

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF BODY ART: IMPLICATIONS FOR MARKETING MANAGERS

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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this study was to assess the extent to which attitudes among a current sample of college students regarding persons with body art may differ from those reported approximately ten years previous. Using the same instrument and general sampling procedure as in an earlier study, a survey was conducted resulting in a geographically dispersed sample of 434 respondents ranging in age from 18 to 49 years. Although it may have been expected that variations in the obtained sample from the earlier one as well as the passage of time would result in differences in attitudes, such was not the case. Exploratory Factor Analysis revealed that the factor structure inherent in the present data was virtually identical to that reported in the earlier study. Although there are relatively minor differences, overall the pattern of attitudes and stereotypes toward persons with body art are quite similar to that reported in the earlier study. Specific similarities and differences between the two data sets and their implications for marketing management are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

A person's physical appearance, as an expression of a person's identity, is often modified in ways that are regarded as both routine and normative in the U.S.A. (Foster and Hummel, 2000). Adorning the body has a centuries old history in Western society. Ackroyd (2011) notes that in England both men and women of the ninth and tenth centuries wore tattoos on their arms. In modern Western societies, the provision of services such as cosmetics, body waxing, hair styling, tanning, teeth whitening, coolsculpting, and other forms of elective cosmetic surgery, make up a large and growing industry in the U.S.A., reportedly over \$1.5 billion in 2018 ("America's Booming ...," 2018). Indeed, the body art industry constitutes a robust growth industry in the U.S. and around the world (Stirn, 2003). According to STAPAW.com (2012), 38% of Canadian adults and 36% of Irish adults had tattoos in 2012. In the United States, 42% of adults have tattoos (STAPAW.com, 2012). There is even a New Orleans Tattoo Museum & Studio that opened there in 2015 (McLeod, 2015).

A Statistic Brain Research Institute direct response study in 2016 found that 14% of adults have at least one tattoo (Statistic Brain, 2016). According to STAPAW.com (2012), 61% of adults have had piercings (including ear cartilage). The number of tattoo parlors in the U.S. has grown from 4,000 in 2001 (Sebastian, 2001) to 21,000 (Statistic Brain, 2016). There are reportedly over 38,000 tattoo businesses in the U.S. that employ over 45,000 people ("America's Booming ...," 2018). A researcher at IBISWorld has forecasted that the tattoo industry will reach \$1.1 billion by the year 2020 ("Toxic Tats," 2016, p. 29) but this has already been exceeded as of 2018. A 2015

Harris Poll found that Millennials (47%) and Gen Xers (36%) had at least one tattoo, while only 13% of Baby Boomers had one (Quirk's, 2016, p. 14). Body art is a term which is used for both tattoos and body piercings, where jewelry is attached to the body.

Not surprisingly, the following studies indicate that the prevalence of both forms of body art – tattoos and piercings, is highest among young adults. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, a recent Pew Research Center estimated that “about 38% of young people ages 18 to 29 have at least one tattoo” (Newman, 2017). The prevalence appears to increase during the college age years, though data is conflicting. A study of Eastern Michigan University students found that 21% of students had tattoos, and almost 30% had body piercing (Anderson, 2003). A survey of 481 college students in New York showed that 42% of the men and 60% of the women had body piercing (Mayers, Judelson, Moriarty, & Rundell, 2002). According to the Harris poll mentioned above, body art and education attainment are inversely related, as 22 percent of those having a high school education or less are tattooed or pierced, as compared to only 4 percent with post-graduate degrees. According to a study of 400 undergraduates in a southeastern university, “Over a quarter (27.5%) of the respondents reported that they had a tattoo—25.8% of men and 28.3% of women” and “Almost seventy percent (69.7%) of the undergraduate women compared to 28.2% of undergraduate men reported having any piercings” (Horn, Knox, Zusman, & Zusman, 2007).

Workplace Concerns

A concern for many organizations is the image projected by their employees to customers or other interest groups. Many organizations have dress codes designed to project a specific image which limit certain behaviors (Wich, 2007). An issue which appears to be of increasing concern in the specification of dress codes in the U.S. is the growth of tattoos and body piercing among employees. The concern results from the fact that body art, which is increasing in prevalence in the U.S., is associated with negative behavior and connotations, such as being overly aggressive, rebellious, and tending toward violence (Swami et al., 2015). Though it is a particularly significant challenge to retailers in the U.S., the issue is widespread: law firms, hospitals, dental hygiene programs, advertising agencies, non-profit organizations, and even government agencies such as state parks “wrestle” with the issue of how employees should dress (e.g., see Baumann, Timming, & Gollan, 2016; Bible, 2010; Elzweig & Peeples, 2011; Felton-O'Brien, 2007; Lau, 2016; McGregor, 2015; Mlodzik, 2007; Rowe, 2015; Search, Tolle, McCombs, & Arndt, 2018; and Timming, Nickson, Daniel, & Perrett, 2015).

The concern for managers is that in the past at least, both tattoos and body art have been associated with risky and deviant behavior in Western culture. Questions exist from a management perspective as to how tolerant retail customers may be and what stereotypes might exist (see Totten, Lipscomb, & Jones, 2009; Ellis, 2015 and Antonellis, Jr., Berry, & Silsbee, 2017). These questions include: What size of tattoo is acceptable? How many are acceptable and on what parts of one's body? Are they more acceptable on women, or by women? The concern is not only about the existence, number, size and location of the tattoos, but what the tattoo might express. Ellis (2015, p. 111) encourages future research in these areas among others.

The issue is complicated by the fact that dress codes can quickly become legal “minefields” (Williamson, 2006; Barron, 2007). Legal issues associated with the restriction of body art include sex discrimination, freedom of religion and freedom of speech, and numerous lawsuits have resulted from body art dress codes (see Miller, Nicols, & Eure, 2009; Mueller, 2017). Facebook™ has a discussion board for its “Tattoo Acceptance in the Workplace” group and postings suggest that many feel that having body art “disqualifies them from consideration” (Ellis, 2015, p. 102). p.

58). “Modified’ applicants and employees have no legal recourse to discrimination under federal law in the United States” (Ellis 20,15, p. 101). “However, strict dress code guidelines can diminish the talent pool” as more Millennials have body art and Baby Boomers are retiring (Carr, 2008). Mueller (2017, p. 30) found that “older generations may be more likely to discriminate against those with tattoos.” McElroy, Summers, and Moore (2014, p. 36) concluded that, “at least for more mainstream, business-oriented jobs, candidates with facial piercings face an uphill climb with regard to earning a job.” According to Foltz (2014) “Of the respondents, 27% believed that company policy should not dictate whether tattoos can be displayed whereas 73% felt that it was acceptable for policy to dictate the visibility of tattoos.”

