

A multisemiotic analysis of ‘skinscapes’ of female students at three Western Cape universities



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Transgressive Literacy

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A multisemiotic analysis of ‘skinscapes’ of female students at three Western Cape universities

S. D. Roux

Magister Artium

Abstract

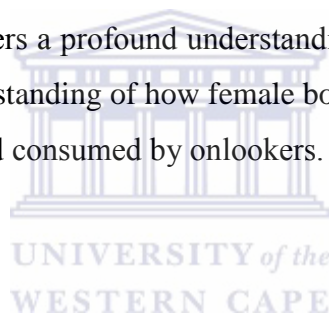
This study used a multisemiotic/multimodal discourse analysis approach to analyze tattoos of selected female students at three Western Cape Universities: the University of the Western Cape (UWC), the University of Cape Town (UCT), and Stellenbosch University (SUN). This study looked at the popular cultural practice of tattooing as a site for identity formation. The aim of this research project was to establish how popular culture is semiotized and resemiotized on corporeal landscapes. The focus was on the kind of semiotics that female students draw on when getting their tattoos, and also where they put these tattoos. The researcher intended to investigate the semiotics of female bodies within the broader field of linguistic landscaping, with a specific look at corporeal linguistic landscapes (Peck & Stroud, 2015). This research was also interested in establishing whether the historical background of each university has an influence on the student population, and subsequently, the tattoos they choose to inscribe on their bodies. This study sought to answer whether there are similarities and/or differences in the tattoos the participants chose across the different campuses and to what effect the social context affects the type of tattoos they chose. All participants were selected via purposive sampling. This means that only those with visible tattoos were approached, as they met the criteria described above (cf. Patton, 1990; Kumar, 1999). Methodologically, interviews as well as text data collection were used to collect the data. In addition, a multimodal text analysis was used as the tattoos were read as texts.

Among others, the findings indicated that female participants negotiate their femininity by acquiring traditionally feminine tattoo designs, relatively small in size, which are typically placed where they can be concealed easily. This in contrast with male tattoo designs which tend to be bigger and more visible. It was found that there was preference for solitary texts

designs across the three campuses followed by a combination of text and image. In terms of agency, it was found that participants were agentive by being able to control who read and how others read their bodies.

The study concludes that women are mindful of their female identity when they choose the designs, sizes and placements of their tattoos. It was found that they typically defy social norms through getting tattoos, but at the same time adhere to social (and feminine) norms by using small tattoos emplaced in hidden body spaces. This means there is a restriction on who is allowed to consume the tattoos.

This study adds to a deeper understanding of tattooing as popular culture at universities in post-apartheid South Africa. It also contributes to recent development in corporeal linguistic landscapes studies. In turn, it offers a profound understanding of the concept of ‘skinscapes,’ which allows for a deeper understanding of how female bodies are ‘authored’ by the tattooee as well as how they are ‘read’ and consumed by onlookers.



Declaration

I declare that *A multisemiotic analysis of 'skinscapes' of female students at three Western Cape universities* is my own work, that it has not been submitted before, for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted, have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Shanleigh Dannica Roux

Signed..... Date



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I would like to thank everyone who has contributed towards the process of completing this thesis:

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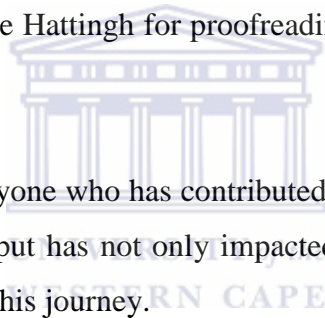


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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.0. Introduction

This study looked at the inscribed signage of the female body within the popular cultural practice of tattooing. In particular, this study investigated selected female students with tattoos at the University of the Western Cape, the University of Cape Town, and Stellenbosch University. The researcher was interested in establishing how female students use the popular cultural practice of tattooing to negotiate their identity as female.

This chapter will firstly provide a brief history of tattooing, as it is the overarching focus of this research. Thereafter, the researcher will provide an historical background to the above-mentioned universities. Next, the statement of the problem, research aim, objectives, research questions and research hypotheses are provided. Then, the scope of the study as well as the significance of the study will be discussed. Lastly, the chapter outline of this study will be provided.



1.1. History of tattooing

Tattooing refers to “the insertion of colored pigment into the dermal layer through a series of punctures of the skin in order to create a permanent marking” (Tiggemann & Hopkins, 2011: 245). It is a practice that dates from prehistoric human existence (Neville, 2005), with evidence of the prevalence of tattoos dating back 5 000 years, in Europe (Wohlrab, Stahl & Kappeler, 2007).

Blanchard (1994) and Sanders (1989), as cited in Fisher (2002), have identified four overlapping functions of tattoos. Firstly, the tattoo functions as a ritual. For example, tattooing functions as the physical marking of a life event on the body. Secondly, tattooing functions as identification. For example, the tattooee identifies himself/herself as part of a certain group, through the inscription of certain symbols. Thirdly, tattooing is protective. For example, the tattoo functions as a talisman to protect the tattooee from harm. Lastly, tattooing has a decorative function. In other words, tattoos are images that permanently decorate the body.

Tattoos have served as markers of identity throughout the years, and it has also literally been seen as a site of struggle. For example, Ancient Greeks used tattoos to mark their slaves as well as criminals, and the Maori tribes from New Zealand tattooed their faces to convey information such as status and achievement (Doran, 2010). Also, during the 1700s, sailors used tattoos to express political beliefs, religious faith and professional membership, and during the 1800s, European sailors used tattoos for identification and affiliation (Doran, 2010). Clearly, tattoos are used by various individuals and groups, for the display of identity as well as meaning making and signalling membership to a particular group.

In the past, tattoos were associated with marginalized groups such as bikers, sailors, convicts, and people of lower socioeconomic status (Nichols & Foster, 2005). During this time, tattoos were mostly associated with men, and “showing one’s masculinity was considered an important motive” (Robbins, 2006:160). In addition, having tattoos was viewed as an act of deviance or rebellion (Tiggeman & Golder, 2006).

Body modification refers to “permanent modes of body decoration” and include contemporary varieties such as piercing, scarification, branding and also tattooing (Atkinson & Young, 2008: 15). The contemporary practice of these examples of body modification date back to the 1960s, and gained popularity by the 1980s (Neville, 2005). During the 1980s, the punk movement as well as the “gay movement” picked up body modification as a protest against the conservative norms of society (Wohlrab *et al.*, 2007). Body modification remained a provocative element of various sub-cultures until the 1990s (Wohlrab *et al.*, 2007).

In recent years, however, tattooing has become a visible and popular aspect of mainstream Western culture. Since the 1980s, the reputation of tattooed people has changed (Kang & Jones, 2007) and in the last decade, body modification increased immensely in popularity, not only rising in numbers but also in range of social classes (Wohlrab *et al.*, 2007). The new tattoo generation includes educated professionals who prefer to see their tattoos as fine art, thus distinguishing themselves from bikers and “low lifes” (DeMello, 1995: 38).

According to Madfis and Arford (2013), we are presently in a post tattoo renaissance era. This means that we live in an era where tattoos are increasingly becoming a legitimate form of art that is accepted by American middle class citizens. Added to this, tattooists identify themselves as artists and they legitimize this medium of expression by improving their technical skills and creating innovative designs and techniques (Sanders & Vail, 2008, as

cited in Madfis & Arford, 2013). The tattoo renaissance also refers to “the drastic expansion of clientele” (Madfis & Arford, 2013: 548). This means that while the group of tattooed individuals previously consisted of marginalized groups such as bikers and sailors, it has now expanded to include members of middle and upper class society (Rubin, 1988, as cited in Madfis & Arford, 2013). The tattoo renaissance also marked an increase in the number of women getting tattoos (Robbins, 2006; Rubin, 1988, as cited in Madfis & Arford, 2013). Madfis and Arford (2013: 548) state that “after the renaissance, tattoos transitioned to become a more socially acceptable form of self-expression for the larger population”.

The recent increase in tattoos is caused by the cultural commercialism in the media (Wohlrab *et al.*, 2007). Tattoos are no longer mainly associated with criminals, but are now also associated with countless celebrities, including actors and actresses, sport stars, musicians and reality television stars such as Angelina Jolie and Kat von D. (Kang & Jones, 2007; Lombard & Bergh, 2014). Lombard and Bergh (2014: 193) state that “[y]oung people follow trends, admire celebrities, and are influenced by images in the popular media”. As a result of this increase in celebrities with tattoos, young individuals are more likely than ever to obtain tattoos themselves. Television shows such as *LA Ink* and *Miami Ink* glamorize the practice of tattooing and therefore have a significant influence on young adults. The opposite is also true. The popularity of tattoos has inspired these television shows and is also the reason for its success.

According to Ginn (2009, as cited in Doran 2010), one of the indicators that tattooing has entered the mainstream is the presence of tattoo parlours in upscale shopping malls and districts. Kosut (2006:74) states that “[a]nother significant sign of tattoos’ shifting cultural status is that tattoo art and artifacts are being exhibited under the rubric of art in galleries and museums”. In addition, Vail (1999) points out that tattoo aficionados consider tattoos to be fine art and therefore collect it on their bodies.

Currently, tattooing is most popular among teenagers and college students (Kang & Jones, 2007). Armstrong, Roberts, Koch, Saunders, Owen and Anderson (2008) state that, among people aged 18 to 30, 25% of them have tattoos and in the next few years, it is estimated to reach 40%. Since such a significant number of youths have tattoos, it would be interesting to establish how they express their identities through the popular cultural practice of tattooing. The researcher will therefore look specifically at university students, as they typically fall in the age bracket of 18-30, thus forming part of the group which is most likely to have tattoos.

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in academic literature on tattoos, which indicates its importance, not only as a fashion statement, but also as an expression of identity, which is an important area of academic research. For example, there are studies linking tattoos and religion (Scheinfeld, 2007), articles on motivation for getting tattoos (Stirn, Oddo, Peregrinova, Phillip & Hinz, 2011; Kang & Jones, 2007; Wohlrab *et al.*, 2007), as well as articles stating that tattoos are an expression of uniqueness (Tiggeman & Hopkins, 2011). Other studies link tattooed individuals to deviancy (Madfis & Arford, 2013; Nathanson, Paulhus & Williams, 2006; Koch, Roberts, Armstrong & Owen, 2010), eating disorders (Preti, Pinna, Nocco, Mulliri, Pilia, Petretto & Masala, 2006), risk-taking (Preti *et al.*, 2006; King & Vidourek, 2013; Roberts, Auinger & Ryan, 2004), and sensation-seeking (Roberti, Storch & Bravata, 2003; Stirn, Hinz & Brähler, 2006). There are studies which investigate the role of sexual abuse on the frequency of body modifications (Stirn *et al.*, 2011). There are also articles surrounding the topic of tattoo removal (Cegolon, Baldo, Xodo, Mazzoleni & Mastrangelo, 2011; Koljonen & Kluger, 2012) as well as on tattoos and regret (Madfis & Arford, 2013).

As seen above, extensive research on tattoos has been conducted from various fields, as well as various points of view. However, there is a lack of research done on tattoos as popular culture in a South African context. Therefore, this study brings a new angle to an old art form, bringing into focus the way women mark themselves while enacting their self-expression. As mentioned before, popular culture has a big influence on the youth, of which many are university students. This study therefore looks at university students at three South African universities in the Western Cape Province, most of whom are young individuals. The following section provides a background to the universities which were used for this study, namely the University of the Western Cape (UWC), the University of Cape Town (UCT) and the University of Stellenbosch (SUN).

1.2. Historical backgrounds of the Universities

The legacy of apartheid in South Africa (1948-1994) left a lingering impact on many institutions, including universities. During the apartheid era, the government aimed to create a higher education sector that restricted black South Africans in terms of access to higher education, by only offering a narrow range of fields of study to them, in order to divide labour in terms of race (Barnes, 2006). The Extension of University Education Act of 1959,

which formed part of racial segregation in South Africa, “was one of the centerpieces of ideology and policy in the days of high apartheid” (Barnes, 2006: 150). According to Barnes (2006: 150), “[t]he apartheid government was largely successful in achieving an institutional basis of differentiation”. The government contributed to the privilege of a white South Africa by providing a full range of educational services to certain institutions, subsequently known as the historically advantaged institutions (HAIs) (Barnes, 2006). The University of Cape Town and Stellenbosch University are HAIs. Conversely, other institutions were forced to provide inferior or so-called “gutter” education to the students (Barnes, 2006: 150). These institutions are referred to as the historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs), one of which is the University of the Western Cape (Barnes, 2006). These three universities are unique and differentiated from one another by their political history, resulting in different socio-economic statuses and language use. Each of the universities used in this study still has distinctive brand identities (Mafofo and Banda, 2014).

Since the onset of democracy, progress has been made in terms of providing higher education to black South Africans (Green Paper for Post-School Education, 2012). However, the effects of apartheid and colonialism can still be seen in the education and training system (Green Paper for Post-School Education, 2012). Historical inequalities still have an impact on the distribution of poverty and wealth in society, and also in the patterns wherein formal education is distributed (Green Paper for Post-School Education, 2012). While South Africa’s leading universities are internationally respected, South Africa’s historically black universities continue to face severe financial and resource constraints (Green Paper for Post-School Education, 2012). In addition, although there has been a dramatic increase in black students and female students enrolling in higher education institutions, gender and racial inequalities are still prevalent, as evident in the patterns of enrolment (Green Paper for Post-School Education, 2012).

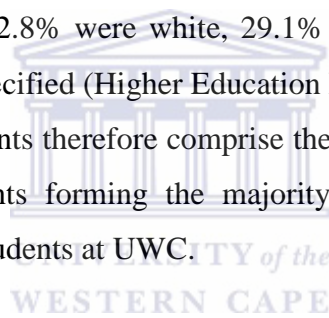
This study focuses specifically on the University of the Western Cape, Stellenbosch University and the University of Cape Town. The following section provides a brief background to these universities.

1.2.1. The University of the Western Cape

The University of the Western Cape was established in 1959, and is thus the youngest of the three universities dealt with in this study. This university was established as a constituent college of the University of South Africa for people classified as coloured¹, with the first group of 166 students enrolling in 1960. The University of the Western Cape has a history of creative struggle against oppression, discrimination and disadvantage (www.uwc.ac.za). A large number of students at UWC come from underprivileged backgrounds.

UWC was known as a “bush college” (Gerhart, 1979), a clear indicator of the times when apartheid positioned UWC as a second-rate university in relation to the University of Stellenbosch and UCT. Despite this status, UWC has the best law faculty in South Africa. Currently, UWC is known as a multilingual and multicultural campus.

In the demographic profile of all students at UWC in 2012, female students made up 60% of the student population. Of this, 2.8% were white, 29.1% coloured, 24.6% were black, 3% were Indian and 0.5% were unspecified (Higher Education Management Information Systems Table HEMIS 2.7). Female students therefore comprise the highest number at this university, with coloured and black students forming the majority. Notably, there is still a small contingent of white and Indian students at UWC.



1.2.2. Stellenbosch University

Although the history of The University of Stellenbosch (SUN) dates as far back as the 17th century, this institution gained official university status in 1918 (www.sun.ac.za). SUN is therefore the second youngest of the three universities discussed in this study.

This University was first known as Victoria College. According to the university website, “[t]he adoption of the University Act in 1916 by the then Union of South Africa Parliament paved the way for the establishment of a university”. On 2 April 1918, Victoria College became Stellenbosch University due to a £100 000 donation by a local benefactor, Mr Jan Marais of Coetzenburg (www.sun.ac.za).

¹ Racial categories in South Africa include African, white, coloured, and Indian (i.e. South Africans originating from Asia) (Gibson & Gouws, 2005).

The University of Stellenbosch is comparable to UCT because of the degrees offered, specifically medical sciences. This university is often known as a largely Afrikaans dominated institution (Mabokela, 2000). During the apartheid era, Afrikaans universities would indoctrinate Afrikaner youth with the belief that the Afrikaner race (whites) was superior (Mabokela, 2000). The ramifications of this practice is still visible, as seen in the controversial documentary “#luister”, giving accounts of the experiences of black non-Afrikaans speaking students on campus.

The university opened its doors to people of colour in 1978, but on a limited scale (Tamminga, 2006). It was not until the early 1990s that the University of Stellenbosch opened to all races (Tamminga, 2006). Since then, the increase in black students at this university has only been gradual (Tamminga, 2006). The contributing factor to this is the primary medium of instruction at this university (Afrikaans), which excludes the majority of black students, as this language is usually their third or fourth language (Tamminga, 2006).

In the demographic profile of all students at the University of Stellenbosch in 2012, female students made up 50.7% of the student population. Of this, 33.4% were white, 9.2% coloured, 7% were black, and 1.1% was Indian (HEMIS 2.7). As seen here, female students comprise a slightly higher number when compared to male students at this university. In addition, white students form the majority at this university. Notably, SUN is still a predominantly Afrikaans university. However, the language policy of SUN is changing, as the university has recently announced that all learning at this institution will soon take place in English (Petersen & Evans, 2015).

1.2.3. University of Cape Town

UCT is the oldest of the three universities explored in this study. The University of Cape Town was founded in 1829, and was then known as the South African College, interestingly, a high school for boys. It consisted of three educational levels: primary school, secondary school, as well as a small university section (Devine & Summerfield, 2013). According to Devine and Summerfield (2013), the university component became the University of Cape Town in April 1918. Today, it is one of Africa's leading teaching and research institutions (www.uct.ac.za).

A key development for the university from 1880-1900 was the admission of women as students (www.uct.ac.za). Also, from the 1980s to the early 1990s, the number of black students admitted to the university rose by 35%. By 2004, nearly half of UCT's 20 000 students were black and just under half of the student body was female (www.uct.ac.za). UCT is similar to UWC in that it is one of the most diverse campuses.

In the demographic profile of all students at UCT in 2012, female students made up 52.1% of the student population. Of this, 17.5% were white, 7.9% coloured, 14% were black, 3.4% were Indian and 9.3% were unspecified (HEMIS 2.7). As with the other two universities, female students comprise a higher number when compared to male students. Similar to SUN, white students form the majority at this university. However, English is the main language on this campus.

As seen above, all three universities were greatly affected by the racialized education system of apartheid. The University of Cape town, as well as the University of Stellenbosch had more privileges than the University of the Western Cape, the latter being an historically marginalized university. The above-mentioned universities are situated in the Western Cape, but have very different histories, demographics and branding identities. Furthermore, the locations of the universities can also be said to have an influence on the type of students enrolling in the respective institutions (in terms of their socio-economic status). While SUN and UCT are both located in affluent areas, UWC is located on the Cape Flats. The Cape Flats is “Cape Town’s largest residential quarter, taking in the coloured districts, African townships and shantytown squatter camps”². It could therefore be argued that most students at the SUN and UCT would come from privileged backgrounds, while most students at UWC do not.

Bearing in mind the languages, identities and other social semiotics constituting the historical differentiation of these universities, I have chosen them as my research sites. It would be interesting to establish whether the historical and socio-economical differences of these universities have an influence on the participants, and subsequently, the type of tattoos they have.

² <http://www.roughguides.com/destinations/africa/south-africa/cape-town-and-the-cape-peninsula/the-cape-flats-and-the-townships/>

Additionally, it has been established that female students make up more than half of the student population at all three universities. They therefore not only represent themselves as females, but also a large part of their respective universities.

1.3. Statement of the problem

While the history and demographics of the above-mentioned universities are easily obtainable, not many studies have been done on popular cultural practices at these universities. The usefulness of popular culture as an analytical tool is still very much underused. The researcher is particularly interested in tattoos as part of popular culture for many young people in South Africa, as tattoos are used by them to form and portray certain identities. Bearing in mind the different histories and stated demographics of the three universities, this study problematizes the human body and its semiotic landscaping within the popular culture of tattooing. By semiotic landscaping we mean inscriptions on the body which can be read. It would therefore be interesting to see if there are, in fact, differences in the popular cultural practices at the three universities. Importantly, the study problematizes the role, if any, that the university itself impacts on the types of tattoos selected.

This research focuses on the body as a semiotic/linguistic landscape. By referring to the body as such, one is saying that the body is a moving site, on which individuals can place signs that others can read and interpret (Peck & Stroud, 2015). The study of linguistic landscapes is fairly new (Landry & Bourhis, 1997; Gorter, 2006). Therefore, the body as a unit of analysis is new in the field of linguistic landscapes and few studies have been done on the body as a linguistic landscape. This is a departure from many studies in South Africa which still largely look at women in terms of race. Very little is known about how females are shaping their bodies in contemporary times. Therefore, little research has been done on how females are voicing their identity through semiotics. Semiotics refer to the study of signs and the meanings communicated through these signs (Barron, 2012) and they take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures and objects (O'Halloran, 2011). By utilizing female students for this research, this study hopes to further problematize the agency of female bodies and the notion of femininity. The research will also be problematizing whether different language ideologies can be 'read' on the bodies of the female students at the various universities.

Tattoos problematize bodies because, as recent studies have shown, work on bodies, i.e. mobility of the body within various ‘social worlds’ (cf. Kress, 2011), focus on the body, skin colour or gender. The female form has always been a site of struggle and tattooing is no exception. Furthermore, tattoos problematize the female body. Case in point, the lower back tattoo, once a fashion statement among females, is now known by the derogatory term ‘tramp stamp’. The lower back is seen as a highly sexualized area to get a tattoo (Kang & Jones, 2014). Therefore, females who choose to get a tattoo in this area are seen as ‘tramps’, in other words, they are seen as being promiscuous. There is however no male equivalent of the ‘tramp stamp’. This is indexical of the inequality that exists in terms of tattoos and gender. This label that has been given to females with lower back tattoos brings into focus how female bodies are being read and how their bodies are mediated in society.

Adding to this, notions of femininity have been under-researched. Similarly, little is known about the tattooing practices of young females at the various universities. Tattooing is a practice that is normally associated with males, and has in the past been associated with marginalized groups and ‘deviant’ members of society (Shelton & Peters, 2008; Tiggeman & Golder, 2006; Armstrong *et al.*, 2008). In the Western Cape, tattoos emerge in a variety of ways, as seen in the different types of tattoos, such as prison tattoos, commercial/mainstream tattoos, alternative tattoos as well as three-dimensional (3D) tattoos.

While artistic license is given to females and males in the cultural practice of tattooing, it is arguably not an equal landscape for both genders. Tattooing is a creative way in which women express their identities and it would be interesting to see similarities, as well as the differences, across the three universities. It would also be interesting to see whether the placement of tattoos is similarly considered appealing or transgressive across the three universities.

1.4. **Research aim**

The main aim of this study is to establish how popular culture is semiotized and resemiotized on corporeal landscapes, i.e. on female bodies. This study will focus on female students at three universities in the Western Cape. Corporeal Linguistic Landscapes, also known as ‘skinscapes’, is formulated as an extension of linguistic landscape studies.

1.5. Objectives

The study is geared towards achieving the following:

1. To investigate how tattooed female students map their bodies.
2. To investigate the kind of semiotic material used in the tattoo designs.
3. To explore the identities depicted by women through their choice of tattoo designs.
4. To determine whether placement, design and size are gender-related.
5. To determine whether the notion of 'skinscapes' facilitate a deeper understanding of tattooed bodies.
6. To establish whether there is a differential effect in tattoos across campuses.
7. To explore bodily and semiotic constructions of femininity.

1.6. Research questions

This study is motivated by the following research questions:

1. To what extent do commonplace gender beliefs influence the type of tattoo selected, as well as its size and placement on the body?
2. To what effect does the social context of the participants affect the type of tattoos they have?
3. Are there similarities/differences in the tattoo trends across the different campuses (specifically social structuring of language, if any)?

1.7. Research hypotheses

This study offers the following hypotheses:

1. Females select tattoos that are considered as traditionally feminine (Atkinson, 2002; Irwin, 2001).
2. Female students with tattoos generally represent themselves as impulsive (Cano & Sams, 2010).
3. The histories, practices, language ideologies and location of the universities have an influence on the tattoos chosen by the participants.

1.8. **Scope of the Study**

This study is limited to female students at three Western Cape universities, namely the UWC, UCT and SUN. Since the researcher is investigating how tattooed females construct their identities, only female students with tattoos were asked to participate in this study. Undergraduate as well as postgraduate students from all faculties were approached to participate in this study. Only visible tattoos were considered for analysis (e.g. tattoos on the neck, arms, and legs), thus excluding all private tattoos. Tattoos on private areas on the body were not considered for visual analysis (although considered when tallying the tattoos of the respective students and grouping of tattoos), bearing in mind ethics with regards to academic research.

1.9. **Significance of the Study**

This study advances our understanding of identity construction through the practice of tattooing among female university students in the Western Cape. As mentioned before, the focus of the problem in this study is the semiotics of the body, particularly the female body. While academic literature on tattoos in Cape Town, South Africa usually focus on prison gang tattoos (cf. Gambetta, 2009), this study focuses on the popular cultural practice of tattooing. Looking at popular culture provides valuable insight into the tattooed female body. Furthermore, the research for this study focuses specifically on females, thus also moving away from studies of males with tattoos. In addition, previous research on tattoos has focused on hypermasculinity, violence and the male form, which is not the focus of this study. Lastly, not much research has been done on university students with tattoos. This study thus takes a new perspective on individuals with tattoos, meaning that, instead of looking at the ‘deviant’ side of tattoos, this study looks at the popular cultural side, as practised by female university students.

1.10. **Chapter outline/Structure of the thesis**

Chapter One provided a summary of the research in terms of the history of tattooing, background information on the three universities, as well as the statement of the problem, aims, objectives, research questions and research assumptions.

Chapter Two contains existing literature on the research topic. This chapter starts with a discussion of literature on identity, with specific focus on the theory of performative identity. Thereafter, literature on tattoos and its link with identity formation is discussed. Literature on tattoos and identity, as well as females and tattoos is discussed. Furthermore, literature on Linguistic Landscape studies is reviewed, with specific focus on the definition, the history of Linguistic Landscape studies, the link between Linguistic Landscape studies and multilingualism, as well as Linguistic Landscape studies and its link with agency. Additionally, literature on ‘skinscapes’ and geosemiotics are reviewed. Lastly, this chapter covers literature on transgressive semiotics.

Chapter Three outlines the theoretical framework, which includes postmodernism, with specific focus on the body as text as well as feminist theory. This chapter also includes theory on popular culture, with its sub-theories intertextuality and hybridity. This chapter also looks at multimodal/multisemiotic discourse analysis, resemiotization and semiotic remediation, recontextualization, critical discourse analysis, as well as thematic analysis.

Chapter Four discusses the research design used in the study. It also outlines the data collection and data sampling procedures that were followed and it discusses the ethical considerations involved in these procedures.

Chapter Five presents the quantitative findings of this study. The findings are presented in four tables. The first table is a representation of the number of ‘existing’ tattoos of the participants, as well as the ‘aspirational’ and ‘undesirable’ placements as identified by participants. The second table is a representation of the findings discussed in the first section of this chapter. The third table categorizes the tattoos in terms of the semiotic material used within the tattoo design. The fourth table represents the languages used in the tattoos.

Chapter Six focuses on the placement, design and size of the tattoos, as well as the kind of semiotic material used in the tattoo designs, including how different semiotic material is resemiotized and remediated to make meaning. This also includes attempting to isolate the norms and motivations behind the re-using and repurposing particular images and verbal texts.

Chapter Seven focuses on female identity construction through tattooing, by using Critical Discourse Analysis. This chapter also looks at whether there is a differential effect in tattoos across the three campuses, and where possible, across different ethnic groups.

Chapter Eight explores alternative forms of femininity found in the tattoo narratives by using Thematic Analysis.

Chapter Nine elicits conclusions from the analysis. This chapter includes a consideration of whether the thesis achieved its objectives, and also discusses the limitations of the study, as well as suggestions for further research.



CHAPTER 2 – IDENTITY, TATTOOS, LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPES AND TRANSGRESSIVE LITERACY

2.0. Introduction

The following section will firstly look at previous research done on the concept of identity. Thereafter, the researcher will focus specifically on research pertaining to the relationship between tattoos and identity, including its relevance in the South African context. Next, the researcher will discuss literature focusing on females and tattoos. This chapter will also look at literature on linguistic landscapes, detailing its evolution over time. Literature on ‘skinscapes’ will be reviewed, as this departure from linguistic landscapes is intriguing to this study as it focuses specifically on corporeal narratives. Finally, literature on transgressive theory will be reviewed, as tattoos can be seen as transgressive, i.e. going beyond what is considered to be the norm.



2.1. Identity

Identity refers to the defining characteristics of an individual. It refers to those aspects that make people unique or indicates belonging to a certain group. Identities are, however, not fixed but continually constructed and performed (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). Pavlenko and Blackledge point out the multiplicity of identity, meaning that instead of giving privilege to one aspect of an identity, for example gender or ethnicity, they acknowledge that identities consist of multiple aspects such as age, gender, sexual orientation, institutional affiliation, and so forth (2004: 16). These aspects influence each other in the sense that they modify and redefine one another (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004: 16).

According to Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004), there are numerous ways that people negotiate identities, whether through linguistic practices or through celebrating certain holidays as well as certain food and clothing choices. As seen here, individuals are able to reveal certain aspects of their identities through other mediums besides language. In this study, the researcher argues that identities can also be negotiated through body modification, specifically tattooing.

Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004: 20) are interested in human agency, which they use to refer to “the instances where individuals resist, negotiate, change, and transform themselves and others”. Individuals employ linguistic and social resources to either resist identities which are assigned to them by others and often position them in a negative light, or to produce new identities (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). Similarly, Cameron (1999) states that people are conscious agents, and as a result, they may also choose to transgress, subvert or resist existing norms through speech. The researcher argues that gender norms can also be transgressed through, amongst other things, clothing, hairstyles, and also tattoos.

Contemporary theorists believe that identities are not fixed and predetermined, but it is something that we acquire throughout life (Ferris, Peck & Banda, 2013). Individuals perform multiple identities by appropriating a range of semiotic modes such as dress, gestures, and so forth (Ferris *et al.*, 2013). Another mode appropriated in the performance of identity is tattoos. According to Ferris *et al.* (2013: 373), identity is “*performed, enacted, or constructed* in the context of everyday interactions”. They use the concept of performative identity to refer to the notion that “our identity is the product of our performance” (Ferris *et al.* 2013: 373). The researcher agrees with this standpoint and is interested in establishing how the women in this study use tattooing to perform their identities.

Coupland and Jaworski (2001) state that communication is a ritualised process which allows its participants to project and construct their identities through performances, which is also true of tattooing, as tattooing is a site for identity formation, as stated earlier. Coupland and Jaworski (2001) also point out that these performances change based on who the audience is. Tattooed individuals can choose to conceal or reveal their tattoos based on who they are communicating with.

Simone de Beauvoir’s (as cited in Butler, 1988: 519) claim that “one is not born, but, rather *becomes* a woman” shows that gender is viewed as an identity that is established through a “stylized repetition of acts”. When looking at gender, which forms part of an individual’s identity, Butler (1988) found that people become a particular gender based on their performance. Gender, sexuality and desire, according to Butler (1988), are intentional and performative. In this sense, performative does not merely mean that gender is performed; it means that gender is “produced in the performance” (Butler, 1988: 150). In addition, gender “must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self” (Butler, 1988:

519). This research is interested in establishing how women utilize tattooing to portray their identity and possibly perform femininity through their tattoos.

Cameron (1999: 444) explains Butler's concept of performativity as follows: "[g]ender has to be constantly reaffirmed and publicly displayed by repeatedly performing particular acts in accordance with the cultural norms (themselves historically and socially constructed, and consequently variable) which define 'masculinity' and 'femininity'". Femininity and masculinity are therefore seen as a routine performance, and not as a given. This research is interested in establishing how the participants perform gender, through the use of bodily semiotics, specifically tattooing.

Similarly, Milani and Shaikjee (2013: 131) believe that gender is performed, adding that these practices are routine performances and "often at a low level of awareness". According to Milani and Shaikjee (2013), individuals creatively deploy semiotic modes in these performances, such as linguistic and other resources used to make meaning, such as dress and gestures. Through these performances, individuals "align themselves with or against culturally available images or models of masculinity and femininity at a given moment in time" (Milani & Shaikjee, 2013: 132). They looked at how popular culture is used in mass media to portray notions of masculinity and femininity. Gender was found to be constructed through multimodal sources such as words, song lyrics, and images, thus looking at gender as performed, rather than simply as an attribute that one has (Milani & Shaikjee, 2013). Similarly, and of interest to this study, is the construction of gender on the female body through tattoos.

The researcher is particularly interested in the possibility of the hybridity of gender roles in the participants. Gender is viewed as a socio-cultural construct which is expressed both overtly and covertly through spoken and written language (Nhlekisana, 2013). Gender, as a social construct, is part of a large body of knowledge that is used by cultures to explain the world, establish beliefs and attitudes, as well as to structure and justify social action (Nhlekisana, 2013). This socio-cultural construct encompasses different expectations of how men and women are supposed to behave, such as the control and division of labour, sexual taboos and dress code (Nhlekisana, 2013). Nhlekisana (2013) further states that gender includes the ways in which men and women are represented in various genres, including songs. According to Nhlekisana (2013), gender theory is a useful tool for highlighting the

different roles and responsibilities which are ascribed to men and women by society, which is often a disadvantage to women.

Cameron (1999) is particularly interested in the performance of gender identity through language. According to Cameron (1999), traditional sociolinguists believed that the way people talk stems from a fixed identity (e.g. as male or female). Postmodernists, on the other hand, believe that “people are who they are because of (among other things) the way they talk” (Cameron, 1999: 444). Identity is therefore constructed in part through language, but also informed by extralinguistic features.

2.2. Tattoos and identity

The connection between tattoos and identity have been an area of interest for many scholars. The following section will look at studies on tattoos and identity. Sweetman (1999, as cited in Hiramoto, 2015: 110), states: “[b]e it expected or unexpected, traditional or a new type of identity constructed in the name of global fashion or something else entirely, tattooees do make a commitment, and certain assumptions about their identity come with the semiotics mediated through their tattoo”. Tattooing is a permanent commitment made by individuals and can be intentionally used to construct identities. Furthermore, Sweetman (1999, as cited in Hiramoto, 2015), acknowledges that other individuals make assumptions about the tattooees’ identity based on the tattoo(s). This statement shows that tattoos and identity are inextricably linked.

Doran (2010) states that academic literature support the idea that tattoos is closely linked to the creation of identity. Individuals get tattoos in order to create an identity for themselves (Doran, 2010). For example, Edgarton and Dingman (1963, as cited in Doran, 2010) found that individuals use tattoos as a way to develop an identity in cases where they live in circumstances that prohibit identity development or where identity is taken away from an individual, such as in a mental institution or a prison. Tattoos are used to convey certain aspects about the individual, whether it is something they want to believe or something they want others to believe (Doran, 2010). This identity created by the individual is not necessarily based on facts, but rather what he wants others to believe (Doran, 2010).

Tattoos serve different purposes for different people. For example, Tiggeman and Golder (2006) found that motivations for tattoos revolve around identity and self-expression. Kang

and Jones (2007) found that individuals use tattoos as a means of asserting independence as well as commemorating important events. Other reasons for getting a tattoo include group affiliations and commitment, physical endurance, personal narratives, resistance, spirituality and cultural tradition, addiction to tattoos, sexual motivations, amongst others (Wohlrab *et al.*, 2007). Tattoos may provide young people a sense of authority and feelings of greater control over their bodies (Kang & Jones, 2007; Wohlrab *et al.*, 2007). It would be interesting to see which of these reasons (if any) ring true for my correspondents.

In a study of college students in America, all participants were asked what would be a reason to obtain a tattoo. The participants received 13 Likert-type questions in order to establish their reasons for obtaining or having tattoos. It was found that 70% of the tattooed participants agreed and strongly agreed that the reason for getting the tattoo was to “express myself”, 70% responded that they obtained the tattoo to “feel unique”, 58% responded that they obtained the tattoo to “be myself, I don’t need to impress anyone anymore”, 50% responded that they obtained the tattoo to “feel independent” and 36% responded that they obtained the tattoo to “distinguish from life experiences” (Armstrong, Owens, Roberts & Koch, 2002: 319). Note that participants could indicate all the possible reasons for having the tattoo, instead of being limited to specific reasons. This illustrates that there are many contributing factors towards having tattoos.

Woodward (n.d.) points out that there is a paradox associated with tattoos in the 21st century. The paradox refers to the fact that the popularity of tattoos is increasing, but the stigma attached to tattoos has not decreased (Woodward, n.d). In addition, tattoo enthusiasts have grown concerned about how their tattoos are perceived by others, which was not the case in earlier years (Woodward, n.d). Kang and Jones (2007: 42) identifies a possible reason for this phenomenon by stating that studies have found that “people cannot fully control the meaning of their own tattooed bodies; the context in which they live shape the responses to and interpretations of their tattoos by others”. These interpretations are often negative. Marczak (2007, as cited in Lombard & Bergh, 2014: 197) states that, even though there has been a marked shift in thought regarding tattoos as well as the stigmatization regarding tattoos, it “can still be seen as an act of defiance, and those wearing it as different from others”.

Goode and Vail (2008) have pointed out why tattooed individuals might not have complete control over how they are perceived by others. According to them, the fact that body modification is voluntary, people are more likely to be judged (Goode & Vail, 2008). As a

result, people “employ a variety of strategies to control information about themselves to make personal characteristics either visible or less visible” (Goode & Vail, 2008: 2). This point emerges in work on ‘skinscapes’, which explores the identity of individuals as well as their ability to conceal or reveal certain aspects of their identity through manipulation of their body.

Lombard and Bergh (2014: 198) state that “[a]lthough there is an element of desire to reveal tattoos, there is often an equally profound desire to conceal tattoos” and this desire “can stem from the deeply personal meaning of the tattoo for the individual or from the deeply embedded social stigma”. Tattooed individuals feel that they have to cover their tattoos in order to avoid being rejected, whether it is in a professional or in a social context (Lombard & Bergh, 2014). In addition, the tattooed individual has little control over how others interpret the tattoo(s). The message that the tattooed individual intends to send, might differ from how the tattoo is understood by the onlooker (Lombard & Bergh, 2014). Tattooed individuals will often hide their tattoos in order “to control the meaning of them: by controlling who gets to see the tattoo gives the tattooee the chance to control the flow of information” (Pitts, 2003, as cited in Lombard & Bergh, 2014: 198). The tattooed individuals therefore show agency with regard to how their bodies are read. It would be interesting to establish whether this is true of the respondents in this study.

Vail (1999) views tattoo collecting as a form of deviance. Therefore, he uses Matza’s (1999) deviance theory, which consists of three stages of becoming deviant, to describe the process of tattoo collecting. These stages are affinity, affiliation and signification. Vail (1999) states that although tattoos are considered less deviant than they once were, becoming heavily tattooed is still considered to be outside the norm. Furthermore, in order to become a collector, one must want to be a collector (Vail, 1999). This process is called *affinity*. It refers to a person’s desire to become deviant (Vail, 1999). The second process to becoming a collector is *affiliation*. Here, “the collector learns how to feel good about being a collector, as well as learning where to place his or her tattoos” (Vail, 1999: 261). The individual learns how to become a collector from other tattoo artists and collectors (Vail, 1999). Now that the individual sees himself as a collector, he or she will “make this self-applied label work for him”, which brings us to the final process of becoming deviant, *signification* (Vail, 1999: 265). During this process, the deviants reconceptualize their actions in order to be appropriate for those who are ‘like that’ (Vail, 1999). According to Vail (1999: 266), “[t]his can have

profound effects on how they view their collections as well as appropriate ways to display them”.

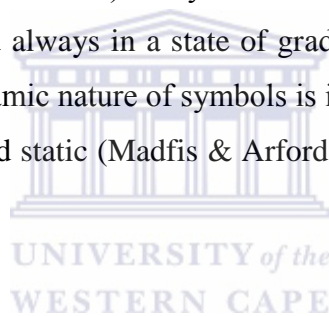
Rozycki (2007) states that, much like clothing fashion, tattoo locations seem to follow trends. Therefore, the popular placements for tattoos are influenced by society as well as the current time period (Rozycki, 2007). The placement of tattoos is of interest to this study, as the researcher is interested in establishing how society influences the choices the participants make in terms of their tattoo designs, as well as where it is placed on the body. The time period wherein the participant acquired the tattoo may also be of importance with regard to how trends change, and consequently, how the participants feel about their older tattoos.

Atkinson and Young (2008) looked at more radical varieties of piercing, tattooing, branding and scarification. They see body modification as “a ‘flesh journey’, or the intentional reconstruction of the corporeal to symbolically represent one’s identity, relationships, or thoughts” (Atkinson & Young, 2008: 15). They argue that “what makes the radical body sociologically interesting is the cultural struggle over legitimate ways of using the body” (Atkinson & Young, 2008: 16). Atkinson and Young (2008: 15) state that “the physical body is like a text, rich in social, cultural, political and religious significance”. The body can therefore be socially constructed, “in the sense that physical changes are voluntarily manufactured as a site for creating and affirming social and cultural meaning” (Atkinson & Young, 2008: 15). In this study, the body is indeed seen as a text which can be ‘read’ by the researcher to explore the identities of the participants.

According to Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004: 18), “[n]arratives play a particularly important role in our account of negotiation of identities”. The cultural transition brought about by the tattoo renaissance is facilitated by tattooed people through narratives in which they ascribe “deep semantic meanings” to their tattoos, and in this way they legitimize their tattoos (Madfis & Arford, 2013: 547). Madfis and Arford (2013: 547) “discuss tattoo narratives as pervasive normative expectations and explore how people face potential dilemmas when they lack them”. The use of tattoo narratives differs from the flash style tattoos in earlier years, where people picked from a limited number of generic designs (Madfis & Arford, 2013). These tattoos were usually obtained by economically disadvantaged and marginalized members of society, who rarely ascribed meaningful narratives to these tattoos (Madfis & Arford, 2013). Of late, tattooees create tattoo narratives to deliberately differentiate themselves from the lower classes who seemingly obtain meaningless tattoos (Madfis &

Arford, 2013). Tattoo narratives have become an important part of tattoos in the post tattoo renaissance era. Madfis and Arford (2013) found that when tattoos are seen to lack depth of thought as well as a lack of meaning, the tattooees receive negative reactions from others. Consequently, they end up regretting these tattoos and opt for tattoo removal or tattoo cover-ups (Madfis & Arford, 2013). However, reasons for tattoo removal are vast and this reason is in no way provided as an absolute motivation for this practice.

As a result of the cultural expectation for tattooed individuals to have tattoo narratives, these individuals have a need for their tattoo narratives to express meanings that symbols cannot accomplish (Madfis & Arford, 2013). Here, symbols refer to the signs that make up the tattoos. Symbols are, according to Madfis and Arford (2013), relative and dynamic. They are relative in the sense that “they are culturally specific, context specific, socially constructed, and subject to countless unique interpretations, denotations, and connotations of different individuals” (Madfis & Arford, 2013: 551). They are also dynamic in the sense that “they are time-specific, ever-changing, and always in a state of gradual transition” (Madfis & Arford, 2013: 551). The relative and dynamic nature of symbols is in contrast to many people’s desire for their tattoos to be absolute and static (Madfis & Arford, 2013). As a result, tattooees may end up regretting their tattoos.



2.3. Females and tattoos

This section will focus specifically on research done on females and tattoos. Women make up 51% of the tattooed population (Laumann & Derick, 2006) even though it was found that tattoos are often seen as a masculine trait (Armstrong *et al.*, 2008). This not only shows the growing popularity of tattoos among females, but also that females are changing the status of tattoos as a “masculine trait”. In a study involving career-oriented females with tattoos, it was found that for them, tattoos symbolize individuality and identity (Armstrong *et al.*, 2008). Tattoos, therefore, can be said to no longer serve as a display of masculinity, but rather as a way of asserting independence and also creating an identity for themselves as women.

Swami (2011: 238) found a gendered pattern in relation to the norms of behaviour that are ascribed to women and men, to an extent that “women bearing tattoos are viewed as transgressing conservative gender attitudes, which in turn results in greater stigmatisation”. For that reason, women with tattoos are more often stigmatized than men with tattoos.

Similarly, research indicates that females with tattoos are more likely to be stigmatized, and as a result they choose to place their tattoos on private areas, allowing them to appear unblemished when coming into contact with strangers or casual acquaintances (Goffman, 1963, as cited in Watson, 1998). This is done by selecting areas of the body which can be easily covered, as well as selecting smaller tattoo designs (Atkinson, 2002, as cited in Doran, 2010). In this way, the woman is able “to conform to stereotypical forms of femininity” (Atkinson, 2002, as cited in Doran, 2010: 16). The design itself is also a technique, together with the placement and size of the tattoo in reinforcing the norms of femininity mediated by society (Doran, 2010). It is of interest to the researcher to establish whether the participants for this research attribute the placement, design and size of their tattoos to their femininity and also whether the stereotypical norms of femininity are maintained in the tattoos in order to avoid stigmatization.

Swami and Furnham (2007) conducted a study of undergraduate students at two British universities. They found that females with tattoos were seen in a more negative light than females without tattoos. Females with tattoos were seen as less attractive, heavier drinkers, and more sexually promiscuous than women without tattoos. These associations became stronger as the number of tattoos increase. In another study, female college students with body modifications showed higher levels of impulsiveness than males (Cano & Sams, 2010: 82). It will be interesting to uncover whether the females in this study count impulsiveness and promiscuity among the reasons for obtaining their tattoos.

Thompson (2015) acknowledges the performative nature of tattooing, and states that tattoos can be used to accentuate femininity, by choosing cute, hidden, small and feminine designs which allow the tattoo to act as an accessory. According to Thompson (2015), women with tattoos are considered to transgress gender norms, and therefore challenge the ‘beauty’ ideal, to which women are expected to aspire. Thompson (2015) states that women are pressured by social influences to keep their tattoo designs feminine. Women who cross these boundaries by getting tattoos of ‘masculine’ designs, such as snakes and skulls, or which are visibly placed and large, receive social sanctions (Thompson, 2015).

Neville (2005) looked at the media representations of females that participate in extreme tattoo practices. She examined contemporary tattoo magazines aimed at extreme body modification communities in terms of their linguistic and visual representation of females who belong to these communities. Looking at these representations are interesting

considering that, in the past, women with tattoos were put on display, appearing in carnival freak shows or in circuses and photographed for ‘pin-up’ reasons. Putting them on display in this manner was therefore a “peep show within a freak show” (Neville, 2005: 45).

Demerson (2001, as cited in Neville, 2005) looked at females with tattoos in contemporary times. According to this study, which was conducted in Montreal, Canada, there are marked gender differences in the size, placement and iconography of contemporary tattoos. It was found that females are likely to get tattoos on their ankles, lower back, shoulders and breasts. Females are also more likely to choose places on the body which can easily be hidden. Males, on the other hand, are more likely to get tattoos on their arms, back, shoulders and chest, and they usually have bigger tattoos than females. In terms of iconography, females tend to select ‘prettier’, more feminine designs such as hearts, flowers and butterflies. Similarly, Sanders (1991: 152) states that women and men choose different designs. While men choose “cartoony, death-oriented, or aggressive images”, women prefer “floral pieces, butterflies, gentle mythical beasts (the unicorn and Pegasus are quite popular), and colorful birds such as parrots or peacocks” (Sanders, 1991: 152).

Sanders (1988, as cited in Watson, 1998) also looked at the difference between males and females with tattoos. Sanders (1988, as cited in Watson, 1998) found that tattoo location is gender specific, as tattoos have different symbolic meanings for males and females. While males think of tattoos as a symbol of self-concept or self-control, and as a display of masculinity, females think of tattoos as primarily decorative, for personal enjoyment or for the enjoyment of significant others. Females, therefore, tend toward public display, rather than thinking of the location in terms of gender (Sanders, 1988, as cited in Watson, 1998).

Robbins (2006) found that meanings attached to tattoos differ for males and females. For instance, it was found that some males interpreted their tattoos as psychologically significant for them while females attached abstract meanings such as love, bonding and hope, as well as more common reasons such as beauty, individuality, and a random decision done at a certain time and place (Robbins, 2006).

Atkinson (2002) and Irwin (2001), as cited in Doran (2010), have found that people use legitimizing and negotiating techniques when considering a tattoo, in order to counter the social perceptions of tattooed individuals. These techniques are used to maintain their identities (Doran, 2010). For example, individuals redefine the purpose of their tattoos in order to fit into accepted social norms by, for example, celebrating an important event. In this

way, they legitimize their tattoos (Irwin, 2001, as cited in Doran, 2010). Also, females select tattoos that appear more 'feminine' than traditional tattoos that are usually associated with sailors and bikers (Atkinson, 2002, as cited in Doran, 2010). Ideas of femininity also become apparent in tattoo selection by females. Respondents' beliefs about what constitutes feminine tattoos will therefore also be of interest in this study.

It was found that the Millennials – those aged between 18 and 29 – are the age group with the most tattoos (Melanson, 2015). University students are most likely to fall within this age range. Respondents in this study fall within this age bracket. In terms of trends for females between the ages of 18 and 25, celebrity copycat tattoos are popular as young females tend to have tattoos that are identical or similar to those of their favourite celebrities. Another trend is getting tattoos that are meaningful. The focus is placed on the meaning and not the design (Cruz, 2013). According to Martin and Dula (2010, as cited in Dickson, Dukes, Smith & Strapko, 2014), college students choose to get tattoos only on places that can easily be covered, which may suggest that they are sensitive to stigma. In addition, while females are just as likely to get tattoos as males, they tend to cover the tattoos more often and they tend to have fewer tattoos (Horne, Knox, Zusman & Zusman, 2007, as cited in Dickson *et al.*, 2014). It would be interesting to see whether the celebrity copycat tattoo and meaningful tattoo trends are also seen in my respondents. It would also be interesting to see whether the respondents cover their tattoos and whether they have fewer tattoos than males.

According to Pitts (2003:49), "women's subcultural body art violates beauty norms in a number of ways, and according to the rhetoric of body modification communities, subverts the social control and victimization of the female body". For example, there are women who use their body art to rebel against male dominance (Pitts, 2003). By becoming heavily tattooed, for example, their aim is to reject beauty norms as well as the stereotypical forms of femininity (Pitts, 2003). In this way, they "'reclaim' power over their own bodies" (Pitts, 2003: 3).

Braunberger (2000: 1) argues that "we read the risks women have taken in becoming tattooed in terms of a revolutionary aesthetics for women". Furthermore, "[t]attooed women complicate recent body theory by staging an aesthetic revolution in 'feminine' beauty" (Braunberger, 2000: 1). From the 19th century, the authority over female bodies has been challenged, and one of these ways has been the tattooing of their bodies (Braunberger, 2000). Braunberger (2000: 1) refers to these transgressive female bodies as "monster beauty".

According to Braunberger (2000: 1), “[t]he written body may only speak from a patriarchal script that tries to limit women’s voices and bodies to supporting roles and scenery”. As a result, any tattoo on a woman’s body “becomes the symbol of bodily excess” (Braunberger, 2000: 1). Additionally, Braunberger (2000) found that whatever meanings women attach to their tattoos are culturally remarked within a broader cultural domain, and therefore the female tattooed body only conveys the meanings which are already attached to it.

Harlow (2008) investigated instances where females use tattooing as a radical, but also positive form of self-identification by obtaining tattoos that reject the existing definition of ‘beauty’. Harlow (2008) specifically looked at the website *Suicide Girls*, which hosts nude images of women who are adorned with tattoos and piercings. This website aims to “redefine beauty through ‘Suicide Girls’ who commit social suicide and assert their own version of non-conventionally aggressive beauty” (Harlow, 2008: 3). These women are therefore seen as agents that resist and undermine existing norms of female beauty by creating their own version of beauty (Harlow, 2008). Similar to Braunberger’s (2000) notion of “monster beauty”, Harlow (2008: 5) uses the term “monstrous beauty”, stating that it “promises a sense of identity that escapes the voyeuristic Playboy culture and engages in the freedom of the senses”. The *Suicide Girls* embrace their ‘monstrous’ bodies (Harlow, 2008).

By the 1900s, feminist movements and the socialization of women into a “beauty culture”, along with the industrial revolution of the twentieth century, began the formation of a consumer society favouring aesthetic surgical procedures, in which tattooing also found a place (Vassileva & Hristakieva, 2007: 368). A popular tattoo trend for women is to get permanent make-up on their faces. Permanent make-up, or cosmetic tattoos, date back to ancient Egypt (De Cuyper, 2008). Cosmetic tattoos are tattoos which simulate make-up (De Cuyper, 2008). Popular cosmetic tattoos include permanent eyeliner, eyebrow tattoos, as well as lip lining (De Cuyper, 2008). This trend has become very popular in recent years (De Cuyper 2008).

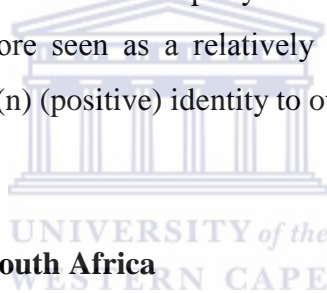
2.3.1. Trends in international tattoo research

According to Bergh, Lombard and van Zyl (2013), there are four trends in international tattoo research, of which three will be explained below, namely Standpoint theory (Aguilar, 2007), the body as commodity (Fisher, 2002), as well as impression management (Tedeschi, 1981).

Standpoint Theory looks at the authority of the individual's own voice, making it an effective tool in the study of the action and reaction associated with tattoos, coming to the conclusion that tattooees "have taken a stand and made their mark on their bodies" (Aguilar, 2007: 20, as cited in Bergh *et al.*, 2013).

Fisher (2002, as cited in Bergh *et al.*, 2013) states that the body has become a commodity, causing individuals to feel alienated from their own bodies. As a result, tattooing, as well as other forms of body modification, is used to reclaim power and ownership over their bodies, as well as to "resist the cultural forces which have commodified the body" (Fisher, 2002, as cited in Bergh *et al.*, 2013: 22).

Individuals use different aids such as clothing, jewellery and cosmetics to enhance their physical attractiveness in order to project positive identities to others (Bergh *et al.*, 2013). According to Bergh *et al.* (2013: 22), "[p]hysical appearance cues are an important aspect of impression management because audiences rapidly form impressions based on physical appearance". Tattooing is therefore seen as a relatively permanent way of altering one's appearance, aimed at projecting a(n) (positive) identity to others (Bergh *et al.*, 2013).



2.4. Tattoos and identity in South Africa

Although tattooing has entered mainstream society, it is also one of the main prison rituals and is seen on most prisoners. It is important for prisoners in South African prisons to have tattoos as it enforces gang hierarchy³. The 'tattoo culture' was introduced to South African prisons by prisoners from foreign countries, during the early 1970s. Tattooing is not allowed in South African prisons and is punishable by means of legal as well as physical action. However, prisoners find a way around this by creating their own tattooing equipment using whatever tools they find. Prisoners use the tattoos to signal the gang they belong to or simply as personal statements. The Numbers prison gang in South Africa consists of the 26s, 27s and the 28s and each gang has its own distinct tattoos⁴. This is particularly relevant to Cape Town prison gangs, where the three universities are located. The researcher wishes to undertake how the different purposes of tattoos in Cape Town have influenced modern tattoo culture here.

³ <http://lostinasupermarket.com/2012/05/gods-gangsters-the-numbers-gangs-south-african-tattoo-prison-culture/>

⁴ <http://thenumbersgang.weebly.com/the-sabela.html>

Tattooing has made major inroads into mainstream society in South Africa (Bosworth, 2010). Tattoo artist, Manuela Gray, from Wildfire Tattoos in Cape Town, South Africa, states that she has clients from all walks of life (Bosworth, 2010). This shows that tattooing is not limited to a certain racial or socio-economic group. In addition, the co-owner of Wildfire Tattoos, Simon White, states that, in the past, people spat at him and threw him with rocks because of his tattoos, but these days, they ask him where he got them and whether they could get the tattoos for a better price (Bosworth, 2010). This shows the differences in the way his body has been 'read' over time, which is of interest in a study of 'skinscapes' and linguistic landscape studies (discussed later in this chapter). This is also proof of the fact that tattoos are much more accepted in society than in previous years. The fact that Wildfire Tattoos, like many other tattoo parlours, is situated in a mall, is a sign that tattooing is now a sought-after commodity for people who can afford it (Bosworth, 2010), and hence is a part of popular culture.

Another sign of the popularity of tattoos in South Africa, and especially Cape Town, is the Cape Tattoo Expo which is held annually in this city. Top international tattoo artists attend this convention, which features original art events, lifestyle vendors, and concerts (www.capetattooconvention.co.za). In this way, mainstream Western tattoo trends are introduced to South Africans.

Lombard and Bergh (2014) looked at the role that tattoos play in expressing identities. Due to the increasing popularity of tattooing among university students, they focused specifically on students from the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein. Lombard and Bergh (2014) set out to establish what the students at this university are trying to communicate through their tattoos. Lombard and Bergh (2014) state that the reasons for obtaining tattoos have changed in the past few decades. For example, while acquiring tattoos in order to experience pain was a popular reason for obtaining tattoos in the past, this trend has changed (Lombard & Bergh, 2014). This also shows how trends change in popular cultural practices. In addition, tattooing is not limited to a particular race or gender, nor is it limited to a specific group.

As seen above, tattooing is a popular practice in South Africa. Tattoos are used by various individuals and groups. Tattoos are no longer associated mainly with prison gangs, and this is seen by the increase of tattoo parlours in malls, the popularity of tattoo conventions, as well as the increase of university students getting tattoos. Tattoos serve various purposes, whether it is for individual expression or to signal that they belong to a certain group. This can be seen

in the South African context as well as other parts of the world. For these reasons, this study is particularly significant because it seeks to uncover the purposes of tattooing for female university students.

The following section will look at literature on linguistic landscape studies.

2.5. Linguistic landscapes

This study is located within the sub-discipline of linguistic landscaping. Landry and Bourhis (1997: 23) define linguistic landscapes as the “visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region”. More specifically, linguistic landscapes refer to:

The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration (Landry & Bourhis, 1997: 25).



Studies on linguistic landscapes therefore focus on “the use of language in its written form in the public sphere” (Gorter, 2006: 2). Gorter (2006: 1) refers to linguistic landscapes as “the language [that] is all around us in textual form as it is displayed on shop windows, commercial signs, posters, official notices, traffic signs, etc.” In light of the recent technological developments, Gorter (2013) has expanded this definition to include other, contemporary, signs. He added the following signs: “electronic flat-panel displays, LED neon lights, foam boards, electronic message centers, interactive touch screens, inflatable signage, and scrolling banners” (Gorter, 2013: 191). Thus, the field of linguistic landscapes is a growing field. In fact, scholars have also started looking at the body as ‘skinscapes’, which will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

Coupland (2010: 2) states that linguistic landscapes are “visualisations of (mainly urban) modernity, and they can bring very different qualities of the contemporary urban experience into focus”. Including the body as a linguistic landscape can also reveal current constructions

of identity and language hierarchy through practices such as the latest fashion trends, including clothing, hairstyles, and tattooing.

Linguistic landscapes, which are also referred to as semiotic landscapes, are “becoming more and more populated with complex social and discourse practices” (Iedema, 2003: 33). Iedema recognizes that “the influence of electronic communication, the globalization of trade and commerce, and the increasingly political-cultural mix of the countries in which we live mark important facets of this changing landscape” (Iedema, 2003: 33).

The above definitions show that the study of linguistic landscapes focuses on languages in public spaces. However, the researcher will be looking at tattooed bodies, and since individuals do not always tattoo solitary texts on their bodies, but also symbols and images, the researcher will be ‘reading’ and analyzing all these semiotics.

The following section will look at the development of linguistic landscape studies over the years.



2.5.1. History of linguistic landscape studies

Earlier studies on linguistic landscapes followed large-scale, quantitative methods (Milani, 2013). For example, researchers would explore how many times different languages occurred together or separately in ‘public texts’ such as shop signs, street names or advertising billboards (Milani, 2013). “These numerical tokens are interpreted as indicators of larger ideological and political language processes” (Milani, 2013: 2). This “drew [researchers’] attention to public signage, rather than policy documents, as the tool through which language policies are not just implemented, but also contested and resisted” (Milani, 2013: 2). Even though the quantitative approach delivers insights on the frequency of certain languages which are visible in the public sphere, “counting signs alone does not tell much about the different authors in the linguistic landscape, their motivations to display or omit certain languages or the specific domains they are used in” (Muth, 2014: 32). Muth (2014) notes that adding a discursive perspective to the quantitative approach will enable researchers to determine the functions, forms and the prestige that languages have in a multilingual context.

In recent years, research on linguistic landscapes has started to shift its focus to qualitative data (Milani, 2013). Researchers use smaller data sets, and they highlight the importance of

going beyond the purely linguistic element in order to grasp the multisemiotic and multimodal nature of the public texts (Milani, 2013). Using qualitative methods has shifted the attention from static objects to mobile artefacts (Milani, 2013). According to Milani (2013: 2), the most current work on linguistic landscape studies “takes an ethnographic sensitivity to public spaces”, with the emphasis on “understanding the human-sign interface, thus exploring the different and very complex ways in which individuals perceive and engage with public signage in their everyday lives”.

This study will incorporate both a quantitative and qualitative design within linguistic landscape studies. The quantitative methodology found in first generation linguistic landscape studies will be used to count the languages, amongst other semiotics, found in the tattoos. In addition, the researcher will use a qualitative approach to establish the participants’ feelings, motivations, beliefs and ideologies, as depicted through their tattoos.

2.5.2. Linguistic landscapes and multilingualism

Due to globalization, linguistic landscapes are rarely purely monolingual spaces (Gorter, 2013). This is as a result of the spread of English in non-English speaking countries as well as the spread of foreign shop names, slogans and brand names in monolingual English speaking countries (Gorter, 2013). Gorter (2013: 191) uses the alternative concept of linguistic landscapes, multilingual cityscapes, which he states is a more precise definition, seeing that researchers are interested in studying the occurrence of multiple languages in urban settings.

Even though the study of linguistic landscapes is important in monolingual contexts, studies of linguistic landscapes are more revealing when they look at multilingualism, the conflict and contact of languages, as well as language variation (Gorter, 2013). Most of the recent studies of linguistic landscapes have focused on the distribution of text types in different cities, analyzing the distribution of languages in bilingual or multilingual spaces (Coupland, 2010). Seeing that the Western Cape is a multilingual space, it would be expected that in cases where language is used in the tattoos of the participants, different languages are appropriated.

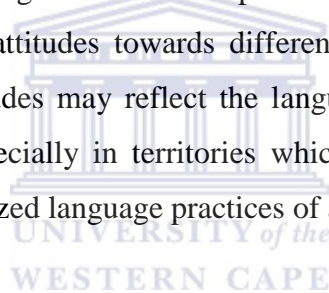
According to Cenoz and Gorter (2006: 68), the study of linguistic landscapes is “particularly interesting in bilingual and multilingual contexts” as the linguistic landscape can provide information on the sociolinguistic context. This research is therefore interested in establishing

whether there are any languages used on the bodies of the participants, in the form of tattoos. However, it is important to note that since tattoos are multimodal/multisemiotic, meaning that people not only inscribe languages on their bodies, but also various icons and pictures, the researcher will look at all these signs and what it symbolizes for the participant.

According to Gorter (2013: 191), “the study of linguistic landscapes aims to add another view to our knowledge about societal multilingualism by focusing on language choices, hierarchies of languages, contact-phenomena, regulations, and aspects of literacy”. The languages used by the participants in their tattoos might possibly reveal certain language ideologies held by them.

Torkington (2009: 123) states that:

Linguistic choices – including code choice or preferences – in public spaces serve to index broader societal attitudes towards different languages and, ultimately, their speakers. These attitudes may reflect the language policies of a particular nation-state or region, especially in territories which are officially bilingual or multilingual, or more localized language practices of a particular community.



The researcher is interested in the linguistic choices made by the participants in their tattoo designs seeing that this might reveal the language ideologies of the participants, as each university is very distinct.

According to Muth (2014: 29), “informal and transient displays of written language such as graffiti, announcements and notes attached to walls and lampposts form an integral part of an urban linguistic landscape”. Furthermore, individuals constantly shape public spaces by the languages they use (Muth, 2014). The language choices individuals make, do not always reflect official language policies or the demographic makeup of the area (Muth, 2014). This is especially prevalent within multilingual contexts (Muth, 2014).

2.5.3. Linguistic landscapes and agency

Linguistic landscapes provide an interesting space for the study of agency as related to language rights, identity and literacy (Woldemariam & Lanza, 2014). Agency is defined as “the socioculturally mediated capacity to act” (Ahearn, as cited in Woldemariam & Lanza, 2014: 80). Furthermore, Woldemariam and Lanza (2014) state that agency is linked with the notion of power, which is illustrated in critical literacy studies where matters of identity, access and power are linked with agency. Language is an important medium to investigate agency, seeing that language is a form of social action (Woldemariam & Lanza, 2014). It would therefore be interesting to establish the degree to which the tattooed female body is agentive, which will be done by investigating instances of agency as depicted through the participants’ narratives, as well as through their tattoos.

2.6. ‘Skinscapes’

According to Bergh, Lombard and van Zyl (2013: 20), “[t]attoos represent a form of body language”, implying that the body is used as a canvas on which tattoos are the ‘message’ that the individual wants to convey to others. Tattoos, therefore, give “new meaning to the expression of ‘reading a person’” (Bergh *et al.*, 2013: 20), seeing that the ‘message’ can be read by others.

This study looks at the body as a skinscape, or a corporeal linguistic landscape where the body is seen as “a collection of *inscriptions in place*” (Peck & Stroud, 2015: 134). The body is therefore ‘read’ in the same way as linguistic landscapes as defined by Landry and Bourhis (1997). The notion of ‘skinscapes’ has evolved from Linguistic Studies in three ways (Peck & Stroud, 2015). Firstly, researchers of ‘skinscapes’ see bodies as constituting space, as opposed to early studies of linguistic landscapes that looked at signs as detached from where it was found. Much of the meaning of the body is derived from its location, and the location itself is impacted by the body. Secondly, the notion of ‘skinscapes’ highlights the fact that the meaning of an inscription is dependent on where it is placed. For example, a tattoo on the face would have different connotations to a tattoo on a hidden area, such as the back, for instance. Thirdly, the body is believed to be both ‘authored’ and ‘read’. In this study, the tattooee is seen as having authorship over her body, therefore intentionally inscribing the body knowing that it will be read and interpreted by others.

Peck and Stroud (2015: 146) state that:

[s]kinscapes offers the field of sociolinguistics a novel (bodily) view of the power relations which exist on the ground. In essence we talk about the body as a sign which can be read externally whilst at the same time becoming a space in which signs are absorbed *into* the body, and impact *affectfully* on the self.

In addition, Peck and Stroud (2015: 146) point out that bodies are in a “continuous state of transformation which carry along with them its own history, trajectory and semiotics”. The body is seen as being deliberately shaped as a way of conveying meaning. In other words, the body is not merely read in terms of colour, gender or ethnicity. It is the authorship of the body by an individual which is read by a real or imagined audience (Peck & Stroud, 2015). It therefore relates to the female’s authorship over her body, meaning that she can choose what message her body conveys to others. What is of importance to this study is how these women convey their identities through the practice of tattooing, and how others ‘read’ these constructed identities. This relates to Pitts’ (2003: 10) statement that the body “is positioned in multiple ways, including as a sight for establishing identity that is read by the self and others”.

Furthermore, the concept of ‘skinscapes’ “encourages us to critically engage with a wider complex of social worlds”, wherein inscriptions of the body (i.e. tattooing) are viewed as being embedded in a system of ‘intertextual aesthetics’ such as popular culture, social class, and so forth (Peck & Stroud, 2015: 149). In addition, the notion of ‘skinscapes’ allows us to investigate the beliefs that spoken language and pigmentation forms the foundation to understanding the agency of bodies (Peck & Stroud, 2015). Lastly, tattoos can be studied at skin level, but it also signals a deeper meaning for the individual (Peck & Stroud, 2015). The researcher will analyze these latent meanings (i.e. feelings, beliefs and ideologies) which are inscribed on the body.

The notion of ‘skinscapes’ implies that the body is read as a linguistic landscape seeing that the body is visible to the public, and the tattooed individual has the agency to communicate any message by using the body (i.e. the skin). Tattoos are signs on the body which can be read, therefore looking at the body as a linguistic landscape is useful to this study. Whether or

not a sign is a linguistic landscape depends on whether these signs can be seen by the public. An individual's decision on the placement of the tattoo is therefore indicative of whether they want others to see it or not.

