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Ankhs and anchors: tattoo as an expression of identity - exploring motivation and meaning

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*Ankhs and anchors: Tattoo as an expression of identity -
exploring motivation and meaning*

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

from

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

Desley Hennessy

BSc (Mathematics)

BPsych (Hons I)

School of Psychology

2011

CERTIFICATION

I, Desley Hennessy, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the School of Psychology, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Desley Hennessy

10th October, 2011

To all living canvases

*Ultimately a man sets the measure of his own freedom and his own bondage by the level
at which he chooses to establish his convictions.*

George Kelly

I Ink, therefore I Am

One must be a work of art, or wear a work of art.

Oscar Wilde

Of all that is written, I love only what a person has written with his own blood.

Nietzsche

LIST OF TABLES-----	VII
TABLE OF FIGURES-----	VIII
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS-----	IX
ABSTRACT-----	XI
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION -----	1
1.1 DEFINING THE SCOPE OF THE QUESTION-----	6
1.1.1 <i>Limiting the Investigation to Tattooing</i> -----	8
1.2 PREVALENCE OF TATTOOING-----	10
1.3 PERSONAL CONSTRUCT THEORY-----	14
1.4 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH -----	18
1.5 FINAL COMMENTS AND OVERVIEW OF THESIS -----	22
CHAPTER 2 TATTOO, SOCIAL FUNCTIONING, AND THE BODY -----	24
2.1 INTRODUCTION-----	25
2.2 SOCIETY AND CULTURE -----	25
2.2.1 <i>Tattoos as Symbols of Belonging: the Naval Collectivity</i> -----	28
2.2.2 <i>Tattoos as Stigma: the Mark of Social Exclusion</i> -----	29
2.2.3 <i>A Specific Cultural Use of Tattoo: ta moko in New Zealand</i> -----	29
2.2.4 <i>Tattoos, Illness, and Health</i> -----	31
2.3 THE BODY -----	34
2.3.1 <i>Body Boundary/Body Barrier</i> -----	34
2.3.2 <i>Body Image</i> -----	36
2.3.3 <i>Body Image and Cosmetic Surgery</i> -----	38
2.3.4 <i>Pathology and Body Modification</i> -----	40
2.4 TATTOOS AND THE BODY -----	42
2.4.1 <i>Appearance Investment</i> -----	42
2.4.2 <i>A Reflexive Sense of Self</i> -----	45
2.4.3 <i>Tattoos, the Body, and Identity</i> -----	46
2.4.4 <i>Tattooing, Sexuality, and Gender</i> -----	47
2.5 FINAL COMMENTS-----	51
CHAPTER 3 PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH INTO TATTOOS -----	52
3.1 INTRODUCTION-----	53
3.2 DEVIANCE -----	53
3.2.1 <i>Deviance and Tattoos</i> -----	54
3.2.1.1 Adolescents and tattoos. -----	57
3.2.1.2 Tattooees versus tattooed people.-----	61
3.2.2 <i>Selective Case Studies</i> -----	62
3.3 PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTURBANCE -----	63
3.3.1 <i>Psychiatric Patients</i> -----	63
3.3.2 <i>Personality Disorders</i> -----	69
3.3.3 <i>Suicide</i> -----	70
3.4 PERSONALITY FACTORS -----	71
3.4.1 <i>Extraversion</i> -----	71
3.4.2 <i>Impulsivity</i> -----	72
3.4.3 <i>Risk Taking</i> -----	74
3.4.4 <i>Sensation Seeking</i> -----	76
3.4.5 <i>Need for Uniqueness</i> -----	76
3.4.6 <i>Materialism</i> -----	77
3.4.7 <i>Self Esteem</i> -----	77
3.5 PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH-----	79
3.5.1 <i>Promoting Psychological Strength</i> -----	79
3.5.2 <i>Other Psychological Variables</i> -----	80
3.6 FINAL COMMENTS-----	82

CHAPTER 4 PSYCHOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING TATTOOING: IDENTITY AND THE REASONS PEOPLE GIVE FOR OBTAINING A TATTOO-----85

4.1	INTRODUCTION-----	86
4.2	CONCEPTUALISATION OF IDENTITY IN CURRENT THESIS-----	86
4.2.1	<i>Discovery or Creation</i> -----	86
4.2.2	<i>Identity in a Postmodern Context</i> -----	87
4.2.3	<i>Multiple Identities: How many “selves” do we have?</i> -----	88
4.2.4	<i>Self-Discrepancy Theory</i> -----	88
4.2.5	<i>Social Identity Theory</i> -----	90
4.2.6	<i>Identity in a Constructivist Context</i> -----	90
4.3	SETTING UP THE FRAMEWORK FOR THE THESIS-----	92
4.4	INITIAL (THEORETICALLY DERIVED) REASONS FOR TATTOOING-----	92
4.4.1	<i>Belonging/Group Membership</i> -----	93
4.4.2	<i>Identity or Self</i> -----	96
4.4.3	<i>Peak Experiences</i> -----	97
4.4.4	<i>Psychological Growth and Healing</i> -----	98
4.4.5	<i>Rebellion</i> -----	101
4.4.6	<i>Remembrance/Rootedness</i> -----	102
4.4.7	<i>Rites of Passage</i> -----	103
4.5	EMPIRICALLY DERIVED REASONS FOR TATTOOING-----	105
4.5.1	<i>Aesthetics</i> -----	105
4.5.2	<i>Beliefs/Life Philosophy</i> -----	107
4.5.3	<i>Impulsivity</i> -----	108
4.5.4	<i>Permanence</i> -----	109
4.5.5	<i>Uniqueness</i> -----	110
4.5.6	<i>Wanted for a Long Time</i> -----	111
4.6	FINAL COMMENTS-----	112
4.7	THE CURRENT THESIS-----	114
4.8	AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS-----	116

CHAPTER 5 METHOD----- 118

5.1	INTRODUCTION-----	119
5.2	PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS UNDERPINNING THE CURRENT THESIS-----	119
5.3	RESEARCH DESIGN-----	119
5.4	RESEARCHER-AS-INSTRUMENT STATEMENT-----	119
5.5	PARTICIPANTS-----	120
5.6	SOURCES OF DATA-----	121
5.6.1	<i>Repertory Grid</i> -----	122
5.7	PROCEDURE-----	126
5.7.1	<i>Interview Procedure</i> -----	126
5.7.2	<i>Repertory Grid Procedure</i> -----	129
5.7.2.1	Eliciting construct poles.-----	129
5.7.2.2	Naming elements.-----	130
5.7.2.3	Completing the grid.-----	131
5.8	PROPOSED DATA ANALYSIS-----	131
5.8.1	<i>Descriptive Characteristics of Tattoos</i> -----	132
5.8.1.1	Tattoo designs.-----	132
5.8.1.2	Location of tattoos.-----	132
5.8.2	<i>Personal Construct Techniques</i> -----	133
5.8.2.1	Tattoo-characterisations.-----	133
5.8.2.2	Opposites of Tattoos.-----	134
5.8.3	<i>Interview</i> -----	135
5.8.3.1	Categorising major reasons for obtaining tattoos.-----	136
5.8.3.2	Reworking the categories.-----	138
5.8.3.3	Inter-rater agreement.-----	139
5.8.3.4	Classification of participants.-----	140
5.8.4	<i>Repertory Grid</i> -----	141
5.8.5	<i>Interview and Repertory Grid</i> -----	144
5.9	CONCLUDING REMARKS-----	146

CHAPTER 6 RESULTS	147
6.1 INTRODUCTION	148
6.2 DESCRIPTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TATTOOS	148
6.3 TATTOO-CHARACTERISATIONS	151
6.4 OPPOSITES OF TATTOOS	154
6.4.1 <i>Not Having Tattoos</i>	155
6.4.2 <i>Meaningless Tattoos</i>	155
6.4.3 <i>Ugly and Evil Tattoos</i>	156
6.4.4 <i>Uniqueness</i>	157
6.4.5 <i>More Literal "Opposite" Tattoos</i>	157
6.4.6 <i>Philosophical Opposites</i>	158
6.4.7 <i>Aesthetic Opposites</i>	159
6.5 RESEARCH QUESTION 1: REASONS FOR GETTING A TATTOO	162
6.5.1 <i>Coding the Interviews</i>	163
6.5.1.1 Themes suggested by the psychological literature and found in the interviews.	164
6.5.1.2 Unanticipated themes that emerged from the interviews.	169
6.5.2 <i>"Making Sense" of the Codes</i>	174
6.5.2.1 Considerations informing initial tattoo decision.	174
6.5.2.2 Considerations about the design.	177
6.5.2.3 Feelings about the tattoo.	179
6.5.2.4 Towards a Theory of Tattoo Acquisition.	181
6.5.3 <i>Reasons related to tattoo acquisition: motivation and meaning</i>	182
6.6 RESEARCH QUESTION 2: TATTOOEEES' VIEWS OF SELVES AND OTHERS	184
6.6.1 <i>Positivity</i>	184
6.6.2 <i>Midpoints</i>	186
6.6.3 <i>Extreme Ratings</i>	187
6.6.4 <i>Conflict Attributable to Elements</i>	188
6.6.5 <i>Movement with Respect to Ideal Self</i>	189
6.6.6 <i>Findings: Tattooees' Views of Selves and Others</i>	190
6.7 RESEARCH QUESTION 3: COMPARING SELVES AND OTHERS WITHIN REASON SUBGROUPS	191
6.7.1 <i>Relationship between Positivity and Reason Subgroups</i>	191
6.7.2 <i>Relationship between Midpoints and Reason Subgroups</i>	196
6.7.3 <i>Extreme ratings by Reason Subgroups</i>	199
6.7.4 <i>Conflict attributable to elements by Reason Subgroups</i>	200
6.7.5 <i>Movement with Respect to Ideal Self within Reason Subgroups</i>	203
6.7.6 <i>Cognitive Complexity of Elements within Reason Subgroups</i>	205
6.7.7 <i>Comparing Grid Elements for Different Subgroups</i>	206
6.7.8 <i>Findings: Tattooees' Views of Selves and Others within Reason Subgroups</i>	209
6.7.9 <i>Summary of Findings</i>	210
CHAPTER 7 DISCUSSION	212
7.1 INTRODUCTION	213
7.2 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS	213
7.2.1 <i>Research Question 1: Reasons for getting a Tattoo</i>	213
7.2.1.1 Motivation and meaning in getting a tattoo.	215
7.2.1.2 Preliminary theory of tattoo acquisition.	218
7.2.2 <i>Research Question 2: Tattooees' Views of Selves and Others</i>	219
7.2.3 <i>Research Question 3: Comparing Selves and Others with Reason Subgroups</i>	220
7.2.4 <i>Additional Results</i>	223
7.2.4.1 Difference between Being a Tattooed Person and a Person with Tattoos.	223
7.2.4.2 Addictive Element to Tattooing.	225
7.2.4.3 Link between Getting a Tattoo Impulsively and Wanting a Tattoo for a Long Time.	226
7.2.5 <i>Broader Issues – the Necessity of PCT and a Narrative Approach</i>	228
7.3 METHODOLOGICAL COMMENTS	234
7.3.1 <i>The Contribution of Personal Construct Theory</i>	235
7.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE CURRENT STUDY	238
7.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	240
7.6 CONCLUSION	242
REFERENCES	248
APPENDICES	277

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1 <i>Comparison of frequencies of tattoo-related businesses listed in the electronic yellow pages in Australian states in March 2010</i>	12
Table 5.1 <i>Supplied construct poles</i>	124
Table 5.2 <i>Final element list</i>	126
Table 5.3 <i>Identifiers assigned to participants based on coding for tattoo reasons</i>	141
Table 6.1 <i>Opposites for participants in RGT and RDT Aesthetic groups</i>	160
Table 6.2 <i>Frequencies of reasons for obtaining tattoos (RGT)</i>	183
Table 6.3 <i>Frequencies of reasons for choice of design (RDT)</i>	183
Table 6.4 <i>Means and Standard Deviations for elements</i>	185
Table 6.5 <i>Midpoint ratings by element</i>	187
Table 6.6 <i>Numbers of ones and fives for elements of the grid</i>	188
Table 6.7 <i>Percentage of conflict attributable to each element in Repertory Grid</i>	189
Table 6.8 <i>Average element ratings broken down by RGT subgroups (with standard deviations)</i>	194
Table 6.9 <i>Average element ratings broken down by RDT subgroups (with standard deviations)</i>	195
Table 6.10 <i>Numbers of midpoint ratings by RGT subgroups for grid elements</i>	197
Table 6.11 <i>Numbers of midpoint ratings by RDT subgroups</i>	198
Table 6.12 <i>Percentage conflict attributable to each element by RGT subgroups</i>	201
Table 6.13 <i>Percentage conflict attributable to each element by RDT subgroups</i>	202
Table 6.14 <i>t-test results on RDT subgroups for changes in view of self before and after tattoo</i>	204
Table 6.15 <i>Cognitive complexity of RGT subgroups</i>	205
Table 6.16 <i>Cognitive complexity of RDT subgroups</i>	206
Table 6.17 <i>Absolute Differences in ratings between Self, and Ideal Self, and remaining elements for RGT Belonging subgroup</i>	207
Table 6.18 <i>Absolute Differences between Self and Ideal Self and remaining elements for RGT Aesthetics subgroup</i>	208
Table 6.19 <i>Differences between Self and Ideal Self and remaining elements for RDT Aesthetics subgroup</i>	209

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 6.1. Breakdown of number of tattoos on participants	149
Figure 6.2. Diagrammatic representation of results sections relating to Research Question One	163
Figure 6.3. Tattoos in remembrance of a pet cat.....	166
Figure 6.4. Tattoo depicting breaking free of anxiety	168
Figure 6.5. Tattoos depicting philosophy of life.....	172
Figure 6.6. Tattoo depicting philosophy of life: don't judge others.....	173
Figure 6.7. Ghost tattoos relating to Celtic traditional beliefs	173
Figure 7.1. Tattoos showing commitment to the “lifestyle”	224

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Abstract

In the main, prior research into tattooing has been the domain of cultural and anthropological studies and hence theorising about tattooing took a societal perspective. Investigations into tattoos from a psychological viewpoint tended to concentrate on deviance, selecting participants from mental hospitals and jails, resulting in self-fulfilling prophecies. The current thesis investigated the reasons for being tattooed from an individual point of view, rather than a societal one. Secondly, the thesis explored the behaviour of tattooing from a perspective of psychological functioning. To this end Personal Construct Theory was employed, as it allowed a conceptualisation of tattooing as experimentation, rather than focusing on tattoo as an indication of deviance. Participants were 56 volunteers who were interviewed in depth about their tattoos and who completed a Repertory Grid. The Repertory Grid was designed to tap into the participants' views of their selves, both before and after being tattooed, as well as their views on others and contained seven self and five "other" elements. Interviews established two types of reasons an individual decides to become tattooed – *motivation* and *meaning*. Motivation relates to why the individual decided to become marked in the first place, while meaning refers to the meaning the tattooed person gave for the chosen design. Motivation and meaning were able to be linked to facets of identity, such as belonging, rites of passage, remembrance, and personal philosophy. A number of the reasons for getting a tattoo were able to be accommodated within the Personal Construct Theory perspective of behaviour as an experiment, supplemented by a narrative focus. Combining grid analyses with insight from the interviews was a unique way to investigate questions about how differently motivated tattooees see themselves and others. Results point to the genesis of a theory of tattoo acquisition that could be the basis for further research.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Who wishes to be creative, must first destroy and smash accepted values.
Nietzsche

Prejudice is the reason of fools.
Voltaire

Pain is life - the sharper, the more evidence of life.
Charles Lamb

The current thesis began by attempting to investigate what meanings individuals attach to their own tattoos. This is an unusual focus for psychology since this topic has been the province of sociologists and anthropologists. Consequently, in the past the approach has been on why *groups* of people tattoo. Few studies have investigated why individuals choose to mark themselves. None have asked the individuals themselves to come up with the reasons for being tattooed and for choosing the particular designs. That is the focus of this thesis.

Many people find it difficult to understand why anyone would choose to have ink injected under their skin. After all, this means taking upon themselves a mark that will last longer than they remain on this earth. Often it is assumed that the tattooed are impetuous and foolish - that they simply fail to consider the ramifications of what they are doing. At other times they are thought to be psychopaths or criminals, or at the very least the type of individual you would not want to have hanging around your house. Love them or hate them, everyone seems to have an opinion on tattoos and being tattooed.

Tattooed individuals are often seen to be of lower socio-economic status – the dregs of society if you will. And if we examine the history of tattooing, we can see that this indeed has been true at various times throughout history in many different countries. However, history also tells us that tattoos hold great value, and even spiritual significance, in many cultures. Tattoos are used to protect against evil spirits, to provide identification when the wearer travels to “the other side”, to aid in healing, and to signify one’s place in the world. The shame of being tattooed with your crime, as happened in ancient and modern times (or in the case of the Jews, being tattooed against their religious beliefs¹), is a stark contrast to the celebration of being tattooed to signify

¹ (seemingly – see Torgovnick, 2008 for an argument denouncing this idea)

your passage into manhood, or your achievement as a chief of your tribe. The accomplishment of a sailor who has crossed the equator, or sailed 5000 miles is commemorated with a special symbol. Members of some biker gangs show their lifelong dedication to their group, as do the Yakuza (Japanese criminal organisation).

Without a proper understanding of what tattoos mean to the individuals who wear them, it seems inappropriate to draw conclusions about these people's characters based on the presence of ink under their skins. Admittedly, the sight of a heavily tattooed individual will often cause one to instinctively "double-take", but perhaps this is not instinct, but merely generations of instilled value judgements. On one level we might be accusing these individuals of stupidity, but perhaps it is we who are being stupid. Some individuals with large tattoos are displaying a level of commitment to a lifestyle that many of us are unable to experience, let alone express.

Shared cultural events may be considered to play a role in some individuals getting a tattoo. As an illustration, a few years before I began this thesis the Olympics had been held in Sydney, and it was the turn of the century - both events individually possible catalysts of tattoo acquisition. The life-changing events of September 11 in the United States had taken place, but I suspect that did not cause many novices to run out and tattoo themselves - not in Australia at least. However in the meantime we have had riots in Cronulla (a respectable Sydney suburb) which did spur numerous "postcode" and similar tattoos, by which the wearer advertised their suburban allegiance.

It should also be noted that when I began this thesis, tattoos were not as prevalent in Australian society as they are now. Many changes have occurred in the last six or seven years, including the number of tattoos readily shown in the media. In my

initial reading about body modification at the end of 2003 there was scant information about the psychology of tattooing, apart from older studies done in mental institutions and prisons. Seeing athletes with tattoos was a rare event, and almost no actors (with the exception of the “outrageous” Angelina Jolie and Billy-Bob Thornton) showed tattoos. By the end of 2005 when I began collecting my data, tattoos were becoming more pronounced in general society. However, this wasn’t enough to stop the odd person giving me a lecture on how “disgusting” tattoos were. Displays of passion such as these continue to occur.

Tattooing became so popular that in mid 2005 two television shows devoted to tattooing were created. “Miami Ink” and “Inked” attempted to give viewers an inside view of what goes on in a tattoo parlour, as well as some insight into the reasons people have for obtaining tattoos. Following on from “Miami Ink” were two spin-off shows: “LA Ink” was first shown in the United States in August 2007; “London Ink” was shown in the United Kingdom the following month. Each show has its own website with many links including tattoo history, and video clips; you can even “test your tattoo IQ”.

The number of tattoos being publicly shown by celebrities has also increased conspicuously. Tattoos are now also being used openly in advertising, not “just” on models and actors, but also used as a warning about lifetime commitments (on a wrinkly old woman). Some individuals have even sold their “real estate” to be tattooed with advertisements (see, e.g., <http://www.celebritysmackblog.com/2009/03/16/seattle-man-sells-tattoo-advertising-on-body/>).

While as youngsters we may have seen the odd “stick-on” tattoo, they abound these days. In 2009 the rugby league season in Australia was celebrated by one newspaper providing a “tattoo” of each team in the competition for readers to wear.

There are tattoo toys, such as tattooed dolls (“Tattoodles”), tattoo birthday cards, tattoo magazines, tattoo conventions and tattoo competitions. We see tattoos on musicians, artists, actors and sportsmen. In short, it is hard to escape tattoos and the increased exposure surely has led many to believe they are now more “acceptable” than once thought. They are definitely more accessible. We would do well to remember that “what is in fashion is constrained by what is made available” (T. W. Butt, Burr, & Epting, 1997, p. 58).

In the current climate it would be remiss not to mention the “trendy” tattoos of the 1990s and 2000s. While many say that these are merely “fashion gone mad”, perhaps they do not realise that getting a tattoo is not as simple as buying the latest shoes. There is considerable cost involved in obtaining a tattoo. There is a toll in time and pain as well as money. There may be regret. Perhaps the younger members of society cannot fully understand the permanency of the tattoos they receive, but surely that doesn’t mean that we should dismiss the entire art form. And it can be seen as an art form. Many fine artists turn to tattoo; tattoo artists are called artists with good reason. Much time and effort is spent to produce a tattoo that looks good. These artists know what will work on each part of the body.

Much research these days is done by “tattooed participants” (or “participant observers”) and I must confess that I, too, am one of these, having when I started, a single tattoo on my shoulder blade. However, I chose not to declare my status to my research participants unless asked. The main reason for this was so that the participants in my study could see themselves as the tattoo experts, while I was “just” the investigator. This meant that they told me all kinds of things that I suspect I would not have been privy to without that appearance of naivety. Having said that, I did not lie, and if I was asked I readily admitted to a tattoo of my own. In most, if not all, cases, this

did not appear to make a difference to the level of disclosure of the participant.

Obviously, having my own tattoo does not make me any kind of expert, so I would have been silly to set myself up as one. What it does do, however, is give me my own tattoo story, my own set of reasons for marking myself in this way.

I discovered that there were deeper meanings for me with regard to my tattoo. My tattoo was drawn by my daughter. We both had the same design and we had our tattoos together. While celebrating the link between us, for me the tattoo also represents one of my core constructs (more about constructs soon), and that made me wonder whether this was true for many people with tattoos. I suspected that other people might also have meanings they attach to their tattoos – meanings beyond what we might see as “obvious”.

1.1 Defining the Scope of the Question

The bulk of academic studies of tattoo to date have been concerned with the social and cultural meanings of tattoos. By contrast, the current thesis takes a psychological perspective, investigating the meanings of tattoos for the individuals who wear them.

Tattooing is one form of body modification. The reasons for limiting the current study to tattooing will be given shortly. However, firstly there will be a brief introduction to body modification.

Body modification means numerous things to many people. Often the definition of body modification depends largely upon the level of exposure of the individual to the various types of body modification. Some draw a distinction between “routine and normative” and “extreme and disvalued” modifications to physical appearance (Foster & Hummel, 2000, p 1). Most people think of body piercing (which excludes the piercing of the ear lobe) as body modification. Why the ear lobe is not included is not

made clear. It may be that it is simply more acceptable in society, or that the damage to the body is minimal. It is difficult to tell.

There are those who see body modification as any modification made to the human form. For these individuals this can range from benign, temporary modifications such as cleaning teeth, washing hair and cutting fingernails, through the “usual” modifications of piercing, scarring and tattooing, to the “extreme” body modifications now practised, such as implants and voluntary amputation. So, what one person sees as “normal, natural hygiene”, another sees as body modification. This latter person may see body piercing, for example, as a “normal expression of self”, while the former sees it as “weird” or “perverted”. How we perceive any particular practise is really dependent upon our societal influences and personal beliefs. For instance, in China women resorted to binding their feet to increase their chances of marriage (Sanders, 1988), something that seems bizarre from our Western perspective.

In addition to the difficulty of agreeing upon a definition, the emotional energy expended on the debate often means that individuals have to “agree to disagree” about body modifications. These days, many people resort to plastic surgery (another body modification) to achieve their ideal body. This is largely accepted by society, until something goes wrong, at which time discussion of the pros and cons once again appears in the media. While it is rather more drastic, plastic surgery could be argued to be no different to exercising. Again, we have a matter of degree. One would expect that the majority of western society would agree that mild exercise is purely done for health reasons, and is perfectly normal. However, when individuals exercise to the degree of body builders (Vale & Juno, 1989), they, too, have transformed their bodies drastically, and have gone beyond what many would consider “normal” and “natural”.

While one would be hard pressed to find anyone who would want to argue that bathing and cleaning your teeth is “weird” or “unhealthy”, the other end of the body modification spectrum is not so readily accepted. Individuals who feel their sense of self is best served by voluntary sacrifice of a limb or part of a limb, are viewed by many as very strange. Indeed, they are most likely to be diagnosed with Body Identity Integrity Disorder². However, on a philosophical level, it would appear that they are not very different from those individuals who desire gender reassignment³.

Another area of body modification that may be overlooked at times is that of bodily modification by technology (Featherstone, 2000). These modifications range from devices used to enhance bodily functions, such as spectacles, to (for some) the building of technological environments, such as a motor car or airplane, around the human body. These advancements mean that it is necessary to replace human functions such as sight and motor response by computers in order to accommodate the increased demands of the technology. Technology can also be built into the human body to augment or replace inner organs, body surfaces, limbs, and senses. A cochlear implant is one such example. Yet even a device such as this causes differences of opinion (Rodrigues, 2007).

1.1.1 Limiting the Investigation to Tattooing

The examples just given highlight the difficulty of arriving at an agreed-upon definition of body modification. Even if the discussion were to be limited to body piercing, that can be further separated into ear lobe piercing and “other” piercings. Due to this difficulty in arriving at a simple definition of body modification, it was decided

² A term coined by First (2005) to describe a psychological disorder where the sufferer claims to have had a lifelong desire for amputation. However, there is currently disagreement over the inclusion of this disorder in the DSM.

³ for an in-depth discussion of this idea, see Bayne and Levy, 2005.

to investigate only tattooing, which has the advantage that it is a body modification with a definition that is clear and unambiguous.

Tattooing is seen as a body modification, but often it is seen as somehow “separate” or “different” from piercing. The obvious distinction is that tattooing is permanent, whereas most people see piercing as temporary (ignoring the scarring, of course). Another distinction is the added individuality available from tattoo. When an individual has a piercing in their navel, they have a piercing in their navel. The most they can do to be different is to change the jewellery. If an individual has a tattoo on their stomach, there are many other variables that can be taken into consideration. Size, colour and actual placement are three of these, but the major difference is the content. The design of a tattoo can be any one of an endless number of options. It can also be re-done with a different design at any time.

For the purposes of this thesis, a tattoo is any indelible mark made with ink or similar colouring material in the skin of a human being. While there are many ways of performing this marking, there will be no distinction drawn between tattooing done in the traditional ways (hand-picked or hammered into the skin) and tattooing done by machine. Similarly, no distinction will be drawn between black and coloured tattoos, traditional, “Sailor Jerry”, “tribal”, jail-house, or other tattoos.

In addition to examining tattooing specifically, rather than body modification in general, it should be mentioned that the current thesis limited the investigation to individuals with tattoos. In other words, no comparisons were made between tattooees and non-tattooed people. This was deliberate. Using non-tattooed individuals as a comparison group immediately sets these participants up as the “normal” control group, leaving nowhere for the tattooed participants to be placed other than in an “abnormal” experimental group. This would place the current thesis on a par with the majority of

prior research that examined only deviant populations. Further, the approach taken in the current thesis was to focus on the tattoos, not on the contrast of lack of tattoos, and to examine individual differences within a group of tattooed individuals. Lastly, there could be no way of guaranteeing that the non-tattooed participants would not have become tattooees at some later stage.

1.2 Prevalence of Tattooing

It is extremely difficult to pinpoint exactly the proportion of the general public that have tattoos. Early literature (Lombroso, 1896) gave figures for tattooing of 1.2% among soldiers, and 10% of adult and 3.9% of child criminals. Cited in that same article were figures from Germany of 2% for criminals and 9.5% for soldiers.

In a study of military recruits in 1999, Stephens (2003) cited prevalence rates of 10% - 30% in the general adolescent population. It should be noted that these adolescents may not have been typical of all adolescents, as they were about to join the military. However, the study found that 28% of respondents had tattoos when entering military service. When broken down by gender, 46% of the females and 26% of the males were tattooed. The study sample was 88% male, 12% female, and had a mean age of 21 years.

Hawkes, Senn and Thorn (2004) cited prevalence rates of 10% – 20% for American males and 7% for females from a study in 1993 (Copes & Forsyth), but themselves found figures of 12% for men and 23% for women. While Copes and Forsyth gave no age range for their prevalence rates, Hawkes et al. used Canadian undergraduates in their study. They believed their figures supported claims that western women may be more than half the individuals currently obtaining tattoos. A US study conducted in 2004 found a nationwide rate of 24% with no gender differences in prevalence (Guttman, 2006). Another study conducted in 2004 (Laumann & Derick,

2006) also found a 24% rate overall, with 22% of women and 26% of men having tattoos. Figures cited by vanishingtattoo.com (2006) also suggest that the rates in the genders are much closer – 16% for males and 15% for females. Two studies carried out on university students five years apart (Mayers & Chiffreller, 2008; Mayers, Judelson, Moriarty, & Rundell, 2002) found almost identical prevalence rates for tattooing (23% in 2001 and 22% in 2006) with no significant differences found between males and females.

Some of this variation may be due to differences in age of samples studied. Prevalence rates vary between age groups – from 7% in respondents over 65, to 36% in respondents aged between 25 and 29 (vanishingtattoo.com, 2006). These rates are also affected by many socio-economic variables. For instance, Rooks, Roberts and Scheltema (2000) found a higher rate for patients compared to staff in a hospital emergency department. Prevalence rates also differed between age groups in that study. The most up-to-date figures published for college students in America cite a tattoo “rate” of 14% (Koch, Roberts, Armstrong, & Owen, 2010) with no distinctions drawn between gender or any other variables.

Figures for Australia are even more difficult to obtain. In 1998, a rate of approximately 10% for tattooing in Australia was cited (Makkai & McAllister, 2001). According to that study, the prevalence rate for males was 11.9%, statistically significantly different from that for females which was 8.5% ($p < .01$, 2 tails). Frequency of tattooing for both males and females peaked during the 19 to 23 year age range, declining relatively steadily after that, with a dip in the 49 to 53 year range for females and slightly later for males. In a study of young offenders in South Australia, Putnins (2002) cited rates of 17% for males (mean age 16.0 years) and 30% for females

(mean age 15.3 years). No more up-to-date prevalence rates for tattooing in Australia have been found.

An article in an Australian newspaper (“The Age”) in July 2003 used the number of tattoo parlours as an indication of the prevalence of tattoos (Coslovich, 2003). The article stated that in 1960 there were only three or four tattoo studios in Victoria, 60 in 1994, and by 2003 there were 140. Table 1.1 shows the numbers of tattoo parlours and related businesses in various states of Australia as obtained from the electronic yellow pages in March 2010.

Table 1.1 shows that in Australia at least the number of tattoo parlours has continued to increase over the past four years. These figures included beauty salons that advertised cosmetic tattooing. Additional entries in 2010 not found in 2006 included eyebrow, eyeliner, lip and blush tattooing. These additional entries ranged from none in some states to seven in each of New South Wales and Queensland. Such figures demonstrate that interest in tattooing has not waned, and other forms of tattooing are becoming more popular - even though the number of removal businesses has grown in some states.

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Table 1.1

Comparison of frequencies of tattoo-related businesses listed in the electronic yellow pages in Australian states in March 2010
(late 2006 figures are in brackets)

	Tattoo parlours	Tattoo removal	Beauty salons with cosmetic tattooing
NSW	206 (151)	26 (28)	69 (60)
QLD	194 (153)	12 (13)	66 (49)
VIC	228 (185)	6 (11)	39 (36)
ACT	17 (10)	1 (1)	5 (5)
SA	47 (32)	9 (2)	8 (7)
WA	59 (51)	3 (0)	1 (1)
TAS	15 (12)	1 (1)	5 (7)

The data for the current study was collected at the end of 2005 and the beginning of 2006. It could be argued that this was early in the current phase of popularity of tattooing. Searching “tattoo” in available databases, such as Informaworld and Expanded Academic ASAP shows that compared with the number of studies of tattooing performed to date, studies performed up to the end of 2005 contributed between 38% and 68% of the total, depending on the database searched. However, in PsycInfo – a psychological database - studies performed up to the end of 2005 contribute only 4.5% of the total studies of tattooing found using a similar search. These figures indicate an increase in the amount of research into tattooing in all areas, with an overwhelming increase in psychological studies of tattooing. It can also be seen from these figures that at the end of 2005 very little research into tattooing from a psychological perspective had been performed, demonstrating the gap in the literature that the current thesis attempts to fill. This thesis aims to provide knowledge of the

individual reasons behind obtaining a tattoo, rather than reiterate the cultural reasons usually associated with this practise.

Before examining the literature on tattooing, mention should be made of the theoretical positions that inform the current thesis. Personal Construct Theory (PCT: Kelly, 1991b) was the overarching position taken in the current thesis. First and foremost, PCT is a constructivist theory. Personal Construct Theory allows both quantitative and qualitative methods to be applied. The current study utilised both. Personal Construct Theory endorses a credulous approach, and this idea was followed in the data collection – a semi-structured interview. Since this interview was transcribed and coded, a discussion of qualitative methods is germane. Development of a coded system further necessitates a discussion of Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

1.3 Personal Construct Theory

The focus of this thesis was to understand the meanings individuals attach to their tattoos. While using a questionnaire may have given one perspective on tattoos, it was thought that a more individual approach would give greater insight into the personal meanings of the tattooees. Personal Construct Theory (Kelly, 1991b) was able to provide the means to achieve this aim, and was also an excellent theoretical underpinning for this thesis.

Personal Construct Psychology (PCP: Kelly, 1991b) proposes that individuals use bipolar *constructs* that enable them to make sense of the world. Constructs are transparent templates which we create and then attempt to fit to the realities of the world, that is, personal interpretations of reality (Kelly, 1991b, p. 7). Since constructs are bipolar, it is necessary to understand both poles in order to define a construct. To know what a person means by “kind” for example, we need to know what they mean by

“not kind”. The question of whether, once one pole of a construct has been identified, the other pole is an *opposite* or a *contrast* (Neimeyer, Bowman, & Saferstein, 2005) is addressed in Section 5.7.2.1. Labelling a construct pole can be difficult at times, commonly because some constructs are formed before we have language to label them (Kelly, 1991b); others may not correspond readily to words.

The Psychology of Personal Constructs (Kelly, 1991b) is based on the philosophical assumption of *constructive alternativism*. This is the view that “all of our present interpretations of the universe are subject to revision or replacement” (Kelly, 1991b, p. 11). What matters is not so much what happens, but how we construe what happens. This construal may be reviewed or updated at any time.

Our constructs are arranged hierarchically, with core constructs usually being *superordinate* or more meaningful than other peripheral constructs. Most importantly, we hold constructs about our *Self*. Such constructs include more superordinate ones, viz. *core constructs* – “those which govern a persons’ maintenance processes – that is, those by which he maintains his identity and existence” (Kelly, 1991b, p. 356).

Elements are the things we *construe* (Kelly, 1991b). While we can construe objects, it could be argued that the most useful constructs are those with which we construe people, as it is people and our relationships with them that are central to the way we operate in the world. The relationship between elements and the constructs used to construe them can be demonstrated with a *Repertory Grid* (Fransella, Bell, & Bannister, 2004; Jankowicz, 2004; Kelly, 1991b). A repertory grid is a matrix that contains elements on one axis and constructs on the other. The elements are usually listed across the top of the grid, while the poles of each construct are found at either end of the relevant row. Elements are rated on each construct in the grid. This can be as simple as a yes/no rating, or a Likert-type scale can be used. Grids can be used both in

therapeutic contexts and in research. Grids are usually (in therapy) analysed singly, but analyses of a group of grids are also possible. It should be noted that while the use of grids is often advantageous, there are those who feel them inadequate for some research situations (Burr & Butt, 1997; Leitner, 1985).

Personal Construct Theory (Kelly, 1991b) allows for both idiographic and nomothetic viewpoints. Therefore, in the current thesis it was possible to obtain individuals' perspectives on their tattoos, while simultaneously taking a more collective approach when desired. In addition, as mentioned above, PCT can accommodate both qualitative and quantitative methods.

When using a Personal Construct perspective in research, there is no standard interview technique. However, a useful stance when interviewing is to use Kelly's (1991b) *credulous approach* (Burr & Butt, 1997; Leitner, 1985), which involves learning the language of the participant. We start by taking what the participant says and does "at face value" (Kelly, 1991b, p. 121). The interviewer should "take[s] at face value what he sees and hears about his subject's constructs" (Kelly, 1991b, p. 121). Using a credulous approach involves trying to subsume the participant's construct system. The emphasis is on achieving a shared understanding – to walk a mile in their shoes. Personal Construct Theory encourages us not to "discard information given by the client merely because it does not conform to what appear to be the facts" (Kelly, 1991b, p. 241).

One technique provided by PCT (Kelly, 1991b) is that of the *self-characterisation*. Here the individual writes about him- or herself as if they were a character in a play. The characterisation is written in the third person, in order to give the writer a little more objectivity. The current thesis utilised this idea when examining the transcripts of the interviews, treating what each participant said as a form of *tattoo-*

characterisation. In talking about their tattoos, participants also spoke about themselves, while at the same time maintaining a degree of objectivity. Analysis of tattoo-characterisations revealed some of the constructs of the participants.

Kelly (1970, 1991b) argued that man can be viewed as a scientist. Taking this perspective, we understand that man uses his behaviour to ask questions. We can therefore utilise this view in our attempts to understand tattooing. Our line of enquiry is concentrated on exploring what questions the tattooee may be trying to answer, what experiment is being carried out. The application of this idea to the explanation of tattooing is discussed further in Section 4.6.

Kelly's (Kelly, 1970, 1991b) perspective maintains that reflexivity is necessary when attempting to describe any human behaviour. If we develop a theory of human behaviour, the theory must apply equally to the theorist. Reflexivity is part of a qualitative approach to enquiry and has been employed in the current thesis. The need for a reflexive view of self is discussed in Section 2.4.2.

Laddering is a process that is argued to access more meaningful constructs in the individual's construction system (Fransella, 2003a; Walker & Crittenden, in press). Laddering involves successively focussing on construct poles. The participant chooses the more meaningful pole, and then why that pole is important to the individual is explored.

The perspective of constructive alternativism makes room for the approach taken in the current thesis. Not only did it allow for reconstrual of the thesis as it progressed, taking a constructivist approach meant that the thesis was written with a sense of transparency. Unlike a "typical" thesis that could be viewed as having had cosmetic surgery so it appears that everything worked out logically and sequentially, the current

thesis is offered in a more “natural state”, with the iterations of theory building and analysis visible.

To summarise, the idea of reconstruing was extremely important to the current thesis. The notion that there are multiple constructions that can be placed on any event is one that should be kept in mind. In addition, this approach meant that the current thesis was reconstrued as it progressed. Personal Construct Theory (Kelly, 1991b) allows for both idiographic and nomothetic appraisal of data. Further both qualitative and quantitative methods are able to be employed. A credulous approach means that participants’ views can be expressed without the participant feeling judged. The *tattoo-characterisation* allowed the participants to talk about themselves with a degree of objectivity. Understanding or subsuming the participants construct systems is extremely important, as their construct systems, including the constructs they apply to themselves, help them make sense of the world.

1.4 Qualitative Research

While most psychologists are trained extensively in the conduct of research using quantitative methods, less attention is paid to qualitative approaches. As at least some of the questions posed in this thesis can only be answered in this way, a brief discussion of qualitative methodology is in order. Qualitative research is concerned with qualities (of participants, of the experience of being tattooed, of one’s life story), rather than quantities. “A primary purpose of qualitative research is to describe and clarify experience as it is lived and constituted in awareness” (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 138). Importantly, qualitative research is emic and idiographic (Morrow, 2007).

Much upheaval has happened during the “history” of qualitative research – definition and focus often depended on the prevailing zeitgeist and social climate

(Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The focus has changed over time, moving from a concern with objectivity, through to ethnography and the era of the “participant observer” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). At the same time, definitions concerning approaches to research were adapted according to the current moment, for example, traditional, modernist, postmodern, and post-experimental. In general, psychology has been concerned with positivist and post-positivist research paradigms (Ponterotto, 2005). Quantitative methods are usually associated with these perspectives, resulting in a narrow focus that has led to a limited ability to advance the field (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Further, this has meant that the assessment of qualitative research is also rooted in the quantitative tradition (Morrow, 2005), which can be problematic. For example, questionnaires commonly used in quantitative research are inadequate when attempting to capture the vertical depth of individual experience (Polkinghorne, 2005).

While definitions of qualitative research are not unproblematic (R. C. Bell, personal communication, 30th August, 2010), one generic definition has been offered:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible.... This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3).

In permitting more than one construction of reality, a qualitative perspective allows for development of new ideas and theories, thus opening up the field of enquiry. In this way, qualitative research is related to a constructivist point of view (Ponterotto, 2005). However, we need also to be mindful of what constitutes “good” research when coming from a qualitative perspective (Elliott, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999; Morrow, 2005). Again, we must consider our paradigmatic underpinnings while assessing the quality or otherwise of this research. Therefore, we need to resist the temptation to lump

all qualitative research in together; different types of qualitative research can lead to different kinds of knowledge claims (Morrow, 2005).

Further development in qualitative methods saw the birth of Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) - a theory “that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents” (A. L. Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 23). The “discovery of theory from data” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 1) was deemed to be the solution to the problem of finding suitable theories to fit data obtained in social research. Glaser and Strauss believed the focus should be the generation of theory. The aim was to find a core category that was grounded in the data while simultaneously being at a high level of abstraction (Robson, 2002). Coding data allowed for definition and further understanding (Charmaz, 2006). It allowed researchers to tease apart the mass of data acquired during, for example, an interview, and sort it into more “manageable” chunks. Similar events were grouped into categories or concepts, which are the building blocks of theory (A. L. Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

One benefit of using the Grounded Theory approach is that categories are permitted to emerge, rather than the research being constrained to the use of previously defined categories (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Morrow, 2007). This approach facilitates the building of (new) theory (Morrow, 2007). Developing a theory using this technique involved three major types of coding: open coding; axial coding; and selective coding (A. L. Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Open coding was the step during which the categories are identified and developed. Axial coding involved differentiating sub-categories of those broader categories. Finally, selective coding entailed the setting up of relationships between the categories and creating the theory. This approach was extremely useful in the current study, as allowing categories to emerge meant that richer

data was available. Using standard quantitative techniques would have meant that many categories for reasons for tattooing would not have come to light.

Qualitative analysis should reflect the diversity of experience of the individuals being investigated (Ziebland & McPherson, 2006). Therefore, we should look to include even very rare experiences. It is not only the most frequent experiences that are meaningful in a qualitative setting.

Another aspect of qualitative research that may be overlooked is the interaction between the investigator and the object of investigation. In their pursuit of “pure” science, quantitative methodologies would have us believe this is impossible. However, it is often the case in qualitative research that the researcher is changed by the interaction that is the research process (Ponterotto, 2005).

Personal Construct Theory (Kelly, 1991b) and Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), while not having a “common” ground as such, both allow for the possibility of something other than the “norm” in psychological theory and research. PCT contends that there are many ways to view a problem, indeed many ways to view the world, and that what we see and experience is contingent upon our construction systems. PCT allows for the view of the individual, and permits the expansion of our view of what is possible in psychology and psychological research. This means we are not constrained by the methods of prior research, but are free to construe research methodology and analysis in any way we choose.

Grounded Theory encourages the development of theory *from* data - it does not insist on a particular type of data, nor does it require a particular form of research method. Therefore it can be seen that Grounded Theory also frees the researcher to expand his or her view of what is possible in research. These methodologies provided a synergistic framework for the current thesis.

1.5 Final Comments and Overview of Thesis

This chapter has examined the theoretical topics and related methodologies that are believed to be relevant to the current thesis. Firstly the scope of the question was defined, and the prevalence of tattooing addressed. Personal Construct Theory was apposite to the current thesis. Not only did it provide an underpinning for the thesis as a whole, the credulous approach encouraged by Kelly (1991b) was used in the interviews. Further, one of the methods of PCT (Repertory Grid) was used to obtain additional (quantitative) data. Finally, a constructivist approach to the writing of the thesis was adopted. This included the re-working of the results as mentioned above, and the belief that the process of the thesis should be transparent, rather than hidden in a write-up that appears *as if* everything worked exactly according to plan.

The discussions around qualitative research methods and Grounded Theory inform the method used in the current thesis. Using a Grounded Theory approach meant that the categories were permitted to emerge from the data, rather than having them be imposed by the researcher solely before the study began. In addition, Grounded Theory, together with a constructivist approach provided a justification for a transparent review of the analysis and results obtained.

Chapter Two begins with a discussion of society and culture, and the ways in which tattoo has been used and researched in these areas. This is followed by a section on the body which includes such topics as body boundary, body image, and the relationship of tattoos to various aspects of the body. Chapter Three examines prior psychological research into tattooing, firstly acknowledging the earlier focus on deviance in psychological studies of tattoos, before examining studies of tattooing that have taken a more positive view. Chapter Four provides an overview and discussion of the topic of identity. Since it the conclusion of this thesis was that tattoos are often used

to display one or many facets of an individual's identity, it was necessary to address this topic. Various approaches are discussed, along with theories relevant to the current thesis. The theoretical and empirical groups for tattoo reasons are also detailed, followed by the aim of the current thesis, and the research questions addressed. Chapter Five contains the method utilised in the current study and Chapter Six, the results. Chapter Seven contains the discussion, including limitations and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2

Tattoo, Social Functioning, and the Body

Skin is a marked surface inscribed with texts of race, gender, sexuality, class and age before it is marked by ink.

Tattoo is probably the antithesis of fashion. After all, isn't following fashion about putting on and taking off whatever the latest "fad" is? Once you have a tattoo, it's not that easy to take it off!

Tattooing has never existed in a vacuum. It has always played an important role in the social life of those who practiced it, and throughout history it has appeared in many guises.

Not only is the self entwined in society; it owes society its existence in the most literal sense.

2.1 Introduction

The act of obtaining a tattoo is often influenced by the social structures of which the individual is a member. Tattoos have been used for many purposes in different parts of the world. In some cases, the tattoo is gained as a mark of defiance. In other cases it is an attempt to fit in to a particular societal group. Once marked, the new identity that is the tattooed person can have an effect on the individual's social behaviours and how society relates to them.

Society and culture play a part in both how we see ourselves, and how we interpret our own and others' bodies, including the ways in which we choose to ornament them. After briefly discussing society and culture and some of the ways tattoos have been used, for example to denote membership, as well as exclusion, this chapter gives a broad overview of the place of the body in a discussion of tattoos. Firstly the notion of a body boundary is visited. A discussion of the body and body image is followed by crucial studies that have investigated body image. The notion of appearance investment and its relevance to a discussion of tattooing are then considered. Finally, the relationship of tattooing to the body in illness and health is followed by a discussion of the part the body plays in construing gender identity and sexuality.

2.2 Society and Culture

It has been argued that the purpose of society is to cater to the basic needs of humans (G. H. Mead, 1934/1967). As we develop, so do our individual needs – food, shelter, companionship, procreation. Further, as individuals evolve, so does the society in which they live.

Interactions with society play a crucial part in the development of the self, which Mead (1934/1967) saw as socially constructed. He further proposed that self is likewise

influential in the development of society. While society is basically a group of individuals living in a community, their ways of behaving may be disparate. It has been argued (Kalekin-Fishman, 2003, p. 145) that relying on PCT “it becomes possible to trace specific connections between macro-frameworks conceived in different ways, and the sundry types of individuals that make up any society”. From a constructivist perspective, society is essential to our construing (Kelly, 1991b), as validation provided by members of society can be used to test our hypotheses about people in our world.

Corporal marking is the visible sign of the history of human society from the family onward in growing complexity.

(Hambly, 1925, p. 242)

Culture pertains to the common ways of living of members of a particular group, and the passing on of these customs to the next generation. As we become part of a culture we participate in shared construing (Scheer, 2003). At the same time our personal meaning-making is shaped by the individuals we encounter in various cultures (Leitner, Begley, & Faidley, 1996).

This view is similar to that proposed by Wicks and Grandy (2007), who defined *culture* as “interpretations of the meanings associated with a diverse range of cultural manifestations such as stories, formal/informal practices, and physical arrangements” (p. 351). Cultural identity was seen to be *participation* in a collectivity, which was defined as “a collection of bodies (people) that represent a structure around which borders can be drawn” (p. 351). Contradictions uncovered led the researchers to conclude that cultural boundaries are both ill-defined and unstable. If the usual assumptions about studying culture are challenged, ambiguity may need to be accepted as a feature of culture. If that is the case, then we need to recognise, especially in the

case of research into tattooees, that it may be difficult, or even impossible, to locate them in a single culture or identity.

For some, cultural identity has been considered as being situated, in part, in the body (Awofeso, 2002), and tattoos can be used to mark cultural as well as other group identities. These group identities may be large- or small-scale. As people, we can be culturally identified to a degree by aspects of our bodies alone – skin colour and general height are two examples. The way we speak can often signify where we grew up. Other non-verbal cues such as amount of eye-contact and degree of physical separation when conversing also differ between cultural groups.

For many individuals, their ways of making sense of the world are different from the meanings shared by their broad cultural group. One way of affirming these unique parts of self is to participate in an alternative cultural group (Leitner, et al., 1996). These alternative subgroups contribute toward the transition of the larger culture in many ways. Affirmation of the uniqueness of some parts of our construing is provided by members of our subgroup (Leitner, et al.). This leads to a stronger sense of personal identity and a confidence to utilise these beliefs in our social life. Subsequent to this personal clarity we can be more emphatic in our demands for social validation from our broader cultural group.

The unmarked body is a raw, inarticulate, mute body. It is only when the body acquires the “Marks of Civilization” that it begins to communicate and becomes an active part of the social body.

(Levi-Strauss, in Vale & Juno, 1989, p. 158)

Cultures are often identified by their dress or other adornments. As an illustration, we know a traditional Pacific Islander wears a grass skirt. It would look strange if we went to Buckingham Palace and the Beefeaters were so attired. Similarly, a big woolly black hat would seem out of place in the tropics. There are other forms of

dress, such as “gothic” attire, that are part of a culture that is not limited by geographical boundaries⁴. Similarly, participants in the Punk culture used safety pins and Mohawks to display their cultural affiliation. Tattoos have been used to demonstrate belonging or affiliation to many different subgroups. These include the older stereotypes of sailors, bikers and criminals as well as punks and others who consider themselves “hard core” such as heavy metal musicians. Tattoos can be seen to be an insignia of membership of a particular culture or collectivity in many instances. An illustrative example, the naval collectivity, will now be discussed. This will be followed by a discussion of the use of tattoos as stigma, and then a specific cultural use of tattoo – *ta moko* in New Zealand.

2.2.1 Tattoos as Symbols of Belonging: the Naval Collectivity

As humans, we feel a need to belong, and many of us choose to display our allegiance. In many parts of the world personal, family, clan, tribe, and secret society are all marked with special designs (Hambly, 1925). These designs signify something about the wearer to other members of the group.

Sailors are one group that is most often associated with being tattooed. Tattooing became popular in the British Navy after James Cook’s visit to Polynesia in 1769 where members of his crew acquired tattoos (Gilbert, 2000). During the 19th century, tattooing flourished in England, largely due to the tradition of tattooing in the British Navy (Gilbert, 2000). Tattoos of soldiers’ regimental crest were believed to encourage *esprit de corps* as well as aiding in identification. Sailors from many countries were tattooed, including England, Italy, Greece, Spain, Japan, Germany, Scandinavia and America (Sinclair, 1908).

⁴ Participants of the gothic subculture wear various styles of fashion including androgynous, punk and what could be construed as morbid fashion – black hair, black lipstick, and black clothes – no matter where they live.

For the most part, seafaring tattoos were symbols that had particular significance (Chinchilla, 2002). Different symbols were tattooed after a sailor had crossed the International Date Line (usually a dragon) or when he had sailed 5000 miles (two swallows). Some sailors chose to tattoo the names of ports they had visited. “*HOLD FAST*” on the knuckles was another popular sailors’ tattoo. Tattooing a rooster and a pig on your ankles was supposed to keep a sailor from drowning (Chinchilla, 2002); two screw propellers on the buttocks was another popular talisman for survival.

2.2.2 Tattoos as Stigma: the Mark of Social Exclusion

As well as being used to denote position in society, tattoos have been used to signify exclusion, often due to socially unacceptable behaviour. In ancient times the Greeks tattooed criminals and slaves (Chinchilla, 2002), and women were marked by their husbands to remind them of their crimes (Jones, 1987). Persians used tattoos on prisoners of war as well as slaves. The Romans used tattoos to identify deserters from their armies (Gilbert, 2000).

Criminals in many countries were forcibly tattooed. Indigenous Burmese were tattooed on the forehead with their crime (Hambly, 1925). France, England, Japan and Russia have at various times tattooed criminals. Deserters from the British Army were tattooed with a “D” (Chinchilla, 2002). Perhaps the most disturbing case of tattooing as a mark of shame comes from the Nazis, who tattooed Jews, with the effect that the prisoners felt even more isolated. This practise was also believed to be against the Jewish religion, adding a fear of eternal punishment to their already tortured existence.

2.2.3 A Specific Cultural Use of Tattoo: ta moko in New Zealand

Tattooing differs around the globe and although no single culture is more important than another, the Maori tattoo has been chosen as an example of cultural

tattooing since it is both distinctive and “close to home”. In New Zealand the age-old Maori traditions are still upheld by some. The Maori language is still spoken by many, and included in the general life of the people, such as on packaging in supermarkets. The haka is still performed before battles (such as sporting “battles”). At the same time the country and its entire people are part of the 21st Century.

New Zealand is a country that has an extremely characteristic form of tattoo (*ta moko*) which is central to Maori tradition (Dill, 2003). Tattooing in New Zealand is unique, because the designs are *carved* into the skin (Gilbert, 2000; Hambly, 1925). This method of tattooing is still performed by some artists. Other tattoos are “pricked” or hammered into the skin, with the introduction of materials such as ink or ashes creating the colour. The dancing of the haka would not be nearly as frightening if the Maori had not tattooed their awesome faces. Unfortunately, tattooed heads were used to trade for guns for some period of time, resulting in the deaths of many Maori (Gilbert, 2000). This trafficking did not decline until 1831, when the importation of heads was banned by Australia.

Facial tattoos were used as signatures by Maori chiefs (Hambly, 1925). The *moko* contains most importantly the tribal history of the wearer, including who their ancestors were, as well as their current place in the tribe (Dill, 2003). In addition to the identity aspect, the acquisition of a *moko* can be used to show the transition from one social status to the next (Phillipps, 1966). This thus both reflects and enhances the person’s prestige in the tribe. Pritchard (2000, 2001) has examined the significance of the Maori tattoo for cultural purposes and the use of Maori tattoo for identity.

In a New Zealand study involving 135 undergraduate psychology students an on-line survey was used to investigate views on cultural tattoos (Nikora & Te Awekotuku, 2002). Participants were encouraged to complete the sentence “I think that

cultural tattoos are because” (p. 131). Responses were coded, with multiple codings being permitted. Group belonging was given as the reason for cultural tattoos by 70% of the participants. The major reason for obtaining a tattoo was given as identity (32%). This study demonstrates that even using a sample from a country with a history of tattoo for specific cultural purposes, many use their tattoos for the additional purpose of expressing a facet of their identity.

To summarise, New Zealand is one country that maintains, to some degree, their tattooing heritage. Tattoos in New Zealand can be used to demonstrate a number of uses for this skin marking. They play a large part in Maori custom, being used for identification purposes, as well as to signify achievements within the tribe. The wearer’s position in the tribe is another aspect of their *moko*, and an added benefit is the fearsome sight of a tattooed Maori face performing the ritual haka.

2.2.4 Tattoos, Illness, and Health

It is possible that tattoos were used therapeutically even before other purposes. Tattooing has a long history of being considered useful for medicinal treatment (Vassileva & Hristakieva, 2007). Otzi, the “iceman” was discovered in October, 1991 (Seidler et al., 1992) and was found to have tattoos on his ankles, back (above his kidneys) and inside his left knee. This mummified body was believed to be over 5000 years old. The majority of the tattoo marks were on acupuncture points, suggesting that the tattoos were used therapeutically (Gilbert, 2000). Papers documenting the use of tattoos for medical reasons first appeared in the mid 1800s (Vassileva & Hristakieva, 2007). Tattoos have been used by health professionals for covering up scars, to disguise baldness, to simulate missing eyebrows and to colour-match skin grafts, as well as to mark lesions before surgery or therapy is undertaken.

Currently, however, the focus of the medical profession appears to be a discussion of the potential health risks involved in obtaining a tattoo, including HIV/AIDS, hepatitis when sterilisation procedures are not followed adequately, and reactions to the inks used (see, for example, Larzo & Poe, 2006). An observational study of infection control practices in tattoo and piercing premises in Australia reported low figures relating to knowledge of the purposes of sterilisation and disinfection (Oberdorfer, Wiggers, Bowman, & Lecathelinais, 2003). At the same time, however, it has been reported in an American study that 98% of tattooees believed that they were tattooed in a clean studio and 93% report seeing sterilisation of the tattoo gun (Millner & Eichold, 2001). These authors continue to stress the need for education about the health risks associated with tattoos. At least one attempt has been made to educate adolescents about the risks, with the development of a health education brochure aimed at encouraging adolescents to make more informed tattoo choices (Armstrong & McConnell, 1994a).

Despite the view that obtaining a tattoo is risky, and complications are rife, research says otherwise. Neither a study designed to investigate the incidence of medical complications of tattoos (Mayers, et al., 2002), nor a further study comparing results five years later (Mayers & Chiffriller, 2008), found any complications associated with tattooing.

While tattoos are used cosmetically (De Cuyper, 2008)⁵, tattoos are also used for sound therapeutic reasons (Vassileva & Hristakieva, 2007). More specifically, tattoo has been used in the reconstruction of the nipple-areola complex after breast surgery, such as a mastectomy (El-Ali, Dalal, & Kat, 2006; Farhadi, Maksvytyte, Schaefer, Pierer, &

⁵ often referred to as “permanent make-up”

Scheufler, 2006). Patients reported that tattooing significantly enhanced the feeling of being almost “normal” after a long period of rehabilitation.

We can see that despite a commonly held view of tattoos being risky and holding no positive attributes at all, there is an alternative. Many researchers have found an increase in self-esteem when tattoos are used to enhance the body after illness or surgery. If assumptions about the “ice man” are correct, then tattoos have been used therapeutically for over 5000 years, and their continued use today is considered beneficial in the main for all those receiving them.

To summarise this section on society and culture, and the use of tattoos, throughout history tattoos have been an important part of the social lives of many people. As demonstrated, tattoos can be a sign of exclusion, such as used on criminals, or as a sign of group membership or belonging. In addition to marking group membership, cultures such as the Maori have used tattoos to signify achievements such as reaching a particular status in the tribe or attaining manhood. The Maori also use their facial tattoos to designate their family history, thus providing a mark of identity.

Social explanations of tattooing are focussed on *group* reasons for the practise. While this approach is valid and extremely important, especially in the context of anthropological and sociological studies, it fails to investigate why a particular individual might choose to put ink permanently into his or her skin, especially when that individual does not belong to a culture with a strong history of tattooing. The current thesis concentrates on the individual’s use of tattooing, and the psychological meanings that each individual attaches to his or her tattoo(s) in a society which does not have a strong tradition of tattooing.

2.3 The Body

The body is of major importance to a study of tattoo. Our bodies are often seen as the site for our selves. The skin has often been used to express a variety of emotions and desires, as well as being viewed as a protective enclosure for the body (Palermo, 2011). Therefore, this section will begin with a discussion of the notion of a body boundary. Body image is then discussed, together with the relationship between body image and cosmetic surgery, as it can be viewed as philosophically similar to tattooing. The section concludes with an examination of studies that attempt to link body modification and pathology.

2.3.1 Body Boundary/Body Barrier

The majority of us in western societies see ourselves as being contained within our skin. However, some people find it difficult to differentiate between self and not-self. While this is common in very young babies, as we mature we are expected to gain some sense of where we end and others begin.

What lives in the body exceeds articulation; it marks the boundary of flesh as the border of knowing.

(Pineau, 2000, p. 13)

The idea of a body boundary or “barrier” has been investigated empirically, especially with regard to deviant behaviour. Body barrier is an indication of the individual’s ability to discriminate between physical self and not-self (Harry, 1987; Wilson, 2006). Wilson (2006) argued that high barrier individuals have a clear sense of their own body boundaries while individuals with low barrier personalities are said to be less sociable and more introverted, often appearing narcissistic. He proposed that low barrier individuals may participate in activities that involve the skin (the body boundary), including sadomasochism and mild bondage.

With barrier scores obtained from inkblot tests used as measures of perception of body boundaries, mixed results have been obtained. In a study involving 75 juvenile detainees, Megargee (1965) correlated inkblot barrier scores and measures of aggression. Barrier scores were found to be negatively related to delinquency, with the more seriously delinquent youths showing statistically significantly lower barrier scores. It was found that low barrier scores were related to impulsiveness, anger, and lack of inhibition. It was suggested that if barrier scores are related to the individual's body boundary perceptions, adolescents are more likely to obtain low scores due to difficulties in establishing ego identity.

A study of 62 prisoners found tattooed prisoners had significantly more positive feelings about their bodies than non-tattooed prisoners (Mosher, Oliver, & Dolgan, 1967). This finding was echoed by Drews, Allison and Probst (2000). It was also found that tattooed prisoners had significantly higher barrier scores (Mosher, et al., 1967). The authors noted that this was in direction opposition to the findings of Megargee (1965). However they suggested that future research should attempt to separate prisoners by severity of crime in an attempt to unravel this mystery.

A third study concerning body boundaries conducted on 45 violent offenders (Harry, 1997) found no significant differences in body boundaries between tattooed and non-tattooed inmates. However, the author concluded that tattooed and non-tattooed had different body experiences, leading him to suggest a possible difference in self-concept between the two groups. This discrepancy in findings between Mosher et al. (1967) and Harry (1987) may possibly be explained by examination of the crimes of the prisoners in each case. As stated, in Harry's research the offenders were violent, whereas in the Mosher et al. study the majority of inmates were imprisoned for automobile theft.

It has been argued (Leitner, Faidley, & Celentana, 2000) that the presence of a “skin barrier” (p. 180) results in a self versus other construct. While they acknowledge that this demarcation based on skin is problematic, Leitner et al. also point out something crucial to the current thesis: “psychological boundaries between people are more complex, permeable, and changeable than physical ones” (Leitner, et al., p. 180). In terms of why individuals choose to tattoo, this may indeed be another “hint”. Perhaps for some the creation of a physical boundary by the application of ink to their skin is attractive, not only because of the permanence, but also because it is much easier to keep people at arm’s length when they are intimidated by the way you look.

Some people can find it difficult to construct psychological boundaries – for these individuals a tattoo can be a very effective means of doing just that. Others find it difficult to deal with changeable circumstances. For them, a physical reminder of a meaningful event may help them overcome these difficulties.

We are symbols and inhabit symbols.

(Emerson, 1876, p. 20)

Our feelings towards our bodies may play an integral part in decisions we make regarding our bodies, therefore our body image is an important construct to discuss. It can be difficult to decipher the relationship between body image and identity. If our identity resides in our body, what happens when our body image changes?

2.3.2 Body Image

Body image is a complex construct, involving one’s attitudes, thoughts, feelings and behaviours about and towards one’s own body. The term does not exclusively relate to one’s physical appearance (Cash, 2004). It may be more apt to speak of an individual’s body image as one of many (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002) - a body image,

rather than *the* body image. Or body image as it relates to.... The concept of body image appears to be as labyrinthine as the idea of identity. Certainly they are related, as mentioned previously.

When it comes to body image, adolescents have a particularly difficult time. Not only are they struggling for independence in a search for their own identity, their bodies are changing, seemingly at will. Popular western culture continually portrays images of what the perfect body looks like. Slender equals attractive for females, while muscular is held up as the Holy Grail for males. Somewhat ironically, the physical changes that accompany puberty tend to lead females away from this ideal, while males are more likely to approach it (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002). Unfortunately, then, for many young females, this can cause issues with self-esteem, as body image is extremely influential in one's global self-esteem. In fact, body image has been linked to such factors as low self-esteem, depression, beliefs about being overweight, dieting, disordered eating, and objectification (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002).

There are numerous ways that the establishment of one's body image can be explained. One school of thought (social constructionism) suggests that society plays a large part in how we view our bodies (Shilling, 2003). Another approach is that of the symbolic interactionists (see, for example, Blumer, 1969; Goffman, 1959), who place control of the body image in the hands of human agents. In this view, the relationship between self-identity and social identity is mediated by the management of the body. For example, Giddens (1991) held a reflexive view, believing that self-identity is maintained by control of the body, while at the same time the embodied self is constantly on display to others. This necessary juggling creates a need for body integrity – the individual needs to feel that his or her body safely “contains” the self. A further view is that of the social constructivists. Burr (1995) argued, for example, that in order

to meaningfully construe our world, we must engage with it as embodied beings. In short, the body can be seen either as a prison (created by the imposition of negative stereotypes) or a performance (the result of a carefully constructed appearance) (Shilling, 2003).

Tattoos are relevant to each of these positions. Some individuals may have tattoos that are linked to a single body image (only shown when they choose to), while others have visible tattoos which relate to multiple body images. As stated, the tattooed body can be seen as a prison, where viewers choose to see individuals in a negative light, or as a carefully chosen performance. For adolescents, whose bodies are changing unintentionally, application of a tattoo may give a feeling of control, restoring self-esteem and therefore boosting body image.

2.3.3 Body Image and Cosmetic Surgery

At first sight it might appear that cosmetic surgery is peripheral to the topic under investigation. However, in the current thesis the focus is on the effects of tattooing on self-image, one aspect of which is body image. While cosmetic surgery is often seen as very different from tattooing, the approach taken could be extended as one way of understanding the tattoo process.

When considering individuals who elect to have cosmetic surgery, Sarwer (2002) has proposed a theoretical model in which psychological as well as physical factors play a part in that decision. With regard to cosmetic surgery body image attitudes can be regarded as having two dimensions: valence and value (Sarwer, 2002). *Valence* is an indication of how important body image is to one's self-esteem, while *value* gives the degree of dissatisfaction with one's appearance. Featherstone (2006) suggests that cosmetic surgery enhances a sense of agency - altering the body is less

about how one looks than how one lives. Giddens (1991, p. 57) would agree: “routine control of the body is integral to the very nature ... of agency”.

Featherstone (2006) relates sense of self directly to body image. Since tattoos are body modifications, as is cosmetic surgery, it may be that Sarwer’s (2002) model could equally be applied to the use of tattoos to enhance body image. The model may be particularly important when examining those who tattoo “just because I like the look of it”.

The body has become a new (identity) project in high/late/postmodernity.

(Gill, Henwood & McLean, 2005, p. 38)

An ethnographic study into the consumption of plastic surgery is of relevance to the current thesis (Schouten, 1991). Using the idea of possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986) together with a constructivist underpinning, Schouten argued for cosmetic surgery as “a self-imposed, personal rite of passage” (1991, p. 421). “Consumption activities” (Schouten, p. 422) such as purchasing goods and services, as well as cosmetic surgery (and tattooing) are integral to a transition of identity, which may have as a result a healing effect on the self-concept. This parallels the anthropological perspective on tattoos. Van Gennep (1960) drew parallels between tattooing and other rites of passage such as circumcision, removal of the ear lobe or dental extraction.

To conclude, although cosmetic surgery does not appear to be necessary to a discussion of tattooing, there are philosophical similarities. Body image and self-concept may be linked. Changes to the body, whether via cosmetic surgery or tattooing, result in changes to the body image, and therefore changes to self-concept. As noted by Cash (2004), the objective “reality” of one’s appearance may be less important than the

individual's own experience. If society does play a part in how we view our bodies (Shilling, 2003) then perhaps Giddens (1991) was correct in suggesting that control of the body may be necessary for self-identity, and changes such as cosmetic surgery and tattooing could result in an increased sense of agency for the individual.

The following section does not logically follow on from the present discussion. However, research done with members of the body modification collectivity is relevant to the current thesis, and does relate to a discussion of the body.

2.3.4 Pathology and Body Modification

Body modifications such as piercings, brandings, and tattoos are often viewed by members of the (non-modified) public as signifiers of pathology. Individuals who choose to modify themselves thus are labelled abnormal. While this may be true in some cases, the current popularity of these practises suggests that this may be an oversimplification of the issue.

Members of the website www.bmezone.com (devoted to individuals interested in body modification practices) who had created personal pages were asked to participate in a study of body modifiers (Hicinbotham, Gonsalves, & Lester, 2006). Surveys were completed by 4700 members. The authors concluded that body modifications in general may be markers for depression and suicidality. The demonstrated tendency to treat piercings and tattoos as one could be seen to be problematic, as scarifications and piercings were more often associated with suicidality than were tattoos.

Researchers in Germany surveyed readers of a magazine devoted to tattooing and body modification in an attempt to gauge body modification practices, motivations for body modification, sexuality, childhood experiences and attitudes towards one's body (Stirn & Hinz, 2008). Reasons given for body modification included commemoration of an occasion (negative as well as positive) or a phase in life, loss

(including separation), idols (including peer group), and getting over an accident or disease. The rate of sexual abuse reported by participants in this study was 8.4%, with 37% of these stating they had suffered from violence. From a total of 432 participants with an average of 9.1 modifications per participant, a subgroup of self-cutters was formed (Stirn & Hinz, 2008). These participants were analysed separately from those who had no history of self-harm. The conclusion reached was that there was no difference in the number of tattoos between the self-cutting group and the remaining sample, in this instance putting paid to the idea that there is a link between tattoos and self-injury.

Thus we can see that tattoos are not necessarily indicators of psychiatric disturbance, or a tendency towards self-injury or suicide. Further, the conclusions drawn alert us to the possibility that tattoos and other body modifications serve different purposes for individuals, and we should be wary of any statements where these practises are combined, lest we be misled. Extreme body modifiers are often seen as the deviants of the deviants. However, as suggested, body modification may indeed be associated with pathology. Some individuals report feeling that body modifications aid them in coping with the vicissitudes of life.

It would appear that tattoos have become an indelible part of our modern society, and will be so for many years to come. There can be no denying that some tattoos are acquired without much thought to the lifetime consequences. Other individuals use body modifications to demonstrate allegiance to social groups or commitment to a particular lifestyle. While some tattooees prefer their ink black and white, it is no longer the case that the arguments for and against tattooing can be so simply classified. What is clear, however, is the need for a theory of psychological

functioning that can explain why people tattoo themselves, rather than using an explanation of deviance, as was done in the past.

To summarise, there were a few themes presented in this section on the body. Firstly, the issue of a body boundary was discussed, with the conclusion that tattoos may be useful to provide a physical boundary for some individuals who find creating a psychological boundary difficult. Secondly body image and body image as it relates to cosmetic surgery were explored. Finally, the question of the existence of a relationship between pathology and body modification was addressed. The following section discusses areas of research into tattooing that are specifically related to the body.

2.4 Tattoos and the Body

Since some individuals are more concerned than others with how they look, a discussion on appearance investment is germane to the current thesis. It is also important to note that a reflexive view of self is pertinent to the subject under study. In this view, our bodies are both objects and subjects – “I” can perform acts upon “me”. Our view of our bodies is important, not only for our body image, but also to our view of self, so that will also be addressed. Finally, the link between tattooing and sexuality and gender identity is discussed.

2.4.1 Appearance Investment

Many tattooees state that they have obtained their body art purely for aesthetic purposes. This would suggest that there is a level of investment in their appearance. A study of 400 undergraduates (Horne, Knox, Zusman, & Zusman, 2007, p. 1012) found that 76.9% of the participants were concerned about their appearance, endorsing “I am very concerned about how I look to others”. Over 25% of the participants had tattoos.

Statements were ranked in order of importance as a reason for obtaining a tattoo.

Gender differences were found. Women were significantly more likely to have tattoos to signify their belief in their own beauty, endorsing the statement: “I am beautiful” (Horne, et al., p. 1016). Men were significantly more likely to have tattoos showing group affiliation.

In examining the association between intention to acquire a tattoo and social role expectations, Kent (2006) developed an instrument that focussed on appearance. It was suggested that the development of this instrument demonstrated two dimensions involved in attitudes toward the body, namely evaluation (or corporeal value) and cognitive-behavioural investment. Kent stated that corporeal value “tapped the evaluative perception of tattoos” (p. 189) and indicated the individual’s evaluation of the “appearance worth of tattoos”, while corporeal aesthetics reflected the cognitive, affective and behavioural aspects relating to the visual benefits of tattoos and “was operationalised as a response to the visual aspects of tattoos” (p. 189). Further, she stated that this variable measured participants’ cognitive-behavioural investment in tattoos.

Kent (2006), citing Frederickson and Roberts (1997) argued that treating one’s body as an object for gazing contributes towards behavioural investment in one’s appearance. Non-tattooed males who self-objectify were found to have a more positive attitude towards tattoos than tattooed males and non-tattooed females. Tattooed females high in physical appearance self-concept were found to be less likely than any other group to be pressured by society into conforming to a corporeal ideal, or to utilise the media for information relating to appearance. While Kent’s (2006) study has shown a link between attitudes towards one’s physical appearance and the acquisition of tattoos, it did not deal with the motivational aspect of tattoo acquisition. Indeed, she indicated

that future research should include investigation of the motivations for tattooing, which is the particular focus of the current thesis.

A recent study in Poland tested two opposing hypotheses relating tattooing and attractiveness (Koziel, Kretschmer, & Pawlowski, 2010). One hypothesis proposed that tattooing and piercing are signs of biological quality – the individuals who wear these body modifications are more likely to be developmentally stable, and are therefore more likely to be physically symmetrical. The alternative proposal was that individuals use body modification to increase their own attractiveness, or hide physical shortcomings such as low body symmetry. It was suggested that the first hypothesis was more appropriate for men, while the second would apply more to women. Measurements of body symmetry were performed on 202 participants, 116 of whom had piercings and tattoos. The researchers concluded that the biological quality hypothesis was supported for men only. No support was found for the attractiveness increase hypothesis in either sex.

Thus we can see that despite the common view that tattooees could not possibly be interested in how they look, there is evidence that, for some people, the contrary may be true. In males, tattoos may be used to signify biological superiority. The tattooed women in these studies used tattoos to demonstrate belief in their own beauty, and were less likely to succumb to societal pressure about their appearance (Kent, 2006). Many individuals make an attempt to change their appearance. This is usually done through minor modifications but sometimes using more radical means - what some term *body projects* (Askegaard, Gertsen, & Langer, 2002; Atkinson, 2002; Foster & Hummel, 2000; Gill, et al., 2005). In order to understand this view, we need to understand the reflexive approach to self and the body.

2.4.2 A Reflexive Sense of Self

As human beings we have bodies and we are bodies (B. S. Turner, 1984). In becoming another possession of the Self, the body has become a site of reflexivity (Askegaard, et al., 2002). In this view, body is both object and subject – the body as an *object* can perform certain activities upon the body (itself) as a *subject*. This view was proposed by James (1890) and echoed by Mead (1934/1967), although the latter saw the self and the body as separate entities:

We can distinguish very definitely between the self and the body. The body can be there and can operate in a very intelligent fashion without there being a self involved in the experience. The self has the characteristic that it is an object to itself, and that characteristic distinguishes it from other objects and from the body. (p. 136)

A reflexive sense of self can come from what Crossley (2005, p. 2) calls “Reflexive Body Techniques”. Reflexive Body Techniques range from washing our hands and dressing ourselves, to using steroids, body piercing and tattooing. We act “in such a way that we become objects for ourselves” (N. Crossley, 2005, p. 13).

Taking this perspective, body techniques have social, corporeal and cognitive/psychological dimensions. They are techniques *of* the body, but also techniques *for* the body. Crossley argues that in part, our specific sense of self is developed through our exploration of reflexive body techniques. These techniques may have a ritual function, in a similar manner to a rite of passage, marking a transition of self-identity. Therefore body techniques such as tattooing may be used to mark chapters in one’s life narrative.

2.4.3 Tattoos, the Body, and Identity

Our self-concept can be viewed as dependent to a large degree upon our body image (Schouten, 1991; Shilling, 2003). Self-concept has been defined as “the cognitive and affective understanding of who and what we are” (Schouten, 1991, p. 413). How one views oneself, or the self-narrative that one tells, may be inextricably linked to one’s appearance.

Of particular relevance to the current thesis is Cash’s (2004, p. 1) view that “individuals’ own subjective experiences of their appearance [are] often even more psychosocially powerful than the objective or social ‘reality’ of their appearance”. This certainly has been evident in the work on anorexia nervosa, with patients having quite unrealistic perceptions of their own bodies with sometimes fatal consequences (Favazza, 1987/1996; Strong, 1998). From this it can be seen that society’s view of what one *should* look like is not necessarily the most advantageous view for the individual. And this applies to all of us, not just those who choose to mark their bodies with ink, or reshape their bodies with exercise or diets or surgery, or cut and colour their hair and fingernails, or wear whatever fashion tells us is the latest trend. Sometimes we need to decide for ourselves what our bodies will look like. “In all cultures, dress is ... manifestly, a means of symbolic display, a way of giving external form to narratives of self-identity” (Giddens, 1991, p. 62).

In a study of men’s bodily practices, Gill, Henwood and McLean (2005) reiterated the claim that the body was central to our sense of identity in modernity. “We become responsible for the design of our own bodies” (Giddens, 1991, p. 120). Both our bodies and our identities must be forged from the many choices offered in a modern society (Shilling, 2003) which demands we take responsibility for our bodies.

The notion of identity as body work has been proposed by a number of authors. It includes attempts by the individual to demonstrate to others identity markers such as social position, accomplishments and one's self-definition (Phelan & Hunt, 1998) by particular forms of dress (Goffman, 1959), and adaptations to body image. We must be wary of the Western conclusion that the untouched (and therefore unmarked) body is natural. The body is in many ways a cultural construction (Mascia-Lees & Sharpe, 1992). Schouten (1991) saw bodily adornment as one way of symbolising specific (role) identities. This view can quite easily be applied to the wearing of tattoos.

2.4.4 Tattooing, Sexuality, and Gender

While we are inherently social beings, humans are also situated within ideas of their gender and feelings about their sexuality. Tattooing has long been linked to both (Hocart, 1937; Scutt & Gotch, 1974), with the result that many stereotypes surround sexuality and tattoos. These include tattoos as a sign of masculinity in men, and promiscuity in women.

Some see the insertion of the needle and ink under the skin as a metaphor for the sexual act (Grumet, 1983). As pointed out by Braunberger (2000), tattooing is only deemed to be a sexual act when the tattooed body is female. While some say a man tattooing men is nothing of the sort (it has been viewed as a symbol of attaining manhood: Grumet, 1983)⁶, others see "the influence of a latent homosexual factor" (Bromberg, 1935, p. 229) and sadomasochism at work. Fried (1983) stated that males often tattoo one another when "isolated for long periods from females" (p. 241). He

⁶ The idea of men using tattoo to establish their place in society has been discussed (Gill, et al., 2005). Tattoos may be one means of announcing sexual status, or affirming one's masculinity (Popplestone, 1963). This view was shared by Yamamoto, Seeman and Lester (1963) and later echoed by Hamburger (1966).

concluded that the choice of tattoo can reveal subconscious conflict over aggressive or sexual impulses, as well as “basic psychic weakness” (Fried, 1983, p. 241).

I am afraid of tattoos because of the sexual expression involved.

(Steward, 1990, p. 11)

Tattoos found on Amunet, an Egyptian priestess who lived around 2000 BC (Gilbert, 2000), have been suggested to have had carnal connotations. Amunet was one of the best preserved tattooed mummies prior to the discovery of Otzi. Other tribes tattooed to enhance the attractiveness of the human form, and for many years in western culture tattoos have been seen as an indication of the willingness of a woman to have sex (Scutt & Gotch, 1974). It would appear that current research findings do little to dispel this notion.

Much has been written about the tattooing of women specifically: from a treatise on the various cultural forms (Hambly, 1925), through to a “secret” history of women and tattooing (Mifflin, 1997). Tattooing became popular with European women in the 1880’s with various designs being adopted, including an ouroboros⁷ reportedly worn by Winston Churchill’s mother (Mifflin, 1997). Currently there are mixed messages given in western culture about the role of tattoo in the lives of women.

What is confusing is the oxymoronic message that continues to surround the tattooed female body. The message of simultaneous conformity and resistance (see, for example, Atkinson, 2002; Kang & Jones, 2007) is repeated time after time. How can one be bowing to social expectations of attractiveness, while at the same time be unfeminine and “radically departing from the norms of feminization” (MacCormack,

⁷ a symbol (often circular) of a serpent biting its own tail

2006, p. 67)? Perhaps, truly, “the meanings women attach to their tattoos are ‘culturally written over’ by the larger society” (Kang & Jones, 2007, p. 44). This view is echoed by Braunberger (2000, p. 2): “It would seem that whatever manifold meanings women attach to their tattoos are culturally written over to simply and only punctuate meanings already attached to their bodies within a larger cultural domain”.

Madame, if you were a lady you wouldn't be in a tattoo shop.

(Steward, 1990, p. 130)

According to Jeffreys (2000), our male-dominated culture means that women are expected to have hostile relationships with their bodies. Likewise Mifflin:

For women, skin is a work in progress through which we celebrate – and denigrate – ourselves: we shave our legs to achieve a childlike smoothness and smear make-up on our faces to enhance our adult sexuality; we bleach and pluck our facial hair and buy expensive creams that promise to “repair” the skin and “reverse” the effects of aging (1997, p. i).

Tattoo has been used as a way of reclaiming the female body which has been appropriated either by individual males, or oft times by a highly patriarchal society (Kang & Jones, 2007; Pitts, 1998). However, at the same time the tattooed female body is termed “grotesque” (Pitts, 1998) and “revolting” (Braunberger, 2000). Postmodern feminists such as Grosz (1994) support the argument that the female body can be reclaimed through corporeal damage.

More recent research has focused on the use of tattoos by women who have something to say. Intriguingly, there appears to be a parallel between rising waves in the feminist movement and the resurgence of interest in women's tattooing (MacCormack,

2006; Mifflin, 1997). Or as expressed by MacCormack (2006, p. 67) “tattooed women and feminists are part of a greater frame of resistant women”.

For contemporary women, having a tattoo can be a signifier of self-determination as well as a symbol of empowerment. Despite the gains of feminism, women are still embroiled in debate about whether they have control over their own bodies (Mifflin, 1997). Getting a tattoo can be seen as an act of rebellion (Kang & Jones, 2007), or as a corporeal reclamation after sexual abuse. “Written on the body, these private insignia are keys to women’s self-images during a period when traditional gender roles are being challenged, and often rejected” (Mifflin, 1997, p. ii).

To summarise, this final section on tattooing and the body has firstly shown links between the use of tattooing and appearance investment. Tattoos are used aesthetically by some. The therapeutic uses of tattoos and risks involved were also discussed. Research was presented that demonstrated that tattoos may not be as risky as some believe. The popularity of tattooing appears to have surged in line with the waves of the feminist movement (for women especially, but also for men), with some women stating tattoos can be used to enhance the sense of reclaiming their bodies. The negotiation of a definition of femininity has been aided by the use of tattoos for some women. The view has often been (and still is, if you believe Swami & Furnham, 2007) that tattooed women are promiscuous. Attitudes towards women with tattoos appear to depend in the main upon the views of those doing the looking. Perhaps beauty is, indeed, in the eye of the beholder.

2.5 Final Comments

Members of any culture share common meanings and attributions. In the case of tattoos, this can be what it means to display a tattoo in that culture, as well as what that particular tattoo portrays. At times an individual may feel the need to join a sub-cultural group to aid in the exploration of personal meaning.

As can be seen from the range of topics covered in this chapter, tattooing has a long and chequered history. Tattooing has been practised in almost all parts of the world at some point, and it continues to be used, sometimes for reasons that we in western culture find hard to understand. At other times we may readily adopt tattooing as a means of signifying belonging to a group, or to celebrate a rite of passage, as is done in many other cultures.

This chapter has contributed to our base of knowledge for the current thesis in a number of ways. The section on society and culture has shown that there are a number of reasons groups of people obtain tattoos. However, these reasons are based on groups of people – it is necessary to gain an understanding of why individuals choose to obtain tattoos.

The section on the body and body image demonstrated that individuals obtaining tattoos may not necessarily be pathological, illustrating the need for a theory of psychological functioning that can explain tattooing. Lastly, the section on tattooing and the body highlighted the use of tattoo for aesthetic purposes, as well as the possibility of psychological benefits for some who use tattoos.

The current thesis, being psychological in nature, focuses on the individual differences found in a sample of tattooed individuals. Chapter Three will therefore discuss research done on tattooing specifically from a psychological perspective.

Chapter 3

Psychological Research into Tattoos

Tattooing is the true writing of savages.

Many a dangerous temptation comes to us in fine gay colours that are but skin-deep.
Mathew Henry, Commentaries. Gensis iii

The pain I'd say makes you more certain of what you want. You have to be willing to go through some level of pain to get the art. So if you're not sure if you want it, and the pain is an issue for you, you probably shouldn't get a tattoo.... I think it's a bonus because it hurts a lot and if I wasn't prepared to go through it there's no way I would have gotten a tattoo. But the fact that I was and it didn't bother me means I value it more. I've gone through the pain to get it.
Participant FR56

3.1 Introduction

Studies in psychology have commonly seen tattooees as deviants. Investigations into tattooing from a psychological perspective differ from studies in sociology and anthropology on one clear dimension. In sociological and anthropological studies tattoos are viewed more as part of normal human behaviour. Apart from their decorative function, tattoos are used as signifiers of one's place in the tribe, of individual achievement, or of transition from one stage in life to the next.

In effect, the current chapter will trace the course of the psychological research into tattooing, starting with a more negative view and progressing through to one that is, at the very least, more rounded. The chapter will begin with studies concentrating on deviance. This will be followed by a note on delinquency and a brief discussion on the use of case studies. Next, studies examining psychological disturbance and psychological attributes, such as personality characteristics will be discussed. Finally, there will be an examination of studies that have taken a less pejorative position, with some concluding that there may be psychological benefits in tattooing.

3.2 Deviance

While most of us think of a deviant as someone who is “weird” or abnormal, we should remain cognisant that deviance simply means different from the norm⁸. Deviants can therefore be positive, negative or even neutral - “... deviancy may be considered as a communicative action aimed at constituting and affirming a social role” (Cipolletta, 2011, p. 124). There are many examples of this with tattoos. Chiefs and brave warriors were tattooed to indicate their unusual and pre-eminent status in society. Criminals were tattooed to indicate their crimes. The Yakuza (Japanese mafia) and bikers in general tattooed themselves to show membership of their group.

⁸ Differing from the norm is the view of deviance taken in the current thesis.

It has been argued (Vail, 1999) that some tattooees progress through Matza's (1969) three stages of becoming deviant. These are: (a) affinity (a desire to become a tattooee); (b) affiliation (i.e., symbolic interaction with other deviants [other tattooees] teaches an individual to behave in a way that is novel to them); and (c) signification (the reconstrual of one's actions as appropriate for a tattooee). This point of view emphasises the volition of the individual in making the transition into deviancy. Further, it demonstrates the constructivist notion of reconstrual (Kelly, 1991b) as well as echoing the three phases of a rite of passage (V. W. Turner, 1969; van Gennep, 1960). These are discussed in Section 4.4.7 below.

3.2.1 Deviance and Tattoos

Lombroso (1896) was among the first to suggest a strong link between tattooing and deviancy. After studying tattoos on 5000 criminals, Lombroso (p. 803) felt he had "proved that this custom is a completely savage one... which does not prevail extensively except among criminals", paving the way for much research into criminality and tattoos. He listed the expression of some form of vengeance as the major characteristic of the tattoos, further noting that the main reason tattooing had spread was atavism. Lombroso (p. 800) felt that tattooing was "one of the essential characteristics of primitive man, and of men who still live in the savage state". Lombroso (1896) drew a parallel between primitive man and criminals by virtue of their common interest in tattoos.

This view was reinforced by Loos (1908) who also linked criminals and primitives via tattoo (Canales & Herscher, 2005). Loos argued that body ornamentation was a crime against society, that it represented a degenerative tendency. Loos further stated "If a tattooed person dies at liberty, it is only that he died a few years before he committed a murder" (p. 29).

Echoing Lombroso (1896), Putnins (2002) carried out a study of 898 young offenders in an attempt to find a relationship between tattoos and recidivism. After controlling for age among males ages 15 and over, statistically significant partial correlations were found between aggressive behaviour (self-reported bad temper [$p < .05$], fighting [$p < .05$], and self-harm [$p < .001$]) and having tattoos. However, the author concluded that the link between tattoos and recidivism risk was too weak to be of any value.

More recent research has presented a similar view. Using a psychodynamic perspective, Palermo (2004) reviewed several studies of tattooees, especially criminals and gang members. He noted that clinicians should use their professional skills to interpret tattoos with a view to predicting dangerousness and recidivism, saying that tattoos “should be regarded as a psychological projective test” (p. 22). Palermo concluded (like so many before him) that “tattoos may be looked upon as an outward expression of the sensation-seeking psychopath” (p. 22).

A study conducted on prison inmates in Utah aimed to find differences between tattooed and non-tattooed prisoners on personality scores, personal characteristics, and behavioural variables (Howell, Payne, & Roe, 1971). Using a convenience sample of 171 prisoners, 101 of whom had tattoos, the researchers administered a personality inventory they had developed themselves. Conclusions reached included that the tattooed inmate was “psychopathic to a greater extent than the nontattooed in terms of repeated offenses, earlier offenses and social deviancy” (p. 37). However, an examination of the results showed only a statistically significant difference in social deviancy with no significant findings for subsequent offences and nothing to indicate the age of offences. What was not discussed were the results showing greater scores for non-tattooed inmates on lying, social withdrawal, sexual deviancy, sadism, rape,

manslaughter, and murder. The difference for manslaughter was the only one to be statistically significant. It is possible there is no significant difference between inmates with and without tattoos.

Some researchers tend to qualify the relationship they claim to have found between tattooing and crime. One such “qualification” was provided by Newman (1982), who concluded that having tattoos was related to committing crimes involving personally assaultive behaviour. Newman’s participants were 256 male prisoners “from 4 consecutive years of psychiatric evaluations for the criminal courts” (Newman, p. 232). More tattooed criminals committed assaultive crimes ($n = 30$) than non-assaultive ($n = 6$). What Newman fails to highlight is the fact that over six times as many non-tattooed criminals were deemed in need of psychiatric evaluation as tattooed criminals.

A study of tattooed army soldiers investigating self-reports of deviancy and risk-taking (Armstrong, Pace-Murphy, Sallee, & Watson, 2000) found that 56% of the participants did not feel deviant at the time they obtained a tattoo. Only 19% admitted to feeling deviant at the time of obtaining a tattoo. What the other 25% felt is left to the reader’s imagination. Further, 47% reportedly believed themselves to be risk takers but 39% did not (14% also unexplained). As with other figures given in this study, these are confusing, as the authors go on to say that originally 48% of the participants did not feel themselves to be risk takers at the time they obtained their tattoos. It appears they changed their opinions after further questioning by the researchers. One suspects this is another case of the preconceptions of the investigators influencing the research they were carrying out.

The most current research (Burgess & Clark, 2010) into the influence of the “savage origins” of tattooing (Burgess & Clark, 2010, p. 746; Lombroso, 1896, p. 793) on today’s stereotypes provided a different perspective. In a study investigating

different tattoo *types*, photographs of potential job applicants were examined by 300 participants. The researchers found that individuals with tattoos deemed to be traditional and tribal were judged more harshly than those with contemporary and cute tattoos. Participants who were not tattooed (and not considering obtaining a tattoo) maintained a strong association with the traditional stereotype of tattooees as delinquents when the tattoos were tribal or traditional. It was concluded that a new social stereotype consisting of tattooees with contemporary designs has evolved.

3.2.1.1 Adolescents and tattoos. Adolescents are another group seen by many as embracing deviancy to some degree. Using prospective data from a national sample of over 13,000 American adolescents, Silver, VanEseltine and Silver (2009) found that prior deviant involvement was one predictor of tattoo acquisition. According to these researchers, the use of alcohol and marijuana and delinquency (with or without violence) are indicators of deviancy that “might provoke tattoo acquisition” (p. 522). They suggest that teenagers acquire tattoos to “demonstrate their commitment to a deviant or ‘alternative’ lifestyle” (p. 53). While this may indeed be the case, drawing this conclusion merely from a statistical model may be inherently flawed. Direct questioning of the adolescents themselves would provide an answer in this regard.

It is possible that tattoos hinder adolescents in their attempts to re-appropriate acceptable roles in society (Silver, et al., 2009). In their introductory section, Silver et al. made a point of the association between tattooing and marginal groups. Stating that this has happened “for most of its history in North America” and then citing a single article that is over 40 years old is using “evidence” that is at the very least out of date. Using out of date studies as well as investigating only within deviant groups appears to be the “norm” when investigating tattoos, making it difficult to draw meaningful conclusions about the current general population.

Typical of “research” into tattoos is one study of 450 college students where the researchers set out to demonstrate that sexual intercourse and tattooing, “both categorically deviant” (p. 887) behaviours, were related (Koch, Roberts, Armstrong, & Owen, 2005). In a sample where 22.2% of participants had a tattoo, a significant difference was found for the age of first sexual experience for tattooed males compared with non-tattooed males, but not for females. Koch et al. likened tattooing and sexual activity to “plunging into very cold water on a hot day” (p.889). One suspects they are attempting to relate both to sensation-seeking, although this was not explicitly stated.

These researchers published a further study of college students and the relationship between body art and deviance (Koch, et al., 2010). In that study the researchers attempted to demonstrate that individuals with more body art would participate in more deviant behaviour in an effort to increase their distance from the social mainstream. Their ideas were based on Subcultural Theory (see, for example, Fischer, 1975) and applied to identity. Deviant behaviour was categorised as having multiple sex partners, binge drinking, using marijuana and other illegal drugs, being arrested and cheating on college work. The sample was drawn from a population of middle-American college students. Participants were grouped according to the number of tattoos they wore (Koch, et al., 2010). It should be noted that while there were significant results reported, the directional details of these differences were not mentioned. For example, the difference between individuals with none, one, two to three, and four or more tattoos on binge drinking was significant, but if one examines the table of percentages, it can be seen that the “no tattoo” group had a higher percentage of binge drinkers than the “four or more” tattoo group. The authors reported “stark differences in the levels of deviant behaviour among those with just one tattoo

versus those with four or more” (p. 159). However, the results should be examined more closely as the differences fluctuate depending on which deviant behaviour is considered.

One study of undergraduate students investigated the possibility of a link between deviance markers (body modifications, Goth appearance and provocative appearance), personality, and misconduct (Nathanson, Paulhus, & Williams, 2006). In the initial data collection, 279 undergraduate students completed measures of body modification, peer group association and personality. Body modifications were reported by 26% of the males and 36% of the females. Data on misconduct were collected several months later, with only 83 of the original students choosing to participate. The authors stated that these participants did not differ systematically from the remainder of the sample. Personality traits examined included openness to experience, subclinical psychopathy, Narcissism and Machiavellianism (Nathanson, et al., 2006). Misconduct included drug use, bullying and crime. In addition to tattoos and piercings, cultural deviance markers included having a “provocative appearance” (19%), dressing as a “Goth” (6%) and having an “extreme hairstyle” (no figures given) (Nathanson, et al., 2006).

Prediction of the various misconduct behaviours from demographic and personality variables was attempted (Nathanson, et al., 2006). Due to the intercorrelation of the deviance markers (mean $r = +.35$) and their similar associations with the other measures, the deviance markers (a provocative appearance and/or body modification) were combined to form one group, bringing into question the results obtained by such an action. Openness to experience, low self-esteem and subclinical psychopathy were shown to predict the possession of deviance markers (Nathanson, et al., 2006). However, when personality was controlled for, the association between misconduct and deviance markers was eliminated. In their own words: “Researchers too

should refrain from blanket positive or negative perspectives on markers” (Nathanson, et al., 2006, p. 798). It was concluded that different personality types were related to different motivations for obtaining deviancy markers, indicating that deviance may be heterogeneous in nature, with the different forms of deviance expressed in idiosyncratic ways. Observers should be careful not to judge individuals with deviance markers too quickly, lest they make a serious error.

In what appeared to be a sample of “average” teenagers, a study of 464 high school students in Perth (Australia) found 13.6% of participants had tattoos (Houghton, Durkin, Parry, Turbett, & Odgers, 1996). This finding may not seem unusual, but the average age of first tattoo was 12.3 years, which is very young. In addition, another unusual aspect related to the tattoos was that almost all the participants had “amateur” tattoos. This may explain why 26% of the participants had considered removal. Taking into consideration the age at first tattoo, and the high rate of amateur tattooing, it is obvious that this sample of adolescents cannot be generalised to any population of adults. Boys with tattoos had the highest level of health awareness.

Drawing together the idea of deviance and marginalisation is a paper by Durkin and Houghton (2000) examining the existence of stereotypes of delinquency related to tattoos in young children and adolescents in Australia. They concluded that such stereotypes are strongly established from a relatively early age, and continue into mid-adolescence. By electing to obtain tattoos while still fairly young, adolescents place themselves in the risky position of being stigmatised, and seen as delinquent. Indeed, some authors such as Grumet (1983) believe the chances of adolescents being asked to participate in delinquent or antisocial activities increase when peers perceive young people as troublemakers.

3.2.1.2 Tattooees versus tattooed people. A distinction has been made between seeing yourself as a tattooed individual and seeing yourself as a tattooee (S. Bell, 1999). Tattooees were distinguished from individuals with tattoos in an analogous way to DeMello's (1993) distinction between prisoners who are either inmates or convicts. For DeMello this concerned the extent to which the convict accepts a convict lifestyle and associated lifelong marginalisation.

Bell's (1999) comparison was based on the extent of coverage. People who have tattoos "often have only one or two, and they are usually personal images in places easily hidden from view" (S. Bell, 1999, p. 55) while tattooees "have many bright or bold tattoos in obvious places, closer to the idea of a Japanese body suit in terms of body coverage" (S. Bell, 1999, p. 56). Bell also pointed out that such individuals have crossed a line into marginalisation. While there is a point at which the amount of ink on someone's skin may locate them in a different subculture (perhaps especially in the current climate) marginalisation may be too strong a description of the circumstances. She further stated: "Being heavily tattooed, even during this trend, is cause for prying questions and mistreatment from curious and overzealous onlookers. Being tattooed is still a 'Freak Show'" (S. Bell, 1999, p. 56).

While Bell's definition of a tattooee is somewhat simplistic, Irwin (2003) has made an analogous but more specific, and hence useful, contrast. Irwin argued that elite tattoo collectors and tattoo artists can be seen as "positive" deviants. In investigating the process of becoming a tattoo collector, Vail (1999) found that collectors see themselves as "tattooees", not individuals with tattoos. This appears to suggest that the tattoos had become "part" of the individuals concerned. In increasing the connection between fine art and tattooing, these groups form a stratum between conventional and outcast groups in society. Irwin further argued that deviance is a "necessary evil" in the preservation of

social order. As suggested by Kelly (1991b), in order to know what something “is”, we need to understand what it “is not”. Perhaps without deviance, we would not recognise conformity.

3.2.2 Selective Case Studies

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, some researchers have used selective case studies to bolster the view that tattooing is deviant. These studies demonstrate extremes in individuals who have tattoos. One such report described a 27 year old man suffering from obsessive-compulsive disorder who had spent ten years compulsively being tattooed (Caplan, Komaromi, & Rhodes, 1996). This man stated that one of his motivations was the pain involved. It further transpired that one of his rituals was to attach electrodes to his penis, again to achieve a particular level of pain. There are no other reported cases linking tattoos, obsessive-compulsive disorder and unusual sexual practices.

Some physicians have treated tattoos as a warning that there may be an underlying psychiatric disorder. Using three “illustrative” cases, Raspa and Cusack (1990) concluded that there was a strong association between tattoos and personality disorders such as antisocial, borderline and schizotypal. They claimed that these patients use tattoos to bolster their defective or damaged egos. The authors further stated that many patients with mania or bipolar disorder have tattoos because they enjoy pleasurable activities with painful consequences.

As can be seen from the discussion in this section, there is a strong body of research demonstrating that individuals with tattoos differ from the norm. However, since many of these studies were carried out with samples from what would be

considered deviant populations – prisoners, adolescents, military personnel - the results were not generalisable to the average population.

3.3 Psychological Disturbance

There is a wide range of what might be considered psychological disturbance. The relationship between psychological variables and tattooing will be discussed in this section, beginning with psychiatric patients, followed by studies of individuals with personality disorders. The final sub-section examines suicide as it has been related to tattooing.

3.3.1 Psychiatric Patients

In 1945, the American Journal of Psychiatry published a short paper entitled “*Tattooed psychotic patients*” (Pollak & McKenna, 1945). The authors attempted to survey male psychotic patients in a Massachusetts hospital, with a view to piecing together the aspects of the individual’s background which led to them being tattooed. Specifically, Pollak and McKenna attempted to find a link between the personality of the individual, and the number, type and location of his tattoos. Of the 640 patients surveyed, only 34 (5.3%) had tattoos. After examining many aspects of each man’s tattooing experience, as well as socio-economic variables, the researchers concluded that:

... no attempt should be made to construct the personality type by the fact that they are tattooed or by their choice of design. No connection can be established between the subject chosen and the psychosis which developed many years later. (Pollak & McKenna, 1945, p. 674)

A decade later, another attempt was made to link personality type to tattoo acquisition (Ferguson-Rayport, Griffith, & Straus, 1955). These researchers felt that individuals unable to sustain highly developed mores used tattoos as their “crest”

(Ferguson-Rayport, et al., 1955, p. 114). Participants were 232 neuropsychiatric hospital patients with diagnoses of either personality disorder or schizophrenia. As part of the investigation, an attempt was made to classify the content of the tattoos (Ferguson-Rayport, et al., 1955). Six categories (plus “miscellaneous”) were created, including identification, love, religious, “bombastic and pseudo-heroic” and “inveighing fate”. The number of tattoos was also recorded. Patients diagnosed with schizophrenia tended to have single tattoos whereas patients with a diagnosis of personality disorder more often had multiple tattoos.

Tattoos labelled “truly schizophrenic tattoos” were those “with private symbolism, never duplicated, sometimes tinged with magical quality...” (Ferguson-Rayport, et al., 1955, p. 122). These groupings can be seen to be problematic. For example, identification tattoos included “diary” which referred to “specific events in life” (Ferguson-Rayport, et al., 1955, p. 118), but religious and commemorative included “in memory of...”. It is difficult to separate these two, especially when one considered the category of “love tattoos” which included “mother” and “girl’s name” which refer to other individuals who may be dead. In this case the tattoo may be “in memory of” the particular individual but the tattoo did not have those exact words so it was not classified as being in memory of someone.

Of particular note was the “high incidence of stars in the subject matter of the schizophrenics, especially the paranoid type” (Ferguson-Rayport, et al., 1955, p. 123)⁹. In line with other cultures cited by the researchers (e.g., ancient Egyptian, Greek, Japanese, Polynesian, and Incan), many tattooed schizophrenics felt the tattoo gave them some form of magical protection, or a feeling of belongingness (Ferguson-Rayport, et al., 1955). Overall, it was concluded that the tattoos of schizophrenic

⁹ This statement is extremely interesting in light of a report that Australians are requesting “duplicates of star tattoos” (Daily Telegraph, 2nd December, 2008, p. 3).

patients can be distinguished from those diagnosed with a personality disorder. These researchers extrapolated from the *topic* of the tattoo to the *function*, proposing that schizophrenic patients used tattoos for magical reasons, while personality disorder patients used tattoos to express inner conflicts.

A further study conducted in psychiatric facilities examined 3,000 patients diagnosed as mentally retarded for signs of tattoos and/or tattoo removal (Edgerton & Dingman, 1963). Of these, 76 (2.5%) were found to have tattoos and it was believed that over 90% of those tattoos were obtained while the patient was in hospital. The investigators felt that the patients were tattooing themselves in an attempt to establish a sense of identity, since they most likely felt stripped of that opportunity.

Tattoos were assigned to different levels of self identification, from gang, through boy- or girl-friend, to self, with an “other” category as the fourth level. The hypothesis of the researchers was that the lower the “level” of the tattoo, the less emotionally disturbed the wearer. If a tattoo had no meaning, or a private meaning, the implication was that the wearer was much more disturbed. How this was established is not clear, since this research was carried out solely on mentally retarded patients, and it would appear that the patients themselves were not consulted.

Another study investigated 433 male patients in the psychiatric ward of a veterans’ hospital (Yamamoto, et al., 1963). Of these, 65 were found to have tattoos, so these men were compared with a group matched on hospital ward and age. Data was collected using a structured interview, as well as the administration of the MMPI. Tattooed participants were found to score lower on the masculine-feminine scale of the MMPI (seeing themselves as more masculine), and higher on the psychopathic deviate scale than the non-tattooed controls. Despite these findings, it was concluded that tattooed patients were no more likely to be in the psychiatric ward than in any other

wards in the hospital. The researchers warn that tattooed men were more impulsive, and were more likely to “act out” and possibly acquire a “medical disability” (Yamamoto, et al., 1963, p. 367) as a member of the armed forces. Insufficient information is presented in this article to determine just how these conclusions were reached.

One study of male psychiatric patients drew a distinction between patients with single and multiple tattoos (Gittleson, Wallen, & Dawson-Butterworth, 1969). Acute admission patients with ($n = 33$) and without ($n = 185$) tattoos were compared with chronic male patients with ($n = 34$) and without ($n = 179$) tattoos. It was found that patients with a diagnosis of personality disorder had significantly more visible tattoos than patients diagnosed with schizophrenia or other disorders. It was concluded that there is a positive association between personality disorder and tattooing “*especially if it is repeated*” (p. 1253).

In a study of 686 mentally disordered male patients, admission files were used to check for evidence of tattoos while nurses’ clinical notes were checked for details of criminal offences, disorders, and anti-social behaviour (McKerracher & Watson, 1969). Significantly ($p < .02$) more non-tattooed patients (21%) reported hallucinations and/or delusions than tattooed patients (9%). More patients with tattoos demonstrated aggression both before and after they were admitted than non-tattooed patients. Tattooed patients also made more suicide attempts ($p < .02$), and had committed crimes such as breaking and entering ($p < .01$). However, the tattooed group was significantly younger and more intelligent than the control group (both $p < .02$). They were also “significantly less prone to psychotic interludes” (McKerracher & Watson, 1969, p. 172). The researchers pointed out that “if there is a relationship between tattooing of the skin and personality, it must depend partly upon the culture pattern in which the custom occurs” (p. 167). The general conclusion of these researchers was that “tattooing was a

peripheral indicator of a primary “psychopathic” syndrome” (McKerracher & Watson, 1969, p. 172). They did, however, include an acknowledgement that tattooed participants’ demonstrated aggression could be partly explained by opportunity.

Childhood sexual abuse was reported in two studies of female psychiatric patients with tattoos (Inch & Huws, 1993; Romans, Martin, Morris, & Harrison, 1998). Exoskeletal defence (Poppstone, 1963) was one explanation offered for the use of tattoos by the four women in the first study (Inch & Huws, 1993), all of whom had experienced sexual abuse as children. An alternate explanation offered was that the tattoos were self-mutilation, displaying the negative attitude each woman showed toward herself, possibly as a result of the abuse.

The second study claimed to find a link between tattoos and psychiatric disorder (Romans, et al., 1998). Of the 354 women interviewed, less than 3% ($n = 10$) had tattoos. This figure is much lower than the prevalence rates found in many countries around the world, and, one expects, very much lower than the usual rate in New Zealand, given the Maori tradition of tattooing. As well as demographic information, details of physical health, alcohol consumption, experiences of sexual abuse, and personality characteristics related to borderline personality disorder were collected.

While the authors were quick to point to a link between the tattoos worn by the women, and alcohol use as well as psychiatric symptoms, they were reticent in pointing out the association between childhood sexual abuse and psychopathology (Romans, et al., 1998). Statements such as “Women with tattoos were more likely to have experienced at least one abuse” (Romans, et al., 1998, p. 139) imply that the women had tattoos before they were abused, which was not the case. The final conclusion reached was that tattoos are one of the “list of sequelae of childhood sexual abuse” which

“includes psychiatric disorders” (Romans, et al., 1998, p. 140), yet again putting tattoos fairly and squarely in the realm of a disorder.

Claes, Vandereycken and Vertommen (2005) examined body modifications in a sample of eating disordered patients who presented to an emergency department and were referred for further treatment ($n = 101$ females). Body modifications were assessed using a questionnaire that examined the risks associated with tattoos and body piercing. Further self-injurious behaviours such as cutting, burning and bruising were also assessed. This study found no relationship between tattooing and personality traits (as measured by an adjusted Dutch version of the NEO-FFI). A negative correlation was found between tattooing and self-injury.

One obvious flaw apparent in many older studies (see, for example, Bromberg, 1935; Edgerton & Dingman, 1963; Ferguson-Rayport, et al., 1955; Gittleson, et al., 1969; Howell, et al., 1971; McKerracher & Watson, 1969; Mosher, et al., 1967; Verberne, 1969; and Yamamoto, et al., 1963) is that the researchers decide what the tattoos “mean”, often without even consulting the person wearing them. The meaning of the tattoo was often declared by examination of the design. Alternatively, a diagnosis of the *person* was based on the number and/or content of their tattoos. Further, even when there was a single tattoo, these studies do not appear to have considered the idea that there could be one reason the tattoo was obtained, and a different meaning or reason attributed to the design (Sanders, 1988). Alternatively, no consideration was given to two individuals attributing different meaning to the same design. Others (such as Grumet, 1983; Hamburger, 1966; Pollak & McKenna, 1945; Post, 1968; and Scutt & Gotch, 1974) have at least acknowledged the possibility of motivation behind obtaining a tattoo.

3.3.2 Personality Disorders

A study of 400 sailors admitted for detention (Measey, 1972) found a significant difference in personality disorder between non-tattooed participants and those with under five tattoos (neglecting to mention detainees with more than five tattoos). However the author noted that this “certainly does not guarantee that a tattoo denotes a personality disorder” (Measey, 1972, p. 185). Echoing Ferguson-Rayport et al. (1955), Measey pointed out that the number of tattoos, their location, and the attitude of the wearer should all be considered when assessing a tattoo as an indication of personality disorder. It appears more likely that the attitude of the wearer alone would indicate a personality problem.

Another study linking tattoos and personality disorders was conducted by Hamburger (1966) in a prison and a hospital. Participants from the jail were mostly diagnosed as having sociopathic personality disorder, with the remainder having inadequate personalities and emotionally unstable personalities. The hospital patients, on the other hand, were primarily diagnosed as drug addicts, with a secondary diagnosis of passive-aggressive personality. Hamburger concluded that the incorporation of another’s identity in a tattoo was an indication of an inadequate personality, while certain tattoos indicate “an apparent deficit in proper ego development” (Hamburger, 1966, p. 62). Likewise, Post (1968, p. 516), drawing on a number of studies, stated that “the presence of the tattoo indicates that there was, or is, a personality disorder which manifested itself in the tattoo, and which could appear again in socially deviant behaviour”.

A two year study of 8,574 male inmates examined personality tests (done on admission) and tattoo “infractions” while in detention (Manuel & Retzlaff, 2002). The authors suggested that neurotic as well as criminal personality types were found in

detainees with tattoos. The researchers also concluded that tattoos were used in three ways: by inmates who were trying to find something to do; by traumatised inmates using the tattoo as a form of relief; and by inmates wishing to fulfil their fantasies. In fact, it would seem that tattoos in prison served any number of purposes. It must be remembered, however, that the tattoos referred to in this study were only tattoos obtained while in prison, and this study clearly is unlikely to generalise well to the public, or even to criminals tattooed before entering detention who did not tattoo while in jail.

3.3.3 Suicide

The relationship between tattooing and suicide has also been investigated. Hicinbotham, Gonsalves and Lester (2006) used an online survey of members of a body modification website to query both attempts at suicide and suicidal ideation. Details of body modifications as well as reports of a history of depression were recorded for 4,700 respondents. While mixed results were found, an association was indicated between body modification and suicidality in depressed individuals, with a stronger association where the body modification is more unusual. As has been noted before, body modification can be used to mean many different things, and in this study piercing and scarification appeared to be greater indicators of suicidality than tattoos. It should be noted that members of a body modification website are not likely to be representative of the general public. Further, this was a self-selected sample of these members.

A study of 134 consecutive suicides concluded that “tattoos may be possible markers for lethality from both suicide and accidental death” (Dhossche, Snell, & Larder, 2000, p. 167). Matching suicide victims ($n = 14$) with victims of accidental death, the main finding was that more tattoos were found in suicide victims (over 50%)

than those who died as a result of an accident (less than one third). However, these differences were not statistically significant and the sample size was very small.

3.4 Personality Factors

There are a number of personality variables that have been related to the desire to obtain a tattoo, most notably extraversion, impulsivity, risk-taking, and sensation-seeking. However, the relationship between these personality variables per se is unclear. Most studies appear to agree that sensation-seeking and risk-taking are linked in some way. However, the relationship between the other factors is much more difficult to disentangle. For example, Aluja, Garcia and Garcia (2003) concluded that facets of extraversion (such as excitement-seeking) are strongly related to sensation-seeking; Whiteside and Lynam (2001) see sensation-seeking as a component of extraversion while Dragutinovich (1987) concluded the two were entirely unrelated. Impulsivity is seen by some (see, for example, Sipps & Alexander, 1987; Wolfe & Kasmer, 1988) to be a component of extraversion, while others see it as a component of psychoticism (Whiteside & Lynam, 2001). In the absence of a logical order, these variables will be discussed alphabetically: extraversion first; followed by impulsivity; then risk-taking and sensation-seeking. Other personality factors such as need for uniqueness will be discussed following the section on sensation-seeking.

3.4.1 Extraversion

Researchers in the United States proposed a *Stimulation Theory* (Copes & Forsyth, 1993) of tattoos. This theory stated that individuals obtain tattoos in order to fulfil their increased need for stimulation because they are extraverts. From a sample of 138 males - college students and customers at tattoo parlours - participants were divided into four groups: no tattoos; would consider a tattoo; have hidden tattoos; and have

visible tattoos. Participants then completed a shortened version of the Eysenck Personality Inventory to determine their level of extraversion. A table with the number of participants in each grouping (i.e., level of tattooing and level of extraversion) was presented. However, no analysis was provided beyond the percentage in each grouping. Copes and Forsyth suggested that high levels of extraversion could be used to explain links between tattoos and delinquency found in prior research. They further stated that rather than being expressions of personality disorders, tattoos were attempts at securing social stimulation. These researchers felt that apart from the desire to appear heroic in the face of pain, the only general explanation for obtaining a tattoo was that of “showing off” (p. 84), concluding that their self-proposed theory was supported by the results of their study.

3.4.2 Impulsivity

Obtaining a tattoo is often thought to be an impulsive act. As such, tattooing by adolescents has been frequently investigated, as adolescence is seen as a stage of impulsively exploring different identity options. A study of 561 American college students found 73% of participants with a tattoo (Greif, Hewitt, & Armstrong, 1999). Many of the conclusions reached were linked to prior research by one of the authors (Armstrong & McConnell, 1994b), such as the relevance of impulsiveness, which was characteristic of a small number of the participants. However, the larger group of participants demonstrated the use of an extended decision-making process when considering tattoos (Armstrong, 1991), making it difficult to regard tattooing across the board as an impulsive act. A more recent study of college students found little evidence to support the idea that tattooing was done impulsively (Forbes, 2001).

A study said to investigate “whether college students with tattoos ... demonstrate extreme personalities and behaviors” (Manuel & Sheehan, 2007, p. 1089),

found that women with tattoos scored higher on impulsivity. It was not specified whether this difference was statistically significant. It was also found that individuals with tattoos were higher on autonomy than those without. Again, significance is not mentioned. The authors stated that even though the mean score with regard to regretting their tattoos was between “disagree” and “strongly disagree”, this was only because the participants did not regret the tattoo *yet*. And the final conclusion was that, in this particular sample, differences in personality variables in tattooees were not as extreme as those found in “less normative people” (Manuel & Sheehan, p. 1095). It appears that the authors are trying to say that even though tattooees are deviant and are going to regret their tattoos *eventually* there are others with more extreme personalities.

One study used questionnaires to examine impulsivity, psychosocial stressors, sensation seeking and body modification (including tattoos) in 281 college students (Roberti, Storch, & Bravata, 2004). Gender differences were apparent when examining the number of body modifications, but not with intention to obtain another modification. Gender significantly predicted the number of tattoos ($p = .011$), with males having more tattoos than females, although only 12% of the variance was explained. Gender and sensation seeking predicted the number of tattoos, but not piercings, while in the case of psychosocial stressors the reverse was found. Sensation seeking significantly increased the prediction of number of tattoos ($p = .019$), with 34% of the variance being explained. Psychosocial stressors were not significantly related to the number of tattoos.

This study, like numerous others (see, for example, L. Carroll & Anderson, 2002; S. T. Carroll, Riffenburgh, Roberts, & Myhre, 2002), involved confounding of variables, since both piercings and tattoos were treated as a single group. As discussed in the introduction, piercings and tattoos are inherently different (piercings are much more temporary than tattoos). In addition, in the conclusion the authors state that their

findings “are consistent with others in suggesting that college students... are a large proportion of those obtaining body modifications” (Roberti, et al., 2004, p. 1174). Since the participants in this study were solely college students, clearly such a conclusion could not be drawn.

3.4.3 Risk Taking

While there may be some disagreement about what constitutes risk-taking behaviour, there is no shortage of studies attempting to show that it is linked to being tattooed. The results reported can be confusing at times, as the majority of studies combine body modifications such as piercings with tattoos.

Adolescent attendees at a Naval Medical Centre were surveyed about body modifications (tattoos and piercings), and other risk-taking behaviours (S. T. Carroll, et al., 2002). It was concluded that adolescents with at least one body modification were at greater risk of involvement in sexual activity, drug abuse, eating disorders and suicide. It was pointed out that adolescents without body modifications were also at risk of participating in these behaviours. It should be remembered that not everyone associates tattooing with risky behaviour (see, for example, Preti et al., 2006).

Other research (Armstrong, et al., 2000) has attempted to demonstrate that soldiers with amateur tattoos were more likely to see themselves as risk-takers and as deviant. Questionnaires were administered to 1,835 soldiers. Significant differences were found between the attributes of soldiers who had tattoos when they entered the military, and those who obtained tattoos after they had joined. Those soldiers with tattoos already inked when entering the military had more tattoos, were more likely to have amateur tattoos and had fewer friends with them at the time of tattooing. Further, they were less satisfied with their tattoos, and were more likely to have indulged in drugs and/or alcohol when they obtained their tattoos. It appears that these differences

may have had an impact on the results, and perhaps the two groups should be reported separately.

A further study examined personality traits, body acceptance and body modifications in 323 anthropology students (Forbes, 2001). This study also looked at both piercings and tattoos, and participants were combined to make a general “body modification” group ($n = 90$). A list of possible reasons for having tattoos or piercings was given to the participants, and the participants could check as many reasons as they felt appropriate. *Liking the look of tattoos* and *self-expression* were the most common reasons given. Significantly more women than men chose *feeling independent* as a reason for having a tattoo. It was also concluded that individuals with body modifications report less conformity to social expectations and greater likelihood of risk taking in comparison to the remainder of the student sample. Having a tattoo or piercing was not seen to be an impulsive act for most of the sample.

In investigating the relationship between risk-taking behaviour and tattooing and body piercing, Deschesnes, Fines and Demers (2006) gave self-report questionnaires to a sample of 2,180 students aged between 12 and 18. Questions from the ATTAS (Armstrong Team Tattoo Attitude Survey: developed from Armstrong, 1991; Armstrong & McConnell, 1994b; Armstrong & Pace-Murphy, 1997; Armstrong, et al., 2000; Greif, et al., 1999) were used in conjunction with measures of self-esteem, suicidal ideation, substance use and various delinquent behaviours. It was concluded that “externalised” risk behaviours, such as illegal activities, school truancy, and multiple drug use, were the greatest contributors to the likelihood of teenagers having body modifications. At the same time, no relationship was found between body modification and either poor self-esteem or “internalised” problem behaviours such as psychological distress or suicidal ideation.

3.4.4 Sensation Seeking

Sensation seeking might best be viewed as seeking excitement or thrills, and it is not hard to see why many people would think this construct plays a part in obtaining a tattoo. A study carried out in Germany involved participants rating tattooed and non-tattooed virtual human characters (Wohlrab, Fink, Kappeler, & Brewer, 2009). Tattooed characters were rated as higher on thrill-, experience- and adventure-seeking, higher on susceptibility to boredom and lower on inhibition, than non-tattooed characters. Tattooed characters were also considered to have had more sexual partners than non-tattooed characters. These results confirm the *stereotype* of tattooees, but of course may not be reflective of actual tattooees. No record was made of whether the participants themselves had tattoos.

3.4.5 Need for Uniqueness

The need for uniqueness, or wanting to feel different, is another assumption made about people who have tattoos. In a large study of 1,375 college students, Tate and Shelton (2008) examined the relationship between tattooing, personality traits, social desirability and need for uniqueness. While it was found that participants with tattoos scored higher on need for uniqueness ($F(1340) = 7.94, p = .0048$), and lower on conscientiousness ($F(1374) = 6.56, p < .01$) and agreeableness ($F(1374) = 27.93, p < .0001$) than participants without tattoos, the differences were slight, leading the investigators to believe that the significance of this result may be due to the large sample size. Since a large proportion of participants in this study were possessors of either tattoos (25% of females and 26% of males) and/or piercings (47% of females and 46% of males), at the very least it can be concluded that body modifiers may no longer represent deviant or “fringe” members of society, at least among the college age population.

Tiggemann and Golder (2006) began their research into uniqueness without the assumption of the possibility of negative outcomes from tattooing, hypothesising that “tattooing could be viewed as an act that results in positive psychological outcomes for the individual... rather than being expressive of some underlying maladjustment” (p. 310). In their study, the authors aimed to investigate the motivations behind tattooing. Measures of need for uniqueness and appearance investment were completed by 100 participants, 50 of whom had tattoos. While the degree of appearance investment was not related to having a tattoo, Tiggemann and Golder concluded a need for uniqueness drives the desire for a tattoo.

3.4.6 Materialism

Watson (1998) investigated the possibility of a link between a number of personality variables and the choice of tattoo location and type. A gender difference in degree of commitment to materialism was found. Participants who were more materialistic tended to have more public tattoos while those low in materialism had private or semi-private tattoos. Males were found to prefer affiliative tattoos. These results concur with those of Coe, Harmon, Verner and Tonn (1993) who felt the major contribution of their study of male military cadets was the demonstration of a sense of alliance, rather than deviance, in the acquisition of tattoos. It is also possible that the participants in Watson’s study who were high in materialism were reflecting the trend of commodification of tattoos.

3.4.7 Self Esteem

The relationship between self-esteem, body investment, depression, anger and body modifications (L. Carroll & Anderson, 2002) was conducted at a high school for “at-risk” girls. The expression of anger was found to be positively related to body

modifications. Further, body modification was negatively related to feelings about one's body. It appears to be the case that the researchers went looking for dysfunction within a dysfunctional setting and have congratulated themselves on finding it.

There are a number of major criticisms of the bulk of these studies. These are: tattoos are often confounded with other body modifications; individuals with a single tattoo may be different in many ways from individuals who continue to obtain multiple tattoos; the reasons for obtaining tattoos are most often designated by the researchers, meaning that only reasons that the researchers have considered are included in the study; and deviant samples are often used to demonstrate deviance.

A qualitative approach studying only tattoos may address at least one of these methodological issues. The experience of the individual would be treated as unique, permitting investigation of their meaning-making. The number of tattoos should be taken into account, rather than dividing people into "tattooed" or "not tattooed". Allowing the reasons to be developed from the data would give a better indication of what the reasons really are. Further, there may be more than one reason any individual obtains a tattoo. At least two questions arise. It is not just a matter of why did you choose this (particular) tattoo, but also why did you choose to become tattooed in the first place? And for multiple tattooees, why did you choose to become tattooed again (and again)?

The previous sections have given examples of studies that have highlighted a link between deviancy and tattooing. Long held beliefs about tattoos (such as the impulsivity of the act of obtaining a tattoo) are beginning to be dislodged.

3.5 Psychological Health

This chapter began with those studies that proposed a view of tattooing related to deviance. This was followed by studies assuming delinquency and psychological disturbance, progressing to studies employing personality factors. The remainder of the chapter takes a more positive view, examining the research that has been conducted into tattooing that has reached more optimistic conclusions.



3.5.1 Promoting Psychological Strength

At times individuals need some assistance with feeling psychologically strong. Some find this strength from the support of others. Some find it in inspirational literature or music. When faced with a difficult situation we are called upon to summon our resources, whatever form they may take.

It has been suggested (Hawkins & Popplestone, 1964; Popplestone, 1963) that tattoos may be utilised by some as a form of armour - an “exoskeletal defense” of sorts.

¹⁰ Thank you to HR for allowing me to use this image.

Popplestone (1963) used this term to refer to corporeal enhancements or modifications that aid an individual's psychological integrity. There are three ways that exoskeletal defences can be expressed: strengthening the body; emphasising sexuality; and equipping the body with indices of invulnerability. It is possible that tattoos may be used for all of these purposes, and indeed, tattoos are often seen as a sign of "toughness", so they may even additionally function to warn onlookers of bodily strength.

Depressed? Downhearted? A good tattoo may make you feel like a man again.

(Steward, 1990, p. 45)

Tattoos may indeed aid the wearer in feeling stronger. For some this feeling of strength may come from the image portrayed by the wearing of tattoos – one of toughness. Others may see their ink more as protection from unwanted advances, sexual or otherwise. However, more than just strengthening the psyche, tattoos have also been proposed to promote positive psychological change.

3.5.2 Other Psychological Variables

In attempting to uncover the psychological and motivational characteristics of young adults practicing body modification, Frederick and Bradley (2000) surveyed 101 adults aged between 16 and 30. Motivation was found to be internalised and self-regulated for the majority of participants, with 91% of them seeing tattooing as a positive behaviour. Perhaps even more interesting is the finding that the only significant result in psychological differences was the demonstration that participants with tattoos had significantly lower depression scores than those without. Given the nature of bias in many studies, as discussed previously, a finding such as this is extremely rare in tattooing research. One previously mentioned study that supports this finding (Forbes,

2001) examined 341 college students and found no differences in personality factors (as measured by the Big Five) between participants with body modifications and those without them.

In a further study designed to compare tattooed and pierced individuals with a control group having no body modification (Wohlrab, Stahl, Rammsayer, & Kappeler, 2007), questionnaires were completed by 359 individuals. Data collected included sexual orientation, 'uncommon' sexual interests, personality type (assessed in line with the Five-Factor Model), thrill seeking and body perception. Significant differences were found between modified ($n = 225$) and non-modified ($n = 134$) participants in Disinhibition (non-modified < modified, $p = .02$), Experience seeking (non-modified < modified, $p = .002$), Sociosexual Orientation (non-modified < modified, $p = .001$), Sociosexual attitude (non-modified < modified, $p = .003$), and Agreeableness (non-modified > modified, $p = .019$).

It should be noted that in both these studies (Forbes, 2001; Wohlrab, Stahl, Rammsayer, et al., 2007) there was no distinction drawn between participants with tattoos and participants with other body modifications, such as piercings. Any research that considers individuals with piercings to be the same as those with tattoos should be examined carefully. In the current study, some participants drew a distinction between piercings and tattoos, saying that tattoos fulfilled a specific purpose for them, one which could not have been satisfied with a piercing. In a similar manner, researchers should be extremely careful not to label tattooed individuals as self-harmers (Adler & Adler, 2005).

To sum up, these studies indicate the shift that has occurred in tattoo research. From original assumptions of deviancy and psychopathology, there has been a transition

to a state of general inquiry, leading to a more rounded view of individuals who choose to tattoo. Finally, some studies have shown that tattooing can be of psychological benefit. However, there are still gaps in our knowledge. These are caused in part by the approach taken in prior research. As has been mentioned earlier in this chapter, researchers in the past chose to concentrate on samples from “deviant” populations, or they chose “control” groups of “normal” individuals, inferring that those without tattoos were “not” normal. In addition, studies that used quantitative methods and had participants fill in questionnaires (or the researchers filled them in themselves), had determined categories *a priori* for the “reasons” behind the tattoos. Not only did this bias the findings in the direction the researchers had set *a priori*, it did not leave any room for other explorations of the reasons individuals chose to have tattoos. Neither did it entertain the idea that individuals may have at least two reasons relating to the acquisition of their tattoo. There is the reason they obtained the tattoo in the first place, and secondly the reason or meaning attributed to the actual design (Sanders, 1988). In addition to approaching tattooing as one example of human behaviour, the current thesis uses an approach designed to let the categories of reasons emerge, rather than have them be dictated by the researcher.

3.6 Final Comments

Early research into tattooing began from an assumption of deviance, and almost always finished with an identical conclusion. More recent research, however, has allowed the possibility of psychological normality. While Reyntjens (2001, p. 3) expresses the view that “those with tattoos have more psychological symptomatology”, others such as Hayman (2000), and Rooks, Roberts and Scheltema (2000), have pointed out some fundamental flaws in previous literature. For one thing, research into tattooing is often carried out on the mentally ill, prisoners, drug users and members of the armed

forces; for another, much of the research is out of date and may not therefore be relevant to tattooed individuals today.

In an interesting aside, in studying research on body image and cosmetic surgery, Sarwer and Crerand (2004, p. 103) found that “the assessment method has continued to predict the results of the research. Interview-based investigations have found high rates of psychopathology”. The major problem is drawing any conclusion from an unusual population. All too often, links between tattoos and deviancy are most likely “found” as argued by Sullivan (2009, p. 131), because the assumption of associations between tattoos and deviancy “shapes the very form such research takes”. What is missing is a study of tattoo based on a theory of psychological functioning.

Rather than commence from an assumption of deviance and/or troubled youth, the current study aims to investigate tattoos in a sample from the general (tattooed) population. The sample was not drawn from adolescents specifically, nor was it concentrated in mental hospitals or prisons. If the research starts from an assumption of normalcy, there is no need to test for psychopathy. Rather, the participants will be treated as experts in their own tattoo experience, and an attempt will be made to understand their perspective, using principles founded in Personal Construct Theory and Grounded Theory. The aim is to gain hermeneutic understanding of tattooing, from the individuals who know best, in line with Kelly’s (1991b, p. 241) notion that “if you do not know what is wrong with a person, ask him; he may tell you”.

Prior literature has failed to look at possible individual differences among the tattooed, and has also focused on tattooed people “as a whole” rather than treating their individual tattoos separately. While it may be that some people have multiple tattoos for the same reason, others may have different reasons for many of their tattoos. Another distinction that is often overlooked is that highlighted by S. Bell (1999) between

tattooed people and people with tattoos. An attempt will be made in the current study to investigate the participants' views on this.

Taking a perspective that treats tattooing as one of a set of normal human behaviours meant that it was necessary to find a concept that could explain the different reasons people give for obtaining tattoos. Not only did this concept need to link the different reasons in some way, it also needed to be one that was not related to abnormality. Expression of identity (or self) is a concept that fulfils these criteria, and is the topic of Chapter Four. As well as discussing various theories relating to identity the chapter also includes various psychological explanations for obtaining tattoos. Finally, the justification for the current thesis, including the aims and research questions, is presented.

Chapter 4

Psychological Framework for Understanding Tattooing: Identity and the Reasons People give for Obtaining a Tattoo

Every time I open the doors to another tattoo parlor, I literally open the doors to understanding another facet of who I am.

Tattooing for me is a way of showing my insides on the outside all the time, so I got them in place that I couldn't necessarily hide or I didn't want to hide. They're sort of in people's faces whether they like it or not, which is not a confrontational thing but it's more of an outward showing of my inward feelings and nature... It's not like my skin has a tattoo on it, it's actually slowly becoming me, becoming my skin. So I feel like when someone says you can't work here because you have tattoos, I feel like they are saying it's because of the colour of your skin.

Participant AA54

They're definitely not just a picture on a bit of skin, they're inside. I think you're tattooed on the inside as much as the outside because.... it's you.

Participant RB40

If you cut me open I reckon I'd be tattooed into me bones.

Participant AA43

Tattooing, when understood in its entirety, must be seen as a religious act. The human being brings forth images from the center of the self and communicates them to the world. Fantasy is embodied in reality. And the person is made whole.

(Webb, 2002, p. 170)

4.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters discussed research carried out into tattooing. In both anthropology and psychology, studies have pointed towards identity as a motive for tattooing. Therefore, this chapter will discuss the view of identity proposed for the current thesis. Then the framework for the thesis will be established. This involves a discussion of the relevant theoretical and empirical categories of reasons for tattooing. In each of these categories, aspects of PCT that appear to inform the groupings will be detailed, along with other psychological theories where relevant¹¹.

4.2 Conceptualisation of Identity in Current Thesis

There are a number of theoretical positions that inform the view of identity taken in the current thesis. Firstly, the question of whether identity is discovered or created will be explored. Secondly, a postmodern stance will be adopted, specifically that our identity can be viewed as made up of multiple “selves” and these selves are fragmented. The notion of multiple selves is consistent with Self-Discrepancy Theory. From a PCT perspective, to know self, we need to understand “not self”, a view that is taken by Social Identity Theory. Finally, the constructivist conception of self will be addressed.

4.2.1 Discovery or Creation

One question concerning identity is whether it is to be discovered at some point in our lives, or it is something we create (Waterman, 1984). Identity being discovered implies that we have a “true” self (Berzonsky, 1986), whereas a creation view of

¹¹ The discussion of these groupings is included here as the emergence of these categories led to a re-configuration of the data analysis. While it would have been possible to discuss these categories in the results, or even in the discussion section, it was decided to locate the discussion of the groupings with the remainder of the theoretical section on identity. This was done mainly so that the reader was aware of all the groupings of reasons before reading the results section. As noted previously, the current thesis has adopted a stance of transparency, revealing the process of thesis production, rather than presenting a document that gave the impression that each section of the thesis followed logically without any need for revision or revisiting.

identity implies we have myriad choices in who we are and will be – there is no “true”, no “final” or “complete”, self.

During the modern era, self was viewed as an inner essence that emerged at birth, and remained fairly constant throughout life (Kvale, 1992; Polkinghorne, 1988). The person existed in a knowable world. However, not all theorists would agree. Strauss (1962) for example, saw constancy of self as a self-perception, rather than a fact. A sociological view proposes that self, society and the interactions between them are what create our identity (Mead, 1934/1967). In this view our “inner essence” is modified by dialogue.

In general, humanistic theories (Maslow, 1961; Rogers, 1961) centre on the idea of a static discovered self, while the more fluid self invention is favoured by constructivists (T. W. Butt, et al., 1997). In Personal Construct terms, self can be seen as a narrative that organises our construct systems, not *just* a set of constructs we apply to the idea of self. “To break down this emerging and developing sense of self into the evaluative construct dimensions that constitute it is to ignore their organization into a living narrative or theory” (T. W. Butt, et al., 1997, p. 57). It should be kept in mind that there are those who feel that the distinction between self-discovery and self-invention is unnecessary when viewed from a Personal Construct perspective (see, for example, Bannister, 1985; T. W. Butt, et al., 1997).

4.2.2 Identity in a Postmodern Context

More recently, many have come to adopt a postmodern view of self. In a postmodern view, identity is not only fragmented, but permanently shifting. Our self-view is continuously transformed in relation to the ways we are represented in the cultural systems in which we reside. This view is somewhat in line with Hermans’ (2003; Hermans, Rijks, & Kempen, 1993) idea of a dialogical self. In his view, the self

is a set of positions. As the “I” moves between these positions, a multi-voiced self emerges. This view of multiple selves was well articulated by Mair with the metaphor of a *Community of Self* (Mair, 1977).

4.2.3 Multiple Identities: How many “selves” do we have?

James (1890) was one of many who drew attention to the distinction between “I” and “me”. The “I” included self-awareness, self-agency, self-continuity, and self-coherence. “I” am able to act upon “me”. James further divided “me” into three types: the corporeal or material self (our body); the social self; and the spiritual self. James said we have as many selves as groups of people with whom we interact. Or as Mair (1977) put it, as many selves as we choose to construe. The ideal and ought selves of Self-Discrepancy Theory (Higgins, 1987) are examples of possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and are consistent with this view, as well as with a constructivist approach. As such, each of these concepts is relevant to the current thesis.

4.2.4 Self-Discrepancy Theory

Self-Discrepancy Theory (Higgins, 1987) proposes three domains of the self, and two standpoints on the self. The domains are *actual* self (“self” in the current thesis), *ideal* self (“ideal self”) and *ought* self (not used in the current thesis). One’s actual self is often referred to as the self-concept, and consists of the individual’s beliefs about the attributes that they actually possess, while ideal self refers to the attributes the individual would ideally like to have. Ought self can be thought of as being comprised of the attributes the individual feels duty bound to demonstrate.

The two standpoints are the individual’s own point of view, and that of a significant other. Self-Discrepancy Theory (Higgins, 1987) suggests that individuals differ as to which self-state representations they choose to aspire to. A self-state

representation is the product of one domain of the self with one standpoint. It is proposed that different kinds of psychological discomfort are experienced depending on which self-state representation the individual strives to meet. Discrepancies between actual and ideal selves are said to create dejection-related emotions, whereas discrepancies between actual and ought selves foster emotions related to agitation. Higgins (1999) himself acknowledged that the hypothesised effects were not always found. He suggested that research should be directed toward finding *when* these effects are likely to occur, rather than *if*. Since then results have been obtained that both dispute (Key, Mannella, Thomas, & Gilroy, 2000) and support (Hardin & Lakin, 2009) Higgins' (1987) original argument.

Self-Discrepancy Theory (Higgins, 1987) was used to research the assessment of body image in female college students (Szymanski & Cash, 1995). In this study the 143 participants were asked to rate their physical attributes from their own viewpoint, and from that of a romantic partner, utilising the ideal and ought self-guides. The authors concluded that the distinction drawn by Higgins (1987) between self and other was useful, while that drawn between ideal and ought self-guides was questionable.

Constructivists have proposed the idea there are at least three components of our self-conception - actual self, social self, and ideal self (Norris & Makhoul-Norris, 1976). Further, it has been noted that the inclusion of the ideal self can provide additional information about how an individual construes him- or herself (Ryle, 1976). In fact, it is possible to have variations on the self as elements in a repertory grid. Therefore, Self-Discrepancy Theory (Higgins, 1987) was seen to have an affinity with a number of approaches in PCT.

As Kelly (1991b, p. 91) stated, "the *self* is, when considered in the appropriate context, a proper concept or construct. It refers to a group of events which are alike in a

certain way and, in that same way, necessarily different from other events.” It is often informative to examine which elements in a grid are similar to the self (J. R. Adams-Webber, 1979). Therefore, in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of an individual’s construal of self, we need to study both the self in its many variations, as well as the not-self (J. R. Adams-Webber, 1979). The current thesis utilises a number of differing views of self and others.

4.2.5 Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory (Stets & Burke, 2000) uses the categorisation of self and others into in-groups and out-groups to define an individual’s social identity. While an understanding of group membership informs the current thesis to some degree, one advantage of the current thesis is that the participants were studied as individuals, not as members of a particular group. This meant that idiosyncrasies of participants are acknowledged, unlike some sociological studies, where “Sociologists who study tattooing focus on group patterns and overall trends” (Kang & Jones, 2007, p. 42).

4.2.6 Identity in a Constructivist Context

Most individuals in western societies have a basic sense of a unified self or identity (Erikson, 1959). This basic unit is continually updated by events, and the individual’s reaction to those events, but there is a core self that remains constant. In Kelly’s (1991b) view, this updating is seen as reconstrual of self-constructs. It is possible that one self-construct pole is that of “tattooee”. Kelly’s own example (p. 273) of a military officer adapting to his new role with the help of rank and insignia might just as easily be applied to a newly tattooed person.

According to Kelly (1991b), we utilise core constructs to help maintain our identity. For example, my construct of myself as an honest person is one that remains with me throughout my life. Bannister (1985, p. 39) sees self as the “story of you that you tell yourself”. This narrative view is also held by McAdams (1988a, 1988b, 1993, 2001), who proposed that our integrative life stories are one standpoint from which to view our personality. If we take this view, modified by the current postmodern zeitgeist, we can see that there are myriad narratives available to each of us. To illustrate, there is a story of yourself that you would tell your friends when, for example, you were pulled over by a policeman for speeding. This story may be very different from the version you tell your parents. And possibly very different from what you said to the policeman at the time.

Self, then, is not a static thing nor a substance, but a configuring of personal events into a historical unity which includes not only what one has been but also anticipations of what one will be.

(Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 150)

For the purposes of the current thesis, identity is conceptualised as a unique set of constructs that we hold about our selves. The self is held in place by those constructs used to construe it (Kelly, 1991b). This set of constructs has a sense of consistency (through time and circumstance) but also holds the potential for change. Change in self constructs can be dramatic or subtle, and can occur suddenly or gradually. At different times and in different situations, particular subsets of these constructs will be more or less salient. Who we are as persons is also perceived by those around us as myriad unique sets of constructs.

To summarise, there are myriad ways of approaching the notion of identity. Some of those deemed relevant to the current thesis have been discussed. These include the distinction some draw between identity as something we must uncover and identity as something we create and change ourselves as we progress. A postmodern approach, seeing the self as fragmented, was useful in the current thesis. Theories such as Self-Discrepancy Theory (Higgins, 1987), and Social Identity Theory are also relevant. Further, the constructivist notion of reconstrual, together with Kelly's (1991b) idea of core constructs, and applying constructs to self are germane to this discussion.

4.3 Setting up the Framework for the Thesis

The author's attempts to categorise the reasons people gave for becoming tattooed led to the development of several categories. Initially it was believed that the categories could be found in psychological theory. However, other categories became apparent from talking to people with tattoos (both during my research and at other times). Subsequently it was discovered that this progression during research was a form of Grounded Theory. However, rather than having "decided" upon a Grounded Theory approach up front, I had proceeded down that path without realising it. For that reason, I may not have abided by all the recommended guidelines of Grounded Theory. The following sections examine the reasons for tattooing. Those reasons found in psychological theory are discussed first, followed by reasons that emerged from the data obtained in the current study.

4.4 Initial (Theoretically Derived) Reasons for Tattooing

Initially it was thought that psychological literature alone could provide reasons that may help understand why individuals would want to obtain tattoos. The following sections discuss the reasons from the literature that I felt were relevant to explaining

tattooing, including the extension I have made to tattooing. In addition, I have attempted to use Kelly's (1991b) theory as a way to supplement my interpretation of the literature¹². In some cases it is possible to see that Kelly's (1970) notion of behaviour as an experiment can be used to aid understanding. Identity was one of the original ideas so it has been left in, in line with the view that the "workings" of the thesis should be transparent.

4.4.1 Belonging/Group Membership

As discussed in Section 2.2, tattoos have been used to denote belonging in many cultures. Many authors have looked to group membership or belongingness when examining identity. Some believe that belonging to a particular group allows the individual the freedom to experiment with a previously unformed identity. Others may see a group as a place where a particular self is brought to the fore. These positions are consistent with Social Identity Theory (Stets & Burke, 2000). Or perhaps the group interacts with the individual in the forming of the self, as suggested by Mead (1934/1967).

Amongst other things, group membership can be seen to provide a platform from which individuals may build their own identity (Erikson, 1959, 1968). In an effort to find or create an identity, an individual may look to an "out-group" such as bikers or punks, to feel part of an "in-group", especially when they feel rejected by society. For some, it may be easier or preferable to identify with a well-defined, yet socially unacceptable group, than to negotiate conformity to the standards of their friends, relatives, and societal groupings. Others, such as parents, may be utilised in an adversarial role as part of the adolescent's attempt at understanding their own identity

¹² The application of PCP to a number of these reasons was discussed in a book chapter titled "Tattooing: A journey towards Identity" (Hennessy & Walker, 2009).

(Erikson, 1959, 1968). In Kelly's (1991b) view, the individual may be contrasting his or her own behaviour with that of others, such as parents, to experiment with forming new constructs.

Mair's (1977) *Community of Self* is compatible with James' (1890/1950) view that each individual has as many selves (identities) as groups of persons with whom they interact. Each role or set of roles that a person plays is embedded in the groups that provide context for the expectations associated with that role. For some, having a highly visible sign of their affiliation with a particular group aids in their identity formation and/or consolidation. However, some feel that the groups we belong to highlight particular identities, rather than form them (Gergen, 1971, 1991/2000, 1993; Gergen & Davis, 1985). Self-definition is aligned with social circumstances. Role playing, social comparison and appraisals from others aid in the development of one's identity.

For a highly developed self there must be a highly developed community.... The unity of the self requires the organization of attitudes that are shared by members of the group to which the individual belongs. A social process involving a number of persons provides the basis for the unity of the self.... The individual is always dependent on the group for his self.

(Mead, 1982, p. 163)

An investigation of the tattoos of 12 cadets from a male military college (Coe, et al., 1993) concluded that tattooing should be viewed as a cooperative action, creating bonds between the tattooees, rather than the acquisition of a mark of deviance. In a major exploration of the process of "becoming and being tattooed", Sanders (1988) stated that tattoos were a symbol of identity. In addition, Sanders believed that acquiring a tattoo not only changed how an individual viewed his or her self, it also changes how others perceived the individual, holding "significant potential for altering social interaction" (p. 397).

Personal Construct Theory (Kelly, 1991b) is able to provide a number of explanations for individuals obtaining tattoos to denote group membership. Firstly, it may be the case that the individual who chooses to tattoo a marking upon his or her skin denoting membership of some “tribe” has construed the experience of group belonging in a similar manner to another individual who also chooses to tattoo the mark upon him or herself. As Kelly (1991b, p. 65) noted, “Sometimes, however, culture is taken to mean similarity in what members of the group expect of each other”. Or it may be that the construal is related to the tattooing process, and the group association comes afterwards. In either case, it can be seen that the Commonality Corollary (Kelly, 1991b) is an important aid to our understanding of this practice.

Kelly’s (1991b, p. 63) Commonality Corollary states, “to the extent that one person employs a construction of experience which is similar to that employed by another, his psychological processes are similar to those of the other person”. This is not to say that just because two individuals have a tattoo that they will necessarily have similar psychological processes, but rather that if they construe their experiences similarly, they may indeed have behaved similarly, that is, they may have both obtained a tattoo. If an individual displays a tattoo, it is possible that this is an attempt to have others with tattoos identify with the individual’s construction system. Alternatively, it could be that the individual is attempting to display a contrasting construction (Kelly, 1991b) to others who do not have tattoos. In either case, we can see Kelly’s (1970) notion of behaviour as an experiment.

The Sociality Corollary (Kelly, 1991b) signifies the importance of roles with respect to an individual’s place in a particular group. The different groups an individual belongs to provide context for the mutual subsuming of construct systems by the members of those groups. By being able to predict what other group members will do,

the individual is able to adjust his or her own behaviour accordingly. Again, it is possible that the individual is utilising the group identity while an individual identity is being experimented with.

4.4.2 Identity or Self

Identity was originally one of the theoretical categories thought to be a reason for obtaining a tattoo. Studies attempting to relate tattooing to aspects of self will be discussed here.

In a study of 17 persons who saw themselves as gender non-conformists, Grounded Theory was used to investigate participants' psychological use of tattoos (Cimo, 2004). The participants were found to view the tattoos as transitional objects which aided the tattooees' sense of control over being an outsider. Cimo believed the tattoos enabled the tattooees to integrate parts of the self, and to differentiate themselves from others. In doing this, the tattoos were argued to facilitate an embodied sense of self. Social Identity Theory (Stets & Burke, 2000), with the notion of self versus others, together with a narrative approach (McAdams & Ochberg, 1988) go some way towards explaining this phenomenon.

For some individuals, having a tattoo is a way of reconstruing their view of self. This may be related to predictions they made about the actual tattoo experience (how they would cope with the pain, e.g.), or it may be that there were predictions made about whether they were the "kind of person" who has a tattoo. Reactions of others play a part in the interaction between self and society, where self can use these reactions as validation for an action such as getting a tattoo (Mead, 1934/1967). Contemplation of possible reactions of others may result in the individuals examining their ought self in line with Self-Discrepancy Theory (Higgins, 1987).

Whatever the case, the evolving self can be seen as attempting validation (Kelly, 1991b). This usually requires others to recognise the individual's continuity of self through time, while simultaneously requiring the individual being able to synthesise different self-images. A tattoo, due to its permanence, is a visible means of validating the constancy of one's identity, despite other things that may change in life.

4.4.3 Peak Experiences

Peak experiences mean different things to different people. Some see them as dramatic occurrences where pleasure and adrenaline levels are heightened. Others see them in a more serene light, with things just “falling into place” – something akin to the experience termed “flow” by Csikszentmihalyi (1993).

It has been proposed that some humans find clarity with regard to their identity during a peak experience (Maslow, 1961). In Maslow's view, people in peak experiences become close to their “unique self”. This does not always have to be an earth-shattering event. However, one way for an individual to clarify their sense of self is to participate in a dramatic social interaction (Gergen & Gergen, 1993). It is possible that the experience of gaining a tattoo may provide some of the drama needed to help crystallize one's self-concept. It may be that the self is discovered during an intense experience (Waterman, 1984). On the other hand, it is equally likely that the experience aids the formation of new constructs about the self (Kelly, 1991b), resulting in a re-creation of part of the self.

Body modification could be construed as a dramatic social interaction of the type theorised to occur in a peak experience. It is a test of endurance and the ability to tolerate pain (Featherstone, 2000; Strong, 1998). Tattooees report a great sense of achievement knowing that one has been through an intense physical ordeal and have

come out of it, having achieved a goal (Sanders, 1988). Therefore, it is possible that obtaining a tattoo may serve a dual purpose for some. Not only will the individual participate in a peak experience, providing clarity of self, they may reap the added benefit of pride in self after enduring the pain of the tattoo process. Others may feel that obtaining a tattoo has enabled them to grow psychologically, even without the intensity of a peak experience.

Tattoos derive... from collective human strivings and impulses that transcend personal experience.

(Grumet, 1983, p. 491)

If an individual anticipates that having a tattoo will be an intense (peak) experience that will test both mind and body, this prediction will most likely be validated (Kelly, 1991b). If a further prediction is that the individual will be more “in touch” with their core self after the experience, “surviving” a tattoo will also be validating. It may even be the case that the individual is using aggressiveness (“active elaboration of one’s perceptual field”: Kelly, 1991b, p. 374) in order to extend their construct system. Alternatively, unexpected reactions from others may prove to be invalidating. In either case, the individual has the opportunity of extending their construct system through experimentation (Kelly, 1970).

4.4.4 Psychological Growth and Healing

The issue of psychological distress is complicated, as often we are subjected to feelings of anxiety or depression without understanding the cause, let alone being able to remove it. Often individuals who have suffered trauma resort to self-injury as a way to escape their psychological prison (Favazza, 1987/1996; Strong, 1998). Self-harm has been discussed briefly in the current thesis. In the past this behaviour was seen as a

weak attempt at suicide. However, it is now acknowledged that inflicting physical pain may indeed aid in psychological recovery (Glucklich, 2001; Grumet, 1983; Hayman, 2000).

Tattoos may serve any of a number of functions, especially when the physicality of the tattooing pain functions to distract the tattooee from psychological pain. Whether the tattoo aids self-definition, self-integration or social identity, it cannot be denied that the tattoo has a psychological purpose. However, there are broader social factors influencing our emphasis on individualising characteristics. For example, DeMello (2000) argues that notions of individual self-awareness informing body art projects such as tattoos are middle-class ideas that originated in the self-help and pop psychology movements of the 1960s and 1970s.

The search for a permanent talisman representative of inner work pertains to those who have chosen the path.

(Rubin, 1988, Dedication)

The process of obtaining a tattoo may require an extension of one's construct system (Kelly, 1991b). While challenging, this can result in psychological growth for the individual. At the same time, the individual may be saying "this is who I am", which is an example of definition of the construct system (Kelly, 1991b). Further, once an individual has participated in getting a tattoo, they will be able to use that experience to construe themselves participating in other actions that may have previously been outside the range of convenience of their construct system.

When examining psychological motives of tattooees, Grumet (1983) stated that "of all the various motives for bearing a tattoo, the quest for personal identity is central" (p. 483). Grumet attempted a "dermal diagnosis" based on the idea that tattoos can be seen as a nonverbal form of communication and, to that end, could be deciphered. Six

categories were considered to complete the diagnosis: emotional reaction to the tattoo; number and sequence of tattoos; circumstances of acquisition; location; quality, symmetry and size; and content. It was concluded that tattoos can be seen as a “psychic crutch” which could be used for psychological growth, such as keeping away unwanted emotions and healing self-image. In addition, tattoos aided in the establishment of personal identity, and allowed the individual to express important feelings in a more obvious way.

Pain has its own noble joy when it kindles a strong consciousness of life, before stagnant and torpid.

(Archaeus, 1838, p. 203)

It is possible that in the process of deciding upon a tattoo, and obtaining it, we can see the C-P-C (circumspection, pre-emption, control/choice) cycle (Kelly, 1991b) at work. When an individual is considering a first tattoo, the construct system will need to be loosened, probably somewhat considerably for a number of people, to entertain the idea (circumspection). Next, certain factors will need to be selected as important to the decision (pre-emption). These may include the size and placement of the design, the cost, and the level of pain involved. Lastly the choice is made and a change in the construct system occurs.

In addition, obtaining and wearing a tattoo are new elements in the individual's construction system (Kelly, 1991b). This provides an environment for the creation of new constructs, further extending the system. When obtaining a tattoo for the first time there will be a level of anxiety, as much of the experience will be outside the range of convenience of our present construct system. However, at some level the individual must be able to construe themselves as ready to go through the experience. As Kelly

states "...even the changes which a person attempts within himself must be construed by him" (p. 55).

4.4.5 Rebellion

As discussed in the section on group membership, adolescents may utilise an out-group while they are experimenting with their identity (Erikson, 1959). While the adolescent may just feel more comfortable with this particular peer group, this is often seen as the adolescent rebelling against authority such as parents or even society. Social Identity Theory (Stets & Burke, 2000) and Symbolic Interactionism (Blumer, 1969) also help explain this behaviour. Rebellion sets up the individual in a self versus not-self (J. Adams-Webber & Davidson, 1979) situation, while the meaning of rebellion is construed by the individual based on social interactions. One reason people assume individuals (usually adolescents) have tattoos is to be defiant (see, for example, S. T. Carroll, et al., 2002; Irwin, 2003).

While it may simply be the case that the adolescent gaining a tattoo is demonstrating their individuality, it may also be that they are performing an experiment (Kelly, 1970, 1991b) in an attempt to anticipate the reactions of their parents. Perhaps for some it is a test of whether their parents will accept their "new" identity. It may even be an attempt to goad the parents into playing a role in a social process with the child – perhaps they are so keen to have their parents interact with them that they are prepared to take "desperate" measures to make that happen.

Another explanation may be found in Kelly's (1991b) notion of contrast. The adolescent may utilise their parents as the contrasting pole of a construct. This, too, is in line with the idea of self versus other (Stets & Burke, 2000), or self versus not-self (J.

Adams-Webber & Davidson, 1979; Kelly, 1991b). Obtaining a tattoo is concrete evidence that they are different from their parents.

4.4.6 Remembrance/Rootedness

Amidst the ebb and flow of living, individuals crave a sense of permanence, a feeling of continuity. As social beings, we feel a need to have connections with other people. This includes links to our past, as well as current relationships. Fromm (1973) believed that throughout our lives, we continually experience separation. These separations serve to emphasise our human existential need for rootedness.

... only that which hurts incessantly is remembered ... Things never proceeded without blood, torture and victims, when man thought it necessary to forge a memory for himself.

(Nietzsche, 1998, p. 42)

In a culture that is ever more transient, a tattoo could be grounding. It might offer the rare experience of permanence. For someone who feels not only physically but psychologically adrift, these indelible markings may be as grounding as the anchor tattooed on a sailor's arm, which helped him keep faith that someday he would make it home. It is possible that the tribal patterns currently popular in tattoos are a reflection of this search for a link to our roots. The permanency of a tattoo may be of benefit to the individual providing stability in times when the rest of life may be changing at a rapid pace.

Martin (1997) acknowledges the use of tattoos to provide a sense of stability in an otherwise rocky world. It is unusual to see this approach taken by a psychiatrist - emphasising that tattoos may be constructive, rather than destructive, adorning rather than mutilatory - in a sea of articles that go to great pains to point out the psychiatric problems of anyone who chooses to tattoo, especially adolescents.

This sense of stability is also necessary in our construct systems (Kelly, 1991b). Changes to our system must be made gradually otherwise we are in danger of experiencing threat. At any one time we do not set out to change all our constructs – their meanings and ranges of convenience – but rather we work on a select few at a time. This has the effect of us having a sense of permanency to our self-image, and provides us with a sense of being grounded. Obtaining a tattoo means that there are certain constructs we hold about ourselves that will be extremely hard to change, adding to the stability of our construct system.

Humans need rituals to connect to one another and to their culture in celebration of life's passages.

(Chinchilla, 2002, p. 52)

4.4.7 Rites of Passage

When many people think of a rite of passage, they often envision a primitive ritual (e.g., tattooing or cicatrisation) that a young person goes through in order to enter adulthood. Modern western civilization also has its rituals and rites of passage. Typically, these have one of two goals, both of which mark a transition in the life of the individual. According to Erikson (1982) the rite of passage can either reinforce the new role of the individual, such as in a marriage ceremony, or it may mark the end of a phase in the individual's life, such as a graduation.

A rite of passage constitutes a self-transformation. This may be a physical transformation such as in the primitive rituals, but it always involves a psychological transformation. In the view of van Gennep (1960), a rite of passage consists of three phases – separation, liminality and incorporation. In the separation phase the individual begins to withdraw from the group, as a means of easing the transition into another

place or status. The liminal phase is a period where normal beliefs about self are relaxed; in this phase our identity can be seen to be in limbo (V. W. Turner, 1969). In terms of construal, the liminal phase would be the period where the individual loosens their construing (Kelly, 1991b) as they attempt to reconstrue their view of self. The incorporation phase happens after the rite has been performed and the individual has tightened their construing.

Each season lived, each transition successfully navigated, etches into our being something that makes us unique.

(Hinders, 1994, p. 17)

Adolescents experience self-transformation when they enter the crisis of identity versus role confusion (Erikson, 1950). Verberne (1969) hypothesised that tattooing is a rite of passage that adolescents utilise in their attempts to overcome this crisis. While this may be successful for some, others may find the resultant upheaval simply adds to their confusion.

Individuals may obtain a tattoo as a permanent reminder of a transition from one stage in life to the next. In some cultures, individuals become tattooed at puberty, and again, for example, for women, when they give birth to their first child (DeMello, 2000; Gilbert, 2000; Hambly, 1925). For some young men, obtaining a tattoo is a ritual in itself - proof positive of courage and endurance in the face of what may be days of pain. Perhaps obtaining a tattoo is one way to cope with the transition into an unfamiliar status - reducing the anxiety by providing a socially agreed way of construing the change. Obtaining a tattoo is not only a reminder of the transition from one stage to the next, but it may also aid in loosening of the individual's construction system, preventing the entire system from being overwhelmed by anxiety.

When an individual becomes tattooed a Personal Construct theorist would consider that he or she is choosing the alternative that will result in extension or definition of his or her construct system (Kelly, 1991b), as we know from the Choice Corollary. For the first time tattooee, it is the validation that the tattoo process is able to be ‘survived’ - that the question the tattooee was asking has been answered. Resolution here constitutes a change in the way the individual views themselves – a change to one or more core constructs. “Core constructs are those which govern a person’s maintenance processes – that is, those by which he maintains his identity and existence” (Kelly, 1991b, p. 356).

This concludes the groups gleaned from the psychological literature. The following sections are included as they cover the groups discovered during data collection for the current study.

4.5 Empirically Derived Reasons for Tattooing

This section discusses a number of themes that emerged during the data collection phase of the thesis but were not indicated by a reading of the psychological literature. For example, the use of tattoo as ornamentation is well-known and was suggested by many tattooed individuals. It was found that many participants expressed the notion that they had wanted a tattoo for a long time, so that category has also been included.

4.5.1 Aesthetics

Humans have a deep need to decorate themselves. Ornamentation is another rationale given for why individuals become tattooed (Camphausen, 1997; Ebin, 1979). Mainstream individuals tend to decorate their bodies with makeup, different hairstyles,

and the latest fashions. Some tend to take it further and have cosmetic surgery in the name of beautification. Body modification could be viewed simply as a more extreme version of this, with piercings, implants and tattoos being the form of expression.

It may be the case that individuals decorate their bodies as a representation of one of their multiple selves (Mair, 1977). This is more likely the case when the tattoo is placed in a position where it can be covered, or shown, depending on the whim of the individual. Having the option of only showing the tattoo when one chooses is a demonstration of the existence of at least two possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

In discussing the history of aesthetics, Siebers (2000, p. 2) argues that there is a “link between certain kinds of bodies and the ability to have particular types of thoughts and feelings”. For example, National Socialists changed the idea of beauty forever when they equated health and racial superiority with a beautiful physique. More recently, democratic movements argue that the appearance and health of the body is an indicator of the success or otherwise of the government. The body aesthetic was seen to undergo dramatic changes when there is a historical shift, for example, from modernity to postmodernity.

Siebers further states: “the laws of beauty are not always about pleasure, however, and there may be ample reason to argue that pain and suffering play the greater role in aesthetics” (p. 11). He continues, explaining that “desire begins and ends in discontentment”, which, he says, lends support to the argument that pain, more than pleasure, is a motivator for aesthetics. What may be of relevance to the current thesis is Siebers’ idea that what most describe as “cosmetic” surgery is, in his view, only aesthetic when it aspires to change human nature. Perhaps for the tattooed individual, a “merely aesthetic” tattoo has a meaning deeper than anyone realises, even the wearer.

Hanes (2005) investigated efforts of self-expression in male residents of a county jail. While Hanes only discussed four of the themes present in art works in the jail, he concluded that artistic endeavour served a number of purposes, including monitoring the passage of time, retreating into a fantasy world, and providing acceptable expression of emotions. It is possible that for some detainees, tattoos are a form of artistic expression, or even a way to alleviate boredom.

Those who choose more permanent forms of decoration may be more sure about their sense of self than those who change their decoration at the whim of “fashion”. Once a tattoo has been applied, changes to certain constructs will be difficult, if not impossible. However, at any time the individual is free to re-construe any aspect of the tattoo. Alternatively, perhaps for some individuals their physical self is subordinate to other selves (Kelly, 1991b; Mair, 1977), and therefore more open to change, while the tattooees have a core construct around decoration of their physical self. Being a core construct, it is more stable, and less likely to change dramatically over a short period of time.

4.5.2 Beliefs/Life Philosophy

Anthropological studies have often demonstrated a “magico-religious” attribution to tattooing, and during the course of the current investigation it became clear that this too was an important reason for many tattooees. Each of us, as humans, has a code by which we live. For some this code is obvious to everyone around us. Others may express their convictions more subtly, and personally. A parallel can be drawn here between these beliefs and the expression by some of religious affiliations. Further, we can see the influence of tribal culture, where the beliefs of the tribe were inscribed upon the members, or the talismanic tattoos that the wearers believed

protected them from evil spirits, or guaranteed them a safe passage to the afterlife (Hambly, 1925).

If the constructs represented by tattoos are core constructs (Kelly, 1991b), then it is possible that tattoos are portraying deeply held beliefs and feelings that are linked to the individual's sense of self. Some individuals like having a tangible reminder of what is important to them and a tattoo is a way to do that without the inconvenience of having to carry something (such as a photograph or card) with them. A tattoo is always with them, it will not be lost, and will be more likely to remain in pristine condition than something you cart around in your handbag or pocket.

4.5.3 Impulsivity

One assumption made by many is that tattoos are obtained on the spur of the moment, often while the individual is drunk. While this may have been the case in the past, there are stricter laws these days surrounding tattooing, and in many places (e.g., Australia) tattoos are not legally done on people who show evidence of being intoxicated. Apart from the obvious opportunity for regret once sober, the tattoo process is affected by alcohol in the bloodstream, with greater bleeding often a result. Greif, Hewitt and Armstrong (1999) suggest impulsiveness is linked to late adolescent development.

We know from Kelly (1991b) that impulsivity can be viewed as the result of a foreshortening of the circumspection period of the C-P-C Cycle. The C-P-C (Circumspection–Pre-emption–Control/Choice) Cycle (Kelly, 1991b, pp. 379-380) is entered into when an individual wishes to make a decision. Firstly, the individual uses circumspection to look at the problem at hand in a multidimensional manner. Secondly, in the pre-emption phase perspectives are organised in a dichotomous manner. Finally,

the individual must make a final elaborative choice. We should also be mindful that spontaneous activity gives us an indication where a person's most valuable experiences lie (T. Butt, 2008; Kelly, 1991a).

While it is entirely possible that many individuals have acted impulsively and obtained a tattoo, it would appear that a great many of those have been contemplating it at some level, for an extended period. Many tattooees state that a tattoo was something they "wanted for a long time", yet one day they just "decided" to go and have one. It would appear that these individuals have been going through the circumspection and pre-emption phases of the C-P-C Cycle repeatedly, and at some point, they enter the choice phase and "impulsively" decide to obtain a tattoo.

4.5.4 Permanence

The permanence of a tattoo is something that many people consider to be a negative aspect. Once a tattoo is applied, a change of heart can mean a long, expensive and usually painful period of removal (Varma & Lanigan, 1999; Wollina & Kostler, 2007), unless the tattoo is covered with another. Most times removal results in scarring, which may even be less attractive than the tattoo itself.

However, many tattooed individuals see the permanence of their body marking as a bonus (DeMello, 1995; Sweetman, 2000). In many cultures permanent body marking such as tattooing was connected to permanent statuses such as tribal membership or marks of maturity (Sanders, 1988). It has even been suggested (Steward, 1990) that a tattoo can be viewed as an existential act which "once done is done forever" (p. 59). Some military personnel have utilised this permanence to keep a close record of their blood group (Scutt & Gotch, 1974).

In terms of PCT (Kelly, 1991b), the permanence of a tattoo may be of benefit only when the tattoo can be linked to a stable core construct. If the tattoo is related to a

more peripheral construct, or to a core construct that has changed, then regret may be the outcome. However, if the construct system has already adapted to include the construct of being tattooed, and the meaning of the tattoo has been subsumed by one or more self constructs, then the permanence of the tattoo may be construed by the wearer as a positive attribute.

4.5.5 Uniqueness

We all like to feel that we are “different” – that there is something about us that makes us special and sets us apart from everyone else. One of the most common reasons individuals give for having a tattoo is that it makes them feel unique (Armstrong, Owen, Roberts, & Koch, 2002a; S. Bell, 1999; Edgerton & Dingman, 1963; Hambly, 1925; Rubin, 1988). Many non-tattooed individuals might argue that, by being tattooed, the “different” person is merely exchanging their reference group. Rather than being an individual because they have a tattoo, they merely become part of an out-group (Stets & Burke, 2000) – a group of tattooed people. It could be argued from a constructivist perspective that if the individual construes uniqueness by the application of a tattoo that is how they construe it, no matter what anyone else may think.

Respondents in a recent study (Orend & Gagne, 2009) went to great lengths to emphasise just *how* different they were. These participants believed *they* were truly rebellious, and were exercising agency, while other tattooees were *trying* to be rebellious and were succumbing to the pressures of popular culture. The use of “flash” (pre-drawn tattoo designs displayed on the walls of tattoo parlours) was one demonstration of this - the participants felt that using flash meant that the others could not possibly be expressing anything unique. Quite ironically, each of the 21 respondents had “logo” tattoos, meaning that their tattoo design was that of a corporation, such as Apple, Nike, or IBM.

The individuality corollary (Kelly, 1991b) offers a simple reflection of this phenomenon of needing to feel unique: “persons differ from each other in their construction of events” (p. 38). This corollary emphasises the need for individuals to feel different. It may also be the reason why some individuals choose to express their individuality with a tattoo, whilst others choose alternate means of expression.

4.5.6 Wanted for a Long Time

As a reason for getting a tattoo, this is not a category that would immediately come to mind. Indeed, it is somewhat harder to explain than many of the other reasons. This phenomenon had been reported in sociological and anthropological literature (Sanders, 1988; Sweetman, 2000), as well as being something mentioned by many of the participants in the current study. Almost half the participants expressed this feeling, even though this notion appeared to be something that they could not explain.

Many individuals stated “I just wanted one” or “I’ve wanted one for ages” but also that one day they “impulsively” went and had a tattoo. This phenomenon has also been reported previously (Armstrong & McConnell, 1994b; Armstrong, Owen, Roberts, & Koch, 2002b). It may well be that this is a case of a particular self (Mair, 1977) being revealed due to some personal event. However, it is hypothesised that the reasons for wanting a tattoo are at a level of awareness not available to the conscious, or in some cases it may be that the relevant pole of the construct is submerged.

The idea of wanting something but not being able to verbalise the reason is not unique to tattoos. Many of us have feelings about particular experiences that we find difficult to express. Some authors such as Scutt and Gotch (1974) have suggested that a theory of ‘Psychic Unity’ explains the spontaneous scattered interest in tattooing over the world, in line with Jung’s (2001) notion of a collective unconscious. These ideas and feelings are known to us, but their exact origin is not.

It is possible that in some cases the content of the tattoo relates to a preverbal construct (Kelly, 1991b). In others it may be that the individual's preverbal constructs were excessively permeable and later constructs have been added to the preverbal construct, making it difficult for the participant to articulate what was going on for them.

Another possibility is that the individual has become embedded in the C-P-C Cycle (Kelly, 1991b), going through the phases of Circumspection and Pre-emption, but not managing to settle on a Choice. This would mean that the individual may re-enter the Circumspection phase any number of times. When the individual finally makes a choice to obtain a tattoo, it may appear as somewhat impulsive.