BACKGROUND LITERATURE

Sociology, psychology and nursing fields have contributed most of the research reported in the literature concerning body art. Less attention on body art has come from the marketing and consumption perspectives. Much of the medical literature on tattooing and body piercing has focused on the risks and complications of these procedures (Carroll, Riffenburgh, Roberts, & Myhre, 2002; Armstrong, Koch, Saunders, Roberts, Alden, & Owen, 2007; Johnson, 2014; Carlsen & Serup, 2015). Sociological studies have primarily focused on body art as a byproduct of deviant and aggressive behavior, as well as descriptions of marginal and sub-cultural groups associated with tattooing and body art (Forbes, 2001; also see Adams, 2009; Silver, Silver, Siennick, and Farkas, 2011; Swami et al., 2015). Psychology studies concerned with body art, on the other hand, have tended to focus on psychopathology and intrapersonal motivational factors such as the expression of freedom or hedonism (Vail, 1999). One trend noted of late is body art that honors one’s children (Gleiter, 2008). Though historically considered to be somewhat deviant behavior in Western society, social scientists argue that the use of body art is becoming increasingly diffused and embraced by the middle class (DeMello, 2000; Carroll, Riffenburgh, Roberts, & Myhre, 2002; Rock, 2008). Koch, Roberts, Armstrong, and Owen (2015, p. 4) noted “Our findings here show further evidence of a shift in the meaning of tattoos about the time respondents acquire their fourth tattoo. At that point, it’s as though one’s tattoos become a more constitutive sign of a lifestyle rather than a nominal addition to the presentation of self.”

In a 2006 national survey, 24% of respondents were found to have tattoos and 14% had body piercings (Laumann and Derick, 2006). As noted earlier, STAPAW.com (2012) states that 42% of U.S. adults have tattoos. In the early 2000s two popular cable television shows that featured tattoos were *Miami Ink* and *Inked* (“Tattoos Put Their Stamp,” 2006). Current television shows about tattoos include *Black Ink Crew*, *Ink Masters*, and *Just Tattoo of Us*. There are also shows in Australia (*Bond Ink Tattoo Crew*) and Great Britain (*London Ink*) (List of tattoo TV shows, 2018).

Not surprisingly, studies indicate that the prevalence of both forms of body art is increasing most rapidly among young adults. Laumann and Derick, (2006) found that, among those born between 1975 and 1986, there was a higher incidence of tattoos and other forms of body art than was the case for those individuals born in the period 1953-1974. In one small-scale study, Forbes (2001) reported that among members of a university anthropology class, 5% had a tattoo and 36% had a body piercing. According to The Chronicle of Higher Education (2003), a 2002 Pace University study of their student body indicated that of the undergraduates, more than half had some type of body piercing, and 23% had at least one tattoo. A study of Eastern Michigan University students found that 21% of students had tattoos, and almost 30% had body piercing

(Anderson 2003). Ten years ago, Lipscomb, Jones, and Totten (2008, pp. 48-49) found that 40.5% of 496 college business students had some form of body art, and 26.3% of male students had body art versus 56.8% of female students. A survey of 481 college students in New York showed that 42% of the men and 60% of the women had body piercing (Mayers, Judelson, Moriarty, & Rundell, 2002). According to the Harris poll mentioned above, body art and education attainment are inversely related, as 22% of those having a high school education or less were tattooed or pierced, as compared to four percent with post-graduate degrees. But this is changing; a 2006 Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology study found that 48% of “20-somethings and 30 percent of all adults have a tattoo or body piercing” and “23 percent of those with body art hold at least a bachelor’s degree” (Fiorentino, 2006, D1). Dundes and Francis (2016, p. 219) studied honor students and their use of body art. They found that “(f)ewer Honors students had tattoos (13% versus 29%) and a greater proportion of those who did thought about this decision for at least a year (75% versus 19%).” Dale, Bevill, Roach, Glasgow, & Bracy (2009) surveyed 1,412 students and 581 business people at universities and communities in Arkansas, California, and Ohio. They found that just about 48% of students “did not think that visible tattoos and body piercings would hinder a person’s chance of getting a job . . .”

Among the most prolific investigators of body art use is Armstrong and her associates, who conducted a number of studies during the 1990’s. Their studies of high school students, college students and career women suggested that body art consumption among adults tends to be carefully thought out in advance, and not associated with alcohol and drug usage, rebellion or post-purchase regret (Armstrong, 1991; Armstrong and McConnell, 1994; Armstrong and Pace Murphy, 1997; Greif, Hewitt, & Armstrong, 1999). Armstrong and Koch have since formed a “body art” team that continues to conduct research into this second decade of the 21st century.¹

Kjeldgaard and Bengtsson (2003) studied tattoo consumption in Denmark and concluded that it is “better understood as either neotribal or reflexive individualistic forms of expression” (p. 26). Lim, Ting, Leo and Jayanthi (2013) concluded that in Malaysia, “the society may perceive tattooing and body piercing practices as a form of art, spirituality, immortalizing significant moment memories, self-expression and representation of the dark.” In other consumption related research, Solomon (2004, p. 180) noted that consumers “use this body art [tattoos] to make statements about the self, and these skin designs serve some of the same functions that other kinds of body painting do in primitive cultures.” Body piercing, using metallic inserts, has also “evolved from a practice associated with some fringe groups to become a popular fashion statement” (Solomon, 2004, p. 181) and has even been applied in medical disability research (“Tongue piercing,” 2013). Hoyer and MacInnis (2001), in focusing on symbolism, mentioned that marketers help consumers with symbol development, communication, reinforcement, and removal. “Consumers often want tattoos removed because they are emblematic of an earlier time of life or an abandoned reference group and impede the development of new identifications” (p. 455). Shelton and Peters (2008) found supporting evidence in their exploratory study, concluding that “tattoo acquisition and removal are undertaken as a means of identity negotiation” and “when identity conflict arose, consumers sought tattoo removal services” (p. 10). Approximately 45,000 tattoos were removed by laser surgery in 2013 (Bowerman, 2013).

