

Tattoos and Social Perception: Is the Stigmatization of Tattoos Warranted?
An Empirical Study

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Tattoos and Social Perception: Is the Stigmatization of Tattoos Warranted?

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Abstract

The current study seeks to understand how the presence of tattoos affects social perception and to identify the *observable* differences in traits between individuals who have tattoos and individuals who do not have tattoos to explore the accuracy of these perceived differences. Participants ($N=308$) were presented with a stimuli photograph of a male or a female who did or did not have tattoos before being asked to rate that individual on a set of 11 traits. Contrary to original hypotheses, the study found that the target stimuli with tattoos was not rated significantly different on a set of 11 traits than was the stimuli without tattoos, regardless of gender of target stimuli and participant tattoos. Participants also filled out multiple individual-difference measures as well as a set of demographic questions. Results revealed that generally, tattooed participants did not score significantly differently than did non-tattooed participants on individual-difference measures including the Light Triad, the Dark Triad, the Big Five Personality Traits, and a measure of Honesty/Humility. It is worth noting that findings did reveal two significant differences between tattooed and non-tattooed participants; tattooed participants scored significantly higher on a measure of psychopathy than did non-tattooed participants and non-tattooed participants scored significantly higher on a measure of emotional stability than did tattooed participants. Although the data did not support the majority of the original hypotheses, the findings reveal a decrease in the negative effect of tattoos on social perception and allude to a societal shift in the opinion on tattoos that is worth further exploration.

Introduction

The current study seeks to examine two aspects of tattoos. First, the study seeks to understand how the presence of tattoos affects social perception which is defined as “the processes by which a person uses the behavior of others to form opinions or make inferences about those individuals, particularly regarding their motives, attitudes, or values” (American Psychological Association, n.d.). Second, the study seeks to identify the *observable* differences in traits between individuals who have tattoos and individuals who do not have tattoos to explore the accuracy of these perceived differences.

The art of tattooing has become increasingly popular in recent years; as of 2016, 21–29% of Americans had at least one tattoo and 15–20% had two or more tattoos (Laumann & Derick, 2016). Despite their increasing popularity in recent years, tattoos still tend to carry the negative stigma they have been associated with in the past. Historically, tattoos have been negatively associated with specific groups such as bikers, punks, and hippies (DeMello, 2000). Members of these groups have been believed to possess certain negative personality traits, which has led to tattoos being associated with those same negative personality traits independent of those groups. Some of these assumed traits and associations include gang affiliation, incarceration, and drug use (Mallon & Russel, 1999), promiscuity and heavy drinking (Swami & Furnham, 2007), lack of credibility (Seiter & Hatch, 2005), and untrustworthiness (Boultinghouse, 2015; Hauke-Forman, et al., 2021). Despite the continued increase in the prevalence of tattoos among the general population, individuals with tattoos are still perceived more negatively than individuals without tattoos in certain contexts—thus, the stigmatization of tattoos in recent times is paradoxical (Broussard & Harton, 2017; Degelman & Price, 2002; Resenhoeft, Villa, & Wiseman, 2008).

Tattoos and Stigma

This study aims to understand how tattooed individuals in the modern world may be stigmatized. The first conceptualization of stigma can be traced back to Erving Goffman (1963) who first discussed the concept in his book *Stigma: Notes on the Management of a Spoiled Identity*. According to Goffman (1963), a *stigma* is essentially defined as the socially constructed relationship between a socially undesirable attribute and a stereotype and can be broken down into three types: abominations of the body (e.g., physical deformities), blemishes of character (e.g., mental illness, unemployment, addiction), and identity (e.g., race, religion, ethnicity). Although Goffman's work on stigma is widely supported and used often, more recent research by Crocker et al. (1998) defines a stigma as "some attribute or characteristic that conveys a social identity that is devalued in a particular social context" (p. 505). Both of these definitions assume that people who are stigmatized have (or are believed to have) some attribute that marks them as different from the majority and leads them to be devalued in the eyes of others (Major & O'Brien, 2005).

An important aspect of these definitions is the idea that the groups or individuals who are stigmatized are typically part of the minority in regards to the attribute being stigmatized. Given this information, one would assume that the negative stigmas associated with tattoos would decrease as tattoos increase in prevalence—but that does not seem to align with what is actually happening. Instead, the negative stigma of tattooed individuals prevails, as shown by Broussard and Harton (2018), causing a lack of understanding of this social phenomenon. Why are tattoos still associated with traits derived from past stereotypes when the tattooed community is now vastly different? Why does the presence of something physical and skin deep affect the

perception of an individual's personality? Why are tattoos still stigmatized when their prevalence has drastically increased in recent years?

Tattoos and their Effect on the Perception of Specific Traits

As mentioned above, tattoos have come to be associated with many different traits such as gang affiliation, incarceration, and drug use (Mallon & Russel, 1999), promiscuity and heavy drinking (Swami & Furnham, 2007), lack of credibility (Seiter & Hatch, 2005), and untrustworthiness (Boultinghouse, 2015; Hauke-Forman, et al., 2021). In recent years, there have been many different studies done to explore the effect of tattoos on the perception of certain traits, but there are very few studies that have looked into the effect of tattoos on the perception of many general traits. The few that have been done have shown that tattooed individuals are more negatively perceived than individuals without tattoos. In a study by Degelman and Price (2002), participants had to rate a photo of the same woman either with or without tattoos. Results indicated that the photo of the woman with the tattoos was rated significantly lower on athleticism, attractiveness, motivation, honesty, generosity, religiosity, and intelligence (Degelman & Price, 2002). Another study using the same pictures as Degelman and Price (2002) showed that the model without tattoos was rated more athletic, more attractive, more caring, more intelligent, and less creative than the same model with tattoos (Resenhoft, Villa, & Wiseman, 2008).

Tattoos and their Effect on the Perception of Specific Groups

There have been many other studies done in recent years on tattoos and their impact on the perceptions of individuals belonging to certain groups such as healthcare workers (Johnson, et al., 2016), prospective employees (Swanger, 2006), criminal defendants (Brown, et al., 2018), and police officers (Hauke-Forman, et al., 2021). Although these studies provide further insight

into the psychology of perceptions regarding tattooed individuals in specific groups, there is still a lot we do not know about perceptions of tattooed individuals in the general population. A majority of the studies on tattoos have been done on specific groups and careers such as the examples mentioned above, but there are not very many studies that have been done on the perception of tattoos in the general population. The previously mentioned studies by Degelman and Price (2002) and Resenhoeft, Villa, and Wiseman (2008) had participants rate photos that reflected a member of the general population. These two studies are two of very few done on the perception of tattoos in the general population.

Perceptions of Tattoos and Age

There are several studies that have shown that there is a significant positive relationship between age and negative attitudes toward tattooed individuals as well. They suggest that there is less of this stigma among younger people than there is among older people (Deal, Altman, & Rogleberg, 2010; Lin, 2002; Zestcott et al., 2018). Other studies have shown that college students show less concern about being stigmatized if they have (or were to get) tattoos (Armstrong et al., 2004) and that they view tattoos as mainstream (Manuel & Sheehan, 2007). These studies show that participants of an older generation typically judge tattooed individuals harsher than participants of a younger generation.

Gender Differences in the Effects of Tattoos on Perception

There have also been multiple studies in recent years that have shown a prejudice toward women with tattoos as well as studies showing gender differences in the stigmatization of tattoos. A 2004 Canadian study found that both men and women judged women with tattoos more negatively than women without tattoos (Hawkes et al., 2004). In Britain, Swami, and Furham (2007) found that women with tattoos were perceived as more promiscuous, heavier

drinkers, and less attractive. Prejudice against women with tattoos may stem from sexist beliefs based on the perceived violation of gender norms (Hawkes et al., 2004). There are significantly fewer studies comparing the stigmatization of tattooed men and tattooed women. In a 2012 study comparing tattooed female care workers with tattooed male care workers in a hospital setting, participants rated the female care worker with tattoos as less professional than the male care worker with tattoos (Westerfield et al., 2012). Another recent study compared female and male “surgeons” or “mechanics” with neck tattoos (Baumann et al., 2016). This study found that participants rated tattooed women significantly more negatively than tattooed men overall. Though these studies do look at gender differences in the effect of tattoos on perception, there is still a gap in the research on gender differences in the effect of tattoos on the perception of specific traits.

