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WEDDING DRESS PURCHASE INTENTIONS

OF TATTOOED BRIDES

BY

SARAH YANG

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

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IN

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OF

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2014

ABSTRACT

A tattooed bride faces internal and external influences that may affect her choice of dress. She also will face the decision of whether to hide or show her tattoos on her wedding day. A review of literature revealed that the history of tattoos, contemporary tattoos, and history of weddings have been comprehensively researched (Fenske 2007; Koch, Roberts, Armstrong, and Owen 2010; DeMello 2003; Mo 2000; Ehrman 2011). However, the topic [of tattooed brides has not been explored. Discussion threads on several wedding blogs indicate that tattooed brides have faced the issue of whether to hide or show their tattoos and differing opinions were posted. The purpose of this study was to explore wedding dress choices of tattooed brides and the underlying reasons for their decisions. This research can be beneficial to future brides who have tattoos as well as to the bridal dress industry.

This study used a qualitative approach. Snowball sampling was used to find twelve participants who met the requirements of being American citizens, having at least one tattoo, and having been married or engaged within the past eighteen months. The participants were asked to complete a pre-interview questionnaire and partake in an interview. The pre-interview questionnaire included multiple-choice questions that requested demographic information and basic wedding dress information, such as age range, income level, wedding dress style, and budget range for their wedding dress. The interviews had open-ended questions to prompt conversations about their tattoo choices, decision making process of choosing their wedding dress, and if they chose to hide or show their tattoos on their wedding day. Participants were invited to email or

bring photographs from their wedding or pictures of their desired wedding dress choice.

After participants granted consent to participate and have their interviews tape-recorded, the completed interviews were later transcribed. Fretz and Shaw's coding and memoing (1995) were used to analyze the transcriptions, and Strauss and Corbin's grounded theory approach (1998) was used to categorize and synthesize codes. Themes that overlapped were grouped into common categories.

This research found that there were more brides who intentionally showed their tattoos than those who intentionally hid their tattoos. Methods used to show their tattoos included adding straps that accentuated their tattoos, shortening dresses that showed more of their tattoos, and choosing certain dress styles that exposed their tattoos. Brides who preferred to hide their tattoos either wore a bracelet to cover their tattoo or chose specific dresses to hide their tattoos.

Since this research only had twelve participants that were found by snowball sampling, the results are not generalizable to the whole tattooed bride population. Further research should be done, such as using a larger sample collected from different regions of the country. This research aims to benefit future brides in making their wedding dress choices and wedding retailers in selecting their wedding dress stock.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

When picking out a wedding dress, a tattooed bride has the option to hide or show off her tattoos. The decision making process that is involved for a tattooed bride has led me to study the history of tattoos and weddings as separate categories before investigating their wedding dress choices. Research on the history of tattoos and contemporary tattoos is plentiful in scholarly literature (DeMello 2003; Schildkrout 2004; Fenske 2007; Wohlrab, Stahl, and Kappeler 2007; Adams 2009; Koch, Roberts, Armstrong, and Owen 2010). The history of the white wedding dress has also been thoroughly researched (Mills 1969; Entwistle 2000; Mo 2000; Walsh 2005; Shrout 2010; Ehrman 2011). However, there has been little research done on the topic of contemporary weddings (Otnes and Pleck 2003). The topic of tattooed brides who have contemporary weddings has not been examined either. This study explores wedding dress choices of tattooed brides and the underlying reasons for their decisions. The results may benefit future brides and the bridal dress industry.

Purpose

While planning for their wedding, tattooed brides are faced with the important question of whether or not to show or hide their tattoos. Since the history of tattoos and the history of wedding dresses have been already studied as separate topics, I aim to investigate the relationship between contemporary wedding dresses and tattooed

brides. This study explores the wedding dress choices of tattooed brides and their underlying reasons for those choices. Various controlled and uncontrollable factors influence these decisions, such as personal preference, family influence, and the desired wedding dress look. In addition to the possible influences, there are budgetary constraints and personal limitations that affect a bride's choice of wedding dress. These influential factors are discussed.

The Study

The number of Americans who have a tattoo has continuously increased over the past few years. Braverman (2012) found that the number of tattooed women has also increased and is now more than the number of tattooed men. The wedding industry is the longest running business that offers customizable clothing that is continuously in demand (The Wedding Report 2012). The Wedding Report (2012) has also stated that the number of weddings has increased in the past few years, along with the average cost of wedding dresses. Discussion threads on several wedding blogs support the importance and design of this study. Blogs, such as Wedding Wire (2012), indicate that tattooed brides have faced the issue of whether or not to show their tattoos, and differing opinions exist. No research, however, has been done on the combined topic of wedding dress designs and visibility of a bride's tattoos.

It is important to consider reasons why people choose to get tattoos. Haas believes that "by understanding the purpose for other cultures' alterations of the body, we can try to understand our own" (1998, 45). She suggests that before trying to understand why people choose to get tattooed, one must first learn about the historical

evolution of the tattoo to realize that there are similar components that relate past and current times. Historically tattoos were markings that designated clan or tribal affiliation, and became more popular with the circus, show business, sailors, and military men in America (Fenske 2007). Tattoos were once thought to be masculine. Women who had tattoos were considered as sexual objects. As time progressed, the popularity of tattoos grew because the meaning of tattoos had changed. Tattoos became more accepted in society and practiced by people of all different class statuses for their own personal reasons. Even though many researchers have studied the tattoo phenomenon, reasons for tattoos are constantly changing in many cultures (Ellerbrok 2008).

Many researchers have established that people have their own reasons why they choose to get tattoos and that tattoos have grown into a subculture (Atkinson 2002; Eason 2007; Manuel and Sheehan 2007; Mun, Janigo, and Johnson 2012;). Some of these researchers and others have found the reasons that people get tattoos are for family or group identity, self-expression, tradition, religion, rebellion, feminine empowerment, sexuality, and influence from various media forms and celebrities (Atkinson 2002; Mun, Janigo, and Johnson 2012; Atkinson 2002, Zinn 2009; Sims 2011; Fenske 2007). These reasons also affect the decision making process of choosing a wedding dress, whether or not a bride has a tattoo.

When picking out a wedding dress, external influences such as family, community, tradition, trend, multimedia coverage and budget may influence the bride's choice (Foster and Johnson 2003). A bride may also have internal influences of self-expression, religion, rebellion, feminine empowerment, and sexuality (Foster and

Johnson 2003). These reasons may also affect the type of wedding she wants: traditional, unconventional or a mixture of both. The tradition of wearing a white wedding dress was significantly influenced by Queen Victoria in 1840, when she wore a completely white, full skirt, wedding dress (Walsh 2005). American brides followed suit and designers began to implement different styles and details into white dresses that were created for royalty and higher-class individuals. As each decade passed, not only did the styles change, but the desired and appropriate amount of extravagance also changed. After the 1960s, haute couture designers influenced royal and wealthy brides in wedding dress styles. This generally led to certain styles to become popularized and also desired by many brides.

The historical changes of wedding dresses influenced contemporary bridal designers to create dresses based on these basic silhouettes: A-line, ballerina, ballgown, empire, mermaid, and sheath (Weiss and Levine 2008). Contemporary white dresses may include colored elements, such as belts or trains, which change the wedding dress look from traditional to a mixed look. I consider a mixed-look dress to be the combination of a traditional white wedding dress with colored elements. Designers, celebrities, and media have made fully colored, unconventional wedding dresses more popular in contemporary weddings, along with the strapless dress style (Foster and Johnson 2003). According to Martha Stewart Weddings' style director, Kate Berry, 75% of wedding dresses in stock at salons are now strapless (Folan 2012). Dresses that are not strapless may be harder to find in stores, which could affect a bride's wedding dress choice when shopping for a wedding dress.

This study provides information about consumer behavior and purchase intentions for wedding dress designers and retailers in hopes of helping them understand tattooed brides' personal life-styles, their personal choices, and what they desire for their bridal look. The results from this study, such as methods to hide or show tattoos, may also benefit tattooed brides who are in the process of choosing their dresses. The methods that brides used to hide or show tattoos, as discussed in this study, may help future brides achieve their decisions as well.

Overview of Thesis

This thesis will explore reasons why women today get tattoos, what influences women's wedding dress choices, and connect what is known about tattooing with what is known about wedding dress choice. The study used a qualitative approach.

This research project has the following objectives:

1. to determine if tattooed brides consciously hide or show off their tattoos on their wedding day;
2. to determine reasons why brides chose to hide or show off their tattoos on their wedding day: family or community expectations, desire for self-expression, American wedding traditions, religious reasons, feminine empowerment, personal and budget constraints or lack of, and influence from multi-medias; and
3. to determine what their methods are to achieve their choice of hiding or showing their tattoos on their wedding day.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Research on the history of tattoos, reasons why people get tattoos, and the history of wedding dresses has been conducted (Foster and Johnson 2003; Eason 2007; Shrout 2010). However, no research has been done on the combined topic of wedding dress designs and visibility of a bride's tattoos. This literature review discusses the two topics of tattoos and wedding dresses separately and connects what is known about tattooing with what is known about wedding dress choices. The history of tattoos, why women today get tattoos, the history of the traditional white wedding dress, what influences women's wedding dress choices, statistics about tattooed people, and statistics from the wedding industry are included in this review of literature.

The location of a tattoo on the body is an important factor when choosing a dress, such as being on "public skin" or "private skin". "Public skin" tattoos are on display during every-day life and located in such areas as the hands, neck, forearms, upper arms, and face, whereas "private skin" is the opposite (Vail 1999, 266). According to Vail (1999), private skin tattoos are typically hidden daily due to contemporary clothing practices; private skin areas include legs, stomach, shoulders, back, chest, and feet. These key terms and other key terms can be found in Appendix A.

History of Tattoos

Traditionally, tattoos were symbols of heritage, clan, social status, culture, and markings of punishment (Wohlrab, Stahl, and Kappeler 2007). Tattoos were first introduced to America through sailors who acquired them during sea voyages (Fenske 2007). Tattoos were popularized by former sailors who showed off their tattoos to a paying audience, which were commonly known as "freak" shows. Circuses and freak shows were held together as one event to attract a larger audience and showcase people with tattoos. Fenske found that, "the first Western bodies associated with tattoos, then, were male bodies" (2007, 92). Military men tattooed iconic symbols on their bodies that related to their unit or as tribute to their country, such as an American flag.

According to Fenske, between 1920 and 1960 the strongest associated tattooed groups were "bikers, convicts, whores, and gang members" (2007, 54). During these decades, however, tattoos were not always the choice of the wearer. Scholars reveal that slave owners would tattoo their slaves "in the southern United States" (Windley 1983; Gustafon 2000; Jones 2000; Schildkrout 2004, 323). Tattoos that were inflicted on public skin were judged and were seen as "freakish." From 1920 to 1960, tattoos generally had a negative connotation, but gradually changed to a more positive association.

During the 1960s, the connotation of tattoos changed from being "freakish" to what is called the "Tattoo Renaissance;" where, "in the wealthy class, the purpose of tattoos was to impress, and in the working class, tattoos were to express" (Fisher 2002, 95). In the early 1960s, "subcultures such as the early rockers and teddy boys helped

bring the tattoo to a new popularity" (Camphausen 1997, 11). Then in the late 1960s, tattoos were not only inked on men, but were on women as well. "The history of the tattooed woman is one built around the eroticism of exposed female body parts" (Fenske 2007, 97). The act of a woman publicly showing private skin was considered erotic, and the addition of having one or many tattoos on private skin increased the level of sexuality and eroticism. For male entertainment, women would go up on a stage and display their tattoos that are located on public and/or private skin. Once off-stage, women would cover up tattoos because they were considered an asset to making money, and they did not want to give out free shows (Fenske 2007). Women with tattoos who were not a part of this type of show-world were still objectified or controlled as sexual objects. Commonly, "men brought their women to have the [man's] name inscribed above the celestial gate, or on the gluteus maximus" (Steward 1990, 49). The Tattoo Renaissance saw a large increase of both men and women of middle-class backgrounds who got tattoos. Polhemus and Randall (1996) thoroughly studied the history of tattoos and how the Tattoo Renaissance came to be. Their findings explain how tattoos were once viewed and the impact of the Tattoo Renaissance. They described the change in attitude towards tattooing in the Western world as the following:

> The ever-growing ranks of the Western middle-classes, however, continued to show disdain for tattooing-vehemently labeling it as 'barbaric' and, worst of all, "common." Ghettoized and stigmatized in this way, tattooing in the west became associated with the disreputable, the criminal and the freakish. Certainly in such conditions the odds were stacked against it developing as an art form. Yet despite this, the 1960s saw the beginnings of a "Tattoo Renaissance;" which (reflecting a new awareness of and respect for non-Western cultures in general) has forced a new appreciation in the West of aesthetic possibilities of

this form of body decoration (Polhemus and Randall 1996, 24). Previously, tattoos had a negative connotation, but later were thought of as a form of art. According to Fenske, the Tattoo Renaissance was "characterized by a larger number of middle-class clients and artists with a higher level of formal education" (2007, 17). She also found that there was "an increasing appreciation for the artistry of tattooing by both artists and clients" (2007, 17), which led scholars to study post-1960s trends and personal narratives in tattooing. Fenske's study suggests that the main change from pre-1960 to post-1960 tattooed bodies was "largely historical, cultural anthropological, and psychological modes of inquiry to more (though not exclusively so) ethnographic sociological, and critical cultural approaches" (2007, 17 and 18). Many scholars conducted their studies inside tattoo shops during the tattoo process instead of asking post-tattoo.

The history of tattoos has led many scholars to study reasons why people got tattoos; the method of research has changed from historical observation to a sociological approach. A substantial change in the tattooing phenomenon is the connotation of tattoos that were first viewed as "freakish" to now being considered a form of art. Many researchers have studied contemporary tattoos and the personal meanings behind tattoos because tattoos have become more popular in American culture.

Contemporary Tattoo Practices

The Harris Interactive Polls (HIP) found that Americans are increasingly getting tattoos (Braverman 2012). The HIP measures public opinion and creates

statistics of the public's knowledge, opinions, behaviors and motivation through telephone and online polls. In 2003, 14% of adults reported having at least one tattoo. In 2008, 16% of the adults surveyed had at least one tattoo. The 2012 HIP found that 21% of the adults surveyed have tattoos, and adults who are "aged 30-39 are most likely to have tattoos (38%) compared to those younger (30% of those 25-29 and 22% of those 18-24)" (Braverman 2012). The 2012 HIP poll also found that the number of women who reported having tattoos has increased.

Contemporary Tattoo Influences

As stated previously, family or group identity, self-expression, tradition, religion, rebellion, feminine empowerment, sexuality, multi-media and celebrities are possible influences on people getting tattoos. These influential categories have been explored through both qualitative and quantitative research. An important factor to consider is the location on the body of where the tattoo will be displayed or hidden because the choice of skin placement will greatly distinguish the amount of attention the tattoo will receive. The tattoo design itself is also an important factor for an individual to consider. Tattoos are permanent; thus an individual must consider all these influences before getting a tattoo.