Hawkins, Mothersbaugh, and Best (2007) noted that there are meanings on at least three levels: having tattoos, the location of those tattoos, and the nature of the tattoos, in terms of symbolism and private meaning. Hill, Ogletree and McCrary (2016, p. 251) found that 44% of the students who participated in their Central Texas study had tattoos, and that “wanting to be unique

¹ See their current research at: <http://drjkoch.org/Research/Tattoo%20Team.htm>.

is a common reason for obtaining tattoos.” Walzer and Sanjurjo (2016, p. 79) concluded that “according to tattoo artists and individuals with tattoos, the media has had a remarkable and multifaceted impact on the practice of tattooing in our contemporary societies.”

A key concept in the field of consumer behavior is that of consumer involvement, the perceived relevance of the object to the consumer based on his/her inherent needs, values and interests (Zaichkowsky, 1985). Regarding body art, involvement would appear to be in part a function of the situation in which the purchase decision takes place. Rational factors that may impact the decision to purchase body art services may include the price of the service, amount of pre-purchase information available or sought, as well as the time frame in which the decision is made among other factors (adapted from Figure 4.3 in Solomon, 2004, p. 124). However, emotions are also at work in the decision-making process, as people may pursue liberation or uniqueness or rejecting symbolism or conformity (Pentina & Spears, 2011). Firmin, Tse, Foster, and Angelini, (2012) also found that friends exert some influence on people’s tattoo adoption decisions. Health-related concerns may also enter in the purchase decision as “there are no universal procedural health standards for tattooing” (Koch, Roberts, Harms Cannon, Armstrong, and Owen, 2005, p. 81; also see Boodman, 2006; Johnson, 2014; “Piercing pain,” 2006; “Tattoos Are No Longer Taboo,” 2006). “As of September 2003, 34 states have regulations for both tattooing and body piercing, 39 states for tattooing only, and 35 states specifically for body piercing” (Armstrong, 2005, p. 40). As of 2018, “almost every state have laws addressing some aspect of body art. (Nevada has no laws addressing body art; Maryland has very limited laws). At least 45 states have laws prohibiting minors from getting tattoos. Thirty-eight states have laws that prohibit both body piercing and tattooing on minors without parental permission” (NCSL.org, 2018). Armstrong, et al. (2002, p. 320) reported that their college students “seemed to be knowledgeable consumers agreeing that there should be a clean studio, an artist who explains the procedure, that the studio/artist should be recommended, that they should shop around before selecting the best studio/artists, know what the health problems are, and that tattoo decisions should be avoided during times of stress.” Resenhoeft, Villa and Wiseman (2008, p. 595) suggested that: “Healthcare providers could inform a college student considering getting a tattoo that despite the apparent popularity of tattooing, a tattoo may harm perceptions of them by their peers.”

In a large-scale survey of college students’ attitudes toward persons with body art, Totten et al. (2009) found that overall the respondents expressed favorable attitude towards persons with both form of body art and that they found both forms to be attractive. They reported that younger persons in the sample, however, tended to indicate more favorable relevant attitudes than did older persons. There were also differences as a function of the sex about whom such attributions were made as both men and women in that study indicated positive attitudes toward women with body art more frequently than to their male counterparts.

The present study represents an update to these findings by assessing the extent to which these results are consistent with prevailing attitudes among a similar sample of college students. As such, the same instrument and a similar sampling procedure were utilized. It is recognized that because of sampling variability it cannot be inferred that attitudes have either changed or remained stable by comparing the two sets of results. Rather, the intent is to provide a current day basis for insights with respect to strategic marketing implications for this important demographic of consumers.

METHODOLOGY

A non-probability sampling procedure similar to that utilized by Lipscomb et al. (2009) was conducted in an attempt to obtain a geographically diverse sample of college students in the United States. The assistance of seven members of the marketing faculty at seven different accredited universities in the following states was obtained: Alabama, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and South Dakota (2)ⁱ. The faculty members were emailed copies of the same questionnaire used by Lipscomb et al. (2008) with appropriate permission and relevant Institutional Review Board approvals. These were then printed out and distributed attached to an informed consent letter in the faculty members' Principles of Marketing courses. Those students in attendance in these courses who wished to participate completed and returned the questionnaires to the faculty members who then kept them secure and mailed to the researchers via U.S. Postal Service. A total of 434 completed questionnaires were received in this manner. Data were extracted from these questionnaires and analyzed using SPSS v. 22 in the manner described below.

RESULTS

Sample Characteristics

A total of 434 respondents returned completed questionnaires. The obtained sample had an age range of 18 to 49 years with a mean age of 21.05 years. With respect to gender, 44.5% identified as female and 51.6% as male; 3.9% did not identify as male or female. Six states, geographically dispersed, were represented in the sample. These were: Alabama (5.8%), Kentucky (20.5%), Louisiana (11.1%), Michigan (18.4%), Pennsylvania (6.5%), and South Dakota (37.8%). The following demographic variables were used in the analyses: age, gender, region of residence, and whether or not the respondent reported having body art.

Prevalence of Body Art

For this study, respondents were asked to exclude pierced earlobes on women from consideration in their responses relating to body piercing. Among the respondents, 35.2% indicated having some form of body art. Of these, 82.1% reported having tattoos while 87.4% indicated having piercings. Among those having tattoos, 33.9%, indicated having one tattoo while 23.4% reported having two. Six or more tattoos were reported by seven respondents (5.6%). This pattern was quite similar for the prevalence of piercings. The largest percentage (32.6%) reporting having one piercing while 15.9% reporting having two piercings. Eighteen individuals (13.5%) reported having six or more piercings. Table 1 reports more specific detail regarding prevalence (see next page).

Type/Number	n	%
Tattoos	124	82.1
One Tattoo	26	33.9
Two Tattoos	29	23.4
Three Tattoos	11	8.9
Four Tattoos	4	3.2
Five Tattoos	5	4
Six Tattoos	2	1.6
Seven Tattoos	2	1.6
More than Seven	3	2.4
Piercings	132	87.4
One Piercing	43	32.6
Two Piercings	21	15.9
Three Piercings	10	7.6
Four Piercings	14	10.6
Five Piercings	5	3.8
Six Piercings	6	4.5
Seven Piercings	4	3
Eight Piercings	2	1.5
More than Eight	6	4.5

Pearson chi-square for independence tests were performed resulting in statistically significant gender-based patterns for prevalence of body art of both types - tattoos, and piercings. For body art in general, significantly more women (49%) than men (21.4%) reported having some form of body art, $\chi^2(1, N = 416) = 35.85, p < .001$. Among these, significantly more men (91.3%) than women (70.8%) reported having tattoos, $\chi^2(1, N = 118) = 7.04, p = .008$. There was a statistically significant relationship in the opposite direction for piercings with 92.3% of the women as compared to 52.8% of the men reported having piercings, $\chi^2(1, N = 127) = 26.3, p < .0001$. There was a statistically significant relationship for the prevalence of body art and state of residence $\chi^2(5, N = 433) = 11.51, p = .042$. Residents of Kentucky reported the highest prevalence (44.9%) and residents of Pennsylvania the lowest (17.9%). Pearson Product-moment correlation revealed no statistically significant relationships of prevalence of body art to age of respondent.

