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COLLEGE STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD TATTOOS: A STUDY OF DEVIANCE

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ABSTRACT

Tattoos have been traditionally perceived as deviant. Recently however, we have seen an upsurge in the prevalence of tattoos both on human bodies as well as in the media. Does this upsurge indicate that tattoos are becoming more accepted into the mainstream and therefore perceived as less deviant, or are tattoos still interpreted in terms of their traditional rebellious image? If tattoos are still perceived to be deviant, do theories that predict involvement in deviant behavior also predict whether a certain individual will have a tattoo or not? In addition, why do individuals decide to get a tattoo in the first place, amidst a society that has traditionally deemed the behavior deviant? To examine these questions, this study uses survey results from 167 college students at The Pennsylvania State University to assess their attitudes toward tattoos. Results indicate that overall, students report that tattoos are generally no longer perceived as deviant. However, findings also show that students are still being stigmatized for their tattoos and participate in stigma management techniques, such as hiding their tattoo from both the older and professional populations in order to reduce the stigma associated with it. Thus, it is possible that an age-related gap exists in our society in which college students and the younger generation do not perceive tattoos to be deviant themselves, but think that a deviant attitude toward tattoos still exists in the older generation. In addition, this perceived gap could vary by setting in which a deviant attitude toward tattoos is still thought to exist in the professional population. Results also show that these gaps may indeed exist in actuality. As a result, college students may continue to engage in deviance-reduction strategies in situations involving older or professional members of society even though college students themselves do not perceive tattoos to be deviant.

Keywords: *deviance, tattoos, stigma, society, attitudes*

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INTRODUCTION

The act of tattooing is nothing new. Tattoos have been found on the bodies of Egyptian

mummies dated as early as 4000 B.C. and are believed to have existed as far back as 8000 B.C.

as evidenced from the acquisition of tattooing materials found amongst caves explored

throughout Europe (Grumet, 1983). Opposition toward tattooing is similarly as ancient as shown

through Greek and Roman writings calling the practice "barbaric" as well as from excerpts found

in the Old Testament prohibiting tattoos because they signify an association with a "cult of the

dead" (Sperry, 1991). What *is* new about tattooing is how widespread the practice has become in

today's mainstream society. These days, it seems like everyone has a tattoo—and some, with

many. Though tattoos have become more commonplace since 8000 B.C., it can be argued that

the opposition toward tattoos still exists today. In society, this opposition stems from the socially

constructed belief that tattoos are deviant. According to sociologist Howard Becker in his book

Outsiders, deviance is defined as "the infraction of some agreed-upon rule". This "agreed-upon"

rule is created by society, and those living in said society deem those who violate the rule as

"outsiders" or "deviants" (Becker, 1963, p. 8). For instance, our society has established a socially

constructed "rule" that we all must conform to our culture's identity standards. These identity

standards tell us how we are expected to appear and behave in every day life. For example, most

men in our society have internalized and demonstrated the identity standard that they are not

supposed to wear dresses or skirts. The minority of men who choose to violate this identity

standard by dressing in female clothing are thus exhibiting the "infraction of an agreed-upon

rule" and are consequently labeled as deviants.

In a similar manner, tattoos have been traditionally perceived as violating our culture's

identity standards, especially when they are placed in certain areas of the body like the face or

are visible in certain environments such as the workplace. Such tattoos are considered deviant, and as a result, the individuals who display tattoos may be subject to stigmatization or other negative reactions by others in society. In an ethnographic study on tattoo collectors and tattoo artists, Irwin (2003) described those who have tattoos as "negative deviants" because they violate conventional appearance norms, which, in turn, produces negative reactions toward these deviants from the mainstream culture (Irwin, 2003). Sociologist Erving Goffman describes a stigma as the attribute of someone that leads others (the "normals") to perceive or discriminate against that individual as different, bad, or otherwise deviant (Goffman, 1963). There are three types of stigma defined by Goffman, one of which is relevant to this discussion. A stigma can be defined as an abomination of the body, which is some visible, physical "deformity" that violates appearance expectations, such as a tattoo. Having a tattoo, especially in the deviant areas or environments discussed prior, can be seen as a stigma likely to elicit discrimination or negative attributions from the "normals." The original definition of stigma from the Ancient Greeks even defined it as a bodily sign that was "cut or burnt into the body that advertised the bearer as a slave, a criminal, or a traitor" (Goffman, 1963, p. 1). Therefore, having a tattoo may lead others to perceive the individual as rebellious or delinquent.

DeMello (1995) noted that the traditional view of individuals who have tattoos include convicts, bikers, or other "low life people" (DeMello, 1995). Several studies have shown that people stereotype against individuals with tattoos as being less credible (Seiter & Hatch, 2005), less attractive, more promiscuous and heavy drinkers (Swami & Furnham, 2007), and generally more prone to antisocial or delinquent behavior (Durkin & Houghton, 2000). A study conducted by Birmingham, Mason, and Grubin (1999) found that after interviewing a sample of 549 male prisoners, visible tattoos were more prevalent among those with a past criminal history, charged

with violent offenses, and among those reported to have increased involvement with substance abuse (Birmingham et al., 1999). Many times, these associations are why people with tattoos end up trying to hide or conceal them so as to avoid discrimination or false assumptions from other people, such as family members or employers.

It is also important to ask whether the prevalence of tattoos in today's society is an indication of a changing societal view on tattoos and the traditional image of rebellion, delinquency, and deviance they have been associated with. Have tattoos become so mainstream that they are currently becoming accepted and more conventional in society? If this is the case, tattoos may subsequently be perceived as less deviant than they have been characterized in the past. According to Kosut (2006), as many as one in five Americans may be inked with a tattoo (Kosut, 2006). In addition, their increasing salience in our current media is undeniable. Television programming has undergone a recent boom in tattoo-related series such as the popular Miami Ink, LA Ink, and Ink Master. These days, celebrities seem to prefer showing off their tattoos as a fashion statement rather than choosing to cover them up under clothing. Magazines and the Internet have even begun using tattoos as a way of advertising products (Kosut, 2006). Hence, it is evident we are currently living in a tattoo-focused culture where individuals are continuously socially reinforced for having them, wanting them, or thinking about them. Kosut (2006) states that rather than being seen as a mark of rebellion, tattoos are now being seen as desirable and trendy and may be recognized as having "aesthetic and artistic cultural value" (Kosut, 2006, p. 1045; Adams, 2009). Adams (2009) even notes that society may have undergone a cultural shift in which "difference" is now valued over conformity in which case tattoos are used as an avenue to conform to that new norm (Adams, 2009).