Orend and Gagne found that people chose to get "tattoos to communicate something about their own identities and group affiliations to others" (2009, 508). Some college students from Koch, Roberts, Armstrong, and Owen's (2010) study acquired tattoos as dedication to their family heritage (e.g., family crests). Armstrong, Roberts, Sanders, Owens and Anderson found that "tattoos can be used to establish

group identity, [but] can also be used for individual differentiation" (2008, 13); a single tattoo can mean connection with others in addition to individualization. For example, gang members have the same overall design as their tattoos to distinguish what group they belong to. These tattoos also have additional symbols incorporated in the designs, such as the date they joined the gang, that gives the tattoos individual meanings. Tattoos can be personal identifiers that can also have a shared meaning within a community or family, which is part of the tattoo cultural phenomenon. Another aspect of how tattoos bring a community together is apparent at tattoo conventions; these are events where tattoo artists and enthusiasts come together and tattoos become the sole focus of entertainment. The first national tattoo convention was a two day event held by Dave Yurkew in 1976 in Houston, Texas, which consisted of a meet and greet of famous tattoo artists from around the world and a tattoo beauty contest (Foemmel 2012). Tattoo conventions have grown to include additional tattooing contests, shop booths, demonstrations, and exhibits.

People may choose to get tattoos for artistic or self-expressive reasons. DeMello (2003) found that in the United States, tattoos are now seen as cultural, artistic and social expressions. Tattoos are considered artwork because of the design of the tattoo itself. Tattoos have become more creative with an array of color and intricate details as a result of tattooing innovations and technologies (Kakoulas and Kaplan 2011). Having an infinite spectrum of tattoo design possibilities allows people to have unique tattoos that may reflect their personal beliefs and self-identification. Tattoos are becoming more acceptable in society because of social interaction and

social beliefs (Kosut 2006). Kosut found young people are actively participating in tattoo culture because of their desire for self-expression (2006).

Cultural appropriation of symbols from Japanese culture, such as Hello Kitty, has influenced the American tattoo subculture. McVeigh suggests that Japanese characters, also known as anime, "appeals to nostalgia" and leads to "hedonistic consumption" (2000, 242). Tattoo designs of anime characters, such as Hello Kitty, suggest that there is a Japanese influence in American popular culture and various subcultures. Getting iconic characters tattooed is associated with the desire of being connected to a subculture and also being a consumer or "collector" (McVeigh 2000, 236). There are other affiliations of iconic symbols, such as Celtic designs, that are connected to self-identity and group connection to Irish descent (MacQuarrie 2000). Symbols of similar representations form a socio cultural movement that people feel the need to be a part of by getting recognizable symbols tattooed on their bodies, whether or not their personal decision to follow suit is also for self-image or self-identity.

Although tattoos are becoming more acceptable in society, they are still considered a mark of deviance and rebellion (Adams 2009; Kosut 2006). Koch, Roberts, Armstrong, and Owen (2010) found that college students who have more than three tattoos were correlated to having experience with illegal drugs, binge drinking, multiple sexual encounters, or being arrested. Some students got tattooed when they were teenagers rebelling against their parents' wishes. However, not all tattoos are signifiers of rebellion.

In America, traditional tattoos are still practiced today, such as Native Americans having "clan symbols tattooed on themselves" (Swartz 2006, 243). Swartz found that "both Natives and non-Natives are participating in the phenomenon of having Native American imagery or images of Native Americans tattooed onto their bodies as a means of exploring and codifying issues of identity and spirituality" (2006, 251). These types of tattoos are not only iconic symbols, but they also have a connection to the meaning and tradition of historical tattoos.

Religion and spirituality are other reasons why people get tattoos. Johnson believes that tattoos are "connected to one's mind, body, spirit, and inner essence forever" (2006, 59). Since tattoos are permanent markings on skin, they require people to have a certain level of commitment to what they want on their bodies. People with strong religious or spiritual beliefs may get a tattoo to show their commitment, such as a symbol of a cross or a bible reference (Koch, Roberts, Armstrong, and Owen 2004; Horne, Knox, Zusman, and Zusman 2007). One's level of commitment to getting tattooed should be taken into personal consideration, especially since tattoos are permanent, unless professionally removed.

Tattoos previously had differing connotations by gender, such that the tattoo industry was a male-dominated activity, and "women with tattoos were considered less acceptable to social mores" (Follett 2009, 247). Follett believes that this gender specific negativity changed when the number of female tattoo artists with credible artistic background increased. Ellerbrok found that women feel their tattoos are an "emotionally empowering acquisition specifically because of the visibility of the tattoo" (2008, 34). Empowering femininity through visible tattoos is important to

women and reflects their decision making process of choosing tattoos (Ellerbrok 2008; Vail 1999). Some female tattoo artists such as Kat Von D inspire other women to become more empowered in their lives, while also stressing that people should thoroughly consider tattoos with personal significance before getting "inked" (Woodstock 2011). Femininity and sexuality can be reasons why people get tattoos (Koch, Roberts, Armstrong, and Owen 2010).

The tattoo design and placement of the tattoo relate to the level of femininity and sexuality. Social norms have shifted to be more accepting of overt sexuality, as some scholars argue that it is human nature (Brandt 2004; Polhemus 2004; Fisher and Salmon 2012). Braunberger (2000) found popular tattoo designs for women were small hearts, flowers, and butterflies, which all have a feminine connotation. Fenske believes that the female body is sexually coded; certain areas such as "the breasts, stomach, ankles, and shoulder blades" are where "feminine" tattoos are commonly located (2007, 99). A common tattooed area where females who want attention is on their lower back; these tattoos are known as "tramp stamps" (Ellerbrok 2008). According to Ellerbrok (2008), the purpose of the lower back placement is to draw attention towards their buttocks. A tattoo can be considered sexy, not necessarily depending on location, but for the personal meaning behind the tattoo itself. For example, Orend and Gagne interviewed a person whose "tattoo meant something personal to her about being 'kissable' and 'sexy'" (2009, 508). Some women choose a particular tattoo design or body placement to connote their feminine or sexual personalities.

The tattoo cultural phenomenon is enhanced by celebrities and often seen in popular media, such as in advertisements, television and award shows, movies, magazines, and books (Sanders and Vail, 2008, vii). There have been many main characters in movies who are showcased with tattoos, such as in the movies *XXX*, *Memento*, *American History X*, *Pirates of the Caribbean*, and *The Boondock Saints*. The tattoo culture displayed in popular media suggest, "American society today is a society that does not condemn the use of tattooing as a means of self-expression as it has in the past" (Bloch 2011, 19). In the last five years, tattoo reality television programs showcasing tattooed artists have boomed in the U.S.'s television industry. There are many magazine publications dedicated to the topic of tattoos. Magazines helped "tattoo meanings" become thought of as "declarations of the self," and helped to associate tattoos with "art in the mainstream print media" (Kosut 2006, 1043).

Celebrities with visible tattoos are frequently shown in public, which helps to show that tattoos are considered more normal than in the past. Angelina Jolie and Lindsay Lohan are "proud owners" of tattoos and often wear clothing that allows their tattoos to be visible to the public eye as a statement of feminine empowerment (Follet 2009, 248). A recent television advertisement for H&M, a popular clothing store for both males and females, showed celebrity soccer player David Beckham without clothes. His body is covered in tattoos, which may contribute to his perceived attractiveness. This national advertisement was shown during the 2014 Super Bowl, so millions of people watched this commercial (Super Bowl Commercials Org 2014). The Super Bowl Commercial Organization's video comments noted his level of attractiveness, but no one mentioned anything about his tattoos. Kosut believes that "if

tattoos [are] portrayed in the media to be a legitimate aesthetic-cultural form, rather than a distasteful badge that permanently blights the body, the more high-status individuals will invariable be attracted to tattoo" (2006, 1045).

The reasons why people choose tattoos, whether located on private or public skin, are different because of the many possible influences that affect their choices. Researchers have found a connection that reasons for contemporary tattoo are similar to those of tattoos in previous times, mainly through tattoo design and the desire for group association. International icons, such as Hello Kitty, connote a cultural appropriation and a cultural influence that is apparent in the American tattoo culture. Many tattooed celebrities, especially females, are now publicly viewed in multiple forms of media. This suggests that tattoos have become more acceptable in American popular culture.

History of the White Traditional Wedding Dress

Wedding dresses were not always white in America, but the strongest influence of wearing a white wedding dress can be traced back to Queen Victoria. The styles of the wedding dresses throughout the eras changed due to influences from British fashion, wars, media, wedding services, and designers. Colored wedding dresses were once considered normal, but later were considered unconventional because of the historical association of white dresses with American brides.

For an American bride during the late 1700s, "a yellow gown was a popular choice for one's bridal dress," and "another popular color selection for wedding attire was blue" (Mo 2000, 21). According to Mo, "the selection of silver and white

garments had long been the preferred choice for royal brides and members of the court" (2000, 21). European styles greatly influenced American wedding dresses. In 1800, a "rare and early example of an all white wedding gown" was worn in the United States by Decima Cecelia Shubrich (Mo 2000, 23).

Mo states that one of the "most highly acclaimed and recognized marriages" was in 1840, when Queen Victoria of the United Kingdom married Prince Albert (2000, 23). Queen Victoria wore a full pleated, white, silk satin dress. She chose a white dress to symbolize practicality and patriotism, rather than purity (Arend 2003). She was already the head of state and wanted to make a political statement that put her duty to her kingdom on display. Wealthy and fashionable American brides quickly adopted the white wedding dress as a way to show off their wealth (Shrout 2010). The wedding dress "has been found to follow the general fashion of the era with only subtle deviations, the dress holding rather consistently with some of the traditional [styles]" (Mills 1969, 36).

From the 1840s to the 1860s, dresses had long, full, pleated layers of white silk satin, full bell shaped skirts, narrow at the top with long trains worn with crinoline petticoats and hoops, which were inspired by Queen Victoria's wedding dress silhouette (Mo 2000, 26). Sleeves were trimmed to match the skirt and had varied frills, scallops and chenille loops. Ready-made dresses were available, but were shunned by high-class brides due to lack of elegance and details (Mills 1969). Most dresses during the nineteenth century were custom made (Arend 2003). Dress silhouettes were created from a smooth curvaceous overskirt with cording, puffs, and lace.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, dress styles were "inspired by historical costume, which contemporary writers described as 'picturesque'" (Ehrman 2011, 86). Another major influence on fashion was the Aesthetic Movement. Dresses were hand-made and "decoration [was] related to an object's form and function" (Ehrman 2011, 91). According to Ehrman (2011), brides would wear their wedding dresses to special occasions that were held in their honor for a whole year after their wedding. As stated in *Godey's Lady's Book,* "many girls when choosing their wedding gown [had] to consider not simply what [was] becoming, but what [was] not costly and also what [was] useful afterwards" (1889, 428). Harriet Joyce, a working-class woman who married at age thirty-five, was considered "too old of a bride to wear white" (Ehrman 2011, 96). She wore a purple dress because it was a "practical colour choice for a silk dress," "a practical wedding option by a woman of her class," and was "intended to be worn again" (2000, 96). Film was a great influence at the end of this century, which "became an important influence on wedding styles," and "enabled people to see with astonishing immediacy fashionable events that they had only read about or seen in still images in the past" (Ehrman 2011, 101). The wedding industry was able to grow with the introduction of film.

Wedding dresses during the First World War had short and elbow-length sleeves, and made from shades of white and cream fabrics. In 1919, evening styles were "glamorous and revealing, and inspired by an eclectic range of sources that included medieval dress and quasi-oriental styles" (Ehrman 2011, 105). Wedding dresses had lower waistlines and focused on the neck and shoulder with distinctive necklines. Some wedding dress hemlines became knee-length. During the early

twentieth century, there was also an "increasing scale of weddings and the publicity given to them encouraged businesses to develop wedding-specific services, which they promoted with increasingly sophisticated forms of advertising targeting the middle and upper classes" (Ehrman 2011, 95).

Strapless dresses were introduced first as evening dress wear in the 1930s. A significant source of bridal information began publication in 1934, called *Bride's Magazine*. It offered many dress styles that were available through catalog order. Wedding dresses became a "straight, slim, high-waist silhouette, which was described as the Directoire style" (Ehrman 2011, 92).

The strapless dress became more popular when Brenda Frazier wore her debutante dress and appeared on the cover of *Life* in 1938 (Braudy 1987). Daring brides, such as Monica Maurice, wore strong colors as a statement. In 1938, she wore a full red dress that had a dark blue belt, which was considered "unconventional" (Ehrman 2000, 126). World War Two brides were "concerned with meeting their family's basic clothing needs" so they altered dresses worn by relatives and friends to make their wedding dresses combined with "unrationed materials like net curtaining and upholstery fabric" (Ehrman 2011, 121 and 125). Wedding dresses were still mainly shades of white. Ehrman states that during the 1940s, a typical wedding dress had a "sweetheart neckline, slightly puffed sleeves, and a fitted bodice" (2011, 124 and 125).

In the late 1940s, strapless dresses by Christian Dior became popular. From 1945 to 1960, couture bridal wear was greatly influenced by British and French fashion. Christian Dior's "New Look" had "wide draped and flaring skirts, busts were

prominent, tapered waist-lines, and rounded hips" (Mills 1969, 70). During the mid-50s, the princess sheath dress became popular, which had capped sleeves. The 1960s wedding dresses had either an A-line or empire silhouette. Sleeves were either plain and short, or were long and fitted that tapered at the wrist. Skirt lengths rose to barely cover the knees. Pastel colors were featured in dresses, which were considered unconventional. However, because a lot of dresses during this time were still handed down, many brides' dresses reflected previous eras depending on when the dress was first worn. Bridal designers created dresses that were "inspired by every era from the Victorian period through to the 1940s," leading commentators to suggest that "bridal wear was becoming fossilized" (Ehrman 2000, 131). Contrary to couture dresses, ready-to-wear dresses by new, upcoming, and young designers became more popular in the late 1950s. Those who were successful grew to create companies that produced ready-to-wear wedding dress lines. Ehrman states "couturier and designers provided direction and inspiration for the ready-to-wear bridal companies which supplied department stores and bridal shops" (2011, 135).

Post 1960s changes still occurred due to influences from high fashion, especially when haute couture designers were sought to design wedding dresses for wealthy families. Royalty has also influenced the changing trends. For example, haute couture designer Yves Saint Laurent designed Farah Diba's wedding dress when she married the Shah of Iran. Valentino designed Jacqueline Kennedy's wedding dress when she married Aristotle Onassis. Dresses made in the late 1970s often had a "fitted boned bodice with a wide scooped neckline, three-quarter length sleeves and a full-

length A-line skirt" (Ehrman 2011, 142). The boned bodice allowed brides to alter the appearance of their waistlines, which is also true for contemporary brides.

Even though Queen Victoria strongly influenced the American tradition of wearing a white wedding dress, colored dresses were still worn by daring brides in the past. The different wedding styles that were popular from the late 1700s to the 1970s helped create basic silhouettes that are now used to make contemporary wedding dresses. Historically, a bride's wedding dress was always an important part of a wedding, and it continued be an essential element in contemporary weddings.