The act of getting tattoos affords a person agency over how s/he is perceived by others (Kirkland, 2009). Getting a tattoo therefore implies that the individual has the potential to make meaning, and also to comment on their realities in a manner that uses more than just words (Kirkland, 2009). Kirkland (2009) looked at the critical and complex aspects of tattoos as literacy artefacts. In doing so, "one can begin to see how contested spaces such as bodies and permanent bruises act as sites of struggle and storytelling" (Kirkland, 2009: 378). In addition, tattoos are believed to illuminate the meaning making necessary to 'write' one's life in such a way that is not merely possible with a pen and paper (Kirkland, 2009). Furthermore, tattoos connect the individual to his cultural heritage and also gives him a unique voice that narrates his social and personal circumstances (Kirkland, 2009). Kirkland examined a young black man by looking at his body as a literacy artefact. Kirkland (2009) documented that the man's tattoos connected his personal stories, or body narratives, to broader social stories. The body narratives of the participants in this study will help the researcher to gain an understanding of how they make sense of their tattoos in relation to the broader society.

Kirkland (2009) found that certain discourses emerged in the narratives of his research subject, namely coping, connecting and commenting. Kirkland (2009) found that his research subject's tattoos helped him cope with certain tragedies and to move towards a place of healing. In addition, the research subject spoke of his tattoos as connecting him to the present, which is rooted in the past, as well as to other people and their stories. Lastly, his tattoos commented on his life and also his philosophy on life (Kirkland, 2009). This "human side of literacy" demonstrates how the research subject talked about his tattoos (Kirkland, 2009: 385). According to Kirkland (2009: 386), "exploring this aspect of literacy is important as it positions [the subject] as an agent, capable of shaping his life's circumstances, and not simply as a victim, being shaped by them".

Milani (2013) argues that studies on linguistic landscapes ignore sex and gender. According to Milani (2013), there is an absence of feminist epistemologies from existing studies on linguistic landscapes, the reason for that is that the focus has been on the multilingual aspect of signs and not on gender and sexuality. He also notes the importance of the incorporation of queer theory into analytical tools of linguistic landscape research, seeing that it provides the

researcher with a “valuable theoretical lens through which to unveil the operations of power in relation to gender and sexuality (and other social categories) in public space” (Milani, 2013: 1).

As seen above, the human body is an integral part of linguistic landscape studies. It is therefore important not only to look at linguistic landscapes in this study, but also at the new concept of ‘skinscapes’, which potentially offers the field an interesting approach to looking at the body.

2.7. Geosemiotics

Scollon and Scollon (2003: 2) introduced the theoretical framework of geosemiotics, which refers to the “study of social meaning of the material placement of signs and discourses and of our actions in the material world”. Signs, which refer to material objects that point to something other than itself, take much of their meaning from where it is situated (Scollon & Scollon, 2003). Thus, geosemiotics looks at the connection between the sign and where it is placed.

Liang and Huang (n.d: 2) state that “geosemiotics argues that the meaning of texts and signs can only be interpreted in the social and physical world in which they are located”. Signs need to be ‘read’ in context, seeing that the social and physical context contribute to the meaning of the sign. These contexts, with its physical, symbolic and material aspects, act as recourses for the production of the meaning of signs and practices embedded in them (Nichols, 2014).

Scollon and Scollon (2003: 2) acknowledge that “our own bodies give off much of their meaning because of where they are and what they are doing ‘in place’”. To illustrate this point, they provide the following example: an individual wearing no clothing on the beach is considered to be a ‘nude bather’. On the other hand, someone wearing no clothing in their own bathroom is merely someone who is going to take a bath, and not a ‘nude bather’. Similarly, a tattooee in church might elicit different reactions than when he or she is attending a tattoo convention.

Three fundamental principles of geosemiotics are as follows:

- The principle of **indexicality**: the meanings of all semiotic signs, whether embodied or disembodied, are significantly influenced by where they are placed in the world.
- The principle of **dialogicality**: all signs operate in aggregate. There is a double indexicality with respect to the meaning attached to the sign by its placement and its interaction with other signs. Each sign indexes a discourse that authorizes its placement, but once the sign is in place it is never isolated from other signs in the environment, embodied or disembodied. There is always a dynamic among signs, an intersemiotic, interdiscursive dialogicality.
- The principle of **selection**: any action selects a subset of signs for the actor's attention. A person, in taking action, selects a pathway by foregrounding some subset of meanings and backgrounding others. Action is a form of selection, positioning the actor as a particular kind of person who selects among different meaning potentials a subset of pathways (Scollon & Scollon, 2003: 23).

Scollon and Scollon (2003) introduce three key systems of geosemiotics, namely interaction order, visual semiotics and 'place' semiotics. The interaction order refers to the ways in which we interact with others in the world. Visual semiotics refers to the visual representations of these interactions, in the form of images and signs. 'Place' semiotics refer to the spaces where the interactions take place.

Rozycki (1999: 121) also points out that "[t]here are instances where the combination of location and image makes a significant statement about the owner". This indicates that where the tattoo is placed on the body is not always arbitrary. In addition, Vail (1999) found that the placement of a tattoo, as well as the surrounding tattoos, have their own significance. The researcher is interested in finding out whether the link between the placement and the sign holds significance for the research participants. The notion of 'skinscapes', which elaborates on this point, will be discussed in the following section.

Geosemiotics is relevant on two levels to this study. Firstly, tattoos derive meaning from where it is placed on the body. Secondly, the body itself is placed within a social world, which brings about its own meanings.

2.8. Transgressive semiotics

The researcher argues that tattoos can be seen as transgressive. The word “transgress” refers to “that conduct which breaks rules or exceeds boundaries (Jenks, 2003: 3, as cited in Pennycook, 2012: 22). In addition, “transgression may be seen as the desire to go beyond, to think otherwise, to transcend the boundaries of the modern” (Pennycook, 2012: 22).

Transgressive semiotics refer to signs that are not in its correct, or expected, place (Scollon & Scollon, 2003). Scollon and Scollon (2003) provide the example of a price tag which has fallen off a garment and which now lays on the side of the pavement. They also include “clear transgressions of semiotic expectation or intention” such as the inverted “R” on a specific toy store, which symbolizes a child’s writing (Scollon & Scollon, 2003: 146). Scollon and Scollon (2003) emphasise the fact that transgressive semiotics are in place, but in some way they are unauthorized. In addition, “[s]igns are... transgressive to the viewer if they appear in places not acceptable for the display of visual semiotic designs” (Scollon & Scollon, 2003: 149).

Jeffreys (2000: 409) refers to the practice of tattooing as “transgressing the boundaries of the body”. Tattooing is therefore transgressive in the sense that tattooed bodies display signs on a space that is not expected, and not always accepted, by society for reasons such as religious beliefs.

Expanding the notion of transgressive semiotics, Pennycook (2012) looked at language use in unexpected places. Pennycook (2012: 18) focused on “[t]he idea of languages floating around in unexpected places”. Pennycook (2012) found that languages are less tied to place, cultural identity and territory than one would expect. Considering the mobility of the body, Pennycook (2012) also looked at the unexpected use of language in relation to tattoos. He mentioned a specific case where a local marine conservation worker in the Philippines has a Hebrews script tattoo – “an unexpected script (Hebrew alphabet), used in an unexpected way (tattoo), in an unexpected context (non-Hebrew speaking), related to an unexpected religion (Judaism in Philippines), in an unexpected place (a dive boat in a marine protected area)” (Pennycook, 2012: 20-21). Therefore, tattoos are not only transgressive as a permanent mark on the body, but it is also transgressive when the sign itself is in an unexpected language, or when it is an unexpected symbol.

Pennycook (2007) states that transgressive semiotics include trash, discarded items and graffiti, the latter being one of the elements of the hip hop culture. According to Price III (2007), hip hop culture has the ability to bring people of all races and beliefs together as a medium for young people to express themselves. The hip hop culture not only has an influence on people's dress style, but it also has significantly influenced American English as well as various other languages (Price III, 2007). The hip hop culture has its own "language". For example, language is used in innovative ways. The words used in hip hop have also expanded the English dictionary (Price III, 2007), which illustrates the impact that transgressive literacy has on the literacy practices of people (Ferris, 2010). It is, however, important to note that even though hip hop and tattoos are both considered transgressive, people with tattoos do not necessarily listen to hip hop and everyone belonging to the hip hop culture does not necessarily have tattoos.

Kosut (2013: 2-3) also highlights the transgressive nature of tattooing when she states that "[m]uch like graffiti art, tattooing is a cultural form that is simultaneously valued by some art experts and criminalized by city and state governments".

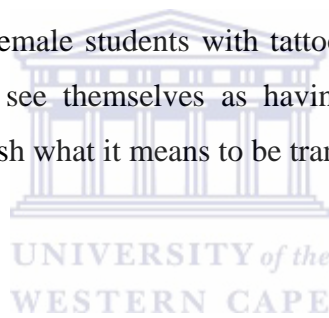
Ferris (2010) looked at toilet graffiti at the University of the Western Cape as transgressive semiotics. She found that transgressive semiotics have negative connotations attached to it (Ferris, 2010). However, Ferris (2010: 20) found that even though transgressive semiotics are frowned upon by mainstream society, it is making a big contribution to the literacy world at present: "especially with the increase in research done in the field of hip-hop as a form of transgressive literacy".

Ferris (2010) also found that women transgress the traditional roles ascribed to them in their graffiti writings. Graffiti refers to "things that are transgressively written on stones and walls in public places against the expectation or in violation of a public expectation that such surfaces would be kept clean and 'unpolluted'" (Scollon & Scollon, 2003: 147). In addition, it was found that through toilet graffiti women "are able to refigure social roles and usurp power from males without appearing to do so" (Ferris, 2010: 100). Furthermore, Ferris (2010: 125) states that they "reconstruct themselves as aggressive, independent and unencumbered by male domination". It would be interesting to see whether the same is true of females participating in another transgressive practice, namely tattooing.

Jaworski and Thurlow (2010: 21) state that graffiti "have received more scholarly attention than any other form of public visual discourse" and that one of the reasons may be that "other

forms of writing or signage have largely undergone the process of ‘automatization’”. Automization entails that “the foregrounding of one [semiotic] is often accompanied (or achieved) by the backgrounding or ‘automatization’ of other semiotics, to the point where they appear so normal and natural as to become ‘invisible’” (Iedema, 2003: 40; Lynn & Lea, 2005: 43, as cited in Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010: 21). In contrast, graffiti “is perceived by most as ‘out-of-place’, often iconoclastic in its content and style, and as creating a more immediate, direct form of engagement with the viewer” (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010: 21). The same can be said of tattooing. Lynn and Lea (2005, as cited in Jaworski and Thurlow, 2010: 21), state that “the actual location, time of creation, and authorship of graffiti are as important for their interpretation as is their form and content”. The above-mentioned aspects can also be applied to tattooing, seeing that they are also important in interpreting the meaning of the tattoo. For that reason, the tattoo placement as well as the tattoo narrative contributes towards the significance of the tattoo.

This research will look at how female students with tattoos depict themselves. It would be interesting to see whether they see themselves as having transgressed certain norms by getting tattoos, and also to establish what it means to be transgressive with your body.



2.9. Summary

This chapter was a review on the literature pertaining to this study. Firstly, literature on the theory of identity revealed that identity can be performed through language as well as extralinguistic features. This study also agrees with Butler’s (1988) claim that gender is performed. Research on tattoos and identity found that tattoos can be used to portray different identities, including gender identity. It was also found that there are gendered differences in the tattoos chosen by males and females. Women were found to choose tattoos which were feminine in design, small, and which can be easily covered. In other cases, women transgress the traditional norms of femininity by creating their own notion of ‘beauty’ (Braunberger, 2000; Harlow, 2008). Furthermore, literature on the international trends in tattoo research were reviewed, as well as literature on tattoos and identity in South Africa. There is an increase in the popularity of tattooing among South Africans. Lombard and Bergh (2014) in particular pointed out that university students are increasingly participating in this practice.

The theory of Linguistic Landscapes provides a framework for this study. Landry and Bourhis’ (1997) definition of Linguistic Landscape has expanded in recent years. This theory

focused the occurrences of multilingualism on public signs, and has also been expanded to include corporeal linguistic landscapes (Peck & Stroud, 2015). The theory of geosemiotics is also important to this study, as it looks at the placement of signs in the physical world (Scollon & Scollon, 2003).

Lastly, as tattoos are considered to be transgressive, literature on transgressive semiotics were reviewed. Much like graffiti, tattoos are also transgressive as they are signs that are found in unexpected places (i.e the body). Tattoos were said to transgress the boundaries of the body (Jeffreys, 2000).

The following chapter is a discussion of the existing literature on popular culture and postmodernism, as well as a discussion of the analytical framework used in this research – multisemiotic/multimodal discourse analysis.



CHAPTER 3 - POPULAR CULTURE AND POSTMODERNISM: TOWARDS A MULTISEMIOTIC DISCOURSE ANALYSIS APPROACH

3.0. Introduction

This chapter looks at the theoretical/analytical framework that will be used in this study. Firstly, the theoretical section will be informed by theories of postmodernism and popular culture as well as feminist theory. Thereafter, the theoretical framework will be complemented by multimodality/multisemiotic discourse analysis, resemiotization and semiotic remediation, recontextualization as well as text, which will be used to analyze the data.

3.1. Postmodernism

This research looks at tattooing from a postmodern perspective. Postmodernism refers to the emergence of a society in which popular culture and the mass media are the most powerful and important factors which shape and control all social relationships (Strinati, 2004). This is true of today's society, as popular cultural influences and the mass media have greatly impacted society, influencing, amongst other things, what music people listen to, the clothes people wear, and also other ways people use to adorn their bodies, such as tattoos.

Haberer (2007: 54) states that postmodernism developed from modernism during the early 20th century, in the years prior to, and following, the "great fracture" of World War I. According to Haberer (2007: 54):

[m]odernism was characterized by the loss of stable values, by the loss of belief in the possibility of an objective truth and in the validity of totalizing ideologies, by the rejection of formal aesthetic theories, the emphasis given to subjectivity, to the discontinuous and fragmentary, also by the place given to reflexivity and self-consciousness in the production of texts.

Haberer (2007: 54) goes on to suggest that postmodernism “merely went further in the same direction, sometimes with an added dose of scepticism and irony, mostly perhaps as a consequence of new developments like consumerism, the new technologies, [and] globalization”. The emphasis on subjectivity, reflexivity and self-consciousness, established in the era of modernism, is therefore still relevant in the postmodern era and is important to this study. Subjectivity is valued when it comes to the meaning of tattoos, seeing that interpretations of tattoos vary according to the individual. The acknowledgment of reflexivity and self-consciousness in the process of producing texts are also important to this study, as these thought processes are important in choosing tattoo designs. Postmodernism emerged as a result of globalization, and the changing times. Approaching this research from a postmodern perspective will include looking at the body as text as well as looking at feminist theory.

3.1.1. The body as text

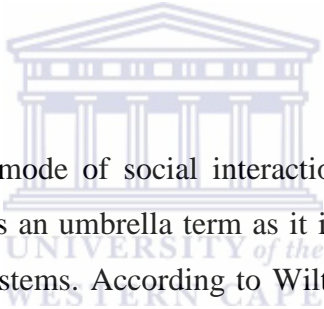
According to Jeffreys (2000: 409), the “postmodern turn in writing about the body” involves looking at the body as a text. This ‘text’ “can be written and rewritten in powerful, even revolutionary, ways”, such as body art (Jeffreys, 2000: 422). The concept of text will therefore not only be used in this thesis to refer to the narratives of the tattooed females, but also to their bodies, which are seen as ‘authored’ and ‘read’ (Peck & Stroud, 2015). Fairclough (1989: 4) defines text as follows:

A text is traditionally understood to be a piece of written language – a whole ‘work’ such as a poem or a novel, or a relatively discrete part of a work such as a chapter. A rather broader conception has become common within discourse analysis, where a text may be either written or spoken discourse, so that, for example, the words used in a conversation (or their written transcription) constitute a text.

This research extends the above-mentioned definition by looking at the body as a text – a surface on which can be ‘written’ and on which messages can be conveyed, through the practice of tattooing.

Fairclough (1989) also points out that texts are no longer limited to written language, by acknowledging that any cultural artefact, such as an image, a building, or a piece of music, can also be read as text. Fairclough (1989: 4) notes that it is important to view language as more than just spoken and written language, seeing that “texts in contemporary society are increasingly multi-semiotic”. Written texts, according to Fairclough (1989), are becoming more multisemiotic, seeing that written language (on a page) at times have images, photographs or diagrams to complement the written text. Fairclough (1989: 4) thus suggests that we analyze texts as follows:

We can continue regarding a text as a primarily linguistic cultural artefact, but develop ways of analysing other semiotic forms which are co-present with language, and especially how different semiotic forms interact in the multisemiotic text.



The concept of text refers to a mode of social interaction (Iedema, 2003; Banda, 2014). Banda (2014) uses this concept as an umbrella term as it includes linguistic texts as well as social discourses and meaning systems. According to Wilton (1999: 50), “there is always a sense in which the body is a text”. Furthermore, “traces of the operations of power and resistance are inscribed upon the body”, by the state as well as the transgressive practices of marginalized people and those who are not respected in society (Wilton, 1999: 50). In this research, tattoos are seen as artefacts that can be read as texts. In analyzing tattoos, texts extend to include images, colour and size as a means of communicating certain messages. This approach is captured in multimodal discourse analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; O’Halloran, 2011; Banda, 2014). The elements that constitute texts are called semiotic resources (Banda, 2014). The tattoos of the participants will be read as texts, paying attention to the semiotic resources which make up the tattoos.

This study takes a postmodern perspective on the body. This research therefore looks at how women produce text on the body through tattooing, while also bearing in mind how women are looked at in society. As women’s bodies are often read along a patriarchal script, the following section will cover research on feminist theory.

3.1.2. Feminist theory

As femininity and the construction of womanhood through semiotics are of particular interest to this research, the inclusion of feminism as a theory is of utmost importance and is elaborated here. According to Jackson and Jones (1998: 1), “[f]eminist theory seeks to analyse the conditions which shape women’s lives and to explore cultural understandings of what it means to be a woman”. Furthermore, feminist theory calls into question the hierarchy which exists in society, particularly with regard to gender (Jackson & Jones, 1998).

Fox and Bayat (2007) state that feminist theory aims to establish non-exploitive and collaborative relationships. Importantly, in feminist theory “[g]ender is regarded as a basic organizing principle that shapes the conditions of human life” (Fox and Bayat, 2007: 68). Many feminist theories, particularly from the 1970s, have focussed on the distinction between sex and gender (Arthurs & Grimshaw, 1999). Judith Butler, one of the key figures in feminist theory, states that feminist theorists dispute assumptions that sex dictates gender roles (Butler, 1988). Furthermore, feminist theory is “critical of naturalistic explanations of sex and sexuality that assume that the meaning of women’s social existence can be derived from some fact of their physiology” (Butler, 1988: 520). Feminist thinkers “see their work as attending to the significance of sexual perspectives in modes of thought and offering a challenge to masculine bias” (Beasley, 1999: 3). Current feminist viewpoints include liberal feminism (Marilley, 1996), Marxist feminism (Madsen, 2000), radical feminism (Crow, 2000), socialist feminism (Holmstrom, 2002), postmodern/poststructuralist feminism (Genz & Brabon, 2009) and feminists concerned with race and ethnicity (Beasley, 1999). According to Beasley (1999), concise definitions of feminism presume that all the feminist viewpoints are perceived to have some common ground, which is that women have suffered and still continue to suffer because of their sex. This research will draw on feminist theory, as the researcher is interested in exploring the participants’ perceptions of femininity and the semiotic construction of their body.

According to Butler (1988: 522), feminist theory “has sought to understand the way in which systemic or pervasive political and cultural structures are enacted and reproduced through individual acts and practices, and how the analysis of ostensibly personal situations is clarified through situating the issues in a broader and shared cultural context”.

Arthurs and Grimshaw (1999) state that there has been a significant increase in academic literature concerning the body in recent years. Interest in the body has been a constant theme

in nineteenth and twentieth century discourse (Arthurs & Grimshaw, 1999). According to Arthurs and Grimshaw, the recent dramatic increase of academic interest in the body is a result of “the increasing ‘visibility’ of the body in contemporary culture” (Arthurs & Grimshaw, 1999: 4). One of the reasons for this is the increase of discourses regarding sexuality in the media (Arthurs & Grimshaw, 1999).

An important source of recent work on the body is feminist writing (Arthurs & Grimshaw, 1999). Arthurs and Grimshaw (1999: 2) state that “[s]ince the emergence of ‘second-wave’ feminism in the late 1960s, the disciplining of the female body has been a constant theme in a great deal of feminist writing”. For example, feminist writers focussed on the ways in which girls were required to behave in lady-like fashion, discouraging them from physical activity (Arthurs & Grimshaw, 1999). In addition, a great deal of discussion and analysis emerged on how the female body was constrained by conventions of female behaviour and movement, as well as fashion, beauty and the media (Arthurs & Grimshaw, 1999).

Feminist analyses of women’s bodies have since broadened in terms of range and scope (Arthurs & Grimshaw, 1999). For example, “[a] particular concern has been the issue of the normalizing power of ideals of body shape, size and youthfulness, and the relation of these ideals to ethnicity” (Arthurs & Grimshaw, 1999: 2).

Pitts (2003: 29) states that the body:

is positioned in multiple ways, including as a site for establishing identity that is read by the self and others; as a space of social control and social investment; and as an ever-emerging, unfinished materiality that gains meaning through various forms of symbolic representation and material practice.

According to Pitts (2003: 10), “[f]eminists have described how women regularly find that they are not in control of their own sexuality, health, and bodily safety”. Furthermore, Pitts (2003: 10) states that “[m]any body modifications that women regularly undertake, such as plastic surgery and compulsive dieting, are seen by the feminist move-ment as harmful results of the enormous pressures women face to be youthful, thin, and beautiful”. In like manner, tattooing can be seen as a way for women to reclaim their bodies. However, as notions of

beauty are controlled and mediated by society, societal influences could also dictate the participants' choices of tattoo designs, as well as where it is placed on the body. These choices not only show how women exercise agency, but can also show the control society has over these women.

Young (1999) argues that the notions of beauty and femininity have been racialized, although not always explicitly. These racialized notions of beauty and femininity is of interest to researchers who would explore ways in which constructs of whiteness, blackness, and femininity intersect, as well as how these constructs may be mutually dependent. Furthermore, Young (1999: 68) states that black females have been historically represented and imagined through their bodies, which “bear markers of their deviance from white norms of feminine propriety and attractiveness”. In the same vein, this study investigates the construction of femininity on the tattooed female body. Whether race and ethnicity intersect here is yet to be uncovered.

Even though numerous studies on language and gender have been done in the global ‘North’ (USA, Canada, Australasia and Europe), such research is scarce in an African context, particularly in reference to semiotics. Gender, according to Atanga, Ellece, Litosseliti and Sunderland (2013), is a set of ideas (what is said, thought and written about men, women, boys and girls) which are often expressed through gendered discourses. The narratives of the participants reveal their constructions of gender. It is important for this study to look at research done by African feminist writers who are concerned with language and gender in an African context, since African scholars now have to rely on studies of Western bodies, which are unusable in certain African contexts (Atanga *et al.*, 2013).

Rudwick (2013) looked at how Zulu women construct their femininities through language, by using two different isiZulu varieties, isiTsotsi and isiHlonipho. Rudwick (2013) looked at the significance and implications it would have on the gender dynamics in this culture. This particular study points out how gender is constructed linguistically, and is context-dependent. In this way, Rudwick's (2013) study is a contribution to the study of African femininities. Rudwick (2013: 236) claims that “women are ‘agentive beings’ who can resist identities, including femininities, that position them in unfavourable ways, and can, through language choices, produce new identities with alternative meanings to normative associations between identity and linguistic variety use”. In this study, the researcher not only wants to look at how the participants take on their agency through their language choices, but through non-verbal

communication (i.e. by getting tattoos). In addition, this study will look at how the participants use their agency as females to not only resist certain identities, but also to create new identities through the practice of tattooing (cf. Rudwick, 2013). The following section covers literature on popular culture and how femininity is portrayed through popular culture.

3.2. Popular culture

The theory of popular culture is important to this study as it can be seen as a site for identity formation (Dolby, 2001), as with the practice of tattooing. The concept of *site* is used to highlight the fact that it is not a fixed object, but rather a system of movement that is continuously changing and is controlled by those in command (Dolby, 2001), meaning that those in power control what is popular at a particular point in time.

Popular culture is an essential part of the youth's everyday experiences (Dolby, 2001). It "has important implications for the public spaces and social fabric of society, including the way that youth conceptualize and enact their roles as citizens" (Dolby, 2003, as cited in Dolby, 2006: 34). Dolby (2006: 31-32) states that, "[w]hile research on traditional forms of popular culture has an established history in the field of African studies, there is a growing interest in studying emergent cultural and media forms". Examples of these include contemporary music, films and movies, clothing and fashion, television, as well as urban and rural culture (Dolby, 2006). Another element of popular culture is tattooing.

Strinati (2004) argues that popular culture forms part of postmodernism, providing examples of popular culture which prove the existence of postmodernism, and popular culture includes architecture, cinema, television, advertising and pop music. Similarly, the *Encyclopaedia of Contemporary Literary Theory* states that postmodernism is used to describe anything that is current in culture, such as music, visual arts, film, dance, and so forth (Björnsson, 2006). Tattooing would therefore also fall under postmodernity, seeing that it is popular and practised by many people in modern day society.

According to the United Nations, youth refers to people aged 15 to 24 (Nandigiri, 2012). Popular culture influences how people throughout the world, and especially the youth, shape their identities (Dolby, 2006). Even though their access to popular culture depends on their economic means, and is sometimes constrained by cultural or religious norms, "the products of a media-obsessed world shape the imaginative landscape of youth's lives" (Dolby, 2006:

32). It is not merely consumed mindlessly and passively, but is rather used in innovative ways to create and express identity (Dolby, 2006). Tattooing, which form part of popular culture, has been used as an expression of identity for many years. This research is interested in how popular culture, specifically tattooing, is used by female students to express their identities.

Popular culture is also seen as a site of struggle, where race, gender, nationality, identities, and power are negotiated (Dolby, 2006). Tattooing is therefore not only a way to express identities but it is also used to negotiate identities.

Barron (2012) examined popular culture in terms of tattooing. Even though tattoos have become ‘consumer products’, the art of tattooing as well as the decision to have a tattoo, have communicative and symbolic functions (Barron, 2012). In other words, tattoos tell stories and mark key points in the tattooee’s life (Barron, 2012). In addition, “tattoo culture concerns individuals mapping out their own rites of passage on their bodies, for others to read, but often for themselves” (Barron, 2012: 109). This is an important point in the notion of ‘skinscapes’, as discussed in Chapter 2.

McRobbie (1994) noticed a change in representations of femininity by comparing two magazines directed at girls in the 1980s – *Jackie* and *Just Seventeen*. *Jackie* offered a stereotypical image of femininity (being a slave to love, a victim of romance). The editors of *Just Seventeen*, however, noticed an increase in girls’ self-esteem and therefore conducted market research which found that “the readers of popular girls’ magazines no longer wanted to be ‘talked down to’. They did not want ‘silly’ love stories and they did not want to be portrayed as ‘boy mad’” (McRobbie, 1994: 164). *Just Seventeen* came to replace *Jackie* as the top-selling magazine at the time. McRobbie (1994) found that in *Just Seventeen*, femininity is represented as a less rigid category. In addition, “[t]here is also a redefinition of the feminine self. It can be endlessly constructed, reconstructed and customized” (McRobbie, 1994: 165).

A key concept of postmodernism is intertextuality (Haberer, 2007), which will be discussed in the following section.

3.2.1. Intertextuality

According to Jameson (1998: 7), postmodern culture is “a world in which stylistic innovation is no longer possible, all that is left is to imitate dead styles, to speak through the masks and with the voices of the styles in the imaginary museum”. The concept of intertextuality was coined by Julia Kristeva (1986) and it refers to the fact that no text exists on its own as it is always connected to other texts (Haberer, 2007). It refers to the conscious or unconscious use of an existing text within another text (Berger, 2004).

Intertextuality is an important element in popular culture (Share, 2006). It refers to “how our contemporary cultural environment is marked by duplication, interpenetration of texts and the circulation and recirculation of images, sounds and words in multiple forms and formats” (Share, 2006: 1). Intertextuality can be found in different elements that make up our culture, such as songs, poetry, movies and fashion (Share, 2006). Intertextuality manifests because everything that can be said has already been said and, as a result, people reuse and manipulate existing texts, images, and so forth. Tattoos may also have intertextual references seeing that individuals tend to get tattoos of existing quotes, poems, song lyrics, symbols and so forth.

According to Gee (1999: 55), intertextuality emerges from the fact that “[a]ny text (oral or written) is infected with the meanings (at least, as potential) of all the other texts in which its words have comported”. In other words, no text is independent. For example, individuals borrow words from others in order to make meaning, which can also be seen in people’s choices in tattoos.

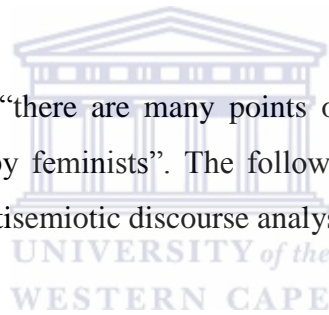
Barthes (1977: 142-148) expressed his views on intertextuality in his writings on “the death of the author”. According to Barthes (1977: 146), a text does not only have one meaning, but is instead “a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash”. Barthes (1977: 148) states that “a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is tane place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author”. Barthes (1977:146) also states that “the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original”, thus questioning the originality of all texts, and therefore, by extension, the originality of tattoo designs can also be questioned. As mentioned before, individuals tend to opt for popular lyrics, quotes, symbols and images. The choices of tattoo design are influenced by existing texts, especially in the postmodern society

in which the female students are living. It can therefore be said that tattoos have intertextual traces.

3.2.2. **Hybridity**

Postmodern theory challenges modernist concepts of identity, which is based on notions of fixed cultural principles (Gall, 2014). A key concept of postmodernism that illustrates this is hybridity. According to Kristeva (1986:203), hybridity points “to the absence of fixed boundaries between styles and genre of language, and people’s fusing of multiple styles and registers when they communicate”. Furthermore, hybridity “involves the fusion of two hitherto relatively distinct forms, styles, or identities, cross cultural contact, which often occurs across natural boundaries” (Kraidy, 2005: 5). For Bhabha (1990, as cited in Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004: 17), hybridity refers to the “third space”, enabling new and alternative identity options to emerge.

Nicholson (1990: 5) states that “there are many points of overlap between a postmodern stance and positions long held by feminists”. The following section will discuss literature dealing with multimodal and multisemiotic discourse analysis.



3.3. **Multimodal/Multisemiotic Discourse Analysis**

Kress (2001: 67) states that “the shape and the direction of the current communicational world demand a re-assessment, in which language is just one of a number of modes of communication, all which are culturally and socially shaped”. Language is no longer the single most important part of communication. For example, image is no longer an illustration or an embellishment of the written text, but is now fully communicational in many textual forms (Kress, 2001). The concept of multimodality is used to address this shift in representation (Kress, 2001). Multimodality refers to “the idea that communication and representation always draw on a multiplicity of semiotics of which language may be one” (Kress, 2001: 67-68). People have turned towards use of image, music, gestures and so forth (Kress, 2001; Iedema, 2003).

Iedema (2003) foregrounds the importance of a multimodal approach in the process of meaning making. Throughout the years, a shift from discourse analysis to multimodality

occurred (Iedema, 2003). Discourse analysis focuses on language use “above the sentence”, with the focus being largely on talk and interaction (Iedema, 2003: 30). In the mid to late 1980s, Hallidayan discourse analysis took into account meaning making through means other than language (Iedema, 2003). Multimodality “was introduced to highlight the importance of taking into account semiotics other than language-in-use, such as image, music, gesture, and so on” (Iedema, 2003: 33). Multimodality is about “recognizing that language is not at all the centre of all communication” (Iedema, 2003: 39). The increased pervasiveness of image, sound and film through the computer, television and internet is the reason for “this new emphasis on and interest in the multi-semiotic complexity of the representations we produce and see around us” (Iedema, 2003: 33).

In summary, Iedema (2003: 48) states that multimodality:

1. Is concerned with giving proper recognition to semiotics other than language in its analyses of representations.
2. Focuses on the relationships between these different semiotics, and on the ‘division of labour’ between them in particular representations.
3. Aims to understand and describe in ‘phylogenetic’ terms the displacement of some semiotics by others (e.g. the displacement of the linguistic by the visual);
4. Links the potential of the different semiotics deployed to how they affect (enable and constrain) interaction and the formation of subjectivity.

Multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) would therefore entail analysing different modes that are being used to convey a certain message. During the mid-2000s, there was a clear wave of language research which acknowledged that communication was not confined to language, but also included other modes and therefore explored the integration of language with other modes (O’Halloran, 2011). MDA therefore highlights the fact that language is no longer the most important mode of communication, but other modes such as images, sound, gestures and music, which are often used in conjunction with language, should also be taken into account (O’Halloran, 2011). Furthermore, “MDA is concerned with theory and analysis of semiotic resources and the semantic expansions which occur as semiotic choices combine in multimodal phenomena” (O’Halloran, 2011: 2).

According to Bock (2013: 65), “[d]ifferent modes have different affordances or meaning-making potential”, meaning that some modes may convey a stronger meaning than other modes. MDA is “concerned with the design, production and distribution of multimodal resources in social settings” (O’Halloran, 2011: 2) as well as the resemiotization (Iedema, 2003) and semiotic remediation of multimodal phenomena.

Multimodality is important to this study seeing that it is used, and has emerged, as a result of the changing social and semiotic (linguistic) landscape (Jewitt, 2008). An important aspect of multimodal aspects on literacy, is the assumption that meanings are made by way of various communicational resources, of which language is only one element (Jewitt, 2008). Peck and Banda (2014) argue that multimodality is an integral part of linguistic landscapes, as it encapsulates the different semiotic resources used to make up the signs that form the linguistic landscapes. Multimodality is also an important part of this study because the researcher wants to look at the interplay between the different semiotics of the tattooed female body.

Multisemioticity refers to the “mixing of visual and written modes” (Palmer, Ruiz-Garrido & Fortanet-Gómez, 2006: 97). In order to analyze how different modes work together, one looks at multisemioticity (Kress, 2011). Modes are defined as “the abstract, non-material resources of meaning-making” which include “writing, speech, images...gesture, facial expression, texture, size and shape...colour” (Dicks *et al.*, 2006, in Pink, 2009: 102). It will therefore be useful to look at multisemioticity in this study, as individuals obtain tattoos of certain images, symbols, written texts, as well as a combination of these elements.

This research not only looks at the narratives of the participants, but their tattoos will also be read as text. In order to do this, the researcher takes a multimodal/multisemiotic approach to text. The researcher will therefore analyze both written and visual modes, as both these modes will yield information which is of importance to the research.

3.3.1. **Resemiotization and Semiotic Remediation**

O’Halloran (2011) states that apart from being concerned with the design, production and distribution of multimodal resources in social settings, multimodal discourse analysis also looks at the resemiotization of multimodal texts. This is done because multimodality is interested in the different semiotics in a text (Iedema, 2003). According to Iedema (2003: 41),

resemiotization “is about how meaning making shifts from context to context, from practice to practice, or from one stage of a practice to the next”. In other words, resemiotization occurs when different modes are used across different practices. Resemiotization is intended to provide an analytical means to trace how semiotics are translated from one mode to another and also to ask why certain semiotics (as opposed to others) are used to do certain things at certain times (Iedema, 2003).

On the other hand, people do not merely replicate semiotic material in different contexts. The semiotic material at hand is made to do different things and is therefore made to carry different meanings. This is where the notion of semiotic remediation comes in. The notion of semiotic remediation can be broken down into two parts, namely semiotic and remediation. As mentioned before, semiotics refers to the signs that are used in different modes of communication. Remediation refers to taking existing materials and putting them to use which results in altered conditions (Prior & Hengst, 2010). In other words, remediation refers to the actual use of signs to create new meaning. One sign can be used across different modes and media to convey different meanings.

Bolter and Grusin (2000) state that semiotic remediation refers to how semiotic material is re-used and re-purposed in the new media. Remediation occurs when “content has been borrowed, but the medium has not been appropriated or quoted” (Bolter & Grusin, 2000: 44). The new medium is dependent on the older medium, whether or not the older medium is acknowledged (Bolter & Grusin, 2000). Although it is an old practice, it is particularly common in popular culture (Bolter & Grusin, 2000). Thus, semiotic material is reworked and re-utilised to express meanings it is not originally known for. In essence, both resemiotization and semiotic remediation involves recontextualization (Banda, 2014). This research will therefore look at how participants have resemiotized and semiotically remediated certain thoughts, artefacts, symbols and feelings into permanent signs on the body.

3.3.2. **Recontextualization**

Recontextualization is defined as “the dynamic transfer-and-transformation of something from one discourse/text-in-context to another” (Linell, 1998: 144-145). This may involve actual words, meanings that were explicitly expressed, or meanings that are implied in the original genre or text (Linell, 1998). These meanings can either be concrete or it can involve

things such as attitudes, ways of thinking, and ways of understanding and laying out patterns of discourse (Linell, 1998). Bernstein (1990: 184) states that recontextualization “selectively appropriates, relocates, refocuses, and relates other discourses to constitute its own order”. Kong (2009) adds to this by stating that, once something has been placed in a different context, the meaning changes. In other words, recontextualization is the process of extracting an aspect of a text, genre or discourse, and placing this aspect into another context. This research will therefore consider how the participants have recontextualized their bodies and signs on their bodies.

According to Feng and Wignell (2011), intertextuality arises from recontextualization in two ways, which results in two types of intertextual resources. The first type involves current discourses quoting from existing discourses (Feng and Wignell, 2011). The second type involves current discourses that recontextualize social practices that are normally associated with other discourses, which results in the adoption of the conventions and styles associated with these discourses (Feng & Wignell, 2011). The researcher is therefore interested in how the participants recontextualize existing discourses on the body.

3.4. **Critical Discourse Analysis**

According to Cameron (2001), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) claims that the ways in which certain things are talked about, namely the choices people make while talking or writing, are ideologically patterned. From a discourse analytical perspective, reality is understood as constructed, or shaped, by social forces (Cameron, 2001). Analysts using CDA believe that the constructed realities are naturalized in everyday discourse by being presented as the way things are, not to be questioned or challenged (Cameron, 2001). Similarly, Fairclough (1992) states that naturalization refers to the process in which ideologies acquire the status of ‘common sense’. Fairclough (1992: 87) defines ideologies as “significations/constructions of reality (the physical world, social relations, social identities) which are built into various dimensions of the forms/meanings of discursive practices, and which contribute to the production, reproduction or transformation of relations of domination”. Ideologies, which refer to “the systems of ideas, beliefs, speech and cultural practices that operate to the advantage of a particular social group” (Fairclough, 2001: 2), are therefore revealed in certain discourses. Ideologies, which are embedded in discursive

practices, have a greater impact on society when it is seen as common sense (Fairclough 1992).

Fairclough (2001), who views language as a social practice, proposed a three-dimensional framework for analyzing discourse. This implies that, when analyzing discourse, the social context should be taken into account (Fairclough, 2001). The three dimensions are *text*, *interaction* and *context*. He uses this framework to illustrate the connection between text and social practice and how they are mediated by discourse practice (Fairclough, 2001).

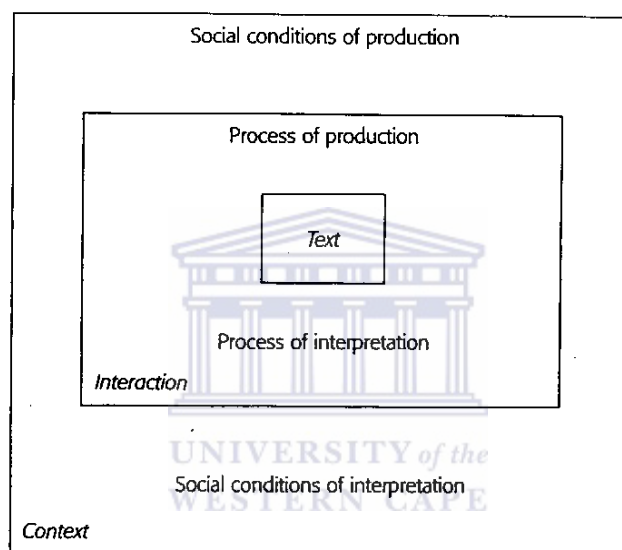


Figure 3. 1: "Discourse as text, interaction and context" (Fairclough, 2001: 21)

The first dimension, *text*, refers to both spoken and written discourse. Texts are the outcome of production and are also the resources for interpretation (Fairclough, 1989; Fairclough, 2001). Corresponding to this dimension is the description stage, "which is concerned with formal properties of the text" (Fairclough, 2001: 21). When analyzing the text, the analyst looks at the linguistic choices that the participants have made, which include linguistic features such as vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, and text structure (Blommaert, 2005).

The second dimension, *interaction*, refers to both the processes of production and interpretation (Fairclough, 1989; Fairclough, 2001). According to Fairclough (1992), there is an overlap between *text* and *interaction* because one does not talk about features of a text without referring to text production and/or text interpretation. In the process of production,

the text is the product and in the process of interpretation, the text is a resource (Fairclough, 2001). Fairclough (1992) states that the nature of these processes depends on the types of discourses as well as the social factors constituting the interaction. Corresponding to the interaction process is the interpretation stage, which “is concerned with the relationship between text and interaction” (Fairclough, 2001: 21). Fairclough (2001) uses the term ‘interpretation’ for the process of interaction as well as the stage of analysis.

Interaction consists out of producing a text and interpreting a text. At the level of interaction, production and interpretation involves an interchange between the formal properties of text and Members Resources (MR) (Fairclough, 2001). MR includes the individual’s “knowledge of language, representations of the natural and social worlds they inhabit, values, beliefs, assumptions, and so on” (Fairclough, 2001: 20). In other words, MR refers to the individual’s schemata, or prior knowledge, that is drawn on. According to Fairclough (1992), the process of interaction is socially constrained in two ways. Firstly, it is constrained by the MR and secondly, it is constrained by the nature of the social practice.

According to Fairclough (2001), the processes of interaction and production are socially determined. The third dimension, *context*, comprises the social conditions of production and the social conditions of interpretation. These social conditions relate to three levels of organization, namely the social situation, or immediate environment of the discourse, the level of social institution, and the level of society. According to Fairclough (2001: 21), “these social conditions shape the MR people bring to production and interpretation, which in turn shape the way in which texts are produced and interpreted”. Corresponding to the context is the explanation stage, which “is concerned with the relationship between interaction and social context” (Fairclough, 2001: 22). The explanation stage involves seeing MR as ideologies, meaning that:

the assumptions about culture, social relationships, and social identities which are incorporated in MR, are seen as determined by particular power relations in the society or institution, and in terms of their contribution to struggles to sustain or change these power relations – they are seen ideologically (Fairclough, 2001: 138).

Although CDA is widely used by different theorists and have many definitions, this study will focus on Fairclough’s (2001) three-dimensional framework. I will therefore look at the

broader settings of the selected universities and the linguistic and non-linguistic features such as the norms, ideologies, beliefs and social discourses of the participants used in this study.

3.5. Thematic Analysis

The interview data, or narratives, were analyzed using thematic analysis, which is a form of discourse analysis. Thematic analysis is a method used to identify, analyze and report patterns in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2013). Attridge-Sterling (2001) states that thematic analyses are used to uncover the salient themes in texts. According to Braun and Clarke (2006: 10), “[a] theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of *patterned* response or meaning within the data set”. The significance of a theme is not necessarily measured by quantity, but rather in terms of whether the theme captures an important feature of your data in relation to your research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Although a number of different versions of thematic analysis exist, this study used Braun and Clarke’s (2006, as cited in Clarke and Braun, 2013) analytic method. According to Braun and Clarke (2013), thematic analysis is useful as a ‘basic’ analysis for a number of reasons, of which the most important reason, in terms of this study, is that it can be applied to a wide range of research questions, ranging from those about personal experiences and beliefs, to those about the construction and representation of particular phenomena in particular settings. This method of analysis would therefore be useful in this study, as the researcher is analyzing data dealing with people’s feelings and experiences of tattooing.

The six phases of thematic analysis are as follows:

Phase 1 - Familiarizing yourself with the data: It is important that the researcher be familiar with all aspects of the data, including the depth and breadth of the data. This can be achieved by familiarizing and immersing yourself in the data by reading it more than once, taking note of initial observations which could be used for the analysis. In order to do a thematic analysis with verbal data (such as interviews, speeches, or television programmes), the researcher needs to transcribe the data into written form. During this phase, it is important to start making notes or marking ideas for coding, which can be used in subsequent phases (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Phase 2 - Generating initial codes: This phase begins once the researcher has familiarized himself with the data, and has generated an initial list of interesting ideas. During this phase, the researcher initial generates codes from the data. Codes refer to “the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon” (Boyatzis, 1998: 63, as cited in Braun & Clarke, 2006: 18). Coding forms part of the analysis process, seeing that the researcher is “organising [the] data into meaningful groups” (Tuckett, 2005, as cited in Braun & Clarke, 2006: 18). Coding, to some extent, also depends on whether the themes (which will be discussed in the following phase) are more theory-driven or data-driven (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data-driven themes depend more on the data, while theory-driven themes depend on specific questions that the researcher has in mind, and wish to code around (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Some of the ways of coding extracts include writing notes on the text which you are analyzing, using coloured pens or highlighters to indicate patterns in your data, or using post-it notes to identify certain sections of your data. During this phase, Braun and Clarke (2006: 19) advise researchers to:

- “a) code for as many potential themes/patterns as possible (time permitting) – you never know what might be interesting later;
- b) code extracts of data inclusively – i.e., keep a little of the surrounding data if relevant, a common criticism of coding is that the context is lost (Bryman, 2001);
- c) remember that you can code individual extracts of data in as many different ‘themes’ as they fit into – so an extract may be uncoded, coded once, or coded many times, as relevant”.

Phase 3 - Searching for themes: This phase begins when the researcher has coded and collated all the data and has a list of the different codes identified in the data. During this phase, the researcher generates themes. This can either be done inductively (bottom-up) or deductively (top-down). The inductive approach requires that the themes are strongly linked to the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The deductive approach, on the other hand, entails the data being fit into existing themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After generating the themes, the researcher collates the coded data to each of the themes. Using visual representations, such as tables and mind maps, may help to sort codes into the different themes.

Phase 4 - Reviewing themes: This phase entails that the researcher check whether the themes work with the codes as well as the data, and also checking whether the themes tell a convincing story about the data. This phase will also reveal whether it is necessary to split

one theme to form one or more themes, to collapse two themes to form one theme, or whether to discard a theme altogether. It is also important that “[d]ata within themes should cohere together meaningfully, while there should be clear and identifiable distinctions between themes” (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 20). This phase comprises of two levels, the first of which involves reviewing the thematic map at the level of the coded extracts, and considering whether they form a coherent pattern within the themes. At the second level, the researcher considers whether the individual themes are valid in relation to the entire data set, also keeping in mind that the themes should accurately reflect “the meanings evident in the data set as a whole” (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 21).

Phase 5 - Defining and naming themes: During this phase, the researcher defines and refines the themes that he will present in his analysis. By ‘define and refine’, Braun and Clarke (2006: 22) mean “identifying the ‘essence’ of what each theme is about (as well as the themes overall), and determining what aspect of the data each theme captures”. For each theme, the researcher needs to write a detailed analysis. The researcher needs to identify the story each theme relates, as well as consider how the theme fits into the ‘story’ the researcher is telling about the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Phase 6 - Producing the report: This phase “begins when you have a set of fully worked-out themes, and involves the final analysis and write-up of the report” (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 23). The writing-up process involves telling the story of your data in such a way that it convinces the reader of the validity of your analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The write-up should include enough data extracts to show the prevalence of the theme. The extracts should illustrate a compelling story and “make an *argument* in relation to your research question” (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 23).

3.6. Summary

This chapter was a presentation of the theoretical framework used in this study. This study takes a postmodern view, as this theory acknowledges popular culture and the mass media as a powerful contributing factor to how people interact in the social world (Strinati, 2004), which also includes the practice of tattooing. This chapter established that texts are no longer merely written language (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), therefore this study also views the body as text (Jeffreys, 2000). The definition of text has also been extended to include

(amongst other things) music, images (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) and also tattoos. Intertextuality and hybridity are also sub-theories of postmodern theory.

Feminist theory is also important to this study, as the researcher is interested in exploring how social conditions influence the construction of womanhood.

The theory of popular culture was found to be a site for identity formation (Dolby, 2001), especially among the youth (Dolby, 2006). As tattooing is becoming increasingly popular among the youth, the theory of popular culture is important to this study, as it allows the researcher to look at how the practice of tattooing is influencing the formation of identities of the youth.

This chapter also outlined the theories that will be used in the data analysis of this study, namely multimodal/multisemiotic discourse analysis, CDA, as well as Thematic Analysis. Multimodality takes into account that language is no longer the primary mode for communication (Iedema, 2003). Multimodal/multisemiotic discourse analysis is used in this study seeing that tattoos do not only consist of written words, but also includes images, various fonts, and come in different sizes and colours. The concepts of resemiotization, semiotic remediation and recontextualization are sub-theories of multimodality and will be used in the data analysis. CDA is also important to this study as it seeks to reveal the ideologies existing in society, which shape how people see the world (Cameron, 2001), and can therefore be used to reveal how society dictates how tattooed women construct their bodies. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2013) will be used in this study to reveal the patterns which emerge in the interviews.

The following chapter is a discussion of the research design and methodology employed in this research.

CHAPTER 4 - RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.0. Introduction

This chapter will describe the methods that were used to carry out the research. Firstly, the research design, comprising of qualitative and quantitative methods, will be defined. Secondly, the data collection and analysis process will be described, which include the data sampling and data collection techniques employed. Lastly, the ethical considerations that were incorporated during the research process, will be discussed.

4.1. Research design

The researcher notes from the outset that this study is a departure from typical linguistic landscape studies (Gorter, 2006; Shohamy, Ben-Rafael & Barni, 2010; Shohamy & Gorter, 2009), which have mostly been approached from a quantitative perspective. This research engages in data triangulation, which means that the data is analyzed qualitatively as well as quantitatively (Kelly, 2006). While the principle design for this study is the qualitative approach, a quantitative approach is also used.

4.1.1. Qualitative research

According to Tewksbury (2009: 47), “[q]ualitative researchers collect data directly from people, whether by observing them, interacting with them or talking with them”. Researchers use qualitative methods to gain an understanding of the behaviour of people, specifically the ideologies and social motivations behind beliefs, values and emotions (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1987) which engendered the choices in tattoos and where to place them. The researcher looked at females with tattoos, analyzing and interpreting their beliefs, values and emotions represented by their tattoos. This is in line with Kelly (2006: 287) who states that qualitative researchers “want to make sense of feelings, experiences, social situations or phenomena as they occur in the real world, and therefore they want to study them in their natural setting”. Tewksbury (2009) adds that qualitative methods focus on social aspects of the discipline and also on gaining a complete understanding of issues, such as how people

understand, experience and operate. Therefore, the data-gathering techniques were largely interviewing and participant observation.

4.1.2. **Quantitative research**

Quantitative methods are used to acquire knowledge and to translate this knowledge into a numeric value (Tewksbury, 2009). A data collection method that is frequently used in quantitative research is surveys (Tewksbury, 2009). However, in linguistic landscape studies, quantitative methods entail counting how many times a particular language is used on public signages in a specific area (Milani, 2013). Quantitative methods were used in this study to count the number of times certain languages were used in the tattoo designs, as well as to quantify the placements of the tattoos on the participants.

4.2. **Data Collection**

This research makes use of triangulation, which entails approaching a phenomenon from different angles by collecting material from as many sources and in as many different ways as possible (Kelly, 2006). Collection methods in qualitative research include interviews (individual and in groups), observing people, places and interactions, immersion into a particular setting in order to gain an understanding of the social structure within that setting, as well as analyzing the media (spoken, written, and so forth) (Tewksbury, 2009). The researcher collected data by means of individual interviews, pictures, and a new methodology using body silhouettes.

4.2.1. **Interviews**

To carry out this research, the researcher conducted interviews with female students at three Western Cape universities. These universities are the University of the Western Cape, Stellenbosch University and University of Cape Town. The researcher selected eight female students from each university (24 students in total) via purposive sampling and conducted individual key informant interviews. The interviews were recorded with the researcher's voice recorder. The data was collected from November 2014 to February 2015 (a period of four months). All interviews were conducted in English.

The researcher decided to conduct interviews, seeing that interviews provide rich data as it not only reveals how the participant sees and knows something, but the researcher is also able to get an explanation of this observation or knowledge from the participant (Tewksbury, 2009). The interview questions covered participants' ideologies and social motivations, beliefs, values and emotions regarding the kinds of tattoos and their emplacement. The participants' attitudes towards tattoos and the role tattoos play in the negotiations of identities and owner's lifestyles also formed part of the interviews. Individual interviews provided a rich base to explore the different viewpoints and experiences of respondents, as well as narratives on tattoos across different ethnic groups on the campuses. The study considered individual interviews important because they intended to provide first-hand 'insider' accounts of how participants understand, (re)value and (re)construct ideologies around tattoos. This qualitative data collection method allowed participants to speak or give their opinions on the motivations for the tattoos they have, the different spaces they are placed, and about how the different choices in tattoos are arrived at, and generally what they mean for the speaker (and perhaps to the significant others, including the family).

Individual interviews were arranged in neutral and mutually convenient locations. All interview sessions were audio-recorded with signed permission from the participants. Each interview lasted for approximately 10-20 minutes. The interview questions were semi-structured, meaning that, although the interviewer had a set of questions, these questions could be adapted during the interview process (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005). This interview method also allowed the researcher to ask additional questions if needed (Welman *et al.*, 2005). Furthermore, semi-structured interviews allowed the interviewer to use probes in order to clear up vague answers and also to ask the participants to elaborate on incomplete answers (Welman *et al.*, 2005).

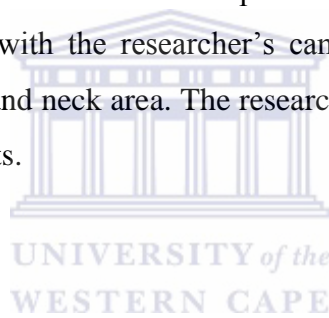
The interviews were transcribed so that the body narratives and the kinds of tattoos and their placement, which constituted the 'text', was used for analysis (Banda, 2014; Iedema, 2003). Cameron (2001) states that providing too much detail in the transcription can be as unsatisfactory as giving too little detail. Therefore, "there is a trade-off between accuracy and detail on one hand, and clarity and readability on the other" (Cameron, 2001; 39). Choosing what to include in the transcription is what Ochs (1999) refers to as selectivity. Ochs (1999) states that this is important since providing too much detail can result in a transcription that is difficult to read and analyze.

4.2.2. **Participant observation**

This data collection method involves looking at the behaviour of the participant during the interview process, and making notes that may be used for interpretation and analysis (Tewksbury, 2009). Observational data collection includes looking at the obvious actions involved as well as looking beyond the obvious level of events and the structure in which it takes place (Tewksbury, 2009). Observations were made when participants were “colouring in” their body silhouettes. Extralinguistic features, such as pauses and laughter, were taken note of for analysis.

4.2.3. **Pictures**

In cases where the participants had given their permission for photos of their tattoos to be taken, the narratives from the interviews were complemented by photos of the participants’ tattoos. The photos were taken with the researcher’s camera. The photos were limited to visible tattoos on the arms, feet, and neck area. The researcher managed to collect 77 pictures of the 89 tattoos of the participants.



4.2.4. **Body silhouettes**

In order to capture the meanings on the design and placement of tattoos, and to add to the interview narratives, the study adapted a technique developed by Busch (2012). Busch (2012) applied a multimodal approach to study school children’s linguistic repertoires by giving them a body silhouette and instructing them to colour it by using a different colour pen for each of the languages and codes they know and use. According to Busch (2012: 518), “the language portrait provides two sets of data that permit inferences to be drawn concerning how speakers interpret their linguistic repertoire: a visual one and a narrative one”. Meaning was created through both visual and narrative data (Busch, 2012). Derived from this innovative technique, a similar technique was used in this study. At the end of each interview, the participant was given a page with a pre-selected body silhouette, along with coloured pens. They were asked to colour the body silhouette with green, blue and red pens. The green pen indicated where the participants already had tattoos, the blue pen indicated where they wanted to get tattoos and the red pen was used to indicate where they felt they would never get tattoos. The researcher decided on these specific colours instead of making the

participants choose any colour (as with Busch's study). Red and green were chosen because of the commonplace schema of 'red' meaning 'stop' and 'green' meaning 'go' at the traffic light, and as such distinguishing 'no-go zones' and existing placements, respectively. In addition, these colours were chosen because each colour is visually distinct from the other, in comparison to blue and purple, for example, which look similar. Using green, blue and red thus made it easier to distinguish the markings of each category on the body silhouettes.

The participants were also asked to narrate their experience as they were colouring the body silhouette. Where tattoos are in a sensitive area, interviewees were asked to sketch the tattoo or tattoos they have on a piece of paper. Both visual and narrative data will be used in the data analysis.

This research interpreted the responses from the body silhouettes and thereafter categorized these findings in a 5-point scale, ranging from 'very low' to 'very high'.

4.3. Data Sampling

4.3.1. Purposive sampling

The participants were selected via purposive sampling. This means that only those who met the criteria set up by the researcher were approached to be part of this research (cf. Patton, 1990, Kumar, 1999). This method proved useful as it allowed the researcher to identify individuals who would provide the needed information to achieve the objectives of the study (cf. Kumar, 1999), thus saving time and therefore the researcher could focus solely on those that would benefit the study. Furthermore, purposive sampling enabled the researcher to explore the participants' beliefs, thoughts, personal values and social identities.

The purposive sampling technique enabled the researcher to access students at the proposed universities who have tattoos and who were willing to share their experiences (Kumar, 1999). This led to a few rich cases where issues of central importance came up (Patton, 1990). By looking at the way the participants self-identify, the researcher was able to explore how these participants construct their identities and also how they capture their ideologies.



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4.4. Ethical Procedures

As mentioned before, the data was predominantly collected by means of conducting interviews. Prior to each interview, the interviewer explained the research to the participants. All information provided by the participants were held in confidence. To assure anonymity, all interviewees signed a consent form which stated that they may choose to remain anonymous, and if they so wish, pseudonyms were used. The interviewees were also informed that participation in this research project was voluntary. The participants were allowed to withdraw at any time, and in those cases, all data produced as a result of their participation were destroyed. The researcher focused on tattoos that are visible. Therefore, only tattoos that are visible on the participants' bodies were captured on photos (if permission was granted) and used for visual analysis. Participants were asked to indicate where their tattoos are on a page, in cases where the tattoos were not visible.

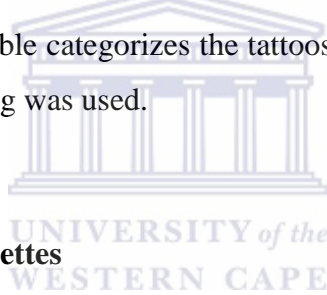
4.5. Summary

This chapter defined the research design that will be used in subsequent chapters: qualitative and quantitative research. Qualitative research will be the primary research method in this study. This chapter also described the data collection methods, which included conducting interviews, doing participant observation, taking pictures of the tattoos, as well as a novel data collection method in which the participants coloured in a body silhouette based on where they have tattoos, where they want tattoos, and where they would never have tattoos. It was stated that the data sampling method for this study was purposive sampling. Lastly, the ethical procedures that were followed during the research process were discussed.

CHAPTER 5 – QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

5.0. Introduction

The youth are avid consumers and producers of popular culture (Dolby, 2006), and are made aware of the latest trends through the media and the internet. At the time of the interviews, the participants' ages ranged from 18 to 25, thus forming part of the youth, according to the United Nations (Nandigiri, 2012). This chapter is therefore an exploration of the tattoo trends as illustrated by the participants in terms of the placement of the tattoos, the preferred semiotic material in the tattoo designs, as well as the preferred languages used. The data is represented in four tables. The first table is a numerical representation of the body silhouettes completed by the participants, which is used as an illustration of tattoo placements. The second table is a list of tattoo placements in order of most popular to least popular. The third table categorizes the tattoos in terms of the semiotic material (text, image, text and image) used in the designs. The fourth table categorizes the tattoos in terms of the languages used in the tattoos, in cases where lettering was used.



5.1. Presentation body silhouettes

It is of interest to the researcher to establish how the participants map their bodies, which involves establishing where they have tattoos, where they want to have tattoos and where they would never obtain tattoos, as this not only reveals personal preferences when it comes to tattooing, but it may also illustrate, reflect or contrast popular trends as shown through the media and the internet. A visual representation of these tattoo placements was acquired by giving each participant a body silhouette on which they indicated their existing tattoos (with a green pen), where they want to get tattoos (with a blue pen), and where they would never have tattoos (with a red pen). Below is an example of a completed body silhouette:

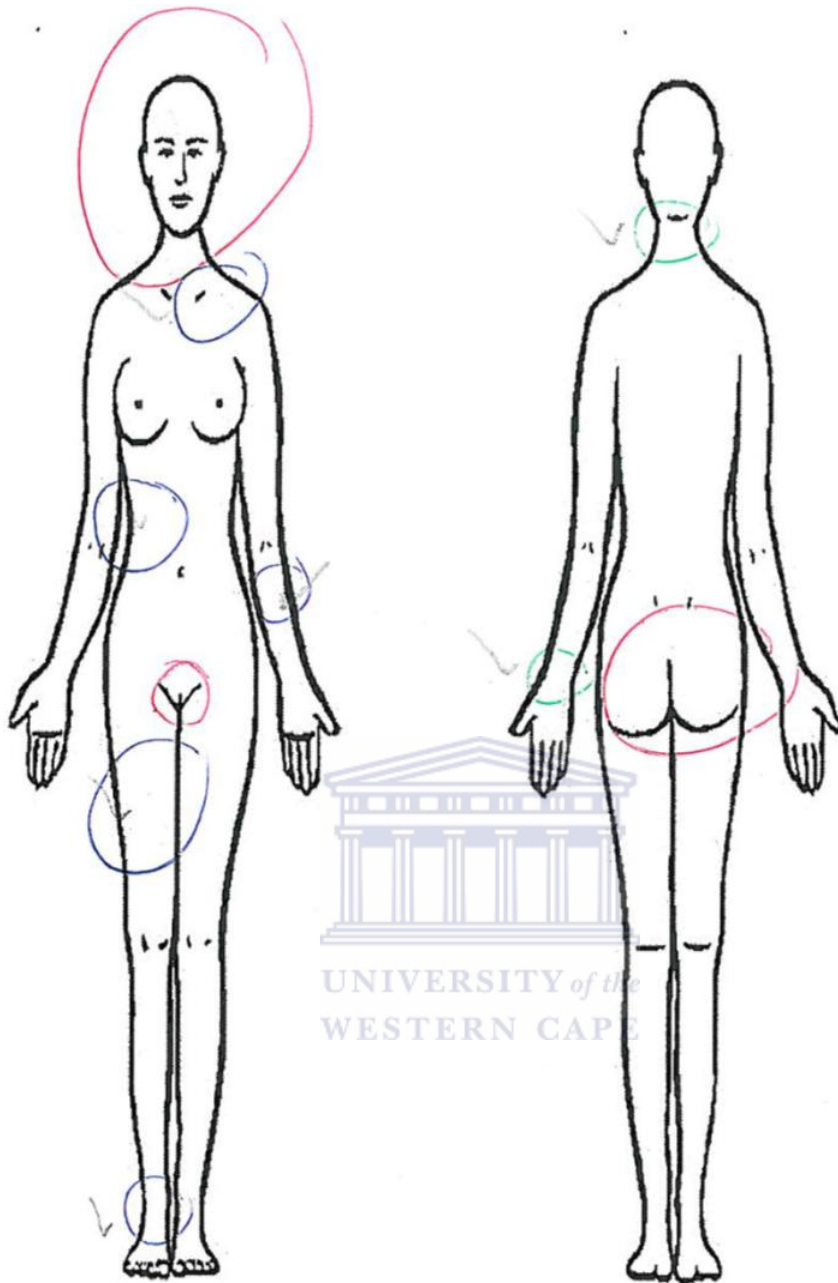


Figure 5. 1: An example of a body silhouette

The completed body silhouettes have made it possible to quantify the number of existing tattoos of the participants and where they are placed on the body, the number of possible future tattoos, and where the participants want these tattoos to be placed, as well as the number of no-go zones, and what these specific placements are. Table 5.1 is therefore a numerical representation of the placements.

Table 5. 1: Numerical representation of body silhouettes

| Placement | Green | | | | Blue | | | | Red | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| | UWC | UCT | SUN | Total | UWC | UCT | SUN | Total | UWC | UCT | SUN | Total |
| Ankle | 2 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Back (incl. spine) | 3 | 2 | 1 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 11 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Back of head | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Behind ear | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Behind neck | 4 | 2 | 2 | 8 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Breast | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| Calf | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| Chest | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Collarbone | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Elbow | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Face | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 16 |
| Foot | 2 | 3 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 7 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Forearm | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Inner Forearm | 2 | 2 | 4 | 8 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Hand | 2 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Hip | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Hipbone | 1 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Indicated whole body | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Leg | 5 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 0 | 10 |
| Lower back | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 6 |
| Neck | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 7 |
| Private areas ⁵ | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 8 | 7 | 18 |
| Ribcage | 2 | 2 | 4 | 8 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Shoulder | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Shoulder blade | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Stomach | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Thigh | 1 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Underarm | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Upper arm | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 6 |
| Wrist | 5 | 3 | 2 | 10 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| | 36 | 32 | 21 | 89 | 30 | 28 | 18 | 76 | 30 | 40 | 32 | 102 |

⁵ These areas specifically pertain to the genitals and buttocks.

The numbers indicated in this table represent the number of markings on the body silhouettes of all participants across the three universities. It is important to note that the columned markings can be further described as existing (green), aspirational (blue) and undesirable (red) placements identified by the participants holistically. The number of markings will be used as one of the methods to identify any possible trends at these universities. The data table also indicates the participants and their affiliated institutions. This categorization was made to establish whether there are differences in the trends at the different universities.

This research not only looks at the placement of the tattoos and the different semiotics used within the tattoo designs, but also at the non-verbal behaviour of the participants during the interview process, as this could reveal interesting information of whether different modes work together to make meaning (Palmer *et al.*, 2006; Kress, 2011). For that reason, notes of non-verbal behaviour were taken while observing the participants during the entire interview process. Interesting non-verbal behaviour took place during the completion of the body silhouettes and will therefore also be used in the discussion that follows.

5.1.1. Categories

The body silhouette has been broken down into 30 placements, as marked by the participants, which are grouped into the ‘existing’ category, the ‘undesirable’ category and the ‘aspirational’ categories.

- ‘Existing’ category (marked in green)

The green markings indicate existing tattoos, thus representing the participants’ present selves. Existing placements reveal which placements were desirable for the individuals at the time the tattoo was acquired. It may also reveal current trends in tattoo placements, or what might have been trending at the time the participant acquired the tattoo. Observations during the data collection process reveal that participants found this task easiest and quickest to complete. The reason for this is possibly because these tattoos already exist, therefore not much thought went into completing this process. However, the more tattoos the participant had, the longer the process took. It was observed that participants with many tattoos would count their tattoos during this process to ensure that they had not omitted any of the tattoos.

Some participants also physically checked on their bodies where the tattoos were while indicating the existing tattoos.

- ‘Undesirable’ category (marked in red)

The areas marked in red were representative of the areas that were the least desirable to have tattoos. It is of interest to the researcher to establish which areas on the body were least desirable for these participants to have tattoos. Interestingly, participants were observed to clearly and effectively demarcate two specific areas as undesirable, specifically the face and private areas (including the genitals and buttocks).

- ‘Aspirational’ category (marked in blue)

The areas marked in blue show where the participants wish to get tattoos in the future, thus representing their future/aspirational selves. As with the ‘existing’ category, this category can also be used to reveal which tattoo placements are currently trending. Observations reveal that this task took longer for the participants to complete than both the ‘existing’ and ‘undesirable’ categories. A possible reason for this may be that participants might not have previously thought of where they want their next tattoo(s) to be, and the process of indicating on the body silhouette gave them the chance to think through which placements would be ideal for them to have tattoos. Participants therefore revealed their preferences based on which colour was used to mark the placement. Note that the placements weren’t necessarily relevant to each participant; they only marked the placements that they had tattoos, they found undesirable, and those that they found aspirational.

5.1.2. Category Comparison

As mentioned before, the researcher interviewed eight participants per university, and each participant was given a body silhouette on which they had to indicate ‘existing’, ‘aspirational’ and ‘undesirable’ tattoo placements. Looking at the total number of markings of each category, Table 5.1 shows that the category with the highest number of markings is the ‘undesirable’ category, with 102 markings. This could indicate that there are more areas on the body that are not considered to be appropriate or suitable for tattoos. The ‘existing’

category follows, with 89 markings. In other words, the total number of existing tattoos amongst all participants add up to 89 tattoos. The ‘aspirational’ category showed the fewest indications with 76 markings. When comparing this category to the ‘undesirable’ category, it is noticeable that the participants indicated more undesirable placements on the body than aspirational placements.