In an article published after the data for the current study was collected and examined Wohlrab, Stahl and Kappeler (2007) proposed ten categories of reasons for obtaining tattoos. These reasons were gleaned from an extensive study of the tattooing literature. Many of the reasons parallel those just discussed, albeit with different labels. Others, such as physical endurance, addiction, and sexual motivation were identified in the current study, but more as sub-themes of the tattoo experience, rather than the motivation underlying the acquisition.

4.6 Final Comments

Many authors have suggested reasons why individuals choose to tattoo. These include: self-expression; personal identity; to symbolise and/or remember an experience (Roberti, et al., 2004); decoration; homosexuality; celebration; rebellion; gang membership (Steward, 1990); "just wanted one" (Greif, et al., 1999); independence (Kang & Jones, 2007); protection (Gittleson, et al., 1969) and as a rite of passage (Ferguson-Rayport, et al., 1955; Irwin, 2001). Atkinson (2004, p. 130) saw only two

reasons for tattoo: identity; and “conformity to dominant norms of self-restraint”.

Armstrong, Roberts, Owen and Koch (2004) found a central theme of identity, citing Goffman’s (1959) ideas around symbolic interaction as one explanation. From the outset it was believed that identity was at the very least *one of* the reasons an individual might choose to tattoo.

The view of tattoo as being currently “in fashion” is frequently expressed, often with disdain. While there may indeed be more tattoos visible these days, I believe this is the result of a number of things other than “fashion”. Firstly, older stereotypes about the types of people who wear tattoos have gradually dissipated over time. In addition, the willingness of actors, models and sportspeople to display tattoos has meant that not only do we see them more often, but, again, this stereotype has been further “watered down”. In fact, Sweetman (2000) sees tattoos as anti-fashion due, at least in part, to their permanent nature.

This chapter introduced a number of reasons that individuals obtain a tattoo. The motives in this chapter are not claimed to be an exhaustive list, but rather have been shown to be a sufficient one for the purposes of the current thesis, as all themes that arose in the interviews have been covered.

As noted in Section 1.3, using PCT (Kelly, 1991b) enables us to see the behaviour (of obtaining a tattoo) as an experiment (Kelly, 1970). For example, the tattooee obtaining a tattoo to feel like part of a group most likely has the hypothesis: “If I obtain a tattoo I will feel like I belong to group X”. The more rebellious tattooee might hypothesise that a visible tattoo will illustrate the level of his or her rebellion. If we employ the premise that behaviour is anticipatory (Butler, 2009), we can see that others

may obtain tattoos imbued with a particular meaning because they anticipate extension of their construct system will result (Kelly, 1991b).

For the purposes of the current thesis, the view adopted is one that is postmodern in nature, but with acknowledgement of the basic tenets of PCT. Therefore, the current thesis takes the view that we each consist of a set of fragmented selves, which are “created” rather than “discovered”. It is hypothesised that tattooees are utilising tattoo to express one (or sometimes many) of these selves, either to themselves, or to others. “Self” is necessarily defined by “not self.

4.7 The Current Thesis

The current thesis has numerous threads that must be drawn together. From a research perspective, the topic was chosen as it was current and relatively unexamined in the psychological literature. Since the study was conceived, a number of studies have been published, but in the main psychological investigations into tattooing are scant. Those that are published are often flawed, either in their choice of sample, or in their methodology. As detailed previously, choosing a sample from a deviant population and concluding that you have found deviants is not good science.

The bulk of studies into tattooed individuals did one of two things. Some studies took a stance that said their control group was “normal”, therefore relegating the tattooed participants to the “deviant” category, as the very notion of having a control group has the idea of non-deviant “built in”. Other studies chose to have their comparison group from the same population as the tattooees. This would appear to be the preferred option. However, on examination it becomes clear that the population from which the sample was drawn was itself “deviant” in some way, for example, patients in psychiatric hospitals, or detainees.

The advantage of the current study is that there is no such stigma set up before any research was undertaken. The focus was on the tattoos, not on the contrast between people with tattoos, and those without. The participants were volunteers from society, not captives in a mental institution or mental patients in a prison. The current study has as its thesis the examination of individual differences within a particular group, in this case, tattooees.

Further, these investigations looked at individuals with tattoos, rather than examining the tattoos themselves, as it were. In other words, if an individual has multiple tattoos, there may be many attributions that can be made, rather than just treating the individual as a conglomeration of deviant behaviours. In the current study the focus was on aspects of each tattoo, and the tattooing experience and its effect on the wearer.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the postmodern idea of fragmented selves is relevant to the current thesis. However, this approach does not explain the phenomenon of tattooing. For the purposes of the current thesis it was first and foremost necessary to have a theory that would explain why people tattoo, but was simultaneously a theory of a whole functioning person. Personal Construct Theory was able to fill these requirements. In addition, PCT is consistent with a postmodern view of self.

Prior research into tattooing was mostly a case of participants (or in some cases, the researchers themselves) selecting one of a list of reasons created by the researchers to explain their tattoos. This approach was never going to broaden the view of why individuals choose to tattoo themselves. Using a Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) approach, together with a credulous attitude (Kelly, 1991b) meant that the participants were contributing to the development of the theory around the reasons they chose to tattoo themselves. Again, PCT was able to fill the void left by other research

methods. The approach taken also meant that the possibility of multiple reasons for multiple (or even for a single) tattoo(s) was explored. This attitude also meant that the participants were treated as the experts in their own tattoo experience.

This chapter concludes the review section of the current thesis. Chapter One gave an introduction to the scope of the question being considered, and discussed the prevalence of tattooing. The theoretical grounding of the current thesis in PCT and Grounded Theory was also discussed. Chapter Two demonstrated that tattooing has been part of humanity's social interactions for millennia. In this context, tattoo can signify inclusion or exclusion, as well as identity markers such as family heritage and personal achievements. Theories explaining tattoo from a sociological perspective are group theories, and the current thesis proposes the use of a psychological theory of human functioning to explain individual tattoos. Chapter Two also discussed the topic of body image and the different ways that tattoos are used. Chapter Three dealt with the prior psychological research into tattooing. Much of this research began from an assumption of deviance, rather than psychological functioning. Prior research also failed to provide an avenue for the exploration of reasons for tattoos that researchers had not thought of themselves. Chapter Four detailed the view of identity proposed for the current thesis, and set up the framework for the reasons for obtaining a tattoo.

Chapter Five gives details of the method of the current study, with Chapter Six discussing the results. Chapter Seven concludes the current thesis with a discussion, including limitations and suggestions for further research.

4.8 Aim and Research Questions

The aim of the current thesis was to investigate the reasons individuals gave for being tattooed. In order to do this, three broad research questions were developed. Firstly, what were the reasons individuals gave for obtaining a tattoo? Secondly, what

views did tattooed people have of themselves and others? Lastly, what, if any, was the relationship between the reasons individuals gave and their views of self and others?

Chapter 5

Method

If we knew what it was we were doing, it would not be called research, would it?
Albert Einstein

A quote is just a tattoo on the tongue.
William F. De Vault

5.1 Introduction

This chapter details the methods employed in the main study. It includes descriptions of the constructs and elements used in the repertory grid, and the data analysis performed on both the interview and repertory grid data. The layout of this chapter has been based loosely on the recommendations for writing up qualitative research suggested by Morrow (2005), as well as the guidelines for qualitative research provided by Elliott, Fischer, and Rennie (1999), adapted for research combining qualitative and quantitative data.

5.2 Philosophical Assumptions Underpinning the Current Thesis

The major paradigm guiding the current research is constructivism. As such, the view is taken that there can be many different realities, and that meanings are co-constructed by the participants and the researcher. This standpoint implies a transactional and subjectivist epistemology (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Subjectivity is an integral part of the research, and the existence of researcher values is acknowledged.

5.3 Research Design

The design of the current study is unusual in that it combines an interview (a qualitative technique) with a repertory grid (a quantitative technique), including the relationship between them. Further, the design could be viewed as an *emergent design* (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), as emergent themes were an important part of the research.

5.4 Researcher-as-Instrument Statement

Since life experiences and interactions with participants can create biases and assumptions (Morrow, 2005), it is important to acknowledge this and to approach qualitative research reflexively. In retrospect it might have been useful to keep a

reflexive diary. However, it is believed that the continual discussion of findings and assumptions with my supervisor provided some level of self-reflection. Further, during my candidacy I was fortunate enough to be asked to write a chapter on the writing of this thesis for a book on reflexivity, which entailed me engaging in self-reflection (Hennessy, 2009).

At the beginning of this research, my experience with the topic was virtually non-existent. I knew a few people with tattoos (including my daughter, my son-in-law, and myself) but had not made any forays into any subculture where tattooed individuals may be expected to be found. Neither had I really spoken to anyone about their tattoos. My experience in qualitative research was limited to my Honours thesis, in which I used protocol analysis to examine transcripts of 32 individuals interacting with different internet selection methods (radio buttons and drop boxes). My major assumption at the beginning of this research was that individuals with tattoos are not necessarily all deviants, and that there may be something more behind the acquisition of a tattoo than a drunken or impulsive expression of abnormality.

5.5 Participants

Participants were 56¹³ volunteers (24 males and 32 females), ranging in age from 18 to 64. The median age was 28 ($M = 30.48$, $SD = 10.14$). Males were aged from 20 to 64, with a median of 30.5 ($M = 34.75$, $SD = 11.67$), while females were aged from 18 to 41 with a median age of 27 ($M = 27.28$, $SD = 7.54$). According to the 2006 Census data, males comprised 49.4% of the Australian population (ABS). The sample in the current study was comprised of 42.86% males, which is less than the national figure.

¹³ In total, 60 interviews were carried out. However, recordings of four of the interviews were unable to be used. Since the recordings were not transcribed until after all the interviews had been completed, this was not discovered during the interview period. This meant that when it came to analysis there was only data available for 56 participants. The identifying numbers were left as they were initially allocated.

However, it is not possible to ascertain the percentages of males and females outside the age range of the participants in this study, so the study figure may be closer to or further away from the national figure. The sample size was chosen in an attempt to ensure multiple participants fitting into each of the reason groups, rather than simply reaching saturation, as suggested by both Polkinghorne (2005) and Morrow (2007).

Initial participants included students and other volunteers who had observed a poster presentation at the University of Wollongong and responded to a flyer asking for participants (see Appendix A). Additional participants were recruited using snowball sampling. Each participant had at least one tattoo.

The highest level of education of participants ranged from secondary school (Years 10 through 12) to University – both graduates and undergraduates. Some participants had studied at TAFE (technical college) after leaving high school. All participants were living in Australia at the time of the study and the majority were Australians.

5.6 Sources of Data

Two instruments were used in the current study. Firstly there was a semi-structured interview which was recorded on a digital voice recorder and is outlined in Section 5.7.1. The interview was carried out in order to ascertain the participants' views on their tattoos. Most specifically, interest focused on the reasoning behind obtaining a tattoo. The second instrument was a Repertory Grid (Kelly, 1991b) as described in Section 5.6.1 below. The grid was employed to examine the views participants had of their different selves, as well as their views of other individuals. (The procedure for completing the grid is described in Section 5.7.2.)

5.6.1 Repertory Grid

Given Repertory Grids are used in many different settings, there is no one “standard” grid. Therefore there are a number of decisions to be made when utilising Repertory Grid technique. These decisions include the numbers of constructs and elements, how to select the constructs and elements, and how to “score” the elements on each construct. The process followed to come to a decision about the supplied construct poles, and likewise the elements to be included in the grid is explained below. After a pilot study of the grid, it was decided to use a five-point scale for scoring the elements, rather than a yes/no response, as participants in the pilot study found the yes/no option difficult to use.

It is possible to choose constructs in a number of ways (Fransella, 2003b). Elicitation of both poles of a construct from the participant is common, and has been argued to result in constructs that are more meaningful for the participants (Fransella, et al., 2004). For the purpose of the current study, it was decided to supply one pole of each construct, and elicit the opposite pole from the participants. This strategy had the advantage of facilitating the option of aggregating grids, as well as saving time, while leaving enough flexibility for the participants to make the constructs personally meaningful.

The supplied poles for each construct used for the Repertory Grid were obtained from the Self-Image Profile (SIP) (Adults) (Butler & Gasson, 2004). (The other poles were elicited from the participant and the procedure for this can be found in Section 5.7.2.1.) The SIP consists of 30 self descriptions, obtained from a sample of the adult population in the United Kingdom. The sample comprised just over 1300 British adults from all regions of Great Britain. Participants were asked to consider five important ways they typically described themselves, and to provide a contrast for each of these

five descriptions. From the pool of items, 30 were selected. Selection was based on frequency, positivity (e.g., “active” rather than “lazy”), and individuality (i.e., if two items were very close, only one was chosen). Further, items were not selected if their contrast had already been chosen.

The SIP draws on Personal Construct Theory (Kelly, 1991b) and Harter’s (1999) model of self. It is reported to investigate the individual’s theory of self. Since one premise of this thesis is that tattoos are a non-verbal expression of the tattooee’s theory of self, using the SIP as a basis for selecting psychological self-descriptors was seen to be appropriate. A full list of the self descriptors from the SIP can be found in Appendix B.

For the current study it was decided to use 12 of the 30 descriptions. Using 30 constructs would have resulted in 414 pieces of information for each grid (R. Bell, 1990), whereas using 12 constructs reduced this to 180. In his study of cognitive complexity-simplicity, Bieri (1955) used 12 constructs and 12 elements. Initially, two descriptions were selected from each of the 6 subscales of the SIP. These were used in a pilot study of the repertory grid. The set of construct poles was re-examined after 16 participants had been given the repertory grid in the pilot study. The final construct pole descriptors can be found in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1

Supplied construct poles

Final self descriptors for Repertory Grid	
Happy	Friendly
Patient	Active
Caring	Confident
Kind	Organised
Sense of humour	Hard working
Sociable	Honest

Choice of elements is another important decision when presenting a repertory grid. For the current study, the elements were chosen in stages. Initially, the elements for the grid in the pilot study were based on “typical” self grids, and therefore included *Self* and *Ideal Self* (or “self how I would like to be”). Since the difference in an individual’s view of their *Ideal Self* may change as a function of time (J. Harper, personal communication, 5th October, 2005) *Future Self* was also included. Further, an element *Someone Who Conforms* (explained to participants as someone who likes to be seen as the same as those around them) was included in an attempt to identify tattooed individuals who may have had tattoos related to the idea of group membership or belongingness.

During the course of the pilot study, a number of elements were added to the repertory grid. The elements *Self As Seen By Others* and *Self As I’d Like Others To See Me* were included as many tattooed individuals have visible tattoos, and it was thought that their reasons for this may be related to the image they believe they portrayed to others. The element *Someone I Don’t Like The Look Of* was added to investigate the purely physical aspects of tattoo, as many individuals, especially those in the body

modification culture, say that they obtain tattoos solely for the aesthetic value (Forbes, 2001; J. Lukis, personal communication, 5th July, 2010; Myers, 1992; Rubin, 1988).

An additional element referring to someone who likes “pushing boundaries” was included in an attempt to identify those participants whose tattoos related to deviancy and/or rebellion. If participants rated boundary pushers similarly to *Self*, this may indicate they see themselves as boundary pushers. If they rated *Ideal Self* in a similar fashion to boundary pushers, this may indicate a desire to be (or at least to be seen as) a boundary pusher. The final two elements were *Someone With Tattoos* and *Someone Without Tattoos*.

There were two elements (*Self Before Tattoos* and *Self Now If No Tattoo*) added to the repertory grid after the pilot study was completed. Since the purpose of the investigation was to look at the psychological meanings of the tattoos to the individual, these elements were included to investigate how participants felt the tattoos had changed their view of self. Throughout this thesis the elements are differentiated as SELF elements (elements that were different versions of the participant’s self) and OTHER elements (elements that were other people). The final list of elements is shown in Table 5.2. A blank copy of the Repertory Grid can be found in Appendix C.

Table 5.2

Final element list

Elements for Repertory Grid	
SELF elements	OTHER elements
Self	Someone Without Tattoos
Ideal self	Someone With Tattoos
Future self	Someone Who Conforms
Self As I'd Like Others To See Me	Someone Who Rebels
Self As Seen By Others	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of
Self Before Tattoo	
Self Now If No Tattoo	

5.7 Procedure

Each participant was given an information sheet (see Appendix D) and the purpose of the study was explained. Participants were asked if there were any questions, and then asked to sign a consent form (Appendix E) before they were interviewed for the study. Participants were told they were free to withdraw at any time.

5.7.1 Interview Procedure

At the start of each interview the participant was asked to give his or her age and gender. These details were noted by the interviewer, along with a participant number that was allocated consecutively.

Participants were interviewed about their tattoos. The interviews were recorded on a digital voice recorder. Where possible, the interviews were conducted in an interview room at the University of Wollongong. Where the participant could not visit

the University, the researcher travelled to the participant, and the interview was conducted in as private a setting as possible.

During the interview, questions were asked about various aspects of the participants' tattoos, including previously determined areas of focus. These concerned aspects of the actual tattoo, questions about the circumstances of getting the tattoo (designed to investigate the individual's motivation, and the meaning they attached to the tattoo) and the social implications of having a tattoo (including the reactions of others). A question about the opposite of the tattoo was asked in order to clarify the meaning the participant attached to the tattoo.

It should be noted that although the researcher herself had a tattoo, she wore jeans and a t-shirt during each interview, so that the tattoo was not visible. This was done in an attempt to remove the tattoo as a possible confounding variable and provide a consistent "appearance" for the participants. If, during the course of the interview, the participant asked if the researcher had a tattoo, she answered honestly.

In an attempt to gain as much information as possible that was salient, each participant was asked to firstly describe their tattoo(s). It was explained to each interviewee that the researcher was interested in what they had to say, and that asking such an open question would mean (hopefully) that the participant would talk about what was most important to him or her. This approach to questioning was influenced by Kelly's (1991b) notion of credulous listening. When the participant stopped speaking the researcher began to ask questions. If any of the interview questions had been addressed already, they were not asked. Since this was a semi-structured interview, the order of the questions was varied in line with the progression of the discussion when appropriate. When clarification was required, the PCP technique of laddering (See Section 1.3) was utilised.

The questions asked included:

- how long was it considered before the tattoo was done?
- what was the actual design?
- why was the design chosen?
- did having the tattoo coincide with any life events?
- were they alone?
- was there was anything else that would have the same effect as having a tattoo?
- how did the participant feel about the tattoo?
- would they change it?
- would they have another tattoo?
- was the pain a deterrent or an incentive?
- what would be the opposite of their tattoo(s)?
- whether they felt the tattoo had had any negative effects on their lives?
- who did they know with tattoos?
- did having a tattoo mean they identified with any particular group of people? and
- what kinds of reactions they had to their tattoo(s)?

At the close of the interview, the interviewer asked if there was anything else about their tattoo(s) that the participant wished to say. This question was another opportunity to gather unprompted information. It often resulted in more information being gained, either due to the participant feeling more relaxed and wanting to keep talking, or to them remembering something they had forgotten to say previously.

After the interview and repertory grid (see Section 5.7.2) had been completed participants were asked if it was possible to photograph their tattoo(s). They were

reminded that it was within their rights to decline this offer, and many availed themselves of this right. The photographs were taken on a digital camera, and efforts were made to ensure that no participant's face was visible in any of the photographs. As an added precaution, the researcher showed them the photographs before they left the interview room, and asked if they were happy with the photographs.

5.7.2 Repertory Grid Procedure

There were three main steps involved in filling out the repertory grid: elicitation of construct poles, naming elements, and completing the grid.

5.7.2.1 Eliciting construct poles. The provided poles were presented randomly one at a time to the participants. The participant was asked to state their opposite pole, giving 12 bipolar constructs. While an argument can be made for using either "opposite" or "contrast" to obtain the elicited pole (Neimeyer, et al., 2005), "opposite" was used rather than "contrast" as the participant was asked in the instructions to consider people in general, rather than just a defined set of individuals (B. M. Walker, personal communication, 5th October, 2005).

The researcher said to the participant:

"I am going to show you some cards containing descriptions that people have found helpful to describe themselves that show how they are the same as some people and different to others. Think about people in general. For you, what would be the opposite of each word?"

Since one initial hypothesis of the current thesis was that tattooed individuals were using tattoos to say something about themselves with pictures because they found words difficult, it was decided not to have the participants fill in the repertory grid themselves. The participant's elicited pole was written in the grid and onto an index card by the researcher. If the participant had trouble finding an opposite, the prompt

“some people are *Happy, Active, Confident*, and so forth, and others are ...” was used. If they continued to struggle, the card was put to one side until all the cards had been looked at and then it was re-presented. This method using cards is similar to that described in Fransella (2003a).

5.7.2.2 Naming elements. It was considered necessary to concretise the abstract categories by obtaining specific individuals that corresponded to them. The researcher firstly named each of the OTHER elements (see Table 5.2) and asked the participant to name someone who fitted each category. The following were offered as clarification when necessary:

Someone you know who likes to be seen as the same as those around him or her: This person would adapt, or conform to prevailing norms. This is someone you know who prefers to be inconspicuous in a crowd or who likes to just be “one of the gang”.

Someone you know who likes to go beyond the limits that others accept: This person may act outside or beyond prevailing norms. They may like to be different, to stand out in a crowd or like pushing boundaries. This can include people who do “daring” things that the average person doesn’t, such as extreme sports.

Someone you know who you don’t like the look of: What we’re after here is someone who has a physical characteristic that you find unappealing. Try to ignore personality when making this decision – the person could be your best friend, but just have some physical attribute that you don’t like.

After the names had been provided, the researcher copied them onto index cards. The researcher then showed the participant each of the SELF elements (see Table 5.2) on cards, explaining what was meant by each one.

5.7.2.3 Completing the grid. There are a number of ways of relating the constructs to the elements in a grid. In the current study elements were rated from ‘1’ (supplied pole of each construct) to ‘5’ (opposite provided by participant). A piece of cardboard with five marks along it - representing the five points of the scale - was placed on a table. A pair of construct pole cards was selected at random and placed above the marks at either end of the cardboard. The participant was then asked to lay an element card on one of the five marks on the scale. The researcher wrote down the corresponding response. Numbers one through five were recorded, with the number one representing the supplied pole. After the element card had been placed and the response recorded, the element card was removed, to avoid comparisons between elements by the participant. This procedure was repeated for each element. Once all elements had been placed and recorded, the next pair of construct poles was placed on the cardboard. The supplied pole was randomly assigned to the left or right hand side of the cardboard.

5.8 Proposed Data Analysis

Because this was an exploratory study, with the data collected pioneering psychological research in this area, some changes were made to proposed analyses both after data collection and after examining the results of some analyses. This will be made clear in what follows where relevant. Some of the changes indicated led to a re-examination of, and amendments to, some of the coding categories. This meant that the assignation of reasons was changed for some participants during the course of the analysis. This process paralleled the first two steps of what is referred to as the Constant Comparative Method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and is part of the Grounded Theory approach (Charmaz, 2006). Since this method of analysis echoes constructivist philosophy, the process has been made “transparent”. In other words, rather than simply present the “final” version the initial attempts have also been included.

5.8.1 Descriptive Characteristics of Tattoos

This section discusses tattoo designs and location of tattoos. Other characteristics relating to the tattoos, such as the number of tattoos each participant had, the age at which they first obtained a tattoo and the length of time they thought about getting a tattoo before they went and obtained one are self-explanatory.

5.8.1.1 Tattoo designs. It is extremely tempting to try to classify tattoos by their “type” or the physical design. Some have attempted “dermal diagnosis” (Grumet, 1983, p. 482) (using various aspects of tattoos, such as how many there are, and the circumstances of acquisition) to diagnose psychiatric disorders. Others have “classified” tattoos on patients with diagnoses of schizophrenia and personality disorder according to their content (Ferguson-Rayport, et al., 1955). Thirdly, authors such as DeMello (1995, p. 50) write specifically of classification by design - “biker tattoos” or “Sailor Jerry” (Rubin, 1988), for example.

It was decided not to place any importance on the “content” of the tattoo, or the style of the design, since classifying the tattoo designs in these ways would not aid in the elucidation of the meaning of the tattoos. Whether the participant had a rose tattoo or a skull is in some ways “irrelevant”. What was regarded as important was what the tattoo design meant *to the person who was wearing it*. Therefore, designs will be noted, but no attempt by the researcher to “analyse” them will be made. Comments on the designs can be found in Section 6.5.2.2.

5.8.1.2 Location of tattoos. Coding the placement of tattoos was deceptively complicated. Delineating each body part would defeat the purpose of coding, especially since tattoos on participants included all the usual places (back of the shoulder, upper arm, lower back) as well as tattoos inside the lip, on the neck (front and back) and the

legs and feet. Using “dress standards” was also complex, as there are different standards that apply to males and females. For example, tattoos “visible when wearing formal attire” would mean that for men only the hands and face are visible, while for women often the bodice and arms are exposed. For that reason, the placement of the tattoos was reported in three simple categories: private (only seen when naked); able to be covered (this included tattoos that could be seen while wearing a bathing costume); and always visible.

5.8.2 Personal Construct Techniques

Basing the current thesis on PCP (Kelly, 1991b) allowed the use of a number of techniques. The tattoo-characterisation paralleled Kelly’s self-characterisation and is discussed in Section 5.8.2.1. Utilising Kelly’s (1991b) idea that in order to know what something *is*, you need to know what it *is not*, meant that the opposites of the tattoos were examined. These often provided more insight into the meanings of the tattoos and the tattooing process for the participants (Section 5.8.2.2). Repertory Grids were utilised specifically to answer Research Questions Two and Three, so the analyses performed on the grids will be discussed in Sections 5.8.4 and 5.8.5.

5.8.2.1 Tattoo-characterisations. At the start of each interview, participants were asked to talk about themselves and their tattoos without any specific questioning. The information provided by the participants in this unstructured dialogue was labelled a *tattoo-characterisation*. The reasoning behind this was to follow Kelly’s directive that if we want to know something about a person “ask him; he may tell you” (Kelly, 1991b, p. 241).

The object was to identify constructs of the participant. The following system for analysing the characterisations was developed, based very loosely on Kelly (1991b, pp. 239 - 267).

Firstly, look for breaks in continuity. Since most characterisations were quite short (less than one page), and spoken, not written, this at times proved difficult. Secondly, check the sequence of topics discussed. Due to the nature of the data collection (spoken rather than written in paragraphs), topic sentences were difficult to determine, but the opening sentence will be important. It is possible to make note of topic areas; these could point to where the participant sees him- or herself similar to, or different from, others. Thirdly, look for repeated terms (or equivalents). Lastly, make particular note of the opening and closing themes, as well as any that are repeated, elaborated upon, or appear to be contradictory.

It should be noted that coding of participants into RGT and RDT groups was based on the tattoo chosen according to the criteria discussed in Section 5.8.3. Hence initial statements may have been about different tattoos to the one chosen by the researcher to be coded. It is possible that the identified constructs would be found to be relevant if the entire interview transcript was coded for each tattoo. Therefore, an alternative method would be to treat the entire transcript as a tattoo-characterisation, rather than just the opening statements. Information gained from inspection of the tattoo-characterisations was used to inform Research Question One.

5.8.2.2 Opposites of Tattoos. As mentioned above, using Personal Construct Theory (Kelly, 1991b) highlighted the need to understand what the opposites of the participants' tattoos were. Participants' answers to this question were noted. If any participant struggled, the first attempt at clarification was an explanation of the statement of Kelly referenced above (Section 5.8.2). If this was not sufficiently helpful, examples from other participants covering a range of possible answers were given. These included not having a tattoo, having a design that was an opposite (e.g., the devil

instead of a [Christian] cross), or having a tattoo that held a different meaning for the participant. Answers were found to fall into themes, which will be discussed.

5.8.3 Interview

Interviews were conducted in order to answer the first research question: What are the reasons individuals give for obtaining a tattoo? Variables collected during the interviews were denoted as tattoo variables. These included the number of tattoos, time since first tattoo was obtained, placement of tattoo(s), and the story of the tattoo(s), including the reason(s) that the participants gave for obtaining their tattoos. Initially, each interview was transcribed, and thematic analysis was employed to find any themes relating to the tattoos. This approach to coding allowed multiple themes to be related to each tattoo. This was one advantage of this method as multiple reasons were able to be accommodated, unlike most prior research where the participant was categorised based on a single reason.

After all the themes had been noted, difficulties arose in determining the major reason for obtaining a tattoo for each participant. One problem was that many participants had more than one tattoo. It was decided that the simplest way to code participants' main reason was to code a single tattoo. This meant that there needed to be some systematic way of choosing which tattoo to code when a participant had more than one. The following rules were applied in the order presented:

1. if the participant spoke about a particular tattoo, that became the tattoo "of interest";
2. if the participant stated that a particular tattoo was the most important to them (or was their favourite tattoo), that tattoo became the one coded; otherwise,

3. the first tattoo the participant obtained was designated the tattoo to be coded.

The first tattoo was chosen rather than the most recent, since obtaining the initial tattoo was seen to be a psychologically bigger “step” for the individual than obtaining additional tattoos.

A second difficulty was that, in the process of codifying the major reasons behind the tattoos, it became apparent that having a single reason did not sufficiently explain what appeared to be going on for the participants. In many cases, there were two ways to view the reasons behind an individual deciding to obtain a tattoo. Firstly, there was a psychological process that led an individual to decide to permanently mark his or her skin. Secondly, there was a process around choosing which particular design to have applied. While it may appear to be unusual to discuss “results” in the Method Chapter, the discussion of this distinction is carried out here in an attempt to clarify the analysis that was performed.

Reasons for obtaining tattoos were therefore broken down into reasons why the person obtained A tattoo (i.e., the reason or *motivation* for being tattooed in the first place, denoted RGT) and reasons why the person obtained THAT PARTICULAR design (the reason or *meaning* of the design of the tattoo, denoted RDT). In fact, Participant PF6 expressed this distinction herself: *“I don’t know how to put this but it’s like the design meant something but the reason I’m getting it... they don’t have to be the same thing”*. In order to account for both these reasons for the tattoos, all 56 participants had a reason coded for each of RGT and RDT for their selected tattoo.

5.8.3.1 Categorising major reasons for obtaining tattoos. As noted in Section 4.3, it was initially thought the psychological literature would provide sufficient categories to classify the reasons for obtaining tattoos. However, this proved not to be the case, so a Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) approach was employed and

the data obtained was used to provide additional categories. As noted above, it was expected that the categorisation would be a simple process - one category per tattoo. In fact, in my initial naivety I even thought one category per participant. However, it soon became apparent that the process was more complicated. Since I am using a constructivist approach, I have left in the steps I went through in the categorisation of the tattoos.

From my early reading of the literature, the reasons people obtained tattoos could be grouped into seven areas. These were **Belonging** (Group membership), **Identity/Self**, **Peak experiences**, **Psychological Growth**, **Rebellion**, **Remembrance** (or Rootedness), and **Rites of Passage**. Whilst it could be argued that any of these categories come under the rubric of Identity, at that point it appeared that many of the reasons could be more specifically attributed. In addition, it should be noted that, while these categories are mutually exclusive, classifying individuals is not, especially in the case of individuals with multiple tattoos as mentioned previously. As noted in Section 5.8.3, at one point in the analysis themes were coded whenever they were mentioned. This meant that once the groups¹⁴ and the “rules” for coding had been finalised, the transcripts had to be re-coded to determine the relevant groups for RGT and RDT. The category of Permanence discussed in the introductory chapters is one such group that emerged during this phase, but was not found to be relevant for either RGT or RDT in this sample.

The next step was to find the groups that emerged from the data. Using this approach gave an additional five groups. These were **Aesthetics** (i.e., for the look of the tattoo), **Impulsive**, **Philosophy** (or Life beliefs), and **Uniqueness**. The fifth category,

¹⁴ Categorisations such as Aesthetics and Belonging are referred to as “groups” initially, but once the re-working of the analysis was done, these became “subgroups” of Identity, and are henceforth referred to thus.

Wanted for a Long Time was added well into the analysis of the results, as explained in Section 5.8.3.2 below.

5.8.3.2 Reworking the categories. Once the groups had been named, an attempt was made to reconcile the data obtained from the repertory grids with those groups. In an attempt to ascertain whether certain attributes of the grids were unique to particular groups, multidimensional scaling was used. Multidimensional scaling uses measures of similarity or difference to produce spatial representations of the data (Kruskal & Wish, 1978). The data can be any measure of association between variables (R. C. Bell, personal communication, 21st August, 2008). In the current study, the data were the grid ratings of elements on construct dimensions.

In an attempt to find a representation of the grids of each group (performed for both RGT and RDT subgroups) in a lower dimensional space, multidimensional unfolding was performed on all 56 grids, using SPSS 15. Both common and weighted models were run, with the differences in variance and normalised stress being compared. Since the two models (common and weighted) were not seen to be very different, the weighted model was used to obtain a specificity value for each grid. Specificity values close to 0 indicate an average source where the dimension weights are similar, while a value close to 1 indicates a specific source with one large dimension weight¹⁵. The specificity values were then analysed using an ANOVA to check for differences between the groups for RGT as well as for RDT. While multidimensional analysis does not specifically address any of the research questions, it provided an interpretation of the data that was consistent with a central, underlying dimension of identity which resulted in a reworking of the results, so it is necessary to include it here.

¹⁵ This explanation was part of the output produced by SPSS 15.

The results of this particular analysis pointed to the “groups” such as **Belonging**, **Impulsive**, **Remembrance** and so on as not being distinct groups, but rather *subgroups* that were all part of an individual’s view of Self or Identity. For this reason, the transcripts were re-examined. During this process, it was noted that often participants stated that a tattoo was something they had **Wanted for a Long Time**. As noted in the introductory chapters, re-examination of the literature showed that this was not unusual (Sanders, 1988; Sweetman, 2000). It was therefore decided to add this subgroup as a reason for obtaining a tattoo.

Using Identity as an overarching concept meant that it could not be one of the (now) subgroups. Therefore, each participant who had been coded into the subgroup for **Identity** as RGT was re-coded. The coding categories for RDT remained unchanged, as the **Self/Identity** category was simply renamed **Personal Symbol** without any need to re-code. The representations coded in this category were mostly astrological symbols (i.e., the wearer’s birth sign), apart from one that was the participant’s Chinese year of birth, and another that was the participant’s name.

5.8.3.3 Inter-rater agreement. From a constructivist perspective, there are multiple possible meanings of any phenomenon, as well as multiple interpretations of the data. While there is some disagreement as to the necessity of reporting inter-rater agreement in a qualitative study (Morrow, 2005; Ponterotto, 2005), it has been included here for completeness. The transcript of each participant with a single tattoo was coded by the researcher and a further coder who had been trained in the coding scheme. In addition, four participants with multiple tattoos were randomly selected, so that in total half the participants’ transcripts were coded by both coders.

The inter-rater agreement for RGT (reasons why the participants were tattooed) was 82.14%; and for RDT (the reason for the design) the inter-rater agreement was

89.29%. Inter-rater agreement was calculated using the following formula (Robins, Fraley, & Krueger, 2007):

$$\frac{2 * \# \text{agreements}}{\# \text{present}(1) + \# \text{present}(2)}$$

where:

#agreements = the number of agreements between the coders on the presence of a category;

#present(1) = the number scored present by coder 1; and

#present(2) = the number scored present by coder 2.

Correlations or agreements of 85% have been deemed to be satisfactory (Smith, 2000). However, since the agreement for the RGT subgroups was less than this, Cohen's Kappa was also calculated. A value of 0.8 was obtained, which is more than acceptable (Robson, 2002; Smith, 2000).

5.8.3.4 Classification of participants. In an attempt to make reading about individual participants more meaningful, the participants will be referred to by their classification. For the remainder of this thesis, participants will be referred to by the code for their reasons for being tattooed (RGT) and the reason for the design (RDT), as well as their participant number. The reason for these multiple codes was given in Section 5.8.3. Table 5.3 lists the letters assigned to each of the coding subgroups.

To illustrate, Participant number 1 was coded into the **Remembrance** subgroup for his reason for being tattooed (RGT), and into the **Belonging** subgroup for the meaning of the design (RDT), so he will be referred to as Participant RB1. Participant number 14 would be represented as Participant DA14 as he was coded into the **Impulsive** (think "Drunk") subgroup for being tattooed, and the **Aesthetics** subgroup for what the design meant.

Table 5.3

Identifiers assigned to participants based on coding for tattoo reasons

Subgroup	Code
Aesthetics	A
Belonging	B
Impulsive/drunk	D
Personal Symbol	S
Philosophy/religion/faith	F
Psychological Growth	G
Rebellion	T
Remembrance/rootedness	R
Rite of Passage	P
Wanted for a Long Time	W

The first step in the coding process produced a number of different codes, as listed in Appendix F. This initial coding is analogous to open coding in Grounded Theory (A. L. Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and provided variables such as the reasons for getting a tattoo in the first place, where to place the design, participants' feelings about their tattoos, and reactions from others. These variables can be grouped together into ideas that inform our understanding of the tattoo decision. These main ideas are whether to get a tattoo and what to get if we decide to get one (includes where to get it, and how big).

5.8.4 Repertory Grid

Repertory grids were used in the current thesis in order to address research question two: What views do tattooed people have of themselves and others? The elements chosen for the Repertory Grid provided a number of ways of answering this

question. For example, elements such as *Self Before Tattoo*, *Self Now If No Tattoo*, and *Self (now)* made it possible to examine whether the participants' view of self appeared to have changed over time, as well as changed due to the tattoo. Elements concerning other people made it possible to compare different SELVES with various OTHERS.

Each element in the repertory grid was rated on 12 constructs. Constructs used were derived from the Self-Image Profile (Butler & Gasson, 2004), described in detail in Section 5.6.1. Since the supplied poles of the constructs were items from the Self-Image Profile selected for their positive emphasis, the supplied poles were designated as the positive poles. The elicited poles were thus treated as the negative poles. The procedure for obtaining construct poles was described in Section 5.7.2.1. As a preliminary analysis, the positivity of various elements, and the number of midpoint (3's) and extreme (1's and 5's) scores were examined. Finally, the conflict in each grid was explored.

Positivity relates to how positively the participant rates the elements in the grid. When applied to the *Self* element, positivity has been used to calculate a measure of self-esteem (Sewell & Cruise, 2004). In order to determine which poles of the constructs were viewed as more positive by the participants, the *Ideal Self* rating was inspected. For example, if *Ideal Self* was found to be closest to the supplied pole for a particular construct, this was seen as confirmation that the supplied pole of the construct was construed by the participant as being positive, while the elicited pole was viewed as negative. In the rare instances when there were anomalies, the participant's rating for *Ideal Self* was used to choose the positive pole. The total ratings given to an element were compared to find the most positively (and least positively) construed elements.

Midpoint ratings are useful to explore, as a high degree of uncertainty is believed to be demonstrated by a large number of midpoint ratings (Winter, 2003).

Although some suggest that use of the midpoint can mean “not applicable” (Metzler, Gorden, & Neimeyer, 2002), midpoints are also used when the participant finds it difficult to attribute one or the other pole to a particular element (Fransella, et al., 2004). This may mean that the construct is not very meaningful for the participant when attempting to apply it to that element. It is believed, due to the nature of the relationship established during the interview, that if any constructs were not applicable in the current research, participants would have stated this. Since none of them did, it will be assumed that midpoints were used to express that the construct was not meaningful, rather than not applicable. The number of midpoints allocated to each element was recorded in order to compare elements.

It is possible to interpret *extreme* scores in a number of ways. For example, the use of extremes may be an indication of meaningfulness (Grice, 2002), polarisation (Winter, 2003), or in some cases pathology (Fransella, et al., 2004; Grice, 2002). In the current study scoring a ‘1’ indicated the participant saw the element (SELF or OTHER) as very high on the positive “side” of the construct, whereas a ‘5’ meant that the participant saw the element at the opposite pole. This approach is consistent with the method used by Watson and Watts (2001). The numbers of 1’s and 5’s were tallied for each element separately so that these could be compared across elements.

It has been suggested (Hinkle, 1965) that *conflict* results from implicative dilemmas in one’s construct system. For example, we may find someone wishes to be assertive, but they feel that being assertive implies that they are insensitive to others, which is a trait they find undesirable (Slade & Sheehan, 1979). When looking at the conflict in a grid, one position that has been adopted (R. C. Bell, 2004, p. 54) is that conflict will exist when either:

1. An element is at the same time similar or close to two constructs which are themselves different or distant.
2. An element is similar or close to one construct's pole and at the same time is different to or distant from another construct's pole, where the two construct poles are similar or close.

Overall conflict is defined as “the ratio of observed conflict situations to possible conflict situations” (R. C. Bell, 2004, p. 54). The number of possible conflict situations in a grid is the product of the number of elements, the number of constructs, and the number of constructs minus 1 halved. Therefore, in the current study, the number of possible conflict situations would be 12 (elements) times 12 (constructs) times half 11 (12 constructs minus 1) = 792. Smaller conflict values indicate that the participant is more consistent in their construal of particular elements. Conflict was computed using SPSS 15, following the guidelines proposed by R. C. Bell (2004).

It was decided to create a categorical variable *Movement with respect to Ideal Self*. In order to do this, Change-in-Self was calculated by subtracting the difference in rating between *Self Before Tattoo* and *Ideal Self* (i.e., how close *Self Before Tattoo* was to *Ideal Self*) from the difference between *Self* (now) and *Ideal Self* (D. Winter, personal communication, 17th July, 2007). *Movement with respect to Ideal Self* was designated to be towards *Ideal Self* if this difference was positive, away from *Ideal Self* if Change-in-Self was negative and static if the difference was zero.

5.8.5 Interview and Repertory Grid

An examination of the data obtained from the interviews in conjunction with the repertory grids was conducted to address the third research question: What, if any, is the relationship between the reasons individuals give for obtaining tattoos and their views of self and others?

Positivity, midpoints, and extreme scores of the elements were compared across the subgroups that were determined from the tattoo interviews. For each of the RGT and RDT subgroups (**Belonging, Remembrance**, etc.) each of these scores (positivity, midpoints, extremes) was totalled by element (*Self, Self Before Tattoos, Someone With Tattoos* and so on) and the largest and smallest were noted. The amount of *conflict* was again computed and compared across RGT and RDT subgroups, as was *Movement with respect to Ideal Self*.

Cognitive complexity is reflected in “the degree of differentiation of the construct system” (Bieri, 1955, p. 263). Various approaches have been used for its operationalisation. Looking at the construct intraclass correlation and the mean of construct root-mean-square correlations among constructs has been argued to give an indication of cognitive complexity (R. C. Bell, Winter, & Watson, 2006), with low values of either index indicating greater cognitive complexity. Construct intraclass correlation and mean of construct root-mean-square correlations were computed using SPSS 15 for each of the RGT and RDT subgroups.

Elements such as *Someone I Know Who Conforms*, *Someone I Know Who Rebels*, and *Someone I Don't Like The Look Of* were included in the Repertory Grid to enable an examination of the way participants viewed these elements in relation to their *Self* and *Ideal Self* elements. It was thought that participants who had obtained tattoos for reasons of **Belonging** would see *Self* or *Ideal Self* close to *Someone I Know Who Conforms*. Similarly, participants who had obtained tattoos for reasons of **Rebellion** would see *Self* or *Ideal Self* close to *Someone I Know Who Rebels*, while *Someone I Don't Like The Look Of* was expected to be seen very differently to *Self* or *Ideal Self* for those who obtained tattoos for **Aesthetic** reasons.

Differences between elements were computed for the RGT and RDT categories using SPSS 15. The total distances between *Self* and *Ideal Self* and the remaining elements were calculated for all subgroups. The average difference between elements without the *Someone I Don't Like The Look Of* element was also calculated for both **Aesthetics** subgroups, in order to see if that element was construed differently from the remaining elements by members of those subgroups.

5.9 Concluding Remarks

As mentioned previously in this chapter, the analysis carried out in the current study was unusual. This was mainly due to the data collection method – a semi-structured interview about tattoos and a repertory grid about SELVES and OTHERS – and synthesising the qualitative with the quantitative data. This was an innovative way to examine the issue. The analysis was further complicated by the coding of the tattoo “reasons”. This was much more complicated than anticipated. As explained at various points in the current thesis, reasons were both gleaned from psychological literature, and developed from the data. This Grounded Theory approach enabled the development of coding categories that would not have been found using a quantitative approach such as a questionnaire. True to Grounded Theory methodology, the results from multidimensional analysis of the grids led to further analysis and theorising about the categories that had been developed. This necessitated a re-working of much of the analysis, especially the subgroups.

Chapter 6

Results

I'll tell you what they are... they're that close to being like their own separate thing as in like a person. Put into that context in a way that it's like your best mate or your girlfriend. When a new romance or a new friendship starts it's very exciting but after a period of time they're just there as well. And until a birthday comes along or an anniversary or you lose someone or something you sit down and really think about what they mean to you. Like sitting here, right now's made me think more about my tattoos then I would have thought about 'em for donkey's because I'm always thinking of what I can do and stuff, how to fix it, how to put more or should I colour this or whatever but...

I don't know if it's just me but having them, I've got a few now and they're big and they're there. When you've got a few little ones they can be missed. I've spent time with people and gone, Oh, I didn't know you had them. Now, it's pretty hard unless I've got shoes, socks and long sleeves shirts and pants on. I've got 'em. It gets to a stage where other people probably notice them and think about them more than you do cause it's just like having blue eyes - they're just there. But the meaning will always still be there, it's just, you don't wake up every morning and go here's my protection, here's my family here's my da da da da. You probably put more thought into what it means leading up to actually getting it. And then you get it on you, you go, yep.

Participant RB40

6.1 Introduction

After a brief discussion of the descriptive characteristics of the tattoos (Section 6.2), the results from the tattoo-characterisations (Section 6.3) and insight gained from participants' views of the opposite of their tattoos (Section 6.4) will be discussed. Next, information gathered during the interview process will be considered (Section 6.5) to address the first research question: What are the reasons for obtaining a tattoo?¹⁶

The second research question (Section 6.6) aimed to understand what view tattooed individuals had of their various selves, as well as of others. This question was addressed by the use of a repertory grid¹⁷. The final research question (Section 6.7) explored possible relationships between the views tattooed individuals had of their selves and others (provided by the Repertory Grid) and the subgroups they were coded into (both RGT and RDT).

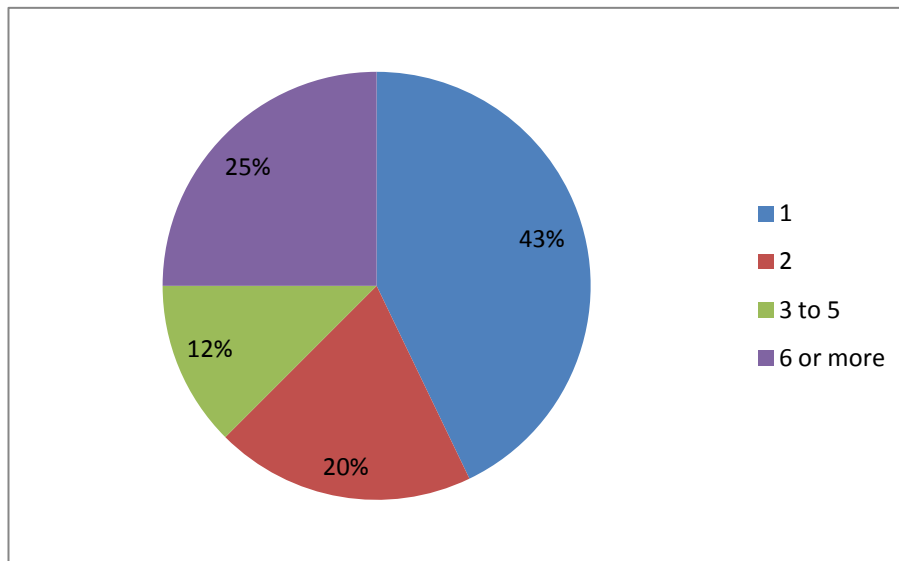
6.2 Descriptive Characteristics of the Tattoos

As can be seen from Figure 6.1, 24 participants (42.86%) had a single tattoo. Fourteen participants (25%) had six or more tattoos, including four participants who had coverage such that counting individual tattoos was not possible. The remaining 18 participants (32.1%) had from two to five tattoos.

¹⁶ The complete interview transcripts, together with any photographs of participants' tattoos can be found on a CD inside the back cover of this document.

¹⁷ Copies of participants' grids can be found on the CD containing the interview transcripts.

Figure 6.1. Breakdown of number of tattoos on participants



Of the 32 participants with multiple tattoos, 15 said there was no link between their tattoos. Some participants had multiple themes. For example, Participant AA43 had a “Chinese theme” on one arm, and a “medieval theme” elsewhere. Others had more idiosyncratic answers. Participant FF9 considered the theme of his tattoos was that they marked off time scales in his life. Similarly, Participant RF22 stated

They link to each other in the sense they both mark off significant points of my life and that I believe that everything that happened today was somehow caused by what happened yesterday. Therefore in that sense they are linked and they are both about becoming a stronger person at the end of a particular situation.

The age of obtaining the first tattoo ranged from 14 up to 46. The median age of first acquisition was 19 years ($M = 21.20$, $SD = 6.04$). In this sample, 18 was the most “popular” age to have a first tattoo, with 19.6% of participants fitting into this category. Just over 10% of participants had their first tattoo 6 years prior to the study, or around the turn of the century. The time since the first tattoo ranged from 1 week to 46 years, with a median of 7 years ($M = 9.33$, $SD = 9.27$).

Participants' reported time of consideration of tattoo acquisition ranged from "spur of the moment" (10 participants) to "always wanted one" (10 participants). Participant AA54 said "not long - usually on the day", while Participant RF20 said "since I was 5 or 6 and saw my grandfather's". In some cases, it was hard to determine. For example, Participant RB1 "had thought about one before but pretty much spur of the moment". Many participants expressed that they had thought about their tattoos for a specific time before obtaining them. Eight participants said 1 year, five said 2 years, and four participants said 5 years. Participant RB40 said "it varied - first one was years and years - 90% would be at least a year – [I spent] 25 years thinking of getting a dragon tattoo".

Tattoos were reported by participants to be on the neck, shoulders, arms, chest, back, legs, backside, and bikini line. The numbers of tattoos in each of the categories for placement are listed in Section 6.5.2.2, as placement is seen to be a consideration related to the design chosen for the tattoo.

Participants listed tattoo designs that included animals (e.g., frogs, lizards, tigers, dragons, koi, and snakes), runes, symbols from bands, writing, tribal designs, plants (e.g. roses, cherry blossoms), cartoon characters, stars, American Indians, wizards, goblins, astrological symbols, Celtic designs, and Sailor Jerry designs as well as designs drawn either by the participant or the tattooist that no-one else had. Reasons for choosing particular designs are discussed further in Section 6.5.2.2 under design considerations.

As noted in Section 5.8.2, a number of techniques used in the current thesis came from Personal Construct Psychology (Kelly, 1991b). Sections 5.8.2.1 and 5.8.2.2 detailed the use and analysis of the *tattoo-characterisations* and the opposites of

participants' tattoos. The Repertory Grid was also employed in the current thesis, and was discussed in Section 5.8.4. One step in the analysis was a multidimensional analysis of the grids, after they had been broken into their reason subgroups (both RGT and RDT). When the grids were analysed in their RGT and RDT subgroups, the results of the multidimensional scaling analysis showed no differences amongst the subgroups. This finding suggested there was a single factor or dimension underlying all the subgroups. It was proposed that this dimension was Identity, or sense of self. This led to a further revision of some of the subgroups, mainly the exclusion of **Self/Identity** as a subgroup, as detailed in Section 5.8.3.2.

6.3 Tattoo-Characterisations

The reasoning behind the *tattoo-characterisation*, as well as the full procedure for analysis, was described in Section 5.8.2.1. Since there were 56 interviews, presenting the analysis of individuals in detail would be unmanageable, so it was decided to present an illustrative characterisation from the larger subgroup combinations (combinations of RGT and RDT¹⁸ subgroups containing four or more participants). Appendix G contains the complete tattoo-characterisations of all 56 participants. The combinations selected were Aesthetic/Aesthetic (both RGT and RDT – eight participants), Belonging/Belonging (both RGT and RDT – five participants), Impulsive (drunk) for RGT and Aesthetic for RDT (four participants), Remembrance for RGT and Belonging for RDT (four participants), and Rite of Passage for RGT with Philosophy for RDT (four participants).

Utilising the tattoo-characterisation made it possible to see what aspects of tattooing were important to the participants, as well as the attributions they felt were important. These included having meaning, aesthetics, having a connection with another

¹⁸ See Section 5.8.3 for an explanation of these acronyms.

person, being different, and remembering one's heritage. Following the instructions given in Section 5.8.2.1, the tattoo-characterisations were checked for first and last sentences, topic areas, and repeated terms.

Of the 25 participants selected, there was only one initial sentence that pointed to the RGT subgroup for that participant (PF2):

I had left my second husband and it was my birthday and I was talking to a girlfriend about tattoos and we decided that for our birthdays we were going to get a tattoo and mine was my 30th birthday and it signified for me more of an initiation almost. It was like suddenly I was free of the past and the ex and my life was opening up for me as who I was as a single person.

On the other hand, five participants had final sentences that pointed to their subgroups. These were: AA43 "I just like tattoos"; AA49 "I liked the designs ... I liked the general idea of them"; AA55 "I just like the art work really"; BB17 "She's got wings on her back and it's St Victoria, which is my name, and I've got two wings on my back with Jude in the middle, St Jude"; and PF6 "kind of like protection - represents three, karma, that sort of thing". Finally, for two participants it was their second sentence that described their subgroup: BB5 "I got the first one when I was 19 ... and that one was all about fitting in with what everybody else in the Navy did"; and BB21 "The first one is just "Australia", just the letters written, which is on my forearm".

Participant FF10's characterisation contained a sentence that gave an indication of his subgroup:

I suppose, in a world when you've got so much so many religions and beliefs kind of in your face, religious holidays and religious you know, this and that, it kind of makes you feel like I suppose you need to belong to, you have to have a belief of some kind in something or something or other, and um yeah I've always felt, just an affiliation with nature and stuff and not needing this

as extra, searching for this extra thing I suppose it's my way of just expressing it to myself.

Topics included in the tattoo-characterisations were more informative. In the **Aesthetics/Aesthetics** subgroup selection, six of the eight participants had topics that pointed to an Aesthetic motive or design meaning for their tattoos. For the **Belonging/Belonging** subgroup selection, all participants mentioned the Belonging aspects of their tattoos in their tattoo-characterisations. For the **Impulsive/Aesthetic** and **Remembrance/Belonging** subgroup selections, one participant in each gave no indication of their subgroups in the characterisation. While being Impulsive or making an attribution towards Remembrance was found in the respective characterisations, the RDT subgroup was not always evident for these two subgroups. Similarly, the **Rite of Passage/Philosophy** subgroup selection all mentioned a Rite of Passage, but only two mentioned Philosophy as a topic in their characterisation. Other topics found included something decorative, being tattooed “in a more complete sense”, commitment, regret, marking a stage in my life, doing something for myself, doing something no-one else had done, ritual (ceremony), coming out of a divorce, and being addictive.

There were not many instances of repeated terms in the selected tattoo-characterisations. Participant AA54 “really liked this artist”, while Participant DA4 felt “people treated me differently”. Participant DA14 mentioned that each of his tattoo designs came from a t-shirt, as well as him wanting something no-one else had, and that his upbringing meant that he didn’t like tattoos, and felt they represented a “lower class in society that you wouldn’t mix with”. Participant RB1 wanted his tattoo where not everyone could see it; for Participant PF2 it was important that her tattoo be “tiny”, while Participant PF6 placed an emphasis on all things “Celtic”.

From the above, it is possible to find some constructs elicited from the tattoo-characterisations. Examples of these are: responsible versus impulsive; decorative versus no real deeper psychological meaning; big versus tiny; flash versus custom job; on a roll versus slowed down to a stop; not embarrassed versus uncomfortable; unhappy versus feeling significant; not where I wanted it versus where I really wanted it; souvenir versus tattoo; and suit and tie versus drunk and disorderly.

6.4 Opposites of Tattoos

Kelly (1991b) was of the opinion that in order to know what something *is*, we need to have some understanding of what it *is not*. For this reason, participants were asked to give the opposite of their tattoo(s). In a similar manner to the opening request for information, participants were encouraged to construe this request in their own way. It is interesting to note that in being encouraged to personally construe the question, the participants answered in line with the distinction drawn in this thesis between the reason for getting a tattoo (RGT) and the meaning of the design (RDT). In other words, some answered the question “What would be the opposite of having a tattoo?” while others answered “What (tattoo) would have an opposite meaning for you?”.

The given *opposites* of participants’ tattoos were often similar, so they will be treated together. The higher level “answers” included not having a tattoo, having meaningless tattoos, having ugly or evil tattoos, feeling unique, and more philosophical or psychological themes. The following sections discuss a number of these. A full list of the answers to the question regarding the opposite of participants’ tattoos can be found in Appendix H.

6.4.1 Not Having Tattoos

For 19 participants, the opposite of their tattoo(s) would be not having tattoos. These are the participants who, in the main, answered the question “What would be the opposite of having a tattoo?”. For some, this was simply, not having the tattoo(s) they have; for others it was having their tattoo removed. Obviously, this leaves a scar, so the implication of having a tattoo removed is very different to never having had the tattoo in the first place.

Participant PF6 said she would have a “stick-on” tattoo – alluding to the permanency factor that many participants preferred. In a similar fashion, another participant said the opposite would be “something of no existence. A bracelet without meaning – you can take it off. Taking the tattoo off” (GG32); another said wearing clothes would be the opposite (because you can wear the same symbol, but you can take the clothes off – you can’t take a tattoo off quite so easily). Two participants said the opposite would be having a photo or a picture of their tattoo, or what it represented. These two participants interpreted the question as “What (tattoo) would have an opposite meaning for you?”. Participant FR56 made what seemed like a quite considered observation. To him, the opposite of his tattoo would be “not having a tattoo but wanting one, not having a tattoo because I was worried what others would think but still wanting one.”

6.4.2 Meaningless Tattoos

One step “up” from having no tattoo is probably having a meaningless tattoo. Of course, this is “meaningless” in the eyes of the tattooee, as what is meaningless to one person may not necessarily be meaningless to someone else. Indeed, as Participant RB40 stated:

Same as I'll never say that's a shit tattoo. I've seen tattoos that I wouldn't put on my dog. But that tattoo to that person might mean to them what mine mean to me, so I would never say it.

It appears that these participants mostly answered the question “What (tattoo) would have an opposite meaning for you?”. Examples in this category included “a fluffy chicken” (BR51); a “happy, bubbly, spur of the moment pretty picture of a girl with big boobs on a skateboard with a butterfly on her head” (RF22); a “heart with “mum” in it – meaningless” (BB17); “daylight, light and clouds” (RR38); and “meaningless flash, standard stuff like skulls, naked women, knives and roses” (DS27).

The emphasis here seemed to be on “pretty” tattoos, and tattoos that are obtained without much thought to the content. Participant TR52 also said the opposite for her would be a piercing, something she did as retaliation. Having a body modification as retaliation suggests no consideration of the long-term consequences. Participant AA23 demonstrated this lack of contemplation when he stated that his opposite “would have a theme, more detail. I would put more thought into it”.

6.4.3 Ugly and Evil Tattoos

For many other participants, the opposite was an ugly tattoo. Participant PA12 described her opposite as a “gargoyle – garish and evil-looking” while PF44 said “having them garish, completely visible, on boobs, topless chicks on Harleys, dolphins, roses, unicorns.” Similarly, AA16 saw the opposite as “a different pattern - something ugly. Something I wouldn't show.” and AA43 “having ugly tattoos, higgledy piggledy ones”.

Evil tattoos were included with the ugly tattoos as both seemed to be something participants really did not want. Participant BF36 said “something ugly, not tribal - an evil square frog, something jagged and evil-looking”. Likewise, Participant BR15 said

“a tattoo of the devil” and DF45 “a devil, something that doesn't represent what the tattoo does”. Also suggested was a “lady looking at the devil, a devil thing” (WF46).

Related to the “evil” theme, were a “cross necklace, something anti-rebellious” (RS30); a cross (as a symbol for death to WR59); “death symbols, inner evil” (PF6); and “not having a faith” (TF47). Similarly, PF42 stated the opposite would be “an atheist approach, you just die and there's nothing beyond that” while BS60 said “wearing a minister’s collar”. **Rebellion** featured as a positive (BB5) and a negative (BB3).

6.4.4 Uniqueness

Other participants had opposites that revealed that their tattoos made them interesting, and feel special. Participant DA25 said that the opposite of her tattoos “wouldn't be me. I would be plain Jane - nothing interesting about me.” She felt she would be boring and lifeless (as in uninteresting, not dead!). Participant AA54 also felt special with her tattoos. She said “I felt plain. Tattoos made me stand out”. The opposite of her tattoos would be “me without tattoos – back being ignored”. As well as feeling his opposite would be an ugly tattoo, RB41 felt that he would be an “unhappy grumpy bastard”. In contrast, PF44 felt that she would be more gregarious than she is now.

6.4.5 More Literal “Opposite” Tattoos

Some participants commented that they might have “opposite” tattoos. These included the opposite year in the Chinese calendar (DS11); and a Taurus glyph (opposite Libra on the zodiac - WF28). Three participants also commented on feeling “dull and boring” (RR29); “boring leg... feel naked” (DA48) and “feeling less decorated” (AA35) as opposites.

Many participants expressed opposites that could be classified in a number of ways. For example, Participant PF6 said that the opposite would be a stick-on tattoo (Section 6.4.1), but also tattoos of death symbols, and inner evil (Section 6.4.3).

6.4.6 Philosophical Opposites

There were also deeper, or what might be considered more philosophical, opposites suggested. Participant WF37 stated his opposite would be “removal, denial of who you once were, but also a reminder of it, without the soul”; RB40 said he would feel a “great sense of personal loss” and FF10 felt his opposite would be a “Spanish conquistador with a cross – something representing lack of morality in western society”. Participant RF20 felt that the opposite for one of his tattoos would be the Nazi symbol, a swastika. For the other, he said, a dragon with Asian symbols that he couldn’t understand.

Participant FF9 felt his opposite would be an “equal amount of effort in other direction - apathy - lack of interest in comic books and [that] illustrator, and philosophy”. Interestingly, DA4 saw the opposite of her tattoo as her own fear of commitment. Participant RB58 said the opposite of her tribal tattoo would be not experimenting, as that tattoo was an experiment. Participant RB1 felt his opposite would be a tattoo of a shrinking violet or a closed book.

Change was another theme in these opposites. Participant DA14 felt the opposite for him would be to “stay the way I was and never change”; and AA53 “being a person who doesn’t think about things”. Participant RB58 had multiple opposites linked to her tattoos and how she felt about life: “forgetting the cat, not being a greenie, not being me”.

6.4.7 Aesthetic Opposites

Since liking the look of tattoos was the reason given by participants in the RGT and RDT groups designated **Aesthetic** for obtaining them, it was suspected that these participants may have had reasons that were pre-verbal. Therefore, those opposites have been examined in more detail. These answers have been grouped into slightly different themes from those just discussed, and are listed in Table 6.1.

While it may appear that there are various themes here, there are two aspects that stand out. The first is that many of these participants are talking about themselves, rather than the tattoo itself. This may be taken as evidence of the centrality of their tattoos to their identity. Secondly, the opposite to their tattoo for each of these participants is still linked to **Aesthetics** in some way. When the opposite is the “no tattoo” or “boring” theme, or the “something that’s not attractive” idea, that is easy to see. The exceptions are probably the last two participants (under “other”). Participant DA4 was somewhat of an enigma. She began her interview with “I’m a jump on the band wagon kind of person” and stated she only had her tattoo for the look of it, but as the excerpt in Table 6.1 shows, there is much more going on for her.

Table 6.1

Opposites for participants in RGT and RDT Aesthetic groups

Part't	Opposite of tattoo
	Not having anything:
AA16	The opposite of that (one tattoo) would probably be this (other tattoo). Coz it's got no meaning. But the opposite of that (other tattoo) would be not having anything.
AA35	I would say not having it and I would feel less decorated.
AA49	Just something that's not there I'd say.
AA54	Me without any tattoos.
AA55	Not having them there.
RA39	The opposite of my tattoos to me, would be not having them but having to do something to compensate for them, being a little bit more outrageous in some other facet, maybe. If tattoos didn't exist, or if I had never decided to get them then I would still be everything I am, but more so. Maybe 10% of each other thing, or maybe a lot more in one thing. The tattoos spread who I am between the other things that say who I am like the bikes and the stuff.
	Boring:
AA53	Being one of those people who doesn't think about things.
DA14	To stay the way I was and never change.
DA25	Plain Jane. Boring and lifeless (uninteresting).
DA48	Boring leg, feel naked.
	To do with aesthetics:
AA23	I would have got more themes, more detail, put a bit more thought into it, rather than just going and saying put a tattoo there.
AA43	Having ugly ones. You don't sort of think about what you're doing. You get higgledy piggledy ones.
PA12	The first thing that came into my head was a gargoyle. So something quite evil-looking and just a bit garish.
	Other:
DA4	If I thought of a tattoo as something that was permanent and forever, then the opposite of that would be my fear of commitment, because my parents are divorced. This is permanent. It's not coming off; it's going to stay with me forever, whereas a relationship always eludes me.
RA7	Being the living dead, pretty much, being stuck in a shitty job, with a shitty wife, a shitty house, a shitty dog, you know thinking you're getting somewhere and but then you work it out by the time you're 75 that actually none of that meant anything. ¹⁹

¹⁹ This is an excerpt from what Participant RA7 said. His complete reply can be found on the following page.

The second participant (RA7) in the “other” category of Table 6.1 came in shoeless, covered in sand, with a quite wild hair-do, piercings, and many tattoos, including one inside his lower lip. During the interview he used quite “colourful” language. This participant was a sky diver and base jumper who travelled around the world doing jumps. He seemed to be very happy-go-lucky and not have a care in the world. His tattoos, however, represented his affiliations (to groups he had been involved with, to people in his life who had died) and his philosophy of life, the depth of which one would never suspect from looking at him.²⁰ In fact, his full response was rather lengthy:

Actually, probably the opposite of having a tattoo would be to be stuck in normal life. Actually yeah, not having tattoos would be a normal life to me, which means you're already dead. Coz we always get told, especially by the Australian media, um, they talk down to us about our risk taking and how we're just going to kill ourselves, blah blah blah. Yeah, to me, everyone who works six days a week, 10 hours a day is already in prison basically, they might have a couch and a TV, but they're in prison. By the time they get to enjoy their lives, just because technically the only reason we should be living is to enjoy our lives that's too late for them. So my tattoos represent my freedom and my choice to go for it. I think the opposite to them would be being the living dead, pretty much, being stuck in a shitty job, with a shitty wife, with a shitty house, with a shitty dog, you know thinking you're getting somewhere and but then you work it out by the time you're 75 that actually none of that meant anything, which is why I've got friends and grandparents, or like peoples grandparents or parents that love what I do because I started it at such a young age um, and I've worked it out early, I think I worked it out by 23, that life is just about fun, coz I've lost about 30-35 friends over the last five or six years too, through base jumping, skydiving, motor cycles and family through diseases and stuff, that it's like life is short and your partners and your friends could be gone within a second, you know. Even my Dad's caught onto that now and now instead of striving to have a house and a home

²⁰ It may seem unusual that a participant with these kinds of tattoos was coded into the **Aesthetic** RDT subgroup, however it should be remembered that coding was based on the participant's first tattoo, so the codes do not always reflect everything about the tattoos participants chose to put on themselves.

and stuff he's gone and he's just running amok, so, obviously no vandalising and no violence or anything like that, we keep it real but, um, yeah, go out and live. I think not having tattoos to me would be yeah, like being society's prisoner, pretty much. And stuck in the grind and too scared to move and too scared to break out.

From examining these opposites it was possible in some cases to see which of the groupings the participant would be coded into for their reasons for their tattoos. However this was not always the case. It may also be that asking for the opposite was a way to tap into reasons that the participants had not previously considered themselves. These might have been preverbal reasons that they could not articulate. However, the opposites allowed them to explore further.

6.5 Research Question 1: Reasons for Getting a Tattoo

Three sources of data provided information that was useful in the analysis of the semi-structured interview. Firstly, information was drawn from the initial statements of each participant contained in the unconstrained tattoo-characterisation. Secondly, themes that arose from the interviews were examined using thematic analysis. These themes included those originally found in the psychological literature (see Section 6.5.1.1) as well as emergent themes (Section 6.5.1.2).

Thirdly, after participants had finished speaking the interviewer asked them interview questions they did not appear to have answered. Given the semi-structured nature of the interview and the critical importance of the credulous approach to the discussion, sometimes not all questions were comprehensively addressed by each participant. These data all inform Research Question One, as shown in Figure 6.2.

Figure 6.2. Diagrammatic representation of results sections relating to Research Question One

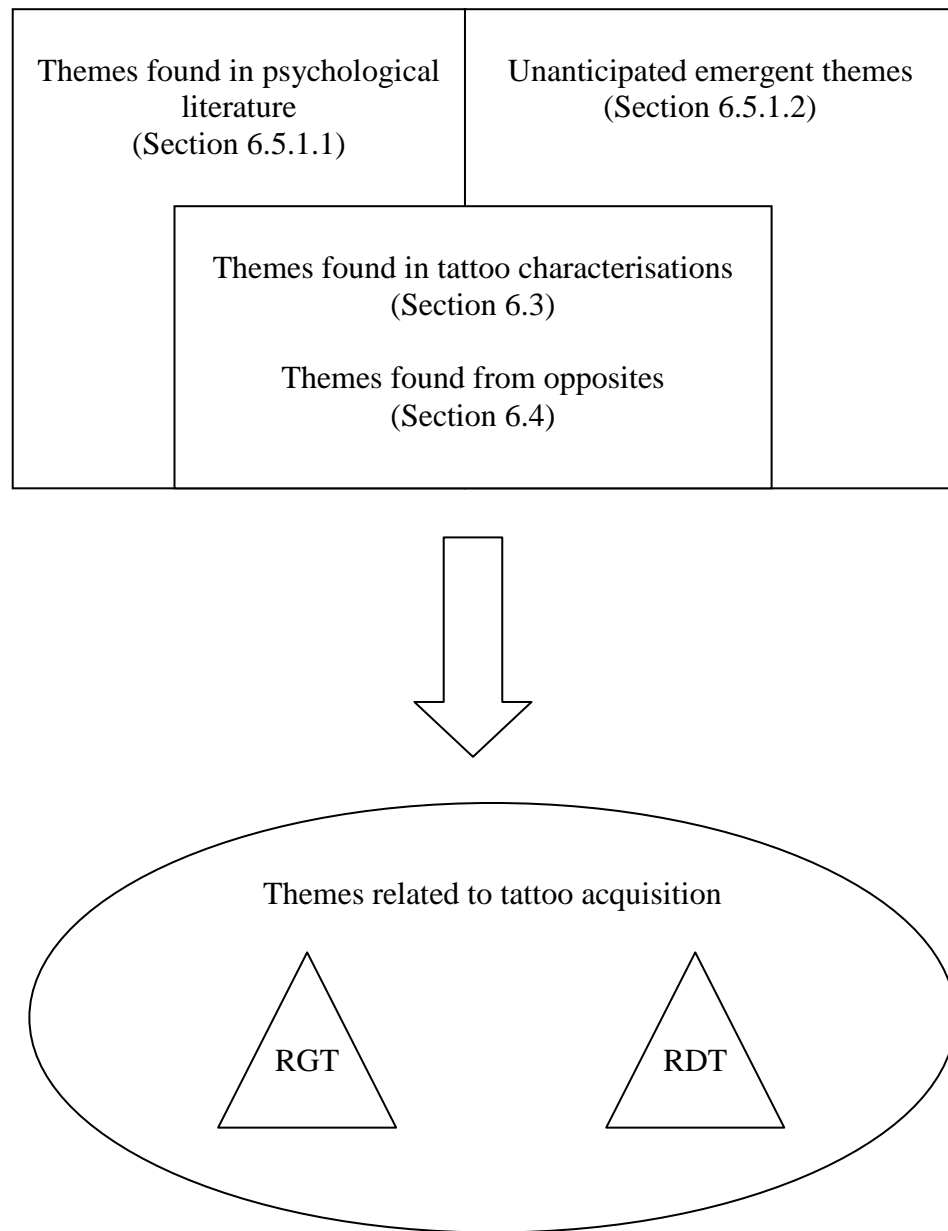


Figure 6.2. Diagram showing how preliminary sections of results (Sections 6.5.1.1, 6.5.1.2, 6.3 and 6.4) inform Section 6.5.3.

6.5.1 Coding the Interviews

The following two sections discuss coding categories (themes) from the psychological literature as well as emergent themes. Initially multiple categories were

noted for each participant. The percentage of participants mentioning each of the major categories is noted to give an indication of the number of participants who take these themes into consideration when making their tattoo decision. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list, but simply indicative of those ideas that arose during the interviews for this thesis.

6.5.1.1 Themes suggested by the psychological literature and found in the interviews. Many of the themes suggested by the psychological literature were found in the interviews. These were discussed in Section 4.4. The themes were often mentioned by participants, even if they were not specifically the major reason (RGT or RDT) for obtaining a tattoo. Therefore, themes will be discussed if they arose in the interviews, not specifically because a certain number of participants talked about them.

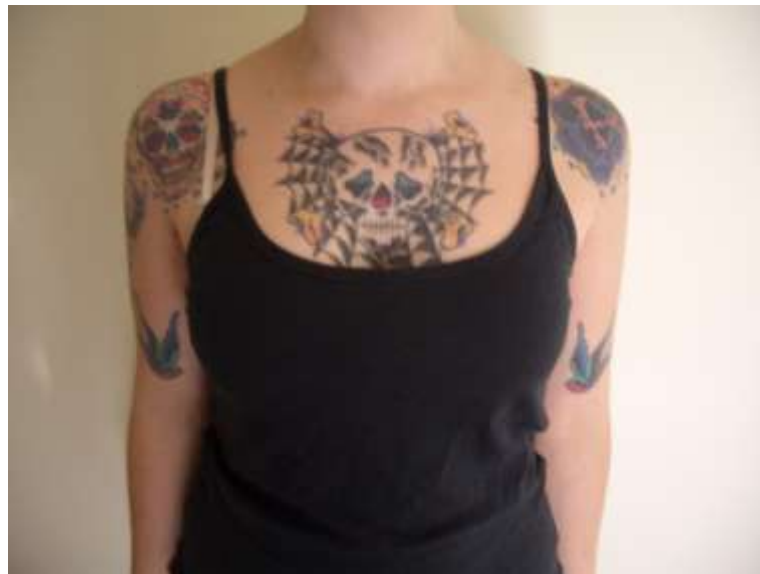
The most frequently occurring theme was **Identity**²¹, with 88% of participants referring to their view of self when talking about their tattoos. This result suggests that the expression of identity may be extremely important to many tattooees. In addition, other themes emerged that were related to Identity. For example, participants talked about the tattoo being (physically and emotionally) “part of me” or like “showing their insides on the outside”. This may be related to the distinction made by S. Bell (1999) between *people with tattoos* and *tattooed people*. In the current study over 70% of participants said they felt they were people with tattoos, while slightly less than 9% related to being tattooed people. Others did not answer this question. This distinction was discussed in Section 3.2.1.2.

Grumet (1983) believed tattoos are forms of nonverbal communication. He also stated that tattoos are used by individuals who are trying to express their feelings externally, and to establish identity. Similarly, Armstrong et al. (2002a, p. 28) cite Lyle

²¹ Chapter Four deals with the topic of Identity, with Section 4.2 giving the conceptualisation of Identity employed in the current thesis.

Tuttle saying tattoos are “external designs for internal feelings”. Similarly, Participant AA54 said:

For some reason I really identify with the bold look of it all. It is pretty full on to look at, especially on a girl. I think that's what I am getting at, with my tattooing and the look of it. A part of why I get tattooed, I think, is being a fairly small female, softly spoken, you know. I am not a really loud person. I am not obnoxious. I'm quite shy but I feel internally strong. Tattooing for me is a way of showing my insides on the outside all the time, so I got them in places that I couldn't necessarily hide or I didn't want to hide. And they're sort of in people's faces whether they like it or not, which is not a confrontational thing but it's more of an outward showing of my inward feelings and nature.



Other notions from the psychological literature included personal symbols, belonging, and remembrance. Six participants had tattoos that were categorised as being a **Personal Symbol** (RDT). Of these, some participants had tattoos that contained their star sign. Others spoke of attributes of the content of the tattoo that they related to, such as a dragon representing wisdom, strength and courage. These tattoos could possibly also have been categorised as **Philosophy** (see Section 6.5.1.2). Participant BS60 claimed his tattoos were solely to look like part of a particular group, yet he had a tattoo

with his name in it. This is a good example of the need to classify each tattoo by RGT (**Belonging** in this case) as well as RDT (**Personal Symbol**).

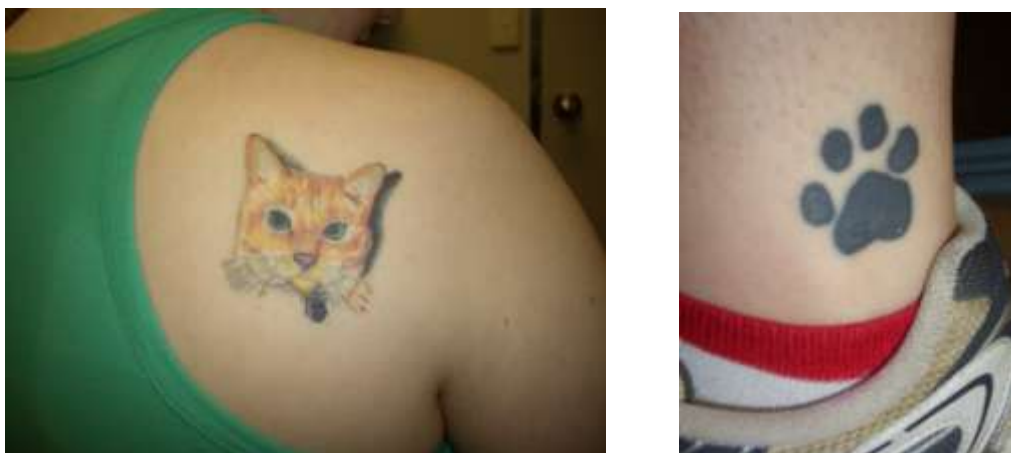
Remembrance was referred to by 66% of participants. Remembering our past, and acknowledging our cultural heritage is very important to some people. In the (wise) words of Participant RB40 “What's the old saying? If you don't know where you come from you never grow up. Not knowing one's history you remain a child forever”.

Twelve participants had tattoos that they had obtained specifically for the purpose of aiding remembrance of a person or event, or as a reminder of their heritage (RGT subgroup). Of the participants who had tattoos linked to their heritage, two were Celtic, and the third was Egyptian. Participant RA7 had tattoos that were memories of events and people in his life, as well as a reminder of a period in his life. The RDT

Remembrance subgroup had eight participants overall, including three participants who had obtained tattoos as souvenirs. For two of them, these were a reminder of another country they had visited, for the third the tattoo was a souvenir of a concert.

Participant RB58 had two tattoos that were reminders of her cat. Her tattoos are shown in Figure 6.3.

Figure 6.3. Tattoos in remembrance of a pet cat

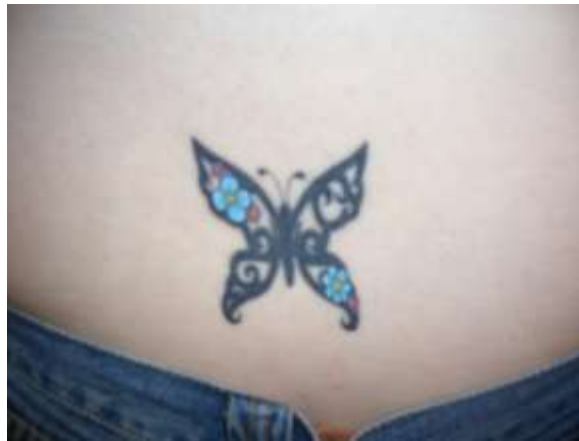


Overall, 52% of the participants mentioned some aspect of **Belonging** when talking about their tattoos. The personal relationships represented included partners, sisters, children and mothers and in one instance as a sign of commitment to a future husband. Others had tattoos linked to their country, while Participant DB57's tattoo represented the country in which he wished to live.

Rebellion was mentioned by slightly less than a third (28.6%) of the participants. When examining the RGT subgroups, only two participants obtained tattoos as a form of rebellion. For Participant TF47, the act of obtaining a tattoo was very much against her mother's belief system, even though the actual design was, for this participant, a reminder of her own and her mother's faith. Participant TR52 likewise had her first tattoo to rebel against her parents, waiting until she was overseas and free of their influence before acquiring it.

Other themes suggested by the psychological literature, such as **Peak Experiences** (10.7%), and **Psychological Growth** (30.4%), were not directly mentioned, but could be found within some of the transcripts. A single participant (GG32) had a tattoo that was obtained to aid in **Psychological Growth**. This young woman acquired a tattoo when she was in the process of recovering from anxiety and depression. She stated that the tattoo was a reminder to her that she had inner strength, especially when she was finding it difficult to do something, such as get out and go somewhere. This participant had Psychological Growth coded for both RGT and RDT as she said the design of the tattoo represented being able to break free of depression and anxiety. (The butterfly represents freedom while the flowers remind her that she is still presently linked to the ground, which represents her anxiety.) Her tattoo is shown in Figure 6.4.

Figure 6.4. Tattoo depicting breaking free of anxiety



Using the opposite of an individual's tattoos meant that further information and understanding was gained from some participants. For example, Participant DA14 gave no real reason for obtaining his tattoos. He stated that he never liked tattoos, still doesn't like tattoos on other people, and that it was an **Impulsive** decision that he could not explain. This man had been separated for about 11 years, after two marriages lasting seven and four years respectively. He had obtained four tattoos in a short period of time, stating that the only reason he could think of was that he was possibly marking himself for being miserable while he was married. This participant gave "stay the way I was and never change" as his opposite, which would seem to indicate that overall his tattoos may be about **Psychological Growth**, and this view is consistent with the idea of being miserable while he was married, but now that he is single again, he has changed and grown.

Diverse modern western societies do not have as many universally performed **Rites of Passage** as have been observed in other more homogenous cultures. However, it was possible to identify eight participants who had tattoos that were linked to what could be seen as significant life events, or "modern day" Rites of Passage. These included graduating from university, significant birthdays, and becoming single again. Overall, this theme was present in some form in 50% of the transcripts.

As an aside, Participant RB40 came up with the following subgroups spontaneously in his interview:

Some people come with a tattoo and it's that dude's got a tattoo because he's a soulful person and that's his soul. The next geezer walks in the door has got tattoos coz he's a filthy junky the person who breaks into your Nan's home when you're not home and he's got his tattoos done dirtily and he looks dirty and probably smells. The next person walks in he's a fashion victim he's got his tattoos done to get himself laid or so the chicks go OOH HH at a nightclub. And the next bloke walks in and he's gnarly and old and covered in tattoos and he looks like he's been born with them.

6.5.1.2 Unanticipated themes that emerged from the interviews. During the coding of the interview transcripts, a number of themes not anticipated from the psychological literature emerged. Seventy-five percent of participants stated they cared about how their tattoos looked (**Aesthetics**). This included participants talking about taking care of their tattoos by using sunscreen and vitamin E cream to maintain the appearance of the tattoo. This subgroup was evident very early in the empirical stage of the current research. **Aesthetics** was given both as a reason to obtain a tattoo (RGT) as well as why the design was chosen (RDT). Including both RGT and RDT subgroups, 23 participants stated that Aesthetics played a major part in their tattoo decision. Three participants specifically said that they looked at the tattoos as a form of art, and they appreciated them for the artwork.

Although the Permanence of tattoos appeared to often be seen as a negative aspect by the majority of the non-tattooed, the tattooees themselves had different views. Permanence was often construed as a positive attribute by the participants. In the current study, 71.4% talked about the permanence of their tattoos, with many stating that the permanence of a tattoo was one aspect that made having a tattoo a uniquely satisfying experience. Permanence undoubtedly played some part in the decision to obtain a tattoo.

Uniqueness was also important to many participants, being mentioned by 51.8%.

Despite this, neither of these themes was a major reason (RGT or RDT) for obtaining a tattoo in the current study.

Over a third of the participants (39%) talked about having a feeling about their tattoos that they could not explain. This feeling appeared to be related to the idea that they were not worried about what other people thought of them having tattoos. Some participants commented that they did not understand why other people became upset when someone had a tattoo, since it really should not have any effect on them. This attitude is expressed by a tattoo that Participant AA54 reported seeing on someone walking down the street one day: *“Your opinion of me is none of my business”*. In other words, I don’t need (or want) to hear what you think about me or the way I look.

Impulsiveness was mentioned by just over a quarter (28.6%) of the participants. However, eight participants gave impulsiveness (or being drunk) as their reason for obtaining a tattoo (RGT). Participant DS11 said that he was walking between pubs, saw a tattoo parlour and “went and had a tattoo”. He felt that if he and his friend had walked on the other side of the road he probably would not have had a tattoo, and talked about occasionally regretting his tattoo. Participant DA4 was drunk when she obtained her first tattoo. She subsequently had the tattoo covered with a second one, as she was not happy with the original.

Participant DA25 had three tattoos, the third of which was obtained after she had been drinking. Quite differently to the two other participants just mentioned, this participant was very pleased with her tattoo, saying that it made her feel peaceful, and she felt it was the only tattoo she had obtained purely for herself. (This tattoo was used for the coding, rather than her first tattoo, as she specifically said it was her favourite tattoo.)

For many tattooees, their tattoos are no longer a possession, but more akin to a character trait or a philosophical belief. The tattoos are “no more easily removed from his or her identity than his or her deepest beliefs, most profound concerns, or idiosyncratic sense of humor” (Vail, 1999, p. 270). Having a tattoo that represents personal beliefs displays a level of commitment to those beliefs. Participant FF9 is one example of this:

"It doesn't matter" is a Chemical Brothers song, it's a really good Chemical Brothers song. But it's also personal philosophy ... anything that may be bringing you down, not to worry about it, you know, it's like a self reinforcing mantra, I look down and I read it every time it's there and I think it continually reinforces itself into my head, that's what the idea is, that's why I put it in Times New Roman, because there's no confusion, there's no pattern about it there's no "ok, that's a pretty tattoo" delusion, because that's not the point, the point is the information not the prettiness.



Almost half the participants (48.2%) linked their tattoos to particular beliefs or life **Philosophy**, such as taking care of the environment, or how to treat other people. The tattoos included in this subgroup were sometimes words or phrases, and other times symbols that acted as a reminder to the wearer. This subgroup was differentiated from that of **Remembrance** (see Section 6.5.1.1) by the “subject” of the reminder. In the Remembrance subgroup, the tattoos were in remembrance of a certain person or event.

In the Beliefs/Philosophy subgroup, the tattoos were an aid to remembering how the person wished to live her or his life.

Three participants obtained tattoos for reasons that were coded as **Philosophy** (RGT subgroup), while a further 15 were coded into the RDT Philosophy subgroup, including participants tattooed with “go hard and live the dream” (Participant RA7 in left of Figure 6.5), “forever” (a reminder that nothing lasts forever) (Participant FR56 on right in Figure 6.5) and “let it be”.

Figure 6.5. Tattoos depicting philosophy of life



Other tattoos that placed participants in this subgroup were symbols such as runes (one representing the completion of a cycle - RF22), teeth (“don’t let it bite you” – RB40) and a star (symbolic of Dr. Seuss’ Sneetches, who taught us not to be prejudiced – RF20 - shown in Figure 6.6). Some participants in this subgroup had tattoos that were more directly linked to religion, such as the Kanji symbol for faith (TF47). In addition, two participants had Celtic tattoos, symbolising not only their Celtic heritage (PF6), but more specifically their identification with the beliefs of the ancient Celts, such as the existence of other worlds, as evidenced by ghost tattoos, as shown in Figure 6.7 (WF37).

Figure 6.6. Tattoo depicting philosophy of life: don't judge others



Figure 6.7. Ghost tattoos relating to Celtic traditional beliefs



A large number of participants (48.2%) mentioned at some point that they had **Wanted (a tattoo) for a Long Time**. After the final re-coding, five participants were coded into this subgroup for RGT. Other topics mentioned included tattoos being addictive (30%) and having a sense of accomplishment or pride after getting through the pain (20%).

6.5.2 “Making Sense” of the Codes

Once the coding was complete, the themes that emerged from the interviews were seen to fall together into domains. These domains were: considerations that informed the tattoo decision; considerations about the design; and reactions to and feelings about the tattoo. These are discussed below, with illustrative responses included.

6.5.2.1 Considerations informing initial tattoo decision. There are many aspects of tattoos that are considered before the decision to have a tattoo can be made. The following includes considerations mentioned by the participants in this study.

Participants reported going alone less often than going with friends to obtain tattoos. Of the 56 participants, 31 said they had someone with them, 11 said it was a combination, and 14 went alone. When the participant had a friend with them (42 participants), 47.62% (20) reported that the other person also had a tattoo. Of these, 20% felt it was their own idea, 20% felt it was the other person’s idea and 60% felt it was a mutual decision.

On the whole participants reported not being influenced by the possible reaction of someone close to them to not get a tattoo. For some participants, concern about reactions translated into being careful about placement, and some delayed getting their tattoo, for example, due to a boss, parent, or partner not approving. Participant WF37 said “I think for all of them I’ve been aware of what the implications are but I’ve got them anyway. On that basis, it’s somebody else’s issue not mine. If they perceive things in a certain way, that’s their problem.” Participant RF13 felt “it was more a case of knowing that if I kept living my life the way somebody else wanted me to I’d never be happy”.

All participants reported knowing other people with tattoos. This included family members, friends, and work colleagues. Participant AA55 said “I don't really know anyone who doesn't, except my parents”.

Many participants had no opinion about others with tattoos. Participant DS27 said “I think they've made a decision for their own reasons. You have to respect that they've had their reasons.” Participant AA55 stated “I don't care but sometimes I wonder what the hell they were thinking but it's none of my business”. Some liked to look at the designs of others’ tattoos, or to speculate on the motivation behind getting them. Participant RF22 said:

Some people get them for stupid reasons and some people I think, a lot of the time, are trying to fit into a certain scene and so they get these tattoos that make them look like they're a part of that scene. They're obviously very identity crisis ridden and not quite sure of who they are or what they're doing in their life and they just want to fit into some sort of genre whether it be you know, homie, goth, metal, I don't know, they're just trying to fit into something.

When asked if they felt having a tattoo meant they identified with any particular group, 78.6% of participants answered no. Identifying with tattooed people was mentioned by 12.5% of the participants. The remainder gave a variety of answers. Participant AA43 stated he identified with bikers. Participant AA54 said “I identify with anyone who is cool and goes their own way but not because they have tattoos”. Participant WR26 felt his tattoos *differentiated him* from the group he belonged to, while Participant DB57 stated he identified with “rebellious nerds”.

One theme that really came through was that the pain was part of the experience – it was seen as a flesh-payment, if you will – if you want a tattoo, you have to be prepared to put up with the pain. Participant RA39 felt:

If you are going to get one, then you've got to be prepared to pay the freight, which is the pain, the looking after, keeping out of the sun and the surf for a week and the fact it's gonna be there for the rest of your life.

Likewise, Participant FR56 said “it makes you more certain of what you want. You have to be willing to go through the pain to get the art”.

When considering a tattoo, one participant said the cost would be the major influence on his decision. Three participants felt the artist or studio was the most important thing to consider. Five participants were most concerned with where to put their tattoos, while 26 participants (46%) thought the design was the most important aspect. Participant RS30 stated her decision would be about “what to get, what style, what colour, how big. Where to get it comes second” while Participant BF36 was faced with a dilemma: “I can think of so many things I'd love to get. It's just a matter of where to put them”. The remaining four participants said that design and placement were equally important.

Participants talked about using tattoos to remind them of particular events. These included birthdays (5 participants), leaving a relationship (5 participants), getting married (2 participants), and graduating (3 participants). Half the participants said there was no particular event linked to their tattoos. Five participants talked about the tattoo coinciding with changes in self or their world view. For example, Participant RF13 said “I was starting to mature and they are both reminders of what I was and how my life was going at the time”. Similarly, Participant DA25 felt “they sort of a little bit coincided with changes within myself and what I was doing in that particular point of my life”. Participant RA39 said “each tattoo reflects a period [in my life] or something that is me forever”.

However, Participant RF13 had a slightly different view:

Some people take a look at their life and they see it in stages.... I think it's kind of wrong to view it that way because we're changing on a day to day basis. People look at tattoos and they see this is from my wild years, this is from my mellow years, this is from when I was doing this and to me I'd see it more as just flowing through you know, it's not like it's a the way they describe it, it makes it sound like chapters in a book, you know, it just stops and starts and moves onto the next bit just like that. It's not so simple and cut and dry. It's just constantly flowing - we don't even realise those changes are happening until we go back.

Almost three quarters of the participants (73.2%) said that a tattoo was a unique way to express what they were trying to express. In other words, there was nothing else they could have done that would have had the same effect for them as having their tattoo. Many of these (19.6%) said that the permanence of a tattoo was important to them. Participant FF10 expressed it in this way: "It's always with me now and it's kind of a reminder of who I am and where I am." Participant PA12 said "I think I did a lot of things visually to take a stand". Participant RA39 said "I can do things *as well* - personal appearance, choice of transport, how I live, how I behave in mixed company - but not *instead*".

Included in this list of considerations are the themes discussed previously, such as **Belonging, Rebellion, Remembrance, and Aesthetics**. These are the major reasons for obtaining tattoos, designated as RGT throughout this thesis. A number of these themes are also relevant to the meaning behind the designs of the tattoos (RDT), which are discussed in the following section.

6.5.2.2 Considerations about the design. Placement of the tattoo, size, and the actual design are the major considerations after the decision to have a tattoo has been made. As discussed in Section 5.8.1.2, the placement of the tattoos was broken down

into three simple categories. Private tattoos (only seen when naked) comprised 5.4% of the sample, able to be covered (this includes tattoos that could be seen while wearing a bathing costume) 85.7% and always visible 8.9%.

Being able to hide the tattoo if necessary (or desired) was mentioned by 62.5% of the participants. However, 16% of participants had their tattoos in places that they could show if they wanted to. Two participants had their tattoos in places because they liked that body part while four participants had tattoos in places that they “thought was a good place”. Participant AA35 chose the base of her spine because “it’s a kind of cool spot”. Others had tattoos in more meaningful places (Participant BB5 felt it appropriate to put one of her tattoos “on my ankle because my children ground me”), while some chose the place based on the pain (Participant RB58 chose “ankle and other spots I thought would hurt”).

Participant RF22 said there was nowhere she wouldn’t put a tattoo. Most participants mentioned specific places on the body as not being appropriate, in their view, for a tattoo. Participant BR51 said the only place he wouldn’t put a tattoo would be his “face, but even there if there was something that would fit”. Some participants banned certain body areas due to tenderness, whereas others were more concerned that the tattoo may change due to the passage of time. For example, Participant PF44 “would not have tattoos on anything that sags” and Participant DS27 said “nowhere that will change - it should hold its pattern where it is”.

Participants reported that many of the designs were chosen because they liked the design. For example, Participant AA43 “liked the art” and Participant PF44 “liked nature”. Other designs were chosen to represent a particular person (including self), place or event. Participant BB3 had a tattoo because “we were about to be married so we got each other’s initials in a similar area”, while Participant BB17’s tattoo was the

same as her mother's. Participant RA7 had a tattoo that reminded him of being a teenager. Other participants felt the designs were imbued with deeper meanings, such as expressing their philosophy of life. Participant RF20's tattoo "design commemorates what's important in my life, and the words have separate meanings" (tattoo included the words, "life, love, laughter"). Similarly, Participant DF45's tattoo "represents courage, wisdom and strength". The reason for choosing the design (RDT) was deemed to be more important to this study than the actual design. These meanings have already been discussed.

6.5.2.3 Feelings about the tattoo. When considering what their tattoos mean to other people, participants' answers ranged from bad, rebellious, or stupid, to attractive. Participant PF6 said "they probably think I'm a rebel", Participant DA14 "they probably think it's a lower class thing to do" and Participant RS30 "that I'm hard-core or a bit of an idiot". Participant RB1 said "people probably think that I'm a little more outgoing than they first realised". Other responses included "a westie" (Participant BB5), "honest" (Participant FF9), "a bikie" (Participant TR52) and "some see a junkie, some guys get overwhelmed" (Participant AA54).

Many of the participants expressed the view that they didn't actually care what it meant to other people. Likewise, many participants said they didn't know or didn't care how other people saw them. Participant AA23 said "I don't care - people should respect you for who you are" while Participant RA39 put it a little more strongly: "I couldn't give a rat's arse. They would think "Look at this guy. He's someone to get to know or someone to avoid." [There is] no middle ground."

Reactions to tattoos were another area where participants reported a wide range, although most reactions were generally more positive. While Participant PA12's ex-boyfriend said "what have you done to yourself?" Participant PS33 was told "cool tattoo". Participant RA39 felt there were "two groups – "worth a chat" or "too scary, don't want to know"". Participant AA16 reported that "some people lift my shirt up and have a look. Ones that don't like them don't usually say anything".

Most participants (91.1%) reported no negative effects on their lives due to their tattoos. However, Participant AA53 felt that being touched without being asked was a negative of her having tattoos. Participant BB17 lost a friend over tattoos and Participant WF46 found one boy wouldn't go out with her.

Three participants said they would change their tattoos. A further nine participants said they would change their tattoo, but only to add to it, or to have the colour re-done so it looked more like "new". Participant FF9 appeared to have second thoughts on occasion about the content of his tattoo. He said "sometimes I think the writing ["let it be" and "it doesn't matter"] is a bit preachy and I get brief moments of wanting to black it out".

Three participants said outright they would not have their tattoo again. Four participants said they would have a different tattoo if they had their time over and three participants with multiple tattoos would have some of them again but not all. Overall, 87.5% of participants would have their tattoos again.

Of the 53 participants who talked about having another tattoo, 38 (71.7%) said they would. Participant RA39 felt that "it's just a matter of when I do it". Three participants said maybe, one said probably not, and 11 said no. Participant FF10 wouldn't get another tattoo as "this says everything".

None of the participants said they would have their tattoos removed. Two, however, talked about having their tattoos covered with other ones. Participant AA43 regularly “updates” his ink. Participant DS11 said *if* he ever regretted his tattoo he would have it removed. In a different vein, Participant RF22 said:

Can I just say that even if I was like years old and if I didn't like them anymore I'd still keep them because even if I don't like them, they still signify that point in my life where I can say, that marks off this chapter of my book; that marks off this point. So I would never, I don't think I would ever want to remove them no matter what.

Participants expressed a whole range of responses (from negative to positive) about the pain associated with getting a tattoo. Participant FF9 felt the pain had stopped him from finishing one of his tattoos (77 cartoon characters on his back). Many participants said it wasn't the worst pain they had ever felt, or that it wasn't as bad as they expected. Participant RB41 said “I enjoy the pain, I find it extremely relaxing”. Participant WR26 had two tattoos. The first was done by machine, and he said it “felt like I was getting my arm cut off”, whereas his second tattoo was done by hand and he said he could almost have fallen asleep.

6.5.2.4 Towards a Theory of Tattoo Acquisition. It is proposed that there are three basic steps (as discussed above) in acquiring a tattoo. In the literature these steps have frequently been conflated. The first is the decision whether to get a tattoo (see Section 6.5.2.1). As noted, the decision is partly based on whether the participant was alone, the possibility of reactions from others, pain, permanence, cost, and other motivating reasons (RGT), such as to signify an event or belonging to a group. The second step is consideration about the design. This includes the placement (whether it can be hidden, whether it will hurt more in some places than others), the size, and the actual design, which is imbued with meaning by the wearer (RDT). The final step is the

post-contemplation of the act, which includes reactions of others, as well as personal feelings about the tattoo. Participants talked about whether or not they would have the tattoo again, whether they would have it removed, and whether they would have it covered with another.

6.5.3 Reasons related to tattoo acquisition: motivation and meaning

After transcribing the interviews and examining the responses to the interview questions, the major reasons given by participants for obtaining tattoos were selected. The reasons given for tattooing and the meanings attributed to the designs illustrate individual differences within the subgroups. Many of the subgroups were found within both RGT and RDT. Discussion of the subgroups was included in Sections 6.5.1.1 and 6.5.1.2. The following section details the number of participants coded into each of the RGT and RDT subgroups. Table 6.2 shows that **Remembrance** was the most common reason participants gave for obtaining a tattoo (RGT subgroups), followed by **Belonging**. **Rebellion** was the second least common reason, with **Psychological Growth** only applicable to one participant.

When it comes to the reason for the design of their tattoo (RDT subgroup), the majority of participants gave **Aesthetics** or **Philosophy**, with **Belonging** the third most popular attribution, as shown in Table 6.3. These three subgroups account for 73.22% of participants' construal of the meaning of their tattoo design. Attributions about the design are also shown in Figure 6.8, as a subset of the considerations once the decision to have a tattoo has been made.

Table 6.2

Frequencies of reasons for obtaining tattoos (RGT)

Reason for obtaining a tattoo per se	Frequency	Percent
Remembrance	12	21.43
Belonging	9	16.07
Aesthetics	8	14.29
Rite of Passage	8	14.29
Impulsive	8	14.29
Wanted for a Long Time	5	8.93
Philosophy	3	5.36
Rebellion	2	3.57
Psychological Growth	1	1.79

Table 6.3

Frequencies of reasons for choice of design (RDT)

What the tattoo represents	Frequency	Percent
Aesthetics	15	26.79
Philosophy	15	26.79
Belonging	11	19.64
Remembrance	8	14.29
Personal Symbol	6	10.71
Psychological Growth	1	1.79

In conclusion, there are two major decision-making steps (or reasons) involved before getting a tattoo. The first step is making the decision to take a permanent mark upon one's skin. This step involves a number of aspects that must be taken into consideration, some of which have been highlighted in Section 6.5.2.1. The second step

is directly related to the actual design, and involves not only the design itself, but where to place it, and what size to make it. Following tattoo acquisition, there is a third step, which involves an appraisal of the tattoo. This review of feelings about the tattoo may be a contributing factor to subsequent tattoo decisions.

6.6 Research Question 2: Tattooees' Views of Selves and Others

The second research question was concerned with how tattooed individuals viewed themselves and others. More specifically, did they have a different view of other people than they did of themselves? Did having a tattoo change the way they viewed their selves? These questions were addressed using a Repertory Grid (Kelly, 1991b) that contained as its elements predominantly self elements, but also elements focusing on potentially important other people. As indicated previously (Section 5.8.4) Repertory Grids can be analysed in many different ways. Those ways chosen here were primarily selected because of their relevance to an understanding of the person's construction of themselves.

6.6.1 Positivity

As an initial examination, the ratings of SELF and OTHER elements were compared in order to determine whether participants were rating these elements differently. Since the elements were rated between 1 and 5, with 1 being the positive pole (as determined by an examination of the ratings given to the *Ideal Self* element), a lower rating means a more positive construal of that element.

The average rating given to each element was calculated across all participants for all constructs. Table 6.4 shows the average ratings (with standard deviations) for each of the 12 elements. *Ideal Self* was rated the most positively, followed by *Self As I'd Like Others To See Me*, while *Someone I Don't Like The Look Of* was rated least

positively. In general the SELF elements were rated more positively than the OTHER elements, with the exception of *Self Before Tattoo*, which was rated less positively than *Someone Without Tattoos* and *Someone With Tattoos*, but more positively than the remaining OTHER elements. The average rating across the SELF elements for all constructs (12 constructs for each of 56 participants equals 672 constructs) was 1.88 ($SD = 0.64$). Across the OTHER elements the mean rating was 2.60 ($SD = 0.63$). A t-test of these averages across all constructs found a significant difference, $t(671) = 22.74$, $p = .000$, indicating that SELF elements are construed significantly more positively than OTHER elements. This result demonstrated a small effect size (*Cohen's d* = 1.15).

Table 6.4

Means and Standard Deviations for elements

Element	Mean	Standard Deviation
Ideal Self	1.35	0.60
Self As I'd Like Others To See Me	1.46	0.65
Future Self	1.66	0.84
Self As Seen By Others	2.02	0.98
Self	2.06	0.92
Self Now If No Tattoo	2.11	0.93
Someone Without Tattoos	2.15	1.16
Someone With Tattoos	2.25	1.12
Self Before Tattoo	2.47	1.18
Someone Who Rebels	2.72	1.32
Someone Who Conforms	2.85	1.24
Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	3.05	1.29

6.6.2 Midpoints

Since ratings ranged from 1 to 5, a rating of 3 was the midpoint. As explained in Section 5.8.4, one interpretation of using the midpoint is that the participant does not find the construct meaningful.

As shown in Table 6.5, when the midpoints were examined by element, *Ideal Self* had the least number of midpoints, with 28 being used in total across all constructs and all participants. Close to this was *Self As I'd Like Others To See Me* (or Ideal Self from the point of view of others) with 33. This appears to indicate that participants found the constructs more meaningful when applied to their SELF elements, especially *Ideal Self*. The exception was *Self Before Tattoo*, which had more midpoints than *Someone Without Tattoos* and *Someone With Tattoos*.

The element with the largest number of midpoints was *Someone Who Conforms* (199 midpoints), with *Someone I Don't Like The Look Of* (171 midpoints) and *Someone Who Rebels* (163 midpoints) almost as large. This indicated that the participants found the constructs less meaningful when rating these OTHER elements.

Table 6.5

Midpoint ratings by element

Element	Number of midpoints
Ideal Self	28
Self As I'd Like Others To See Me	33
Future Self	60
Self	113
Self As Seen By Others	129
Self Now If No Tattoo	130
Someone Without Tattoo	130
Someone With Tattoos	153
Self Before Tattoo	154
Someone Who Rebels	163
Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	171
Someone Who Conforms	199

6.6.3 Extreme Ratings

As noted in Section 5.8.4, the use of extreme ratings has been interpreted to indicate meaningfulness (Grice, 2002), polarisation (Winter, 2003), or even pathology (Fransella, et al., 2004). When the number of positive extreme ratings given to each element is compared to the number of negative extreme ratings, as shown in Table 6.6, we notice that three SELF elements – *Ideal Self*, *Self As I'd Like Others To See Me*, and *Future Self* all had the largest number of positive extreme ratings and the smallest number of negative. At the same time, three OTHER elements - *Someone Who Conforms*, *Someone Who Rebels* and *Someone I Don't Like The Look Of* – all had the largest number of negative extreme ratings, as well as the smallest number of positive extreme ratings.

Table 6.6

Numbers of ones and fives for elements of the grid

Element	Number of 1 ratings	Number of 5 ratings
Ideal Self	473	1
Self As I'd Like Others To See Me	409	2
Future Self	346	8
Someone Without Tattoos	241	39
Self As Seen By Others	235	14
Someone With Tattoos	210	21
Self	187	11
Self Now If No Tattoo	181	8
Self Before Tattoo	164	36
Someone Who Rebels	160	77
Someone Who Conforms	116	77
Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	92	113

6.6.4 Conflict Attributable to Elements

The percentage of conflict attributable to each element is displayed in Table 6.7. Since conflict has been defined (see Section 5.8.4) as “the ratio of observed conflict situations to possible conflict situations” (R. C. Bell, 2004, p. 54), small values mean less conflict or inconsistency. *Ideal Self* and *Self As I'd Like Others To See Me* contributed the smallest percentages of conflict, while the largest amounts of conflict came from *Someone Who Rebels* and *Someone I Don't Like The Look Of*. These are the only two elements that could be considered to have more than a small amount of conflict, using Bell's (R. C. Bell, personal communication, 10th January, 2011) criterion of any value less than 11.8.

Table 6.7

Percentage of conflict attributable to each element in Repertory Grid

Element	% Conflict
Ideal Self	3.27
Self As I'd Like Others To See Me	3.65
Future Self	5.17
Self Now If No Tattoo	6.58
Self	7.09
Self As Seen by Others	7.69
Self Before Tattoo	9.63
Someone With Tattoos	9.66
Someone Without Tattoos	10.87
Someone Who Conforms	10.98
Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	12.29
Someone Who Rebels	13.11

6.6.5 Movement with Respect to Ideal Self

Utilising different aspects of self as elements enabled comparisons between elements such as *Self*, *Ideal Self*, and *Self Before Tattoo*. Of the participants in the study, 78.57% moved towards *Ideal Self*, 12.5% moved away, and the remaining 8.93% remained static. A t-test was performed to explore if there was a significant difference in Change-in-Self, that is, whether *Self* (now) was significantly closer to *Ideal Self* than *Self Before Tattoo*. A significant result was found, $t(671) = -12.80, p = .000$. This indicated that overall participants saw *Self* (now) as significantly closer to *Ideal Self* than *Self Before Tattoo*.

It is possible that Change-in-Self could be attributed simply to the passage of time, rather than the acquisition of a tattoo. Therefore a further t-test was performed to

check whether the difference between *Self Now If No Tattoo* and *Ideal Self* was significantly more or less than the difference between *Self (now)* and *Ideal Self*. While this result was significant at $p = .05$ ($t(671) = -2.94, p = .003$), it was not significant at $p = .001$. A significance level of .001 is reported due to the multiple tests that were done. *Self (now)* was found to be closer to *Ideal Self* than *Self Now If No Tattoo*, which demonstrated that while Change-in-Self was partly due to the passage of time, some of the change could be attributed to the acquisition of a tattoo.

6.6.6 Findings: Tattooees' Views of Selves and Others

Tattooees' views of selves and others were examined in a number of ways. Firstly, tattooees' views of SELF elements were compared with views of OTHER elements. Results indicate that SELF elements were generally viewed more positively than OTHER elements, with the exception being *Self Before Tattoo*. This finding was echoed in each of the analyses where *Self Before Tattoo* was included. *Self Before Tattoo* also had the most midpoint ratings of all the SELF elements. Of the OTHER elements, *Someone Without Tattoos* had the least number of midpoint ratings, and *Someone Who Conforms* had the most.

Secondly, when examining extreme ratings, *Self Before Tattoo* had the most negative (5) ratings of the SELF elements. *Ideal Self* had the most extreme positive (1) ratings, followed by *Self As I'd Like Others To See Me*. *Someone Without Tattoos* had the most positive (1) ratings of the OTHER elements, while *Someone I Don't Like The Look Of* had the most extreme negative (5) ratings.

Examining the conflict attributable to elements also showed *Self Before Tattoo* to be the SELF element contributing the most conflict to the grids. *Ideal Self* contributed the least conflict of the SELF elements, while *Someone With Tattoos* contributed the least conflict for OTHER elements. *Someone Who Rebels* contributed the most conflict

for OTHER elements. Lastly, it was found that the majority of tattooees felt they were closer to their *Ideal Self* than they were before they had their tattoos, even when a change in time was taken into consideration.

6.7 Research Question 3: Comparing Selves and Others within Reason Subgroups

As well as investigating the different views of selves and others that participants hold, it was thought that comparing the views of participants within their RGT and RDT subgroups may provide additional information. Sections 6.7.1 to 6.7.7 address the various grid analyses performed when the participants were broken into RGT and RDT reason subgroups. Only subgroups with at least five participants have been included.

6.7.1 Relationship between Positivity and Reason Subgroups

As noted in Section 6.6.1, the average rating for SELF elements overall was 1.75, while for OTHER elements it was 2.60 (a lower score means the element was rated more positively). Breaking the ratings down into the RGT and RDT subgroups shows where some of the variations occurred. As shown in Table 6.9, *Ideal Self* was the most positive SELF element for all RGT subgroups except the **Belonging** subgroup where *Self As I'd Like Others To See Me* was the most positive. *Someone Without Tattoos* was the most positive OTHER element for all RGT subgroups, with the exception of *Someone With Tattoos* for the **Impulsive** subgroup. Mean ratings for elements for RGT subgroups are shown in Table 6.8 with standard deviations in parentheses beneath.

The majority of RGT subgroups rated *Self Before Tattoo* as the least positive SELF element. The exception was *Self Now If No Tattoo* for the **Wanted for a Long Time** subgroup. For the OTHER elements, *Someone I Don't Like The Look Of* was

rated as the least positive by four out of the six RGT subgroups. The exceptions were the **Aesthetics** (*Someone Who Conforms*) and **Belonging** (*Someone Who Rebels*) subgroups. As can be seen from Table 6.8, the **Rite of Passage** subgroup rated *Someone Who Rebels* almost equally negatively to *Someone I Don't Like The Look Of*.

For the RDT subgroups, *Ideal Self* was the most positive SELF element for all subgroups, as shown in Table 6.9. Of the OTHER elements, *Someone Without Tattoos* was again the most positive element for most subgroups, the exception being *Someone With Tattoos* for the **Remembrance** subgroup. For the RDT subgroups, *Self Before Tattoo* was the most negatively rated SELF element. *Someone I Don't Like The Look Of* was the least positive OTHER element for three of the five RDT subgroups. The **Personal Symbol** subgroup saw *Someone Who Rebels* as the least positive, while the **Aesthetics** subgroup rated *Someone Who Conforms* as the least positive OTHER element. Again, mean ratings for elements are shown with standard deviations in brackets beneath.

As noted in Section 6.6.1, when examining the participants overall, *Self Before Tattoo* was rated more negatively than *Someone Without Tattoos* as well as *Someone With Tattoos*. When the results were examined by reason subgroups the results were not so straight forward. In the RGT subgroups, *Self Before Tattoo* was rated more negatively than various OTHERS in every subgroup. However, *Someone Who Conforms* was rated more negatively than *Self Before Tattoo* by every RGT subgroup, as was *Someone I Don't Like The Look Of*. *Someone Who Rebels* was rated more negatively than *Self Before Tattoo* by the **Belonging**, **Rite of Passage**, **Aesthetics** and **Wanted for a Long Time** RGT subgroups, and *Someone With Tattoos* was also rated more negatively than *Self Before Tattoo* by the **Aesthetic** and **Wanted for a Long**

Time subgroups. Lastly, the **Wanted for a Long Time** RGT subgroup rated *Self Now If No Tattoo* as slightly more negative than *Self Before Tattoo*.

The ratings given to *Self Before Tattoo* compared with OTHER elements differed between RDT subgroups. For example, *Someone Who Rebels* and *Someone I Don't Like The Look Of* were both rated more negatively than *Self Before Tattoo* by all RDT reason subgroups. *Someone Who Conforms* was rated more negatively than *Self Before Tattoo* by all but the **Belonging** subgroup and *Self Before Tattoo* was rated more negatively than *Someone With Tattoos* by the **Personal Symbol** subgroup. Finally, *Self Before Tattoo* was rated more positively than all OTHER elements by the **Philosophy** subgroup.

Table 6.8

Average element ratings broken down by RGT subgroups (with standard deviations)

Reasons for getting tattoo subgroups	SELVES						OTHERS					
	Self	Ideal Self	Future Self	Self As I'd Like Others To See Me	Self As Seen by Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of
Remembrance N = 12	2.09 (.88)	1.35 (.60)	1.74 (.85)	1.60 (.73)	2.10 (1.04)	2.63 (1.18)	2.19 (.90)	2.07 (1.08)	2.61 (1.10)	2.66 (1.14)	2.39 (1.16)	3.10 (1.31)
Belonging N = 9	1.89 (.82)	1.31 (.52)	1.46 (.70)	1.27 (.47)	1.85 (.78)	2.41 (1.25)	1.83 (.80)	1.88 (1.21)	2.07 (1.02)	2.63 (1.32)	3.15 (1.39)	2.98 (1.39)
Rite of Passage N = 8	1.95 (.81)	1.16 (.42)	1.38 (.57)	1.31 (.53)	1.95 (1.03)	2.53 (1.10)	2.07 (.85)	2.13 (1.09)	2.28 (1.12)	2.85 (1.21)	3.20 (1.22)	3.21 (1.17)
Impulsive N = 8	2.22 (1.08)	1.49 (.73)	2.01 (1.16)	1.52 (.71)	2.00 (1.00)	2.44 (1.37)	2.24 (1.18)	2.28 (1.18)	1.82 (.87)	2.76 (1.21)	2.19 (1.17)	3.20 (1.42)
Aesthetics N = 8	1.96 (.92)	1.30 (.60)	1.65 (.86)	1.40 (.69)	1.97 (1.09)	2.27 (1.11)	1.93 (.88)	2.05 (1.14)	2.32 (1.29)	3.29 (1.23)	3.05 (1.31)	2.63 (1.21)
Wanted for a Long Time N = 5	2.17 (.91)	1.52 (.65)	1.73 (.69)	1.72 (.61)	2.22 (.94)	2.30 (1.00)	2.32 (.95)	2.18 (1.11)	2.32 (1.20)	2.75 (1.16)	2.47 (1.30)	3.07 (1.22)

Key: The most positive elements within SELF and OTHER for each subgroup are shown in pink, least positive in blue.

Table 6.9

Average element ratings broken down by RDT subgroups (with standard deviations)

Meaning of the design subgroups	SELVES						OTHERS					
	Self	Ideal Self	Future Self	Self As I'd Like Others To See Me	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of
Aesthetics N = 15	2.07 (.93)	1.34 (.58)	1.78 (.99)	1.46 (.68)	1.96 (1.05)	2.49 (1.19)	2.08 (.93)	2.07 (1.07)	2.20 (1.17)	3.07 (1.19)	2.78 (1.31)	3.01 (1.31)
Philosophy N = 15	1.91 (.78)	1.38 (.58)	1.53 (.66)	1.48 (.58)	1.89 (.86)	2.26 (1.13)	2.09 (.93)	2.28 (1.13)	2.42 (1.14)	2.92 (1.21)	2.52 (1.29)	3.09 (1.17)
Belonging N = 11	2.36 (1.04)	1.40 (.72)	1.68 (.92)	1.55 (.79)	2.29 (1.12)	2.86 (1.26)	2.35 (1.00)	2.07 (1.32)	2.17 (1.13)	2.63 (1.36)	2.89 (1.46)	3.32 (1.40)
Remembrance N = 8	2.01 (.94)	1.26 (.51)	1.57 (.63)	1.39 (.59)	2.08 (.95)	2.30 (1.07)	2.03 (.89)	2.23 (1.13)	1.92 (.89)	2.67 (1.30)	2.63 (1.15)	2.99 (1.20)
Personal Symbol N = 6	1.89 (.74)	1.32 (.55)	1.78 (.88)	1.39 (.52)	1.92 (.73)	2.40 (1.06)	1.85 (.76)	2.13 (1.16)	2.61 (1.04)	2.69 (1.08)	2.89 (1.32)	2.58 (1.24)

Key: The most positive elements within SELF and OTHER for each subgroup are shown in pink, least positive in blue.

6.7.2 Relationship between Midpoints and Reason Subgroups

As explained in Section 6.6.2, midpoints are sometimes regarded as an indication that a particular construct is not meaningful when trying to apply it to a specific element. The number of midpoints given to different elements can be compared for RGT and RDT subgroups. For example, looking at the number of midpoint ratings given to *Self Before Tattoo*, compared with *Self (now)*, may indicate whether participants in certain subgroups find particular constructs more or less meaningful since they have obtained their tattoos. Table 6.10 shows the number of midpoints allocated to each element by members of the various RGT subgroups.

A dependent samples t-test on the number of midpoint ratings given to *Self Before Tattoo* and *Self* by the RGT subgroups, found a significant difference for the **Remembrance** subgroup only, with *Self Before Tattoo* having more midpoint ratings ($t(143) = 3.03, p = .003$). However, these results are not significant when alpha is adjusted for multiple tests.

The **Personal Symbol** ($t(71) = 3.17, p = .002$) and **Remembrance** ($t(95) = 2.57, p = .012$) RDT subgroups showed a significant difference in the number of midpoint ratings given to *Self Before Tattoo* compared with *Self*. While these results are significant at $p = .05$, they are not significant at $p = .001$. Table 6.11 shows the number of midpoints allocated to each element by members of the RDT subgroups.

Table 6.10

Numbers of midpoint ratings by RGT subgroups for grid elements

Reasons for getting tattoo subgroups	SELVES						OTHERS					
	Self	Ideal Self	Future Self	Self As I'd Like Others To See Me	Self As Seen by Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of
Remembrance N = 12	21	9	17	15	31	41	29	25	46	52	33	33
Belonging N = 9	13	3	4	1	17	21	12	15	18	29	27	20
Rite of Passage N = 8	20	2	4	3	12	27	20	18	26	23	29	31
Impulsive N = 8	23	4	13	6	20	14	14	23	20	29	19	21
Aesthetics N = 8	17	1	12	2	16	21	27	22	15	28	26	22
Wanted for a Long Time N = 5	9	5	5	5	22	17	12	10	10	22	13	20

Table 6.11

Numbers of midpoint ratings by RDT subgroups

Meaning of the design subgroups	SELVES						OTHERS					
	Self	Ideal Self	Future Self	Self As I'd Like Others To See Me	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of
Aesthetics N = 15	39	4	21	4	33	40	43	40	35	56	45	41
Philosophy N = 15	29	9	14	8	36	38	32	39	46	63	46	63
Belonging N = 11	25	9	11	18	35	29	28	17	28	32	29	24
Remembrance N = 8	12	3	4	2	17	25	18	20	16	19	27	25
Personal Symbol N = 6	7	3	9	1	7	21	7	11	26	24	14	16

6.7.3 Extreme ratings by Reason Subgroups

Participants in the **Rite of Passage** RGT subgroup rated *Self* as extreme (value of 1 or 5) significantly more often than *Self Before Tattoo* ($t(95) = -2.10, p = .038$). However, when alpha was adjusted to accommodate multiple t-tests, this result was no longer significant. The participants who obtained a tattoo on **Impulse** rated *Self Before Tattoo* with more extreme ratings than *Self* ($t(95) = 2.57, p = .012$). This result is significant at $p = .05$, but not at $p = .001$. No significant results were obtained for any of the RDT subgroups with regard to differences between *Self Before Tattoo* and *Self*.

As noted in Section 6.6.3, it is more informative to split the extreme ratings into ones and fives. When this is done, a significant difference between *Self* and *Self Before Tattoo* was found for the **Remembrance** ($t(143) = -2.14, p = .034$) and **Impulsive** ($t(95) = -2.15, p = .034$) RGT subgroups on fives. However, again adjusting alpha for multiple tests meant that these results were not significant. Examining the data in this way showed that the significant difference in extreme scores demonstrated by the **Rite of Passage** RGT subgroup was driven by the difference in the number of one ratings given to *Self* as opposed to *Self Before Tattoo* ($t(95) = 2.94, p = .004$).

Dividing the extremes into ones and fives shows that there were significant differences between *Self* and *Self Before Tattoo* ratings in the RDT subgroups, when none were found previously. Significant differences on fives were found in the **Belonging** ($t(131) = -2.36, p = .020$), **Philosophy** ($t(179) = -.289, p = .004$) and **Aesthetics** ($t(179) = -2.36, p = .019$) RDT subgroups. However, these results are not significant at $p = .001$. A further significant difference was found in positive (1) ratings for the **Aesthetic** RDT subgroup ($t(179) = 2.14, p = .034$) but again this result was no longer significant after alpha was adjusted.

6.7.4 Conflict attributable to elements by Reason Subgroups

As can be seen in Table 6.12, four of the RGT subgroups (**Remembrance**, **Aesthetics**, **Rite of Passage**, and **Wanted for a Long Time**), had *Ideal Self* as the element with the lowest average conflict, indicating that the participants of those subgroups were using constructs most consistently for that element. The remaining two subgroups (**Belonging** and **Impulsive**) had *Self As I'd Like Others To See Me* as the most consistent element. When examining the elements that contributed the greatest amount of conflict, this was found to be *Someone Who Rebels* for four of the RGT subgroups (**Remembrance**, **Belonging**, **Aesthetics** and **Rite of Passage**), with *Someone I Don't Like The Look Of* contributing the greatest conflict for the remaining subgroups - **Impulsive** and **Wanted for a Long Time**.

Table 6.13 shows the percentage of conflict attributable to each of the elements by the RDT subgroups. *Ideal Self* was viewed most consistently by all but the **Personal Symbol** subgroup. This subgroup had *Self As I'd Like Others To See Me* as the most consistent. When examining the elements causing the most conflict, this was split between *Someone Who Rebels* (**Belonging**, **Philosophy** and **Aesthetics** RDT subgroups) and *Someone I Don't Like The Look Of* (**Personal Symbol** and **Remembrance** RDT subgroups).

Table 6.12

Percentage conflict attributable to each element by RGT subgroups

Reasons for getting tattoo subgroups	SELVES						OTHERS					
	Self	Ideal Self	Future Self	Self As I'd Like Others To See Me	Self As Seen by Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of
Remembrance N = 12	5.91	3.47	5.58	4.71	8.55	10.57	5.55	9.18	11.49	10.53	12.4	12.03
Belonging N = 9	6.8	3.28	5.12	2.9	6.84	8.87	5.9	9.8	10.01	12.36	14.91	13.16
Rite of Passage N = 8	7.45	2.85	2.99	3.61	7.38	11.29	7.26	12.58	7.98	11.75	13.46	11.38
Impulsive N = 8	6.94	3.61	6.55	3.4	6.26	8.19	7.68	11.34	8.44	11.03	11.96	14.61
Aesthetics N = 8	7.58	2.91	6.25	3.65	8.51	9.8	6.01	12.19	10.03	9.71	13.21	10.11
Wanted for a Long Time N = 5	7.96	2.9	5.22	3.4	10	8.86	8.76	8.9	8.26	12.42	10.38	13

Table 6.13

Percentage conflict attributable to each element by RDT subgroups

Meaning of the design subgroups	SELVES						OTHERS					
	Self	Ideal Self	Future Self	Self As I'd Like Others To See Me	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of
Aesthetics N = 15	7.65	3	6.05	3.97	8.04	10.75	6.86	11.47	9.42	10.09	12.55	10.1
Philosophy N = 15	5.97	3.13	4.62	3.32	6.3	9.87	6.92	11.04	10.34	12.61	13.67	12.24
Belonging N = 11	8.24	4.04	5.14	4.7	9.24	8.25	6.39	9.1	10.16	11.56	12.29	10.86
Remembrance N = 8	7.21	2.75	3.29	3.21	8.46	9.95	5.88	10.36	8.45	11.11	14.18	15.14
Personal Symbol N = 6	5.8	3.77	6.53	2.67	7.53	8.07	5.95	12.77	9.4	8.08	13.08	16.28

6.7.5 Movement with Respect to Ideal Self within Reason Subgroups

Change-in-Self was calculated as explained in Section 6.6.5 for each of the RGT and RDT subgroups. The majority of participants in each RGT subgroup moved closer towards *Ideal Self* after having obtaining a tattoo. The **Impulsive** subgroup had 50% of participants move towards *Ideal Self*, one (12.5%) static and three (37.5%) move away. The **Wanted for a Long Time** subgroup was closely split between moving towards and moving away.

To investigate whether there was a significant difference between the distance of *Self Before Tattoo* from *Ideal Self* and the distance of *Self (now)* from *Ideal Self* t-tests were performed for the RGT subgroups. Significant results were found for participants in the **Belonging** ($t(8) = -2.70, p = .027$), **Remembrance** ($t(11) = -.47, p = .001$), **Rite of Passage** ($t(7) = -3.80, p = .007$) and **Aesthetics** ($t(7) = -.48, p = .014$) RGT subgroups. However, it should be noted that multiple t-tests were performed on the RGT subgroups, and these tests were repeated on the RDT subgroups. Only the result for the **Remembrance** RGT subgroup was significant once the alpha level was adjusted to account for the multiple t-tests.

This result could be due to the passage of time, rather than the acquisition of a tattoo, as noted in Section 6.6.5. Again a further t-test was performed to check whether the difference between *Self Now If No Tattoo* and *Ideal Self* was significantly more or less than the difference between *Self (now)* and *Ideal Self*. Significant results were found for the **Remembrance** RGT subgroup ($t(143) = -2.519, p = .013$) and the **Rite of Passage** subgroup ($t(95) = -2.236, p = .028$). However, neither of these results was significant once the multiple t-tests were taken into consideration. For the **Aesthetics** subgroup, the difference was found, but it was not significant.

For the RDT subgroups, the majority of participants moved closer to *Ideal Self*. The **Personal Symbol** subgroup had twice as many participants move towards *Ideal Self* as away. In the **Philosophy** subgroup, three out of 15 participants moved away from *Ideal Self* and three showed no change. However, if we take no change to be “not” moving away, then we have 12 out of 15 participants (80%) not moving away from *Ideal Self*, which is more in line with the other results. When t-tests were performed on the RDT subgroups, significant results were found for all but the **Personal Symbol** subgroup, as shown in Table 6.14. Only the result for the **Aesthetics** subgroup remained significant after the alpha level was adjusted for multiple t-tests.

Table 6.14

t-test results on RDT subgroups for changes in view of self before and after tattoo

RDT subgroup	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Aesthetics	-4.79	14	.000
Philosophy	-3.06	14	.008
Belonging	-3.71	10	.004
Remembrance	-4.25	7	.004
Personal Symbol	-1.94	5	.110

These results were also checked against the differences between *Self* (now) and *Ideal Self* and *Self Now If No Tattoo* and *Ideal Self*. Significant results were found for the **Philosophy** ($t(179) = -3.178, p = .002$) and **Aesthetics** ($t(179) = -2.493, p = .014$) RDT subgroups, demonstrating that for these subgroups Change-in-Self was due in part to the tattoo. Again, once these values are adjusted due to the multiple t-tests, no results were significant.

For the **Belonging** RDT subgroup, the difference between *Self Now If No Tattoo* and *Ideal Self* (1.10) and *Self (now)* and *Ideal Self* was almost identical (1.11). This indicates that Change-in-Self for the **Belonging** subgroup was not related to the tattoo acquisition. Similarly, Change-in-Self for the **Remembrance** subgroup appeared to be due simply to the passage of time, with the relevant differences being equal.

6.7.6 Cognitive Complexity of Elements within Reason Subgroups

The measure of cognitive complexity used was intraclass correlation (Fransella, et al., 2004). When participants' grids were examined together in their RGT subgroups, Table 6.15 shows that the lowest relative values for construct intraclass correlation and the mean of construct root-mean-square correlations were found in the **Wanted for a Long Time** and **Impulsive** subgroups. The subgroup who obtained a tattoo as a **Rite of Passage** had the highest (and therefore most cognitively simple) values, relative to the other subgroups.

Table 6.15

Cognitive complexity of RGT subgroups

RGT subgroup	Construct Intraclass Correlation	Mean of Construct Root-Mean- Square Correlations
Remembrance n = 12	.40	.53
Belonging n = 9	.45	.55
Rite of Passage n = 8	.50	.58
Aesthetics n = 8	.43	.55
Impulsive n = 8	.33	.49
Wanted for a Long Time n = 5	.32	.46

Table 6.16 shows the values for construct intraclass correlation and the mean of construct root-mean-square correlations for the RDT subgroups. The most cognitively simple subgroup (highest values) appeared to be the **Belonging** subgroup. In contrast, the most cognitively complex RDT subgroup was the **Philosophy** subgroup.

Table 6.16

Cognitive complexity of RDT subgroups

RDT subgroup	Construct Intraclass Correlation	Mean of Construct Root-Mean-Square Correlations
Aesthetics n = 15	.41	.53
Philosophy n = 15	.38	.51
Belonging n = 11	.46	.57
Remembrance n = 8	.42	.53
Personal Symbol n = 6	.39	.51

6.7.7 Comparing Grid Elements for Different Subgroups

Absolute differences between *Self* and *Ideal Self* and the remaining elements were calculated for the RGT and RDT subgroups. As shown in Table 6.17 *Someone Who Rebels* was the element with the greatest difference in rating from both *Self* and *Ideal Self* for the **Belonging** RGT subgroup. The next largest differences were between *Someone I Don't Like The Look Of* and both *Self* and *Ideal Self*, followed by *Someone Who Conforms* with both *Self* and *Ideal Self*.

Table 6.17

Absolute Differences in ratings between Self, and Ideal Self, and remaining elements for RGT Belonging subgroup

	Self	Ideal Self
Someone Who Rebels	164	211
Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	156	187
Someone Who Conforms	136	161
Someone Without Tattoos	111	94
Someone With Tattoos	100	99
Self Before Tattoo	76	135
Ideal Self	75	
Future Self	70	35
Self As I'd Like Others To See Me	69	18
Self As Seen By Others	58	77
Self Now If No Tattoo	22	69

In the RGT **Aesthetics** subgroup, the absolute differences between *Self* and *Ideal Self* and *Someone I Don't Like The Look Of* were less than the difference between *Ideal Self* and *Someone Who Rebels*, or *Someone Who Conforms*, as shown in Table 6.18.

Table 6.18

Absolute Differences between Self and Ideal Self and remaining elements for RGT

Aesthetics subgroup

	Self	Ideal Self
Someone Who Conforms	168	211
Someone Who Rebels	147	178
Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	130	145
Someone Without Tattoos	105	104
Someone With Tattoos	97	122
Ideal Self	65	
Self Before Tattoo	64	103
Self As I'd Like Others To See Me	62	19
Self As Seen By Others	53	84
Future Self	46	39
Self Now If No Tattoo	31	72

For the RDT **Aesthetics** subgroup the largest absolute difference was between *Ideal Self* and *Someone Who Conforms*. The difference between *Ideal Self* and *Someone I Don't Like The Look Of* was almost as large. However, as shown in Table 6.19, the difference between *Self* and *Someone I Don't Like The Look Of* was the largest difference between *Self* and any other element. The average difference between elements in this subgroup (excluding differences between *Someone I Don't Like The Look Of* and other elements) was 12.9, while the average difference between *Someone I Don't Like The Look Of* and other elements was 18.43.

Table 6.19

Differences between Self and Ideal Self and remaining elements for RDT Aesthetics subgroup

	Self	Ideal Self
Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	267	323
Someone Who Conforms	258	336
Someone Who Rebels	245	287
Someone Without Tattoos	180	188
Someone With Tattoos	180	208
Self Before Tattoo	135	225
Ideal Self	132	
Self As I'd Like Others To See Me	122	38
Future Self	107	85
Self As Seen By Others	105	139
Self Now If No Tattoo	63	153

6.7.8 Findings: Tattooees' Views of Selves and Others within Reason Subgroups

A number of results were made clearer by splitting the participants into the RGT and RDT subgroups. When examining the positivity of elements, differences between subgroups became apparent. For example, *Ideal Self* was the most positive SELF element for all RGT subgroups except the **Belonging** subgroup, which rated *Self As I'd Like Others To See Me* as the most positive SELF element. When examining the ratings by RDT subgroup, *Ideal Self* was the most positive SELF element for all subgroups. Other differences between subgroups for most and least positive elements were reported.

Conflict attributable to elements was also examined for the RGT and RDT subgroups. *Someone Who Rebels* caused the most conflict in five of the RGT subgroups,

with the remaining two – **Impulsive** and **Wanted for a Long Time** – seeing *Someone I Don't Like The Look Of* as the most conflicting element. The RDT subgroups were split between *Someone Who Rebels* and *Someone I Don't Like The Look Of* both causing conflict in a number of subgroups.

When Change-in-Self was examined, only the **Remembrance** RGT subgroup showed a significant movement towards *Ideal Self*. Likewise, for the RDT subgroups, only the **Aesthetic** subgroup demonstrated a significant movement towards *Ideal Self*.

The **Impulsive** and **Wanted for a Long Time** RGT subgroups showed high cognitive complexity, while the **Rite of Passage** subgroup showed a low value. For the RDT subgroups, the most cognitively simple subgroup was the **Belonging** subgroup. The **Philosophy** subgroup demonstrated high cognitive complexity.

6.7.9 Summary of Findings

Overall, there are a number of results to comment on. Firstly, the use of tattoo-characterisations and opposites were ideas provided by PCT. Addressing the first research question revealed an unexpected split of reasons for tattooing into *motivation* and *meaning* subgroups. These two sets of subgroups inform the first two steps in the proposed theory of tattoo acquisition. A third step, post-tattoo evaluation, may serve as input to the first step on subsequent tattoo decisions, and completed the theory.

A Repertory Grid was used to compare tattooees' views of selves and others. SELF elements were viewed more positively than OTHER elements, apart from *Self Before Tattoo*. This result was seen in a number of different analyses, including the positivity, midpoint and extreme ratings of elements. *Self Before Tattoo* was also found to be the SELF element contributing the most conflict to the grids. It was found that the majority of tattooees felt they were closer to their *Ideal Self* than they were before they had their tattoos.

When the participants were split into RGT and RDT subgroups a number of differences became apparent. *Ideal Self* was the most positive SELF element for all RGT subgroups except the **Belonging** subgroup, and when examining the ratings by RDT subgroup, *Ideal Self* was the most positive SELF element for all subgroups. Examining the conflict attributable to elements for the RGT and RDT subgroups showed a similarity between the **Impulsive** and **Wanted for a Long Time** RGT subgroups. These two subgroups were also similar in their level of cognitive complexity (high).

Chapter 7

Discussion

Written on the skin – the very membrane that separates the self from the world – tattoos are diary entries and protective shields, conversations pieces and countercultural totems, valentines to lovers and memorials to the dead.

Mifflin

7.1 Introduction

This chapter will examine the implications of the results from the current study before noting the methodological benefits of the approach taken in the thesis.

Limitations of this work and suggestions for future research will then be discussed. The chapter closes with a brief conclusion to the thesis. Discussion of the results pertaining to the use of tattoo-characterisations and opposites is included in Section 7.3.1.

7.2 Discussion of results

Sections 7.2.1 to 7.2.3 discuss the results pertaining to the three initial research questions. Section 7.2.4 deals with results that were informative but did not specifically address a research question. This is followed by a discussion of the necessity of Personal Construct Theory and a narrative approach when attempting to understand the tattooing phenomenon.

7.2.1 Research Question 1: Reasons for getting a Tattoo

In attempting to answer Research Question One, the first realisation was that **Identity** was underlying the motivation for getting a tattoo, rather than being simply one of the reasons an individual chose to be tattooed. While some may feel that taking identity to be the underlying impetus for any tattooing experience is presumptuous, the current study is not the only one to propose this view. As mentioned in Section 4.4.4 Grumet (1983, p. 483) believed “*the quest for personal identity is central*” to the motivation for obtaining tattoo.

As discussed in Section 4.2.1, one question concerning identity is whether we discover our self (Berzonsky, 1986) or create it (Waterman, 1984). If our identity/self is something we discover, then tattoos may be used to show on the outside what is present on the inside. If, however, identity is something we create, then it is possible that tattoos

are being utilised in the process of creation – we can effectively change aspects of who we are by obtaining a tattoo. While many researchers have linked tattoo to identity (see, for example, Armstrong & Pace-Murphy, 1997; Edgerton & Dingman, 1963; Giliberto, 2004; Hewitt, 1997; Kosut, 2000; Langellier, 2001; Phelan & Hunt, 1998; Shelton & Peters, 2008), they fail to address this fundamental theme.

In the current study there are examples that may be seen as identity being discovered. These include Participants FF9 “it [the tattoo] doesn't show anything that you don't know already [about yourself]”.and AA54 “tattooing for me is a way of showing my insides on the outside all the time ... sort of an outward showing of my inward feelings and nature”. It may be the case that these participants are using their tattoos to test the reactions of others to their outward displays of who they think they are. For example, Participant FF9 may be testing a hypothesis about what people will say when they see his “Let it Be” tattoo.

Other participants appear to use tattoos to change aspects of identity. Participant GG32 used her tattoo firstly to test her hypothesis about her strength and the ability to do something that frightened her. After that, her tattoo became a reminder that bolstered her psychologically and helped her overcome her other fears, her anxiety:

...near the end of last year, I got diagnosed with depression and anxiety disorder. I had really bad panic attacks, and I couldn't leave the house because I became agoraphobic and had a social phobia. So at that point in time, my friend brought up the tattoo idea again. And I started thinking about it as a way to prove to myself that I was strong enough to do something that was scary and I was afraid of, but something that I really wanted to do. And that way, every time I was faced with something that my mind was saying I couldn't do, I could look at it, or think about it, or touch it and know that I had done something greater and more important than that. And I could go and do it.

In a similar fashion, others employ the physicality of their tattoos to reinforce or denote a psychological boundary. As noted in Section 2.3.1, physical boundaries, such as those created by tattoo, are often simpler and more permanent than psychological boundaries (Leitner, et al., 2000).

Another stance taken in the identity “debate” is the idea of self as object and self as subject (Mead, 1934/1967). “I” versus “me” (James, 1890) if you like. Our self-concept can be seen as our view of our self *as an object* (Rosenberg, 1979). To me, this paralleled the notion that we ARE a body, yet we HAVE a body. So, just as “I” can gaze upon “me”, “I” can similarly choose to mark “my” body.

This body *is* “me”, yet “I” can still manipulate it. If as seems to be the case, identity often underlies the quest for bodily marking, then perhaps our reasons for tattoo are as multidimensional as our view of self. After all, quite apart from the nuances of daily life, most of us have multiple (often fragmented) identities. Just because some choose not to signify these identities with ink doesn’t change the fact that they occur.

7.2.1.1 Motivation and meaning in getting a tattoo. During the course of the analysis it became evident that there was more than one “reason” that could be attributed to the acquisition of a tattoo. Participants had a reason or *motivation* for being tattooed (RGT subgroups), but they also had a reason or *meaning* that was attributed to the design chosen (RDT subgroups). For about one third of the participants, these were the same thing. This finding of discrete reasons for the acquisition and the choice of design has not been widely considered, though noted by Sanders (1988), and Stirn and Hinz (2008). More recently, research into prison tattoos utilised a “tattoo history questionnaire” which examined, in part, “reasons for acquiring the tattoo; the significance of the tattoo; and the time frame during which the first tattoo was considered (whether to acquire a tattoo and what type of design)” (Rozycki Lozano,

Morgan, Murray, & Varghese, 2011, p. 513). These reasons were discussed in detail in Sections 4.4 and 4.5.

Some reasons, such as **Belonging**, were found both as the motivation for acquiring a tattoo, as well as the meaning attributed to the design. A number of psychological theories contributed to our understanding of this need. James (1890) originally said that we have as many selves as groups of which we are a part, an idea echoed by Mair's (1977) *Community of Self*. Obtaining a tattoo that shows membership in a group tests whether it really makes the tattooee feel part of the group. Erikson's (1959) notion that identity experimentation is facilitated by belonging to an out-group is important in the current context, especially when coupled with Gergen's (1993) premise that social comparison can aid in the development of one's identity. Lastly, Kelly's (1991b) commonality and sociality corollaries each contribute to our understanding of individuals who may choose to tattoo for reasons of belonging. Two individuals who construe their experiences similarly may behave similarly (i.e., they may both obtain a tattoo), thus the commonality corollary may provide one explanation of tattooing to aid one's sense of belonging. Alternatively, the sociality corollary would posit that an individual may obtain a tattoo based on his or her understanding of the group's views on tattoos. For example, the individual believes that the group feels strongly that having a tattoo identifies you as a member.

Remembrance was also found to be a motivation for obtaining a tattoo as well as the attribution for the design. Man has an existential need to remember where he has come from (Fromm, 1973), to find a link to other humans. In the (wise) words of Participant RB40 "What's the old saying? If you don't know where you come from you never grow up. Not knowing one's history you remain a child forever". Individuals with Remembrance tattoos may be attempting to test a hypothesis that the tattoo will aid

them in their remembering – of an event, a person, or a heritage. Perhaps others use their tattoos to “do” the remembering for them – the hypothesis being that if they apply a tattoo, what may have been painful memories might be less painful.

Humans in many civilizations for many hundreds of years have used tattoos as a **Rite of passage**. A rite of passage is either a celebration marking the end of a phase in one’s life, or it can be used to reinforce a new role (Erikson, 1982). Either way, it has been argued by van Gennep (1960) that every rite of passage is a psychological transformation of the self. While it has been argued (Myers, 1992) that some individuals who obtain tattoos as a rite of passage need an audience, this was not evident in the current study. None of the eight participants who had tattoos as a rite of passage had people with them when they had their tattoo done, and all of them had tattoos that could be hidden when desired. In fact, some had tattoos in places that could only be seen when they were naked. In western civilisation in the 21st Century, perhaps the act of getting a tattoo is tests an individual’s hypothesis about their tolerance of pain, which is part of many rites of passage.

To summarise, there are at least two types of reasons individuals get a tattoo. The first is the initial motivation, the second the meaning attributed to the design. Identity appears to be an underlying dimension for both these. Subgroups of identity such as **Belonging, Personal Symbol, Philosophy, Remembrance, and Rite of Passage** can be found as reasons that individuals choose to have themselves tattooed. Subgroups such as **Belonging** and **Remembrance** were utilised for both motivation and meaning.

7.2.1.2 Preliminary theory of tattoo acquisition. The two sets of reasons related to getting a tattoo informed the first two steps of the proposed theory of tattoo acquisition. A number of motivating factors play a part in the first step – the decision to get a tattoo. These include whether the potential tattooee was convinced by a peer group member to get a tattoo, whether they knew other people with tattoos, how they felt about tattoos in general, how they felt others such as parents and friends would react to them having a tattoo, the cost, and what they anticipated the pain would be like. The most important factor was their motivating reason, referred to in this thesis as RGT. As discussed previously, these reasons included precipitating events, feeling a connection to another person or group, and wanting to express something about themselves, such as a personal belief. Part of this decision was contemplating whether there was something else they could do that would have the same effect. Many participants felt tattoo was the only way to say what they wanted to say.

The second step involved deciding which design to get to convey the intended meaning. Selection of the design includes choosing what size and colour to make the design, as well as where to put it. In considering placement, participants often chose parts of the body that could be covered if they desired, but could show if they wanted to. Participants reported that many of the designs were chosen because the participant liked the design. Other designs were chosen to represent a particular person (including self), place or event. Some participants chose designs to represent their philosophy of life. These reasons for getting the tattoo were the meaning attributed to the design, designated RDT throughout this thesis.

The third step in the proposed theory is the evaluation of the tattoo once it has been applied. This step involved a personal evaluation of the tattoo process. This included whether the participant was happy with the design, and whether the pain was

bearable. The opinions (wanted or not) and reactions of others were often taken into consideration, although many of the participants expressed the view that they didn't actually care what it meant to other people. Likewise, many participants said they didn't know or didn't care how other people saw them. The results of this step are also used as input or motivational factors when the individual considers obtaining a subsequent tattoo. Each of these steps is an area that could be further researched.

7.2.2 Research Question 2: Tattooees' Views of Selves and Others

In general, participants in the current study saw their various selves as more positive than the others they considered in the repertory grid. The exception was *Self Before Tattoo*, which was often seen more negatively than many of the OTHER elements in the grid. Whether that result was biased due to the nature of the participants is difficult to determine, but the possibility must be considered. *Self Before Tattoo* also had more midpoint ratings, suggesting that the participants found it harder to apply constructs to that SELF element. With respect to extreme ratings of elements, *Ideal Self*, *Future Self* and *Self as I'd like Others to see Me* were rated most positively, while *Someone I Know who Conforms*, *Someone I know who Rebels* and *Someone I Don't Like the Look Of* were all rated most negatively. These results are hardly surprising.

Self Before Tattoo contributed more conflict to the grids than any other SELF element. This would appear to indicate that, in general, the participants were happier with *Self* (now) than before any tattoos, and the participants are more sure of *Self* (now). These benefits appear to remain, even when the passage of time was taken into consideration. Indeed, for the majority of participants, *Self* (now) was seen to be closer to *Ideal Self* (with respect to the constructs investigated) than before the first tattoo had been acquired. Further, when movement with respect to *Ideal Self* was examined, as

explained in Section 6.6.5, almost 80% of participants were found to move towards *Ideal Self*.

7.2.3 Research Question 3: Comparing Selves and Others with Reason Subgroups

Most results obtained in this section were in line with those obtained when examining the participant group as a whole. In addition, due to the number of comparisons carried out, most results that were significant failed to be significant once alpha had been adjusted. This issue is discussed in Section 7.5, but it is possible that having subgroups with more participants may have made these results clearer.

Few results for movement with respect to *Ideal Self* were significant after alpha was adjusted. The movement for the RGT **Remembrance** subgroup remained significant, which may indicate that obtaining the tattoo was a positive step towards *Ideal Self* for those who obtained tattoos as an act of Remembrance. This result was also found for the **Aesthetic** RDT subgroup. It is possible that this is an indication that the participants in this subgroup were happy with the way their tattoos looked, and that in obtaining tattoos that they liked, they were closer to their ideal.

Examining levels of cognitive complexity of the subgroups provided some easily interpretable results. Individuals obtaining tattoos as a **Rite of Passage** (RGT) were found to have low cognitive complexity. Using a tattoo as a rite of passage may be especially important in the 21st Century, when much of society lacks any ritualistic rites of passage. In many cultures adolescence is a time when individuals attempt to work out who they are. Some cultures utilise a rite of passage to signify that the individual has passed from childhood into adulthood, and it is possible that in these cultures the individual is less confused about their status in life. Adding to the confusion are the physical changes that occur. The individual has no control over these, and this process

can create a great deal of uncertainty. There are other times in our lives, for example, when someone is very sick, and they feel their body is out of their control. It is possible that if an individual chooses to get a tattoo when they are feeling betrayed by their body, it may help restore a semblance of order.

Low cognitive complexity was also shown by the subgroup with tattoos designating **Belonging** (RDT). This also seems to be a straight forward result. If you have a tattoo that you attribute to a particular person or group, the decision about the design is simple.

Participants with tattoos representing Life **Philosophy** (RDT) showed higher levels of cognitive complexity. It is possible that these participants were more abstract thinkers, and therefore found it more difficult to find a design that appropriately conveyed their desired message. Lastly, both the **Impulsive** and the **Wanted For a Long Time** RGT subgroups also showed high cognitive complexity. It seems likely that the simplest explanation is two-fold. Firstly, these subgroups have some common underlying dimension. They may be poles of the same construct, and the phenomenon demonstrated here may be an example of slot-rattling (Kelly, 1958). It has been noted that “changes of self-construal of this type, often referred to as slot-rattling, were regarded by Kelly as relatively superficial since they do not necessarily involve any modification in the constructs themselves” (Winter, 1992, p. 58). Secondly, these subgroups have not been sufficiently investigated to uncover what this dimension is, and how it affects the (tattoo) decision-making processes of these participants, but it seems likely that it is a complicated process.

Many tests were found to lose statistical significance once an adjustment was made to alpha to account for the number of tests performed. These remain areas that

could be explored in future studies, as in many cases they made “psychological” sense. It may be the case that if a priori theories were proposed and tested, rather than testing for “everything”, a greater number of significant results would have been found. Under the current circumstances, results that remained significant can be seen as strong results. One example is the significant result for the **Remembrance** RGT subgroup showing that *Self* (now) is closer to *Ideal Self* than *Self Before Tattoo*. This indicates that for those participants obtaining a tattoo for reasons of remembrance, the tattoo appeared to help them become closer to their *Ideal Self*.

Lastly, there were some a priori theories about ratings of elements by particular subgroups. While these theories were not supported, some results were in the same “vein”. For example, members of the RGT **Belonging** subgroup were theorised to see *Self* or *Ideal Self* as similar to *Someone Who Conforms*. Although this was not the case, *Someone Who Rebels* was the element with the greatest difference in rating from both *Self* and *Ideal Self*. This indicates that the **Belonging** subgroup did not want to be seen as rebellious, which could be construed as being similar to wanting to conform.

Another proposed theory was that participants in the **Aesthetics** subgroups would have *Self* or *Ideal Self* furthest away from *Someone I Don’t Like The Look Of*. In the RGT **Aesthetics** subgroup, these distances were large, but shorter than the distance from *Ideal Self* to *Someone Who Rebels*, or *Someone Who Conforms*. It may be the case that participants who obtained tattoos for the Aesthetic value were not worried as much about physical appearance as they were that they not be seen as either rebels or conformists. While the RDT **Aesthetics** subgroup members did not always rate *Someone I Don’t Like The Look Of* more negatively than all others, the rating for this element was more negative than the average rating of all other elements. This suggests

that overall, for these participants at least, physical appearance played a part in how they viewed others.

Subtle differences in the results of analysis of members of the RGT and RDT subgroups indicated that there were individual differences between participants coded into these subgroups. For example, differences were found between the RGT **Belonging** and the RDT **Belonging** subgroup. This implies that dividing the reasons into motivation (RGT) and meaning (RDT) was a sensible way to obtain different information about the participants' tattoos.

7.2.4 Additional Results

As well as answering the Research Questions, the data collection was set up to look for additional information. These topics included whether the participants themselves distinguished between being a person with a tattoo and being a tattooed person, and whether the participants felt that tattooing had an addictive element to it. A further insight gained was the possibility of a link between impulsively getting a tattoo and having wanted to get a tattoo for a long time. These results will now be discussed.

7.2.4.1 Difference between Being a Tattooed Person and a Person with Tattoos. In the current study, participants were asked if they felt they were a tattooed person, or a person with tattoos. The majority (73%) felt they were people with tattoos. Some participants did not answer the question. The remainder (slightly less than 9%) stated they were tattooed people. Participant AA54 felt she was “becoming” a tattooed person:

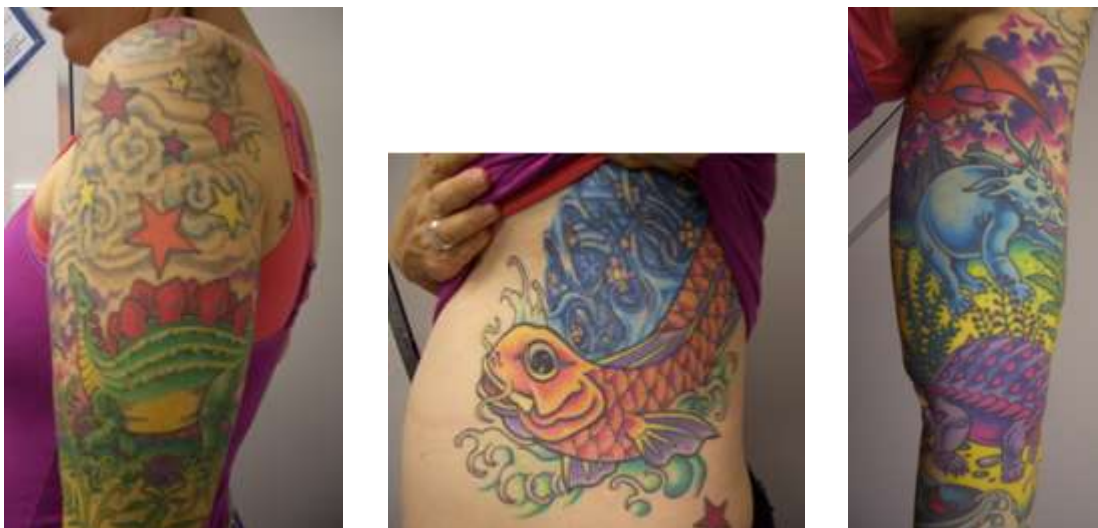
When I got my first one I would definitely have answered that question, person who has a tattoo. But as more and more, I'm becoming I think a tattooed person. Because it is going to become – eventually my hope is to

cover my arms, cover the top of my chest, my back, my legs, pretty much the, all my body you'll see, my feet, my hands, not my face, really, but would be my ultimate, to where I want to take tattooing. So I guess at that point a tattooed person would be more accurate, as it becomes your skin rather than just something on your skin, you know.

I believe the distinction is in the attitude of the wearer, and the commitment made to the “lifestyle”, rather than simply based on the amount of skin that is covered (S. Bell, 1999). This view was stated by Vail (1999) and in fact expressed by Participant AA53:

I would say I'd call myself a tattooed person. I think I've crossed that line. I think I have to live with them in a way that makes me different from a person with tattoos... in a way that a person with one or two or even you know, five smallish tattoos, like when you have lots of full coverage, it's like constant, constant. Summer when I'm not covered up, constant staring, constant people talking to me. I go to get the groceries I'll have five people go...say something. Never nasty, just like, wow you have tattoos! What do I say? Thanks! It's really kind of... tiring. Yeah, so, I think it's definitely a commitment to you living with that every day.

Figure 7.1. Tattoos showing commitment to the “lifestyle”



This acceptance of difference based on being a tattooed person versus having tattoos has also been linked to personality (Stirn & Hinz, 2008). In that study, tattooees felt that their tattoos were integral to their view of self, while individuals who “had” tattoos considered the tattoos as more decorative. This may be related to the idea that tattoo is associated with the commodification of the body thought by some to be prevalent in modern culture (Foster & Hummel, 2000; Orend & Gagne, 2009). It was also found that tattoos were used by individuals to integrate parts of Self - in a similar manner to a narrative - while at the same time giving a sense of control over being an outsider (Cimo, 2004).

7.2.4.2 Addictive Element to Tattooing. In the current study, 30.4% of participants felt that there was something addictive about having a tattoo. This phenomenon has been reported previously in college students (Greif, et al., 1999). It may be that the addictive element becomes a chief motivation behind obtaining a tattoo. If that is the case, addiction would need to be added to any theory of tattoo acquisition. However, before that can happen, it would be necessary to determine to what the tattooees are addicted. It is most likely another example of individual differences and could therefore be difficult to uncover, especially since a number of participants found their “addiction” difficult to verbalise. It should be noted that addiction does not explain why someone would get a tattoo in the first place.

Noting that behaviour can be viewed as an experiment (Kelly, 1970) may be helpful in attempting to understand “addiction” to tattoos. As Kelly (1970, p. 261) noted: “If he does perform the same experiment over and over ... I shall suspect that he is still looking for the answer to a question he knows no better way of asking”. Not only does this explain why someone would originally get a tattoo, but it suggests that our addicts would cease to be tattooed once they find their answers.

7.2.4.3 Link between Getting a Tattoo Impulsively and Wanting a Tattoo for a Long Time. The possibility of a link between **Impulsively** getting a tattoo and having **Wanted** (a tattoo) **For a Long Time** has already been mentioned in this thesis. In the current study there were many participants who had wanted tattoos for a long time then seemingly “suddenly” decided to get a tattoo. The average age of participants in the **Impulsive** subgroup obtaining their first tattoo was just over 28, including two participants over the age of 30 (BF36 and WF46). This appears to fly in the face of the popular view that it is young people who obtain tattoos on impulse. As noted in Chapter Six, the median age of first acquisition for the entire sample was 19 years and the mean was 21.2 years.

This phenomenon of apparent impulsivity with regard to obtaining a tattoo being preceded by years of contemplation has been reported previously in at least one ethnographic study (Sanders, 1988), as well as a psychological one (Kent, 2006). A number of other authors (Armstrong, et al., 2002a, 2002b; Roberti, et al., 2004) have touched on this subject, noting that some tattooees stated that they *just wanted one*.

While it may be the case that their participants were college students and had not put much thought into their tattoos, the commonality of this as a reason would suggest otherwise. In fact, MacCormack (2006, p. 65) stated: “Tattooed interviewees often claim they always knew they wanted tattoos”. In some cases the desire to obtain a tattoo is difficult for the participant to verbalise – a non-verbal construct pole perhaps.

Results did indicate that there may have been more similarity between participants **Wanting** (a tattoo) **For a Long Time** and those obtaining them **Impulsively** than first thought. For example, analysis of the grids indicated that participants coded into those subgroups were the most cognitively complex of any

subgroups of participants in the current study. This result may be indicative of ambivalence around thinking about a tattoo for a long time and then “suddenly” deciding to get one. In addition, members of these subgroups were the only participants not demonstrating a significant movement toward *Ideal Self*. It may be that these participants’ tattoos were not adding to their sense of self since the designs were simply portraying an aspect of self that was already present, and had been for some time.

What I preach to people, when I do motivational tattoos for juveniles and stuff - I just tell them to be smart about being dumb. Yeah it's dumb to get tattoos. But if you're going to do it, go for it, but pick it, wait for that time in your life when you know where you're headed. And don't just do stuff irrationally, like just, do it right, coz they are going to be there for the rest of your life. Pick your artist, pick your design, hang out, wait, coz it might change. I've had heaps of tattoos that I haven't got because life's changed. Just wait for that you know.

Participant RA7

It is likely that the “wanting” without being able to express why is a non-verbal construct, and the “impulsive” decision to get a tattoo was actually triggered by some event. Further research would be necessary to determine whether this is the case. At this point the question of the degree of relatedness between someone wanting a tattoo for a long time and someone “suddenly” deciding to get one remains unanswered. Alternatively, as discussed in Section 4.5.3, this behaviour may be an example of a “faulty” C-P-C Cycle (Kelly, 1991b).

The results obtained demonstrate the utility of the methods used in the current thesis. Not only were the research questions answered, but other information came to light. This included the addictive element of tattooing, and the distinction between being a person with a tattoo and being a tattooed person. Finally, an unexpected result was the link between wanting a tattoo for a long time and seemingly impulsively getting one.

Tattoos create a new surface of the body as text.

(MacCormack, 2006, p. 57)

Further, the results have opened the way for the creation of a theory of tattoo acquisition. When considering a tattoo both motivation and meaning play a part in the decision. Other influences include whether the individual already has a tattoo, and if so, whether they feel compelled to obtain another. Further research needs to be carried out in order to expand the theory to encompass the link between wanting a tattoo for a long time and impulsively deciding to get one.

7.2.5 Broader Issues – the Necessity of PCT and a Narrative Approach

As noted in this thesis, there are two main sets of reasons that an individual considers when getting a tattoo. The first reason involves the decision to get a tattoo, and has been referred to within as the motivation for getting a tattoo (RGT). As discussed in Section 4.6, the behaviour of obtaining a tattoo can be viewed as an experiment, with varying hypotheses. The actual hypothesis depends on which particular motivating factors were influential for each individual.

The second reason involves the choice of design for the tattoo (RDT) and was referred to as the meaning of the tattoo. While it is possible to see this choice as an experiment, the reasoning behind any choice may be quite elaborated (Kelly, 1991b). If the particular design is chosen to represent a core construct (Kelly, 1991b), for example, it may be that a narrative view is also required. Proctor (2009) does an excellent job of explaining this idea. As he states (p. 25) “A construct carries a story and a story communicates one or more constructs”.

The results of the current study point to the participants construing their various *selves* differently. This is in line with the postmodern view of a fragmented sense of self (see Section 4.2.2 for discussion). Although the primary position adopted in the current

thesis is consistent with a postmodern view of self, this stance does not provide a sufficient explanation of individuals who tattoo. This is especially the case when the individual has multiple tattoos that have a consistent theme running through them. A postmodern perspective would see no apparent link between them. Using PCP (Kelly, 1991b) together with a narrative approach can aid in this explanation. Either the tattooee has made multiple attempts to address a particular hypothesis, or they have woven a story that binds their different tattoos together.

Stories are necessary to weave a web of meaning within which we can live.

(Mair, 1989a, p. 277)

Life story is a way of providing identity for the postmodern adult (Giddens, 1991; McAdams, 1996). The process of interlacing narratives forms a coherent view of self. In this view the *person* weaves between these stories, negotiating their different selves (Kosut, 2000). Another way to view this is to see the person as a collection of self-constructs (Kelly, 1991b), some of which may be inferentially incompatible.

Many writers claim that the creation of one's life story begins in adolescence (see, for example, Habermas & Bluck, 2000; McAdams, 1988b). As explained by McAdams, developmental milestones in the life of an individual make adolescence the optimal time for the story-making process to begin. Further, it is believed that psychosocial development in adolescence is concentrated on the resolution of the struggle between identity and role confusion (Erikson, 1959, 1968). Identity formation at this age is argued to be a process of questioning formerly held beliefs and self-images, experimentation with new values and roles, and finally commitment to a new self (Marcia, 1966). Finally, cognitive development at this stage enables the individual to reason and think in abstract terms (Piaget, 1950/2006; Piaget & Inhelder, 1969/2000).

In the process of relating one's life story, autobiographical reasoning is actively employed to create coherence between one's sense of self, and one's participation in remembered events (Habermas & Bluck, 2000). The idea of different "voices" interacting to create a self-narrative (Hermans, et al., 1993) is in line with a postmodern premise of multiple selves. It is believed that the life story enables one to develop self-understanding, and maintain a sense of continuity (Pillemer, 1998). A good illustration of the need for a coherent self-narrative is demonstrated by sufferers of Korsakov's syndrome. As stated by Oliver Sacks (1985, p. 105) "such a patient *must literally make himself (and his world) up every moment*". To maintain one's identity, a continuous inner narrative is essential (Sacks, 1985; Sweetman, 2000).

Tattooing is a way of cutting into nature to create a living, breathing autobiography.

(Mifflin, 1997, p. 178)

For individuals who are somewhat challenged in their literary ability, writing may be problematic. In these situations, it is possible that a tattoo may express what they find it hard to articulate - tattoo is an effective way of "telling" their story. In this instance, tattoo is the writing of an individual's story – tattoo is "the book of my body" (Metzger, 1978/1981, p. 219) the chapters of this book represented by different markings.

It has been suggested that body modification practices are one way to protect the "autonomous" self from the fragmentation of postmodern culture (Sweetman, 2000). In terms of Kelly's (1991b) Choice Corollary, the individual is choosing the alternative which is anticipated to provide extension and definition of his or her system. In addition, a narrative approach means that any view of self can be re-construed (Kelly,

1991b). At any point in time the story we tell about our Self can be re-authored. At any point in time we can choose a different experiment, and test a different hypothesis.

A person's identity is not to be found in behavior, nor – important though this is – in the reactions of others, but in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going.

(Giddens, 1991, p. 54)

Sarbin (2005) sees narratives as anchors to one's identity. Giddens (2000, p. 253) would agree: "autobiography – particularly in the broad sense of an interpretative self-history produced by the individual concerned... is actually at the core of self-identity in modern social life". Further, Pillemer (2001) suggests that momentous events may even redirect the course of one's life. Certainly, at the very least these events are not easily forgotten. As Singer (1995, p. 430) states: "... narrative memories... which are repetitively contemplated over a lifetime, offer a continuity with past experience, a commentary on current concerns, and a template for the possibility and prospects of future action". A number of others espouse the benefits of narrative for developing a sense of self (Botella, Figueras, Herrero, & Pacheco, 1997; Diamond, 1995; Gergen & Gergen, 1993; Gergen & Kaye, 1993; McAdams, 1996).

Therapeutically, narrative has been very successful in various areas. A narrative approach has been used in working with individuals who have suffered trauma (M. L. Crossley, 2000; Sewell & Williams, 2002), as well as with perpetrators of violence (Wetherell & Potter, 1989). Among constructivists, Miller Mair (1988, 1989b) is one advocate for "psychology as storytelling".

The universe is made of stories, not of atoms.

(Rukeyser, 1960/1968, p. 111)

Telling one's story has also been shown to be useful for those suffering from physical illnesses, for example neurological disease (Rhimmon-Kenan, 2002) and cancer (Langellier, 2001). In both these cases, the serious nature of the illness triggered an "identity crisis", and story-telling was one way to address this issue. Most importantly for the current thesis "tattoo also promises a narrative" (Langellier, p. 146).



22

*I am no longer afraid of mirrors....
There is a fine red line across my chest
where a knife entered, but now a branch
winds about the scar... What grows in
me now is vital and does not cause me
harm.... I am no longer ashamed to
make love... Love is a battle I can win. I
have the body of a warrior who does not
kill or wound. On the book of my body, I
have permanently inscribed a tree.*

(Metzger, 1978/1981, p. 219)

For some individuals, having a tattoo is one way to tell their story. Writing on "tattoo narratives", Kosut (2000) believes tattoos may be useful in determining the nature of the relationship between self-identity, the body and society. Oksanen and Turtiainen (2005, p. 112) also employ the term "tattoo narrative", but they use it to describe the way some tattooees use tattoos to plot their lives. These stories may be viewed as maps, with the various tattoo marks acting as reference points for the developing narrative. Sweetman (2000, p. 53) takes this one step further, arguing that tattooing can be interpreted as an attempt to "stabilize one's sense of self-identity ...

²² <http://www.deenametzger.com/poster/poster.html>

through the establishment of a coherent personal narrative”. Tattoos can also be viewed as representations of constructs about the self (Kelly, 1991b).

All the experiences of our lives – the joys and sorrows, our perceptions of life events, the words spoken to us and about us - weave together in a tapestry we call self.

(Hinders, 1994, p. 17)

In investigating body modification practices in men, Gill et al. (2005) found that their participants were more interested in talking about their Selves than their body modifications. Of particular note here is a remark made by Gill et al. (2005, p. 44): “... the presence or absence of tattoos ... on the bodies of our interviewees is far less interesting in sociological and social psychological terms than the justificatory narratives they employed to account for their body modification practices”. It appears narrative is a necessary part of investigating tattooing.

The narrative constructs the identity of the character, what can be called his or her narrative identity, in constructing that of the story told. It is the identity of the story that makes the identity of the character.

(Ricoeur, 1992, pp. 147-148)

A qualitative study of 10 tattooees (Littell, 2003) found that tattoos served a number of functions, one of which was maintaining a sense of Self. Littell further noted that the meanings and functionality of the participants’ tattoos changed as they moved through different stages in their lives. It seems apparent that the narrative of each tattoo would be different during these different stages. This is a perfect example of re-constructing one’s sense of self.

A piece of paper, whatever its reason, can't carry the weight of a body.

(Pineau, 2000, p. 6)

While a re-storying view is consistent with a narrative as well as a constructivist approach (extension of the construct system: Kelly, 1991b), a contrasting idea is that obtaining a tattoo commits the individual to a particular narrative (Sweetman, 2000). In this case, we may be seeing definition of the construct system (Kelly, 1991b). While this may seem less than ideal, for some individuals a permanent “diary” is exactly what they require. A tattoo provides stability in what might seem like an otherwise unstable world. At the same time, the individual remains free to re-story any part of their tattoo narrative whenever they choose.

Another possibility is that having a tattoo changes one’s narrative (Frank, 1995), and allows the individual to re-construct their current life story. For some, for example, touched by illness or tragedy, a disruption to one’s current story may be a welcome change. Broken narratives have been said to be useful in recovery from trauma (Sewell & Williams, 2002). If having a tattoo permits an individual to re-author a tragic life story and set a new one in motion, then that must surely be seen to be a good thing. For personal stories where this has indeed been the case, see *Tree* (Metzger, 1978/1981) and Rhea’s story in *You’re marked* (Langellier, 2001).

