

THE CONSUMPTION OF TATTOOS AND TATTOOING:
THE BODY AS PERMANENT TEXT

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ABSTRACT

The body as permanent text: The consumption of tattoos and tattooing

In this thesis, I investigate permanence through exploring tattoo consumption in terms of the social-historical context of being tattooed. The analysis is based on four years of data collection adopting a grounded theory approach.

I present an analysis of how permanence occurs in terms of tattoo consumption, with particular interest in the physical permanence in relation to identity creation. This is set within the framework of Consumer Culture Theory (CCT). The reason for this is twofold, firstly to illustrate the ability of using tattooing as an instrument to investigate permanence within CCT. Secondly, to show the lack of use of the socio-historical perspective within such an investigation, and to show that the use of such data is a valid strategy and which adds depth and context to such an investigation.

Furthermore, I suggest that tattoo consumption has become a site of embodied expression that is bounded by physicality, and permanence. I present a typology of tattooed consumers based on levels of commitment and explore in depth two main categories, physicality, and, permanence.

I find that the physical permanence is shown through the commitment to tattoo usage. Its permanent nature determines the tattoo as an act of consumption that is dualistic in nature; both accepted, and yet equally rejected, which is seen within the consumers' negotiation of its use, in terms of mimicry and placement. Being tattooed represents a form of consumption that contravenes certain rules and norms of society, and yet at the same time is the basis for community membership and adherence to a set of sub-cultural norms and values.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE SUBJECT AREA AND THESIS

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

Perceptions of tattooing and tattoos have purportedly undergone a ground shift within the last 25-30 years. These encompass not only changes within the tattoo industry itself, but also perceived attitudes towards tattoos and tattooing within society. Tattooing has moved from being a relatively obscure topic associated with deviancy and non-mainstream groups to a thriving aspect of modern consumer culture that can be seen in terms of fashion (MacKendrick, 1998) and popular culture (Atkinson, 2002, 2003a; Bengtsson, Ostberg & Kjeldgaard, 2005; Kjeldgaard & Bengtsson, 2005; Kosut, 2006). The use of tattooing is associated with, or has become an integral part of various subcultures (Atkinson, 2002, 2003b; Atkinson & Young, 2001), while tattooing itself has produced its own community, collectors, aesthetics and practices (De Mello, 2000; Gilbert, 2000; Goulding, Follett, Saren, & McLaren, 2004). Yet, in spite of its importance and linkage to various types of consumption tattooing has not been adequately or recently investigated in terms of why or how people 'consume' tattoos and tattooing inside the aegis of marketing.

General academic work available on tattooing has until recently been limited in scope and relevance. Some of the work available is out of date as it does not encompass the purported changes linked with tattoo usage that have occurred in the last 25-30 years, i.e. Sanders seminal, yet out of date 1985 research, on which he based his 1988 book. Or, in the case of other research which use limited populations or presents data used in such a way which skews the results. For example De Mello, (2000) rejects the continuing existence of 'working class tattooing', but only uses middle class consumption for data sources. While in 2006 the presentation of data concerning a national investigation into tattoos and body piercings in the United States by the University of Chicago, solely presented data concerning tattooee's status on drug use and previous incarceration in penal establishments. By not giving the figures for the general population (Laumann & Derick, 2006), a situation which does not allow for

contextualisation was created.

The purported relationship between tattooing and criminality was popularised in sociology and criminology in modern times by Lombroso (1896). His work influenced views on tattoos and body image in relation to their use in the media, psychological studies (Fleming, 2000) and criminology (Fleming, 2000; Gibson, 2002; Rafter, 2005). His views in stating that the tattoo was a symbol of criminality were however resulted from limited research using 5,343 criminals, and not involving 'normal' members of the public (Lockheart & Hemingson, 2000; Lombroso, 1896, 2006). According to Lombroso (1896), criminals were innately primitive and atavistic beings with recognizable physical deformities including tattoos. Other commentators argued that tattoos came after one was convicted and thus was learned practice among prisoners while they were imprisoned (Arjunan, 2000). Even though Lombroso's work has more recently been attacked for poor research methods, and a limited view of society and influenced by misogyny (Arjunan, 2000; Fleming, 2000; Rafter, 2005) his views of tattooing as being an innate symbol of criminality still had influence in criminology circles till the late 20th century (Arjunan, 2000; Rafter, 2005); a linkage to negativity surrounding a tattoo which still exists in general society and the media (Riches, 2004). This overtly negative view of tattooing can, within certain areas of research lead to an equally flawed, overtly positive representation of the act of tattooing as noted by Nathanson, Paulhus and Williams in their 2006 work on body modification:

We know surprisingly little about who chooses to acquire markers such as tattoos and piercings. Published commentaries tend to portray the practice in blanket negative terms (e.g., Favazza, 1996) or blanket positive terms (e.g., Atkinson, 2003; Stirn, 2003). The few available studies of personality correlates are open to criticism on a methodological basis.

(Nathanson, Paulhus & Williams, 2006, p.780)

This is not to say all previous research on tattooing has been flawed, but continuing critical attention has to be exercised when using previous work. Relevant works in certain academic areas reflect a limited remit, for example

consumer behaviour research, specifically on the subject of tattoos, has constrained been interest in the activity itself - design placement and choice etc. (Sanders, 1985). Other works concentrated on tattoo choice in relation to gender (Watson, 1998); ethnographic studies of the symbolic nature of consuming tattoos (Velliquette, Murray & Creyer, 1998); and the changes in the tattoo community over the last ten to fifteen years (Velliquette & Murray, 1999). I noticed spaces in this small family of articles. None of the recent studies use data from British consumers. Moreover, apart from one co-contributor of one particular piece no other author of recent studies on tattooing was tattooed (Velliquette, Murray & Creyer, 1998). I identified this as a gap in conceptual awareness of tattooing and the industry in academic works. In addition, each piece of work continued the misapprehension of tattooing being solely a Polynesian import, which is repeated to create a false image of exoticism for the tattoo. It is important when looking at prior work to be critical of the use of data from such works. While Sanders work is out of date it still can be used to contextualise and to assist in identifying aspects of permanence within the act (i.e. contrasting patterns of present consumption with those of past consumption).

As this thesis investigates the concept of permanence in consumption by examining tattoo consumption there is the need to learn from the mistakes and limitations of previous research involving tattoos. Tattooing requires to be studied in a holistic way, not limited solely to one aspect or component of tattooing. This has determined the breadth of data used in this thesis, and by not solely looking at tattooees, who are gaining further tattoos, but also individuals who are acquiring their first tattoo, and individuals who are thinking about or merely planning a first tattoo. The use of current data is also used, not merely to look at present day activities but as a starting point to look at patterns with past consumption.

Coincident with these perceived changes (in terms of popularisation and acceptability) within and surrounding tattooing there have been significant developments within the subject of consumer research over the last 25-30 years, due mainly to the influences of the social sciences (Fabris, 1990). These changes have involved three main areas.

Firstly, the scope of the subject of consumer research has widened to include the study of topics that have not been previously considered within the realms of consumption theory (Maxwell, 1996; Mick, 1996). Secondly, research within the academic discipline of consumer behaviour has increasingly used qualitative research methods as a tool of inquiry (Denzin, 2001). These changes within consumer research {as described here} have been paralleled by similar changes within the humanities and the social sciences. The importance of consumption to these subjects and to today's human condition is now more fully understood (Miller & Rose, 1997). Thirdly, the changes within consumer research studies have led to the development of what can be considered as a loosely connected family of research practices and activities investigating consumption; these have become known as CCT or Consumer Culture Theory.

This final development occurred as a response to changes in society, where consumption and consumer culture have evolved to such an extent that various academics believe consumption to be the definer of present day existence (Miller & Rose, 1997). Some academics view this apparent importance of consumption as being a specific aspect of postmodern society (Miller & Rose, 1997), or that postmodernism is a better construct to understand consumer theory (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995). These perceived links have increased in importance to such an extent that consumption is now considered as vital to the postmodern view of identity (Belk, 1988; Cova, 1997; Maxwell, 1996; Woodruffe-Burton, 1998). This hypothesis was commented on by Miller and Rose (1997) in their work on consumption, stating: "many diagnoses of our 'postmodern' condition hinge on debates about consumption: has consumption replaced production as the key to the intelligibility of the present?" Extending this hypothesis they set the rhetorical question surrounding such a view: "have consumption sub-cultures replaced class, region, generation and gender as sources of interest and identification?" (Miller & Rose, 1997, p.1).

CCT primarily revolves around investigating the issues raised in Miller and Rose's assumption. CCT is used to investigate the cause, effect, and interactions within the consumption process. It examines how consumption is situated within

the everyday lives of individuals and the communities and societies of which they are members. There are two specific related issues that can be seen in and thus investigated through the study of tattoo consumption. These are issues of permanence; firstly, what are the reasons and implications of this permanent act? Secondly, permanence within identity that relates to an inability to change. The ramification of this creates a physical limitation to consumer choice, specifically caused by the permanence of the tattoo. How do these aspects sit within consumers' choices, and in what way do they relate to CCT or other issues within consumer behaviour research? In particular how such an investigation to answer these questions may be undertaken using socio-historic data, as by doing so will fill a gap within CCT.

1.2 RESEARCH ISSUES AND HYPOTHESES

My study of tattoo consumption gave early indication that various facets within the action of tattoo consumption mirror the four strands of consumer culture theory as first defined by Arnould and Thompson in their 2005 overview on CCT later refined in their introduction to their 2007 work on CCT.

The four aspects given are:

1. Socio-historical patterning of consumption
2. Marketplace cultures
3. Mass mediated market ideologies and consumers interpretative strategies
4. Consumer identity projects

When the parallel between the aspects of CCT and tattoo consumption is noted and taken in the context of the specific nature of the tattoo, it demonstrates that a holistic exploration of tattoo consumption is an ideal tool to illustrate both the various features of CCT, and also an excellent way of exploring and rectifying certain related issues within CCT (i.e. a lack of a socio-historic approach to issues). In particular, it identifies specific features of consumer choices and consumer behaviour. Tattoo consumption is both a valid and effective tool to shed light on the question of permanence within consumer behaviour due to its physical permanence of the tattoo. This has two specific consequences, firstly, the tattoo exists as a permanent mark on the body, through its definition, application and consumption it has physical permanence. The permanence is at

odds with, and creates a paradox to, the impermanence of bodily existence, the tattooee as the carrier of the tattoo ages, diminishes, and dies, being an example of the impermanent nature of existence, yet the tattoo has the potential to live beyond the tattooee.

Tattoo consumption, is considered a paradox made flesh, as all works of mankind - including themselves - are temporal and fleeting. Yet, in the use of a tattoo there is an action that counteracts, or opposes this temporality of human existence. The tattoo by the manner of its acquisition creates a permanence, and is seen in the aesthetics, the meanings, reasoning, and socio-cultural background used in its creation, as well as its permanent physicality. In terms of aesthetics, meanings and socio-cultural explanations behind the tattoo are like flies trapped in amber - a never changing point of reference to one particular aesthetic choice, style of tattooing, meaning and one specific point in time, which are caught, represented and etched onto the tattooee's skin permanently, with the potential for lasting up to 7,000 years (Bianchi, 1995). This physical permanence, along with historical commentaries allows for researchers to view and identify socio-historical patterns in the aesthetics, meanings, explanations and reasoning behind the tattoo. How does this permanence of both in terms of the act itself and permanence created through the act sit in relation to the impermanence of existence?

This permanence can also be seen in the tattoo within the creation of identity of the individual. The creation of identity is an active process where the consumer can create their own identity through consuming activities, products, services or experiences, with specific attention being given to those that are linked to the use of, or interaction with the body (Belk, 1988; Hirschman & Thompson, 1999; Holbrook, 1997). This is the process where what is described as the self, or the extended self (Belk, 1988), is formulated, changed, developed and invested in through consumption to form and importantly reinvent the consumer's identity (Holt, 2002; Kozinets, 2001, 2002).

It is the permanence of the tattoo that creates a limitation on further identity creation, which is at odds with one view surrounding consumption where

consumer behaviour is linked to the fragmented nature of identity, and the creation of identity is able to be reformed ad nauseam. What if the consumption of a product, service, or activity freezes individuals into an unchangeable identity? Then the act of consumption does not actually free individuals, but restrict them? How does this freezing of identity relate to the human physicality, and the fragmented nature of identity both?

The answer to these questions can be answered through an investigation of tattoo consumption. Firstly, the activity is viewed as part of the overarching family of activities called body modification. Secondly, the definition of a tattoo, both in terms of actual physicality and also within the description as a subset of body modification is permanent, i.e. cannot be changed. This concept of permanence is significant as identity is viewed in the early 21st century as a fragmented and multi-layered creation (Firat & Shultz, 1997; Firat & Venkatesh, 1995). The point in this statement surrounding the ability to reform the consumer's identity is important (Schouten, 1991), as identity of the consumer is considered a never ending project (Giddens, 1991). If however, the tattoo is permanent this does not allow the individual to mould their identity further or play within their identity beyond the confines of their tattooed identity.

Until the 1980's, the tattoo in western society was perceived as a badge of deviance and membership of certain "deviant" groups. While this is a rather simplistic view of tattoo history, it was, and is, a common perception. Changes to views of the use and application of the tattoo have rendered this generalisation as redundant. With tattoo ownership now spread across a broad spectrum of society, and adopted for varying reasons (Camphausen, 2000; Juno & Vale, 1989; Mercury, 2000). By the late 20th/early 21st century tattoo consumption is seen to be linked to fashion, celebrity culture, musical genres, and affiliation to musically based subcultures (Atkinson, 2003b; Kjeldgaard & Bengtsson, 2005; Wojcik, 1995). While from a historical perspective, different groups have consumed the tattoo for diverse reasons throughout the world and in different time-periods, there are commonalities. One aspect common to all of these activities is the linkage of tattooing to an investment (of various descriptions) in the body. This has similarities to consumer research in the way of thinking which

perceives the body as a consumable object, an item that can be added to, an object that can be 'upgraded' by the use of tattooing and by the act can be filled with cultural capital which can allow an individual to become part of one or more groups (Rubin, 1995; Scutt & Gotch, 1974). While some cultural definitions and meanings have altered through time and place (Parry, 1999; Scutt & Gotch, 1974), but the reasoning behind consuming the act and its dualistic nature have not; which again relates the action to permanence. The permanence of tattooing is seen both in, and through the act, showing the importance of both the permanence to tattooing and the importance of relating to its socio-historical background within this study.

1.3 JUSTIFICATION FOR THE RESEARCH

This study of tattooing not only looks at the tattoo as an item, product, badge or an aesthetic which is purchased, but in doing so investigates permanence and the theoretical components supporting the activities. The form this investigation takes and the breadth of data used deals with a specific limitation within CCT. To begin with, in CCT the significance and determinants of consumption are thought of as a major part of social life (Baudrillard, 1998; Featherstone, 1991; Firat, Dholakia & Venkatesh, 1995). In particular, this is seen in how consumption is undertaken in relation to the creation of identity, and how individuals define themselves, are central tenets to this view (Hirschman & Thompson, 1999; Woodruffe-Burton, 1998). When identity has been deliberately stabilised (i.e. further change limited) through permanently altering their body leads to two questions. Firstly, how generally does this permanence fit into consumers' choices, and a secondary, but related issue is how does this permanence relate to the perceived fragmentary and ever changeable nature of present day identity (Firat & Shultz, 1997; Firat & Venkatesh, 1995)?

A point of note is that there are continuing patterns and recurring relationships that can be traced by an accurate holistic review of tattoo consumption. This permanent, non physical aspect of tattooing can only be adequately analysed through using a socio-historical approach. There has been however, a distinct lack of socio-historical analysis both specifically within the realms of CCT, and

in more general terms within the discipline of marketing. The need for both to encompass this area has been recognised in previous reviews of CCT (Arnould & Thompson, 2005, 2007) and in several marketing studies (Stowe, 1983; Witowski, 1985).

Further, as tattoo consumption is a complex issue, and that the socio-historical characteristics of tattooing have developed over time an historical contextualisation is needed for illustration of the activity in question. This follows as the activity (tattooing) is a culturally rich and at the same time a socially ambiguous action.

The aims of the study are as follows:

1. To use the study of tattoo consumption to add to the knowledge of CCT in terms of using socio-historical data in investigating how permanence sits within consumer behaviour.
2. To answer: How does the permanence of the tattoo contribute to the creation of personal and group identity through consumption?
3. To answer: How physical permanence relates to the individual as seen in relation to identity creation?

1.4 METHODOLOGY

The main issue that is addressed by this research is – how does the consumption of a tattoo, in the context of its definition, i.e. a permanent body modification, and in context of the permanence found within the act {i.e. its unchanging nature and motivation(s) for the act in terms of its history} relate to the impermanence of existence, both in general terms and specifically in terms of individual and the creation of their identity.

My overarching research design was emergent. I set out to understand and describe the reasons for and meanings behind the consumption of tattoos and

tattooing, both present and past, to identify the determinants of consuming a tattoo and resultant experiences. It is reasonable to assume that individuals have a range of motives for becoming tattooed and that these will be reflected in this study. Therefore, the objectives in choosing a relevant methodology become.

The identification of sources of relevant data, and the creation of mechanisms to gather relevant data, the collection of data of sufficient quality and quantity to answer the questions:

1. How does tattoo consumption relate within the aspects of CCT?
2. How does permanence relate to the concept of a fragmented identity?
3. How is permanence (as seen through tattoo consumption) situated within consumer choices?

To answer these questions it has been necessary to ascertain the determinant(s) of tattoo consumption in order to construct a rounded explanation of motivations and experiences; illustrating why people obtain tattoos and what is the meaning or experience of being a tattooee. This will investigate the permanence within the act. Using a socio-historical examination is necessary because of the complex and cultural richness of the activity, and to illustrate the recurring patterns (i.e. permanence through the act). While socio-historical approach is a necessary tool to illustrate the concept of permanence it also fills a gap within CCT that has been identified in Arnould and Thompson's (2005) commentary concerning CCT.

The methodology used throughout the investigation to investigate the questions raised is grounded theory. Within this framework, several data gathering techniques were used. These include: researcher introspection {as the author is himself heavily tattooed and has gone through a lengthy process of completing his 'canvas'}; participatory observation at tattoo parlours and tattoo conventions; interviews with tattoo consumers at the point of purchase; three case studies of tattoo consumers; and a netnography of posted online consumption narratives of tattooees; with secondary sources providing added data and theoretical

sensitivity. All are discussed in detail, in addition examples of data coding and the process of abstraction are provided.

1.5 OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

Chapter one deals with the background to the research. It states the main research problem and the hypotheses driving this investigation; showing how a study of tattooing can be used to illustrate the different aspects present within CCT. CCT as a model can be used to investigate the concept of permanence within consumption and, in particular, the relationship to the creation of identity through consumption. This is relevant as a permanent identity is in conflict with the impermanence of existence, the physical permanence of the tattoo is a paradox made flesh in relation to the existence of the individual carrying the tattoo. Furthermore, there is conflict with the creation of identity through consumption which is correlated to a continual project due to the fragmented nature of identity. As tattooing is a permanent type of body modification linked to these two subjects (physical permanence and identity consumption) it is the ideal activity to investigate permanence in terms of consumption.

The chapter continues by describing the methodology, its use, the synthesis of methods undertaken for gathering data, situating the definitions of the terms and facts used within the study. These include what CCT as a family of study represents, and what tattooing is, both as an action and as a form of body modification. This leads to the limitations of the scope of the study including individual tattoo design meanings, semiotics, and interpretative studies.

Chapter two has a review of the literature relevant to the study, defining CCT and its four differing strands of research (Arnould & Thompson, 2005, 2007). These are discussed below and in section 1.6, with particular interest being paid to permanence and touching upon its relevance within tattoo consumption and how this effects the creation of identity. Each of the strands of CCT is discussed and linked into analysis of tattoo consumption, showing the relevance of each aspect of CCT to such consumption. These are categorised as: marketplace

cultures; mass mediated market ideologies and consumer's interpretative strategies; consumer identity projects; and the socio-historical patterning of consumption.

This last aspect of CCT description leads directly onto the next section of the thesis which deals with the literature linked to analytical models and research hypotheses. In particular the lack of socio-historical analysis within CCT, both in general, and it being used as a tool to analyse specific assumptions within CCT such as permanence and illustrating the paradox between the permanence of the tattoo and the impermanence of identity. It includes the fragmentary nature of identity creation through consumption. Identity is covered by a description of the how societies and communities link with identity, and finally bodily identity. This leads to a section on the body, dealing with embodiment and consumption, including the concept of the body as 'sign'.

This is followed by a section on permanence, what it is and how it is situated theoretically, showing how a socio-historical approach can investigate permanence and how permanence is situated within consumption theory and how this is linked to identity creation. The final aspect dealt with in this chapter is the grotesque body: the theoretical basis and how the tattoo can be evaluated in relation to this.

Chapter three describes in detail the methodology used within this study: defining the methodology used {Grounded Theory (GT)}, justifying its usage within this study, both in relation to the subject being investigated and in the aims and objectives of the study. This leads to describing the form that analysis takes within GT, defining constant comparative analysis, how this sits within the study, and how it relates to theory creation. One specific point of note is how the use of computer analysis of data occurs within a GT methodological framework and its negative attributes which preclude its use within this study.

The next section illustrates the research procedures undertaken within the study, including describing the nature of valid data within GT and the five forms of data collection used. This involves the following: the initial type of data collection –

introspection, including defining and delimiting the practice of introspection, and stating how it is undertaken within this piece of research. Leading onto describing what experiences and events are encompassed by this section of data collection. The second type of data collection is discussed next: the researcher as participant and observer, stating how the research fits within the collection of data and the study as a whole.

The third type of data collection, netnography is described and defined relating it to the online presence of tattoo consumers and their posted experiences, which provide rich and valid sources of data. The important issues concerning the ethical aspects of gathering such virtual data and interacting with individuals online are discussed.

The fourth type of data collection undertaken is the interviewing of consumers of tattoos, including 20 consumers at point of consumption and interviews with three longitudinal case studies of tattoo consumers at differing points of their tattoo consumption. The fifth and final form of data collection discussed is the collection of data from books, journals, and pictorial representation, which help identify patterns within tattoo consumption and add to theoretical sensitivity.

This leads into a description of the people and places involved in the data gathering, including pictorial representation and examples of data, including excerpts from 385 online tattoo experience narratives; 20 tattooees interviewed at point of consumption; and three tattooees who have been followed during the course of their tattoo consumption. After describing the individuals who are involved in the data collection the study moves to descriptions of data collection locations.

This is split into two sections. The first comprises of the physical data collection areas, including a tattoo parlour or shop where tattooees and tattooers were interviewed at point of consumption. To appraise how tattoos are projected as an aesthetic medium and to assist in the creation of an historical record an International Tattoo exhibition at the Maritime Museum was visited. Alongside a historical viewpoint is the subcultural and community development that exists

along with tattoo usage. Data on this aspect was also gathered through visiting a tattoo convention. Interviewing tattooees and tattooers at the convention alongside the organiser of the event allowed for a rich variety of data. This was added to with visual data acquired by photographing the site, attendees and tattoos undertaken at the tattoo convention.

The second set of data portrayed is virtual data, which originates from two specific webpages (BMEzine.com and TattooFAQ.org); their respective forums; and an instant messaging service (MSN Messenger). Developments in internet usage into what is known as web 2.0 has allowed for an expansion of user generated content such as the posting of tattoo consumption narratives.

The natural progression from this section is the use of consumption narratives in the creation of a typology of tattoo consumers: classifying tattoo consumption into three separate but mutually supportive groupings which are defined by their commitment to consume tattoos. One of the findings of the research was the identification of differences and similarities in the behaviour of tattoo consumers. As a result, and, as an emergent product from the data, a typology of consumers is detailed. The three 'types' identified are, 'fashion consumers', 'committed but concealed consumers' and 'fully committed consumers'. This provides a basic description of tattooees based on varying levels of commitment, a situation which results from the permanent nature of the tattoo.

Chapter four deals with the analysis of the data gathered. The forms of data and places are defined and then situated within the analysis framework. To provide an accurate description, to contextualise the phenomenon of tattoo consumption, and to identify patterns within tattoo consumption it requires the action to be located in terms of usage, place, and significance in history. Thus this section situates and analyses the present usage of tattoos using the data gathered from the author's introspection, interviewees at point of purchase, three case studies, and web based consumption narratives. These are then placed in context within the use of tattoos from in historical settings to the present day. This is to show the permanence of the activity and the importance of permanence within the action. While the focal point is the consumer identity project aspect of CCT the other

three features of CCT must be included. This is necessary to illustrate permanence effectively, contextualise themes which are linked to the idea of identity and to assist in identifying patterns within tattoo consumption and thus showing permanent characteristics within a socio-historical framework.

1.6 DEFINITIONS

What is CCT?

The definition of CCT or Consumer Culture Theory as used within this study of tattoos and tattooing is that found within the articles on CCT by Arnould and Thompson (2005, 2007), which they wrote as a critique of consumer behaviour. They describe CCT as “an interdisciplinary field that comprises of macro, interpretive, and critical approaches to and perspectives on consumer behavior” (Arnould & Thompson 2007, p. xiii). The CCT framework that they produced was created through an application of an:

...iterative interpretive process so common to cultural research to the task of essentially thematizing the CCT literature. Our classification framework is predominantly inductive and hence reflecting characteristics of CCT research to date.

(Arnould & Thompson, 2007, p.7)

This led to a:

...heuristic mapping of the common structures of theoretical interest that systematically link together studies that manifest diversity in terms of methodological orientations (i.e. ethnography, phenomenology, multiple schools of textual analyses, historical methods, web-based methods), theoretical traditions....and, of course, substantive issues emanating from the particular research context.....it remains one of many other possible classification schemes and it is by no means meant to be definitive or exhaustive.

(Arnould & Thompson, 2007, p.8)

Thus CCT as described by Arnould and Thompson, is used as a structure that this study is sited into. It is wrong to believe that CCT is a “unified, grand theory” as “it refers to a family of theoretical perspectives that address the dynamic

relationships between consumer actions, the marketplace, and cultural meanings” (Arnould & Thompson, 2005, p.868). Nor is it a totalizing narrative, it is a framework which through the post-structuralist narrative can be viewed, investigating the:

...social arrangement in which the relations between lived culture and social resources, and between meaningful ways of life and the symbolic and material resources on which they depend, are mediated through markets.

(Arnould & Thompson, 2005, p.869)

Consumer culture theory study occurs within one major premise which is the concept under question within this study:

The consumption of market-made commodities and desire-inducing marketing symbols is central to consumer culture, and yet the perpetuation and reproduction of this system is largely dependent upon the exercise of free personal choice in the private sphere of everyday life

(Arnould & Thompson, 2005, p.869)

Originally in their 2005 piece of work Arnould and Thompson proposed there were four structures of common theoretical interest which are interrelated and associate with one another reciprocally. These have been discussed in detail and in context of this study within *Section:1.5* which outlines this thesis; a short synopsis of the areas follows:

- **Marketplace cultures**

Marketplace cultures situates CCT with anthropological and associated studies on material culture and how it relates to the creation of societal and family structures and the rituals and customs undertaken within these framework(s) (Miller, 1998).

- **Consumer identity projects**

Consumer identity projects links CCT with cultural studies work on identity construction, and how cultural contradictions are manipulated and managed by individuals (Giddens, 1991) through the marketplace (Illouz, 1997) and how cultural and cultural sentiment and rituals are commodified (Schmidt, 1997).

- **Mass mediated market ideologies and consumers interpretative strategies**

Mass-mediated ideologies and consumers interpretive strategies associates CCT with critical theory traditions alongside other contemporary media studies research on the active and creative media user (Fiske, 1994; Jenkins, 2006; Willis, 1990).

- **Socio-historical patterning of consumption**

The socio-historic outline of consumption links CCT with sociological and historical research occurring on the function of various categorizations such as class, sexuality, gender, and ethnicity as structural influences on consumers' behaviour with and through the marketplace (Cohen, 2003; Fine & Leopold, 1993).

Any particular CCT study has aspects of all four of these subject areas (e.g. Holt, 1997) with one or two of these aspects being the focal point(s) of the study and the others being less important. In this thesis while CCT is reviewed, the focal point is identity creation projects in relation to tattooing. While tattooing is placed in context with the four strands of CCT in order to contextualise secondary themes which are linked to the idea of identity and identify patterns (i.e. aspects of permanence) within the tattoo, such as the way that the tattoo is portrayed in the media which in turn affects identity creation projects.

A final issue surrounding situating a study within CCT is described by Arnould and Thompson in their 2007 commentary on CCT:

Another concern is that this CCT framework could place limits on the scope of culturally oriented consumer research and exclude topics and theoretical orientations that do not fit into one of the four categories. As a practical matter, we think the odds of such a reified application becoming widespread are slim to null.

(Arnould & Thompson, 2007, p.7)

In opposition to the possible self limiting nature of CCT is the positive emphasis of flexibility within CCT, with Arnould and Thompson (2007, pp.8-9) noting that: “these four domains of theoretical interest are, by design, broad and can be applied in a very flexible way that should be able to encompass a wide spectrum of theoretical questions and concerns.” This allows of a multiplicity of uses of CCT, both in terms of subject matter and methodology used in investigating said subject matter.

What is a tattoo?

The investigation of the tattoo and of tattooing requires the definition of Body Modification, of which the tattoo is a subset. How tattooing relates to this definition is relevant to this study as it introduces the feature of the tattoo and of the activity of tattooing which is the fulcrum of this piece of research, namely, permanence. This is important as this permanence creates a paradox with the impermanent nature of human existence. This permanence also effects the creation of identity as gaining a tattoo creates a situation which extinguishes or limits opportunity for further identity creation through consumption.

The consumption of tattoos and tattooing is, in its essence, a service with a resultant product, i.e. the finished tattoo, and thus is a service provision within the delineation of the Body Modification segment of the ‘body grooming’ service sector of the economy. As defined, Body Modification (BM) is the changing of the body by various means and to varying degrees from its natural, original state to another altered form (Featherstone, 1991, 1999; Mercury, 2000). This description covers a wide variety of practices, which are socially (Sanders, 1985), culturally (Üstüner, Ger & Holt, 2000), ethnically (Gell, 1993; Robley, 1998), or market (i.e. fashion) driven (MacKendrick, 1998; Sayre, 1999).

All types of BM are performed as subcategories of the larger service industries. Within western modern societies they exist on a relative scale of social acceptability (MacKendrick, 1998, Nathanson, et al., 2006), from fairly common and socially acceptable activities such as hairdressing, weight-training, plastic surgery, circumcision and dentistry (Featherstone, 1999, 2000), to less frequent and less acceptable activities such as suspensions, piercings, foot-binding and extreme tattooing (Blake, 1994; Camphausen, 2000; Mercury, 2000). As a generalisation, in western society the less invasive an activity is, the more acceptable it is perceived to be within society. Moreover, the longer its heritage, the more likely it is to be seen not strictly as BM, but as a social practice (Rubin, 1995). In the case of tattooing in western society, historically it has moved in and out of societal acceptance (Anderson, 2001; Armstrong, 1991; Dalrymple, 2000; Goulding & Follett, 2002b, 2003; Lombroso, 1896; Steele, 2000; Stokes, 2002).

Concept of permanence in relation to tattooing

BM in the definition of the activity exists as two main types:

- **Non-Invasive Practices:** These do not alter the body's structure and usually involve the body's surface (Camphausen, 2000; Mercury, 2000).
- **Invasive Practices:** These modify the body either temporarily or permanently by adding to or removing from the body (Camphausen, 2000; Mercury, 2000; Schouten, 1991).

Within these definitions, modifications have two specific sub groups.

- **Temporary decorations:** changes that have no lasting effects, they can be of a short or long-term nature (Favazza, 1996; Featherstone, 1999, 2000; Camphausen, 2000; MacKendrick, 1998; Mercury, 2000; Myers, 1992).
- **Permanent Decorations:** mostly invasive and cause permanent alteration of hard or soft tissue areas (Camphausen, 2000; Favazza, 1996;

Featherstone, 1999, 2000; Gilbert, 1995, 2000; MacKendrick, 1998; Mercury, 2000; Myers, 1992).

In terms of these definitions the tattoo, or the procedure of inserting ink under the skin to create pictures in one form or another (Armstrong, 1991) is an invasive permanent activity. This aspect of the tattoo is the crux of the matter of this thesis. The nature of the tattoo is the permanence of the act; it cannot be removed, or changed in toto, the individual is frozen within the limitations of a tattooed identity.

1.7 DELIMITATIONS OF SCOPE AND KEY ASSUMPTIONS

While it is important to describe the remit of this study, it is also necessary to define what this study does not include. There are several main issues which I will address. While it is necessary to recognize that the tattoo design, whatever it may be, has a variety of aesthetic meanings, for example, individual, societal, or cultural, the meaning(s) of such designs is not a concern of this thesis as it is a separate study in its own right. This thesis is not a semiotic or symbolic study of tattoo design(s) or the meaning of the tattoo. Due to the visual nature of the tattoo it could be thought of as an ideal subject for such a study but while symbols and semiotics are touched upon they are not a part of this study. Moreover, while this study discusses postmodernism, it is not a critique of postmodernism, as post modernism is a side issue which is merely a part of the study of tattooing which aims to illuminate permanence in relation to the creation of identity and physical existence. Neither is this study a critique on, nor a holistic study of, CCT itself, as it uses a review of CCT to identify and fill a specific gap within the CCT family as has been discussed earlier in this chapter.

1.8 CONCLUSION

There is a view that there is a commodification of life in general and the enculturation of the market (Fromm, 1976). The consumption of the products, services, and experiences provided by the market are presented as being synonymous with the creation of identity. This is linked to the theories related to the use of the body, bodily consumption and fragmentation of identity.

Investigation of the tattoo and the consumption of the tattoo illuminate and question these theories as the tattoo is a permanent body modification which freezes the individual's identity and impedes further changes of identity. This will be shown through an investigation of present and past consumption of tattoos and tattooing, which is partitioned into the four parts of CCT. This in itself is undertaken to counter another limitation of present CCT, as there is a lack of socio-historical analysis within CCT.

CHAPTER 2

CCT, PERMANENCE, AND TATTOOING

2.1 INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS CCT?

A definition of consumer culture theory (CCT) is: “an interdisciplinary field that comprises of macro, interpretive, and critical approaches to and perspectives on consumer behavior” (Arnould & Thompson, 2007, p.xiii). This interdisciplinary field is not so much a unified, grand theory but a family of work that has developed over the last 20-30 years (Arnould & Thompson, 2007), which deals with the socio-cultural, experiential, symbolic, and ideological aspects of consumption, as opposed to merely a psychological or economic view of consumer activities.

It was the work of Arnould (2004) who, alongside and along with Thompson (2005, 2007), began to place CCT in context and started to define it as a family of academic work. Arnould and Thompson’s 2005 commentary on the family of work reviewed CCT development over the preceding twenty years, and in investigating it, described CCT as the exploration of:

...the heterogeneous distribution of meanings and the multiplicity of overlapping cultural groupings that exist within the broader socio-historic frame of globalization and market capitalism. Thus, consumer culture denotes a social arrangement in which the relations between lived culture and social resources, and between meaningful ways of life and the symbolic and material resources on which they depend, are mediated through markets.
(Arnould & Thompson, 2005, p.869)

One specific detail in the context of this definition is the concept of consumption culture existing in the context of “the broader socio-historic frame of globalization and market capitalism.” This socio-historic viewpoint, particularly the historical aspect is a significant part of this thesis, as historical data is used in conjunction with present data, placing the consumption of tattoos within a historical framework to enable an analysis of the concept of permanence.

Another point of note is Arnould and Thompson subdivision divides CCT into four distinct sub groupings of their work.

The development of CCT into a loose family of research areas occurred over a lengthy period of time. Eric Arnould in his 2004 ACR (Association for Consumer Research) presentation at the doctoral symposium placed the development of CCT into 3 distinct phases. The first phase, which occurred between 1980-1990 and described as the *Paradigm Shift* when there was movement from the dominance of the structuralist and positivist viewpoint within consumer behaviour to where post-modern, interpretivist or post-structuralist were taken as equally valid forms of inquiry. The second period of CCT (1990-2000) was one of development. This was described as the *Exploration* period, where differing structures, theories and methodologies were experimented with to create a further understanding of consumer behaviour, which led to the development of the family of work later described as CCT. The third and final period (2000 - present day) was described by Arnould as the *theoretical and strategic codification period* whereby the work undertaken in the previous two phases have been contextualised and refined. This included the definition of CCT - what it encompasses, demystifying it in terms of its remit, and the methods and processes undertaken within its auspices. To understand CCT fully requires a review of the development of CCT, taking particular interest in describing the four main parts of CCT and their linkages to the consumption of tattoos.

Development of CCT

Consumer behaviour research has been heavily influenced by the social sciences and the methods and methodologies used within that academic discipline. Initially, consumer behaviour research was dominated by various versions of positivism. The primacy of consumer research was described in one work as being objective-order paradigms: including cognitive psychology, role theory, structuralism, exchange theory, and behaviouralism (Murray & Ozzane, 1991, p.130). With most consumer research at the time adopted a psychological direction, this focused on explaining and predicting existing activity. Progression from this point in consumer research has been a development into

interdisciplinary perspectives, alongside progress into additional methodological areas. This area has been described as a subjective-order orientation (Murray & Ozzane, 1991) which included methods such as phenomenology (Goulding, 2005; Thompson, Locander & Pollio, 1990), ethnography (Goulding, 2005; Peñaloza, 1994; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995), hermeneutics (Arnold & Fischer, 1994), semiotics (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1993; Mick, 1986), and literary criticism (Stern, 1989, 1993).

This showed that as a discipline consumer (behaviour) research was being caught into the methodological debate which originated in the social sciences encompassing what was the best way of understanding the world and creating knowledge. The discussion was regarding two of the principal approaches to gaining knowledge, namely the positivist and interpretive viewpoints (Belk, 1995; Miller, 1995). These were not solely about theoretical structures, methods, or methodology but differed in basic assumptions and underlying philosophical beliefs, including the nature of reality and as such, the resulting research processes (Belk, 1995).

The dominant position of positivism in the social sciences had been questioned from the 1930's onward by academics such as those of the Frankfurt school, who put forward forms of knowledge creation which in time became known as the interpretivist approach (Calder & Tybout, 1987; Hirschman, 1989; Miller, 1995). This particular academic theoretic structure was also known as qualitative, subjective, naturalistic, and humanistic (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). Positivism also has a variety of theoretical standpoints that can be loosely collected under the aegis of positivism, including: logical positivism, logical empiricism, modern empiricism, neo-positivism, etc. (Anderson, 1983; Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). CCT has its historical roots in requests for consumer researchers to broaden the methodologies available, and to expand the remit of the discipline to investigate, specifically, including the then neglected dimensions of the experiential, social, and cultural contexts of consumption (Belk 1987a, 1987b; Holbrook & Hirschman 1982). It is through the widening of these activities academics deepened their understanding of the theoretic basis of consumption. This is a major point of note surrounding CCT and was described by Arnold and

Thompson, in their 2005 work on CCT:

...to paraphrase Geertz's (1973) famous axiom, however, consumer culture theorists do not study consumption contexts; they study in consumption contexts to generate new constructs and theoretical insights and to extend existing theoretical formulations.
(Arnold & Thompson, 2005, p.869)

The changes and arguments over methodology however have not excluded the use of multi-variate methods within CCT to further theoretical studies, with quantitative measures and analytic techniques being used in investigations when multi-variate methods were felt necessary (e.g. Arnould & Price, 1993; Coulter, Price & Feick, 2003; Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Grayson & Shulman, 2000; McQuarrie & Mick, 1992; Moore & Lutz, 2000; Sirsi, Ward & Reingen, 1996).

Within the overall view of CCT in using specific consumption to investigate the theoretical background to the consumption, the importance of historical influence is noted in the following comment:

...this research tradition has significantly developed this perspective through empirical studies that analyze how particular manifestations of consumer culture are constituted, sustained, transformed, and shaped by broader historical forces (such as cultural narratives, myths, and ideologies) and grounded in specific socioeconomic circumstances and market-place systems.
(Arnold & Thompson, 2005, p.869)

Thus, all aspects of CCT can use historical situations, narratives, facts, media etc. in an investigation of consumer behaviour or to gain 'theoretical insights' through consumption practices. Consequently, the four semi-structured areas which have been highlighted will be reviewed individually, firstly in relation to CCT and secondly in relation to the consumption of tattoos, to illustrate the ability of historical (and thus socio-historical) data to be used in such a manner. The initial area to be investigated is Market-place cultures.

2.2 MARKET-PLACE CULTURES

As the CCT aspect of market-place cultures, according to Arnould and Thompson (2005, p.873) “addresses some of the most distinctive features of the market-place-culture intersection” and, as such, it is necessary to address it first. A point of note is that this study area differs in relation to an anthropological view of people being bearers of culture; consumers are viewed as producers of culture. Within CCT the aim of researching such market-place cultures is to investigate how “consumption as a dominant human practice reconfigures cultural blueprints for action and interpretation, and vice versa” (Arnould & Thompson, 2005, p.873). An additional area of investigation is how consumption is per se, situated within a specific cultural setting or locale, i.e. how consumption fits within a pre existing culture: which can occur in terms of national (Laroche, Chankon & Tomiuk, 1998; Üstüner, Ger & Holt, 2000), ethnic (Metham & Belk, 1991), sexual (Belk & Kates, 2001) or religious cultures (Sood & Nasu, 1995). It includes geographically situated cultures such as North American (McCracken, 1986; Witkowski, 1989), African (Arnould, 1989; Bonsu & Belk, 2003), Asian (Appelbaum & Jordt, 1996; Joy, 2001; Tse, Belk, & Zhou 1989), Turkish (Üstüner, Ger & Holt, 2000) and Eastern European contexts (Coulter et al., 2003; Sredle, 2007). Such groups do not need to be geographically bound (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001), but interact over the new forms of communication that have been invented since the creation of the internet (Bromberg, 1996; Kahn & Kellner, 2004a, 2004b; Kozinets, 1997, 1998, 1999).

Of interest is how consumers forge groups or ‘worlds’ that revolve around cultural concepts or themes which are linked to consumption of specific ideas such as ‘escaping the market’ (Kozinets, 2002), through past times or entertainment such as Rave culture (Goulding, Shankar, & Elliott, 2002), or interaction with items such as Harley Davidson bikes (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995). Experiences such as recreating being ‘frontiersmen’ (Belk & Costa, 1998) or skydiving (Celsi, Rose & Leigh, 1993) are used as a linkage. The differentiation between these groupings is not exclusive as the consumption of a cultural ‘item’ involves ideas and can also include experiences. Arnould and

Thompson (2005, p.873) describe this activity of consumption as creating “distinctive, fragmentary, self-selected, and sometimes transient cultural worlds through the pursuit of common consumption interests.”

These groups created through, and around, consumption have been variously described in CCT as a culture of consumption (Kozinets, 2001), consumption world(s) (Holt, 1995), consumer tribes (Arnould & Thompson, 2007; Cova, Kozinets & Shankar, 2007), fan communities/fandom (Arnould & Thompson, 2007; Brown, 2007), subcultures of consumption (Bengtsson, Ostberg & Kjeldgaard, 2005; Cova & Cova, 2002; Goulding, & Follett, 2002a; Kates, 2002; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995), and consumption microculture (Thompson & Troester, 2002). The prevailing areas of such work have centred on youth based subcultures (Kjeldgaard & Askegaard, 2006; Thornton, 1996) while the influence of age is beginning to be investigated more fully (Goulding & Shankar, 2004). Other investigations have included internet usage (Kozinets, 1997, 1998, 1999); fandom (Brown, 2007; Kozinets, 1997, 2001), countercultural lifestyles (Kates, 2002; Thompson & Troester, 2002), and temporary consumption communities (Arnould & Price, 1993; Belk & Costa, 1998; Kozinets, 2002).

Through consumption, consumers create identities analogous to a collective or communal character with the creation or adoption of shared values, symbology, attitudes, myths, rituals, activities, shared practices, and hierarchical structures and systems. The market is the mediator of social linkages and social relationships (Arnould & Thompson, 2007). Previous research has shown that market-place cultures or subcultures frequently delineate their symbolic definitions as existing in opposition to other such groupings: specifically the dominant lifestyle norms and mainstream consumer sensibilities (Arnould & Thompson, 2005, 2007; Brown, Kozinets & Sherry, 2003; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995).

One aspect of the consumption mentioned upon earlier which require to be commented on, is that there is dissimilarity to the typical sociological description of subculture(s). The internal hierarchical status does not occur through conforming to a set of unchanging consumption standards but by demonstrating

cultural capital, which is perceived as important to the group they are a member of, and using the symbols recognisable and held in admiration by the group (Belk & Costa, 1998; Celsi et al., 1993; Kates, 2002; Kozinets, 2001, 2002; McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002). This ‘tribal’ or group usage by consumers can be seen in the comment by Cova and Cova in their article on tribalised marketing:

....we see marketing as the activity of designing and launching of products and services destined to facilitate the co-presence and the communal gathering of individuals in the time of the tribes: a kind of “tribal marketing”. The credo of this so-called tribal marketing is that today consumers are looking not only for products and services which enable them to be freer, but also for products, services, employees and physical surroundings which can link them to others, to a tribe.

(Cova & Cova, 2002, p.600)

The tattoo has been used to represent membership of a culture (Rubin, 1995) or subculture(s) and aspects of a population such as high society and the working class (Bradley, 2000; Featherstone, 1999, 2000), bikers (Gilbert, 2000), music based subcultures (Atkinson, 2003b; Wojcik, 1995), sailors (Parry, 1999), the military (Scutt & Gotch, 1974), criminals (Braithwaite et al., 2001; Hunt & Phelan, 1998; Caplan, 1997), sex workers or sexual ‘deviants’ (Brown, Perlmutter & McDermott, 2001; Ferguson-Rayport, Griffith & Straus, 1955; Fried, 1983; Parry, 1999), or extreme body modifiers (Atkinson & Young, 2001). This occurs both by those within the subculture and those outside it in relationship to creating a clichéd representation of that particular group.

The tattoo’s linkage to rebellion and particular music genres is homage to its social and cultural inappropriateness that prevailed throughout the west for the second half of the 20th century. Fashionability and ‘coolness’ of the tattoo is linked to this subcultural association (Atkinson, 2003; Bengtsson, Ostberg & Kjeldgaard, 2005; Irwin, 2003; Kjeldgaard & Bengtsson, 2005). Furthermore, this linkage is seen in the attempts to brand users of tattooing or any form of body modification as delinquents and the activity at best a risky practice (Braithwaite et al., 2001), and at worst a form of self-abuse initiated and

condoned by society (Jeffereys, 2000; Pitts, 2003; Post, 1968). This can be seen even to recent times in modern medical publications:

Evidence indicates that it is the mere presence of the tattoo, not its artistic content, that correlates with certain diagnoses. Thus, any tattoo can be viewed as a warning sign that should alert the practicing physician to look for underlying psychiatric conditions.
(Raspa & Cusack, 1990, p.1483)

Yet, this generalisation of negativity is another form of defining the act and the individual undertaking it as a member of a group, by imposing external morals. This however occurs without investigating the determinants of the activity, the context of its specific usage, or the activity itself. As can be seen, the negativity itself flows from its presence and not the associated design, or placement; this is due to its difference from other body modifications, which occurs through its permanence, not its individual meaning.

Overall, the market-place cultures area of CCT relates to the theories of communitas or tribus {neo-tribes} and belonging, which originates from the writings of Maffesoli (1996), which deal with the idea of neo-tribes, groups created out of a fragmented society, due to the activities of globalization, and post-industrial society and economy. In addition to this, the meaning of personal identity is no longer a fixed creation and can be formed or reformed through consumption (Belk, 1988). This is related in theoretical terms to the views of Baudrillard (1998), who, in his work on consumption, stated that our entire society is structured around consumption and the respective meanings behind this consumption. By the flaunting of commodity centred signs consumers can gain prestige, identity, and standing - an idea formulated from Veblen's (1899) theories of conspicuous consumption. In being a sign or a representation the item or experience is consumed for its symbol which exists in a micro {personal} and a macro {societal} form (Barthes, 1964, 1972; Baudrillard, 1998).

In terms of the tattoo consumer, the creation of a consumption culture exists firstly with the tattoo itself, which once gained gives the consumer automatic access into the tattoo community. Secondly this also occurs outside the overall

tattoo culture when the individual identifies him or herself with a specific group in terms of tattoo ownership, or the design. In relation to this, wider society rightly or wrongly attributes the ownership of a tattoo to the automatic belonging to a certain group, such as sex workers, criminals, bike gangs, the working class, etc. The use of such symbolic activities to identify the individual was described by Maffessoli “aesthetics is a way of feeling in common. It is also a means of recognising ourselves. *Parva esthetical?* Be that it may, the hodgepodge of clothing, multi-hued hairstyles and other punk manifestations act as a glue; theatricality founds and reconfirms the community” (Maffessoli, 1996, p.77). He continued this:

...the role of the mask, which we know has the function, amongst others, of integrating the persona in an overall architectonic. The mask may be an elaborate or colourful hairstyle, an original tattoo...all these examples, it subordinates person to this secret society which is the chosen affinity group.

(Maffessoli, 1996, p.91)

This is however a permanent declaration of belonging, which is at odds with the idea of a fragmented cultural identity, as the individuals’ membership of a subculture {and also of the tattoo (sub)culture} is permanently etched within their dermis. This limits their capacity to change as once they gain a tattoo, they are locked into a tattooed body, a tattooed identity. Humanity, in an attempt to understand its impermanence undertakes, or relates to activities that involve permanence or others that are inevitable and unchangeable (such as birth and death), which are used to contextualise, understand and communicate impermanence relative to their existence, this can be seen in a comment of Arendt, who stated that:

Birth and death presuppose a world which is not in constant movement, but whose durability and relative permanence make appearance and disappearance possible, which existed before anyone individual appeared into it and will survive his eventual departure.

(Arendt, 1958, p.97)

It has to be noted that the tattoo, in socio-historical terms among a variety of

cultures {e.g. Maori (Robley, 1998)} is a permanent representation of transcendence from one role or position to another, i.e. showing the individual leaving of childhood, becoming part of, or *communitas* with, the adult world. Thus the gaining of a tattoo links the world in 'constant movement' (i.e. aging) with permanence in terms of a gaining of a tattoo to show attainment of coming of age. As this is an activity within the group predates the individuals and, all things being equal, continuing after they are dead, the action symbolises permanence. The tattoo equates with the 'durability and relative permanence' that 'make appearance and disappearance possible', which Ardent commented upon. This is a view expanded upon by Whitehouse in his work on initiation cults:

...there is a universal recognition of the biological processes of birth, maturation, reproduction, physical deterioration and death which characterize the life-cycles of humans and many other species. Social groups, however, are not subject to this kind of process; they have a notional permanence, which is unaffected by arrival and departure of particular members....ritual provides a way of conceptualizing a timeless social order. Through the caricature and violent negation of biology and process, ritual affirms the transcendent authority of society, represented in the timeless order of the ancestral world.
(Whitehouse, 1996, p.704)

This view of ritual in terms of tattoo consumption relating to group identity or *communitas* has strong links to the historical study of ritual and liminality. It shows that the activity itself is on the cusp of existence {liminal} in various terms. The tattoo is on the liminal part of the body, {the skin}, which is the boundary of bodily existence. While tattooing in itself a liminal activity, as it is neither fully accepted nor rejected by society. These ideas involving ritual originated in the work of Van Gennep (1960) later developed by Turner (1974). Van Gennep described bodily transformations, often involving tattooing, scarification, or painting, that were used in ritual "rites of passage." Lévi-Strauss (1963) looked at the body as a surface that was waiting for culture to be imprinted on this, with: "the purpose of Maori tattooings is not only to imprint a drawing onto the flesh but also to stamp onto the mind all the traditions and philosophy of the group" (Lévi-Strauss, 1963, p.257).

These views on ritual and liminality were paralleled by Bakhtin (1984), in terms of the carnivalesque, which show that the process of being tattooed actually moves consumers from one aspect of existence to another. This, in terms of identity, is the badge of the community or, in terms of the tattoo community, the more important issue is the tattooing itself rather than the design being the badge of identity (De Mello, 2000; Kjeldgaard & Bengtsson, 2005). In such cases the act of becoming tattooed falls into the area of ritual or sacred consumption. This is when the very act of consuming/purchasing a specific item/article is seen to be a transcendental experience (Belk, Wallendorf, & Sherry, 1989) and is due either to the sacred nature of the product or the symbolic nature encompassed within it (Schouten, 1991).

The use of tattooing within religious rites is linked to the idea of the agony and the ecstasy (Camphausen, 2000; Mercury, 2000) and blood sacrifice of the individual (Turner, 1974; Van Gennep, 1960). This is believed to imitate the nature of birth and simulates rebirth within another community (Gell, 1993; Turner, 1974). The tattoo within anthropological studies has long been accepted as a rite of passage (Van Gennep, 1960) and/or a symbol of a religious or special caste (Gell, 1993). This does not only concern tribal people such as the Ibo of Sarawak (Gilbert, 2000), but also gangs and individuals in the west where people get tattooed as they join a street gang (Hunt & Phelan, 1998; Phillips, 2001), subcultural group (Atkinson, 2003b) or come of age (Camphausen, 2000; Gilbert, 2000; Hardy, 1988).

It is interesting to note that the more fractural nature of a society and the less stable a society internally, the members use less permanent physical signs and signals to identify their group, while in opposition external pressures increase the use of permanent signs. This is:

...because of the mobility of individuals across groups and consequent shifting of alliances, individuals within communities that engage in frequent internal warfare should not be willing to submit to rituals that leave permanent markers, such as tattoos or scars, which can signal group

identity. Such markers might hinder their ability to create or join new groups, or at least minimize their credibility amongst new group members.
(Sosis, Kressb & Boster, 2007, p.236)

The use of less permanent modifications in terms of tattoos today occurs as tattoo mimicry, this has been noted by academics such as Craik, who argues that such false tattoos “have alleviated some of the stigma attached to tattooing and enabled it to become a component of high fashion....that is desirable because of its exotic associations” (Craik, 1994, p.25). This “dabbling” nature of tattoo mimicry alongside tattoo usage relates to the ideas espoused by Turner (1999a) in his work about tattooing. He differentiated between “social commitments or loyalties as either hot or cool” and “thick solidarities....hot loyalties or thin solidarities and....ironic or cool loyalties” (Turner, 1999a, p.41). In doing so, he wished to show the difference in the use of the tattoo in primitive societies in terms of strictly understood and defined meanings and reasoning to that in present day society. He commented that, in our present day society, the tattoo is an “optional, decorative, impermanent and narcissistic” item and has become, “a regular aspect of consumer culture” (Turner, 1999a, p.43), rather than a necessity. In previous time phases this view of the tattoo being “optional, decorative, impermanent and narcissistic” was also the case. This view of the tattoo can be found throughout the tattoos existence and across societies, it is **not** due to our present day consumer culture.