Actual Differences in the Traits of Tattooed Individuals and Non-Tattooed Individuals

There are a multitude of other studies that have been conducted on the perception of tattooed individuals in addition to those mentioned above, but there are very few studies that look at the truth—or lack thereof—to these perceived differences. Broussard and Harton (2017) looked at the difference of deviant behavior—specifically the quantity and frequency of drinking—between tattooed individuals and non-tattooed individuals and the results indicated that tattooed participants scored significantly higher on this deviant behavior than non-tattooed participants. When age was included as a covariate and the same data were analyzed, however, that difference was no longer statistically significant. This study also showed that there was no significant difference between non-tattooed and tattooed participants on cognitive abilities or personality traits (Broussard & Harton, 2017). A 2020 study by Stanescu and Romascanu found that individuals with body modifications scored significantly higher on subclinical psychopathy

than those without body modifications, but did not find any significant difference in narcissism or Machiavellianism. Another study found that adults with tattoos were more impulsive and more willing to take risks than are adults without tattoos, but the effect sizes of these differences were small (Swami et al., 2016).

Chris Lynn has also conducted a lot of research on the actual difference between tattooed and non-tattooed individuals on physical immunity and health in many different ways. In 2020, Lynn et al. measured secretory immunoglobulin A (SIgA), cortisol, and C-reactive protein (CRP) and found that individuals with tattoos showed an enhanced immune response compared to individuals without tattoos when receiving a tattoo. Lynn et al. (2022) tested salivary endocrine (cortisol), immune (secretory immunoglobulin A), and inflammatory (C-reactive protein) responses in non-tattooed and tattooed individuals while getting a tattoo. Results showed that the more previous tattoo experience individuals had, the better their salivary endocrine, immune, and inflammatory responses were.

Despite the large amount of research done on differences in the perceived traits of tattooed individuals and non-tattooed individuals, there is almost no research addressing if these perceived differences are reflective of actual differences between these two groups. Due to the lack of research on actual differences between tattooed and non-tattooed individuals, a number of personality measures will be included in this study to determine the accuracy of the perceived differences between these two groups.

Potential Dispositional Predictors of Perceptions Regarding Tattoos

The Light and Dark Triad Traits

The Dark and Light Triads are sets of three personality traits used to represent the extreme sides of good and evil in human nature. Paulhus and Williams created the Dark Triad, a

profile of the three traits, Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Narcissism is defined as a sense of grandiosity, egotism, and self-orientation; Machiavellianism as manipulative behaviors, self-interest, exploitation of others, and a ruthless lack of morality; and psychopathy as impulsivity, antisocial behavior, and a lack of empathy and remorse (Koehn et al., 2019). Kaufman et al. created the Light Triad as a counterpart to the Dark Triad. The Light Triad comprises three traits: Kantianism (treating people as ends unto themselves), humanism (valuing the dignity and worth of each individual), and faith in humanity (believing in the fundamental goodness of humans) (Kaufman et al., 2019).

In a study conducted on the relationship between body modification and dark personality traits, Stanescu and Romascanu (2020) found that both subclinical psychopathy and anti-sociality were significantly higher in individuals with body modification than they were in individuals without any body modifications. Although there is not a ton of research directly looking at the connection between the Dark Triad traits and tattooing, many studies have shown that individuals with tattoos are perceived more negatively than are individuals without tattoos. Specifically, it has been found that individuals with tattoos are perceived to be higher in traits such as gang affiliation, incarceration, and drug use (Mallon & Russel, 1999), promiscuity and heavy drinking (Swami & Furnham, 2007), lack of credibility (Seiter & Hatch, 2005), and untrustworthiness (Boultinghouse, 2015; Hauke-Forman, et al., 2021). These traits do not directly align with the Dark Triad traits, but they tend to carry this negative and dark stigma. As such, this study will utilize the Dark Triad to measure the actual differences in tattooed and non-tattooed individuals.

Similar to the Dark Triad, there is no research directly connecting the Light Triad to tattooed individuals. As mentioned above, tattooed individuals are typically perceived as more

negative than are non-tattooed individuals on a variety of traits. By society's standards, the Dark Triad traits are seen more negatively than are Light Triad traits. Previous research has shown that historically, tattooed individuals have been perceived more negatively than have individuals without tattoos on a variety of different traits. Although the Dark and Light Triad traits are not exact opposites of each other, they are considered to have direct contrasts to the common cores of the individual traits (Kaufman et al., 2019). Therefore, this study will utilize a measure of the Light Triad in order to determine the actual differences between tattooed and non tattooed individuals.

The Big Five Personality Traits

The Five-Factor model of personality is commonly referred to as the Big Five personality traits and measures extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism. Research by Tate and Shelton (2008) found that tattooed individuals scored significantly lower on traits of agreeableness and conscientiousness than did non-tattooed individuals. Despite their results being significant, Tate and Shelton (2008) state that these results explain very small amounts of variance and most likely reflect inconsequential real world differences between the two groups. They warn that caution should be taken when attributing psychopathology to individuals who indulge in any form of body modification (Tate & Shelton, 2008). Another study found that individuals with body modifications did not significantly differ from individuals without body modifications on the Big Five personality traits (Forbes, 2001). The current study will utilize the Ten-Item Personality Inventory (Gosling et al., 2003) in order to explore the actual differences of tattooed individuals and non-tattooed individuals on the Big Five personality traits.

The Honesty-Humility Facet of the 60-item HEXACO Personality Inventory-Revised

Although there is not any direct research looking at the relationship between the Honesty-Humility facet of the HEXACO Personality Inventory-Revised and tattoos, there is research that looks at the relationship between the presence of tattoos and traits adjacent to the Honesty-Humility facet of the HEXACO Personality Inventory-Revised. Individuals with tattoos have been perceived as untrustworthy (Seiter & Hatch, 2005a) and as having a lack of credibility (Boultinghouse, 2015; Hauke-Forman, et al., 2021). Degelman and Price (2002) also found that tattooed females have also been rated as less honest than non-tattooed females. To look directly at the actual differences between tattooed individuals and non-tattooed individuals on honesty and humility, the current study will utilize the Honesty-Humility facet of the HEXACO Personality Inventory-Revised (Ashton & Lee, 2009).

The Current Study

Because of the inconsistent popularity and social perceptions of tattoos, continuous research on this topic is important to help us better understand the current perception of tattoos in modern culture. The current study will address the following research questions:

1. What perceived traits are affected by the presence of tattoos?
2. Are tattooed individuals perceived more negatively than are non-tattooed individuals?
3. Are tattooed individuals perceived more negatively by older generations compared with perceptions of members of younger generations?
4. Do tattoos on females impact perception more negatively than do tattoos on males?

5. Do tattooed individuals actually score more negatively on personality/individual difference measures than do non-tattooed individuals?

It is hypothesized that (1a) the tattooed individuals in the photos will be rated lower in attractiveness, trustworthiness, kindness, professionalism, intelligence, credibility, honesty, religiosity, and ambition, and will be rated higher in creativeness, and promiscuity in comparison to the non-tattooed individuals; (1b) these effects are predicted to be particularly pronounced in the perceptions expressed by members of an older generation; (2a) the tattooed female will be rated lower than the tattooed male; (2b) these effects are predicted to be particularly pronounced in the perceptions expressed by members of an older generation; (3) participants with tattoos will rate the tattooed individuals in the photos more positively than non-tattooed participants; and (4) tattooed participants will not score significantly different from non-tattooed participants on any of the personality/individual difference measures.

Methods

The primary purpose of this study was to (a) understand how the presence of tattoos affects social perception, and to (b) identify the *observable* differences in traits between individuals who have tattoos and individuals who do not have tattoos to explore the accuracy of these perceived differences. This study included an experimental component as well as an analysis of the predictive power of various dispositional variables as they relate to perceptions of individuals who have tattoos. Participants were presented with a single photo of some target. They were asked to rate their perceptions of this target on various dimensions. For the experimental component, a between-participants design was implemented with two independent variables. The first independent variable was gender of target (two levels, male or female) and the second was tattoo status of target (two levels: no tattoos and tattoos). Further, participants

completed several trait measures so this study will be able to address, regardless of experimental conditions, the predictive utility of various traits that are held by the actual observers.