Rasch Analyses

The items assessing attitudes toward persons with body art were subjected to Rasch Rating Scale Model (RSM) (Andrich, 1978a, 1978b) analysis as implemented in the WINSTEPS v. 3.68.2 (Linacre, 2009) as a means of assessing the psychometric properties of the items. The mean endorsement level for the 37 items was “centered” or set to zero logit units. The observed as well as True SD was 1.74 logit units for both model and actual data; the relatively small RMSE of 0.14 for model and 0.15 for actual data indicated a high level of precision in calibrating items measures. The reliability was .99 for both model and real data corresponded to high 12.49 and 11.33 reliability-separation indices or 16.99 and 15.44 identifiable item strata for model and real data, respectively. Thus, the functioning of the response format and the items used are considered to be psychometrically sound for their intended purpose.

Data Reduction

These thirty-seven items comprising the scale assessing attitudes toward persons with body art were subjected to Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) utilizing Principal Axis Factor extraction with direct oblique rotation and Kaiser normalization in order to explore inherent latent factor structure within the data. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test of sampling adequacy resulted in a value of .863 indicative of the appropriateness of the analysis with this data set (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1984). With no number of fixed factors specified, the scree plot resulting from this initial analysis revealed evidence for three discrete factors. Accordingly, a three-factor solution was specified for which the rotation converged in nine iterations accounting for 45.68% of the variance. Following Sheskin's (2011) recommendation that with sample sizes comparable to that in the present study, factor loadings of .3 or greater should be used. Inspection of the factor loadings indicates that the first factor consists of items indicating positive attitudes toward body art. Twenty-four items loaded positively at .3 or greater on Factor 1 and may be viewed as indicative of positive characteristics associated with persons having body art (see Table 2). Four of these items double-loaded on factors 1 and 2, possibly indicative of ambivalence among the sample. It is of note that this factor is quite similar to the results reported by Totten et al. (2009) using the same scale but a completely different sample of college students. Again, similar to the aforementioned study, fifteen items loaded positively (including the four with double loadings .3 or greater) on a second factor seemingly indicative of negative characteristics associated with persons having body art (see Table 2). These items assess attributions with traditionally negative social connotation. An exception has to do with the four double loaded items, all of which deal specifically with sexual promiscuity which may be indicative of ambiguity among the sample as to whether this represents a positive or negative trait. Three items loaded of Factor 3. These items have in common that they assess a perspective-taking dimension in that all have to do with attributions of how persons with body art are viewed by others.

Two separate composite factor scores were computed by summing the data for those items that showed loadings of .3 or greater for Factor 1 – Positive Characteristics Associated with Persons Having Body Art (range = 17 – 79, $M = 46.07$, $SD = 12.15$) and for Factor 2 – Negative Characteristics Associated with Persons Having Body Art (range = 13 – 48, $M = 28.97$, $SD = 7.84$). After performing a median split procedure for the age variable, each factor score was subjected to a 2 (gender) x 2 (age) ANOVA. The ANOVA for Factor 1 (positive characteristics) resulted in a significant main effect for gender, $F(1,402) = 5.52$, $p = .019$, $n^2 = .019$, indicating that women generally expressed significantly more positive attitudes toward persons with body art ($M = 46.75$) than did men ($M = 45.33$). Neither the main effect for age nor the age x gender interaction were significant. The ANOVA for Factor 2 (negative characteristics) also resulted in a significant main effect for gender, $F(1,403) = 8.64$, $p = .003$, $n^2 = .021$, indicating that men expressed significantly more negative attitudes toward persons with body art ($M = 30.18$) than did women ($M = 27.65$). Again, neither the main effect for age nor the age x gender interaction were significant. The results for the individual items within composite factors are depicted in Table 3 and discussed subsequently supported by Pearson chi-square for Independence tests to assess potentially meaningful relationships among items and demographic variables considered. This approach was selected because the data were in terms of frequencies and there was evidence of significant skewness among the majority of the scaled items (-1.47 to .926).

Table 2
Factor Loadings from Principal Axis Factor Analysis: Communalities, Eigenvalues, and
Percentages of Variance for Items on the Body Art Appreciation Questionnaire

