

A COMPARISON OF COLLEGE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS  
OF OLDER TATTOOED WOMEN AND  
YOUNGER TATTOOED WOMEN

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

The study examined how college students perceive older versus younger women based on their tattoo status (i.e., no tattoo, feminine tattoo, or masculine tattoo). A randomly assigned sample of 376 responded to a survey involving a 2 X 3 experiment designed to assess the impact of age (older versus younger) and tattoo status on four dependent measures: credibility, promiscuity, and attractiveness. Results indicate that older and younger women are perceived differently depending on their tattoo status. Not wearing a tattoo may lead to a more favorable perception of older women than wearing one, but wearing a feminine tattoo may engender a more favorable impression of older women than having a masculine tattoo. In contrast, avoiding to wear a tattoo may not be as helpful for the perception of younger women as it is for older women. Also, while younger women may be rewarded for gender role transgression with respect to tattoo status this is not so for older women.

This thesis is dedicated to anyone with an imposing disability.  
You, and you alone, are the obstacle you must overcome.  
However, perseverance and determination can prevail.

Namasté

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

Tattoos have increased in popularity over the last two decades. What was once considered deviant behavior has become a modern, trendy and fashionable tendency without confinement to societal boundaries of career, gender, generation, race, class, age or even religious affiliation. Tattooing is as widespread among young people as it is amongst the older generation, with tattooing tearing fast into the gender divide. Tattoos are increasingly entering mainstream society and have crossed class, racial, socioeconomic and professional barriers. To put this phenomenon in perspective, 24% of Americans currently sport tattoos; and among young adults aged 18 to 30 years old, this number is expected to increase up to 40% in the next few years (Armstrong et al., 2008). Further, the last two decades have seen a surge in women getting tattooed; with women making up approximately 45% - 65% of the population who get tattooed (Armstrong et al., 2008). Although there have been some previous investigations that compare how college students perceive women and men who are tattooed and which also examine the gendered reasons why people get tattoos, none of these investigations to date have specifically studied how college students perceive younger women versus older women with tattoos. This is unfortunate because understanding this comparison may enhance insights into societal perceptions of women as they age.

This study examines the effects of tattoos on perceptions of older versus younger females' credibility, attractiveness, and promiscuity. The analysis is anchored in three dimensions of the literature on tattooing as a social practice. First, general history of tattoos



within Western culture and their rise in popularity is reviewed. The reasons for the rise in tattoo popularity within the last few decades are addressed, as are the conflicting viewpoints and perceptions of tattoos within Western culture. Second, literature on tattoos as an exclusive masculine practice versus tattoos as a shared gender practice is described. Third, the current Western fashion viewpoint that women should present themselves in age-appropriate ways is explored for its implications on how tattooed female bodies are perceived in the Western society. The study is framed by the tenets of the Social Categorization Model (SCM) as postulated by social scholars (e.g., Tajfel, 2010) because of its focus on the processes of perception, selection and categorization, as well as the stigma or stereotyping that may result. These processes are helpful in explaining how individuals utilize categories or groupings to conceptualize their social environments based on societal norms concerning actions, their underlying intent, and the belief systems in which they occur. Whatever the motivation for donning a tattoo in the contemporary era, it becomes imperative to examine how an older woman with a visible tattoo is viewed in comparison with a younger woman with the same tattoo to bring to light possible benefits and/or consequences that result from choosing this form of expression at differing ages.

A quantitative survey including Semantic Differential and Likert type scales, will aid the researcher in gaining insight to undergraduate students' perceptions of older and younger women with tattoos. For the purpose of this study, older women are defined as women over the age of 45 years and younger women are defined as younger than 25 years. The study will focus on perceptions of the undergraduate students regarding a source's credibility, attractiveness, and promiscuity.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **A Brief History of Tattooing**

Throughout history, tattoos have been documented in virtually every culture (Sanders, 1989; Armstrong, 1991; Grief, Hewitt & Armstrong, 1999) to commemorate religious ceremonies, denote tribal ranks or as marks of royalty, and also to symbolize status (Keinlan, 2005). In 1992, the oldest known human with a tattoo to date, 5,300 years, “Iceman,” was found in the mountains of Northern Italy (Doss & Ebusu Hubbard, 2009). Another notable example of this long history of tattooing practices can be found on the mummified body of an Egyptian priestess dated approximately 2,000 B.C. (Sanders, 1991).

Though tattooing has been known to exist in many countries throughout the world (e.g. Italy, Egypt, Japan, and New Zealand), the history of tattoos in Western culture is of particular significance to this study due to the unprecedented rise of tattooing as a decorative body accessories in the last two decades. Tattoo history in Western Culture can be traced to the voyages of Captain James Cook in the 1760’s and his visit to Tahiti (Armstrong, Owen, Roberts & Koch, 2002a, 2002b). These visits provided contact with natives whose bodies prominently featured tattoos as an avenue for identity and expression. Indeed, the word tattoo comes from the Tahitian word “ta-tu” which means to mark or strike something (Bell, 1999; Grief, Hewitt & Armstrong, 1999; Keinlan, 2005) that will leave an impression to signify a message sent by the tattooed person. Today tattoos continue to be used to signify meaning and clearly send messages; and are used as a common form of self-expression in America and in many countries around the world (Sanders, 1998; Stuppy, Armstrong & Casals-Ariet, 1998; Bell, 1999).

The unprecedented rise in popularity of the tattoo can be credited to the entertainment and celebrity industry that exercised concerted efforts to actively engage in this culture even as it faded in the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries. Circus entertainers who often included the Tattooed Lady, otherwise known as “sideshow freaks” (Bell, 1999) or “circus side-show acts” (Braunberger, 2000) were quite popular at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1890, “La Belle Irene,” the first tattooed lady, gained notoriety within the amusement world by willingly showing off her legs and back (she had to lie and say she had been captured by native Indians and forcibly tattooed). In order for tattooed women to become famous, they had to expose parts of their bodies that would normally go unseen except during intimate encounters. As such, women with body decorations became synonymous with sexual waywardness as well as amorous and decadent behavior, and were conceived as the epitome of promiscuity in society (Sanders, 1991, p. 151). This attitude is perpetuated to date in terms of those who associate tattoos on women with sexual promiscuity (Swami & Furnham, 2007).

Tattooing has become popular over the last two decades as tattooing has become increasingly evident in mainstream society. The industry has grown in leaps and bounds, so much that tattooing was listed within the top six business ventures in the mid 1990’s (Kosut, 2006). Case in point, there is now a National Tattoo Association (with annual conventions), along with an Alliance of Professional Tattooists (currently hosting 3,000 members; up from 1,800 members just five years ago) (Kaiyala, 2011). As Kosut (2006) asserts, “America is fast becoming a tattooed nation” (p.1035). This is due in part to three reasons: a) Advancements in tattoo equipment (needles now come in various tapers) thus tremendous improvement in the quality of tattoos (Grief, Hewitt & Armstrong, 1999; Swami & Furnham, 2007), b) The status of

tattoos has been elevated such that the tattooist is not only respected but also exalted as an artist, and tattoos are now referred to as “body art” (Kosut, 2006), and c) Tattoos are increasingly portrayed as fashionable and trendy in the media (Bell, 1999; Kosut, 2006) including popular television shows like Miami Ink help.