Does our culture still perceive tattoos by their traditional stigma characterized by rebellion and association with deviance, or are tattoos becoming so popular within our society that we are now beginning to accept them as part of mainstream and conventional culture? Perhaps the best way to assess this argument is through exploring the attitudes and behaviors of the population most likely to be active members of the growing "tattoo-culture": college students.

The purpose of this study is to investigate three questions. The first is whether college students generally perceive tattoos to be deviant, or on the contrary, whether attitudes show that tattoos are not considered deviant, thus possibly indicating a larger societal change in their traditional view. Though tattoos have clearly increased in prevalence both on human bodies and in culture, it may well be that tattoos are still considered deviant. Consistent with the research by Adams (2009) in that "difference" is now valued over conformity, the very idea that tattoos are deviant may be what is driving this newfound "tattoo-culture". Thus, the first hypothesis of this study is that *the majority of college students' attitudes toward tattoos will indicate that they are still perceived to be deviant in today's society.* Following from this hypothesis, the study will also examine whether having a tattoo can be predicted by the same theoretical factors that predict greater involvement in deviant and criminal behavior, including social disorganization theory, social control theory, and differential association theory. The third, and final, purpose of this study is to address the question: Why do college students get tattoos despite the fact that tattoos may possess negative connotations in society? In the next section, I will briefly describe the theories of deviant behavior that will be used to guide the two latter questions.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social Disorganization Theory

In their book *Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas*, sociologists Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay argued that social disorganization caused from environment factors such as low economic status, ethnic heterogeneity, and residential mobility contribute to increased crime and delinquency rates in certain communities (Shaw & McKay, 1942; Sampson & Groves, 1989). Sampson (1987) also added to this theory by arguing that marital and family disruption may have direct effects on crime and delinquency rates by decreasing community level social controls (Sampson, 1987). Thus, if social disorganization theory predicts a greater probability of involvement in criminal or delinquent activities, it is expected that the theory can also predict greater involvement in deviant behavior. Following from the hypothesis that tattoos will be regarded as deviant, it can be similarly hypothesized that those who experience marital disruption in the home—as an aspect of social disorganization—will be more likely to have a tattoo than those without such family disruption.

Social Control Theory

Travis Hirschi's well-known criminological theory, social control theory, argued that social bonds to conventional society are an important factor in abstaining from delinquent behavior. Social bonds are formed through attachments to others (parents, peers, school), commitment to and investment in conventional activity, involvement in conventional behavior, and belief in conventional and moral values (Hirschi, 1969). Krohn and Massey (1980) state that these bonds represent "a stake in conformity which serves to control deviance" (Krohn & Massey, 1980, p. 531). It can thus be hypothesized that those who have fewer social bonds to

conventional society and less "stakes in conformity" will be more likely to have a tattoo than those who have a greater number of social bonds.

Differential Association Theory

Edwin Sutherland's differential association theory took a different approach to explaining crime. Rather than looking at multiple situational factors associated with increases in crime, Sutherland looked at the connection between the society and the individual to explain how individuals *learn* criminal behavior by communicating and interacting with others (Sutherland, 1947; Matsueda, 1988). Thus according to differential association theory, individuals learn from others both the skills needed to commit a crime, as well as the motivations to either engage in or avoid criminal behavior. According to Sutherland, individuals engage in criminal behavior when they learn "an excess of definitions favorable to law violation over definitions unfavorable to law violation" (Sutherland, 1947; Matsueda, 1988, p. 281). Following from this theory, it can be expected that individuals who are surrounded by others who participate in deviant activity will learn both how and why they should also engage in deviant behavior. Relevant to the current study, it is hypothesized that the students who have a greater number of friends and family with tattoos will be more likely to have a tattoo themselves compared to students who do not know many others with tattoos. In addition, this theory may also help to explain *why* individuals decide to get tattoos in the first place; it may be that someone decided to get a tattoo because he or she knew other people with tattoos at the time.

The third question this study attempts to examine is *why* college students get tattoos amidst a society that has traditionally deemed, and is still predicted to deem, the behavior as deviant. Although there is no specific hypothesis for this question since this will be explored in a more qualitative nature through content analysis, it is expected that identity theory, techniques of

neutralization, and social learning theory will have a considerable impact on why people decide to get tattoos.

Identity Theory

There are two aspects of identity that may cause a person to decide to get a tattoo: individual and group identity. Relevant to this study is the work on individual identity by Blanton and Christie (2003) who proposed a theory entitled deviance regulation theory (Blanton & Christie, 2003). According to this theory, people maintain a positive identity by differing and "standing out from others" in good ways. In other words, people choose "desirable" ways to deviate from the norm in order to maintain their positive personal identity. People may choose to get tattoos because they see it as a desirable way of sticking out from the larger population. For example, they may think that tattoos look "cool" or "cute", feel rebellious, or see tattoos as an art form, mark of self-expression, or personal meaning. Those who see tattoos as desirable in this way may choose to get one as a way to uphold their personal identity. Another aspect of identity that may cause people to get tattoos is that of group or social identity. In their study of social identity theory, Ashforth and Mael (1989) proposed that an individual partly defines himself or herself in terms of "salient group memberships" and that this sense of "belongingness" to the particular group constitutes part of an individual's identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 34). Individuals, then, engage in activities to promote identification with the group. Thus, people may get tattoos in order to identify with a religion, team, or other public or private group.

Techniques of Neutralization

Those who participate in delinquent activities may experience guilt over their actions. As a result, delinquents may justify their actions as being acceptable or even morally correct in an attempt to avoid negative judgment from society. Sykes and Matza (1957) described these

justifications as "techniques of neutralization". The theory explains that people who participate in deviant behavior may rid themselves of the stigma by denying the responsibility for their actions, denying that injury or harm was involved, denying that there was a true victim, condemning the condemners, or by appealing to higher loyalties (Sykes & Matza, 1957). Although those who get tattoos are not breaking the law, engaging in deviant behavior that is susceptible to stigmatization from society may lead the deviant to experience guilt over their behavior. As a result, the individual with a tattoo may engage in neutralization techniques in order to justify his or her deviant actions. For example, a person with a tattoo may say that they got the tattoo in order to honor someone who died. Though this is a venerable gesture nonetheless, the deviant can perhaps be said to be denying responsibility for the tattoo by saying that it was entirely the result of the deceased and that they did not truly get it for themselves.

