5-2-2017

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Submitted in Partial Completion of the
Requirements for Commonwealth Honors in Psychology

Bridgewater State University

May 2, 2017

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Author Note

Abstract

Stereotypes may affect perceptions of rape victims in the courtroom and could possibly lead to unjust trials. Because rape victims who are perceived as counter-stereotypical women are often judged more harshly than stereotypical women and women who have tattoos are stereotyped as having negative characteristics, we tested whether having tattoos would impact the characteristics attributed to victims of rape. Using a mock-juror paradigm, we experimentally examined how a rape victim's tattoo would impact perceptions of the victim and trial judgments. Participants read a fictional rape trial summary, viewed the alleged victim (with a flower, script, or no tattoo), rendered and explained their verdict, and rated the victim on a number of qualities (e.g., credibility, blameworthiness). We hypothesized that participants would render fewer guilty verdicts, attribute fewer positive qualities, and have less sympathy when the victim had a tattoo compared to no tattoo. Results ran contrary to these predictions; participants were more likely to render a guilty verdict, rated the victim as more credible, blamed her less, and had more sympathy for her when the victim had a flower tattoo compared to no tattoo. Our results supported our prediction that women would be more likely to render a guilty verdict than men. Significant results from this study could help bring justice to victims of rape by making them aware of potential jury biases.

More Than Skin Deep? The Effect of Visible Tattoos on the Perceived Characteristics of Sexual

Assault Victims

Imagine the injustice of basing the verdict in a rape case on the victim's outward

appearance or behavior directly related to her assault. For sexual assault victims, perceptions of

their behavior during and directly after the assault can be heavily influenced by what people

think of as stereotypical behavior for a rape victim (e.g., Masser, Lee, & McKimmie, 2009).

Stereotypes are thoughts that are widely held about certain groups of people and applied to

individuals, which may or may not be an accurate representation of reality. For victims of sexual

assault, these stereotypes can include both general behavior and behavior involved in their

victimization (e.g., Masser et al., 2009). Additionally, a female victim may be judged using

stereotypes about appearance, both for women in general and sexual assault victims in particular.

These stereotypes can be based on attractiveness, apparent promiscuity, or masculinity (e.g.,

Johnson, Ju, & Wu, 2016). Overall, these stereotypes can negatively impact perceptions of

sexual assault victims. Another factor that could potentially inform stereotypes about women is

tattooed skin. Stereotypes about tattoos, also often based on attractiveness, promiscuity, or

masculinity (e.g., Swami & Furnham, 2007), could be exceptionally damaging when applied to

women who are also victims of sexual assault. The present study aims to explore the relationship

between stereotypes and perceptions of sexual assault victims with visible tattoos, and the

possible effect these have on trial outcomes.

When a person implicitly or explicitly uses stereotypes of women in a way that affects

their beliefs about rape and sexual assault victims, they are employing the use of a "rape myth"

(Payne, Lonsway, & Fitzgerald, 1999). These myths revolve around general notions, including

that women ask for or want rape, that men do not mean to rape, or that rape does not really

happen (Payne et al., 1999). Examples include: "any healthy woman can successfully resist a rapist if she really wants to," or "many women have an unconscious wish to be raped" (Burt, 1980, p. 223). These rape myths imply that women, specifically sexual assault victims, invite or enjoy sexually aggressive behavior by men (Payne et al., 1999). People who adhere to these rape myths are often more likely to blame victims of sexual assault for their own victimization (Masser et al., 2009). Many rape myths, which can be impacted by stereotypes formed about sexual assault victims, revolve around a victim's behavior or appearance. Endorsement of rape myths is also correlated with benevolent sexism (i.e., beliefs that reflect traditional views of women and are believed to be positive and not harmful; Glick & Fiske, 1996).

Sexual Assault Victims & Behavior

Women who become victims of sexual assault are often judged by others through the use of stereotypes about general behavior. An overarching finding is that sexual assault victims are categorized as either "good" (stereotypical) or "bad" (non-stereotypical) women, especially by people who hold conservative or traditional views on gender (Glicke & Fiske, 1996). For example, sexual assault victims who do not adhere to stereotyped roles for their gender (e.g., appearing masculine) are often judged more harshly than stereotypical women in that they are less likely to be believed and their perpetrators are less likely to be convicted (Masser et al., 2009). Additionally, some people tend to adhere to rape myths when examining a rape victim's behavior; they may participate in thinking such as, "if a girl engages in necking or petting" she should be partially blamed if "her partner forces sex on her" (Burt, 1980, p. 223). Rape myths like this reflect a victim's behavior, whether it is separate from an instance of rape or not, and make sweeping judgments about her level of deserved blame.

As defined for McKimmie, Masser, and Bongiorno's (2014) experimental vignette study on victim stereotypicality, a stereotypical victim was one who physically resisted her rapist and who alerted and cooperated with the police. On the other hand, a non-stereotypical victim was one who did not physically resist her rapist and who declined to assist police in their investigation. The researchers found that participants were more likely to find the defendant not guilty in cases of acquaintance rape (i.e., the victim knows the perpetrator) if the victim was described as non-stereotypical (McKimmie et al., 2014). Many people continue to believe that only stereotypical victims are valid, despite the fact that the aforementioned definitions of stereotypicality are based only off of people's perceptions; beliefs that categorize only stereotypical behavior by victims as acceptable are no longer socially or legally recognized (Angelone, Mitchell, & Grossi, 2015). Unfortunately, some people may still adhere to this outdated belief; their bias may lead them to falsely find a perpetrator innocent due to a victim's completely normal, but non-stereotypical behavior after being assaulted.