Contemporary Wedding Dress

There are over two million weddings each year in the United States, and the wedding dress plays a vital role during the ceremony (Wedding Report 2012). Contemporary wedding dresses have basic silhouettes that designers use as a base for their dress designs. Sleeves, straps, belts, and other embellishments are also added to the dresses to add character. However, the strapless wedding dress has become more popular among contemporary brides.

The number of weddings continuously grows as the population increases; remarriages are also on the rise (U.S. Census Bureau 2011). The wedding industry is the longest running business that offers specialized custom-made merchandise (Wedding Report 2012). The average cost of wedding dresses has also been increasing yearly. The 2011 American Community Survey estimates the median age of first marriage for women is 26.9 with a 0.1 margin of error (U.S. Census Bureau 2011).

These statistics imply that this study has relevance for a substantial number of young women who are planning weddings.

A contemporary wedding dress is created around a basic silhouette, which originated from the historical evolution of the wedding dress styles. These include A-line, ballerina, ballgown, empire, mermaid, or sheath (Weiss and Levine 2008; Mills 1969) as seen in figure 1. The silhouette is paired with a neckline: bateau, high collar, jewel, square, v-neck, halter, portrait, sweetheart, sheer, scoop, off-the-shoulder, asymmetric, strapless, and straps (Weiss and Levine 2008). The necklines are shown in figure 2. Other elements are then added to the dress such as belts, sleeves, bustles, and trains. Brides may choose to add colored elements to their white wedding dresses, which makes their dresses no longer considered traditional. As stated previously, I refer to this as a "mixed look." Dresses that are fully colored are called "unconventional," and have been popularized by celebrities (Ehrman 2011, 172).

Figure 1

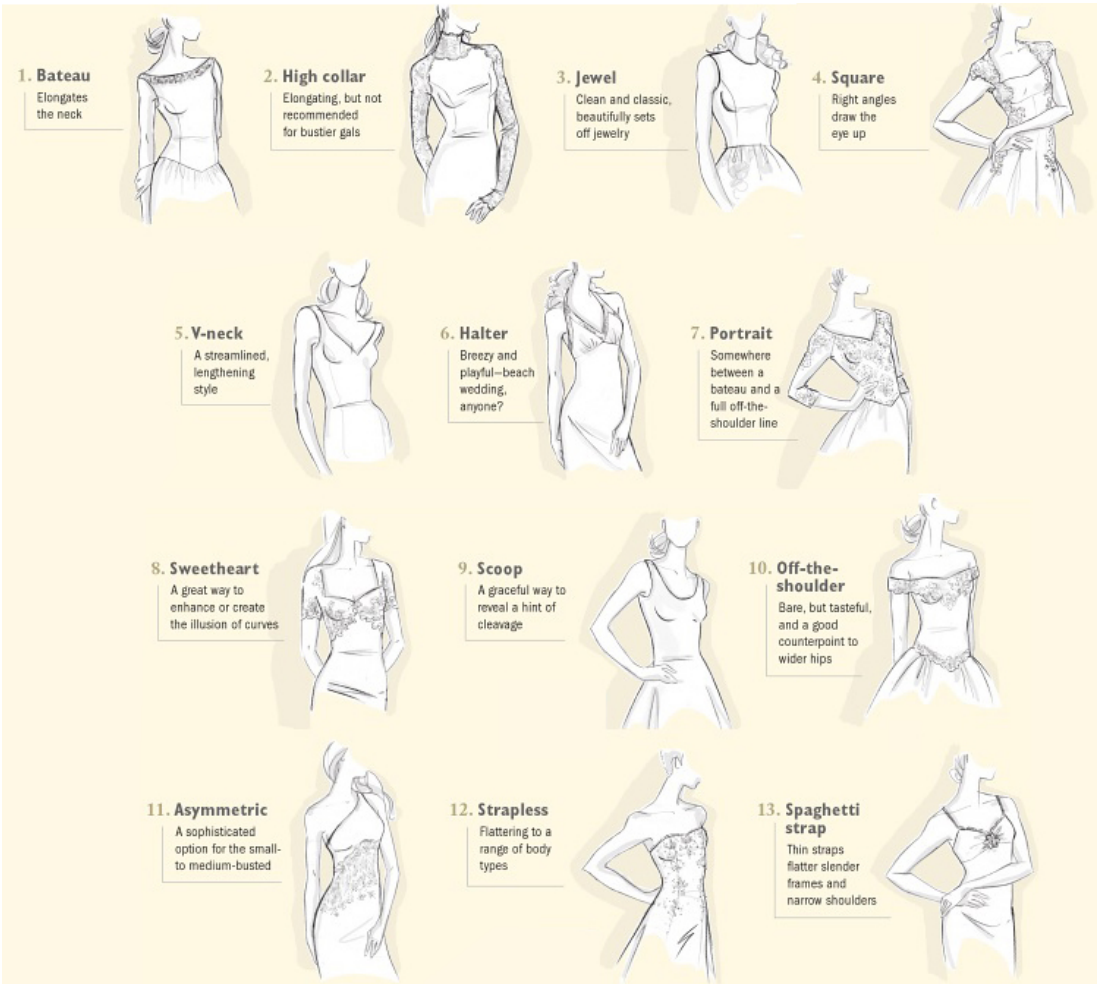
Basic Silhouettes

(Weiss and Levine 2008)

Figure 2

Necklines

(Weiss and Levine 2008)



In the 1990s, strapless wedding dresses dominated the wedding dress industry. As of the 2000s and up to now, celebrities seen on the red carpet and award shows are regularly wearing strapless dresses. Strapless dresses are easy to manipulate to create another dress style (Walsh 2005). The strapless dress can be paired with any type of silhouette, and elements can easily be added, such as straps or sleeves. Adding either of these elements would transform the strapless dress into a non-strapless dress. This can save money for women who want a wedding dress they can re-use and wear after the wedding. Since the majority of dresses available in salons are strapless, this limits dress selections for brides who want other styles (Folan 2012).

Influences on Wedding Dress Choice

There are many internal and external influences that a bride may face when choosing her wedding dress. Scholars have found that wedding dress choice are influenced by family, community, and the wedding industry; self-expression and self-image; tradition; princess ideal; sexuality; multiple forms of media; and celebrities (Entwistle 2000; Friese 2001; Foster and Johnson 2003; Ehrman 2011). However, in addition to these influences, there may be restrictions such as having a tight budget that can affect a bride's wedding dress choice (Choy and Loker 2004).

Family, community, and wedding industry influences may affect a bride's choice of dress. If a bride "flouts the conventions of [her] culture and goes without the appropriate clothes, [she is] subversive of the most basic social codes, and risks exclusion, scorn or ridicule" (Entwistle 2000, 324). Entwistle states there is pressure brought on by society to look a certain way on the wedding day. Likewise, Walsh

believes that the dress decision and pressure to look a certain way are influenced by "female members of the family and/or wedding party, potentially including the mother of the bride, mother of the groom, sisters and bridesmaids" (2005, 241). People may have their own ideas of what the bride should wear or how she should look. Staff at bridal salons may suggest certain dresses that are flattering for the bride, to accentuate curves and slimming of the body (David's Bridal 2013). There is a certain "pressure to conform to the bridal costume, rather than the costume conforming to the body" (Engstrom 2008, 77). Engstrom has found that a bride often tries to lose weight in order to fit into a dress size, instead of having the dress altered to her own personal size. If a bride does not follow the "bridal diet" to lose weight by her next dress fitting, she is "violating rules of the wedding world" (Corrado 2002, 61). Brides are pressured to look good in their dresses because of social pressure and influence from family members; the thinner, the better is the norm. Photographs are commonly taken at weddings and used as post-wedding keepsakes to reflect the bride's special day. Photographs may also increase the pressure on a bride to look her best on her wedding day, especially since wedding photographs are commonly viewed by later generations.

Self-expression and self-image are factors that a bride may consider when choosing her wedding dress. Women typically already have their own personal sense of style for everyday wear. However, bridal consultant David Tutera (2011) suggests that a bride upgrades her everyday style on her wedding day. Many of his clients have expressed a desire for the "wow" factor to make sure everyone focuses on them, especially as they walk down the aisle.

The traditional white wedding dress is an iconic symbol with rhetorical power that encodes cultural meaning of the personal lived experience of the bride (Friese 2001, 55). A bride's emotions, attitudes, and values can be articulated or concealed by the wedding dress (Friese 2001). The majority of contemporary wedding dresses carried in popular bridal stores, such as David's Bridal, are white (David's Bridal 2012). A traditional wedding consists of the bride wearing a white wedding dress and the wedding location has white decor (Tutera 2012).

The traditional American white wedding dress is often connected to religion, more specifically Christianity (Dibben 2012). Wearing a white wedding dress is the norm for religious American weddings. Some religions may require brides to be fully covered, including shoulders, arms, and back (Engstrom and Semic 2003). As Engstrom and Semic (2003) state, religion is important to many Americans, and their wedding dress style and location will reflect their devotion.

Engstrom believes that a bride wearing her wedding dress "symbolizes feminine values embodied in the self-image of a beautiful, finely dressed 'princess'" (2008, 77). She suggests the princess ideal is about perfection and feminine values. Likewise, Krememer (2012) believes the image of a bride in a wedding dress encompasses feminine values of power and beauty. Perfection and feminine values are "a big part of the fairy tale dream that most brides yearn for on their wedding day" (Dibben 2012, 8). Similarly, Gualtieri (2012) found that women would even go so far as to purchase a fairy-tale wedding from the Disney Corporation. According to Gualtieri (2012), the concept of the princess ideal includes set standards on how a

bride should look on her wedding day, which is comparable to the Disney Princesses. However, not all brides desire the "princess" image, but a "sexy" appearance instead.

Even though wedding dresses are traditionally white in American culture, contemporary wedding dresses focus more on sexuality and feminine empowerment. To further promote a sexy and feminine look, designers such as Vera Wang are now creating colored wedding dresses instead of the conservative white wedding dress. Vera Wang "was the first American bridal designer to make an impact in Europe and the success of her business model was a major influence on bridal dresses in the 1990s" (Ehrman 2011, 163). Wang's 2012 spring collection consisted of unconventional black wedding dresses to "build a sense of mystery [that included] sensuality and sexuality" (Dibben 2012, 8). Wang believes that a colored wedding dress can have a sexual appeal (Dibben 2012).

Ehrman found, "recent social and technological developments, particularly the internet, have had an impact on wedding fashions" (2011, 163). The Internet has become a widely used source for multi-media access. The media "constructs celebrity weddings as a source of inspiration for consumers and represents wedding perfection" like the princess ideal (Winch and Webster 2012, 57). Jessica Biel, a celebrity and newlywed of Justin Timberlake, wore a Giambattista Valli designed "now-famous dress: a custom petal-pink strapless gown of silk mousseline and silk organza with a light-pink floral motif" (Cress 2012). Many magazine headlines focused on the shock of the celebrity wearing a pink wedding dress because pink is a departure from the traditional white wedding dress, yet is considered a feminine color. Having a colored wedding dress is becoming more popular in contemporary weddings due to the

exposure through multi-media and celebrities (Foster and Johnson 2003). Celebrities, in addition to Jessica Biel, who had colored wedding dresses include Gwen Stefani, Reese Witherspoon, Anne Hathaway, and Julianne Moore.

In addition to media showing celebrities on their wedding day, reality television shows that showcase weddings and/or wedding dresses have become more popular. The reality television show, "Say Yes To the Dress" captures many brides' experience while shopping at Kleinfeld Bridal, a bridal boutique (Kleinfeld Bridal 2014). Viewers are welcomed to watch the emotion and stress that brides endure while shopping for their wedding dresses. Bridal consultants at Kleinfeld Bridal stress the importance of knowing their clienteles' budgets to help focus the choices of wedding dresses.

A bride must consider the budget for her wedding dress separately from her overall wedding budget. The 2012 Wedding Report states that in the United States, the average store-bought wedding dress costs from $875 to $1,458, and a designer or custom-made dress costs from $1,749 to $2,332. The main differences between store-bought dresses and designer or custom-made dresses are how they are created and sold. Wedding dress stores have sample sizes of designer and store-labeled dresses that can be ordered and refitted for brides-to-be. Altering a dress, except for fitting, requires the approval of the designer, which then classifies the dress as "designer made" instead of store bought (David's Bridal 2012). Customizing a wedding dress may be an option for a bride who has a large budget. Dolce Bridal's (2012) online website allows women to custom design their wedding dresses with many color selections. Choy and Loker (2004) found that women who have a higher income and

prefer to have a unique look on their wedding are more likely to create a custom wedding dress online. Similarly, Tiggemann and Golder found that "people with highly elaborated appearance schemas will pay more attention and devote more time, energy, and money to their appearance; that is, they evidence a greater degree of emotional and behavioral investment in their appearance" (2006, 310). A tight wedding dress budget will limit a bride's wedding dress choice.

Various influences and restrictions affect a bride's choice of wedding dress. Not every bride, however, will face all of these influences, but only those that apply to her lifestyle. For example, if a bride is raised in a non-religious or non-practicing family, she will not need to consider religious influences or restrictions that a religious bride would face. This is true, unless the groom's side of the family is strongly religious. The greater the number of influences and restrictions, the more difficult the wedding dress choice may be.

Tattoos and Wedding Dresses

The decision making process for a wedding dress may be more difficult for a tattooed bride because she has to consider the reasons for her tattoos and the influences of her dress choice. The balance of all the influential factors between the tattoos and the dress is a "negotiation of her gendered role" (Eason 2008, 268). A tattooed bride must choose to hide or show off her tattoos on her wedding day. This can be a challenging decision to make, but may also be more difficult when finding the perfect dress.

Jessica Biel has a few tattoos that were visible when she wore her pink wedding dress, as seen in *People, NY Daily News, TMZ, and Huffington Post*. The articles did not comment on the visibility of her tattoos in the picture, which suggests that wearing a pink wedding dress is more outrageous than showing tattoos during the wedding occasion.

On a popular wedding forum, Wedding Wire (2012), brides post reasons why they showed off or hid their tattoos on their wedding days. Members who showed their tattoos gave reasons such as wanting self-expression and individuality, feelings that tattoos are a part of who they are, and they never considered their tattoos an issue. Other members posted reasons to hide their tattoos that included family influence, not wanting the tattoo to distract from her look, wanting a traditional white wedding, and religion. Some members posted about tattoos they regretted and how they covered them up on their wedding day (Wedding Wire 2011). The 2012 Harris Interactive Poll found that 14% of tattooed people regret having tattoos (Braverman 2012).

Armstrong, Roberts, Saunders, and Owen (2008) studied the young adult population that regrets their tattoos and opts to have them removed from their bodies. They found a higher percentage of women who opted to remove their tattoos in the 2006 study compared to the 1996 study, which suggests women increasingly regret their tattoos. However, "tattoos that cost several hundred dollars could require several thousand dollars and many laser sessions to remove" (Singer 2007, A1). On top of price, tattoo removals are extremely painful and may leave scarring.

A woman may choose a less painful approach for a temporary fix on her wedding day. If a bride regrets any of her tattoos, she may try to hide them on her

wedding day. Other options to hide tattoos that brides may consider include airbrushing, makeup concealer, wearing a shawl with their dress, or designing a dress to cover the location of the tattoos (Wedding Wire 2011).