Social Learning Theory

In addition to Sutherland's differential association theory, social learning theory may also explain how interactions with others in the environment may leave some people with a desire to get a tattoo. Derived by psychologist Albert Bandura, social learning theory states that people learn certain behaviors through observational learning. More specifically, individuals in society *model* a particular behavior, and others *observe* and *imitate* this behavior and may be positively reinforced for doing so (Bandura, 1977). Thus, it can be expected that some people decided to get a tattoo because they observed others with a tattoo and subsequently imitated the behavior of these people. As a result, having known other people with tattoos is a likely explanation for why some people decide to get tattoos in the first place. In addition, observing others in the media and other such influences such as television shows and magazine articles that constantly reinforce a "tattoo-culture" may also lead some consumers to decide to get a tattoo.

THE CURRENT STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine college students' attitudes toward tattoos in regards to deviance. The goal of this research is to discover whether or not college students generally perceive tattoos to be deviant. In addition, demographic information gathered from the sample will also illustrate whether the same theoretical factors that predict greater involvement in deviant and criminal behavior can also be used to predict whether or not someone will have a tattoo. Finally, this study also seeks to identify reasons for getting a tattoo and to examine how students who have at least one tattoo are treated by, or are perceived to be treated by, the larger society.

METHOD

Participants

The sample for this study included a total of 167 participants. Among those, 45% were males and 55% were females. Students ranged in age from 18 years to 24 or more years with the majority of the sample (70%) in the age range of 21-23 years. There were several races identified in the sample (73% White/Caucasian, 11% Black/African American, 6% Hispanic/Latino, 4% Asian, 1% Middle Eastern, and 5% were classified as "Other"). Participants were a mix of sophomores (3%), juniors (35%), and seniors (62%).

Approximately half of the participants were recruited during the Fall 2012 semester and the other half were recruited during the Spring 2013 semester at The Pennsylvania State University. Both groups of participants were enrolled in the same undergraduate 400-level Sociology of Deviance course offered both semesters. There were no exclusion criteria for participating in the study, and in addition, no deception was used as the students were totally

informed about the purpose of the research and the procedures to be followed. All of the students provided implied informed consent to participate.

Materials

The data for this study were collected from the students' responses on a six-page survey (refer to the Appendix for the complete survey). The survey was broken into three parts; each part was designed to collect data for each of the three research questions posited in the beginning of this study.

The first section of the survey asked students to provide demographic information such as gender, age, class standing, race/ethnicity, religious affiliation, and whether or not the student has a tattoo. These questions were included primarily to describe the sample as well as to measure which types of students have tattoos and which do not. In addition, several questions were included to analyze the second hypothesis of the study: theories that predict involvement in deviant or criminal behavior including social disorganization theory, social bond theory, and differential association theory can also be used to predict whether or not someone has a tattoo. As mentioned above, marital disruption in the home is hypothesized to increase the probability that someone will have a tattoo. More specifically, those living in a single-parent home will be more likely to have a tattoo than those living in a two-parent home. Thus the students were asked to provide the martial status of their parents as a measure of social disorganization. The four components of social control theory were also examined through individual responses on the survey which combined to measure the students' amount of social bonds to conventional society (the hypothesis is that fewer social bonds will be associated with a likelihood of having a tattoo). Thus, attachments to others (for example, school) was measured by having students rate how often they skip classes during the week. Commitment to and investment in conventional activity

was measured through the students' GPA (a measure of how much time and effort they put into homework and getting good grades). The students' involvement in conventional behavior was in fact measured by asking their level of involvement in unconventional behaviors such as being arrested, being convicted of a felony, shoplifting, smoking marijuana, using other recreational drugs, and cheating on a college exam. Thus, students who do not report many of these involvements can be said to be more involved in conventional behavior. Finally, belief in conventional and moral values was measured by asking students their religion (analyzed as any religion versus no religion/Atheist) and how important religion is to their daily lives. Differential association theory was measured by asking the students how many close friends and family members have tattoos. As stated, it is predicted that individuals that know many others with tattoos will be more likely to have a tattoo themselves over others who do not know many others with tattoos.

In order to investigate the first question and related hypothesis of this study, the second section of the survey asked participants to rate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with ten statements that overall were designed to measure a student's attitude about whether or not he or she sees tattoos as deviant. All of the ten questions the students were asked to respond to are based on sociological concepts in the study of deviance which lends validity to this part of the survey. For example, the ninth question ("When I find out that someone has a tattoo I didn't know about, I think of that person more negatively afterwards") is rooted in the concept of stigma, which was addressed earlier in this thesis. Another concept in deviance studies is the idea of social distancing in which "normals" (non-deviants) avoid the deviant or terminate an existing relationship with him or her. This is usually done in order to avoid being stigmatized for being associated with the deviant, also known as "courtesy stigma". The second question on the survey

("I do not want to associate myself with people who have tattoos") gets at both of these concepts. The rest of the questions in this part of the survey are either grounded in concepts of deviance or within the definition of deviance itself. Thus, the attitudes measured for each question were expected to also generalize to overall attitudes about deviance in accordance.

The third and last part of the survey was for only those students who had a tattoo (or tattoos) at the time of participation. This part of the survey was intended to examine the third question of the study which asks why people decide to get tattoos in the first place amidst a society that has traditionally deemed, and is still predicted to deem, the behavior as deviant. As stated, this section is largely open-ended and thus was analyzed more qualitatively than the other two sections. Mentioned above, predictions were made about theories that may explain why people may get tattoos: identity theory, techniques of neutralization, and social learning theory. The accompanying reasons that students acknowledged for why they got their tattoos (team/group membership, self-expression, to honor someone who died, knowing other people with tattoos, etcetera) are included in this section. In addition, students were asked whether they have ever felt stigmatized by others for having a tattoo, who they have been stigmatized by, whether they have ever hidden their tattoo, and if they have any regrets about getting their tattoo. These last questions were used as additional indicators as to whether or not tattoos are still perceived to be deviant in today's society in congruence with the first hypothesis of the study.

Procedure

Students enrolled in the Fall 2012 Sociology of Deviance course were informed about the study and were encouraged to participate by staying after class to take the survey. Students were told the survey would take about 15 minutes of their time and upon completion, they would each be compensated with extra credit added to their final grade in the course. Participation was

entirely voluntary and approximately 80 students opted to complete the survey after class. Students were first read a verbal informed consent form and then the survey was distributed to each student thereafter. To keep survey responses confidential, students were asked not to put their names on the survey, and instead, to sign their name on a separate sheet of paper in order to receive extra credit for their participation.