Sexual Assault Victims & Appearance

As discussed, sexual assault victim stereotypicality is often defined by victims' general behavior and behavior during and in response to the assault. However, appearance can also play a role in the stereotypes assigned to these victims. Attractiveness, which is an important part of a person's appearance, can greatly impact perceptions of sexual assault victims. In general, people who are unattractive tend to be perceived as having more negative characteristics than attractive people (Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani, & Longo, 1991). Thus, women who are perceived as less attractive face the risk of also being seen as less socially competent, less likeable, and less intelligent (Eagly et al., 1991). Especially for sexual assault victims, due to the nature of their victimization, attractiveness matters. In a study by Deitz, Littman, and Bentley (1984), which

examined the effect of victim attractiveness and mode of resisting the rape (i.e., passive, assertive, aggressive) on trial outcomes, participants identified more with the victim described as attractive and attributed more positive traits to her. Additionally, participants were more likely to think the perpetrator was guilty when the victim was described as attractive and aggressive, versus unattractive and aggressive (Deitz et al., 1984). The attractiveness of sexual assault victims, then, plays a big part in the outcomes of the alleged perpetrators' trials.

Attractiveness, however, is not the only aspect of appearance that plays a role in negative perceptions about sexual assault victims. Victims who are viewed as promiscuous in some way are also subject to negative judgments by those who adhere to rape myths. The idea that only women who appear to "sleep around" or "dress suggestively" (Payne et al., 1999) are raped implies that all rape victims must have also appeared in such a way to provoke or invite their victimization. Jury members may use a victim's perceived or assumed promiscuity as justification for her assault, possibly leading to jurors unjustly finding a perpetrator not guilty. In a vignette study measuring the effect of victim clothing on the perceptions of an alleged sexual assault perpetrator, the perpetrator was rated as less responsible and less aggressive when the victim was described as wearing revealing or provocative clothing (Johnson et al., 2016). In another study, participants were given a vignette describing a fight between a husband and wife; the wife was later described as either dressing in a sexy and seductive manner or in a plain and homely manner before being raped by her husband (Whatley, 2005). Ultimately, victims who were described as dressing in a sexy manner were seen as more blameworthy for their victimization than the victims described as dressing plainly (Whatley, 2005). This shows that victim dress and assumed promiscuity plays a great role in the extent to which the victim is blamed for her own assault (Whatley, 2005).

Additionally, how masculine a woman physically appears can impact the way she is seen and the stereotypes assigned to her. These stereotypes involve the way women are expected to look and can also affect the way sexual assault victims, specifically, are viewed. More broadly, women in general are seen negatively when they are non-stereotypical for their gender, especially in appearance. A woman who appears masculine in some way is at a heightened risk for being seen as a non-stereotypical woman (Glick, Wilkerson, & Cuffe, 2015), and women who are seen as non-stereotypical are more likely to be judged harshly when they become victims of rape (Masser et al., 2009). Relatedly, one study found that women in the workplace who were more masculine in appearance (i.e., clothing and body type) were more likely to be sexually harassed, by use of either sexist remarks or the imposition of feminine gender roles on them by others (Leskinen, Rabelo, & Cortina, 2015).

Tattoos

The stereotypes and other judgments faced by women and sexual assault victims may overlap with those concerning people with tattoos. Many people, adults and young children alike, harbor negative attitudes about tattoos and people who have tattoos (Wohlrab, Stahl, Rammsayer, & Kappeler, 2007). Often, the same people who harbor negative attitudes about tattoos also associate them with risk-taking and deviant behaviors, like drug abuse and law-breaking (Tiggemann & Golder, 2006). As such, tattoos are stereotypically linked to criminality and other deviant behavior (Adams, 2009; Wohlrab et al., 2007). Research from the medical community, specifically, has suggested there is a connection between having tattoos and deviant sexualities (Adams, 2009). Aside from behavior, perceptions of tattoos can also affect perceptions of a person's attractiveness. Overall, people tend to see a non-tattooed person as more attractive than a person with visible tattoos (Resenhoeft, Villa, &Wiseman, 2006). More

specifically, a study by Swami and Furnham (2007) found that women were rated as decreasingly attractive the more tattoos they had. According to Eagly et al. (1991), less attractive people often have more negative characteristics attributed to them. Women with tattoos, who are seen as less attractive, may then have more negative characteristics attributed to them than women without tattoos. Moreover, Swami and Furnham (2007) also showed that people perceived women as increasing in sexual promiscuity the more tattoos they had.

These beliefs about tattoos and perceptions of the women who display their tattoos could become even more damaging when applied to sexual assault victims. For example, Burt (1980) identified the thought that "in the majority of rapes, the victim is promiscuous or has a bad reputation" as a common rape myth. Thus, in the case of a rape victim, perceived promiscuity from her appearance as a tattooed woman may have the same effect that "promiscuous" clothing has had in relevant literature (Johnson et al., 2016; Whatley, 2005), meaning that she may be seen as less believable and the defendant more likely to be found not guilty. Other stereotypes about appearance, which usually apply to sexual assault victims, can also extend to victims with visible tattoos (e.g., "women should be feminine" and "women with tattoos are masculine"). Additionally, women who defy stereotypes for their gender may be judged more harshly when they become victims of sexual assault. Because tattooing is often attributed to men only or seen as an exclusively masculine practice (DeMello, 1995, 2000), sexual assault victims with visible tattoos may be seen as defying gender stereotypes, and therefore may be judged more harshly. Thus, some trials may be unfair to tattooed victims of sexual assault simply because of the jury's perceptions of the victims' appearance.

The Present Study & Hypotheses

The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between negative perceptions of a female sexual assault victim and any visible tattoos she has. We also aimed to show whether or not there is a link between these tattoos (and subsequent negative perceptions) and an increased likelihood that mock jurors would find the defendant not guilty. Furthermore, the study additionally explored the relationship between tattoo style and trial outcomes by using two tattooed conditions: flower and script. Participants in the study read a description of a sexual assault trial and viewed one of three pictures described as the victim: a woman with no tattoo, a woman with a script tattoo, or a woman with a colored flower tattoo. After reading the trial summary, participants were asked to answer a number of questions regarding perceived levels of the victim's and defendant's credibility, responsibility, stereotypicality, and other attributes. They were also asked to state whether they found the defendant guilty or not guilty, and explain why they chose that verdict.

