WEARING YOUR LIFE AS A SLEEVE: EXAMINING TATTOOING AS A
FORM OF POSTMODERN IDENTITY EXPRESSION

A Thesis
Presented to
The Honors Tutorial College
Ohio University

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for Graduation
from the Honors Tutorial College
with the degree of
Bachelor of Arts in Sociology

by
Nina Cesare
June 2011
Abstract

Perceptions of tattooing have changed dramatically since the 1960s. While “getting inked” was once regarded as a deviant activity, characteristic of marginalized and sanctioned groups, instances of permanent bodily decoration are becoming increasingly frequent among individuals who fail to fit traditional stereotypes. Coinciding with this trend is the emergence of a postmodern society in which near constant communication and immersion in multifarious social groups has eroded the capacity to develop stable conceptions of self. This paper argues that the tattooing we now see among non-traditional groups constitutes a form of legitimate identity expression. As individuals are forced to place him or herself in a greater number of social groups and alter their persona in accordance with each, they strive to reclaim self-ownership by etching their bodies with symbolic representations of personally significant experiences, interests and beliefs. This practice is most seen among young individuals with high levels of social and economic capital, as they feel the pressure of postmodern identity dispersion most of all. This study attempts to support these notions by empirically analyzing data from a survey distributed to students at Ohio University and the surrounding community. Results are discussed in the study’s final section.
I. A BRIEF HISTORY OF TATTOOING IN WESTERN CULTURE

The art of tattooing has endured a long and varied history in the context of Western culture. Those who wear tattoos have experienced long periods of social stigmatization tempered by bursts of acceptance. Displaying a tattoo makes a personal statement to the rest of society, but the way in which others interpret that statement has shifted back and forth with time. Within the context of marginalized groups such as prison inmates, tattooing can be used as a form of asserting solidarity and reclaiming power (Goffman 1967, Sanders 1990). Some declare tattooing to a form fad or fashion, and many tattooees (a term used throughout this study to denote a tattooed person) recognize their ink as an “accessory” that they can choose to show or not show (Sweetman 1999). Others define tattooing as a highly individualized act and a form of claiming ownership over oneself (Pitts 2003, Johnson 2001). The debate over the social value of tattooing and its relation to social marginalization and/or deviance has continued through decades, with most perspectives generally learning toward the latter. Recent times, however, have a brought with them a change in the collective attitudes toward tattooing. Between the 1960s and 1980s alone the number of licensed tattoo parlors in the United States increased from 500 to 10,000, and it is reasonable to assume that one in five Americans is inked (Velliquette 2006, Kousta 2006). Clearly, the role of tattooing in western society has shifted through the decades. This means that the modern tattooee holds a unique perspective on the practice and a different relationship with his or her body art than their decorated predecessors.
The practice of tattooing first came to America as an extension of European colonial exploration. Captain James Cook and his crew first came across the practice of Maori tattooing while exploring New Zealand. Evidence collected from the ship’s records indicates that the area’s natives wore curvilinear facial markings known to them as “moko.” Fascinated with the phenomenon, Cook and his men collected the preserved heads of these individuals and transported them overseas as souvenirs for European collectors. Up until this time Europeans had long been ceremoniously marking their bodies through a similar process called “pricking,” but Cook was the first to introduce the practice as a form of purely aesthetic body modification. He also coined the term “tattoo,” derived from the Tahitian word “ta-tu,” meaning “to strike” or “to mark” (Sanders 1989). Viewed as a new form of cultural exchange, the practice quickly captured the European imagination. Not only did sailors of the time often return home wearing exotic Polynesian and Maori designs, they often brought with them tattooed natives and displayed them as spectacles in pubs, dime museums and fairs. Doing so offered intrigue and novelty to the European audience and helped them legitimize perceived advancement and superiority over more “primitive” cultures (DeMello 2000).

In the late 1800s, following Cook’s exploration and the opening of Japan to the west for trading purposes, tattoos experienced their first real surge in popularity among the European audience. Reports have it that aristocrats and political leaders such as Czar Nicolas II, Kaiser Wilhelm and most of the male members of the British Royal family sported some form of ink as a means of participating in the latest trend
Eventually, the practice gained notoriety across the Atlantic and prompted the development of a purely American tattoo industry. At this time, however, tattooing was still a delicate practice that involved rhythmically injecting ink into the skin with a single needle, one puncture at a time. The invention of the electric tattoo machine by Samuel O’Reily in 1891 opened the practice to the public and was able to serve a much larger clientele. Despite its obvious benefits, this technological advancement ultimately helped lead to tattoos becoming the mark of the poor and alienated. Increasing disinterest from more elite consumers, unfavorable media stories and the spread of disease destroyed the reputation of tattooing and those who wore them in the eyes of Americans. By the mid 20th century, tattooing was seen as a deviant, unsavory activity (Sanders 1989). The mass stigmatization of tattooing had begun.

In the latter half of the century, a desire to test the limits of what society deems acceptable resulted in a surge in the practice of tattooing. At this time, members of society’s fringes recognized marking one’s skin as a form of collective identity assertion and began to utilize the practice as a way to test cultural boundaries and express an “us versus them” mentality (DeMello 2000, Sanders 1989). The widespread popularization of tattoos and the transformation of the practice into a branch of fine art is a cultural phenomenon known as the “tattoo renaissance.” Since its emergence, this revolution has transcended cultural, ethnic and gender boundaries and redefined society’s perspective on deviance (DeMello 2000, Koust 2006, Mifflin 2007). The process first began in the late 1960s and early 1970s when interests in “exotic” culture
drew individuals into the world of Japanese tattooing. In the latter portion of the 1970s it began to gain significant momentum with the emergence of lifestyle oriented New Social Movements (NSMs) such as those pertaining to gay rights, feminism, and environmentalism. Groups of these kinds encouraged participants to integrate collective objectives into their behaviors and decisions, thereby making membership a “cultural and lifestyle based change” (Pichardo 1997).

Before long, tattoos became a way to identify oneself with a particular group or subculture, and design choice began to serve as a reflection of affiliation with a philosophy or group. As more ideological groups emerged and society became more fragmented, individuals began to use tattooing as a means of anchoring themselves amidst the change. Velliquette (1998) explains the phenomenon by stating, “as diversity becomes further emphasized, the tattoo becomes one more way of reassuring the pressure,” resulting in a correlative increase between social change and body modification. Furthermore, the number of tattooed people increased and the social risk of acquiring ink diminished. Tattoo parlors responded to this by improving their technology and opening themselves to a broader range of clientele. The tattoo revolution had begun.

In addition to testing the boundaries of self-expression, those heading the tattoo revolution have made a strong effort to breach the boundary between tattooing and art. Many tattooists have worked to re-brand themselves as fine artists rather than unskilled stencil workers. Many tattooists now boast experience and training as fine artists and are consequentially able to develop more sophisticated designs that
conform well to body contours (Kienlen 2005, Sanders 1989). Members of tattooing collectives that value artistic skill and aesthetic sophistication pride themselves on their professionalism and make a concerted effort to exchange techniques and keep one another up to date on the latest technologies. As described by Sanders (1989) these groups are aware that displaying, marketing and discussing tattoos as form of visual art allows them “significant control over their worklives,” and allow them to encounter “a new client pool with sophisticated aesthetic tastes and sufficient disposable income to purchase extensive, custom-designed art products” (35). As more groups deem it acceptable to wear tattoos, a “body as canvas” approach toward the practice has emerged, further helping to breach the boundary between tattooing and art (Koust 2006). Additionally, labeling one’s tattoo as a “work of art” helps others understand the practice as a creative extension of self rather than a challenge to society’s value systems (Velliquette et al 1998).

No longer an act of rebellion, tattooing in the post-renaissance era is what Koust (2006) defines as an “ironic trend.” Firstly, there is the obvious contrast between the permanence of tattooing and the temporality of passing fashion trends. Additionally, popular culture labels tattoos as an indicator of rebellion or subcultural membership, but are marketed in a way that is both “gentrified…and desirable” and helps gradually integrate the practice into mainstream culture. Once a mark of affiliation with alienated, marginalized subgroups, the tattoo is now a commoditized, corporately promoted object. In addition to this conflicting dichotomy, tattoos serve as an expression of individuality for the wearer but also act as a manner of
demarcating group association (Sanders 1989). Overall, the new found popularity of tattooing has given the practice a multiplicity of ambiguous and/or conflicting social meanings. They are individualized and commoditized, a tool for unification and marginalization, a form of rebellion and acceptance, and require permanent physical alterations, even in the context of a temporary trend.

This study explains changing attitudes toward tattooing by examining the relationship of body modification to identity expression and determining how it serves as a reflection of individuals’ current social environment. It argues that tattooing among younger groups with high social capital constitutes a form of identity anchoring for those living in the context of postmodernity - a society filled with individuals who suffer from a fragmented sense of self (Gergen 1991). It argues that the emergence of a more highly connected, technologically driven and socially disjointed has transformed tattooing into a legitimate form of self-expression. Many claim that the practice no longer constitutes a form of rebellion, as the number of tattooed persons has steadily increased over the past few decades (Cullerton 2005, Orend and Gangé 2009). The impact of tattooing is now less about the act itself and more about the design choice and how it reflects the individuality of the wearer. Due primarily to the impact of advertising and high interconnectness, the practice itself has developed into a commoditized and socially accepted element of society. By combining theoretical descriptions of self presentation, embodied identity and the impact of postmodernity on the development of the self with opinions on tattooing submitted by 2,021 survey respondents at Ohio University and within the Athens
community, it seeks to understand how changing perceptions of tattooing reflect large-scale recent social change.

II. EXAMINING THE SELF IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIETY

Understanding how the self is developed and maintained in the context of society is crucial to examining how tattooing relates to its expression and development. Though many will attempt to deny it, our dress, grooming and overall attractiveness has a profound impact on our social relationships (Sanders 1989). The interactions on which they are predicated form our basic understanding of self and help us learn to empathize with others. As explained by Gubrium and Holstein (2000), “the self emanates from the interplay among institution demands, restraints and resources, on the one hand, and biographically informed, self-constituting social actions on the other” (95). In other words, by watching others we are able to understand ourselves and develop into social beings. Though they vary in their opinions regarding whether or not a core “self” exists, sociologists agree that patterns of behavior and perception of self are indeed the product of socialization. Regardless of norms, interaction with others establishes expectations for individuals to fulfill and creates pathways for identity development (Mead 1934).

Sociological examination of the self within society falls along two primary theoretical strains. The first of these – symbolic interactionism - is characterized by the idea that one’s concept of self is birthed almost exclusively through processes of social interaction. The social being and the individual are the same entity and emerge independently from the exchange of ideas and pathways of communication afforded
by society. Symbolic interactionists argue that as we learn more about others by watching their behavior in the context of social encounters, we gradually learn more about ourselves as well. Watching others helps us understand our own emotions and recognize the impact of our actions. Cooley (1902) titles this phenomenon the “looking glass self,” meaning that we view our own actions from the perspective of an outsider and alter our behavior according to the expectations placed upon us by society. What we think of as the “self” is actually a set of characteristics that we “sustain by purpose and endeavor” as a means of distinguishing ourselves from others. These “personal variations” – our more aggressive conceptions of individual identity – are often manifested physically and evidenced by what one chooses to consume or wear. Tattooedees view themselves as distinguished by their bodily decoration and realize that wearing tattoos has a profound impact on the nature of their social interactions (Sanders 1989). Those who graduate to the level of being a collector do so through a process of socialization. They consider their consumption of tattoos a key component of their identity and learn these behaviors through their association with collector friends (Vail 1999).

Social identity theory states that society is divided into groups and that within these groups emerge different roles. The individuals who occupy the roles are then shaped by the duties and expectations they imply and modify their sense of self accordingly. Consequentially, these individuals do not have a cohesive “personal self,” but rather a multiplicity of identities which they utilize and alter according to the situation in which they find themselves (Tajfel and Turner 1979). The ever-present
and coercive entity which imposes these expectations – what Mead (1934) terms the “generalized other” – becomes the benchmark by which we make behavioral decisions and interpret others’ actions. Theorists of this strain emphasize that identities have descriptive, prescriptive and evaluative significance and are molded by subjective belief structures. Individuals feel pressured to conform to these categorizations for the sake of developing common bonds and prompting self-enhancement. Social identity theory provides a more dynamic and universally applicable interpretation of identity development, as roles themselves are transient social constructs, and it provides an effective theoretical linkage between social processes and individual cognitive processes. What makes social identity theory interesting in the case of tattooing is that marking one’s body in this way is a form of permanent categorization. Social identity theorists acknowledge that the broad social category in which an individual falls forms the primary basis for self-identification. For tattooees, this categorization is being a tattooed person. However, the permanence of tattooing contradicts the notion of self as a malleable and transient unit.