7.3 Methodological Comments

A large amount of data was collected during the current study. Decisions had to be made on the method of collection, as well as the analysis. Working through this amount of information meant that different approaches to examining the data had to be utilised. An interview was the first data collection method employed in an effort to

understand the processes that come into effect when an individual considers, and then has, a tattoo. Participants were firstly given the opportunity to talk freely about their tattoos with the aim being for the participants to “self-select” what they felt was most important about their tattoos and their tattoo experiences.

The methods employed in the current study resulted in the reasons for obtaining the tattoos coming from the participants. Most prior studies into reasons for tattoo have used questionnaires, and the reason categories were pre-determined by the researchers. This meant that if the researcher had not thought of a category, it was not included. Using a Grounded Theory approach to add to the theoretically derived categories meant there was less danger of that occurring. The methodology employed in the current study allowed the acknowledgement that one “reason” was insufficient – the reason or *motivation* for obtaining the tattoo as well as the *meaning* attributed to the tattoo design are both necessary. In addition to assuming the motivation for obtaining a tattoo, interpretations of tattoos are often based on the researcher’s opinion of content or placement, without checking what the design means *to the person who is wearing it*.

7.3.1 The Contribution of Personal Construct Theory

An additional benefit/finding in the current study has been examining the usefulness of various techniques to investigate tattooees’ feelings about themselves and their tattoos. Utilising the tattoo-characterisations (Sections 5.8.2.1 and 6.3), the opposites approach (Sections 5.8.2.2 and 6.4), and coding the transcripts gave rise to a simple theory of tattoo acquisition.

Personal Construct Theory (Kelly, 1991b) proposes that each individual has a set of constructs that is utilised in making sense of the world. These constructs are bipolar in nature, and are arranged hierarchically. Integral to understanding another is trying to understand their construct system. Because constructs are bipolar, we use both poles to

define them. One pole can only be understood fully with an idea of what the other (or opposite) pole is. At times individuals may have constructs that were formed before they had language to label them. These constructs are referred to as non-verbal.

Personal Construct Theory (Kelly, 1970, 1991b) also tells us that behaviour can be viewed as an experiment. For a number of tattooees, this perspective is helpful to understand what they might have been attempting when they obtained a tattoo. There are any number of hypotheses that may have been proposed. These include: how will others react to an outward display of some facet of my identity; can I use a tattoo to bolster my sense of self; will a tattoo make me feel more part of a particular group; will a tattoo help me remember a special event or person; and can I take the pain of having a tattoo.

The initial statements of each participant were treated as a tattoo-characterisation (based on the self characterisation of Kelly, 1991b), and, as such, enabled some personal constructs about individuals' tattoos to be revealed. However, this was not as useful as anticipated. As noted in the Results chapter, various themes were found in the answers to the interview questions. Further information was able to be gathered due to the nature of the approach taken – a credulous approach by the researcher meant that participants offered more than just the answers to the interview questions.

Asking for the opposite of each participant's tattoo(s) was more informative. Opposites fell into categories such as not having the tattoo(s) in the first place, having the tattoo(s) removed, having a temporary replacement, such as a bracelet, clothes, or a photograph or picture. Other "opposites" categories included meaningless tattoos, ugly tattoos or an opposite picture. Finally, some felt that they would be different people without their tattoos. One additional benefit of asking for the opposites of tattoos was that the categories gleaned from examining the opposites could be used to verify the

categories coded for the tattoos. Using the opposites approach also reflected the distinction between motivation and meaning when examining the reasons for obtaining a tattoo. This was a unique benefit of using techniques drawn from PCT.

I'm a conversation in a skin bag and I choose that conversation at any one particular time, of who I want to be because I made everything all up anyway.

Participant PF2

Interview data revealed the depth of psychological meaning for some participants, something that would not have been possible with a questionnaire. When asked about the opposite of their tattoos, many of those who were coded **Aesthetic** (for both RGT and RDT) gave answers that were concentrated more on themselves, than on their tattoos. This may seem contradictory, but it should be remembered that participants were coded on a particular tattoo (see Section 5.8.3), whereas the answers they gave to the question about opposites were able to be construed in any way the participant chose, so they did not necessarily answer with respect to that first tattoo. A list was given in Table 6.1, however some examples include: “The opposite would be the same guy, but certainly something else would be enhanced to make sure I got the message across to people, to the citizens.” (RA39) and Participant RA7:

My tattoos represent my freedom and my choice to go for it. I think the opposite to them would be being the living dead, pretty much, being stuck in a shitty job, with a shitty wife, a shitty house, a shitty dog, you know thinking you're getting somewhere and but then you work it out by the time you're 75 that actually none of that meant anything.

Examination of the transcripts of the interviews meant that the reasons individuals obtained tattoos, as well as the meanings they attributed to the designs chosen, were able to be codified. Reasons were further coded into subgroups denoting motivation and meaning for each participant. Techniques from Personal Construct

Theory (Kelly, 1991b) such as the repertory grid gave additional insight that may not have been available otherwise.

7.4 Limitations of the Current Study

There are limitations to any study, and the current one is no exception. In the first instance, participants were self-selected, with the offer of participation initiated via a snowballing technique, so there are obvious limits to the generalisability of results. To begin with, no convicted criminals or self-confessed psychopaths were interviewed, and no scales were administered that may have identified participants as such. Only one participant had what is colloquially referred to as a “tramp stamp” (tattoos on the lower backs of young women, ostensibly “advertising” their loose morals). No participants admitted to blindly following fashion for the sake of it. In a study such as this it is hard to imagine that these individuals would volunteer, even if asked. Since the current study was carried out in eastern urban Australia, it will not necessarily be generalisable to other countries, or even to other parts of Australia. Likewise, the results would be unlikely to apply to those with very strong cultural reasons for tattoo.

Using a semi-structured interview, especially one where the participants were encouraged to talk for as long as they wanted to in the first instance, means that some protocol analysis techniques were not able to be applied. Counting the number of words or phrases, for example, would not have made much sense. Using an interview rather than a questionnaire meant that some questions were not answered in easily decipherable ways.

The tattoo-characterisations were not as useful as first thought. While some constructs were able to be gleaned from the characterisations, on the whole they did not come from the suggested areas, such as first and last sentences. Indeed, there were a number of issues that arose because the tattoo-characterisations were taken from speech.

In hindsight, getting the participants to write about their tattoos would have been preferable. Unfortunately, that may have “scared” a number of them off. (It would also somewhat negate the premise that some participants may not be good at expressing themselves verbally.) A written characterisation would have meant that the text was more considered, and the sentences easier to “find”. Despite this setback, I still believe the pros of qualitative methods far outweigh the cons. I still would not suggest a questionnaire, for example, in order to try to solve this dilemma.

Using the repertory grid also had limitations. Providing one pole of each construct can be argued to be detrimental to meaningfulness to participants. However, it was beneficial because all participants shared one pole of each construct. Giving the participants the opportunity to provide the contrast pole meant that the construct was “theirs”, at least in part.

Using the difference between *Self Before Tattoo* and *Self Now If No Tattoo* or *Self* (now, with tattoos) did not provide as much information as anticipated. The passage of time needed to be considered, as people change over time, despite the introduction (or not) of ink into their skin. Perhaps more weight should have been given to the time since the tattoos were first obtained. Another option would be to have a “control” group, but that would require a tremendous amount of resources, and that may place the study in the realm of marginalising the tattooed participants. It is possible a longitudinal study would be informative. However, one difficulty would be finding participants before they have any tattoos and examining differences in them before and after. Deciding how long before the tattoo was acquired could also prove problematic. If you speak to people who are booking appointments for tattoos, they have (we assume) already made the decision to have one. If you select people at random, the very fact of talking to someone

about possibly having a tattoo may change aspects of their identity, or even change their view on obtaining a tattoo.

One further limitation may have been the coding system. It is possible that the reasons exist in a more complicated hierarchy than that suggested in the current study and acknowledgement of that hierarchical system may have provided even more insight into the processes utilised by tattooees. For example, **Aesthetic** tattoos may be on a different level in the hierarchy to other identity-based tattoos; tattoos **Wanted for a Long Time** may be subsumed by tattoos obtained **Impulsively** or vice versa. This is one area where the coding should possibly have been revised. However, it is possible that this conundrum would require years of further research to fully unravel, so it was decided to simply treat **Impulsive** and **Wanted for a Long Time** as separate subgroups.

7.5 Suggestions for Future Research

While some questions about tattooees have been addressed by the current study, many more remain unanswered. One idea would be to examine the meaning inherent in the *act* of getting a tattoo. One would have to be careful, however, not to corrupt the data by the collection of it.

A follow-up study 10 or 20 years hence could prove informative. If the participants of this study were able to be contacted, it could be valuable to examine whether they went on to get more tattoos and how they felt (in the future) about the tattoos they had at the time of this study. Another idea would be to interview the participants every five years and see how their construal of their tattoos changes (if indeed it does) over time.

The question of **Wanting** a tattoo **For a Long Time** and then “suddenly” deciding to get one could be examined further. It would be necessary to find individuals without tattoos who said they wanted tattoos, interview them, and then wait to see if and

when they actually went and had tattoos, and what it was that prompted their actions. Linked in to this could be research into individuals who “just wanted one” but are unable to express reasons why. Perhaps it is even the case that these individuals are simply attempting to rationalise an impulsive act, not wishing to admit to a foreshortening of the circumspection required in the C-P-C cycle (see Section 4.5.3). However, this would likely necessitate clever non-verbal methods of data collection.

Future research could also examine the claim by Vail (1999) that individuals with one body modification are different from those with multiples. The difficulty there would be deciding which variables to measure. Participants with multiple tattoos could be the subject of a further investigation. Rather than asking why these people keep getting tattoos it may be more informative to ask what stopping having tattoos would mean to them. As suggested previously, it is possible that they were looking for multiple answers to (possibly) multiple questions (Kelly, 1991b).

Those results that almost gained significance, especially where the results failed to reach significance due to the adjustment of alpha made necessary by multiple tests could also be the subject of further research. Some of these results concerned the number of midpoints given to *Self Before Tattoo* compared with *Self*, as well as the number of extreme ratings (value of 1 or 5) given to *Self Before Tattoo* and *Self* for different RGT and RDT subgroups. Change-in-Self was demonstrated to be due partly to the tattoo for a number of groups, but also failed to meet significance once alpha was adjusted.

Elicitation of constructs pertaining to the participants’ tattoos, rather than beginning with construct poles that were based in self-descriptors is another area that could prove fruitful. This method may result in more meaningful constructs about the

participants and their tattoos. Further, it would enable researchers to gain more insight into the meanings of tattoos for those who wear them.

7.6 Conclusion

The original aim of the current study was to investigate from a psychological perspective the reasons why people choose to obtain tattoos. Since tattooing is a human behaviour, albeit an unusual one in western culture, it was necessary to have a theory about general psychological functioning that could place activities such as tattooing in a broader framework. Personal Construct Theory is a theory that fulfils this requirement.

In the main, prior psychological research into tattooing was carried out with a preconception of deviance. As such, most research was carried out with samples from deviant populations, often including inmates, detainees in the armed forces and psychiatric patients. Unfortunately, this meant that conclusions linking tattooing and deviancy were common. The research in the current study was focused on the meanings of tattoos to the individuals who wear them, not on the deviancy or otherwise of the participants. This view was reinforced by the lack of a control group, which is often used as a comparison group (read “normal”) for the so-called “abnormal” tattooed group.

Another concern about prior research was the equating of tattooed individuals with other body modifiers. While tattooing is a form of body modification, it is not always sensible to include tattooees in groups of body modifiers. In addition, there are different parameters around tattoos, such as number of tattoos, content, style, and placement that need to be considered and these parameters are not relevant to all body modifications.

Further, prior research often consisted of questionnaires where assumptions were made about the reasons behind the tattoos. This meant that any reasons not thought of

by the researcher were not necessarily included in the findings. In some cases these questionnaires were filled out by the researcher after a medical examination of the “participant” – or even taken from prison or hospital admission records. The current thesis used the data provided by the participants to create a theory about the reasons for obtaining tattoos.

In addition to providing a theory of human functioning that encompasses tattooing within an assumption of normality, PCT was able to provide a number of methodological benefits for the current study. Firstly, using a credulous approach in the semi-structured interviews meant that the participants were treated as experts on their own tattoos. In addition, the use of a tattoo-characterisation at the beginning of each interview provided information on what each participant saw as the most important aspects of their tattoo.

Utilising the PCT idea of opposites was helpful in complementing the understanding of individuals’ tattoos gained from the interviews. Another point to consider is that while the current study purposely investigated the tattoos of a sample *not* taken from a deviant population, the data collection methods meant that if there was some psychological abnormality it almost certainly would have been revealed. Individual differences were demonstrated, with tattoos obtained for a variety of reasons; participants came from a variety of social backgrounds.

Using semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis revealed that there are often two reasons an individual obtains a tattoo. These are the *motivation* for obtaining a tattoo, and the *meaning* the person attributes to the design of the tattoo. For example, someone might want to get a tattoo to celebrate graduating from university or some other such rite of passage, but the design they choose is their birth sign, which is a personal symbol. Obviously when a person has multiple tattoos, there can be multiples

of multiple reasons for the individual's tattoos overall. In some cases, however, the individual chooses to tattoo for the same reason each time. One explanation would be that the person was attempting to find an answer to a question that wasn't answered with prior tattoos.

In attempting to answer the first research question, a preliminary theory of tattoo acquisition evolved. This theory proposed three basic steps in tattoo acquisition. The first step is the decision whether to get a tattoo. The second step is consideration about the design, such as what to get, and where. The final step is the post-contemplation of the act, which includes reactions of others, as well as personal feelings about the tattoo.

The initial coding of themes demonstrated that these participants were not quite the typical drunk, careless tattooees that are often portrayed, especially by the media. There are many considerations made before obtaining a tattoo, and the decision was not always one made impetuously in one's youth.

The use of repertory grids, another PCT tool, provided information not obtained from the interviews. With the data from the grids it was possible to examine the ways the individual viewed a number of his or her selves, including what they were like before they had tattoos, and how they feel they would be now if they had never had a tattoo. The grid also included the participant's views of others, such as someone who has a physical attribute they don't like, and someone they know who also has tattoos.

From the grids it became evident that for many participants the tattoo(s) helped them move towards their *Ideal Self*. Changes in extreme and midpoint ratings in the grids were also helpful in examining the participants' view of self. Distances between elements demonstrated whether particular elements were viewed as being similar or different. Examination of the grid data also gave indications of conflict in some

participants. Lastly, the results of the cognitive complexity analysis supported the idea that getting a tattoo on impulse was often the result of wanting to have a tattoo for a long time first.

Contrary to popular belief, people with many tattoos do think carefully about what they are doing. Participants talked about how they take care of their tattoos, and many mentioned being cognisant of the permanency of putting ink into your skin. Some people use their skin as a diary: they mark significant events in their lives; and they use tattoos to remember people, including aspects of self. Others use ink as a demonstration of their commitment to their belief system. For many, it appears that there is some kind of primeval urge to mark oneself which cannot be explained in words; marking oneself is something intense and private, yet it is also a shared participation in an event that has spanned most of human history.

From talking to these individuals, I feel I have gained a great deal more than I could ever hope to express in the short space of this thesis. While writing up I have gained another tattoo, and this is partly due to the influence of my participants. Many of them expressed the idea that you should "earn" your tattoo, and as I had obtained my first one with the aid of numbing cream, I was determined to get one without it. I gave some thought as to the placement, as well as the actual design, again mostly courtesy of my participants. As I noted previously, at the beginning of this research, my experience with the topic was virtually non-existent. Now I can say I have been privileged to experience the trust, warmth and insight of over 50 individuals who told me their stories. I was able to talk to bikers, sailors, and sky divers, as well as students, businessmen, parents and grandparents. These participants shared with me their knowledge of Japanese traditions, Celtic beliefs (such as Samhain), and other cultural heritages different to my own. They taught me about cartoonists, and bands, and Dr Seuss and 1% biker groups. They shared their secrets with me. Some of them showed me areas of their bodies they probably wouldn't do in a "normal" situation. I understand that heavily tattooed people are simply people, and that they don't appreciate it when someone walks up and touches them without asking. People with tattoos have their own reasons for marking their skins, and it is asinine of anyone to judge them for it, especially without having heard the reasons why. My participants were thoughtful, contemplative, and generous. I only hope that I have gone some way towards doing their efforts justice. I have learned so much from the entire experience, so to my participants I say "thank you".

In short, the most important message from the current thesis is this: tattooees have elaborate accounts of how and why they get tattoos. Individuals each have their own reasons for having ink put into their skins, and we should strive to consider this possibility before we make a judgement about anyone with a tattoo.

Any tattoo may be highlighting a particular view of self that the individual wishes to emphasise. So, while I am a wife, a mother, a grandmother, a student, a teacher, a counsellor, a runner, a swimmer and a pianist, to name but a few, either of my tattoos could be chosen to represent any or all of these. A tattoo can show allegiance, remembrance, life beliefs, or personal details. It could be in a place where it is seen all the time, or in a place where it is only seen when the wearer is naked, depending on the idiosyncratic purpose of the tattoo. Being tattooed is often the expression of one (or several) of an individual's fragmented selves, and telling a story about the tattoo(s) can enable the individual to weave these selves into a coherent whole.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Flyer

DO YOU HAVE A TATTOO???

Would you be willing to spend an hour or so
talking about it?



If you'd be interested in participating in
research into tattoos conducted by the
University of Wollongong, please
contact:

Desley Hennessy

Email: dh37@uow.edu.au

Phone: 4221 4491 (w)
0412 123 293 (m)



Appendix B

Self-Image Profile (Adult) Items

Kind	Good listener
Creative	Reliable
Fun	Sensitive
Active	Helpful
Loyal	Thin/slim
Happy	Intelligent
Optimistic	Easy going
Caring	Determined
Sociable	Fit
Organised	Trustworthy
Confident	Hard working
Thoughtful	Friendly
Sense of humour	Outgoing
Patient	Honest
Generous	Enthusiastic

Appendix C

Repertory Grid

Happy													
Patient													
Caring													
Kind													
Sense of humour													
Sociable													
Friendly													
Active													
Confident													
Organised													
Hard working													
Honest													

Appendix D

Information Sheet

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

Department of Psychology

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

A PSYCHOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION INTO THE MEANINGS OF TATTOOS

Desley Hennessy

Supervisor: Assoc. Professor Beverly Walker

This research aims to examine people's reasons for obtaining tattoos. An attempt will be made to understand whether the reasons that prompt this behaviour are similar for most people getting tattoos, or whether the reasons vary. Previous research into tattoos has concentrated on the sociological and historical aspects, so this research will concentrate on the individual's point of view. Throughout history people have had tattoos to protect them from evil, and to celebrate various important phases of their lives. Psychological research into the meanings of tattoos may indicate that these reasons are still valid for the individual, and that, for some people, tattoos are a positive influence in their lives.

Participants will be asked to talk about their experience of getting a tattoo, in particular, why they wanted the tattoo, what it means to them and how they feel about it now. Participants will be asked for permission to photograph their tattoos. This is entirely voluntary. The interview process should take approximately 60 minutes.

Participants are welcome to direct any questions about the research and/or the procedures to be used to the researcher or her supervisor. It is possible that participants may experience some degree of distress when talking about the meanings they attach to their tattoos. While this is not expected, it is entirely understandable, and, if necessary, the interview will be immediately terminated. The participant will be referred to counselling services within the University if required. Participants are free to refuse to participate or, having consented, to withdraw their consent without the refusal or withdrawal having any adverse affects whatsoever.

The interviews will be taped and then transcribed. The transcriptions will be stored in a locked room at the University of Wollongong. Transcripts will be anonymous but will have a code number allocated to them. This number may be used when quoting, for example, "participant number 10 stated ...". Confidentiality will be maintained, as no record of participant's name, address or other details will be kept. Some tattoos may be photographed, with the participant's consent, but no identifying features of the participant (e.g., their face) will be included in the photograph.

If participants have any enquiries about the research, they can contact Desley Hennessy on 4221 4491 or Beverly Walker on 4221 3653. If participants have any concerns or complaints regarding the way the research is or has been conducted, they may contact the Complaints Officer, Human Research Ethics Committee, Office of Research, University of Wollongong on 42214457.

Appendix E

Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

Department of Psychology

CONSENT FORM

A PSYCHOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION INTO THE MEANINGS OF TATTOOS

Desley Hennessy

Supervisor: Assoc. Professor Beverly Walker

I have been given information about A Psychological Investigation into the Meanings of Tattoos and discussed the research project with Desley Hennessy who is conducting this research as part of a Doctor of Philosophy supervised by Beverly Walker in the department of Psychology at the University of Wollongong.

I understand that, if I consent to participate in this project I will be asked to talk about the tattoo(s) that I have had, including any I have had removed.

I have been advised of the potential risks and burdens associated with this research, and have had an opportunity to ask Desley Hennessy any questions I may have about the research and my participation.

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary, I am free to refuse to participate and I am free to withdraw from the research at any time. My refusal to participate or withdrawal of consent will not affect my relationship with the Department of Psychology or my relationship with the University of Wollongong.

If I have any enquiries about the research, I can contact Desley Hennessy on 4221 4491 or Beverly Walker on 4221 3653 or if I have any concerns or complaints regarding the way the research is or has been conducted I can contact the Complaints Officer, Human Research Ethics Committee, Office of Research, University of Wollongong on 42214457.

By signing below I am indicating my consent to participate in the research entitled: A Psychological Investigation into the Meanings of Tattoos, conducted by Desley Hennessy as it has been described to me in the information sheet and in discussion with Desley. I understand that the data collected from my participation will be used for a PhD thesis and possibly publication in a journal, and I consent for it to be used in that manner.

.....
Signed

...../...../.....
Date

.....
Name (please print)

Appendix F

Full coding for participants

Explanation of codes

Code	Name
1	Belongingness/association
2	Personal Symbol
3	Philosophy/religion/faith
4	Psychological growth
5	Remembrance/rootedness
6	Rite of passage
7	Impulsiveness/drunken
8	Rebellion
9	Aesthetics
10	Wanted for a long time
11	Toughness (personal, not impression)
12	Permanence
13	Uniqueness (more to me than you think)
14	Peak experience
15	Insides on the outside
16	Accomplishment/pride in self
17	"in your face" (can't explain feeling - don't care what others think)
18	Life story, signifies that part of my life
19	Balance
22	Tattoo is the only way to say this
25	Pre-verbal
30	Addictive
32	Pain
33	A tattoo more important (code '2' for THAT tattoo)
36	Tattooed person: 0 no (ie person with a tattoo), 1 yes, 2 neither, 3 both, 4 becoming one, 9 no answer

Note: Codes with less than three participants have been removed due to page size limitations.

Codes for participants

Participant	RGT	RDT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	22	25	30	32	33	36
RB1	5	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1												0
PF2	6	3	1	1	1	1	1	1		1		1		1				1									0
BB3	1	1	1				1	1		1		1															0
DA4	7	9	1	1		1		1	1	1	1	1		1	1			1						1			0
BB5	1	1	1				1				1			1			1										0
PF6	6	3		1	1	1	1	1		1				1					1					1	1		0
RA7	5	9	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1		1		1		1	1	1		1		1			2
FF9	3	3		1	1	1	1		1	1	1			1				1	1			1					1
FF10	3	3	1	1	1		1	1				1		1	1							1					0
DS11	7	2		1			1		1			1															0
PA12	6	9	1	1			1	1	1	1	1	1															0
RF13	5	3		1	1	1	1	1			1	1		1	1												0
DA14	7	9		1		1		1	1	1	1		1	1	1			1			1				1		0
BR15	1	5	1	1			1		1					1													0
AA16	9	9	1	1			1				1									1							0
BB17	1	1	1								1			1	1							1					0
RF20	5	3		1	1		1				1	1		1					1					1	1		3
BB21	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1						1												0
RF22	5	2		1	1	1	1	1			1			1		1			1	1		1			1		2
AA23	9	9	1								1	1												1			2
PB24	6	1	1	1		1		1			1			1	1												0

Participant	RGT	RDT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	22	25	30	32	33	36
DA25	7	9	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1		1	1											0
WR26	2	5	1	1			1				1	1		1	1												0
DS27	7	2		1			1	1	1		1			1	1					1				1			0
WF28	2	3		1	1			1				1		1													0
RR29	5	5		1			1	1		1	1	1	1		1												0
RS30	5	2		1	1		1				1			1	1			1						1	1	1	0
PS31	6	2		1		1		1		1		1		1	1			1					1			1	9
GG32	4	4	1	1		1				1	1	1	1	1	1		1							1		1	0
PS33	6	2	1	1			1	1		1				1						1						2	0
AA35	9	9									1			1	1												0
BF36	1	3	1	1	1			1			1	1	1	1	1			1									0
WF37	2	3	1	1	1		1				1	1		1					1						1		3
RR38	5	5		1			1				1				1									1			0
RA39	2	9	1	1	1		1				1			1	1				1		1						0
RB40	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1			1	1			0
RB41	5	1	1	1	1		1				1			1		1								1			0
PF42	6	3		1	1	1	1	1						1						1	1			1			0
AA43	9	9	1	1			1	1			1	1								1							1
PF44	6	3		1	1			1			1	1			1		1		1	1				1			0
DF45	7	3		1	1			1	1		1	1		1	1									1			0
WF46	2	3		1	1						1	1			1			1	1								0
TF47	8	3			1		1			1				1									1				0
DA48	7	9							1		1				1												9

Participant	RGT	RDT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	22	25	30	32	33	36
AA49	9	9									1			1										1			9
BB50	6	2	1	1				1	1																		0
BR51	1	5	1	1			1		1		1	1		1									1				1
TR52	8	5		1	1		1		1	1	1	1					1										0
AA53	9	9					1				1	1		1	1	1			1								1
AA54	9	9		1	1		1				1			1	1		1				1						4
AA55	9	9									1			1	1		1							1			3
FR56	3	5		1	1		1	1			1		1	1	1				1	1					1		0
DB57	7	1	1	1					1		1			1							1						0
RB58	5	1	1	1	1		1							1	1				1					1			1
WR59	2	5		1	1	1	1	1			1	1		1									1				0
BS60	1	2	1	1	1						1									1							0

Appendix G

Tattoo-characterisations

Participants with Aesthetics as the Reason for Getting a Tattoo and as the Reason for the Design of the Tattoo

AA16: I've just had a lot of work done here, I'm still halfway through it now. I've just finished the top half of my arm. Basically what I'm doing is something that represents everything that's happened in my life so far and things that are going on and stuff like that and I'd say the rest will be the same.

AA23: Well I got me first tattoo when I was about 17, in Wollongong, just around the corner from the town Cinemas, where the cab rank is, upstairs. I was underage, but I looked overage. And I was working at the time, yeah, in the transport industry. Like I was a young bloke working in trucks. My dad had trucks. I just wanted to get a tattoo. And when I went to the tattooist, well he's still doing tattoos today. He went over to the U.K. for a few years and then he came back. He's still one of the well known, you could say highly regarded tattooists around here, Dave Rand. I got my first one when I was 17 and now I am 41. I have added the children's names as I've, you know, got married and I didn't get my wife's name in there. She wouldn't let me. But I do have the children's name on one arm and the other one on the other arm. Yeah, well when I went to the tattoos, he said, if you've never had tattoos, before, you know, that's a fairly big tattoo for the first go, which was the panther and the girl right there on the right hand arm - just the panther and the girl.

AA35: Yeah. I don't know. I've been trying to think of why I got it. I don't really have a very good reason. Mostly for something decorative, I'd say. I don't really have a better reason than that. I have two in the same place. I didn't like the first one. That's probably because I didn't really think about it that much before I got it as you can probably tell. I've since had it covered with another one, just a really plain shape. I don't regret having it, I really like having it. And it's served its purpose because it is decorative and except for focus that is what I wanted. It's got no real, deeper psychological meaning or anything like that.

AA43: I got me first tattoo when I was 17. Always liked tattoos and just started getting them. But I should have went big first, instead of getting little tiny ones here there and everywhere. That's why a lot of me tattoos are now covered up, me original ones. They're just getting bigger and better and costing me more money. But other than that I just like tattoos. Have done for 30 years.

AA49: I've got 7 tattoos just on various parts of my body, mainly chest and back. I got those between the ages of about 17 and 22. Pretty much... No real motivation for getting them, I just, I liked the designs at the time and I'd seen them in magazines, yeah, I liked the general idea of them.

AA53: I first got a little tiny tattoo when I was 18. I'd wanted to get a tattoo probably pretty much from since I was aware of them. My dad has a tattoo. Well he has lots now but he had one when I was growing up. I'm glad that I waited now, because I really would have gotten something awful if I had got one when I was 15 when I first wanted it. Yeah so I got one and then I got...earlier I didn't get anything with a meaning

or anything. I just got something. I got a little star. I like stars and now I've got over a 100 stars! And I got more little small ones, just bits and pieces and..but none of them are really..they are all flash, pictures I had drawn, nothing really, no custom jobs or anything. And then when I started going to this Lesbian strip club, which is called Girlesque, which is like not like a normal strip club. It is like performance art kind of thing. And heaps of the girls who performed there had these beautiful tattoos and I kind of became friends with two of the girls there and they were telling me about their tattoo artist whose name was Megan. And my girlfriend at the time went and got a custom job, like on her arm. She got a half sleeve in a day. Which was like...Well not a full half sleeve. It's just on the outside not the inside. But she did nine hours in one sitting.

AA54: Ok. Give me a minute. Errrrmm. Got ,my first tattoo when I was 19. And there was a gap of a few years um, and then I just started to get really interested in them more and more so I was not just having one or two tattoos but actually being tattooed in a more complete sense. So I sort of found an artist that I really clicked with and got a long with. I was with a guy at the time that also really liked tattoos and didn't have any. Really liked this artist. So we sort of ended up visiting him all the time and getting more and more work done. Every time we'd go on birthdays and just go to go and get tattooed and started on a roll. We got a lot in a short amount of time. And since I have broken up with that guy I haven't actually been back to have any. Which is a shame and I'm really meaning to getting round to going back and getting more. It's slowed down to a stop. But um, yeah. Um..... what do you want to know?

AA55: Um, oh well, I've got three. I got my first one when I was sixteen. It's now been sort of done over like with another one. It was going to be four, but now it's

sort of gone into one large one. Ermm... Yeah I love'em, and going to get more. And..yeah. I just like the art work really. So...

Participants with Belonging as the Reason for Getting a Tattoo and as the Reason for the Design of the Tattoo

BB3: It's the letter B and it's just on my bikini line. I've always had the desire to have a tattoo but never really... I've got a religious upbringing so tattoos were unhealthy to the body, to the skin so it was never a really good practice to partake in tattooing but I kind of fell out of being a full-on follower of my parent's religion so I kind of went a little bit wayward so the letter B signifies the initial of my ex-husband. so he's an ex now but obviously we were together, just due to be married so as a commitment we each got the letters of each other done in the same sort of area. So I kind of regret that decision now. one because it's not kind of something that I've been brought up to do and two because I'm now separated due to be divorced so I have to actually go through the process of thinking of altering that letter B because it's not appropriate any more so I'm just trying to come up with a few ideas of how to change it. I probably won't eliminate it because I like tattoos. I'm sort of almost thinking of getting another one. I don't altogether regret it, I kind of like it.

BB5: Yeah sure. I've got 10 of them. I got the first one when I was 19 when I first joined the Navy and that one was all about fitting in with what everybody else in the Navy did, it was like a membership badge I guess. So not a whole lot of thought went behind it, I just found one that grabbed the eye and pointed to the wall and said "that one" and then I didn't get any more for a couple of years but then I met up with a group of friends also in the Navy that had them and were interested in getting more. It

was like yep and so I got suckered in and quite literally they get under your skin. So I went off and got more and more and more and it's probably only the last two of them that I really put thought into because I knew that I would not do it forever. Umm and actually designed one of them and picked out another one for a specific reason, but all the others were just I liked them and just even the positioning of where I got them there was no real thought processes as to this part of the body for this reason. It was just this part of the body as long as it can go under my uniform. I've got some on my ankles but I didn't ever want to get them where it was going to be confronting to somebody else. I'm not embarrassed by them, but some people are uncomfortable with them.

BB17: Well, um, I had sort of thought about it for a long time. My birth mum, coz I'm adopted, she has a tattoo for each one of her kids and ah, there's three of us. I have a tattoo from her first relationship with my dad Chris, it's a phoenix coming out of flames as in a new beginning, and that's me, that's her symbolism of me. And um, it's also, she's got wings on her back and it's St Victoria, which is my name and I've got two wings on my back with Jude in the middle, St Jude

BB21: Okay, well, yeah, I've got two tattoos. The first one is just Australia, just the letters written, which is on my forearm. This was done when I was in the army. Umm, it was just like my little patriotic gesture. Umm, its very traditional for people in the army to get their blood type but because I always knew I was only going to be in the army for four years, I decided to get my country instead. So yeah, so that was the first one. Umm, I then got this arm-type band which says "life". Some people think it says "Loof" but it says life. Umm, and I got that in about, oh, probably about six years ago,

so about the year 2000 and I got that because I was going through a funny stage in my life so it was a bit of a mark of the stage I was in. So that's basically all I've got.

BB50: Oh, ok, well... what can I say? I've got two tattoos. One of Mickey Mouse, that's there, that I got cause I had everything Mickey Mouse and this and that and I just like Mickey Mouse, as far as that one goes. And this one, I got that bit with a friend of mine years and years and years ago like some silly little thing and then I got the rest of it done. But, the dude wasn't obviously supposed to draw a circle there cause I had a different picture. I wish I never got it done and I'd probably get it taken off if I could. But yeah, that's pretty much it...

Participant with Belonging as the Reason for Getting a Tattoo and a Personal Symbol as the Reason for the Design of the Tattoo

BS60: I've got more than one tattoo, I've got several tattoos. At the time, my close friends joined the navy, and tattooing was just a part of the dress if you like for navy people, they've all got tattoos. And at the same time probably I was a bit of a, for want of a better word, a juvenile delinquent and that was part of the dress too, if you like. In other words, people who mixed in those sort of crowds had tattoos. And at the same time a friend of mine was sort of a well not a private detective. I don't know what you call him these days. But we worked for him, doing like minding, you know, houses, like there were a few ratbags running around the Roselands area. So if people are going away or there's a party on and people were worried about getting gatecrashers.

Participant with Belonging as the Reason for Getting a Tattoo and Philosophy as the Reason for the Design of the Tattoo

BF36: Basically, January this year I went to Bali with my sister. For a while I'd been thinking about getting one. I always said I would get one if I could work out a place to put it, where it wouldn't go feral when I get older and bigger. I didn't want to get it on a difficult spot where it would stretch or...because there are places where it would look good, but once you have a baby or I don't know that sort of stuff. So if I could figure out a spot then I would start figuring out what I would get. While I was in Belgium about 5 years ago, I thought I would get the Southern Cross done on my foot, and then there wasn't anybody over there that would do it on my foot, for a first tattoo. Then when I came back, I sort of moved off the Southern Cross idea and went onto Taurus Bull, like coz I'm Taurus and stuff and I thought the bull'd be pretty cool. But I was on the plane with my sister and we were just talking about what we'd get. She really wanted one. She's like 4 and a half years younger than me. So she's only just turned 18. She's yeah, in the rebellious stage. She's like "lets get tattoos in Bali". And mum had warned us and she was like, "If you're going to do it, go somewhere clean." She was worried. But it took us ages to work out what we were going to get. It was just coincidental that the hotel we were staying at had a tattoo parlour across the road. So we both thought that that was a bit of a sign, coz we had no idea, we hadn't even looked up the hotel at all, it was just that was what was given to us. So on our first night there we went across the road and had a chat to the guy and had a flick through his books and stuff. And he was talking about what do you want and he had a picture of a turtle and the turtle was really nice. But I have a thing with frogs. I have always liked frogs, so we asked him what sort of frogs he had. And somewhere along the line we decided we'd get the same thing. I can't really remember whether it was on the day we arrived, or

when. But basically Dani, my sister, thought she remembered something about frogs on our family shield. You know how in England every family has a, is it a shield? it's something. But she said something about there being a frog on that. So we sent an e-mail home to ask mum and dad. Mum wrote back, "I have no idea what this is about, but dad doesn't know anything about frogs on the family shield." And then Dani thought she also remembered something about frogs being a totem for being able to adapt to change really well. Like resilience and living in habitats where others can't live and I thought that was a pretty cool sort of totem. So we spoke to the artist and asked him if he could design us a tribal sort of design of a frog. He worked on it over the course of a week. We went and saw him about three times. He did a few different sort of ones, one that was a more Maori type design, one that was more like an African one and in the end we asked him to do a bit of a blend and he put his own artistic flavour to it. So it's sort of like a tribal design. Yeah it's this awesome frog and we got the same one, on the same foot on the same spot. So it's sort of cool that me and my sister have that. Yeah. that's all I can think of at the moment.

Participants with Belonging as the Reason for Getting a Tattoo and Remembrance as the Reason for the Design of the Tattoo

BR15: You've seen it, it's very small obviously. I got it when I was in year 11, half way through year 11 I moved down the coast, down here, from Sydney and myself and two of my girlfriends got exactly the same one. We jugged school one day and went and got a tattoo before I left. And that's it and it's a fish because we went to an all-girls' school in Sydney and stuff together, a Christian fish. It was meant to be like a representation of the fish and Christianity and that sort of thing.

BR51: First tattoo I got, I always wanted to get tattoos. I don't know why, I just always liked them. The first one I got, the group house I lived in, all the guys had, were into wrestling, WWF, I was into it as well, so everyone got the same wrestling tattoo on their leg. Second one I got was, me and my best mate, we just got the same tattoo done, on my other leg. After that, had a big one on my back. It's a big bulls head. I liked it so I got it done. The ones on my arms are original work. I was thinking I didn't want to get anymore except for original stuff. So, so yeah, I've got, a bloke in Adelaide drew me couple of pictures and I got them on my arms. Probably I started back in high school. I got two tattoos from high school we done in class. Just as a, one of the guys wanted a tattoo gun so we tried it out.

Participants with Impulsive (Drunk) as the Reason for Getting a Tattoo and Aesthetics as the Reason for the Design of the Tattoo

DA4: My name's Jodie. Tattoos, ok. The reasoning behind why I got a tattoo. I'd wanted to get a tattoo for a very long time because when they suddenly became trendy again because I'm a bit of a jump on the band wagon type person I thought oh wow that's great. but then I thought, it's a big decision because it's permanent and even when you get them removed, it still looks a bit tacky so I thought it's a big decision. I thought about it and thought about it and when I really wanted to get one, initially, probably about 30 I got my belly button pierced and I thought that was ok but I was with a guy who was really against tattoos my boyfriend at the time thought they were ugly they're slutty la la la then I just thought, fair enough I won't get one because I don't want to upset him or his family and then my sister got one. She's younger than me, she's eight years younger than me and she got one in a very prominent position on her arm, it was a yin-yang symbol on her arm and I thought it looked good but I thought with the career

path I'd chosen I knew that one day I'd be in a position where that wouldn't look quite right and it is about perception so I thought, then also I went to Bali in 2000 and I got one of those Pamela Anderson, barbed wire fake tattoos, the henna ones around my arm and it lasted about two or three weeks and I noticed that people treated me differently. It was summer so it was exposed, and people they treated me differently, I could tell. it was a weird feeling. and then it washed off and left me with a red mark and it got infected so I thought maybe that's an omen. So I let it go for a while and and I thought, well I won't get one then. And then one night we were out with some friends and my friend's brother, it was his birthday, and we'd all had a bit to drink and he said "right, that's it, I'm getting my tattoo tonight" so we went to Kings Cross of course, where they let you get them done when you're drunk and we went to this place, I think it was called Max's, anyway, so we went in there and then I said "right, I'm doing it" and I couldn't find a design that I particularly liked but I knew I wanted to get it on my lower back so I got this tiny little squiggly thing on my back. It's hard to describe, but that's all I got. It was very simple and it was very small.

DA14: At the moment I have four of them. I had intended to get one last year which I'll probably touch on later. But I think I mentioned when I first met you I actually never used to like tattoos it was the cultural upbringing of mine. It was seen as I grew up as something that people of lesser intelligence or prostitutes or bikies or someone actually used to decorate themselves. It wasn't considered to be part of just the average person's society. And of course at a certain point they became fairly popular. And until about six years ago I had never thought about getting a tattoo it wasn't in my head. they were things I thought I didn't particularly like and I never really gave any thought to it. and I think you asked me before how I came about having a tattoo. I

honestly don't know why I decided to have one. Just one day something came into my head and said I'd like to have a tattoo. So I'd made up my mind that if I was going to get something I wanted something that no-one else had. I left it in abeyance in my mind, didn't really think about it much. Anyway. And I should stress, I don't particularly like most tattoos people have which is another thing that may sound a bit strange for someone who has them. Anyway, I went over to Nepal and I done a trip over there and I came back and I'd bought a lot of t-shirts and all that crap that people buy over there. And one day I was walking along and I just happened to have my head down and I looked and on my shirt was a particular design. Oh, sorry, that's right, I remember what it was, it was a mountain range which was obviously the Himalayas and it had a particular design on top of it which was actually the ones I have on my shoulders. It was only one of them. But I just looked at that and I thought that is just a nice simple little symbol, I'll use that. In my mind, it didn't have any particular significance. There must have been something appealing about that particular shape or you know, um, there was just something about it. So I thought, well, I'll have that. I always decided I wanted something it would be something simple, it would be not something coloured, I don't like coloured tattoos. It would be, and it would be based on something meaningful. At the time I didn't even know what this meant, and I later found out it's supposed to represent the eyes of the Buddha, that's why it has that particular round piece in the middle. So that was basically it. I was just walking along and I saw this thing on a t shirt and I thought, I'm going to do it. So I just went straight out and had these tattoos put on. And then my second one, I'll get these in order I have on my lower back. It was also taken off a shirt I had it was actually a dress shirt. When you closed the shirt up, it actually had two halves of a simple pattern, as you button the shirt up it made one complete pattern, it had a letter "N" in there, which I have no idea what it means, and I

just thought I'd get that done. I liked the shape of that, I was just putting the shirt on one day and I thought, no-one will have this shirt, it was not a mass-produced shirt, so if I put this on, no-one's going to have this particular tattoo. So I went in and had the "N" changed to an "M" because my name is Max, it was the logical thing to do. And the other one was actually taken off a t shirt as well that I bought in Nepal. It had on the front a big round Mandala, and in the centre it had a small piece that I thought would be the piece I would use for my tattoo because the rest of it was quite large, probably eight or nine inches in diameter and I didn't want anything that big on me, so I had a portion of it taken out and printed up and then I had that put on my leg, just sort of like on my upper thigh there. So that's basically how I came about to have them. My original, view on tattoos was that I didn't particularly like them. In fact I really disliked them as I was growing up. It was the representative thing in my mind of a lower class in society that you wouldn't mix with. As I mentioned it was like bikies, prostitutes. I've always loved music but I always disliked the representation, or the way a lot of musicians represented themselves. So the thought of having a tattoo like, say, a heavy metal rocker was always repulsive to me. Coz now it doesn't particularly bother me. So yeah, it was just a societal expectation at the time. Part of my upbringing. Where today, a lot of people are brought up with it, some people their kids have tattoos, they're quite happy to have them. Half the people that I know don't like tattoos at all. In fact most of my friends don't have them. They don't really discuss them with me at all actually, to tell the truth. So that's really how it came about. It's just, I have no idea as to why I suddenly decided I wanted them. I'll probably refute that a little bit. Probably a part of it is that I separated 10 years ago and I think there's a stage you go through. I joke with my friends and say I was going through male menopause. I wasn't, I mean, it's just a joke, but I suspect that when you've come out of something unhappy you like to actually identify with yourself

and I think that's probably part of the reason I actually got them. But I'm not, as I've never had anyone talk to me about it, I'm not 100% sure on that. It's like I'm saying I was unhappy now I'm going to do something for myself that makes me feel significant to myself, so I put them on there. But other than that, I never look at them. It's not like I go round watching myself all the time, I never look at them. I don't think I've hardly ever looked at them since I put them on. I suspect that was probably the driving force behind it, is that you try to do something for yourself. I did other things as well, I bought myself a 4 wheel drive, I booked a holiday overseas, I joined some clubs, I went out and met different people. It was just an extension of moving on, I think, in some ways.

DA25: Ok, well I got my first tattoo when I was 15, I remember going and lying about my age to the guy coz he's going are you sure you're 18 because I was always really short and stuff, Yup Yup I am but I am but I went when I was 15 and got it done. I'm not really sure why I did it. I think my father has a lot of tattoos, and I always sort of liked them and thought they he looked fancy and tough and things like that, probably I was trying to rebel against them, I remember getting the tattoo, and going home and saying see, look what I got and they said that's good that's nice, so that backfired on me but I liked it I guess I always liked it. I guess it was my way of saying that I am, not tough, my little way of expressing my self in a way. I was short, I wasn't very attractive, I sort of got picked on a little bit, I wasn't strong enough to stand up to people in that manner though I seemed to be coz I was very mouthy, but I would run a million miles if it came to it. That was just my little way of saying I can do something no one else has done or no one else has got and that was my little booster if you like. Whenever I used to get scared of something I used to think well if I could go and get a tattoo, I could do that. That's where it all started from, I suppose, from there. And then it was many years

before I decided to get another one and that again was a bit of a change of phase, a bit of a change in life, I guess. Things were going differently, I started riding motor bikes which I have always loved, and then we decided to get Harleys and stuff like that so I thought I got to get another tattoo now so, yeah, I went and got a large tattoo, but I didn't realize it was so large until I saw it on me and I said oh shit, that's a bit big but oh well too late can't get rid of it, so got that, liked it. Then just last year I got my third one, where Michael and I went on a holiday to Perth and we were sitting in a café, and were a bit bored. We had wanted to go over to this little island thing but had missed the ferry, so went to the pub and had a few drinks and then thought lets go get a tattoo, so we went and got another tattoo, this one was done by hand we found that really fascinating, and it was a whole different kettle of fish. We did not realize that when it said hand done tattoo, we just thought yeah you do not do it with your foot, we did not take the meaning as literal as what it was. They took you down to this little basement like thing, and there was like shrunken heads in jars and we were sort of going Oh my God, where are we, trying to act like this was all kind of normal and then they did this sort of like a ritual like a ceremony where they tied needles together and they do it and its literally done by hand using these little needles. At first we were thinking Oh what have we done, what are we doing, but then afterwards we thought that's amazing and now we like to show people that that's a hand done one while this one is the standard gun one and things like that and I'm not sure if I'm going to get any more.

DA48: I do not know it is pretty hard to say anything special. The first one I got a friend of mine did it, so I was quite happy about that, but he wouldn't put it where I really wanted it, he said I will do this for you, you take it and then come back and if you are happy with everything, I will do it where you really wanted it, because he was a

friend of mine, I wanted it there originally and it's here, hidden, if you know what I mean.

Participant with Impulsive (Drunk) as the Reason for Getting a Tattoo and Belonging as the Reason for the Design of the Tattoo

DB57: Ok well I walked into a... I had some spare money and walked into a tattoo parlour, and looked at all their examples and saw one that I liked it was definitely the one that I wanted. I was talking to friends about it and they said make sure it's the one that you want and I was sure so the following week I went back up to Parramatta where I got it done and got it done. The tattoo is a bald eagle one of its wings is red and white stripes and the other wing is blue with white stars the American flag. I really like America, one day hopefully I would like to buy a one way ticket there, and I saw that the bald eagle, America, American flag, I do want to get others to relate to the whole American theme, and there is one that I do really want. As I said I was a board game collector, I have seventy monopoly games so I want to get Mr. Monopoly tattooed on my back but that is if I have another \$200 just floating around spare.

Participants with Impulsive (Drunk) as the Reason for Getting a Tattoo and a Personal Symbol as the Reason for the Design of the Tattoo

DS11: Basically it's the Chinese symbol for tiger because I was born year of the tiger. That's the sort of significance of it. Um, How we actually got it was we were drunk. I got it about ah, it must've been probably about seven or eight years ago now, um, and we were drunk one Sunday afternoon and happened to walk past a tattoo parlour a friend of mine, two of us, and we basically thought ah why not, so we went in and they did, I remember I was a bit nervous and the they actually did the drawing, it's

on my arm here and they did the drawing on my arm and then we sort of, and he got down the back of the spine, Chinese, I can't remember what his said or the significance of it but there was, but he thought it looked good out of the book of Chinese symbols basically and um, then so they drew it, we went back out to another pub down the road and then thought why not, came had a look, why not, came back and they basically just literally 10 minutes later cause it didn't take long to do, that was it.

DS27: I have one. I got it when I was about 19, I think. And I drew the design myself because I didn't like the idea of going into some tattoo parlour and picking something off a wall, that didn't mean anything, or I wouldn't like in another year's time. It's pretty small. I have it on my lower back there's a couple of reasons that I put it there. To start with, the original reason, I guess is coz it's a place that you can choose to cover or choose to expose. It's not something you have you know, on an arm that you can't hide, something big like that. I think the other reason is I was still young enough to be terrified of what my parents would think if they ever found out. So it had to be somewhere I could hide. The other reason was that it is a part of your body that doesn't change dramatically as you age. It's not, the stomach would stretch with pregnancy, or you know, anywhere else would change. But it doesn't seem to have a big difference in there, so. Yeah. Well, I don't know what else to tell you about it.

Participant with Impulsive (Drunk) as the Reason for Getting a Tattoo and Philosophy as the Reason for the Design of the Tattoo

DF45: Ok, umm, well basically I got my tattoo about, let me think, probably almost two years ago now, umm it was a spontaneous thing, like I've always wanted one but then I've never sort of really been game enough to, to go and get one and then

yeah I was I think I was with my girlfriend one day and I just said you know I think I'm going to go get one tomorrow, do you want to come? And I knew what I wanted, like I knew if I got one I always wanted like a dragon cause umm I used to do, well I was doing at that time umm Chinese Marshal Arts I was right into that eternal marshal arts and that kind of thing, so yeah I like the dragon, I like what it represents, it represents umm courage, wisdom and strength so yeah I guess I associated that with myself and my beliefs and so forth umm, yeah so I went and got it and then it was just a matter of choosing where, so I wanted, wanted somewhere umm that was a bit different like somewhere that you can't really see that much as well except like say when I go to the beach or something, that's why I chose like my upper leg, umm, yeah, that's about it really.

Participants with Philosophy as the Reason for Getting a Tattoo and as the Reason for the Design of the Tattoo

FF9: Ok um, originally I had a big plan to, ok um, I had a big idea to get a rather large complicated design, tattoo of comic book characters covering my whole back, and as um I was planning that, I went to a tattoo parlour to just ask about it and um, a lot of them kicked me out basically cause they didn't want to deal with it, because a lot of them just want to deal with what they've got on the wall, simpler concepts, but I came across one that would, that ah help me re-design it. In the meantime I got one character done on my forearm my right forearm, just here, just to have the experience I wanted that there as well, and um, I planned to make a band out of him eventually but I didn't do it until just recently. And Um, yeah, that didn't go too bad so um, once we had the big plan for my back we started working on it. And then ah, about 60% of the way through which is about 25 hours worth of work, not in one sitting I did 8 hours straight

once but, um, after the 15th hour or so I stopped, because the adrenaline rush started tapering away and so it wasn't as exciting it became more of a chore and therefore I didn't, I felt every moment of the pain and it was like, it became unbearable 10 hours later so, my back is incomplete and still is and I'm not too fussed about it, I like what it is, what it ended up as, it's very original like you'll see, and since then, I was inspired by a chemical brothers track, called "it doesn't matter", to get this done, also the reaffirmation about not caring about getting this one finished and um, then a few years later I got that complemented with the "Let it Be" on the other side, backwards and just the beginning of this year, or last year I had the rest of my band finished. I don't have any other plans for any more tats. I don't plan to finish the back because it's just hurts too much. um, I have been playing with the idea of getting some sort of UV tattoo because you can get UV ink that is safe and invisible under natural light, nothing too complicated, maybe something on my arms that can double up the space that I've got under the rest of them so if I've got a blue light around they'll show up.

FF10: I had it done almost a year and two or three months ago, I suppose. I had it done in Peru. I suppose after travelling and being in South America I learned a lot about indigenous cultures over there and I was really interested with the Incan culture and the Tiwanakal people and yeah I always thought about having a tattoo and never really seriously.

Participant with Philosophy as the Reason for Getting a Tattoo and Remembrance as the Reason for the Design of the Tattoo

FR56: I guess the meaning of my tattoo is that, it says "forever" which to me is an impossibility for a human being so it's a reminder, I guess, for me, to always be

aware that nothing is forever. I guess it's kind of ironic. I guess that was the point. But, um, nothing's forever and you should live for today. And it's that pretty much broadly sums it up.

Participants with Psychological Growth as the Reason for Getting a Tattoo and as the Reason for the Design of the Tattoo

GG32: I've been thinking about getting a tattoo since I was in year 10 when I was 15 years old. So obviously my parents had to have an involvement in that and they didn't want me to get one. So me and my best friend continued thinking about it and then at the start of this year, well, near the end of last year, I got diagnosed with depression and anxiety disorder. And I had really bad panic attacks, and I couldn't leave the house because I became agoraphobic and had a social phobia. So at that point in time, my friend brought up the tattoo idea again. And I started thinking about it as a way to prove to myself that I was strong enough to do something that was scary and I was afraid of, but something that I really wanted to do. And that way, every time I was faced with something that my mind was saying I couldn't do, I could look at it, or think about it, or touch it and know that I had done something greater and more important than that. And I could go and do it. So me and my best friend went and investigated it and my family on my dad's side they're all male, and they have quite a few tattoos and so they told me the best place to go and when to have it and how big to get it and stuff like that. So I went to Corrimal Tattoos and talked to the man about it and my friend looked at the tattoos, and we basically discussed how painful it was going to be, which my friend was very interested in, and all that kind of thing, like metals in the tattoos and things, in case we were allergic. And we ended up booking to get tattooed at exactly the same time, in the tattoo parlour together, so that we could hold hands, in early January of this year.

And it ended up, when we got there for our tattoos, her mum drove us in, because we didn't know whether we'd be able to drive. Because we were getting tattoos on our lower back. So we didn't know if we could lean back into the seat without it hurting. And we also didn't know if we were going to pass out or something like that, so we were a little bit worried. And my parents and my sister were in Europe at the time. So I wasn't living with my family and my grand parents and uncle who I was spending a lot of time with, all refused to take me because they didn't want me to get one and they'd been trying to talk me out of it ever since my parents left. So her mum took us and her mum was really scared, which kind of was upsetting for us. Because she kept saying, "What if you die? What if you have an allergic reaction and you have to get it removed straight away" and how that hookers tend to have them, and did we really know what we were doing. And so by the time we got there, me and my friend found out that they'd over-booked that day. So we couldn't have our tattoos at the same time, one of us would have to go first and then the other person. There were about ten or fifteen other people. And in this tattoo parlour you get it done on a bed in front of everybody. And so I said that I'd go first. And luckily we'd discussed the pain so much, that we'd actually put on numbing cream, and we'd also taken painkillers, just in case. And so I went first, and basically it didn't really hurt that much. I thought the pain was going to be the thing that triggered my anxiety, but I actually dealt with it really well which was an achievement for me, because I thought that I was going to have to leave. And my friend basically sat there and patted me and watched it getting done, because I was getting it on my lower back and I couldn't see it. And everyone in the parlour was going, "Yeah. Yeah. That's nice!" The weird thing about getting a tattoo and it's also a piercing parlour, you tend to make friends with everybody in there, because you are all going through an experience together. And so mine lasted 45 minutes it took to do the tattoo, about 30 minutes to do

the black and then for the different colours you have to change the needle. And that's probably the most scary bit was him changing the needles, and going what colour do you want and all that sort of thing. And I was going Oh my God! The colours, I didn't even think about that. But in the end it didn't really hurt that much. And then my friend had hers. Hers was much smaller than mine and in black. But in the same spot, and she cried and said it was really painful and things like that, so that was stressful for me. But afterwards we had to put the cream on it and stuff. And my family dealt with it.

Participant with Rebellion as the Reason for Getting a Tattoo and Philosophy as the Reason for the Design of the Tattoo

TF47: My tattoo is on my lower hip and it is a Kanji symbol for faith. I decided that I wanted to get it like two years ago, probably originally like a rebellious thing against my mum, which is like why I got my belly button pierced as well, but then when I went to get it, like I wanted to go get it with my girlfriend but then some thing happened so I couldn't so I thought maybe this is like a sign that I shouldn't get it. So I was like if I wait an year, because we were going to do on holidays and we were going for the same holiday next year and I go if I still want it next year then, if I still really really want it then I'll get it when we go away next year, and that was like last November and I still really wanted it so I went and I did it. I knew what I wanted to get, because I didn't want to get something like a butterfly or something that was just there to look pretty, like I wanted something that meant something to me because I come from a very religious family, like my mum's a minister, I've grown up in a church, even though I don't go to church any more I wanted something that would always remind me of where I came from and what I believe in. Yes that is a part of my faith, I was tossing up between that and a across, but because of where I got it, I thought a cross was a little

bit inappropriate, so yes so I picked that and I have absolutely no regrets. It is in a place where my mum will never ever see it.

Participant with Rebellion as the Reason for Getting a Tattoo and Remembrance as the Reason for the Design of the Tattoo

TR52: Just talk about my tattoos, why I got them done? I always wanted them from about the age of I think about 13. I can remember telling mum and dad I'm getting tattoos when I'm older. And my dad was always like no, no you can't get them. I think for me it's an expression of art. It's also, you can get them, you find things that mean something to you. Why did I get my first one? I think cause I was away from home, so my dad wasn't there to stop me. And I really, I looked and I looked and I ended up just choosing anything so I got one that I really don't like anymore. It's a Tasmanian Devil but I think cause I was in England and it was a reference to home and stuff like that. Um, yeah, other than that, for me, I've just always loved them. I think, umm, I don't like sleeves, but I love individual tattoos. I've seen half sleeves, if the work is good, I just I love it. I suppose, that's what it mainly is for me, its just a form of art, an expression, it's a way for people I suppose to show what's in them, but yeah, when I think of Isaac's I don't think that's an expression of what's inside him. Yeah, it's mainly that. Mainly expressions. I think beauty as well. Even when they're ugly, that the work that goes into them.

Participants with Remembrance as the Reason for Getting a Tattoo and Aesthetics as the Reason for the Design of the Tattoo

RA7: Yeah ok I've got quite a few tattoos two major pieces, which is my sleeve for my arm and a full back job which we're still working on at the moment, I got my

first tattoo I guess I was around 18-19 when I got my first tattoo I think, and I had a broken leg at the time or a broken foot and for the last 18 months I'd been looking for a design that suited me and then found one and that was my first little one on my leg and then I got a similar one on my shoulder, tribal, just cause that was the, what I felt like back then. The get something from the memories of a teenager sort of thing. The one on my ankle that's the very the first one.

RA39: Ok. I'm Grant from Wollongong. Fifty seven. Got my first tattoo when I was 19. Got my most recent a week ago. Still healing. Intend getting several more. Never been disappointed or sorry I've got one. Every tattoo I've got, I've put in months or years of thought first and then went ahead and got it. And always been happy. Never looked at one and thought, "God I wish I hadn't got that." Every tattoo I've got represents something either at the time or me forever. Some are more localised, like an event that happened. Some are who I am and always will be. Like I say, I have two more that I know I'm gonna get. It'll be just a matter of time and money and when it's the right time to get it. I haven't thought one bad thing about having a tattoo, since I got my first one in 1969 when I was a punk kid and got a tiger coz Balmain won the premiership. They haven't won it since. That was a one off thing, the tiger. But the ones since then have all been something that means something to me. All my life whether it be two more days 'cause I ride a motorbike or might live 'til I'm a hundred. But being a bike rider, it's not a big possibility.

Participants with Remembrance as the Reason for Getting a Tattoo and Belonging as the Reason for the Design of the Tattoo

RB1: I went and saw concerts. Towards the end of 1996 I was lucky enough to go on a work conference to Las Vegas in the United States and the Rolling Stones happened to be playing a concert there at the time. I'd also just come out of a divorce that year around the same time and being at the concert thought, again, I should get something other than just a t-shirt and the program or the ticket stub and was lucky enough they had a couple of tattooists set up there doing the Rolling Stones symbol which is the lips and the tongue. I guess I knew that working in an office environment and the fact that I do surf a lot I didn't want something where everyone could see it I wanted it where it meant something to me so I had the tattoo placed on my butt which I've always found, it's um, becomes a bit of a curiosity factor especially amongst people who know me there's always like "show us your butt" and "did you get the tattoo just so you can say "kiss my ass"", because you have lips and tongue on your bum. Because of the surfing and work culture and the fact that I do have to be presentable a lot of the time I wanted the tattoo to be somewhere where obviously it wasn't visible and there again it highlighted the fact that it was something personal to me and a select few people would see. Of course, unfortunately, I'm not exactly a shy retiring type and quite often on nights out with friends when we have been drunk and there have been occasions where we've done nude runs and things like that of course then my butt becomes the topic of conversation. After the nude run when everyone realises I have a tattoo. Prior to that it was never really an issue it was something that I guess some people don't expect to see from me being a guy that they usually see in a suit and tie. When they do see me drunk and disorderly that's probably one step and then to see me with a tattoo on my butt I think it takes that persona sort of drops again, to another, I

guess you could say a lower level to some degree. Or the perception of me is of a lower level than that anyway.

RB40: Alright. Well I've got one in progress at the moment. I'll show you if you like and you'll probably enjoy it. I've been to Japan 32 times on the ships, yeah. When I was young I kick boxed a lot and karate, and I was into the Samurai swords - Japan's really cool. It's weird, it's a strange place but it's like they've got this huge respect thing happening there really good manners and if you get to meet the real Japanese they're really shy and come across sometimes as arrogant and rude but once you get to know them they'll stick by and look after you. The whole Japanese thing, I've always loved dragons, got dragons all through the house. I wanted a dragon as probably my first tattoo probably, but just never had the right dragon sort of thing. And the tattoos actually started with Celtic ones cause of being Irish, thinking of maybe doing the full sleeve cause I love fish, I love the koi and its the symbolism behind them. There's this whole Chinese myth that if the koi reaches the head of a river it turns into a dragon. It's a big fish, like a big gold fish. The big ones you see in ponds. The koi carp. They're a carp. And they symbolize good fortune and sort of good luck. The dragon sort of symbolizes power and a bit of determination maybe and strength I suppose. So I'll probably get a koi. The bloke who does all my tattoos is just begging me. Perfect shading, and it'll just blend. So that's my dragon. I've got hardly any colour on, all my tattoos are just black. I don't look at myself as someone who follows fashions but at the moment big bright colourful tattoos. I ride dirt bikes and one of me younger mates has got... I don't know, might regret them later on. They're cool tattoos. Sort of like graffiti style. That new sort of new wave that, yeah, I think mine are a bit more... every one I've gone and got drawn up and thought about it and it's got a reason. Not just because

it's a cool picture. But I don't know. I enjoy getting tattooed. The shop I get done at at Thirroul is a whole. I listen to punk music and yeah, just people I associate with and it's a cool spot and I'd rather go there than go to a pub. It's cool. Wayne who does mine, he's a strange bloke. He's very quiet and hard to get any conversation out of him, but once you've, coz I've been there and spent a lot of time there and yeah, I wouldn't say we're mates, like I wouldn't invite him to a barbecue but its good. I like it. Thing is, there's a show on TV, on pay TV on Saturday mornings called "Miami Ink". It's awesome. Just, yeah, tattoo shops are cool. A bit intimidating and daunting, like the first time I ever went, probably the first half a dozen times I went the tattooist, a lot of them don't talk, too busy doing what they're doing which is what you want. I like it, it's cool. And his shop's all, he sells all like art work from, like that sort of pop culture art. Posters from bands and done by the original von Dutch and all these sorts of things and it's just a cool spot and I don't know.

RB41: I'll start in order of the tattoos that I've got, as I have only about four or five. The first one I have is a...the first one I got is this Indian woman up here, which I got when I was in my mid to late twenties. And I got that because it was when I first met my wife and it was not long after we met that I got it. And I don't know what... the main motivation for getting it was, I believe it was because I wanted a tattoo and because I wanted a reminder of when we first met. Because we both had this fascination for American Indian culture. And when we first met we were talking, and we discovered that we had a similar dream when we were younger, about um, almost like a past life type situation. And we'd had that dream when we were apart and were not together. And once we were together the dream stopped, sort of thing. So, a bit freaky and a bit weird sort of sounding, but that's just the way it happened. That's when I decided, I'll

get, you know, I'll get ...er in the dream she was an American Indian woman, Native American woman, so that's why I decided to get that one. And that was my first. And I got that in the city, King's Cross, at a tattoo shop there. And not knowing much about them at the time, I let the guy do whatever he did. Probably because it was my first one and it was just a small thing, he probably thought, he's not really sure. So he put it on, and after a while I realised it probably wasn't as great a job as it could've been done. And being a first one, he probably thought, you know, "I'll just whack it on and that's that!" And he probably didn't think I was all that serious anyway. So I never got another... I never received another tattoo, or never got another one for about another fifteen years. Probably about a year ago, I got my second one, which is this goblin one here on my shoulder. I'd always liked motor bikes, Harleys and so forth, I'd always liked that. And I started watching the show American Chopper on TV, and my wife started watching it. And I started buying some magazines and I saw that. That is actually a company logo from a magazine and I saw it and I thought as soon as I saw it I thought "That would make a fantastic tattoo!"

RB58: I've got nine of them. They're all one of a kind bar one and I'm not very impressed with that one because I found a better one later on that I could have had. So I'm pretty pissed off with that. It doesn't matter. It's there for life. It's still my star sign so it doesn't really matter. I've got... What do you want to know? Why did I get them?

Participant with Remembrance as the Reason for Getting a Tattoo and a Personal Symbol as the Reason for the Design of the Tattoo

RS30: Yeah. Ok. Well when I was I think thirteen about thirteen, I really wanted to get a tongue ring, and my mum wouldn't let me get one. And my dad said he would

be really sad if I got one. And then one day, my mum said that if I forgot about the tongue ring, then she'd let me get a tattoo. I thought wow! That's bigger than a tongue ring. I didn't understand why she said that. But I was really stoked. So then she said if you still want one in a year, and I did. And I'd been thinking about it for the year what I wanted to get and. And my friends said you should get something to do with Buffy because I was obsessed with Buffy, but I said I wasn't going to be into Buffy forever, so that would be stupid. I was just trying to think of something that I wouldn't regret. Because obviously it's permanent and I can't afford to get rid of anything. And so I got my star sign. Coz I'm a Scorpio and I think scorpions are cool as well. And I thought I'm not going to regret that because I'm always going to be a Scorpio. And, it was my 15th birthday present, so I got it just before my 15th birthday, when I was still 14 and that was before it was illegal for kids to get one, just before, so I was stoked because all my friends wished they could get them but they were too late. And I got it purple because it suited. Even though red was my favourite colour, that would look pretty weird, I think.

Participants with Remembrance as the Reason for Getting a Tattoo and Philosophy as the Reason for the Design of the Tattoo

RF13: Well the first tattoo I got was on my arm and I got that about 4 years ago, just over 4 years ago. It happens to be the logo of a band that I listen to and the reason I chose that band, they are not exactly my favourite band but lyrically the words that they've written, the lyrics they have written, I'd say are words that mean most to me, you know, it's affected the way I live and affected the way I look at life, my own life and other people's lives. So, I'd say, whenever I look at that tattoo, to me, it's like a reminder for what matters most to me, cause their lyrics are more about; respect for

everyone, you know for myself and for other people and I view it as something really important, that to get respect, you have to respect other people and it's finding a balance, you know balancing it out between each other. At the same time I mean they also teach about like, um, it's I'd say it's more about what's right and wrong in life. For me it's something that I always, in all my decisions I always think about, I always have to think about what's, what I think is right and what's wrong, you know from what my parents had taught me as well and I guess you know I kind of combine what I hear in the music that I listen to in that band's lyrics that I can relate to my own life as well, you know through those lyrics. I don't know, it's just something I take with me all the time. It also reflects on a certain period of my life at the time where I wasn't so sure about life and my view on life, cause at the time I got it, it was just after September 11, the whole world was in quite a bit of a chaotic state. In those words I found I was able to see what mattered most, you know, things that mattered most to, should matter most to everyone, "I" think should matter most to people so... To me, I've always viewed things like pride, respect, I'm trying to think what other words to use, things like trust, as well, it's another thing, I've always viewed that as very important things. And for me to expect to get respect and trust and such other things like that from other people, I have to be willing to give the same back. So, it's just a reminder for me, I view this tattoo as a reminder of what's important in life.

RF20: I have two. I have two tattoos. One on my back, that was my first one and one on my stomach. The important thing for me with tattoos, I'm kind of probably going to get some more. But all of them have to have a meaning to me coz then you won't regret it later on in life. If you get a tattoo just because you think it looks cool, then, then five years go by and you're like, I don't like it any more, you're pretty much

stuck with it, if you don't like it later on, which hasn't happened to me, but if you don't, it at least has meaning, so you can still appreciate it for what it is, even if you don't actually like the ink on your body. The one on my back kinda has... it says "life, love, laughter" the words actually came off a graphic on a skateboard deck. Skating was a huge part of my life, still, not to the same extent, but it's still a big part of my life. As well as, the overall design, I guess, kind of commemorates what's kind of important in my life but the words themselves have kind of separate meanings, being associated with the graphic on the board. Life: just living, and taking advantage of everything and living to the fullest, love: not just in the sense for family and friends but living with passion, just everything you do, you know, do with love and really enjoy yourself and do it and then laughter: just the importance of just being able to laugh at yourself and enjoy things and see the good side of everything. It's kind of words to, I guess, live by, and also like I said it commemorates the impact skateboarding has had on my life. The one on my stomach is a lot simpler, it's just a green star and that's off a Dr Seuss book – "The Sneetches and other stories" – I don't know if you're familiar with it. Which essentially it comes down to, the moral is that every person's just a person, it doesn't matter what you look like, essentially you know, we're all the same you should judge a person by who they are and not what they are. And so, um, it's kind of always been an important, I guess, moral value, for me, if that's the right word, I'm not too sure. And so it kind of demonstrates, and at the same time always reminds me everyone's you know, judge them as who they are as a person individually as opposed to the stereotypes around them. That's the meaning of that and I guess I'll get more. They are a bit addictive, like as soon as you get one you're like "ah, that'd be cool, that'd be cool" but I think keeping in mind that I always want to have meaning and some sort of significance it keeps me from going overboard. And on advice from my mum, which

has been great advice, because she doesn't like tattoos, not getting them anywhere that can be seen when you're wearing a short-sleeved shirt and pants coz they'll never know you're in a job with long pants and a polo shirt if I had a massive tattoo on my forearm whether I like it or not, certain people hold certain things to that and you can get prejudice on that, they can start conjuring up things about who you are and while I don't really care if people think that way, I don't want it if it's going to affect things in my life that I might want to do, so until I'm independently wealthy and I can say "it doesn't matter coz I'm rich" which won't happen, but I'm going to avoid tattoos anywhere I guess with what I'm wearing now, you can't see them, so. But I'd like to get a few more. I don't know, I think that's all right now, so if you have any questions.

RF22: Well, I'll talk about the first tattoo I got. I have two tattoos all up. This is my first one, the one I've already told you about.²³ I got this in 2001, 2002 I can't actually remember. I have this theory that unlike a lot of my other body mods, I get a tattoo to mark off every significant point in my life every significant thing I go through; every achievement, I mark it off with a tattoo that symbolises that. I believe in designing my own tattoos so it has to be a personal representation to me. Personal symbolism that chances are, I'm not going to regret when I'm older. 'Cause I can look at it when I'm 80 years old and say - "I got that because..." , "I designed this because...". This one is a thinking fairy, as I call her, on blood red rose which has a thorn on it and her ankles are attached to a spider web. If you look on the rose, there's still bits of white and that's in relation to Oscar Wilde's story "The Nightingale and the Rose" and in a nutshell a nightingale falls in love with a student, she lives in his garden and she loves him so much she sings for him all the time but he really just ignores her and brushes her

²³ Participant RF22 was part of a pilot study for the current thesis.

off and he falls in love with this girl but the girl said she'd only be with him if he brought her a blood red rose. There was only white roses in his garden, however, the nightingale loved him so much that she sacrificed herself at midnight on a full moon she pierced her heart on the thorn and made the white rose red so that the boy could give it so he could find true love just like she had and he got the rose and then the girl told him she wasn't interested anymore and the rose just ended up getting thrown into the gutter. So she'd sacrificed her life, for her love for this boy and it didn't mean very much to him after all as it turned out. I went through, at a young age, I was young I was very much in love with a young man and at a stupidly young age, we got "engaged" so to speak. He ended up running off with my best friend which tends to happen with young people, childish things like that. And I let him go and said fine, be with her. You know, I felt sad because I loved him so much and obviously he doesn't love me to the same extent back and he just wanted to be with this other girl who ended up saying 'I don't want to be with you anymore' and she just chunked him aside like the rose and so that's how I see this rose. As well, not only is it an Oscar Wilde reference but I see it as Nietzschean reference, Frederic Nietzsche reference – who I've always been a big fan of. Is a, as you know, one of his major theories is; every day is an authentic progression of the self every day is another stepping stone in the path of your life and you take responsibility for your own actions being existentialist, and every day you just say ok this is what I did today, I'm learning from this, I'm moving on to tomorrow and you live in the moment. And so, that's what the cobwebs also symbolize. It's attached to her ankles saying don't forget that every day you've lived from that past, every day is another stepping stone to where you are today, every day symbolises something. So yeah, in a nutshell, she's a thinking fairy as I call her because my parents used to always call me their little blonde fairy and I was always thinking and I was always writing

stories, making up stories and doing crazy things in the garden, running around naked in the garden amongst the flower beds so I was always their fairy and then as I grew older I became their thinking fairy as they called me and I had long black hair and that's why she's got long black hair and she's thinking. So, yes. This fairy has been through a lot and she has sacrificed herself for certain people and she has bled on the rose for that. And which also leads on to my next tattoo. I got this about August 2005 so only last year and this is another very symbolic tattoo to me. I've been deferred from uni for the last 2 years because I've been really really messed up. I've been in and out of hospital with very bad anxiety and depression to the point that doctors kept putting me on lots of different medications trying everything to get me better and nothing seemed to work to the point where I got tried on this one particular medication and I had... My doctor accidentally prescribed me four times the dosage I was supposed to have and I had an overdose and I could have been killed. And it was a very traumatic experience and I didn't even link it to it initially, it happened on a train. His doctor's office is in St Leonards and he just said 'oh just take this tablet with a meal and hopefully you know your anxiety and depression and anger issues will start to get better'. So I thought nothing of it, I went and had lunch, I took the tablet and got on the train and fifteen minutes into the train trip I just suddenly had no proprioception, I had no sense of where I was in space, I could have been upside down as far as I knew and my whole nervous system just was suppressed. I was drooling. I couldn't talk. I couldn't breathe properly. I couldn't walk properly and I was trying to ask people for help at the station but they all thought I was a junkie. I said "please help me" and I'm drooling and no-one would help me because they thought I was some junkie and I eventually found a train station guard guy and said "I need help". He actually took notice of me and said "oh, maybe I should help this chick". And I got to the managers office just in time and I passed out on the

floor and I'd come into consciousness every five or ten minutes for a few minutes and I somehow convinced them not to call an ambulance. I don't know why I did that. I was in a delusional state. All I was thinking was that I can't afford an ambulance and I don't want any trouble. I don't want to try to get any attention. I don't want to cause any problems. I just said, "no, don't get an ambulance, don't get an ambulance". And they're like, "I really think we should get you an ambulance, you know, you look you're about to die or something". So I'm like, "No, No, ambulance!" and then I'd pass out again. It was a very interesting ordeal. Umm. At that stage my anxiety had gotten really bad but that day, one of the reasons I was given the medication was for my anxiety, umm, and it's one of the reasons I deferred from uni for the last two years. I'd wake up in the middle of the night with panic attacks and I'd wake up in the morning and have a panic attack and I'd go to uni lecture and have a panic attack. I just started missing lectures and I think it might have been one of your classes and we had a test in the tutorial and I just sat there the whole time going, like that, thinking I just can't leave the tutorial, I can't leave. Your mind just goes into a weird state and I didn't even do the test. And...So... sorry I've kind of gone on a bit of a tangent, I'm kind of tired. So, after this experience with the medication my anxiety got even worse and I actually became agoraphobic and I couldn't leave my house for three months and it ended up getting to that point where my doctors would come to my house to see me. And my psychologist helped me a lot. She'd convince me to sort of walk up to the end of the street, she'd come out the front of the house with me and actually literally take my hand and like "it's okay" and I'd be freaking out like "no, no, come on we can go to the top of the street" and I would and I'd vomit and I'd be like 'hey! I did it. I did it'. And within six months after that, everyday I'd try and go out a little bit further. I'd go to the next street and sort of go a little bit further and further and then finally I was put on prozac and it

was like I stopped feeling sorry for myself. I stopped going why has this happened to me. It's not fair, why do I have this, I want to go out and experience life. I couldn't hang out with friends, I couldn't go to parties. I couldn't go and see my friends' bands play. I couldn't do anything and I got to the point where I just thought "fuck it, I'm going to kill myself" and I was that close to killing myself that I... I did actually attempt to hang myself but it went terribly wrong but I won't go into that. And after I was put on prozac, I stopped feeling sorry for myself. I stopped thinking "I'm a victim. I thought, "no, I've got to be proactive here' I've got to take, grab it by the balls and say, 'no, I'm not going to be controlled by my anxiety and depression any longer'. And it was like, with the help of this medication, it cleared my brain so I could personally change my thought patterns and my pathways of facilitation. I could change the way I thought. It wasn't that the Prozac that changed the way I thought, it swept the leaves out of the way so to speak so I could actually do something about it. And after a few weeks of being on Prozac I felt so much better. I was still fairly depressed and anxious but I could actually go out of the house and I would say to myself 'No, I'm going to stay out of the house for an hour' and would do it. I wouldn't go back inside and everyday I started getting a bit better and a bit better and a bit better until I still remember going to my first gig, the first, my first, my friends band was playing and it was the first time I'd been out for ages and I was really anxious but I managed to do it and I was crying and I was scared of walking into the club and I didn't want to go. I just wanted to turn around and go home, where was I, it was this big scary place and I just went in and I did it and I felt so happy afterwards. And it occurred to me after a few weeks of feeling so much better that, you know, I still get anxious sometimes. I still get depressed sometimes. But I am so much better than I used to be that I can actually live life and enjoy life. And where I was living at that point in time wasn't the happiest place in the world. It was very dark, I

only lived with one of my friends and she worked all night and slept all day so I never saw her and being alone all the time and being agoraphobic I had no contact with anyone and I started getting very depressed. I ended up moving out of that house once I'd overcome my agoraphobia and I moved into a house just of artists and musicians who would, like the TV is non-existent in my house. My last housemate would either sleep, work or watch TV and we have an art studio, we have a band studio, everything is just there for me to take and for me to give back. It's just the most brilliant environment in the world. I live with an artist, a painter, a photographer/painter and I live with a few members of a band called 'The Follow' who are very good musicians and being friends with them and being very successful musicians I get to go backstage to all these really cool concerts. They opened for 'Nine Inch Nails' and I got to hang out backstage just, after I'd become friends with these people and I moved in with them my life is just so much better. I realized that, my god, life really is cyclical. I used to be happy and then I became really depressed and really sick and now I'm happy again and I was looking at these, the theories behind the runes - the ancient north runes and they have this idea that the three aetts, I think it's pronounced etts. A E double T S. There's three aetts and they represent three significant phases in your life like; childhood, adulthood, elderly. And there's different phases and different stages in these three aetts and this particular one on my arm called (hera) – it's written J E R A - is called the, jera stands for the spring harvest - or the thaw after winter. It's when you've been through a really stagnant, frozen, cold, horrible part of your life and finally spring has come and everything's getting better and the ice has melted so that's why I got that rune and the snake around it, the ouroboros as it's called, is used in so much symbolism throughout history of mankind it basically is just a snake holding it's own tail and it just states that life is cyclical, everything is cyclical so by combining that with my rune, by designing this, it

says to me that no matter what I go through, if I go through a bad point in my life again, I know life is cyclical and that I'm at another point on the snake and I know that I'll come back to jera again so if I'm having a really bad day and I'm feeling really depressed to the point that I can't get out of bed I'll just look at that in the mirror and go "oh no, tomorrow might be ok". So this just makes me remember that life can actually be really pretty good. So that's my tattoos.

Participants with Remembrance as the Reason for Getting a Tattoo and as the Reason for the Design of the Tattoo

RR29: Yeah. I've got just the one, which is a band around my arm. I got that in 1998, in Scotland. I was overseas, sort of a working holiday thing. So I would have been 21 or 22. And I got it. It's something I had at the back of my mind for a while. I spoke about it with a friend. I was staying over there with sort of my best friend. And we always said, ah yeah, you know, we'll get them and all this sort of stuff. Well anyway, I got mine and he didn't. but yeah, there were just few people at the time. I remember another one of my flatmates, she got one. And that was sort of my, I thought to me, it was sort of my Scotland souvenir type thing. So I went to this guy, Bill's Tattoos. It was just on this street in Edinburgh, called Lee Fawks, it's a fairly famous sort of street, but that's sort of the I guess the working class area of the street down to the docks and that sort of thing in Edinburgh. And the thing I remember about it is the sign on the door saying "Cash Only." Yeah, so I just went in and picked the... I quite liked the design. It's just like one of those Celtic bands. I thought, Ah that's alright. And just, yeah, asked him for that and he did it. It was no major drama. It was sort of like, the way I remember it was sort of like being pinched non-stop for you know, a couple of hours. He wrapped it in a bit of cling wrap and said "there you go" sort of thing and it

bled and this that and the other. Haven't had any problems with it. Get a few comments every now and then like when people see it. I guess it is a little bit of a surprise almost, I guess, cause I am pretty you know, sort of, it's a little bit out of, almost out of character. I am pretty straight down the middle with most things so I guess it's considered...it's a bit outlandish for want of a better word. I actually walked in to a place a couple of months after that and I was seriously considering getting another one. I was in the Middle East and the symbol they had everywhere like on all the like cars, was like a. It's sort of an Islamic type thing I think, like an evil eye. It's meant to see. It's just like a round, three round symbols. The idea was it was meant to see backwards and see you know, evil behind. And that was sort of all, all through the middle east, it was painted on the backs of cars and this that and the other. I thought that would be alright, I'll get it on my shoulder blade. So I walked into a tattoo sort of parlour, shall we say in Egypt. Then thought the better of it. Could do without the hepatitis. It's good, I'm glad I've got it, certainly not one of those things that you look at, you know, people sort of have regrets about them and that sort of thing. So yeah. I like it so I don't regret it. I don't know that I'll get too many more. But never know. Never say never.

RR38: Well, I, the person that suggested, or brought up the subject of getting tattoos was my mom, and this was, we were living in Singapore before coming here and that was all of high school for me. So, she never had a tattoo when she was young so she just one day out of the blue, said oh did you ever think about getting a tattoo? And I said oh, yeah that would be nice and she's like, ok well you know talk to your dad and maybe he'll let you get one. So I asked my dad and he's like yeah, ok, but what if it's permanent and what if you don't like it and this and that... so I had to sign like a contract saying I would never regret getting a tattoo, with my dad. So, and then I had to

decide what I wanted and oh, that took forever, cause I went into the tattoo parlour and there's just tons of books and tons of pictures of everything and I didn't know what I wanted. And then they have like, the year of the dragon, the year of the goat, that's how their calendar is. And I think it was the year of the dragon then, so I looked at all the photos of dragons and I found one that I really liked, so I picked that one and got that one done. And like, I just wanted something oriental just cause I had so much fun living in Singapore meeting all of these people and friends and everything and just having fun at school. So, um, just a little reminder, yeah, and I got it done

Participant with Rite of Passage as the Reason for Getting a Tattoo and Aesthetics as the Reason for the Design of the Tattoo

PA12: Ok. There's actually not that much to tell to be honest. I got my tattoo when I was 18, I'd always wanted a tattoo, from I guess when I was a teenager. And I wanted a cat or a panther. A black panther or something along those lines. I think that was because it represented something a little bit mysterious and I have a love of cats. And when I went to get the tattoo I was told I couldn't get something like that that small coz it would just look like a black spot, and so there was absolutely nothing behind it other than I wanted a tattoo so I looked for a nice one that was quite pretty and picked a rose and it's on my left shoulder blade and that's it really. There's not a lot of significance behind it. There probably would have been a lot more significance behind it if it had been the panther, just because of my love of that and I think I sort of associate with cats in that respect, you know. But, yes, the rose is just a, it was like the other option, basically.

**Participant with Rite of Passage as the Reason for Getting a Tattoo and Belonging
as the Reason for the Design of the Tattoo**

PB24: I have got two. First one I got when I was 18, at schoolies week. I wanted to get it, I wasn't drunk or anything, and I was with a boy friend for about 4 years and we got each other's star sign, but it is also my sister's star sign as well so I was kind of hedging my bets there in case it didn't work out, which it didn't. ahm, it's just a Pisces sort of a thing, just two fish, and I got it there like on my ribcage, so I figured no one would see it there, and the other one is on my foot. One day I was hanging out with my sister, we're chalk and cheese, complete polar opposites in every way and we couldn't agree on what to do and then she suggested that she wanted to go and have a look at tattoos, so I said ok we'll do that, and we wound up thinking about getting one done together, and I thought well it is a safe bet, we'll never find anything we can agree on, it's just four little stars and we both liked it so we got it done on our foot and that is the only thing that is the same about us.

**Participants with Rite of Passage as the Reason for Getting a Tattoo and a
Personal Symbol as the Reason for the Design of the Tattoo**

PS31: Ok. I always wanted a tattoo. And it just took me a while to figure out where I wanted it and what I wanted to get. Because obviously it's something that's going to last forever. So last summer, I decided that I wanted an astrological symbol. Because it's something that would never change. You know, it's not a fad, type of thing. I could keep it relatively small and simple. I didn't want to go for anything extravagant. So last summer I decided that I wanted it on my hip, because then I could keep it out of sight, from people you know, if I don't, in a special setting, and it seemed a relatively

safe place, because I am a safe tattoo getter. Last Summer I went at the end of summer with a couple of friends they got their ears pierced and I got my tattoo.

PS33: Ok. I've got two on my tailbone. One's a really big blue scorpion, 'cause I'm a Scorpio. So that just represents me and I'm a pretty strong Scorpio. I actually believe in the things that describe a Scorpio and think that I kind of link with that. And the other one is my boyfriend's name in Japanese, which is Alex. I put it in Japanese because I thought, it means something, he speaks Japanese, he's not Japanese but he speaks it, and he understands that, and I understand that. And only people who are important to us have to know what it is. But I thought it would mean a lot for our relationship, so I did that. They turned out a bit bigger than I thought they would. Like they drew it, and said it will be about this big, and once they actually did it, it was actually an extra quarter bigger than what I thought it would be. So it's quite big and quite bright. I got them done when I turned 21. I thought I'd do something different to celebrate my 21st birthday. And I've always wanted a tattoo. I didn't just... I wanted to try something different and that's probably why I got it. Yeah. That's about it.

Participants with Rite of Passage as the Reason for Getting a Tattoo and

Philosophy as the Reason for the Design of the Tattoo

PF2: I had left my second husband and it was my birthday and I was talking to a girlfriend about tattoos and we decided that for our birthdays we were going to get a tattoo and mine was my 30th birthday and it signified for me more of an initiation almost it was like suddenly I was free of the past and the ex and my life was opening up for me as who I was as a single person. And so it was a celebration of that - not only my thirtieth but a celebration of being single so that is why I got my tattoo. Now it was a

butterfly and it's a very small one and it's just down here, I suppose, inside my hip. It's a tiny little thing went down to Central Station, I can't remember what it's called "central station tattoos" I think who apparently are the best tattooists in Sydney. They've won heaps of awards and I had this great big burly sort of, um, bikie doing it and he was down there between my legs it was really quite uncomfortable. I chose a butterfly because it was tiny and it was a beautiful little creature.

PF6: Ok yeah, the first one I got was on my left hip, it's a Celtic knot. The second one I got is on my back its Celtic design with bands that come out its right on my spine that comes up reaching up to the other two. And the one I have on my right hip is a triskell. It's got origins in paganism and in Celtic history. Kind of like protection, represents three, karma, that sort of thing

PF42: I got my tattoo October last year and it's an Egyptian ankh and it symbolises eternal life. Basically I said to myself, when I turned 18, it was going to be pretty much a pinnacle in my life, so I said I'll get a tattoo to kind of signify that. That's kind of why I got it and when I was getting it, it didn't really hurt that much. I expected the pain to be a lot worse than what it was. And then it was like over and done with. The initial outline wasn't as bad as the colouring in, the colouring in hurt. It was a pretty good experience. I'm still pretty happy with it now. Like I don't regret doing it. Cause one of my mottos is "don't live with any regrets." Its in a nice spot, well I think it's a nice spot and I'll be able to cover it when I'm older, so yeah.

PF44: Well, I have four tattoos. I got my first one in about the year 2000, roughly. I'd always wanted a tattoo from the age of about 15 onwards and obviously I

wasn't allowed to have one, it was against the law, and then I was seeing a fellow by the name of Paul, who said I don't want a girlfriend with tattoos so I waited and I waited and I waited until about the year 2000. And I'd actually broken up with Paul and so I went and got a tattoo and I was so excited because I always wanted one. And I got a frog on my foot and it really hurt, it really hurt, it was like someone sticking a knife in between your toes and twisting it and it really hurt but it was so cool and I was really excited about having it and all that kind of stuff so, that was really, really exciting. I've got a bee on my hip and that was, I'm not even sure, I think because I love tattoos, I just love them and so I got the bee that was just really lovely and people are like oh, that looks really cool. I think it was just one of those things that you just go oh I've got one, might as well have two, you know. And then after that I started thinking about wanting another tattoo. They say they're addictive and I'm sure that they are, I'm sure. But umm, yeah, I've got, I started thinking about it and I thought well where would I get one because I want them in a place where I can hide them if I want to hide them. But, so that I can show them off if I want to show them off. Because I think it's a very important social thing that if you want to have tattoos you want to have, be, not come across with you know, the one on the shoulder or you know, the chick from the garage, you know, down the street at the welfare homes and all that. So I've got them in discrete places where I've hidden them. So I've got, the next one I got after the bee was the gecko on my ankle and it's wrapped around and it's really cool. I love it. And I'm actually planning another one. I'm going to get a gecko on the top of my foot so it's like a gecko trail going up my foot. Because I just love nature. They're all animals. And I think when my son turned 2, no 3, it wasn't too long ago actually, only about a year ago, I'd been thinking about another tattoo for a little while and going with the theme of wildlife and lizards and frogs. I went to a tattoo place and I said look, I really want a tattoo, not sure

what to get, want to make it wildlife, what have you got? And they, you know, said oh well here's a couple books, went through a couple books and I just saw this lizard one and it's just awesome and I went, I like that but it's too small and they go oh we can blow it up so they blew it up and I got to about oh say, 4 inches high- I don't know if that's 4 inches, I don't know how much it turns out to be... Yeah and then I changed the colouring on it because I wasn't happy with the colouring and they put that in between my shoulder blades which is another place if I have my hair down you can't see it and if I'm wearing a jumper or a t-shirt or that kind of thing you can't see it but if I want to show it off then I show it off and people are like, wow that's really, I didn't know you had one and I'm like yeah, well I love it, so... Yeah, the only downside is, having the ones on my feet, they wear, they get a bit, the colour seems to fade quicker because there's a lot of wear and tear on your feet, pull your shoes on and off, sweating, blah blah, so you get, they wear away a bit. I've had the frog re-inked on my foot once, probably about the same time as I got the lizard on my back, so yeah.

Participants with Wanted for a Long Time as the Reason for Getting a Tattoo and Philosophy as the Reason for the Design of the Tattoo

WF28: Ok. The first one is butterfly and that's simply because I love butterflies. And the other one's – they were both designed by the same guy and the other one is really personal to me. It's my ancient Libran glyph - a piece of it - my zodiac glyph.... yeah and it's got really nice swirly bits around it and that. yeah. They're both very very personal, that's probably what I think about them.

WF37: The first one I got when I was 19, 20, I can't remember now, it was a long time ago, umm, what's that, a quarter of a century. I was at the Sydney motor bike

show, the international motor bike show, so that's the little one, just up here, about the only one you can't see these days. Just a little ghosty guy, this little fiddly one, got it actually was to cover up a vaccination scar from when I went overseas earlier. That was back in the days when you used to get vaccinations to go overseas. That was before plane travel, that's how long ago that is. The other ones I got, I don't know, probably over the next five years, they're all within that 5 -6 year period. The other ones were all when I was involved in motorbike culture for want of a better term.

WF46: Umm, I always wanted to get a tattoo. I don't do piercings and stuff like that so that it was something that was me. And I wanted to get it as a teen, younger, lucky I didn't because the one I wanted to get was, it was a bit, bit not me, so it was good thing that I actually waited, until I made my decision. And I was looking around and I was thinking. One day I dreamt, that I was watching myself riding a bike and I had this tattoo. So, the next day I used to work in a publishing company - magazines, so the next day I got some people from the design department to design the woman. Cause it's a lady praying in front of a cross. And I don't know why or how I got about to do it but I got it and somebody designed the woman and somebody did the cross and put it together and I got it done. Yeah, so it was just something I liked as well and I was like, whoa, it's like I was looking for this symbol but I couldn't find it and then I dreamt it, so I was like ok. So that was how I got around to doing it.

Participants with Wanted for a Long Time as the Reason for Getting a Tattoo and Remembrance as the Reason for the Design of the Tattoo

WR26: I've got two tattoos. First one I had for six years, second one for about 8 months. I had probably always wanted in some way to have a tattoo and eventually...

I've seen them on my friends - I thought it was pretty cool. But that's not how I wanted it. I wanted a tattoo to be discreet, because in my profession I can't have them hanging out on my arms. But so that I knew that it was there and when on the weekends, coz on the weekends I look like a different person, I don't look particularly like a dentist. Because with the short hair, goatee and motorbike. It's just a different part of me. So not the quiet retiring professional. And having the tattoo, it makes me just, I get the feeling that it is, it just makes me feel different or fit more into the role, actually it probably is a bit of a role, that I'm a motorcyclist. Although I've had the tattoo a lot longer than I've had the Harley. It makes me feel, it makes me feel good. I particularly like the later one that I got.

WR59: I don't know why it was always something that I had wanted, I can't even recall where at first you know I saw it or whatever, but I had wanted it for a long time and I remember asking my father when I was probably 16 or 17 before I was of legal age you know to go on my own, and we discussed it and he was never against that sort of thing, but I he was like its something you really need to think about. I had and it never went away, I always just wanted it because in my mind it was just a symbol of life, in Egypt the ankh it's, you know, the hooped cross, it's life and fertility and you know, yeah and I've never wanted to get any more, its never been something that I have wanted to do like full body art, like its somewhere where I forget where it is. I think most people who are in my life probably, my family knows its there but where ever it is but it was really something more for me. So, yeah. I had it done and I really, I don't know why at the time, and I still like the fact that it is there because to me it is part of the heritage of the family and everything to do with that. But yeah, I ended up not getting it done till I was eighteen, you know, we discussed it and he said if you really

want it done that much he'd come, you know he's sign, you can have parental consent, but I said look I can wait and I didn't get it done like the second I turned 18, I waited a bit longer and I went and saw a few people about it, and yeah. But it was just something that I knew I wouldn't let up on until I got it. I am very happy. I have never regretted, you know, getting it. I think it's something that if my daughter asks about it, it is not just a picture or something I had put there for no reason, you know, it does have symbolism to me so that's the most important thing, that I don't necessarily agree with just tattoos everywhere, so yeah, but it's personal. My husband he is not particularly fond of it, he never was. I was with him at the time but not married, obviously he was just my partner at that stage, but again he just sort of said it is your choice and it meant something so that is about it.

Appendix H

Opposite of tattoos for each participant

Participant	Opposite of tattoo
RB1	shrinking violet/closed book
PF2	no tattoo
BB3	not being rebellious
DA4	fear of commitment
BB5	anti-establishment, something rebellious
PF6	stick-on tattoo, death symbols, inner evil
RA7	stuck in normal life = death, being the living dead
FF9	equal amount of effort in other direction - apathy - lack of interest in comic books and illustrator and philosophy
FF10	Spanish conquistador with a cross - something representing lack of morality in western society.
DS11	other arm, opposite year in Chinese calendar. Ultimate opposite - no tattoo
PA12	gargoyle - garish and evil-looking
RF13	not having it at all
DA14	stay the way I was and never change
BR15	tattoo of the devil
AA16	different pattern - something ugly. Something I wouldn't show. Not having it at all. Tribal tattoo has no meaning - arms are opposites of each other
BB17	heart with "mum" in it - meaningless
RF20	Nazi symbol, swastika, or remove star. Back - antonyms of life, love, laughter - pretty picture/flash that has no meaning. A dragon with Asian symbols I can't understand
BB21	no tattoo
RF22	happy, bubbly, spur of the moment pretty picture of a girl with big boobs on a skateboard with a butterfly on her head. Non-significant, spur of the moment, just looks pretty. Big metal head with big skull and crossbones or a band's tattoo.
AA23	would have a theme, more detail, put more thought into it
PB24	fish: bird, stars: Wearing clothes (same thing but not permanent)
DA25	wouldn't be me. Plain Jane - nothing interesting about me. Boring and lifeless (uninteresting, not dead!)
WR26	having them removed
DS27	meaningless flash, standard stuff like skulls, naked women, knives and roses
WF28	not to have them, butterfly: bird, Glyph: Taurus glyph (opposite Libra on zodiac)
RR29	have nothing - be dull and boring
RS30	something anti-rebellious, a cross necklace
PS31	barbed wire or tribal on arm

Participant	Opposite of tattoo
GG32	something of no existence. A bracelet without meaning - you can take it off. Taking the tattoo off
PS33	no tattoo, photo of boyfriend
AA35	not having tattoo - feeling less decorated
BF36	something ugly, not tribal, evil square frog, something jagged and evil-looking
WF37	removal, denial of who you once were, but also a reminder of it, without the soul
RR38	daylight, light and clouds - pretty, eg butterfly, flower, heart
RA39	The opposite of my tattoos to me, would be not having them but having to do something to compensate for them, being a little bit more outrageous in some other facet, maybe. If tattoos didn't exist, or if I had never decided to get them then I would still be everything I am, but more so. Maybe 10% of each other thing, or maybe a lot more in one thing. If the tattoos spread who I am, between the other things that say who I am like the bikes and the stuff.
RB40	great sense of personal loss
RB41	unhappy, grumpy bastard, an ugly tattoo
PF42	an Atheist approach, you just die and there's nothing beyond that
AA43	having ugly tattoos, higgledy piggledy ones
PF44	be more gregarious than she is now, having them garish, completely visible, on boobs, topless chicks on Harleys, dolphins, roses, unicorns
DF45	devil, something that doesn't represent what the tattoo does
WF46	lady looking at the devil, a devil thing
TF47	not having a faith
DA48	snake: boring leg, feel naked
AA49	something that's not there
BB50	Mickey Mouse: Donald Duck, skull and crossbones. Band: never having had it
BR51	a flower, a surf brand (opposite to chemical brothers), fluffy chicken (opposite to cow horns)
TR52	a piercing (in her lip) - something I got as a retaliation
AA53	being a person who doesn't think about things
AA54	me without tattoos - back being ignored. I felt plain, tattoos made me stand out
AA55	not having them there
FR56	not having a tattoo but wanting one, not having a tattoo because I was worried what others would think but still want one
DB57	a picture on the wall - a copy of my tattoo
RB58	forgetting the cat, not being a greenie, not being me, I wouldn't experiment
WR59	a cross (death)
BS60	wearing a minister's collar, individually: a flowery tattoo with "mum", rose & snake ARE opposite... opposite of rose is thorn, reverse of saying

Transcripts of Interviews, Repertory Grids and photographs where taken

1	RGT subgroup Aesthetics	4
1.1	RDT subgroup Aesthetics	4
	Participant AA16	4
	Participant AA23	20
	Participant AA35	50
	Participant AA43	72
	Participant AA49	96
	Participant AA53	108
	Participant AA54	134
	Participant AA55	163
2	RGT subgroup Belonging.....	182
2.1	RDT subgroup Belonging.....	182
	Participant BB3	182
	Participant BB5	192
	Participant BB17	214
	Participant BB21	230
	Participant BB50	242
2.2	RDT subgroup Personal Symbol.....	255
	Participant BS60	255
2.3	RDT subgroup Philosophy	290
	Participant BF36.....	290
2.4	RDT subgroup Remembrance	310
	Participant BR15	310
	Participant BR51	322
3	RGT subgroup Impulsive	338
3.1	RDT subgroup Aesthetics	338
	Participant DA4	338
	Participant DA14	352
	Participant DA25	381
	Participant DA48	402
3.2	RDT subgroup Belonging.....	419
	Participant DB57	419
3.3	RDT subgroup Personal Symbol.....	432
	Participant DS11	432
	Participant DS27	446

3.4	RDT subgroup Philosophy	461
	Participant DF45	461
4	RGT subgroup Philosophy	473
4.1	RDT subgroup Philosophy	473
	Participant FF9.....	473
	Participant FF10.....	494
4.2	RDT subgroup Remembrance	506
	Participant FR56	506
5	RGT subgroup Psychological Growth	522
5.1	RDT subgroup Psychological Growth	522
	Participant GG32.....	522
6	RGT subgroup Rebellion.....	541
6.1	RDT subgroup Philosophy	541
	Participant TF47	541
6.2	RDT subgroup Remembrance	554
	Participant TR52	554
7	RGT subgroup Remembrance	569
7.1	RDT subgroup Aesthetics	569
	Participant RA7	569
	Participant RA39	599
7.2	RDT subgroup Belonging	644
	Participant RB1	644
	Participant RB40	669
	Participant RB41	705
	Participant RB58	735
7.3	RDT subgroup Personal Symbol.....	759
	Participant RS30	759
7.4	RDT subgroup Philosophy	777
	Participant RF13	777
	Participant RF20	794
	Participant RF22	818
7.5	RDT subgroup Remembrance	844
	Participant RR29.....	844
	Participant RR38.....	869
8	RGT subgroup Rite of Passage	884
8.1	RDT subgroup Aesthetics	884
	Participant PA12	884

8.2	RDT subgroup Belonging	898
	Participant PB24	898
8.3	RDT subgroup Personal Symbol.....	911
	Participant PS31	911
	Participant PS33	922
8.4	RDT subgroup Philosophy	938
	Participant PF2.....	938
	Participant PF6.....	958
	Participant PF42.....	982
	Participant PF44.....	998
9	RGT subgroup Wanted for a Long Time	1017
9.1	RDT subgroup Philosophy	1017
	Participant WF28.....	1017
	Participant WF37.....	1032
	Participant WF46.....	1070
9.2	RDT subgroup Remembrance	1081
	Participant WR26	1081
	Participant WR59	1100

1 RGT subgroup Aesthetics

1.1 RDT subgroup Aesthetics

Participant AA16
Male, 26 years old

Interview date: 10/2/2006

Participant: I've just had a lot of work done here, I'm still halfway through it now. I've just finished the top half of my arm. Basically what I'm doing is something that represents everything that's happened in my life so far and things that are going on and stuff like that and I'd say the rest will be the same.

Desley: and then you'll do the bottom half

Participant: yeah. all the way. my tattooist is always busy so you have to book in months and months ahead so it's a real slow process with him. I'll get through it. I'm coming up with ideas, of actual designs to fit in with the themes is hard to, yeah. I don't know what else I can tell you.

Desley: so what about the other ones, like when did you get them...

Participant: This one I had last time I talked to you, so about 2001 I got that one, the whole thing. I've had that since re-done, gone over again coz it wasn't done real well and just to get it a bit more even, coloured in sort of thing. And that shading around the outside you can see. After that in 2004 I got the Southern Cross there, a big southern cross and it's only been the last 6 months I've done the outside there

Desley: so, start with that one. How would you describe what that's a picture of?

Participant: just tribal stuff. I don't even know what the reasoning was or anything, I just liked that sort of style

Desley: so was it a picture you saw somewhere?

Participant: yeah. I don't have the picture any more but I remember I cut it out of a magazine, it was an ad for something and it was a guy he had his forearm done and I took that in and said that's the sort of style that I want.

Desley: so the tattooist designed it

Participant: yeah. it wasn't the same as the picture, it was that sort of tribal design. He sort of designed it as, he drew it free-hand and we did it from there.

Desley: so he had to make it fit your skin?

Participant: yeah. He did it free-hand and he did a good job. The design of it.

Desley: and then so you got the Southern Cross?

Participant: yep.

Desley: and that was to represent

Participant: oh, Australia. But it's not the Australian one stars, it's the 5 point stars, as you can see

Desley: so what do the Australian ones have?

Participant: 6 points, yeah, one for every state.

Desley: so why 5 and not 6?

Participant: um, I just like the star, it looked better, rather than the other one, it was too roundy. I liked that one better. That's the only reason they're five points. That's what it represents.

Desley: so what kind of things have you got on this big piece?

Participant: woman's face here

Desley: so is that anyone in particular?

Participant: um, not really, it's just, it just represents female in my life. Could be Briony or could be anyone, no-one in particular

Desley: so any women in your life rather than your feminine side

Participant: yeah it's definitely not that. Um, palm tree, buildings you can see, that represents the Gold Coast where I left to join the Navy 7 years ago, so that's what that is. Dice with seven on every face, that's basically just luck. Like I feel lucky for what I've gotten in the last seven years, and achieved and that. On the back there you can see praying hands, still healing, with a motorbike chain around it, instead of rosary beads. That's um, I'm not a religious person but I liked the thing of that and that's basically for the people I've known who have died.

Desley: so was it you liked the look of it, or the idea of praying...

Participant: um, I just, it's for... to represent friends of mine who have died. Sort of, prayed. I'm not a religious person so I got a motor bike chain. one died in a motor bike accident, that's what that is and there's six other people as well but we haven't finished that yet, that's supposed to have some other stuff on it as well.

Desley: so there's a spider web there too

Participant: um, spider web, that's just basically to fill in the gap.

Desley: oh, ok. So that doesn't represent anything?

Participant: nup.

Desley: ok. So this is money?

Participant: money. Yep.

Desley: so that just stands for money, not anything else?

Participant: just for money. I don't know, like, yeah.

Desley: so with the motor bike chain, do you ride a motor bike?

Participant: I used to, yeah. I raced motor bikes for a long time. I sort of wanted to get something on there that represented that side of me as well, so it's got a few different meanings.

Desley: so do you know what else is going on that?

Participant: yep. It's, on the inside of my arm I'm getting a car, the front end of a Mercedes, on the inside here. The number plate is a special number plate, it's going to be the tail number of a helicopter that crashed last year. It was four of my friends died on that, um, so I'm getting a car there and my name on the outside, "Stewart", and a little thing saying "riding high, living free"

Desley: ok. So that's like your motto?

Participant: yeah. it's, it's. I like that saying. It was... the guy who started the Hells Angels, that was his title of his first book he wrote. It's just a cool sort of, turn of phrase, or whatever, yeah.

Desley: so are you able to say why you chose the tribal, for example?

Participant: the only reason I chose that was for the way it looked. No other reason, no meanings or anything. Whereas this one has got more meaning. This side has sort of meaning whereas that I was 19 and I was about 20 so yeah, that was more for looks. This is more because it has meaning

Desley: it's got all different meanings in together

Participant: yeah.

Desley: ok. So why did you put them on your arms?

Participant: probably because I think my arms are favourite part of my body, is my arms

Desley: physically or?

Participant: yeah. physically. I don't know, I feel a bit self-conscious about my chest, back, everywhere. So my arms

Desley: shoulder?

Participant: yeah, yeah.

Desley: is there somewhere you wouldn't put a tattoo?

Participant: no. I've sort of considered everywhere, I've even thought about tattoos on my head, on my skull. Probably on my face would be the only sort of place, coz I have... I nearly got stuff on my neck, but I'm glad I didn't but um

Desley: why's that

Participant: well, that's probably a place I wouldn't, but I wouldn't totally rule it out, but at that moment no I wouldn't, but who knows in the future?

Desley: yeah. so how long did you think about the tattoos before you got them?

Participant: um. Normally.... With this one it was months, probably about 3 months

Desley: for the tribal

Participant: yeah. same with the Southern Cross

Desley: I think last time I spoke to you

Participant: yeah, we talked about that. So I thought about that for a long time. The rest I... I mean I've sort of wanted to do something. The actual designs, the guy up there, he draws them up and I don't see them until the day that I'm getting them done, yeah

Desley: so if you didn't like it, would he then change it?

Participant: he could, yeah. it's just that I've happened to like everything he's done so far. Me and him get along really well, he knows what I sorta like, he likes the same sort of things and he's got you know, I rock up and he's always got a good picture for me

Desley: so he's done all this arm?

Participant: yeah

Desley: and he fixed up the other one?

Participant: no that was another guy that fixed that up. In Canberra

Desley: so where did you get that one in the first place?

Participant: Gold Coast.

Desley: so do you still like your tattoos?

Participant: yeah, yeah I do.

Desley: would you change anything about them?

Participant: ah, maybe this one I'd probably bring it down to there

Desley: tribal. Make it longer? is that something you've thought about

Participant: sort of, but at the moment I'll probably concentrate on this one. But na, I don't have any regrets, that's for sure. I like 'em.

Desley: so you wouldn't want to get them removed?

Participant: no, no never

Desley: do you think once you've finished that sleeve you'll get another tattoo

Participant: yeah. that's where I think probably on my back, across the top of my back. Coz I do worry about that. I'll run out of space here and I don't want to be fully covered in them you know. But it's something I'll keep doing

Desley: so what would be the first thing you'd think about? Where to have it, or what you'll put on there, or you really want that guy to keep doing it?

Participant: yeah. probably choose my back and it'd probably be writing more so than pictures on my back

Desley: so why would that be?

Participant: yeah, I don't know. I can't think of pictures that I'd want to put on my back.

Desley: but you can think of words?

Participant: yeah, like writing and stuff like that, I like that sort of look. Like you see people with their names across their back, I do like that

Desley: is that in that scripty...

Participant: yeah that old, not old English

Desley: tudor?

Participant: yeah, it's like a...

Desley: sort of like diamond shapes on the edges

Participant: yeah. you see it quite a bit, yeah

Desley: how does the pain factor into it for you?

Participant: it's not even really an issue. It does hurt sometimes like up underneath my arm hurts but it would never stop me from doing it.

Desley: is it something you look forward to?

Participant: no. it's not something I get a kick out of or anything.

Desley: do you get some kind of kick out of actually when it's over, going yay, I put up with that?

Participant: yeah, sort of.

Desley: I was talking to another guy today and someone said to him, oh, you've got a tatt, did you cry? And he's like no, did you? And the other guy's like "oh no, of course not" but he said he must have, otherwise why would you ask that question. And he had from there to there, he didn't go underneath his arm.

Participant: yeah. no, it's not something. Maybe afterwards, but not straight away, I'm normally glad to get out of there. I'm normally going yeah, right that's enough. I've had enough

Desley: do you see the pain, though, as some kind of physical challenge or something like that?

Participant: um. Sort of, but it's sort of something that once you're there you can't control it. you can't sort of stop him halfway. So you just gotta bear it and just cop it.

Desley: I've read where all the endorphins kick in and it doesn't really actually hurt that much

Participant: yeah. sometimes I feel it'll be going and it just goes numb, you can't feel a thing. And then other times you can feel everything.

Desley: so do you think that depends on just how you are on the day?

Participant: yeah. and sort of, where it is on your body and that, I suppose. Yeah.

Desley: do you think of, like this one's stuff that's happened to you, on your right arm, which I assume includes the Southern Cross which I think you said was about going to Iraq

Participant: yeah. a few years ago

Desley: is this one like a separate thing?

Participant: yeah. it's totally just for looks. It basically has no meaning

Desley: so when you talk about looks, what would be the opposite of looks for you?

Participant: I'm not sure. It's just like buying a flash pair of shoes or flash car or something like that. That's the only reason. I really like tattoos and then wanted to try to get one. I just like the look of them. There was no meaning to it or anything. I just like that style, it appealed to me

Desley: why is having flash cars or nice shoes and stuff like that important to you?

Participant: I'm not sure. Probably I grew up in a fairly basic sort of house, you know and in the last eight years I've come a long way, I think, I've bought three houses, I drive a BMW now and it's a big thing for me. Choose my life is. That's how I gauge my success, sort of what I've accomplished. It means things to me

Desley: so being able to have the money to buy things you want

Participant: yeah. the freedom to do what I want, more so

Desley: because when you've got money, you've got freedom?

Participant: yeah. it's helped a lot, that's for sure

Desley: so what about what you've accomplished in your career is that different?

Participant: no, I think that's the same sort of thing. That's sort of represented by... what I have or what I've bought or whatever are representing how I've done in my career, I've succeeded, I've done well in my work and that allows me, that's just my way of showing it. more to myself than anyone else. I don't care what other people think.

Desley: so with your work, I can't remember what your title was

Participant: I'm an aircraft maintenance engineer

Desley: is that something where you get promotions

Participant: yeah. and I've been promoted like in the minimum time, so, yeah, it's been big. Actually I've only got five weeks to go in the Navy and I'm out

Desley: what are you going to do?

Participant: I'm going to travel around South America.

Desley: yeah?

Participant: yeah, then I'm going to Canada, trying to get work there, so, we'll see how that goes. It'll be a bit different without any money coming in. see how I go

Desley: with the tattoos on your right arm, to remember things that have happened, is there something else you could have done that would have had the same effect for you?

Participant: like other than get a tattoo?

Desley: yep

Participant: yeah. probably would have been. Like you could have put up photos up around your house of my friends or that sort of thing. But for me that's the easiest and best way to do something.

Desley: what do you mean by easiest?

Participant: not so much easiest, but it's the first thing I think of sort of thing. For me it's the best way. To get a tattoo on you to represent someone else, it's a big thing really.

Desley: so it's a nice tribute to the people that died, for example

Participant: yeah.

Desley: so with the one on your left arm that you said was more for show, is there something else you could have done there? Like you mentioned buying a nice car.

Participant: yeah. um, I'm not sure. That's the only thing I think of. I suppose there's jewellery, body jewellery and all that sort of stuff as well, but...same sort of thing

Desley: so would you have got say a piercing instead?

Participant: yeah. when I was 17 I had my nipple pierced, that was more just a, my mate got it, so I got it. yeah, I'm not sure I can think of anything more. I suppose the money I spent on that could have been spent on, new clothes, or something like that

Desley: do you think of yourself as a person who has tattoos, or are you a tattooed person?

Participant: a person with tattoos

Desley: so do you feel like they're part of who you are?

Participant: yeah.

Desley: so, I've got a trick question for you. What would be the opposite of your tattoos? If you want to think about each arm separately...

Participant: the opposite?

Desley: yeah. so if we look at your left arm, what would be the opposite?

Participant: {long pause} as in tattoos, what tattoo?

Desley: you can take it any way you like. Some people have said not having the tattoo, some have said a different picture, on a different place. However you think. My theoretical basis, the guy says you can't know what something is unless you know what it's not.

Participant: what it's not, yeah.

Desley: So I'm trying to work out what it's not.

Participant: the opposite would be doing something else. Would be a totally different arm.

Desley: but would it be like a different pattern on the same arm, like something ugly...

Participant: yeah. something I wouldn't show. something you'd keep covered all the time.

Desley: so would that be it for you, or would it be just not having it at all, or would it be something else?

Participant: not having it at all.

Desley: and would that apply to this one as well, or... so the opposite of this one that has all the stuff

Participant: the opposite of that would probably be this. Coz it's got no meaning.

Desley: but the opposite of that would be not having anything?

Participant: yeah. If that makes sense.

Desley: yeah, it does.

Participant: I suppose you could say they're opposite to each other, in that way. Yeah, we'll go with that, now that I think about it.

Desley: so, when you had the tattoos, were you by yourself?

Participant: um. This side (tribal), yeah, this side, na, there's always been someone there most times

Desley: so was it someone who went to get a tattoo as well, or someone who went

Participant: just someone who was with me. Briony come once, another mate of mine, another two mates have been with me on two other times

Desley: so is that just more about them

Participant: no, it's just more that we were in Sydney, they were with me and we went together. They were interested. One of my mates, he's got tattoos all over him. He was actually interested, he sort of wanted to talk to the guy and that

Desley: so he was thinking about getting one?

Participant: yeah. just seeing what he was like

Desley: so what do you think other people think when they see them?

Participant: some people like them, some people hate them

Desley: so what kind of reactions have you had?

Participant: um. Some people come up and lift my shirt up and have a look. Ones that don't like me don't say anything normally

Desley: so do you think it's enough that they're a bit intimidated, that's why they don't say anything?

Participant: no. maybe, but I don't know how I'd be intimidating

Desley: I talked to a guy yesterday and he had two here and he wore a muscle shirt and coz they weren't on the side, they were on the front of his arms

Participant: yeah they stand out

Desley: who knows! Did you ever worry enough about upsetting someone that you thought about not having them?

Participant: only my mum. My mum and my grandparents. It's never stopped me. Might have slowed me down, but not stop me.

Desley: do you think it's had any negative effects on your life? Like has it stopped you getting promotions?

Participant: no. in the Navy it's sort of accepted, sort of thing. Maybe out in the real world it might be different. So far, so good

Desley: you mentioned that one of your friends has got tattoos, do you know lots of people that have them?

Participant: yeah. most people do.

Desley: in the Navy?

Participant: yeah

Desley: so most people you know?

Participant: yeah

Desley: so what about your family?

Participant: oh, the younger, my younger, like my sister and my brother-in-law, my uncles, but not, no females in my family besides my sister and none of the older sort of

Desley: generation

Participant: oh, my father does, he was in prison for years. He's got tattoos all over him. But as far as my mother aunties and that goes, nup

Desley: do you feel like you identify with any particular group. Like having the tattoo mean that you identify with people in the Navy more

Participant: I don't think so, no. I don't identify with one particular group. To other people I might but I don't think I do

Desley: is there anything else about your tattoos that you think is important? As far as your view of yourself

Participant: no. maybe, I like attention, I like people to look at me. That's probably the only relevance

Desley: but that applies not just to the tattoos, to the car

Participant: yeah. probably yeah.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	2	5	4	3	Sad
Patient	5	1	1	1	3	5	5	5	2	3	5	2	Intolerant
Caring	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	3	2	5	3	1	Angry
Kind	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	4	3	1	Selfish
Sense of humour	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	3	1	5	3	2	Dull
Sociable	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	3	4	2	Loner
Friendly	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	4	3	2	Nasty
Active	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	5	5	1	Lazy
Confident	3	1	1	1	1	4	3	5	1	5	3	4	Shy
Organised	4	1	1	1	1	4	4	1	5	5	5	2	Shit fight
Hard working	2	1	2	1	3	2	3	1	3	5	5	1	Unmotivated
Honest	2	1	1	1	3	2	2	1	2	5	5	2	Deceitful

Participant: Well I got me first tattoo when I was about 17, in Wollongong, just around the corner from the town Cinemas, where the cab rank is, upstairs. I was underage, but I looked overage. And I was working at the time, yeah, in the transport industry. Like I was a young bloke working in trucks. My dad had trucks. I just wanted to get a tattoo. And when I went to the tattooist, well he's still doing tattoos today. He went over to the U.K. for a few years and then he came back. He's still one of the well known, you could say highly regarded tattooists around here, Dave Rand. I got my first one when I was 17 and now I am 41. I have added the children's names as I've, you know, got married and I didn't get my wife's name in there. She wouldn't let me. But I do have the children's name on one arm and the other one on the other arm. Yeah, well when I went to the tattoos, he said, if you've never had tattoos, before, you know, that's a fairly big tattoo for the first go, which was the panther and the girl right there on the right hand arm - just the panther and the girl.

Desley: Did you have the background as well?

Participant: the background? No that was done later. I just had the panther at the time, with the lady on it. Yeah and then I liked them so a few weeks later I went and got the snake and the eagle. And then I just got the bulldog and the rose and I just started getting more and more and more. But for some reason I never ever got one there. I never got a round to it, or I was going to put hinges in here and spider webs on the elbows. I was going to do all sorts of things. Then I had my marriage breakup with Zita, my wife in about 2001 and then we got back over 12 months ago now, around 2004, 2005. And before we got back together I had that scorpion tattooed on me neck, but I am not a Scorpio. I am a Leo. She went off her head when we still weren't together. She was at her mother's place, "oh no, look at your neck! Look what you've done. You've ruined your good looks" and this and that. I said, oh well it's personal preference. I wanted to get it and I got it done. I'm old enough and I'm not silly. So I got it done and yeah, but. I used to regret it when I was younger. Especially when you meet a nice girl, coz I met Zita, you know, good family and I'm a decent bloke but the tattoos makes you look rough. Because I ride a Harley, you know. Used to be a bit of a fighter. Bit of a bluer around the pubs and that. When I first met Zita, the Europeans were like, Oh my god this bloke's a criminal. Coz you don't see them in Portugal you see. Once you got their respect, you know, you started taking

them on outings and days out, they can see you are a decent bloke, they didn't have any problem and then they don't even look twice at me now with the tattoos. I'm in a higher profile in my job at work. I am the operations manager. Used to be a truck driver all me life until probably 3 years ago. Basically people look at me different but I am not. You know some people look and I say don't let the tattoos scare you, like I'm here to do a job and I do a good job in a pretty big company. Probably 8 and a half million dollars worth of stuff we turn over every year. And I run the whole show. And I train at weights everyday at the gym. But I've never regretted getting them. I've always put cream on them at night time. Coz they've been on there since I was 17, so what's that, 25 years. So they've lasted fairly well. They had faded a little bit from the sun. You can see I shave my arms, because I train weights at the gym. That one was cut there when I was younger, I had a cyst in my arm. He said "I'll have to cut your tattoo." I said, oh well if you've got to cut it, you've got to cut it, you know. But I've got there "true til death" on there but I remember I got me mum's name there, I'll never forget that, because I thought that, I'd always have that, you know. So I got my kids' names on me and they love it. They can't even walk, because they are only babies. But where their name is on your arm, they've got to walk on that hand. That's my side of dad. They're funny. So yeah. I don't regret getting them. You know, Jayden my little boy, he says to mum, I can't wait to get tattoos and ear rings like my dad. Cause he adores me, you know. I said, you can't get tattoos. The other day he says "oh dad, can you write on me, on my arm". So I signed my name on his arm and he said 'aaaaaa, dad you hurt me." I said, Jayden, tattoos are 10 times worse. There's blood running out of ya, they wipe it, they draw over it,. Oh I don't know about tattoos now, dad, you know. But if he wanted to get one I'd go with him, you know when he is old enough, but his mother would just loose the plot about it. But what do you do, if they're old enough, you know, so they're going to go and get it done behind your back anyway. My dad wouldn't go with me, see. My dad was like, bad luck, you go and get it, it's your own silly fault. But I'd go with my children and advise them, clean, sterile, you know. So I've never regretted getting them. You do, you know, round the Harley and you've got the wrap-around sunglasses and a black hat on. I've had old women say to me, you look disgusting. And I say you know, I'm not hurting you, I'm just riding me motor bike. And I've got all the tattoos, short hair, the neat hair, tidier than me mates, they've got the shaved head, long at the back. They look as rough as guts and some of them haven't even got tattoos, you know? But that's personal preference you know. So, but I'd advise the kids not to get them. Specially girls, you know. I don't like them on girls. Specially my daughter.

Desley: So with each of them, was there a particular reason you got that picture?

Participant: When you go into a tattoo studio, the walls are full, you know. And you can pick out lions, tigers, dolphins, hearts, crosses, love birds, or you can take in a surfing magazine, or something you've seen in a ladies' magazine. He will trace it for you and then say I'd like that across your bum, or I'd like it on me ankle, or whatever. But I went in there, I just walked in and I said I want a lady with a panther. I thought that'll look cool, you now, 17 year old.

Desley: You just liked the look of it?

Participant: Personal preference, you know. It was what I wanted. So, at the time you just look up there

Desley: So that's the case with each of them? You went in and picked?

Participant: This one on my neck, the scorpion, I had that drawn. It was supposed to be tribal. But all the others were just on the wall, bar the children's names. He just drew that in pen and traced it. If you've never had a tattoo they are quite painful. Anywhere where the sun gets. You find on your arms, they are not too bad. But on your back, is tender. I got one on my bum. The cheeks of your bum, like it's quite tender.

Desley: someone said anywhere there's bone. But I was talking to a guy the other day, he had got one right in the middle of his spine and he didn't feel it. And he thought that it had gone numb from all the other stuff around.

Participant: Yeah. That one up there on my left wrist on the gristle there, it was like an electric shock. The one on the neck I thought that would hurt

Desley: it looks like it would hurt

Participant: but it was not too bad. The outlines are the worst. Coz by that time it's pretty numb, once they're coloured in. A lot of people get the outline done, think, Ah that's enough I can't stand it any more. But then they've got to let it heal and go back for a second dose. Unless it's a huge back tattoo. But just the average sized hundred dollar tattoo, you're better off to get it finished. Coz then it clears, you put your cream, you never pull the scab, cause you see that

there, it's white? I pulled the scab out. It pulls the colour out. You always keep your cream on it and look after it. Yeah, but you do bleed fairly a bit. Especially when you get a long lines, if you get a long line, and you feel it burn nearly to the end there and they wipe the blood and then they go round and round.

Desley: So was the background there when you got the big lines?

Participant: Yeah the big lines at the tail. It's like aaaah. By the time it's done there you can feel it's red hot. You feel like it cutting your skin. I had them all done by the same bloke, but the name which was tattooed there on me left wrist, that was done at King's Cross. That was rough as guts! You know, just like a doctor, Get a prescription, in and out, in and out, in and out, get them served, you know. Lucky I didn't catch any infections you know. Cause they have to have a proper sterilizer. You went in but you have to be careful in the Cross, because they do you and then use the same needle to save on paying everything That was in the early days, you know. So you have to make sure it's sterilized and red hot. They put one gun in and change it for another one coz they're different guns, one for the outline and one for the colour.

Desley: so they're different thicknesses?

Participant: yeah. The outline goes really deep but the colour is not that deep.

Desley: So with all of them or with any of them was there a particular reason you picked that picture? Say that one there, is that a dragon?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: So why did you want a dragon?

Participant: Oh I just looked up there and I thought, well I got a panther there with the nude girl, I got a panther, I've got a spider on the back of me shoulder, and eagle there. And so I thought I'll get a dragon here.

Desley: So is there a common theme, spiders, dragons, eagles?

Participant: No. It's like buying a Holden or a Commodore or a Holden or a Ford. The Ford might have something different, or you like the Commodore. It was just nice at the time, it looked good.

Desley: So it's not that they are all animals?

Participant: No.

Desley: To me it's something like being strong, or...

Participant: No.

Desley: Nothing?

Participant: No, I just liked what they were at the time and just got them done. there's an Indian's face, see in the centre of me watch there. That's an Indian.

Desley: oh, ok, yeah.

Participant: But people do look at you funny when you've got them. Like at the gym, people look at you. Some people just look down on ya. So I always wear a shirt, just a short sleeved shirt. Specially when I've got the kids with me, coz they're little angels, you know. If their dad looks like Rambo! Two kids you know. But no. I have never regretted them. My kids don't look at me different. I am just their dad and they love their dad, whether you've got tattoos or you haven't. They are just concerned that you give them a cuddle at night and play with them.

Desley: So how long since you had that last one?

Participant: The one on me neck, probably 18 months.

Desley: Ok. So you got them roughly, from when you were 17, to about,

Participant: I probably got most of them in the first couple of years. And that one, that was probably done, I don't know, probably 12 or 14 years ago. And that was it. I never had any done,

probably 10 years. Fourteen sorry... twenty five.... probably for nine years then I got me neck done. When I was young I was going to get stars on me ears, and spider webs here and you know, Harley Davidson tattooed across the back of me neck because I've always had Harley Davidsons and stuff. But you can get to the point where you can look as rough as guts too, you know. And in the high profile job that I do, you don't want customers coming to see you and saying, "Jesus! He's Hell's Angels"

Desley: So do you know what it means, the spider web on the elbow?

Participant: No. it's just a fill in.

Desley: I thought I read somewhere that it actually meant something, but I have never been able to work out what it was. Someone said it's because of the shape of it.

Participant: See if you go like that, the spider web, some people have a little spider, and just close it up and when you stretch it out, and your arm goes like that, and some people will get a hinge in here.

Desley: Oh, OK.

Participant: You know, like a door hinge. You know it's like putting mag wheels on a car. Do you like them or don't you like them.

Desley: So if you don't like them you don't get them.

Participant: My wife hates them.

Desley: The tattoos?

Participant: Yeah. But I said to her, you wouldn't be without these arms wrapped around you so ...

Desley: True. So is there any particular reason why you put any of them in a certain spot?

Participant: No, I just filled the right, top of that right arm up. Yeah, no, I just sort of started here and moved across there and thought I'd add a bit there . then I done this one up here and then I thought I'd put the bike thing under here and moved around there, you know, and put that eagle up the back behind the other eagle and

Desley: What about the rose? That looks a bit out of character with the rest.

Participant: Yeah, that was just to fill it in. it was actually going to be coloured in, you know, like a sleeve. But I never got it done.

Desley: What's that one round the back there?

Participant: That's a bull dog.

Desley: bull dog, ok.

Participant: but, yeah. So. That'll do me. I don't think I'll get anymore.

Desley: Is it because of your wife, or?

Participant: yeah, yeah, yeah. well I know she doesn't like them. You know. She's an attractive girl and I suppose I am not too bad looking for 41. but we go out together and some people, she feels sometimes a bit embarrassed. Not embarrassed but she feels like if I had any more I'll be in trouble, like these ones up over your neck. I was going to get this side of the neck done when we were separated. At one stage there I thought...with this one on me neck, coz she really hated it. We weren't together, we didn't talk for 3 years. So basically I'd get the children every fortnight. I'd never let 'em down once. I'd get there and she'd say, she'd pick them up, and "where are my children? NOW!" I said would you like to come in for a cup of coffee? I had my own house, I've done it up and bought a house up in Berkley. And, um, "No! Get my children now!" and then I put the divorce papers in and we started talking again. And I missed her too, you know. But I had already had this done. And then the day she was going off at her mother's house about it I was going "sucko, I hope you hate it, I hope you just hate it, cause I like it." That might have been me being a bit vindictive but I always wanted to get me neck tattooed. But I knew it would

upset her. But now we are back together she just looks at me, it's on there, it's on there and we have a good relationship now. Much better. I live in my house, she lives in hers.

Desley: Ah, Ok.

Participant: I stay 2 or 3 nights a week there and yeah. I breed birds, so I go and fix up me bird stuff.

Desley: So is there anywhere you wouldn't put a tattoo?

Participant: On me face.

Desley: With all of them, I guess, how long did you think about doing it before you did them?

Participant: About 2 or 3 weeks.

Desley: for each of them?

Participant: just once I got one, that was it. I was addicted. Probably for the first 3 or 4 years, bang bang one after the other, you know.

Desley: Can you tell me why they are addictive?

Participant: well you get one, you think, they're new, they're all, like it's like having a new car, you know, you get in and it's all cool, look at me, you know. You get one, and it all clears up and they're bright, and you look in the mirror and you think, Ah, that looks so cool, I'll get another one, you know, to match the other side and then get another one, you know?

Desley: So was it about balancing them up?

Participant: No. Cause I always rode a motor bike and I thought Harleys and tattoos and you know?

Desley: But the addictive thing? Cause there's a guy who works for Dave Rand's, Adam, I don't know his last name. I asked him why it was addictive and he said he thought it was about people trying to balance them up. Like you said you got it on your right arm, and then you get one on your left arm and then again and again.

Participant: Yeah, I know Adam very well. Good guy.

Desley: Yeah he seems really nice. I've had my motorbike licence for a year, and I went in with my motorbike stuff and he was like what are you riding and I said 250, I was so embarrassed. But he was really good, he said this is what you should do, practice that and

Participant: ah, he's a good bloke.

Desley: It's not like he thought he was too good talk to me about anything.

Participant: Very nice guy.

Desley: Yeah he seems really nice.

Participant: Well, I've always been one to do what I wanted to do. If I want to walk down the street with no clothes on, I'll do it. Like, go to my place, everyone says how come you are so fussy? Clean, tidy, everything's got to be spotless. I say if you don't want to come here, don't come here. I don't care what I say to people, within respect, but if I have to say something to them I say it to them. So that's how I have always been. My mates come over to my house, too clean John, well, don't come. Simple! I don't care if I don't talk to anybody all week, it doesn't worry me. I talk to truck drivers all day by the time I go home I've had enough of them anyway. Zita says to me sometimes, how can you stay outside all day doing your garden and not talk to anybody? It's not that I don't talk to anybody. I talk to my dog and the birds.

Desley: Dogs are better company than some people anyway. So do you consider that any of your tattoos were linked to a particular event in your life?

Participant: No. no. I worked with trucks. I grew up quicker than most kids, because I worked on the milk run when I was about 11. I said to my dad, can I have a push bike? He was a fairly

heavy drinker. And he said if you want a freakin push bike go and get a job. What do you think I am, super man? That was his favourite saying, what do you think I am superman? So I said no worries. I was a determined little prick, too, you know. I got up at 2 o'clock every morning til I was 15. I went to school til I was 16, done the milk run. Used to get two dollars a morning. I used to help my mum out too, cause he used to drink most of the money, you know what I mean?

Desley: Yeah.

Participant: I used to help my mum out and then in Berkley there was a Total service station. They had trucks but I could already drive a truck cause my dad was a truck driver. Used to drive around the steelworks while he was blind drunk I used to do the job for him. Drive around all the time. And he'd be up on the ships and in them days you could go on the ships and they could drink all day. In the old days you know what I mean? And he'd say to me I wanna come back and I'd just drive round all day, tipping, tipping, you know, so I could drive a truck as good as him.

Desley: So how old were you then?

Participant: Twelve.

Desley: Really?

Participant: I used to drive around all the time. Then we'd go to Berkeley pub after work he'd get blind drunk and I'd drive the combi van home. Then he got a Valiant. I could drive the Valiant. But I could drive as good as him.

Desley: probably better if he was drunk.

Participant: he was drunk 7 days a week, you know. Then I got a job at the Total Service Station. That was his mate, he had 6 trucks and the service station. I learnt to change tyres and learned to work on the trucks and learnt to fix them and I drove a semi trailer from 15 til I was 19 when I got my P plates. Everyday I drove it from the Service station. But all the blokes I worked with were a lot older than me. I used to go to Berkeley pub when I was about 15 and had a couple of

Schooners and ride me bike home. But I always had a hairy chest and I shaved at 15 and so I'd have a couple of schooners of beer and ride me push bike home. And then of an afternoon, they'd get back from Newcastle and I didn't drink. I used to drive the truck in the steelworks and load it for them, and bring it back. Yeah, so I always grew up with older blokes. I never really had. ...I me mates on the weekends, we'd go swimming and chasing girls and carrying on, ride a horse, used to ride me horse. So yeah, I was driving the trucks and it was so cool riding them trucks, and I thought I'll get me a tattoo. I was a good truck driver, drive all me life, until about 3 years ago, when I became the operations manager at Ross Transport. I can drive Bulldozers, forklifts, excavators, got all me tickets. So I was never good at school, but good at

Desley: Practical.

Participant: Yeah. Can do anything with me eyes shut. as far as school I used to hate it.

Desley: So none of the tattoos you can say you got when that happened.

Participant: No. no. I just wanted them.

Desley: The one on your neck was while you were separated. It wasn't because you were separated?

Participant: I always wanted it done. Something on me neck. But I could wait for it, never. My wife, I knew she'd hate it and I done it just to piss her off more. Cause she's, you know Zita?

Desley: yeah.

Participant: She's beautiful. She's straight. Super straight. Like me, if someone outside the yard starts, I'll punch their head straight in, it doesn't worry me. But when you are with her, I act a bit different, you know what I mean. Not that I fight much. I protect her and the kids, especially the kids. It might have been a bit of a vindictive thing. She wouldn't talk to me. She hated me, she hated me with a passion.

Desley: and I guess maybe it was the one of the only things you could do to get at her.

Participant: Yeah, for 3 years, I never abused her, never got cranky. She'd be there raving, "yeah, Zita, whatever, I'm over it. I paid you out, I am getting on with my life. I bought another house, you know." Paid her child support every month. Never missed picking the kids up, used to go and get them every fortnight. Because they love their dad. I'd play with them and took them out, and I'd discipline them too. Like they're well-mannered, you can take them anywhere, but when I got my neck done, she freaked. Still see her standing there at her mum's house, on the verandah, in her nightie, roaring at me! I was like... You're not with me anymore.

Desley: So most of them you had before you met her?

Participant: Yeah. I had them all.

Desley: Except the kids' names.

Participant: The kids' names and the neck, yeah. So when I met her, I was walking through the mall at Wollongong. She had her nephew with her. She walked out of Badrans where she worked. And she said to him, "how was your day?" and I said "any day, baby." She looked at me like oh what a jerk! So we went down to the Novotel to have coffee, my mate and I, and she was there with a couple of girls, and I went up to her and said, "hey, how's it going?" She said you are one of the rudest people I ever met. Have a go at the state of ya. I said, so what, I'm here to talk to my friends. I thought for a couple of days, I thought, I like her. She's nice. There's something about her, you know what I mean? I was a bit of a flirt with the girls too, you know and I thought this one, there's something about her. She's special. So a month went by and I said to them I have to go home and iron me clothes, iron your clothes, you wouldn't know how to start the iron. I can iron as good as you, because I can. Yeah and I asked her out and 13 months later we were married. I was at her mother's place one day fixing her tap. Her mum and dad don't speak English. Her dad came up to me and said "ooh. Ooh, criminal. look", don't worry about me mate, I'm looking after your daughter. I respect your family, but he couldn't understand what I was saying. But I said, I don't hassle you, so don't hassle me. I had an incident with one of the brothers where I bashed his head on the concrete but it was his fault. I used to take them cherry picking in Yarrah. And I don't smoke. I've never smoked. I hate smoking. I said, when you're on the bus, dance, sing, do whatever you want, cause it was a big party. But I said there's no smoking on the bus. Cause Casey was only a baby. She was in her little chair. And he started smoking. I said get off. You make me. Get off now, or I'll make ya.

So he got off and he wouldn't get back on the bus. His kids were crying, his wife was crying. A friend of theirs got off and he busted his watch. And Zita's sister, she's got beautiful sisters, he grabbed her by the throat and I just grabbed him and slammed him on the road, but he run like a dog, straight back into the car. But that's the only incidence I've ever had with them. Her father loves me. Even when we split up, like if I seen them at Warrawong, give me a cuddle. Coz you get that respect, and the tattoos, they don't even look at the tattoos now, you know. It's personal preference. But when you meet a nice girl, especially Europeans, like if I went to your mum and dad's if we were going out, they probably wouldn't hassle you too much, coz you're a little bit older, I'm a bit older, you know what I mean, but when Zita, the Europeans, I had to go to Catholic church, get married, go and see the Father and confess all your sins and the bullshit that goes with it. But they're different, see, you know. That's how they are. Their little last daughter getting married, I had to ask the father, and I asked the father if we can get married, and "no problem Johnny" talks Portuguese. I can understand a fair bit of it too. But if I was to advise a young bloke these days, I'd say don't get them. Because of that you know, meeting families and all that. But then these days everybody's got them, .Every girl you see in the gym has got a tattoo on her ankle or across the back or on their boobs or, they've got them everywhere.

Desley: So do you still like them all?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: Would you change any of them?

Participant: No.

Desley: Would you get any of them taken off?

Participant: Never.

Desley: Ok. Do you think you'd have another one?

Participant: Yeah. If something came along I'd get a big one there with Zita's name, if she didn't go off the brain, but... I've always been a person who's done things. I've been in a fair bit of trouble when I was younger, for fighting. Never been a criminal, but I was pretty bit hard on the

knuckle, like I got locked up there a few times. But if I look back at what I have done, I never regret it. It's part of growing up. Me dad had died at that time. It was one of those times in my life where I couldn't handle it. My dad was gone, we had worked together for years. But the marriage breakup I look back now and I was too fussy in the marriage, bit clean and tidy. But when Zita had the little fella she had post natal. I tell you. I swear by it. She wouldn't talk, there was no more sex. There was no more...it was just like I didn't know her. I used to sit her down, say Zita, I do the fruit, do the veggies, I mow the lawns, I wash your car, I work 80 hours a week, which I used to drive 80 hours a week in a truck. I still come home, I still love you. I get home here, the house is just full of these vibes, you know. You can walk in and it's so cold. I'd take the kids down for an hour, down to the park to give you a break. Nothing seems to matter. I am physically worn out Zita when I get home from work, but I still do help you, I still go and do the groceries, so you don't have to do it with both of the kids. I look back and that's what happened. I threw her out. Simple as that. I don't regret it, not one bit. Everything I have done in life, I have never regretted it.

Desley: What do you mean by threw Zita out?

Participant: I threw her out of the house. Chucked her out. Straight through the front door. See you later. Don't come back.

Desley: Because of the way she was?

Participant: Yeah. Twelve months this went on Desley. Twelve months, I'd stay talking, no... I sat her down and said, what do you want? I don't go with other women. I don't gamble. I don't go to clubs and pubs after work. You've got new rings, brand new car, whatever you wanted I bought ya, air conditioner when you were pregnant, dishwasher. You know, you come home from hospital, everything was done with the cotton bud, you know, spotless. Casey was bathed my little girl, she was fed, she was looked after, you know. I don't know what you want. I cannot physically do any more. I'd had a gutful. So we had a blue on Sunday and I threw her out.

Desley: So do you think she knew what she wanted, or?

Participant: I dunno. But now she is a completely different girl. Completely. Like someone has turned the clock. She's unreal now. But I have never regretted anything I've done in life.

Whether it's punched somebody in the mouth or got a tattoo or. You know, I've done a few silly things when you are young. You know I've bought another house now, and done it up and I breed birds and that takes a lot of time, making their nest boxes. As far as the tattoos, I have never regretted it. When I was younger and met Zeta it was a bit funny. I love this girl and she is beautiful. She made me take the earrings out. But then I have done a lot of things for her. "Take the earrings out". "I wish you didn't have the tattoos." And I said shit I wish I didn't have them. I have her a lot of stuff. But now, the tattoos are there, the earrings are there, I am a decent bloke, I love you, I love the kids, whatever you want for your house I'll fix it. I'll do the mail, I'll do the lawn, whatever you want. You can't change people. When you try to change someone, unless they are idiots, but when you try to change a normal decent bloke because he has tattoos or he has a couple of beers on an afternoon after work or something, it will create dramas in a marriage.

Desley: Yeah, it's not a good idea.

Participant: The person you married is the person you married.

Desley: I read something once which said, men marry women, hoping they won't change and they do, women marry men to change them but you never can.

Participant: I've had mates of mine, they've got married, nice wives and then they started drinking, playing around with other women, coming home drunk. You have to understand the woman too. She don't want that crap, you know and vice versa. But I would never do that to Zita. I'm there, go to work come home. When we were married it was all for Zita, Zita's family. Whatever was going on. But with any of the tattoos I've never regretted them. They're on there, they're on there, what you get is what you get, I told her.

Desley: So what about the pain aspect of it?

Participant: I could stand it.

Desley: You could.

Participant: Doesn't worry me.

Desley: So is it like a benefit?

Participant: that there. I had one on that arm and only that one. One on each arm. And this is true. I went back and I got them all done in one day and I went back the next day and got the whole other side done in one day. Twelve hours. Six hours one day and six hours the next. 'cause I wanted them finished.

Desley: So the pain doesn't put you off?

Participant: pain doesn't worry me.

Desley: Was it something you looked forward to?

Participant: No. The first half an hour, seems to be the worst. But then it sort of goes numb and you just sit down and get used to it. But you do get a few...where you get the long lines. "oh, Jesus" you know. But other than that, the colour-ins are easy. Once the outlines done, the colour-ins easy. But the one on the bum is only writing. It's words. It's a bit of a saying. But the old leg, she was jumping. Cause you are lying on your stomach and it's touching something, you know. But other than that. That's the one I couldn't wait to finish. Cause it was only words, only about, I don't know, 10 words, but it was jumping, you know what I mean. But the other ones were fine. Bit painful, bit tender on the back, and under here.

Desley: Yeah. Someone said under there it hurts.

Participant: where it's a bit soft. But anywhere where the sun gets is not too bad. But under there, you know, it's a bit tender.

Desley: So do you consider that your tattoos mean anything as a whole thing together or do you think of them as separate?

Participant: No they're just me.

Desley: So it's not like a theme that holds them together or something like that?

Participant: No, I get out of bed and have a shower and shave and look at myself and it's just me. That's it.

Desley: So do you forget they're there?

Participant: yeah. they're just there. They don't worry me.

Desley: so is it sort of like having a mole or?

Participant: I went for a walk yesterday with me dog. Had no shirt on. I see people like. who's that bloke?. you know? It doesn't worry me. I don't care.

Desley: Do you ever think, though, what are they looking at, and think, oh yeah, I've got tats.

Participant: No, I don't care. I've never been one, you can ask Zita that. I've never been one to care about what other people think. where she's funny like that. She's like, ah, you know, what will they think. I am like Zita I don't care what they think. I am a decent bloke. I am here in my own yard, mowing my lawn, doing my own stuff. I'm not a child molester, I am not a freakin' weirdo. I'm just me. Unique little Johnny. Mowing, whipper snipping, pruning. I am super clean. I'm too fussy that's the problem. But that's the way I am. That's why we live in separate houses.

Desley: So do you think there's something else you could have done rather than have tattoos?

Participant: what like?

Desley: Piercings, I don't know. Travelled around the world.

Participant: No I have never been one to travel. Coz Zita's gotta beg me to go on holidays. I like being at home on me own turf. But at Christmastime, my boss has got a house at Sussex Inlet and we went down there for 5 days on the water. It doesn't cost me nothing. We had a ball. I

really enjoyed it. But as far as going overseas, I have got no interest to go overseas anywhere. I'm happy... If the boss said tomorrow you have to take a week's holiday I'll be happy at home. Doing me yard, wash me dog, wash me car, cruise around. I like me own environment. Holidays never worry me. Never.

Desley: So you wouldn't have thought of having piercings or?

Participant: only me ears. No. There was a girl one night at the Harp, I only knew her to say hello to and if she had been a bloke I would have knocked her out and they'd be still trying to wake her up. She grabbed me on the nipple and just scrrrrrrrewed it like out of the blue. I mean really grabbed it and twisted it. If she had been a bloke you'd've give her uppercut and knocked her out. I was really firey towards her, you know, I pushed her and said don't freaking grab me like that, that's uncalled for, you know what I mean. I was just standing there and she was drunk. I was sober. She just, you know your nipple, she just grabbed it and twisted it! If I had a nipple ring, Ah mate! One of my drivers, he's got tattoos all over his chest, he got two nipple rings and he hangs his keys off them. And it doesn't hurt him. He's had them for years. But I just like me ears pierced. I wouldn't get any nipple ring or penis ring, or you know or none of them bolts through the head of your pecker or anything. Or through the eyebrow. Because of my job too, you know, I wouldn't. Even though the earring, a few people say why don't you take the earrings out. I don't want to take the earrings out, I like the earrings and that's how I am. But no piercings, na. never interest me.

Desley: Do you call yourself a person with tattoos or a tattooed person, or do you not see any difference?

Participant: I've just got tattoos and that's it.

Desley: So they are not part of who you are, or they are?

Participant: Well, they are part of me, because where I go they go. So I'm sitting there and I'm having a cup of coffee with your mum and dad, and it's John, you've got tattoos. And he's taking Desley out, they're going for a cup of tea, or they're going for a ride on Harley or she's riding her motorbike and he's going to tag along or whatever. People should just respect you for who you are, not look at you like a criminal because you've got tattoos, you know. I've had

people come for jobs, you know, eye rings, nipple rings, ear rings, most of whom I hired and turned out to be good you know. I got a Turkish bloke. When he come there, the bloke said “well he’s only a dumb wog!” well you worry about your truck and I’ll worry about the “dumb wog,” because I’m the boss here. He turned out to be the best employee there. You know, he dresses, awww mate, atrocious. Long shorts, steel caps, yellow beanies he wears the silk soccer shirts, but I don’t look at him any different. He’s got no tattoos, got mad wild hair and an ear ring, but he’s one of the best blokes there, you know. Then this other guy Jimmy, that’s got tattoos all over him, nipple rings. If you see how tall he is, probably six foot seven. He’s a big bloke, not fat, just solid. All the customers love him. He’s a gentle giant. But the boss is like, put the shirt on, Jimmy. He’s like, why? Oh OH&S you know, you should have your shirt on. Your nipple rings can get caught on the truck. But he’s a gentle giant, everyone loves him. And the Turkish guy, Tony, they all love him. But I never take the people on face value. one of the drivers said he’s just a dumb wog. I said you worry about what you are doing. You get your job right first and let Tony get his job right, you know. I never take people on face value. I’ve got tattoos. I’ve never looked down on anyone. So that’s how it is.

Desley: I’ve got a trick question. Could you tell me what you would call the opposite of your tattoos?

Participant: The opposite to my tattoos. That is a trick question.

Desley: It is. It’s a horrible question.

Participant: The opposite to my tattoos. As in what, do you mean? Give me an example.

Desley: That’s cheating. Some people say not having tattoos. Some people say the opposite picture of the tattoo or doing something that would be the opposite of it.

Participant: If I was going to get tattoos again and I had none, I would have picked out ones with a theme.

Desley: So there would have been something linking them up.

Participant: Yeah. See on this side here, there's panthers. All different panthers. I might have had a panther with a tree and a bit of a scene, or something you know what I mean? But when I got tattoos, about 25 years ago, a tattoo was a tattoo. But now they are into body art. You know, body piercing where they'll sit down and they'll design all Desley's back. You know you've got Merlin the magician and he's got his little buddies working for him and it comes down there right down your bottom, you know. Things like that, like it's a theme. Coz it's called body art now. Not tattooing. But I've seen the old blokes, you know 60, 70 year old, skin's all drooping it's basically just a black mark. But back in their day it was still whatever they got, you know. But it's body art now, so a lot more thought goes into it. People are tracing their own stuff out of books and taking it in, or take it in and I want to get this done, that done, match it with this, or, so yeah.

Desley: So that would be the opposite of yours?

Participant: Oh yeah. I would have got more theme, more detail, put a bit more thought into it, rather than just going and saying put a tattoo there.

Desley: So is that what you did? You just went, I want one, yeah, I'm going, that's the one I want?

Participant: I went in there. You didn't have to book in unless they weren't busy. But they weren't busy in them days. I went in the dungy little room. You know where the cinemas are, the town Cinemas, you walk up the little alley way, there's that little undercover bit before you walk into the mall.

Desley: Yeah, I think so.

Participant: Turn right there, And right next to the cinemas is a little dingy lane way. You turned left and went upstairs. He was in a little room up there. Dave Rand.

Desley: Yeah he's at Corrimal now.

Participant: Yeah and he's got the one at Windang.

Desley: Ah as well, yeah.

Participant: He was only young then. A lot younger than he is. Didn't ask you how old you were. My first I just walked in, that was 55 dollars. That one there.

Desley: In those days.

Participant: yeah. but I was earning reasonably good money. I was a young bloke working on trucks. And that was \$55. And he said, "well that's a big tattoo, son." cause he's got a bit of an accent. "it's a big tattoo mate". "Sure you'll stand the pain?" "You're, right mate. Trust me. Hard as nails, she'll be right, you just put it on." I still today, I'm good friends with Dave. I see him at Harley shows or whatever. But that was like, I want a tattoo, I am going to get it. I went there Thursday night, it was Thursday night shopping. It was open. I got it on Thursday night. I walked out with it all, um,

Desley: wrapped up?

Participant: yeah, he used to put Savlon cream and a piece of paper towel and sticky tape around it. By the time I got home, it was all blood soaked and you went, "waaah look at that. Look at me!" You know. My mother goes "You are an idiot". My father goes, "couldn't care less about him" Then my brother got two tattoos. But he only ever got the two. He's in jail for murder now. so yeah. He's a lost cause. To the drugs.

Desley: Unfortunately it does that to some people.

Participant: But he killed a little boy that was the problem.

Desley: really?

Participant: killed him stone dead at Dapto. A hammer straight through his head. It wasn't his little boy it was someone else's. but she was mixed up in drugs and she was Aboriginal and. I haven't seen him for years. I haven't seen him for 20 years then, you know, when he'd done it.

Desley: So is he in for life, or?

Participant: He's out of jail, but he's in this home. It's like a jail, it's got a fence around it, and nurses and security. About 20 people in the home. He'll never get out.

Desley: So does he have brain damage from the drugs?

Participant: Schizophrenia. He's on 600 ml of juice a week to keep him sane. I hope he never gets out cause he's a threat to society. He'd be talking one minute, the next he just snaps, just straight away. But he only ever got two tattoos, he was going to get them all over him too, like his brother, like me, but no he only ever got one on each arm.

Desley: It's horrible what drugs do to people.

Participant: Ah yeah. And a good looking kid. Come from a good family, you know. never abused. But you could never tell him nothing. He was like a rebel, you know. If you said that was black he'd say it was green. And he'd just fight over, whatever it was, you know.

Desley: So was he always like that, or just with the drugs?

Participant: yeah. na. Always. Then he got onto the drugs and the heavy stuff, you know. He used to mark with the coppers, they knew him. He's no good.

Desley: So, back on track I guess. Did you go by yourself to get the tattoos or did you go with somebody else?

Participant: I went by meself.

Desley: every time.

Participant: stubborn as hell. Straight up there, I'm here, I'm going to get it done

Desley: Ok. What do you think other people think when they see you?

Participant: I 'spose up until about 6 or 7 years ago, people used to look at you like "shit, look at that bloke. don't go near him, he'll rip your head off!" But then since, you know, the last 5 or six years tattoos have become

Desley: More popular.

Participant: Yeah, everybody's got them. I see blokes at the gym training with me, they are 50, 55 they are still getting tattoos, they've got an earring. And they think they are so, cool you know, with the grey hair and...it's a fad they're going through, you know. Yeah, now, it's a lot less... you know when I used to walk along the street, it used to be like, shit! Look at those tattoos on that bloke. But now there's me with a tattoo, there's someone over there, a girl, she's got a nipple ring or tattooed across her chest, another girl bends over there and she's got one across her bottom. It's more common now. But the older generation's funny, though like the 60 or 70 year olds. But like I said I never worry about it. I walk down the street in me undies and me tattoos, it wouldn't worry me. That's how I am.

Desley: So have you had any particular reactions? Like have you had people say stuff or do stuff?

Participant: No not really. But you see people look at you funny sometimes. especially like when you pull up on a Harley at a café, there's a couple of old fuddy duddies having coffee, and you pull up. How you going luv?

Desley: They're probably scared!

Participant: Yeah, so.

Desley: Cause I was talking to a girl this afternoon and she was saying people yell at her, "you are a freak!" and stuff like that.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: She's got her nose pierced and her labret. And she's got a tattoo on here and one on her leg which they probably don't see, but she said people go what kind of a freak are you and get really cranky at her.

Participant: Never had that problem. I get a bit cheeky sometimes if they are looking at me, I say "I'm all right! I ain't gonna bite ya!" and they go, no no I'm not looking at you, mate.

Desley: So at the moment, is the thought of upsetting Zita is stopping you getting more, or?

Participant: Yeah, cause she'd be disappointed. Before I was off the leash. I could do what I wanted when I wanted. I still do a little bit of that, but with respect to her. But I know she would be disappointed. So I wouldn't. We have a good relationship now and that would be throwing it in her face, and I wouldn't do that to her.

Desley: It would be asking for trouble.

Participant: Yeah. trouble you don't need you know what I mean. No disrespect, you know, on her part, so. I'd go there and she'd be like what have you done. Blah blah blah, you freaking idiot, I've got to walk down the street with you and you've got enough, you know what I mean? So I'll just leave it there.

Desley: So what do you think about other people with tattoos?

Participant: I don't even look twice at them. I see them and oh, you've got a tattoo for a reason, or whatever, see a girl with her kids' names on her or whatever. They've got it for a reason, or they've just got it because they wanted to get a tattoo, like me, or whatever, I don't look at them, I just look at them like normal people. Black, white, culture don't worry me. I just speak to everybody. My next door neighbour's Croatian. He's like my father. We get on really well. He's retired. He can't wait for me to get home from work in the afternoon. G'day mate, how you going? Yeah, yeah, good boy, you know. He gets lonely too. He's got his wife and 2 kids, but I spend more time with him than his children. When I first moved in he goes, come over "I lived here for 33 years here pleaaaaaaase no trouble! You've got your tattoos, you got Harley Davidson. I am very scared. Very quiet street here" I said, "listen mate, I'll tell you straight, you give me trouble, I'll give you trouble. You want a good friend we'll be good friends. We'll leave

it there". Before I moved in, the girl who owned the house, was my sister's best girlfriend. So we all went out for dinner, with the old fellow, my mum and dad, we had a few beers, broke the ice and mate, he loves me. We get on unbelievable. I go there with no shirt on, tattoos. And if they get caught they call me because they can't read and write. And I call the doctor on their Medicare card, look after them, take them to do the groceries some days, take him to get his bread, just round the corner here, up the top of here. and if it's raining I'll take him up there, and if he wants stuff for his garden I'll take him. He's annoying some days, but he's a good bloke. But he was so worried at first with the tattoos. And all the friends too, They'll all come over. they are all sixties or seventies. One day I said "Kacruzy!" That means hello. "ohhh!" she just got in her car and drove right off! No worries. Next day, Mick says to me, "oh, Johnny you scared Selma. She think you mafia from jail now you know, unreal, the whole crew. They'll all come over, kakruzy, kakrusy, dovay dovay, come over have coffee or a few beers, we are all mates. Sit down, all tattoos, no shirt on, don't even faze them. Because you go their respect. You look after the old fella, mum, you take them out if they need doin'. Till people get to know ya. But all the other neighbours, there's an old lady at the other end, Helga. She's 84. She's a machine. She could out-walk you. She walks up Flagstaff Hill every day.

Desley: Really?

Participant: She loves me. She comes up and "John What are you doing" She's Polish. I must have a look at your birds. I think she's going a bit crazy. But she goes out the back and takes photos of them, whatever. I'm there at the sink with no shirt on and she never once questioned me. She gets right up close to me, has a yarn to me. She's dressed in the old fashioned, like the silk, not silk, woollen, long pleated skirts, tailor made shoes, like the scarf, oh she's beautiful. Woollen jumpers and . I think she's 84, 85. She come up " I MUST have a look at your birds today, john!" She goes taking photos, I walk round there just my shorts on, mowing the lawn or whatever, she's never once asked me about the tattoos. Not even scared of me. She's just straight up the day I moved in, started being friends. She lives by herself and I said if you ever need a hand give me call. She mows the lawn herself and cuts the hedge with. I've got a hedge trimmer, she does it with, what are they called?

Desley: Shears?

Participant: Shears. She just! Some people. Like they like you or they don't like you. There's on there, they're on there.

Desley: So who do you know that's got a tattoo? like you said your brother and you said a guy at work. So do you know lots of people or not many?

Participant: Yeah I know heaps of them. Heaps of bikies cause I hang around a lot of Bikies who've got tattoos. Adam Patterson. I know Adam real well. I'll be with him in 2 weeks at a bike show. Well have a beer, and he'll go Johnny how you going, ra ra ra! They've wanted me to join the club and they have done for years but I don't want to join. It's too committing and I don't want to be committed to anybody. I like to do me own stuff, you know.

Desley: Yeah.

Participant: Yeah, so most of the bikies have got tattoos there. All my brother in laws none have got tattoos. My sister's got no tattoos. I was always the rough, odd one!

Desley: So in your family it's just you and your brother?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: And just people you know.

Participant: Yeah. No one else in the family has got tattoos at all.

Desley: So do you think it's had any negative effect on your life, having tattoos?

Participant: No not really.

Desley: like has it stopped you getting a job? It obviously hasn't stopped you getting a wife!

Participant: No. because if I ever did go for an interview at all I'd always wear long sleeves, just in case. And I never had the neck tattooed then, so you were just like long sleeves on and then once you proved yourself, who you were, it didn't matter.

Desley: So do you identify with any particular group? Like do you think of yourself as a biker because you've got tattoos or a tough guy because you've got tattoos or something else?

Participant: No. If you get into a fight, like I used to do a bit when I was younger, and you had tattoos they think rough bastard, he's fighting, he's bashed that bloke up. Look at him now, he rides a Harley. But you go round things a different way. Like I never really had to cover up for a job because I was a truck driver, not a solicitor, and truck drivers are known to have tattoos. And I was always a good truck driver. So as soon as I applied for a job, they knew who I was, I got the job. But no, I don't...no, I like me tattoos. But if I ever went anywhere...when I first met Zita's mum and dad I wore the long sleeves for a while, just to sort of, you know...and I remember once it was freaking like 30 degrees and I'd thrown my shirt off. I said Zita they've gotta see 'em one day, it's that frigging hot, I can't even breathe here! Things you do. But it never stopped me getting a wife. Zita, like I said – straight. She just loves you dearly and that's it, you know. And as far as she said, she never stopped loving me when we were separated and I never stopped loving her either but she was more stubborn than me. But anyway that's life.

Desley: So is there anything else about your tattoos that you think is relevant, that I might not have thought to ask you about?

Participant: You can make yourself look rough or you can make yourself look decent. You know, you can go on a Harley, with, the vest, the singlet, the helmet, coz I've got high handle bars, and you can look rough. But me, I wear a flanelette shirt, cause you can get sun burnt, flanelette shirt, and they can only see this one, but they are going to wonder if I've got any more, you know. Like you see a girl with a bit of a tattoo and you think, oh, big boobs, wonder if she's got any more, you know what I mean? Where does the tattoo go, gets the mind thinking, you know what I mean? Normally I wear a shirt when I am on the motor bike because of coppers, get onto ya. They can be real arseholes. I found out over the years. A few months ago I was riding on the Northern Distributor and he seen me, like I wasn't speeding, but he'd done a freaking U-turn and come straight back, but I had all the tattoos covered up, I was riding along minding my own business. Because you've got a bit of size on you, you've got the vest on and you're all shaved up and you're riding the bike they just can't wait to pull you up, look at this loser. like the coppers look at you, the Highway Patrol, not the general duties, they pull you up just to have a look at your licence and just to upset you for half an hour, you know what I mean? But you're

doing nothing wrong. So I always tend to ride with me sleeves on. And I always wear the right helmet, You see a lot of them, they were those little Nazi helmets? I've got one of them but they are illegal.

Desley: Are they?

Participant: yeah. Most of them. They're bringing them out now. I've got an open face, but it's legal. But it's a bulky sort of one. But there's a few out now that have the Australian standards. In the old days you could pull it off with a safety hat, like a hard hat for work, you could stick it on. But the street fine now is about \$175

Desley: For the wrong helmet?

Participant: Yeah. So if the coppers pull you up, and I've got the right helmet with the tattoos covered up, not doin' nothing wrong. Have a good day. See you later mate. Well that's basically about it.



Participant: Yeah. I don't know. I've been trying to think of why I got it. I don't really have a very good reason. Mostly for something decorative, I'd say. I don't really have a better reason than that. I have two in the same place. I didn't like the first one. That's probably because I didn't really think about it that much before I got it as you can probably tell. I've since had it covered with another one, just a really plain shape. I don't regret having it, I really like having it. And it's served its purpose because it is decorative and except for focus that is what I wanted. It's got no real, deeper psychological meaning or anything like that.

Desley: So how old were you when you got them both?

Participant: The first one I had done I was probably 22 or 23. And then the coverage I was probably 27 or 28. even at that age, though I still didn't want my dad to know. And I've got a lovely 7 year old sister who pointed it out to everybody one day which was fantastic. I fainted three times each time that I was having it done. I think that particularly painful spot the base of my spine, right on the sacrum. It was quite painful. Quite a weird kind of pain. There wasn't a point where I thought Oh that hurts so much I am going to faint. I could feel it but it didn't really feel like it was hurting, but then the next thing you know, I'm on the way out. So that was

Desley: So does it run in your family and stuff?

Participant: Oh yeah. Absolutely I am a bit of a fainter anyway. I've fainted from other things before. I realised what was happening and each time I was able to say, excuse me you are going to have to stop so I can lie down, and put myself in the coma position, so I knew that I would be fainting safely. But it didn't hurt enough for me to not want to continue.

Desley: So what was the original picture?

Participant: The women's symbol.

Desley: You mean the circle and the cross.

Participant: The circle and the cross, yeah. There wasn't really any huge reason behind it. I just decided I would like to have something, because I was doing it for decoration, and that symbol didn't really mean to me probably what it would mean to a lot of other people. I wanted to have something a bit less of a statement. Because the meaning was decorative and not anything that would make any kind of statement. So that's why I decided to have it covered.

Desley: Because?

Participant: Because it was, people could see that as being some kind of political statement, when it definitely wasn't anything like that.

Desley: So did you think before you got it that maybe they would see it like that?

Participant: I knew that I didn't see it like that and that is what was part of my decision at the start, but it definitely was perceived like that and I just got sick of it.

Desley: So was it because you were a feminist or something?

Participant: I don't know. I don't know. Obviously, well of course, looking back now, that symbol does have political connotations. But I don't know. Part of me was just thinking I'm over answering questions when it wasn't anything. It was definitely, I'm not the kind of person to be going out and making statements like that. Anyway, particularly when it is something that is so permanently attached to your body. and I probably got sick of other people perceiving it to be a statement.

Desley: So you got it covered up with what?

Participant: Oh it's just a, it's kind of like a big, like a four pointed star thing. But it is quite plain and very simple.

Desley: And with the pictures, did you designed them yourself or did you pick them

Participant: Oh with the first one was quite plain anyway. It was only maybe 4 cm high, if that. But the next one I designed. Yeah.

Desley: just so it all covered the other one up, or?

Participant: It's maybe larger than it needed to be, to cover the other one up.

Desley: So why did you choose that picture?

Participant: just coz it was something I liked.

Desley: So was it something you saw somewhere, or you came up with?

Participant: No, I drew it.

Desley: Why did you put it on your spine?

Participant: I don't know. I think it's a kind of cool spot. There's no significance. I just thought it was a cool spot. I really have no greater reason other than that.

Desley: Some people put it in a place where they can cover it up if they want to.

Participant: Yeah. No, no. It wasn't anything to do with that.

Desley: So is there a place that you wouldn't put a tattoo?

Participant: personally, I don't think I would have anything in a really public place. I don't know. I've got a couple of piercings but you can take that out if you don't want it, or if I'm going some place where I don't want to have that there. I can take it out and that is fine. But I don't think I would do anything permanent in a place that would be really obvious. It's not that I look at other people and go "eww!" but for me, I don't think that I would do that.

Desley: Is it for work, or because of your dad or?

Participant: No it's just because of me. No other reason.

Desley: So how long did you think about the tattoo before you got the first one?

Participant: It had definitely crossed my mind a long time before I had it. But it wasn't one of those things where I thought, "Oh, I'm going to get a tattoo, but I can't go yet." I thought about it, I knew that I would get one. Probably maybe a year before I did go to get it. But it wasn't me saying I'm going to get it but not yet. Or I'm going to get it yet, because I was waiting for a particular picture or anything like that. I knew I would get it but just never really got around to it. Then, Ok, I'm going to get it now and then, went. That process between deciding and going was probably about 3 hours.

Desley: oh really! So what about the second one? How long did you think about that?

Participant: Probably about the same actually. Probably thinking for a year yeah I should do that, I might do that, and then eventually got around to saying yeah, I'll go.

Desley: So how long did you think about the design?

Participant: In my head, the whole year that I was thinking about it, I knew what I would put over it, I knew what I would have

Desley: So when you made that final decision it was just a matter of drawing it up?

Participant: Oh I had had it sketched for a while, before I finally went yep, that's it, I'm going. So it wasn't that short time period though. When I said yes I am going and me actually getting it going I physically didn't have time to go. I had to make an appointment and wait for a week and a half before I could go.

Desley: scary

Participant: I know! I know!

Desley: So you don't consider that either of them coincided with any particular event in your life?

Participant: I don't feel like it did. No I don't feel like either of them did particularly because a year lapse between the decision it would happen and finally getting it done. I don't know, I feel like if it happened in conjunction with something it would have been a more acute reaction, I think.

Desley: And you'd probably have a link to that in your head?

Participant: Yeah, yeah. So no, I don't feel there was a link.

Desley: So do you like the star tattoo?

Participant: Yeah I do like it.

Desley: And would you change it at all?

Participant: No, I don't think so.

Desley: Would you do it again?

Participant: Yes.

Desley: Would you do the first one again?

Participant: No. I would do the second one again, though.

Desley: Would you ever think about having it off?

Participant: No, I don't think so. Nup.

Desley: So you said that you fainted with the pain.

Participant: That was weird. It wasn't really pain. I just fainted, I am not really sure why. Because even thinking back now, it was obviously uncomfortable, but there was never a time

where I just went that hurts so much, you have to stop. It was only, you need to stop because I need to faint and then I'd hop backup and keep going.

Desley: and was it just you fainted once and then you were ok.

Participant: No it wasn't. I fainted a couple of times. On both occasions a few times. But as I said it wasn't, it didn't feel that actually painful. I don't know what it was. Maybe it was just the thought of the needle going in or something. I don't know. But if you ask "did it hurt?" I would say, well you can feel something and it's probably discomfort, but I wouldn't say pain.

Desley: So were you by yourself?

Participant: No. no. I had a friend with me.

Desley: Both times?

Participant: Yes.

Desley: And did they get anything done or did they just go for moral support?

Participant: Actually the second time two friends were with me. One was for moral support and the other one just happened to be shopping with us that day so she just came along, coz she's a sticky beak. She just wanted to see if she was interested in the process, cause she doesn't have any. And the first time, my friend was also getting a tattoo.

Desley: So was the first one your idea or her idea or?