Tattoos, in the past, were associated with celebrities and other phenomenal persons especially in the entertainment, fashion, and gaming industries. Rock stars who have worn tattoos include Janis Joplin, who was credited with being one of the first to draw public attention to tattoos (Sanders, 1991), along with Tommy Lee (Motley Crue), Brittany Spears, and Cher; with other celebrities such as, Pamela Anderson, Ben Affleck, Angelina Jolie, Julia Roberts and Johnny Depp (Kosut, 2006) wearing tattoos for many years. It is not just actors but sports athletes as well. Over 50% of the National Basketball Association (NBA) athletes have tattoos (Kosut). These celebrities not only advertise the popularity of tattoos, but also allow the viewer to notice how conventional they are becoming. Tattoos are no longer just relegated to a marginalized group; they are becoming an integral part of the society, involving not just young people but older people in a wide array of professions (Handwerk, 2002).

### Conflicting Public Perception of Tattoos

Despite the increasing popularity of tattoos, existing scholarly and popular literature on public perception of tattoos is characterized by two themes that suggest a public that is divided in its perception of tattooed bodies. The themes include viewing tattoos as: (a) positive versus negative expression, and (b) exclusive masculine practice versus shared gender practice.

### Positive versus negative expression.

The perception of tattoos as a positive form of expression includes viewing tattoos as a symbol of self-identity and as an art form. Proponents of this position emphasize that tattoos have moved from mark of the outcast to that of celebrity and star status (DeMello, 1995; Handwerk, 2002). Tattoos are not only viewed as “art,” but also as a form of legitimate self-identity expression (Armstrong, 1991; DeMello, 1995; Sanders 1989, 1991; Grief, Hewitt & Armstrong, 1999; Atkinson & Young, 2001; Forbes, 2001; Atkinson, 2002; Degleman & Price, 2002; Doss & Hubbard, 2009). Kosut (2006) explains that the music industry uses tattoos as “primary communicative tools” (p. 1038) and that “tattooing is being gentrified and repackaged as desirable and hip” (p. 1038).

The perception of tattoos as a legitimate form of identity expression is described by many scholars. This is especially true regarding women. In spite of society’s stigma of tattoos, many women tend to view their tattoos as signifying and memorializing specific events in their lives (Forbes, 2001) and as an expression of their identity that symbolizes their individuality (Armstrong, 1991; Armstrong & Gabriel, 1993; Grief, Hewitt & Armstrong, 1999; Benson, 1999; Forbes, 2001; Armstrong, Owen, Roberts & Koch, 2002a). Further, Wohlrab, Stahl and Kappler (2007) note that in the upsurge of the tattooing industry, individual identity can now depend on tattooing as an ideal accessory in establishing the distinct identities of a person. Not only does one’s appearance reveal one’s identity, but tattoos in particular help to project a distinctive self-identity. As found in studies such as Forbes (2001), Grief et al, (1999) and

Armstrong (2004), most tattooing is motivated by the need for a person to express his/her identity and that a popular reason for getting a tattoo is “self-expression.”

In direct contrast, however, there are those who still associate tattoos with stigmatized groups. Goffman’s (1963) definition of stigma is “the situation of the individual who is disqualified from full social acceptance” (p. i). People with tattoos may be subjected to a negative perception from the society and associated with social outcasts (Stuppy, Armstrong & Casals-Ariet, 1998) as well as American greasers (Bell, 1999). Within Western society, the perception that tattooed individuals are stereotyped and seen as deviant is quite common (Hawkes, Senn & Thorn, 2004; Adams, 2009). The tattooed person is often stigmatized and has long been associated with being of lower class (Bell, 1999), a criminal and a prisoner (Durkin & Houghton, 2000; Atkinson, 2002; Adams, 2009), a street gang member (Atkinson, 2002), a pervert, psychopath and prostitute (Forbes, 2001; Seiter & Hatch, 2007), a rebel or deviant (Bell, 1999; Benson, 2008), or punk group member (Swami & Furnham, 2007).

Some scholars (e.g., Armstrong & Gabriel, 1993; Greif, Hewitt & Armstrong, 1999) argue that the stereotyping may be informed by verses in the Bible, which warn “Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves” (New International Version, Leviticus. 19:28, 1984; Armstrong & Gabriel, 1993; Grief, Hewitt & Armstrong, 1999, Lin, 2002). Further, an individual’s attitude toward tattoos can be related to his or her religious orientation, with most religions ostensibly opposed to the use of bodily artifacts and certain decorations citing relation to the forces of evil powers (Lin, 2002).

Many stereotypes of the tattooed person exist. Common misconceptions of the tattooed person are that one is immature, impulsive and irresponsible. Further, it is often thought that the

person is completely inebriated while getting tattooed. However, alcohol causes increased bleeding (Armstrong & Gabriel, 1993) which makes it highly unlikely that a tattoo artist would even work on someone while he or she is inebriated. People generally avoid alcohol prior to getting and after receiving a tattoo to allow for healing and to respond better to health care instruction (Armstrong & Gabriel, 1993).

In reality, the tattoo process is painful due to the rapid-injecting electrical device used (Grief, Hewitt & Armstrong, 1999). Having tattoos on one's body is a deliberate choice that is usually a well thought out process (Armstrong & Gabriel, 1993; Forbes, 2001; Doss & Hubbard, 2009). Most people think about getting their tattoos for at least a month, and there is little evidence that getting a tattoo is an impulsive act (Armstrong, 1991; Forbes, 2001).

#### Exclusive masculine practice versus shared gender practice

Another theme which has garnered much attention over the last few decades revolves around whether tattoos are exclusively male or shared gender practice. The viewpoint that tattooing is exclusively male behavior involves a belief that tattoos were designed by and for men and “[have] functioned like a hundred other rituals implicitly designed to keep men together and exclude women” (Braunberger, 2000, p. 4). Tattoos are “permanent, painful, masculine...” (DeMello, 2000, p.13), and are traditionally “associated with masculinity” (Armstrong et al, 2008), p. 879). Armstrong (1991) notes that for men, tattoos are seen as a “badge of courage” or a symbol of their masculinity citing an example of leading military men throughout history who to used tattoos to denote conquests.

Atkinson (2002) notes that the primary reason tattoos have been seen as exclusively male is because of the historical exclusion of women from certain subcultures (i.e. military, motorcycle gangs and people doing drugs). Thus, men use their tattoos to communicate their social identity (Sanders, 1991) to denote which clubs they belong with the tattoo used to symbolize membership. According to Keinlan (2005), men have different reasons for getting tattooed than women. That is, men tend to get tattooed for extrinsic reasons such as to alter the way society perceives them whereas women are likely to do so for intrinsic reasons such as satisfying an emotional need.

