

# **Tattoos: The Road to Acceptance in Western Society**

**An exploration of gender, misconceptions, and workplace  
acceptance**

**Savannah Ramion**

**Indiana State University**

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### **Abstract**

The following thesis is to gain a better understanding of tattoo acceptance in Western society by looking at gender in tattoos, the misconceptions and stereotypes that surround the tattooing culture, as well as the acceptance of tattoos in the workplace and how tattooed people feel about their tattoo after receiving one. Tattooing in modern Western culture appeared within men in the armed forces, particularly the navy. The analysis of scholarly essays and journals viewed within this thesis provide multiple explanations on acceptance of tattoos today. Gender, overall, is not a large factor when looking at tattoo acceptance. The main points that gender bring up is that tattooed women are viewed more negatively than tattooed men; feminine and masculine designed tattoos also have an effect on how tattooed people are viewed: feminine or masculine tattoos will add the characteristic to the tattooed person. Not only do the designs of tattoos have an effect on people, misconceptions and stereotypes of tattoos is a large reason why tattoos are not being accepted today. It is still believed that tattooed people are risk takers, promiscuous, heavy drinkers, and partake in the use of illegal drugs. Through studies it has been found that tattooed people and non-tattooed people are not much different than has been previously recorded. The final point is when looking at tattoos in the workplace. Currently visible tattoos are rarely widely accepted within the workplace due to the negative connotation that people have with tattoos.

Keywords: tattoo, gender and tattoos, misconceptions and stereotypes of tattoos, tattoo acceptance, tattoos in the workplace

### Background Information

Body modification comes in multiple forms: piercings, scarification, and tattoos. All processes are different, both in practice and culture. Cultural body modifications have been around for centuries and have made their way to the modern Western culture within the past 100 years. Body modifications, specifically tattoos, have made an impact on Western society in various ways. Tattoos specifically have been scorned in Western society based on different standards of religion and morals. The scorning of tattoos in modern Western culture is not uncommon and any person who has a tattoo will be questioned by those who disagree with the idea of body modifications, specifically those who disagree with tattoos.

Tattoos, being around for centuries, can be fascinating for people where it is not an everyday aspect of life. Archaeologists have found that tattooing has been found on mummies dating back to 3000 BC on Egyptians (Williams, 2014). Tattooed mummies have been found across the globe, showing that the idea of tattooing is not secluded to one type of culture in a specific part of the world. A few countries where tattoos have been found are the following: India, China, Japan, Egypt, and Indonesia (Perzanowski, 2013). Not all of these tattoos are permanent; India has two different types of tattooing processes: henna, a non-permanent form of tattooing with its own reason of practice behind it, and a permanent form of tattooing. Though henna is now a common form of tattooing because it is not permanent there are more cultures, in the past and now, will go with the permanent form of tattooing rather than the non-permanent form.

The reasons that people get tattoos vary; in non-modern Western cultures tattoos are important in ones' identity. In Egypt tattoos were commonly found on women, usually showing

their social status, or on people who were being punished. Being tattooed as a punishment is not uncommon; in Japan men were tattooed, as a punishment, for committing a crime and is now common among people in the Japanese mafia. Other cultures are tattooed for religious purposes, to show survival of war, and to show social status such as slavery.

Tattoos, today, are found on many people for various reasons like they were in the past. People will get tattoos because the tattoo means something to them, it is artistically appealing, to decorate their body with something permanent, and many more. With the idea of getting something, such as a tattoo, permanently placed on ones' body does not come without its hate in Western society. People with tattoos are judged by others because a person has a tattoo or because of a certain tattoo that they have. Judgement comes in the form of questions, comments, and body language. Judgement does not simply stop at whether or not a person has a tattoo; judgement goes much deeper than that.