Participant: Well I actually didn't know that the other one wanted to get a tattoo. I just said I'm thinking about getting it really soon and she said so am I and we said lets go together. So it wasn't we were talking about it and then decided. We were talking separately about getting a tattoo and then decided to go together. So neither of us kind of ended up getting one as a result of it. Yeah. yeah.

Desley: what I was just wondering, because you've got piercings, and I assume that's fairly painful.

Participant: I wouldn't see it as being, it's not particularly painful. I don't think.

Desley: But just the thought of having your tongue pierced for example. I can't go there. I can't even think it through. It's like a nipple ring or something. My brain just doesn't want to go there. For some reason that seems really painful to me. Probably more so than the tattoo. So I am just wondering, did you faint with the piercing?

Participant: No.

Desley: You think that's because it's quicker?

Participant: Yeah. And a lot more acute. It's over in a second. Some piercings the healing time is worse. With the tongue for example, the healing time for the tongue, 'cause it swells up so it goes like a pillow and you can't talk and the healing time is worse than the actual piercing in the tongue. I was really surprised cause I thought the lip would really hurt to get it done.

Desley: I imagine it would!

Participant: I think it's because the skin is really fine. The same with the tongue, the skin is really really fine. With the tongue, you don't actually, people don't believe but you don't even actually feel it. It's really not painful for it to fly through your tongue, the needle. But the healing with the tongue it's really bad.

Desley: So do you consider the pain is a negative thing or a positive thing or just something....?

Participant: no. Definitely a negative thing. People say, "How could you do it? It hurts so much" but to me it's a function of how much you want it to be there. And if you want to have a tongue ring, you'll just deal with it.

Desley: What about with the tattoo, though?

Participant: Yeah. Definitely the same thing. The pain didn't factor into my decision whether to have a tattoo or not.

Desley: So when you had the first one and you fainted twice, that didn't put you off?

Participant: No. absolutely not, no. No. I don't consider fainting to be a scary thing, though, either. Because I have fainted a lot, giving blood and that kind of stuff. I don't really consider fainting to be that scary. It's a controlled thing. People haven't died from fainting or that kind of stuff. but perhaps my training in a medical area as well. I am not a doctor or anything, but I work in Bio –med and physiology. Perhaps understanding the physiology behind becoming unconscious and that kind of stuff has made it less unknown, so it doesn't... like I'm not really that...

Desley: So what is the physiology behind becoming unconscious?

Participant: I guess what I'm referring to in regards to this is how everything keeps working absolutely perfectly; just because you are unconscious it's not a precursor to dying. If you are fainting for that reason. Of course there are cases where becoming unconscious is a process of dying, but I know that it is not, in that situation. You know, you are not going to lapse into a..

Desley: A coma or something

Participant: No. from fainting, if you're having a tattoo done

Desley: So is it more like saying "oh. Here go!"

Participant: That's exactly how it was! I could feel it starting and I literally just said, just for a minute I am going to have to lie down because I am going to faint. And that was fine. There was no panicking or anything like that. And of course the girl doing it, particularly the second time was very calm, because it is obviously not uncommon.

Desley: Was this the first one?

Participant: No no. she did the second one. It's obviously quite common that people are going to start feeling like that. She had a first aid certificate and was quite calm, cause she had seen it a lot of times before and I was very calm because I knew exactly what was happening. It definitely, like it wasn't a big deal for either of us.

Desley: Which was good. You wouldn't want her panicking.

Participant: Absolutely not. Absolutely not.

Desley: So why do you think you chose to have a tattoo rather than do something else?

Participant: Something else as in?

Desley: Have another piercing or go jump out of a plane, or something?

Participant: I think I like feeling decorated. And I think that's the best reason I can give for the piercing as well.

Desley: So it was just something different?

Participant: Something different to the piercings, yeah.

Desley: So you can't think of anything else you could have done that would have had the same effect? To make you feel decorated?

Participant: I don't know. Like my hair colour changes every month. It's quite plain and boring at the moment compared to how it usually is, because I've had a bleaching experience that means that I can't... A blonding experience which means I won't be colouring for a while. But a lot of that kind of stuff I do change quite regularly. My hair gets cut and coloured quite dramatically quite often compared to most other people. I enjoy wearing a lot of almost theatrical make up when I go out. I dress quite conservatively at work, but when I go out, I wear a lot of make up and lots of colours in lots of different ways and really go into a lot of themed events, that mean that you can really dress up to extremes and that kind of stuff which is really fun.

Desley: So what kind of themes would that be?

Participant: There's a few production companies that run events that are... I don't even know how to describe it. It's just an event, it's just a night and it has a theme in it and you have to decorated really in a lot of detail to create a whole different atmosphere and everyone who goes dresses up to whatever the theme is. I'm trying to think of some themes I have been to. It might be like a fifties housewife theme, wigs and things on and you know people in aprons and starched dresses and collars and little tooth picks with cocktails and square of cheese on it, you know. Really thematic dressing up. I've been to some overseas as well. Didn't go there for that. But happened to find them when I was over there. It was a 1940's French theme and dressed up. I just really enjoy it, something different, decorative dressing up kind of stuff.

Desley: So what is it about being decorative that's important? Or what are the benefits?

Participant: I don't know. I like to be a little bit different. I guess I have always been involved in artistic and creative pursuits as well. But working in science. Go figure! And I think that, I don't know, I just get bored if I don't. And I get bored fairly quickly with, you know with my hair staying the same for example, wearing the same boring make up every day, that kind of stuff and I feel like the piercing and tattooing are an extension of that.

Desley: So you've got being the same and therefore being bored on one extreme, and what would be the other end of it?

Participant: the other end, like a continual change and evolution. It's not so much an undecorated, decorated state. But a changing, not changing state.

Desley: And obviously you prefer the changing

Participant: Yeah, yeah. absolutely. Yeah, yeah. In terms of being decorated. The change in terms of being decorated.

Desley: You wouldn't want to be decorated even in that extreme way, all the time?

Participant: No.

Desley: So it's not the decoration, but more the difference?

Participant: Yeah, yeah, yeah. absolutely. Oh sorry, hang on. I do like... I think I need to make that clearer for my own benefit if nothing else. Definitely, as decorated and not decorated, I like to stay at the decorated end. But the continuum that I am most affected by is the staying the same with changing in terms of the decoration. And I think the tattoo, particularly when I got it was a matter of just extending the change. It was a change in the decoration.

Desley: What do you mean?

Participant: Well, I hadn't had one before and I wanted to have one.

Desley: But then once you got it, it was permanent. So then it's not a decoration or change is it?

Participant: No it becomes part of, like it becomes a part of the decorated state to me. Like I feel like it becomes part of the decorated state. No it doesn't change, but now I am thinking about other things I could have down there like around the tattoo that would make it a bit different. Like I've been looking at some more piercings that would sit like at the points of the star and to me that's another way of evolving that.

Desley: So for you just having the tattoo and leaving it is really not

Participant: No it's not the point.

Desley: Having it and then decorating it or doing something different with it as well.

Participant: Yeah, yeah. I wouldn't decorate it with more tattooing. But I'm looking at piercing. If the tattoo wasn't there I wouldn't be thinking about those piercings. The piercing's to go with the tattoo that is there.

Desley: So like you said it is an evolution of the tattoo. It's going to evolve into something else

Participant: Yeah, yeah.

Desley: So do you distinguish between having a tattoo and just having that picture?

Participant: What do you mean?

Desley: Well some people just want a tattoo and I guess it doesn't really matter what it is. They just want to have a tattoo. Whereas other people want to have that particular tattoo.

Participant: I guess now, now that I've got something I really really like, I really like what it is and I wouldn't change it. But when I first got it done obviously it was something I thought I wanted, well thought at that time, but obviously I changed it. The woman symbol. Obviously that was something I wanted at the time. It didn't turn out to be the right choice. But what I've got now I really like and I wouldn't change it. And I wouldn't put it anywhere else either. I like it how it is.

Desley: So what would be the opposite of your tattoo?

Participant: Not having a tattoo. I don't know what you mean by that.

Desley: Well some people say not having it. Other people think of a picture that would be the opposite. And some people think of a different place or even a different meaning, coz for some people there's a certain feeling associated with the tattoo. So it depends how you want to interpret it.

Participant: {pause} For me, I would say not having it and I would feel less decorated.

Desley: So you would be heading back...

Participant: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I'd say less decorated, which, the word that springs to mind is boring but having a tattoo doesn't make you not boring. But feeling undecorated makes me feel I want to do something to fix that. Not that it is boring to be undecorated, but I get bored with being undecorated.

Desley: And it's not just the tattoo for you.

Participant: That's exactly right.

Desley: The hair, the make up, the...

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: do you play around with your clothes a lot too?

Participant: yes.

Desley: so it's just whatever you can do to your body to ...

Participant: Yeah. I think that's the reason, that's probably, all of those things, like the clothes, the hair and the make up and the tattoos and piercings are probably even more the reason that I dress quite conservatively at work. It's because it's quite a personal thing and I like to keep it separate.

Desley: So it's not more about you get more of a contrast then?

Participant: No not even necessarily. There's no deliberate conscious decision to try to create a contrast. But to me it's something I do for fun.

Desley: If you did it all the time, it wouldn't be as much fun.

Participant: Well if I did it all the time there wouldn't be a distinction from. Like I feel like when I do go to a big effort with my hair and make-up and stuff like that, it's always associated with a fun event or something like that. and work every day is not fun. And usually I'm too stressed to have the time in the morning. I start work at quarter to seven. If I had to get here any earlier I'd have to get up at a stupid time. I do probably make a more conscious effort to dress conservatively at work.

Desley: Is there a reason?

Participant: Because it's, because it is a personal...like all the other fun stuff, like the decorations, are for fun. I don't know. I don't feel like I'm an intensely private person or anything like that. But I just think well, it's not really, I don't want to bring it in to work.

Desley: So what do you think it means to other people that see your tattoo? Obviously the first one meant a lot of different things.

Participant: yes. I always think that if my dad would know, that...he hates anything. He even hates earrings. Like even just a simple, little, one pair of studs. He hates anything that changes, he doesn't like that

Desley: So he would be down on the boring end of your...

Participant: No no. I don't think it's boring that people don't want it and I don't think that people who are undecorated are boring. But I get bored with it. I don't really feel like it's any of my business to start thinking about what other people choose to do, but I know that I get bored.

Desley: I thought you said, that not changing to you is boring.

Participant: Well if I am not changing I get bored. But there's no way I look at somebody else and say, you are boring because you are staying the same.
yeah.

Desley: Because that's up to them.

Participant: that is exactly, That's exactly right. But it's not even like I would say, Ah they are not changing and it's boring. That's not for me to comment. I don't even think it, like it doesn't even occur to me to have an opinion of how people change or don't change.

Desley: I guess you don't always know. Just because they're not changing physically it doesn't mean they are not changing in some other way.

Participant: See, I don't even, unless it's somebody I know really well, and you get to know them and you know what's going on. I don't even think about it. I don't even engage in that thought process at all about other people. That's entirely up to them and not my business. I guess one of the biggest things I think about when people do comment on tattoos is, "why are you even thinking about it? What is your... why are you even thinking about it, it's not yours. It has got nothing to do with you and it doesn't affect you." Because I have this attitude of I am giving you the courtesy of not passing judgement and I don't understand why you feel as though you even need to do that to other people. And that was something that was always a part of me long before I had any piercings or any tattoos. I remember when I was 6 or 7. You can't argue with a parent when you are 6 or 7, I don't know. But I remember mum saying something about, I can't even remember what exactly it was about, but why are you even talking about it? She was passing a judgement or making a comment about something that someone had done. Like even then I remember, and I didn't have any burning desire to say look at that tattoo, it's so excellent or when I grow up I am going to have heaps of piercings or anything like that. There was no such thought process at that point. But I just fail to understand why someone even needed to pass a comment on what somebody else was doing. And that's definitely something that I've maintained. Not consciously, but it's obviously a very strong outlook. And I think in terms of other people looking at my tattoo I fail to understand why they even need to think about it. Why it would even occupy even one second of their thought processes when it doesn't affect them.

Desley: Maybe it does.

Participant: Yeah. I don't know. I don't see how or why it should.

Desley: I guess if you go with Jung's idea that really anything that provokes a reaction in you is some part of your shadow. Maybe the people that react to your tattoo, there's something in them, maybe deep down they worry that they'll be boring or something.

Participant: Yes. I can definitely appreciate that way of thinking. But that's their problem.

Desley: And some people aren't very good at dealing with it. And if they don't recognise that

Participant: Yeah. Yeah. I can completely understand that. But for me that still feels like, even as I say I can understand if you are having trouble dealing with it, but I don't feel like it has to become my problem.

Desley: no. It shouldn't.

Participant: That's exactly right. When you put it in that perspective I can understand that people may react

Desley: They probably don't know why they are reacting like that.

Participant: Yeah but that's still not my problem.

Desley: No.

Participant: And I resent that people make it your problem.

Desley: they try to.

Participant: that's exactly right, and I resent that they even try to make it anyone's problem other than their own. I don't know. I haven't come across a great deal of... even people who actively dislike it, like my dad have never tried to do anything to stop me from doing exactly what I want anyway. But sometimes you hear people making comments in general about tattoos, and if they don't happen to have seen mine, they don't know that they could be inadvertently offending me. I have ever experienced any hardcore bad attitude from other people but I don't have a great deal of time for it anyway, the times I have heard people.

Desley: So if someone said something about your tattoo that would offend you?

Participant: No. I'm not easily offended, but at the same time I am aware that some people would be offended. I would say it would be an offensive comment if somebody in my position could be offended by it or if it is something that I could take offence to, but usually I would choose not to. Yeah. but I've not really experienced a great deal of people kind of making adverse commentary.

Desley: Yeah. It's funny people seem to have extreme reactions sometimes. Like my poster at the conference last year and this woman came up and starting going on about how stupid people were that had tattoos and whatever. And there was, when I did my pilot study one student walked in and said every female that has a tattoo is a slut, I would never associate with anyone who had tattoos... and then at the end she went, my best friend has got a tattoo and I just didn't comment.

Participant: Yeah. I find it difficult to understand. I find it really difficult to understand why people need to engage in that kind of behaviour.

Desley: like you said, it's a problem with them, something going on. So what kind of reaction did your dad have?

Participant: oh, he didn't, no, no, he didn't react. Our family is like that anyway. There's always a great deal of respect, regardless of how old you are they have a great deal of respect for you as a person. Even little things I remember appreciating when I grew up, like no one got, no brothers and sisters got in trouble in front of the family. If you are in trouble go away and deal with it. That was enough you didn't have to be embarrassed as well. There's always a right to retaining your dignity kind of thing there. My dad believes in that kind of stuff really strongly. By the time I was 23 or however old I was when I got the first one, there was no way he was going to be telling me what I should or should not do or making a comment about it. Because it is my decision. It is nothing to do with him. Although I know he really doesn't like it. He's never ever said to me, "I don't like your tattoo." But I know that he doesn't like tattoos in general. He doesn't like that kind of stuff.

Desley: So what sort of reactions have you had from other people?

Participant: mostly, oh, can I have a look, because a lot of my friends have them. And those who don't I would still say are very decorated people. But I think that I live quite a sheltered little existence I think. I don't have a lot of friends who are conservative. I don't have a lot of friends who even have conservative parents. I'm not friends with a lot of liberal voters. I think of the time I forget how conservative and judgemental people can be because on a day to day basis I don't interact with them, by choice.

Desley: Did you ever worry about upsetting someone enough that you thought Oh, I shouldn't get it?

Participant: No. Not even for a second.

Desley: So when you see someone else with a tattoo what goes through your mind?

Participant: sometimes I might, it's mostly about the actual tattoo not that they've got one, and if I don't like the picture, I might say I probably wouldn't have got that picture. It's mostly about the actual picture rather than the fact that it is there.

Desley: So you don't have any of those stereotypes that they would be a certain kind of person because they have a tattoo?

Participant: No.

Desley: So you said a lot of your friends have tattoos.

Participant: Yeah a fair few of them.

Desley: Anyone in your family?

Participant: No.

Desley: Ok. Do you consider that it has had any negative effects on your life?

Participant: I don't think so. I don't think so. I don't think the piercings have either. I don't really, I forget that they're there. So I couldn't even, I mean if it has, I haven't noticed. If it has, I haven't noticed.

Desley: So do you feel like you identify with any particular group of people?

Participant: No. No. And I am really happy that that's the way. Because I wouldn't want to be pigeon holed into anything. No not really, not really. I am trying to think of a group that I would be in. I can think of probably a few that other people would probably pigeon hole me into. But nothing that I feel as if I belong to...

Desley: So would that be like body modifiers, or something like that?

Participant: yeah, perhaps, yeah. Something like that. I don't feel as if there's anywhere that I would really fit. I don't now whether many people would say I fit in 100% anywhere anyway. So yeah,

Desley: I guess no-one really does.

Participant: No, I don't think so. I don't think that I'd really want to.

Desley: So how far would you take the decorating thing do you think? Or the changing thing, depending on how you want to look at it.

Participant: I don't know but it's definitely limited by the fact that I wouldn't want to get anything permanent done in places where it is publicly visible. And that's got to do with the reasons I was talking about before. It's mine and it's not there for other people to enjoy. It's for me to enjoy.

Desley: What's like the most extreme thing you can think of doing?

Participant: I don't know. Probably the dress up nights that I have been to. I haven't been to one in a while. I know dressing up doesn't sound like anything big. They are actually very very extravagant. You know, wearing big Victorian wigs and hiring big dresses and big bustles and really pale make up and that kind of stuff, it is very extreme and extravagant to do. But I don't know. If I found something else that I'd like to get pierced, have that done. I don't think I, at this point I don't want any more tattoos. But if there's something you know that I suddenly have a burning desire to do, I'd probably go get it. In terms of my day to day appearance probably not much would change. Apart from my hair colour and stuff.

Desley: So is there anything else about your tattoo that you can think of now that you have been talking about it for a while?

Participant: No. Not really. It's very interesting to talk about this kind of stuff, because it's not the kind of thing that you consciously think about a great deal. No, I don't think so. I think that's it.

Desley: You talked before about changing and not changing and the more important thing for you....

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: So what is it about changing that's important?

Participant: It's not changing in general but changing appearance, like changing decoration. I don't know. I just think it's fun, I think, that's definitely the biggest driving factor.

Desley: So what about it is fun? Is it like surprising people or?

Participant: No no no. The surprising people is something that I probably try not to do, which is why I don't want anything permanent. I don't know. I think it is fun to try different things and do different things.

Desley: So is that only within the realm of decorating? Do you go and do other different things like ride motorbikes, or skydive or?

Participant: Not really. Probably it's got a lot to do with the fact that I don't have a great deal of time to do anything. I work full time, I run my own business as well, I teach aerobics over at the gym. I am enrolled in two postgraduate degrees. So I don't have heaps of time to actually do a lot other than the things that my time is already committed for. So maybe it is because I can't do anything else. I don't know. I've always liked doing decorating and stuff long before my time was that committed. I don't know. I think I feel like I am doing something that's fun, by changing

Desley: is that a way of relaxing, or?

Participant: No, definitely not, not relaxing, but I don't know. I just like trying new things. Maybe that's what it is. I honestly don't know the answer to your question.

Desley: I'm wondering what underlies that.

Participant: I have always been interested in fashion and popular culture and the decorating business that we run, is similar to those events that I was talking about, and we've done that for 5 or 6 years now. I think there's definitely a challenge in creating something that's new. I'm talking about in general. I enjoy the challenge of creating something new, so perhaps it's an extension of that. I want to keep evolving. But it is definitely fun to try new things as well. Like I have had probably four or five piercings taken out, because I've done that. That's it now I don't need to have that. I had my belly button pierced maybe 12 or 13 years ago and then all of a sudden everyone had them and I thought aaah, I don't want this any more.

Desley: You want to be different as well?

Participant: Maybe there's an element of wanting to be different, but again I had a belly button ring and I never showed any body. Like I never wore any little tops that would show it off. So it wasn't about publicly being different.

Desley: It was more for yourself?

Participant: Yeah, yeah. But I enjoyed having it for myself. I think the whole time I had it only about four or five people saw it. But then everyone had them and then I thought oh, that's not fun anymore. So I took it out. So you know there have been a few of those kinds of piercings that have come and gone, but just like... It's finished now! Something different.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	2	2	2	2	2	1	3	2	1	5	1	5	Glass half empty
Patient	2	1	2	2	2	3	2	3	4	5	2	5	Frustrated
Caring	5	2	3	1	2	5	1	1	2	5	1	4	Selfish
Kind	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	5	2	3	Cruel
Sense of humour	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	2	2	5	2	5	Serious
Sociable	5	3	5	5	5	4	5	1	1	2	1	4	Introverted
Friendly	2	2	2	2	5	2	2	2	1	4	2	4	Unapproachable
Active	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	4	Sedentary
Confident	1	1	1	1	1	4	2	2	2	3	1	5	Shy
Organised	1	1	1	2	3	3	2	5	4	2	1	4	Scattered
Hard working	2	2	3	1	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	4	Lazy
Honest	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	4	Sly

Participant: I got me first tattoo when I was 17. Always liked tattoos and just started getting them. But I should have went big first, instead of getting little tiny ones here there and everywhere. That's why a lot of me tattoos are now covered up, me original ones. They're just getting bigger and better and costing me more money. But other than that I just like tattoos. Have done for 30 years.

Desley: So the first one you got, where was that?

Participant: On my right arm. Just there underneath that one.

Desley: Ok. So what was that when you got it?

Participant: It was a black rose of death. Just a black rose, a couple of skulls and that on it. Couple of birds underneath and some flowers around it, like vines and that.

Desley: Ok. So what did that symbolise for you?

Participant: I don't know. I just liked it. It was just a really nice design. Yeah. the design was really good but 30 years on it sorta started fading so I decided to get it covered over. But other than that, yeah, no sorta real meaning to it. I just liked it.

Desley: Ok and how long did you think about it before you actually went and had it? Was it days, weeks, months, years?

Participant: Probably 2 years. Sort of from when I started working, oh, I left school, started working and that, few of the boys working with me, they had tattoos and I was always into body art as you call it.

Desley: Yeah. So can you remember your second one?

Participant: Yeah. The second one was a knife. that had my girlfriend's name on it. That was just to sort of symbolise what I liked sort of thing and got her name put on there and then we broke up so it got covered over as well.

Desley: ok. So did a knife mean anything to you?

Participant: No again it was just a nice design. See I'm not sort of into um, actual meanings of tattoos. If I like the design to me it's artwork.

Desley: Yeah.

Participant: If the design looks good I'll get it, sort of thing

Desley: So it's decoration for your skin?

Participant: Basically yeah.

Desley: Is that equivalent to, I don't know, putting a picture on the wall of your house or something?

Participant: Yeah, yeah. "cause I am into sort of like nice art if you know what I mean. How can I say it? Something that looks nice you know. You can sit there and look at it and go Ah yeah! And you can see depth and stuff in it you know?

Desley: depth as in perspective depth or?

Participant: Yeah sort of perspective depth, yeah. Like that picture up there. They're walking through it. There is design and depth in it.

Desley: Ah yeah so it looks like it's 3-D.

Participant: three dimensional, yeah.

Desley: so roughly how many tattoos would you say you have? Like is that arm just one, or?

Participant: well that's sorta, no that's a whole combination of different tattoos. There's about 14 tattoos on there. And I've got one big one on me back and a small one on me back. This arms got four on it, that's the top part, six all together. then there's me shoulders and me chest, so there's...

Desley: Heaps.

Participant: There's probably about 35 individual tattoos but they're all sort of joined. Like that's, down this arm there's sort of a Chinese type theme. Coz it started out with a dragon then the Samurai. The Japanese mask there. The koi carp, the Sumatran tiger, the spiders and there.

Desley: So it's all.

Participant: yeah. it's all flowing into sort of one, one big tattoo type of thing. Just a little bit more colour on the inside and it will be finished, I hope.

Desley: Ok. And with this arm are you going to get the full sleeve?

Participant: Yeah. I'll get that one finished off, I've just gotta get this one finished first. Bought a bike so me money's going into me bike at the moment.

Desley: Fair enough. So will that have a theme on that arm as well?

Participant: Yeah, this one's sort of a, that's like a Chinese theme on that one. I've started with – like that's the devil under there and a medieval knight there. That's going to sort of carry that sort of theme down that arm as well. Probably skulls and witches and..

Desley: Ok so when you say "that theme" what would be the name you would give that theme?

Participant: Medieval, yeah. yeah that'd be it, sort of thing. Cause that's like a medieval knight. The same as up on me shoulder.

Desley: So does that join on to your arm?

Participant: yeah that all comes up over there as well. It's like a what do you call it's..er...it's a... it's right on the tip of me tongue... it's um, a gargoyle.

Desley: Ah, OK.

Participant: He's coming from my shoulder going down to this medieval knight sort of thing. And the devil around the back there and it's all sort of going to flow into one. anyway

Desley: And then you said you've got a back piece.

Participant: Yeah I actually designed that meself. It's a tiger. With an Amazon lady holding it with chains and she's got a spear and there's all mountains and that in the background. It's still not quite finished because it hurts too much.

Desley: Oh, OK. I would have figured under there would hurt a fair bit, wouldn't it?

Participant: Well see that's not too bad under there. Right up there hurts, but it's like sunburn. That's how I describe the pain. It goes away after a couple of hours.

Desley: But the back doesn't.

Participant: Ah it kills. That's why. I got it started about 13 years ago. It's still not finished yet. One day I'll get the guts to finish it. The chest hurts pretty much too, so.

Desley: I'd imagine, yeah. They say, most people say anywhere with bone, or sensitive skin.

Participant: yeah. right on the breast bone I've got, there's a um, it's sort of, it's carrying on from this medieval style, there's a wizard and there's a dragon and there's a horseman, a headless horseman sort of on there and there's all bats and things around it. And he put a bat right on my sternum there. Na, that shouldn't have been happening. Cause there's nothing there. There's like about a millimetre of skin. Ah, that just kills you.

Desley: So that'll be almost going to the bone.

Participant: Yeah, if you cut me open, I reckon I'd be tattooed into me bones.

Desley: So the Chinese or the Oriental theme, does that represent anything at all for you?

Participant: No, it doesn't sort of really represent anything. I just like that style of tattoo. If you have a look at the Japanese, how they do their tattoos, it's all, like to them it all means something. They're all in the mafia, Japanese mafia and all that sort of stuff, you know? They're the only sort of real people who get them over there. But that's just how they're writing. Coz I look at their sort of, like the Samurai and that, I don't know, I suppose a meaning of strength or whatever. To them it is, but to me, I just like it.

Desley: So it doesn't represent strength to you?

Participant: No not really. No, coz I just like that style of tattoo. See he's ready to strike the dragon that's trying to get to the angel. The spider has got hold of the angel, so the Samurai is ready to kill the dragon and then slay the spider.

Desley: And is that a story from somewhere?

Participant: No that's just how I envisioned it in my mind. How I wanted to get tattooed. I actually designed all of that. And the koi carp on the back, that was sort of there just to fill up space and it looked nice. I seen one on another guy and I went ah! Coz I was wondering what to put up there. And that sort of went with the whole theme. Japanese type, Chinese style.

Desley: Someone said, in mythology, that the carp, if they swim up to the start of the stream or whatever they turn into a dragon.

Participant: Oh, ok. There you go. Well I didn't know that.

Desley: I don't know if that's true, that's what a person told me.

Participant: maybe the carp's coming down, back to the dragon.

Desley: maybe.

Participant: that could be part of it, yeah.

Desley: So were they individual things that you saw somewhere or you just sort of thought them up?

Participant: Well I'd seen pictures of different things. Then I sort of drew up what I wanted. And then Sue re-drew it, so that was good. She's a good drawer. I just sort of do like stick figures. She just re-designed it and I looked at it and said yeah that's what I want. Change this, change that, then yeah.

Desley: And so with the medieval theme, what does that mean to you, anything?

Participant: No. it's just, um, like I like watching them sort of movies and things. Like, um, Lord of the Rings and that sort of stuff, you know. To me they're good movies, that medieval sort of stuff.

Desley: And the fantasy stuff.

Participant: Yeah. I've always liked them since I was a kid. So just go into that sort of thing.

Desley: So do you think if you say there's two sets, if this is the medieval front and back?

Participant: No. not really, no.

Desley: So what would the front and back be?

Participant: It's sort of flowing. The front part is sort of flowing into one theme and the back's gonna be totally different. How else can I explain me back. Me back's going to be like – not exactly medieval, but, because that sort of goes back to the dark ages. Whereas that theme's sort of the, what the next one up from it? I can't think of it.

Desley: I don't know my history. So not the dark ages, but whatever that came after that?

Participant: yeah, well, that's right, yeah. yeah. not exactly the dark ages, but yeah.

Desley: But you said there's an Amazon woman?

Participant: Yeah. just an Amazon sheila, she's just standing there with chains around this cat. Because back in them type of ages, they used to use them to hunt for 'em, like tigers and stuff. Whereas these days they use guns and dogs.

Back then they used, well, like hawks and things like that. Yeah.

Desley: So what does that represent for you then?

Participant: um. Nothing.

Desley: So it's just a picture?

Participant: Yeah it's just a picture. It's a little bit faded at the moment. Get it fixed up. But yeah, no, I just liked that design. I saw a similar sort of thing in an Easy Riders magazine about 20 odd years ago. I thought, ah yeah I like that. I'll get that turned into a tattoo one day and I just played around with the idea and changed it to what I liked. Because I just like tigers and things like that

Desley: For any particular reason?

Participant: No, I just like them. To me tigers are just a great animal, you know. I've got four of them on me body.

Desley: But for you it's really just about the aesthetics. Like how it looks and that's all?

Participant: Yeah, that's right. Yeah. Doesn't sort of really represent strength or anything like that, to me, personally. I just like the art work and how the end result looks. If I don't like something I cover that up and do it again sort of thing, you know. Which they can. Because that spider I got 25 years ago and they've redone it. Because it looked like that. Which is, really bad.

So he just went over it again and then put some red around it. Hence the red spider web going up the girl's legs. Just to make it stand out a bit.

Desley: They had Angry Anderson on TV last year, and he got his lasered off so he could get it redone.

Participant: Yeah that's right. Getting them re-done. That's the thing. You've got to really think what you like. Because if you don't like it in 10 years time and you get it lasered off, it never really goes away. The reason why I am getting mine covered up is because like they're so old and the ink has spread so much.

Desley: So you wouldn't get the same thing?

Participant: No, no, just change it over. So it's all, so it'll all be one type of thing. I might leave the Harley one, cause I just bought a Harley.

Desley: Are there any of them that you don't like?

Participant: Only that one. Only because it's, it's so old.

Desley: So it doesn't look as nice.

Participant: It doesn't look as nice. When it was first done it was brilliant. There's a snake going round the evil and sort of through the skull. But you know, as you can see..

Desley: Yeah, you can hardly tell what it is actually. Until you pointed that out.

Participant: Yeah, but yeah. I'll just get that covered up. That's the only reason. But all the tattoos that I've had, I've liked them all. I'm just changing it so that now it's not just one individual tattoo here, you know what I mean? It's going to be one big tattoo instead of 20 little ones sort of thing.

Desley: And do you think you'll keep going until you run out of skin?

Participant: No. I'll just get me top half of me body done, I think.

Desley: So neck?

Participant: No, just around the collar bone. That's as far as that is going to go. That's sort of finished but I've done that in black and white, but I might get it coloured, instead of leaving it black and white. The colours look really good these days.

Desley: Yeah. And just go down to your hips?

Participant: Yeah. just down to me hips. Sort of like a t shirt.

Desley: long sleeved

Participant: long sleeved t shirt, yeah, that's it

Desley: So are there any of the tattoos that you've every had that have any meaning for you?

Participant: Sort of really only the one with my girlfriend's name on it. That was just cause I was in love with her and all that sort of stuff. Yeah. didn't sort of keep going. Anyway, doesn't matter. These things happen. So like I said they are all just individual designs that I liked. Just put them all together and make one nice tattoo, rather than have individual ones.

Desley: So in the end it will be literally like a shirt?

Participant: Yeah. Exactly. like the guy on Prison Break or whatever it is at the moment.

Desley: I haven't seen him. I heard about it the other day.

Participant: You've got today's paper? There's pictures of him in today's paper.

Desley: Yeah? Better go and get it.

Participant: That's a brilliant tattoo.

Desley: It's in the Mercury?

Participant: Yeah. the Mercury.

Desley: So you've been having them basically non-stop for 30 years, you said, roughly?

Participant: yeah, I'm 45, um, Twenty eight years, yeah. I'd get one, at least one per year.

Desley: And you don't regret any of them?

Participant: No no. no, they're all, they've all been good tattoos. Like I say, I'm just getting them covered over now because the old ones look old. Just get 'em beefed up to look better.

Desley: So it's all about the aesthetics.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: So what about the pain aspect of it? Like you said the back hurt too much.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: So you don't enjoy the pain or you do sometimes?

Participant: Yeah it doesn't sort of, bother you too much. Just certain spots, it just kills in certain places. The tattooists know what parts hurt so they'll do a little bit and go somewhere else and go back to it. I keep saying, just stay there! Finish it! Get it over and done with, you know. They keep on going back.

Desley: coz you know they're going to come back

Participant: yeah. finished there? No, I'm coming back to it. No you're not.

Desley: But they're the ones with the gun, aren't they? So would you say it's a benefit having the pain there? Is it like a plus or a minus or just something you have to have?

Participant: Yeah, you just put up with it. Coz most of the time I sit there with this, like when I was getting part of this one done, like in here, in the elbow and that, that really hurts. And there was this lady, sitting on the other chair and the other tattoo was doing this little tiny butterfly, about as big as of a 20 cent piece, on her arm and she was jumping, and carrying on and I was just sitting there, me and Al, looking at her laughing. I said sit still for a minute! It's only going to hurt for 20 minutes. She looked at me said how long are you going to sit there for? I said about 3 hours. It's like, she went "oh my God"

Desley: But everyone's pain threshold is different.

Participant: Yeah that's right. Because I've been doing it for so long, I sort of know what to expect. You just put up with it, yeah. yeah, like I say, different parts of your body hurt. Like the middle of me back and me sternum that really killed. Yeah. but I'll get them finished one day.

Desley: So did having your tattoos coincide with any particular event in your life ever?

Participant: Yeah I got one on my back for when my wife and I got married. Yeah, put one on. Just got her name and everything on there. That's a tiger coming out of some trees and it's got her name on it. Just after we got married, put that on.

Desley: And that's the only one?

Participant: Yeah. The rest was sort of I'd wander into the tattoo shop and look at different designs and go yeah, I like that. Put that on there. Or I'd go home and think about it and draw something different and go back and get Sue to draw it properly.

Desley: So you always go to the same place?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: So how important is that to you?

Participant: yeah, pretty, pretty important. Because there's some shonky tattooists out there. You see some guys coming in and say to the this tattooist that I go to, can you do something with this tattoo, cause it's really bad, you know. There's just some shonks out there, they've got no idea what they're doing and, anyway. Yeah.

Desley: so do you use the same person there or just the same shop?

Participant: Same shop. well, years ago it was only Dave. Then his son started working with him. Now there's three other guys started working with him. Only 3 guys have tattooed me. That's Dave and his son Chris and then Al. The only reason I got Al to start putting some tattoos on me, coz I seen him doing an eagle on a guy, it was sort of from here down to here, spread - eagled eagle, and it was probably the best darn tattoo I had ever seen in my life. Just how it was done. You could see each feather. I said to him who done that. He said, oh, me. Coz he was doing another one at the time. I went, ok. Then he's done quite a bit of this arm. He's actually better than what Chris was, that's Dave's son. Dave's the best tattooist in Australia.

Desley: Yeah the guy I talked to the other day, said if Dave died he would never get another tattoo.

Participant: well that's it, yeah. He's the number one tattooist. He's got awards everywhere.

Desley: I think one of the other guys that works there, Todd, he's got an award for women's tattoos.

Participant: yeah, yeah, Todd's pretty good too. I haven't got one off him yet. I've seen him doing them, doing the art work and that, but yeah, I haven't actually got him to do any on me.

Desley: It's good isn't it that we've got good ones down here. You don't have to go to Sydney.

Participant: that's it, yeah. you see Dave's been around for 40 years.

Desley: Yeah. I talked to a guy. Dave used to be near the cinemas in the city. That's where he got his first one.

Participant: My first one he was in Port Kembla.

Desley: Ah, OK.

Participant: So that was his first shop, here in Wollongong.

Desley: He's a nice guy too.

Participant: yeah, that's it, yeah.

Desley: He seems very generous to me. So do you think there's anything else you could do or have that would be the same for you as having a tattoo? like could you go out and buy lots of nice pictures? Would be cheaper probably.

Participant: Yeah. But it

Desley: not the same?

Participant: Na, not really. You hang them on the wall, and you are the only one who'll see them, you know what I mean? It's like, put them on your body, walk down the street, everybody looks at them. A lot of people move out of your way, when you are walking down the street it's like...

Desley: Yeah a bit scary. So is that a good thing or a bad thing?

Participant: Well it doesn't bother me actually. I just look at people and think, yeah. I'm just a bloke, you know. Just like tattoos.

Desley: One guy said the other day said sometimes it's good coz it's a barrier and sometimes it's nice that people won't talk to him

Participant: I see, yeah, I know what he means, yeah. If you want to go to the pub and just sit there by yourself and just have a quiet beer, nobody will come up and annoy you. I'm not going

anywhere near that bloke! It is good sometimes. But sometimes it can be a bad thing, sometimes you want to go to the pub and have a yak with somebody,

Desley: And they're all scared of you! The guy I talked to this morning, he's got the new style – I'm not sure what you call it, not the graffiti stuff, but really colourful...

Participant: Ah yeah.

Desley: And he said everybody was coming up to him to talk about them.

Participant: Yeah. I find the same now, actually, the more colour that I get, people do actually want to talk to you about them.

Desley: Well maybe the older ones, like if you look at your older ones; they look like a jailhouse tattoo or something. So they are not really sure about you.

Participant: Yeah, they are all covered up.

Desley: Get rid of the scary ones. So typically when you go, do you go by yourself to get your tattoos?

Participant: Oh no. sometimes me missus and kids come with me, me grandson, he says "can I get one of them poppy"... not yet. Yeah! no, sometimes I go down by meself, I'll just go down there, say g'day and have a look around the shop and see what new designs have come in.

Desley: but it's not something, like when you got your first one, you didn't go with a bunch of mates or anything?

Participant: No when I got my first one I was by meself. What'd I do? Actually, I finished work. I was working in the Steelworks and I used to drink in Port Kembla. And I went and had a beer and I walked up and had a look in the tattoo shop and he was doing a guy then. He said if you come back in half an hour, if you want one I'll put one on you. So I went back to the pub, had another beer, walked back up the road and yeah, he was ready to go.

Desley: So in those days they didn't mind that you had been drinking?

Participant: No, no. these days it's a bit different. Back then everybody got pissed before they had, but I had only two beers. Like I just went to the pub and had a quick beer I thought ah I'll walk up to the tattoo shop and have a look and because he was busy, then I went back and had another beer.

Desley: Someone said that you bleed more when you've been drinking.

Participant: That's right. Yeah. You've got to make sure if you've booked in Saturday morning, you don't get pissed Friday night. Because you just bleed out. Yeah. I've done that a couple of times.

Desley: Does that wreck the tattoo?

Participant: No doesn't actually wreck it. But the colour doesn't stay in there. I think you can see, in parts there, when he was doing the red, it sort of bled lots, but I'd been out the night before.

Desley: so you've learnt that lesson

Participant: yeah, that's right. You don't get on the piss the night before. Cause your blood's a lot thinner. And you do, you bleed a lot more than if you weren't. so I've gotta try and make the appointments in the afternoon, before I head to the pub.

Desley: Do you think of yourself as a person with tattoos or are you a tattooed person?

Participant: That really means the same thing, doesn't it?

Desley: Not to some people. Like the guy this morning, to him a tattooed person was someone like yourself I guess that's got a serious amount of work done. He had his kids names here, a big piece there, one here and one there. But still to him, he said he couldn't stand up against someone who has full sleeves and stuff.

Participant: Ah I see what you mean.

Desley: He said that was really arrogant to call himself a tattooed person, because he doesn't have that commitment to it.

Participant: Yeah, yeah. I probably am, actually a tattooed person I 'spose rather than a person with tattoos. I used to be a person just with a couple of individual tattoos. But now it's, yeah, yeah I understand what you mean.

Desley: So is it more important for you to have a picture on your skin or to have a particular picture on your skin?

Participant: No, just having a picture there. Something that looks good.

Desley: Something you like?

Participant: Yeah that's right.

Desley: But in some ways it doesn't really matter what it is?

Participant: No not really. Just as long as it flows into one. Instead of having four or five little things that just don't gel together you know what I mean? Whereas all of that goes in together, spider's got her, it's facing her and he's facing them with the sword round the back ready to slice it's head off sort of thing

Desley: So it's like a whole story, almost, on your arm.

Participant: Basically, yeah.

Desley: I saw a guy once and he had good and bad luck symbols all down his arm.

Participant: On one arm?

Desley: Yeah, I can't remember what he had on the other one. What kind of reactions have you had to the tattoos?

Participant: Different sorts of reactions. I said to the Missus one day, we were walking down Crown Street. I just had a singlet on. And people just move out of your way.

Desley: So you felt like Moses.

Participant: Yeah, that's exactly how it is. And I said to the missus... you don't mind if I swear, do you?)

Desley: No.

Participant: I said to her, like, have I got "I am a fucking criminal." tattooed on my forehead? And she said why what's the matter and I said you have a look how many people move out of the way, you know. And she said what are you frigging talking about. And I said you watch. I said, we'll walk 50 metres and I guarantee you in that 50 metres, 10 people will move out of our way. So we're walking down the street and we had only gone 10 metres, she said yeah, you're right, aren't ya? I said yes, it's like, I'm not a criminal, you know, but that's people's perspective of tattooed people.

Desley: That's the stereotype.

Participant: that's it, yeah.

Desley: And the old research actually said if you have a tattoo, you are either a psychopath or a criminal.

Participant: That's right.

Desley: And if you're not in jail it's only because you haven't been caught yet.

Participant: that's it {laughing}... but you see, I'm neither. I don't do anything criminal. I don't do drugs or anything.

Desley: You ride a bike though!

Participant: Yeah. That's it!... anyway

Desley: So has it had any negative effects on your life? Has it stopped you getting jobs or girlfriends or?

Participant: No not really. Because every job interview I have ever been to, I have always worn short sleeves, just so that they know straight away. And there was only one job that I never got because of my tattoos and that was like at the front counter of a store, but I've been in the building game most of me life, so that didn't really bother me.

Desley: That's good. So what do you think about other people with tattoos? Like when you see people with tattoos do you move out of their way?

Participant: No, no. most of the time if I see somebody with a nice tattoo I'll walk up and have a look at it. Just go can I check that out, you know? Most of them are like yeah ok. Because they look at you first and they are like he's got heaps of tats. Most guys are alright. You get the odd idiot that's like, I'm tougher than you, piss off sort of thing. It's like, grow up, you fool! To me tattooing is an artwork. And if I see something nice, I'll go up and ask the guy to have a look at it. Or girl

Desley: So do you know lots of people that have tattoos?

Participant: Yeah most of my mates have got tattoos.

Desley: What about in your family?

Participant: Yeah my wife's got a tattoo. My two elder sons have got a tattoo. My son's tattoo on his arm it's just brilliant. It's in progress, but. He's like, three times bigger than me he's got a Samurai on his arm as well, with a dragon, the Samurai is trying to slay the dragon. It's brilliant. He's just got some background done on it, but his arms are like this!

Desley: Yeah. So is that done at Corrimal as well?

Participant: Yeah, Al's doing it.

Desley: I've got a trick question. For you, what would be the opposite of having your tattoos?

Participant: I don't know. I have always had tattoos and I have always liked them so I don't know what it would be like to not have tattoos.

Desley: Would that be the opposite? Not having them? Would it be having ugly ones? Would it be having, I don't know, girly ones? Having them all taken off?

Participant: No, I just like them. I've always liked tattoos.

Desley: So what would the opposite be, do you think? Just not having them at all, having ugly ones?

Participant: Having ugly ones. You don't sort of think about what you're doing. You get higgledy piggledy ones, which a lot of people do. Quite often you're sitting there getting a tattoo done and somebody will come in and you hear them talking to the tattooist, oh, what about get that and that. To some tattooists, it's just work to them, you know, they just want to make a few bucks. But a good tattooist would say look if you get that, what are you going to put around it? You've got to do something else with it, you know. Just that tattoo would look stupid. Which most of them do. You've got to have a theme, I think. Not a theme, but something that looks good, first up.

Desley: So something connecting them in some way.

Participant: Yeah, sort of like that. That by itself doesn't look any good. There should have been more background and stuff put around it. But yeah, I never sort of got that far with it.

Desley: But I suppose in those days they probably didn't do it like that as much, did they?

Participant: well, yeah Dave did. There were a few tattooists in Sydney that did that sort of thing, sort of everything flowing into one, sort of thing. But they didn't explain it as good back then, as they do now. They talk to a lot of people and say so if you do this then what are you going to do ..if you get this this and this done as well it will look a lot better. But how much are they going to cost? And that's a big factor with a lot of people getting tattoos. I've got thousands of dollars worth. To me the money doesn't really come into it. When I've got enough money to get done what I want to get done, that's when I go to the tattoo shop. Just say, right, book me in for 2 or 3 hours.

Desley: So is that the only thing that dictates when you get them?

Participant: It used to. It's not so much now because like me and my wife both work. The kids are older now. They're working. We've sort of got a bit of spare cash. So if I've got nothing to do I'll say how much money's in the bank, I'll get 300 bucks out and go and get some tattoo work done. It used to be an issue but now it's not. You know what I mean?

Desley: It's just when you feel like it.

Participant: Yeah. that's it. But like I say I'm too busy spending money on my Harley at the moment.

Desley: The guy who came in the other day had 6 bikes.

Participant: Six! Half his luck. I've had 47 bikes over 37 years.

Desley: That's not bad.

Participant: But I've only got one at the moment.

Desley: Do you feel like, the fact you've got tattoos means that you identify with any particular group of people?

Participant: Ah yeah. Cause I am in the bikes and I always have been, yeah. Most bikers have got tattoos.

Desley: So if you see someone with a tattoo, do you straightaway go, they're a biker!

Participant: No. you...

Desley: You can tell.

Participant: You can tell what sort of tattoo they've got as to um, whether they're just ... ah, just guys who get tattoos just for the sake of getting a tattoo or whether they're into bikes and they've got tattoos. Like there's guys into hot rod clubs and that, they've got tattoos, but they're a different sort of style of tattoo again. Surfies- surfies get tattoos. But you can tell they're not real good because most of the time they get a tattoo and 2 days later they're in the surf. Half the ink's sort of gone. They don't listen. No brains. anyway

Desley: They don't look after them properly.

Participant: na, that's right, yeah.

Desley: So I assume you do.

Participant: Ah yeah. even now, like this, um, last time I got something done was about nine months ago. I still put cream on it all the time. Just to keep it soft and keep the colour in it. Even though I am outside working in the sun all day long. Cause it fades a fair bit.

Desley: Do you put sunscreen on it?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: Is that what you meant by cream?

Participant: No I put vitamin E cream on it. Yeah, like of a night-time and things like that. If I know I'm going to be outside working most of the day, I'll put sunscreen on then.

Desley: Is there anything else you can think of about your tattoos? I think I've asked you all my questions.

Participant: No, just about covered everything, I 'spose.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	4	1	3	1	1	Sad
Patient	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	4	3	3	3	3	Impatient
Caring	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	5	5	1	3	Don't care
Kind	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	4	2	Anti-social
Sense of humour	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	3	3	2	1	2	Dumb
Sociable	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	3	1	3	Unsociable
Friendly	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	5	2	Bad
Active	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	4	3	3	5	Comatose
Confident	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	4	1	5	1	3	Vince
Organised	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	5	5	5	3	Disorganised
Hard working	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	5	2	3	5	Slack
Honest	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	3	3	5	3	4	Liar



Participant: I've got 7 tattoos just on various parts of my body, mainly chest and back. I got those between the ages of about 17 and 22. Pretty much... No real motivation for getting them, I just, I liked the designs at the time and I'd seen them in magazines, yeah, I liked the general idea of them.

Desley: Ok, so why on your back and your front?

Participant: I didn't want to get anything that couldn't be covered up by a t-shirt pretty much, mainly for like job interviews or whatever, things like that.

Desley: Fair enough. And so, do you mind running through what the pictures are?

Participant: Yeah mainly Celtic designs, and yeah generally sort of obscure designs, that aren't really, they don't have any particular meaning to them, I just like the designs a lot.

Desley: So it's just mainly an aesthetic thing, you like the look of it?

Participant: Yeah

Desley: So did you decide, I want a tattoo in this place and I'll look for a picture that fits it or was it more the other way- I like this picture, where can I put it? Or a bit of both?

Participant: Yeah, the first one, yeah, a bit of both really. I liked the design, I thought that's a very good design, and yeah, I got that first one's in the center of my chest and it just fitted it really well being a triangular shape.

Desley: And so does Celtic mean anything to you?

Participant: Not really, I just, I like the designs, yeah.

Desley: So just like the artwork?

Participant: Yeah

Desley: So you said you wouldn't have a tattoo anywhere that wasn't covered by a t-shirt?

Participant: Yeah, possibly forearm or something, but it'd be something fairly discrete. I think, if I got anymore.

Desley: So not on your legs or face or anywhere like that?

Participant: Certainly not face, possibly legs or arms, but yeah, certainly not face.

Desley: So you said you had the first one when you were 17?

Participant: Yeah

Desley: Through til you were 22 roughly?

Participant: Yeah

Desley: So one or two a year for a while?

Participant: Pretty much, yeah

Desley: And then nothing since then?

Participant: Yeah nothing at all since then.

Desley: So do you think you'd ever get another one?

Participant: Possibly, if I did I'd probably get work done to the existing ones. Like change something or put some more colours in, I'd say.

Desley: Is that because you're not happy with them now?

Participant: No, it's just I'm happy with what I've got.

Desley: So you don't want an additional tattoo but you might get the others...

Participant: Yeah that's right, I think I've got enough sort of coverage at the moment...

Desley: So do you still like them all?

Participant: Yeah, probably, probably one I wouldn't it removed I don't think, but it was a bad decision I think, the design I don't like anymore really

Desley: So would you think about getting it changed?

Participant: Possibly, yeah, yeah that's where I'd get work done, on that particular one.

Desley: to like, cover it up or just...?

Participant: Mainly just add to the design

Desley: It would still be what you've got, just add to it?

Participant: Yeah

Desley: When you had them, that's probably hard, but how long did you think about it before you actually went and did it? like was it days, weeks, months?

Participant: Probably, probably 6 months I'd say.

Desley: For each one, or...?

Participant: For the first one.

Desley: And what about for the other ones?

Participant: Well, after that I just, well I was interested in, like I'd buy magazines, tattoo magazines, and look at different designs and out of one magazine I might find one thing that I'd like, whatever, yeah

Desley: So you'd just go get it?

Participant: Yeah

Desley: So was there any timing to it at all? Or just that you found something?

Participant: Not really, no, no, just something I liked. I'd have that in my head for a while and ohh, it's a convenient time, I'll go get that done.

Desley: Do you think, with all of the ones you like, would you have them again if you had your time over?

Participant: I think so, yep.

Desley: What about the one you don't like?

Participant: Well, no, I wouldn't.

Desley: You just wouldn't get it at all?

Participant: Yeah, yep

Desley: Do you consider that any of the tattoos coincide with any particular event in your life?

Participant: Not really, no

Desley: So why 17?

Participant: At the time I had, I don't know, I just had an interest in it.

Desley: It's actually illegal these days...

Participant: Yeah, I know

Desley: Might have been then too, I don't know, but, um... So, what about the pain factor? Do you consider that to be a plus or a minus or is it just something you have to go through?

Participant: A minus I think, yeah, just something you have to go through. It's definitely not a plus.

Desley: It is for some people...

Participant: Yeah, I know, some people... but yeah, not really

Desley: What I'm thinking is, there's one of the psychological theories that says that people go through what he calls peak experiences, and they, you get more in touch with your real self at those times... and so one thing I'm thinking of is maybe one peak experience is throwing yourself out of an airplane. So, I'm wondering, whether for you, there's any relation between that and getting a tattoo?

Participant: I don't think so...

Desley: So there's no sense of the same kind of, whatever it is you get out of skydiving?

Participant: I've never really thought about it actually. No, I mean I get it and I'd be really happy with it for a quite while and oh, yeah, it's just there now.

Desley: It became like part of you?

Participant: Yeah, yeah

Desley: Cause I was just thinking, cause you know a lot of people say they're addictive, tattoos...and I wonder whether part of that is just how you feel after you've got it, cause a lot of people seem to feel really good once they have it

Participant: I think so, yeah, yeah

Desley: So I'm wondering if that's a similar "thrill" for want of a better word to when you've done a dive?

Participant: Possibly yeah, jumping's something very different for me though

Desley: In what way?

Participant: I don't know, its, I love everything about jumping really, it's like a, it's definitely an addiction. I feel more peaceful jumping, it calms me down.

Desley: Yeah, someone else has said that, and then I spoke to a guy who said his tattoos calm him down. He said just looking at it reminds him, so maybe there is a link there somewhere. Do you think your tattoos mean anything as a whole? Like, is there a theme or anything or is it just random designs that you like?

Participant: Random designs that I like but they're generally in a Celtic theme just because I like those particular designs. I like the sort of, the curves on them.

Desley: But there's not anything that actually links each of them to the others or anything?

Participant: No

Desley: Why have a tattoo? Was there something else you could have done?

Participant: Not that I can think of, yeah. It's just, yeah, they just interest me, I love looking at them, I've got pictures of them, the actual artwork, and stuff, yeah.

Desley: So you couldn't have just stuck the pictures on your wall or something?

Participant: Yeah, I wouldn't have got anything out of them though I don't think. I don't know.

Desley: So what would you consider you get out of your tattoos?

Participant: Just, that the design being on your body and seeing, I guess your body moves or something and the tattoo moves with it.

Desley: Ok, which would work on your chest, but what about on your back?

Participant: That's funny actually, the ones on my back, my girlfriend just was commenting on them this morning. I said, I don't know, I haven't seen them in years. Look in the mirror, no, yeah that's a good design, yeah. I don't even really think about the ones on my back, I've nearly forgotten about them. Just purely because you never see them...

Desley: Because you don't see them...

Participant: Yeah... except in the morning when you get out of the shower or something

Desley: Yeah, cause I guess most people don't go round looking at their backs

Participant: I remember a similar comment from a bloke in the tattoo shop while I was getting one on my back - He said what are you going to get that for, on your back for, you'll never see it. I thought about it later, yeah you're right.

Desley: Did you get any more on your back after that?

Participant: No

Desley: So you think that had an influence on it?

Participant: Possibly, but I mean, it wasn't until a year after that, or I don't know how long after, I actually thought oh that bloke was right. Yeah.

Desley: took a while to sink in, did it? To you, was it important, I think you sort of talked about this, but to have a tattoo rather than just have the picture?

Participant: I think so, the sense of permanency of it

Desley: So it was something you wanted to have always?

Participant: Yes, it's always going to be there.

Desley: trick question. What would be the opposite of your tattoos?

Participant: um, I can't think of an answer for that really...

Desley: As in you don't know quite how to answer, or?

Participant: I just, yeah, can't think of an opposite

Desley: So would the opposite be just blank skin then?

Participant: Yeah, yeah, I suppose

Desley: Not something ugly instead?

Participant: No, no, just something that's not there I'd say

Desley: Ok, so just not having them

Participant: Yeah

Desley: So when you went did you go by yourself?

Participant: Yes, for the first one and a couple later ones I had a mate who was getting one done as well, he already had a couple as well

Desley: So it wasn't like one of you influenced the other to go, you just went...

Participant: No, no

Desley: What do you think that it means to other people that see them?

Participant: um, I've generally only had positive comments. So, maybe out of politeness, if people don't like them they're not going to say anything. It's generally, yeah, it's more other people that have tattoos that are likely to comment. Say, oh yeah, I've got something similar, or I like that design.

Desley: So you haven't had any negative things happen because of them?

Participant: No

Desley: do you think that's probably cause you're careful about where you put them?

Participant: Yeah, generally, if its at work I've got a shirt on

Desley: What about your family and friends and stuff?

Participant: Friends have always said they like them or whatever, and family, my mother's not real... like she said it's a bit stupid isn't it? Yeah, she asked me a couple years ago, she said, oh, you're not going to get any more? I said no, I'm not, I'm not planning to.

Desley: Mothers seem to do that. So did you ever worry about your mother's reaction enough that you thought oh maybe I shouldn't get any or get another one?

Participant: Not really, no

Desley: Who do you know that has a tattoo?

Participant: A lot of jumpers I think... People out here...

Desley: What about in your family or your friends and stuff? Or friends outside here.

Participant: Yeah, no family, a few work mates, yeah a few people at work. Generally seems to be older people that have served time in the army or something, things like that

Desley: Do you feel like the fact that you have a tattoo means that you identify with any particular group of people?

Participant: Not really, no

Desley: So it's more something just private?

Participant: It's personal, yeah, just personal

Desley: So that's not something you'd go round and like show off or anything?

Participant: No

Desley: So given that its covered by the t-shirt, how often would people see them then?

Participant: Not very often, like, here occasionally, cause we've got like a communal shower block, so obviously when I'm getting changed or when I go out in the surf or something like that.

Desley: Is there anything else about your tattoo that you think, that might be relevant?

Participant: Not really, no

Desley: Do you feel like it's a part of who you are?

Participant: Yeah, definitely

Desley: And are you able to say in what way, or is that too hard?

Participant: It's part of my body, that's the way I think of, yeah

Desley: So someone said it's sort of like the same as I've got blue eyes or I've got brown hair.

Participant: Yeah, its, yeah... I think of it that way now.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	4	4	3	Unhappy
Patient	3	1	2	2	2	3	3	2	1	4	3	4	Busy
Caring	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	5	3	Uninterested
Kind	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	4	3	Mean
Sense of humour	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	4	5	4	Angry
Sociable	4	4	3	3	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	3	Rude
Friendly	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	3	4	Rude
Active	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	5	3	1	Lazy
Confident	3	1	1	2	1	2	1	2	2	4	4	3	Shy
Organised	3	2	2	2	2	4	3	3	2	5	4	2	Scatter-brained
Hard working	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	3	2	5	2	2	Bludging
Honest	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	4	2	Thieving

Participant: I first got a little tiny tattoo when I was 18. I'd wanted to get a tattoo probably pretty much from since I was aware of them. My dad has a tattoo. Well he has lots now but he had one when I was growing up. I'm glad that I waited now, because I really would have gotten something awful if I had got one when I was 15 when I first wanted it. Yeah so I got one and then I got...earlier I didn't get anything with a meaning or anything. I just got something. I got a little star. I like stars and now I've got over a 100 stars! And I got more little small ones, just bits and pieces and..but none of them are really..they are all flash, pictures I had drawn, nothing really, no custom jobs or anything. And then when I started going to this Lesbian strip club, which is called Girlesque, which is like not like a normal strip club. It is like performance art kind of thing. And heaps of the girls who performed there had these beautiful tattoos and I kind of became friends with two of the girls there and they were telling me about their tattoo artist whose name was Megan. And my girlfriend at the time went and got a custom job, like on her arm. She got a half sleeve in a day. Which was like...Well not a full half sleeve. It's just on the outside not the inside. But she did nine hours in one sitting.

Desley: coloured in and everything

Participant: yeah yeah yeah yeah. Cause she was going back to the States like the next day or something. So she had this one window of opportunity so she got this piece from this woman called Megan, who has since been my tattoo artist. And I've got all my big custom work from her. And so yeah. After Amber got her half sleeve, I booked in straightaway and I got my left rib cage done. And I wanted ...I've got a koi carp on my left ribcage and I wanted one on each side, but it is the most excruciating place to get a tattoo. I was like..right, maybe I'll just leave it to one side. So I've got one koi carp. And then I just, any time I had money, anytime I was working full time, I got big custom work. And since I first got my biggest piece, I've never got anything small again, because I thought this is the way I wanted to be tattooed. I want to do big custom work. But then money is an issue. I haven't been tattooed in a few years now because I've been studying and haven't had any money. It's expensive. Yeah. Soo.. I really like colourful tattoos. Like all mine, bar a couple of the really early ones, are really brightly coloured. Like rainbow colours and they are a bit cartoony. They're not really, I guess they are not really typical kind of what you would expect of tattoos. Heaps of people say that to me like, wow they are really

unusual. Because they are like children's illustrations kind of thing. So, I guess, I can't really see an end to it. Like I don't try to think, like I... My girl friend kind of goes, I am getting this one thing and that will be the end. Like she can see the end of her tattooing process, but I can't really see an end to mine. So I'll keep going till I die or get sick of it or something. But like I said it's a money issue. So I don't know what else to say.

Desley: So how old were you when you got your first big piece?

Participant: I guess I would have been 21.

Desley: And since then, you said you've only got big work done?

Participant: Yeah. I've only done big stuff

Desley: How long do you sort of think about a piece before you actually get it?

Participant: Depends. If I've got money I'll get it straight away. Like I don't know. It's like a weird process for me. Coz part of it's about trust. Like I go this is how much I trust myself and how much I trust my judgement on things and on the way I look and stuff. I kind of don't want to deliberate over things for too long. And inevitably if I do deliberate on something I'll change my mind. But I've never regretted any of my tattoos. Even the really early ones. I wouldn't get them again, just because they are all small.

Desley: Yeah.

Participant: But I don't go I wish I didn't get that.

Desley: So you don't think about changing them?

Participant: No. Never even think about cover ups or getting them removed. Getting them removed; I find is the weirdest concept. Like getting a tattoo removed, what are you doing? Just get a painting. So... yeah, no, I don't regret the. But I guess, like at the moment I'm planning, I want to get on with it when I get the baby bonus, not, I'm not going to spend the whole baby

bonus on a tattoo, but yeah. This is the first time in three years I'll have a chunk of money. And so I wanna get, I pretty much know what I'm gonna get.

Desley: So that'll be after the baby's born

Participant: Yeah, after the baby cause you can't get tattooed while you are pregnant.

Desley: I didn't think that would be very good.

Participant: yeah, so after the baby's born then I'll get one.

Desley: So you said you knew what you wanted to get?

Participant: Ah yeah yeah. I've got a vague idea... I've got kind of a final short list of like 3 things that I want to get.

Desley: So are they things you designed yourself or does Megan design them?

Participant: Ah Megan, totally. well I kind of have the idea. Like with my sleeve, I kind of went in to her and I said Look I want a sleeve, I want it to be dinosaurs, and want them to be doing these things and I picked out what dinosaurs I wanted, but she drew them. Cause I am not much of an artist at all. So she kind of draws everything up for me. Like I just trust her 100% to do what... Cause she knows me as well. I've known her for like 6 years or so, and so she's um....you know, you spend big chunks of time with your tattooist, so you get to know them pretty well and they get to know you pretty well. I feel like we are really in tune and I feel like she knows what I like. So I totally will go to her with an idea and at the next meeting, before I've even seen the drawing she'll put it on me straight away, coz I just know that there won't need to be any adjustments. So yeah, no, I don't draw them.

Desley: You think about what you want and tell her and

Participant: Yeah. I usually take pictures. Like when I got my dinosaurs..I'm really into dinosaurs and I've got heaps of books at home.. So I stick post-it notes in my book, like "ok I like this guy's face" I like this guys whatever and can you make him look this. And she's really

thorough. Like she'll photocopy all the books and she'll circle bits and then she'll like go away and draw up the piece. So she's incredibly thorough. She's awesome.

Desley: So once she's done that you just go back and get it straight away?

Participant: She'll go away and draw it. It usually takes her 2-3 weeks to draw it up. And then I'll just come back in and she'll do the outline and then we'll work on it like that. I only do, like when I was getting my leg done, I used to do 4 hour sittings. But now I only do two. I can't do more than two now. I'm a bit like...I don't know whether I am getting old, or...

Desley: You can't do it because of the pain or because you get bored or

Participant: I think it's more the energy. I find like that it's really a lot of energy getting a tattoo. Specially when they start doing shading I find it really psychologically taxing. Not really the pain, but it just exhausting. And so 2 hours is long enough now. And also she's \$160 an hour now, so 2 hours is like

Desley: 300 bucks.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: Not cheap. So you mentioned that you like stars and also dinosaurs.

Participant: Oh I just like dinosaurs generally in my life.

Desley: So what is it about dinosaurs that appeals to you?

Participant: I liked that they lived so long ago and we don't really know anything about them. But they are so pervasive in our culture. Like everyone knows about, everyone thinks they know about dinosaurs, everyone has an idea about dinosaurs. I just think that kind of longevity is awesome. And ...I am intrigued by how much we don't know about them. And how much we like to think that we know about them. And how a lot of the expert knowledge or what ever is speculation and it is constantly shifting. I'm really into that. I just like them as kind of a figure. And they look cool. yeah so. That's why I like dinosaurs.

Desley: And what about stars?

Participant: There is no real reason. I don't know whether it was maybe...I can't really remember whether I liked stars before I started getting tattooed with stars. But now they're just, they're a bit of a motif and they link a lot of my tattoos together. Like some of my tattoos would join up with other tattoos via a train of stars or something.

Desley: So how long since you've had a star tattoo?

Participant: it'd be a fair few years now. Cause when I started getting the top of my sleeve, the top of my sleeve is like a sky scene and it's got stars. That would have been in...I was in the States. Oh no, I got that tattoo on my finger when I was in the States and that was in 2002. The start of 2002. So that's the last time I had a star tattooed. But the tattoos I've got since then, have been finishing up my sleeve and there are no stars on that.

Desley: So do you imagine that you'll get stars again in the future?

Participant: Yeah, definitely. I think cause they are such a motif now, it would be weird if I got part of my body tattooed that didn't have stars on it. Cause it would be like

Desley: So they are incorporated in most of your work then?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: gotcha. So you said the first one you had was the little star?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: Where was that?

Participant: On my tummy.

Desley: Ok and was there some reason you put it on your belly?

Participant: No, I just thought it was a good spot.

Desley: For any particular reason?

Participant: I guess I liked the look of tattoos on your belly. I think now, I kind of..I mean I really love it. I tattooed two more just above it.

Desley: as in yourself?

Participant: yeah. But I think...the only reason I wish they weren't there is because want them bigger. Megan said...cause I've been wanting to have a baby for ages. And Megan, I went to her, I wanted to get a, a bat, hanging down, like upside down bat, with one wing kind of, like I did a drawing for it and everything and I went to Megan for the consult and she was like, aren't you having a baby? I said at some point I am having a baby. She said I am not tattooing your stomach until you've had the baby. Cause it's gonna get fucked up. She's really full-on about people taking care of her work. Understandably, cause she's investing a lot into it, she's an amazing artist. So she flat out refused. I am not tattooing you until after this baby, comes out. So I guess the only reason I wish that little star wasn't there is so I could get something bigger on my lower belly.

Desley: So it's down lower? Fairly low?

Participant: Yeah it's like there, and I can't really even see it any more.

Desley: Underneath the baby.

Participant: Yeah, so it's pretty low. I guess I'll say for my first tattoo I wanted, I was still kind of testing it out and I hadn't obviously made the commitment then to be a kind of, quite a heavily tattooed person. So it was all part of, if I decide I am not going to be into this, I can always cover it up. It was a bit of that, I think, it must have been. But I kind of crossed that bridge a little while ago.... Except for the dead of winter when they're all covered...

Desley: So did you worry about your mum or anyone?

Participant: Oh my mum knew. She always knew that I would get tattooed. She's pretty cool. I think at the start she didn't realise how many I'd get. I don't think I realised either. But she... My mum's been always been supportive of anything I have done in life. When I was a teenager, I used to look like a freak and I had pink coloured hair and had dreadlocks or whatever and heaps of facial piercings and stuff, and she was always really like, you know, help me dye my hair and didn't really... didn't care about that kind of thing because I think she used to just think oh well, there's heaps of worse things that I could be doing with my body. Um, and so when I said look I am going to get a tattoo, all she was concerned about that I was going somewhere that was reputable and had good sterilization techniques and stuff. And so she was like calling around. I ended up going to the one in Fairy Meadow, is that the one you went to?

Desley: Corrimal?

Participant: Yeah Corrimal. She called them and "my daughter is coming in to get a tattoo and I just wanted to check you've got good sterilization techniques." And so I was going "oh my God" But she was pretty cool with it. And then when I started getting more and more she never ever said anything negative. I think she worries about how people judge me. But she doesn't judge me herself. She just worries about what other people are going to think about me. But she did make me promise not to get any below my elbows. But she doesn't care. And I think she likes it now. We went overseas together last year. Because I went and did a conference and did some research and she just came with me just to hang out. We went in Tucson, Arizona, which is like, have you been there?

Desley: Arizona? Yeah

Participant: yeah. And so It's a pretty awesome town. We were walking down and like heaps of people came up to me "oh man, you've got really cool tattoos!" I think she was like really proud. She was like "yeah!" Cool tattoos! She's totally into it now. I think she's proud of me. I think she's proud also because of the way.... Of my attitude towards it. I just go this is just a part of who I am, and if people want to judge me because of them, that's their problem. And I know that people do judge me because of the, cause it's pretty obvious. I am on the train and people are like pulling their kids away from me. And I go, well, you don't really know anything about me, you know. I am actually really nice and I am well educated and rah rah rah, so I figure if people

really want to judge me, then. And they are going to judge you for something, no matter what you do.

Desley: Yeah.

Participant: If its not the tattoos it's going to be something else.

Desley: One guy I talked to said he was on the train and a little kid said "Mummy is that the boogey man?" And she went "yeah!" because he had tats.

Participant: Full on! People are really...

Desley: Another girl I was talking to was walking down the street in Newtown. She said people were screaming out at her "you're a freak!"

Participant: Wow!

Desley: Cause she's got one here and one on her leg.

Participant: Oh my God! That's so weird. Yeah. I still get looks at in Newtown, which surprises me, but no one's ever really said anything.

Desley: No ones said anything really negative?

Participant: Nup.

Desley: What about things like being able to get a job?

Participant: Oh, I always cover up for.... I pretty much cover up for lots of things. Especially now that I am doing my PhD and it is associated with tattoos. It's not about tattooing, like in the way that yours is, but it has a connection to tattooing. And I just didn't want people to judge me or think that I am a gimmick, like I don't want them just to think that I'm just doing that because I have tattoos. I just think they'll accept my work and be more open to it, especially kind of fuddy duddy academic types. I think they'll be more open to it if they don't realise straight off

that I have heaps of tattoos. I think if I got up at a conference say, was all covered, I mean covered in tattoos and everyone could see them and gave my paper, I think people would be too preoccupied. Just coz I know how preoccupied people get, like “WOOOW” and staring at my arms or whatever. So I just kind of go, I don’t need that distraction. I want you to listen to what I am saying. And then afterwards we can talk about my tattoos, you know. I don’t mind revealing afterwards but I just think that’s a distraction people don’t need while I’m presenting papers. But yeah for jobs I would cover up. I went for a nannying job with this family. And didn’t know anything about the family. They turned out to be totally cool. But I covered. This was when my sleeve went just below my elbow, and I was like sitting down and they were talking to me and I had pink hair at the time which I had kind of vaguely tried to cover up. Which doesn’t work. Um. And yeah the little girl she was 4 at the time, “what’s on your arm?” she was lifting up my sleeve. I was going “oh, it’s nothing” But they were really into it. They were totally into my tattoos and the kids loved them and the parents turned out to love them as well. So that turned out to be fine. But I always just have that caution because I just know that people have preconceptions about women who have heaps of tattoos. And so I always had that at the back of my mind. I don’t internalize tattoophobia or anything. But I kind of keep it in the back of my mind, “not everyone is you know...”

Desley: So would you ever do your face or your neck or anything?

Participant: ummm, I’ve thought about doing my neck. I would never do my face. I’ve got a tiny one...I’ll probably get more on my fingers. Umm, not really. I think, also aesthetically, I’m not, I don’t think your face is...unless you are going to get a moko or something which I would never do because that would be awful.

Desley: Insulting.

Participant: Totally. So I would, I think other than those kind of things, aesthetically I don’t think your face is really the places for the kind of tattoos that I get. Like it just doesn’t go there for me. And hands are a bit the same. Like other than your fingers, I wouldn’t really. I would never get my feet tattooed either. Feet. I don’t know I guess it’s like a psychological block.

Desley: I guess since you go for the big stuff and hands and feet aren’t that big.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: so what are you going to do? Shrink it all down?

Participant: yeah shrinking's not it.

Desley: You are not going to be able to fit it all in. So do you consider that any of your tattoos coincided with any particular event in your life?

Participant: Only one that is really identifiable. Well I mean, tattoos that I've gotten overseas, obviously I go, ah yeah, that tattoo I got in San Francisco. I got big stars on the backs of my thighs, which I got in San Francisco. But obviously the stars don't mean San Francisco. But when I think about them, I always go ah yeah I got those at Black and Blue and I can kind of remember that experience. And also I've got cherries on the back of my leg that I got in Olympia in Washington and that's the same. It's like I got them in Washington. But other than that, you know, cherries don't symbolise what it was. But yeah. Other than those kind of things. Other than that, the tattoo will evoke the tattooing process, which will evoke what was happening at that time..

Desley: In your life.

Participant: Yeah. Other than that they don't really symbolise anything.

Desley: So you haven't got one where you like broke up with somebody or had a birthday or?

Participant: No.

Desley: Did you ever worry about any of your girlfriends going eww. You're a freak. You've got tattoos.

Participant: Girl friends like my sexual girlfriends?

Desley: Yeah.

Participant: Ummm.

Desley: I assume the other ones would be OK with it.

Participant: Yeah. Yeah, although not really. I guess the kind of people I associate with usually would be cool. My current partner didn't have any tattoos when we met. And her first two tattoos I did on her. But she's got a few now. But she, like I said, she's really, like I'll just get a couple more and that will be the end. She's not into big kind of coverage pieces. They are big, about that big, but not full colour. I think when I think "big" I think no skin. Like my sleeve has no skin. And I said that to Megan. I don't want any skin. She's like "man, you're a psycho" Yeah, I haven't worried about it. One of my girlfriends who was a psycho...

Desley: You mean literally?

Participant: Yeah pretty literally was pretty psycho. Very possessive and very um, just not very nice. And I've got stars on my chest and I went and got those just one day on a whim. And when I saw her that night, I said check it out, I got these! And she was totally appalled that I hadn't asked her permission.

Desley: Ok!

Participant: Yeah, that's what I am saying, she was just mental. And she kind of gave me the cold shoulder. Put me in the dog house for a few days. Yeah, so, she was a bit weird. Yeah so that was the only negative response, and I just think that's her problem.

Desley: totally. So you said that you still like all your tattoos.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: But you wouldn't have the little ones again, because of the size thing?

Participant: Yeah. It's not just the size thing. Just because they kind of take up places that I

Desley: could have used for other stuff.

Participant: yeah. Like I have a butterfly about that big, which was like my third tattoo, in the middle of my back. So there goes my back piece kind of thing! That's quite frustrating to me. I mean I love the butterfly. I never see it coz it's on my back. You know, and I wouldn't...Like I say I would never get it removed or I don't even want to get it covered up. Because Megan could totally do a back piece that would cover it up really easily. But I just would feel a bit funny about that. So I just kind of go, well I won't have a backpiece.

Desley: I just wonder what it says when people want to get them taken off or covered up or something.

Participant: Totally. Really strange.

Desley: Having said that my daughter got her first one covered up.

Participant: Did she?

Desley: She got a little Chinese thing here that said "art" 'cause she's an artist and she was into Brett Whiteley and he used to put Chinese Characters, and then she decided that he was a bit of a tosser and so she's got a phoenix. It's about down to here. Really pretty. She first wanted a peacock, but the guy said that the feathers, because they are individuals, wouldn't cover up the thick symbol.

Participant: Ah yeah, yeah, yeah.

Desley: So she did a phoenix. Really nice.

Participant: Yeah. Yeah. I don't know. My dad got his covered up. The one he had had since he was 17. But he got that covered up when my mum and him split up. I think he just kind of wanted to erase, coz that had been with him since they had been together I think. So he's like, I gotta fuck that off! I'm not having it anymore.

Desley: I've heard that some women, I suppose men too, but I've only heard of women, get tattoos when they get divorced and stuff like that.

Participant: My dad got tons when he got divorced.

Desley: Actually the first guy I talked to, he got one after he got divorced. He said it was like trying to reclaim the self he had before.

Participant: Yeah. I totally think it's like that

Desley: He got the Rolling Stones mouth on his bum at a concert.

Participant: Oh my God!

Desley: So that was pretty cool. So for you what's the most important thing? Is it having Megan do them, is it the picture, is it where you put it or is there some other aspect?

Participant: I think it's a combination of things. Obviously the aesthetic of it would have to be the first thing. I like them to look beautiful... I like them to fit the body part that they're on. I think that that's really important. But I think it's a combination of all those things that you mentioned. Like I really wouldn't...short of a few international artists that I have read about in tattoo magazines and I kind of go oh I really like their look or what they're doing, who if I were travelling to that part of the world, I would go and see them maybe. I wouldn't go anywhere else in Sydney other than Megan. Unless I was getting something not....that wasn't custom, but I can't imagine ever getting anything that's not custom now. So that cancels it out. So yeah Megan's just.... she is the bomb! I love her.

Desley: Yeah. A guy that I talked to here, he goes to the guy that owns Corrimal.

Participant: Ah yeah.

Desley: And he said that he will keep getting tattoos until that guy dies and then he will never get anymore.

Participant: I can totally understand that. When you just find someone and when it is some one you click with. Like we click aesthetically. Like she will just get what I want to do, 100%, straightaway. And I just think, God, why would I try and find another relationship like that?

Desley: Specially when it is something so permanent and if the next person didn't..

Participant: absolutely. Yeah.

Desley: What about the pain aspect of it? Do you consider it to be a bonus or does it detract from it, or is it just something...?

Participant: um... oh, I don't think it's. oh. definitely not a detraction for me. I've got tattooed in all the, like the notorious, painful spots. Except for, I've heard the soles of the feet are really painful, but I don't want to be tattooed there.

Desley: I interviewed a guy and he said that the feet are really bad and it's not just because of the bones but because of the number of nerves, and the soles of the feet all those accupressure points.

Participant: Yeah. Reflexology. Yeah. So other than my feet, you know but the notorious spots like the rib cage, back of your knees, under your arms, inside of the elbow. Which I can vouch for. They are all very painful spots. But it's never unbearable. I have never had to ask her to stop. But I think I have a highish pain threshold anyway, just because of how I was raised. Like my parents never indulged me kind of whingeing about pain at all. It was always like, shut up, there is somebody worse off than you rah rah rah rah! So I've kind of had this sort of psychological pounding for 27 years. Like pain is nothing. Which has come in handy. So yeah, it's kind of, the pain is just whatever, something that happens.

Desley: So is it something that you look forward to, though?

Participant: I love getting tattooed. I just love the whole experience of it. Sometimes I am kind of like ... I would never get an anaesthetic though. Like there are anaesthetic sprays.

Desley: yeah.

Participant: that's so weird. Um. I think you've really got to embrace the whole tattoo process and that involves the pain, that involves it being there forever. I think if you cheat out on any of those aspects it's not going to be a complete kind of experience .for me anyway And also I don't think it hurts that much, that you would need to. So the pain is just by the by, I think. I think it is part of the experience so therefore it's important to me. Because I love tattooing from beginning to end.

Desley: So how do you feel when you are getting one?

Participant: Fine. Just chat. Chat to Megan.

Desley: One of the guys that I talked to, he said he is actually taking his arm to Melbourne next week. And he said that it makes him feel really calm. Looking at the tattoo he goes back into that place.

Participant: Oh. Ok. Wow. No, I don't feel like that at all.

Desley: But he also said he loves the whole thing.

Participant: Yeah I love it. I just, yeah, it just....Megan's funny. coz she knows when she's on a sore bit. Cause I'm quite chatty. And she, if I start to be a bit quieter, she goes, "oooh does that bit hurt, does it" and I just go "yeah!" So she's really funny and we just normally hang out and kind of chat. And all the people in the tattoo shop know me and so they come up and go hey, how are your dinosaurs or whatever. Yeah. They know me as the dinosaur girl.

Desley: there you go...Do you consider that all your tattoos are related or are there some that are related and some not?

Participant: I think there's a definite distinction between my earlier tattoos and my later tattoos, just because when I first started getting tattooed I didn't understand what was possible in terms of what you can get on your body. So there has been a real progression aesthetically. Cause I've kind of gone wow there's all these colours and there's all these amazing artists, not just flash.

So there's definitely a break between my flash days and my custom days. So yeah no I don't think they're really connected. I think for my other arm, will be different to this arm because I don't want them to match at all. I want them to be quite really distinct. Cause I think 2 sleeves that are really similar can be a bit full on unless you've got a Japanese body suit or something where that's part of the thing. So I'm interested in them being distinct. And like my leg's quite distinct from my arm. So....But I think they're all similar in that they're all things that I've chosen and I have a quite distinct aesthetic, just a visual aesthetic anyway in that it involves a lot of colour and such that they're linked in that I chose them all but they're distinct as well I think.

Desley: so there's no theme that runs through?

Participant: No no no. Other than the colour but that's just incidental because I wouldn't have it any other way.

Desley: So do you have a favourite?

Participant: It kind of changes. Sometimes I do, and sometimes it'll be.... Like for ages, my favourite was this tiny tiny red star that I have just in the middle of the like the other stars in the sky and everything. I just for some reason was in love with it for ages, going, it's so cute, it's small and it's tiny and I loved how it was hanging out. But then other times I go my whole sleeve is my favourite. Or whatever, yeah, so nothing really stands out as being a, you know...

Desley: What about at the other end, do you have one that you don't like?

Participant: No not really.

Desley: And that doesn't change?

Participant: No. I never go through phases of not liking them.

Desley: So for you, is there something else you could have done that would have had the same effect, rather than get a tattoo?

Participant: In my life?

Desley: yeah. You mentioned you used to have piercings.

Participant: oh yeah. Piercings never even came close to how much I love tattoos. Like, not even...Just totally incomparable. Piercings were just I guess part of being, you know, out there. Out there people have piercings. I was quite young as well when I was doing all that kind of thing. So I didn't... I think my, the psychology I have now, this is a philosophy around tattoos, stuff wasn't developed at all. And it was just about being a freak, you know! Which I'm really not that into now. And the piercings are all gone now. I barely hardly ever even wear earrings any more. I used to have big huge stretched ears and now I just kind of go... erh

Desley: So when you say it was about being a freak, you mean provoking that kind of response from people?

Participant: Yeah kind of. Just looking different. I mean I've always been into looking different, in various different ways. You know, being a full hippy or being whatever. but yeah. I don't know...Piercings never appealed that much.

Desley: So can you put into words what it is that appeals about tattoos, or is it going to take too long?

Participant: I think part of it's the permanence. Part of it is the history. And specially since I've been doing my thesis and realising that tattoos are just so intrinsic to human behaviour *for ever*. That blows my mind and continually blows my mind. Like I'll read..like you know that Maori that they found that had the tattooed acupuncture points. 2000BC. I just go, that is awesome man! So cool. All these disparate cultures from all over the world, individually, said hey, let's get some fish bones and some mashed up charcoal and stab it into our skin. How awesome is that? So part of it's that as well. So yeah I guess that's the short version. Don't want to waffle on.

Desley: So you said you'd done some yourself.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: How do you do that? Do you use a gun or?

Participant: No no no. I'd love to. I think that would be a big investment. I just have a little syringe and India ink. Like full prison jobby! I have only done them on Genevieve my partner and a couple of friends and myself. So I'm not like expert at it. And I only ever do stars and hearts because that's the only thing I can draw. And it takes so long, so I like to keep it small.

Desley: So is that breaking the skin or is it just injecting it?

Participant: It's kind of like stabbing it in. I experimented on myself to see what was the best method. But now I just kind of, it's just a replica of what the tattoo machine does. Just stabbing it in.

Desley: Cause there's a couple I talked to, and they got hand ones done in Perth and she said he sort of flicked the skin sort of.

Participant: Yeah yeah. Depends on where you learn them from. Coz I think that's how they do it in Thailand.

Desley: He had all like shrunken heads and stuff and she was really scared. Coz, She said he took them down along the stars and there were these shrunken heads and, ooh are we going to get out alive? But it's her favourite tattoo. She loves it.

Participant: I would like to get a hand tattoo, from someone who actually knows what they are doing. Coz you know, that's part of the history as well. And at the same time I really like engaging with the history. I am very aware of cultural appropriation with tattoos. I think that's such a huge problem with the way tattoos are now, today, currently you know in fashion and whatever. People are just getting tattoos not knowing anything about what they are getting. I'm like "oooh, you people! Don't you understand what that means. My God" That really horrifies me.

Desley: So when you say that do you mean what it means in terms of the symbol?

Participant: Yeah symbols and people going “yo I want a tribal design” they don’t know where that tribal design comes from, you know, it could come from... I hate the concept of tribal tattoos because it is just so disenfranchising for people who that tattoo design, you know whether it is Marquesan or whatever, that that means for their culture and has always meant for their culture. And it’s like, I don’t know about this white guy just going to a shop and kind of picking it off a wall, it’s a bit shit. So, that’s kind of is the horrifying aspect of tattooing for me.

I don’t care about you know Barbie girls getting whatever, getting some little thing, you know, which I know people who are really into tattoos kind of don’t like that fashion aspect, but I don’t care if people who aren’t dedicated... I don’t think you have to be a dedicated tattoo person to be allowed to get a tattoo. I just think as long as you are not offending other cultures. And so I’m hyper-conscious of that. And I’m not into that kind of western... and even not any kind of tradition of tattooing. Just something

Desley: So you wouldn’t get a Japanese piece or?

Participant: No. the closest I’ve got is my Koi carp, but it’s a cartoon, it’s not like a traditional Japanese thing. I think Japanese tattoo is different because obviously it’s invested in their culture, but it’s not a cultural tradition in the way that Maori tattoo is or in the way that a Marquesan tattoo is where it’s invested with spiritual meaning. It’s still, yeah, I don’t know. I mean Japanese tattooing also just doesn’t appeal.

Desley: So do you think of yourself as a tattooed person or are you a person with tattoos?

Participant: I would say I’d call myself a tattooed person. I think I’ve crossed that line. I think I have to live with them in a way that makes me different from a person with tattoos.

Desley: In what way?

Participant: in a way that a person with one or two or even you know, 5 smallish tattoos, like when you have lots of full coverage, it’s like constant, constant. Summer when I’m not covered up, constant staring, constant people talking to me. I go to get the groceries I’ll have 5 people go...say something. Never nasty, just like, wow you have tattoos! What do I say? Thanks! It’s really kind of... tiring.

Desley: maybe you could get a little sign "I know they're nice"

Participant: Yes. That's why I have them! Yeah, so, it's kind of, I think it's a, it's definitely a commitment to you living with that everyday.

Desley: One guy I talked to he said that he was found it was a barrier and some people maybe because he was a big man having lots of tattoos, meant that certain people won't talk to him and he actually enjoys that because it keeps them.

Participant: I think it's different.

Desley: it doesn't sound like it works for you

Participant: I think it's different, because I am a woman and I am quite open, like I'm smiley and chatty and also because my tattoos are very, not, you know no skulls or anything kind of scary, and they're really just cartoony, they make me really approachable. Which I don't really mind. Sometimes... I mind it when people grab me. I am like you don't have to touch them you can look at them, but you don't have to touch.

Desley: That happens too when you're pregnant. I don't know if it's happened to you, but people feel like they can suddenly touch your belly.

Participant: That's what I am saying.

Desley: they wouldn't do it if you weren't...

Participant: I know! I was thinking and, um, when I first got pregnant I was thinking I'll be really pregnant in winter and I was going that's good, because people's brains would probably explode, trying to decide whether they want to grab my arm or stomach first. So, yeah, I think when you have And I don't think you can fully understand that til you have lots, real heavy kind of stuff, just how constant it's going to be. And when I am out with my mum or even my grand parents they'll kind of go wow, I didn't realize how much people stare at you and talk to you. I'm like yeah I know, tell me about it. so yeah, it's kind of, I think it's a that's a line you cross and you just go ah well, that the way it is.

Desley: So my trick question is “what would be the opposite of your tattoos?”

Participant: Hmmm. What do you mean? The opposite for me personally?

Desley: Yeah.

Participant: I guess it would be like, being one of those people who doesn't think about things. You know how people just go through their life and they'll be at school and they'll just think about school and they won't question outside their direct projectory. Then they'll go and they'll get a job, marry whoever comes along and before they know it their life's over and they've gone erm, I didn't really question...or maybe they don't have that realization. But you know. And I used to think this when I used to work as a checkout chick at Woolies and there are these people who have been working there for, and there is nothing wrong with check out chicks. But there's people who have been there 20 years and I'd go, I just don't understand how you can do this for 20years. I know that lots of people don't have other options in their life, but it would still amaze me that they didn't even think outside that thing.

Desley: so they didn't contemplate a different life.

Participant: Yeah. And sometimes I go that would be really easy and I'd be totally into that, but I'd be constantly thinking what's going on over there, what's happening here and thinking about everything that's going on in the world. Which is mental sometimes and maybe have a nervous breakdown. Yeah so I think being one of those people who doesn't think about anything. That would be the opposite of my tattoos. It's a bit weird but that was the first thing that came to my mind.

Desley: No that's good. Typically when you get your tattoos are you by yourself?

Participant: combo. Sometimes I go by myself, sometimes...usually by myself because it is not that exciting for other people. I've gone with friends, who've got tattoos and it's like you're on your own. And I just get really jealous I as just sitting here and going “choose me” Yeah. so, um, yeah, usually by myself.

Desley: yeah. what I was maybe trying to get at there is because some people actually do it as a group sort of thing.

Participant: oh, I've only done that once.

Desley: maybe get it because someone else is getting it or vice versa

Participant: Yeah. no, no. That's only happened once when I got the stars on my chest. My friend was staying up from Melbourne, cause this band called the Lunatics was playing. And they, all the girls in that band have like full sleeves. Awesome they're so hot. And so we'd been seeing the Lunatics and then the next day "lets get some more tattoos, coz we gotta be like them!" and so we just kind of rocked up to the tattoo shop and I got stars on my chest and she got this thing on her arm. That's the only time I have been in that kind of situation.

Desley: but it wasn't really you were being pressured into it?

Participant: Oh no. I wasn't being pressured at all.

Desley: What do you think it means to other people when they look at you, say in summer?

Participant: Depends on the person. I think some people go, hey she's cool look at her tattoos. This woman, I was just at the Blues festival in Byron Bay and this woman comes up to me and she says, "I respect you!" she was totally off her face but...she's like "I respect you man, cause I've got some tattoos but it takes courage to have heaps of tattoos like what you've got." I was going Thanks, you know, great, I'm glad you respect me, go away! So I think it kind of ranges from that. Or I think there's a bit of, I think with heavily tattooed people there's a bit of "too cool for school" thing, it's a bit of a... you know, like before, I used to read about people and go, yeah being tattooed is like a club, you know, rah rah and I don't think it is like a club. I think people are more, like usually tattooed people are the more stand-offish people because it's like...i don't know. Sometimes I see them on King Street and I'll be wanting to check out their tattoos, discretely, coz I know what it's like to be stared at, but they'll be kind of like too cool and look away and barely acknowledge that you have these tattoos too. It's weird kind of thing. So I think it ranges from those kind of responses to like full-on judgment – oh my God look what she's done to herself, she's ruined her body, whatever.

Desley: not like the people who ruin them by getting too fat

Participant: yeah. or shooting up smack! That's what I used to say to my mum if I could see her getting a bit funny about it, I'd be like "not taking heroin" and she'd go "oh yeah"

Desley: So what do you think about other people with tattoos? "I respect you man!"

Participant: yeah. No not really. I do have respect especially for women who have lots of tattoos, just cause I know what it's like. I go, yeah well that shows a certain integrity and a certain strength of character. Which you know lots of people probably have in other aspects of their lives. It's not just tattooed people who have that strength. And you know lots of people have strength in way more important ways. So yeah, there's that, but other than that, I don't think oh you've got tattoos therefore you must be cool, because I know heaps of tattooed people who are dickheads. I guess it stops short of that.

Desley: so you see a range in them, just as you see a range of people who don't

Participant: totally. Absolutely. I do...I'm a bit of a tattoo snob though, because I think my tattoos are so beautiful and so if I see a bad tattoo I'm quite...

Desley: bad as in badly done?

Participant: Badly done, yeah. I'm a bit, you know, just in my own head, judgmental, I'd go errr! why didn't they go to a good artist! You know what I mean. But I would never say anything. The only times I feel like saying something is when I see someone who's got a new tattoo and they're not taking care of it. I would want to go, "you should moisturize that!" but I never say anything...

Desley: A guy came in the other day, coz I take photos and his girlfriend came in afterwards, and she's like see there, that's where the scab fell off! Not good. So you obviously know a lot of people with tattoos?

Participant: Yeah. it's hard not to now

Desley: But then someone I talked to said I don't know anyone at all.

Participant: I find that really hard to believe.

Desley: well, given that his girlfriend had, what, six... forgetful! Do you feel like the fact that you have tattoos makes you identify with any particular group of people?

Participant: No, I just identify with people who are nice, and good.

Desley: so whether they have tattoos or not?

Participant: Ah yeah.

Desley: ok. Is there anything else you can think of about your tattoos that might be relevant?

Participant: No, no.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	2	2	1	2	3	4	3	4	1	2	1	3	Sad
Patient	4	3	5	3	2	2	4	1	4	4	1	3	Impatient
Caring	4	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	3	5	1	4	Nasty
Kind	4	3	4	4	5	5	5	4	3	5	1	3	Horrible
Sense of humour	3	2	3	3	2	5	2	5	2	2	1	4	Depressed
Sociable	3	2	3	1	3	5	4	5	1	1	1	4	Hermit
Friendly	5	4	4	2	4	3	4	3	1	1	1	3	Grumpy
Active	3	2	2	1	3	5	2	5	1	1	2	5	Lazy
Confident	4	2	2	3	2	5	4	4	2	3	1	5	Meek
Organised	5	5	5	4	5	2	5	2	2	5	1	3	Messy
Hard working	2	2	2	2	1	4	2	5	1	4	2	5	Lazy
Honest	4	2	3	2	2	4	4	3	1	5	1	5	Liar



Participant: Ok. Give me a minute. Errrrmm. Got ,my first tattoo when I was 19. And there was a gap of a few years um, and then I just started to get really interested in them more and more so I was not just having one or two tattoos but actually being tattooed in a more complete sense. So I sort of found an artist that I really clicked with and got a long with. I was with a guy at the time that also really liked tattoos and didn't have any. Really liked this artist. So we sort of ended up visiting him all the time and getting more and more work done. Every time we'd go on birthdays and just go to go and get tattooed and started on a roll. We got a lot in a short amount of time. And since I have broken up with that guy I haven't actually been back to have any. Which is a shame and I'm really meaning to getting round to going back and getting more. It's slowed down to a stop. But um, yeah. Um..... what do you want to know?

Desley: So you said you got your first one when you were 19.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: So what was it?

Participant: It was on my foot. It's the cherry blossoms. They cover just sort of all the top and the side of one foot. It just black and just outline so there was no colour.

Desley: So why did you choose that picture?

Participant: I found it on a Japanese fan, I just really liked the artwork as a visual thing. Didn't have much meaning to me. I didn't identify with like, the cultural, anything to do with that. I just really liked it and the exact shape and size of the design when I traced it and put it on my foot it was the exact shape and size of my foot I didn't have to resize it or move anything, or cut it and move it around. That was just it. So I thought well it was meant to be. It was a perfect fit. So I got that done and I was at first year uni....

Desley: Was that because you wanted one on your foot?

Participant: Um. It kind of just all fit together. I wasn't particularly. I think to begin with I was sort of thinking maybe I should try and have them somewhere where I can cover them up if I need to, for work or things like that. But after that it just became a totally different way of thinking about it. That was, like I said that was my first one and it was more a case of just a person having a tattoo. Just to get an ornamental thing about me.

Desley: So why a tattoo? Why not do something else?

Participant: I like the permanence of it. I like the commitment factor. You have to commit to it and stay committed. You can't sort of get sick of it and take it off. Yeah. I don't know why that appeals to me, but it does, just the fact that they are forever. And um, they're non-negotiable. You can change them and you can have them removed, technically. But really I just like the permanence about them. And, um, piercings have never really gone... I like piercings. I like the look of them, but again you can take them out. Doesn't appeal to me so much. To a point, but not as much as tattooing definitely. It's not the same look either.

Desley: So part of it is just aesthetic for you?

Participant: Yeah. A lot of it's aesthetic, yeah.

Desley: So you had your first one when you were 19. when was the next one... sorry, did you go by yourself to have that one?

Participant: I took one of my friends. I booked in by myself I was in the city for uni that day and then I came back the next day and just took a friend who is not particularly interested in tattoos at all. I just wanted someone to come along with me. For support so, yeah. And he is quite interested but he has never got any himself.

Desley: And so when was the next one?

Participant: I think I must have been about 22 when I got my next one. That was the purple sort of black rose on my shoulder. I'd been working on a design, thinking about the front of my shoulder, of a spade with my initial in it. For some reason I really liked that idea. I was playing around with fonts and things on the computer. I took it in to Morgan my tattoo artist who I really

trusted at that stage. I'd seen him tattoo my boyfriend really well. And he sort of steered me away from that. He said it wouldn't look good, it wouldn't really fit. The shape of it wasn't really the shape of a shoulder, I should go with something which would fit organically into the body shape and I really liked that idea coming from my foot, that it wrapped around my foot to keep going with that sort of idea. So I had a book of flash, old school flash that had just come out, just some things from an artist in America and I really liked this purple black heart so of thing, sorry the flower. So I decided that was a great shape for the shoulder and went with that. So he gave some good advice. He was a really cool guy.

Desley: So that again, was just about the look of it?

Participant: um, yeah. No real meaning. It's the style for me of the tattoos. It's really a big part of it. They're um, I really follow the old school style of tattooing. American traditional, the sailors had a lot of these tattoos and that's sort of where they all come from. A lot of my designs now are either based heavily upon or are direct sailor tattoos that other sailors would have had in the past, that come mostly from Sailor Jerry, who was a pioneer of American style tattooing. Really thick lines is what I like. Really bold look, bold colours, bright colours and thick outlines so they really stand out. I can appreciate other styles, but for me I think this is the one style I am going to stick with over my whole body, rather than to mix like a bit of Jap..... I do like Japanese and a few other styles and I really don't like some styles as well. But I think... I really....for some reason I really identify with the boldness, the bold look of it all. It is pretty full on to look at, especially a girl. I think that's what I am getting at, with my tattooing and the look of it. Is to....Do you want me talk about this? Just keep going? ...is apart of why I get tattooed, I think is being a fairly small female, softly spoken, you know. I am not a really loud person. I am not obnoxious, I'm quite shy. Grew up as a child, very, very shy, hiding behind my parents and things like that, so. Um, but I feel internally strong. So tattooing for me is a way of showing my insides on the outside all the time. So I got them in places that I couldn't necessarily hide or I didn't want to hide. And they're sort of in people's faces whether they like it or not, which is not a confrontational thing but it's more of a, just sort of an outward showing of my inward feelings and nature. Because often I found as a really short little slight girl I was often very underestimated by people or I was just ignored or forgotten. Or... there wasn't anything I felt terribly memorable about me. Not so much, not so much about my personality or anything like, but just you know I found I would be waiting in a line or something and people would look straight over me and serve the next person, or I just felt ignored a lot by society in general. Or

just underestimated, aw, you're just a little girl, what would you know, what could you do? And I felt like I could do a lot and I knew a lot so tattooing for me in such an outward way is a way of showing that to people.

Desley: Yeah.

Participant: initially

Desley: It draws attention to you.

Participant: Straightaway, yeah. It does.

Desley: The woman I talked to yesterday had full sleeves up to here and her legs and she's got stars all across here, over a 100 stars

Participant: oh wow.

Desley: And she said she was with her mum the other day and her mother's like "wow people DO look don't they?"

Participant: that's what my mum says.

Desley: And they want to touch her

Participant: yep, they do

Desley: it's a bit... it's like, she's pregnant as well, and I said to her, cause when you are pregnant people think they've got rights to touch your belly, whereas they would never normally touch your stomach. She said it's like that with the tattoos and she was wondering if people would spin out because they're like belly? Tattoo?

Participant: Yeah what do I touch first? Yeah. They really do feel like that. Even, I mean, and sometimes it's ok, I am not really comfortable with people touching me but sometimes it's Ok depending on the circumstance. Sometimes it's really not OK. And I'm *not* a confrontational

person so I won't yell and swear and scream at them or anything like that. I just get out of there. Like as soon... I just walk away. I try and show on my face that I am not happy but I won't mouth off at anyone unless it's really warranted, like in a pub and some guy grabs me or something. But if it's just... I've been accosted... I picked my boyfriend from at the hospital recently. He had a general anaesthetic for a procedure, so he was pretty groggy and I had to pick him up. I don't know if she was a nurse, she definitely worked there, in uniform and she absolutely, she grabbed me, pulled my top down with her fingernails to see my chest tattoo and then she pulled my... I had my bag on my shoulder, she pulled this up, and I said I'd like to leave now, please don't touch me. And she said "stop... hang on a minute... I want to have a look" and she made me stop and stand there, and she pulled my top, "I can't see, I can't see" and she was almost ripping my clothes to get my top off. And I just walked away, I was so upset and she called after me, "it's okay, I've got a big one on my back" or something like that, like that made it okay to grab me and abuse me and I just thought that was really weird. It's never happened like that before. But that was a bit off- putting, especially in a hospital. I guess she thought she was a nurse and she touches people all day so it was okay to touch me. Yeah. It was really weird.

Desley: Yeah, yeah. So was there a specific reason for picking the shoulder?

Participant: um, I just... no, I'm not sure. It was a visible area. just seemed like a logical place to start and I tend to choose areas that I can see in the mirror or I can see on myself, as I look around. I don't have any on my back. I've got one on the back of my calf. But I don't, I just, that was reaction to a certain thing as well, an experience I had. I went to a nightclub with some friends in Kings Cross and I had a short skirt on and high heels. And these guys in Kings Cross were just sort of leering at all of us and just being really awful as we walked down the street to go to the ATM. And I just thought if I had a big dirty tattoo on the back of my leg, I wonder how that would change what they said or what they thought. You know, it just, it wouldn't be the same look, a girl in a short skirt and high heels with a big tattoo on the leg is not the same as a girl in a short skirt with no tattoos. And the next week I sort of went and got the whole thing done. So...

Desley: So what's that a picture of?

Participant: It's a pirate girl. I just chose that on the day out of a Sailor Jerry book. But I thought it was a really really strong feminine image which I tend to lean towards, like strong female images. She's got, you know, scantily clad, she's got the sword out with blood so she's sort of been doing a bit of hacking and...I don't know I guess it was a reaction to that moment.

Desley: is it like a warning?

Participant: It's all in fun. I don't mean I'm going to go and chop your head off. But you know, it's a kind of tougher thing to have. Feminine, but tough at the same time is sort of how I would sum up my general look and tattoo vibe, the aesthetic that I like. Always with a feminine touch, always with some colour, a lot of colour, brightness and boldness but at the same time a bit of toughness there.

Desley: so where's the femininity in the skull?

Participant: Yeah, not a lot there.

Desley: Adam told me skulls were boy tattoos!

Participant: I really like skulls. I have, um, I don't know why. I think a skull reminds me, I know it sounds a bit weird, but a skull or a skeleton, a lot of people think they are creepy and they're a bad omen or a negative thing to have, but it tends to remind me slightly that you know, we all die, don't worry so much. You know like everyone dies in the end. You don't have to worry so much about life, and what happens in day to day, even though I do... but, it's sort of like that's what it means to me. Is just, don't stress too much, you know, don't worry about earthly things terribly, too much, because you know, you are going to die in the end. So it's not a morbid like I'm a part of some gang or like I am going to go and kill someone or anything like that . but I've had people say, like older people say, don't get any more skulls, they're not good. This isn't particularly the style that I like either. My artist drew this and just showed us the outline. And because I just tend to get tattooed without many breaks in between. He just sort of just went down his own path. And I was looking at it and because often he just does things and I think eeeer, yeah, and then he'll add a splash of colour and it will be perfect.

The minute before that it wasn't and it wasn't exactly what I wanted. I just thought I'll trust him, I'll go with this cause he has tattooed me so many times and it has all been beautiful. And he

really went more his style than my style on this one. So I am thinking of getting this re-done, just added to and bits changed. The roughness of it all. I think I want it sort of smoothed, and, just a few different things about it changed. But that will be down the track...

Desley: So was that the last one you had?

Participant: No I got that when I was I guess about 23. I got, I can't remember which was first, I got the one on my leg and then this one, was within about 2 or 3 weeks of each other. And that was the last one I got, so it was a bit over... a year and a half maybe.

Desley: So that's a butterfly is it?

Participant: It's a razor blade with butterfly wings. That was just a flash design as well, by an American artist. And I really, that's one of my favourite ones actually I really like the colour. And the style, the boldness of it and I like the image. 'cause it sort of really sums up the feminine with the hardcore sort of side of things. Coz it's got, I would never get a butterfly myself. It's such a common image in tattooing on females and it's a really female image. But the razor blade is so not. So it's kind of like, it's a combination of the two which is perfect for my style. As soon as I, I literally was flicking through the book and I just went "that one", as soon as I opened the page I knew that's what I'm getting. I got that straight away.

Desley: and there's another one, up higher.

Participant: Yeah, I got that on my birthday. It's a Mexican skull. So they have, I have always been interested in Mexican art, Frieda Kahl and things like that, learning about that in high school. Mexicans I found have the day of the Dead. They have a different take on death they, other than.... Western society mourns and cries and it's all really upsetting, whereas in Mexico they have this day where they eat candy and they celebrate and there is music, and fireworks, and flowers. It's really colourful, really cultural day, and it's remembering the dead but in a really happy, celebratory way. They party, they eat and that would be great to have something like that in our society rather than all the mourning and the doom and gloom and the grey and the black and all that. So I really respect that part of their culture. That was a positive way of having a skull on me as well and it links back to the style of art I am interested in, the simple Mexican style. So that was good to get a lot of colour in happening there.

Desley: Which birthday was that?

Participant: I guess I was probably, I don't know, 22 or 23. I can't really remember, Must have been 22 this one and round about 23 were these two. It was just after my birthday. Or one was before and one was after, so.... Yeah, this must have been 22.

Desley: And when did you get the birds?

Participant: So this and these must have been 21, I guess. Yeah, about the 21st, so that was the first one I got other than when I was 19. and then I got the birds. And then this one I think and then the other skull and then that one and that one within a few weeks of each other. So just building up, I thought I would build up this area and it would be a bit of a block, of work, in a very visible area. That's what I wanted.

Desley: So would you have any more?

Participant: Yeah, I am really considering getting more very soon. Money has been an issue, because I am starting my business. I have spent thousands on cameras, lenses, film and what not. So I still owe money for that. So it's just a matter of finding time, and I think my artist was in the city so it was really easy to pop in whenever you wanted or ring up the day before, book in and go and spend a whole day with him and that was great. Now that's closed down a couple of years ago. He's working out of some place in Richmond. He's under someone else. He can't give us the discounts that he used to because he has to sort of justify the time he spent and write in a book how much he's charged. He does tattoo us out of his apartment. He and his brother have an apartment in the city which is good. It's not the perfect set-up but he is really hygienic when he works so it's fine. Wherever he tattoos you, he's really good. I feel like a little bit of intrusion, going into his place and ringing him and, he's always a bit out of it, so, just explaining like who I am. He hasn't seen me for a few years and whatever. But I've heard of people, people I know who have been to him recently and been tattooed in his apartment. So I'll go back there soon, when I can organize the money. But I don't know what I am going to get yet, and I don't know where I'm going to get it.

Desley: So what would be the first thing you think about, what to get or where to get it?

Participant: I guess they go hand in hand. The process would probably be for me, looking through a lot of flash books, looking on the internet for flash that's available or a lot of the Sailor Jerry stuff I would go through and just see if anything really sparks my interest. Often it's, yeah, those really female with a bit of toughness to it as well. Also it could be something like that I see, like the traditional things would be a lot of roses, birds with banners, there's nautical stars, anchors and the pin up girls – that's sort of mostly what sailor Jerry and all the old sailors used to get. So it will be something along those lines. and then depending on the size and shape of the piece I'll decide where I would want that to go. Yeah.

Desley: So do you think you would do that before you got this one touched up?

Participant: Yeah, I think I'll get more work in general done. It's difficult because I don't want to offend my artist because I still want to keep going to him. But I know he probably isn't the one to do the re-touching on the piece that he designed. Because he'd kind of think what's wrong with it? Why do you want it to be changed? And if I went to get that done by someone else and came back to him, I wonder what he would think. So I am a bit worried about that. I probably might try and get as much work done by him first and then sort of think in the future how I am going to go about re-doing.

Desley: Fair enough. So are there any, like do you have attachments to the actual pictures. Like you said for the skulls you said you think about how everybody dies and that's no big deal.

Participant: Yeah. Well, um....

Desley: Are the actual pictures important to you?

Participant: Yeah. But they are probably a lot for the reason I said before that it's that feminine side mixed with the toughness, that people don't see. Is sort of like, yeah, the pirate girl she's really tough looking but still really feminine at the same time. I guess, with all of them, like it's a rose, but it's not a pink or red rose, it's a black rose. So there's always got that sort of... it's something that never really happened consciously. I've just in thinking about recently come to that conclusion. But it's the same thing with my hair, it sort of runs through my clothes and everything, I've got one side that's long. When my hair's out and done properly, it's pink but

it's black as well. One side that's long and girly and layered and the other side's shaved with like leopard print in it. It's like that real half and half thing that for some reason I just tend to carry on, aesthetically all the time.

Desley: Yeah. So is there a place that you wouldn't put a tattoo? You said you don't have them on your back.

Participant: Yeah. I will get my back done, but I don't have them yet. Yeah there's probably a few places, I probably wouldn't tattoo most of my face, but I would consider. I definitely want my hands done, my fingers, really, and it's just that social, not even social but the work barrier that stopped me being able to, I know if I got my hands and fingers tattooed, I've got 3 casual jobs; I know 2 of them I'd be fired from, pretty well straight away. General Pants would probably be cool, like they would definitely be cool with it but that's a very rare thing. And then if I left there because I don't want to be there my whole life, I'd kind of be stuffed as to where to go after that. So work is a big issue. Like I haven't got anything past there, like past elbow because my work shirts tend to stop about there. So if I ever had a job where they had to have cap sleeve or something and no tattoos, I just couldn't take the job. So it has restricted me. And that's just casual jobs to get me by at the moment, that have uniforms and things like that. But it's a whole other story if I apply for jobs with no uniforms. I'd have to wear something up to my neck and down to my elbows to cover it. Plus down to here. I been for, I haven't even been to that many interviews, it's not what I want to do. But I've definitely been rejected from jobs because of my tattoos. And this is when I've had a lot less than I have now. So...it's stopping, I really really want to get my hands done soon, but it's sort of a case of what will happen in the future with employment, is pulling me back a bit. Unfortunately. It's a shame.

Desley: Yeah. Doesn't seem quite right.

Participant: No. But not getting tattooed, I probably, my bum probably would be the last place I'd bother, just because it is not visible to most people and probably my breasts as well, again the same sort of thing.

Desley: So you want something where people can see.

Participant: Yeah I really want them to be able to see. It's not a private thing for me, to have tattoos on my body. I feel like it's, when you have this many, and I don't consider myself as having that many compared to other people but compared to the main population I guess I do, and they're visible, it's my skin now. It's not like my skin has a tattoo on it like a sticker or something like a little ornament; it's actually slowly becoming me, becoming my skin. So I feel like when someone says you can't work here because you have tattoos, I feel like they are saying it's because of the colour of your skin, which to me doesn't mean anything different to if I were a black person and came in and said can I have a job here and they said no, because of the colour of your skin. Which obviously is highly illegal. But they can say it to me and the fine line is you made your skin coloured, this person was born with coloured skin, and it's such a fine line. To me, but tattoos have a huge connotation to people still.

Desley: And I think, too, that one's pretty literally in your face.

Participant: Yeah. Yeah. Depending on what I wear. Yeah it is.

Desley: Where as you know some people might have a little one somewhere and they get it on purpose so they can cover it up.

Participant: Yeah exactly.

Desley: So for each one, roughly how long do you think about them before you actually get them?

Participant: That one was on the day. These, that one was on the day. This was sort of, I did think about this, I played around with the colours in each section and what I would do so, some of them might be a two week sort of period of mucking around with colours and shapes and stuff, but there is not a lot of consideration. Like I said I can show up there on the day and know that I am getting tattooed but not have a clue and know that my artist has a whole lot of books so he'll just sit me down with the all books and someone else will get tattooed and I'll start flicking. And he's really patient. So whenever I'm ready and I find something, and I usually just know yep that's what I want and I go with it that day. So there's not a whole lot of consideration.

Desley: And does that worry you because it is something really permanent. Do you think, oh maybe I won't like it later?

Participant: No. Because I usually, I am really a procrastinator. So I don't often make snap decisions at all. I am not a risk taker. Which sounds weird to say, I get a tattoo and I am not a risk taker in any sense of the word. And I, um, no, I don't make snap decisions. I am sure of the imagery that I like and the style. So if it is within that style and it fits in the sort of categories of the things that I've talked about and it has some sort of meaning or I just love the aesthetic then I know I am going to be happy with it. That's not a problem. Because it is not a broad style. There's such a ,there's only a small set of images that you can go with anyway and I just love everything that comes out of that style. It's a theme to stick to, so it makes it easier to choose.

Desley: So do you consider that any of your tattoos have meaning?

Participant: Meaning to me but not, yeah, meaning to me in the different ways that I have described, but not to other people. Often other people don't get...

Desley: So it's not that this tattoo means "X" and this one means "Y" or

Participant: No. In sailor terms they have, some of them have meanings. Especially like the birds apparently mean, you know, like you get one bird here on your hand, when you've gone so far, so many nautical miles or you've crossed the equator on one side - things like that have traditional meaning. But for me no, it's just an aesthetic that

Desley: And it's all different ways of portraying basically the same thing?

Participant: Yeah. Yep. All of them are.

Desley: So you said you got one of them for your birthday?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: Did any of them coincide with any particular event in your life?

Participant: No. no. I just seemed to go through a period of getting a lot when I was going out with this guy who was also getting a lot.

Desley: So was he sort of influencing you to get them?

Participant: Er, yeah. Not to get them. But, I am still as excited now as I was then, about it. But it's just that the person I am with now, doesn't have any, he wouldn't really know any places to go to or whatever, which doesn't mean that I can't take him there. But because this guy has moved out, it's a lot harder. It used to just be, you'd pop in when we were walking past and now it's sort of like you've got to initiate the whole process and it's a lot more effort and so, it's not. If he was still there I am sure I would have more, because I could just pop in, whereas now, you've got to ask him can we set it up at your house? I hate calling people, like cold calling people and sort of asking for a favour or something like that. That's why I am putting it off. And money as well. So... um, yeah, but especially if you know someone who is really into it. Because apart from him, I don't actually know, and Kristyn, I don't actually know anyone or have any friends that are tattooed. Which I find kind of interesting. I just find a lot of my friends don't really understand where I am coming from in life, in general, lots of different things. We still get along, but I just don't feel like they are "my" people. Or like my sorts of, types of people. And then I see a lot of tattooed people and I think "I don't think you'd be my type of people either", because I don't fit in with a group, tattooed or non- tattooed really. But um, yeah, I guess it is always encouraging when you've got someone to do it with who gets as excited. I mean he started with nothing. He's got a fairly flexible job where he can get tattooed. But he, the first tattoo he got was his knuckles on one hand. Then he went with something here and got one side of his neck done and then the other side and then the other hand and then his head. Like, you know, he just went, he took it to extremes from the word go. So, that was really inspiring and it's like. I wasn't trying to catch up or compete or anything. But it was inspiring to see someone get so excited, from having met them with nothing, to going to more extremes than most people, you know, 99% of the population. So that was pretty cool.

Desley: So do you still like them all?

Participant: Yep. Yep. I haven't had any regrets. Even this one where I don't particularly engage with the style, as much as I could, I know that it doesn't really bother me, it's something that I

can always have changed or think about another project to work on. So yeah I am happy with them all.

Desley: So you wouldn't ever want to get them off or get them...?

Participant: No, I just want to get more.

Desley: This is probably a dumb question, but do you feel like they mean anything as a whole or is it more just like little glimpses into the same thing? Like all they all different windows into your soul?

Participant: Not so much, no. I think they're pretty much, like if they're going to have impact they are going to have impact as a whole. Because they are all the same style, same sort of sailor imagery. So if they're going to have any impact at all, it is as a group. And it is mostly the aesthetic on me. If you put these tattoos on a big bikey guy, the impact would be quartered or halved or something. Because it is just expected. And I think a lot of the impact for me, is not what they are or what they look like so much, as who they are on and how big they are. This one I got on my chest, the guy I was going out with got the same one and we didn't downsize it for me and he is 6 foot 7 so it looks like this little thing on him and it's my whole chest. On his, it actually goes up higher. But I said no, you can't do it that high because I am going to have to have work things, you know. I've gone for maximum impact on me. Yeah.

Desley: So what about the pain thing? Do you consider that to be a plus or a minus or just something that goes along with it?

Participant: um. I never actually feel a terrible amount of pain. So just it's something that goes along with it. It's not like I go FOR the pain. Like I really don't get excited or anything by the pain. I don't sort of go I couldn't, I can't, I am not going to do it, I'm scared, because of the pain either because it's part of it.

Desley: Kristyn's last one she said she was almost looking forward to the pain.

Participant: Yeah, it's so exciting to get one. It's like, it's an adrenaline rush anyway. So it's not really a factor either way. I just know that it's coming and I do get a bit of butterflies in the

stomach before it happens. As soon as that first, oh god he's going to do it! as soon it starts, whatever, you think ah that's alright. And I seem to have a fairly, compared, I've seen this other guy get tattooed a lot, I seem to have a much higher pain threshold than he does. And the only one that really gave me grief was my calf muscle, my leg. That was a really long job, about 4 hours or something. We did, all of it was completed in that session. I haven't come back for colour or anything afterwards. And that was really bad. actually maybe it was, because he said the skin was bouncy on here and it wasn't taking the thick needle. Because I've got such a thick line. That he had to do it all again in a thinner needle that would take and then do it again so he was going over things that he had already gone over. That was really, after 4 hours it was just getting a little bit too much. He had to do sort of do a little bit and stop, little bit and stop and it was getting like a bit awful.

Desley: So this wasn't really bad, on your chest?

Participant: No. I don't remember.... That's what everyone asks me, every single day, did that hurt on your chest? Did that hurt on your chest? And I don't remember it really hurting that much. And as I said I did it without a break so it mustn't have been bad. Because I don't recall and I do recall the leg. So, you know, it mustn't have been that bad at all.

Desley: What about your foot, though? Because they say feet are pretty painful.

Participant: I don't remember that either. That was my first one. I guess I thought that it was going to be SO bad that when I, it was... the foot sort of has these nerves that they hit and it would jump and he had to really press on my foot really hard. And there are some bits that aren't actually connected up perfectly coz he probably was... This isn't the same guy. I actually went to another place. They are ok, not terribly impressive. I hear that the foot tends to fade a bit after time. It seems to have like bled a little bit.

Desley: and having shoes on all the time.

Participant: yeah, I guess, I don't know what it is. And the skin on your feet apparently regenerates a lot quicker than other parts of your body. So it's losing... I don't know if that's true. But that's what I heard. I actually heard a lot of places would not tattoo feet. They just refuse.

Desley: Specially for your first one, someone told me.

Participant: yeah. People have weird... And a lot of artists I think don't do necks hands, faces, and feet. It's weird, they all have their... I mean it's up to them, the artists. They all have their different things that they like and don't like, but there's no actual reason in tattttooing, no medical reason, there's no there's actually no reason why they can't. Because I've obviously I've seen it done in every possible place. It's just society and it's a bit sad that artists are constricted by that, like view of society. Coz they're the ones who are trying to break away from that and they're sort of keeping that going by... yeah, I don't know.

Desley: I spoke to a podiatrist and he said he would never get his feet done, because there's too many nerves there. I thought it was too many bones, but.

Participant: Yeah. I think people can overcome pain so much more than they know. Like you don't think about it. But if you ever are in an accident in a car and you break your arm or something, people get through pain. They always get through pain. It's not, and like your body has so many mechanisms to deal with pain, just on a survival level. People think oh my God it's so bad, but your body is pretty good, pretty resilient. You don't ever put yourself in that situation until you're in an accident or something. When I broke my arm, I don't remember it feeling like anything. I was only 9, my bone snapped clear in half and I don't remember pain at all. So...

Desley: But that could be your body going..

Participant: Yeah, your body goes into shock and things like that and that's it. I don't know.

Desley: So I think I asked you if there was anything else you could have done rather than have a tattoo?

Participant: I have piercings. I don't heal piercings very well. I never do it. I do all the care things and they just get infected all the time. I had, I've got my tongue pierced. I had my lip here pierced and I really wanted to just have a ring through it and I couldn't even heal the stud. I've got a little scar there, but you can't tell. And I just, I took it out eventually and had one through

my ear. Like through two holes and that wouldn't heal either. I don't know. My body's not good at healing piercings. Yeah but it's so different. I think a lot of people get piercings to try out the alternative lifestyle kind of and they wear it for a while and they take it out. I like, as I said the permanency of a tattoo.

Desley: Cause there's no going back really.

Participant: Yeah. It's a big commitment.

Desley: So do you consider yourself a tattooed person or are you a person who has tattoos?

Participant: When I got my first one I would definitely have answered that question, person who has a tattoo. But as more and more, I'm becoming I think a tattooed person. Because it is going to become – eventually my hope is to cover my arms, cover the top of my chest, my back, my legs, pretty much the, all my body you'll see, my feet, my hands, not my face, really, but would be my ultimate, to where I want to take tattooing. So I guess at that point a tattooed person would be more accurate, as it becomes your skin rather than just something on your skin, you know.

Desley: And that girl I was talking to yesterday said that it was a commitment because people are so invasive of your privacy. It's not like you go just put pictures on me and that's it.

Participant: Yes, it does, it means a lot more than that.

Desley: So my trick question: what would be the opposite of your tattoos?

Participant: crap. I don't know what that means. I don't know what that means really. The opposite of my tattoos. I don't know. The opposite of my tattoos would probably just be me without any tattoos, I would say. Back being ignored in the line, I could either be which is like... not really how it is.

Desley: Ok. So you were saying the opposite would just be

Participant: Yeah, it's all I can think of really, the most accurate way. So it would be me as I was before I had any tattoos which I just find. I don't think this about anybody else in life at all, but just me personally, what I think about myself, I felt a bit plain. This was my way of making myself stand out, which I believe, probably, that, within me I know that I stand out, but this is a way of communicating first off to people when they first look at me, that there is something a bit different. Making that impact that I was sometimes too shy to make of my own accord.

Desley: So if you didn't have the tattoos you wouldn't be your real self or you wouldn't be showing your real self to the world?

Participant: Yeah I think that's more to the point. I feel really comfortable being tattooed and I feel more myself with tattoos and with the hair that I have or whatever that I do. People say oh it's just a phase that you are going through. My dad said that when I was 14 or something, begging him can I please dye my hair pink. And he'd say no you can't and that's that. It's just a phase. They love to say that. Parents love to say that. It's just a phase you'll grow out of it. And a lot of people do. They dye their hair when they are young and they get piercings and they do uni, and they go into the workforce and they dye their hair the natural colour, take all their piercings out and they take off the black make up and they're just plain again. Whereas I wanted something that was beyond all that. And I couldn't ever be plain again. It was like a commitment.

Desley: So typically when you go, do you go with somebody to get the work done?

Participant: Yeah. I've never been by myself. I used to go with my partner at the time, but now I would take Chris with me, my current partner or a friend or something like that. But I would feel comfortable going by myself, knowing Morgan pretty well as I do. He went overseas and we still communicated with him, he e-mailed and brought us presents back. So he's quite friendly and nice though he's a like a biker sort of dude. He doesn't ride for a club but he does ride and his tattoo places are run by bikies guys anyway. His bosses are always in a gang. He is cool because he rides, a 73 chopper or something, but he doesn't ride for anyone. He rides for himself which I find is pretty cool and identify with that sort of. Being part of the alternative culture but not actually signing yourself up for a particular group and having to live by their particular rules. You're in with them all, but not anyone in particular. Which I think is really cool.

Desley: I guess the reason I ask that from most people is to see whether they were influenced to get a tattoo by someone else.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: But I'd say with you, it's

Participant: It's pretty internal yeah. An expression of my internal thoughts.

Desley: So have you had any....you said you've not got a couple of jobs because of the tattoos. Have you had any bad reactions from people?

Participant: Yeah I've had people say... a friend of mine got married straight out of uni. I'd known her from uni, all through uni and she marries this guy a bit older than her, a lot of money, really conservative, he's a business type, property developer type guy and he said to me "don't get any more tattoos", over dinner or something, he said "don't get any more tattoos. People won't respect you." And I knew he was saying, "I don't respect you." You look like that and you come in my house, I don't have the respect for you that I would if you looked nice and smart and neat and all that kind of stuff." And I just thought stuff you! Why should I live my life to some guy in a suit's idea of what it is. It's like, um, er, I've had... One of Sydney's top photographers, he's been president of the photography association in NSW or in Australia for quite some years. And he's really well known. He did a lot of big profile ads for Qantas and things like that with the children's choir and he's quite well-known and. He shares offices and studio in Balmain and I applied for a job with him just to be his personal assistant, in photography and his work in general. And I got so close to being the person that he chose. It was between me and another person. Everyone else who applied from uni didn't even get through the first round, I got through all the rounds, and there were many. Um, and I met with him twice. And the second time I came in for a day, trial sort of thing, and I worked with him all day. I wore a top that showed part of my rose and my birds, I didn't have anything else. I didn't have anything here, it was much less than I have now. And he didn't even get back to me after that. When I finally spoke to him he said, look there were parts about the digital side that I wasn't so good at and he needed someone who was good at the digital but he said I'll be honest with you now. I can't have someone who looks like you sitting at my desk when I have clients in. And I said oh really? Coz that didn't cross my mind. In photography I thought everyone's creative. Everyone's

arty looking, it's fine and it really wasn't fine. And he said yeah you may think everyone's arty but they're really not. Because the people who control the money for all the ads are the CEO's and the ad executives or the executives of the company, and he said "I got people from Qantas coming in, they're all in suits, they're all conservative people and they are a lot of money..blah blah blah." And they come in and say who's that sitting there, and he said I'm not willing to risk of them walking out the door and saying they are going somewhere else. I'm not using you as my photographer... Which is so stupid because I can't ever see that actually happening. People know that creative people usually look a bit different a bit expressive and arty or whatever and he just said, look, just in case, I am not willing to risk money on you. so he said I wouldn't have, he said, practise your digital skills and if I really take off, we'll get you back in and wear a parka to work or something, and we'll get you back in and I just thought no I am not calling you again. You know and I spoke to people about it and he said you don't want to work for him anyway. What a dickhead! Why would you? But you know anything retail or casual, low level, that I'd just be doing one or two shifts to get money like I do now, they just don't have it. There's always a part of their dress code that says, no visible tattoos, no visible piercings other than the ear piercing and that's it. Which is a bit of a double standard anyway. And that's just a given, except for General Pants that's just a given. So it's a bit sad.

Desley: So what do you think people see when they look at you?

Participant: Sometimes they see a junkie which is really scary. I have never seen a junkie with this much weight on. I don't know, I don't know what they see. A lot of guys get a bit overwhelmed because they don't usually, they're not usually used to seeing like a strong yet feminine female figure. Some men, can't say all of them. But some, especially in the Hurstville area, a lot of like Lebanese guys find it really confronting that a chick is not you know not their idea of what they think a woman would be or whatever. i get comments all the time. Hurstville I get mostly stupid people going, "haa look at that. Oh my God, look at that tattoo!" they call out. Hurstville's pretty cool cause I have worked there for about 4 years I'm sort of just like your standard an alternative person. Everyone's seen me before. So I am friends with all the shopkeepers and everyone says hi. I'm just, I think what it is, is that when people first see me they see a certain thing, which is a bit out there a bit crazy or they don't know what to make of me. But as soon as people know me or they have met me a few times or they have always known me they just see me, they don't see any tattoos they just see Jo. Which is what I've got from everyone who has ever gotten to know me or has known me from before I had tattoos. They

know no difference. It's just me it's when they first meet me that first impression is pretty.... But as soon as they talk to me it's gone, I think, or it's pretty much gone. They still have questions but they don't have doubts or anything. It changes with areas too, the people's reactions, like Hurstville people are pretty cool, now. There's only some young guys might call out or say something or people might come into the shop sometimes and say oh my good look at those tattoos or whatever. Miranda I find is really different. It's funny. You can tell the different areas by different....I had to go to Hornsby the other day for a photo shoot and walk around Westfield for ages and when you haven't ever been somewhere before and no one's ever seen you, you can hear it. It's audible. Specially in Miranda. Because people there, I don't know what they think about themselves, pretty like they think they're pretty upper class anyway. So you walk through, I can hear people all around me, it's like a little wave of people going "oaah" or you just hear the word tattoo or that girl or look at that chest or you know. You just hear all these little things. And people are really rude and just stare and things like that. Often they don't say anything I haven't had any really bad reactions. Someone once said to me, drunk at a party, "oh you mustn't be a very healthy person." I said I'm sorry, I don't know what you are talking about. They didn't know me, I think it was the General Pants Christmas party actually. And he said well you are obviously not worried about ink poisoning. I thought, ok, I don't even know what that is, I don't know what he's talking about.

Desley: oh, in America I think I hear that they use car paint.

Participant: I did hear that actually

Desley: and also, the guy broke the record for how many hours straight tattooing he could handle, it must be 2 years ago. And he went for 26 hours. At about 20 hours straight work you can get ink poisoning. And your just body shuts down and basically they have to stop there.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: So this guy was going for the record and he could've made 20 hours and they would have had to go, "na", but he luckily didn't. they had people there ready to watch for all the signs and everything.

Participant: that's awful.

Desley: yeah. It's just that your body can't take it.

Participant: But it was a bit of a stupid thing to say to me like as if he just knew I was this unhealthy person just from his first glance at me, having known nothing about me. Same, I went to a doctor once. I just had a cold or something and I went to a medical centre and I hadn't met this doctor before. And I went in, he said "oh", I think he was Indian and he said "aaah, are you trying to scare me?" I said sorry I don't understand your question. And he said you've got all this scary stuff all over you, you've got all this scary stuff. I said no I am not trying to scare you. And I spoke to him about what was wrong and everything and chatted with him about the weather or something, and he said "you know, I'm so surprised, you really surprise me. I said what do you mean? He said when I first saw you in the waiting room and I called you in I thought you would probably be a junkie or some sort of drug addict or something, because of how you look. And you are the most well spoken person I have had sit in this chair today, and I am stunned. I didn't realise people could be tattooed and be well spoken." He couldn't believe that someone who knew what they were talking about, or could just be pleasant and friendly and intelligent could be so tattooed with scary things. It blew him away, but I guess that's good.

Desley: One of the guys I spoke to said that he finds it is a barrier. I guess coz he was a bit guy, too and he had full sleeves people won't talk to him, because... He lives in Wollongong and he wasn't that big, actually, he said but the crowd will part as he walks along. He said to his wife, "just watch this and count how many" and he said he went 10 metres and like 50 people moved away.

Participant: ah, how funny.

Desley: But he said that's good sometimes because people will leave you alone.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: but then sometimes that's not good

Participant: Because I am little they go "oooh, I could pick her up" and they run over and... I had a lady the other day, patting my arms a lot, patting my birds, because she'd just had one, she'd

just had a bird. People think ah, I've got one so it's ok. Or I've got a bird, you've got a bird, we're together now! She was like, oh that's great, she was just admiring it. She was nice, she was someone's mum who was just shopping and she said oh, that's lovely. I love birds. I was just admiring yours. And another guy came in, totally unrelated and he had just got a three quarter sleeve, all the outline done. it was beautiful a Japanese, a big Koi that wrapped all the way up his arm. So they were up at the counter at the same time and I said can you show her your tattoo? We all sort of got our stuff off and showed each other. It was funny. Everyone had different styles and stuff, but it was just cool that everyone.... Yeah, so she did feel like she could touch me. At that point I was it's ok, I was working, she's my customer, it's ok. But I've been out with my mum and I've had little chickies in stores come up to me and say "oh my God, did that hurt" and start patting me and touching me, and mum's like "wow why are they touching you?" what's going on this is really weird.

Desley: I find that really weird because until she said that yesterday, or the day before, no one had ever mentioned that before. That they got touched.

Participant: Yeah. Probably guys don't get touched. And I guess it's mostly women that touch me. I don't think many guys would think it is ok to do that.

Desley: You don't want guys coming up and playing with the one on your chest.

Participant: I do get drunk people, like drunk guys coming up and saying. I got abused once in a night club. Because this guy said, he was just wasted, he was falling around the club. And he got to me and he was like – I had like dreadlocks at the time, my tattoos were all showing and he was like, "what the hell are you drinking?" I said I'm drinking Vodka and cranberry because that's what I like to drink. He was like "what's going on? You can't be drinking that!" like his mind was exploding coz he...I said, OK what do you think I should be drinking? You've just looked at me, you must know what I like to drink. He said I reckon you should be drinking Jack Daniels straight from the bottle. Because of what I looked like, I couldn't drink like a girly drink like vodka and cranberry, that would be too embarrassing for me. I should be having a man's drink. It was a bit stupid. I said well I don't like Jack Daniels. You know people have these set ideas, like people must drink, you MUST be a junkie, you MUST be a criminal, which is also a stupid thing because if I was going to be a criminal would I get these unique and permanent markings all over my body, you know. Like

Desley: but that's the stereotype

Participant: yeah, there are jail tattoos, there are gang tattoos and they do, it's a bit stupid, because if you are going to commit a crime why would you mark yourself, you know, with really easily... And once you get taken into the Police for anything, your tattoos go on record. So they know who you are every time you do something, they just need a camera surveillance or something to know who you are, so it's a bit stupid. And in that way it keeps you accountable as well because people know who I am. If I go and do something in a shopping centre or wherever it gets around and I am easily described to everyone. So I have to sort of watch what I say and what I do. Not heaps, like it's not on my mind all the time. But I think if I go nuts at this chick because she's stuffing me around at the counter or something everyone will know it's me. They'll all know who I am, where I work. They can follow the hair or follow the tattoos around and they sort of know. In a way, you know, everyone sort of knows who you are. So I guess I have to be a little bit careful about what I say to which people and stuff like that. Not so much. Doesn't become a concern.

Desley: So do you feel like you identify with any particular group of people because you have a tattoo?

Participant: Not a particular group of people like Goths or punks or something like a sub culture in that sense. Because I'd never like to, I would never like to be involved in a group like that just because I think there would be too many rules to follow. The essence of an alternative person or an alternative culture is that you don't follow rules. So I think if you are going to be a Goth you have to do this this this and this, when you are trying to get away from having to do things. So, like I can understand that they are into the same sort of music, same sort of style of dress but nothing's ever been right for me to go into one of those sort of groups and be happy like that. So myself is what I would mostly say that I am but I just have an immense respect for people, who no matter what type of people they are if they're true to themselves. That's what I see in people and really respect. My hair dressers are really crazy people. They're like, he's an ex-drug addict and stuff but he is great and he is so creative and he's worked for himself his entire life, he's got a great salon going and so, you know I really respect him. He's not in any particular sort of group. He just does what he does and Yeah so more so than just a group, I respect people who are true to themselves and often that means you know, against some sort of adversity against the

main stream or against you know, what their parents would expect of them or think that they should do or whatever. Like my artist, my tattoo artist is really cool. He rides a motorbike. He's a really cool guy. He's a biker, but doesn't ride for a particular group he hasn't signed up for any of those rules. He just rides for himself. His bosses are from particular bikey gangs but that's because of his nature of employment. But yeah anyone like that. Even some of the weird people you see wandering the streets talking to themselves. Maybe they're mentally ill but at the same time they're sort of freer than most people. In some respects. Yeah just anyone who is cool and goes their own way more so than any particular group of people.

Desley: so not anyone just because they have a tattoo?

Participant: No definitely not. Probably, definitely I wouldn't like to be around most people because they have tattoos. I think most tattoos that I see, I don't like, I don't really respect, I don't think the artistry is good and the placement is good and the you know, the imagery is good. I don't like. It's funny because I love tattoos and I love tattooing and the whole deal and the concept and everything that goes with it but 95% of tattoos I've seen on people I loathe them. I really hate them. Which sounds a bit weird. But you know it's all the sort of girls that have the ornate thing on their back and just people that get the same thing that everyone else gets or just little bits and pieces around and I just think "er, no good"

Desley: So do you look at them and go I wonder why they got that,

Participant: Yeah

Desley: Or is it just totally...

Participant: Yeah. Um. I don't know. I guess I look at a lot of them and think why did they get that when there's like 80 million other people that have that same thing but I just think, I don't know, I just don't like what I see most of the time and I don't really want to talk about it. And it's always those people who want to come and talk to me about tattoos as if they have some sort of connection with me when there is really not a lot going on that is the same in any way or anything.

Desley: So you mentioned that your boyfriend doesn't have any tattoos?

Participant: mmm.

Desley: Did you know him before you had yours?

Participant: I don't know. I knew him as a friend for about a year or more before we got together.

Desley: So he wasn't intimidated by the tattoos or anything?

Participant: Possibly when he first met me he might have been a little bit. I think he mentioned, maybe. On first meeting me I don't know whether I had all of them, or I probably didn't have all of them, I probably had you know, half of what I have or something like that when he first met me. But he got to know me just through going out with a whole bunch of our friends going, just drinking in pubs and going out, things like that so it wouldn't have taken him very long to realise that I wasn't an intimidating person anyway. He is a really artistic person as well due to his background and things like that. I guess he has probably considered having tattoos but has never actually entertained the thought enough to go and get one. A lot of it is about knowing people that have gone and got one. I think initially even though my ex has gone way beyond what I have done with tattooing, he probably wouldn't even have a tattoo, he might have one or two had he not met me and seen the one on my foot. That's sort of what sparked his interest. So it's funny that I sparked him with something that is now to both of us so insignificant. But at the time he said "that is the best tattoo, it's the best thing I have ever seen, that's amazing", now I don't even think about it and he probably doesn't either coz he's gone off and got more amazing things. But Chris really wants to . he designs tattoos everyday – doodles and draws things. He's are really good artist and he has really got into the imagery that I have so he'll like a heart with a banner and a dagger and birds and banners and really cool stuff like that. He's designed heaps and heaps of things but he sort of leaves it around and his mum says don't you get that tattoo! Don't. coz they're quite conservative. They've been cool that they've accepted me from day one and never said why is there this tattooed girl in my house?

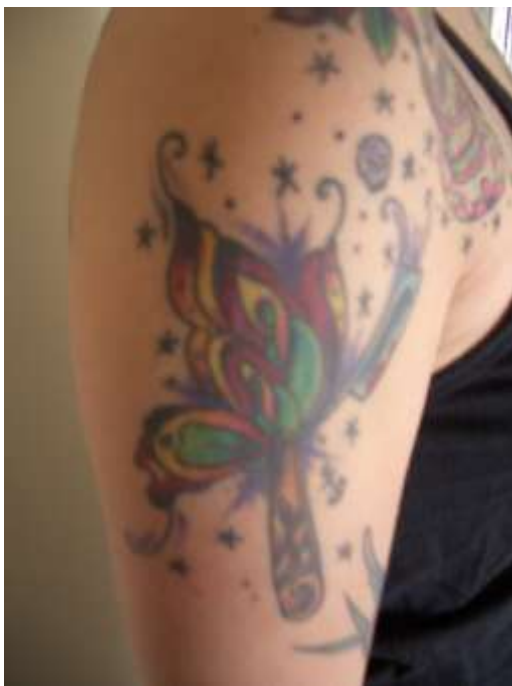
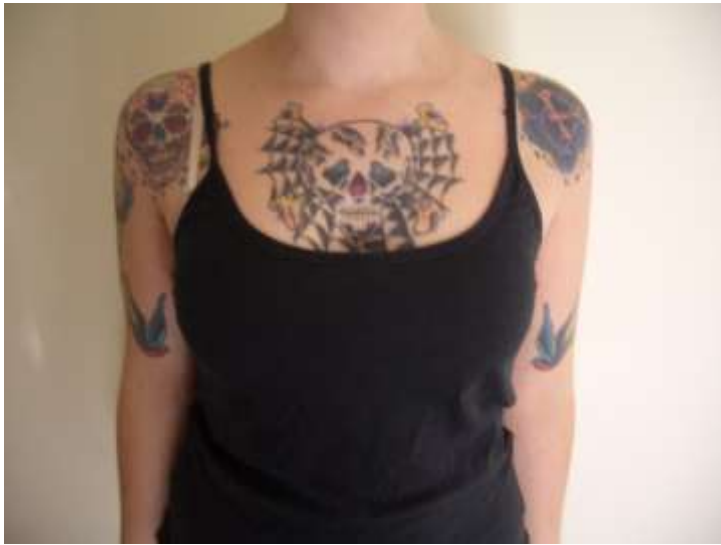
Desley: So you didn't cover up the day you had to meet them?

Participant: No, no. they've always seen them. And his grandparents know me and everything and I live here now. So they're cool. I mean they're really artistic people as well. Chris' parents are really into theatre and art and things like that and music. So they can appreciate all different types of people. They've probably never met anyone with this many tattoos before but they never had an attitude about it at all. They're really really polite people and really nice, so that's good. But I think it would be a different story if Chris got something. And I always worry more so before when I didn't know them as well that if Chris came home with a big chest tattoo. He wants to get his chest done, a heart and these rays and then a dagger and all this crazy stuff. That it'd be, if he'd never met you, he'd never have ruined his body, you know. That's a bit scary. That it'd be my fault. But it's not like – like I, I might be the inspiration for him actually getting it, but he'd always entertained the thought and has drawn things and everything before. I don't know whether it will actually happen. But he is doing law, so he would probably definitely get them somewhere where – and for him I think he's talked about it in a more personal way. It's not, he wouldn't get them to show people. He'd get them for himself and he'd get them under his shirt, or you know, and he's thought about getting the half Japanese where it comes down here – just the little sleeve things. A lot of businessmen have those. So they can cover them up but it is just a personal thing that he'd really feel happy about, aesthetically that it was there. That's different to my, you know, reasoning.

Desley: So is there anything else that you can think of about your tattoos?

Participant: No, not really. Think I've covered most of it. There's no real stories that go along, like reasons and events and anything like that that I got them, I just feel a bit sad that I haven't been for so long. It's been over a year. Year and a half or so. I guess money is the factor. Because everything I've saved has to go into photography now. It's going to happen soon, though. Hopefully.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	2	1	5	3	3	3	2	5	1	3	2	5	Sad
Patient	4	2	1	1	3	4	3	3	1	3	1	3	Impatient
Caring	3	1	2	3	2	3	3	3	1	4	1	5	Thoughtless
Kind	4	1	1	3	3	4	3	2	1	5	1	5	Cruel
Sense of humour	3	1	1	2	5	3	3	5	3	3	2	5	Serious
Sociable	3	1	1	2	4	3	3	3	2	3	1	4	Unfriendly
Friendly	2	3	5	1	1	3	2	1	1	4	1	5	Cold
Active	1	1	3	2	3	5	3	5	1	1	2	5	Lazy
Confident	3	1	1	3	3	4	2	5	5	3	4	2	Shy
Organised	5	1	1	3	4	4	4	5	1	5	1	3	Messy
Hard working	4	1	3	3	4	5	4	5	1	2	1	2	Complacent
Honest	3	1	2	2	3	3	4	5	2	3	4	5	Dishonest



Participant: Um, oh well, I've got three. I got my first one when I was sixteen. It's now been sort of done over like with another one. It was going to be four, but now it's sort of gone into one large one. Ermm... Yeah I love'em, and going to get more. And..yeah. I just like the art work really. So...

Desley: Mhmm. So what was the first one a picture of?

Participant: It was actually a tribal design on my arm. Yeah.. that was sort of stemmed off that. I like the tribal work. I went and got another one of those done. And then I like the Maori one. I pretty much like all. I am not really against any of it, except for skulls, I think, but

Desley: So when you say "any of it" you mean any culture?

Participant: Style of tattoos, yeah.

Desley: So you'd go Japanese...?

Participant: That's...my main one is Japanese. It's actually my favourite this Japanese stuff.

Desley: Ok. So how old were you when you got that last one?

Participant: Err..It's been going over about a year now, so... um, it just sort of got sort of finished about probably three or four months ago. So about a year and a half.

Desley: Mhmm. And you said the first one got covered up.

Participant: Yep.

Desley: So you got another design over it

Participant: Another design. Yeah.

Desley: So is that because you didn't like it?

Participant: Not at all. It was because where I got it done originally. The first place I got it done was here....

Desley: On the shoulder.

Participant: Yep. Right shoulder, yep. And then the one that I got, the Japanese one was all under my arm. But I wanted to wrap it around, and so I just thought it would be easier just to cover up. So it's not that I didn't like it, yeah.

Desley: Ok. So with each tattoo, how long do you think about them before you actually get them?

Participant: Umm. Some time.. not long really. I just see something I like and get it done.

Desley: Yep

Participant: So.

Desley: Yeah. OK. And you have a particular artist that you stick with?

Participant: Now I do. Yeah. Originally I didn't, but now I do.

Desley: Mhmm. So you said you are going to get more tattoos.

Participant: Yeah. Definitely.

Desley: What's the most important thing for you? Is it the design, or the place...?...or the artist, these days?

Participant: Not really the artist, 'cause I've sort of found what I like, now. It's more...not really the design either because it's pretty much up to me, what I design. I look for more quality than anything else. I just want to see good quality.

Desley: What I meant was, when you think about your next tattoo, do you think about what picture it'll be or do you think about where to put it first.

Participant: ah, no, what it's going to be.

Desley: What it's going to be. And then you decide..

Participant: decide later

Desley: where to

Participant: coz sometimes when you want a particular design, you can't put it somewhere because it's not gonna fit, so

Desley: Or suit the shape of your body, or whatever.

Participant: That's right.

Desley: So.. why did you put the first one on your right shoulder?

Participant: um, don't know. Just seemed like the place to put it, so...

Desley: Mhmm. So it wasn't a conscious thing of..er..whether you can cover it up, or something like that?

Participant: No. not really. Nup.

Desley: Ok...you said that the Japanese ones under your arm..

Participant: Not under ..it's right around, the whole arm.

Desley: So it's on your arm and that's it, or..

Participant: No the big one's from here to here. Um, and I got one on my chest and the other one's on my back.

Desley: So was there any decision about putting it on your chest and your back? Any reason you did that?

Participant: Yeah actually, the one on my chest, I did want one on my chest, so I just decided to put it there. But every other one I just liked the design and I didn't.... I just put it anywhere, pretty much... but... Actually the one on my back's going to be covered up as well, 'cause I want something bigger...so.

Desley: OK.

Participant: But again it's not 'cause I don't like it. It's just that I want something bigger.

Desley: So you are still happy with all of them?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: And you wouldn't get them changed..

Participant: No, not at all.

Desley: Or taken off?

Participant: No.

Desley: OK. Do the tattoos mean anything as a whole to you? Like is there something linking them?

Participant: I made a conscious decision pretty much after I got that first one done, because I was too young to really realise. But I made a decision to get nothing that actually meant of

anything of any importance to me for the reason that it probably would not mean something to me later. So I wanted to get something that didn't really mean anything to me. I just liked the design, or whatever, so, for that reason I haven't got anything of importance to me. Yeah. If that makes sense.

Desley: Yeah. It does. So there's no link..

Participant: Nothing.

Desley: ...between them.

Participant: No.

Desley: so it's just, I like this one. I like this one. Ok. So is there a place you wouldn't put a tattoo?

Participant: My head.

Desley: Mhmm. For what reason, though?

Participant: Er..

Desley: Is it the face..?

Participant: Yeah the whole head, really.

Desley: And is it just because it's..

Participant: Errm. Probably just 'cause it would be frowned upon, more than anything. I don't, I wouldn't like it there anyway. But...

Desley: So you wouldn't like a moko or something?

Participant: No

Desley: not much into tribal?

Participant: Not unless I was living in the village, and you know, it was sort of the thing to do. I am not against it, you know...

Desley: That's just not for you.

Participant: Not my thing, yeah.

Desley: Yeah. OK. So you said you picked the pictures based on aesthetics? What they look like, rather than what they meant?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: Ok. So what's the one on your chest a picture of?

Participant: it's a Maori design.

Desley: That's a Maori design, is it?

Participant: yeah. A face sort of thing.

Desley: Ok. And is there anything about that, that appealed to you?

Participant: Yeah. I do like the Maori designs, and so I just thought.....It was quite a nice design. Actually a guy had his whole back done with the same picture, but I just didn't really like my whole back done, so...um, I just shrunk it down and put it on my chest. It's very intricate, sort of, lots of lines and all that, so...

Desley: Mhmmm. So is intricacy something that plays a part in your life?

Participant: I think so, yeah.

Desley: In what way?

Participant: Just to make it interesting I guess.

Desley: Mhmm. So what would be the opposite of interesting?

Participant: Boring. Boring. Yeah..

Desley: OK. And you prefer your life to be interesting, rather than boring?

Participant: Yeah, I think so.

Desley: So what's important about interesting?

Participant: Is this about my life, or about..?

Desley: Yes. Just in general.

Participant: What's important about intricacy? Err..keep you on your toes. Just so you are not bored and slack off I guess, I don't know. I don't really like to be sort of stuck in one place. I like to keep moving and doing things and yeah, so

Desley: And I guess that's reflected in the fact that you said you didn't want to get something that meant something because your meaning may actually move on.

Participant: That's right, yeah.

Desley: Ok. So what's the picture on your back?

Participant: Er.... It's just another tribal design. It's pretty small, actually. It's not that big, but I'm getting a big dragon piece designed up on it, so..

Desley: In Japanese style, yeah?

Participant: Yeah. That's getting started.

Desley: that'll take a while, won't it?

Participant: Errr. Well I asked him. I was with him last night, my tattooist and he said it would probably take less than the one on my arm, so.... The one on my arm took many, many, many, many hours.

Desley: Really? Is that because it was a bigger one to cover up?

Participant: Err. That and it's just a lot of like shading and a lot of, like fine detail to it. So..so ..we'll soon find out, but...

Desley: Yeah. Erm... did any of your tattoos coincide with any particular events in your life?

Participant: No, not really.

Desley: You said you were sixteen when you got the first one?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: Was that a big deal, because it's actually illegal these days?

Participant: Yeah I know. No..no. it wasn't at all.

Desley: So, did you ever worry about what other people would think? Like did you worry about what your mum'd say or anything?

Participant: Yeah it was a bit strange actually, 'cause I got it on my mother's birthday.

Desley: Oh, OK.

Participant: So when I went to give her a hug, I sort of said, "Watch the arm!" I sort of told her that morning, I was going to get one done, so...she didn't believe me, I don't think. Yeah. I've always done my own thing, so...

Desley: So did you have to get permission from someone, to do it, or?

Participant: No.

Desley: Oh, OK. So do you link it to your mum's birthday in your mind? That tattoo?

Participant: No, 'cause it's covered up now, so...

Desley: OK. You don't even think about it! OK. What about the pain factor? Do you consider it to be a bonus, or does it detract from it or is it just something you have to go through?

Participant: Err..when you're thinking about getting one done, you sort of don't think about...like you think about the size of it, and you don't really think about, umm... what it's gonna feel like. But when you're actually getting it done, then at some point, some part, some time, you just sort of think, "Shit! What am I doing this for?" But that's when you're sitting for three, four hour sits and it just gets to be annoying, but..err... No as a whole it wouldn't deter me. No.

Desley: Mhmm. Is it something that you look forward to?

Participant: Sometimes it is, yeah. Sometimes, yeah.

Desley: So why do you think that is?

Participant: I don't know. It's a bit of a ...bit of a strange one, isn't it?

Desley: My daughter got one here, recently. She said she was looking forward to the pain.

Participant: To the pain, yeah. Yeah. A lot of my friends say that too, and sometimes you do. I know what they mean, but I guess there's a difference. If getting something small it would only take a few minutes, but sitting for three, four hours, it gets a little bit of a mindboggling, I guess.

Desley: I just wonder whether that's a part of... whether your mind...you go into a different space, or something?

Participant: I reckon the first ten fifteen minutes are probably the worst and then after that you sort of switch off a bit.

Desley: Yeah, 'cause like you get endorphins that kick in, don't you?

Participant: Yeah. unless they hit a real tender spot where you're gonna feel it no matter what.

Desley: So, a lot of people say that they are addictive.

Participant: Definitely.

Desley: Why do you think that is?

Participant: I'd say the pain, to a degree. Errr. ..yeah it's a good question. I don't know. Maybe...I guess they have broken the chain of actually getting one, so then it's not such a bad thing to get the second one. They just like the artwork, or...yeah...it's something different. For myself, I just always knew I'd get more. It's not a question of that. I just like 'em, so...

Desley: Yeah.

Participant: That's that.

Desley: So is it the whole process you like. A couple of people I talked to, said they like the whole thing.

Participant: Hmmmm.

Desley: Like the designing it, the actual getting it, having it.

Participant: yeah. I don't actually design them. I go to the tattooist and I say this is what I want and then he will come up with a design. So...um, yeah...I don't... I wouldn't say the whole process. I just like, I like the finished product, I guess. I like the stages. I like knowing that, say for example...this was done over a year, so I like to know that, you know..that in a month's time I can go back and get some more done. And then have the final product, whatever..... I'm not in any...like I wasn't in any great rush, you know to get it done. I like the dragon...it'll probably take a while to do, but it's nice to see the stages and to see like the skeleton of it where they take a photo of just the outline and then the stages it goes through to get where it is. So that's pretty interesting.

Desley: Mhmm. So just then it kind of reminded me of like creating a building or something.

Participant: Yeah. different stages and things.

Desley: Yeah, because I've just renovated, so...So, do you think there's something else you could have done, rather than having a tattoo, that would have had the same effect, for you?

Participant: Mmmmm. No.

Desley: No. It's that or nothing?

Participant: I've had piercings and all that, but no. I don't mind piercings, I just don't.... it's not a.... I think for me, myself it's the whole permanent aspect of it as well. To know that you've made a lifelong decision and ...

Desley: 'Cause it is a major commitment, isn't it?

Participant: Oh..well it is and then it isn't. Depends on how you look at it. In my eyes it's...I don't think it is really. I mean it is a commitment in the fact that it's gonna be there forever, but I don't see it as a negative or a positive thing. It's just something that you wanna do. So...

Desley: Mhmm. So I guess yours are covered up. I was talking to a girl the other day, who's got one here.

Participant: My one is normally.... it's pretty open.

Desley: It's normally showing? This one on your back, what kind of reaction do you get to it and how that influences your life?

Participant: Ah, look, coming from an Italian background, my grand parents and parents were a bit, sort of not open to these things.

Desley: Yeah.

Participant: but it still didn't deter me, so...and it won't. 'Cause it's my body, you know. I decide what goes on and what doesn't.

Desley: Now what about...say you were trying to get a job and stuff...

Participant: Yeah..no it doesn't... I know where I wanna go. Like I know what area I'm going to be in, so I don't... it's not going to hinder my options. And the way I see it as well, if someone's gonna look at that in a negative way, then they don't deserve to have me working for them anyway, so.

Desley: Yeah. Unfortunately some people aren't quite that clever, are they?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: Do you think of yourself as a person with tattoos, or are you a tattooed person?

Participant: I don't see any difference. What's the difference?

Desley: I'm not sure. That's what I am trying to figure out.

Participant: I don't see any difference.

Desley: Most people actually say one or the other.

Participant: Tattooed person or a person with tattoos. Um...

Desley: I think some people look at it as maybe how many you've got, or something. 'Cause if you've got one little one you're probably not a tattooed person.

Participant: Tattooed person. I don't know. Both.

Desley: Can't decide? When you went and had it, did you go by yourself or did you go with other people?

Participant: Errm. Last one was pretty much all on my own. The first couple, it's a pretty exciting stage, so I guess you go with people. Actually I think we went....with the first one we got with a few different people got some as well, the same with the second one, so.

Desley: So was it like they got it because you were getting it, or you got it because they were, or?

Participant: No. We all sort of decided weeks before hand that we all wanted to get one and we all sort of found what we wanted and then just all went together.

Desley: Ok. What do you think it means to other people that see them?

Participant: Oh! A lot of people get...give me some funny looks, and all that. But I've pretty much switched off to that now. When I first got it, I really noticed a lot of people looking at me differently, but now I don't even think about it, so. I don't even recognize it's there half the time. I just forget about it.

Desley: So what kind of reactions have you had to it?

Participant: Ummm. A lot of people think it's, you know...it's too big...And are you sure you're going to like it in ten years, or whatever, but...a lot of people don't understand that everyone's different. I don't judge anything they do, so they shouldn't judge anything I do.

Desley: Doesn't stop 'em! (Sorry, I'm afraid I forgot what I was going to ask you!) So what do you think about other people that have tattoos?

Participant: I don't care if other people have tattoos. I look at some designs and think, what the hell were they thinking, but that's not for me to decide anyway. It's their choice, so... It's none of my business.

Desley: Yeah. Who do you know that has a tattoo?

Participant: I don't really know anyone that doesn't, actually. I think my mum and dad are the only people I know that don't have one.

Desley: Ok!

Participant: and my dad was actually taking about getting one.

Desley: Yeah? You corrupted him, did you?

Participant: I think maybe. And there's a couple of my cousins as well. Family there's a few, family that don't have it.

Desley: Mostly your friends.

Participant: Oh, all of my friends have them.

Desley: And you said that hasn't really had any negative effect on your life?

Participant: No. No. Nup. Not at all. I actually....I was going to get one about a year ago on my forearm. And I sort of asked my boss at the time, you know, if I could get one, and he sort of said "No."

Desley: OK.

Participant: um. Otherwise I would pretty much have gotten it done straight away. But apart from that, no.

Desley: So you've had to be a bit careful.

Participant: Yeah. I'm not going to let that stop me anymore. If I want to get it I'm just going to get it, so... I've learnt my lesson. I'll just do what I have to do and worry about the consequences later.

Desley: So when you say you've learnt your lesson, what do you mean by that?

Participant: Not to ask.

Desley: Oh, OK. 'Cause you've already got the job. He can't really sack you, can he?

Participant: Yeah...or just....I mean, if it, worst case scenario I would just have to have worn a long sleeved shirt. Not a big deal, so.

Desley: Yeah. So do you feel like having a tattoo means that you identify with a particular group of people?

Participant: Errr...other tattooed people. That's just about it.

Desley: So when you look at them you feel some kind of affinity or something?

Participant: Probably with my friends. Not really outside people. Like, a lot of my friends have big pieces as well, so...and...yeah.

Desley: Mhmmm. I remembered what I was going to say before. You were talking about everyone's different. So is that one of the things that appeals to you? The fact that you are different?

Participant: Ah, definitely. Yeah. Shows a part of your personality. What kind of designs you get.

Desley: So a girl said the other day, it was like having your insides on the outside for her, because she's only little. And she said people tend to overlook her. But now she's got this tattoo, it's like she doesn't get ignored any more.

Participant: Yeah. Yeah. I um, I don't really do it for attention seeking. I just really just do it because I like the artwork. I mean I'm really pretty tall anyway, so not that I really get overlooked much. But I don't do it to stand out, or anything.

Desley: So is it like just for yourself?

Participant: Yeah. Yeah.

Desley: So would that go to the extreme that you wouldn't even show anyone? You don't feel you need to show anyone?

Participant: No, not at all. I mean, I don't know. A lot of people, you know.... they have to put designs somewhere where ...or they wear something that has to show it off, or whatever, but I am not like that at all.

Desley: Ok. You're ready for the hard question?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: What would be the opposite of your tattoos?

Participant: The opposite of 'em? Not having them there.

Desley: OK. Just not having them?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: Yeah. OK Well that was easy, wasn't it? Ok. Is there anything else that you can think of about them that I might've forgotten to ask you about?

Participant: No, I think we've pretty much covered it.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	3	1	1	1	2	4	2	2	2	2	3	4	Depressed
Patient	4	2	3	2	3	2	4	1	2	4	4	2	Crazy
Caring	1	1	1	2	2	3	2	1	2	3	4	2	Selfish
Kind	2	1	2	2	3	3	3	1	2	3	4	2	Unfair
Sense of humour	2	1	1	1	3	2	2	2	1	2	2	3	Bland
Sociable	2	1	2	1	2	3	3	1	1	1	2	3	Loner
Friendly	2	1	2	1	3	3	2	1	1	1	2	1	Bastard
Active	5	2	4	1	4	3	4	2	1	5	2	5	Lazy
Confident	3	1	2	2	2	4	3	1	1	2	1	5	Boring
Organised	2	1	1	1	1	3	2	4	2	4	4	5	Disorganised
Hard working	2	1	2	2	2	3	2	1	2	4	3	5	Lazy
Honest	1	2	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	4	3	2	Fake



2 RGT subgroup Belonging

2.1 RDT subgroup Belonging

Participant BB3

Female, 36 years old

Interview date: 23/11/2005

Participant: It's the letter B and it's just on my bikini line. I've always had the desire to have a tattoo but never really... I've got a religious upbringing so tattoos were unhealthy to the body, to the skin so it was never a really good practice to partake in tattooing but I kind of fell out of being a full-on follower of my parent's religion so I kind of went a little bit wayward so the letter B signifies the initial of my ex-husband. so he's an ex now but obviously we were together, just due to be married so as a commitment we each got the letters of each other done in the same sort of area. So I kind of regret that decision now. one because it's not kind of something that I've been brought up to do and two because I'm now separated due to be divorced so I have to actually go through the process of thinking of altering that letter B because it's not appropriate any more so I'm just trying to come up with a few ideas of how to change it. I probably won't eliminate it because I like tattoos. I'm sort of almost thinking of getting another one. I don't altogether regret it, I kind of like it.

Desley: so is it more like that you have it, rather than like it itself?

Participant: having it you mean?

Desley: is it that you like that tattoo, or you like the fact that you have a tattoo

Participant: yeah, it's just the fact that I've got a tattoo and I sort of, it's a bit of a rebellious streak in me because I've always been really straight. just doing something a little bit rebellious feels good.

Desley: why did you, say, put the "B" rather than some other picture?

Participant: because it symbolised commitment to each other at the time

Desley: and there was nothing else you could have put instead?

Participant: no. it seemed like a good idea to put each other's initials. Because I value marriage, I knew I was going to get married, and I valued marriage, so it wasn't for me, the thought never crossed my mind I would ever split up. It's not going to be like, it was just a commitment, so I had no other thoughts in my head. It was going to be forever, it was my husband. But obviously circumstances have changed out of my control, so, but, um, yeah. so I guess now, yeah, I hadn't thought of putting another one. It was to symbolize that commitment, just that letter "B".

Desley: and so why was it important for you to mark that with a tattoo?

Participant: because we had both been talking about getting a tattoo. I mean he had one already, so he was always saying he wants another one so I sort of piggy-backed on that and said I'm going to get one too. And then because it sort of became a joint decision, we thought, well, what can we do to make it really symbolic, rather than just going and getting a tattoo of anything we individually wanted, so because we made the decision to have one together, we thought something symbolic, we thought why don't we just get each other's initials, first initials

Desley: so why did you have it put in that particular place?

Participant: because it was a private thing between us. It was a private thing between us and I don't, because I know my mum, she doesn't like them, she doesn't agree with them so I thought, I'm not going to stick it in her face as well, that I'm being a bit rebellious, so I thought I'll do it. it was for my own show, not other people's show, that's why

Desley: so only people you want would see it?

Participant: yeah. my husband at the time saw it. yeah. it wasn't something to show off to the world and say that I've got a tattoo, it was just for myself, yeah.

Desley: so how old were you when you had it?

Participant: not long ago, it was only 3 years ago, about 3 years ago.

Desley: and how long did you think about it before you went out and did it?

Participant: I thought, not long, probably, discussions about, like very light discussions about tattooing between my ex-husband and I at the time, probably over about a year. Um, yeah, about 9 months and then just prior to getting married we had it done.

Desley: and it was linked to the actual marriage

Participant: yes.

Desley: I think you've answered this, but do you still like it?

Participant: I still like the thought of a tattoo, but I don't like the actual one. So, what I, I mean it's a B so what I'm thinking of putting is three little Z's like a Bzzzz, you know. I thought that's the only thing. I can't change it to a butterfly coz it would be a lop-sided butterfly but yeah, just three little Z's to the end, just to differentiate it between a letter.

Desley: so you'd just change it so

Participant: completely different meaning. B, Buzz, something like that

Desley: would you have it again?

Participant: would I do that again? No. a tattoo, don't know, different symbol, nothing to symbolize something for someone else, it'll be purely for me, that's it.

Desley: there is some superstition around tattoos that if you do something to do with a person something bad will happen. they'll die or you'll split up or something but not everyone subscribes to that theory

Participant: oh, ok.

Desley: so it's interesting, I guess, when it does, coz those people can say "I told you so"

Participant: that's probably a good thing because it was a really bad marriage. I was married under duress, I didn't want to get married. Out of fear for my life I did, so

Desley: from parents, or...

Participant: no, it was him. He was just a bit of a psycho. I've got an AVO on him now, so it was the police that broke us up, thank God. Thank God for the tattoo if it symbolizes a bad thing to the other person because it wasn't a good. It wasn't.... I'm saying I did it for commitment but it was more out of fear of not doing it. So I guess that can relate to your research, but in truth I was sort of forced to marry him because of his aggression, his aggressive nature

Desley: so you were scared not to?

Participant: yes.

Desley: because that would have meant something to him?

Participant: it was a combination of a lot of things, like I believe in marriage being full time, but I knew that that was something, that wasn't my choice, I couldn't get out of it because we had already made that commitment before I knew his aggressive side, so until the actual signing of the marriage papers, I kind of was forced to do and partake in everything that was symbolic for a marriage. And yeah, we spoke about that, so there was a bit of time where there was a bit of this new side of him, things may change, things may change down the track.

Desley: and I guess there's a lot in the way that we're brought up, to believe what we should do, and it's really hard to break away from that

Participant: yeah. I find that a bit challenging, so

Desley: so would you have another one, do you think?

Participant: yeah, probably. Probably just to know that I'm doing it for myself this time, purely for myself. And not because it was for that reason. If I'd do it again, like in a discrete place

again, nothing huge, but something that I like. And it would be a decision I'd made for myself, not because someone else has told me. So yeah there is that, doing it for me.

Desley: so if you were going to have another one, what would be the most important thing, the place, the picture, or something else?

Participant: the picture, the picture that I want

Desley: and then you'd decide the place later on?

Participant: yeah, I'd decide where

Desley: have you thought about getting that one removed

Participant: no I haven't. I haven't, because of the fact that I like it being there, so I'd just change it to something else, rather than get it covered or removed. It's not that I don't like it

Desley: if you get a good tattoo artist, there's probably a few options for what you can do.

Participant: yeah.

Desley: my daughter had Chinese writing and she didn't like it so she got a phoenix over the top. She wanted a peacock and the tattoo guy said that the peacock feathers wouldn't cover up the thick bits, but a phoenix would. So you might find that z's might not be your only option. You might be able to get something a bit different

Participant: where did your daughter get it done?

Desley: in Corrimal, in Wollongong. The woman I just spoke to went to Central and she said that they've won awards there.

Participant: that's where I was thinking of going. Jodie, she went to the Cross, one of the side streets, who had a good name and I've seen people there as well so it wasn't just off the street. He did a very good job. It hasn't faded at all. I thought, I've heard about Central

Desley: yeah. if you get someone who's willing to talk to you and design you something, not just ok come in

Participant: well that's good, they can see if they can just camouflage it, rather than something else.

Desley: my daughter went back a couple of times before they settled on what. The guy she went to wins awards for women's tattoos.

Participant: oh, ok. Interesting.

Desley: is there something else you could have done at the time, rather than had the tattoo, that would have had the same effect, that you were trying to achieve with the tattoo?

Participant: no. coz it did go along the lines that we were both talking about that we did want to get a tattoo, so it just made sense.

Desley: so nothing else would have made sense in that context? Tricky question. What would be the opposite of your tattoo?

Participant: yeah, it is tricky. I don't know how to answer that one. Opposite in what terms?

Desley: the theoretical background that I'm working from, the guy says that you can't know something unless you know what it's not. So you can't know hot unless you know cold. So, you know, can we help understand your tattoo by understanding what it isn't? So I guess that could mean what picture would you have as an opposite, or what meaning would you attach that would be opposite?

Participant: well, by getting it against my not getting it.

Desley: I guess it's whichever thing makes the most sense to you

Participant: ok. What it's not is, not being a little bit rebellious. I mean not having a tattoo would symbolize just my goody-goody sort of, choices in life. Always straight, I've always been on the straight and narrow. That's what it's not, so getting it is saying, no I can be a little bit rebellious. Yeah, that's how I see that tattoo as a whole. Regardless of what the picture was, the reason why I got it there, but for me that's the not.

Desley: so it's more about what it means to have a tattoo?

Participant: yep.

Desley: So when you got it were you with your fiancée at the time?

Participant: yes.

Desley: and he got one as well

Participant: yes.

Desley: so would you say it was really his idea, or joint?

Participant: it was joint, it was joint. I mean he did, he already had one and he was talking about getting another one, so yeah the discussion was then, I want one too. Um, so, yeah, I guess it was joint, coming to that decision

Desley: so without wishing to be too personal, and you can not answer if you don't want to. Have other people seen it?

Participant: no.

Desley: so asking you what they think of it is irrelevant

Participant: yeah. Jodie said she'd take a photo of it and I said well you haven't seen it and she said that's right I haven't seen it and I said unless you want to see too much, I don't want you to see it.

Desley: so have you had reactions from people like when you've told them you have a tattoo?

Participant: um

Desley: or it's not something you really talk about?