Whether more structurally oriented or based in stimulus-response dynamics, these theories have one basic message in common: what we think of as the self is a construction that both shapes and is shaped by processes of interaction. We maintain power to mold our self-interpretation, but this power is tempered by our “going concerns” – a term referring to established social institutions that help shape one’s identity - which may be “as formally structured as a government bureaucracy or as modest and loosely structured as a group of friends who gather on Thursday night to
play bridge,” but in any case impact one’s development of self (Gubrium and Holstien 2000). Gergen (1991) breaks the process of socialized self-discovery into three steps – strategic manipulation, or playing more roles to achieve social gains, pastiche personality, or the process of constructing an identity from available bits and pieces, and finally the emergence of the relational self, or the realization that despite manipulation the self is a process inextricably intertwined with external relationships. Even when we refer to ourselves in an individualized sense with terms such as “I” or “me,” these labels passively take into consideration social context (Cooley 1902). In other words, we cannot separate the habits of the self from the environment in which they are developed.

Sociologists often refer to the constraining, coercive, yet fabricated influence of society on behavioral choices as the “social scaffold.” This term, first coined by Goffman (1975) and later elaborated on by studies such as Benford and Snow (2000) introduced the concept of frame analysis, which highlights the importance of context when interpreting social interaction. The term “scaffold” implies both the fragility and transience of the metaphorical edifice. Actions that fall outside of the social scaffold can disrupt the stability, but should those actions come to be adopted by a large number of people they have the potential to change its basic construction. The social scaffold of western society has traditionally barred against permanent body modification such as tattooing, but the adoption of this practice by those who harbor the greatest power over its structure is gradually altering this perception. The emergence of the tattoo renaissance and increase in the number of tattooed persons in
the past several years exemplifies the relative malleability of this structure. The popularity of the practice indicates that those who wear tattoos are gradually disassembling society’s restrictions against them and using their social leverage to reconstruct the scaffold in a way that ensures a more favorable perception of tattooed persons. The transformation of tattooing from unskilled stencil work into a form of fine art in the latter portion of the twentieth century provides further evidence of this paradigm shift (Kleinen 2005, Sanders 1999).

Perceptions of self-identity that emerge through processes of social interaction are not confined to internal manifestation; individual identity is inextricably intertwined with physical appearance. People decorate their bodies and design their actions in order to convey information about themselves as quickly and efficiently as possible. Items of clothing and other forms of physical modification act as “props” that allow social actors to change their roles according to the expectations of the surrounding environment (Goffman 1959). Judgments made by others based on this appearance provide a benchmark for social interaction. Additionally, physically manifesting identity information facilitates closure and allows others to draw conclusions more efficiently and terminate cognitive processes related to the matter more quickly (Kruglanski et al. 1993). This concept of “embodied sociology” – examining identity development as a physical manifestation from an outcome-based standpoint - is a relatively unexplored sociological subtopic (Shilling 1993). It focuses on how an individual “gives off” rather than verbally “gives” information and provides a theoretical link between an individual’s social, physical and actual self
(Goffman). Additionally, it breaks down the barrier between the internal and the social self – the conceptual differentiation between the “I” and the “me.” As described by Crossley (2005) by recognizing that we both have a body and are a body” (2).

Bourdieu (1986) provides an in-depth analysis of what embodied identity is and how it affects our social relationships. Using the term “capital” to denote forms of physically manifested identity, he distinguishes between two primary types: social capital and physical capital, both of which may be expressed in an embodied, objectified or institutional state. Like economic assets, these forms of capital have the capacity to accumulate and ultimately produce profit for the owner. Often handed down through heredity, this form of capital bridges the distinction between hereditary and culturally fabricated characteristics. A notion as contextual as identity, Bourdieu describes an individual’s social capital as combination of both number and diversity of connections as well as physical prowess and financial resources. Lopez and Stack (2001), which also elaborates on the concept of embodied sociology, measures this influence according to the number of social connections an individual has coupled with his or her economic capital. Physical capital serves as a manifestation of individuals’ tangible and intangible prowess and social influence in the same way that paper money represents financial resources. In other words, physical capital refers to how an individual grooms or molds her body to reflect affluence or good heredity.

Bourdieu’s description of physical capital raises the issue of appearance and its relation to social influence. In its embodied form, social capital is labeled physical capital and appears as dispositions, lifestyles and aesthetic preferences. These traits
help denote the individuals as a member of a desired or privileged community characterized by wealth and social influence. This form of intangible wealth manifests itself physically through the manner in which one presents him or herself. As Bourdieu (1986) describes, “The embodied capital, external wealth converted into an integral part of the person, into a habitus, cannot be transmitted instantaneously (unlike money, property rights or even titles of nobility) by gift or bequest, purchase or exchange” (50). The style of dress and grooming exhibited by those with high social capital serves as an indicator of the connection between appearance and social influence by denoting their membership within a privileged social group. Fine clothing, styled hair and expensive makeup is more than a luxury; it is a costume or calling card of the influential social elite.

In relation to tattooing as an aesthetic preference, this study argues that the acceptance of tattooing among groups characterized by high social capital – those who harbor the greatest control of the construction and alteration of the social scaffold - has effectively transformed collective norms regarding the practice as an act of deviance and made “getting inked” an acceptable form of self-expression. A higher level of economic and social capital results in a greater level of social exposure through interpersonal interaction and media sources. These individuals can afford the capacity to not only access cultural outlets but to browse topics at their discretion through computers and mobile devices. Increased awareness in these areas mean that individuals are more likely to garner from advertising and media that tattoos are fashionable, attractive, and popular among the stars (McClaren and Torchinsky 2009).
These perspectives are then further reinforced by other media-savvy members of their social group. Additionally, from a social-structural standpoint, if individuals at the top of the scaffold are getting tattoos, they are indirectly influencing those at the bottom to emulate them by getting tattoos as well.

Because individuals are forced to change and adapt their physical selves to social situations, embodied identity is often described as a process rather than a set of defined characteristics. According to Budgeon (2003), some scholars believe that the body cannot be considered a material object at all because its presence is highly interpretive and temporal. Formed through interaction, the body serves as both a form of individual expression and a receptacle for the influence of social conditions. It contributes to the development of their relationships and consequentially their identities, by conveying information about factors such as sex roles and class structure and reciprocally shaping processes of interaction (Lurie 1991, Shilling 1993). As the number of contexts in which a body must adapt increases, the body as a physical presence becomes obscured by the body as layers of representation (Budgeon 2003). Individuals who find themselves socially embedded in a wide array of contexts and expected to fulfill roles associated with each feel more inclined to anchor his or her “true” identity in a physical manner (Sweetman 1999). The way in which this identity anchoring manifests itself becomes in itself a form of embodied identity, as it often makes itself known in the form of clothing or other bodily adornment.

Among the most obvious and heavily studied examples of identity manifested as physical capital is clothing and fashion. The term fashion, as used in this paper, is
not limited to means of decorating the body. Instead it encompasses “clothing, amusements and social conduct” – all of which are methods of altering one’s “front stage” and affecting subsequent interaction (Simmel 1957, Goffman 1959). As Lurie (1991) explains, “Long before I am near enough to talk to you on the street, in a meeting, or at a party, you announce your sex, age and class to me through what you are wearing--and very possibly give me important information (or misinformation) as to your occupation, origin, personality, opinions, tastes, sexual desires and current mood. I may not be able to put what I observe into words, but I register the information unconsciously; and you simultaneously do the same for me. By the time we meet and converse we have already spoken to each other in an older and more universal language” (32). In other words, before we even interact with others we perform an initial analysis of the individual based on appearance and design our actions to fulfill expectations accordingly. Goffman (1959) refers to the indicators directly given and indirectly given off by others as cues and their complements received by others as impressions. Cues may be non-verbal: avoiding eye contact with others, for example, may give the impression that one is unfriendly or unwelcoming to the advances of others. Likewise, good grooming and posture may incite deference from others. In other words, the items of clothing worn, words chosen and mannerisms designed by an individual serve as symbolic identity indicators that others, upon encounter, must decode.

Examining self-presentation as a means of identity expression raises the question – can tattoos be considered a form of fashion? Do forms of body modification such as tattooing exist within their own category of identity characteristics or are they simply an example of incorporating the exotic into the
fashion’s repertoire? A great deal of information seems to support this idea. It may be argued that an ebb and flow in the popularity of the practice parallels that of fashion trends. Like a hairstyle or item of clothing, a tattoo is clearly a part of the individual’s “identity toolkit” (Goffman 1959). Both the choice to sport tattoos and the choice of design makes a firm, declarative statement about the wearer. They “touch the depths of one’s feelings and tangibly convey information about the core self (Johnson 2006).

In the past several years, tattooing has also been partially incorporated into consumer culture and marketed through mainstream media as a key component of celebrity image (Sweetman 1999). According to Koust (2006), when tattoos are portrayed through media outlets as a “a legitimate aesthetic – manifestation of culture rather than a distasteful badge that blights the body,” this helps eliminate stigma and disseminate the practice to a greater number of social groups (1045). Repeating images that display tattoos as chic, desirable and sexy through advertising integrates the idea into the public consciousness and allows individuals to create deep-seated cognitive parallels between tattoos and other forms of bodily adornment such as overcoats, earrings and handbags. Consequentially, acquiring tattoos, like purchasing articles of clothing, has become more frequent - commoditized even - until it resembles any other form of corporate consumption (Sweetman 1999, Koust 2006, Orend and Gangé 2009).

When considering the potential relationship between tattooing and fashion, one must consider that fashion is, by definition, a process of continual change (Lurie 1991, Sweetman 1999). Social interaction, as described previously, requires constant re-
interpretation and re-evaluation. Each encounter requires the individual to read and decode the identity indicators both given and given off by others. Even moments of personal introspection require consideration of the self within the context of society, as identity is shaped largely through interactions with others (Cooley 1902, Mead 1932). The “generalized other” – an abstraction of others’ reactions and expectations - and its coercive force is ever-present in one’s continual process of self evaluation (Mead 1932). Fashion accommodates this characteristic by itself being characterized by constant change and re-adaptation. Tattooing, on the other hand, constitutes a form of permanent identity assertion and for this reason should not be theoretically equated with fashion as a whole. Though the popularity of the practice may display similar characteristics to fashion, the two are fundamentally different. Despite the fact that modern tattooing is marketed similarly to clothing and shoes, the choice to “get inked” is a highly individualized act (Orend and Gangé 2009, Sanders 1988, DeMello 2000, Sweetman 1999). Tattooing is an anchor that stands in contrast to the transience of fashion and its “carnival” of free-floating signs (Baudrillard 2000).

III. TATTOOING, SELF PRESENTATION AND STIGMATIZATION

Assuming at least some parallels can be drawn between tattooing and more traditional identity indicators raises the question – why have tattoos been largely stigmatized in western society? What is it about permanently marking one’s body that proves such a threat to the already tenuous “social scaffold” (Goffman 1959)? A multitude of studies claim that individuals who are criminally deviant, emotionally disturbed, have low self esteem or in someway anti-establishment or anti-social in
their behavior are more inclined to wear tattoos (Koch et al. 2009, Nathanson et al. 2006). Research of this strain argues that when a subculture finds itself encroached upon, it needs to modify its behavior to separate itself from the invaders in a physically obvious way (Koch, Alden, Roberts, Armstrong and Owen 2009). Others view tattooing as a form of self-mutilation and a signifier of low self-esteem or self-deprecation on the part of those who occupy a “despised social status” or are victims of abuse (Braithwaite et al. 2001, Jeffries 2000). Arguments such as these are, however, inherently flawed because they fail to take into account social context. In drawing conclusions, they neglect the subjectivity of deviance and the fluid nature in which deviant behavior is perceived according to the norms and standards of the time (Adams 2009). Recent increases in the popularity of tattooing among non-traditional groups has brought to light the theoretical discrepancies between deviant behavior and body modification. The following section will elaborate on why, if unjust, this stigmatization has been perpetuated and falsely supported in Western society.

One possible source of stigmatization lies in associations between tattoos and criminal deviance. It is true that a number of individuals confined in highly controlled, institutionalized settings do also have tattoos - approximately one-third to two-thirds of prison inmates alone – though their decision to wear them is a pro-social, group oriented activity (Sanders 1989). Within the context of their isolated community, tattooing is a rational and healthy way of promoting solidarity and identifying with other members of their already marginalized group. Additionally, institutionalized settings lend themselves well to extreme forms of identity expression
such as tattooing, as the method of control used within these venues involves stripping inmates of personal belongings, visible forms of self-assertion, former social contacts and routine activities in order to reclaim his or her identity and reset his or her “moral career” (Goffman 1963, Bell 1999). Still, despite efforts to deprive them of all forms of identity development, the inmate nonetheless retains control over their own physical being. Exercising that control lends them some vestige of social power within their oppressed group. Many use them as indicators of activity within prison social groups or way of identifying oneself with a lover (Goffman 1967, Sanders 1989). Generally speaking, prison tattooing is not an outlet for inmates’ aggressive tendencies. Instead, it serves as a manner of coping with the depersonalization and the “pains of imprisonment” (Sanders 1989: 40).