In the North American patriarchal setting, femininity is constructed from a hegemonic masculine viewpoint (Donaldson, 1993) that embodies and propagates the precepts of the masculine gender and their expectations of the feminine gender. Encultured in this mode of thinking, women are expected to “modify their bodies for the pleasures of men i.e. men prefer soft, supple, thin, sexy, unblemished feminine bodies” (Atkinson, 2002, p. 232). Women who defy these appearance norms are likely to attract a negative perception. Tattooed women break these rules and tend to be cast as non-conformist (Hawkes, Senn & Thorn, 2004). A tattoo on a woman can bring about confusion and even rejection if breaking the social rules creates in the mind of the viewer “anxieties of misrecognition” (Braunberger, 2000, p.1). In fact, many male tattoo artists historically balked at tattooing women. For instance, Steward (1998) cites a tattooist in San Francisco who in 1990’s refused to tattoo women unless they were over 21 years old, accompanied by their husbands [or man], and also referred to women who get tattoos as “tramps...dykes... farm wives...whores...lank-haired scaggs, with ruined landscapes of faces



and sagging hose and run-over heels” (p. 127). Unfortunately for this tattooist, he has since run out of business.

In reality, though these masculine views of tattooing still exist, tattooing is clearly now a shared gender activity, substantiated by the number of women who get tattooed, which has quadrupled in the last two decades (Armstrong, 1991). Women now make up more than 50% of tattooed people in the United States (Armstrong, 1991; Armstrong & Gabriel, 1993; Hawkes, Senn & Thorn, 2004; Armstrong et al, 2008, Adams, 2009). One reason why the number of women getting tattooed is on the rise is that women now have unprecedented freedom to do so (Healey, 2010).

When women want a change of self-concept, there are many ways to do so, for example, many women may opt for plastic surgery or Botox; however, a big number are apt to adopt a different hairstyle or to get a tattoo (Keinlan, 2005). While (as mentioned earlier) men are likely to get tattooed to change the way society sees them, women in contrast, get tattooed to change the way they see themselves (Keinlan, 2005).

Also, women tend to view a tattoo as just another form of jewelry or accessory (Sanders, 1989; Durkin & Houghton, 2000). While this may be how women view their tattooed selves, they are comparatively more likely to be seen as socially deviant than their male counterpart (Bell, 1999; Martin & Dula, 2010).

If a woman does choose to be tattooed, there are still gender norms dictating the type of tattoo that would be most appropriate. Generally, women choose smaller and more feminine tattoos with thin wavy lines, such as flowers and unicorns (Sanders, 1989; Bell, 1999; Atkinson, 2002) rather than the larger, more aggressive tattoos with thick straighter lines such as dragons,

daggers and tribal tattoos that are usually chosen by men (Sanders, 1989, Atkinson, 2002). A male interviewee in Sanders (1989) stated “A woman should act like a woman and keep her tattoos feminine” (p. 51). Atkinson (2001) found that in certain circles, the only acceptable way for women to be tattooed was to have extremely feminine tattoos (e.g. butterflies, dolphins, flowers) thereby staying within the established gender roles deemed by society (p. 226). Thus, when a woman observes this rule, it may be seen as self-imposed gender stratification (Atkinson, 2002). However, if she opts to cross the gender line, the act may be seen as a gender role violation (Bell, 1999; Hawkes, Senn & Thorn, 2004).

The perception of tattoos as shared gender activity can be further differentiated by the actual placement on the body. Men generally choose to place their tattoos on a visible location, either their arms (biceps) or chests (Sanders, 1989, 1991; Keinlan, 2005). In contrast, given the negative views of women with tattoos, women will generally have their first tattoo placed on an unexposed part of their bodies, which is why the lower back, hips and upper portion of the back area are the most common places for women to conceal their tattoos (Armstrong, 1991; Sanders 1989, 1991).

Specifically within Western culture, public perception of tattooing is still quite varied, if not contradictory. An example of opposing viewpoints can be found in comparing two noted authorities on women and tattoos: while Demello’s (1995) study found that the preconceived notion of women with tattoos as “biker chicks” is far from reality, in direct contrast, Armstrong (1991) found that stereotyping a “biker mama” is more common than not.

Age Appropriate Appearance

Western society places enormous value on youth and beauty and disparages the very act of aging. Societal views on older women are much harsher than they are on men and the social worth of a woman is often linked directly to her age (Hatch, 2005). While a man with gray hair may be viewed as gracefully attractive, a woman with graying hair is more likely viewed as old. As Garner (1999) claims “women lose their social value simply by growing old” (p.4). Ageism affects the societal perceptions of women more than men such that women tend to experience discrimination in this regard more so than men. As noted by Tretheway (2001), by age 45, many women face sub-employment and are likely to have peaked in their financial earnings.

Clarke and Miller (2002) found out that people’s evaluation of bodily appearance of others is mostly based on what society deems appropriate for their age group. A contemporary example that illustrates this point in a way that is analogous to the perception of tattooed bodies concerns hair length. Hillary Clinton, the current Secretary of State, is one who has been criticized for the length of her hair. Many feel that given her age, Hillary Clinton’s hair is too long. The Washington Post, reported that Clinton’s hair is an “act of defiance” (Givhan, 2010) and that she is making a “social statement” by allowing her hair to be so long during a United Nations meeting (Alpert, 2010). In an article in the N.Y. Times, Browning (2010) wrote about middle-aged women with long (gray) hair that sparked a debate (1,200+ comments) and earned her a spot on The Today Show (Springer, 2010). Browning (2010) says “It has become a cultural norm: women of a certain age cut off their hair...it is the appropriate thing to do.” Also, Browning (2010) pointed out the fact that many women within this age bracket feel that their hair is their identity, even though society deems this behavior as inappropriate.

Fashion is yet another area where older women struggle against societal norms. Current style trends are directed at a youthful market and older women trying to fit within this mold are considered “threatening to a socially defined norm of aging” (Lewis, Medvedev and Seponski, 2011). Fashion magazines, wrought with clear skinned models that are too tall, too thin and too young have become the norm. The latest styles are aimed at society’s ideal image of the ageless and all too thin women. Thus, the older woman is chastised for trying to look youthful by merely trying to stay fashionable within today’s couture trends (Lewis et al, 2011).

These thoughts about middle aged women may parallel those about aging women with tattoos: if an older woman is judged so harshly according to her hair color or length, then it is reasonable to expect that she will be judged in a similar manner on a tattoo that she wears. If tattoos lead to negative impressions of those wearing them, they could precipitate undesirable outcomes for the tattooed individuals (e.g. while applying for jobs, going on dates). This may be amplified for women as they are a group that already faces other forms of discrimination such as ageism and sexism.

### Gaps in the literature

Though many scholars have studied the perceptions of tattoos by college students none to date have specifically addressed how college students perceive older women with tattoos. Although some studies (e.g., Hawkes, Senn, & Thorn, 2004) compared college students’ perceptions of size of tattoo worn by an individual, it still remains unclear how the perceptions of tattooed bodies vary with regard to age, especially for tattooed women.