As a person who has tattoos it is better to understand the types of judgement that comes from those who do not have tattoos. People with tattoos will face judgement from people with tattoos as well; questions generally asked are why someone got a tattoo, what does the tattoo mean, why did someone get the tattoo in a place visible to others, and more. Judgement does not stop at asking questions; judgement all comes in forms of various passing comments such as how a tattooed person will regret their tattoo in the future, a tattooed person will not be able to get a job with their tattoos, a tattooed person wasted their money on a tattoo, and, again, more. With judgement of tattoos comes acceptance of tattoos, even acceptance from those who do not have a tattoo. Today tattoos are common among Western society as a decoration on ones' body; it is understood that the tattoo is permanent and

removal of the tattoo will be difficult. While people will regret tattoos they received early on in life, adults will be tattooed well into their 50's and not regret getting tattooed. Regardless of regret or not for a tattoo, judgement will not stop from passerby's who simply get a glimpse of a visible tattoo.

Even though some people will regret the tattoo that they got when they were young there is still the problem with tattooed people: others are not willing to accept tattoos. Tattoos in the United States of America started with men in the military, mainly those who were in the Navy. Now people of all ages are getting tattooed; the legal age to get tattooed without parental or guardian consent in the United States of America is 18-year-old. Being tattooed takes money, patience, and an artist. Acceptance of tattoos involves two main variables: religion and morals. Anyone with tattoos has received criticism from someone who believes that tattoos are not moral and are breaking rules of their religion. In The Bible, Leviticus 19:18 states "Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the Lord." This bible verse is one that causes problems within the Christian community when talking to those with tattoos. People who take The Bible for face value will tell someone with tattoo that what they have is a sin against God. Tattoos are still being scrutinized by people who have strong beliefs against them such as Christian's who believe that tattoos are sins.

### **Research Questions**

Though tattoos are commonly found within the United States of America and Western society, acceptance of tattoos on people is questionable. Therefore I propose to look into acceptance of tattoos within Western society to see if it has been evolving for better or worse. Various questions must be asked in order to answer the argument. One point to note on tattoo

acceptance are views people have on them when the tattoos are on people of a different gender. Gender has a distinct impression on people: stereotypically women are dainty and fragile while men are strong and aggressive. Gender is a common theme among judgement; looking into the different genders of tattooed people will help expand on acceptance of tattoos: is it more accepted of men to get tattoos or women? This distinction will be my starting point for the acceptance of tattoos.

A second point that is worth noting are what the misconceptions and stereotypes of tattoos and how they affect people who have tattoos. There are many misconceptions of the process of getting tattoos as well as stereotypes put on people who have tattoos. These misconceptions and stereotypes are a hinder to tattoo artists and those with tattoos. By exploring the misconceptions and stereotypes of tattoos I will be able to expand on the hypocrisy and judgement that are received by tattooed people. With this exploration I will be able to state as to whether or not acceptance is growing for those with tattoos.

The final point that I will explore is if tattoos are more accepted today than they have been in the past. With the changing times people are becoming more liberal and viewing topics differently. Now that tattoos are becoming more common in Western society people are forced to think about tattoos more. With the idea of being forced to think about tattoos more than the past it will be beneficial to look at the past and compare it to today. I anticipate that I will run into problems with today's judgement on tattoos such as tattoos in the workplace and tattoos within certain age groups will be a helping factor to determine whether or not tattoos are being accepted more than they have been in the past.

Tattoos have been around for centuries and were originally used for cultural reasons. Found on mummies, it has been noted that tattoos date back to the ancient Egyptians. Noting the past and cultural aspects of tattoos then moves forward to why people in Western societies are tattooed today. Body modification is popular among those in Western societies who wish to decorate their bodies permanently. People with tattoos run into people who judge them for their tattoos based on religion and morals. Having an understanding of judgement on tattooed people by having tattoos myself is the reason for the exploration of tattoo evolution. The main point of exploration for the evolution of tattoo acceptance in Western society will be through the reading and deciphering of journals, articles, and books that have been published within the past 30 years. It is important to find recent articles rather than articles written more than 30 years ago because the main focus will be on today's acceptance of tattoos. If data being found that was collected past the year 1980 will be futile in the purpose of current tattoo acceptance.