First, we predicted that mock jurors would convict the defendant less often in conditions where the victim had a tattoo than in the tattoo-less victim condition. Prior research has shown that in cases involving female sexual assault victims perceived as less attractive, more promiscuous, and more masculine than stereotypical victims, the defendants are convicted at lower rates (Masser et al., 2009; McKimmie et al., 2014). Because tattoos and tattooed women also elicit these perceptions (Swami & Furnham, 2007), we expected to find similar results. Our second hypothesis focused on the way mock jurors perceived sexual assault victims with tattoos. We predicted that the victims in the two tattooed conditions would be seen as less credible, more blame-worthy, and would be met with less sympathy than the victim in the non-tattooed condition. Women perceived as unattractive or masculine, as tattooed women often are (Swami

& Furnham, 2007), also tend to be associated with negative qualities and seen in a more negative light than more stereotypical women (Masser et al., 2009; McKimmie et al., 2014). Finally, our third hypothesis was aligned with many other mock-jury and vignette studies that have shown that men sympathize more with the defendant than women do, and women sympathize more with the victim than men do (Deitz et al., 1984; Golding, Lynch, & Wasarhaley, 2015; Johnson et al., 2016; Lynch, Wasarhaley, Golding, & Simcic, 2013; Maeder, Yamamoto, & Saliba, 2014; McKimmie et al., 2014; Wasarhaley, Simcic, & Golding, 2012). We expected to find that, overall, men would be more likely to find the defendant not guilty, attribute fewer positive characteristics to the victim, and sympathize less with her, while women would be more likely to find the defendant guilty, attribute more positive characteristics to the victim, and sympathize more with the victim.

Method

Participants and Design

Participants were online community members ($N = 263$), facilitated through Mechanical Turk (MTurk), a website run by Amazon that allows "workers" to complete short tasks in exchange for a nominal fee (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). Participants were 18 years of age or older, as well as U.S. citizens, in order to meet general U.S. jury eligibility requirements. We excluded 101 participants from the study for various reasons: 37 left the survey prior to answering the manipulation checks, 24 said they had seen the victim before, and 40 failed the tattoo manipulation check (*Did the victim have a tattoo?* non-tattooed $n = 2$, flower $n = 13$, script $n = 25$). Of our final sample of 162 participants, 54.3% were women, 83.3% were white, and ages ranged from 20 to 70 years ($M = 39.25$, $SD = 12.85$). We used a 3 (tattoo: none, flower, script) by 2 (participant gender), between-subjects design for the present study.

Materials

Images. The study used three images, one for each condition (see Figure 1). The images were of a white woman from the waist up, seated in a courtroom witness stand and facing the viewer. All three images were the same, the only difference being that two of the images featured a tattoo (either dark red flowers or four lines of horizontal script) edited onto the woman's right upper arm area, where it was slightly obscured by the woman's sleeve. The two styles of tattoos were chosen based on previous research, which suggested that black and white script tattoos were associated with masculinity, while floral or colorful tattoos were associated with femininity (Wohlrab et al., 2007). In order to choose which versions of each tattoo style to use in the images for the study, we pilot tested five images: the control image, two different styles of script, and two different styles of flower, using a separate sample of participants from MTurk ($N = 145$; 41% male and 59% female; Mean age = 38.7; Range = 18 to 75). Based on this pilot test, we found that the woman in the chosen script tattoo and the red floral tattoo images were rated the same as the woman in the control image in terms of attractiveness, trustworthiness, friendliness, sexiness, femininity, and masculinity. Because all the pictures were rated similarly, we were able to ensure that other variables were not confounded with the presence of a tattoo. The women in the tattooed images only differed from the control image in that they were perceived as less conservative than the control (tattoo-less) image. Additionally, all three images chosen for the study were rated as having equal image quality.

Trial Summary. Each participant was given a synopsis of a rape trial, consisting of approximately 1,800 words (Lynch, Jewell, Wasarhaley, Golding, & Renzetti, in press). For every participant, the summary was exactly the same. First, participants read an introduction, which included descriptions of the specific charge (Rape in the First Degree), the names of the

defendant and victim involved, the witnesses included, and that the defendant pled not guilty.

This trial started with testimony from the prosecution's first witness (the victim), which included

her description of the events surrounding the alleged rape, as well as her direct examination and

cross-examination. The victim testified that she and the defendant had gone on a few dates, but

on the most recent, after dinner and a movie, she had invited him into her apartment to say

goodnight and he then raped her. It continued with direct- and cross-examination of the

prosecution's second witness, the police officer who handled the victim's case once she reported

it to the police. Next, participants moved on to the defense's case, which started with both direct-

and cross-examinations of the defense's first witness (the defendant). He testified that they had

gone on a few dates, and on the most recent, after dinner and a movie, the victim had invited him

into her apartment and they had consensual sex. It continued with direct and cross examinations

of the second witness for the defense (the victim's neighbor). Participants then read closing

arguments from both sides. The prosecution argued that the defendant should be found guilty of

Rape in the First Degree, while the defense argued that there was not enough evidence to do so.

Finally, participants read the judge's instructions regarding the necessary criteria to convict the

defendant (Kentucky Revised Statutes 510.040; 1975).

Questionnaire. Following the trial summary, participants were asked to mark the

defendant guilty or not guilty, to rate how confident they were in their verdict (1 = *not at all*, and

7 = *extremely*), write their reasoning for their verdict, and to rate the guilt of the defendant (1 =

not at all guilty and 7 = *completely guilty*). They then had to rate the victim on perceived levels

of her credibility, honesty, and believability, on a scale from 1 (*not at all)* to 7 (*completely).*

Additionally, they were asked to rate the victim and how much they believed she expected to

have consensual sex on the night in question (1 = *not at all* and 7 = *very much*). Questions were

also asked about participant emotions, including sympathy for and anger toward the victim (1 = *none* and 7 = *a lot*). Finally, participants were asked to rate the victim on blame and responsibility (1 = *not at all* and 7 = *completely*). The same questions, with the same ratings scales, were also asked about the defendant. Participants also rated the officer's and neighbor's credibility (1 = *not at all* and 7 = *completely*). We asked these questions so as to not alert participants that the primary focus of the study was perceptions of the victim.

Next, participants were asked questions measuring the stereotypicality of the victim, such as how similar she was to typical rape victims and to what extent she was like a person they expected to be a rape victim (1 = *not at all* and 7 = *very much*). Similar questions with the same ratings scales were asked of the defendant, asking how similar he was to a typical person who commits rape and how alike he was to people they expected to commit rape. Participants were also asked how similar they thought the alleged rape scenario was to a typical rape scenario (1 = *not at all* and 7 = *very much*).