## Perceptions of personality traits in women with tattoos

The next section briefly reviews studies that have employed four communicative elements that would be helpful in further understanding the perceptions of college students regarding younger versus older tattooed women: credibility, physical attraction, likeability, and promiscuity. Credibility is a “complex construct, and is composed of several dimensions including perceptions of a source’s competence, character, composure, sociability, and extroversion” (Seiter, Weger, Merrill, McKenna & Sanders, 2010 p. 145) which is affected by visible tattoos. For example, Sieter and Hatch’s (2005) study of 148 undergraduates found that wearing a tattoo, for either a male or female, led to negative perceptions of the person. Even though people with tattoos were viewed as less credible in general than those without, they were viewed as more extroverted, which is a common element of credibility. Resenhoeft, Villa and Wiseman’s (2008) study of 158 community college students was specific to women with tattoos. In their study, perceptions of the model with a tattoo were perceived more negatively especially with regard to personality traits. Therefore we asked:

**RQ1:** How do college students’ perceptions of older versus younger women differ with respect to tattoo status when it comes to credibility?

Physical attractiveness can be defined as the perception of beauty by other people (Degleman & Price, 2002) and women with tattoos are often seen as less attractive than those without tattoos. Swami and Furnham’s (2007) study of college students noted that tattooed women were not only viewed as less physically attractive, they were also assumed to be more sexually promiscuous and heavier alcoholic drinkers than non-tattooed women. Degelman and Price (2002) used a sample of 196 high school students to compare a young woman (24 years

old) with and without a tattoo. Their findings showed the woman with a tattoo was rated as significantly less attractive, intelligent, artistic, athletic, motivated, generous, mysterious, religious and honest.

Resenhoef, Villa & Wiseman (2008) replicated Degelman and Price's (2002) study using two female models; a 24 year old wearing a black tube top and black pants and a 27 year old wearing a white sleeveless t-shirt. In both studies, having a tattoo was found to foster negative interpersonal perceptions (p. 595) in that the woman who was not tattooed was viewed more positively in her physical appearance (attractiveness) as well as personality traits (caring) than the woman with the tattoo.

Though there are divergent studies to support negative and positive views of tattoos, most studies still concur on the preponderance of negative views about women with tattoos. Seiter and Hatch's (2005) study of both men and women with and without tattoos found that regardless of sex, having a tattoo hurt people's image more than it helped. However, their study did not support the common belief by tattoo wearers, that having a tattoo makes one more attractive (Sanders, 1989; Armstrong, 1991; Sieter & Hatch, 2007; DeMello, 2005) and found no evidence to support the claim that perceptions of attractiveness of females is affected by wearing a tattoo. This prompted the second research question:

**RQ2:** How do college students' perceptions of older versus younger women differ with respect to tattoo status when it comes to attractiveness?

Extending the study by Swami and Furnham (2007), which found that women with tattoos were rated as being more promiscuous, this study sought to extend their finding by looking at how the woman's age group affects the ratings. Therefore we asked:

**RQ3:** How do college students' perceptions of older versus younger women differ with respect to tattoo status when it comes to promiscuity?

### Theoretical Framework

Any aspect of our person and personality can lead to categorization or stereotyping (positive or negative, inclusive or exclusive). However, what makes Social Categorization theory especially useful for understanding the role tattoos play in communication is that though tattooing has become increasingly popular, it remains a practice that is outside the norm. To frame our understanding of the dynamics expected to influence the respondents' perceptions of the women viewed in this experiment; we must first discuss the process of social categorization, the resulting person prototypes, and the impact of stigma as they guide our assumptions and assignments of traits.

Tajfel (2010) describes social categorization as an "ordering of social environment in terms of groupings of persons in a manner which makes sense to the individual" (p. 119). This is an automatic process of assigning a category to the people we meet that allows us to make social decisions and anticipate another's behavior. As such, it is a primary sorting function that allows us to differentiate ourselves, maintain our social structure, protect and assert our value system, as well as interpret interaction with others. Though social stereotyping can result from this process, it does not necessarily result in prejudice. Further, though these inferences may commonly have a negative quality, they can also produce positive evaluations (Tajfel, 2010).

Hugenberg and Sacco (2008) outlined three steps to social categorization and stereotyping which are useful for examining the perceptions of tattooed women with respect to their age. They argued that social categorization process relies on rules of category selection, category activation and category application. While this may seem like a lengthy process, it is actually an almost instantaneous phenomenon involving a split second thought that simplifies inferences about other people (Willis & Todorov, 2006).

Category selection involves the individual's immediate sorting of potential categories that may apply to the person before him or her, which is based on preconceived notions of "types" of people and the behaviors associated with these categories. Tajfel and Forgas (1981) suggest that such "types" of people are known to observers through experience and socialization. Also called "prototypes," these preconceived ideas apply to both the observer and the observed and are loosely defined as "fuzzy sets" of information that depend on context and group membership (Hogg & Terry, 2000, p.123). As such, prototypes include criteria for belonging versus not belonging to a given group or category.

As such, assumptions and inferences people make about others are based on these pre-existing categories which are activated by both similarities and differences people observe with special emphasis on the differences. Because we use this process to understand our social world, any non-normative experience tends to trigger the need for evaluation and the categorization process. Once the categories have been selected to apply to a particular person or group, they are activated and the related assumptions and expectations applied. Category application "involves attending to and processing the unique characteristics of the individual" and measuring him/her



based on his/her “type” and the related grouping of appropriate behaviors and associated meaning (Hugenberg & Sacco, 2008, p. 1054).

Finally, social categorization is the process via which stigma may occur if social norms are violated. Stigma involves someone who bears a negative or soiled social identity based on the breaking of norms (Goffman, 1963). Three types of stigma may be invoked including a) abominations of the body, b) blemishes of individual character, and c) tribal stigma of race, nation and religion (DeMello, 2000). For example, tattooing can be seen as an abomination of the body. Swami and Furnham (2005) found that tattooed women were judged harsher than tattooed males based on preconceived societal stereotypes.

Physical appearance cues are an important aspect of this study as impressions are formed almost immediately based solely on physical appearances (Doss & Hubbard, 2009). Willis and Todorov (2006) note how quickly judgments are cast in that impressions are formed within the first 100 milliseconds of exposure. Tattoos are symbols drawn permanently on body parts, and as such are subject to instant judgments based on the viewer’s pre-existing attitudes (Seiter & Hatch, 2005). Many tattooed people believe that having a tattoo is a recipe for heightened sense of attractiveness and beauty, but lingering stigmas may result in a negative skew of the intended message (DeMello, 1995; Forbes, 2001; Atkinson, 2002; Seiter & Hatch, 2005; Swami & Furnham, 2007). Along these lines, the present research investigated the extent to which social categorization influences the perceptions of students on women who have tattoos.

Artifacts such as jewelry, belts, hats and clothing display trends in society and are used to make fashion statements. A tattoo is one of the latest fashion trends (Stuppy, Armstrong & Casals-Ariet, 1989; Bell, 1999) and, as mentioned earlier, many women consider their tattoo just

another piece of jewelry or accessory (Sanders, 1991). The major focus of the present study is to investigate college students' perceptions of this "accessory" with respect to younger versus older wearers.