Turner’s views are also at odds with others, such as Sweetman (1999), who found that tattooees show differing levels of commitment and that this depended on the tattooee’s view on the permanence of the tattoo. His work showed that consumers realised that there was a ‘fashionable element’ to contemporary body modification, “but several also pointed to the permanence of tattooing as problematic in this regard” (Sweetman, 1999, p.59). This problematic or more accurate ‘regret’ aspect of tattooing is due to its inability to be changed, and the results of research in this thesis does find this idea of commitment does occur in relation to tattooing.

However, the use of tattooing originating from non-permanent modifications,

occurred without the such ideas of ‘hot’ and ‘cold’ commitments, or the reduction of stigma according to Turner and Craik respectively. Furthermore, entire cultures such as North American Natives developed their use of tattooing from its non-permanent relatives such as body painting, henna and Mehndi. In fact, this may have been the actual process in creating tattooing per se, as described by Hambly in his anthropological work on the history of tattooing: “Tattoo by puncture was probably a deliberate invention of some genius who saw a way of making magico-religious colouring more permanent” (Hambly, 1925, pp.18-19).

It is pertinent to note that within Arnould and Thompson’s 2005 review of CCT, they state that market-place cultures define themselves and occur in opposition to dominant ideologies, while their later 2007 critique gives a more realistic view to the placement of:

...a more complex and ambivalent dynamic in which consumers exert agency and pursue identity goals through a dialogue (both practical and narrative) with the cultural frames imposed by dominant ideologies.
(Arnold & Thompson, 2007, p.10)

In case of the tattoo, this is the most accurate interpretation as while there are a variety of subcultures which use tattoos and tattooing, there exists an overarching or general (dominant) culture where the tattoo is acceptable and feted. This exists in parallel with a negative view of the tattoo which equally rejects the tattoo. This lack of an exact identification of acceptability, (i.e. ‘fuzzy nature’) and acceptability being analogous with the relative permanence of the activity was noted by Nathanson et al. in their investigation into markers of deviance:

Although acceptance is increasing in Western society, body modification still has overtones of cultural deviance.....Body modification lies at one end of a fuzzy spectrum of cultural deviance markers (CDMs). This radical end of the spectrum involves invasive skin-alterations that are relatively enduring (Martin, 1997). Besides piercings and tattoos, other examples include branding, flesh tunnels and pattern-cutting (Myers, 1992). Less radical but more publicly provocative markers include extreme hairstyles such as shaved head, spiked hair, and Mohawk cuts (Hebdige, 1979). Although least radical

with respect to permanency, Goth makeup and clothing tend to be worn for their sinister significance...
(Nathanson, et al., p.780)

This absence of strictly defined levels of acceptability of body modification leads to mixed cultural messages which, in turn, create this dualistic existence of the tattoo being feted and rejected in equal measure within society. This is still extant and has an historical origin which is traceable as long as the tattoo has been documented. This has an affect on Turner's analysis on tattooing, in that his opinion is that the use of the tattoo today differs from past use in primitive societies, as today it does not have a strictly defined meaning. Yet, this is incorrect as his view 'strictly' understood aspect ignores the dualistic positive/negative view of the tattoo which has occurred since time immemorial and throughout various cultures. Furthermore it does not take into consideration the practicalities of individuals, societies and (sub)cultures deliberately appropriating and using tattooing specifically due to its permanence.

The duality of meaning of the tattoo can be expressed as a universal or archetypal sign (Jung, 1959, 1990). This duality will be discussed later in the following sections about the consumer identity projects, the body, and the grotesque body.

2.3 CONSUMER IDENTITY PROJECTS

The next related aspect of CCT to be reviewed and linked with tattoo consumption is the concept of Consumer identity projects. As group identity coalesces and is defined by consumption within market-place cultures, Consumer identity projects deal with a similar feature of individual identity in that it is concerned with how consumers manipulate and use market produced resources to: "forge a coherent if diversified and often fragmented sense of self" (Arnould & Thompson, 2005, p. 871).

The basis of this is the assertion that the market-place has become the repository of resources (actual and symbolic) that individuals use through direct and vicarious consumption activities (Belk, 1988; Holt, 2002). This was commented

on by Miller and Rose (1997, p.1) in their work on consumption: “Have consumption subcultures replaced class, region, generation and gender as sources of interest and identification?” Their comment shows the link between group (macro) and individual (micro) identity as these are interrelated. Identity creation is seen as an active process with consumers both seeking and manufacturing identities (Mick & Buhl, 1992; Schau & Gilly, 2003).

This can occur either as an understood goal and objective or as an indistinct and vague path or process (Arnould & Price, 1993; Thompson & Tambyah, 1999), which can result in internal conflicts and contradictions (Hirschman, 1992; Mick & Fournier, 1998; Murray, 2002; O’Guinn & Faber, 1989; Otnes et al, 1997; Thompson, 1996). For example, according to Schau and Gilly, consumers’ use of web based technology allows individuals to “negate prior assumptions about linear narration” (Schau & Gilly, 2003, p.398). While Arnould and Thompson describe this as one of a variety of “coping strategies, compensatory mechanisms, and juxtapositions of seemingly antithetical meanings and ideals” (Arnould & Thompson, 2005, p.871). This is comparable with the previous comment regarding the dualistic position the tattoo holds within society. Being both accepted and rejected, it is a balancing act in which tattoo consumers exist, through their tattoo consumption. Yet even with the use of internet or other such mechanisms the consumer uses to create, mould, and describe their identity, these can only be used to mask a tattooed identity not remove it.

One development of the investigation of the market-place identity projects is the investigation of how the market organises and structures consumer identity that individuals can then pick and choose. The choices that consumers make while are personal and meaningful to them, create identities; by using symbols and narratives which occur through the consumerist market-place. For example fan identity that was investigated by Kozinets (2001) who illuminated how its ideals and background were created and projected by the mass media; while others (Belk et al, 2003; Murray, 2002) demonstrate how individual identities originate through the market (media, advertising) and the products themselves.

Belk illustrates this process:

Consumer imaginations of and cravings for consumer goods not yet possessed can mesmerize and seem to promise magical meaning in life. Among the sorcerers helping to enchant these goods are advertisers, retailers, peddlers, and other merchants of mystique. But these magical systems of promotion (Williams, 1980) and dreamworlds of display (Williams, 1982) are not the only processes at work in bewitching us. Prior work also suggests that consumers willingly act as sorcerers' apprentices in window-shopping, daydreaming, television viewing, magazine reading, Internet surfing, word-of-mouth conversing, and an often not-so-casual observing of others' consumption (Belk et al, 2003, p.327)

In terms of the concept of created narratives, Holt (2002) gives a post-modern view on identity creation with consumers generating communal visions or emotions described by Firat and Venkatesh as "socially ordered production" (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995, pp.255–256). This in turn creates the development of "unruly bricoleurs who engage in nonconformist producerly consumption practices" (Holt, 2002, p.88).

This bricolage occurs as the never ending need of the market to create 'difference,' as the "most creative, unorthodox, singularizing consumer sovereignty practices are the most productive for the system" (Holt, 2002, p.88). This creation of difference is necessary for the manufacture of new, or to reform, cultural materials that can once again be disseminated via the market as products and symbols for the new identity. This activity was noted by Davis in his work on fashion, culture, and identity. In relation the use of signs and symbols, he stated that:

Subcultures produce their own particular practices which are in part body orientations or ways of walking and talking which are worn like a 'second skin' on the body of the skinhead, punk, raver etc.
(Davis, 1992, p.138)

These practices are then taken on by the individual who wishes to associate them with such subcultures, but, at the same time, synthesise this identity into their own personal identity (Davies, 1992 Hebdige, 1979). This change of symbolic

meaning is not a new activity. Changes of sign, symbol and meaning occurring over time and from group to group were noted by Peirce, one of the initial definers of the study of sign:

Symbols grow. They come into being by development out of other signs, particularly from likenesses or from mixed signs partaking of the nature of likenesses and symbols. We think only in signs. These mental signs are of mixed nature; the symbol-parts of them are called concepts. If a man makes a new symbol, it is by thoughts involving concepts. So it is only out of symbols that a new symbol can grow. *Omne symbolum de symbolo*. A symbol, once in being, spreads among the peoples. In use and in experience, its meaning grows. Such words as force, law, wealth, marriage, bear for us very different meanings from those they bore to our barbarous ancestors.
(Pierce, 1894)

There is then permanence within the action of changing the meaning, in relation to the tattoo as while the meaning of the tattoo design within society or subculture may change, to the individual who has gained the tattoo their choice and reasoning behind it cannot. This is due to the fact as they are as frozen and as permanent as their representative, the tattoo itself.

The link between identity and consumption can be seen as a logical progression within the growth of consumer behaviour as an academic subject. Indeed, from its inception after the Second World War, advertising was linked to identity through consumption (Miller & Rose, 1997; Hirschman, 1991a; Hirschman & Thompson, 1997). Advertising was viewed as having the aim of making individuals identify with items and objects. The process involves the classifying of individuals (Miller & Rose, 1997) and matching them with unconscious personality images or consumption based stereotypes (Auty & Elliott, 1998; Holbrook & Batra, 1987). The resulting image is then used to promote and sell the product. This categorisation and classification of individuals is undertaken to elicit a breakdown of market share, market divergence, and methods of observation and prediction of market forces (Miller & Rose, 1997).

The tattooed identity fit with the particular view that identities are structured and

can be created around the act or experience of consumption (Baudrillard, 1998; Belk, 1988; Cova, 1997; Featherstone, 1991). In terms of a fragmented self, this is more questionable. On one level this can be seen in the cultural appropriation of the tattoo per-se as a symbolic imagery within subcultures which then can be used inside the creation of individual identity. This also can be seen in the use of certain designs and their meanings that are used by subcultures, which at the same time have meanings for an individual that can differ from those 'given' by the subcultures. Another issue which links to this fragmented sense of self is the sourcing of tattoo designs from societies and cultures from an assortment of geographical areas and time periods which, in conjunction with the development of tattoo brands, gives the individual an eclectic mix of designs allowing for a sense of play (Firat, Dholakia & Venkatesh, 1995; Firat & Shultz, 1997; Firat & Venkatesh, 1995), and through the pick and mix of designs, the identity can be moulded through the symbols and messages projected (Firat & Shultz, 1997).

The very physicality of the tattoo is however at variance with the idea of the fragmented identity which occurs through its physical permanence. While the meaning of the tattoo design is malleable, its meaning as a tattoo is not flexible, or changeable, in that it is frozen, through its very permanence. This is more in line with Bakhtin's Grottesque body, in that it exists in two extremes at the same instance, namely the dual meaning of positivity and negativity. The dualism of (non)-acceptability is not generated within the system of signs/symbols of the tattoo - it is imposed from without. It is imposed by the historical/cultural developments surrounding the tattoo that have existed within western society since the ancient Greeks and Romans (Jones, 1987, 2000; Mayor, 1999). While in the 17-18th centuries the permanent physicality of the tattoo was, in effect, a physical representation of the difference between the ideas of Rousseau (1762a, 1762b) and Hobbes (1651), which related to whether human beings were naturally 'good' or 'evil'. This was played out through the interaction with, and representation of, 'primitive' or 'historic' peoples during this time and afterwards (Caplan, 2000a; Fleming, 2000, 2001; Fletcher, 1882). The tattoo being a way of identifying the civilised/uncivilised, or individuals who do not conform to the norms of that society such as criminals (Gell, 1993; Lombroso, 2006; Rubin, 1995). The duality of civilised/uncivilised is aptly articulated by Bell in her 1999

work on Tattooing:

Tattoos, as a visual means to separate oneself from the normalized culture, can be thought of as a “loaded choice,” a choice that draws attention to oneself intentionally (Hebdige 101). Although Dick Hebdige refers to specific images, clothing, and hairstyles as signs, I believe that the appearance of *any* permanent mark on the body is a sign to the mainstream culture of one’s separation, whether one meant it as such or not, regardless of the chosen image. Imagery comes into play where specific and personal identity is concerned, but, in relation to normalization, a tattoo is enough to separate oneself from society at large. (Bell, 1999, p.54)

The other message promulgated that tattooed people are attractive as well as abhorrent; with the ideas of exoticism and difference, (i.e. abnormal and atypical) are the main driving force for the use of the tattoo within the media (Craik, 1994). While in its personal symbolic nature the tattoo has an infinite variation of symbols and meanings in terms of the design, yet this cannot overcome the macro view supported by society that there is a limit to what is acceptable in terms of tattooing. This is reflected in its {society’s} official legal limits (HSE, 2003a; 2003b), and unofficial limits - such as the limiting of work prospects for individuals as varied as police officers (Steele, 2000) and international models (Cristina, 2006). In recent research on hiring practices (Swanger, 2006), visible tattooing and piercing practices were described as analogous to an action to: “self-mutilate” (Swanger, 2006, p.155). A survey of 37 human resource managers as part of this work found that of the 30 responders (81.08% of total contacted), 26 (86.67%) stated that an interviewee with such modifications would be viewed negatively by their organization, 3 (10.00%) responses were neutral, and 1 (3.33%) response was positive regarding tattoos/piercing (Swanger, 2006, p.154-5).

In the context of the ‘post-modern’ identity, these issues fit into the idea of the constant state of change with a mixture of tattoo designs projecting different identities. Furthermore, through the interaction of individual and group identities (Elliott, 1997; Featherstone, 1991; Firat & Shultz, 1997), it creates the idea of identity being fluid (Firat, Dholakia & Venkatesh, 1995; Firat & Shultz, 1997;

Firat & Venkatesh, 1995). Another aspect which fits into the parameters of post-modern consumption is the use of new media, in particular the Internet, around which tattoo consumers interact, linking to views of hyper-reality and simulation (Baudrillard, 1983, 1998; Firat & Shultz, 1997; Lyotard, 1993). Yet, these ideas are in opposition to the permanent nature and history of the tattoo, which in this instance occurs on several levels.

First, the physical permanence fixes the physical identity which in turn limits the fluidity of identity play, the tattoo would have to be hidden or synthesised into the new physical identity: as it cannot be ignored. Even when the argument of tattoo removal is presented into the equation of physical identity creation (and recreation) the situation is that tattoo removal is neither an efficient nor complete activity. Certain colours cannot be removed through laser removal (Bee, 2000; Kupermanbeade, Levine & Ashinoff, 2001; Luisant Laser Tattoo Removal, 2006), while this type and all other forms of removal (Bee, 2000; Plastic Surgery Network, 2004; Varma & Langian, 1999) always present the individual with permanent scarring (Plastic Surgery Network, 2004) which again limits the physical identity of the individual. Secondly, the idea of the use of 'new' media is not new to the tattoo or tattoo consumption, as in the past what was considered 'new media' such as engraving, movable print in the mass media, alongside other such technology was used to purvey stories, personal recollections, and consumption experiences of the tattoo (Einhorn & Abler, 1998; Gilbert, 2000; Lockheart & Hemingson, 2000). Thirdly, in the context of hyper-reality and simulation is also not new for the tattoo, from the earliest point of tattoo commentary onward there has been a thread of simulation of the use of the tattoo and with the tattoo. The idea of individuals copying tattooing but in a non-permanent way (or simulation) is a specific form of separate body modification (body-painting, mehndi, etc.) indeed there is debate about which came first the permanent or non-permanent form of such physical body modification and which form copied which (Hambly, 1925; Robley, 1996; Rubin, 1995).



Picture removed due to copyright

Fig:1 Laser tattoo removal

Note mark left by removal showing the tattoo is permanent even when removed.

In terms of the creation of identity, whether that of an individual or a group (as it is made up of individuals) it is important to turn attention to the body, as the human body is the primary projector of identity for the individual and the tattoo is a body modification. Thus the tattoos relationship with and contextualisation in terms of the human body is necessary.

Physical identity and the body

Scholars have only recently discovered the human body itself has a history. Not only has it been perceived, interpreted and represented differently in different epochs, but it has also been lived differently, brought into being within dissimilar material cultures, subjected to various technologies, means of control, and incorporated into different rhythms of production and consumption, pleasure and pain.
(Gallacher & Laqueur, 1987, p.vii)

This investigation of the body is to contextualise and understand the importance of physicality to the tattoo. In particular the physical permanence, that is attributed to the tattoo and which influences the identity, creation of community, aesthetics, and meanings which envelope the tattoo and can be identified through the socio-historical review of the tattoo. The permanence is the tattoos' principle aspect, which occurs directly through its physicality and from which develops the majority of its meanings and characteristics. This physicality occurs through and with the body.

Until lately, the body itself has been somewhat ignored by academics and the studies undertaken were limited in scope and relevance. Recently the views of academia have changed, as the importance of the body has become apparent. Interest has arisen in how various views on the body have emerged and how it interacts with the social and cultural mores of the time period in which it exists. How physicality fits into the creation of identity by individuals and the activities undertaken with and through the body which determine identity are two points of specific interest. In general, the statement of Gallacher and Laqueur at the beginning of this section puts into context the features, problems and points of relevance that any study on the body has to take into account.

Examining theories of the body is highly pertinent to this investigation because tattooing requires the body in order for tattooing to occur. Without physicality, tattooing would not have its embedded values, emotions or morals. It might just be another set of ethnic or unusual designs. Thus, the study of tattoo consumption must concern itself with theories of the body and the use, culture and traditions surrounding the human body, as well as the act of being tattooed.

Defining the Body

Does the body end with the skin or should we include hair, nails and other epidermal body products within the bounds of the subject...surely the decorative body arts such as tattooing, scarification, cranial modification and body painting should also be considered if the medium of the human body is to have a definitional basis of the subject of inquiry. It has been shown that it is insignificant (if not inaccurate) to sharply differentiate between bodily decoration and adornment, on the one hand, and the clothing of the body on the other.
(Polhemus, 1978, p.28)

The centrality of the body is self-evident as it is the source of individual consciousness: this raises the question of how the body is defined as “the body.” Is it purely a physical, material construct, or does it have other dimensions? Where do its boundaries end? Is it at the extremities of skin, hair and nails or does its influence spill over onto its surroundings, coverings, or vice versa

(Polhemus, 1978). This affects the views of activities undertaken by the body in terms of interpersonal interaction or contextualising the world(s) in which people exist through the use of body image and schema.

There is a diversity of definitions for body image and schema dependant on the academic discipline (Cash, 2004). The term and definition “Body Image” originated in psychological, neurological and other medical related studies (Cash, 2004). Originally it was used interchangeably with “Body Schema” {Körperschema} (Schilder, 1935) leading to methodological and conceptual confusion in various disciplines. Cash (2004) gives a useful working definition of body image, which: “refers to the multifaceted psychological experience of embodiment, especially but not exclusively one’s physical appearance” (Cash, 2004, p.1). Yet, there are further definitions. For example, some academics such as Garma (1949) state that clothes and body decorations are psychological variables of body image. This assessment assumes that clothes should be considered a defensive covering of the body, which has some significant association with concepts like ‘foetal membrane’ and other enwrapping symbols. Garma also states that clothes are an extension of body schema, whereas other academics such as Jourard and Secord (1955) say that there are shared group norms concerning ideal dimensions for each body part not just the whole of the body.

The linkage of the physical construct of the body to identity is a deeper notion of identity, it is how the body is constructed by its occupation and use {embodied identity}. This includes not only movement and use of the body, but how the body creates self-identity (Belk, 1988; Joy & Venkatesh, 1994; Thompson & Hirschman, 1995; Turner, 1991). The way the body is used within the context of the creation of identity and embodiment is subtler than that of the influence of race, sexuality or gender, which is more obvious, but this is actually just as important, if not more so. The way an individual creates and then uses his embodied identity is paramount within the creation of the idea of ‘me’ that each and every sentient being has.

Part of the creation of identity resides in body image and body schema which

create the embodied identity of the individual. Although the body has an independent existence, it is created socially and culturally. Within our own dominant western ideology, the particular concept of the body is thought of as having a masculine definition (Carr, 1998). Another example, within the terms of white or European ethnicity, blonde hair, blue eyes, and a certain size is given as the ideal concept of physical attractiveness. Further to this, there is also within the early 21st century a cult of youth and a culture of the body beautiful (Joy & Venkatesh, 1994; Polce-Lynch *et al.*, 1998). This ‘ideal figure’ in the past evolved due to changes in diet, fashion, culture and religion and was time and place specific; in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries being ‘fat’ showed disposable income and thus status. This is no longer the case as mass consumerism alongside mass media has created a position where the western ‘norm’ of the body is shown, advertised, and replicated within other cultures that normally do not have the same definitions (Chapkis, 1987; Kacen, 2000).

Individuals view themselves in relation to others and to what they perceive as the ‘normal’ body, thereby creating a system of bodily classification. The ‘normal’ body however, is not static over time, cultures, or age of the individual; this being noted by Fisher and Cleveland in their work on body image and personality:

By and large, body image has been defined as a psychological variable. That is, it is usually described as a psychological variable. That is, it is usually described as evolving process in which the individual experiences his body in a manifold situations and also notes the varied reactions of others to it.
(Fisher & Cleveland, 1968, p.51)

The basic activity is problematic as to the societal nature of the interpretation of signs, symbols and meanings, but there are however other problems, within the act of creating a referential point within one’s own body:

Every region has such multiple meanings, and so any locale on the body is truly much more difficult to identify and conceptualise than might be first realised. Without exception, you are faced with an enormously difficult task as you try to

understand your own body psychologically.
(Fisher & Cleveland, 1968, p.x)

The way that the body develops identity and self-reference is a continuous process which changes and alters as the individual advances through life, has their body altered through surgery, accident, or within the case of this study, the tattoo. The latter is a permanent change, impermanent changes differ in terms of overall symbolic meaning which is perceived through concepts such as social acceptability and group identity.

In terms of the symbolic nature of the body there has been substantial research into this area, the most widely known of these have been Freud (1927) and Jung (1983, 1977, 1990) whose main works on psychoanalysis revolved around dreams, signs and the body. The subjects of garments and the semiotics of food were investigated by Barthes (1972). Freud's work included the symbolic body and sexuality these specifically have been developed into an entire set of signs popularly known as Freudian symbols (Appignanesi & Zarate, 1999). In contrast, Jung, after differing with Freud about the subconscious, created a view of universal or archetypal signs (Jung, 1983, 1990). Jung talked of the all-encompassing nature of the symbolic character of existence:

...when people feel they are living the symbolic life, that they are actors in the divine drama. That gives the only meaning to human life; everything else is banal and you can dismiss it. A career, producing of children, are all maya (illusion) compared to that one thing, that your life is meaningful.

(Jung, 1977, p. 275)

The functions of the symbolic meanings of products and consumption activities operate in two directions: outward, in forming the social world, through social-symbolism and inward in the construction of self-identity, and self-symbolism (Auty & Elliott, 1998).

The importance in the context of the tattoo is that the sign in the tattoo design has moved from being 2D {two-dimensional} to 3D {three-dimensional} through its projection on the body. This is an extra dimension of information and

interpretation into the message(s) and meaning(s) being expressed. In terms of semiotics, 3D is more efficient and effective than a 2D example of the same design (Merritt & Sopousek, 2002). The New York Stock Exchange's introduction of its 3D Virtual Trading Floor showed that 3D information projection and monitoring systems have improvements over 2D models. In the context of the tattoo, the third dimension is a living object bringing in more concepts and contexts in which meanings can be found and projected:

Once data has been extruded from two dimensions to three, additional considerations are activated. Color (sic), form and line become linked to space, time, iconography, social symbology and cognitive/corporeal mapping.
(Merritt & Sopousek, 2002, p.48)

In terms of the tattoo this is important as without the physicality (the third dimension) the tattoo would not have the meanings such as acceptability, group membership, or identity projection etc. that are related to it. These occur through the physical permanence of the tattoo, without permanence the tattoo would not be a tattoo and as such lose its nuanced meanings. They may have similar attributes such as projection of identity, but its symbolic meaning would be different, i.e. the 'tattoo' would merely be body painting or similar activity. While these can be used in a comparable way to the tattoo for identity projection, they would not have the same meaning due to the more acceptable nature of body painting vis a vis tattooing due to the differences of relative permanence of the activities. The projection of these differences can be found by looking at the 'Mass-Mediated Market-place Ideologies and Consumers' Interpretive Strategies', which includes the manipulation and use of media in presenting and contextualising the tattoo and its message, and is the next aspect of CCT to be investigated.

2.4 MASS-MEDIATED MARKET-PLACE IDEOLOGIES AND CONSUMERS' INTERPRETIVE STRATEGIES

This area of CCT examines how consumers' ideologies (i.e. systems) of meaning occur, and how they direct and replicate consumers' feelings and activities so

that they guard and protect the ruling or prevailing interests within society (Hirschman, 1993). The central aspects of this area originate from critical and media theory (e.g. Dawson, 2003; Fiske, 1989; Hall, 1993; Lears, 1994; Twitchell, 1996). This includes investigating: what are the normative meanings within the messages that commercial media convey about consumption (Hirschman, 1988). In what way do the consumers interpret these messages and create responses to them that can be identified in terms of their actions (Hetrick & Lozada, 1994; Hirschman & Thompson, 1997; Murray & Ozanne, 1991; Murray, Ozanne & Shapiro, 1994)? In interpreting and responding to messages, consumers are viewed, as 'interpretive agents', their activities in denoting meanings vary from at one point in accepting and co-opting the general (dominant) accounts of consumer identity and lifestyles that are represented and projected in the mass media and advertising to those consumers whose activities are conscious choices to diverge from the ideological directions disseminated in the media. The common denominator of this diverse latter group of consumers in terms of identity creation and recreation (play) is a critical view of corporate capitalism and marketing as it exists as a cultural and social establishment (Holt, 2002; Kozinets, 2002; Kozinets & Handelman, 2004; Murray, 2002; Thompson, 2004).

On a separate level, this area of research also scrutinizes the management of consumer identity projects and concurrent interaction that occurs through economic and cultural globalization (Arnould, 1989; Belk et al, 2003; Bonsu & Belk, 2003; Coulter et al, 2003; Wilk, 1995). Another aspect of this area of analysis, is the investigation of specific cultural production systems that project images to consumers, i.e. marketing communications, the fashion industry etc. (McCracken, 1986; Thompson & Haytko, 1997), which through their activities within their overall narratives methodically influence consumers towards particular types of identity projects. This last issue significant as the tattoo, and representations of the tattoo, have become another tool used by the advertising industry, both as a conveyer of information within adverts (The Promotional Marketing Association, 2000), and as a medium for advertising (BBC, 2002; 2005a, 2005b).

Work in this area of CCT has developed from prior work concerning the design and management of built and natural servicescapes and their effects they bring to bear on overall consumer experiences and cultural ideals (McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002; Peñaloza, 2000, 2001; Price & Arnould, 1999; Price, Arnould & Tiemey 1995; Sherry, 1990, 1998; Sherry & McGrath, 1989). This occurs by the use and reworking of familiar and celebrated cultural narratives or mythologies e.g. the Wild West (Peñaloza, 2001); Frontiersmen (Belk & Costa, 1998); accounts of athletic achievement (Sherry, 1998) which are used to serve commercial aims and to guide consumer experiences with specific objectives (Arnould & Price, 1993; Joy & Sherry, 2003; Peñaloza, 2001; Sherry, 1998). The analogy with the creation of a store layout that is used to steer consumers' physicality through retail space, servicescapes do so on a mental level through the use of narrative designs that lead the consumer through the use of emotional (Escalas & Stern, 2003; Holbrook & Batra, 1987) and cultural (Hirschman, Scott & Wells, 1998) narratives within their practices of self-narration and self-creation. It raises the question of, how and in what manner does the material world, i.e. bricks and mortar interact within the consumption experience, which was characterised as the: "built environment embodies brand essence and how consumers respond to it" (Joy & Sherry, 2003, p.261). The symbolic denotations, cultural principles, and ideological incentives that are encoded in the culture texts used within such servicescapes do not refer solely to the physical attributes of servicescapes but also include the influence of advertising (Escalas & Stern, 2003; McQuarrie & Mick, 1996; Stern, 1993).

The employment of analytical tools such as semiotic and literary critical theories when investigating servicescapes is favourable (Hirschman, 1988, 1990; Mick, 1986; Stern, 1989, 1995). While multi-methods (Escalas & Stern, 2003; McQuarrie & Mick, 1992, 1996, 1999) are also used because of the complex nature of adverts which give meaning in a variety of ways (i.e. music, imagery, and copy), to create understanding of an advert, and give an account of how advertising works which differs from usual information processing conducts (Scott, 1990, 1994a, 1994b). In addition to adverts as sources of lifestyle and identity directions, popular culture texts in terms of television programs, radio programs, films, music videos, books, magazines etc. express pure ideologies of

the market-place informing consumers how to look, how to act, what are desirable, aspirational and idealised objects, activities, and lifestyles (Belk & Pollay, 1985; Hirschman, 1988, 1990; Schroeder & Borgerson, 1998; Stern, 1993, 1995). By deciphering and deconstructing these mass-mediated market-place ideologies, it can be seen how ‘capitalist cultural production systems’ encourage consumers to crave specific identity types and lifestyle principles (Brinol, Petty, & Tormala, 2004).

In relation to this, Deighton and Grayson (1995), within their work, elaborate the view that consumers become freely entangled, and actively submissive to the market-place narratives that are projected. Contrasting this point is Scott’s (1994a) view of the consumer as a resistor against the markets imposition of ideological frameworks. This occurs in a variety of ways where the narratives espoused by the market are critically managed and where concepts and incentives are manipulated by the consumers in ways different to the intended ones. Such adaptation and manipulation of media representations can be seen in the way consumers interpret adverts in relation to their lifestyle choices and identity projects (Belk & Kates, 2001; Mick & Buhl, 1992; Ritson & Elliott, 1999) In addition, consumers’ use and interpretation of such adverts does not necessarily lead to the purchase orientated aims of the advert envisaged by their creators.

Overall, the views espoused in this area of CCT state that consumers are active in such interpretative activities when dealing with market based ideologies within the media, rather than merely acquiescing to normative narratives. This leads to the creation of lifestyle choices which confront and challenge dominant consumerist norms or which are in opposition to corporate power (Dobscha & Ozanne, 2001; Kozinets, 2002; Kozinets & Handelman, 2004; Murray & Ozanne, 1991; Murray, Ozanne, & Shapiro, 1994; Thompson & Haytko, 1997). This opposition to the mass mediated ideologies as purveyed by the market in turn influences the overall messages available (Kozinets & Handelman, 2004), and expands the culture and philosophy behind consumer activities.

In terms of the mass media and the tattoo, there can be seen a permanence of, or

longitudinal (historical) framework, in terms of present day messages {ideology(ies)} espoused and projected by the market specifically and media in general. There are links in context and signification of those currently projected, in relation to those of the past. This specifically occurs in relation to a dualistic view of the tattoo that equates with an equal attraction (or positivity) and repudiation (or negativity) of the tattoo (Goulding & Follett, 2002b; 2003; Sanders, 1985). These positive and negative views surrounding tattoos are seen in a variety of aspects, including the age of the tattooee (Anderson, 2001; Atkinson, 2003a; Brown, Perlmutter & McDermott, 2001; Davies, 2004; Sanders, 1985, 1988) their gender (Agris, 1977; Atkinson, 2002; Coe, Harmon, Verner & Tonn, 1993; Goulding & Follett, 2002a; Hawkes, Senn & Thorn, 2004; Mifflin, 1997; Sanders, 1991) the placement of the tattoo (Camphausen, 2000; Mercury, 2000; Sanders, 1989, 1991), and the quality of the tattoo (Bradley, 2000; DeMello, 2000; Sanders, 1989, 1991).

The dualistic view is somewhat covered by the false assertion of the tattoo being acceptable today, this is bandied about in the media when it is being discussed in terms of a fashion accessory (Cristina, 2006; Kjeldgaard & Bengtsson, 2005; Midgley, 2000), or when the brand of one or another celebrity is being mentioned (BBC, 2000a, 2000b, 2004; Davies, 2004; Samson, 2004). The presence of tattoos became even more evident within pop culture during the early 2000's. Tattoos inspired television shows such as *Inked* (A&E Television Network, 2006) and *Miami Ink* (TLC, 2006) linked the tattoo with reality TV and reinforced its 'acceptability' and thus fashionability. Yet this normal or dominant narrative of acceptability surrounding the tattoo also imposes negative limits, which are absolute, and at the same time in direct opposition to that which states it as being acceptable. For example, advertising uses the tattoo or the 'meanings' inherent in the tattoo as part of advertising narratives, it is however still not acceptable for models to show off their own tattoos, and several instances have been noted of tattoos being airbrushed out of photographs for corporate clients (Cristina, 2006).

Unacceptability revolves around the tattoos permanence, if the design on the skin was non-permanent or semi-permanent, the negativity would not exist (Favazza,

1996; Featherstone, 1999, 2000), and possible regret would not be permanent (Tsiros & Mittal, 2000). There is a ranking of acceptability in western modern societies (MacKendrick, 1998; Nathanson, et al., 2007), from acceptable activities such as hairdressing, non-extreme piercing, weight-training, plastic surgery, circumcision and dentistry (Featherstone, 1999, 2000), to less acceptable activities such as suspensions, extreme piercings, foot-binding and extreme tattooing (Blake, 1994; Camphausen, 2000; Mercury, 2000). To reiterate, the generalisation in western society is the longer its tradition, and the less invasive a modification is, the more acceptable it is as a social practice (Rubin, 1995).



Picture removed due to copyright

Fig:2 The ‘face’ of regret

This Belgian tattoo consumers experience is a reification of regret due to poor positioning and the ignoring of permanence within the tattoo choice.

(Daily Mail Foreign Service, 2009)

Where tattoo ownership is made attractive and/or rejected, this duality, in part, originates from the same area, namely the linkage of the tattoo with rebelliousness (Parry, 1999; Rubin, 1995; Scutt & Gotch, 1974), or in another description, the rejection of ‘civilised morals’. This is a continuation of the idea of the ancient Greeks, of the barbarian being ‘without’, or outside and the civilised being ‘within’ a defined set of boundaries, of which tattooing was one (Gusthafson, 2000; Jones, 1987, 2000).

This idea of the tattooee in relation to civilised activities also occurs in a dualistic manner, as the tattoo is a symbol of membership of a civilisation (or culture) and at the same time a repudiation of it, which is dependent on the position of the

tattooee and viewer of the tattoos in relation to the culture (Atkinson, 2003b; Atkinson & Young, 2001; Camphausen, 2000; Rubin, 1995; Jones, 1987, 2000). The situation is a self-fulfilling activity, as certain subgroups (both past and present) made use of the tattoo and they were considered as inadmissible in certain eras to what was considered 'polite' society, the use of the tattoo was then considered unacceptable due its connections with these groups. It is then used at later times by other groups due to its 'unacceptable' or rebellious nature (Hambly, 1925; Parry, 1999; Scutt & Gotch, 1974).

It is this rebelliousness that causes it to be used within the music industry, specifically with the tattoo being used as an identifier of one or other musical subculture and thus its fashionability (Atkinson, 2002, 2003b; Baron, 1989b; Wojcik, 1995). In general the media's (including advertising) usage of tattoos involves its being a narrative device which purveys meaning or identity. It uses clichéd representations that portray well-known aspects of tattooing that reinforces abstract concepts with the ownership of a tattoo. For example *Cape Fear* (1991) illustrates the link of the tattoo with deviancy and criminality through Robert De Nero's heavily tattooed sociopath. Similarly, ethnic identity is portrayed along with modern Maori culture and the meaning of tattoos in this culture in *They Once Were Warriors* (1994) while *Memento* (2000) illustrated the use of tattoos as a narrative in their own right and a memory aid {in memoriam}. Another aspect is seen in the *The Simpson's* cartoon series where permanence is linked to acceptability and regret (The Simpson's, Episode 1–101, Simpson's roasting on an open fire) were shown. Other cultural references within publications are for example *The Illustrated Man* by Ray Bradbury (2002), where the tattoo represents another version of the idea of "the other", in terms of the carnivalesque and Bakhtinian aspects of the tattoo, while Kafka's *The Penal Colony* (1919) reinforces the punitive aspects of the tattoo and the idea of power and the body.

A review of ideologies and narratives attached to the tattoo and its use have their origins in past views and contexts leads to the final aspect of CCT to be reviewed, the socio-historic patterning of consumption.

2.5 THE SOCIO-HISTORIC PATTERNING OF CONSUMPTION

The last aspect of the CCT family of studies is the socio-historic patterning of consumption, which: “aligns CCT with burgeoning sociological and historical research on the role of class, gender, and ethnicity as structural influences on market-place behaviors” (Arnould & Thompson, 2007, p.8). As an area of interest it is particularly important for two reasons. First, it is a research aspect within of CCT and consumer behaviour research specifically and marketing generally which is least used in terms of investigating the academic discipline and its sub-disciplines, or contextualising its own activities. This aspect was commented on by Witowski who stated that: “few academic disciplines seem to neglect the history of their subject as much as does the field of marketing” (Witkowski, 1985, p.200). A similar view was also espoused elsewhere:

What are the new frontiers for CCT? One area conspicuously absent from this review, and by implication JCR, is broader analyses of the historical and institutional forces that have shaped the market-place and the consumer as a social category
(Arnould & Thompson, 2005, p.876)

This leads on to the second issue, namely the use of historical data within this thesis. Historical data is employed in this thesis to investigate the background of the product (in this case the tattoo), its origins, and its production historically. This is to identify purpose and position the product held socially and culturally which is contextualised within a CCT framework.

Present work available within CCT in terms of socio-historical investigation tends to view the structures of institutions and society which methodically manipulate and influence consumption rather than from a purely historical standpoint. Such structures used include age (John, 1999), class (Allen, 2002; Holt, 1997, 1998; Wallendorf, 2001), religion (Belk, 1992), ethnicity (Belk, 1991; Mehta & Reilly & Wallendorf, 1987; Wallendorf, & Reilly, 1983), gender (Bristor & Fischer, 1993; Dobscha & Ozanne, 2001; Fischer & Arnold, 1990; Thompson, 1996; Thompson & Haytko, 1997; Thompson, Locander & Pollio,

1990), sexuality (Kates, 2002; Schroeder & Zwick, 2004), social groupings and community (Moore-Shay, Wilkie, & Lutz 2002; Wallendorf & Arnould, 1991; Ward & Reingen, 1990). Prior work within CCT using an historical viewpoint has included Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal* (2002), which uses fast food consumption as a tool to investigate the post 1945 social, economic, and cultural influences in America and their resultant effects on American society. While Holt (2004) and Leiss, Kline and Jhally (1985) take a longitudinal view of brands and advertising investigating social, economic, and cultural aspects, looking at their wider impact.

Within the overall view of CCT Consumers are thought of as carrying out roles within society, and formulating positions within society in general (Otnes, Lowrey & Kim, 1993). How does consumer society fit within wider society? In return, how do existing structures and social settings influence, create and sustain what is considered as 'consumer society'? For example, Holt (1997, 1998) investigated the relationship between culture, social class and consumption, Wallendorf (2001) looked at how literacy in relation to consumption and consumer behaviour is influenced by class and race. Such investigations into social structures and class in relation to consumption also include the concept of social mobility (Allen, 2002), as this, or the lack of it, exists in any class based structure. In general, class has to be viewed in a historical context, as class structures and the orientation of individuals within that class structure is established by socio-historical experiences. Another aspect of interest is the composition and interaction of consumers' beliefs and practices (religious and secular) that exist in relation to the social structures, institutions, and groups and how they affect individuals' consumption experiences (Stone & Graham, 2007; Köse, 2007). To understand these or to contextualise them adequately, these too must be viewed in a historical context.

In addition this is also important in relation to the methodology chosen in this thesis, namely Grounded Theory (GT). It is important when labelling data and creating theoretical categories within theory construction (which is central to the methodology) that the researcher understands the variables and connecting relationships (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This is termed 'theoretical sensitivity'

and is created through the use of a number of techniques including reading relevant literature (Goulding, 2002, 2005). The creation of such sensitivity in relation to tattooing has to relate to past activities, and in so doing, using socio-historical data.

The history of the tattoo has an important position in terms of investigating the use of the tattoo and appreciating its development in terms of being understood and recognised into something which is easily consumable by individuals. As Kam-hon Lee stated in his article on using history for theory building in marketing: “For some phenomenon, it is impossible to conduct survey or experiment to trace the cause. However, the phenomenon may be largely and satisfactorily explained by history” (Kam-hon Lee 1983, p.152).

The choice of using Socio-historic viewpoint to research consumer choice within a FLAG (fits like a glove) framework is explained:

Because such patterned consumption experience logically cannot be reduced to individual-level analysis (Holt, 1998), Winchester affords the opportunity to study a choice phenomenon that must be grasped by attending to social and historical dynamics...
(Allen, 2002, p.516)

While Allen is describing patterns in terms of class and gender, in terms of present tattoo consumption there are, in particular, historical commonalities in usage, patterns, views of the tattoo, etc. which cannot be fully understood without using historical data to view the consumption of the tattoo. This is important as it shows patterns that illustrate the theme of permanence that runs throughout the action, as not only is the tattoo permanent there are permanent (i.e. unchangeable) social and cultural aspects within the action - for example, the dualistic view of tattoo acceptability, its use as an identifier or hierarchical reference point, or linkage to sexuality - which are continuous throughout the historical narrative of tattoo usage.

In addition, Tattoo production in common with other activities has an

‘establishment’ within the group linked to the activity that tries to create a history, heritage, and authenticity for the action to ensure outsiders view it as genuine. This emphasises the authenticity, as part of the creation of the identity of the activity, etc. Hobsbawm, described this “Invention of tradition”:

Invented tradition is taken to mean a set of practices.... which automatically implies continuity with the past...the peculiarity of 'invented' traditions is that the continuity with it is largely fictitious.
(Hobsbawm, 1983, pp.1-2)

In fact this invention of tradition has three aspects, they include

- a. Those establishing or symbolising social cohesion and collective identities
- b. Those establishing or legitimising institutions and social hierarchies, and
- c. The socialization of people into beliefs, value systems and conventions of Type a) is most commonly referred to and is used to imply the two other functions as well
(Hobsbawm, 1983, p.9)

In the context of Tattooing, invention of tradition exists in one aspect as a legitimisation of the activities undertaken. Creating the tradition that the tattoo is solely a Polynesian import (De Mello, 2000) imbues the tattoo with exoticism. However, this exists in parallel with the incompatible yet simultaneously held belief in the origin of the tattoo in Celtic culture and use of Celtic tattooing (Gilbert, 2000; Hip Inc., 1999; MacQuarrie, 2000). The facts are that the tattoo is not solely a Polynesian import and Celtic tattooing has had an influence on modern tattooing beyond the measure of its proven authenticity (Fleming, 2000; MacQuarrie, 2000). Fantasy patterns are being produced within modern tattooing to feed a desire for “authentic” tattoo designs and are supplied through the use of the vast array of Celtic artwork available via illuminated manuscripts and other mediums (Lockheart & Hemingson, 2000) this is discussed further in appendix 3.

The use and repetition of such erroneously held tattoo beliefs create a clear linkage between ‘exoticism’ and ‘difference’ and the act of being tattooed.

However, there is a continuity of attempting to bring history and thus acceptability to tattooing. This can be seen in the context of tattoo commentators, who as early as the Elizabethan era espoused the ancient British origins of the tattoo, as did their counterparts in the Victorian period (Darwin, 1871; Einhorn & Abler, 1998; Fleming, 2000, 2001; Scutt & Gotch, 1974). Thus any in-depth study of tattoos and tattooing requires the use of such historical information to contextualise and identify commonalities and themes between time periods, within groups, as well as between various groupings. This was eloquently illustrated through a rhetorical question about the use of history and historical data in terms of marketing:

What is history? Is it, for example a set of facts conveniently arranged in a book or a series of events recorded in a chronicle? No because a listing of facts or events does not have meaning in itself – and giving meaning to the past is what historians are paid to do. Little in the past is fixed enough for us to use without applying historical analysis. The past – which ended a second ago is inert. A mere recording of events is no more informative than the markings on a gravestone. Giving life and voice to the past by moving beyond mere chronicling is what the discipline of history does. Thinking historically means fashioning and refashioning the historical record to give it substance, meaning, and dimension. History makes the past active, allowing us to reach back for authority and guidance, and to disaggregate the web of events in order to comprehend more fully particular elements. This is history as process, a way of carving out information as it is needed, so that complicated mixtures of ideas, events, groups and people can be analysed. (Stowe, 1983, pp.1-2)

However, the study of the impact of tattooing within Europe in a historical context past the boundaries of the late 18th century and early 19th century is problematic, but has to be undertaken as present day consumption needs to be contextualised - today's product has not developed nor does it operate in a vacuum. The problems are caused by the lack of official commentary and the lack of sources to conduct studies of the context of European tattooing. This is due to the “moral disreputableness” of the subject matter and one other very important factor. As Gell in his seminal work on tattooing surmises:

These archives unless I am much mistaken, do not hold sufficient information about tattooing to make possible a genuine history, directly articulating a change in tattooing institution....The reason for this (lack of information about tattooing) is simple; tattooing is not sufficiently important from the standpoint of archive producers to generate continuous documentary record, in the same way that changes of powers in the chiefly offices, or changes in religious allegiances, or changes in land tenure.
(Gell, 1993, pp.41-42)

Though it is a commentary on Polynesian Tattooing, it is as relevant to the study of European Tattoo history and culture as it was to Gell's subject. Thus tattooing may be prevalent within a culture but little mention is made of it because it was considered unimportant by commentators and historians. This happened throughout the 19th century in Britain, and although tattooing occurred within Britain and was popular:

Throughout much of the nineteenth century tattooing as a British custom was barely visible, and where it was – in scanty literary sources, criminal records, and medical literature – makes an accurate inference of its incidence within the wider population is impossible.
(Bradley, 2000, p.137)

Thus at the time, as the subject matter of tattooing in a European context was not thought of as a valid item for investigation, there was not the impetus to create a body of literature. The work that was available was limited in scope and until the 1980/90's did not exist beyond criminology and psychology (Ferguson-Rayport, Griffith & Straus, 1955; Fried, 1983; Lombroso, 1896, 2006; Post, 1968) and medical related publications, in particular dermatology (Becker, 1988; Goldstein, 1979; Goldstein, Muller & Tuttle, 1979; Goldstein & Sewell, 1979; O'Donnell *et al.*, 1995).

Beyond the realms of official documentation of the tattoo there exist several areas of data which can be tapped into to create a socio-historic contextualisation of tattoo consumption. The origin of narrative data can be found in writings and descriptions of past historians, the most famous and well-known examples of these are attributed to Caesar who described the ancient Britons as the 'painted

people' (Caesar, 1953). Greek writers during the period of the City States (Herodotus, 1996) and later in the Byzantine era (Jones, 1987, 2000) gave detailed descriptions of tattooing as a punitive action and as part of commentaries on tattooed nomadic tribes of Thrace, Volga, and Black Sea basin (Caplan, 2000a, 2001; Cockburn, 1980; Rolle, 1989). Other early commentaries were written by authors, playwrights and other such observers (Cockburn, 1980; Jones, 1987; Mayor, 1999). These sources of data occur in relation to writings and descriptions of peoples, places, societies and individuals, they discuss tattoos and tattooing merely as a side issue. The designs and the reasons for and in what context tattooing occurred within these societies are not recorded.

In the early modern period prior to the beginning of modern anthropology, most tattoo commentary occurred at a non-official level (Burchett, 1956; Gilbert, 2000). During the Age of Empire in the 16-19th centuries, this developed in parallel with the embryonic European Empires which disgorged explorers and administrators around the world who collated information about the peoples they discovered and latterly controlled (Einhorn & Abler, 1998; Rao, 1942; Rubin, 1995). For example one of the earliest such accounts of tattooing was given by Sir Martin Frobisher in 1576, describing Inuit he encountered:

The women are marked on the face with blewe streekes...women race [scratch or pierce] their faces proportionally, as chinne, cheekes, and forehead, and the wristes of their hands, whereupon they lay a colour, which continueth dark azurine.

(Lockhart & Hemingson, 2000)

This activity of collation and notation continued until the 20th century (Rao, 1942; Smeaton, 1937; Trench, 1940/41) and the collapse of empire. Even with these studies many tattooing rituals and their complex motivations around the world have been lost for various reasons (Camphausen, 2000; Gell, 1993; Lockhart & Hemingson, 2000; Van Dinter, 2000).

Other areas of data surrounding historical tattoo usage come from diarists (Darwin, 1871) and magazines such as *Harmsworth* (Stephen, 1898), *The English Illustrated Magazine* (Brooklyn, 1903) and *The Strand* (Bolton, 1899),

which churned out articles praising tattooing, giving hints and tips on design choice and placement (Anon., 1902), reviews, and interviews of famous tattooists and stories about tattooing around the world (William, 1844). Indeed tattooists became celebrities in their own right such as Tom Riley, Sutherland MacDonald, George Burchett and D.W. Purdy (Burchett, 1956; Gilbert, 2000).

Information such as the *Harmsworth Magazine* estimated in 1898 that one in five (20%) of the gentry were tattooed (Stephen, 1898, p.474) and the *New York World* 1897 reported that 75% of American society women were tattooed (Sanders, 1991, p.150) are all relevant to this study. Diatribes against tattooing from concerned scholars such as Lombroso (1896) are also relevant, as they allow for a holistic socio-historic view of the tattoo. For example, an American social commentator, Ward McAlister complained: “Society men in England were the victims of circumstance when the Prince of Wales had his body tattooed. Like a flock of sheep driven by their master they had to follow suit” (New York Times, 1892, p.9). This commentary, whilst an attack on tattooing also shows the dualist view of attraction/rejection, commenting on both its fashionability and frequency and its abhorrent nature.

A further means of investigating tattoo heritage and consumption in different cultures is one that is diametrically opposite to those discussed above, that is to investigate tattoos in cultures where their heritage has never been destroyed or diminished to such an extent that it has been forgotten. The cultures within this group includes New Zealand Maori tattooing or Moko (Gell, 1993; Robley, 1998); Iban tattooing from Sarawak (Van Dinter, 2000); Samoan tattooing (Gell, 1993); Muslim tattooing from the Middle East and North Africa (Atkins, no date; Cartwright-Jones, 2005a, 2005b; Gilbert, 2000; Lockheart & Hemingson, 2000; Phoenix & Arabeth, 2003; Smeaton, 1937); and Coptic (Christian) tattooing from the Levant and the Holy Land, Egypt and North Africa (Carswell, 1958). These cultures have always had tattooing as an integral part of their culture and have never lost its practice which allows a contextualisation of tattoo use by comparing and contrasting activities today with what we know of the past, thus assisting in giving historical records substance, meaning, and dimension.

A final means of gaining data surrounding tattoo consumption and heritage is the study of the very ancient tattoos that are still extant. These have been found in areas where the environmental or burial rites have created conditions where the soft tissue of corpses is preserved to such a degree that tattoo designs are still visible. This involves the corpse being mummified either by design or by nature (Ascenzi, Cockburn & Kleiss, 1980; Briliot, 2000; Capasso, 1993; Cockburn & Cockburn, 1980). Various areas around the globe have been identified where corpses have been found and as such have the possibility of finding other individuals (Rubin, 1995).

The most ancient tattoos that have been found on the Alpine mummy Otzi (Capasso, 1993) which come from 5,300 BC, prior to this discovery the honour was held by an Egyptian Mummy of a dancer which was dated to approximately 2000 BC (Bianchi; 1995, p.22-23). Within Egypt and its neighbouring states such as Nubia and Libya, several mummies have been uncovered in Archaeological digs (Bianchi, 1995; Gilbert, 2000; Illes, 2000). Other Tattoo cultures that have been discovered this way include heavily tattooed Scythian mummies from Pasaryk in the Altai Mountains within the Russian Federation, which was dated to 600 BC (Brilol, 2000). In addition to these discoveries Inuit tattooing has been revealed on mummies found in Qilakitsok Greenland, and the Isle of St Lawrence, Alaska, with these discoveries being dated to 1500 and 400 AD respectively (Zimmerman, 1980).

What is notable is that this form of data shows the potential permanence of the tattoo to 'outlive' its wearer in a very physical sense. This permanence of the tattoo is the main issue of investigation.

2.6 PERMANENCE

The Tattoo and permanence

In its definition and also its application, the tattoo is permanent; this is to say it is a permanent body modification (Camphausen, 2000; Mercury, 2000; Millner & Eichold, 2001). If applied properly it does not disappear through time, or 'use'. It is the oldest and the best known of the different types of body modification (Hambly, 1925). Different societies have unique forms of this process. Tattooing involves the injection of dye between 1/64th and 1/16th of an inch into the skin by an electric needle, injecting ink at the rate of 50 to 30,000 times a minute (Armstrong, 1991, p.216). This is a very precise and skilful operation. Many things can go wrong; if the needle is too deep then pigmentation runs, leeching into the fat layer, or scarification can occur (Armstrong, 1991). Tattooing is also by definition an invasive practice, this occurs through cutting, piercing, or introducing 'foreign' objects to the body i.e. implants or ink etc (Camphausen, 2000; Gilbert, 2000; Mercury, 2000).

While in tattooing, the modification is permanent (Camphausen, 2000; Mercury, 2000; Millner & Eichold, 2001), there are products which mimic a tattoo. These exist as both non-permanent and semi-permanent body modifications such as stickers, henna tattooing, and semi-permanent tattoos (Cartwright-Jones, 2003, 2005a, 2005b; Phoenix & Arabeth, 2003). At one end of this range are 'Temporary Tattoos' which are gained through using normal tattoo equipment and pierce the skin to inject ink which fades after a set amount of time due to special ink (English, 2000).