At the end of the questionnaire, participants were given 7-point scales (1 = *not at all* and 7 = *extremely)* to rate the victim on 15 different adjectives: attractive, smart, mean, sexy, ugly, friendly, sexually experienced, feminine, unintelligent, likeable, conservative, undesirable, unfriendly, sexually inexperienced, and masculine. We asked three manipulation check questions in order to ensure participants noticed our independent variable and other factors about the case: the victim's gender, the defendant's charge, and whether the victim had a tattoo or not.

Prior to conducting analyses, we combined multiple relevant ratings to create three scales for the victim, measuring credibility, blame, and stereotypicality. We measured the reliability of each scale using Cronbach's alpha (α), where a rating greater than .7 indicates strong reliability (Schmitt, 1996). The credibility scale created for the victim included averaged ratings for

credibility, honesty, and believability ($\alpha = .96$). The blame scale included averaged ratings for

blame and responsibility for the victim ($\alpha = .90$). The victim stereotypicality scale averaged

ratings for victim similarity to common rape victims, victim typicality, and the extent to which

the participants expected the victim to be someone who would be raped ($\alpha = .84$). We created the

same scales for the defendant, but only present results relevant to our hypotheses (i.e., results

concerning the victim).

Procedure

Participants completed the study online by selecting it through the MTurk website. They

were then brought to the Qualtrics website, where they were asked to read the consent form

provided and give informed consent to participate. Then, they were shown a short page of

instructions asking them to read the following summaries carefully and answer the questions

thoughtfully. Next, they were given a short paragraph introducing the case, the victim, and the

defendant. At this point, participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions (flower

tattoo, a script tattoo, or no tattoo) and viewed the corresponding picture of the victim, described

as "being sworn in to testify". Participants were then given the exact same trial summary.

Following the testimony summary and juror instructions, each participant was asked to fill out

the questionnaire. The study took an average of 18.8 minutes to complete.

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Results

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Overall, the conviction rate across conditions was 52.5%. Our first hypothesis predicted

that participants in the non-tattooed condition would be more likely to render a guilty verdict

than those in the tattoo conditions. We ran a hierarchical logistic regression, with the first step

including participant gender and the second step including our tattoo condition dummy variables,

to examine the effect of victim tattoo on verdict. Contrary to the first hypothesis, we discovered

that participants in the flower condition were more than two times more likely to render a guilty

verdict than the participants in the non-tattooed condition (OR = 2.56, *p* = .013; see Figure 2).

Between the script and non-tattooed conditions, there was a trend toward significance concerning

guilty verdict rate; script condition participants were marginally more likely to convict the

defendant than non-tattooed condition participants (OR = 2.14, *p* = .059).

We used Univariate ANOVAs to analyze our second hypothesis, which predicted that

participants would find the non-tattooed victim more credible, less blameworthy, and would have

more sympathy for her, compared to the victims with a visible tattoo (see Table 1 for ratings

means and standard deviations). An ANOVA for the victim credibility scale revealed a

significant difference in participants' perceptions of the victim's credibility across conditions, *F*

(2, 159) = 4.32, *p* = .015. A post-hoc pairwise comparison revealed that the only significant

difference was between the flower tattoo and non-tattooed conditions (*p* = .004; see Figure 3). In

this case, the victim in the flower condition was rated as significantly more credible than the

victim in the non-tattooed condition, contrary to our prediction. Another ANOVA revealed that

there was a significant difference between conditions for the victim blame scale, *F* (2, 159) =

3.91, *p* = .022. A post-hoc pairwise comparison revealed the significant difference was between

the non-tattoo and flower tattoo conditions, with the flower tattoo victim being rated as less

blameworthy (*p* = .023). Finally, an ANOVA for victim sympathy revealed the difference

between conditions to be trending toward significance *F* (2, 159) = 3.04, *p* = .051. A post-hoc

pairwise comparison showed that the participants in the flower tattoo condition had significantly

more sympathy for the victim than those in the non-tattooed condition (*p* = .016).

Our third hypothesis predicted that women would convict the defendant at a higher rate

and have more pro-victim perceptions than men would, across all conditions. The logistic

regression analysis (described above) revealed a main effect of gender on verdict such that women were nearly four times more likely to render a guilty verdict, regardless of condition, than men (OR = 3.76, $p < .001$; see Figure 4). We also ran a series of independent samples t-tests to discern any differences between men's and women's ratings (see Table 2 for ratings means and standard deviations). We discovered significant differences between men's and women's ratings of victim credibility (t [160] = -4.01, $p < .001$), blameworthiness (t [160] = 3.67, $p < .001$), and sympathy (t [160] = -3.49, $p = .001$). Women, overall, found the victim more credible, blamed her less, and had more sympathy for her.

After asking participants to render a verdict, we also presented a free-response question for participants to explain why they chose their verdict. This qualitative data was coded separately by the principal investigator and a research assistant blind to the experimental conditions, according to the following thirteen codes: the victim's behavior during or directly after the assault, the victim's physical attractiveness, a lack of evidence, a lack of medical evidence (i.e., no rape kit), the credibility of witness testimony, the credibility of the victim, the credibility of the defendant, reasonable doubt, that the sex was non-consensual or forced, that the victim wanted to have sex that night, that the defendant wanted to have sex that night, the defendant's behavior, and the victim and defendant knowing each other prior to the assault. The two coders had a 96.1% agreement rate and any discrepancies were resolved by the principal investigator. We present the verdict reasoning analyses descriptively.