### **Introductory section**

The history of tattooing shows that tattoos exist for different reasons: humiliation, punishment, and decoration of the body. The process of tattooing has existed for over two thousand years; scholars believe that tattooing started with the Egyptians. Not only were mummified Egyptians found with tattoos, other later cultures were also discovered to have tattoos such as Vikings, Romans, Britons, Japanese, and Pacific Islanders were also known and found to have tattoos (Williams, 2014). With the knowledge that tattooing has been practiced throughout history, tattoos, today, are straddling the line of acceptance. Acceptance of tattoos has been heavily argued amongst scholars and has been tested by psychologists. Notable points

from various articles speak of tattoos on males and females, misconceptions and stereotypes against people who are tattooed, as well as whether or not tattoos are being accepted today.

Various questions have been answered through tests by scholars within the past fifteen years. Gender is a heavily studied subject with tattooed people; males and females are viewed differently depending on what type of tattoos the person has as well as placement of the tattoos. Beyond gender, tattoos are viewed differently on people of various professions such as surgeons, mechanics, and salespeople. Not only are tattooed workers judged for their tattoos, they also have false stereotypes forced upon them by people who view tattoos negatively. The stereotypes and misconceptions of tattooed people weighs heavily on tattooed people and has been looked at and tested in depth. The main stereotype of a tattooed person is that they are reckless and impulsive when compared to non-tattooed people. Even with the stereotypes and misconceptions of tattooed people, judgement of workers with tattoos, and the differences between different gendered tattooed people it is important to know whether or not tattoos are being accepted within Western culture. Tattoos have been practiced in different cultures; Westerners have adopted and adapted tattooing with technique, practice, and reasons for getting tattoos.

### **Research Analysis**

#### **Tattoos and Genders**

Gender plays a large role in tattoo acceptance and marginalization more than people, both tattooed and non-tattooed, realize. Various objects and subjects in life are considered to be masculine and feminine based on stereotypes that males and females have; stereotypes on males are that they are strong, the head of household, logical, and less sensitive to other's

feelings whereas female stereotypes are that females are delicate, dependent, emotional, and easily influenced by those around them. These stereotypes for males and females transfer over to tattooed individuals based on their gender.

A study done in 2012 based on the roles of gender norms and tattoos was done in order to show the difference between tattooed males and females in a workplace. It was hypothesized that male salespeople with masculine tattoos would be considered more masculine than males with feminine tattoos and that female salespeople with masculine tattoos would be considered more masculine than females with feminine tattoos (Arndt & Glassman, 2012). During the study people were asked to group up different tattoo designs into feminine and masculine. Tattoo designs that were considered feminine in the study are suns, dolphins, and colorful tattoos and were described as cute, modern, and happy. Tattoo designs that were considered masculine were black Celtic designs, barbed wire, and snakes. The masculine designs were described as aggressive, tribal, and bad (Arndt & Glassman, 2012). The study conducted also hypothesized that male salespeople with masculine tattoos and female salespeople with feminine tattoos would be well-received than male salespeople with feminine tattoos and female salespeople with masculine tattoos. Both hypotheses were found to be true (Arndt & Glassman, 2012); the different designs of tattoos found on tattooed salespeople make a difference to how tattooed and non-tattooed people perceive them. Tattooed salespeople are not viewed as negatively by tattooed people versus non-tattooed people and feminine tattoos are seen to be positive when compared to masculine tattoos (Arndt & Glassman, 2012).