The next level of product is a temporary tattoo on top of the skin instead of underneath it. Methods include the use of ink and stamps; paint, airbrushes and stencils to create designs; and Mehndi or Henna (Cartwright-Jones, 2003; Phoenix & Arabeth, 2003), which is a sub category of temporary body modification in its own right (Mercury, 2000; Gilbert, 2000; Phoenix & Arabeth, 2003). This is an activity, which is based on Asian, Middle Eastern and North African ethnic traditions (Cartwright-Jones, 2003, 2005a, 2005b; Phoenix & Arabeth, 2003; Üstüner, Ger & Holt, 2000). These temporary/false tattoos come

in the form of two different products, either a practitioner is paid to apply the design, or self-use kits. Products come in varying quality, but all can be considered as activities, which are very closely related to tattooing.

X

Picture removed due to copyright

Fig:3 Body art kit

A type of tattoo mimicry.

X

Picture removed due to copyright

X

Picture removed due to copyright

Figs: 4/5 Transfer tattoos

Another form of temporary/false tattoo is a sticker or transfer, which is produced on a paper backing. These items are purchasable products themselves or freebies with other items (Tattoofashion.com, no date). These “tattoos” are associated with sweets and chocolate purchases and work by peeling off the backing, licking the design and sticking to an exposed area (see Figs:4/5). The last type of mock tattoo is clothing which looks like realistic tattoos, see-through sleeves, tights, women’s panties, and body stockings (Cheeky Legs, 2006; Frog on Top Studios, 2007), however none of these are a tattoo and thus do not have the same social or cultural meaning due to the lack of permanence.

In relation to the ‘temporary’ tattoos, which are applied in the same manner as ‘normal’ tattoos but are marketed as fading after five years (HSE, 2003a), this is false, as any ‘tattoo’ that inserts ink under the skin is permanent (English, 2000). The only true temporary tattoo, (i.e. mimics but is not a tattoo) comes in two basic types, the transfer type (Bee, 2000; Mohammed & Nixon, 2000), and Mehndi or henna tattoo (Camphausen, 2000; Mohammed & Nixon, 2000; Phoenix & Arabella, 2003; Üstüner, Ger & Holt, 2000). The difference is that a false or mimic of a tattoo can be removed without any remaining signs; the actual tattoo however cannot be removed without procedures that scar. Removal is a service which is as old as the tattoo itself (Gilbert, 2000; Jones, 1987), it occurs when tattoo is no longer wanted. The oldest known variant of this service is from ancient Rome and required pigeon faeces in its creation (Jones, 1987), while the most modern variety of tattoo removal is undertaken through the use of lasers (Kupermanbeade, Levine & Ashinoff, 2001). Both however, have adverse effects of being painful and leaving scars, the Roman due to it being an astringent, while the laser burns the skin in its use and it is not able to breakdown blue and thus also green inks (Luisant Laser Tattoo Removal, 2006).

Other present day ways of removing a tattoo are dermabrasion (Plastic Surgery Network, 2004) or incisive surgery (O’Donnell, et al. 1995). These two forms are invasive, as they remove tattoos by removing the skin along with the ink and thus leave scars (Plastic Surgery Network, 2004). They are only available via medical practitioners, are very expensive to undertake, and do not actually remove the signs of the tattoo, a mark will remain. The last form of tattoo removal is not

exactly removal, but tattoo replacement, this in itself is not 100%, as the darkness of the inks within the original design will affect the type and effectiveness of the tattoo placed on top. The urban myth of skin coloured skin that can be used for a cover up similar to this activity is exactly that, an urban myth and does not exist (Sanders, 1985).

Thus the practice of tattoo removal is not by practice able to remove it in total, there will always remain an indelible mark, no matter what removal process used. This is why the socio-cultural position that the tattoo holds is unique (Parry, 1999; Scutt & Gotch, 1974), including its questionable moral existence and the dualism (feted/rejected) which is central to its being. In addition it has in some instances the potential to exist beyond death (Capasso, 1993; Cockburn, 1980; Smith & Zimmerman, 1975).

The acquisition of a tattoo is analogous to the purchasing of any other product or service, the gaining of a tattoo relates to both high-involvement and low-involvement product purchase activities (Radder & Huang, 2008). This investigation does not look at 'why' or how the consumer decides to acquire a tattoo, what is relevant is the influence of permanence within the decision process. The difference between the two types is significant and relates to the level of attention, time, and energy dedicated to the pre-acquisition or exploration stages throughout buying process (Zaichkowsky, 1985, 1986). Tattoo acquisition can come under either type of involvement, showing that the same product can have different involvement levels across people (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985; Zaichkowsky, 1985, 1986). Involvement is an important issue due to the tattoo's permanence, and the physical and social risk involved in the activity of being tattooed (Aaker & Lee, 2001; Taylor, 1974). However, permanence or its resultant affects is not necessarily identifiable within the choices as some consumers do not even acknowledge the influence of permanence as it is not part of their choice, while others recognise the tattoos permanence (i.e. unable to be changed) and this effects of their choice, specifically in terms of involvement. This is analogous to the view of Alba and Hutchinson (2000), in that, individuals can be familiar with the product (i.e. the tattoo) but lack expertise with the products effects (i.e. its permanence or its

acceptability) that then affects their choices (Alba & Hutchinson, 2000), and in turn can create regret if the choices are based on misapprehension of the tattoo.

Thus, high involvement occurs when the tattooee takes time and effort to research the tattoo they wish to place on their bodies, i.e. the design; they also make themselves aware of the process of gaining a tattoo, what the physical action/interaction is involved (possible pain, healing etc.). This can be seen in the interaction both actual and potential tattooees, have online, swapping experiences, learning about tattooing in terms of the experience, its results, reviews of tattooists, choosing designs etc. (Mandel & Johnson, 2002). Such use of digital decision aids to assist decision making (Häubl & Trifts, 2000) is an important to the choices of highly involved tattooees make, but similar activities have been an aspect since Victorian times when articles of such reviews of tattooist, explanation of tattooing and designs were made available in Journals and newspapers of the day (Bolton, 1899, 1902; Brooklyn, 1903).

Choice of tattooists which can also be seen in terms of relationship marketing (Sheth, & Parvatiyar, 1995; Martin, 1998), as exemplified in the trust imbued by the tattooist in the process and their abilities as a tattooist, which in turn makes the tattooee choose them (Sirdeshmukh, Singh, & Sabol, 2002). It is also seen in the process of choosing a tattoo design which occurs within an interaction with the tattooist (Sanders, 1985), from highly involved self created designs to low involvement off the peg or 'flash' originated designs. It has been thought that it is the low involvement tattooees who make up the majority of those who regret their tattoo purchases (Sanders, 1988). In the expression the actual physical outlay, (i.e. pain) in relation to the tattoo can be considered an investment in terms of high and low involvement consumption activities.

Furthermore, in terms of tattooing, tattooees are analogous to consumers making value decisions, based on whether the aesthetic (Bloch, Brunel, & Arnold, 2003), (sub)cultural and physical investment of the tattoo 'product' in relation to the permanent outcome of having a tattoo physically attached to themselves for the rest of their lives. The permanence of this decision has an effect on the malleable or shifting self (Mandel, 2003) as it limits play in relation to physical identity

(Belk, 1988).

The physical permanence relates to decisions about the overall finished aesthetic (Bloch, Brunel, & Arnold, 2003) and the cost/benefit analysis of how their acquisition is interacted with by the society(ies) or group(s) that they are a member of (Aaker & Lee, 2001; Escalas & Bettman, 2005), this too is linked to the creation of, or redefinition of identity. In terms of a high involvement activity the potential tattooee tries to make the best decision they can based on their own individual criteria. For example as the tattoo is analogous to clothing (Gell, 1993), specifically a permanent item of clothing (Gilbert, 2000), consumers frequently purchase a clothing item due to its symbolic meaning, which reinforces image or creates psychological satisfaction (Solomon, 1986). In such terms tattoos like clothes are identifiable in how the consumer reflects their consumer own social life, ambitions, desires fantasies and (sub)cultural affiliations (Kaiser, 1998).

What is also apparent from looking at tattoo usage in longitudinal terms is that we start to see relationships, patterning, and permanence within the aims and objectives of tattoo use over time and between cultures. Significantly, the virtual lack of change to the product in terms of supply (dependant on an individual practitioner) and its application (the physical insertion of ink below the skin through the use of a needle in a skill based setting) also becomes apparent. In addition the other commonalities include the existence of a 'global market'; the use of the tattoo as a medium for an identifier; its existence within a dualistic set of positive/negative attributes that co-exist simultaneously and within the same culture and still exist today, these include the tattoo being equally feted and repelled; undertaken in terms of being a member of civilisation/savage barbarian; in terms of hierarchy of high/low caste. The meaning of the tattoo as opposed to the design is a one of dualism and permanence.

Humans and permanence

Human beings have always viewed and interacted with the concept of permanence (thus also, impermanence) in terms of how to understand it and how it exists in relation to the permanent nature of change. Most, if not all religions,

of both the present and the past deal with the impermanence of being, whether in terms of an afterlife such as the Abrahamic religions or through reincarnation as found in the Hindu and Buddhist faiths (Hinnells, 2005). In relation to this metaphysical permanence, differs from physical permanence or worldly permanence which gives existence and understanding of impermanence in a secular form. This struggle can eloquently and aptly be seen in the poetry of Shelly's Ozymandias which describes the fate of Ozymandias {Pharaoh Ramses II}, and his attempts at immortality through his great works, one of which being a statue of himself, this carried the commentary:

My name is Ozymandias, king of kings: Look on my works,
ye Mighty, and despair! Nothing beside remains: round the
decay of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
the lone and level sands stretch far away
(Shelly, 1818)

Central to the theme of the poem is that all works of mankind – including themselves - are temporal, fleeting. Yet, in the creation of the statue and its commentary there is in itself an action that aims to counteract or oppose this temporality of human existence. This theme of searching for understanding of this temporality and existing beyond it is a commonality to all periods including today's consumption based society as Brown pointed out:

Pyramids and skyscrapers - monuments more lasting than
bronze – suggest how much of the world's 'economic'
activity also is really a flight from death....If death is a part
of life, man represses his own death just as he represses his
own life.
(Brown, 1968, p.93)

There has been some prior work on the linkage between consumer affluence and the achievement of secular immortality (Hirschman, 1990; Warner *et al*, 1949). These works did not deal directly with consumer behaviour in relation to perceived temporality or permanence (thus also impermanence), but consumer affluence and its connection to secular immortality it is a related subject and thus must be discussed. This research reinforced the views of living on through great works, as Hirschman states:

...philanthropy and public service that would live on as a monument to the social worth of the founding entrepreneur. Hence, the entrepreneurial forebears must not only found great fortunes, but also must have acquired or donated publicly notable possessions (e.g. art collections, museums, libraries) as a social legacy. Certain surnames became immortalized in the public consciousness, and long after public knowledge of the source of their wealth had eroded, tangible reminders of their social influence remained: Rockefeller Center, the Morgan Library, the Whitney Museum.

(Hirschmann, 1990, p.31)

Hirschman noted that individuals could live on through a variety of methods, including conspicuous consumption as identified by Veblen (1899); collecting art and antiques, where the acquisition of collections of art and craft products as these are seen as being of special significance within a society or ideology related to affluence. The bequeathing of secular immortality occurs where individuals have ‘immortal’ status through relationship to their illustrious ancestor(s). Art and craftsmanship, is used when appreciation (and undertaking) of such achievements is another route to immortality and a “legendary status and one of perhaps a more sanctified nature than that afforded by capitalistic enterprise” (Hirschman, 1990, p.38). The final aspect of secular immortality identified was man's dominance of nature and the triumph of technology, where technology can be used to imprint ‘immortality’ of the individual onto the world.

The final aspect of activities aiming at secular immortality can also be seen within western society's cults of youth and beauty that occur through various aspects of body modification such as plastic surgery and body grooming products (Chapkis, 1987; Featherstone, 1991, 1999, 2000). With these, individuals attempt to stave off the impermanence of being, aiming to halt the march of aging and the death of their physical being rather than attaining immortality through consuming items or leaving a legacy for future generations (Chapkis, 1987; Sayre, 1999).

In general terms however and in relation to the aim of secular immortality such consumption activities are commonsensical as:

.....an ideology celebrating the acquisition of wealth and possessions primarily seeks immortality through material means. What is puzzling is that social scientists in general and Consumer researchers in particular have been reluctant to recognize this as a central motivation driving exceptional personal achievement and the oft-resulting accumulation of wealth and possessions.
(Hirschman, 1990, p.40)

Yet in this research and that of Warner *et al* (1949) such depictions are based on one segment of the class system, being limited to the lower-upper and upper-middle classes and investigating textual narratives related to them. Yet this striving for immortality, or in other terminology, the struggle to understand the ‘permanence’ of impermanence, is not limited by class or by era, this can be seen in the oldest human text extant, the Epic of Gilgamesh (Assyrian International News Agency, 2008) which deals with this as its main topic, and shows the futility of trying to do so.

This is also seen in later Greek philosophy, where permanence and the transitory nature of existence was a point of investigation. On one side stood the philosopher Heraclitus, who viewed the world in terms of perpetual struggle and strife, with everything in the universe being in a constantly in a state of change (Guthrie, 1962). One can't, he said, step into the same river twice, since the river never remains the same, i.e. the only permanence being the arrangement of change itself (Guthrie, 1962). A later philosopher Parmenides questioned this by investigating reality in terms of its fixed and unchangeable features, viewing that the fundamental base of reality is permanent (Guthrie, 1962).

This philosophical interest in permanence, specifically that of a struggle between what is and the action of entropy was paralleled in the activities of individuals striving to endure. Arendt, noted this in the public life of prominent ancient Greeks and Romans who believed that they would live on through their good deeds, in a: “relative permanence, if not immortality, of mortals” (Arendt, 1958, p.56). The ‘reality and reliability’ of which exists:

primarily on the fact that we are surrounded by things more permanent than the activity by which they were produced,

and potentially even more permanent than the lives of their authors....the human artifice, depends upon their greater or lesser permanence in the world itself.
(Arendt, 1958, p. 95-96)

The temporal process inevitably annihilates worldly accomplishments. What man builds or creates is cast down by time and usage (Brown, 1968). It is their very existence however that items, articles, or things give context to and points to the nature of permanence and impermanence:

It is this durability which gives the things of the world their relative independence from men who produced and use them, their “objectivity” which makes them withstand “stand against” and endure, at least for a time, the voracious needs and wants of their living makers and users. From this viewpoint, the things of the world have the function of stabilising human life.....against the subjectivity of men stands the objectivity of the man made world rather than the sublime indifference of an untouched nature, whose overwhelming elementary force, on the contrary, will compel them to swing relentlessly in the circle of their own biological movement, which fits so closely into the over-all cyclical movement of nature’s household.
(Arendt, 1958, p.137)

Thus the temporal advance of existence prevents any lasting permanence, as this is relative to the impermanence of the action, or the item created and the world surrounding it, either in terms of the literal world, or the specific social/cultural world which the item is created and takes context from. As seen in the following comment:

It is as though worldly stability had become transparent in the permanence of art, so that the premonition of immortality, not the immortality of the soul or of the life but of something immortal achieved by mortal hands, has become tangibly present, to shine and to be seen, to sound and to be heard, to speak, and to be read.
(Arendt, 1958, p.168)

Thus the tattoo which (ignoring the nature of man of returning to the dust he comes from) has the *potential* for physical continuation, to last, to be able to be seen centuries from now through its action of aesthetic representation. It differs from other activities as: “In this permanence, the very stability of the human

artifice, which, being inhabited and used by mortals can never be absolute, achieves a representation of its own” (Arendt, 1958, pp.167-168).

So through this permanence it (the tattoo) creates meaning in itself:

because of their outstanding permanence, works of art are the most intensely worldly of all tangible things; their durability is almost untouched by the corroding effect of natural processes, since they are not subject to their use of living creatures, a use which, indeed, far from actualizing their own inherent purpose – as the purpose of a chair is actualized when it sat upon – can only destroy them
(Arendt, 1958, p.167)

The tattoo in its relative permanence can be seen in this light, similar to the work of art described here it is “almost untouched by the corroding effect of natural processes.” This is seen in the fact that, while it does not as a rule outlast its owner/wearer, it has the potential to do so. The oldest known tattoos to have survived this way for at least 7,300 years, as seen in the mummies of the Alps (Capasso, 1993; South Tyrol Museum of Archaeology, 2000), Egypt (Bianchi, 1995; Illes, 2000), the Steppes and Altai (Briliot, 2000; Cockburn, 1980; Rolle, 1989), New Zealand (Robley, 1998), Greenland (Pederharthansen, Meldgaard & Nordqvist, 1991), Taramakland (Barber, 1999), Peru (Norris, 2006; Nova, 1998); Nubia (Alvrus, Wright & Merbs, 2001); and Alaska and the Aleutian islands (Smith & Zimmerman, 1975; Zimmerman, 1980). Other similar, more modern examples include Victorian academics ‘collecting’ tattoo designs of criminals and the working class (Lacassagne, 1881; Lombroso, 1896), the preserved skins in the tattoo collection of the Anatomy Museum of the University of Tokyo Medical School (Scutt & Gotch, 1974), and the private collection of the skin of 18th and 19th century sailors (Chinchilla, 2002).

What can also be stated is that while the tattoo remains, the particular social meaning and contextualisation of that particular tattoo usage may have disappeared, because that society and individual no longer exists; yet in general terms there are specific types of tattoo usage and reason(s) for being tattooed which have occurred in the past and are present today. The reason(s) for tattooing occur within and through the physical permanence of the tattoo, which is used,

identified, and interacted with as such, due to its physical permanence. Various examples of tattooing can also be split into respective areas of CCT to show permanence being used within these groups. For example, the tattoos used by the earliest identified European tattooee (the mummy Otzi from 5,300 BC) were undertaken as permanent physical points of identification of the sites of acupuncture or heat treatment for arthritis, so they can be utilised by individuals with minimum knowledge of either the body or the medical technique (Capasso, 1993; South Tyrol Museum of Archaeology, 2000).

This activity fits into the CCT family as the body is invested with cultural capital, such as in market-place cultures. This is also linked to ownership and knowledge. As Foucault (1979, pp.56-57) states, “mastery and awareness of one’s own body can be acquired only through the investment of power in the body.” The tattooed mummies from New Zealand (Hambly, 1925; Robley, 1998); Peru (Hambly, 1925); and Greenland (Gilbert, 2000; Pederharthansen, Meldgaard & Nordqvist, 1991) all have designs to identify the group (Gilbert, 2000; Rubin, 1995) and the individual (Robley, 1998). Tattooing was undertaken due to the non permanence of other similar identifying marks (war paint, clothing etc) (Gell, 1993; Hambly, 1925; Robley, 1998; Rubin, 1995; Scutt & Gotch, 1974) as the tattoo is permanent it can be taken beyond the grave into the next life to allow for identification there (Gell, 1993; Scutt & Gotch, 1974). These usages link into the idea of a custom or activity being used to identify the individual or group and within CCT matrix this can be analogous to Consumer identity projects, but also has aspects of market-place cultures, specifically when related to the cultures, as in Polynesia and Melanesia, where tattooing was an important integral part of the economic life of the group as well as having social and cultural implications (Gell, 1993).

In terms of its existence within the media or as a message, the tattoo has been part of the use of commentators, private and public, academic, professional or amateur, to be observed and remarked upon. Relating to socio-historical analysis patterns it can be viewed, with the meanings (of the tattoo, not the design) both given and taken from the use of tattoos in such narratives, these include the tattoo being exotic, the mark of barbarian or member of a civilised society. The tattoo

occurs as a narrative in its own right. It (the tattoo) acts in some cultures and societies as a literal language (Lockheart & Hemingson, 2000; Robley, 1998; Schraeder, 2000; Vasiliev & Danzig, 2004). This is taken to the extreme in relation to the Marquesian alphabet the only written use of which occurs in context of the use of the tattoo (Gell, 1993; Gilbert, 2000). Another use of a tattoo is in the context of a message of remembrance, a representation of memory, or more accurately an 'in memoriam' tattoo (Caplan, 2000a), these occur in terms of pilgrimage (Carswell, 1958; Fleming, 1997, 2000, 2001); the loss of a close friend or member of immediate family (Gell, 1993; Hambly, 1925); or of a point of reference in an individual's life (Hambly, 1925). This again returns to the idea of permanence being paramount in terms of the tattoo. For something to continue, beyond the loss of a loved one, to act as a reminder of their passing, or of an activity undertaken which has meaning (Carswell, 1958).

The next issue which relates to the tattoo and its use and links to the framework of permanence is the grotesque. Tattoos through their permanence, in terms of the impermanence of the body, and other paradoxical points within its existence allow it to be described as a grotesque act, which creates a grotesque body, a term which is linked to the work of the Russian philosopher Bakhtin (1895-1975) and which will now be considered.

The Grotesque body

The idea and form of the grotesque and in particular the grotesque body was identified and considered in depth by the Russian philosopher Bakhtin with his work *Rabelais and his World* (1984). Bakhtin became the foremost definer of the grotesque. His view of the grotesque created the theory of the carnivalesque body and grotesque realism. Heavily influenced by his work concerning literary theory, his particular definition of the grotesque is a pastiche of bi-polar descriptions, objects, or circumstances, which are actually in total opposition to each other (Goulding, Saren & Follett, 2003). This is directly connected to the existence of the tattoo; it is permanent, while at the same time being as impermanent as the individual it exists on, a paradox in existence. In addition within its description, the tattoo is an action or activity as well as a finished item or article that is immovable, another contradiction in terms of its existence.

In terms of the grotesque an object exists in relation to items that should not occur together, but, in the context of the grotesque, are found as integral parts of the same object, person, or incident. For example, ‘normally’ they are pathetic and ludicrous, vile and attractive, laden with optimism and heavily burdened with cynicism all at the same time (Wright, 1968). While the aim and direction of the grotesque came from:

The images of the material bodily principle in the work of Rabelais (and of the other writers of the Renaissance) are the heritage, only somewhat modified by the Renaissance, of the culture of folk humour. They are the heritage of that peculiar type of imagery and, more broadly speaking, of that peculiar aesthetic concept which is characteristic of this folk culture and which differs sharply from the aesthetic concept of the following ages. We shall call it conditionally the concept of grotesque realism.
(Bakhtin, 1984. p.18)

To Bakhtin, the grotesque body was also one of contradictions; never constant, always changing; it is born and dies; the end is also the beginning. The image, which Bakhtin gives to illustrate this part of his theory, is a laughing, mad blind hag who is pregnant. She is an ‘impossibility’, specifically, in terms of the normal state of existence she should not exist (Bakhtin, 1984). As, the grotesque body: “Combining heterogeneous elements and points out that it violates natural proportion, thus presenting elements of caricature and parody” (Bakhtin, 1984, p.35).

The tattooed body can be considered a grotesque body for several reasons, in terms of its very existence the tattoo submits to the definition of the grotesque, as the tattoo is a permanent representation that is etched into impermanent flesh, a paradox made flesh. In addition, the tattooed body is both attractive and repellent to others in the same instance (Bakhtin, 1984), and the tattooed body is ‘different’ from the body’s natural state, thus gaining another aspect of the grotesque (Wright, 1968). Finally, there is the linkage between the tattooed body and the circus/carnivale, where it would be exhibited as ‘the other’; the very existence of such a body creates a situation where, because of its difference, it is

considered an item to be observed, examined, or inspected for money (Yates, 1997).

The linkage of the grotesque to the projection of internal meanings, feelings, and identity of the tattooee found in the context of the design choices also underlines the “grotesque” nature of the tattooed body as found in the Bakhtinian definition: “The grotesque body has no façade, no impenetrable surface, neither has it any expressive features. It represents either the fertile depths or the complexities of procreation and conception” (Bakhtin, 1984, p.339). This projection of internal identity (Belk, 1988; Hirschman & Thompson, 1999; Schouten, 1991), feelings (Hirschman, 1984), tastes and group belonging (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995) via the tattooee’s choices links with the theories of the body, its symbols, and semiotics (Schouten, 1991; Thompson & Hirschman, 1995). All are found in the use of the tattoo, and are projected by the tattoo into the tattooee’s identity. Yet this identity is locked, as it is permanently etched on the skin, an identity to be managed, not changed as even removal activities leave marks to be seen and identified.

Tattoo, permanence, and freedom

One final aspect of permanence in relation to the tattoo specifically in respect of the creation of identity is interesting as, in certain postmodern theories surrounding consumer behaviour and consumption society, identity is linked to the concept of freedom as consumer behaviour theory postulates the ability to form and reform the identity of the individual through the activities and actions which they consume (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995). However there is a proviso in this activity, namely the freedom (or ability) to undertake such actions. This is important as freedom exists in two forms, the ability or freedom to undertake an activity i.e. the right (of free speech), and freedom from the threat or experience of an activity i.e. cruel and unusual punishments. Both types of freedom also imply choice, in that the individual is able to make an active choice concerning their activities, the freedom ‘to’ will be discussed first, as it is more relevant to the conversation surrounding tattooing.

Thus ‘freedom to undertake an activity’ is a term which depicts the ability of the

individual to act intentionally and knowingly within a measure of self control, this introduces the additional idea of addiction. Addiction in context of tattoos takes place when the consumer has a physical (Elliott, Gournay & Eccles, 1996; Hirschman, 1992) and/or emotional reaction to the tattoo (Hirschman, 1992; Hirschman & Holbrook 1982; Holbrook & Hirschman 1982; Labroo & Ramanathan, 2007). This can occur in the form of any of its physical or abstract qualities that makes the consumer demand more of the same (Elliott, 1994; Hirschman, 1992). As addiction requires acquisition to exist, it is thus primarily an experience of the tattoo, existing as a determinant of further consumption, not as a determinate for initial consumption.

External and internal controls are important when discussing self control in relation to tattooing; firstly, external control occurs through social, cultural, and religious frameworks which place legal or moral limitations to individuals' activities. This links again to the theories of power that were espoused by the French philosophers, Baudrillard (1983, 1998) and Foucault (1979, 1990a, 1990b, 1992) who both pointed out that the body itself is at the intersection of social control, individual power, personal identity, and mass consumption, with a linkage to symbolic consumption associated with the body and its uses. As Foucault stated:

...there may be a 'knowledge' of the body that is not exactly the science of its functioning, and a mastery of its forces that is more than the ability to conquer them: this knowledge and its mastery constitute what might be called the political technology of the body. Of course this technology is diffuse, rarely formulated in continuous systematic discourse; it is often made up of bits and pieces; its implements a disparate set of tools or methods.
(Rabinow, 1984, p.173)

While the body itself is also a battleground of theories and concepts:

...the body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs. This political investment of the body is bound up, in accordance with complex reciprocal relations, with its economic use; it is largely as a force of

production that the body is invested with relations of power and domination; but, on the other hand, its constitution as labour power is possible only if it caught up in a system of subjection (in which need is also a political instrument meticulously prepared, calculated and used); the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body.
(Rabinow, 1984, p.173)

These internal and external frameworks are not necessarily linked or exist in compatibility with one another, as internal control is only partially linked to external influences and rather relates to personal activities and controls such as will power, self reliance, self-discipline, and self-control rather than laws and legislation (Baudrillard, 1983, 1998; Foucault, 1979, 1990a, 1990b, 1992).

Free will, which is used synonymously with freedom, differs from it as there are levels of freedom, such as voluntariness, which is the kind of freedom that exists due to an absence of compulsion or constraint of activities. For example, the philosopher Hobbes, asserted that a person only acts freely when the individual wills (chooses to undertake) the act and that they could have done otherwise, if they had decided to, and not compelled to do so (Hobbes, 1651). He stated that: “no liberty can be inferred of the will, desire, or inclination, but the liberty of the man; which consisteth in this, that he finds no stop in doing what he has the will, desire, or inclination to do” (Hobbes, 1651).

Such views of freedom are also linked to the idea of determinism (S.E.P., 2008). In reality all choices of individuals are constrained to some extent due to real world influences; however determinism claims that current and future events are determined (or limited) by prior activities and causes. This perception was shown by the works of the Scottish philosopher Hume who commented that:

Tis evident the error of distinguishing power from its exercise proceeds not entirely from the scholastic doctrine of free-will, which, indeed, enters very little into common life, and has but small influence on our vulgar and popular ways of thinking. According to that doctrine, motives deprive us not of free-will, nor take away our power of performing or

forbearing any action. But according to common notions a man has no power, where very considerable motives lie betwixt him and the satisfaction of his desires, and determine him to forbear what he wishes to perform. I do not think I have fallen into my enemy's power, when I see him pass me in the streets with a sword by his side, while I am unprovided of any weapon. I know that the fear of the civil magistrate is as strong a restraint as any of iron, and that I am in as perfect safety as if he were chain'd or imprison'd. But when a person acquires such an authority over me, that not only there is no external obstacle to his actions; but also that he may punish or reward me as he pleases, without any dread of punishment in his turn, I then attribute a full power to him, and consider myself as his subject or vassal.
(Hume, 1967)

This commentary illustrates the denial of free will through the limitations of action, a form of constraint, in this case of human activities. The most extreme point within this view is that total freedom is an illusionary nature, as: “what is at stake in determinism: our fears about our own status as free agents in the world” (S.E.P., 2008).

In terms of the tattoo, the unmarked individual has the freedom to be tattooed, to gain a tattoo. In modern terms everyone has the freedom not to be tattooed. This second aspect of freedom occurs in relation to tattooing as tattooing has been used as a punitive action. This aspect of tattooing has virtually disappeared over time, being only found in the context of unofficial actions of individuals (Johnson, 1994), which are in effect examples of physical abuse. Tattooing's last example of being used as an official punitive action was the tattooing of concentration camp prisoners by the Nazi regime during the German Third Reich. It is pertinent to note that while prisoners were tattooed as a punitive measure as well as a permanent administrative mark, heavily tattooed individuals and tattooists were seen as public enemies and arrested and placed in the very same concentration camps (Lockheart & Hemingson, 2000; Oettermann, 2000).

With regard to the freedom to tattoo, imposed limitations are caused by the boundaries of the tattooee's body, in addition to the constraints of social, historical, religious and legal frameworks (Baron, 1989a; Brown, Perlmutter & McDermott, 2001) which exist in both official and unofficial terms to confine the

activities of the tattooee (Cristina, 2006; Dalrymple, 2000; HSE, 2003a, 2003b). But freedom is also limited by previous tattoo choices such as bodily areas already covered (Mercury, 2000), the colour of inks used within present tattoos (Kupermanbeade, Levine & Ashinoff, 2001), and the quality and experience of previous work (Larratt & Larratt, 1994a). All of these actions or related activities such as attempted tattoo removal place limitations on the tattooee in his/her choices to undertake further tattooing. Previous choices also can lead to transgressions of social, historical, religious, and legal frameworks, which too have repercussions for tattooees (Kakoulas, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2004d). These cannot just be those which can be directly linked to tattoo ownership i.e. the restriction of employment prospects, limitation of displaying tattoos (Steele, 2000; BBC, 2000b, 2002), but also physical repercussions such as skin infections and/or substandard tattoos if the tattooee uses an unlicensed tattooist (Larratt & Larratt, 1994a; Papageorgiou, Hongcharu, Wichai & Chu, 1999).

2.7 CONCLUSION

What has been identified in this chapter is that the family of consumer behaviour research called CCT or Consumer culture theory is a family of work. In undertaking this review through the four differing aspects of CCT, it was seen as noted by several commentators (Arnould & Thompson, 2005, 2007) on both CCT specifically and marketing generally (Stowe, 1983) as academic subjects lack the use of socio-historical analysis as part of the list of research tools available to examine consumer activities and the cultures surrounding or influenced by them. This thesis in using a socio-historical basis for its analysis in part fills this gap. In doing so I wish to show that socio-historical analysis and the use of historical data are valid tools in terms of CCT through the use of tattooing as a theme to investigate permanence as a concept.

From an historical perspective, different groups have consumed the tattoo for diverse reasons throughout the world and in different time-periods. The one aspect common to all of these elements is the permanence of the activity and within the activity. This can be seen in the definition of the tattoo itself as a

permanent body modification (Gilbert, 2000; Mercury, 2000), differing from other activities through its permanence (Armstrong, 1991; Favazza, 1996; Featherstone, 1999, 2000), its meaning and socio-historical context occurring through its permanence. Furthermore, in investigating tattooing we see patterns and themes which continue over time, which can be viewed as permanence beyond its physical permanence. While the societal or cultural meaning of the tattoo as a symbol may have disappeared along with the society that spawned and contextualised the design, the tattoo design and activity itself can live on. Its permanence is at odds with the impermanence of life and thus human body, yet is contextualised and defined by it.

The tattoo's permanence has repercussions on the theories surrounding identity use and has links to the grotesque body and freewill. Tattoos limit identity changes, an individual's identity cannot be manipulated in opposition to the ownership of a tattoo, it has to be synthesised into the new identity. Even removal of the tattoo cannot change this. The freedom to gain a tattoo limits the freedom for future identity changes from the ever changing identity to one of a solid unchanging permanence. I will show this through the use of data taken from modern consumption experiences and place it in context of past actions and activities (socio-historical data). This will be structured within the four areas of CCT to show the use of socio-historic view within such a setting, paying close attention to consumer identity projects and market-place cultures.

Before undertaking the use of data to portray and analyse activities the research methods undertaken alongside the methodologies used must be discussed, which leads onto the next chapter discussing methodology.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS USED

3.1 INTRODUCTION: THE DEVELOPMENT OF METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION METHODS USED

My overarching research design was emergent. I set out to understand and describe the reasons and meanings behind the consumption of tattoos and tattooing, aiming to identify the determinants and experiences of consuming a tattoo, specifically in relation to the aspect of permanence. As my research progressed and I immersed myself in the data the objectives of the research became more focused and can be summarised in the following.

Research Aims

The aim of this research is to add to the knowledge base of CCT by using socio-historical data to investigate how permanence sits within consumer behaviour. This examination of permanence has been undertaken by investigating tattoo consumption, taking particular interest in its relationship to individual and group identity creation. The investigation of permanence is in terms of present actions, comparing and contrasting these, and relating them to past (historical) activities, so as to identify patterns, commonalities, and continuity (i.e. permanence within the actions). These activities will add to the remit of CCT in terms of addressing the lack of use of socio-historical data within such an investigation and, in addition, will illustrate how permanence contributes to the creation of identity.

The key questions therefore are:

1. How is permanence (as seen through present and past tattoo consumption) situated within consumer choices? How does tattoo consumption relate within the aspects of CCT? (To identify permanence within differing aspects of CCT.)

2. How does permanence relate to existence in an impermanent world, specifically in context of the concept of a fragmented identity?

3. How does permanence relate to tattooing, as seen in the determinants and experience of tattoo consumption and as identified by using both past (historical) and present tattoo consumption data alongside one another to identify patterns, and thus permanence within the activity?

It is reasonable to assume that individuals will have a range of motives for becoming tattooed. Therefore, the objectives in choosing a relevant methodology become:

1. The identification of sources of relevant data
2. The creation of mechanisms to gather relevant data
3. The collection of data of sufficient quality and quantity to:
 - Analyse the determinants and experiences of tattoo consumption in relation to permanence.
 - Who consumes tattoos and how do they differ? {Typology of consumers}

I used an inductive and incremental process of theorizing, modification, and expansion from which a three-phase research design resulted. As my knowledge of further sources developed, my methods used to gather this data became more refined, I was able to identify and gather substantial information which otherwise might have been overlooked. In terms of methodology I used grounded theory, employing several techniques within it to gather data. This was founded on the supposition that doing so would be a positive influence on the entire research process as stated by Lincoln and Denzin (1994, p.2): “The combination of multiple methods.....adds rigor, breadth, and depth to any investigation.” These techniques are: introspection surrounding my own consumption;

participant observation, including observational data of behaviour at two sites of tattoo consumption (a tattoo convention and a museum situated tattoo exhibition); netnography, to gather online data; semi-structured interviews of twenty consumers at point of purchase and three case studies; socio-historical data gathered from books, journals and pictorial representations. In addition I used relevant newspaper articles and studies from other eras to illustrate past activities and views of tattoo consumption.

Over a four-year period I observed and participated in tattoo consumption and interviewed regular tattoo consumers. I looked at how consumers began and developed their tattoo careers, and how tattoo consumers interacted during consumption. To place these activities into context I looked at a variety of tattoo related consumption, in relation to present and past actions, and reviewed the history of tattooing. These activities augmented my own tattoo experiences and related consumption. It must be stated categorically that my own consumption of tattoos and tattooing *affected* and *effected* the research process for this thesis on more than one level. It was through my prior activities in consuming tattoos in conjunction with the lack of work in this area within academia in general and specifically within the realm of consumer research that made me choose the subject matter of tattooing for this thesis. Acculturation or accessing those who were tattooed and interacting with tattoo consumers was made easier through my own activities and contacts within the tattoo community and industry.

3.2 PHASES OF RESEARCH

The first phase

The first phase of the research process consisted of introspection of researcher participation in tattooing. This led to participant observation which occurred at several venues - a tattoo parlour, a socio-historical based tattoo exhibition, a tattoo convention, and also at a virtual/digital level by looking at a selection of tattoo related web pages and other electronic resources.

The second phase

The second phase of the process consisted of exploring the nature of tattoo consumption experience from the perspective of the tattooees themselves. Aided by my long-term tattooist, I recruited an initial cross section of tattooees who participated in one-to-one in-depth semi-structured interviews designed to explore the experience and the meaning of tattooing to them. A total of 20 tattooees took part, seven male and 13 female, aged 18-42, drawn from a range of occupations from students, through manual workers, to managers. Additional data came from three case studies, two were individuals whom I had known prior to my starting this research and were long-term tattoo consumers. The third was a female tattooing apprentice who was identified and contacted via electronic means. This data was supplemented by 385 consumption narratives sourced from a tattoo-related webpage.

This phase of the research was split into two parts; the initial part took the form of creating a typology of tattoo consumers from the interviews of 20 tattoo consumers at point of purchase and a random selection of 20 online narratives from the 385 gathered. The typology was created by establishing the age, gender, depth {how many tattoos}, placement, and design type. In the second part of this phase both manually and electronically gathered narrative data was collected and analysed by applying grounded theory until saturation point {no further information being identified} was reached (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The third and final phase

The third and final phase involved the collection and analysis of a wider range of data {tattoo related books, magazines, flyers, tattoo related products}. My observations were documented in researcher notes and memos (Glaser & Strauss, 1967); I included visual representations - photographs of situations, activities, and individuals. This was to make effective representation of the people, places and some of the rituals involved.

3.3 CHOICE OF METHODOLOGY

The basic premise and starting point of this research is that qualitative methodology is valid and suitable in the context of the subject matter, aims, and objectives. My chosen methodology, ‘grounded theory’ is within the parameters of qualitative methodology. I will explain why I have chosen grounded theory, pinpointing the particular strand of grounded theory used to analyse data, to obviate any misconceptions.

The data collected *has* to be relevant to the subject researched and had to be gathered in such a way as to answer the questions posed. A significant point is that data surrounding tattoo consumption has to be seen in the context that tattoo consumption has “depth” of activity rather than breadth. Even if the act is considered or described as a “shallow” act by a consumer, the reasons for the activity itself has an enormous amount of corresponding thoughts, ideas, concepts, and abstract beliefs. This links to the emotional and physical investment that connect the activity to the reasoning and determinant(s) behind the choices made. Reasoning and determinant(s) exist both on an individual and societal basis and can be found by examining the narratives acquired, which describe the individual’s activities and experiences.

As these narratives include both the factual information concerning the act and representations of abstract notions surrounding the choice(s) made they can be used to create an understanding of the process. Furthermore, narratives become a focus for studies and, if used properly, can be seen as rigorous, highly structured forms of communicating information, which allow for a variety of possible analysis (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Coffey, Holbrook & Atkinson, 1996). Prior to beginning this thesis I was aware of the existence of both present consumption narratives and those from the past which exist in a variety of forms (published diaries, blogs, newspapers, etc.) accessible through a range of media (specialist journals, webpages, etc.).

The idea of using thick or deep descriptive data to describe thick or concept rich

activities such as tattooing is linked to the view that research of activities or products cannot be described adequately without contextual understanding of the items, individuals or processes surrounding them and is described by Marshall and Rossman:

- i. Human behaviour is significantly influenced by the setting in which it occurs; thus one must study that behaviour in situations. The physical setting e.g., schedules, space, pay, and rewards and the internalised notions of norms, traditions, roles, and values are crucial contextual variables. Research must be conducted in the setting where all the contextual variables are operating.
- ii. One cannot understand human behaviour without understanding the framework within which subjects interpret their thoughts, feelings, and actions. Researchers need to understand the framework. In fact, the 'objective' scientist, by coding and standardizing, may destroy valuable data while imposing her world on the subjects.
- iii. Field study research can explore the processes and meanings of events.
(Marshall & Rossman, 1980, p.49)

Thus, methodology has to be fit for purpose, the topic under inquiry has direct implications for the choice of methodology and methods, and the topic being researched cannot be adequately understood without looking at the activities, ideas, and concepts surrounding the act.

3.4 WHAT IS GROUNDED THEORY?

“Grounded theory” refers to a system of theory creation where theory is created inductively from a body of data. The work, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* by Glaser and Strauss introduced grounded theory to Academia. This was a new methodology for sociological studies, differing from theory arrived deductively which is fitted to data from a grand or overarching theory, e.g. that of Marx, Freud, and Durkheim etc. Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.11) views on such theories are given as: “Some theories of our predecessors, because of their lack of grounding in data, do not fit or do not work, or are not sufficiently

understandable to be used, therefore useless in research, theoretical advance and practical application.” Thus grounded theory (described as GT from here on) aims to solve this issue by allowing for the inductive discovery of theory, which is grounded in analytically and methodically analysed data (Haig, 1995).

GT does not aim to discover the “truth” or “fact” but to conceptualize what is occurring using empirical data. The primary difference between GT and other forms of methodology is that GT undertakes to conceptualize during the initial stages of the research process rather than retrospectively. Glaser and Strauss have argued over the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of GT itself, but hold certain issues in common, namely the rejection of the logico-deductive method and the primacy of generation of theory from data, with emphasis on theory creation rather than verification:

In contrasting grounded theory with logico deductive theory and discussing and assessing their relative merits in ability, fit and work (predict, explain, and be relevant), we have taken the position that the adequacy of a theory is how it was generated. Thus one canon for judging the usefulness of a theory is how it was generated – and we suggest that it is likely to be a better theory to the degree it has been inductively developed from social research.
(Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.5)

Verification in GT occurs as an integral part of the theory creation. When verification comes from theory generation, it “carries the same benefit as testing theory, plus an additional one” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.28). This is the benefit of knowing that theory has a direct link to the data, thus it is validated through and via the data.

The development of GT originated in social sciences (Sociology), with the works *Awareness of Dying* (Glaser & Strauss, 1965) and *Time for Dying* (Glaser & Strauss, 1968). It has been predominantly used within sociological, health, and management related work (Goulding, 2002) such as *The Social Organization of Medical Work* (Strauss, Fagerhaugh, Suczek & Wiener, 1997) and *Unending Work and Care* (Corbin & Strauss, 1988). There has been a widening of the themes of research topics *Experts versus Laymen: A Study of the Patsy and the*

Sub-contractor (Glaser, 1976), together with further movements into other management sub-disciplines such as HR and consumer research. This shows that the explicit advantage of GT is its adaptability and usefulness in different research situations. This adaptability is not only to be found in the area of usage but also within the methods themselves. As Glaser stated:

Grounded Theory method although uniquely suited to fieldwork and qualitative data, can easily be used as a general method of analysis with any form of data collection: survey, experiment, case study. Further it can combine and integrate them. It transcends specific data collection methods.

(Glaser, 1978, p.6)

Analysis within Grounded Theory

Analysis involves three processes from which sampling procedures are taken and which may overlap. The collection of data is linked to theoretical sampling or sampling through theoretically relevant constructs, and data chosen must have relevance to the item/activity being studied. This happens in relation to the researcher coding and the analysis of the data, highlighting further data to collect. In undertaking the analysis according to O'Callaghan (1996), the researcher should have:

- A perspective to build analysis from
- An awareness of substantive issues guiding the research questions
- A school of thought to help sensitise the emergent concepts
- A degree of personal experience, values, and priorities

Analysis that is undertaken is as follows:

Firstly, data is interrogated/broken open to identify the relevant categories - this is called open coding. The next act is theoretical sampling - this is the constant use of memos to create a bank of ideas that are visited and revisited to map out an emergent theory. When undertaking this, the constant comparative method has to occur - comparing like with like, to search for emerging patterns and themes within the data. The final action is selective coding, where a "core" or central category that relates to and ties all other categories in the constructed theory

together is used. This in effect subsumes data further into the core category, which the researcher has to justify as the basis of the emergent theory. This happens when the theory has been identified, written up, and integrated within existing theories found from the data.

There is another aspect, Axial coding, taking place prior to selective coding; it is where categories are clarified, developed further, and related to one another. This additional aspect only occurs when using the Strauss and Corbin version (1990) of GT not the Glaser and Strauss version as used in this thesis, and is only commented on to show the difference between the two strands of GT.

Constant comparative analysis and theory creation

Theory building is the main aim of GT. It happens as an ongoing process, data being coded and analysed through constant comparative analysis the purpose being to generate theory systematically through the use of the action of coding. This leads to the researcher looking at the data as further coding is undertaken. Further codes are created and then compared with the original codes with the aim of reassessing and adjusting the codes to fit the data better. These codes are of two types - those abstracted from the actual language of the data and those created by the researcher to represent items found within the data. This leads to a situation where theoretic ideas and notions develop; creating possible alternate ways of coding or illuminating the codes and begin the development of theoretical relationships between the codes. When this happens the researcher should stop coding and write a memo on the idea. This has to be done when the ideas are fresh and at the surface of the researchers train of thought.

Once categories are ascertained and internal relationships identified, the categories then should begin to be integrated – looking at the categories' abstract concepts. Those identified as being similar are subsumed by, or grouped into, another category.

Use of Grounded Theory with computer analysis

In the past, the tools used to aid the continual comparative analysis within the use of GT were scissors, a copier, and piles of blank paper. Data can now be

analysed through the use of qualitative data analysis software such as Nu*dist, N6, or ATLAS. These can count the frequency but this does not allow the richness of the narrative to show fully, nor for the use of words outside their given meaning – i.e. in slang or subcultural terminology. If the understanding of the multi-layered meaning of the word is not known, then data is skewed. Thus computers are not used in this activity due to their limitations.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION

Data valid within Grounded Theory

Within the reach of GT the definition of valid, usable data is not only textual, nor does narrative need to be spoken words. Relevant data can vary both in the way they are collected and the manner of their presentation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Observations of behaviour {interactions and events} can take the form of field notes which are written like diary entries. Collection of the written word, through interviews, literature reviews or other methods, is not the limit of GT data. All of what the researcher sees, hears, feels, alongside spoken or written narrative is data. Observation and perception can be used to develop and test theory. This use of narrative or text is described as “rich” or “*thick description*”, a term used by Geertz (1973) in his ethnographic work *The Interpretation of Culture*. Thick description is undertaken to view the item, act, or activity being studied as a whole rather than merely looking at the surface representation of the item or activity in question (Geertz, 1973). Theoretically all forms of media can be used; pictures, photographs, tape recordings, newspaper clippings, web pages etc, which set the scene for the study. This is vitally important when looking at certain actions or activities as facts associated with narratives could be used to give more weight or meaning to narratives, emphasising and underpinning any categories or theory developed.

This layered adaptability of methods, applicability, and valid data within GT also helps with the practicalities. In essence GT adaptability allows for a diversity of social settings, topics, situations and methods, and the ability to use a variety of data within the theory building process. This very versatility is the main

attraction for its use in this piece of research.

Data collection

The research topic of the consumption of tattoos was undertaken at several levels with data being gathered from a variety of sources, including:

- My own experiences- my narratives of consuming tattoos.
- Visiting points of consumption- a tattoo convention, a socio-historical tattoo exhibition and tattoo parlour.
- The narratives of three case studies- two of tattooed individuals and one non-tattooed individual in the initial stages of tattoo consumption.
- The interviewing of 20 consumers {seven Male, 13 Female} at point of purchase.
- The collection of 385 consumption narratives {125 Male, 259 Females, one unknown} - from a tattoo webpage.
- A literature review of academic, technical, and subject orientated publications on tattooing, taking specific interest in the socio-historical aspect of tattoo consumption; viewing past and present publications to look at the differences and commonalities in terms of tattoo consumption within consumption narratives to investigate permanence.
- Searching different media {newspapers, TV shows, both past and present etc.} to look at how tattoos are consumed within the media, specifically using past newspaper articles to look at the differences and commonalities in terms of messages projected about tattoos and tattoo consumption in relation to past and present views to investigate permanence.

The decision to use several tools allowed reflection on the process and experience of consumption. There were issues over gaining data, and, to undertake 'good' GT based research: "the researcher must remain flexible and open, and prepared to sample across several groups and possible locations before the data starts to make sense and the research finds direction" (Goulding, 2002, p.156). My aim when gathering data was to gather data reliable and robust enough to undertake systematic analysis and interpretation. Thus I incorporated a

variety of data in origin and type.

INTROSPECTION

First form of data collection: Introspection

The use of introspection and self-analysis is not new. Introspection is defined as the “action of looking into, or under the surface of, things, esp. with the mind; close inspection or examination of something” (OED, 1989). It has origins in the Greek school of Philosophy, which had the datum of ‘know thyself’. Subjective Personal Introspection (SPI) is a controversial research technique. Within Consumer Research and similar subjects it has proponents such as Holbrook (1986, 1995, 2005, 2006); Reid and Brown (1996); Gould (1991, 1995); Heisley and Levy (1991); Hirschman and Holbrook (1982); Sayre and Horne (1999); Schouten (1991), and Shankar (2000); and opponents, Wallendorf and Brucks (1993).

Introspection is when the researcher analyses his/her own personal experiences that relate to the topic under investigation, making the subject him/herself. Wallendorf and Brucks (1993), define it as researcher introspection while Shankar (2000), gives three types of introspection in addition to self-introspection:

Guided introspection is when participants are asked by researcher to introspect.....Interactive introspection is when both participant(s) and researcher interact.....The data used are a result of the interaction. For this form of introspection to “work” both participant(s) and researcher should be “in the midst of a similar life experience....Syncretic forms of introspection is.....any combination of the personal, guided, and interactive introspection.
(Shankar, 2000, pp.27-28)

Within the context of this study syncretic introspection is used, as introspection is used as a framework of my own experiences and that of the individuals interviewed. While the internet data gathered is given in the form of introspective narratives.

Personal experience in terms of research was created from autobiographical based consumer behaviour research (Hirschman, 1990) and literature (Stern, 1989). The reasoning was that introspection when using the researcher-as-subject allows a far more detailed, richer, and in-depth description of the consumption experience.

Two pieces of work have particular relevance to this thesis, Sayre's (1999) *Using introspective self-narrative to analyse consumption: experiencing plastic surgery*, and Schouten's, (1991) *Selves in Transition: Symbolic Consumption in Personal Rites of Passage and Identity Reconstruction*.

The relevance of these papers is twofold. The first is that plastic surgery and tattooing have a remarkable amount in common. They are both invasive, permanent body modifications; are advertised, provided through and consumed in a service setting; and have only become widely used and acceptable within British society in the last 20-25 years. Furthermore, similar to tattooing, plastic surgery has until recently (1990/2000's) been perceived as solely gender specific i.e. for women. With recent societal changes men have become more open to plastic surgery. This is in line with societal views on tattooing which was seen as a masculine activity, solely the preserve of males or loose heterosexual women and lesbians (i.e. gender rebels).

Secondly, as academic works they are of interest because of their data gathering, data analysis, and how they are structured. Schouten's (1991) work differs slightly from Sayre's in that Schouten interviews consumers who then are introspective about their own consumption of plastic surgery, while Sayre's (1999) work involves self-introspection. Schouten uses both formal and informal interviewing situations:

Interviews were kept as loosely structured as possible, allowing informants the freedom to broach topics in their own ways, and at their own paces.....As themes emerged and as rapport with informants increased it became possible to use more probing questions to test and explore themes across informants.

(Schouten, 1991, p.415)

When he had gathered the data Schouten used constant comparative analysis as described by Glaser and Strauss (1967), leading to the creation of themes linking through the consumption of plastic surgery. His work shows the effective use of guided introspection.

Sayre, on the other hand uses self-introspection as the main data gathering process, stating that:

...introspection and self-narratives are this paradigm's advantages over others precisely because it is a primary activity rather than a secondary observation. Here, the informant-author delivers an uncut and pregnant description without the aberrant signification typical of symbolic communication between researcher and respondent.
(Sayre, 1999, p.101)

What can be construed from both these studies is that introspection is a valid data-gathering tool for qualitative methodologies and is directly applicable to an activity such as tattooing. In practice the introspection used in this study exists in terms of both self-introspection and syncretic introspection, as defined by Shankar (2000). This occurs through my own introspection and guided introspection {the participants are asked by researcher to introspect} and interactive introspection.

Practice of Introspection

Initially, I laid out my own tattoo consumption as narratives. I looked at the act in terms of what occurred and the determinants of the acts. I wrote my consumption narrative using the same style and framework as the online narratives. The importance of undertaking introspection in relation to GT was noted by Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.252) who stated: "one should deliberately cultivate such reflections on personal experiences." My next use of introspection was in questioning the 20 interviewees and my three case studies. I asked them to relate to me not only their tattoo consumption, but also why they consumed tattoos, to look retrospectively at their tattoo consumption, specifically in terms of the choice of tattooist, design, placement etc. Data from my experiences along

with that from the case studies, interviewees, and online tattooee narratives used in the practice of introspection are found in the sections 3.6: *The people and sample data* and 3.8: *Digital settings*. They include pictorial representations and sample data.

PARTICIPANT AND OBSERVER

Second type of data collection: Researcher as participant and observer

Initially looking at the research topic and wondering how to investigate it, I realised that my first point of reference was my own tattoo consumption. My unique view arising from my own consumption is very important, as the difference between those with and without tattoos is “marked” in more ways than one. Thus participant observation became the second part of my data collection, its importance was commented on by Marshall and Rossman (1980, p.79):

Participant observation is a special form of observation and demands firsthand involvement in the social world chosen for study. Immersion in the setting allows the researcher to see, hear, and begin to experience reality as the participants do.