Students enrolled in the Spring 2013 Sociology of Deviance course were similarly informed about the study and asked to participate through e-mail. This time, however, the survey was held at designated times in a separate room on campus. The students were therefore asked to sign up for one of six time slots if they were interested in participating. Again, approximately 80 students completed the survey and received extra credit for their participation. During each time slot, the procedure of administering the survey was the same as that mentioned prior in regards to informed consent, survey distribution, and confidentiality of the responses.

RESULTS

There were a total of 167 participants included in the survey. As shown in Table 1, 19.8% of participants had a tattoo and 80.2% of the sample did not. General demographic variables including gender, age, class standing, and race were first tested to see whether they had any effect on the incidence of someone having a tattoo. Using Pearson's chi-square test for independence (χ^2), a statistically significant relationship was found between gender and having a tattoo at the $\alpha= 0.05$ level ($\chi^2=5.17$, $p= 0.023$). Twelve percent of the males had a tattoo whereas the females were more than twice as likely to have one with 26.1% of the females in the sample adorned with a tattoo. The relationship between age and having a tattoo was also statistically

significant with 10.5% of 18-20 year olds with a tattoo, 20.5% of 21-23 year olds with a tattoo, and 45.5% of individuals 24 or over with a tattoo (χ^2= 6.63, *p*= 0.036). Class standing was not significantly related to having a tattoo. In addition, there was no significant relationship found between race (White versus non-White) and having a tattoo.

Table 1. The relationship between sample characteristics and the percentage with a tattoo and mean deviance attitude score		
	% with a Tattoo	Deviance attitude (*mean*)
Overall sample (N=167)	19.8%	1.79
Gender *		
Male	12.0%	1.79
Female	26.1%	1.80
Age *		
18-20	10.5%	1.77
21-23	20.5%	1.82
24+	45.5%	1.61
Class standing		
Sophomore	0.0%	1.70
Junior	20.7%	1.76
Senior	20.2%	1.82
Race		
White	18.7%	1.81
Non-White	22.7%	1.75
Marital status of parents ^		
Two-parent home	20.3%	1.86
Single-parent home	19.4%	1.74
# Friends and family with tattoos * ^		
0	14.3%	2.00
1-5	12.1%	1.84
6-10	31.0%	1.71
11-20	31.2%	1.66

How often do you skip classes? * ^		
Skip any class	27.2%	1.73
Never skip any class	12.8%	1.85
GPA ^		
Less than or equal to 3.00	26.3%	1.64
Greater than or equal to 3.01	17.8%	1.84
# Unconventional behaviors participated in ^		
0	11.5%	1.80
1	18.6%	1.82
2	12.5%	1.84
3	36.8%	1.79
4	16.7%	1.59
5	0.0%	1.65
6	50.0%	1.70
Religious affiliation ^		
Any religion	17.1%	1.85
No religion/Atheist	21.2%	1.64
Importance of religion in daily life? ^		
Very important	29.6%	1.93
Somewhat important	14.5%	1.83
Not at all important	21.9%	1.69
Do you have a tattoo? ^		
No	0.0%	1.83
Yes	19.8%	1.62

a. * Denotes a statistically significant result ($p < 0.05$) for the cross-tabulation chi-square test between % with a Tattoo and the grouped variables on the left side of the table at the $\alpha = 0.05$ level.

b. ^ Denotes a statistically significant result ($p < 0.05$) for the t-test between the deviance attitude mean score, and the grouped variables on the left side of the table at the $\alpha = 0.05$ level.

c. *Note*. Some variables with more than two groups that denote significance may only be significant in the comparison of means between specific groups within the variable.

d. *Note*. Higher mean scores (*M*) on the deviance attitude scale represent more agreement with the belief that tattoos are deviant (*M* of 1.0 = lowest possible deviance attitude; *M* of 2.0 = neutral deviance attitude; *M* of 3.0 = highest possible deviance attitude).

In addition to testing these general demographic variables on whether they had an effect on the incidence of someone having a tattoo, several cross-tabulations were computed to test the second hypothesis of the study which stated that theories predicting involvement in deviant or criminal behavior including social disorganization theory, social control theory, and differential association theory can also be used to predict whether or not someone has a tattoo. Data for the students' recorded marital status of parents were coded into either "two-parent home" or "single-parent home". Those living in a single-parent home were used as a measure of social disorganization. This theory was not significantly supported in that those living in either type of home were equally likely to have a tattoo (20.3% of those in a two-parent home had a tattoo and 19.4% of those in a single-parent home had a tattoo). As stated, the students' level of social bonds were measured by how often they skip class, their GPA, the number of unconventional behaviors they have participated in, their religious affiliation, and how important they think religion is in their daily lives. This theory was also generally not supported. The only statistically significant relationship found within the social bonds of social control theory was between how often a student skips classes during the week and the likelihood of having a tattoo. Out of those that skip at least one class during the week, 27.2% had a tattoo while only 12.8% of those that never skip any class during the week had a tattoo ($\chi^2 = 5.43$, $p = 0.020$). Differential association theory, however, was supported in predicting the incidence of a student having a tattoo. As mentioned, this theory was assessed by asking students to report how many of their friends and family had a tattoo. Of participants saying they knew 0 friends and family with a tattoo, 14.3% had a tattoo themselves, 12.1% of those knowing 1-5 people with a tattoo had one themselves, while 31.0% of those knowing 6-10 people with a tattoo had one themselves and 31.2% of those

knowing 11-20 people with a tattoo had one themselves. This finding was statistically significant (χ^2= 8.30, p= 0.040).

Data for the second section of the survey were examined in order to test the first hypothesis, which stated that the majority of college students' attitudes toward tattoos would indicate that they are still perceived to be deviant in today's society. As mentioned, each participant in this section rated how strongly they agreed or disagreed with ten statements that were designed to measure a student's attitude about whether or not he or she sees tattoos as deviant. In order to calculate a student's "deviance attitude", his or her responses to each of the 10 questions were summed (1= "strongly disagree/disagree", 2= "neutral", 3= "agree/strongly agree") and then averaged so each student had a "score" between 1.0 and 3.0 with a score of 1.0 indicating the highest level of disagreement with the belief that tattoos are deviant, and a score of 3.0 indicating the highest level of agreement with the belief that tattoos are deviant. To test the first hypothesis, the mean deviance attitude score for the entire sample was calculated. The overall deviance attitude mean for the sample was M=1.79 which indicates that the majority of the college students in the sample disagree that tattoos are deviant in today's society, while some students were "neutral" (*Min.*=1.20, *Max.*= 3.00, *SD*= 0.35). While this finding does not support the first hypothesis in that tattoos were expected to be perceived as deviant, it is certainly telling in and of itself.