Participant: no. actually I lied. Tina did see it. the other girl that you're meeting I think next week, we went up, and this is before I even knew who you were and we just started talking about tattoos and she gave me the reasons why she's got the tattoo and it's pretty much in the same spot, not as low, and yeah I told her and she said, oh yeah, and when I told her I might change it with the z's, she said oh, yeah, that's a good idea, so that kind of reactions. Actually probably the only reaction is, oh, you've got a tattoo. So it's like they didn't see me as someone who would have a tattoo. She actually saw it so it mustn't be that low, she didn't see that...I guess I just...

Desley: did the possibly of a reaction, say from your parents influence whether you were going to have it or not?

Participant: yeah that's probably why it's in a discrete place because I don't want to give them, because it's something they don't approve of.

Desley: so it didn't stop you getting it

Participant: no

Desley: it just influenced where it was.

Participant: yeah.

Desley: so what do you think about other people who've got tattoos?

Participant: I don't know, no judgement on them.

Desley: do you think it's had any negative effect on your life?

Participant: no, not really

Desley: coz is there a bad connotations for you?

Participant: no, no. coz I kind of, my personality gets over things pretty quick so it doesn't have that, so, nup.

Desley: that's good. and does having the tattoo mean that you feel like you belong to a particular group of people?

Participant: slightly, I mean I don't like to be in the, you know, some people judge people with tattoos as being, you know, a baddie. So no I don't see it that way, but I do feel a little bit rebellious but no, I don't see myself as being in a group of people.

Desley: not even a group of people that have tattoos?

Participant: no, not necessarily, no. I don't just sit there and think, oh, yeah, she's got a tattoo on her arm, you know, I'm closer to her or you know, no. not at all.

Desley: so is there anything else about your tattoo that you think is important?

Participant: no. that's it.

Participant: Yeah sure. I've got 10 of them. I got the first one when I was 19 when I first joined the Navy and that one was all about fitting in with what everybody else in the Navy did, it was like a membership badge I guess. So not a whole lot of thought went behind it, I just found one that grabbed the eye and pointed to the wall and said "that one" and then I didn't get any more for a couple of years but then I met up with a group of friends also in the Navy that had them and were interested in getting more. It was like yep and so I got suckered in and quite literally they get under your skin. So I went off and got more and more and more and it's probably only the last two of them that I really put thought into because I knew that I would not do it forever. Umm and actually designed one of them and picked out another one for a specific reason, but all the others were just I liked them and just even the positioning of where I got them there was no real thought processes as to this part of the body for this reason. It was just this part of the body as long as it can go under my uniform. I've got some on my ankles but I didn't ever want to get them where it was going to be confronting to somebody else. I'm not embarrassed by them, but some people are uncomfortable with them.

Desley: So, was it an issue about being seen with them at work?

Participant: No, especially not being in the Navy because it's part of the culture.

Desley: Yeah, I had spoken to a guy a couple of years ago who was younger, in his early 20's or something and he said there actually trying to discourage people in the Navy from getting them.

Participant: They are. I don't know about the other two services are but in the Navy you can't get one if you're under 18 obviously because of the legal aspect from the civil side of things. Um and they don't allow them in certain areas, like they don't allow facial tattoos or um I think the neck and the face is pretty much out of bounds. But it comes down to the case what they can't see they can't chastise you for. And mine was never about in-your-face rebellion, it was this is attractive to me but I'm not going to confront your beliefs just to get my own opinion across and I knew that one day I would be an old lady and I didn't want to be an old lady with my arms or my legs covered in tattoos. So they are all in positions where, a lot of my friends

will say my god I didn't realise that you had one and I'll say well I've actually got ten. They just had no idea, because it was never about being a rebel. Never.

Desley: So, it was more personal.

Participant: It was just, I don't know what it is but it was always something that appealed to me and it wasn't a particular group that was appealing. It wasn't like I had this thing about sailors or bikers or you know, labourers or anything I just love tattoos. I really love the idea of tribal tattoos but I don't have a tribe. If I was a Maori or something I would fully embrace the Maori tattoos because I think they're just fantastic.

Desley: So you wouldn't get a Scottish something?

Participant: I've thought about it. I actually have a lot of interest in pagan religions and I love the symbolism that goes with that. So, I think if I was to get any more, and I don't have any intentions to now, it would be something to do with my beliefs there. But I like the idea of this belonging, so I like the idea of the tribal-type tats and things like that.

Desley: So you were 19 when you.....

Participant: I was 19 when I got my first one.

Desley: We probably don't need to go into all of them but how old were you when you got your last one?

Participant: Ah, I.

Desley: Or possibly you said two of them you put thought into?

Participant: Yep, the last two I had one of them done, um, I was in Indonesia so it would have been 1996, it was 9 years ago. So, I would have been 32. And the last one I had done was in 2001. So it was 4 years ago so I was 37.

Desley: And for those particular ones did you think about them for a long time?

Participant: I did, and I guess that reflects on where I got them done, they're on my ankles so people can see them and umm, yeah one of them I designed myself and the other one was it was a very obvious choice. It wasn't that I sort of stayed up nights thinking "what am I going to pick?" I knew that even when I got another tattoo it would be this for this reason.

Desley: Um, So, for any of them did they coincide with you having any kind of life changing experience?

Participant: Not at that time. No, one of the ones on my ankles got my children's names on it but it wasn't that I had them done when they were born. It was, so it was, yeah, perhaps a little belatedly it was, but certainly not at the time no.

Desley: So as far as the content in most of them you just sort of picked off the cuff almost?

Participant: Yep, yep, so

Desley: but there are two in particular that are special?

Participant: There are two in particular that, I guess three in a way, the first one I got although the design itself I just picked sort of yes that one's pretty but I had the word, um the letters WRANS which is the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service and it was done when I joined the Navy. Um, So I guess you know, flashing back to your other question it was sort of um, symbolic to what was going on with me at the time.

Desley: And the actual picture was that?

Participant: No, no.

Desley: But the lettering was?

Participant: The lettering was.

Desley: And um was that put in a certain place for a certain reason or just?

Participant: No, it's on my hip.

Desley: Ok.

Participant: Couldn't be seen. Yeah.

Desley: But that's all nothing else?

Participant: No, and again it was only the last two that were in a specific place for a specific reason.

Desley: So the one on your hip do you mind telling me what that is a picture of?

Participant: It's a heart and a rose with a scroll, it's a very typical no thought behind it, yep, I'll have that one because it's got a scroll and I could fit the lettering that I wanted in.

Desley: Ok, so with the other two the pictures. Are they...

Participant: Well the one, one of them is a band around my ankle with my children's names on it and the other one that's a frog because my partner and I have got this thing about green tree frogs so it's a green tree frog with his initials under it.

Desley: Oh ok, that's nice, so was there any significance in the actual band?

Participant: Yes it's a band because it's a circle because it's never ending love for my children and it's on my ankle because my children ground me. So and his is also on my other ankle for the same reasons. So yeah.

Desley: Ok, and I think you answered why the picture and why its there. Is there somewhere where you wouldn't put a tattoo?

Participant: On my arms and my face.

Desley: Anywhere that's...confronting

Participant: Anywhere that's really confronting to others.

Desley: Do you still like all your tattoos?

Participant: Yes, no regrets.

Desley: Ok, so you wouldn't change any of them?

Participant: No, I'd never have them, well, I wouldn't say, never say never but at this point in time I have no intent of having them removed.

Desley: Would you change any of them?

Participant: Um, No yeah I wouldn't, I am happy with them all.

Desley: Would you do them all again?

Participant: I would have to say yes, because I don't regret having them done. I guess if I had anything that I would change it would be maybe it would be maybe the thought that went into them. Perhaps if I thought about why I wanted what I wanted but I certainly don't regret having that many and I don't dislike the ones that I've got.

Desley: So there's not a particular one that you'd go I really...

Participant: No

Desley: That I wouldn't have done that or?

Participant: No, no.

Desley: And you said that you're thinking that you'll not have any more?

Participant: No none planned again, never say never, I'm not adverse to the idea, but I'm not thinking about it.

Desley: So is there some reason behind why you wouldn't have another one?

Participant: Umm, I think I've just done what I've wanted to do, it's you know, it's no longer something that I need to do, I've done what I've wanted to do.

Desley: So, is it like there was a period of your life where you felt like you needed to do that and that's over?

Participant: Yeah I guess there was.

Desley: or is that kind of obvious?

Participant: It is actually, I hadn't thought about it but now that you say that and I think about the years I had that done, it was probably during times where there was a lot of things going on in my life you know, children being born and I had a marriage break down and then we've been together for nine years now but the early part of our relationship and then I guess the um, the middle part of our relationship where it was all sort of locked in, committed and not going to change, um whereas now things are all fairly stable and normal and so I don't know if that is just coincidental or whether that's my subconscious working overtime. I have no idea.

Desley: Some people think there is no such thing as a coincidence.

Participant: I think there's lots.

Desley: What about the pain aspect of it, is that like a plus or a minus or a neutral?

Participant: It's um, it's neither a plus or a minus it's I think if anything a good deterrent cause I know the, I know that I don't get them done, it's not like just going out and buying a picture. I know it's going to hurt, and it hurts like hell and anybody that says it doesn't hurt hasn't had one done.

Desley: It always seems to be a funny question cause people seem to say it did it hurt and it's like having a piercing does it hurt? Well, yeah! Did you think about that?

Participant: Well, yeah, there's damage to the epidermis and that tends to ache a little.
(Laughter)

Desley: Yes it hurts.

Participant: But, no that wasn't a factor, it wasn't really a factor.

Desley: It didn't put you off but it wasn't like you were addicted to the.....

Participant: Oh God No

Desley: The buzz of it all ...

Participant: Its painful enough to be in pain, it's not something that I would embrace it, I wouldn't put it this way I wouldn't go through the pain without getting the tattoo at the end. The pain's not the attraction it's the tattoo that was the attraction.

Desley: Fair enough. Do you find that your tattoos mean anything as a whole, is there a theme or anything that runs through?

Participant: No, absolutely nothing.

Desley: Except maybe the two on your ankles coz they're about relationships?

Participant: Yeah, only because they're the sorts of main parts of my life, they're my kids and my partner but no, none, it was all about the catching the eye, aesthetic sort of thing....very pretty.

Desley: So why did you, I don't know if you can answer this, so, why did you chose to have a tattoo rather than do something else, like when you joined the Navy for example?

Participant: I had an interest in tattoos even before I joined the Navy, so I guess at that stage, it was more like now I have an excuse to, because that was what people did in the Navy. So had I not joined the Navy I probably still would have got them maybe not as many because it is a very accepting environment to have them in, there is no, it's very rare that I'd get any negative comments because so many girls in the Navy have them. So I think, yeah I think it was just that, just that sort of permission, I think that's probably why I had them done.

Desley: So is there something else you could've done say the ones on your ankles to commemorate your children and partner, something else you could have done that would have had that same effect?

Participant: I'm sure there's a lot of things.

Desley: But, like for you

Participant: aaam, No. no. no.

Desley: And is that the permanency thing? the look of it?

Participant: Yeah possibly, possibly it's like yeah, it's an external of the internal, you know it's an external reflection of the internal so, yes it is a permanent umm, reminder to me and to them and to others that these are my boys, this is my life, I've got three boys - two sons and a partner.

Desley: Do you see yourself as a tattooed person or do you see yourself as a person who has tattoos?

Participant: I see myself as a person that has tattoos.

Desley: So your identity isn't necessarily bound up in having them?

Participant: no. No, they are part of who I am, not what I am.

Desley: Here's my trick question...

Participant: There's always a trick question. The fine print.

Desley: Yeah, Can you tell me, you might have to do it separately, I'm not sure, but what would be the opposite of your tattoos? I'm coming from a personal construct background, I don't know if you have heard of that but George Kelly says that to understand something you have to understand what it's not. So to understand hot you have to have some concept of cold. So, what I'm going for is to understand one or even if you want to pick one tattoo say your first one.

Participant: Uhum

Desley: So what would be the opposite of that, so that could be what would be the opposite picture, what would be the opposite meaning or what would be the opposite of having that tattoo and you can pick any or all of those. Or something else if you think of it.

Participant: I guess based on that first one given that it is the wording of the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service to me it would be doing something that would be anti-Navy in a way, but I can't think of anything specific.

Desley: It's like one guy I asked him and he had the Rolling Stones symbol and he said for him the opposite for him would be something like a shrinking violet because the Rolling Stones symbol says hey you know, I'm a bit adventurous, and the other one he said is a part of him that's a bit closed off, that doesn't always...

Participant: Yeah and I guess as far as symbolism goes the opposite would have to be something that would be anti the establishment and as I said it was never an act of rebellion so to me maybe the opposite would have been to get something that was a rebellious thing to do.

Desley: So is it a sign of like respect for that?

Participant: It is, it is and um, to me it was all about thank you for allowing me to belong. because there was always going to be noise when we joined the Navy and there was 3000 people that applied and only 50 of us got in. So it was almost this elitist thing that this is this club that I belong to. Sure, sure, that I am proud to be a part of, so it was a flag flying thing so, yeah so the opposite would have to be something that was anti the establishment and you know if you don't

want me then um, screw you sort of thing. But no particular symbols spring to mind, apart from and I know of people that do have, you know they get the tattoos they get all the loops and the airfields, screw you and it would be something like that which is just not me.

Desley: I saw a couple once and she had his name in there and she said we've got matching ones and he had the F You on it and I thought its not really matching.... But to each his own. I thought of something we were talking about but, you talked before that you liked the idea of a tribe, belonging to a tribe. To you was the navy a bit like your tribe?

Participant: Oh yeah, still is, yeah.

Desley: And is that something that happens, cause I don't know people in it, something that happens to everyone that joins the Navy?

Participant: Nah

Desley: Like the nature of the beast or..

Participant: No, I think the ones that it doesn't happen to are usually only in it for a short time. Because it is restrictive and it is, yeah there are very firm and fast boundaries that you just don't cross. So if you're not prepared to live by the family rules then you move out. So, I think those of us that stick around, I mean I've joined 21 years ago, so those of us that stick around are either suckers or um like being part of that tribe, that family.

Desley: I'm getting visions of "A Few Good Men", you know in the..

Participant: Yes there is even a pocket of that going on but it's so hard to explain. It's like oh I don't know, I did a bit of background research into my family cause McFarlane's my maiden name and I have been married previously and actually about to be married again next month but when I went from my married name to my maiden name it was all about refinding who I was so yeah. And in researching McFarlane that was how I got onto the whole pagan religious thing but it was researching my family was the same sort of thing, this is my tribe, this is my family and the Navy's done that for me. I don't know if that was for anyone but for me it certainly is. It's

almost like I guess you could say that having that first tattoo is like having the family tartan. You know the family crest, that's the family crest.

Desley: So what about any for any of the others, like say the one with the kids?

Participant: The ones on my ankles ooh, nah cause there part of, that is, they are my tribe as well, they are my family so I think its probably a continuation of that but not it wasn't a cognisant sort of thing I've didn't think right, I've started it here and this is how I'm going to finish it but it...

Desley: just how it happened.

Participant: yeah. And those two in particular on my ankles and that one even on my hip are the only ones that I really thought about what I wanted, not so much the picture on this one but the wording. Then again it comes back to that, this is my model.

Desley: So, for any of them where you alone when you had them or did you have people with you?

Participant: I don't think I was alone for any of them actually. But I don't even know that that wasn't a thought out sort of thing.

Desley: Were other people getting tattoos at the same time or just....

Participant: Um, there was a couple of people getting them done at the same time, for some of them but my ex husband went along with me for two or three of them, but he didn't have any. Well he didn't have any at that time. He ended up getting one but certainly not at that time he was I guess just a support person. But the idea of going in to get one done on my own, it's not that I'm avoiding that situation, it's just that it never panned out that way.

Desley: Ok, so nobody else got a tattoo when you got yours?

Participant: Oh, a couple of times they did.

Desley: So was it like your idea or their idea or just something that came up along the line?

Participant: For the first one, it was sort of, I've thought about doing this and I don't know whether I was the instigator, I would think possibly not at that age. I was more likely to be the follower but again it was something that I had wanted to do. So it was like if you're going to do it then I'm coming too.

Desley: So, it wasn't like you had to be talked into it?

Participant: Ah No, oooo no. No, no, no, not at all. And I think when I got my last one a girlfriend came with me and she ended up getting one done after I got mine done when she saw that I didn't pass out or scream or bear down like giving birth she was sort of right, like I'm brave enough to do it now. But it wasn't like you know come on you've gotta get one done or you're not my friend. I won't be your friend if you won't get one done, there was none of that. It was just like minded people I think.

Desley: So what do you think it means to other people who see you with tattoos?

Participant: Depends on who they are, if they're Navy, I don't think it means that much at all. For some city folk it's a bit challenging, because as we were talking about before it's that stereotyping of you know you must be a westie or you know where's your mochie and your flannelette shirts or your Torana and your 15 kids. Its, I've never had any adverse reaction I must admit. I haven't had anybody that confronted that they've had to say to me "I don't like them because...", so I've not had any nasty experiences. I'm sure there's people who've had nasty thoughts but they've certainly not vocalised it.

Desley: Ah so that's nice.

Participant: Yeah Yeah.

Desley: Um, so, what reactions have you had from your family, or parents?

Participant: My parents were a little shocked initially probably for the first two or three they were a bit confronted because my parents are very conservative and it was a bit confronting

then. But I had always thought that it was a bit of an issue for them until about three weeks ago, when coz I've got one on my shoulder blade and I'm getting married and I said to mum that I would wear a dress that would cover it so, because of the elderly aunts and uncles and grandparents and things like that, and I said you know it's not about being in their face or upsetting them and my mother said no, don't cover them, that's part of who you are. So that was an indication to me that whilst they wouldn't rush out and do it they acknowledge that this is something that I need for me.

Desley: But that's really nice isn't it?

Participant: Yes, it was just an amazing defining moment that it was like, Wow, that's pretty cool, cause it's all about well for me it's all about parental acceptance at times, so ...

Desley: Mmm, Mmm

Participant: So that was quite a, quite a momentous occasion.

Desley: A woman I spoke to this morning and she had one she said kind of it was coz she knew it would piss her mother off. She doesn't know she's got it, coz she doesn't actually want to upset her mother, but it could be a silent...

Participant: Silent Rebellion, it's like having that cigarette down the back of the school and nobody can see you there.

Desley: So, did you ever worry about a reaction from someone enough to make you have second thoughts or?

Participant: yep. Not to have second thoughts, but certainly to perhaps cover them up. I remember when I first met my partner's mum I think I wore jeans on that day. Just because I wanted her to know me, first before it was me with this sort of side issue going on. And again it's you know, if I think that the situation determines that they should be covered up then they get covered up.

Desley: But it didn't stop you in getting any or?

Participant: Na, coz it was never about anybody else.

Desley: But at the same time you were careful about where you put them?

Participant: I was because as I said, I'm not a rebel and I am not about upsetting anybody. So I wouldn't, at my expense I wouldn't do something just to piss somebody else off. You know I wouldn't get sort of great big things down my arms that I knew that I would have upset my family. Because at the end of the day I am the one that's got to live with them. So, I have other ways that I might want to rebel.

Desley: So, you mentioned before that people who have tattoos don't judge people who don't so what do you think about people who have tattoos in general?

Participant: In general, I think they're probably a bit more open minded than others, umm, less judgemental than others and yeah that's a very broad statement not knowing everybody with tattoos but um, yeah I think they're probably less likely to look at somebody and make a judgement call on the way they appear because they have it done to them so, often.

Desley: In general how do you think people see you if they know that you've got tattoos?

Participant: Um, I don't know, I don't know. That's a tricky one because I try to think of their reaction based on my, thoughts, you know but I don't think the tattoos that I've got are that in your face that somebody would look at them and go {gasp} holy shit would you look at that person and she's got children you know and she's older or she's this and she's that and.... Like as I said I haven't ever had a reaction that have made me think that people have judged me on having ink under my skin. So I'd, I'd have to say that I don't think they judge me any differently. Because that's not been my experience.

Desley: So, do you know lot's of people that have tattoos?

Participant: Heaps, yep, I'd have to say that in the Navy I know more people with them than without them.

Desley: Ok but what about outside the Navy?

Participant: I don't know anyone outside... no. I do, I do, I know lots of people without them.

Desley: So outside the Navy you know people who have tattoos?

Participant: um..... Look, I'm sure I do, um... none that I can think of because so many of my friends are Navy but no that's not true, I know partners and family members of Navy people that have got tattoos and things like that.

Desley: And would that be because the Navy person has a tattoo and their partner or not at all?

Participant: No, I think it's quite possibly more the age group and the yeah the demographics that we you know, I don't have a lot of friends that live in Woollahra or you know the upper north shore sort of area. I think there's a few tats up there hidden under those white collars, So I think based upon the people that I tend to associate with that it's not something that you get judged about and there's a lot of people that I know that have tattoos without any Navy connection. And I think that more and more and more that's occurring and less and less and less than yeah, than it used to be.

Desley: So, you having tattoos does that mean you identify as a particular group of people?

Participant: Sailors.

Desley: Sailors?

Participant: But not because of my tattoos, no, I don't believe that having tattoos puts me in a box.

Desley: So you don't see yourself or walk past and see a picture of someone with a tattoo and go oh, I'm one of those or?

Participant: No, cause its not that big a deal.

Desley: And you said you associate with sailors but that's more because you're in the Navy?

Participant: That's because I'm in the Navy and my partner's in the Navy not because I have tattoos no. It's not that I avoid civies because they don't like my tattoos. I just don't know many of them.

Desley: So is there anything else about your tattoos that you think is important?

Participant: No, I don't think so, it's just that they're not that big a deal. It's not, it's no different to me to... I don't know having a particular brand of clothing that you like or a particular, I don't know, it's just not that big a deal.

Desley: It's just like you could like a brand of clothing and you could actually throw that out if you get sick of it. With tattoos it's not that simple.

Participant: Sure, sure, it's not, it's just not something that enters my mind on a regular basis that I've got tattoos and you don't or you don't have tattoos and I wish I didn't or I'm not going to talk to you if you don't have tattoos. It's not that big a deal.

Desley: so, are you aware of them, because a woman I spoke to this morning said it's like I can, well she said it's like my piercing, but I would have thought a piercing you can feel I know because I used to have one but she said that she's really aware of where her tattoo is and that's she's got it whereas other people say that it's almost like they forget and then they go Ooh, yeah I have a tattoo.

Participant: I don't... I just don't sort of look at myself in the mirror in the morning and go "there you all are. I'd forgotten you were there". Sure I notice them, I have one on my wrist and my watch sort-of falls around that so on occasion I see it. The ones on my ankles if I stretch my feet out in front of me I can look down and see them but again it's not "ooh, look, there's my tattoos" it's like looking down and seeing a freckle on my leg, or my red painted toenails or something. It's something that catches my eye for that moment and then I move on. It's not something that I acknowledge all the time.

Desley: So, they've sort of become part of you?

Participant: Yeah, absolutely yeah, It's like a freckle or a mole or I don't know. I don't look at my eyes every morning and go look "there's my green eyes" it's I have green eyes. It's just part of me. Possibly because I got my first one 21 years ago so it's not a novelty.

Desley: It's possibly some of it because people have only just probably had one only it's

Participant: And I did do a degree of that when I first got them and again I'd sort of look down and I'd look at them. And again, using the nail painting analogy it's sort of like oh look I've just had my nails done whereas if you've had them done for four weeks you don't do this thing or like getting engaged "oh look at that ring" whereas after a while it's just there.

Desley: Because they just become, what's the word? assimilated into your life.

Participant: Yep, yep, yeah.

Desley: What about your kids. What do they think of them?

Participant: My eldest son wants to get them. Yeah it's funny actually, coz my son who's at the moment, he's coming up to his 19th birthday. When he was at preschool and they had some art work and the pain was on the paper and they had to fold it in half and open it up, it was like a blot test and they were asked "what does that represent to you?" and his looked like a butterfly and he said "it looks like my mum's tattoo butterfly" coz to him it was just like mum having a moon-shaped scar or something. It was something that was a little bit different but it was just no big deal. Coz they've grown up always knowing them. My eldest son wants to get his own but the funny thing is that I don't want him to get them. Because I don't want my baby to mark his skin, his clean, beautiful skin.

Desley: But you marked your skin.

Participant: I did, I did, and I would never stop him. Because if the worst thing my son does is goes off and gets a tattoo then that's cool I can live with that. There are worst things that an 18 year old son could do to his mother. but he's a good kid, he wouldn't do it. his thought processes are very similar to mine in that he has a particular one that he wants to get and he knows what it

is he wants and he knows where he wants to get it but he wants to join the police service in a few years time so he would never get it in a place that is going to jeopardise that. So it won't go on the arms, he wants to get it on his chest.

Desley: But you can get away with when you're a male can't you.

Participant: Well that's right.

Desley: We have to worry about things heading south.

Participant: No well, I've got them there too.

Desley: I was talking to someone a couple of years ago and she said she was going to get a fat lady so when her boobs sagged it would be skinny.

Participant: I have a mouse on my right boob. And when I was pregnant with my children it became a rat. It grew in size, and a girlfriend of mine had a little floral wreath put around her belly-button when she was young and skinny and I said don't do that because it'll end up looking like a Christmas decoration by the time you're pregnant and it did.

Desley: The guys at Corrimal tell the, like if the girls that want anything on their stomach about a woman had a teddy bear with balloons on a string and when she got pregnant she got stretch marks and it cut the balloons off and with the second child it went through the teddy bears neck. yeah that's his horror story because he tries to deter young girls from having them on his stomach. I think he's really good.

Participant: I actually had mine done at Corrimal, yeah, it was a long time ago, there was a couple running it.

Desley: Yeah they're still there, I think David and Sue Rand

Participant: Yeah!

Desley: They win all kinds of awards, and they've got a young guy there now that wins awards for women's tattoos.

Participant: Oh, oh ok.

Desley: a really ratty looking guy.

Participant: Yeah they always are. They always are

Desley: He's like more than usual, cause they've got another guy there who works there who like really pleasant looking .

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: Like tats everywhere and just really pleasant looking where this guy looks like you wouldn't want to meet him in an alley.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: He just looks like he's a bit shady. The girl I was just talking to in Sydney she went for hers and she had a little squiggle on her back and she went it to get it covered up and said the guy was really nice and said would you do this and do that, she was like oh phew, and this really gross looking guy walked in and he went and he'll be doing it and the guy was like do you want a beer and he was drunk and selling dope on the phone while she was having it, and she said she just terrified.

Participant: Oh. So did she still go ahead with it?

Desley: I think she was too scared not too.

Participant: Wow! Oh that would have been me out of there. For the same reasons I wouldn't get one done drunk. I have had to be quite sober.

Desley: Another girl had one done when she was drunk.

Participant: See most good tattooists won't tattoo you when you're drunk, for a couple of reasons, A) you're more likely to bleed more because of the thinning of the blood, but for the same reasons that the regrets are more likely to be there, and I have a friend that is particularly occa this guy he's a sailor and he's got a really strong strine you know he's got this real Aussie drawl going on. And he, his wife's name's Marie and he had a tattoo done up in Hong Kong, I think it was, not that it's so much these days, that's where the sailors got their tattoos done in Singapore and Hong Kong and places like that and he was very drunk when he had it done and the guy said what's your wife name and he said MEREE (drawn out) and it's spelt M-e-r-e-e coz that's the way it sounds cause he's gone phonetically so needless to say Marie didn't like that one.

Desley: Funny that, so did you get all yours in Australia?

Participant: No, I got one Pacific Bay in the Philippines.

Desley: So was that daunting at all?

Participant: No.

Desley: Like getting it done in a different country?

Participant: No, no. And it was right in the midst of all the AIDS epidemic years, it was in the mid 90's and no, because you can tell if a place is clean and whether there've got sterilizing equipment and the fact that it was overseas wasn't the issue. Had I gone in there and he had rinsed his gun out under a hot tap then I would have been a bit concerned but it had come out of the autoclave, it had been sterilized and it was all good. That was enough for me to think alright this guy knows what he's doing.

Desley: That's the other thing the girl said, he said shit I forgot my decent gun. So I don't quite know why she went ahead with it, seemed a bit silly to me.

Participant: yeah, says a lot about her personality though. That's a head I'd like to get in front of or inside of.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	2	2	2	2	1	4	2	1	2	4	5	4	Sad
Patient	5	3	1	1	2	5	2	1	1	5	3	5	Impatient
Caring	2	1	2	1	2	3	2	1	3	3	3	4	Heartless
Kind	2	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	4	2	3	4	Cruel
Sense of humour	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	4	4	4	Humourless
Sociable	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	3	4	1	5	Anti-social
Friendly	2	1	1	1	1	3	2	1	2	3	2	5	Nasty
Active	3	2	2	2	4	4	3	2	3	3	4	5	Inactive
Confident	2	2	2	1	1	5	2	1	4	5	5	3	Frightened
Organised	3	2	1	2	2	4	2	1	2	2	5	3	Messy
Hard working	2	2	2	2	2	4	2	1	2	3	5	5	Lazy
Honest	3	1	1	1	2	4	2	1	4	2	5	5	Liar



Participant: Well, um, I had sort of thought about it for a long time. My birth mum, coz I'm adopted, she has a tattoo for each one of her kids and ah, there's three of us. I have a tattoo from her first relationship with my dad Chris, it's a phoenix coming out of flames as in a new beginning, and that's me, that's her symbolism of me. And um, it's also, she's got wings on her back and it's St Victoria, which is my name and I've got two wings on my back with Jude in the middle, St Jude

Desley: and is that her name

Participant: yes.

Desley: so you're saying you've got two tattoos?

Participant: I've got one. She's got two for me, coz I was her first child.

Desley: so she's got the phoenix?

Participant: she's got the phoenix coming out of the flames and she's got wings on that shoulder. I've got mine on this shoulder. So, yeah.

Desley: so how old were you when you got it?

Participant: oh, I got it in November of last year on schoolies down at Lake Conjola after a very very drunken night

Desley: ok. So you got the wings to match up with her wings. So why is that important for you to have that matching?

Participant: we have a connection. It's almost what you'd call an unspoken connection. We, it's the kind of thing we can have a conversation but we're not saying anything. We, um, we've always been very close, more friends than daughter and mother and I myself put a lot of thought

into this. I drew it up, I stuck it around my room, thought, yeah, I still like it. I didn't just run into it and it seemed like something that I wanted to do. I couldn't express myself in any other way than this. I felt this was the best way I could do it.

Desley: is it a replica of hers?

Participant: no it's different but similar

Desley: and when you said you thought about it for a long time, what would you call that?

Participant: about a year.

Desley: a year, ok. So the fact that it was on schoolies, doesn't really...

Participant: that was more sort of there's a tattoo artist down here, let's go for it

Desley: and you had the picture with you?

Participant: yep. I always have it with me and I had it on my wall. I don't have it on my wall any more for various reasons.

Desley: so from when you decided on the picture you just carried it around?

Participant: yeah. I just, every time I walked past a tattoo place I thought, orrrr, take it out, think, no, I'll leave it a bit longer. And then when I got down there I thought, ok, I'm leaving, I went to New Zealand for 2 and a half months, and I thought, ok, I'm leaving for 2 and a half months, I'm going to go see my mum, I'll do it now.

Desley: so you had it for when you were going to see her?

Participant: yeah.

Desley: so she's obviously in New Zealand?

Participant: yes.

Desley: how long have you been out here?

Participant: seven years. I go back to New Zealand every year

Desley: is that because your adoptive parents moved here?

Participant: yes

Desley: so why did you put it on your right shoulder?

Participant: I sort of went through a whole lot of places that it could go and I thought, well, for safety reasons I didn't want it anywhere sort of on my chest or on my stomach, if I put on weight, your stomach can stretch, it can contract, and look nasty so I thought I'll get it on my shoulder but the design I had, the size of it, it wrapped around and it didn't look very good

Desley: on your arm?

Participant: yeah. so I thought ok what's the best place to put it and I took a photo of my shoulder and I put it on photo shop then I played around with where I could put it and then I put it right where it is, which is just there and it looked really good and it wouldn't stretch or contract there or anything like that

Desley: that's a really good idea. I've never heard of anyone doing that before

Participant: I picked that up off a friend. He's got a big back piece that he drew and gave it to the guy and said "I want this", but yeah.

Desley: the photoshop thing. That's clever

Participant: it's a better way to look at it rather than guessing.

Desley: yeah. so is there a place that you wouldn't think was appropriate for a tattoo?

Participant: anywhere on your stomach.

Desley: because of the obvious reasons? Actually there's a guy at Corrimal who tries to talk girls out of tattoos on their stomachs for that reason.

Participant: yeah. And also breasts. I went down and I had a chat to him and he said don't get it on your breasts because they're always growing and contracting. What about when you have kids they'll shrink. When you're an old woman you don't want to look down and think "oh great"

Desley: there's a tattoo down on my knees

Participant: yeah, sort of thing.

Desley: so, for you, did having the tattoo coincide with any particular life-changing event

Participant: it made me realize that people are very prejudice against tattoos. I actually, I was working in a medical surgery with my dad, my adoptive dad and I didn't tell my mum and dad, my adoptive parents, that I was going to do it, I just did it, because I thought if I talked to them they'd talk me out of it and I really wanted to do this. And I told him about it and I used to wear a loose kind of a white top, it wasn't really see-through but, and he told me you're going to have to wear the black uniform now because I don't want people seeing it. that was prejudice against me having a tattoo and I noticed a number of people

Desley: even though you already worked there

Participant: yeah. I have no problem with the uniform change – the black one's actually better. It's for the senior girls and I'm a junior clerk so they said "right, we'll update you to senior" coz I was meant to get updated anyway but I've noticed that jobs they now write sometimes on their application letters "do you have any visible tattoos?" and it's, I don't call it visible, but if I was working in a place that wears singlet tops I'd have to write yes. And I mean, I don't see a problem with it. coz when I got my tattoos there was a picture and it said "the only difference

between tattooed people and non-tattooed people is tattooed people don't care if you've got tattoos".

Desley: yeah. I've heard that before

Participant: it's true. They don't care.

Desley: people that don't, seems to me, to either be accepting of it or really really against it.

Participant: my mum sort of said to me, "oh, I don't like it, but it's your body and if you want to mutilate yourself then fine" and I went "ok". My dad was a bit different, he was more looking at a safety point, being a doctor, he said you can get hep C and all this stuff from it, did you check the guy out, did you make sure he sterilized his needles, all of which I did, common sense. Then he said to me "you're still my daughter. You know you pumped ink into your skin but you're still my daughter. I don't accept that you've done it, I don't want to see it. I'd rather you covered it up out of respect for me." I thought, that's fair enough, that's my thing, why not

Desley: what I was more getting at was was there anything that was happening in your life at the time, in particular?

Participant: ah, no. not really

Desley: so it wasn't like you'd split-up with a boyfriend or...

Participant: no

Desley: ok. Schoolies. Do you link that to getting the tattoo?

Participant: every time people ask me about it I say "yeah, it was just a schoolies decision" coz I had a friend, who's got a heaps of tattoos everywhere and he's had them since he was about, oh 14 and he just said to me "look, my outlook in life is "why not?", I mean, YOU have to accept it, you have to accept it's on your skin, not anybody else. It's your choice" and he goes "look what I've done. I did this for the simple fact of rebellion. I love it, nobody else does." Coz he's got like fairies up his arm and he's a guy, and he's got green stars up the other one. He goes "I love

‘em. Isn’t that the only thing that matters” and he talked to me and I thought well, yeah, that’s true. If it’s something I want to do I shouldn’t ask anybody else about it. I should do it. So in a way he talked me into it, but in another way he just made me realise that I did want to do it. I really wanted just to take that little step and he even came with me. He got one done when I was sitting there. Yeah.

Desley: that was good that you had him

Participant: yeah

Desley: so do you still like your tattoo?

Participant: love it.

Desley: so you wouldn’t change it, or get rid of it?

Participant: oh, the only thing I’d change is I’d get the writing bolder a bit coz when he did the writing I sort of twitched a bit and shook a little bit. That’s the only thing I’d get changed.

Desley: so have you thought about doing that? You said you’d gone to Corrimal.

Participant: that was before I got my tattoo. But I went to Feelgood, and I just said to him can you check my tattoo out, I was wondering if you could fix it. The wings, they aren't symmetrical, but I don’t mind because that shows... that’s me as an individual, and a lot of people say I’m not symmetrical, I’m a bit weird, I’m a bit different, so I thought, cool. It’s fine with me, but the guy at Feelgood was like they’re not the same, the writing’s shaky, he’s stuffed it up. And I thought, well, thanks, I like it. and the only thing he said he could fix is he said he could make the writing a bit bolder coz it’s a little bit shaky but I don’t mind, I really like it.

Desley: well, that’s all that matters in the end. So would you do it again?

Participant: yeah. I’m actually looking into a new one. Just here {wrist}, but I’m just going to try to secure a job first before I get it done. I’m born in the year of the rabbit, Chinese zodiac and I was going to get the sign of the rabbit just there

Desley: I spoke to someone the other day and they had the Chinese symbol for tiger coz they were the year of the tiger

Participant: I think that looks quite cool

Desley: my daughter's getting one right now.

Participant: I was suggested to take ½ a panadol before you come

Desley: I don't know what she'll be doing

Participant: I know they always suggest don't take painkillers but Feelgood told me if you come here I would suggest that you take ½ a panadol coz it will at least get you to think that you're affected by it – the placebo effect. I put a lot of thought into mine. I probably won't get it until next year. I've seen friends that made bad decisions. I just thought I don't want to do that. I've got a friend who's really really tall and he used to be really fat and they used to say you're as fat as a country. He got really tall and really thin and he got really drunk one night and he was at a tattooist's place and he said "I want "country" right across my back" and none of the lettering matches up, only half of it's coloured in. I said to him "are you going to get it fixed" and he said "I don't have the money for it". I was this close to paying for him to get it done, because it was going to cost him an extra \$200 coz it's about that big, across his shoulders. And I thought "you idiot, why did you rush into that" and it looks terrible.

Desley: they're not supposed to do it when you're drunk

Participant: doesn't it dilute your blood and stuff?

Desley: yeah. you bleed more. You don't know what you're doing is the other thing, if you're drunk. For that very reason, you do something that you might regret later.

Participant: I bled a lot with mine, which was quite interesting.

Desley: what about the pain factor?

Participant: that was really painful. This is going to sound kinda weird. It really hurt at the start. I was crying and I was swearing but then it got to a point where it actually, I just didn't care. I knew it hurt, I knew it was painful, it was probably bleeding, but you get to that point where you just think right, I'm halfway through this, I can't stop them now

Desley: do you think it's don't care... I was going to say that the endorphins kick in

Participant: It might have been, I'm not sure, but it was almost as if, like I was just sitting there and someone was getting a pin every so often, apart from constantly

Desley: so like every now and then it hurt

Participant: on the writing was the worst part, that was the worst part, because it's loops so he had to go like that through my skin and that really hurt. The wings are quite detailed, so that also hurt quite a bit too, but it only took a day to really stop healing, stop hurting. It took forever to heal, but I heal quite slowly, so yeah

Desley: you wouldn't think of getting it off or anything?

Participant: never. I've heard lasering hurts more than getting one. And because it's very involved, I'd have to go in for a lot of sessions which I don't want to do. And it leaves a scar anyway so would I prefer an actual picture, a piece of art, or a scar, coz they'll look exactly the same

Desley: you're better off with the picture

Participant: yeah

Desley: why did you choose to have a tattoo rather than do something else?

Participant: I've never had my ears pierced. I just did not see the point in putting a piece of metal into your skin, didn't see it. I've got friends who said "it's great, it's great, you'll love it, you'll love it, they look so cool". I don't think they do, I think they look like, I don't like the ones in

the nose, I reckon they look like pimples. The ones that get them here, they're even worse. I guess that's my little prejudice, sort of. I don't like piercings. If people want to do them, that's fine

Desley: so there wasn't anything else you could have done that would make you have that sort of link with your mother?

Participant: no. I couldn't... I'm a musician. I play bass. And I tried writing songs and it kinda worked but songs change and you forget them and stuff like that and this is a memory for ever, I'm never going to lose this.

Desley: so the fact that it's permanent was a good thing was a good thing

Participant: yeah. I really wanted to show my love for her, coz she did for me, twice. And she's done it for each one of her kids

Desley: so how old were you when she got the tattoos?

Participant: um, she got the first tattoo, the phoenix, when she found out she was pregnant with me. She got it done and she got the second one, I think when I turned one.

Desley: and how old were you when you were adopted?

Participant: ah... ten, ten days, yeah

Desley: so the wings were for your birthday?

Participant: she told me it was for St Victoria, the saint was an angel sort of thing

Desley: but you said it was when you were about one so I was just wondering

Participant: I don't know, she hasn't mentioned it.

Desley: you said yours was St Jude, is that her name?

Participant: yes. Oh, Judith but she prefers to be called Jude.

Desley: and are the wings, I don't know anything about saints, do they have different wings for different saints, or just wings

Participant: I think it was just the general sort of thing. Her wings are quite different to mine. Mine are very, ah, they look a lot like angel's wings. Hers are sort of, almost, eagle wings, so.

Desley: oh ok. so it's just wings in general

Participant: pretty much

Desley: ok.

Participant: just whatever wings look cool

Desley: so do you think of yourself as a tattooed person, or a person who has a tattoo?

Participant: a person who has a tattoo, because if I was a tattooed person that would be me stereotyping myself and I'm very against stereotypes.

Desley: trick question.... For you, what would be the opposite of your tattoo?

Participant: probably something that didn't mean anything. Like just a loveheart with mum in the middle. To me, that's what it would be, something that I did just for the sake of doing

Desley: ok. So it would still have a link to your mother, but it

Participant: probably not, just sort of a, oh, that looks cool, whack it on there sort of a thing

Desley: alright. So you said you went with a friend and he got a tattoo as well,

Participant: yes

Desley: so was it more do you think you were going and he got it, or he was going and you got it, or a bit of both?

Participant: I was going to get it and he walked in and he saw the design and he thought "I want that". He liked it a lot when he walked in and looked at it, and he had the cash on him, so he just got it. that helped me a lot. That made me relax, coz he was in pain just as much as I was. So we were both saying "this hurts, this hurts so much". Yeah. it was quite good actually

Desley: what do you think it means to other people that see it?

Participant: everybody thinks it's quite... I know, I had a friend who I was quite close to and when I got it thought it was very pathetic. She thought it was me just trying to say "hey, I've got a tattoo with mum's name. that makes me seem great, doesn't it" but that's not what it was and I tried to explain it to her and we got in a massive fight but that's not important. Um, some people think it's weird that I want to express myself that way, other people think that there's no better way that you could have done it. like my boyfriend, actually, he's very into tattoos, he just hasn't got his yet, he's looking for a big back piece. He hasn't got his yet because of funds, but he loves it. he's got photos of it and all that sort of stuff. Whenever he introduces me to one of his friends and they'll say "ok. What are you into?" he just goes "you should see what she did at schoolies" and he'll show everybody. He really loves it.

Desley: so you weren't with him when you got it?

Participant: he came down the day after I got it

Desley: but you were together?

Participant: yeah.

Desley: so you've had it right from people who think it's really cool to people who

Participant: yeah. then I've had it in the middle where people have kind of said "ok, well that's interesting"

Desley: you've had the whole range, basically

Participant: yeah. pretty much.

Desley: you talked about what your parents think. Did you ever think, oh, they're going to hate it so I won't do it?

Participant: as soon as the needle hit my skin. As soon as the needle hit my skin I thought "I can't do this"

Desley: because of them?

Participant: yeah. every thought that I could have ever thought went through my head at that tiny little second I said to my friend "I can't do this, I shouldn't be doing this" and he goes "it's too late now" and as soon as he said it I thought "well, it is". What are they honestly going to do to me? Are they going to kick me out of the house? Are they going to completely push me over to the side? They're not going to do that. They're my parents. They probably won't enjoy it, but they'll get over it. and parents do. Mum still isn't happy about it, she's more sort of... every time she sees it she kind of goes... but she understands it's my choice, it's my way of expressing. And it also is hard for her, because it's my birth mum. So she'll be thinking, well, what about me? And I've said to her, I know you don't like them, so why would you want your name tattooed into my skin if you don't like them. And she said "but still you want to express yourself in such a permanent way with your mum, you don't express yourself like that with me" and I said "I don't know how... you do not like this.... That's the thing me and Jude have. We are both into this. You're not. I don't know how to quite connect" and she's also a musician. She's an excellent singer and so we wrote songs together. That's brought us a bit closer together. Which was quite good. So it's all about expressing yourself. You can't just say "hey, look what I did just for you" coz she'd just kind of go "oh, great"

Desley: coz she wouldn't be impressed would she?

Participant: yeah.

Desley: what do you think about other people with tattoos?

Participant: if you put a lot of thought into it, I have no problems with it. I think it's quite cool if you can do that. If you're the kind of person who says "I'm going to go and get a tattoo, the first one that I see" I don't like it. I think it has to have a meaning.

Desley: so you mentioned that you've got a couple of friends

Participant: quite a lot of my friends have tattoos

Desley: no-one in your family, apart from your mum?

Participant: just me. In my adoptive family, my brother's had his eyebrows pierced and they got ripped out playing rugby. I told him, you shouldn't do it, not if you play rugby

Desley: so do you think it's had any negative effects, apart from the reaction of your parents?

Participant: ah, losing a friend over it, yes.

Desley: so you don't get on at all now?

Participant: no. She has a tattoo, she's one of those people who just went and did it. she got a bat just there and I thought "why did you do that" and it's one she drew, and she's not a very good drawer. I said "why did you do that"

Desley: was that before or after yours?

Participant: that was the day before mine, actually

Desley: so did she know you were going to get it?

Participant: no. so there was of course the 18 year old, "you copied me, you did it just because I did it" sort of thing. Such an immature kind

Desley: so do you think the fact that you have a tattoo means that you identify with any particular group of people?

Participant: I identify with people who do have tattoos because I can understand from the point of view that someone won't accept that part of them. I can understand if people go "oh... my mum doesn't like it" because MY mum doesn't like it. I can say "you should see what my mum said when she saw mine" and we can have a laugh about it. but it doesn't make me any different. I'm still who I was before I had it.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	3	1	1	1	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	3	Melancholic
Patient	2	1	1	1	2	4	2	3	2	4	3	3	Neurotic
Caring	2	1	1	1	2	3	2	2	3	4	3	1	Disinterested
Kind	2	1	1	1	2	3	2	2	3	3	2	1	Cruel
Sense of humour	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	3	2	1	Bland
Sociable	2	3	3	2	2	1	2	1	4	1	1	3	Quiet
Friendly	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	Horrible
Active	2	1	1	2	1	3	2	3	3	3	2	4	Slow
Confident	4	2	2	2	3	1	4	2	3	2	2	4	Shy
Organised	2	3	3	3	3	4	2	2	3	1	2	1	Disorganised
Hard working	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	3	4	3	2	4	Lazy
Honest	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	4	3	3	4	Liar



Participant: Okay, well, yeah, I've got two tattoos. The first one is just Australia, just the letters written, which is on my forearm. This was done when I was in the army. Umm, it was just like my little patriotic gesture. Umm, its very traditional for people in the army to get their blood type but because I always knew I was only going to be in the army for four years, I decided to get my country instead. So yeah, so that was the first one. Umm, I then got this arm-type band which says "life". Some people think it says "Loof" but it says life. Umm, and I got that in about, oh, probably about six years ago, so about the year 2000 and I got that because I was going through a funny stage in my life so it was a bit of a mark of the stage I was in. So that's basically all I've got.

Desley: So how old were you when you got the Australia?

Participant: Aaah, I would have been about twenty.

Desley: And did you think about it for a long time or...

Participant: No, it was quite a spontaneous sort of thing, it was just a spur of the moment, I was out with the boys and we went past a tattoo shop and we all just went in there and...

Desley: so you went in and...

Participant: I was in the army at the time so yeah, it was quite spontaneous and wasn't something I'd thought about and processed, I just did it.

Desley: So, why did you pick Australia the word rather than say the flag or something else or...

Participant: I'm not too sure why. Umm, I don't think I really like pictures, like tattoos that are like pictures. I think I more like just words or symbols or something a little more abstract rather than an actual picture. No, I don't really like colours neither, I just like the dark colours.

Desley: just the black.

Participant: yeah.

Desley: ok. Why did you put it here?

Participant: umm, because it was just very traditional in the army it was traditional to get your blood type on your forearm so it's just the traditional spot really. I did, I sponse I would've, I did hesitate a bit thinking, oh, you know, It's easily exposed if you go for a job interview and it's going to be hanging out which can be a bit of a worry but it's not a really big tattoo anyway. It's small. It's not offensive. I wouldn't think it's offensive to most people who live in Australia.

Desley: So you said you went with other guys from the Army?

Participant: Yes.

Desley: Did they get tattoos?

Participant: Yeah, yeah, most of them got their blood type. Like I said, it's very traditional.

Desley: Yeah, a guy that works in the video shop has got his blood type and he says he hates it and I'm not game enough to talk to him cause he gets cranky.

Participant: I suppose that's why I didn't get my blood type because it just says, you're in the army sort of thing and...

Delsey: A bit too obvious.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: So. Was it somebody in particular's idea to get that tattoo or you don't remember? Or was it you who said, lets all get tattoos.

Participant: No. I think it might have been someone else's idea actually and I think I just went along with it. Yeah, yeah. so, it wasn't me actually, I don't think it was me.

Desley: So are you able to say a bit about why Australia is important to you?

Participant: Oh, it's just that I'm very patriotic. I'm proud of where I come from and yeah, and I was in the army at the time and that was a very patriotic thing to do, to join the army so, yeah, that's where I was at at that stage.

Desley: So do you think there was something else you could have done to demonstrate your patriotism? Like, you'd already joined the army and that would be enough for some people.

Participant: Yeah it would be enough but I don't know, I suppose I'm quite a passionate sort of person and, yeah, so I think that was why I generally go that one step further than most people.

Desley: So, what about the pain of it?

Participant: Pain didn't concern me.

Desley: as in it didn't hurt?

Participant: Oh, it did a little but, but it's not, it was bearable. I've dealt with more pain, umm, yeah but it doesn't really concern me too much. You know, I do not like needles traditionally but it didn't bother me too much.

Desley: Ok. So with the second one, why did you put it up there on your arm?

Participant: umm. I don't know. I suppose at the same time, I had some mates as well that was sort of starting to get into tattoos and a lot of tribal type tattoos. And that was where most people at that time were getting their tattoos. So that was the obvious spot.

Desley: So, it's like an arm band but it's not.

Participant: Yeah. Most of my mates have armbands that go right round. So it's sort of an armband but it was a little bit different.

Desley: And is that in keeping with your liking to do things a bit different from other people?

Participant: Yeah I suppose so.

Desley: So, you didn't just want to get a traditional...

Participant: No. Armband. Yeah, I wanted to... individualise it - if there's such a word.

Desley: Okay, so, how long did you think about that one before you had it?

Participant: Umm. I did think about this one a little bit more. Yeah, I say I would have processed it for a few weeks before I actually did it.

Desley: Okay. And did you design it? Or did the tattoo guy do it?

Participant: no. I like the old English lettering. I always liked it and the only thing he did design was the shading. I just wanted to get the outline but the tattooist suggested shading rather than just the outline. Yeah, so, but that was the lettering that I was after.

Desley: And are you able to say more about why 'life' was important to you?

Participant: Yeah, it was just a stage I was in at the time. At that stage, I was almost depressed I'd say. I was in a job that I wasn't totally happy with and I was living in Sydney and you know, I was probably exploring the seedier side of life and I just wasn't happy with where I was going so I made a decision to change that direction. And that was a signifier of that change in my life.

Desley: so when you think about the tattoo now, do you think back to that decision?

Participant: No, I don't think about it too much to tell you the truth. But this morning I was, because I knew you were coming and I started thinking about it because I think I mentioned to one of my colleagues that I was having a meeting with you and she had a few tattoos and she said 'oh, what's the research about' and I said, I don't know, I suppose it's probably about why people get tattoos and she said that she got hers because it signified a stage in her life and I

thought well, that's the same reason I got mine. I have been thinking a little bit about it lately, but in general I don't really, I sort of see myself as way past that stage now, so it's not.

Desley: ok. So would you consider changing it or getting it taken off then if you're past that?

Participant: No. I've got no regrets or.

Desley: So you're still happy that you've got it?

Participant: yeah, definitely. There's no shame attached to it.

Desley: for some people, like my daughter got hers covered up with something cause she's sick of it.

Participant. A lot of people do yeah.

Desley: She got Chinese writing because she was into Brett Whiteley and then she decided then she didn't like Brett Whiteley so it was probably a bit of a hasty decision.

Participant: oh, okay.

Desley: So, this is probably a stupid question, but do you consider that either of your tattoos are linked to any particular event in your life?

Participant: Umm. Yeah, definitely.

Desley: So would that be the army and then the decision?

Participant: yeah, definitely yeah, they were big events in my life, yeah.

Desley: So when you talked about the pain before, did you mean with just this one or both of them?

Participant: Yeah, both of them. For both of them the pain was bearable so.

Desley: So the pain, do you consider that a plus or a minus or just part of tattooing?

Participant: It's not something I enjoy. I don't enjoy pain. I don't go out of my way to enjoy pain but it wouldn't stop me from getting another one. If I was to get another one I wouldn't think, oh that's really painful I don't know if I could go through that again.

Desley: Some people actually seem to enjoy the pain.

Participant: I wouldn't say I enjoy it, no, no. It's just, it's there but I don't enjoy it.

Desley: So do you think about your tattoos as separate from each other or do you think that there's some theme that joins them together.

Participant: Umm. Well the common, the obvious link is that they are both tattoos but I see them as separate from each other I'd say. Yeah, even though they're both tattoos.

Desley: but there's no common theme to what's going on with them.

Participant: No. They're two very distinct themes yeah.

Desley: so when you think about the arm band, was there something else you could've done that would have had the same affect for you of marking that part in your life?

Participant: Yeah. I spose I wouldn't have to go that far. I wouldn't have to make such an obvious statement today. I know with the birth of my son I wanted to go out and get a tattoo, you know, the first letter of his name or, you know, I wanted to get it tattooed but and then I thought to myself, no, you know, as happy as I am I don't have to go and tell the world any more. Yeah, so yeah I don't have to go to that extreme anymore.

Desley: Do you think at that time you could have done something different?

Participant: ummm. I probably could have but I probably wasn't as self aware as I am now so that was the way to go about it back then to let everyone else know.

Desley: So do you think of yourself as a tattooed person or a person who has tattoos?

Participant: Yeah, a person that has tattoos. Yeah, I don't know if I'd want anymore. Yeah, it's, most of my friends have gone on to get more tattoos and I don't regret what I've got but I don't want to get anymore.

Desley: So you wouldn't have another one?

Participant: Umm. No, I don't think so. No, so yeah, a person that has tattoos but not a tattooed type person.

Desley: the guy I spoke to this morning said to me that physically he's a person with tattoos but mentally he's a tattooed person coz he would like to have sleeves and stuff like that. But he's not going to.

Participant: Oh, ok. Yeah.

Desley: so that was an interesting way of putting it

Participant: Yeah definitely. I have them but I don't consider myself like the stereotypical tattooed person sort of thing.

Desley: Do you feel like they're part of your identity?

Participant: No. Oh, they're there and people probably associate me with the tattoos I have but I don't think they're a big part of my identity no.

Desley: So what do you think people think when they look at you and see them?

Participant: Umm. I don't know. Not many people comment, so I don't think it's such an obvious thing these days. It's such an unusual thing to see. So I don't think people get put off by them. Or make a judgment based on them.

Desley: Do you think that's because they're quite discrete though?

Participant: Possibly, yeah. They're not obtrusive.

Desley: Like, if you had sleeves or a facial one.

Participant: Oh, definitely yeah, yeah but they're just. I don't know, personally, I just, it's my own personal judgment base that I sort of that I see people get tattoos as a trend type thing, you know, all these people that you know, are really covered in tattoos which is slightly different, yeah.

Desley: there's people that are like serious tattooees I think. It's like they're getting one and they're planning the next one.

Participant: Yeah, exactly, yeah.

Desley: Serial tattooees or something. Umm. So you said that you were with guys to get that one. Did you go by yourself to get the armband?

Participant: No. Actually, I went with a couple of my friends, my friends that were into tribal tattoos as well. We all..

Desley: So did they get one at the same time?

Participant: Umm. I think one of my mates might have, yeah. Yeah, I think two of us got it at the same time. Or roughly the same time. Yeah. We were all going to the same tattoo artist in Sydney so it was a specific tattoo artist that we'd go and see.

Desley: but it was more planned, it wasn't just spur of the moment like the other one?

Participant: Yeah definitely planned yeah.

Desley: So what kind of reactions have you had from your family.

Participant: Aaaah. I suppose the biggest reaction I got probably would've been from my wife's family 'cause they're very traditional. Umm, none of their kids have tattoos, the parents don't have tattoos. They're Catholic, traditional, ethnic sort of family. So I suppose the biggest response would be from them cause they're not used to it. Umm, my own family my brother has tattoos and my grandfather had tattoos and so there wasn't a big response from my own family. Umm. Yeah. But I haven't had any negative responses from family.

Desley: Well that's good!

Participant: Yeah, yeah.

Desley: Umm. Did you ever worry about a reaction say from your mum or something and go, oh no, I'd better not do that.

Participant: Umm. No I don't think so. No, no.

Desley: You didn't think about it that much?

Participant: No, I just didn't think it would be such an issue.

Desley: So does the fact that you have tattoos mean that you identify with any particular group of people?

Participant: No. I'm not the sort of person to look at someone's tattoo and say, oh, have a look at mine and where did you get yours done. Yeah, I can take 'em or leave 'em. Yeah, so I don't. I think I've changed a lot since I got my tattoos. I like to think I have so yeah.

Desley: Okay. Ready for the trick question? What would you say would be the opposite of your tattoos?

Participant: The opposite... would be to have no tattoos. Yeah

Desley: It's just some people say something else. Like the guy today had a star on his stomach and he said the opposite would be to have a swastika on his stomach. For some people its

another tattoo that's different but for some people it's just not having it. And would that apply for both of them?

Participant: Yeah, I think so. I suppose I'm thinking about it differently after what you've just told me, but the initial response was just not to have any. But if I really wanted to I could have a nasty word like 'death' or something, which some people do. Yeah but.

Desley: and what about on that one?

Participant: The Australia? Umm. I don't know. I do like other countries. A lot of people have said to me, you should get Thailand or....

Desley: what just have to get a list?

Participant: Yeah, or I could have a different country I suppose, that would be the opposite. Because, yeah, I do go overseas quite a bit.

Desley: Okay. So is there anything else that you can think of about your tattoos that I might have forgotten to ask you?

Participant: Umm. No. I suppose its cause a lot of my friends have gone on to get more tattoos I've sort of been the one who hasn't. But I 'spose that's my individuality that I speak about. If something is the in thing, then I tend to do the opposite and because they've gone on I sort of, I've probably gone away. It's almost too common to have tattoos now to not have tattoos is almost the 'in' thing.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	2	1	2	1	2	3	2	1	2	1	3	4	Dysthymic
Patient	3	1	2	1	4	3	3	1	3	2	5	2	Rushed
Caring	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	4	2	Selfish
Kind	2	1	2	1	3	2	2	1	2	2	4	3	Self-centred
Sense of humour	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	3	2	3	4	Morbid
Sociable	3	1	2	1	4	4	2	1	1	2	1	4	Introverted
Friendly	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	3	3	4	3	Obtuse
Active	4	1	3	2	5	2	4	3	1	2	3	5	Lazy
Confident	2	1	2	1	2	4	3	4	2	3	3	4	Anxious
Organised	4	1	2	1	5	4	4	1	2	3	2	3	Disorganised
Hard working	3	1	2	1	4	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	Lazy
Honest	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	2	3	2	Conniving



Participant: Oh, ok, well... what can I say? I've got two tattoos. One of Mickey Mouse, that's there, that I got cause I had everything Mickey Mouse and this and that and I just like Mickey Mouse, as far as that one goes. And this one, I got that bit with a friend of mine years and years and years ago like some silly little thing and then I got the rest of it done. But, the dude wasn't obviously supposed to draw a circle there cause I had a different picture. I wish I never got it done and I'd probably get it taken off if I could. But yeah, that's pretty much it...

Desley: You'd get the whole thing off?

Participant: Yeah, yeah

Desley: So how old were you when you got the Mickey Mouse?

Participant: I was 18. And that one I was 20 I think, 20 or 21 or something. I got the first bit probably when I was 20...

Desley: So that was twice (can't quite hear all of it)

Participant: Yeah, that was just there with a friend of mine

Desley: So did you both get the same thing?

Participant: Yeah, oh she didn't get it there, she got hers there

Desley: On the shoulder?

Participant: Yeah, so... I don't know, I can't really say much more

Desley: How old were you when you got the band?

Participant: 21

Desley: So not long after?

Participant: No, it was about, yeah, it would have been about a year afterwards

Desley: So Mickey Mouse just because you like Mickey Mouse? Ok, and that's on your hip?

Participant: Yeah, that's there

Desley: Yeah, its quite big too... So why did you put the Mickey Mouse down there?

Participant: So you couldn't see it, so my parents couldn't see it.

Desley: Oh, alright, so you were like 17 you said?

Participant: No, I was 18. They didn't mind anyway... but that there I mean my grandparents still haven't seen that one.

Desley: On your arm?

Participant: Yeah

Desley: Ok, so you keep it covered up?

Participant: Yeah, I just wear a watch or something, there's things that you get these days, or I wear a long sleeved shirt or something.

Desley: So why did you get it there then?

Participant: I don't know. Coz I always thought it would be alright or I could just wear a watch. But it doesn't really fit under most watches, like it has to be one of them pop's watches or something like that, otherwise it doesn't really hide anything cause the dude sort of stretched it and made it really big there...

Desley: So you said you'd have that one off if you could and you'd never get it again?

Participant: No, no

Desley: You'd get it somewhere else or something like that?

Participant: No, no

Desley: So it was just a big mistake?

Participant: Yeah, basically, young and stupid.

Desley: Do you think you'd get another tattoo?

Participant: Yeah, I would but it'd have to be well thought about.

Desley: So how long did you think about those before you got them?

Participant: Umm, about 24 hours probably...

Desley: For both of them? Ok.

Participant: Although the Mickey Mouse one, I was always going to get but that one didn't have much thought involved.

Desley: So you just were sitting there and you both went let's go get a tattoo or something?

Participant: Yeah, pretty much, we did.... It was fun at the time

Desley: So why did you then go and get the band put on?

Participant: Umm, I don't know it just sort of ... Umm, I don't know, it was, my boyfriend at the time had heaps of tattoos and I don't know, there's no real, nothing really behind it. It was just stupid.

Desley: So he did go, “maybe you should get a band” or something?

Participant: Sort of, when I was about to he said not to, so then... I could’ve been... I don’t know...

Desley: So, you said you would get another tattoo, so what would be the most important thing to you - the picture or where to put it or would there be something else?

Participant: Probably the picture or like what it was, would be more...

Desley: So you’d have to find something, is it more about what it means or what it looks like or?

Participant: I don’t know, I’m not really one for just going and getting something because it means something or stuff like that. I’m not really so into anything enough to get a tattoo for it.

Desley: Except Mickey Mouse

Participant: Oh, well yeah... but um, yeah, I don’t know, it would be more like sort of, an occasion would have to arise and then I’d think about it sort of thing, but until then I’m not going to rush out and get another one...

Desley: So you don’t have a plan?

Participant: No there’s no real plans to get one but if something came up and I wanted it then, then I might. But it would be under a lot more serious consideration than the last two times for sure.

Desley: So with the Mickey Mouse do you regret that one?

Participant: No, not at all

Desley: Would you change it at all, do you think or are you happy with the way it is?

Participant: Yeah, no, I'm happy with him the way it is.

Desley: Do you consider there's any relationship between the two or are they totally separate? Some people have some sort of thing that links their tattoos...

Participant: No, no, there's nothing

Desley: Do you think, or in your head, does either of them coincide with any particular event in your life?

Participant: My 18th birthday, that one... and no, not really, the other one doesn't.

Desley: So what do you think when you look at it?

Participant: I don't

Desley: So you don't notice it?

Participant: I don't think about it. Cause I don't really waste much time regretting things. There's not, I don't have enough time to waste.

Desley: So is there something else you could have done rather than have a tattoo that would have had the same effect for you?

Participant: I don't know. I didn't really put that much thought into it. I suppose I could have, I know where I could have spent the money better off, but that's about it. I wouldn't have...

Desley: You wouldn't have got a piercing or...

Participant: No, it was something I didn't think twice when I was that age. I never thought it would ever bother me or anything. I was just yeah, bullet proof, nothing

Desley: They sure are at that age...

Participant: Oh, yeah...

Desley: So is there a place you wouldn't put a tattoo if you were going to get another one?

Participant: Yeah, I wouldn't put one on my bum... and I probably wouldn't put one there...

Desley: Cause it sags or?

Participant: Oh, I just, I don't know, like your bum hurts the most...

Desley: Does it? I thought your feet hurt the most...

Participant: oh, your feet would hurt. I'd get one on my foot somewhere but I don't think I'd handle the pain. But I mean, that killed, that was all, it came up like that, I thought it was all infected or stuff but it was just coz that's where it was.

Desley: What about on your neck or your face or something like that?

Participant: No, no, I don't think I'd do that.

Desley: So you'd go for somewhere that wasn't painful... not so obvious probably?

Participant: Not too obvious would be the main one.

Desley: I've seen a few here lately.

Participant: Oh, ok

Desley: Its interesting... you don't really see it

Participant: I think about when you get old, what they're going to look like

Desley: One girl came in, she had one under here, and she said "that way when my boobs sag you won't see it". So when you got the Mickey Mouse were you by yourself?

Participant: No, I was with my boyfriend.

Desley: Was it his idea or your idea?

Participant: It was my idea. Oh, he went and did something at the time, I don't remember what he did but he didn't come and sit next to me or anything.

Desley: So you were sort of by yourself

Participant: Yeah, when it was getting done.

Desley: So do you consider that you're a person that has tattoos or are you a tattooed person?

Participant: What does that mean? A person who has tattoos, or??

Desley: Some people call themselves tattooed people, which seems to be depending on how much work they've had done. But there's one person I spoke to said they're a tattoo person on the inside coz that's what they feel like but they haven't actually got a lot of tattoos.

Participant: Oh, ok.. well... Yeah, I don't know, I just consider myself a person with tattoos.

Desley: So do you feel like they play any part in who you are?

Participant: No, not at all

Desley: So you don't really think about either of them?

Participant: No, not as in that they play any part in my personality or anything like that... I probably, yeah, I suppose a lot of people would look at that and think differently... I suppose a lot of people think its, I don't know what people think, I don't really have much time to waste worrying about that either...

Desley: So you haven't had any particular reactions?

Participant: No, not really... oh my mom thought I was an idiot. I agreed with her though. Only my dad hasn't seen it - oh my dad has seen it - maybe- but he just doesn't say anything. My grandparents I wouldn't dare. But, um, nanna saw that the other day, coz my trackies had gone down because they're stretched and she goes "is that a tattoo you've got there Lauren?" I said oh yeah I've had that for about 10 years. She goes "you stupid bloody woman"... I don't know, I suppose...

Desley: So nothing really negative?

Participant: No, nothing really negative negative

Desley: Has it stopped you getting a job or anything like that?

Participant: No, not yet. I work for the Council. I thought it was a requirement. {laughter}

Desley: So, umm, this is probably a dumb question to ask but what do you think it means to other people that see it?

Participant: I'm not sure, sometimes I'm probably, I'd like to know. Some people have sort of pretty straight down the line views of tattoos I'm sure, especially older people, I don't really, I don't really care...

Desley: There's one girl I talked to, she lives at Newtown or somewhere, and she said she was walking down the street and they started yelling out "you're a freak" which is pretty weird in Newtown you'd have to be...

Participant: Yeah... far out.

Desley: So what about you're friends, what do they say about it?

Participant: Nothing... it's been years since anyone said anything. A few people, people that I work with that haven't even noticed after weeks and weeks and weeks. And I just think, well they're pretty blind.

Desley: Did you ever worry about the reaction that someone else would have and go, oh maybe I shouldn't do that?

Participant: Oh, only my grandparents. Just my grandfather really. My Nanna'd be alright, she'd just call me an idiot and get on with things. No, I don't think it...

Desley: So who do you know who's got a tattoo?

Participant: Paul, Iza, Alex- that's the bloke that I was with then, Jadie - that girl that I got that with, she had one before that too. Gee, I don't know that many people - a few people at work...

Desley: What about in your family?

Participant: No... oh my sister's husband, he got, yeah I think he got one, on his ankle. But they're really square, so I don't know, that must really have some intense meaning for him to, oh, they're not square square, they're alright.

Desley: So what would be the opposite of your tattoos?

Participant: The opposite, what do you mean?

Desley: Well some people take it to mean not having them, some people take it to mean a different picture, or in a different place maybe.

Participant: Yeah, not having that... and then (something) change...

Desley: But if you were going to have the total opposite of Mickey Mouse there?

Participant: I'd have Donald Duck...

Desley: In the same place?

Participant: {laughs} Yeah yeah, no, to be the total opposite of Mickey Mouse... umm, it probably would have been something cartoon... I don't know... skull and crossbones, is that opposite? I wouldn't do that though

Desley: I guess it's the point, it's what you wouldn't do, that's the opposite.

Participant: Ok yeah, I wouldn't have put anything too serious or that really meant anything... yeah, the opposite to that would be not at all... definitely

Desley: Never having had it?

Participant: Yeah, yeah definitely

Desley: Do you feel like you identify with any particular group of people because you have tattoos?

Participant: No, I don't think so. There's a certain amount of people who might love, love looking at... oh show me that... and they're really into it, I don't really get that... no, I don't think so, not the people I hang around or anything or people I know or groups that I've associated with...

Desley: And you don't feel like you want to rush over and talk to someone who's got a tattoo or anything like that?

Participant: No, no definitely not

Desley: I think I've asked you all my questions – we jumped around a bit...

Participant: the pain, was that a plus or a minus...

Desley: oh, I didn't ask you that. the pain - was that a big deal, was that something you looked forward to?

Participant: no, I didn't look forward to it, no I didn't, but I mean once it started I didn't rate it sort of like no this hurts too much and sort of flake out...

Desley: So its just something you're meant to put up with til you got it done?

Participant: Yeah, like giving birth or something, you know you can't get out of it...

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	2	1	1	2	1	3	3	2	2	3	3	2	Sad
Patient	4	2	3	2	3	2	2	3	2	3	4	2	Rushed
Caring	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	3	3	2	Nasty
Kind	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	3	2	2	Thoughtless
Sense of humour	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	3	2	2	Morbid
Sociable	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	4	3	Lonely
Friendly	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	3	3	2	Mean
Active	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	3	2	3	4	2	Docile
Confident	2	1	1	1	1	4	3	2	2	4	3	2	Shy
Organised	2	1	1	1	3	2	3	4	2	2	5	2	Messy
Hard working	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	3	3	1	Lazy
Honest	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	4	2	1	Liar



2.2 RDT subgroup Personal Symbol

Participant BS60
Male, 64 years old

Interview date: 1/6/2006

Participant: I've got more than one tattoo, I've got several tattoos. Why I got them you mean?

Desley: Yeah, whatever you think of.

Participant: Well at the time, my close friends joined the navy, and tattooing was just a part of the dress if you like for navy people, they've all got tattoos. And at the same time probably I was a bit of a, for want of a better word, a juvenile delinquent and that was part of the dress too, if you like. In other words, people who mixed in those sort of crowds had tattoos. And at the same time a friend of mine was sort of a well not a private detective. I don't know what you call him these days. But we worked for him, doing like minding, you know, houses, like there were a few ratbags running around the Roselands area. So if people are going away or there's a party on and people were worried about getting gatecrashers.

Desley: So like security?

Participant: Yeah. Sort of security. But I don't want to make it sound more important than it actually was. Well if there was a party going on or if some people wanted to go to the club and they had a couple of kids, just go and mind the house, because there were lunatics running around. And it always helped, if you, so it was part of the dress cause you had the tight jeans, the riding boots, the singlet and the tats showing and I lost some teeth playing football, getting a smack on the mouth a couple of times. So if you had the teeth out and the tats showing, you were pretty frightening! I guess you were frightening to people. Not that I was actually, I suppose. Yeah. So it was part of dress if you like. I was smart enough at the time to make sure I could always cover them, so I got them from my arms up, so I've got nothing showing. You can't see any tattoos. I was working in the Public Service, and tattoos weren't part of the public service. Not many people in the public service had tattoos, if you like. And at the same time, because I was only young, and a lot of local girls used to go to Fellowship at St David's at Lakemba and tattoos weren't a really good thing to have there, so I made sure my shirt was down there, so if you like. Though I guess thinking back, I've only started thinking about it

since you rung me, it was just part of the uniform, you know. Who I was at that time. So in other words, you know, I was...

Desley: but it sounds like it was only one part of your life. Because you were also in the Public Service.

Participant: Well I suppose I could have been a bit of a chameleon for want of a better expression, because, if ... WELL I mean it was very handy. If you... if there was a party and you had to sort of manage gate crashers, then it was very handy to have them, because in those days they were regarded... like only prisoners had them or navy guys or I suppose hoodlums for want of a better word. I don't know if I was a hoodlum, but, you know people were put off by them. Now they're pretty mainstream aren't they? A lot of people have got them.

Desley: Yeah.

Participant: Yeah, so in those days it was very handy for all sorts of reasons. Plus it was part of the group. Every one had Holdens, everyone wore tight jeans, everyone had t-shirts on, people wore boots, and people had tattoos. So part of the Navy group I was in, the local group I was in... that's the way we dressed.

Desley: So were you in the Navy?

Participant: No, no. Friends of mine were in the Navy and that was part of their... like if you joined the Navy you got a tattoo. So I didn't want to join the Navy but I thought, oh, these tattoos mightn't be a bad idea. So for this reason, and for a couple of reasons I just thought it was a good idea and finished up with some tattoos, you know? Is that what you want, or?

Desley: Mhmm. So how old were you when you got the first one?

Participant: Probably round about 18. It's very hard for me to remember exactly. I've got 3 tattoos. So it's hard for me to remember which one I got first or how old I was. But I was sort of thinking back about the guys in the navy, and that was probably when I was about 18 and probably over maybe a one year or two year period, you know, maybe.

Desley: That you got the tattoos?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: And you can't remember which one you got first?

Participant: No.

Desley: OK.

Participant: I suspect...there's one with my name on it and I was thinking that's probably the one I got first.

Desley: So is that your surname?

Participant: No my Christian name, Graham. Because I was going to do the girl thing, you know, or put "mum". And me mother wouldn't have appreciated it, a girl thing, well... I was smart enough to realise at that age for most girls and most blokes there's probably more than one girl, one bloke. Ah, I just don't remember, it's something I don't think about and hadn't thought about it 'til your father mentioned it. I said if you're stuck I'll, you know, if you wanted a hole dug I'd probably come and dig it for you, so if you were stuck I'd just help you out. So yeah, it's not something I have thought about for years, until you mentioned it. These days it's pretty, well I wouldn't cover them up, where I might have when I was younger, like at the church or something, going to the church dance, church girls probably wouldn't like the tats that much. I kept the sleeves down.

Desley: So one of them has got your name on it, what are the other ones?

Participant: Oh, I'll show them I you like.

Desley: I'll look at them later if that's alright. So what are the other ones?

Participant: Well the other one's a rose and a snake sort of thing. And the other one is writing and the bloke who put it on got the spelling wrong which really craps me off and I should go and

have it fixed, you know. There was a movie called “somebody up there likes me”. It was about a fighter in America. At the time I was sailing fairly close to the wind and I managed... You know how sometimes in your life things would go this way that way. Well every time it always went right for me. So in other words... And I could have got in a lot of trouble because been in jail actually, for a fair while. So every time there was a sort of, a major happening, I somehow always, just got away with it. I always just found a way out, you know. So one day I thought, Ah, and I liked the title of the movie and I was going to the police boys at the time and having a few fights and I thought I’ll get that tattooed on me. Anyway, about two weeks later I thought, that was a stupid idea, but anyway...

Desley: Bit late then

Participant: yeah, bit late then

Desley: So it says “somebody up there likes me”

Participant: yeah. It’s the name of a movie, that’s where I got it from, at the time. And it’s probably followed me through my life except on monetary deals. If I buy shares in a company it’s gonna crash, you know. If you want BHP to crash, I’ll buy shares and boom, down it goes. But health-wise, family-wise, every other thing-wise, on critical incidents it’s always gone my way.

Desley: So have you had a heart attack?

Participant: Yeah

Desley: And that obviously went your way coz you didn’t die!

Participant: I won’t bore you with the story, I mean I will if you want me to, but it could’ve been very ugly it was just a fluke that it wasn’t. An absolute fluke. And that’s sort of been the story in lots of times, you know. When I could’ve even been in a lot of trouble or health-wise things happen to me that I, it was just a million in one chance that I got away with it. Money-wise, no, it’s always the opposite. If it’s to do with dough, if it’s important things I can get away with it. If it’s to do with dough, no. Every time I crash.

Desley: So the one that's got your name on it, does that have a picture as well?

Participant: I'll just take me jumper off. I mean, I don't mind.

Desley: it's alright. Because I'm taping I need to talk about it anyway. So it's a dagger?

Participant: Yes. With my name there.

Desley: So why a dagger?

Participant: At the time, I can't remember why I got it actually. Coz I certainly didn't used to knife anyone. That wasn't... People did, but I didn't. so no, I um....

Desley: So are there any connotations with daggers?

Participant: Not that I'm aware of at the time. But I'm completely different than I was then. Like I was a lunatic, you know. I wouldn't have got it because it was threatening because it's not something I do. I wouldn't stab someone. Certainly, I could hit them with a cricket bat when I was younger. I could, actually, that wouldn't have been a problem, but no, stabbing someone, no, no.

Desley: Do you think you were just trying to look tough?

Participant: Probably, yeah, yeah. My wife said I was a little thug when she met me. So, yeah. But I don't think I ever did it because, remembering back, if you thought you were that tough you could get into too much bother. But I always think it's better, this is the way I used to think when I was young. It's always hold it back til you absolutely have to and then you get very violent very quickly and that usually puts people off. Whereas if you swagger around all the time I don't think that works, and that wasn't, I wasn't that type of person anyway. I wasn't a sort of swaggering sort of person. I wasn't actually.

Desley: So you can't think of why you would have got a dagger?

Participant: What happened I was sober when I got the tattoos and I would have looked at a wall with all the photos on and I would have thought “that looks good”.

Desley: Ok. Yeah. So it’s more about the look of it?

Participant: Yeah. It would have been the look. It wouldn’t have been... I’m not a knife sort of person, never have. I’ve never, even in my wildest days I would never think of stabbing anyone, um, and didn’t like it that much, actually. I had a mate of mine who used to, didn’t mind stabbing other people but I didn’t like him or the knife thing. It’s a contradiction which is probably my life actually. I am a contradiction, according to people who know me.

Desley: Man of mystery!

Participant: No, no. I don’t, I think what you see is what you get, but a contradiction, because I could go out on Saturday night and get into a hell of a lot of trouble and really sort of get stuck in, and then go to church on Sunday, like fellowship, and go to a fellowship dance.

Desley: And that felt ok? Normal?

Participant: Yeah. At that age, you know, it’s all about chasing women isn’t it?

Desley: Don’t know – I’ve never chased women

Participant: I’m just saying for most guys that age, and at the time the sort of clubs and pubs weren’t there so there was only limited places you could meet them, so it was either school or whatever street you lived in. and not everyone had a car so the transport thing was a problem so you tended to just stay in your own area and if... my parents and we were involved in the church and the fellowship and there was a dance and there were lots of girls there and I wasn’t the only bloke by the way, I’m not the only one that had that idea. If the police would’ve raided the fellowship dance they would have found a few villains there, actually.

Desley: So with the rose and snake, that sounds a bit like a contradiction to me as well.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: Would that have been just you looked at it and you liked it or was there something else going on?

Participant: If there was, I wasn't aware of it. And I get on well with my sisters who are psychologists. They're always asking me things over the years, you know, and I get on well with them, so I must be... but my nickname's Shocker because people who know me tend to think that I behave fairly stupidly, even now, but not, I wouldn't do you any harm, you know? Does that help you?

Desley: So is that like taking risks with yourself?

Participant: And kids. And grandkids. It's something I've really gotta pull back on, but yeah. Yeah. I do. I have over the years, you know. I used to, and my daughter lives next door to me so

Desley: You can't be too bad

Participant: No. my other daughter and I get on really well. No. we get on good. I used to race through the yard in an old cart with my daughters hanging on to the... sitting on the front, what do you call it?

Desley: The bonnet?

Participant: Yes the bonnet. Holding on. Yeah. Stupid things like that. And I chase my grandkids in the street here before, you know, I take them to school and they come out of the driveway, and I go "rrr" in the car and move it a bit forward and they run and we have a great old time. My wife chastised me yesterday about it.

Desley: I reckon

Participant: So I tend to take risks, always have but whether that's got anything to do, because I'm not doing psychology and maybe it has, I don't know, you tell me. But I don't think it has anything to do with that, I don't think it was anything deep, I just thought "ay, that looks alright"

you know and it was something I put up there and it wasn't big in the sense that if you get a big tattoo there's a lot of pain involved. In other words, have you got any tattoos on you?

Desley: Yeah.

Participant: In the old days it used to be like getting a cigarette and just burning yourself, that's the feeling. And I was no hero, believe me.

Desley: But you had three, so

Participant: Yeah, but I mean I wouldn't I wouldn't get one of those huge Maori things or anything like that. Well, they're too big and I don't want them on there anyway so I just think it fitted there. I just liked the look of it, it's not something I'd show normally. I'd say there are people who've known me for years who wouldn't even know I had tattoos. I mean, people I've met, say, at work, I might have worked with someone for thirty years and they wouldn't know I have a tattoo.

Desley: Coz they're covered up

Participant: Coz they're covered up and blokes don't normally wear short sleeved shirts so, you know, so

Desley: Unless they want to show them off I think

Participant: Ah

Desley: Or at the gym they wear singlets.

Participant: To show the contradiction thing again, I for years wore an anklet. So I'm not worried about the tattoo at the gym, I'm worried about the anklet, what people, you know,

Desley: That's probably a whole different thing though because a tattoo is more masculine...

Participant: The contradiction thing, yeah, yeah

Desley: And an anklet I guess you might think some people would see as feminine

Participant: would definitely think that, yeah. So I'm not, I go to the gym, if I go to the gym I always wear long sleeves but no, I don't

Desley: Is that because you don't want people to see them or just, you just do that?

Participant: No if I go to the gym, this is a fairly average body, believe me, and at my age I'm not going to be able to go there and lift weights that young blokes can lift. I think if you try and do those things you look ridiculous same as I wouldn't sort of wear gold chains or dye my hair or you know, I was going to say get a sports car, but I'm a lot older than you. I mean I wouldn't get a Mazda MX6, you know, because I think that old blokes in sports cars that go along look bloody ridiculous. So no, I'm not, there's not much lair in me, believe me, I'm not a lair.

Desley: I was just wondering if you cover them up on purpose when you go to the gym?

Participant: No, not on purpose, I just don't think I look, guys my age don't look that flash in a singlet. It's just, I think I'd look ridiculous actually. I just wear, I suppose I just like wearing clothes that are loose on me. I don't wear anything that's not XXXL, coz I like everything sort of loose, you know. Like this shirt I have on is far bigger than I am, that's just the sort of clothes I like. So I couldn't imagine, the only time these days I could imagine, if I got in some situation I really thought I have to sort of fight my way out of, you know, and that's believe me if you've ever been in a fight, that's the last thing you want. If I was being threatened I might flash them then, drop the tooth out, rip the shirt off and say "come on, away you go" to put someone sort of off a bit, you know and then start running.

Desley: Give you a head start.

Participant: Yeah, give me head start. So that I can't imagine any other circumstance that I'd want to show my tattoos actually. No, I don't.

Desley: And why do you think you don't want to show them?

Participant: Because the clothes I wear don't allow the tattoos to be shown. I don't normally wear clothes. Start again. I wear clothes that sort of cover my arms and my body up, mainly because I don't have much of a body, I don't know. But I always wear loose fitting clothes and I don't wear tight singlets or anything that's cut off at the shoulders, never have actually.

Desley: But you said you couldn't think of a situation where you'd WANT to show your tattoos?

Participant: Unless I was threatened. If I thought it would put someone off I'd probably do it, but at my age I'd probably want to get out of that situation before I was there, you know.

Desley: But it sounds like you don't want to show them, do you know what I mean?

Participant: Yeah, but

Desley: If you can't think of when you would want to

Participant: But til this subject come up with you, I haven't thought about it. It's not something I've thought about in probably 30 years. They're just there. It's like the false teeth, it's like I've got a couple of scars on my face, I've got a sore foot, I've got a football injury, I mean it's just

Desley: Just a part of you?

Participant: Just part of me, I'd forgotten about it. I don't even think about it, you know. I had to stop and think. When I talked to John I came home and actually looked, because I have a shower and that every day but. That's got Graham, yeah, that had that, yeah. So that's how much I'm aware of them, you know.

Desley: It'd be like saying "where's the scar on your face?" or something you'd have to stop and think

Participant: Well I went for one of those skin cancer tests and the guy said you've got scarring on your face, how did that happen, was it cancer? And I said "mate, I can't, I just don't

remember. It must have been football, I just don't remember getting my face stitched", you know. I said "I just can't" you know. Am I a good client? Is this helping you?

Desley: Don't know! So you were about 18 when you got them

Participant: Round about 18

Desley: So that's like forty something years ago

Participant: Forty five years ago, yeah

Desley: Which probably is why you can't remember a lot of it

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: So do you think you got them basically just because of how they looked?

Participant: Identify with the group, I'd say.

Desley: So it was more about looking like the other people that had tattoos?

Participant: Identify with the group

Desley: Or being like the people you hung round with, is that a better way to put it?

Participant: No, I think identify with the group.

Desley: Which group are you talking about?

Participant: Lucky for me there were some navy groups and some delinquent groups and the tattoos covered you for both of them

Desley: So it enabled you to fit in?

Participant: I was already into those groups and that was just a part of the dress and the...

Desley: But did everybody have them?

Participant: When I was young the people I mixed with, everyone had tattoos that I mixed with. I didn't mix... except when I was at work

Desley: So would you have felt out of place if you didn't have one?

Participant: Probably, yeah, I probably would have. Yeah I would have, actually. I think I would've. Thinking back. Yeah.

Desley: so was it something you think you wanted to do, or is it more, almost, you had to?

Participant: no, I didn't have to. I just thought it was a good idea at the time. Same as I went and bought some boots and jeans, coz I wore singlets, the whole gear.

Desley: so it's part of the uniform?

Participant: part of the uniform, yeah.

Desley: so, how long did you think about the tattoos, do you remember, before you had it? would it have been days, weeks, months or a year, or?

Participant: no it wouldn't have been a year. Would've been probably weeks. I would have thought about it for sure, coz I'm not usually someone who goes off half-cocked, so I would have thought about it. I would have thought it was a good idea. In those days, coz of the transport and that, now there's tattooists everywhere, I mean in Penrith there's two tattooists, you know. but in those days you had to either go into town or you had to go to a place at East Hills and I went there more than once and there were too many people there and I thought "oh bugger it, I'm not waiting" you know. So it was that, they weren't easy to get. I think had they been easy to get I probably would've got more, actually. And I would have got them more quickly, but it was just that, there's a guy in town, you had to go into town, you know. And you had to go to East Hills and you weren't sure if they were going to be there because it was a sort

of a bit of a loose arrangement, you know. So you go to East Hills and, the bloke used to do them in the garage and sometimes he was there and sometimes he wasn't and you'd have to drive home.

Desley: did he use an electric gun?

Participant: yeah. {made the noise}

Desley: do you consider that any of the tattoos coincide with a particular event in your life?

Participant: no

Desley: not at all?

Participant: oh. Ok. These two no. this one definitely.

Desley: which is "this" one? The saying?

Participant: coz I got out of lots of trouble in a period of time that I could've been in a lot of trouble, a real lot of trouble.

Desley: so was that like a turning around of your life thing, or?

Participant: no. meeting me wife was. So that turned me. This didn't. no, no, no. I kept on doing silly things. Because I thought I could get away with it all this. And I continued to.

Desley: so it was more marking the fact that you'd got away with something?

Participant: yeah. that'd be it.

Desley: I thought you meant you were relieved that you got away with it and then you stopped, but you didn't stop, you kept going.

Participant: kept going

Desley: do you like the tattoos?

Participant: I don't dislike them. I don't mind them. I'm sort of neutral about it. I don't dislike them. If I could get rid of them tomorrow at no pain and no cost I wouldn't bother.

Desley: you wouldn't get rid of them?

Participant: no. I couldn't care less about them.

Desley: would you change them at all?

Participant: I'd get the spelling right. The idiot couldn't spell "somebody", he left the "e" out of it. A few times I've gone, I'll go and get an "e" but how ridiculous is that? You know, going to a tattooist, put an "e" there for me, would you? And they'd go, oh, you're kidding mate. So, yeah.

Desley: would you have them again?

Participant: at my age now?

Desley: no, if you went back.

Participant: yeah. definitely. Absolutely.

Desley: would you ever consider having another one now?

Participant: yeah. I will. I could be talked into that. No, I'll tell you why, yeah. No, I'll tell you why. Because, at the pre-school there's a woman there who was going to get a tattoo and she was, and they were talking. I'm a great magger, you know, so when I go to the school or... my wife reckons I can talk under water... but if I go to the school or the preschool or whatever, within about 5 minutes I'm in the group. I don't know why that is, that's just the way I am. And there's a lady there. They were all talking about having a tattoo and I said "I've got a couple". And she said "what are they like" and I said "not too bad" and she said I'm going to go and get a so-and-so but no-one'll come with me. I said "if you go, I'll go". She said "you're kidding" I

said “no I’m not. If you want to go and get a tattoo, give us a ring (coz she knows who I am). Give me a ring and I’ll come in with you.”

Desley: and get one?

Participant: and get one. I said “I don’t know what I’ll get, but I’ll get something”.

Desley: do you know where you’d put it?

Participant: no. because, I see her, it’s only about a year ago. She picks up her kid at the end of the street, so I know her reasonably well. So I pulled up there the other day and she yelled out “I haven’t forgotten Graham”. I said “Vanessa. That’s cool. The deal’s still on”. So if she rang me tomorrow

Desley: would you just pick something off the wall?

Participant: yeah. I’d just rock in there and pick something off the wall.

Desley: so what would you go for?

Participant: very little. Small as possible.

Desley: do you have any idea of the content?

Participant: um. Probably something a little bit absurd. Something a bit stupid. But I don’t know, what’s... I haven’t been to a tattooist’s for forty years so I don’t know what’s. the only tattoos I see are those women, those ones there, and the odd ankle one and that. And the other tattoos I just walk past. So it’d be small, it’s probably be a little bit absurd, or stupid.

Desley: so you mean like a cartoony thing?

Participant: yeah. probably something stupid like that.

Desley: would that be for the grandchildren, or...

Participant: no. that's coz just that's the way I am. I'm an idiot.

Desley: coz you feel stupid... not idiot, but playful, or something?

Participant: yes.

Desley: and where would you put it? would you put it somewhere where people could see it, or...

Participant: no. it'd be somewhere here here, up here, here, somewhere out of the way. It wouldn't be displayed. No. Definitely not.

Desley: so what do you think would be the point in getting a tattoo then, at this point in your life?

Participant: just helping Vanessa out. Because that's the way I am. A bit mad, you know.

Desley: so how far would you go helping someone out?

Participant: depends who it was. It wouldn't be big, it'd have to.... No chance of me doing it for a bloke. I'm not going to go in and hold your hand. If you won't get it then I'm not going with you. But if a woman, yeah, a young woman asked me, yeah, sure.

Desley: ok. So what about other things, not tattoos?

Participant: yeah pretty much. If someone wanted a hand, yeah.

Desley: you'd do anything?

Participant: pretty much, yeah.

Desley: what if they literally wanted a hand?

Participant: in what way?

Desley: like a transplant or something?

Participant: oh. Right. Ok. I misunderstood what you said. {pause} Yeah. I'd consider it. depends who it was. I'm a sucker for a story. Any hard luck story for a woman. Ask my wife. Over the years, coz I worked in nursing for a while, after I retired. A mate of mine owned a nursing home and there's a lot of women down there, got badly treated and that and so I went to court with them and that. They'd get into debt and I'd go along and be an advocate for them and all that sort of crap. So if anyone's got a hard, if a woman's got a hard luck story, yeah.

Desley: just about anything?

Participant: well.... I'd draw the line, yeah.

Desley: maybe I'd better not ask

Participant: I would draw the line, actually. Well, I have.

Desley: ok. Do you worry about the pain aspect of it? like would that put you off? Would you think it was good?

Participant: getting one now? I'd be worried about the pain aspect of it now for sure.

Desley: coz some people actually enjoy the pain.

Participant: no chance. I don't enjoy pain. no no.

Desley: so it's more something you have to go through to get...

Participant: yeah. I wouldn't like the pain. Believe me. No

Desley: do you consider that there's like a theme that runs through the tattoos or are they three separate things to you?

Participant: no. no theme.

Desley: they're separate.

Participant: come and have a look at my house, there's no theme. Drives me wife mad. Every room...

Desley: everything's different? But that's just typical of you, to have things that are not related?

Participant: for birthday presents I get like stuffed toys off me daughters. So everything from a stuffed toy to a ride in a jet boat. Yeah, so. Yeah, they think I'm fairly strange in a lot of ways. They're the sort of things I like, you know. I wouldn't try, I'm not... I mean I drive an old Hyundai, I don't pretend to be something I'm not. I don't dress fancy or that, but I rarely act my age, you know. So if we're out or something, if we're out and with my son-in-laws, they reckon I'm an absolute lunatic. They get embarrassed, coz we start having a good time and they think.... Oh. So like walking down the side of ferries throwing things through windows. I was doing some rock climbing a few months ago with some nephews of mine. Fell, you know, coz I've got a bad knee, bad ankle, with climbing up rocks. My wife said, you're a bloody lunatic, coz you'll fall. Ah, it'll be right

Desley: so is it all just about living life?

Participant: yeah. I pretty much have a go at it. but in saying, I'm not going to have a go at everything, yeah. I've been... obviously there's a fear content. It's there to stop you behaving irrationally, coz otherwise you'd just walk into the road and get run over, wouldn't you, but especially if there's kids around, pretty much I'd be in anything. Like today, I take one of my grand-daughters to netball practice and take another with her, you know. And we take those little scooters, you know and we're going to.... So I'll have a go on this little bloody thing and they think, what an idiot, you know.

Desley: is it just about having fun

Participant: having fun. Yeah. whatever's going.

Desley: and have you always been like that?

Participant: yeah. mad.

Desley: so there was no particular event that happened and suddenly

Participant: no.

Desley: it wasn't like having a heart attack, for example and...

Participant: didn't change at all. Didn't make me any more reckless. No. not at all.

Desley: do you think at the time there was something else you could have done rather than have a tattoo that would have had the same effect of making you feel like you fitted in.

Participant: ah

Desley: or had the uniform?

Participant: no. probably not. No. I can't

Desley: I guess they weren't into piercings in those days, really?

Participant: no. no piercings. I was never aware of piercings and in those days if a bloke wore an earring

Desley: he was gay

Participant: probably give him a smack. I don't know. No. I don't mind piercings. I mean if people want to pierce themselves, so be it, but it's not something I'd do, no. it was definitely, you think it was just an identifier for a group. It just happened to fit two groups, so I got two for the price of one. That's all.

Desley: good value

Participant: yeah. good value. So, yeah.

Desley: so do you think of yourself as a tattooed person, or are you just someone who has tattoos?

Participant: ah.... I'm someone who's got tattoos. I didn't understand the question, but I'll still answer.

Desley: some people call themselves tattooed people and they seem to be able to draw a distinction between that and having tattoos. And some draw that on how many they have.

Participant: oh, right

Desley: like if I've only got one, I'm not a tattooed person, but if I have whatever number...

Participant: and if it was only one, what if it was full frontal

Desley: well, yeah.

Participant: no. I'm someone who's got tattoos. And a crook knee. And false teeth.

Desley: and other things.

Participant: and other bits and pieces. And a zipper. {reference to scar from heart surgery}

Desley: some staples

Participant: And a wife. And some staples, yeah.

Desley: so when you went to get the tattoos, did you go by yourself?

Participant: ah, twice I did, and once I was with some other people.

Desley: and did they get tattoos as well?

Participant: yeah.

Desley: so was that the first one, or...

Participant: no, second one.

Desley: ok. And was it your idea to get them, or theirs....

Participant: I can't remember how it came up, but at the time I was thinking about it anyway and someone probably would've said, we'll go over East Hills and see if he's working tonight. We got there, what's on the board, oh yeah, have I got any dough, away we went. Yeah. so it's something I was going to do. I guess the circumstances just arose that you could do it, you know?

Desley: so it just worked at the time?

Participant: yeah

Desley: what do you think other people think when they see your tattoos?

Participant: now?

Desley: how about now and then?

Participant: well, then, coz it was a tough guy act. It was part of the...

Desley: so they probably thought you were tough?

Participant: they thought that. Unless they knew me, then they knew I wasn't. yeah. yes. Yes. if you took the teeth out, and you had the riding boots and, because in those days you would tend to be known anyway, so people who sort of knew who you were anyway, and you had a

reputation, whether it was deserved or not, so it was just part of the... like women put make-up on. It was just part of the make-up. What was the question again?

Desley: what do you think other people think of you now, with them?

Participant: they probably just think I was a bit of a lunatic when I was younger, you know. Bit of a delinquent, probably, or in the navy. People that don't know ask me if I was in the navy, but it doesn't come up very often coz I don't show them very often. Very rarely, and at my age now, for years now, you don't tend to meet new people with your shirt off, you know what I'm saying, so. Probably the only time people see me with my shirt off's in the gym and funnily enough, a lot of people in the gym have got tattoos, now that I think about it. yeah. it's not uncommon to see someone, so they wouldn't...

Desley: wouldn't say anything probably

Participant: no.

Desley: so what kind of reactions have you had to them, over the years?

Participant: over the years. A couple of girls who didn't know I had them didn't react too well. I remember that.... My parent's didn't react that well. But other than that....

Desley: nothing? So it hasn't had any negative effect on your life?

Participant: I'm not aware that it ever has.

Desley: what about as far as getting jobs and stuff like that?

Participant: no. I was in my job for over about 37 years. It didn't stop me before. I worked in a couple of places when I left school. Selling. And I could always sell, I think I still could if I wanted to. I could sell alright, and then I joined what was then the Department of Main Roads and really liked it and they was all over the state. They tend to move you around a bit. So it was never like you worked in the one organisation... I know it sounds silly. You tended not to think you worked in the same place, coz my kids were in three different schools in nine months once,

which wasn't much fun, but anyway. So I never thought of leaving and I enjoyed it and I sort of, I fitted in there, if you like. It was an organization that I was happy to work in, it was a big organization, there were lots of opportunities, and I never got around to leaving, actually. So it didn't affect me there. So work-wise, no. and as I say, I was smart, because I remember this when I got them I was smart enough to make sure, I'd never put anything on my fingers for instance, love, hate or anything like that crap. And no face, no tears or any of that crap.

Desley: what do they mean? Coz there was a guy at soccer the other day had a tear there....

Participant: yeah. I can never understand.... And I guess one of the Cobbe people had it and ever since then, you know, one of those Cobbe blokes. That John, I can't think of his name. I didn't like them before then and I ...

Desley: what do you mean "Cobbe" people?

Participant: you know the Anita Cobbe murderers?

Desley: oh, the murderer!

Participant: the murderers. There were four of them. Well one of them, John, whose name just escapes me. He had the tears thing. So I didn't like them much before that and seeing that I liked them even less now. I don't know. It's a thing you normally do in jail, you know. It's a jail, you normally think of them as being jail.

Desley: so are there places you wouldn't put tattoos? You said your hands and your face?

Participant: I wouldn't put a tattoo anywhere that's visible if I was just living my life normally. So my normal life, as I don't.... if you're going to work and that I never wore short sleeved shirts, I don't think most blokes do, it's more of a sporting thing. I'd never get it anywhere that I couldn't easily cover it up if I wanted to.

Desley: which is probably sensible. Do you know many people with tattoos?

Participant: these days. I don't know them very well, but I know people with tattoos. But old friends, you get to my age people move away and that, like I have friends in Queensland, Victoria, all sorts of places, who've got them, but if you asked me people who I mix with on a regular basis, they may have and I don't even know. I mean people I mix with at the gym have got tattoos, I know who they are.

Desley: but not your family or friends

Participant: not in the heart group, I don't know, there could be guys with tattoos there, I don't know.

Desley: do you feel now that having the tattoos means that you identify with any particular group of people?

Participant: identify now? No, not at all.

Desley: but you did then?

Participant: I did then. Yeah.

Desley: so if you see people with, say, similar style tattoos to yours, similar age, would you feel any connection there?

Participant: um. As I say I think... I work for court support, at Penrith court, with crims and that, so probably if I see people with tattoos in court I make the assumption "this bloke's probably guilty". You do, well, you make assumptions. So people walking in, I'm not giving them legal advice. What I'm there is to support people who haven't been in courts before. So what you're trying to find, you know, like for crims they've been there, they could teach me the ropes. I'm not that interested in them coz they know what to do and where to go. It's for people that probably haven't been in courts before. But you do make assumptions as people come in, coz it's the second biggest court in NSW, like today there might be 250 people there, we've got nine courts running. And you've got to do it very quickly, so you make assumptions all the time. Tatts is probably a crim – "you right mate? You got legal aid? Yeah, right, over there". Yeah, that'd be an assumption I'd make if I saw...

Desley: so is it just at the courthouse or would you make assumptions about people with tattoos no matter where they were?

Participant: if I see them in the shops and that, and you do see old blokes with tattoos, I sometimes think to myself, I wonder if that bloke belted me when I was a young bloke. So I make assumptions that this bloke was probably navy, a bit of a delinquent, he may have been in boob. But boob tattoos is different.

Desley: what are "boob"?

Participant: you know, tattoos they get in jail. boob tats.

Desley: I haven't heard that expression before.

Participant: yeah. so, they're tattoos the colour's slightly different, they haven't got the colour in them. And there tends to be a lot of writing. This stuff, ears, round the back of the neck and it's the sort of things you get in jail. So you usually pick them a mile off so you think this bloke's been in jail. Other people you just assume navy or just bit of a lunatic when they were young, you know.

Desley: delinquent I think you said

Participant: bit of a delinquent, yeah.

Desley: so I've got a trick question.

Participant: yeah, go.

Desley: what would be the opposite of your tattoos?

Participant: what would be the opposite? {pause} what would be the opposite? That's a good question. For me? {long pause} wearing a minister's collar.

Desley: ok. {laughs} my father. So someone not with tattoos, obviously?

Participant: yeah. so what's the opposite of not having tattoos, so

Desley: opposite of YOUR tattoos?

Participant: yeah, ok, I'm using that to identify the way I was. That's a picture of me when I was young. So I imagine that someone who's been in the church. That's something that I see that people go to at a fairly young age, in other words they go through school and some sort of seminary and off to church. So I would assume they've been that way probably most of their life, so I would say, yeah, that would occur to me coz your dad's a minister.

Desley: so someone who wasn't a delinquent or a ratbag...

Participant: yeah. ok. How do you identify that person. This is what I was thinking. You could say a copper but they're, like, they're worse.

Desley: yeah. they're ratbags too sometimes

Participant: yeah. not that I dislike coppers

Desley: so someone pure or something?

Participant: yeah, so I'd be thinking, ok, and how do you identify, because like you think about ambulance people, nurses all that sort of thing being good people but they're all, I know plenty of nurses and they're all lunatics too, so... that'd be the most obvious one to me

Desley: so it's like the ultimate good person

Participant: that's what I think anyway

Desley: because other people like nurses could have "bad" for want of a better term, aspects to them...

Participant: I know a lot of nurses because I work at a hospital too. I wouldn't say they were bad, but they probably, they wouldn't be the opposite to me, they'd be quite similar and they'd probably... when you're young, that's what being young's about, isn't it? doing silly things and as you get older, hopefully you get a few brains, well, most people do, I don't know, so as you move through that growing up period and I think most normal people would go through that sort of period. Yeah except for someone who maybe....

Desley: never did the other bit

Participant: yeah. I can't think of anyone else you could put in that category. I was just trying to think.... Coz doctors are knockaround sort of people. I've played football against doctors and they're.... there's some lunatic doctors out there

Desley: I think people like that, because they're in really stressful positions, sometimes they have to be lunatics to release their stress or they'd go mad.

Participant: yeah I don't know if lunatic's the right word. I mean doctors, the doctors I know, and when I was at school I knew a couple that went on to be... I've played football with them, they're normal sort of blokes, they're just smarter than everyone else. They just had lengths on us for brains, you know?

Desley: had what? Had what for brains?

Participant: lengths. It's a racing term. If someone's a lot better...

Desley: oh! Lengths ON them.

Participant: you just say

Desley: so they're lengths ahead. Gotcha.

Participant: lengths ahead of me.

Desley: so if you thought about the tattoos separately, so if you're thinking about the one with the dagger and your name on it, what would be the opposite of that tattoo?

Participant: of that dagger? It's gotta be a tattoo?

Desley: no. some people say not having it, or feeling differently.

Participant: no. no.

Desley: or getting it off.

Participant: opposite of that tattoo. No, getting it off's not the opposite. {pause} That tattoo... {pause} um. The opposite of this tattoo to my mind would have been some flowery tattoo with "mum" written in there, which would be, and she's quite the opposite to me. So for me that would be the opposite. Not getting rid of the tattoo, I don't see that to be the opposite.

Desley: so just a totally different picture?

Participant: yeah, I'd say a totally different picture.

Desley: with a different person?

Participant: with a different person, yeah.

Desley: what about your rose and your snake? What would be the opposite of that?

Participant: the opposite of the rose and snake. {long pause} I think probably, that's hard to answer because the rose and snake are opposite see, so rose and snake's probably indicates a person who's two different things, which is what I was when I was young. You want something more definitive than that. um. Well ok the opposite of rose is obviously a thorn or something or some prickly pear or some flower that's not beautiful, something that's a bit ugly. And the opposite {pause} I don't know.... Let me think about that for a bit

Desley: too hard....

Participant: no, I'm trying to be sensible. What is the opposite? And I just, I can't think what the opposite to a snake is. No, no. ok, because we've got snakes here.

Desley: thanks. You didn't tell me that before.

Participant: yeah, no. so what's the opposite to a snake?

Desley: I guess it depends what attributes of a snake you think about.

Participant: yeah, yeah.

Desley: so how do you think of a snake?

Participant: which one? See brown snakes, round here, I don't know if you can see one, I've got bits of black pipe

Desley: like over there?

Participant: bits of black pipe all round the place, see there's one, coz that's if you come across a brown, coz he'll attack and you've gotta have something to defend yourself, you know. So they're all over the place so if a brown snake appears you've got something to defend yourself. If it's a black snake, black red belly, they could come through the house and I'd just open the door and he'd go out. I couldn't care less about them, tread over them all the time.

Desley: ok....

Participant: so I'm not scared of snakes and I'm not scared of kids around snakes, they're fully aware of them. Brown snakes worry me. So I just can't say all snakes are bad, coz I don't think they are.

Desley: so you can't really even describe a snake...

Participant: to you? Describe a snake to you? What do I think about a snake?

Desley: yeah. because it depends on the kind of snake

Participant: ok yeah, it depends. Well, excluding a brown snake, I'd say snakes are just animals going about their normal... they're living, same as I am, they're trying to do their best, same as I am, trying to get a feed from somewhere, same as I am, so I don't dislike 'em, don't like 'em. I wouldn't kill them, unless I was defending myself. I tend not to kill things, you know, I don't even like using fly spray that much. So excluding brown snake I think snakes are no different to a bloody kookaburra or a magpie or a.... we've got a pet pig here, you know. So he's no different to a pig, I don't think, just doing his best. We're all doing our best

Desley: I was just wondering whether there are certain attributes that you think about when you think about a snake?

Participant: only a brown snake. The thing I think about a brown snake is that he's going about his business, I'm going about mine, but he'll attack me. So I'll attack back. And I don't have to attack him before he'll attack me, he'll just attack, whereas the other snakes will just run. Like most animals or birds or anything will just run, so, you know. That's the only difference I'd make, coz he's a threat to me. Does that make sense? So I don't see a snake any different to a pig, or a kookaburra or anything, I mean, because they're just going about their business. If you live in a rural area, having snakes, kookaburras, magpies, cows, pigs, horses is part of the deal. Flies, cockroaches...

Desley: but you've got a snake on your arm

Participant: yeah but I didn't...

Desley: you didn't have a kookaburra on your arm

Participant: yeah, I know that. And I can't imagine why I would have got it in the old days.... Coz I'm not a snakey sort of person, I'm very upfront, actually. I think I am.

Desley: it's interesting that you use that term – a snakey sort of person

Participant: I'm not a snakey, yeah, well, so..... yeah I don't know the answer.

Desley: tricky one that one. And what about with the writing, can you come up with an opposite for that?

Participant: an opposite for that? Well, someone up there hates me. That'd be the opposite wouldn't it? like, if I've written someone up there likes me, if that's a statement I've made, the opposite of that, I guess, is someone up there doesn't like me. I probably wouldn't be here now, if they didn't, maybe.

Desley: maybe. Is there anything else you can think of about your tattoo?

Participant: no. see, you've got to remember in answering all these questions it was a long, long while ago and I'm quite different in a lot of ways. These are all prior to meeting my wife, who, I wouldn't have got them had I met her. So in other words she put me on the straight and narrow. Yeah, so there was different time, different place, different person. And when someone says "what were you thinking 45 years ago"...

Desley: it's a bit hard to remember

Participant: geez, it's hard to remember

Desley: but, by the same token, you said you wouldn't have them off or anything, so

Participant: no. they're part of me, same as my false teeth, I suppose I can't grow my tooth back, or my hair. Yeah, I couldn't imagine what reason you'd have to get them off. And even growing up with them, I couldn't imagine there was any time I needed to have them off for any reason. It was just something I never thought about. Would I have them off? No. yeah.

Desley: so they're just like, they're part of you and that's it?

Participant: they're just there

Desley: I guess that's something too, though, people do, I mean, you've got false teeth. But some people go and get hair implants and things, so maybe getting them off would be akin to that.

Participant: no. I think people with hair implants look a bit different

Desley: yeah. but people DO it.

Participant: they're trying to be something they're not.

Desley: but maybe getting the tattoo off would be trying to be someone you're not, too, do you know what I mean?

Participant: yeah, um. I can't imagine what reason you'd have for taking them off. I'm trying to think what reason I'd have. I can't think of any reason I'd have to take them off. Coz they don't play any part in my life that I'm aware of.

Desley: and I guess there's no surprises coming that would mean suddenly you shouldn't have them, or something

Participant: like what? I can't imagine.

Desley: no, neither can I

Participant: I don't think I'm up for much action in my life

Desley: unless the Queen showed up or something!

Participant: well....

Desley: even then you'd cover them up, wouldn't you? So...

Participant: I think my family's far more.... What word do I want? Dysfunctional than the Queen's family. I wouldn't hold that.... I mean, I voted for... I voted against the republic

Desley: it'd be hard...

Participant: I think the Queen's family and the Simpsons are probably as dysfunctional as each other. I wouldn't hold her family up as any sort of functional model. So I can't imagine, yeah, I just can't imagine what circumstances there would be to have them off. I can't.

Desley: so there's nothing else you can think of about anything to do with the tattoos?

Participant: no. I don't know if I'm a good client or not for you. I don't know.

Desley: that's alright.

Participant: no. it seemed like a good idea at the time, you know, the streaker's defence. You know, just at the time it seemed like a good idea and I've never thought any different.

Desley: so you haven't regretted it...

Participant: no

Desley: or thought it was stupid or anything

Participant: no.

Desley: so do you think other things you did around that time were stupid?

Participant: yeah, absolutely.

Desley: interesting.

Participant: well, I mean, the things I did I could have been jailed for, for fairly long periods of time, so, you know, I regret that. And it was stupid, but...

Desley: it's done now

Participant: yeah. so, I mean, I regret all that, but I mean, what can you do about it? so... but it seemed like a good idea at the time....

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	3	1	2	2	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	3	Morbid
Patient	2	1	1	1	3	2	2	2	5	3	4	2	Impatient
Caring	2	1	1	1	2	3	2	2	4	2	3	3	Dismissive
Kind	2	1	1	1	3	2	2	1	3	3	3	3	Non-caring
Sense of humour	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	1	2	4	2	4	Serious
Sociable	3	2	2	2	4	3	3	3	4	2	2	3	Solitary
Friendly	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	4	2	2	3	Introverted
Active	3	2	2	2	3	4	3	4	3	3	3	2	Passive
Confident	2	1	2	1	4	3	3	4	2	1	2	3	Reserved
Organised	4	1	3	1	5	4	4	3	1	3	4	2	Untidy
Hard working	3	1	1	1	4	3	3	3	2	3	4	2	Lazy
Honest	3	1	2	2	3	3	3	1	4	3	4	2	Untrustworthy

2.3 RDT subgroup Philosophy

Participant BF36
Female, 22 years old

Interview date: 20/3/2006

Participant: Basically, January this year I went to Bali with my sister. For a while I'd been thinking about getting one. I always said I would get one if I could work out a place to put it, where it wouldn't go feral when I get older and bigger. I didn't want to get it on a difficult spot where it would stretch or...because there are places where it would look good, but once you have a baby or I don't know that sort of stuff. So if I could figure out a spot then I would start figuring out what I would get. While I was in Belgium about 5 years ago, I thought I would get the Southern Cross done on my foot, and then there wasn't anybody over there that would do it on my foot, for a first tattoo. Then when I came back, I sort of moved off the Southern Cross idea and went onto Taurus Bull, like coz I'm Taurus and stuff and I thought the bull'd be pretty cool. But I was on the plane with my sister and we were just talking about what we'd get. She really wanted one. She's like 4 and a half years younger than me. So she's only just turned 18. She's yeah, in the rebellious stage. She's like "lets get tattoos in Bali". And mum had warned us and she was like, "If you're going to do it, go somewhere clean." She was worried. But it took us ages to work out what we were going to get. It was just coincidental that the hotel we were staying at had a tattoo parlour across the road. So we both thought that that was a bit of a sign, coz we had no idea, we hadn't even looked up the hotel at all, it was just that was what was given to us. So on our first night there we went across the road and had a chat to the guy and had a flick through his books and stuff. And he was talking about what do you want and he had a picture of a turtle and the turtle was really nice. But I have a thing with frogs. I have always liked frogs, so we asked him what sort of frogs he had. And somewhere along the line we decided we'd get the same thing. I can't really remember whether it was on the day we arrived, or when. But basically Dani, my sister, thought she remembered something about frogs on our family shield. You know how in England every family has a, is it a shield? it's something. But she said something about there being a frog on that. So we sent an e-mail home to ask mum and dad. Mum wrote back, "I have no idea what this is about, but dad doesn't know anything about frogs on the family shield." And then Dani thought she also remembered something about frogs being a totem for being able to adapt to change really well. Like resilience and living in habitats where others can't live and I thought that was a pretty cool sort of totem. So we spoke to the artist and asked him if he could design us a tribal sort of design of a frog. He worked on it over

the course of a week. We went and saw him about three times. He did a few different sort of ones, one that was a more Maori type design, one that was more like an African one and in the end we asked him to do a bit of a blend and he put his own artistic flavour to it. So it's sort of like a tribal design. Yeah it's this awesome frog and we got the same one, on the same foot on the same spot. So it's sort of cool that me and my sister have that. Yeah. that's all I can think of at the moment.

Desley: you've probably covered half my questions! Why on your foot?

Participant: Couple of reasons. The first one for me, I thought A) I could cover it up if I need to. So for work if I wear closed-toe shoes that's not a problem. B) I can show it I wanted to, because I live in Wollongong so I wear thongs all the time. It's not going to get hugely fat. That was a big thing for me. You don't put much fat on your feet. And the one that my sister liked was, because she does like a sort of like Tae Kwon Do, which is all done bare foot, she really liked the fact that it could be on her foot and then it could sort of be part of her thing with martial arts as well. And then we chose the left foot because she's already got a birthmark on the bottom of her right foot. So she sort of felt like that one was decorated enough. And I didn't have a preference left or right. She preferred left, so I just said, ok, left.

Desley: So is there a place you wouldn't have a tattoo?

Participant: Anywhere that's going to be visible all the time. So forearms. I don't think I like them on the back of the shoulder. My waxing lady, I was talking about tattoos and she said that she sees so many brides coming in, trying to cover up their tattoos on their shoulders for their wedding day. So that sort of made me think. Originally I thought on my, just on the bottom of your deltoids there, on your shoulder blades, but I've seen a few of them and I don't know, it would have to be really, really little and really pretty and not too loud because they really stand out there. I'd have to think about it a bit more if I were going to go with one of those.

Desley: and you said nowhere where it would sag.

Participant: Yeah. I wouldn't want it to morph. Especially if you're getting an animal... anything. But then a friend of mine has got one on her bum, and it just looks really good.

Whereas I don't think it would, I don't know why, I don't think it would look that good on my bum. I probably wouldn't get one on my bum, and I wouldn't get one on my stomach.

Desley: Some of the places they talk you out, if you're a girl, talk you out of getting it on your stomach.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: And I heard this horror story about a tattoo of a teddy bear and it got beheaded by a stretch mark or something.

Participant: Oh no, that's terrible.

Desley: You don't know when you get pregnant, what's going to happen.

Participant: no way. And even the ones that are really low, even still, I think would stretch somehow. I don't know. I really like them on the lower back. Not right in the middle, 'cause just everybody's got them right in the middle of the lower back. My flat mate got one two weeks after I did, on the, just sort of on the right of her lower back. It's a big bird. It's gorgeous, but I don't know what that would do either on the lower back, but, I don't know, it's not like I'm really conscious about. If you're doing it for decorative purposes, and if it's ever gonna stretch and go weird, then it's no longer decorative. I was sort of penitent, but the guy who did them, he just had them everywhere. Because he's Balinese and his skin is a bit dark, and he said "Aw, they always look so good on white skin. If only they could find a way of doing a white tattoo that would look really cool on us." He was like this is my body and the more I can decorate it and have it sort of a bit arty. And I hadn't thought of it like that before. I was sort of, More like it's some sort of statement. But it was nice that you could think about decorating your skin. Sort of like a piece of jewellery, but just one that you have all the time. I like that concept.

Desley: So what does the frog mean for you?

Participant: I've always liked them and I don't know why. But I said to my sister that she would have to look up the totem thing and if that was true then I would go with it. Because I thought that would be a nice sort of idea. Especially because our parents were in the army so we moved

around a lot and had a lot of different homes. And I feel like that ability to cope with change has just been ingrained in us, because we've had to. So I liked the fact that that is what a frog totem is, is that you are adaptable and you can cope with change and you are very resilient when it comes to dealing with those sort of things in life. Especially like I went on exchange and had six different host families. It just feels like it is something very close to home for me. So yeah.

Desley: So being resilient is important to you?

Participant: Yeah I think so, I think it would be nice to... just to know that you can deal with it. To have that inner confidence to know that you are strong. You can deal with pretty much anything that comes your way.

Desley: So what would be the opposite of that for you?

Participant: Weakness, I suppose. So in terms of an animal? I don't know.

Desley: I was just thinking about the idea of resilience and strength. That's obviously something that's important to you.

Participant: yep. Yep. So the opposite, I suppose, just weakness and... what's the other word? Mmm. Dunno. Leave it with me!

Desley: it'll come. So you said when you had it, how long did you actually think about it? Just the week, or whatever, on the way?

Participant: Yeah. Well, actually having a tattoo, I think, I'd been thinking about getting one for probably about five years. But then I just had to work out all the little sort of aspects to it. Because I thought, you know, if I'm going to have it for the rest of my life, so I had to think about it. But from the time that it actually became something that was being designed, we had about a week; where we said, yeah go on that, and we'll see. And we just visited him a few times, and said, "ah can you make the legs a bit thinner" and then at the very end we were like "It's sort of like my ring! Make the feet really obvious." And he was like, Ah yeah that's cool, I'll work on it!

Desley: they're good sometimes, aren't they?

Participant: Ah he was fantastic. I would recommend anybody to go to him. If I went back to Bali, I'd probably go back to him and get another one.

Desley: So do you consider that having a tattoo coincided with any particular important event in your life? 'cause obviously you've travelled a bit. You've been to Belgium and you've been on exchange, so Bali, was that a different thing?

Participant: Bali was the first time me and my sister have ever travelled together. And because I moved out of home when she was only, I don't think she was even 13 yet, we haven't really bonded much. I just haven't really been around and they live near Canberra. So I only see her, probably monthly. And even then, sometimes it's only for about 20 minutes because she's rushing out, coz she's got to go to work or something like that. So it was sort of... Originally the trip to Bali was planned with my partner. My boyfriend. But then we broke up in October last year. So everything was already paid for, except I paid and he was going to pay me back. So we talked about whether he would still come or not, because we are still friends, but it just wasn't working. I ended up saying, "Let me see if I can find somebody. If I can't find somebody then you come with me." But I knew my parents would be able to cover the cost for my sister in the short term, so that was my first preference. I thought it would be a bit of a nice gesture, because she finished Year 12 last year. And she's never been out and I just wanted to get her out of Canberra for a while. Because I know that Canberra can suck you into this really closed mindedness. I just wanted to get her out. And I think they wanted her to travel as well, but she just wasn't initiating that thought. I think if it is going to coincide with any sort of event, I sort of saw it as a bit of bonding opportunity between me and her. So a sort of a peace offering. Because we never really got along that well. She has a bit of an interesting side to her.

Desley: it's funny leaving home, I did that with two sisters so they've bonded with each other.

Participant: Yeah. And it was just the two of us too. I sort of feel like we missed all those years where we can become friends. But then at the same time we always fought. So if I had been at home it would probably have made it even worse. Because she was going through a really rough teenage years. I don't know. I'm just going to keep my fingers crossed that eventually we'd be mates. Bali it was a good step. A good step.

Desley: So do you still like the tattoo?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: Would you change it at all?

Participant: The only thing I'd get done is, I'd get it re-done. Because there's a couple of bits that are a bit too light. Like it's not even, it's just a black tattoo. I think you get so many reflexes on your foot. I think there are a couple of areas where he, for whatever reason it hasn't come up as dark as the rest. So it's slightly uneven in areas. the only thing I'd get done to it is get it darker.

Desley: just get it improved.

Participant: Yeah. Just redone. Like re-coloured and stuff.

Desley: So would you do it again?

Participant: Get another one?

Desley: No the same one.

Participant: Oh the same one? Like if I had my time again?

Desley: Yeah.

Participant: Yeah. yep

Desley: So no regrets.

Participant: No. No.

Desley: OK. So would you get another one?

Participant: Yes.

Desley: And what would you consider the most important thing to think about, where you put it, what it was, who did it?

Participant: I'd think about all the same things that I already thought about for that one, which is why it would probably take me another five years! But I think I still wanna get...er, I don't even know. I can think of so many things I'd love to get now. It's just a matter of where to put them!! Because I've got so many places which I have totally crossed out as a No. I do like the lower back. On either side, not in the middle. But I'd have to think about stretch marks and stuff like that. 'cause I just don't know how that's gonna go. I don't know. I would have to think about it heaps to go with it again.

Desley: So you'd be looking for a place first of all?

Participant: Yeah. Because I could think of a number of things I could do, like I'd get someone to draw me up... like my flatmate is an artist, so I'd get her to draw me up some kind of... Like the bull, I'd still like to get the bull done. Yeah, I don't know. Maybe when I have kids I'll want to get something that's related to the kids. I don't know

Desley: So what is it about the bull? Are there certain characteristics that appeal to you?

Participant: I think because I have always been a Taurus, I've always associated that animal. And my mum is a Taurus as well, and she's extremely, she's such a strong woman it's unbelievable! Just before I went overseas, she gave me a pendant, which was given to her by her mum who's also a Taurus. And it's just this bull. Most Taurus pendants aren't...like there aren't many really good ones. This one is just amazing and I love it. So I've always thought if I could get a bull that looked something like that pendant, then that'd be really cool to have with me all the time. So I guess it's sort of a bit of a family thing as well as a star sign thing.

Desley: So it's more than just your star sign?

Participant: Yeah. Yeah. Cause it's a link with my mum.

Desley: So what about the pain factor?

Participant: I don't know. I think the foot... Apparently the foot is pretty bad. Because it's on top of my foot and that's right on the bones. The head of the frog is sort of on the boniest part. That was the worst for me. For my sister the worst part was near her toes. She was in a little pain. It looked as if she handled the pain worse than I did. I just tried to breathe through it.

Desley: So who went first?

Participant: She went first. I shouldn't have done that, 'cause I couldn't watch her. If I had watched the whole thing, I don't think I would have gone through with it, because she was in so much pain. And I was so nervous. But then once they do that very first little bit, then you go, yeah ok it hurts but it's not too bad. It's hard to describe to somebody who hasn't had one. Because it's like... like a bee sting is worse, because you don't want the bee sting. Whereas you know that it's going to end up being really cool, so even though it hurts you just find a way to deal with it because you know that you want it anyway. So. It was funny, 'cause we asked him, um, we got music played while we did it. And Dani, I don't know, she likes rock music. She had System of a Down playing. And for me, I think that's another thing that sort of stressed me out watching her. Because it was this angry rock music which she needed, coz she was just like holding on and saying, "YEAH!" Just before he started, I'm like, "do you have any like happy music?" so he ended up putting The Red Hot Chilli Peppers on. The Greatest Hits. It was gold!

Desley: some people wouldn't call that happy music, though.

Participant: Yeah, but it was sort of mellow. So it was not heaps happy, but I needed something that was more I suppose, relaxing in a way. Because I think it hurt more when I was tense to it.

Desley: Yeah I imagine with rock music you'd be getting worked up.

Participant: Yeah. coz Dani was like really holding onto the chair and then she was grabbing her hand and digging her nails into her hand to try to give her some other pain to think about.

Whereas I was trying to just totally, totally relax. I had my eyes closed for most of it because I just didn't want to even look at anything. And it was at the back of a surf shop, so it was just like

all surf boards and then you could see totally out into the street. I didn't want any visual stimulation. I just closed my eyes and I was like "it'll all be worth it. It'll all be worth it." We took heaps of photos, so it's funny looking at them. So the pain didn't bother me that much. And you get a bit high afterwards, 'cause you dealt with all the pain. It was just before we left, so we left in the best mood and we were both so happy. It was cool

Desley: Some people would think of the pain as a positive thing. They almost look forward to it.

Participant: Yeah. I wouldn't say I enjoyed the pain. But it made me feel good that I could deal with it.

Desley: I suspect that's why they get so addictive. Because people feel so good once they've done it.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: It's like some little goal that you've achieved. Like jumping out a plane or something. It's a big jump, but you did it.

Participant: Yeah. And I can definitely see how people could get addicted to it. But with me, I've got too many, I suppose logical thought processes to get in the way of me getting addicted to it. Just the whole "but it'll stretch" and all those sorts of, not doubts but just barriers I suppose to it. I have to really, really think about it. I reckon I'd get another one. It will just take me a while to work out where and yeah. Just really think about it lots.

Desley: like you said with the other one you said you had a couple of ideas before you got it.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: So you would wanna really decide what you want because you might change your mind.

Participant: Exactly. And if I had got the Southern Cross when I was overseas, I really think I would still love it. Because, the feet.... because you do wanna have something that's unique. I don't like when people just, you hear about some people who just walk in and go "mmmmm.

That one.” And they just pick one off the wall and grab one, it means absolutely nothing to them, they just wanted a tattoo. But for me it would have to be unique. And it would have to be something that really meant a lot to me. And at the time when I was overseas in Belgium, there was nothing except the Southern Cross. I used to just dream about it and I think it would have meant so much to me at the time, that I would still like that tattoo now, had I got it done. But there are a lot of people with Southern Cross tattoos. Whereas this was a tattoo that you designed and nobody has it. He’s now got it sort of on his records of somebody did want it, but we were the first, so that’s sort of cool.

Desley: That’s the most important thing.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: So do you think you’d ever get it taken off?

Participant: I can’t see that I would want to. At this point in time, I can’t see that I would want to. It’s too easy to cover up if I don’t want to see it. Obviously when you’re having a shower you can’t cover it up. Even um, the only thing is with strappy shoes, it just distracts your attention from the nice shoes. So I just have to cross my legs with my right foot up so that they can see the right shoe. But if I really wanted to cover it, there’s a.... cause I covered it when I first came back to Australia, ‘cause when I was walking around, the sun was absolutely burning. So I got this Elastoplast. It’s like a big, a really really big fat bandaid. And I just covered it. And it was funny because I’d had lunch with my friends and none of them even noticed that I had that on there. So I figured if I wanted to go somewhere where I wanted to wear strappy shoes, or it wasn’t allowed to be seen, I could just put a bit of like bandage over it or whatever, or a bit of tape. And if anyone asks I’ll say I cut myself surfing and leave it at that. So I think it’s definitely in a spot where I can cover it. It’s not totally on my toe or anything like that. I don’t think I’ll need to get it removed.

Desley: So is there something else you could have done with your sister that would have had the same effect as getting a tattoo together, do you think?

Participant: Probably not as long lasting. We could have got a piercing but you can take a piercing.... See she’s already got her nose pierced and I’ve got my belly pierced. And the reason

I wouldn't get my nose pierced 'cause she's got it done and the reason she wouldn't get her belly pierced is because I've got it done. So I think we wanted to do something that was a little bit more daring than that. And being there with each other for it was like a big bonding thing. I suppose we could have jumped out of a plane, that would have done it. But just, yeah, I don't know. The fact that it's something that would be there with us forever, I think is what was part of the connection, the bond with it and the drive behind it. It was like us making a statement, that, you, like. For me it felt that in a way she was acknowledging that in a way she did want me to be a part of her life. Because that is something that hasn't been evident to me. Because I haven't really been home and she's not the best with messages. I'm sure she messages all her friends, but she doesn't message me hardly ever. So yeah. For me it was just one of those gestures where we both sort of made a bit of an effort and we both benefited from it. It seems like a pretty huge thing to do, get a tattoo, yeah, but. I think the way the relationship was at that point, it needed a big gesture from both of us to get it kick started again. Mum freaked out. She's like "that's huge!" it takes up almost the whole top of our feet. It's funny. It was the same stencil. And the last time I was comparing it with my sister, and mine looks bigger somehow. Even though our feet are pretty much the same. And the head of hers is a little bit wider, and one of her feet looks shorter. It's really weird. It was exactly the same stencil, but our skin must have been stretched differently when he put it on. It's good that there are unique differences, though, just little tiny things.

Desley: So they are the same, but not quite.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: So do you differentiate between having a tattoo and having that tattoo?

Participant: For me?

Desley: You said some people just wanna have a tattoo and that's it.

Participant: Yeah. I couldn't see myself as somebody that just walked in and just got a tattoo just for the sake of having one. I feel like there were so many reasons behind it for me. Like I wanted it to mean something, I wanted to like the design because obviously if I've gotta look at it everyday for the rest of my life, I don't wanna not think it looks good. Like the first couple of

frogs he designed, I sort of though I really don't think I could look at that forever. It didn't look quite right and we told him to keep going with the design. So eventually he had eight. The very last one he did, we both agreed that that was the one that looked the best and that was the one we liked. So all of those things, for me it was more about that particular frog. Just everything about it. What it meant to both of us. Which is why I wanted to get that frog rather than just a tattoo. It wasn't about just having a tattoo. It was so much more than that.

Desley: And what about the family thing? Did you find out about?

Participant: Oh, there's no frog. It's funny. Dad doesn't remember anything about a frog. Dani still swears there's something about a frog. I think she's researching into it or something. It would be a really cool twist if there is something to do with that. But either way, I think that the fact that we moved around so much as kids is enough. The fact that that totem is what it is. I think that is enough of a family connection. It would just be an added bonus if it did happen to be on the family shield.

Desley: So do you look at yourself as a tattooed person, or are you a person with a tattoo?

Participant: I'm just a person with a tattoo.

Desley: So, what would be the opposite of your tattoo?

Participant: um. {long pause} Something very ugly. I don't know. Something, well something that's not tribal, 'cause that's tribal. {long pause} um. I don't know. Maybe an evil square frog. Coz I don't think that's very evil. If we are gonna go for an exact opposite. Because he is all rounded, so something that was very jagged and something that is sort of I don't know, evil looking. That'd be pretty opposite.

Desley: So what do you think it means to other people that see it?

Participant: None of them think it's real. They all go, that's too cool to be something real. They think that like... I was talking to my friend about this on Friday night. I said, "do people think it's not real because it looks crap or do they think it is not real?" I couldn't make it out. She said that she thinks that most people wouldn't believe that somebody would put something that

different on them permanently. She said a lot of people would do something decorative like that just for a bit of fun. But she said that she thinks that most people think you wouldn't be daring enough to put something that decorative on you.

Desley: You in particular?

Participant: I don't know. Maybe me.

Desley: or anyone?

Participant: I'm not sure. I'm not sure. I think, I tend to be pretty sort of subdued when it comes to daring things. So it's possible that people just would not expect me to have done it. And when I came back and told my ex- boyfriend, he was just like, "you did what?" and we were together for ages so he knows me pretty well and he was pretty shocked by it. Often people say "why a frog?" they look at it and say that's really cool but why a frog? Then I'll explain exactly what I've told you and they'll say, "oh that's cool!" and they just sort of leave it at that. And my friends have seen it a lot, like we'll be sitting down and they'll say, "That's such a cool tattoo! I love your tattoo." But definitely the most common thing people say is "why a frog?" so I don't know what they are thinking. They're obviously just thinking why a frog?

Desley: Well I guess coz a frog's really different. You know like if you had a butterfly...

Participant: Yeah. Which is what every second girl has, a butterfly or something.

Desley: But I guess you can still ask that question

Participant: Why a butterfly?

Desley: yeah. it's just that people don't.

Participant: Yeah. And it's funny. Like my flatmate, the bird that she got, she downloaded the picture off the internet. Sort of like a stencil. I suppose you could say a shadow. I said why that bird and she's like coz that bird, to me it represents freedom. I think as long as you've got a reason for it.

Desley: I talked to one guy maybe a few years ago and he got ten tattoos in one sitting. And I am sure it was just like that that that that. I can't see how that meant very much to him.

Participant: no. I can't either, but you never know.

Desley: no, you don't. So what kind of reactions have you had apart from disbelief? You said something about your mum before.

Participant: Mum thought it was too big. She was like what have you done? Coz it does take up like...

Desley: your foot

Participant: I'm getting used to it. I must admit when he first designed it I thought Oh that's big. Especially because I don't have huge feet. When we were talking about the size of it, he actually got a ruler and measured it up and it was supposed to be about seven centimetres and I swear that it's not seven centimetres. I don't know. Maybe it is, when I push all my skin together. So yeah, mum thought it was, I've had a few people say, oh it's big, and disbelief, and then, I don't know. Most people think it is pretty cool. The are like, ah that's a really awesome design. It's generally been pretty positive, apart from "Oh it's big"

Desley: So you haven't really had any negative reactions to it?

Participant: No. Not one, actually. Apart from my mum saying it's a bit big. She was a bit hesitant to accept it, I think. But I have had no one say they don't like the design at all.

Desley: And you haven't had anything where people have seen it and been like 'you can't come here' or "we don't want to associate with you, or?"

Participant: No.

Desley: You said your sister's got a tattoo and your flat mate. Do you know other people with tattoos?

Participant: Yes.

Desley: Lots, or?

Participant: um... not heaps. I probably know more guys with them. And my good friend has two. His are awesome actually. Coz he's lost both his parents, so he's got a rose on his chest for his mum and he's got, like on his left, so basically it's over his heart. And he's got a scorpion on his back for his dad and it's like his dad has got his back. and I think that is really cool that. 'Cause you sort of go, Oh, a rose? And he goes yeah it's for my mum and then you feel really bad that you questioned it. I only know one person who has just gone in and picked one off a wall, and that was my boyfriend from high school. But he was an idiot, so it didn't surprise me that he just went and did that. I know a couple of girls with them.

Desley: So no one else in your family?

Participant: No, no one else in my family, no. although dad reckons it would be cool to convince mum to get that. I'm like she never would! That's not going to happen. I'm pretty sure. One of my very close family friends has a few on her back and I think, I don't know. I don't think she's got them on her arms but I think she's got them on her shoulders at the back. I can't think of anyone in my family. Not with an obvious one. There's one of my aunties that I would be surprised if she didn't have one. But I don't know, I've never seen it, so if she does have one it's not in an obvious place. And she hasn't talked about it, if she does. But it would not surprise me at all if she had one. But yeah, none of my direct family.

Desley: So do you find that you associate with any particular group of people because you have a tattoo?

Participant: I wouldn't say it's changed. It's just that I notice them more. Like I notice people with them more. And I look at them differently now. Because I look at them and think, I wonder what it means to them or what they were thinking when they got that. I was at church service last night and one of the guys I was talking to at the end, I noticed he had a tattoo on the outside of his ankle. I could only see I was like black and when I got a good view I could see that it was like a cross. I thought that was pretty cool and I could tell straight away that that's what it meant

to him. Cause we were in a church and he was obviously there for that, so that didn't surprise me. But I often wonder, like... And then one of the girls was telling me that her dad drew a Carlton of a football player and he got a Carlton football player tattooed on his leg. She said it was not even a good picture. He just drew it, and wanted a Carlton football player on his leg. I guess I look at people with tattoos differently now. Because I do start to think about why they got it done.

Desley: So what do you think about people that have tattoos?

Participant: I used to think that they were a bit silly, 'cause it were like, you're going to have that for the rest of your life, are you sure that that's what you want. So I'd say my perception has now changed slightly. Because it's now more, you know, it's your body to decorate how you want and I am hoping that these things do mean something to you. I would associate more with somebody who could say this is for that and this is for that; rather than just saying, Oh I liked it! I think I would have a different opinion of those two types of people. I don't know whether I associate differently with them. It's just more that I have a common interest in a way, now that I have one. Like I now have something more to talk about with someone who does have tattoos. I don't know if that answered the...

Desley: Yeah. You know it's just the stereotype that people with tattoos are criminals, psychopaths.

Participant: there used to be a stereotype with like the bikies that have heaps of them. I think I still look at them and go... and get, I do get a little bit sort of er... if it's somebody with heaps of tattoos I think I still, I guess I get a little bit reserved. Coz there is that little bit of a " Oh they are just such a huge daredevil. They've just gone and.." I don't know what it is about that. But I guess if it were someone really heavily tattooed. But then the guy that at did my tattoo, I wasn't scared of him at all. And he had them on his neck and just everywhere. Everywhere. He just looked like a walking painting. But I mean this is a barefoot Balinese who walks around in shorts and singlet tops and has this big cheery smile as opposed to somebody who walks around in leathers and has a big beard. I guess the whole image is different there.

Desley: So you're saying that you would find that scary?

Participant: Maybe slightly more scary. But then bikies in general, it doesn't matter if they have tattoos or not they just come across that way. Tattoos just add to it.

Desley: Yeah. I mean that's just the stereotype of the bikie gangs and

Participant: Yeah. I guess I am more intrigued now. But I think I still have that initial sort of "you've got lot of tattoos" and then I'll start to look at them more. Whereas maybe before I would've just been like you've got lots of tattoos. What does that say about you?

Desley: Or run away.

Participant: Yeah. Yeah. I don't know. I've only been in the gang for about two months. I'm still finding my feet.

Desley: Yeah. Literally.

Participant: Literally.

Desley: well done! So is there anything else that you can think of about your tattoo?

Participant: Nope, I don't think so. I still really like it. I still catch myself looking at it going, "I've got a tattoo. Ooooh!" I really wish... I'm such a perfectionist though. I really wish I could get it darkened up where it needs to be darkened.

Desley: maybe you can.

Participant: I'm sure I can. It's just a stencil really. Anyone that can tattoo would be able to just go over it.

Desley: There's this guy that owns the Corrimal and Windang places, Dave Rand. Apparently I've been told he's the king of tribal tattoos in Wollongong. Maybe he'll be able to do it. He's been tattooing in Wollongong for as far as I can work out twenty or thirty years at least.

Participant: Wow!

Desley: I think the one in Windang's called Tribal Tattoo.

Participant: that might even be where my flatmate went.

Desley: and he's got a shop in Corrimal called South Coast. My daughter was saying the other day that he's the king of tribals.

Participant: alrighty. I'll have to go see him. The thing is it only cost me 50 bucks to get it done. It's going to cost me like double that to get it touched up.

Desley: You can go and see what he says, you know. He might say it's not worth it. To me that looks right the way it is, because this is coming in.

Participant: Yeah. That's fine. But see that foot's lighter than the other feet. That spot there is lighter. That foot is lighter. When you look closely at it there are just some spots that are just greyer. And it's not that you are going to look closely at it. It's all the way down. I really don't even care.

Desley: The other way to look at it is that it makes it a bit more different, too, rather than uniform.

Participant: Yeah. And it gives a bit of texture as well. I'll probably just leave it. It's probably a good lesson for me not to be so anal.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	2	1	1	1	3	4	2	1	2	1	5	4	Sad
Patient	4	1	3	3	5	5	4	3	5	3	5	3	Anxious
Caring	3	1	1	3	2	5	3	2	3	3	4	2	Hurtful
Kind	2	3	3	3	3	4	2	2	2	3	4	3	Harsh
Sense of humour	3	1	3	1	2	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	Dry
Sociable	3	2	2	2	3	4	3	2	1	1	2	4	Quiet
Friendly	4	3	3	3	4	5	4	1	2	1	2	2	Cold
Active	4	1	2	1	3	1	3	3	1	2	2	5	Sedentary
Confident	2	1	1	1	1	4	3	2	1	1	1	5	Insecure
Organised	3	1	1	2	4	3	3	4	5	1	5	3	Chaotic
Hard working	1	2	2	1	3	1	1	2	5	3	4	2	Lazy
Honest	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	4	5	3	Liar



2.4 RDT subgroup Remembrance

Participant BR15
Female, 27 years old

Interview date: 9/2/2006

Participant: You've seen it, it's very small obviously. I got it when I was in year 11, half way through year 11 I moved down the coast, down here, from Sydney and myself and two of my girlfriends got exactly the same one. We jigged school one day and went and got a tattoo before I left. And that's it and it's a fish because we went to an all-girls' school in Sydney and stuff together, a Christian fish. It was meant to be like a representation of the fish and Christianity and that sort of thing.

Desley: did you all get it because you were leaving?

Participant: mmm. yeah. as sort of like a group, sort of, bond, sort of, I guess, would be the way to think about it.

Desley: was that picture just because you were at a Christian school

Participant: yeah. because it was, that's what we decided on because we'd been through like an all-girls' school from year 7 to 10 together. In year 11 you got to go and be with the boys and so that was it

Desley: it's on your ankle?

Participant: yep

Desley: why did you choose your ankle?

Participant: I don't really know why we put it on our ankle. I cannot recall why we chose that spot

Desley: so ankle doesn't mean anything to you

Participant: not really. It was just somewhere where we could all, you know, put the tattoo there and also we thought we could wear socks and hide it from our parents. Do you know what I mean?

Desley: and it's only little

Participant: yeah, it's tiny

Desley: is there somewhere you think that you wouldn't put a tattoo

Participant: I couldn't see myself walking into a tattoo shop and taking my clothes off and getting one on my breast or something like that or on my butt or something

Desley: so nowhere private

Participant: yeah

Desley: so what about your face

Participant: oh, I wouldn't put it on my face, sorry, no

Desley: so somewhere that's not totally private but you can cover up

Participant: yeah. Nothing you have to get naked for or anything.

Desley: so how long did you think about it before you did it?

Participant: not very long. About 5 minutes. It was a spur of the moment thing. We were walking past the tattoo shop, yeah, in school uniform and everything. It was surprising that he actually did it to us because we weren't 18, obviously

Desley: so you said that that was to symbolise you leaving, so that was because you were moving

Participant: yes, it was a connection thing, that's why we didn't go to school that day and stuff like that

Desley: so do you still like the tattoo?

Participant: um, yeah. to me it's fine, it's like it's so small, it's not a big impact on my life. It's not like I've got my whole shoulder tattooed or something like that. It doesn't really bother me and it's, I don't know, it's been around for so long it's just sort of part of me now. I wouldn't go and get it taken off.

Desley: so would you have another one?

Participant: ah, yeah, I have considered that

Desley: and what kind of things did you think about. Did you think about the picture, the placement

Participant: I've thought about placement, of different places where you could put it. Like I though along here's not a bad option because you can cover that up with your pants, and stuff like that obviously. And also in there because that's covered with a shirt. As for picture, I haven't thought about picture, there actually is a word, I thought about writing "sunflower". If I got another tattoo that's what I'd have tattooed on me, the word "sunflower" which is actually my dog

Desley: so you wouldn't think of a picture of a sunflower

Participant: probably not. Maybe a small sunflower with the actual written "sunflower"

Desley: so have you thought about what script or font you would use?

Participant: um, yeah, coz I know how I write her name, so

Desley: so it would be in handwriting, sort of

Participant: yeah

Desley: what about the pain

Participant: it burnt. It was a weird burning sensation, so

Desley: so is it something, like is it a plus or a minus for you or just

Participant: well I'm afraid of needles, so that's a minus I would think.

Desley: some people actually like the pain of it

Participant: mmm. That's bizarre

Desley: they look forward to it

Participant: yeah. na. I don't look forward to pain

Desley: I was talking to someone the other day who said they're going to get one on the weekend and they said even though they don't like it, they're sort of looking forward to it

Participant: oh

Desley: the pain. Yeah. it's a bit weird. So you wouldn't get it taken off or anything

Participant: no.

Desley: is there something else you could have done instead of getting a tattoo to mark that leaving and also the group thing. Like bought friendship rings?

Participant: I guess so. We could have done something different. And I guess, in a way we also did something different. We ditched school that day. That was the choice and that was what we were doing. But I don't think, if we'd bought friendship rings, by now, we would have bought,

as kids you've only got so much money, \$5 friendship ring that would be broken, or, you know, you wouldn't wear it or anything like that. this way it's not like you can take it off

Desley: or lose it

Participant: yeah

Desley: so do you think of yourself as a tattooed person, or are you just a person and you happen to have a tattoo

Participant: I'm just a person who happens to have a tattoo I think

Desley: so, my trick question. What would be the opposite of your tattoo?

Participant: I guess a tattoo of the devil

Desley: because of the Christianity thing

Participant: yeah. that wasn't too difficult, I don't think, because that *is* the opposite, yeah

Desley: it's just that people treat that question differently. Like some people say not having it, whereas the guy I spoke to this morning said more about what he'd be like if he didn't have it.

Participant: oh, ok

Desley: there's different ways you can actually take it

Participant: oh, ok. So did I answer that wrong?

Desley: no no no. it's all about your interpretation of the question as well

Participant: yep

Desley: it's just interesting that there's ...

Participant: I just thought you meant the opposite picture

Desley: yes. Some people have actually answered it in multiple ways as well

Participant: wow

Desley: like, the opposite would be not having it BUT if I had one that was an opposite, they'd put it on a different place as well, like on the opposite arm, who knows. So you said you were with your friends and they both – two of them, was it?

Participant: yep

Desley: ok. So do you remember whose idea it was?

Participant: I think it was Leanne's idea.

Desley: and did she have to, like, talk you into it, or did you just go "yeah, let's do it"

Participant: I think she kind of talked us into it a bit. Yeah

Desley: so what do you think it means to other people that see it?

Participant: I don't think it means a lot to other people coz it's not very noticeable. Like you wouldn't even really notice that it's there. My mum's seen it but I managed to cover it up from her for about a year or a year and a half and for ages she told me that, like we'd be at the lights and stuff and a bikie or something would go past and she'd be like "yeah, there's one of your crew, Shae" and be all upset. Yeah. she thought her daughter was turning into a bikie or something. But, I was doing a first aid course a couple of years back and someone there seen it and I got the really bizarre like she asked me about it, but it was very hostile... about the tattoo. It's really bizarre. Like I said about the Christianity thing and then she went into a bit spiel about Catholics aren't Christians and you can't, you know, do that and you know, Catholics hate Christians and Christians hate Catholics and I'm like "it's just all Jesus. It's ok". Yeah, so. And she was going from like a historical viewpoint. And I know that there was, coz I went to

Catholic schools all my life and I've been through all the religious education and I know that there were differences and stuff, but it's really not that big of a deal, I don't think. Yeah.

Desley: I wasn't brought up a Catholic, but I wasn't brought up to hate them. Bit strange

Participant: well I thought that was a bit strange

Desley: so what other kind of reactions have you had?

Participant: they're the only two I can think about.

Desley: so nothing, basically

Participant: no

Desley: so would you call yourself a Christian now

Participant: um.

Desley: or should I say a Catholic?

Participant: no no. I know we're getting really religious, and I'm not even religious, like, do you know what I mean. I went to a Catholic school, I got sent there and I don't go to church or anything like that. It's just, it's not so much the religiosity that, is it, do you get what I'm saying? It was just a symbol that we chose that sort of united us.

Desley: but it is the universal, not the universal but the old symbol that the Christians used to use when they didn't want anyone to know they were a Christian

Participant: oh, ok

Desley: they used to draw it in the sand, you know, when they were all being persecuted, they used to draw that fish in the sand with their toes, coz they didn't wear shoes, and that way they knew who they could talk to about stuff, without being killed

Participant: oh, ok, now I'm learning stuff

Desley: my dad's a minister, so

Participant: oh really?

Desley: yeah. it was actually drawn that way, not sideways

Participant: Oh, ok

Desley: coz it's a Greek letter

Participant: oh

Desley: ictus it is. Which means fish. That's where it all came from. So I think ictus might have even come from what they put on Jesus' cross, you know how they had "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews" or whatever. It all came out of that

Participant: oh, wow

Desley: so, the reason I got onto that is that I was just wondering if it's a symbol of anything like that for you or it's just.

Participant: it was just a spur of the moment fish thing. I also thought... I happen to be a Pisces so I also thought this can double as your star sign. My girlfriends aren't Pisces but...

Desley: did you ever think about, you know, what will my parents say?

Participant: ooh, yeah. I was worried about that for a long time. Walking around the house in socks constantly.

Desley: and they didn't get suspicious or anything?

Participant: no, I just forgot to wear socks one day and mum, this was like so long afterwards it wasn't funny, then she got really upset, and thought I was turning into a bikie, which was bizarre, kind of like, well get over it mum, it's not that big, so

Desley: and you didn't have a Harley sitting in the driveway

Participant: no. and I wasn't wearing a leather jacket or studded belts or anything

Desley: it's not like bikies are that bad

Participant: no, I'm not saying they are that bad,

Desley: but mothers think they are

Participant: that was mum's interpretation of

Desley: of tattoos. So what do you think about other people that have tattoos

Participant: I think it's fine.

Desley: so you don't stereotype them as bikers or anything

Participant: I guess my stereotyping's not based on the tattoo, I guess it's based on the overall picture. Like there's some sort of tattoos I don't like, that I think are just plain tacky and maybe bikish or whatever. Like if you've got like a smoking gun or something along those lines. or the naked women

Desley: that's more about the content

Participant: yeah

Desley: apart from those friends, do you know any people that have tattoos?

Participant: yeah. I know some people that have tattoos. One of my girlfriends has got a beautiful fairy on her ankle, on the inside, it's about that big and it's got wings and it's naked and it's absolutely gorgeous.

Desley: so family?

Participant: no. none of my family

Desley: so do you think it's had any negative effects on your life

Participant: I don't think so. No. it's not big or prominent enough so I don't know whether I'm actually really helping here

Desley: do you think the fact that you have it means that you feel like part of any particular group, apart from that little group of your girlfriends?

Participant: not really, coz I wouldn't class myself as a tattooed person. Because a person who IS tattooed would laugh at me, quite frankly, coz I've got this tiny little fish scrawled on my ankle. That's not a tattoo, you know THIS is a tattoo, or something

Desley: so you don't think it sort of, like, qualifies?

Participant: I don't think it qualifies.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	2	1	1	1	2	3	3	2	3	4	4	2	Sad
Patient	3	1	2	1	5	1	3	2	5	4	3	2	Impatient
Caring	2	1	2	1	3	2	3	3	4	3	2	2	Uncaring
Kind	2	1	2	1	4	2	3	1	4	3	1	2	Mean
Sense of humour	2	1	1	1	3	4	3	3	2	2	4	2	Dull
Sociable	3	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	1	Quiet
Friendly	2	1	1	1	3	3	3	3	3	2	1	2	Nasty
Active	3	1	1	1	4	3	2	3	3	3	3	2	Sloth
Confident	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	3	1	3	3	1	Shy
Organised	2	1	2	1	3	4	2	1	2	4	4	2	Chaos
Hard working	3	1	2	1	4	3	3	2	4	3	3	2	Lazy
Honest	2	1	1	1	4	3	3	1	4	3	3	2	Liar



Participant: First tattoo I got, I always wanted to get tattoos. I don't know why, I just always liked them. The first one I got, the group house I lived in, all the guys had, were into wrestling, WWF, I was into it as well, so everyone got the same wrestling tattoo on their leg. Second one I got was, me and my best mate, we just got the same tattoo done, on my other leg. After that, had a big one on my back. It's a big bulls head. I liked it so I got it done. The ones on my arms are original work. I was thinking I didn't want to get anymore except for original stuff. So, so yeah, I've got, a bloke in Adelaide drew me couple of pictures and I got them on my arms. Probably I started back in high school. I got two tattoos from high school we done in class. Just as a, one of the guys wanted a tattoo gun so we tried it out.

Desley: Oh really?

Participant: Yeah for his design technology project. So, I was about 14. that's about all I can think of really. So no real reasons for them

Desley: So 14 when you got the first ones- what were they of?

Participant: One was a band, symbol of a band I liked. The other was just a little pattern, sort of, nothing important really. Just, that was a test, that was the first one, to use the tattoo gun, to see if it worked

Desley: So you were the guinea pig.

Participant: Yeah, and it worked.

Desley: That was very brave.

Desley: So how old were you when you got the wrestling one?

Participant: 18

Desley: And were you actually into doing wrestling or just watching it?

Participant: Bit of both. There was a big gym mats out in the back yard. We used to jump off the roof and do all sorts of stuff onto 'em.

Desley: So what was it about wrestling that was important to you?

Participant: I don't know. I enjoyed the, watching them beat each other up, I suppose. I think it was, something to sort of communicate with my friends as well. Cause all my friends were into it as well.

Desley: So it gave you something in common?

Participant: Possibly yeah. I don't watch it any more. Started getting a bit silly or maybe I just grew up... but yeah...

Desley: And then the second one, you said on your other leg, you got it with a friend?

Participant: This one here, that's the wrestling one.

Desley: And did you go together to get that?

Participant: No we went at separate times. Me and my best mate went together and got that one. We just... it's the biohazard symbol...

Desley: I've seen someone else with that. I was just trying to remember where.

Participant: Ok, it's a band... but also it means medical waste, but we both liked it, so...

Desley: So you went together and got that?

Participant: That's like our... yeah... cause we hardly ever see each other cause he's in jail... cause he's an idiot...

Desley: How old were you when you got that one?

Participant: Probably about 19. Got one on my back at the same time. I got ones on my arms. I got one two years ago and one three years ago. Going to get some more but just have to work out what I want and where I'm going to get it.

Desley: So what do you think about first - the picture or the place, or is there something else?

Participant: I think I found the pictures first. Then sort out where I want to get them.

Desley: So in the future you expect to do that again?

Participant: Yeah, I would find, I'd probably go to the same guy that drew these cause I like his art work, his style's really good, I'd probably ask him, give us a at your portfolio I wanna get something tattooed. He was more than happy to give me his artwork.

Desley: And did he actually do it - was he a tattoo artist?

Participant: No, he just drew it, and the tattoo artist put it on my arm.

Desley: You didn't have to do a little copyright with his name on it did you?

Participant: No

Desley: So when you had the tattoos, how long did you think about it before you actually went and did it?

Participant: Not too long.

Desley: So like a week or so?

Participant: The ones on my ankles were, the second one I got on my ankle was pretty much an on the spot thing. We walked into a tattoo shop and I was asking him about prices for the one on my back. I'd been thinking about getting that one for about a month, just had to save some

money. And we went in there, and we just said oh we should get the same tattoo on our ankle. But um, it was an on the spot sort of thing. He said I can fit you in. Like right then and there, so we just did it on the spot. But I had to go back a week later for the one on my back, cause it took probably a few hours to do. The ones on my arms I sort of thought about for a couple weeks probably and booked it in and so I had like two weeks for the booking to think about it too. I seen a picture, this one, I seen a picture at my friend's house and I said oh, I like that. Rang up the bloke that drew it and he said yeah, go for it. I said draw some more stuff so he drew some more stuff and I picked one for this arm.

Desley: So it's not for you about the actual tattoo artist, it's the art?

Participant: The art, yeah.

Desley: Can you tell me a bit about why you put them where you put them?

Participant: I don't know what the word would be, but that's just the best place that they would fit on my body. Each one was just sort of suited for there. Anywhere else and it wouldn't, cause it was that big, that's how big the pictures were. Same as this one, same size. The ones on the ankles are just, just got on the ankles cause we just did them...

Desley: And your back was already taken I guess...

Participant: Yeah, these are a bit smaller. the one on my back goes from shoulder to shoulder. That's why I got it there, the best place that it would've fitted.

Desley: So they're mainly all black too?

Participant: I've only got one coloured one, which is that one there, yeah, I like the black. See, the bloke that drew them just draws them in pencil and then goes over them in a bit of ink and they actually come out better on my arms than they did on the paper. The shading's a lot more accurate.

Desley: So is that a function of the artist, the tattoo artist then?

Participant: Yeah, I like certain artists, who I got him to do most of my stuff. Coz he does really good work. I got the first one from one bloke and that one, and half the one on my back. Cause they never finished the one on my back. They only did half of it and got it finished somewhere else and I didn't like them either. The bloke that did this one was really good, very professional. Did a really good job, so I went back to him to get another one.

Desley: So you'd probably go back to him?

Participant: I'd definitely go back to him again, yeah. Just quality work, very professional about it.

Desley: Seems to be important to some people, like this one guy I spoke to, he said if this certain guy died he would never get another tattoo cause its him, or no-one.

Participant: I'd probably still get more tattoos if he went, but...

Desley: But he'd be your first preference?

Participant: Yeah

Desley: What is it about the pictures that you like?

Participant: I have no idea.

Desley: Ok, so you just like them, and that's it?

Participant: I was looking for something cause I was thinking about getting a new tattoo anyway, I was looking and looking and looking at pictures and it just jumped out at me... said oh I'll have that. I asked the bloke for his permission first...

Desley: So is there a place that you wouldn't put a tattoo?

Participant: Probably not.

Desley: What about on your face?

Participant: I probably wouldn't tattoo my face, no.

Desley: And why would that be?

Participant: There's plenty of other places to put it I suppose. I really haven't even thought about it. If I found something that would, that would fit on my face, I possibly would, it depends...

Desley: So you don't worry about like, not being able to get a job or stuff like that?

Participant: No, I work construction and tattoos sort of come with the trade. Ninety percent of the people I work with are tattooed...

Desley: So it hasn't really been a problem for you, having them?

Participant: never been a problem.

Desley: What kind of comments have you had on them?

Participant: Some people say oh, cool tats or give me a look at that and they have a closer look at it. that one's a bit rude, so some people comment on that...

Desley: So you've had no negative comments?

Participant: Except for my mum, grandmother

Desley: Mums have to do that don't they

Participant: My pop asked me if I'd grown up yet- are you finished getting them bloody tattoos, are you grown up yet?

Desley: So do you still like the tattoos?

Participant: Yeah

Desley: All of them? Would you change any of them?

Participant: No

Desley: Or get them off or anything?

Participant: No, I like the three up here. The two down there I don't often see but every time I look at them it just reminds me of good times from the past, which is good. Remind me...

Desley: So does it remind you of the people that you were with?

Participant: People I was seeing at the time, things we did that was silly.

Desley: So it's a nice thing that you've got them there to look at them?

Participant: It's like a photo I suppose. Photo of the past.

Desley: And with the ones on your arms do they remind you of anything in particular?

Participant: Not at all. No, just...

Desley: So it's just more for the artwork?

Participant: I like the artwork, yeah.

Desley: What about on your back, cause you can't really see that?

Participant: I don't often see it. Sometimes I'll have a look at it in the mirror. I know what it looks like, but...

Desley: So what does it mean to you?

Participant: You see, you see it on a lot of outback utes.

Desley: Yeah, I was behind one yesterday. Actually had cowman or something as his numberplate.

Participant: cows... I'm a bit of a country by heart...

Desley: So brought up in the country or something?

Participant: No. But I did spend a fair bit of time in the bush. But umm, maybe that's why I got it. I've always liked... I've always had them on the back of my feral utes. I did the big mudflaps and spotlights and aerials. Maybe that's why

Desley: So does it have any association of that for you, or only if you sort of think about it a lot?

Participant: probably only if I think about it yeah.

Desley: So is it more, with that one, just a picture as well?

Participant: Yeah... a picture of it... mostly the art

Desley: So did any of the tattoos coincide with any particular event in your life?

Participant: Not at all. Except this one...

Desley: they're sort of a period of time aren't they

Participant: yeah. but no. not at all.

Desley: What about the pain factor? Do you consider that to be a bonus or is it just something you have to go through or is it actually a minus?

Participant: I've got a fairly high tolerance to pain so it really didn't bother me. On that one I fell asleep... I was pretty hung over too but... yeah the pain doesn't really bother me.

Desley: So it's just like something...

Participant: Just something that comes with it?

Desley: So it's not like you look forward to it or anything?

Participant: No. don't look forward to it.

Desley: Some people do

Participant: but I don't really, it doesn't worry me. I just, oh well, it hurts a bit

Desley: Do you consider that they're like related, the tattoos, or do you think of them as all separate?

Participant: I think of these two related because the same bloke drew them. But, apart from that no.

Desley: Do you think there's something else you could have done rather than have a tattoo that would have had the same effect for you? Like you could have taken pictures and carried them around, would that be the same, or?

Participant: No, definitely not.

Desley: So how would it be different?

Participant: I don't know. I 'spose its like, mine now. Its part of me, don't have to worry about it, its always going to be there. You don't have to, you can't lose it, I suppose.

Desley: And it won't get ratty around the edges, like a piece of paper would...

Participant: Yeah

Desley: What about the ones on your legs? Like you said, that reminds you of people...

Participant: I don't have a lot of photos. I've got a couple but not many. I don't really need photos, the memories are things you really couldn't really take photos of.

Desley: So it's more about the feelings?

Participant: I didn't originally get them for the memories but they sort of come, what is it, five years on now, you sit back and think oh yeah, that was fun. That was a good time then...

Desley: So that's good to just have that as a reminder...

Participant: Cause I don't see any of the guys anymore. At all. They've all moved away, gone here and done that and...

Desley: So what do you think it'd be like if one of them showed up, like if you ran into them down the street or something?

Participant: that's probably be good. I'd probably go down to the pub and have a beer. Catch up for a while.

Desley: So it'd be sort of like going back to the old times?

Participant: Yeah, old times, catch up and then probably go separate ways again.

Desley: Do you think of yourself as a person who has tattoos or are you a tattooed person?

Participant: I don't know... I don't really understand that.

Desley: Well, its just some people say that you've got to have a lot of tattoos to be a tattooed person and other people just say, oh I'm a person and I happen to have a tattoo on me. I guess it's umm, probably more about how much does it... in the front or the back of your mind when you think about yourself?

Participant: Probably a tattooed person then.

Desley: So it's something you think about when you think about yourself?

Participant: Yeah. Maybe cause I'm always thinking about what I'm going to get next, cause I'm definitely going to get more.

Desley: So what do you think about other people that have tattoos?

Participant: I usually like to look at them. Look at whatever they've got. Might give me some ideas for what I might want to get in the future. I've seen a lot of tattoos, people who have, you might see three or four tattoos the same on different people. That's why I got original stuff cause I know it's not going to be done again. The bloke said he wouldn't let anyone else get it tattooed.

Desley: So do you feel like you belong to some kind of group of people that have tattoos?

Participant: Not really

Desley: so you still feel like...

Participant: Yeah, I'm still me, but I've got tattoos...

Desley: And you're interested in other ones, but it's not like that makes you buddies or something?

Participant: No... it's good to talk about them with other people. I went down the uni bar here not long ago and I said "do you mind if I sit here?" and the guy said "yeah" and started asking me about my tattoos and we just started talking about it, so that was good.

Desley: Ice breaker thing...

Participant: Yeah, I was waiting for Paula to finish. So I had a few beers with these guys, people I didn't know but I was... common ground to talk on...

Desley: Which you might not've had otherwise?

Participant: Yeah

Desley: What would be the opposite of your tattoos?

Participant: The opposite? {pause} In what respect?

Desley: That depends which respect you want to take it. Some people say a different picture. Some people say getting it taken off. Some people say never getting it. For some people, its about the feeling...

Participant: I what thinking more what would the opposite of that picture be, that's what I was thinking. I don't know. A flower?

Desley: So something pretty...

Participant: Yeah...

Desley: What about the ones on your ankles? Say the wrestling one, what would be the opposite of that?

Participant: I was just thinking that. probably getting a surf brand tattooed on me or something. I don't know. It's just a wrestling club, wrestling team or something. Opposite of my back... I don't know, a chicken or something?

Desley: Like a little fluffy chicken?

Participant: Yes, that's a hard question.

Desley: It is, it's a very hard question. What do you think other people think when they see your tattoos?

Participant: A lot of people admire the artwork that's gone into the ones on my arms... the one on my back, if you're at a pub or something a lot of people have said do you drive that yellow thing out the front? Coz they can tell that I've driven that ute to the pub. The ones on my ankles, a lot of people say what are they for, what do they mean? A lot of people, but mostly I just get comments on my arms, I don't know, a lot of people say they're really good. who done them? Is another one I get asked a lot. How long have you had it? coz you can tell if it's decent work if you've had it for a long time and it still looks good...

Desley: So do you think there are people that are put off by the ones on your arms?

Participant: Maybe

Desley: That you know, might not say anything to you because you look too scary or something?

Participant: Possibly

Desley: Cause there's that old, you know, the stereotype of criminals and psychos have tattoos and that sort of...

Participant: I don't know, it's possible. I haven't come across that knowingly though.

Desley: So you basically just had people who think they're cool, or nice art?

Participant: Most people I meet have said that.

Desley: Or interested in...

Participant: A couple of people have said, oh that's a bit, that's a bit rude or whatever. You don't notice it unless you have a really good look at it

Desley: So you haven't been accused of being a woman hater or something?

Participant: Never

Desley: Did you ever worry about someone's reaction to them, like think oh no, mum wouldn't approve or something like that?

Participant: That's probably a plus to getting them. No, I never worried. I didn't think my mum would like them, but I don't think she would really have complained all that much. Cause my old man's got tattoos, my pop's got tattoos, mum's got a tattoo. I thought my nan might say something but she didn't say that much. Cause pop's got tattoos... my pop said the most about them and he's got tattoos on his arms and on his legs.

Desley: It goes one way or the other usually. Who else do you know that's got a tattoo?

Participant: My old man, pop, my niece has got one, none of my mates have any... not my close mates anyway, just the ones I used to hang out with, couple of guys had tattoos.

Desley: and guys at work?

Participant: Yeah, they always get guys to work with tattoos. A lot of my old man's friends have tattoos. Some of them are covered in them. Some look really good. That's all I can think of.

Desley: So is there anything else about your tattoos that you can think of that I might have forgotten to ask you?

Participant: No

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	3	1	1	3	3	2	1	2	3	3	2	2	Sad
Patient	4	4	4	4	5	4	3	1	3	2	4	2	Impatient
Caring	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	1	3	1	5	2	Violent
Kind	3	2	2	2	3	4	3	1	2	1	4	2	Thoughtless
Sense of humour	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	Prude
Sociable	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	Hermit
Friendly	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	1	2	1	3	2	Rude
Active	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	3	3	3	2	3	Lazy
Confident	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	4	3	3	1	2	Quiet
Organised	3	1	1	1	2	4	3	1	3	3	3	3	Jumble
Hard working	2	2	2	1	1	4	2	2	4	4	3	3	Bludger
Honest	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	1	3	2	4	3	Untrustworthy



3 RGT subgroup Impulsive

3.1 RDT subgroup Aesthetics

Participant DA4

Female, 38 years old

Interview date: 23/11/2005

Participant: My name's Jodie. Tattoos, ok. The reasoning behind why I got a tattoo. I'd wanted to get a tattoo for a very long time because when they suddenly became trendy again because I'm a bit of a jump on the band wagon type person I thought oh wow that's great. but then I thought, it's a big decision because it's permanent and even when you get them removed, it still looks a bit tacky so I thought it's a big decision. I thought about it and thought about it and when I really wanted to get one, initially, probably about 30 I got my belly button pierced and i thought that was ok but I was with a guy who was really against tattoos my boyfriend at the time thought they were ugly they're slutty la la la then I just thought, fair enough I won't get one because I don't want to upset him or his family and then my sister got one. She's younger than me, she's eight years younger than me and she got one in a very prominent position on her arm, it was a yin-yang symbol on her arm and I thought it looked good but I thought with the career path I'd chosen I knew that one day I'd be in a position where that wouldn't look quite right and it is about perception so I thought, then also I went to Bali in 2000 and I got one of those Pamela Anderson, barbed wire fake tattoos, the henna ones around my arm and it lasted about two or three weeks and I noticed that people treated me differently. It was summer so it was exposed, and people they treated me differently, I could tell. it was a weird feeling. and then it washed off and left me with a red mark and it got infected so I thought maybe that's an omen. So I let it go for a while and and I thought, well I won't get one then. And then one night we were out with some friends and my friend's brother, it was his birthday, and we'd all had a bit to drink and he said "right, that's it, I'm getting my tattoo tonight" so we went to Kings Cross of course, where they let you get them done when you're drunk and we went to this place, I think it was called Max's, anyway, so we went in there and then I said "right, I'm doing it" and I couldn't find a design that I particularly liked but I knew I wanted to get it on my lower back so I got this tiny little squiggly thing on my back. It's hard to describe, but that's all I got. it was very simple and it was very small.