Not only are feminine tattoos viewed more positively in comparison to masculine tattoos, but tattoos designs are centered around a traditional view on femininity with

butterflies, birds, and other soft or personal objects (Dickson, Dukes, Smith, & Strapko 2015). With females obtaining tattoos that are considered traditionally feminine females are heavily judged for their tattoos regardless of style or design. Tattoos are already viewed negatively by groups due to the idea that punks groups, rebels, and deviants were the type of people to receive tattoos in the past (Swami & Furnham, 2007). A study performed by Swami and Furnham in 2007 investigates who tattooed women are rated in comparison to non-tattooed women. It was hypothesized that tattooed women would be rated to be less attractive, more sexually promiscuous, and consume larger amounts of alcohol when compared to women who are not tattooed. The participants were 160 undergraduate students who were shown 8 different images of drawn, tattooed and non-tattooed women (Swami & Furnham, 2007).

The results of this study show that participants viewed tattooed women negatively in comparison to non-tattooed women. Tattooed women were perceived as less physically attractive, sexually promiscuous, and more likely to consume larger amounts of alcohol when compared to non-tattooed women (Swami & Furnham, 2007). This study depicts the marginalization that tattooed women face in society; tattoos are associated negatively in Western culture with the thought that tattooed people are more likely to partake in rebellious behavior, have a high usage of drugs and alcohol, as well as make impulsive decisions (Swami, Tran, Kuhlmann, Gaughan, & Voracek, 2016).

A third point to bring up on the topic of genders and tattoos is the reason for getting tattoos. Tattoo shop owner Justina Kervel noted that men will get tattoos to change how society views them whereas women get tattoos in order to change the way they view themselves (Keinlen, 2005). Teresa Johnson, another tattoo shop owner states "A lot of

women do it as a type of reclaiming their bodies and marking of certain incidents,” (Keinlen, 2005, p. 25). Another trend for women with tattoos is that they are not afraid to get larger tattoos versus a small, dainty tattoo that is expected of women yet women still attempt to hide their tattoos. Not only are size different for women, placement is also a size when looking at genders. Males tend to get tattoos on their arms or other visible places whereas women get tattoos on their torso, back, or hips (Keinlen, 2005).

Regardless of gender tattooed people are judged simply because they have tattoos. Gender, though, plays an important role in tattoo acceptance. It has been seen that tattoos can be considered masculine or feminine depending on the design; the design of a tattoo can affect how a tattooed person is viewed. Males with feminine tattoos are viewed to be more feminine and females with masculine tattoos are viewed to be more masculine. This type of thinking is hindering the acceptance of tattoos as is the judgement of visible tattoos on females, the size of tattoos on people, and the way tattooed women are perceived. Gender, though, is not the only way tattooed people are discriminated against; the different misconceptions and stereotypes of tattoos are also hindering tattoo acceptance.

### **Misconceptions and Stereotypes**

The way that tattoos have been viewed in the past 80 years are hindering the acceptance of tattoos in society today. Misconceptions and stereotypes of tattoos have existed since their introduction into Western culture. Understanding the misconceptions and stereotypes that surround tattoos will further explain their acceptance. Tattoo stereotypes have been consistent throughout their history in Western society; through various studies tattoo stereotypes have been confirmed and investigated in order to put an end to them.

Most information revolving around tattoo stereotypes report that tattooed people partake in risky behaviors and risky decision-making (Neluis, Armstrong, Young, Roberts, Hogan, & Rinard, 2014). The risky behavior associated with tattoos is high amongst tattooed adolescents; tattooed adolescents are associated with high drug and alcohol use, risky sexual activities, as well as illegal or violent behavior (Swami et al., 2016). Not only are tattooed adolescents associated with illegal and risky activities, college students are also associated with those behaviors as well as possible history of criminal arrest (Swami et al., 2016). This particular study was to investigate whether or not tattooed individuals were more impulsive or willing to take more risks in comparison to non-tattooed individuals; this study hypothesized that tattooed individuals would take more risks than non-tattooed individuals and that the tattooed individuals would become more prone to boredom and a higher level of impulsiveness (Swami et al., 2016). The results of the study show that tattooed adults were slightly more likely to take risks in some variables such as ethical, financial, health and safety, recreational, and social risks. Not only that, tattooed people were found to have greater motor impulsivity; as a whole it was found that there is not a large difference between tattooed and non-tattooed adults like it was previously thought (Swami et al., 2016).