### **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

This study sought to compare a younger woman (for the purposes of this study, younger women were defined as younger than 25 years old) and an older woman (for purposes of this study, older women were defined as those over the age of 45 years). A quantitative 2 (age: older versus younger) x 3 (tattoo status: without a tattoo versus feminine tattoo versus masculine tattoo) experimental design, was used to gather data on how women with tattoos and in respect to their age are perceived by undergraduate college students. The dependent variables include source credibility, source attractiveness, source likeability, and source promiscuity.

Upon getting their informed consent, 376 randomly assigned undergraduate students enrolled in communication classes at a southeastern university were surveyed using Survey Monkey. While some students were given extra credit for their participation, others, were not compensated in any way.

Prior to launching the pilot study, six tattoo artists were interviewed. The artists were shown pictures of each model with a tattoo and asked to define whether the tattoos were masculine or feminine. They concurred that the flower tattoo used in this study was feminine, while the tribal tattoo used in this study was masculine. The artists further described feminine tattoos as "thin and wavy lines" while stating that masculine tattoos generally have "thicker, bolder and straighter lines."

A pilot study was conducted on a class of 19 students (not included in the results of the study) to identify and address potential problems that might occur during the actual survey. For example, one question included in the survey asked respondents to estimate the age of the model shown in the photograph and this information was used to ensure that the age description of the models provided in the actual survey generally corresponded with the respondents' perceptions.

The stimuli consisted of a total of six color photographs each depicting one of two models (either tattooed or not tattooed) who is younger looking and the other one older looking, with both assuming the same pose and wearing a white t-shirt and jeans against identical lighting and background. The models used were chosen because of their similarity in height, weight, and hair length and body type. Also, that models looked their estimated age was corroborated by the results of the pilot study referenced above. Of the three photos of each model used; one photo was of the model (either younger or older) without a tattoo; the second photo was of a woman with a feminine tattoo (flower - thin and wavy lines); and the third photo showed the woman with a large masculine tattoo (tribal - thick and straighter lines). The tattoos were digitally inserted on the photographs. 376 students completed the survey. While 65 participants saw a photo of the older woman (and told that she was 48 year old) without a tattoo, another 63 students were presented with another photo showing the older woman with a feminine tattoo. The last 68 students in this category saw a photograph of the older woman with a masculine tattoo. Conversely, a different group of 54 students observed a picture identical in composition but of a younger looking woman (and told that she is a 23 years old woman) without a tattoo, while another 69 students saw a variation of the same photo with the model wearing a feminine

tattoo and the last 58 students in this category saw the younger woman with a masculine tattoo. Specifically, the following previously tested measures were employed in this study.

Pre-existing attitudes toward tattoos were measured by Swami & Furnham's binomial scale: "Do you have any tattoos? If so, how many? If no, would you consider having a tattoo in future?"

Credibility was operationalized using 15-item 7-point Likert scales (Very strongly agree = 1; Very strongly disagree = 7) designed by McCroskey et al (1974), highlighting five separate dimensions: competence (Cronbach alpha of .72), character (Cronbach alpha of .75), social ability (Cronbach alpha of .70), extroversion (Cronbach alpha of .77) and composure (Cronbach alpha of .71) (see appendix A for items corresponding to each dimension).

Likeability, which we defined as including how friendly or approachable the person was viewed as was operationalized using the Reyson (2005) likeability 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = very strongly disagree; 7 = very strongly agree) to rate 11 statements : "This person is friendly," "This person is likeable," "This person is warm," "This person is approachable," "I would ask this person for advice," "I would like this person as a coworker," "I would like this person as a roommate," "I would like to be friends with this person," "This person is physically attractive," "This person is similar to me," and "This person is knowledgeable." Data from this study indicate this instrument to be a highly reliable measure of likeability (Cronbach's alpha of .90) and has been successfully applied in studies such as Seiter et al. (2010) and Reyson (2006).

Physical attractiveness is measured using a subscale of the Likeability scale and promiscuity was tapped using 9-point Likert scale used by Swami & Furnham (2007): "How sexually promiscuous do you think this woman is?" (Not at all = 1; Very = 9). The last section of

the survey asked participants to indicate demographic details including sex, age, and race/ethnicity, and college classification.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESULTS**

### Description of Sample

A total of 376 college students responded to the survey. As Table 1 shows, 236 (62.8%) of these respondents were female while 133 (35.4%) were male. A majority (165; 43.69%) of the students were freshmen followed by sophomores (93; 24.7%), juniors (78; 20.7%), and seniors (31; 8.2%). The ethnic composition of the students was predominately Caucasian 246 (65.6%), followed by Latinos 56 (14.9%), African Americans 30 (8%), Asians 25 (6.6%), Native Indian 1 (.3%), Pacific Island 1 (.3%), and others 10 (2.7%). The majority of the respondents did not have tattoos 276 (73.4%) versus 93 (24.7%) that had tattoos. Of the 276 (73.4%) who did not have tattoos, 171 (45.5%) said they would consider getting a tattoo, 188 (31.4%) said they would not consider getting a tattoo, and 80 (21.3%) were not sure if they would ever get a tattoo.

Table 1: Description of Sample

---

|                        | n   | %     |
|------------------------|-----|-------|
| Gender                 |     |       |
| Female                 | 236 | 62.8  |
| Male                   | 133 | 35.4  |
| Figure 1               |     |       |
| Classification         |     |       |
| Freshmen               | 165 | 43.69 |
| Sophomores             | 93  | 24.7  |
| Juniors                | 78  | 20.7  |
| Seniors                | 31  | 8.2   |
| Ethnicity/Race         |     |       |
| Caucasian              | 246 | 65.6  |
| Latino                 | 56  | 14.9  |
| African American/Black | 30  | 8.0   |
| Native American        | 1   | .3    |
| Other                  | 10  | 2.7   |
| Not Tattooed           | 276 | 73.4  |
| Tattooed               | 93  | 24.7  |

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Note: Percentages do not all add up to 100 because some respondents did not answer all questions.

### Independent and Dependent Variables

As described earlier, two independent categorical variables used in the study were age of female model (two levels: younger model versus older model) and tattoo status of female model (three levels: no tattoo, feminine tattoo, and masculine tattoo). Initially, four dependent continuous variables were employed in the study: credibility, likeability, attractiveness and promiscuity. However, likeability was dropped because it registered a higher than moderate correlation with credibility (.91). Cronbach reliability alphas for the two composite dependent variables were extremely high: credibility (.97), and attractiveness (.99).