Knowing that some brides will hide their tattoos, wedding dress designers may create dresses to cover certain areas of the body where brides regret their tattoos the most. This study explores personal methods of tattooed brides who want to either show or hide their tattoos on their wedding day, and describe how they feel about their own tattoos. Future brides may benefit from this study, by incorporating methods used by the brides in this study to hide or show tattoos to achieve their ultimate bridal image.

A tattooed bride's choice of wedding dress could potentially be influenced by many factors, as discussed in this review of literature. Tattoos are more acceptable in American society, and a bride's tattoo may not be as much of a shock as it might have been in the past. If the idea of a tattoo is downplayed by society because of continuously changing social norms, and if a bride considers her tattoo to reflect her self-image, then there should not be an issue if she chooses to show her tattoo on her wedding day. If a bride, however, regrets her tattoo, then she will most likely take the initiative to hide her tattoo on her wedding day. Each bride will have her own personal decision to make, whether or not her tattoo is an influential factor. These hypothetical situations connect what is known about tattoos to what is known about the history of wedding dresses, providing a lead-in to the actual study of wedding dress choices of tattooed brides.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative approach, namely individual interviews with tattooed brides and brides-to-be. The requirements of the participants included that they must be American citizens, tattooed, and newlywed or engaged for the first time within the past eighteen months. After applying for and receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board (approval number HU1213-179, see Appendix B), the interviewees were recruited through snowball sampling, beginning with a classmate at the University of Rhode Island; the aim was to achieve a sample of at least twelve participants. The participants were contacted initially through a password protected email account, and were asked questions to see if they met the requirements of the study. The recruitment email can be seen in Appendix C.

If the individual met the requirements, another email was sent to determine a convenient time and place to meet for the interview, along with attachments consisting of the participation consent form and a pre-interview question sheet (see Appendix D and Appendix E). The pre-interview question sheet asked for background information including demographic data, such as age and income. These questions were given as multiple choices with numeric ranges. The income brackets were based on a previous study by Weiss and Levine (2008), and the religion choices were from Ellerbrok's study (2008). Brides were also asked to choose the corresponding range of their wedding dress budget, and to describe their wedding dress, such as location purchased,

and who paid for the dress. They were asked to select if their wedding dress was traditional, unconventional, or mixed-look. Brides were asked to return the completed pre-interview question sheet either by email or at the interview, along with an optional picture of their wedding dress or potential wedding dress pictures. Pictures used in this thesis have been cropped to preserve confidentiality of the participants, and their names have been changed.

All twelve interviews were completed between May 2013 and November 2013. The interviews were held at quiet locations convenient for the participant, such as in a URI office, the participant's apartment, mall lobby, or coffee house. There were two participants who were unable to meet face to face. They mailed their consent form prior to conducting a Skype or phone interview. One of these two participant's Skype sound quality was not clear, so we switched to a recorded phone interview. Each interview lasted from fifteen minutes to one hour (see Appendix F for interview questions).

The interview began with the interviewer reading the participant agreement out loud to ensure the participant acknowledged the terms and conditions; and then the interviewer asked for confirmed permission to use a tape recorder. The participants were handed a front and back image of a female body and asked to mark where their tattoos are located. The interview questions asked their preferences to show or hide their tattoos during their wedding, their methods and reasons, and their decision-making processes of choosing and buying their wedding dress. They were also asked to describe their whole wedding experience. The method used to count the number of tattoos that an individual had was by their own description of how many tattoos they

counted on themselves during the interview. This data was then compared to the female body diagram they circled for each distinguishable tattoo. The numbers verbally stated and the numbers of circles were equal.

All questions were open ended and allowed participants to answer with as much or as little detail as they chose to reveal. If the interviewer wanted to learn more about the questioned topic, probing statements were used, such as "so tell me more about __," "why did you choose to do__," and/or "tell me about the decision making process." If the conversation veered off topic, the interviewer would ask another open-ended question to lead the conversation back on topic. These interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed; the recordings were erased after the transcriptions were complete.

The transcription process took on average about three and a half hours for each interview. Every word was written down in a script format, with the interviewees' mannerisms noted. If a participant went off on a tangent unrelated to the topic, a summary of the tangent was written in place of actual quotations. This process was very labor intensive and tedious, but was fully completed by December of 2013.

After transcribing each interview, the data collected were used to create themes for coding. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw's coding and memoing (1995) were used, following a grounded theory approach (Strauss and Corbin 1998; Flynn and Foster 2009). The data collected were coded and memoed extensively, and then were used to develop categorical themes. Themes that overlapped were grouped into a common section, and new sections were made for themes that were only mentioned once. The results were then analyzed and synthesized based on the categories that appeared.

Responses given by the participants had reoccurring themes. Some quotes were modified for readability and clarity (e.g., “like,” “um” were removed when these words hampered readability); all added modifications appear in brackets.

The research was limited by the selection of participants found, such as the demographics of the participant. For example, all participants lived in New England, where the city they are from may or may not have a largely tattooed population. Also, the selection of available bridal dresses may not be as large in certain cities, which may affect their dress choices. These participants’ experiences and opinions are not generalizable to all tattooed brides. Snowball sampling involves people who knew each other, instead of having a random sample of tattooed brides.

When writing the proposal for this study, there was a debate of which method to use for data collection. A questionnaire or survey instrument would have the ability to get a much larger sample, but rich descriptions would only be obtainable through qualitative research. I was able to connect with the participants on a more personal level by conducting interviews, rather than just collecting completed questionnaires or surveys from the participants.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study showed that some participants' wedding dress choices were affected by their tattoos, while others did not factor in their tattoos as an issue. The participants who intentionally chose to show their tattoos mentioned methods they used to achieve their goal; participants who wanted to hide their tattoos also discussed how they were able to hide their tattoos. Overall, the study focused on the participants' reasons for their tattoos, influences and restrictions on their wedding dress choices, and the results of how they looked on their wedding days. The background information of the participants varied such as their age range, income level, religion, the number of tattoos, and the location of their tattoos. Participants discussed reasons for their tattoos and the influences that affected their wedding dress choices.

Results

Participants

Table 1 shows the number of participants per age range. Nine out of twelve participants were between the ages of 25 and 31. Two participants were between the ages of 18 and 24, and one participant was between ages 32 and 38. The first participant that was chosen through the snowball sampling was a University of Rhode Island Textile, Fashion Merchandising and Design graduate student. She provided the names of two of her friends who attended other schools, who then referred other

friends of theirs to be participants. This type of sampling explains why the most common age range of the participants was between ages 25 and 31. One of the younger participants is still in school, and the other is working a full time job. The oldest participant has completed graduate school and has a full time job.

Table 1

Age Range of Participant

Age Range of Participant	**Number of Participants**
18-24	2
25-31	9
32-38	1

Table 2 shows the number of participants per income level. Four of the twelve participants make under $14,999, and three make between $15,000 and $29,999. Of the seven participants who make under $30,000, most are still in school or are just starting out in the workforce, which explains the lower income level. The significance of the most common age range shows that the majority of participants are currently still enrolled in school, which helps to explain why the most common income level is below the poverty line. There is one participant who makes between $30,000 and $44,999, and another who makes between $45,000 and $59,999. These two participants have full time jobs and are aged between 25 and 31, and both have completed either a masters or doctoral degree. Three of the twelve participants make

between $60,000 and $74,000. Two of the three have completed more than twelve years of education and have full time jobs. The third participant has only completed high school, but works a full time job plus a part time job.

Table 2

Income Level of Participant

Income Level of Participant	Number of Participants
Under $14,999	4
$15,000-$29,999	3
$45,000-$59,999	1
$60,000-$74,999	3

Table 3 shows the religious affiliation of the participants. Six of the participants state that they are not religious. Of the remaining six, there is one participant for each of the following religions: Christian Orthodox, Christian not included elsewhere, Catholic, Catholic not practicing, Protestant, and Buddhist. The participant whose religion is Buddhism is a Cambodian American. Since her family is cultural and strongly religious, her wedding took place in Cambodia. She explained that in her tradition, the bride wears numerous solid-colored dresses throughout the ceremony and reception, but since she is a Cambodian American, she also got to wear a traditional American wedding dress. She was not married prior to her interview, but is now married. The data collected from her interview does not reflect the traditional Cambodian wedding dresses she chose, but only the traditional American wedding dress.

Table 3

Religion of Participant

Religion of Participant	Number of Participants
Buddhist	1
Catholic	1
Catholic, not practicing	1
Christian Orthodox	1
Christian, not included elsewhere	1
Protestant	1
No Religion	6

Table 4 shows a general description of each participant's tattoos, dress choice, and their intentional or unintentional choice to hide or show their tattoos on their wedding day. Column A has each of the twelve participants' names listed. Column B has the number of tattoos that each participant has and the number of those that are on public or private skin. Column C shows each participant's dress description that includes their choice of wedding dress look, neckline, elements, and dress silhouette. Column D lists the results or preferences for their tattoos being shown or hidden on their wedding day, which includes how many were hidden or shown, and if the result was intentional or unintentional. This data was collected from the pre-interview questionnaire, interview, and pictures they supplied. The twelve participants had a total of forty-two tattoos. Tattoos that have been covered up by another tattoo were only counted once, and tattoos that were done post-wedding were not counted in the total. The least amount of tattoos on each participant was one and the most was nine.

There were two participants with one tattoo, two with two tattoos, two with three tattoos, and two with four tattoos. One participant had five tattoos, one had eight tattoos, and one had nine tattoos. There were twenty-nine tattoos on private skin, and thirteen on public skin.

Table 4

General Description of Participants' Tattoos and Dress Choices

Name	Tattoo	Wedding Dress Choice*	Tattoo Results with Dress Choice
Bethany	1 tattoo: 1 public	Mixed Dress, Sheath Silhouette, High collar with capped lace sleeves, and studded belt.	Show 1, intentional.
Christine	3 tattoos: 3 private	Unconventional Dress, A-Line Silhouette, Strapless, Heart Shaped Cut, Full champagne-colored dress.	Show 1, unintentional; Hide 2, unintentional.
Debbie	4 tattoos: 3 private/ 1 public	Mixed Dress, Ballgown silhouette, Strapless, Heart Shaped Cut, High-Low hemline, Champagne details.	Hide 4, unintentional.
Hannah	2 tattoos: 2 private	Mixed Dress, Sheath Silhouette, Strapless, purple belt.	Show 1, intentional; Hide 1, unintentional.
Kayla	2 tattoos: 2 private	Traditional Dress, Strapless, Strapless, Heart Shaped Cut, Ballgown Silhouette.	Hide 2, intentional.
Kathleen	9 tattoos: 6 private/ 3 public	Traditional Dress, A-line Silhouette, Strapless, corset top.	4 Show, intentional; 5 Hide, intentional & unintentional.
Lanna	4 tattoos: 3 private/ 1 public	Traditional Dress, Sweetheart neckline, Lace Straps	1 Show, unintentional 3 Hide, intentional.
Madeline	4 tattoos: 2 private/ 2 public	Traditional Dress, sheer neck and sleeves, A-line Silhouette.	Prefers to show, dress not made yet.
Mallory	1 tattoo: 1 private	Mixed Dress, , A-Line Silhouette, Added Straps, added goldish-yellow medallions	1 Show, intentional.
Mindy	3 tattoos: 1 private/ 2 public	Mixed Dress, Ballgown Silhouette, Strapless, Heart Shaped Cut, high-low dress with pockets.	2 Show, intentional; 1 hide, unintentional.
Nadia	8 tattoos: 5 private/ 3 public	2 Traditional Dresses:1)Ballgown Silhouette, V-neck, sleeveless, knee-length; 2) Ballgown Silhouette, Heart Shaped Cut, added capped sleeves.	Short Dress: 7 Show, intentional; 1 hide, unintentional. Long Dress: 5 show, intentional; 3 hide, unintentional.
Rebecca	1 tattoo: 1 private	Traditional Dress, Empire Silhouette, V-neck with cap sleeves.	1 Hide, unintentional.

* The heart shaped cut, not to be confused with Weiss and Levine's "sweetheart neckline," describes the fabric on the front bodice where the fabric dips at the cleavage.

Table 5 shows the correlation of private and public tattoos compared to being hidden and visible on the brides' wedding days, which does not include Madeline and Nadia's results. Madeline's dress is not made yet because her wedding will be held in 2015. Nadia had two different wedding dresses because a portion of her wedding was held at a waterfall, thus there were different results when she wore the short dress and the long dress. The total number of her tattoos would be doubled if included with the other participants' results.

The table shows there are more private tattoos that were visible than public tattoos that were hidden. The difference in the numbers suggests that brides typically chose to show their tattoos when they had the chance and fewer brides hid their public tattoos. Nadia chose to show her tattoos while wearing both dresses. While wearing the short dress, Nadia had four private tattoos that were visible because two of her tattoos are on her leg and ankle, and the other two are on her back. When she wore the long dress, only two of her private tattoos were visible. All of her public tattoos were visible when she wore either of the two dresses.

Table 5

Private and Public Tattoos with Results with Results of Weddings

	Hidden	Visible
Private	17	5
Public	2	6

Brief Background of the Participants

The names of the participants have been changed.

Bethany is one of the younger brides. She is currently continuing her education in Fashion Design, which may explain why she chose to make her own wedding dress with the help of a friend.

Christine was married in March 2013 on a cruise ship. She has a steady job working in a hospital and just had a baby recently. She was about 5 months pregnant when we met for her interview in September 2013.

Debbie is an African American who graduated from the University of Rhode Island's Textiles, Fashion Merchandising and Design program in 2013. She had an internship at David's Bridal during spring semester of 2013. She was married during the summer of 2013, which was before her interview.

Hannah is the oldest participant. She is a veterinarian, and works with her husband in the same practice. They were married in her husband's parent's back yard during the summer of 2013, before the interview.

Kayla has been working full-time and part-time since she has graduated from high school. She helps her husband take care of mentally incapable adults. Her interview took place in August, and she was married in December 2013.

Kathleen has the most tattoos out of all the participants. She had two children with her husband before they were married; their wedding took place summer of 2013. She began working as soon as she graduated from high school.

Lanna is Cambodian American and one of the youngest participants. She is currently working full-time, after completing her undergraduate degree in vocational

technology. Her wedding took place in Cambodia in 2014, which was four months after her interview.

Madeline is studying Historic Textiles at the University of Rhode Island. She has chosen a wedding dress that she found in the Historic Textile and Costume Collection at the University of Rhode Island that is to be replicated by a dressmaker for her wedding that's planned to be held in 2015.

Mallory is also studying Historic Textiles at the University of Rhode Island. She had planned on making her own wedding dress originally, but came across a dress that she loved when she was visiting her hometown. She bought the dress ten months before her actual wedding that was held in 2013. She was married before the interview.

Mindy was the first participant for the snowball sampling. She had graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Textiles, Fashion Merchandising and Design from the University of Rhode Island and has a full-time job working in the fashion field. She was married during the summer of 2012, and had her wedding at two locations: a rented venue and on a beach.

Nadia had her wedding at a waterfall during summer of 2013 and had two wedding dresses. She has a passion for dinosaurs, which influenced her choice of tattoos. Her interview was conducted over the phone, due to distance, and she was the last participant.