Item	Factor Loading			Communality
	1	2	3	
1. Tattoos can be attractive	.78	-.12	.21	.78
3. Tattoos on women are attractive	.74	-.14	.13	.74
4. A small, discrete tattoo is "sexy" on a woman	.67	-.02	.21	.63
11. Piercing(s) with body jewelry on women is attractive	.67	-.08	.09	.81
5. Extensive tattoos are attractive on a man	.66	-.08	-.05	.64
10. Piercings with body jewelry can be attractive	.66	-.11	.09	.79
17. A small, discrete piercing with body jewelry is "sexy" on a woman	.63	-.03	.12	.63
2. Tattoos on men are attractive	.62	-.13	.09	.70
16. Piercing(s) with body jewelry on men is attractive	.61	.02	-.43	.74
7. Extensive tattoos are attractive on a woman	.59	-.10	-.06	.58
24. Tattoos are appropriate for a parent	.59	-.33	.21	.61
36. Piercing(s) with body jewelry is appropriate for a parent	.55	-.14	.00	.55
18. Extensive piercings with body jewelry are attractive on a man	.54	.08	-.50	.62
12. A small, discrete piercing with body jewelry is "sexy" on a man	.53	.06	-.37	.66
8. A small, discrete tattoo is "sexy" on a man	.53	.04	-.02	.53
13. Extensive piercings with body jewelry are attractive on a woman	.51	-.04	-.19	.44
6. A man with a tattoo(s) is sexually promiscuous	.49	.40	-.05	.62
9. A woman with a tattoo(s) is sexually promiscuous	.44	.45	.03	.68
25. Tattoos indicate "free spiritedness"	.42	.23	.25	.56
21. Tattoos are appropriate for a person of any age	.41	-.10	-.10	.44
14. A man with piercing(s) and body jewelry is sexually promiscuous	.41	.35	-.25	.57
15. A woman with piercing(s) and body jewelry is sexually promiscuous	.38	.42	-.04	.63
31. Piercing(s) with body jewelry is appropriate for persons of any age	.36	-.09	-.15	.47
34. Piercing(s) with body jewelry indicate "free spiritedness"	.31	.32	.25	.54
22. People tend to stereotype persons with a tattoo(s)	.12	-.09	.34	.30
29. A person with piercing(s) with body jewelry is "tough"	.11	.62	.04	.53
32. The number of piercings with body jewelry that a person has makes a difference in how he/is perceived by others	.02	.12	.36	.43
23. The number of tattoos that a person has makes a difference in how he/is perceived by others	.00	.07	.38	.47
28. A person with a tattoo(s) is "tough".	-.03	.62	.12	.54
37. Piercing(s) with body jewelry indicate a "partying lifestyle"	-.09	.79	.07	.70
35. Piercing(s) with body jewelry indicate that the person abuses alcohol or drugs	-.12	.73	.01	.67
19. A person with a tattoo(s) is aggressive	-.13	.69	-.10	.58
33. A person with a piercing(s) with body jewelry is aggressive	-.17	.70	-.02	.62
26. Tattoos indicate a "partying lifestyle"	-.18	.67	.06	.60
27. Tattoos indicate that the person abuses alcohol or drugs	-.23	.67	-.06	.62
30. I consider a person with a piercing(s) with body jewelry to have a "bad" image	-.27	.61	.10	.57
20. I consider a person with a tattoo(s) to have a "bad" image	-.39	.62	-.05	.67
Eigenvalue	9.21	5.53	2.17	
% of variance	24.88	14.95	5.85	

Table 3
Items Endorsements in Percentages*

Item	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neither		Agree		Strongly Agree	
Tattoos can be attractive	7.4	(32)	10.2	(44)	14.3	(62)	47.3	(205)	20.8	(90)
Tattoos on men are attractive	13.6	(58)	10.5	(45)	37.6	(161)	27.3	(117)	11	(47)
Tattoos on women are attractive	12.5	(54)	17.1	(74)	27	(117)	31.6	(137)	11.8	(51)
A small, discrete tattoo is “sexy” on a woman	8.1	(35)	12.7	(55)	26.7	(116)	37.1	(161)	15.4	(67)
Extensive tattoos are attractive on a man	29.1	(125)	22.1	(95)	34.4	(148)	11.4	(49)	3	(13)
A man with a tattoo(s) is sexually promiscuous	24.9	(107)	26.7	(115)	39.5	(170)	8.1	(35)	0.7	(3)
Extensive tattoos are attractive on a woman	40.8	(177)	29	(126)	15.7	(68)	11.5	(50)	3	(13)
A small, discrete tattoo is “sexy” on a man	23.5	(101)	16.8	(72)	42	(180)	13.5	(58)	4.2	(18)
A woman with a tattoo(s) is sexually promiscuous	21.9	(95)	24	(104)	33.4	(145)	19.1	(83)	1.6	(7)
Piercings with body jewelry can be attractive	11.5	(50)	13.6	(59)	16.4	(71)	49	(212)	9.5	(41)
Piercing(s) with body jewelry on women is attractive	9.9	(43)	12	(52)	23.3	(101)	43.9	(190)	10.9	(47)
A small, discrete piercing with body jewelry is “sexy” on a man	42.2	(181)	23.5	(101)	26.3	(113)	6.3	(27)	1.6	(7)
Extensive piercings with body jewelry are attractive on a woman	39.7	(172)	33.7	(146)	18	(78)	6.7	(29)	1.8	(8)
A man with piercing(s) and body jewelry is sexually promiscuous	37.4	(160)	25.2	(108)	31.3	(134)	5.1	(22)	0.9	(4)
A woman with piercing(s) and body jewelry is sexually promiscuous	23.2	(100)	23.9	(103)	33.6	(145)	16.5	(71)	2.8	(12)
Piercing(s) with body jewelry on men is attractive	43.3	(184)	22.6	(96)	28.2	(120)	4.2	(18)	1.6	(7)
A small, discrete piercing with body jewelry is “sexy” on a woman	13.7	(59)	9.5	(41)	27	(116)	40.2	(173)	9.5	(41)
Extensive piercings with body jewelry are attractive on a man	56.6	(241)	19	(81)	23	(98)	0.7	(3)	0.7	(3)
A person with a tattoo(s) is aggressive	21.1	(91)	34.1	(147)	30.4	(131)	13.7	(59)	0.7	(3)
I consider a person with a tattoo(s) to have a “bad” image	28	(120)	35.4	(152)	22.6	(97)	11.9	(51)	2.1	(9)
Tattoos are appropriate for a person of any age	26	(112)	36.4	(157)	13.5	(58)	20	(86)	4.2	(18)
People tend to stereotype persons with a tattoo(s)	1.2	(5)	1.4	(6)	6.8	(29)	55.8	(239)	34.8	(149)
The number of tattoos that a person has makes a difference in how he/is perceived by others	3	(13)	2.8	(12)	8.8	(38)	57.4	(247)	27.9	(120)
Tattoos are appropriate for a parent	7.9	(34)	15.6	(67)	40.2	(173)	26.7	(115)	9.5	(41)
Tattoos indicate “free spiritedness”	6	(26)	16.5	(71)	41.4	(178)	30.5	(131)	5.6	(24)
Tattoos indicate a “partying lifestyle”	14.7	(63)	39.8	(171)	29.8	(128)	14.9	(64)	0.9	(4)
Tattoos indicate that the person abuses alcohol or drugs	41.5	(179)	35	(151)	18.6	(80)	4.6	(20)	0.2	(1)
A person with a tattoo(s) is “tough”.	20.9	(90)	38.7	(167)	28.8	(124)	10.4	(45)	1.2	(5)
A person with piercing(s) with body jewelry is “tough”	29.1	(125)	44.7	(192)	22.1	(95)	4	(17)	0.2	(1)
I consider a person with a piercing(s) with body jewelry to have a “bad” image	22.2	(95)	38.1	(163)	23.8	(102)	14.5	(62)	1.4	(6)
Piercing(s) with body jewelry is appropriate for persons of any age	24.4	(105)	41.2	(177)	18.8	(81)	13.3	(57)	2.3	(10)
The number of piercings with body jewelry that a person has makes a difference in how he/is perceived by others	3.3	(14)	4.7	(20)	10	(43)	59.5	(256)	22.6	(97)
A person with a piercing(s) with body jewelry is aggressive	21.4	(92)	43.7	(188)	30.2	(130)	4.2	(18)	0.5	(2)
Piercing(s) with body jewelry indicate “free spiritedness”	10	(43)	26	(112)	39.3	(169)	22.6	(97)	2.1	(9)
Piercing(s) with body jewelry indicate that the person abuses alcohol or drugs	35.6	(153)	38.6	(166)	21.2	(91)	4	(17)	0.7	(3)
Piercing(s) with body jewelry is appropriate for a parent	14.7	(63)	26	(112)	37	(159)	18.1	(78)	4.2	(18)
Piercing(s) with body jewelry indicate a “partying lifestyle”	21.6	(93)	39.1	(168)	28.1	(121)	10.9	(47)	0.2	(1)