Although the results showed that the overall sample does not perceive tattoos to be deviant, several variables were tested further to see which kinds of participants thought tattoos were more deviant than others. To do this, the mean deviance attitude scores for groups of participants were compared using an independent samples, two-tailed t-test (*t*) to check for a significant difference between group means. Although most means were in the 1.0 to 2.0 attitude

range, significant differences between group means were recorded to show that there are

particular groups of participants indicating more agreement with the belief that tattoos are

deviant over other groups. Group means within the variables gender (male versus female), age

(18-20 years versus 21-23 years versus 24 years or older), race (White versus non-White), and

class standing (sophomore versus junior versus senior) were not found to be significantly

different at the α= 0.05 level. However, several significant differences were found between

group means of other variables. When comparing deviance attitude means within the variable

marital status of parents, participants in a two-parent home were significantly more likely to

agree that tattoos are deviant versus participants living in single-parent home (t= 2.28, p= 0.024).

Participants who had a GPA greater than or equal to 3.01 also were significantly more likely to

agree that tattoos are deviant versus those with a GPA of less than or equal to 3.00 (t=3.24,

p=0.001). When comparing means between participants who knew 0 friends and family with

tattoos versus those who knew 6-10 friends and family with tattoos, those who knew 0 friends

and family were significantly more likely to agree that tattoos are deviant than those knowing 6-

10 people with tattoos (t=2.16, p= 0.036). There were also significant differences in the means

for those knowing 0 friends and family with tattoos versus those knowing 11-20 friends and

family with tattoos (t=2.56, p= 0.018) and in the means for those knowing 1-5 friends and family

with tattoos versus those knowing 6-10 friends and family with tattoos (t=2.01, p= 0.046). The

means between those knowing 1-5 friends and family with tattoos and those knowing 11-20

friends and family with tattoos was barely significant (t=1.97, p= 0.051). In each of these

significant differences, those who knew *less* friends and family with tattoos agreed more that

tattoos are deviant than did their counterparts. There were no significant differences between

those knowing 0 friends and family with tattoos and those knowing 1-5 friends and family with

tattoos, and with those knowing 6-10 friends and family with tattoos and those knowing 11-20 friends and family with tattoos. There were also significant differences in the means for those students who skip any class during the week versus those who never skip any class during the week with the latter students agreeing more that that tattoos are deviant (t=2.30, p= 0.022).

Students who participated in only one unconventional behavior were significantly more likely to agree that tattoos are deviant compared to those who had participated in four unconventional behaviors (t= 2.09, p= 0.041). Those who participated in two unconventional behaviors were also significantly more likely to agree that tattoos are deviant compared to those who had participated in four unconventional behaviors (t= 2.26, p= 0.028). No other group means that were compared within this variable were significant. Of the participants who had any religion versus those who had no religion or were described as Atheist, those who had any religion were significantly more likely to agree that tattoos are deviant compared to those with no religion (t=3.08, p=0.002). Accordingly, participants who said religion was important in their daily life (very important or somewhat important) were significantly more likely to agree that tattoos are deviant over those saying religion was not at all important to them (t=3.19, p= 0.002). There was no significant difference in group means between those saying religion is very important to them and those saying it is somewhat important to them in their daily lives.

As expected, there was a significant difference in means between those who have a tattoo and those who do not with the participants who do not have a tattoo agreeing more that tattoos are deviant than those who have a tattoo (t= 3.27, p= 0.001). Among the participants who have a tattoo, there were no significant differences in means between those who do and do not feel stigmatized for having a tattoo, those who have and have not hidden their tattoo, those who have and do not have regrets about their tattoo, those who were and were not of legal age when getting

their first tattoo, and between those who do and do not mostly associate with others who have tattoos.

As described above, the third and last section of the survey was limited to participants who had at least one tattoo. This section was largely qualitative. It addressed the questions of why people decide to get tattoos in the first place, as well as what kinds of tattoos people get and how they feel about their current ones. The most common tattoo (54.5% of the sample with tattoos) was a benign image of sorts, such as a flower, animal, or star. Other less frequent tattoos included a known symbol (39.4%), a saying (33.3%), a religious symbol (24.2%), a personal symbol (15.2%), the name or initials of a person (6.1%), the initials of an organization (6.1%), a quote (3.0%), and a tribal symbol (3.0%).

Participants also checked off several reasons for why they decided to get their first tattoo. As mentioned, it was expected that identity theory, techniques of neutralization, and social learning theory would play a considerable part in why the students decided to get a tattoo in the first place. It was mentioned that there were two aspects to identity: individual identity and group identity. The results show that individual identity had a larger influence than group identity for why people get tattoos. In addition, individual identity was the most significant reason for why people decided to get tattoos overall. Only one participant said that team/group membership was a reason for getting his or her first tattoo, while reasons related to individual identity were mentioned 63 times by participants (20 people said they liked how tattoos looked, 9 people said they liked how tattoos made them feel, 19 people said they got their first tattoo as part of self-expression/identity, and 15 people said they got their tattoo as part of a personal inspirational message to live by).

As stated, it was expected that people would mention that they got tattoos in order to honor someone who died, as a possible technique of neutralization to justify getting the tattoo by placing more responsibility on the deceased as a reason for getting the tattoo rather than on personal desire. Twenty-four percent of those who had a tattoo mentioned this reason as a factor in why they decided to get a tattoo. Although the meaning of these data cannot be interpreted with certainty, techniques of neutralization as they relate to tattoos are certainly an interesting consideration.

Lastly, it was mentioned that social learning theory would have a substantial impact on why people decide to get tattoos. Surprisingly (especially with the significant data found earlier in which those individuals knowing increasing numbers of friends and family with tattoos are more likely to have one themselves), only 3% of those with tattoos mentioned that they knew other people with tattoos as a reason for getting one themselves. Other reasons included: honoring a particular time/event in my life (7.1%), honoring someone currently in my life (3.6%), religious reasons (3.0%), and as a spontaneous decision/had no real meaning (2.4%).