Rebecca graduated from the University of Rhode Island with a Master's degree in Textiles, Fashion Merchandising and Design, and has a full-time job working with

textiles. Her 2013 October wedding was held at a historic textile mill in Rhode Island, which took place two months after the interview.

Discussion

Influences on Tattoos

The reasons given for why participants got tattoos varied. Themes included the location of their tattoos; self-expression and self-image; femininity, empowerment, and sexuality; rebellion or whims; religion; and friends and community connections. Some participants were open about their experience, while others were more reserved. Each category is relatable to the studies that were discussed in the review of literature, which suggests that the history and contemporary tattoos have similar influences.

Location of tattoo. The location of a tattoo is important for a person, especially when deciding to have it on public or private skin. As stated by Vail (1999), tattoos on public skin risk judgments by viewers, whereas, tattoos on private skin have the ability to be covered up from viewers. Having a tattoo in a location where it is easily hidden may be beneficial when applying for jobs. The participants explained their reasons for having a tattoo on private skin that included fear of stretching in the future, ability to cover or hide, and concern for future jobs. Mallory has one tattoo in the middle of her upper back. She explained, "I wanted it to be in a place that I could cover if I wanted to. I also wanted it to be in a place where it won't go through a lot of stretching as I get older." Similarly, Madeline explained her decision-making process for choosing the side of her lower back for her Hello Kitty tattoo. Madeline said, "I picked somewhere that I could hide, and that also when I wear a bathing suit, it would

be visible. I remember that was my logic." Debbie mentioned that she wanted her arms tattooed, but decided against it because tattoos are not fully acceptable in society, especially in certain work environments.

Many participants chose to have their tattoos on public skin. Mindy "pushed" her tattoo artist to tattoo her wrists because "he was really skeptical at first, being so close to the hands…" and he voiced his "concern of covering up tattoos for jobs." She opted to have it done on her wrist because "it wasn't really for anyone else," meaning that she wanted the tattoo for herself and didn't care what other people thought about the location of her tattoo. Contrary to Mindy's experience, Bethany said, "Everyone has loved [my tattoo], even when I thought they wouldn't, especially since it's on my hand." She has a small heart tattooed on her ring finger; her husband has a matching tattoo on his hand as well. They got the tattoos two years before they were married.

Friends, family, or future jobs have influenced the choice of location. These location-influenced tattoos were found mostly on private skin. People still judge tattoos that are on private skin, depending on the type of clothing worn or if the tattoos are intentionally shown. Rebecca chose to get a tattoo on her hip when she was twenty years old to hide it from her father. She explained, "I was concerned that my dad was going to freak out, so I tried to pick a place that he wouldn't see right away." After getting enough courage to tell him about her tattoo, he appreciated the tattoo because she "got something meaningful." Similarly, Kayla explained that her father was one of the reasons why she chose not to get tattoos on public skin. She said, "Both my sisters have tattoos, my dad just doesn't care because they're not in an obnoxious place, it's not like I have any on my face or hands or anything like that." Madeline,

however, had a different experience when she broke the news to her parents of her first tattoo, which was on her lower back. Out of her three other sisters, she is the only one who has tattoos. She recalled that her parents were "upset," and that "they might have said, 'we're sad that you did that,'" "but they got over it pretty soon." As stated previously by Woodstock (2011) and in agreement with the participants' comments, the location and design are important factors that people consider when choosing a tattoo.

Self-expression and self-image. As for tattoo designs and the participants' reasons to get them, self-expression and self-image were the most common re-occurring themes that were discussed in the interviews. While analyzing the participants' explanations, their personal choice of self-expression and self-image was found to relate to the ideas of cultural appropriation, symbolic connectivity, femininity and sexuality, and community connection. Self-expressive tattoos reflected tattoos that were also done as memory and family devotion tattoos.

Many participants' reasons for their tattoos are in agreement with DeMello's statement that tattoos related to the self and social expression (2003). Hannah explained the reasons why she chose her butterfly tattoos on her back were because she "wanted them to represent" herself, her life, and her "changes, and [she] just wanted something really pretty." She also explained, "It wasn't necessarily for anyone else to make comments about. It was mainly for me to have something really, a beautiful piece of art on my back." DeMello (2003) also found that tattoos are seen as artwork; Nadia described her full leg tattoo as her "pride and joy artwork." The self-expression aspect was described by Lanna, who chose cherry blossoms and butterflies

for her tattoos. She said, “I like cherry blossoms. It’s my favorite flower, so I got that.” She also said, “the other one [has] a bunch of butterflies that I’ll never regret. I just wanted to get that one because I was going through something tough [in my life]. I got [that tattoo] to kind of remind me.” Even though each participant had their own personal meanings behind why they chose their tattoos of butterflies and flowers, they are related as feminine connoted tattoo designs (Braunberger 2000).

Femininity, empowerment, and sexuality. Some participants did consider their tattoos to be feminine, a symbol of empowerment, or a representation of sexuality. Debbie has three butterfly tattoos; she says she “loves butterflies” and “guesses it’s kind of girly.” Nadia believed that, “a whole bunch of my tattoos right now are really feminine,” such as her vine and floral full-leg tattoo and the New York State flower tattoo on her ribs. She is proud of her leg tattoo because it gives her a feeling of empowerment, especially when many people made positive comments about the tattoo. Debbie and Rebecca see tattoos as an indicator of sexuality, which is in agreement with Orend and Gagne’s study (2009). Debbie said, “I’ve been trying to convince [my husband] to get one, I think it would look sexy.” She previously described her own personality as having a level of sexiness and considered that people with tattoos are “sexy.” Rebecca said that she’s “had some guys indicate that they found my tattoo sexy.” She also said that her husband “finds it sexy [when] he touches it in a way that’s like a part of me.” She did not mention that she personally thought her tattoo was sexy, but she made a connection between tattoos and sexuality. Femininity, empowerment, and levels of sexuality were reasons why people chose tattoos, where the designs were icons of empowerment or symbolized femininity.

Similar to the feminine tattoo design, Madeline also had cherry blossoms tattooed on her shoulder. She said she chose cherry blossoms because they were inspirational and connected to a memory, but then she "started noticing a lot of people had cherry blossoms." The popularity of a specific flower tattoo is not purely circumstantial according to McVeigh's study on social commodity and cultural appropriation (2000). Many people have similar tattoo designs because of the idea of cherry blossoms and the feminine flower symbol. Similar to this idea, Madeline also has a Hello Kitty tattoo that further suggests and agrees with McVeigh (2000) that iconic symbols connect an individual to a socio cultural movement. Each person may have their own personal reason for their tattoos, but tattoo designs reoccur because of cultural appropriation and symbolic meaning. Since Madeline wanted her cherry blossom tattoo to be different, she explained, "I got the silhouette from when I was five years old" added on to the existing tattoo "just because of a reminder of my childhood and never to really grow up, and just kind of always have a fun, carefree attitude." Her self-expressive tattoo brought back fond, which other participants also mentioned were reasons for their tattoos.

Nine participants chose to get a tattoo in memory of their past and/or for family devotion. Tattoos varied from being an icon, a phrase, to being simply a family member's name, which was also found as reasons for tattoos in Koch, Roberts, Armstrong, and Owens' study (2010). Pets were considered part of a family and were included in this category. Orend and Gagne's study (2009) found that reasons for tattoos communicated self-identity and group affiliation. Christine said that her sister and mother have the same tattoo as her, a shamrock, except they each have a different

verse of the Irish blessing so "it's like a family tattoo." Kathleen has her son's, daughter's, and husband's name tattooed on herself, which were all obtained prior to her wedding. Her passion for tattoos has influenced her children because she said, "my kids love it; they want tattoos." She also plans on getting another tattoo of an "infinity symbol that has faith on it" to symbolize her relationship with her husband. Five participants mentioned plans for future tattoos that reflect memories of their new-formed family after the wedding. By adding additional details or designs to a tattoo, it may transform the tattoo to become even more meaningful to the owner than the original design. Mallory said, "Whenever we have children, for each child we have, I want to have a leaf added to the tree." Mindy and her husband got "an owl sitting on a tree, the type of tree [they] got engaged under" as their "anniversary present to each other." Their wedding had an owl theme, which created a memory that also reflected their lives together. Even though a tattoo may be family influenced, the family members may not feel the same about their tattoos, which can be considered rebellious behavior.

Rebellion or whims. Sometimes reasons for tattoos may not originally have a deeper meaning, such as when people got tattoos because of rebellion or whims. Kosut (2006) and Adams (2009) both stated that tattoos are still relatable to rebellion and deviance. Sometimes there are two perspectives of rebellion; one being from the person taking action, and the other from viewing the action being done. Tattoos that were acquired without much thought or reason at all were considered done on a whim.

Tattoos that originated from the idea of rebellion can lead to later regrets. Debbie explained why she got her first tattoo. She said, "I was 16 and just going

against my mother and I have this teddy bear that my dad gave me, and I thought it was a good idea to get that right there, but now I regret it. One day I want to change it to a rose or something." Lanna explained, "My first one that I got was when I was 18; I was kind of going through like a rebellious stage and just wanted one. So I went to get it, and then after I just went to get more and then I ended up with about 3 or 4." Her first rebellious tattoo created the desire for more tattoos, and ironically, one of them says, "No Regrets." She chose that phrase because she believes in looking towards the future, and not having any regrets from her past.

The participant may not consider herself being rebellious, but she may appear to be rebellious in the eyes of the parents. For example, Kayla said, "My mom cried on my first tattoo, on my 18th birthday begging me not to go." Knowing that her mother did not want her to go but that she went anyways can be seen as rebellion, especially through the mother's point of view. However, from her perspective it may not have been rebellious. She may have just wanted a tattoo, and it did not matter what her mother thought.

Bethany and Madeline both explained that they got their tattoos "on a whim," and both said they have no regrets. As discussed before, Bethany chose to get a heart tattooed on her ring finger. She said, "It was kind of like on a whim, like in the moment, I wanted to get a tattoo." At the time she was a little scared to go through with having a tattoo that was connected to some one she wasn't married to yet. She explained, "This [tattoo] is small enough and simple enough that I knew I wouldn't regret it." Coincidentally, Madeline said the reason for one of her tattoos was also "on a whim." It was her boyfriend's name; he got her name tattooed as well. Eight years

later, they are engaged. Even though she got her tattoo "on a whim," she still feels connected to the tattoo choice and does not regret it. She also got a Hello Kitty tattoo and explained her reason as, "Initially because all my life, I love Hello Kitty." She was "in a rebellious phase and just really wanted to get a tattoo." She still has the same passion for Hello Kitty, so her rebellious tattoo is still meaningful to her.

Whether the reason for a tattoo was because of a rebellious stage or "on a whim," there were different outcomes and feelings towards the tattoos afterwards. Some tattoos were regretted later, but others grew to become special to that person and had a stronger meaning.

Religion. Some tattoos were a reflection of the participant's religion. Religious tattoos found by Horne, Knox, Zusman, and Zusman (2007) had biblical references. Kayla had the Japanese symbol for God tattooed on her torso, which relates to their study. Having the word God tattooed in any language shows devotion to beliefs and religion. Kayla's tattoo is also relatable to McVeigh's study of cultural appropriation and iconic symbolic reference (2012). Kayla said, "My first tattoo I got on my eighteenth birthday, it has Japanese symbols that say, 'Love, Life, Peace, God.'" Mindy felt the same way, so she also chose to get religious tattoos. She explained:

> I got my first tattoos on my wrists when I was eighteen, my eighteenth birthday present. At the time I was very religious and wanted to get something that meant a lot to me. So I looked to the Bible for my inspiration and there's actually one part of the Bible that said, 'they will write God's name on their hands and declare the name of Abraham as their own'. Basically like claiming yourself as part of the family, and so that was kind of the inspiration for [the tattoo]. So I got "Yahweh" or Jehovah written in Hebrew on my wrists. I am a Christian, but it's like the history of what I believed. So I originally got it written in white ink because I wanted it as a reminder for myself, like my hands were there to do good and do God's work.

Strong religious beliefs and passion for religion, such as Kayla's and Mindy's tattoos, are known to influence people's choice of tattoo. Many people who get religious tattoos can feel more connected with their beliefs and to God. The concept for some type of connection through a tattoo can also be found in non-religious tattoos.

Friends and community connections. Participants chose to get tattoos due to influence from friends or to create a connection to a community. Peer pressure can be a strong influence on many people. The ideas of others can also strongly influence a person's choice of tattoo. On a more positive note, tattoos have the possibility to be beneficial for a community that also has a special connection with a person. Symbols that relate to a group of people or to a community are often chosen as a tattoo design by multiple people to further show their devotion to the group, which also relates to McVeigh's study (2012).

Kayla succumbed to peer pressure when she "was going to get [her nose pierced] and then [she] had college friends talk [her] into getting a tattoo." She chose to get "five stars to start a piece of the sky and the ocean," but has not finished the whole tattoo design. A similar type of influence affected Mindy and her tattoo. "After years of people questioning" her white wrist tattoo, she got "annoyed and decided to just get them over in black" ink. She explained, "I suppose a tattoo is not as taboo as cutting yourself or burning yourself and having those scars."

Nadia chose to get a tattoo of a "stage screw, which was the representation of where [she] worked in college. It was [the company's] symbol, so a lot of people got that tattoo design after they had worked there." This community-influenced tattoo also reflected memories for Nadia. Another one of her tattoos was of a monkey that was

done for a charity. She explained that when she went to get her leg tattoo finished, the tattoo artist told Nadia about a fundraiser to benefit "monkeys in a sanctuary, illegal pets, and saving them." Supporting a good cause, such as this, may be influenced by a community or acquaintances, such as tattoo artists.

Tattoos are relatable to connection with friends or communities by the manner in which they are achieved. Peer pressure and strong opinions of others can influence a person's choice of tattoo, and promotes a level of connectivity. Friends and community influences were discussed as less important reasons for the participants' tattoos compared to the other influences that were listed.

Restrictions and Influences on Wedding Dress Choices

Brides face restrictions and influences when choosing their wedding dresses. Restrictions on wedding dress choice found from this study include location of wedding, comfort level, budget, color preference, and personal body type. Influences on the participants' dress choice were found to be from family and friends, personal ideas and self-image, femininity and sexuality, and outside sources. Brides may face more than one restriction or influence. The varied possibilities of these restrictions and influences differ for each of the brides' experiences.

Location of wedding. The location of a wedding is an important factor for a bride, whether or not she is religious. Even though half of the participants stated that they were religious, no weddings took place in a church. For these twelve tattooed brides, a traditional church wedding appeared to be undesirable. Only one bride, the Cambodian American, mentioned that she felt the need to cover up her tattoos or wear

a specific style wedding dress because of religion. Lanna's wedding was highly influenced by her family, culture, and religion; she felt the need to hide her tattoos. These factors also affected the location of her wedding.