Another potential source of stigma comes from tradition of mind/body Cartesian dualism and the effect that this philosophy has on perceptions of the self (Budgeon 2003, Sanders 1989). This form of dualism differentiates between the body and the mind as entities existing within two separate realms, with the mind/mental processes being that is abstract, rational and “closer to God” and the body being akin to more basic, animal-like inclinations (Budgeon 2003). The body is seen as an accessory to the self—a crude machine or cloak in which the divine and rational soul operates (Synott 1993). Focusing on the body as a strong component of self thusly indicates an unhealthy obsession with base pleasures and a rejection of transcendent rationality – a profile that perfectly fits the so-called “criminal type.” Excessive or extreme adornment and/or modifications are seen as an indication of materialistic,
hedonistic, and Epicurean fixations. “Normalizing” the body in this case equates principally to diminishing the extent to which it is decorated and consequentially the amount of attention drawn to it (Sanders 1989). By doing so one divorces oneself from the temptation of more crude, base pleasures and removes the burden of the “clay, corruption and corpse” that is the physical being (Synott 1993). According to this perspective, by placing significant amounts of time, money and dedication to customizing their bodies, the tattooed person reveals him or herself as tending toward basic, primitive pleasures rather than seeking personal enlightenment.

Stigmatization against tattoo wearers becomes easier to understand when one recognizes that the process of tattooing is a painful activity that incurs high social and physical risk both during and after the process. Tattooees are forced to temporarily expose and submit their bodies to the will of a stranger, breach standards regarding intimacy and personal spaces, and endure the burning pain of injection (Sanders 1999). Before undergoing the process, the first time tattooee finds him or herself under a significant amount of anxiety and psychological distress. The process he or she faces forces them to place trust in the aptitude and honesty of the artist - an individual who they may have not met and been able to assess previously. For first timers this distress is intensified by the awareness that the actual pain of tattooing is unknown to them until he or she is under the needle. Though never comfortable, the actual pain of tattooing depends on the location of the body - areas closer to bone are more sensitive to the vibrations of the needle - and the intensity of the pigmentation. Once an individual establishes report with an artist and becomes acquainted with the
sensation of being tattooed then he or she overcomes the social risks and becomes a “collector” or “tattooed person” (Sanders 1999, Vail 1999). Undergoing the pain and scarring it takes to achieve this status, however, is often portrayed by the media as a form of self mutilation, which serves to pathologize and marginalize the wearer (Pitts 1999).

Stigmatization is also the consequence of negative reactions from others and self-definition (Sanders 1989). As evidenced by the fact that many people express happiness with their tattoos because they reportedly make them feel “different” or special,” tattooees are constantly aware of the fact that wearing tattoos impacts their definition of self (Goffman 1963, Sanders 1989). Garnering positive reactions from others makes the prospect of collecting more tattoos more appealing. Receiving praise from other tattooed persons serves as a key ritual that defines passage into the tattooed community and renders these individuals more inclined to not just collect but engage in a shared lifestyle in which tattoos play an important role (Atkinson 2003, DeMello 2000). Conversely, if an individual reveals him or her self to be a tattooed person and receives a negative response from others, he or she is more likely to develop a negative self-perception and take steps to further marginalize him or herself from society. In accordance with the notion of the “self-fulfilling prophesy,” the more frequently individuals are labeled as deviant or rebellious for wearing tattoos, the more inclined they are to integrate this perspective into his or her perception of self (Merton 1948). In light of this rejection, tattooing may then be used as means of re-claiming
oneself or seeking the acceptance and “shared specialness” of the tattoo community as a whole.

When it comes to tattooing, women are particularly vulnerable to stigmatization relating to social reactions. Non-western tattooed women have traditionally been viewed as “uncultured, savage, wild and sexually unrestrained” (Pitts 2003). Asserting this kind of sexual dominance and self-ownership proves a threat to their male counterparts. Additionally, marks themselves contradicted traditional notions of feminine beauty. Though encouraged to shape and mold their bodies’ appearance through the use of cosmetics, radical footwear and contour-shaping undergarments, misguided associations between women and the practice of tattooing prevent them from decorating the surface of their skin. Overall, society forces women to mold their bodies in a way that makes them appear young, fit, sexually virile and congruent with the trends of the time (Lurie 1991). According to this line of thinking, tattoos are blemishes that detract from the sexuality and ideal beauty of the feminine form.

Open discussion of women’s rights has profoundly shaped society’s perspective on female tattooing, however. Debates on issues such as abortion rights, date rape and sexual harassment have women reconsidering who maintains control over their bodies and why (Mifflin 1997, Pitts 2006). Beginning with the height of the feminist movement in the 1970s, tattoos have become an increasingly popular way for women to reclaim their bodies against a society characterized by objectification and an emphasis on corporeal sexual appeal. Often times, female tattooees are victims of
sexual or physical abuse and use body modification as a means of “controlling pain” and asserting dominance over their physical being (Jeffreys 2000). Some choose designs that establish individuality by demarcating important events or individuals in their lives (Kienlen 2005). Postmodern feminists highlight the role of tattooing as a form of deconstructing fabricated bodily norms (McCormack 2006, Pitts 2003). In place of “normalizing” the body by highlighting and exaggerating biological distinctions, these women are using the “shared meaning” of tattooing to “emphasize bodily self-ownership; personal, cultural and political expression through the body and new possibilities for gender, sexuality and even ethnic identity” (Pitts 2003: 14, Shilling 1993). Regardless of motive, the permanence of the design and severity of the process serves as strong declaration of self against the constraints of society.

In addition to expectations regarding social class and gender, the practice of tattooing developed a poor reputation in the early twentieth century when the advent of the electric tattoo machine allowed parlors to sprout up rapidly. Devoid of sanitation standards and formal regulation, amateur establishments rapidly appeared across the nation, particularly in port towns, where they catered to transient sailors. Mechanizing the practice also allowed individuals with little professional experience beyond sign painting and practicing their technique on circus animals (DeMello 2000). Word soon spread regarding the risk of communicable disease as an effect of tattooing. The practice soon garnered a reputation as a dirty activity in which only the dregs of society participated. Nowadays, the tattooing business is highly controlled and forced to adhere to strict, medical standards regarding hygiene and equipment
maintenance. Regardless of whether or not previous stories of tattoo-related diseases were exaggerated, awareness regarding the risk of spreading harmful diseases through needle usage led authorities to establish strict health guidelines. Additionally, many tattooists now boast formal training in the fine arts. A growing number of these individuals are working to shed existing stigma against the practice as a dirty, deviant activity and convince society that tattooing is not only a legitimate art form but that “related activities of tattoo creation, collection and appreciation” should be defined as “socially valuable” (Sanders 1989: 3).

These explanations make clear that classifying tattooing as an expression of deviance is a narrow and antiquated conclusion. Perceptions of tattooing as a mark of criminals fails to take into consideration the need for solidarity among intentionally depersonalized inmates. Additionally, body modification in institutional settings such as prisons serves as a means of reclaiming power over the body – the last element remaining element of self over which inmates maintain control. The idea that tattooing is an unsavory, unsanitary industry neglects the strict medical regulation and artistic training that characterizes modern professional tattooists. On a subconscious level, mental barriers against body modifications such as tattooing stem from deep-seated cultural notions of the boundary between body and mind. Excessive emphasis on the former is perceived as a sign of inadequacy in the latter. Women find themselves particularly scorned for wearing tattoos but this barrier is based in fabricated conceptions of a feminine ideal, both in terms of physicality and sexual power. Instead of serving as an indicator of abnormal or deviant tendencies, tattooing
is a form of self expression – a permanent identity assertion. As the next section shows, the recent surge in the popularity of tattooing stems not from a tendency toward societal resistance, but from an increased need to claim and establish an identity in a rapidly changing world.

III. SEARCHING FOR STABILITY: POSTMODERNITY AND ITS EFFECT ON THE SELF

Society currently finds itself in the midst of significant social changes. Human interaction as we know it is undergoing a process of evolutionary adaptation. With the rise in popularity of the Internet and the proliferation of technologies such as PDAs and Smartphones, individuals find themselves connected to one another on a nearly continuous basis. The number of groups with which we are connected has increased exponentially, as initiating these connections has become an easy and immediate task. On an interpersonal level, forming and maintaining friendships is easy as clicking a button or instantaneously exchanging a few short sentences. As a consequence of this development, social circles have broadened, enticing many to “collect” hundreds or even thousands of online acquaintances. In addition to experiencing these pressures on a personal level, individuals find their worklife tasks more diverse, more varied and in need of more immediate attention. Thanks to these technologies, being at work is no longer means being confined to the workplace itself (Gergen 1991). Remote meetings and long distance collaboration are facilitated by file sharing devices such as Dropbox or Google docs and tools for visual/audio communication such as Skype. Overall,
individuals face more diverse and dispersed social pressures than ever before and society as a whole is struggling to cope with these changes.

The increased social interconnectivity associated with postmodernity has undoubtedly impacted identity expression and self-development on an individual level. As discussed in section one, identity theory describes the self as a social construct, subject to the influential pressures of the surrounding social environment. Social identity theory focuses on the importance of establishing roles as a means of defining self. Symbolic interactionism places emphasis on micro-scale interaction and highlights the fluidity and influence of social symbolism on the perception of self and others. Proponents of symbolic interactionism claim that interpersonal interaction helps create and solidify self-meaning. Regardless their minute differences, both strains of thought agree that interpersonal interaction forms the basis for self-awareness. Developing relationships does more than help us to understand the “generalized other” (Mead 1934) – it helps us develop a grasp on who we are as well. By altering the context in which these relationships are developed, the expectations associated with them, and the frequency of which interpersonal connections are made society has forced social theorists to question the reliability of these classical theories and, in fact, the concreteness of social science itself (Gergen 1991). The postmodern social environment, with its increased speed and frequency of communication and its re-defined notions of relationships, has called into question what constitutes the self.

A number of scholars have offered their perspectives on exactly how the postmodern world has impacted the development of the self. Gergen (1991), for
example, acknowledges that trends in social immersion have shifted greatly enough to merit what Kuhn (1962) calls a “paradigm shift” regarding dominant theories of identity development. A keystone work in the pathway to understanding postmodern identity development, Gergen (1991) describes structural changes in the social environment and speculates how these changes have altered instigated a “reconstruction of relationship” and altered individuals’ sense of self. This work begins by stating that we are shaped by interaction, but we nonetheless maintain some power over our self-image. This process of “self construction,” which is then broken down into three steps: strategic manipulation (playing more roles to achieve social gains), pastiche personality (the process of constructing an identity from available bits and pieces, most commonly through fashion), and finally the emergence of the relational self (the realization that despite manipulation, the self is a process inextricably intertwined with external relationships). The basic processes that underlie these steps toward self-development, however, have changed in light of postmodernity’s technological advances. The immediacy of communication they offer have brought into question the stability of the established order (Smart 1993) and ushered in an era of personal uncertainty.

Some believe that the ambiguity and pressures of postmodernity have caused society itself to undergo a collective sense of personal instability and crisis of self (Baudrillard 2000, Gergen 1999, Smart 1993, Turner 1990). As Gergen (1991) explains, in the postmodern era “...there is no individual essence to which one remains true or committed. One’s identity is continuously emergent, re-formed and redirected
as one moves through the sea of ever-changing relationships. In the case of ‘Who am I?’ it is a teeming world of provisional possibilities” (139). In other words, increased communication has increased pathways for self-development and the individual is struggling to readapt. Gergen (2007) proposes that the increased interconnectivity has created a widespread feeling of “social saturation” in which individuals feel overwhelmed by the number of situations to which they must adapt and ultimately grow to see their autonomous selves as ill-defined and generally inadequate. We can see this malaise through a number of social trends, including individuals’ attempts to return to stable, community-like settings and the popularity of get-away cabins and other forms of vacation through seclusion (McClaren and Torchinsky, 2009). Overall, postmodernity embodies the fine line between opportunity and saturation, with a tendency toward the latter. Because identity is based primarily on interaction, constantly having to ask the question “who can I be when with you?” has fostered a sense of collective “multiphrenia” – or a split sense of self.

The concept of “multiphrenia” is central to the postmodernity debate and necessitates elaboration for the purpose of this study (Gergen 1991). A term that literally means “many minds,” the condition of multiphrenia has three basic phases. The first is a “vertigo of the valued” – the tendency to adopt characteristics from others and question one’s own established beliefs. The second is the “expansion of inadequacy” – the idea that regardless of what choices one makes, they will not be accepted by at least some portion of society. In this case, the diversity of moral standards caused by increased social fragmentation has destroyed traditional
boundaries between right and wrong. The third is a “recession in rationality” - the idea that there are no longer bifurcated or evenly divided decisions from which can rationally choose. With no defined divisions between right and wrong, the ability the possibility of “committed” romanticism,” or “strong and single-minded modernism” – qualities that once defined and anchored the individual – become an unattainable ideal.