Table 2: Pearson’s Correlations among dependent variables

|                       | <i>Credibility</i> | <i>Likeability</i> | <i>Promiscuity</i> |
|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| <i>Credibility</i>    |                    |                    |                    |
| <i>Likeability</i>    | .91                |                    |                    |
| <i>Promiscuity</i>    | -.79               | -.87               |                    |
| <i>Attractiveness</i> | .63                | .72                | -.69               |

*p* < .001

#### Analysis of Data

First, data were subjected to a two-way multiple analysis of covariance (MANCOVA). This test was considered appropriate given the association among the dependent variables (See Table 2). As Table 3 indicates, the MANCOVA was significant: Wilks’ Lambda for age = .798,  $F(3, 358) = 30.17$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .20$ ; tattoo status = .851,  $F(6, 716) = 10.05$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .08$ ; interaction of age and tattoo status = .883,  $F(6, 716) = 7.70$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .06$ . Because the underlying assumption of homogenous covariance was not met as evidenced by a significant Box’s M test (499.255,  $p < .001$ ), Pillai’s Trace which is robust to this violation (see Olson, 1974,

1976, & 1979; Finch, 2005) was invoked as a failsafe: Pillai's Trace for age = .202,  $F(3, 358) = 30.171$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .20$ ; tattoo status = .151,  $F(6, 718) = 9.738$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .08$ ; interaction of age and tattoo status = .120,  $F(6, 718) = 7.66$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .06$ .

Second, univariate analyses were conducted in order to identify interaction effects of the independent variables. Tables 4, 5, and 6 indicate that except for the relationship between tattoo status and promiscuity, both age and tattoo status were significantly linked to each of the three dependent variables (i.e., credibility, promiscuity, and attractiveness). Post hoc analyses utilizing the Bonferroni method indicated distinct interaction effects for each category of age model.



Table 3: Multiple analysis of covariance of credibility, promiscuity, and attractiveness by model's age and tattoo status

|                   | F    | df     | Error | $\eta^2$ | p   |      |
|-------------------|------|--------|-------|----------|-----|------|
| Age               |      |        |       |          |     |      |
| Wilks' Lambda     | .798 | 30.171 | 3     | 358      | .20 | .000 |
| Pillai's Trace    | .202 | 30.171 | 3     | 358      | .20 | .000 |
| Tattoo Status     |      |        |       |          |     |      |
| Wilks' Lambda     | .851 | 10.05  | 6     | 716      | .08 | .000 |
| Pillai's Trace    | .151 | 9.738  | 6     | 718      | .08 | .000 |
| Age*Tattoo Status |      |        |       |          |     |      |
| Wilks' Lambda     | .883 | 7.696  | 6     | 716      | .06 | .000 |
| Pillai's Trace    | .120 | 7.662  | 6     | 718      | .06 | .00  |

Table 4: Univariate analysis of covariance of credibility, promiscuity, and attractiveness by model's age

|                | SS     | df | MS     | F     | $\eta^2$ | p    |
|----------------|--------|----|--------|-------|----------|------|
| Credibility    | 63.92  | 1  | 63.92  | 44.93 | .11      | .000 |
| Promiscuity    | 189.26 | 1  | 189.26 | 65.43 | .15      | .000 |
| Attractiveness | 7.94   | 1  | 7.94   | 8.34  | .02      | .004 |

Table 5: Univariate analysis of covariance of credibility, promiscuity, and attractiveness by tattoo status

|                | SS    | df | MS    | F     | $\eta^2$ | p    |
|----------------|-------|----|-------|-------|----------|------|
| Credibility    | 33.94 | 2  | 16.97 | 11.93 | .06      | .000 |
| Promiscuity    | 16.12 | 2  | 8.06  | 2.79  | .02      | .06  |
| Attractiveness | 27.76 | 2  | 13.88 | 14.57 | .08      | .000 |

Table 6: Univariate analysis of covariance of credibility, promiscuity, and attractiveness by model's age\*tattoo status

|                | SS    | df | MS     | F     | $\eta^2$ | p    |
|----------------|-------|----|--------|-------|----------|------|
| Credibility    | 15.37 | 2  | 7.684  | 5.401 | .03      | .005 |
| Promiscuity    | 47.07 | 2  | 23.537 | 8.138 | .04      | .000 |
| Attractiveness | 9.33  | 2  | 4.665  | 4.90  | .03      | .008 |

#### Older Model Interaction Effects

For the older model (see Table 7), having no tattoo ( $M = 4.85$ ) was significantly linked to a higher level of credibility than having a feminine tattoo ( $M = 4.26$ ) or masculine tattoo ( $M = 3.16$ ). Also, having a feminine tattoo was significantly associated with a higher level of credibility than sporting a masculine tattoo. Concerning promiscuity, possession of a masculine tattoo ( $M = 5.88$ ) was rated significantly higher than having a feminine one ( $M = 4.67$ ). However, there was a lack of significant differences between having no tattoo and either wearing a feminine tattoo or a masculine one in evaluating promiscuity. In terms of attractiveness, having no tattoo ( $M = 4.00$ ) was rated significantly higher than sporting a feminine tattoo ( $M = 3.21$ ) or

bearing a masculine one ( $M = 2.38$ ). Having a feminine tattoo was also rated as more attractive than wearing a masculine one.

Table 7: Bonferroni pairwise comparisons of older model's credibility, promiscuity, and attractiveness by tattoo status

| DV             | IV (Tattoo Status Level) & Mean |                  | Mean Difference<br>(p levels in parenthesis) |
|----------------|---------------------------------|------------------|--|
| Credibility    | No Tattoo                       | Feminine Tattoo  |  |
|                | 4.85                            | 4.26             | .59 (.08)                                    |
|                |                                 | Masculine Tattoo |  |
|                | 4.85                            | 3.16             | 1.69 (.000)                                  |
|                | Feminine Tattoo                 | Masculine Tattoo |  |
|                | 4.26                            | 3.16             | 1.10 (.000)                                  |
| Promiscuity    | No Tattoo                       | Feminine Tattoo  |  |
|                | 5.12                            | 4.67             | .44 (.60)                                    |
|                |                                 | Masculine Tattoo |  |
|                | 5.12                            | 5.88             | -.76 (.38)                                   |
|                | Feminine Tattoo                 | Masculine Tattoo |  |
|                | 4.67                            | 5.88             | -1.20 (.003)                                 |
| Attractiveness | No Tattoo                       | Feminine Tattoo  |  |
|                | 4.00                            | 3.21             | .78 (.001)                                   |
|                |                                 | Masculine Tattoo |  |
|                | 4.00                            | 2.38             | 1.61 (.000)                                  |
|                | Feminine Tattoo                 | Masculine Tattoo |  |
|                | 3.21                            | 2.38             | .832 (.001)                                  |

#### Younger Model Interaction Effects

As far as the younger model was concerned (see Table 8), wearing no tattoo ( $M = 4.48$ ) was rated as significantly more credible than having a feminine tattoo ( $M = 3.45$ ) but not

significantly different from sporting a masculine one. The difference between wearing a feminine tattoo and a masculine was not significant in terms of credibility. In terms of promiscuity, wearing a feminine tattoo ( $M = 6.03$ ) was rated significantly higher than having no tattoo ( $M = 4.50$ ). But no significant difference was found between not wearing a tattoo and wearing a masculine one just as no significant difference was found between sporting a feminine tattoo and a masculine one. Regarding attractiveness of the younger model, having no tattoo ( $M = 4.32$ ) was rated higher than wearing a feminine tattoo ( $M = 3.55$ ) but no significant difference was found between not wearing a tattoo and wearing a masculine one. However, wearing a masculine tattoo ( $M = 4.17$ ) was rated significantly higher in attractiveness than sporting a feminine one ( $M = 3.55$ ).