Desley: so were you still with that boyfriend?

Participant: sorry. I'd broken up with the boyfriend so it was my own choice then and I didn't have him hindering me. So I got this squiggly little line thing, it's hard to describe and then we went to the Bourbon and Beefsteak and danced all night. when I got home the bandage was bleeding, it wasn't pretty but that's not the point. And then, when it healed it was, as I said, just this tiny little line, it's hard to describe, I thought that's a really pathetic tattoo, I'm not happy with that, and in the end my friend's brother whose idea it was didn't even get one when we were there anyway. so it was painful but it wasn't too painful because it's sort of like the needles going in and it's like jab jab jab jab stop. Jab jab jab stop. so it's like pain... relief, pain... relief. it's not a really bad pain. so then I thought right, ok, I always wanted to get a tribal looking one so I'm going to go and I'm going to find a tattooist who can design over the little squiggly crap that I ended up with and make it a lot better and bigger. so that's what I did. I was living in Bondi and I went to this place where another girlfriend had had her belly button pierced and this guy, I went with her and he was really nice and genuine and very spiritual and he just made me feel comfortable because the first guy that did it was this big oaf in Kings Cross, you know, and it's a big thing so I thought ok. I explained the situation to him and he had a look at the existing tattoo and he said, yep, I can do that for you, no probs. so he designed it's a lot bigger now, it's like a tribal thing. he designed a stencil and then he actually stencilled it onto my lower back. then this guy came into the tattoo parlour and he said, he had a cherry ripe hanging out of his mouth and he looked like the biggest thug and the nice guy handed me over to him and said he'll be doing your tattoo. the first thing he said to me what "awright, come in 'ere, do you want a beer?" and I was like "no" and thinking, "should YOU be having a beer" so off he goes and he starts and I thought well, I just didn't know what to say I didn't trust him, I was really scared, but I didn't have anybody with me, I'd decided to go by myself and I was just like "oh my god, this is so not like what I wanted" and then the tattoo gun that he had he said "awww, I haven't got the good one, I left that at home... aw, she'll be right" and I am just freaking out thinking "it'll be alright, it'll be alright" so he finished doing it. I thought he was finished. And he goes 'oh, you moved" and i said "what" and he said "i won't charge you for that bit" so there is an extra dot on it somewhere so that was really frightening. He was hung over, and he was very angry too. he was going on about he'd broken up with his wife and he wasn't seeing his kids and how he was hung over and he was also getting phone calls while he was doing my tattoo to sell pot. I was just like "what's going on?" so it might as well have been a coke can dipped in ink ripping into my back but anyway. and it was finished I was like "ok" and I was fairly happy with it. and then, so he put a bandage on it and I'd been through that before so that was ok. that was the Sunday. on the Wednesday, the following Wednesday I had these massive cramps and pains and I was like

"what's going on, what's going on? oh my god, it's the tattoo, that guy's infected me" and so I went to the doctor and I showed him my tattoo and he said, na it's not infected and he took some blood and urine tests and it turned out I had appendicitis. so I had to go into hospital and have my appendix out so I'm laying there and my back's hurting and then I had to have my appendix out but luckily it was keyhole surgery so they just go in your belly button and make a small incision. It's not like the old days where they carve you up. so yeah, that's the story.

Desley: how old were you?

Participant: that was, that was only two years ago, so I was 35, I was 35.

Desley: when you got the first squiggly one?

Participant: I was 34.

Desley: so it was a year

Participant: about a year later.

Desley: so do you have any reason why you chose the tribal design?

Participant: yeah. um. I wanted something unique and all the ones that I looked at I just didn't like and so knowing that this guy was designing it over my old one, I knew that nobody else was going to have exactly the same design. So I wanted it to be unique. And I wanted it to be in a place where people couldn't see it if I didn't want them to. Because professionally I just don't think it looks right on your arm. Even though I'd love to have one on my arm, I know that it's not the right choice, career-wise

Desley: so is there some reason why it's important to you for it to be unique?

Participant: um. Not overly, oh, yeah, I just wanted it to be, everyone is still getting tattoos, everyone was getting them at the time, it's a very popular thing. I just wanted mine to be my own and not just some run-of-the-mill, like my sister got yin-yang. Heaps of people get that. I just wanted it to be different, coz I'm an individual.

Desley: how long did you think about each of them before you had them?

Participant: a long time, a long time, I'd been thinking about getting a tattoo since my mid 20's. and at first I think what stopped me was the pain factor, but then as more and more people got them and said, oh, it's nothing really, in fact it's quite addictive pain, which I can understand, yeah, it's weird. I got over the pain factor and then I got over the disapproving factor because my sister got one then my brother got one and then I wasn't going out with the guy that didn't like them any more and then I thought, hey, it's my decision, it's not theirs anyway.

Desley: so do you still like it?

Participant: yes I do

Desley: would you change it at all?

Participant: um. I think at the moment that it's looking a little bit faded and somebody I met at a party, this guy who was a genuine, really good tattooist, he said it was probably because of the ink that he used, it wasn't the best and he probably wasn't a very good tattooist. And I thought, well, I should have twigged, shouldn't I, with the Cherry Ripe hanging out of his mouth and him offering me a beer. And selling dope during, yeah. so, yeah. but I still, I still really like the design and I like how it went over the old one.

Desley: so would you have it again?

Participant: yes

Desley: but not with that guy

Participant: definitely not that experience, no.

Desley: would you have another one?

Participant: I've thought about it, because I'm Scorpio, and I've got a girlfriend who likes that little "M" design of the Scorpio and then I thought, well, where will I put it and I thought maybe on my back, on the shoulder, coz that's where she's going to get hers, and it's her first tattoo. I am thinking about doing it.

Desley: is the symbol more important than where you put it?

Participant: equal, equal importance. I've made the decision that I won't get it on my arm, because of career choices and I would always get it in a place where I know it's there and if I want to expose it, I can. And, but you wouldn't ordinarily see it, like if you're wearing a short-sleeved shirt. I wouldn't get it on my ankle. I wouldn't get it on my breast area, I don't think that that... that wouldn't suit me, it's not my style. So, yeah. any area that can be concealed, I'm happy with.

Desley: so you said something about people said the pain was actually addictive

Participant: yeah

Desley: did you find that was a good thing about having it

Participant: yeah, it's kinda weird, because I'd heard a lot of people say that, and I remember in an interview Robbie Williams said that too. Because he's got quite a few, and it's true. Coz I mean I've had two sessions. One, that first squiggly one when I was drunk and the second one when I was totally 100% sober. I guess it kinda is, coz it's a bearable pain, it's, like I said before it's a pain pain pain pain stop. It's a bearable pain. Addictive, I don't know. Addictive, ah...

Desley: I wonder whether it's the bashing your head against the brick wall thing. It feels so good when it's over. Do you know what I mean? and there's this sense of "I did it, and I made it"

Participant: there is. Absolutely. Definitely. I walked out of there very proud. Yeah I did. Absolutely.

Desley: some people think of it as a challenge to their self, you know how much of this can I go through. There was a guy a couple of years ago he broke the world record. He had... twenty... six I think, hours of tattooing

Participant: wow. Don't think I'd do that

Desley: at about 21 there's this point where your body can actually reject it and you can almost die

Participant: oh, really?

Desley: so he could have got to 21 hours and then just have to go "stop, or I'm going to die" but luckily he didn't

Participant: wow. I didn't know that

Desley: yeah. Because of all the ink and the constant trauma. In Samoa, when they do from here to there, and they do it the old fashioned way, they actually hammer it into them. And what they do they do it until the guy passes out and then when he wakes up they start again and it takes about four days straight to do these shorts on. It's a bit too much trauma. So that's very impressive that you made it through

Participant: it took about an hour. It took about an hour.

Desley: would you think about getting it off?

Participant: no, I don't see any need to

Desley: what if you had another boyfriend and you found out he didn't like tattoos?

Participant: oh, I don't rule my life by what boyfriends think any more. That was the last. I never did before either. It was just this one guy that I thought I was madly in love with, so I pretty much listened to everything he said, but I'd never be in that position again. It's my body, it's my

life, and I don't... yeah. mum and dad have accepted it, they're the biggest challenge, so. Coz I'm the oldest, and my sister did it first, then my brother

Desley: that's always the way, isn't it? so why a tattoo and not something else?

Participant: I don't know. it's just something I always wanted to do. Like I got my belly button pierced and that's something that I'd always wanted to do. And I did that late too, I think I was about 30 when I did that, so. Yeah. it was just a natural progression, I think, like piercings, like I've had my ears pierced and the top of my ears. I never wanted my nose pierced or my chin or, I don't think I could do the tongue. Um, I don't know.

Desley: was there something else that you could have done that would have had the same effect for you?

Participant: no.

Desley: are you a tattooed person, or are you a person who has a tattoo?

Participant: mmmm.

Desley: probably not something you think about

Participant: no, I'm a person that has a tattoo, I think. It's not like I go out of my way to look into the latest, you know, designs and stuff like that, but it's just good, like it's fun at parties and at the pub, you know, people talk about tattoos, yeah, I've got one. And some people are surprised, because, yeah

Desley: because they don't see you

Participant: as a tattoo type of person, as a person with a tattoo

Desley: my hardest question.... What would be the opposite of your tattoo, for you?

Participant: the opposite?

Desley: yeah. where I'm coming from, the theoretical background is, the guy said that you can't understand something without knowing what it's not. So you have no concept of hot, unless you know cold, or some other versions of temperature. So to understand what your tattoo is, what would be the opposite. So you can think of that as the opposite of the picture or the opposite of having it, whichever one takes your fancy, or the opposite meaning. Like one person said if I didn't have this tattoo I'd have a picture of so-and-so, which would be another part of him.

Participant: no. I always thought, I always thought of getting a tattoo that was unique, and also a little bit mysterious, and that's what the tribal is, because the only other thing I thought of was maybe Chinese writing but then I thought of the old joke that it could end up with saying "beef and black bean sauce" when you want it to say "joy and happiness". Um, the opposite of it. If I thought of a tattoo as something that was permanent and forever, then the opposite of that would be maybe my fear of commitment, because my parents are divorced. Maybe that would be the opposite. Because this is permanent. It's not going anywhere, it's not coming off, so maybe, yeah, it's something that's going to stay with me for ever, whereas a relationship always eludes me

Desley: do you think that links at all into that guy who said he didn't want you to have one?

Participant: probably. It probably is a rebellious act, after I broke up with him, yeah. definitely.

Desley: so you said you were alone for the first one, but not

Participant: oh no, the first little one I had a friend

Desley: sorry – the other way round

Participant: I had someone with me for the first one and for the second one I was by myself.

Desley: and the person you went with the first time ended up not getting one.

Participant: that's right

Desley: so what do you think it means to other people that see your tattoo?

Participant: it's usually, oh, wow, that's nice, or you know, that's different, or... usually it's a positive response, or it's like, oh, you've got one, ok.

Desley: so they're a bit surprised?

Participant: It's a bit of surprise, or a positive response, but, people are funny with tattoos. I've found either you really like them and you get one, or you just don't like them at all. There's no happy medium with tattoos.

Desley: there doesn't seem to be. I had a poster up at uni and this woman came up and just started sprouting about how bad they were.

Participant: yeah, exactly.

Desley: What kind of reactions have you had, do your parents know?

Participant: yeah, my parents know. My sister broke the barrier, then my brother got one, so me getting it was just like, oh, yeah, whatever. So I showed them and it was no big deal

Desley: so you weren't particularly worried about a reaction from anyone, that might have influenced whether you got it or not?

Participant: no, not at all

Desley: do you have an opinion of other people with tattoos?

Participant: yeah, they don't bother me. In fact I really like, I think on guys, they can be very sexy, like on guys who've got the barbed wire, like arm bands. I think they look great. I live at Bondi so there's tattoos everywhere as you can imagine and I think tastefully done ones look very sexy on a man

Desley: so not the full sleeve

Participant: no, I wouldn't, I don't think I've ever been out with a guy... no, that's never attracted me, the full sleeve. And then there's pictures of people with like the face done, there's a guy that's got the lizard skin done, on his face.

Desley: there's a guy that's got jigsaw puzzle

Participant: jigsaw puzzle, yeah. this was actually like green, there, like lizard skin. That's just, I don't know what that is. There's a guy from Hell Raiser the movie, is that the jigsaw guy?

Desley: I'm not sure. He's been on all kinds of stuff. He's actually got implants here that look like horns

Participant: I think I've seen him on some documentary

Desley: and he's getting the bits coloured in in different places around the world, to like complete himself or something

Participant: ok, coz it's like bits of a puzzle

Desley: yeah. so it's quite interesting

Participant: I can respect that that's what he wanted to do and people liking to tattoo all over their body but I don't find it particularly appealing or attractive myself.

Desley: so, it hasn't had any negative effects on your life?

Participant: no. not like. I've got a boyfriend now. He doesn't like them. He hasn't got one, he would never get one and, but, he doesn't pass judgement on me, I wouldn't let him anyway. He knows I've got it and that's that. Yeah.

Desley: does the fact that you have a tattoo mean that you identify with any particular group of people, for example tattooed people, or people that have a tattoo on their lower back, or people that are rebellious?

Participant: yep. oh, I guess it's people who have jumped on the tattoo band wagon because I think a lot of people have them. I don't know what the percentage is in society. Do you know any figures?

Desley: last I heard it was ten, fifteen percent

Participant: it seems like more, coz I live in Bondi. Yeah I do, I feel like I'm part of a group of people that have made a decision to have something that they love put permanently on their bodies and I do feel like part of a secret club, yeah, I do, because outwardly you wouldn't know that I have got one. Yeah yeah I do. It does make me feel like part of something, people who have them, yeah.

Desley: so do you distinguish between people who have tattoos like you and the ones that have the full sleeve, or are they all the same to you?

Participant: oh, I guess they're like extremists. Compared to me they're extremists and there's no covering that up, there's no going back from that. I actually just saw a picture of, coz I buy the gossip magazines and ten percent of it you can just believe. I saw a picture of Ryan Phillippe, you know the actor that's married to Reese Witherspoon, and he's got a sleeve! Who would know. And I don't know if he had it on painted for a movie, but he was out with the kids and he had a sleeve, and I'm thinking, wow, I've never noticed that. In a movie you can cover it with makeup

Desley: like Angelina Jolie covers hers up

Participant: yeah.

Desley: I noticed in one of the Tomb Raiders you can just see a little bit if you're looking for it. so is there anything else about your tattoo that you think's important? As in what it means, or what effect it's had on your life.

Participant: I guess it was a bit rebellious and I guess it was, in a sense and I guess it was a bit of a "fuck you" to the old boyfriend because I did tell his mother and I still kind of was in a bit of

contact, we were still in regular contact, his mother and I and she was probably the most upset person that um

Desley: that you split up?

Participant: that we split up and that I got that tattoo because she was dead against them as well but I just said to her "it's my life and I chose to do it" then she was alright. She was just as motherly towards me but I guess the main reason I told her was so she would tell him.

Desley: so you wanted to get at him?

Participant: yeah, I did. Yeah, on a level that is tangible, yes, but maybe there were different reasons for doing it. I guess that was probably the driving factor and also that I'd been thinking about doing it for a long time and I'd always wanted one.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
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Caring	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	4	3	4	Apathetic
Kind	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	1	1	4	2	4	Cruel
Sense of humour	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	4	2	4	Boring
Sociable	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	3	Introvert
Friendly	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	4	2	4	Cold
Active	3	1	1	1	3	3	3	2	2	3	2	3	Lazy
Confident	3	1	1	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	2	Shy
Organised	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	3	4	3	Disorganised
Hard working	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	Bludger
Honest	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	3	1	5	3	5	Deceitful



Participant: At the moment I have four of them, I had intended to get one last year which I'll probably touch on later. But I think I mentioned when I first met you I actually never used to like tattoos it was the cultural upbringing of mine. It was seen as I grew up as something that people of lesser intelligence or prostitutes or bikies or someone actually used to decorate themselves. It wasn't considered to be part of just the average person's society. And of course at a certain point they became fairly popular. And until about six years ago I had never thought about getting a tattoo it wasn't in my head. they were things I thought I didn't particularly like and I never really gave any thought to it. and I think you asked me before how I came about having a tattoo. I honestly don't know why I decided to have one. Just one day something came into my head and said I'd like to have a tattoo. So I'd made up my mind that if I was going to get something I wanted something that no-one else had. I left it in abeyance in my mind, didn't really think about it much. Anyway... And I should stress, I don't particularly like most tattoos people have which is another thing that may sound a bit strange for someone who has them. Anyway, I went over to Nepal and I done a trip over there and I came back and I'd bought a lot of t-shirts and all that crap that people buy over there. And one day I was walking along and I just happened to have my head down and I looked and on my shirt was a particular design. Oh, sorry, that's right, I remember what it was, it was a mountain range which was obviously the Himalayas and it had a particular design on top of it which was actually the ones I have on my shoulders. It was only one of them. But I just looked at that and I thought that is just a nice simple little symbol, I'll use that. In my mind, it didn't have any particular significance. There must have been something appealing about that particular shape or you know, um, there was just something about it. so I thought, well, I'll have that. I always decided I wanted something it would be something simple, it would be not something coloured, I don't like coloured tattoos. It would be, and it would be based on something meaningful. At the time I didn't even know what this meant, and I later found out it's supposed to represent the eyes of the Buddha, that's why it has that particular round piece in the middle. So that was basically it. I was just walking along and I saw this thing on a t shirt and I thought, I'm going to do it. So I just went straight out and had these tattoos put on. And then my second one, I'll get these in order I have on my lower back. It was also taken off a shirt I had it was actually a dress shirt. When you closed the shirt up, it actually had two halves of a simple pattern, as you button the shirt up it made one complete pattern, it had a letter "N" in there, which I have no idea what it means, and I just

thought I'd get that done. I liked the shape of that, I was just putting the shirt on one day and I thought, no-one will have this shirt, it was not a mass-produced shirt, so if I put this on, no-one's going to have this particular tattoo. So I went in and had the "N" changed to an "M" because my name is Max, it was the logical thing to do. and the other one was actually taken off a t shirt as well that I bought in Nepal. It had on the front a big round Mandala, and in the centre it had a small piece that I thought would be the piece I would use for my tattoo because the rest of it was quite large, probably eight or nine inches in diameter and I didn't want anything that big on me, so I had a portion of it taken out and printed up and then I had that put on my leg, just sort of like on my upper thigh there. So that's basically how I came about to have them. My original view on tattoos was that I didn't particularly like them. In fact I really disliked them as I was growing up. It was the representative thing in my mind of a lower class in society that you wouldn't mix with. As I mentioned it was like bikies, prostitutes. I've always loved music but I always disliked the representation, or the way a lot of musicians represented themselves. So the thought of having a tattoo like, say, a heavy metal rocker was always repulsive to me. Coz now it doesn't particularly bother me. So yeah, it was just a societal expectation at the time. Part of my upbringing. Where today, a lot of people are brought up with it, some people their kids have tattoos, they're quite happy to have them. Half the people that I know don't like tattoos at all. In fact most of my friends don't have them. They don't really discuss them with me at all actually, to tell the truth. So that's really how it came about. It's just, I have no idea as to why I suddenly decided I wanted them. I'll probably refute that a little bit. probably a part of it is that I separated 10 years ago and I think there's a stage you go through. I joke with my friends and say I was going through male menopause. I wasn't, I mean, it's just a joke, but I suspect that when you've come out of something unhappy you like to actually identify with yourself and I think that's probably part of the reason I actually got them. But I'm not, as I've never had anyone talk to me about it, I'm not 100% sure on that. It's like I'm saying I was unhappy now I'm going to do something for myself that makes me feel significant to myself, so I put them on there. But other than that, I never look at them. It's not like I go round watching myself all the time, I never look at them. I don't think I've hardly ever looked at them since I put them on. I suspect that was probably the driving force behind it, is that you try to do something for yourself. i did other things as well, I bought myself a 4 wheel drive, I booked a holiday overseas, I joined some clubs, I went out and met different people. It was just an extension of moving on, I think, in some ways.

Desley: so, just for interest, were you married for a long time?

Participant: I've actually been married twice. The first time I was married for seven years and the second time was a short marriage, it was only 4¼ years.

Desley: but you were married or with somebody from when you were a teenager, or...

Participant: no, no. the first person I was married to I was actually 26 at the time. Yeah, and the second one I was actually about 36. so I had a little interim period there where I was on my own and my second one I was with for 4¼ years and I've been single now for 10 years.

Desley: I was just wondering whether that was relevant. Coz a lot of people get married very young and haven't actually come to know themselves

Participant: well having said that, I do agree there is a great deal of knowing yourself in this. I think that in my marriages I gave up a lot of myself. I was also a very selfish person. I know they're very contradictory terms. I came from an only parent with no brothers and sisters, I was extremely poor, but I had a very strong independent streak and it was quite hard for me to actually be with someone. But through my relationships I found that I actually gave a lot of myself and wasn't moving in the direction I'd like to in my life, with my partners, even though my first partner was a very good person, so I think that the second time I went out on my own I actually had made up my mind that I wanted to do all the things that suited me, because I don't affect anybody by doing them. I've said to my friends, I can be selfish and never hurt anybody, by being on my own. So I've gone out and done a lot of the things I wanted to do. I may have met someone who wanted to do those things, I don't know, they may have been happy with everything I do, but if you're in that position, in your life, you should do the things you want to do. I've traveled to lots of countries, if I want to go out til 4 o'clock in the morning and come home I don't have to worry about if anyone else wants to come home at midnight. You know, you just do what it is you want to do. So I think the idea of possibly putting a tattoo on myself was like saying "well I can do whatever I want to do", even TO myself, it's not going to bother anybody else. I can put this on me, I can be happy with it, no-one's going to question it and I just do things my way. So I think that was, yeah, I do think it was partly driven by my second marriage because I was very unhappy through most of that and I have absolutely no doubt in some ways it was reactionary. It's almost like I was saying I was marking myself for being unhappy.

Desley: do you mean like punishing yourself?

Participant: I'm not sure that it was punishing myself. I think it was like saying, I think it was like saying I AM a significant person, the other person didn't think so I've done something significant with myself, by actually putting something on me.

Desley: so was it more about taking yourself back?

Participant: I think so, yeah. that's the closest thing I can come to in my own analysis of how I felt and reacted at the time. although I did not get my tattoos until about 4 years after I'd separated. It wasn't like I rushed out and was a reactionary going, you know, oh my God, my life fell apart I'd better do something with myself. I didn't do that. But my own general feeling was it's probably what, part of what prompted me to put them on, yeah.

Desley: so over what time span did you get the tattoos?

Participant: only over about a year. I had them all done...

Desley: so you had the two shoulders at the same time?

Participant: yep. they were both done the same day. And I've lost track of the timeframe but the other two were done probably in the last, sorry, in the year to 18 months after I had the first two. And I was going to get one done last year, which I've already picked out, and for some reason I just never got around to it. Then when summer comes you have to have a couple of weeks where you don't actually get salt water on them. So I thought I don't want to get it done through summer, so maybe through winter I'll get one more. I will say that'll be probably be my last one. I'm not going to get overloaded with them.

Desley: we'll start with these ones.... Why did you put them on your shoulders?

Participant: on my shoulders? I honestly haven't got a clue. I don't know. It's got nothing to do with me wearing this top today. No, I really don't know. Just, I thought about where to put it, probably because it's a part that you actually see quite easily. I mean, the only time anyone

would see them is if I had a shirt like I've got on, or if I was at the beach or something. Other than that I don't particularly care if anyone sees them or not anyway

Desley: see, some people would put them there so they could cover them up

Participant: no I just, I think in my own mind, it's probably because it was frontal that, and you have to bear in mind that you do do something because you like people to look at it. I'm not particularly concerned if people look at them. And I've got them on my back and my thigh and people would never see them unless I was down at the beach or if I went out with someone, of course, they might see them. But I guess probably the first time was being frontal is that if you are in that position where someone sees you, then that would be the first thing they'll see, so I guess it had that kind of significance. That it was in front, it was visible, and I felt at the time it was something significant I was doing. So of course, I'm.... it's like, someone, like say, a woman has a hair do, she wants someone to look at it. I had some tattoos, at the time, and as I said, it's not particularly significant to me now, probably felt "look what Max has done to himself, do you like this?" you know, it's just a natural reaction. See, probably that's the reason, I think, yeah.

Desley: and it could have been just to test, you know, you said it was about taking yourself back, so putting it where someone can see it is a bit like testing out how they react to you.

Participant: well, I think there was another thing too. I've been going to a gym for about ten years and I usually wear a singlet in a gym. This is just coming to me as we're talking, I didn't consciously think it at the time. It's probable because I was in a gym and tattoos have become a bit popular, unconsciously I put it in a place that could be sighted, for instance, because I always wear singlet tops in the gym. I don't like anything else coz they get too hot. So I guess there's probably something deep down with that significance, yeah.

Desley: so was there any reason you got two, and not just one?

Participant: I do remember significantly in my mind that I felt it provided balance. I know it might sound a bit strange, but the thought of having something on one side, even though I've done it on my leg, but up here I felt that it needed to be balanced, and if I had two different things it would not provide balance. So somewhere in my mind I remember distinctly thinking,

you need to have balance. And I would say that is probably representative of the fact that I like balance in my life. For instance, I have just here a whole heap of financial stuff, I've just been to see a financial advisor, and he did an analysis of my particular position and asked how I like to do things. I'm a balanced investor, you see. I don't sort of stick to conservative, I don't go too high in my risk, those sort of things. And in my life I always liked things to be balanced. I got to a gym, I look after myself really well, but I like to go out and have a drink with friends. I don't believe I should live my life like a monk and I don't believe I should be a slob. I like to have all things in balance, so it allows me to stay in control of my life. So there was definitely, as I said I remember it distinctively, that I liked the idea of balance. In fact I've even joked to people who said to me, why didn't you have just one, if I had just one I'd fall over coz of the weight of it. So it was just a balance thing, yeah.

Desley: so for you, what would be the opposite of balance?

Participant: to not be in control. It's always been important to me in my life to have control. Now between us, and you told me you deal in Psychology, the reason I think this is because I was an only child of an only parent. I suspect that my mother was Schizophrenic. She was, as I was very young, very controlling and actually quite violent. But it was a, she was, to all intents and purposes 70% of the time just your average person. Little old lady. She went around, she did everything she had to do, worked a job, la la la, provided a home, but the other 30% was an alter personality and so I grew up with that. It was a very difficult upbringing. So always in my life as I was young, I couldn't control anything coz you're a child, you can't control the things in your life that make you unhappy. As you get a bit older you want to be able to control your life. So that's why I answered there, I think not being able to be in control, not being in control, is the opposite of balance to me. If I keep everything on an even keel, I'm happy. If it's out of balance I'm not happy and I think that has descended from my upbringing and if I haven't got that sense of control in my life, it doesn't mean I want to control people, it just means I like the feel of, I like to feel my life is safe and that's what the balance is, because if you feel safe about where you are, if you feel comfortable where you are. Because if I start to feel uncomfortable about something I know I'm not in the right place, or in the right situation. So yeah, that's what it is to me.

Desley: so when you say uncomfortable, is that just a feeling that you get?

Participant: yeah. it's a very uneasy feeling. Very uneasy. Yeah.

Desley: so then you wouldn't feel safe?

Participant: no.

Desley: are you able to say why it's important for you to feel safe?

Participant: I think it's just a part of my emotional health, really, I mean, safe or unsafe can be bounded by many things. You like to feel you're safe but I could walk out the door and be run over by a car, so was I safe or not? But, no, it's just that feeling of, that there are not things in life that intimidate you. The closest thing that I can get to is actually something that Freud said, and I hope you don't mind me quoting it, he said that what he found, the closest thing he could find to the meaning in life was the need to be an individual and to escape displeasure, in other words, the uncomfortable situations that arise in life. I mean, why don't I live in a tent? Because I'm more comfortable in a house. Why would I drive a car in traffic, rather than a motor bike? Because I feel safer. There's that area that you go into in your life where you use the things that are available to make your life not unpleasurable. Why does a child cry, or a baby cry when it's hungry, because it's facing displeasure, it's getting the hunger pain. When it has the mother's breast milk, it has the pleasure, it feels comfortable in life again, it can go to sleep and there's nothing to worry about. So yeah I think that's the way I feel about it, yeah. There are more things in life but you can't always have that. It'd be nice if we could.

Desley: so, you talked about how the tattoos on your arms were the eye of the Buddha, but you found out afterwards, after you had them

Participant: hmmm. I suspected before that they were, but it was afterwards, I actually, when I did my trip to Nepal there was a couple of people I met over there who lived back up in Port Macquarie and they're still to this day good friends although the guy's gone off the rails a bit. It was a guy and his girlfriend. I met them over there and this particular lady Kerry said to me she thought at the time they were, I pointed this thing out on my t shirt while we were over there as well and she said to me she thought it was the eyes of the Buddha, as it turned out it was, so. That was the first I knew about it, yeah.

Desley: so with the other two symbols, on your back and your leg, have you found out if they mean anything?

Participant: ah, no I haven't no. because as I said one was the smaller insert in a mandala, which was quite a significant diagram and the other one was just something off a shirt which I guess someone just sat down and designed and thought they liked the look of it, so I don't actually think it probably had any real significance other than to the person who made the design.

Desley: so I think we were talking about why you put these on your arms, is there any reason you put the other ones on your back and on your leg?

Participant: no, I don't think so. I can't remember having any reason other than because I already had two on my shoulders that, I just thought, where else do I want to put it. I thought my stomach is an unusual place, it's like a very very soft tissue area, so I probably wouldn't get it done there. I didn't like the idea of one high on my shoulder, on my back, because that's something that a lot of women do, not that I'm relating to myself in that sense, I didn't see it as an area most men would put a tattoo, at the time. So, honestly I don't know why I put them there, I just thought one on my back, one on my thigh, and I went out and did it.

Desley: so they were together or, did you get them at the same time?

Participant: no, I had them done probably, look, I've lost track of time, probably about six months apart, I guess

Desley: so was there any of that intuition you talked about in the placement then? I've read that some people believe that the body tells you where it would like the thing placed.

Participant: the one on my back I think was probably because a lot of people just put one on their back somewhere so that was probably part of the reason I did that. And I think part of the reason that I did them in the areas that I did, I mentioned that I couldn't have done one on my stomach because there's a lot of soft tissue there, but the lower part of your back and your thigh tend to be quite hard areas and I probably thinking in my mind now that because you don't get skin movement the design would stay fairly set. For instance, if you were to put something say on a soft area, as the skin moved it would move the design. Even though I'm not standing

around looking at them, and probably no-one else is, but what you look at is what you see, so that if, for instance, you're in a soft tissue area and say the skin folds over, you don't actually see what you really put there, for instance if I had a piece of art work and I put it on the wall and you had a look at it and then you look at it again in the night it would look different because it has a shadow on it. I think I do kind of recall that it had something to do with being a more harder part of the body and keeping the shape exactly the way it was.

Desley: so does that apply to the idea that it might sag later on as well?

Participant: no, I never ever thought about later on. There's another thing that's flashing through my mind, so it's probably got something to do with it, I remember a mate of mine telling me that his brother got a tattoo, long before I ever had any. And I think he had it in the middle of his arm or something and he said he watched his brother one night moving his arm and changing the tattoo. So somewhere probably in my mind there was something about if I put it on, I don't like the idea of it changing and I'm thinking as we're talking, it actually goes with what I said about the balance in life. I like things to stay on fairly even keel. So somewhere in my mind is probably the fact that I don't like the idea of it changing. I don't like my life, I like my life changing but I don't like it changing in an uncomfortable way. So if I can make changes I'm happy with, that's fine, so I think there's a significance there between change and distortion and balance. That's just what came into my mind, so if it's come into my mind, it's probably right.

Desley: and also if it's going to change when you move, it's not necessarily something you have control over.

Participant: that's possibly true too. And if it changes when I move, it's not what I originally got, is it. just to look at, visually. So yeah, yeah, that's a fair assumption, I'd imagine, yeah.

Desley: so, with any of the tattoos, how long a period did you think about it before you went out and had them?

Participant: with my first tattoo I probably only thought about it for maybe a matter of a few weeks. And, as I said, I, I'd thought about it and I have no idea why I thought about it. Honestly, unless something comes in my mind later on. I'd thought about getting one, at that stage I thought about getting one, and it was only a very loose thought. It's not like, oh wow I have to

get out and get a tattoo, I have to do it. I hadn't really made a decision on it, I said, I wouldn't mind getting one and I sort of thought if I see something I'll get it. that was basically how it came into my head. it was neither important nor unimportant, it was just a loose thought. And as I said to you earlier I was walking along one day and just casually glanced down and it just popped into my mind, that's it. and then I actually rang up that day about getting it done and then made the appointment which I think was for the following day and went in and had it done. And of course in that time I'd decided to get two, rather than one.

Desley: and with the other ones, about the same amount of time, that you think about them?

Participant: no, once I did the first two I decided I would have a few more. I'd never given the thought to how many, I mean, even today, I said I'd probably get one more, I haven't really thought well one more is it. I mean life is constantly changing. What I think now in six months' time I might turn around and say I don't want another one, I might turn around and say I want six. I don't know what I'll do. That's highly unlikely. You know. I mean, it's just a case of whatever you think at the time. The one I decided, I'll go back and tell you about the one I think I might get. It's things that just pop into my mind, that might inspire me. I was watching a movie, just a cheap B grade movie called King Arthur which was set around the 16th Century, maybe earlier, probably more like the 12th Century and I was watching this movie and there was a scene where there's this barbarian comes onto the screen and he had a tattoo on his forehead and I just liked the look of it and I thought no-one would think to do that tattoo. And I've actually had the movie out since last year coz I wanted to draw it on a piece of paper, put it on pause and draw it on a piece of paper and I watched the movie and I actually missed the first part where this guy came on with this tattoo on his forehead. It was so insignificant, but I realized in my mind I had picked it up really fast, because when I watched the movie the second time I actually missed it. so I rewound it and I had trouble finding it. so it was just something that I saw very quickly and it was more in my mind's eye than consciously thinking about it, so if I do get one done, it will be that particular... I have no idea what it means and I just was struck by the fact that it was simple, it was of another time, no-one else would have that particular tattoo and if I did get it done I thought I would have it done in the middle of my back and it would be approximately 4 inches or so in length. So whether I get it done or not I don't know.

Desley: I think you talked about this already, but do you feel like any of your tattoos coincided with any particular events in your life?

Participant: I said to you before, absolutely no doubt that separating from my ex-wife was significant in the first one. I was looking for my own individualism I think. In that particular marriage, as I said, I was very unhappy and I think I just needed to, I think I just needed to do something that just said, yep, you're worthwhile, you can do whatever you want to do and it doesn't have anything to do with anybody else. So I went out and did it. as I said, I did other things as well. I did lots of other things that were totally unrelated. Like I said I went overseas and sort of moved on.

Desley: are there other things you think you could have done instead, or was having the tattoo something?

Participant: I never think of it as doing anything instead, because, as I said, I did do lots of other things. I found a lot of things were significant. Like after we split up I started renting a unit, I remember the day I went in, moved in there, I went and got some things that I needed and as I was getting these things and putting them into what was going to be my home for a short period of time I remember feeling in myself how good it was that I was making something the way I wanted it, even though in my marriage we had never had any hassle over homes, it was just the thought of controlling my own environment. As you see here I live on my own, I've only been here about six weeks, by the way, and I've done everything the way I like it here, the way I want. I'll change things over time. Yeah, it's just being able to control my own environment and I think that was just significant about being able to do something like that, yeah. I've always been a physical person for a start, I've done sport all my life and the body's always been an important thing to me for some reason, in the, how you use it, how you look after it, it's just something I went through in high school. I picked up a book on nutrition one day, and suddenly the body became important, how you look after it. but I'm not obsessive about it in any way. I love having a drink with my friends and eating certain sorts of food but most of the time I just look after myself. It was just something that came to me one day in a teenage flash in the library when I picked up a book.

Desley: do you still like your tattoos?

Participant: yes. Very happy with them

Desley: you wouldn't change them at all?

Participant: never change them, never get rid of them. Very happy

Desley: you talked about getting another one... what about the pain aspect?

Participant: in what sense?

Desley: well, some people actually enjoy the pain... some people would like... if they could have anaesthetic they would have a tattoo

Participant: yes, there is an element of the fact that, but in a certain way I pride myself in being able to take a little bit of pain but it's not like I'm into self flagellation. It's not like I'd like someone to tie me up and whip me or anything, no. I think, I think of it as being a combination of two things. I think it's A) being a man, and I may impinge on what I'm going to say. I think it's like a primordial thing, that as a man you like to be able to endure things so I do remember when I had mine done, and they were quite painful my tattoos, of thinking A) I'd like to be able to handle it, because obviously everybody else does and B) that I felt that it was good for me to be able to handle something like that, like I was proving I could do it. I've done that with other things, I'm actually normally quite a hairy person, so I get my back waxed coz I get very hairy and it doesn't look particularly attractive and I do that more for myself than any body else either. So actually when I get that done I sort of, it's not like you enjoy it, it's just that you think, yes, I can handle this better than a lot of other people. For instance, I had a mate of mine had his back done, coz his girlfriend wanted him to do it and from what I believe he nearly fainted, because he didn't like the pain. He got all hot and sweaty and had to go home and lie down. When I get it done I just walk out like nothing's happened. So, yeah, I think it's just a macho thing really, to absorb a little bit of pain. But having said that, I don't like pain, I think it's just the fact that you feel good about yourself if you actually have handled it. for instance, if I was to hurt myself at work, I'd like to think that I was able to handle what happens, it's not like I'm going to fall apart over it. and in my job I do get hurt every now and again, coz I work in mining. So, yeah, I think it's just a macho thing really. Yeah. the pain aspect. I certainly wouldn't like to, I would never deliberately do anything to inflict pain on myself, I think that's, that's not something I could do. I try to avoid pain if I can

Desley: ok. But getting a tattoo is deliberately inflicting pain on yourself.

Participant: no, coz I didn't know if they hurt because I'd never had one.

Desley: but after the first one, like before you went back for the back one

Participant: so I already knew that it was going to hurt when I went again. Yeah, of course, I think to a certain extent there's a degree of accomplishment in saying yes, I was able to do this but there was not a part of me going in there saying, I'm going to enjoy getting hurt, you know.

Desley: and there wasn't a part of you that was going, I need to go through this pain for certain reasons?

Participant: yeah, no, there probably was, in that there was a relativity between having done this, and some words just popped into my head, was "marking myself" and I take it all back to my childhood, in that I had a very very painful childhood so to certain extent I related to the tattoos some pain in that this has been a part of my life, pain is a part of my life, so I think I should be able to handle it. there was definitely a part of that in me. Definitely.

Desley: and if we go with what you've been saying, too, at least this was a pain that you could control, in that, it was your choice to go through it.

Participant: that's right

Desley: versus someone else inflicting pain on you when you don't, or if you have an accident.

Participant: that's right. but having said that you still have to remember when I had my first tattoo I didn't know how much they were going to hurt. I had no idea of the degree of pain. For all I knew they may not hurt at all because so many have them. Most people don't have them done like this, they have them done with the colours and everything so I don't know if there's any difference in how you have one of those

Desley: I think round the front is probably more painful, from what I've heard

Participant: yeah, that's right, there definitely was some connection between what I saw as my emotional pain growing up and the physical pain of being able to do something like that. Definitely. I've known that all along, since I've had these, yeah.

Desley: I tend to think that that's the thing. Sometimes physical is easier to cope with than emotional pain.

Participant: well it is, because physical pain lasts for a finite amount of time but emotional pain one way or another is always there. You do go through healing processes. Let's say someone gets married, they split up, we all know it's a great trauma, everyone does, you meet someone else and become happy so. But aspects of that emotional trauma will always be there. I've seen it with so many people over the years that always in their next relationship, even if they think they're completely happy there is something there. I mean you know as well as I do, whatever goes out of the conscious mind into the unconscious mind, will always be there. But physical pain, I can cut myself, it can heal and there'll be no evidence of it ever being there. so that's the difference, yeah, I mean. The Chinese knew that. That's how they used to like to torture people by doing things that affected them mentally, like the Chinese water torture, so, yeah, I mean the emotional pain of anything is always there, somewhere, even if it's not risen to consciousness it's always there, yeah. so something that is physical I know is going to go away. For instance, again, so many things pop into your head as you talk. When I was a little boy I talked a lot in class, so it was quite common for me to get the cane off the teacher and I remember going down to get the cane off the teacher once and he gave me two cuts on each hand, which was quite severe in school, and quite painful but as I walked out of his office I remember thinking, well, this is going to go away, it's only going to hurt for a short period of time, so I wasn't particularly worried about it. but if something emotional happens to me, I know that it's going to drag on, so, and if it's something severely emotional, I know it's going to take a long time to get over. So in that sense physical pain doesn't particularly worry me, but at the same time I don't want anything too intense, like I'd hate to be in a car accident or something, I mean, perish the thought but yeah, these are just things that, they just come and go, only transitory.

Desley: do you think there's any.... Sometimes I wonder whether you can use physical pain to help you deal with emotional pain.

Participant: you can. you definitely can because I've done it in my mind, the thought that even though I know it's not particularly true that I know that if I can absorb something physically painful, that I can actually get over of something emotionally painful. Like, I can't think of an analogy. That's the only way I can put it, is that to, I think the best way of putting it is if you can handle some sort of suffering, you can handle another kind of suffering even if they're unrelated. And I think that's how I think it is. Like a person who's been hungry for a long time, say in a poor country, could handle having a tattoo, probably. I'm not saying they all could coz there's people, everyone has a different sensitivity to things. I think that someone, someone who's been in a prisoner of war camp and known great deprivation can quite often handle other traumas. They may not, because the trauma, they may not like any trauma whatsoever. That's the closest analogy I can make, yeah. That if you can handle one trauma and if you have a reasonably mature mind, you can handle other traumas as well. Having said that, I don't really know what my degree of acceptance of other traumas is. Because I can only relate to how I feel, not anybody else. It's not measurable.

Desley: and you don't know where the line is, where it would become too much.

Participant: exactly, yeah. but again as we're talking, and it comes into my mind, the Germans used to do... tests, for instance one that's in my mind it's with twins. They would have them on opposite sides of a petting with a buzzer and one would push the buzzer and put an electric shock in their twin and they would test the tolerance of one against the other, to see how far the love aspect of the relationship between two siblings would go. See it's a question of what trauma you can take and what could be inflicted. So, yeah, that's just the way I see it. I had something physical, if I got hurt at work, it's unintentional, I work in mining. Something could fall on me and hurt me and I could get hurt quite badly. I see myself as trying to handle that the best I can and any other traumas you have in life you try to handle them the best you can and I see that as part of growing up. When you're a kid you kick your toe on the ground when you're walking down the footpath you want to run to your mother. When you grow up you have something that hurts you and you just have to be able to handle it. because that's the adult world. You don't just run in to mum, you fix it up yourself.

Desley: I wonder, too, if there's some kind of sense of, I've been thinking of accomplishment, but that's not the right word, for after you've had the tattoo and you've been through the pain and you go, yes, I did it. Do you think that relates at all for you, like does that make any sense?

Participant: definitely. Yep. Definitely. It's that feeling of I decided I wanted to do something and I went and did it. It was the same as when I bought the car I bought at the time and I went on the holiday I did and other things and there was just that sense of I want to do this and I've done it. I haven't had to think about what does anybody else think about it. I've done this, I wanted to do it. yes definitely, yeah.

Desley: I was talking it more though about making it through the pain

Participant: oh, ok. Yeah, there was, yeah.

Desley: and I wonder whether, like they say that tattoos are addictive, some people say that

Participant: no, not for me

Desley: I wonder whether that plays a part in it, the fact that people go through this experience with all that pain and they make it out the other end and go, yeah I feel really good. I want to do that again. I don't know, it's just something that buzzes around in my head.

Participant: there probably is a part of that but I'm, I can say I won't do it for that reason. I think there is a part of that. If you go through something I think, yeah, I mean, even if you went through something terrible in your life and I'm only talking about me personally because I don't know what other people think. I think that sometimes the feeling of accomplishment, not what you went through, but the feeling of accomplishment afterwards is the feeling you like to have. That good sensation. if you do something and you get a good sensation, you'd like to have that feeling again. It's not that I want to go and have another tattoo so that when it's all over I can say, wow, I've got that feeling again. If I could have the feeling without having the tattoo, it would be good. I guess it's like when people have sex and they reach the final moment and they go, that feeling was so great. But you can't have it all the time, can you? It's only the end result. So, that nice feeling is what you like to have. In anything. It doesn't matter what it is. If you do a good job at work, at the end of the day you think, I feel really good about that. I hope tomorrow I feel like that at the end of the day. The next morning you might get up and go, gee I wish I didn't have to go to work today, but you'd like the feeling that you had. So it's just that end pleasurable feeling of anything, whether it's getting a tattoo or anything you decide to do. And I

would relate it to what I said before about the Freudian stuff because you deal in that stuff you may or may not know whether that's right or not but that's the way I feel. It's just that good feeling that you have over anything. It's when you shave yourself, for instance, and I apologise for not being shaved today, and you think, oh that looks better than what it did before. So yeah, I think.... There's no doubt about it.

Desley: I used to swim but I always say the best part is the shower at the end, because you know you've done it.

Participant: funny you say that, because only a few days ago I said to the guys in the gym, this is the best part now, have a shower and I'll go sit down and read the paper

Desley: because you know you've done it

Participant: exactly. Yeah. in your mind, in my mind, it's just a sense of having done what you set out to do. In any endeavour. It's an old saying to get yourself to do something, like say you're a runner, the first step is to get yourself out the door to go and do it. people who procrastinate and say, I'm going to do it tomorrow, never get anywhere. The people who actually do something will get somewhere. You find that in life all the time. A friend of mine, her daughter, she's talking about going over to Europe next year. And I said, so why isn't she going now? Oh, she wants to sell her car and she wants to do all this... and I said, but she could do that now. Why is she going next year? Why doesn't she do it now? And the reason I said that to her was because in a year a lot of things could happen. She might meet someone. She might not travel for ten years. She might get, let's use the analogy I had before, she might walk out the door and get run over by a car, she might die, she might never go. If you don't do it when you say you're going to do it, you'll never get anywhere. I mean you might get somewhere, but it's that thought of.

Desley: you come up with reasons why you can't

Participant: yes. That's right. I think the thing is, we're all the same. There's things I don't do straight away. There's just, yeah I think the thing is that when you say you're going to do something, get in there and do it. you'll notice I said when I decided I was going to get one I actually rang up that day. I didn't put it off for a week, I didn't need to rationalise why I was

going to do it or anything, I just went, I'm going to get this. As soon as I got home I rang up the particular guy who ended up doing it and arranged to get it done.

Desley: it's interesting, though, because some people would do it on the spur of the moment and then regret it, but you haven't

Participant: I'd already made up my mind, no, this is also a part of, I guess as you get older and you've moved further into your life, I did ask myself, but not, I didn't dwell on it much. I said to myself if I do this it's got to be something you do, it's permanent. I know you can get them removed and the technology will get better with time, but I'd made up my mind if I'm going to get them, I'm going to get them 1) for the long haul and 2) something I know that I'm going to be happy with, and you asked me earlier am I happy with them and I went yes. There's not a moment of doubt in my mind. I'm quite happy with what I've got. So I already knew when I got them that 1) I would be happy and 2) they would be there forever. I have no intention of ever taking them off for any reason, you notice I have an earring. I may not keep that forever, because I thought to myself when I'm 65 or something am I going to look stupid with an earring. Well, if I do I'll get rid of the thing but my tattoos are something that I will keep forever because it won't matter if I'm 65 and I've got tattoos coz who's gonna see them anyway. But then again, they will distort as I get older, but

Desley: do you think about your tattoos as a whole, like do you see them as being related to each other

Participant: probably do in the sense that, you mentioned the whole and I noticed that you drew a circle, which is symbol of wholeness. That's what the mandala's based on, symbol of wholeness. yeah I do because I see them like, when you mentioned the whole I see them as me. So it's the whole of me that has these tattoos, they're a part of who I am, so that's the wholeness of it. if you see here, if you look at Max, oh who's Max, Max is the guy with this shirt on, that owns this house, that works in a certain place, that has these tattoos. You could go on and on about everything to do with Max. that's the wholeness of me. Tattoos are a part of me, so when you're looking at Max or talking to Max or not even knowing Max... you know, the person across the road doesn't really know me, I've only been here six weeks, but the wholeness of me is everything that is me. So yeah, these are part of me. Absolutely

Desley: given that you've mentioned the person across the road, what do you think they think when they look at you and you've got tattoos?

Participant: my first impression with most people is that they probably don't like them. That they probably have the kind of view that I had of people being adorned with tattoos is that, um, it's a, a lower class kind of thing to do. I think that a lot of people still have that view that if people put tattoos on themselves that they're disfiguring themselves. That they haven't thought about it, that they probably wouldn't be particularly intelligent. Yeah. I think that's the way most people think, yeah.

Desley: and I think where yours are quite intimidating too

Participant: if I was wearing something like this, they're obviously significant

Desley: it's intimidating coz they're coming at you

Participant: it's interesting that you said that word because, yeah, it probably is, yeah. I was interested when you said that, it's probably got that intimidatory effect because it's out front. And I think it does do that to people because I've noticed sometimes people tend to look there immediately. But then again it is significant. I mean I could have a red bow tie on, sticking out like a sore thumb, and someone would probably stare at it. so, yeah, that's probably true, yeah, I think so.

Desley: why did you choose a tattoo rather than something else. Like why didn't you have a piercing or something?

Participant: I did. {ears}

Desley: so that was about the same time as well?

Participant: um, fairly close, yeah.

Desley: I was thinking more of something like, whatever men get pierced

Participant: like my dick?

Desley: you don't get your belly button pierced, do you, as a man, typically?

Participant: I wouldn't get pierced down there 1) because it would be TOO bloody painful and I do see that as a kind of disfigurement. I've only ever met one guy that had it done and he talked about the pain he went through and I would not want to go through that. This guy went through unbelievable pain and ended up having to rush back to a doctor and it was bleeding all the time. I actually find that a bit grotesque. I know why guys do it. I've read about it and he's told me why. I thought about having other piercings, but to be quite honest, the reason I don't do it is because they're not overly acceptable. And I'm saying in my mind I'm not sure that I actually accept piercings in other areas. I'm not talking about down there, I mean I'm definitely not getting that done but. To me that is actually like a mutilation, in such a sensitive area, coz these guys are putting these rod things through. But I mean to have something say in my eyebrow or another one in my ear or, you know, I actually saw a guy once who had rings through each nipple and he was a good-looking man from a woman's point of view. I think a lot of women would have gone for this guy and I actually thought it looked alright but I think most women probably wouldn't like it, you know. But to get back to why, you asked me why I didn't do something else.

Desley: but you really considered...

Participant: I did do some other things. At the time I got my earring and I actually grew a big long rat tail thing down the back of my hair. So I did do a couple of other things. And then eventually I was over in England and I had a haircut a couple of days before I came home. I went in to this guy and he cut it really short, it was only about that long. I'm sure the guy was gay because he kept going on about how great I looked. And I'd actually toyed with shaving all my hair off, and I went out and did it. I did number 3, number 2, number 1 and I thought, yeah, I don't look too bad so I'll just stick with that. So yeah, I did a couple of other things at the time. That's why I joked about going through male menopause with my friends. They go, why did you do this, and I say, I'm going through male menopause, you know. I rode all the flack that I copped from guys at work and things like that. I did do a couple of other things

Desley: so do you think there's anything you could have done that would have had the same effect for you as the tattoo?

Participant: yeah. The other things did. Yeah.

Desley: so it was all accomplishing the same thing

Participant: probably, yeah.

Desley: so you talked before about the tattoos were part of you. Do you call yourself a tattooed person or are you a person who has tattoos?

Participant: person who has tattoos. Definitely.

Desley: my trick question. What would be the opposite of your tattoos? You can take them separate or together, however you like.

Participant: the opposite of my tattoos... was to stay the way I was and never change.

Desley: ok. for you it's not related to whether you had them or not, it's actually more about you as a person

Participant: yep. Definitely. It was about me changing at that particular time in my life. And just doing the things I did in all areas of my life, it was a kind of watershed in my life at that time. There were other things that were related. I'll tell you one of them, it was probably one of the most significant events in my life. After I split up I moved into a unit in Towradgi and I lived there for twenty months. I went through all this trauma of separation and it really hit me very very hard at the time and it was the loneliest period of my life ever. At that time, I was 40-odd and I didn't know what was in the world for 40 year old people. I thought that when you were on your own you were completely alone and there was nothing to do and you wouldn't meet people your age. I didn't know anything about it, I hadn't been in that position. Anyway. One particular night I went to sleep and I had a dream that was extremely profound. I dreamt that I was, like in a French provincial style house and it had this big glass window, massive glass window, almost the size of the wall. I was actually lying back on one side of this glass, propped up on my

elbows, lying horizontal, propped up on my elbows and this dark figure came rushing at me, and I woke up in a sweat. I mean it was like an absolute nightmare. It sounds simple talking about it but it was like an absolute nightmare and I had real trouble going to sleep. Eventually I just said to myself, go to sleep, forget about it and from that night on I slept like a baby every night. Prior to that I used to wake up four or five times a night, all the time. And then I just, just had this beautiful relaxed sleep night after night after night after night and at that particular point in time I was saying to myself, ok, you've been through all the crap in your life, now let's get on with it. let's get over and done with it and what do you want to do with yourself and it was like what had been so unhappy just got better and better and better and better and better and the last ten years have been the best ten years of my life. I'd love to go back and start all over again, but of course that's not possible. It was just this big, what I call a climactic event in my life. I actually went and talked to a counselor about it and I was never really, I'm not really skilled enough to be able to analyse it. I figured it was either something to do with my dark side, or maybe it was a mother fixation or something, I don't know. All I know is that it was extremely significant to me and my life changed dramatically. It was literally overnight. I changed in how I was feeling, what I was going to do with my life, you know, things like that. It's just like the next day I just went, that's it, I've had enough of the crap that you're going through, end it, let's get going. Just like that

Desley: so you're saying the dark figure

Participant: well I don't know. I was just guessing, I don't know. I don't know whether it was what they refer to as the dark side or not. It's not for me to analyse

Desley: your shadow you mean?

Participant: yeah, the shadow self. It may have been, I don't know. Maybe it was, maybe it was the rush of all the things that had made me unhappy coming towards me saying do something about it. I don't know. I'm not qualified enough to analyse that. I mean I've got Freud's Interpretation of Dreams over there but I'm still not going to make a definitive judgement about what it might have been because I'm not qualified to do it.

Desley: what about your gut reaction to what it was, like what does your gut say it was?

Participant: my mother. That was my gut feeling. But I could be a million miles off the mark, I don't know

Desley: I just suspect from everything else you've said, that your gut instinct's right

Participant: it may be wrong too

Desley: Freud would probably go along with it being your mother as well.

Participant: he may, but he's not here to talk to me.

Desley: he can't argue back! So when you had your tattoos, were you by yourself?

Participant: yes

Desley: you didn't take anyone to hold your hand?

Participant: no, no. no-one knew I was doing it, no-one even knew I'd thought about it

Desley: oh, ok. So what kind of reactions did you have

Participant: not much really. Not much at all

Desley: so you didn't have people going "oh my God, why did you do that?"

Participant: I actually can't quite remember how people reacted. I know there wasn't much. One guy at work went on about it for a while but I used to just joke with him anyway. He had some anyway so I don't know why he went on about me. No, I don't remember getting any really severe reactions, no, not at all. There might have been a couple of people say, why did you get that done, but nothing, nothing untoward, no.

Desley: so did the possibility of any reaction make a difference to, like did you think, I'd better not get that coz

Participant: I never thought I'd better not get it but I considered that there would be a reaction but it didn't particularly bother me. I just thought I'm going to do this and that's all there is to it. I did it for me. I didn't actually, I didn't actually do it for people to look at. I mean, you're covered up most of the time, so people aren't going to see them. I mean if I'm out anywhere, unless I don't have a top on no-one would even know I had them. And I'm only wearing a top like this because I know it's supposed to be 29 degrees today and I've got to go down the shops later. No, it didn't concern me at all what anyone else's reaction was going to be, but I did know that there would probably be some reactions from people. I've got a friend of mine who absolutely hates tattoos. She's told me she doesn't like them, so what? I go, you don't have to have them, don't worry about it.

Desley: you didn't put it on her, did you?

Participant: that's right

Desley: what do you think about other people that have tattoos? Like do you still look at them as prostitutes and

Participant: no. Probably when I look at someone who's got a tattoo I look at them the way I would any other time, like just wonder what that person is like as a person. Male or female, you just think to yourself, you know, who are they, what are they about, what sort of life do they have. Probably some types of tattoos I identify with someone not having a lot of intelligence but that doesn't mean they haven't, they could be extremely bright. But that's because I don't like those tattoos. See, I know I'm making a value judgement when I shouldn't. I might, say, go the gym and some guy's got something on and I think, he's a bit of a dickhead, coz he's put that tattoo on, but I think that's just a normal thing that people do, you know. If I saw a woman walk down the road and she's got her hair purple red and orange. Do I think she's an idiot or do I think she just likes purple red and orange hair. That's the way I look at someone. But I think there's definitely times I do make a value judgement on people but I know I shouldn't but it's probably just the way I was brought up to do that. Most tattoos I just look at as someone who's got a tattoo on them. They have a different hairstyle one time and a different shirt on the next day, and then one day they've got a tattoo

Desley: do you know many people that have tattoos?

Participant: there's a few guys I work with have. They're becoming more and more prevalent, particularly on younger guys. Out of my friends, not particularly, no.

Desley: no-one in your family?

Participant: I'm trying to think if any of my friends have got tattoos. From what I remember, unless it was summer down the beach I wouldn't see my friends with their clothes off for a start. Nearly all my, trying to think, I can't think of anyone who's actually got one off the top of my head. I am seen as being different by my friends, I know that. They do see me as different to everyone else.

Desley: because you have tattoos?

Participant: not just because of that. I have totally different viewpoints to other people, I have a different stand on a lot of things in life. I'm just, I have a totally different outlook on life to what they do, that's all. But I think some people feel intimidated by my viewpoints. Because I think to a certain extent I've bothered to look into life a lot deeper than a lot of other people do. Like I've read widely, like philosophy, psychology, Greek mythology, God knows what else, some of it years ago, I've forgotten. I've always been intrigued by various aspects of life. I mean, I've travelled, I don't want to go to America, I'd rather go to say Nepal, or I've been to South America and seen the Inca things and things. I want, I've always been intrigued by the... the things that I think that change the world, that are significant, but are not necessarily contemporary. So my friends, I don't ask them about it, I do sense that they think I'm a little bit different to them. I am in some ways, because they've all come from families, I didn't have a family. Yeah I think that's probably the biggest thing. They all have children. All my friends have children. I'm the only one that doesn't. See, I've been married twice but I've never had children. There were reasons for that. My first wife had had her tubes tied when I met her. My second was 36 when I met her so she didn't want to go through having children at that age, and that was fine by me. I understood why. So I never actually had my own children. So I live my life differently now that I'm a single person. Because I'm a single person and a lot of them are starting to partner up, or have been for quite a while, even though I might go out with someone I've still not remarried, so they see me as different and I think that people sometimes see a person who's single as a threat. So there's that significance as well. So if I'm the single guy who

shaves his head off, has an earring with a cross in it and has some tattoos, they're thinking, he's just not like me. He's completely different. So I think there is an element of that, yeah. but I do get along with everybody, having said that.

Desley: so do you think it's had any negative effect on your life

Participant: no. not at all. No. the only negative effect I could think of was if I went out with someone and they absolutely hated them and it became an issue, but then I wouldn't stay with someone like that anyway, because I would think that they were going over the top about something that's really quite simple

Desley: and wanting you to change yourself

Participant: mmm. Well, it doesn't bother me if people want me to change, as long as they don't go over the top about it because I believe when all people get together they change for the other person in some way. So unless they were making a big issue of it, it wouldn't bother me. If they're making a big issue then I'd think well this is someone who's trying to control me, see, so I wouldn't like it.

Desley: so do you feel like you identify with any particular group? Like do you identify yourself with people who have tattoos, or are you just individual?

Participant: no I just see myself as individual. As I said, my friends as far as I can remember off the top of my head, don't have tattoos, so I'm not frequenting with tattooed people all the time.

Desley: what about when you see other people with tattoos? Do you feel like you've got some kind of affinity with them?

Participant: I probably do but it's not a great thing I think about. No. I just see myself as someone who had some tattoos and other people have them and good luck to them, I hope they like theirs and I like mine.

Desley: so is there anything else about your tattoos that you think's

Participant: significant. No, I can't think of anything really. No, not really, no. just something I did at a stage of life and I was glad I did it.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	3	1	1	1	2	3	1	1	1	1	1	4	Unhappy
Patient	2	2	1	1	3	2	2	3	3	4	4	2	Impatient
Caring	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	3	2	3	3	Uncaring
Kind	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	3	2	3	Cruel
Sense of humour	2	1	2	1	3	2	2	1	3	3	3	4	Boring
Sociable	3	1	3	2	4	4	3	2	1	1	4	3	Difficult
Friendly	2	1	2	1	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	Unfriendly
Active	2	1	2	1	2	4	2	1	2	2	1	5	Lazy
Confident	3	1	2	2	4	4	3	1	1	1	4	5	Scared
Organised	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	4	4	2	Disorganised
Hard working	2	1	1	1	3	2	2	3	1	1	1	5	Lazy
Honest	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	3	2	Uncaring



Participant: Ok, well I got my first tattoo when I was 15, I remember going and lying about my age to the guy coz he's going are you sure you're 18 because I was always really short and stuff, Yup Yup I am but I am but I went when I was 15 and got it done. I'm not really sure why I did it. I think my father has a lot of tattoos, and I always sort of liked them and thought they he looked fancy and tough and things like that, probably I was trying to rebel against them, I remember getting the tattoo, and going home and saying see, look what I got and they said that's good that's nice, so that backfired on me but I liked it I guess I always liked it. I guess it was my way of saying that I am, not tough, my little way of expressing my self in a way. I was short, I wasn't very attractive, I sort of got picked on a little bit, I wasn't strong enough to stand up to people in that manner though I seemed to be coz I was very mouthy, but I would run a million miles if it came to it. That was just my little way of saying I can do something no one else has done or no one else has got and that was my little booster if you like. Whenever I used to get scared of some thing I used to think well if I could go and get a tattoo, I could do that. That's where it all started from, I suppose, from there. And then it was many years before I decided to get another one and that again was a bit of a change of phase, a bit of a change in life, I guess. Things were going differently, I started riding motor bikes which I have always loved, and then we decided to get Harleys and stuff like that so I thought I got to get another tattoo now so, yeah, I went and got a large tattoo, but I didn't realize it was so large until I saw it on me and I said oh shit, that's a bit big but oh well too late can't get rid of it, so got that, liked it. Then just last year I got my third one, where Michael and I went on a holiday to Perth and we were sitting in a café, and were a bit bored. We had wanted to go over to this little island thing but had missed the ferry, so went to the pub and had a few drinks and then thought lets go get a tattoo, so we went and got another tattoo, this one was done by hand we found that really fascinating, and it was a whole different kettle of fish. We did not realize that when it said hand done tattoo, we just thought yeah you do not do it with your foot, we did not take the meaning as literal as what it was. They took you down to this little basement like thing, and there was like shrunken heads in jars and we were sort of going Oh my God, where are we, trying to act like this was all kind of normal and then they did this sort of like a ritual like a ceremony where they tied needles together and they do it and its literally done by hand using these little needles. At first we were thinking Oh what have we done, what are we doing, but then afterwards we thought that's

amazing and now we like to show people that that's a hand done one while this one is the standard gun one and things like that and I'm not sure if I'm going to get any more.

Desley: So what are they pictures of?

Participant: My very very first one was a picture of a little rose, which is very faded now, but any way, it's a little rose. My second one is not a little picture; it's more just a design if you like. Its sort of like a half a Celtic look but not really, its sort of like a more modern Celtic look and my other one's don't know what you would call it. It is like a little symbol I suppose

Desley: So you say you and Michael had the last one together, so did you get a similar thing?

Participant: No he got, Well, sort of. the place we went to does only tribal tattoos, they do sort of like tribals and they do a lot of the Maoris across their faces and down their throats and things like that and those big ones that go across your shoulder and half your chest, they do all that sort of thing, so Michael sort of got this, its not really a tribal looking thing, Its likeI haven't seen any thing like that here., this pattern that he got. I guess that mine is something similar in sort of a way to it.

Desley: But they were not identical?

Participant: No, they were not, he got a huge one on his arm and I don't want them where you can see them unless I want to show it.

Desley: fair enough. So if we start with the rose, why was the rose important?

Participant: Because it was little, and I was trying to convince myself I could do this, I didn't want to pick anything too big, so it looked little, it looked feminine and at the time there wasn't the many choices like today, you can pick anything you like really, there were so limited choices back then I suppose and I didn't want anything too big, in fact the rose that I got was an offshoot of a larger one, but I said I just wanted that little part of it so they just did that little part of it, because I didn't want really anything else. I didn't want any skulls or cross bones or any of the boy ones, I just wanted a sort of feminine one but not so big.

Desley: So was that in Australia?

Participant: yes it was

Desley: Why did you put it where you put it?

Participant: It was where it was fashionable at the time sort of, I think girls had just started to get tattoos on the top of their shoulders around that time I suppose, I had seen a few girls with some there, I knew that I didn't want one on my arms or anything like that, so where I had it if I thought if I wear a like a singlet you could see it but if I choose not to show it then I could cover it with something else. That was my main reason for getting it there. At the time, I did not think of, like my other ones are on my lower back or on my foot. I would never have dreamed of having one there. Back then you had it on your arm or you had it on your back so that's why I chose it there.

Desley: So what about with the second one?

Participant: The second one is down, just at the base of my back down low. The one that I had originally chosen was a really pretty Celtic design and I thought it was a little bit too pritzzy for me. Right at the last minute, they were just about to stencil it on, coz they stencil them on first, and I spotted one on the wall and I thought that looks a bit different, looks a bit tougher and I picked that one. Without looking, without thinking, I just picked that one. When I saw it once it was finished, I thought it didn't look so big on the wall. maybe I should have stuck with the more delicate one, but

Desley: too late

Participant: yeah. I think so. I think I was trying to prove that I was capable of riding the Harley so I needed a tough sticker to go with it.

Desley: funny you call it that. That's what my daughter calls it when people get them across here {upper arm}.

Participant: tough sticker?

Desley: yeah. it obviously doesn't hurt very much there.

Participant: apparently not. Though I think they all hurt to some degree.

Desley: There is a guy who tried to break the record for how many hours straight tattooing, a couple of years ago, which was 24 or 26hrs, but they said after 21 or somewhere around there, you get paint poisoning from having so much ink in they had to just call it off or he would have died, luckily for him it didn't.

Participant: gosh

Desley: So how long ago did you have the back piece?

Participant: oh, probably about 4 years ago.

Desley: Then one on your foot was

Participant: that was last year.

Desley: So how long did you think about each of them before you had them?

Participant: The first one probably 2 days. the next one, well there was a big gap in that. The next one, I did want one sooner but I could never find the one that I wanted. It takes you a while to choose them sometimes, you have to think carefully because it is going to be there for a long time. Which of course I just went and bugged all that up in the space of 5 minutes you know. I had always wanted one, wasn't sure where, I was thinking there or higher or where, so that one was a little longer to choose and I probably thought about that one for a good 6 months I'd say, before I decided yes I am definitely going to get one and now I have to go and find the pattern. I looked on the internet and I had researched it quite well, what's available what's is around, looked at pictures, choose one and then in the literally last two minutes I changed it to that one, so I don't know what you would consider that. As for the one on my foot, it was a spur of the moment thing we just decided lets get a tattoo, for something to do

Desley: why not

Participant: yes

Desley: The one on your foot was it just whatever looked nice or did the guy actually suggest it.

Participant: No, I picked it, just looking through books. At first I didn't think I was going to find anything I wanted. I said I don't want flowers or anything like that and I thought I'm not going to find anything, again I did not want to fall in the trap of that looks little there but when you do it, it turns out a lot bigger. I then saw that one as a little offside one and I thought oh, that one could look nice and just choose it like that.

Desley: So with each of them or maybe the last two was there anything about the actual design that you like?

Participant: I think the one on my foot is my favourite one. I like it because it is a little bit different, its on my foot so that's a bit different, although lots of people are getting that now. I like that Celtic look design, even though it is not traditional Celtic or tribal, whatever one you want to call it, but its sort of got that feel to it, and I quite like that, coz I'm sort of, I don't know, I like things like that, I like like Buddhist things and stuff like that. So that just reminds me of that sort of a feeling if you like

Desley: can you explain that to me more?

Participant: well, that sort of a thing gives me a feeling of like peace, if you know what I mean. Not really? It's sort of like...

Desley: So what would the opposite of that feeling then?

Participant: Just chaos, just normal everyday chaos in society saying you have to act this way or do this thing or be this thing that we expect you to be, and you'd be forever not being yourself you are being what this person wants or that person wants. You go to work and you are expected to look and behave a certain way, that can all be fine and well but sometimes you want a little bit of that solitude and peace in your life and in your mind, and for some reason I don't really know

why or can't explain it the tattoo that I got on my foot, sometimes I only have to look at it and it can just make me peaceful, I know that it's a bit odd but that's how it works for me, it just makes me realize that, no hang on a minute I don't have to do any of that, I can just retract a little bit here and get a piece of mind,

Desley: so the tattoo makes you feel peaceful?

Participant: In a way, yes, it helps me focus back onto me, instead of all these things that you're supposed to be. You know a wife, a stepmother, you know a chef or sex goddess and all the stuff you are supposed to be in your life. It just reminds me that I can just back track and be me, I can do what ever I want. That reminds me of that.

Desley: that's nice. So with each of the tattoos do you think they coincided with any particular event in your life?

Participant: Yes sometimes I think they do, I think so I can't say it's a profound or significant event, or any thing like that, you know, I certainly didn't, you know something didn't happen in my life and I went and got a tattoo, I can't say that's for sure, but sometimes I think they sort of a little bit coincided with changes within my self and what I was doing in that particular point of my life, you know like trying to rebel a little bit when I was younger, that was the one on my shoulder, then just trying to fit in an image when I got the one on my back

Desley: the Harley image?

Participant: yeah. trying to fit that image, which is so stupid really but I still like that tattoo, and I have always wanted one there. I guess I did choose a little differently maybe because I felt like I had to go with this image of riding a Harley or some thing like that which is crazy, I am over that now. Yeah and then the one on my foot, even though it was a spur of the moment thing I did still want to get another one and when I saw the sort of tribally effects and the Celtic things I sort of, that was appealing to me. So I thought just for once I am going, I want to get a tattoo this time just for no particular reason, just because I want to get one. not because I am trying to prove a point not because I am trying to fit an image, not for any other reason bar I would just like to get one this time that is like a piece of jewellery, if you like or a piece of body art, some thing for me.

Desley: which could be why it gives you that “sense of peace” feeling?

Participant: I think so, I think so yeah.

Desley: So do you still like all of your tattoos

Participant: Yeah, probably the one that I first got very first off that’s really faded and old and I have often thought about getting it either removed altogether or tattooed over the top of, but then I don’t know there is something that says no don’t because that is your first one and I should leave it alone some times I just forget that its there until some one says you’ve got a dirty mark on your shoulder and I just say oh, that, no that’s just an old tattoo.

Desley: So you wouldn’t change the other ones.

Participant: I wouldn’t change the other ones. I certainly wouldn’t change the one on my foot, the one on my back I am not sure whether, I’m not even sure if they could do any thing more with that, just to make it look a bit more feminine, Its probably a little bit beefy looking, I’m sort of not sure about that, I’m not really a beefy person either, so I am like what did you get that for, what did you do that for, I’m sort of stuck with the one I picked, so I’m not sure about that but in the mean time I will just leave it alone, coz that’s ok and the only one that I would maybe play with would be the old one only because it has started to look very old and I’d either say just take it off or just do something over the top of it so it doesn’t look like just a smudge.

Desley: So you couldn’t just get it recoloured or something?

Participant: I could. I don’t think I would just get it recoloured no because I think the tattoo is old fashioned I suppose, I’d probably pick something more modern.

Desley: So you said you are not really sure that you would have another tattoo?

Participant: I am not sure but I would not rule it out, if I saw the right one, I probably would get another one again

Desley: you would not get any of your other ones taken off?

Participant: No

Desley: What about the pain aspect is it a good thing or is it a bad thing?

Participant: I do not particularly like pain, you know, like a friend of mine who I was kind of lining up with, she likes that pain aspect, whereas I don't, no way. OOW why do that if it's unnecessary, but in the same breath, it does not hurt for long, as soon as it's done, it's done, it hurts a bit while they're doing it. It depends on the size of the tattoo as well. You cannot say that I enjoyed the pain but you know it is going to be over soon.

Desley: and it's just part of getting it

Participant: it's just part of getting it, yes, like getting your ears pierced isn't it. It is the end result you sort of think about, more than the pain at the time.

Desley: So do you think the tattoos have any theme that runs through them, like that binds them all together or do you think of them as separate?

Participant: Nah they're all separate.

Desley: Why did you choose to have a tattoo rather than something else?

Participant: Well that is a hard one. Depends on what else there is to do. Do you mean as in...

Desley: for the first one, you wanted to be a rebel, I assume there are other things 15-16 that you could have done to be a rebel

Participant: well probably. I already smoked so I couldn't go and do that, I was never interested in drugs or anything like that, so

Desley: you could have gotten pregnant

Participant: no, I was too not good with boys, I was too shy plus don't forget that I was short and unattractive, so that was not going to be my thing, you know ew, her.

Desley: You could have gotten a piercing.

Participant: Piercings then I don't think were popular except getting your ears pierced, and the only one I remember getting at school was the one very high up, I remember I did that, I smoked, I had the high piercing, I wasn't really into boys, it's not that I wasn't into boys, or maybe it should be they weren't into me because I was just short and unattractive so the boys were never really a problem for me because that was never going to happen, wasn't interested in drugs so a tattoo just seemed to be, I'll just do that.

Desley: So what about with the one on your back given that you were already riding a Harley is there something else, is there something else that you could have done, you said that you were trying to fit the image of a biker I guess. So do you wear the open faced helmet and vest and all that stuff

Participant: No I am scared of falling off, I sort of have an open faced helmet to a degree, but mine still has a visor coz I don't like the bugs and dirt and stuff, I am still a bit pritzzy that way. Normally I do, I wore a full face helmet, whenever I rode my bike, I always had that jacket, I never was a thongs and shorts going riding that is just stupid if you ask me, so and I got that I thought I have to look the image now, so I can't wear a full face helmet anymore, so I did get an open faced helmet and I chose the one with a visor, so that was ok. I already had the leather jacket and stuff, as for the vest no I do not think I would go for that because I do not think it gives you any protection or whatever.

Desley: So you wanted the image but you did not want to be silly?

Participant: yeah I still wasn't going to compromise my safety on the bike either, Michael does, like he's really stepped down what he used to wear, well sometimes lets say yes we drive it but we ride at different speeds now, before when we had the sports bikes, we used to call them organ donor bikes because we were sure that is what we were going to become if we kept them because we used to ride them at quite high speeds a lot, so you need a lot of protection, so now that you ride a Harley it's a bit different you sort of ride in a cruise mode, you still ride them at

very high speeds but you just handle them in a different way, and it doesn't look cool when you are sitting in a Harley all covered in racing leathers, you just don't do it, you don't do it, so yes you have to fit the image of the bike and I saw the tattoo as a way of fitting that image I suppose and plus sometimes people would look at the image and say you are an unlikely looking person to ride a Harley, and I say why it's a bike, and I didn't understand that for a while, like what am I supposed to look like, so then they said that you should be more dikey looking, or we expect you to be rougher looking, maybe that is where it came from well I will get another tattoo then, I did always want one down there but I guess I chose differently, because of that perhaps.

Desley: And about the one on your foot was there something else, you could have done there?

Participant: By that time or even before the one I had on my back I'd sort of tried the piercing things. I had a tongue piercing, belly button pierced, didn't really fancy any other piercings they are painful again I like things I can hide, like I know I have got it but the whole world does not have to know I have got it, I guess my only other option was a branding and that is too painful sounding, I don't have the right skin for branding any way, so I don't know if there was something else I could have done , I suppose I could have had my hair done to make me feel better, or I could've went and bought jewellery I suppose to make me feel better, but they are not permanent, it changes. and I guess it was a nice reminder of the feeling at the time or what I was doing at the time or where I was at that time. It is a permanent marking of reminder of that stage in my life rather than just getting my hair done.

Desley: So do you consider yourself a tattooed person, or a person who has tattoos?

Participant: I'm just a person who has tattoos.

Desley: So you do not feel like they form any part of your identity?

Participant: na. no, not really.

Desley: are you ready for the hard question?

Participant: yeah.

Desley: What would be the opposite of your tattoos?

Participant: the opposite? Ooh. Oh, God. You might have to give me a week to think about that one. The opposite of my tattoo. In which way, what do you mean?

Desley: whichever way you choose to interpret it.

Participant: what would be the opposite of my tattoos...

Desley: some people say not having them, some people say a picture that would be the opposite... for some people it's even just an opposite feeling

Participant: um, gosh. I guess it wouldn't be me. I don't know. Sometimes I think it's part of me but that sort of contradicts the question beforehand am I a person with tattoos or whatever. I don't see myself as having had tattoos to do that, but in the same breath I guess, in a way they are part of me, in a way, I just choose to have them in the form of body art I suppose so the opposite of it would be a plain Jane, really, it would be, there wouldn't be anything interesting about me, does that make sense?

Desley: yeah

Participant: alright, that's my interesting point the opposite of my tattoos would be that I was boring and lifeless.

Desley: Life less to the point of dead or just uninteresting?

Participant: no, just uninteresting.

Desley: So when you got your first tattoo were you by yourself?

Participant: No, I took a girl friend with me

Desley: and did she have one

Participant: Yes. She got the same one just a different colour

Desley: so was it your idea or her idea

Participant: It was my idea. Yeah. I even paid her bus fare. I couldn't afford to pay for her tattoo but I paid her bus fare to go and get it, yeah, coz we caught the bus.

Desley: What about the second one were you by yourself then?

Participant: No again I went with a girlfriend. She didn't get one done that day. She had hers done about a month later and I went with her.

Desley: So did she get it because you got it?

Participant: No, I think we were both just going to get it, I just happened to have the money first. To be really honest with you, that's what it got down to, she had to wait for another pay day or another pay fortnight or something like that, and then by the time it was booked in hers ended up being about a month after mine but that was her only reason.

Desley: And were you with Michael when you had the second one

Participant: Yes. With him? As in married to him? Yeah. he called in briefly with his friends, they called in on their bikes and gave us a hard time, but they didn't like come or anything, they just, they knew that we were going there so they just thought that they would be smart and call in and that and then they left so that was that.

Desley: So what do you think it means to other people when they see your tattoo?

Participant: I don't know really. I think some people might be shocked, I don't know but then again I don't parade them, if you know what I mean, so not everybody knows that I have got tattoos. The one on my foot is really a bit harder to hide so I do not really care about that as much as the other ones. I do not show the one on my back very often at all, so if you catch a glimpse of that either it was by accident or I was going or doing something at the time that I thought it was more appropriate or that it was ok if it was seen. That's a hard one to answer,

because when people do see it, if I've chosen to sort of, show it, they're people who have probably got tattoos anyway or would expect to see a tattoo, so their comments are that they either like it or they don't or whatever but I guess people who don't really know I have them and might catch a glimpse by accident often they're sometimes shocked because I have had people say before I didn't know you had tattoos as if it was a disease and it's not, it's only a bloody tattoo, and like you do not look the type and I say don't I, what do I look like? It's almost as if you're a chameleon. I can be a chameleon if I want to because I can put my suit on for work and do my hair and I can talk the talk, do the rest of it, yeah I can be a chameleon and then when I get home I can take all that off, and put on my bike gear on, I can have my tattoo hanging out the back and I can get on my bike that they probably would look and not even know that that was me riding past them. I like that. I don't know if that really answered your question because I got sidetracked there.

Desley: Did you ever worry about getting a bad reaction from your family or something?

Participant: I knew I wouldn't get one from my family because they are quite ok about it, if anything they tease my brother because they say that your sister has more tattoos than you do, you wuss coz he's been wanting a tattoo for 20 years now but still hasn't got one, so no I was not worried about that reaction. Sometimes, and this is probably really silly but I have to be honest with you, is the only time I worry about a reaction is often with Michael's acquaintances or people, you know, like sometimes I sort of feel like with him being a dentist, I am a dentist's wife and I am supposed to act and walk and talk a certain way which I just don't, I really find it hard to conform to stuff like that and sometimes I worry about their reaction if they happen to see one of my tattoos like oh his wife and I feel like I have let him down and I am giving him a reputation because of me you know what I mean. That's about the only time I am really worried about it and I am quite certain that I have tucked in, and that I don't let them see it or they will freak or they will talk about me, which I don't care if they talk about me but I don't like it reflecting onto him that have you seen Mike W's wife she is a bit of a number that worries me a little bit, but otherwise no, I don't care.

Desley: So how many people do you know roughly, that have tattoo?

Participant: that have a tattoo?

Desley: like lots of your friends?

Participant: yeah. I know quite a few people with tattoos, yeah, lots

Desley: and your family? You said your dad

Participant: my dad has a few, his are very old, he has not had a new ones since he was much younger. Yeah he has got them and I have always liked them. One of the ones it's very hard to see it now on his arm is of a Highland flinger and I remember as a kid he used to squeeze his arm and it used to look like the thing was dancing, so I remember that, and I liked it. he used to make it dance. So I grew up, like I never really thought of tattoos as being bad or being a tough image or any thing like that, it was later I realized that it was associated with tattoos, when I was younger I didn't think that at all. I thought some people get pictures on their arms, especially in Scotland where they get them every. There are loads of people with tattoos there, especially when I was growing up.

Desley: How old were you when you left Scotland?

Participant: We left a couple of times but the last time I was probably 12 and then we came here and have been here ever since. My grandfather had tattoos and we used to look at his as well and we used to compare his with my dad's. It wasn't a bad thing it was just body art

Desley: so it was just like a fact of life for you?

Participant: yeah, but it was all the guys that had them, none of the girls so I think that is where if you sort of go back to the 15year old, it was like yes I am a girl and I can do it, I can be just as big as any boys and I think that might have something to do with it.

Desley: you seem to be saying that they give you some kind of courage

Participant: I am sorry I am contradicting myself as well, aren't I, as I'm saying it.

Desley: a couple of them you had said stuff like "if I did that I knew I could do anything"

Participant: yeah that is how it started off, to be really honest with you, that's how it started off. it was a confidence booster mainly for me, but then to really go and contradict everything, this is a job for psychology, trying to work this out, I was scared to show it. I had it and I knew I had it and it made me feel empowered in a way that I did it and that I got it but then I was scared to show it to people because I didn't know what they would think of me, they might think I was stupid or they might say what did you do that for you silly bitch, and therefore I would be 10 steps back wards again from feeling how I felt when I was younger, you know short unattractive, and added to top it off you know uneducated or stupid, because I was already told that and to top it off even more stupider because I went off and had a tattoo. Therefore I can't really explain that I didn't want to show it off to say see I am strong and tough, I didn't want to do that, that was just a more personal thing to say if I can do that, then I can walk up there and get on that bus, because a few times I couldn't. I would stand at the side and see the bus come and I was like Oh God there are too many people on the bus and I'll wait and I'll look this way I will let the bus go and I will get the next one. You know I was a little bit that way, I was just very not self confident at all when I was younger but I was mouthy that seemed to make up for it.

Desley: So it was like this inner thing that it gave you.

Participant: I think so; I think I was trying to convince myself maybe I am not really sure.

Desley: I was wondering whether you thought that may be if you showed people then you would get the impression that you didn't really live up to the impression.

Participant: Yeah they would go "you, it doesn't suit you", if she got one fair enough, she'd be an idol, but that just makes you sillier. Yeah I certainly didn't think, I was scared of the reaction, in one breath I thought, this could get me accepted or it might not, so I never really wanted to take the chance,

Desley: so it was like covering your options, like don't find out.

Participant: yeah. don't find out. Yeah.

Desley: So do you think that the tattoos have had any negative effect on your life?

Participant: no none at all. Like I said mainly because I've chosen to have them in places where I could hide them, so therefore if I do not want you to know, then I can sit here and you would never know. So I cannot say it has had a negative effect, like I have never lost a job position because of it or anything like that.

Desley: So you think having a tattoo means that you identify with any particular group of people?

Participant: No, I do not think so

Desley: Even the back one you do not think of yourself as more of a biker now?

Participant: No because it didn't turn me into that. I didn't stay that way, I didn't say Oh I will get them up my arms or you know wear big boots or whatever and get people's names, no I never went any further than that, I just got that sort of gives me half a right to ride a Harley, and I have called it quits there, I am not obsessed that I have to get a million and 10 tattoos to continue on with this Harley thing, because I had decided that that was a bloody load of shit any way like if I wanted to ride the bike I can ride the bike it doesn't really matter. I'm not gonna, I probably won't ride that for every, so what happens then, what happens if I buy a Ducati next, what am I going to do then, so no, I cannot really say that I identify with all these tattooed people and stuff like that, for me it really is more just a personal thing. It's just something that's me and that's it, its not to belong to any group, although I did think I needed that one to prove that I was allowed to ride a Harley, but that was to prove that I was allowed to ride the Harley, not so much to belong to a group of Harley riders.

Desley: So it was like a rite of passage almost

Participant: in a way, yeah. it was a bit like the open-faced helmet thing. You had to look a certain way to ride it, but I didn't necessarily want to identify myself as one of these sort of people, like a big Harley biker, I'm not that. I'm just someone that rides a Harley so that I don't get too many looks riding up the road I can have my tattoo hanging out the back. It is more of a personal thing, it's more a style, its like fashion. If you really, yeah, that's probably it – fashion. Instead of saying, well I can have a nice leather jacket or I have a tattoo that hangs out in the back when I ride it, yeah.

Desley: Its just that when the jacket goes out of fashion you can throw it away

Participant: Yes that's right. You can go and get a different one. Same as the helmet, like you can't wear the close faced because that is not really fashionable, it has to be an open faced. It is more of a fashion thing, in a way,

Desley: except that you cannot really throw away the tattoo

Participant: Yes, and it's slightly bigger than I thought it would be.

Desley: So is there anything else about your tattoo that we might have not talked about that you can think of?

Participant: I don't think so no, I would really love to sit here and say I did it because I would like to shock the world but its nothing to do with shocking the world it's just something to with me and I think that from now on if I did get another tattoo, it would be more so for something that was special to me, not so much any image I was trying to portray or

Desley: Like the one on your foot

Participant: Yeah I like that one. That's my favourite one out of all of them. It's probably the smallest one too, but I like that one the most. that one I tend not to hide, funny enough. I don't really care if people see that one. This one I'll hide if I'm going to a function I'll make sure that the dress I'm going to wear is going to cover it. always make sure that one's hidden if I'm going anywhere, actually, unless I'm just out with some friends and they are the same, then I don't look odd compared to them or if I am riding my bike that often hangs out the back, coz of the way I sit, don't care, but any other time I make sure that it is well hidden, but my foot I don't care, I don't care who sees it I don't try to hide it, and I thought shouldn't they all be that way. They should all be that way, so I figure, that from now on I am going to choose them that way.

Desley: It is the one you said was more about you. All the other ones were done for like external reasons

Participant: in a way they were

Desley: so that sort of makes sense that you do not hide that one.

Participant: Yeah I don't want to hide that one and I've never actively tried to hide it. I have never looked before I've left the house to go somewhere, normally I'd go "can't see that one, can't see that one" you know, do things like that, whereas that one I wouldn't say "ooh, you can see that one" I'd just go "oh well, you can see that one", it doesn't matter, I don't care that that one is seen. That one is my favourite one, it's part of me, if I need to I can look at it, and feel calm and feel a little bit more centred, a little bit more spiritual in a way if you know what I mean and I feel from now on if I would choose to have a bit more that would be the way I would choose to have it. Something that identifies a little bit more to me and not so much to what it is I am trying to fit or be or rebel against or prove or what ever.

Desley: So what about the technique, the hand done one, was that very different from getting the electric one.

Participant: Yeah very, very different. Yeah. I liked it.

Desley: Pain wise different, because I have heard it is actually more painful.

Participant: I have heard a few different ones. I have heard the gun is more painful because it sort of drags the skin and I quite agree that the gun ones are painful, the foot one because may be it was on the foot and it is quite sensitive, it still bloody hurt, but Michael would probably give you a better idea on that he had a much larger one on his arm compared to the other one which was done on his arm. One has been done by a gun and the other one by hand. He said that the hand one was less painful, as to why that is I do not know may be because they just pluck it, they pluck the skin.

Desley: The one that I heard about was the one in which they hit it in.

Participant: That is on the throat, the same idea, they have the finger down there and they tap it so that it bounces in, and they sort of do that in some areas where they can't actually pluck them, so it depends on where you are having it as to what technique they will use. Yeah, because he

would have done that tapping part if he had to, but because it was quite accessible, and it's not somehow like your throat where you can't pluck if you know what I mean, they sort of pluck it and skewer it and pick the skin up with it if you like.

Desley: Sounds terrible

Participant: It does sound terrible the way I explain it but it is very quick and its very small movement, it is very precise and small and I think the whole atmosphere was totally different. He could have taken me over there and did it there and it probably would not have been half as effective as going down this dungeon type home. I went thank god he is here, like Michael was with me, and I could just see my head shrunk in one of those little jars and he had all this tribal things and it was almost as if it was a ceremony and such, if you know what I mean.

Desley: They did have a ceremony of a girl I think it was in Thailand or somewhere and they like smoke all this stuff and chant.

Participant: He did not do any chanting. He was just a guy on his own, and mind you, he is covered in them like everywhere, they're all over him and there are pictures of him doing it to other people and that is where I have seen him do that tapping part around the throat, even in some of the face areas they have to sort of tap it in. Yeah I think it was just the whole experience that was memorable in a way and I thought wow that was so different. I liked that it sort of appealed to me a little bit, whether I would go and get it done that way again I don't know, it was different. that was a different thing to have it was more memorable than just going to a tattoo parlor where there are blokes, and you lay there and you get this gun and that's it, that is a very impersonal way, the other way it was very personal, like this is just for you and it was so cool I liked it.

Desley: so it was a bit less like mass-production

Participant: Yes, yes. it was very personalised. I liked it.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	2	4	3	2	Sad
Patient	2	1	1	2	3	2	2	1	4	2	4	2	Frazzled
Caring	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	1	3	4	4	3	Cold
Kind	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	1	2	3	3	3	Ugly
Sense of humour	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	1	4	Anal retentive
Sociable	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	Hermit
Friendly	2	2	2	1	3	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	Hostile
Active	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	1	1	3	Couch potato
Confident	3	1	2	2	3	2	2	3	1	5	3	1	Scared
Organised	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	4	5	4	3	Disorganised
Hard working	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	1	2	3	4	3	Bone lazy
Honest	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	Liar



Participant: I do not know it is pretty hard to say anything special. The first one I got a friend of mine did it, so I was quite happy about that, but he wouldn't put it where I really wanted it, he said I will do this for you, you take it and then come back and if you are happy with everything, I will do it where you really wanted it, because he was a friend of mine, I wanted it there originally and it's here, hidden, if you know what I mean.

Desley: So you wanted it on your forearm and he said to hide it.

Participant: No, he said we will do this first and see how you cope with it, I don't want to put it right there where every one can see it and you're gonna hate it, only because he was a friend of mine

Desley: So he wasn't worried about whether it was seen or not?

Participant: He was probably just worried about how I felt about it at the time. Probably he was protecting me more.

Desley: So how old would you have been roughly then?

Participant: 26. Yeah

Desley: So it wasn't like you were 17 or something

Participant: No, but I always knew where I had wanted it so I was determined that that was where I had wanted it. I did speak to him about it but I never went back to him to get this one, so in the first place he probably should have put it there and I wouldn't have got two.

Desley: So you don't think you would have got another one.

Participant: I probably would have, I probably would have, but he was sort of just protecting me like if I'd have had gone somewhere else, they would have done it straight away, yeah.

Desley: Do you think that would have been a bad thing?

Participant: No, but the choice that I had picked for here, this one's better. You know what I mean like the one I would have there.

Desley: It wouldn't have suited your arm as much.

Participant: Yeah it would have, but this one is nicer.

Desley: So how old were you when you had the second one?

Participant: was not long ago. 4 years, yeah, 4 years ago.

Desley: Do you think you will get any more?

Participant: I don't think so. I haven't had no urge to or anything.

Desley: So was the thing more for you about the picture or having a tattoo or was it something else going on do you think?

Participant: Like in my life you mean?

Desley: Yeah, but also... yeah probably in your life, that's an easier way to think about it

Participant: No, no, I didn't do it for any reason, to like hurt anyone else or anything like that no.

Desley: So was it just something you wanted to do?

Participant: Yeah, yeah.

Desley: A lot of people say I always wanted a tattoo. Did you feel like that do you think?

Participant: No I didn't always want one, no. my mother's got one, she sort of had hers and maybe I thought then oh mum's got one, so it's alright if I get one, sort of that way.

Desley: So how long do you think it was between when you started thinking about it and when you actually got the first one? What was it like, days, weeks, months, years?

Participant: Because it was a long time ago, it was sort of a spur of the moment thing, because I was out and I called into the shop he had worked at and sort of hung around a little bit and then sort of thought, you know, what about giving me a tattoo?

Desley: Did he do it that day?

Participant: Yes. So I probably didn't really think about it much at all.

Desley: and did you have a design picked out?

Participant: Yes, I sort of looked through everything. The first one that took me a while to pick, no not really. I sort of went umm I want that one, it was pretty quick. And this one was the same too, I sort of looked quickly and went that one that's it.

Desley: So what was about it, do you think, that made you choose it?

Participant: The colours.

Desley: So colours are important to you?

Participant: yeah. like lots of them have them black ones but I would rather colours.

Desley: Was it the specific colours or just the fact that it was colourful?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: So what is the one on your knee?

Participant: That's a snake. It has got a nice blue in it. Like this squiggly one like that.

Desley: Do snakes mean anything to you in particular?

Participant: No I don't like them.

Desley: I interviewed a guy the other day and he had a pet snake.

Participant: No, no. that's why everyone laughs at me, why did you get a snake? you hate snakes, and then with the flower people say what sort of flower is it? Like, being a horticulturist, yeah, well, it's none really. It's a mixture between a Lily and...

Desley: so it's not an actual flower?

Participant: no. it's not like, a tulip, a lily and a tulip.

Desley: Do they have particular characteristics, lilies and tulips? like are they hardy or delicate or any thing like that, that you can think of?

Participant: That is what they say is that your favourite flower, and I say no it isn't really a flower, but even lilies or tulips, I really fancy either. So it was really just the look and the picture and the colour.

Desley: So are you typically some one who just goes for stuff just coz of how it looks?

Participant: Meaning clothes and furniture and things like that.

Desley: Or even plants I suppose you'd have to be in some way wouldn't you. Like if you were designing a garden would you have to look at how stuff looked before you planted it?

Participant: yes. Probably I don't really care too much how things looked, like I am not a perfectionist or any thing like that, my house is a mess.

Desley: I was just wondering what it was about that that appealed to you, if it's not your favourite flower?

Participant: Probably the colour and how it was black and then sort of lighter inside and because it fitted in there and wasn't something circular, it's long probably why. I think I really wanted a tattoo there so I had to get something that I really liked to fit in that space.

Desley: So why there, what's important about that space?

Participant: I just think it looks nice, it looks good. Whoever's got one there.

Desley: as opposed to like on your upper arm, or your back or somewhere?

Participant: no. yeah, so it's probably just the spot I'd say.

Desley: and the one that you got on your leg, was that there because the guy suggested that it goes there.

Participant: So that it would fitted here because it went down like that, but he sort of said please, you know, so I didn't come back because I knew him.

Desley: So do you think there is a place that you wouldn't put a tattoo?

Participant: {pause} Me? That I wouldn't put one? My back.

Desley: What about like on your face or?

Participant: Yeah, na. I wouldn't put it on my face.

Desley: Upper arms?

Participant: no. Not me no I wouldn't.

Desley: What about like your feet or somewhere like that?

Participant: Feet yeah feet's ok.

Desley: except apparently it hurts a lot

Participant: Probably I don't like them where every one has got them.

Desley: Somewhere unusual.

Participant: which now is not that common because everyone's got them every where.

Desley: Yeah basically. So how do you feel about the tattoos do you like them?

Participant: Yes.

Desley: Would you change them at all?

Participant: No.

Desley: Neither of them?

Participant: No.

Desley: Do you think you would have them both again if you had your time over?

Participant: yes.

Desley: Even the snake?

Participant: yes.

Desley: and you said you don't know if you would have another one.

Participant: I would like to but I would have to find something that I'd like and pick really where I'd like to put it.

Desley: So out of those things what would be the most important, the picture or where to put it?

Participant: probably where to put it.

Desley: yeah, so you'd think about the place on your body and then think about what would fit there?

Participant: yes.

Desley: So would you ever think about getting those tattoos taken off.

Participant: No. I know they'll go all wrinkly and old and stuff but ...

Desley: Do you think that there was something else you could have done rather than have a tattoo at that point?

Participant: Well I was in the tattoo shop, and I was with the tattooist's friend, so probably not.

Desley: So do you consider that you were trying to achieve anything in your self by getting the tattoos.

Participant: This one I sort of went down and had a look and planned it, sort of made an appointment, and said I will have that, and I come back and spoke to the guy and they sort of booked in and got it arranged.

Desley: But it wasn't for a particular reason, for yourself?

Participant: No, it was because I liked the look of it.

Desley: So, it wasn't like because of a certain birthday or anything.

Participant: No it was not because of any special occasion. I was like I don't wear jewellery or anything extra like that

Desley: but that is something extra, isn't it?

Participant: people, um... I don't think it's a real big thing. Like I don't think that hey you have a tattoo, Like it doesn't shock me at all. Like you know, I know like how some people think. Wooh, they judge you differently, but to me it's not a big thing.

Desley: To you or if other people have it.

Participant: Well I did go out with someone that absolutely hated tattoos and his family hated them and they sort of did judge me because of that I think first up and that is not very good, you shouldn't do that ever.

Desley: They said somewhere that the difference between people that have tattoos and people that don't is that the people that do will accept anyone, but people that don't, you tend to find that some of them are really against it. Quite a few of the people that I have talked to have just said this is me and they have to accept me the way I am, and some people actually put them in a place where they can be seen to try and force people, I think, to like, to accept them or not accept them, where as some people will keep them covered up in certain circumstances, you know like they will get it up here so that they can put a t-shirt on and cover it up, but then other people choose to have it somewhere obvious

Participant: and show it

Desley: because it's sort of like well then you have to look at it.

Participant: Like if I am cold I'll just put a jumper on, if I'm not I won't

Desley: but you wouldn't wear a jumper to just cover it up.

Participant: nup.

Desley: Have any other things happened to you apart from that guy that was a bit against it

Participant: like they said jail tattoos because the father was older and he was sort of old fashioned, he was old fashioned about everything, it didn't really worry me, but I just thought it was unfair.

Desley: So have other things like that happened to you?

Participant: With any

Desley: with, like with boyfriends or not being able to get a job because you had a tattoo or anything like that?

Participant: No, no. well that one you would never see, and this one, work...it wasn't an issue. I work for a younger couple, and I think they just hired me because of my horticultural skills not because I had tattoo.

Desley: Can you separate in your mind that fact that you have a tattoo and the fact that you have a picture on you? Are they separate things? Was it more important for you to have a tattoo or to have that particular picture?

Participant: No I just wanted a tattoo there

Desley: and that was the main thing

Participant: If I look around at tattoos, I will notice, if someone has them and I will go aah, that looks really good, you know

Desley: Because there's not a lot.

Participant: Yeah, they always look good for some reason.

Desley: So you said the first one your friend did?

Participant: Yes

Desley: Did you have any one else with you?

Participant: No.

Desley: What about the second one, did someone go with you?

Participant: No

Desley: So you went off just by yourself.

Participant: yes.

Desley: How long did you think about that one?

Participant: Well years,

Desley: so from before the first one almost.

Participant: Yeah I am trying to think about the first one, I might have been older than 26, I can't think, because I have been married and had three kids, and I didn't have it before that so I must have been 30 or something, I reckon, 30...even older maybe I was 32.

Desley: The snake, so only about 4 years ago?

Participant: This one was 4 years ago, so I had the previous one about 6 years ago, yeah because I never it when I was being a mother. I'm still a mother, but, you know having children and being married. Yeah it happened after that.

Desley: What do you think they mean to other people that see them?

Participant: Some people comment and say it's nice. Some have said why did you get that? or oh when did you get that and I say I have had that for a long time now, I have never noticed it, you know things like that. No one has ever been nasty.

Desley: So you haven't had any one say that you are an idiot or something?

Participant: um...Probably my girlfriend, my best girl friend, she calls me Rose tattoo, she wouldn't get one, no one has ever said you know you are an idiot, why did you get that, oh no I suppose that same family probably said you are nice looking blah blah blah, why would you go and put a mark on your body, but they had problems themselves so.

Desley: So what do you think about other people with tattoos?

Participant: Nothing I'd look at them and appreciate them.

Desley: So just for the artwork?

Participant: yes and I'd probably think I would like to know those people or talk to them, like they stick out a bit, and I find them interesting.

Desley: The people because they have tattoos?

Participant: Yes. Like first up. Yeah. If a normal person was walking down the street, depends different things interest me in people, there is like a tattooed girl I know at the gym, she sort of moved here from somewhere and she has got lots of tattoos and I sort of "wow" but I have met her now and we have a chat, but if she'd just walked in I wouldn't have even noticed her, I would have but not as much.

Desley: Because it is something you have common

Participant: Yeah sort of, yeah.

Desley: Do you think you feel like you identify with other people with tattoos or particular groups of people?

Participant: Yeah I probably do, yeah like if I say you know so-and-so, you know that guy, he's got that tattoo of the thing and then oh yeah yeah. Then they say you know that girl she has got all those tattoos and I say yeah yeah.

Desley: So it's sort of always in the back of your mind. Do you forget that you have it or is it too obvious there.

Participant: Yeah I probably forget.

Desley: A few people said it's just like you know, a mole, or having blue eyes or something like that. It is just like part of them and they don't think about it always.

Participant: No, I don't always think about it.

Desley: Who do you know that's got a tattoo?

Participant: My mother and lots of people. Friends and stuff.

Desley: Any one else in your family?

Participant: No.

Desley: Has your mum had hers for a long time?

Participant: She got hers when she was 50. She had like 10 things to do when she turned 50, and it was one of them, that is what she said "she might want to interview me" and I said "probably mum, probably"

Desley: my trick question. What would be the opposite of your tattoo?

Participant: opposite? Opposite? What do you mean.

Desley: I'm supposed to try and let you guess, but some people have said an opposite picture, some people have said not having it, taking it off, feeling different, like this one guy actually said that his tattoo actually calms him down, so like if he had the opposite of the tattoo, he would be really stressed, because it reminds him of stuff.

Participant: the opposite of having it, um...

Desley: So you can do them separately if you like. if you think of your snake what would be the opposite of that.

Participant: Boring leg.

Desley: So just a plain leg.

Participant: Yeah. Just nothing, I would feel naked probably without it. Not... the same.

Desley: So what would be the word to describe your tattoo. If the opposite is boring and naked, what would be the word, if you can think of one?

Participant: Me.

Desley: So we have got you on one side and boring on the other?

Participant: if i... no, coz it means two things, doesn't it? I would rather have it than not have it.

Desley: So what is it about having it that's important?

Participant: Probably just being a bit different from everyone else.

Desley: So it's like different versus boring, almost.

Participant: yeah.

Desley: and it's important for you to be different?

Participant: Not important because I think everyone's different. But, um, it probably is one thing that is different about me to other people.

Desley: I don't know how to explain that, coz everyone is different, but it's like one little ... like an extra almost. Every one has different eyes or something, every one has different arms but you're extra different.

Participant: yeah. Not Nothing to stand out more. It's hard, isn't it? I haven't really thought about it all the time.

Desley: Tricky. So is there any thing else you can think of that might be relevant?

Participant: No, no, like it took me a little while to pick which one I wanted, and I had lots of people tell me where to go, like which was the best one.

Desley: As in the best tattoo parlour?

Participant: yeah, yeah, so probably I wasn't like get drunk and get a tattoo.

Desley: So you thought about it and then got it. Because it was going to be there forever, or?

Participant: Probably yeah, yeah. This one here I think I was a little bit drunk, but this one, nothing, it was just a morning thing.

Desley: But you obviously planned it because you set up an appointment and stuff like that. So do you think it's got anything to say about you as a person, like do you think its related to how you see yourself?

Participant: it'd have to be, really. People have like things written on their arms and stuff, I wouldn't do that, like the word happiness, or this Chinese meaning something or other, I don't know, I wouldn't, I wouldn't like to not have it.

Desley: So you wouldn't like to be without it. Is that what you mean?

Participant: Yes.

Desley: And does that apply to the one on your leg as well?

Participant: Probably, I would have liked it here, but I am glad I didn't get that there, as I think this is much nicer.

Desley: You wouldn't want to be without the snake either?

Participant: Yeah no it's good.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	4	Sad
Patient	2	2	2	4	2	4	3	4	2	3	4	3	Don't understand
Caring	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	3	Nasty
Kind	2	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	3	3	4	Mean
Sense of humour	2	2	3	2	4	3	3	2	2	2	2	4	Boring
Sociable	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	1	4	Lonely
Friendly	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	4	Ugly
Active	2	1	2	2	3	2	3	2	1	2	2	3	Lazy
Confident	2	1	2	2	3	4	3	1	2	2	2	4	Timid
Organised	4	1	2	1	3	4	3	2	3	2	3	3	Messy
Hard working	3	1	2	2	3	3	2	1	2	2	3	3	Lazy
Honest	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	1	3	2	3	Liar



3.2 RDT subgroup Belonging

Participant DB57
Male, 29 years old

Interview date: 22/5/2006

Participant: Ok well I walked into a... I had some spare money and walked into a tattoo parlour, and looked at all their examples and saw one that I liked it was definitely the one that I wanted. I was talking to friends about it and they said make sure it's the one that you want and I was sure so the following week I went back up to Parramatta where I got it done and got it done. The tattoo is a bald eagle one of its wings is red and white stripes and the other wing is blue with white stars the American flag. I really like America, one day hopefully I would like to buy a one way ticket there, and I saw that the bald eagle, America, American flag, I do want to get others to relate to the whole American theme, and there is one that I do really want. As I said I was a board game collector, I have seventy monopoly games so I want to get Mr. Monopoly tattooed on my back but that is if I have another \$200 just floating around spare.

Desley: How long ago did you have that?

Participant: I don't know the exact date, but it must be six-seven years.

Desley: you said you went and had a look and then went back a week or so later, how long were you thinking about a tattoo before looking?

Participant: Not really didn't look, I was just walking around I was working up there was nothing to do at night. It was near Westfield, so I popped in looking at the different designs and ah, got it. It was already designed by, kind of like a mass produced designs, not my own and yeah, thought, got it. Didn't even went to look at other places or designs because I knew that was the one that I wanted.

Desley: Cool, Where is it?? Nice and quick.

Participant: right shoulder right back shoulder,

Desley: Why did you put it there?

Participant: it was so, cover up so work couldn't see it, and it wasn't on display and it was on the back that is where I thought most tattoos go.

Desley: Is there a place that you wouldn't put a tattoo?

Participant: Ankles painful areas, I'd just want them on my shoulders, and back, that's all. Nowhere on my front. Oh, I'd put them there but I'm not really fancy, I'd rather them on my back

Desley: what about your face?

Participant: nah not on my face, legs

Desley: So somewhere you could cover up.

Participant: With my position now it wouldn't really matter, but yes somewhere where I could cover it up, if I, if later on I go in an office job again I would want to cover it up again. Yep

Desley: so just be careful about where you put it

Participant: Yeah

Desley: do you feel like when you had it it was linked to a particular event in your life

Participant: Not really. The tattoo is linked to my love of America but to getting it done, not really, I was just walking past and I had the excess cash, got to get it done.

Desley: So do you still like the tattoo

Participant: yes I do

Desley: do you think you'd ever want to change it

Participant: No I have thought about getting it re-inked, brighten the colours up again, but no, not changing it

Desley: So you would never get it off

Participant: No

Desley: and you said you've thought about having another one

Participant: Yeah, adding on to it, the American type theme, the bald eagle one so continue on, maybe get just the flag or outline of the states and Mr Monopoly, I did have a look at a Mr. Monopoly done in American colours and it didn't look as good as just the black, black Mr. Monopoly

Desley: so just a fancy script or something

Participant: No the actual Mr Monopoly, not the word, the picture, so, coz I love the board games so that's just something else I'd get.

Desley: Monopoly is English isn't it?

Participant: No yeah English American

Desley: I just think about the places on the Monopoly board, are all, in England. When you think about another tattoo, do you think more about what picture to get or where to put it, or something else??

Participant: cost

Desley: so just money

Participant: yep

Desley: If you had the money then what would be your next consideration

Participant: get Mr Monopoly

Desley: and you know where you'd put him?

Participant: Probably on the left blade or could it be small... left blade or shoulder, to kind of balance it up yeah

Desley: What about the pain part of it, do you consider that's a bonus, does it detract from it

Participant: The pain wasn't really, it was a long time ago, can't really remember it but when he was doing it and we had a break and I had a look in the mirror and said what's all that, that's not supposed to be red, it was supposed to be blue and white, it was the blood pouring out. Suppose for the couple of days after when you have to bandage it all, and have ruined some good white office shirts, pain no couldn't remember it, I've got a lot of fat there, so no.

Desley: so pain is not a big deal.

Participant: no

Desley: So what is it about America that you like, are you able to express that.

Participant: yeah. Its number one. Every one goes there to make it big, I hate it to have ask these questions, all these sports, all major sports they're here, all the Australian ones are here but they're not really televised, that big over there. Oprah and Donahue, all those big stars are viewed on our TVs but do you think you'd see Ray Martin or Kerrie Anne, or some of those over there. I don't know just the major movies, the TV shows, they're they're big. I just got back, when did I get back....December. and everything's big there. the biggest, like, the first time in America and the best souvenir that I got was a 2 litre double gulp cup, a soft drink cup and that there really publicised America for me. The 24 hourism, everyone goes there to make it big. I just, I know more about America than I do Australia, I don't want to down grade Australia, but I just love America

Desley: so if big or making it big is the most important thing what would be the opposite of that for you?

Participant: put dollars down

Desley: If America is about making it big, what would be the opposite of that

Participant: Like some other country or some thing

Desley: or another idea may be, so is it not making it big is it??

Participant: No, I used to be camp counsellor, and loved camps, Summer camps is where America started and shopping malls, our biggest shopping mall, like Parramatta or something like that is kind of like the corner store for them over there, so the opposite of big, I don't really understand the question.

Desley: I was really trying to get that in your mind what the opposite of big would be, so it would be

Participant: It wouldn't be an opposite, like Australia is Australia, that is fine like I have had no influence like parents, never come from there, great-grand parents all those, parents have never visited there, neither have grand parents, just commercialism, that's why I like it, I can't, there's no really opposite I don't think.

Desley: It's just this theory that I am using, he says that you can't know what something is unless you know what it's not.

Participant: the opposite.

Desley: so I'm just wondering...

Participant: Well Australia. Everyone makes it big there and look at their movie stars, they are Australians like Mel Gibson, and all those people they have moved there, so Australia is going

slowly, I was in Sydney the other day and I saw an American restaurant. I believe they are taking over the world.

Desley: We went to an Australian restaurant in America

Participant: Did you, outback steak house or something

Desley: I can't remember what it was called. It was in LA. They had Americanized version Australian. We were home sick at that time.

Participant: Oh no definitely I wasn't.

Desley: So what is important about being able to make it big for you?

Participant: I don't know, it's nice, I am happy with who I am, with size I am and things like that it just that everyone else has gone there to make it big, that's good so I am thinking ok I will travel there. I'm not worried about making it big it's just that they have gone there for a reason and I will follow them.

Desley: So its part that you are not sure what the reason is and you want to go there and find out or you know what the reason is?

Participant: Yeah {pause} I know the reason kind of its just a whole different life style I went there and one of the things I wanted to do was visit Walmart and its an everyday supermarket, but that is America to me, Walmart, Dairy Queen, White Castle, just the American stores you see on TV shows and know about and its just a whole different culture. not culture as in the way the food they eat is different but things they do just the stores and ... Like if they bring the stores here with different names, exactly the same shop but different names I would go why. Something like the mars food bars, it's called something there but totally different here, but why?? Other than that I really like it and I'm happy to go back there and stay.

Desley: So you would prefer to live there

Participant: yeah. No disregard to Australia but I would prefer....give it a go, for a couple of years.

Desley: So whereabouts would you live??

Participant: Well since having friends in Pennsylvania, and staying there for a week or so, I hopefully would make that my base so where we stay is like a county away from Amish area, Dutch country so next time I go I want to go to Pennsylvania, and spend a whole month just in Pennsylvania. I always say fifty two states, fifty two weeks in a year, a week in each state.

Desley: Wouldn't quite be enough would it??

Participant: No, No

Desley: So do you think there was something else you could have done with rather than have the tattoo at that time

Participant: At that time, no I would have just spent it in shopping. Back then I was creating a good library at home. Would have went and purchased books

Desley: Or board games

Participant: Yeah. Oh, I wasn't into board games back then.

Desley: So why do you think you choose the tattoo rather than go shopping or

Participant: Well its permanent, if you buy books or some thing they are permanent but you could lose them or get rid of them, but personal art expresses why I like my favourite country. Just it's permanent, something that I like. I am happy with the flag and I think anything American would have been fine and out of the pictures they had of American, this one I preferred.

Desley: So that was just your favourite picture of the flash that they had

Participant: yeah

Desley: Do you think of yourself as a tattooed person or a person who has a tattoo.

Participant: As a person with a tattoo.

Desley: Did you go in by yourself

Participant: yes

Desley: So what kind of reactions have you had to the tattoo?

Participant: First off the parents didn't like it but they have lived with it, and other people that I show, they want to look at it, they like it. I don't know if this is along the subject but I wouldn't go and get one of those kind of barb wire Celtic designs, that's not me, but this is a picture and it expresses... I had thought about other pictures as "oh yeah, that looks great" and I would not mind getting a tattoo of that but I would get Mr Monopoly rather than

Desley: something else

Participant: yeah. even though I like it but I'd get the opposite. Opposite or, yeah Mr Monopoly is my next one

Desley: So you haven't had any negative effects on your life because you've had a tattoo

Participant: Nope

Desley: how do you think people see you

Participant: well they don't see it and they can't judge me until they see it. I could be just an everyday person that is why it is hidden

Desley: Do you think that you identify with a particular group because you have a tattoo??

Participant: um. Nerds that's kind of rebellious. I was a quiet boy go to work, come home, no social life, and to go get a tattoo, oooh, that's a big thing. You relate tattoos to gangs and bikies and all that but I'm not that, is that a help?

Desley: I'm not sure... possibly. Did you ever worry about the reaction of your parents that you thought you shouldn't do it

Participant: I was old enough then so they can't really say anything but they helped me through, they helped me bandage it up coz it was on my back, it was hard to get to, so they helped me bandage it.

Desley: I guess that was better than having you get tied up in a knot. So do you think of the picture differently... I don't know how to express this.... Like do you think of the picture as one thing and then the tattoo as something different, or it is sort of just one thing??

Participant: true. I went back to the tattoo parlour and asked if I could have a copy of the drawing to put up on the wall coz it was quite hard to see and I really enjoyed the picture. I suppose yeah if I could've had the picture I wouldn't have got the tattoo, but coz I couldn't get that picture I had to take it with me by means of a tattoo.

Desley: So if you could have a picture of Mr. Monopoly would that be good enough, or

Participant: No that's different, yeah, coz I've got heaps of him and like seventy Monopoly games on the shelves um, that's just some extra.

Desley: is that a permanence thing, then, or something else?

Participant: that shows my love of monopoly, even though I love my parents I'm not going to get them tattooed on there. I think maybe I'd get other tattoos of things that I really really love.

Desley: So it's more about expressing a part of yourself.

Participant: Yes

Desley: What would be the opposite of your tattoo?

Participant: {pause} The opposite questions, the opposite of tattoo. Well, a picture on the wall or something really a copy of it.

Desley: Some people say not having had it, some people say getting rid of it, some people think of a different picture that would be the opposite. So for you it would be that you would have the picture but having it on the wall.

Participant: I think if I had the picture, back then, between there and now I would have had the tattoo, even if I didn't get it that night, I get it...

Desley: some here along the line.

Participant: yeah

Desley: Can you think about what would be the opposite of that tattoo for you

Participant: No I can't.

Desley: Of that tattoo

Participant: oh. something that I wouldn't get.

Desley: Yes if you want to interpret it like that.

Participant: Like I said no Celtic designs, no pictures of family, friends, kids, even if I don't have any, the traditional when you think tattoo, that. I wouldn't get that type of tattoo.

Desley: So what is it that you think of as a stereotype?

Participant: Dragons and swords and vipers, snakes. That is a tattoo to me and you said mine's is tattoo, but it's expressing some thing. These people that are get ah, butterflies and dolphins and

things. I don't know the person because so I can't comment on it but they just get it because it's what a young girl gets. Do you have any tattoos??

Desley: (nods) Is there anything else you can think I may have forgotten to ask about your tattoos that I may have forgotten to ask you

Participant: Well they fade in colour, and I like mine so I'm going to get it re-inked, coloured up again, whereas other people would just let it go and I'm losing a bit of weight and hopefully that won't put the picture out of whack that too much. One concern that I did have was that back then was acne, well I had a lot of pimples and that. I was worried they'd pop up there and get infected with the ink and that. But that hasn't been a problem. Choosing a tattoo artist, I had good comments about this so that's why I went to him. Other than that there is a place in Dapto I wouldn't go. I've had friends and cousins get it done at Fairy Meadow, so ok, they've got theirs done, I'll go back to them. That's all I can think of.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	2	1	2	2	3	3	2	2	1	2	2	1	Sad
Patient	2	1	2	2	3	4	2	3	2	2	2	3	Hectic
Caring	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	Don't care
Kind	2	1	2	1	3	2	3	3	2	1	2	3	Cheapskate
Sense of humour	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	2	3	2	2	2	Nobody
Sociable	3	1	3	1	2	2	2	1	3	1	2	1	Lower class
Friendly	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	3	2	Unsociable
Active	2	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	3	4	Lazy
Confident	2	1	2	2	2	4	2	1	3	1	3	3	Shy
Organised	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	4	2	1	3	4	Clutter
Hard working	1	3	2	2	1	1	1	1	3	2	3	4	Less effort
Honest	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	2	2	Liar



3.3 RDT subgroup Personal Symbol

Participant DS11
Male, 31 years old

Interview date: 2/2/2006

Participant: Um, basically it's the Chinese symbol for tiger because I was born year of the tiger. That's the sort of significance of it. Um, How we actually got it was we were drunk. I got it about ah, it must've been probably about seven or eight years ago now, um, and we were drunk one Sunday afternoon and happened to walk past a tattoo parlour a friend of mine, two of us, and we basically thought ah why not, so we went in and they did, I remember I was a bit nervous and the they actually did the drawing, it's on my arm here and they did the drawing on my arm and then we sort of, and he got down the back of the spine, Chinese, I can't remember what his said or the significance of it but there was, but he thought it looked good out of the book of Chinese symbols basically and um, then so they drew it, we went back out to another pub down the road and then thought why not, came had a look, why not, came back and they basically just literally 10 minutes later cause it didn't take long to do, that was it. So.

Desley: So was that in Sydney?

Participant: That was in New Zealand.

Desley: Oh ok.

Participant: Yeah I was, it must have been seven or eight probably eight, nine years ago now, how old am I 31, so it must have been 21, 23, 22, 23, so it's quite simple there wasn't too much brain power going on at the time. Um, I remember they did say that it was quite easy to remove and I remember thinking because it's sort of just, it is symbol, it's more like lines sort of there, that they could you know, that if they did remove it and it did scar a little bit it wasn't going to be too much of a big deal, and I probably looking back now actually, regret it a little bit. Like my father had tattoos from years and years ago and he actually had his all laser removed off. Coz it's not, I don't know it's alright when you're young but when you get a bit older it's sort of sometimes you feel mmmm, it's some funny reactions from people it's quite amusing, although they seem to, they're a lot more, people sort of seem to take them a lot, what's the sort of word I'm looking for, it used to be that people use to frown on them a lot more than what they actually do now.

Desley: A lot more accepting.

Participant: I think they are a lot more acceptable, well basically so many people have them whether there little ones on there ankles, my sister, I only just found out the other day she's got one on her ah, backside. I didn't know that until about two months ago so yeah I think they're more accepted and a lot of people just don't notice them anymore, you know. It's just sort of part and parcel whereas probably a few years ago these people used to be walking around going there's a tattoo, you know, you can actually notice a tattoo, now you don't. I personally don't notice them all that much, whether or not that's what you've found in your study I'm not sure.

Desley: We'll see. So why was the actual symbol important to you?

Participant: I remember going in thinking what do I want and I remember thinking ok I wouldn't mind a Chinese symbol I thought it would be quite cool. And then I thought I needed to find something that would be, you know, there was a little bit of substance to it so, when I went through and I knew I was born year of the tiger, so, I looked at the symbol for tiger and it was small and it was one symbol and I thought "perfect". Basically. I didn't want like a little devil or some horrible skull and crossbones thing. So, that was, that was, yeah, that was the significance of it. So it was basically just going back to born the year of the tiger and it actually does say tiger too, because I've been out and actually saw a Chinese person and said look, does this actually say what it means, we actually did that that night, so we actually made sure we didn't get conned.

Desley: My daughter got one that was Chinese writing and she was walking through china town and someone went "oh, art" and she went phew so that was a big concern.

Participant: They do, a couple of times I've been walking through Chinatown here and in London, just in a tank top and people have said are you born year of the tiger because they see the symbol and I say yes. So people do recognise it you just have to speak Chinese.

Desley: So with the Chinese was there any relevance to that?

Participant: Not really no, it was, I didn't want something big and solid. Cause my biggest fear is if I ever wanted to get it taken off I'm going to have a big scar and that was probably it, so I thought the Chinese symbols because they are sort of writing, um, I know they're a lot more popular now but they weren't so much well, people I knew with tattoos back then so and both of us, the friend of mine who I was actually with at the time he got his in Chinese, I can't remember what his said, it was some random, Confucius sort of type thing and it was two letters down the back but it kind of meant a sentence, little bird, bird in the hand is worth two in the bush sort of stuff, and we both said well if its ever going to come off, cause they're quite, there literally just writing like that so there wouldn't be too much of a scar no worse than any of the rugby ones that I've got on me now so it wouldn't really matter.

Desley: Ok so the fact that you got the year of the tiger, so that's when you were born, so is that important to you as well?

Participant: Not really, well obviously its my birthday, but um, it's on a Chinese sort of does, no, I just sort of thought yeah, tigers are quite cool as well they are sort of right up there with dragons, it's not a rat, I probably be a little bit more, If I was born a rat, Are you a rat?

Desley: I think so.

Participant: yeah. So that's the thing. Is yeah, I don't know, I just thought oh, it sounds quite cool and there's a little bit of sort of, a little bit of substance, when you're drunk there's sort of generally not too much but um, yeah that was it, but as in believing in the Chinese New Year, I don't know enough about it to say whether that's good, bad, lucky. I have no idea.

Desley: So what about the attributes they say that go with being born in the year of the tiger, do you know what they are?

Participant: Not really no, no, I sort of have read you know on the back of a Chinese restaurant sometimes you'll have, sometimes on the back of the menu you'll have, the sort of trivia that say oh you are such and such, you'll have a good year sort of thing, I have read those but to actually bring them up now and remember them, no I couldn't.

Desley: So that didn't play any part in making a decision?

Participant: No, like I do know what, like I'm a Gemini, so I do know what that means, because people, you know my wife reads my horoscopes to me and she always says you're a split personality kind of person, sometimes you're good and sometimes you're very bad sort of thing. So that I know a lot more about, I don't know if that's any significance to year of the tiger though.

Desley: Yeah I wouldn't cause that's more a year whereas Gemini is only a month.

Participant: Yeah I don't, I know there is significance in it but I couldn't tell you what it was.

Desley: What it was. Okay so why did you put it up here?

Participant: Because I thought I could hide it there, so it's not going to be openly visible, and I thought, I was told tattoos hurt as they do close to bone, so I thought that's nice big fleshy part, cause I remember like my friend he had his down his spine, and he seemed to be in quite a bit of pain as they were doing it. Where as that, it didn't hurt at all, yeah I sort of, you've got to have somewhere where you can see it without but then not being over the top, if you know what I mean, I didn't want one that was going to be like on the face, you know like Maori tattoos, you know the tattoos that some people put up their arms, I didn't want to sort of go over the top like that but then still have it where you can see it. so in summer, so I think that was probably why.

Desley: So you could decide when people saw it?

Participant: Yeah like I know some of my father's friends when they saw it you could just see the look it was like he's got a tattoo ooh, and it's funny, I remember when I first started shaving my head cause I was going bald and people have a perception that, and I know it's, a lot more, a lot of people do it now, he must be bad if he's got a shaved head, it's just sort of peoples, and when I go for a jog.

Desley: The skinheads thing?

Participant: Yeah. I think and that's just the ... and tattoos are related to bikies, you know people have that same you know, same mentality, bad people, I remember in London, when I first

started shaving my hair, I remember when ever I went for a new job interview I never would I'd let it grow back, if I, cause if it was a little bit longer people sort of didn't get that shock value that they don't seem to get now, I think people are a lot more understanding, well hopefully.

Desley: You hope yeah, so obviously you didn't think about it very long, when you had it. Are you able to say why you got the tattoo apart from being drunk? Was there any...

Participant: I sort of always, I always probably thought it wouldn't be bad to have a tattoo, I always thought they were quite cool, you know, peer pressure. {laughter} Um, and we were literally I don't know, it was just pretty spur of the moment we were literally walking from one pub to another pub 100 metres up the road and smack bang in the middle was dodgy bobs tattoo emporium.

Desley: So you were saying you were going between pubs.

Participant: We were going between pubs and it was pretty much spur of the moment, there was no significance.

Desley: So there was no big event in your life that happened or something like that?

Participant: No, I was single and at the time I had been going out but that had been for a year I'd been single for about a year, I had been going out with a girl for a long time.

Desley: So that wasn't like the break up thing?

Participant: No, it had been well past then, I had been going out a lot though, it was just a good time we were having a lot of fun. Umm, so no, not really. What else was I doing I'm just trying to think, at that stage, I'd set up, I was working for myself, it was sort of with a couple of other guys and we set up a company and basically I was young and had quite a bit of money, the company was doing well and partying a lot and that was as, pretty much as simple as it got, and it was, it was literally spur of the moment, if we probably walked the other side of the road we probably wouldn't have got one, so...

Desley: So when you think about it does it bring back any memories or anything?

Participant: Not really, um, to tell you the honest truth I never notice it, I only ever notice it when someone points it out. And most of the time it will be one of my friends and they'll even go Oh I forgot you had a tattoo, you know, and like it will be just the time, and very rarely does anyone ever mention it. Like I have sort of thought a couple of times oh I, you know, ghetto, go and get rid of it and then you know, I just sorta thought well there's not really a point, it's there and it's not over the top and offensive and it's, most people don't have any idea what it means until they ask cause they're not Chinese so. So that's pretty much about it, like Nicky my wife quite likes it, so as long as she's happy.

Desley: So would you have it again?

Participant: No, I wouldn't get another one, if that's what you mean, I wouldn't get another one, but I you know I don't regret it, put it that way.

Desley: Do you talk about getting it removed?

Participant: I do, you know, it's not like, if I regretted it I think I would have gotten rid of it, it's a really simple process to get rid of and I know before it use to be a lot harder and you know it wouldn't worry me if it scarred a little bit. Because you wouldn't notice it, and so I sort of, I suppose if I really regretted it I would have gone and got it but you know it doesn't phase me so.

Desley: So would you change it in any way do you think?

Participant: No, no cause I, actually what it ended up to be I don't mind it at all, um, no, I wouldn't change it, cause it's like when people don't know exactly what it is sometimes as well, and they'll actually come and ask what is it. And then you give in there and they sort of go ahhh okay, the penny drops, year of the tiger, oh I'm actually born that year sort of thing, so no I wouldn't change it. Cause if it's a patch where people immediately go ah that's a little devil with a bow and arrow, sort of stuff, you know but, but that at least most people don't even understand what it is.

Desley: With the symbol?

Participant: Yeah with the symbol.

Desley: Okay so you said it didn't hurt.

Participant: I was quite surprised. Coz I was watching some...I don't know if you've ever seen the Samoan tattoos that they get with the rings around here, and that looks really really painful, cause there's a lot of blood under on the soft skin. yeah

Desley: Some people actually not Samoans but they get them and they stop you here, they don't get it on the other bit cause it hurts too much.

Participant: Ah like we, like he said I'll show you some parts where it hurts, he didn't put any ink in it, and he went under there and yeah that gives you a fair and on the bone, he did it on my ankle, that hurts right on the bone, so I could imagine if you had it done, you know some people get them right there, that would be.

Desley: I spoke to a guy and he had Celtic knots all up his shin and I figured that would have hurt.

Participant: They basically said anywhere you pinch yourself and it hurts, it'll, it'll hurt. Like you can pinch yourself there and nothing happens but if you pinch yourself under there you definitely feel it and that's the sort of principles.

Desley: It's just some people actually enjoy the pain.

Participant: I can't say it was, but it didn't, I remember sort of sitting there watching him doing it and just thinking it's not as, it's just like someone sitting there with a little tack and sort of you know and doing that, there wasn't a flinch or an ouch. Or of which I was quite surprised actually, because I thought it would be a lot worse.

Desley: So you were saying about how it didn't really hurt, so pain is not a plus or a minus.

Participant: No I don't know if I've got a high or low pain threshold, I know some people serve and I'm definitely weaker, I definitely don't have a sadistic sort of ah like hurting myself for any particular reason, I know some people do but not me for any particular reason so.

Desley: And after you got it you said you just went out and?

Participant: We just went out straight to the pub, I remember, I think he just told us that, um that, what did he say, trying to think, don't, couple of things he told us not to do, don't go and yeah don't put it in the sun for a month was one of them, which was hard because it was summer, um, don't put it in the sun and there was something else we had to do.

Desley: Did you have to put cream on it?

Participant: Yeah put cream on it the first week.

Desley: Until the scab or whatever comes.

Participant: Mine didn't really scab that bad, I don't, just because of the location and it didn't bleed that much it was only, he had a little sort of patch on it when we got it done and it was sort of fine after that, but they were quite, the actual tattoo parlour itself was quite good cause they, if you turn up there and you've obviously had something to drink they'll make you wait, that's why they draw it on and tell you to go away, yeah, they say, they'll draw it on, so by the time you actually get through the process it took quite a long time, so you sort of have sobered up a little bit anyway, and then they tell you to go away and come back, but they were quite good on that like as tattoo parlours go they could have sat there and gone bang done.

Desley: I think these days there not allowed to do it if you're drunk. And also apparently you bleed more.

Participant: Yeah I don't know I have no idea on that as I said I was drunk.

Desley: That's what I've been told so yeah.

Participant: We weren't totally, you know what I mean we weren't falling all over the place, we were happily drunk I should say, like we had x amount of beers playing pool so we weren't you know, drunken sailor throwing up down the street sort of stuff, it was a lazy Sunday afternoon. yep.

Desley: So was there something else you could have done rather than have a tattoo?

Participant: Hard to tell, I was on the other side of the road. Um, as I said there was no real significance in it, there was no it was really quite spur of the moment, and that's it, yeah so there's no, I don't know. I don't know what other people have said but as a deep and meaningful thing it's pretty much a zero on that scale yeah, like I, it's there, it's done, I'm not unhappy with it, I'm not overjoyed probably overly joyed with it but.

Desley: So do you think of yourself as a tattooed person?

Participant: Yes I suppose I do, if someone asks me if I've got a tattoo I say yes so.

Desley: So if you see other people with tattoos do you sense some kind of connection,

Participant: bond?

Desley: bond or belonging or something?

Participant: No, not really, no, no,

Desley: So you sure about that.

Participant: yeah, I'm just trying to think. No, I don't think so. Not consciously anyway.

Desley: So my trick question, what would be the opposite of your tattoo?

Participant: The opposite of it.

Desley: Cause the theoretical framework I'm working from, the guy that developed the theory said you can't know what something is without knowing what it's not, so you can't know hot unless you know cold, so I can't know what your tattoo is unless you can tell me

Participant: What it isn't. I'm just stumped.

Desley: but it's a really hard question

Participant: That's a mind fudger that is. Um, what it isn't, what's the opposite, I suppose no tattoo or one on the other arm, with a totally different symbol.

Desley: So what would be a totally different symbol?

Participant: I guess if you wanted something opposite it would have to do with something with the Chinese symbol relating to the furthestest away from the year of the tiger, so that would be your opposite wouldn't it.

Desley: It would be your opposite not mine.

Participant: So if you did that it would have to be on the other arm and it might be the year of the rat, so that would be the or the monkey or the dragon whatever the other ones are. The ultimate opposite would be none, I suppose, you've either got it or you don't.

Desley: Got it or you don't. Yep okay, so you said you were with a friend and he also got a tattoo, so was it like his idea or your idea or you both went oh what the heck?

Participant: I actually think it was more his idea at the time, it was sort of part and parcel, but I he was definitely probably, he would have definitely got it no matter what where I was umming and ahning, I was probably umming and ahning cause I knew my father had them and he'd got his removed. And as soon as he saw mine he'd kill me so.

Desley: So what do you think it means when other people see it, like do you think associate you with that idea that you said with the bikers and the?

Participant: I don't know I definitely think older generation people like the, you know, some, sort of my parents' friends are probably not as broad minded as the younger people are and you know um even their friends that are a little bit older than them, like my grandmother sort of, you know, she would frown on it, so I wouldn't show it to her, like it wouldn't, cause I know she'd be annoyed with it cause that's just who she is and her sort of generation have a but as far as sort of my generation or your generation, I don't know how old you are, sort of few years I won't say anything I won't even make a guess, you know 22, 23, I'm saying, um so yeah I think we are a lot more open minded than what we use to be so it's funny like, friends of mine when I go around their place and their parents will see it and you just go mmmm, you've got a tattoo you dodgy little man sort of thing, and I a friend of mine who actually had, when he got his done and he showed his mother, his mother went spewing over it, basically she was not happy, she demanded him at Christmas to go and remove it.

Desley: And did he?

Participant: No I think he's still got it, I will ask him though, I will send an email.

Desley: So did the possibility of the reaction like that influence so like did you think twice about it or?

Participant: I knew the old man would kill me because he spent so much time and effort getting rid of his and his, he had one two three, and he had a few, and he had a big job I think he was in the merchant marines or something like that something to do with, he was a big sailor on a large boat and they all seemed to have them in those days. I don't know, I can't even remember what they were, there were sailing themes on all of them and he got them removed and his, but they scarred and because the hair didn't grow back on the scar they were quite solid, so you could actually still see them but it didn't sort of like, the anchor was gone but you could see the scarring and you could make them out, you couldn't probably read the writing you could see the sort of outline of it quite easily. But that's changed now these days the sort of tech, 15 - 16 years ago the technology has gotten a bit better than what it was a bit better than it was then, well I hope if I ever want to remove mine.

Desley: So what do you think about other people with tattoos?

Participant: Some of them are scary. I don't know if you've been a moki on a Maori...the full...

Desley: Not in the flesh I haven't

Participant: When you've done the full, there's sort of, there's an actual a tradition in that, like um, it's suppose to be going through your tribal ranks, and that's how it goes back but nowadays you just see gang members wearing the full on you know, and they look mean and that's probably because they are. Being, being very stereotypical right then. I'm trying not to be but of my encounters of them their generally sometimes not the nicest people in the world, their generally a gang member of some sort.

Desley: Is that in New Zealand.

Participant: They, yeah, you wouldn't. If they were on one side of the road you'd cross and cut and run and pass, sort of. Don't cross the black power and mogul mob, you walk the other side of street, um but normally don't, like I've got quite a few of my friends that have got them, some of them that are like who are Maori, and they've got like obviously traditional tattoos, some are Samoan and they have the, the ring around the arm, um yeah I don't know, it doesn't, I think people who have gone over the top on them, that's not my cup of tea, I couldn't see myself doing full on arms and...

Desley: So sleeves you call over the top

Participant: Yeah, you know how you get, some people really love tattoos, and they've got loads of them, and I just, you know, that's not me, definitely not me, um, but that's their choice, don't really have any sort of preference, there's no sort of I don't now bondship with them or not you know it's just a tattoo. That's quite you know sometimes you just go that's quite a cool tattoo or but or that's horrible, ones with mother on them just shouldn't be allowed to be done anymore. They really should cut it, don't you still see them, the hearts with mother, the ones that are quite funny where they've obviously had a girlfriend or a wife and then they've either broken up or been divorced and so they've actually tried to change the name.

Desley: So, like Johnny Depp and Wynona Ryder.

Participant: that sort of thing. You're leaving yourself open there if you put someone's name on it.

Desley: Someone told me that there's a tattoo superstition that if you put a name something bad will happen, so either you will split up or the person will die or something. I don't know, a lot of people haven't heard of it so.

Participant: I don't know

Desley: So do you think it's had any negative effects on your life?

Participant: No not really.

Desley: So it hasn't lost you any girlfriends or jobs or anything?

Participant: No, my mouth's probably got me into more trouble than my tattoo, no definitely not, no, you might get the odd bad look from grandma but no nothing significant.

Desley: So is there anything else about your tattoo that you think is important.

Participant: No not really.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	2	1	1	1	1	4	2	1	2	3	4	3	Sad
Patient	3	1	1	2	2	2	3	2	3	2	5	3	Me
Caring	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	4	3	Unloving
Kind	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	3	3	Tight arse
Sense of humour	1	1	1	1	1	4	1	1	2	3	3	4	Boring
Sociable	3	2	2	2	1	4	2	3	2	2	4	3	Recluse
Friendly	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	4	3	Mean
Active	2	1	1	2	2	3	2	2	2	4	1	4	Dormant
Confident	2	1	1	1	1	4	2	3	2	3	5	4	Nervous
Organised	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	2	3	1	5	4	Disorganised
Hard working	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	4	Lazy
Honest	1	1	1	1	2	3	1	1	1	3	3	4	Lies

Participant: I have one. I got it when I was about 19, I think. And I drew the design myself because I didn't like the idea of going into some tattoo parlour and picking something off a wall, that didn't mean anything, or I wouldn't like in another year's time. It's pretty small. I have it on my lower back there's a couple of reasons that I put it there. To start with, the original reason, I guess is coz it's a place that you can choose to cover or choose to expose. It's not something you have you know, on an arm that you can't hide, something big like that. I think the other reason is I was still young enough to be terrified of what my parents would think if they ever found out. So it had to be somewhere I could hide. The other reason was that it is a part of your body that doesn't change dramatically as you age. It's not, the stomach would stretch with pregnancy, or you know, anywhere else would change. But it doesn't seem to have a big difference in there, so. Yeah. Well, I don't know what else to tell you about it.

Desley: What does it look like?

Participant: It has a Pisces symbol in the middle, but it is not because I am terribly aligned with any kind of astrology stuff. I just liked the pattern. And it's just, it's patterned around it. It was symmetrical, it was... I got it in a colour rather than black, because I didn't like the idea of black. That's about it.

Desley: So for you what would be the most outstanding feature of the picture?

Participant: um. I don't really know. I liked the fact that it was original. It's obviously not something that I am going to see on somebody else somewhere. I don't know. I'd just jump back a question for a second. Another reason why I put it where I put it and probably has an impact on what I think of it now, is that it's somewhere I don't have to see it every day. If I look for it I can see it but it's not something that I notice. There's nothing striking particularly about it because I guess I don't see it very often unless I look for it. Unless somebody asks me about it.

Desley: I was thinking more like when you think about it is there a feature that you think...

Participant: Not really. It's just a pattern. It's all one solid block colour. There's nothing that stands out particularly about it.

Desley: And is Pisces your star sign?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: So that had some influence on being there, or?

Participant: It had some influence. Probably. I mean so far as I looked at what they had available of that sort of thing when I was looking for something to build on. As I said I am not terribly astrologically minded or anything. I just had a look at what my options were for my name or for my initials or for my, anything else that I could find that was a little bit to identify with me and that was a pattern that I could build on without it being too overly obvious that it was you know, a H for Holly or ...

Desley: So you mentioned you put it on your back so it couldn't be seen amongst the reasons. Is there somewhere that you wouldn't put a tattoo?

Participant: I don't think I'd put it somewhere that I had no choice to hide. I wouldn't have a facial tattoo. I'd also probably even hesitate to go to arms even though the upper arms you can hide with sleeves and things. I'd still have issues with that. I'd probably also not put it, as I mentioned somewhere on your body that you know is going to change dramatically. I think any body who thinks their chest or their stomach is going to stay the same is going to be quite unhappily disappointed a bit later. It should hold its shape, it should hold its pattern where it is.

Desley: So how long did you think about doing it before you did it?

Participant: I knew that I liked them and I liked the idea of having one, probably a couple of years before I did it. In terms of planning, it was a spur of the moment. I was in a ... I was on holidays and I found somewhere that I liked that I felt comfortable with and basically did it the same day that I found one.

Desley: So you already had the drawing or?

Participant: No I went into the tattoo parlour and sat down with the guy who actually did it for me in the end and had a bit of a chat to him about what I wanted and I showed him, I drew with him. He sort of helped me to I guess clarify what I liked in the pictures I drew and what I didn't. We did the same day.

Desley: So do you consider that having a tattoo coincided with any particular even in your life?

Participant: No, actually. I, um. Not really. I knew that I had left high school. I was in Uni at the time. Um.

Desley: Did you say you were on holiday?

Participant: I was on a holiday. I think it was just a matter of the opportunity at the time. But it was something I had thought about as I mentioned for a little while. I just hadn't ever planned when or what or where. But no I don't think it was anything significant. There wasn't a reason that I decided to get one.

Desley: so it wasn't breaking up with a boyfriend, or...

Participant: no

Desley: So do you still like it?

Participant: Yeah. Yep. Yep. I still love it.

Desley: Would you change it at all?

Participant: Nup. I, as I said I don't see it very often on myself and it still represents something original to me and, um, yeah, I don't feel a need to change it. I'm not bored of it coz I don't see it. I know that it's there.

Desley: So you wouldn't get it off?

Participant: Not at all. Nup.

Desley: Would you have another one?

Participant: I've often thought about it. I think they are quite addictive.

Desley: And why do you think that is?

Participant: I have no idea actually. It's a...

Desley: I have a theory. Like I asked a tattoo artist one day in Wollongong one day and he said because people like to balance themselves up.

Participant: Yeah. I could understand that. Left and right and..

Desley: but this one's a bit bigger, so they do another one there and..

Participant: Well as I said mine is fairly symmetrical, in the middle of my body, in the middle of the...

Desley: there goes that theory!

Participant: Well maybe not. I mean that's still fairly balanced. I don't know where I would put another one.

Desley: Have you thought about what you would have?

Participant: No. Well I've thought about that. I haven't found anything that I *need* or anything that I particularly relate to and think I would still relate to in enough years, to make it worthwhile.

Desley: what about maybe when the baby is born, would you consider having the star sign of the baby with something or?

Participant: No, not the star sign. Um. At the very most if it had to do with the baby then I might have names or initials or something like that. Or something that I could associate specifically with them. But until, until they sort of develop some kind of personality trait that I could find that I thought would continue to represent them, I probably wouldn't do it, I probably wouldn't do it. So, yeah, I don't know. I mean it's, it's ... I think if it had something to do with a child then I would feel obliged for the next child, to do something as well. And I am not really sure I want to start that. Six children later I might be covered!

Desley: Do you think if you were thinking about another tattoo, would you think more about where to put it or the picture first?

Participant: Probably where to put it. And I think I would be looking for the same sort of I guess characteristics as where I had my first one. I wouldn't want to see it every day myself. And I wouldn't want it to be on a body part that changes dramatically over time. Not really sure there's many places like that left. I think I would have to find somewhere that I was comfortable with, where it could be, before I started to figure out what.

Desley: Ok. So place more than picture.

Participant: Mhm.

Desley: So why do you think you chose to have a tattoo rather than do something else?

Participant: I think it was in addition to doing it! I had piercings and all that sort of stuff at the time as well. It was just something else that I could get that I thought was an expression of what was important to me or what I liked at the time, or that particular stage in my life, that I would remember it. I guess it was by when I got it or remember what I got and why.

Desley: So what would you say that stage was, that you were trying to remember?

Participant: I don't know. I guess it was somewhere between childhood and getting somewhere near responsible adulthood. I wasn't too prepared to wander into the whole "I'm a grown up" thing too quickly. I still don't think I've reached that yet. I plan on reaching that. But there's no specific event. It was just, I guess an age. It was a fun age.

Desley: So do you think of like being at Uni when you think about it, or is there something else, like being young still?

Participant: Yeah. I guess I think more about the town I was in and the place I had it done, rather than what else was going on in my life at the time.

Desley: So that was a nice place for you to be?

Participant: Yeah it was a place where I spent a lot of my child hood and where my parents grew up and family around and stuff. And it happened to be there you know, that I came across on holiday somewhere that I thought I could do it.

Desley: And were you on holidays with your family or?

Participant: I was on holidays with extended family. Visiting extended family. But not with my immediate, I think I would have been too terrified to get it done then. They would have found out.

Desley: So do you think there is anything else you could have done that would have had the same effect for you?

Participant: Probably not. I mean there is... it is a permanent fixture. Yes you can choose to get it removed, but it still won't ever go away 100%. So it's something that I chose, I guess, that I knew it would stay there. Anything else, anything else that I could have done is reversible. You can take out a piercing, as I have, most of them, so...

Desley: Ok. Do you think of yourself as a person with a tattoo, or a tattooed person?

Participant: A person with a tattoo I guess. Again, coz it's not something I see every day or every time I get dressed or something. It's not at the fore-front, ever, so.

Desley: Ok. Trick question. What would be the opposite of your tattoo?

Participant: In terms of an actual picture, I couldn't tell you, but it would be something that I picked off the wall that would have no meaning and no connection to anything. Nothing to do with me, I guess. I don't know, maybe I guess, some of the stuff you see in a standard tattoo sheet is always the, the skulls or the naked women or the you know, the knives with the roses or any of that sort of stuff that I associate with being too drunk to come up with your own idea or not having something that means something to you, so I guess something along those lines.

Desley: Something meaningless.

Participant: Yeah. Yeah.

Desley: So when you went did you go by yourself?

Participant: Yep.

Desley: Very brave.

Participant: Well, as I said I was on holidays with, visiting family. I was visiting by myself. And it wasn't something that I wanted my family to know about immediately anyway so. I would quite happily have had a friend or someone with me had they been there, but, but they weren't so.

Desley: So what do you think it means to other people that see it?

Participant: I've never thought about it really. I don't know and it probably doesn't really matter to me. If it was 100% visible all the time, I guess it could cause a judgement, about something they would associate me with, but as it's not...

Desley: So are you talking about the stereotype?

Participant: Yeah. I guess the um, I don't know, I guess when I look at somebody else with full sleeves or something done, I don't necessarily have a liking or a disliking of them or think they're a particular type of person.

Desley: What kind of reactions have you had to it?

Participant: I guess the one that stands out the most was my mum's when she eventually saw it which was probably six years or so after I had it. And I was expecting fireworks. I was expecting, maybe not an outburst, but certainly an opinion and I got almost nothing. She sort of said, "Ah, well that's not too bad" and that is as much as was ever spoken about it. And I think that one stands out because I was expecting something really big. But, other kinds of reactions, people are surprised that it's colourful rather than just black. It has absolutely no black in it. So they, um, they find it I guess, a little bit different. I guess it's not terribly offensive to any particular group, because really it's just a pattern. It's not particular words or it's not, it's not an image that has a stereotype I guess, attached to it. I haven't had anything terribly memorable from other people.

Desley: Did you ever worry enough about what your mother would think to think, "oh no, I won't do it"?

Participant: No.

Desley: so you were terrified, but not totally.

Participant: No. I think terrified's a strong wrong word. She's a very strong woman. She has very strong beliefs about what you should and shouldn't do and I guess through growing up that's quite important to have some sort of guidance that way, but I always knew that I would get to a point where my opinion of that would matter more than hers. I guess that's when it happened!

Desley: Part of that too is, like if she is like that, then you learnt to be like that yourself.

Participant: to some extent, probably. Yeah.

Desley: So what do you think about other people with tattoos? You said a bit about people with full sleeves.

Participant: I think they've made a decision based on their own, I guess their own reasons. I don't think that they're for everybody. Certainly not everybody makes the decision to have one. I guess...I don't know. I mean people get them for so many different reasons. You have to kind of respect that they've had their reasons and if you talk to them about it usually they're quite willing to tell you what it means to them or why they got them, or what it was.

Desley: Do you think you have a pre-conceived idea of what kind of person they're going to be?

Participant: No. I know when I was growing up I used to think, when I was quite young, sort of ten and under I had a couple of uncles that had tattoos and they were Navy people. And I remember thinking wow either they were tough or they had to be Defence Forces or a bit rough, might have been a bikie gang or whatever. But they are so common now that there's not one particular group of people that they seem to represent any more.

Desley: So who do you know that has a tattoo, like friends, family?

Participant: None of the above. Friends, family, my husband, not immediate family as far as I know. Unless they are going through the same denial to the family that I did. Certainly extended family, aunts and uncles and cousins and a lot of my friends from various groups, both here at sky diving. Through the years, people from all walks of life that had them. I don't think there is any group that I know that doesn't include somebody at least, that has something.

Desley: Do you think it's had any negative effects on your life?

Participant: Not overall, no. I know that when I first got it I was, I was quite concerned as to the reaction I would get from home, but I still knew it would be a temporary reaction. And it wasn't something I was prepared to go and get removed no matter how bad the reaction was. I did know that it would fade away, I just wasn't looking forward to the confrontation. But no, other than that, nothing.

Desley: Do you think that having the tattoo means that you identify with a particular group of people?

Participant: No. Again they don't seem to represent one group of people to me anymore. When I was young, yes, but I know so many different people from different categories and different walks of life that have them for different reasons, so. No, not at all. It's just something that I liked myself.

Desley: So you said before that they are addictive.

Participant: Yeah. Maybe it was the power of suggestion. But I certainly had a least 3 or 4 people tell me before I went and got one that I should, not should, but just be aware that often you'll go and get one and quite soon after that you'll want to get another one and quite soon after that you want to go and get another one. I sort of made a promise to myself that I would wait at least 12 months from the first one to any subsequent tattoos. I certainly went through a few months thinking, "wow, what else am I going to get" you know, "I've got 8 months to work out what I'm going to get!" By the time I got to the 12 months I sort of thought well it's not really important. There's nothing else that means enough to me to make me want to go at the moment and put a permanent mark on. So as a result I've only got the one, and I am quite happy with one for now. For now. There might be another time or there might be another event or something like that that I find means enough to me to find a pattern or to find a picture to mark the occasion, but I think by waiting the 12 months, I sort of, I've probably stopped myself from getting some things that wouldn't have meant anything to me by now anyway.

Desley: Just for the sake of getting another one, sort of?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: So you skydive.

Participant: I do.

Desley: ok. Can you see any parallel between jumping out of a plane and getting a tattoo?

Participant: I guess the first time you try anything that's...that might hurt, or that might be dangerous or that might not be mainstream at the time, or that you might not associate with mainstream at the time, probably has some parallels, but overall, probably not. Skydiving I

guess just as a bit of a sidetrack. When people first do it and when people first choose to come skydiving, it's often for the rush and for the thrill and the adrenaline hit. The longer you stay in the sport, the more you come to realise that you actually stay in it for the opposite reasons. The people that compete and train all the time and come out most weekends and do big formations and that sort of stuff will tell you that they don't do it for the thrill anymore. Or not the same thrill of leaving an aircraft and knowing that it's dangerous or anything like that. It's more because it gives you quiet time in your brain if you like. It's the only time that there's no other thoughts going on. There's nothing else that can possibly take your thought processes away from what you need to be...

Desley: Because you've got to concentrate.

Participant: because you have to concentrate on what you are doing and you generally do concentrate. Instead of coming down really hyped up like you do the first 4 or 5 jumps that you do, you come down a lot more relaxed because you've had a bit of quiet time from everything else that goes on in your brain all day every day. Yeah. Spending a weekend out here is much more relaxing than people give you credit for. I guess, as I said, maybe the first jump or the first few jumps that you do, is for the thrill of something new. Maybe that's why some people get tattoos or maybe that's the addictive nature of the tattoo. That you sort of think wow that's something I got something out of, I got a buzz out of, or something.

Desley: I just wonder if there's this element of conquering something. Like you're lying there for however long and going through this pain and at the end you can go "I did it." So it's like a little personal test thing. And I imagine throwing yourself out of a plane the first time, like....I can't imagine myself ever doing that.

Participant: A lot of people come into the sport with that, or with a fear of heights or a fear of falling or whatever, and certainly for them it appears to be a conquering act. It was nothing that I was ever afraid of. It was something that I always knew that I was going to come and do. I'm not sure if I ever put the tattoo into a conquering type field. It was just something that I wanted to do. Something that I, maybe something that I thought I would associate with a time or a period in my life or something. But...

Desley: But you don't see skydiving like that?

Participant: I don't see skydiving like that for me. But I certainly recognise that it is like that for a lot of people. Especially when they start. For the people that are like that, they don't generally stick around in the sport. They come, they do it once, and they've done it. They've got their badge of honour, they can walk away and say, well I did that. The people that stay in the sport, it generally wasn't about that to begin with. So they maintain their interest in what they're doing and they strive to get better or they strive to compete in a different discipline or they find that the social environment is probably overly friendly. So it's a great place to be. So, yeah. For me skydiving wasn't really like that.

Desley: So you said that you find it calming.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: When you had the tattoo did you find you had to go into a similar place just to go through the experience?

Participant: No, I was excited. I think it was just myself and the tattoo artist that was there at the time. So I didn't find that it was as painful as I was expecting. I didn't find that it took a terribly long time. I really didn't find that I had to force myself to endure something. It kind of just happened and we had a chat while it was happening and then it was done.

Desley: I was just, I guess trying to make some sense out of it for me. One thing is that I have read a guy called Maslow. He said that if you go through what he calls a "peak experience" you get down to basically the essence of yourself, coz all the other crap gets swept away. So I'm thinking, doing some kind of extreme sport, for which I assume skydiving would qualify, would be part of that. You said you've got to clear your mind of all the other stuff.

Participant: Yes. Absolutely.

Desley: So I'm just wondering if for some people the tattoo is that kind of thing.

Participant: u, some people, I certainly wouldn't say it definitely wouldn't be. But I don't think it was, for me. I don't remember it being like that at the time. I didn't, um...

Desley: So it wasn't that big a thing, in some ways.

Participant: No. No. It was something that I wanted to do, and

Desley: And you did it.

Participant: I did it. Yeah. It wasn't something that I really had to struggle to make myself go and do, or that I had to talk myself into it terribly hard. The opportunity arose and I sort of went with it from there, so.

Desley: Ok. Is there anything else that you can think of about your tattoo?

Participant: Not really. It, it doesn't play that big a part, so, not really.

Desley: And you don't relate it to the fact that you do skydiving at all?

Participant: No. But having said, if I, if I found a place that I was happy to put something and then was looking for something that meant something to me, then skydiving would quite possibly end up somewhere in the subject matter. It's a sport that I have been in for about 6 years now, and it's not something that I see myself leaving in a terribly big hurry. I would say that that is somewhat defining of who I am and what I enjoy, so it may turn out to be somewhere in there, or something that would relate it back, but there's no rush for it yet.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	1	1	2	1	1	4	1	1	3	3	4	2	Sad
Patient	2	1	1	1	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	4	Hurried
Caring	2	1	3	1	3	3	2	1	4	2	4	2	Self-centred
Kind	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	1	3	2	4	1	Mean
Sense of humour	2	1	3	2	2	2	2	1	2	3	3	4	Straight
Sociable	1	1	3	1	2	3	1	3	3	3	3	4	Keeps to themselves
Friendly	1	1	2	1	1	3	1	1	2	2	3	1	Closed
Active	2	1	3	2	3	4	2	5	4	4	5	4	Sedentary
Confident	1	1	2	1	1	3	1	3	2	3	2	4	Shy
Organised	2	1	1	2	2	3	2	2	4	3	4	2	Scattered
Hard working	2	1	2	1	2	4	2	2	5	3	5	3	Bludger
Honest	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	3	2	5	2	Liar



3.4 RDT subgroup Philosophy

Participant DF45
Female, 27 years old

Interview date: 10/4/2006

Participant: Ok, umm, well basically I got my tattoo about, let me think, probably almost two years ago now, umm it was a spontaneous thing, like I've always wanted one but then I've never sort of really been game enough to, to go and get one and then yeah I was I think I was with my girlfriend one day and I just said you know I think I'm going to go get one tomorrow, do you want to come? And I knew what I wanted, like I knew if I got one I always wanted like a dragon cause umm I used to do, well I was doing at that time umm Chinese Marshal Arts I was right into that eternal marshal arts and that kind of thing, so yeah I like the dragon, I like what it represents, it represents umm courage, wisdom and strength so yeah I guess I associated that with myself and my beliefs and so forth umm, yeah so I went and got it and then it was just a matter of choosing where, so I wanted, wanted somewhere umm that was a bit different like somewhere that you can't really see that much as well except like say when I go to the beach or something, that's why I chose like my upper leg, umm, yeah, that's about it really. So...

Desley: So you were about 25 when you had it?

Participant: Yeah, I'd say so.

Desley: And what is it about courage, wisdom and strength that's important to you?

Participant: I think its just umm, well I guess for me, the, well from kung fu as well, its more of like an internal thing, so umm being courageous obviously umm, having wisdom, like thinking about things and umm I guess just trying to become more knowledgeable about everything and more experience umm and then strength is probably more internal strength rather than obviously external strength...

Desley: So strength of character...

Participant: Strength of character, yep, I'd say so. Umm, yeah, so that's why I got it, just resembles that so, and I believe in that.

Desley: So is there a place, you said you put it on your thigh, so it wasn't obvious all the time?

Participant: Yeah, yeah, I didn't want it to be obvious all the time because sometimes you go to nice events and things like that, you want to wear a nice dress and sometimes, especially if it's a dragon, it doesn't really go with what you're wearing (laughter). So, yeah...

Desley: So is there a place you'd, that you wouldn't put a tattoo?

Participant: Oh, not on my arm, probably nowhere that's sort of really visible, really obvious, like here or on my chest or on my back. If I was to do one on my back it would be more like lower or umm you know, to the side or something like that but, yeah nowhere that it could really be seen when you're you know, wearing a nice dress or just, just really even when you're out wearing a singlet or whatever, so, nice to be a bit more discrete I think...

Desley: So how long would you say you'd thought about having a tattoo before you had it... coz you said you thought about it for a day or something...

Participant: Well I thought about doing like actually getting it done, like going yep, this is crunch time but I thought about it for years, like I've always wanted one, umm, probably, probably at least yeah, probably at least like 5 years or something... probably going yeah I'd like to get one one day, like I knew I'd get one one day, so I think I was just feeling a bit game that day.

Desley: So what was it that was putting you off? Was it the thought of the pain or your parents?

Participant: No, no, I'm not... no I think umm, well I think maybe, I think that was near the time I had just moved out from home and umm it was summer, I had time off work and I was all relaxed and I just thought oh, I'm going to go and do this now so, yeah it was probably like at a new beginning of my life as well, cause I'd broken up from a long term relationship before that so, I guess it was just doing something different.

Desley: So do you consider it was to mark a new point in your life or did it just happen to coincide?

Participant: No, I think it just you know, a lot of things, probably a lot of things that I didn't do, umm, I guess probably a lot of things that you just don't do when maybe you're with someone or whatever and when it finishes then you can do those things again. So, yeah, I guess umm...

Desley: So you don't take it for credit and go that's when I split up with so and so, or that's when I left home...

Participant: No, no, I go, oh my god, no, no, no way no, its something I've always wanted to get done, but I just felt like the time was, was right then, so...

Desley: So, umm, do you still like the tattoo?

Participant: Yeah, I do.

Desley: Would you change it at all?

Participant: Umm, no, no I wouldn't change it.

Desley: And would you have it again if you had your time over?

Participant: Yeah, I probably would actually.

Desley: Mmmhmm, so what about another one? Would you ever consider another one?

Participant: Yeah, I would actually, they're quite addictive... I would, but I just don't know, like I umm, yeah I would like something else actually, its quite funny because I guess umm, you get it and you sort of, its yours, its very individual and you identify with it and umm yeah I would like another one but I'd have to have a good think about it because I don't want to get just anything, you know. Whereas there's a lot of people out there that just like being tattooed. So you know, umm, I don't know, just have to see. But I would like another one.

Desley: So if you think about having another one would the picture be the most important thing, or the place to put it or is there something else?

Participant: Both really, like definitely like well what it is, definitely the picture, and what it is, and how big it is, umm and definitely the place to put it as well. Because like I said before I wouldn't put it on my arm or anywhere that's too exposed. Umm, just because I just don't think it looks that nice on some people, so yeah... and also when you're older- when I'm 80 and I'm wearing a singlet and have something on my arm- is that a big mole? (laughter)

Desley: So what about the pain factor?

Participant: Yeah, apparently, well where I have mine, which is like on my upper upper thigh, it didn't actually really hurt there, like it was, its very uncomfortable at first, and it just stings a little bit but then the whole area just goes numb and its more just like a pressure rather than anything. But umm, umm, my ex-boyfriend got his whole arm done and some parts are fine, like under the arm apparently really hurts, and yeah so, yeah mine wasn't that painful. And pains not really a factor for me so...

Desley: So would you consider that the pain was a plus or a minus or just something you had to do to get your tattoo?

Participant: Yeah well I think it's expected, so, you expect some, some sort of discomfort.

Desley: Its just some people actually seem to enjoy the pain...

Participant: Yeah well its probably umm, I don't know if I would say I enjoy the pain but it wasn't as bad as what I thought and it probably was umm, its one of those things that can become addictive I guess, so...

Desley: The pain you mean?

Participant: Well, not, I don't know, I wouldn't classify it as pain, what I had, like where mine was. I don't know, I think its just having the tattoo is more addictive I guess, like you want another one and that kind of thing, yeah, not the pain, yeah I guess that's always a bit of a worry but just, take it I guess if you want it...

Desley: So umm do you know why you think they're addictive? I've got heaps of people saying that...

Participant: Umm, well I think umm, I think probably because its something individual, its something that you can identify with, I guess its something that umm, you, well I don't know, I know a lot of people probably don't really think about it that much and just want to get tattooed. But I just think its something that umm, like, you think about and you think ok, well I'm going to have this on me and I'm going to have this on me for the rest of my life, so, yeah I guess its just that representation and its just having that different thing, and I guess probably for me that's why it would be more addictive and want to have another one because its different you know, and its something different about you I guess, so yeah...

Desley: Umm, do you think there's something else you could have done rather than have a tattoo that would give you that same feeling?

Participant: Umm, I don't know... there's probably nothing I've done I guess that... oh no, actually, there's a lot of things that I can associate that same sort of feeling of having that tattoo... I guess for me it was I was, I'm right into like that sort of Chinese marshal arts and that internal side of it and the meditation and, and just the umm, the being of the whole, whole practice of it, so for me like I just wanted to represent that I guess, umm, umm... I think umm, yeah, sort of yeah...

Desley: So that was about the only way you could represent it?

Participant: Well, yeah I didn't think there would be really any other way. I mean, obviously by me going to kung fu and that kind of thing and you know, practicing it outside of, of the actual place where I was doing it, umm, yeah there's probably nothing else I'd do. Like I wouldn't go and get, I'm not the type of person who likes to get piercings everywhere and I probably wouldn't want to do it in that sense. Umm, I really don't know how else you would or what else you could do really, yeah...

Desley: Umm, do you consider that you're a tattooed person or are you just a person who has a tattoo?

Participant: Yeah, I'm just a person who has a tattoo.

Desley: So when you went, did your girlfriend go with you? Your friend, yeah? Did she get a tattoo as well?

Participant: Yeah, yeah, she did, she did, she actually already had one, she had like a little dolphin, it was old, like she got it when she was like 19 or something and umm she had that changed and got a very big tattoo, yeah...

Desley: So do you consider it was her idea or your idea, or?

Participant: I know it was my idea and then when she was there she got excited so she wanted something done, yep

Desley: What do you think it means to other people that see it?

Participant: Umm, I think, well, I guess it's probably some people that see it and think, why would you know, why would you know a female want to do that to her body or whatever. And then other people probably look at it and think ok, like that's different, like she's obviously, there's some meaning to it. Some people, I know when I look at people with tattoos, sort of try to think ahh I wonder what made them want to get that, like because there's usually a big story behind why people get tattoos. Some there's none, but yeah there's usually a bit of a story and it, I think it makes the person more interesting as well, so it probably just depends if people actually like them or not and their opinion of them I guess.

Desley: So have you had any like really negative reactions?

Participant: Na, not at all.

Desley: That's good...

Participant: The only time people would really see mine anyway is like when I'm at the beach. So, yeah I haven't had any negative reaction oh except probably from my mum and my grandmother, but that's about it.

Desley: That is what mothers and grandmothers are for...

Participant: even like mum said a few months ago, oh its not that bad, its not as big as I thought it was. (laughter)

Desley: So umm, did you ever worry about that, you know, that your mother would have a bad reaction and maybe you shouldn't do it?

Participant: No, well, I knew she'd always have a bad reaction, but I just thought I just wanted to do it and I mean, when I got it done, like I was 25, you know what I mean, I'm, you know, and its on you for life, so your mum can't really do anything about it, I knew she wouldn't be happy with it, like I didn't go and show her, she just happened to see a bit of it one day and umm, yeah, what could she do?

Desley: No I was talking to a girl this morning and she didn't get one for I don't know how many years because her boyfriend didn't like them and when they split up she went out and got, well 4 now, but like she just wouldn't get it while she was with him.

Participant: Yeah, yeah, yeah, well, that, that was similar to like the guy I was with. When I wanted to get one, but he was sort of like not really liking them that much, so I still would have probably got one had I been with him for longer. But, it was just sort of you know you hold off a bit and procrastinated about it more, and yeah, but then yeah, exactly, we split up so I went ahead and got it, so...

Desley: Umm, what do you think about, I think you said, you mentioned this, about other people that have tattoos?

Participant: Umm, yeah I think it adds interest to the person. Umm I think that, I mean depends on what it is too, like you see some bikies and that sort of thing, some people do it so they can look tough and rough and that kind of thing. Some people do it as more of a symbolism of something, like either their culture or just something that they believe in strongly. Umm, yeah, so I just think it adds interest, like I, I do, when people, when I see someone with a tattoo, like I look at it and I'm like oh, ok. You know, I have a good look.

Desley: So you don't find yourself with that stereotype of oh they must be a criminal or something like that?

Participant: No, no, no...

Desley: So who do you know that has a tattoo?

Participant: Umm, my ex-boyfriend Adrian. Umm, he's got his whole arm done, he's got one here and one on his back. Umm, a lot of my girlfriends, pretty much all of my girlfriends actually, come to think of it. One of them's got about 5 I think. Umm...

Desley: No one in your family?

Participant: No, well not that I know of, so... (laughter)

Desley: Umm, do you think that having a tattoo has had any negative effects on your life?

Participant: No, no... I think umm, I think had I made the decision to put it in a place where people could see it all the time, then yeah, it probably would have but it hasn't had any negative effects, no. And I just think too if, if I was with someone or whatever and, and they didn't like it and they didn't like me because of it or judged me because of it, then I just think they're not worth knowing anyway, so yeah...

Desley: Umm, do you feel like the fact that you have a tattoo means that you identify with any particular group of people?

Participant: No, not at all. I've got all friends from all different walks of life. I get along with everybody so, yeah, it doesn't, it doesn't put me in a different, different sort of social, social casting I guess. Umm, yeah, not at all. Yep.

Desley: Question, what would be the opposite of your tattoo?

Participant: The opposite of my tattoo... oh, probably something like a devil, that'd be awful, yeah, something that just doesn't represent what my dragon does. (laughter)

Desley: And would it be in the same place do you think or would you put it ... like if it was going to be the opposite, would it then not be discrete as well or is it just the fact that it would be something different.

Participant: So if it was something opposite like where would I put it? God I wouldn't want to see it. I'd put it under my foot.

Desley: That's a good one I hadn't thought of that one. Umm, so what kind of reactions have you had apart from your mum's? Like your friends and stuff, what do they say?

Participant: Yeah, oh, I mean, I know that it's not everybody's tastes, and if someone was going to get a tattoo, sort of like ohh, what made you decide to get it there and, why this, you know, that sort of thing. Umm, most people that have seen it really like it, so, that's so different, it's a really different place to put it and umm, its you know, and then you start talking about why you got it and what made you choose the picture and umm, yeah I think, I think most people understand or accept it, if you've got a bit of a story behind it. If you just want to get a tattoo that's when I think you're sort of judged a bit more. Sort of why did you get that? Just because you liked the picture, well I don't like the picture, you know what I mean, so umm... yeah... I haven't had any really bad reactions. Umm, I'm sure some people, like some people have probably looked at it and just gone oh, oh ok... you know, but

Desley: but not to your face

Participant: Yeah yeah, no that's fine.

Desley: I wonder when you say that too, whether if its someone who's got like quite a few tattoos you might get a worse reaction because you know, one's obviously it means something, but they might draw the conclusion that if you've got six of them then maybe you've just got a bit carried away or something.

Participant: Yeah, well that's right. Well actually my girlfriend has got about 5 or 6. She just got carried away. She hates half of them. So, yeah.

Desley: Umm, is there anything else you can think of about your tattoo that might be worth mentioning?