(Marshall & Rossman, 1980, p.79)

Apart from being data, my own tattoo consumption experiences helped my undertaking this research in other ways. It is important within GT when labelling data and creating theoretical categories within theory construction that the researcher understands the variables and connecting relationships. This is termed ‘theoretical sensitivity’ and is effected by a number of varying techniques including reading relevant literature. The creation of such sensitivity according to Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.252) occurs “not only during his research {and from his research} but from his own personal experiences prior to or outside it.”

Being tattooed I was aware of the procedure I wanted to investigate, including what going under the needle entailed; the prices; the technical language; and products associated with tattooing. As such, I would be the gatekeeper to the research through my tattooed status, including my experiences with and contacts among the tattoo consumers in the UK generally, and Telford specifically. It also

removed the insider/outsider situation which incurs loss of meaning while gathering data, or causes misunderstanding (Velliquette, Murray & Creyer, 1998).

My participation observation garnered other data, through my use of associated products such as magazines, journals, books, and other publications, which aided my literature search and other data gathering. This combination of personal insight created by participation and observation was discussed by Adler and Adler, who stated:

...although we sometimes think of observation as involving only visual data gathering, this is far from true; all of the senses can be fully engaged.....Observations thus consist of gathering impressions of the surrounding world through all relevant human faculties.....recording the data with photography, audiotape, or videotape
(Adler & Adler, 1994, p.378)

Thus I have used photographs as tools to illustrate and focus my conceptualisation of the act of tattoo consumption. Similarly my knowledge and use of tattoo related web pages gave me access to information and allowed me to gather relevant data more easily than an individual without my personal experience of the tattooing. Consequently, my own consumption has directly influenced the tools and data gathering.

Participation observation took place at a variety of areas:

1. Artistic Tattoos in Telford, observing others' tattoo consumption and the general 'life' of the tattoo parlour.
2. My own tattoo consumption at Artistic Tattoos in Telford.
3. Participating in and observing tattoo and tattoo related consumption at a tattoo convention at King Charles Hotel in Gillingham, Kent.
4. Observing tattoo related consumption at a socio-historical tattoo exhibition (Skin Deep) in the National Maritime Museum in London.

One aspect of observation research that needs to be dealt with is the ethics of this

data gathering method. There is a sliding scale in the extent of revelation of the researcher's existence with those they are observing or participating (Marshall & Rossman, 1980), this exists between the extremes of full disclosure to complete secrecy, which in turn has implication for research ethics.

I decided that my presence should be overt. All consumers were alerted to my presence and purpose and permission was asked prior to interaction occurring (both face to face and online). In addition, I contacted the organisers and authorities of the tattoo convention and the Museum exhibition asking permission to use their respective venues for data gathering. This was granted, however, I was limited at the museum to what data I could gather due to copyright restrictions. Further descriptions of the physical settings, along with sample data and pictorial representations of places, are found in the sections 3.6 *The people and sample data* and 3.7 *Settings: The physical settings*.

NETNOGRAPHY

Third form of data collection: Netnography

There has been a ground shift not only in the subjects being investigated but also in the manner of investigation within the academic discipline of marketing, specifically the sub-discipline of Consumer Research. As the consumer has changed over the last 20-30 years due to technological changes, this has had an effect on both the consumption process and its data collection and analysis (Hemetsberger, 2005; Lee & Fielding, 1991; Venkatesh, Eminegul & Güliz, 2002).

The specific changes in mind are the creation of the Internet; the move from analogue to digital information; the increased availability of personal computers; the decrease in the knowledge base required to use services {Yahoo, MSN, etc.}, create web pages, to a point where it is a 'normal' activity. The revolution in digital data collecting, storage and management has changed how and what we consume (Datamonitor, 2006) and how we interact with one another (Kozinets, 2001). The knock on effect on the consumption of products and services effects both real and virtual products (Giesler & Pohlmann, 2003; Stockdale &

Borovicka, 2006).

New technologies were at first used mainly by individuals considered to be on the outskirts of 'normal' culture (Kozinets, 2001). There emerged a range of communities within cyberspace soon after the creation of the Internet. Cyberspace became used by people whose interests were similar but who were geographically disparate, allowing new relationships between consumers, product producers, developers, and service providers. These changes were paralleled in the creation of Netnography as a research tool which "investigates the specific instance in which community is produced through computer-mediated communications" (Kozinets, 1998, p.366). Such communication gives a wealth of online data that can be used. The use of such data has methodological and ethical repercussions that will have to be commented on.

Netnography: Virtual data and ethics

On the whole if individuals have posted information in the public domain then it is available to be used providing that individuals are represented accurately and given anonymity. But is it ethical that subjects do not know they are being observed or used in research? In addition, the UK data protection act adds to the issues the researcher has to consider (Akeroyd, 1991; Lee & Fielding, 1991). To counteract possible claims of unethical practices, in the context of lack of permission, actions prior to placing information into this thesis were taken. The main webpage used for data collection {*bmezine.com*} was contacted by email to ask permission, {see Appendix:1}. No response at all was received. Each individual used within this study was approached either in person or by email {39 out of 385 online experiences} to ask permission. Only two individuals gave conditions to the use of their experiences. One asked me which experience was to be used and the other for a copy of my finished thesis. Further descriptions of digital data used, along with sample data and pictorial representations of web pages are found in the section 3.8: *The digital settings*.

INTERVIEWS

Fourth form of data collection: Interviews of 20 consumers at point of consumption and interviews of three longitudinal case studies

My contact with a Telford tattooist, Winston Gomez, predated this research, allowing me to interact with him and his clientele to collect data. This was semi-structured interviews of 20 tattoo consumers of Artistic Tattoos and three case studies. Marshall and Rossman (1980, p.82), describe what an interview is: “An interview is a method of data collection that may be described as an interaction involving the interviewer and interviewee, the purpose of which is to obtain valid and reliable information.....[and is] a useful way to get large amounts of data quickly.”

When undertaking questioning of customers in Winston’s Studio, I created a framework for gathering data in a taped semi-structured interview.

I asked:

- What tattoo did you get?
- Why did you get your tattoo? (Identified with any subculture?)
- How did you feel
 1. When making the Choice?
 2. When undertaking the activity?
 3. Afterwards?

During the interview, I explored who they were and if they defined themselves in any particular manner, noting down relevant background information, such as their families’ views of tattoos, and who, or what, had influenced their decisions. I noted any influences such as membership of a subculture relevant to the consumption, either in terms of the activity or in the decision process.

The next source of data came from three case studies. Individuals who were known to me agreed to become long-term case studies as they had trust in me. I had unparalleled access to their activities and views regarding tattoo

consumption - I became part of their tattooed lives. I kept in regular contact with these individuals, visiting them, collecting notes, taking photographs of their tattoos, and taking part in their consumption activities. I asked them to think about their tattoo consumption, back over their own activities, what had occurred, and also what surrounded their tattoo activities. With these case studies, I watched and noted their tattoo consumption developing, following their tattoo consumption processes discussing with them their decisions and noting information of every tattoo they gained. To assist in this progress I took photographs of their tattoos when I could. Further descriptions of the individuals involved are given along with sample data and pictorial representations in the sections 3.6: *The people and sample data* and 3.7: *Settings: The physical settings*.

BOOKS, JOURNALS, AND PICTORIAL REPRESENTATION

Fifth form of data collection: Books, journals, and pictorial representation

The final aspect of my data collection took the form of books, specialist journals, newspaper articles, and other items of data. Dey, comments on such a variety of data available to qualitative methodologies, stating: “general culture may provide another rich source of ideas for analysis. There is non-academic literature....newspaper reviews...biographies and the like. There may also be non-literary sources, such as radio and TV interviews” (Dey, 1993, p.66).

Such data was used for several reasons; firstly, to add theoretical sensitivity to the research process; secondly, to view tattoo consumption holistically rather than limiting it. For example, diaries of tattooists from the ‘golden era’ of tattooing such as George Burchett’s *Memoirs of a Tattooist*, (Burchett, 1956), hold valuable data concerning tattoo consumption from another time period. While magazines such as *The Tatler & Bystander*, *The Strand* (Bolton, 1899, 1902) and the *Harmsworth Magazine* (Stephen, 1898), also are full of primary data concerning contemporary tattoo consumption with articles praising tattooing, giving hints and tips on design choice and placement (Anon., 1902). Newspaper articles of the same era give reviews, interviews of famous tattooists, and stories about tattooing around the world (William, 1844). Other similar

articles by commentators and concerned scholars, such as Lombroso (1896), Fletcher, (1882) and McAlister (New York Times, 1893) can be found giving contemporaneous historical accounts and moral judgements on such activities. This use of newspapers and journals as sources of socio-historic data in illustrating activities, views and opinions surrounding issues was noted by Franzosi:

Newspapers have long been relied upon by historians and social scientists in general as informal sources of historical data. In recent social research newspapers have been used systematically as sources of data.....Louis Galambos relied on newspapers to study the changes in public opinion attitudes to big business at the turn of the century.
(Franzosi, 1987, p.6)

Finally as tattooing is a visual medium, not referring to pictorial representations of tattoos and tattoo consumption would be a waste of important data that could add valuable insight into tattooing; for example, using such representation to illustrate context in the use of tattoos and how visual meaning is projected within tattoo use. It is important that I refer to visually based mediums as what we see is sometimes taken for granted within research and thus left out (Silverman, 2001).

Present publications, specifically specialist tattoo related journals such as *Skin Deep* give a good broad view of tattoo consumption and illuminate the 'community' surrounding tattoo consumption. Publications also were important in viewing the history and development of tattoo consumption in the context of the choice and reasoning (behind the choice), as a product and as an industry. In conjunction with this, newspaper articles and adverts were gathered to examine how society in general viewed and consumed tattoos as an abstract notion, as a purveyor of information and meaning, as well as a tangible product.

3.6 THE PEOPLE & SAMPLE DATA

As they have been vital in assisting my understanding of the determinants and resultant experiences of tattoo consumption, the individuals utilised in the case studies require examination. I will explain who these characters are, where and

how I gathered data from them, what I did with the data, and how I analysed the data gathered. The first point of interest and data was my own tattoo consumption, which was added to by the three case studies.

All case studies were asked to give assistance in gathering the data I needed and agreed to be involved knowing the aims and objectives of the research. With the two who were close geographically (Marf {Martin Lineton} and Graham Sherry), I visited them in their own homes and discussed, in a semi-structured manner, their tattoo consumption while I noted their answers in memos and photographs. As the third (Rosie) lived in Southampton, discussions, with a semi-structured interview schedule, were initiated over MSN messenger after we met online at a music genre webpage.

I followed their tattoo consumption processes discussing with them their decisions and noting information. To assist in this progress I took photographs of their tattoos when I could. I was given the opportunity to photograph one case study's being tattooed, cataloguing his thoughts during the process. The data gathering sessions online included talking about thoughts and aims of possible consumption and exchanging pictures of designs and web pages of possible interest. I am unable to fit all the data gathered or details concerning them in this thesis so the salient points will be given in synopsis in conjunction with examples of the data gathered.

John Follett

My own tattoo experiences I wrote out as a descriptive narrative, in addition using the appointment cards of my tattoo consumption as prompts in the act of introspection. I also kept series of photos that show the progression of my tattoo consumption which in total has cost approximately £1000 and is yet to be finished. I have provided scans of these in conjunction with photos of examples of the tattooing they undertook on me.

1st Tattoo experience

Backstreet tattooist, no card or photo of tattoo as tattoo has been covered up prior to this study.

2nd set of Tattoo experiences

Received 5 tattoos at Skin on Ink in 3 sittings.



Fig:6 Appointment Card for Pictures on Skin, Gillingham, England

Note the commentary espousing qualities of work (Fine lines/ original designs)



Fig:7 Authentic Tribal (Haida)

An animal fetish shows longitudinal fetishisation of the tattoo.



Fig:8 Celtic Adam and Eve and Viking dragon by Pictures on Skin



Fig:9 Marquesian style tattoo by Pictures on Skin

Note the angle which it rests, this is due to it being a cover up tattoo and is the tattoo that replaced my first tattoo. Its placement was constricted by the tattoo it was covering; this shows the limiting of free will through tattoo acquisition.

3rd set of Tattoo experiences

Received 1 tattoo in 1 sitting.



Fig:10 Appointment Card for Inkfish Studios, Maidstone, England



Fig:11 Celtic Eagle by Inkfish Studios

4rth set of Tattoo experiences

Received 1 tattoo in 1 sitting.

No appointment card for Inkantations (sic) in Leslie, Fife, Scotland



Fig:12 Tribal arm piece (authentic Marquesian)

Top section undertaken at Pictures on Skin, the lower part by Inkantation and the reverse (partially visible) at Artistic Tattoos.

5th set of Tattoo experiences

Received 10 tattoos in 15 sittings.



Fig:13 Appointment Card of Artistic Tattooing



Fig:14 Tribal sleeve

Lower left hand sleeve, rear of top left sleeve, Indonesian elbow rose and triangle on lower right arm by Winston at Artistic tattoos

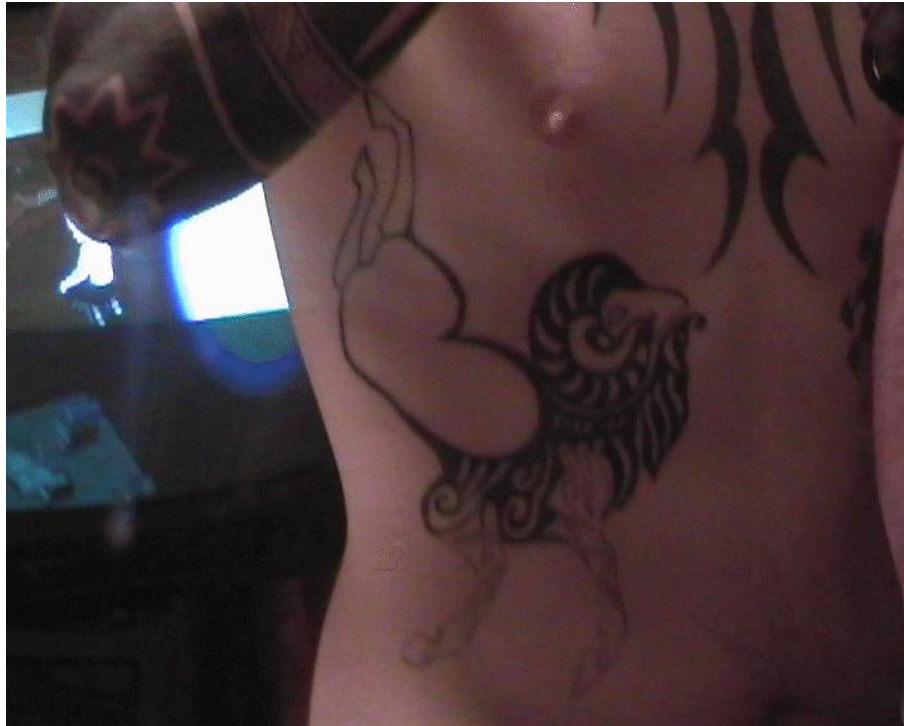


Fig:15 Rib cage and chest tattoos

Rib cage tattoo (Scythian): Part of other rib (Scythian), chest (Indonesian) left elbow (Dyak from Borneo) tattoos undertaken by Winston Gomez, this shows longitudinal continuity and globalised nature of tattoo designs available.

6th set of Tattoo experiences

Received 1 tattoo in 1 sitting.



Fig:16 Appointment card for Modern Body Art Birmingham



Fig:17 Appointment Modern Body Art Birmingham reverse

Note the comment about deposits as this shows the tattoo as a consumable product.



Fig:18 Elbow Sun

Undertaken by Jo Harrison at Modern Body art Birmingham

Note the lack of the thorn design (see Fig:20) this design undertaken later had to sit with the placement of this earlier tattoo showing limiting of free will by tattoo acquisition.

7th set of Tattoo experience

Received 1 tattoo in 1 sitting.



Fig:19 Appointment card of Medway Tattooing



Fig:20 Thorn vine arm sleeve design

Undertaken by Medway Tattooing, note that the design has to take into account previous tattoos thus showing limitation of freewill.

Martin Lineton: Case Study1 (Marf)

I met Marf in September 2000. We were introduced through my house-mate at the time, Mick Carter. We met at a pub in Stirchley, Telford called The Elephant and Castle. The reason we met was that we were both invited to a gig of a new local punk band. We were introduced to one another, “Ah you’ll get on with Marf he has silly amounts of tattoos too.”



Fig:21 Marf

Note biker, blackwork, and Old school designs.

The two of us stood and drank talking about our tattoos and tattooing experiences for a couple of hours. There was an instant bond with him due to the tattoos and our mutual interest in music. His tattoos are what are described as generic biker or heavy-metal/rock tattoos, plenty of skulls, grim reapers, etc. He also has an extraordinary amount of piercings in his ears. Both of us were also at that time roadies for local bands; roadies perhaps is a romanticism on my part for moving heavy sound equipment around, but for him it was down to really knowing how to tune instruments, replace a string and set up the band. He was a ‘professional’ roadie and took pride in being a part of the band Slipstream.



Fig:22 Marf front

Photo taken 2006, note the full new right sleeve and Graffiti lower left sleeve undertaken since beginning of this study. Also note the surgery scar on his abdomen which he was afraid that would affect the permanence of the tattoo by damaging it.

Marf, looked the part of a roadie, he sported a shaved head and a long red beard which half heartedly covered a large port wine stain birth mark he has on his chin. Bespectacled and ultra-skinny he lives off fry-ups, painkillers and immeasurable cups of coffee. Working class to the core, he worked as a plastic technician and ran a line at a plastic moulding company. When this went under he moved onto working at a factory producing double-glazing. He has not had an easy life. He was bullied as a child because of his birthmark and his dyslexia; his father died when he was young; after his mother died he “had a bad time.” At one point he experienced kidney failure, which resulted in his having several long-term bouts of hospitalisation and in one instance major surgery that scarred him across his abdomen. During his illness his greatest fear was not of dying but of losing his tattoo. He asked his surgeon specifically whether he would get a scar on his tattoo.

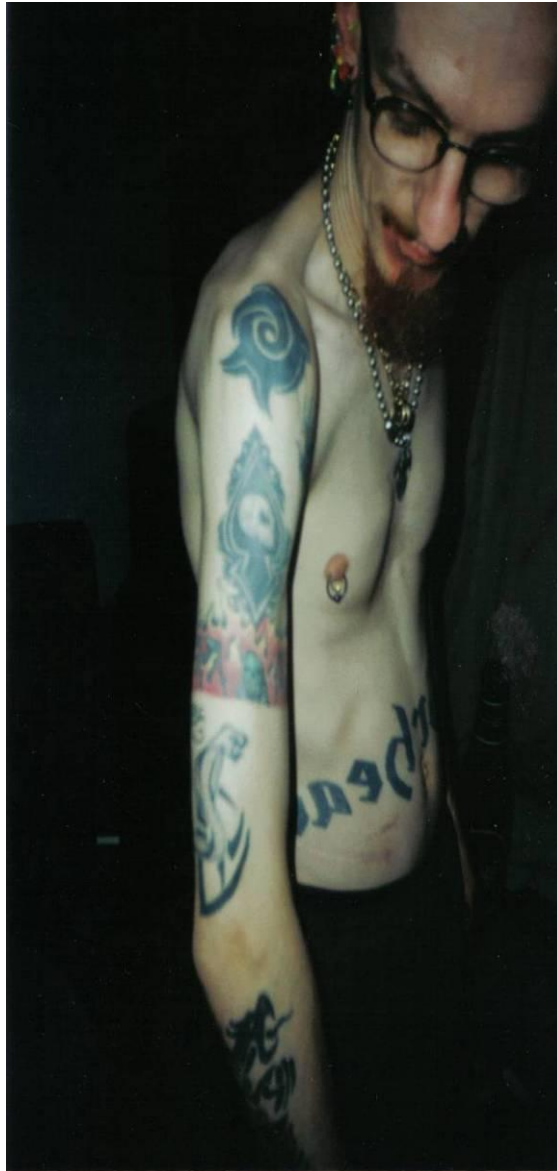


Fig:23 Martin Lineton {Marf}

His tattoos include biker blackwork and tribal types. Note this photo has been flipped and the writing on his stomach is the correct way. It is interesting to note his use of less permanent body modifications such as piercing was transferred to making them more permanent by stretching his lobe piercings and removing cartilage so that they would be less transient in nature as he was fed up with losing piercings due to their closing up.

He was heavily into music, from hard rock to brit-pop, indie to rave, all genres to which he felt some sort of link. This was reflected in his choice of tattoos. Apart from his generic heavy metal tattoos he also had Motorhead tattooed on his stomach and a hard rave logo on his left leg. They all represented part of his character; he saw no clash of genres of music or tattoo styles. However he planned out his designs after realising too late that he needed structure in his designs.

Our data gathering sessions were fuelled by cups of coffee as we interrogated our latest purchases of tattoo related publications. In doing so we would aesthetically rate the subjects of the tattoo magazines, swapping magazines. In relation to ourselves we would discuss our past tattoo experiences and talk about our future intentions, one of Marf's was his intention to become a tattooist, which resulted in his buying a tattoo machine. The tattoos of swallows on his chest had a story behind their choice. His dad had been in the army, but had not acquired any army tattoos during his national service. After he left he wanted to get swallows, however, his wife, Marf's mother, would not allow it, and so Marf got them as a memorial for his parents. Mainly he had got into tattoos through his love of rock and roll - in particular his tattoos were an indicator of his identity.

When questioned about tattoos and permanence he stated that due to the port wine stain (birthmark) on his face he had no qualms about permanently altering his body in terms of placement where it was visually apparent i.e. on overtly public skin such as his hands, face, etc. He also stated that he had received negative comments due to his permanent modifications, but not for his non-permanent ones. His striving for embellishing his body permanently with personal meanings linked to his personal aesthetic and musical tastes (heavy metal, thus the Motorhead tattoo) in his choice to be tattooed. At the end of this study he purchased a tattoo machine, with the aim of becoming a tattooist, he however never realised this during my interaction with him.

This following transcript is part of one semi-structured interviews that occurred throughout the data-gathering period.

Interview with Marf (29): machine operator:

John: How did you first get involved in tattoos and tattooing?

Marf: Well I consider myself as part of the tattoo community and intend to be a bigger part of my life. Tattoos are a big percentage of my life – I live for tattoos cos I've bought a tattoo gun and want to get into it. People accept its part of me, people who know me, know that I am a nice person and to be honest a lot of people in the tattoo community are nicer than ordinary people.

John: Do you think that people assume things when they see your tattoos?

Marf: Yes, all because of the thug sort of mentality, they don't realise people get tattoos cos they want them, not because they are thugs. Also people see thugs with tattoos and what they do gets brought back onto us lot.

John: Do you think that your tattoos have limited you in any way?

Marf: Possibly, but if I like what I see I'll do it whatever people think, its just narrow mindedness, like my sister said to someone, it's just me; it's just the way that I am. I do get a lot of stick off some people, like...why have you done it? Why have you got so much done? But, I want to be a walking art gallery.

John: Some people like to show them off like galleries, don't they?

Marf: Well, you go to the shows and you see that, you become accepted in the tattoo community even if you have only got one or two tattoos – but having *tattoos* is better (his emphasis) – the more the better – but when you get a full sleeve or stomach tattooed – when you something off like that a little different then people say well done – cool work or things like that.

Graham Sherry: Case Study 2 Punk and tattoo collector



Fig:24 Graham Sherry: Case Study 2

Graham was one of my friends in Telford prior to my beginning this study. His friendship arose from our mutual interests in tattoos and music. We met at a music themed pub, The Station in Wellington at this time it was a rock/alternative pub which metal-heads, Goths, punks, and bikers frequented. Every Friday the pub ran a rock disco. It was here that we bumped into one another and started talking tattoos.



Fig:25 Graham Sherry: left leg

Design is logo of SoCal (Southern Californian) Punk Band 'No religion', the design is linked Graham's self perceived identity as a 'punk'.



Fig:26 Graham Sherry sleeve

Old school design: Note the design stopping at the wrist allowing it to be hidden.

Our friendship grew when I met up with Graham at Winston's *Artistic Design* in Telford (see Section 3.7 *Settings: the physical settings* for details). Baby-faced but balding Graham was an interesting person. He thought of himself as a Punk of the American rather than UK variety. He dressed as an American Punk, with American work-shirts, and baggy skating shorts. We used to go to Punk gigs together, taking turns driving. For most of the time he lived with his brother and various lodgers in a house in Telford. Permanent bachelors, the housemates were somewhat lacking in personal and domiciliary hygiene. They were, however highly amusing. Graham's commitment to permanence is seen in the placements of his tattoos, nothing below the wrists and nothing above the shirt collar. He recognised that the placement of such permanent modifications in public flesh areas would be negative for his working position and career. He and his brother had both experienced negative reactions at work due to their tattoos. Furthermore, permanence is seen in his choice of tattoo designs as his aim was to use traditional (working class) designs in his overall aesthetics, as they were also linked to the American Punk (So-Cal) subculture.

The data was gathered from Graham in a similar manner to Marf, in that I undertook semi-structured interviews of Graham to follow his tattoo consumption.



Fig:27 Graham Sherry detail

Note sacred heart, playing cards, and hot rod flames designs all of working class origins now linked to So-cal and other Punk subcultures.

Graham was passionate about what “he was into” especially music and tattooing. His views of both had a certain morality. He hated lack of authenticity, especially bands that “weren’t real punks,” as seen in the music and tattoo use of the band members. He thought there was a direct correlation between “crap” bands and “crap” tattoos. In his opinion some bands were thrown money by their record label when signed and told to go off and get some tattoos. In parallel with this he felt that a tattoo uniform, which bands had to follow if they were to be seen as part of a certain genre or a musical movement, had been created.

One point of note concerning Graham’s tattoo consumption is that Graham chose to tattoo his armpit. The reason for this was he wanted to get tattooed in an unusual place and he wanted to find out how much he could take. This has analogies with Foucault’s view on the body (1979, pp.56-57) where he states, “mastery and awareness of one’s own body can be acquired only through the investment of power in the body.” He told me afterwards that the healing was worse than getting it done as he had to sleep with his arm above his head and the swelling got worse before it got better. Work was a problem as well due to the fact that bending the armpit made the skin break open again. His routine of cream and powder that he had learnt from the dragon tattoo behind his knee

made it heal quickly and without losing any ink.

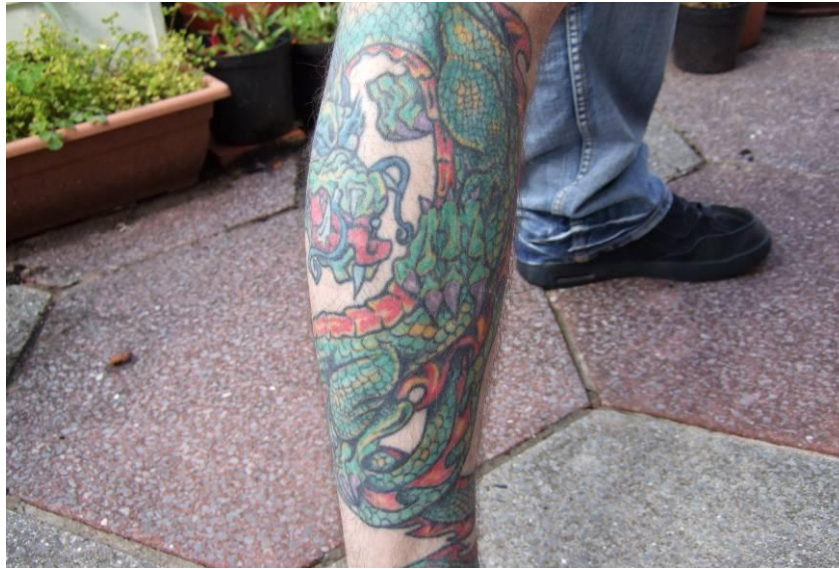


Fig:28 Graham Sherry leg tattoo
Stylised Japanese Dragon

This is an example of semi-structured interview undertaken with Graham:

Interview with Graham (24): Machine operator and line manager at Denso:

John: When did you first get into tattooing?

Graham: March 2001, about two years ago.

John: What attracted you to tattoos and tattooing?

Graham: Well My dad told me when I was living at home I couldn't get one, so when my parents split I got one, also my little brother (Stu) had just got one the week before, so I thought if he could sit through one then so could I.

John: When did you first notice tattoos and tattooing?

Graham: About three years before, when I was 18, Matty and me decided to get one each but we kept bottling it.

John: Do you think that people have a negative view of tattoos and tattooing?

Graham: Not so much any more, older people do? They say things like why did you do that, or why did you get that done? But, most people like it, but they say things like they wouldn't get it done themselves or to that extent.

John: Have you had any negative reactions?

Graham: Everyone says that I will regret it when I'm older, but at least I'll have lived a life to regret!! Also why are people bothered about what I do to my body? It's my body and if I want to do something I'll do it.

Rosie: Case Study 3 tattoo assistant

Rosie was unique among my case studies, in that our interaction occurred entirely via the digital medium and we never actually met. This interaction between individuals of common interests is occurring more frequently as the ease of interacting on the Internet increases with the adoption of broadband connections and the rise of specific interest centred sites.

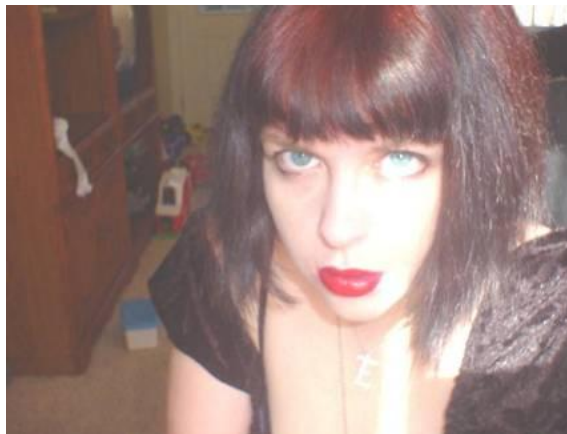


Fig:29 Rosie Case Study 3

I “met” Rosie online at *Gothicmatch.com*, an Internet website that allowed people with an interest in the Gothic music genre and subculture to interact. I had joined to meet people to go to gigs with and to chat with. The webpage asked

you to post a synopsis of your interests alongside a description of yourself and a photograph if possible. One of the options I chose when uploading my interests was tattoos and tattooing, something which I emphasised in my description box. Prior to meeting Rosie online, I had chatted to several individuals via this method from both inside and outside of the UK, most were only partially interested in tattoos.

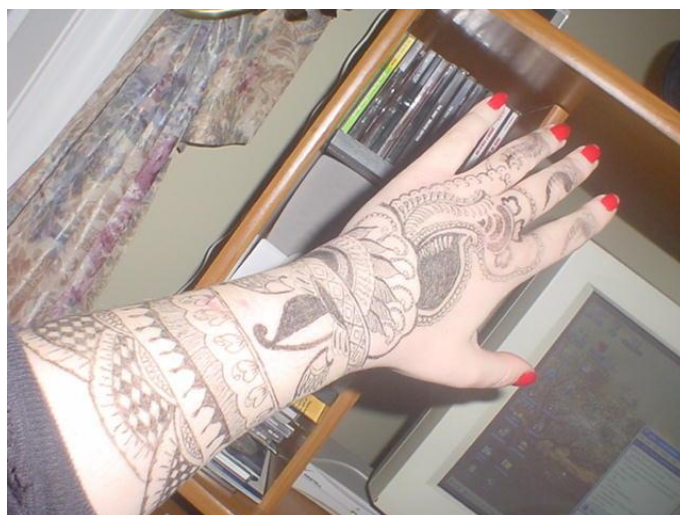


Fig:30 Rosie potential design undertaken with henna

The representation of permanence in Rosie's tattoo choice is seen through her use of non-permanent body modifications in terms of henna and tattoo skin pens to create tester pieces and to 'play' with potential designs on various body parts as seen on her hand above.

Rosie was working in a tattoo studio - her second as the first had folded and been bought over by the second - thus Rosie had an insight into tattoo consumption from the service point of view. Her interests in tattoos and tattooing had come about via her two interests - music and piercing. Already trained as a piercer, she was serving her apprenticeship as a tattooist. She was undertaking A-level art and she wanted to incorporate her artistic studies into her work and vice versa. Unusually for a tattoo assistant she was not tattooed but heavily pierced. This was because she wanted to be absolutely sure about what she wanted in terms of a tattoo design and its positioning. Her work had taught her that to choose a tattoo in haste was indeed an issue that an individual would repent at leisure due to the permanence of the tattoo.

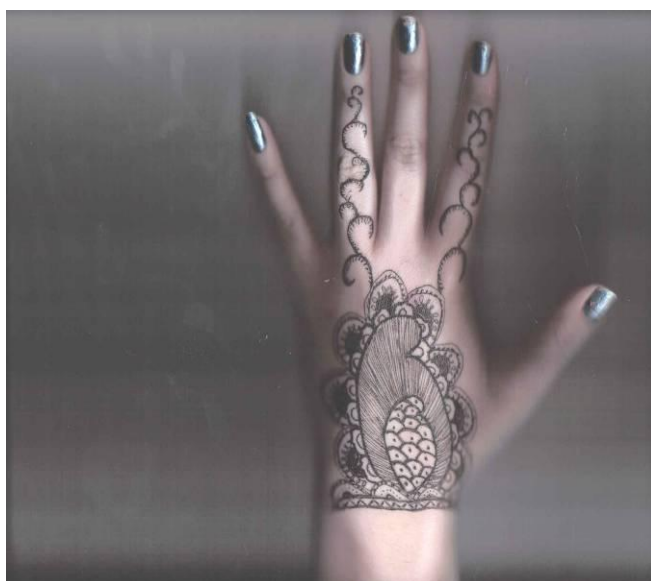


Fig:31 Rosie potential design 2

Undertaken with tattoo skin ink pen

Her job in the studio was to help in every aspect of the delivery of tattoo consumption to the public. Rosie had to open the shop in the morning, help throughout the day interacting with customers, tidy up, and clean the studio prior to locking up. Her assistance to customers included helping them choose their designs, showing them designs from the various portfolios, organising pre-prepared display designs and publications the studio held. She enjoyed interacting with people and took pleasure in piercing people for the studio. The process of learning how to tattoo encompassed setting up the equipment for the tattooist and preparing skin transfers made up from designs chosen. The practicalities were taught via watching the tattooist undertake tattoos and being shown specific aspects of tattooing techniques and styles after work.

To plan her tattoo consumption she created a portfolio of possible tattoo designs, this was partially an element of a chosen art college course and partially for her own benefit. She also tried out new tattoo designs by drawing proposed designs with “tattoo” pens and henna onto her skin to see what they would look like. Firstly, she found it aesthetically pleasing and would undertake it before a special occasion to have the appearance of a tattoo; secondly she felt that she needed to be ready and sure about the design, so a cold run, and living into the design

would make her feel more definite about getting the real tattoo. These activities place Rosie in the realms of a dabbler as she uses tattoo mimicry and has not yet committed to the permanence of the tattoo, as the tattoo's permanence halts any further dabbling by limiting placement. Furthermore, her actions show high involvement in the decision process (Zaichkowsky, 1985, 1986), both in terms of aesthetics (Bloch, Brunel, & Arnold, 2003) and permanence (Craik, 1994).

3.7 SETTINGS: THE PHYSICAL SETTINGS

Apart from the interviewing of the case studies, there were three physical settings for the data collection: the *Artistic Tattoo* parlour in Telford; the 2nd Tattoo Convention at Gillingham, Kent; and the Tattoo Exhibition at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, London. Each setting was chosen for the ability to gather data relevant to the overall view of tattoo consumption. This data was added to and placed in context by my interaction with a variety of other characters associated with these places.

Artistic Tattooing: Telford

The first setting is the Tattoo studio *Artistic Tattooing* which is situated next to the bus depot in Queen Street Telford. It is an unassuming Victorian building with the large bay window common to many old fashioned shop fronts. Two other businesses share the building: a small café (Mollies Cafe) on the left side of the building and, upstairs, a barber complete with a red and white pole. *Artistic Tattooing* in Telford can be described as a typical British Tattooist, but it was one shop in a tattooing franchise that includes shops in Shrewsbury, Wrexham, Crewe, Telford and Liverpool. The shops are run in this manner: one individual who is the tattooist in situ (Winston Gomez known to all as Geoff, for some arcane and obscure reason) runs the day-to-day activities of the shop and manages every aspects of the tattoo parlour, including monetary, personnel and legal. Behind these activities there is another person, a silent partner who employs the tattooist and funds the tattoo parlour.

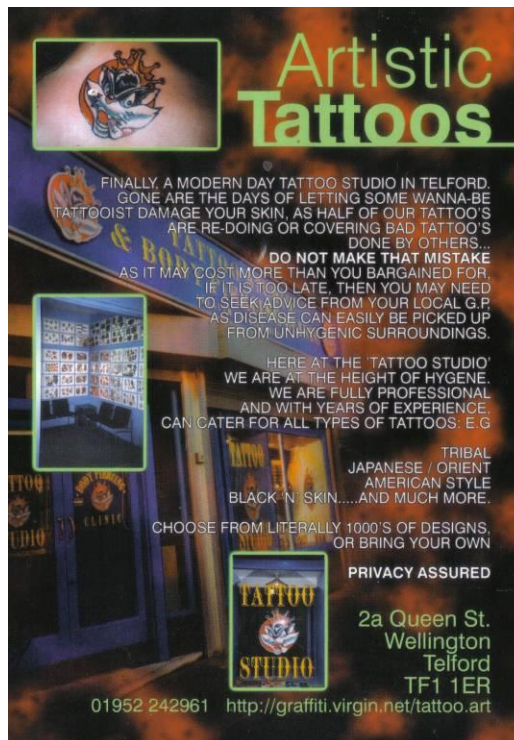


Fig:32 Flyer for Artistic Tattooing Telford

Note the comment about ‘bring your own designs’ showing the placement of the consumer on equal footing with the tattooist within the procedure prior to physical acquisition of the tattoo.

Items that are sold are body piercing and tattoo related products including jewellery, skin care products, and clothing. There were two service rooms: the back room was for tattooing and the front room was for body piercing. Furnished with slide doors to maximise usable areas both rooms were approximately 50 ft by 50 ft with storage areas similar to kitchen units on the back walls for tattooing and piercing equipment. Each had a centrally positioned former dentist’s chair.

Winston Gomez, the main tattooist at the tattoo shop, was a Liverpoolian by birth and nature, but undoubtedly a Latino in heart and action. A very passionate loud individual in many ways, he was a supreme storyteller and people person. An Elvis fan and a 1950’s fashionista he was a mine of sub-cultural and music references and experiences. Originally a punk he allegedly squatted with various punk and hardcore bands in the 1980’s. A self-taught tattooist, he had also worked in America becoming a specialist in working class tattooing (Old school). The tattoo shop was a mirror of his aesthetics as well being the means of

his livelihood. In his late 30's, he had been tattooing professionally for 5 years and had started working for *Artistic Tattooing* just prior to the beginning of this study in the year 2000. He considered himself lucky to be a tattooist as he was paid for something he enjoyed doing, he began tattooing himself, his friends, and acquaintances informally during his punk phase and this led to paid employment in a tattoo shop. Once he was an established tattooist with experience in America and in Britain, Winston was offered the opportunity to become a partner in opening the Telford *Artistic Tattooing* shop (the other partner remained unnamed and in the background). This suited Winston as it gave him the chance to work independently without carrying the total financial responsibility of the venture. He realised his ambition to become totally independent in 2005 when his financial situation allowed him to buy out his silent partner. He changed the name of the shop to *Kit Kat Tattooing*.



Fig:33 Winston of Artistic Tattooing: Telford

In effect Winston was Artistic tattooing in Telford. He alone decided upon the running and development of the shop, the unnamed silent partner was interested only in the timely return on his investment. Apart from one instance money was never talked about during my time at Artistic tattooing. Winston would never discuss profitability. Direct questions about the subject were fobbed off by “If every fucker knew how much I was making they would all want to be a tattooist.” This comment was closely followed by “well they all do want to anyway.” His view of competition was a dichotomy. He was disdainful about

opposition, disliking professional quality competition that was not located in a shop, but was happy about “shit” competition or “scratchers” as it gave him a market for cover-ups. Unhappy consumers from other tattooists would come to him for advice initially and in the long run as consumers for his help in either repairing the damage already done or to have another tattoo placed over the unwanted tattoo. He blamed this on the availability of tattoo equipment on the internet and through mail order, which individuals would purchase as he put it: “to try out being a tattooist.” Yet, he himself became a tattooist through this route. This was the aim and planned route to become a tattooist of Case study:1 Marf, who purchased a tattoo machine to do so.

When questioned, in 2000, about what type and how many customers he generally received Winston answered that he had customers of all persuasions, professions, and ages: doctors to car mechanics, single mums to students had all passed through his doors. The age range 18-30 made up approximately 80% of his customers with 85-90% of commissions from flash work rather than self-designed or one-off piece. Demand varied during the year: full demand with a 3-4 week waiting list in summer, while winter was slack with diminished demand. The seasonal nature of the work was explained by Winston: summer it is hotter, more revealing clothes are worn, tattoos are more visible, thus advertising tattoos which then feeds back into peoples’ actions in consuming tattoos at this time of year more than at any other time. This situation changed over time. In 2001 demand was such that waiting list went to 6 weeks, this waiting time continued throughout 2002. 2003 saw it rise to 8 weeks, and 2004 to 9/10 weeks. This increase in demand was also paralleled by a reduction in slack time in winter: in 2000 they had a slack time from mid November to the end of January; in 2001 and 2002 only in December; whereas by 2003 the Studio was fully booked all year round. Indeed by 2006 there was a 4-month waiting list to get a tattoo from this studio.

In 2000 there was no such thing as an average week’s workload. It was dependent week to week on what was booked in. If in a week the majority of customers ordered small flash designs then it would have more individuals through the door rather than if large custom designs, such as a customised back

piece, were ordered. The most popular product in terms of single designs for men over the period I was gathering data at Winston's was the Maori shoulder tattoo popularised by Robbie Williams. This led to the design being placed on the flash sheets for ease of application. It was closely followed in popularity by generic tribal pieces and British bulldogs. For women, the most popular tattoo has been the generic tribal piece situated on the lower back (known as ass antlers or tramp stamp). The several variations on this design were modifications of the one design of a horizontal black line curving at the ends and the middle, the detail of which would be altered slightly to create an infinite number of designs marketed as separate pieces of flash. The second most popular design was the dragon design sported by Angela Jolie on her arm. Customers did not always copy her placement, with the ankle and shoulder blade being the two other areas popular for this design.

In Winston's eyes demand for tattoo designs was influenced by the media and fashion. He stated that celebrity tattoos influenced consumption more than anything else, but he thought there was a negative as well as a positive aspect to this, stating: "We have to thank the stars for popularising tattooing, and certain designs, but sometimes it doesn't feel like that when you are doing the thirtieth Robbie design or Jolie Dragon."

The favourite designs changed over the four years of studying *Artistic Tattooing*. This was due in part to movements within tattooing, specifically the reawakening of working class tattoo designs in America (Old School) that fed across the Atlantic. It was also to do with the creation and popularisation of the "Emo" genre of music in 2000-2004. An increase in demand resulted from this subculture's association with certain Old School designs: in particular hot rod flames on arms and legs for men, and "Emo" stars on wrists, collarbones and ankles for both sexes, the popular positioning by women also included the pubic bone and the lower back.

Tattoo Convention at Gillingham: King Charles Hotel, 15th and 16th of June 2002

The inclusion of a Convention as a gathering ground for data is to show the importance of conventions within the overall consumption of tattoos and

tattooing. It highlights several forms and aspects of tattoo consumption specifically the convention as a locus for the tattoo community and as an area of conspicuous tattoo consumption.

I chose the Gillingham convention to visit, as I was already knowledgeable about the geographic area having lived there for over a year. My first large-scale tattoo consumption had occurred here and I had interacted as a customer in three of the six tattoo shops in the area, meeting several of the tattooists from the area in a social context. However, I had a shock, the Tattooist I had the best relations with and who had undertaken most of my tattoos, Dick Want from *Pictures on Skin*, had literally disappeared. No one, even in the tattoo community, knew his whereabouts.



Fig:34 King Charles Hotel Gillingham venue for tattoo convention



Fig:35 Gillingham Tattoo Convention 2
Banner outside advertising the convention



Fig:36 Tattooist working at Gillingham convention
Note authentic tribal design on table next to him.

The King Charles Hotel in Gillingham was already known to me as a venue for alternative discos and live music. First impressions that I received when I arrived at the hotel on Saturday was how busy it seemed: even although an England football match was being played that day. I entered and paid my £15 for a two-day ticket, the proof of payment was similar to a music festival in that I was given a non-removable wristband as proof of payment. There was a disco and a

bar, where the band for the evening's entertainment were setting up, the DJ playing various tracks over the p.a. system. To the left a room was occupied by trade stalls. These included individual stalls offering alternative and retro-clothes; normal and body jewellery; tattoo inks; and one stall advertising a trade web site, where for a fee a studio could advertise itself. In addition to this there was another bar serving drinks and food.



Fig:37 Authentic tribal arm

On attendee at Gillingham Tattoo convention

The room to the right of the entrance hall was home to the stalls selling 'tattoo supplies' - in addition to a group of tattooists watching the football on a borrowed portable TV. Three stalls were selling tattoo machines, ink, and flash. One of the stalls in this room was a small-scale light engineering firm that produced tattoo machines for tattooists. When questioned about the nature of their work the engineering stall holders stated that they had found a need in the late 1990's to diversify their products and increase their customer base because of the downturn in demand in the engineering sector for small scale custom made products. Looking around for a profitable niche market in which they could

operate they found the production of tattoo machines to be an opening that was both profitable and without much competition. The company would produce stock items and custom machines for tattooists. This led to specialist orders such as left handed machines, decorated machines and machines designed for a specific tattooist's grip.



Fig:38 Frankenstein portrait

On attendee at Gillingham Tattoo convention

The convention itself was based in a long rectangular room with ply-board booths built to chest height along each side of the room. Each booth, supplied with electricity and special waste bags, housed a single tattooist/tattoo studio. A large colourful banner behind each working area provided advertising space. Of the 18 booths two had not been filled on the first day. The majority of the studios had photograph books filled with examples of their work and folders of their flash. Several studios advertised their awards: winners or 'recommended' at shows.



Fig:39 Custom full sleeve

This custom sleeve - at Gillingham Tattoo convention

This custom design shows high involvement in aesthetic choice, i.e. the tattooee interaction with design choice (Zaichkowsky, 1985, 1986).

In the Convention area, one stall, from *'Skin Deep'* the premier British tattoo magazine, was selling back copies, subscriptions and branded clothing. Three of the four other stalls in this area specialised in 'alternative' clothing; jewellery; tattoo flash; tattoo design sets; framed prints; and picture framing. The overwhelming majority of the pictures were of tattoo related images, some of which would not be immediately apparent to anyone out with the tattoo community, such as Vargas 1940's and 1950's pin up girl drawings. The final stall was also selling photos, books, CDs with flash and pin up photos (fantasy, fetish, tattooed, pierced, 1940's it was all there) as well as offering a tattoo/ body piercing photography service.



Fig:40 Tattooees mingling at the convention

On the first day during the 5 hours I was there between 150 and 180 people attended, a 'slow day' due to the football. The organisers were also disappointed with the 300 attendances on the Sunday, down on previous turn-outs but explicable because it was Fathers' Day. If one was not getting a tattoo then there was little to occupy you and food and drink was very expensive. Also on the Saturday when I first entered the main room it was a bit intimidating with people in their own little groups but perhaps this was more to do with its being my first attendance at a convention. There was a very open atmosphere with people bringing their children along. People when talked to would be quite frank about swapping tattoo experiences and complementing one another on their tattoos. Individuals showing off tattoos sometimes had clothes that helped viewing such as shorts and "wife beater" t-shirts or clothes specifically altered to show off tattoos. This took the form of a rip on the back of a t-shirt to show a tattoo on a shoulder blade or trousers with one leg cut off or rolled up to show the inked skin underneath.

Photographers both professional and amateur wandered between booths and customers taking photographs. I took photographs of the convention and customers as data - in doing so I observed the unwritten rule of asking permission of the owner of the tattoo or stallholder. I recognised some of the

people that were meandering around from their photographs in books or magazines, a couple of older individuals were well known.



Fig:41 Tattooed attendee at the Gillingham convention

Note the flash cards of designs on the wall behind.

The Skin-Deep Tattoo Exhibition at the National Maritime Museum Greenwich, London, 17th June 2002

My visit to Gillingham Tattoo convention coincided with a tattoo exhibition running at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich London. As such I took advantage of being in the South-East of England to visit the exhibition. This exhibition was first exhibited at this venue between 22 March and 30 September 2002. The exhibition was advertised widely. In the promotional literature (also available online) the exhibition was described:

The Skin Deep exhibition brought together a fascinating range of objects to illuminate the development and diversity of tattooing over the past 200 years. Beginning with Captain James Cook's first encounters of native tattooing in the South Pacific, the exhibition looks at the adoption of tattooing by sailors, and its growth as a statement of fashion and identity throughout today's society.

(National Maritime Museum, 2002a)



Fig:42 Outside of the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich

The socio-historic tattoo exhibition was held here due to the historical links between sailors and tattoo usage, showing linkages between a specific group and tattoo usage.



Fig:43 Skin Deep Tattoo Exhibition

Part of the entrance: note the sailor tattoo design (anchor) side showing linkages between a group and specific design.

My first impression of the venue when I arrived at the museum was the incongruity of the setting of the exhibition with the actual subject of the exhibition. The museum set in Greenwich Royal Park is housed in a set of magnificent mock classical buildings at the edge of the park. The area has a long tradition of links with both the Royal family and the Royal Navy. The buildings that make up the museum have world-class heritage. By the late 20th century the Royal Navy had moved on to other sites and other uses had to be found for the buildings, this led to the creation of the National Maritime Museum.

The form contains the following text and handwritten entries:

NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM **ROYAL OBSERVATORY GREENWICH**

This slip, when signed and dated by a member of the Filming Section, is authorised proof that the holder has completed all necessary paperwork regarding copyright.

Permission granted by: Eleanor Heron Date: 17/6/02
Of Filming Section (Eleanor Heron)

WE HOPE THAT YOUR PHOTOGRAPHS WILL ASSIST YOUR PROJECT. PLEASE RECOGNISE OUR ASSISTANCE BY MAKING A DONATION BEFORE YOU LEAVE. COLLECTION BOXES MAY BE FOUND AT ALL EXITS TO THE MUSEUM.

© National Maritime Museum
Greenwich, London SE10 9NF Tel: 020 8312 6645/6727/6710 Fax: 020 8312 6599

Fig:44 Copyright declaration for tattoo exhibition

The buildings were extremely elegant; they housed a variety of maritime related exhibitions. Two buildings had been covered over with a glass roof, enclosing the space between them, thus allowing for more exhibition space. The tattoo exhibition was in this central piazza area, on the first floor. I had to gain permission to photograph the exhibition via the visitors' information stand below the exhibition area. Here there were two advisors, an older English woman in her late 50's and an Asian man in his 20's. Both queried me about my tattoos, the woman commenting negatively, stating that the tattoos were ugly scars while the Asian man said that he was intrigued by my thorn sleeve design as it reminded him of the beautiful Indian henna designs. These comments illustrate the dualistic view of the tattoo. When the manager arrived, I was refused permission to photograph the exhibits due to the fragile nature of some of them and copyright infringement on others; however, I was allowed to photograph the outside of the exhibition.

The exhibition itself was disappointing. The area set aside for the exhibition was a u-shaped tunnel with exhibition cases and commentary on either side. Exhibits varied in time and origin. Commentary included portraying the accepted history of the re-importation of tattooing into Britain. Important items associated with the journey of Captain Cook were exhibited including William Hodges portrait of Captain Cook. Items linked to tattoo culture included a 19th century wooden model of a war canoe carved with the fluid lines and intricate spirals characteristic of Maori Moko.

The development of British and other western tattooing culture was shown in the exhibiting of flash designs from the 1890's and examples of early 20th century tattooing machines. Photographs of tattooed individuals showed off patterns and changes in taste down the 20th century. Modern influences were shown by photos of a range of tattooed celebrities, including the singers Pink and Anthony Kedis of the Red Hot Chilli Peppers. The celebrities' photographs were accompanied by a commentary on the tattoos they had and, in some cases, the meanings the tattoos held for the celebrities.



THE TATTOO.
AN EXHIBITION.

SKIN DEEP

22 MARCH - 30 SEPTEMBER

NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM



Skin Deep – a history of tattooing is a fascinating and colourful history of the tattoo, showing at the National Maritime Museum from 22 March. Topics range from Captain Cook's early encounters with the Tahitians, through the use of tattoos by seamen in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, to its present-day status in society and fashion.

Admission

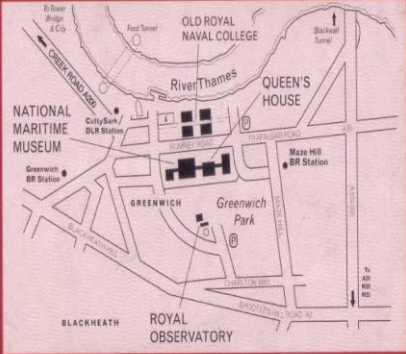
Entry is now free to all the museum sites at Greenwich, though there may be charges for some special events and exhibitions.

Opening times

10.00 – 17.00 daily. Last admission 16.30. Late summer opening. All sites closed 24-26 December.

Travel

By Docklands Light Railway to Cutty Sark for Maritime Greenwich. Connex railway from Charing Cross, Waterloo East, Cannon Street or London Bridge in about 20 minutes. Or riverboat to Greenwich from Westminster, Waterloo, Embankment and Tower Piers.



For further details, event programmes, school visits and disabled access to this World Heritage Site, please call our recorded information line: 020 8312 6565 or visit our website: www.nmm.ac.uk

National Maritime Museum, Royal Observatory and The Queen's House Greenwich, London SE10 9NF



Fig:45 Flyer for Skin Deep exhibition

3.8 THE DIGITAL SETTINGS

There were a variety of digital settings in the study: Webpages, FAQ news boards, and instant messaging. The most important and influential was *BMEzine.com* web page.