Table 8: Bonferroni pairwise comparisons of younger model's credibility, promiscuity, and attractiveness by tattoo status

| DV             | IV (Tattoo Status Level) & Mean |                  | Mean Difference<br>(p levels in parenthesis) |
|----------------|---------------------------------|------------------|--|
| Credibility    | No Tattoo                       | Feminine Tattoo  |  |
|                | 4.48                            | 3.45             | 1.03 (.001)                                  |
|                |                                 | Masculine Tattoo |  |
|                | 4.48                            | 3.86             | .62 (.28)                                    |
|                | Feminine Tattoo                 | Masculine Tattoo |  |
|                | 3.45                            | 3.86             | -.41 (.39)                                   |
| Promiscuity    | No Tattoo                       | Feminine Tattoo  |  |
|                | 4.50                            | 6.03             | -1.54 (.001)                                 |
|                |                                 | Masculine Tattoo |  |
|                | 4.50                            | 5.12             | -.62 (.80)                                   |
|                | Feminine Tattoo                 | Masculine Tattoo |  |
|                | 6.03                            | 5.12             | .92 (.08)                                    |
| Attractiveness | No Tattoo                       | Feminine Tattoo  |  |
|                | 4.32                            | 3.55             | .78 (.001)                                   |
|                |                                 | Masculine Tattoo |  |
|                | 4.32                            | 4.17             | .15 (1.00)                                   |
|                | Feminine Tattoo                 | Masculine Tattoo |  |
|                | 3.55                            | 4.17             | -.63 (.01)                                   |

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

This study sought to determine the relationship between a woman's age and tattoo status (i.e., no tattoo, feminine tattoo, or masculine tattoo) and the way in which she is categorized by measuring college students' perceptions of a woman's credibility, attractiveness, and promiscuity. Based on the results presented earlier, it is generally evident that older and younger women are perceived differently depending on whether they are wearing a feminine tattoo, masculine tattoo, or no tattoo at all. This study provided evidence to support a conclusion that the tattoo status of older versus younger women is related to perceptions of the women's credibility, promiscuity, and attractiveness as a whole. Subsequent univariate analyses also revealed that tattoo status of older versus younger women was associated with each one of these three perception categories. Even more specifically, pairwise comparisons of the tattoo status of both older and younger women in terms of the three perception categories revealed differences between the two groups.

Tattoo status and a woman's age were revealed to influence the perceptions of older woman in that they were viewed as credible both without a tattoo and with the feminine status tattoo, but there was a significant decrease ( $p = .000$ ) in the perception of her credibility when she exhibited the masculine tattoo. In this case, breaking the gender norm by choosing a masculine tattoo produces a negative assessment of credibility for the older woman. In contrast to this, the younger woman is viewed as most credible when not wearing a tattoo, but no difference was found in credibility when she wore the feminine or masculine tattoo.

The results also show the older woman is perceived as most attractive when she does not exhibit a tattoo compared to feminine tattoo and the masculine tattoo. However, the older woman is perceived as more attractive when wearing a feminine tattoo when compared to the masculine

tattoo which indicates that older women are perceived as most attractive when they do not have a tattoo, but if they do choose to have a tattoo, then a feminine tattoo is preferably attractive to the masculine status. There is an interesting difference revealed between the older and younger woman's attractiveness measures as the younger woman, while she is also found most attractive without a tattoo when compared to the feminine tattoo and masculine tattoo, the younger woman is instead rated as more attractive with the masculine tattoo over the feminine one.

Finally, the older woman is evaluated as least promiscuous to when she is either not wearing a tattoo or has the feminine tattoo. In fact, there is no significant difference between not having a tattoo and a feminine tattoo status for this measure. The perception of the older woman's promiscuity does become significant for the masculine tattoo when compared to either of the more feminine options.

This measure provides further interesting results as, in comparison to the older woman being found more promiscuous with the masculine tattoo, the younger woman was perceived as significantly more promiscuous with the feminine tattoo when compared to the same young woman without a tattoo. In addition to no difference being found between perceptions of the younger woman's promiscuity and either type of tattoo, no difference was also found between the lack of tattoo and wearing one that was masculine.

While both women in the study were rewarded with more credibility, attractiveness, and perceived as less promiscuous when they were not wearing tattoos, this is where much of the similarity ends. In the case of tattoos, the results indicate that older women are expected to conform to feminine expression standards, and that perception of them may suffer if they express themselves in masculine ways. It appears that on some level, younger women may be rewarded

for breaking the gender norm by their own peers. Collectively, these results suggest a dichotomy of public perceptions regarding tattoos as they relate to age of wearer.

## Discussion

To fill the gap of current research on tattooing and gender this study looks at how the type of tattoo and the age of the woman wearing it impact her assignment to particular categories. Because research has shown that tattoos are a form of self-expression, this research bears the practical purpose of clarifying what this form of self-expression is actually telling others about the wearer.

The results indicate that as women ages there are benefits to perceptions of credibility, so long as the older woman does not go too far in breaking gender role types. A younger woman is negatively impacted on the level of credibility by wearing any level of tattoo, indicating a strong positive relationship between age and credibility, as long as the gender prototype is not overtly violated.

The finding that that the older model in the no tattoo condition was rated more positively in all categories than she was when wearing a feminine or masculine tattoo seems to concur with previous studies that view women with tattoos negatively (Hawkes, Seen & Thorn, 2004). When it comes to perceptions of attraction and promiscuity, older women remained constrained by the gender appropriate category, but the younger woman appears to be operating under different measurements or rules by her peers. The older woman is rewarded for abiding by appropriate gender roles without deviation. In significant contrast, the younger woman is rewarded on the attraction scale for not having the tattoo, but also for wearing the masculine one. This may be



due to a perception among her peers that breaking the gender role is more appropriate for the younger woman. This finding seems to be in line with previous studies of college students that have claimed the positive view of tattoos as self expression (Grief, Hewitt & Armstrong, 1999; Forbes, 2001; Yin, 2002; Tiggeman & Golder, 2006; Stuppy, Armstrong & Casals-Ariet, 2010), but the reward for the masculine status and penalty for the feminine status tattoo experienced by the younger model indicates an additional backlash against the younger woman for her choice of the feminine tattoo. Further research is needed to explore this effect.

The data brings into question the differing standards of measure involved in the older versus younger woman's prototypes when it comes to what is perceived as attractive. Is the younger woman less attractive because of the overt expression of femininity? If so, it may be that the assertive (masculine) nature of getting tattooed puts the feminine tattoo on this younger woman into a kind of contempt category, making her appear inappropriately sexual and therefore less attractive and more promiscuous. This is interesting because it may be that the masculine nature of the tattoo somehow negates the negative perception of promiscuity just as the feminine tattoo seems to enhance it. It may also be that the masculine tattoo makes the younger woman appear to be outside of what is feminine and therefore non-sexual and non-threatening. It is suggested that this experiment be repeated with the addition of a qualitative component so more light is shed on these findings and the gaps are filled further.