Participants

The study consisted of an online survey that was created and administered through Qualtrics, and was distributed via various online methods. The participants were required to be at least 18 years of age and able to understand and read English. There were 308 participants in total ($N=308$) (212 identified as women, 68 identified as men, 17 identified as non-binary, and 6 preferred not to say, and 5 identified as “other”). The mean age of participants was 36.37 ($SD = 18.739$) with participants ranging in age from 18 years old to 81 years old.

Materials

Photograph Stimuli

This study had four different conditions (based on two two-level IVs) in which participants were shown one of four different photos. The stimuli photos that were used in this study were photos of a male and a female that have been edited to create a total of four different photos. Thus, the gender of the target is one two-level independent variable. The first level will be the original photos of the male and female without any editing (the no-tattoo level). The second level of stimuli photos is the same photos of the male and female with a sleeve tattoo of a geographic pattern on the upper arm of each individual (the tattoo level).

In developing the stimuli, it was important to use the same photo of the same male or female for each condition to avoid possible confounds. It was also important for the tattoos to be identical and as neutral as possible to avoid possible confounds. In each condition, the same tattoo was edited on both the male and the female stimuli photos. The four different stimuli photos can be found in Appendix A.

Trait Rating Scale

Each participant was asked to rate the individual in their assigned stimuli photograph on a set of 11 traits; attractiveness, trustworthiness, kindness, creativity, professionalism, intelligence, credibility, honesty, religiosity, promiscuity, and ambition. Although the exact set of traits used in this study have not been used together in any previous studies, they are based on a 2002 study by Degelman and Price that also looked at the effect of tattoos and ratings of personal characteristics of women. The traits that have been added or replaced from the Degelman and Price (2002) study are based on findings from more up-to-date studies. Participants were asked to rate the individual in their photo on each individual trait on a scale of one to seven (1=strongly disagree, 7= strongly agree).

The Light Triad Scale

The Light Triad Scale, is a 12-item Likert-scale developed by Kaufman et al. (2019) intended to gauge how participants map onto the three Light Triad personality traits: Kantianism (treating people as ends unto themselves), humanism (valuing the dignity and worth of each individual), and faith in humanity (believing in the fundamental goodness of humans). Participants were asked how much they agree with each statement on a scale of one to seven (1=strongly disagree, 7= strongly agree). Sample items include “I tend to see the best in people” and “I tend to treat others as valuable”. The Light Triad Scale has been shown to have excellent validity and reliability over four diverse cultures (Kaufman et al., 2019).

This study measured these variables in participants to assess the observable differences between tattooed and non-tattooed individuals to assess the accuracy of prior research, that tattooed individuals are perceived to be more negative than individuals without tattoos by

looking at the traits of Kantianism, humanism, and faith in humanity. The full Light Triad Scale can be found in Appendix B.

The Dirty Dozen Dark Triad Scale

The *Dirty Dozen Dark Triad Scale* is a 12-item Likert-scale created by Jonason and Webster (2010) that is intended to gauge how participants fall on the three Dark Triad personality traits: narcissism (a sense of grandiosity, egotism, and self-orientation), Machiavellianism (manipulative behaviors, self-interest, exploitation of others, and a ruthless lack of morality), and psychopathy (impulsivity, antisocial behavior, and a lack of empathy and remorse) (Koehn et al., 2019). Sample items include “I tend to manipulate others to get my way” and “I tend to lack remorse”. Participants were asked how much they agree with each statement on a scale of one to seven (1=strongly disagree, 7= strongly agree). In a set of studies with over 1,000 participants, the Dirty Dozen Dark Triad Scale was shown to have structural reliability, convergent and discriminant validity, and test-retest reliability (Jonason & Webster, 2010).

This study measured these variables in participants to assess the observable differences between tattooed and non-tattooed individuals to assess the accuracy of prior research stating that tattooed individuals are perceived to be more negative than individuals without tattoos by looking at the traits of narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy (Stanescu & Romascanu, 2020). The full Dirty Dozen Dark Triad Scale can be found in Appendix C.

The Ten-Item Personality Inventory

The *Ten-Item Personality Inventory* (TIPI) is a 10-item Likert-scale created by Gosling, Rentfrow, and Swann (2003) as a brief measure of the Five-Factor Model of personality. The Five-Factor Model of personality is commonly referred to as the Big Five personality traits and measures extraversion (the tendency to be sociable, energetic, assertive, lively, happy, and

optimistic (McCrae & Costa, 1992)), openness to experience (the desire for curiosity, imagination, aesthetics, wisdom, enlightenment and humanism (John, 1989; McCrae & John, 1992; McCrae & Costa, 1992)), agreeableness (the desire for kindness, benevolence, confidence, empathy, obedience and sacrifice (John, 1989; McCrae & John, 1992)), conscientiousness (the desire for organization, discipline, autonomy, efficiency, reliability, progressiveness and reflection (John, 1989; McCrae & John, 1992)), and neuroticism (the desire to experience anxiety, stress, hostility, impulsiveness, shyness, irrational thinking, depression and low self-esteem (John, 1989; McCrae & John, 1992; McCrae & Costa, 1992)). Participants were asked to rate the extent to which the pair of traits applies to you (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree). Sample items include “Extraverted, enthusiastic” and “Disorganized, careless” The Ten-Item Personality Inventory has been shown to have factor structure, convergent validity, and discriminant validity (Ehrhart et al., 2009; Gosling et al., 2003).

This study measured these variables in participants to assess the observable differences between tattooed and non-tattooed individuals to assess the accuracy of prior research, that tattooed individuals are perceived to be more negative than individuals without tattoos by looking at the traits of extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, emotional stability, and neuroticism (Forbes, 2001; Tate & Shelton, 2008). The full Ten-Item Personality Inventory can be found in Appendix D.

Honesty-Humility facet of the 60-Item HEXACO Personality Inventory-Revised

The *HEXACO Personality Inventory-Revised*, originally developed by Ashton and Lee (2009), is a six-dimensional model for measuring personality. The model measures honesty-humility (people who avoid manipulating others for personal gain, feel little temptation to break the rules, are uninterested in life’s wealth and luxuries, and feel no special entitlement to

elevated social status), emotionality (people who fear physical dangers, experience anxiety in response to life's stresses, feel a need for emotional support from others, and feel empathy and sentimental attachment to others), extraversion (people who feel positively about themselves, feel confident when leading or addressing a group of people, enjoy social gatherings and interactions, and experience positive feelings of enthusiasm and energy), agreeableness (people who forgive the wrongs they have suffered, are lenient in judging others, are willing to compromise and cooperate with others, and can easily control their temper), conscientiousness (people who organize their time and physical surroundings, work in a disciplined way towards their goals, strive for accuracy and perfection in their tasks, and deliberate carefully when making decisions), and openness to experience (people who become absorbed in the beauty of art and nature, are inquisitive about various domains of knowledge, use their imagination freely in everyday life, and take an interest in unusual ideas or people) (Ashton & Lee, 2009).

The Honesty-Humility facet of the HEXACO Personality Inventory-Revised measures the tendency to be genuine in interpersonal relations (sincerity), the tendency to avoid fraud and corruption (fairness), the tendency to be uninterested in possessing lavish wealth, luxury goods, and signs of high social status (greed avoidance), and the tendency to be modest and unassuming (modesty). The HEXACO Personality Inventory-Revised has become a very widely used measure of personality and has been shown to have test-retest reliability (Henry et al., 2022) as well as self/observer agreement (Lee & Ashton, 2006). The Honesty-Humility facet specifically has been shown to be inversely related to a wide range of criteria including criminal activity and other unethical behavior when used within the HEXACO Personality Inventory-Revised or on its own (Ashton & Lee, 2008). The Honesty-Humility facet has also shown to increase the

predictive validity of the Five-Factor model of personality when added to the original five domains of the model (Ashton & Lee, 2008).

The Honesty-Humility facet of the 60-Item HEXACO Personality Inventory-Revised is a 10-item Likert-scale. Participants were asked to rate how much they agree with each statement on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Sample items include “ I think that I am entitled to more respect than the average person is” and “I wouldn't use flattery to get a raise or promotion at work, even if I thought it would succeed”. This study measured these variables in participants to assess the observable differences between tattooed and non-tattooed individuals to assess the accuracy of prior research showing that tattooed individuals are perceived to be more untrustworthy, less honest, and less credible than individuals without tattoos (Boultinghouse, 2015; Hauke-Forman, et al., 2021; Seiter & Hatch, 2005). The full Honesty-Humility facet of the 60-item HEXACO Personality Inventory-Revised can be found in Appendix E.