The wedding dress style a bride chooses may have been influenced by the location of the wedding, such as the manner of her ceremony or the overall wedding look the bride preferred to have. Six brides chose to have their wedding at a rented venue, and one of these brides, Mindy, had another part of her wedding on a beach. Madeline, who is not married yet, said her preference is either at a rented venue or at a beach. Debbie had her wedding on a beach during the summer of 2013. Many brides chose to have their weddings at alternative locations, such as at a waterfall, or on a cruise ship, at a farm, on a beach, or in a backyard. Nadia's wedding dress style was affected by the location of the wedding, which was held at a waterfall. She explained, "ever since I was a little girl, I wanted to get married in a waterfall and I found the right guy who thought that was an awesome idea. The waterfall connected us to nature." She specifically chose a dress that was shorter length and was made out of a certain material that would not be too heavy or see-through when wet. Nadia said, "With the shorter dress, I was just looking for something that I wouldn't mind swimming it [*sic*] into the water, so I wouldn't mind if I got it wet, but I also just wanted it to have the same feel to it, where you know, it was an outdoor wedding." Since she planned on getting the first dress wet during the ceremony, she purchased another dress that she could wear for the reception, which was a long traditional dress. Nadia found that the availability of short dresses was limited. She said that "the place [she went dress shopping] didn't have very many short dresses because wedding

dresses don't usually come short." Nadia Full-length dresses are more popular than short dresses, thus there is a larger selection to choose from. Christine had her wedding on a cruise ship. The cruise ship had other passengers on the ship during her wedding, which may not be ideal for most brides since strangers are present as well. Bethany, who was married on a friend's farm had a less formal event. She said that they "didn't have anyone wear suits or tuxedos," and she wore a wedding dress that she designed that was "classy and timeless, and something I was comfortable in." Mindy chose to have her wedding at a beach because she wanted to "piggy back off of my family's annual Fourth of July party." Hannah's wedding was located in the groom's parent's backyard. She felt that having a backyard wedding made it an intimate event with family and close friends. She said, "I was looking for something low-key, inexpensive, because we were having a backyard barbecue wedding. It wasn't something religious or church oriented, or anything like that."

Tattooed brides in this study appeared to have no interest in getting married in a church. Instead, they chose alternative locations that were perhaps associated with their lifestyles. The location of a wedding is an important factor and can affect the wedding dress choice of tattooed brides.

Comfort level. The level of comfort while wearing the dress was another theme that reoccurred throughout the interviews. Eight of the twelve brides mentioned that the level of comfort was an important consideration during the wedding dress selection process. Debbie mentioned that when she was trying on dresses, she wanted the mermaid silhouette, but it was "not going to be comfortable for me to dance in." She said, "I picked my dress because I had all that leg room to just act a fool." She

ended up with a ball-gown silhouette with a high-low hemline that allowed more movement than a mermaid silhouette. Lanna's Cambodian wedding took place over an entire day, during which she wore multiple Cambodian dresses. The traditional American wedding dress was the last ensemble for the evening. When I asked Lanna about her dress decision process for the traditional American wedding dress, she said, "I think mostly the comfortable part is a big factor for me, since it's at the end of the day for the wedding, so I don't want to be in anything that's going to disable me to breathe." Some brides, such as Kathleen, may choose a dress that is not comfortable, but is desired for its "wow factor." Kathleen chose a dress that had an "itchy material," tulle, on the bottom layer of the dress. Tulle is not comfortable when it touches the skin and can be irritating, but is commonly used to give dresses more fullness and dimension.

Budget. Having a tight budget may affect the wedding dress choice, or what is available to purchase at a wedding dress store. Four brides responded that they paid for their wedding dresses themselves, while one bride partially paid for the dress with the help of her family. Six other brides' families or families-in-law helped to pay for the dresses, and one bride's best friend and father paid for her dress. Four participants' budgets were less than $899, and four other's budget was between $900 and $999. Two participants indicated their budget was $1,000 to $1,999, one participant wrote $2,000 to $2,999 as her budget, and one participant, Madeline, is still undecided about her budget for the wedding dress. These results agree with what the 2011 Wedding Report stated as an average wedding dress cost, from $875 to $1458. Of the twelve participants, three dresses were bought at David's Bridal, one from J. Crew, three from

a local bridal store, two were purchased online, one is expected to be made by a dressmaker, and one was self-made dress with the help of a friend.

Mallory, Mindy, and Nadia found wedding dresses that were on sale, which helped them stay within their budget. Mallory said her dress "was fifty percent off because it was a discontinued dress, so that was a good incentive. It was a really good price." A discontinued dress is no longer in production and is the last inventory of that particular style because the style was available in a previous season. These dresses are typically less desirable for brides with high budgets because it is not a new style that is in the current trend. Mindy had a similar experience. At the time, Mallory was not looking for a dress because she planned on making it herself, but still wanted to partake in the tradition of looking at dresses with her mother. She found a dress that she really liked, but the store did not have it in her size. She looked online for the same dress, and "it was only $250, so it was a really great find. It was the last of the style, they were discontinuing it after that." She found the same dress online and purchase it for a lot less than what the store marked for the price, which convinced her to purchase the dress instead of making her own. She explained, "I just felt that it would cost so much money to try and do it that way to make it myself, still you got to buy the nice silks and you know." Not every bride has such a lucky wedding dress shopping experience.

Unfortunately, sometimes when people find the perfect dress, they realize it is out of their budget, like Kathleen's experience. When I asked her what her dress shopping experience was like, she said, "we paid for the wedding ourselves, so I was on a real tight budget. There was one dress that I fell in love with, it was a wedding

dress, and then you take it apart and it came out as a cocktail dress, but it was out of my budget, that was actually my whole budget." It's quite heartbreaking for a bride to find a dress she loves that is out of her budget. In the reality television show, "Say Yes to the Dress," bridal consultants expressed the importance that brides should not shop for wedding dresses that are out of their budget (Kleinfeld Bridal 2014). It is a popular culture show, but does reflect some sentiments of today's brides. In the show, many brides have affluent and generous parents who offer to pay the difference or for the entire cost of the dress in order for the brides to have their dream wedding dress. Nadia had a wedding dress budget that she needed to stay within to buy two dresses. She found her reception dress at a store and looked online for the ceremony dress that was to be worn in the waterfall. As Nadia found, short dresses have limited availability in stores. She said, "with the shorter dress, I was just looking for something that was a little more affordable;" she looked online and searched for "up-cycled wedding dresses, to see what came up through Etsy.com." Buying a used wedding dress can be cheaper than buying a new wedding dress, which she did not mind since she had purchased another dress that was new. Her parents ended up helping to pay for her dresses.

Color Preference. Other restrictions may include color preference when buying a wedding dress. Rebecca originally wanted a colored wedding dress, which is considered unconventional so there is limited availability in stores. She described her experience of dress shopping in detail and explained why she ended up with a full-white dress instead. Rebecca explained:

> They were all white or crème or ivory, except for one I really wished had been in a yellow or a color like that. I tried it on, [but] they didn't

> have a yellow. I tried it on in a dark purple, which was pretty, and I was originally thinking about getting a colored dress, not a white dress, but I just couldn't find something that I really liked. I either wanted something like a really deep teal, blue, or a really light yellow, so it was kind of like neither colors [were] particularly popular right now, so I went with white.

Rebecca's preference for a colored wedding dress proved to be too difficult to find, so she ended up with a traditional white American wedding dress. Similar to Rebecca's color restriction, Christine said, "I did try on some white traditional dresses, but since I'm so pale, it kind of just washes me out." Her skin tone restricted her wedding dress color preference. Choosing a non-white dress may limit the choices of dresses available because unconventional dresses are harder to find, especially in stores. Some designers do offer traditional dresses in different shades of white and limited colors, which is how Christine was able to wear a champagne colored wedding dress.

Personal body type restriction. Another common restriction among the interviewed brides was their personal body type. Six of the brides mentioned that they were self-conscious about their body type, which restricted them from choosing certain types of dresses. Body-type restrictions that were mentioned included hips, body shape, height, and shoulders. Mallory said, "I wanted to have a really tiny waist and not have to deal with my hips," which resulted in her only looking for an A-line styled dress to suit her preference. She also explained, "I'm not a big fan of strapless, I don't think strapless looks very good on me, and most dresses are strapless now." Her body type and personal preference restricted her dress preference to be a strapped or sleeved A-line dress. Her experience of wedding dress shopping suggests that the majority of wedding dresses available in stores are mainly strapless. To solve this restriction, she chose a strapless A-line dress that was too long and needed to be

hemmed. She used that excess material to add straps to the strapless dress. Similar to Mallory's experience, Nadia said, "I don't really like my shoulders, " so "I ended up adding sleeves, like tiny little cap sleeves." In addition to shoulders being a target area of self-consciousness, a person's body shape may restrict a bride's wedding dress choice. Mindy said, "I feel like I have a boxy frame, like an H-shape. I didn't know what style really looked that great on me either." Having a boxy frame, or any other specific body type will limit the available styles that will flatter the body. Height, or lack thereof, can also be another body-type restriction when looking for a wedding dress. Kathleen explained that when she was trying on dresses, her shortness limited the dresses that were available to her. She said, "I did try one on, it was all ruffle, it didn't look right on me because I'm short." Having too many ruffles on a dress may make a short person appear even shorter due to the excess amount of fabric. A shorter person may also need to hem a wedding dress to match her own height.

Personal preference. Debbie was also restricted by her personal preference, but not because of self-consciousness. She specifically wanted a wedding dress that allowed her "legs to show," a look she was able to achieve with a high-low dress. If a bride wants to show a certain part of her body, the number of available dresses to choose from will be restricted. There will be limited pre-made wedding dress styles that will allow a bride to show off her legs, such as ballerina or high-low. A bride may choose to have a dress altered and hemmed so that her legs can show, but that would require her to spend more money. When Nadia was looking for her short wedding dress, she said, "I'm not going to buy a two thousand dollar dress to cut half of it off, just so I can have a [shorter] dress with pockets, seems a little silly." This would also

impact her budget because in addition to paying full price for a long dress, she would also have to pay an additional charge to have it hemmed.

Family and friends. Many brides mentioned that their family and friends influenced their wedding dress decisions. Hannah went dress shopping with her younger sister, and the dress her sister "made [her] try on" was the one that they both "fell in love with." Her sister was the one who found the perfect dress for Hannah. The bride also thought "it was more appropriate to cover more with [her husband's] grandparents there." Originally she wanted a knee-length dress, but she specifically chose a long dress to look more conservative because her husband's grandparents would be there. The sister and the husband's grandparents influenced Hannah's wedding dress choice. Mindy said her family was very involved in the dress choosing process. Her mother and sister were with her while dress shopping. She said, "Throughout the whole thing, it's kind of an emotional process. [You] find things that don't look good, and you're just like, 'Oh my God', you just feel so down on yourself when you don't find the right thing." It's very important for a bride to have people who are supportive during this emotional process. Christine's mom, sister, mother in law, and sister in law accompanied her to shop for the dress. She said, "they had the same reaction I did, they loved it as soon as I put [the dress] on, it felt right, and [I] didn't really feel the need to try on anymore after that." Sometimes when a bride finds the perfect dress and the people close to her approve of the dress, it gives the bride a feeling of fulfillment and she no longer feels the need to try on other dresses.

Unfortunately, not every bride has the same experience when shopping for a dress. Kayla looked at "four other places" before finding her dress at a local bridal

boutique. She said, “I didn’t know what would look best on me, I tried on a bunch of different dresses and different styles,” but luckily “right before I was going to leave, she pulled out a dress that was a mixture of everything that would fit my body type and the color I was looking for.” She ended up with an ivory-colored, strapless, ballgown-styled wedding dress.

Dress shopping can be a stressful experience for the bride, especially when people disagree with the bride’s dress choice and impose their personal dress choices on the bride. Nadia’s sister, mother, and close friends were with her when she chose a dress, which made the experience more difficult. Nadia explained, “my sister kept going on,” “she was like, ‘we can have a little themed wedding of the 1940s,’ and I was like, ‘no, I don’t want that.’” She explained that she argued with her sister many times that she did not want a 1940s themed wedding. Her friends were also there when she was dress shopping, and when she tried one on “everybody was obsessing over how like, ‘oh Nadia, it’s like totally 1940s you’ and [she responded], ‘I’m not like that most of the time.’” Nadia sounded aggravated when she was referring back to this experience during the interview. It is good to have friends to support you when choosing a dress. However, they may try to force their ideal dress choice upon the bride. Even though the people who accompanied her on her dress shopping kept on pressuring her towards a certain styled dress, she stood her ground and chose a dress that she actually wanted.

Personal ideals and self-image. The most common influence on wedding dress choice cited by the brides was their personal ideals and expressions of self-image. Personality is part of self-image, which was a common theme; brides said they wanted

their dress choice to match their personalities. Bethany, the bride who made her dress, said that she made a sash that "was made out of studs" because it was "something that fits my personality." She chose to add a non-traditional sash to her wedding dress, which made her dress have a mixed look. This helped add personality to her dress, and made it unique. Hannah also added a colored sash to her white wedding dress to create a mixed look. The dress she chose originally "came with a cream sash, but [she] chose a purple sash." Adding colored elements not only makes the dress have a mixed look, but it allows people to transform their dress to have more of their own personality. Mindy said, "I feel that my personality is really kind of quirky, and fun so I mean I'm trying on a bunch of really elegant, serious dresses didn't really suit what I was looking for." She found a high-low dress that had pockets, and a white belt that had a flower on it. Madeline, the bride who is not married yet, believes that "it would be cool to remake a vintage dress so that you're not entirely tied to the previous owner, but it still has that reference." She believes that if you wear an un-altered, previously worn wedding dress, then it's too impersonal to the second bride and is only really meaningful for the first bride who wore the dress. Altering or copying the pattern of a previously worn wedding dress allows the new bride to have her own personal dress. Kayla mentioned self-image preservation in photos was important for her. She was going to get another tattoo before the wedding, but decided to wait until after the wedding. Kayla explained:

> I want to wait until after the wedding, just because, like the way I envision myself. I wouldn't first of all be able to finish in time, but I want to envision myself not having that. I want to look back and show my children and grandchildren, like this is the way I look. It's not like I'd be embarrassed of it, but it's just not the way I want to keep that clean kind of beauty. I don't know if [a visible tattoo] would detract

> from it, but I would feel more comfortable having it done after the wedding, like for pictures and everything like that. Because [the wedding is] something that's going to be… it's like a major event in your life. It's not like I want to have that if I regret it… you know I might regret the tattoo when I'm 50, but I can look back at the picture and show everybody like this is like who I am, kind of thing.

Self-image is important to many brides, especially Kayla, whose ideal self-image on her wedding day is to be pure and appear tattoo-less. During a follow-up email, she mentioned that she got a tattoo on her forearm after the wedding. The purity ideal was once customary among traditional brides. More recent standards of what brides should look like arose from popular culture, such as the Disney Princesses (Gualtieri, 2012).

Nadia desired the princess look, so she tried on a traditional white ballgown-style dress. She said, "When I put the big dress on, I just really liked it, and I put it on and then I was like, 'this is the one'. I felt like a fairy princess in it, and I just really wanted it." The image of looking like a princess may be ideal for some brides, such as Nadia, but four of the brides said that they wanted the opposite. Rebecca said, "I've never been into the whole princess ideal, anything like that, it actually kind of frustrates me to be honest." She said, "I wanted something very simple but elegant and expressed me more than some idea of a bride out there. So I have something that looks more historic looking, rather, it's not very modern." Similar to this feeling, Kathleen said, "I tried one on that the girls wanted me to try on, it was like a Cinderella dress, and I hated it, it was horrible." Instead she chose a corset top, A-line wedding dress that had a "lace theme" because she "likes vintage more."