While some studies such as Gergen (1991, 2007) adopt a cautionary standpoint and associate postmodernity with the dissolution of the self, other theorists view the emergence of the postmodern era as a boon to individual identity development. Holstein and Gubirum (2006), for example, emphasizes that the self is a product of interaction and argues that increasing the number of pathways the individual encounters affords him or her a greater sense of potential. Postmodernity has not destroyed the self as we know it – it has simply expanded the number of available pathways for personal development. Individuals continue to search for a sense of belonging and community in order to anchor his or her identity, but instead of inheriting these groups they now have the freedom to choose them at will. In some cases, individuals join commercially fabricated groups and integrate their habits of consumption into their identities. Often they balance affiliation with multiple groups without strain. Overall, the ability to choose does not “flood” the self as suggested by studies such as Gergen (1991, 2007) which state that the individual’s primary concern lies in balancing the pressures and expectations involved with multiple affiliations. Instead, it has opened a greater number of pathways for self-development, which has lent individuals a greater sensation of freedom and potential.
Long before the emergence of postmodern thinkers such as Gergen, Holstien and Gubirum, Georg Simmel – a leading figure in the symbolic interactionist movement – began to theorize about the effect of increased communication and its effect upon the self. Simmel views society as an amalgam of autonomous individuals whose associations shape his or her perception of self. For this reason, he suggests that the most appropriate unit of analysis for understanding society’s dynamics lies in examining one-on-one interactions. With this perspective in mind, Simmel determines that the level of social saturation associated with urban life poses a threat to the security of the individual. Although urban dwellers are more autonomous in their self development giving them a more pure and well-defined sense of individuality than those of their rural counterparts, this freedom threatens the stability of the self. The stereotypical “blasé,” reserved urban countenance is nothing more than a response to the sense of fragmentation that results from a daily bombardment of social pressures. These individuals use the specialization of behavior, skills and appearance as a means of distinguishing themselves as individuals within the social mass. Essentially, the city dweller’s cultural experience and sense of self is subjected and fabricated, as is necessary when they find themselves overwhelmed with choice. As described by Simmel (1903), “The deepest problems of modern life flow from the attempt of the individual to maintain the independence and individuality of his existence against the sovereign powers of society, against the weight of the historical heritage and the external culture and technique of life” (28). In other words, with great freedom comes great social pressures and a general threat to the self.
Postmodern society is witnessing a social phenomenon similar to what Simmel (1903) describes, only instead of congregating in urban areas individuals are developing communities online. The problem of “maintain[ing] individuality” and preserving the self has been amplified to an unprecedented scale. As mentioned previously, individuals design their countenance and appearance to suit the expectations of their surrounding conditions. The question is not “who am I?” but “who can I be when I am around you?” (Gergen 1991). In postmodern society, this question must be assessed on an increasingly frequent basis as the number of groups with which one associates steadily grows. As stated by Gergen (1991), “In the postmodern world, there is no individual essence to which one remains true or committed. One’s identity is continuously emergent, re-formed and redirected as one moves through the sea of ever-changing relationships” (139). The concept of a core self becomes obscured by the near constant need to reevaluate and re-adapt to each social situation. In lieu of traditional identity building cues such as community, the individual searches for other ways of manifesting this idea anchoring his or her self.

Online social activity provides an excellent example of the pressures of postmodernity and has possibly created an inter-generational difference in regards to how these pressures are felt. Based on the fact that youthful generations have a tendency toward conformity and are therefore more likely to adopt trends, we can infer that most users of social networking and mobile communication tools are younger (Gavin and Furman 1989). Additionally, Lenhart et al. (2010) reports that 73% of American teenagers currently use at least one social networking platform, and
although adult (ages 30+) usage has increased dramatically in the past several years, this group still lags far behind at 39%. Usage of virtual social spaces varies between the age groups as well, with the younger audience more apt to utilize tools for communication. The same report indicates that teens are also more likely to own portable computing devices such as laptops (Lenhart et. al (2010). Based on this information, we can see that people of younger generations are more likely to multiple lives and are consequentially forced to develop and maintain multiple personas. Unlike their older counterparts, they are always connected, always interacting, and always forced to perform.

In addition to a continual re-assessment of self, a higher frequency of social contact with people of diverse backgrounds and opinions means that preferences are more likely to be shaped by their peers and more likely to disseminate quickly (Atkinson 2003). Likewise, a greater emphasis on media and communication allows for the effective establishment of new norms for behavior (Featherstone 1982). This, in turn, means that newly accepted social practices are more likely to develop quickly and be diverse in nature. Consequentially, if individuals continually confronted with ideas and practices they once found shocking or offensive – such as tattooing - they will eventually develop an inclination to accept them. In other words, what was once considered deviant is now, under the right conditions, becoming the norm. If the adopting group is large enough, and if they have enough social influence, they can effectively re-mold the fabric of society and change what is deemed acceptable.
One way in which the effects of postmodernity make themselves readily apparent in the world of fashion. Rather than directly impacting individual trends, postmodern social changes have increased the rapidity with which new trends are consumed. The luxury and affluence that characterizes the postmodern era has allowed individuals to dedicate more time and effort to maintaining his or her personal aesthetic. Because of this, emphasis on the importance of fashion as a tool for self-expression has increased significantly. People mold their appearances around what they buy. Clothing labels are no longer just a form of advertisement – they are images that represent lifestyles, status symbols and anchoring components of the consumer’s identity (McClaren and Torchinsky 2009). Styles correspond to lifestyles, and consumers are free to mix and match elements of many to create a personalized image (Atkinson 2003, Gubrium and Holstein 2000). Bovone (2006) addresses this phenomenon by stating, “due to the increase in the standard of living, fewer people are worried about their material subsistence. Consequently, even consumption can be interpreted, as in recent sociological works, as a search for experience and a sense of identity” (379). In other words, in the context of the postmodern era you are what you buy.

Looking beyond fashion, the era of “doubts and uncertainties” described by postmodern theorists has another obvious impact on identity development – individuals now place more emphasis on the physical being as an indicator of self (Smart 1993). As the frequency and diversity of human communication has increased due to advances in technology, the community has diminished in importance as a
means of shaping identity. In its stead has emerged a phenomenon that can be described as the “unprecedented individuality of the ‘uncertain body’” – the tendency for individuals to rely on their appearance as a form of identity anchoring (Shilling 1993). As the lines between public and private life are blurred and the individual becomes increasingly fragmented, the manner in which one presents him or herself physically becomes inextricably intertwined with who he or she really is (Velliquette et al. 1998). Molding one’s appearance becomes a means of providing personal stability. Individuals mix and match elements of elements of existing styles to construct their personalized images (Atkinson 2003, Gubrium and Holstein 2000). Overall, molding one’s appearance becomes a means of achieving a sense of identity and stability.

Overall, the sense of ambiguity and personal fragmentation associated with the postmodern era has increased the importance of appearance as a tool for identity development. Unfortunately, relying on transient means of molding one’s appearance - such as clothing and hairstyles - to provide concrete identity assertion is temporary and tenuous. A change of clothing and a haircut may denote affiliation with a new social group. Tattoos, on the other hand, are near permanent – they cannot be changed according to a given situation. In terms of non-verbal social communication, they extend beyond conditional assimilation. For this reason they constitute the most extreme possible form of identity assertion. Contrary to popular belief, the postmodern tattooed individual is not deviant or rebellious – he or she simply uses tattoos to create a sense of personal stability and clarify perceptions of self. Tattoos
are highly personal and each tattooee has a unique story to tell. Nonetheless, the common thread between their stories is often that the tattoo marks a movement from emotional despair toward personal betterment – a firm declaration of self and a transition from “contamination” to “redemption” (Velliquette et al 2006). By tattooing his or her body, the postmodern individual gains independence and proclaims control over his or her uncertain self (Johnson 2006).

Despite its importance in regards to identity expression, the postmodern tattooee’s decision to “get inked” is not as simple as asserting individuality in a postmodern world characterized by conflicting social expectations. Though decisions regarding placement and design choice are typically highly individualized, the decision to get tattoos is a process of “affinity, affiliation,” and general social recruitment (DeMello 2000, Sanders 1988, Vail 1999). In other words, having tattooed friends strongly influences the decision to get tattooed, and is crucial to becoming a “collector” (Vail 1999). Media outlets such as blogs and magazine that focus on tattooing help establish and guide the discourse of tattooed persons, shape their preferences, and create among them a sense of community. This consequentially allows them to bolster their sense of identity and view themselves as “tattooed persons” (DeMello 2000, Velliquette 2006). Furthermore, events such as tattoo conventions allow tattooed persons to “learn how to become collectors” by helping them evaluate skill, develop preferences and establish rapport with other tattooed persons (Vail 1999). Overall, the tattooed collective is a diverse and fragmented bunch, but promoting communication and establishing social connections between
these individuals and helps them learn about and internalize the values that transform them into “tattooed persons” (Sanders 1999, DeMello 2000).

Some design choices - particularly those based in corporate imagery - reflect the attempt to both express individuality and identity with a particular group (Orend and Gangé 2005). In many cases, the images themselves represent a corporate philosophy such as perseverance, strength or determination (McClaren and Torchinsky 2009, Orend and Gangé 2005). Displaying a Nike symbol on one’s ankle, for example, does more than assert a penchant for athletics. It also serves as a means of personally connecting with others who recognize the Nike logo and share the values it embodies. Advertisers themselves feed upon this phenomenon by developing brands that are “personified,” almost human, and create for the consumer “faux needs” and the desire to adopt the characteristics they symbolize (Orend and Gangé 2005, McClaren and Torchinsky 2009). Furthermore, they have helped to integrate inclinations toward tattooing into mainstream culture by highlighting tattooed celebrities. Famous actors, athletes and musicians represent the brand and serve as the advertisement. Their choice of bodily decoration - tattoos included - serve as an indicator of the qualities on which the company’s reputation stands.

With this information in mind, one can see that the postmodern tattooee belongs to an ironic collectivity in which the primary objective is to assert individuality through a shared practice. Though all share a mutual appreciation for the art itself and many heavily adorned individuals label him or herself as “tattooed person[s]” (Sanders 1989) the impetus to get a tattoo stems from a multiplicity of individual factors such
as hobbies, interests, spiritual leanings, or important persons and events in one’s life (Orend and Gangé 2009). Even tattoo artists themselves, though varied in their methodologies and perspectives toward the art, nonetheless identify themselves as members of the tattoo “collectivity” - a term used by Wicks and Grandy (2007) to mean “a collection of bodies (people) that represent a structure around which borders can be drawn” that provides a “theme, category, or framework for analysis” (351). Thus, despite tendencies toward specialization, the tattoo community can be studied as a whole.

Overall, tattooing anchors the self in two ways. It is a form of “voluntary stigma” and “mutual accessibility” that allow the user to simultaneously exhibit personal expression and find group acceptance (Sanders 1988). Though their design choices and motivations differ, they recognize one another as belonging to a group. As members of a “collectivity,” tattooees share the ritual and feeling of dedication that accompanies getting inked (Wicks and Grandy 2007). Secondly, tattoo design choice can serve as a means of symbolically displaying one’s values, experiences and beliefs. Sporting a tattoo allows the wearer to make a permanent (and often public) declaration of self amidst ever-changing social demands. In this way, they remedy the “fragmentation, complexity, mutability and disassociation” of postmodern life by satiating the need for “stability, predictability, permanence and identity” in an increasingly uncertain world (Velliqette et al. 2006).
IV. LOOKING AT THE NUMBERS

The following section of this study analyzes data from a survey regarding self-perception and tattooing in order to further examine the link between tattooing and postmodern identity expression. Based on the theoretical cross-comparison between the sociocultural significance of tattooing and changing notions of the self in the postmodern era found in sections I through III, this study expects to note several themes: the relative popularity of tattooing among young individuals with high economic and/or social capital, a trend toward personal significance in regards to design choice among those who have tattoos, general acceptance of tattooing among non-tattooed persons, and a lack of connection between tattoo wearing and deviant activity. If assumptions from the previous section are correct, then tattooed respondents should suit the profile of someone who experiences a crisis of identity due to excessive social involvement associated with a postmodern lifestyle and feels inclined to anchor his or her sense of self in other ways. We expect them to be socially active, non-deviant individuals who report a weak sense of self and community. Similarly, we expect non-tattooed persons to by sympathetic to motivations behind tattooing and perhaps even consider getting their own sometime in the future.