Procedure

To examine how individuals with tattoos are perceived, participants were randomly assigned one of four photos for viewing: a female with a full sleeve of tattoos, the same female with no tattoos, a male with a full sleeve of tattoos, or the same male without tattoos. The participants were then asked to rate the individual in the photo on multiple traits including attractiveness, trustworthiness, kindness, creativeness, professionalism, intelligence, credibility, honesty, religiosity, promiscuity, and ambition based on the set of traits tested in a similar study by Degelman and Price (2002). Participants then completed the Light Triad Scale (Kaufman, 2019), the Dirty Dozen Dark Triad Scale (Jonason & Webster, 2010), the Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI) (Gosling et al., 2003), and the Honesty-Humility facet of the 60-item HEXACO Personality Inventory-Revised (Ashton & Lee, 2009). Finally, participants answered a series of

demographic questions that asked about gender, age, religious affiliation, if they themselves have tattoos (and if so how many and if they ever feel the need to cover them up), and their overall opinions on tattoos. Before being directed to leave the survey, participants were thanked for their participation.

Results

Hypotheses 1, 2, & 3

Eleven factorial ANOVAs (2x2x2) were conducted to examine the effects of target gender, target tattoo, and participant tattoo on the degree to which participants would rate the stimuli photo on eleven traits (attractiveness, trustworthiness, kindness, creativity, professionalism, intelligence, credibility, honesty, religiosity, and ambition). The results of these ANOVAs are presented below for each trait.

Attractiveness

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Attractiveness

Target Gender	Target Tattoos	Participant Tattoos	N	M	SD
Female	No	No	32	4.719	1.250
		Yes	36	5.028	1.158
		Total	68	4.882	1.204
	Yes	No	47	4.851	1.042
		Yes	22	5.182	1.563
		Total	69	4.957	1.230
Male	No	No	37	3.595	1.481
		Yes	24	4.250	1.188
		Total	61	3.853	1.400
	Yes	No	38	4.263	1.131
		Yes	28	4.036	1.261
		Total	66	4.167	1.184

Table 2. ANOVA Source Table for Attractiveness

Target Gender	$F(1, 256) = 33.119, p < .001$
Target Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = 1.374, p = .242$
Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = 2.856, p = .092$
Target Tattoo * Target Gender	$F(1, 256) = .071, p = .791$
Target Gender * Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = .112, p = .738$
Target Tattoo * Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = 1.858, p = .174$
Target Tattoo * Target Gender * Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = 2.050, p = .153$

The ANOVA described in the above two tables examined the effect of target gender, target tattoo, and participant tattoo on the degree to which participants would rate the stimuli photo as attractive. As shown in the tables above, the ANOVA revealed a significant effect for target gender ($F(1, 256) = 33.119, p < .001$). Post hoc tests indicated that the target female was rated significantly more attractive than was the target male. There was no significant effect for target tattoo, participant tattoo, or any interactions.

Trustworthiness

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Trustworthiness

Target Gender	Target Tattoos	Participant Tattoos	N	M	SD
Female	No	No	32	4.375	1.070
		Yes	36	4.278	1.210
		Total	68	4.324	1.139
	Yes	No	47	4.447	.802
		Yes	22	4.546	1.224
		Total	69	4.478	.949
Male	No	No	37	3.784	1.336
		Yes	24	4.375	.824
		Total	61	4.016	1.190
	Yes	No	38	4.105	1.060
		Yes	28	4.286	.854
		Total	66	4.182	.975

Table 4. ANOVA Source Table for Trustworthiness

Target Gender	$F(1, 256) = 4.143, p = .043$
Target Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = 1.129, p = .289$
Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = 2.064, p = .152$
Target Tattoo * Target Gender	$F(1, 256) = .040, p = .842$
Target Gender * Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = 2.049, p = .154$
Target Tattoo * Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = .160, p = .690$
Target Tattoo * Target Gender * Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = 1.271, p = .261$

The ANOVA described in the above two tables examined the effect of target gender, target tattoo, and participant tattoo on the degree to which participants would rate the stimuli

photo as trustworthy. As shown in the tables above, the ANOVA revealed a significant effect for target gender ($F(1, 256) = 4.143, p < .05$). Post hoc tests indicated that the target female was rated as more trustworthy than was the target male. There was no significant effect for target tattoo, participant tattoo, or any interactions. However, post hoc tests indicated that individuals without tattoos rated the female more trustworthy than the male without tattoos.

Kindness

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics for Kindness

Target Gender	Target Tattoos	Participant Tattoos	N	M	SD
Female	No	No	32	4.406	1.160
		Yes	36	4.528	1.082
		Total	68	4.471	1.113
	Yes	No	47	4.426	.878
		Yes	22	4.546	1.471
		Total	69	4.464	1.092
Male	No	No	37	4.243	1.211
		Yes	24	4.542	1.062
		Total	61	4.361	1.155
	Yes	No	38	4.421	.722
		Yes	28	4.857	.848
		Total	66	4.606	.802

Table 6. ANOVA Source Table for Kindness

Target Gender	$F(1, 256) = .089, p = .766$
Target Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = .998, p = .319$
Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = 3.382, p = .067$
Target Tattoo * Target Gender	$F(1, 256) = .739, p = .391$

Target Gender * Participant Tattoo $F(1, 256) = .863, p = .354$

Target Tattoo * Participant Tattoo $F(1, 256) = .066, p = .798$

Target Tattoo * Target Gender * Participant Tattoo $F(1, 256) = .069, p = .793$

The ANOVA described in the above two tables examined the effect of target gender, target tattoo, and participant tattoo on the degree to which participants would rate the stimuli photo as kind. As shown in the tables above, the ANOVA did not reveal any significant effects.

Creativity

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics for Creativity

Target Gender	Target Tattoos	Participant Tattoos	N	M	SD
Female	No	No	32	5.281	1.170
		Yes	36	5.000	1.352
		Total	68	5.132	1.269
	Yes	No	47	5.043	1.062
		Yes	22	5.227	1.307
		Total	69	5.101	1.139
Male	No	No	37	4.351	1.358
		Yes	24	4.542	.884
		Total	61	4.426	1.190
	Yes	No	38	4.895	1.110
		Yes	28	4.679	1.188
		Total	66	4.803	1.140

Table 8. ANOVA Source Table for Creativity

Target Gender	$F(1, 256) = 11.973, p < .001$
Target Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = 1.232, p = .268$
Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = .041, p = .839$
Target Tattoo * Target Gender	$F(1, 256) = 1.318, p = .252$
Target Gender * Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = .014, p = .907$
Target Tattoo * Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = .010, p = .921$
Target Tattoo * Target Gender * Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = 2.097, p = .149$

The ANOVA described in the above two tables examined the effect of target gender, target tattoo, and participant tattoo on the degree to which participants would rate the stimuli photo as creative. As shown in the above tables, the ANOVA revealed a significant effect for target gender ($F(1, 256) = 11.973, p < .001$). Post hoc tests indicated that the target female was rated as significantly more creative than was the target male. There was no significant effect for target tattoo, participant tattoo, or any interactions. However, post hoc tests indicated that the target female with tattoos was rated significantly more creative than the target male with tattoos. Post hoc tests also indicated that the target male with tattoos was rated significantly more creative than was the target male without tattoos by participants who did not have tattoos.