First Digital Setting: BMEzine.com

I was knowledgeable about BME prior to my starting this research. I had used it to search for designs for my own consumption. When I began my tattoo consumption in 1999 after a break of eight years, I used it to help plan my future consumption. This web page, started in 1991, was one of the first to be created to deal with the subject of body-modification (BM) in general and tattooing in particular. Within the web page there was a variety of resources similar to those in paper based specialist publications. To all intents and purpose it was an Ezine or electronic magazine and an online version of paper/hard copy based publications. Information included: a dictionary of BM terms and activities; photographic databases of BM activities such as tattoo designs, piercing etc subdivided by type of design; a forum where interested individuals could chat about their BM activities and tattoo consumption.

All these aspects were found in two parts: an open area which was available for general public consumption and an adult/members only area which contained sexual based content or content which, due to its graphic content, was deemed suitable only for those who were committed enough to join up as a member. Non membership limited the amount of open source photographs accessible. To make sure that membership was open only those who had an active interest in the subject; it was restricted to those who contributed photographs, articles about BM itself, the BM subculture or their BM consumption experiences. This alone did not give full and total access, as the access was time limited by the amount of information you upload to the site, six, nine or twelve months. The sexual content was available only through either a further uploading of information or payment of a fee. The public nature of the information and the lack of active communication links (in comparison to redundant links) to members made me

shy away from contacting individuals directly via the web page. A large amount of data was posted anonymously and without any way of communicating with authors.

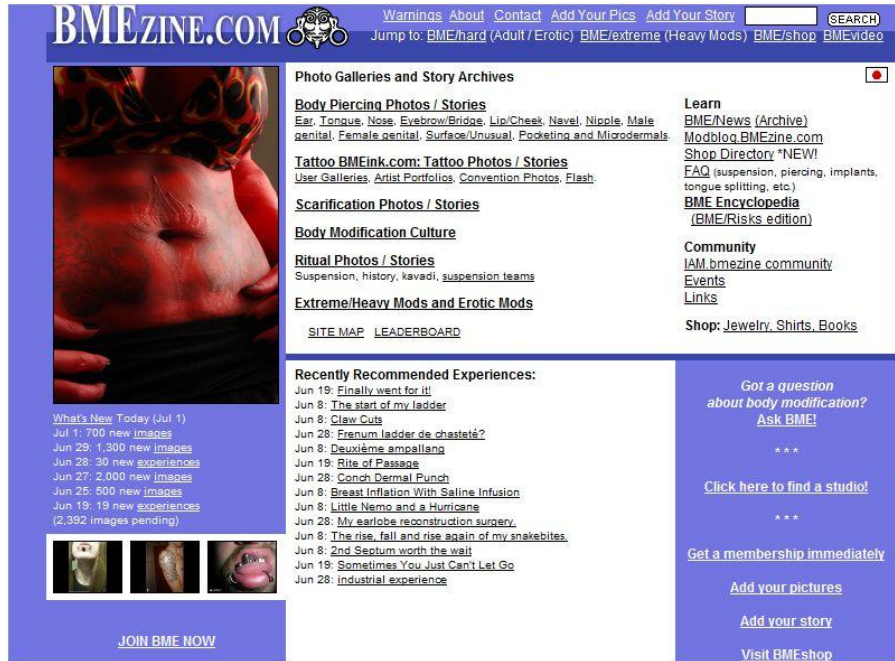


Fig:46 BMEzine webpage

Through my use of *BMEzine.com* I realised that the majority of articles available on the web page were autobiographical consumption narratives. Consumers would post their consumption experiences of the various types of BM activities and swap tattoo designs in the form of photographs alongside their experiences. These varied from ‘mainstream’ activities such as tattooing and piercing to less well-known ones such as scarification, suspensions and implants. In addition, the use of these consumption narratives would remove the problems that I had discovered in gaining data in sufficient quantities. At first the web page was not well organised and relevant data was hard to find. The narratives were organised by the description created by the consumer themselves and not linked geographically. So it was difficult to find narratives from British consumers. As the majority of tattoo consumption in the west occurs in the North American continent the greater part of the data was contextual to that area. This obstacle was removed in 2003 when the web page was updated to include a search option in the experiences section, which could be limited via geographic origin.

The narratives an example of which can be found below came in the form of a user generated description **Blue roses for me...from me**, (Emma, no date), followed by a short ‘at a glance’ determinant of the details of the Author, when the tattoo experience occurred, and where it occurred in terms of Studio name and geographic location. Other options not found on this example are contact details for the author and the name of the tattooist.

Blue roses for me.... from me

Well, as so many stories on BME begin, I have wanted a tattoo since I was young, every time I saw one on somebody I just thought that they were so beautiful and I knew without a doubt that I would get one when I was ready and that I would definitely not stick to just one. Although my family isn't into them at all and hardly any of my

friends have any, it didn't put me off and I knew tattoos would definitely have to be a part of me. The first blue rose on my back was a birthday tattoo, taking place on my 19th birthday. I went with a friend to Under the Skin as she had been there before and recommended them. We went downstairs and all the guys there were so nice and really funny so they made me feel really comfortable. The actual bit of the shop where the tattoos are done was really clean and so much better than other places I've seen. As I was looking around at the designs on the wall I came across the blue rose design with a red heart and said that was the one for me. I booked an appointment for a week's time, on my birthday. A week later me and my friend, who was also getting tattooed, made our way from college to Aldershot. The hardest decision in this whole experience was deciding what underwear to wear! As we were both having tattoos on our hips (I had one on my

At A Glance	
Author	Emma
Contact	Emma@bme.anon
When	Two years ago
Artist	Gordon and Dave
Studio	Under the Skin
Location	Aldershot, South-East England

hip as well as the rose on my back), we knew that we absolutely could not show the guys any granny pants! We did try our hardest not to get the piss ripped out of us, but Gordon and Dave did absolutely rip it when my friend had to whip out her boxers (girl ones obviously but still.....piss was ripped). I went first and I was very nervous and excited. I had already had one small tattoo but I hadn't really gotten as used to it as I have now, so I was quite nervous. When you first hear the machine the noise is nasty but when Gordon started it was fine and they all just made us laugh so much, I could barely keep still. As there was a fair amount of skin and booty showing, the jokes were very dirty and I was sweating from total embarrassment rather than pain. The tattoo only took about 20 minutes and afterwards I was wrapped up and given aftercare instructions. The tattoo healed perfectly and I have found that keeping tattoos covered up with Savlon cream and cling film under my clothes and at night really helps to prevent scabbing and scabs being knocked off. 6 months later I had started feeling unhappy when I looked at my rose on my back and started to regret it being so small. It took a while for me to realise that I could simply just add to it and make it bigger and more beautiful. I went back to Under the Skin as I was so happy with all the tattoos and piercing's they had done for me and had a look around for something to have that would go with the blue rose until I eventually decided that I would get another blue rose and another heart. I told Dave what I wanted and let him position the tattoo where he thought it looked best. I didn't have to wait for an appointment that day as my tattoo was quite small and had my tattoo done in between appointments. I love having tattoos done and do not think it hurts at all but is actually quite a nice feeling! We're all different and I know some people enjoy it and some find it agony. So I had my tattoo done and Dave even improved on the original by outlining and re-coloring some parts of it. The two roses and hearts look much better now they are bigger and stand out more. My parents didn't even notice the new addition and now think that it has always been two! I have always though that I would never get a rose and the red roses are quite common, but I love my blue roses more than anything and every time I see them in the mirror I think they look so beautiful. Tattoos are so addictive it is so true, I currently have 8 and am definitely not finished yet. For anyone wondering whether to have a tattoo or not, wait until you see something you truly love and until the moment is right and you will know when this time comes. Each time I

get a new tattoo, I don't just get one every time I go into a shop, I just wait until the need to have a new tattoo takes over and it is all I can think about! I feel like this right now and will definitely be back in that chair soon!

Happy tattooing!

Love Em x

Disclaimer: *The experience above was submitted by a BME reader and has not been edited. We can not guarantee that the experience is accurate, truthful, or contains valid or even safe advice. We strongly urge you to use BME and other resources to educate yourself so you can make safe informed decisions.* As can be seen the narrative describes the consumers experience, but it also includes certain aspects, which need to be commented on.

- The narrative is written from a first person perspective in retrospect; the consumer is introspective about an incident in the past.
- The language in this and other narratives has aspects that are influenced by the use of digital media such as email and mobile phone texting such as “*grin*”. This can be seen in the use of informal language of emoticons or emotional icons created by the interaction of typed symbols such as brackets and dots to form pictures e.g. (^_^).
- The legal disclaimer is vital due to the litigious nature of today’s society with a possible scenario being a regretful tattoo consumer attempting to sue the web page for some perceived bad advice on tattooing posted by another user of the site.

Second Digital Setting: TattooFAQ.org

Tattoo FAQ {Frequently Asked Questions} (Anon, 1997) is another web page, which is a community based resource and is used for educational purposes by potential and active tattooees. Its existence illustrates one aspect of high involvement within tattoo consumption (Zaichkowsky, 1985, 1986).



Picture removed due to copyright

Fig:47 Internet Tattoo FAQ

Begun in 1997 this web page started as a text based bulletin board/newsgroup which gave information about the professional way of purchasing a tattoo. This includes:

- what to expect when being tattooed
- the healing process
- how to choose a design
- how to choose a reputable tattooist

It was of great use to me when I had started out using the internet as a resource for my tattooing and later in undertaking this research.

Third Digital Setting: MSN Messenger

The final digital setting that was used was MSN messenger on which I chatted to an assistant at two tattoo parlours in Southampton. My contact arose from being a member of an internet sub-cultural web page Gothicmatch.com; a web-page used by people interested in the gothic music subculture to contact one another and interact online. We had become friends through our mutual interest in tattoos

and tattooing. We discussed tattoo experiences and tattoo consumption. This method of communication allowed not only informal discussion but also the passing of pictures of tattoo designs, web pages and Internet links of mutual interest.

3.9 TYPOLOGY OF TATTOO CONSUMERS

During the process of developing the codes as a theoretical basis for the determinants of tattoo consumption, I produced a typology of tattoo consumers. The aim of creating a typology (i.e. a classification of consumers) was to create understanding of the issue or activity being studied, as Myers and Nicosia acknowledge:

...by assigning meanings to objects, ideas and people he encounters. Classifications enable him to observe and thus work towards explanation and prediction. All knowledge rests on some form of classification; to classify is to begin to understand.

(Myers & Nicosia, 1968, p.182)

This is further elucidated by Holt, who states:

To comprehensively describe the variety of ways in which people consume, to understand how these differences vary across groups and situations, and to explain the unacknowledged conditions that structure how different groups consume and the unintended consequences of such patterning.

(Holt, 1995, p.1)

In order to understand the processes and decision-making that consumers were undertaking I pursued a detailed examination of the customers themselves. It was necessary to determine precisely who the consumers were, what they consumed, and what commonalities, that could be identified among these individuals. I undertook this in an analytical and systematic manner compatible with GT. First, I took the results of the 20 interviews of tattoo consumers taken at Artistic Tattooing, added to by 20 online narratives, chosen at random, from the 385 that had been gathered, plus the data from the three case studies.

I then cross-examined the narratives using constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to identify significant facts and issues. These were the features of tattoo consumers necessary to create the typology. This entailed the recording of variables such as - demographics {gender/age}; their tattoo choices in terms of design and placement; noting whether these placements are in areas normally hidden {back/calf, etc.}; half-hidden which are able to be shown when certain clothes are worn {bottom of back, upper-arm or upper-chest} and in areas visible unless specific covered up {wrist, lower-arms, etc.}; or visible at all times {face, hands, etc.}. Other aspects included the number and size of tattoos; whether consumers mention the possibility of repeat tattoo consumption; and if they stated whether they felt part of a tattoo community, either indirectly, or in its widest sense by association and membership {piercing, subcultural affiliation etc.}. With the online narratives, I noted the type of membership, if any, of the webpage on which they were posting, or the use made of other electronic media, as well as any related comments given in the narratives.

The form undertaken to express the details found was taken from Schouten's (1991) study of plastic surgery, *Selves in Transition*, as a format for the tabular projection of data from the various consumers. It is the easiest way to portray effectively the data in a manner that can be used to compare and contrast the details given; these tables are given in the next pages.

Table 1: Table of typology of 20 tattoo parlour based Tattoo Customers.

Customer	Placement	Tattoo design	Tattoo # and placement of others	Gender	Age	Repeat Consumption?	Consumer type	Feel part of tattoo Community
No1	Back H	Custom Tribal	12 th Others HH	F	33	Yes	CC	No
No2	Hip HH	Flash Unicorn	1 st	F	18	Maybe	F	No
No3	Hip H	Flash Unicorn	1 st	F	18	Yes	F	Yes (in the widest sense)
No 4	Back H	Flash Liverpool football team badge	1 st	M	20	No answer consumer passed out	F	No answer consumer passed out
No 5	Shoulder blade H	Flash Dolphins	1 st	F	29	No	F	No
No 6	Arm HH	Flash Rose Old school and name of son	1 st	F	19	No	F	No
No 7	Leg H	Custom Authentic tribal	5 th Others HH	M	29	Yes	CC	Yes
No 8	Arm V	Flash Panther Old school	3 rd Others HH	M	29	Yes	CC	Yes
No 9	Shoulder blade H	Flash heart Old school and name of husband	1 st	F	Not given	No	CC	No
No 10	Full back piece H	Custom Tribal	5 th Others HH	F	22	Yes	CC	Yes
No 11	Half sleeves V	Custom Cover-ups preparation For tribal design	5 th Visible on neck	M	30	Yes	FC	Yes
No 12	Full sleeve V	Custom Blackwork thorn design	9 th Visible on hands & wrists	M	?	Yes	FC	Yes
No 13	Lower back HH	Flash Tribal	1 st	F	24	No	F	No
No 14	Lower back HH	Flash Tribal	1 st	F	23	No	F	No
No 15	Ankle H	Name added to Flash Heart	2 nd	F	27	No	F	No
No 16	Ankle H	Flash generic Tribal	1 st	F	20	Maybe	F	Yes (in the widest sense)
No 17	Shoulder HH	Custom Blackwork	1 st	M	24	Yes	F	Yes (in the widest sense)
No 18	Shoulder blade H	Custom Angel	3 rd	F	26	Yes	F	Yes (in the widest sense)
No 19	Shoulder blade H	Touch up of a Marc Bolan portrait	4 th	M	42	No	CC	No
No 20	Arm HH	Addition to tribal flash arm band already in place	2 nd tattoo	F	24	Maybe	F	No

Types of tattoos: H=hidden HH= half hidden V=visible

Typology of tattooees: F=fashion CC= Committed but concealed FC= fully committed

Table 2: Typology of 20 Online Tattoo narratives

Experience name	Placement	Tattoo design	Tattoo # and placement of others if given	Gender	Age	Location	Repeat Consumption?	Consumer Type	Feel part of tattoo community
Blue roses for me.... from me	Back H	Custom rose Old skool adding to 1 st tattoo	3 rd Tattoo 5 more afterwards	F	21	Aldershot	Yes	CC	Part member of BME
MY FIRST TATTOO	Back H	Flash 3 stars nu skool	1 st tattoo	F	18	Antrim, N.Ireland	Yes	F	No comment
Chest tattoos, painful but worth it	Chest HH	Custom blackwork	More than one no exact number	F	20	Leeds	Yes	F	No comment
Beautiful Butterfly, my first tattoo.	Neck HH	Flash butterfly	1 st Tattoo	F	18	Banbury, England	Yes	F	Full member of BME
A job well done	Half sleeve HH	Custom	2 nd tattoo	F	18	Banbury, England	Yes	F	Part member of BME
The bird on my shoulder that reminds me how to live	Shoulder H	Custom	1 st tattoo	F	21	Glasgow Scotland	Yes	F	Yes: BME prior to consumption Part member of BME
Boy Goes In Feeling Macho & Comes Out Deflated	Arm HH	Custom	1 st tattoo 9 more acquired afterwards	M	36	Bath England	Yes	CC	Yes
Oh, my Goddess!	Arm HH	Custom	1 st tattoo	F	21	Edinburgh Scotland	No	CC	Yes: BME prior to consumption
My Celtic Shamrock	Arm HH	Flash Celtic	1 st tattoo	F	24	Belfast	Yes	CC	Yes: BME and other sites prior to consumption
Starry- Eyed, thanks Vincent!!	Wrist & arm V	Custom stars to cover up of 1 st tattoo	4 th tattoo	F	19	Belfast	Yes	FC	Yes: BME prior to
"Closer To God" - My Derek Hess tattoo hand pricked by Tatu Pier apeiro – a first tattoo experience	Arm V	Custom blackwork	2 nd or more tattoo	M	27	Brighton	No comment	FC	Full member of BME
	Ankles H	Custom Celtic	1 st tattoo	F	25	Brighton	Yes	F	Part member of BME
Ace of Spades	Arm HH	Biker	2 nd tattoo	M	18	London	Yes	F	Full member of BME
Backpiece - day one	Back H	Japanese	2 nd tattoo	M	19	High Wycombe	Yes	CC	Yes in widest sense Part member of BME
First large tattoo piece - 4 1/2 hours total and the beginning of my journey into serious ink.	Full sleeve V	Blackwork Cover up	2 nd or more tattoo With visible neck tattoo	Not given	Not given	Hammersmith London	Yes	FC	Part member of BME Yes in widest sense
My first tattoo	Back H	Custom	1 st tattoo	F	17	Stoke-on-Trent	Yes	F	No comment
My Mantra	Arm HH	Custom Nu skool	1 st tattoo	M	17	Harrogate	No comment	F	Part member of BME
Saving a hideous half-sleeve	Full sleeve V	Old School cover up	2 nd or more tattoo	M	18	Hemel Hempstead	Yes	FC	Part member of BME and other sites prior to consumption
Tattoo of death	Arm HH	Japanese Kanj flash	1 st tattoo	M	20	Glasgow	Yes	F	Full member of BME
Autobots, roll out!!!	Leg H	Custom	1 st tattoo	M	18	Birmingham	No comment	CC	Associated consumption

Types of tattoos: H=hidden HH= half hidden V=visible

Typology of tattooees: F=fashion CC= Committed but concealed FC= fully committed

3.10 BREAKDOWN OF FINDINGS

Tattoo parlour: There were 13 females and seven males, with age ranging between 18 and 42; the average age being 25, the most heavily tattooed consumer was female, aged 33, with 12 tattoos.

Online narratives: 11 women, eight men, and one with gender not given, with an average age of 21. The most tattooed individual was male, 36 who had ten tattoos, 11 narratives concerned first tattoos, two of these were reminiscences about prior consumption activities.

What was found was that consumers had a varied level of commitment to tattooing, with three specific types were found that are determined by design use, tattoo placement, and perceived membership of the tattoo community. They are as follows:

Fashion consumers (F) This group is the least committed to tattoo consumption. These individuals are also the most common type of tattoo. Fashion consumers are also the least likely to feel part of a tattoo community or subculture. This group provides from amongst their ranks the members of the other two groups. Fashion consumers think least about the activity they are undertaking, in terms of design {tendency to pick flash rather than initiate a custom design}, they also lack in-depth knowledge of the action of being tattooed. Fashion consumers' tattoos are smaller in comparison to the other groups in terms of size and number of tattoos. The point of movement from fashion consumer group to the committed but concealed consumer group can be defined by the consumption of tattoos being beyond 4-5 small tattoos or a single piece tattoo such as a half-sleeve {from shoulder to just above the t-shirt sleeve line}. But the design also has to be placed in an area where it is either concealed at all times, or can be presented in certain situations or type of clothing i.e. female consumers wearing crop-tops to show off the generic lower-back tribal, or blackwork tattoos {ass-antlers} that are popular with women at the moment.

One important aspect of Fashion consumers is that they have a recognisable tendency to undertake associated consumption as a gateway into being tattooed. This includes the use of mock/false tattoos or other forms of body modification that mimic tattooing such as body paint, henna, etc., prior to the consumption of a tattoo proper. This also includes the consumption of body piercing as an introduction to the modification of the body in general and the form of non-permanent tester pieces to assess possible designs. In terms of permanence, their dabbling in tattoo consumption occurs with their interaction with these non-permanent body modifications. This is due to the fact that when tattooees gain their first tattoo their dabbling is halted due to the tattoos permanence, as this limits any identity play through its existence. It also agrees with Craik's analysis that found that such non-permanent body modifications: "have alleviated some of the stigma attached to tattooing" (Craik, 1994, p.25), (see Chapter 2, p.45). This however is also what differentiates tattoo consumption typology from the tripartite typology of subcultural consumers identified by Schouten and McAlexander (1991), as consumption itself halts dabbling. Even if it is not recognised by the tattooee prior to the tattoo acquisition tattooing freezes their identity, limiting their identity dabbling with the first tattoo. The tattooee can cover the tattoo, however this is a temporary concealment. Such an activity is merely a false denial of the permanent physical reality.

X

Picture removed due to copyright

Fig:48 Fashion consumer as tattoo is placed in a coverable area

(Larratt & Larratt, 1994)

X

Picture removed due to copyright

Fig:49 Fashion consumer tattoo as it is placed in a coverable area

(Larratt & Larratt, 1994)

Committed but concealed consumer (CC) This next group of tattoo consumers is the second largest group. The members of this group, along with the final group members, come from the ranks of Fashion consumers, but their consumption, and particularly their repeat consumption this shows their further commitment to tattooing and to its situation within their identity. This is similar to Sweetman's (1999) view who found that tattooees show differing levels of commitment which depended on the tattooee's view on the permanence of the tattoo (see Chapter 2, pp.45-46). They are also more inclined to use customised flash or entirely customer generated designs rather than stock designs. Sizes of chosen tattoos are larger and, in terms of placement, they select areas that are more prominent such as the lower arms. This consumption journey pushes them up to what is socially acceptable. They however do not gain tattoos to a point where they are unable to be covered by clothing i.e. no hand, upper-neck, wrist or face tattoos, they also more readily associate themselves with a tattoo community.



Fig:50 Committed but concealed consumer Graham
He has large scale tattooing but none permanently on display.

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Picture removed due to copyright

Fig:51 Committed but concealed consumer

The tattooee has large scale tattooing but none permanently on display.

(Larratt & Larratt, 1994)

Fully committed consumer (FC) This final group, in numerical terms is the smallest group of tattoo consumers, and the most vocal - both in terms of bodily and verbal narratives surrounding their tattoo consumption. Their tattoo consumption generally occurs in terms of large-scale skin coverage, namely full sleeves, front or back pieces, specifically, however, this tattoo consumption must include fully visual tattoos, i.e. face, upper neck, lower wrist or hand tattoos. Membership does not necessarily need to include large scale tattooing as they are defined and recognised by their permanently visible tattoo consumption. As a group they are the most likely of the three groups to identify with the tattoo community. Their permanent tattoo display is beyond what is socially acceptable

in terms of placement. This, permanently on view, permanent body modification, relates to Foucault's (1979) view of a level of constriction or societal rules surrounding the use of the body. It also shows a linkage to Sweetman's findings, through the concept of varied commitment to tattoo consumption - illustrated in the comment: "the permanence of tattooing as problematic" (Sweetman, 1999, p.59). This problematic situation can be seen in the dualistic view of tattoo acquisition. Far from tattooing being an 'acceptable' activity limitations exist, this occurs through permanently visible tattooing. Such positioning, even if it is only a singular or small tattoo, if it is permanently visible it is viewed by society as a negative characteristic.



Fig:52 Fully committed consumer Marf

He is a member of this group due to his hand tattoos

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Picture removed due to copyright

Fig:53 Fully committed consumer

The tattooee is fully committed through her hand tattoos.

(Larratt & Larratt, 1994)

Points of note

The data shows a move in tattooing away from it being predominantly a male dominated activity finding a 60% female 37.5% male split {1 (2.5%) not given}, this has resultant affects on the Freudian narcissistic view of the tattoo. The distribution of tattoo consumers by differing types between the two narrative collection areas is: 22 fashion consumers (F), 12 committed but concealed consumers (CC), and six fully committed consumers (FC). Another point of note is that online consumers have a lower average age than the tattoo parlour consumers {25}, they also have a tendency to use owner generated images more than the parlour consumers. What was a commonality to all was the view seen through their activities that the body is a commodity which can be invested with capital through gaining a tattoo.

3.11 CODING

The next stage of the investigation was to move to coding the narratives aiming to produce conceptual categories and a theory of tattoo consumption. This action involved the consumption process itself; the choices made during the consumption process; the consumers reasoning behind the consumption process; influences on the consumption process and contextualisation of the consumption process by the consumer. Any related consumption found either in the various consumption narratives or in available publications, including non-tattooing consumption objects and events was also noted. This was recorded whether it was a physical object, figurative representation, or an abstract concept. The exact relationship between tattoo consumption and any other consumption was investigated and commented on. All this occurred in the context of continuous comparison of the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

I began the process by breaking down the full raw descriptive field notes; the online consumption narratives; the transcripts of the taped interviews of consumers; my own consumption narratives; and those of my three case studies. To do this I continually asked the questions {what is this?} and {what does it represent?} I gave each discrete phenomenon {incident, idea, or event} a name that captured its essence in a more general way. When doing this I kept comparing each consumption narrative and codes with one other and the contexts in which it was occurring. This was undertaken through a line-by-line analysis of the data as described by Glaser (1978). To do this effectively I had to make sure that all narratives, {face-to-face and digital gathered} were represented and analysed in the same way. I chose the online narratives as a template for the other narratives so that the analysis would be rigorous.

The codes found in the online narratives can be broken up into various elements and this was undertaken in the context of the entire text of the narrative. The posting has four parts; a boxed area with details of the experience; the consumer's descriptive heading; the text of the narrative; the copyright disclaimer; and contact details of the webpage provider. As narratives were

digital they could be transferred in total into a matrix of columns and rows to facilitate textual analysis. The actual text was transferred within the context of the three parts of the narrative excepting the copyright disclaimer.

The details of the experience along with the descriptive heading were analysed in the same way as the narrative text. Details given included the real name of individual being tattooed {optional}, and the character or avatar by which he/she wished to be identified. If individuals wished anonymity they could leave the details blank; or use the email username@bme.anon. This is a BME run account theoretically allowing anonymity but with the ability to be contacted. Along with the use of IAM membership {for full members paying subscription}, contributors were allowed to customise the information given within their narrative. Details of the experience being posted, namely; where, who, and when were optional. Some individuals named the tattooist and tattoo shop they were commenting on, while others left these areas blank or very vague.

The point where the narrative begins is not with the text but the description the contributor gives for the textual experience, for example: **Blue roses for me... from me.**

This textual description is analysed in exactly the same way as the main body of the text as it also shows the concepts occurring within the consumption process. Aesthetics are shown within the comment about the chosen tattoo design 'Blue roses'. This textual analysis of the narrative goes on within the body of the text undertaken with a line-by-line analysis. The analysis of this portion of the text shows several issues that are interlinked, related, influenced, and determined by one another. The concepts that were found were analysed and data extrapolated as found in table 3.

Table 3:

<p>Blue roses for me.... from me</p>	<p><i>Narrative</i></p>	<p>Aesthetics Values Identity <i>Analysis</i></p>
	<p>Well, as so many stories on BME begin, I have wanted a tattoo since I was young, every time I saw one on somebody I just thought that they were so beautiful and I knew without a doubt that I would get one when I was ready and that I would definitely not stick to just one. Although my family isn't into them at all and hardly any of my friends have any, it didn't put me off and I knew tattoos would definitely have to be a part of me.</p>	<p>Media Normalisation Anticipation Time Aesthetics Addiction Relation(rel) Acceptability Relation(rel) Acceptability Physicality Identity</p>

The text shows an introspective self-analysis by the consumer regarding his/her consumption experiences and that this consumer views this self-analysis and projection of his/her experience online as a natural part of the consumption process. The narrative gives a rich depth of narration; the consumer is not only aware of her use of media within the act of consumption, she actively admits to the linkage and effect that the use of such media has on the consumption process – i.e. the recording of the event being such an effect. Online resources such as BME webpages have a place within the overall consumption experience. The consumer's introspection occurs in relation to his/her views of tattoo consumption, given in terms of others actions influencing his/her views and the prevalent value structure regarding tattoos and tattooing. This in the long term exists in relation to his/her wants or demands for owning a tattoo.

In the first level of analysis I identified 33 codes, which are given in Appendix:2

alongside where they exist within tattoo consumption narratives. From these previous codes I further reduced them to the following codes {**in bold**}.

Table 4:

Physicality Subsumed	Values Subsumed	Trust Subsumed	Time Subsumed	Identity Subsumed
Placement, Ownership (power), Body reaction / Interaction; Health, Pain, Addiction, Sexuality, Narcissism, Anticipation	Spirituality, Authenticity (tattoo use, tattoo design), Acceptability, Regret, Aesthetics, Normalisation, Value \$£, Product	Relationship (R) (Relatives/friends/ significant others), Relationship(T) (interaction with tattooist/tattoo community), Quality of tattoo, Skill of tattooist	Time of life, Experience, Development, Memory	Media representation, Use of media (new media, old media), Music (Subculture), Celebrity

The next level of coding, together with those they have subsumed are:

Table 5:

Physical	Representation	Continuity & Change
Physicality	Identity Trust	Values Time

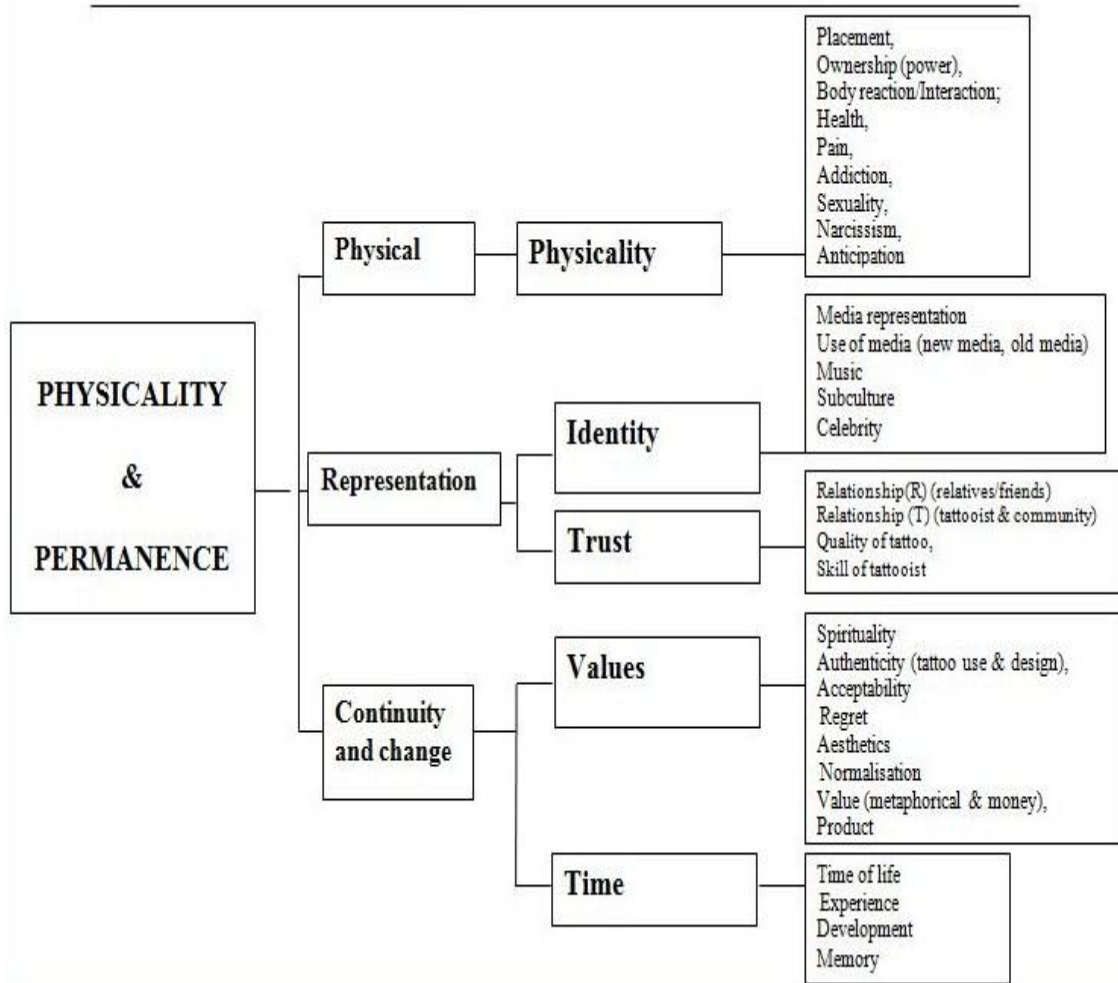
Table: 6

Physical	Representation	Continuity & Change
Physicality & Permanence		

A diagrammatical representation of the development of the theoretical coding into conceptual categories is found in Table 7:

Table 7:

Representation of the development of theoretical coding



The description and definitions of the initial codes from which the main codes were subsumed can be found in Appendix:2. This includes how they were identified from within the consumption narratives. The next step was to describe and then integrate the codes and their properties into fewer codes prior to creating conceptual categories.

What can be seen from the pictorial representation is that the final two conceptual categories of physicality and permanence have originated from and represent the other aspects of the tattoo, in terms of the coding they are anchors for all other codes. For example, the various aspects identified (and all associated codes) of the tattoo exist through and can be identified through their permanent 'physical' context.

This physical aspect is seen through and exists as a permanent attribute, showing the interdependence of these two codes. This can be seen in the fact that the tattoo's permanence is created and exists through its physicality. If it were not a physical attribute, i.e. injected into the skin, it would not be permanent, and thus it would not have the cultural, social, or historical meanings or linkages e.g. used in terms of identification, either of the individual or of group membership. Nor would it have the particular aesthetics linked to it that have been created through the development of the tattoo itself and are in general another permanent aspect of the tattoo. These aspects are identified within and exist through the analogous and metaphorical characteristics of the tattoo and can be found throughout the narratives of tattoo consumption.

The tattoo through its permanent physicality also represents the various facets of the consumers' choices when gaining a tattoo. It represents their level of involvement which they have imbued into the process and their interaction (if any) with the tattooist, or any specific personal or group aesthetic choices and meanings within their design, which are then physically and thus permanently represented within the final product. The physicality in relation to permanence also affects the varying degrees of commitment to being tattooed which is physically and permanently identifiable through the positioning of the finished tattoo.

Similarly the permanence is representative of and links to other aspects of the tattoo. This permanence has an effect on the other aspects of the tattoo as it freezes the values embedded in the tattoo choice and activity i.e. the meaning for the individual, society, subculture etc. However these values may not endure the passing of time - they are changeable while the tattoo which represents them is not. Furthermore, the tattoo has the potential to carry a snapshot description of the tattooee and their life beyond what would be normal temporally, which can be seen in the existence of tattoos on mummies, which give a more detailed snapshot of their lives beyond what can be ascertained merely through solely investigating a body.

3.12 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have identified the development of methodology and data collection methods that I have used in this thesis. Linking the aims and objectives of the thesis with the requirements for the methodology and data collection used. From this I have detailed my inductive and incremental process that I used, describing my process of theorizing, modification, and expansion from which a three-phase research design resulted.

I have justified my choice of methodology of grounded theory (GT). In addition I define and describe GT in terms of a methodology and its relevance to the subject studied, with specific relation to the use of thick or deep descriptive data to study concept rich activities such as tattooing. Grounded Theory's adaptability in the area of usage and also with the methods and the variety of data able to be used are the reasons that I chose GT. As tattooing is a visual medium and is an activity with depth of culture and meaning GT is an ideal methodology to be used to investigate it.

Of particular notice is the difference between GT and other methodology as it does not create theory that is arrived at deductively and fitted to data, theory is inductively discovered, and is grounded in analytically and methodically analysed data. Where data is coded and analysed through constant comparative analysis, the purpose of which is to generate theory systematically through the action of coding, with the theory having a direct link to the data, which is thus validated through and via the data.

In terms of constant comparative analysis and its role within theory creation, I identify the shortcomings and reject the use of computer analysis with GT. After this I describe my data collection, stating the data valid within GT, and the 5 forms of data collection (introspection; researcher as participant and observer; netnography; interviews; books, journals, and pictorial representation) describing and justifying the use of each in turn. This is followed by describing the coding process, showing an example of the breakdown and analysis of the data. The

initial 33 codes that I identified are given in detail in Appendix: 2, defining them as determinants or experiences and comment about their creation and interaction. I further reduced these codes, first to five codes, then to three and finally to the two conceptual categories of physicality and permanence. The development is shown in a tabular form to ease understanding of the creation process of the two final codes of permanence and physicality.

In the next chapter I present these abstracted categories and discuss the development of a theoretical explanation of tattoo consumption. Presenting and analysing the data gathered of present and historical tattoo activities, to showing permanence within and through the action as seen in the patterns found within tattoo consumption.

CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS OF DATA: TATTOOING AND THE PERMENANCE OF BODILY CONSUMPTION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Only heaven knows exactly when the first man, or half-man, first added some natural ornament to his body, or a woman to hers. Not long after, I feel sure, the first primitive attempt was made at putting *permanent decoration*, or magic sign, on the skin. If so, it would be a proud claim for tattooing that it was one of man's first conscious acts which distinguished him from the rest of the animal kingdom. We do know, from archaeologists, that body marking was practiced for thousands of years in prehistoric times. Proof of this has been found in excavations dating back to the Stone Age, more than 12,000 years before Christ.

(Burchett, 1956, pp.14-15) {emphasis by thesis author}

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Fig:54 George Burchett tattooing
(Burchett, 1956, p.160)

The words above were written by 'Professor' George Burchett, the 'King' of Tattooists and found in the collection of his published personal writings and diary entries. His career as a tattooist spanned 70 years during what is described as the 'Golden' era of tattooing, starting as a child tattooist in the early 1880's only ending with his death on Good Friday in 1953 at the age of 81. His work cataloguing and describing his experiences is relevant to this study as it is a reservoir of primary evidence that gives information about past tattooing. His writings are notable in that he deals with the historical, social and cultural aspects of tattooing prior to discussing his experiences and his life story. In particular,

his work is similar to this thesis in that it identifies permanent patterns within tattoo use by identifying issues and examples which occur and then return and repeat themselves in terms of usage, aesthetics, meaning, and style.

Burchett along with other commentators from the past such as Hambly (1925), Fletcher (1882), and Bolton (1897) in parallel with recent commentators such as Caplan (2000b), Sanders (1985,1988, 1989), DeMello (2000) and Featherstone (1999, 2000) discuss how its use as feature of identity is a 'permanent' aspect within tattooing. Other aspects of permanence can be identified that occur in addition to its physical permanence. This can be seen in the continuity of reasoning(s) and contextualisation(s) of the tattoo in general and in terms of it being: a bodily commodity; a representation of identity; the permanence of the aesthetics i.e. design; continuity within the 'messages' imposed by society on the tattoo (as opposed to the meaning of the design) and thus also projected by the tattoo which affect tattooees' decisions. Consequently this chapter of the thesis will gather together the relevant data both present and past concerning tattooing and analyse it to illustrate the permanence that occurs within the action and through the action of being tattooed.

The initial issue investigated in the use of the tattoo, is the body as commodity, this along with the tattoo's physical permanence, which is dealt with in section *4.8 Physical permanence and the tattoo*, are the interfaces between the concepts of physicality and permanence. The body as a commodity is a 'permanent' aspect of the tattoo that exists beyond its physical permanence. This is due to the view of the body being a commodity (and thus the tattoo being an investment) occurring as a longitudinal continuity through differing eras and areas. In addition this permanent aspect anchors all other permanencies discussed, these are given in relation to the relevant CCT groupings that were discussed in Chapters 1 and 2.

This leads to the next issue to be discussed is the tattoo in relation to marketplace cultures, with the portrayal of the tattoo as the mediator of relationships. Identifying and analysing the link between the tattoo and subculture is discussed, including the tattoo's interaction with design and identity and how these relate to

permanence. This directly relates to the tattoo community which is examined next, where the permanence within the action of being tattooed occurring in relation to the continuity of design is discussed, showing that the tattoo has a permanence in terms of aesthetics as well as a bodily physical permanence, this point does not include the analysis of the meaning(s) of the designs as this in itself is a separate issue, in addition tattoo types or 'brands' are identified and shown in appendix 4.

Next the third issue investigated is the usage of the tattoo in terms of individual identity, and consumer identity projects, where the individual's identity creation activities is shown how the choice of the tattoo relates to the expression of feelings, beliefs and overall actions of the individual and how this exists within a permanent process. It also discusses the problems with regret within the tattoo choice, and how this exists as an experience and how these link with the idea of the post modern identity and permanence.

This leads to the message(s) relating to the tattoo which is part of the CCT aspect of mass-mediated marketplace ideologies and consumers' interpretive strategies. There are identifiable permanent aspects of the societal views surrounding tattooing that can be seen in the areas of sexuality and gender in relation to tattooing. Illustrating that the present perceived increase in acceptability of the tattoo is a false observation, and that the actuality is a duality of meaning, specifically one of equal negative and positive significance, which is as permanent as the tattoo itself. This leads onto the next section, concerning the socio-historic consumption of the tattoo. It looks at the influence on tattoo consumption of issues such as class, community, ethnicity, and gender, being linked to the idea of duality as the positive/negative message of the tattoo as espoused in section 4.6 *mass mediated market ideologies and consumers interpretative strategies: Permanent messages*. In addition, this section deals with how consumers deal with the negative message, how some negotiate this, and ameliorate their consumption through mimicry or positioning of the tattoo, while other revel in tattoos negativity and state it as a pull factor to tattoo consumption.

To put this entire chapter into context I return to George Burchett to illustrate an issue which is both obtuse and relevant as it contextualises and illuminates the problems regarding investigating the reasoning(s) behind gaining a tattoo, namely the complex and often contradictory and subjective nature of the tattoo:

...it would be downright impertinent if I were to attempt a definition of the reasons of why men, and women, have adorned their bodies with tattoo marks since prehistoric times. For one thing, I know enough about these reasons from personal experience, to realize how little I know about the human mind.....the scientists, too are human and they disagree among themselves about the motives which underlie tattooing.

(Burchett, 1956, pp.26-27)

However difficult to identify or define the reasoning(s) behind tattooing, the tattoo's socio-cultural identity is solely dependent upon the permanence of the tattoo as without the permanence the tattoo in terms of reasoning(s), meaning(s), aesthetics etc. would not have the same qualities espoused in its usage or perception, and would make this thesis invalid. While the physical permanence of the tattoo is a bodily commodity, this view of the body as a commodity in relation to the tattoo is a permanent aspect and is the next subject to be dealt with.

4.2 THE BODY AS COMMODITY: A PERMANENT PHYSICAL INVESTMENT

The first point of interest is the body being thought of or interacted with in terms of a commodity which can be invested in, bought and sold in relation to the tattoo. This investment is identifiable through physically expressed concepts, i.e. beauty, ownership of the body, fetishisation of the tattoo, or an expression of identity. The idea of the body as commodity relating to the tattoo is one of the 'permanent' or long term attributes of the tattoo that exists beyond its physical permanence and can be identified through socio-historical data.

Tattoo as a bodily commodity

What do people think when their getting Robbie Williams' designs on their bodies? They thinking that they will be like them? Or is it just fashion.....I think it's a bit of both, but either way its crap, I mean, who the hell think "Born to be mild" is cool, I mean it's a joke! And on top of that the tattoo itself is crappily done, I mean....with all their money you would think they (celebrities) would get good tattoos, but no, both him and Beckham have crap tattoos in terms of quality...and people come in here and want me to give them copies, I mean I do them for them, I can't knock my bread and butter, but I do them properly, also it gets a bit repetitive, you end up hoping for that design that's a little bit different, that's been thought about.

Winston Gomez: Tattooist

The body is central to this piece of work as the consumption of tattoos and tattooing is primarily a physical activity. Running parallel to the importance of the body in the context of tattoo consumption is the importance of the body within modern consumption (Falk, 1994; Featherstone, Hepworth & Turner, 1991; Joy & Venkatesh, 1994; Thompson & Hirschman, 1995) in general. This can be seen in a variety of ways, first, the body is a physical commodity in its own right (Thompson & Hirschman, 1995) to be bought and sold (Hirschman, 1991b), either partially or wholly. Second, the body is central to the construction of an individual's identity, which is constructed by consuming objects and services via and through the body (Belk, 1988; Hirschman & Thompson, 1999; Holbrook, 1997).

The comments made by Winston Gomez a tattooist, encompass what this subsection is all about, namely what do tattoo consumers think they are undertaking when getting a tattoo on their bodies. Namely, it is a form of investment which takes a physical form, but is situated in concepts such as beauty, fashion, fetishism, an experience, and a signifier of personal or group identity. The tattoo in terms of a physical investment is in fact a meeting place of the concepts of beauty, fashion, and consumption. The following narrative illustrates the tattoo as a commodity:

This is a serious tattoo shop – all custom work, no teenyboppers going in for ill-advised and inappropriate Kanjis there! I asked how much tattoo work cost there and was told £60 per hour, which seems pretty much the going rate for the UK as far as I can tell. I went away to mull things over and choose a design. A few months later I came back with photocopies of the design I had settled on, to get a more specific quote. The chap behind the desk estimated 2-3 hours' work: so £150-180 for the tattoo. I asked him who they recommended to do the tattoo, and he mentioned Dave Bryant as an ideal candidate to do the extremely detailed grey-work.

A bit of back-bone (but not a vertebra)

The tattoo as a fiscal commodity can be seen in the financial considerations commented on by the tattooee on the tattoo they were planning to acquire. Note the morality linked by the tattooee to the process as found in the 'teenybopper' comment. This also shows that there is a linkage between values and the tattoo being chosen as seen in: "all custom work, no teenyboppers going in for ill-advised and inappropriate Kanjis there!" – implying the link between youth and regret through the permanence of the choice, and thus permanence of the investment.

This next comment shows the tattoo not only a fiscal investment but also a physical one:

I paid £140 for the tattoo.....I'll definitely come back for my next tattoo (I am already think about what I want next). The healing process went nicely afterwards, when I got home I removed the plastic wrap, washed my tattoo with antibacterial soap, and applied ointment about 4-5 times a day. After about a week my tattoo was done "snake skin shedding" as I call it then I used lotion the following week, now I have a beautiful sexy tattoo. I'll be posting a picture of it real soon.

My first Tattoo

The tattooee identifies the tattoo with an investment, namely the physical aspect of beauty in: "now I have a beautiful sexy tattoo," which was gained through the monetary exchange (£120). This however, is not guaranteed, with it only occurring with a parallel investment in physical activities such as moisturising

and keeping it clean. This shows that beauty as a concept is one of the determinants of tattoo activities and as a metaphysical concept defined by the ancient Greek Philosopher Plato is as relevant today as when he discussed it in the *Phaedo* (Plato, 1975).

This obvious linkage between cost (of the tattooing service) and values (of the finished design as seen in its quality) is not new, this can be seen in other cultures and in historical settings. For example, where tattooing was an integral part of the economic life of a society such as in various areas in Polynesia, such as Tahiti and the Marquesas islands (Gell, 1993), tattoo acquisition was linked to the feudal systems in place where patronage of tattoo artists by the rich was also linked to projection of power, as the rich would subsidise the poor being tattooed in return for support (Gell, 1993; Hambly, 1925). If such patronage was unable to be gained, or was rejected. Then, due to the cost of tattooing less able artists would be used, which led to the possibility of poor, or badly executed tattoos being acquired, which socially was looked down upon. Another geographic area where tattooing was well established as a business, and tattooists would not only earn fiscal fortunes, but also social standing and fame was Japan. Japanese tattooing {Izumi} had become an art form and when their skills were in demand in the west, Japanese tattooists would earn up to and including £2000 a month in 1890's money at the height of the tattoo craze (Buruma & Buruma, 1980; Parry, 1999; Scutt & Gotch, 1974).

While there is fiscal investment that leads to a physical investment into abstract concepts such as beauty there is also a negative physical investment in terms of pain. This is seen as the physical “price” you have to pay to gain the tattoo which can be seen in the following narrative:

John: Your wrist tattoo must have hurt!

Marf: Nah, well only a bit, but you know yourself it's just something you have to put up with a bit of pain to get what you want. If you want to talk about pain, then we can talk about my surgery, now that hurt! It isn't much when compared to that! But the easiest was my stomach

In addition, the physical investment leads to gathering knowledge on the body, with consumers finding out the abilities of their own bodies and how their body acts/reacts, as seen below:

I never thought that it would take so long to heal this elbow. It's been two weeks now and still not fully healed. The tattoo is on the crease and thus keeps bursting open every time I move my arm.

Tattooee: John

The accounts surrounding gaining knowledge or power, and the act of investment of physical pain in acquiring the tattoo support the ideas and theories of Foucault (1979, 1990a, 1990b) and Baudrillard (1998). In as much as the body is invested with cultural capital (such as beauty discussed earlier) it is also linked to ownership and knowledge. As Foucault (1979, pp.56-57) states, “mastery and awareness of one’s own body can be acquired only through the investment of power in the body.” Yet there is little difference between the Baudillardian (1998) and Foucauldian (1979) ideas of power being invested in the body and the earliest known tattoo consumption of Otzi the iceman, where the power invested through tattooing was a medical-magical activity aimed at the recovery of the body (Capasso, 1993; Gilbert, 2000; South Tyrol Museum of Archaeology, 2000).

Power over and occurring through the body comes in a variety of forms, knowledge being one - knowledge of the body and knowledge represented through the tattooed body. This is an example of linking abstract and physical components of the tattoo. The abstract part is the representation of ideas and meanings within the tattoo, i.e. the overt knowledge such as tribal identity in terms of Polynesian tattooing (Gell, 1993; Gilbert, 2000; Robley, 1998), or secret and hidden knowledge such as the tattooing of alchemists in Elizabethan England (Rosecrans, 2000; Fleming, 2000, 2001). In physical terms, power is the ability to overcome the adversity of gaining a tattoo. Undergoing the tattooing process causes pain and the consumer must master and control that pain for the process to occur at all. Mastery over the body through tattoo activity also represents ownership of the body.

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Fig:55 Otzi the iceman and his tattoos

These tattoos show the action of investment in the body, namely a magico-medical practice against arthritis (Green, 2007).

Tattoo and ownership

The body being seen as a commodity in this way implies ownership, which can be seen in the following comment:

For me it has come to mean, amongst other things, reclaiming my body and my power to make decisions about my life. If I get any more, they'll be to mark major life changes. Straight after this was done my head was full of ideas for more, and I guess that's how some people come to get very heavily inked in just a few weeks. If you want to do that, it's your decision, but I'd say "stop and take time to reflect."

At A Glance

The tattoo is perceived by **At A Glance** as being a symbol and an action which links reaffirmation of the ownership of her body to the action of gaining and owning a tattoo. This has long term precedence as tattoos in ancient Rome and Greece were used to mark out prisoners, gladiators, and slaves - showing if tax had been paid on these groups or whether they were public property, thus enforcing the concept of the body as a commodity (Jones, 1987). Tattooing of slaves and prisoners was used to further dehumanise already degraded individuals, turning their bodies into narratives of their captivity, culpability, or servitude. This was shown in the writings of this period by Julius Caesar (1953), Herodotus (1996), Virgil, Seneca and Galenus (Gennaro, 2002), and Petronius

(Gusthafson, 2000). For example the statement: “As long as he lives, he will have stigma” Petronius, *Satyricon* 45.9 (Gusthafson, 2000, p.17) is but one negative instance, with the term Stigma being one of several Latin terms meaning tattooing (Jones, 1987). In opposition to this and creating a duality is that tattooing in relation to ownership has another important aspect; the undertaking of the tattoo reaffirms the consumers’ ownership of the body. It shows that the consumer has the ability to undertake the activity - it represents his/her fiscal, emotional and physical control of his/her own body (Sanders, 1988).

Further relating aspects of control of the body being linked directly to the idea of the body as a commodity can be found in Maori tattooing (Moko). This nearly died out due to somewhat more sinister reasons. British Victorian delight in exotic collections created a trade in tattooed heads which was at its height during the 1820’s (Cohen, 1973; Robley, 1998). Individuals were kidnapped, forcibly tattooed if they did not already have a Moko, murdered and decapitated and then their severed head was treated and sold as a souvenir, again turning the body into a commodity (Gilbert, 2000). This, not surprisingly, caused a downturn in Moko ownership. Another cause was the inability of male Maoris to gain employment when owning Moko. This created a situation by the 20th century where a dwindling number of Maori women became the sole repository of tattoo culture, as noted by European tattooists visiting New Zealand as early as 1933 (Parry, 1999).

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Fig:56 Maori Chief

A tattoo type which links the identity of the individual with that of the group
(i.e. Maori). (Robley, 1998, p.31)

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Fig:57 Moko Collection

(Lockheart & Hemingson, 2000)

These two pictures come from the personal collection of Mr (Major General)
Robley who, while investing in severed heads also did much to publicise,
catalogue and preserve Maori traditions and culture.

Tattoo fetishisation

When the tattoo is viewed as commodity it is used to invest a variety of concepts
at the cultural and social level. This can be seen with the fetishisation of the
tattoo through its use by celebrities, where celebrities are consumption models in
terms of tattoo design, as seen in the following narratives:

she got the lion tattoo that Christina Ricci has on her back,
on my friends lower back and its very simple, and mine was
done smaller (than Christina Ricci's)

My first tattoo (original title I know)

I noticed some very beautiful Tibetan Sanskrit writing on Incubus' lead singer Brandon Boyd's arm. After checking various websites and reading many a book from my local library.....I did NOT get The Mantra because Brandon Boyd has it, I got it because of what it symbolises and what it helps me to understand about my life and about myself, I do NOT like hearing that I got it because he has it, I'm no sheep!
My Mantra

As seen above one aspect of the body as a commodity is when heroes and heroines in the form of celebrities are shown as physical ideals to be emulated or rejected (Chapkis, 1987; Featherstone, 1991, 1999). This occurs through design choice, as seen in the above comments of: "she got the lion tattoo that Christina Ricci has on her back" and "on Incubus' lead singer Brandon Boyd's arm." This activity is described by Pachter below:

Today's popular heroes are no longer the mighty builders of empires, the inventors and achievers. Our celebrities are movie stars and singers, 'beautiful' people of leisure who profess a philosophy of enjoyment rather than discipline and toil.
(Pachter, 1975, p.330)

With the body becoming more and more fetishised within modern consumption, specific bodies (i.e. celebrities') bodies have more collateral than others. Through tattoo use this is being interacted with through the body being central to an individual's creation and representation of identity or embodied self. The sense of self in contemporary society is connected with the idea of unlimited personal consumption {food, signs, and goods}. The Cartesian discourse has been warped/changed from 'I think therefore I am', to the belief that 'I consume therefore I am' {edo ergo sum} (Falk, 1994). As such the body can be invested and changed through and with consumption. This is seen in the investment of the body with tattooing as a fashion item, as seen partially through a fetishistic use of the tattoo, both in general terms and also specific designs through its use by celebrity, where the celebrity tattoo is marketed as something to aspire to have.