Data for this study was collected among Ohio University students and Athens community members through September and October of 2010. The questionnaire itself was created through SurveyMonkey and was distributed through the Ohio University student graduate and undergraduate listerve and was received by
approximately 20,000 individuals. In addition to this, fliers advertising the objectives of the study and survey URL were posted in public gathering places around the Athens community in an effort to diversify the overwhelmingly college-oriented respondent pool. Because owning a tattoo elicits stigmatized responses in some social contexts, it is important that respondents feel as comfortable and secure in order to ensure honesty, candid responses. In light of this, all responses were entirely anonymous and participation was optional. No questions required respondents to offer identifying information such as name, current age, email or gender. Additionally, the survey did not track the IP address of the respondent, leaving it impossible to implicitly determine their identities.

Survey design facilitates mathematical comparison between factors regarding perceptions of tattoos as marks of stigma, personal justifications behind getting tattoos, perceptions of tattoos by non-tattooed respondents, and choice of tattoo design in conjunction with socioeconomic characteristics, histories of deviant activity, and subjective measures of social and economic capital. By doing so, it offers qualitative evidence that concretely elaborates on theoretical propositions raised in the first portion of the study. Furthermore, the addition of statistical measurements regarding the relationship between identity and tattoo wearing in the postmodern era distinguishes this study from similar contributions within this strain. By comparing respective levels of social interconnectivity and wealth between tattooed and non-tattooed respondents it seeks to confirm that the postmodern tattooee does not get tattoos as a way of responding to marginalization. Tracking response frequency in
terms of perceptions of the appearance and rationale behind tattooing attempts to confirm that postmodern tattooees use their body art as a means of self expression.

Though some may argue that using a respondent pool composed primarily of university students will yield biased results, the characteristics of this pool suit the needs of this study. College educated individuals or those who are currently in college are generally characterized by high social capital, both in terms of their connections to professional and education opportunities and their personal or family finances (Lopez and Stack 2001). Studies show that although the cost of tuition has increased in the past decade, the per capita income of students entering college has increased steadily as well, indicating that many students’ families still view college as an affordable option ("Higher Education Landscape", www.collegeboard.com). Fiscal advantages aside, college campuses are characterized by high levels of social immersion. Universities promote involvement with student organizations - Ohio University alone offers approximately forty-six school-sponsored groups for students. Living communally in dormitories forces students to interact with peers on a near constant basis. In addition to this, many students use virtual platforms such as Facebook as a means of augmenting their existing social networks. The sum of these pressures results in an environment in which residents are compelled to adapt his or her behavior and persona to an large number of social groups, which models the preconditions of "multiphrenia," as described by postmodern social theorists (Gergen 1991). However, despite the efficacy of using students as a primary respondent base, the survey was
also advertised at high traffic public locations around Athens in order to broaden the response base.

The first section filters participants into those who currently own or have owned tattoos in the past and those who do not own tattoos. The second section asks tattooed persons to answer a series of questions regarding his or her personal justifications for the act of tattooing, the meaning behind the design choice, the relative importance of aesthetics and symbolism in regards to tattooing, and the affect that his or her tattoo has on personal confidence and security. The third section queries those without tattoos regarding whether or not he or she possesses other forms of body modification, his or her perceptions of tattooed individuals, and specific personal aversions and/or attractions to tattooing. Within sections two and three, both groups are also asked to answer questions regarding his or her perceived strength of self and community. In the fourth section, participants offer demographic info such as yearly income, education level and approximate friend network size in order to provide a brief illustration of his or her level of social capital. In addition to this, all respondents were asked to answer a series of questions regarding his or her past deviant activity (felonies, misdemeanors, drug use, etc). This information will provide all the background necessary to test the validity of conclusions drawn in the theory-based portion of the study.

The majority of questions regarding tattoo related decisions and perceptions of tattooing ask respondents to rank responses from one to six according to the following scale:
1 = Strongly agree
2 = Agree
3 = Neutral
4 = Disagree
5 = Strongly disagree
6 = No response

An examination of response frequency was performed on these questions in order to illustrate trends perception of tattooing and its relation to identity development among tattooed and non-tattooed persons. Questions regarding social and economic and social capital are multiple choice and ordinal. Data collected from these questions was compared with whether or not the individual has a tattoo using a chi-squared test of association in order to determine the existence of a relationship between these two variables. The details of the relationship were examined through frequency distributions. Perceived strength of self and community and its relation to tattooing involved a categorical/quantitative relationship. An independent sample t-test was used for analysis. Frequency distributions provided an illustration of opinions on the aesthetic and personal significance of tattooing among tattooed and non-tattooed respondents. Questions regarding past deviant activity are bivariate and formatted with yes-no responses. A chi squared test of association was also performed to determine the existence of a relationship between tattooing and deviant activity. To view the survey in full, see Appendix A.
Once collected, responses from the survey were downloaded from the distribution service- SurveyMonkey - and cleaned for use. Open ended responses were transformed into their numeric equivalent for greater ease of use. Because tattooed and non-tattooed respondents were asked questions regarding deviant activity through separate survey modules, responses were combined into one column per question within the response sheet. The data was then uploaded into R and examined. See Appendix B for the full syntax of the analysis.

To recap the hypotheses, this analysis seeks to support the hypothesis that that the postmodern tattooee is generally a young adult, non-deviant, enjoys high social and/or economic capital, and uses tattoos as a form of identity expression rather than self marginalization. It quantitatively tests for the existence of a relationship between reported levels of social and economic capital and whether or not the respondent is tattooed. Using frequency distributions, it examines whether individuals feel their designs are personally salient and whether non-tattooed persons view the practice negatively or sympathetically. It compares tattooed and non-tattooed respondents in terms of their perceived sense of self and strength of community. Additionally, it tests for a potential relationship (or lack thereof) between whether or not an individual is tattooed and his or her inclination toward deviant activity. Details and results of this exploration are found in the subsequent paragraphs.

Analyzing the results offers us a picture of the respondent base (N=2019) to help illustrate theoretical points previously made. According to these findings, 35.3% of respondents report having or having had a tattoo, whereas 64.3% claim they have
never been tattooed (see Figure 1). This number is remarkably high compared to the national average of 24% of individuals reporting having tattoos (http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16908345). Considered in conjunction with the fact that the vast majority of respondents for this survey are Ohio University students - the majority of whom are undergraduates and range between the ages of 18 and 22 - one can conclude by inference that the younger individuals are more likely than to be tattooed than the rest of the population. Looking further into the data (see Figure 2) reveals that approximately 35% of respondents got his or her tattoo at or below the age of 25, with 6% claiming to have been tattooed before the age of 18 – a statistic made remarkable by the fact that parental permission is required to get a tattoo preceding entry into legal adulthood (age 18 in the state of Ohio). This corresponds with the hypothesis that the emergence of tattooing as a form of socially acceptable self-expression is a relatively new topic, and that because of this most tattooees are of a younger generation. Older groups are rapidly adopting the trend as well, although they remain fewer in number (Cullerton 2005). Nevertheless, the youth remains more oriented toward conformity, more likely to adopt emergent trends (Gavin and Furman 1989). They therefore compose the majority of the tattooed community in the postmodern era.
Looking at the respective incomes and friend networks of tattooed versus non-tattooed persons helps paint an insightful illustration of the postmodern tattooed individual. To create this picture, a series of chi squared tests of association were performed in order to look for relationships between whether or not the respondent has...
a tattoo and his or her reported levels of social and economic capital. In terms of economic capital, there appears to be no significant distinction between tattooed and non-tattooed individuals in terms of either personal household income (N=1809, X²=4.18, df=4 p=0.382) or parents’ household income (N=1767, X²=5.489, df=4 p=0.241). Examining these groups’ respective levels of social capital yields an even more interesting picture. In terms of their real life social networks, they are apparently equally connected. We note no significant difference between the number of friends claimed by tattooed persons and non-tattooed persons (N=1844, X²=2.581, df=4, p=0.474, respectively), nor do we see a significant difference between the number of people with whom they claim to communicate regularly (N=1840, X²=7.354, df=3, p=0.474). Even the number of clubs and civic associations with which each group claims to be involved is approximately the same as well (N=1847, X²=8.757, df=4, p=0.062).

Despite these similarities, the data suggests the presence of a relationship between whether or not an individual is tattooed and his or her inclination toward maintaining virtual social ties. An examination of Facebook network size suggests a significant divergence between the groups (N=1829, X²=11.263, df=4, p<0.05), as does the number of people with whom individuals claim to communicate regularly within his or her Facebook network (N=1828, X²=25.123, df=3, p<0.05). For the purpose of this examination, network size was standardized to four categories: Below 50, 51 to 150, 151 to 250, 251 to 500, and above 500. Breaking these categories down into frequency distributions (see Tables 1 and 2) reveals that tattooed persons, though smaller in number, are proportionally more likely to be more socially interconnected online.
Whereas 36% of tattooed individuals claimed the largest possible network size (above 500), only 29% of their non-tattooed counterparts did the same. In terms of communication, group size was divided into four categories: “five or fewer,” “6 to 10,” “11 to 20,” and “more than 20.” Similar to the previous question, the majority of individuals who responded “20 or more” (74%) were tattooed.

**Table 1:** Facebook network size breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your Facebook network size?</th>
<th>0-50</th>
<th>51-150</th>
<th>151-250</th>
<th>251-500</th>
<th>500+</th>
<th>Row Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tattooed Frequency</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tattooed Row %</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tattooed Column %</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Tattooed Frequency</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>1173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Tattooed Row %</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Tattooed Column %</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column Totals</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>606</td>
<td>614</td>
<td>1829</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2:** Facebook communication breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>With how many of your Facebook friends do you communicate frequently?</th>
<th>≤5</th>
<th>6 to 10</th>
<th>11 to 20</th>
<th>20+</th>
<th>Row Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tattooed Frequency</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tattooed Row %</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tattooed Column %</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Tattooed Frequency</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>1173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Tattooed Column %</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Tattooed Row %</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column Totals</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>1827</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tattooed and non-tattooed respondents were asked a series of questions concerning his or her level of personal and interpersonal stability. An independent sample t-test concluded no connection between the perceived strength of friend and family support and whether or not the respondent had tattoos (see Table 3). There was, however, a significant relationship between the strength of an individual’s sense of self and whether or not he or she owns a tattoo ($t = -9.193$, $df = 2450.92$, $p<0.05$),
as well as between his or her sense of community and whether or not he or she is tattooed ($t = -13.718$, df = 2396.996, $p<0.05$). Interestingly, examining the respective means of tattooed and non-tattooed respondents indicates that tattooees are in fact more secure in their perceptions of self and community strength. When asked to rank their level of agreement in regards to the statement “I have a strong sense of self” (see Appendix A for description of scoring the scale) the mean score for tattooees was lower than that of their tattooed counterparts. A similar phenomenon occurred regarding the perceived strength of their broader community. As hypothesized in the previous section, the postmodern tattooee decorates his or her body as a form of identity anchoring. One can speculate that those who have tattoos enjoy a more stable feeling of self due to the presence of their concrete identity indicators. People choose designs based on life experience, individual interest, and religion, and they carry these indicators around with them as an ever-present reminder of their core selves (Sweetman 1999).

Table 3: Perceived strength of self and social networks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>T-score</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>Tattoo/Non-Tattoo</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have a strong friend/family network</td>
<td>-0.680</td>
<td>0.497</td>
<td>Tattooed</td>
<td>1.593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-tattooed</td>
<td>1.708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a strong sense of self</td>
<td>-9.913</td>
<td>&lt;0.05</td>
<td>Tattooed</td>
<td>1.817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-tattooed</td>
<td>1.982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I live in a strong community</td>
<td>-13.718</td>
<td>&lt;0.05</td>
<td>Tattooed</td>
<td>2.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-tattooed</td>
<td>2.119</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In accordance with the hypothesis proposed in the first section, the postmodern tattooee generally considers his or her tattoo personally salient and representative of his or her core being. In order to test this idea, tattooed respondents were asked a
series of questions regarding the meaning of his or her tattoo and asked to respond to each on a six-point scale of agreement. A significant portion of tattooed respondents (66%) claim that his or her tattoo memorialized an important person or place (Figure 3). Approximately half of them (50%) report having chosen a tattoo design that reflects his or her personal interest (Figure 4). Most (52%) did not worry about the cost of his or her tattooed, and over half (54%) researched tattoo shops extensively before deciding on one to patronize. The vast majority (92%) report feeling happy and satisfied with the decision to get a tattoo. These figures illustrate that the modern tattooee is more concerned with the meaning and design of his or her tattoo, rather than the general aesthetic of being tattooed. Most are willing to put forth significant effort to find a reputable artist and “invest” in the personal statement that his or her tattoo makes.