Having compared the categories as a whole, the following section draws a comparison between the three universities in terms of the three above-mentioned categories. In addition, this section will also compare the individual body placements between campuses.

- ‘Existing’ tattoo placements

From the 24 participants, a total of 89 green markings were etched on the body silhouettes. In other words, the participants had a total number of 89 tattoos at the time of the interviews. Table 5.1 shows that of all three universities, participants at UWC have the most tattoos, with a total of 36 inscriptions on the body, which makes up 40.4% of the total number of tattoos. Participants at UCT have a total of 32 tattoos, which makes up 36% of the total number of tattoos. Lastly, participants at SUN have the fewest number of tattoos, with a total of 21 inscriptions on the body, making up 23.6% of the total number of tattoos. There is a significant difference between the number of tattoos at UWC and SUN. Participants at UCT also have a significantly higher number of tattoos than participants at SUN.

In terms of the individual ‘existing’ body placements, participants at UWC had the most tattoos on the back, behind the neck, the leg, and the wrist compared to participants at UCT and SUN. Participants at UCT had the highest number of foot tattoos compared to the other universities, while participants at SUN had the highest number of tattoos on the inner forearm and the ribcage.

- ‘Aspirational’ tattoo placements

Table 5.1 shows that in terms of the number of tattoos the participants are planning on acquiring, a total of 76 blue markings were etched on the body silhouettes. Participants at UWC and UCT want 30 and 28 more tattoos in total, respectively. Together, participants at SUN have indicated that they want 18 more tattoos, thus having the least number of tattoos in

the 'aspirational' category. This indicates that they do not want many tattoos on their bodies. Neville (2005) states that individuals in the Western mainstream communities only have one or two small tattoos. Interestingly, one of the participants at this institution has indicated that she wants her whole body covered in tattoos, thus being the exception not only at SUN, but also amongst all three institutions.

In terms of the 'aspirational' body placements, participants at UWC indicated the highest number of markings on the back, hip, ribcage and shoulder blade compared to participants at UCT and SUN. Participants at UCT indicated the highest number of markings behind the neck, as well as the thigh, wrist and chest, while participants at SUN indicated the highest number of markings on the calf and the lower back.

- 'Undesirable' tattoo placements

In terms of indicating which placements are the most undesirable to have tattoos, participants at UCT have collectively used this category 40 times. Participants at SUN used this category 32 times. With 30 markings, UWC has the least markings for this category.

When comparing the universities, Table 5.1 reveals that UWC has the highest number of 'existing' tattoos, as well as the highest number of 'aspirational' tattoos. UWC has also indicated the least number of 'undesirable' placements. This indicates that tattoos are more popular among participants at this institution than among participants at the other two institutions. UCT has the second highest number of 'existing' tattoos and 'aspirational' tattoos. Participants at UCT have also indicated the highest number of placements as 'undesirable', showing that they regard the larger part of their skin as no-go zones for tattoos. Participants at SUN have the least number of 'existing' tattoos and have also indicated the fewest placements as 'aspirational'. SUN also has the second highest number of 'undesirable' markings. This indicates that tattooing is not as popular among the participants at this institution compared to the other two institutions. It could also indicate that the participants at this university prefer to have a small number of tattoos. The reason for this is unclear, as the data did not reveal specific reasons for the discrepancy.

In terms of 'undesirable' tattoo placements, participants at UWC indicated the highest number of markings on the calf, inner forearm and upper arm compared to participants at UCT and SUN. Participants at UCT indicated the highest number of markings behind the ear,

hand, leg, neck, and private areas, while participants at SUN indicated the highest number of markings on the breast, collarbone, foot, lower back, stomach and wrist.

5.1.3. Trend formula

The body silhouettes were used to establish which tattoo placements are the most popular/desirable, and also which placements are the least popular/desirable among the participants in this study when constructing their idea of the female form. In order to establish whether a specific placement is currently trending among the participants in this study, the number of green and blue markings are added, as it can be said that the ‘existing’ and ‘aspirational’ categories are indicative of positive tattoo trends that may exist. Thereafter, the number of red markings of that specific placement is subtracted, thus removing the total markings by participants that regard that placement as ‘undesirable’. Below is an illustration of the trend formula:


$$\text{‘Existing’} + \text{‘Aspirational’} - \text{‘Undesirable’} = \text{Negative or positive trend}$$

The total number of markings per body part will be measured by an adapted Likert scale. Total markings are further categorized as follows: 0-3 is considered a ‘very low’ response, 4-7 is considered a ‘low’ response, 8-10 is considered a ‘moderate’ response, 11-13 is considered a ‘high’ response and 14-19 is a ‘very high’ response. The same scale applies to the cases where there is a negative number. For example -3 is considered a very low negative response and -19 is a very high negative response.

To illustrate this formula, I use the ribcage placement as an example. The ribcage had eight green (‘existing’) markings (thus indicating that eight participants have ribcage tattoos) and 11 blue (‘aspirational’) markings (indicating that collectively the participants plan on getting 11 ribcage tattoos), which gives us a total of 19 markings, a very high response for a tattoo placement. There were zero red (‘undesirable’) markings for the ribcage, therefore not affecting the equation. It also indicates that none of the participants see it as an undesirable placement for a tattoo. This placement can therefore be said to be highly desirable and popular amongst the participants of this study. Corroborating this response is the fact that the

well-known singer Rita Ora, an influential figure in popular culture, has a tattoo on her ribcage.

The category ‘indicated whole body’ was added for instances where the participants did not mark specific placements, but deliberately covered the majority of the body silhouette with one colour/category. Consequently, specific placements on these body silhouettes could not be tallied. The decision to mark the majority of the body silhouette with one colour, can also be significant to the analysis. For example, in an instance where the majority of the body silhouette is marked with red, the participant illustrates that her whole body, except for her ribcage, where she has an existing tattoo, is seen as undesirable for tattoos. This is in contrast with another participant, who marked the majority of her body silhouette with blue, thus illustrating that she is planning on having her whole body covered with tattoos. This reveals that even though there are many similarities among most participants in terms of body mapping, there are also cases where there are stark differences as to how they decide to mark their bodies.

By applying the trend analysis on all of the placements, the researcher was able to list these placements from most popular to least popular. It should be noted that while two placements (whole body and upper arm) scored zero (0), it does not mean that these areas were not indicated by the participants. The number of positive and negative markings for each placement were equal, and therefore when applying the trend analysis, these markings were cancelled out, and the result is therefore inconclusive.

5.2. Trend analysis findings

The following section is a discussion of the trends that were found using the trend analysis formula. This formula was used to establish which placements are the most popular, which tattoo trends are declining and which placements participants regard as no-go zones for tattoos. Findings are supplemented with qualitative findings corroborated with confluent academic studies.

Table 5. 2: List of placements (from most to least popular)

| <u>No.</u> | <u>Placement</u> | <u>Number of markings</u> | <u>Response</u> |
|------------|------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. | Ribcage | 19 | Very high |

| | | | |
|-----|----------------|-----|----------------------|
| 2. | Back | 16 | Very high |
| 3. | Wrist | 13 | High |
| 4. | Foot | 9 | Moderate |
| 5. | Shoulder blade | 9 | Moderate |
| 6. | Behind neck | 9 | Moderate |
| 7. | Inner forearm | 8 | Moderate |
| 8. | Ankle | 7 | Low |
| 9. | Hipbone | 6 | Low |
| 10. | Thigh | 6 | Low |
| 11. | Hip | 5 | Low |
| 12. | Behind ear | 3 | Very low |
| 13. | Elbow | 3 | Very low |
| 14. | Shoulder | 3 | Very low |
| 15. | Hand | 2 | Very low |
| 16. | Chest | 1 | Very low |
| 17. | Collarbone | 1 | Very low |
| 18. | Forearm | 1 | Very low |
| 19. | Underarm | 1 | Very low |
| 20. | Whole body | 0 | Very low |
| 21. | Upper arm | 0 | Very low |
| 22. | Back of head | -2 | Very low (negative) |
| 23. | Leg | -2 | Very low (negative) |
| 24. | Breast | -3 | Very low (negative) |
| 25. | Lower back | -3 | Very low (negative) |
| 26. | Stomach | -3 | Very low (negative) |
| 27. | Neck | -6 | Low (negative) |
| 28. | Calf | -9 | Moderate (negative) |
| 29. | Private areas | -15 | Very high (negative) |
| 30. | Face | -16 | Very high (negative) |

5.2.1. Popular trends

Using the trend formula, it was established that the three most popular placements among the participants are the ribcage, with 19 markings (a ‘very high’ response), the back, with 16 markings (also a ‘very high’ response), and the wrist, with 13 markings (a ‘high’ response). These body parts are considered to be typically feminine tattoo placements (Fannin, n.d), therefore, the quantitative findings corroborate other studies/axiomatic beliefs about femininity and tattoos.

As seen above, the ribcage is a very popular placement for a tattoo among the participants. Two of the participants, JS and AD, who have tattoos on their ribcages, have similar reasons for choosing this placement. The participants chose this area because it is close to the heart and because it can be easily hidden. Not only have they placed emotional value to the tattoo

placement, but they have also strategically placed it there so that they can conceal the tattoo. JS also states that she chose this placement because “it’s a personal tattoo. It’s not really something I’d like people to see. It’s more like for me” (turn 18). Here the issue of private and public space emerges. JS regards her ribcage as a private area, which no one would be able to see unless she decides to show them.

Some of the participants in this study chose the back because it is easy to hide. For example, LH states that one of the reasons she got the tattoo on her back was to hide it from her parents (turn 40). She further states that: “It’s not something I want to flaunt. It’s not it’s not for the world to see. It’s something personal, something private” (turn 42).

As mentioned before, the wrist is considered by many to be a feminine placement for a tattoo. One reason for this could be because the wrist is often considered to be a very delicate part of the body. AO chose to get a tattoo on her wrist “because I wanna like see it every day and remind- get reminded of what I’m going through and not go back there ever again and stuff like that” (turn 20). A tattoo on the wrist may also be reminiscent of a bracelet – another particularly feminine artefact.

The placements which scored highest after the ribcage, back and wrist, are the foot, shoulder blade, and the area behind the neck, all of which have nine markings. These areas thus have a ‘moderate’ response.

5.2.2. Declining trends

There is also evidence of possible declining trends. This is seen when a high number of participants have indicated that they have a tattoo on a specific placement, but there is a significantly smaller number of participants who have marked that placement as an aspirational category. For example, the inner forearm has eight green markings and two blue markings. Similarly, the area behind the neck has eight green markings and three blue markings. The number of markings in the ‘aspirational’ category for the above-mentioned placements indicates a very low response. A possible reason for the decline in popularity is that these placements might be difficult to hide or cover at work, church or to hide it from their parents, for example.

5.2.3. No-go zones

Placements marked in red represented ‘no-go zones’, indicating an aversion to having tattoos on these body parts. The three least popular placements to have tattoos include the face, with -16 markings (a ‘very high’ negative response), the private areas with -15 markings (also a ‘very high’ negative response), and the calf with -9 markings (a ‘moderate’ negative response).

BD stated that she would not get a tattoo on her face or her neck because she “[doesn’t] think it’s appropriate for a girl” (turn 34) and because “it’s very butch” (turn 36). When asked if she thinks it is appropriate for a male to get a tattoo on his face, she replied, “yes”. Similarly, LF stated that she would not get a tattoo on her neck or her chest because she thinks having a tattoo there looks “rough and tough” (turn 40). At least in the minds of these participants, these parts of their bodies, if inscribed, would no longer be feminine. A discussion around the construction of femininity is discussed later.

AR stated that she would not get a tattoo on her face because of how painful it would be to get tattooed there, and also because it would not look beautiful (turn 20). CM stated that she would not get a tattoo in her face, because “this is what people see every day. I don’t want something on my face that they staring at like Kat von D” (turn 22). Here, she is referring to the famous tattoo artist’s facial tattoos. This statement highlights the fact that tattoos do attract attention (whether wanted or unwanted), and for this participant, it might cause her to feel uncomfortable if people had to focus on her face, which is always exposed. This brings about the issue of private versus public space and the body being ‘read’ as a text. CM chooses to map her body by choosing spaces that she can cover, while avoiding ‘public’ spaces such as the face in order to avoid unwanted attention. It could also be argued that ‘public’ space on the body is the realm of men. Women who have tattoos on these spaces are therefore transgressing. The unmarked female face is therefore tacitly ratified within the realm of the male (public) space.

Other undesirable tattoo placements include the neck (excluding the part behind the neck) with -6 markings, as well as the stomach, breast and lower back area, all of which have -3 markings.

5.2.4. Per University/comparison

As mentioned before, Table 5.1 can also be used to compare patterns found in the tattoo placements across the different campuses. This is useful to the researcher as it is of interest to this study to establish whether the historical differentiation of the universities have an influence on the type of tattoos the participants have.

It was found that there is a significant difference with regards to the leg area when comparing UWC and SUN. UWC has five green markings and one blue marking on the leg area, giving a total of six markings. In contrast, SUN has no green or blue markings in this area. However, there were no red markings from SUN for this area either, thus leading to an inconclusive result.

The wrist is also a more popular placement among participants at UWC and UCT than among participants at SUN. Participants at UWC indicated five green markings, one blue marking and no red markings for this area, thus giving a total of six markings. Participants at UCT indicated two green markings, four blue markings and no red markings, giving a total of six markings. SUN, on the other hand, indicated two green markings, zero (0) blue markings and two red markings. In other words, there are only two wrist tattoos among the participants at SUN, none of the other participants indicated this area as 'aspirational', and in fact, with two red markings, there was some indication of this area being an undesirable tattoo placement. It is possible that this placement is no longer as popular/trendy as in the past. It could also be that, because the wrist is a popular placement for tattoos, many are opting not to have this area tattooed, in order not to have a common tattoo placement. Common tattoo placements often get negative reputations over time, such as the lower back tattoo that was once considered very fashionable and very feminine, but which is now known as the 'tramp stamp'.

5.3. Categorization of semiotic material

In Table 5.3, the tattoos are categorized in terms of their semiotic material (text, image, and a combination of text and image), thus revealing which semiotic mode(s) the participants prefer when choosing a tattoo design. This gives an indication of how participants in this study prefer to use tattoos to express themselves – whether by using images (including symbols) or texts or a combination of both. This might also reveal tattoo trends that may exist in terms of

which semiotic material is preferred when deciding on a tattoo. Even though the total number of tattoos is 89, the researcher only took/collected pictures of 78 tattoos because the other tattoos were not visible at the time of the interview process. Also, while tattoos in private areas (e.g. breasts, genitals, and buttocks) were considered for statistical analysis in Table 5.1, these tattoos were not analyzed visually and therefore no pictures were taken of tattoos in these areas. The following table only considers the tattoos which the researcher physically captured with a camera phone.

Table 5. 3: Breakdown of semiotic material

| Semiotics | UWC | UCT | SUN | Total | % |
|------------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|------------|
| Solitary text | 3 | 5 | 5 | 13 | 17 |
| Solitary image | 17 | 17 | 10 | 44 | 56 |
| Text & image | 12 | 3 | 6 | 21 | 27 |
| Total | 32 | 25 | 21 | 78 | 100 |

In terms of the semiotic material used in the tattoos, 56% of the tattoos are solitary images, thus making up more than half of the tattoos and is therefore the most popular choice among the participants. Solitary images in the tattoo design score significantly higher than solitary texts (17%) and the combination of text and image (27%). A possible reason for preferring solitary images might be that the image alone is symbolic for the individual and therefore it is not necessary to add text to explain the tattoo. In addition, the symbolism of the image might be personal so that only the individual understands its significance/meaning. This will be discussed in more detail later.

Only 17% of the tattoos are solitary texts, making this the least popular choice for the participants. It could be that text alone is not considered to have enough symbolic meaning. Additionally, in a follow-up interview with KA, who has a solitary text tattoo, she stated that “graphic texts stand out –the designs, the colour, the size. Doesn’t matter how big you make that lettering, people are still gonna have to get close to read you [laughing].” It can therefore be said that solitary images afford the individual more ‘space’ or distance, while solitary texts cause the individual to have less ‘space’ between herself and a curious onlooker. KA also stated that having only text in a tattoo design might not be considered as “aesthetically pleasing” as a graphic tattoo. Through the observations of the researcher at the various

research sites, it appeared to be common practice for individuals to have images accompany the text, in order to make the tattoo look more appealing. Furthermore, she noted that it was especially tough for her to get a solitary text tattoo because it was difficult to decide on whether to have a sentence, a phrase or a single word tattooed on her body. She stated that: “It’s the whole ‘I don’t want to explain this one word to every single person who asks’ [laughing]”. According to this participant, it would almost always be necessary to explain a tattoo containing a single word to an onlooker, whereas a sentence or a phrase would be more self-explanatory. As illustrated by KA, there are many things to consider when choosing solitary texts, maybe more so than solitary images and the combination of text and image.

However, a tattoo of a text might be of significance on its own. For example, Robbins (2006: 165) states that a possible reason for preferring to inscribe solitary texts on the body is that “scripts state their meaning clearly”. In these cases, the tattooed individual might feel that the text on its own conveys the intended message clearly and therefore an image is not needed to supplement or explain the meaning of the text. It may also be personal preference, as is the case with AO, who states that she prefers writing/lettering when it comes to tattoos for women (turn 50).

Another reason for choosing solitary texts, as well as solitary images, may be because of limited space on the body or a specific placement. For example, AH stated that it was difficult for her to find a tattoo artist who could tattoo her preferred design on her inner forearm. Her tattoo has a combination of text and image and as a result, some tattoo artists refused to do the tattoo because it might be problematic for a tattoo artist to fit the design on a small space. Another possible reason for choosing solitary texts is that the participant might crowd up the message that they are trying to convey through the tattoo if they use both text and image. It is interesting to note how the body constrains the message, which is reminiscent of the old refrain “the medium is the message”.

The combination of text and image is the second most popular choice, with 27% of the tattoos incorporating both semiotic modes. In some instances, the text supplements the image and adds to the meaning of the tattoo. For example, JS has a tattoo of a tree together with the Chinese symbols for inner strength. A tree is considered to be strong and is therefore what represents strength for this participant. She added the Chinese symbols to reinforce this message. In other cases there is a disjuncture between the image and the text, meaning that while it is seen as one tattoo, the image and the text convey two different messages. For

example, TA has a rosary with the accompanying words “no regrets”. She chose the rosary to signal her membership to the Anglican Church. Also, when she explained the meaning of the tattoo, she discussed the image of the rosary and the phrase separately. For the participant, there is no apparent religious connotation of the phrase “no regrets”. However, onlookers ‘reading’ her body may perceive the text and image as one sign.

5.4. Language as semiotic material

In Table 5.4, the tattoos containing language are categorized in terms of the languages used in the tattoos. This table only considers the tattoos of which the researcher collected digital images of. Three official South African languages (English, Afrikaans, and isiXhosa) are listed in this table, as the researcher expected these languages to be the most used by the participants. The category ‘other’ was added to account for those languages that are not official South African languages. The category ‘code-switching’ was added as it was expected by the researcher that the participants might use two or more languages in one tattoo, as this is a common occurrence in everyday speech in the Western Cape.

Table 5. 4: Breakdown of languages

| Languages | UWC | UCT | SUN | Total | % |
|----------------|-----|-----|-----|-----------|-------------|
| English | 5 | 3 | 6 | 14 | 63.5 |
| Afrikaans | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 4.5 |
| isiXhosa | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Other | 2 | 3 | 2 | 7 | 32 |
| -Chinese | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 14 |
| -French | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 9 |
| -Italian | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4.5 |
| -Elvish | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4.5 |
| Code-switching | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 7 | 6 | 9 | 22 | 100 |

The above table reveals that 63.5% of the tattoos with lettering is in English, making this the most popular language to get tattooed in. For example, some of the participants opted for tattoos of quotes from books or songs, which is in English. This may indicate that English has more affordance than other languages in the practice of tattooing.

The category 'other' is used to categorize the languages that are not official South African languages. This category makes up 32% of the tattoos that have language. A possible reason for this phenomenon is that the participant might want a unique tattoo, and getting a tattoo in a foreign language is therefore one way of differentiating themselves from others. In addition, the participant might want a tattoo that others might not know the meaning of. The table also gives a breakdown of the different languages constituting 'other'. This is interesting considering that none of the participants mentioned that they are fluent or native speakers of those particular languages used in those tattoos. Yet the participants preferred to use these languages for permanent inscription instead of Afrikaans and Xhosa. A possible reason for this is that the Afrikaans and Xhosa tattoos are not popular trends in tattooing (as yet).

Furthermore, as SUN is a predominantly Afrikaans institution, the researcher expected that some of these participants might have tattoos with Afrikaans wording. In fact, during an interview, AR, who is a student at SUN, mentioned that she has seen many female Afrikaans students with tattoos of Afrikaans lyrics from popular Afrikaans bands. However, only one of the participants from SUN has an Afrikaans tattoo. Specifically, this tattoo contains the lyrics "soet slaap sonder sonde", from the song "Tiny Town" by the South African rock band *Fokofpolisiekar*. When asked about her decision to get a tattoo in Afrikaans, AO said:

"Everyone goes to English, 'cause everyone understands English, so it's- usually when people ask me what what it says uhm, like I say- I tell them in Afrikaans and they would like 'what does it mean?' and I'm just like 'well can't really explain it to you because you have to listen to the song' so it doesn't have the same meaning in English as it has in Afrikaans" (turn 16).

Firstly, she mentions that everyone has tattoos with English lettering. Therefore, by having a tattoo with Afrikaans lettering, she is differentiating herself from others. Secondly, she mentions that people acquire English tattoos because everyone understands English. Here, she points out that people are conscious of the fact that their tattoos are being read and they might have a desire for people to understand what the tattoo means. This might be a reason why they decide to use English. Furthermore, when explaining the meaning of the tattoo, AO uses Afrikaans as she maintains that the meaning of the lyrics might change. The authenticity of the lyrics will also be lost if she had to translate the lyrics for her tattoo. From these findings, it appears that Afrikaans tattoos might be a growing trend at SUN, but it has yet to become a popular trend at UWC and UCT.

Some of the participants had different languages tattooed on their bodies, such as LF who has the English word “Sugar” tattooed on her back, and the Italian phrase “Sono felice” on her inner forearm. However, there was no code-switching found within an individual tattoo. This is interesting as the Western Cape is a multilingual space where code-switching occurs constantly. In fact, many of the participants code-switched during the interviews. Code-switching might be regarded as non-standard and therefore not acceptable to have as a tattoo. The issue of temporality may also emerge as an important phenomenon here. The permanency of a tattoo may implicitly imply that the standard varieties be used. Code-switching may therefore be viewed more as a fleeting ephemeral phenomenon – and therefore may not be preferred when contrasted with the permanency of a tattoo.

5.5. Summary

This chapter contains numerical representations of the body silhouettes which were completed by the participants, as well as the semiotic material used in their tattoos. The first table looked at the tattoo trends, specifically focusing on the placements (Table 5.1). The researcher was able to compare the popularity of the placements between the universities. Establishing tattoo trends are important seeing that the placement plays a significant role in the overall construction of the tattoo, as seen by the narratives. The researcher used a formula which was designed to establish which tattoo placements are trending, which tattoo placements are declining and which tattoo placements are least popular. It was found that the most popular placements among the participants were the ribcage, back and wrist, while the least popular placements were the calf, private areas, and the face (Table 5.2).

This chapter also considered the semiotic material constituting the tattoos, which was presented in Table 5.3. It was established that solitary images were the most popular choice among the participants, followed by the combination of images and texts. Solitary texts were found to be the least popular choice among the participants.

The final section looked at the languages used in the tattoos (Table 5.4). It was found that English was the most popular choice when expressing themselves through language (inscribed on the body) and no code-switching was found.

CHAPTER 6 – RESEMIOTIZATION AND SEMIOTIC REMEDIATION AS DISCOURSE PRACTICE IN TATTOOS

6.0. Introduction

This chapter uses notions of resemiotization and semiotic remediation (Iedema, 2003; Prior & Hengst, 2010) to account not only for placement and design but also the meanings attached to particular tattoos. The analysis will be supplemented with images of the participants' tattoos. In addition, the patterns that emerge in the data set will be identified and analyzed (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2013). This chapter also looks at the kind of semiotic material (text and images) used in the tattoo designs including how these different semiotic material is resemiotized and remediated to make meaning. This includes attempting to uncover the norms and motivations behind the re-using and repurposing of particular images and verbal texts. The "relationship between symbol selection, body placement and reason for being tattooed have been studied in a limited way" (Watson, 1998: 453). The researcher will therefore attempt to widen this relationship, by analyzing the narratives provided by the participants which speaks to the placement and design of their tattoos.

According to Watson (1998), there are two important decisions that people make when they decide to get a tattoo: one is the symbol itself, and the second is *where* this symbol will be placed. The narratives provided by the participants revealed the importance of the placement of the tattoo as well as the meaning that the symbol/sign has for them. Consequently, different themes regarding the placement and symbol/sign emerged from the interview data. The narratives surrounding the placements of the tattoos generated the following themes: *placement and meaning, the 'no-tattoo' tattoo, interplay between private and public space, strategic body mapping, as well as body mapping and pain, and placement and the pursuit of uniqueness*. The narratives surrounding the symbol/sign generated the following themes: *remediation of religious beliefs as 'skinscapes', from 'significant others' to 'significant relationships', commemoration, and inspirational tattoos, as well as tattoos and femininity* (which will be discussed in Chapter 7).

Note that tattoos are subjective, with the implication that the meaning the tattoo has for the tattooed individual, might not necessarily cohere with an onlooker's interpretation of the symbol. What is of importance in this chapter, is the participants' interpretation of the tattoo and the meanings *they* have attached to it.

6.1. Placements

6.1.1. Placement and meaning

This section focuses on the meanings the participants attach to their tattoos in relation to where it is placed on their bodies. The theme *placement and meaning* uncovers instances where there is a direct link between the symbol/sign and its placement. This is in line with Scollon and Scollon's (2003) theory of geosemiotics, which suggests that signs take most of their meaning from where it is situated. In the interview data, it was found that the most popular placements for the participants such as the ribcage, back and wrist, most often fall within the theme of *placement and meaning*, indicating that the meaning attached to the placement contributes to its significance, and hence its popularity. The investigation into how/whether the placement indexes some construction of femininity, will be discussed in Chapter 7.

The analysis will firstly start by considering the meanings attached to the three most popular placements among the participants, namely the ribcage, back and wrist (as established in Chapter 5). Two of the participants, AD and JS, each have a tattoo on the ribcage. The following extracts show their responses to the interview question guided towards establishing whether the tattoo is related to the placement:

JS: "I chose it like by my ribs 'cause it's close to my heart" (turn 10).

AD: "Uhm... it's it's close to my heart, but that's not really the important part. It's just that it's out of sight, like I don't want any tattoos that are visible anywhere on my body and it's right over here, it's quite- and also apparently tattoos on the side like there- that's where you put very important- like those spaces are reserved for like important things, I don't know" (turn 8).

When asked why they decided on this placement, both responded that they chose the placement because it is close to their heart. The decision of choosing a placement that connects the tattoo to the heart, illustrates the emotional connection that the participants have attached to the tattoo, plausibly as the heart is associated with love. Therefore, by placing their tattoo on their ribcage, JS and AD are signalling how important/meaningful their tattoos are to them. Additionally, AD mentions two other reasons for placing her tattoo on her ribcage. She states that it's "out of sight", relating to the theme *interplay between private and*

public space, which will be discussed later in this chapter. In another section of the interview, she reveals that the tattoo is placed where no one can see it, because of the personal meaning attached to it. Furthermore, she states that it is believed that the ribcage is reserved for “important tattoos”. When the researcher further inquired about this statement, she responded:

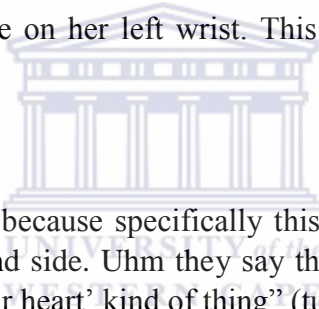
“I read it on the internet actually, ’cause I saw like different mean, different-what different parts, not mean, but like, ya and also ’cause it said this one was the most sore place, and then they said that if something means that much to you, you will just get it anyway, whether it’s sore or not” (turn 12).

This extract reveals an axiomatic belief that an individual would acquire a tattoo on the ribcage to signify their most significant emotions/events because of their willingness to endure the painful process of tattooing this sensitive area, which also relates to the theme *body mapping and pain*, which will be looked at later in this chapter. In addition, this extract reveals the external influences with regard to AD’s decision to have the tattoo inscribed on her ribcage. She states that she consulted the internet (considered here as an expert authority on the subject), about the possible meanings attached to different tattoo placements. Furthermore, she says that “they” (referring to those who posted the article on the meanings of different placements on the internet) claim if a tattoo has significant meaning to you, pain would not be a factor when considering the placement. Her decision regarding this placement is therefore also influenced by the socially constructed meaning attached to this area of the body. It can be said that if she had placed this tattoo on another area on her body, the personal meaning might have diminished or others might interpret the tattoo differently. This could index a physical hierarchy on the body, meaning that certain placements are regarded more important than others, and as seen by the above-mentioned example, more sensitive/delicate body parts are regarded as the best placements for meaningful tattoos.

Another popular placement among the participants is the back (as established in Chapter 5). LH, who has a tattoo on this body part, had this tattoo to commemorate the death of her cousin. She stated that: “I missed him a lot so I thought I’m gonna carry him on my back. That was why I chose my back” (turn 22). The initials can be said to be resemiotizing (Iedema, 2003) the cousin, while his memory is semiotically remediated (Bolter & Grusin, 2000; Prior & Hengst, 2010) in the metaphor of “carry him on my back”. In a follow-up

interview with this participant, LH allows for an unravelling of the significance of the tattoo. It was established that the significance of having the tattoo on her back emerged from the guilt she felt for not being able to prevent his suicide. This brings to mind the phrase “don’t carry the monkey on your back”, where the monkey is the ‘problem’ and a ‘burden’. Interestingly, she decided (both literally and figuratively) to carry her cousin on her back. Here, this participant’s identity has changed to that similar of a mother-figure who carries a child on her back. This tattoo can therefore also be seen as a physical manifestation of the guilt LH carries in her heart and mind, which is interesting as this is not typically the emotion one would expect to be immortalized on the body.

As mentioned before, the wrist is a popular placement for tattoos among the participants. TA has her mother’s name inscribed on her wrist. She states that she chose this placement “because there’s a heartbeat in your wrist as well” (turn 16). Although she did not elaborate on this, one can assume that this is an illustration of her love for her mother. Similarly, CM inscribed her grandmother’s name on her left wrist. This is what she had to say about the placement of her tattoo:



“Uhm, I would say mostly because specifically this one it’s on my left hand and your heart is on the left hand side. Uhm they say that’s why you get your ring on this finger. ‘Connects to your heart’ kind of thing” (turn 16).

CM stated that she chose her left side because the heart is also on the left side of the body. Once again there is a clear reference to placement of tattoo and emotional attachment signaled by the connection to the heart. Additionally, CM states that her reason for having her tattoo on her left side is that “they say that’s why you get your ring on this finger”, showing the influence of society on her decision to have her tattoo on that specific placement. Furthermore, mentioning the ring on the finger also indexes social norms of marriage (and possibly heterosexuality), which is another layer in the construction of a particular type of woman.

DK also has a tattoo on her wrist: a tattoo of a heart (picture 6.1). When explaining the meaning of this tattoo, she stated:

“[t]he heart on my sleeve, for obvious reasons. Be vulnerable. Love as much as you can, which is what Jesus did” (turn 10).

The popular saying “to wear your heart on your sleeve” is the crux of this tattoo. Not only has this inspired the design, but also inspired the placement of this tattoo. The symbol of the heart is placed on the wrist (where a sleeve would normally be). This tattoo has symbolic significance for DK, as she explains that her tattoo is sending a message to be vulnerable and to love as much as you can, a sentiment manifested by Jesus, and hence the Christian religion. Similarly, SC, who has a tattoo of a crescent moon on her wrist (picture 6.2), also explains her tattoo by using the above-mentioned saying. She chose this design because “[i]t’s like they say, ‘you wear your heart on your sleeve’, it’s just like a little heart on my sleeve” (turn 12). Once again, “wearing your heart on your sleeve” is a sentiment which is cherished. It can also be said that these are emotions typically associated with women. In addition, reference is made to the outside world with regards to the decision on the placement of the tattoo, as seen when SC refers to “they”, possibly referring to society, specifically those who use the popular saying. “They” could refer to the patriarchal script in which the female body is being ‘read’ and/or constructed.

Even though both of these participants provided the same reason why they chose to inscribe their wrists, they have two different symbols conveying the same meaning. DK has a tattoo of a heart, while SC has a tattoo of a crescent moon. Both of them have not only repurposed (Bolter & Grusin, 2000; Prior & Hengst, 2010) the saying “to wear your heart on your sleeve”, but also the different designs they have chosen. For instance, the symbol of a heart does traditionally refer to love, which is similar to the meaning DK has attached to her tattoo, but she has extended the meaning of this symbol by adding a Biblical message. Also, in many cultures, the moon is symbolic of the female and of fertility (Green, 2012), but SC has repurposed this symbol to take on a different meaning. What is also interesting here is that the combination of the placement (both tattoos being on the arm, where a sleeve usually is), as well as the image (a moon and a heart), contribute towards the same message, thus showing the multisemiotic nature of their tattoos (cf. Kress, 2011).



Picture 6. 1



Picture 6. 2

A noticeable pattern that emerges in the data with regards to the placements of the participants' tattoos, is that some of the participants decided on placements that were either closely located to the heart, or is linked to the heart in some way. This can be seen as an expression of their femininity. Women are often believed to be emotional, wearing their hearts on their sleeves (as the popular saying goes). This is not only seen in the last two examples where the participants have intentionally inscribed their wrists and forearms to signal this sentiment, but also with the other participants who have tattoos that signal emotional connections to people (grandmothers and mothers), as well as certain events (almost losing a parent).

The examples used in this section show that the meanings attached to these tattoos are very special to the participants. They attach emotional value to the tattoos, not only to the placement, but also to the meanings (which will be discussed in another section in this chapter). At this point, we see womanhood/femininity being constructed through conventional semiotics (hearts, names of loved ones, inspirational quotes, and so forth) on delicate and hidden parts of the body.

6.1.2. The 'no-tattoo' tattoo

It is also important to look at the meanings these women have attached to the placements that they find undesirable, as it reveals why they would not inscribe these body parts. In order to establish this, one of the interview questions was, "where on your body would you not get a

tattoo, and why?” The responses revealed that society’s expectations of women is still to conserve the “purity and ‘blankness’ of the female skin” (Botz-Bernstein, 2015: 120), resulting in invisible inscriptions of male dominance on the female body, henceforth referred to as *the ‘no-tattoo’ tattoo*. This is also in line with “Baudrillard’s concept of the blank female skin as a ‘void’ that men rush to fill with their own desires” (Botz-Bornstein, 2015: 120). The following responses reveal how these participants construct their femininity by choosing *not* to inscribe certain areas on the body:

TA: “Okay uhm I won’t tattoo my legs or my calves because I love my legs and uhm... it will just take the attention off the legs and to the tattoo [laughing] and we’ve all established that my calves are my focus point probably but anyway and my neck, it’s too... gangster, if I can put it like that and I’m a female and it won’t look very appealing... not that I care what people think. It’s just... not feminine to tattoo the neck or the face” (turn 30).

According to TA, because she finds her legs to be her best asset, she would not tattoo these parts because the tattoo(s) would draw attention away from them. Here, the feminine image of bare legs (through wearing short shorts and having no tattoos) are being contrasted with attention grabbing tattoos on legs. TA is therefore constructing her femininity by not inscribing her legs and calves. Her unmarked legs are appreciated in public space, therefore she would not jeopardize that by inscribing her legs. This could signal that her body belongs to the public ‘male’ space. In addition, she states that she would not tattoo her neck or face “because it’s not feminine” and also because “I’m a female and it won’t look very appealing”. Here, a contrast is made between herself and an ‘imagined’ male, noting that for her to have these body parts inscribed, it would not look appealing, whereas it would look appealing on a man. Her statement could signal that her body belongs to the public ‘male’ space. She also states that tattooing her neck would be “too gangster”. Here it is not clear whether she is referring to gangsterism (belonging to a gang) or indexing a trend (having swagger). Nonetheless, both possibilities are not typically associated with femininity. Face tattoos are more common among prisoners and gangsters so one could assume that she is talking about the former. This brings forth an aggressive, criminal, and arguably male element, which she does not wish to associate with. Similarly, RK stated that she would not

get a tattoo on her face or her neck because “I just associate that with gangsterism and it’s so hectic when it’s all out there” (turn 28).

BD states that she would get a tattoo on any body part “[e]xcept the private parts [laughing] or my neck. I don’t think I would tattoo my neck or my face” (turn 32). When asked why she would not tattoo her neck or face, she responded, “I don’t think it’s appropriate for a girl” (turn 34). When asked if it is appropriate for a male, she responded, “Yes” (turn 38). She does however believe that it is appropriate for men to have tattoos on their necks and their faces. One can therefore see that there are more spaces on the body that are available for men to get tattooed, supporting the idea that a woman is a ‘trespasser’ in the public space, while the male form has more control and more available physical space on the body for tattoos. In addition, in contrast to the placements mentioned in this chapter, which can be seen as ‘public’ spaces, BD states that she wouldn’t tattoo her “private parts” (thus possibly referring to buttocks and genital region). The fact that she laughs after she mentions this might indicate that there is a stigma attached to tattooing private areas.

These snippets reveal how the participants construct their femininity by not inscribing body parts which are associated with masculinity, gangsterism and ostentation, qualities which are in contrast to what stereotypical femininity entails. Similarly, RK states that she would not tattoo her neck or her face. She provides two reasons for not tattooing these areas. Firstly, she associates it with gangsterism. Secondly, she states that “it’s so hectic when it’s all out there”. Describing neck and face tattoos as “hectic” could also mean that she believes these tattoos attract too much attention, either to the person or to the face specifically. In these extracts, it can be seen that femininity is contrasted with gangsterism as well as ostentation.

The above examples illustrate that the participants not only construct their femininity by what they have on their bodies, but also by what they do not have (in terms of tattoos). Femininity is associated with being discreet and not having tattoos on ‘appropriate’ places. This relates to the following theme, called *interplay between private and public space*.

6.1.3. **Interplay between private and public space**

Aside from choosing placements for emotional reasons, some of the participants have also strategically placed their tattoos in order to hide them when they have to, and to reveal them when they want to, giving rise to the theme *interplay between private and public space*. This

theme looks at the participants' agency over their bodies, as they have the ability to decide on whether or not people should see their tattoos, whether it be via coverage or strategic placement. Dickson *et al.* (2014) state that women are more likely than men to cover their tattoos. In this section, the researcher intends to establish whether and why this may be true. Here, the researcher also looks at whether or not the tattoos are purposely hidden, and the reasons for placing the tattoos in places which can/cannot be seen.

Demerson (2001, as cited in Neville, 2005: 46) found that "women are more likely to choose a spot which is easily hidden". Similarly, the interview data reveals that the main reasons the participants chose to hide their tattoos include that the tattoo is personal, needing to cover it for their (future) careers, and hiding the tattoos from their parents. In the following cases, the participants specifically point out that they have chosen a placement that is hidden, or can be easily hidden, because the tattoo (and the meaning the tattoo has for them) is personal.

Both JS and LH make it clear that they do not want people to see their tattoos, and by purposely hiding their tattoos, they are able to control who is reading (or not reading) their bodies. This could be said to empower them. JS says that her tattoo, placed on her ribcage and therefore always covered by her clothing, is purposely hidden because: "[i]t's more like for me to know about. Not for everyone to see" (turn 16). She further explains that she does not want everyone to see it "because it's a personal tattoo. It's not really something I'd like people to see. It's more like for me" (turn 18). Similarly, LH, who has a tattoo on her back, states that: "[i]t's not something I want to flaunt. It's not it's not for the world to see. It's something personal, something private" (turn 42). Both snippets indicate that the feeling/motivation which guided the decision to get the tattoos, is something deeply personal, and might possibly be something that they feel guilty about. Both participants do not want people to see their tattoos as they are wary of the fact that people might ask what the meanings behind the tattoos are (e.g. LH's feelings of guilt regarding her cousin's death).

Martin and Dula (2010, as cited in Dickson *et al.*, 2014) found that college students who have tattoos either fear being stigmatized or they have already been victims of stigmatization, and therefore they place their tattoos on areas that are easy to cover. A possible reason for this is that tattooing has been considered a man's activity and therefore women with tattoos are seen as "gender role violators" and are thus more likely to endure stigmatization (Dickson *et al.*, 2014: 269). Consequently, women are more likely to choose placements that are easy to hide, conceal, or cover.

6.1.4. Strategic body mapping

The following snippets look at instances where the participants placed their tattoos on areas on the body where prospective employers, or their parents, would not be able to see them. Brallier, Maguire, Smith, and Palm (2011: 72) state that “several studies investigate the implications of having visible tattoos on an individual’s employability”. Some of the participants specifically mentioned that they opted for placements that can be hidden in case their tattoos have to be covered at work. When asked if her tattoos and the placements are related in any way, RK stated:

“I placed all my tattoos so that, if I had to, I would need to show them. If I had to hide them, I could. So the one on my wrist is exactly where my watch’s band would be. Uhm the one on my back, obviously I would just wear a longer shirt. The one on my leg is like lower leg area so if you wore like socks or you wore long pants, it wouldn’t be very visible. Uhm the one on my neck as well. It starts just below the collar, so if you wore a collared shirt, that would be hidden away. So everything is placed in such a way so that if I needed to hide it, I could, and also because I didn’t know- like obviously the field I’m going into is very corporate and some people are very fussy about stuff like that, so ya. I placed them so that if I needed to hide them, I can (turn 14).”

RK’s narrative is an illustration of *strategic body mapping*. Each of her tattoos are deliberately hidden specifically for the workplace, which in her case is the hospitality industry. Brallier *et al.*’s (2011: 75) “study suggest that visible tattoos are still viewed negatively with respect to employment in the food service industry”. Each tattoo intersects with its mode of concealment. Her wrist tattoo can be covered by a watch, the tattoo on her neck can be covered with a collared shirt, and the tattoo on her leg can either be covered by long pants or socks. This snippet shows how well she thought about her placements in relation to her professional image at her place of work.

When asked where she would not get a tattoo, AD, who has a tattoo on her ribcage, said:

“Anywhere visible I would not get a tattoo. As I said, I don’t want- like also, like- I think about the future and like when I get a job or, ya you can cover it up, but you can’t always wear long sleeves and you can’t always do this or do always to that and- like I said, if you get married or if you have children or, you don’t want all those things to be- well, in my view” (turn 20).

In another section of the interview, AD states that she does not want anyone to see her tattoo because the meaning of her tattoo is personal (turn 14). In the extract above, she reveals that she would feel restricted in terms of what clothing she could wear if she had her tattoo somewhere that was visible, as seen when she says “you can’t always wear long sleeves and you can’t always do this or do always to that”. AD is therefore adamant about people not being able to see her tattoo, unless she deliberately displays the tattoo. She also reveals that she does not picture her future self with a tattoo, when she states that she does not want the tattoo to be in her view when she gets married and has children. This brings forth the stereotypical role of a ‘good wife’ and the image of a ‘good mother’. For her, the ideal image of a good mother and a good wife is one without visible tattoos. It can be said that AD’s body is constrained by the limitations of her ideas regarding gender norms.

Other responses to the above-mentioned interview question include:

SC: “I chose places that if I wanted to hide them in the workplace, I could. Just to avoid prejudice mostly” (turn 12).

GJ: “I still have to get a job one day, and as a teacher, it’s- it won’t be appropriate for me to have tattoos” (turn 24).

SC’s tattoos are on her wrist and ribcage, places which are easy to conceal. When asked why her tattoos are hidden, she stated that she chose placements which would be easy to hide in the workplace, in order to avoid prejudice. This is ironic, because her body is already ‘prejudiced’ because of her common-sense knowledge of tattooed women. In addition, GJ acknowledges that as a teacher, she would not be able to reveal her tattoos at work. She therefore shows awareness of the fact that she has a professional image to uphold, not only in front of her colleagues, but also her learners, as well as the learners’ parents. Once again, the female body is set against a patriarchal script of what women should/shouldn’t do.

It can be said that the fact that the participants are university students has influenced where they chose to place their tattoos. Many of the participants are studying for jobs where visible tattoos may not be acceptable. They have therefore carefully mapped their bodies so that their tattoos are easily covered. This also illustrates that in choosing their placements, they consider their future selves. The tattoos are therefore not mindlessly placed on random areas

of the body. In fact, their bodies are sites of struggle – clearly indicating constraints of ‘future judgment’.

Among the participants, there were those who chose certain placements that would be hidden from their parents. Examples of these are shown in the following snippets:

AO: “some of them was because my dad didn’t know uhm I got tattoos. He was quite uhm he didn’t like the idea. He was against it. And my mom was the one that knew so we had to like kind of uhm choose places so that he doesn’t notice them.” (turn 24).

JB: “the one on my stomach was so that my parents wouldn’t see” (turn 20).

LH: “I chose my back ’cause it’s under my bra strap so my parents can’t see it” (turn 40).

Tattooing among youth is still a relatively new trend which recently became a part of popular culture and therefore older generations might still associate tattooing with criminals and gangsterism, or they simply do not think it is appropriate for women. Thus, when choosing the placements for their tattoos, the three above-mentioned participants took into consideration the fact that their parents do not want them to have tattoos. However, instead of refraining from getting tattoos, they placed the tattoos in areas that are easily hidden (e.g. under the bra strap, stomach). The fact that these participants want to hide their tattoos, whether from prospective employers or parents, shows that they are aware that tattoos are still seen as transgressive, meaning that it is still unacceptable in the work place and among older generations. The role of ‘good employee’ and ‘good daughter’ are defined by not having tattoos.

RE, who has a tattoo on her shoulder blade, chose this placement because “it was a guy that did the tattoo so I didn’t want him to see uncomfortable places” (turn 16). From this statement, it can be inferred that women have been socially engineered to believe that they cannot be comfortable with their bodies, especially around men. It can be said that as a woman, she does not feel comfortable with a man seeing private areas on her body. This raises the question: if the tattoo artist was a woman, would she have considered other, more private/intimate, placements? Another reason she has chosen this placement was so that “I

can look at it any time I look in the mirror or whenever I can see it. It's not like I have to bend down" (turn 16). She made sure that she placed her tattoo so that she would be able to see it. When she mentions that she does not have to bend down in order for people to see her tattoo, she is referring to the lower back tattoo, once popular among women, but now stereotypically linked to promiscuous women (Dalzell & Victor, 2015).

AH pointed out that she specifically does not want to have a tattoo on her face because she does cosplay, referring to "the activity of dressing up in costume as an admired character in order to express one's enthusiasm and fandom" (Kroski, 2015: 1). She says: "I do- put on make up to make myself look like the characters so I can't really do that if there's a tattoo on my face" (turn 28). A tattoo is an expression of one's identity (Tiggeman & Golder, 2006; Doran, 2010). Therefore, when AH is taking on another persona during cosplay, she cannot have a mark on her that is an expression of her own self. It can also be said that a tattoo on the face would clash with her other hobby – cosplay. It can therefore be said that tattoos are beneath cosplay in the hierarchy of her social life.

LF, who has seventeen tattoos, said that all of her tattoos are in places that she can hide (turn 32). Having done some of her own tattoos, she has placed these tattoos on spots "that aren't like super noticeable" (turn 38), which is seen in picture 6.3 while her professionally done tattoos are typically bigger (picture 6.4). The tattoos that she has done herself, however, are relatively small. For example, the first photo is of a tattoo on her back, which was done by a professional tattoo artist. It is much bigger, more visible, and also more detailed than the tattoo on her knee, which she did herself. She also stated that the tattoos that are more important to her, are typically in more prominent places, whereas the tattoos which are not as meaningful, are undercover (turn 28). It can be said that she has a way of hierarchizing her tattoos. The bigger, professional tattoos, get more visibility, while the less professional tattoos are placed in obscure places.



Picture 6. 3



Picture 6. 4

As seen in the discussion above, the participants have strategically mapped their bodies in order for their tattoos to be covered if necessary. Tattoos are also hierarchized on the body as seen with LF's tattoos, and these hierarchies, like fashion, indexes patriarchal/social structuring.

While many of the participants stated that their tattoos were hidden intentionally, other participants mentioned that they did not intentionally place their tattoos to hide them, neither was it intentionally placed for people to see them. For example:

KA said: "it wasn't my intention to... 'oh let's get it there so no one will see it'. Two of them are visible all the time. The spine one no one ever sees. The neck one kind of kind of shows. It was never my intention to hide any of them" (turn 24).

TA said: "I just choose a place where I feel is appropriate and meaningful to me and then whether you see it or not, it doesn't bother me" (turn 22).

KA and TA do not mind that some of their tattoos are visible. They have chosen their tattoo placements based on other factors. For example, KA chose placements which she considered to be uncommon. TA chose her placements based on the meanings attached to the individual tattoos. These participants therefore consciously did not take into consideration how others will read their bodies. Both participants have tattoos which are easily visible, and as society

has deemed visible tattoos as not always being acceptable for women, one can say that they are consciously transgressing the norms dictated by society.

Two of the participants chose to push the boundaries by deliberately placing their tattoos on spots on the body which are always visible. For example, MT, who has a tattoo on her shoulder blade, stated: “I want people to see it” (turn 12) and that “I like to wear loose types of jerseys, knitted tops, uhm that sort of hang of the shoulder, so I knew that by placing it where it is now, it would always, you know, peek through” (turn 10).

Similarly, SV, who has a tattoo on her neck, says:

“I didn’t want to put it in a place that- I wanted it to be seen at all times so regardless of the weather, it’s still- it will still be seen. ’Cause I’m not a scarf type of person, so it will always be seen. It doesn’t really matter in which weather” (turn 12).

Both MT and SV illustrate through their narratives how they have strategically mapped their bodies in order for their tattoos to be visible at all times. MT specifically states that she wants people to see her tattoo and therefore she placed her tattoo on her shoulder blade, knowing that she wears clothing that always reveals this area of her body. This way, she knows that her tattoo will always be visible. Similarly, SV placed her tattoo on her neck, knowing that she does not wear scarves during winter, and thus the tattoo will always be visible. It can therefore be said that she wants it to be seen as it relates something about her personality to others. In addition, her tattoo is therefore part of her everyday style. Based on what they know about themselves, especially their fashion preferences, these participants have chosen their respective placements so that their tattoos would always be visible to onlookers.

6.1.5. **Body mapping and pain**

Research has shown that there are instances where individuals chose the placements of their tattoos based on the level of pain of a certain area on the body. Bergh, Lombard and van Zyl (2013) state that in a study conducted in 2010, there was a strong trend towards getting tattoos because of the painful process. They noted, however, that this trend has subsided (Bergh *et al.* 2013). In this study, there was only one participant who chose a more painful placement as a way of demonstrating the importance of the tattoo. AD, who has a tattoo on

her ribcage, stated that she chose to get the tattoo on her ribcage because it “was the most sore place, and then they said that if something means that much to you, you will just get it anyway, whether it’s sore or not” (turn 12). She also pointed out that “apparently tattoos on the side like there- that’s where you put very important- like those spaces are reserved for like important things” (turn 8). She therefore deliberately placed her tattoo on a place that is believed to be very painful to get a tattoo, as a way of showing that the tattoo is important to her. This is in contrast with other participants and also other women, who, as claimed by RE, are ‘soft’ (turn 28) and wouldn’t be as likely as men to have tattoos, let alone tattoos on the most sensitive parts of the body. In other cases, a number of the participants took into account which places on the body would be least painful to get tattooed when choosing a placement for their tattoos.

ND and TH decided to place their tattoos on areas which they have heard are the least painful to get tattooed. These are both the participants’ first tattoos, which could explain why they would have chosen these areas. When the interviewer asked ND why she chose to place her tattoo on her inner forearm, she responded: “this was the least pain () the forearm is the least pain. So I’ve heard. And...I would’ve gotten it in a worse place but I wasn’t prepared for that” (turn 23). Similarly, TH, who has a tattoo on her shoulder blade, states that she decided on that placement because “it’s probably one of the not as painful places” (turn 26). Both participants might have experienced some level of anxiety with regards to the pain factor and therefore they consulted others to establish where they would experience the least amount of pain.

LH, who has a tattoo on her back, says: “the rose was very sore. It’s on my on my spinal cord so you can imagine how sore it was” (turn 54). As a result, she has decided not to get any more tattoos “because it was very sore. I don’t want to put my body through that much agony again” (turn 54). Her repetition of the word ‘sore’ as well as her use of the word ‘agony’ shows the amount of pain she experienced during the tattooing process.

6.1.6. Placement and the pursuit of uniqueness

Tiggeman and Golder (2006) found that tattooing is used as an expression of uniqueness. It should be noted that in this theme, issues of placements and designs overlap. The interview data revealed that the participants considered placement as well as design/symbol in their pursuit of uniqueness. Furthermore, this theme also reveals that the participants acquired

tattoos in order to be different from others. There were also instances where participants chose placements that are different from others' in order to be different within the tattooed community. Below are the extracts that will be analyzed in this section:

RK: "I like getting tattoos, because I think that they do add a certain amount of uniqueness to somebody" (turn 30).

LF: "it makes your body like kind of more exciting, like "oh!" like all these like fun little things. And then I mean like, it's just interesting too" (turn 24).

KA: "I just didn't want any common spots. Nowadays the wrist is a common spot. Ear is not. Spine, kind of. Uh, neck not so much. The only common one now is the wrist one, nowadays. A lot of people. But all of the others I didn't want it to be the same as everybody else. Ankles, 'tramp stamps'..." (turn 22).

AO: "I just choose random spots. The first one uhm I chose because I wanted it on my lower back but the tattoo artist said that everyone sees it a 'tramp stamp', he says. So I was like "nah I don't wanna be classified as that". He uhm suggested that I get places that's not really like uhm common- on common places. So I try to choose uncommon places and where I see not a lot of people have them" (turn 18).

In the responses above, the participants attempt to differentiate from others within the tattoo community in terms of the placements of their tattoos. For example, by stating that she doesn't want any common spots, and also mentioning the 'tramp stamp' area and the ankle, one can see that she wants to be different from the women who get tattoos on stereotypical feminine placements. Over time, these placements that was once marked to celebrate a woman's femininity, have gained negative connotations, such as a 'tramp stamp', as mentioned by KA. The fact that the tattoo placements are common, meaning that many women have tattoos on these placements, have caused them to lose their allure. According to Ruvio (2008: 446), "people react emotionally and behaviorally to maintain a moderate level of uniqueness from others. Conversely, when people feel too similar to others, they will increase those activities or behaviors that express their uniqueness". This is evident in the statement by KA, which shows that she has established her uniqueness in the sense that she has tattoos, but she is also increasing this uniqueness by getting tattoos on places which are not common.

There were also other reasons for the decision to maintain a level of uniqueness. For example, AO's decision to get tattoos on uncommon places on the body was influenced by

her tattoo artist, who is more knowledgeable about which placements would be the best. As a result, and also similar to KA, she now is mindful about choosing placements where not a lot of women have tattoos. Additionally, SV, who has a leopard print tattoo, states:

“I mean a lot of people would come to me and say ‘well it’s very unique because they don’t see a lot of people going for tatt- a tattoo like yours. I’d always see a butterfly or a rose, but a leopard print is something I’ve never’ so I’ve gotten quite a good response since I’ve had it” (turn 26).

Once again, rose and butterfly tattoos, which are considered to be typically feminine, are also seen as common tattoos. She therefore chose a leopard print tattoo, which is not as common as the ‘traditionally’ feminine tattoos. For this participant, having people acknowledge the fact that this is not a common design, is a positive aspect of her tattoo.

It was therefore found that some of the participants chose certain designs and placements which are uncommon, in order to establish their uniqueness.



6.2. Symbol/sign

In the following section, the researcher further develops arguments on how the participants resemiotized and remediated different social discourses and semiotic material in the tattoos to make meaning. This includes looking at the meaning the participants attach to the actual signs (symbols, words) in their tattoos.

6.2.1. Remediation of religious beliefs as ‘skinscapes’

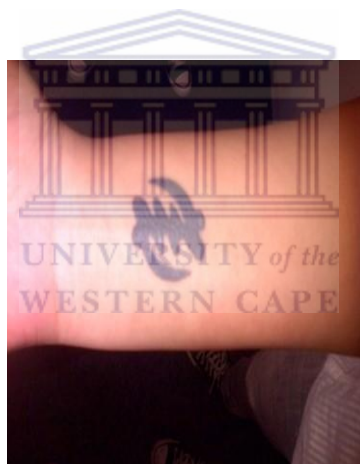
According to Robbins (2006: 167), “[a] person’s religious background could easily have an effect on the imagery he or she chooses.” This is true of some of the participants in this study, as some of them have opted for tattoos of a religious nature. Lombard and Bergh (2014) found that the participants in their study were innovative in the ways in which they celebrated Christian symbols, which is in sharp contrast to the past, where it was taboo in certain Christian circles to obtain tattoos. In this study there were a number of participants who have

inscribed religious symbols on their bodies, showing that this is indeed a growing trend, and is thus also more acceptable than in the past.

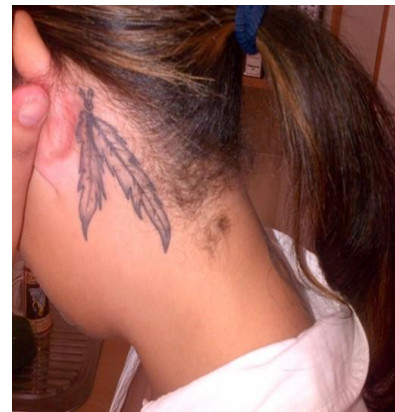
KA has four tattoos, of which three have religious connotations. The first tattoo is a “triquetra” on the back of her neck (picture 6.5), which is a symbol that represents the power of three in Christianity: the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. She also referred to this symbol as “the Charmed sign” (turn 20), thus referring to the television show “Charmed”, in which this symbol plays a significant role. The second tattoo is a Gye Nyame (picture 6.6), which is a religious symbol from Ghana, and it symbolizes the supremacy of God. These two tattoos are instances of intertextuality, seeing that this participant tattooed a symbol from a popular television show, as well as a popular religious symbol on her body. The third tattoo is of two feathers behind her ear (picture 6.7). It represents hope and faith, and, according to her, this tattoo “ties to the religious aspects of the first two tattoos” (turn 20).



Picture 6. 5



Picture 6. 6



Picture 6. 7

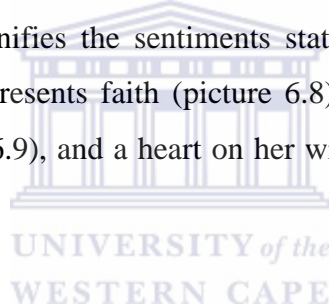
TA has a rosary (Anglican prayer beads) on her inner forearm, along with the words “no regrets”. She states that she decided to get the prayer beads to signal that she is Anglican, stating that “I’m Anglican and we- we have rosaries and stuff” (turn 16). Religious and inspirational aspects are therefore found in this tattoo.

AO has “Jeremiah 11 verse 29” (a verse from the Bible) tattooed on her ribcage. However, the actual words do not appear in the tattoo. The Bible verse states the following:

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”⁶

AO states that this is “the verse that kind of got me through my first year of varsity” (turn 8), thus revealing the inspirational nature of this tattoo. Inspirational tattoos will be discussed later in this chapter. She uses this verse motivation to get through her struggles. Interestingly, she only has the name of the verse inscribed on her body. This could be due to limited space on her ribcage. It could also show that seeing that the tattoo is personal to her, she does not need others to know what the verse is about, because she knows the verse. By only tattooing the name of the verse, she is relying on the onlooker’s knowledge of the Bible to make sense of the tattoo.

DK has a tattoo based on the Bible verse 1 Corinthians 13 verse 13 which says, “for three things will last in life: faith, love and hope, and the greatest of these is love” (turn 8). She has three tattoos, each of which signifies the sentiments stated in the Bible verse. She has a crucifix on her finger which represents faith (picture 6.8), a dove at the back of her neck which represents hope (picture 6.9), and a heart on her wrist which represents love (picture 6.10).



Picture 6. 8



Picture 6. 9



Picture 6. 10

Similarly, GJ also has a tattoo representing “faith”, “love” and “hope” (picture 6.11). However, semiotically, it is different from DK’s tattoos. Firstly, the actual words “faith”, “hope” and “love” appear in GJ’s tattoos. Secondly, their symbols for “hope” are different. Thirdly, GJ has one tattoo representing all three of the words, while DK has three tattoos on

⁶ <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah+29%3A11>

different placements on the body. Lastly, GJ did not mention that her tattoo is derived from a Bible verse at all. When asked why she obtained the tattoo, she said: “without faith, hope and love I can’t do anything, so I just decided to get that ’cause it meant a lot to me” (turn 10). The design that GJ chose can also be found on the internet. Picture 6.12 is a picture found online. The woman in the picture has a tattoo of the words “faith”, “hope” and “love”, accompanied with the symbols for a crucifix, heartbeat and heart. It is possible that GJ acquired the idea for the design as well as the placement from this image from the internet source. This is a common practice among the tattoo community. However, there are differences, such as a difference in size (GJ’s tattoo is smaller), and also a difference in the font.



Picture 6. 11



Picture 6. 12

Evidently, “faith”, “love” and “hope” are remediated differently by DK and GJ, hence representing different identity options and characteristics of the participants. “Faith”, “hope” and “love” has been semiotically remediated from book (the Bible) to skin. For DK, the Biblical message has been extended as it is now on her skin. For GJ, the message of this tattoo is divorced from the Bible as she did not specify that the meaning of her tattoo was derived from the Bible.

It is interesting to note that most of the religious tattoos are related to Christianity. It could be argued that other religions find tattoos more taboo. However, tattoos are also not acceptable for many Christians, based on the following verse in the Bible:

“You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh on account of the dead or tattoo any marks upon you: I am the LORD” (Leviticus 19:28, as cited in Scheinfeld, 2007: 363).

It could be argued that those who have tattoos are seen as transgressing this Bible verse, and therefore it is still not accepted in certain religious circles. As a result, having religious symbolisms may evoke anger from onlookers, whether religious or not. This can be seen in DK’s experience. DK chose to get tattoos to show her devotion to the Christian religion. She stated that “it does it- does it- does ’cause a lot of shit with people that are too drunk and too atheist to understand so [giggling] they don’t get happy with that mark on my finger. They get really mean to me as well. Someone once told me ‘fuck your god’. That wasn’t nice” (turn 16). She states that many people do not like her tattoos because of their religious (Christian) nature. She provides an example of an onlooker who is not Christian who ‘read’ the tattoos on her body and thus interpreted that she is a Christian. Based on his interpretation of the tattoos and also his own beliefs, he responded negatively to these tattoos and thus made a crass remark. This interaction illustrates the fact that (tattooed) bodies are authored and read, and as a result could illicit responses from onlookers.

Robbins (2006) claims that tattoos are decorative, and therefore it might have different interpretations, also depending on the tattooees’ interpretation. This might be true in AL’s case, who has a tattoo of a crucifix, but after the interview, when the researcher asked her whether she is a Christian, she responded that she is not. This might indicate that she has attached a different meaning to this symbol. Robbins (2006) states that oftentimes someone might not have an ideological connection to a particular culture, but chooses a certain tattoo simply because of the design, which might explain AL’s choice of symbol. This is also true of individuals who have tribal tattoos, without belonging to the particular tribe, such as TA, who has tribal designs on her lower back and behind her neck.

6.2.2. From ‘significant others’ to ‘significant relationships’

The data also reveals that some participants use tattoos as a way to signal relationships with loved-ones, corroborating Shelton and Peters’ (2008) statement that personal relationships is a common reason for acquiring a tattoo. In an early study, Sanders (1991) found that these tattoos are usually the names of romantic partners, serving as a symbol of devotion toward

the partner. Watson (1998) found that these tattoos were also most common among women. This specific tattoo trend has changed since that study was conducted. Interestingly, none of the women in this study has a tattoo of a romantic partner's name. In fact, these women showed an aversion to getting a tattoo of a romantic partner's name. The question, "what is the worst tattoo you have ever seen on a woman?" elicited the following responses:

LF: "I've definitely seen like plenty of ladies with like a name- you know, like Jamie, and then it's like crossed out. And you're like "ooh". Probably shouldn't get men's names tattooed on your body" (turn 54).

AH: "I've seen a woman who got her- I think it was her husband's face tattooed on her calf, like here. It just looked weird. I was like what if you get divorced or something. I don't really like that idea so much. Getting loved ones- like boyfriend's or girlfriend's tattoos, names on you 'cause what happens if you don't love them anymore. So... (turn 42)."

These snippets reveal that as of late, there is a stigma attached to getting a tattoo of a romantic (possibly male) partner. LF advises against having a man's name tattooed on the body, thinking that this is not a wise decision. Similarly, AH claims that it is "weird" to have a tattoo signalling a relationship with a significant other, as there is a possibility that existing feelings for that person might change. This relates to Madfis and Arford's (2013: 553) notion that symbols are dynamic, therefore "the permanence of the tattooing medium can become problematic for people who overestimate the stability of both life and symbols". Instead, the participants in this study opt to signal relationships with best friends, parents and grandparents. These relationships are believed to be longer-lasting than romantic relationships. An example of this is BD, who has tattoos of both her mother and her daughter's names. In addition, TA has her mother's name on her wrist, as well as her mother's name and date of birth, along with her mother's favourite flower, on her ribcage. SC has a crescent moon tattooed on her wrist as a tribute to her mother. She chose this particular sign because:

"it's just sort of a reminder of my mom, uhm and her love. 'Cause as a child, she always used to say uhm- there was a book she read to me, and the quote from the

book was ‘I love you to the moon and back’ and like since I can remember, that’s all my mom’s ever said to me. She doesn’t just say ‘I love you’, she says ‘I love you to the moon and back’ so it’s just sort of a reminder- and then uhm I bought the same book for my little sister, so now it’s something I say to her. So it’s just a little connection between the three of us” (turn 10).

The quote SC’s mother used to illustrate her love, “I love you to the moon and back”, is derived from the children’s book, “Guess how much I love you” by Sam McBratney (1994). The original quote says, “I love you right up to the moon – and back”. The tattoo serves as a reminder of the connection she has with her mother and sister. This quote and its sentiments is remediated on her body through the symbol of the crescent moon on her wrist.

CD has the word “four” tattooed on her forearm, as “a tribute to the very important people in my life” (turn 4). CM has the word “family” tattooed inside of an infinity symbol, because “I’m, as you can see, very close with my family” (turn 14). She therefore uses this tattoo to signal that she has a close bond with her family. She’s also depending on this tattoo to be ‘read’ in order to understand the meaning, as seen with the above statement, specifically the words “as you can see”.

In a study, Sanders (1991: 155) noticed that fewer women are getting “vow” tattoos, and he believes that the reason for this is “the significant changes in women’s orientations as well as the broadening of the tattoo client base resulting in women from a wider range of sociocultural backgrounds acquiring tattoos” and as a result, “the women [he] encountered increasingly were using tattoos to celebrate themselves and commemorate significant transitions in their lives”. As seen above, relationships can be emblazoned on the body through tattooing. Other participants have shown their bond with others through getting matching tattoos with another person. For example, CM and her mother have matching tattoos that they obtained on her mother’s birthday. What is interesting here is that the date that they acquired the tattoo is also of significance to the participant. The date (her mother’s birthday) therefore also contributes towards the meaning the tattoo has for this participant.

AR states that her mother acquired a tattoo on the same place on the body as her, and therefore that placement on the body is now “a shared thing” for them (turn 40), signifying a significant relationship. Once again, it can be seen that placement is an important aspect of a tattoo. In this instance, the signifier is different, but they have a shared placement on their bodies, which is meaningful to them.

RK states: “I have matching ones with my best friend (turn 12)” and “That’s like a unity symbol. So like, ‘united we stand’ kind of a vibe (turn 12).” Not only is the tattoo and the placement exactly the same, which in itself would symbolize their bond, but the symbol itself is also a symbol of friendship for them.

Two of the participants, TA and BD, are best friends, and they have matching tattoos to symbolize their friendship. TA’s tattoo is pictured in picture 6.13 while BD’s tattoo is found in picture 6.14. The words “mon amie” is tattooed on their ankles. BD states that “mon amie” “means ‘my girlfriend’ in French” (turn 16). She further explains that “[m]e and my best friend we we got the exact same tattoo on the same place so that’s- and a friendship symbol. So that is for our friendship” (turn 16). Note that the translation for “mon amie” is “my best friend” who is a girl, signalled by the ‘e’ in “amie” and not “my girlfriend” as in somebody that one is in a romantic relationship with.