Participants were also asked a series of questions intended to shed additional light on whether tattoos are perceived as deviant in our society. Consistent with the prior data in this study showing that tattoos are not perceived to be deviant, the experience of those with tattoos in this sample generally did not parallel the experience of other deviants in our society. The majority of the sample stated that they do not feel stigmatized by others for having a tattoo (66.7%), do not have any regrets about their tattoo (78.8%), and do not associate mostly with others who have a tattoo (72.7%). The majority of students mentioned that their tattoo (or tattoos) "has meaning to them" and is "a part of who they are". Despite this, the majority of

students with a tattoo reported that they have, at some point, hidden their tattoo or pretended they didn't have one (53.3%). This will be discussed in the next section.

DISCUSSION

It was originally expected that the majority of college students in this study would perceive tattoos to be deviant based on two notions embedded within the literature on tattoos. First, tattoos were largely believed to be subject to stigmatization based upon their traditional association with convicts, bikers, and other "low life people" as mentioned by DeMello (1995). In addition, tattoos were perceived to be a highly visible violation of conventional appearance norms as noted by Irwin (2003) and perhaps even seen as an abomination of the body likely to elicit negative reactions from others as defined by Goffman (1963). Second, Adams (2009) noted that "difference" is the new norm which could suggest that the very idea that tattoos are deviant may be appealing to people and could explain the rise in their prevalence both on human bodies and in the media as people increasingly use tattoos as an avenue to conform to the new norm.

Despite this, the results of this study overwhelmingly support the notion that college students generally do not consider tattoos to be deviant in today's society. Though the original hypothesis that predicted the contrary was not supported, the finding that tattoos are generally not perceived as deviant is a significant discovery in and of itself. As it was shown, the mean deviance attitude score for the overall sample was a 1.79 denoting that the majority of students disagreed that tattoos are deviant, while some others were neutral to this statement. Though each group mean stayed at or below a 2.00 (neutral), there were several significant differences between group means showing particular groups of participants indicating more disagreement with the belief that tattoos are deviant over other groups. It was intriguing to find that group

characteristics that tend to produce more involvement in deviant behavior also resulted in the finding that tattoos are not perceived to be as deviant in these groups as they are in their counterpart groups. For example, those living in a single-parent home, those who knew fewer friends and family with tattoos, those that skip classes during the week, those with a lower GPA, those who participate in more unconventional behaviors, those that identified with no religion, and those that thought religion was not at all important in their daily life all perceived tattoos as less deviant than their counterparts. These characteristics were used as a measurement of several theories predicting involvement in deviant and criminal behavior as part of the second research question of this study (social disorganization theory, social control theory, and differential association theory). Though these measurements may not predict the *behavior* of getting a tattoo (as evidenced by an unsupported second hypothesis, as will be discussed later), it is possible that they have some influence in *attitudes* regarding the deviance of tattoos. Those more likely to be involved in criminal behavior are probably less inclined to see situations, people, and behavior as "deviant", tattoos included. Implications for the elaboration of these results should be taken with caution, however, since it should be reiterated that the results show that on average college students, no matter what background factors are present or not present, generally do not see tattoos as deviant.

Following from the earlier finding that tattoos are not perceived to be deviant, the second hypothesis was also generally not supported in that theories predicting involvement in deviant and criminal behavior do not necessarily predict the likelihood that someone will have a tattoo. Reflecting Shaw and McKay's (1942) social disorganization theory and Sampson's (1987) work on marital disruption and its direct effects on crime and delinquency rates, it was expected that participants living in a single-parent home would be more likely to have a tattoo than those living

in a two-parent home. This was not the case; in fact, participants in both household types were equally likely to have a tattoo. In addition, Hirschi's (1969) social control theory was also generally not supported in predicting the likelihood of a tattoo. Following from Hirschi's argument that social bonds to conventional society are an important factor in abstaining from delinquent behavior, it was expected that those with fewer social bonds to conventional society would be more likely to have a tattoo. As mentioned, the amount of social bonds a student had was measured by how often the student skips classes (attachment to school), their GPA (commitment and investment in conventional activity), the number of unconventional behaviors they have participated in (involvement in conventional behavior), their religious affiliation, and how important religion is to their daily lives (belief in conventional and moral values). The only social bond measure that was a significant predictor of having a tattoo was how often the student skips classes during the week, with those skipping any class significantly more likely to have a tattoo than those who never skip any class.

This finding could offer support for a difference between those who take school or other "professional settings" seriously and those that do not. Perhaps those who do not have a tattoo and are not considering one may say they do not want to make a bad impression in a job interview or perhaps they want to avoid having an employer think differently of them if they have a tattoo. These individuals may take the "professional" look seriously and subsequently refrain from getting a tattoo. Those that skip classes or are less invested in school or another professional setting may be more likely to get a tattoo because they simply do not care about "looking the part". This interpretation would be interesting to study in future research. Despite the relationship found that individuals who skip classes during the week were significantly more likely to have a tattoo than those who do not skip any classes, social control theory does not

generally predict the incidence of having a tattoo as was evidenced by four out of five insignificant test results for social bonds. Though social disorganization theory and social control theory may predict greater involvement in criminal, delinquent, or deviant behavior and may even predict attitudes on whether or not tattoos will be perceived as more or less deviant as delineated above, they do not predict the likelihood of having a tattoo in this study. This is a logical outcome when considering the results showing that tattoos are not perceived to be deviant in the first place.

The third theory tested, differential association theory, however was a significant predictor of the likelihood of having a tattoo. Results overwhelmingly showed that students who knew friends and family with tattoos were more likely to have a tattoo themselves. The incidence of having a tattoo increased simultaneously when the number of friends and family with tattoos known to the student also increased. Though originally used as a predictor of involvement in deviant behavior, perhaps the conceptual ideas behind differential association theory can be applied to behavior that is considered non-deviant as well. Individuals without a tattoo can learn from those that have tattoos both the skills needed to get a tattoo (what to get, where to get one, and how to get one), as well as the motivations for getting a tattoo. Others may show off their tattoo, tell others how "cool" it is to have one, or how meaningful the experience of getting one was. In this way, those with tattoos give favorable definitions toward them, and in turn, provide the motivation for those without a tattoo to ultimately decide to get one themselves. In addition, it seems that the attitudes and behaviors of friends and family is generally a better indicator of tattoo behavior than what social disorganization theory and social control theory are likely to predict, especially during the college years. College is an incredibly social experience. Without parental supervision in a new environment, the socialization process whereby students learn what

the "norms" are for college culture is entirely dependent upon friends and peers. Students

observe others' behavior, internalize those norms, and consequently imitate them in order to "fit

in" to the society and conform to expectations. This may go something like, "if they're doing it, I

should do it too". Tattoo behavior could act the same way. Though they may not be deviant per

se, tattoos are still very noticeable in that they catch people's attention. College students,

especially, may take notice of tattoos adorned on their friends and family and see it as another

"norm" to conform to. Observing *several* friends and family with tattoos makes the desire to

conform to this "norm" even more salient. Thus, the significant relationship found between the

number of friends and family with tattoos and the increasing likelihood of having a tattoo makes

sense in this context, especially within the realm of impressionable college students.