### Limitations

While every effort was made to ensure duplicity for the models (i.e., height, weight, body position, attire, etc.), the models are not identical and there is no denying the difference in facial

expression. This might play a factor in the younger model's higher rating, though the conclusions of this study are primarily based on patterns within each age group rather than between them.

It is also ironic that the present study focuses on publicly visible tattoos yet studies have shown that most women have their tattoos on a location of the body that can be concealed (Armstrong, 1991). Another limitation of the study is the demographic and geographic context of the school where the study was conducted. The university is situated within a tropical climate where the students might be more naturally accepting of body art as they are exposed to more flesh (beach sports) than their counterparts in the northern region.

Further, though the sample size was adequate, focusing on college students limits the generalizability to the larger population. The placement of the tattoo on the model is yet another limitation. We used only one body part to emphasize the tattoo, albeit, a prominent location. The influence of expansion of tattooed body parts warrants further investigation. Lastly, the results do not differentiate between male versus female respondents. Dividing the respondents by gender would prove useful in further understanding the younger population's views on this topic. For example, is it male students who judge the older model more harshly or is it her female counterparts?

To date, there has not been a study that compares older tattooed women and younger tattooed women. Previous studies have shown that college students tend to be more accepting of tattoos than their older counterparts (Armstrong, 1991); however, the results of this study show that students tend to be accepting of tattoos on younger women but less so regarding older women. Given that tattoos are permanent, their views may change as they too, begin to age. It is also clear that the dynamics involved in how we categorize women of different ages is complex

and unique to not only the differing age groups but also the differing perspectives and contexts involved. Future research should continue to explore the many ways women, age, and tattoos intersect.

## APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

### Section A

Instructions: On the scales below, please indicate your feelings about the person depicted in the photograph. Circle the number between the adjectives which best represents your feelings about each person. Numbers “1” and “7” indicate a very strong feeling. Numbers 2 and 6 indicate a strong feeling. Numbers 3 and 5 indicate a fairly weak feeling. Number “4” indicates you are undecided or do not understand the adjectives themselves. Please, work quickly. There are no right or wrong answers.

|                   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |             |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------------|
| 1. Good-natured   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Irritable   |
| 2. Unsympathetic  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Sympathetic |
| 3. Verbal         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Quiet       |
| 4. Tense          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Relaxed     |
| 5. Unfriendly     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Friendly    |
| 6. Talkative      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Silent      |
| 7. Poised         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Nervous     |
| 8. Cheerful       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Gloomy      |
| 9. Expert         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Inexpert    |
| 10. Timid         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Bold        |
| 11. Dishonest     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Honest      |
| 12. Calm          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Anxious     |
| 13. Intellectual  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Narrow      |
| 14. Good          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Bad         |
| 15. Unintelligent | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Intelligent |

## Section B

Instructions: Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements as they apply to the person in the photograph. Use the following scale to choose the number that indicates your feelings:

- 1= Strongly disagree
- 2= Moderately disagree
- 3= Slightly disagree
- 4= Undecided
- 5= Slightly agree
- 6= Moderately agree
- 7 = Strongly agree

1. I think she could be a friend of mine.
2. I think she is quite pretty.
3. She is a typical goof-off when assigned a job to do.
4. It would be difficult to meet and talk with her.
5. She is very sexy looking.
6. I have confidence in her ability to get the job done.
7. She wouldn't just fit into my circle of friends.
8. I find her very attractive physically.
9. If I wanted to get things done, I could probably depend on her.
10. We could never establish a friendship with each other.
11. I don't like the way she looks.
12. I couldn't get anything accomplished with her.
13. I would like to have a friendly chat with her.
15. She would be a poor problem solver.

## Section B Continued

Instructions: On the scales below, please indicate your feelings about the person depicted in the photograph by answering the following question. Circle the number between the adjectives which best represents your feelings about each person. Numbers "1" and "9" indicate a very strong feeling. Numbers "2" and "8" indicate a strong feeling. Numbers "3" and "7" indicate an average feeling. Numbers "4" and "6" indicate a fairly weak feeling. Number "5" indicates you are undecided or do not understand the questions themselves. Please, work quickly. There are no right or wrong answers.

1. How sexually promiscuous do you think this woman is?  
Not at all      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      Very



## **APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

### **Informed Consent**

Researchers at the University of Central Florida (UCF) study many topics. To do this we need the help of people who agree to take part in a research study. You are being invited to take part in a research study which will include about 200 people. You can ask questions about the research by contacting Laura Raymond: [lormondo@knights.ucf.edu](mailto:lormondo@knights.ucf.edu)

You have been asked to take part in this research study because you are a college student.  
**You must be 18 years of age or older to participate**

**Study title:** A COMPARISON OF COLLEGE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF OLDER TATTOOED WOMEN AND YOUNGER TATTOOED WOMEN

**Purpose of research study:** Is to analyze the perceptions college students on older women versus younger women

**Procedure: What you will be asked to do in the study:**

First, you will be asked some questions about some of your beliefs. Second, you will be shown an image and asked some questions about your perceptions of this image. Lastly, a few demographic questions will follow.

**Location:** This study takes place on the internet. You will not be required to meet anyone at a specific place and time.

**Voluntary participation:** You should take part in this study only because you want to. There is no penalty for not taking part, and you will not lose any benefits. You have the right to stop at any time. You will be told if any new information is learned which may affect your willingness to continue taking part in this study.

**Time required:** The survey takes approximately 15 minutes.

**Risks:** There is no foreseeable risk involved in participating in this experiment.

**Benefits:** There are no expected benefits to you for taking part in this study. As a research participant you will not benefit directly from this research, besides learning more about how research is conducted.

**Compensation:** n/a

**Anonymous research:** This study is anonymous. That means that no one, not even members of the research team, will know that the information you gave came from you.

**Questions about the study or to report a problem:** Copies of the completed study will be made available to interested participants. To receive copies of the study please note the contact information below.



**Study contact information for the investigator.** Laura Raymond [lormondo@knights.ucf.edu](mailto:lormondo@knights.ucf.edu). Or, Dr. Musambira [george.musambira@ucf.edu](mailto:george.musambira@ucf.edu)

**IRB contact about your rights in the study or to report a complaint:** Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901.

By continuing, I am signifying that:

- 1) I have read the procedure described above
- 2) I am at least 18 years of age or older
- 3) I voluntarily agree to take part in the procedure

## **APPENDIX C: IRB APPROVAL**



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board  
 Office of Research & Commercialization  
 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501  
 Orlando, Florida 32826-3246  
 Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276  
[www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html](http://www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html)

**Approval of Exempt Human Research**

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1  
FWA00000351, IRB00001138**

To: **Laura Raymond**

Date: **March 08, 2011**

Dear Researcher:

On 3/8/2011, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Exempt Determination  
 Project Title: A COMPARISON OF COLLEGE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF OLDER TATTOOED WOMEN AND YOUNGER TATTOOED WOMEN  
 Investigator: Laura Raymond  
 IRB Number: SBE-11-07526  
 Funding Agency:  
 Grant Title:  
 Research ID: n/a

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Joseph Bielitzki, DVM, UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 03/08/2011 01:35:04 PM EST

IRB Coordinator

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