We expected our findings from the verdict reasoning analyses to support our hypotheses, such that tattooed victims would be perceived more negatively than the non-tattooed victim and that women would have more pro-victim feelings than men. Across conditions, we anticipated that the tattooed victims would elicit more victim-blaming and negative perceptions, but this

prediction was not supported. When rendering a guilty verdict, for all three conditions, participants mentioned the credibility of witnesses relatively often (non-tattooed: 29.7%, flower: 29.0%, script: 26.0%). Participants in the two tattooed conditions, when rendering a guilty verdict, also mentioned the victim's behavior often (flower: 19.4%, script: 20.0%), but the second most common theme in the reasons of non-tattooed condition participants was non-consensual sex/use of force (21.6%). There were also some discrepancies between conditions for not-guilty verdicts. Participants in all three conditions mentioned a lack of evidence most often when finding the defendant not guilty (non-tattooed: 40.0%, flower: 32.4%, script: 28.1%). Those in the tattooed conditions mentioned presence of reasonable doubt as the second most common reason for rendering a not-guilty verdict (flower: 25.6%, script: 28.1%), but participants in the non-tattooed condition mentioned the victim's behavior second most often (20.0%).

Along the lines of participant gender, men and women each rated the victim's behavior (men: 18.6%, women: 18.9%) and the credibility of the witnesses (men: 25.6%, women: 29.3%) as the top reasons for a guilty verdict. However, they differed in their reasoning for not-guilty verdicts. Men chose a lack of evidence (30.1%) and presence of reasonable doubt (20.3%) most often, while women chose a lack of evidence (27.3%) and the victim's behavior (25.0%) most often.

Exploratory Analyses

Due to the counterintuitive nature of our results, we chose to run exploratory analyses using the previously mentioned victim stereotypicality scale and the 15 additional qualities on which participants rated the victim. We began our attempt to explain the favorability of the flower tattoo victim by exploring the participants' ratings of the victim's stereotypicality. To determine if participants perceived one of the victims as more stereotypical than the others, we

conducted an ANOVA comparing the stereotypicality scale ratings across tattoo conditions. The results showed no significant differences in victim stereotypicality between conditions, F (2, 159) = .034, p = .966.

We also analyzed the 15 qualities for which participants rated the victim in an exploratory manner. We used Univariate ANOVAs to analyze these qualities by condition, two of which were significant: undesirable (F [2, 159] = 3.30, p = .039) and conservative (F [2, 159] = 7.44, p = .001). A post-hoc comparison suggested that there was a difference in ratings between the flower tattoo condition and non-tattooed condition in terms of the victim's perceived undesirability. The flower tattoo victim (M = 2.28, SD = 1.25) was perceived as significantly less undesirable than the victim with no tattoo (M = 2.88, SD = 1.27; p = .014). There was also a significant difference between the flower tattoo condition (M = 3.31, SD = 1.23) and the non-tattoo condition (M = 4.08, SD = .97) in terms of the victim's perceived conservativeness, with the non-tattoo victim being seen as more conservative than the victim with the flower tattoo (p < .001).

Discussion

Women, especially those who become victims of rape, are subject to stereotypes and judgments concerning their behavior and appearance (McKimmie et al., 2014). These stereotypes can focus on women's behavior in general, their behavior during or in direct response to their assault, or on their general appearance (McKimmie et al., 2014). Specifically, women perceived as non-stereotypical are often judged more harshly than women perceived as stereotypical (Masser et al., 2009). If a woman violates expectations, she may be viewed more negatively as she does not fit the stereotype of what a "good" victim should be (Glick & Fiske, 1996). A factor that we hypothesized would add to these negative perceptions was visible tattoos. Women with

visible tattoos are often seen as less attractive and more promiscuous than women with no tattoos (Swami & Furnham, 2007), which we theorized would compound negative stereotypes associated with them if they are also victims of rape. As such, we proposed that women with visible tattoos who become victims of rape would be perceived more negatively than rape victims with no tattoos. We made three predictions based off this assumption, for which we found mixed support.

In line with previous mock-jury research (e.g., Golding et al., 2015; Wasarhaley et al., 2012), we predicted that female participants would have more pro-victim attitudes and be more likely to convict the defendant than male participants. We found support for this prediction in the quantitative data, as women were far more likely to convict the defendant than men were, regardless of condition. Additionally, women found the victim credible at a higher rate, had more sympathy for her, and were less likely to blame her, compared to men. There were also gender differences in the qualitative data between the reasons given by men and women for a verdict of not-guilty. Men mentioned a lack of evidence and reasonable doubt most often, while women mentioned victim behavior and a lack of evidence most often. When women mentioned victim behavior, they often brought up the victim inviting the defendant into her apartment and kissing him goodnight. One woman even said that the victim "was giving a lot of mixed signals [to the defendant] throughout their date." These sentiments represent a reliance on victim-blaming from women who found the defendant not-guilty, but not for men. While women overall had more pro-victim attitudes than men, these findings suggest that when women found the defendant not guilty, they did so because they believed the victim deserved her assault or in some way precipitated it.

With regard to the presence of a tattoo, we predicted that participants would be more likely to convict the defendant when the victim was non-tattooed, compared to when she had a visible tattoo. However, our results showed the opposite: participants in the flower tattoo condition were more likely to convict the defendant than participants in the non-tattooed condition. This result does not support our expectation that a tattooed victim would yield fewer guilty verdicts, which we had based on evidence that showed women with tattoos were perceived negatively (Swami & Furnham, 2007), and victims who were perceived negatively yielded fewer guilty verdicts (Masser et al., 2009). We also predicted that a non-tattooed victim would be perceived more positively than a tattooed victim, based on prior research findings that showed a woman with a tattoo was seen as more promiscuous (Swami & Furnham, 2007), and promiscuous women are more likely to be blamed for their victimization (Whatley, 2005). However, our results again were in opposition to previous relevant findings. The victim with the flower tattoo was seen as significantly more credible than the non-tattooed victim and participants had more sympathy for her than for the non-tattooed victim. Additionally, we found that participants blamed the victim with the flower tattoo less than they blamed the victim with no tattoo.

