

Tattoos in the Workplace

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Introduction

As the art of tattooing becomes more popular and accepted within various societies, the stigmas and stereotypes of those with such body modifications remain. For years tattoos have been viewed as a deviant act, one that causes individuals to associate them with risky and foolish behavior. The stigmas and attitudes placed upon these individuals continue in an array of areas, as those with tattoos are judged on personality, character flaws, behavioral patterns, intelligence, and approachability. Since tattoos were first introduced in the 1700's, those who chose to permanently alter the body were subsequently placed within a deviant subculture (Burgess & Clark, 2010). Thus, tattoos were not an acceptable social norm, but a maladaptive practice.

Individuals often obtain tattoos as a form of self-expression and identity. However, doing so may cause other individuals to misjudge the moral compass and character of a person based solely on the presence of tattoos. As previous studies have focused their resources on attitudes toward women and styles of tattoos, a limited amount is directed toward attitudes about tattoos in the workplace. Different professions, specifically white collar positions, may look down upon an employee with tattoos or refuse to hire someone based on tattoo presence. Blue collar jobs are often less rigid and professional, therefore accepting tattooed employees at a higher rate (Dean, 2010). This study was done to distinguish whether or not stigmas exist among different positions. Regardless of tattoo status, an individual's character and personality should not be looked down upon.

Hypothesis

• **There is a stigma attached to individuals with tattoos in the workplace compared to non-tattooed employees.**

Method

Participants

- A total of 50 students participated in the study, 40 females and 10 males. Participants signed on to the research management system to complete the online survey.

Questionnaire

- A single survey modified from Dwayne Dean (2010), Attitudes Toward Tattoos, was given to the participants. A total of 25 attitudinal questions were asked.
- **Part 1:** The first 15 questions were regarding the appropriateness of tattoos in various white and blue-collar professions.
- A rating scale was used as the response format, from 0 to 4, with 0(No Opinion), to 1(Strongly Inappropriate) to 4 (Strongly Appropriate).

- As each profession was given, participants were to indicate the appropriateness of tattoos depending on whether the tattoo/s were: large and visible, large and hidden, small and visible, or small and hidden.

- **Part 2:** The remaining 10 questions pertained to personality characteristics and physical traits of tattooed individuals.
- Participants were to rank whether or not people with tattoos were more, less, or no different than people without tattoos in different categories.
- Example: Are individuals with tattoos more, less, or no different than individuals without tattoos in the area of attractiveness and creativity?

Results

The total attitudes toward tattoos in the workplace were calculated by adding all responses given in the scale measuring appropriateness in different professions. The responses based on the rating scale were summed for each profession (range=0-16).

• A 2(Group: Tattoo or No Tattoo) x 3(Age: 18-25, 26-35, 36 and above) factorial ANOVA was used to determine attitudes.

• The main interaction, Age x Tattoo Status provided no significant results, $F(2, 39) = .358$, $p = .701$

• In addition, the main effects for age, $F(2, 39) = .563$, $p = .574$, and tattoo status, $F(1, 39) = 1.186$, $p = .283$, were reported.

• A Pearson Chi-Square test was also used to determine a relationship between various personality characteristics and tattoo status. Tattoo status was used as a measure to compare frequencies.

• Significance was found in the areas of rebellious, attractive, presentable, and approachable, $p < .05$ (See Figure 1 for summary).

- Rebellious X Tattoo Status, $X^2(1, N=50) = 3.978$, $p = .046$
- Attractive X Tattoo Status, $X^2(2, N=50) = 8.759$, $p = .013$
- Respectful X Tattoo Status, $X^2(1, N=49) = 7.027$, $p = .008$
- Presentable X Tattoo Status, $X^2(2, N=50) = 8.069$, $p = .018$