More stereotypes found with tattooed people are based off of tattooed teenagers. Tattooed teenagers find tattoos as a way to express themselves while adults have found tattoos a sign of deviant behavior (Blair, 2007). A study found that tattoos were linked with teenagers who had eating disorders, practiced unsafe sex, violence, suicide, and had a low self-esteem as well as school failure (Blair, 2007). A different study found that tattooed teenagers reported having grades in the A and B range stating that grades and tattoos had nothing to do with each

other. It is believed that there is a stigma on teenagers with tattoos because of the quick, short-term decision making that teenagers are known for making (Blair, 2007). College students are also judged for their tattoos; college students find tattoos more positive than their older counterparts and are not concerned to be considered a risk taker for having tattoos (Dickson et al., 2015). Most studies focus on the negative view on body art, their permanence, health concerns, and disapproval by family and peers (Dickson et al., 2015).

A study done in 2009 showed researchers that people with and without tattoos are viewed differently. Because of that study, it was hypothesized by Arndt and Glassman that people with tattoos would accept others with tattoos more than those without tattoos (2012). The study concluded that tattooed participants trusted tattooed people more than participants without tattoos; not only do tattooed people trust other tattooed people more than non-tattooed people, tattooed people are also more willing to work with tattooed people than non-tattooed people are (Arndt & Glassman, 2012). The reasoning for this is because non-tattooed people make a quick, stereotypical judgement based on being in, or out, of a specific group of people, in this case tattooed people and non-tattooed people (Arndt & Glassman, 2012). A harsh judgement made on people with tattoos can be along the lines of, "You're a nice girl. It's too bad that you have so many tattoos," (Keinlen, 2005, pg. 25). It is often that non-tattooed people will make judgements such as that on those with tattoos, that having tattoos of any kind makes someone a "bad" person. During the 1970s and 1980s tattooing was viewed as a sign of rebellion and also became popular due to punk and rock music (Keinlen, 2005).

A more recent look into the reasons why people get tattoos was sectioned off into eight different categories: big five personality factors (openness to experience, conscientiousness,

extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism), need for uniqueness, distinctive appearance investment, sensation seeking, attitude toward authority, sociosexual orientation and participant demographics such as gender, age, and ethnicity (Swami, 2012). Swami's results found that people who received their first tattoo showed much lower scores on the big five dimension of conscientiousness and much higher scores on extraversion, sensation seeking, need for uniqueness, distinctive appearance investment, and sociosexual orientation (2012). While there were differences between tattooed and non-tattooed people, the notable findings were the lack of differences between the two groups when looking at attitudes towards authority (Swami, 2012). In the past it was heavily believed that tattooed people had a rebellious side in comparison to non-tattooed people such as affiliation with a gang as well as school truancies. The difference noted with this particular study is that behavior was studied based on psychological differences rather than self-reported behaviors (Swami, 2012).

These findings make an impact on the acceptance of tattoos; stereotypes are one of the main problems when it comes to acceptance of tattoos in Western society. Tattoos are still viewed as a rebellious act and are considered negative by those who do not have tattoos. With the rebel status hanging on to the tattoo industry it is difficult to analyze the perception of tattoos as a whole, studies done are typically small groups of people ranging from 200 – 500 participants. It is notable that the stereotype of risky behavior is closing in when comparing tattooed and non-tattooed people, with the only notable difference being that tattooed people are more impulsive when behind the wheel. It is also notable with the understanding of how non-tattooed people are willing, or not, to work with tattooed people. Non-tattooed people are less likely to trust someone with tattoos as opposed to a tattooed person trusting another

person with tattoos. It is important to understand, though, that tattoos are not as harshly judged based on their stereotypes today as they have been in the past. Within the past 10 years tattoos were linked with unsafe sex, drug usage, heavy drinking, and other risky behaviors. Now the risky behavior stigma is being closed between tattooed and non-tattooed people.