This use of the tattoo specifically shows the explicit link between the expression of the internal abstract values, with feelings and emotions manifest externally. As

Freud (1927, p.42) who stated: “the ego is first and foremost a body ego; it is not merely a surface entity but it is itself the projection of a surface.” In addition, it shows to a certain extent the fetishistic activity of the tattoo both in its original tribal incarnation and in today’s tattoo consumption, with the use of the tattoo to represent abstract values through the body (Freud, 1927). It can also be viewed as a commodity fetish as described by Marx (1867) who was using the term with the specific view that primitive belief systems exist at the heart of modern society. This is something which is not new as such an activity was noted in the Victorian era when the middle classes and society members sought to copy royalty in acquiring tattoo(s), as can be seen in the next excerpt from a Victorian tattoo article:

When royalty hangs onto a craze, you may be assured that the rest of the exclusive world of wealth and power soon follow in the same path, and annex the peculiarities of the pleasures of which have given amusement to their heroes born in the purple. What wonder, then, that tattooing is just now the popular pastime of the leisured world? For one of the best-known men in high European circles, the Grand Duke Alexis of Russia, is most elaborately tattooed. And Prince and Princess Waldemar of Denmark, Queen Olga of Greece, King Oscar of Sweden, the Duke of York, the Grand Duke....Anyone meeting the Duke of Newcastle, or the Earl of Portarlington, or Sir Edmund Lechmere, in the street, would hardly realize the fact that these gentlemen are proud wearers of tattoo marks – very much so. We are able to give facsimiles of the designs which have been tattooed on the Duke of York, Prince Francis of Teck, Prince George of Greece, together with other examples of the art. Professor Riley’s work is pronounced to be, by no less that a celebrated Royal Academician, who takes considerable interest in tattoo work, the finest in the world.
(Stephen, 1898, p.473)

What can be seen in Stephen’s article is the absolute fetishisation of the tattoo by stating the tattoo being of the latest fashion (or craze) linking this with celebrities of the day (i.e. Royalty), then stating the quality of the work, and offering ‘facsimiles’ i.e. designs of these celebrities which can be copied, which was commented on in the very beginning of the article. Fetishisation itself in terms of Freudian analysis (1927) however does not occur; it is in the original ‘primitive’ variety of fetish rather than the psychoanalytical definition of the activity. Such a

contextual analogy with the primitive aspect of fetishism is more suited to this usage in tattoo consumption. This reverts to the original tribal aspects of fetishising animals, spirits etc. in the form of a tattoo, which granted the bearer the characteristics of the animal, e.g. its strength etc. (Gell, 1993; Turner, 1974; Van Gennep, 1974). This brings in the idea of ritual and the sacredness of activities, which are not necessarily linked to religion (Clarke, 1976; Rook, 1984, 1985; Wallendorf & Arnould, 1991). Such ritual and fetishisation of the tattoo is seen directly in the theories surrounding liminality as given by Turner (1974) and Bakhtin (1984).

This fetishisation with stars and celebrities also brings with it another point of note which is seen in the comment from **Winston Gomez** at the beginning of the section **Tattoo as a bodily commodity**, along with the comments from **My Mantra**, and **My first tattoo (original title I know)** earlier. There can be noted a morality and values linked with this fetishisation, a rejection of the use of tattoos by celebrities, or a movement by tattooees to distance themselves from merely being copies of celebrities, as **My Mantra** states: “I do NOT like hearing that I got it because he has it, I'm no sheep!” While, **My first tattoo (original title I know)**, comments on the differences in design between the tattoo on her tattoo originator (Christine Ricci) and her. In addition to this **Winston** comments disparagingly on celebrities (Robbie Williams) usage of tattoos, in terms of the quality of the tattoo, stating: “And...and... on top of that the tattoo itself is crappily done, I mean...with all their money you would think they (celebrities) would get good tattoos, but no, both him and Beckham have crap tattoos.” This is also seen in: “who the hell think ‘Born to be mild’ is cool, I mean it’s a joke!” It is as if there is a duality here concerning tattooing, fashion and celebrities are two of the driving forces behind tattoo popularisation, yet, they are also seen at the same time, cheapening tattoos with their unauthentic, ill thought out, and executed examples. Yet what can also be said is that their tattoo use in terms of poor quality and/or ill thought out tattoos are similar to general tattoo use among the population.

As can be seen in the previous tattoo’s narratives and journal excerpt is that Tattooing is a service which relates to the body beautiful, the fashionable body,

and the body as a commodity, where the body can be added to, taken away from, improved, or changed to meet concepts of beauty (Thompson & Hirschman, 1995). Undertaking such bodily inscriptions move the body from the territory of the untouched 'normal' body, with the aim of fostering resistance, or submitting to the creation or imposition of such physical norms (Chapkis, 1987). In fact this investment of beauty is one of the permanent attributes of the tattoo. While individuals may disagree whether a tattoo is attractive or aesthetically pleasing the background of the social interaction of beauty is a permanent within the view of, and interaction with the body.

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Fig:58 Kimberley Vlaminc

(Daily Mail Foreign Service, 2009)

The tattooing activities of Kimberley Vlaminc (see Fig:58) highlight this interface of the body as a commodity, with permanence and the limitations of acceptability (through beauty/attractiveness and thus also regret). This is seen in the description of the photograph in the publication it was found: "Scarred from life: Kimberley Vlaminc shows her tattooed face. The 56 stars will cost £8,500 to remove. But even the most advanced laser techniques would, while removing the tattoos, leave deep white marks all across Kimberley's face" (Daily Mail Foreign Service, 2009). The body as a commodity is seen in the linkage between the activity and cost of its removal, while permanence and subsequent regret are seen description of "Scarred for life" and the explanation of the permanent scarring caused by tattoo removal, and show that tattooing is a permanent investment. Her actions in getting a facial tattoo project her directly into the fully committed consumer group, while the negative reaction of her parents and

partner to her act reinforces the social unacceptability of fully permanent (i.e. unable to be hidden) tattoos.

It was the French philosophers, Baudrillard (1998) and Foucault (1979, 1990a, 1990b, 1992) who noted that the body itself is at the intersection of social control, individual power, personal identity, and mass consumption, with a linkage to symbolic consumption. While at the same time mass consumption created the situation where there are whole industries that have been co-opted or created to service, invest, and inscribe the body - in the case of tattooing literally. The view of the body within Consumer Research as a commodity originates from these views of Foucault and Baudrillard, and can be seen in the works of Falk (1994); Turner (1991, 1999a, 1999b, 2001); Hirschman (1983, 1991b, 1992); Hirschman and Thompson (1999); Thompson and Hirschman, (1995); Holbrook (1997a); Holbrook and Batra (1987); and Featherstone (1991, 1999, 2000). Academically these works lean heavily on the postmodern tradition of liberatory consumption, where the consumer is liberated through consumption, not enslaved by it (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995). This liberation is neither comprehensive nor a general point in relationship to tattoo consumption as tattoo consumption can also enslave as it is permanent and cannot be removed.

Thus what can be seen is that the present view of the body being a commodity and the tattoo being a cultural, aesthetic, and fiscal investment is nothing new. Throughout the history of tattoo this view is seen again and again, whether it is in terms of an overt fiscal investment or less obvious investment. What can be seen is that the tattooee will have to invest time, money, pain or effort in return for a commodity which in itself is an investment in terms of personal identity, bodily being, and (sub)cultural identity.

4.3 MARKET-PLACE CULTURES: TATTOOS, SUBCULTURES, AND IDENTITY: A PERMANENT MARKER

In terms of market-place culture, the tattoo is a mediator of social linkages and social relationships. In other words, tattoos can be described as being a connector through identity, as the tattoo is an aspect of identity in relation to the membership of a group or (sub)culture. The idea of linking a group with tattooing occurs in two ways, firstly, the activity is taken up by members and is used as a connector, and secondly, from without the group, as outsiders identify the group rightly or wrongly through tattoo usage. In their use, tattoos can illustrate affiliation in terms of membership, allegiance to, or merely a passing interest in a subculture. What is important in this situation is that the affiliation is permanent, and the choice of using a permanent marker is an overt activity which shows commitment to that group. As an example of linkage between the use of a tattoo and design and subculture, the following is drawn from an online narrative:

I've wanted a tattoo for many years and came up with countless designs (some awful ones that I'm SO glad I didn't go ahead with—like the crow I was desperate for when I was Goth)

The bird on my shoulder that reminds me how to live

Even if the individual did not go ahead with that particular design, nor remain within that subculture, the observation concerning subcultural use is relevant and occurs within today's tattoo usage. It also shows that the commitment to a subculture effects the commitment to a certain design (the crow and the Goth subculture) or type of design. While this comment relates to the linkage of the tattoo with specific subcultural use, there also exists that which can be described as the 'tattoo community' which is in turn a subsection of a wider body modification community. This is not to say that the tattooee automatically sees themselves as a member of a specific 'tattoo club'. There is a sliding scale of commitment to this group, however, ownership of even a single tattoo *allows* for membership due to the physical ownership and experiences gained. Such commitment is similar to, but not entirely analogous to the work by Schouten and

McAlexander (1995) where there are three differing levels of subcultural membership (i.e. dabbling, soft core, and hard core membership). The difference of the tattoo subculture from the outlaw biking fraternity (or other such subcultures) is that the “mimicry of outlaw styles” (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995, p.48), does not encompass permanence and such styles can be altered, thus imposing no limitations on identity play. Once a tattoo has been gained, the individual has gone beyond the dabbling or ‘pretending’ in that in gaining, even one tattoo, they have gone beyond this by limiting their identity permanently. Thus, due to the physical attributes of the tattoo consumer dabbling occurs within the use of non-permanent tattoo mimicry and other non-permanent body modifications which draw the consumer into tattooing. Which means due to permanence dabbling occurs in this case without any direct consumption of the tattoo.

The narrative below discusses a tattooee's experiences as an integral member of the tattoo subculture which they were linked to and interacted with through the use of the internet, and also shows the use of non-permanent body modification as a gateway to tattooing:

I got my first piercing in 3 years. I felt confident, I knew it felt right on me, and I had a new respect for body modifications. I discovered BME early January, and before long had submitted my first experience and was in awe at the wonder of IAM, the community side of BME. I have met some of the best people on there, and have formed closer friendships than I have with people in the town where I live (you know who you are! X x x) Friends on IAM have helped me through some major crisis points, reviewing experiences like this one has given me a purpose in the evenings which would have otherwise been spent alone, I can really say that IAM has changed my life, for the better. What has this got to do with a tattoo I hear you ask! Well, my very first tattoo was a BME logo. I looked through the page of BME logos, and one jumped out at me. It was the 'BME 5 Rings'. I knew instantly what it meant to me.

know what it means to me, that's all I care about

What can be seen in this tattooee's comment is her usage of a non-permanent body modification led to membership of and her interaction within a subculture

which is based within an online community. This community revolves around body modification and the tattooee talks about the importance of the community to her with the comment “I have met some of the best people on there, and have formed closer friendships than I have with people in the town where I live (you know who you are! X x x) Friends on IAM have helped me through some major crisis points.” Which leads to her expressing her commitment to the community, she expresses her commitment to the community, firstly by spending time interacting with other members, this is seen in her comment: “reviewing experiences like this one has given me a purpose in the evenings which would have otherwise been spent alone.” Secondly, her commitment to the community is then given physical permanence by her gaining a tattoo of the community’s logo.

The issue of gateway(s) into gaining a tattoo are also seen in the next tattooee’s statement, with acquirement through group membership and possession of a tattoo being a logical step from the use of other non-permanent body modifications {piercing and hair dying} that she had been undertaking prior to the acquisition of a tattoo:

As I am the youngest when it comes to my main group of friends I was determined to be on a par with them as soon as I hit 18. Everyone around me on the alternative scene in Brighton had loads of tattoos and piercings and some even had implants and brandings. Since I was 12 I have been going against my parents wishes and having piercings and odd hair colours and unnecessarily large clothing but this time I wanted to go a step farther and get some inking done. As scared as I was about the prospect of non-removal (in theory).....I wasn't sure when I was going to have a tattoo done but I had a vague idea of what I wanted. It wasn't until my friend Phil decided to drag me along to a 3 hour sitting of his sleeve that I became obsessed with the idea. I sat there talking to the artist and watched Phil sweating blood and as soon as the 3-hour sitting was over I had to talk to Nigel, the artist about what I wanted.

My finest euphoric moment with a man!

What is notable from this narrative is the linkage between body modification and subculture membership: “Everyone around me on the alternative scene in

Brighton had loads of tattoos and piercings” and commitment which is seen through the idea of permanence of the tattoo in the comment “I wanted to go a step farther and get some inking done. As scared as I was about the prospect of non-removal (in theory).” Thus the question of permanence is central to her choice and is linked to her not being sure about the design she wanted. This uncertainty is what arrested her movement to gaining a tattoo, but once she had an experience of tattooing along with another member of the ‘alternative’ community and could relate to it she was able to move onto being tattooed herself. It also shows high involvement in the activity choices (Zaichkowsky, 1985, 1986).

This idea of community relates to the theories of *communitas* or *tribus* {neo-tribes} and belonging that come from the works of Maffessoli (1996), which deal with the idea of neo-tribes - groups created out of a fragmented society. In addition to this, the meaning of personal identity is no longer a fixed creation and can be formed or reformed through consumption (Belk, 1988). This is related in theoretical terms to the views of Baudrillard (1998), who, in his work on consumption, stated that our entire society is structured around consumption and the respective meanings behind this consumption. By the flaunting of commodity centred signs consumers can gain prestige, identity, and standing - an idea formulated from Veblen’s (1899) theories of conspicuous consumption. In being a sign or a representation, the tattoo is consumed for its symbol but this exists in a micro {personal} and a macro {societal} form (Barthes, 1964, 1972; Baudrillard, 1998).

Both of the prior comments show the differing levels of community found surrounding tattoo consumption. One revolves around internet interaction, the other involves an informal set of friends - both of which are described in terms of tattoos or body modification. This view of tattoo consumption in terms of *communitas* has strong links to the social and historical study of ritual and liminality. It shows that the activity itself is on the cusp of existence {liminal} in various terms. The tattoo as stated earlier in this thesis is on the liminal part of the body, {the skin}, which is the boundary of bodily existence. As seen in the comments the permanence of the tattoo is important in terms not only of the costs

to the individual but also of the commitment to the group as Sosisa, Kressb and Boster discuss in terms of an anthropological standpoint:

....the costliness of ritual actions enables them to serve as honest signals of commitment to the group because only those who are committed to the group's beliefs and goals will be willing to incur the time, energetic, and opportunity costs of ritual performance. In other words, individuals pay the costs of ritual performance, but by doing so they demonstrate their commitment and loyalty to the group (Sosisa, Kressb & Boster, 2007, p.235)

Sosisa, Kressb and Boster's comment returns to the idea of ritual in relation to the tattoo, and in turn links to liminality and the movement of the tattooee from one group to another which is portrayed through tattoo acquisition. This idea originates in the work of Van Gennep (1960) which was later developed by Turner (1974) and paralleled by Bakhtin (1984) in terms of the carnivalesque. While the tattoo is the badge of the community, the activity experienced is the ritual, and the tattoo being its outcome. In terms of the tattoo community, the more important issue is the tattooing itself rather than the design being the badge of identity (DeMello, 2000; Kjeldgaard & Bengtsson, 2005).

This use of the tattoo as a badge of identity occurs throughout the world and is one of the commonalities or permanent aspects that occur over differences in time and place. Tribal peoples as far apart as the Maori and the Alaskan Inuit use group use of permanent identity markers (Camphausen, 2000; Gilbert, 2000; Rubin, 1995). This is seen in a comment from Burchett which shows linkage and the strength of linkage between specific groups and tattooing. He also shows the changes in group tattoo use between the early 20th century and the early 1950's:

...forty or fifty years ago....one in every three men of the working class, most regular soldiers – and many officers – and practically all sailors were tattooed. There may be fewer now, though sailors still carry on with the tradition. (Burchett, 1956, p.27)

It is interesting to note that this situation reversed itself in the following decade with the creation of pop culture changing from the clean cut socially conservative

1950's to the Hippy subculture of the late 1960's. Tattooing of pop stars brought tattoos to a wider consumer base. Just as socialites copied the aristocrats and royalty between the 1880's and 1920's teenagers began to copy pop stars tattoo usage and designs.

As a badge of identity, specific group identity is also seen in the following extracts from Victorian and Edwardian tattoo related articles which categorize the act, the experience being undertaken, and the design, all being linked to membership of a specific group identity (see following).

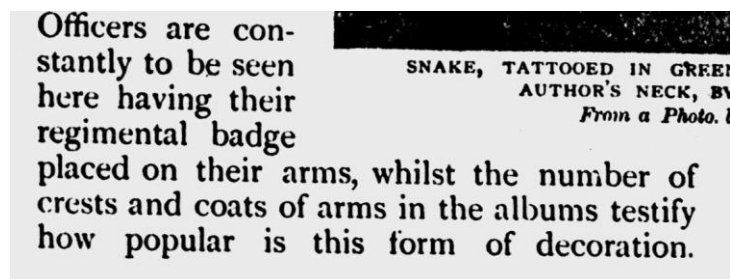


Fig:59 Excerpt from Victorian tattoo article

(Bolton, 1897, p. 434)

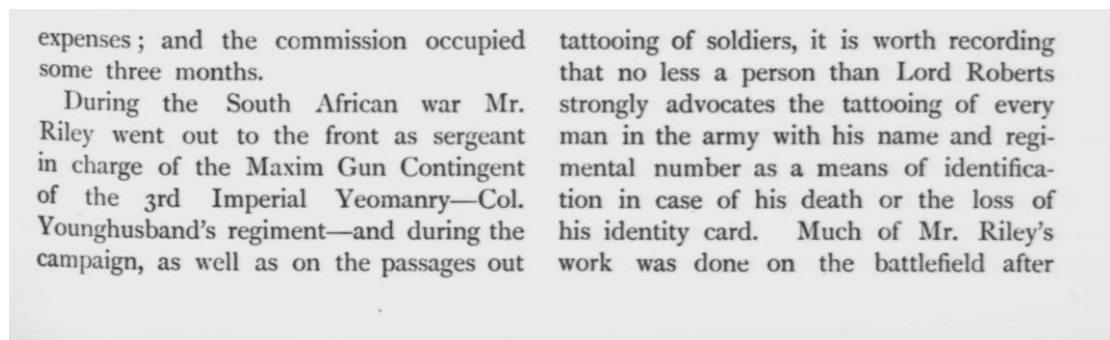


Fig:60 Excerpt from Edwardian tattoo article

(Brooklyn, 1903, p.111)

X

Picture removed due to copyright

Fig:61 Victorian military tattooing

(Brooklyn, 1903, p.106)

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**Fig:62 Victorian design linked to a
specific subculture**

i.e. membership of 3rd Imperial
Yeomanry. (Brooklyn, 1903, p.107)

As can be seen usage (in these cases the military) leads to specific groups (subcultures) appropriated their own aesthetics, myths, legends, traditions, and folklore within tattooing. This is also seen in the following comments by Gothic Faerie discussing her planned ‘Goth’ themed leg tattoo, the aesthetics of which linked to ‘Goth’ subculture in general terms:

I had been planning my gothic themed leg for about a year before I actually got a start on it. I had the general concept in mind for it and a few ideas for individual pieces that I wanted to incorporate into it, but other than that I wasn't really sure. I figured that I would just leave it to the artist to figure out the details. After all, I was far from an artist and it

made more sense to have my tattooist work out the details. They were more likely to know what would work and what would look good within the framework that I gave them. I knew, however, that I definitely wanted a gothic faerie, some sort of spider and something to do with vampires.

Gothic Faerie

Past and present groups appropriate tattooing and/or both general and specific designs in terms of their identity becoming symbols for their membership as noted by Davis in his work on the use of signs and symbols in relation to fashion, culture and identity. He stated that:

Subcultures produce their own particular practices which are in part body orientations or ways of walking and talking which are worn like a 'second skin' on the body of the skinhead, punk, raver etc.

(Davis, 1992, p.138)

This does not of necessity mean that the original/previous or authentic meaning(s) of the design transfers with the design itself, or that there is any meaning remaining to the design beyond its aesthetic attractiveness. This was touched upon by Bates: "it is much more difficult to specify the set of behaviors that lead us to infer a truly symbolic awareness of the relationship between a conventional behavior (vehicle) and its referent" (Bates, 1979, p.38). The activity of groups, which change meanings {of an image} beyond those originally envisaged, is called bricolage. This is not a new activity. Changes of sign, symbol and meaning occurring over time and from group to group were noted by Peirce, one of the initial definers of the study of sign:

Symbols grow. They come into being by development out of other signs.....it is only out of symbols that a new symbol can grow. Omne symbolum de symbolo.

(Pierce, 1894)

Specific designs would be initially linked to specific groups, which would then percolate into general tattoo usage, for example, sailors would be tattooed with a rooster on one foot and a pig on the other; supposedly to prevent the wearer from drowning. While other designs also originated as nautical tattoos:

- A full-rigged ship shows the seaman has sailed round Cape Horn
- An anchor indicates he has sailed the Atlantic Ocean
- A dragon denotes that the bearer has served on a China station
- A shellback turtle shows the sailor has crossed the equator
- 'Hold' tattooed on the knuckles of one hand and 'fast' on the other were said to allow the bearer to grip the rigging better (National Maritime Museum, 2002b)

After the mutiny on *The Bounty*, the naval court-martials relied on the proof of tattoos to make sure they were trying the correct men. The mutineers living with the tattooed inhabitants of Tahiti had acquired their habits and carried tattooing to the extremes. Fletcher Christian's buttock tattoo design was on show at the "Skin Deep" exhibition at the National Maritime Museum in 2002 (National Maritime Museum, 2002a; Smith, 2002). The admiralty estimated that by the end of the 19th century, 90% of serving sailors in the Royal Navy had tattoos (Prentice, 2005). This level of linkage led to creation of an interlinking of the tattoo with that group in general, where in general society the ownership of a tattoo would lead rightly or wrongly to the identification of an individual with that group. Yet, as these designs while still being used, now do not necessary have the same meanings as they disseminate into general usage.

Apart from sailors, groups which were linked to tattoo ownership included the working class, biking (Gilbert, 2000), sailors, the military (Scutt & Gotch, 1974), criminals (Braithwaite *et al.*, 2001; Hunt & Phelan, 1998), sex workers or sexual 'deviants' (Brown, Perlmutter & McDermott, 2001; Ferguson-Rayport, Griffith & Strauss, 1955; Fried, 1983; Parry, 1999). The linkage to deviance and negativity will be studied in the section 4.6.

Tattoo subculture and tattooing community

Apart from specific subcultures being linked to tattoo usage there is the tattoo community or subculture which has been touched on earlier, it is necessary to look at this in more depth. The idea of community and *communitas* of the tattoo community exists at several levels of tattoo consumption. Tattoo communities, in terms of recognition by consumers or practitioners, arise at the tattoo parlour/shop level as well as regionally, nationally, and worldwide. It exists in terms of the definition as given by Schouten and McAlexander:

...we define a sub-culture of consumption as a distinctive subgroup of society that self-selects on the basis of a shared commitment to a particular product class, brand, or consumption activity.

(Schouten & McAlexander, 1995, p.43)

The activity which links all the members is their acquisition of a tattoo, in particular the undertaking of a common physical experience which is permanently etched on them. Tattoo subculture has a multilayered nature, communities exist in terms of official {through tattoo conventions, community webpages and organisations to assist and represent tattoo providers} and unofficial communities {through groups organised around tattoo parlours}. In addition, it is geographically diverse as the creation of the internet has allowed ease of communication among tattooee aficionados, around the world. This internationalisation has built upon the work of tattoo conventions that occur nationally, regionally etc. it also allows for the swapping of designs, and the dissemination of designs originating from obscure anthropological works, or antique newspapers (Larratt, & Larratt, 1994; Lockheart & Hemingson, 2000).

A well known tattooist and writer, who added the emphasis of community to tattoo consumption is Musafar Fakir who is considered the “grandfather” of Body Modification; he did much to widen tattoo design into the use of authentic ethnic designs. He coined the phrase Modern Primitives in 1979 to describe individuals who undertook such tattooing. His activities were popularised in the 1985 film *Dances Sacred & Profane* (Fakir, 2007), and in Re/Search publication’s 1986 frequently reprinted book *Modern Primitives* (Juno & Vale, 1989). This gave rise to the community called Modern Primitives whose members follow the ideals espoused by Fakir. Most members of this unofficial group are American, but it has worldwide membership. While tattooing is only one part of this group’s activities they can be considered a seminal influence on tattoo expansion and development of the tattoo subculture itself as members embraced other media such as film and the Internet to disseminate their practices and beliefs to other likeminded individuals. Yet the tattoo solely being a primitive action rejects the socio-historical position of it **also** being a symbol of civilisation (Rubin, 1995), and its dualistic existence, as it is not situated in one

or other definitions but both.

In terms of the tattoo subculture itself, the knowledge of, and/or interaction with the tattoo community or body modification community is determined by the consumers' depth of consumption of tattoos and other body modification such as piercing. The interrelationship and difference between these separate body modifications is noted by a consumer as seen below:

John: Do you think there is something like not two different communities, but people with tattoos, do you think that there is some sort of connection between them?

Tattooee Jane Hornsely: Definitely, it's a little club, it all depends which club you are talking about, some just have tats, others just have piercings, but most people have both 'cos they seem to go together.

In addition, a tattoo convention organiser also espoused this idea of a tattoo 'club', noting that it is the tattoo acquisition and experience that links members of the group. This is seen in the following comment:

Yeah, you get all sorts here, lawyer, doctor, street sweepers, black, white, yeah, all sorts. What they all have in common is their tattoos, it brings them together. It's like something, which unites them, you know, you will never have trouble here tonight (at the convention) 'cos they all get on together 'cos of this connection.

Gillingham tattoo convention organiser Darren Stares:

The overt identification of this linkage is seen in the above comment in "What they all have in common is their tattoos, it brings them together. It's like something, which unites them." Tattooees' tattoos are the centre around which their relationships revolve, a permanent commonality, a point of discussion for them, a visual connection which levels all types of individuals which is seen in: "you get all sorts here, lawyer, doctor, street sweepers, black, white, yeah, all sorts." Tattoo acquisition is the most explicit, open and unambiguous projection of internal identity (Belk, 1988; Hirschman & Thompson, 1999), in either this tattoo club or any such subculture affiliation linked to tattoo usage (Atkinson, 2002, 2003b; Atkinson & Young, 2001). Through the physicality of the tattoo

this occurs directly via the tattooee's choices, which act as a linkage between the theories of the body, its symbols, and semiotics (Schouten, 1991; Thompson & Hirschman, 1995). In specific terms of group belonging this is important to the meanings of the tattoo. As seen also in section 4.2 the use of the tattoo, similar to other activities, is used to reject (Levine & Stump, 1983) or adhere (Atkinson, 2003b; Wojcik, 1995) to societal and subcultural "norms" of beauty and the body which again can be linked to subcultural allegiance and is viewed either in general terms or specific designs and/or placement (Bennett, 1999; Pritchard, 2000).



Fig:63 Darren Stares

Gillingham convention organiser

As commented on previously, the actual ownership of a tattoo is the permanent commonality, although this is not a universal understanding throughout all tattoo consumers. However, some individuals have no notion of being a member of a tattoo related community at all, yet have the relevant qualification for membership through their tattoo consumption:

Tattooee Kylie Sands: A member of a tattoo community.....nah, I'm just getting' a tattoo...

Thus while the tattoo is a 'ticket' to becoming a member of the tattoo subculture, it depends whether the tattooee wishes to use it. It is the tattooee's views, knowledge, or ability to relate to the 'tattoo' community which is the induction

into membership. It is a potential membership which is in effect nascent until realised by activity i.e. acceptance of a tattoo subculture and interaction between other tattooees within the overall subculture. Thus it can be seen that while some tattooees may interact with one another in terms of Miller and Rose's (1997, p.1) comment on consumption: "Have consumption subcultures replaced class, region, generation and gender as sources of interest and identification?" Others do not, so in terms of the tattoo subculture this cannot be taken as a generalisation.



Fig:64 Gillingham convention tattooees mingling in the main hall

While tattoo conventions are a modern creation, a development from music and motorcycle festivals, there are prior analogies with Victorian high class tattoo parties (Burchett, 1956), and with Polynesian and Melanesian tattoo festivals where mass tattooing occurred (Gell, 1993).

There is another community which exists in terms of tattooing specifically a local community there exists around each tattoo shop a small group of regulars who use the shop as more than a tattoo consumption point. They interact with one another on a social level at the shop in addition to their tattoo orientated activities. Swapping designs discussing latest work that is ongoing, with individuals remarking on and encouraging one another's consumption in form of designs:

I usually pop into see Winston [tattooist] as often as I can; I have a chat, get an update on his latest work over a cup of

tea, and a chat with Tyson [tattoo assistant] about Staffies (sic).

Graham Sherry

In summing up the relationship between the tattooing and the creation of community, it can be said that the ritual the community uses as its point of reference is the process and experience of gaining a tattoo. There are differing levels of commitment, both to a subculture in general and to their view of the tattoo subculture specifically. The shared value(s) espoused is the acquisition of a tattoo, while the level of commitment to a specific subculture can be expressed in the tattoo consumption undertaken i.e. a permanent body modification, in general. But in specific instances this is seen in the design(s) chosen, as aesthetics are linked to specific subcultures or groups. In comparison an individual's linkage to the tattoo subculture in general occurs through the acquisition of a tattoo, but it also needs to include the consumer's knowledge of and interaction with the tattoo subculture, which can occur at a local shop level or at a higher level (e.g. regional, national etc.) as seen in attending tattoo conventions.

We have talked in the previous subsection about specific designs being linked to subcultures to identify that subculture. In this subsection we have discussed the tattoo subculture itself, the next issue is the macro level of design usage linking to subculture, which is in effect the tattoo subculture, or tattooing in general in respect to a 'tattoo' aesthetic.

4.4 TATTOO AESTHETICS: THE PERMANENCE OF THE TATTOO DESIGN

The tattoo by the manner of its acquisition, and thus its permanence, is seen in the very aesthetics used in its creation (as opposed to their meanings), as well as its physicality. In terms of aesthetics, the meanings and culture behind the aesthetics of the tattoo are like flies trapped in amber - a never changing point of reference to one particular aesthetic choice and style of tattooing. There is the unchanging nature of that particular tattoo aesthetic which has been etched onto the tattooees' skin. In his study of tattooing McCabbe noted this permanence within the designs of tattoos:

Classic images – eagle, snake, anchor, heart are deceptive in their directness and their simplicity. Hidden behind the designs are years of technical and artistic experimentation that combined to create a successful style....the practice moves along, constantly reinventing itself as it digests ever changing cultural influences.....old tattoos become trapped in their time and speak of the values and aesthetics of the era in which they were created.
(McCabbe, 1997, p.16)

Yet this only is the tip of the iceberg, so to speak, as tattoo aesthetics today are on the whole direct copies of prior designs, showing a direct linkages to past tattooing. This again is analogous to Arendt's view of permanence, due to the tattoo design's parallel with works of art, which are "almost untouched by the corroding effects of natural processes" (Arendt, 1958, p.167). In effect, the past has become a repository for today's aesthetic creations, yet this is also a historic commonality with past tattooing. Tattooists and tattooees of the past have commented on and demanded traditional (i.e. historic) designs. Even when these designs are developed, their lineage does not stray far from their origins and the folk art of the past can still be identified just under the surface of so called 'newly invented' designs. This is seen in the following comment by tattooist (and tattooee) Winston Gomez:

Winston: You see John, the old school, you know, working class stuff....it didn't really go away and never will, even

when the tribal stuff came in, or...I should say returned (chuckles), the main amount of my work was and still is the usual....bulldogs, swallows, hearts, St Georges cross, football stuff, and all that. No matter what is fashionable it's always been there and always will be, I mean even the hearts.

John: The Sacred heart of Jesus?

Winston: Yeah...I mean its so old...and so Catholic it hurts, they don't know that but they still get it, I mean the old guys 20-30 years ago got the same stuff. It was the same when I was in America, the same designs from the past like the Battle Royale, I mean they go on about developing designs and I get new flash but behind them all it's the same design.

X

Picture removed due to copyright

Fig:65 Battle Royale tattoo flash (modern) (Green, 2007)

X

Picture removed due to copyright

Fig:66 Victorian Battle Royale

(Bolton, 1897, p.433)

Winston discusses how the designs chosen are the traditional or ‘normal’ set of tattoo designs in the comment: “it didn’t go away and never will, even when the tribal stuff came in or...I should say returned.” This comment shows the longevity of not only the designs but also the demand for such designs. In addition, this fare of tattooing available to him (and hence to his clients) in form of tattoo flash does not substantially alter, in that even if they do change, the original or ancient designs can be seen in those available. For example, Winston talks about the ‘Sacred heart’, an image originating from a Roman Catholic cult which developed in the 17th and 18th centuries (Stuart, 1912). This represents the depth of love and devotion to Jesus, which developed into its use as a heart on its own to show secular love, devotion, and passion. While the ‘Battle Royale’, as seen prior, is considered a ‘classic Americana’ (in Britain it is described as Working class or Old School tattooing) an age old theme that represents opposing forces locked in combat. The most frequent images used are those of a bird of prey, mostly an eagle, which represents the sun, the sky, and the heavens and a serpent such as a snake. The images are a development of older imagery, for example the alchemic circular snake that eats its own tail (ouroboros) or the snake that encircles a dagger proclaiming “Death Before Dishonour.” This shows both the potential for development within tattoo designs and cross cultural fertilisation of designs, but without hiding its original design.

Yet, Winston Gomez’s statement has comparability with the following comment by Schroeder on his experience of viewing carved Viking standing stones, in that

the meanings of the designs viewed are of the past and have had specific meaning(s) that he is unaware of prior to being encultured with the history and meaning behind the symbols. In addition these symbols not only have specific historical meaning, they also ‘speak’ of the actual culture surrounding the designs itself that is experienced through their viewing:

The stones were interesting, but meant little to me on first seeing them...he carefully laid out the history of the stones...I began to see the stones differently. They began to speak to me from the distant past. With the proper context, some motivation, a little background information, and an expert lecturer, what had been an interesting set of pictures on some rocks transformed into impressive icons of an entire cultural tradition.

(Schroeder, 2002, p. ix-x)

This has direct parallels with the consumption of tattoos. A person can look at the tattoo in one way, as merely as a tattoo, but when one looks at the aesthetics or the historical meanings of the tattoo it is soon evident that meanings exist in layer upon layer of personal, historical, and social developments and contexts. Hidden or forgotten meaning(s) exist in conjunction with present overtly projected signs, which like icebergs merely hint at the depth and richness of the cultural tradition of over 4000 years (Gilbert, 2000; McCabbe, 1997; Rubin, 1995; Sanders, 1988, 1989) which has developed to this point to create the specific tattoo design the person is acquiring. Grumet views this development stating:

What was once the seafarer's proud exclusive emblem became progressively plagiarized and readily available to any teenager through an urban tattoo parlor or traveling carnival. Yet modern tattoo styles still reveal their ancient origins. Dainty figures of animals, birds, butterflies, dragons, and snakes are derived from designs of the old master tattooists of Burma and Japan, while explicitly religious, sensuous, or patriotic themes (e.g., eagles, flags, hearts, unclothed women, etc) came to be known in the profession as “American work”

(Grumet, 1983, p.483)

This regurgitation or ‘plagiarising’ can be viewed as ‘permanence’ within tattoo designs was seen in past tattooing and commented on. Tradition has something to

do with this, but the strength and meaning of the designs also have some part to play in this. This is witnessed in the permanence and endurance of the tattoo designs within Coptic tattoo usage. The Middle Eastern Coptic Church is a Christian culture, which never stopped or demeaned tattooing within its culture, the study of its practices is of great importance and relevance to individuals wishing to research tattoos and tattooing (Gilbert, 2000; Lockheart & Hemingson, 2000). The permanence of design (and also context) can be clearly seen in its use of tattooing in an unbroken heritage, which has developed Western European tattooing through pilgrimage usage in the Balkans, Italy and Spain (Caplan, 2000a; Hambly, 1925) to the Chicano style of today (Grover, 1995). The importance of the Coptic tattoo was stated by Carswell in his seminal work on the subject:

Egypt was the first country to adopt Christianity as the national religion. The Coptic Church is therefore the oldest national church in the world; and as such is of vital importance in the study of all aspects of early Christianity. Many villages in upper and Middle Egypt have early Coptic remains, varying from a hermits cave with rudely marked crosses on the rocky sides, to churches whose walls still preserve stately figures of holy personages painted in the style which shows the origin of Byzantine art. Besides the great painters there were in the villages craftsmen who designed and made objects which lend a religious fervour to daily life. Among such objects were tattoo designs.
(Carswell, 1958, p.10)

The earliest extant European reference to Coptic tattooing is from 1612, by a Scotsman, William Lithgow (Hardy, 2000). Tattooing was taking place through the use of blocs of wood that had designs chiselled out of them Carswell describes these blocks:

The blocs are the most important part of Razzouk's equipment. They serve as a double function: firstly, they provide his customers with a rudimentary catalogue from which a design may be chosen, and secondly, provide a means whereby the desired design can be stamped into the skin....There are only two definite dates in the collection of woodblocks. One is the Armenian inscription for the year 1749, and the other is a resurrection incorporating the date 1912. Some of the blocks are extremely worn and would certainly seem to be of the antiquity claimed for them by

Razzouk, who asserts that they have been in his family since the seventeenth century....Apart from stating the blocks may come from any part of the period between the two dates shown a more accurate dating is impossible; nor can a chronological dating of style and development be traced since primitive art of this kind shown no appreciable pattern of development.
(Carswell, 1958, p.16)

The way of thinking behind this act was that to Copts tattooing was more than the act of imprinting designs under the skin; the reasoning was as Dr M. Murray described:

These naïve and charming objects (tattoo designs) have a deep and underlying significance, for they express the passionate devotion that supported the Coptic Church, even to its poorest members, through centuries of persecution. At the present day when persecution is little more than a memory, the Copts are tattooed on the inner side of each wrist with the sign of a cross, and sometimes with a large design – e.g. Christ in Glory on the upper arm. The very indestructibility of the method symbolises to the Copt his own undying faith.
(Carswell, 1958, p.15)



Picture removed due to copyright

Fig:67 Coptic tattoo design (18th century) (Lockheart & Hemingson, 2000)

The comment: “the very indestructibility of the method symbolises to the Copt his own undying faith” shows the permanence of contextual usage of the tattoo as a personal (and group) message from the tattooee. Tattooing is chosen due to its permanent nature, which in itself is a self referential meaning, i.e. representing: “undying faith.” Thus the commitment of the individual to the tattoo is linked to their commitment to their spiritual identity and group identity.



Picture removed due to copyright

Fig:68 Coptic cross tattoo (Urumandimi, 2008)

X

Picture removed due to copyright

Fig:69 Coptic tattoos in 2009 (www.flickr.com, 2009)

X

Picture removed due to copyright

Fig:70 Modern Copt tattooing (Paulkist, 2007)

X

Picture removed due to copyright

Fig:71 Coptic tattoo (Arabist, 2009)

This permanence within design usage can be seen in relation to Coptic practice, but is identifiable in the 20th century, in terms of the designs harking back to past aesthetics i.e. Napoleonic and Victorian rather than their modern versions. George Burchett commented on this in relation to the aesthetics demanded by soldiers in both world wars, but these choices have special significance in the context of the 1939-45 total war and its technological aspects:

Few service men asked me to tattoo modern weapons on their body, such as tanks, modern artillery, machine guns or anti-aircraft guns. On the whole they stuck to traditional pictures of obsolete looking rifles and time honoured cavalry swords. The same applied to sailors who, though serving in aircraft carriers, insisted on having sailing ships to commemorate total war.
(Burchett, 1956, p.72)

While this can be argued as aesthetic romanticism applied to military matters or aesthetic conservatism, it is also showing the permanence of the designs. These designs are long held and are a comprehensive continuation of the aesthetic tradition. This can be seen in George Burchett's next comment:

I had many officers and men of General De Gaulle's Free French forces among my customers...the same designs seem to have persisted over three or four generations. Several times French clients asked me to tattoo designs which I remember from Dr. Lacassagne's book which was published in 1881.
(Burchett, 1956, p.85)

The designs asked for by these officers are ones which were not a usual stock in trade for Burchett, as they were aesthetically 'French' or European, but their survival shows a longitudinal endurance of designs from pre-1881 to 1940-45. Furthermore, they were according to Burchett used in similar contexts and patterns of use.

This continuation or permanence within design is also seen in the usage or present day reacquisition or re-acquaintance of ancient designs. For example the tribal tattoo designs so fashionable in the late 1980's and early 1990's were taken from anthropologists work on tribal societies around the world (Liu, 1990), but were also popular with British officers stationed overseas in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Burchett, 1956). This cultural interaction also happened in the opposite way, from the west to other 'tattoo' societies with Polynesian societies in the 18th century 'borrowing' western or European designs (Gell, 1993). Such movement of tattoo designs has been important in the conservation of tattoo cultures, for example German anthropologists' studies of Marquesian

tattooing in the late 19th and early 20th centuries preserved designs and meanings that had been lost in their original settings due to prohibition of the activity by the French colonial authorities (Gell, 1993; Gilbert, 2000). These designs were later returned to the Marquesas Islands and the practices re-established (Kuwahara, 2005) this only occurred due to the previous work of the anthropologists. Another modern instance is the use of Scythian tattoo designs from 50BC 'becoming' a staple product for today's tattooists.



Picture removed due to copyright

Fig:72 Original mummified Scythian tattoo (Answers.com, 2007)

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Picture removed due to copyright

Fig:73 Modern Scythian tattoo

(Scythian tattoo, 2009)

These designs (see Figs:15, 72 & 73) were rediscovered from the 1940's onwards on mummies of the Altai region of Russia, their technical ability and aesthetic influence has skill and artistic ability which parallels that of 'professionals' in the modern era (Briliot, 2000; Gilbert, 2000). As their age however does not lessen or diminish the striking effect, the designs have been appropriated by many modern tattooists as a part of their repertoire. In fact their dissemination by tattooees through the internet to other tattooees was paralleled earlier by the reuse of the ancient Egyptian tattoos in the 1920's which were popularised in newspapers (Burchett, 1956), which again shows continuity and dissemination of artistic tradition.

This aesthetic borrowing or interaction has been accused of being a form of cultural imperialism, and actions taken against it (BBC, 2001), however, this interpretation of a subculture as a plunderer (Brown, 2007) is only one view of subcultures (Cova, Kozinets & Shankar, 2007). The aesthetic interaction of the tattoo community in terms of its historical internationalisation, and the subcultural, and tattooees' interaction within the aesthetic process is more akin to that of entrepreneurs. This correlation occurs due to the ease with which individuals can purchase tattoo equipment, which creates the potential career route of tattooees becoming tattooists (providers), though not necessarily good or legal ones. In addition, the interaction of tattooees swapping designs prior to their physical acquisition places them on a common footing with producers. The ease of this almost interdependent relationship between consumers and producers

existing occurs due to the burgeoning online community, yet this was also seen in past times with newspapers, journals disseminating designs and mail order allowing the purchase of tattoo machines (Davis (2007). The tattoo subculture in this term of entrepreneur is similar to the example of the pipe smoking community and producers as commented on by Pace, Fratocchi and Cociola:

Network represents a boost to the entrepreneur's activity and expansion, communities, specifically virtual communities, can multiply the network effects on the internationalization of a craft enterprise. The typical features of a community provide an ideal environment for the expansion of the activity, while the sense of reciprocity and solidarity, the sense of kind, and the common passion can drive the internationalization process
(Pace, Fratocchi & Cociola, 2007, p.316)

Such network actions in terms of aesthetic development and interaction in the swapping of tattoo designs have occurred through the interface of various tattoo subcultures historically, this has allowed for a vast diversification of tattoo designs. It also gives a huge repository of designs which are used and reused, but also protected and later regurgitated, yet not necessarily with the same meaning or context. Another issue that Burchett noted about the longevity of general designs as opposed to specific designs in his previous comments, and also types of designs, in particular the designs linked to relationships, commitment and love:

...but for sixty years the heart and backbone of my business has been the love of men for women and vice versa. On four continents, on the bodies of every race, I have tattooed flaming hearts, cooing doves and pretty girls. 'True love Mary' and 'I love Amy' were my stock in trade and my bread and butter, whether I was working in London, Hong Kong or Johannesburg. The only variation was the name of the beloved.
(Burchett, 1956, p.89)

This in itself is interesting as he states that these designs were prevalent on the four continents where he had worked as a tattooist (Europe, Africa, America and Asia), and that they had been placed "on the bodies of every race." This along with Burchett's other comments surrounding the length of usage of designs,

others from Winston Gomez, and the data surrounding the use of Coptic designs leads to the supposition that tattoo designs are similar in existence to archetypes, in that they have an existence which is both long in terms of time and deep in meaning and are repeated across time periods and societies. The term archetype was created by Jung, he postulated that contents of the collective unconscious occurred as specific images called *archetypes*, describing them as: “primordial types, that is, with universal images that have existed since the remotest times” (Jung, 1959, p.5). He also described them as dominants, imagos, and mythological images.

Jung proposed that archetypes were “the hidden treasure upon which mankind ever and anon has drawn” (Fordham, 1968, p.27). The existence of which can only be deduced indirectly by examining behaviour, images, art, myths, etc. They are innate inherited potentials which are aesthetically actualized when they enter consciousness as images or manifest in behaviour on interaction with the outside world. As Jung stated:

All the most powerful ideas in history go back to archetypes. This is particularly true of religious ideas, but the central concepts of science, philosophy, and ethics are no exception to this rule. In their present form they are variants of archetypal ideas created by consciously applying and adapting these ideas to reality. For it is the function of consciousness not only to recognize and assimilate the external world through the gateway of the senses, but to translate into visible reality the world within us.
(Jung, 1960, p.342)

Archetypes while they are “conscious representations” (Jung, 1990, p.67) of the unconscious, in general are misunderstood as being “certain definite mythological images or motifs” (Jung, 1990, p.67). Thus the archetype may emerge into consciousness in countless variations. While there are a very few basic archetypes at the unconscious level, there is a potentially infinite variety of related specific images which relate to the original small amount of patterns. This situation can be seen paralleled in relation to tattoo designs, as they externally represent the internal hidden meanings and have long-standing deep seated meanings which are repeated across time periods and societies, with a small

amount of patterns relating to a potentially infinite variety of related images. The tattoo design's position is also linked to Arendt's statement about the permanence of works of art:

...because of their outstanding permanence, works of art are the most intensely worldly of all tangible things; their durability is almost untouched by the corroding effect of natural processes
(Arendt, 1958, p.167)

This timelessness or continuity of art is seen in the very nature and strength of the tattoo designs as found in the length their usage, furthermore this permanence of existence does not preclude that tattoo designs can develop or are solely limited to those already extant. As stated earlier, this is also seen in the actual make up of archetypes. Though there are only a few archetypes the range of images linked to these are potentially limitless (Jung, 1990). What also can be seen is that the stability of design also adds to the overall stability of the identity of the individual as accomplished by the use of the tattoo. This permanence and stability acts in relation to the cyclical or impermanent nature of existence, as it does not change but its owner ages. This again illustrates the relationship between the permanence of the tattoo aesthetic and the archetype, as Maffesoli pointed out there is a: "link exists between an archetype's tragic dimension and the accentuation of the cyclical conception of time" (Maffesoli, 2007 p.32), i.e. its permanence demonstrates the impermanence of existence.

The longitudinal existence or permanence of tattoo designs are in effect representing the culture, traditions, philosophy, history and development of the tattoo 'subculture' in the relatively unchanging aesthetics. This 'unchanging' nature of the aesthetics shows the permanent nature of the tattoo beyond its physical permanence through its aesthetics. When taken in terms of Lévi-Strauss' view that: "the purpose of Maori tattooing is not only to imprint a drawing onto the flesh but also to stamp onto the mind all the traditions...of the group" (Lévi-Strauss, 1963, p.257). It is in fact permanence through the design as well as its permanent physical impression.

A review of the various tattoo types can be found in Appendix:3, this illustrates present day tattoo types, and comments on their development from their original basis or archetypal aesthetics to what is used today.

The next related issue is that of individual identity which is a related issue to subcultural and community use of the tattoo within identity projection, as groups are made up of individuals and thus group identity is dependent of individuals linking their own specific identity to that of the group.

4.5 CONSUMER IDENTITY PROJECTS: A PERMANENT PHYSICAL IDENTITY

Creation and definition of personal identity through tattooing exists in terms of the tattoo design occurring through the choice of design. It is a contextual activity which is another permanent aspect within tattooing. This is irrespective of what the design is, as it is the choice that is linked to identity. The choice of design occurs at different levels of commitment. On one extreme, there is the consumer purchasing flash, which is in effect having another person's design copied directly without personalisation:

I turned the leaf of the page and there was that tattoo that I wanted; it was beautiful, simple but exactly as I had wanted; it was almost as if that design had been made especially for me, I felt as though he'd delved into my mind and drawn it for me and only me.

Beautiful Butterfly, my first tattoo

In terms of identity, the initial aspect of the consumer representing his/her identity occurs in the first self-defining part of the narrative, which relates to the consumer's setting the scene. "there was that tattoo that I wanted.....it was almost as if that design had been made especially for me, I felt as though he'd delved into my mind and drawn it for me and only me." As can be seen the consumer relates to the design and their identity specifically. The 'delved into my mind' shows the externalising and expression of internal feelings, meanings, and identity through the tattoo:

I wanted a bird on my shoulder: a physical manifestation of this philosophy, so that I will remember every time I look in the mirror to check that I'm living the kind of life I want to lead.

The bird on my shoulder that reminds me how to live

This narrative shows reification: a making physical of the metaphysical found in the identity of the tattooee, as seen in “a physical manifestation of this philosophy.” As Arendt stated this act is “inherent in all” (Arendt, 1958, p.138), as the tattoo is close to the body which in equates in Arendt’s view for to be easily worn out or destroyed due to its ‘independence’, it does not become destroyed, enabling it to “survive even for a considerable time the changing moods of its owner” (Arendt, 1958, p.138).

Thus both physically and theoretically it (the tattoo) is a permanent manifestation of self-identity, which is matched to other aspects of the consumer’s life and identity. In these tattoo narratives other aspects of their lives, beliefs or experiences can be seen in the choice of designs.

This weaving of identity through the use of the tattoo can also be equated with the consumer weaving his/her own identity through the consumption narratives, letting the reader know who they are, their origins, what their experiences have been to bring them to this point and how this information interacts with the determinants of the act of consumption. For example in the following narrative, in **Oh, my Goddess!**, the consumer lets the reader know how they define themselves in expressions of geography, ethnicity, and background experiences that led them to this particular consumption experience. She also comments on her choice determinants, for example, commitment in terms of the time taken over her choice, the idea of permanence of the tattoo, and its meaning. The choice of a peacock feather is also at one extreme of commitment in terms of high involvement is the acquisition of a custom piece, with the design being totally consumer generated:

Well, here is the story of my first tattoo. I should state that I am from California, but am staying in Scotland for a year for

fun, travelling, learning etc...It all happened a few summers ago, when I believe I was contacted by the divine Goddess Hera.....After studying her for days and days. I decided that I wanted to do something to forever link me with this Goddess. I learned that Hera's sacred sign was of the Peacock Feather (among others) which represents her watchful eye.....Nearly two years later, after much consideration, reading BME, planning, praying, meditating etc...I felt my dedication to Hera would be highly appropriate, and decided unequivocally on the feather.... From the moment I walked in and met Sarah (one of the wonderful artists at Tribal), I knew there was no one else to do the tattoo for me. After speaking with her (she is so nice!) and looking through her portfolios I was thoroughly impressed. I checked out about six other places, but didn't feel so excited about any of them. So, having made my appointment I did a lot of ritual in the weeks before. Burning candles, praying, asking Hera to give me strength and courage for what I was told is one of the most painful places to have a tattoo.....So many people thought I was crazy when I told them I wanted my first tattoo to be a twenty five inch peacock feather on my spine. They said I should wait and get a smaller one before diving into some major skin art. But I felt this was right, and was prepared for the pain involved.

Oh, my Goddess!

What can be seen in the tattooee's narrative is that her decisions, in terms of tattooing, occur in terms of value decisions, based on whether the permanent aesthetic fits her criteria in representing her identity. This involvement in turn occurs in terms of the personal and physical investment of the tattoo 'product' in relation to the meanings attached to the tattoo (Zaichkowsky, 1985, 1986), which exist through but not necessarily designated absolutely through the design, (Bloch, Brunel, & Arnold, 2003) but are all sourced from and representational of the tattooee's identity(ies) i.e. individual and/or group (Escalas & Bettman, 2005). The involvement of the individual is seen again within the commitment of the tattooee in terms of time spent over choice of design (Sanders, 1985), which is seen in: "After studying her for days and days. I decided that I wanted to do something to forever link me with this Goddess. I learned that Hera's sacred sign was of the Peacock Feather (among others) which represents her watchful eye." It is also seen in her choice of tattooist in the comments: "After speaking with her (she is so nice!) and looking through her portfolios I was thoroughly

impressed. I checked out about six other places, but didn't feel so excited about any of them.”