Figure 1

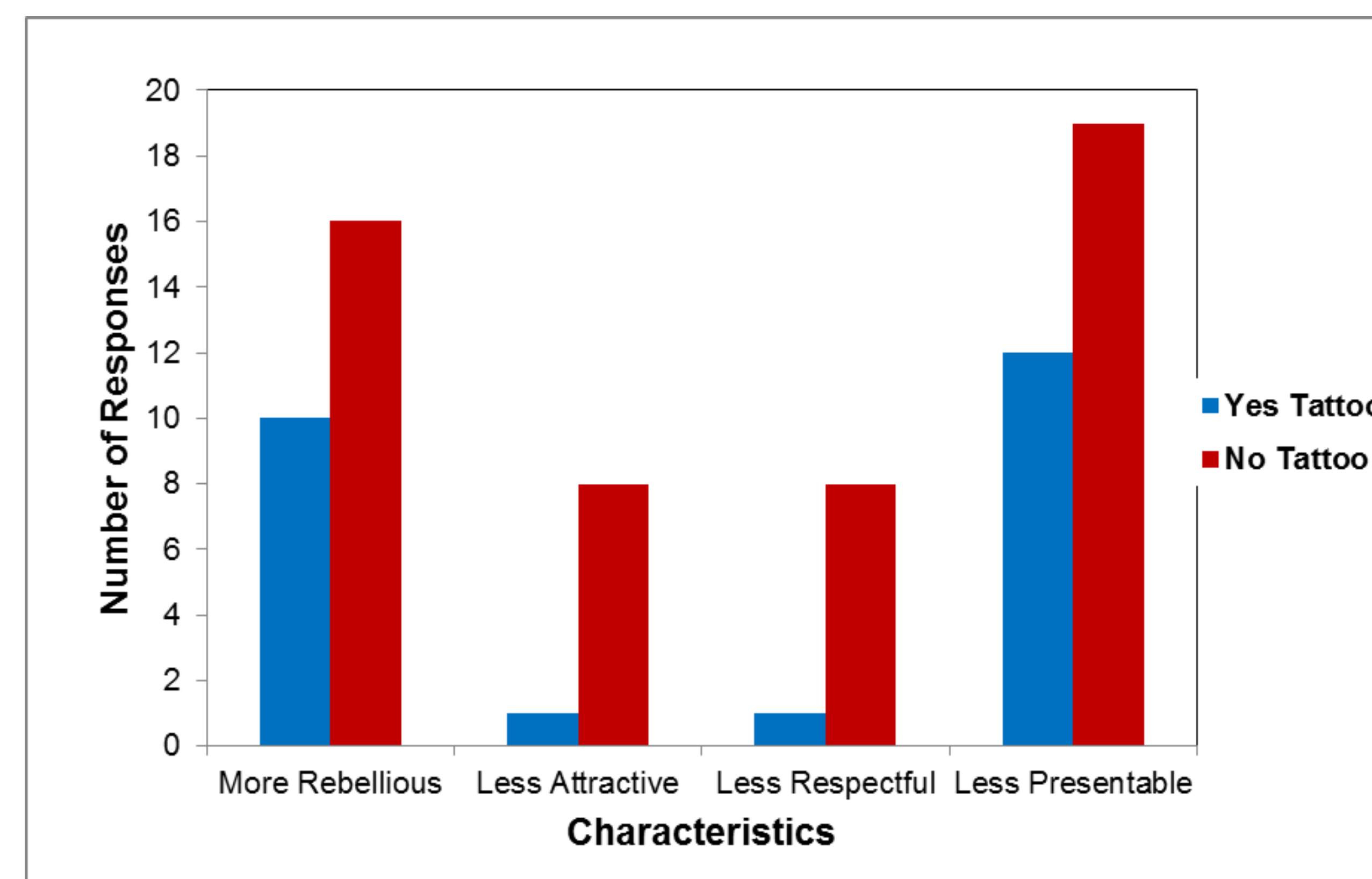


Figure 1. Those without tattoos found individuals with tattoos to be more rebellious, as well as less attractive, respectful, and presentable.



Discussion

Though my original hypothesis was not supported, the relationship that was found between various personality and physical characteristics and tattoo status may be a sign that social stigmas do exist against individuals with tattoos. As tattoos are becoming more prominent in society, the stigmas associated with them need to be eradicated. There is no way to effectively judge the character of an individual based on whether or not the person has a single tattoo or several. Doctors, dentists, and CEO's can have tattoos and be extremely successful regardless.

Future Direction

Further research is needed to examine the differences in attitudes toward tattoos within white and blue collar professions. Though there was no significance in determining overall negative attitudes toward tattoos, further in depth analysis of tattooed individuals may be beneficial. There will always be varying opinions toward the tattooed population, as to what is deemed to be acceptable in different environments, but tattoos only go skin deep. There are many other factors to consider when deciding who would be an acceptable candidate for a position.

References

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