The verdict reasoning data analyses revealed that, across conditions, the reasons for verdict that participants mentioned differed. Specifically, though participants in all three conditions commonly mentioned the credibility of witnesses as a reason for a guilty verdict, those in the tattooed conditions also mentioned the victim's behavior often, while those in the non-tattooed condition made note of non-consensual sex/use of force, instead. Additionally, participants across conditions mentioned a lack of evidence as a reason for a not-guilty verdict; however, those in the tattooed conditions also mentioned a presence of reasonable doubt, while

those in the non-tattooed condition mentioned the victim's behavior. While participants noted

different reasons for rendering a verdict across conditions, the differences between conditions for

the not-guilty verdicts are the most illuminating. Many participants in the non-tattooed condition,

when rendering a not-guilty verdict, specifically mentioned the victim's decision to invite the

defendant into her home. One participant in the non-tattooed condition said he chose a not-guilty

verdict because the victim "invited him [the defendant] into her apartment and kissed him." The

choice of the non-tattooed condition participants to mention the victim's behavior in these ways

as a reason for a not-guilty verdict supports the finding from the quantitative data that they were

engaging in victim-blaming more-so than those in the tattooed conditions. This finding similarly

runs contrary to our hypothesis that participants in the tattooed conditions would have more

negative feelings for the victim than those in the non-tattooed condition, including blaming the

victim more.

Our exploratory analyses attempted to find an underlying reason for the contradictory

results we found for two of our three hypotheses. We examined the ratings of various victim

qualities to explore a possible reason for the flower tattoo victim's perceived credibility, lack of

blame, and significantly high sympathy. As such, we found that ratings for both desirability and

conservativeness were significantly different across conditions. We discovered that the flower

tattoo victim was seen as significantly more desirable than the non-tattooed victim, which may

help to explain the positive perceptions of the flower tattoo victim (e.g., more credible, less

blameworthy, higher sympathy). If participants thought the flower tattoo victim was desirable,

that may have led them to believe her assault was credible, more-so than for the non-tattooed

victim, who was seen as less desirable. This finding may also reflect the popular idea that less

desirable women are essentially "lucky" to have sex or find a partner, so a less desirable

woman's assault may be seen as less credible due to this assumption (Harding, 2008). Another explanation may lie in the belief that an attractive or desirable woman may be more likely to become a victim of rape because she is irresistible. Additionally, we discovered that the non-tattooed victim was seen as more conservative than the flower tattoo victim, which is supported by previous research (Swami & Furnham, 2007). However, the same Swami & Furnham (2007) study also suggested that a conservative woman, at least in terms of visible tattoos, would be seen as more desirable.

Based on relevant research, which focused on perceptions of rape victims (McKimmie et al., 2014) or women with tattoos (Swami & Furnham, 2007), we predicted that a victim with a visible tattoo would be judged more harshly and perceived more negatively than a victim with no tattoos. However, it could be that while women in general are sometimes perceived in a more negative way because of their visible tattoos, the same may not be applicable to sexual assault victims in court. Perhaps the victim's visible tattoo made her a more believable victim because of her desirability, influencing the rate of guilty verdicts for the defendant in the tattooed conditions due to an assumed irresistibility. In essence, it is possible that tattoos serve a different perceptual function for viewing women in court who are victims of rape, compared to women who are not. This idea is supported by our finding that the victims did not differ in terms of perceived stereotypicality; although it follows that tattooed women would be seen as less stereotypical than non-tattooed women, this may not be applicable to tattooed women in the context of a rape trial. Additionally, a simpler explanation may be apparent in the possibility that tattoos are becoming more socially acceptable, especially by younger people (Swami & Furnham, 2007).

Alternatively, it could be that our hypotheses were not supported due to the design of our experiment. We pilot-tested the images used prior to the main study in order to determine that

they were rated equally in terms of attractiveness, masculinity/femininity, trustworthiness, sexiness, and friendliness. This was intended to maintain experimental control (i.e., to maximize internal validity). However, this similarity may have impacted our overall results. Perhaps our hypotheses were not supported, and in fact came out opposite, because all three images were equally attractive and feminine/masculine. This idea is also supported by the finding that the victims in all three conditions were rated as equally stereotypical. Another factor in our design that could have impacted our results is the scenario itself. We purposely chose a date rape scenario for the study, because prior research shows that victim stereotypicality or non-stereotypicality has little to no effect on perceptions of the victim in prototypical rape (stranger rape), while it can show significant effects on perception in non-prototypical rape (date rape; McKimmie et al., 2014). In other words, participants reading date rape scenarios are more likely to rely on stereotypes when considering their perceptions of the victim. However, the choice of a date rape trial, as opposed to a more prototypical stranger rape trial, could have impacted the perceptions that participants had of the victim. It is possible that the date rape scenario led participants away from believing the victim was promiscuous and instead primed them to focus more on other attributes elicited by the tattoos. Essentially, there is a chance the scenario itself suggested the victim was not promiscuous, one of the main associations that led us to hypothesize a tattooed victim would be perceived more negatively and would yield fewer guilty verdicts from participants.

Future studies examining the relationship between perceptions of rape victims and perceptions of tattoos may be generated from the limitations in our study design. One such study could include conditions involving a stranger rape scenario, in addition to the current date rape scenario. This would allow researchers to examine the effects of stereotype-reliance by mock-

jurors, compounded by both rape scenario and presence or absence of visible tattoos. Additional studies could vary the number, style, or placement of victim tattoos. Even if perceptions or connotations associated with tattoos have changed positively, these new attitudes may be confined to small tattoos placed in neutral areas of the body. For example, tattoos on the face or neck or an arm completely covered by tattoos may be perceived differently than one small tattoo on the upper arm. This idea is supported by our finding that the flower tattoo victim was seen as significantly less conservative than the non-tattooed victim. Thus, even if perceptions of tattoos are becoming more positive, they may still be seen as non-conservative, especially when larger or placed in a more controversial area of the body. The effect of different styles of tattoo or specific phrases may also be used in a future study in order to explore how specific images or words tattooed on the body may be perceived (Timming, 2015).

While the present research helps to expand our knowledge of how tattoos affect perceptions of rape victims, it has some limitations. Although MTurk provides a national sample of jury-eligible adults, the participants were all people who knew of the website, had access to a computer, and had enough interest in our specific study to self-select it. In reality, citizens do not volunteer for jury duty, and the government has the ability to exclude those they know to be ineligible for jury duty. For our study, we did ask participants if they were 18 or older and U.S. citizens, but we did not ask if they had been convicted of a felony or were otherwise ineligible to serve on a jury. Therefore, we may have had participants who would not be part of a jury pool in reality, but were able to act as a mock-juror. In relation to this, our participants were not able to collaborate and come to a unanimous decision like jury members in real courts. Each participant had to come to a decision on their own, without the ability to discuss the case or be swayed by

other members. This may add to the accuracy of their perceptions, but decreases the external validity of our results (Wiener, Krauss, & Leiberman, 2011).