Picture 6. 13

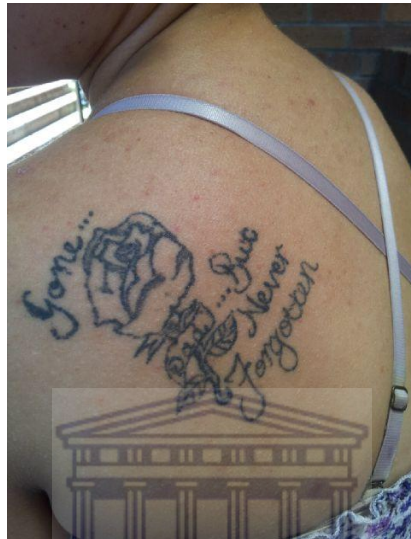


Picture 6. 14

The data reveals that, although the tendency to have tattoos has existed for many years, there has been a change in the type of relationship being celebrated. It is no longer advised to have tattoos signalling relationships with significant others, but there has been a shift towards arguably more permanent relationships such as family members and best friends. This could be because the participants are cautious of the possibility of romantic relationships ending. It was also interesting to find that most of the tattoos which signal significant relationships, signal relationships with other women.

6.2.3. Commemoration

Tattoos are also used by the participants to commemorate loved ones who have passed away. RE has a tattoo on her shoulder blade (picture 6.15), commemorating her father. When asked about the meaning of this tattoo, RE stated: “my father died and I wanted something like permanent on me to remind me of him so I decided to get a tattoo” (turn 8).



Picture 6. 15

Picture 6.15 shows that the tattoo explicitly illustrates that this participant’s father has passed away. The word “dad” is tattooed in the ribbon around the stem along with the words “Gone...but never forgotten”. This quote is particularly true as the permanence of a tattoo is ensuring that she would always remember her father.

CM has the word “Nana”, with birds in a flying motion underneath the word, in commemoration of her grandmother. In the following quote, CM explains why she chose this design:

“Nana is what I called my gran and she was like my mom. She was there all the time for me as well as my mom and when she passed away couple of years ago, it was more like a tribute to her. Uhm the birds is kind of like, you know, setting her free. She was sick for a very long time. And also 'cause birds are just really pretty” (turn 10).

CD has her grandmother's initials tattooed at the back of her neck. She says:

“when she passed away I just I felt like I needed something as a- I need to do something in her honour so I felt- and I was addicted to tattoos, so I might as well get that. And it's ya- she's always with me. I have a piece of her” (turn 6).

The three examples above all show tattoo memorials of older family members, who were possibly also role models for these participants. RE wanted “something permanent” on her to remind her of her father, and decided to have a memorial permanently etched onto her body. She chose the rose design because she is fond of roses (turn 12). Her decision to use the flower on the memorial might be because it aesthetically enhances the memorial and thus makes the memory of her father more pleasant (even if it's just on surface-level). CM decided to have birds tattooed with the name “Nana”, which she called her grandmother. She stated that it's a way of “setting her free”. It could therefore be said that the birds symbolize freedom, possibly freedom from pain the grandmother might have experienced before her passing. CD stated that now that she has the tattoo commemorating her grandmother, her grandmother is always with her. She goes on to say that “I have a piece of her”. This could mean that she sees her grandmother's initials/name as something belonging to her grandmother, and it is therefore now forever a part of her, seeing that it is on her body.

The data revealed that tattooing as a means of commemorating the passing of a loved one, is popular among the participants, and it also revealed how certain symbols are remediated for commemorative purposes.

6.2.4. **Inspirational tattoos**

Inspirational tattoos are tattoos that are acquired with the intention to inspire or motivate the tattooee and/or the onlooker. These tattoos are usually images, single words or quotes. These tattoos were common among the participants in this study.

TA has a tattoo on her chest, which says “life goes on” (picture 6.16). She obtained this tattoo after a break-up. She says: “[w]e broke up again for final and so I got this one, “life goes on”, on my chest with a heartbeat because life really does go on. It didn't stand still after the breakup because I was heartbroken” (turn 16).



Picture 6. 16

JS has a tattoo of a tree on her ribcage, along with the Chinese symbols for inner strength (picture 6.17). She chose an image of a tree because “they stay up forever so that was like what represented strength” (turn 6).



Picture 6. 17

SC, who has an arrow tattooed on her ribcage, says that this tattoo is:

“a reminder to keep moving forward, uhm... there’s a saying that goes... like, and arrow, before it can be shot forward, it has to be pulled back, and sort of in life, that’s the reality of things. You’ll- you’ll be pulled back before you can fly forward

and succeed, so it's just a reminder that even if you're feeling like you're pulled back, you're going to fly forward" (turn 10).

Patterns found in the above-mentioned tattoos are that for all three participants, their tattoos serve as reminders of some sort. For TA, her tattoo reminds her that even though her relationship ended, life does go on. The EKG line, which is symbolic of a heartbeat, is a physical representation (and also a reminder) of the fact that her heart is still beating. For JS, her tattoo of a tree serves to remind her that she has to be strong, as trees are believed to be strong. For SC, her tattoo is a reminder of a popular quote, and this quote reminds her that being pulled back in life is inevitable, but it is also necessary in order to succeed. In this way, 'being pulled back' is seen as something positive, and therefore this tattoo is a positive/inspirational message.

The tattoos are not only inspirational to the participants, but it can also be inspirational to onlookers. For example, the actual words 'Life goes on' in TA's tattoo can be read by others and can also serve as inspiration to them. It can however be said that SC and JS's tattoos are more personal because their tattoos do not explicitly state the inspirational messages. In JS's tattoo, the words 'inner strength' are tattooed in Chinese symbols, therefore many people will not know what these symbols symbolize. In addition, an image of a tree might signify something different to someone else, and therefore would be interpreted differently. SC's tattoo however might also serve as inspiration for others because the arrow tattoo has become popular among the tattoo community, and is often cited in blogs dedicated to popular tattoo designs.

6.3. Summary

This chapter illustrates the importance of placement and design of the tattoos for the participants. Many of the participants felt that the placement of their tattoos added to their meaning. It was also found that by consciously deciding *not* to tattoo certain body parts also carried meaning, as it adds to the construction of their female identities. The tattoo narratives also showed that the participants strategically map their bodies with their tattoos in order to be able to either conceal or reveal their tattoos as they choose, especially in cases where they have to hide the tattoos from their parents or (prospective) employers. Some of the participants placed their tattoos based on the level of pain they would experience when

acquiring the tattoo. Participants also opted for placements which would add to the uniqueness of their tattoos.

In terms of the designs of the tattoos, participants opted for religious symbols, or tattoos carrying religious meaning for them. They also chose designs which signal significant relationships, tattoos which commemorate loved ones, and inspirational tattoos.

Both placement and design were found to be utilized in the negotiation of (feminine) identities. Participants typically chose placements which were associated with feminine tattoos or which would accentuate their femininity. The designs were also found to be traditionally feminine.



CHAPTER 7 – SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF FEMALE IDENTITY

7.0. Introduction

This chapter deals with the theme *tattoos and femininity*. In this chapter, focus will be on the beliefs and ideologies which shape the way the participants in this study construct and negotiate their (female) identity. The researcher was interested in establishing what role gender plays in the types of tattoos the participants have, including the size and the design, as well as the placement of the tattoos. Thus, in this chapter, the researcher performs a Critical Discourse Analysis (cf. Fairclough, 1992; Fairclough, 2001; Johnstone, 2008) of the interviews, specifically dealing with the answers to the questions pertaining to the subject of women and tattoos. This chapter will also take in to consideration whether there is a differential effect in tattoos across the three campuses, and where possible, across different ethnic groups.

Using Fairclough's (2001) three stages of Critical Discourse Analysis, this analysis will start with *description* and *interpretation* of the tattoo narratives. The *description* stage "is concerned with formal properties of the text" (Fairclough, 2001: 21). The *interpretation* stage "is concerned with the relationship between text and interaction" (Fairclough, 2001: 21), which refers to looking at possible reasons for the linguistic choices the participants make during the interviews. The first part of the analysis will therefore focus on the language use of the participants during the narratives. This section will also look at the possible reasons for the participants' linguistic choices. These two stages will be performed together, seeing that text and interaction flow together. The final section of this chapter will deal with the *explanation* stage of the tattoo narratives, thus focusing on the social context within which the interviews took place (Fairclough, 2001).

7.1. Beliefs and ideologies as social constructs in female identity construction

This research sought to uncover the views the tattooed women have about how they should look, how their tattoos should look, and where it should be placed on the body and possibly also establish how society and certain ideologies dictate and shape these opinions. Therefore, six of the interview questions were directed at uncovering the beliefs and ideologies that

impact their viewpoint on tattoos and womanhood by looking at the responses of the participants.

Description and interpretation

Gender identity refers to “the degree to which people see themselves as masculine or feminine given what it means to be a man or woman in society” (Stets & Burke, 2000: 997). Femininity and masculinity, specifically, are socially determined rather than biological, meaning that society decides what it means to be a man or a woman in terms of dress, behaviour, and so forth (Stets & Burke, 2000). Furthermore, Stets and Burke (2000: 997) state that “males will generally respond by defining themselves as masculine while females will generally define themselves as feminine”. However, seeing that gender identity is a social construct, there are women who identify as masculine and men that identify as feminine (Stets & Burke, 2000). The researcher was interested in establishing how the participants construct their identity as female, as seen in their narratives.

7.1.1. Negotiating femininity through tattoos

The following discussion stems from the interview question, “Do you think you can still be feminine with tattoos?” This question is central to the research, as it seeks to uncover whether the participants feel that women can still be feminine with tattoos. According to Smiler and Epstein (2010: 150) “the core elements of femininity appear to include passivity, emotional expression, and a concern for others’ well-being”. Considering that tattooing was previously believed to be associated with men (Armstrong *et al.*, 2008), and hence with masculinity, the researcher was interested in determining how the women negotiated their femininity through this historically male dominated practice and also to establish whether they are deliberately challenging the gender roles associated with tattooing. Below are extracts which were taken from the interviews, each in response to the above-mentioned question:

DK: “Yes! I think you can be even MORE feminine with tattoos. I’ve seen tutorials where women that’s gone through breast cancer, where they get re-implants, then they get uhm beautiful tattoos on their breasts to make them still feel beautiful” (turn 54).

MT: “I feel a lot more feminine with my tattoo being where it is. Like I said, the placement was all about femininity and how, I don’t know, I feel like sort of sensual when I have a sweater like just like falling over, you see a piece of my back and you got the ink showing through, so it depends on where you have it done, and whether it’s big or small, but ya you can still be feminine. I’m still feminine” (turn 32).

CD: “Ya! I think it’s so so so beautiful on on on someone. On a girl, if it’s placed right and if- if the size is decent” (turn 26).

In the above extracts, all the participants believe that they can be feminine with tattoos. However, a noticeable pattern in these responses is that there are certain conditions that women have to adhere to in order for them to maintain their femininity as tattooed women. For example, DK states she thinks “you can be even MORE feminine with tattoos”, indicating that she believes tattoos can enhance a woman’s femininity. She does however add that they get “beautiful” tattoos to make them feel more feminine. “Beautiful” is a word most often used to describe women and therefore it would imply that the designs of the tattoos she is describing are typically feminine tattoos. MT states that she feels more feminine with her tattoo being where it is (shoulder blade). She therefore deliberately placed her tattoo on a place where it would enhance her femininity. MT also states that it makes her feel “sensual” which is interesting as the female body is celebrated for its sensuality (Chua, 2004). Furthermore, MT prefers wearing sweaters that “fall over” her shoulder, which brings up a very feminine image, and highlights her sensuality. She also mentions that the size of the tattoo should also be taken into account when looking at a feminine tattoo, when she said that “it depends on whether it’s big or small”. One can assume that MT associates small tattoos with femininity because her own tattoo is quite small and she states that she believes her tattoo makes her feel more feminine. CD mentions that tattoos can be beautiful on women, but they have to be “placed right” and the size has to be “decent”. It can be assumed that she means that they should be placed in order for them to be easily covered, and they should also not be too big. These are therefore two conditions for a tattoo to be feminine.

In the following responses, the participants also believe that tattooed women can still be feminine, but they do acknowledge that tattooed women’s femininity has changed somehow.

RK: “Yes, definitely. Like, uhm, I’ve seen a lot of like, not lady-ladies, but very beautiful women with tattoos and they just like embrace it and they embrace their bodies” (turn 32).

CM: “Of course. I mean so many girls who now- it’s seen feminine to get a rose or a flower as a tattoo. Also I think the way that {you have} the font makes it look feminine, as well and it really just depends on what you’re getting and where you’re putting it on your body and it definitely can still be girly. Maybe not as pure as some girls but can still be girly” (turn 34).

Although they agree that women can be feminine with tattoos, RK and CM illustrate that they feel women with tattoos are less feminine than women without tattoos. For example, RK states that she has seen beautiful women with tattoos. What is particularly interesting is that she wanted to use the word “ladies” but she changed her mind and said “not lady-ladies, but very beautiful women”. Biological sex (being a man or a woman) is something people are born with, therefore it can be said that RK believes women can be beautiful with tattoos. However, being lady-like is a performance, and she therefore feels that women who get tattoos are not lady-like. CM identifies certain designs that are associated with feminine tattoos, namely roses and other flowers, which women choose in order to maintain their feminine identity. She also mentions that the type of font chosen for the tattoo also plays a part in whether the tattoo is seen as feminine. Furthermore, she points out that for a tattoo to be feminine, it has to be appropriately placed and the design should also be feminine. She further states that women can still be feminine, but “Maybe not as pure as some girls”. By getting a tattoo, in the eyes of this participant, a woman’s femininity is tainted. This relates to Braunberger’s (2000) concept of ‘monster beauty’, which entails that by getting tattooed, women are transgressing ‘feminine’ beauty.

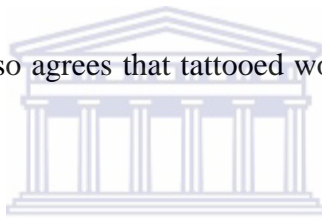
The following participant, JS, agrees that tattooed women can still be feminine. She also acknowledges that there is a difference between male and female tattoos.

JS: “Uhm ya. I think you can definitely be- still be feminine with tattoos. I mean there are more feminine tattoos and there are more, like, guy tattoos” (turn 36)

JS acknowledges that women can still be feminine, but she also points out that there are certain tattoos that are associated with men and certain tattoos which are associated with women. Even though she does not specifically indicate which tattoos she believes are meant for men and which tattoos are meant for women, her statement does indicate that she definitely believes there is a difference between the tattoos chosen by women and men. The difference between male and female tattoos will be discussed further in this chapter.

JS further mentions that “you can always dress it up or dress it down” (turn 38), meaning that the same tattoo can be changed according to whether you are a man or a woman. An interesting observation can be made here. The phrases “dress up” and “dress down” are typically found when talking about fashion. Not only is this a topic typically associated with women, this statement also illustrates the fact that tattoos have become fashion statements. The fact that tattoos are likened to clothing, also indicates how common this practice has become.

The following participant, SC, also agrees that tattooed women can still be feminine, stating that:



“Nothing can really make you masculine, unless you are a man. Like ya, obviously the way you dress or something, but, my tattoo doesn’t change who I am. It’s just another part of me” (turn 30).

The statement “nothing can make you feminine, unless you are a man” illustrates that this participant does not believe that tattoos can change your gender identity. She is, however, to some extent, aware of the performativity of identity, as seen when she states that “the way you dress or something” can make you appear masculine.

The participants all stated that tattooed females can still be feminine, although there are certain conditions that the females have to adhere to when it comes to the placement, the design and the size of their tattoos. The extracts show that femininity has to be negotiated, not only in the everyday construction of femininity, but especially when it comes to maintaining and enhancing female identity while being tattooed.

7.1.2. The popularity of female tattoos

Prior to this research, the researcher noticed an increase in the popularity of tattoos among women, especially female university students. Still bearing in mind that in the past it was mostly men from marginalized groups (e.g. bikers and sailors) who had tattoos, the researcher wanted to establish whether or not the participants in this study believe that women with tattoos transgress gender norms. The next section thus looks at the answers to the question: “Do you think that it’s common for women to have tattoos?” The following responses will be discussed:

AD: “It is quite common. It’s more common now ’cause you see it everywhere. I don’t know, just like in Stellenbosch, everyone has tattoos. Like so many people. Like- and it’s the silliest things, and they’ve all got it... like... ya” (turn 38).

“... it’s a trend. And it’s really bad ’cause it’s like infinity signs and sparrows-swallows, and feathers, and you know those- and they say it’s got meaning. It doesn’t have meaning. Like infinity, what? That’s not even a thing. Don’t even start with me” (turn 40).

KA: “Well, ya. But, uhm... it seems like they stick with the whole stereotypical wrist, what’s that, double infinity tattoos. Uhm bird tattoos, ankle tattoos, dolphins, hearts. My mother has a rose on her ankle. ‘Tramp stamps’. They know what it means, yet they still get them. It’s pretty common for anybody to get tattoos” (turn 36).

DK: “I’ve seen more women with tattoos these days, but small ones, tiny ones, than men” (turn 60).

The responses above show that these participants believe that it is common for women to have tattoos. AD mentions that it is quite common, especially in Stellenbosch, where she is a student. However, she views the tattoos that the women get in a negative light. For example, she says that the tattoos are “the silliest things” and “they’ve all got it”. She says “it’s a trend. And it’s really bad.” It can be said that AD shows an aversion towards the fact that people follow trends. She specifically mentions bird tattoos, feather tattoos and infinity sign tattoos, saying “they say it’s got meaning. It doesn’t have meaning”. In AD’s extract, the pronoun “they” is used twice when referring to women with tattoos. This linguistic choice shows her attempt at separating herself from those who get the “silly” tattoos. The tattoo designs that

she mentions are currently trending among females. This could indicate that AD might think that women are getting these tattoos because it is popular, and not because it has meaning to them. This relates to Madfis and Arford's (2013) statement that ascribing deep meanings to tattoos are an important part of contemporary tattoo culture.

Also note that the word "common" (as used in the interview question) could also be used to describe someone who is uncultured, and this might have influenced this response. Seeing that the question was ambiguous, it might yield different responses than expected. However, these answers are still useful to the analysis.

KA acknowledges that tattoos are common among women. When describing the tattoos women get, she says "they stick with the whole stereotypical wrist, what's that, double infinity tattoos". Like AD, she specifies bird tattoos and double infinity tattoos. KA also adds dolphins, hearts, roses and 'tramp stamps' (lower back tattoos). Furthermore, she adds placements (the wrist and ankle) which she regards as common placements for women. KA does however show some degree of dislike towards these choices women make. For example, she not only states that women tend to opt for certain designs, but by using the pronoun "they", she is trying to differentiate herself from other women with tattoos, or at least women who have "stereotypical" tattoos. After mentioning the 'tramp stamps' she adds "They know what it means, yet they still get them". What is also interesting is that KA uses the pronoun "they" to refer to women with tattoos, even though she herself has tattoos. As illustrated above, women sometimes disempower other women who they feel play into stereotypical gender roles.

DK mentions that even though she has noticed that there is an increase in women with tattoos, the size of their tattoos are "small" and "tiny" compared to men's tattoos. She has thus noticed a marked gender difference in the sizes of tattoos. Here, one can see that women 'play it safe' when it comes to their tattoos. Acquiring small, easy to conceal tattoos is a way to not only negotiate their femininity, but it also allows them to maintain "unsullied identities" (Goffman, 1963, as cited in Watson, 1998).

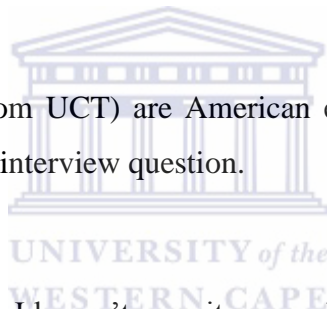
Another participant, SC, states that she thinks it has become more accepted:

"Ya, I think it's becoming more accepted. I know previously, like, tattoos were just for sailors, like, you know, rough men and now, it's sort of like... anyone can have

it, and you don't have to be a particular character to have them, which is nice. I think it's better that women are, sort of allowed to do things that they want" (turn 32).

She points out that "anyone can have it" as opposed to the past when tattoos were associated with "sailors" and "rough men". Furthermore, she states that she thinks it is better that women are allowed to do what they want, as opposed to the past when it was less acceptable for women to have tattoos. By stating that women are "allowed" to do what they want, it brings to mind that women constantly have to ask for permission and be submissive. This participant believes that women have been granted permission, and therefore also freedom, from society which dictates the acceptable behaviour and appearance of women. Interestingly, it can be noted that even though women are allowed to "do things that they want", they were still granted that permission by society, indicating that women are in fact still being controlled by society.

Two of the participants (both from UCT) are American exchange students. The following extracts are their responses to the interview question.



AL: "Yes. Where I'm from. I haven't seen it so much here in Cape Town. Like, in the States, yes" (turn 36).

LF: "Uhm it definitely is where I come from, or at least like amongst my group of friends. Like, the majority of them have, you know, like a couple tattoos. Like-nothing like too huge, but like, they do. And I think that like, with each like, uhm, new generation, like it's a lot more common" (turn 50).

Both participants state that tattoos are common among women in America. It is interesting to note that both participants mentioned that tattoos are common among women where they come from, even though the interview question didn't stipulate that they should compare Cape Town with America. Furthermore, AL points out that she has not seen many women with tattoos in Cape Town as opposed to America. LF also mentions that tattoos are common among women in America. She does, however, point out that the people she knows don't have tattoos that are "too huge". Tattooing is definitely more common in America, according

to LF, even though the tattoos are not big. Their responses indicate that they have noticed that there is a marked difference in the popularity of tattoos in America as opposed to South Africa. This could suggest that South African women are (still) more conservative when it comes to tattoos, as compared to American women.

In the responses below, two participants state that they have not seen many women with tattoos:

AH: “I don’t see that many women with tattoos, as opposed to men so much. I think men are more likely to get tattoos. Women often either have to cover up their body or be more reserved whereas men can walk around shirtless. So I think... ya it’s not as common as men doing tattoos. But I would like to see more women with tattoos. They’re awesome” (turn 38).

AH states that she has not seen many women with tattoos. It is however unclear whether she is referring to the university population or whether she is making a general observation. She also states that men are more likely to get tattoos than women. Furthermore, she thinks that women “either have to cover up their body or be more reserved whereas men can walk around shirtless”. Here, it can be said that she is not only talking about tattoos, but also generally. This statement reveals an underlying ideology motivating her opinion. In society, a popular belief is that women are typically expected to be more reserved than men, making it more acceptable for men to show more skin. For AH, the fact that men are allowed to show more skin, indicates that they are more likely to have tattoos. However, it is interesting to note that women make up the majority of the tattooed population (Laumann & Derick, 2006). With this being said, women are more likely to conceal their tattoos, which could be the reason for the belief that women are less likely to have tattoos. She does however state that she would like to see more women with tattoos, indicating that she acknowledges that this is something that needs to change.

Similar to AH, RE states that she does not think that it is common for women to have tattoos. When the researcher asked the above-mentioned question, RE stated:

“No, I don’t, I don’t think so, ’cause women-, most of my friends were like ‘[gasp] you did it? Was it sore?’ I’m like ‘no, it wasn’t that bad’ and they- most women are too scared to do it. They- they feel like it’s gonna be so sore. And women, you know they’re soft and stuff like that but no I don’t think so” (turn 28).

She states that her female friends were shocked when they saw that she had a tattoo. She believes that “most women are too scared to do it” as they feel that it is going to hurt too much. She adds that women won’t get tattoos because they are “soft”. This relates to the stereotypical view/image of women as being fragile and therefore not tough enough for a painful practice such as tattooing.

7.1.3. Establishing boundaries for female tattoos

In the following section, two interview questions will be discussed, namely “what is the best tattoo that you’ve seen on a woman?” and “what is the worst tattoo that you’ve seen on a woman?” These questions were asked to identify the boundaries that make female tattoos acceptable in society. Another purpose of establishing the boundaries was to simplify the process of determining the factors that make tattoos acceptable, and also which elements make them transgressive for women.

Below are some of the responses to the interview question, “What is the best tattoo that you’ve seen on a woman?”

AD: “anybody would, that has like tiny little... dainty, like, that would probably- I haven’t seen one specific thing that I’m in love with. But anything tiny. Very small. Dainty, that’s me” (turn 54).

SC: “Wow. I- I mostly like very delicate designs, so, little, and- it doesn’t have to be little but I- personally, I prefer little tattoos, ’cause I think they... just look nicer” (turn 34).

In her description of the best tattoos she has seen on women, AD uses adjectives such as “tiny”, “little”, “dainty” and “very small”. Similar to AD, SC says that she prefers “little”

tattoos, stating that little tattoos “just look nicer”. Here, the word “nice” is associated with femininity. One can assume that she is comparing little tattoos with big tattoos on women. Furthermore, SC says that she likes “very delicate designs”. The words “very delicate” are also associated with femininity. Both AD and SC therefore prefer tattoos which look traditionally feminine. The above-mentioned extracts therefore also illustrate the tattoos that these participants view as ‘acceptable’ for women. In contrast, two other participants mention tattoos which one would not consider to be typical of feminine tattoos:

ND: “I was watching a reality show and this girl had this massive dragon on the side of her body. I think I just liked the design and the colours” (turn 45).

RK: “Oh gosh, this lady had this like half sleeve. Like just under her elbow to just like above her wrist. It was like a rose type of thing, but the colour was so nice. It looked like so well done. The shading, that was like the prettiest tattoo I’ve ever seen” (turn 42).

ND and RK recall that the best tattoos they have seen were a massive dragon and a half sleeve, respectively. Both tattoos are very big; the dragon is described as “massive” and a half sleeve is a combination of tattoos that form one tattoo and covers one half of the arm. A dragon tattoo is also typically associated with masculine tattoos. These are very different to AD and SC who prefer little tattoos, with dainty and delicate designs. However, in their descriptions of the tattoos, they do mention features which are typical of feminine tattoos. For example, in her description of the best tattoo she has seen, ND points out that she likes the design and the colours, but she does not mention that she liked the size of the tattoo, which she describes as “massive”. Furthermore, she talks about the placement of the lady’s tattoo, which is placed “on the side of her body”, or her ribcage. As mentioned in Chapters 5 and 6, the ribcage is a popular placement among females.

Likewise, the best tattoo for RK is described as half sleeve, with a rose design. Roses are typically associated with females, which indicates that the design was feminine. She also mentions that the colour was “so nice”. Once again, the word “nice” is associated with femininity. She also describes this tattoo as the “prettiest tattoo” she has ever seen. The adjective “pretty” is usually used to describe delicate, feminine things. The above-mentioned

descriptions illustrate that women have to adhere to traditionally feminine tattoo designs, placements, as well as sizes, in order for it to be considered as the 'best' female tattoos. Although the sizes of the two above-mentioned tattoos transgress the norm of the female tattoos in the data sample (i.e. small), other features such as the design and the colours make it feminine.

This section illustrated what is acceptable for women's tattoos to be considered attractive. It was found that women consider traditionally feminine aspects of tattoos, which is dictated by society (as seen earlier in this chapter).

The next section will illustrate which tattoos cross the boundaries of female tattoos. Below is CH's response to the question, "What is the worst tattoo that you've seen on a woman?"

"Ya the lower back tattoos that just look like wire. Like a piece of wire and a piece of wire around the arm, like I don't like that. And hearts" (turn 50).

"Hearts with like- I don't know- like and roses. Like hearts with like roses around it. It's so uhm- it's just so common man. And butterflies, so like- small little butterflies on the neck, or-or, just- just like all that common tattoos that you can like mention because you've seen it so often. Like with women walking around that are smoking and stuff. It just doesn't look- for me it doesn't look () for me it didn't look right, sorry" (turn 52).

CH mentions a few tattoo designs and placements which she dislikes on women. Firstly, she mentions the lower back tattoos "that just look like wire". Adding to this, she mentions a tattoo of "a piece of wire around the arm". A tattoo of a barbed wire is a design that one would typically associate with men and not women, therefore it could be assumed that she dislikes this design on a woman because it transgresses boundaries of femininity. In addition, the first placement she mentions, namely the lower back tattoo, has become synonymous with promiscuity, which add to the reason she does not like this tattoo. The other placement she mentions is "around the arm" which is a typically masculine placement. Combined with the design, namely the barbed wire, this is arguably a masculine tattoo, which could be why she dislikes this tattoo. Interestingly, however, she goes on to say that she dislikes "hearts", "roses", and "hearts with like roses around it" as well as "small little butterflies on the neck". These tattoos are quite popular among females at the moment. This participant particularly

dislikes these tattoos because it is so frequently found among females. In her statement “it’s just so common man”, she means that these are tattoos that you see often. It can be said that for a tattoo to be acceptable for this participant, it has to be something unique. However, “common” can also be used to refer to people who are seen as uncultured. For example, she describes the women she has seen sporting these tattoos as “women walking around that are smoking and stuff”, which brings forth a negative image of a type of woman that she does not wish to associate with. CH therefore associates common tattoos (in the sense that a lot of women have them) with “common” women (who are uncultured).

When the researcher inquired about the worst tattoo that DK has seen, she responded:

“Tramp stamp’. A ‘tramp stamp’ at the back. Ugh, it’s gross. And it was in colour. I think it was in- I think it was in pink. I can’t even remember. No, it was really bad” (turn 66).

Similar to CH, DK also dislikes lower back tattoos, as she calls them “tramp stamps”. After pointing out that this is the worst tattoo that she has seen, she says “Ugh, it’s gross”, which shows her feelings of disgust towards this tattoo. She also notes that the tattoo was in colour, which caused this participant to dislike the tattoo even more. It is however not clear why she dislikes colour tattoos, or lower back tattoos that are in colour. It is interesting to note that the colour of the tattoo was pink, which is a colour associated with femininity. For DK, however, this made the tattoo look even worse, stating that it was “gross”. A discussion of ‘tramp stamps’ will follow in the *explanation* stage. The following snippets are also responses to the above-mentioned question:

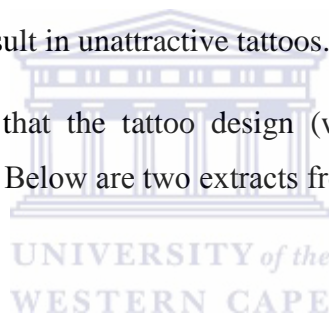
LH: “... Someone’s name... tattooed somewhere. An ex-boyfriend’s name tattooed somewhere. Oh no. That’s so weird” (turn 78).

SC: “I think a skull and crossbones. I- I don’t know. It was on her arm. It just sort of- to me- I was like I don’t think that looks nice [laughing]” (turn 38).

LH states that the worst tattoos she has seen are tattoos of someone else's name. She specifically mentions "an ex-boyfriend's name tattooed somewhere". It can however be assumed that at the time the woman acquired the tattoo, the man was her boyfriend but they had since broken up. LH feels that the woman should have known it was not wise to get a tattoo of a boyfriend's name. In other words, the permanent marking (of a temporary feeling for a man) on the body is seen as "weird" for this participant. This also relates to the statement by Madfis and Arford (2013), that the meanings of tattoos are stable and static, while individuals' beliefs, values and relationships often change. Obtaining tattoos which symbolize relationships, might therefore be problematic.

SC states that the worst tattoo she has seen on a woman was "a skull and crossbones" placed on the woman's arm. Although she does not mention this, the design as well as the placement are typically associated with masculine tattoos. She states that she does not think it looks "nice". Once again, the word "nice" is associated with feminine tattoos, and crossing the boundaries of feminine tattoos result in unattractive tattoos.

Similar to SC, KA also stated that the tattoo design (which I argue is associated with masculinity), did not look "nice". Below are two extracts from KA's narrative:



"full arm tattoos are cool but it should be more like a feminine kind of design. You have these skulls or this like gothic kind of tattoos all over a girl. It's just weird" (turn 40).

"I just think going too big. Going too big and going too graphic and gothic on a girl. It's just not nice" (turn 42).

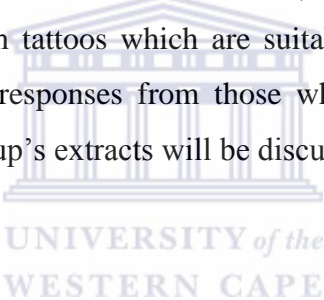
KA states that if a woman has tattoos which span over her whole arm, "it should be more like a feminine kind of design". The words "should be" indicates that she states this as a rule, although it is unclear whether it is her own rule, a rule dictated by the tattooed population, or by the larger society. Therefore, even though the tattoo is big, it has to be a feminine design, otherwise it would not be suitable for a woman. Moreover, she states that the worst tattoos she has seen are tattoos which are "too big", "too graphic and gothic" and specifically mentions skulls. She states that these designs are "just not nice" on women. Here, the word "nice" is once again associated with femininity. These tattoos, which are big and a more

masculine design, are not considered typically feminine, therefore this participant does not think it is attractive on women.

7.1.4. Female tattoos versus male tattoos

Demerson (2001, as cited in Neville, 2005) found that iconography tends to be gendered. While women generally decide on feminine designs such as butterflies, flowers and hearts, men are more inclined to get bigger tattoos on their backs, arms, shoulders and chests (Demerson, 2001, as cited in Neville, 2005). The following interview question was asked to establish the differences (at least in the minds of the participants) between men's tattoos and women's tattoos: "Which tattoos do you think are suitable for men and which are suitable for women? Or do you think that there is no difference?"

The participants' answers are divided into two sections: 1) the responses of those who believe that there is a difference between tattoos which are suitable for men and those which are suitable for women, and 2) the responses from those who do not believe that there is a difference. Firstly, the former group's extracts will be discussed.



MT: "I think there's a big difference. Uhm, for men, it's usually you know the whole full arm, tribal, big skull, big cross type of thing, you know. Females, I don't know, we tend to go for smaller ones, and it's only a very very select few who would maybe have their whole arm tattooed, you know, get a sleeve, or have more than three tattoos. But men can actually go all out. Like they can have their whole arm fully covered and it wouldn't be a thing. You wouldn't like look twice. But for a female to have a full sleeve, it would be something else. So, I think the difference is that men's tattoos are much more out there, much more noticeable, and females, I- I don't know, they would put their tattoos in more discreet places. They wouldn't be as ostentatious about their tattoos as men" (turn 38).

MT thinks that there are marked differences between male and female tattoos. She has observed that the tattoos that men choose are usually big, stating that they get "full arm, tribal, big skull, big cross" tattoos. She also states that women, on the other hand, tend to have smaller tattoos and that "only a very very select few" women have full sleeve tattoos or have more than three tattoos. She therefore notices a difference in the size, design as well as

the number of tattoos that men and women have. Similar to KA, MT introduces a rule when it comes to (gendered) tattoos: men “can actually go all out” while women “would put their tattoos in more discreet places. Interestingly, she states that men “can” go all out, meaning that they are being granted permission, which is similar to SC’s comment that women are allowed to do what they want. It can be argued that society grants permission by dictating acceptable/unacceptable tattoo trends. Additionally, for a man to have a full arm tattoo, “it wouldn’t be a thing” and “[y]ou wouldn’t like look twice”, showing that this is a common occurrence among tattooed males. In contrast, for a woman to have full arm tattoos, it “would be something else”, showing that such an occurrence would be a spectacle. There is also a contrast between female and male tattoos, as seen with the adjectives used to describe the tattoos, the former being “discreet” and the latter being “ostentatious”.

According to RE:

“Oh, if I see a woman with a skull on her body, I would- oh no [laughing]. You don’t do that but I think ya, there are different- there are definitely differences in the kind of tattoos that men get and that women get, ’cause often you see men have a skull or they have a dragon or they have something so, you know, ya. Women always have, or women I’ve seen have this softly and always- like this one girl, she has uhm she has words here on her chest that says uhm ‘we’re walking in faith everyday’ or something like that. So women always go- or the women I’ve seen always go for the kind of softer stuff and men is just ‘wow!’ ‘I wanna like my whole leg or my whole arm’ or just like hmm mm [laughing] and I don’t see women doing that, so” (turn 40).

In this extract, the participant starts by creating a scenario where she sees a woman with a skull tattoo, but she fails to complete the sentence as she starts laughing. This could indicate that she thinks it is a preposterous idea for a woman to have this type of tattoo design, as she also states “[y]ou don’t do that”. It can be said that she is speaking to all women when she makes that statement, that women should not get skull tattoos. She points out that tattoo designs such as skulls and dragons are men’s tattoo designs, while women have “softly” tattoos, such as inspirational messages. She provides an example of a woman she has seen with a tattoo that says “we’re walking in faith everyday”. According to this participant, women go for the “softer stuff”, referring to feminine designs and tattoos with inspirational

meanings, while men's designs are big, evoking feelings of amazement from this participant as she stated "wow!" while speaking about the size of the male tattoos.

MT and RE state that they have indeed noticed differences with regards to the designs, sizes, as well as the placements of the tattoos.

The following participants also note gender differences in tattoos:

KA: "... Well it obviously depends on the person but I think like small. Small to medium on girls. And like full back tattoos and full arm tattoos are kind of guy things" (turn 44).

CD: "For a girl I'd say like uhm back of the neck, over here, over here, over here, like the tiny spots where you can hide it easily. For a guy, I think he can show it off as much as he wants to" (turn 51).

Similar to MT, KA points out that full arm tattoos are more often seen on men, and also adds full back tattoos. She also states that the size of women's tattoos are usually "small to medium". The sizes "small to medium" are also used when talking about clothing sizes. This might be the idealized clothing sizes for women. She also points out that "full back tattoos and full arm tattoos are kind of guy things". It can therefore be said that this participant believes that the larger tattoos are therefore exclusively for men, while smaller designs are acceptable for women. When talking about which placements are suitable for women, CD pointed to certain spots on her body, bringing forth the idea that there are certain demarcated placements that women should adhere to, further stating that these are the "tiny spots where you can hide it easily". A man, on the other hand, "can show it off as much as he wants to". There is therefore a definite contrast made between the degree to which men and women can display their tattoos. According to this participant, men are allowed to display their tattoos as often as they prefer. Men are therefore granted more freedom when it comes to displaying their tattoos.

In terms of the designs, BD, TA and AD have collectively listed the following designs suitable for men: "tribal tattoos", "crosses" (BD turn 66), "skulls", "knife piercing", "hardcore" (TA turn 50), "tough", and "incredibly inked up stuff" (AD turn 72). AD also

points out that “dainty on a guy is a bit funny, like that’s a bit silly” (AD turn 72). For women, the following tattoo designs were seen as suitable: “more feminine tattoos like butterflies and flowers” (BD turn 66), “words”, “letters”, and “dainty” designs (AD turn 72). Men are therefore constructed as being tough while women are seen as more delicate and therefore they should inscribe their bodies accordingly. These descriptions also show how men and women are constructed.

Some of the participants believe that there is not a differential effect in tattoos across genders, as seen in the following extracts:

AO: “I don’t think there’s a difference. I uhm I only like writing. There’s a- I think there’s a specific type of script that would look better on a woman than a guy so- ’cause I’ve seen someone with the same tattoo as me on my wrist, but hers is very like, bulky and stuff and I don’t like that. It doesn’t uhm fit her body or anything so I think there’s no- you can have tattoos, whatever you want to but like if you uhm do writing, the type of script, uhm, it differs for men and women. Like sm- not small but like very delicate writing would look better on a woman than on a guy” (turn 50).

CM: “There isn’t really a difference” (turn 46).
“You can dress a tattoo up in ways to make it more for a man or more for a woman” (turn 48).

What is interesting about the above-mentioned extracts, is that the participants claim that they do not believe that there is a difference between male and female tattoos, but their subsequent comments indicate that they are in fact aware that there are differences. For example, AO states that she does not think there is a difference, but afterwards she points out that there is a difference in the type of text that females should choose because of aesthetic reasons. She provides an example of a woman that has the same quote inscribed on her, but the size of her tattoo is described as “bulky”, which is not desired by this participant. In this extract, she brings forth a contrast between the woman’s “feminine” body and the “bulky” tattoo, illustrating that this is not attractive for her. She would therefore normally associate “bulky” tattoos with males. She goes on to say that “very delicate writing would look better on a woman than on a guy”, thus providing an example of the difference between male and female

tattoos. CM states that “[y]ou can dress a tattoo up in ways to make it more for a man or more for a woman” thus indicating that she believes there is a difference between male and female tattoos. This is similar to JS’s statement that “you can always dress it up or dress it down”. Both participants are therefore talking about changing the design of the tattoo in order for it to be masculine or feminine.

In the extracts below, participants argue against the boundaries between male and female tattoos:

AR: “I think there’s no line, and there shouldn’t be a line at all. Like I mean my older brother wants to get a lotus flower on his calf and I think that’s awesome, like... but other people would be like ‘ugh a flower on a guy, that’s a bit weird’. But, whatever. Guys can get flowers too. I can get a cool dragon on my whole back too like so I just- there’s no line. There- maybe there is to some- in some people’s minds but there shouldn’t be” (turn 46).

JS: “I think it all depends in you as a person. If you prefer like, I don’t know, dragons [laughing] or I don’t know. I don’t think there is a difference. I mean I’ve seen men with like swallows and most people say that’s a girl tattoo. But I mean it looks nice on a man ()” (turn 60).

AH: “I’m pretty much ‘whichever tattoo you want, you can get it’. If you want a giant skull, and you’re a woman, go for it. So I- I don’t really think there’s a distinguishing thing. That’s male tattoos, that’s female tattoos (turn 44).

AR states that there is no difference between male and female tattoos, and there shouldn’t be a difference. Although she points out that there is no line, she states that her (male) sibling wants a tattoo of a flower. A tattoo of a flower is a typically feminine design. Furthermore, she points out that she can get a tattoo of a dragon spanning over her whole back, therefore not only mentioning a typically masculine design, but the size of the tattoo is also more associated with male tattoos. This example shows that this participant is, in fact, aware that there is a gendered difference when it comes to the designs and sizes of tattoos. JS mentions that females can acquire dragon tattoos and men can acquire tattoos of swallows, therefore also showing awareness that bird tattoos are typically associated with female tattoos and dragon tattoos are typically male tattoos. Interestingly, she states that a swallow tattoo looks nice on a man. The word “nice” has been established as describing something that is

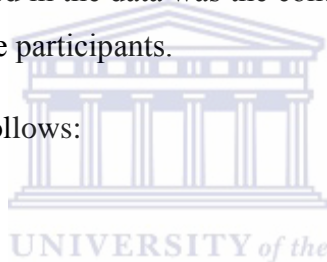
feminine, and therefore it can be said that having a bird tattoo transgresses the norms of male tattoos, hinting at femininity. AH argues for the freedom to choose whichever tattoos, regardless of gender. She provides the example that women should get giant skulls if they want it. Here, she does not only mention a skull which is a typically masculine design, but she also mentions the size (“giant”), which is associated with male tattoos, therefore contradicting her statement that she does not think there’s a distinguishing difference between male and female tattoos.

In this section, it was shown that all participants are aware of the gendered differences in tattoos, specifically pointing out differences in sizes, placements as well as designs.

7.1.5. **Feminine versus butch tattoos**

An interesting pattern that emerged in the data was the contrast made between ‘feminine’ and ‘butch’ placements by some of the participants.

The definition of feminine is as follows:



“Having qualities or an appearance traditionally associated with women, especially delicacy and prettiness⁷”

Below are two definitions of the word ‘butch’:

“(of a woman) looking or behaving like a man, or (of a man) being very strong with big muscles, and behaving in a traditionally male way⁸”

“an overtly/stereotypically masculine or masculine-acting woman. [C]an be used to denote an individual, or the dominant role in a lesbian relationship”⁹.

⁷ <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/feminine>

⁸ <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/butch>

⁹ <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=butch>

As seen above, the first definition of ‘butch’ mentions a masculine, physical appearance of females, and both definitions mention masculine behaviour in females. It can be used to describe men and women. However, the terms differ slightly for each gender. The first definition states that, for a woman, it means to behave or look like a man, while for a man, it means being even more masculine than the stereotypical image of a man. The second definition, from the Urban Dictionary, states that ‘butch’ refers to a woman who is overtly performing a masculine role, and is also often used to refer to a masculine lesbian.

When the interviewer asked, “Where on your body would you not get a tattoo and why?” some of the participants responded as follows:

MT: “on my arms, like biceps, triceps, none of that. It’s very butch” (turn 16).

KA: “My arm. The common area. The face, duh. And lower back [laughing]. Lower back is self-explanatory. Face is just plain dumb. That’s something you can never hide. The arm one is such a common spot to put a tattoo, and for a chick it just makes you... butch. Ya it’s just those- just those ones” (turn 28).

TH: “Uhm well, I chose this place because like of the size of it basically, and be- uhm the- the original like- because I looked at other people’s versions of this tattoo and a lot of them have it here [pointing to arm]. But my mommy said I mustn’t get it here because it’s butch for a girl to get a tattoo here, so I decided here it probably better” (turn 18).

All three participants state that they won’t get tattoos on their arms, stating that it is “butch”. For example, MT states that tattoos placed on the arm are “very butch”. KA states a tattoo on the arm is seen as common, either referring to a common occurrence, or belonging to an uncultured person, as discussed earlier in this chapter. She also states that tattoos on the arm “makes you... butch”, showing that she believes that getting tattoos in this area is an act that automatically makes a woman masculine, whether intentionally or unintentionally. She hesitated before saying the word “butch”, indicating that she was cautious of using this word. TH has a tattoo on her shoulder blade, and although most people with the same tattoo have it on their arm, she decided against this placement. Her mother advised her against placing her tattoo on her arm because, according to her mother, the act of placing the tattoo there, is butch. A general pattern found in these extracts is that those who are seen as transgressing the

norms of femininity by having tattoos on their arms are seen as “butch”. The extracts show that these participants have a fear of having their bodies read as “butch”, and as a result they make a conscious decision to avoid having tattoos on these ‘masculine’ placements. Being “butch” is something that these participants deem unappealing, or it is at least something that they do not identify with.

The following extract is taken from the interview with BD:

- Interviewer: Uhm where on your body would you not get a tattoo and why?
BD: Not get a tattoo... uhm... I don't know.
Interviewer: So anywhere?
BD: Anywhere.
Interviewer: Okay
BD: Except the private parts [laughing] or my neck. I don't think I would tattoo my neck or my face.
Interviewer: Okay. Why not?
BD: I don't think it's appropriate for a girl.
Interviewer: Mmm?
BD: Look- It's very butch.
Interviewer: Yes. Okay, and you think it's appropriate for a guy?
BD: Yes.

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BD states that it is not appropriate for a girl to have tattoos on the neck and face, stating that having these areas tattooed is “very butch”. Added to this, she identifies these areas as spaces where it is acceptable for men to have tattoos, but not women. It can be said that the neck and face, as well as the arms, as identified by MT, KA and TH, are spaces which cannot be hidden easily and consequently the tattoos will be visible most of the time. It can therefore be said that the visible spaces on the body are typically reserved for male tattoos. Once again it is evident that males are allowed to show their tattoos while women should cover their tattoos. Having tattoos which are visible all the time is seen as masculine.

In this section, the *description* and *interpretation* stages yielded discussions concerning the negotiation of femininity through tattoos, the popularity of female tattoos, establishing the boundaries for female tattoos, female versus male tattoos, as well as feminine versus butch tattoos.

Explanation

The following section looks at the social context in which these interviews took place, which could have influenced the interactions. Here, a consideration of the norms, ideologies, beliefs and social discourses is necessary (Fairclough, 2001).

The researcher interviewed female students with tattoos and was interested in how they negotiate/construct their identities as tattooed women. These participants revealed how the popular cultural practice of tattooing is influenced and dictated by society. It was found that even though gender, such as femininity and masculinity, is a social construct, most women in this study adhered to traditionally feminine roles as seen in their tattoos. For example, it is considered the norm to have small and delicate tattoo designs, which can be concealed easily, tattoos that have inspirational meaning as well as tattoos which signal bonding with other women. For women to transgress these norms, for example, having large tattoos which are always visible, and masculine designs such as a skull and crossbones, are seen as taboo and these women are deemed unattractive and unappealing.

There is also evidence that tattoo trends change, and these changes are also brought about by society. For example, the lower back tattoo, which was once considered a feminine tattoo, is now being associated with 'loose' women, hence its nickname 'the tramp stamp'. As a result, most women in this study view this tattoo in a negative light, and it was seen as one of the least popular placements among the participants (as seen in Chapter 5). One of the participants that has a lower back tattoo, states that she regrets it, possibly because of the negative associations attached to this tattoo.

7.2. Comparing tattoo trends between campuses

The researcher was interested in establishing whether there is a differential effect in tattoo trends among the different campuses. In Chapter 5, the researcher established the differences in tattoo placements among the participants in this study. However, the researcher also wanted to gain a broader perspective of the tattoo trends on the campuses. The following question was therefore asked to find out which tattoo trends the participants have noticed at their associated universities: "Have you noticed any tattoo trends among females at this university?"

It should however be noted that the data sample is relatively small and one cannot make sweeping generalizations based on this sample. Furthermore, a few participants mentioned that they have not noticed tattoo trends on their respective campuses. However, most participants identified trends related to placements on the body as well as tattoo designs. The responses regarding the tattoo designs are categorized as follows: religious symbols (e.g. crucifix), tribal designs, symbolic tattoos (e.g. infinity symbols, arrows), nature (e.g. birds, trees), and wording (e.g. quotes, names).

Firstly, the researcher will look at the participants' responses on their observations of the tattoo trends on the respective campuses, and compare whether there are similarities and/or differences across the campuses. There will also be a consideration of the participants' own tattoos, and whether their tattoos reflect these trends.

At UCT, two of the participants were exchange students and had only been on campus for a short while at the time of the interview. They stated that they had not noticed any tattoo trends on campus. Another student also stated that she hadn't noticed many students with tattoos. A different student stated that she hadn't noticed many women with tattoos, but those she had seen, had flower tattoos. Other tattoos related to nature were also noticed among the female population at the university, such as swallows, and "birds coming out of the feather" (CM turn 54). Another popular trend among the female student population is symbolic tattoos. For example, two participants noticed that infinity symbols were popular. TH also noted that hearts "and all of that girly stuff" were popular among the female population at UCT. One participant noticed that tribal tattoos were popular among the female students. SC identified wording as a popular trend, which can also be seen among the participants, of which four have tattoos with wording.

Two of the participants noticed trends with regard to the placement. SC mentioned that many female students have tattoos on the back, neck, collarbone and forearm. SV also noticed that the back and neck are popular placements. She also pointed out that the foot is a popular placement. These trends were also found among the participants, as two participants have tattoos on their backs and two have tattoos behind the neck, one participant had a tattoo on her forearm, while two other participants have tattoos on their inner forearms. However, none of the participants have tattoos on the collarbone. One participant has three tattoos on her feet.

At UWC, one of the participants mentioned that they hadn't noticed any tattoo trends on campus, and stated that she does not pay attention to tattoo trends. Another participant, on the other hand, noticed an increase in women on campus who have tattoos, stating that tattooing in itself is a trend, thus she did not mention any specific designs or placements. The rest of the participants at UWC noticed that female students tend to have tattoos related to nature, and butterflies were identified by three participants, followed by feathers and flowers, which were identified by two of the participants. Flowers are popular among the participants, as four participants have flower design tattoos, and two of these participants have more than one flower tattoo. Butterflies were also popular, as two participants have butterfly tattoos, and one of these participants has four butterfly tattoos. Symbolic tattoos were also found to be trending among the female students at the university, such as dream catchers (identified by TA), stars and infinity symbols (identified by KA) and hearts (identified by RK). Another trend is wording, specifically names of people (identified by BD) and specifically of parents (identified by TA). TA also stated that the female students tend to have "soft nature, 'oh help me lord' type of stuff" (turn 52). It can be said that she is stating that these women tend to have typically feminine designs.

In terms of placement, KA noticed that students tend to have tattoos on the shoulder, arm, wrist, as well as the lower back. RK also noticed that female students have tattoos on the shoulder, and she also noticed tattoos on the feet. MT noticed that tattoos in the middle of the back, as well as on the ankle, were popular placements among the females on campus. By using Table 5.1 in Chapter 5, it can be seen that none of the participants have tattoos on their shoulders. However, one of the participants has a tattoo on the shoulder blade. Additionally, none of the participants have tattoos on their arms, possibly because of the negative (masculine) connotation attached to it. However, two participants have tattoos on their inner forearms. The wrist is a very popular placement, as five participants have tattoos on this body part. Two participants have tattoos on their lower backs, two have tattoos on their ankles and two have tattoos on their feet. Three participants have tattoos on their backs, two having the tattoos placed on their spinal cords.

At SUN, the most popular trend that was noticed by the participants, is symbolic tattoos. The most popular symbolic tattoo is the infinity symbol, as five of the participants pointed out that this tattoo design is trending at SUN. AO claims that the reason for the popularity of this tattoo is the TV show 'Revenge'. The main character of this show, a young woman, has a double infinity symbol tattooed on her wrist. AO therefore claims that the popularity of this

show sparked the trend, hence women have tattoos of similar designs. This trend is also proof of the influence of popular media on the youth. Other popular symbolic tattoos include a horse shoe and an arrow (identified by DK), anchors (identified by JB) as well as stars (identified by RE). Another popular trend in terms of design is having tattoos related to nature, of which birds and feathers are popular designs. Wording was also identified by four of the participants. AR stated that the female students tend to inscribe “a cool quote they would see on Tumblr” (turn 52). Once again, it is evident that the students are influenced by popular culture, as social media forms part of popular culture. AR stated that Afrikaans lyrics are particularly popular among Afrikaans women at SUN. Religious symbols (i.e. a crucifix) were identified by three of the participants as a popular trend among the female students. AO stated that she noticed that tribal tattoos are trending.

In terms of placement, three participants noticed the back and two participants identified the foot as a popular placement among female students. One participant has a tattoo on her back, while none of the participants have tattoos on their feet. Other placements include the sleeve tattoos (identified by AO), wrist (identified by JS), the back of the neck (identified by DK), and the leg (identified by RE). None of the participants have sleeve tattoos, two participants have wrist tattoos, two have tattoos on the back of their necks, and one participant has a tattoo on her leg.

The most noticeable difference in trends between the campuses was that some students at SUN had Afrikaans wording, while this was not found at UWC or UCT. Afrikaans is prevalent at SUN as this is a mainly Afrikaans institution, therefore it could be expected that students would have tattoos in this language.

It was also found that all five categories were prevalent at the three campuses, whether the participants mentioned these designs as trends at the universities, or whether they had these designs themselves.

7.3. Summary

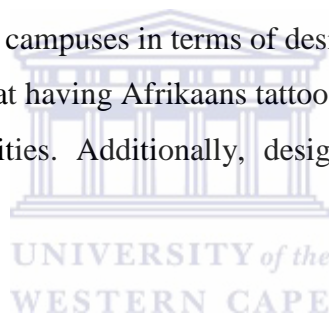
In this chapter, Fairclough’s (2001) three stages of Critical Discourse Analysis was used to analyze the participants’ responses to the questions related to gender and tattoos. The stages are *description*, *interpretation* and *explanation*. The *description* stage entailed analyzing the *text*, referring to the spoken discourse (i.e. the interview). The *interpretation* stage looked at

interaction, which entailed examining the production and interpretation of the interview. The *explanation* stage entailed the analysis of the *context*, thus focussing on the social conditions surrounding the interview.

Femininity and masculinity, which are social constructs, have been naturalized, meaning that it is spoken about as common sense. Masculinity and femininity are seen as opposite ends of a spectrum, with the implication that transgressing the norms of feminine tattoos are seen masculine and are therefore regarded in a negative light. It was found that many participants chose stereotypically feminine tattoos. The femininity of the tattoo is not only determined by the design, but also the placement and the size.

It was also found that women are perpetrators of ‘gender violence’ as they reinforce the patriarchal script by echoing the social ideologies and beliefs regarding appropriateness, femininity, and so forth.

Lastly, a comparison between the campuses in terms of design and placement showed that the only noticeable difference was that having Afrikaans tattoos is a trend at SUN, while this was not found at the other universities. Additionally, designs and placements were mostly typically feminine.



CHAPTER 8 – TOWARDS ALTERNATIVE VIEWS OF FEMININITY

8.0. Introduction

This chapter explores alternative perspectives on femininity focusing on *deviance*, *impulsivity*, *semiotics of the body and regret*, as well as *lack of meaning*. The chapter is organized as follows: firstly, the above-mentioned themes will be described. Next, the narratives of three participants will be discussed as they contain the above-mentioned themes. Lastly, additional examples of each theme will also be mentioned.

8.1. Themes

Theme 1: Deviance

According to the Harris Poll (2012), 25% of Americans who had tattoos stated that having a tattoo makes them feel more rebellious. In the past, tattoos have been associated with deviance and rebellion (Tiggeman & Golder, 2006). However, the participants' decision to get their tattoos showed evidence of deliberate deviant behaviour, showing that deviance still plays a role in the decision to get a tattoo. Belonging to the tattoo subculture might seem desirable because of the deviant element.

Theme 2: Impulsivity

This theme refers to instances where participants were 'living in the moment' at the time of acquiring the tattoo and as a result getting tattoos without giving it much thought. This theme speaks to one of the hypotheses of this research, which is that women with tattoos generally represent themselves as impulsive. Fisher (2002: 100) states that "getting tattooed is often not a deliberated decision". It could be argued that these participants did not consider how they would feel about their tattoos in the future. Because tattoos are a popular trend, some people have been known to get tattoos impulsively, as a way to 'fit in' with those belonging to the tattoo-subculture and therefore not thinking about the implications of the tattoo in future.

Theme 3: Semiotics of the body and regret

According to the Harris Poll (2012), 14% of Americans stated that they regret getting tattoos. The researcher was interested in establishing whether any of the participants experienced regret because of their tattoo(s) and also to uncover the reasons for experiencing regret. The relative and dynamic nature of symbols might contribute toward the regret experienced by some tattooees (Madfis & Arford, 2013). Peck and Stroud (2015: 143), who uses data conducted in a tattoo parlour, state that “clients [are] constantly being reminded of the permanency of their tattoos and the possible (undesirable) resemiotization of the meaning of these tattoos over time”. As a result, they might experience regret for acquiring/having the tattoo. In addition, Madfis and Arford (2013: 547) found that the tattoos, as well as the narratives, become problematic when there is “an inability of tattoos to function beyond their capacity as symbolic representations”.

Theme 4: Lack of meaning

This theme refers to instances where the participant’s tattoo does not hold any significant meaning for her. Madfis and Arford (2013) state that when tattoos are perceived to lack meaning, the tattooed individual might receive negative reactions from others, often resulting in the tattooee regretting the decision to acquire a tattoo.

8.2. Narratives relating to alternative ideas of femininity

Following is a discussion of three participants’ experiences of *deviance*, *impulsivity*, *semiotics of the body and regret*, as well as *lack of meaning*.

8.2.1. Participant 1: CH

CH has one tattoo, placed around her wrist. She obtained the tattoo when she was eighteen years old. When the interviewer asked what her tattoo signifies, as well as what the meaning is behind the tattoo, she responded:

“Well, it doesn’t actually signify anything. Like I said, I literally just woke up one day, and I’d say it was because I was being rebellious or I don’t know what was going through my head exactly. I just literally just woke up and went and got a idea that I need to get a tattoo, and then I just went and got it. Like without doing too much research. Uhm I knew that I wanted it to be like a bangle, whatever, but that’s basically it. I mean, I actually don’t know where this design comes from because it wasn’t actually my chosen design. I just came in the tattoo parlour and the lady gave me a- like a bunch of designs, and I wasn’t actually sober, so ya. So I- it’s a very- ya this tattoo- I don’t know what it is. I really don’t know. I’ve- I’ve tried to search for the meaning, and uhm... I still haven’t found it” (turn 12).

The above-mentioned extract brings forth the themes of *lack of meaning, impulsivity, semiotics of the body and regret*, as well as *deviance*.

Lack of meaning: CH states that her tattoo does not signify anything, showing that there is a lack of meaning in this tattoo for the participant. In addition, she also did not spend much time doing research on tattoos before she went to the tattoo parlour. She chose a random flash design, which, she stated, was not the design she initially intended. Her impulsive decision resulted in choosing a design without thinking about what it could mean. She stated that she has tried to search for the meaning of this tattoo, but has not found it. Although her initial intention was that she wanted a tattoo with meaning, the haste in which she acquired the tattoo did not allow her to search for a design with a symbolic meaning. At the time of the interview she was still looking for the meaning of the tattoo. It can be said that the lack of meaning of this tattoo, as well as the frustration of not being able to find the meaning, contributes to her dislike of the tattoo.

In the extract above, CH mentions twice that she “woke up”, stating both times that she “literally just woke up one day”. This statement could either refer to waking up after sleeping, or it could refer to the fact that she had an epiphany, realizing that she can get a tattoo. This statement also shows that her decision to get a tattoo was impulsive. She mentions that she might have acquired the tattoo as a way to rebel against her parents, so “waking up” could mean that she realized that getting a tattoo could be an ideal way of rebelling against her parents.

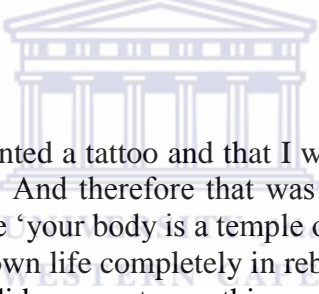
She went on to state:

“But that was the initial objective, you know. Just ‘ya I’m gonna get a tattoo with meaning, and this and that’ but everything just happened so fast and you know I just ended up getting it. I woke up and I was like ‘I have a tattoo’” (turn 20).

CH's initial intention was to get a tattoo that had significant meaning for her, but as a result of the haste in which she ended up acquiring the tattoo, searching for a tattoo with meaning was not possible. In this extract, she uses the words "woke up" again, but here it could refer to realizing what she had done. This indicates that her decision was impulsive.

Impulsivity: CH stated that the moment leading up to the tattoo "happened so hasty" (turn 14). There is evidence of the sense of urgency she felt before getting the tattoo. She even moved the appointment to an earlier date, stating that even though the appointment was for Saturday, she moved it to the Friday (turn 16). She "was like 'no, you have to get it done now'" (turn 16), which once again shows the urgency she experienced towards getting the tattoo. She further states that "It's just- it just like happened- it in a short amount of time. There wasn't much thinking" (turn 16).

When the interviewer asked CH if she thinks her tattoo sends a message to others, she stated that:



"My intention was that I wanted a tattoo and that I wanna do what I wanna do. It's my life. Uhm it's my body. And therefore that was my mindset. But I mean, my parents would always tell me 'your body is a temple of God', but I would- I ignored them. And I was living my own life completely in rebellion to what they wanted for me, and so I just basically did very extreme things, and this is one of the extreme things that I did. Just one of the extreme things that I did in rebellion against my parents" (turn 24).

In the above extract, one can see evidence of rebellion and deviance. The words "my life", "my body", and "my mindset" shows that one of the main reasons for getting this tattoo was to claim ownership over her own body, and possibly trying to signify her individuality (Armstrong *et al.*, 2008). She therefore rebelled against her parents, who, for religious reasons, do not approve of tattoos. Impulsivity and rebellion led to her tattoo lacking any significant meaning, which consequently led to regret. When the researcher asked whether she has ever regretted her tattoo, she responded:

"Uh definitely [giggling]. Ya just the most recently- I mean I really liked the tattoo- actually before I was driving in the car and I- I told my mother I need to speak to my aunty and give her some material to uhm to sew it my- my width because I can't find any bands that can fit around my arm 'cause it's so thin. So ya, I don't want people to see the tattoo. I don't want them to- because when people see the

tattoo, they uhm... you are like part of- okay, you have a tattoo, you're like automatically part of a certain type of person or associated to be a certain way, you know? So- and also, like the way the tattoo looks and everything, so. Initially, what I wanted to get with the tattoo, is what I got. I mean, uh- the perception that is created around this tattoo, it's really uhm... like in your face. Like 'bam! Here's a tattoo' it's dark, dark lines, it's thick. You can't not see that it's a tattoo. You can't look past it. And so that was the- the objective I achieved. But now my- views of tattoos have changed completely and... it's a blight on my arm now" (turn 22).

Semiotics of the body and regret: CH stated with certainty that she regrets her tattoo. Interestingly, within the same sentence she mentioned that she "really liked the tattoo" which is an indication of how her feelings towards this tattoo has changed. Additionally, she states that she does not want people to see the tattoo, which is also an indication that she regrets the tattoo. She further stated that if you have a tattoo, you are associated with "a certain type of person", referring to people she does not want to be associated with. It could be said that she might have wanted to fit in with that group in the past, but her personality has changed. Although she does not clarify what type of person, one could assume that she is referring to delinquents (i.e. gangsters). She stated that people "automatically" associate her with a certain group or associate her with behaving a certain way, which shows that her awareness of having no control over how others perceive her. Tattooed individuals do not always have control over how others interpret their tattoos (Madfis & Arford, 2013; Lombard & Bergh, 2014).

Madfis and Arford (2013) discuss the dynamic nature of symbols and how this might ultimately be problematic for tattooed individuals. For example, Madfis and Arford (2013: 553) state that "[i]ndividuals' beliefs, values, life circumstances, relationships and friends change, as do the symbols that people use to represent these meaningful viewpoints and connections".


According to Madfis and Arford (2013: 553), "[t]attoos, as permanently embodied symbols, cannot provide the elasticity and fluctuation intrinsic to the human experience". For example, CH cannot adapt to her tattoo because she does not identify with being rebellious anymore, leading to regret and the desire to have the tattoo permanently concealed. In addition, she also regrets the design of her tattoo, which is "dark", "thick", and "You can't look past it". Although this was what she wanted initially, it is now a "blight" on her arm.

Even though CH placed her tattoo deliberately on a place that would always be visible, she mentioned that she had recently been planning to cover her tattoo with a material band that she wanted her aunt to make. She stated that she achieved the initial goal she had for her tattoo, which was for it to be visible, but now it is part of the reason why she dislikes the tattoo.

Deviance: Madfis and Arford (2013: 554) state that “[w]hen tattoos stand as enduring markers of particularly troubling or embarrassing signifiers of deviant identity or negative life changes whether internal or external, regret may be experienced”. This is the case with CH, who stated that “A tattoo wasn’t a- wasn’t a good thing, and it was a constant reminder of my rebellion” (turn 28). Because of the permanence of the tattoo, it serves as a permanent reminder of a part of her life that she regrets, and subsequently she also regrets the tattoo. She stated that this tattoo is a symbol of sin (turn 30). She now sees her tattoo as a blight on her arm, symbolizing sin, thus showing how the meaning of this tattoo has been resemiotized.

8.2.2. Participant 2: RK

The following extract is an excerpt from the interview with RK, who has five tattoos, of which she regrets her first tattoo.

- 
- Interviewer: Okay. Uhm I’ve heard that some people end up regretting their tattoos. Have you ever felt that way?
- RK: Uhm to be honest with you, I regret only one. And that’s the one on my lower back. But, like, to fix that now, I’m getting more, you know what I mean? So I’ve made that one and now I actually I wanna fill like maybe half or my entire back.
- Interviewer: Okay.
- RK: Just make a big like collage of it.
- Interviewer: So why do you regret that one?
- RK: Uhm I think it was- it wasn’t even well-researched. It was like impulsive, we decided one day and went to go get it the next day, like that kind of thing.
[Laughter]
We Googled tattoos like that morning?
- Friend: Ya.
- RK: That morning, ya.
- Interviewer: Oh wow.
- RK: So it was very like- we were very young. We were like 19, so, you know, that’s the only one that I- I don’t regret it. I know that I can add to it and stuff so I don’t really regret it. I do regret- like now I’m like “oh don’t let me wear something so low, that it’s like out there”, kind of a vibe.

In this interaction, RK's narratives reveal the themes of *impulsivity*, *lack of meaning*, as well as *regret*.

Impulsivity: Similar to CH, RK also rushed to get her tattoo. She stated that the reason she acquired the first tattoo was that she “really just wanted a tattoo”. RK singles out her first tattoo as the one she acquired impulsively. RK and her friend researched tattoos right before going to the tattoo parlour, indicating that not much thought went into the design. Lombard and Bergh (2014: 199) state that “[t]he choice of tattooist and design should, therefore, be a process rather than a capricious act”, because the permanence of a tattoo should not be taken lightly, as it can result in lifelong regret. RK also states that she and her friend were very young at the time they obtained their first tattoos, implying that they were both still immature at the time. She therefore attributes this factor as one of the reasons why she regrets the tattoo.

Lack of meaning: When the researcher asked what her tattoos signify, RK stated that only two of her tattoos have symbolic meaning: the friendship symbol on her ribcage and the fire lotus on her leg (Appendix turn 12). Therefore there is no significant meaning behind the lower back tattoo. In addition, the fact that the tattoo was not well-researched, adds to the lack of meaning of this design, and by implication, the whole concept of the tattoo.