Despite the fact that this research found considerable evidence that tattoos are neither

perceived to be deviant in today's society nor explained by theories that predict deviant behavior,

arguably the most fascinating finding in the entire study is that the majority of students in this

sample have already hidden their tattoo or say they would hide it if they had one. Out of the

participants with tattoos, 53.3% said they have hidden their tattoo and 61.4% of all participants

in the overall sample agreed to the statement, "If I had (or currently have) a tattoo, I would try to

hide it from certain people". According to Erving Goffman, those with a stigma (or some

deviant, non-normative characteristic) try and manage the tension of having one in a social

setting by either hiding it or by downplaying the stigma's visibility. Those who have a stigma

that is unknown to others use a "passing" technique in order to hide the stigma and appear as

"normal". Those who have a stigma that is known to others but still wish to downplay its

visibility in certain settings may "cover" the stigma (Goffman, 1963). Individuals with a tattoo

may try to "pass" or "cover" their tattoo by hiding it in situations where they deem stigmatization

to be imminent, for example in the workplace or in an interview, in school, or around certain family members.

Several of the participants in the study who had a tattoo stated that the reason they do not regret their tattoo is because it is in a place where they can hide it. The survey asked participants, "Do you have any regrets about getting your tattoo and if no, why not?" Some of the responses included, "Because I can hide it for when I get a professional job", "Because they are all in places that are hidden", "It is in a place I can easily hide it so only those I want to see it can", "It isn't noticeable", and "It is in a place where if I need to hide it to be professional I can". A number of participants (17.3% of the overall sample) stated that they are not considering getting a tattoo because they want to avoid negative assumptions from others—most commonly stated to be employers and family members. All but one of these individuals, or 96.6%, also stated that they agreed that they would hide a tattoo if they had one. The association between wanting to avoid negative assumptions from others and wanting to hide a tattoo is not a coincidence, and was in fact a statistically significant relationship in this study (χ^2= 11.76, *p*= 0.003).

These results bring up an interesting predicament when considering the totality of the study. Why do students feel they need to avoid negative assumptions from others or hide their tattoo while at the same time claim that they do not perceive tattoos as deviant? Perhaps it is possible that while college students themselves do not perceive tattoos to be deviant, they think that *others* still perceive them to be deviant, namely the older population and those in a professional setting. And maybe they really do. Out of those that stated they have "felt stigmatized by others for having a tattoo", the majority of those they felt stigmatized by included members from the older or professional populations. Responses included, "older people", "adults mainly and professionals", "employers", "people in the professional world", "Grandma",

"family", "my parents", "Dad". And as mentioned, those that are not considering getting a tattoo because they want to avoid negative assumptions from others likewise named employers and family members as those they want to avoid negative assumptions from the most. Thus, these results suggest possible gaps between age and setting on *perceptions* of whether tattoos are deviant. Though college students may not perceive tattoos to be deviant themselves, they may perceive a deviant attitude toward tattoos to still exist in the older and professional populations. This, then, may be why college students feel compelled to engage in stigma management techniques such as hiding a tattoo in certain situations in order to reduce the traditional deviance associated with it even though they do not perceive tattoos to be deviant themselves.

CONCLUSION

The most significant limitation of this study is the generalizability of the results to other populations. The sample for this study was unfortunately quite homogeneous. The students were all around the same age, were in very similar majors, and were all taking the same course. As mentioned, the class the sample came from was entitled The Sociology of Deviance. Thus, the specific students who opted to take this class in the first place may naturally see things as less deviant because they are the ones that are willing to learn about it. In addition, taking the class teaches you to see things "naturalistically", in other words, to understand a deviant from his or her point of view. Perceiving deviants in this way may subsequently change what types of behavior and how many behaviors you see as deviant. For the students that were given the survey near the end of the Sociology of Deviance course in the fall semester, their newfound "naturalistic" view of deviance may have influenced and lowered their perceptions about how deviant tattoos are. Though seeing things from a "naturalistic" point of view is actually

beneficial to both personal growth and the growth of society, only sampling students who possess this quality is not representative of the larger population of college students who have not learned this "naturalistic" point of view toward deviance. Thus, this study and its external validity would be improved by sampling college students from several different areas of study.

Another limitation in this study involved the internal validity of certain measures of deviance. It is uncertain whether the students' combined responses to the ten questions in the second part of the survey is a truly accurate measure of their overall attitude toward tattoos and whether or not they are perceived to be deviant. In addition, it is unclear weather the marital status of parents, social bond indicators (how often a student skips classes, GPA, involvement in unconventional behaviors, religious affiliation, and how important religion is to daily life), and the combined number of family and friends with tattoos are the best measures of social disorganization theory, social control theory, and differential association theory, respectively. Thus, a future study should seek to improve these measures to see whether similar results are found for the first and second hypotheses.

In addition to sampling other college students from different areas of study and improving measures, there is another important direction for future research that is derived from the results of this study. As mentioned, results suggest that the younger population of college students may perceive that both the older population and the professional population continue to view tattoos as deviant, even though the college students themselves do not perceive tattoos to be deviant. In addition, since results showed that college students feel disproportionately stigmatized for having a tattoo from both of these populations, the perception that a deviant attitude toward tattoos exists in the older and professional populations may be valid. Thus, a future study should survey both the older population and professional population to see whether

there is a true difference of deviance attitude means between these populations and that of the population of college students. If there is a significant difference in which either or both of the older and professional populations see tattoos as deviant versus the college students' non-deviant attitude toward tattoos, an age-related gap could exist as well as variance in deviance attitudes by setting. If there is no significant difference between the attitude toward tattoos of college students and that of older and professional populations, it could suggest that society as a whole is becoming more accepting of tattoos in mainstream culture.