**Figure 3: Tattoo reflects important person or place**
Non-tattooed respondents appear to be sympathetic to the view that tattoos serve as an assertion of self. When questioned about their opinions on tattooing, approximately equivalent proportions expressed interest and disinterest in the possibility of someday getting a tattoo (37% and 38%, respectively). See Figure 5 for a breakdown of the results. The majority (81%) answered that any tattoos he or she may get in the future would have to mean something significant. Positive attitudes toward the aesthetic of tattooing, the division between those who do agree that “tattoos often look nice” (31%) and those who express a contradictory viewpoint (35%) is surprisingly small. The majority of respondents (55%) do not view getting a tattoo as an irresponsible act. Nearly half (45%) do not feel that tattoos reflect poorly on the wearer (as opposed to 20% who do hold this opinion). Clearly, traditional perceptions
of tattooing as an act of social rebellion are becoming antiquated in the postmodern world. Interpretations of what it means to be a tattooed person are changing in accordance with interpretations of what it means to be a person at all. It is important to note, however, that the majority of respondents for this study fit the proposed profile for the postmodern tattooee, and for this reason may not represent the opinions of a wider audience with great accuracy. Nonetheless, they are of a younger generation and appear to represent a changing collective mentality that accepts tattooing as a legitimate form of identity expression rather than social rebellion.

**Figure 5: Interested in getting a tattoo**

In regards to the relationship between tattooing and deviance, the survey data appear to contradict the argument made in the previous section. There is a relationship between tattooing and the performance of misdemeanors ($X^2 = 5.241$, df = 1, $p < 0.05$), felonies ($X^2 = 4.305$, df = 1, $p < 0.05$), the usage of illegal substances ($X^2 = 9.0583$, df
= 1, p <0.05), and a tendency toward sexual risk-taking ($X^2 = 17.132, df = 1, p<0.05$).

There is not, however, any link between tattooing and heavy drinking – classified according to the questionnaire as consuming two or more drinks per day ($X^2 = 0.353, df = 1, p= 0.552$) - although this may be attributable to the abundance of student respondents prevalence of alcohol abuse on college campus. These results offer a surprising contrast to the declaration that tattooing has been incorrectly identified as an inherently deviant activity and that favorable perceptions of the practice are now the norm. Instead, it suggests a mild but detectable connection between tattooing and rebellion. See Tables 4 and 5 for sample frequency breakdowns of responses from tattooed and non-tattooed responses.

**Table 4**: Tattooing vs. felony breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have you ever been committed of a felony?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Row Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tattooed</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>665</td>
<td>667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column %</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Row %</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>98</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Tattooed</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1226</td>
<td>1234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column %</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Row %</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 5**: Tattooing vs. substance use breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you regularly use marijuana or other illegal substances?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Row Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tattooed</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column %</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Row %</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Tattooed</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>1046</td>
<td>1231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column %</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Row %</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20 1891 1901

323 1579 1902
Although the statistical illustration described above conflicts with statements made in the previous section regarding deviant perceptions of tattooing as antiquated, there are possible explanations for it. It may, for example, reveal that althoughattooees are not inherently deviant, they are pushed toward acts of deviance through the rejection of others. Despite its growing social acceptance, there nonetheless exists a stigma against tattooed persons - a stigma that places them at the margins of society. The idea of the “self-fulfilling prophesy” - the idea that if an individual defines a situation as real, he or she is more likely to make the situation real in its consequences (Merton 1948). As mentioned in the second section of the study, the justifications behind the historic stigmatization against tattooing are numerous and ever-present. It could then be argued thatattooees recognize this stigma and react to it by living out the expectation associated with deviance. Perhaps due to differences technology usage, there exists a generational divide in the impact of postmodern changes. Overall, though there exists a connection between tattooing and risky and/or criminal behavior, tattooing itself is not a characteristic of the deviant activities. The behavior is instead caused by an internalized reaction against being negatively evaluated as a tattooed person. Further discussion of this apparent theoretical disconnect appears in the following section.
V. BRINGING IT TOGETHER

“No one else in the world has an arm that looks like mine”

- Anonymous interviewee (Sanders 1989)

This study seeks to examine tattooing as a form of legitimate identity expression in the postmodern era. It first provides a brief history of tattooing in Western culture, followed by a general analysis of self-presentation in the context of society. It then critically examines historical associations between tattooing and social deviance by discussing the rationale behind tattooing in prison communities, tattooing as a form of self-mutilation and more. Ultimately, it argues that tattooed individuals are not inherently deviant but do have a tendency to marginalize themselves based on unfounded associations between tattooing and socially undesirable behavior. Given this theoretical exposition it explains fundamental social shifts in the postmodern world and proposes that tattooees may use body modification as a form of identity anchoring in a world characterized by rapidly changing boundaries and norms. As stated by Pitts (2003), bodies are “spaces where identities are continually acted” (43). Therefore, when faced with conflicting and ambiguous social pressures, individuals may claim stability and control over their identities by marking their bodies. The most extreme and permanent way in which they can do so is through tattooing, and increasingly many are choosing this solution.

The second portion of the study uses data collected from Ohio University students and Athens community members to create a quantitative illustration of the typical postmodern tattooee. An anonymous electronic survey gathered responses
about participants’ justifications for having or not having tattoos, opinions on tattooing, history of deviant activity and the richness of his or her social and economic capital. Analyzing the responses allows us to develop an illustration of the postmodern tattooee which elaborates on theoretical claims made in the first section. Overall, this information seeks to empirically answer several questions. First, is there a relationship between tattooing and social or economic capital? Do tattooees occupy a lower socioeconomic status than non-tattooed persons? Are they loners or do they boast a high level of social connectivity? Second, do tattooees and non-tattooed persons differ in terms of their perceived strength of self and community? Do tattooees sense great personal instability and choose to mark their bodies as a way of anchoring themselves? Thirdly, is there a connection between tattooing and deviant activity? Do tattooed persons have a tendency to feel marginalized and act out? Finally, what are both groups’ opinions on tattooing? Is it important that an individual’s tattoos have personal meaning? Do non-tattooed persons have a negative opinion of the practice? The results of these inquiries and their implications are discussed in the following paragraphs.

In terms of social and economic capital, there seems to be no significant difference between tattooed and non-tattooed persons. According to the survey, these groups do not perceptibly differ in terms of parents’ income or personal income. However, these results may be weighted by the abundance of college students surveyed - all of who occupy a relatively homogeneous and comfortable socioeconomic standing ("Higher Education Landscape", www.collegeboard.com).
This relatively high level of economic standing among tattooed respondents provides important empirical support for two points proposed earlier. Firstly, it is apparent that popular opinions regarding tattooing are changing on a collective level because those who occupy the top of and exert control over the “social scaffold” are the ones who are getting tattoos (Goffman 1959). Secondly, because wealthier individuals enjoy greater access to information-laden, instantaneous online media outlets it stands to reason that well-off tattooed persons learned from these sources that tattooing is a legitimate and attractive form of identity expression.

Both groups also report roughly equivalent levels of interpersonal interconnectedness. When asked how many people they consider close friends and, among these individuals, with how many do they communicate with on a regular basis, both groups offered a similar response. This information strongly supports the theory suggested earlier in the study that tattooing is no longer characteristic of socially deviant. It stands in contrast to previous examinations of the practice as a tool for those who feel “encroached upon” and wish to differentiate themselves from society at large (Koch 2009). Instead, these finding imply that tattooees are not marginalized and outcast from society. They have the same number of friends and come from similar socioeconomic backgrounds. The very fact that college students - the group which composes the majority of the respondent base - exceeds the national average in terms of tattoo consumption shows that the postmodern tattooee does not occupy the fringes of society. They are subject to the same social benefits and pressures that their non-tattooed peers experience.
As stated previously, this study expected to find a connection between personal instability and tattooing. Theoretical findings contained in the first portion of the study suggest that those who have tattoos would also report having a weaker sense of self. The tattoo itself, it inferred, was an external reaction to an internal crisis of identity. This hypothesis, however, fails to take into consideration causality when empirically reporting measures of self-assurance. Contrary to what was proposed, tattooeees report having a markedly stronger sense of self than their non-tattooed counterparts. Rather than disproving assumptions about tattooing and identity, this finding points to the notion that those who have tattoos have the advantage of carrying a built-in identity anchor. The reason they report higher levels of self-esteem could be because they have found a material crutch for their otherwise unstable identities. In accordance with what Shilling (1993) described as the “unprecedented individualization” of the “uncertain body,” the postmodern tattooee uses his or her tattoo as a means of dealing with the “doubts, uncertainties and anxieties” of the postmodern world. What is shown by this survey may be the aftereffects rather than the antecedents of getting a tattoo.

Reports of online connectivity among tattooed persons proportionally exceeds that of their non-tattooed counterparts, despite having approximately equal levels of social capital in real life. This trend helps solidify the link between tattooing as an act of resistance against postmodernity, as the development of online social relationships is a clear indicator of the ambiguity of postmodern life. Clearly, tattooeees place more emphasis on cultivating a vibrant virtual social life, which requires them to develop
and maintain a far greater number of identities than their non-tattooed counterparts. Likewise, they are not, as has previously been assumed, social deviants who devalue and reject relationships with others. They do not exist on the margins of society. Instead, they excel in developing relationships with others, although many of these relationships involve navigating the uncertainty and anonymity of online life. Unfortunately, this particular strength makes them feel more socially conflicted and unsure about their own identities and more inclined to use alternative means of declaring a sense of self. As argued in the previous section, tattooing serves as a form of identity anchoring for those who harbor an unstable perception of self due to a high volume of conflicting social demands.

Findings on tattooing and social network use, coupled with indications of a generational divide in online activity represents how older and younger groups experience the pressures of postmodernity in different ways. Being connected online imposes a new breed of social pressure and reflects the changing meaning of what it is to be “social” in the postmodern era. It is easy to develop a great number of identities in an online space, but the maintenance of these multiple selves exacerbates feelings of “multiphrenia,” or “the splitting of the individual into a multiplicity of self-investments” (Gergen 1991: 74). Because of their remoteness and social anonymity, they employ what Baumund (2000) identifies as the three main obstacles of postmodernity: uncertainty, continuous risk and shifting trust. Put simply, Developing an online identity is as quick and simple as registering an email address. Maintaining this identity and determining the appropriate level of self-disclosure and interpersonal
trust for the environment ushers in a wave of effort and uncertainty. Based on this one can infer that those who use online social media more frequently – namely, those of younger generations - are more likely to feel the pressures of postmodernity more intensely and experience the “social saturation” described by Gergen (2007).

Information regarding the connection between online activity and tattooing may provide the most viable explanation for why tattooed people report higher levels of social deviance than their non-tattooed counterparts. Although tattooees are well accepted by their peers, they nonetheless experience rejection from those of older generations who do no experience the pressures of postmodernity in the same way. Although tattooing has experienced a collective surge in acceptance and popularity beginning with the so-called tattoo revolution in the latter portion of the twentieth century, stigmatization against the practice nonetheless lingers. Whether it’s due to the misconception that tattooing is a dirty and unregulated business (Sanders 1989), or whether it’s because of a belief that focusing one’s attention on the body means that one is neglecting the mind (Budgeon 2003, Sanders 1989), marginalizing those with tattoos is nonetheless common among those who fail to view them as identity anchors. This sense of rejection may account for their apparent tendency toward antisocial behavior. When an individual is labeled as deviant or undesirable, he or she is more likely to internalize the labels and believe this perspective and therefore more likely to make it come true (Merton 1948). The postmodern tattooee may embody this very concept.
Results from the survey suggest that the postmodern tattooee does in some ways fit the illustration developed through a cross-comparative examination self-presentation, embodied sociology and the pressures of postmodernity. He or she is younger, comes from a relatively affluent background and enjoys liberal wealth still. They are highly socially integrated both online and in real life. Overall, they are not the deviant outcasts described by studies such as Koch et al. (2009) and Nathanson et al. (2006). Their high levels of social and economic capital afford them exposure to media outlets that portray tattoos as quasi-fashionable, attractive, legitimate forms of self-expression. Additionally, their unprecedentedly frequent social interaction and development of multiple personas causes them to question their core selves. Information regarding online social activity provides the strongest example of this notion, as the ease and convenience of developing virtual relationships means that individuals find themselves managing a multiplicity of identities and consequentially questioning their stability of self. In regards to reported feelings of stability in terms of their selves and their relationships, initial hypotheses failed to consider causality and for this reason the data posed a contradiction. What can be determined statistically is that tattooed persons perceive themselves as more secure in their sense of self and the strength of their social networks because they have already found a means of anchoring themselves. Their tattoos serve as constant visual reminders of the persons, places, and beliefs that make them who they are.

Though it is among the most extreme forms of expression, body modification is not limited to tattooing alone. Other forms of conscious physical alteration include
piercing, scarification, tooth filing, micro dermal or transdermal implants. Even anorexia, bulimia and cutting may fall under this category, as these measures of extreme bodily maintenance also represent an effort to command control over the body (Featherstone 1999). Further investigations into the connection between body modification and postmodern identity expression may want to look at these practices as a means of asserting one’s identity in the postmodern era. Perhaps reclaiming the self does not necessitate a manifestation as concrete and illustrative as tattooing. Noting a significant increase alternative body modification practices in the past couple of decades would support the idea that the postmodern tattooee views “getting inked” as a means of regaining control over their fragmented selves. Although the subject of the wearer’s tattoo often serves to illustrate his or her interests and beliefs, linking other forms of body modification to postmodernity may indicate that the practice of altering the body transcends the importance of the design itself.