Semiotics of the body and regret: RK regrets the first of her five tattoos, which is placed on her lower back. Lower back tattoos are typically intended for public display, placed in order to be revealed by wearing low-rise pants and a short top, for example. One could therefore assume that the negative perceptions about people who have lower back tattoos could have attributed to her regretting this tattoo. She states that when choosing what to wear, she thinks “oh don't let me wear something so low, that it's like out there”. Seeing that the social as well as personal meaning of the lower back tattoo has changed over time, she now purposely covers it by wearing clothes that would conceal the tattoo. It is clear that she is now conscious of this area of her body, for a different reason than the past, when she might have wanted to reveal the tattoo. It could be that she is conscious of how people will perceive her when they see this tattoo. She intends on getting her tattoo covered by “fixing” the tattoo and “filling” her back by getting more tattoos. The word fix is usually used when someone mends something that is broken. Additionally, one would normally fill an object that is empty. Later she stated that she does not regret the tattoo, because she knows that she would be able to change the design.

8.2.3. Participant 3: CD

The next participant, CD, has three tattoos. When the researcher asked CD why she decided to get tattooed, she replied:

“Uhm, my first one, I got it when I was seventeen. I was so stupid. I just chose it because I was like into anchors at the moment. So I was like ‘I’m gonna get a tattoo of an anchor’, and I got it. Uhm, my mom said no, and I got it the very next day [giggles], and I was like ‘ya, whatever’. I just got it like ‘cause everyone was getting it and tattoos- I mean ya and tattoos were like, major and anchors were like cool” (turn 4).

In this extract, CD shows instances of *impulsivity*, *deviance*, *lack of meaning*, as well as *semiotics of the body and regret*.

Impulsivity: CD states that she was 17 years old when she obtained her first tattoo. This extract shows that her decision to get a tattoo was impulsive. She states that even though her mother objected to her having a tattoo, she went to the tattoo parlour the very next day. There was not much planning that went into the decision to get a tattoo, despite the fact that she knew she wanted an image of an anchor.

Deviance: The fact that she acquired the tattoo despite her mother’s negative response, shows an element of deviance and rebellion against her mother.

Lack of meaning: When the interviewer asked what her tattoos signify and enquired about their meanings, she said: “Uhm my first one’s an anchor. It means fuck all” (turn 6), which is a rather crass way of stating that her tattoo does not have any personal meaning. It also shows that she feels negatively towards this tattoo.

Semiotics of the body and regret: When asked whether she has ever felt regret towards any of her tattoos, she responded “I regret the first one, ya” (turn 14), which shows that acting in rebellion against her mother, as well as the lack of meaning of the tattoo, could have contributed to her feelings of regret towards this tattoo.

When the researcher asked whether the placement of her tattoos were related to their placements in any way, or whether she chose random placements, CD stated:

“Uhm I try- well my first one, I got it by my hip bone so I was like ‘oh my god, that’s so the in thing’. So that’s stupid” (turn 8).

As seen above, she inscribed the tattoo on her hip bone because this was a popular placement at the time. It is worth noting that when she quoted her past self by stating: “oh my god, that’s so the in thing”, she changed her tone of voice to a mocking accent, therefore mocking herself and her decision to follow this trend. In hindsight, she feels that following that trend was “stupid”. Following trends, in CD’s case, resulted in regret, arguably because of the lack of meaning of the tattoo as well as its arbitrary placement.

The researcher asked CD what reactions she has received from family, strangers and friends, and she responded that:

“... Well my family- when I- when they eventually found out about it, they were like ‘oh my god, you’re so grown up’ so I don’t know. Basically, they- they like it. They- some of them are like ‘oh my god, that’s so ugly’. I mean, I know my aunt like hates the anchor one, you know everyone hates the anchor one” (turn 22).

She states that when they “eventually” found out that she has a tattoo, they came to the realization that she had grown up. The fact that they were not immediately aware of her tattoo, indicates that she might have hid the tattoo from them, because she was aware that they might not approve. It can also indicate that because of the placement, the tattoo is concealed most of the time, and therefore they found out about it later. She also states that her aunt hates her anchor tattoo, and immediately afterwards stated that everybody hates her anchor tattoo. The fact that nobody likes this tattoo, calling it “ugly”, could also contribute to her own dislike of this tattoo.

8.3. Additional examples

8.3.1. Additional examples of deviance

When the researcher asked SC what kind of reaction she has received from family, friends and strangers, she responded:

“Uhm... older- it all depends on what generation. Like, the older are generally like ‘why would you do that to your body?’ like ‘you’re destroying your body’, ‘it’s not yours to destroy’ sort of thing, which I don’t really agree with. It’s my body. I do what I want” (turn 26).

In this extract, SC states that older generations think that getting a tattoo is a way of mutilating the body. Interestingly, she does not disagree with the statement that she is destroying her body. This could indicate that she might have intentionally used tattooing as a way to reject traditional norms of beauty. This is in line with Harlow (2008: 5; cf. Braunberger, 2000) who found that women use tattoos to reject existing norms and perceptions of femininity, therefore creating their own “monstrous beauty”. It is therefore evident that SC used tattooing as a tool to claim ownership of her body.

When the researcher asked whether LH thinks her tattoo sends a message to others, she stated that:

“People don’t understand why I got it. I don’t think they will get the message. And it’s weird because they don’t normally people don’t associate people with our expertise to have tattoos. So if they see, especially it’s on my back you don’t see it every day so when I wear something and you see it people are like ‘oh my god you have a tattoo’ it’s so weird sometimes. I’m like ‘yes, I smoke too’ [laughter]. I’m not a goody two shoes” (turn 60).

LH points out that people do not normally associate tattoos with those who are educated, which shows that many people still associate tattoos with deviant groups, such as sailors and bikers. Having a tattoo, and also smoking, are therefore ways that LH use to show that she is not a virtuous person. It is interesting to note that the term “goody two shoes” is mostly used to refer specifically to women. Therefore, by asserting she is not a goody two shoes, LH is rejecting traditional norms of femininity.

When the researcher asked AO why she decided to acquire tattoos, she stated:

“Well, my first one I decided because nobody thought that I was gonna get one. Nobody saw me as the kind of person that would do something like that because I

was quite conservative and stuff, and I just wanted to show people ‘well you know what? I can also be a bit unpredictable’ so... I got it. But I also got a- I saw my cousin’s friend has one and I was like ‘I also wanna get one’ so I just decided to do it” (turn 4).

One of the reasons she decided on a tattoo was to prove that she can be unpredictable. This shows that the general perception about tattoos is that it is associated with risk-takers/deviants. She therefore used tattoos to change others’ perception of her. For this participant, belonging to the tattoo subculture is important, as she no longer wants to be seen as conservative. Performativity and agency can be seen in this extract. Like LH, she feels the need to prove that she is not a “goody two shoes”, and they therefore use tattoos as a way to achieve this.

8.3.2. Additional example of impulsivity

When the researcher asked LF, who has seventeen tattoos, whether she thinks her tattoos send a message to others, she responded:

“Like a lot of people like take the idea of like tattooing so seriously and I really don’t take it seriously at all. As like, the majority of my tattoos were like done on a whim, and are like, somewhat like, jokeish, so. Like, I mean, I just think, like, that you know, like I’m kind of like a whimsical person. I’m kind of like a jokester and stuff, but, yeah. I don’t know” (turn 42).

LF states that most of her tattoos were done on a whim. Earlier in the interview she stated that she inscribed many of her own tattoos, meaning that she could get a tattoo whenever she wanted without having to go to a tattoo parlour. Having access to a tattoo machine meant that many of her tattoos were done impulsively. Interestingly, she takes pride in the fact that her tattoos were done on a whim, as she states that this is a means to show others that she is a “whimsical person” and a “jokester”.

8.3.3. Additional examples of semiotics of the body and regret

When the researcher asked RE whether she has ever regretted her tattoo, she responded:

“Uhm, for I quick moment I did because uhm I have a job in next week for three days and it’s like a formal thing and I wanted to buy this dress, but the back was gonna be naked and I was like ‘oh I can’t wear this because I have a tattoo and it wouldn’t fit in like- in a formal setting’ so I was like ‘oh man. I’m never wear like stuff that’s naked on my back at work’ because that’s where I’m going to work anyway so uhm ya but I think uhm I can live with that. It’s not that bad. That’s the only regret I have actually” (turn 18).

RE experienced regret when shopping for an outfit for a formal event, when she realized her tattoo might not fit well with her professional image. She couldn’t wear a particular dress to a formal gathering at work as it would have revealed her back, and therefore also her tattoo. Her tattoo not only restricted her in terms of what she could wear for this occasion, but she also realized that as a result of her tattoo, she would never be able to wear backless dresses to work functions. The long-term consequence of this tattoo caused momentary regret for this participant. It can also be said that it harmed her feminine image to an extent because she was not able to wear a backless dress, which is very feminine garb.

Tattooees might experience tattoo regret for various reasons, including placement, as seen with RE. MT, on the other hand, experiences regret as a result of a technicality. When asked whether she has ever regretted her tattoo, she stated:

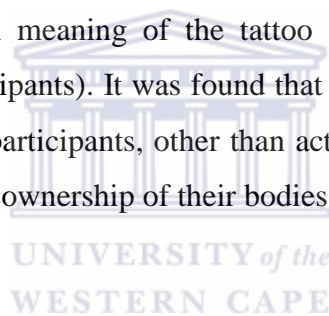
“I’ve only had it four- for four months. So not really. But I- I’m regretting uh having the words printed so small, because people often have trouble reading the words, and mistaking the word ‘free yourself’ for ‘feed yourself’ or ‘feel yourself’ so not- not really regret, but I wish I had the words printed more clearly” (turn 14).

She states that she regrets the size of the lettering in her tattoo, which causes people to read her tattoo incorrectly. Madfis and Arford (2013) state that tattooees do not always have control over how others read and interpret their tattoos. This lack of control might result in tattoo regret (Madfis & Arford, 2013). Interestingly, she acknowledged that she hadn’t regretted it yet, which shows that she is aware of the fact that some people end up regretting their tattoos over time, for whatever reason, and that there is a possibility that she might regret the tattoo in future.

8.4. Summary

Four themes were discussed in this chapter, namely *deviance*, *impulsivity*, *semiotics of the body and regret* as well as *lack of meaning*. The narratives showed that personalized tattoos are more significant, and participants were more likely to regret tattoos that lacked significant meaning. In addition, tattoos done on impulse often lead to regret as there is a lack of significance and meaning for the participant. Moreover, it was found that others' interpretations of the tattoos oftentimes contribute to the participants' own feelings about their tattoos. Additionally, negative opinions from onlookers result in regret.

The data revealed that there is still an element of deviance related to the practice of tattooing. None of the participants experienced regret as a result of the initial meaning attached to their tattoos, but rather experienced regret as a result of impulsivity and deviance. It was also found that the participants were more likely to regret aesthetics and lack of meaning as opposed to regretting the actual meaning of the tattoo (in cases where the tattoos have significant meaning for the participants). It was found that tattoos acquired on impulse rarely had significant meaning for the participants, other than acting as a mechanism to fit in or to rebel against parents, or claiming ownership of their bodies.



CHAPTER 9 - CONCLUSION

9.0. Introduction

The following chapter is a conclusion to this study. The aim of this study was to investigate how female students utilize the popular cultural practice of tattooing to negotiate their female identity. In order to establish whether the aim of this study was achieved, this chapter will briefly discuss the objectives of this study. Thereafter, the researcher will provide a final conclusion, discuss the limitations of this study and also provide suggestions for further research.

9.1. To explore the identities depicted by women through their choice of tattoo designs.

The data revealed the identities portrayed by the participants were connected to female gender identity. For these participants it was important to maintain their femininity while participating in the historically male practice of tattooing. The negotiation of feminine identity was evident in the choices of traditionally feminine designs, which were resemiotized according to individual tastes and reframed in localized experiences and perceptions. Additionally, the participants chose to acquire relatively small tattoos, and placed them where it can be concealed easily.

Popular designs included religious symbols, most often related to the Christian faith, as well as friendship symbols, and other artefacts symbolizing significant relationships with other women. In addition, tattoos which commemorate the death of a loved one were also found among some of the participants. Lastly, inspirational tattoos were also prevalent in the data sample, whether through quotes, symbols or a combination of both.

9.2. To determine whether current tattoo trends (in terms of placement, design and size) are gender-related.

In order to achieve this objective, the researcher analyzed the body narratives of the participants, not only looking at instances regarding their own tattoos, but also their opinions of other women's tattoos. It was found that there is a distinction between male and female

tattoos, of which the former are believed to be bigger, more visible, and the imagery is more aggressive (e.g. skulls, dragons). The tattoos that the women found acceptable for themselves and other women, are typically small, easy to conceal and 'feminine'. It was established that these opinions, or rules regarding acceptable female tattoos, are mediated by society.

9.3. **To investigate the kind of semiotic material used in the tattoo designs.**

The researcher looked at the actual tattoos to establish whether the participants preferred to express themselves through solitary text, solitary images, or whether they preferred to use a combination of both modes. Seeing that the body is 'authored' and 'read' (cf. Peck & Stroud, 2015), one can say that these preferences reveal *how* the women prefer to communicate through the practice of tattooing. It was found that solitary texts were the preferred designs across the three campuses (which is interestingly easiest to read), followed by a combination of text and image. Solitary images were not as common/popular as the other choices.

9.4. **To investigate the agency of tattooed female bodies.**

This research set out to problematize the agency of female bodies. It was found that the participants are, in fact, agentive beings, as they are able to control how others read their bodies. They are also agentive by going against society as society sees tattoos as not adhering to societal norms. One of the participants decided to have tattoos despite others telling her that she would be destroying her body, relating to Braunberger's (2000) concept of "monster beauty", as well as Harlow's (2008) concept of "monstrous beauty", both of which speak to the agency of the female body. However, it was found that among the society of tattooees, there are certain norms regarding where their tattoos should be placed and how it should look in order for it to be acceptable. The participants therefore defy social norms by having tattoos, but compensate by hiding their tattoos, having small tattoos, as well as 'feminine' designs.

9.5. **To determine whether the notion of 'skinscapes' facilitates a deeper understanding of tattooed bodies.**

The novel concept of 'skinscapes' proved useful in the analysis of tattooed female bodies. Using this concept allowed for a deeper understanding of how bodies are 'authored' by the

tattooee as well as how they are ‘read’ by onlookers. Authorship entails the act of inscribing a particular design on the body, and also placing the inscription on a particular body part. Authorship therefore also requires agency from the tattooee. The body is also ‘read’ by others, of which the author has limited control.

9.6. To explore alternative ideas/forms of femininity.

A thematic analysis of the body narratives revealed that some of the participants acquired their tattoos in the spur of the moment and some deliberately acquired tattoos as they wanted to portray an image of deviance, thus generating the themes of *impulsivity* as well as *deviance*. It was also found that acquiring the tattoo impulsively, or as a means of being deviant, often lead to regret, giving rise to the theme *semiotics of the body and regret*. Acquiring tattoos on impulse often resulted in the tattoos having *lack of meaning*, which also led to the subsequent regret of the tattoo.

9.7. To establish whether there is a differential effect in tattoos across campuses.

Based on the historical differences of the three universities, the researcher was interested in establishing whether there would be a difference in the choice of bodily inscriptions and/or placements across campuses. In order to establish whether there are any differences, the researcher listed the tattoo placements, and compared the number of tattoos per university, the semiotic material (text, image, a combination of text and image), as well as the languages appropriated in the tattoo designs (cf. Chapter 5). It was found that UWC has the participants with the most ‘existing’ number of tattoos, typically placed on the back, leg, wrist, and behind the neck. Participants at UWC also marked the highest number of ‘aspirational’ tattoo placements, such as the back, hip, and ribcage. Participants at SUN indicated the least number of ‘existing’ and ‘aspirational’ tattoos. Participants at UCT marked the highest number of ‘undesirable’ placements, such as the private areas, leg, and behind the ear while UWC indicated the lowest number of ‘undesirable’ placements. In terms of the semiotic material of the tattoos, it was found that there was not a marked difference between the campuses in terms of having solitary text and solitary image tattoos. UWC has the most tattoos that combine text and image, to reinforce and explain the meanings the participants want to project. In terms of the languages used in the tattoos, it was found that the participants at all three universities preferred English in their tattoos. Furthermore, Chapter 7

allowed for a comparison of the preferred designs across campuses. The main theme among the participants' responses at all three universities was that the designs, placements and sizes of the tattoos were typically feminine.

9.8. Final Conclusion

This study reveals that women are mindful of their female identity when they choose the designs, sizes and placements of their tattoos. It was found that they typically adhere to the norms of feminine tattoos which exist in the tattoo community.

The novel data collection method of the body silhouette proved to be very useful in this study, as the analysis of these body silhouettes resulted in a better understanding of how the participants map their bodies. Not only were they able to indicate their existing tattoos, but they could also indicate where they want their future tattoos to be, as well as where they would never have tattoos. Based on these findings, the researcher was able to analyze the current trends in terms of tattoo placements, as well as declining trends. The body silhouettes also simplified the task of comparing tattoo trends (w.r.t placements) across campuses.

9.9. Limitations of Study and Suggestions for Future Research

Time constraints did not allow for a larger population sample, therefore the study cannot be generalized to the larger population. It would therefore be suggested that future research investigate a bigger sample, and also a more diverse population. This could allow for the study of transsexual/transgender individuals as well as looking at tattooing practices across various races. It would also be interesting to include the views of non-tattooed individuals as well as males with and/or without tattoos. Focus group discussions would also be insightful.

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APPENDICES

Due to the sheer volume and length of the collected data and interview transcriptions, the appendices have been collated into a separate booklet.





UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

A multisemiotic analysis of ‘skinscapes’ of female students at three Western Cape universities

APPENDICES



A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Magister Artium in the Department of Linguistics, University of the Western Cape.

2015

Supervisor: Professor F. Banda

Co-Supervisor: Doctor A. Peck

APPENDICES

Interview questions

1. Tell me about yourself. (How old are you? What are you studying? What made you choose this university?)
2. Why did you decide to get tattoos?
3. How many tattoos do you have?
4. Can you talk me through your tattoos from start to finish? (When did you get your first tattoo?)
5. What do they signify? What are their meanings?
6. Are the tattoo(s) and its placement(s) related to each other?
7. If you have any tattoos that are purposefully hidden, why did you put it somewhere people cannot see?
8. I have heard that some people end up regretting their tattoos. Have you ever felt that way?
9. Where would you not get a tattoo? Why?
10. Do you think your tattoos sends a message to others?
11. How do you want people to see you?
12. What kind of reaction have you received from friends/family/strangers?
13. Have your tattoos ever held you back in any way?
14. Do you think you can still be feminine with tattoos?
15. Do you think that it is common for women to have tattoos?
16. What is the best tattoo you have ever seen on a woman?
17. What is the worst tattoo you have ever seen on a woman?
18. Which tattoos do you think are suitable for women and which are suitable for men? Or do you think that there is no difference?
19. Have you noticed any tattoo trends among females at this university?

Transcription Key:

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| == | Overlapping talk. |
| () | Inaudible segments of talk. |
| { } | The guess of a possible word or phrase. |
| [up] | Non-verbal information |
| - | False starts or restarts: when speaker “rethinks” what s/he wants to say; s/he rephrases before completing the first thought. |
| ... | Hesitation (a pause of approximately 0.5 to 1 second) |
| <i>Italics</i> | Using words other than English. |
| “ ” | Quoting another person/ using someone else’s words. |
| CAPITAL LETTERS | Words that are louder than usual. |

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Adapted from Eggins, S. & Slade, D. 1997. *Analysing Casual Conversation*. London: Cassell.



INTERVIEWS

UWC

Interview with BD

1. Interviewer: Okay can you tell me uhm a bit about yourself? Uhm how old are you? What are you studying?
2. BD: I'm 21 years old and I'm studying BA Psychology at UWC.
3. Interviewer: Okay so why did you choose UWC?
4. BD: I only applied at UWC [laughing] and because of all my friends. They also applied at UWC and I wanted to be with all my friends as well.
5. Interviewer: Okay uhm why did you decide to get tattoos?
6. BD: Uhm all of my friends had tattoos and my sister them and I thought it's really really nice and I also decided to get one and then after the one, I got a few also after that.
7. Interviewer: So do you think it's addictive?
8. BD: Yes it is.
9. Interviewer: Okay. 'Cause I'm thinking why didn't you stop after the first one [laughing].
10. BD: It is addictive.
11. Interviewer: Okay how many tattoos do you have?
12. BD: I have 9 tattoos.
13. Interviewer: Wow. Can you talk me through your tattoos from start to finish? When did you get it and what is==
14. BD: ==My first tattoo I got two years ago when I was first year. And then after that I got the rest of the 8 and I think the the last one I got this year. The last few, I got this year.
15. Interviewer: Okay uhm can you tell me what each tattoo uhm signifies? What's the meaning of each one?
16. BD: Each tattoo has its own meaning to me... like, uhm I like flowers, and I got my mommy's name and my daughter's name [daughter's name], and the rest is just flowers and butterflies. Things that I really like.
17. Interviewer: Oh okay. The tattoos and the placement, uhm is it related in any way? Why did you choose uhm a specific spot for a specific tattoo?
18. BD: On the body?
19. Interviewer: Yes.
20. BD: Not really. Like my one friend has a scorpion on her foot and I think that's

really sexy. A tattoo on the foot that goes up on the leg. And my daughter's name I have on my chest. My mommy's name I have on my hand. Didn't know really elsewhere to get it [laughing].

21. Interviewer: Okay uhm... do you have any tattoos that are purposely hidden?
22. BD: No.
23. Interviewer: No? Okay uhm I've heard that some people end up regretting their tattoos. Have you ever felt that way?
24. BD: No. Not yet.
25. Interviewer: Do you think you will one day?
26. BD: No. I don't think so.
27. Interviewer: Uhm where on your body would you not get a tattoo and why?
28. BD: Not get a tattoo... uhm... I don't know.
29. Interviewer: So anywhere?
30. BD: Anywhere.
31. Interviewer: Okay.
32. BD: Except the private parts [laughing] or my neck. I don't think I would tattoo my neck or my face.
33. Interviewer: Okay. Why not?
34. BD: I don't think it's appropriate for a girl.
35. Interviewer: Mmm?
36. BD: Look- It's very butch.
37. Interviewer: Yes. Okay, and you think it's appropriate for a guy?
38. BD: Yes.
39. Interviewer: Uhm do you think your tattoos sends a message to others? Or is it intended to send any message to other people?
40. BD: No. Just for me.
41. Interviewer: Okay uhm what kind of reaction have you received from friends and family and strangers?
42. BD: Uhm most of them were happy about it and said it's nice. Gave me compliments. I didn't really get uhm like negative comments about the tattoos. So I'm happy about that.
43. Interviewer: [Laughing] Has your tattoos ever held you back in any way?
44. BD: No.
45. Interviewer: Okay uhm... do you think you can be feminine with tattoos?
46. BD: I think so.
47. Interviewer: Why?
48. BD: Uhm I don't think uhm that tattoos define you. It's a art.
49. Interviewer: Mmm?
50. BD: [Laughing]
51. Interviewer: More general questions now. Do you think that it's common for women to

- have tattoos?
52. BD: It is. I don't think tattoos is just made for guys. I think women can also get it.
53. Interviewer: Uhm what is the best tattoo that you've ever seen on a woman?
54. BD: The best tattoo?
55. Interviewer: Mmm.
56. BD: I think butterflies.
57. Interviewer: Why butterflies?
58. BD: I like butterflies.
59. Interviewer: What about butterflies are so special?
60. BD: Uhm I think it's pretty and there's different kinds of butterflies...
61. Interviewer: Mmm. What is the worst tattoo that you've ever seen on a woman?
62. BD: The worst tattoo...
63. Interviewer: Mmm.
64. BD: I think cartoon stuff. Doesn't really make sense to me.
65. Interviewer: [laughing] Okay. Which tattoos do you think are suitable for men and which are suitable for women?
66. BD: I think for men, like tribal tattoos and crosses and stuff. And for women, like more feminine tattoos like butterflies and flowers and stuff like that.
67. Interviewer: Mmm. Last question. Have you noticed any tattoo trends among females at UWC?
68. BD: Uhm yes. Flowers, butterflies, uhm names of people with designs and stuff.
69. Interviewer: Okay. Uhm before we end uhm is there anything you wanna ask, or say?
70. BD: No.
71. Interviewer: No? Okay. Thank you.

Interview with CH

1. Interviewer: Okay. Uhm tell me about yourself. How old are you? What are you studying?
2. CH: Okay so I'm twenty years old. Studying Law.
3. Interviewer: Okay. Uhm what made you choose this university?
4. CH: Uhm it's five minutes away from home. Uhm I heard that the Law Faculty was the best in Cape Town, or in South Africa and uhm ya. That's why I chose to come study here.
5. Interviewer: Okay uhm so why did you choose- why did you decide uhm to get tattoos?
6. CH: Well uh I always liked tattoos like from a young age. Like uhm... the- you know that Nik Naks tattoos that you used to get? Ya that Nik Naks tattoos and then you walk around and then you're like "oh look at my tattoo" you know. Like in school and stuff like uhm I'd always be drawing on my arms

with pen and like my arms would be covered with pen and then- that's just- then one day I just basically woke up and got a tattoo.

7. Interviewer: So how old were you?
8. CH: I was eighteen. Ya. Ya. Nah wait. Ya. Ya I was eighteen.
9. Interviewer: Okay so how many tattoos do you have? Just the one?
10. CH: Ya I just have one.
11. Interviewer: Okay so what- uh what does this tattoo signify for you? What- what is the meaning behind it?
12. CH: Well, it doesn't actually signify anything. Like I said, I literally just woke up one day, and I'd say it was because I was being rebellious or I don't know what was going through my head exactly. I just literally just woke up and went and got a idea that I need to get a tattoo, and then I just went and got it. Like without doing too much research. Uhm I knew that I wanted it to be like a bangle, whatever, but that's basically it. I mean, I actually don't know where this design comes from because it wasn't actually my chosen design. I just came in the tattoo parlor and the lady gave me a- like a bunch of designs, and I wasn't actually sober, so ya. So I- it's a very- ya this tattoo- I don't know what it is. I really don't know. I've- I've tried to search for the meaning, and uhm... I still haven't found it.
13. Interviewer: Okay so uhm why did you choose uh to get your tattoo there, on your wrist?
14. CH: 'Cause I wanted a bangle. A permanent- my logic was I wanted a permanent bangle. So that was the logic that I was going for. But other than that, there wasn't really anything else logical about... this uh tattoo. Being a Law- going into Law- it's just- like the beginning of the year, I just- it like happened so hasty.
15. Interviewer: Mmm.
16. CH: Just like- I mean I literally sold so many things. I like sold all my games and like I- to get enough money. The appointment was for Saturday. I moved it to the Friday. I was like "no, you have to get it done now". It's just- it just like happened- it in a short amount of time. There wasn't much thinking. I was completely sober, leading up until the point I came into the tattoo parlor. But I don't really know why I got- I mean, there's other reasons that would have contributed to me getting this tattoo, but... ya but I think that's...
17. Interviewer: What?
18. CH: Uhm... () I would enjoy watching shows, you know? Tattoo shows.
19. Interviewer: Mmm?
20. CH: And I definitely know that that in- had an influence of my mindset of tattoos. Like just increased the- the wanting to get it and uh the- the seeing it being more accepted and uhm in- amongst my generation. But it was still very

much forbidden, basically, because nobody in my family had a tattoo, so it was forbidden. Like I knew that if I would get it, I'd basically- basically cut off my parents, but- and uhm making a big decision like that, you would think at least you'd get something with meaning, ya.

[Laughing]

But that was the initial objective, you know. Just "ya I'm gonna get a tattoo with meaning, and this and that" but everything just happened so fast and you know I just ended up getting it. I woke up and I was like "I have a tattoo", "daddy, mommy, I have a tattoo, I have a tattoo", and my parents didn't speak to me for months.

[Interruption]

I mean I like tattoos. I used to like it. I used to admire it. I thought it was like body art and... stuff like that.

21. Interviewer: Okay so uhm I've heard that some people end up regretting their tattoos. Have you ever felt that way?

22. CH: Uh definitely [giggling]. Ya just the most recently- I mean I really liked the tattoo- actually before I was driving in the car and I I told my mother I need to speak to my aunty and give her some material to uhm to sew it my- my width because I can't find any bands that can fit around my arm 'cause it's so thin. So ya, I don't want people to see the tattoo. I don't want them to- because when people see the tattoo, they uhm... you are like part of- okay, you have a tattoo, you're like automatically part of a certain type of person or associated to be a certain way, you know? So- and also, like the way the tattoo looks and everything, so. Initially, what I wanted to get with the tattoo, is what I got. I mean, uh- the perception that is created around this tattoo, it's really uhm... like in your face. Like "bam! Here's a tattoo" it's dark, dark lines, it's thick. You can't not see that it's a tattoo. You can't look past it. And so that was the- the objective I achieved. But now my- views of tattoos have changed completely and... it's a blight on my arm now.

23. Interviewer: Uhm do you think your tattoo sends a message to others? Was it intended to like send a ().

24. CH: (). My intention was that I wanted a tattoo and that I wanna do what I wanna do. It's my life. Uhm it's my body. And therefore that was my mindset. But I mean, my parents would always tell me "your body is a temple of God", but I would- I ignored them. And I was living my own life completely in rebellion to what they wanted for me, and so I just basically did very extreme things, and this is one of the extreme things that I did. Just one of the extreme things that I did rebelling against my parents.

25. Interviewer: Mmm.
26. CH: I would say, actually, one of the instigators to getting this tattoo is, uhm, I was gonna go to a festival, right? And I had enough money, but they said I couldn't go. I had the transport. I had everything. They said "no, you can't go". So I had this bunch of money laying at home and I didn't know what to do and I was quite angry at them. () at the end, it just occurred to me. Like I can't describe it. It was just like "get a tattoo". So I got a tattoo.
27. Interviewer: Okay uhm what kind of reaction have you received from family, friends, and strangers?
28. CH: Well, my- my family was- my- my mother was absolutely, like... floored... depressed. She didn't even speak to me for months. The- my entire relationship with my parents just like different... uhm... it was- it was uhm (). I mean, nobody in my family had tattoos, so I literally alienated myself from my family. And my- half of my family is Moslem so they were all like "Haram", on top of it like "she's Haram". Obviously, I was like- I was myself very depressed, for quite- quite a while, and uhm ya. A tattoo wasn't a- wasn't a good thing, and it was a constant reminder of my rebellion.
29. Interviewer: Mmm.
30. CH: So basically it was a symbol of... sin.
31. Interviewer: Okay so uhm has your tattoo ever held you back in any way?
32. CH: No, not really. People don't really care about tattoos these days. They really just don't. So my parents () hide it. You know, wear long sleeved shirts or whatever. Uhm ya it didn't really affect my life. I mean, it did affect my life with regards to family and... but in- on a deeper level it's affected me, but on a superficial level, tattoos are very superficial. Ya it doesn't affect. It's just a superficial society.
33. Interviewer: Uhm do you think that you can still be feminine with tattoos? Seeing that it's such a- or it used to be seen as a guy thing.
34. CH: Uhm... Ya? I guess.
[Giggling]
35. Interviewer: Okay do you think that it's common for women to have tattoos these days?
36. CH: Ya, it's quite common. It's actually- it's too common. It's- [giggling] I see it's like water around here. It's like "whoa! Are you serious?" Like I- I- I- I don't- ya. It's just- It's common. I don't like it.
37. Interviewer: You don't like it?
38. CH: Nah.
39. Interviewer: Uhm what is the best tattoo that you've ever seen on a woman?
40. CH: Uhm... Uhm I can't actually answer that question 'cause I can't really {bring to mind any of the best tattoos}. I used to admire almost every single tattoo that I saw. Okay not every single tattoo, but mostly like the- the big

ones that would cover the full back or the full body and I was planning on getting full arm tattoos, full body tattoos, ribcage, the whole like full uh tattoo. Uhm I had my- in my mind I visualized how I wanted it to look, so I always liked the big- big designs on your full back. I didn't even like small... here, there tattoos, you know?

41. Interviewer: Mmm.
42. CH: It's like *eilandjies*. Like little islands of tattoos. I liked it to be one big piece.
43. Interviewer: Mmm.
44. CH: Ya.
45. Interviewer: And then what is the worst tattoo that you've ever seen on a woman?
46. CH: Oh those- I don't like those tattoos on the back that like- just like a... it's just like a- I don't know.
47. Interviewer: The lower back?
48. CH: Ya the lower back tattoos that just look like wire. Like a piece of wire and a piece of wire around the arm, like I don't like that. And hearts.
49. Interviewer: Mmm.
50. CH: Hearts with like- I don't know- like and roses. Like hearts with like roses around it. It' so uhm- it's just so common man. And butterflies, so like- small little butterflies on the neck, or-or, just- just like all that common tattoos that you can like mention because you've seen it so often. Like with women walking around that are smoking and stuff. It just doesn't look- for me it doesn't look *lekke*. For me it didn't look right, sorry.
51. Interviewer: [Laughing] Uhm which tattoos do you think are suitable for men, and which tattoos are suitable for women? Or do you think that there's no difference?
52. CH: I don't think they have a difference anymore [sigh]. I don't think there's much differences between men and women these days anymore. Like- there's like- there's no lines anymore. Everything is blurred. We live in a very confused ().
53. Interviewer: Mmm?
54. CH: Uh if you record that- that's my description of the age that we're living in. Like my generation.
55. Interviewer: Ya.
56. CH: So we go for everything, and we have blurred the lines, and a lot of us like in the middle, in between () just like "what do I do" type of stuff but I don't think there's any differentiations between tattoos. It's basically "whatever you want, goes."
57. Interviewer: Ya. So last question. Have you noticed any tattoo trends at this university?
58. CH: Yes. I've noticed it particularly this year, for some strange reason.
59. Interviewer: Ya?
60. CH: I don't know. Maybe 'cause last year I didn't really like look at- actually I

did. I didn't really see this many tattoos last year. I don't- I don't know if I'm the only one that noticed it but I mean, when I was first year, nobody really had tattoos. There was a few== one or two. Like I was one of the few people that actually had tat- not tattoos but like was walking around with it open and I would see- like I could actually identify the people. Like "that girl has" "oh that's the girl with the tattoo." Like now it's like "yoh!" "yoh!". It's like water. Everybody has a tattoo that's coming in and they're like eighteen so they must have gotten it either the holidays or they must have gotten it like in matric or the holidays. I assume they all got it the holidays and went out and got it for campus or something like that but it's like more of an accessory these days. It's like a- it's extremely superficial. It's like a piece of clothing. It has no meaning. It's because everybody is flooded with all these Instagram pictures, tattoos, and like "yoh!" like, it's hectic, but it wasn't always like that. Before Instagram was a thing, it was just like maybe on DSTV that had tattoo programs or like uhm a picture uhm that you'd Google yourself if you're interested, but now like everybody has Instagram and sees these pictures, plus famous people that's getting themselves tat- tattooed up. Everybody's exposed to it and it's like influencing them. It influenced me, unfortunately.

61. Interviewer: Unfortunately?

62. CH: Unfortunately.

UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE

Interview with KA

1. Interviewer: Tell me about yourself? How old are you? What are you studying?

2. KA: Twenty-five. Uh studying linguistics, PhD, and...

3. Interviewer: Anything else?

4. KA: No.

5. Interviewer: What made you choose this university?

6. KA: It was the only one I applied to.

7. Interviewer: Why?

8. KA: Lazy. It's close to home... I knew people here...

9. Interviewer: Why did you decide to get tattoos?

10. KA: It's permanent. I've had piercings before and I just took them all out.

11. Interviewer: How many tattoos do you have?

12. KA: Four.

13. Interviewer: Can you talk me through your tattoos from start to finish? Which one did you get first and when did you get it?

14. KA: Geez Louise. Uhm in my second year, 2008 I got my first one. After many

many years of research. Second one was in 2009. Third was honours 2010. Fourth was last year.

15. Interviewer: Last year.

16. KA: Ya last year. Beginning of the year.

17. Interviewer: Can you tell me why didn't you stop at the first one? [laughing]

18. KA: That was my intention. I was JUST going to get the one. And, I don't know. Some say it's the feeling that you get when you get your first tattoo. That when the needles touch you and stuff like that. It releases something. Even Carte Blanche had a whole story on it. An addiction. That's what my mom says. I was addicted to tattoos, that's why I can't stop.

19. Interviewer: Uhm your tattoos' meanings... can you tell me what tattoos signify?

20. KA: The first one, the triquetra. Uh most people just know it as the Charmed sign. You know, the TV show? Uh and in the show it represents the three sisters. The power of three. It's a religious symbol. The- each point of the triquetra represents the father, the son and the Holy Ghost and the circle around it represents eternity. Some churches in England- there's a church in England that actually has it as their logo. Second one, probably can't pronounce it properly, is the Gye Nyame. It's a symbol from Ghana, and it represents the supremacy of God. Last year, I actually, where were we? We were in St. James, and I actually met a guy from Ghana and he says it's quite a popular symbol in Ghana. It- it's on their currency, which I didn't know at all. It's... ya it's on their currency and it's a popular religious symbol in Ghana. Third one is a quote down my back. Shakespearean quote: "be not afraid of greatness". That was- that's now the only one that really has to do with my education, 'cause that time it was honours. I was going further. I was doing post grad. Uh that's actually the fourth one, third third ya. Fourth was the feathers. That, the actual design is three feathers. Represents hope, faith, chas- charity, charity, uh so I figured [laughing] there's not much space on my ear so I just took the two: hope and faith, and it still kind of ties to the religious aspects of the first two tattoos... Next.

21. Interviewer: Uhm the tattoos and the placement. Is it related in any way?

22. KA: I just didn't want any common spots. Nowadays the wrist is a common spot. Ear is not. Spine, kind of. Uh, neck not so much. The only common one now is the wrist one, nowadays. A lot of people. But all of the others I didn't want it to be the same as everybody else. Ankles, tramp stamps...

23. Interviewer: Uhm do you have any tattoos that are purposely hidden?

24. KA: Not really... That was, when I got it, it wasn't my intention to... "oh let's get it there so no one will see it". Two of them are visible all the time. The spine one no one ever sees. The neck one kind of kind of shows. It was never my intention to hide any of them.

25. Interviewer: Okay. I've heard that some people end up regretting their tattoos. Have you ever felt that way?
26. KA: Uh... not really. When you get it. Like that moment you get it and you get home and see that thing on your wrist or something like that then you're like "why on earth did I just get this thing? I paid like 700 bucks and it's permanent and it's there for everybody to see" but then after that, I think it's just that pain factor. That moment it still hurts and things like that and "oh my god why did I do this?" But I don't regret them at all.
27. Interviewer: Where on your body would you not get a tattoo, and why?
28. KA: My arm. The common area. The face, duh. And lower back [laughing]. Lower back is self-explanatory. Face is just plain dumb. That's something you can never hide. The arm one is such a common spot to put a tattoo, and for a chick it just makes you... butch. Ya it's just those- just those ones.
29. Interviewer: Okay uhm do you think your tattoos send a message to others?
30. KA: Depends who those others are, hey. Some people, probably other students or whatever, or other tattoo enthusiasts would say like "cool tattoo" or whatever but then you have those certain family members that are just not- it's not their vibe. They're like "ugh, prison tattoos. You're a gangster". So it depends on the person. Obviously youngsters or whatever, they will be all "okay it looks cool" and stuff like that and the older generations will just "what have you done to your body?"
31. Interviewer: Uhm ya. What kind of reaction have you received from others? From family, friends, strangers?
32. KA: Friends, well they're your friends. They're obviously gonna like that. Uhm... after like the fourth one I know some friends were like "okay this is your last, hey?" Family- okay my parents, my dad actually didn't give, didn't care that much. My mom was like "okay that's your last one" that was like after the first one. My brother was like "when are you gonna get your next one?" Uh family members, I have quite religious family members and their not, tattoos, earrings, drinking, anything like that. They're very much against that and they were quite vocal about it, to the point where when I got my fourth one, for months, when I spoke to them a go visit them I sat at an angle so they wouldn't see [laughing] and even my mother encourage my mother's like "don't, put on a cap. Put on a scarf. Don't let them see that. You never know what they're going to say". So like the most hate that I got was from family members.
33. Interviewer: Uhm have- has your tattoos ever held you back in your everyday life?
34. KA: Up until this point, no. Probably once I leave the campus... environment, I'll probably, ya. When I go to interviews and things. Probably gonna have to cover them up.

35. Interviewer: Okay uhm do you think it's common for women to have tattoos these days?
36. KA: Well, ya. But, uhm... it seems like they stick with the whole stereotypical wrist, what's that, double infinity tattoos. Uhm bird tattoos, uhm ankle tattoos, dolphins, hearts. My mother has a rose on her ankle. Tramp stamps. They know what it means, yet they still get them. It's pretty common for anybody to get tattoos. It's just... the younger generations find it okay. Everything's- it's just the older generations and their opinions.
37. Interviewer: What is the best tattoo that you've ever seen on a woman?
38. KA: ... That's a tough one... I have no idea. Guess I'm still waiting to see one.
39. Interviewer: Uhm and the worst?
40. KA: ... there's some tattoos that, that are okay on guys. That chicks think, you know, like full- ya full arm tattoos are cool but it should be more like a feminine kind if design. You have these skulls or this like gothic kind of tattoos all over a girl. It's just weird.
41. Interviewer: So the worst tattoo?
42. KA: I just think going too big. Going too big and going too graphic and gothic on a girl. It's just not nice.
43. Interviewer: Mmm... uhm so which tattoos do you think are suitable for women and which are suitable for men? Or do you think that there's no difference?
44. KA: ... Well it obviously depends on the person but I think like small. Small to medium on girls. And like full back tattoos and full arm tattoos are kind of guy things.
45. Interviewer: Mmm. Okay last question. Have you ever noticed any tattoo trends amongst females at this university?
46. KA: ... I've seen a lot of stars [laughing]. I blame Rihanna. A lot of stars and... I've seen quite a few of those- those infinity symbols. And I think it's more like the placement. You see a lot of shoulder- shoulder, arm, wrist, tramp stamps [laughing]. I think it's the relationship between the design and the placement.
47. Interviewer: Mmm okay thanks.

Interview with LH

1. Interviewer: Okay. So uhm tell me about yourself. How old are you? What are you studying?
2. LH: Okay I am turning twenty-five... studying linguistics masters. Doing my Masters in Linguistics.
3. Interviewer: Okay. Anything else. What do you want to tell me [laughs]. Anything interesting...about yourself? Anything.

4. LH: ()
5. Interviewer: Okay. Yes. Is that all? Okay so what made you choose this university?
To study at.
6. LH: it's cheaper than Varsity College.
7. Interviewer: Okay [laughing] any other reasons?
8. LH: Uhm when I applied, I applied for Psych so at the time this was the best,
UWC has the best Psych department in the Western Cape so that's why.
9. Interviewer: Okay uhm why did you decide to get tattoos?
10. LH: I wanted one for a very long time. I didn't know what I wanted.
11. Interviewer: mmm
12. LH: and then my cousin passed away so I decided okay I'm going to tattoo his
initials on my back.
13. Interviewer: Okay. So how many tattoos do you have?
14. LH: Just the one.
15. Interviewer: Can you talk me through your tattoos? Or this one tattoo.
16. LH: I got it==
17. Interviewer: ==When did you get it?
18. LH: Uh. Five six years back I got it. It was just the initials first of all and then
uh two years after, I remodeled it. Uhm he did the LM over and then he
added- he added uh a rose. Ya it was too plain according to me so I wanted
it altered.
19. Interviewer: So why did you choose a rose?
20. LH: I don't know.
21. Interviewer: Don't you know?
22. LH: It's symbolic, you can say, 'cause what does the rose mean? To me it...
my cousin and I were very close so after he died I felt his, I
missed him a lot so I thought I'm gonna carry him on my back. That was
why I chose my back.
23. Interviewer: Oh wow.
24. LH: And... the rose was... a rose is a beautiful- beautiful thing and I wanted to
remember him prior to his death because it was not a... a... it was not a...
he committed suicide so it was not something that you would like to think
about so you want to remember him before the incident.
25. Interviewer: So this tattoo do you consider it to be personal?
26. LH: Yes.
27. Interviewer: Okay so why- why would you say that?
28. LH: Because it's his initials. Nobody knows what it's about until they ask me...

- and I can't say unfortunately or fortunately, I don't know what it is, Logan's, my fiancé's, initials are the same. But I got the tattoo way before I met him so maybe it's coincidental.
29. Interviewer: It is coincidence ya [laughs].
30. LH: Coincidence or maybe it was just meant to be, I don't know.
31. Interviewer: Mmm.
32. LH: It's personal because, it has so much meaning to me.
33. Interviewer: Ya.
34. LH: I didn't just get it because I wanted a tattoo. I wanted a tattoo that has meaning 'cause I have to live with this for the rest of my life.
35. Interviewer: So is there a reason, you- you already mentioned that uhm you wanted to have it on your back is it as a way to carry him.
36. LH: With me, yes.
37. Interviewer: On your back.
38. LH: Yes.
39. Interviewer: Okay uhm==
40. LH: ==Oh and I chose my back 'cause it's under my bra strap so my parents can't see it. So that's another reason [laughing].
41. Interviewer: Okay so it's also also to hide [laughing].
42. LH: Yes. It's not something I want to flaunt. It's not it's not for the world to see. It's something personal, something private.
43. Interviewer: Okay. uhm the tattoo and the placement of the tattoo the location, is it related in any way?
44. LH: No. ()
45. Interviewer: Okay uhm I've heard that some people end up regretting their tattoos. Uhm have you ever felt that way?
46. LH: No. That's why, I always wanted one but didn't know what and I wanted something I know I have to live with this for the rest of my life so I had to be very sure before... I was not drunk when I got it [laughing] so I don't think I'll ever regret it.
47. Interviewer: Okay uhm... so this is more general. Uhm where where would you not- where on your body would you not get a tattoo
48. LH: Face.
49. Interviewer: Your face? Okay why?
50. LH: For obvious reasons. [laughing]
51. Interviewer: Some people like tattoos on their faces.
52. LH: Me personally I think I'm done with tattoos. I'm not gonna get another one.
53. Interviewer: So you're okay with the one?
54. LH: Yes because it was very sore. I don't want to put my body through that

much agony again [laughing]. Especially the last () the rose was very sore. It's on my on my spinal cord so you can imagine how sore it was... so after that I'm cured for any...

55. Interviewer: So you're done?

56. LH: I'm done.

57. Interviewer: A lot of people say that tattoos are addictive but it's not the case for you

58. LH: not for me no definitely 'cause I was supposed to go back for coloring there. I said there is no way I'm going back for coloring there. I'm fine with it just the way it is.

59. Interviewer: Uhm do you think that your tattoo sends a message... to others?

60. LH: People don't understand why I got it. I don't think they will get the message. And it's weird because they don't normally people don't associate people with our expertise to have tattoos. So if they see, especially it's on my back you don't see it every day so when I wear something and you see it people are like "oh my god you have a tattoo" it's so weird sometimes. I'm like "yes, I smoke too".

[laughter]

LH: I'm not a goody two shoes.

[laughter]

LH: Especially in undergrad I got that a lot.

61. Interviewer: Mmm.

62. LH: People like "you are so... I can't understand. You have so much potential. Why do have a tattoo." it's like they are very biased.

63. Interviewer: Mmm.

64. LH: I thought like the day and age we are in now it's not supposed to be that way but I find people still act... weird.

65. Interviewer: So how do you want people to see you? The fact that you have a tattoo. Like do you want people to see you in any way?

66. LH: Such as?

67. Interviewer: Uhm no I just mean that uhm seeing that you have a tattoo do you want people to view you in maybe a positive way like as being part of the- of a tattoo like subculture, or?

68. LH: Definitely not. I guess that I got this for a very special reason so I don't care what people think about it.

69. Interviewer: Mmm.

70. LH: If they don't like me because of it I'm fine with that. If you like me Because if it, it's their problem. I don't really care. It was a personal choice. I didn't make the choice based on what other people might think of me. I didn't take that into consideration at all.

71. Interviewer: Uhm what- what kind of reaction have you received from friends or family or even strangers?
72. LH: They're shocked. Like I said, they don't expect... me to have a tattoo because I'm apparently supposed to be this goody two shoes which I'm not [laughs]. So the bad side comes out when they see the tattoo. They're like "oh you have a tattoo?" that's weird. Especially family.
73. Interviewer: Mmm.
74. LH: They judge you.
75. Interviewer: Uhm do you think that it's common for women to have tattoos?
76. LH: These days yes. I've seen quite a few with tattoos.
77. Interviewer: Okay. Uhm what is the worst tattoo that you have seen on a woman?
78. LH: ... Someone's name... tattooed somewhere. An ex-boyfriend's name Tattooed somewhere. Oh no. That's so weird.
79. Interviewer: And the best tattoo that you have ever seen on a woman? ... It can be anybody?.
80. LH: I don't know. I don't normally look at==
81. Interviewer: You don't you don't pay attention to others with tattoos. Uhm which tattoos do you think are suitable for women and which are suitable for men. Do you think there is a difference?
82. LH: I don't think there is a difference. Not in the day and age we are today. But then again, men won't get butterfly tattoos... and women won't get skulls, unless you're [friend's name] but [laughs]. That's not the point. There's not supposed to be, but there are different things like women will get butterflies or flowers where men won't==
83. Interviewer: == something that's more feminine==
84. LH: == feminine ja. I don't like the word "feminine" but okay.
85. Interviewer: Why don't you like the word "feminine"
86. LH: In that sense. I don't like- I'm a very big feminist, so I don't like the people associating or "this is for women only this is for men only" I don't like that because what we can do- what they can do, we can do much better.
87. Interviewer: Mmm.
88. LH: So I don't like it when people say "ugh that's so girly".
89. Interviewer: Mmm. Uhm have you noticed any- okay, you already said that you don't notice people with tattoos, but any tattoo trends here at UWC?
90. LH: No.
91. Interviewer: You don't pay attention...
92. LH: I don't walk around much anyways.
93. Interviewer: Okay. That's all.
94. LH: Is that it.

Interview with MT

1. Interviewer: Tell me about yourself. How old are you? What are you studying?
2. MT: I'm twenty-three years old. Turning twenty-four in November and I'm doing Masters in Linguistics, second year at UWC.
3. Interviewer: Okay. What made you uhm decide to study at UWC?
4. MT: It was sort of a last minute decision. I initially wanted to go to Stellenbosch, but UWC was the only place that was still open by the time I actually decided to go to University, and it's close to home. That's the only reason. If I had it my way, I wouldn't be at UWC.
5. Interviewer: Okay. Why did you decide to get your tattoo?
6. MT: I've wanted this tattoo for about three years now. Uhm, I saw a similar design on the internet, and I just liked the way, you know, it resonated with me. Uhm, the- the symbol, the words, I just felt myself connecting to it and I always wanted something similar, and then eventually you know, I plucked up the courage to go and get inked.
7. Interviewer: Okay. So uhm what does the tattoo uhm signify and mean to you?
8. MT: Okay so it's a feather. It's sort of disintegrating and then you know it- there are birds flying out of it, with the words "free yourself". Uhm, it just means that you are in the position- you are in a position to always change the circumstances that you are in and you shouldn't let whatever circumstance you are in uhm drag you down. You are always at liberty to free yourself from whatever crappy situation you find yourself in.
9. Interviewer: Okay uhm you tattoo and the placement, is it related in any way?
10. MT: Uhm, no, not really. I mean, with regards to the placement, I think it's very feminine. Uhm and the types of clothing I wear- I like to wear loose types of jerseys, knitted tops, uhm that sort of hang off the shoulder, so I knew that by placing it where it is now, it would always, you know, peek through and I just- I don't know, it just looks very feminine to me, very dainty.
11. Interviewer: So you want people to see your tattoo?
12. MT: I want people to see it.
13. Interviewer: Okay uhm I've heard that some people end up regretting their tattoos. Have you ever felt that way?
14. MT: I've only had it four- for four months. So not really. But I- I'm regretting uh having the words printed so small, because people often have trouble reading the words, and mistaking the word "free yourself" for "feed yourself" or "feel yourself" so not- not really regret, but I wish I had the words printed more clearly.
15. Interviewer: Okay uhm where on your body would you not- not get a tattoo and why?
16. MT: Uhm... I wouldn't get any on my legs, or my lower back, or on my stomach.

- Well I'll probably have one done on my hip bone when- when you know, when I'm skinny enough for it. Ya, and on my arms, like biceps, triceps, none of that. It's very butch.
17. Interviewer: Yes. Uhm can you tell me why you wouldn't get tattoos on your uhm lower back?
18. MT: Okay, that's tramp stamps and it's kind of outdated and you know, what it, I don't know, like who's gonna see your tramp stamp? That's why it's called a tramp stamp 'cause only- you only see it in compromised situations.
19. Interviewer: Well, some people- well it wasn't called a tramp stamp. Someone dubbed it that, so I mean.
20. MT: But I don't like what it means, the way people see tramp stamps. 'Cause if I see someone with a lower back tattoo, I'd think that's really tacky, so ya.
21. Interviewer: Okay uhm what kind of reaction have you received from friends, strangers?
22. MT: Uhm... well my boyfriend's mother interrogated me about it. She didn't really like it, uhm, but she's very closed-minded. Uhm, the rest of my family, uhm they were shocked. I mean I'm the first person in the family to actually get inked. Uhm but those who know what it means to me and those who've actually seen it and looked at it, they say it's very pretty. It's very feminine, very dainty, sort of elegant, I suppose. So ya.
23. Interviewer: Okay uhm so do you think your tattoo sends a message to others?
24. MT: I think tattoos in general send a message. Uhm I remember sitting in church one day I was in someone else's congregation. One lady was standing behind me, she's like "I would never put myself through that type of pain". So I think that when you have a tattoo, you put yourself out there as a type of person who would go and get your body inked. Like you would put yourself through that pain and I think... I don't know, it just makes you a different kind of person to the world, 'cause it's, it's rare that you get people who have tattoos. So when you put yourself out there saying "look, I have a tattoo" I think people see you differently. They see you as this daredevil kind of adventurous type of person. That's what I think. I beg to differ.
25. Interviewer: Okay. Uhm do you think that it is common for women to have tattoos?
26. MT: It is now. I mean, it wasn't before, but a lot of women uhm are becoming more liberal.
27. Interviewer: Ya?
28. MT: Uhm you know sexist ideologies, feminist ideologies, coming to the fore so I think it's okay now. It's common now.
29. Interviewer: Uhm do you think you can be- you can still be feminine with tattoos==
30. MT: ==Yes.
31. Interviewer: ==because it's seen as uh as a guy thing, it used to be seen as...
32. MT: I feel a lot more feminine with my tattoo being where it is. Like I said, the

placement was all about femininity and how, I don't know, I feel like sort of sensual when I have a sweater like just like falling over, you see a piece of my back and you got the ink showing through, so it depends on where you have it done, and whether it's big or small, but ya you can still be feminine. I'm still feminine.

33. Interviewer: Uhm what is the best tattoo that you've seen on a woman?

34. MT: ... Best tattoo I've seen on a woman... I think, Cheryl Cole from X factor UK. She has a tattoo on the side of her hand. I don't know what- what- I don't actually know what it is, but I just like the idea of having a tattoo on the side your hand, so when you sit like this with your, you know, your hand, or your face resting on your hand and you see it, I think it's quite pretty.

35. Interviewer: And the worst tattoo?

36. MT: Oh! The worst tattoos are definitely those tacky tattoos where people draw these incomplete dolphins on their backs. It looks like it's been done in the backyard, and it's like blue-ish green 'cause you know it wasn't done professionally and they draw like these dolphins that look like fish, so ya that's probably the worst I've seen [giggles]. Or those hearts like with the ribbon through it and the word "love" on the inside. Like oh that's just terrible. It's very tacky. Ya.

37. Interviewer: Which tattoos do you think are suitable for women and which are suitable for men? Or do you think that there's no difference?

38. MT: I think there's a big difference. Uhm, for men, it's usually you know the whole full arm, tribal, big skull, big cross type of thing, you know. Females, I don't know, we tend to go for smaller ones, and it's only a very very select few who would maybe have their whole arm tattooed, you know, get a sleeve, or have more than three tattoos. But men can actually go all out. Like they can have their whole arm fully covered and it wouldn't be a thing. You wouldn't like look twice. But for a female to have a full sleeve, it would be something else. So, I think the difference is that men's tattoos are much more out there, much more noticeable, and females, I- I don't know, they would put their tattoos in more discreet places. They wouldn't be as ostentatious about their tattoos as men.

39. Interviewer: So why- why do you think women can't have sleeves?

40. MT: I- It's not that women can't. It's just not common. So if you wanna have a sleeve, then go for it. But like I said, it's just a select few, but I would like to see more women getting sleeves. I think it's really sexy.

41. Interviewer: Uhm have you noticed any tattoo trends among females at UWC?

42. MT: At UWC? Uhm... I know of people with tattoos like in the middle of the

back. I think that's a trend. And a feather thing is going on right now. I mean before I knew, I had a feather, and I know someone else who has a feather behind her ear so I think the feather thing is- it's really happening. I don't- I don't- I can't think of anything else. Maybe the ankle tattoo. It's like also very common.

43. Interviewer: Okay so anything you wanna ask or say?

44. MT: No, I'm good [laughing].

45. Interviewer: Okay. Thanks.

Interview with ND

1. Interviewer: Okay so tell me about yourself. Like how old are you? What are you studying?

2. ND: Uhm I'm 21. Studying BA Sports Science. Uhm I used to be a gymnast, a dancer. Gosh there's more. Uhm, do you want like a...

3. Interviewer: It doesn't matter you can...

4. ND: All around?

5. Interviewer: Mmm.

6. ND: Uhm I worked for the community- for the City of Cape Town sorry and we taught gymnastics in all community centres like Bellville, Ottery, Parkwood and that type of thing.

7. Interviewer: Okay so what made you choose uh UWC?

8. ND: The program of Sports Science. Uhm... the- my old coach came to UWC and he got his Masters in Sports Science and then after that I was just drawn to the course, after research.

9. Interviewer: Okay uhm what- why did you decide to get tattoos?
[Laughter]

10. ND: Uhm I think it started with my grandpa. He actually made his own tattoo, using a needle and pen ink. Ya [laughing] and he scraped I don't know, signs into his hands. He explained it to me. Started scratching himself with a needle and they would blow the ink out uhm on to the scabbing type of thing and it lasted forever. He's like nearly 70 now so it's still there. There's some weird signs on there but he's the main reason why I wanted to get one. Not the way he did it though.
[Laughter]

The professional way.

11. Interviewer: So how many tattoos do you have?

12. ND: I have one for now.

13. Interviewer: One for now. Uhm so can you tell me when did you get this tattoo?
14. ND: I got this in July... Ya I just got- ya after the holiday the weekly holiday we had?
15. Interviewer: Mmm.
16. ND: So I got that. It's been a few months now. What month is it?
17. Interviewer: November [laughing]. So can you tell me what is the meaning of this tattoo?
18. ND: It's my parents' names in the infinity symbol. Just, they are me, I am them. It's- I think it's a spiritual thing. Ya I'm very close to them so I wanted them on me forever.
19. Interviewer: Okay. Uhm is the tattoo and the placement, is it related in any way?
20. ND: I don't think so, no.
21. Interviewer: So why did you choose this specific placement?
22. ND: Uhm this was the least pain () the forearm is the least pain. So I've heard. And...I would've gotten it in a worse place but I wasn't prepared for that so...
23. Interviewer: Okay. uhm... I heard that some people end up regretting their tattoos. Do you- have you felt that way?
24. ND: No, not at all.
[Laughter]
25. Interviewer: Okay where- where would you not get a tattoo? Where on your body?
26. ND: ... Are we allowed to use explicit language?
27. Interviewer: Ya, sure.
28. ND: On my vagina () [laughing].
29. Interviewer: That's not explicit.
30. ND: Some people are sensitive to body parts so that's the one area.
31. Interviewer: [laughing] Okay do you think your tattoo uh sends a message to other people?
32. ND: No, I think, 'cause mine is very personal, so I don't think it would really affect anybody else.
33. Interviewer: Okay. How do you want people to see you? Like, you have a tattoo, so, like do you care?
34. ND: Not at all. [laughing] I really, no. I'm a free spirit.
35. Interviewer: What kind of reaction have you received from others? From friends, family, strangers?
36. ND: With regards to that? Uhm my mom smacked my arm.
37. Interviewer: [laughing]
38. ND: No really [laughing]. Uhm but they're getting used to it, I think. Some people say it's boring to get your parents' names but I mean that's why I said it's a personal thing. But I think everyone's- they say they like it but you can't trust anybody [laughing].

39. Interviewer: Okay. So more general uhm questions now. Uhm do you think that it's common for women to have tattoos?
40. ND: Uhm it depends on the type of woman.
41. Interviewer: Mmm?
42. ND: Uhm obviously the businesswoman, no, because she needs to keep up a certain image, so to say, but I would say it goes on the type of woman that you are.
43. Interviewer: Mmm. What is the best tattoo that you've ever seen on a woman?
44. ND: Oh this is weird. Uhm I was watching a reality show and this girl had this massive dragon on the side of her body. I think I just liked the design and the colors. Ya that was the best I've seen.
45. Interviewer: Okay and the worst?
46. ND: I once saw someone with an onion on their armpit.
47. Interviewer: No [laughing].
48. ND: I'm serious. I've seen it. It was like a red onion on top of it and it had like the fumes coming out of the onion and ya, that's disgusting [laughing].
49. Interviewer: Wow. Which tattoos do you think are suitable for women and which are suitable for men? Or do you think that there are- that there is no difference?
50. ND: No there's no difference at all.
51. Interviewer: Okay. Uhm last question. Have you ever noticed any tattoo trends among females at this university?
52. ND: I haven't paid much attention to the women that have tattoos here. I haven't seen many girls with it. Maybe I'm just not looking, but...
53. Interviewer: Okay so uhm do you have any questions or anything you wanna say before we end this interview?
54. ND: I did ask you why you chose this.
55. Interviewer: Ya.

Interview with RK

1. Interviewer: Okay so tell me about yourself. How old are you? What are you studying?
2. RK: Oh. I'm 23 and I'm studying Industrial Psychology. I'm a final year.
3. Interviewer: Okay uhm what made you choose UWC?
4. RK: Uhm I don't think I chose UWC. Uhm it's kind of just based on like what my father wanted and because I could get my studies paid for here better than I could at UCT.
5. Interviewer: Okay uhm why did you decide to get tattoos?
6. RK: Why? It's difficult like it was trending, I suppose and ya it's kind of once I

- had the first one, I wanted another one and I wanted another one, so there's no specific like starting point, but just because I really just wanted a tattoo.
7. Interviewer: Okay. So how many do you have?
8. RK: I have one... I think I have five.
9. Interviewer: Five. Okay can you talk me through your tattoos from start to finish? Where- When did you get the first one and...
10. RK: Oh okay. So uhm the first tattoo was the one on the back of my neck. I have three stars that I got in grade 10 grade 11, and then I got one on my back, on my lower back area. That was after high school, and then I got one on my side. We actually have- like I have matching ones with my best friend. That was the one- the meaning behind that one. Then I got my initial on my wrist and I got one on my leg.
11. Interviewer: Okay so what do your tattoos signify? What are their meanings?
12. RK: Uhm to be honest with you, like there's no like real meaning behind [laughing] only like- only like one- two of them. So the one on my uhm, the one on my ribs for my best friend. That's like a unity symbol. So like "united we stand" kind of a vibe. And then uhm the one on my leg, it's like a fire lotus. So there's like this whole story behind it. Actually my current boyfriend met me when I was like going through a very tough time and then he came up with that, because I told him I wanted a tattoo and he was "wait I'm really good at finding things" and like the whole symbolization after that. So everything that I've been through through my life but still shining and still being beautiful on top. When you finally like reach the top.
13. Interviewer: Okay uhm your tattoos, and the placement, are they related in any way? Or was it just...
14. RK: Uhm yes. I placed all my tattoos so that, if I had to, I would need to show them. If I had to hide them, I could. So the one on my wrist is exactly where my watch's band would be. Uhm the one on my back, obviously I would just wear a longer shirt. The one on my leg is like lower leg area so if you wore like socks or you wore long pants, it wouldn't be very visible. Uhm the one on my neck as well. It starts just below the collar, so if you wore a collared shirt, that would be hidden away. So everything is placed in such a way so that if I needed to hide it, I could, and also because I didn't know- like obviously the field I'm going into is very corporate and some people are very fussy about stuff like that, so ya. I placed them so that if I needed to hide them, I can.
15. Interviewer: Okay. Uhm I've heard that some people end up regretting their tattoos. Have you ever felt that way?
16. RK: Uhm to be honest with you, I regret only one. And that's the one on my

lower back. But, like, to fix that now, I'm getting more, you know what I mean? So I've made that one and now I actually I wanna fill like maybe half or my entire back.

17. Interviewer: Okay.

18. RK: Just make a big like collage of it.

19. Interviewer: So why do you regret that one?

20. RK: Uhm I think it was- it wasn't even well-researched. It was like impulsive, we decided one day and went to go get it the next day, like that kind of thing.

[Laughter]

We Googled tattoos like that morning?

21. Friend: Ya.

22. RK: That morning, ya.

23. Interviewer: Oh wow.

24. RK: So it was very like- we were very young. We were like 19, so, you know, that's the only one that I- I don't regret it. I know that I can add to it and stuff so I don't really regret it. I do regret- like now I'm like "oh don't let me wear something so low, that it's like out there", kind of a vibe.

25. Interviewer: Okay where on your body would you not get a tattoo and why?

26. RK: On my face.

[Laughter]

On my face or on my neck, because like, I don't know, I just associate that with like gangsterism and it's so hectic when it's all out there like you know? A tattoo is like- for me it's like body art, so it's like to beautify your body, or you get something and it's pretty or whatever and- or it symbolizes something. But if you get something in your neck, on your face, it's like, "now what do you say?" It's not gonna beautify your face. Like what would you think if you had like a giant dragon on the side of your face? It's not pretty [laughing].

27. Interviewer: So ya you said that uhm people associate tattoos with gangsterism, right?

28. RK: Yes.

29. Interviewer: So uhm do you think you can still be feminine with tattoos?

30. RK: Yes, definitely. Like, uhm, I've seen a lot of like, not lady-ladies, but very beautiful women with tattoos and they just like embrace it and they embrace their bodies. So that's actually one of the reasons also like why I- like I like tattoos. I like getting tattoos, because I think that they do add a certain amount of uniqueness to somebody and like I've seen really nice tattoos where people actually look really good with them. Like sleeves- women with sleeves and stuff, and it looks really nice. And then you see women-

other women with sleeves, just depending on what they got. Uhm you know, it differs.

31. Interviewer: Uhm do you think your tattoos uhm sends a message to others?
32. RK: Uhm I don't- I don't think it sends a message as like "I belong to a certain clan" or anything like that. But it's just- people can see what kind of person you are. If you're very conservative or whatever, if you have no tattoos and, but if you're more like out there, more like uhm, how can I say, not- I wouldn't say proud. If you're more like... confident, basically, and you- then ya. It's a sign of confidence, if I can put it that way.
33. Interviewer: Okay what kind of reaction have you received from family, friends, and strangers?
34. RK: Oh we always get the one where they say "oh you're gonna regret that when you're old."
35. Interviewer: Mmm?
36. RK: And for me like, I don't think so. Like I think it would be very cool, in a way like, you know like my grandkids would be like "ha ha Granny's whole back is tattooed" like you know what I mean? like it's- for me it would be cool because I know, like my father doesn't have tattoos and my grandparents don't or whatever, but I think with our generation- like it's a symbol of what our era goes through, or the trends in our era. That will then reflect.
37. Interviewer: Yes. Uhm more general questions now. Uhm do you think that it's common for women to have tattoos?
38. RK: It's become more common for women to have tattoos. It never used to be uhm in the past, I don't think but a lot of girls have tattoos now, like that I've seen. I think it also just depends on, you know, on the person, on the individual.
39. Interviewer: Mmm. Uhm what is the best tattoo that you've ever seen on a woman?
40. RK: ... Oh gosh, this lady had this like half sleeve. Like just under her elbow to just like above her wrist. It was like a rose type of thing, but the color was so nice. It looked like so well done. The shading, that was like the prettiest tattoo I've ever seen. And it's someone I don't even know, because I work uhm in the hospitality industry. We just used to serve her, and that's where I saw her. She has a very nice tattoo.
41. Interviewer: Okay, and the worst?
42. RK: When people get portraits. Like, and I know my one friend got a portrait and the face of the portrait doesn't look anything of the per- like the person and that's a mess up. Like how do you fix something like that? Ya that's like the worst I've ever seen.
43. Interviewer: Which tattoos do you think are suitable for women and which are suitable

- for men?
44. RK: Uhm I don't- like I obviously- men shouldn't get like flowers, but sometimes you can, like depending on what kind or where you locate it or like the colors used in that. Then it would look really nice but I don't think there's a specific uhm kind of tattoo for a man and a specific kind of tattoo for a woman.
45. Interviewer: Uhm have you noticed any tattoo trends among females at this university?
46. RK: A lot of people go for like hearts and like butterflies and that kind of thing. I've seen a few girls with like butterflies on their shoulders and on their feet, but that's it.