Participant: Umm, well just, I didn't want colour. I just wanted the black as well. I just think that looks a bit nicer. I know that's sort of like, grouping nice and tattoo in the same, in the same word, but I just think it looks like, for me, because like I don't want to look like rough or anything like that, so that was important. I wanted it to be big enough as well so that it umm, just so it was there, cause I just don't like seeing those tiny little tattoos that's when I think well you've just done it just to get something on you. So it's big enough that you can see it. And umm, yeah, I just wanted the black, I just think that looks, it looks better. So, yeah, that's about all.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	2	1	2	1	4	3	2	1	4	4	4	3	Sad
Patient	3	1	4	1	3	4	2	4	5	5	5	3	Impatient
Caring	2	1	3	1	2	3	2	1	4	4	5	5	Mean
Kind	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	1	4	3	4	4	Nasty
Sense of humour	2	1	1	1	3	3	2	2	4	2	4	4	Morbid
Sociable	2	1	3	1	2	3	2	2	4	3	5	5	Unsociable
Friendly	2	1	2	1	2	3	2	1	4	3	5	5	Not nice
Active	2	1	3	1	2	4	3	1	4	3	1	2	Lazy
Confident	3	1	1	1	2	4	3	4	1	2	1	2	Lacking in self-esteem
Organised	2	1	2	1	2	3	3	4	4	4	5	2	In a mess
Hard working	3	1	2	1	2	4	3	2	3	4	5	1	Lazy
Honest	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	3	3	2	Liar



4 RGT subgroup Philosophy

4.1 RDT subgroup Philosophy

Participant FF9

Male, 28 years old

Interview date: 13/1/2006

Participant: Ok um, originally I had a big plan to, ok um, I had a big idea to get a rather large complicated design, tattoo of comic book characters covering my whole back, and as um I was planning that, I went to a tattoo parlour to just ask about it and um, a lot of them kicked me out basically cause they didn't want to deal with it, because a lot of them just want to deal with what they've got on the wall, simpler concepts, but I came across one that would, that ah help me re-design it. In the meantime I got one character done on my forearm my right forearm, just here, just to have the experience I wanted that there as well, and um, I planned to make a band out of him eventually but I didn't do it until just recently. And Um, yeah, that didn't go too bad so um, once we had the big plan for my back we started working on it. And then ah, about 60% of the way through which is about 25 hours worth of work, not in one sitting I did 8 hours straight once but, um, after the 15th hour or so I stopped, because the adrenaline rush started tapering away and so it wasn't as exciting it became more of a chore and therefore I didn't, I felt every moment of the pain and it was like, it became unbearable 10 hours later so, my back is incomplete and still is and I'm not too fussed about it, I like what it is, what it ended up as, it's very original like you'll see, and since then, I was inspired by a chemical brothers track, called "it doesn't matter", to get this done, also the reaffirmation about not caring about getting this one finished and um, then a few years later I got that complemented with the "Let it Be" on the other side, backwards and just the beginning of this year, or last year I had the rest of my band finished. I don't have any other plans for any more tatts. I don't plan to finish the back because it's just hurts too much. um, I have been playing with the idea of getting some sort of UV tattoo because you can get UV ink that is safe and invisible under natural light, nothing too complicated, maybe something on my arms that can double up the space that I've got under the rest of them so if I've got a blue light around they'll show up.

Desley: I've never heard of those

Participant: Well the ink is available online, it's just a matter of, I talked to the man that did my band, he said "Dude, you get the ink I'll do it free on you" Um, it's just a light idea, it's not really

that important, if I come across it I come across it, I won't go out of my way for it cause it's such a minor thing, when it shows up it will be so rare too so, it's not like there is a blue light in every other room. Um but that's about everything.

Desley: So if we could look at them one at a time.

Participant: Uhum

Desley: The first one was the guy

Participant: This one guy

Desley: Does he have a name?

Participant: Well um, I was a, well I was a huge comic book fan, my most favourite comic book story is dragonball, which was recently turned into a cartoon, years ago I had this whole Chinese collection of comic books so anyway the Japanese creator, writer and artist his name is Akira Toriyama and um he draws himself in the backgrounds of his comic books as this little robot man, not frequently but just does that um considers himself as ah, his work is something that I aspire to and one day maybe writing so um, being that he is my inspiration I put his name in seven different parts around my arm.

Desley: Ok , So how long ago did you do that?

Participant: The first tattoo, would have been six years ago, six or seven, six or five years ago, six and a half years ago, about, actually about seven, seven years ago I got this guy and the work on my back about six years ago.

Desley: ok. Then the forearm?

Participant: This forearm, I had done much later, I had that done, it was maybe 4 years ago, um, "Let it Be" was about a year and a half ago and the rest of this band was a little under a year ago.

Desley: And the back was that done over a period of weeks or months or years?

Participant: Weeks, um, yeah, every weekend I would go to his place and we would do some more.

Desley: So why is, we'll start with that one, so why is that guy important because that's who you aspire to be or be like?

Participant: I suppose so, I do try to achieve something as complicated and as wonderful as his creation you know, it's just like in anybody, being inspired by a writer or a movie maker, it's his um, comic books over the span of 10 years is just, he's got this wonderful quality that is rare in comic books, each episode the characters get slightly older, everything that happens to them you know causes scars, you can tell they have actually changed as people as well as physically. And it's just something to really appreciate. It's also my right arm, I used to like to draw myself and so the sort of inscription on my forearm and around is maybe to boost my efforts.

Desley: So with the stuff on your back why is the content of that important?

Participant: Well um, initially, I had, it was basically every character, comic book character that was important in my view at the time, um, it spans Chinese, Japanese and American comics, um, my initial plan had over 100 characters but the tattooist corrected my understanding of tattoos, to have so many characters the detail would be lost because the lines thicken and it would just turn out to be a mess and so we reduced it to 77 characters and I like that number because it was the year I was born but anyway, um, 77 characters cover my entire back from the top of my neck the base of my spine and around both sides, but I think we got through, I don't even know how many on my back, cause I don't really look at it, but it's about 40, 40 odd characters, um, it's basically all we got up to. Um, yeah, it's even got a bit of history in the comic book realm because there's a character which is this one here, was a character that was on the cover of first American comic book, circa 1800's, 1870's, so I thought put that one in there as a sign of appreciation for it, where it all came from.

Desley: And with the writing, so you said "It doesn't matter" is part of a Chemical Brothers song.

Participant: It's a chemical Brothers song, it's a really good chemical brothers song. But it's also personal philosophy it's um, it's also anything that maybe bringing you down, not to worry about it, you know, it's like a self reinforcing mantra, I look down and I read it every time it's there and I think it, it's like it continually reinforces itself into my head, that's what the idea is, that's why I put it in times new roman, because there's no confusion, there's no pattern about it there's no ok, that's a pretty tattoo delusion, because that's not the point, the point is the information not the prettiness, the same with the back.

Desley: So why Mirrored?

Participant: Mirrored because, initially, because if I did it upright this way it would be upside down to everyone else and it's a way I can read it, if I have my arm out I can see the mirror, it's perfect, and it's also maybe it's my imagination running wild, but it's behind, exactly behind in line with it, it does matter, so, *Let it Be* is probably an inspiration for *It Doesn't Matter*, people song, thing is, if my arm was see through, it would be directly behind it and it would be the normal way around. And so, yeah, I thought that would be pretty cool.

Desley: So are you are saying *Let it Be* the song is inspiration for *It Doesn't Matter* the song?

Participant: I would imagine so, but no documentation or anybody admitting to that, but they're both English bands and they're both um, do inspirational...

Desley: It's not like the Beatles haven't influenced anybody else is it.

Participant: That's right, that's right, it's a similar message and in both tracks they repeat the message over and over and over and over, so I think that might be linked. Cause it's also self reinforcing, at the time I was getting that done I was going through things in my life as well that were actually getting to me quite a bit and one of, the most difficult is to drop it and to let it go, and so I got something to remind myself.

Desley: So with the places that you put your tattoos are they important for any reasons, like that one you said is so you can read it?

Participant: Yep

Desley: And this ones so it's behind it.

Participant: That's right

Desley: What about say the band?

Participant: The band, well I finished the band after I had these done. I had the band in mind for a long time, but, um, it was reinforced when I started considering that because I thought it's aesthetically um, complementary as these are both vertical and this is horizontal, can't save my arms but if I read my arms it's the opposite, it'll be horizontal and this would be vertical, so I thought they complement each other and that's thick and these are thin, if you saw them from a distance and couldn't read them or see what they are you'd see the directions that they cover. So I thought they work well together.

Desley: So what about the back piece?

Participant: The back piece, well um, my brother has patches of like descending, like elbow to shoulders different themes and I don't like that, I don't like having a whole bunch of different themes matched together, it's like a collage of randomness and it doesn't really make much sense so I wanted to get something big, because I knew , you get one small one and a few weeks you have the thrill of the pain and the thrill of overcoming it and then you want another one and you want another and you want another, with the chances of actually having them all come together is very slim so I wanted a big one to fit on my back and that's the biggest canvas that I have and um, leave no space for anything else to inspire me to alter it and those definitely would take away from the view, take away from the others, so I think these all go together, they don't take away from each other at all, whereas if you have too many different things together then it's like you know, it's like having two different portraits on one canvas. You know.

Desley: That's a good way of putting it actually, so is there somewhere you wouldn't put a tattoo?

Participant: I wouldn't put one on my face, although i have considered scars and like just and no ink, just plus fancy in my head but um I wouldn't put it on my face, um, ah, um, places where it's too hidden, I don't think there's a real, I don't think there's a point, it's not that it's showing off but I mean, I don't, I mean there is not a real point for it, having it say on your backside, there's no point to that I mean, it's just um, because it's an important thing, you've got people altering your body forever, and so you might as well you know make something that you can share, I mean. I know my parents don't like me having tattoos and to respect that every time I'm around them I've got a shirt on and i don't rub it in their faces and so you know it'd be on, but at the same time there is no point in having ones that nobody ever sees. Is there? You don't have to know anything about yourself, you know, it doesn't show anything that you don't know already.

Desley: Sorry what was that you just said?

Participant: You're expressing part of yourself with a tattoo and if you're the only person that sees it then there's no real news.

Desley: I see.... Ok.

Participant: It's no real, it's redundant, you go through pain for nothing.

Desley: It's sort of writing a book and no one reads it.

Participant: That's right and just having it for yourself and hiding it

Desley: Never thought about it that way before. So, with each one or any of them how long did you think about having it before you did it?

Participant: Um, it's a strange, I mean I always, always thinking about such things, and even writing stories and all these crazy things and um it's coming up with an idea, something that would tickle my fancy, some sort of idea would tickle my fancy and I'll elaborate on it and it's usually very small period of time, I don't want to dwell on it too much.

Desley: So what are we talking, days, weeks, months? Just roughly

Participant: Roughly, alright, it's a difficult question to answer, because it's like um, it can take years to get to the point where it's like oh that's a good idea, but, it's not that I come up with the idea and then consider it for years and then do it, if I come up with a good idea and I really love it then I'll do it straight away.

Desley: So say the guy, the single guy on your arm?

Participant: That was quite spontaneous, I'd say weeks. Cause I was planning the back and I thought, ah well.

Desley: The back was obviously longer.

Participant: Yeah that was a big thing. That um, the back I would say a year, considering it, then it took me several months just to design it and get it planned out.

Desley: And what about with the writing?

Participant: The writing, weeks as well, and I'm being generous - it would be few weeks, very few weeks, sort of um ah I'd like that and then being able to find the time and get it done. If um, I could have done them on the first day I would've.

Desley: Ok, so, do you still like all the tattoos?

Participant: Yes

Desley: So would you change any of them?

Participant: Sometimes I think the writing on my arms is a little preachy and I feel a little humbled, but well not really humbled but I get the thought that who am I to tell people these things and so I get brief moments of temptations of blacking them out, having black squares, but they're very brief and very fleeting, the next day I'll be in a better mood, it's just a matter of remembering my smiling, you know bad mood and I just who am I to do this stuff but um.

Desley: But then isn't that more for you than for other people anyway?

Participant: It is, it is, but I do, I do also have to appreciate that other people do see it.

Desley: And I guess they're like what does that mean?

Participant: I've never regretted my band or my back.

Desley: So it's just the writing.

Participant: Ah yeah, you know.

Desley: So, is it regret or is it not quite that strong?

Participant: Oh its, it's not really regret because I really like the designs, it's just um, I might get bored of them, I might think ok what else can I do to them to fix them up to make them a bit better. Um, but um, that's um fleeting as well.

Desley: Ok so when you had the tattoos did any of them coincide with some particular event in your life?

Participant: Hmm, umm, nothing directly related, nothing that's significantly related.

Desley: So people might have had someone that has died so then they get a tattoo.

Participant: No nothing like that at all.

Desley: So nothing like that, which is good I guess.

Participant: I guess if anything I rode a motorbike for a year and um, that inspired me to rebel a little bit more maybe. If there's an answer to that one that would be it.

Desley: So you didn't have any tattoos before you rode the motorbike?

Participant: Actually it was round about the same time.

Desley: Ok

Participant: I think I got them, no I did have them, I had them round the same time I started looking for motorbikes and I had my motorbike after I got my back done, well as I was getting my back done, I was riding to this place.

Desley: So what I think there is a song where he talks about a quarterlife crisis or something like that.

Participant: Possibly, possibly

Desley: So would you have anymore tattoos do you think?

Participant: Um, once I got my band done I was content, I was, for the longest time I wasn't very happy with just having the single character there. Because he just stood out on his own and couldn't really see, nobody knew who he was and what it meant and um, once I got that finished I was happy. I don't need to finish my back, umm, it's good the way it is. I don't even have to look at it, not that I'm a machine or anything but I mean, it's just really not on my mind at all. Not that I need anymore but um, apart from every once and a while, to get some sort of scarring or uv, or some sort of, any little design, but, I don't think I'll ever follow through on it, because this is done.

Desley: So if you think about it what is the most important thing for you about the tattoo, is it where you put it, what the picture is, do you stick to the same artist every the time?

Participant: I would if I could. The guy that did my back has gone overseas. The most important thing for me is um, the fact that they are going to be on me forever

Desley: So therefore you think about the content or the place or?

Participant: The content and the place are 50/50 they're equally important, there's um, because both, you need to consider the place to consider the content because the place, your body has

different shapes and ah, certain shapes will only work on certain areas. So um so they do, they work hand in hand, there both equal pretty much so.

Desley: Uhum, so you mentioned that the back one got too painful, if you think about before that was the pain like a plus or a minus or, some people actually enjoy the pain or maybe, I suspect sometimes it's when it's finished it's this sense of accomplishment, cause its like "Wow I put up with that for however long".

Participant: Well there is that, but before I got them done, I had no idea really, now but I, looking in hindsight I really had no idea but I could see that a lot of people had a lot of big tattoos and therefore you know, if they can do it then why can't I and to test the waters I got that one character and that wasn't too bad at all, it was on my forearm, forearm, arms are pretty tough compared to most other areas, you, actually you use the sensations on your arms more often to not, shoulders you don't feel a thing, your getting more if you fall asleep, front and back you never use the sensations for those so its.

Desley: I saw a guy once, getting here and he was in tears and he was this big tough looking guy and he, you know, I bet that hurts.

Participant: Well they say the front is more painful than the back in pain wise, to me the thing that made the back unbearable was the fact that I couldn't see it since I couldn't see it I could hear the needle going ZZZZZZZZZZZZZ, and then I had to anticipate and wait and wait and wait, you know, and then it made the actual beginning that much more painful because I would be anticipating because I could hear it but can't see it and I don't know when it's going to hit.

Desley: Ok, whereas these ones you could watch it.

Participant: I could watch it. Mmm, prepare yourself...

Desley: Don't know

Participant: He said sometimes to look away, and so, not react on the back it's just like alternate reaction to it.

Desley: So do you consider your tattoos mean something as a whole thing or are they more separate?

Participant: Yeah, they're separate time scales of my life yeah, my past, I mean I don't read comics anymore, of course I've still got my collection, but I don't read them. Um, ah yeah, I wouldn't be who I am if I wasn't that obsessive a comic collector then back then, so um, I, it's part of me, so even though I don't practise it it's part of who I am now.

Desley: But the writing is not necessarily linked to the comic?

Participant: Well it is in that the comic isn't finished, It doesn't matter that it's not finished, I'm not ticked off, a lot of people go ah it's not finished and you've spent so much time on it, can't you, how do you sleep at night, and its like, really it's not that important. I mean, I'm satisfied with what I've got done on my back and in order to get it done, in order to get it absolutely completed I would have to go through what I don't want to go through.

Desley: Would you ever consider getting them off?

Participant: No, I think it's a waste of time, I think its ah, it's insulting to yourself, it's insulting to your own path, cause you were that person that made those decisions, that went through all that to get it now just to erase it, there's no real point, you know, if you simply because it's a regret, then I suppose that's the most legitimate cause or legitimate excuse but I mean, if you're going to do it for other people then I don't know, I'm not really, I'm just rambling now, but um, no, I just think it's almost an insult to everything you went through to get it.

Desley: So why did you choose a tattoo rather than do something else?

Participant: It's um, I can't think of anything that's as much of a commitment, as a profound statement that you know, there is no other way to express my appreciation for the art form of comic books, and have them put on my back, I mean, ultimately I was going to add another, the plan was to have my whole back done, cause it's just outline, there is no colour in it or anything, cause colours fade and distort, um, I was going to do thicken the lines around the superman symbol as well, the tattooist said from a distance it would look like a blur, with a dark blur of a superman symbol over the top, but um, ah, sorry what was the question.

Desley: So was there something else you could have done?

Participant: Oh yeah, well um yeah, it doesn't, nothing else would say what a tattoo says, in such a way.

Desley: So it wasn't so much just trying to change your body, it was trying to make a statement about comics.

Participant: An appreciation for them

Desley: Yep so, like getting your nosed pierced wouldn't have done it.

Participant: No you can take that out, its not like, getting your nose pierced for the sake...

Desley: And there's no link there. Yeah.

Participant: No it's nothing about changing my body, my body is just something that I can use, but not as something you do.

Desley: So was there something else you could have done instead of using your body?

Participant: Umm, no, no, nothing that would have sufficed for what I want.

Desley: So do you think of yourself as a person who has tattoos on them or a tattooed person.

Participant: Um, a tattooed person

Desley: And how do you make the distinction?

Participant: Ah I don't separate myself from my tattoos.

Desley: So they're a part of you.

Participant: Mmm.

Desley: Cool, so my trick question and you might have to answer this separately or all together, what would be the opposite of your tattoos?

Participant: That is a trick question, the opposite of my tattoos, {long pause} hmm, that's a bizarre question.

Desley: Where it comes from, the theoretical background that I'm coming from the guy that did the like the theory, said that you can't know what something is without knowing what it's not, so you can't know hot unless you know cold, so we can't know about your tattoo unless we know what it isn't. So you might want to deal with them separately. That might be easier, I'm just thinking of the writing.

Participant: When you say what it isn't, the question is, um, the opposite is the need to

Desley: So for some people who have treated that as the opposite would be not having a tattoo and not having that commitment, other people have said a different picture, like one person has that I spoke to had the British flag, the union jack and for her the opposite would be the Australian flag, I think sort of as a joke.

Participant: For me the opposite means an equal amount of effort in the other direction. So no tattoo wouldn't be considered the opposite because it's nothing, an opposite of expressing a love for something would be not loving it, not appreciating, even despising it. Maybe it goes back rather than the actual tattoos themselves it's um, all my love for comic books and dragonball for this, Akira Toriyama here and philosophy here is a complete lack of interest in those subjects.

Desley: So something like apathy?

Participant: Yeah

Desley: Would it be interest in something else or just not interest in those things?

Participant: Well nothing else competes or nothing else contradicts the subjects that I'm appreciating here so I wouldn't really call them opposites.

Desley: Okay, that is a hard question isn't it.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: So when you got the tattoos did you go by yourself or did you have other people with you?

Participant: Um for the first guy I had one friend with me, for the back umm, by the time I actually started working on my back the tattooist had helped me design it and he had become a friend himself so I was just me and the tattooist, oddly enough when I was there and got this section done, there was an old TV show on channel 10, a music show, I forgot what it was called, one of their news, one of their reporters was in the shop and filmed me getting this done.

Desley: Oh really.

Participant: The, it doesn't matter I got done by a friends brother, which is, which got me back into getting tattoos, you know, I thought about it and then I thought here's a cheap alternative, that's why the quality's a bit lower than the rest. So um my friend was there with my um actually my ex was there too, "Let it Be" I was on my own and band was on my own.

Desley: So when you had people with you did they get a tattoo as well or were they just there for you?

Participant: No they were just watching.

Desley: What do you think it means to other people when they see you with those tattoos?

Participant: Depends on the person, I'm sure quite a few people who don't understand just shake their head and say I don't understand these kids these days. I remember getting a few really bizarre looks when I first the it doesn't matter, not knowing how to react to that, what it means, cause some people think it means don't care, when that's precisely the opposite, yeah but, a lot of

people look at it and get confused, um, the neck people just get curious because it just peeks out at the top of my collar and wanna look actually I had a lift on the way here a lady wanted to peek down my back, asked me to but she had to get off. The “Let it Be” had funny reactions to that, all non English speaking background people get it instantly and most English speaking background get it, pretty close to it's path, but a few English speaking background people ask me what it means, it doesn't stand out to them, they just don't understand, if had people ask me what does it say in German, it's not German, it's backwards. I don't know how to break it to them that it's pretty obvious without, without you know insulting them but I just say kindly it's just the other way around. It's happened three or four times.

Desley: What kind, I suppose this is sort of the same question, what kind of reaction have you had from your friends and your family?

Participant: Friends um I get a 50/50 understanding and um 50% understanding and 50% not on the thing but understanding this is my character. Meaning like a lot of people don't understand the things I talk about or I do but they understand that's the things that Rob does. And so yeah, in most ways its like that, its general, to my face everything as far as I'm aware, it's positive.

Desley: So you haven't heard any negative reactions?

Participant: No, I posted my, I'm a member of a message forum online and I posted my tattoos there and a few people just say that's ridiculous, it's just their opinion that this is not the type of tattoo that should be a tattoo, to them it has to be a skull and crossbones or something, or a web on my elbows or something silly like that.

Desley: Do you know what that means, the web on your elbow?

Participant: No

Desley: Someone thought it was related to jail somehow.

Participant: Oh yeah a lot of jailbirds have it. yeah. its just common, I suppose it's a cute thing to do cause webs are some are really elastic and here will change shape when you bend your arm. I think it's just a simple novelty of that.

Desley: Um did the possibility of seeing parents of someone else reacting badly make you have second thoughts of doing it?

Participant: I don't want to upset them too much, but then it dawned on me like it really isn't that important, um, and also they've already been exposed to it with my brother, so they won't react as harsh as they would have if I was the only child or the older one.

Desley: So what about job prospects?

Participant: Um, you can cover these up, long sleeves can cover them up, and I've never had a problem with them so far.

Desley: Yeah, I just talked to one guy and he's got them everywhere, but he said he didn't get any that he couldn't easily cover up until he decided what he wanted to do, and he does extreme base jumping and stuff so.

Participant: Wow

Desley: No, and piercing's and all kinds of stuff. Yeah, um, put it in reverse a bit, so what do you think about other people when you see them with tattoos?

Participant: To be honest most times I think um, it wasn't, it's not worth what they've done, um, most of the time, because it's most common to see people with tattoos that you'll see on the wall of the tattoo parlour, like have a star there or an animal of some sort. I mean I just don't think there's very high chance of you finding a tattoo design on the tattoo parlour that reflects what you're wanting to express in anyway let alone completely, it's um, you follow?

Desley: Yeah yeah I do, I'm just trying to work out um, brains gone dead, so you're saying it's not worth the effort of the pain, the money and the time.

Participant: And the permanency

Desley: For something that's not actually yours.

Participant: Exactly. Somebody else's design.

Desley: So how do you think people see you?

Participant: Well um, well they don't think that for instance because you'll never see my tattoos again, that's a given, um, how do I think that people see me, just as different, some people may even see me as honest, I'd like to think, because you know, not many people would so boldly express something that they love, even though its past....

Desley: So apart from your brother who else do you know that has a tattoo?

Participant: I have a few friends, a few friends, actually quite a few friends, over the years I've known them that have a few little tattoos here and there.

Desley: Has it ever stopped, have you ever had a problem with a partner not liking them?

Participant: Not at all.

Desley: Also, do you, does the fact that you have tattoos mean you identify with any particular group?

Participant: Maybe, or from personally from my point of view, no, not at all, um, yeah, it's more a thing like what I see and um, it doesn't reflect any sort of organisation in anyway, you sort of ground, you know for the people

Desley: Yeah and I was thinking also just the group of people that are people with tattoos.

Participant: Well um, that's such a wide group, I wouldn't even count it as one group for me, okay, to be at the broadest I would say so, people with tattoos and people without

Desley: Okay so if you see someone else in the street who had tattoos that were a bit unusual, let's imagine not straight off the wall.

Participant: Oh an unusual tattoo

Desley: Yeah, sorry, so would you look at them and go, like look at them differently from the people with the standard ones

Participant: absolutely

Desley: and would you feel like you and them had something in common.

Participant: I'm very shallow, I'm very shallow sort of soul, feeling that way maybe, maybe even for the briefest moment I was like, If I imagined that at all, I can't remember any time that that has happened, but you know, can't discount that either. But um, I do appreciate a work of art when I see it walking past me.

Desley: Whether it's unique or not or just?

Participant: Well, yeah well I appreciate the art even if it's standard, but it's not as inspiring as something I never seen before. And there are a few exceptions round.

Desley: So do you admire it just for the actual artwork?

Participant: Mainly just for the art work because I don't know these people and I can't say why they put it there. Because I like what he's doing the artwork and where it's put. So that's what I can really appreciate.

Desley: Yeah I was just thinking, do you think of wow, that would have taken 8 hours and they would have put up with pain or does that not come in to it.

Participant: Yeah I do appreciate that as well more than the association of being tattooed as well. Actually I do appreciate the pain that it goes through, especially when you see people with a lot of work, just looking at them you wince, but it's mainly my highest appreciation of it is the art itself or the technique that the tattooists used.

Desley: Okay, so is there anything else about your tattoos that you think's important?

Participant: No, that covers everything.

Desley: Alright thanks.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	3	2	2	4	Sad
Patient	4	1	2	1	2	4	4	5	1	1	5	2	Speedy
Caring	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	3	3	1	3	2	Vicious
Kind	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	3	2	1	3	1	Mean
Sense of humour	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	4	3	2	1	4	Dull
Sociable	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	5	4	4	1	4	Introverted
Friendly	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	3	3	1	2	2	Lonely
Active	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	3	3	1	2	4	Inert
Confident	2	1	2	2	1	3	3	3	2	4	1	5	Shy
Organised	4	3	4	3	4	4	4	5	3	1	5	3	Messy
Hard working	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	3	1	5	4	Lazy
Honest	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	3	3	Sinister



Participant: I had it done almost a year and two or three months ago, I suppose. I had it done in Peru. I suppose after travelling and being in South America I learned a lot about indigenous cultures over there and I was really interested with the Incan culture and the Tiwanakal people and yeah I always thought about having a tattoo and never really seriously.

Desley: So how long seriously did you think about it?

Participant: Probably maybe two weeks before I had it done and then yeah I decided to go in and see this guy umm, who I hadn't heard anything about his work, but I don't know I just had a good feeling about the place and the guy, yeah and we sat down and designed something with Incan, with a lot of Incan symbology I suppose, that represents elements in the world, like living objects I suppose and it's, how people, I would, call, would call my religion, would be like if I did have one would be like nature and the elements that are there already, you know what I mean, so yeah, I felt really attached to these images and I got him to include a few of the things on, such as the serpent, the condor, the puma which are very important creatures for the Incans.

Desley: So how long were you in Peru for that visit?

Participant: I would have been in Peru for two months I'd say, before that I was in Bolivia for a couple of months, yeah Bolivia is almost 100% indigenous in, yeah I learned a lot about, yeah, not only who I was but indigenous cultures and their beliefs, and yeah, made a lot of sense.

Desley: So you're saying in Peru you learned a lot about yourself?

Participant: Peru and Bolivia, they're quite similar countries, they're quite similar.

Desley: So it wasn't just the traveling somewhere different it was those actual countries?

Participant: Yeah I'd say so, um, we sat down for a couple of days and pieced things together, using I suppose using traditional tribal, maybe even Polynesian kind of designs with the Incan ones and I also have a Oxytong cross in there. Which is a region from the South of France where

my father's from. Um, there is also a cultural region separate from the French and that's where my dad's research is, and I've kind of been pretty hammered with that in my life, so yeah, I felt I needed something like that in there, so it's quite a bit of a mix of things.

Desley: So it's sort of stuff that speaks to you. Yeah, ok. So I think you sort of answered why you chose that design. Can you say a bit more about why that's important to you?

Participant: I suppose, in a world when you've got so much so many religions and beliefs kind of in your face, religious holidays and religious you know, this and that, it kind of makes you feel like I suppose you need to belong to, you have to have a belief of some kind in something or something or other, and um yeah I've always felt, just an affiliation with nature and stuff and not needing this as extra, searching for this extra thing I suppose it's my way of just expressing it to myself.

Desley: So when you say extra thing you mean religion, organised religion?

Participant: Organised religion.

Desley: It felt a bit then you were going to say belonging to a tribe or something like that.

Participant: No. Yeah, yeah, I don't, I'm not, I don't have it to fit in with people with tattoos. It's not.

Desley: I didn't mean it in that way more um, I guess we should talk about indigenous people, sort of like getting back to that basic thing, the tribal way of life.

Participant: That's true, yeah, you can learn a lot from um, I suppose we'd call it simplicity, but it's not simplicity, it's returning to the roots really, of human thought.

Desley: So it's on your leg?

Participant: Yep. It's a serpent, which represents everything that lives in the ocean or underground, the puma represents everything that lives on the land and the condor represents everything that flies and lives in the air. There's the Oxytong Cross and um, the spiral for me,

there's a few spirals in there, it's always represented a kind of a, an ongoing infinity, kind of for me, continuous.

Desley: So did you ask him to put those in?

Participant: Uhum.

Desley: So did you have a hand in actually drawing?

Participant: I personally didn't draw any but um we kind of, as he was doing it as well, I'd kind of get him to change things as we were going on, it wasn't really like, you know, this is exactly how it's going to be, going to put these bits on your leg and then like, tattoo them, it was mostly like I want this, this and this here is kind of a general design um, he's kind of showed me and then I've kind of modified it a few times and this went on for like a week or two, and even when it came to getting it done it was still getting modified as well.

Desley: So um why did you put it there?

Participant: No reason it just spoke to me, you know, I don't think it would have fitted in anywhere else.

Desley: You mean because of the size of it or?

Participant: um. Yeah the size of it, plus I suppose I didn't want to, I'd like, I like to be in a position where you can cover it and it's, tattoos are still not seen like as an everyday norm with some employers or some people in the general public. So it's nice just to be able to, it comes out in summer really, it's hidden away for the whole of winter and just comes out in summer so.

Desley: So is there someplace you wouldn't put a tattoo?

Participant: um. Yeah most places really. I don't think anywhere on my torso, I wouldn't feel comfortable with any on my arms, this is the only tattoo I want, it says everything I want to say in it, I don't have any, you know, you know no drive to get another one, nope, it wouldn't say anything I wanted I think, this says pretty much everything.

Desley: So what about in ten years time when you have a family and stuff like that could you see maybe you'd want to have something to do with your children or your wife or?

Participant: Hmm, no I don't think so.

Desley: Can you explain why or is that... a bit tricky?

Participant: Yeah it's a bit tricky, its a pretty hypothetical, um, yeah I just, I suppose it's a bit kitsch, having like you know a love heart or something, not to that extent but you know, yeah, this says pretty much everything about who I am I don't think I'd get anything about anyone else on my body, whoever it was, if it was my blood or not, I just don't think, yeah, it's my body it says who I am.

Desley: So obviously you're happy with it, is there anything you'd change about it?

Participant: um. No I've just got to get some of it done a bit more, a bit better, because it's only been done once and um, I went on a four day hike the next day as well so it um, it kind of a bit rubbed off, cause you have to let the crust fall off by itself, um, so yeah the four day trek didn't do it so good. But yeah, no nothing I'd get changed about it.

Desley: So would you do that again, have that tattoo again?

Participant: Definitely.

Desley: Cool, so what do you think is the most important thing about it, do you think it was where it was, the guy who did it, the circumstances, the picture, something else?

Participant: Umm, yeah I suppose it was the circumstances, I couldn't see myself doing that, this here, in Australia. Um, the circumstance were right I guess, yeah it was really cheap as well to do it there, something like this here would cost maybe 1000 dollars, over there it was like 100 or just over 100 I think.

Desley: And you had it done in one go?

Participant: Two sittings.

Desley: Two sittings?

Participant: yeah. One after the other, like day after the other, 6 hours and 6 hours, yeah, um, it's um, it's largely on circumstance I guess, yeah, I don't think, it was just the timing, it was just right, kind of thing, as I said I wasn't searching for it, I wasn't like, it kind of fell on me in my lap.

Desley: So what about the pain factor was that like a plus or a minus or?

Participant: Umm, it's got it's pluses and minuses, makes you feel, the tattoo, the pain makes it feel like it's there, it's pretty, pretty intolerable at some stages especially on bones or nerves, your leg just kind of kicks out some times without you wanting it to, the guy gave me quite a bit few beers and cocaine. To get me through it.

Desley: That would probably help.

Participant: You're not supposed to drink before you get a tattoo because it thins your blood out, but apparently he said don't worry if you're doing it while you're getting a tattoo that's fine.

Desley: Oh because it doesn't have enough time to ..

Participant: To get in, to thin your blood out.

Desley: Just to calm you down a bit.

Participant: Especially the long necks, kind of thing, so it's something to clench cause it's pretty, pretty unbearable, I've got pretty sensitive skin as well, so it's pretty intense.

Desley: So did you have to shave your legs as, you would have to?

Participant: Yeah, he had a razor there and we shaved it, you've got to be careful not to um, bleed anywhere, bias the tattoo.

Desley: Hmmm, it would go and then wreck it, hmm, So um, is there something else you could have done that would have had the same effect of having the tattoo for you?

Participant: Mm, no, I think yeah, it's something that's always with me now and it's kind of a reminder of who I am and where I am, yeah.

Desley: I mean there are other things that people do like piercings or scarring, or other stuff, none of that?

Participant: Well I was originally gonna get scarring, I was gonna get, there's these, kind of a spiral, I was going to have one on each chest, um, yeah, the guy that I went to, I didn't feel he had any experience and um, my judgement got the better of me. I've had piercings before, I had eyebrow rings in high school, I've got plugs in at the moment, umm, I've had them in for two and a half years so, yeah, it wasn't like a major step to have a tattoo, but, I've gone through some of that pain kind of before.

Desley: But doing something like a piercing or a scarring you don't think would have had the same effect for you?

Participant: No, No

Desley: Okay, so even though the scarring would hurt you could have put a picture?

Participant: Yeah scarring's really not that permanent, after years it can kind of like, you loose it anyway, at tattoo for me is more like, this here, this is a tattoo, it's gonna last the rest of your life, a piercing you can take it out its a very transient kind of thing. It's not

Desley: Just as well, some people grow out of them, so do you distinguish between being a tattooed person or do you call yourself a person who has a tattoo?

Participant: A person who has a tattoo for sure.

Desley: but do you feel like the tattoo is part of you or is more a representation of you?

Participant: It's more a representation.

Desley: Okay, so my trick question for the day. For you what would be the opposite of your tattoo?

Participant: What would be the opposite of my tattoo, umm a er, an opposite tattoo of my tattoo.

Desley: It depends how you want to take it, some people take it as...

Participant: I see it as an opposite tattoo of my tattoo. So, um I guess, a, a Spanish conquistador with a brazen cross in his hand, um, I suppose that, something representing the lack of um, morality that we have in the west.

Desley: Would you put that on the same place?

Participant: Would I have that, I wouldn't put that on my body.

Desley: Yeah I know you wouldn't but if you did, when you think about that opposite, would it be in the same place you think or would you put it somewhere else?

Participant: Perhaps on the opposite leg.

Desley: Uhum, so when you had the tattoo did you have any friends with you?

Participant: Umm, yep, I had some friends with me.

Desley: And did they have tattoos as well or were they just there?

Participant: One of them had a tattoo a week or so earlier, not from the same person but from the same city.

Desley: And do you think that had any influence on you getting yours?

Participant: Definitely would have egged me on a bit more. I mean the thought was there originally but you always need something to actually get you in the tattoo parlor, I don't know, it would have definitely had some influence on me that's for sure.

Desley: So was this friends you were traveling with or friends you made over there?

Participant: Friends I made over there.

Desley: Okay, cool, so what do you think it means to other people that see your tattoo?

Participant: Umm, most people just see Polynesian kind of designs and umm, most people like it I think but, I don't really go out of my way to explain it to anyone unless they're really really curious yeah, or really close.

Desley: So how often would people sort of ask you what it was or what it means?

Participant: Every couple of months they go, you get someone. What does it mean.

Desley: So would you call that fairly often or like compared with how many people say something about it?

Participant: No, not many, I think at first a few, quite a few, but now not many.

Desley: Is that because you came back and no one had seen it before do you think?

Participant: Yeah, a bit curious I think, so, I'm, a pretty calm collected person, to have done something in their eyes a bit brazen, I guess they wanted to see what the deal was.

Desley: yeah. So what kind of reaction did you get?

Participant: Um, I sent my parents a digital photo of it. Mum was a bit shocked at the size of it, just the and the child of an Italian mum can be a bit protective, protectionist, but um, yeah no, it was pretty general, pretty positive general reaction from most people.

Desley: So you don't feel like it had any negative effects on your life?

Participant: No

Desley: none? Oh that's good, did the possibility say of upsetting your mother, did that enter your mind when you had it, did you think twice about it or?

Participant: A little bit, it washed away pretty quick.

Desley: Do you think that's because you were in another country?

Participant: I suppose a little bit has to do with that but I don't know I've always been pretty independent from my parents, there've never really cast a net over me, I've always had pretty free reign, like, since I've been 18 I've lived most of my, half of the time been overseas traveling, or working, pretty independent so, It comes into it that I know she'll care that I'm putting most of it on, staining my, my, you know her child, her baby with ink, but she came around to it quicker than I thought, she likes it now.

Desley: So was she like ok by the time you got back?

Participant: Pretty much, she didn't take it hard, she took it I suppose out of everyone, she was a bit sad I'd say at first but it didn't last very long.

Desley: So would you say that when you had the tattoo that was linked to any like life changing event? So you said it was while you were traveling, would you relate it to anything like that, or?

Participant: I'd just left someone maybe two or three months earlier who I'd been seeing for quite a while, maybe that came into it a bit, it was kind of just like turning a leaf, um, but no, I don't think, not really, I don't really associate with that, with that moment.

Desley: Oh it's just some people you know someone dies or they get divorced or something and they'll go out and have one so. Um, what do you think about other people who have tattoos?

Participant: Um, now that I have one it's, it's less of, I see it as less of a rebellious culture, more of a, as people trying to express themselves in their own little way, I suppose the traditional tattoos I'm not very attracted to. Like your dragons and your anchors, even your coloured like nice pictures that you have these days with plenty of detail doesn't really seem much to me. Um, yeah I guess people with tattoos are just like everyone else, you know what I mean, it's just their own way of distinguishing themselves I suppose.

Desley: Um, I think we've already talked about this, do you actually identify yourself with any particular group of people, like for example does having that tattoo mean that you identify more with the people in Peru for example or is it totally about you expressing yourself?

Participant: um. It's pretty much myself really.

Desley: So is there anything else about your tattoo that you think's important that we haven't talked about?

Participant: Um not so much I've always seen this as the rays of um like the sun and I've seen this as the moon kind of thing cause it's given me, um, but yeah. That's pretty much the story.

Desley: Okay thanks.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	Sad
Patient	5	1	4	2	4	5	5	4	3	3	4	4	Restless
Caring	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	4	Hating
Kind	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	5	Mean
Sense of humour	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	4	Sourpuss
Sociable	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	Recluse
Friendly	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	Mean
Active	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	Couch potato
Confident	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	2	1	1	Shy
Organised	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	3	1	Chaotic
Hard working	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	2	1	Lazy
Honest	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	Dishonest



4.2 RDT subgroup Remembrance

Participant FR56
Male, 20 years old

Interview date: 4/5/2006

Participant: I guess the meaning of my tattoo is that, it says “forever” which to me is an impossibility for a human being so it’s a reminder, I guess, for me, to always be aware that nothing is forever. I guess it’s kind of ironic. I guess that was the point. But, um, nothing’s forever and you should live for today. And it’s that pretty much broadly sums it up.

Desley: How old were you when you got the tattoo?

Participant: This year, only about 5 months ago I was 20

Desley: and where is it?

Participant: It’s on my shin

Desley: was there a reason you put it on your shin?

Participant: I thought, my, I wanted it on my leg simply because if I decided to get any sort of job that could disqualify me from I can it can be covered. Also, if I didn’t like it, it’s only on my leg. It’s pretty small and so if I don’t want people to see it I can hide it. But I found that I do like it so I tend to wear shorts and short socks a lot

Desley: Show-off

Participant: yes

Desley: So is there a place that you wouldn’t put a tattoo?

Participant: Practically, I’d say probably below my elbows or above my collar but I’d say I’d like to get tattoos on my neck but I think I’ve decided that’s probably not a good idea. I’d like to join the Navy and their policy is below the neck and above the wrist so I’d probably, I guess the

only place I would never put a tattoo would be my face but I don't think I'll ever get anything below my wrist or above my collar. Um, simply because yeah, it's just, society doesn't like it.

Desley: Yeah. So how long did you think about the tattoo before you got it?

Participant: Um, one of my friends is a tattooist, he's the one who did it for me and a lot of my friends have sleeves and their necks and so forth done and so I um I'd been thinking about it for, probably since high school, but the idea of the word "forever" came to me probably mid-way through first semester last year, so in about April. I saw it in a tattoo magazine a guy had it on his neck and I liked the idea of the word, what it meant, or what I felt it would mean. And I just decided that that was a good idea thought about it for yep, for a good 8 months or so, then decided, went and talked to my friend. He said, yeah, this would be \$150 if you want. I made an appointment with him.

Desley: It was all over. So do you consider that it coincided with any particular event in your life?

Participant: Um, I'd have to say... yes and no. I'd say yes it does in that I guess the music I listen to most or a lot of the musicians have tattoos and I'd noticed that. And I'd never really thought about them before I started listening to punk and hard core music and I noticed that you know there's a lot of guys out there with pretty cool looking tattoos and thought maybe I'd like to get a tattoo one day. That was when I was about 17. and, um, but I guess I decided to get "forever" on my leg because, I guess I started thinking about, how I was beginning to grow up, and how I'd like to preserve some of my youth. Or some of who or what I was as a younger man I guess. Um, and I guess that would be a reminder to me of how, I don't know, a younger version of me thought about the world. That's pretty much...

Desley: So it wasn't that anything particular thing that happened, it was more

Participant: It was more a combination of events

Desley: So more like a period

Participant: Yeah, a period in my life

Desley: I was going to say a stage you're going through but sounds really bad. So some of the, if you look at the tribal cultures, they have tattooing as a rite of passage into manhood. Does that like, ring any bells for you?

Participant: That did have, um, some, I did think about that. My grandfather, his father had, was a sailor. He mentioned that he had, I think it was a butterfly on his foot, and that I guess to me, it um, then we got talking about Maori tattooing, obviously he's from, they're from New Zealand, and we got talking about the whole body. The family, some of the family stories and how, living through the pain. It was, yeah the rite of passage into manhood. That did, it meant something to me but it was a minor reason as opposed to one of my. That wouldn't be something that would immediately spring to mind, but as I think about it, it does, that did mean something to me. I was thinking, I've been thinking for a while I might like to get something Maori, kind of design, preferably done the traditional way, I guess for the same reason. It would be the story of the family, it's part of my ancestry. And yeah, um, the rite of passage, either I guess it's, yeah. Sorry. It, um, to me, I guess, to me I guess you can't legally get a tattoo until you get to a certain age. it hurts, obviously, so I guess its part of when you become a man this becomes available to you. And so it, and it shows I guess "I'm a man" kind of thing. I've lived through the pain of repeatedly being stabbed.

Desley: Though I think the traditional way, that's going to hurt more, isn't it?

Participant: yes. Oh, yes! One of my friends, his father, no his uncle, has been doing that to him. His uncle brought it up and said "every man in my family has a traditional Maori tattoo" and his father said "why would you want to do that, that's so stupid" and then he asked his father, he said "do you have one?" and his father said "yes, but I was younger".

Desley: Parents eh? So would you have to go to New Zealand to get that?

Participant: Um, yes. I'd say I'd do that. Um, because I guess it'd be, the point of it is the authenticity. It's um, I could be anywhere I could go and get a Maori design done but if I go and get it done, it will mean more if I get it done in New Zealand, the traditional way. So, if I do get something done there, the traditional Maori tattoo I will go over to New Zealand to get it done.

Desley: So are your ancestors Maori?

Participant: um, my, I think there's very little. There's some but very little.

Desley: Because like their facial tattoos have their family, line, almost I guess in it. So would you be going for that kind of thing, or is it just a Maori design?

Participant: I would I would attempt to incorporate the family line, I guess, in that. But I wouldn't get something outrageously big. So it may be, I may be limited in what I could get.

Desley: So have you thought about where you'd put it?

Participant: Um, at the moment I'm a big fan of the legs. But I would probably on my legs somewhere but it would really depend on the time. In what I'm thinking then. I intend to get more, I guess, modern tattoos, before I do this. And it would depend on, yeah, placement of them as well.

Desley: So when you think about getting another tattoo, do you think more about the design or the place, or something else?

Participant: A lot of the tattoos I'd like to get are old designs.

Desley: So Sailor Jerry stuff?

Participant: Yes, Sailor Jerry stuff. I've been looking at the tall ship, with homeward underneath it. A lot of them would, I'd like to actually be in the Navy before I got them, simply because they'd mean more to me. Yeah, I'd like to get the tall ship one in the centre of my chest. And the bluebirds and the man's ruin preferably on my ribs.

Desley: I don't think I've heard of that.

Participant: Man's ruin is the martini glass, cards, a dice and the woman.

Desley: Ok

Participant: With man's ruin written underneath it. I was thinking about getting it on my calf or my ribs but I've been warned off my ribs supposedly it's incredibly painful.

Desley: My daughter's boyfriend was going to get his ribs done the other week and the other guy said "no" he said, it's just so bad. He wanted this big dragon thing. I think it's a bit close to the bone, literally. Do you still like the tattoo? I know it's only been a few months?

Participant: Yes, very much.

Desley: Do you think you'd ever want to change it or cover it up or anything? Get rid of it?

Participant: Um, I don't think I will. It's possible. At the moment I guess I'm thinking it'll always be my first tattoo and no matter whether I got it changed or get it removed, it will always be my first tattoo. And I think that tattoos are, a lot of people say "what if you don't like it when you're older?" and I think, I'm sure it will probably look silly when I'm 60 years old, but it'll always be something I did when I was younger and it'll always have that reminder of good times in my life. Or they could be bad times. I don't know how I'll think about when I was 20 when I'm 60, but I don't think I'll ever cover or change it simply because it's just, I guess it's a, yeah. It's become, not so much something I associate myself with, but just an element of my life that I guess no-one can ever take away from me. The word "forever" is on my leg and it means a lot, what it means to me may change but I imagine it will always have meaning to me. And I don't think that I'll ever change it.

Desley: It just struck me that, coz there's always the big thing about what if you don't like it when you're older but people's bodies change and you may not necessarily like that about yourself either. You know, like women get saggy boobs and stuff. You don't necessarily like that when you're older, but

Participant: There's nothing you can do about it

Desley: No. and it's funny. I talked to a girl the other day and she's got a tattoo here and she didn't get a job she really wanted because she had a tattoo. And she said to her it's like discriminating against someone because of the colour of their skin, it's just that she chose the

colour of hers. And it seems a bit like that. It's because you're making a decision to do something different, people want to, stomp on you, or something.

Participant: I'd always thought about the fact that I guess society or proper society doesn't approve of tattooing. But the thing is I guess there's nothing I can do to change that. I try to, I guess I put it in that position because I can hide it. I was thinking any kind of job where I have to wear shorts and short socks I probably don't want. If they're going to discriminate against me because I have a tattoo on the bottom of my shin, though. I guess, yeah, the, having a tattoo and discriminating against it, um, I don't know whether I... my opinion is basically, most people would agree with this when they get tattooed, if you think, if you're going to have a problem with it, then you shouldn't get tattooed. If you can't accept it, that's the way the world is, and you're not going to change it by getting a tattoo. So I guess, accept it, or don't get a tattoo. There are a lot of things in this world I'd like to change but I can't. So, I disapprove of them but I don't complain about them because there's nothing I can do. I don't see any point in allowing myself to be worried about things I can't change. A lot of people disagree with me and say "the world should accept people with tattoos". It doesn't, so that's life, I guess.

Desley: I guess it's a lot more accepting than it used to be, but on an individual level you can still strike someone who's very much against it. So, um, what about the pain aspect? Do you consider that to be a bonus, does it detract from it, or is it just something?

Participant: For me I guess the issue, I slept, I sleep on my stomach. So I had to manoeuvre myself into a position so I could sleep without hurting myself. The pain I find, I guess I'd say it's, it makes you more certain of what you want, I guess. You have to be willing to go through you know some level of pain in order to get, I guess, the art, so if you really don't, if you're not sure if you want it, and the pain is an issue for you, you probably shouldn't get a tattoo. That's, that'd be my opinion. It may, it's gonna hurt. You're being stabbed repeatedly with a needle. Whether you're prepared to go through that or not. Or whether that's a huge issue for you or not, I guess, can help you in deciding whether or not it's worth it. Um, I think it is, it's a bonus because it hurts a lot and if I wasn't prepared to go through it there's no way I would have gotten a tattoo. But the fact that I was and it didn't bother me, means, I guess, I value it more. I've gone through the pain to get it.

Desley: Is it something you'd look forward to, do you think, the pain?

Participant: Um, not really. I'm not a big fan of pain. But the ends justify the means. Um. I enjoy the art, so the pain is, is part of it and um, but I guess the pain comes with the, you're getting something and that's the price you have to pay and it's not the worst price in the world. It's not THAT painful so it's um, yeah, it's I don't know that look forward to is the right word, but it's definitely, I don't think it's a negative aspect of tattooing. It's a difficult one.

Desley: So you said you'd probably get some more tattoos, do you think where to put them, or do you think about the picture?

Participant: I think it's a combination of both. A lot of the art, my friend being a tattooist I've seen a lot of his work, it's um, I see designs I like, mostly the old sailor style, Sailor Jerry designs, or the, I don't remember what it's actually called, the Japanese designs, I especially like the koi. I'd like to get a koi on my forearm but they're a lot of money, so, and it's also again the issue of can people see it and on the forearm it's reasonably obvious. But, there are certain designs I think, for me at least, should be in certain places on the body and so if I think about getting one, that would be where I'd have it. As I said, the sailing ship, the tall ship I think I want to get in the centre of my chest or on my forearm. Man's ruin as I said on the back of my calf or on my ribs. I think the design. I look at the art first and then decide where I think that would look good on the body and or if a lot of the designs I've seen I just don't think they look good anywhere. So, I'd say it's a combination of both but the art is definitely very important part of it for me.

Desley: Why did you choose to have a tattoo, rather than do something else?

Participant: I guess curiosity was a part of it. What's it like to be a tattooed person? What's the pain like? But um, I guess I saw a lot of art I'd like. I wanted to get something small as a first tattoo. Also, as I said my friend's a tattooist. When you know someone who can get you cheap tattoos, it becomes more attractive. I have lip piercings and I used to have 10mm tunnels in my ears, so I thought, I guess I'm interested in this kind of thing. I don't know why but it interested me so I thought I'd just take the plunge, see what happens. As I said, went and talked to my friend about it a couple of times. I talked to some of my friends about the design I was looking at and they said it sounded like a pretty good idea, or design idea, so I got the tattoo and I guess the real reason would be I just think they look cool. A lot of people have said to me "what about

when you're older and wrinkly" whatever. I think they look pretty good. I like...I've seen an old painting or photograph or something, and old man with lots of tattoos next to his grandson. I don't think they look that bad. I guess you can look at the man and say "he's lived a life". He hasn't been worried about what's going to happen. He's been out there, he's seen things. This might be a reaction to the, I know a lot of people. The idea of the mid-life crisis because you spent your whole life trying to, probably, I don't know, get yourself in the situation where you can live your life and you find you don't live your life at all. So I guess that's what, um...I see people with tattoos and I think "he's doing something, he's done something, he's been somewhere, he has stories"

Desley: Yeah. So you said something about being a tattooed person. Do you consider yourself to be a tattooed person or a person with a tattoo?

Participant: Um, I don't have enough tattoos to call myself a tattooed person.

Desley: Ok, so how many do you have to have?

Participant: I just, I've seen several people with sleeves, and that would be what I'd call a tattooed person.

Desley: So it's a serious

Participant: Yes. It's

Desley: Is it about having them showing though?

Participant: I'd say yes.

Desley: So if they had like a full back piece?

Participant: I'd say yes as well. I guess it's the, you know, the kind of person that a family would, you know, move their kids away from.

Desley: There's a guy who told me once he was on the train and this woman got on with a little girl and the little girl's gone "is that the boogey man?" and she's like "yeah". But some people think it's good. A couple of the guys have said to me it's like it puts up a barrier and people won't talk to them and they actually like that.

Participant: Yeah. Um, I guess, it's the whole bikers, criminals and sailors have tattoos and none of them are reputable. So,

Desley: It's quite funny though. I talked to one tattoo guy who's been in Wollongong for like 40 years, or something and he said that's actually wrong. He said "if I'd been in business for bikers and sailors I would've gone broke a long time ago." He said so many people get them and just hide them under their shirts, it's not funny.

Participant: is this um... Which shop's that?

Desley: Corrimal. And he's got the one down south – Windang or somewhere as well.

Participant: I only know the guys at Feelgood Tattoo. Um, yeah. I thought it might have been them.

Desley: So do you think there's something else you could have done that would have had the same effect for you as getting a tattoo?

Participant: Um, no, I don't think so. Um, I found that talking to, it was, um, it was kind of, yeah, the rite of passage thing, but also it was kind of cool to be the first one of my friends to get a tattoo. Um, I don't think there's anything I could have done that would be as permanent. Um, no matter what I do, unless I lose a leg, or yeah, if something happens to it, it's always going to be there and um, it holds another element of me. It is forever, but it's forever for me, but eventually it's going to rot away or whatever, but I don't think there's anything I could have done that would have been as permanent as forever.

Desley: As the word, you mean?

Participant: As a tattoo. And, yeah. I can't think of anything else I could have done that would have had the same effect.

Desley: Ok. So, for you, what would be the opposite of your tattoo?

Participant: I don't know. Not having a tattoo.... Um. I guess it would be more, for me not having a tattoo would be more, the ah, would be not having a tattoo but wanting one. It would be not having one because, I don't know, I was concerned what maybe my family would think, or my friends or society would think but still want to get one. That would be, I guess, the opposite of having a tattoo for me. I don't know who said it but it's better to regret something you did than something you didn't do, so I thought, yeah, get a tattoo. If I didn't like it, that's life

Desley: When you went and got the tattoo, did you go by yourself?

Participant: I did, yes, but as I said

Desley: The guy was your friend

Participant: And his fiancé is his apprentice so it wasn't. I've been told that if you're going to get a tattoo, make sure you trust the tattooist. So one of the first things when I came here, moved to Wollongong for University, was I went up to the tattooist and started talking to the guys up there. That was last year, and ym, they pierced my lips. I just found that knowing them, at least I found, makes you more comfortable with them. If you think that they're nice people you're more likely to, you feel more at ease with them so I guess I didn't feel any need to bring a friend with me to get tattooed because I was very comfortable with Rosh. And I was, yeah, confident in his abilities, so I didn't really feel the need to go with anyone. I told one of my friends before I went because I didn't want it to be some, I know a lot of people, apparently, tell everyone they know they're going to get a tattoo. So I just decided that if they notice, they notice. I pointed that out to most of my close friends. It looks pretty good. Didn't feel... it was for me, for them, I didn't need to have anyone with me.

Desley: I'm more actually interested because some people do it due to peer pressure.

Participant: Oh. Ok.

Desley: So whether it was like other people went along and then I went along and I ended up with a tattoo. But typically most people I've talked to that's not the case. Sometimes they take people to hold their hand or something.

Participant: I'd say a lot of my friends have a lot of tattoos. No-one from, as I said earlier, I was the first one of my friends from my high school to get a tattoo and um, but, knowing a tattooist and having lots of friends with tattoos they asked me about it. Going to get one, because I felt at the end of the day it was my decision. It wasn't something where my friends encouraged me, sort of thing. I'd thought about it for a long time. I'd wanted to get a tattoo for a long time. This was the one idea I'd had for nearly a year. And I like the font that I have it in. I like the way it flowed.

Desley: I was just thinking. You said that you had Scottish and New Zealand heritage. Have you ever thought of getting Celtic stuff?

Participant: Um, not really. Um,

Desley: Is that because you don't like the look of it?

Participant: I don't mind the look of it, but I find that, the same problem I have with a lot of the tribal designs is, everyone gets them, they don't mean anything. And I was also told that getting a Celtic tattoo is, these days at least, after Cronulla, getting a Celtic design you might as well get a swastika. That's what someone said to me. If I wanted to get a Celtic design that wouldn't stop me, but I never really wanted to. So, you know, it kind of. I guess it's yeah, everyone has them and they're very generic. They wouldn't mean as much to me. I have thought about getting my family's motto or my clan's motto on my collarbone, which is "I shine not burn" but I'm not sure if I'd do that or not. I also thought about getting their emblem or seal or whatever it is. I forget what it's actually called.

Desley: Crest, maybe?

Participant: Yeah. It has a sun on it and the motto underneath but I never really thought about Celtic designs. They can look good on some people but

Desley: It's not your thing?

Participant: It's not my thing.

Desley: Ok. So what kind of reactions have you had to the tattoo? What did mum say?

Participant: I told my mother before I went, the day before. I said to her "I'm going to see Rush at 11 o'clock tomorrow" "oh, why" "I'm getting a tattoo" "really, what?" "I'm getting the word "forever" on my leg" and showed her a design that I had which is different to what I have, and I think mine's better. But um, she didn't seem to mind. I showed her when I got home. She didn't seem to.... I don't think she approved, but it didn't bother her. Um, my sister was very, ah, I guess anti it beforehand but very very... she liked it when she saw it.

Desley: So is she older?

Participant: She's 17 and I have an 11 year old brother who "can I touch it" was the first thing he said. Yeah he wanted to, he was the only one, he looked at it, he liked it. My father was an interesting.... I assumed my mother would have said something to him but apparently she didn't. I'd been walking around in shorts, it being summer, with no shoes or thongs on and, um, two weeks later, I think it was three days before I came back to Wollongong – I went back to Canberra for the break and saw mum – and my cousin was round for dinner because he was going to drive me back, and he said "oh, is that real?". My father turns and says "is WHAT real?" I said "oh, yeah, it's real". He said "WHAT???" "I've had it for three weeks, dad" "oh, really? Oh, rrrrr" But, um, my grandfather. My grandparents I talk to a lot about it. And I'd talked to them about how I knew a tattooist and I talked actually about the history of different tattoos and meanings with him and he liked it. So the reactions from family members have been, I guess, mixed, but not outrageously negative. Um, my friends all think it's good and one of them actually asked me recently if I knew who was a good tattooist coz he knew I'd done my homework before I got mine. He's in the army and wants to get the rising sun design on his bicep, so I recommended my friend to him. But I don't think I've had any terrible reactions.

Desley: Has it had any negative effects on your life?

Participant: I think like looking after it... nothing that wasn't a minor annoyance. It hurt, it was itchy, I kept having to slap it

Desley: You could've got your little brother to

Participant: I should have. It was, also, I got it done the week before I went back to work. I work in my high school in the book room and it was just it was I guess annoying looking after it and sleeping on it. Nothing really negative from society.

Desley: So just a bit of a nuisance

Participant: Yes. It was more of a nuisance when I just got it done coz I couldn't swim in the middle of summer. That was quite annoying.

Desley: So, did you ever worry enough about what your parents or someone would think to think maybe I won't do this?

Participant: My father. I wrote the biography for my friend's band to go into Tattoos Down Under so that they could. They were featured band for, I think it was January. I wrote the biography for them. I showed my father, look there's. my friend was the featured artist, one of the featured artists that month and I showed him. He doesn't like.... he said he can see, some of them look okay but he wouldn't get one. I wasn't sure what my mother would say, that was why I said something beforehand. But I got the, I guess my parents may have got the impression I was interested in tattoos. Would probably get a tattoo coz I had an interest in them. I know the two guys down at FeelGood Tattoos and my friend Rosh, so I guess they may have seen it coming. But it did concern me that my mother would, my mother especially. Because my father tends to take the "you're a bloody idiot" response to things that, you know, if he considers me stupid, whereas my mother's more "I'm not mad, I'm just disappointed" so I was more concerned what my mother would think. Because I guess I don't like thinking she's disappointed.

Desley: Yes. Sometimes worse than mad isn't it?

Participant: Yes.

Desley: So what do you think about other people with tattoos?

Participant: Several of my closest friends have a lot of tattoos. Depends what designs they are, really. People with a lot of the more tribal designs who are white I think “why?” But for all I know it could mean a lot to them. But I like the way a lot of, I like the way, I guess, the sailor, the old school Japanese, sailor tattoos look. It really depends what the design is though. But if I see monsters I think “ok... why?” but I think I guess more so in the past when bikers, sailors and crims but my um, but yes, they’re living their life I guess how they want. I respect that. They choose to do something that they know society doesn’t, the majority of society doesn’t approve of still. Which will, no doubt, disqualify them from several jobs. Yet they do it anyway. I respect it, but, at times I think, isn’t that a bit silly to cut off your options like that. But, I don’t know...

Desley: So does having a tattoo mean that you feel like you belong to any particular group, like do you identify with any particular group of people?

Participant: Um, not really. I’d say it’s not that, I listen to a lot of hard core music, I identify with the hard core music scene. I’d say I associate more with the music than the tattooing element of that. But I can, I don’t know, I guess my tattoo doesn’t really have an association with anything that isn’t personal for me. If I join the Navy I’d like to get some Navy tattoos and I think that would be more, that would have that um, association I guess. But I don’t really think about it that way. I know a lot of people with tattoos from a lot of different walks of life. And I don’t think that having a tattoo makes me automatically puts me in with all these other people because they’re all different. One of my friends, he doesn’t like, he has the sleeves but um, the tribal design on the shoulder but he doesn’t like that association. His is very intricate designs, and what he considers not up to the same standard. He doesn’t like that. Yeah, but I don’t define myself by my tattoo.

Desley: Is there anything else you can think of that might be relevant?

Participant: {long pause} Um, not really.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	3	3	3	2	3	4	3	3	3	3	2	3	Sad
Patient	3	1	4	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	4	4	Impetuous
Caring	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	Selfish
Kind	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	Mean
Sense of humour	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	4	2	2	2	2	Serious
Sociable	1	1	1	1	1	4	1	5	4	1	1	3	Introverted
Friendly	2	2	3	2	2	4	2	5	3	3	1	3	Stand-offish
Active	2	2	4	2	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	4	Inactive
Confident	2	2	4	2	3	4	2	5	2	3	2	4	Self-doubting
Organised	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	3	2	4	Disorganised
Hard working	2	2	3	2	2	4	3	2	2	2	3	2	Lazy
Honest	2	2	2	2	2	4	2	1	2	3	2	3	Untrustworthy



5 RGT subgroup Psychological Growth

5.1 RDT subgroup Psychological Growth

Participant GG32

Female, 18 years old

Interview date: 2/3/2006

Participant: I've been thinking about getting a tattoo since I was in year 10 when I was 15 years old. So obviously my parents had to have an involvement in that and they didn't want me to get one. So me and my best friend continued thinking about it and then at the start of this year, well, near the end of last year, I got diagnosed with depression and anxiety disorder. And I had really bad panic attacks, and I couldn't leave the house because I became agoraphobic and had a social phobia. So at that point in time, my friend brought up the tattoo idea again. And I started thinking about it as a way to prove to myself that I was strong enough to do something that was scary and I was afraid of, but something that I really wanted to do. And that way, every time I was faced with something that my mind was saying I couldn't do, I could look at it, or think about it, or touch it and know that I had done something greater and more important than that. And I could go and do it. So me and my best friend went and investigated it and my family on my dad's side they're all male, and they have quite a few tattoos and so they told me the best place to go and when to have it and how big to get it and stuff like that. So I went to Corrimal Tattoos and talked to the man about it and my friend looked at the tattoos, and we basically discussed how painful it was going to be, which my friend was very interested in, and all that kind of thing, like metals in the tattoos and things, in case we were allergic. And we ended up booking to get tattooed at exactly the same time, in the tattoo parlour together, so that we could hold hands, in early January of this year. And it ended up, when we got there for our tattoos, her mum drove us in, because we didn't know whether we'd be able to drive. Because we were getting tattoos on our lower back. So we didn't know if we could lean back into the seat without it hurting. And we also didn't know if we were going to pass out or something like that, so we were a little bit worried. And my parents and my sister were in Europe at the time. So I wasn't living with my family and my grand parents and uncle who I was spending a lot of time with, all refused to take me because they didn't want me to get one and they'd been trying to talk me out of it ever since my parents left. So her mum took us and her mum was really scared, which kind of was upsetting for us. Because she kept saying, "What if you die? What if you have an allergic reaction and you have to get it removed straight away" and how that hookers tend to have them, and did we really know what we were doing. And so by the time we got there, me and my friend

found out that they'd over-booked that day. So we couldn't have our tattoos at the same time, one of us would have to go first and then the other person. There were about ten or fifteen other people. And in this tattoo parlour you get it done on a bed in front of everybody. And so I said that I'd go first. And luckily we'd discussed the pain so much, that we'd actually put on numbing cream, and we'd also taken painkillers, just in case. And so I went first, and basically it didn't really hurt that much. I thought the pain was going to be the thing that triggered my anxiety, but I actually dealt with it really well which was an achievement for me, because I thought that I was going to have to leave. And my friend basically sat there and patted me and watched it getting done, because I was getting it on my lower back and I couldn't see it. And everyone in the parlour was going, "Yeah. Yeah. That's nice!" The weird thing about getting a tattoo and it's also a piercing parlour, you tend to make friends with everybody in there, because you are all going through an experience together. And so mine lasted 45 minutes it took to do the tattoo, about 30 minutes to do the black and then for the different colours you have to change the needle. And that's probably the most scary bit was him changing the needles, and going what colour do you want and all that sort of thing. And I was going Oh my God! The colours, I didn't even think about that. But in the end it didn't really hurt that much. And then my friend had hers. Hers was much smaller than mine and in black. But in the same spot, and she cried and said it was really painful and things like that, so that was stressful for me. But afterwards we had to put the cream on it and stuff. And my family dealt with it.

Desley: So I'm not quite sure where to start with that... you said your grandparents tried to talk you out of it? I assume that's on your mum's side?

Participant: Yes. My grandparents on my mum's side. My grandparents on my dad's side were very supportive.

Desley: it's a pity they weren't around to take you. So what is it a picture of?

Participant: It's basically a kind of butterfly, a black outline of a butterfly. And then in the butterfly's top left hand wing and the bottom right hand or it might be the other way round, there's three and two flowers in different colours. And do you want me to tell you what it means? To me?

Desley: Yes.

Participant: Basically originally we were both going to get similar tattoos of glitter bugs with swirls on the side of them and we'd found them in the shop. But afterwards Erin, my friend decided to change hers to a tiny symbol for a dance because she's a ballerina. And I started looking around on the Internet, just because I hadn't done that before, to see what kind of tattoos people had. And I've always liked butterflies. I've always liked insects, that kind of thing, but my grandparents were like, "No, you can't put a bug on your back." And so I spent a lot of time on the Internet, collecting pictures of what I thought were attractive to me and I ended up finding this one and another one that was very similar. My grandparents picked this one. They said if I was going to get a tattoo, it had to be feminine and attractive. But basically to me, I think that the butterfly represents flight and wanting to break free of earth. Whereas the fact that it has the flowers shows that it's yet to do that, and it can't because it is already connected to the earth. Although it's beautiful in this way, it still has the plan to break free, like it wants to be free of anxiety, free of like, stress.

Desley: so maybe more than it is.

Participant: more than it is. And it can't break free at the moment. So maybe I'll get another one.

Desley: are you all right?

Participant: Yeah, I'm fine.

Desley: So why did you put it on your lower back?

Participant: because it's um.

Desley: anywhere near your spine is painful.

Participant: it's very painful. Yes. I always wanted it on my back. because when we went to the place the guy told us that if you get it in your front, when you get pregnant, it'll stretch it. So instantly we both decided on the back.

Desley: I'm very glad you did that.

Participant: I'm glad they tell you. It was quite helpful, he was. So, he just said that and I was going to get it on my shoulder or on my lower back. So then I decided to get it on my lower back, on the spine even though he said that would be more painful than the shoulder. Because that way when I'm older and I start to wrinkle I can hide it. And also it won't get sunburnt, because the sunburn breaks down the chemicals and makes it disappear. So that's why I chose the middle of the back even though it is more painful.

Desley: So is there a place you think you wouldn't put a tattoo?

Participant: On my stomach, around the front of my body. I hate people with tattoos on their breasts, like off the top near the décolletage or something, you call it? Anyway I think that's bad. I don't like that. I wouldn't tattoo myself there.

Desley: What about your face?

Participant: I really like Maori tattoos on the face for men. And I've actually met a few like Anglo guys living in Australia, who have the facial tattoos, but they've always been married into a Maori family. But as a female, no I don't think so.

Desley: Hands?

Participant: Like henna? You know how Indians do henna for their weddings? That's quite beautiful, but I don't know. You've gotta keep, just for up keep of the tattoo for like a month, you can't put your hands, like immersed in water and stuff like that. So I think it would impair my life too much to try to get it to heal. Plus, I am going into education. I am going to be a teacher. Tattoos are very frowned upon in that profession and so you have to cover up any tattoos while you are teaching. And especially on prac. they are very strict about it. And so having it on my hands it would be a clear indicator that I had it and it might affect my job prospects or my relationship with the education department at the university. So that's one of the reasons that I won't have it too visual on my body, like my hands, face, neck.

Desley: Legs?

Participant: Legs, yeah. I guess the ankle would be Ok. But that's very painful.

Desley: So how long did you think about it, roughly, before you got it?

Participant: About four and a half years.

Desley: oh, ok.

Participant: it was a very long process.

Desley: So I know you said part of it was for you, to do with having anxiety and all that stuff.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: Do you consider it coincided with any particular event in your life?

Participant: um.

Desley: Or is it more like that period?

Participant: That period. I mean it wasn't a specific birthday event, or something to prove that I was becoming independent of my family or anything like that. It was more something that I wanted to do to my body and I felt the time was right, and emotionally I needed to do something to prove that I could do things. So that's why, basically.

Desley: Is this your first year at Uni?

Participant: It's my second year.

Desley: I just thought it might have been to help you to get to go to uni as well. Get in the right frame of mind.

Participant: no.

Desley: So do you still like the tattoo?

Participant: Yes.

Desley: Would you change it at all?

Participant: No.

Desley: Would you have it off?

Participant: No.

Desley: Do you think you would do it again?

Participant: Yes. Although I was talking to my parents about that last night, since I was coming down here today. Me and Erin were thinking about getting another one together. They said one's trendy, two's trashy, so I think they are really against the second one.

Desley: So you don't think you'd do another one?

Participant: I would like another one. But I would probably have to wait 'til I move out of my parents' house, to get it.

Desley: So if you were going to have another one, do you think you would think more about the picture, or where you were going to put it? Or would you want to go back to that same guy and decide after that?

Participant: I think the second time around, I'd probably... we were talking about getting it on our wrists, as a kind of bangle, kind of image. So it wasn't straight away it's not like a tattoo, it's more like some kind of jewellery. And you could always cover it up with a bracelet. So the area is kind of decided, but it's more the image that I care more about. Because as my friend said... because originally I wanted to get skulls and crossbones, and my friend was like "you are going to have this on your body for ever You have to get something where in ten years you are not going to look back and go, Oh my god, why did I put that on my body? You need something

that's feminine and classic." So that's the kind of areas we tried to go into. So I think the image is probably more important than where I visually put it on my body.

Desley: Ok. You said it didn't hurt as much as you thought?

Participant: Yeah, it didn't hurt as much as I anticipated.

Desley: do you look at the pain as some kind of benefit, or did it detract from it, or?

Participant: The pain detracted from it, as in wanting to go and get it. The pain was something that definitely held me back. Because I was thinking that I was going to embarrass myself in front of a whole room full of people, screaming and crying over this little tattoo on my back. But I suppose once you get it done, because people assume that they're so painful, you go, "oh my God, I must have a really high pain threshold." Or you go, "It didn't hurt that much" people are like, "Aaah? Oh then?" It was like after you get it done, "I could survive that! It wasn't that bad." So I think it's a positive thing once you get it done, but a negative prior to getting it done.

Desley: So is it like some kind of badge of honour?

Participant: Yes, it is like a badge of honour.

Desley: People say they are addictive.

Participant: I think they definitely are addictive.

Desley: I wonder whether a part of it is the fact that how good you feel, that you've been through it and survived, as in not made a fool of yourself or not run out halfway?

Participant: I think people still look at them as something that sets you apart from the rest of the human population. I don't know, originally it was more restricted who got tattoos, sailors and stuff, and because it's become more mainstream, but it still separates you from everybody who... a lot of people are against tattoos and all that kind of thing about bar-coding your body or putting permanent brandings on yourself. There are a lot of things that people have said to me. But, er, what was I saying? I've forgotten what...

Desley: About how it is addictive and the idea that maybe it is because how good people feel after they have done it.

Participant: I was saying how it sets you apart from the rest of the society. But I think that generally tattoos are becoming a lot more mainstream. I mean the people who are actually getting them. It's not so much that they are addictive or that they make you feel really good. I think it is because it is becoming a lot more socially acceptable to get them. So a lot more females are getting them as well. And apparently the next all new thing, is actual tribal scarring! Have you heard about that?

Desley: I've read a bit about that.

Participant: Tribal scarring and that kind of thing on your body. That's supposed to be the big new radical thing to do to yourself.

Desley: Is it done by cutting?

Participant: I don't know. I think they must cut you to scar you. But it is done in a certain way with certain instruments and stuff.

Desley: I think, from the stuff I've read from before, they cut you and they do something to annoy it so it heals with a keloid scar.

Participant: like raised and white?

Participant: yeah. Whereas a normal scar if you heal well, it would be a nice little line but a keloid scar is big and thick.

Participant: I wouldn't like it. But I definitely think they are addictive though, because I wouldn't have thought of getting a second one until I got the first one.

Desley: what is it about it that's addictive to you?

Participant: They are nice to look at. Like when you get out of the shower and you see your new back in the mirror, you go, “Oh wow, don’t I look pretty from that angle!” just random stuff like that. I think they look so attractive on your body, if you do it the right way. As in not too large, not too many colours, not like those body suits they can do, which is like your entire body. But I don’t know why it’s addictive, really. I suppose piercings are addictive too. Coz I’ve got seven piercings on my ears coz I never want to pierce another part of my body except my ears. Every time I get it, I’m just like, “Cool. I like the way that looks.”

Desley: so it’s an aesthetic thing?

Participant: yeah, it’s more of an aesthetic thing.

Desley: Ok. So why did you choose to have a tattoo, rather than do something else?

Participant: Something else to my body, or something else like an activity?

Desley: Whatever.

Participant: Probably because I was one of the last...even though I wanted to get one for a long time, no one expected me to get one. It was like one of those things you just say, and people go “oh yeah, Ok!” And for me as a person, it was very...people were like almost shocked when I say I went and got one. Even the people that did know about it, were like that’s not the kind of person you are, like the stereotype of what kind of people have tattoos. They’re like, you don’t fit in and I like to show I am not as conformist. Like I know that I’m not on the inside, but physically, most of the time you look it, because I wear clothes that are mainstream, and I have a hair cut that’s mainstream. But whereas with my tattoo I can show the non-conformist nature I feel on the inside on the outside. Even though they’re less non-conformist than they used to be, I think. And I’ve always been called tattoo as a nickname, since I was a little kid, I don’t know why “Tattoo” or “Tatts”. So now I actually have one it kind of fits.

Desley: So do you think there’s something else you could have done that would have had the same effect? Like you talked about having the tattoo so that you could look at it and go, I went through that, so I can go through other stuff.

Participant: No, I don't think there was anything else I could have done.

Desley: Not some serious body piercing or something?

Participant: No. My friend got her belly button pierced and from her experience with that, I would never get a different part of my body pierced – my nose or my lip or my tongue or anything like that. I just wouldn't get those kinds of piercings that would give me the thought that, wow look at the thing you just did to yourself. I think the tattoo was important because it was always going to be with me. I didn't have to go, yeah, but that thing's back at home. That thing I did which is so great. Even if I sky dived or something, it would be a certificate on my wall at home, it wouldn't be with me constantly. So it's like a constant reminder. It's like a part of me now. I don't know if that makes sense.

Desley: Yeah but a piercing would have been part of you.

Participant: Yeah, but piercings are disgusting in other parts of the body.

Desley: What do you mean by disgusting?

Participant: I think they just look gross. Especially tongue piercings. They can impair your speech slightly, and like with your food. And nose piercings, if you get a cold and eyebrow piercings I like guys but on girls, they look unattractive. They look too masculine. Belly button piercings, my friend's one, they're too painful and it always gets infected. And all the other piercings they do, like on the feminine genitalia and stuff – who would expose themselves to get a piercing there in the first place, in a public area. Have some decency. And who's ever going to see that really, besides your partner?

Desley: Depends on your lifestyle, I suppose. So, was it more important to you to have a tattoo, or have that particular picture tattooed? If that makes sense.

Participant: um. I think the tattoo. Because the decision to have the tattoo was so much more important to me, than what I put on myself, initially. So getting up, being brave enough to make the appointment and go in and have it done. The actual getting of the tattoo was the thing I was most worried about. I was pretty sure that whatever I picked, I would like it for the rest of my

life. And since other people had an involvement in the picking it was like a fall back, because I could say, you're the one that helped to put it on me. Whereas the tattoo was purely my decision. So I think that was more important to go through the actual tattoo, than actually what went on my body.

Desley: So do you think of yourself as a person who has a tattoo or are you a tattooed person?

Participant: I'm a person who has a tattoo.

Desley: so do you think it factors into your identity at all?

Participant: I think it definitely factors into your identity. Probably because it is one thing that people remember about you. Because people are so caught up in physical appearances, if they describe me they might go "That tall red haired girl with the tattoo on her back. I remember her!" because that's an identifying feature. I think when I talk about myself, I'd talk about what I look like, I say I have a tattoo and I have seven piercings on my ear and stuff like that as part of defining who I am and what I am. Because it's also tied up with, so much emotion is also tied up with around the whole tattoo experience, with me particularly with me because it was because of my anxiety and stuff. So much stuff went into that, and it's such an emotional thing, that it has just become part of me. When I talk about myself, I talk about how I have a tattoo or what that tattoo means to me and I remember it constantly when I am scared and stuff like that.

Desley: so for you it's a really strong thing that you can hold on to?

Participant: yeah.

Desley: Trick question. What would be the opposite of your tattoo?

Participant: The opposite? What does that even mean? Um. {pause} The opposite of my tattoo? {pause} No tattoo? I don't really understand that question. I'm sorry.

Desley: I try not to explain it too much because people interpret it differently. Some people say no tattoo, other people say another tattoo that would be the opposite picture.

Participant: Like a reflection?

Desley: like someone said yesterday, I can't remember what they had, but they said the opposite would be, just say it was a puppy dog, and the opposite would be a tiger, or something. Someone else said, another physical thing, but something less permanent like a necklace, rather than a tattoo. A couple of people have said a different feeling. And then other people have said anything meaningless, because their tattoo has meaning.

Participant: I guess something that I wasn't so attached to, emotionally, would be the opposite. Something of no existence. Like you put on a bracelet that doesn't mean anything and it just looks good and then you can take it off. But with this, it's so connected to me emotionally, that probably taking it off, I would feel I have lost a little bit of myself; because that whole experience no longer has any permanency physically. I guess that's what I would say the opposite of that would be.

Desley: So you're saying, taking it off?

Participant: Taking it off would be the opposite, yeah.

Desley: You said you went with your friend and she got one. So was it your idea originally, or hers, or both?

Participant: We just came up with it together. We'd always just liked them. And when we go to fairs we'd always get the henna tattoos on, and things. So it was something we came up with, together. And we both realised that we couldn't do it independently, that we both really needed each other to do it. And I think it's probably brought us closer together. 'Cause there's three of us that are best friends and two of us now have tattoos. The other person doesn't like tattoos. And on an emotional level of fear and stuff, I think my friend and I are closer because we've had this experience and we've survived it together. If you know what I mean. We'd ring each other the first day and say what's yours like. mine's aching, is your aching? Yeah mine's aching too. Is it itchy, yeah mine's itchy? Ok. I'll talk to you later. The experience was like a big part of, not a big part of our friendship, but it was like one of the pinnacles of what we've done together with our friendship. So I'd say we came up with it together really.

Desley: So what kind of reactions have you had to it?

Participant: My parents were shocked, 'cause they accidentally found out when they were in Europe. My grandmother on my dad's side of the family accidentally told them over the phone. So they were a bit shocked. The next thing my sister rang me up, who's fifteen. She's like "Did you get one, did you get one?" I'm like "yes" She's like, "Oh I want one now. You've got to convince Mum and Dad to let me have one." So my dad was like, when he was in Europe, ok if Natasha can do that, I'm going to get my ear pierced. And so when he came back he hadn't got it pierced, so I took him to get his ear pierced, and now he wants to get a tattoo. So he wants me to take him to get a tattoo. It will be something Celtic, we think, on his back. Most people who've seen it thinks it's really nice. They usually go "hey that's a really nice picture." Coz it was just a picture, just a photograph. They're like "that's really pretty" that kind of thing. I've had a couple of people go, how could you do that to yourself? Why would you want to do that to yourself? Especially because I am involved with the Christian group on campus. My friends are Christians and they say you know, it says in the Bible not to put permanent markings on your body. And that kind of thing. "Tattoos are disgusting". Most people are shocked by it. They're just like "Oh" and "can I see it?" everybody wants to see it. You can't just say I have a tattoo, people are at you until I you show it to them and then they are usually like "wow! Wow. I don't know how you did that." "That's nice. I don't think I'd be able to do it." Those are some of the reactions I have had.

Desley: So you haven't had any really negative things happen?

Participant: No.

Desley: sounds like it was more before?

Participant: Yes, mostly it was before and from my friend's mum, who was like "you're gonna die" blah! Blah! Blah! And then my mum's parents and my uncles spent nearly a month trying to convince me out of doing it. Because they would say, why do you want to do that to your body? Sailors have them. Prostitutes have them. Do you really want to put yourself into a class in society that you are not a part of. All this kind of stuff like that. But I haven't had any bad reactions to it. Except my grandmother said "what happens if your husband doesn't like it?" That was one of the weirdest reactions I've had. I said well I see it like this, it's a part of me

now. My husband or boyfriend will have to accept it as part of me. Because I'm not going to remove it for someone else.

Desley: it's like saying what if he didn't like the colour of your hair?

Participant: or what if he didn't like a birthmark on you or something? It's just part of your body and they can't do anything about it. I actually know a woman who had a tattoo on her arm and he husband didn't like it so she removed it. She now has huge scarring on her arm now and stuff. And after she got it done he turned around and said I actually prefer the tattoo to all the scarring. So I think I would never remove it for anyone and that was just a really random comment from my grandma. But nothing really bad, like no one threw eggs at me or anything.

Desley: so you haven't lost a job or...

Participant: no.

Desley: What do you think it means to other people?

Participant: To me and to Erin and her tattoo to me, it represents our relationship, like to each other our experience. To my family, I think they like it but I think they are still a little bit shocked by it. I think to them, to my mum, since I did it when she was out of the country, it showed that I'm becoming more independent of her. I don't always follow her rules and things like that. Because she originally said, "you can't have a tattoo" and went and did it when she was out of the country. Kind of behind her back! I think to them it shows I am becoming a bit more independent, that I choose what kind of things I want to do to my body, my face, my hair, that kind of thing. That's about it. That's the only people that really care about it. My family and my friend.

Desley: So when someone else sees it you think they just go, "A tattoo!"

Participant: I actually keep wondering whether it changes people's opinion of me. Like whether the really Christian people who said how could you do it, how could you brand your body, whether they think of me as a sinner. Well, I'm not a sinner, but like I'm going to hell because of something I did to myself. Or not following the bible. Because I am actually Catholic and the

Christian group on the campus are all Anglican and Baptist and all that. They tend to exclude Catholics from Christianity and so they try to convert me all the time to becoming Christian instead of being a Catholic, even though I'm involved in their bible.

Desley: What do you think about other people with tattoos?

Participant: It depends what they look like and why they've got it. I think you can't actually judge someone's tattoo, before you ask them why they got it, when they got it, why they got that specific one. Like I know a couple of people. Like my uncle has a lot of tattoos and three of his tattoos, one is for his son, it's got his son's name in it, one is for his daughter and one is for his wife and they're on different parts of his body. Like they represent when he married my aunt, he put her name on him and when each child was born he put their names on him. So it kind of represents his experiences. So even though he's got lots and lots and I don't usually like that. But because they're so important I can see why those events are important to him, so I kind of like it. Whereas, if the person, some women have the tattoos all... there's a lady I have seen at university, she has tattoos all over her arm and on the front of her body like there,

Desley: stars?

Participant: yeah, I think so. and when I saw her the other day, my first response was, oh I don't like that, I wouldn't do that!

Desley: she's into circus and stuff.

Participant: is she? That was really far out. To get so many tattoos and on those places. But I suppose she has her reason and I couldn't really judge why she got them until actually I talked to her about her tattoos and shared my experiences with her. Usually when I see a tattoo on people, I think that it is to do with an event a person experienced or something that's really important to them like family, friends, and an achievement like when they got a job, or people get them when they go to foreign countries and stuff. Usually I try to assess why they get it. I try to talk to them about their tattoos.

Desley: Usually you don't look at them and go, Oh she must be a prostitute or he must be a sailor or?

Participant: There are certain tattoos that you know are sailor tattoos.

Desley: Isn't that a style of tattoo?

Participant: A style of tattoo, yeah. like you can tell that they're kind of like sailing tattoo and you can pick up that maybe he works on a ship or as a merchant seaman or something like that. Usually I don't look think, this person has tattoos, therefore he fits into this class of society. Because if I started thinking that, then I wouldn't be able to react when people started placing me, classing me when they see mine.

Desley: So you said your family on your father's side have tattoos?

Participant: Yes.

Desley: Do any of your friends have tattoos?

Participant: Only one. Er, two. Erin, which I went with and one of the ladies who was in my course last year. And she left because she had a baby or something and she had a tattoo on her wrist, of a star.

Desley: Do feel like you identify with a particular group of people because you have a tattoo?

Participant: I think when you meet other people who have tattoos or you go into a tattoo parlour, and you are either getting one or you have one, you kind of identify with each other because you've been or are going to go through the same experience. So you kind of offer support to people who wanna go get tattoos and give them advice and things like that. And definitely when you see other people you start talking to them. You always bring up their tattoo and your tattoo and talk about "Oh how did it feel for you?" and that kind of thing. It's like you are in a special tattoo club, sort of. And you all can talk about it, even I you don't know anything about the person you have one thing in common that you can talk about. That's how I see it.

Desley: Would that apply to someone who had full sleeves and looked really tough, would you still feel you had something in common with them?

Participant: To a degree I'd think that I had something in common, meaning that I had one. But I'd usually assume they went a bit overboard when they got to the actual tattooing stage; or they like pain because the more you get the more it hurts and bleed and stuff. I don't know if I'd fully identify myself with them if they were fully tattooed.... I'd probably think, you know, I don't think I am really quite in your class, but I'd identify with them a little bit.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	4	3	3	3	Sad
Patient	3	1	2	1	2	3	3	1	2	3	4	3	Rushed
Caring	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	Hateful
Kind	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	Mean
Sense of humour	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	4	4	1	2	Bland
Sociable	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	Isolated
Friendly	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	2	1	Aggressive
Active	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	3	3	4	Tired
Confident	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	4	4	4	3	Weak
Organised	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	2	3	4	2	Messy
Hard working	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	4	2	5	3	Lazy
Honest	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	4	2	1	Hiding



6 RGT subgroup Rebellion

6.1 RDT subgroup Philosophy

Participant TF47

Female, 19 years old

Interview date: 11/4/2006

Participant: My tattoo is on my lower hip and it is a Kanji symbol for faith. I decided that I wanted to get it like two years ago, probably originally like a rebellious thing against my mum, which is like why I got my belly button pierced as well, but then when I went to get it, like I wanted to go get it with my girlfriend but then something happened so I couldn't so I thought maybe this is like a sign that I shouldn't get it. So I was like if I wait an year, because we were going to do on holidays and we were going for the same holiday next year and I go if I still want it next year then, if I still really really want it then I'll get it when we go away next year, and that was like last November and I still really wanted it so I went and I did it. I knew what I wanted to get, because I didn't want to get something like a butterfly or something that was just there to look pretty, like I wanted something that meant something to me because I come from a very religious family, like my mum's a minister, I've grown up in a church, even though I don't go to church any more I wanted something that would always remind me of where I came from and what I believe in. Yes that is a part of my faith, I was tossing up between that and a cross, but because of where I got it, I thought a cross was a little bit inappropriate, so yes so I picked that and I have absolutely no regrets. It is in a place where my mum will never ever see it.

Desley: So she doesn't know?

Participant: No, she doesn't know. She would shoot me if she found out.

Desley: ok. So is that why you put it where you put it so people wouldn't see it?

Participant: Well I didn't get it for other people, I didn't get it sort of like something to show off to other people. I got it for me, so it wasn't, like I wasn't going to get it like on my arm or somewhere where it would be displayed to the world coz it was just something that was just personal for me and that's probably why I got it down there, and also coz like when I'm like 80, I can hide it. It's not something like in your face because some people are a bit iffy about tattoos.

My mum thinks they look trashy on girls so she can't see mine and she can't think that I look trashy.

Desley: Is there a place where you wouldn't put a tattoo?

Participant: Yes, somewhere that's always exposed. I would never get it on my arm or anything. You know like how some people get like the bands and that like, you know if they want it that is fine but I would never get it in such an out there place.

Desley: Why is that?

Participant: Probably because I think this is going to sound a bit judgemental, but like I know if I see girls like with big tattoos, like you see some Maori girls, I know one girl who's got like a massive cross on her arm. I don't think that looks very good, like I don't think. I know that it is different for everybody, but I think tattoos should be some thing personal, something that you do for yourself not to show off to the world and yeah because like in 50 years when your arm is all wrinkly it is not going to look so great.

Desley: So what about on your shoulder or some thing like that?

Participant: Yeah like on the back of your shoulder that looks nice, on some girls, and that way if you decide you don't like it, you don't have to see it, other people have to. Me personally, I probably wouldn't get one there, I've got my one and I think I will stick with that one, I don't think I'll get any more. I got what I wanted. Like I honestly don't know what I would get if I got another tattoo and I wouldn't want it just for decoration.

Desley: So do you still like it?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: It hasn't been that long. Would you change it all?

Participant: Na, I love it.

Desley: Have you thought about getting rid of it?

Participant: Na.

Desley: What about the pain aspect?

Participant: I think I psyched myself out so much like expecting it to be so bad, that when I actually got it done, it wasn't as bad as I thought it was gonna be. Like my brother has a tattoo, and I have a lot of friends who have tattoos, except their tattoos are really big and they're just like oh it hurts like hell, I almost fainted from it, brace your self but I was in there, I was on the bench. I felt really calm because the guy was showing me all the needles, like they were all new, it's nothing dirty, like it's all safe, and I had my girl friends with me holding my hand, and because it is only little, it only took like 10 minutes and it was sort of like the same pain as getting a Brazilian wax. It was sort of like a "ooo" and then, it's not like a crying pain it is like a pinching sort of. It hurts for a second and then it just goes away. The outline when he was doing the outline, that hurt more than when he was actually colouring it in, because he used a different needle, like a thicker needle but I think, like my pain it was nothing like, I was like all tensed up, and like holding my breath, not consciously, I was just like waiting for it, but the guy went no, no breathe or you will hyperventilate, you need to breathe. I didn't know, it was fine and over in about 10-15 minutes. And I'm like the biggest girl when it comes to pain, like if I stub my toe I'll cry, but this was just, this wasn't

Desley: so would you say it was a plus or was it just something you had to deal with?

Participant: no pain is good pain, but it wouldn't stop me from going and getting another one if I wanted another one, like I wouldn't go, it was just incredible like and I wouldn't use it like as a deterrent. If other people would ask me what it is like to get a tattoo, I would say it hurts a little but you get over it, as it doesn't last.

Desley: You said it's a symbol, you said some kind of symbol.

Participant: It's the Kanji symbol, a type of Japanese script. So it's the Kanji symbol for faith.

Desley: So does Kanji mean anything to you or is it just.

Participant: No I just, I wanted something symbolic for me, like I didn't just want like a word I wanted like... I don't know why but I like, like some of my friends say that the whole getting Chinese symbols is like, as a tattoo, is like a phase that a lot of people are going through, which I suppose in one sense is kind of true coz there are a lot of people out there who have those tattoos, but for me when I saw it and like I knew what it meant, like there was never any other option that came into my head. Like I knew I wanted that, like I was tossing up between the symbol for faith and the symbol for trust, but I chose faith as that meant more to me than the symbol of NASA.

Desley: So why is faith important to you?

Participant: May be because of how I have been brought up. Like my mum's a minister and when my parents married they were both ministers but they got divorced so now it's just my mum. So I have been raised like I was born into the church, I've been raised in church, did the Sunday school thing, did like because I am from the salvation army, we have got like sunbeams and guides and it's like the salvation army's version of girl guides and so I did all that and then I started working on Sundays and I didn't go to church very often, and now I work in a bar, which is like completely against what the Salvation Army believes. So while there are a lot of people who know me who think that I have rebelled and I am now anti Christian and anti that, which is not true at all because I still have my faith and I still know what I believe and I still practise what I believe, I just don't do it by going to church because I have other engagements, like I need to work because I need to pay all the bills because I pay for everything. Like I've got a car, paper work and all sort of stuff. Working is a priority for me and not going to church doesn't stop, like doesn't hinder my Christianity or my faith at all, but I guess I wanted, like if other people thought I was going to stray or I was going to like lose my faith then I wanted, like I wear a cross but every one wears a cross, but like I wanted some thing that was going to be there for ever, to constantly remind me where I come from, what my beliefs are and then if ever I do get to a point where I'm going to do some thing dumb, and that I am going to stray from my beliefs and I start acting in a way that does contradict my faith then I will see it and I will wake up, Laura, like that is stupid, you know better than that, your mum will be really, really disappointed.

Desley: So you said it was about a year since you got it?

Participant: Yes, I got it in November but I was supposed to get it the November before, but my girlfriend decided to put herself in a hospital so that plan got put on hold.

Desley: So did she get one at the same time?

Participant: No, she got her belly button pierced. She wouldn't be able to handle a tattoo. Like and her parents are even more strict than my mum is. Her dad's Greek so he'd kill her.

Desley: So how long did you think about it the first time before it got cancelled?

Participant: Ages. I am one of these people who, you know parents would hate me because always like my mum would tell me not to do some thing and then because she told me not to do something I would always want to go and do it. So she was always like you can't get your belly button pierced, don't blah blah blah and like the day I turned 18, and I could legally do it myself I did it, and I have no regrets. Then when my brother got a tattoo, and we started talking about like tattoos in my family and my mum was like, no they look like trashy on girls, I don't like tattoos on girls and I was like no they don't. I think they look great, like I don't know what is wrong with my brain but something sort of clicked and went sort of like, alright she doesn't like them, so I'm going to be, you know, a rebellious teenager, and I'm going to go get one, but I was always like yeah I want to but it doesn't seem as if I can keep it forever. It's not like a belly button ring where you can just take it out once you are over it, but like that is why I didn't go and get it straight away. Like I was 18, I could have but I didn't because I was like no this is for life. I don't want some ugly scar on me like if I decided to get it removed, I will think about it and if I still want it, like I'll figure out what I want, and if I figure it out and I make a decision then I'll wait a while and if I still want it then I will get it. That was probably about year before I was going to get it the first time and then I was like yep I will go and get it. But then we ended up in the hospital and I was then like all right may be this is God telling me I shouldn't get it, so that's why I waited another year, because my girlfriend really wanted to be with me.

Desley: It also says in the bible, you know, if you needed like any extra...

Participant: yeah, well, um, that's true... that's another reason my mum will never find out.

Desley: it just seems funny coz you talk about trying to be rebellious but then there is still this sense that you also don't want to disappoint her.

Participant: I know which is why I don't tell her.

Desley: So it's like your own private rebellion.

Participant: I don't know its really weird like I am messed up in the head or some thing because every one who knows me sees me like a good Christian girl, which is a good label to have, when you are a teenager you don't want to be seen as like the good girl all the time. It wasn't like really a rebellious thing like for me. I never saw it like being a bad thing, but I just know that my mum would interpret it that way. I know my mum wouldn't like, because it is just me and my mum, like I don't talk to my dad, so like my mum is really important to me, like I know that she does not like that fact that I work in a bar because she is a minister in the salvation army sort of like an anti alcohol, but for me even though I have been raised in the church like I have my own sort of beliefs. I don't think there is anything wrong with having a drink every now and again, like I am not a fan of going out and getting drunk every night, like I would no way condone that, but I just don't think there is anything wrong with having a glass of wine with dinner or stuff like that. So working in a bar is not a problem for me, getting my belly button pierced was not, a big thing for me, getting a tattoo was not like a bad thing for me. I just know that if my mum knew about it she would be really disappointed, and I'd rather my mum be really, really angry at me rather than be disappointed in me. So there's like something messed up in my head.

Desley: So do you consider that when you got the tattoo, it was linked to any particular event in your life?

Participant: No, I wouldn't say an event.

Desley: Do you think that there was something else that you could have done rather than get a tattoo?

Participant: Gone back to church. I don't know because for me, it was, like I wanted something that, I wanted the symbol that always reminded me where I came from and what I had been taught, so like I wear a cross and that and like that reminds me but it's... like a tattoo it's sort

of... like, I don't know, it's like I notice it more and like it hits me more. I didn't even buy my cross, some one bought it for me, but the fact that like it's my tattoo, I picked it, I chose it, it was my decision, it's there for me, like it was there because of reasons that I stated, like that I wanted, like it's always there to remind me of something, like I don't think anything else could remind me so much and have that sort of impact on me, as my tattoo does. Sounds really dumb, when you verbalise it.

Desley: No, it's just something, sometimes maybe what we call a preverbal thing, that you can't actually put into words.

Participant: Yeah because it makes sense in my head.

Desley: So you don't think, like you're saying that it's there to remind you of your faith and where you've come from, you don't think that your mother would appreciate that side of it?

Participant: I think she would prefer if more than if like, you know I got Devil horns, or a butterfly or something insignificant, but my mum is a very old-fashioned woman, she has been brought up in a completely different era, no one even really like had tattoos back then, and who ever did have them. It was thought of very, very bad, so I don't think she'd get over that, or it would take her a while to get over that, she still doesn't like the fact that my brother has tattoos and my brother comes home with a new tattoo every week, and I think when, coz my brother has the symbols as well, we messed with her head a little bit and told her that his meant a large fried rice, when he first got it, we told her that we got the symbol off our local Chinese menu, and she wanted to kill us, like she dragged him down to her work, coz she works with like this Asian lady and made her read it to make sure that it was actually the proper symbol for respect and honour, but I think she is just very old fashioned in her ways of thinking, her beliefs, like, I don't think she'd understand why I got it. There are other people in my family who understand it, but I don't think my mum'd get it.

Desley: So you went with your girlfriend. Was it your idea or her idea?

Participant: It was my idea.

Desley: So what kind of reaction have you had to it, or people who see it?

Participant: Most people don't see it. Like if it comes up in a conversation, I would never deny it to people, yeah I have got a tattoo, but mostly people don't see it, like I'm not one of those girls who runs around in really low cut jeans or anything like that, like it's not something that, like coz I didn't get it for other people, I got it for me, but I told like my close friends, like the girls that run holidays with me, they know, and I have told like I've got some guy friends that I am really close to, but most people I tell are really shocked. They all say that they have this image of me being like the good church girl, and then to find out that the good church girl has a tattoo. They never expect it but no one's really said like that was stupid, you shouldn't have got it, you going to regret it in later life. Most of them have their own tattoos, and I figure that if I do regret it then it is my decision to regret. You know you learn from experience and if I do end up hating it then there is always the option of getting it removed but I don't think I'd ever do that.

Desley: So you haven't had any really negative things happen.

Participant: No.

Desley: You say lots of your friends have tattoos and you brother. Any one else that you can think of?

Participant: my cousins, a lot of my close friends, not my cousins basically but the only family member other than my brother who has got, but the people I work with, and like a lot of people and when it does come up in a conversation that I have got a tattoo, they go oh I know some one who has a tattoo, so it seems like a lot of people.

Desley: Did you ever worry so much about your mum's reaction that you thought you shouldn't do it?

Participant: No, while I love my mum dearly, I have never let anyone, not just my mum, anyone sort of stop me from doing something that I really want to do, I am a very stubborn person but also I've been very independent from when I was like 16, when my parents got divorced so I have always made my own decisions, done my own things, like even though my mum doesn't always agree with my choices, I sort of have a no regrets policy. Even if I do some thing that my mum doesn't agree with, I'll be like if it blows up in my face and it turns out my mum's right,

then I have no-one to blame but myself and I figure like every thing you do in life, you always learn from your experiences, specially the ones that don't exactly go quite according to plan, but if someone was to tell me not to do some thing and then that something could've turn out to be a really great thing then I would always regret not following my instinct, not doing it. Like I figure if it messes up I've got no-one to blame but myself so I can't really get too upset, like you say just deal with it and move on and learn not to do it again.

Desley: So for you what would be the opposite for your tattoo?

Participant: opposite of my tattoo. I don't really understand the question.

Desley: some people take it to mean the opposite picture, some people take it to mean not having it, some take it to mean having it taken off, and some people talk about the opposite feeling to the feeling they have with it, so it's whichever or if you can think of another interpretation, it's up to you

Participant: opposite of my tattoo... um... would probably be like not having a faith, just completely turning away from all that that I've been taught and brought up to believe, which would be like a completely different lifestyle for me and one that I would never ever want to go, like I'd never want to go there. But, yeah, probably that, just not having faith, like not knowing where I was going after this world, not really caring, like not worrying about any thing, like the only person, like I always say that I live my own life, make my own decisions, but at the same time, like I think you know how they have got those bands, the what would Jesus do bands, that's like always in the back of my head, like my mum might be disappointed but God understands where I'm coming from, and I think that if I didn't have that nagging thought in the back of my head, then I could do some really dumb stuff, like I know that I would never go down that path.

Desley: So does the fact that you have a tattoo mean that you identify with any particular group of people?

Participant: No...

Desley: like do you see people with tattoos and go...

Participant: no, it's nothing like that. It's just like I got it for me, so how other people interpret or if other people like it or not, that really doesn't concern me so long as I like it and am happy with it, I don't really care. Just because I got it and it means faith, like that doesn't make me connect with Christians any more. It doesn't mean I am not going to hang around with my non-Christian friends or people from work at the bar, just because I have this tattoo, it is just there to remind me like where I come, yeah, like what I believe in. I don't think that Christians should only hang out with other Christians, because how are the non-Christians going to find out about God and stuff, so no it doesn't connect me with one particular group I am just me, I blend with everyone.

Desley: So what about say in the future, your future husband doesn't like it then what are you going to do?

Participant: I would go tough luck. I had it before him and I will have it after him, if he can't respect why I got it then its not as if it is on his body, it's on my body. Yeah he's gotta to look at it, but it's not as if he is going to look at it 24-7. If he can't understand why I got it, like the reasoning behind it, and how important it is, like the meaning of it, for me then maybe I shouldn't be married to him.

Desley: So is there anything else that you can think of about your tattoo?

Participant: To be honest I have never really thought this much about my tattoo, like I saw the study on the thing and I thought it was really, really interesting, No that's basically it.

Desley: What do you think about other people who have tattoos?

Participant: Good on em. I think some people, I have met a lot of people who have regretted getting a tattoo, like I know a guy who has a tattoo of Tweety Bird on his arm that he got in a drunken night with his friends once and I know he regrets that but I think it's really cute. If people want to do something, if they want to get a symbol or a picture for themselves then they should go for it, and if they regret it that's their problem. I don't like to judge people, I think they did it for their reasons, even if we can't understand their reasoning behind it. I know someone who has a tattoo of a ballerina. And I thought, like when I found out she had that, in

my head I was thinking that's really dumb tattoo to get, like what possible meaning could a ballerina have, but it turned out that when she was little she was a ballerina and her dad would take her to her ballet lessons, she was like her daddy's little princess and then her dad died and she got it to remind herself of her father and that and I was like oh that makes sense, now its not so dumb. Everyone is judgemental. You see clothes that people wear and you go you shouldn't be wearing that and you see tattoos that people have and you think that looks bad but if the individual likes it then it is not up to us to judge, it's not our decision.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	2	4	3	Depressed
Patient	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	3	3	4	3	2	Frantic
Caring	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	4	1	Selfish
Kind	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	Angry
Sense of humour	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	3	Cold
Sociable	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	1	2	4	Lonely
Friendly	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	Mean
Active	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	4	1	3	5	4	Complacent
Confident	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	5	2	2	1	5	Unsure
Organised	2	1	2	1	2	3	2	5	1	4	4	2	Disorganised
Hard working	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	3	1	3	5	4	Lazy
Honest	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	2	4	2	Low self-esteem



6.2 RDT subgroup Remembrance

Participant TR52
Female, 33 years old

Interview date: 24/4/2006

Participant: Just talk about my tattoos, why I got them done? I always wanted them from about the age of I think about 13. I can remember telling mum and dad I'm getting tattoos when I'm older. And my dad was always like no, no you can't get them. I think for me it's an expression of art. It's also, you can get them, you find things that mean something to you. Why did I get my first one? I think cause I was away from home, so my dad wasn't there to stop me. And I really, I looked and I looked and I ended up just choosing anything so I got one that I really don't like anymore. It's a Tasmanian Devil but I think cause I was in England and it was a reference to home and stuff like that. Um, yeah, other than that, for me, I've just always loved them. I think, umm, I don't like sleeves, but I love individual tattoos. I've seen half sleeves, if the work is good, I just I love it. I suppose, that's what it mainly is for me, its just a form of art, an expression, it's a way for people I suppose to show what's in them, but yeah, when I think of Isaac's I don't think that's an expression of what's inside him. Yeah, it's mainly that. Mainly expressions. I think beauty as well. Even when they're ugly, that the work that goes into them.

Desley: So what do you mean by ugly?

Participant: Well, like Isaac's ones. They're demons, on his arms, and I know, it took me a while, at first I thought oh, they're good, but then when you really look at them you go- they're revolting, but he loves sort of, he's into heavy metal and he's into that sort of thing and he gets a guy that draws them and so this man- he sits there and draws these- it makes me think, what's going on in your mind to draw that? So that's what I mean, even though they're ugly there's also, there's something behind them because it's an expression of someone else. Whether it's their drawing, their wants and desires, or you know what I mean, that's what I see them as mainly, it's just like art. Yeah.

Desley: So how old were you when you had the first one?

Participant: 20... yeah. Got it for my, just after my 20th birthday.

Desley: So was it about your birthday, was it about being overseas...?

Participant: I think it was I always wanted one. I always, always wanted one. And it was because I was away from home. And I just thought, I think my boyfriend at the time had them too, and I just knew I always wanted one and I thought if I don't do it now, I'll never do it. So I think that the first one was a bit rushed. I wish, in retrospect, I wish now I had've thought a bit more cause I know I would have got something different. But yeah, it was probably because I was away.

Desley: So you got it to represent home, or just?

Participant: No, it was because I'd always wanted one and they were cheaper over there. I think that's probably why, I was in a position that I could afford to get it done. Cause I know when I was in Australia they were always very expensive. They seemed unobtainable. And when I was saving to come overseas I never would have been able to afford it. So, when I got over there it was a little, it seemed cheaper. So that's probably the main reason, was it's cheaper but also because I was away and it was something to do. I think I did a lot of things because I was away and it was something to do.

Desley: So whereabouts is that one?

Participant: Here, on my shoulder.

Desley: On your shoulder? And why did you put it on your shoulder?

Participant: I suppose because if I wanted to I could hide it and if I wanted to show it I could. Yeah, also I think that's just the first place I thought of getting one. I never thought of getting one on my bum or anything like that, it was, yeah, just on my shoulder cause I think I could hide it if I needed to. And I think cause I liked my shoulders.

Desley: That would help.

Participant: Yeah

Desley: So do you have other ones?

Participant: Yeah, two. I got that one and one other, and the other one's on my other arm. And that's a Celtic design.

Desley: how long after the first one

Participant: I think it was a year or 18 months to 2 years after the first one.

Desley: So were you still overseas?

Participant: Yeah I was still overseas and we had this man come. It was a friend of, a friend of a friend like, he was coming from Wales to do these tattoos and I'd heard a lot about him. And when I saw his work I just decided yep, I have to get one cause his colours were vibrant and amazing and when I looked through his books I found one that I really wanted. I think there was probably half a dozen of us that got it done by this one guy. So my boyfriend at the time got one and I got one, so yeah. As I say, it was his colours. By that stage I was going through my Celtic, I loved everything to do with like the Celtic circles, you know. If I'd ever got married it would have been a Celtic wedding ring. That's why I got the Celtic one. To me it was like eternal, like an eternity thing. I think I probably got it done then because this guy was coming and I'd heard a lot about him and I wanted another one cause I can remember my boyfriend at the time saying don't get another one you don't need another one, you'll end up like covered in them or something. I really wanted one. Even though it was only my second one because he knew I liked them so much that I might keep going. But yeah..

Desley: And you didn't keep going...

Participant: I still want them, I just- monetary. I can't afford to have them done. Every time I think I'll go and get one done something comes up and I don't do it. I was getting this covered, I was getting the first one covered about 12 months ago and then something came up and we didn't do it. Isaac and I were actually going to get one together. I just still haven't done it. I know I really do want to. I want to get two more. One covered and just another one. It's just yeah. I think it's now finding the money, as well as, I don't know whether I'm putting it off though. I don't know. I don't think I am. It's mainly that I've got the money but I don't have the time or...

Desley: Have you picked the design?

Participant: virtually... we've met someone that, his drawings are beautiful and he's done some of his sister's tattoos. I know I want a turtle because my little boy, it was one of his first words. And I just love turtles, yeah. I've seen them like done in sort of an Aztec-y way. And they're just, they're really good and then you can add colours. I've sort of gone through a sort of tribal-y type thing of liking just the plain designs, so I don't know. I know it will probably be a turtle. And I'm going to try to put his initials in it maybe. I was even looking at getting the two boy's names in Arabic cause I love Arabic writing, but I think their initials, at first I was looking at it but it was "JI" and I thought oh I can't have that on me, because of the references to overseas, but I don't know. I'm still thinking. I know definitely a turtle and maybe writing with the other one. But it won't be, I wouldn't actually write, yeah, I think I'd probably just put their initials rather than...

Desley: Their name?

Participant: Yeah... Still thinking on that one. I just know I never would have written a word or anything on myself, or someone's name. Jacob's I would, my little boy's, but I'd probably put his initials, that's what I've been thinking, put his initials and maybe his date of birth somewhere on me but I don't know.

Desley: So the turtle would go over the devil?

Participant: Yeah, yeah. That's what I'm hoping. That's what I have to find out. Like I have to find someone that could design it and then look at colours and stuff that would really cover it. I think it's faded a lot though. I must admit I don't look at it very often any more but when other people see it now they go- what is it? It doesn't even look like what it's meant to now.

Desley: That's not good... So is there a place you think you wouldn't put a tattoo?

Participant: Probably on my belly cause of having a baby. It's so soft and it just... I don't know, it wouldn't feel right I don't think. Yeah, probably just on my belly. I wouldn't on my boobs either. Because I had a tattooist once tell me that they just look like holes if you get things tattooed and if you're showing it. It all depends on what they are but they can look like a hole or

a mole or something like that so I just never, I wouldn't on my boobs and I wouldn't on my belly I don't think.

Desley: What about your face?

Participant: No, no I wouldn't on my face either. I considered getting one on the back of my neck. But even that now I don't know cause now I think as I'm getting older, I think probably I'd go for places that I can hide. Also because you start thinking about... people are always saying to me, what if you have to go to a really nice dinner and dress up. But these days they're more sort of, so many people have tattoos don't they, that it's not like the big issue it was, maybe even when I got my first one. Cause I mean that was what 13 years ago, 14 years ago. They were just becoming I think more popular then. So, yeah... coz I mean I've got a friend who got one recently and I think for her, basically it's because everyone's got one. It's like she even copied one that like Sara O'Hare has. You know, a model. So she got a tattoo that a model has. And I was thinking, oh did you get it for the right, you know, for the right reasons. I think, yeah. Sort of, I think everyone has different reasons for getting them. So. Yeah.

Desley: So umm, with the two that you've got, did you think about them for a long time before you actually went and got them?

Participant: as I say I'd always wanted one. The Tasmanian Devil, I think I ended up getting him cause I really, like I said, I really wanted to get one. And I just loved the Tasmanian Devil at the time, I mean I even had like little key rings and all that, all that sort of thing. And I do think that it had something to do with being away from home, the Tasmanian Devil, looking at it, at the reasons now. But the other one, I just loved Celtic things. I mean I had dresses with all Celtic designs on them. I was going through a stage of wearing a lot of black and you know what I mean. I think it was just, at the time... coz I picked the Tasmanian Devil I think a couple of weeks before. And the Celtic one, I knew I wanted a Celtic one, but I picked one of his designs. Yeah,

Desley: That was pretty soon?

Participant: oh, I'd wanted one for a while though but, yeah looking at his would have probably been an hour or something before. Yeah, yeah. I can't remember if he sent the books earlier. I don't think he did. I think we just basically went there and looked at his works and got it done.

Desley: So do you consider that either of them were linked to any particular events in your life?

Participant: No, I, no... cause I did other things, events, yeah. Piercings. I think they could in a way, cause I know whenever I rang my dad he'd say what have you done now? You've had something pierced, have you had something tattooed? Maybe it's cause I was away from home.

Desley: But it wasn't to commemorate something?

Participant: No, this one, no, the first one I got it for my birthday cause but it was coz I'd wanted one for a long time. So it was a birthday present to myself, the first one. Cause I think I got it done the week before my birthday. Was it, it was around my birthday anyway. Yeah, that was probably a birthday present to myself, but as I said, it was cause I'd wanted one for so long, so I got that one done, and the other one, no, no reason other than there was a good tattooist and I wanted another tattoo, yeah.

Desley: So when you think about the devil, do you think that's my 20th birthday present or...?

Participant: I think of it now as a tattoo- when can I get it covered? I don't put it to the time that it happened. I mean, they are what I did when I was in England. Both of them. When I think of having the tattoos I think about what I was doing at the time. Cause I know, when I got this one done, it was around the time that I was going to, I was, I had been with my boyfriend for a while and a friend came with me and had it done and yeah, so I can remember what I was doing at the time and I can remember what I was doing when I had this one done cause I was nannying and I had to sort of cover it up and the ink came out and stained the sheets and things like that. So I can remember things like that but I don't think there ever was a thinking, it's my birthday, I have to have the tattoo done. It was oh, it's my birthday, I might as well get that tattoo done with be the first one. With the second one I'd say it was just because this guy was coming and I knew I wanted another tattoo.

Desley: So do you still like the Celtic one.

Participant: Yeah, I love it.

Desley: so you wouldn't change it or cover it up?

Participant: If anything I might even look at, if I did anything it would be just touching the colours up. No... see that's just me now. I don't even really notice it anymore, it's just there. Yeah, the Tasmanian Devil, I don't even think about it anymore. It's just when people go- what is that? Oh that's right, I've got that there. I think cause I've had them for quite a while.

Desley: But if you had your choice you'd cover up?

Participant: I would cover the Tazzie. Only because it's just not very good work. Yeah, it's just something. I wish I'd thought a lot more. Yeah, I really wish that I had really planned something. Cause I know even for a long time I wanted to even design something myself or I knew that I liked the Celtic and the tribal ones. But this was just a, ooh I'm getting it done, I'm going to choose that one, yeah.

Desley: So what about the pain aspect of it? Was that like a plus or a minus or just?

Participant: I can remember it hurt. I can remember it really hurt. This one, he took 15, 20 minutes and I can remember thinking ooh that hurts a little bit and this one took about 35 minutes. They weren't too bad. I can remember it hurting, but not too bad. I was with my boyfriend though when he had his done, he had it down his spine and he was basically crying, yeah, so it is pretty painful, yeah.

Desley: But is it like a bonus that it's painful or does it detract from it or...

Participant: No, it's just something that goes with it. Yeah, just something that goes with it. You know that there's, for me, I know I want a tattoo done it's going to hurt a little bit. But it's neither a bonus nor a detraction, no, neither.

Desley: You said that you went with your friend to get the first one?

Participant: Yep

Desley: So did they get one as well?

Participant: No she didn't, she just came with me. Yeah.

Desley: So for moral support or something. And when you got the Celtic one there was a group of you?

Participant: I'm just trying to think if my boyfriend was actually in the room. But we were at a friend's house so there were people around, but I think it was only me and the tattooist in the room at the time. Although they probably were popping in every so often to have a look. I can't remember totally but it was in my friend's front room so I should think there were people popping in and stuff.

Desley: having a sticky-beak

Participant: yeah

Desley: So do you consider there's any link between the two tattoos or are they just separate?

Participant: Just the England. Just being away from home. Just doing something because I could, yeah.

Desley: So what is it, if you can say, that's important to you about the Celtic thing?

Participant: I just love the design, firstly, but then also I see it, the Celtic designs don't have an ending. They don't have a beginning or an ending. So that's why I say like eternity to me. I've never actually looked into the one that I've got, as in what it is. When people ask me I say eternity. I think that that is basically, a lot of them are, the Celtic knots and that, because there's no beginning and no end. But yeah, I basically, I love the look of them. It's very much a visual thing, yeah.

Desley: And can you explain what it is?

Participant: It probably has a tie to it being Irish as well. I didn't get to Ireland but I've always loved the idea of Ireland. The Irish accent is one of my favourites. Most women melt when they hear the Irish accent. So I think it's probably got that tie to the England, well to the Celtic so that the Scottish and the Irish. But other than that it was purely and simply, I remember seeing them and just loving it straight away. And then it was like a bonus that it was either Scottish or Irish. And yeah, like I had rings, I had necklaces. Everything was Celtic for probably about 5 years. I was just really Celtic, yeah. Birthday presents from mum and sisters was either, might even just be a pad that had a Celtic cross on it or things like that. Also, the ankh, I had an ankh that had a Celtic circle in the middle and yeah, just, I think it's just beautiful work. I think it was the jewellery first that pulled me in. But then I even had books and stuff as well, yeah, and just the history of it, the umm, and aesthetics of course.

Desley: So, you mentioned that you had piercings and stuff as well. Was there something else you could have done rather than had a tattoo for the two that you had?

Participant: No I probably wouldn't have, cause it was right at the time. Like I said, with the first one it was just that I always wanted one, I was away from home so mum and dad couldn't stop me, I was young, I suppose and you're up for anything, you want to try anything...
um...anything else, no, because I was away from home I suppose the next big thing would have been, yeah to do something that was visual I suppose. Because I was away from home, I was living alone, I was you know- doing my own thing, having to look after myself. Yeah. I suppose I could have bought a new pair of shoes or something. But no, no I just know I wanted a tattoo and as I say I'd wanted one for a long, long time.

Desley: So what would be the opposite of your tattoos?

Participant: The opposite? I don't know what you mean. As in feelings for them, or, yeah, ok.

Desley: However you want to put it.

Participant: I suppose, my piercings, like when I, cause I actually got my lip pierced and that was sort of like a, I finished a job, it was a retaliation as well because I had, that, that boyfriend before was now my ex and he turned up to see me and I told him oh, I want to get my eyebrow

pierced and he had his pierced so it was almost as if when I got that done it was a reaction, whereas I really wanted the tattoos. They were something that I really wanted, and you know, looked forward to getting, and whereas the tattoo- the piercing, was like a, a reaction. It was a hard job that I had been doing. I was working long hours, umm, working on umm, markets in Blackpool and it was almost like it was a in your face thing. I wanted people to go oh, what have you done sort of thing. I don't know.

Desley: Literally.

Participant: Yeah, and they did. I used to get lots of comments about it, cause when I got it done

Desley: are you talking about the piercing?

Participant: yeah, yeah. it was a new thing. Not many other people had it. I went down to a place called Bristol in England. And I was the only person. I think I saw one other person with a piercing the whole time. I mean I was only there for 6 weeks but it just, they weren't done, so people used to stare at me and go, oh what's that thing in your face? So it's almost as if it was a, a retaliation at the time, whereas when I think of my tattoos they're things, they're artwork. They're beauty. Piercings now I see as, I like them, but I know that I got mine, yeah, like on a rebound I 'spose. yeah, whereas the tattoos are things that I really wanted. I did want the piercing, but I got it somewhere that wouldn't have. I suppose that's like the opposite. It's hard to sort of think of it that way.

Desley: What do you think they mean to other people that see them?

Participant: Oh, different things to everyone. I know when I came home with the one on my shoulder, my parents had heard about it and I can remember them both going, oh, oh that's not too bad. You know, cause I think they were expecting some monstrosity. But when they saw it was only a little one, and they thought, well that's quite cool. Yeah, I think it's a lot to do with people's ages. I know that old people go to me, oh why have you done that to yourself? Older people, that sort of, even older than my parent's generation. Whereas young people are like, oh you got tattoos, how cool, you know. People ask if it hurts or why did you do it, yeah, what will you do when you're older? So I think, it's a very personal thing and I think everyone reacts differently. Some people don't even see them and I think these days, because they are, it's a

fashion, like it's an accessory at the moment, isn't it really? People are, it's become something that you know, all the cool people have in a way. So now it's just, I think a lot of people don't even see them anymore. I do, I must admit, I still go up to people and go oh, I love your tattoo, where'd you get it done, the colours are amazing, what does it mean, or...? Cause I love them, I see them as an expression, as art. But yeah, I think there just isn't the, I suppose stigma around it now, so, when you do get comments it's sort of few and far between now and people don't really comment that much. I used to get a lot on my Celtic one because the colours and that I suppose was quite good when I first had it done. They were for about sort of 8 years, I think only now they're sort of fading a bit and that. But umm, yeah. On the whole, you get your good comments and your bad.

Desley: So have you had any really negative things happen because of the tattoos?

Participant: People have said to me, oh I never would have expected you to have tattoos and I could see that I've gone down in their esteem because I've got 'em. But, not overly, even my dad, I think my dad just got over it, he was just like oh ok, so you've done something else to your body. But other ...no, only, as I say, I think I've had a couple of people, I mean, even jobs I went for I covered them up at first and umm, yeah. They are, sometimes they can, people can look on you differently cause you've got them. But once again I think it's a bit different now than it was you know, ten years ago.

Desley: Yeah, a bit more accepted these days, aren't they? Did you ever worry about what your parents would think enough to consider not getting them?

Participant: I must admit when I first, I remember my dad saying he would disown me when I was younger. "I'll disown you". So it took me a long time to tell him. I think it probably even came about that my younger sister knew and she'd giggled when he said something because that's how he normally found out everything about me. I don't, like I say, when he first saw it he sort of was like, oh it's not that bad actually and my mum did the same thing. So... I never would have not gotten them though because it's something I always wanted. I suppose I, I waited til I was away from them to do it, so it might have taken me longer to do it if I'd stayed at home, yeah.

Desley: So who do you know that has a tattoo?

Participant: Who do I know? Oh, as I say, these days most people do, so umm... yeah, like most, oh let me think... Like my boyfriend does, a couple of my good friends do, but then again there's lots of people that don't as well so... Cause I know my friend that recently had one done, her mum hates them and she just can't believe that her daughter did it cause she went and got two at once, and her son's now got them and she's just so against them. One of my sisters does. The other two just would never do it. Yeah... so it's probably a lot of people, actually I think most of the people I know are younger than me that have them done. Oh, my friends, I don't think, not my old school friends, like people that are my age now, none of them have them, not of my good friends, none of them do. So it's mainly people younger than me.

Desley: Do you feel like the fact that you have tattoos means that you identify with any particular group of people?

Participant: No, but I know that people would look at me and think that I would. I mean, I know that, like even the father of my child, he sees them as, you know, just can't believe that people do that to themselves. Has even told my little boy that they're disgusting things and that stupid people get them done. So I know he now looks at me as a lower person, especially because my boyfriend now has them and we know some bikies, so now I think he has now put me in this barrel of oh, bikie people. You know what I mean, so I think that some people do sort of see a tattoo and they will put you in a barrel. But these days I just, I think older people would, of a certain age group. I think, sort of you look at maybe your 50s and over, they might categorize you, there would still be younger people, but older people will categorize you, and I think umm, like I say, it's just because so many more people have them now. I suppose you're either seen as a fashion conscious person or as I say, by older groups, it would be oh you must have been a bit of a wayward for a while, or you know what I mean, you must have gone off the tracks. Yeah, I think that some people do still see it as a deviant thing, definitely, yeah.

Desley: Unfortunately, yeah. So, I think I asked you what you think about other people with tattoos?

Participant: Like I say, I see them as works of art. Sometimes I do look at people and go why did you do that? Like with me on the face, I, I think it's umm, a lot of the time people do it to shock or there's something in them that they're trying to get out, so it's like a way of showing

something. On the whole I love them, even when I see sleeves and that, you can see something beautiful in it. So I, basically I love them. I must admit sometimes I do go- why did you do that, to certain tattoos. Like some of them I don't get but on the whole I just see them as art, so, yeah.

Desley: So is there anything else you can think of about your tattoos?

Participant: About my tattoos? No, like I say, I really want to get some more. I'd love to. But then again, it might be now that I'm starting to think, oh you know, you'll be in the work force soon, maybe it's time to stop and stuff like that, so I don't know whether I actually will. I love them, they're part of me. Although with the Tasmanian Devil one, it's because it doesn't look like anything anymore, that's why I want to change it. So it's like I want to revitalise it I suppose, but it, I want to change it so it's something more to me. But umm, as I say, yeah, I just see my tattoos and any future tattoos that I have, and I see it on all other people as a personal thing. It's an expression, it's yeah, just artwork, and I love them, so yeah.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	3	1	2	1	4	4	4	4	3	5	2	3	Sad
Patient	4	2	2	1	4	4	4	5	2	5	4	4	Crazy
Caring	4	2	2	2	3	4	3	4	1	5	5	4	Hateful
Kind	3	2	2	2	4	4	3	3	2	4	4	2	Uncaring
Sense of humour	3	2	2	2	4	3	3	5	2	4	2	2	Boring
Sociable	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	4	1	4	1	3	Introverted
Friendly	4	2	2	2	4	4	3	4	2	3	3	2	Mean
Active	2	1	1	1	3	2	2	1	2	4	4	2	Couch potato
Confident	3	1	1	1	2	3	3	4	2	4	1	4	Quiet
Organised	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	3	2	4	5	2	Ruffled
Hard working	2	1	1	1	2	3	2	2	1	4	3	2	Lazy
Honest	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	4	4	5	Liar



7 RGT subgroup Remembrance

7.1 RDT subgroup Aesthetics

Participant RA7
Male, 29 years old

Interview date: 25/11/2005

Participant: Yeah ok I've got quite a few tattoos two major pieces, which is my sleeve for my arm and a full back job which we're still working on at the moment, I got my first tattoo I guess I was around 18-19 when I got my first tattoo I think, and I had a broken leg at the time or a broken foot and for the last 18 months I'd been looking for a design that suited me and then found one and that was my first little one on my leg and then I got a similar one on my shoulder, tribal, just cause that was the, what I felt like back then. The get something from the memories of a teenager sort of thing. The one on my ankle that's the very the first one

Desley: So I was wondering, the one on the leg is that the leg that was broken?

Participant: No this one was at the time, no this one was I broke this later on, um, then a little one on my shoulder that was symbolising the lads and surfing and where we were at, then I went up to, quit my job quit my career and started a new one, and that's where I've always wanted a tattoo on the back of my neck, so I got a tattoo there with a little base jumper inside, cause I was base jumping at the time, and loved that then I got one on my wrist here, that really got this design from my sister, one of my sister's necklaces she gave me, made a design out of that, the lady wasn't very good and I had no idea then so that was started up there with them and I wasn't very happy and when I moved back to Melbourne, um, got in touch with a friend of mine who knew a good tattooist and we became good friends and it sort of went from there, so he fixed up this one, then I wanted, I wanted, a dream of mine since I was probably since I was 3 years old was to have a full sleeve of a tattoo. Um, so but never wanted to do it until I realised where I was going in my life and wasn't sure but then by 24 I had worked out where I was at with my life, what I was going to do and what would affect me tattoo wise and what wouldn't. So, then I got, basically got a life's drawing on my arm, all my life's work so far, mostly in skydiving which has become my life and passion. I did that and I was pretty stoked, I got a little one on my lip as well but just that was a team of this, sky intense 7 years that's just a little thing in there to hide, just something stupid really. Um, and then I got some work on my feet then we started on the big piece on my back and that's still going for the last couple of years.

Desley: So is that in Wollongong?

Participant: That's in Melbourne, I fly down to Melbourne to get tattooed. Then fly home so yeah.

Desley: I hope you wait a little while, I hope you don't get straight on the plane.

Participant: I do pretty much, yeah same day yeah

Desley: Wow.

Participant: Get tattooed and see my family, Yeah but everything is uncomfortable to a certain extent so you get used to the pain. On those days you're in pain

Desley: I was speaking to a girl before she had her back done and said she had to drive like this home so she was like this with the pain.

Participant: You learn to just deal with it, you just harden up. Pretty much yeah, yeah.

Desley: It's not like it's going to smudge I guess hey.

Participant: No, no.

Desley: So, I'm not quite sure the best way to go about them, when you talk about the pictures that you've got, like the sleeve you said is your life, the other are the pictures important, the actual content of it?

Participant: The content of the tattoos for me is what they're all about. Yeah definitely.

Desley: So all of them.

Participant: Especially my, the two main pieces. The first one was my first tattoo so it's always going to be special. Which is the little foot one. It's just the design I really, I've just been in the

surf too sorry. A little design I've always wanted something pretty much that looked like this. So, got that.

Desley: so that was just for the look of it

Participant: The look of it and also, I've always been fascinated with tattoos even since I was a kid so I got one as soon as I could almost. yeah.

Desley: So why was it important to you.

Participant: Ah, just it was that period of my life, that I really wanted to, it was another way to symbolise it. It was a surfing, skating sort of period and with all my mates and out of school and running amok, yeah, so, and really and all I was being smart when I get my tattoos not so much now cause I don't care now where the placement was so, I could always put a sock over this if I had too and the one on my shoulder is covered up by a shirt. When I was searching for my direction in life, then I still kept it real, until I knew where I was going, once I worked out I was going nowhere then it was all cool.

Desley: Ok, So is there someplace you wouldn't put a tattoo?

Participant: Not really no, maybe my face I'd say if anything

Desley: Your neck?

Participant: I'd do my neck yeah, maybe not the front but I'm probably gonna do the sides. For me it's all about money, so and not money as in I can't afford tattoos but money as in if I'm gonna tattoo my face and my neck I'd want to have enough money so I don't have to look for a job again. Cause you'd never get one So yeah. that's the only thing that stops me, I don't really care about, I can deal with it, I think the most important thing with people who regret tattoos is not being able to deal with the consequences and the commitment of permanent colouring it right, you know

Desley: Some people don't think about it.

Participant: Yeah, then, I put a lot of, always put especially my big pieces I design it and then I wait a year and then I'll get it just to make sure.

Desley: Seems to be what people do that are sensible about it.

Participant: yeah

Desley: The last girl said a year as well

Participant: Yeah you always wait a year cause life can change so much in a year. So, pretty much, I wouldn't, I won't tattoo my face most likely, I probably most likely won't tattoo my neck, I most likely won't tattoo my chest either because it's just a lot of work and a lot of pain and that's years to come so.

Desley: When my daughter got her first, she just got a little one and there was a guy getting his chest and he was just crying, this big tough looking guy, I figure around your nipple would be pretty bad.

Participant: Yeah mostly round here is pretty bad, I mean everywhere but feet, my feet were the worst, they were the worst so far, so much sensitivity so many nerve endings and things like that, it was crazy.

Desley: I'd be too ticklish I think on my feet.

Participant: Yeah it's pretty full on actually

Desley: So do you mind if we just go one by one?

Participant: No worries

Desley: You said you think about them all for about a year, the first one you said was to reflect your time

Participant: To tie in the lot

Desley: Skating and stuff

Participant: And same with the second one, it's just a little tattoo, it's covered up now, not covered up so you can't see it but covered up just with another tattoo around it, so, and that was the same thing so...

Desley: So is it incorporated into the bigger one?

Participant: Yeah it is, same period as the first tattoos.

Desley: So was it like associated with some life changing event?

Participant: Um, that one was still the whole surfing with the lads, freedom sort of thing, running amok, sort of stages, young adult.

Desley: So it wasn't anything dramatic that happened?

Participant: No

Desley: Was just trying to remember that time?

Participant: No that was just about getting a couple of tattoos and that's what it was about at the time. That's the style, yeah so that's all those two were mainly, my neck was pretty much about wanting one on my neck and about change cause I quit my career as a carpenter and went permanent skydiver and was right into base jumping so got a little jumper in my neck there. Um, and this one was just originally was just about being bold pretty much and whacking one on my wrist to secure the fact I would never be a politician, or something like that

Desley: A step up.

Participant: Some sort of family meaning in there, then once we incorporated the full scene that's it became serious about putting content in there to make it so I would never regret it and I could always have it mean something.

Desley: So sort of steps through your life?

Participant: Yeah this one does, up the top here is the groups of our Australian 8 way team. The Cliffs of Norway where I live 3 months of the year and the jumper jumping into the sunset which is also a building, another building, that's a dragon which is the year I was born, year of the dragon, all the curves represent my surfing, that's a waterfall we jump up in North Queensland, it's a jumper in a sunset, um, that's a cave in Mexico we jump, a 300 way world record sky diving thing we did a few years ago, the ball of life, the crumbling of society how I see it, that's ah base jumpers tracking through visual tunnels which is what I enjoy doing with my flying and then the words til the end, which goes into a wave into my grave on top of a mountain.

Desley: Cool

Participant: And so that's that one. Yeah, so that had a lot of meaning, we worked it in two parts over three years, yeah, so.

Desley: Is it hard to design them in 3D?

Participant: Yeah well, I work, I tell him what I want my mate and we sit down and slowly go through it all together and he knows how to work my skin. It's not like drawing on paper you're drawing to follow the muscle contours sort of thing. So if you look at everything it's running down different lines. But yeah it just took awhile and stuff like that, and then the one on my, what did I get next? Then my feet which is just a saying that I live by you "go hard and live the dream", so that's what's I sort of live my whole life by.

Desley: Did you think to get it the other way up so you could read it?

Participant: Well I can read it, its, na, yeah I know what it says, so.... and I got it so I could just stand like that

Desley: Yeah

Participant: And it says the whole thing and then my back is um, based from a book called Jonathan Livingstone Seagull. Yep, Okay, which I take with me when I travel. And it's how I base my life on as well when listening to what society tells you to do, just by doing what you want and living your own dreams, so that way you're going to actually succeed 10 times more than what they make you succeed just by being yourself and um, I basically surfed out and there's basically a flyer he's hit, we call tracking, but he's tracked as good as he can on this earth so he's moving on to the next world now, to go through, and it's just um, actually got shown the guy metamorphasising from human to comet as he's leaving from this world into the next and I've got 2 angels down the bottom, one's my mum and my girlfriend, they both died within three months of each other. One is mum is cancer and my girlfriend is a skydiving accident so, they represent the people that are already in the next world. Um, and

Desley: So it's part of the back tatt?

Participant: It's gonna be, it's separate at the moment but we're gonna join it all up as well, yeah so that happened about midway through the tattoo, um, so that's incorporating all that in as well, so they're already sort of in that next world that I'll be adding to, should be, should have already happened but I keep staying alive for some reason, and um.

Desley: Always something else.

Participant: And that's pretty much it.

Desley: Cool. So would you change any of your tattoos?

Participant: No, not at all

Desley: So you wouldn't want to take any of them off?

Participant: No, definitely not, just this one is to get the team thing, that's coming off itself, yeah.

Desley: That's just the name is it?

Participant: The shovels, yeah, um, but yeah, na definitely no regrets at all. Sometimes I've thought not regrets but you think oh, that's pretty committed, but well, ah you know, in my industry that I'm in it's done nothing but good. It's actually been a bonus to have them so,

Desley: Yeah. why's that?

Participant: It's just people expect you to be looking weird, I've had a Mohawk for over ten years as well, people expect that look when they come skydiving or base jumping and so they get it basically and I've never compromised on what I think.

Desley: I guess if they went into a tattoo parlor and they didn't have any tats you'd be a bit.

Participant: Yeah yeah you know it happens, but it could be like that, but I just never compromise what I want to look like or what I want to be and I still get further than most people ever get with their lives and it shouldn't be a hindrance and it hasn't been so, yeah as long as you got, good stuff in here it doesn't, it shouldn't matter what your skin looks like you know.

Desley: It does for some people though.

Participant: It does and I just love it, cause they don't talk to me and that's perfect about 90% of the population won't talk to me and I love it cause they're all the wankers so I only get to hang out with all the cool people, which is perfect for me.

Desley: Sounds good. Would you have another tattoo?

Participant: Oh definitely, yeah, I'm working on it all the time, I go, my next sitting is at Christmas time so, once I've finished the back

Desley: So when the back's finished?

Participant: The back of it then we're going down my left leg um, to the evolution of life but in flight so instead of going from apes to humans, it's going from eagle to comet and human's going to be in the middle of it but it's all body flight and around that it's going to be heaps and heaps of butterflies and ladybirds and dragonflies to show the simplicity and complexity of

human flying sort of thing, but that's sort of like a five year plan. So I gotta wait on my back first, yeah.

Desley: So with this one was it more the picture or where you were going to put it that you thought of?

Participant: Ah its um, didn't want to put it on my arm, I've got my sleeve already I figured that the eagle would be better off on something wider. Um, so thought down my left leg.

Desley: So you thought of the Eagle before you thought of your leg is that what you're saying?

Participant: Yeah definitely, I thought of the concept before the body part, so if I do this arm it will be three flyers inter-twirling down my arm going through all sorts of different industrial tunnels and stuff. If i do that, but that's way, way down the track. But there's lot of pain involved as well, so you can't just go, it's not just like something you can go and do.

Desley: That's what always amazes me when people "oh go it did it hurt?" and you're like did you think about it properly.

Participant: Yeah anyone who says it didn't hurt are just lying. You know.

Desley: The girl that was just in here she said like when she had her first one she was in this really bad place in her life and she actually wasn't feeling anything. And cause he put it up here she actually giggled the whole way through it.

Participant It depends, sometimes I can fall asleep and sometimes I'm just in agony so, yeah it really depends on the nerves and your state of mind if I came home from work when I was a carpenter still I'd go in straight after work and I'd had the worst day over at work and it would hurt a lot because I was agitated, I wasn't calm, sometimes you can get right into a zone, generally most sittings it won't hurt at all at first like it does hurt but not like then you just keep going and then you sink into a zone and then you'll sort of snap out of the zone pretty quickly and then it just hurts straight after for the rest of the sitting.

Desley: Yeah, So does that last about the same time?

Participant I do, yeah, roughly, I won't do ever do more than 3 hours worth of work cause it just hurts too much

Desley: Did you hear about that guy in the UK I think it was about 2 years ago broke the world record of 26 hours or something

Participant: Yeah I couldn't

Desley: And they said after 21 he could have gone into toxic shock and they would have had to go nope sorry got to stop.

Participant: Yeah

Desley: But he didn't, lucky for him.

Participant: That's just crazy, I mean that's just a state, that's just crazy

Desley: Because I've been looking, started looking at body modification.

Participant: Ok yep.

Desley: There is a guy called Fakir Mustafa, he's into modern primitives and he does flesh hanging and all that sort of stuff.

Participant: Oh yep, I've got friends that do that

Desley: He pierced his own penis when he was 11.

Participant: Okay

Desley: While his mum was out somewhere, But he said he won't do it unless he gets in that zone. Like he just totally won't. Cause he's got, well his nipples are like that big now and then

he puts these big butcher hooks through here and hangs up on them and just wriggles till they rip out and he's done a corset so his waist is like...

Participant: Ah okay yeah

Desley: Pretty far out stuff

Participant: It's just into that zone and some people like being in there all the time and so good on em, I've got some friends that are pretty heavily into some full on stuff like that and that's just their thing. I like surfing mostly.

Desley: I'm scared of surfing so.

Participant: I've had my fair share of piercings over the years but they're just not practical for me because of my lifestyle as far as surfing, skating and skydiving, base jumping things, harnesses and stuff get in the way. I just can't pierce half the things I wanted to pierce so. So I just sort of got away from that and got into tattoos.

Desley: So do you consider the pain as a plus or minus or just something you have to put up with?

Participant: It's part of earning, earning a tattoo I think. I think everyone would have em, a lot more, even though everyone's sort of got em now, everyone would have a lot more if they were easier to get. You know so, so it think its you definitely gotta earn your tattoos, same as we use it in base jumping we have um, people that take the helicopters to the top of the big cliffs they haven't earned their jump, whereas we like to hike to earn your jump. And I think the pain is part of earning your tattoo as well.

Desley: Yeah that's a good way to look at it

Participant: Yeah so.

Desley: So would you consider your tattoos have like a theme over all?

Participant: Oh definitely, base jumping, skydiving, life, freedom.

Desley: Cause this is your life?

Participant: Yeah and freedom, true freedom, my life's been pretty free, most of it so, I think yeah, I try to express freedom all over my body and yeah sort of preach about it sort of to other people, because I live the life that everyone want to lead, so, yeah, um, you know, they say how do you do it, cause I chose to, so I think I express that in my tattoos as well. You always have choice you don't have to be stuck.

Desley: Yeah cause, a lot of people I think are scared

Participant: Yeah, that's totally, you've got to embrace that fear and move on and take it instead of a negative which society just punches you full of fear these days and the media it's all fear, fear, fear, you just have to break out of that and turn it into a positive and the world is your oyster sort of thing. I did that six years ago and never looked back. Now I'm only in the country for 5 months a year and just travel the world and now people have started to pay me to travel, so just now, it's just getting better and better. You know.

Desley: So they pay you to do jumps?

Participant: Yeah, yeah, we just got back from Beijing, China where they just jumped off the tower and paid us to go over there to do that and off to KL in a couple months to go jump off one their buildings and just come over from KL as well and Norway and everywhere. You still pay a lot yourself but you get looked after more and more and it's all just through deciding not to be apart of the system sort of thing.

Desley: So do you get famous for doing that?

Participant: Oh I yeah not so much in this country, but we're pretty well known overseas

Desley: So when you say we?

Participant: There is a group of around the world just the top 10 jumpers top 20 jumpers we sort of all run the circuit together, I'm well known for wild looks and my um, flying skills and my camera work, so that like gets you work around and then people do notice around the world, and stuff, but Australia's like the most anal country in the whole world, so that's really, so besides the surf, I don't really like it here.

Desley: Even more than England?

Participant: Ah my teammates have already said that oh yeah yeah, Australia is, Australia's is number 1 anal, so it sucks. Unless your a swimmer, footballer or cricketer, basketballer, then you're gods, then your accepted, but it's any other sport and stuff that's cutting edge like base jumping um, it's um they won't accept it, they won't even have a bar of it, you know. So that's why we go to Europe and Asia, cause they let us and they accept the risks and all that stuff.

Desley: Have you jumped off that tower in New Zealand, is it in Wellington or in Auckland?

Participant: No, no, too windy most of the time for that one.

Desley: Yeah because my husband had these people, a guy and his wife that jumped off it, they were going to try.

Participant: Glen and Heather Singleman

Desley: Yeah it is yeah and they came and talked to the people that work for him they were really impressed.

Participant: Yeah, Yeah. it's quite windy though.

Desley: she busted something didn't she, doing a bungee?

Participant: Yeah in a bungee, that was a few years ago now, they're doing another thing at the moment.

Desley: I've got his email there, I just, the last time I tried to get them at Picton.

Participant: Yep Yep

Desley: And then they didn't show up.

Participant: Ah ok, yeah they're nice people, I wouldn't really call them base jumpers but, they do base jump but I wouldn't call em, they're not hard core base jumpers at all, they just do very very safe sort of stuff and more so for their media, they really only base jump for their TV show. So, but good on em, I'm good friends with them, and they're very different to me, but, they're alive still and that's the main thing.

Desley: Could be a problem for some. So we'll get to the tricky question, so why did you choose a tattoo rather than do something else?

Participant: I do everything so this is just another thing

Desley: Okay

Participant: So, it's um, since I was a little kid I had all these dreams that I'd tick off in my life and this was one of them, so you know, I've recorded albums, I've made videos, I'm writing a book now, I've got my tattoo, I've travelled to all these places I wanted to see, done this done that. Tick tick tick tick tick.

Desley: So it's just one thing?

Participant: Yeah it's just another, na.

Desley: Is it special in some way?

Participant: Oh it's special, cause it's permanent cause it's gonna stay with me until the end yeah and no-one can take it away from me.

Desley: But then if you think about recording an album or writing a book that's fairly permanent too.

Participant: Yeah but it can get lost or stolen or misplaced, this

Desley: True, you hope you don't

Participant: Na, that's it

Desley: At a shopping centre or something.

Participant: Yeah

Desley: So do you think there is something you could have done that would have had the same effect as getting a tattoo?

Participant: Not really, no, it's its own individual, it's its own individual thing, so it's not anything else, you know, it is a tattoo

Desley: I guess if it was on your list then.

Participant: Yeah it is a tattoo and that's specific, so, a CD is not a book, you know, so, a tattoo's not a painting, it's a tattoo, so that's what I wanted yeah, and it's part of it for sure. And if, I, learnt to deal with that, if you can deal with it then it's not an issue. So, yep.

Desley: So do you consider yourself to be a person with a tattoo or a tattooed person?

Participant: Oh that's a good one, um, I don't know, I wouldn't consider any one of those, I don't even think about that, yeah, it's like I've had a Mohawk for 10 years but I don't really notice that I had one until I look into the mirror

Desley: So you forget they're there almost?

Participant: Yeah I mean they're obviously in my face everyday but it's not it's a part of me, it's not like they're placed on.

Desley: Yeah someone said it's sort of like you know I've got whatever colour eyes so you don't.

Participant: You don't, yeah, yeah, I would, especially when, my Mohawk, I've had it for so long now but when it was always pink or blue or whatever and it's just like you'd be walking down the street and everyone would be pointing at you staring and you'd forget why and then you'd go, that's right I just dyed my hair pink. Or whatever so you don't even think about it, so I wouldn't say anything for that.

Desley: So it's sort of become part of....you?

Participant: It's me, straight up.

Desley: Because when I was reading stuff it felt like there was a distinction.

Participant: I've taken it to the next level, so I've taken it from getting a tattoo to having a hobby. So, it's almost, yeah, it's not, like going get tattooed or going to keep working on my life or lifestyle or...

Desley: So is it like your life story in a way?

Participant: It's, it's my, part of it, especially this one is my life's story, but life's dues my unions as well.

Desley: So it's not just this event and that event?

Participant: No no not at all, its mixed in, this ones my beliefs of success, but success is not rated on money and power, success is rated on inner being and feeling freedom, proper freedom, you know, so a lot of it just based around more philosophical I suppose. But I also living like this as well, in everyday especially when I'm in Norway with the big cliffs you know we're flying, we're free, 30, 40, 50 seconds we're in the air. Flying along you know, so I'm actually living the stuff I'm preaching as well, sort of thing, so it's like a, almost for me, I took a guy two days ago, who was a, I had a God hates you T-shirt, I hate religion, I hate it, and um, had a God hates you shirt on and this guy was a scripture teacher, for a primary school, so we're like I believe he had an open mind and I've got an open mind, I don't hate people, but, everyone has

beliefs, but I just think, I believe religion is for people who are too weak to believe in themselves sort of thing. But he had the same destinations and the same beliefs that I had we just went about them in completely opposite directions, you know, and he was open to mine and I was open to his and we got along really well you know, so, that's sort of what it all is you know.

Desley: That was good. I've got a tricky one for you now, what would be the opposite of your tattoo?

Participant: That's a good one. Opposite of a tattoo

Desley: So I don't know if you want to do them separate or what.

Participant: What would be the opposite,

Desley: Do you want me to explain why I'm thinking about that?

Participant: Yeah that's a good one.

Desley: The theoretical background that I've got the guy says that you can't understand something without understanding what it's not.

Participant: Okay, that's a good question.

Desley: So you can't understand hot unless you know what cold is. So how can we better understand your tattoo... you tell me what it isn't or what you would do, one guy said the other day he'd still have a tattoo but he'd have a different picture, but then some people said maybe having a fake tattoo because that's not permanent and a tattoo is. So there's different interpretations that you can put on.

Participant: what would my....opposite to my tattoo.

Desley: It's a very hard question.

Participant: Lets, can we come back to that one.

Desley: Yeah

Participant: That's got me stumped I wouldn't even know.....Actually, probably the opposite of having a tattoo would be to stuck in normal life. actually yeah, not having a tattoos would be a normal life to me, which means you're already dead. Cause we always get told, especially by the Australian media, um, they talk down to us about our risk taking and how we're just going to kill ourselves, blah blah blah, yeah, to everyone who works six days a week, 10 hours a day is already in prison basically , they might have a couch and a TV, but they're in prison, by the time they get to enjoy their lives, just because technically the only reason we should be living is to enjoy our lives that's too late for them. So my tattoos represent my freedom and my choice to go for it. I think the opposite to them would be being the living dead, pretty much, being stuck in a shitty job, with a shitty wife, with a shitty house, with a shitty dog, you know thinking you're getting somewhere and but then you work it out by the time your 75 that actually none of that meant anything, which is why I've got friends and grandparents, or like peoples grandparents or parents that love what I do because I started it at such a young age um, and I've worked it out early, I think I worked it out by 23, that life is just about fun, cause I've lost about 30-35 friends over the last five or six years too, through base jumping, skydiving, motor cycles and family through diseases and stuff, that it's like life is short and your partners and your friends could be gone within a second, you know. Even my Dad's caught onto that now and now instead of striving to have a house and a home and stuff he's gone and he's just running amok, so, obviously no vandalising and no violence or anything like that, we keep it real but, um, yeah, go out and live I think not having tattoos to me would be yeah, like being societies prisoner, pretty much. And stuck in the grind and too scared to move and too scared to break out, so.

Desley: So I'll divert for a second but do you get scared like the first time you jumped were you scared?

Participant: Oh I was still scared today and yesterday. I was still scared, yeah, yeah, definitely

Desley: So is that part of doing it properly?

Participant: Yeah, base jumping, I mean sky diving is a little bit different, but I still get scared jumping, it's more an anticipational feeling, cause at the end of the day you can die. Um, and

I've watched friends die and watched my girlfriend die right in front of me, when she made a mistake, you know, it's like it's that easy, we lost another mate this year, lost 5 last year and just by human error and stuff, so, it keeps you scared and I think if you're not scared don't do it, take another sport.

Desley: So, if you weren't scared you might take a risk that...

Participant: No you wouldn't be able to, you wouldn't be able to understand where the level of danger is, to pleasure, so if you're stepping over that level of safe danger then you're gonna get hurt or killed, so you really need the fear to keep respect for the sport. Because at the end of the day the earth is never gonna move ever. So, And I've been lucky in the nine years I've been jumping and that's over 6000 jumps in both sports, I haven't broken a bone yet so, broken heaps of bones drinking. So you definitely need the feeling.

Desley: Definitely more dangerous

Participant: So you know yeah I'm scared and I always will be scared hopefully, If I'm not scared I take a break for awhile. If I start to feel that it's just like another day in the office then I'll just have a break which I'm doing now and just go surfing and that scares me so.

Desley: Yeah it scares me, I have a fear of water so.

Participant: Okay

Desley: So when you got your tattoos were you by yourself?

Participant: Yeah, every time, every single time, I try and do everything by myself pretty much so, I was into punk rock all the way through my teenage..., I still am, but I always went to the concerts by myself, um, try and go base jumping by myself as much as I can. Surf always pretty much by myself, I mean I do other stuff with other people also but I think if you go with a group of mates to get a tattoo you have to question your reasons, yeah so, and your reasons should only be in here and that's it that's the bottom line, But everything if you do anything for the wrong reason and it's like what's the point you know, your just fooling yourself at the end, in the end you might not fool yourself for 20 years but in the end your gonna be fooling yourself.

Desley: And you're likely to regret it...

Participant: For sure. Yeah. so.

Desley: Yeah, there was a guy in here on Monday and he's got a Rolling Stones, The mouth on his bum, he got at a Rolling Stones concert and he was by himself in a strange country, yeah so

Participant: Yep, I mean that's good, the random stuff like that is pretty cool too.

Desley: Cause he wears a suit and tie, he works at one of the offices up there he says that people just don't have a clue

Participant: Yeah yeah, I, I, people know because of my earrings and my hair but you can get away with it. If you're a professional and no-one would have an idea, you know and it's funny who judges you once they do find out, which is great again, it just sorts out the shit from the cool people. So I like it it's great.

Desley: Saves you a lot of time I guess.

Participant: Oh, definitely.

Desley: So what do you think it means to other people that see your tattoos?

Participant: Oh, to me, probably, it's changing more and more but in what people think that but definitely when I got the work done it means you're a criminal or drug addict and no hoper. And you can still see the, and you can still tell the people that are actually no hopers, drug addicts and criminals cause they've got the jail house tats and they're generally the smackey looking crew. I mean, most people, some people and it makes them look like a poser, you know, so people might have thought that but generally with my Mohawk and everything combined it's probably some sort of no hoper and I earn triple the money they do so, yeah, so and I only work 6 months a year so it's like, think what you want you know. But definitely I was judged for sure. Yeah a lot and I thought I do it, and again it just goes back to separating people that are fake and people that are true so. You go up to the biggest meanest bkie and probably 99 times out of 100 he's

gonna be a really cool guy. Don't fuck with him at the same time but there's guys, he's a nice guy but just because he's covered in tats and he's a big bikie looking...

Desley: One of the guys that works at Corrimal, I went in and

Participant: Ah big Ads.

Desley: Yeah, And i went in there cause I got my license on my motorbike this year and so I've gone in there in all my bike stuff and he's like what kind of bike you riding and I'm like "a 250" but he was really nice and giving me hints and he was lovely and he's got sleeves.

Participant: Yeah big Adam has and he's a sky diver as well.

Desley: Is he?

Participant: Yeah, If he's big.

Desley: I think he pierced my belly a few times but it keeps rejecting me, so I gave up..

Participant: He's massive. He's a really really big guy.

Desley: Yeah but really softly spoken.

Participant: Yeah that's Adam. Yeah Yeah.

Desley: No he's pretty cool

Participant: He's a really nice guy. Yeah, he's got about 500 sky dives as well.

Desley: Yeah, wow.

Participant: He's covered, I mean he's really covered.

Desley: Yeah, cause I said to him this idea that it's addictive and he said he didn't know whether it was addictive or if people were just trying to balance out, like you said you necessarily wouldn't get another sleeve but your going to get one on your legs so maybe , as people quite often...

Participant: Yeah yeah, it is sort of addictive like it's nice, when you leave the tattoo studio you feel like a bit of a champion.

Desley: Yeah that's what I'm trying to work out is it, it's not, some people say that the pain is addictive but I think it's more like,

Participant: No you just get this feeling of

Desley: When it's finished, I did it.

Participant: The fact that it's permanent and the fact that you just, you just sort of, the feeling inside's really good. So.

Desley: Does it relate it all to the feeling you get when you do a jump?

Participant: Yeah, definitely for me yeah, yeah for sure, I mean, even these days, I walk out sometimes cause I sort of rock in and I get busy it's change of the route for me to get tattoos. More of, its a huge piece I need to get it finished, I've got gotta go in there and do it but my arms but definitely, like wow, what is going to come out today, my back just hurts so much more its a bit harder umm, but it's a lot like the jumping, a lot like surfing for sure. It's a lot like a partying too.

Desley: So are you able to articulate what it is?

Participant: No, it's just that feeling that you can't explain to other people cause they might have their own version of it. And some people will never understand it, like some people will never understand why we jump off cliffs and buildings but to the group that do it's the most powerful thing in the world so, um, yeah, it's hard to sort of express it unless you just, basically just tell people to go for a sky dive and they'll get a rough idea of the feeling.

Desley: Yeah we went to America this year and we went to the Grand Canyon. Have you been?

Participant: Yeah, yeah

Desley: We went on the North Rim where people don't usually go, but people just sat there and they looked at it and no one talked or did anything and someone we spoke to said if you've been you don't need to say...

Participant: Yeah, that's what it's like, a lot of places are like that, Norway is like that as well, the mountains up there. Yeah Everest.

Desley: I guess it's a bit like that with a jump.

Participant: Yeah definitely yeah yeah.

Desley: If you get it you get it and if you don't there's no point so

Participant: Yeah there's no point explaining so they just think you're crazy.

Desley: Cause from um, cause from looking at one of the theorists, have you ever heard of Maslow, he said that um when people go through a peak experience, like something really intense like a sky dive um, it's sort of like you strip away all the bullshit

Participant: totally

Desley: you get to your true self. And I think I don't know about for everyone but for some people maybe they get tattoos because that helps them sort of get in contact with that.

Participant: Maybe

Desley: That's why I was wondering if you think it's the same kind of...

Participant: Yeah to a certain extent, yeah, it's just, it's hard to explain really, it's just a just one of those you feel, you just feel good about yourself. Just feels good inside. Can't really pinpoint it too much though, I know it's good.

Desley: So do you think of it along the same lines as a jump or?

Participant: Yeah for sure for me definitely yeah. Just a little personal high and it's like you could go out and tell the whole world, the whole world doesn't care that you've been tattooed but it really means a lot to you. And surfing's the same, I, you get a really nice wave or you get a barrel and it's like it's just a special moment you know so, and you don't get those often, moments of true freedom you know so.

Desley: Yeah I've got a trainer and he put me on his double kayak not last summer the one before I think we went from Wollongong Harbour up to North beach and we caught a wave in and I've never caught a wave in and like it was so weird cause he was behind telling me what to do but I felt totally alone in the world and it was so nice. Even though I had a fear of water and he trouble getting me back out. But it was yeah magic.

Participant: No it's good I like it hey. Yeah, that's why I moved up here from Melbourne, just cause it was close to the ocean yeah it's nice.

Desley: So did you know people when you moved up here from?

Participant: Yeah I've worked up here a few days off and on, I sky dive the beach so, I know everyone cause we all work around the place in other parts of the world together so, yeah, so we we're all friends which is cool though.

Desley: So this tattoo in here you said it was a team?

Participant: Yeah we just had a team, it was just more of a bit of fun to tattoo my lip.

Desley: So did you get that one with other people or?

Participant: Na, na I still did this on my own. My other team mates weren't into tattoos.

Desley: So they didn't do it?

Participant: No, no no, So I sort of just did it for me. Just to ah, cause we were such a good fun team, we were all rebels sort of thing and all did things, we got further than anyone else that ever got, we all did things our own way, and didn't listen to the old school sort of way of thinking, we just did it our way, and um that was just like a good moment in time, so I just whacked it in my lip just cause it's hidden and no one will see it unless I show em.

Desley: And is there a reason why you don't want them to see?

Participant: No not really, I could put, "we are the shovels" here and you'd be a wanker. I just put it in there and it just reminds me every now and then that it was a cool part of my life for sure. So yeah.

Desley: Cool, So what kind of reactions have you had from say your family and friends?

Participant: Mum, when I first got my little one on my leg, I just told mum a month before I did it everyday that I'd already done it, by the time I showed her that I'd done it she really didn't care so and now so, they just call me stupid but my, so, but it's your skin it's your body um, but they know that when, I was, always succeed, in what I choose to succeed in, in life so, so they like so they see straight past it and see me as a person so it just went from strange, you get that obvious reaction and then the coolest reactions are from the kids in the other countries, mostly third world Asia and Nepal way, they are just blown away by it. Yeah.

Desley: So did they want to touch it?

Participant: Yeah totally, they always touch it, yeah, then I'll pull out my back and they always freak out so, yeah it's really cool. So they're like, kids are the best cause they don't show they haven't gotten into any of the bullshit yet that people preach and rah rah rah to em. So they're just kids and they're just pure form.

Desley: And they're upfront.

Participant: And they're just straight up, its so great and you know they just say oh wow, cool, excellent, you know, cool. So there's no inhibitions there.

Desley: Yeah it's a pity we all couldn't stay like that.

Participant: Yeah so.

Desley: So um, how do you think, sorry, what do you think about other people that have tattoos?

Participant: I don't think anything, I don't judge so, I mean you'll see the smackies but you don't judge them by their tattoos, might judge them because their laying on the floor trying to steal something or whatever, but you might judge them like that, it's like get your shit together you know, but I don't judge anyone by their tattoos.

Desley: So what about ones that you said they look like a wanker?

Participant: Oh, I suppose it is, but that's not so much their tattoos, its more because they've got their little tight shirts on and they're generally bouncers at a club and they're on a power trip.

Desley: Seems to be a theme this week. You're the third person that's said something about bouncers.

Participant: Yeah they're all power trippers. So.

Desley: My daughter calls them tough stickers.

Participant: Yeah those so you know that's just their way, you know, just their way, that's why I don't go out, I don't bother going out to clubs.

Desley: So I think you're probably gonna say no, but the fact that you've got tattoos does that make you associate with any particular group?

Participant: No, cause yeah

Desley: So you don't see yourself as um...

Participant: No I think, cause I'm such a weird person, I love punk rock and Paul McCartney, that's the sort of boundaries that I'm, so I play a lot of music and it's all mellow ballads. And yet if I got up on stage and started doing it people would be like what? what are you doing? you should be punk, so I don't associate myself with anyone, I've always done everything by myself. And none of my friends, oh actually a few friends these days are covered in tats, but throughout most of my life I've been the sole person doing the sole thing. Especially my old group of friends that I still keep in contact with that I'm away from now. Um, I'm the only one with major tats out of all of them. So yeah I don't really associate with any groups or anything. So you do get on, sometimes with the big bikers and that and start talking about your tats but that's about it.

Desley: But I mean but you wouldn't consider yourself a biker?

Participant: No no, not at all, no, A push biker maybe.

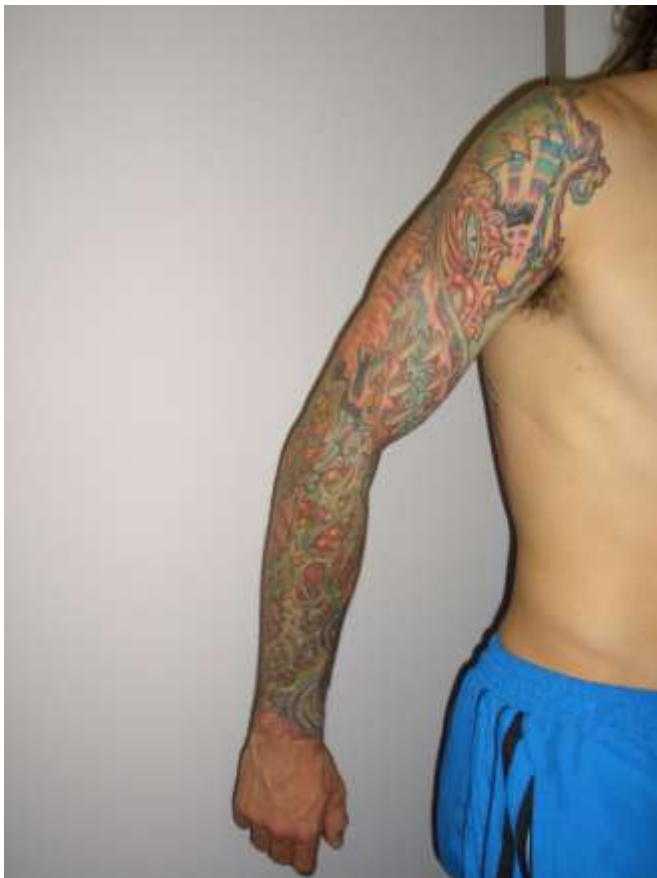
Desley: So is there anything else about your tattoos that you think might be important?

Participant: Um.

Desley: Like the meaning?

Participant: No, what I preach to people, when I do motivational tattoos for juveniles and stuff. I just told them be smart about being dumb. Yeah it's dumb to get tattoos, if you're going to do it, which I, go for it, but pick it, wait for that time in your life when you know where you're headed. And don't just do stuff irrationally, like just, do it right, coz they are going to be there for the rest of your life. Pick your artist, pick your design, hang out, wait, coz it might change. I've had heaps of tattoos that I haven't got because life's changed you know, and just, wait for that you know.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	2	1	1	2	1	5	3	2	3	2	1	2	Sad
Patient	3	1	2	1	4	5	3	2	4	2	3	3	Impatient
Caring	2	1	1	2	1	3	2	2	3	2	2	1	Arsehole
Kind	2	1	1	1	2	4	2	3	3	2	2	2	Prick
Sense of humour	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	Grumpy f**k
Sociable	3	3	4	2	1	2	2	2	4	3	3	3	Anti-social
Friendly	2	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	Proper c**t
Active	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	Slacker
Confident	2	1	2	2	1	3	2	2	3	3	1	2	Trapped
Organised	2	1	1	1	3	4	3	4	5	3	1	2	Disorganised
Hard working	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	4	3	3	1	1	Bludger
Honest	2	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	3	2	3	2	Dishonest





Participant: Ok. I'm Grant from Wollongong. Fifty seven. Got my first tattoo when I was 19. Got my most recent a week ago. Still healing. Intend getting several more. Never been disappointed or sorry I've got one. Every tattoo I've got, I've put in months or years of thought first and then went ahead and got it. And always been happy. Never looked at one and thought, "God I wish I hadn't got that." Every tattoo I've got represents something either at the time or me forever. Some are more localised, like an event that happened. Some are who I am and always will be. Like I say, I have two more that I know I'm gonna get. It'll be just a matter of time and money and when it's the right time to get it. I haven't thought one bad thing about having a tattoo, since I got my first one in 1969 when I was a punk kid and got a tiger coz Balmain won the premiership. They haven't won it since. That was a one off thing, the tiger. But the ones since then have all been something that means something to me. All my life whether it be two more days 'cause I ride a motorbike or might live 'til I'm a hundred. But being a bike rider, it's not a big possibility.

Desley: so, with the tiger, you were a Balmain fan?

Participant: I was a Balmain Tigers supporter for no other reason than I like tigers and when they won the premiership in 1969, so I went and got a tiger. The very first one. And then I didn't get another one, 'til '74, which was the one on my other arm, which matched up. that gave me one on each arm. And from then on, I've got all over.

Desley: How many do you have?

Participant: Ten. Unless you count word, each word as a separate, but, no, that's one, to me? That's a text, so it's one. So, ten now.

Desley: What would be your favourite one?

Participant: The one I got the last week, each time. The new one is the favourite, 'til you get another one, and that's the favourite. Like grandchildren. No that I have any of them yet. It's like when you have one and then you get another one, you think, I like that one better, because

the new ones newer looking than the old one. 'Cause I get them years between, I've never got two within any close space of time. It's always been years between. Sometimes none for 15 years and then maybe two or three a couple of years apart. But never on impulse and never because I'm half shot, because I don't drink. And each one, like that's a quote, so that's thoroughly researched who wrote it. Talk to friends that are English majors, and say "look, who is this person and how smart is he? Is this the right thing to have?" I think it is, but I want somebody that knows English Literature to say, "Yes, that guy's cool. He knew what he was talking about."

Desley: So you said each of your tattoos reflect either a period?

Participant: A period, like Balmain winning, or something like the quote is me, who I've always been and probably always will be. Like a passage from, well it's not actually a classic, but it's a book of short stories, a line of text that says, "This is Grant."

Desley: So are you able to step through each one and tell me what it represents?

Participant: Absolutely.

Desley: You want to do that in chronological order, or?

Participant: Yeah, all right. In the order I got them? Ok.

Desley: If that's easiest?

Participant: Yeah, and do you need to see them?

Desley: Well, whenever... it doesn't matter when

Participant: it's easier if I can just say this one means. If you are uncomfortable it's cool...

Desley: No, I'm not uncomfortable. I'm just worried about because we are taping it – if you say "this one" and say what it is....

Participant: Righto. First one. 1969. Balmain winning the premiership, one tiger.

Desley: Yeah. 'Cause you like tigers.

Participant: Yeah I like tigers. Not footballers. I can't stand footballers. Footballers are like criminals, that haven't been arrested. But I do like tigers.

Desley: some people that about people with tattoos, you know!

Participant: Well that's might be true..... I'm sure there are criminals that haven't got tattoos. White collar guys. people running charities ripping off millions off people.

Desley: That's for sure.

Participant: 69 the Tigers. Now, from '69 onwards until a few years ago, I was heavily involved in martial arts as a teacher, as a student, as a seminar giver, as a fighter, as a combat fighter in tournaments, as a representative of Australia against Japanese fighters. So martial arts are animal symbols, cranes and stuff. Because I was totally involved in martial arts, I thought well, I've got a tiger, which is lucky, because there's a tiger style.

Desley: So it's a style of fighting?

Participant: It's a style of fighting. And I thought ah well, I need something on the other arm. So I thought well dragons are a fighting style too. So I got a dragon, which is on my left arm. So that matched me up. One on each arm. That's all I had.

Desley: And are these styles of fighting that you did?