### Acceptance

The final point that is imperative to this work is whether or not tattoos are being accepted today or if they are still marginalized in Western society. Tattoos are deeply rooted in history for various reasons; archaeologists have found mummies of nobility that were adorned with tattoos. Even with the rich past of tattoos, they are being viewed negatively in many aspects. A problem with acceptance of tattoos is commonly found within the workplace. It has been argued by tattooed people whether or not they are allowed to have tattoos and that they are protected under the first amendment of the constitution (Porter, 2012). Arguments have broken out between employees and employers as to whether or not workers are allowed to have visible tattoos. Various tests and studies have been conducted in order to understand how tattoos affect people within a work environment.

“The days of being disqualified from a job, social or religious group for having a tattoo are also a thing of the past,” (Williams, 2014, pg. 25). This statement is not necessarily true when looking at the job aspect of having tattoos. One notable study focused on tattoos within a work environment where the tattoos would be visible. The study depicted 8 men and women with a tribal tattoo on their neck, as well as 8 men and women without tattoos, and showed a group of 262 willing respondents to determine whether or not they would be willing to work with the tattooed individuals. The respondents were asked if they would willingly allow a visibly

tattooed doctor perform surgery on them as well as allow a visibly tattooed mechanic to work on their vehicle (Baumann, Timming, & Gollan, 2016). The results of the study found that mechanics, both with and without tattoos, were viewed more positively than surgeons, but the tattooed workers, regardless of profession, were rated lower than the non-tattooed workers (Baumann et al., 2016).

A second study with tattoos in the workplace dealt with the way both tattooed and non-tattooed people perceive salespeople. Overall the rating stated that non-tattooed people did not want to work with salespeople who had visible tattoos because of the negative connotations that tattoos have in society today (Arndt & Glassman, 2012). The tattoos were a turnoff to non-tattooed people working with tattooed salespeople based on their gender and they type of tattoo they had (a masculine tattoo or feminine tattoo). Arndt and Glassman's research showed a stigma where visible tattoos could change a person's perspective on a worker. In one case a female with a masculine tattoo was asked if she was a lesbian because of her tattoo (2012). Tattoos in the workplace are difficult to deal with based on the negative connotation that tattoos have; tattoos are for punks, not workers.

A third important study on tattoos acceptance in the work place was done by Williams, Thomas, and Christensen about social workers (2014). Social work is intended to promote cultural competence and diversity, yet tattoos within the social work profession on social workers are viewed negatively. It has been suggested that having an unconventional appearance of tattoos, piercings, and brightly colored hair may turn off clients, colleagues, and administration (Williams, Thomas, & Christensen, 2014). While having tattoos may be viewed negatively by a client, social workers have begun to complain that their employers are making

them cover up tattoos and remove piercings; some social workers believe that forcing employees to cover up tattoos is an outdated policy that does not coincide with social work's core values (William et al., 2014). Williams, Thomas, and Christensen stated on the issue on social workers and tattoos,

The issue of visible tattoos and piercings being restricted in the professional workplace, including social work settings, is not going to go away... Social work, like many professions, is facing, or should directly face, this issue. Given that social work is expressly committed to reducing prejudice, marginalization, and oppression, we are in a position to lead in advocating for more flexible workplace expectations and policies regarding professional appearance. Indeed, if human diversity truly is an important professional value, then it is time to model this value across social work contexts and demonstrate better consistency in practicing what we preach. (Williams et al., 2014, pg. 374).

It is considered unethical, as a professional, to judge a tattooed person because they have tattoos; in retrospect it is also unethical, as a client, to view a professional in a culturally diverse positive position to judge the professional for having tattoos (Williams et al., 2014).