Interview with TA

1. Interviewer: Okay. So uhm tell me about yourself. Like how old are you? What are you studying?
2. TA: Uhm... I'm 22 years old. I'm studying B education. My majors are English and Life Orientation. Uhm and ya I'm addicted to tattoos.
3. Interviewer: Okay [laughing]. So firstly uhm what made you choose this specific university?
4. TA: My mother [laughing]. Plain and simple. My mother. Uhm... it was the first and only choice.
5. Interviewer: Okay so you didn't apply at any other==
6. TA: No.
7. Interviewer: == universities? Okay. Okay you say you're addicted to tattoos. So tell me why did you decide to get tattoos in the first place?
8. TA: Well uhm I was grade 8 when I encountered people with tattoos and I was so fascinated that I really wanted one myself and uhm... it was something- I knew it was going to be somewhat painful or whatever but I just wanted- I actually I just wanted one because everybody had one. At first ==
9. Interviewer: == So it was to fit in?
10. TA: At first it was to fit in yes. But then I spoke to my mother about it and... Like I was grade 8, 14 years old and we spoke about it and she said "okay let's go". So my first tattoo is very random and to fit in and- but after my first prick, I was hooked.
11. Interviewer: So tell me how many tattoos do you have now at this point?
12. TA: I have fourteen in total.
13. Interviewer: Fourteen. Can you talk me through each==
14. TA: ==Each tattoo?
15. Interviewer: ==of them? Uhm just uhm when did you get them?

16. TA:

Okay. Okay so the first one was the lower back. It's a tribal and uhm like I said that was random. I walked into the tattoo parlor, looked at the designs on the wall, chose one, and decided to get that one. My second one is uhm on my foot. My star sign, a scorpion. So that's- that's where things got real to me. Like not to put anything on my body. Yet I don't regret my first tattoo because I really liked the design. But the second one is my star sign. And then the third one is uhm my neck behind my neck. It's uhm a tribal design that forms a heart with uhm a T in the middle for my name because I love myself [laughing]. Ya and uhm after that so I added on stars around that because it looked so blah so I added stars to that. Then uhm... what was the next one. Let's see the back oh ya this was the next one. The rosary with "no regrets". This I got after me and my boyfriend broke up for the first time and uhm "no regrets" was just I have no regrets because we broke up and I loved him. I don't regret anything and I live my life according to this as well. To have no regrets in life. To see it as a learning curve and a life lesson. And the rosary is because I'm Anglican and we- we have rosaries and stuff. And then the next one was... ya, my mother's name on the side right on top with her birth date because I love my mother and then a flower and leaves with that because she loves flowers and stuff and then after this one I got let's see uhm... what was that... after this one was... uhm... I think it was this one. On my ankle, "*mon amie*"... it means "my girlfriend" in French. Me and my best friend we- we got the exact same tattoo one the same place so that's- and a friendship symbol. So that is for our friendship. And then uhm after that one I got uhm "life goes on" on my chest. Me and my boyfriend we got back together, rekindled, after that, two years later we broke up again for final and so I got this one "life goes on" on my chest with a heartbeat because life really does go on. It didn't stand still after the breakup because I was heartbroken wadawadawada so ya like that one "life goes on" and then I got uhm inca lilies on my side under my mother's name because inca lilies is my mother's favorite flower. I got that and down till on my leg that is- and that one is extended as well, made it bigger, and uhm I got my mother's name here again, on my wrist because there's a heartbeat in your wrist as well so- and I really love my mother so I put her name here, but I actually wanna cover up this- the first one to make this side look as one and not three different tattoos so I wanna make it one so I'll get that covered up okay and then the music note==

17. Interviewer: == Was that your last one?

18. TA: ==because I love music. No [laughing] uhm because I love music and I'm actually gonna start studying music because I wanna teach music as well which is part of- I'm doing teaching but I don't wanna be an English teacher

- or a Life Orientation teacher. I wanna teach music and sports and that kind of thing so I love music so this is a treble clef and the bass clef that forms a heart with the love of music ya and then I have a quote on my back that says uhm “my body is my journal and my tattoos are my stories” and that is really the truth because all of my tattoos is a story. Even the first one is a story because just getting the first one whatever so uhm that concludes my tattoos.
19. Interviewer: Okay okay so you’ve already told me what the meanings of the tattoos are... uhm... Okay if you have tattoos any tattoos that are purposefully hidden... why did you put it somewhere people cannot see? Are there some tattoos that you==
20. TA: ==there are no tattoos that are purposely put there to==
21. Interviewer: == hide
22. TA: == like for my own... No. No. Nothing like that. I just choose a place where I feel is appropriate and meaningful to me and then whether you see it or not, it doesn’t bother me.
23. Interviewer: Uhm I’ve heard that some people end up regretting getting their tattoos. Uhm have you ever felt that way?
24. TA: No. Not about one. Just the reason why I wanna cover this one up is because I wanna make this one but I don’t regret getting it at all.
25. Interviewer: Okay so where would you not get a tattoo on your body?
26. TA: On my vajayjay [vagina] [laughs].
27. Interviewer: Okay.
28. TA: And, wait, there and my calves. I won’t put a tattoo on my calves. I won’t go lower than my thigh, and uhm in my neck and my face. I won’t tattoo there. That’s it.
29. Interviewer: Okay. Uhm so why? Why would you not tattoo your calves or your...
30. TA: Because I love my legs and by tattooing my legs it would take the focus== [interruption]
- Okay uhm I won’t tattoo my legs or my calves because I love my legs and uhm... it will just take the attention off the legs and to the tattoo [laughing] and we’ve all established that my calves are my focus point probably but anyway- and in my neck, it’s too... gangster, if I can put it like that and I’m a female and it won’t look very appealing... not that I care what people think. It’s just... not feminine to tattoo the neck or the face. Yes.
31. Interviewer: Do you think your tattoos uhm sends a message to others?
32. TA: If it does, I would want it to send a positive message.
33. Interviewer: Mmm?
34. TA: Because I don’t have tattoos that encourage people or tell them I’m this or that or whatever. Like if they ask me about my tattoos, I will tell them what it means and then if it influence them positively, by all means.

35. Interviewer: How do you want people to see you? Like, you have these tattoos. Do you...?
36. TA: First of all don't judge me for my tattoos because my tattoos don't make me who I am. I'm still a human being, I still have feelings, I'm normal, I feel pain, whatever so don't judge me by my tattoos. Like uhm the old religious aunties and *oomies* [uncles], they will always say "*nee in die bybel se die en daai*" [no in the bible they say this and that] whatever. "Tattoos are a sin" whatever, but really tattoos... if you know your Bible, and to put scriptures to tattoos, even when- where- on God's thigh there was a note on his thigh and it doesn't say in the Bible that he wrote it with a pencil or a koki. It was carved in his thigh, which means it's also a form of tattooing. So uhm I don't want people to judge me so I don't judge them. The way they dress, or whatever they feel like doing so don't judge me on my tattoos.
37. Interviewer: What kind of reaction have you received from others? From friends, family, strangers?
38. TA: Oh... different various reactions. Uhm firstly they will see the tattoo on my hand or wrist or chest and then they will ask me about it and then ask me how much tattoos do I have and then I will say fourteen and then will be like "[gasp] what? You have fourteen? [gasp] wow! Let me see." And they are always excited to know more and curious like "does it hurt here?" "is it painful here?" "how does it feel?" "how long did you sit?" and- so they are always curious and excited. Never negative towards...
39. Interviewer: Okay. Uhm so now I'm just gonna ask a few general questions. Uhm do you think that it is uhm common for women to have tattoos?
40. TA: Lately yes. Ya I think it is because a lot of people get them. Even if it's just one but they do have, even if it's hidden and people don't know about it but I would say it is common.
41. Interviewer: What is the best tattoo that you have ever seen on a woman?
42. TA: *Yoh...* that's a... I've seen loads.
43. Interviewer: Just one.
44. TA: Okay one tattoo that stands out and would that I would want myself also is uhm probably a sleeve. And the sleeve is not just a whole lot of tattoos whatever. It- it tells a story. It's different tattoos that come together as one. So I must say the sleeve.
45. Interviewer: What is the worst tattoo that you have seen on women?
46. TA: Uhm ya the worst one I saw was a tattoo on this girl's forearm and it was her boyfriend's name [laughing] and they broke up so she still has that tattoo and not only because it was his name but it was badly done. Looked like it was backdoor or something, so that was the worst tattoo I saw.
47. Interviewer: So you won't get someone's name tattooed on you, a boyfriend or...?

48. TA: I will. Like say for instance my ex-boyfriend. Say I got his name tattooed, then... it's a tattoo I got in the moment right there then coming back to the "no regrets". It's- it- he was a part of my life for a certain amount of time which means I loved him that much that I tattooed his name on me and that will last forever which means I have no regrets and so I won't regret tattooing his name. But unfortunately we didn't come to that point where I did that, but in the future if I do get into a serious relationship or whatever and I feel that I really wanna tattoo this person's name on my body, then I will do it, so there's no hiccups about that.
49. Interviewer: Which tattoos do you think are suitable for women and which are suitable for men? Or do you think that there is no difference?
50. TA: Uhm... Mostly I think there's no difference. However, you do get tattoos that are more suitable for guys, like uhm... like for instance... uhm actually not but like like heavy heavy... uhm what's the word.. like skulls and and and uhm knife piercing hardcore stuff. I think that's more suitable for men. However, if a lady gets it, I won't have a problem with it because it's their choice... But ya I think it's more suitable for a guy than it is for a lady.
51. Interviewer: Uhm have you noticed any tattoo trends among females at this specific University?
52. TA: Uhm... firstly, I just come to campus and go home. I don't [laughing] I don't look around because it will just distract me and will lead me into temptation [laughing]. However uhm I do- I think I do notice that, like a lot of people have, uhm like dream catchers and flowers and feathers and that that type of thing. It's like soft nature, "oh help me lord", type of stuff.
53. Interviewer: Yes.
54. TA: Dream catchers yes and- and uhm ya names maybe of parents I've noticed a lot like in my class also so ya that soft kind of things.
55. Interviewer: Okay so uhm that was the last question.
56. TA: Okay.
57. Interviewer: So before we end off, are there- is there anything else you wanna say, or ask, or...?
58. TA: Uhm... not really. Just that tattoos are awesome. And go for one, if you don't have one.
59. Interviewer: [laughing] Okay thank you.

SUN

Interview with AO

1. Interviewer: Okay uhm tell me about yourself. How old are you? What are you studying?
2. AO: Well, I'm twenty-one. Soon to be twenty-two. I'm studying BSc Molecular Biology, so I wanna be a forensic analyst. So ya. Do you wanna know more?
3. Interviewer: Uhm why did you decide to get tattoos?
4. AO: Well, my first one I decided because nobody thought that I was gonna get one. Nobody saw me as the kind of person that would do something like that because I was quite conservative and stuff, and I just wanted to show people "well you know what? I can also be a bit unpredictable" so... I got it. But I also got a- I saw my cousin's friend has one and I was like "I also wanna get one" so I just decided to do it.
5. Interviewer: Okay. How many tattoos do you have?
6. AO: I have four.
7. Interviewer: Four? Can you talk me through each one? Uhm what is it? What does it signify?
8. AO: Okay uhm my first one I got when I was in Matric. It's on my- kind of on my side. It's uhm my... {sign} in Chinese. I'm Pisces so it's in Chinese. My second one is on- kind of on my ribs. It says- it only says Jeremiah uhm 11 verse 29. Uhm it's the verse that kind of got me through my first year of varsity and stuff. And then my third one is an abstract uhm symbol of a phoenix but it also has the first letter of my name in it. And then my fourth one says- it's in Afrikaans so it says "*soet slaap sonder sonde*" 'cause it's one of the lyrics of my favorite band, one of their songs. But it's like a song that symbolizes my- what I'm going through at the moment.
9. Interviewer: So what is your uhm favorite band?
10. AO: Fokofpolisiekar.
11. Interviewer: Ah, okay [giggling].
12. AO: Ya.
13. Interviewer: Cool. That's so awesome. Like uhm having Afrikaans tattoos.
14. AO: Ya.
15. Interviewer: I'm fascinated by that.
16. AO: Ya, not a lot of people have. Everyone goes to English, 'cause everyone understands English, so it's- usually when people ask me what- what it says uhm, like I say- I tell them in Afrikaans and they would be like "what does it mean?" and I'm just like "well can't really explain it to you because you have to listen to the song" so it doesn't have the same meaning in English as it has in Afrikaans. So ya.
17. Interviewer: Okay. Uhm your tattoos and the placement, is it related in any way? Or did you just choose random spots?

18. AO: I just choose random spots. The first one uhm I chose because I wanted it on my lower back but the tattoo artist said that everyone sees it a tramp stamp, he says. So I was like “nah I don’t wanna be classified as that”. He uhm suggested that I get places that’s not really like uhm common- on common places. So I try to choose uncommon places and where I see not a lot of people have them.
19. Interviewer: Mmm.
20. AO: So ya. My fourth one though, uhm... it is uhm related because I wanna like see it every day and remind- get reminded of what I’m going through and not go back there ever again and stuff like that.
21. Interviewer: Wow. Uhm I’ve heard that some people end up regretting their tattoos. Have you ever felt that way?
22. AO: Not at all. I- I sometimes I forget ‘cause of the placements of my tattoos, I forget uhm I have them. So usually when I look at them, I’m like “okay cool. I remember these”. But I’m not like- I don’t regret anything.
23. Interviewer: Mmm. If you have tattoos that are purposely hidden, uhm why?
24. AO: Well [giggling] some of them was because my dad didn’t know uhm I got tattoos. He was quite uhm he didn’t like the idea. He was against it. And my mom was the one that knew so we had to like kind of uhm choose places so that he doesn’t notice them. But he found out eventually so he’s cool with it now. But I don’t want- I don’t- I don’t have tattoos for people to notice them, so that’s why uhm the ones that are hidden- ‘cause it’s for me. It’s not for anyone else to notice them. It’s not to draw attention to myself.
25. Interviewer: Ya. Where on your body would you not get a tattoo and why?
26. AO: Uhm well, on my lower back because I don’t wanna be classified as a tramp stamp and everyone thinks oh if the girl has it there she wants to show off her tattoos and stuff and that’s not me. So I won’t get one there.
27. Interviewer: Uhm do you think your tattoos sends a message to others?
28. AO: Uhm I don’t know. I think uhm I think people see it in a negative way sometimes like uhm “look at that girl”, “she’s not- she’s not very- she doesn’t care about her body” and stuff like that. I don’t think it’s like a message like uhm a positive- positive way, or anything. It’s just like “oh that girl has tattoos”.
29. Interviewer: Okay uhm what kind of reaction have you received from family, friends, strangers?
30. AO: Uhm... from family, they were quite intrigued. Uhm but they- like I said, they never thought that I’d be the one to get tattoos.
31. Interviewer: Mmm?
32. AO: Uhm friends are always like “wow”, “what does it stand for?” “are you

getting your next one?" Always wanna know more and uhm they come- especially to- like because I have tattoos and not a lot of our friends has tattoos. They would like to get uhm info and ideas and stuff. So but strangers, especially older people, doesn't like the idea of me having tattoos cause I- I went to a psychiatrist once and he also- he preached to me about my tattoos because he doesn't like the idea of tattoos. He's very old-fashioned. So but I had to tell him my parents were quite open-minded about it. I thought my dad was gonna be the one that's gonna freak out but he was like "okay well it's your body. Do what- do with it what you want. I'd rather know about them than you hide- hiding them."

33. Interviewer: Mmm.

34. AO: So.

35. Interviewer: Okay. Have your tattoos ever held you back in any way?

36. AO: Hm mm. Not at all.

37. Interviewer: Not at all?

38. AO: No.

39. Interviewer: Okay uhm do you think you can still be feminine with tattoos? Seeing that it's such a guy thing or it used to be a guy thing in the past?

40. AO: Yeah I think so because I'm still feminine with my tattoos. I'm still a girly girl. Ya there's some aspects that's changed, but it's not because of the tattoos. I'm still feminine after my after my tattoos. Uhm I changed because of uhm my friends and how they influenced me but I'm still- in a way I'm still feminine with my tattoos so I still- I have feminine tattoos so I guess it kind of- you can decide if you have one tattoo or two tattoos or if you want like bulky ones but I don't think you're femininity changes with your- or it changes your femininity because you have them.

41. Interviewer: Okay so what would classify as a feminine tattoo?

42. AO: Like, I would see this as a very feminine tattoo [pointing to wrist tattoo]. I don't think guys would use this script or anything as a tattoo and uhm like my- my star sign uhm is very feminine. I don't think guys would uhm use them so I think like what I would classify as like guy tattoos is really bulky and very out there, you know? So ya.

43. Interviewer: Uhm what is the best tattoo that you've ever seen on a woman?

44. AO: Hmm. I don't know. I don't- I've seen a lot so there's not really. I can't think of one at the top of my head, though, like- I like uhm her [pointing to friend] heart tattoo. Like that's nice for me so there's not for me a best one though.

45. Interviewer: Mmm?

46. AO: So ya.

47. Interviewer: Okay and what is the worst tattoo?

48. AO: The worst I've seen. I don't- I don't really like- uhm on women but I- I don't- I think like to cover your whole body is not very- I don't- I don't like that. Uhm but like the worst tattoos I've seen overall is like uhm with no purpose like when you uhm uh crossbones or a skull or whatever. I don't see a point in getting that, especially on your calves. Why would you get a cross bone on your calf? I don't see the point in that, but I guess it's up to everyone but...
49. Interviewer: Ya. Uhm which- so which tattoos do you think are suitable for women and which are suitable for men? Or do you think that there's no difference?
50. AO: I don't think there's a difference. I uhm I only like writing. There's a- I think there's a specific type of script that would look better on a woman than a guy so- 'cause I've seen someone with the same tattoo as me on my wrist, but hers is very like, bulky and stuff and I don't like that. It doesn't uhm fit her body or anything so I think there's no- you can have tattoos, whatever you want to but like if you uhm do writing, the type of script, uhm, it differs for men and women. Like sm- not small but like very delicate writing would look better on a woman than on a guy.
51. Interviewer: Okay ya that's true. Uhm have you noticed any tattoo trends uhm at this university?
52. AO: Haha well uhm very tribal tattoos sometimes and sleeves. I've definitely seen some- and then the infinity sign, 'cause after Revenge everyone's getting infinity signs so ya. That's what I've noticed.
53. Interviewer: Okay. Uhm no you have any questions or anything you want to say before we end?
54. AO: Hm mm. I'm cool.
55. Interviewer: Okay thank you.

Interview with AR

1. Interviewer: Okay. Uhm tell me about yourself.
2. AR: Okay I'm [name]. Uhm I'm twenty.
3. Friend: Vegetarian.
4. AR: I'm vegetarian [laughing] for eight and a half years now. Uhm ya, vegan next year. Very excited. Uhm I'm studying BA humanities, I'm second year now. Uhm... studying- I'm gonna major in Psychology. Uhm I have two brothers. Both older. One is 28, the other one is 21. Uhm, mom and dad uhm... what else can I say? I have red hair uhm ya I don't have much else to say. I'm considered to be goth or emo. Whatever those other labels are, uhm, which I'm not. Uhm ya, I love tattoos [laughing] and piercings.

5. Interviewer: Okay so why did you decide to get tattoos?
6. AR: Uhm since I was younger, I've always loved them. Like I remember seeing like celebs and like people from my family with tattoos and like "oh my word this is so awesome" like I'd love to just be covered in tattoos. Like it's always been like, kind of a need almost? Just to like cover my body with ink. I know it sounds weird, but like I just always like felt like you have to decorate your skin. Like, it's there, like it's a beautiful canvas. It's "enhance it" kind of thing. So I don't know, I just fell in love with the idea of just getting everything covered with like beautiful imagery and sometimes meaningful stuff, but not all the time, ya.
7. Interviewer: Wow, so how many tattoos do you have?
8. AR: Only three.
9. Interviewer: Okay. Uhm can you talk me through your tattoos from start to finish?
10. AR: Okay. My first one was a sugar skull on my back. It's basically just a skull and it's like very colorful and like little patterns on its face. I call him Frank. Uhm- [laughing] actually my mom named him Frank. I don't know why but ya uhm I got that last- in my first year. Uhm I was only allowed to get tattoos after I was 18, and then my mom was like "No. Twenty-one." And then one day I booked in Stellenbosch, 'cause I was here and I was like "Mom, I booked my tattoo for next week" and she was like "oh my God." I was like "ya" and she's like "okay, this is happening." I was like "yes" and then she was like "okay" then she was very chilled with it and then a month later she got a tattoo in the same place. She got a crucifix and like roses for her three children so uhm... ya, so I got this one basically cause uhm I don't know, basically just my love for skulls and like everything that symbolizes death. I know it sounds really morbid. It's probably why I'm called goth but I don't know, like death is just something that I've always, not been inclined to, but like, the idea of it is something that I've always thought about. Uhm I don't know, it's something very beautiful to me. Like the soul and all of that stuff, like I don't know so I've always been- ever since I was younger... I don't even remember how old I was but skulls- always loved them. So I thought okay like my first tattoo should be like something that I've always appreciated. So it's kind of like symbolic of death and... ya so I just thought getting a pretty skull. And then uhm my second one was this moon. Uhm I got this cause the crescent moon basically means new beginnings and rebirth and whatever and then I got this, when did I get this? September-September last year. So I got two in one year. Uhm... there isn't really a reason why I got the rebirth thing but I think I always like Paganism and for them like they obviously worshipped all the elements. Didn't worship but they- and they felt like the moon was their source of energy and it was very

mystical and held all their- the powers of the earth and blah blah blah. So uhm- I don't know I just wanted to get something that like, I kind of appreciate it, so I just thought like cool crescent moon. And then uhm I got this one a few months ago. It's like a gypsy sugar skull type thing. Uhm I just got this one 'cause again the whole skull thing like I just want my whole body with skulls basically and I saw this image in grade 8. It was like a picture. Like a black and white picture. And I just fell in love with it and ever since then I kept the picture. I took the actual original picture I had to the tattoo place. I was like "do something cool with this". Uhm I don't know, I just think she's so pretty and beautiful and kind of like what death is to me. How I view it. Something awesome, ya. That's a mouthful [laughing].

11. Interviewer: So the tattoos and the placement, is it related?
12. AR: No, not at all. I just got the first one on my back 'cause my mom would be less mad. It would be==
13. Friend: ==Tell her about your front. You wanted a tattoo...
14. AR: Oh, yes. Okay so I wanted- I forgot about that. I wanted this skull over here, on my chest and then uhm obviously my mom wasn't happy about it and then I went to the tattoo place 'cause she was like "okay it's fine" and I booked it. This was uhm... beginning of last year, and then uhm the tattoo artist actually was like "how old are you?" and I was like "oh, well, 18..." and he said uhm "that's very young to be getting a tattoo in a place that's so like obvious." Can't remember what else he said. It was ya something like uhm "normally girls will only get chest tattoos once they have like full sleeves" and- so he was very anti it and it kind of turned my mom against it so when I came here I was like okay I don't mind putting it on my back 'cause to me placement doesn't mean anything. 'Cause eventually I want everything obviously... inked, so, ya placement isn't really... anything.
15. Interviewer: Okay... uhm so you don't- okay that's fine. Uhm I've heard that some people end up regretting their tattoos. Have you ever felt that way?
16. AR: Not at all. I don't think I ever will. And that's like a huge thing. A lot of people say "oh you're gonna regret it one day" and I just think, I don't know, I try to live my life with no regrets. I know that sounds so clichéd, but it is true, like in that moment of time, I love that image, and it meant something so I think I will love it even 50 years down the line, you know? Ya.
17. Interviewer: Uhm... where on your body would you not get a tattoo and why?
18. AR: Uhm the only place would be my face, I think, ya. Well just because==
19. Friend: ==She's not Lil Wayne.
20. AR: Ya [laughing] uhm I just think- I don't know, there's just some- I would just

never get it on my face. Pain wise, beauty wise, I just- no, not on my face, no [laughing].

21. Interviewer: Uhm do you think your tattoos sends a message to others?

22. AR: Uhm not directly. Maybe, maybe to like maybe my younger cousins. Showing that just because their moms and uncles and aunties are very against it, like they don't have to be so, I don't know how to like put it, like uhm they don't have to like close their minds off to a specific type of how you should look. So like I'm kind of- I wouldn't say I'm the only one like me in my family, okay I kind of am cause I'm very like open and free spirited about everything, so I don't know it's kind of like showing them indirectly like you can be who you want to be even if you've lived a sheltered life and ya, I don't know if that makes sense.

23. Interviewer: Ya it makes sense. Uhm... what kind of reaction have you received from others?

24. AR: Oh god. [laughing] uhm I would say, more negative than positive. Parents, fine. Obviously they preferred if I wouldn't ink up my whole body, but uhm they know that getting a tattoo doesn't affect who you are inside. It has no relation at all. Uhm but a lot of my friends that I've made in varsity are actually very- they have so much to say. Like, uhm like what [friend's name] was saying kind of like "how would you look in your wedding dress?" This wasn't what [friend's name] was saying. This was other people. Uhm "think about how you'll look in your beautiful white wedding dress. The pictures, how horrible they'll look, with all your tattoos showing and uhm what your children will think of you" and all that stuff and regarding the 'children' thing, I just- my response is always "I would raise my kids to not be so closed off on one idea of beauty like, you know, just because you have a couple of tattoos, you can still be a good person, like, you know what I mean, like it just- there's no relation to a tattoo and a- how you are as a person.

[Interruption]

But also like the conservative aunties and uncles. They're always like "ugh look what she got now" but I- it doesn't bother me at all. I get it because I love it and that's all that matters to me, so...

25. Interviewer: Okay so has your tattoos ever hampered you in any way? Held you back?

26. AR: No. I think maybe in the sense that like people see me and then they're like "oh okay no, this isn't my type of person". But like just because I have a couple tattoos, I wear black, my hair is a different color, like I'm not like this rough person. Like I'm actually like one of the most sensitive people on the world- in the world [laughing] but like- so I think maybe in that regard. But ya like not so far in terms of jobs or anything uhm... ya.

27. Interviewer: So do you think you can still be feminine with tattoos?
28. AR: Mmm. Definitely. I just think- like I said, a tattoo doesn't mark who- like your spirit and your- your uhm personality. Like I can still be feminine- or I can be masculine if I want to be, you know. I just- like I said, it has no relation at all.
[interruption]
29. Interviewer: Uhm do you think that it's common for women to have tattoos?
30. AR: Uhm ya. Like [friend's name] said, more common now definitely. Like, everyone. You don't have to- I think before, it used to be like if you're in a certain... uhm I don't know how to – like a type of person would only get a tattoo, like into heavy metal music or a biker or- all this kind of serious types==
31. Friend: ==and also if you're, not poor, but if you like went to jail and stuff. But tattoos are actually very expensive these days. It's not just for a certain- like people think if you're a dropout and stuff like that, then you get tattoos. Tattoos are expensive.
32. AR: Ya. So, kind of- I forgot what I was gonna say now. Uhm... ya so it's not like a specific niche of people anymore. I mean everyone, like from a poppie to a preppy person to anything. Like, they can all get tattoos. Like they all do. So it's like, every second person I meet literally has something. Like, or want to get something. And they see my tattoos and they'll be like "oh what do you think of this idea" and I'm like "oh, I don't know. It's your body [laughing]. I can't tell you what you should get". That kind of thing. Even my friends that always said they'd never get tattoos, now they're like "okay cool. A tattoo. That's a nice idea". Like my mom. Back in the day, she would never agree to a tattoo. But now, because it's so common, like, it's not like... that big a deal, I think.
33. Interviewer: So the uhm- ya, what's the best tattoo that you've ever seen on a woman?
34. AR: Uhm... I can't say like a woman specifically but like, if I'll see- I know right now I'm in love with watercolor tattoos, and if you've ever seen like==
35. Interviewer: ==Yes.
36. AR: There will be like a lion and it's so beautiful, so like- and I can't think of like a specific person. I love Angelina Jolie's tattoos. I think they're so cool. Oh and Megan Fox's one of Marilyn Monroe, but I think she got it removed... that was cool... ya I can't think of a specific... I love my mom's tattoo.
37. Interviewer: Mmm.
38. AR: Ya.
39. Interviewer: Why?
40. AR: 'Cause I think, she kind of got it in the same place as me, so I don't know,

kind of a shared thing for us. And also the three roses is like me and my two brothers and like the crucifix. Ya obviously I'm not religious but she is, and that's like how she got through a lot of things so because it's meaningful to her, I love it. So ya.

41. Interviewer: And what's the worst tattoo that you've seen on a woman.
42. AR: Ooh uhm...
43. Friend: Snookie.
44. AR: [Laughing]. Uhm... I can't really- like obviously I can see things that I wouldn't get but like they will love it, so I- you know what it mean? I can't really- maybe I'd say a bad tattoo would be like not well done. Like uhm maybe the dragon only has one eye and like it shouldn't be like that. That kind of thing, so- but if they love that dragon, I wouldn't get it 'cause maybe I think that it's not something I would get but they love it so, to them it's not bad, so it shouldn't be bad for me. I don't know, ya [laughing].
45. Interviewer: Okay so uhm which tattoos do you think are suitable for men and which tattoos are suitable for women?
46. AR: I think there's no line, and there shouldn't be a line at all. Like I mean my older brother wants to get a lotus flower on his calf and I think that's awesome, like... but other people would be like "ugh a flower on a guy, that's a bit weird". But, whatever. Guys can get flowers too. I can get a cool dragon on my whole back too like so I just- there's no line. There- maybe there is to some- in some people's minds but there shouldn't be.
47. Interviewer: Mmm.
48. AR: Ya so I wouldn't like at a guy's tat and be like "oh that should be on a girl" or vice versa.
49. Interviewer: Okay. Uhm last question.
50. AR: Mmm.
51. Interviewer: Have you ever noticed any tattoo trends here at this university?
52. AR: At this university? Well definitely the crucifix. Like the two- like the very simplified one like. You know that? Infinity sign... uhm definitely like uhm a cool quote they would see on Tumblr and then they would get it tattooed... like- again, clichéd stuff. Uhm... I've seen a few skull tattoos here as well. Quite a few. Mostly on guys though, definitely. Like, I don't think I've seen one girl with a skull==
53. Friend: But I think they came here with them==
54. AR: ==Ya I don't think they got it here==
55. Friend: ==It wasn't part of the trend.
56. Interviewer: Oh, okay.
57. AR: Ya or like- where like one word like "faith" or "love"... that kind of thing.
58. Friend: Or Afrikaans lyrics==

59. AR: ==And definitely a feather, ja.
60. Interviewer: Really?
61. AR: Afrikaans lyrics. Seen a lot of that. Die Heuwels Fantasties.
62. Interviewer: On women or on men?
63. AR: Women. Girls. On the back, here and on the front here. A lot.
64. Interviewer: I would like to interview someone with that.
[laughter]
65. Friend: [another friend's name] has got that.
66. AR: Ya. Ya. That then obviously the feather thing breaking off into a group of sparrows. Oh my god, ya. That's, ya. That's probably what I've seen a lot.
67. Interviewer: That was the last question so do you have anything you wanna say or...
68. AR: Uhm... lets, uhm... oh ya, another thing people always say like "oh it's such a permanent decision to put on your body" but then I've got this whole thing where like your body is- your skin, like- nothing's permanent. Like, we all die and like get soaked back into the earth and then you're done. Like, no one's gonna look 100 years from now "oh they got that tattoo and it was permanent. But like our bodies. They all disappear, kind of thing. They disintegrate. How is that permanent, you know?"
69. Interviewer: Mmm.
70. AR: So you should only worry about your soul and how you treat other people. That's what people should worry about. Not tattoos. Ya. That's all I have to say [laughing].

Interview with AD

1. Interviewer: Okay so uhm tell me about yourself. How old are you? What are you studying?
2. AD: I am 21 years old. I am studying BA Humanities. I am hoping to go into the political part of life. I would like to work in Parliament. Ya, I wanted to join the military, but then you- there's all different qualifications and stuff that you have to do before you can get in there... ya. Uhm I'm from Plettenberg Bay... well, I'm from Paarl and I've lived in Plett for ten years. We've just recently moved back to Paarl. I have a sister, two parents... ya, and a dog. His name is Riggly [laughing]. I uhm, I don't think uhm there's anything to me. I'm just there. Like, I'm not really anything... special [laughing]. I'm not insecure. I'm just like, there. Like I don't really follow fashions. Like I'm not really like when it's hippy time, I'm not really like a hipster. I'm just- not boring but, just there. Ya.
3. Interviewer: Okay. Can you tell me why you decided to get tattoos?

4. AD: I've only got one.
5. Interviewer: Okay?
6. AD: And I wanted one for a very long time but then, uhm, the- in last year, in the April holidays, I went home and the first night that I was back, that- like I got back the day and that evening my dad had a heart attack, and it was quite serious. So uh- like my mom called the ambulance, whatever and then as they got to hospital then his heart stopped... and they managed to resuscitate him or I don't know what you call it, but uhm then they- in Plett they didn't have the facilities, like a heart unit or whatever so they had to take him to Mosselbay and in the ambulance it stopped like 8 more times. So they keep- kept having to- but my mom never told us about he had a heart attack. She just said that he's not feeling well. And then uhm when he got there he was in ICU for 3 days and we couldn't speak to him. Well we could see him but uhm so they basically just put a stent in and that worked and... I don't know, it was just a really tough time. Like you never expect something like that to happen to you like you always hear "heart attack" and you never know how serious it actually is like you have no idea and uhm I think that was just so close to losing someone, and that just meant like- and after that I realized that anything that happens like you get o- like you can get over it like it does pass. So my tattoo over here says "this too shall pass" and like with anything, it happens and where- when it's in the moment you must enjoy it, and when it's bad, it's not forever... ya.
7. Interviewer: Okay. Uhm... so your tattoo and the placement, is it related to each other?
8. AD: Uhm... it's- it's close to my heart, but that's not really the important part. It's just that it's out of sight, like I don't want any tattoos that are visible anywhere on my body and it's right over here, it's quite- and also apparently tattoos on the side like there- that's where you put very important- like those spaces are reserved for like important things, I don't know.
9. Interviewer: Okay.
10. AD: Ya.
11. Interviewer: Where did you hear that?
12. AD: I read it on the internet actually, 'cause I saw like different mean, different- what different parts, not mean, but like, ya and also 'cause it said this one was the most sore place, and then they said that if something means that much to you, you will just get it anyway, whether it's sore or not. You know, sensitive.
13. Interviewer: So why don't you want uhm why do you want your tattoos to be hidden?
14. AD: 'Cause I don't think it's very acceptable to a lot of people and well people accept it but they do like judge you on what you- especially like our- like if I get married one day, I wouldn't want it to show in my wedding dress or I

wouldn't- like I'm not ashamed to tell people I have tattoos but people that don't know me. I wouldn't just like them to see something. Even if it's tiny over here or over here like, that's not for me. Ya and it some- the tattoo is for me, not for anyone else. Like, it's a very personal thing. Like people don't even know that I have it. Like, I sometimes don't even know that it's there but I know but I don't, at the same time.

15. Interviewer: Okay. Uhm I've heard that some people end up regretting their tattoos. Uhm have you ever felt that way?

16. AD: Never. I haven't felt that way because I don't think my- the experience that I had, that made me get the tattoo, it's something that I'll never forget or, it's not an emotion also that I'll ever regret. Like- not that I'm happy that I went through all that, but it's made me stronger as a person. Like when little things happen to me, it's not... the worst. 'Cause worse- worse has happened and worse can happen... so... ya. And also, it's made me a bit more comfortable with my body, 'cause obviously when you get a tattoo then people ask you, you just lift up your top. Now I'm quite free [laughing].

17. Friend: She lifts up her top everywhere.

18. AD: Not to show people my tattoo, that's not why, but I just like flashing, it's fun. Not on campus, like to my friends. Like these two gay guys, they just love it. Like, I don't think the one is straight... but, uhm [laughing] ya, so I don't really care. Well I do, but not really.

19. Interviewer: So where on your body would you not get a tattoo and why?

20. AD: Anywhere visible I would not get a tattoo. As I said, I don't want- like also, like- I think about the future and like when I get a job or, ya you can cover it up, but you can't always wear long sleeves and you can't always do this or do always to that and- like I said, if you get married or if you have children or, you don't want all those things to be- well, in my view. Like I- I'm fine with it on everyone else. You can wear it wherever you want but... not for me. Ya.

21. Interviewer: Okay.

22. AD: And both of my parents have tattoos as well so... they weren't too unimpressed when I got mine. It was very com- impulsive... because, uhm- like I've always wanted it, but then just my friend came down and then I phoned my mom half an hour before and I told her I'm getting it and then I told her where and everything. It was fine. And I told her why, so.

23. Interviewer: Do you think that your- your tattoo sends a message to others?

24. AD: No. That's impossible. 'Cause nobody sees it or really knows the whole story behind it so... ya, and I wouldn't want it to send a me- like, it's mine.

25. Interviewer: Mmm.

26. AD: Ya.

27. Interviewer: Uhm what kind of reaction have you received from others? From family, strangers, friends?
28. AD: Uhm, from family, because they all know what happened, like close to me, they're okay with it, but if I had gotten anything else, I would have been like- they wouldn't have been too impressed. 'Cause I got a nose ring and only my one gran would have been fine with it. The others are like "oh ya". You know they want to say something bad but they won't and a nose ring isn't even anything big. So if I got a tattoo of like, a sun on my ankle, they wouldn't have been too happy. My parents would have been fine with it but not like aunts and stuff like that.
29. Friend: Conservative.
30. AD: Ya.
31. Interviewer: Uhm... has your tattoo ever held you back in any way?
32. AD: No. It's... impossible.
[laughter]
33. Interviewer: And uhm can- do you think you can still be feminine with a tattoo?
34. AD: Definitely. My tattoo is very feminine. And I don't think it's what you put on your body. It's how you present yourself in any case. Like you could be like the butchest person with a flower on your- flowers everywhere. You won't be feminine, like that's im- that's not really... realistic. Like, no. And I don't think the stuff you put on your body... changes, like- it can change people's perspective of you as a person but it can't make you now... I don't know how to say it, but any more feminine or masculine. Doubt it. It depends on what obviously you have with it.
35. Interviewer: Yes.
36. AD: Ya.
37. Interviewer: Okay do you think that it's common for women to have tattoos?
38. AD: It is quite common. It's more common now 'cause you see it everywhere. I don't know, just like in Stellenbosch, everyone has tattoos. Like so many people. Like- and it's the silliest things, and they've all got it... like... ya.
39. Friend: It's a trend.
40. AD: Ya, it's a... it's a trend. And it's really bad 'cause it's like infinity signs and sparrows- swallows, and feathers, and you know those- and they say it's got meaning. It doesn't have meaning. Like infinity, what? That's not even a thing. Don't even start with me.
[laughing]
41. Interviewer: Uhm==
42. AD: ==But I guess that's their thing.
43. Interviewer: Okay so other tattoo trends that you've seen at this university?

44. AD: Uhm a lot of guys like it on the back of their legs.
45. Interviewer: Okay.
46. AD: Like here on their thingies, calves... uhm.
47. Interviewer: And on women specifically?
48. AD: A lot of girls have it on their wrists or here. I've seen like tiny like little writing here at the back. Lot of Afrikaans girls.
49. Interviewer: Mmm?
50. AD: Ya.
51. Interviewer: Uhm what is the best tattoo that you've ever seen on a woman?
52. AD: ... On myself. It's probably my own.
53. Interviewer: Okay.
54. AD: [laughing] Like I'm not trying to be- anybody would, that has like tiny little... dainty, like, that would probably- I haven't seen one specific thing that I'm in love with. But anything tiny. Very small. Dainty, that's me.
55. Interviewer: Okay.
56. AD: Ya.
57. Interviewer: And the worst that you've seen on a woman specifically?
58. AD: Gosh, I've seen quite a lot of bad ones in Stellenbosch. Like, there's a lot. Like, what's that girl's name... uhm at your res? That girl that came and sat outside with us? Uhm... [name]'s friend? [name]'s roommate?
59. Friend: Oh uhm I can't remember her name.
60. AD: Her tattoos are like funny. Like they're all supposed to like go, go with each other or whatever but they're not nice.
61. Friend: Like a compass and==
62. AD: ==A com- like she's trying to do too many things. It's like the death of her grandpa plus her mom's anniversary==
63. Friend: ==and her boyfriend...==
64. AD: == plus her boyfriend's birthday and like- you know, you don't need to- it's not a family gathering on your arm. Like, you can just relax, you know?
[laughing]
So...
65. Friend: Also Snookie's one man.
66. AD: Oh my gosh. My one- okay not my one friend. Actually I don't like her at all. Uhm she's got this one that says "faith", but it goes "fai" and then it's like a heartbeat. And like your heart keep- like, is kept alive by faith or some dumb shit like that.
67. Friend: Tough love or something.
68. AD: Ya something like- like all this ratchet shit, you know. And like, she's got a -like I mean if you're getting three tattoos in one year, there's something wrong with you. Like... that's- you can't have so much meaning in one

year. Like I don't know if everyone gets it for meaning, but those are quite permanent decisions that you're making. You don't just get a tattoo, 'cause then it starts saying faith with a heartbeat and funny things start happening. [laughing]

69. Interviewer: Okay so which tattoos do you think are suitable for women and which are suitable for men?
70. AD: I don't like demons for women.
71. Interviewer: Okay?
72. AD: Like tough, like incredibly inked up stuff. Not for women, like... I don't-no. Also with women, I prefer like words, letters, just anything I- again, dainty. Not like... so much detail and all that, like. And then I think, the dainty on a guy is a bit funny, like that's a bit silly.
73. Interviewer: Uhm ya that was the last question, actually. Uhm do you wanna say anything before we end?
74. AD: Oh, no.
75. Interviewer: Or do you have any questions?
76. AD: I don't really have any.
77. Interviewer: Okay.
78. AD: Thanks.



Interview with DK

1. Interviewer: Okay. Uhm so tell me about yourself. How old are you? What are you studying?
2. DK: I am twenty-one. Turning twenty-two this year. I'm studying Law. Fourth year. Not final year though. Didn't go so well. Uhm... I come from Overberg side of the world, Gansbaai, {Shark Town}. And, what else is there? I'm one of a twin. She's not here. She's in Cape Town studying graphic design. And... what else should I say? Anything else? Nothing?
3. Interviewer: It's up to you.
4. DK: One of four- one of four kids, sisters. Not fun always. Uh what else is there? Uhm... I'm really short [laughing]. I'm a midget. Uhm I'm Afrikaans... and... what else? What else is there? Uh I really love good red wine.
5. Interviewer: Mmm [giggling] don't we all [giggling].
6. DK: I don't know what else then. There's a lot of things, but ya. What else can I tell you?
7. Interviewer: It's fine. Uhm tell me, uhm, why did you decide to get tattoos?
8. DK: Uhm I'm quite a Jesus freak. So which means I'm really faithful. It kind of

sounds weird when I say it that way but that's my way of saying it. Uhm so I've wanted it for a while and I've never really been scared of the idea of something being permanently on my body. I can't get big things, unfortunately, 'cause that would have been much better, 'cause that's more work of art. But uhm I couldn't get big things because if I'm gonna sit-practice Law then they're quite picky about what you have on your body. Ya, so that's irritating but, oh well, life's choices. So uhm I got something based on Corin- 1 Corinthians 13 verse 13 which says uhm "for three things will last in life: faith, love and hope, and the greatest of these is love" which is faith, love and hope. There's a dove on the back of my neck.

9. Interviewer: Oh wow.

10. DK: And the "faith" is a cross on my ring finger because it's the first commitment in my life and the permanent commitment in my life. The heart on my sleeve, for obvious reasons. Be vulnerable. Love as much as you can, which is what Jesus did. And then, the "hope" is at the back of my neck 'cause I can't see it, but I'm pretty sure it's still there, but it is there. So I know it's there, so.

11. Interviewer: Uhm can you- okay know it's fine. You already talked me through your tattoos.

12. DK: Sorry [laughing].

13. Interviewer: So, no [laughing] it's fine. Uhm the tattoos and the placement- oh ya you told me that also.

14. DK: Sorry [laughing] it's very much- they're very much put in- I got them all at one time because it's cheaper and it's- it was cheaper. It was definitely cheaper that way. But also, they were meant to be all together so I got them all one time.

15. Interviewer: Okay. Awesome. Do you have any tattoos that are perma- purposely hidden?

16. DK: ... They're not hidden but they are put on certain places also because it would be easy to hide them if I have to. So obviously you can wear a ring there, or long sleeve shirts, I would wear my hair down when I don't need to show this but in this point in my life I don't need to hide it, so... it's okay. But it does it- does it- does 'cause a lot of shit with people that are too drunk and too atheist to understand so [giggling] they don't get happy with that mark on my finger. They get really mean to me as well. Someone once told me "fuck your god". That wasn't nice.

17. Interviewer: What?

18. DK: People get very passionate about these things.

19. Interviewer: Wow.

20. DK: Ya. They weren't very happy. But it's okay. I got it so I have to take the

- punches with it.
21. Interviewer: Ya. Wow. Okay, so uhm I've heard that some people end up regretting their tattoos. Have you ever felt that way?
22. DK: No. I used to- I used to draw these with a pen on my hands for a very long time 'cause I wanted them very badly.
23. Interviewer: Mmm.
24. DK: So I also got used to it and the bird I never see so... not really a problem [giggling]. But no, I don't think I'll ever regret it. And also, I've put them in places that's- it's not on my stomach that's gonna sag, or my boobs that are gonna sag, or my bum that's gonna sag, so, it's fine. Probably being very inappropriate. I'm sorry!
25. Interviewer: No! No! [giggling]. Not at all. Uhm where on your body would you not get a tattoo and why?
26. DK: Oh! Tramp stamp. Definitely never. Definitely not. I'll probably have- I'd love to have a massive tattoo on my back, that would go down there, but I'd never have a tramp stamp. I'd never get anything on my boobs, 'cause that would be terrifyingly sore. Or I won't get anything just straight down my spine 'cause that's sounds like torture, as well. And nothing really in my private spots, no. I think that's fine, but other than that... uh I've seen tattoos everywhere and they all look pretty good, but the way they were done were also pretty good, so, I don't know. I have- I have a friend that actually has a skeleton of a unicorn's head on her leg which is pretty freaking awesome so, I- ya, basically just private spots are a no-go for me.
27. Interviewer: Okay.
28. DK: And tramp stamps.
29. Interviewer: Ya [laughing]. Uhm do you think your tattoos sends a message to others?
30. DK: ... Ya, 'cause whenever someone asks me uhm about my tattoos, or if someone ever asks me what they're about, I do explain it in a very nonchalant way, and they're like... they're half like- it's- it's- it's quite a big thing and I'm just like "[shrugging]" and also for people that don't like talking about religion, it half opens a door to them, which could be a good or bad thing. Most of the time it's pretty cool. People are very like "that's pretty cool", "that's pretty" like... I don't know, because I remember the scripture as well so people are very like "wow that's pretty cool", I'm like "[shrugging] not really". I don't know. It's definitely a conversation starter.
31. Interviewer: Ya.
32. DK: That's what I would say, ya. Definitely.
33. Interviewer: Uhm what kind of reaction have you received from family, friends and strangers?
34. DK: My mom loves it. But my mom is very- very chilled about a lot of things.

Uhm, I have three sisters, and actually my twin sister gave me the money to do it as a birthday present, so she loves it. My dad, not so much, but he's very old school Afrikaans, so he just sees it as "this was invented in prisons, and you're putting it on your skin" so uhm he's kind of like it doesn't- but he can't do anything about it anymore. I got it, told him afterwards. He was like "I'm not very impressed, but it's your body. You can do with it whatever you want, probably. Just don't get pregnant." That's all he said.
[laughter]

So he doesn't- he's a- but he does like the message behind it.

35. Interviewer: Mmm.

36. DK: So- then strangers, like I said, people that like starting arguments about religion. Love to see it and then react to it. People that are religious, adore it, because they love the cross especially, 'cause it's very tiny. Little baby cross. So uhm so they like it. And then, ya. My friends like it, but also people mostly expected it from my sister 'cause she's the artsy one, but she's also a graphic designer which means she's very much detail-orientated and perfectionist, so the only thing she'll get is down her spine, because if there's something wrong with the position of it, it would be her spine that's fucked and not the tattoo. So, people were quite surprised when I got it, but I've always wanted them, so I've been drawing on myself for years and years and years so it's one way of () cancer, I think, so.

37. Interviewer: Uhm uh I would like to come back to the fact that you said uhm uh religious people adore your tattoos.

38. DK: Ya.

39. Interviewer: Like, I would expect==

40. DK: ==Not Christians, though, but all religious people. Like, just religions overall.

41. Interviewer: Oh.

42. DK: Ya.

43. Interviewer: Okay, 'cause normally they would- I would assume that people would think "no, it's- it's not okay for you to have tattoos."

44. DK: Okay well there is- there are some Christians that would go like "no, it's against the Bible", but then they don't know their freaking Bible because it's not. It says in Ephesians that "thou shall not pierce yourself and throw blood over dead people" because that was a- that was a Pagan- Pagan religion.

45. Interviewer: Mmm?

46. DK: And that's what the whole scripture is based on. It's not to- not to worship

god- other gods besides the Christian god. And that's what it's about. It's not about- because then if that scripture says you're not allowed to get tattoos then you're also not allowed to get any piercings whatsoever. So people misinterpret it entirely, which I love correcting them on, so then they're just dead quiet, and then they go back to their Bibles or they Google but religious people like Muslims, uhm, any African culture, they love it 'cause they're like "ah, cool, spiritual, awesome. Enjoy what you can. Be free when you can." They're just chilled. And happy clappy Christians obviously like "ah that's pretty cool." So they're just like "that's pretty cool. I like it."

47. Interviewer: [Giggling] Uhm so have your tattoos uhm ever held you back in any way?
48. DK: No. Not yet. But I haven't applied for a job. So, I've not had that problem yet. Uhm no, not at all. Not yet.
49. Interviewer: Mmm.
50. DK: But I don't have anything uhm... offensive on me.
51. Interviewer: Ya.
52. DK: So, that helps, I think.
53. Interviewer: [Giggling] Ya. Uhm... do you think you can still be feminine with tattoos?
54. DK: Yes! I think you can be even MORE feminine with tattoos. I've seen tutorials where women that's gone through breast cancer, where they get re-implants, then they get uhm beautiful tattoos on their breasts to make them still feel beautiful.
55. Interviewer: Oh, wow.
56. DK: It's gorgeous. It's like flowers and stuff, and uhm no I think it's gor- I've seen so many- I've watched so many... women with tattoos. There's one woman with the moon cir- uhm cycle on her chest and there's women with different- like even make-up. You can tattoo make-up on you, which is also pretty cool and no definitely not. It's not necessarily- I mean, wait. It was the- the tattoos started in uhm prisons and then also it was tradition for- 'cause in I think it was in Japan or China () was quite like- they weren't looked down upon, as far as I know. It was quite a- it was quite a like cultural thing, and they used to get uhm a mark, a tattoo for each lover that they had, which was quite feminine, I think, 'cause it's like your lover and you're like "we had this moment together" and stuff, so I don't think it was ever- it's not unfeminine to me, no.
57. Interviewer: Okay. Do you think it's common for women to have tattoos these days?
58. DK: I think it's common to have tattoos overall these days. It's not as frowned upon as it was back in the day. And it's much easier to get, as well.
59. Interviewer: Ya.
60. DK: Uhm more uhm available, so ya it's definitely for women much easier to

get tattoos. Actually, I've seen more women with tattoos these days, but small ones, tiny ones, than men, 'cause also we're living in Stellenbosch, which is a very Afrikaans traditional culture that's amongst us, and most of their families will not believe in it, and they will- like their dads or moms would drive them out of varsity if they got one, so I think that's also a big issue in Stellenbosch, especially, but ya, I think it's normal for girls to get it now.

61. Interviewer: Mmm. Uhm what is the best tattoo that you've ever seen on a woman?

62. DK: Ooh! Uh ya I actually know exactly which one it is. Uhm it was this American girl. She's tiny, tall, dark hair, gorgeous big-featured face, uhm and she's, as I said, really small but tanned, and she had this this compass on her shoulder but it was like big. It had these- it went like these uhm triangles and it was aligned in every triangle, and then it was red and white, red, white, red, white, which looked pretty cool. And then there was these patterns going out on her shoulder and it was based on uhm when her parents got divorced, they used to move around a lot and basically she travels now the entire world and to her it's almost like home is everywhere.

63. Interviewer: Oh.

64. DK: Ya so the com- oh, it's gorgeous. I actually- I actually get goosebumps when I think about it, but that was definitely one of my most favorite tattoos I've ever seen on a woman.

65. Interviewer: Okay and what is the worst tattoo that you've seen on a woman?

66. DK: Tramp stamp. A tramp stamp at the back. Ugh, it's gross. And it was in color. I think it was in- I think it was in pink. I can't even remember. No, it was really bad. No, no, no. () actually.

67. Interviewer: [Giggling] Uhm which tattoos do you think are suitable for men and which are suitable for women? Or do you think that there's no difference?

68. DK: I don't think there's any difference, but I would say which I like on men.

69. Interviewer: Mmm?

70. DK: Which look good, it's more the tribal type tattoos. Or any- any uhm... detailed tattoos. Like shading, and like faces, portraits that are done well so that's pretty cool, and ya I don't think there's specifically- but guys with traditional tattoos, but you must have muscle to have those, so more like a Dwayne Johnson type of thing. That- that's pretty- it could- it looks good, it looks good, but otherwise it's fine. But I have a joke. I've heard once of a guy that- he had a rough night in Vegas, and my friends passed him in the airport, and he was sitting like, with his head in his hands, and when he lifted up, he got a Batman tattoo around his eyes. That would count one of the worst I've ever seen as well, actually, ya. Poor thing. Drunken nights.

71. Interviewer: Uhm last question. Have you noticed any tattoo trends at this university?

72. DK: Yes! Yes, uhm, there's obviously the cross at the back of the neck. Uhm, the cross overall. Uhm ya at the back of the neck, most- most I've seen. And then also uh a horse shoe. Uh birds flying. A feather. Uh what's the other thing? Sorry if I'm speaking like I'm judging, but... uhm what's the other one? It's uhm... what's the other one man? Uhm a arrow. Ya, I have a friend that has a arrow, but hers is based on a very beautiful thing. It was about her parents getting divorced so it's basically you have to pull an arrow backward to shoot forward. So that was quite nice, but arrows, lots of them. And uhm ya, I think that's about it.
73. Interviewer: Mmm.
74. DK: Ya.
75. Interviewer: Okay.
76. DK: Girls have a lot of those. A lot. And butterflies.
77. Interviewer: [Giggling] Uhm before we end, is there anything you want to say or add or...?
78. DK: Ya. If anyone ever asks if a tattoo is sore, do not- don't- yes, it is sore. It's a needle going into your skin thousand times per second. Of course it hurts a bit. It gets- it's not- it's more sore for other people, or for- different strokes for different folks, but shit. It is sore. It's a needle going into your skin.
79. Interviewer: [Giggling]
80. DK: So yes, that's the last thing I would add.
81. Interviewer: Okay, thank you.
82. DK: I get that question so much.

Interview with GJ

1. Interviewer: Okay so tell me about yourself.
2. GJ: Uhm I'm a first year education student. Uhm I come from a very strict family so it was difficult for me to get my first tattoo but ya I got two now so... uhm... what else?
3. Interviewer: Uhm... what made you choose this university?
4. GJ: I think it was because my sister was also here uhm it was like- okay she was here so I'm just gonna go there also and it was- everybody kept talking about this University of Stellenbosch. I was like "I wanna go there" so...
5. Interviewer: So where are you from?
6. GJ: Uhm Saron.
7. Interviewer: Saron, okay. Why did you decide to get tattoos?
8. GJ: Well my first- I decided to get my first tattoo 'cause like- just like the

- butterfly, I'm still searching for myself and the day that I find myself I'm just gonna be like a butterfly you know like, a whole being, ya.
9. Interviewer: Yes. And then the second one?
10. GJ: Uhm the second one is more like without faith, hope and love I can't do anything, so I just decided to get that 'cause it meant a lot to me.
11. Interviewer: Okay that two tattoos uhm... When did you get your first tattoo?
12. GJ: Uhm August month last year.
13. Interviewer: And your second one?
14. GJ: About two months ago I think. A month ago, more or less, ya.
15. Interviewer: Okay, so what- okay you already told me what they signify so anything else about their meanings?
16. GJ: No. Not really.
17. Interviewer: Okay. The tattoos and the placement, where you put it on your body, uhm are they related in any way? Did you choose that tattoo to be==
18. GJ: ==No. Not really. It was just, "it's gonna look better here and it- it's gonna look nice here" so that's the only reason I put them there.
19. Interviewer: Okay uhm your tattoos are on your back?
20. GJ: Yes.
21. Interviewer: And it's hidden, right?
22. GJ: Well, it depends on what I have on. Like if I have a strappy top on, you can see this tattoo but you can't see this tattoo so it's hidden most of the time.
23. Interviewer: Okay. Is there a reason why?
24. GJ: Yes. I still have to get a job one day, and as a teacher, it's- it won't be appropriate for me to have tattoos.
25. Interviewer: Okay. Uhm I have heard that some people end up regretting their tattoos. Have you ever felt that way?
26. GJ: No. My tattoos mean something to me and I don't think I will ever regret it.
27. Interviewer: Uhm where would you not get a tattoo on your body and why?
28. GJ: On my feet. I heard it's super sore and my sister got one there and she almost cried so I'm like "no, never" and I think here [pointing behind her ear] because this is also a bit sensitive here and everybody can see it. I would like to keep my tattoos uhm covered.
29. Interviewer: Mmm? Okay. Uhm do you think that your tattoos send a message to others?
30. GJ: Not really. Like if they know who I am, then they obviously know what the tattoos mean to me, but I don't think like, most people say you have tattoos you're like gangster and stuff like that but I don't think it's like that. It's a butterfly, a butterfly.
31. Interviewer: Uhm would you want people to see you in any kind of way...
32. GJ: Because of my tattoos?
33. Interviewer: Yes.

34. GJ: No. I- like, I am who I am with or without my tattoos.
35. Interviewer: Mmm. Uhm what kind of reaction have you received from family, friends, strangers?
36. GJ: Everybody loves my tattoos. So it's not like "woah". Like it's not a big deal, especially because everybody I getting tattooed now. So my family was like okay. They knew about the first one so they were chilled. And I got the second one without they- without their knowledge and when I got back home and they so it, they were like "okay it looks nice. But why- why didn't you tell us?" and I was just like "okay 'cause I didn't wanna like- I knew you were gonna say no" and they were like "okay no it's fine. You've got it now. What can we do?"
37. Interviewer: Mmm. Have your tattoos ever held you back in any way?
38. GJ: No.
39. Interviewer: Uhm... Do you think- this is a general question but do you think that you can still be feminine with a tattoo? 'Cause some people see tattoos as not feminine.
40. GJ: I think you can still be 'cause it depends on what you've got or what you have and what your tattoos mean to you. Like if I'm gonna get a gun, obviously it's not gonna be that feminine anymore. But if it's got a meaning to me, then yes, I'm still- it's still gonna be like feminine.
41. Interviewer: Do you think it's common for women to have tattoos?
42. GJ: Yes. Yes.
43. Interviewer: Uhm what is the best tattoo you've ever seen on a woman?
44. GJ: Uhm, I'd say, it was an infinity sign with the name of what her child's name would have been and the date that they lost the baby.
45. Interviewer: Oh wow. And what was the worst tattoo that you've seen on a woman?
46. GJ: Uhm, now I've got to think. The name of a boyfriend. Ya that's the worst.
47. Interviewer: Why? Why do you think that?
48. GJ: Because what if they break up? And now she's got like- this one girl in Saron, she's got an infinity sign with her boyfriend's name. Uhm he doesn't have her name on his- on his body. Like, they were supposed to go together but then they didn't have enough money and she got the tattoo alone so now she's stuck with his name on her arm and what about if they break up? So that's like, really stupid.
49. Interviewer: [laughing] Which tattoos are suitable for men and which tattoos are suitable for women?
50. GJ: I don't think there's a difference between what's suitable and what's not because it all depends on what the tattoo means to you. Like if a guy also wants to get a butterfly- okay, I think- I know it would be funny, people would think differently, but it all depends on the meaning it has to you.

51. Interviewer: Mmm. Last question. Have you noticed any tattoo trends at this university?
 52. GJ: Tattoo...?
 53. Interviewer: Trends.
 54. GJ: Uhm... I think so. Most people get like the cross, or the infinity sign so that's the main thing in Stellenbosch.
 55. Interviewer: Okay. Uhm before we end off, is there- do you have any questions?
 56. GJ: No.
 57. Interviewer: Thank you.

Interview with JS

1. Interviewer: Okay. So tell me about yourself. How old are you? What are you studying?
 2. JS: Okay. I'm twenty-one. I'm studying BSc in Biodiversity and Ecology. Uhm it's my last year this year... and... I'm from Bloemfontein. Uhm ya what else do you want to know?
 3. Interviewer: That's fine. Uhm why did you decide to get tattoos?
 4. JS: Uhm well mine's- mine's pretty personal. Uhm some stuff happened in first year, and it just- it symbolizes, like, strength, for me, so that's why I actually got a tattoo.
 5. Interviewer: Okay uhm so uhm can you tell me what does the tattoo mean to you? What is it?
 6. JS: Ya. Okay so uhm it's a tree and I chose a tree because it like- trees are pretty strong 'cause they can weather any storm. Uhm- and I mean they- they stay up forever so that was like what represented strength.
 7. Interviewer: Mmm.
 8. JS: Ya.
 9. Interviewer: Okay and then uhm the tattoo and the placement, is it related in any way? Or did you choose the uhm spot as a random spot?
 10. JS: Well, no. I chose it like by my ribs 'cause it's close to my heart.
 11. Interviewer: Okay.
 12. JS: My reasoning [giggling].
 13. Interviewer: And then uhm is the tattoo maybe purposely hidden?
 14. JS: Yes.
 15. Interviewer: Yes. Okay so why is it?
 16. JS: It's more like for me to know about. Not for everyone to see.
 17. Interviewer: Ya. Okay==
 18. JS: ==It's- because it's a personal tattoo. It's not really something I'd like people to see. It's more like for me.
 19. Interviewer: Okay and then uhm... I've heard that some people end up regretting their

- tattoos. Have you ever felt that way?
20. JS: No. Uhm I thought about mine for a while. Uhm and I mean... I've never really wanted a tattoo and when I thought "okay, this is what I'm going to do", I went for it. And I haven't regretted it. I've had it for- this year will be the fourth year I've had it.
21. Interviewer: Okay so how hold were you when you got it?
22. JS: I was turning nineteen.
23. Interviewer: Oh okay.
24. JS: Ya.
25. Interviewer: Okay and then uhm where on your body would you not get a tattoo, and why?
26. JS: On my face [laughing]. Uhm... and uh places where I guess is really visible. Mainly because these days when you go for a job interview or- you need to sort of hide things.
27. Interviewer: Ya.
28. JS: Or you look scary cause of your tattoos or I don't know. Most- some people are against it so- or are just a bit closed-minded about these things.
29. Interviewer: Ya.
30. JS: It's like, I wouldn't really get it like somewhere where it's visible, unless it's small. Like a small little thing, but...
31. Interviewer: Mmm okay so what kind of reaction have you received from family and friends? People who have seen it?
32. JS: Uhm... everyone's actually uhm... really impressed [laughing]. I think mainly 'cause it's pretty detailed and they always ask where I get it- where I got it. Uhm and it's not- I guess it's not something that uhm can be easily... detailed.
33. Interviewer: Mmm. I understand what you mean.
34. JS: I'm not sure, uhm but most people like it. The ones that have seen it. They think it's pretty cool [giggling].
35. Interviewer: Okay. And then uhm... do you think you can still be feminine with tattoos? Seeing that it's a- it used to be seen as a guy thing?
36. JS: Uhm ya. I think you can definitely be- still be feminine with tattoos. I mean there are more feminine tattoos and there are more, like, guy tattoos.
37. Interviewer: Mmm.
38. JS: And you can always dress it up or dress it down. Even when you like- if- if it's visible. I don't know. Uhm I mean I know lots of people with tattoos that are actually VERY feminine. Uhm I don't think it's actually male biased anymore, so.
39. Interviewer: Ya. Okay and then- so do you think that it's common for women to have tattoos these days?

40. JS: I think so.
41. Interviewer: Mmm.
42. JS: Ya. I know quite a few people that have tattoos. Quite a few women that have tattoos.
43. Interviewer: Ya. And then uhm what is the best tattoo that you've seen on a woman?
44. JS: Mmm... Uh while I was doing my tattoo, there was a girl that had uhm... like a personal quote of hers, but written in Arabic. She had it down her spine. It looked really cool.
45. Interviewer: Wow.
46. JS: It was very pretty. Cause Arabic's like a really pretty written language.
47. Interviewer: Ya. Okay and what is the worst tattoo that you've seen on a woman?
48. JS: Uh... I'm not sure. I think... things like... I don't- I personally don't like color tattoos. I don't- I don't know why but uhm... some people also have like butterflies and they're all colored in and I find that weird. I don't personally like those [giggling].
49. Interviewer: Okay so why don't you like color tattoos?
50. JS: I'm not sure. I mean- I guess it's like a... preference.
51. Interviewer: Mmm.
52. JS: Uhm my mom's got a color tattoo.
[Laughter]
I- I don't know. It looks weird for me to have... I don't know.
53. Interviewer: Okay.
54. JS: The ones I've seen are like badly done.
55. Interviewer: Mmm.
56. JS: I find. Ya. And the people that do have it, regret it, so.
57. Interviewer: Okay. So which tattoos do you think are suitable for men and which are suitable for women? Or do you think that there's no difference?
58. JS: I don't think there's a difference.
59. Interviewer: Mmm.
60. JS: I think it all depends in you as a person. If you prefer like, I don't know, dragons [laughing] or I don't know. I don't think there is a difference. I mean I've seen men with like swallows and most people say that's a girl tattoo. But I mean it looks nice on a man ().
61. Interviewer: Okay and then last question. Uhm have you noticed any tattoo trends at this university?
62. JS: Trends... uhm... not really. I mean most people have wording.
63. Interviewer: Ya?
64. JS: Uhm I haven't really seen people with the same kind of image tattoo, but

lots of people have words like in a circle on their back, or written down their foot, ya.

65. Interviewer: Okay and then uhm is there anything you want to say or ask before we end?
66. JS: ... No [laughing].
67. Interviewer: Okay. Thank you.