Overall, the results of our study suggest that further research is necessary. Although our research supported prior studies that established a link between participant gender and victim sympathy or verdict rate, our other hypotheses found less support. The present findings suggest that tattooed skin may not greatly impact perceptions of rape victims in court, or possibly just when judged by mock-jurors. Additionally, the findings suggest that even though women with tattoos are often perceived as unattractive, that does not mean that tattooed victims in court will be seen in the same way. More research specific to this situation is needed before any broad conclusions can be drawn. This kind of research may better elucidate biases on the part of mock-jury members and help to identify which behavioral or physical aspects of rape victims influence juror perceptions. The impact of findings in more specific studies could be substantial for victims of rape who happen to be either non-stereotypical women or victims, and therefore help them to get justice in real-life courts.

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Table 1

Guilty Verdict Rate and Victim Ratings by Condition

Scale	Condition		
	Flower	Script	Neutral
Guilty Verdict Rate	62.10%[a]	57.80%[a]	39.00%[b]
Victim Credibility	5.75 (1.25)[a]	5.41 (1.44)[b]	4.98 (1.59)[b]
Victim Blame	1.86 (1.40)[a]	2.68 (1.83)[b]	2.56 (1.73)[b]
Victim Stereotypicality	4.79 (1.53)[a]	4.86 (1.23)[a]	4.82 (1.34)[a]
Sympathy for Victim	5.90 (1.59)[a]	5.60 (1.59)[b]	5.12 (1.93)[b]

Note: Different letter subscript denotes significant difference ($p < .05$); ratings presented as *M(SD)*

Table 2

Guilty Verdict Rate and Victim Ratings by Participant Gender

Scale	Participant Gender	
	Women	Men
Guilty Verdict Rate	67.00%$_a$	35.10%$_b$
Victim Credibility	5.78 (1.31)$_a$	4.90 (1.49)$_b$
Victim Blame	1.91 (1.47)$_a$	2.86 (1.77)$_b$
Victim Stereotypicality	5.05 (1.36)$_a$	4.55 (1.37)$_b$
Sympathy for Victim	5.95 (1.49)$_a$	5.03 (1.89)$_b$