*Items in parentheses are frequencies

Factor 1: Positive Characteristics Associated with Persons Having Body Art Tattoos

The large majority of respondents in the sample (68.1%) expressed the attitude that tattoos can be attractive (combined percentages for responses Agree and Strongly Agree; see Table 3). Although this was a fairly general attitude, there was a statistically significant relationship with gender of the respondents. Specifically, a higher percentage of women (76.7%) as opposed to men (60.3%) either agreed or strongly agreed that tattoos can be attractive, $\chi^2(4, N = 417) = 14.06, p = .007$. With respect to attractiveness of tattoos on men, a total of 67.4% of the female respondents agreed that tattoos on men are attractive. A significantly smaller percentage, 11.8%, of the men, however, agreed with the statement, $\chi^2(4, N = 413) = 140.28, p < .001$. Of note is that this finding is nearly identical to that reported earlier by Totten et al. (2009) except that the percentage differences are even larger in the present study as compared to the earlier one. Unlike the earlier study, however, there was no statistically significant relationship of gender to the corresponding item concerning attractiveness of tattoos on women. For this item, 43.5% of respondents overall agreed or strongly agreed that tattoos on women are attractive. In the 2009 study, a significantly higher percentage of men agreed as compared to women.

Consistent with previous findings, the present results indicate that the extent of the presence of tattoos is related to attributions of attractiveness with 51.2% of the sample as a whole disagreeing that extensive tattoos are attractive on men and 69.8% *disagreeing* that they are attractive on women (see Table 3). Concerning tattoos on men, there was a significant relationship with gender, $\chi^2(4, N = 413) = 52.20, p < .001$ (see Table 4) wherein more women agreed that extensive tattoos on men are attractive (24.9 %) as compared to male respondents (4.1%). It is interesting to note that in the 2009 study significantly more *women* disagreed that extensive tattoos on men were attractive as compared to male respondents.

There was also a significant relationship of gender to the corresponding item concerning the attractiveness of extensive tattoos on women with 18.8% of the men and 8.8% of the women agreeing or strongly agreeing with this proposition, $\chi^2(4, N = 417) = 10.29, p = .036$. This cross-gender pattern wherein respondents of the opposite gender consider extensive tattoos on the opposite gender to be attractive with greater frequency than do those of the same gender is similar to the results reported by Totten et al. (2009).

In the present study and in Totten et al. (2009), a specific sub-dimension of attractiveness that was examined is that of sexual attractiveness. This dimension was subsumed in various items by the use of the adjective, “sexy”. In the present case, the majority of respondents, 52.5%, agreed that a small discrete tattoo on a woman is “sexy” while only 17.7% agreed that this was so for a man (see Table 4). Continuing the cross-gender pattern discussed above, in the present study there was a statistically significant relationship between gender and attributions of sexual attractiveness with respect to a small discrete tattoo on women, $\chi^2(4, N = 417), p = 13.76, p = .008$. In this comparison, 57.1% of men agreed that a small discrete tattoo on women is “sexy” as opposed to 45.6% of female respondents (see Table 4). A similar cross-gender pattern was in evidence for the companion item concerning the “sexiness” of a small discrete tattoo on a man, $\chi^2(4, N = 413) = 56.8, p < .001$ wherein significantly more women (31.8%) agreed that a small discrete tattoo on a man is “sexy” as compared to men (5.0%) (see Table 4). These patterns are nearly identical to those reported earlier by Totten et al. (2009).

Table 4
Percent Agreement and Disagreement for Items Significantly Related to Gender of Respondent^a

Item	Disagree		Agree	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Tattoos can be attractive	22.8	12.4	60.3	76.7
Tattoos on men are attractive	32.7	15.0	11.8	67.4
A small, discrete tattoo is “sexy” on a woman	21.9	19.7	57.1	45.6
Extensive tattoos are attractive on a man	51.4	52.3	4.1	24.9
A man with a tattoo(s) is sexually promiscuous	44.5	61.1	5.9	11.4
Extensive tattoos are attractive on a woman	66.5	74.6	18.8	8.8
A small, discrete tattoo is “sexy” on a man	46.2	33.9	5.0	31.8
A woman with a tattoo(s) is sexually promiscuous	36.2	58.5	30.8	9.3
A small, discrete piercing with body jewelry is “sexy” on a man	60.5	71.5	2.7	13.5
A man with piercing(s) and body jewelry is sexually promiscuous	57.0	68.4	4.1	8.8
A woman with piercing(s) and body jewelry is sexually promiscuous	37.5	57.8	23.7	14.6
Piercing(s) with body jewelry on men is attractive	60.9	70.8	1.4	10.4
A small, discrete piercing with body jewelry is “sexy” on a woman	18.8	28.6	56.2	43.2
Extensive piercings with body jewelry are attractive on a man	66.1	86.5	0.0	3.1
A person with a tattoo(s) is aggressive	48.2	63.0	17.0	10.9
I consider a person with a tattoo(s) to have a “bad” image	57.4	70.8	15.7	12.5
Tattoo(s) indicate a “partying lifestyle”	50.0	59.7	17.9	13.6
Tattoos indicate that the person abuses alcohol or drugs	71.9	82.3	4.9	4.7
A person with piercing(s) with body jewelry is “tough”	74.1	73.6	1.8	7.3
The number of piercings with body jewelry that a person has makes a difference in how he/is perceived by others	9.8	4.7	78.1	88.0
Piercing(s) with body jewelry indicate that the person abuses alcohol or drugs	68.3	81.3	5.8	3.1
Piercing(s) with body jewelry indicate a “partying lifestyle”	54.0	68.4	12.5	4.6