In a society that obligates its members to abide by and uphold strict expectations, tattoos have traditionally been seen as a noticeable violation of our culture's identity standards. Associated with convicts, bikers, and other "low life people", tattoos have acted as a visible stigma evoking negative attributions and stereotypes from others in society (DeMello, 1995). As a result, tattoos and those who have them have been traditionally considered to be rebellious, delinquent, and overall deviant within mainstream culture. But with the increasing prevalence of tattoos both on human bodies and in the media, it was suggested that tattoos are perhaps becoming more accepted as part of conventional culture. Some studies have suggested that tattoos are now being recognized as trendy, artistic, and may even be used as an avenue to conform to a new cultural trend that values "difference" over conformity (Kosut, 2006; Adams, 2009). Does this newfound "tattoo-culture" indicate a changing societal view on tattoos and the traditional deviant image they have been associated with?

Results from this study suggest that for at least college students, tattoos are no longer perceived to be deviant. But before concluding that this finding marks a changing societal view on how tattoos are perceived, it has also been revealed that college students still continue to hide their tattoos from others. It is thus possible that although not perceiving tattoos to be deviant

themselves, perhaps due to their awareness of and participation in "tattoo-culture", college students may think that *others* still perceive them to be deviant, namely those in the older population as well as those in a professional setting. It was also found that, due to the stigmatization felt by college students from both the older and professional populations for having a tattoo, perhaps there really is an age-related or situational gap in attitudes toward tattoos between these populations and the population of college students. The *perception* that a deviant attitude toward tattoos exists in older and professional populations combined with the *actual* stigmatization observed from these populations is likely the motivating factor behind students' engagement in stigma management techniques, such as hiding a tattoo in certain situations to reduce the traditional deviance associated with it despite not perceiving tattoos to be deviant themselves. As suggested, this discrepancy would be a useful target for future research endeavors.

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APPENDIX: STUDY SURVEY

INSTRUCTIONS: Please indicate which information describes you best by placing an "X" where it is appropriate:

Gender: ____ Male   _____ Female

Age: ____ 18-20 years old   _____ 21-23 years old   ____ 24 years old or more

Class standing: ____ Freshman   ____ Sophomore   ____ Junior   ____ Senior

Major: _____ (if unsure, please put DUS)

Approximate GPA: ____ <1.70 ____ 1.70-2.30 ____ 2.31-3.00 ____ 3.01-3.30

____ 3.31-3.50 ____ 3.51-3.69 ____ 3.70-4.00

Marital status of parents: ____ Married ____ Single/never married ____ Separated

____ Divorced ____ Widowed

Race/Ethnicity: ____ White/Caucasian ____ Black/African American

____ Hispanic/Latino ____ Asian ____ Indian/Native American

____ Pacific Islander ____ Middle Eastern

_____ Other (please specify)

Religious affiliation: ____ Roman Catholic ____ Protestant Christian ____ Jewish

____ Mormon ____ Muslim ____ Hindu ____ Buddhist

____ No religion/Atheist

_____ Other (please specify)

How important is religion in your daily life?

____ Extremely important   ____ Very important   ____ Somewhat important

____ Not at all important

How often do you skip classes during the week?

____ Every class   ____ The majority of my classes   ____ Some of my classes

____ I never skip class

Have you ever done any of the following? (Please check all that apply)

____ Been arrested   ____ Been convicted of a felony   ____ Shoplifted

____ Smoked marijuana   ____Used other recreational drugs

____ Cheated on a college exam

Do you have a tattoo? ____ Yes   ____ No

    If no, are you considering getting a tattoo? ____ Yes   ____ No

    If you answered no, why are you not considering getting a tattoo? (Please check all that apply)

    ____ Religious reasons   ____ Scared of the pain   ____ Too permanent

    ____ Can't think of an image/type   ____ Scared of contracting disease (ex. Hepatitis)

    ____ Parents won't approve of it   ____ Just not for me

    ____ Want to avoid negative assumptions from (check all that apply):

        ____ friends   ____family   ____employers   ____ professors   ____ significant others

        _____ Other (please specify)

Number of close friends with tattoos: _____
Number of immediate family members with tattoos: _____

INSTRUCTIONS: Please read each item and indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement by placing an "X" in the appropriate circle.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	Having a tattoo is rebellious.	O	O	O	O	O
2.	I do not want to associate myself with people who have tattoos.	O	O	O	O	O
3.	I automatically assume negative things about people who have tattoos.	O	O	O	O	O
4.	I automatically assume positive things about people who have tattoos.	O	O	O	O	O
5.	Tattoos violate the rules or norms of my family or community.	O	O	O	O	O
6.	If I had (or currently have) a tattoo, I would try to hide it from certain people.	O	O	O	O	O
7.	I do not think of people who have tattoos as different from those who don't.	O	O	O	O	O
8.	Tattoos are generally accepted by most people in society.	O	O	O	O	O
9.	When I find out that someone has a tattoo I didn't know about, I think of that person more negatively afterwards.	O	O	O	O	O
10.	When I find out that someone has a tattoo I didn't know about, I think of that person more positively afterwards.	O	O	O	O	O

INSTRUCTIONS: If you have at least one tattoo, please answer the following questions. If you do not have a tattoo, please skip the rest of the survey.

The following table asks you to characterize your tattoo(s) by describing what image/type the tattoo is of and where it is located on your body. If you have more than one tattoo, the order in which you record your tattoos does not matter.
Note: If you have more than 10 tattoos, please choose whichever 10 tattoos you would like to describe.

Tattoo	Image/Type	Location
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		

Why did you decide to get your *FIRST* tattoo? (Please check all that apply):

____ Team/group membership

____ I liked how tattoos looked (ex. cool, cute)

____ I liked how tattoos made me feel (ex. rebellious)

____ Self-expression/identity

____ To honor/remember someone who died

____ To honor/remember a particular time or event in my life

____ To honor someone that is currently in my life

____ Constant reminder of an inspirational message to live by

____ Religious reasons

____ I knew other people with tattoos

____ Spontaneous decision/no real meaning

____ Other (please specify): _____

If you have any other tattoos, why did you decide to get more? _____

_____

_____

Do you feel stigmatized by others for having a tattoo? ____ Yes ____ No

If yes, by who? _____

Have you ever hidden your tattoo(s) from those people or pretended you didn't have one? ____Yes ____ No

Do you have any regrets about getting your tattoo(s)? ____ Yes ____ No

    If yes, why? _____

_____

_____

    If no, why not? _____

_____

_____

Were you of legal age when you got your first tattoo? ____ Yes ____ No

Do you tend to associate mostly with others who have tattoos? ____ Yes ____ No

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