Femininity and sexuality. Femininity and sexuality are themes that reoccurred throughout the interviews. A bride may desire to appear sexy on her wedding day; however, her guests will pass judgment on the level of sexiness. Finding the right

balance that avoids a scandal depends on personal taste. Debbie said, “I wanted something sexy, I was like, ‘it has to be sexy.’” She then later reiterated, “I wanted something really sexy that was me.” A high-low strapless dress was the perfect choice for Debbie. Nadia described the dress she chose, “It was definitely something like me; sexy, feminine, a little vintage looking, and definitely me.” She saw her personality to be sexy and feminine, so she chose a dress that combined the two to show off the style that related to her personality.

A bride, however, may choose not to look sexy on her wedding day, especially if she wants a pure look. Kayla said, “I don’t want to look sexy. I want a timeless beauty look.” Kayla does not convey any level of sexiness in her appearance, and wants to look classic and pure. Bethany was anti-feminine when she described the wedding dress she made, saying that her dress was “nothing really too like girly.” By adding a studded belt, she transformed the dress to look less feminine, add personality, and add a punk touch.

The level of femininity and sexuality are important factors that brides consider when they are choosing their dress. Some brides desire feminine or “sexy” dresses, while others prefer a modest, less “girly” appearance.

Outside sources In addition to the influences and restrictions already mentioned, brides turned to outside sources for help choosing their wedding dresses. Kathleen said, “honestly my decision making process was asking the consultant what they thought because I didn’t know what would look best on me.” Experienced bridal consultants may be a good source because they help brides pick a dress on a daily basis. Mindy said she looked online at “The Knot” website, and her sister bought her

"The Knot" book (Roney 2012) to help with wedding planning. "It had standards when things needed to be done, and thought about." Books and magazines can be useful to help plan for a wedding and give ideas for wedding dress styles. Other brides mentioned that they looked on "Google," "Etsy," "Pinterest," and "Off Beat Bride" for wedding dress inspirations. Online browsing may help inspire a bride's wedding dress choice. Madeline found her dress inspiration from the Historic Textile and Costume Collection at the University of Rhode Island. She said, "choosing the dress was kind of a shock when I found it because we were looking for candidates for an exhibition in the collections and it kind of just struck me as a perfect dress." She further explained, "It's important for me to refer back to my time at the University of Rhode Island because I think that was a really important part of my life."

Even though all of the participants had different reasons for their tattoos and varying influences and restrictions were found from the interviews, many themes reoccurred for both tattoo reasons and wedding dress choices. Many brides believed self-expression and self-image were the most important reasons for their tattoos and the most influential factors for choosing their dress. The study suggests there are multiple connections between tattoos and wedding dress choice, such as that a tattoo creates an additional influence or pressure on a bride.

Wedding Dress Choices of Tattooed Brides

An important factor a tattooed bride must face is whether she wants to hide or show her tattoos on her wedding day. By interviewing twelve brides that have from one to nine tattoos, varied results were observed. The results fit the following

categories: intentionally hid, intentionally showed, unintentionally hid, and unintentionally showed. The brides who have more than one tattoo have chosen multiple responses. Bethany and Mallory were the only brides who had just one tattoo. They each had one response; Bethany intentionally showed her tattoo, and Mallory unintentionally hid. The reasons and methods used to achieve the brides' choices to intentionally hide or show their tattoos are described below. Madeline's preferences are included in the discussion, but are not counted in the tallied results of each category because she is still engaged, not married yet, and hasn't finalized her dress choice. The tallied numbers of each category are the final results from weddings that have already taken place. Since Nadia had two wedding dresses, her results are also not included in the tallies to avoid the confusion of her tattoos being counted twice, but they are included in the discussion.

Tattoos that brides preferred to have hidden were categorized as "intentionally hid," even though the wedding dress naturally covered the tattoos on private skin. Even if brides stated that they preferred to show their tattoos, the context of their explanation was used to distinguish which category was most fitting, intentionally showed or unintentionally showed. To clarify, if a bride preferred to show her tattoos, but said that she chose a dress because of its specific style and not because her tattoo showed, it would be considered "unintentionally showed."

Intentionally hid. The brides who intentionally hid at least one tattoo were Kayla, Kathleen, and Lanna. A total of six tattoos were intentionally hidden. Kayla preferred not to have any tattoos showing because she wanted a pure look. When she tried on a few dresses, "you could see part of my tattoo on the side, and it didn't look

flattering," so she chose a dress that "covered it up perfectly." She intentionally hid all of her tattoos on her wedding day. Kathleen wore a bracelet on the wrist of the tattoo that she was "not too fond of because it came out kind of crappy." While the jewelry was a temporary fix, she said in the future, she will cover it up with another tattoo. Lanna intentionally hid her tattoos; she said, "Just because my family is very traditional. I think that they [would go] crazy if I did [show them]." Her method to achieve this was by wearing a dress that is, "full, long, covers most of the skin."

Intentionally showed. The brides who intentionally showed their tattoos were Mallory, Mindy, Kathleen, Bethany, Nadia, and Madeline. Six tattoos were intentionally visible. Madeline, who is engaged but not yet married, said that she does not want to hide them, but she does not "want them to be the center of attention." She said that the dress will have "little sheer sleeves," to draw less attention to her shoulder and upper arm tattoo. Nadia intentionally showed the tattoos that are on her shoulder, back, arms, ankle and legs when she wore the short wedding dress. She intentionally showed the tattoos that are on her shoulder, back, and arms when she wore the long traditional dress. Nadia said she picked the dress for her reception because her back tattoo was visible. She also said, "when I was getting the sleeves put on for the long dress, I didn't want them to cover my shoulder tattoo, and that was definitely accomplished." She explained, "I definitely wanted to show off my leg tattoo, so that I shortened it." By shortening a dress that is mid-calf, she was able to show off more of her leg tattoo. She said, "I had some barefoot jewelry, and I made sure that it was a little more minimal than some of the bigger barefoot jewelry… I just wanted a little bit of sparkle on my feet so you could still see the entire tattoo on my

foot as well" (see figure 3). Knowing that her tattoos would be on display, she said, "I actually had to go and get the one on my shoulder finished." She said, "these are going to be in pictures and this needs to get done. I needed it to be in all the pictures and I needed it to look beautiful, and not unfinished."

Figure 3

Nadia's Leg and Foot Tattoo

Photographs are an important component of a bride's wedding; some brides may choose to touch up or fix their tattoos, or even cover up existing tattoos with new tattoos. The longevity of the photographs are important to brides because generations later, people will look at the wedding photos. Similar to Nadia, Mindy had added more to her wrist tattoo. She explained:

> So for my wedding I wanted to disguise it, a little bit. I didn't want it to be so pronounced, but I still didn't want to cover it up either because it's still my past. It's something that I feel strongly about. So on my left hand, where my wedding ring would be, I knew that would be in a lot of pictures at my wedding; so I decided to come up with a design. It's kind of like vintage floral aesthetic vines and things like that, just kind of disguising the lettering and I really like it. That's kind of where that came from. I don't have anything planned for my other hand yet, but people don't really notice it. Fortunately, it is still pretty small. People notice the bigger one on my left hand first so it's nice.

When Mindy added more design to her existing tattoo, it helped to disguise the original tattoo, but also made the tattoo more apparent due to its larger size (see figure 4 and figure 5).

Another way to accentuate tattoos is by using fabric to highlight or focus on an area of the body. When Mallory added straps to her dress (see figure 6), "it did kind of a V-shape which really highlighted my tattoo because it framed it really nice." To not hide her back tattoo, Mallory said, "I also had a birdcage veil because I knew that I didn't want to have a long veil that would go over my tattoo."

Figure 4

Mindy's Before Wrist Tattoo

Figure 5

Mindy's After Wrist Tattoo

(Annyshka's Photography 2012)

Figure 6

Mallory and Her Bridesmaids

Bethany specifically wore her wedding ring on her right hand so that her tattoo was still visible. Kathleen said, “I know I wanted a strapless [dress], I know I wanted a corset so you could actually see the stars on my back.” She strategically chose a corset styled top to show off her “matching” tattoo; she and her best friend got matching, star-designed tattoos together (see figure 7). She said, “I like the [tattoo] on my foot, so I had to show it…” and also chose a specific styled shoes “because the tattoo looks really cute with the shoes” (see figure 8). Kathleen was able to find shoes that complemented her foot tattoo. She felt passionate about her tattoos and intentionally showed them even though, she said, “some people didn’t want me to show [them], like my mom, she just hates tattoos.”

Figure 7

Kathleen's Matching Tattoo

(ELC Photography 2013, Kathleen on right)

Figure 8

Kathleen's Foot Tattoo With Shoes

Unintentionally hid. The brides who unintentionally hid their tattoos, a total of nineteen, were Hannah, Debbie, Christine, Rebecca, Mindy, Kathleen, Nadia, and Madeline. Madeline will most likely unintentionally hide her lower back tattoo. Nadia unintentionally hid one with her ceremony dress, and three with her reception dress. As stated before, Debbie unintentionally hid her neck and shoulder tattoos when she wore her hair down. She said, "I didn't care about hiding them. My hair hid them though because they're so small" (see figure 9 and figure 10). Her abdomen tattoo was covered by the dress. Nadia's leg tattoo was hidden when she wore her reception dress, and she explained that, "it's just the nature of a long dress." She also said that she "did not hide any of them, but naturally a lot of them got hidden because some of them are just where clothing has to be," such as her rib tattoo. Many tattoos were unintentionally hidden due to the style of the dress, such as tattoos on Hannah's hip, Christine's lower back, Kathleen's hip, lower back, and ankle, Mindy's rib tattoo, and Rebecca's hip tattoo.

Figure 9

Debbie's Neck Tattoo

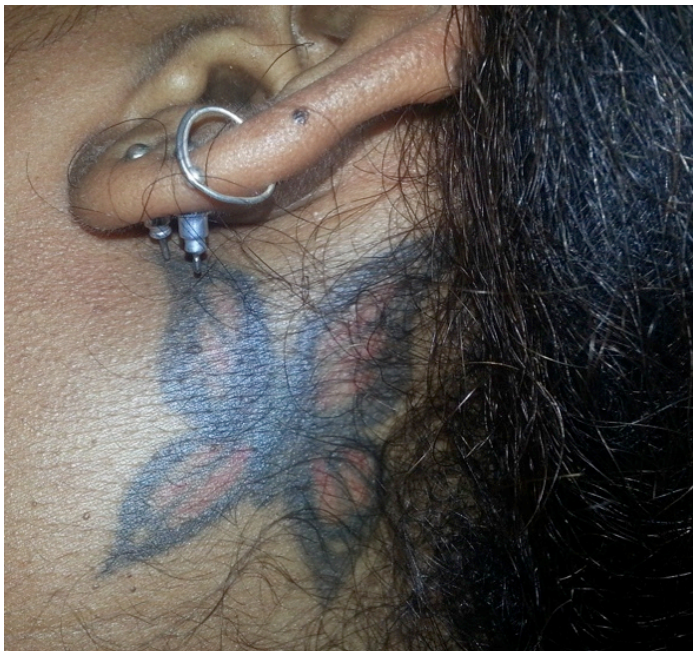


Figure 10

Debbie's Hidden Tattoos

Unintentionally showed. The brides who unintentionally showed their tattoos were Kathleen, Christine and Hannah. Four tattoos were unintentionally visible. Two of Madeline's tattoos, wrist and foot tattoo, will most likely be unintentionally shown because she did not specify if they would be intentionally hidden or if she has a method to show them. She did say that she preferred to show her tattoos in general; they would be unintentionally visible with a tea-length dress. Kathleen wore her hair half up, and the tattoo behind her ear was unintentionally visible. She did not consider her tattoo when she chose the hairstyle for her wedding. Christine has a tattoo on her foot that was visible on her wedding day. She said, "I didn't really care either way, it's just kind of the way it worked out. If I had gone with a short dress, [the ankle tattoo] would have shown, which would have been fine with me too." Her responses suggest that some brides may be indifferent to either hide or show a tattoo on the wedding day. Similarly, Hannah said, "I didn't necessarily choose the dress because of the tattoos, nor did I choose obviously to hide the tattoos, I didn't want them to hide. But yeah, I just found the dress, I liked the dress, and everything just kind of flowed and fit." Even though she wanted her back tattoo to be seen, she did not choose the dress for that reason, which is why her back tattoo is classified as unintentionally showed. As seen in figure 11, Hannah's mixed-look dress had a purple belt that accentuated her back tattoo and added a personal touch. Some brides may have a preference to hide their tattoos, but may not take action on their choice. Lanna preferred to hide all of her tattoos, but did not use a method to hide her tattoo. Her finger tattoo was unintentionally visible during her wedding. Since her finger tattoo was obtained with

purple ink rather than with black ink, she did not feel the need to take any action to hide since it "doesn't really even look like a tattoo… and it is small."

The results and discussion of this study suggest that some brides considered their tattoos to be a factor when they selected their wedding dresses. A tattooed bride may have a more difficult decision-making process when choosing her dress than a bride without tattoos. The history and reasons for tattoos along with external influences have been found to affect brides' decisions to hide or show their tattoos. In addition to the tattoos, brides also faced many internal and external influences on the wedding dress choices. Some brides had easier experiences than others when they shopped for their dresses. In reaching their decision to hide or show, there were previously mentioned restrictions that limited the availability of dress choices. The varied methods used to intentionally hide or intentionally show tattoos may benefit future tattooed brides who will face the same dilemma. Since society is becoming more accepting of tattoos and the majority of the participants chose to show their public skin tattoos, then having a visible tattoo on a bride's wedding day is no longer considered scandalous. The results of this study suggest that tattoos are an influential factor when choosing a wedding dress, but are not as important as they were when society associated them with "freakish" or rebellious people.

Figure 11

Hannah's Back Tattoo

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This qualitative study focused on tattooed brides' purchase intentions of their wedding dresses using Flynn and Foster's grounded-theory approach (2009). Pre-interview questionnaires and interviews were used as the method of data collection. Data collection took place between May 2013 and November 2013. The participants were recruited through snowball sampling. Potential participants were sent an initial email to determine if they qualified for the requirements of being American, tattooed, and married or engaged within the past eighteen months. Transcripts of the interviews were transcribed and coded according to Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw's coding and memoing (1995).

The average age and income of the participants reflected typical college students who make less than $15,000 in annual income. The most common age range was between twenty-five and thirty-one, which is in agreement with the U.S. Census age of first marriage. There were a total of forty-two tattoos among the twelve participants, with twenty-nine of them on private skin, and thirteen on public skin. Their influence and reasons for tattoos were categorized as follows: Location; self-expression and self-image; memory and family devotion; rebellion and whims; religion; femininity, empowerment, and sexuality; religion; and friends and community connection. Designs of tattoos were strongly influenced by cultural appropriation and symbolic references. Restrictions for wedding dress choices

included location of wedding, level of comfort, budget level, color preference, body type, or personal preference. The reasons for participants choosing their tattoos were similar to their reasons for selecting wedding locations and dress styles. Influences for their wedding dress choices were categorized into the following: family and friends; personal ideals and expression of self-image; femininity and sexuality, and outside sources (e.g. multi-media).