It is through the choice of the design is the most identifiable aspect of recognizing high or low involvement (Zaichkowsky, 1985, 1986), but other aspects of the choice such as the linkage of placement and commitment due to the physical investment (i.e. pain) required (Aaker & Lee, 2001). This is seen in the comment: “So many people thought I was crazy when I told them I wanted my first tattoo to be a twenty five inch peacock feather on my spine. They said I should wait and get a smaller one before diving into some major skin art. But I felt this was right, and was prepared for the pain involved.” The main issue in this comment that links this to high involvement is of her preparation of the pain (Aaker & Lee, 2001), which is also seen through the perception of others of the potentiality of regret as found in the potential pain.

Thus the two extremes of tattoo choice being the high involvement of an original and personally created design, to low involvement off the shelf design discussed earlier. The midpoint of these two points as found below is a negotiation between tattooist and tattooee about the design, with both having input in deciding on the final design as seen in the narrative below:

Though we'd decided to have the same basic design, on the insides of opposite ankles, Sophie helped us pick out some subtle differences that have made each piece unique.

apeiro - a first tattoo experience

As can be seen the potential tattooee tries to make the best decision they can based on their own individual criteria. For example as the tattoo is analogous to clothing (Gell, 1993), specifically a permanent item of clothing (Gilbert, 2000), consumers frequently purchase a clothing item due to its symbolic meaning, which reinforces image or creates psychological satisfaction (Solomon, 1986). In such terms tattoos like clothes are identifiable in how the consumer reflects their consumer own experiences, social life, ambitions, desires fantasies and (sub)cultural affiliations (Kaiser, 1998), but in terms of a physical permanence.

This self-definition aspect of the consumers' narratives is seen against the backdrop of the actual consumption process. Additionally, the abstract feelings and ideals of the consumption of tattooing can be seen as part of the individuals' identity and thus being represented:

I wanted ink done which represents things I believe in/like/represent me, so a fire dancer from the Amy Brown website was chosen as the central image, I'm a person that tends to walk on the edge and I regularly get hurt, so that is somewhat appropriate. Surrounding that would be the butterflies, butterflies tie in with the design due to a fascination and love that I have for them - their beauty and almost mystical element tie in with the design also with the first tattoo that I ever got - I feel that somehow butterflies represent all that I believe in. To finish the design off would be stars in a band and falling through the gaps on the rest of the sleeve, the band representing eternity and the stars there simply because I'm fascinated by stars and all that they represent. By the end of the day I had totally re-worked the entire design and there wasn't a single thing about it that I didn't like, I photocopied it so that if I lost a copy I wouldn't lose the entire design and then with the final design tucked away all I had to do was wait for the day to arrive.

A job well done

Once again, this shows the aesthetics (design) being a linkage between representation of personal internal meanings "which represents things I believe in/like/represent me, so a fire dancer from the Amy Brown website was chosen," and how the tattooee views him/herself: "I'm a person that tends to walk on the edge and I regularly get hurt, so that is somewhat appropriate." Here too are seen aesthetical choices (butterflies) relating to metaphysical concepts: "their beauty and almost mystical element tie in with the design also with the first tattoo that I ever got - I feel that somehow butterflies represent all that I believe in." This also shows that the aesthetics of the tattoo links in with prior consumption, to create an overall aesthetic. Choice of design is also a representation of personal meanings seen in the choice of aesthetics: "stars in a band and falling through the gaps on the rest of the sleeve, the band representing eternity and the stars there simply because I'm fascinated by stars and all that they represent." These meanings stated are not necessarily linked to macro or societal designated meanings as they are crafted and created by the individual and designed through

their personal symbolism. The tattoo is part of the individual, and as such is part of their identity it is similar to the idea of the 'extended self,' as described by Belk (1988).

The functions of such symbolic meanings of the tattoo similar to other products and consumption activities operate in two directions: outward, in forming the social world, through social-symbolism and inward in the construction of self-identity and self-symbolism (Auty & Elliott, 1998). Symbolically the tattoo in effect is similar to clothing, in that it represents the tattooee's personality, views, aesthetics, and memories being in all intents and purposes a narrative of the individual inscribed within the epidermis, this is partially defined through the aesthetic and the positioning chosen.

One point of difference between clothing and tattooing is that it can represent anything the tattooee wishes it to; while the tattoo is recognised as a tattoo. The designs used may be recognised in terms of the symbol(s) used, but do not have to be compatible with societal or subcultural interpretations of that specific symbol as it will have personal or deeper meanings, along with the possibility of bricolage between societies/cultures and/or over time. Furthermore, the tattoo is permanent, even when 'removed' it remains as a scar on the tattooee, additionally the sense of self in as linked with unlimited personal consumption is halted or limited by the tattoo, specifically, it is limited by the action of gaining the first tattoo, an issue that will be discussed next.

Postmodern identity and the tattoo: Permanence and free will

Because the body holds several key positions within views of modern identity, the body is central to an individual's creation and representation of identity or embodied self. Thus the tattoo can be seen as central to the creation of the identity, or more accurately the moulding or modifying the body and hence the identity of the individual, the most obvious of which is the movement from an unmodified un-tattooed body to a tattooed and hence a modified body. This identity is created for the tattooee by the act of being tattooed, it cannot be rejected, and at best it can be ignored or hidden by clothing if possible.

The sense of self in contemporary society is connected with the idea of unlimited personal consumption {food, signs, and goods}. In a postmodern world consumption is now the determiner of identity (Falk, 1994), in terms of physical identity, the body can be invested and changed through and with consumption.

...for the self in consumer society, it is the body-image that plays the determining role in the evaluation of the self in the public arena (Schilder 1964). It is the surface of the body, which is the target of advertising and self-promotion, just as it is the body's surfaces, which are the site of stigmatisation. The modern consuming self is a representational being. (Falk, 1994, p. xiii)

The linkage of the grotesque to the projection of internal meanings, feelings, and identity of the tattooee found in the context of the design choices also underlines the “grotesque” nature of the tattooed body as found in Bakhtinian definition: “The grotesque body has no façade, no impenetrable surface, neither has it any expressive features. It represents either the fertile depths or the complexities of procreation and conception” (Bakhtin, 1984, p.339). Yet as stated earlier this permanence limits the ability to reform the identity, this projection of identity. When a tattoo is acquired and after time no longer wanted then the tattooee has to either undertake removal (and thus scarring) or replace it with another design over the top.

Winston Gomez: As you can see, (points to arm) I grew to dislike my crappily done old school tats and got them covered up John, the big jap stuff covers up some real shitty stuff, I got it when I didn't know any better, trouble is cos they were dark I had to get darker stuff over it which sort of narrowed it down a bit what I could get.

Tattooee John: I went into see Dick before I left Medway I had £70 spare and I had the need for another tattoo, I asked him to cover my small Celtic design I had got when I was 17. We went through the usual pleasantries and small talk and I sat down and said to him do what you think looks good, I trusted him to do that, Dick knew what I liked because we had talked over the last 6 months about stuff and I just let him get on with it. I wasn't happy with what I had there already, it had not been placed straight, due to the shape of the previous tattoo it had to be a certain angle, but an hour

later I had an unusual tribal piece based on a Polynesian design which I was a lot happier with.

What can be seen in the previous comments is that the two tattooees had a variety of tattoo designs originating from a diverse background, (Old school, Celtic, Japanese and Polynesian). In these cases the tattooees wanted a change as they were no longer pleased with their tattoos and wanted to replace them, bringing in the idea of regret (Tsiros & Mittal, 2000). However due to their previous tattoos their choices were limited. “I had to get darker stuff over it which sort of narrowed it down a bit what I could get” shows the new tattoo was determined by the aesthetics, while: “due to the shape of the previous tattoo it had to be a certain angle” illustrates the denial of free will through the limitations of action (Hume, 1967), which in this case is the determination of the placement of the cover up. This is also seen in the next narrative:

John: Have you ever regretted your tattoos?

Tattooee Christine Brown: No not these (laughs) I have to say that don't I....seriously I had some really bad tattoos from when I was a teenager, they were all India ink ones, everyone in my group got them.

John: What were they?

Tattooee Christine Brown: They were...like a cross on my arm, some names....well actually they were all over the top of my arm. I got them removed when I grew up, but I had some really horrible scars, they had to scrape away the skin you see. I was really self conscious about them and tried to hide them with clothes, but when I realised I could get something over the scars and that I could get something this pretty (points to tattoo) I did so.

In terms of tattoo removal only one tattoo consumer that was interviewed regretted their tattoos enough to remove them or consider the possibilities for removal. Her comments found above show that the tattoo acquisition even with removal was permanent due to the scarification. In her eyes it was the aesthetics of the poorly executed tattoos which were the main determinants for their removal, while the resultant scars were the main determinant for the replacement tattoos. What can be seen are the limitations on her activities with: “tried to hide

them with clothes”, and: “when I realised I could get something over the scars and that I could get something this pretty (points to tattoo) I did so.”

Free will can be viewed when a person acts, namely when the individual chooses to undertake an action and they were able to do so without being compelled to do so (Hume, 1967). Christine did not have free will as there were limitations on her action, the first constraint was her poor tattoos, and the second constraint was the scars and the self-conscious feelings she had about them which led to limiting her clothing choices. This led onto her third constraint, namely her choice to get more tattoos to improve her bodily aesthetics. This final limitation is seen in her comments “when I realised I could get something over the scars and that I could get something this pretty (points to tattoo) I did so.” This shows that she felt compelled by the scarification to cover it, and her sole option that she had confidence in to improve the aesthetics was to get another tattoo, returning to the idea of the tattoo as a permanent physical investment.

Tattoo and experience

Another concept which is linked to identity creation is that of experience. This type of consumption takes place as a result of stimulated emotions before, during and after the consumption activity. In terms of tattooing this occurs generally through gaining a tattoo, or a special tattoo in terms of design, tattooist or the process itself. This is seen where consumers’ acquire tattoos delivered by traditional methods, rather than through the use of an electric tattoo machine (Lockheart & Hemingson, 2000), thus acquiring a unique experience as well as an ‘uncommon’ tattoo style (Schwarz, 1998):

The tattoo itself was executed by the incomparable Tatu Pier, a hand tattoo artist based largely out of Brighton and also responsible for the last tattoo I acquired, an experience that moved me greatly and spurred me on to work with him again, the first time I have returned to a tattoo artist.

“Closer To God” - My Derek Hess tattoo hand pricked by Tatu Pier

Tattooee John: I got my chest done because not only did I like the design, its placement also made me think about, well if I could take it, physically, I hadn’t done an area like that

before. You know in terms of pain and how it would be healing, because it is one thing having a tattoo on your arm, and your chest. All I can say is that it was like nothing I had experienced up until that point. But, I would do it all again.

For example, the consumers both state that the choices {tattooist, tattooing style, tattoo design, and placement} were taken due to it being a different or even unique experience. It also shows the strong relationship that encompasses the experiential aspect of the tattoo, for example, the hand pricked tattoo illustrates part of a customisation of the tattooing action (Holbrook & Addis, 2001). Overall, the experience is not just the activity undertaken i.e. how the tattooing takes place, or the design, but also the outcome of the tattoo, in terms of pain and physical healing as seen in John's comments. While its aesthetic qualities and the emotions that were engendered through the tattoo acquisition are also thought of as part of the experience.

The tattoo being undertaken as an experience is not new; the earliest correspondence talking about the tattoo in such terms is from a British traveller to Jerusalem in 1697 who stated: "The next morning nothing extraordinary happened, which gave many pilgrims leisure to have their arms marked with the usual ensigns of Jerusalem, Henry Maundrell" (Carswell, 1958, p.11). This shows the tattoo being regarded as 'an experience' linked to visiting Jerusalem. It also shows continuity with other past and modern tattooing, particularly, the consuming of tattoos as a tourist activity in the 19th (Gilbert, 2000; Scutt & Gotch, 1974), and 20th centuries (Cohen, 1973; Lockheart & Hemingson, 2000; Steward, 1999). For example western tattooees and tattooists would visit Japan and other Asian countries to learn the trade, gain designs, and to be tattooed as an experience or a form of 'tourism' (Bradley, 2000; Burchett, 1956; Parry, 1999), not unlike present day globalisation of tattooing.

Thus, these previous commentaries show the tattoo are usually goods and services that are consumed with the explicit aim of gaining an experience (Clarke *et al.*, 1998). By consuming these goods, services, or activities consumers attempt to capture the essence of abstract concepts such as excitement and uniqueness (Price, Arnould & Otnes, 1999). Other examples of this type of

consumption include activities such as white water rafting (Arnould & Price, 1993; Price, Arnould & Otnes, 1999) and skydiving (Celsi, Rose, & Leigh, 1993), although these do not necessarily have to be extreme sports (Neelamegham & Jain, 1999; O'Guinn & Belk, 1989; Pine & Gilmore, 1998). This is related to the actions where consumers can turn the most normal of activities into something special, set apart, sacred, which again returns to the idea of ritual and the sacredness of activities, which are not necessarily linked to religion (Clarke, 1976; Rook, 1984, 1985; Wallendorf & Arnould, 1991). Yet, again the permanence of the tattoo limits further experiences, due to the limitations on areas left to tattoo or the ability to tattoo over previous tattoos.

What can be identified in the previous commentaries is that there is an analogy that tattoo consumption is similar to what is described as 'postmodern' consumption. In the context of this 'postmodern' identity, is the creation or development of identity through consumption where such consumption is deemed liberatory (Firat, Dholakia & Venkatesh, 1995; Firat & Venkatesh, 1995). This issue fits into the idea of the identity being fluid or fractured and potentiality of constant state of change, with the mixture of tattoo designs projecting different identities. The sourcing of tattoo designs from societies and cultures from an assortment of geographical areas and time periods in conjunction with the development of tattoo brands gives the individual an eclectic mix of designs allowing for a sense of play (Firat, Dholakia & Venkatesh, 1995; Firat, & Shultz, 1997; Firat & Venkatesh, 1995) within tattoo consumption. Through the pick and mix of designs, the identity can be moulded through the symbols and messages projected (Firat, & Shultz, 1997). In the context of the 'postmodern' identity, these issues fit into the idea of the constant state of change, with the mixture of tattoo designs projecting different identities. Furthermore, through the interaction of individual and group identities (Elliott, 1997; Featherstone, 1991; Firat & Shultz, 1997), it creates the idea of identity being fluid (Firat, Dholakia & Venkatesh, 1995; Firat, & Shultz, 1997; Firat & Venkatesh, 1995). Another aspect which fits into the parameters of postmodern consumption is the use of new media, in particular the internet, around which tattoo consumers interact, linking the tattoo to views of hyper-reality and simulation (Baudrillard, 1983, 1998; Firat & Shultz, 1997; Lyotard, 1993).

Thus, if taken solely as an investment in the body to define the individual's identity, then the process and experience of being tattooed does fit with the view that postmodern identities which are structured and can be created around the experience of consumption (Baudrillard, 1998; Belk, 1988; Cova, 1997; Featherstone, 1991). However, the very physicality of the tattoo places the tattoo at difference with these postmodern views of the symbolic tattoo, as its meaning is not malleable or changeable it is frozen through its permanence. While tattoo mimicry can occur, this cannot be entirely simulated due to the lack of permanence of the mimicry, the tattoos physicality cannot be simulated the actuality is that tattoo mimicry is actually another form of body modification as permanence is part of the definition of a tattoo. While it is also permeable and is a surface creation, i.e. symbolic of internal feelings and expressions it is also an impossibility, as it is not a natural construction but has to be created through human intervention (i.e. a modified body). In this respect the tattooed body is more in line with Bakhtin's Grotesque body, in that it exists in two extremes at the same time, a dual meaning of positivity and negativity. The dualism of acceptability is not generated within the system of signs/symbols of the tattoo; this is the aspect to be addressed within the next section.

4.6 MASS MEDIATED MARKET IDEOLOGIES AND CONSUMERS INTERPRETATIVE STRATEGIES: PERMANENT MESSAGES

Mass mediated market ideologies and consumers interpretative strategies examines how consumers' ideologies (i.e. systems) of meaning occur and how they direct and replicate consumers' feelings and activities so that they guard and protect the ruling or prevailing interests within society (Hirschman, 1993). In such terms the ideologies which purvey meaning within the society are formed by, and occur through, interaction with tattoos by tattooees and non tattooed individuals and in turn have resultant effects on tattoo consumption. This includes the representations of tattoos within the media that portray well-known aspects of tattooing so reinforcing abstract concepts linked with the ownership of a tattoo. In fact this range of messages linked to the tattoo seen in the media and

also within general society can be placed into a clearly set dichotomy, which in itself is a permanent aspect of tattoos and their acquisition.

Recent activities relating to tattooing have created an assumed view, portrayed in the media and society in general, that the tattoo is an acceptable item. This is taken as a given due to the perceived 'relaxed usage' of tattooing as a symbol within the media, and what has been described as the gentrification of tattooing (De Mello, 2000; Halnon & Cohen, 2006; Sanders, 1989). Thanks to the tattoos uptake by celebrities and the increased use by people in general, there has been an acceptance of the tattoo into what has it has been described by some commentators as being a 'mandatory' fashion accessory (Craik, 1994; Turner, 1999a). This has occurred in what can be described as the 'MTV factor' in disseminating tattoos and related products. As such it further reinforces the linkage between tattoo consumption, music genres, and what can be expressed as alternative lifestyles (Camphausen, 2000; Mercury, 2000):

Tattoos become fashion now, it's become trendy. But because of all the attention its getting, you know MTV, the media, its like anything else where kids see something on TV, whether it's a tattoo or a pair of shoes or something, they treat it as it's the same thing. It's a fashion statement.

Hal., M. tattooist

(De Mello, 2000, p.191)

However this is a shallow and inaccurate representation of the actual situation. In terms of the tattoos use within the media, and thus projected to members of society, there is a duality of acceptance and equal repulsion which has existed since the creation of tattooing, and as such a permanent attribute of the tattoo's existence. Furthermore this dual existence can be identified and illustrated in present day tattoo usage and throughout differing societies and time periods.

This long term duality within the media can be seen in comparing both present and past accounts of tattooing, for example an article in the Times supplement entitled: *What do Tattoos say about Britain* by Dr Theodore Dalrymple threw light upon this negative view of tattooing. His article delights in attacks on body modification, namely tattooing and body piercing. In his article he repeatedly uses denigrating language and shocking pictures referring to body modification,

stating that it is a low brow pastime in which the lower classes participate. This idea is reaffirmed by the subtitle of the article *we are all proles now*.

He attacks the aesthetics, questions the meanings pertaining to tattoos, and literally places it as a heretical action (all with an equal level of inaccuracy). He states that the vast majority of professional tattoo “art” strongly resembles prison art: being violent, limited in its themes, crude in its iconography and often having strong pagan undertones. The diatribe continues:

Whereas tattooing used to be both male and proletarian it is no longer so. In ever larger numbers, young middle-class adults, both men and women, are adorning themselves with this savage form of bodily decoration. No doubt they are encouraged by the numerous young celebrities who have tattoos: Robbie Williams, most of the Spice Girls, David Beckham, even Tim Henman. When the fashion began, the middle classes might venture a tiny butterfly or flower tattooed on an inconspicuous and easily covered part of their anatomy. Now they have become more emboldened. By tattooing themselves, the middle classes are in fact displaying that insatiable thirst for downward cultural mobility that seems to characterise modern Britain. It isn't social climbing that we do now, its social descending.
(Dalrymple, 2000, p.28)

What can be seen is that the negativity is linked to class, linking the tattoo with “downward mobility,” the copying of celebrities, and also indirectly with the idea of permanence and the inability for change or removal in the comment: “venture a tiny butterfly or flower tattooed on an inconspicuous and easily covered part of their anatomy.” This inability to change appearances or cover up their tattoos (and thus being frozen in one identity) is the crux of his attack.

However, this denigration of tattooing is in direct opposition to an article, which appeared in the same newspaper a month before. Entitled *Make this the week that...you get a tattoo*, this article lauded the fashionability of a tattoo stating:

Yes, those unsightly blemishes once associated with Hell's Angels and Geordie football fans are now the last word in celebrity cool. If you don't secretly have a dragon on your buttock, a python on your inner thigh or at least a swallow on your nipple then consider yourself unworthy to appear in

Hello! magazine. It's not vandalism, its skin art
(Midgley, 2000, p.2)

This commentary observes the social changing of tattooing from being used by a select subcultural background to more general usage, also linking it with its aesthetic appeal. This continues with pictorial examples of Mel C of the spice girls while commentating on other tattooed celebrities:

Anyone with a pop record, film or gym sculptured body to flaunt. Think Eric Cantona, Sporty Spice, Vinnie Jones, Davina McCall, Robbie Williams.....Sporty has "Angel" inscribed across her stomach. Cantona has a Mohican chieftain on his chest. David Beckham meanwhile, who has already had his son's name, Brooklyn, tattooed on his back and a guardian angel between his shoulders is about to have the Latin words Et Animus Liber, meaning "Free Spirit"...
(Midgley, 2000, p.2)

This duality of body modification and in particular tattoos is nothing strange. Indeed it parallels exactly the situation at the turn of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth when tattoos were all the rage among fashionable society (Stephen, 1898), while at the same time denigrated as a 'savage art' by some commentators, as seen below:

I have been told that the fashion of tattooing the arm exists among women of prominence in London Society. The taste for this style is not a good indication of the refinement and delicacy of the English ladies; First, it indicates an inferior sensitiveness, for one has to be obtuse to pain to submit to this wholly savage operation without any other object than the gratification of vanity; and it is contrary to progress, for all the exaggerations of dress are atavistic.
(Lombroso, 1896, p.793)

Lombroso's comment about tattooing being a 'savage operation' it being a 'gratification of vanity' and it being 'atavistic' are moral judgement on the activity which is similar to the denigration from Theodore Dalrymple who describes it as a 'savage form of bodily decoration'. It is notable that he uses female tattooing as his example to attack tattooing, an issue which will be discussed in the next subsection. Other commonalities with the comments are

also seen in the following excerpt from another 19th century newspaper:

THE NEW-YORK TIMES Mr. McAllister laughed.

"Well," he said, "I had not heard of this, but I doubt not that it may all be true. Perhaps you may not know that for years it has been customary among fashionable society men in England to have themselves tattooed. It is certainly the most vulgar and barbarous habit the eccentric mind of fashion ever invented. It is considered, I believe, that a profuse growth of hair all over a person is a token of a low and unrefined nature, but the habit of adorning a body like the savage of the South Sea Islands with figures of various designs is a relic of barbarism. It may do for an illiterate seaman, but hardly for an aristocrat.

"Society men in England were the victims of circumstances when the Prince of Wales had his body tattooed by the 'tattooer to His Royal Highness.' Like a flock of sheep driven by their master, they had to follow suit. The operation was a very painful and expensive one, but it had to be

Fig:74 Victorian newspaper article on tattooing

(New York Times, 1893, p.9)

Notice that in this Victorian article there are comments about the savage, vulgar, barbaric nature of the tattoo **and** the fashionability through use of the tattoo by celebrities "which is described as being analogous to a 'flock of sheep'" exhibit similarities with Dalrymple's comments. Commonalities between present and past positive comments can be seen in the following excerpt from another Victorian article:

Lady Randolph Churchill, with many others of royal and distinguished rank, have submitted themselves to the tickling, but painless and albeit pleasant, sensation afforded by the improved tattooing needle, which is nowadays worked on a simple plan, aided by the galvanic current, the genius of the artist supplying the rest of the operation.....to have her forearm or shoulder adorned with perhaps such a mark as this – a serpent holding its tail in its mouth – a symbol representing eternity.

(Stephen, 1898, pp.473-474)

Notice the parallels with the positive statements, linkage to celebrities and the discussion of designs as also found in the previous Midgley article. This position

of the tattoo being placed in a situation of equal attraction and repugnance originates from the classical period. It is derived from the development of meaning of the word 'stigma' over time. Originally it occurred as an ancient definition for a tattoo in Graeco-Roman society. The modern meaning of the word as a religious expression and as a negative aspect of an individual exists from when it gained Christian associations (Gusthafson, 2000; Jones, 2000). This came about by the use of tattooing to identify the first Christians which created opposing connotations and associations. Christians began tattooing (specifically to imitate the wounds of Christ) to distance themselves from their Jewish origins (Gusthafson, 2000; Jones, 2000), as the Jewish religion proscribed it. The classical dualism of the tattoo was reinforced, when the pagan Roman emperors used it as one of the forms of punishment meted out to the Christians (Gusthafson, 2000). As commented on earlier Classical societies viewed tattooing as negative and 'barbaric' and it was used to mark out groups perceived outside of (or negative to) society. While to the early Christians tattooing was a mark of pride and positivism due to it being a sign of Christianity, as well as a marker of group identity (Gustafson, 2000).

Later Christian views on tattooing continued this dualistic view of equal positivity and negativity, as seen in a report by papal legates in AD 786 to Pope Hadrian, which mentions both demonic diabolical (evil and to be discouraged) and Christian tattoos (righteous and to be encouraged):

For god made man fair in beauty and outward appearance, but the pagans by devilish prompting have superimposed most hideous cicatrices, as prudentius says 'He coloured the innocent earth with dirty spots.' For he clearly does injury to the lord who defiles and disfigures his creature. Certainly, if anyone were to undergo this injury of staining for the sake of God, he would receive great reward for it. But if anyone does it from the superstition of pagans it will not contribute to his salvation any more than does circumcision of the body to the Jew without belief of the heart.
(MacQuarrie, 2000, p.36)

The duality of the tattoo continued in such general terms in Europe up until the early Middle Ages, with it being used equally as a negative punishment and a positive religious activity. In terms of general use tattooing died out due to the

addition of feudalism and ethnic differences {e.g. introduction of Normans among other groups} into the societal equation of Europe (Hardy, 1988). Although it continued as a religious practice in Italian, Spanish and Levantine pilgrimage places and by Christian groups as an identifying mark in the Balkans and Levant (Burchett, 1956; Caplan, 2000).

This duality had returned through the increased interaction with tattooed peoples from the 15th century onwards. Its savage nature of negativity was an aspect of the description of tattooing used by its detractors during every wave of popularisation of tattooing in the west, even up to the present day (BBC, 2004; Caplan, 1997; Hunt & Phelan, 1998; Post, 1968). While its positive aspect as the 'noble savage' has developed into the aspect of exoticism (Caplan, 2000). This can be seen in present day interaction of the media with celebrities where a celebrity can be feted for gaining a tattoo and held up to being a fashion icon (Penny, 2000) and at the same time attacked for tattoo usage (BBC, 2000a, 2000b, 2004). For example, David Beckham was feted in his tattoo consumption until he started to gain permanently fully observable tattoos on his lower arm (observable due to his football strip) (BBC, 2000a; Penny, 2000) and on his neck (BBC, 2004), the latter led him to being described as a yob by British newspapers (Daily Express, 2004; Samson, 2004).

This development of a dualistic view of the tattoo can also be seen in the history of the Japanese tattoo, which was first feted in the Edo period and then rejected and criminalised in the Meiji period (Burchett, 1956; Buruma & Buruma, 1980). It was seen as a form of savagery and backwardness when Japan was opened up to westerners in the 19th century, ironically at the point where the tattoo was acceptable in western societies (Burchett, 1956; Hambly, 1925). At present, the Japanese tattoo was legalized by the occupation forces in 1945, but at present has an image of extreme criminality due to its association with the Yakuza {the Japanese mafia}, and exposure of a tattoo is banned in many areas (public baths, gyms, etc.), yet there is a thriving underground tattoo community along with a semi-official collection of tattooed skins at Tokyo's medical university (Buruma & Buruma, 1980). The expressions of the dualistic message of the tattoo will be discussed further in the next section.

4.7 THE SOCIO-HISTORIC NATURE OF THE TATTOO: PERMANENT DUALISM

In terms of CCT the socio-historic nature of the tattoo is found in: “the institutional and social structures that systematically influence consumption, such as class, community, ethnicity, and gender” (Arnould & Thompson, 2005, p.874). This is linked to the idea of duality as the positive/negative message of the tattoo as espoused in section 4.6. The dualistic meaning of the tattoo is important as it shows the tattoo as being a grotesque activity i.e. existing in two states at the same time. This duality of equal acceptability/rejection that society creates and espouses can be identified through the filters of class, ethnicity, gender and sexuality, which will be dealt with in turn.

Positive and negative attributes of the tattoo in the context of class

The tattoo in terms of class has generally existed in a dualism, of being a symbol of positivity and negativity from ancient times. Class and ethnicity are situated together as their positivity originates from exoticism and negativity through the attribute of savagery. These aspects can be seen in the comments about class and identity by the Greek moralist Dio Chrysostom:

In Thrace free women are full of tattoos, and the higher the rank the more they have. It follows that a queen may be tattooed, and therefore a king too.....just as owners put brands on their cattle so as to be able to recognize them
(Jones, 2000, p. 14)

Notice the linkage between the tattoo as an identifier of high class associations within a primitive (non classical) society. In comparison the Roman view acknowledged the tattoo as a low class identifier, even when worn by high level individuals:

....some from the lowley commoners are generals; some magistrates – though their calves and ankles are still marked, black and blue from the iron fetters, and though their tattooed faces {facies...inscripta} are inconsistent with their office and betray them by their inscription {suo....titulo}
(Gusthaffson, 2000, p. 19)

So in a similar time period one group thought of the tattoo as a positive symbol of class, others thought of it as a negative symbol due to its use by lower classes. This dichotomy is seen in later Victorian comments in relation to the tattoo being a dualistic activity of positivity and negativity through class. For example, Lombroso viewed the tattoo's use by the working class as an indicator of negativity; note the linkage to primitive peoples being a negative aspect:

Those classes who, like the ocean floor, maintain the same temperature, repeat the customs, the superstitions and even the songs of primitive people, and who share with them the same violent passion, the same dullness of sense, the same childish vanity, the long periods of idleness, and in the case of prostitutes the nakedness that among savages are the principal incentives to this strange usage.
(Lombroso, 2006, p.62)

In terms of upper class usage this too was commented on as being both positive and negative, for example, Ward McAlister complained that: "society men in England were.....like a flock of sheep" (New York Times, 1892, p.9) when discussing tattooing's fashionability. This commentary, whilst an attack on tattooing also shows the dualist view of attraction/rejection, commenting on both its fashionability and frequency and its abhorrent nature in the upper classes at the same time. This duality of high/low class acceptability and usage can be seen in the next excerpts from Brooklyn's article on tattooing. Firstly, it can be seen in Brooklyn's narrative that the highest level of society is advocating the use of the tattoo in all levels and secondly in the pictures following that the tattoo's use was seen as fashionable (i.e. a positive action) in all levels of society.

tattooing of soldiers, it is worth recording that no less a person than Lord Roberts strongly advocates the tattooing of every man in the army with his name and regimental number as a means of identification in case of his death or the loss of his identity card. Much of Mr. Riley's work was done on the battlefield after

Fig:75 Excerpt from Edwardian article on tattooing

Tattooing advocated as an activity for all classes (within the army)

(Brooklyn, 1903, p.111)

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Picture removed due to copyright

Fig:76 A Victorian working class tattooee

(Brooklyn, 1903, p.107)

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Picture removed due to copyright

Fig:77 A famous tattooed Victorian socialite

(Brooklyn, 1903, p.111)

Thus the tattoo exists in a dualism of positivity and negativity in relation to class. Yet Veblen in his work on Victorian conspicuous consumption did not speak of tattoos (Veblen, 1899). Was tattooing too inconspicuous, or was this due to its 'objectionable' qualities as found in the tattoo's dualistic positive/negative social positioning? Perhaps because it was used by the working class and the upper and middle classes simultaneously and thus did not fit his theory in terms of class that he refrained from commenting on it?

This class orientated dualism changed into terms of an absolute rejection of tattooing by 'polite society' in the 1950's as the descendants of those tattooed aristocrats and middle class socialites from the period 1880-1920 now perceived it negatively as a past-time of the lower, less salubrious classes rather than a beautifier or a fashion accessory. This however was a break with tradition and the positive/negative duality returned by the late 1960's. In addition, in the 1950's the working classes alongside various existing working/lower class groups/subcultures (the military, sexual minorities, criminals, etc.) had continued to undertake tattooing, albeit at a lower level than before, while new groups such as bikers, mods, rockers and later hippies took it up as part of their cultures.

Modern versions of this duality can be seen in the comments of Theodore Dalrymple that was given at the beginning of section 4.6. His comments identify tattooing as a working class activity and its adoption by other classes as a negative attribute: "...whereas tattooing used to be both male and proletarian it is no

longer so. In ever larger numbers, young middle-class adults...the middle classes are in fact displaying that insatiable thirst for downward cultural mobility that seems to characterise modern Britain. It isn't social climbing that we do now, it's social descending" (Dalrymple, 2000, p.28).

The earlier comments by Lombroso on the tattoo being a savage activity the tattoo being the identifier of the other or ethnic/savageness is one part of a dualism which exists in terms of ethnicity and racial identification which is the next subsection.

Positivity and negativity of the tattoo in the context of ethnicity

Society's dual view of positivity and negativity of the tattoo was partially created through its use by tribal or savage peoples and developed throughout the initial development of western society. As early as the first part of the classical period Greek culture had encountered various peoples who used tattooing as an integral part of their culture included the Scythians (Herodotus, 1996; Rolle, 1989), the Egyptians (Illes, 2000), the Persians (Herodotus, 1996) and the Thebans (Herodotus, 1996). These groups viewed tattooing as a badge of high society (Gilbert, 2000; Hambly, 1925) and membership of 'civilisation' (Rubin, 1995). This saw the creation of a dualistic view of the tattoo, as the Greeks believed that the tattoo was undertaken by savages (i.e. barbarians) and due to this, the tattoo would be an ideal punishment, as seen in the following comment: "I will Tattoo you with pictures of the terrible punishments suffered by the most notorious sinners in Hades! I will Tattoo you with the white tusked boar" (Jones, 1984, p.54).

However, this savage negative notion was accompanied by the view of the tattoo as exotic, and thus was attractive to those who wished to challenge the social mores, and also undertaken by those who had been exposed to other cultures, such as the Greek Ptolemaic Pharaohs of Egypt (Hambly, 1925). Overall, in the Classical world of Greece and later Rome, tattooing was primarily viewed as an item of self-decoration undertaken by barbarian peoples, either for aesthetic purposes or for religious reasons. Greeks and Romans however, considered it inappropriate for themselves and was a way to define the 'other' (Gusthafson,

2000; Jones, 2000). Yet, it was this definition that gave the tattoo an attraction to the civilised.

The dual acceptability of the tattoo which existed in Britain due to the influences of classical culture and Christianity was changed by the Norman invasion of England in 1066. Norman bodily practices were now forced on the indigenous population rather than a continuation of prior practices (Hambly, 1925; Hardy, 1988). This is seen in William of Malmesbury, writing about the “savage” pre-Normans in his twelfth century *Chronicles of the Kings of England*, which does not provide for any acceptable tattooing as his is a blanket ethnic based condemnation:

In general the English at that time wore short garments reaching to the mid knee; they had their hair cropped; their beards shaved; their arms laden with golden bracelets; their skin marked with punctured designs {picturatis stigmatibus cutem insigniti}; they were accustomed to eat excessively, and to drink until they vomited. These habits they imparted to their conquerors, as to the rest they adopted their manners. (MacQuarrie, 2000, p.37)

This blanket condemnation of a population was viewed within the context of identifying ‘others’. It was a condemnation of an activity undertaken by a different people and thus taken as an identifying mark of that ethnic group which was to be suppressed, a situation that was paralleled throughout a greater part of Europe by this time. When tattooing was later associated with ‘primitive’ peoples from the outset of the imperial expansion of western nations from the 15th century onwards (Einhorn & Abler, 1998; Gilbert, 2000; Lockheart & Hemingson, 2000), a duality had returned with a positive concept of the ‘noble savage’ (and thus exoticism). This positive aspect was also transferred to ancient peoples and societies linked to present societies i.e. the English Elizabethan vision of their exotic ‘painted’ ancestors saw this as an aspect of civilisation and contextual linkages with the newly discovered ‘civilised savages’ of the Americas at this time. As a practice tattooing was the main characteristic apart from skin colour that set the ‘noble savage’ apart from the white western observers, thus again imbuing the tattoo with the nature of ‘other’ (Gilbert, 2000; Goldstein & Sewell, 1979).

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Picture removed due to copyright

Fig:78 Elizabethan reconstruction of a Pict

This picture was created when tattooing was considered a symbol of civilisation and the ‘noble savage’ (Caplan, 2000).

However, this initial positive inquisitive interest in the ‘noble savage’ soon degenerated into the belief that the ‘savage’ part of the description was stronger than the ‘noble’ aspect (Hambly, 1925; Lockheart & Hemingson, 2000). Indeed once this view changed participation in the activity of tattooing was considered an element of an interpretation of being a savage rather than civilised individual (Lombroso, 1896), and that tattooing was an activity to be repressed and their users civilised in both at home and abroad.

This positive exotic view of the tattoo however has not dissipated and continues to this day, with such narratives of exoticism promulgated by its association with foreign or tribal usage around the world. This has been taken to such a degree that the false assertion that the tattoo is solely a Polynesian import is taken as a given fact and disseminated by some academics (Caplan, 2000a; De Mello, 2000). This relates to Hobsbawm’s (1983) invention of tradition, accurate or false this association is also a pull factor for modern tattoo consumers, as seen in

the following narrative:

My first passport to the wide, wonderful world of body art came in the form of a huge stack of back issues of National Geographic magazine. I immediately dove deeply into that yellow bordered stack and didn't surface again for a long, long time....I was enraptured with the uninhibited way that the people pictured chose to decorate their bodies.....the tattooed Yakuza of Japan, and the exotic kohl rimmed eyes and painted hands and feet of the women of India....later I even considered having them replicated on my own hands as tattoos.

(Delio, 2008)

This exoticism or mark of the 'other', however, is also still perceived within a negative attribute as seen in the comments of Giles Coren:

then there's a flicker of sun and in parks all over the country the unwashed hordes strip to their nuts to reveal meaningless symbols and foreign alphabets carved all over their skin.....Swimming at the Hampstead lido the other day, I felt like Captain Cook landing for the first time in Polynesia.....I swear, so ubiquitous have tattoos become, so much the uniform of every naked Briton

(Coren, 2009)

This exoticism imbued within the tattoo is seen in the context of being un-British, while tattooing is a popular activity, it should not occur here. The negativity is emphasised with the derogatory class related comment of "unwashed hordes" and "meaningless foreign alphabets" which are further associations of the tattoo with the 'other'. The contextual identification in relation to nakedness leads on to the next subjects, gender and sexuality.

Negativity of the tattoo in the context of gender and sexuality

Within the duality of positivity and negativity that society creates and espouses surrounding tattoos can be identified through the filters of gender and sexuality.

As described earlier beauty is an abstract concept and per se is an ideal. It occurs in both male and female terms and contexts. As such this abstract concept of beauty is projected onto men and women (the majority onto women) through a filter (Bergson, & Senn, 1998; Chapkis, 1987), which creates an image that must be adhered to and striven to attain (Gunter & Wykes, 2004). One aspect of this in relation to tattoos and tattooing is that in the context of western cultures the tattoo is considered a male activity (Camphausen, 2000; Gilbert, 2000; Mercury, 2000), which when attributed to or undertaken by women creates opposition between the socially constructed views and the actuality (Armstrong, 1991; Hardin, 1999; Mifflin, 1997), which in turn creates the female wearing the tattoo a gender transgressor. This is one reason why women with tattoos even to this day are considered less acceptable to social mores, and/or an item to be derided. For example the negative connotations of the use of tattoos by women can be seen in the media view as given in The Sun newspaper:

A CHAV Barbie with TATTOOS has gone on sale to mark the doll's 50th birthday. Blonde Totally Stylin' Barbie and her brunette pal Nikki come with 40 tattoo stickers plus temporary "tattoos" for their little owners. The idea is that girls can make Barbie look like their heroines — such as Jordan, Amy Winehouse or Cheryl Cole. The doll is being sold in the US for £13.50. But parents have accused the makers Mattel of dumbing down. One parent said: "Whatever will they bring out next? Drug addict Barbie? Alcoholic Barbie?" Tattoos are common and if it leads girls to get one, they might regret it for the rest of their lives.
(The Sun, 2009)

The derogatory comments are similar to those from the beginning of the section in that they are class orientated (calling Barbie a Chav which is a derogatory description of a [non]working class subculture), linking the tattoo with permanence and regret, and linking its usage to both celebrities and socially unacceptable groups and their activities (drug addicts alcoholics etc.).

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Picture removed due to copyright

Fig:79 Tattoo Barbie (The Sun, 2009)

Yet the derogatory comments of this article are in clear contrast with the comments in the same newspaper about female tattooing. Bella Battle in the article 'Celeb tattoo parlour' imbues the tattoo with beauty and sexuality stating: "Out of Playboy's 25 Sexiest Celebrities last year, 14 of the listed babes had tattoos." She then comments positively on visible tattoos: "Just last week, party girl Lindsay Lohan headed out at 3am to get her fourth tattoo, a small heart between her left thumb and forefinger." Continuing her review in terms of large amount of tattooing in relation to female tattooing using Angela Jolie as an example: "The undisputed queen of celeb body art, Ange has barely any un-inked skin left...Proud owner of over a dozen tats, the actress has a tiger across her back, the words? know your rights' near her neck...and the Latin for 'what nourishes me also destroys me' across her stomach" (Battle, 2007). These two articles shows the tattoo's position is one of direct positivity and negativity.

In a historical context of the question of gender and acceptability is found surrounding one of the earliest examples of tattooing extant. A tattooed Egyptian mummy of Amunet, a priestess at Thebes, and hence from high level of society was found during the 1920's (Bianchi, 1995; Gilbert, 2000). The tattoo designs found on her consisted of several lines and dots. This included an elliptical pattern below her navel. This according to Egyptian scholar Bianchi (1995, pp.22-23) has: "undeniable carnal overtones". These tattoos were a sign of sexual maturity and ensure fertility. Initially they were thought to be a magico-medical charm against contracting venereal disease. This was alleged because of the assumption that the mummies discovered were those of prostitutes, yet as a

priestess she was actually of a high caste (Bianchi, 1995).



Picture removed due to copyright

Fig:80 Amunet's tattoos (Green, 2007)

This preconception continued after the discovery of the priestly status of the mummy, as this was an automatic association of tattooed women with prostitution (Illes, 2000) the prevailing view at the time {1920's} yet this definition of the mummy continued up until the 1970's.

Tattooing and sexuality

The reasoning linked to gender specific negativity relates to the tattoo's association with sexuality as touched upon in the previous section. Historically, from even prior to the Victorian period various sexual minorities i.e. homosexuals, lesbians and sex-workers and related subcultures have been associated with the use of tattooing, which reinforced society's negative views. Gender and class splits defined the female use of tattooing, succinctly described by Steward in his writing of 1950's tattooing as "nice girls don't get tattooed" (Steward, 1990, p.128). These negative viewpoints were influenced by the writings of individuals such as Lombroso (1896) and later Parry (1999) and Steward, (1990). Their idea of savage nature of the tattoo as primarily promoted by Lombroso and discussed earlier was paralleled alongside negative sexual overtones and came from personal viewpoints rather than effective research. For example, Lombroso's natural antipathy to the tattoo came from his Jewish religious cultural prohibition of tattooing (Arjunan, 2000). Furthermore his research was not undertaken in the general population and was limited to researching imprisoned criminals, prostitutes, and soldiers (Lombroso, 1896,

2006) thus skewing his results. His results however, 'proved' the tattoo to be an automatic signifier of criminality and abnormal social and sexual activities, a view held within criminology until recently (Fleming, 2000). Furthermore some social scientists are still today disseminating this 'automatic' relationship between the tattoo and criminality as a fact (Henderson, 2001) even though Lacassagne's (1881) research on tattooing undertaken in the same era as Lombroso's work suggested a totally different result, namely that the tattoo is a signifier of identity rather than criminality.

Parry and Steward theorised that tattooing had a predominantly sexual basis. Both compared the act to having sex, with an active inserter and a passive receiver, and explored the (homo)erotic potential and sadomasochistic overtones of pleasure involved in the pain. Parry stating: "tattooing is essentially sexual. There are the long, sharp needles. There is the liquid poured into the pricked skin. There are two participants of the act, one active, the other passive. There is the curious marriage of pleasure and pain" (Parry, 1999, p.2). This accusation of passivity ignores any interaction the tattooee has in the process, while Parry's specific views on women being tattooed was even stronger stating that only abnormal women undertook tattooing. He stated:

...prostitutes in America, as elsewhere, get tattooed because of certain strong masochist exhibitionistic drives. Feeling sorry for their sorry fate, they seek to give themselves more cause for self pity by undergoing tattooing...not infrequently prostitutes undergo tattooing on the most sensitive parts of the body, where the pain of the operation is excruciating.

(Parry, 1999, pp.24-25)

Steward went further and commented on the fact that tattooing was primarily a homoerotic act and was due to latent homosexual tendencies, ignoring aesthetic, cultural, or social influences, while links to identity either individual or group based were downplayed. In general, both Parry's and Steward's work were similar to that of Lombroso's due to limitations of the populations in which they undertook their research. While the linkage to sexuality is identifiable it is not a general or mandatory aspect of tattooing, it would be wrong to view tattooing

solely as a sexual activity.

Parry, as discussed earlier was the first Freudian psychoanalyst to research tattooing and he considered the narcissistic imperative of the tattoo as working alongside, and its use in this manner was due to sexually negative attributes. The aspect of narcissism in tattooing is the positioning of the tattoo, in that it determines whether the tattoo is visible to others or has the ability to be shown off by its owner as seen in comment below:

...chose a star outline with a bass clef inside to match up with my first idea. It just seemed natural to have them on my wrists. They were my designs, so I wanted to see them after all!

Wrist Tattoos!

This is the projection of the tattoo into the public sphere as a deliberate act showing a narcissistic activity. As seen in the comment: “It just seemed natural to have them on my wrists...so I wanted to see them after all!” In particular the narcissistic aspect was considered a main characteristic of the negative features of the tattoo along with pain and permanence. In terms of human psychology, narcissism was defined by Freud (1957) after the figure of Narcissus in Greek mythology. Narcissus was a handsome Greek youth who rejected the amorous advances of the nymph Echo. In doing so he was punished, by being doomed to fall in love with his own reflection in a pool of water, as a result Narcissus pined away being transformed into the flower that bears his name, the narcissus. Freud believed that narcissism was the basis of the persistent pursuit of personal gratification. It shows an attempt to gain attention, undertaken in the pursuit of attaining social control and driving personal ambition.



Fig:81 Altered clothing to exhibit the tattoo - at Gillingham convention

Note this deliberate showing off of the tattoo brings in the idea of narcissism.

It is also perceived to emphasise the belief of self-importance and insensitivity to others, and is portrayed as a lack of empathy with others. Such pathological narcissism is at the core of the narcissistic personality disorder. Jung (Jacoby, 1991; Jung, 1990) and later Lacan (1992), however, saw that narcissism is not necessarily a negative activity or psychological concept. The situation was more complex than Freud stated, with both introvert and extrovert tendencies existing within narcissism (Lacan, 1977). Narcissism was merely one version of a set of coping mechanisms that the individual has to deal with their interaction with the outside world that *could* lead to a negative outcome.

The concept of narcissism influenced Parry's work, and both helped reinforce similar negative, value-laden views of the acceptability of tattoos generally within western society (Armstrong, 1991; De Mello, 2000; Hawkes, Senn, & Thorn, 2004), and specifically for women (Mifflin, 1997; Sanders, 1991). Yet, the incompatibilities of tattoo consumption with Freud's views on narcissism are set specifically within Freud's view that women are less narcissistic than men are. Data acquired in undertaking this thesis show that more women than men are acquiring tattoos. Of the 385 UK consumption narratives available online, 125 were male to 259 female (1 not specified), while of the 20 tattoo parlour

consumers only 7 were male. This negativity against female tattooing is deeply set and while diminishing is still extant within society (Goulding & Follett, 2002a, 2003). However, there is still the view that tattooing is an activity for males, and is linked to the idea that the tattoo is representational of sexual immorality and sexual deviance especially when placed on a woman (Armstrong, 1991; Atkinson, 2002; Mifflin, 1997). As seen in the following statement made by a thirty year old woman:

I'm really proud of it and show it off as much as possible although I have to wear my hair up to show it off properly as my hair is really long. The only people who haven't seen it are my parents. I always make sure it is covered when I go to their house. Even though I'm thirty now they would still freak if they saw it.

My first tattoo

This shows that while women are driving the tattoo renaissance the predisposition for hidden placement is still more in the realm of the female tattooee. Sanders (1988, p.414) claimed: "since tattoos on women are especially stigmatizing, placement on private parts of the body allows women to retain unsullied identities when in contact with casual associates or strangers." While Atkinson (2002) showed through his research that tattooed women, specifically young women, are well aware of this stigma of visibility, and take it into account when they are choosing their tattoo placement. This also underlines Foucault's (1979) idea of society's panoptical viewing individuals of (specifically womens') bodily activities. What is also interesting is that the negativity surrounding tattoo is linked to her purely having a tattoo, not her age, or her showing it off (i.e. narcissism).

The perceived civilised and savage image of the tattoo is seen in the context of class, ethnicity, gender and sexuality. This exists in relation to the tattoo's positive/negative dualism and can be seen as a reification or physical representation of the difference between the theories of Rousseau (1762a, 1762b) and Hobbes (1651), which related to whether human beings were naturally 'good' or 'evil'. It is also the physical representation of the romantic movement's idealisation of the exotic, the enlightenment's view of the world, and

rationalism's analysis of individuals, in relation to the notion of the 'noble savage,' which is both an imaginary figure and a pull factor for tattoo use. While its negative aspects of the tattoo being a symbol of the innate evil of humanity as viewed through Lombroso's (1896, 2006) theories of atavism and primitivism with the tattoo being a natural identifier or proof of inherent human evil. The tattoos linkages to immoral sexual urges, criminality, psychological dysfunction, negative views of the female gender and thus being a representation of 'savage primitivism' were disseminated and given credence through the works of academics such as Lombroso, Steward, and Parry. These opinions have been recycled and used within media depiction of tattoos and are also found in individual's views of the tattoo even to this day, and thus affects tattoo consumption. This will be investigated in the next sections.

4.8 PHYSICAL PERMANENCE AND THE TATTOO

Consumer interaction with duality and physical permanence of the tattoo

While the tattoo in itself has a duality of positive and negative, the consumer in relation to these social-cultural ideas undertakes tattooing in negotiation between these two extremes. This occurs in two ways. Firstly, the negotiation of permanence in relation to dabblers using false tattoos or tattoo type products to mimic the tattoo, with such mimicking undertaken by those who are either not willing or able to commit to the permanence of tattooing. This leads on to the second negotiation which occurs in relation to the placement of, and thus commitment to, the tattoo.

As the cultural capital which the consumer imbues him or herself with in gaining a tattoo is a permanent capital, namely that the tattoo is with the individual till the day they die, and has the potential to even outlast the life of its wearer. This permanence is vital to the very existence of the tattoo as without this permanence the tattoo is not the tattoo and subsequently would not have the cultural, emotional, or moral signifiers and meanings which are attributed to it in our and other societies. The permanence is a physical permanence which is apparent to some customers and they discuss this within their comments on their choice(s). It

is identifiable also in the comments of tattooists in describing their work and in consumers discussing the consumption of tattoos with tester pieces of removable tattoos or tattoo like products before engaging in the full blown permanence of a real tattoo. As tattooing is by definition an invasive, permanent modification (Camphausen, 2000; Millner & Eichold, 2001) this permanent acquisition and physical investment is very important. The narrative below shows that permanence, in particular the permanent physical aesthetic, is identified as an investment, and results in aesthetic and moral judgements made on the proposed choice by both the tattooee and her friends:

‘Oh, but it’s such a pretty part of you and it’ll be so ugly’.....The day I snapped I was at a friends house and I mentioned I would be getting my collar bones tattooed. I got the ‘Why? You’ll hate it when you’re 50’ which I’m prepared to deal with, but then I got ‘Why don’t you get it done on your lower back?’ I must admit my jaw dropped and something in my mind went click. In the minds of some people the lower back must never go saggy, and getting it done on the lower back ensures you will never get bored of it (even when you are 50). The next day, I went out and made the appointment, damn sure I was never going to delay getting a tattoo because I was afraid of how other people might react to it.

Chest tattoo

The comments of **Chest tattoo** show that the permanent nature of the tattoo expands into several other issues. Firstly, permanence in relation to an aesthetic judgement and placement (chest) is a point of note, when the tattooee is female her choice of placement exists in relation to societal views on gender specific physical aesthetics as seen in the comment: “Why? You’ll hate it when you’re 50 which I’m prepared to deal with, but then I got ‘Why don’t you get it done on your lower back?’.....In the minds of some people the lower back must never go saggy.” The action of tattooing was considered as an aesthetic investment by the tattooee, her peers believed due her choice of placement (chest) it would not be aesthetically attractive later in life. This negative comment is due to the specific choice of placement of the tattoo in relation to the female gender (Agris, 1977; Armstrong, 1991; Goulding, & Follett, 2002a; Hawkes, Senn, & Thorn, 2004). The comment’s socio-culturally basis originates from parts of the body having different levels of perceived importance to different genders which in turn is seen

in such comments on tattoo placement (Featherstone, Hepworth & Turner, 1991; Sanders, 1985, 1988). Showing that the possibility of regret through aging and being able to see it to reinforce this regret. What can be seen is that the tattooee is making a choice about a permanent aesthetic investment on her body, the choice of which revolves around the positioning of the tattoo.

The permanence of the tattoo can be seen both as a positive (an attraction to) and negative (cause of regret) aspect of the tattoo, as seen in the following narratives:

I had wanted a tattoo all my life. I don't know why, but ever since I can remember, I had wanted a tattoo and a motorbike.(where the motorbike came from, I don't know) Now, when I was young, I didn't know tattoos hurt, I thought they were just drawn on and magically stayed on forever. My sister had 3 tattoos done throughout her life and that made me want them even more because they were soo cool! (she got a butterfly on her stomach, Arabic on her back and Chinese on her ankle.) I wasn't going to give up until I got one.

My first tattoo

One of the main objectives of this tattoo was to cover a smaller piece of work on my shoulder, which I'd had done about 4 years ago.....and had decided was most definitely NOT what I wanted there.