A study done on college students about tattoos in the workplace was conducted in 2014 (Foltz, 2014). Foltz objective of the study was to determine whether or not Millennial college undergraduates understood the implications of obtaining a job while having visible tattoos. The undergraduates were asked to answer "yes" and "no" questions that pertained to the attitude and perceptions participants felt about tattoos and how they (tattoos) would impact their chance of employment as well as answer some open ended questions to express

participants' reasoning for obtaining, or not obtaining, a tattoo (Foltz, 2014). Overall respondents stated that they would think about placement before getting a tattoo in regards to future employment; not only that but 85 % of the respondents agreed that it would be difficult for someone with visible tattoos to obtain a job after graduating from university (Foltz, 2014). When asked a hypothetical question about hiring someone with tattoos, "...61.2% of respondents indicated if an applicant had visible tattoos, their decision on whether to hire the applicant would be negatively impacted,"(Foltz, 2014, pg. 596). When asked why respondents felt tattooed people would have problems finding a job after graduating from a university as well as having a negative impact on hiring a tattooed person, respondents stated that it is because they believe tattoos are not professional and employers should have the right to dictate whether or not a tattoo is visible for employment (Foltz, 2014). The undergraduate participants had a high understanding of the implications of having visible tattoos when looking for employment even though of the 21% of participants who have tattoos, 95.2% of the tattooed participants stated that their tattoos would not be visible to future employers (Foltz, 2014).

Tattoo acceptance does not end at the workplace, acceptance also is important when looking at an individual with a tattoo. Tattoos have become popular in Western culture in the 1990s more so than any other recent time period (Swami, 2011). For this particular study people getting their first tattoo sat down and filled out a questionnaire, they were then later contacted within three weeks and filled out another questionnaire. The participants were asked a series of questions based on how they felt about their physical appearance, their need for uniqueness, their social anxiety, as well as to fill out Rosenberg's self-esteem scale, state why

they were getting a tattoo, state their satisfaction with their tattoo, and to state what the likelihood of getting another tattoo in the future would be (Swami, 2011). The results for getting the tattoo were highly rated that the receiver wanted to express themselves, look good, or to be unique. Overall there were large differences between males and females when it came to their physical appearance three weeks after getting their first tattoo. Men had decreased their social, physical anxiety whereas women's social, physical anxiety increased. Even with this finding, it was also noted that women appreciated their body more even though their social, physical anxiety increased (Swami, 2011).

Tattoos have become a part of popular culture in Western society. One aspect of tattoo acceptance is the way that people with tattoos feel about themselves and other with tattoos. After getting a tattoo one's expectations of their tattoo may have changed the way they now view themselves whether it be negative or positive. Tattoos in the workplace are also something of concern when looking at tattoo acceptance. Overall tattoos in the workplace are not acceptable to non-tattooed people. It has been seen that tattooed mechanics and surgeons are rated lower than their non-tattooed counterparts. While tattooing is increasingly becoming popular in today's society there is still a stigma on them. Tattoos are not being fully accepted in the workplace knowing that people are apprehensive when working with someone who has visible tattoos. It is believed that it is easier to obtain a job when one has visible tattoos, but that is still not the case. The negative connotation and risky behavior stereotype that tattoos have on them make employers leery about hiring people who have visible tattoos. Visible tattoos are still seen as a sign of rebellion as well as a sign of impulsive behavior. Hiring a

tattooed based on these stereotypes will hinder tattooed people until the negative thought surrounding tattoos diminishes.