This study found that contemporary brides chose wedding locations in alternative sites rather than in a traditional church. Weddings were held at a farm, at a waterfall, on a cruise ship, on a beach, in a backyard, and at various rented venues. Wedding dress choices were influenced by the locations of the weddings; for example, the participant who was married in the waterfall had two wedding dresses. She specifically chose a short wedding dress to wear during the ceremony in the waterfall, and a traditional long wedding dress for the reception.

More brides intentionally showed their tattoos than those who intentionally hid them; five private skin tattoos were visible and two public skin tattoos were hidden. Brides said that the nature of the dress resulted in unintentionally hiding some of their tattoos. Seventeen out of twenty-two private skin tattoos were hidden. Six out of the eight public skin tattoos were visible. Two of the public skin tattoos were hidden because of family influence and self-image. During the participants' weddings, private skin tattoos were generally hidden tattoos unless the bride purposefully used a method to show them, and public skin tattoos were mostly visible except for those who chose to hide them. The highest number of tattoos that were visible at one wedding was five, and six was the highest number of tattoos that were hidden at another wedding.

Brides who wanted to show their tattoos on their wedding day had different methods to achieve their bridal look. Methods ranged from adding straps to accentuate their tattoos, choosing specific shoes that complement the tattoos, shortening dresses to show more of the leg tattoos, adding jewelry to accentuate the tattoos, choosing particular dress styles to expose their tattoos, and touching up or adding more details to their original tattoos. Brides who wanted to hide their tattoos on their wedding day used only two methods, which included wearing a bracelet to cover a tattoo and choosing specific dress styles to hide their tattoos. Reasons for hiding tattoos included family influence and regretful tattoos.

Results from this research suggest that tattoos may not be a problem to brides anymore. The debate about whether tattoos are considered acceptable in society may no longer be relevant. Some brides do not consider their tattoos an important factor when choosing their wedding dresses. There was no apparent correlation between a bride's religion and having a church wedding. This observation implies that tattooed brides may have alternative lifestyles, resulting their wedding locations to be in alternative places.

A suggestion for further study would be to use a larger sample, perhaps from a different region than southern New England. Requiring that a study participant must have at least one public skin tattoo may help gather more relevant data. Data from the South may be different, where their expectations or wedding ideals may be more conservative than Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Weather may be a factor that can affect locations of weddings, or even the styles of wedding dresses. Hot or cold temperatures may influence a bride to choose a dress made out of a specific material.

A different age range could also be targeted, which may create different results. A broader age range may result in brides who have a larger income or budget for their wedding dresses, which will ultimately affect the availability of dresses that meet their high budgets. Studying a higher age range may be beneficial to include brides who are on their second marriage. The wedding dress choices may differ from a first-time bride. Future studies can also incorporate other culture traditions, instead of limiting the study to focus only on Americans. Other traditions may have various customs, requirements, and expectations for wedding attires.

A similar study could be done that focuses on the participant's education level, with their tattoos and wedding dress purchase intentions. This type of data may be achieved through a comparison of their highest-completed educational level with their tattoo decisions, and eventually used to compare that data with their wedding dress choices. It would be interesting to see if there is a contrast between a bride who has completed only twelve years of education and a bride who has completed more than twelve years of education.

APPENDIX A

KEY TERMS

Mixed look: A combination of a traditional white wedding dress with colored elements.

Private skin: Skin that is typically hidden daily due to contemporary clothing practices; private skin areas include legs, stomach, shoulders, back, chest, and feet. (Vail 1999).

Public skin: "Skin that is easily visible" during every-day life such as the hands, neck, forearms, upper arms, and face (Vail 1999, 266).

Tattoos: Permanent ink placed under the skin. The word "tattoos" generally signifies having one or more tattoos.

Traditional look: Classic white wedding dress (Dibben 2012; Shrout 2010; Walsh 2005).

Unconventional look: Non-traditional, colored dresses (Dibben 2008, 8; Walsh 2005; Ehrman 2000).

Wedding dress elements: belts, sleeves, bustles, and trains (Weiss and Levine 2008, 194-199).

Wedding dress silhouettes: A-line, ballerina, ballgown, empire, mermaid, and sheath (Weiss and Levine 2008, 194-195).

APPENDIX B

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

THE
UNIVERSITY
OF RHODE ISLAND
DIVISION OF RESEARCH
AND ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT

OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE
70 Lower College Road, Suite 2, Kingston, RI 02881 USA
p: 401.874.4328 f: 401.874.4814 uri.edu/research/tro/compliance

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DATE:	June 17, 2013
TO:	Linda Welters
FROM:	University of Rhode Island IRB
STUDY TITLE:	[456476-2] Wedding Dress Purchase Intentions of Tattooed Brides
IRB REFERENCE #:	HU1213-179
SUBMISSION TYPE:	New Project
ACTION:	APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE:	June 17, 2013
EXPIRATION DATE:	June 16, 2014
REVIEW TYPE:	Expedited Review
REVIEW CATEGORY:	Expedited review category # 7

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research study. University of Rhode Island IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

Please report all NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this study to this office.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years.

Based on the risks, this project requires Continuing Review by this office by June 16, 2014. Please use the appropriate renewal forms for this procedure.

If you have any questions, please contact us by email at compliance@ds.uri.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document unless the signature requirement has been waived by the IRB.

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APPENDIX C

RECRUITMENT EMAIL

THE
UNIVERSITY
OF RHODE ISLAND
COLLEGE OF
HUMAN SCIENCE
AND SERVICES

THINK BIG WE DO

Dear _____,

I am a graduate student at the University of Rhode Island in the Department of Textiles, Fashion Merchandising and Design. My thesis focuses on tattooed brides and brides-to-be and their choice of wedding dress. I would like to invite you to participate in my study. I've received a referral to you through snowball sampling (someone you know has suggested you for this study). If you meet the requirements and agree to participate, you will be sent a consent form and pre-interview questionnaire. After completion of the questionnaire, I will arrange to meet you at your convenience for an interview. If you agree, please respond to this email. Thank you.

Requirements:
Must be married within the past 16 months for the first time or engaged to be married for the first time.
Must have at least one tattoo.
Must be a U.S. Citizen

Sarah Yang
M.S. Candidate

APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEWS

THE
UNIVERSITY
OF RHODE ISLAND
COLLEGE OF
HUMAN SCIENCE
AND SERVICES
THINK BIG WE DO
DEPARTMENT OF TEXTILES,FASHION MERCHANDISING AND DESIGN
55 Lower College Road, Suite 3, Kingston, RI 02881 USA p: 401.874.4574 f: 401.874.2581 uri.edu/hss/tmd

The University of Rhode Island
Department of Textiles, Fashion Merchandising, and Design
55 Lower College Road, Suite 3,
Kingston, RI

Wedding Dress Purchase Intentions of Tattooed Brides

CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH

You have been invited to take part in a research project described below. The researcher will explain the project to you in detail. You should feel free to ask questions. If you have more questions later, Linda Welters, the person mainly responsible for this study, (401) 874-4525, will discuss them with you. You must be at least 18 years old to be in this research project.

Description of the project:
This study will explore wedding dress choices of tattooed brides and their underlying reasons for those choices.

What will be done:
If you decide to take part in this study here is what will happen: You will be sent a pre-interview question sheet to complete prior to the interview schedule. You will be asked to bring any pictures that show your preferred wedding dress choice, which is optional, and consent will be asked to use your photo in the study. The time and location will be chosen for most convenience of the interviewer and interviewee. You will be asked permission to be recorded with a tape recorder, and the interview will take place approximately an hour. The questions will ask about your wedding or wedding plans in relation to your tattoos.

Audio informed consent:
As indicated above, interview will be tape recorded with your consent.

Risks or discomfort:
There are inherent risks to being audio recorded, but your identity will be kept confidential with a nickname. The audio will be destroyed, but the confidential transcripts will be filed in the principal investigator's office for three years after protocol has ended. You may have feelings of embarrassment for past decisions, such as getting tattooed, or disappointment over your wedding dress.

Benefits of this study:
Although there will be no direct benefit to you for taking part in this study, other than to share your experiences, the researcher may learn more about wedding dress choices in relation to having tattoos. This study may benefit future brides who are facing the decision to show or hide their tattoos.

Confidentiality:
Your part in this study is confidential. None of the information will identify you by name. All records will be kept on a password encrypted laptop, and only be accessed by the principal investigator and student investigator. After the interview recording is transcribed, it will be erased.

Decision to quit at any time:
The decision to take part in this study is up to you. You do not have to participate. If you decide to take part in the study, you may quit at any time. Whatever you decide will in no way be held against you. If you wish to quit, simply inform Linda Welters, (401) 874-4525, of your decision.

Rights and Complaints:
If you are not satisfied with the way this study is performed, you may discuss your complaints with Linda Welters or with Sarah Yang, (401) 585-4015, confidentially, if you choose. In addition, if you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the office of the Vice President for Research, 70 Lower College Road, Suite 2, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, Rhode Island, telephone: (401) 874-4328.

You have read the Consent Form. Your questions have been answered. Your signature on this form means that you understand the information and you agree to participate in this study.

_____	_____
Signature of Participant	Signature of Researcher
_____	_____
Typed/printed Name	Typed/printed name

_____	_____
Date	Date

I give my permission to have the interview audiotaped.

_____
Signature of Participant

Please sign both consent forms, keeping one for yourself

APPENDIX E

PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Pre-Interview Question Sheet

What is your age? 18-24 ___ 25-31 ___ 32-38 ___ Older than 38 ___
What is your income level? Under $14,999 ___ $15,000-$29,999 ___ $30,000-$44,999 ___ $45,000-$59,999 ___ $60,000-$74,999 ___ $75,000-$89,999 ___ Over $90,000 ___
Religion: Roman Catholic ___ Protestant ___ Christian Orthodox ___ Muslim ___ Christian, not included elsewhere ___ Jewish ___ Buddhist ___ Hindu ___ Sikh ___ No religion ___ Other (please specify) ___

Wedding dress look:
Traditional: *Classic, fully-white dress* ___ Unconventional: *Untraditional, colored dress.* ___
Mixed: *Traditional white dress with unconventional colored elements (belts, sleeves, bustles, and trains).* ___

Wedding dress budget:
Less than $899 ___ $900-$999 ___ $1,000-$1,999 ___ $2,000-$2,999 ___ $3,000-$3,999 ___ $4,000-$4,999 ___ More than $5,000 ___ Have not decided ___

Who paid or is paying for the dress? _____

Where did you buy or get your dress from?: Store _____
Online _____ Passed-down ___ Designer _____
Other _____
Wedding Ceremony Location: Church ___ Hotel ___ Restaurant ___ Home ___ Rented Venue ___ Beach ___ Other _____

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

(Refer them to the body diagram handout to fill out)

Tell me about your tattoo(s).

What reactions have you gotten from people seeing your tattoos?

Describe your wedding day.

Describe the decision making process of choosing a dress?

What about the other dresses you did not pick?

What were your methods to hide/show tattoos?

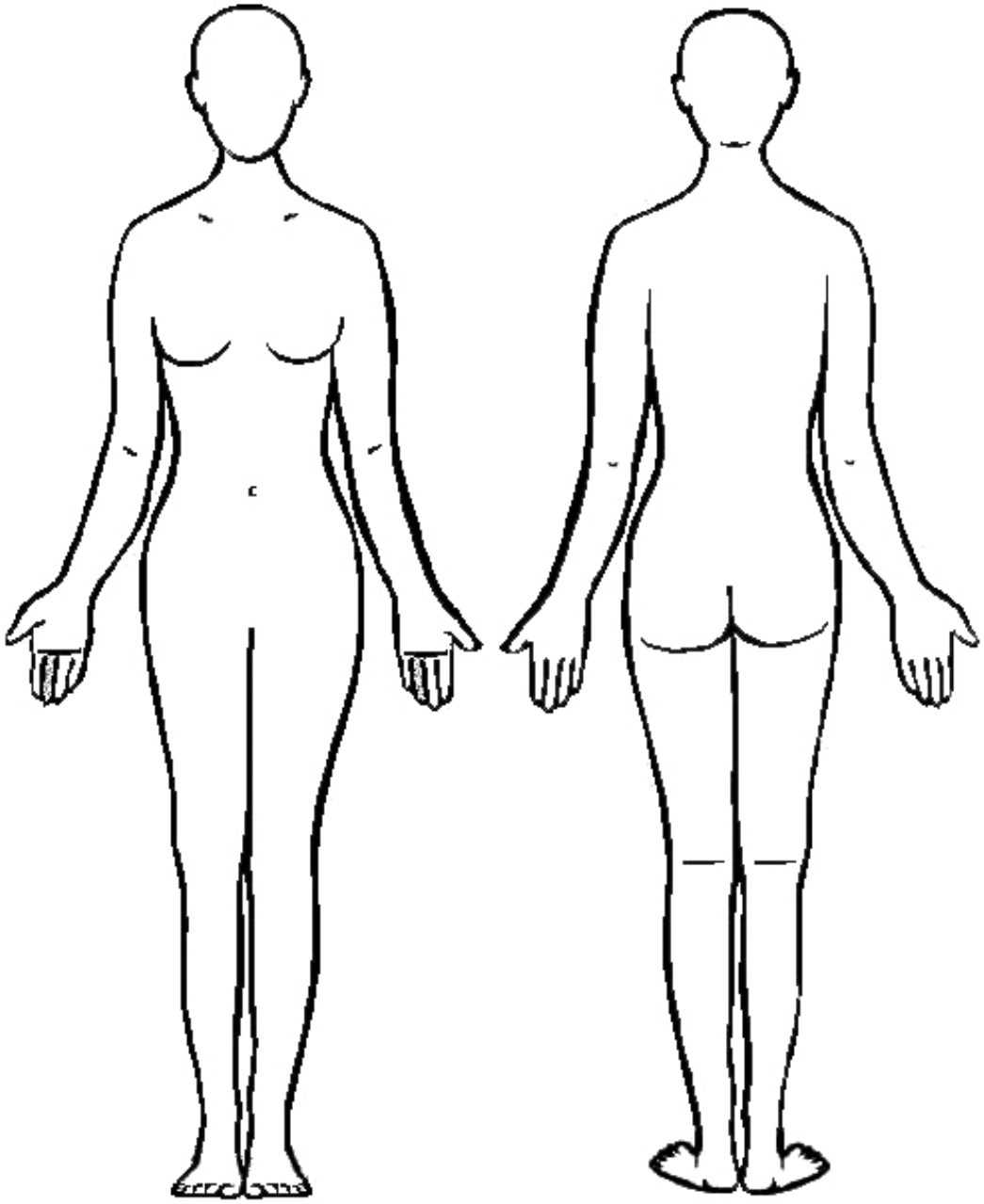
Probing statements may include:

So tell me more about __,
Why did you choose to do__,
and/or tell me about the decision making process.

APPENDIX G

BODY DIAGRAM FOR INDICATING TATTOOS

Locations of tattoos: Please indicate the locations of your tattoos.



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