Interview with JB

1. Interviewer: Okay. Tell me about yourself. How old are you? What are you studying?
2. JB: Uhm I'm twenty-two and I'm doing uhm my Bachelors in BA Language and Culture. Uh my major- I finished my one major last year, which was English Studies, and this year I'm doing German and Visual Studies. Uh ya [laughing].
3. Interviewer: Okay so what made you choose uhm this university?
4. JB: Uhm I think it's because I have the most uhm exposure to it. My mother was here, and my dad was at Wellington, I think. So Stellenbosch is kind of a central university and I think I came here on one of the opening days and I was just like "I want to be here" so ya [laughing].
5. Interviewer: Okay so uhm why did you decide to get tattoos?
6. JB: You know honestly I- I don't remember. I got my first one when I was eighteen. Like, I just turned eighteen. Uhm I- I have absolutely no idea. It wasn't a kind of a "I'm gonna get back at my parents" thing 'cause I never showed them. Uhm I really don't remember. I just- but as soon as I got the first one, I fell in love with it. I was like "I need more. I will have more". And it's- it's very- I like the whole art thing about it, so... special and everything.
7. Interviewer: How many tattoos do you have?
8. JB: I have six [laughing].
9. Interviewer: Okay. Can you talk me through your tattoos from start to finish?
10. JB: Okay. First one is on my stomach, and it's a treble clef. And I got that because I- like music is a really big part of my life. Not that I {physically} play any instruments or have, but it's just really important to me. Uhm second one I got on my leg. Uh and it's a- should I explain exactly what it is?
11. Interviewer: Ya you can.
12. JB: Uh it's a heart sewn in uhm into my leg and the needle's kind of stuck there. I will admit that was a really impulsive one. I just- I looked at the picture I was like "I want that this" so I just kind of went so there's no significant meaning to it. Uhm and then I got a Red Hot Chilli Peppers quote on my

- arm. And a Dr. Seuss quote on my back. And then last year October I went and I got the Alice in Wonderland on my arm and this on my arm, so.
13. Interviewer: Okay so what quote do you have on your back?
14. JB: It's a Dr. Seuss quote.
15. Interviewer: Oh, Dr. Seuss.
16. JB: Yes [laughing].
17. Interviewer: Okay so what do the tattoos mean for you? Each one, like.
18. JB: Yeah, yeah. Like I mentioned, some of them were just impulse. Like "I just want this now". Uhm and the other ones. I don't know. Especially the quotes. There's a lot of- it's- it's things that kind of stick in my head that I constantly think about, just I guess I apply to my life. The Alice in Wonderland thing is- it's the most prominent thing I can remember from when I was little. And I've always wanted something from when I was a child and then when I saw the two pictures, I uhm- my artist put them both together, and I was like "yes, this is perfect" so, definitely my favorite. Uhm, ya I honestly- I can't remember why I started, like, the first one. I have no idea [laughing].
19. Interviewer: Uhm your tattoos and the placement, is it related in any way or was it just random choice?
20. JB: Uh the one on my stomach was so that my parents wouldn't see, so. And uhm the example I got of it was also on the girl's stomach and I really liked it so that was how I got that the first time. Uhm the other ones, not really. They just- I kind of, just kind of decide- when I see the picture, I instantly imagine where I want it and then that kind of just goes there, so ya [laughing].
21. Interviewer: Okay uhm I've heard that some people end up regretting getting their tattoos. Uhm do you ever felt that- feel that way?
22. JB: Honestly, no, because it's not just tattoos to me. Like I don't really regret anything because everything that I have done, has brought me to where I am right now, and I'm pretty happy with the way I am right now. And, you know, people do stuff that they regret every day. Like, a little bit of ink under my skin is the least thing I would ever regret, so ya.
23. Interviewer: Okay so where on your body would you not get a tattoo and why?
24. JB: Uhm on any of my sexual organs, definitely! Uhm or any other reproductive system or all of those parts are out, definitely. My face. Uhm, I do have a tendency to uhm to place them where they still able to be covered up, so nothing over here, or- if I ever get something that is a little bit exposed, it would probably be on the neck, but make sure my hair is always covering it uhm and ya. Ya I think that's the two==
25. Friend: ==and between your fingers.

26. JB: And between my fingers, ya () [laughing].
27. Interviewer: Okay uhm... uh do you think your tattoo sends a message to others?
28. JB: I don't- like initially I didn't, 'cause I did it for myself, not for anybody else. And then after, like, a few years, okay not a few years, but *vyf jaar*? Ya it's probably been about five years. In those five years I kind of noticed some people do have this opinion (). They told me I look very sort of {defensive and stuff} () badass. But the bad kind of badass. I guess intimidating. I don't know. I- it's weird because it doesn't change anything to my like- who I am. When my parents found out about my tattoos, when I started saying "I'm going to go do this", and then I told them, but it doesn't change who I am at all, so why should you have a different perception? But people do. It's kind of a general thing, so, ya [giggling].
29. Interviewer: What kind of reaction have you received from family, friends, strangers?
30. JB: Uhm mostly that I will never get a job, and I will never get married. Those are the basic ones. And then I tell them that I do have a job and I've got intention to get married. So [laughing] that kind of puts a stop to it. And then obviously the- they always ask you what is it mean, and you have to explain to them. But you can't really. And obviously the whole thing about "do you regret it?" "what do your parents say about it?" and then I just kind of ignore it. It gets so old [laughing].
31. Interviewer: Have your tattoos ever held you back in any way?
32. JB: Uh... I wouldn't say so... no. Not that I can recall of. Like every time I've gone for an interview, I've always covered up. And when- when someone eventually finds out I do have it, that- they don't really change, so [interruption] so ya [giggling].
33. Interviewer: Okay and uhm do you think you can still be feminine with tattoos?
34. JB: I think so, yes [laughing]. I think so. I hope so [laughing].
35. Interviewer: 'Cause most- most people associate it with like males.
36. JB: Ya I- I don't know. I haven't really thought about that. My femininity has never really been a problem to my either. I'm aware of what I am, so I'm- I don't need someone to tell me that it's gonna change because of some ink, whatever I decide to do to myself [laughing].
37. Interviewer: Okay uhm do you think that it's common for women to have tattoos?
38. JB: I think in the past few years, it has become extremely common. Especially the whole infinity signs and I think- it's like, tattoos have pretty much become a commodity. So, I think a lot more girls kind of get it to symbolize friendship and stuff so I don't think it's- ya, I don't know. I think a lot of girls have been getting it lately, especially from a younger age. So, ya.
39. Interviewer: Uhm what is the best tattoo that you've ever seen on a woman?
40. JB: Uh... mmm... I've seen so many. It's probably- there's this uhm... it's this

massive tree on this girl's side and her back and then the roots kind of go into her skin. It's the whole 3-D effect. It looks really good. It's probably my favorite. But I wouldn't get it. It's a bit too big for my taste but probably the best one I've seen so far, ya.

41. Interviewer: Okay and what is the worst tattoo that you've seen on a woman?

42. JB: Uh... mmm... well, a friend of mine, so got- she went to a friend of hers, and he was stoned when he did it and she got a butterfly with her- her sister and her mother and her father's name and when the guy got to the sister's name, he accidentally misspelled it and then he just crossed it out and he wrote [laughing] (). That's probably the worst I've seen, and by far the funniest as well. That was quite brilliant [laughing].

43. Interviewer: Which tattoos do you think are suitable for men and which tattoos do you think are suitable for women? Or don't you think that there's a difference?

44. JB: I don't really think there's a difference. I don't- I mean it's kind of an opinion thing, so. I for example think tribal tattoos are stupid. I think infinity tattoos are stupid, because it's not- it's repetitive. Like everyone's got it, kind of thing [laughing]. But then again, so you can do whatever the- whatever you want to, so ya.

45. Interviewer: Okay and last question. Have you noticed any tattoo trends at this university?

46. JB: Uhm... definitely anchors. I think that's some hipster thing, I assume. I don't really know hipsters, but I've seen that. And ya the infinity sign. And I've seen a lot of girls get writing over here, but I like that. I like the writing thing, and... I'm not sure. I don't really- it's not really- it's not a lot like consistent ones here. It's kind of interesting because you got a lot of different kind of tastes.

47. Interviewer: Mmm.

48. JB: So, ya.

49. Interviewer: Okay so before we end, do you have anything you want to say or ask?

50. JB: Uhm... no, I think you've covered it.
[Laughter]

51. Interviewer: Okay, thanks.

Interview with RE

1. Interviewer: Okay so tell me about yourself. How old are you? What are you studying?

2. RE: Okay uhm I'm 18, turning 19 in December and I'm studying B Acc.

3. Interviewer: B?

4. RE: Accounting.

5. Interviewer: Accounting. Okay.
6. RE: Become a CA. Or so I hope.
7. Interviewer: Okay uhm why did you decide to get tattoos?
8. RE: Uhm I only have one on my back and uh initially I was against tattoos because it didn't look nice and stuff but then uhm my father died and I wanted something like permanent on me to remind me of him so I decided to get a tattoo. It says here uhm "gone but never forgotten". In there it says "dad" so ya that's why I did it.
9. Interviewer: Okay so will ever get more tattoos or is it just the one?
10. RE: No I think it's just a once-off for me.
11. Interviewer: Uhm so okay what- what else does your tattoo signify?
12. RE: What else? Uhm I saw this picture once and it says like "some people draw their art and some wear them" so that's kind of what it is. It's like- it's like a flower so I like flowers very much and that's why I chose a flower and my dad is the main reason why I got it, as I mentioned just now, so ya that's about it. It doesn't say anything else. I'm not like a gangster or something [laughing].
13. Interviewer: Okay. Uhm the tattoo and its placement uhm is it related?
14. RE: Related?
15. Interviewer: Yes. Did you choose, why did you choose this specific spot?
16. RE: Uhm, okay, it was a guy that did the tattoo so I didn't want him to see uncomfortable places and I guess like, if it's here, I can look at it anytime I look in the mirror or whenever I can see it. It's not like I have to bend down (). Ya.
17. Interviewer: Oh okay. Uhm so I've heard that some people end up regretting their tattoos. Have you ever felt that way?
18. RE: Uhm, for I quick moment I did because uhm I have a job in next week for three days and it's like a formal thing and I wanted to buy this dress, but the back was- was gonna be naked and I was like "oh I can't wear this because I have a tattoo and it wouldn't fit in like- in a formal setting so I was like "oh man. I'm never wear like stuff that's naked on my back at work" because that's where I'm going to work anyway so uhm ya but I think uhm I can live with that. It's not that bad. That's the only regret I have actually.
19. Interviewer: Okay so uhm where on your body would you not get a tattoo and why?
20. RE: Uhm on my stomach because it's like really soft- 'cause I see a lot of people doing it on their stomach and on their lower back. I would also not do that, 'cause then you would always have, you- everyone wants to show their tattoos so if you make it there, you constantly have to wear naked things and I'm not into that so ya, any discreet place no.
21. Interviewer: Okay uhm do you think your tattoo sends a message to others? ... Was it-

- is it intended to send a message?
22. RE: No it wasn't. It was just for me, as a reminder of my dad and ya. I think when other people see it, they think "oh shame, she lost her dad". That's not what I want. It's- it's just for me, it's not for anyone else, just me.
23. Interviewer: Okay uhm what kind of reaction have you received from family, friends, or strangers?
24. RE: Oh, my mom was quite upset about it. Uhm she says it's a sin, and I believe her and ya I will have to explain that to God someday and like my other friends were like "oh it's cool" and then there's like this- this one person, she's almost like my mother but she's not my mother and she was like "oh you got a tattoo. Let me put on this and this to help it heal." And she was like supportive of it so you get different kinds of reactions.
25. Interviewer: Okay uhm has your- okay you actually mentioned that your tattoo uhm held you back kind of when you went shopping [laughing] so do you think you can be uhm feminine with tattoos?
26. RE: Ya I think it can. It doesn't make me- it doesn't change who I am. It's just like, I have this thing and I'm gonna have it for the rest of my life, and there might be slight uhm a way that I'm gonna regret it but that's not- it's not huge, so. I'm still- I still feel like a woman. I don't feel like "oh I'm a bad ass now" [laughing] no, it's not like that.
27. Interviewer: Okay uhm so do you think that it's common for women to have tattoos?
28. RE: No, I don't, I don't think so, 'cause women-, most of my friends were like "[gasp] you did it? Was it sore?" I'm like "no, it wasn't that bad" and they- most women are too scared to do it. They- they feel like it's gonna be so sore. And women, you know they're soft and stuff like that but no I don't think so.
29. Interviewer: Don't you think it's common?
30. RE: Do you think it's common?
31. Interviewer: Well I see a lot of women with tattoos.
32. RE: You do?
33. Interviewer: Yes.
34. RE: I haven't seen much of them. Those- like my friends, the women I know, was all like "oh no I'm too scared to do that. If I'm gonna do it, it's just gonna be a small thing so it can be uhm over quickly" but ya I don't... maybe I haven't seen a lot of women.
35. Interviewer: [Laughing] Okay so uhm what is the best tattoo that you've ever seen on a woman?
36. RE: The best tattoo... I don't know, uhm... 'cause I- this one girl, who lives in my town, uhm she has like a message here. I don't know, somewhere around her stomach or something. It says "One life. One chance". It's just that four

words, but it sends so a- like a great message out to people. It's like, it was just- and like the way it was uhm grafted on her, it was beautiful.

37. Interviewer: Okay and the- what's the worst tattoo that you've seen on a woman?
38. RE: Oh my word. It was actually that girl's sister [laughing]. She recently got a tattoo and she posted it on Facebook. I was like- it was like a huge cross. It was like so huge and it was also on her stomach but it was lying in a way down and I was like, and she's such a small girl. She's so small and now she has this big thing on her stomach and I think "woah, that- no, I wouldn't have done that if I were you."
39. Interviewer: [Laughing] Uhm which tattoos do you think are suitable for men and which are suitable for women? Or do you think that there's no difference?
40. RE: Oh, if I see a woman with a skull on her body, I would- oh no [laughing]. You don't do that but I think ya, there are different- there are definitely differences in the kind of tattoos that men get and that women get, 'cause often you see men have a skull or they have a dragon or they have something so, you know, ya. Women always have, or women I've seen have this softly and always- like this one girl, she has uhm she has words here on her chest that says uhm "we're walking in faith everyday" or something like that. So women always go- or the women I've seen always go for the kind of softer stuff and men is just "wow!" I wanna like my whole leg or my whole arm or just like "hmm mm" [laughing] and I don't see women doing that, so.
41. Interviewer: Mmm so the last question. Uhm have you noticed any tattoo trends at this university?
42. RE: Uhm, no, not really. I haven't seen much people with tattoos uhm here actually 'cause I don't go out much and like the few I've seen, it's just like something small on the back or on the leg. Women like stars on their foot and something like that so... I haven't seen men around, much men with tattoos. I saw this one girl, or a woman, it wasn't a girl. She had a colorful tattoo, her whole back. It was like a sunset. It was all yellow and stuff and I was like "woah! That's so big" but ya, so I don't see any trends. People don't follow each other.
43. Interviewer: Okay before we end, is there anything you wanna say, or anything you wanna ask?
44. RE: Uhm no not- I think like, a lot of old- not old people but people not from our generation uh judge people who has tattoos. And I think like everyone do it for their own personal reason. I may- I may have done it for my dad. Some other people do it for they like the thing. And I recently saw, also another girl, her cousin died, and she also put his uhm, the date of his death with uh with his- with his name on her, and I think "wow that's cool" and uhm ya so people do it for their own reasons and I don't think anyone should

judge them, because you might have been in a- in a situation where you want to express yourself and you didn't know how. Some people chose tattoos.

45. Interviewer: Mmm.

46. RE: So ya. People shouldn't think "ugh, tattoo, in a gang or something". It's not like that all the time.

47. Interviewer: Okay, thank you.



UCT

Interview with AH

1. Interviewer: Okay so tell me more about yourself. Uhm how old are you? What are you studying?
2. AH: Okay. Uhm I'm nineteen. I applied for general BA. Gonna be studying lots of different languages. Latin, Mandarin and Italian... Uhm... I love dyeing my hair because that's- I haven't had my hair its natural color in over a year. Uhm... I enjoy gaming, watching anime, movies, and making outfits of the characters and participating in competitions.
3. Interviewer: Cool. So what made you uhm choose UCT to study at?
4. AH: [Giggling] Mostly my dad. Uhm but I liked the course options here. The () options.
5. Interviewer: Okay.
6. AH: Uhm ya it's not much [giggling].
7. Interviewer: Okay so why did you decide to get tattoos?
8. AH: Mmm... it's a good question. I just really liked the idea of the tattoos and the designs that I chose. They meant things to me and it was like a way of expressing myself.
9. Interviewer: Okay?
10. AH: Ya. I think- I believe in the idea that your body is a canvas and you're the artist.
11. Interviewer: So how many tattoos do you have?
12. AH: Two. For now [giggles].
13. Interviewer: Okay and so uhm can you talk me through it? Which one did you get first and what is it?
14. AH: Okay. I got the one on my wrist about a year ago now and the symbol here is a symbol from a game and underneath is written in Lord of the Rings Elvish. The quote "nothing is true, everything is permitted". And then the angel wings I designed myself.
[interruption]
15. Interviewer: Okay can you talk me through your tattoos?
16. AH: Okay so this one on the wrist uh the middle symbol is from a game called Assassin's Creed, and underneath that's written in Lord of the Rings Elvish: "Nothing is true, everything is permitted". It's also a quote from the game but I also liked the concept of the quote, how- what it means and everything and around there is angel wings which I designed myself. I- I really like wings so. This one's about a year ago that I got it. Uhm next one's this one on my shoulder. It, well wolves- it's a tribal wolf design. I got that because

wolves are like my spirit animal. My favorite animal and everything so I wanted a wolf tattoo.

17. Interviewer: Super cool.
18. AH: Fairly new actually. Last week Wednesday.
19. Interviewer: Oh okay. So any other meanings that it signifies for you or...?
20. AH: Uhm no. It's just mostly because love wolves, spirit animal. Liked the design.
21. Interviewer: Okay. The tattoo itself and the placement, is it related in any way? Or did you just choose like a random spot?
22. AH: Uhm this one I really wanted it on my wrist. Like I went to a few places, asked if they could do it and they said no, it was too small. And eventually I found a place that would do it on my wrist. I didn't want it anywhere else. I don't know why. It just had to be there. And this- this one is a similar thing. It just felt right in that spot. It's kinda- that where it's meant to be [giggling].
23. Interviewer: Okay uhm so I've heard that some people end up regretting their tattoos. Have you ever felt that way?
24. AH: No. I love my tattoos. I- I always like look at them and everything. I haven't regretted them yet and I hope I don't, but I'm pretty sure I won't.
25. Interviewer: And you plan on getting more?
26. AH: Yes. Lots more [giggling].
27. Interviewer: Okay uhm where on your body would you not get a tattoo and why?
28. AH: Mmm. I don't think I'd get a tattoo on my stomach area. I'm just not like that comfortable with that- stomach area and I like to show off my tattoos so I wouldn't really put one there. Or on my face as well. Because I do cosplay, so I do- put on make up to make myself look like the characters so I can't really do that if there's a tattoo on my face. Other than that uhm, ya.
29. Interviewer: Okay uhm do you think your tattoos send a message to others?
30. AH: Possibly==
31. Interviewer: ==Or do you want it to send- what- what message to you want it to send others?
32. AH: Uhm well along with my dyed hair and lots of piercings I just- I don't know- it's being an adventurous person. Very out there, outgoing. I kind of want that message to be across so I enjoy it when people see my tattoos, comment on it. It's- I feel like they're connecting with a part of me. But other than- ya.
33. Interviewer: Okay uhm what kind of reaction have you received from others? Uhm family or friends? Strangers?
34. AH: Uh... well my friends love it very much (). My dad hates the idea that I

keep getting tattoos. Uh about a week after I got my first tattoo, my brother come down from London and I showed it to him and he tried to rub it off [laughing]. He was like “is that real?” That kind of hurt a bit but uh- so he doesn’t really like the idea that I get tattoos. But, my mom is pretty okay with it. I mean she- when I went to get my wolf tattoo, she also got a tattoo behind her ear, so.

35. Interviewer: Cool.
36. AH: She’s chilled with that.
37. Interviewer: Okay. More common- more general questions now. Uhm do you think that it’s common for women to have tattoos?
38. AH: I don’t see that many women with tattoos, as opposed to men so much. I think men are more likely to get tattoos. Women often either have to cover up their body or be more reserved whereas men can walk around shirtless. So I think... ya it’s not as common as men doing tattoos. But I would like to see more women with tattoos. They’re awesome.
39. Interviewer: [Giggling] What is the best tattoo that you’ve seen on a woman?
40. AH: Best tattoo that I’ve seen on a woman? Uhm... I saw a dragon tattoo on this one woman’s back. It was ... It was a dragon with its wings kinda half open and its tail back was wrapped around a sword. And it was like really big on her whole back. I really loved that. Like I plan to get a tattoo similar to that one, eventually. So I would say that.
41. Interviewer: Cool. Okay. And uhm the worst tattoo that you’ve seen on a woman?
42. AH: Uh... Oh. I’ve seen a woman who got her- I think it was her husband’s face tattooed on her calf, like here. It just looked weird. I was like what if you get divorced or something. I don’t really like that idea so much. Getting loved ones- like boyfriend’s or girlfriend’s tattoos, names on you ‘cause what happens if you don’t love them anymore. So...
43. Interviewer: So which tattoos do you think are suitable for men and which are suitable for women? Or do you think that there’s no difference?
44. AH: I’m pretty much “whichever tattoo you want, you can get it”. If you want a giant skull, and you’re a woman, go for it. So I- I don’t really think there’s a distinguishing thing. That’s male tattoos, that’s female tattoos.
45. Interviewer: Mmm. Okay so last question. Have you noticed any tattoo trends at this university?
46. AH: Mmm I don’t think so. I mean I haven’t seen that many tattoos around. The tattoos that I have seen are flowers, actually. It’s quite a few- the few people that I’ve seen with tattoos, they have flower tattoos. So I suppose that’s a trend. Otherwise there’s not really many people with tattoos here.
47. Interviewer: Okay. Uhm so before we end, do you have any questions? Or do you wanna say anything?

48. AH: Uh... get a tattoo! [laughing]

Interview with AL

1. Interviewer: Okay so tell me about yourself. How old are you? What are you studying?
2. AL: Uh I'm twenty-one. I study Economics and I'm from Los Angeles.
3. Interviewer: Okay so why did you decide uhm to come to uhm UCT?
4. AL: Uhm because I wanted to visit Cape Town uhm and do a semester study abroad, uhm in Cape Town.
5. Interviewer: Okay uhm why did you decide to get tattoos?
6. AL: Uhm... I don't really know I guess just because like- like something uhm- I don't really know [laughing]. Yeah I don't know. That's my answer.
7. Interviewer: Okay and then how many tattoos do you have?
8. AL: Four.
9. Interviewer: Four. Can you talk me through your tattoos? Uhm when did you get it? And what is it? What does it mean?
10. AL: Okay so my first one I got when I turned eighteen. Uh it's behind my ear. And it's uhm my like sign.
11. Interviewer: Star sign?
12. AL: Yeah. Yeah and then uhm... I don't- that one doesn't have much meaning, and then uhm the next one I got was also when I was eighteen. It's on my ankle, and it says uhm "harmony" in Chinese. Uhm and uhm I guess that one just kind of was like a reminder to myself to have like a balance, you know like school, fun, I don't know. And then I have another one on my wrist. And it's like a cross and it doesn't mean anything, and I have one on my back. And it's like of a swallow. It kind of has meaning.
13. Interviewer: Okay, so what does the swallow mean?
14. AL: Uh it's more like representative of like a feeling in my life. Like- like a- uhm just like after one day uhm I just sort of felt like a certain way and then I thought of the tattoo and then like a year or two later- I got that one when I was twenty- twenty one. So a year or two later I still wanted it, and then I got it. So yeah.
15. Interviewer: Okay and then uhm your tattoos and the placement, is it related in any way or did you just choose random spots to get your tattoos?
16. AL: Uhm they're- no, they're not really related. I mean I didn't choose like a random spot per se but it chose a spot that I thought would be like easy to conceal if I had to like ().
17. Interviewer: Okay. And then- so- okay- so if your tattoos are purposely hidden, why is it so?

18. AL: If they're what?
19. Interviewer: Purposely hidden. If you uhm==
20. AL: ==oh for like a job interview uhm I just don't wanna have something on my face or like my neck, just in case like I would have to like conceal it.
21. Interviewer: Okay. And then I've heard that some people end up regretting their tattoos. Have you ever felt that way?
22. AL: What?
23. Interviewer: Regretted.
24. AL: No. No, no at all.
25. Interviewer: Okay. And then where on your body would you not get a tattoo and why?
26. AL: My face. Uhm... and that's about it. I mean I'm not really opposed to getting it somewhere but it would have to be like- I would have to have a good reason for it, and I would like think about it for a while before I got it.
27. Interviewer: Okay. And then uhm do you think your tattoos sends a message to others?
28. AL: I mean, I think it's relative so like it could send a message to () people who like think one way about tattoos. You know it could send a sort of message I mean for other people. Uhm like everyone's gonna think differently about it. ().
29. Interviewer: Okay. Uhm what kind of reaction have you received from family, friends, strangers?
30. AL: My family doesn't know. Uhm so they haven't reacted. And then strangers will come sometimes and say like "oh, I like your tattoo". No one's ever had any like negative reaction.
31. Interviewer: Okay. Uhm have your tattoos ever held you back in any way?
32. AL: No, because they're easy to conceal if I need to.
33. Interviewer: Okay. Uhm do you think you can still be feminine with tattoos?
34. AL: Yes. Uh it just depends on, you know, the type that you're getting. Uhm and, you know, where you get them. But yeah I definitely think you can.
35. Interviewer: Okay. Uhm do you think it's common for women to have tattoos these days?
36. AL: Yes. Where I'm from. I haven't seen it so much here in Cape Town. Like, in the States, yes.
37. Interviewer: Okay. Uhm what is the best tattoo that you've ever seen on a woman?
38. AL: Uhm... That's really hard to say. Uh, I've seen a lot of good ones. A lot of good ones in my opinion are on, like, backs, like I think are more- maybe like a little more feminine. Uhm yeah.
39. Interviewer: Okay and what is the worst tattoo that you've ever seen on a woman?
40. AL: I don't like- I don't like chest tattoos. So things going across your chest, I don't like that. But it's your choice [giggling].
41. Interviewer: Okay uhm which tattoos do you think are suitable for men and which are suitable for women?

42. AL: I don't think there's a type of- I don't think there's- it's like- I don't think tattoos are something that you can like generalize. I think it's very like specific to a person, because the way it looks depends on your skin color, on your body shape, where you put it, like- everybody is like unique in some way so like the same tattoo will look different on two different people.
43. Interviewer: Okay. Uhm last question. Have you noticed any tattoo trends at this university?
44. AL: No. I have not. But I've only been here for a week, so [giggling] maybe not long enough to notice.
45. Interviewer: Okay. Uhm before we end, is there anything you want to ask? Anything you want to say?
46. AL: Uhm no, not really. Uhm yeah no.
47. Interviewer: Okay. Thank you.

Interview with CD

1. Interviewer: So tell me about yourself. How old are you? What are you studying?
2. CD: Uhm I am turning twenty one in April. I am studying- well this is my first year. I am studying Social Work. Uhm I really have a passion for kids, and helping the community and [giggling]. Uhm but no I'm really passionate about that (). Uhm I love anything in design. I should have taken something in the design field. But you know, it's such a niche in the market. Like, my brain's too small to actually like think of how to get into that field so I- I picked my second love, which is social work.
3. Interviewer: Okay so uhm why did you decide to get tattoos?
4. CD: Uhm, my first one, I got it when I was seventeen. I was so stupid. I just chose it because I was like into anchors at the moment. So I was like "I'm gonna get a tattoo of an anchor", and I got it. Uhm, my mom said no, and I got it the very next day [giggles], and I was like "ya, whatever". I just got it like 'cause everyone was getting it and tattoos- I mean ya and tattoos were like, major and anchors were like cool. So "I'm just gonna get it" but then over time- after my first one, I got so addicted. During the- the pain like "ah I'm never gonna get a tattoo again" but like afterwards like "oh my god this is really addictive". So then I got my second one and my third one. My second and third is very important to me. Uhm my second one is behind my neck. It's my gran's initials. My third one is the uh word "four". It's got to do with my two cousins and my sister and I. We all grew up together so it's always been the four of us. So basically uhm the second and third one is very important and it's just a tribute to the very important people in my life.

5. Interviewer: Mmm oh wow. Uhm so uhm what do your tattoos signify? What are their meanings?
6. CD: Uhm my first one's an anchor. It means fuck all. Uhm my second one is my gran's initials. Uhm when she passed away I just I felt like I needed something as a- I need to do something in her honour so I felt- and I was addicted to tattoos, so I might as well get that. And it's ya- she's always with me. I have a piece of her. Uhm, and then my third one obviously is the letter- the word four. Uhm, and that's just- I wanted to get that to signify to my two cousins and my sister- to show them "you guys do mean a lot to me". Ya.
7. Interviewer: That's cute. Okay so the tattoos and the placement, is it related in any way? Or did you choose it- did you just choose it as a random spot?
8. CD: Uhm I try- well my first one, I got it by my hip bone so I was like "oh my god, that's so the in thing". So that's stupid. I'm not gonna go based on that. My second- my third one, uhm the back of my neck uhm because it's not really visible. I wanted something where you- 'cause I knew you'd have to go out in the corporate world and I didn't really- I didn't really==
[Interruption]
- I needed to get it in a spot where it's not uhm obvious. I didn't wanna get it like on my calf or on my like... over here, whatever. I needed it somewhere respect- like still tiny, but respectful and decent, so I got it at the back of my neck. I can hide these, so, something that I can hide.
9. Interviewer: Ya.
10. CD: Ya.
11. Interviewer: Okay uhm... I've heard that some people end up regretting their tattoos==
12. CD: ==Ya I regret my first one [laughing]
13. Interviewer: == have you ever felt that way? You do? [laughing]
14. CD: I regret the first one, ya. But my other two I don't.
15. Interviewer: Okay where on your body would you net- not get a tattoo?
16. CD: ... On my neck. That looks- that looks fucking sore. I don't think I will get it there. Like this section over here. I uhm==
[Friend talking. Inaudible]
- But uhm I think just like my neck area. The undecent spot. Like say for example you wanna go for a job interview and you're wearing like- like- like a really nice pencil skirt and then you have one right here [pointing to front part of her neck]. Like on your (). I mean, it's ugly.
17. Interviewer: [Laughing]
18. CD: I love tattoos but like I know where to draw the line.
19. Interviewer: Ya. Okay uhm do you think your tattoos sends a message to others?

20. CD: Ya, that I'm fucking cool and that uhm I like tattoos. That I'm into art, and embracing art. Ya.
21. Interviewer: Ya. Uhm what kind of reaction have you received from family and strangers? Friends?
22. CD: ... Well my family- when I- when they eventually found out about it, they were like "oh my god, you're so grown up" so I don't know. Basically, they- they like it. They- some of them are like "oh my god, that's so ugly". I mean, I know my aunt like hates the anchor one, you know everyone hates the anchor one. But the other two- like, people- my family likes it. They're okay with it. Ya they haven't really said much. I haven't really gotten any negative reviews... no one's ever come to me and be like "oh my god you're an indecent person" 'cause of the placement and how small it is.
23. Interviewer: Okay uhm do you think you can still be feminine with tattoos?
24. CD: Ya! I think it's so so so beautiful on on on someone. On a girl, if it's placed right and if- if the size is decent.
25. Interviewer: Mmm.
26. CD: I think it can be quite beautiful, ya.
27. Interviewer: And has your tattoos ever uhm held you back in any way?
28. CD: No, not at all [giggles]. No, not at all.
29. Interviewer: Okay. Do you think that it's common for women to have tattoos?
30. CD: Yes. I think it's a growing trend. I think a lot of women are choosing to get tattoos.
31. Friend: Wait, by common, do you mean it's like a common occurrence or common as in like==
32. Interviewer: ==No not the second one.
33. CD: No, no, it's a common occurrence. I definitely agree with that. I think more and more women are jumping on the wagon, getting tattoos, ya.
34. Interviewer: Mmm. What is the best tattoo that you've seen on a woman?
35. CD: Best tattoo... Uhm... I'm not into like- I don't know. I don't really stalk like tattoo- like the community. Uhm...
36. Friend: Mine.
[Laughter]
37. CD: I mean- I guess, ya. Ya! I choose mine.
38. Interviewer: Mmm.
39. CD: Although like, they're not- they're not as pretty as like most- oh, wait, got it. Have you ever seen Miley Cyrus' tattoos?
40. Interviewer: Yes.
41. CD: Uh wait, I'm sure there's one that I- okay have you ever seen Cheryl Cole's tattoos? Like, it spans all over her bum. I think it's very pretty, but I don't think she needed to have it that big. I just like the art, that's all. I wouldn't

- get the whole thing. It is pretty. Uhm I like uh the sentence that Miley Cyrus has over here. Uhm, that's about it. And I like mine, ya.
42. Interviewer: Okay uhm the worst tattoo that you've seen on a woman?
43. CD: ... [Laughing] Uhm... the worst... I don't think I've seen- no, Cheryl Cole, Cheryl Cole.
44. Interviewer: [Laughing] Which one?
45. CD: The one on the bum.
46. Interviewer: So it's the best and the worst?
47. CD: Well, it's the best with regards to artwork, but it's also the worst because of the placement and how huge that mother fucker is. So ().
48. Interviewer: Okay which tattoos do you think are suitable for men and which are suitable for women? Or do you think that there's a difference?
49. CD: Uhm, sleeves, on a guy is pretty nice. Uhm, but that's about it. Oh, wait. And if he has- if he has like a six pack and if he has like some- some over here and like that's nice. For a girl I'd say like uhm back of the neck, over here, over here, over here, like the tiny spots where you can hide it easily. For a guy, I think he can show it off as much as he wants to.
50. Interviewer: Mmm. Okay last question. Have you noticed any tattoo trends at this University?
51. CD: ... No, I actually- no. I haven't seen people much with tattoos.
52. Interviewer: Oh, okay. Thank you so much.
53. CD: Thank you.

Interview with CM

1. Interviewer: Okay. Uhm tell me about yourself. How old are you? What are you studying?
2. CM: I am nineteen. I'm doing a Bachelor Social Science, Psychology and drama. Uhm I like owls. I don't know [giggling]. What else do you wanna know?
3. Interviewer: Okay that's fine. Uhm why- why did you choose uhm this university to study at?
4. CM: Uhm it's a difficult question. I was accepted at quite a few different universities so I did have a choice. It was first Stellenbosch. But I think more of the convenience. I live close to here, you know. A lot easier to get to. Beautiful campus.
5. Interviewer: It is. Uhm why did you decide to get tattoos?
6. CM: Uhm I think that it's a form of art, you know, to- to express something on

your body. And I've seen so many beautiful tattoos. My boyfriend is covered in tattoos, so he's hot [giggling] obviously. I don't know. I just think that you only live once, so you might as well do something that means something to you. Stand out.

7. Interviewer: Ya. Okay, how many tattoos do you have?
8. CM: Only two, so far.
9. Interviewer: Okay. So can you talk me through them? Uhm what is it? What does it mean?
10. CM: Mmm. Okay there's one on my wrist. I am British, from British descent. Nana is what I called my gran and she was like my mom. She was there all the time for me as well as my mom and when she passed away couple of years ago, it was more like a tribute to her. Uhm the birds is kind of like, you know, setting her free. She was sick for a very long time. And also 'cause birds are just really pretty. And then, the one behind my neck.
11. Interviewer: Ya?
12. CM: It's just my mom and I have a matching tattoo that we got on her birthday.
13. Interviewer: Oh wow.
14. CM: It says family in the infinity because I'm, as you can see, very close with my family. So something that I won't regret.
15. Interviewer: Okay uhm your tattoo and the placement. Is it related in any way?
16. CM: Yes. Uhm, I would say mostly because specifically this one it's on my left hand and your heart is on the left hand side. Uhm they say that's why you get your ring on this finger. "Connects to your heart" kind of thing. Uhm also for convenience of hiding them. I did have long hair before this so you couldn't see it so mostly just if I needed to hide it, I could.
17. Interviewer: Okay uhm I've heard that some people end up regretting their tattoos. Have you ever felt that way?
18. CM: Personally, no. Uhm don't- I mean, regret's a strong word. There's a couple of things I would change if I had to go back, but I don't necessarily regret getting tattooed. So I mean I accept it, I did it already.
19. Interviewer: Okay, so what would you change?
20. CM: Uhm maybe the font. Also, I don't know, more of the placement of it. I mean, they're okay where they are, but if I could, I would maybe change the way the bird is situated. Something- nothing major.
21. Interviewer: Okay uhm where on your body would you not get a tattoo and why?
22. CM: My face. Uhm pretty much anywhere else. I'm not really picky. I love tattoos. Uhm ya my face, just because this is what people see every day. I don't want something on my face that they staring at like Kat von D. Not doing that.
23. Interviewer: Okay uhm do you think your tattoos send a message to others?

24. CM: Sometimes. It depends how many tattoos or are you talking to me specifically?
25. Interviewer: You specifically.
26. CM: Maybe that I am a risk taker in a little bit of a way. Many people I speak to ask me about my tattoos and they're like "Weren't you scared? Don't you think you're gonna regret it? It's such a big decision." So it's more like you're willing to take a risk getting something you're gonna have forever. I think that's pretty much it.
27. Interviewer: Okay uhm what kind of reaction have you gotten from others? From family, friends, strangers?
28. CM: Well my dad was a little pissed.
29. Interviewer: [Laughing]
30. CM: He did not want me to have tattoos, but uhm he came around. Especially because I'm like designing more tattoos that I'm planning on getting.
31. Interviewer: Oh.
32. CM: Uhm so there's gonna be quite a few more. They have to get used to the idea. First one was a bit of a shock because I was quite young. He got over it.
33. Interviewer: Okay uhm wait okay uhm have your tattoos ever held you back in any way?
34. CM: No. Not at all. I feel- I've had a corporate job before I started studying. I took a gap year. I worked in a very formal settlement. Uhm and it was never a worry. I mean they're so common nowadays. I don't think that anybody sees them as a negative- it's not like jail people with tattoos. You know what I mean.
35. Interviewer: Ya. Uhm can you still be feminine with tattoos, do you think?
36. CM: Of course. I mean so many girls who now- it's seen feminine to get a rose or a flower as a tattoo. Also I think the way that {you have} the font makes it look feminine, as well and it really just depends on what you're getting and where you're putting it on your body but it definitely can still be girly. Maybe not as pure as some girls but can still be girly.
37. Interviewer: Okay. Do you think that it is common for women to have tattoos?
38. CM: Yes. I've seen loads of people with tattoos. I think more the younger generation, but I don't think it's uncommon.
39. Interviewer: Mmm.
40. CM: You know, you'll probably find more people with tattoos nowadays than without.
41. Interviewer: Ya.
42. CM: At least people that I speak to. So, quite common.
43. Interviewer: Okay so what is the best tattoo that you've ever seen on a woman?
44. CM: Well I've seen many but if I had to go with my best one, I'm really obsessed

with owls so I've seen quite a few different owl pieces. Especially, how do I explain? With the clock, and I've seen different ones. It's more- looks like a piece of artwork that someone's got put onto them, so, very detailed, with the feathering, beautiful black and grey. I won't ever get color tattoos, personally, so I think that would be the best one that I've seen. No one specific. It was just a random Pinterest lady.
[Laughter]

45. Interviewer: Okay so what is the worst tattoo that you've seen on a woman?
46. CM: Definitely the stars on Kat von D's face. Not saying that the tattoos themselves is bad, but the stars are kind of faded but I mean, it just looks shit. You can't cover that. It's- no matter how much make up you take off, you're still gonna have something on your face that people are gonna be staring at so that's probably the worst.
47. Interviewer: Okay so uhm which tattoos do you think are suitable for men and which are suitable for women? Or do you think that there's no difference?
48. CM: There isn't really a difference.
49. Interviewer: Okay?
50. CM: You can dress a tattoo up in ways to make it more for a man or more for a woman.
51. Interviewer: Mmm.
52. CM: As she's [pointing to friend] said previously, the sleeve is more for a man, I kind of disagree with that, only because I've seen women, you know, with like sleeves with the roses and stuff and for me that still looks very beautiful. It just depends on where and how you're doing it but I think anyone can have anything, really.
53. Interviewer: Mmm. Okay so last question. Have you noticed any tattoo trends at UCT?
54. CM: Uhm UCT specifically... I'm gonna be putting myself under the bus for this, but uhm swallows, definitely. A lot of people have that. Uhm... let's see. The birds coming out of the feather, I've seen a few of those. Infinity signs. So I'm kind of a common occurrence. So mostly I would say people do that- and the guys with the tribal tattoos. Fuck. They just get that to fit in. It's so irritating. I don't know why they think- especially the guys that don't even have muscles and stuff.
55. Interviewer: [Giggling]
56. CM: Maybe it's just me, but those I see often. You'll see that around a lot more and it's not really imaginative. Guess I'm one of those, but ya.
57. Interviewer: Okay so before we end this interview, do you have anything you wanna say or ask?
58. CM: Just do it. I don't know. I don't have anything to ask but uhm... It's just a tattoo, you know? You're gonna die anyways, unfortunately.

59. Interviewer: Ya.
60. CM: That's pretty much it.
61. Interviewer: Okay thank you so much.

Interview with LF

1. Interviewer: Okay so tell me about yourself. How old are you? What are you studying?
2. LF: Uhm I'm twenty. I am studying Business Management Economics and ya I'm a third year this year.
3. Interviewer: Okay so what made you decide uhm to study at this university?
4. LF: Uhm well, I wanted to do- study abroad in a place that like wasn't Europe, 'cause I feel that the whole Europe thing is like kind of overdone. Like, I wanted to go somewhere that was English speaking, so there wasn't a language requirement, that had, like nice weather, and like beaches, and different landscapes and uhm ya UCT just seemed really awesome and like I had a friend who was here last year, and she had a great time, so yeah. She highly suggested it.
5. Interviewer: Oh, wow.
6. LF: Yeah.
7. Interviewer: Awesome. So why did you decide to get tattoos?
8. LF: Uhm it was kind of- I don't know. Kind of like a boredom thing. Kind of like an exploration thing, sort of. Like, it started like- I just kinda- my friend just gave me one, and then like I knew how to just like do it myself so I would just kind of like do 'em when I was bored, sort of. Uhm but then like- but I'm into like getting like professional ones too, but they're more expensive so I only have a couple of those.
9. Interviewer: How many tattoos do you have?
10. LF: Uhm I think I have like thirteen, like fourteen. But like- some of them are really really small, and some of them are like bigger and some of them are like kind of unfinished-like, but yeah.
11. Interviewer: And then how many did you do yourself?
12. LF: Uhm I think I did all of them, except for like five, so I guess I did like nine [laughing].
13. Interviewer: Wow.
14. LF: Yeah but again, they're all really little, so, it's like- like, some of 'em aren't really that intense. Like- like I did that one. That one's pretty small, but then then like I did that one. That one's even smaller, you know? So they're like- like vary in sizes.
15. Interviewer: Oh wow.
16. LF: Yeah.
17. Interviewer: Uhm can you talk me through your tattoos from start to finish?

18. LF: Uhm like each one or?
19. Interviewer: Each one and what it means and when did you get it?
20. LF: Okay uhm... Okay. I have one right here "Hey". I just did it 'cause I thought it was kind of silly and kind of describes like being like adventurous and social and just going up to someone and being like "Hey. What's up?" you know? Like something like that. Uhm I have like- I've like one on my toe that was kind of unfinished, just 'cause it really hurts to do it on your toe. Uhm and most of these I did uhm like the past three years, like in school. Uhm I have like one on this toe that I just did 'cause it was cute. It was like the first one that I did that was kind of like kind of bigger. Uhm I've a band aid right there, that my friend did uhm a couple of months ago with a gun, but it needs to get put over. This little triangle right here- that was like the- that was like the first one that I did. I was just gonna do a dot to see how it felt, but then it kinda looked like a triangle, so I just made it a triangle. Yeah. And then this one it's like stitches. People always think it's tally marks, and they're like "Oh what's- what does it symbolize" I'm like "no it's just stitches 'cause I'm tough, you know?". Uhm and I have this one on my leg. Uhm, I don't really know what I was doing. I just started doing it, then I was like "oh I need to stop. I don't know what I'm doing". So yeah, so there's that. Like, uhm, I've one on my butt that's like- that was like my first one, that my friend did, and it's like Claremont, which is my home, hood, like, back in California. And then, on my other butt cheek I have a smiley face [laughing] that's still like- that's still like getting done. Uhm, I have... uh I have a heart on my boob that I did just 'cause I thought it would be cute. Uhm==
21. Interviewer: ==You did it yourself?
22. LF: Yeah. I did like all of these myself. It's like- I just go like boop boop boop boop boop. I have like little uhm ellipses in my armpit, just 'cause I thought it would be cute. Like, I started doing it with my left hand, and I was like "oh I can't do this!" so then I made my roommate do it, and she was like "I hate this! I hate this! I hate this!" the whole time. Uhm and then I have this like uh- it's kind of like an asterix but it's also uhm like in one of my favorite books, like, Breakfast of Champions, it's like the little thing that the author draws. It's really cute. Uhm I have like this little thing on my finger. Like I just- again, I thought it was just kinda cute. Uhm, I have this one, Sono Felice. Felice is my last name and it means like "happy" in Italian. Sono Felice means "I'm happy", so there's that. I have one right there, that I got uhm on Friday the Thirteenth with my friend. Like on Friday they do like cheap tattoos so we like got 'em together. Uhm and then on my back somewhere==

23. Interviewer: Ya.
24. LF: ==on that side, it says sugar. And again like I thought it was just cute. Uhm I mean, that's mainly like the motivation for my tattoos. It's like- I just think like, ultimately, they're cute, and like, want them to look good... and you know, it makes your body like kind of more exciting, like "oh!" like all these like fun little things. And then I mean like, it's just interesting too. People are always like "Whoa. Is that a tattoo? Like, what's that?" I'm like "yeah. It is. You know, I got a couple, here and there" but... yeah, mostly just they're cute- some of them have deeper meanings, but, like, the small ones, not so much. Like, they mostly just mean, like, like having fun and like doodling, yeah.
25. Interviewer: Wow. That is so awesome.
26. LF: Yeah.
27. Interviewer: Uhm, so your tattoos and the placement, are they related in any way? Or did you just choose random spots?
28. LF: Uhm, well, you know it's mostly it's just from like an aesthetic, like, point of view. Like I want them to like look good and like- this one was like- you know, it's like a bigger, like kind of more important, one. So like I wanted it to be on like a more prominent spot, but then like other ones that like, don't really mean so much, are like kind of like in spots that like don't show so much or uh are like kind of undercover. But like, again, like, I like them to be symmetrical. Like these ones are like symmetrical. Like, one on each side. Uhm, that kind of stuff. So, I guess like the- the better ones, like the more meaningful ones, are like in spots that you see them more.
29. Interviewer: Oh.
30. LF: Yeah.
31. Interviewer: Okay uhm so you don't have any tattoos that are like purposely hidden?
32. LF: Uhm, well, all of them are in spots that I could hide.
33. Interviewer: Mmm?
34. LF: Like, if I chose to. Like, if I'm wearing pants, and like a shirt, like you can't see any of them, so- like, they can- they can be hidden, but I don't always hide them. Yeah.
35. Interviewer: And then, uhm I've heard that some people end up regretting their tattoos?
36. LF: Uh huh.
37. Interviewer: Have you ever felt that way?
38. LF: Uhm, I mean, not exactly. Like, there's some that I like know I kind of could have done better, or like, if I had like gone to a professional person to do it, they could have done it better, but, I mean, I don't really feel that way, because, like, I purposely- like, the ones that I've done myself, are like really small and like on places that aren't like super noticeable, so, like I

wouldn't regret them, I think. Like if I try to do like- like a giant sword on my leg, like that would just be like way too ambitious and would probably like look bad, whereas like- you know like a little tiny like dot somewhere that can like be covered with shorts, like, wouldn't be like too regretful, just because like it's not- it's not like that noticeable, sort of, so- so not really. I mean, some of it could be done better, but I kinda think that they're funny that they're that way.

39. Interviewer: Where on your body would you not get a tattoo and why?

40. LF: Uhm, I don't think I would like anywhere like above the neck, or like kind of on my chest. Just because like... I don't know, like, I wanna keep that area clean. Like slash I think it kinda looks a little too, like, rough and tough, like up there. Like I don't really like that look. Like I like- like I like that tattoos are kind of- you know, they kind of have some tough connotations, but like, they don't need to be like... like oh like up there, you know? And when they're up there, you can't hide them at all, so. Like if you wanted to, for any reason. And I also think sometimes to like- if, like, "oh, if I'm in a wedding dress, like how would that look?" you know?

41. Interviewer: Uhm do you think your message- *ag*, do you think your tattoos sends a message to others?

42. LF: Uhm, yeah, probably. You know, like... like, I don't know, that I'm kinda tough, or something, which I am, uhm, or you know, like, just you don't really care. Like a lot of people like take the idea of like tattooing so seriously and I really don't take it seriously at all. As like, the majority of my tattoos were like done on a whim, and are like, somewhat like, jokeish, so. Like, I mean, I just think, like, that you know, like I'm kind of like a whimsical person. I'm kind of like a jokester and stuff, but, yeah. I don't know.

43. Interviewer: What kind of reaction have you received from family, friends, strangers?

44. LF: Uhm, well at first my- my parents were like "what the hell? Is that a tattoo?" and then I was just like "yeah". And then like- and like as I started doing like more and more, they were like- they were just kinda like "Oh, you!" and then, uhm- and then like I got this one that's like my family name, and like I showed all of my family like on Christmas, and they were all like super into it, and they like- they really liked it and they were like "like oh my god. Like how do you feel if like I got that too?" and stuff. I'm like "Yeah! We should all get it like as a family thing" so, I mean, I think just when- one- there is this sort of like deeper meaning. Like it means a lot more. Especially to them, since we all have like the same surname, but, uhm- but I mean like strangers would just ask me like "Whoa! How many

tattoos do you have?” and I’m like “oh I don’t know. Like, a lot.” So- but they’re little. Yeah.

45. Interviewer: Do you think you can still be feminine with tattoos?

46. LF: Oh, totally. Yeah. I mean, I don’t think- I don’t think that tattoos are like masculine at all. Like, I mean, again it just depends on like, what they are, and like, their placement, and like style and stuff. But like, I think- I don’t think it like makes women like look masculine or anything like that. And I also don’t like, care about like genderization of things either. But yeah of course you can still be feminine. Like, if they’re like cute and like well done and stuff. You know, if there was a big like pirate skull- and that’s like what you’re going for, that’s- then that’s cool, but, like I wouldn’t choose that style. Yeah.

47. Interviewer: Have your tattoos ever held you back in any way?

48. LF: Nope, not really. Oh, one time I was gonna give blood, and you’re not supposed to give blood if you’ve recently got a tattoo, but that’s the only thing. Yeah.

49. Interviewer: And do you think it’s common for women to have tattoos these days?

50. LF: Uhm it definitely is where I come from, or at least like amongst my group of friends. Like, the majority of them have, you know, like a couple tattoos. Like- nothing like too huge, but like, they do. And I think that like, with each like, uhm, new generation, like it’s a lot more common. Like I know, my parents, like their generation like, no one has tattoos. Like, I know my parents have none and they would probably never get any. And like- like of that generation, like there was a lot more, like looked down upon, but now it’s like expanding. It’s like a different thing now, so more people have them.

51. Interviewer: What is the best tattoo that you’ve ever seen on a woman?

52. LF: Whoa. Ooh. I don’t know. Uhm... I don’t know. I’m trying to think of them. Uhm... I don’t know. I haven’t really like noticed that much. Uhm I really like the look of like- like traditional tattoos. So I think like those look really cool on ladies, ‘cause they kind of like- ‘cause they can be like really cute and feminine, but also have like a tough look to them. But I can’t really think of anything specific right now. Sorry.

53. Interviewer: It’s fine. Uhm what is the worst tattoo that you’ve seen on a woman?

54. LF: Ooh. Uhm I don’t know. Just kind of like clichéd tattoos. Like- like Koi fish or like cherry blossoms, like those type of things. Or like- I don’t really like when people get like- like names. You know, that’s kind of weird. I’ve definitely seen like plenty of ladies with like a name- you know, like Jamie, and then it’s like crossed out. And you’re like “ooh”. Probably shouldn’t get men’s names tattooed on your body, but uhm yeah I don’t know- yeah I

guess it's just cliché ones that are just really done up. I've seen some kind of like weird looking like pin up girl tattoos, like... I just think that's kind of weird. I don't really like the look of that, either.

55. Interviewer: Uhm which tattoos do you think are suitable for men and which tattoos are suitable for women?
56. LF: Uhm I don't know. I mean suppose it's all kind of fair game and it just depends on like the look that you're going for, because like it is a style. And it's- it's like a choice and uhm- like there's- there's plenty tattoos that like I would never get, but like other women might choose to get, but I mean I guess just like... I don't know. I think like pin up girls are like kind of weird anyways, but I think it would just like less weird for men to get than a woman to get. Uhm just you know when their like boobs are out and stuff like that. But again, I just don't really like the look of those at all. But uhm... yeah I don't know. I guess- well, I mean, I also think too that men have a lot more areas that are like covered and women like basically like this whole like part of the shorts. So like if men were to get tattoos there, like, it wouldn't matter so much for women but yeah I don't know. I think that- I think that it's all fair game. Like, men and women can tattoo the same things. It just, yeah, depends on the look that you're going for.
57. Interviewer: Okay and uhm last question. Have you noticed any tattoo trends at this university?
58. LF: Oh, trends? Uhm... Not too much, actually. Like, I haven't really noticed that many people with tattoos actually. Uhm but I've only been here for like a short while. But like I'll keep my eyes out for trends. But I haven't- I haven't like noticed that many. Are there a lot of people with tattoos here?
59. Interviewer: Ya. Quite a lot. But I think most of them are hidden.
60. LF: Yeah.
61. Interviewer: Ya. Especially for women.
62. LF: Yeah.
63. Interviewer: Okay. Thank you.

Interview with SC

1. Interviewer: Okay so tell me about yourself. How old are you? What are you studying?
2. SC: Uhm I've just turned nineteen and I'm studying a Bachelor of Social Sciences. Triple Major. Uhm Economic History, Religious Studies and Sociology.
3. Interviewer: Okay uhm what made you decide to uhm study at UCT?
4. SC: Well it was kind of between here and Stellenbosch, and uhm UCT is closer.

- It's also supposed to be top in Africa, so, kind of trusted the stats [laughing].
5. Interviewer: Okay uhm why did you decide to get tattoos?
6. SC: Uhm well I think it's a form of expression, mostly. Uhm I studied art in high school, and for me, it was a way to carry my art around with me, without having to obviously {lag} around like a major canvas. So uhm it's just putting it out there for everyone to see, but at the same time, knowing that it's with me and not necessarily just for other people to see.
7. Interviewer: Okay so how many tattoos do you have?
8. SC: Two.
9. Interviewer: Two. Okay uhm... so what- what does- what do your uhm tattoos signify? What are their meanings?
10. SC: So uhm, the crescent moon, it's just sort of a reminder of my mom, uhm and her love. 'Cause as a child, she always used to say uhm- there was a book she read to me, and the quote from the book was "I love you to the moon and back" and like since I can remember, that's all my mom's ever said to me. She doesn't just say "I love you", she says "I love you to the moon and back" so it's just sort of a reminder- and then uhm I bought the same book for my little sister, so now it's something I say to her. So it's just a little connection between the three of us. And then I got an arrow on my ribs, which is just sort of a reminder to keep moving forward, uhm... there's a saying that goes... like, an arrow, before it can be shot forward, it has to be pulled back, and sort of in life, that's the reality of things. You'll- you'll be pulled back before you can fly forward and succeed, so it's just a reminder that even if you're feeling like you're pulled back, you're going to fly forward, ya.
11. Interviewer: Okay that's nice. Uhm your tattoos and uhm the placement, is it related in any way or did you just choose random spots?
12. SC: Uhm I chose places that if I wanted to hide them in the workplace, I could. Just to avoid prejudice mostly. Uhm ya, the ribs one, I wanted it so that I could see it and not necessarily everyone can see it. Ya, if I wear like a crop top, everyone can see it, but most of the time it's just so that I know it's there. And then the moon one. It's like they say, "you wear your heart on your sleeve." It's just like a little heart on my sleeve. It's actually the moon. [Laughter]
13. Interviewer: Okay uhm I've heard that some people end up regretting their tattoos. Have you ever felt that way?
14. SC: Well they're still fairly new, but I know like, obviously when you're fifty, you'll feel differently about it. Like, in reality, nothing's actually permanent. So if I do regret it, I can have it removed and like, the thing is,

for me now, they mean something, and maybe in the future they won't, and maybe I'll regret it, but, at the moment I don't.

15. Interviewer: Okay, so when did you get your tattoos?
16. SC: Three weeks ago? Very very new. Very new.
17. Interviewer: Both of them?
18. SC: Ya. I got them done in one go. Whoop! It was sore [laughing].
19. Interviewer: And where on your body would you not get a tattoo, and why?
20. SC: I guess above the neckline, and uhm... I don't know. Like, my legs and, like, my sort of upper arm sort of thing, I don't know. I just wouldn't want anything that's super super visible.
21. Interviewer: Mmm.
22. SC: Ya. Definitely not on the face.
[Giggling]
23. Interviewer: Do you think your tattoos sends a message to others?
24. SC: I think people do take something from the tattoos. Maybe not the right, like, message that I'm trying to send out. Like, ya, some people are prejudiced immediately. Especially your older generations. They immediately assume that you're like a scallywag. Not really [laughing].
25. Interviewer: Okay so uhm what kind of reaction have you received from family, and friends, and strangers?
26. SC: Uhm... older- it all depends on what generation. Like, the older are generally like "why would you do that to your body?" like "you're destroying your body", "it's not yours to destroy" sort of thing, which I don't really agree with. It's my body. I do what I want. Uhm but younger generation- the first reaction is "did it hurt?" Bit of a stupid question [laughing]. Yes, it hurt. It hurt a lot. But uhm ya, a lot of people often ask to see it, and then you can judge the expression on their face. Many people react differently, but most from my generation are accepting, but anyone older than maybe thirty-five, forty sort of are like "what were you thinking?" My parents were fine with it. I mean, they're just like "it's your body. If you wanna express yourself in that way, do it."
27. Interviewer: Wow. Uhm do you think you can still be feminine with tattoos?
28. SC: Ya [giggling]. Of course. Uhm I don't think having a tattoo makes you masculine. I mean==
29. Interviewer: ==Ya?
30. SC: Nothing can really make you masculine, unless you are a man. Like ya, obviously the way you dress or something, but, my tattoo doesn't change who I am. It's just another part of me.
31. Interviewer: Mmm. So do you think it's common for women to have tattoo these days?
32. SC: Ya, I think it's becoming more accepted. I know previously, like, tattoos

were just for sailors, like, you know, rough men and now, it's sort of like... anyone can have it, and you don't have to be a particular character to have them, which is nice. I think it's better that women are, sort of allowed to do things that they want.

33. Interviewer: Mmm. Uhm what is the best tattoo that you've ever seen on a woman?

34. SC: ... Wow. I- I mostly like very delicate designs, so, little, and- it doesn't have to be little but I- personally, I prefer little tattoos, 'cause I think they... just look nicer. But I mean I've seen uhm a really beautiful Mandala design on a woman's back and I think that's really stunning.

35. Interviewer: Okay and==

36. SC: ==Simple.

37. Interviewer: Uhm what is the worst tattoo that you've seen on a woman?

38. SC: I think a skull and crossbones. I- I don't know. It was on her arm. It just sort of- to me- I was like I don't think that looks nice [laughing].

39. Interviewer: [laughing] Which tattoos do you think are suitable for men and which tattoos are suitable for women?

40. SC: I don't think it has to be a particular... set of tattoos. I mean, if you like having a floral design on you and you're a man, then it's fine, like, whatever. And if you're a woman and you wanna have like tribal designs, then cool. Uhm I don't think there's a set criteria that only men and women can have. Personally I think that's- whatever you feel is beautiful, you should put on yourself.

41. Interviewer: Okay and last question. Have you noticed any tattoo trends at this university?

42. SC: Uhm I've seen a lot on the forearm, like the middle forearm, and uhm... on the back, like and- and around the neck area and on the collar bone. Like I've seen quite a few, and a lot of words. Like phrases and stuff.

43. Interviewer: Ya.

44. SC: Ya I've seen the same phrase once or twice. Can't remember what it is. It's Latin, but uhm ya. I've seen it a few times. I think there must have been an image and people were just like "oh that's a cool tattoo. I want that as well". Ya.

45. Interviewer: Okay. Before we end, is there anything you want to say, or?

46. SC: Just that I don't think uhm people should be judged immediately by their appearance. Like, I have piercings and I have tattoos, but it doesn't mean that I'm like, hard core, like, a rebel. It just means that I think that that's beautiful. That's what I wanna adorn myself with, then that's fine. Like people shouldn't have a prejudice against me just because what I've chosen to do.

47. Interviewer: Ya. Okay thank you so much.

Interview with SV

1. Interviewer: Tell me a bit about yourself. How old are you? What are you studying?
2. SV: Uhm I'm twenty two years old. I'm studying film and media production and my other major is Gender Studies.
3. Interviewer: Okay. What made you choose uhm UCT?
4. SV: Uh well, because, wow. That's a really difficult question. I don't know, it's the first- it's the- it's one of the three universities I applied at and university- and uhm this- UCT was the first one to reply so I just thought I'd give it try. There wasn't really a very specific reason.
5. Interviewer: Okay uhm so why did you decide to get tattoos?
6. SV: Oh this was- this- I actually took a whole two years before I got my first tattoo. I really wanted to think about it but I wanted to do the tattoo because I felt that a tattoo is something that you sort of like- okay besides your dignity and all of those you take, but I felt like a tattoo is something that tells a- that tells another person about my life story but like to the- to the grave. Like it's there permanently. It- it's not something that someone can take away that easily. That's what I thought. That's how I thought about it.
7. Interviewer: Okay uhm so how many tattoos do you have?
8. SV: I actually only have one, at the moment. Still planning to go for another, but that's still under- it's debatable, so.
9. Interviewer: Okay so can you explain to me what what your tattoo is about? What's the meaning?
10. SV: Uhm a got a leopard print tattoo. Well, I'm very, I'm very uhm how can I say? Very interested in a leopard in general. Because, well, if you have to compare it to a cheetah or a lion or whatever, they all have agility, but the thing about a leopard is that for example he's- he's uhm chasing its prey, right? So then the prey climbs the tree but then this is the one animal that sort of goes after what it wants. Not the fact that it goes for its prey, meaning me, but the thing is I also go for what I want. Doesn't matter if it seems as if it's not in reach. I'll climb and climb and climb until I get- until I reach my goal. So that's why I specifically chose a leopard print.
11. Interviewer: Okay. Uhm so your tattoo and the placement, is it related in any way? Or was it just a random spot that you chose?
12. SV: Uhm ya it's a random spot. It's a random spot. I didn't want to put it in a place that- I wanted it to be seen at all times so regardless of the weather, it's still- it will still be seen. 'Cause I'm not a scarf type of person, so it will always be seen. It doesn't really matter in which weather.
13. Interviewer: Okay [giggling]. Uhm... I've heard that some people end up regretting their tattoos. Have you ever felt that way?
14. SV: No. Because I took a whole two years before I got first tattoo.

15. Interviewer: Mmm?
16. SV: Ya.
17. Interviewer: So when did you get this? How old were you?
18. SV: I'm twenty two. I got the tattoo last year in August.
19. Interviewer: Okay.
20. SV: Okay.
21. Interviewer: Uhm where on your body would you not get a tattoo and why?
22. SV: Uhm I'll probably not get a tattoo on my foot because it's really painful. Like I tried for a spot. I was gonna do something but then the first time it touched my foot, I couldn't handle it so that's probably the last part I'll go for.
23. Interviewer: Okay uhm do you think that your tattoo sends a message to others?
24. SV: I'm hoping so, because a lot of people are really skeptic about tattoos. They feel that, you know, you're a woman, you should respect your body, and having it all inked up is not really the way to go, but I'm really hoping that it does. I mean, for me, going for a tattoo could be a brave thing to do, so it would help maybe for you to overcome some fears that you might have? Like I'm really hoping it does send a message.
25. Interviewer: Okay. Uhm, what kind of reaction have you gotten from other people? From strangers, or friends, or family?
26. SV: Well, uhm, if I have to now start with like any family. I don't see my family a lot so I would start with my immediate family. My parents, maybe. Really shocked. They didn't really think I would do it, but uhm in terms of strangers. I mean a lot of people would come to me and say "well it's very unique because they don't see a lot of people going for tatt- a tattoo like yours. I'd always see a butterfly or a rose, but a leopard print is something I've never" so I've gotten quite a good response since I've had it.
27. Interviewer: Okay. Your tattoo, has it ever held you back in any way?
28. SV: No. Actually not, because the majority- like for example I started working in the field that I'm studying and it's not really- it's almost like it's a sort of trend within my field because a lot of people that I've worked with all have a tattoo that sort of says something about what they do and how hype and fun they are, so it's not- it's not really- no. It hasn't held me back.
29. Interviewer: Okay, and also, do you think that you can still be feminine with tattoos?
30. SV: Yes. I don't think a tattoo would describe someone's femininity. I think it depends on the person and I don't think we should be labelled because of a tattoo.
31. Interviewer: Okay. And then uhm do you think that it's common for women to have tattoos?
32. SV: From what I've seen, and especially in the environment that I'm in, it is

- quite common, ya.
33. Interviewer: Okay. And uhm, what is the best tattoo that you've ever seen on a woman?
34. SV: It would have to be a- once I saw a portrait of uhm the girl's mother. She had a portrait of her mother on her thigh, and I really really thought that was so unique. I've never actually seen another woman with something like that so that was really something to admire.
35. Interviewer: Okay and what is the worst tattoo that you've seen on a woman?
36. SV: Uhm, it would- well it was- it was supposedly an angel, but it looked like a little devil, that had horns so I'm not really sure- that was- I was really confused that day, because not only has the ink gotten lighter so it looked greenish and like- I don't know, it didn't really look nice.
37. Interviewer: [Giggling] Okay uhm which tattoos do you think are suitable for men, and which are suitable for women? Or do you think that there's no difference?
38. SV: Uhm well we live in a really- a very uh uhm categorized kind of life so- I mean, a lot of things would sort of- for example like a very masculine male wouldn't go for something as an angel. They'll go maybe for tribal tattoos and things like that. What I'm trying to say is that it really depends on the person.
39. Interviewer: Mmm.
40. SV: I mean if you really don't care about what other people think, then you'd go for an angel, even if you are a man.
41. Interviewer: Okay uhm have you noticed any tattoo trends at this university?
42. SV: Uhm you mean in terms of design or==
43. Interviewer: ==Placement, design, it doesn't matter.
44. SV: Well it would have to be placement. A lot- a lot of the girls would go for the back, uhm, just below the neck, or they would go for their foot.
45. Interviewer: Mmm.
46. SV: Ya. That's what I've seen a lot on campus.
47. Interviewer: Okay and then uhm do you have any questions or something you want to say before we end?
48. SV: Oh no. I have nothing to say now.
49. Interviewer: Okay thank you so much.
50. SV: Pleasure.

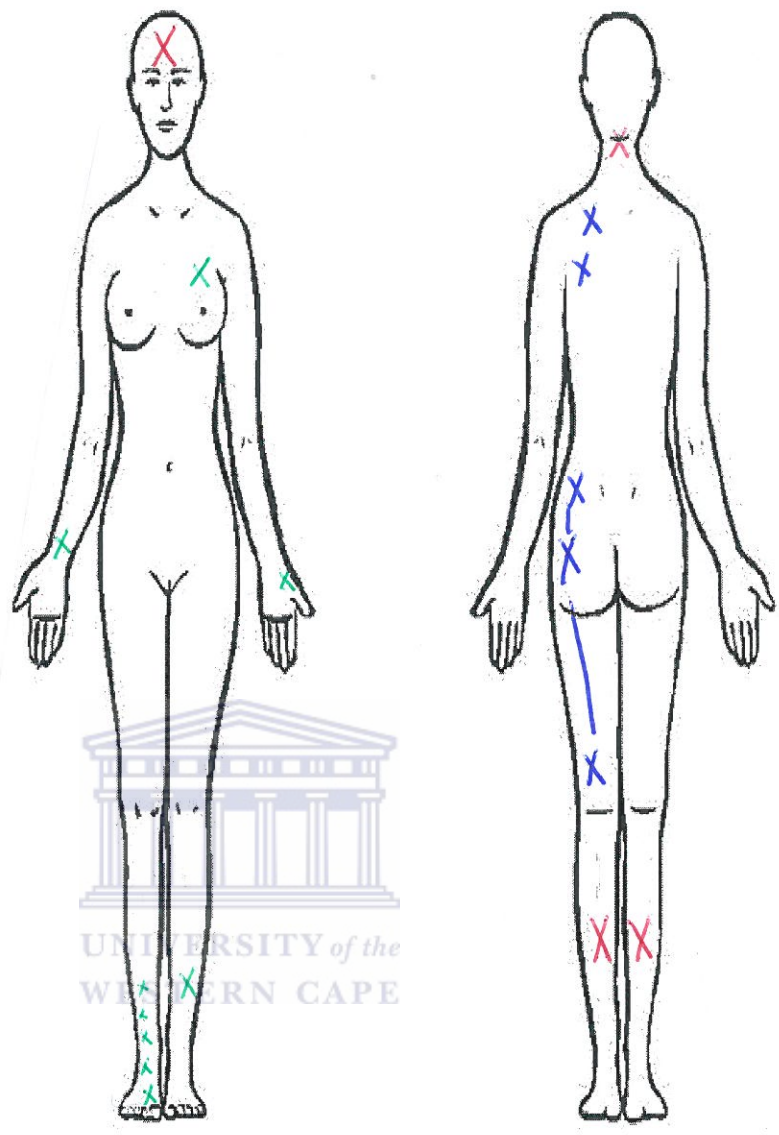
Interview with TH

1. Interviewer: Okay so uhm tell me about yourself. How old are you, what are you studying?
2. TH: Uhm okay I'm turning twenty in August. Uhm I have a- I'm studying Bachelor of Social work... Uh ya that's about it.
3. Interviewer: So what made you choose this university to study at?
4. TH: Uhm well it's kind of the closest... like in terms of travelling and things like that. Uhm... and it... for- for my uhm my major whatever, it's like- it's like obviously, okay I did apply at UWC as well, but I don't know why it just felt like UCT was... 'cause Belville's so far. I don't know how to travel to Belville, so...
5. Interviewer: Okay, uhm why did you decide to get uhm your tattoo, or tattoos?
6. TH: Uhm I always wanted a tattoo, so- and this- this uhm... normally when people ask me what it means or what it's from then I get- I wouldn't say shy but like 'cause it's- it's not really like a- like a thing. It's like a symbol from a game. You know like people get tattoos 'cause it means something to them, and this means something to me.
7. Interviewer: Okay so what does it mean to you?
8. TH: Uhm I can't really put it into words... I know it sounds weird but something about that game, it just, have a connection.
9. Interviewer: What is the game?
10. TH: It's uhm it's a Play Station 2 game. It's called Final Fantasy.
11. Interviewer: Okay.
12. TH: [Giggling] I sound really weird by saying that...
13. Interviewer: How many tattoos do you have? Just the one?
14. TH: This is my first one.
15. Interviewer: Your first one?
16. TH: Ya.
17. Interviewer: Okay uhm... so the tattoo and uhm where- where it's placed, uhm does it- is it related? Or why did you choose this spot?
18. TH: Uhm well, I chose this place because like of the size of it basically, and be- uhm the- the original like- because I looked at other people's versions of this tattoo and a lot of them have it here [pointing to arm]. But my mommy said I mustn't get it here because it's butch for a girl to get a tattoo here, so I decided here it probably better.
19. Interviewer: Okay. So what is the meaning of the tattoo? Did you research it?
20. TH: ... Uhm... in all honesty, I don't think there's like- like one specific kind of meaning. It's just like in the game you kind of just see that everywhere, but it's like... I don't know, I can't really put it into words. It's like... I- I have nothing. Sorry that I can't be more helpful.