This study incites further investigation into the potential for generational differences in the way individuals experience the pressures of postmodernity. Theoretical hypotheses regarding the connection between tattooing and deviance appear incongruous with survey measurements regarding tattooing. It could be that tattooees are acting out against lingering stigmas against the practice. As noted earlier in the study, stigma against tattooing has several fundamental bases. Firstly, there is the association with needle usage and disease that stems from the early days of electric tattoo machine usage. Secondly, prisoners and other marginalized groups often use bodily markings as a way of proclaiming solidarity and regaining control over the self.
Finally, there exists in western culture an emphasis on Cartesian duality, in which individuals who place excessive emphasis on physical pleasures or bodily decoration are seen as unenlightened (Budgeon 2003, Sanders 1989). In place this, individuals are encouraged to transcend physical needs and search for intellectual and spiritual satisfaction. Alternatively, this statistical discrepancy may be explained by a generational difference in the way individuals experience postmodern pressures. Online social activity is a major contributing factor in the development of a fragmented sense of self. Developing online profile is as simple as registering an email address, but maintaining these virtual identities requires significant time and interpersonal effort. The use is required to constantly reevaluate socially unprecedented online spaces and determine the appropriate norms or behavior for the given situation. On a related note, it is clear that that younger generations are more apt to spend more time online and develop virtual social connections (Lenhart et al. 2010). Further investigation could be conducted to confirm the idea that older and younger generations perceive and react to postmodern pressure in unique ways.

Because women face unique challenges in regards to perpetuated stigmatization against tattooing, father studies may be conducted to examine gendered differences behind the motives for tattooing in the postmodern era. It is possible that women continue to feel this stigma and are more hesitant to get tattoos for fear of marring their beauty and rendering themselves undesirable. However, open discussion of women’s issues such as sexual harassment and equal pay have enticed women in the late twentieth to assert self-ownership through body modification (Pitts 2003,
By marking their bodies in what is traditionally an unattractive way they reject subjugation and objectification and asset gender equity. Similarly, women sometimes tattoo their bodies as a means of “controlling pain” or asserting power after experiencing sexual assault (Jeffries 2000). Overall, women often use tattoos as a means of “exploring new possibilities for gender [and] sexuality” (Pitts 2003: 14). For this reason, they may be more inclined than their male counterparts to get tattoos and to choose personally and emotionally salient designs.

Among this study’s primary restrictions is its limited respondent base. College students provide a good representation of the postmodern condition due to their high levels of social capital and consequential need develop multiple identities in order to keep up with interpersonal and professional demands. Nonetheless, further studies may be conducted in order to examine tattooing from a broader perspective. It is possible that different demographic factors may yield different results in terms of the importance of tattooing as a form of identity expression. Perhaps groups with diminished access to Internet and media outlets such as the underclass or the elderly would report a lesser connection between the importance of design choice to individual preferences. Without the increased pathways of communication and exposure to a bombarding array of thoughts and perspectives associated with the postmodern dependence on technology, it’s possible that these groups would not develop an intense crisis of self. Likewise, living in a community with limited social and physical mobility may preserve the importance of community in developing a sense of self. Future studies may investigate similar connections between tattooing
and identity expression, though they may want to draw from a larger and more diverse respondent pool.

Overall, the changing social environment identified as postmodernity requires that sociologists take another look at the social meaning behind tattoos. As described by Velliquette (2006), “Tattooing has been studied from a sociological perspective as deviant social behavior, from an anthropological perspective as a mark of civilization, from a cultural perspective as a mediator of class dynamics, and from a historical perspective with an emphasis on the various roles that body adornment has played in society” (35). This study builds upon examinations of the practice from these standpoints and examines how it relates to parallel social trends. Focusing specifically on changes associated with the postmodern era, it seeks to examine how increased communication has altered perceptions of body modification. In doing so, examines tattooing from an individualized, identity-based standpoint and as component of consumer culture shaped by changing social tides. It links ideas of body, identity, and social influence and looks at how modification of the self through emergent technologies and has manifested itself physically (Featherstone 1999).

The postmodern tattoo artist does more than fill stencils on flesh. He or she etches identities, memories, and selves into the skins of the customers. Wearing a tattoo is, in essence, wearing your life as a sleeve. As described previously, the postmodern era is characterized by near constant re-adaptation, social saturation, and maintenance of a malleable, shifting persona. The advent of virtual communication has obscured the importance of community support in identity development, forcing
individuals to find new ways of asserting who he or she is. Tattoos, in this context, embody the persons, places and memories that shape the individual and provide a sense of wholeness and stability amid ever-changing social ties. Their purpose is summarized best by one anonymous tattooee quoted in Sanders (1989), “In the future when I'm sitting around and bored with my life and I wonder if I was ever young once and did exciting things, I can look at the tattoo and remember” (52). Tattoos are more than pictures – they are lives and identities that are symbolically manifested in visible forms.
References


Cesare 69


Lenhart, Amanda, Kristen Purcell, Aaron Smith and Kathryn Zickuhr. 2010. “Social Media and Mobile Internet Use Among Teens and Young Adults.” *Pew Research Center: Pew Internet & American Life Project*.


Vail, Angus. 1999 “Tattoos are Like Potato Chips…You Can’t have Just One: The process of becoming and being a collector” *Deviant Behavior: An interdisciplinary journal* 20:253-73

70.


Appendix A: Survey Design

1. Have you ever owned tattoos? (Q1.EverHadTattoo)
   a. Yes = 1
   b. No = 2

2. If yes, how many? (Q2.HowManyTattoos)
   a. None = 1
   b. 1 to 3 = 2
   c. 4 to 10 = 3
   d. 10 to 20 = 4
   e. More than 20 = 5

3. Have you had your tattoo removed? (Q3.HadTattooRemoved)
   a. Yes = 1
   b. No = 2

4. How old were you when you got your first tattoo? (Q4.AgeGotTattoo)
   a. Younger than 18 = 1
   b. 18 to 35 = 2
   c. 25 to 25 = 3
   d. 35 to 50 = 4
   e. Older than 50 = 5
   f. I don’t have a tattoo = 6

5. Do you have any other forms of body modification? (Q5A.OtherBodyMod)
   a. Yes = 1
   b. No = 2

6. If yes, how many? Please do not spell out the number. = Open ended
   (Q5B.HowManyMod, Q5C.HowManyModCorrect)

7. My tattoo reflects my religious/spiritual beliefs
   (Q6A.TattooReflectsSpiritualBeliefs)
   a. 1 (strongly agree)
   b. 2 (agree)
   c. 3 (neutral)
d. 4 (disagree)
e. 5 (strongly disagree)
f. 6 (prefer not to answer)

8. I got my tattoo to remind me of a special person/place/event in my life (Q6.TattooReflectsPersonPlace)
   a. 1 (strongly agree)
   b. 2 (agree)
   c. 3 (neutral)
   d. 4 (disagree)
   e. 5 (strongly disagree)
   f. 6 (prefer not to answer)

9. My tattoo reflects my personal interests (Q7.TattooReflectsInterests)
   a. 1 (strongly agree)
   b. 2 (agree)
   c. 3 (neutral)
   d. 4 (disagree)
   e. 5 (strongly disagree)
   f. 6 (prefer not to answer)

10. The main reason I got my tattoo was because I find the design attractive (Q8.AttractivenessMostImportant)
    a. 1 (strongly agree)
    b. 2 (agree)
    c. 3 (neutral)
    d. 4 (disagree)
    e. 5 (strongly disagree)
    f. 6 (prefer not to answer)

11. It’s important to me that others know what my tattoo means (Q9.OthersShouldKnowMeaning)
    a. 1 (strongly agree)
    b. 2 (agree)
    c. 3 (neutral)
    d. 4 (disagree)
    e. 5 (strongly disagree)
    f. 6 (prefer not to answer)

12. I didn’t worry about the price of my tattoo (Q10.PriceIsNoConcern)
13. I researched tattoo shops extensively before deciding on one (Q11.ResearchedShops)
   a. 1 (strongly agree)
   b. 2 (agree)
   c. 3 (neutral)
   d. 4 (disagree)
   e. 5 (strongly disagree)
   f. 6 (prefer not to answer)

14. I am happy with my decision to get a tattoo (Q12.GladGotTattoo)
   a. 1 (strongly agree)
   b. 2 (agree)
   c. 3 (neutral)
   d. 4 (disagree)
   e. 5 (strongly disagree)
   f. 6 (prefer not to answer)

15. My tattoo makes me feel better about myself (Q13.TattooBoostsEsteem)
   a. 1 (strongly agree)
   b. 2 (agree)
   c. 3 (neutral)
   d. 4 (disagree)
   e. 5 (strongly disagree)
   f. 6 (prefer not to answer)

16. I feel I have a strong sense of self (Q14.HaveStrongSenseOfSelfA)
   a. 1 (strongly agree)
   b. 2 (agree)
   c. 3 (neutral)
   d. 4 (disagree)
   e. 5 (strongly disagree)
   f. 6 (prefer not to answer)
17. I have a network of close friends and family I can rely on (Q15.StrongFriendFamilyNetworkA)
   a. 1 (strongly agree)
   b. 2 (agree)
   c. 3 (neutral)
   d. 4 (disagree)
   e. 5 (strongly disagree)
   f. 6 (prefer not to answer)

18. I feel like I live in a strong community (Q16.StrongCommunityA)
   a. 1 (strongly agree)
   b. 2 (agree)
   c. 3 (neutral)
   d. 4 (disagree)
   e. 5 (strongly disagree)
   f. 6 (prefer not to answer)

19. Do any of your family members of close friends have tattoos? (Q17.FriendsFamilyHaveTattoos)
   a. Yes = 1
   b. No = 2

20. If yes, how many? Please do not spell out the number. (open ended) (Q18.FriendsFamilyTattooNumber, Q18B.FriendsFamilyTattooNumberCorrect)

21. Have you ever committed a misdemeanor? (Q19.MisdemeanorA)
   a. Yes = 1
   b. No = 2

22. Have you ever been committed of a felony? (Q20.FelonyA)
   a. Yes = 1
   b. No = 2

23. Do you regularly use marijuana or other illegal substances? (Q21.SubstanceAbuseA)
   a. Yes = 1
   b. No = 2
24. Do you engage in “hooking up” culture? (Q22.HookingUpA)
   a. Yes = 1
   b. No = 2

25. Do you consume approximately two or more alcoholic beverages per day? (Q23.AlcoholAbuseA)
   a. Yes = 1
   b. No = 2

26. I am interested in getting a tattoo (Q24.InterestedInTattoos)
   a. 1 (strongly agree)
   b. 2 (agree)
   c. 3 (neutral)
   d. 4 (disagree)
   e. 5 (strongly disagree)
   f. 6 (prefer not to answer)

27. I think tattoos often look nice (Q25.TattoosLookNice)
   a. 1 (strongly agree)
   b. 2 (agree)
   c. 3 (neutral)
   d. 4 (disagree)
   e. 5 (strongly disagree)
   f. 6 (prefer not to answer)

28. If I got tattoo, it would have to mean something significant (Q26.TattooWouldHaveMeaning)
   a. 1 (strongly agree)
   b. 2 (agree)
   c. 3 (neutral)
   d. 4 (disagree)
   e. 5 (strongly disagree)
   f. 6 (prefer not to answer)

29. Getting a tattoo is irresponsible (Q27.TattooIsIrresponsible)
   a. 1 (strongly agree)
   b. 2 (agree)
   c. 3 (neutral)
   d. 4 (disagree)
   e. 5 (strongly disagree)
30. Tattoos reflect poorly on their wearers (Q28.TattoosReflectPoorly)
   a. 1 (strongly agree)
   b. 2 (agree)
   c. 3 (neutral)
   d. 4 (disagree)
   e. 5 (strongly disagree)
   f. 6 (prefer not to answer)

31. I have a strong sense of self (Q29.StrongSenseOfSelfB)
   a. 1 (strongly agree)
   b. 2 (agree)
   c. 3 (neutral)
   d. 4 (disagree)
   e. 5 (strongly disagree)
   f. 6 (prefer not to answer)

32. I have a network of close friends and family I can rely on (Q30.StrongFriendFamilyNetworkB)
   a. 1 (strongly agree)
   b. 2 (agree)
   c. 3 (neutral)
   d. 4 (disagree)
   e. 5 (strongly disagree)
   f. 6 (prefer not to answer)

33. I feel like I live in a strong community (Q31.StrongCommunityB)
   a. 1 (strongly agree)
   b. 2 (agree)
   c. 3 (neutral)
   d. 4 (disagree)
   e. 5 (strongly disagree)
   f. 6 (prefer not to answer)