^aCombined responses of Strongly Disagree and Disagree; Strongly Agree and Agree

The majority disagreed that tattoos are appropriate for a person of any age with 24.2 % of the sample expressing agreement and 62.4% expressing disagreement (see Table 3), a result virtually identical to that reported by Totten et al. (2009). Concerning the appropriateness of tattoos for a parent, 36.2 % endorsed this sentiment while 40.2% were neutral and 23.5% disagreed (see Table 3). Within the present sample, 36.1% agreed that tattoos are indicative of “free spiritedness” while 22.5% disagreed and 41.4% were neutral (see Table 3). There was fairly uniform agreement across the sample for these three items as there were no significant relationships to the demographic variables considered with the exception of whether or not the respondent him/herself reported having body art as discussed below.

As mentioned above, items relating to attributions of sexual promiscuity double-loaded on Factors 1 and 2. In the case of tattoos, most respondents in the present study (51.6%) disagreed that a man with a tattoo is sexually promiscuous (see Table 3). There was a statistically significant relationship to gender as a higher percentage of women (61.1%) expressed disagreement as compared to men (44.5%), $\chi^2(4, N = 413) = 28.9, p < .001$ (Table 4). This result is nearly identical to that reported by Totten et al. (2009). As was the case in the previous study, the largest proportion of the sample (45.9%) disagreed that a woman with a tattoo is sexually promiscuous (see Table 3) although this percentage was somewhat lower than in the earlier study. There was a statistically

significant relationship to gender for this attribution wherein more women disagreed (58.5%) with this statement as compared to men (36.2%), $\chi^2(4, N = 417) = 34.39, p < .001$ (Table 4).

Piercings

Like previously reported findings (Totten et al.2009), the majority of respondents (58.5%) either agreed or strongly agreed that that piercings with body jewelry can be attractive. Further and again consistent with previous findings, this result was relatively uniform as there were no significant relationships of this item to any of the demographic variables considered. Paralleling the finding for tattoos, a much higher percentage of respondents viewed piercings with body jewelry on women to be attractive (54.8%) as compared to the presence of body art on men (5.8%) (see Table 3). Again, there were there no statistically significant patterns evident for this item as functions of any of the demographic variables considered indicating relative uniformity of attitude across the sample. A statistically significantly greater percentage of women, however, reported piercings with body jewelry on men to be attractive (10.4%) than did male respondents (1.4 %), $\chi^2(4, 412) = 37.53, p < .001$ (see Table 4), continuing the cross-gender pattern noted above.

In parallel to the results for tattoos, the extent of the presence of piercings with body jewelry on both men and women were found to be related to attitudes of attractiveness. Overall, the majority of respondents *disagreed* that extensive piercings are attractive on men (75.6%) and women respectively (73.4%) (see Table 3). This perspective was relatively consistent as there were no statistically significant relationships of this item with any of the demographic variables considered. A considerably higher percentage of respondents indicated that a small, discrete piercing with body jewelry on women is “sexy” (49.7%) with only 7.9% making this attribution with respect to men (see Table 3). Significant cross-gender patterns were present. Specifically, a higher percentage of women (13.5%) as compared to men (2.7%) agreed that a small discrete piercing with body jewelry is “sexy” on men, $\chi^2(4, N = 413) = 39.84, p = .001$ (Table 4) while the inverse was true for piercings with body jewelry on women with more men (56.2%) as compared to women (43.2%) expressing agreement, $\chi^2(4, N = 416) = 14.07, p = .007$ (Table 4).

In response to the related item “Piercing(s) with body jewelry is appropriate for a parent,” 22.3% of the respondents agreed while 40.7 % disagreed (see Table 3). There were no statistically significant relationships among these items and any of the demographic variables considered.

Although in the earlier study for every variable having to do with the attractiveness or “sexiness” of tattoos or piercings, chi square analysis revealed a statistically significant relationship between these attitudes and whether or not the respondent him/herself reported having body art, such was not the case in the present sample.

Factor 2: Negative Characteristics Associated with Persons Having Body Art Tattoos

Most respondents in the present study *disagreed* that a person with a tattoo is aggressive (55.2%) (see Table 3). For this item there was also statistically significant relationship to gender, $\chi^2(4, N = 416) = 10.98, p = .027$ with 63.0% of the women and 48.2% of the men expressing disagreement. Most respondents disagreed that a person with a tattoo has a “bad image” (63.4%). In the case of this item, was also a significant relationship to gender with more women (70.8%) *disagreeing* with the statement than men (57.4 %), $\chi^2(4, N = 415) = 10.87, p = .023$ (see Table 4), a finding nearly identical to that reported by Totten et al. (2009).

Over half of the respondents (54.5%) *disagreed* that tattoos are indicative of a “partying lifestyle” with 15.8% agreeing with this statement (see Table 3). In this case as well there was a significant relationship of this variable to gender. A higher percentage of women disagreed

(59.7%) as compared to men (50.0%), $\chi^2(4, N = 415) = 11.15, p = .025$. Otherwise, this view was relatively uniform across the sample as there were no significant relationships of this item to any other demographic variables considered. A relatively small percentage of the sample endorsed the view that a person with tattoos engages in substance abuse (4.8%) with the vast majority disagreeing with this assertion (76.5%) (see Table 3). Again, the sample was quite uniform in this attribution as there were no statistically significant relationships of this variable with any of the demographic variables considered. Most respondents (59.6%) *disagreed* that a person with a tattoo is “tough.” There were no statistically significant relationships of this variable to any of the demographic items considered.

Piercings

Overall, the findings regarding piercings were quite similar to those for tattoos. The majority of respondents *disagreed* that a person with piercings with body art is “tough” (73.8%) or that piercings are associated with a “bad image” (60.3%) (Table 3). The sample was relatively homogeneous in these beliefs as there were no statistically significant relationships of this variable to any of the demographic items considered. Most respondents (65. %) disagreed that a person with piercings with body jewelry is aggressive and that a person with piercing with body jewelry abuses alcohol or drugs (74.2%). There was a significant relationship to gender for this later item, $\chi^2(4, N = 417) = 10.14, p = .038$. More women disagreed with the latter assertion (81.3%) as compared to men (68.3%) (Table 4). Similarly, the majority of the sample *disagreed* that a person with piercings with body jewelry leads a “partying lifestyle” (60.7%) (see Table 3). Again, it is of note that these results are nearly identical to the finding reported by Totten et al. (2009).