Professionalism

Table 9. Descriptive Statistics for Professionalism

Target Gender	Target Tattoos	Participant Tattoos	N	M	SD
Female	No	No	32	4.063	1.343
		Yes	36	3.833	1.183
		Total	68	3.941	1.256
	Yes	No	47	3.957	.806
		Yes	22	4.546	1.438
		Total	69	4.145	1.075
Male	No	No	37	3.81	1.221
		Yes	24	4.250	.847
		Total	61	3.984	1.103
	Yes	No	38	3.895	1.134
		Yes	28	4.250	1.143
		Total	66	4.046	1.143

Table 10. ANOVA Source Table for Professionalism

Target Gender	$F(1, 256) = .112, p = .738$
Target Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = 1.439, p = .231$
Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = 4.008, p = .046$
Target Tattoo * Target Gender	$F(1, 256) = .825, p = .365$
Target Gender * Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = .572, p = .450$
Target Tattoo * Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = 1.620, p = .204$
Target Tattoo * Target Gender * Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = 2.447, p = .119$

The ANOVA described in the above two tables examined the effect of target gender, target tattoo, and participant tattoo on the degree to which participants would rate the stimuli

photo as professional. As shown in the above tables, the ANOVA revealed a significant main effect for participant tattoo ($F(1, 256) = 4.008, p = .046$). Post hoc tests indicated that the stimuli were rated as significantly more professional by participants with tattoos than by the participants without tattoos. There was no significant effect for target gender, target tattoo, or any interactions. However, post hoc tests indicated that participants with tattoos rated the stimuli with tattoos as more professional than the stimuli without the tattoos (for both target genders). Post hoc tests also revealed that participants with tattoos rated the target female with tattoos as significantly more professional than the target female without tattoos.

Intelligence

Table 11. Descriptive Statistics for Intelligence

Target Gender	Target Tattoos	Participant Tattoos	N	M	SD
Female	No	No	32	4.625	1.264
		Yes	36	4.333	1.095
		Total	68	4.471	1.178
	Yes	No	47	4.426	.801
		Yes	22	4.727	1.162
		Total	69	4.522	.933
Male	No	No	37	4.108	1.149
		Yes	24	4.625	.824
		Total	61	4.312	1.057
	Yes	No	38	4.395	1.079
		Yes	28	4.429	1.034
		Total	66	4.409	1.052

Table 12. *ANOVA* Source Table for Intelligence

Target Gender	$F(1, 256) = 1.080, p = .300$
Target Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = .284, p = .594$
Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = 1.103, p = .295$
Target Tattoo * Target Gender	$F(1, 256) = .038, p = .845$
Target Gender * Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = 1.026, p = .312$
Target Tattoo * Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = .043, p = .836$
Target Tattoo * Target Gender * Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = 4.066, p = .045$

The ANOVA described in the above two tables examined the effect of target gender, target tattoo, and participant tattoo on the degree to which participants would rate the stimuli photo as intelligent. As shown in the tables above, the ANOVA revealed a significant main effect for the interaction of target tattoo, target gender, and participant tattoo ($F(1, 256) = 4.066, p = .045$). Post hoc tests indicated that participants without tattoos themselves rated the target female without tattoos as significantly more intelligent than the target male without tattoos. There was no significant effect for target tattoo, target gender, participant tattoo, or any two-way interactions.

Credibility

Table 13. Descriptive Statistics for Credibility

Target Gender	Target Tattoos	Participant Tattoos	N	M	SD
Female	No	No	32	4.406	1.103
		Yes	36	4.028	1.108
		Total	68	4.206	1.113
	Yes	No	47	4.447	1.017
		Yes	22	4.500	1.225
		Total	69	4.464	1.079
Male	No	No	37	3.784	1.436
		Yes	24	4.417	.776
		Total	61	4.033	1.251
	Yes	No	38	4.368	1.025
		Yes	28	4.464	1.170
		Total	66	4.409	1.081

Table 14. ANOVA Source Table for Credibility

Target Gender	$F(1, 256) = .373, p = .542$
Target Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = 4.043, p = .045$
Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = .502, p = .479$
Target Tattoo * Target Gender	$F(1, 256) = .044, p = .834$
Target Gender * Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = 3.425, p = .065$
Target Tattoo * Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = .034, p = .853$
Target Tattoo * Target Gender * Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = 2.893, p = .090$

The ANOVA described in the above two tables examined the effect of target gender, target tattoo, and participant tattoo on the degree to which participants would rate the stimuli

photo as credible. As shown in the tables above, the ANOVA revealed a significant effect for target tattoo ($F(1, 256) = 4.043, p = .045$). Post hoc testing indicated that the stimuli photos with tattoos were rated as significantly more credible than were stimuli photos without tattoos. There were no significant effects for target gender, participant tattoos, or any interactions. However, post hoc tests indicated that the target female with tattoos was rated significantly more credible than was the target female without tattoos by participants without tattoos, the target male with tattoos was rated significantly higher than the target male without tattoos by participants without tattoos, and the target male without tattoos was rated significantly more credible by participants with tattoos than participants without tattoos.

Honesty

Table 15. Descriptive Statistics for Honesty

Target Gender	Target Tattoos	Participant Tattoos	N	M	SD
Female	No	No	32	4.437	1.190
		Yes	36	4.250	1.156
		Total	68	4.338	1.167
	Yes	No	47	4.575	.950
		Yes	22	4.546	1.336
		Total	69	4.565	1.078
Male	No	No	37	4.297	1.266
		Yes	24	4.583	.830
		Total	61	4.410	1.116
	Yes	No	38	4.553	1.005
		Yes	28	4.643	1.026
		Total	66	4.591	1.007

Table 16. ANOVA Source Table for Honesty

Target Gender	$F(1, 256) = 2.893, p = .090$
Target Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = 1.804, p = .180$
Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = .082, p = .774$
Target Tattoo * Target Gender	$F(1, 256) = .045, p = .833$
Target Gender * Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = 1.135, p = .288$
Target Tattoo * Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = .005, p = .947$
Target Tattoo * Target Gender * Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = .406, p = .525$

The ANOVA described in the above two tables examined the effect of target gender, target tattoo, and participant tattoo on the degree to which participants would rate the stimuli photo as honest. As shown in the above tables, the ANOVA did not reveal any significant effects.

Religiosity

Table 17. Descriptive Statistics for Religiosity

Target Gender	Target Tattoos	Participant Tattoos	N	M	SD
Female	No	No	32	3.219	1.458
		Yes	36	3.139	1.437
		Total	68	3.177	1.445
	Yes	No	47	3.192	1.135
		Yes	22	3.636	1.497
		Total	69	3.33	1.268
Male	No	No	37	3.622	1.421
		Yes	24	3.917	.974
		Total	61	3.738	1.264
	Yes	No	38	3.553	1.267
		Yes	28	3.964	1.478

Total	66	3.727	1.365
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Table 18. ANOVA Source Table for Religiosity

Target Gender	$F(1, 256) = 7.601, p = .006$
Target Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = .438, p = .509$
Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = 2.497, p = .115$
Target Tattoo * Target Gender	$F(1, 256) = .525, p = .469$
Target Gender * Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = .254, p = .615$
Target Tattoo * Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = .894, p = .345$
Target Tattoo * Target Gender * Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = .362, p = .548$

The ANOVA described in the above two tables examined the effect of target gender, target tattoo, and participant tattoo on the degree to which participants would rate the stimuli photo as religious. As shown in the above tables, the ANOVA revealed a significant effect for target gender ($F(1, 256) = 7.601, p = .006$). Post hoc tests revealed that the target male was rated more religious than was the target female, overall. There were no significant effects for target tattoo, participant tattoo, or any interactions. However, post hoc tests indicated that participants with tattoos rated the target male as more religious than the target female and that the target male without tattoos was rated significantly more religious than was the target female without tattoos by participants with tattoos.

Promiscuity

Table 19. Descriptive Statistics for Promiscuity

Target Gender	Target Tattoos	Participant Tattoos	N	M	SD
Female	No	No	32	3.969	1.282
		Yes	36	3.917	1.481
		Total	68	3.941	1.381
	Yes	No	47	3.787	.999
		Yes	22	3.727	1.638
		Total	69	3.768	1.226
Male	No	No	37	4.243	1.623
		Yes	24	4.292	.806
		Total	61	4.262	1.353
	Yes	No	38	3.842	1.386
		Yes	28	4.179	.983
		Total	66	3.985	1.234

Table 20. ANOVA Source Table for Promiscuity

Target Gender	$F(1, 256) = 3.051, p = .082$
Target Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = 1.790, p = .182$
Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = .170, p = .680$
Target Tattoo * Target Gender	$F(1, 256) = .047, p = .829$
Target Gender * Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = .564, p = .453$
Target Tattoo * Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = .179, p = .672$
Target Tattoo * Target Gender * Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = .200, p = .655$

The ANOVA described in the above two tables examined the effect of target gender, target tattoo, and participant tattoo on the degree to which participants would rate the stimuli

photo as promiscuous. As shown in the above tables, the ANOVA did not reveal any significant effects. It is worth noting that the effect of target gender was approaching significance.