34. Do any of your family members or close friends have tattoos? (Q32.FriendFamilyHaveTattoosB)
   a. Yes = 1
   b. No = 2
35. If yes, how many? (open ended response) (Q33.FriendFamilyTattooNumberB, Q33.FriendFamilyTattooNumberCorrectB)

36. Have you ever committed a misdemeanor? (Q34.MisdemeanorB)
   a. Yes = 1
   b. No = 2

37. Have you ever committed a felony? (Q35.FelonyB)
   a. Yes = 1
   b. No = 2

38. Do you regularly use marijuana or other illegal substances? (Q36.SubstanceAbuseB)
   a. Yes = 1
   b. No = 2

39. Do you engage in “hooking up” culture? (Q37.HookingUpB)
   a. Yes = 1
   b. No = 2

40. Do you consume two or more alcoholic beverages per day? (Q38.AlcoholAbuseB)
   a. Yes = 1
   b. No = 2

41. What is your yearly household income? (Q39.HouseholdIncome)
   a. Below $20,000 = 1
   b. $20,000 to $50,000 = 2
   c. $50,000 to $100,000 = 3
   d. $100,000 to $200,000 = 4
   e. $200,000 and above

42. For students only: what is your parents’ yearly household income? (Q40.ParentsIncome)
   a. Below $20,000 = 1
   b. $20,000 to $50,000 = 2
   c. $50,000 to $100,000 = 3
   d. $100,000 to $200,000 = 4
43. What is your highest level of education? (Q41.HighestEd)
   a. Less than high school = 1
   b. High school degree of equivalent = 2
   c. Two year associate’s degree = 3
   d. Some college = 4
   e. Bachelors degree = 5
   f. Graduate degree = 6

44. What is your mother’s highest level of education? (Q42.MothersEd)
   a. Less than high school = 1
   b. High school degree of equivalent = 2
   c. Two year associate’s degree = 3
   d. Some college = 4
   e. Bachelors degree = 5
   f. Graduate degree = 6

45. What is your father’s highest level of education? (Q43.FathersEd)
   a. Less than high school = 1
   b. High school degree of equivalent = 2
   c. Two year associate’s degree = 3
   d. Some college = 4
   e. Bachelors degree = 5
   f. Graduate degree = 6

46. In terms of your social network, how many people do you consider close friends? (Q44.CloseFriends)
   a. Five or fewer = 1
   b. 6 to 10 = 2
   c. 11 to 20 = 3
   d. More than 20 = 4

47. How many of these friends do you contact via phone or email on a regular basis? (Q45.CommunicateRegularly)
   a. Five or fewer = 1
   b. 6 to 10 = 2
   c. 11 to 20 = 3
   d. More than 20 = 4
48. What is your Facebook network size? (Q46.FacebookNetwork)
   a. Below 50 = 1
   b. 51 to 150 = 2
   c. 151 to 250 = 3
   d. 251 to 500 = 4
   e. Above 500 = 5

49. Among these people, how many do you communicate with on a regular basis? (Q47.FacebookCommunication)
   a. Five or fewer = 1
   b. 6 to 10 = 2
   c. 11 to 20 = 3
   d. More than 20 = 4

50. How many hours a day do you spend online? (Q48.HoursOnline)
   a. Less than 1 = 1
   b. 1 to 2 = 2
   c. 3 to 5 = 3
   d. More than 5 = 4

51. How many clubs or civic associations are you a part of? (Q49.ClubsAssociations)
   a. None = 1
   b. 1 to 2 = 2
   c. 3 to 5 = 3
   d. 6 to 10 = 4
   e. More than 10 = 5
Appendix B: Survey analysis syntax

rm(list=ls(all=TRUE))

## laptop


## Bentley Annex

tattoo=read.delim("C:\Users\nc389706\Documents\My Dropbox\Tattoo thesis\Good.Working.Data.Jan13.txt")

attach(tattoo)

summary(tattoo)

## Variables

Q1.EverHadTattoo
Q2.HowManyTattoos
Q3.HadTattooRemoved
Q4.AgeGotTattoo
Q5A.OtherBodyMod
Q5B.HowManyMod
Q5C.HowManyModCorrect
Q6A.TattooReflectsSpiritualBeliefs
Q6.B.TattooReflectsPersonPlace
Q7.TattooReflectsInterests
Q8.AttractivenessMostImportant
Q9.OthersShouldKnowMeaning
Q10.PriceIsNoConcern
Q11.ResearchedShops
Q12.GladGotTattoo
Q13.TattooBoostsEsteem
Q14.HaveStrongSenseOfSelfA
Q15.StrongFriendFamilyNetworkA
Q16.StrongCommunityA
Q17.FriendsFamilyHaveTattoos
Q18. FriendsFamilyTattooNumber
Q18B. FriendsFamilyTattooNumberCorrect
Q19. MisdemeanorA
Q20. FelonyA
Q21. SubstanceAbuseA
Q22. HookingUpA
Q23. AlcoholAbuseA
Q24. InterestedInTattoos
Q25. TattoosLookNice
Q26. TattooWouldHaveMeaning
Q27. TattooIsIrresponsible
Q28. TattoosReflectPoorly
Q29. StrongSenseOfSelfB
Q30. StrongFriendFamilyNetworkB
Q31. StrongCommunityB
Q32. FriendFamilyHaveTattoosB
Q33. FriendFamilyTattooNumberB
Q33. FriendFamilyTattooNumberCorrectB
Q34. MisdemeanorB
Q35. FelonyB
Q36. SubstanceAbuseB
Q37. HookingUpB
Q38. AlcoholAbuseB
Q39. HouseholdIncome
Q40. ParentsIncome
Q41. HighestEd
Q42. MothersEd
Q43. FathersEd
Q44. CloseFriends
Q45. CommunicateRegularly
Q46. FacebookNetwork
Q47. FacebookCommunication
Q48. HoursOnline
Q49. ClubsAssociations
Q50. SenseOfSelf
Q51. StrongFriendFamilyNetwork
Q52. StrongCommunity
Q53. Misdemeanor
Q54. Felony
Q55. SubstanceAbuse
Q56. HookingUp
Q57. AlcoholAbuse
## Value labels

EverHadTattoo = factor(Q1.EverHadTattoo,  
levels = c(1,2),  
labels = c("Yes", "No"))

AgeGotTattoo <- factor(Q4.AgeGotTattoo,  
levels = c(1,2,3,4,5,6),  
labels = c("Younger than 18", "18 to 25", "25 to 35", "35 to 50", "Older than 50", "I don't have a tattoo"))

SenseOfSelfA = factor(Q14.HaveStrongSenseOfSelfA,  
levels = c(1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6,7),  
labels = c("Strongly agree", "Agree", "Neutral", "Disagree", "Strongly Disagree", "No opinion"))

InterestedInTattoos <- factor(Q24.InterestedInTattoos,  
levels = c(1,2,3,4,5,6),  
labels = c("Strongly agree", "Agree", "Neutral", "Disagree", "Strongly Disagree", "No opinion"))

## Frequencies

Q1.EverHadTattoo2 = as.factor(Q1.EverHadTattoo)  
table(Q1.EverHadTattoo2)

Q6.TattooReflectsPersonPlace2 = as.factor(Q6.TattooReflectsPersonPlace)  
table(Q6.TattooReflectsPersonPlace2)

Q7.TattooReflectsInterests2 = as.factor(Q7.TattooReflectsInterests)  
table(Q7.TattooReflectsInterests2)

Q8.AttractivenessMostImportant2 = as.factor(Q8.AttractivenessMostImportant)  
table(Q8.AttractivenessMostImportant2)

Q9.OthersShouldKnowMeaning2 = as.factor(Q9.OthersShouldKnowMeaning)  
table(Q9.OthersShouldKnowMeaning2)

Q10.PriceIsNoConcern2 = as.factor(Q10.PriceIsNoConcern)  
table(Q10.PriceIsNoConcern2)
Q11.ResearchedShops2=as.factor(Q11.ResearchedShops)
table(Q11.ResearchedShops2)

table(Q12.GladGotTattoo2)

Q24.InterestedInTattoos2=as.factor(Q24.InterestedInTattoos)
table(Q24.InterestedInTattoos2)

Q25.TattoosLookNice2=as.factor(Q25.TattoosLookNice)
table(Q25.TattoosLookNice2)

Q26.TattooWouldHaveMeaning2=as.factor(Q26.TattoosWouldHaveMeaning)
table(Q26.TattoosWouldHaveMeaning2)

Q27.TattooIsIrresponsible2=as.factor(Q27.TattooIsIrresponsible)
table(Q27.TattooIsIrresponsible2)

Q28.TattoosReflectPoorly2=as.factor(Q28.TattoosReflectPoorly)
table(Q28.TattoosReflectPoorly2)

## Histograms & visualizations
hist(EverHadTattoo, col='null', main="Have you ever had a tattoo?"

hist(Q6.TattooReflectsPersonPlace, col='blue', main="My Tattoo Reflects an Important Person or Place In My Life", xlab="Level of agreement (strongly agree to strongly disagree)"

hist(Q7.TattooReflectsInterests, col='red', main="My Tattoo Reflects My Personal Interests", xlab="Level of Agreement (strongly agree to strongly disagree)"

## Plots (for non-numeric category transformations)
plot(EverHadTattoo, col='black', main="Have you ever had a tattoo?", font.main="Times New Roman"

plot(AgeGotTattoo, col='black', main="When did you get your tattoo?", xlab="Age Group", ylab="Frequency"

plot(InterestedInTattoos, col='red', main="I am interested in getting a tattoo", xlab="Level of Agreement (strongly agree to strongly disagree)", ylab="Frequency"
## Summary Reports

summary(Q6.TattooReflectsPersonPlace)

summary(Q7.TattooReflectsInterests)

summary(Q11.ResearchedShops)

summary(Q12.GladGotTattoo)

summary(Q13.TattooBoostsEsteem)

## Chi squared test

Income=table(Q1.EverHadTattoo, Q39.HouseholdIncome)
ParentsIncome=table(Q1.EverHadTattoo, Q40.ParentsIncome)
HighestEd=table(Q1.EverHadTattoo, Q41.HighestEd)
MothersEd=table(Q1.EverHadTattoo, Q42.MothersEd)
FathersEd=table(Q1.EverHadTattoo, Q43.FathersEd)
CloseFriends=table(Q1.EverHadTattoo, Q44.CloseFriends)
CommunicateRegularly=table(Q1.EverHadTattoo, Q45.CommunicateRegularly)
FacebookNetwork=table(Q1.EverHadTattoo, Q46.FacebookNetwork)
FacebookCommunication=table(Q1.EverHadTattoo, Q47.FacebookCommunication)
HoursOnline=table(Q1.EverHadTattoo, Q48.HoursOnline)
ClubsAssociations=table(Q1.EverHadTattoo, Q49.ClubsAssociations)

Misdemeanor=table(Q1.EverHadTattoo, Q53.Misdemeanor)
Felony=table(Q1.EverHadTattoo, Q54.Felony)
SubstanceAbuse=table(Q1.EverHadTattoo, Q55.SubstanceAbuse)
HookingUp=table(Q1.EverHadTattoo, Q56.HookingUp)
AlcoholAbuse=table(Q1.EverHadTattoo, Q57.AlcoholAbuse)

chisq.test(Income)
chisq.test(ParentsIncome)
chisq.test(HighestEd)
chisq.test(MothersEd)
chisq.test(FathersEd)
chisq.test(CloseFriends)
chisq.test(CommunicateRegularly)
chisq.test(FacebookNetwork)
chisq.test(FacebookCommunication)
chisq.test(HoursOnline)
chisq.test(ClubsAssociations)
chisq.test(Misdemeanor)
chisq.test(Felony)
chisq.test(SubstanceAbuse)
chisq.test(HookingUp)
chisq.test(AlcoholAbuse)

## Independent Samples t-test

#Independent variable

Q1.EverHadTattoo

#Dependent variables

Q50.SenseOfSelf
Q51.StrongFriendFamilyNetwork
Q52.StrongCommunity

t.test(Q1.EverHadTattoo, Q50.SenseOfSelf)
t.test(Q1.EverHadTattoo, Q51.StrongFriendFamilyNetwork)
t.test(Q1.EverHadTattoo, Q52.StrongCommunity)

summary(Q14.HaveStrongSenseOfSelfA)
summary(Q29.StrongSenseOfSelfB)
sample(Q15.StrongFriendFamilyNetworkA)

## Testing direction of relationship’
FacebooknetworkCor=cor(Q1.EverHadTattoo, Q46.FacebookNetwork)
FacebookCommunication=table(Q1.EverHadTattoo, Q47.FacebookCommunication)
HoursOnlineCor=cor(Q1.EverHadTattoo, Q48.HoursOnline)