Note: Different letter subscript denotes significant difference ($p < .05$); ratings presented as *M(SD)*
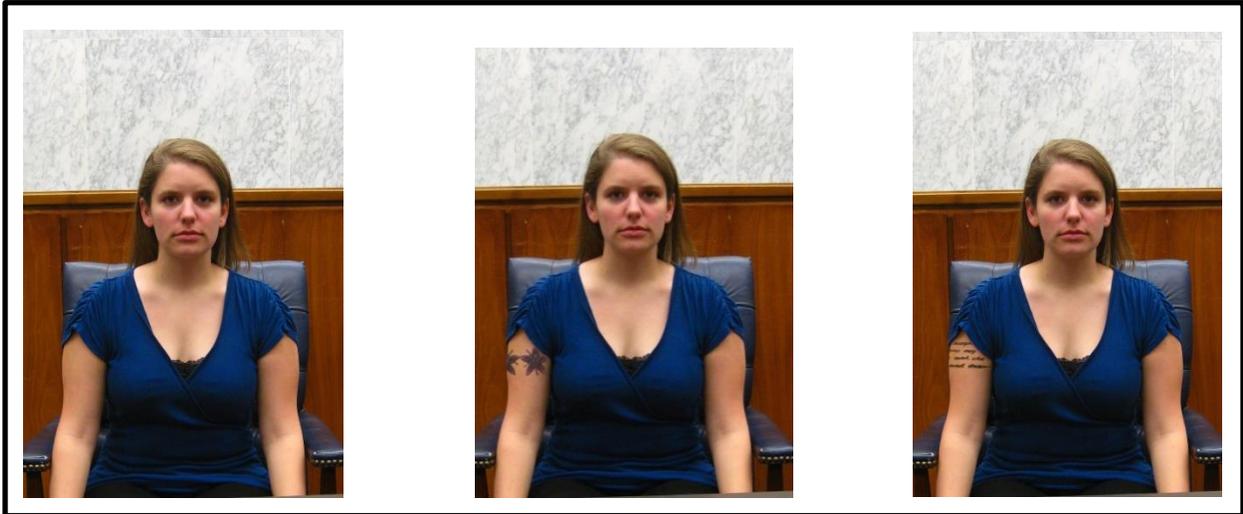
Figure 1. Stimulus images used in non-tattooed, flower tattoo, and script tattoo conditions, respectively.
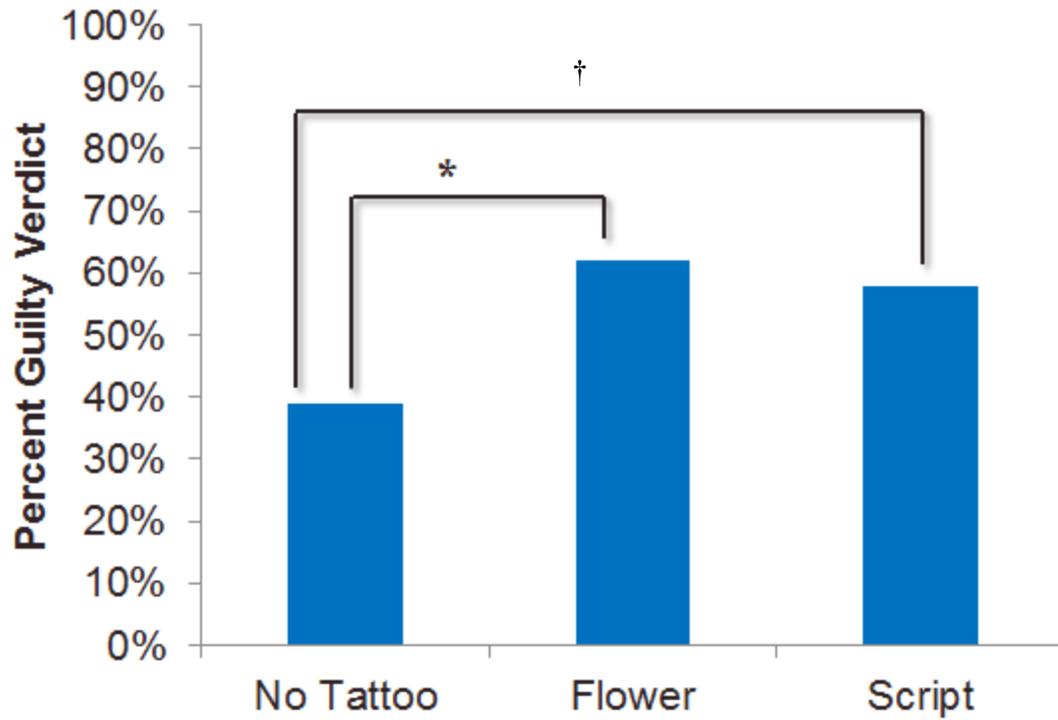
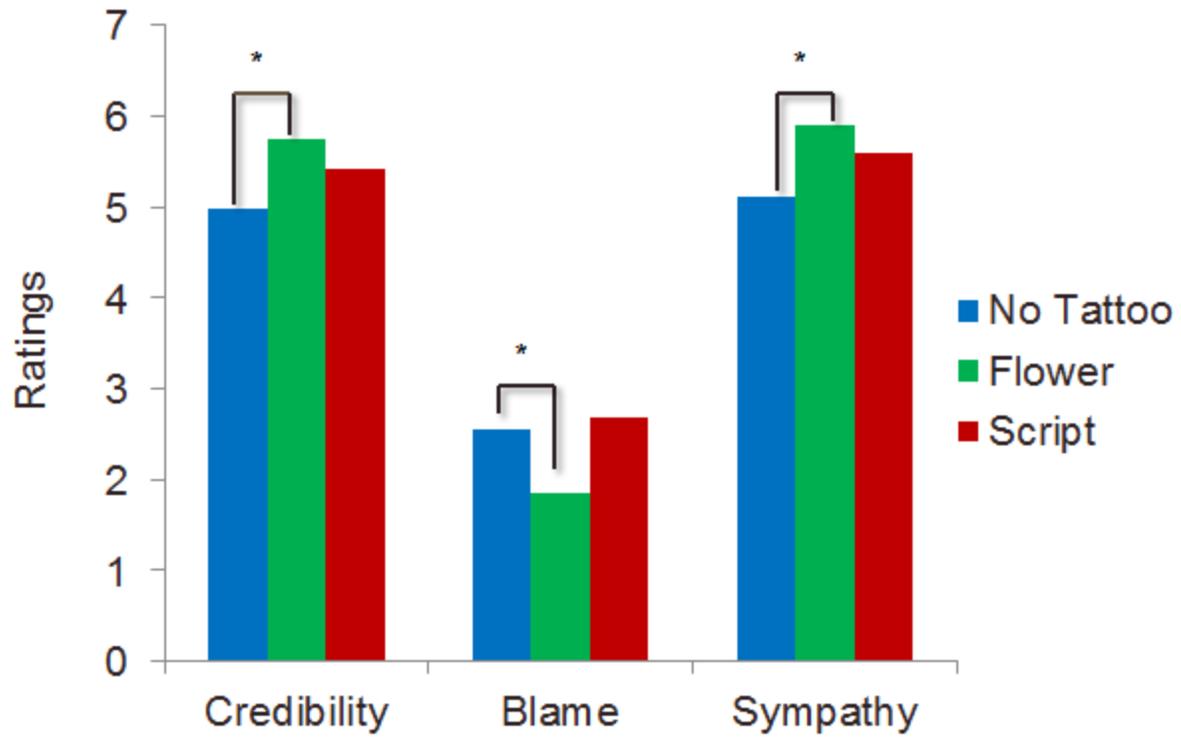*Figure 2.* Verdict by tattoo condition (*$p < .05$; †$p = .059$).
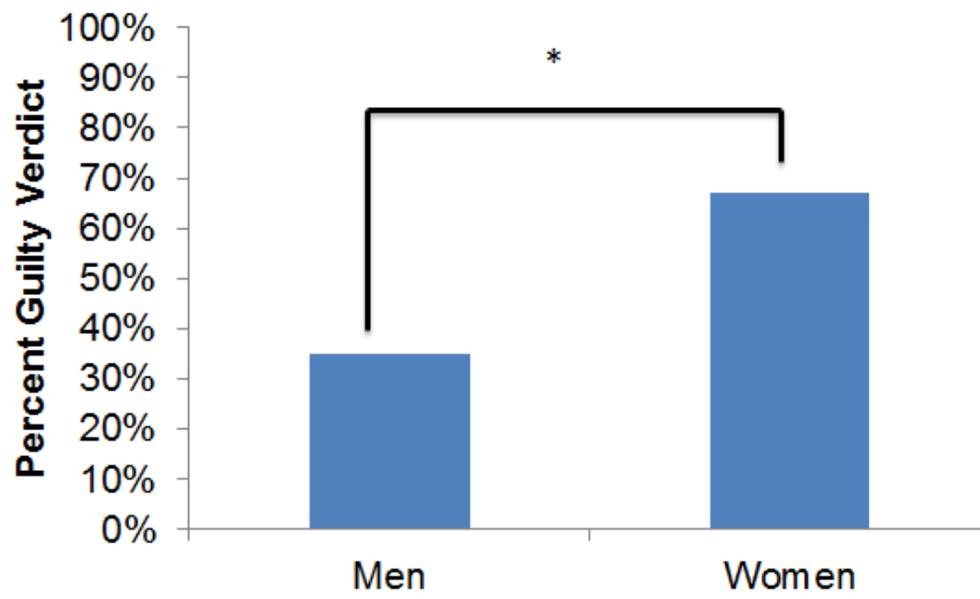
Figure 3. Ratings by tattoo condition (*p < .05).

Figure 4. Verdict by participant gender (*p < .001).