21. Interviewer: It's fine. Uhm I've heard that some people end up regretting their tattoos. Have you ever felt that way?
22. TH: Before I got it I was. I did have a fear that I would, but I really wanted it, and you know, you're only young once and things like that and... it's on my back so if I do regret it I could always just wear- like cover it up. Wear a top or something.
23. Interviewer: Mmm.
24. TH: So it's not like somewhere where you you'll see it all the time, things like that so it wasn't such a big thing.
25. Interviewer: So did you place it there uhm so that you can cover it?
26. TH: No, I placed it there 'cause it was either here, here, or like somewhere else here. I think here I put it because it's probably one of the not as painful places.
27. Interviewer: Okay [giggling] and then uhm, you have this tattoo uhm so what- what- how do you want people to see you? You have this tattoo now. Do you want them to see you in any way? Do you understand the question?
28. TH: You mean like for people to look at me differently because I have one?
29. Interviewer: Yes.
30. TH: No- like- I... that was actually a fear of- because my cousin she- she doesn't approve of getting tattoos and piercings and things like that. So I was worried at first that she would see me in a different way, but I talked to her about it and then she said no she wouldn't so then- then I didn't really worry about it because you know, it's my body, and stuff like that.
31. Interviewer: Okay. What kind of reaction have you received from others? Family, strangers, or friends?
32. TH: Uhm everyone was just like- first question like "what is it?", "where's it from" things like that. But lot of people, you know like they smile like "oh it looks so cool" and stuff like that so. I didn't- I didn't receive any negative reactions from anyone so... that's good [giggling].
33. Interviewer: Okay. Uhm do you think that it is common for women to have tattoos these days?
34. TH: I think it's becoming like more of a thing now than it was before because obviously like, people like- women can show their certain parts of their bodies and things like that but now... people's getting it more and more. And I see like- like a lot of, like where I work I see a lot of people, a lot of women have like tattoos like all over and things like that so I think it is becoming more of a common thing now.
35. Interviewer: Mmm. What is the best tattoo that you have ever seen on a woman?
36. TH: Uhm... I don't- I don't think I can really answer that 'cause I think it- it

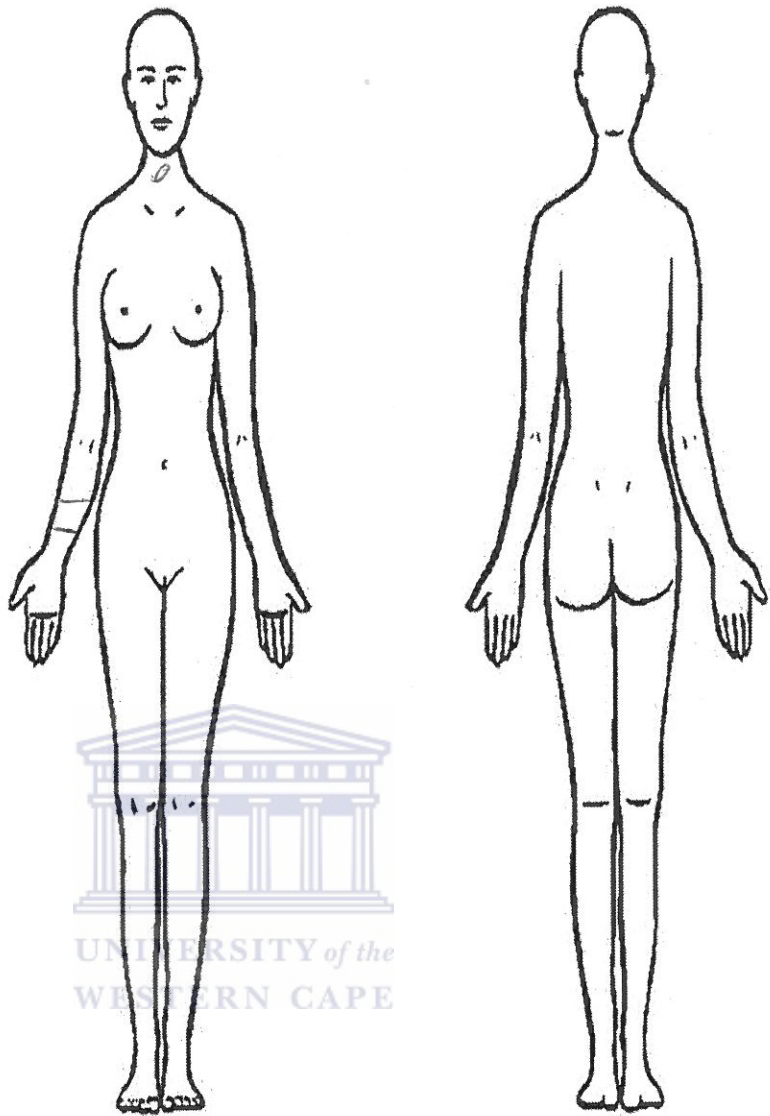
depends... 'cause like I don't know uhm. I think that uhm... I don't know how to answer this in a proper way uhm. I wouldn't I don't really like rate tattoos kind of in a way. I just, like if it means something to you and you know, you like it and you're proud of it or whatever then, you know, that's cool. Like maybe I won't agree with what you have on you or something but you know, if it's cool for you, it's cool with me. I don't know if that answers the question.

37. Interviewer: It's fine. And then, what is the worst tattoo that you've seen on a woman?
38. TH: I think the worst would probably be like tattoos that were messed up. Like, like mine was actually- there's a kind of a mistake on mine but you can't really tell so it's not so bad. But like when people have wrong spelling, things like that. I saw one person, that one girl had a tattoo that said "you go, gril".
39. Interviewer: No [laughing].
40. TH: So like tattoos like that would be bad.
41. Interviewer: [Laughing] Oh wow. Uhm which tattoos do you think are suitable for women and which are suitable for men? Or do you think that there's no difference?
42. TH: ... I don't think that there's really a difference because it- I guess it depends on like how you see yourself, in a way, 'cause like- like I kind of see myself as sort of more as a dude than a girl, which is why I have a tattoo like this and not I don't know a fairy or something. So think it could go either way.
43. Interviewer: Okay and then the last question. Uhm have you noticed any tattoo trends at this university?
44. TH: Uhm I think a lot of people are getting like tribal- tribal sign things and like those infinity things. Like a lot of people like that and hearts and all of that girly stuff. Ya I think that's most of what I've seen... ya.
45. Interviewer: Okay. And before we end, is there anything you wanna say or want to ask?
46. TH: Nah, just I felt weird about this at first but I'm cool with it now.
47. Interviewer: [Laughing] Okay, thank you.



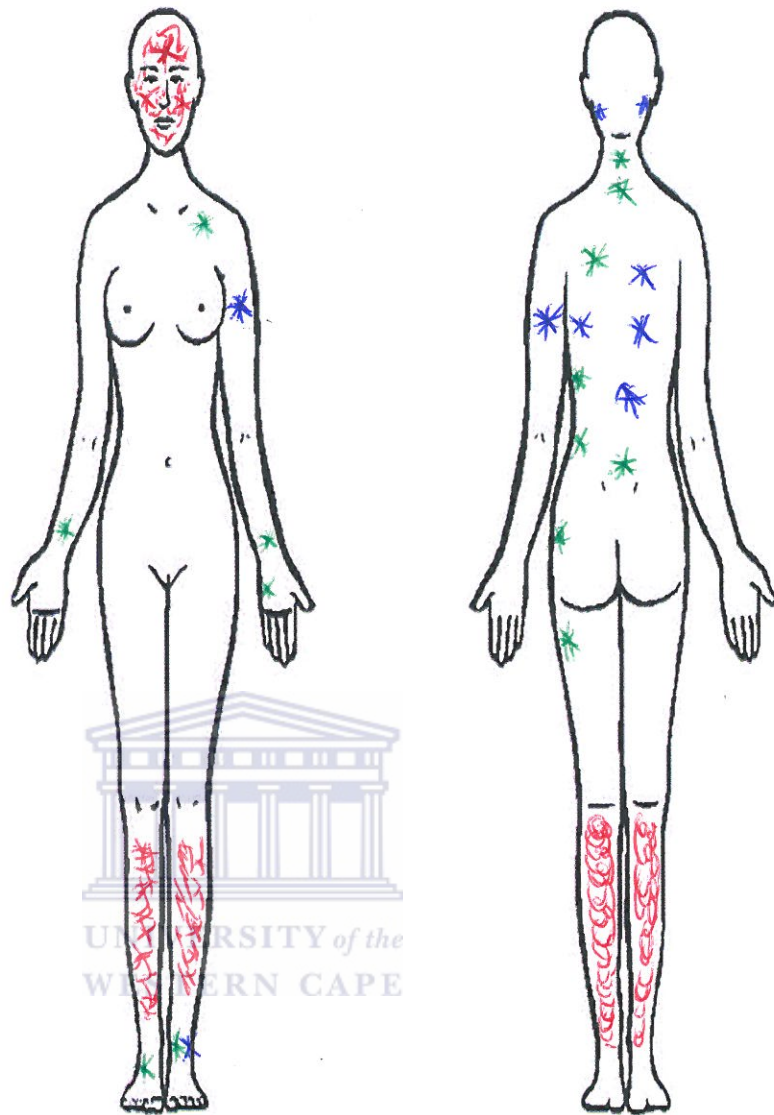
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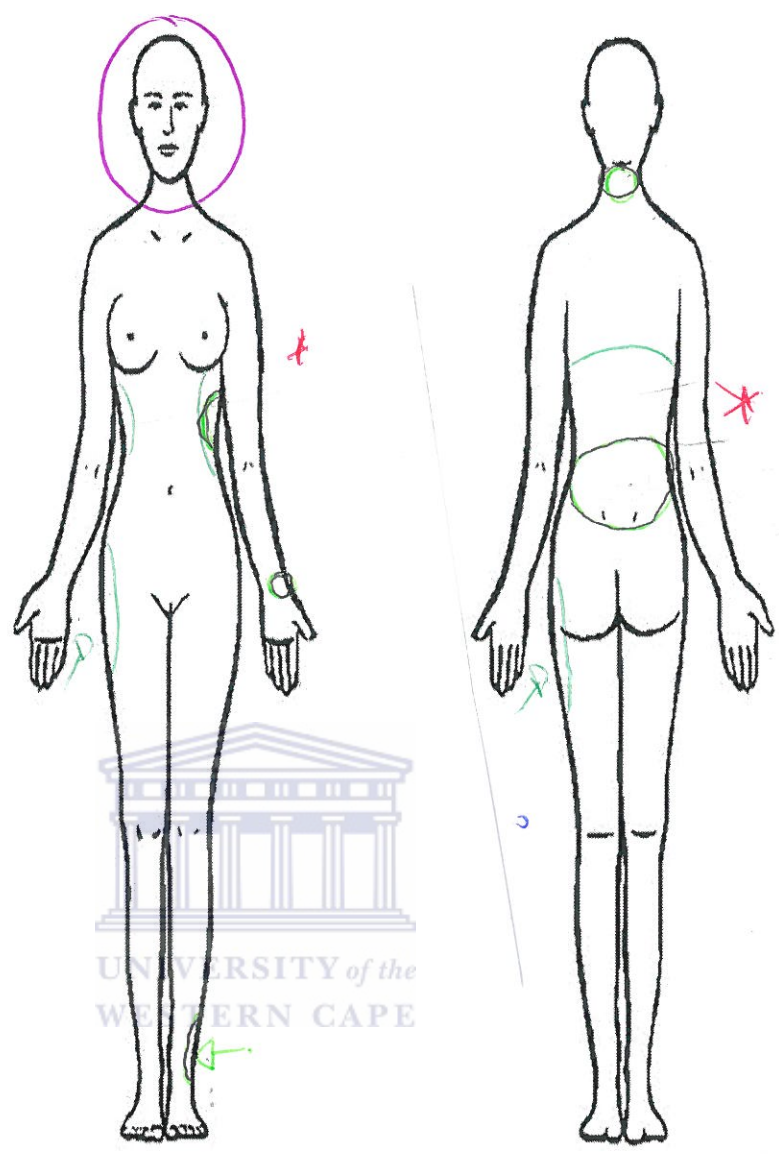
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14 tattoos

TA (uwc)

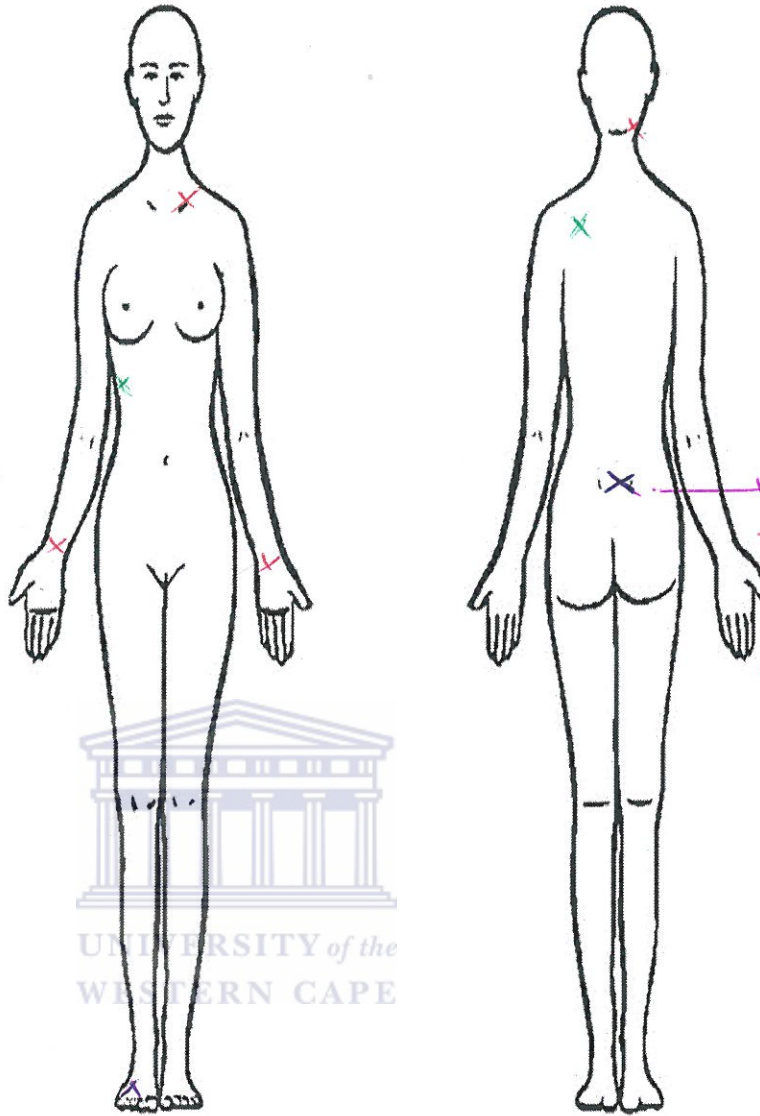




- where you have tattoos ●
- where you want to get ●
- where you would never ●

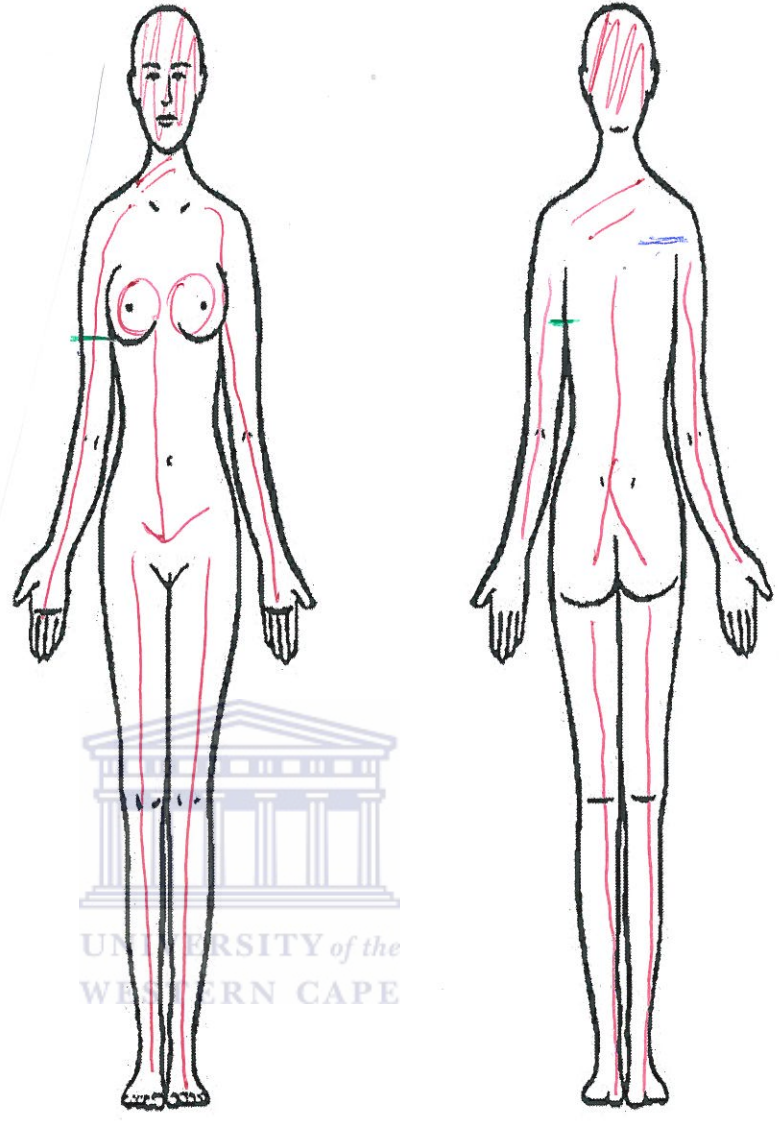
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G.J



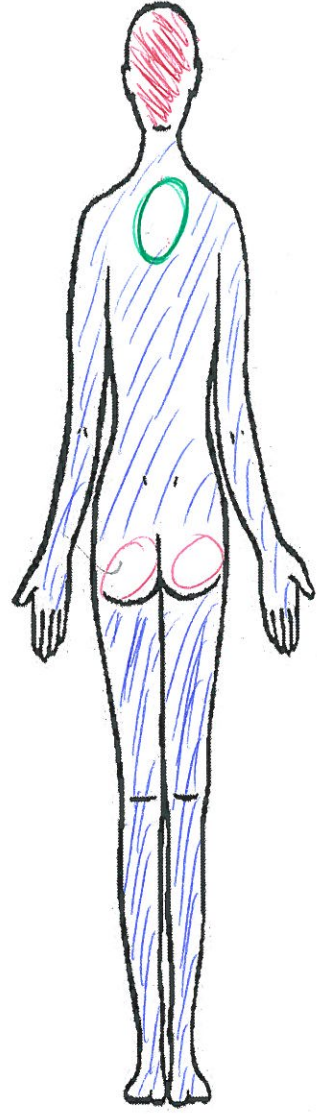
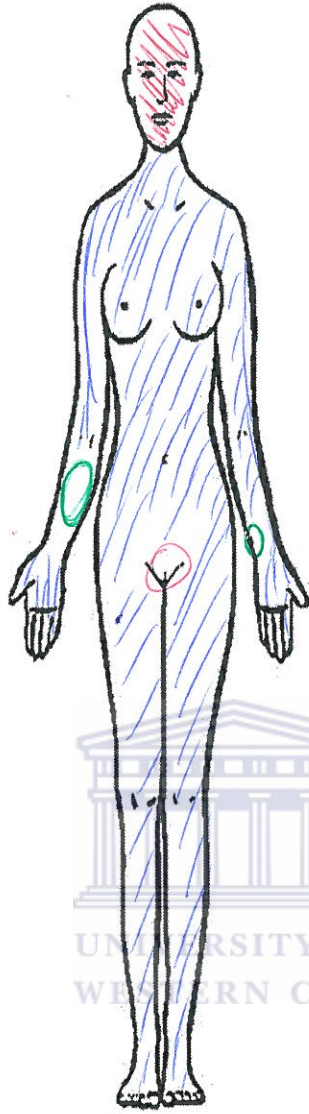
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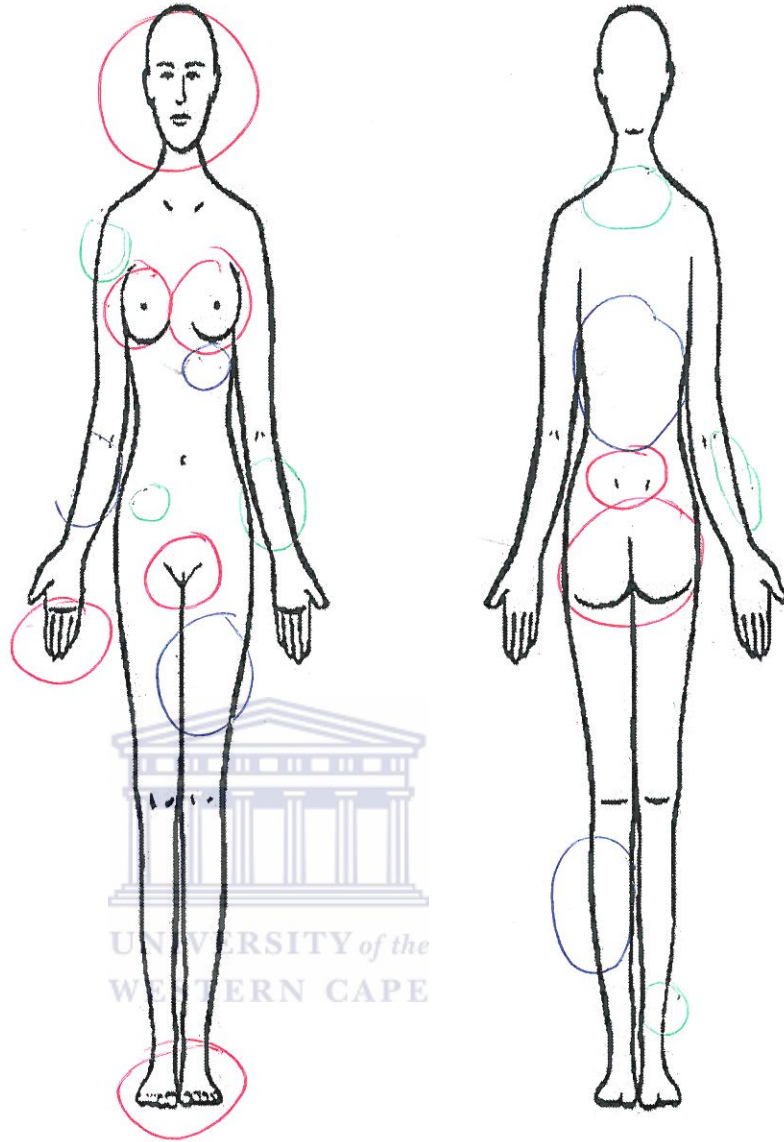
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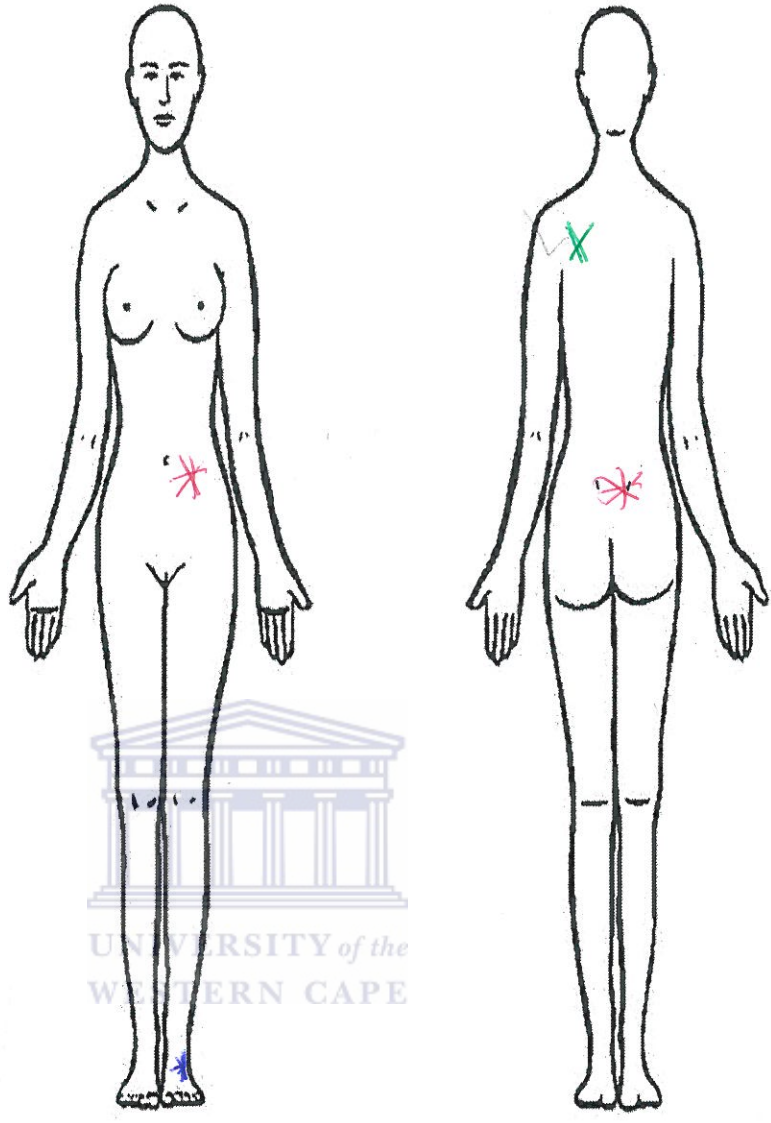
SUN
6 tattoos

JB



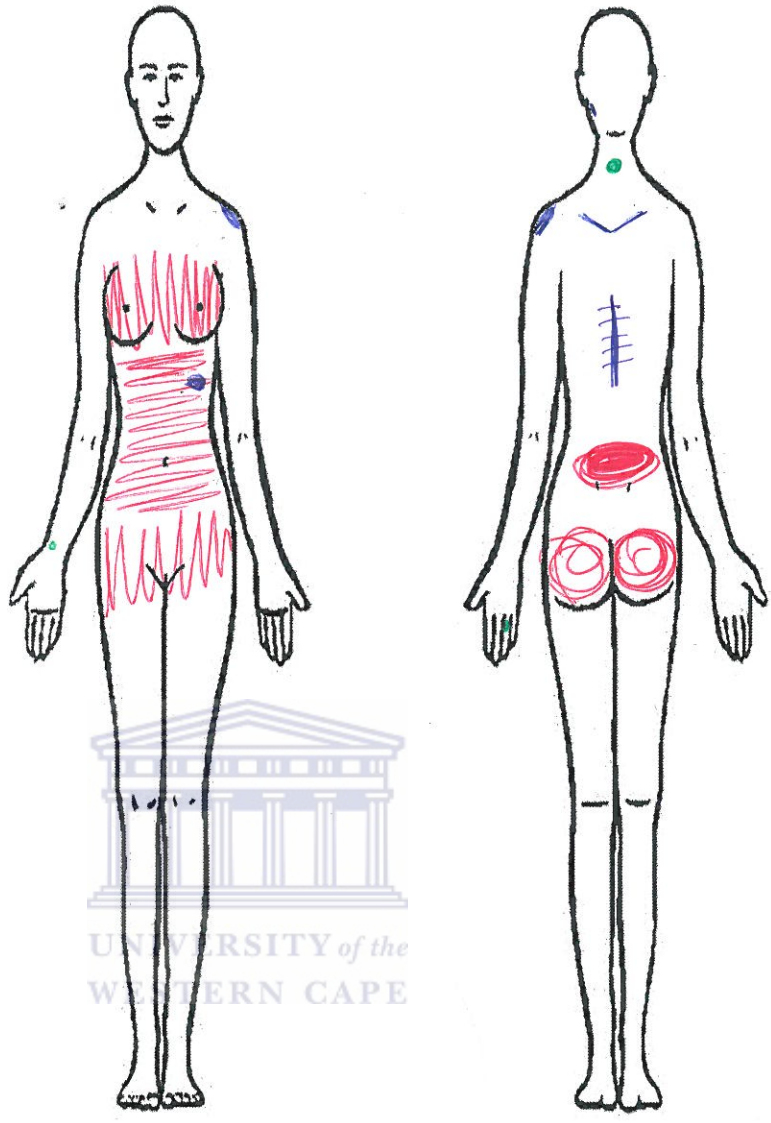
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RE



SUN
3 tattoos

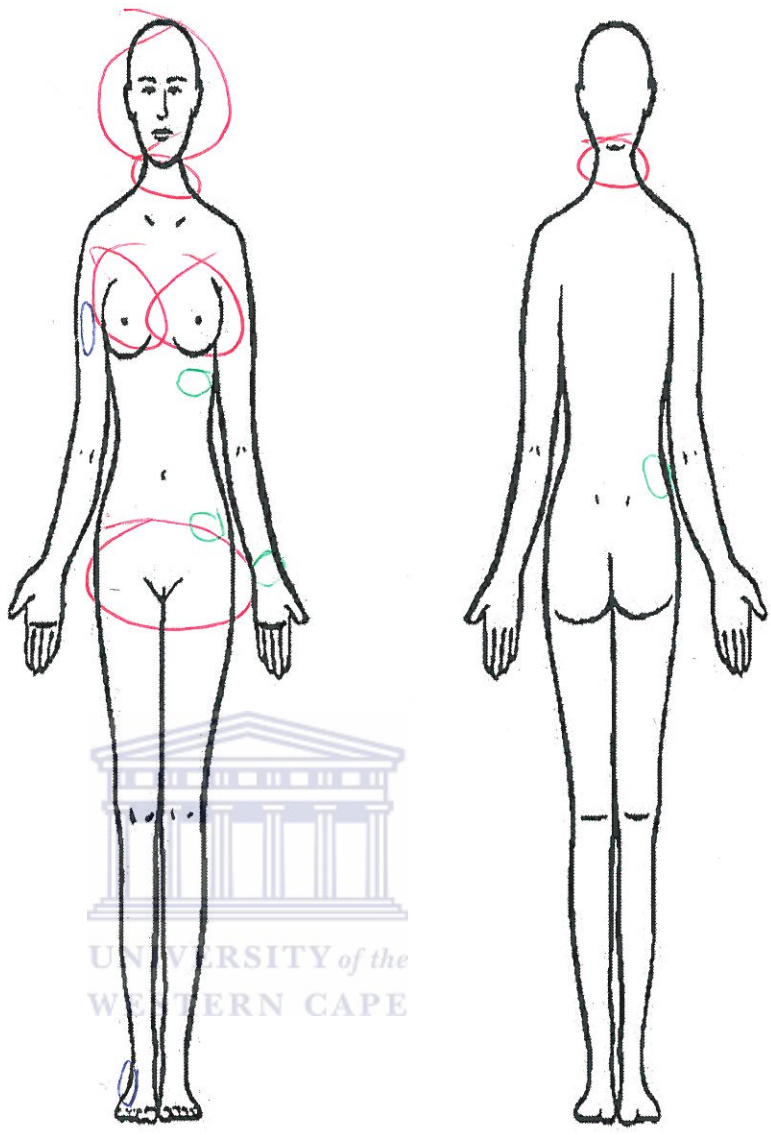
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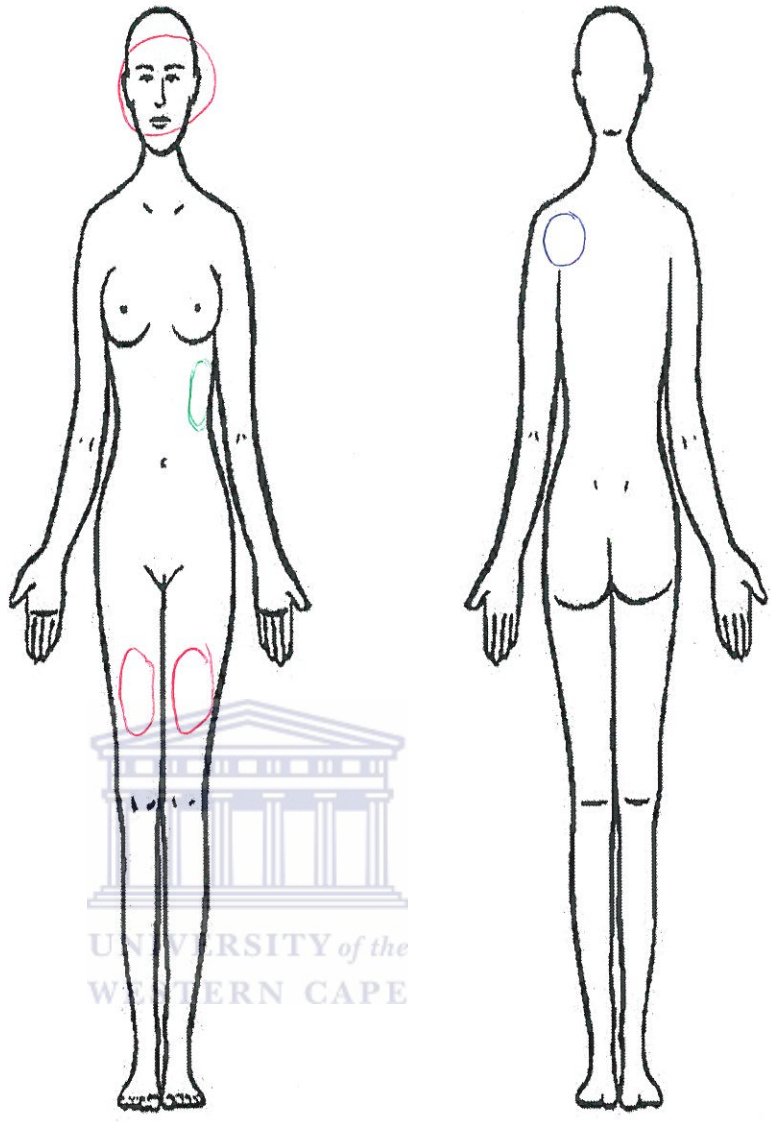
SUN
4 tattoos

AO



SUN
1 tattoo

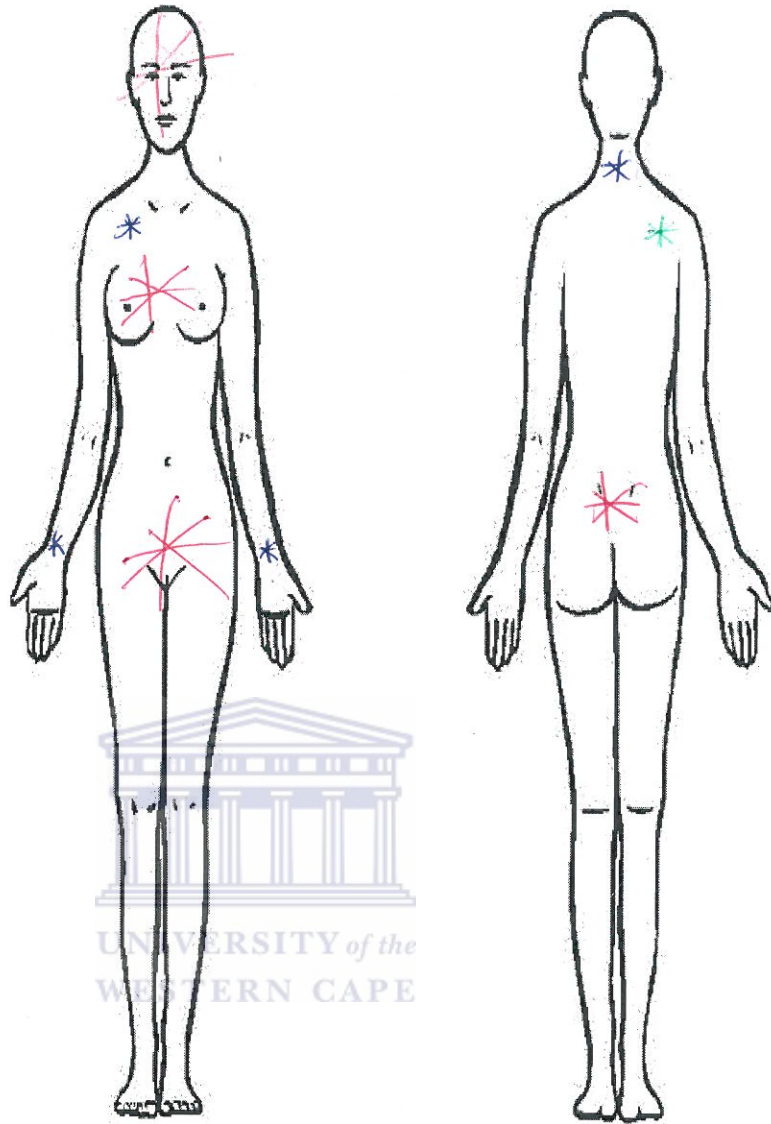
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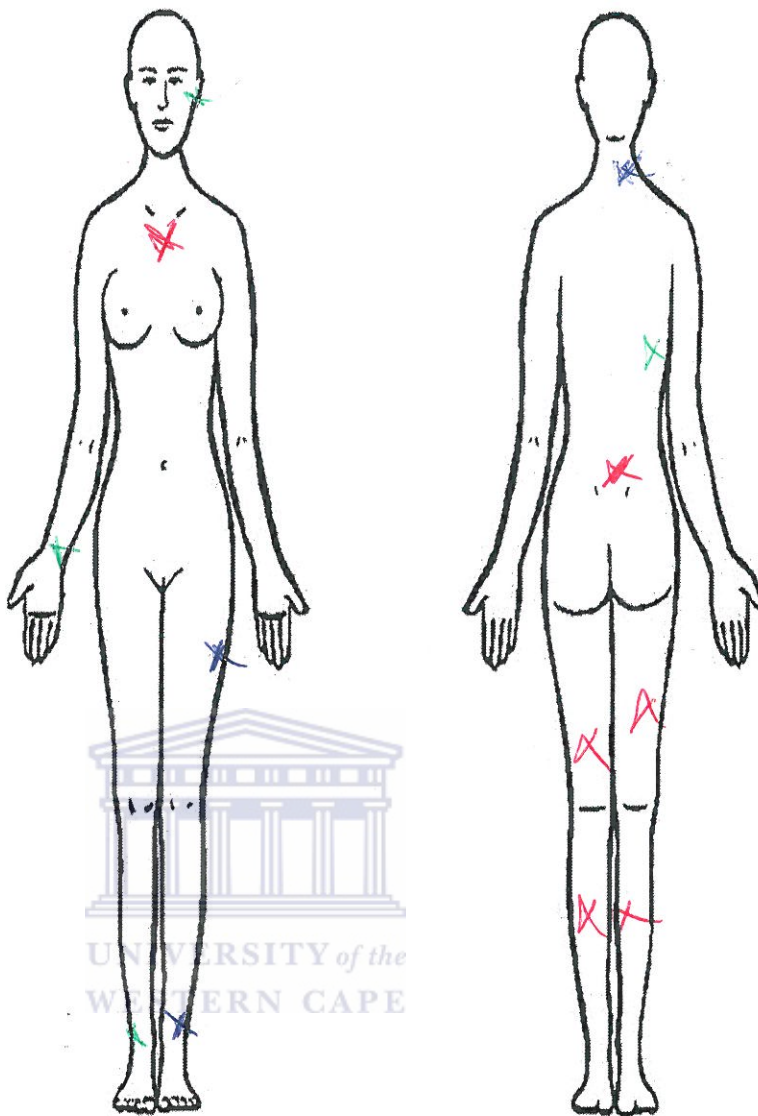
UCT

TH



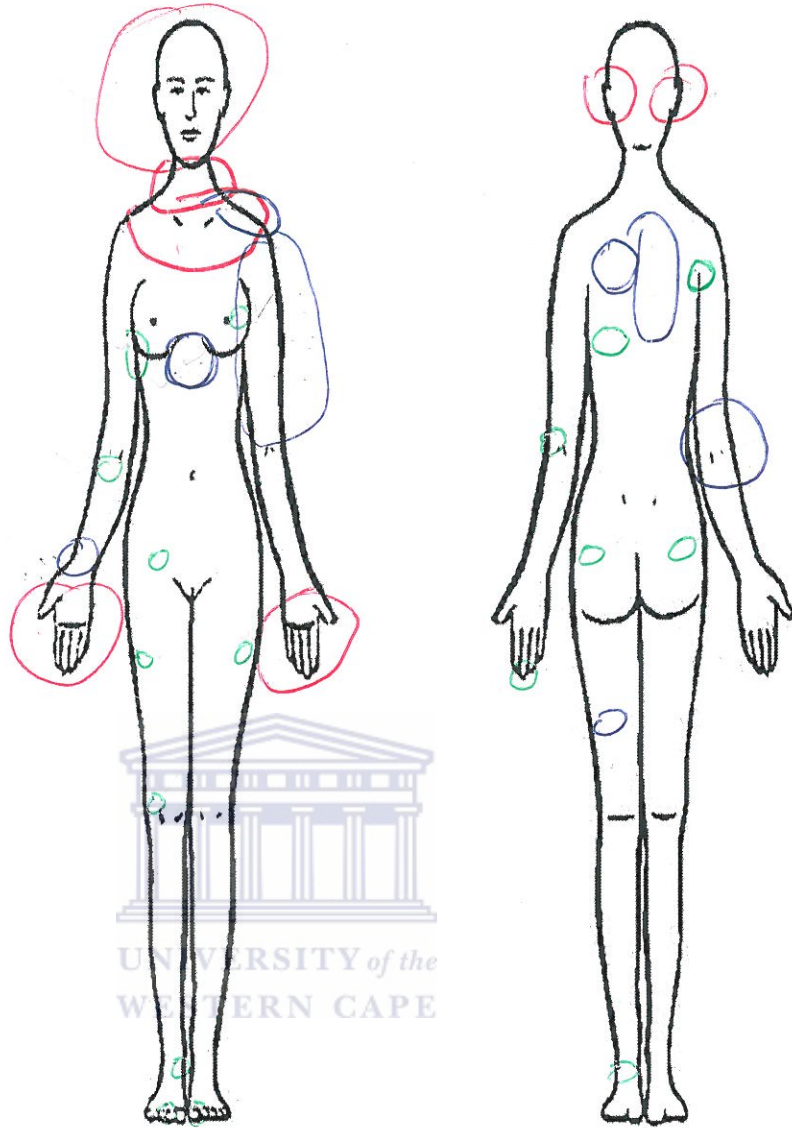
UCT
4 Tattoos

AC



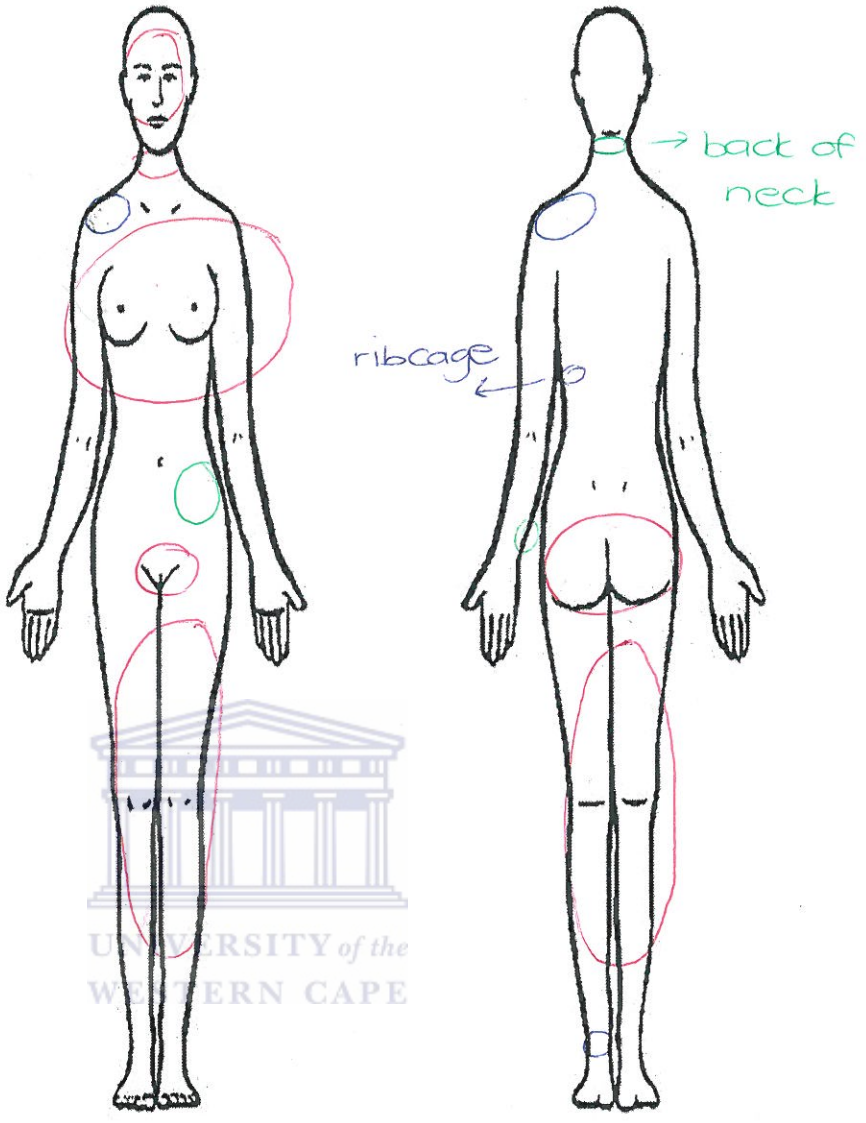
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LF
UCT
16 tattoos
17



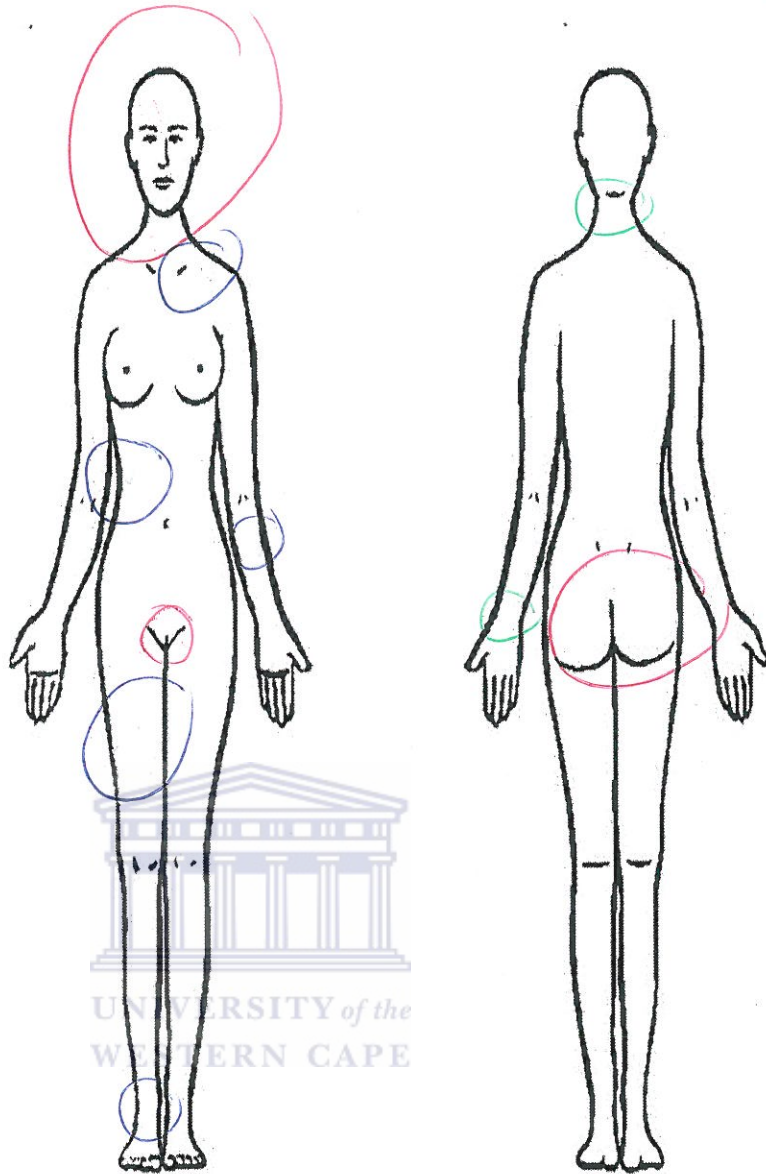
CDS
3 tattoos

~~the~~ UCT

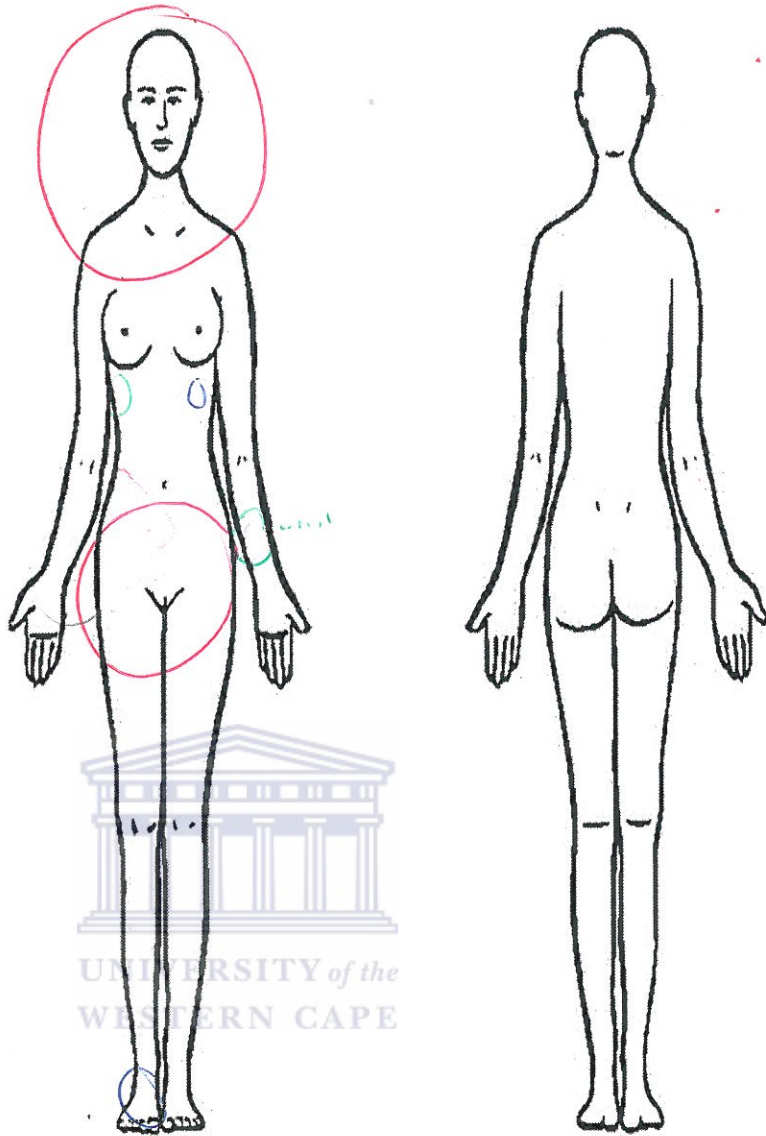


UCT
2 tattoos

CM

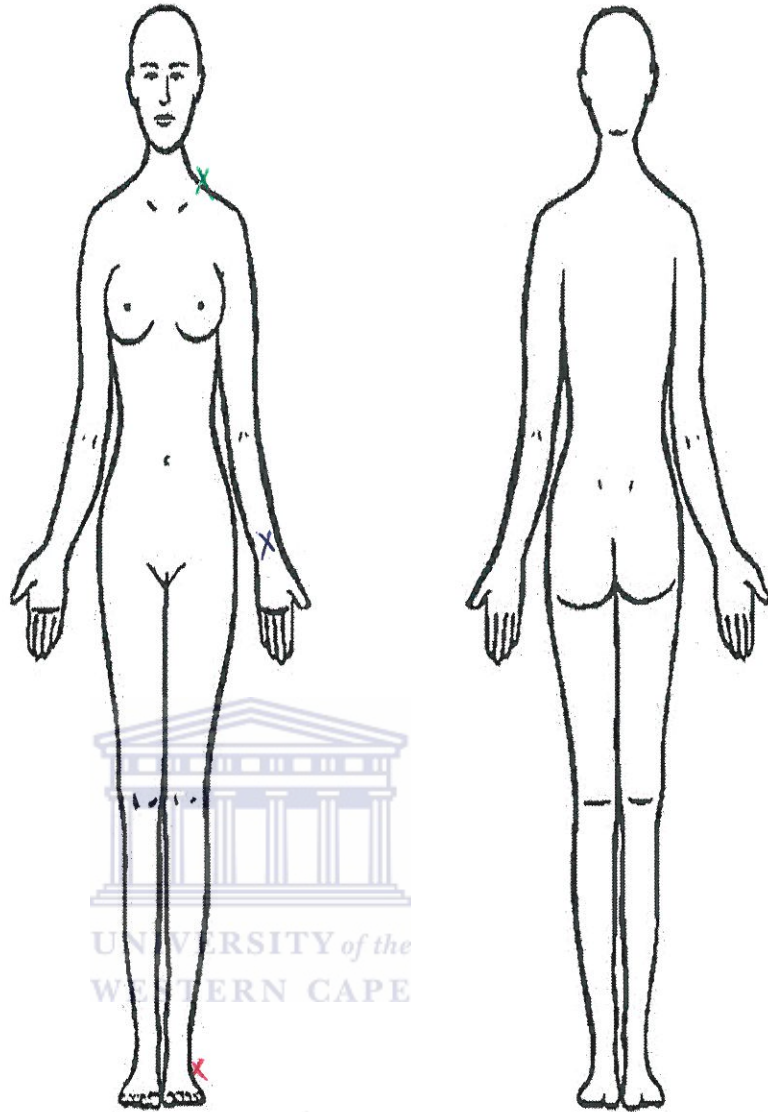


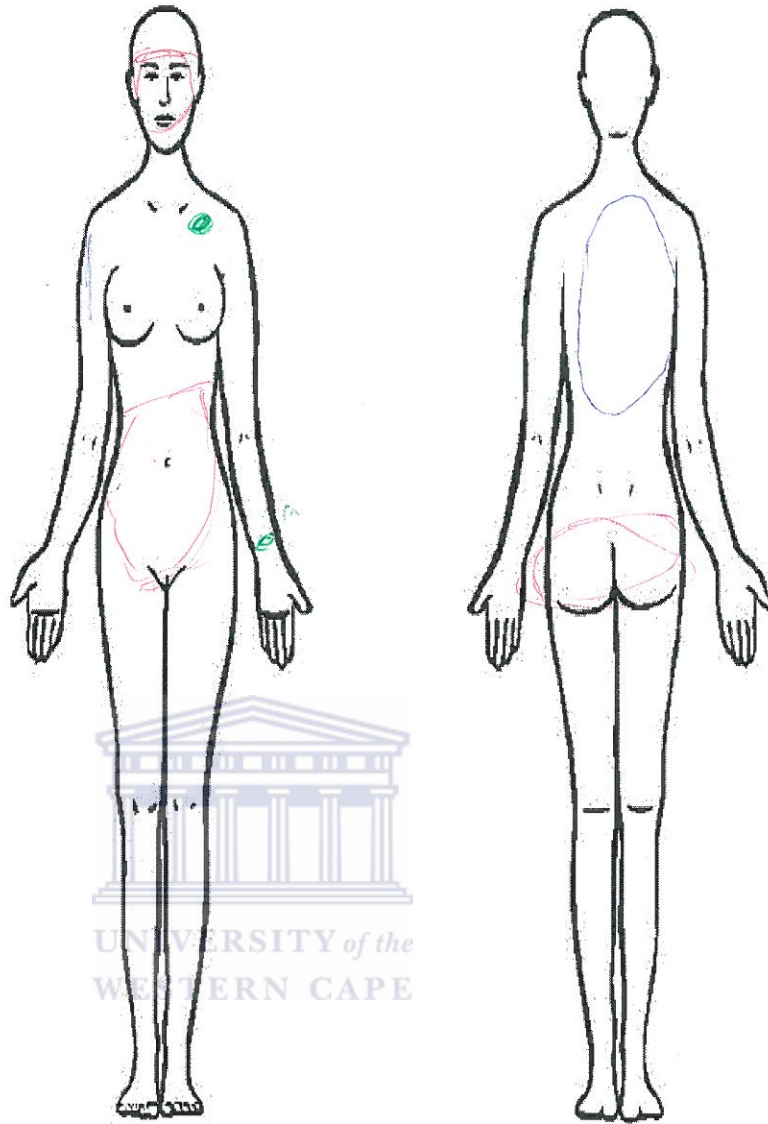
SC
2 tattoos
UCT



UCT
1 tattoo

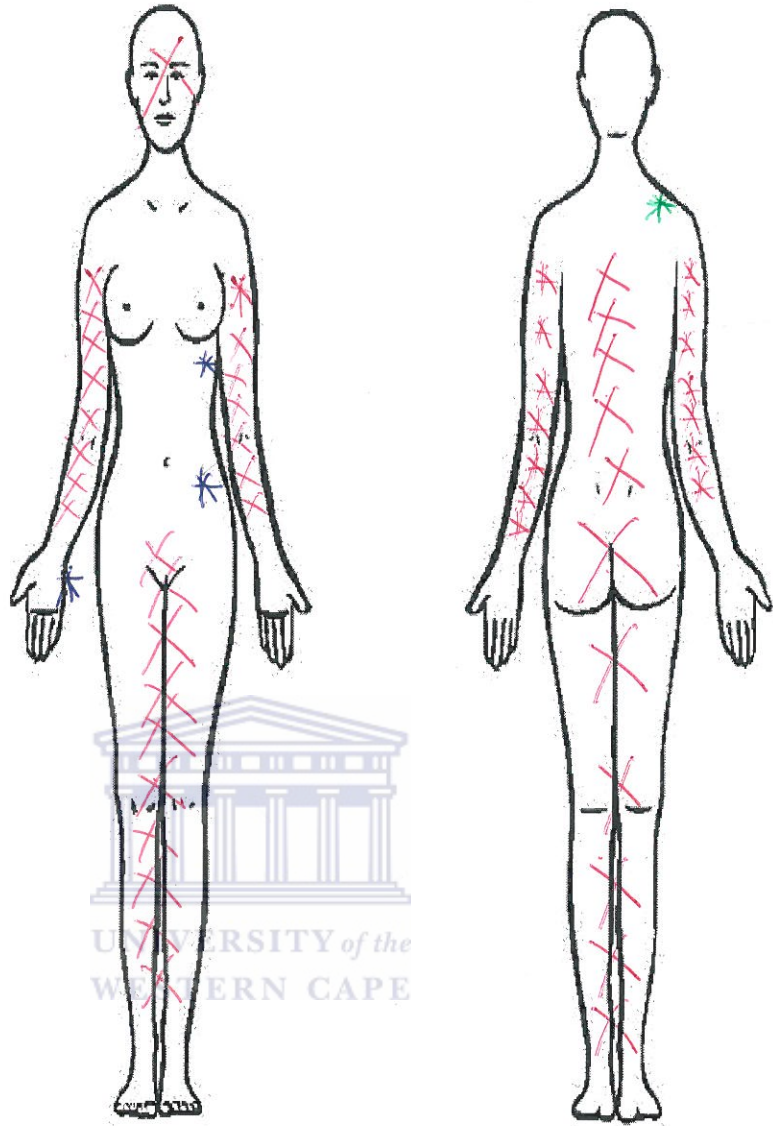
SV



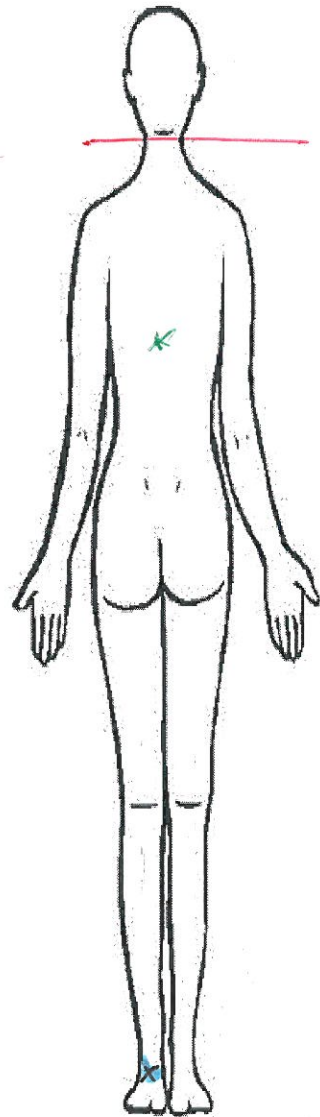
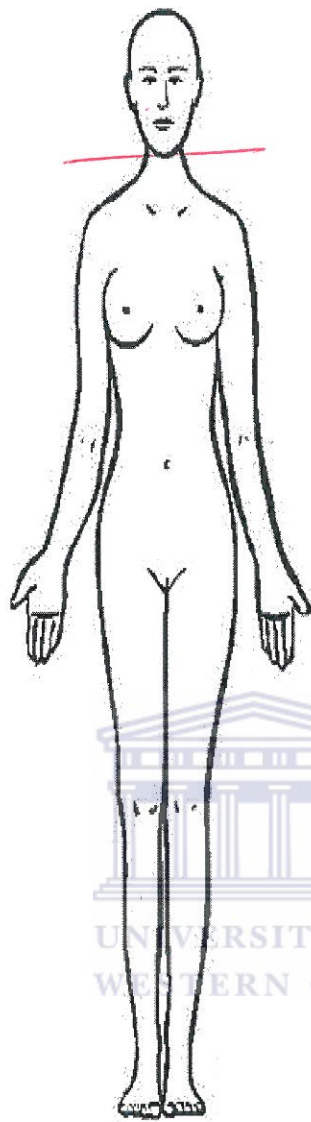


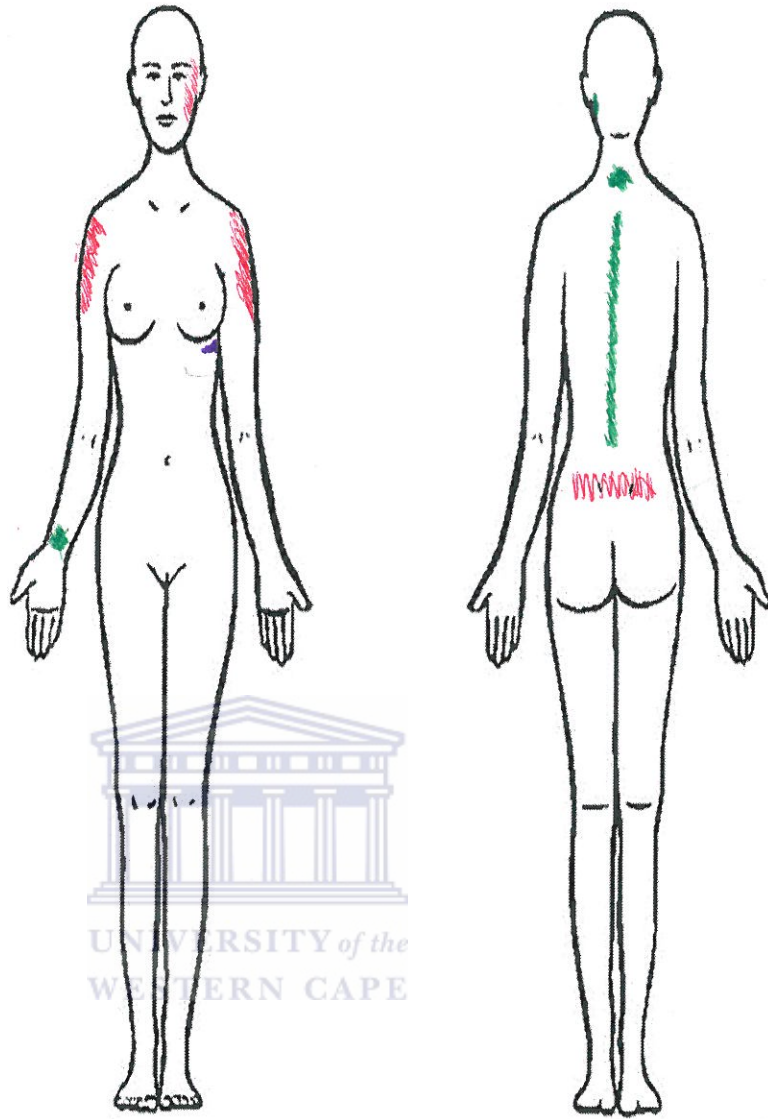
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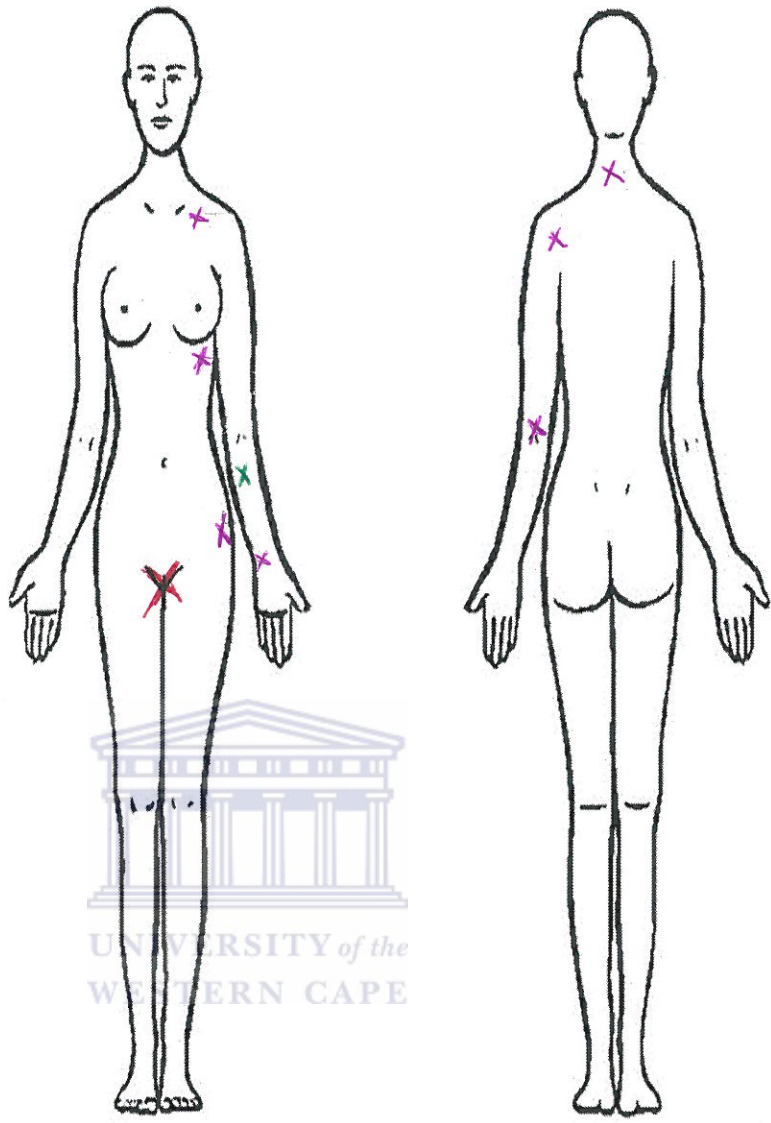
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