Ambition

Table 21. Descriptive Statistics for Ambition

Target Gender	Target Tattoos	Participant Tattoos	N	M	SD
Female	No	No	32	4.375	1.238
		Yes	36	4.139	1.313
		Total	68	4.250	1.274
	Yes	No	47	4.596	1.035
		Yes	22	4.591	1.182
		Total	69	4.594	1.075
Male	No	No	37	4.270	1.484
		Yes	24	4.500	.933
		Total	61	4.361	1.291
	Yes	No	38	4.342	1.279
		Yes	28	4.357	.989
		Total	66	4.349	1.16

Table 22. ANOVA Source Table for Ambition

Target Gender	$F(1, 256) = .143, p = .706$
Target Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = .970, p = .326$
Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = .000, p = .995$
Target Tattoo * Target Gender	$F(1, 256) = 1.481, p = .225$
Target Gender * Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = .632, p = .427$
Target Tattoo * Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = .001, p = .978$
Target Tattoo * Target Gender * Participant Tattoo	$F(1, 256) = .533, p = .466$

The ANOVA described in the above two tables examined the effect of target gender, target tattoo, and participant tattoo on the degree to which participants would rate the stimuli photo as ambitious. As shown in the above tables, the ANOVA did not reveal any significant effects.

Hypotheses 1b & 2b

Zero-Order Correlations of the Primary Outcome Variables with Participant Age

To address whether the predictor variable of age was related to the trait ratings of the stimuli photos (attractiveness, trustworthiness, kindness, creativity, professionalism, intelligence, credibility, honesty, religiosity, promiscuity, and ambition), zero-order correlations were computed. A one-way multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was also conducted to examine whether target gender or target tattoo had a significant effect on the degree to which participants would rate the stimuli photo on the 11 traits that comprise the trait rating scale.

Table 23. Zero-Order Correlations of the Primary Outcome Variables with Age of Participant for Non-Tattooed Female Stimuli

	N	<i>r</i>
Attractiveness	76	.108
Trustworthiness	76	.137
Kindness	76	-.028
Creativity	76	-.060
Professionalism	76	.154
Intelligence	76	.050
Credibility	76	.161
Honesty	76	.090
Religiosity	76	.376**
Promiscuity	76	.035
Ambition	76	-.020

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Table 24. Zero-Order Correlations of the Primary Outcome Variables with Age of Participant for Tattooed Female Stimuli

	N	<i>r</i>
Attractiveness	81	-.026
Trustworthiness	81	-.125
Kindness	81	-.136
Creativity	81	-.433**
Professionalism	81	-.167
Intelligence	81	-.237*
Credibility	81	-.153
Honesty	81	-.234*
Religiosity	81	.255*
Promiscuity	81	-.133
Ambition	81	-.314**

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Table 25. Zero-Order Correlations of the Primary Outcome Variables with Age of Participant for Non-Tattooed Male Stimuli

	N	<i>r</i>
Attractiveness	72	.014
Trustworthiness	72	.028
Kindness	72	-.066
Creativity	72	-.037
Professionalism	72	.066
Intelligence	72	.043
Credibility	72	.095
Honesty	72	-.013
Religiosity	72	.112
Promiscuity	72	-.049
Ambition	72	-.009

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Table 26. Zero-Order Correlations of the Primary Outcome Variables with Age of Participant for Tattooed Male Stimuli

	N	<i>r</i>
Attractiveness	78	.264*
Trustworthiness	78	.185
Kindness	78	-.016
Creativity	78	.251*
Professionalism	78	.087
Intelligence	78	.165
Credibility	78	.176
Honesty	78	-.062
Religiosity	78	.000
Promiscuity	78	.104
Ambition	78	-.038

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Overall, perception of target religiosity ($r(76) = .376, p < .01$) was positively correlated with participant age for the rating of the stimuli photo of the female with no tattoos. These correlations are summarized above in Table 23.

Overall, perception of target creativity ($r(81) = -.433, p < .01$), intelligence ($r(81) = -.237, p < .05$), honesty ($r(81) = -.234, p < .05$), and ambition ($r(81) = -.314, p < .01$) were negatively correlated with age of participant for the rating of the stimuli photo of the female with tattoos. Perception of target religiosity ($r(81) = .255, p < .01$) was positively correlated with participant age for the rating of the stimuli photo of the female with tattoos. These correlations are summarized above in Table 24.

None of the perceived traits were significantly correlated with participant age for the rating of the stimuli photo of the male without tattoos. These correlations are summarized above in Table 25.

Overall, perception of target attractiveness ($r(78) = .264, p < .05$) and creativity ($r(78) = .251, p < .05$) were positively correlated with participant age for the rating of the stimuli photo of the male with tattoos. These correlations are summarized above in Table 26.

ANCOVA with Participant Age as a Covariate

Table 27. ANCOVA Summary Table

	<i>Age</i>			<i>Target Gender</i>			<i>Target Tattoo</i>			<i>Target Gender * Target Tattoo</i>		
	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
Attractiveness	2.173	.142	.007	51.829	<.001***	.146	2.112	.147	.007	1.058	.305	.003
Trustworthiness	.950	.330	.003	8.392	.004**	.027	1.00	.318	.003	.347	.556	.001
Kindness	1.304	.254	.004	.426	.515	.001	.370	.543	.001	.776	.379	.003
Creativity	1.708	.192	.006	21.067	<.001***	.065	1.985	.160	.007	3.518	.062	.012
Professionalism	.352	.553	.001	1.652	.200	.005	.151	.698	.000	.104	.747	.000
Intelligence	.014	.906	.000	4.962	.027*	.016	.041	.840	.000	.483	.488	.002
Credibility	1.426	.233	.005	5.542	.020*	.018	2.610	.107	.009	.669	.414	.002
Honesty	.912	.340	.003	.380	.538	.001	2.791	.096	.009	.205	.651	.001
Religiosity	11.401	<.001***	.036	6.056	.014*	.020	.396	.530	.001	.070	.792	.000
Promiscuity	.065	.790	.000	1.896	.169	.006	3.204	.074	.010	.301	.583	.001
Ambition	2.720	.100	.009	2.385	.124	.008	1.024	.312	.003	.011	.917	.000

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Means and standard deviations can be found in Tables 1-22.

A one-way multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was conducted to examine whether target gender or target tattoo had a significant effect on the degree to which participants would rate the stimuli photo on the 11 traits that comprise the trait rating scale (attractiveness, trustworthiness, kindness, creativity, professionalism, intelligence, credibility, honesty, religiosity, promiscuity, and ambition).

As shown in the table above, there was a significant main effect of target gender for the perceived traits of attractiveness ($F(1, 302) = 51.829, p < .001, \eta^2 = .146$), trustworthiness ($F(1, 302) = 8.392, p < .01, \eta^2 = .027$), creativity ($F(1, 302) = 21.067, p < .001, \eta^2 = .065$), intelligence

creativity ($F(1, 302) = 4.962, p = .027, \eta^2 = .016$), credibility ($F(1, 302) = 5.542, p = .020, \eta^2 = .018$), and religiosity ($F(1, 302) = 6.056, p = .014, \eta^2 = .020$), when controlling for participant age. The MANCOVA did not reveal a significant main effect of target tattoo or a significant interaction between target gender and target tattoo for any of the 11 traits, when controlling for participant age.

Hypothesis 4

Independent-samples t-tests were conducted to assess the observable differences between tattooed and non-tattooed individuals on the Light Triad Scale (Kaufman, 2019), the Dirty Dozen Dark Triad Scale (Jonason & Webster, 2010), the Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI) (Gosling et al., 2003), and the Honesty-Humility facet of the 60-item HEXACO Personality Inventory-Revised (Ashton & Lee, 2009).