First large tattoo piece - 4 1/2 hours total and the beginning of my journey into serious ink

The only tattoo I have ever regretted was my first tattoo; I had to get a tattoo at the time. I was 17 and everyone else was getting one within my group, this gave me an impetus on the want I had always had for one. I made a quick sketch of what I wanted when my friend Tracy went for a tattoo, I went along and showed him the sketch (it was a small Celtic design), he said £5. I sat down he did it in under 5 minutes. I wish I hadn't cos he had not placed it straight, but at the time I didn't care, as I had a tattoo, it was only afterwards I regretted it. So it got covered up. I am glad I didn't get any more till I was 25; it gave me time for my taste and realisation what permanence is to develop.

Tattooee: John

This shows the importance of the permanence, as not only is this aspect the defining feature of the tattoo, i.e. without the permanence it would not be a tattoo

and lack all the cultural, social, or historical meanings attributed to it. Furthermore, as seen in the comment from **My first tattoo** it is one of the defining aspect for the individual consumer. Within this aspect as seen in “drawn on and magically stayed on forever,” it is the characteristic which is central to the consumer’s characterization of the tattoo itself. Showing permanence is an attraction for some tattooees. Viewing it as being ‘magical’ or ‘other,’ this permanence or ‘durability’ of the tattoo creates a specific condition of existence for the tattoo which a comment by Arendt illustrates:

It is this durability which gives the things of the world their relative independence from men who produced and use them, their “objectivity” which makes them withstand “stand against” and endure, at least for a time, the voracious needs and wants of their living makers and users.
(Arendt, 1958, p.136)

The tattoo in itself is ‘independent,’ as while they are physically part of their carrier, it is still separate from the person who has acquired it, and this is seen within the tattooee’s description of the tattoos in terms of “she got a butterfly on her stomach” rather than in terms of *she had* or *has* a butterfly. This independence of the tattoo illustrates its durability beyond its physical permanence, as Arendt states: “which makes them withstand “stand against” and endure, at least for a time, the voracious needs and wants of their living makers and users.” These needs and wants can change, if they do, then tattoos gained are then later regretted (Sanders, 1985, 1988, 1989; Tsiros & Mittal, 2000).

This is seen in the comments by **First large tattoo piece** and **Tattooee: John**. Where **First large tattoo piece** states “I’d had done about 4 years ago.....and had decided was most definitely NOT what I wanted there.” This shows the negativity of the permanent aspect of the tattoo, where choice or decisions are later regretted due to changes in taste or development in views, or as seen in the following statement a mistake undertaken by George Burchett the tattooist:

Sometimes a little blunder happens....On this client’s chest I misspelled the word “cause” in the proverb “BLESSED IS HE WHOSE CAUSE IS JUST, THRICE BLESSED HE

WHO CUTS HIS BLOW IN FIRST”, making “cuase” But the client did not mind, and although I offered to correct the mistake he decided to leave it as it was.

George Burchett

(Burchett, 1956, insert between pp.14 & 15)

Where any of these regrets occur the only realistic option is one of cover up or changing as removal of the tattoo is impossible due to the relative permanence, even in context of modern removal techniques. This is seen in the following statement by Burchett:

Firstly, the patron is an absolute master. Once he has given an order it must be followed exactly. A portrait painter or *couturier* has much more freedom...there is no going back and starting again. A puncture is a puncture and it is at best a very difficult task to eliminate part of the tattoo once it is made.

George Burchett

(Burchett, 1956, p.64)

In relation to removal, certain colours such as green and blue cannot be removed by lasers (New Look Laser Tattoo Removal, 2008), while chemical treatment cannot remove tattoos, but are described and falsely shown to remove tattoos within adverts. This is commented on an American tattoo removal company webpage:

Certain colors are more easily removed than others. Black and red tattoos are the easiest to remove. Orange, yellow, pink, purple, brown, and other shades are slightly more difficult to remove. The most difficult colors to remove are light green, light blue, and teal/turquoise....We've seen little to no evidence that magic creams help faded tattoos. At best, they fade the skin on and around the tattoo, which makes the tattoo look a bit lighter. Looking at the ingredients and components of such products makes one wonder how they would purportedly remove tattoo ink. No medical professionals that we've ever spoken to has expressed anything different from our view - these creams are a gimmick, and a waste of time and money.

(New Look Laser Tattoo Removal, 2008)

X

Picture removed due to copyright

Fig:82 After effect of Tattoo removal cream

N.B. Even after 4 applications it shows that the tattoo is not removed

(Larratt & Larratt, 1994)

While the importance of permanence has an influence on the consumption patterns post-purchase this also is seen prior to tattoo acquisition with a staging point incorporating non-permanent body modification prior to adoption of the permanent tattoo. This can be seen in the comments of future tattoo consumer **Rosie**, and **On tattoos, fainting, and eventual glory**:

John: Why do you use the pens and henna to doodle designs on yourself?

Rosie: I want to be certain about what I want; I mean its going to be on my body for the rest of my life so I have to be sure about it. I see it like a test; I keep them on for a while and see if I like the design, the way it looks on me and how it will look, I mean I intend in the long term to get full sleeves and with that much dedication I got to be sure. Its part of the whole process, I suppose, I mean I know now what I don't want, which focuses me to realise what I do like.

I had toyed with the idea of getting a tattoo for several years. As a child, I plastered cheap, fake tattoos all over my body and did everything I could to make them last more than a few days. I purchased henna kit after henna kit for myself and to practice on my friends. The minute I turned 17 I became obsessed with tattoos...the "real deal".....As time began to pass, and summer and my eighteenth birthday became rolling along, I began to understand...and start saving.

On tattoos, fainting, and eventual glory

What can be seen in these two comments is the use of tattoo mimicry to ascertain whether the design chosen is ‘right’ for them, as they realise the permanence of the final product. In addition in terms of the comment: “and did everything I could to make them last more than a few days.” From **on tattoos, fainting, and eventual glory**, shows that permanence was specifically one aspect they were trying to gain.

The use of such non permanent activities makes the movement onto tattoo use a natural progression. Which is seen in terms of using body modification both in present day individuals as seen by the previous comments of **Rosie** and **On tattoos, fainting, and eventual glory**, and past societies. There is also another progression from an active choice to mimic tattoo to an active choice for permanence, as individuals, societies and (sub)cultures deliberately appropriate, value, and acquire tattoos specifically due to their permanence, this can be seen in the following comments:

I want them to be there always, that time I burnt myself and thought I was going to lose part of my sleeve, I shit myself about it. But it wasn't deep enough to damage it, god...I was relieved, I want them to last.

Graham

When I went in hospital for me kidney, the time I had surgery I had to ask them where they would be cutting cos I was a bit worried about them cutting my Motorhead tattoo, it's my favourite, and I didn't get it just to get it screwed up by a scar.

Marf

You may lose your most valuable property.....through misfortune in various ways; you may lose your house, your patupounamu, your wife and other treasures – you may be robbed of all your most prized possessions; but of your Moko you cannot be deprived except by death; it will be your ornament and your companion until your last day.

Netana

(Cowan, 1921, p. 242)

What can be seen in these comments is that the permanence of the tattoo is actually valued. In terms of **Graham**, **Marf**, and **Netana** (a Maori talking about his Moko), it is the permanence that they value. The tattoo can be considered a

stabilising force for the tattooee, both in terms of aesthetics and identity due to its permanence. Sometimes, it is only when the permanence is threatened as in both Graham's and Marf's cases that the importance of the permanence can be seen. For some tattooees permanence is an active concept within their choices:

Winston Gomez: When I was America I worked with a guy who was doing scarification, similar designs but cutting instead of tattooing. I just didn't get it, it doesn't stay, I mean give it a few years and its gone, when I am paying that much for a design I wouldn't expect it to disappear.

This comment returns to the ideas of the body being a commodity, to be invested in however, it also raises the investment of permanence within the acquisition of a design being the object of the investment. This is seen in the comment "it doesn't stay" and "I wouldn't expect it to disappear. It is as if the payment, monetary terms here but also physically in terms of pain 'spent' for the investment is wasted due to the impermanence of the scar. This also shows that the ephemeral nature of being is held at bay with the tattoo due to the permanence, but is not extinguished, as the true permanence lies with the tattoo rather than its wearer.

The physical permanence as discussed in this section makes the tattoo more than just a body modification fashion accessory which can be removed when the wearer does no longer want it, or feels it is no longer in fashion, such as an ear piercing. It is what occurred with Winston Churchill's mother who was discussed earlier (Armstrong, 1991); the tattooee must cover it with clothing or another tattoo to be rid of that particular image. Once gained a tattoo is there for life (and in some cases beyond this). Even if it is removed, there will still remain a scar and/or an outline. It is in fact the most stable item available to an individual, even beyond their own existence. Due to its closeness to actuality of the tattoo the following comment by Arendt could be used to describe the tattoo:

It is as though worldly stability had become transparent in the permanence of art, so that the premonition of immortality, not the immortality of the soul or of the life but of something immortal achieved by mortal hands, has

become tangibly present, to shine and to be seen, to sound and to be heard, to speak, and to be read.
(Arendt, 1958, p.168)

Additional to the physical permanence gained through the activity there is permanence within the action in that the tattoo itself has permanence beyond this mere physical attribute. This occurs as the aspects of its consumption relating to its being a commodity, its existence as an aesthetic, and its usage as an identifier and its dualistic portrayal. All of these will be discussed in the following section of this chapter, tattoo placement, acceptability, and commitment.

Tattoo placement, acceptability, and commitment

The body is a place of power where power is situated and negotiated between the individual and the values of society. This is seen in the legal framework that is used to authorize tattooers in terms of health and safety and age limits (HSE, 2003a; 2003b), and through regulations from other forms of official, semi-official, and unofficial organisations and groups (Kakoulas, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2004d). In his work Foucault stated that the body is always under the “panoptic gaze” where society views the body and what the individual does with it and interacts with the individual in such a manner as to reward or punish him/her for either adhering to, or rejecting, societal norms surrounding the body. In terms of tattoo consumption this relates to rewarding and punishing the tattooee by a variety of means through the consumer being fashionable and feted for it or the limiting of their job prospects and other forms of social punishment. These are formal and informal rules surrounding employment prospects:

When I was working at Sainsbury's I had a bad incident involving my tattoos, they didn't allow me to wear a short sleeve shirt on the shop floor, they got me a special long sleeved shirt to cover my tattoos ... they just told me to do it, they were not nice about it, quite negative in fact. I used to get bad comments about them all the time from my supervisor.

Tattooee: Stuart

As can be seen in this comment from Stuart, his tattoos brought about censure from those in power over him, and a moral judgement made on him, his experience belies the idea that tattoos are ‘acceptable’ within today’s society,

even though there is considered a movement to being more acceptable. However, this acceptability is negotiable if the tattoo is placed on a part of the body that can be covered it is more acceptable, than on an area where it is overtly projected, such as the hands or the face This can be described as a difference of commitment. The differences in placement can be seen in the following excerpts from interview with tattooees.

The tattooee **Graham** talks about choosing only to get tattooed in certain areas:

Graham: In general I've only had good things told to me about my tattoos, well... when they talk about my tattoos, but I have had people being negative, especially when they say talk about tattoos in general you know, crap tattoos, or more often in relation to work..... No...well yes, in a way, its not what I've got its more what they think it will do to me. They say things like I am limiting myself, and I have ruined any prospects of bettering myself. Comments like that usually come from supervisors at work and other people looking down at me. They all have a story about someone who didn't get a job, or had something negative happen to them cos they had large amounts of tattoos or really visible ones. I don't really care what they think, and I'm lucky in that I haven't got a job that I really have to pay attention to what they say, I mean.... It's not as if it's against the law or rules at work to be tattooed like me.

John: Have you ever limited your tattooing due to the possibility of negative reactions, you know, what people might think of you if you get a tattoo in a certain place?

Graham: Yes, I mean the face tattoo is way out anyway, like no way dude! But seriously in terms of where, I have a rule, not above the neckline and not below the wrists. It's just not on! I mean hands, maybe, if I could get away with it, but I can't cos I have to think of the future, what or where I will be, if I can't cover them up in a future job, you never know what will happen.

The tattooee states that there are absolute limits to his tattoo consumption; this is due to its permanence. Graham believes that in his position he can get away with being tattooed in his job in the comment: "I'm lucky in that I haven't got a job that I really have to pay attention to what they say, I mean....It's not as if it's against the law or rules at work to be tattooed like me." However, tattoo

consumption does occur in relation to fully visual tattoos, i.e. face, upper neck, lower wrist or hand tattoos. He thinks that socially this is an absolute position of unacceptability, as seen in: “maybe, if I could get away with it, but I can’t cos I have to think of the future, what or where I will be, if I can’t cover them up in a future job, you never know what will happen.”

The type of tattooing which is permanently visual is undertaken by fully committed tattoo consumers, they are the most openly identifiable as tattoo consumers, and these individuals are defined and recognised by their tattoo consumption, as its nature is beyond what is ‘normally’ socially acceptable in terms of placement. Turner describes this point of difference between tattooing types:

In the modern world of unemployment, tattoos on hands or foreheads, which proclaim ‘Hate’, are indicative of alienation and separation rather than masculine mateship. By contrast, discrete and aesthetic butterflies and flowers on the shoulders and backs of fashion models and middle-class professional women are sexual consumer images; they are removable adornments.

(Turner, 1999a, p.48)

Yet this idea of alienation has not been found in the data, although the consumers do state their understanding of where they are in terms of what is thought of as ‘normal’. If they feel it necessary, tattooees position their tattoos where they can be hidden or shown off at will (Sanders, 1989). In the following narrative a tattooee discusses their commitment to the values they wish to espouse being a permanent part of them and also showing commitment to their tattoos through their chosen visual placement:

John: Why did you get the tattoo on your hand?

Marf: Well I had been thinking about it for a while and one day I thought what the hell....I did this one on myself, and I got Chid [tattooist] to do the other. Part of it is.... cos I am running out of room...(laughs), the other is well the reason why I got all my tattoos,... its just part of me, I am lucky cos I don’t have to worry about what people think of me, you know in my line of work, either in the glass trade or in building and decorating it just doesn’t matter.

John: What do you mean its part of you?

Marf: Well, its like what my sisters say to folk when they comment on it, they say stuff like ‘its just Marf’, you know, its me, part of me, its me. Tattooing and piercing is just me!

John: Your identity?

Marf: Yes, my identity.

John: So you see yourself as a ‘tattooed’ person, a ‘pierced’ person?

Marf: Yes, I will always be a tattooed person, a pierced person.

This shows that a fully committed tattooee view their tattoos as ‘fixing’ and ‘anchoring’ their self identity by permanently marking their body, making their identity through their tattooing activities. Their tattooing in terms of placement is such that they move from being a person with tattoos, to a tattooed person. The visual aspect transforms the tattoo into a referent to their identity, thus they are being defined by their tattoos. In addition, as their identity is fixed, permanently, the subcultural, personal and societal meanings are now frozen, and they cannot be changed.

The activity as found within the various consumption narratives is a personal experience of physical interaction, symbolic representation, and commitment to particular values that culminate in an act which is dualistic in nature, being both highly valued socially and culturally, and at the same time rejected which in itself is a permanent attribute of the activity as much as its physical permanence. The ways that people interact with this duality is that they either use self limiting actions such as choosing to use non-permanent tattoo mimicry, or they choose to position their tattoos on their bodies at places where they can limit societal interaction with the tattoo. Others realise the limitations on their activities by getting such tattoos, seen in **Marf’s** comments: “the other is well the reason why I got all my tattoos,...its just part of me, I am lucky cos I don’t have to worry about what people think of me.” Whilst at the same time showing their commitment to tattoos and permanent body modification by placing them in

public areas, this in turn affects their identity as the tattoo now is an active part of their portrayal.

This societal positive and negative duality can also be seen within one final issue which is interesting - the negative aspects or interpretation of the tattoo can also exist as a draw factor, or transmuted into a positive aspect as found in the comment below:

When I first noted tattoos they were on the back of old sailors hands in the fishing village I grew up in, there always was a story about the sea or the war attached to them, sitting in a smoky pub, listening to the old men talking about the past and other far off places made them even more exotic. My father would tell me never get one as people will always be able to identify you. However, once I grew up and discovered rock and roll rebellion and that tattoos fitted into that as they were a bit 'wrong' and that 'the wrong type' of people got them. It just made me even more determined to get one.

Tattooee: John

Note the comment about exoticism, how the tattoos were the 'other' linking them to far off places, i.e. not here. The initial negative aspect was commented on in relation to the permanence of identity and this, and the following negative comments are manipulated into a positive aspect. It is through the negation of the activity by portraying it as a morally questionable activity that positive cultural capital is imbued within it in the eyes of this consumer, he may have negotiated his tattoo acquisition further in due course in terms of positioning, however to him that tattoo in terms of it being a permanent identity marker with negative connotations is actually a positive attraction.

4.9 SUMMING UP/CONCLUSION

Permanence in itself is an abstract concept beyond magnitude, though through the use of the tattoo a relative permanence is found. Through the tattoo permanence is made flesh. Permanence is the reason for gaining a tattoo, and also creates the meaning for the tattoo. In addition, the aspects of the tattoo as a physical investment of historically identifiable socio-cultural capital, is a permanent attribute, as this is common over varied time periods and societies. This occurs through concepts such as beauty, the projection of personal and group identity. While the meanings of the images change, and designs are developed and manipulated, aesthetically, there is permanence also identifiable though the longitudinal existence of tattoo designs.

The negative meaning of the tattoo gained through its permanence gives rise to differing levels of being tattooed. Small and light tattooing is considered playful and fashionable, while being heavily tattooed contravenes certain rules and norms of society. Fashionable tattooing is still agreeable to societal norms, it is only when the tattoo is continually on view that the negative aspect outweighs any positive socio-cultural advantages. At the same time being tattooed is the basis for community membership, personal identity projection and adherence to a set of sub-cultural norms and values, which are feted and used within fashion, which adds to its attraction. This attraction is partially due to its negativity, however when societal barriers are passed, fashionability reverts to denigration along with possible societal punishment. This dualistic nature exists by virtue of its place in history, being an extreme form of 21st century self-expression yet having a lineage back to the Stone Age.

Thus while tattoo consumption is a site of embodied expression it is bounded by physicality, identity, and the values of the consumer, it occurs within the indissoluble context of permanence. Permanence gives stability and continuity of identity, both in terms of individual identity and group membership in its physical and aesthetic permanence. The tattoo freezes the individual into the

point of acquisition. Subcultural affiliation linked to specific tattoo can now never be changed, even if membership lapses their links to it are still extant. Membership of the tattoo subculture has permanent potential through tattoo acquisition, as the individual gateway is the ownership of a tattoo and the experience gained. However, this does not exist in an automatic passive state but needs to be activated through interaction.

Tattoo permanence is seen both in positive and negative dualism. It can be actively recognised and sought out and appreciated by consumers, and through unwise choice(s) may cause regret, and be thought of negatively. Indeed the historic social-cultural markers exist due to its permanent attribute. Permanence of the tattoo can be negotiated through the use of mimic tattoos or through positioning to give relative permanence i.e. able to be covered by clothing. Yet such negotiation is merely a denial of the tattooee's bodily permanence as even one hidden tattoo limits their identity, commitment to tattooing is absolute, as they cannot be truly removed. When tattoos are absolutely permanent, which by definition are those which can never be hidden, they project the tattoo into main the definition of the tattooee's identity. Thus it is through the tattoo, that stability in identity, in both individual and group terms is affected, and that which may change (i.e. their identity) is taken beyond the range on man and made eternal through the physical permanence of the tattoo's existence. Permanence is the crux of the tattoo, and at the same time its physical core, permanence as a concept is made flesh through tattoo acquisition.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The investigation in this thesis has concentrated on permanence within the context of the consumption of tattoos and the use of socio-historical data. Data has been gathered and analysed in the context of a grounded theory methodology, from which conclusions have been drawn. This will be summarised and given in this chapter alongside a commentary on the process itself. A revisiting of the theoretical linkages and an evaluation of the process will be given, discussing where the findings are situated; specifically, what does this contribute to theory concerning identity creation (group and individual) and bodily identity in relation to permanence, and to CCT as a family of work. After evaluating the process, I will reflect on what I would have done differently and enumerate further issues for investigation that have been identified.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

The aims of the research and key questions that were asked were:

1. To use the study of tattoo consumption to add to the knowledge of CCT in terms of using socio-historical data in investigating how permanence sits within consumer behaviour.
2. To answer: How does the permanence of the tattoo contribute to the creation of personal and group identity through consumption?
3. To answer: How physical permanence relates to the individual as seen in relation to identity creation?

In relation to the aims of the research the conclusions were arrived at through looking at the consumption narratives of tattooees. By investigating these narratives of tattoo consumption through continual comparative analysis, categories and concepts that are relevant to the consumption of tattoos were

identified. Narratives analysed included commentary and observations of past (historical) consumption alongside present day narratives, in addition other socio-historical data was used to add theoretical sensitivity in identifying conceptual categories within the grounded theory composition. In doing so I identified two main conceptual categories of physicality and permanence. These were identified within the continuity of the act; the permanence of its usage in relation to identity creation; the permanent physical aspect of the tattoos acquisition and definition; and in relation to the abstract values and concepts physically imbued into the tattoo. The two concepts were then grounded in theory and presented in relation to consumption narratives in Chapter 4.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS ABOUT PERMANENCE

What was found through analysis of the data was a tripartite sectioning of tattoo consumers, which relates to their commitment to tattoo consumption. The first most common type of tattoo consumer is described as fashion consumers. They are the least committed to tattoo consumption and this is shown in the amount, and more specifically, the placement of tattoo consumption chosen. Fashion consumers consumption in terms of amount is 4-5 small tattoos, up to and including the level of half sleeve tattoo, with placement occurring in bodily areas either covered or able to be covered. They are also the least likely to identify themselves with the tattoo community. These results parallel the works of Turner (1999a), Sweetman (1999) and Kjeldgaard and Bengtsson (2005), in the concept that tattoo consumption relates to the level of commitment the consumer has to tattoo ownership. It is notable in relation to its permanence that dabbling in tattoo consumption occurs prior to actual consumption, i.e. acquisition of a tattoo. This is due to the fact that even one tattoo limits the physical identity as the individual has to negotiate around its placement with clothes etc. and as such limits any such further dabbling.

The next group of tattoo consumers is described as the committed but concealed consumer. This group along with the members of the final group {fully committed} are fashion consumers whose consumption has developed, going

beyond that of fashion consumers in terms of the amount acquired. This is not necessarily the crux of the matter, as placement is vital. Committed but concealed tattooees, while having more skin coverage, still limit their consumption to areas able to be covered.

The final group of fully committed consumers is, in numerical terms, the smallest group of tattoo consumers, but are the most recognisable, as their bodily narratives in terms of their tattoo consumption is the most public and 'vocal' of all three groups. This is due to their tattoo consumption in terms of placement. While the majority of this group have large amounts of skin coverage, it is the fact that their tattoos are always on display in the public sphere {face, upper neck, lower wrist or hand tattoos}, which define them. Thus, acquiring even one small tattoo in any of these areas projects the individual beyond the membership of fashion consumers and committed but concealed in one step. This final group is also the most openly identifiable with the tattoo community as they are defined and recognised by tattoo consumption itself, rather than identifying themselves through their consumption, as its nature is above and beyond what is socially acceptable in terms of placement, and thus remarked upon.

In general terms some consumers identify permanence within the tattoo and make decisions accordingly, while others ignore or do not recognize the implications of such permanence, which may cause regret in the long term. In addition to this, no matter which of the groups the tattooee is a member of, their identity is stabilised to such an extent, that physical identity is frozen, and changes have to be negotiated with clothing. As play in terms of physical identity is limited due to the tattoos permanence this has implications for theory which is dealt with next.

5.4 CONCLUSIONS ABOUT PERMANENCE AND THE TATTOO: IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY

The acquisition and 'use' of the tattoo shows direct linkages to the works of both Foucault (1979, 1990a, 1990b, 1992) and Baudrillard (1998), in two specific incidences. Firstly, is the idea that the body is something which can be invested

in through activities or products, in this case the tattoo. Secondly, there are official and unofficial rules found within society which govern the use of, and interaction with, the body, which if adhered to allows for reward, and if broken creates negative repercussions. The 'present' perception of an increase of acceptability of the tattoo is just that, a perception, as the tattoo is not absolutely acceptable. There are limits to acceptability, i.e. tattoos are acceptable if they are not on show or able to be covered, but unacceptable if they are permanently on display. A notable point is that the unacceptability exists due to the tattoo's permanence.

The tattooee's identity has been stabilised by their tattoo acquisition. This quality has analogies to the work of Arendt (1958). These also exist in the independence of the existence of the tattoo in relation to its owner and its ability to outlive or 'stand against' the wearers demands and desires. In effect they are able to outlive or exist beyond the acquirer's life. Further links to Arendt's work in terms of stability occur through the tattoo's existing in terms of a piece of art. This can be identified in the longevity of the tattoo aesthetic which also emphasises the tattoos correlation to a Jungian (1959, 1977, 1990) archetypal existence, which on the one hand exists across time periods and societies and on the other relates to the relationship the tattoo has with the expression of internal values and feelings linked to personal and group identities. The similar link to the tattoo is the Bakhtinian definition of the Grotesque body as having: "no façade, no impenetrable surface" (Bakhtin, 1984, p.339), which corresponds to the tattooed body, as the tattooed body, having no façade, quite literally wears its heart on its sleeve. The internal workings, mechanisms, belief structures, and values of the tattooed person are projected onto his/her skin representing the fertile depth or the complexities of his/her being.

This can occur in terms of both personal and group values and identities which in effect is an investment in the body at a cultural, social or personal level. This in itself requires commitment, thus while there is a tripartite consumption typology, which is linked to commitment, it also occurs in relation to the investment in an identity whether that be individual or group based. This situation of the projection of such personal and group identifier is seen in the historical use of the

tattoo.

The duality of the tattoo being equally feted and rejected by society links to the other theoretical basis of Bakhtin's grotesque, as the tattoo's dual existence of acceptability within our culture propels it into the definition of the grotesque act. This negative aspect of the tattoo's duality is identified in the socio-historical investigation of the tattoo in terms of class, ethnicity, gender and sexuality. In these areas the dualistic positive/negative aspect of the tattoo can be clearly identified. Its repellence and perceived inappropriateness is due to its use by certain subcultures or groups across differing eras and areas {Christians, slaves, tribal peoples; ethnic groups i.e. Thracians, Maoris, Ancient Britons, Anglo-Saxons etc.; criminals, nobility, socialites, soldiers, sailors, sex-workers, rock stars etc.}. Their use of the tattoo reinforces its inappropriateness which feeds back to demand for tattoos with some of these groups being used as active consumption templates and advertisements for tattoo acquisition. In addition, the duality of inappropriateness and acceptability is the reification of the theoretical differences between the work of Rousseau (1762a, 1762b) and Hobbes (1651) debating whether mankind is naturally 'good' or 'evil'. This argument was latterly influenced by the theoretician Lombroso (1896, 2006) who with his linkage to the birth of criminology influenced the argument against the tattoo and manipulated identification of the tattoo to primarily a savage act, whilst ignoring data that identified it as an expression of identity, aesthetics, or civilised values.

One specific issue needing to be addressed is the linkage to tattooing by some academics to post-modern identity, however, the main proponent of the tattoo being linked to postmodernism, Turner (1999a) in doing so, lumps all types of body modification and tattooing {temporary, semi-permanent and permanent} together, such a generalisation is false. As the permanent physical aspect of the tattoo draws the individual into a set identity and halts any notion of play, as tattoo cannot be removed, even with plastic surgery, dermabrasion etc. he/she will always be left with a mark. Theoretically, this illustrates the denial of free will (Hume, 1967), through the limitations of action, in this case tattooing denies freedom of identity play.

In addition, individuals have been using the tattoo as an expression of identity and community designation since time immemorial (Burchett, 1956; Hambly, 1925), which discounts the activity being a 'post-modern' development. What can be said is that present tattoo consumption has elements of postmodernism, such as the use of the internet, globalisation of the market etc. that can be attributed to it. But these do not define it as a post-modern product or activity, as these aspects have parallels with past tattoo consumption activities. The only differences are the levels of technology used, i.e. newspapers instead of the internet being used to disseminate tattoo designs and tattoo experiences.

In addition, the tattoo is an identifiable ritual, linking it to the theories of Turner (1974) and Van Gennep (1960). It may have infinite personal meanings, or reasoning(s), but the act is still a ritual as it follows strict episodic activities and conveys specific meanings, which include tribal membership. The most obvious of which is the membership of the tattooed 'tribe,' thus, in terms of a ritual, tattooing is a liminal ritual because it transfers an individual from being in the state of being non-tattooed to being tattooed, i.e. a change. It is situated on the boundary of the body {a liminal area}, i.e. within the skin, thus it is not in the body, nor is it on the body, and it is on both the outside and the inside of the physical being. Similarly, it is a liminal act in the context of acceptability, being neither fully acceptable nor totally unacceptable.

5.5 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

In looking at this thesis in total the main contribution to knowledge is the identification and filling of the gap found in CCT and the remit of the discipline of marketing, namely the lack of use of socio-historical approach within the analysis of consumer behaviour. The failure to use this aspect of consumer activity has been identified by previous academics (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Stowe, 1983).

What has been shown within this thesis is firstly that tattooing can be used in investigating issues within CCT by showing that aspects of tattoo usage (both

present and past) are able to be situated in relation to the four sections of CCT and in doing so can be used to investigate issues within them (e.g. personal identity creation, subcultural identity, media/societal projection of meanings or the social-historical influence on consumption). In addition, this activity also shows the capability of using such socio-historical data and the analysis of such data to investigate, explore, and illustrate issues and problems within CCT specifically and the discipline of marketing in general, in the instance of this thesis the subject of permanence.

The other main aspect of this thesis develops the understanding of how a permanence features in relation to the creation and development of an individual's identity through consumption (Hirschman & Thompson, 1999; Metham & Belk, 1991) in relation to groups of which the consumer is a member (Muniz & O'Guin, 2001; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995), or where the moulding of an individual's body relates to and occurs in conjunction with his/her personal identity creation (Sayre, 1999; Schouten, 1991; Thompson & Hirschman, 1995). This relates to the work of Belk (1988) who proposed that possessions and parts of the body are extensions of the self and an integral part of identity creation. Why the tattoo is part of this 'body' of work rather than solely the remit of physical consumption (Featherstone, Hepworth & Turner, 1991; Hirschman & Thompson, 1999; Thompson & Hirschman, 1995) is the fact that the tattoo has an existence independent of its acquirer, which again relates back to the work of Arendt (1958).

In general, this thesis has built on previous work specific to tattoo consumption (Sanders, 1985, 1989); in terms of the tattoo community (De Mello, 2000); the perceived changes of the last ten to fifteen years within tattoo consumption (Velliquette & Murray, 1999); the tattoo and gender (Goulding & Follett, 2002a), and the symbolic nature of consumption of tattoos (Velliquette, Murray & Creyer, 1998); while the relationship between fashion and the acquisition of a tattoo brings in the concept of commitment (Kjeldgaard & Bengtsson, 2005). While any tattoo usage in relation to subcultural affiliation also relates to the individuals commitment to that subculture as permanence is involved. Commitment can also be seen within the typology of the tattoo consumer, the

distinction between the differing tattoo consumers can be viewed through the placement of the tattoo, as this is analogous to the commitment they have for their particular consumption which builds on work by Turner (1999a) and Sweetman (1999).

5.6 IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

In terms of private or public sector policy analysts and managers, or marketing practitioners the implications of this thesis is the identification of permanence as an integral aspect of consumer choice, as identifiable in the data. In an impermanent world, and specifically a post-modern world, this is an important issue. In our throwaway culture where items, ideas, and comments are discarded without any long term consideration, this demand for permanence queries whether consumers wish for more permanence in other aspects of their consumption. As such this desire for permanence should be tested against other products and services.

5.7 LIMITATIONS

This section is a review of my own learning experience and the process I undertook to gather, analyse the data, and present the findings within this thesis. In effect, what I found was that I discovered the process of undertaking the research for this study a duality. I felt that it was a journey from which I learnt and which I enjoyed; but also at times, it became disjointed and took me down several wrong turns. The activities mentioned were a process that developed alongside the overall practice of the research. The positive development(s) took the form of both practical and theoretical aspects of the research, which were then fed back into the research process to improve on both its practical and theoretical aspects. At other times, it was not a pleasant experience, specifically with the feeling of helplessness and inability to see the next step of the process. For example, items were difficult to access even through the British Library, and I had to rely on the personal collections of my tattooist and other members of the tattoo community to borrow them. Others were impossible to retrieve in any way

I tried. Experiences such as this were annoying, time consuming and fruitless, wasting valuable time.

In terms of methodology when undertaking this research, I had no problems in choosing which to use. This was simple, clear-cut and uncomplicated, in that my aim, of creating a theory surrounding the consumption of tattoos and tattooing, pointed me towards the methodology I should use. Whereas there are a number of methodologies that I could have used only grounded theory fitted my aims and objectives.

In addition, development of the data collection methods was quite straightforward for me, as I had experience of the tattoo “world” or subculture, thus I was already knowledgeable about where I could acquire data. My interest in tattooing allowed me ease of face-to-face data collection at points of purchase that would not have been available to someone without either the knowledge or contacts that I already had. However, no article or book on methods or methodology while discussing the process, procedure and theoretical underpinnings of the activity will give you much assistance with actual practicalities. An issue such as the noise in the tattoo parlour drowning out interviewing is one such example, which had to be experienced first hand, dealt with, and learnt from.

5.8 FURTHER RESEARCH

Symbolic use of the tattoo and symbolism of tattoo designs were only touched upon in this thesis. Symbolic consumption of tattoos is an aspect of the tattoo which requires further investigation. In addition, the investigation and identification of the aspect of permanence within other consumption projects and products should be developed. Of particular interest in this is whether other forms of bodily consumption involve permanence, either directly or indirectly. The decision process of tattoo choice is again something touched upon within this thesis. This requires further work as it is one aspect which is important to the entire action. It can be investigated in terms of deciding whether or not to acquire

a tattoo and which tattoo design to acquire. Another issue is the use of the tattoo both within advertising and lately as an advertisement itself, why do advertisers use this to imbue products with values and furthermore, which values do they impart to the product and in turn do consumers read these values as given or reject them.

Finally, there is a case for the investigation of the use of tattoos and tattooing within an observable and conscious form of ritual consumption. These are merely some of the issues that I would have liked to investigate further in this thesis but time and space have prevented me from doing so, however this also leaves me a wealth of studies surrounding the consumption of tattoos and tattooing to undertake in the future.

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APPENDIX 1

Emails

Sample email to Tattoo webpage BMEzine.com asking for permission to use online experiences.

-----Original Message-----

From: John Follett [<mailto:johnalanfollett@hotmail.com>]

Sent: 11 October 2006 13:24

To: media@bmezine.com

Cc: Goulding, Christina C (Prof)

Subject: Permission to use information in student thesis

Hello, my name is John Follett, I am a student undertaking a PhD in the consumption of tattoos and tattooing at the University of Wolverhampton (UK). I am a heavily tattooed individual and I chose this subject as I have found that many pieces of work have been undertaken by non-tattooed individuals, who have a bias against tattoos and tattooing and this has come through in their work. Thus I am contacting you to ask permission to use information found on BMEZINE as evidence within my thesis. I am not printing or reproducing any items for publication or financial gain and nor am I copying any photographs for use in this thesis. It is solely for educational purposes and to illustrate the use of the internet by tattoo consumers.

If you wish confirmation of my student status or the subject of my thesis you can contact my supervisor Professor Christina Goulding

At C.Goulding@wlv.ac.uk or at c.goulding@wbs.wlv.ac.uk

If you wish any more information, please do not hesitate to contact me at this email address

Thank you

John Follett

Sample email to Tattoo consumers asking for permission to use their online experiences. Note the Anon in the email address.

-----Original Message-----

From: John Follett [<mailto:johnalanfollett@hotmail.com>]

Sent: 06 July 2007 15:44:46

To: AlPhoenix@bme.anon

Cc:

Subject: Query about tattoo experiences

Hello, my name is John Follett,

I am a student undertaking a PhD in the consumption of tattoos and tattooing at the University of Wolverhampton (UK). I am a heavily tattooed individual and I chose this subject as I have found that many pieces of work have been undertaken by non-tattooed individuals, who have a bias against tattoos and tattooing and this has come through in their work.

Thus I am contacting you to ask permission to use your tattoo experiences that are on BMEZINE as evidence within my thesis. I am not printing or reproducing any items for publication or financial gain, it is solely for educational purposes and to illustrate the use of the internet by tattoo consumers.

If you wish confirmation of my student status or the subject of my thesis you can contact my supervisor Professor Christina Goulding

At C.Goulding@wlv.ac.uk or at c.goulding@wbs.wlv.ac.uk

If you wish any more information, please do not hesitate to contact me at this email address

Thank you

John Follett

APPENDIX 2

CODING

Table1: Coding

Code	Determinant or Experience given in order of importance	Note \ Comment
Acceptability	Determinant Experience	Acceptability of tattoo (general acquisition, placement, aesthetic choices) determines tattoo consumption. Experience occurs through how others interact with individual due to the tattoo.
Addiction	Experience determinant	An experience as addiction is a side effect of the acquisition, not the reason why an individual gets tattooed, it becomes a determinant for future consumption in parallel with normalisation.
Aesthetics	Determinant Experience	Aesthetics (in general terms, the aesthetics of the tattoo itself, specifically the choice of tattoo design, due to aesthetic views and meanings etc) determines tattoo choices. The experience is the tattooee's emotions engendered by the design and the physical results of the tattoo.
Anticipation	Experience Determinant	An experience as anticipation is a physical interaction prior to acquisition, can become a determinant in prior perception of being tattooed and in future choices after experience occurs

Authenticity	Determinant Experience	Determinant due to choice of type of tattooing or design. Occurs as an experience through the use of specific tattoo style.
Body's reaction/interaction	Determinant Experience	Occurs as a determinant through anticipation of physical demands prior to tattoo acquisition. Becomes an experience through tattoo acquisition.
Celebrity	Determinant Experience	Celebrity used as determinant as tattoo ideals to be followed or rejected, closely linked to normalisation. An experience as part of the overall experience.
Development	Determinant Experience	Being tattooed as seen as a development in life, also an experience as being tattooed more than once develops tattoo consumption.
Experience	Determinant Experience	Tattoo choices taken in aim of gaining a specific experience. But all other aspects of tattoo consumption can also be seen as part of the experiential as they are too "experienced".
Health	Determinant Experience	Tattooees views on cleanliness (and thus health) determines tattoo choice. Becomes an experience through tattoo acquisition due to the tattoo being an open wound and healing is an integral experience of the action. Experience of

Identity	Determinant Experience	<p>healing also feeds into determinants of future consumption.</p> <p>Identity is a determinant through membership of a community where a tattoo is part of the “uniform” of that community. Is experienced through membership of tattoo community or interaction among tattoo community at any level.</p>
Memory	Determinant Experience	<p>A determinant through the use of <i>in memoria</i> tattoo, an experience through the use of the tattoo as a point of reference to other memories and through choosing tattoo style or tattooist as an experience itself.</p>
Media representation	Determinant Experience	<p>As a determinant occurs through celebrity and normalisation, media used as assisting in choice of getting a tattoo, choosing tattoo design. Also linked to trust as tattooist uses media to engender trust in helping potential customers to choose them as the service provider. Exists as an experience through interaction of community i.e. internet.</p>
Narcissism	Experience	<p>An experience as tattooees deliberately expose and show off tattoo(s) gained.</p>
Normalisation	Determinant Experience	<p>Occurs as a determinant as</p>

Physical effect	Determinant Experience	<p>normalisation makes tattoo acquisition occur, linked to acceptability. As an experience occurs through addiction and acceptability, positive acquisition leading to further consumption.</p> <p>Is a determinant through anticipation, choices made according to perceived physical effect(s) including healing (health) and pain. An experience through the invasive nature of tattooing, the physical effect of the process i.e. the endorphins and the healing after effects which transfer into determinants of further consumption.</p>
Pain	Determinant Experience	<p>Is a determinant through anticipation, due to perception of pain that will be experienced</p> <p>Through acquiring a tattoo. Pain is an inevitable by-product experienced due to tattoo acquisition.</p>
Physicality	Determinant Experience	<p>Being tattooed and having a tattoo cannot be divorced from physicality. Is a determinant through aesthetics and placement. Is an experience through pain, physical effect(s), health (healing), sexuality and narcissism.</p>
Placement	Determinant Experience	<p>Is a determinant through the anticipation of pain. Is an experience due to pain,</p>

Product	Determinant Experience	<p>health (healing) because different areas on the body have different levels of pain and healing speeds due to being tattooed.</p> <p>Is a determinant is related to media, and normalisation as tattoo publications help tattooees make choice(s), while other product based body modifications such as piercing sit alongside the use of and introduction to tattooing. As an experience through the use of tattoo designs as part of various products (T shirts etc)</p>
Quality of tattoo	Determinant Experience	<p>Exists as a determinant in conjunction with media and Relationship (tattooist/ tattoo community) due to advertising of the skill of tattooist with prior tattoo work and Relationship Relatives/friends/ significant others though word of mouth projecting quality of tattoo etc. Occurs as an experience through skill of tattooist and health (healing) which both determine the overall experience.</p>
Relationship R (Relatives/friends/ significant others)	Determinant	<p>Determines consumption choices through acceptability, and normalisation to be conducive for initial consumption, and choice of tattooists</p>

Relationship T (tattooist/ tattoo community)	Experience Determinant	Is an experience which develops determinants, through experience of tattooist, interaction with tattooist
Regret	Experience Determinant	Primarily an experience as tattoo acquisition is the major creation of regret, but also exists as a determinant through anticipation, and as for further consumption.
Sexuality	Determinant Experience	Exists as a determinant as an aim of acquiring tattoo, through placement and narcissism
Spirituality	Determinant Experience	Is a determinant through aim of acquiring tattoo, this includes aesthetics due to design choice, as an experience through the emotional and physical feelings engendered by tattooing process
Skill of tattooist	Determinant Experience	Skill exists as both a determinant and experience through aesthetics, health (Healing), as these are outcomes dependant on the skill of the tattooist. While these also determine choice of tattooist through relationship with tattooist.
Trust	Determinant Experience	Trust engendered by tattooist prior to acquisition through media and relationship with tattooist. An

Time of life	Experience Determinants	<p>experience as trust is engendered through experience.</p> <p>Primarily an experience due to permanence of tattoo and exists through memory. Is a determinant through acceptability.</p>
Use of Media	Determinant Experience	<p>Use of media helps potential customers to choose design (Aesthetics) or tattoo provider (Relationship T). Exists as an experience through interaction of community i.e. internet tattoo community (Relationship T)</p>
Values (Monetary \$£)	Determinant	<p>A determinant as price determines acquisition because finance determines tattooist choice, which in turn determines skill of tattooist quality, aesthetics and health.</p>
Values (Other)	Determinant Experience	<p>Is a determinant through the values (meanings) that the tattooee engenders in the tattoo through both design (aesthetics) and process, which is linked to authenticity and experience.</p>

APPENDIX 3

TATTOO TYPES

There now follows a list of the various tattoo ‘families’ to illustrate the divergent yet related range of designs available.

Old Skool/Old School: These designs are described as American and British working class and military designs, these include as the sacred heart, man’s ruin, homeward bound, etc. These are what can be considered folk designs and are linked to the representation of situations, places, groups, items, and individuals which relate directly to everyday occurrences or interactions (Burchett, 1956). They are simplistic in their meaning and design parameters and link back to previous ages through their styles (Hambly, 1925), but hark back even further with their meanings, such as workers designs relating to guild symbols from the middle ages.



Fig:83 Old School gambler’s design

This design ‘originates’ from the illegal nature of gambling in most countries (specifically US/UK) in the 19th century (Wroblewski, 1989, 1995), but are linked back to previous eras through the use of cards and dice which have been linked to gaming since their origins (Burchett, 1956). However, their use in this instance in relation to a skull also factors in the concept of the fickle nature of life itself.

Nu Skool: Are modern versions of Old School designs but presented stylistically in similar ways to graffiti. The use of Nu Skool is linked in with forms of alternative music scene such as Gangster rap, Nu-metal and Hip-hop.



Fig:84 Hot Rod Flames and a stylised sailors star

While the flames originate from 1930's aesthetics and 1950's car drag racing (Phelps, Westbrook & Radoff, 2006) and are regurgitated as a modern tattoo design, they also link back to the primeval fire. The stylised sailors stars are also in fact map compasses, which show even with the changes in meaning the original designs are still identifiable (Hardy, 1988).

Tribal: This type of designs includes both authentic tribal designs as used by ethnic people globally and fantasy pieces which are advertised and sold as tribal (Van Dinter, 2000). Aesthetically, tribal pieces are the easiest to create as carbon deposits are easily transmuted into black tattoos, with designs again coming from everyday objects or aesthetics such as animals, weaving, and carving. The resurgence of tribal aesthetics in the early 1980's occurred for the same reason that it was adopted by tribal peoples around the world as it is easily undertaken by learners and semi-skilled tattooists (Wojcik, 1995). Tribal tattooing's influence along with Celtic tattooing discussed next is of questionable authority, as the given view is that tattooing is not European but a Polynesian import brought to the west by Captain Cook's voyages of discovery in the 18th century. This is a falsehood which is repeated by many academics while discussing tattooing (e.g. De Mello, 2000). It is incompatible with yet simultaneously held

belief in the origin and use of “Celtic” tattooing. The facts are that the tattoo is not solely a Polynesian import, and both tribal and Celtic tattooing have had an influence on modern tattooing beyond the measure of their authenticity, with fantasy patterns of both types being produced. This has come about with the desire for “authentic” tattoo designs. The use and repetition of erroneously held tattoo beliefs create a clear linkage between exoticism and difference, and the act of being tattooed.

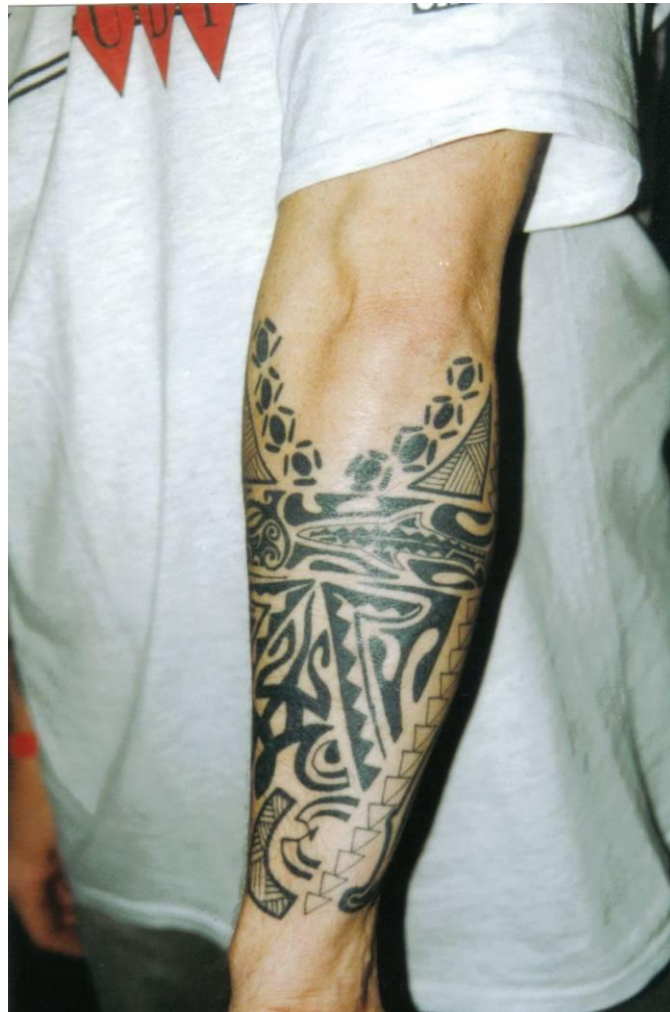


Fig:85 Authentic Marquesian design

This is the most complex of tribal tattooing. Note the lizards and fishes, it also has abstract linkages to their everyday lives in the use of triangles which represent both sharks teeth and the islands in the sea (Gell, 1993; Van Dinter, 2000).



Fig:86 Indonesian tribal

Note the blocky black nature of the tattoo which makes it easy to be copied by a semi or non skilled tattooist, a fact that made this type of tattooing popular initially within tribal societies and led to its adoption by other groups later due to its ease of application (Gell, 1993; Gilbert, 2000; Wojcik, 1995).

Celtic: This set is based on Celtic artwork such as illuminated manuscripts. These are while of questionable validity as historical tattoos. This situation is similar to, the “Invention of tradition” as described by historian Eric Hobsbawm is (1983: 1f.).

....‘Invented tradition’ is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.
(Hobsbawm, 1983: 1f)

However, the difference between invented traditions and Celtic tattooing is that the designs are based on a long standing aesthetics which are authentic from their ethnic origins (Dhoireann, 2004; Fish, 2009), and there are historical commentaries which describe Celtic tattooing (MacQuarrie, 2000). What the problem is that these commentaries do not describe the designs extant, and there has been no mummified remains found that confirm the activity (MacQuarrie, 2000), or show actual designs, as commented on by Celtic art historian and tattooist Pat Fish (Vickers, 1998). There is continuity of attempting to bring history and thus acceptability to tattooing. This can be seen in the context of tattoo commentators, who as early as the Elizabethan era espoused the ancient British origins of the tattoo and during the Victorian period (Darwin, 1871; Einhorn & Abler, 1998; Fleming, 2000, 2001; Scutt & Gotch, 1974).

Because we have no preserved ‘bog bodies’ with tattoos, it is impossible to guess what tattoos the ancient Celts wore. But it is easy to surmise that they would have replicated on their bodies the same patterns we know they wove into their clothing and carved into household implements.
(Fish, 2009)



Fig:87 Celtic Adam and Eve



Fig:88 Celtic Eagle

Both Celtic designs have been copied from the Lindisfarne Gospel

X

Picture removed due to copyright

Fig:89 Elizabethan reconstruction of tattooed Pict/Briton (Caplan, 2000)

This tattooing was used as an example of civilisation.

Blackwork: Are monochromatic developments from tribal designs. It was developed through an influx of alternative aesthetics being used in the context of Tribal tattoos (black and bold) (Wojcik, 1995).

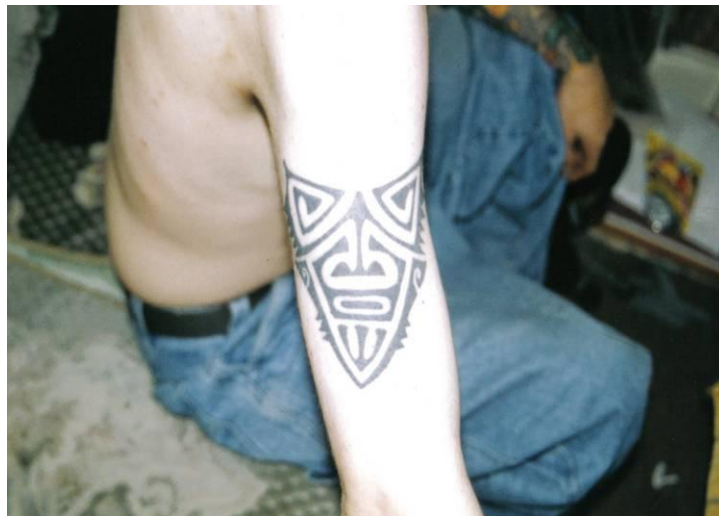


Fig:90 Black work mock “Mexican Tribal”

Note the similarities with tribal tattoos, blackwork originates from alternative aesthetics which are then set into a ‘tribal’ monochromatic context.

Chicano: Also described as Hip-hop style, they are indirectly lifted from American prison tattooing. They originated from a Coptic, Byzantine and Catholic heritage of iconography and symbolism, developed within a Latin and Balkan European background but truly flourished within a Mexican and Latino

traditions (Grover, 1995), while musical (hip-hop, rap etc.) links to the designs have dispersed them globally.



Fig:91 Chicano design (Our Lady of Guadeloupe)

This is a development of Catholic and early Christian iconography.

Biker: These are socially unacceptable designs, such as skulls, grim reapers, bikes, etc. They are a development of working class designs.



Fig:92 Biker design

Portraiture: This is a type of tattooing which creates a high quality reproduction of an individual's photo. This shows a secular development of religious iconography in the specific representation of a person through a tattoo.



Fig:93 Bettie Page Portrait (1950's pin-up)

Portraiture shows the development from the use of icons in a religious context and expanding into the secular world, as seen in the modern context of celebrity is seen as the 'modern' saints of today's world that are found in terms of celebrities and famous individuals such as Bettie.

Japanese: Japanese traditional tattooing or Irezumi is thought to extend back to at least the Jomon or Palaeolithic period which is approximately 10,000 BC (Buruma & Buruma, 1980; Gilbert, 2000; Hambly, 1925). In Japanese calligraphy the word can be written in several ways, the most common being with the Chinese characters which means, “inserting ink” but also literarily means through the use of the characters for “stay” or “remain” and “blue” or “green”, referring to the most popular colour of inks used (Buruma & Buruma, 1980).



Fig:94 Japanese and portraiture designs

This leg shows both Japanese styling {coy-carp lower leg} and western portraiture. The Coy carp is a baby dragon in Japanese mythology (Buruma & Buruma, 1980). The portraiture shows the linkage between the use of classic iconography and the modern context of celebrity as seen as the ‘modern’ saints of celebrities such as Clint Eastwood, James Dean, Billy Holiday, and Jonny

Halladay.

Custom: These are designs when the tattoo customer designs the tattoo that they are purchasing. The input from the tattoo artist varies according to the competence of the artist and relationship with the consumer. They first came to prominence with the Victorian tattooists Tom Riley, Sutherland MacDonald, and George Burchett (Bolton, 1896; Brooklyn, 1903; Burchett, 1956).



Fig:95 Custom work

Custom work has boomed with the influx in the last 25-30 years of classically trained artists becoming tattooists. This parallels the activities of the period of 1880-1920 where Tom Riley, Sutherland MacDonald, and George Burchett extended the artistic imperative within tattooing, a situation paralleled in the period 1980-present.