As was the case for the items comprising Factor 1, for those items comprising Factor 2 and unlike the results reported by Totten et al. (2009) there were no statistically significant relationships on any items to whether the respondent reported having body art (see Table 6).

Factor 3: Others’ Attributions Concerning Persons with Body Art

Three items comprised Factor 3 and appear to represent attributions concerning how others view persons with body art. Among the present sample 90.6% *disagreed* that people tend to stereotype persons with body art with only 2.6% in agreement. So too, the majority agreed that the number of tattoos makes a difference in how a person is perceived by others (85.3%) and that the number of piercings makes a difference in how a person is perceived by others (82.1%). For none of these items was there a statistically significant relationship with any of the demographic variables considered.

DISCUSSION

The present study was conducted in an attempt to update earlier findings by Totten et al. (2009) using the same instrument and sampling procedure to gain an appreciation of the extent to which those findings are consistent with prevailing attitudes among a similar sample of college students. Even though the demographic profiles of the two samples are quite similar the authors fully recognize that given the nature of the sampling procedures and resultant sampling variability, definitive comparison between the two samples is not possible. Nevertheless, it may prove beneficial to utilize the present results to formulate marketing strategies of potential benefit to practitioners.

Perhaps the most compelling and somewhat surprising finding is how well the present results mirror those of Totten et al. (2009) despite the variability in the sampling plans. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) conducted on the two samples reveals nearly identical factor structure. As was the case in the earlier study, significantly more women report having piercings with body art as compared to men while significantly more men report having tattoos. Just as was the case in the earlier study, the strong majority of respondents consistently endorsed positive attributions toward persons with body art both in the form of tattoos and piercings with a relatively low percentage of respondents endorsing negative stereotypes. In the present study, more women reported finding body art to be attractive generally as compared to men. Thus, the majority of the sample were of the opinion that tattoos can be attractive although this sentiment was endorsed by a significantly higher percentage of women than men. It is of note that unlike the results of the earlier study in which it was found that significantly more younger than older respondents found body art in both of its forms to be attractive as compared to older persons, such was not the case among the present sample. This may be indicative that the current sample was more homogeneous in acceptance of body art than was the previous sample.

Also similar to the earlier findings, the majority of those comprising the present sample were of the opinion that that the extensiveness of a person's tattoos made a difference in terms of attractiveness. The majority of the sample disagreed that extensive tattoos on women and men are attractive. Replicating the findings of Totten et al. (2009), the sex of the individual about whom attributions of attractiveness were made was important. Specifically, the percentage of those disagreeing was much higher for the attractiveness of extensive tattoos on women than was the case for men. These results could be interpreted to mean that extensive tattoos on men is more socially acceptable within this market segment than are extensive tattoos on women. As was the case for tattoos, a much higher percentage of respondents viewed piercings with body jewelry on women to be attractive as compared to the presence on men. Again, paralleling the findings for tattoos, the extent of the presence of piercings on both men and women were found to be related to attributions of attractiveness. The majority of respondents disagreed that extensive piercings are attractive on persons of either sex. In the present sample, and in the results reported by Totten et al. (2009), there was a general consensus that body art of both forms can be attractive as long as they are not overdone. There also was a preponderance of positive attributions made about persons with body art with comparatively few respondents endorsing negative stereotypes.

A particularly interesting finding in the present results that partially replicates Totten et al. (2009) is evidence for a cross-gender effect wherein a higher percentage of persons of one sex reported finding body art on persons of the other sex to be attractive. Thus, a higher percentage of women than men found both tattoos and piercings on men to be attractive. Unlike Totten et al. (2009), however, there was no such relationship of gender when attributions were made for attractiveness of body art in either form on women. This may suggest that the present sample was more in agreement than the earlier one concerning the attractiveness of body art on women. This interpretation is bolstered by other results in the present study. Although the majority of the respondents disagreed that extensive body art is attractive on persons of either sex the cross-gender pattern was in evidence. For instance, unlike the results reported by Totten et al. (2009), significantly more women than men agreed that extensive tattoos and piercings on men are attractive while significantly more men than women agreed that extensive tattoos (but not piercings) are attractive on women.

These findings appear to have implications for marketing managers. For example, there appears to be little reason for concern among managers that persons in their employ with body art

who are visible to the public will be viewed negatively by customers or detract from potential sales, according to our results. This does refute the work by Baumann, Timming & Gollan (2016). The exception may be for company representatives who display extensive body art. The present data suggest that these individuals may not be viewed favorably by consumers. In addition, the make-up of the target market must be considered. Marketing managers should consider revisions to corporate policies regarding the display of tattoos and piercings within reason. Mishra and Mishra (2015, p. 328) recommended that “organizations should be considerate towards the changing values of this generation and bring some flexibilities to the dress code norms.” Ruetzler et al. (2012) found that grooming and business attire were more important indicators in the hiring decision than tattoos and piercings. Managers should also tread carefully in terms of the views of customers versus the rights of their employees to have body art, as noted by Allred (2016): He reviewed several cases that pit the employer against the employee when it comes to hiring and/or disciplining tattooed employees. His conclusion is that, to date, “the courts have been largely sympathetic to the arguments of employers that their interest in a workplace free from undue disruption-or that simply turns off customers- is a rational basis for limiting the display of tattoos on the job.” So, despite the acceptance of tattoos consumer culture, in the workplace, it may still be a battle ground for years to come.

We suggest the need for future research. Researchers should consider exploring how tattoos and/or piercings on front-line employees may be different in different industries (manufacturing versus service) or types of service providers (coffee shop versus a bank) or between different target audiences (clothing companies that target on teens/young adults, like Aeropostale or Forever 21, versus companies that target older consumers, like Macy’s or Eddie Bauer) (see McLeod, 2014).

For instance, Arndt et al (2017) found that hiring managers may be concerned about the “fit” between a service provider with a tattoo and the “image” of the company (study context was dentist office). Dean (2010) found that visible tattoos on white-collar workers were deemed inappropriate while similar tattoos on blue-collar workers were viewed as appropriate. Results are driven by consumer expectations of what a service provider should look like. Both of these studies center on the idea of congruence. Consumers expect service providers to look a certain way. But, hiring managers want their employees to reflect the brand/corporate image.

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