Table 28. Independent Samples T-Test for the Light Triad

	Non-Tattooed Participants		Tattooed Participants		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Faith in Humanity	18.344	4.752	18.446	5.017	-.167	.394	-.021
Humanism	22.643	4.404	22.746	3.946	-.195	.282	-.024
Kantianism	22.325	4.311	23.036	4.503	-1.298	.754	-.162
Light Triad	63.317	10.452	64.227	11.002	-.686	.980	-.086

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Table 29. Independent Samples T-Test for the Dark Triad

	Non-Tattooed Participants		Tattooed Participants		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Machiavellianism	10.227	4.642	10.936	4.720	-1.215	.799	-.152
Psychopathy	8.974	5.128	8.300	4.119	1.140	.034*	.142
Narcissism	13.792	5.455	13.427	5.648	.528	.477	.066
Dark Triad	32.994	11.586	32.664	11.783	.226	.710	.028

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Table 30. Independent Samples T-Test for the Big Five Personality Traits

	Non-Tattooed Participants		Tattooed Participants		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Extraversion	7.760	2.784	8.691	2.879	-2.641	.695	-.330
Agreeableness	10.175	2.214	10.200	2.322	-.087	.690	-.011
Conscientiousness	10.403	2.566	10.300	2.636	.317	.735	.040
Emotional Stability	7.779	2.909	7.591	2.499	.549	.049*	.069
Openness	9.955	2.372	10.336	2.164	-1.337	.734	-.167

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Table 31. Independent Samples T-Test for the Honesty-Humility Facet of the 60-Item HEXACO Personality Inventory-Revised

	Non-Tattooed Participants		Tattooed Participants		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Sincerity	10.487	2.557	10.273	2.577	.669	.904	.084
Fairness	10.714	2.853	10.336	3.024	1.035	.375	.129
Greed Avoidance	6.461	1.764	6.209	1.687	1.165	.542	.145
Modesty	6.020	.836	5.918	.869	.955	.398	.119
Honesty-Humility	33.682	5.626	32.736	5.666	1.342	.956	.168

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

The independent-samples t-tests described in the above tables were conducted to assess the observable differences between tattooed and non-tattooed individuals on the Light Triad Scale (Kaufman, 2019), the Dirty Dozen Dark Triad Scale (Jonason & Webster, 2010), the Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI) (Gosling et al., 2003), and the Honesty-Humility facet of the 60-item HEXACO Personality Inventory-Revised (Ashton & Lee, 2009). The independent-samples t-tests found that for almost all traits of the four scales there was no significant difference in scores between non-tattooed and tattooed participants. However, a significant difference in psychopathy ($t(262) = 1.140, p = .034, d = .142$) between non-tattooed participants ($M = 8.974, SD = 5.128$) and tattooed participants ($M = 8.300, SD = 4.119$) was found. A significant difference in emotional stability ($t(262) = .549, p = .049, d = .069$) between non-tattooed participants ($M = 7.779, SD = 2.909$) and tattooed participants ($M = 7.591, SD = 2.499$) was also found.

Discussion

The current study was designed to fill the gap in our understanding of the impact of tattoos on social perception. Based on the reviewed articles on tattoos and social perception, it was predicted that (1) the stimuli photos with the tattooed individuals would be rated lower on traits of attractiveness, trustworthiness, kindness, professionalism, intelligence, credibility, honesty, religiosity, and ambition, and would be rated higher in creativeness, and promiscuity in comparison to the stimuli photos with the non-tattooed individuals; (1b) these effects would be particularly pronounced in the perceptions expressed by members of an older generation; (2a) the tattooed female would be rated lower than the tattooed male; (2b) these effects would be particularly pronounced in the perceptions expressed by members of an older generation; (3) participants with tattoos would rate the tattooed individuals in the photos more positively than

would non-tattooed participants; and (4) tattooed participants would not score significantly different from non-tattooed participants on any of the personality/individual difference measures.

While the results supported some parts of the hypotheses, the results also opposed some parts of the hypotheses. The tattooed individuals in the stimuli photos were rated significantly lower than the non-tattooed individuals on only the trait of credibility. The tattooed female in the stimuli photo was rated significantly lower than the tattooed female on the trait of religiosity. The tattooed female was rated significantly higher on traits of attractiveness, trustworthiness, and creativity than was the tattooed male. These results oppose the original hypothesis. When looking at the relationship between age and the trait ratings of the stimuli photos only the traits of creativity, intelligence, honesty, and ambition were rated lower by older participants, but only for the tattooed female in the stimuli photo. These patterns did not hold up when looking at the tattooed male in the stimuli photos.

The other hypotheses looked at the effect of participant tattoo on the degree to which participants would rate the stimuli photo on the 11 traits comprising the trait rating scale. Tattooed participants only rated the tattooed individuals in the stimuli photos higher than non-tattooed participants on the trait of professionalism. As discussed above, there were a few significant interactions that showed mean differences in the ratings of the stimuli on a few of the traits, but those effects did not hold up to create a significant main effect in any of the ANOVAs for those traits. The traits that did show significant results did generally support the original hypothesis regarding perceived trait rating differences between tattooed and non-tattooed participants.

Although the results did not show many significant perceived differences of the target individuals with target gender or target tattoo as the independent variables, they do show a

positive shift in the societal acceptance of tattoos when compared with results from the 2002 Degelman and Price study. The current study replicated the methodology used in the Degelman and Price (2002) study of presenting participants with a stimuli photo before asking participants to rate the individual in the photo on a set of traits. The current study added to this methodology by using stimuli photos of both a male and a female. Additionally, the current study altered the set of traits being rated by swapping out some of the traits from those used by Degelman and Price (2002) for traits that have been measured in more current studies on tattoos and social perception. Despite certain differences, the current study is able to provide support for the idea that tattoos are gaining acceptance as they become more prevalent in society. This comparison speaks to the societal shift in the acceptance of and opinions on tattoos.

The last set of analyses conducted examined if there were any observable differences between tattooed and non-tattooed participants on individual-difference measures of the Light Triad, the Dark Triad, the Big Five Personality Traits, and a measure of honesty/humility. These (mostly) insignificant differences between tattooed and non-tattooed participants support the original hypothesis and allow us to correctly identify the effect of tattoos on social perception as a paradoxical stigmatization. The only traits that showed a significant difference between tattooed and non-tattooed participants were the traits of psychopathy and emotional stability, which showed that non-tattooed participants scored lower on emotional stability and higher on psychopathy than did tattooed participants. These significant differences do not replicate any other findings thus far and warrant further research to understand the possible mechanisms. We propose a possible explanation based on narratives in popular culture and on social media; individuals with tattoos may score significantly lower on measures of emotional stability than do individuals with tattoos because people commonly get tattoos in response to/to cope with a

traumatic or emotional event. This is not something that has been proven by academic research, but is a common narrative on social media that appears to resonate with people of all ages and backgrounds.

Although the results did not fully support the original hypotheses, they are valuable to our understanding of tattoos and their effects on social perception. The last studies to look at the social perception of tattoos in a similar fashion to the current study were done in 2000 by Degelman and Price and in 2007 by Manuel and Sheehan. As previously mentioned, the art of tattooing has become increasingly popular in recent years; as of 2016, 21–29% of Americans had at least one tattoo and 15–20% had two or more tattoos (Laumann & Derick, 2016). Since this statistic was published, there has not been any follow up studies looking at the effect of tattoos of social perception on a general set of traits. The recent increase in tattoos among the general population may explain the difference in the results of the current study compared to similar studies published around two decades ago (Degelman & Price, 2002; Manuel & Sheehan, 2007).

The increasing prevalence of tattoos in the general population may explain the decrease in the negative perceptions and associations they have previously been shown to have. Tattoos are no longer an automatic signal of membership to groups that hold negative associations such as sailors, prisoners, gangs, drug users, etc. (DeMello, 2000; Mallon & Russel, 1999). As time goes on more and more people of all ages, genders, professions, and cultures have tattoos.

The results of the current study not only show the increasing acceptance of tattoos, but also provide information that may inform and benefit individuals who are considering getting a tattoo. The current study offers a modern day understanding of how tattoos might affect professional, educational, social, and personal opportunities. The results of this study could serve to inform individuals interested in a tattoo on possible location, design, and size. Although the

stigmatization and negative associations commonly made about tattoos are not completely gone, the results of this study show that they have been- and likely will continue decreasing over time.