## **Conclusion**

### **Introductory Section**

This thesis is meant to show people that tattoo acceptance is evolving in Western society. By analyzing various scholarly articles and studies I hope to shed light on the hypocrisy of the negative views on tattoos based on gender, misconceptions and stereotypes, and acceptance in the workplace. The analysis of the resources found barely scratch the surface of what is known on tattoo acceptance in Western society; many of the studies looked at consisted of small respondents in generalized locations of Europe, Canada, and the United States of America. Personally having tattoos, both visible and not, is the driving force of this thesis. Better understanding acceptance within the past fifteen-years as well as within the past year has given me a better understanding of what people think of those with tattoos based on what has been perceived by them (tattoos) since they came into existence within Western society.

### **Summary of Findings**

Tattoos have evolved since their existence; Egyptians adorned themselves with tattoos if considered part of nobility and the Romans were tattooed if they were prisoners or slaves. Tattooing is not always permanent; there is another form of temporary tattooing known as henna which has become popular within Western society because it is not permanent versus tattooing done in a shop. With the rich history of tattooing I believe that it is important to know what the social stance on tattoos is: are tattoos acceptable or no?

The first point that was investigated dealt with genders and tattoos. What was found is that people have a specific perception of tattoos on males and females. The perceptions deal with the way males and females are seen in society today: males are the strong, independent gender whereas females are the dainty, dependent gender. With these stereotypes in mind, it is seen within groups that men with feminine tattoos are viewed to be more feminine whereas men with masculine tattoos are viewed to be more masculine; the same goes with women, women with feminine tattoos are viewed to be more feminine whereas women with masculine tattoos are viewed to be more masculine. The discrimination with genders and tattoos does not stop there; women are generally viewed to be promiscuous, heavy drinkers, as well as drug users because of their tattoos regardless of design. The main, final difference between genders is the reason why tattoos are gotten. Women, typically speaking, get tattoos that are sentimental to them or mark a turning point in their life whereas men get tattoos because they want one or like the design.

Another important aspect to look at when trying to understand tattoo acceptance is knowing the misconceptions and stereotypes that surround tattoos. Tattooed people are thought to be heavy risk takers, especially amongst adolescents, who partake in the usage of illegal substances, are heavy drinkers, partake in unprotected sex, and have a problem with authority. It has been found that there are not large differences between tattooed and non-tattooed people like there was in the past. A large portion of stereotypes and misconceptions of tattoos stem from the age group that have tattoos: teenagers and young, undergraduate students. Some of the stereotypes that surround teenagers are that they do poorly in school and make poor life decisions because it is believed that teenagers make short, brash decisions

with their lives. Overall there is still a highly negative connotation connected to tattoos by non-tattooed people regardless of design.

The final point made is to know whether or not tattoos are being accepted in Western culture today. The main aspect of tattoo acceptance is within employment. It has been found that employers are less likely to want to hire a person with visible tattoos. Not only are employers less likely to hire a qualified person for a position based on visible tattoos, it has been concluded that non-tattooed people are less likely to work with someone who has visible tattoos or the non-tattooed person is less likely to trust someone who has tattoos. On the other hand it has been noted that a person with tattoos is going to trust a worker with tattoos. Trust with visible tattoos also comes with profession: people are more likely to trust a tattooed mechanic versus a tattooed surgeon, but the non-tattooed mechanic and surgeon were still rated higher than the tattooed mechanic. Not only is acceptance in the workplace looked at by customers, it is also important when looking at specific professions. Social workers are beginning to argue that visible tattoos should be allowed because their profession is positive on diversity.

### **Closing Section**

The essays and articles that have been investigated are a small portion of what is to be found on tattoo acceptance. At this point it does not appear that gender is a huge factor when looking at tattoo acceptance, but the misconceptions, stereotypes, and views of tattoos in the workplace compose a large portion of what has been studied with tattoo acceptance. It is important to know that acceptance of tattoos in Western society is taking a turn for the better, but it is a slow slope to tattoo acceptance. The negative views on tattoos have not changed

within the past fifteen years. After looking into tattoo acceptance I believe that it is important to further investigate the perceptions of tattoos in the workplace and to better understand and overcome the negative perceptions that tattoos have on Western society.

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