Limitations and Future Directions

The current study has multiple limitations that should be addressed and considered when looking at the results. Firstly, this study mostly used shortened, self-report questionnaires and scales, as well as digitally edited photograph stimuli to gather the data. The best and most accurate measures of each of these constructs are the originally published, full-length measures. By using shortened versions of these already validated and widely-used scales, we may possibly decrease the accuracy of these measures. It is also important to acknowledge that the main stimuli used for this study were photographs that were digitally edited by a digital effects professional to include tattoos. While the use of such stimuli allows for easy control, such stimuli may lack ecological validity. The edited-on tattoos, though edited by a professional, may also not be completely accurate. Stimuli showing individuals with actual tattoos may better reflect how people would react and think in a real-life scenario. Additionally, it should be noted that the photo stimuli only included one male and one female. Using stimuli photographs of a single male and female may have produced results that are representative of participants' personal opinions of the individuals in the photo rather than results that are representative of their opinions as they are affected by the tattoos. The results from this study may have been more accurate and generalizable if photograph stimuli included photos of multiple males and females.

This study was a very basic study that aimed to look at how social perceptions are impacted by tattoos as a whole. This study is a starting point for what could potentially be a large body of research looking into the many variations of tattoos and how they affect social perception. The tattoos in the photo stimuli were chosen because they were as neutral as

possible. Future research may benefit to replicate this study utilizing the different qualities of tattoos as an independent variable (e.g. black and white or color, visible or hidden, sentimental value or random, words or figure/picture). Future research may also seek to explore what specific traits correspond to harsher judgment of tattooed individuals to further our understanding of tattoos and social perception.

Bottom Line

Overall, the current research indicates an increasing acceptance of tattoos that follows in line with their increasing prevalence in the general population. Although the study has its limitations, the results add to our understanding of the human experience as it relates to tattoos and social perception. As with many other social constructs, the societal outlook on tattoos has not always been positive, with seemingly cyclical trends. This study builds on previous research to update our understanding of this social construct and inform our understanding of social perception.

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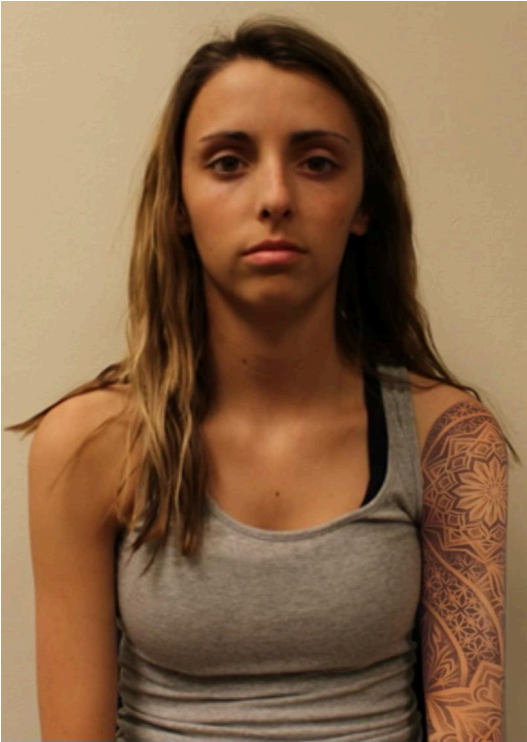
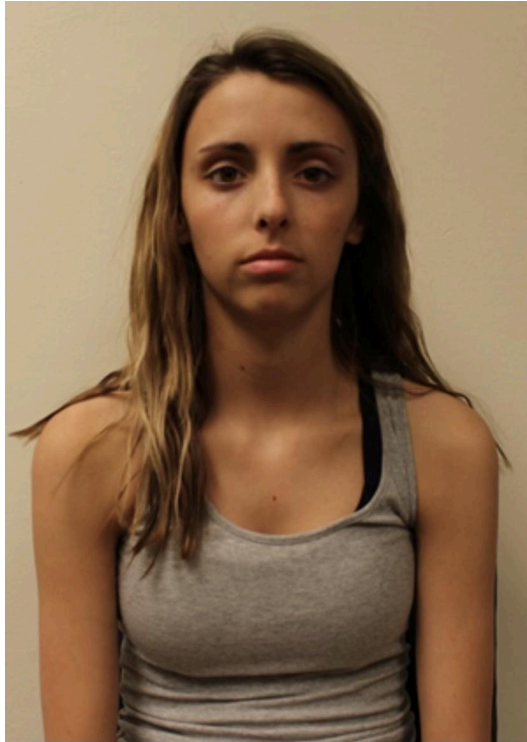
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Appendices

Appendix A

Photograph Stimuli



Appendix B**Light Triad Scale**

Please indicate on a scale of 1 to 7 how much you agree or disagree with each statement
(1= strongly disagree 4= neutral 7= strongly agree).

1. I tend to see the best in people
2. I tend to trust that other people will deal fairly with me
3. I think people are mostly good
4. I'm quick to forgive people who have hurt me
5. I tend to admire others
6. I tend to applaud the successes of other people
7. I tend to treat others as valuable
8. I enjoy listening to people from all walks of life
9. I prefer honesty over charm
10. I don't feel comfortable overtly manipulating people to do something I want
11. I would like to be authentic even if it may damage my reputation
12. When I talk to people I am rarely thinking about what I want from them

Kaufman, S. B., Yaden, D. B., Hyde, E., & Tsukayama, E. (2019). The light vs. Dark Triad of personality: Contrasting two very different profiles of human nature. *Frontiers In Psychology, 10*, 467. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00467>

Appendix C**The Dirty Dozen Dark Triad Scale**

Please indicate on a scale of 1 to 7 how much you agree or disagree with each statement

(1= strongly disagree 4= neutral 7= strongly agree).

1. I tend to manipulate others to get my way
2. I have used deceit or lied to get my way
3. I tend to exploit others towards my own end
4. I have used flattery to get my way
5. I tend to lack remorse
6. I tend to be callous and insensitive
7. I tend to be unconcerned with the morality of my actions
8. I tend to be cynical
9. I tend to want others to admire me
10. I tend to want others to pay attention to me
11. I tend to seek prestige or status
12. I tend to expect special favors from others

Jonason, P. K., & Webster, G. D. (2010). The dirty dozen: A concise measure of the Dark Triad.

Psychological Assessment, 22(2), 420–432. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0019265>

Appendix D**The Ten-Item Personality Inventory**

Here are a number of personality traits that may or may not apply to you. Please write a number next to each statement to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with that statement. You should rate the extent to which the pair of traits applies to you, even if one characteristic applies more than the other.

1 = Disagree strongly

2 = Disagree moderately

3 = Disagree a little

4 = Neither agree nor disagree

5 = Agree a little

6 = Agree moderately

7 = Agree strongly

1. __ Extraverted, enthusiastic

2. __ Critical, quarrelsome

3. __ Dependable, self-disciplined

4. __ Anxious, easily upset

5. __ Open to new experiences, complex

6. __ Reserved, quiet

7. __ Sympathetic, warm

8. __ Disorganized, careless

9. __Calm, emotionally stable

10. __Conventional, uncreative

Gosling, S. D., Rentfrow, P. J., & Swann Jr, W. B. (2003). A very brief measure of the Big-Five personality domains. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 37(6), 504-528.

[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0092-6566\(03\)00046-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0092-6566(03)00046-1)

Appendix E

Honesty-Humility facet of 60-Item HEXACO Personality Inventory-Revised

On the following pages you will find a series of statements about you. Please read each statement and decide how much you agree or disagree with that statement. Then write your response in the space next to the statement using the following scale:

5 = strongly agree

4 = agree

3 = neutral (neither agree nor disagree)

2 = disagree

1 = strongly disagree

1. I wouldn't use flattery to get a raise or promotion at work, even if I thought it would succeed.
2. If I want something from someone, I will laugh at that person's worst jokes.
3. I wouldn't pretend to like someone just to get that person to do favors for me.
4. If I knew that I could never get caught, I would be willing to steal a million dollars.
5. I would never accept a bribe, even if it were very large.
6. I'd be tempted to use counterfeit money, if I were sure I could get away with it.
7. Having a lot of money is not especially important to me.
8. I would get a lot of pleasure from owning expensive luxury goods.
9. I think that I am entitled to more respect than the average person is.
10. I want people to know that I am an important person of high status.

Costa, P. T. & McCrae, R. R. (1992) Revised NEO personality inventory (NEOPI-R) and NEO five-factor inventory (NEO-FFI) Manual. *Psychological Assessment Resources*, 3.