Participant: No. They are just mostly that I wanted one on each arm and they are both martial arts style. They are Kung-fu styles. I did karate, so it's a totally different martial art. When you are young, it doesn't really matter – as long as you got a karate guy who's got some tattoos, it opens a lot of doors.

Desley: Is part of it that you look tougher, so you look like you're a better fighter if you have tattoos...

Participant: No. Fighters are fighters no matter what they look like. Guys that look like accountants to me would shred me, and wouldn't look like they could wobble a junket. Other guys I've seen looking tough as nails, I've seen faint getting a little... you know. I've seen guys pass out. I thought you were a tough guy, you're nothing! Because of the pain or the blood or you know, something! I saw a guy faint! I thought he was a tough guy. I guess I'm tougher than I thought I was and you're not as tough as you thought you were!

All right. That was '74. Didn't get any more then 'til '81. I was briefly married in the seventies and had two children. And when that all went pear shaped, I moved back to Wollongong and I thought would get one each of my two kids. Because I am not going to be always married, I wasn't. But I am always going to be a father of some sort; not a very good one, but a father. So I got one on each shoulder. A little animal representing my two kids and their names underneath each. A little devil for my son and a little Bugsy rabbit type... Thumper or someone, a little Walt Disney rabbit, a cute one, for my daughter. So there's one on each shoulder blade, of those

Desley: And you got them at the same time?

Participant: I got them at the same time. I was really skinny and it was really hot and they really hurt. Coz I was really lean and skinny at that time coz I was still training and playing lots of sport. Tattoos that hit the bone hurt a lot more than tattoos that just hit the flesh. You have no idea. Anyway, having those two, I thought I need something for myself, because I'm Grant and I'm always going to be Grant. Because of my Indian heritage, I got a big chief in the centre of my back

Desley: As in literally an Indian chief...

Participant: An Indian's head. An Indian chief, yeah. Like with the feathers and the war paint and all that stuff. Because of my won obscure Native American history I thought yeah, and because my nickname has always been "Chief" up 'til recently everyone just called me Chief. Maybe I looked like an Indian, I don't know. So I got the Indian's head and that was about, the two children were '81, when my marriage broke up and I moved back to Wollongong, missin' the kids and I got one each. Then maybe '84-'85 I got the Indian's head, having thought about it.

I got a T-shirt airbrushed first, wore it for a long time when I thought yeah, I can wear that on my back forever. So all of them were like, you think first, you don't rush in half shot and think that's a good idea, and you wake up and you've got a tattoo and no girlfriend, because she thought, "what on earth have you done?" So I got the Indian head in mid eighties, '84, '85, something like that. It's all a bit dim, ok. Then none 'til, what is it now, 2006, mid nineties, maybe. Didn't get another one.

Desley: So about ten years?

Participant: Yeah, ten years. Now when I was a wee lad, my favourite band of all time was Lead Zeppelin. One of the albums they put out was untitled, but they had four Celtic runic type symbols. One for each band member. It was just called the Runes album, because it didn't have a title. That was just what you did when you were a trendoid, hippie, seventies, heavy metal band you didn't name your albums. We're too important to have names, we just call it "the album". And I particularly liked one. Then I thought I can't get one, because I've got two boobs. I was going to get one on each chest, chest piece, one on each half of my chest. So I consulted my girlfriend, who I had been with an awfully long time, at that time. I said, apart from the one I want which one is your favourite symbol? And she picked one, so I went into.

Desley: These were the Runes?

Participant: These were Rune symbols, which you'll see shortly. I went to my, oh, that's another thing too, you always go to the same guy that does the right thing and that has a good name and you go back to him, like return to business. Like if you go to a fish shop and they give you a few extra chips, you go back. So you always go to the same guy. and went to Dave again.

Desley: This is Dave Rand?

Participant: Dave Rand, He's my mate. He's my buddy. He's a friend as well as my tattooist. He's a good guy. We've got similar bikes, same age, we have similar outlooks on lots of things other than tattoos. I like them and he does them but, I mean we'd be mates anyway. And I don't have many mates. He's one of my few, actual mates.

Desley: People speak highly of him. Even teenagers.

Participant: Yeah. The reason Dave's so good to me is he knows anyone that comes from uni to have a tattoo, he knows that I've recommended him to them. Because they come to me because I'm the only tattooed guy they know. This is mostly women, 'cause blokes don't ask advice, we know everything! but girls, women, are thinking of a tattoo, they come to me and say you've got tattoos where do you go? And I say Dave. Say Grant sent you and when it comes for me to get something, Dave rounds down, coz he knows that he doesn't need to make money out of me. He'll always be able to make money out of me 'cause I'm always going to go to him. And he's going to make money indirectly by me sending firm new young nubile to his studio to get tattooed! So anyway, I went to Dave and I said I want these two symbols. He drew them up. One on each...what do you call them? Pecs, yeah. so that was it, those were nineties, not sure when. Early, maybe mid nineties. A few years later, having heard this quote and heard it used when people talk about themselves, I thought yeah. I had some others in my mind mostly from Edgar Allan Poe. But everyone said Edgar Allan Poe most of his stuff was under the influence of drugs when he thought it up and wrote it, so I thought that doesn't interest me, I don't want something associated with a guy that was off his guts. That said, all, not all, most of Edgar Allan Poe's quotes are dark and spooky

Desley: I only know the raven

Participant: yeah and there's lots and they're all sort of to do with things not going well. My girl at the time was like that's a bit dark, that's a bit, not deep, not too deep for me or anything, but a bit dark. So this one from Rudyard Kipling, who seemed to be quite a cool dude and not into heroin or pot...oh no it wasn't. It was laudanum, that's what all used to have, it was opium.

Desley: Oh yes.

Participant: liquid opium, they used to sip it for their health, but it probably put you off your guts for most of the day. But anyway, this quote from Rudyard Kipling, from the book of short stories about "Cats and Other Animals" that was the name of one of the short stories and I thought yeah, that's me so it went on my chest. A couple of years later, late nineties, maybe early 2000s, my other favourite band after Led Zeppelin's Metallica, and they have a symbol on their albums. It's their trademark "logo" I guess is the word, I don't know. So I thought, "Right! Time to get a Metallica tatt." Because I got my Led Zeppelin one in the seventies and now I'm

an old dude and still into rock music and still misbehaving like I did in the seventies, so I thought yeah, I'll get a Metallica tattoo. I got that on my, where the girls get it now, on their arse cheek bone thing, just above the bum.

Desley: Tailbone?

Participant: Tailbone, that's it, yeah. Got that one, that's the all but most recent. And then just last week, having thought about this other guy for many moons, a Star Wars character, no less. My daughter's not talking to me, but she'll come round. Yeah, this is one of the Star wars characters I always thought he was really cool, because he didn't speak, he just acted. The most he ever did was nod. That's the most you got out of him was a nod, then action. So I thought yeah, that's me. So that's the one that's on my arm now that's healing, that's almost healed

Desley: So who is he?

Participant: oh, the Fett, the bounty hunter.

Desley: I can't place him.

Participant: Doesn't say much, but that's his big gun, sort of thing.

Desley: So at the moment that's your favourite?

Participant: Yeah. It's really cool, coz it's brand new and it's shiny and the colours are really...

Desley: Pretty?

Participant: Pretty, yeah. And I've still got a couple to go. But because it's still healing it's my baby. I've still got to put cream on it twice a day and

Desley: Look after it.

Participant: And pat it dry when I get out of the shower, not reef the towel across me like I do. It's almost healed now.

Desley: A guy came in, and he'd pulled the scab off so he had a gap in one of his. I think he did it by accident, scratching or something.

Participant: I said to Dave, "What's the story again? Run me through it." He said Right, twice a day, warm, soapy water, pat it dry. Then half an hour later put the Macro E... it's like a woman's anti wrinkle cream.

Desley: I use it!

Participant: Yeah I can tell! No wonder I couldn't get any. They said "we sold the last of it"

Desley: A big tub!

Participant: Mate wrinkles mean nothing. I used to worry about personal appearance, but now I live on my own. it's not important. But anyway, that's what I'm doing now, bringing one to, you can feel it, it's still. A tattoo is an injury. It's like gravel rash, so you can feel the warmth, the heat on that through the shirt, coz it's still healing. But it's alright, it's looking good.

Desley: So what is it about that guy that appeals to you?

Participant: I just, I just saw the movie once, Princess Lea walks in with somebody. And she's pretending to be a bounty hunter to get him to rescue somebody from some bad guys' cave or nest. And this Boba Fett, who's a bounty hunter, who's just hanging round, she looks up at him and he just nods, that's him, yep. I'm knowing, you're one of mine and I'm one of yours, and we won't talk or go and have coffee, have a latte! He just nodded, and I thought, Ah! How cool are you?

Desley: So it's the fact that he's cool?

Participant: He just nodded. That's all he needed to do. He wasn't all gushy and introduce himself, "Hi I'm Boba Fett. I'm a bounty hunter too. Let's do lunch." She just looked up at him and he just nodded. That'll do

Desley: So it was really understated.

Participant: Yeah That's all he had to do, was nod. And it conveyed everything you needed to know and I'd like to be, I'd like to convey everything I need to know with that little amount of effort, because I really don't need to, I'm not all that into being too gushy. If I like someone they know it. If I don't like 'em they know it quicker, sort of thing.

Desley: So is it the simplicity?

Participant: Yes, All he needed to convey to that other person that he was another bounty hunter, was that little nod. You don't see his face ever, no idea who the actor is, also there is no face because he's always got this combat helmet on, and his body armour, and his rocket launcher slung over his shoulder. That's all he needed to do. And I just thought... and this was like the original Star Wars lot, when they first came out, was it the seventies, eighties?

Desley: I think so.

Participant: not these last ½ dozen, but the original ones with Hans Solo and Luke Skywalker and Princess Leah and all that, I mean they're all 60, 70 years old, those people. Harrison Ford's like 62 and he was a kid in this. It was like his second movie after American Graffiti, so, we're talking 30 years ago. But that stuck with me. I thought one day. I was just going to get his head. And Sue Rand, Dave's wife, said No No, I'll bring it up on the Internet. I'm not a computer guy. I'm technologically inept. She said I'll bring up some images of him and you can pick one. She brought up three or four pictures of him, on his website, Boba Fett. And I thought, yeah that'll do it. So this is just the bust of him standing looking cool with his arms folded, with his arms ready to sort of damage somebody, I don't know. It's a still from the movie.

Desley: So do you think there is any link, like you just said "ready to damage someone" and that reminded me of martial arts. So is there any link between any of your tattoos, do you think? Apart from, like, your arms, it's almost like you got them in pairs.

Participant: Oh did I?

Desley: well for a while, there, coz you had the tiger and dragon, which were fighting styles.
Then you got your kids.

Participant: Yeah, the two kids. they were the only two I got the same day.

Desley: Then you got the two runes.

Participant: The two runes, yeah.

Desley: then like you got the two about yourself.

Participant: The two are pretty close together, relatively.

Desley: you said the Indian is a part of you as well and so is the quote.

Participant: Yeah but they were a long way apart, those two.

Desley: In time, yeah.

Participant: Yeah. The Indian was between the two kids and, oh, no, that was the next one after the two kids. After I got the two kids, I did me, coz I'm always going to ...

Desley: So what do the runes mean to you?

Participant: The one I like, which is I liked the design and it was the one Jimmy Page adopted for himself, and he I thought was the cutest of the Led Zeppelin guys.

Desley: What do you mean by cute?

Participant: Most attractive.

Desley: Ok.

Participant: If I thought the guy was a good sort, which I do, I mean lots of guys are attractive for a guy, but I do think there are a lot more attractive women than there are attractive guys. That's coz guys are grotesque most of the time. If I was to be pressed into saying who was the best sort in Led Zeppelin, then I'd say Jimmy Page. He's very articulate, he's very educated, he was very cool. I'd seen him in interviews when he was a little kid, and I'd seen him give interviews when he was in between rehabs, I thought he was pretty cool. Plus his symbol was what I liked, it was just a nice looking symbol.

Desley: You chose it more for the look of the symbol than for him?

Participant: I was really pleased, because I liked it and when I found out which one was which I was so pleased he's that one, so it was lucky for me. I still would have got the symbol, because I liked it of the four. But I was really pleased when I found out that was the one that, coz I saw it on a jacket at a concert. He had it on his jacket, and I thought, ah that's you! Good! That pleases me. It's like finding out that someone you are attracted to, is suddenly widowed or something, and you think, oh , that's handy (laughs) only joking, but you know what I mean. I mean I liked the symbol and finding out it was Jimmy Page's...

Desley: Was an added bonus?

Participant: Yeah. I thought that's good. I'm glad it's him because I think he's pretty cool.

Desley: And with the other one, you said your girlfriend picked it

Participant: I had a girlfriend for an awfully long time. I said pick one sweetie. She wasn't a Led Zeppelin fan, she was also a Grant fan, she was like me. So I said, there's three, I've got one, I said pick the one you like and she did, so I got it there, just so I had one on each booblet! She's gone, now. But I don't mind that. I'm not gonna...

Desley: So you don't regret getting one that she chose, or anything?

Participant: No. we're still buddies. I rang her before I came up to talk to you. She's moved on. She's in love with some rich, successful dude. But that's cool. We're still great buddies and always we will be. He's not going to stop me liking her and doing whatever I can to help her out.

I was with her for 18 years, he's nothing, he's only been with her only for six weeks, now. Oh, bit longer, a year probably. But he can't take away what went on since 1985 to only like last year. She's still... we're still mates and no, no regrets. I like it. I've grown to like it because I said pick your favourite one of these three and that's the one and it's there now.

Desley: Does that represent another member of the band that you like?

Participant: Probably. I don't know which ones it represents. I just said pick one you like. I could research, as I said, on the Internet! He's probably the dead. I don't know. I said these are the other three guys, coz there were only four members, so I don't.... I never bothered to find out which one it was. I didn't care. It was the one she liked so on it went.

Desley: And that's all that mattered.

Participant: And I don't look at it and think, "oh God I wish I was still with her, or I wish I didn't get this." It's not like having someone's name tattooed across your forehead and you've got to keep going out with girls with that name for the rest of your life.

Desley: You can change it like Johnny Depp did.

Participant: Yeah. He got Winona and

Desley: Changed it to Wino

Participant: There's not many girls called Winona, so... no I would never do...

Desley: I spoke to a guy the other day, and he had the picture of the girl's face.

Participant: Aoh!

Desley: And her name.

Participant: Yeah?

Desley: And when they split up, I think it was Dave even, he wanted to put barbed wire across the name, and he said no, don't do that and he put flowers or something.

Participant: no, you don't. I wasn't worried about having my kids, because they're always going to have that name and they are always going to be my kids. No matter what happens to me or them. That doesn't change, but I would never, that's that impulse thing of falling in love...

Desley: That's how it was with this guy. He said it was just a few weeks or months or something and he got this girl's face on there and then they split up.

Participant: That would be the way to make sure you split up. That would bring it on.

Desley: That's what they say. Some people have this superstition that you shouldn't put someone's name because something might happen.

Participant: Yeah. I mean best case scenario, you'll get hit by a truck or the worst thing is that they suddenly take a walk.

Desley: Not good.

Participant: I would never do that. To me that's more repulsive than...that's why you've got to think about it and make sure that's what you want and that's what you'll always want as best as you can. You can't say what you'll always want because things change. I might become something that I am not, now, but I doubt it. I would have by now. I'm still...

Desley: Still you.

Participant: Yeah. Still me. Still riding a bike. I'm still doing the stuff I did when I was 18, 20, still.

Desley: So do you think you got any of the tattoos as part of the bike culture?

Participant: No, it wasn't a biker thing. It was a me thing. The biker thing was a coincidence. I didn't get tattoos because I was a Bikie. I got them because that's what I wanted. And it just

happens to be... When I started getting them it was just bikers and sailors that had them, really. Now my kids have got 'em. One year they both wanted... their birthdays are very close together. A couple of years apart, but the months. One year, they both wanted a tattoo for their birthday. So I said Ok, well we'll do this right. We'll go to Dave. We'll go down a couple of months before to see what he's got or what you want. When it comes to your birthday, come down for the weekend and we could go in and Dave can do them both, and he did. He did a thing on my son's arm, a memorial to a dead mate. And my daughter got one of those wavy Celtic things across her arse bone there, where I got my Metallica one a year or so later. Well, what were we on about?

Desley: Just picking the things you are not going to regret, I think.

Participant: yeah, but getting names, recipe for disaster.

Desley: Yes.

Participant: You've got to think about, well this is how I'll probably be for the rest of my life, so this will mean something. This one here will, it'll be more relevant as I get older coz I'll be crustier, more obnoxious and what's the word? Hermit-like. Just a guy who just wants to be on his own and left alone by everybody. You know, invitation only, sort of thing.

Desley: So with where you put the tattoos, is there any reason for..?

Participant: I can wear my work shirt, which we are forced to wear, stupid frigging thing! And nobody knows I've got a tattoo. I've only got to do the top, the one button up, and the sleeves are here, and no one would know I had one. And I talked my son out of getting his forearms done.

Desley: for that reason?

Participant: I said one day you might not be a boiler maker and a wild man surfie. You might be a leader of industry and you've gotta meet, you know, the queen's envoy from Sumatra. You can't shake her hand with flames going up your forearms. I said get them get them from there up. I said get them where normal clothes'll cover them. And he did. He only got the one, high

up, right up high on his shoulder, which is the memorial thing to his mate. But me, I would never get anywhere where I couldn't cover them up with a minimum of effort. Not because I don't want anyone to see them, but just because. You can't have them where you can't cover the, because you just don't know. You might always think you are going to be the same guy, but you don't know, if things you can't control, around you can change. I might get promoted (I might) you know, I don't want to be having "get fucked" or something across my knuckles because it's not...

Desley: It's not always appropriate!

Participant: Appropriate, yeah, that's the word! It's not always appropriate. If you didn't hear that, you can tell 'em what I said.

Desley: So you wouldn't get it on your face or anywhere

Participant: No, no, the highest I got it is, you can just see the top of my quote if I wear a V-neck. But the only V-neck I've got is this stupid shirt I've got to wear for work. I'm a t shirt guy. But I always wear sleeveless, so you can see my arms. But that's nothing, that's just on the bike. Soon as I get off, I put on a shirt, or sloppy joe, push the sleeves up, tattooless! No one would know.

Desley: So what about in private departments? Would you get tattoos there?

Participant: No, not really.

Desley: No one's going to see them. Well, very few.

Participant: Very few. One more that I know I am getting is semi-private. It's below the trouser line, but not very far below. I wouldn't get a tattoo on my willy for all sorts of reasons. I actually don't want Dave to touch it! No, I wouldn't. I think that's a bit over the top.

Desley: I met a guy like that. He didn't want to have a vasectomy because he didn't want the guy playing with his private bits.

Participant: No, I wouldn't. The one I am getting on my lower stomach goes below my jeans belt-line

Desley: So you've picked the picture and everything.

Participant: Yeah, it's already locked away. It's just a matter of when I do it. But it's not going anywhere near, what you would call private parts.

Desley: Is that because it hurts more, or?

Participant: No, it's just because it wouldn't be appropriate. I am not going to have a tattooed willy. Just doesn't interest me.

Desley: Some people do.

Participant: Yeah well, that's it. If you are going to do this as your subject, you must be prepared and already worked out you are going to meet lots of guys that aren't like everybody else. And girls. I mean we might all be tattooed, but we might not always be tattooed for the same reason.

Desley: No.

Participant: No I was never interested in private parts being pierced or tattooed, or touched, actually. Private parts are for a reason, coz they're private. And the rest of me... invitation only. Also not...if you are sort of first timing, it's not what you wanna ...that might be a bit too much on the first date. I don't know. I think I'm a bit too much on the first date the way I am.

Desley: but I mean, that's you.

Participant: that's me. Someone's interested in me, then better be prepared for something

Desley: It'd be like saying you've got blue eyes and I don't like blue eyes or something.

Participant: If she doesn't like tattoos she's not going to like anything else about me either. It's just one small part.

Desley: Of you.

Participant: Yeah. No, it's not linked to the. I think the biker thing was just a coincidence. I was always going to be a biker long before I thought of getting a tattoo. I've been biking in my granddads side-car since I was about four. He used to take me around in his side car. I thought "how cool's this" and I was a little guy that lived in Stanwell Park and "The wild one" the movie, came out in '55. And everyone rushed out and bought a 650 Trident with bars on it, fanging up and down the streets in Stanwell Park, not streets, roads! Everyone went " Ah shock horror!" and I thought " How cool is that!" I looked at them and thought, Wow, those are bad men! yeah, That's for me. I was always going to be a biker, long before I was going to be a tattooed person.

Desley: So was the appeal the "bad men" bit?

Participant: What the biker thing? No, I just don't like cars. It's the same thing, you're on your own. Come and go as you please. You are outside. To me a car's just like a ...it's like this room. far too small to be in! No, hurtling round when I was a 5 and 6 and 7 year old in my grand dad's side car, that did me, I thought how cool is this. Or if he had someone else in the side car, you'd sit on the back and hang on, fanging round the street of Sydney. No helmets in those days or anything. Ex-army bikes with these side-cars on, no brakes, no lights. It just appealed to me. Everyone in the cars would just look at you and think, I'm glad I'm not like that, or Oh I wish I was like that. I don't know.

Desley: A bit of both probably.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: So with your tattoos, do you consider that any of them, that they are linked to any particular event in your life? Like you did say this one was Balmain winning...

Participant: Yeah, well that's what prompted it. And I would also always like tigers as animals. I like cheetahs too, but you don't get many cheetah tattoos. But, yeah, I think they're all...An

event might have brought it forward a little or convinced me to get it, but they generally cover a bigger span of time than just a singular event.

Desley: So there's no particular tattoo that you look at and go that's because of something?

Participant: No I look at this one and say I got that the year they won the grand final.

Desley: But not because...

Participant: Not because. It's because I liked tigers. Like, during the year. I didn't even know they were going to win. I got it in June of the year they ended up winning. It didn't go on because they won. It went on just for the tiger

Desley: so Saint George didn't win the year you got that, did they?

Participant: I've no idea. That was, as I say, that was like... ah. Saint George! My link is that they were Balmain Tigers. Not so much that it was Balmain, that was just a coincidence. That went on in June and then in September they beat South Sydney in the grand final I thought that's cool! That's the year I met the girl I ended up marrying too, so that was a pretty...

Desley: It wasn't because you met her either?

Participant: No I had already met her before then but we started going out or something. We got pretty close. Coz I lived in Wollongong and she was in Sydney. I used to hitch-hike up, coz I was always losing my licence. If you couldn't borrow one you'd hitch-hike up. Sixty nine was when we actually started to click.

Desley: So with the ones of the kids, you said you got them when you separated?

Participant: Yes. She got the kids, which is what happened in those days. But I didn't mind, I'm not a kid guy... I should never have married. I should never have had kids. I am just not cut out for it despite what the experts say. Not everyone's a born parent or a born partner person.

Desley: But do you consider that you got the tattoos related to the separation?

Participant: Ah no, not to the separation. It's just that I wanted to, because I wasn't seeing them very often in those first couple of years. I was being made to pay for my sins, like, it was pretty hard to see them. So I thought I'll get a little one each, so that when they saw me, they'd think Dad was pretty cool, coz they were both really little then. They'd think Dad was pretty cool, having tattoos.

Desley: And I guess they'd think they were cool coz their names were on there

Participant: Yeah. They were the only ones in school whose dad has got their names tattooed on him. Sort of thing. They're nearly in their 30s now, they still they don't say anything against it. And when they were little they were very impressed that their old dad had gone out and got, hadn't just bought them a card each for their birthday, had actually had a tattoo with their names. But when they were about 3 and 5 they would have thought that was pretty cool. They had a dad who had a Harley and had their names tattooed on his back. Because other kids at Primary School's dads school didn't have Harleys. They had white commodores or whatever they had in those days.

Desley: So do you still like all your tattoos?

Participant: Absolutely.

Desley: Would you change any of them?

Participant: I'd get them touched up. See this one being the oldest is below this one which is the newest, so it looks like "before and after" what I would do, I would go to Dave and say, can you like what they do with old photos in camera shops these days, run it through a scanner. I would say to Dave, "could you make that look like a tiger rather than a blur" and if he couldn't I'd say that's cool. But as for changing them now, I like them...

Desley: Just the way they are.

Participant: I like them the way they are. I'd like to see them enhanced if they could be.

Desley: Have you seen Angry Anderson on TV? They had him last year on one of those makeover shows. You know how he's got..

Participant: Yeah, he's got full sleeves.

Desley: And he got it lasered off and re-done, to make it look newer.

Participant: Ah yeah? Ah, OK. I probably couldn't afford that.

Desley: He was sitting there going "Ow. Ow. Ow ow."

Participant: he's a sook.

Desley: it was quite funny, coz he looks so tough.

Participant: He's little. He's only about two foot six. He looks tough. Full tattoos and the shaved head

Desley: And he's got stockings.

Participant: I got to a biker function every good Friday and he's always there with one of the Bands. Him and Pete Wells, who's now dead, so it'll be him without Pete Wells. But he's always one of the bands at this particular biker do I go to on a good Friday. But he is a midget. There's nothing of him. But no, all I would have, I wouldn't go to the trouble of lasering them off and having them redone. If Dave could touch it up and make it look good, if he can't I'm happy with it the way it is. It's old, I'm old. Some of them are going to look old and some of them are going to look newer. The ones that are just plain black look like a deep green after a few years. They change from a jet black to sort of jet green. They change colour as you get older. So the ones on my chest that are just plain black, are now sort of really deep, it's a nice green, not like the hospital walls, that sort of insipid green that they often are. It's a nice deep dark green. So they just change as you get older.

Desley: So would you do them all again. If you had your time, would you get each of them?

Participant: Yeah. there's none that I thought... yeah, I would. Yeah. I think so. I might get them bigger or maybe in a different spot. Because I'm not a really big guy so I am sort of running out of room, if you know what I mean. I can't get it every one I want, because I just don't have the space. But... yeah, there's nothing I...I went in naked, and Dave had all these on a sheet of paper, I wouldn't say, No I don't want that anymore. I'd say yeah, that one there, that one there. I'd pretty much go the same way. It's hard to say what you would do if things were different. There's nothing I don't want anymore, that doesn't mean anything. Not even the one of the girl, because she is always going to be my favourite girl. I don't care how many rich bastards she marries! That won't change how I feel about her. She can marry the Pope for all I care. I'll still think she's a cool ole squeeze, 'cause we were together an awfully long time. We had no trouble. And we didn't bust up badly. She just met this guy who was a bit more suitable for her lifestyle and off she went. We parted as great buddies. Had a seriously good cuddle for our last one, shook hands and been mates ever since. He's a bit nervous, he doesn't like us being close, but that's just too bad.

Desley: He'd probably be happier if you didn't get on!

Participant: he knew we were buddies. He didn't take her off me. There's no animosity between he and I. He's just luckier that's all. He got her and I didn't. But he can't change what went before. There's no good him being nervous. She won't do the wrong thing by him, which is why we were together so long. She's a good score. We'd've stayed together forever, if it had been up to me, but it wasn't. That's cool.

Desley: So you said you've got two more planned at least.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: And you've got the places ready for them?

Participant: I've got the places and I've got the pictures in my head and where they're going. It's just a matter of time and finance.

Desley: Yes. They are not cheap.

Participant: because, I mean, this one, in 1969 it was six dollars.

Desley: Wow!

Participant: Which was, my first year apprenticeship, so it was a lot of money. And now if you go and pick one off the wall at Dave's, they're like, scary. I mean he gives me a good price because we are mates. But if you were to just get one of the rack, they are big bucks now. Dave's so lucky that it's so trendy to have them, everybody's got 'em. Kids have got 'em, girls have got 'em. Like I said, when I got that one, that made me either a sailor or a bikie, but I already was a bikie, so. But, yeah, that was all. Same with pierced ears. Girls had them, but blokes didn't have a pierced ear.

Desley: didn't gay guys have them?

Participant: Yeah. Straight left ear, gay right ear. I've only ever done mine on the day for a fancy dress and then taken it off. I'm not a pierced, it doesn't appeal to me at all. For myself. I mean, I don't care. Anyone else can have them, spikes through their eyes and stuff. For me personally, my lifestyle, I am too nervous, I do too many things. I work as a wood turner, I do leather works, I work with motor bikes. I can't afford to have something pulled off me because it got caught in a drill or a grinder. I get enough fingers mangled and nails squashed and stuff, just bare handed, without having things at all, that'll catch. As far as nipples.... Oh! Not at all.

Desley: So when you think about the tattoos you're gonna have, do you think firstly of the picture or the place or the artist? I mean that you'll have Dave do it, sounds like that's a no brainer.

Participant: Yeah. Dave would do it. The image first. I see something , or think of something or something occurs to me and I think, yeah. That's for me.

So it's the image first and then, where will it go.

Desley: OK.

Participant: The Metallica one was always going to be somewhere on me and I thought, well, it's only a one off. With Led Zeppelin one of each, that was cool, because I was getting two. But this

I thought I need this to be somewhere where there was room only for one. My daughter had already had the one on her arse bone, so I thought that'll do me. I know that's a chick thing, but I don't care. I don't care what... I've not seen another guy with one down there, but I didn't get it for another guy. I did it for me. Let people think whatever they think. I don't care. You won't meet someone that cares less about what other people think than me. You might, but it'll be close. So yeah. The image first, the thing I want and then work out where it'll go. Unless where I see it is on something and I think that's where I want it too, also, as well, if it's something that's already been done. The two I'm getting, one is on somebody, on a movie character and I'll get that the same place, because that's what appealed to me; the image and the place together. But the other one was on a birthday card. It was a hand drawn image and I thought that's so cool, I'll get that one day. But it'll be a long time because I just only saw it the other day, but it'll go. It's also a one off. So it will either go somewhere central, rather than something I have to even up later. I don't know where that'll go.

Desley: So you don't like the idea of having unbalanced?

Participant: a bit of symmetry, yeah. This one above the tiger was to give me...the dragon goes right up to here and this was always shorter and when I decided I'll get this one, I thought "I'll put it above the tiger. That'll give me... It will be two on one, but it'll still be balanced lengthwise." From there to there. There to there. Coz they're pretty close together. That one's just above the tiger, but not linked to the tiger at all. Nothing to do with the tiger, it's just where it went.

Desley: So what about the pain aspect? Do you consider that that's a bonus or does it detract from it?

Participant: It doesn't detract. It's bearable, it's not... like I said, when it's on a bony area, like on the arse bone or those ones on my shoulder when I was really skinny, they really hurt, cause they're right on the shoulder blade. If I was close to saying, I've had enough of this, that would have been the time. But I didn't coz I thought, no, I can do this. The pain doesn't attract me. I'm not pain friendly. I ride a bike. I'm fairly used to it, I've broken that many things coming off bikes, racing and on the road. So pain isn't totally unknown to me. But the pain of a tattoo doesn't appeal, but you gotta wear it. This one here didn't hurt a bit. It was like a mozzie, because it's all flesh. I said to Dave, this is so nice getting one somewhere where it's not bony.

Coz he knows that the last three or four I got had been on fairly bony bits. When I said that he laughed. He said yeah, that's right. This one was almost like hardly noticeable, coz it was just in flesh. Flesh is nothing. When I get one on my stomach that's not going to hurt at all. There's no bone there for miles! But yeah. The pain doesn't appeal, as part of it, but it's not a problem. It's just, what you have to put up. And I would never get an anaesthetic to get a tattoo. I think that's so wet. You're kidding. You're missing the point.

Desley: So what's the point then?

Participant: If you are prepared to get a tattoo, then you should be prepared to pay the big bucks and wear the pain as well, and having to look after it. Same as you wear glasses and you get contacts. Sounds like a good idea until you realise you have to wash the freaking things every night and boil them once a week. They don't tell you that when they're saying throw away your glasses - have contacts! They don't tell you how much frigging around you've got to do, to look after them. Same with the tattoo. People, when they find that they've got to look after it really well for the first week while it's healing...well if you are going to get one, then you've got to be prepared to pay the freight, which is the pain, the looking after, keeping out of the sun and the surf for a week and the fact it's gonna be there for the rest of your life. That's sort of an intangible thing, you don't know what's going to happen. I think the pain is just, you just wear it. It's part of it. It might attract some people, but expensive way to get hurt, you could probably pay someone to hurt you. It'd be a lot cheaper and you wouldn't be marked up as much. If all you wanted was pain, that's easy, you know. Ride a motorbike. But no I don't get them because I'm looking forward to getting hurt. I'm looking forward to it stopping, when Dave has to stretch or change the needle or something. Yeah. I think Ah good, Dave, I'll have a stretch too. I think he gets sick of it the same time I do. And he has to have a stretch. It's very intense, and he can't cock it up. He's got to make sure everything he does is absolutely spot on.

Desley: Certain number of layers of skin they've got to get the ink down to, and all kinds of stuff.

Participant: yeah and he can't make a mistake and rub it out. So he needs a breather too coz he can't afford to make a mistake. So every now and then he puts the needle down, has a stretch, I think, Ah good! So I move around a bit, coz you're not moving while you are getting done. You're chatting, but you're not moving around. So it's like knocking your head against a wall -

it feels so good when you finish. It's not unbearable. It's doable. I've seen people with tattoos in places I'll never get. Like up under here I think that would *really* tingle. Maybe one day when I've ran out of room in not so painful places. Pain is not the big attraction.

Desley: Do you think they're addictive?

Participant: I don't think. They're like motor bikes, if you're fair dinkum if you haven't got one, I think anyone that gets one and says that's all I'm gonna have, is fooling themselves. Maybe they won't. my kids have still only got the one each. My daughter is always talking about getting another one. I wouldn't suggest addictive.

Desley: just a lot of people say they are.

Participant: I think once you get one and you become a part of the tattoo lifestyle, for want of a better word, then the next one isn't as big a decision, once you've got a couple. You don't go berserk, you don't get your neck and forehead and stuff. But once you think , yeah, this is cool, this is who I am, these two are cool but I'd really like to have something here or something here or whatever. But not addictive, I think people who say this is all I'm getting, would be proved wrong more often than not as time went on.

Desley: So why do you think people keep getting them?

Participant: because once they realise.... I mean, I don't know. I'm only a boilermaker, I don't know why people do anything. I mean I don't know why I did most things. But once you get one, you get two, you think that didn't hurt, the world didn't change, my mum's still talking to me, and if you want...you don't get them for the sake of it, I don't know, some people might, if you see you want one, and you've already got two and you think that those two didn't really change anything and you think I like that one, I think I am going to get that one. See mine are years and years apart. So you think "yeah. That's a good image. That's a good symbol. That's a good thing I want to say about myself, or want to project to other people." And you get that one. But not addictive. I think they are more a hobby. Like I've got six motorbikes. You know, I can't ride six motorbikes. But might... but that's what I do. I'm a biker. I've got one bike for this, one bike for that and a couple of bikes I used to race on, which I don't race on any more 'cause I'm too old and things break more easily now, and take longer to heal. So I don't race

anymore. No, not addictive. I think for me they are more a hobby type thing. Well more intense than a hobby, but certainly not addictive. Like I don't have to have a tattoo every three years, or something.

Desley: Yeah. Maybe addictive is not the right word.

Participant: Yeah to me addictive means...

Desley: That you can't do without it, yeah.

Participant: I can. I mean if Dave snuffed it tonight or I met my goddess and she said, "Ok but no more tattoos." I wouldn't say, "no that's too bad, you're out of luck." I would. No that's a wrong way of putting it. Say something occurred that prevented me from having anymore then I wouldn't go spare, I'd say, "yeah' that's cool. I'm balanced at the moment. That'll do me." But if I had the freedom of choice and the cash and Dave's still around, I'll get these other two. So yeah. Not addictive, but more a thing you do.

Desley: So you said it was saying something about yourself.

Participant: Yeah

Desley: So is there any way you can say something about yourself without getting pictures drawn on your skin?

Participant: Yeah. There's personal appearance, choice of transport, how I live, how I behave in mixed company. There's lots of ways of getting your message across. Tattoos is just part of it.

Desley: So it is just one of...

Participant: One of the number of ways in which I promote myself. Or present myself. I don't know. I mean how many 57 year olds do you know, who've got a mohawk and six motor bikes, without tattoos? So it's all sorts of things. The tattoos are just a part of me being just a little bit different.

Desley: So is there anything else you could do instead of having tattoos?

Participant: Instead of?

Desley: Yeah.

Participant: No.

Desley: Or is that not something you would contemplate?

Participant: No maybe I'd do something in addition to them, but not instead of them. I can't think of something I rather had than them. Ah I wish I had another bike and no tattoos. I would like the bike I've got and the tattoos. I'm contemplating more. I'm no where near saying that's enough, or God I wish I hadn't done this. I'm old now, I mean and I don't need to impress too many more people. I'm not going to be applying for any more jobs or meeting any more pretty girls or having to meet anyone's parents or anything where a tattoo might work against me. I'm pretty much old enough now to say, well this is who I am. If you don't like it cross the road, talk to someone in a car. Talk to someone with a tie on. I've got a million people just like me everywhere I go. But you've got to seek them out now. There's this brotherhood thing with bikers. I mean I go to a do that I go to once a year and there a guy that I only see at that do, you know, big hug, "how're you going 'bro?" I don't know his name, don't know what he rides. He knows I'm a biker 'cause he saw me there last year. I know he's hardcore, 'cause he's turned up. So I don't need to mix with the straights. I've got my own circle of other bikers. I get more respect from other bikers, especially young bikers, coz when I take my helmet off and they see how old I am. They think "fuck, this guy's been, this guy's a serious old dude. He's turned up here with his patched jeans and his colours on, looking crusty and ready to roll. And we're all here, sort of eighteen, twenty with our first bikes trying to look tough, and look at this old bugger still struttin' around, looking cool," you know...or lookin' well, relatively cool! Cool for those surroundings, yeah. It's not the same when I walk through the mall on a Saturday morning to the bookshop.

Desley: well it's a different place isn't it?.

Participant: yeah. I get plenty, I don't, I don't have any trouble getting served though. People seem to get out of the way. It's not that I'm threatening! Just people notice

Desley: Do you consider yourself as a person who has tattoos, or are you a tattooed person?

Participant: I'm a person that has tattoos. Like I'm a person that has six cats, motorbikes, a lathe downstairs that I do my own wood turning, all my own workshop.... You know, I'm a guy with things and one of the things I have, is tattoos. Well some other things I've got are about a thousand books, and 800 CDs and 40,000 spanners. Because I've been a builder and tinkerer of things since day one. Build, weld, oxy-cut, spanner stuff, grind stuff.

Desley: Handy.

Participant: Handy. Make anything, fit anything, this wheel on this bike, I'd have it fitted by afternoon, even if I have to make spaces and brackets to make it fit. That Yamaha wheel'll fit on that Triumph front end by this afternoon, or I'll be a really angry guy. So I'm not a tattooed person. I'm a guy, Grant the Kid, with tattoos and with lots of other stuff too. Sense of humour, most of my teeth, nice brown skin, I don't know, you know. Is that what you asked me?

Desley: Yes, because when you said something it reminded me of something, but it's gone.

Participant: Tattooed person or person with tattoos? No. Grant with tattoos, Grant with various other possessions.

Desley: What I'm thinking of, is it's not...do you consider it's part of who you are? Like is it part of your identity?

Participant: Yes. But I'm not a circus freak. It's just one small part. I'd be the same. I'd be just this sarcastic, obnoxious smart ass, without the tattoos. Just that they are part of the package. I can be a smart mouth with long sleeves on. Nobody knows I'm a tattooed Smart Alec. They'll think I'm just a Smart Alec, or a sarcastic bugger or a funny bugger or an old bugger.

Desley: So are you conscious of them most of the time? Like some people say they forget...

Participant: With a long sleeved shirt on, I just forget, 'cause they're just arms. Everyone's got arms.. When I've got my shirt off, then I think, " Ah right. I look like the Louvre" 'cause I've got tattoos front and back. So I've got to remember at the beach that people will look at me and try and read what's on my chest, and catch me looking at them and look away, sort of thing. So yeah. With the shirt off, fairly conscious that they're there. Because like I say one's a quote, people always try to read it and say "hey, what does that mean?" and I say "well, read it". But with the shirt on, it's just the arms showing, that to me is just a suntan. It's been there that long, it's just a part of me. And a guy with tattoos on his arms, is nothing. Every guy from my era has got tattoos on is arm. Mostly down here. So tattoo there and there means nothing to anybody. There are like a 100,000 guys my age with tattoos on their biceps. With the shirt off and with the quotes and other stuff and band, the Metallica stuff...

Desley: And the Indian on your back?

Participant: Yeah and the Indian, they think this guy has a story to tell, or there's more to his guy than the two on his arms. This guy is a serious aficionado or whatever. So a shirt off, yes, conscious. But sleeveless or a t-shirt, I don't know it I'll even forget them. They just don't exist. Anyone's going to notice them is going to be freaked out if they ever go into the real world and see the rest of the world. That's nothing, those two. They shouldn't even get a second look from anybody.

Desley: So trick question...

Participant: Yes?

Desley: What would be the opposite of your tattoos?

Participant: I don't know what that means. The opposite of my tattoos?

Desley: Would you like a hint? I try not to put words in people's mouths. Some people take it to mean if they didn't have them.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: One person said taking them off. One person said feeling differently and other people have picked pictures that would be the opposite. So it's however you want to interpret it.

Participant: The opposite of my tattoos to me, would be not having them but having to do something to compensate for them, being a little bit more outrageous in some other facet, maybe. If tattoos didn't exist, or if I had never decided to get them then I would still be everything I am, but more so. Maybe 10% of each other thing, or maybe a lot more in one thing. If the tattoos spread who I am, between the other things that say who I am like the bikes and the stuff.

Desley: So you're saying there's you and there's these different things that are you

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: So if you took one thing away..

Participant: So if the tattoos disappeared, I'd get an extra motor bike..

Desley: Or get another cat

Participant: Or get another cat or even a more defined mohawk or

Desley: Pink hair or..

Participant: Pink or go even grey. yeah, so that's what I'd be. The opposite would be the same guy, but certainly something else would be enhanced to make sure I got the message across to people to the citizens.

Desley: Would that be the opposite of them, though?

Participant: That would be the alternative to them, I guess. Don't know. I'm not smart enough for that stuff.

Desley: It's a hard question, isn't it?

Participant: I never thought of the opposite, because I don't remember what I was like before them. Because I was always going to be who I was. I mean you are told, that you're a product of your environment and upbringing and stuff. That had already happened by the time I got my first tattoo. I was already moulded by my earliest upbringing. So if I hadn't got the tattoos, I'd still be who I am. But I don't know if that answers your question.

Desley: I'm not sure...

Participant: I don't understand the question. The opposite of tattoos is no tattoos I guess.

Desley: What I'm trying to get at is, because the theory that I'm using, he says, "you can't know what something is unless you know what it is not" So you don't know what hot is unless you've experienced cold.

Participant: I'm glad that's just a theory.

Desley: Yeah. Do you understand because if every thing was hot then you wouldn't understand what hot was, because it would be all the same. So When you had your tattoos did you go by yourself?

Participant: Eighty percent of the time. The odd one or two times I've had, never a mate, bloke mate, don't have any bloke mates. I think maybe once or twice I might have had a girlfriend with me. I would suggest probably 90 percent I've gone on my own. I've made the appointment and gone in on my own. I've gone in, done it on my own.

Desley: So it wasn't something you did as a group exercise?

Participant: No, no.

Desley: So what do you think other people think about you when they see you with your tattoos?

Participant: honestly I couldn't give a rat's arse. They would think, look at this guy, he's someone to get to know or someone to avoid. No middle ground either. This guy's worth having a chat to..

Desley: Is it because it's interesting, or?

Participant: because it's interesting. He's either got a story to tell, or you know, Golly gosh!

Desley: he's a bit scary

Participant: He's a bit scary. Which means they wouldn't have liked me even if they had taken the chance. Because if I am scary on appearance, they are not going to be able to go the distance once they get to know me and see how I live and see what I do for fun. I don't do anything bad, I'm not a criminal. But I do have a lot of fun. If I've got time to think back before I croak, I'd wanna think well at least I had a bit of fun, at least i.... as I slide under some Volvo at a roundabout..

Desley: Not a Volvo

Participant: Oh, alright. I used to drive, I just say that because I used to drive one myself. Yeah that's what I think, possibly, when I'm walking around in a non-biker environment. In a biker environment, I'm invisible. I look like a choir boy. I've seen guys there that I wouldn't tackle with a machete. You hit them and they smile, and you think Oh, I'm in trouble now! But in a non-biker environment as in citizens everywhere else, I either present something worth a second look, either genuinely or theoretically. Some people think Ok he's alright and then think, well maybe not. But either someone worth a second look or saying Hi to, or Nah. Too scary. Don't wanna know, and go away, which is cool with me.

Desley: So what kind of reactions have you had?

Participant: To my face? Where were we? So like I said, two groups- either yes, worth a chat, or too scary, don't want to know.

Desley: So have people actually said stuff to you?

Participant: Yeah. Ok. Guys my age, see Led Zeppelin. Guys my age, old people, mostly blokes, it's a boy band. They didn't have a female fan base, Led Zeppelin. They were heavy metal, hard core, drinking, bonking he-men!

Desley: Boy stuff.

Participant: Boy stuff, yeah. Guys my age or a bit younger go, Yo! Led Zeppelin. Young guys, punk kids, 18, 20 see the Metallica and stuff, go "ah! Wow!" you know, they amazed that a guy of my obvious vintage would even

Desley: have heard of

Participant: have heard of them. But I've been a Metallica fan since way back. They've been around a lot longer than just the last few albums. They've been around since '82, which is a long time. The quote on my chest, people always either want to either read that or have me explain what it means. To me it's really self-explanatory. That's about it. They're the ones that get the most reactions. The other ones are pretty much standard... tattoos of tigers and dragons and stuff. But the ones that are mine, no one's ever asked me about the kids because it is obvious they're my kids, and the Indian must mean I must like Indians. No one's ever asked me am I Indian. They either assume I am, or think I like 'em. But the ones I have to comment on, or explain, or talk about, are the band ones, either to say, "yep, Led Zeppelin, my man!" and the quote. People want to know what that means or where it came from.

Desley: So they're the more unusual ones.

Participant: they're the more, the non- standard. I mean everyone's got a tiger and a dragon. But something like symbols from a band, not everyone's got symbols from a band. You've got to like a band pretty much to get their logo tattooed on you.

Desley: The first guy I spoke to had the Rolling Stones mouth, on his bum. And he got it done at a concert.

Participant: Oh really? What the tongue? That's the one my daughter wants, down near her hip.

Desley: Well he had his on his bottom and he just dropped his pants and showed me!

Participant: That's the one she wants. She wants that tongue, down yer....

Desley: That'll hurt too, on her hipbone.

Participant: Yeah. And she's fairly scrawny, so it's going to tingle. But she got the one across her tailbone. Spent the first 10 minutes holding onto my hand and the next hour talking to the guy next to her, flirting her head off, bloke who was next to her getting tattooed. I thought, I might as well go for a milkshake, I don't exist. I'll just come back and pay for it!

Desley: didn't want to cramp her style!

Participant: But that's it. That's reaction. The arm ones no reaction whatsoever, but the band ones and the quote get a bit of interest.

Desley: So , er, this is probably a dumb question, but did you ever worry about someone else's reaction to them?

Participant: Couldn't care less. I didn't do martial arts for 30 years to worry about what someone thought of me. If they don't like me, go across the road. It's a big country and there's plenty of room. I'm not gonna insist on being anyone's friend. There are lots of people I'd like to befriends with, but I'll wait for them to make the first move, because I'm not really sure how to, maybe I'm not sure I'll like them, then if they wanna say, "Hey Grant, How's it going?" that's good, if they don't well then it never was. But no, I never, ever, ever gave a rat's about what someone else might think. Couldn't care less.

Desley: Did you ever worry about it stopping you getting a job, or anything?

Participant: No, that's why I made sure I got them, where a nice shirt, you know, wouldn't stop me from getting a job. Because no one would know. I mean I got a job here nobody knew.

Desley: So you said your kids have got tattoos?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: Dave's obviously got them. So do you have lots of friends with tattoos, or?

Participant: I don't have lots of friends. But, I've got no male friends, no mates. I don't ever... I have got biker mates in sort of hit and miss... that I meet up with at biker do's. But you know, I don't meet up with anyone, and I don't have male mates. And I don't go to pubs with my mates, or football or anywhere. So most of the guys I interact with, when I go to a biker function, that is a group, thing, they're all, I mean there's not too many untattooed guys in a biker do. outlaw-type biker dos, angels and clubs. I don't go to clubs I don't go to BMW riders' dos.

Desley: What's the other one? The Hogs?

Participant: Yeah, Hogs. They're Harley riders. They are sort of Citizen Harley Riders. They're the clean skins. They're not...

Desley: Ah, OK

Participant: But yes, the friends I do have would be drawn from the biker world, and they would be tattooed as much or more or less than myself. That's women too. A lot of girls are getting tattooed these days.

Desley: So do you feel like you identify with any particular group of people because of your tattoos?

Participant: No, not because of my tattoos. Probably because of my bikes, but not because of my tattoos. I'm just a guy with tattoos.

Desley: So you're more a biker than you are a tattooed person?

Participant: Yeah. If I was to pin down what I am, "Grant, what are you?" I'd say I'm a biker. A lone wolf biker. A biker that's happy to go anywhere on his own. If there's other bikers when I get there, cool. Sit around, chew the fat talk bikes, talk women, talk, that's what it is really.

Yeah. But as far as riding with a group, it doesn't appeal, it's not good or back, or I don't think about it. It's just not what I do. Groups tend to attract trouble. Big groups.

Desley: If they're on bikes.

Participant: On bikes. Yeah. I go everywhere on my own, but once I'm there, if it's a biker do, then you mingle with the other dudes that have come from everywhere else. Where are you from, what do you ride, how're you going? Stuff. Then you just go your separate ways. They're just the guys that you might see, just that time, when you go down to the Milton Show, that's in September you see a guy that was there last year, but you don't know where he comes from. He might live a mile from you in Wollongong, but you don't know that. You didn't ride down with him, you just meet up, talk about things, he might have the same bike you've got, or might have had one or he might be riding something you used to own, and you say, Ah, I had one of those, really cool, or was a heap of shit... or whatever. But as far as A group, no, I don't have a group of friends with tattoos. I know a lot of guys that have them, because of where I go and what I do. I'm part of a group of guys that are all tattooed...

Desley: But you don't like see other people with tattoos and think ah they must be like me somehow.

Participant: No I don't think anyone's like me. I think they're like themselves. They might have similar views on things, to me, they might have really scary views; they might just be a person with tattoos as well, you know. But I don't...usually if you see someone else with tats, like not just one, some kid has got one because it was his birthday. I'm talking about a guy that's like a career tattooed person, an older guy, you might just say "g'day" but you don't go all gushy and say, "Oh hey, how're you going?" You know, it's just not what we do. We don't sort of drive over each other and say where did you get that, how long have you had that? It's a private thing. He's got his. It means something to him. I might not agree with them, but I didn't ask anyone what they thought about what I was getting either.

Desley: So it's like an unspoken understanding about it..

Participant: Yeah. You go, how're you going, mate?

Desley: It's not like your bikes where you would talk about what bike you have and...

Participant: No we don't. Because it's such a personal thing. I mean a bike it's either a Honda or a Yamaha or a Kawasaki or a Harley. But a tattoo, you can have anything that you dream up. You can have a million things off the wall that he's got up there, or you can come up with something and say this is what I want. So it's not something that's discussed. No one's ever...another tattooed person wouldn't ask me "why did you get that?" I'd say "why did you get Donald Duck there, it looks stupid!" you know. So, no, it's just something that's not talked about. It's just accepted.

Desley: What about bikers that are in clubs?

Participant: Outlaw clubs?

Desley: Yeah.

Participant: What about 'em?

Desley: Don't they have a tattoo?

Participant: Quite often they have the name of the club somewhere prominent. Which is alright, unless you are going to fall out with that club and join another club.

Desley: You're in trouble.

Participant: You're in trouble. That's why you don't get one that'll bring you unstuck. Like getting 'Gladys forever'. You come home and Gladys has moved the furniture out and gone. So ..yeah, um, what was the question?

Desley: I was just wondering. You said they're all personal or

Participant: Well yeah Club guys will often get the club somewhere – on their arm, down here the Forth Reicht guys have quite often got a Forth Reicht tattoo, Banditos've got a Banditos on their neck, Angels are always...not always, sorry. A lot of the Angels have got their symbol

somewhere on them, because they're lifers. Because they have probably decided they are always going to be, A) a biker and B) in the Angels. Outlaw clubs, you don't leave, you don't leave just on a whim. You don't get in easy, you don't get out easy. You've gotta really, you don't get voted in on a 100% majority. If one person votes against you, you don't get in. Otherwise there's always going to be someone in that club who doesn't want you in that club. That's going to lead to dissention. So if you want to join a club, an Outlaw Club, pretty much with my experience with them, it's a 100% vote in, or you don't get in. so they're not easy to get in, and you don't ride with them a year and say, Ah , I'm going to leave. The least you'll get is a hidin'! But na, if you wanna do the time to get into an outlaw club, be prepared to be with that club 'til you're really too old to ride. Which is probably why you get a tattoo. Coz it is a lifelong thing. You want to be a Rebel or an Angel or whatever club you want to get into. I'm not a club guy. I don't mind them, I might join a club if I was invited to, but I would never actively prospect to be in a club. I'm just quite, I'd just ra... I'm not into being tied up – you meet every third Friday, will you go to this every second Tuesday, I get that at work, you know? I want to be able to get on my bike and shoot up to Queensland to watch a baseball game if my team's playing. And not have to say I can't go because the Club's doing this or the Club's doing that. So I would never be a club guy. But I understand. I've had enough to do with them to know how they work, and yeah. Wouldn't interest me. But I understand why they, once they're in a club, they would get the club insignia tattooed on them somewhere. But I wouldn't ever have a tattoo on my neck anyway, bit hard. I don't have any shirts that have collars to cover it if I needed to cover it!

Desley: So, pardon my ignorance, but why are they called “Outlaw” clubs?

Participant: Because, way back when, remember the movie The Wild One?

Desley: vaguely. Was that James Dean?

Participant: Marlon Brando. Anyway, there was a movie called The Wild One, which started this whole thing. Now that was based on a true event. A gang of bikers went to a town called Hollister and cut up pretty loose drank and womanised and yahooed and made everybody take notice of them. Black Leather jackets, no helmets, 'cause no helmets those days, bad bastards. So the American Motorcycle Association, which was the citizen group of motor bikers, that were sort of very well-to-do, and they said, “Well, 99% of motor bikers are cool. These one percenters, these are the bad ones, These are the outlaws.” So for every outlaw club in the world

since, they've got a one percent badge, to signify that yeah, we're the one percenters. They're called the one percenters. And they are called outlaws because they don't, they're not actually criminals as such. I'm not going to sit on the 60K all the way home, I'm going to go as fast as the car in front of me's going and if there is no car in front of me, I'll go as fast as I feel like. I'm not gonna, you know give a hand signal if there's no one there and stuff. I'm just gonna ride home like I ride every day, to suit me. That's technically an outlaw because I am not obeying the laws of the land, but I'm not a career criminal. I'm not gonna do stuff that's against the law, on purpose. I'm just gonna...

Desley: Do what you feel like doing.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: So do they do stuff against the law on purpose, or?

Participant: Probably. Yep. There's all sorts of levels of how game you are and how much you want to push, you know.

Desley: The limit.

Participant: You provoke the cops, because it's a game. It's our job to do what we do and it's their job to stop us. It's just an ongoing game. I've had cops break things on my bike and then give me a defect for them just because they were bastards.

Desley: So you see that on movies. I really hope it doesn't happen.

Participant: That happens. It happens. I had a cop pull me over in Towradgi Road and pull my front break on, til he broke the cable. Just pulled on until it snapped the cable, the front brake cable. And then give me a defect for riding with no break, because he was an arsehole and I was just a kid. And I had no recourse, we had no civil rights then, or anything. I'd say "your Honour, he broke it." And he'd say "Your honour I didn't." "oh well, I'll have to take the policeman's word. You've been booked here and you've been booked here. You're a bad man, Mr. Armstrong. So obviously the policeman wouldn't lie." Yeah right! So yeah, that doesn't happen only in movies. That happens....

Desley: In real life.

Participant: Not as much now because, you know people are smarter now. People have got rights now. But when you are a young punk, hurtling around town, showing off and being a smart arse, breaking the law, drag racing down Squires Lane with your mates, you know, that was the game. You got caught, you lost your licence. You didn't get caught, you went home thinking, well, that's one I didn't get caught for! If that's criminal behaviour, then take me away, but it's not, it's fun. It's just... Otherwise I'd drive a car, you know. If I wanted to obey the law, 24 hours a day, I wouldn't have a bike. A bike wouldn't interest me. One of the lures of a bike, is being out there and having fun and kicking arse and having a bit of...doing a few things you can't do in a car. That's all. Sorry.

Desley: So is there anything else about your tattoos that you can think of, that you think is important?

Participant: No just a summary of all I said. Never been sorry I got them. Always got them with lots of forethought. At the moment, forethinking two more. And quite happy to be who I am and not ashamed of who I am and not embarrassed how I look with a shirt off. I am, because I'm fat. But I mean, I have never not taken my shirt off because I am tattooed. I've not taken my shirt off because I was in a restaurant, or I shouldn't you know. But I don't go to the beach and think, ah I can't have my shirt off, there's people. It's a free country. There's girls with more tattoos than me on the other end of the beach, you know. Never gave any tattoo that I've got a second thought negatively. It's always been either that's cool, neutral or more. Never, it should have been bigger, should've been smaller, different colour.

Desley: You think that's because you think it through before.

Participant: Yes, by deciding years in advance, that's what I want and picking the time as best as you can guess as the right time to get it done. Sometimes a couple of years apart and sometimes a long time. Because like I said, I'm not addicted to them. I don't have to get one every three years. There's a big gap between the Indian and the ones on my chest, because nothing appealed. I was always going to get the Led Zeppelin ones, but I didn't get round to it 'til I got round to it. I thought, yep I'll get them.

Desley: So it's just something else you want to get, basically. Like you might want to buy another bike. So somewhere along the line you'll get another tattoo.

Participant: Yeah. Well, I'm more likely to get another tattoo than get another bike.

Desley: It's a bit cheaper!

Participant: A little bit cheaper. Lasts a bit longer too. Yeah. No I'm happy with the bikes I've got now and I don't plan to buy any more bikes. I've only got to walk past a bike shop and go, "Oh! Look at that!" But no. I'm more likely to get more tattoos before I get another bike. But neither thing is something I'm prepared to say I'll never have. Because even this one, I said to Dave, I'm going to get only two more. And he laughed and he said "yeah! When you got that one you said that was the last one." I said, "Did I?" he said "yeah!" I thought OK! He knows me. I must have said it. I must have said that'll do me now.

Desley: That one probably hurt a fair bit.

Participant: Yeah. That wouldn't have been the reason. I might not have had anything in my mind at the time, that I wanted. But then Boba Fett came along and I thought, yes. And that's why when I said only two to go he laughed. He thinks I'm going to be back. When I walked in he said I'll see you in two years. I said Ah yes. It might be more it might be less. But it will be I'm going to him and he'll do a good job at the right price. But economics isn't a factor either. If I want it I'll pay the guy right. You know it's not I won't get that. Economics might decide the timing. But the cost of the tattoo doesn't enter into it. It's what you pay. It's like the bike. It's like the milkshake. If you want the milkshake and it is three bucks, well then you have to pay three bucks for the milkshake, even though it's a bullshit paying three bucks for a milkshake. But that's it. It's only an economic consideration generally, not on the day. If that's what he wants for it. Before I got that, I said to Sue, his wife, "how much will Dave want for that?" She rang him and he said one sixty tops. So I took 200, just in case he'd want a bit more, but it was 120. But it wouldn't have been...if she had said 160, I wouldn't have thought, "That's too much." I would say, "Ok, that's what I'll bring with me." Because once I have decided it's happening, the cost isn't gonna be something that'd stop it happening. Because I would have

already made sure I had enough money to pay whatever Dave asked because I know he'll do the right thing.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	Miserable
Patient	4	2	1	2	5	4	4	5	5	1	1	5	Noxious
Caring	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	Neutral
Kind	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	5	Callous
Sense of humour	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	4	2	3	Dour
Sociable	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	5	Hermit-like
Friendly	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	Aloof
Active	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	5	5	3	4	Dead-beats
Confident	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	4	4	5	1	3	Weak
Organised	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	5	5	5	1	4	A shambles
Hard working	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	3	5	4	3	3	Lazy
Honest	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	3	3	2	1	3	Slimy





7.2 RDT subgroup Belonging

Participant RB1
Male, 34 years old

Interview date: 21/11/2005

Participant: Towards the end of 1996 I was lucky enough to go on a work conference to Las Vegas in the United States and the Rolling Stones happened to be playing a concert there at the time. I'd also just come out of a divorce that year around the same time and being at the concert thought, again, I should get something other than just a t-shirt and the program or the ticket stub and was lucky enough they had a couple of tattooists set up there doing the Rolling Stones symbol which is the lips and the tongue. I guess I knew that working in an office environment and the fact that I do surf a lot I didn't want something where everyone could see it I wanted it where it meant something to me so I had the tattoo placed on my butt which I've always found, it's um, becomes a bit of a curiosity factor especially amongst people who know me there's always like "show us your butt" and "did you get the tattoo just so you can say "kiss my ass"", because you have lips and tongue on your bum. Because of the surfing and work culture and the fact that I do have to be presentable a lot of the time I wanted the tattoo to be somewhere where obviously it wasn't visible and there again it highlighted the fact that it was something personal to me and a select few people would see. Of course, unfortunately, I'm not exactly a shy retiring type and quite often on nights out with friends when we have been drunk and there have been occasions where we've done nude runs and things like that of course then my butt becomes the topic of conversation. After the nude run when everyone realises I have a tattoo. Prior to that it was never really an issue it was something that I guess some people don't expect to see from me being a guy that they usually see in a suit and tie. When they do see me drunk and disorderly that's probably one step and then to see me with a tattoo on my butt I think it takes that persona sort of drops again, to another, I guess you could say a lower level to some degree. Or the perception of me is of a lower level than that anyway.

Desley: ok. Can you define lower?

Participant: um. Again, I think a lot of the time people see a person in a suit and tie and they think highly educated probably a bit boring, quiet, shy retiring type. Once I've had a few drinks they realise that I've got a personality. Of course it happens to be that if you get to see me run down the street nude you get to see my butt and they see the tattoo and they think he is liberated or there's some freedom there or there's... he must have had a wild youth or something along

those lines. It just seem to me that the perception of people who I haven't met prior to that I expect it would change if they see me drunk and nude but the tattoo seems to have an extra effect of, you know, why, what's that all about? And when I go into the story of how I got the tattoo and the fact that I got it while I was at a concert in Las Vegas, you know, lying in a tattoo tent, face down on a table where there's bikies and drunk people around and everyone else watching the Rolling Stones concert is getting them on their arms and I got myself buck naked on a table. I think that kind of adds to my character sometimes and gives them a different perception of me, rather than just being a guy in a suit.

Desley: so it's not necessarily lower in ...

Participant: in terms of like a social standard I guess

Desley: yeah

Participant: Um. I think it would be for some people probably not so for me because I have kept it somewhat private and I think they realise that obviously you've done that for a reason, you still want to maintain your status of being a business-like and an educated person. I think sometimes that tattoos, I've seen it with my younger brother because he does have numerous tattoos now, even though he is probably he isn't well educated as I am, like I've gone to University, but in terms of intellect he's still a very smart guy but when people see him because he's got these tattoos that are quite visible on his arms, um, people tend to treat him differently, I've noticed that just being with him in shopping centres and things where if I go to ask a question of someone at a customer service counter they're quite pleasant when they reply whereas with him they tend to think of him as being someone who perhaps isn't as well educated or isn't as high in social standing because he does have tattoos. Socio-economic, they assume that because he has a tattoo he's not as well educated, or he doesn't have as much money and he tends to get treated differently in terms of service. Whereas someone like myself who's quite small and unimposing doesn't have visible tattoos and speaks well, even though he doesn't speak, in terms of speech differences, there is no difference, although he might have a slightly stronger Australian accent than I do. But in terms of everything else it's not like he's going up and swearing at people or abusive, he's still very polite and he's still well-spoken but they see the tattoos on his arms and they think "ooh, what's the", because there's a stigma I think sometimes attached to tattoos.

Desley: Probably the old stereotype, of the criminals...

Participant: I think the criminals and the old sailor factor, and again the rock star factor I think plays a large part of it too. I know as a kid growing up, tattoos to me were always worn by people who followed heavy metal music, because that was when I ever saw people wearing tattoos that seemed to be the kind of thing, they were always Iron Maiden and that kind of fan, people with pictures of dragons and things on their arms. You know, satanic type things so I guess that perception was you're a heavy metal fan, therefore you have a tattoo. Again that's my perception, but the same sort of thing, it was that, the sailors, the builders, the heavy metal fans.

Desley: and bikers.

Participant: yeah. And bikers, that goes without saying, doesn't it.

Desley: so, how old were you when you had it?

Participant: um. I would have been twenty-five.

Desley: and did you think about it for a long time? Or was it just a spur of the moment...

Participant: it was a bit of a spur of the moment. I had thought about getting a tattoo prior to that but the timing of that, it just seemed to me that everything was right. I was in a foreign country, I'd just come out of a divorce, watching a band I'd idolised for a long time, there wasn't anyone there who knew me so if anyone had seen me sprawled out on the table getting this tattoo, I wasn't.... I might have felt uneasy and awkward about it at the time but it was, I didn't know the people, they didn't have a perception of me already, so it didn't matter. And of course when I came back to Australia, it wasn't as if anyone saw it, unless I wanted them to. So, in terms of the thought about it it probably only half an hour prior to getting it done, I thought "yes, I'm going to get this done" and it was like, well, what's it going to mean, and have a think about where am I going to put it pretty much.

Desley: so did you think about the picture very much, or was that a foregone conclusion?

Participant: that was pretty much a foregone conclusion because of the fact that I was a Rolling Stones fan and it just seemed to fit and again I liked the idea. I think I liked the idea of having lips and tongue on your butt. If you wanted to you could say kiss my ass. I had actually previously seen a similar thing on one of their albums. They have an album called “under cover” and on the back of the album there is actually a picture of someone from behind, nude, like a torso, and their buttocks and the top half of the legs, and on the copy of the album I have it had a plastic sleeve over the top and on the corner of the plastic sleeve it actually had the Rolling Stones symbol and when you put the two in, it actually put the symbol on the person’s butt. Pure coincidence. And I think that must have somehow, subliminally, because I didn’t realise until I came back and I was playing some of the albums at that stage and saw this and thought “hang on. That’s what I’ve” and it sort of twigged after that. I’m not sure if that’s where I got the idea from, or whether I just thought it was a good spot because it’s private for me. I didn’t actually think, hang on there was something there with that. It was coincidence that they matched, but it wasn’t a coincidence that I ended up with the same as the album cover in that regard.

Desley: maybe it wasn’t a coincidence that they matched. Maybe they designed it like that.

Participant: yeah. I don’t know whether it was a design thing on purpose or whether it was just pure coincidence. I don’t know. I’m sure for some people if they didn’t put the sleeve in the right way they wouldn’t have got that effect. So I don’t know. But it fitted on mine and I was like “wow that’s like the back of my own butt”. I can see that one, it’s a mirror image. So I guess that made the difference.

Desley: so why is it important to you, the tattoo?

Participant: I think for me it was a way of um having something I guess I could keep myself in some regards to show that I hadn’t gone through a period of my life through, my divorce had come around, but also to show that I hadn’t changed in some regards as well, I was still the guy I was before. I liked the Rolling Stones, I liked the music and liked to have a bit of fun. Even though I had come out of a marriage breakdown. I think that’s sort of how it came about. You know, a period of my life HAD changed, I’d grown up a significant amount in that period, I was married at a fairly young age, so I’d gone from being a guy working in a pub studying part-time, living day to day, to being married, running, well not running, but running bars and being, working in a HR department, pretty much a 9 to 5 job with a wife and a home and a new car and

bills to pay and once that finished it was sort of a new lease on life. I went back to being a teenager in some regards.

Desley: was it like going to back to how you were before?

Participant: yeah. But I still wanted to have something to show that I wasn't, I was the same person, I wasn't, I had changed in some regards. I might have grown up slightly, but I was still the same fun guy underneath and I think getting a tattoo was kind of similar to that in some regards, I was sort of saying right, that period of my life's finished but because that period of my life's finished, doesn't mean I'm not the same person. I can still be that same guy. I might not be married. I think that becomes a bit of a thing too with marriage. Everyone sees you as being a couple all the time, rather than being an individual and I wanted to show people that ok, that part of my life may have finished but I was still, as far as I was concerned, I was still me. I think that detaching myself was a whole bit of, this is what I was like when I was younger, I was a good fun guy I went out and did things and I could still do that.

Desley: so, don't answer this if you don't want to, but do you feel like you were yourself when you were married?

Participant: um. I think a lot of the time, I think when I was married, I was still myself but you tend to, the act of marriage is to be, means you have to become unselfish in some regards. You have to start thinking of your partner, not just of yourself. You have to think of what they're doing. You have to think, ok if I'm going to go and do this, what are they going to think about it or I want them to do this, or I want them to be happy so I guess it's that constant, you know, the fact that you're not thinking just for yourself, you're thinking for someone else sometimes too. So I don't think I changed in terms of who I was, but just in terms of some of the things I did. And I think when you become single again you don't have that, there's no responsibility other than to yourself. It's a matter of ok, if you want to lie in on Saturday morning, you can. You don't have to think about, oh, the wife needs to get the car, she needs to have this done, I've gotta do that, you can think, I can lie in. so I think a part of it was, so yeah, I don't think it was a case of me feeling any differently, in terms of who I was, just again the change in thinking, I could revert back to being me. I think that was probably a part of the tattoo too, I kind of knew that if I got a tattoo when I was married my wife wouldn't have agreed with the idea, like "what are you doing that for?", you don't need to do that, that's going to be silly, how's that going to

look on your bum when you're 75 years old and wrinkled? Um, whereas to me it was like, well, I want to do this, I can. There was no-one to say you shouldn't do it, or perhaps this is silly, or you know, don't do it. It was all up to me. So probably a bit of a way of getting to prove, a bit of independence in some regards, having my independence back. I could do something I wanted to do and not have to worry about the consequences.

Desley: so, do you still like the tattoo?

Participant: yeah, I do. Um, it has faded slightly, coz it's 10 years old now. Um, which surprises me, because it's not in an area that gets a lot of sun, if any, um, so I am surprised at that. Um, a couple of times I've thought about, do I want to get it re-coloured and then I've sort of thought, no, there's no point, I think if it fades that much that it's going to be invisible, then so be it. That might be something that I'd look at at a later stage but it's still quite visible now. I don't think about it a lot, to be quite honest, being in a non-visible position, you tend not to notice it as much and study it. I see people who do have tattoos and they sit there sometimes at the beach, and they might be scratching their arm or looking at it and thinking, yeah that's cool, or they might have noticed a change if their muscles have grown or the skin's changed in terms of the colouring, whereas with it being on my butt you tend not, you can't see it, so you tend not to think about or, it's only every now and again I get a glimpse in the mirror if I'm getting out of the shower, or something, um, or over the past few years I've had a couple of girlfriends who obviously when they've seen me nude have made a comment about it, you know "oh, what's that?" and they want the story as well and then of course they make comments about it as we have our relationships. They make jokes about "kiss my ass" and it's become quite a prominent thing. Um, but yeah, no, I still really do like it again because it is something that is private to me a lot of the time, it's something that I can reveal to people if I choose to. Um, I think that's probably what I like about it most, it does give, seeing my butt's enough of a "wow" factor and the tattoo definitely is. Um, so, I guess, yeah, I obviously enjoy it. I've now gone out and bought, when I used to go to the stones concerts when I was younger I pretty much bought the stock standard concert things whereas now I tend to look for the ones that have the same tattoo symbol on the shirt. So I've something I can say "that's what I've got on my butt" I've noticed I've done that a fair bit lately too.

Desley: so would you change it all?

Participant: no. I don't think so. I don't think I could change it.

Desley: would you have it again?

Participant: yeah. Definitely yeah. If I didn't have it there already I would have it again. I wouldn't put it anywhere else other than where it is. I've thought about that, um, watching other people I know get tattoos on their arms and things I've thought "could I have put that rolling stones tattoo anywhere else" and I don't think you could. I think having a lips and tongue other than where it is on my butt would seem not quite right. Um, on an arm, or on a chest or something I don't think. It's something that I've thought about, yeah. I can't see it being done differently. Um, having watched my brother going through getting some of his heritage-type tattoos, I have recently thought about getting something similar on an arm. Like the welsh coat of arms is three sort of feathers and I've thought about getting that and at the same time I've thought, if I wear a white shirt to work, people will see it and I've sort of ummed and ahhed but it's something I might do one day probably but just at the moment I'm holding off.

Desley: right. Ok. So, why did you have a tattoo rather than do the normal memorabilia?

Participant: hard question.

Desley: sorry

Participant: no, no, that's alright. I'm just trying to think. I think because being in an office-type job pretty much for a period of time then and a responsible position as well. Um, I think having a tattoo in a way was sometimes, how do you put it? It's seeing as being something outside the area, I guess, in some regards

Desley: it's a bit different

Participant: yeah. There's a term for it ... I can't think what it is. Damn! It'll come to me later on. I'll walk out of here and I'll think... I guess it was something me showing myself I wasn't just an office suit and a tie.

Desley: so you're not the stereotype?

Participant: no, I'm not the stereotype. Yeah, so. Um, and I think that was probably why in having it done on my butt shows it's something for me to see, that I know I'm not that type of person. Um, you know. Well, I am, but there is another side to me I guess.

Desley: so is there something you could have done that would have had the same effect?

Participant: um. Well people have suggested to me well why didn't you just get your ear pierced or something like that and I guess it's something that's never appealed to me. Um. I think the ear piercing thing again is very public. Um. I guess growing up where I did in the UK ear piercing is always seen as a bit effeminate, something like guys did if they weren't quite sure about themselves sometimes. Whereas a tattoo was a manly thing. Very macho. So I guess that's probably why that appealed to me a little more too. Um.. that was it ... taboo! The tattoo thing's always seen as being a bit of a taboo thing as well, in some regards. You know, a bit of a rebel. And I think that was again another part of it. Something that people wouldn't expect of me, because I am suit and tie so to have a tattoo is that taboo thing, taking things to the other side. It enabled me to show that I'm not just a straight-laced guy, I do have another side. So yeah. I hope that answers it.

Desley: so there's not really anything you can think of that would have had that effect.

Participant: no.

Desley: that you would be willing to do.

Participant: no. I can't say.. I mean, I've done... since, over the past 5 or 6 years I've done other things. I've bungee jumped and I've sky dived and did things like that and they're great and they're an adrenalin rush and there's excitement and there's also a bit of an image thing attached to them too. Like, oo-wa, you must be so tough because you've done those things um, but they're not a lasting thing. It's something that happens for a short period of time then it's done. And it's not something you can take with you, you know, unless you carry a photo of yourself bungee jumping or parachuting around, it's not something that's there to prove. Well, not prove, but to show you've done those things. Whereas the tattoo's there for me and it's always going to be there for me. Um. And then again, if I want other people to see it, I can let them see it. I think

that's part of it. I think the fact that there's an attachment there, something that's everlasting, enduring um, something that because of where I've had it placed means I can choose who I show that side of me to. It's sort of like, um. I guess it's like opening a book at a certain page. You know, sometimes you get books with nice pictures in them and there are certain pages that you want people to see, I guess that's what I'm like. I see myself as a certain image of the way I am as a book cover, and people might find out about me by reading through. But there are certain bits that I want certain people to see if I show them. That's the way I am, I guess

Desley: so, tricky question... I'll leave that for one second... do you draw a distinction between having a tattoo, and having that particular picture? Do you think of yourself as a person with a tattoo, or are you a tattooed person?

Participant: um. I guess, I don't know. It's strange. Like I said, because I don't think about it every day, because I don't see it, some days, you know, I'm completely oblivious to it. But I do notice that when I do see, um, displays on tattoos or tattoos shops, I tend to stop and have a look. Um, and think, oh, yeah, I'm one of them too. I guess I do feel like some sort of cultural attachment to that tattoo world, but at the same time, because generally people who do have tattoos have them where they are quite visible and prominent, um and in this day and age when they're becoming such a trend, we're getting all manner of tattoos in all manner of places, I also at the same time tend to not think of myself as a tattooed person because mine is more of a, I guess, a bit of a badging for myself in some regards.

Desley: it's more private?

Participant: it's more private, yeah.

Desley: so it's there for you not...

Participant: yeah. It's there for me

Desley: not for other people

Participant: yeah. Unless I want them to. Which is again, my decision so, whereas you see these days people get them, a lot of people get those Maori bands around their arms which are quite

prominent and you know they're probably Yugoslavian and they've got a Maori band around their arm and I don't understand that. They've done it because they're feeling proud or whatever it's visible for everyone to see and they're doing it to show off in some regards. Like saying "I've got a tattoo too"

Desley: my daughter calls them "tough stickers"

Participant: yeah. That's a great term for it.

Desley: because they don't really hurt.

Participant: yeah.

Desley: and it's as good as putting a sticker on to go "yay"

Participant: that's right. Yeah.

Desley: so I thought that was a good description

Participant: I think that's a great term for it. And I've noticed if you go around a lot of the pubs and clubs in Wollongong you'll find, I reckon about 70% of the security guards would have them. Because it's seen as being a bit of a coat of arms... I'm a tough guy, I've got a Maori arm band tattoo. I reckon there's a good majority of them. If you don't see them, it's because they've got their sleeves these days the long sleeves. If you asked them to roll up their sleeves, I reckon you'd find probably 7 out of 10 have got something of that nature on their arm. It's quite amazing. And I noticed that because I worked in hospitality for a while so I know a lot of the guys. Yeah. It's a tough thing. "I'm a security guard, so I'm tough". Gotta have your tough sticker to prove it. It's strange like that. So yeah, there is some sort of mental note that yeah, I'm a tattooed person, but at the same time I'd also throw in the "I'm not a tattooed person like everyone else" in some regards. Um, because, when I first got it done I probably was, because tattoos were getting done because it meant something to them. Nowadays they're getting done because it's a trend and I don't feel that attachment to those people. I guess in some regard.

Desley: yeah. So there's like sub-groups of

Participant: there's people who get it done, like I said, for change in life, or they get it done because it means something to, or because it's a point of reference, um, and then there's the people who get it done because it's trendy. I guess the one's that are trendy are the ones that are on the edge. Everyone else I can identify I can understand for all the other reasons. The ones that get it done for a trend I don't understand. They're the ones, as far as I'm concerned, who, they're not doing it for a reason to themselves, they're doing it for a reason to others.

Desley: Yeah

Participant: I think that's where they're out of that whole group, I don't feel association to them because of that. So...

Desley: what about the other direction, if you go to the people that are like serial tattooees that are getting the sleeves and planning their whole body just about

Participant: again, I guess I can understand that, because obviously there is, it means something to them to go into it to that extent, it must be some a major reason for it. Whether they like the art work or they do have an affinity for it, whether there's some, I don't know, psychological disorder getting that much done. But I do understand and I don't appreciate it as much, probably, because I think sometimes it can be done too much. I mean, it's sort of like saying "I don't like my body and I'm going to cover it up" in some regards. Um, again, that's just my own personal thing but I do understand why they're doing it and I do realise that

Desley: do you associate yourself with them as a tattooed person, though, or do you think that's another thing?

Participant: probably not because my tattoo is again so small and private and theirs obviously aren't. um, they're large tattoos and they're very prominent. I probably don't because I'm sure they'd look at me and think of me, if we put it in motor bike standards, they're the guys riding the Harleys, and I'd be on a postie bike.

Desley: ok

Participant: you know what I mean? Because it's my tattoo's so small and insignificant compared to what they're having done. Um, I think that's the way that they would view me. I tend to sort of take a little bit of that on, because I tend to think it's quite small, it's private, um, and in terms of a comparison like that, yeah, I think that's a pretty fair way to put it.

Desley: so, trick question. Can you tell me what would be the opposite of your tattoo?

Participant: the opposite of my tattoo? Ooh, dear, I don't think I'd even know how to answer that one. um, what would be the opposite of my tattoo? I'd think in terms of the actual art itself, I mean, the tongue is quite... the way it's done it's a mouth with the tongue poking out, quite, anti-establishment, in your face, the rolling stones as they were. Sort of like sticking your thumb up, fingers up to everyone you know, and I guess that's what a bit of it was to me too, just a bit like them, a bit of a rogue, a bit of a... you know, I don't have to be like everyone, I can do my own thing in some regards. So I think if you were taking to the other way it would have to be something quite shy and retiring, and that would be um, I don't know, a flower or something like that perhaps. Something that shows like a shrinking violet, that shows the other side of my personality I think is that sometimes, I do have an engaging personality, so for something that says the reverse it would have to be something like a shrinking violet to show the part of me that does close up sometimes. I guess that's the only symbolism I can come up with in terms of an opposite, yeah, I can't think of anything else that would symbolise, I guess, something that's not so outgoing. A closed book perhaps, would probably be the only other thing but I don't think, I can't imagine myself getting either of those as a tattoo. It's... yeah, I don't think

Desley: it's just the theoretical standpoint I'm coming from he talks about you can't understand something unless you understand what it's not. So trying to understand your tattoo, part of that, from that perspective is trying to understand what it isn't. so what would be the..

Participant: I didn't remember that one til you said that. I'm saying that it obviously shows an outgoing side of my personality and I think that a lot of it probably goes back to like I said some subliminal thing time the lips and the poking thing it's all subliminal to say "hey. I do have an outgoing side to me, I'm not just a guy in a tie" so, um, yeah. Ok.

Desley: ok. So I think you might have answered this, but I'll just check. What do you think your tattoo means to the people who see it?

Participant: um. Again I think it shows that I do have another side. Um, that I am perhaps, a little more outgoing than they first realised, a little bit more unreserved, um, in fact, again, because tattoos are seen as a bit of a I always think of as a bit of a taboo thing um I think it shows them that there is another side to me, rather than just being this professional business person, um who's very mature and switched on. I think they see the tattoo and think "this guy does like to have fun. He can do silly and stupid things sometimes and not have a... or feel a need to be responsible 24/7" there are things about it... That's what I would hope it would show, in some regards. But at the same time I don't necessarily, I don't necessarily want them to have an opinion of me, just because I have a tattoo.

Desley: so it doesn't matter to you what they think about it?

Participant: not really. No. I mean like because of where it is, as I've mentioned, it means that people who see it are people who already know me and if they haven't worked out that side of my personality by the time they see the tattoo, um, well then I guess, seeing the tattoo either way isn't going to reinforce that difference.

Desley: so would you.... This might be too private, but would you tell a girlfriend you had it, or would you just...

Participant: um, I have previously. It tends, I had a girlfriend a few years ago who had a tattoo on the small of her back and I didn't notice that until probably 2 or 3 weeks after we'd started dating we went to the beach one day and while we were there I said "wow, you've got a tattoo" and she's like "yeah". And then she said "have you got a tattoo?" and I said "yes I do" and then had to show her. But I hadn't really thought of, any need TO show her the tattoo I thought when we got to the point in our relationship where we were naked she'd see it then and it'd probably come up in conversation if she saw it, I don't know. I guess, again, if it comes up in conversation I have but I've never, I can't say I've ever sat there and said to a girl at a particular time "hey, I've got a tattoo on my arse. Do you want to see it?" It tends to be, it comes up in conversation because they have tattoos of their own, um. Once or twice it has come up because, I might be with a girl who I'm with at a party and someone else who's seen the tattoo says something about "have you seen his tattoo yet?" and then it's like "what?" and yeah, I've got one, ok. That's the story, and show them. But I've never sat there and showed someone. When

I've just started dating "hey I want to show you my tattoo because you're going to see it one day anyway"

Desley: so is part of that because you worry about what they'll think of you, in that stereotype you talked about with your brother?

Participant: no. I think it's because of the fact that. There probably is a little bit of a stereotype there in terms of I don't want them to form an opinion of me because of my tattoo. I'd rather they like me for who I am. I think the other factor it is where it is is that if I'm going to become close and intimate to them, they'll get to see the tattoo anyway and then that would mean more to them, the fact that they feel like they're one of the few people who've seen it.

Desley: so it's more special

Participant: yeah. It's more special, its, its not something everyone should see anyway. Um, but you know, but by seeing it if and when they are close and intimate with me, it sort of adds to that moment. Its something that they know that very few people have seen. So it's sort of like I must be special to him because not only do I get to see him naked, I get to see his tattoo. I guess, so it's yeah, like another part of the process.

Desley: so what kind of reactions have you had to it?

Participant: um, typical parents one was "what'd you get that done for?" but they didn't find out til a few months later obviously. Um, um, my younger brother sort of laughs at me because he considers me to be one of those, coz he's got such big prominent tattoos he considers me to be the postie tattoo, and he's the Harley tattoo so he kind of laughs about you know me not being a real tattoo person. Um, girlfriends have been... they all seem to like it to be quite honest. Not putting... this is going to sound funny... not putting tabs on myself but I seem to have what most girls would consider to be a cute arse. That's the comment I get a lot and I think for some of the girlfriends I've had it's a surprise that if they see me in jeans and they say "nice arse" or things, but then when they get to see my butt naked and the tattoo it's kind of like "oh. That's kinda cute. That's even cuter now." It adds to the cuteness

Desley: like a bonus

Participant: sort of, yeah, I guess it is. They go “I like the fact that your arse is cute but the tattoo’s cute too”. It’s sort of like a little double whammy in that respect.

Desley: so basically good reactions

Participant: yeah, pretty much. I can’t say anyone’s ever told me

Desley: no-one’s run off screaming

Participant: no. um, no I can’t say they have. And of the girls that have seen it, I know a couple of them, when our relationships have ended have made comments obviously to their girlfriends. I’ve been at parties and had their girlfriends or people come up and ask me you know “I hear you’ve got a cute little tattoo on your backside. You want to show us?” and make a comment about it, as if it’s a way of getting an intro. Or something along those lines. They might have thought I was cute myself and thought “right. We’ve heard about his tattoo. Let’s go have a look. See if we can get him to show us” that sort of thing. Um, so that’s sort of come out of it too but I tend to brush those things off. No, sorry, you’re not going to get a look at my butt

Desley: it’s not really why you got it

Participant: that’s right and the comment then is “when we’ve been dating for six months you can have a look at it then”.

Desley: it’s private. You choose who you want to see it.

Participant: yeah, it’s private. And whilst I have done things at parties where I have done streaks and nude runs and things, you know, I don’t think standing at a party having a little talk to you and then dropping your pants to show your arse is a particularly great thing to do

Desley: you wouldn’t do it if you didn’t have a tattoo there, would you?

Participant: no. that's right. If someone said "can I see your butt?" no, you wouldn't. if they want to see your tattoo I think it's the same sort of thing. You've got to treat it as the same. Keeping your private...

Desley: so did the fact that maybe your parents might not approve have any influence on whether you got it?

Participant: not really, because I knew where it was going to go they weren't likely to see it. I was 25 years old. It wasn't as if when I, I'd lived out of home since I was 17, so it wasn't as if they were going to catch me coming out of a shower or walking nude around the house and see the tattoo. It'd be pretty much, the only way it would have got back to them would be word of mouth, either one of my brothers or a girlfriend saying something to them. So, it wasn't really a concern in that respect. My parents are pretty accepting, I mean, although they are, I'd probably consider them, well I've always considered them to be quite old-fashioned, English, um, they're pretty accepting. They realise that things change in the modern world and I boxed when I was younger. I know that was terrible for my mum sort of accepted this little skinny kid being a boxer getting his head punched about a lot. Um, but she was fine, you know, she didn't like it, but she was never going to stop me from doing it, because she knew it was what I wanted. So she would support me, she would never let me enjoy it but she never came to watch.

Desley: I can understand

Participant: I think most parents could. And it's a similar sort of thing, advice about boxing like I don't want you to do this and whatever else but I always sort of knew that whatever decisions I make, they'll support me. Whether it's right or wrong, whether I've made a bad decision or a good decision, they've always said if that's what you want to do that's fine. You know. We don't like it, we'd advise you to do this or whatever, but you've done it and as long as you're happy with the outcome come out with. Um, so I think I've always been quite lucky like that, too

Desley: so, apart from your brother, who else do you know that has a tattoo?

Participant: um, I'm trying to think. Someone from... family friends have got them. Um, I mentioned girlfriends that have had them as well... um, but around the time I got mine there

wasn't really anyone. Even my brother at that point didn't have a tattoo. I can't say I can recall a couple of work colleagues when I worked in pubs, ie security guards and things that had them, um, but no-one who's tattoo I ever looked at and thought I want to get one like that. Um,

Desley: so what about now?

Participant: um, how do you mean, like in terms of people I know?

Desley: yeah

Participant: endless. I wouldn't be able to list them here.

Desley: ok

Participant: um, like I said, ex-girlfriends, female friends who've got them, my brother, in-laws, mates from work, mates from soccer, mates from surfing, um,

Desley: every aspect

Participant: yeah, people I know socially and intimate circles as well. Such circles. I'm amazed now at the number of people who do have them. Whereas I know at the time that I did get mine it wasn't, even though it was 1996, it still wasn't an everyday event. It wasn't something everyone had. And I would imagine when I was a kid in the 70s and 80s it was even less so. Now there seems to be a tattoo parlour in every suburb in some regards. They're just booming, you know, because the popularity of the thing, they're just a socially and culturally accepted thing and it became a trend, or a fashion statement.

Desley: even over the last few years. Like I went into Corrimal tattoo parlour today and there were probably 10 people in there, there were only a few guys working, whereas in the past you could go in there and there'd be none or one.

Participant: one guy getting a tattoo and one guy doing it. And then he'd be like sat around for the next 3 hours waiting for the next customer. Nowadays you can go in and it's like come back later or

Desley: support thing but still

Participant: I think, I can see them getting to the extent where it will become like a hairdresser's where you need to make an appointment or book a couple of days in advance.

Desley: some of them do

Participant: like, I can't do you today, come in Tuesday. You know, it's getting to that stage because it's so popular. And I guess also that's why it's more opening up people realising there's a demand for it so it's. there's over... I think there's about, what, half a dozen in this area.. in Wollongong

Desley: I'm not sure. There's Thirroul, Corrimal, Wollongong, there's one at Shellharbour I think

Participant: is there still one at Port Kembla? But I can think back to when I was a kid and first living in Australia.

Desley: I saw one in Kiama the other day

Participant: Which surprised me because it's a sleepy coastal village. There's the tourism boom over summer and you wouldn't think, that's where that person gets their cash in over summer when the tourists are there and they're a bit like me being in Las Vegas, you're out of town, away from the people you really know, I'll get this tattoo and come back and have a surprise for them. I got this tattoo done while I was away.

Desley: so you weren't at the concert with anyone you knew?

Participant: no. no. no-one at all. I mean, even, it was a work event, 10 of us had gone over for a conference, in Las Vegas, on international gaming and it was only an 8 day conference and it was on the 4th day, we'd arrived on the Thursday night so it'd be on the Monday through to the Thursday the conference days and I'd seen the tickets advertised through the casino I was staying in, the Mirage Casino, saying, Rolling Stones playing, and it was virtually sold out and I

talked to the concierge and he get me tickets and he rang me on the Tuesday when I got back to my room and he said “I’ve got you some tickets, they’re expensive, but” and I said “great. How many did you get?” and he said “one”. Great for me. Finished on the Thursday, finished the conference, and it was like, I think we were finished about 5 most of the days, I went back to my room, got changed, got a taxi out to the carpark of this other casino where the concert was at and went by myself. Which was another thing I had probably never done before, go to a concert by myself. Generally when you do go to a concert, you go with someone. Whether it’s a girlfriend or a couple of mates, or even just one mate, so there’s always someone you can turn back later on and say “how cool was that?” you’ve got that point of reference again. But because I was there, and the guys I was at the conference with, were in their mid 40s and upwards and I was 25 and the youngest person in middle management in the company there probably wasn’t anyone there I felt comfortable asking to come along in some regards but at the same time again it was a bit of another bit of escapism for me. I thought, well, I’m here, in another country, I can go to this concert by myself. Another bit of proving that I was an individual, you know. I can go I can go to a concert by myself and do this. And I came out with a tattoo as well. So yeah, I guess it was a bit of a character test of myself in some regards too.

Desley: getting the tattoo or going to the concert or both?

Participant: I think going to the concert was. Once I was there because, ah, because I’d sort of proved it to myself I guess that I could go, and it wasn’t like it was a small concert. There were 28 thousand people or something like that, and it was a big open-air one and to be in that kind of numbers and that kind of crowd and to be there by yourself and on the other side of the world, I think that was part of it. I just got caught up, I know, I’ll get a tattoo.

Desley: so how did you find out they were doing tattoos at the concert?

Participant: just saw the tent. I think I went to the toilets at one point, saw the thing there and saw the people lining up and thought “what’s that about” and had a look and then towards the end of the concert as I was sort of coming out I thought I should get that done. Like I said I thought about it and wasn’t quite sure and then I thought I could do this, yeah, it means something to me so why not? Went and had it done that way. But yeah, they had the typical t-shirt tent and the other things as well and there were 2 guys sitting there doing tattoos. So that was it. I think it was a US, US \$55 I think it was. So what’s that? About 100 bucks Australian.

Yeah. Which I wasn't quite sure of the prices at the time but I figured that must have been pretty much the standard price.

Desley: I think they depend on size and

Participant: I know you want to take a picture and

Desley: I've got a guy lined up just in case

Participant: it's probably only, it's only 4 or 5 cm in diameter either way if that, so it's not a huge one in terms of, but its coloured, so I guess it's the art work more than anything else. But I would have thought it wouldn't have been anything difficult for them, they're obviously doing it on a lot

Desley: maybe they had to pay copyright

Participant: they might have too. I wouldn't be surprised actually. I wouldn't be surprised by that. The Stones are a corporation themselves now. That might have been part of the deal.

Desley: so you said something about it being a test of character... do you think part of that was just "can I go through with the actual"... like were you worried about the pain or

Participant: um, I think everyone is worried about the pain when you first go because there's this big muscly, invariably this big tattooed guys themselves, you know, jabbing a needle into you thousands of times. So I think you are to an extent, but I think that I know from having had, it's small comparison in some regards, but having had injections and things whenever I've been to hospital, or blood tests, I've never had a problem with having those needles stuck into me. I figured if this is just going to be that a thousand times over, well, after a few minutes its going to be pretty much numb anyway. It's going to be like getting a dead arm you know, it's gonna hurt, but once you're past the initial numbness of it it's pretty much like, um. I didn't find the pain that was pretty much how the pain felt, I think because your butt is quite fleshy, that was pretty much it. It was like someone had given me a big kick in the butt, but it lasted for 40 minutes rather than 4 or 5 minutes. So I had some, I actually said to the guy "is this going to hurt?" and he said "yeah, it'll hurt" but his description was it will feel like a really big bruise for a while.

And I think the hardest part was not being able to sit down for a good few hours afterwards and then having to sleep on my stomach to make sure, you know, and I did keep rolling over onto it and “ow”. But, yeah, I think, like I said, I generally have a low pain threshold. Most people do, they just never admit to it. Um, but I know that once he did start, first started doing it it was kind of like “oh well . This is it. Now you have to bear it, you can’t ask him to stop halfway through”. If it was going to really hurt, bad luck, grit your teeth. I think the pain... the fact that I was lying there with my butt in the air and all these people stood around was probably a good distraction in some regards, because, you know, you felt like, you felt like you were entertainment. The guy who did it, he was doing with the rubber gloves on and I remember at one point someone was standing there laughing and he’s got this rubber glove and he’s pretending to stick it in my butt, going “hey, look at this” you know. So these are all these people I didn’t know stood around laughing at me getting the tattoo done

Desley: not necessarily at you, though

Participant: probably with me, but yeah, I was laughing too. But yeah, at the same time, ok, again, it was a distraction from the pain in some regards but there people making comments and I was making comments about.

Desley: so you don’t necessarily feel it was a test of your character to get it?

Participant: not, no. I don’t think so, no. I think the test was to actually get the tattoo in some regards because it was something I would have said “am I going to do this?” “yes I am going to do it” and “when am I going to do it?” so do it now so once I’d made that decision it was “right, now I’ve got to do it” so that was the test. Having made the decision to have it done, to actually walk into the tent and have it done.

Desley: so do you think you would have walked out of the concert and got it done if they hadn’t had the tent in there?

Participant: at a later stage? Probably, yeah. Um. Probably wouldn’t have been a rolling stones tattoo, it might’ve been something else, might have been on somewhere else on my body. I would think it probably would have been on my butt still, because of the privacy factor. But I

don't know what that would have been. I think its something, like I said, because I'd always said that I wanted to get one, it was always going to happen, it was just a question of when.

Desley: so you always said you wanted a tattoo? You mean not a rolling stones tattoo?

Participant: it was pretty much something I always liked the idea of having but I don't know whether it was the tough sticker factor or what but it was always something I thought I wouldn't mind having a tattoo. Again something that's symbolising to me, something that I can carry through my life.

Desley: yeah. But I mean, the fact that you're going to put it somewhere private tends to indicate that you're not doing it to look tough.

Participant: yeah that's right. But to me it was, like we talked about before, the people who generally I had this association with tattoos and tough people, when I was younger. There were bikies, there were sailors, security guards, I guess there was a real "tough" factor to it, but that wasn't the be all and end all for me. That was maybe 5% of 100% in the decision in some regards. To show I've got a tattoo therefore I'm not a wuss. I guess. To show myself that I'm not a wuss. Whether it was the pain factor of going through the tattoo or whether it was the fact that I have a tattoo I don't know. I think there was just a bit either way I'm not a wuss and I've got a tattoo. Yeah.

Desley: so is there anything else about the tattoo that you think's important?

Participant: um. Na, I can't say there is. I think we've covered everything. I guess the, I haven't, the only thing is I guess is I do sometimes think what is it going to look like when I'm an old man because it is, it is in a spot where obviously your body shape changes a lot, through age and time, so I do think, is it going to look, because of where it is. I think well, will that really matter. Its not like if I got a tattoo of a sailing ship on my arm and as I got older my arms got smaller and all wrinklier and the sailing ship looked like a shipwreck. With this being where it is on my body, no matter what happens to the shape of my bum, its not something that's going to be highly visible for other people to see, or even for myself to see to say, well, I don't like that any more. It becomes like a scar, I guess, in some regards, to an extent. It's there now I can't change it. If its, even if I did want to, well, its not going to matter and its not something I have to look at

every day. A bit like if I got a big scar on my bum, I think, well what can you do about it? Not much, it's going to be there and you can't change it, so just leave it.

Desley: and I guess its part of you and your life

Participant: but I guess aesthetically its one of the things you do think of, is it going to look cool when I'm 75 but then because its on your... somewhere only I can see it tends to negate that argument because it doesn't matter if it doesn't look cool when you're 75. You're probably the only person looking at it. So, you know, because it's for me it shouldn't matter. So yeah, so that's the other side of it too.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	Sad
Patient	3	1	1	1	1	3	3	2	5	2	3	5	Rushed
Caring	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	4	Mean
Kind	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	3	2	1	4	Nasty
Sense of humour	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	5	Bland
Sociable	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	1	4	Boring
Friendly	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	1	5	Rude
Active	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	3	2	3	5	Lazy
Confident	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	2	4	Shy
Organised	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	3	3	2	5	Messy
Hard working	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	3	2	5	Lazy
Honest	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	5	Liar



Participant: Alright. Well I've got one in progress at the moment. I'll show you if you like and you'll probably enjoy it.

Desley: Wow

Participant: I've been to Japan 32 times.

Desley: With work?

Participant: On the ships, yeah, when I was young I kick boxed a lot and karate, and I was into the Samurai swords - Japan's really cool. It's weird, it's a strange place but it's like they've got this huge respect thing happening there really good manners and if you get to meet the real Japanese they're really shy and come across sometimes as arrogant and rude but once you get to know them they'll stick by and look after you. The whole Japanese thing, I've always loved dragons, got dragons all through the house. I wanted a dragon as probably my first tattoo probably, but just never had the right dragon sort of thing. And the tattoos actually started with Celtic ones cause of being Irish, thinking of maybe doing the full sleeve cause I love fish, I love the koi and its the symbolism behind them. There's this whole Chinese myth that if the koi reaches the head of a river it turns into a dragon.

Desley: Oh, OK – so, koi, sorry?

Participant: It's a big fish, like a big gold fish. The big ones you see in ponds. The koi carp. They're a carp. And they symbolize good fortune and sort of good luck. The dragon sort of symbolizes power and a bit of determination maybe and strength I suppose. So I'll probably get a koi. The bloke who does all my tattoos is just begging me. Perfect shading, and it'll just blend. So that's my dragon. I've got hardly any colour on, all my tattoos are just black. I don't look at myself as someone who follows fashions but at the moment big bright colourful tattoos. I ride dirt bikes and one of me younger mates has got... I don't know, might regret them later on. They're cool tattoos. Sort of like graffiti style. That new sort of new wave that, yeah, I think mine are a bit more... every one I've gone and got drawn up and thought about it and it's got a

reason. Not just because it's a cool picture. But I don't know. I enjoy getting tattooed. The shop I get done at at Thirroul is a whole. I listen to punk music and yeah, just people I associate with and it's a cool spot and I'd rather go there than go to a pub. It's cool. Wayne who does mine, he's a strange bloke. He's very quiet and hard to get any conversation out of him, but once you've, coz I've been there and spent a lot of time there and yeah, I wouldn't say we're mates, like I wouldn't invite him to a barbecue but its good. I like it. Thing is, there's a show on TV, on pay TV on Saturday mornings called "Miami Ink". It's awesome. Just, yeah, tattoo shops are cool. A bit intimidating and daunting, like the first time I ever went, probably the first half a dozen times I went the tattooist, a lot of them don't talk, too busy doing what they're doing which is what you want. I like it, it's cool. And his shop's all, he sells all like art work from, like that sort of pop culture art. Posters from bands and done by the original von Dutch and all these sorts of things and it's just a cool spot and I don't know.

Desley: So when you say you enjoy it, you enjoy the pain of it?

Participant: I wouldn't say I enjoy the pain of it as a fetish, like it doesn't turn me on, but it does as well. I have a, I've broken fourteen bones so I've had a terrible run. My nickname's "Crash". Everyone calls me. I broke my neck in three places when I was 17. Spent a long time in hospital and if I go to a doctor's surgery or hospital I feel sick straight away. Like if I've got to get a needle I have to lie down or I'll faint. But getting tattoos. I think it was a bit of a personal test, my very first ever one. I got it, it's 10 years ago, nearly exactly, so I started late but yeah, it was like a bit of a... I don't think tattoos are a macho thing or a tough guy thing, but for me it was a bit of a personal test, you know.

Desley: Like whether you could put up with the needle?

Participant: do it, yeah, yeah. I was. I got that one done in Sydney at Newtown at the Celtic Dragon. And I was scared and nervous. Not so much OF getting it done, I was scared and nervous that I was going to carry on like a girl, that I was not going to be able to handle it.

Desley: I talked to one woman and she fainted.

Participant: Heaps of people faint

Desley: Two or three times.

Participant: Yeah?

Desley: And she said. I think she got hers done at Feelgood in the city, and the second time they're just like "yeah, whatever, when you're finished we'll keep going"

Participant: I've never. When I got me first one, which is that one,

Desley: Does that go all the way round?

Participant: It didn't, it only went to there. Does now.

Desley: Coz it hurts heaps more under there, doesn't it?

Participant: Oh yeah. Everyone has their spots. Like me it's under the arms. Coz this took 7 ½ hours. Started at the bottom and come up. In here and at the back I was just like phew...

Desley: I imagine there would be pretty bad.

Participant: Anywhere where it hurts to pinch.

Desley: Yeah, that's what someone else said.

Participant: Then the chest. I haven't got a tattoo on my chest, but a few of my mates, and the guy who does mine, he reckons the chest is, and your lower back, though I can vouch for lower back, that hurts, but for me it's inside the arms where for other people it doesn't hurt them. Everyone's got their spot. That one didn't... I thought that was going to hurt, but it didn't bug me at all

Desley: The bone, yeah, you would imagine.

Participant: My legs. Like on my knee cap I thought that would hurt but it didn't. The leg for me was like the closest thing to... I could've fell asleep, read a book, whatever, to me it was no

pain. Not no pain, of course there was pain, but it was, yeah, nowhere near what I thought. That was cool. Yeah but definitely coz when I got this one done I was silly, I got it done a couple of days before I had to sail. You know you've got to wear overalls on the ship I cut the sleeves off and it gets all frayed and it rubbed out some of the colour and I've never gone back to get it fixed because don't know. I'm not scared of it, I don't know, just put it off, sort of thing.

Desley: So the first one you had here you said was about 10 years ago and then how long til you got the next one?

Participant: I don't know. I got it done the day before Mother's Day that one, and then I, might have been a year. Coz that's my mother's family shield. And the knot, she got for my birthday whenever it was, years ago, made it at the jewellers out of white gold, it's that the actual knot. And I got me birthday present, I always wanted something to fill in there. The tattooists, they hate doing anything that's continuous because everyone's a different size and I always wanted something to go. As I said, a year I guess and then I probably go once or twice a year since then really, when I think about it, I've got a few.

Desley: So do you consider that there's some kind of theme going through all the tattoos or are there some that are related to each other or separate?

Participant: There definitely is.

Desley: Which one?

Participant: There's themes plural. Coz, This arm's, I had that band and that done and then had the teeth on my leg done for ages, they were just there by themselves. That's the only tattoo I don't really like because it's done bad. It's supposed to be serrated and it's all blurred already. The bloke who done it, if I ever see him I'll smash him. That was the first tattoo I had done by Wayne actually. Yeah, so that must have been my second tattoo.

Desley: is that sharks or dolphins??

Participant: They're sharks not dolphins everyone says dolphins. They're supposed to look a bit more sharky.

Desley: They do look sharky - I just wasn't sure.

Participant: The teeth would have been more clear. I got that, yeah it was, because I got that done in Sydney as well. Then I met Wayne at Thirroul and he done the shield and the knots and then he done the black dolphin sharks to tie it in cause that was just floating there. This was more of... this is the only tattoo I got that was on his what they call flash.

Desley: So all the rest you had designed?

Participant: Yep, that one is out of a book, it's Courtney Davis, he's I think he's regarded as the best Celtic artist in the world. He has heaps of books. He's a Welsh bloke. And there's a bit of an addictive thing to it I suppose.

Desley: yeah. Why is that, do you think?

Participant: I don't know. It's probably the same as... {pause} what house only has one painting on the walls. You know what I mean. Once you decorate with one thing you think "that looks good. This would probably look good here, or this goes good here" and individuals would all be different, but for me every one I've got means something, it represents a part of my life or an idea or maybe like a cause or, yeah, I don't know, a motto. It just. Put it this way. Right now, with this dragon, I wanted a big dragon. I wanted, I gotta get it shaded, 7½ hours is enough in one go. But because they're all black I want a colourful tattoo, but I, to get this finished. I can't make up my mind. It's the only one, I've never been 100%. I wanted a dragon, just a dragon and when he done it he said "you want to leave gaps in it for when we fill it" and I don't know if I want it filled in, I just like it as it is and maybe I'll wanna get it shaded. I want a black dragon but more of the scales. If you shade it, you're gonna lose all...

Desley: You'll lose that,

Participant: You'll lose it so I'm starting to lean towards a red dragon, or sort of red and black combination and then. He put these two bits of fire in, they weren't in the original one. They actually got put in, there's one spot where he'd already. On one of the flames you can actually see where there's a mistake.

Desley: There, there's scales across it

Participant: Yeah, through it. He done so much he's gone, mate you gotta do something to break a little bit. A couple of flames. And we argued because he wanted to do the true traditional Japanese flame – it doesn't have a point – it ends sort of like that, but to me it sort of makes it look like a ribbon sometimes so I said no, I want the more sort of hot rod flame, I don't know, and I really want to make it a sleeve but this is where it is now if I wear like a long-sleeved shirt I'm not a tattooed person. I'm proud to be tattooed but I don't want to look like a bikie, and I don't want to look like a bum. I don't want people to look at me and think I'm a scum-bag or which is a bit vain, but then other days I don't give a rats what anyone thinks and I don't. I live my life, do my own thing, but I've got some mates who have got their hands tattooed and it's too much. Sometimes it looks dirty.

Desley: And it's all those stereotypes about what kind of people have tattoos.

Participant: Yeah. definitely.

Desley: So you get people who won't give you a job because you've got it, or won't talk to you, even. The guy I talked to yesterday said some people are like "ooh. He's too scary"

Participant: Yeah. Yeah.

Desley: And he didn't have his hands or anything done.

Participant: Some people are. I think it's getting more and more accepted. It's the older people now that are more, because it's become fashion now. It's like all the young people and I was pretty proud of myself because I'd wanted tattoos since I was this big and my old man is a hard old man, you know, and he's like, if you ever come home with a tattoo then I'll sand it off. And I believed him. And when I come home from, when I first got my first one, I was probably 22 or something, 21, I'm not sure, I come home and showed me mum and I said I got it, it's Irish, it's for you and she's like, she hates them, but she goes "I respect that you done something. At least you put a bit of thought into it, you didn't come home with a skull and crossbones or a bloody dagger with "mum" written in it." When I showed me old man, it was a big thing for me to go

down and show him. Not for me mum to whinge to him, he's like "erh. I've been expecting them for years. I thought you would've come home years ago with 'em." And I was like "good on ya"

Desley: All that stress for nothing

Participant: But it worked out good because when I was young I went through phases where I, I went through a phase in me late teenage years where I wanted one of those cow skulls with the feathers hanging off the horn and I had that now I'd be, I'd get it covered with something else because, yeah.

Desley: So how long do you think you thought about each one, before you had them? Was it like days, weeks, months, years?

Participant: Yeah. Um. Combination of all.

Desley: Ok.

Participant: The, me first one it was years and years and years. Literally 10 or 15 years of combination of being scared of me dad and not really knowing, always changing my mind. And then something inside me realized, coz I'm changing my mind so much, just wait, because you've gotta pretty long life with 'em. And then there's other ones there where I've gone in there and like "oh. I wanna get a tattoo." The time's right. Other ships I've worked on we did 3 months trips, you know, 3 months off and you get home and it's winter and I don't know what I want but I know I want something here coz I'm sick of this one sitting by itself and yeah, that'll do so it's maybe like, I don't always visualise exactly what I want but I know, sometimes, it's like if you're looking for something, in your house, you know you want something but you're not sure then you see it and you go that's it, that's what I want. But 90% of mine have all been at least a year, I would say, at least, some more. My dragon's been, I'm 33 and I've wanted a dragon since I can ever remember so I've put 25 years of thought at least. Looked at thousands of magazines and the internet and, same as I want a big Celtic cross. This arm will always just be me Celtic side and, but I haven't seen THE Celtic cross I want, you know, and I'm not, no drawer, yeah. Same as like the dragon, yeah, it's a hard question, but at least a year I would say on average.

Desley: So the one you said you didn't like very much, was that an impulsive one, or

Participant: Na

Desley: Is it more just because you're not happy with how it turned out?

Participant: The way it's done. I liked the idea of it and when I presented it to the guy I had the books and the pictures and he drew it up and it looked good on the stencil and when he done it he's just done a really bad job. Really bad job and there's, what do you do?

Desley: Would you think about getting it off?

Participant: No. no way.

Desley: Or changing it or something?

Participant: I'd thought of changing. I went and seen Wayne and Wayne's gone "mate it would be pretty hard" coz it's black and it's there and we could maybe have a solid black like this, like just some sort of pattern but it wouldn't mean anything. The teeth represent, they were there for a reason and it's... yeah, no I wouldn't. I asked him if he could re-do it but he said "no. how". I asked him about the serrations like that, and I asked him to look coz they were standing out a bit and he tried to put shadow but it just looks like a blur and yeah, he didn't do a very good job at all.

Desley: a bit disappointing

Participant: Yeah, very disappointed. But my mum said "you've got your tattoos and I don't like them but a lot of them are beautiful. That looks like you got it done in jail or something." It does. I've never been to jail but it looks like a, looks like one of me mates has done it in a garage while we were having a beer or something. Yeah, it's pretty bad.

Desley: Part of that is just, I think, because the lines are a bit

Participant: Yeah, the shading just looks blurry. If you look there, it's a really light grey on the outside and that was supposed to be a shadow and then it didn't match up, there's gaps in them, the ones on the back. You can see gaps in the teeth, yeah, it's just crap.

Desley: So what do the teeth represent?

Participant: I had a loss at a particular time in my life and it was like, um, I'm not going to let that happen again. The teeth represent, sort of the old stand on your own two feet, they represent what it was like. I leant on someone once, depended on someone for too much, you know what I mean, got too attached and it all went pear-shaped and it's just a personal reminder to always look after yourself, probably.

Desley: So not rely too much on anyone else because you can't always rely on them.

Participant: Pretty much. It's alright now my fiancé, if she heard this now there'd be a lot of trouble, it was a girl, you know, and I was madly in love. I'm getting married in September. Never told this to no-one, but if she rang me up right now, this girl, the other one, I'd be like, what do I do? So I still think about her to this day. She was important to me. The mermaid actually looks like her. That's her as well.

Desley: Oh. Ok.

Participant: Um. Yeah. That's just the tide... it doesn't have too much meaning at all. It's more aesthetics.

Desley: So do sharks mean anything to you?

Participant: Just my. Surfing all my life. I work on ships. I follow the sharks, but that's not a football thing. Yeah.

Desley: That's the new one with the sharks head

Participant: Yeah - I wanted to represent losing a leg sort of you know got considered like a punky style of big fake sort of stitches or maybe with swords and knives and, you know, the

whole ocean thing tied in. I've had a bit of fun with it too - backpacked a lot through Europe. Americans, I don't know how many Americans you know but they're pretty thick. In pubs and that having a beer - wow look at that tattoo - me, me dad and my brother are shark hunters, I used to have really long hair back in Australia No Way, having beers brought. Me brother got took by a shark that's why I got that done or something like this, just taking the piss fully to make my mates laugh and these people you expect them to go Yeah right and you go, only kidding but they take it hook line and sinker and they go "I'll buy me a beer for a man who fights sharks." Good on ya mate.

Desley: So you said losing a leg

Participant: Yeah just for a reminder that you've got two legs and stand up for yourself.

Desley: Ok so that's why it's linked to the teeth?

Participant: Yeah the teeth represent like maybe having your leg bitten off by a shark. And they're just all different, each one's a different tooth from a different shark. I just researched that in a book, thought if I'm going to get sharks' teeth, why not...

Desley: do a good job of it.

Participant: yeah. The mermaid is part of that she fits in.

Desley: So she went with this tattoo

Participant: No I just said leave a gap there because I want to put a mermaid there and I had to come up with a mermaid I wanted.

Desley: So is she linked into the shark and the teeth or is she separate

Participant: yeah. Yes and no, I don't know. sometimes the meaning it changes you know what I mean? Sometimes the mermaid represents her as a real person and other times it's, I think of it, cause I spent a lot of time... I've been at sea for 11 years. me first 9 years it was all.... we'd do 3 or 4 month trips to Japan, Korea, and be gone for a long time, it was um, yeah, like a, like a

constant companion. You got your....I don't know, yeah. I think it's beautiful, I love that tattoo, it's probably one of my favourite tattoos. No one knows it's there, I've had friends for 10 years and they go when did you get the mermaid done and I go 8 years ago and people just don't notice it cause its up high and my shorts probably come to here mostly. Yeah, and then the turtle underneath that's the Japanese character for longevity. Turtles represent old age and longevity. Just... I wanted that, I thought oh, well, it would sit well there and it ties in with the bit of a nautical theme. cause I don't tell no-one about the sharks teeth and for me I just say yeah, they're sharks teeth. Some people ask about tattoo and I say mind your business too.

Desley: I think you can explain on different levels cause some people you can say sharks teeth. Whatever, whereas typically what the guy said yesterday he doesn't explain his tattoos to anyone,

Participant: I haven't

Desley: he's got writing across here and people go what does that mean he says, if you can't figure it out I'm not going to tell you.

Participant: that's right

Desley: So you've got the standing on your two feet long life type thing there and what does the Celtic stuff mean to you?

Participant: That's just like pride in my ancestry pretty much and I'm very family orientated

Desley: so part of what you are?

Participant: yeah. we're very...family's everything. I'm getting my biggest piece will be across the back of my shoulders the word in Gaelic for family I think it's 12 letters. I don't know how to pronounce it, I used to... but I'm going to get the word family. its hard because I know what I want but I'm not good at expressing for like Wayne my mate who does them. Yeah, family's everything, everything to me. I'm proud Australian. Like if Australia plays Ireland in the rugby or something you know smash the Paddy bastards, I go for Australia, all the time. First and

foremost Australian. And um, but yeah... What's the old saying, if you don't know where you come from

Desley: You don't know where you're going.

Participant: that's it yeah, you never grow up, not knowing one's history you remain a child forever – Caesar or someone like that I think. Stuck in me head. Yeah, that's it. I've been to Ireland a few times and I come from a very political family I guess, all in unions. My grandfather had to leave Ireland for dodgy reasons I suppose you can say if you want. That's it. If I wasn't here I'd be there I suppose. If I wasn't Irish or Australian I wouldn't mind being a Jap sometimes just because of their culture you know, I think it's just awesome. I just appreciate old things sort of like culture especially. Yeah.

Desley: Is this Celtic this bottom one on your arm?

Participant: Yes

Desley: It looks almost New Zealandy type.

Participant: Oh no don't say that.

Desley: Oh, no sorry. Are they birds?

Participant: Yeah they're... it's called, zoo, what do they call it, no not zoology, zoomorphogy or something. What's it is the Celts believe that things were created by gods the way they are it was rude and an offence to draw my dog, like this artist who could draw it it would look like a photo to them and their beliefs that's wrong. Things are created beautiful so you can represent them but you shouldn't try to copy or try to reproduce them. That's why they came up with all the awesome patterns. Plus its all the circle of life and everything's connecting. I've got this Celtic one on my back.

Desley: Oh wow, so are they the same birds.

Participant: No if you have a look this is a hawk and that's a duck

Desley: Oh yeah

Participant: My last name's Teal and our family shield is teal ducks in teal blue and my old man his name's duck and he has a duck and the hawk. My mothers shield has three hawks. my dad's shield is a snake, rampid snake with 3 ducks. I try to tie that in that's the sun, cause I'm the first born son in my family. sun shine out my arse. No it was supposed to be that big, we drew it up it was like a half circle. I want these two, he's like come and see me next week, swearing about that and I said go one then.

Desley: So how long did that one take?

Participant: 5 1/2

Desley: Oh really I suppose there's not as much detail.

Participant: Oh, the bloody scales on this. If you have a look, they're all perfect

Desley: he's done a good job.

Participant: Yeah, he's a great tattooist, worth a million.

Desley: So what's the Japanese is that the respect.

Participant: Yeah that's a time between, a combination of, I wouldn't rate it highest to least just out and out beauty like a bunch of flowers or a beautiful landscape it's just beautiful and Japans beautiful. Ever since I bought this house three years a go and I had a unit before that so 6 years ago if you told me I'd love gardening or be into gardening I'd slap you in the head. I love gardening. I want... I'm slowly doing this up into a paradise you know probably cause I'm away a lot I want it to be beautiful. The Japanese gardens, I have books on them. So the whole beauty and the whole, the history like the whole Samurai trip the whole warrior thing, the whole... The Celts and the Japanese mythologies are so similar you'd be amazed cause they're both, two of the only sort of warrior races that believe that the warrior should know poetry and a warrior should know how to do beautiful things other than killing and fighting. The Celts have 7 degrees of

tests before you become a warrior and one of them was poetry and the Japanese were the same you know. Samurai would be out chopping heads off thought the day and come home at night and do the 2 hr tea ceremony you know, and make origami and arrange flowers and have the most beautiful gardens in the world. So like, yeah, I don't know it's just yeah, all of it. It's very hard to put it into words but it's a combination of I wanted a dragon and I wanted, this will probably be my big colour arm, I'll get it all be coloured and it will be like a masterpiece sort of thing. If I get the carp it will be an oversized carp sort of thing. I didn't want to... If I stand across the road and you look across the road you go that guys got a dragon on his arm. That was important to me that's why it's so big. Again, it wasn't supposed to be this big to start with but it's the shape of my arm, I'm pretty skinny and it just flows.

Desley: Yeah

Participant: Yeah, just respect, strength and beauty and everything all together.

Desley: So these are like your values in life.

Participant: I think, so, I'd like to think so. I have my dodgy moments.

Desley: Everyone does though. So is that tied up with the Celtic stuff as well

Participant: I believe so yeah. yeah, well, these were to me, like.... the first one was my own personal ... test.... mainly. Yeah, like face your fears sought of thing. I have an extreme fear of like doctors and dentists and anything medical now. I just can't yeah, cop it, turn into a girl and I consider myself a hard head and my mates respect me. when it comes to needles and stitches I don't like it. It was a different case when I was younger. I don't know I can't explain it now.

Desley: I guess it's what you went through with your neck and stuff, it's pretty understandable

Participant: Yeah. I could sit here saying it makes me feel like a warrior but it was nothing like that but I guess in today's modern world. It's a bit of a... and all of them its probably one of the highest factors is it's forever. What's forever....This is such a part time world and this prick that's running our country right now he wants to make it even more part time and casual. Permanence is, you know, I spent my life wondering around and when I get married I'll be

getting an anchor on my leg that's my symbol - I've dropped my anchor now you know. my partner, she's my best mate you know, we're mates. That'll be like a bit of a tribute to her I suppose.

Desley: So will you still go out on the boat.

Participant: yeah I have to.

Desley: Sorry

Participant: That's cool, its good money. I've got this house, maybe buy a second house, kids and all this sort of thing. Money's good, and I love the life, it's in my blood. dad before me, and my granddad, my uncle. It's just what it is. It's in you. The ship I'm on now it's the closest thing to not really being on a ship. Like here to Melbourne she can ring me up, like every time she needs to. I come home every four days and I get a whole night at home or half a day or something, depending what shift I'm on and what time the ship comes in. Yeah, I've always been on the ships. There's so much more too I don't want to be cliché but I can sit here. The whole thing, like I like it when I'm on the ship in the bar and the old blokes have the homeward bounders, the sailing ship, tall ship, it's called a homeward bounder tattoo. I like seeing young blokes like meself on the ship getting', a mate of mine just got a big tall ship on his chest, it's so not cool that it's cool. But to get a tattoo, I don't think it's....I hate when I, I don't go out much any more, but you go to a nightclub and you see these young ponsy pretty boys with these, I've got this tattoo because, I got it for all the wrong, I got it because it's a fashion accessory. I don't like that at all, I think that's wrong. Not wrong, do what you want to yourself but to me it's shallow and just not cool. So yeah, it's gotta be, you want it to look good and you want other people to maybe like it but it doesn't matter if they don't. It's got to be solid man, it's got to be real and got to be what you are, otherwise, I don't know. To some people it's a fashion accessory and to me it's part of my life. It's part of being me. I wouldn't be me if I didn't.... I'd be a different me. You look at old photos cause you know, like with tattoos, you go back 2 years ago and this one wasn't there or that one wasn't there. Look I only had the one band there and nothing on me legs, all this sort of thing. I don't know maybe they're like little entries in a diary as well.

Desley: Johnny Depp talks about how it's like a record of his life story. Cause he's got quite a few.

Participant: Johnny Depp;

Desley: Yeah

Participant: The Actor

Desley: Yeah, he got one when he was engaged to Winona Ryder that said Winona forever and he changed it to wino because they split up and he just recently had a sparrow. You know how he was Jack Sparrow in the Pirates and his little boy's called Jack so he got a sparrow for him. But he turned it around so it's flying to his heart. But he's got quite a lot, yeah, you just don't see them.

Participant: That's cool. I like him, I reckon he's....I don't like the movies of Jack Sparrow, I found it was a crap movie but he one of the best actor getting around. Val Kilmer, he's such a wasted actor. I watched a movie the other night Wonderland have you seen it?

Desley: No.

Participant: It's a story about John Holmes the porn star

Desley: Oh, no.

Participant: It's really well done, a good movie.

Desley: But he says something like its chapters in the book

Participant: Definitely. definitely

Desley: And there's this woman who I have a photo of and she had a mastectomy and instead of getting a fake breast she got a tattoo over the scar. and she's made a poster of it and they sell it

and she said this is a the book of my body and she's inscribed a tree on it. Cause that's growth and to her that's celebrating that she beat cancer rather than go, let's pretend it didn't happen.

Participant: that's it

Desley: so that's one thing that I think some people do sometimes get a tattoo to help them get through stuff.

Participant: Yeah definitely. Totally believe in... I've done it

Desley: So would that be your teeth one.

Participant: Yeah definitely, at that period in time when yeah

Desley: It seems to me that you've got things going so you've got the family and the ancestry and one thing when I've been reading stuff is the idea that people need to know where their roots are so that seems to be really fitting with what you're staying with the Celtic stuff.

Participant: Yeah

Desley: And then you've got the Japanese respect and stuff like that that seems to be more your morals, your view on life, your values.

Participant: Pretty much yeah, the honour thing - definitely.

Desley: Then you've got the teeth and stuff for you which is a reminder I guess but it's also helpful when you had it.

Participant: Yeah, that's absolutely for sure.

Desley: and its good I guess ...like you said some people just get them because they're a fashion accessory and I guess they don't think when I'm 50 what am I going to do with this tattoo. But for you because you've got meaning behind them.

Participant: I believe so yeah.

Desley: and even the anchor. A lot of sailors have anchors.

Participant: well I've discussed it with my fiancée she loves my tattoos. she's tiny , petite a hairdresser and her parents are really beautiful, she's really well spoken. I call her Posh you know. I'm a bit of rough you know, but yeah she loves them. Since we've been together I've had that one and that one done since we've been together. I discuss them with her and go through it and she thinks they're sexy. Then I point out a big hairy biker. I say you want me to look like that and she says No. she's proud and I'm proud of myself that I put a lot of time and effort into getting the right one... if that's the right word for it. And they've progressively all gotten bigger too. I don't regret any of my tattoos but sometimes I look at some and say I should of done this. now, that's the beauty of hindsight

Desley: So would you change any of them now if you could.

Participant: Oh, that's a hard one. Yeah, I'd probably....Yes and no. I don't know, it's hard... I wouldn't but I would you know what I mean. I definitely would've.... I would have got that done bigger cause that was so beautiful, the photos when it was new, the detail in that is incredible now it's like... I've got lots of moles and I'm spotty you know, I'm not allowed to go in the sun any more but the doctor said yeah, just don't go in the sun. I've always been bronzed up, surfed all my life. But the sun does bad things to, you know, working on the ships. If anything I would have got them bigger and would have got someone else to do the teeth.

Desley: So would you have any of them off

Participant: No, no way. Na. I don't believe in putting them there if you're going to take it off. Also I wouldn't put no-one's name. well maybe someone's name but I wouldn't put a girlfriend or a wife or a... I'm the sort of person , touch wood now. Well if you're my best mate you're family to me. I've got a mate who's got his best mates name tattooed on his chest cause he got killed in a car accident. I'm very that kind of person. When I have kids, I can easily see, I want to incorporate that, we've already discussed that, Jane, that's my fiancée, When I get my cross done I probably want to get it done so names can go, children's names, you know the whole, I believe in that sort of huge gift for someone to A) go through pain B) the permanent. Yeah like

to me that's a pretty big honour, man. A friend of mine on the ships, I use to draw, but I'm not a very good drawer but I had a phase when I was trying to draw a bit and I drew this skull with some tribal and he was covered in tattoos and he said can I have that for a tattoo and I went Yeah and he's this huge big steroid skinhead monster and he just whacked it on there in amongst the other ones and it made me feel pretty cool. But Jane my fiancée hasn't got a tattoo on her and she said if I get a tattoo I'd get like my initial like a T or I said if you want to do something like that when we get married I'll get your star sign on me and you put my star sign on you. We discuss those sorts of things. I wouldn't mind. I've been for years considering, I'm a Scorpio and the M with the little hook on the tail on the back of my neck cause I'm a Scorpio. I get told all the time. So ,yeah, I don't know

Desley: So you've got plans obviously for multiple more tattoos

Participant: Yeah

Desley: What's the most important thing you think of, is it the picture or the place to put it? Obviously the artist is important to you as well.

Participant: Probably more yeah the actual picture it's probably the, it's the foundation, it's the framework and then where you put it is pretty important. Like I wanted, I was thinking of getting an anchor here and he said mate it's the wrong shape get your Celtic cross here because the bottom of the cross is the skinnier part of your arm and the cross fits here whereas the anchor's the other way. So that sort of thought is important too. consideration into. When I got my leg done a lot of people said don't do your leg man you can't wear shorts but I thought well I don't hide them, not ashamed of them. I don't think they're them offensive or I know who I am, people who know me love me. If they offend people the people who I offend are people who I would want to offend anyway so if they're that pathetic that a bit of ink in someone's body is OHHH, well, they can get fucked.

Desley: If you wanted to be a business man or something that'd be covered up anyway.

Participant: Well that's right - but that's not me. I thought about what, I dreamed I wanted to be a rock star, an actor, whatever, I was like I've got a big one there that would restrict you in the roles. But I never left the house to become an actor but it was stupid little subconscious thoughts

and you chase them away pretty quickly. There is always that thing sometimes I think I've got a 5 yr old child down at the beach and I can't take your shirt off but I would anyway because I'm not embarrassed.

Desley: Well it's not like they're ugly or anything.

Participant: No, I don't think so. The only time I ever felt a little bit self conscious and I only had the one, it was the very first one. It was years ago when I went to Thailand with a girl, we stayed in this really nice flat it was 5 star and went to go to the pool there and everyone was from Europe and they were all quite "Hello" {in posh English voice}, and I had really long hair at the time and I was getting all these weird looks and I sort of felt I don't fit in here. and then well those situations and those places where I would feel like that I don't want to be there anyway if you know what I mean. But then we're trying to work out where we're going on our honeymoon you know we're going to stay in the ghouse and I'm a lot more tattooed now and that's where you're ah....I guess its arrogance, I'll strut around. I dare someone to come over and say you're offending me sort of thing like I'm not holding my head down or hiding from no one. It's just how it is. Come over and say hello, have a beer with me you'll see that I'm a human being with goals and inspirations like everyone else I just show some of my feelings on the outside - wear it on your sleeve. It's the old saying you know like, yeah. And I'd be lying not to say there is that little streak there where its a bit of a show off too you know. especially when I was younger and I was single the young chicks love tattoos and it's worked that way. Like "I love your tattoo." It's all good. Stuff like that it's cool. And you go to the pub and have a beer and some people look at you and think you might be a meanie. That's not a bad thing, sometimes, like, you know what I mean. They give me self respect but I've found also in certain circles they grant me respect too. It's like having a ticket, it's like you've done a right of initiation like some people look at me you know. Especially if you're in an area where there's ... like if you go into a tattoo shop and you're obviously tattooed you don't get that what do you want thing. People want to talk to you. Or if you go to a rock concert or the dirt bikes it's like he's cool – it's without even.... It's like an introduction card on you in certain spots. and other spots it works in the complete opposite it's like a rejection thing. But I don't want to be in those spots anyway.

Desley: It's like a barrier or something. which is good and bad cause if you don't want them to approach you it will keep them away.

Participant: That's right. But I like, I sometimes like the whole surprise thing - I sail with this guy who's so square and so nerdy looking and fat and soft and we were doing something one day and his shirt sleeve rolled up and he had this *awesome* geisha girl full done you know, a couple of days work and he used to be in the navy before he joined the merchant - he used to be in the submarines. I was like that is so cool!! I've had that before a bit hard now but when I just had this one I used to wear a t shirt to cover this arm just to hear and you move and it pops out and people go oh, you have a tattoo, just a few and you take your shirt off somewhere woah! and the dragon - a lot of people talk to me about me dragon. A lot of people come up and go I love oh, Or they see this one and they go what's that? Cause they see this and you go like that and it's a big tattoo and it's bold and it's...

Desley: It's a big commitment.

Participant: If I was giving advice to young budding people wanting to get tattooed go big because big is beautiful. They don't blur, they don't become. I've seen people with tattoos, I've had a bit now, I think I'm up to 30 hours in the chair or something so if I see these pretty boys on the telly I give them a bit of lip you know. They can't hear you. Things like that you know.

Desley: Well I guess if you're going to do something permanent you may as well be serious about it.

Participant: But I fully respect that that little thing might be something this big inside their heart. Same as I'll never say that's a shit tattoo, I've seen tattoos that I wouldn't put on my dog. But that tattoo to that person might mean to them what mine mean to me. So I would never say it. I just don't say it, it's like a little rule I have. It's not for me but it's I would never, yeah. I've got a mate who's got one arm completely sleeved in and it's shit. It's... he got it done when he was young and he got it done on the cheap like when he had a few dollars he went in and it's just got things in it and he tries to make up meanings for them. He's got his other arm three quarters done and that is awesome, cause he's older and he's got parts of his life in there, you know what I mean. Yeah. but yeah, I don't know.

Desley: So what do you think about other people with tattoos when you see them?

Participant: that's a good question. Different people like... on the ships, like more people have got tattoos than not, the older blokes, it's like you don't even see it's there any more because. Well I shave my arms cause it brings them right out, well she shaves them with hair clippers and we're there it's like it's got grease and hair and they're just there, it's like a birthmark. Don't think anything, they're nothing. But other people you might see, you might be somewhere and someone comes in and they've got junky tattoos or scumbag tattoos and you look at them and go you're a scumbag. It sounds a bit arrogant and vain but.

Desley: What would you call a scumbag tattoo?

Participant: Oh, I don't know, usually just outline that's never finished its green, its thick, been done by someone in the back yard with a homemade gun.

Desley: So it's a crappy tattoo, not the content.

Participant: Crap tattoo, stupid. They just look like they're...skinny people. Look like they're heroin addicts and they just look like tattoos that have been done, just look dirty and...

Desley: Back yard jobs?

Participant: You can get backyard jobs that are amazing too. I've got mates, I don't know how to explain myself here.

Desley: I wasn't sure if you meant the quality of the tattoo or what they were of. You know like the skin heads used to have certain things.

Participant: More the whole thing like the person inside the skin as well, just they give a persona. Some people come with a tattoo and it's that dude's got a tattoo because he's a soulful person and that's his soul. The next geezer walks in the door has got tattoos cause he's a filthy junky the person who breaks into your Nan's home when you're not home and he's got his tattoos done dirtily and he looks dirty and probably smells. The next person walks in he's a fashion victim he's got his tattoos done to get himself laid or so the chicks to OOOHHH at a nightclub. And the next bloke walks in and he's gnarly and old and covered in tattoos and he looks like he's been born with them. So that's how I, but that's just me and how I... yeah.

Desley: Well that's what I'm trying to work out is, are there groups, so you've done really well. Four was what I had in mind so. So, do you consider that any of your tattoos coincide with any particular life changing events?

Participant: Yes.

Desley: Do you mind talking about them? You don't have to go into detail. If you don't want to that's fine.

Participant: Yeah well, the one on my leg we've sort of... done that. But {long pause} that's probably the most like this happened so I'm going to go and get a tattoo about that. Where others are more probably more encompassing and more general - like it's more before it's talked about how I feel and it's over time it becomes a vision and a picture and then it's there. Yeah, not so much, yeah.

Desley: So with that first one you said that's a bit of a... was it almost like an initiation?

Participant: Yeah definitely, an initiation and yeah, like a test for myself. I tested myself. I always wanted a tattoo and subconsciously I think, it was good, it was easier for me to think my old man would knock my block off cause probably. I'd been in the tattoo shops and until I had my first one done that noise that tattoo gun man I'd walk in and go Oh, I want a tattoo so bad but there's no way in the world I could sit there and do that shit you know what I mean. But I had to laugh when I got my dragon I was there all day and half the night. It was Thursday and he opens til 7.30 on Thursday nights and they've probably done a dozen people through the day he's got a young bloke works there with him. And this big guy come in he's been on telly, he's an iron man, I don't know his name. He's and up and start and his sister was getting a tattoo so he just wanted a tattoo. He got the word tigers cause they won the grand final. He's only young as thick as a brick but an athletic sort of dude. He was shitting himself and he brought in his Ipod cause he said the noise the noise. He carried on like a big girl and he was a big strong lad you know what I mean. So to me it was a test, definitely a test, an initiation if you like. Came through with flying colours. Soon as he put the needle on I was like, is that it? Cause it's a not needle. It's a needle but it's not. People talk about how it hurts and I've got friends who have tattoos that big

and they will never go again cause it's deathly painful to 'em. But I find that it's not sexual but it is nearly a cool pain sometimes.

Desley: Well they say that you get the endorphins released.

Participant: Do they

Desley: Yeah

Participant: Well I'll be honest and this is very vain but it's very true. Sitting there getting tattooed, specially if you're there all day and people come. When I was getting this done everyone comes in and goes wow, look at that. Wayne's shop's only very small and you're sitting right there and every Tom Dick and Harry walking past sees you getting done. Through the day some of his friends, cause he's the tattooist of all the bikies and everyone knows him you know. There're some hard core people come in you know and they go that's a big tattoo son like this you know. They're big raps, mate, it makes you feel good, like a man. It makes me feel like a man but it does as well, like it give you... it makes you feel good.

Desley: I wonder you know how you said they're addictive and a lot of people say they are whether part of that is the feeling you get from getting through the pain. Do you know what I mean?? Cause you can go look what I did, I did 7 ½ hours put up with this and you feel really good and its something.

Participant: Yeah, the dragon was maybe.

Desley: I don't know but

Participant: I don't think I'd go just so I can cash in on being able to say you know, I don't want to be fully tattooed. I want to be heavily tattooed but I want them all to be strategically placed.

Desley: And meaningful?

Participant: Yeah and look good. Like I'll never get my chest and my stomach. But I love the big words across the belly when you've got your 16 yr old waistline happening. I think they're

awesome. Or you're snorting enough of this stuff to keep you thin when you're 40 but I come from a family of big people big beer drinkers and bellies are there you know so... I personally can't stand tattoos on the neck but I see so many young people doing it at the moment because the crusty demons do it and the dudes on the film clips have got it and that's hard core to get your neck tattooed and your face. It's really hard. I don't know { very long pause}. You got me there. {long pause} I'll tell you why its addictive, cause every time you get one done you're surrounded by tattoos and there's art everywhere and you're getting it done and people are coming and going and you're seeing others and while you're there while one bloke's tattooing you another bloke's drawing up a stencil for his next client and you go that's awesome. Awww... You think, your brain's - it's like decorating anything. Some people are into minimalism and others are into full WOAHH. So I guess that's part of it it's just addictive. It's a classic. You get one and you think gees that looks good but that would look good too or you look at yourself and you go, coz I did, I was off balance cause I had this arm done and this leg done, I had nothing anywhere else. then I got my back done and it was bringing it together and then I knew I wanted something, I wanted a dragon. I didn't realize I was going to get a big dragon and couple of years ago I wouldn't have visualised just a huge dragon. I had this whole naked arm we call it real estate. It's prime real estate here man. This mate of mine he's a big bloke - it's prime real-estate, yeah. I was pretty keen for a sleeve, at least a half sleeve and I was leaning towards - I love those sorts of tattoos you look at and you can't really see what it is. You have a look and it's all different things. But then I love tattoos like I said that you can see from across the road and you go WO HOH. And you have the background a bit more muted... some tattoos the background swallows. Yeah, you just think I need to get that one there now cause I'm out of whack or that looks good or you see, I don't know, like, um. I had my lower back done before, but everyone and their dog's got their lower back tattooed now but I've had mine there for 7 or 8 years and I was a bit of a... So many people have a little spidery tribal thing, and I go there's mine and they go Ooh. So that's kind of cool it's a bit of a 'mine's bigger than yours' thing. A bit of a boy thing, I don't know. It's quite addictive, it's just I enjoy getting tattooed, you are right I know. Like you said it's the endorphins or if it's just what it is.

Desley: It sounds like it's the whole thing.

Participant: It's the whole thing. I just dig being there. I dig... I feel cool when I'm there I feel like I'm a rock star and I feel yeah, like I could ride for the crusty demons or I'm sponsored or

whatever. You just feel really cool. And coming home with it. If you've seen, when they're new, they whack the cream and they just stick glad wrap on it now.

Desley: Yeah

Participant: It's all bleeding and crappy and you get home and get in the shower and go ohhhhhhhh. The first time, cos at the shop they do it, it's a bit of a show at the shop you know, you've got to be cool. So what do you reckon, yeah, that's good mate, that's good, yeah. It's when you get home, you're doing these ones and yeah, so it's just cool. I don't know man. It's the only word I can think of. It's pretty hopeless, language wise but cool, it's just cool. And you feel good, you do you feel, not tough, I've never felt tough, but I feel cool. I feel superior, nearly. Arrogant, it makes me feel really arrogant. I'm a pretty, keep to myself bloke but yeah, you do.

Desley: So do you think there's anything else that you could do that would make you feel that cool?

Participant: Huh, I've done a lot of things. It's a different cool man, it's not like a high, it's not like – I used to fight a lot, I used to be a bit of a naughty boy when I was young and...

Desley: as in street fighting?

Participant: Yeah, all sorts, I used to train but then, I used to think knocking someone out was cool – it made me feel good. Especially if it was in the ring and you'd been training and it's art form too you know. Like kick boxing's an art. People have different opinions but that's a different feeling. I don't know it's just, probably not. Maybe, scoring a winning goal for a huge soccer team, singing on stage in front of 100,000 screaming fans that are there for you, I'd imagine. I like bungy jumping, sky diving, I ride motorbikes and I work in a dangerous job and they all make you feel good too but I feel good when my girl comes home, you know, she's me mate and I love her and I love when I see my dog in the morning, I'm very tight with my dog, but that's a different feeling, it's just.

Desley: What about other body modifications like piercings?

Participant: No, I'm not into it.

Desley: No?

Participant: Not at all. I think a lot of it, and this is where I'm a bit of a sort of hypocrite maybe but to me tattoos are cool and body piercing isn't cool. It's ugly. I don't believe that anyone can, you know, my mum couldn't believe that anyone could look at their skin with tattoos on it and think it's good. That's how my mum would think. But I can't look at these people with chunks of metal hanging out of their face, like beautiful young girls with shit hanging out – I just can't get into it, it's not cool. But I don't mind eyebrow piercings and I had my ears pierced when I was young. I pierced my nose when I was pissed when I was young and I've done silly things but yeah the whole face metal and holes and this putting coral under your skin so it grows horns and all this shit, to me that's just, that's people who are trying to get shock value you know and it's a show. But I wouldn't hold it against anyone

Desley: So for you tattoos are more personal?

Participant: Definitely. Definitely. When I say they make me feel cool and all that there just side elements. First and foremost it's all about, inside, you know what I mean? You put them on for you. Like, if you keep up to date, all, what's happened right now an old school Japanese dragon isn't cool at the moment you know what I mean, this isn't gonna get some 18 year old girl to drop her daks for you it's a, at the moment it's all this, they call it graffiti sort of art. That's cool at the moment, like now punk's like, the big stars are coming back and but I like I don't pick something to suit everyone else you know what I mean? You might buy a car that you think's alright but everyone else loves, that's one thing but to put something on your body forever that's...

Desley: It's got to be for you..

Participant: It has to be.

Desley: So when you had the tattoos did you go by yourself, or did you ...

Participant: Yep, always.

Desley: Was there peer pressure

Participant: Nah, when it's actually getting done. I've been out there with my mates and that and looked at them but, no, I definitely, no peer group pressure.

Desley: What kind of reactions have you had to them?

Participant: All sorts.

Desley: Have you had anyone, like really negative reactions?

Participant: Not so much to my face but I've never been told I can't come in or anything like that.

Desley: One girl I talked to she lives at Newtown or somewhere and people yell out of their cars at her "You're a freak" and stuff like that.

Participant: Yeah, well I guess {long pause} a man wanting to have tattoos is more socially accepted than women. Still, even to this day, you know, I don't particularly like tattoos on women, I used to when one in a thousand had one, I used to think it was very sexy if they're put in the right spot. Like a tattoo on the boob or... that just makes me sick, they look, yeah, I don't know. It's very shallow but I'm such a hypocrite but sometimes you see a chick with a tattoo and you go, she's a slut, you know what I mean? It's a slutty looking tattoo but other chicks get it done and it looks beautiful. Like, so, yeah, but. I would have to say in my experiences, just in my little world I've had 70 to 30% more praise as opposed to negativity. The main negativity would be from my family. As in like I'm the only one who's got them in the family. That's a lie. My dad's brother, my uncle Sid, when he got his first born grandson he went and got a tattoo of a Scorpio, cause we're all scorpions. My dad, my uncle, his sons, both his sons and his nephew and now his grandson. It's a family that breeds in the Spring.

Desley: Lucky you don't live in the northern hemisphere. So you said a lot of guys at work have tattoos.

Participant: Oh, yeah.

Desley: And your friends.

Participant: Yep. And then my friends.

Desley: Do you feel like the fact that you have a tattoo means that you associate with any particular group of people?

Participant: No, it could do and I, when I'm sitting around and everyone there's got tattoos... A) guys don't sit there and talk about stuff like that you know what I mean? You'd get slapped in the head for being a nonce. There can be a bit of an awe – you know what I mean, like having a few drinks or you might look around and go, this is cool, we look like a gang or we look like a posse, whatever these words are these days. It can be cool but most of my mates that I spend most of my time with have got one or two tattoos like they're tattooed but they're not tattooed. It's more the guys on the ships that have got more tattoos but when you live with someone for six months a year you don't want to hang out with them too much when you're at home. So we all hang out, but we don't. But me local boys will all hang with us sort of expense is half of it, cause they're not cheap man.

Desley: So are you a person with tattoos or are you a tattooed person?

Participant: ohhh.... {pause} I'm a person with tattoos I think. I don't know, I might change my mind in half an hour. Yeah, I think I'm just me still. Either way, like it's not. I've never been to a tattoo show or I don't only have friends with tattoos and I don't talk and dream and think about them all day every day and you forget they're even there so much you don't even. I remember when I got my very first one I've never been in front of a mirror so much in my life. I'm getting a bit fatter and my hair's falling out a bit more – mirror's become even less friendly to you. After the first one or two they become just a part of you. Does it sound silly but sometimes I think of them like a shield to, like some armour, like sort of putting on...

Desley: As protection for you?

Participant: Yeah, it does, yeah. I don't know why I say that but it's something I think and feel. Cause I spend a lot of time on the ships, you spend a lot of time on your own you know and you have plenty of time to think, so I think a lot, think too much, I get into trouble for thinking all the time. But I write poetry and shit a lot you know and yeah, definitely like a shield, like a ... I've mentioned my tattoos in a lot of my poetry and just writings, people call it poetry and I just call it writings, you know. And when I think about it now I mention them a bit. I've described them as something that separates me from the rest of the herd and yet I've never put one on me to... my object was never to put it on me so I would stand out either. It does, but it doesn't. Having this discussion I'm finding that everything's got a

Desley: Yin and yang?

Participant: A two, yeah very two for one value here. It means this but then it means this and...

Desley: it's a bit tricky isn't it? Do you want my trick question then? What would be the opposite of your tattoos?

Participant: what would be the opposite of my tattoos? I don't really get you, what do you mean? What would be the opposite of my tattoos?

Desley: Well, some people when you ask them that they say not having them. Some people say having them off. Some people say a different picture and one person actually said feeling different, because of the feeling they had about the tattoo they would have a different feeling. So, whichever way you choose to interpret it.

Participant: {pause} I would have to say the opposite of my tattoos would be a great sense of personal loss almost equivalent to a death in the family.

Desley: So is that like losing a part of yourself, maybe, or...?

Participant: Yeah, I'd say so. They're definitely not just a picture on a bit of skin, they're ... they're inside. I think you're tattooed on the inside as much as the outside because You wear em, it's not like a piece of clothes, man it's exactly the same as a freckle or your curly hair or

whatever you've got, it's you. So if they weren't there the opposite would have to be just loss. I'd feel at a loss.

Desley: So do you think it'd be like losing an arm or a leg or something?

Participant: Yeah, definitely. Or a best friend, I'd even take it further maybe. I could never envisage getting them removed put it that way and personally, I could never see.... I've surprised myself my different cycles of my life. I've probably been ten different people. But I couldn't see my self being a person who regretted having them there.

Desley: So you're saying is that kind of like a core part of you that will always be there even if you change...

Participant: I believe so.

Desley: other little things?

Participant: Cause I've, through the phases of my life I've gone in different directions and things but I think we all have our little like core values that you always, are the constant and yeah, I couldn't ever see me, it being different sort of thing. Yeah. Definitely.

Desley: So, is there anything else about them that we can think of? Or do you think we've done it to death?

Participant: Come with a lifetime guarantee. {long pause} I'll tell you what they are, they're that close to being like their own separate thing as in like a person put into that context in a way that it's like your best mate or your girlfriend. When a new romance or a new friendship starts it's very exciting and very, but after a period of time they're just there as well. And until a birthday comes along or an anniversary or you lose someone or something you sit down and really think about what they mean to you. Like sitting here, right now's made me think the last half hour, whatever has made me think more about my tattoos then I would have thought about em for donkey's because of I'm always thinking of what I can do and stuff, how to fix it, how to put more or should I colour this or whatever but.. I don't know if it's just me but having them, I've got a few now and they're big and they're there and when you've got a few little ones you can,

they can be missed. I've spent time with people and gone, Oh, I didn't know you had when now, it's pretty hard unless I've got shoes, socks and long sleeves shirts and pants on. I've got em. It gets to a stage where other people probably notice them and think about them and more than you do cause it's just like having blue eyes or, they're just there. But the meaning will always still be there, it's just, you don't wake up every morning and go here's my protection, here's my family here's my da da da da. But, you probably put more thought into what it means leading up to actually getting it. And then you get it on you, you go, yep.

Desley: So in some ways getting a picture is like a quiet reminder. Whenever you want to use it but most of the time it's just... Sorry, if you want to sit down and think about family then that might help you remember but most the time you don't go oh, yeah this is to remind me about family.

Participant: Probably never. You just put them there, you know why you put it there. You know what it means. It's definitely a reminder but you don't literally look at them and go uhuh! Because the things they're there to remind you of are things you don't forget anyway. A lot of it's subliminal, you don't think about it, but you always do, you know what I mean.

Desley: So it's in the back of your mind?

Participant: Yeh, that's it, its in the back of your mind.

Desley: I like what you said, it's like looking at it more leading up to having it. So it's like you think about it leading up having it and then it's almost like you've done it, so, it's...?

Participant: Yeah, it's like a ceremony maybe, you get all prepared and you're fasting and your ritual bathing and your cleansing and then you do your ceremony and then you come out of that ceremony you come out a man or you come out a married man or you come out a tattooed man. It's done, it's there.

Desley: So it's like the rites of passage that they have in some cultures?

Participant: Definitely.

Desley: Like you said to be a man, they have to go through whatever.

Participant: I haven't sort of got that vibe as much after the first one, the first one was very personal. It was a man thing, it really really was cos being, I'm 6ft 2, I'm not like a girly little boy but to go and have that and think, what if I faint, what if I spew up, what if I...you know what I mean? Yes! No drama! Then after that it was more I'm getting it because of this and this and this and this one's for this and whatever. But definitely you don't, it's not a daily thing – it's like, that's my dragon, it's just there. You might walk through the shops and you catch a flash of your reflection and you go that looks cool, or you might go I'm glad I got that there. I'm a bit of a smart arse and I enjoy people's reactions when you're walking and I don't rate anyone who can't talk to you to your face so when you catch people sideways glance and they're whispering. I go, that's right.

Desley: One guy I was talking to, I can't remember who it was but he said he was on a train somewhere and this woman got on with a little girl who was about nine and she said, is that the boogy man?

Participant: Fair dinkum. Yeah. It's possible. See that's why I'm still nervous, maybe of the whole forearm thing and then other days I want my forearms to be tattooed so it's always there. I want to be looked at as that guy's covered in tats but then other days I don't. Like my families very nice, I guess I'm the black sheep of the family my family have all done well at school and they're all very just nice people, I've always had long hair and Mohawks and whatever I've always been a bit, I'm very shy, but I do these extraverted things as well so I don't know.

Desley: They say that about actors though that they're quite often very shy too and you wouldn't expect that.

Participant: That's true, you wouldn't would you. I've heard that. If I'm in a comfortable situation, my house, my friends, I'm a full on lair, like I'm a rat bag – one person walks into the room that I don't know and everyone else might know em, I'm the dude in the back seat just checking em out very strange you know. I don't want people to look at me then other times when they're looking at me and staring at me, I like it - don't know. That's just probably just another whole kettle of fish. I haven't talked this much in years.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	5	2	4	3	3	Suicidal
Patient	2	1	1	1	1	3	2	2	2	5	3	4	Methylamphetamine
Caring	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	3	Nazi
Kind	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	1	1	5	3	4	Bitch
Sense of humour	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	3	1	4	2	4	Dill
Sociable	1	2	1	1	1	3	2	3	1	5	2	4	Boring
Friendly	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	5	1	4	Hard core
Active	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	3	1	2	2	3	Fat arse
Confident	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	5	1	3	2	3	Sook
Organised	3	1	1	1	2	4	2	1	1	2	2	3	Chaos
Hard working	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	3	2	5	Bludger
Honest	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	5	3	4	Dodgy





Participant: I'll start in order of the tattoos that I've got, as I have only about four or five. The first one I have is a...the first one I got is this Indian woman up here, which I got when I was in my mid to late twenties. And I got that because it was when I first met my wife and it was not long after we met that I got it. And I don't know what... the main motivation for getting it was, I believe it was because I wanted a tattoo and because I wanted a reminder of when we first met. Because we both had this fascination for American Indian culture. And when we first met we were talking, and we discovered that we had a similar dream when we were younger, about um, almost like a past life type situation. And we'd had that dream when we were apart and were not together. And once we were together the dream stopped, sort of thing. So, a bit freaky and a bit weird sort of sounding, but that's just the way it happened. That's when I decided, I'll get, you know, I'll get ...er in the dream she was an American Indian woman, Native American woman, so that's why I decided to get that one. And that was my first. And I got that in the city, King's Cross, at a tattoo shop there. And not knowing much about them at the time, I let the guy do whatever he did. Probably because it was my first one and it was just a small thing, he probably thought, he's not really sure. So he put it on, and after a while I realised it probably wasn't as great a job as it could've been done. And being a first one, he probably thought, you know, "I'll just whack it on and that's that!" And he probably didn't think I was all that serious anyway. So I never got another... I never received another tattoo, or never got another one for about another fifteen years. Probably about a year ago, I got my second one, which is this goblin one here on my shoulder. I'd always liked motor bikes, Harleys and so forth, I'd always liked that. And I started watching the show American Chopper on TV, and my wife started watching it. And I started buying some magazines and I saw that. That is actually a company logo from a magazine and I saw it and I thought as soon as I saw it I thought "That would make a fantastic tattoo!"

Desley: it is a logo of a bike company?

Participant: Yes, it is. Yeah. It's a place called the Chopper Shop in Gosford, actually. So it's a local place. And as soon as I saw it I thought, "Wow that would make a great tattoo!" it's funny because I'd thought about it on and off over the years since I'd had the first one, but never really did anything about it. Probably because I never found anything that inspired me or saw

something that I liked. But I saw that, and strangely enough, one of the reasons was because ONE, I liked the actual design and TWO, is I smoke cigars.

My other hobby is collecting premium cigars. And in previous years I've gone over to the States and collected cigars and gone to Cigars Functions Conventions over there. And the fact that the little logo was smoking a cigar, I thought was really indicative of me as well. So when I started discussing with my wife about getting another one, she thought that that would be fantastic. Because she thought the thing looked evil like I do. Yeah, and it smoked cigars, so she thought that would be a mad thing to get. So I we decided to get that one. And I chose the tattoo shop this time a bit more carefully, because I got a couple of books and I read an article on this particular shop which is called Bill's Custom Tattoos which is in Oxford Street, in the city. I read an article on that and it sounded quite good. They sounded like they had some good tattoo artists there. So I went there and I took the picture of that with me, and showed them and said, "Could you do this?" And spoke to the young guy there and he said, "Yeah, no problem." By the time I got my appointment and I got in there, I had actually changed from him, to getting tattooed by a young lady there. A Slovakian lady, by the name of Ivana. She doesn't speak great English, but she's quite a nice young lady. And she did that. And I was really happy with how it came out. So then I thought, you know, "Wow I really liked it!" and a lot of people say there's a lot of pain involved in the tattoos. And I am sure in certain parts of the body because of the skin being thinner and what not, I haven't had the opportunity to feel that much pain. I enjoy it. I find it extremely relaxing. I really do. I like going there. I don't think much about the pain, if there's any. To me there's really none. It's just an enjoyable experience and I find it really relaxing. You know, there's peace and quiet, you know. She's working so she's not talking a lot and I'm not talking a lot and it's just quiet and it's just really relaxing. It's not a big studio and usually when I'm in there she's by herself, so there's just her and I and some music playing maybe. And an odd customer coming in every now and then for something. Other than that, so it is just her and I. It's good. It's great. So then I decided after I had that one I thought, "Yeah, I'd love to get another one. Oh! That's right." So I thought, "I'd love to get something about the kids. Coz I love my kids and I thought, "I'd love to get something of the kids." And I looked at a few tattoo books and I thought I'd like to get a portrait of the two kids' faces. Like school photos and have their portrait on my back. And their names underneath each kid. Because I saw that in previous magazines and I thought, "Wow, it looked really good." And some of them, like they had the original photo and then the tattoo and they came up really really nicely. But at the same time portraits are hard to do, and I think it's something...er..it's a skill that that sort of certain people

have and certain people don't. So I thought that it also could be tricky. And I'd hate to have it so that it didn't work out so great and then have it stuck on my back forever. And if it didn't work out well the kids would be disappointed and everyone would be disappointed. So I thought maybe that's not the way to go. Maybe I'll just get their names instead. So the third tattoos were my kids' names on my forearms, on the underside of my forearms, and I just decided to have their names instead. So I got in a more prevalent space. Because that wouldn't.....well the original idea was to have it on my back, which no one would have seen, so the next choice was to have them on my forearms so that everyone could see it. You know, I've got lots of positive reactions from people. You know, they thought that it was really sweet the way I, you know, I chose to put the kids. Lots of people would do things for your kids. But to have it put on your body forever is a bit unusual, but also they think that is really great. A lot of people wouldn't do that, one because of the pain factor and two, because it is so permanent. But it doesn't bother me. You know I feel that at myat being forty now, I mean, in the past in my life, I did various jobs which required ... you know it was probably not a good idea to have tattoos, so one off my reasons is, my background probably stopped me from getting tattoos when I was young. I think a lot of people get tattoos when they are really quite young. You know, when they like leave school or whatever, and that's their choice. And I probably would have done the same thing had I been a certain situation. But my background, my family background dictated such that I probably wouldn't have.....it didn't cross my mind to get tattoos then. Until I first met my wife and then at that point, again it still came into my mind because the choice was up on the top of the shoulder there where a shirt would easily cover it, short sleeve or long sleeve and then no one can see it, you know, because I was in sales. So therefore it was wise not to be tattooed all over. But once I turned forty it was not, it was not because of a change of life or anything, it was because I realised now, that you know, my time is spent looking after my wife now, so I don't need to go out and prove anything to anyone or show anyone.... You know, I don't have to be different for anybody else. I can do what I wanna do now, which is why I opted to go for the next tattoo which is on the forearm. To me that is almost like a big decision, on the forearm, coz that's like in your face. Even though the names are on the underside, you can always, you know people don't always see that. But going forearm is a real in your face thing because people see it all the time. And the snake, I mean the snake is... I don't know why I chose the snake... although I suppose the main...a couple of reasons were, we love snakes. I really like snakes. We have our own snake.

Desley: Yeah, I noticed that. I wished I didn't.

Participant: I love snakes because they are beautiful creatures. I think they are really misunderstood. They are extremely patient creatures. I think they just like to be left alone. They are just patient and they are quiet and they just do their own thing. And also I was also born ...in terms of the Chinese horoscope, I was born in the year of the snake. So I thought that would be a nice spiritual way to go, in terms of getting something. 'Coz I don't like to get tattoos for,...um... I like to have the tattoos, but I don't like to get the tattoos for no reason. So I won't just go and say, "Oh that's a great looking thing and that's it." I like to think that there'll be a story behind or a reason behind why you have it. For whatever reason. And then again because I was born in the Chinese year of the snake and because we love snakes and the funny thing is, my wife had this skateboard for years and years, from when she was young. I think we still have it. And the underside, it was funny. The kids got it down and I almost tripped over it. So I went to pick it up and we'd already had the pattern decided and we already had it drawn up, and I walked into the garage one day and "ah, bloody skate board" and I picked this thing up and on the underside of it is an almost identical pattern to this particular pattern. It's just a freaky thing. It's just really unusual but it's almost exactly the same.

I think the snake is perhaps a cobra, I'm not sure. This is basically a rattle snake, but the pattern was very similar. The colours are different, but the pattern's very similar. It is really freaky. In any case, I went back to the same girl. After I had these done, I started thinking about the next thing I wanted done. We were actually talking about having a back piece done, on my back. And we were talking about a dragon, at the time. I thought about that. This is where you have got to be comfortable about the whole thing. Because I thought about that a little bit and I thought, "Wow, a back-piece." And we started out as a little dragon and we ended up discussing like a huge back-piece. {looks at skateboard} oh, no, that is a rattle snake too. The only difference is the purple colouring. Before the snake we were talking about a dragon and we were thinking about a small little dragon but it turned out we were discussing like the whole back. And the tattoo girl was really happy, Ivana was extremely excited because she hadn't done a big back in a long time if at all, so she was really excited about that. But I decided against that, one, because of the financial side of things. It was quite a big expense, and also, but that's not the main, that's never my main consideration, but also the time taken. Because each time you go there, can be four, five hours at a time. So it's quite a time commitment. And also with the back and everything, you know people would...I was discussing it with Jay, one of the main people I would discuss it with...she wasn't all that keen on it. So I thought, you know if you are not, and

I'm not a 100%, then it was probably not a wise thing to do. So that's when we came up with... we decided on the forearm, and we decided on a snake instead. And she just, Ivana just drew it up for me. We went through some books and put it together and she drew it up for me. And she put in the colours. She decided what colours she wanted. Although Jay wanted to have purples, so we made sure that got in there, and then off she went. We just... and I've been having this now, she's been doing this for me now for about two months. The initial time...and it's only taken that long because of time... you know we've gone away a couple of times and also waiting for the arm to heal. Because of the fact that I enjoy it so much I can sit there for four or five hours at a time and not have to complain or worry about anything, so she can do a lot. But also you have to consider that...she has to consider the colours. That they don't run into each other and it doesn't affect each other. Otherwise she'll just be going back over the same thing. So usually she just does what she can where it doesn't involve a lot of colours mixing and then wait a couple of weeks and I'll go back again and do it again. So I think the last time, for this particular one, on this time, the last time will be in about two weeks. And she'll just do some final touch-ups on it and then we're going down to Melbourne to a tattoo convention. And we're gonna put the arm in. She wanted to go, she'd never been to one so she was quite excited about going down and asked me if I was interested to go and I said "Yeah, I'd love to go." They don't really have anything in Sydney. It's mostly Melbourne and Queensland that have the bigger shows.

Desley: They had a mini one, I think, there was a motor bike thing down at Albion Park.

Participant: yep. You know, I still buy the bike books and things and yeah, the bikie cubs still have their tattoo shows. But this is run by the...I guess it is the Professional Tattoo Association of Australia. So these are run by the organization that sort of, I guess umbrellas all tattoo artists.

Desley: Yeah. I think someone mentioned that to me in an e-mail the other day.

Participant: Ah, OK. The one in Melbourne is in May. The 5th of May. And it's Carlton Crest Hotel in Melbourne. And so we've decided to go there and stick the arm in. If nothing happens it doesn't matter. It's not a full arm. I mean it's only half the arm. But if I've had lots... I mean it's funny. It's really unusual coz I've had lots of positive comments, and I always tell Ivana this, coz it's her work, I've had lots of positive comments from people regarding the colours. How bright they are and everything. They really enjoy that. And the difference in the colours with the

purple and everything, and the pattern is such that a lot of people really enjoy it. Even people who don't have tattoos, probably have ever contemplated getting one, or ever will, they just have something to say. They just go "WOW! That is so colourful. They are so bright." You know they are really fascinated by it. And they and I'm quite happy to talk about it. I don't bring it up, but people ask me I've got no problems with it, I'm happy to talk about it. I still have... My kids' Principal was asking me about it the other week. I had to go up there and I was chatting to her and she was asking me about it. She sort of thought it was nice but at the same time, it's a Catholic school, so she was still very much....I think in a lot of ways tattoos have walls broken down, but there's still some walls up for some people. And she just was sort of saying, "What happens when you get older?" And I didn't quite understand that question, because I thought ..It's still going to be there {laughs}. I don't know, I didn't understand what she meant.

Desley: I think they thinkwell sometimes it's because it changes, depending on where it is. I think people think when you are really old you're not gonna want to have tattoos. I don't know why.

Participant: Yeah. Yeah. That's right. I did see a documentary once, that I thought the guy was extremely interesting. I saw a documentary one about this guy, who was about 70 or 80 years, and he was covered head to toe in tattoos, covered head to toe. And piercings. It was just his thing. And he just looked so calm and happy and everything. He was fine with his life. So I thought that was really interesting. And really good. But, I think, to my way of thinking, I've gone through that already. Like I've done all the things I wanted to do when I was younger and I've gone through the sales and everything. So all the areas where it probably wouldn't have been wise to have them, whether or not it is right thinking I don't know. But at that time for me it was. All those areas I've gone through, where I thought it was not a good idea to have them...I've gone through all of that. So to me, it's as you are getting older, it's less likely you should be worrying about things like that, and more about doing things that make you happy; that you enjoy, make you relaxed. Because so many things are so focussed the other way, you need something to keep you on track and even keel. So for me it's just art, but you happen to be the canvas. They're all the ones that I have. This one was for my wife, the Indian girl, originally this was done in an older style. It seems that the older style is more to do with the heavier ink and different needles. And with the heavy ink it looks a lot darker. Therefore it looks a lot darker. The newer style, more like the European style, is to have a lot of colour, less outline. So it looks like free flowing and even hand-drawn on. So that one, I was a bit disappointed with

that, because I didn't...well, I still like having it. I'm never going to get rid of it, even though I know you can go over them. But it was a bit disappointing...I'm disappointed in myself because I didn't focus enough on wanting to get it done properly. At the time we just picked it off the wall and said, " Yeah. That was the one for us." And that was it ...

Desley: How old were you then sorry?

Participant: Probably twenty six, twenty seven. Something like that. I don't know as a general rule, but I think.... even then I was probably thinking, Gee! I was a lot older than when most people would start to get tattoos. I think I was a lot older than most people start. I think most people start in their early twenties if not earlier, when they get the big work done. So I decided, because I had the kids' names, I thought I'd get my wife's name again. But a bit more fancy. So we designed, across on my back, we're gonna have a scroll with angel wings and a little halo on top with Jay's name in the middle of it, and that's gonna be that. Although... unlike the dragon piece which was discussed all over the back, this will be right across the back. So it will still be a fairly big piece.

Desley: at the top.

Participant: And at the top, yeah. So, but it's gonna go right across the back as against in the middle, but right across. Ivana's going to do that one too, and that'll be coloured. I must admit, I've been watching that show on the Discovery Channel, Miami Ink – about the tattoo shop. And I must admit, someone made a comment last week, one of the clients, and one of the guys made a comment that usually a lot of people, once they find someone they enjoy, having them do the tattoos

Desley: The artist?

Participant: Yeah. The artist. They usually stick with that person, and they are happy with their work. And that's who I think I found with Ivana. I am happy. She's always evolving. When this started out, it started out with various bits and pieces like the black spots and what not. Various bits and pieces were different. They were, like this skin spots in there and this was clear, and different things, and the lines weren't as thick. But every time we go in there, she's always looking at the picture, when I'm not there and evolving something new out of it. And so when I

go in there she's wanting to change something around. And I think that's great. The fact that she's never happy. She always wants to improve it more and more. So that's what I like about her. She's not someone where you can just walk in and whack it on, what you want as you want and that's it. For her it's more of an artistic thing. 'Cause I said to her, This is how I want... I sent a text message to her saying this is how I wanna have it. Jay, wings blah. Blah. And it was quite simple. And she said, "No no no, I'll design something. You forget about it. We'll make it art. Not just some crap you pick off a wall, which is her description. What she's talking about is, a lot of pre, as you'd know, a lot of pre-organised designs, so she doesn't like those. She goes back to Europe a lot to visit her family. And she likes the European tattoo artists. The people who have more of a free hand style. They use a lot more colour and everything looks more free flowing rather than just organised off a wall, and then stuck on with a stencil kind of thing. So she likes that. And I like that idea, because for her, it's more than just sticking something on a guy's arm or leg and that's it. For her it's got to look right.

Desley: so there's more commitment from her.

Participant: Yes. Yeah. And I like that. I like that. It's not something where it is just get 'em in, get 'em out type of thing. And I can see that she likes that, because ...obviously you pay for these things, but at the same time, when she's done the touch-ups on it, if she hasn't been happy with a particular colour or she can see that next time something else needs to be done, for her benefit, she won't charge me for it anything like that. She'd just let it go. She'd just be happier to see that it is complete I must admit I was surprised, because when she first said to me I want to make the purple thicker, or I want to do this, when she did the spots she'd go, I wanna colour them in because I thought, I was looking at it the other day, and I thought, "wow, how weird is that, that you would sit down at home or somewhere or in the shop even, and just pull that picture out and just look at it and go... 'cause you're not going to see me for 3 weeks and you have other people coming in, so I'd probably be pushed to the back of your mind when I'm not there. But she's pulling the picture out and going what can I do to improve that? make it look a bit better?

Desley: I can imagine there are certain ones she's interested in. There may be others where people walk off the street and she does it.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: And she never sees them again.

Participant: No that's exactly right.

Desley: So you've got a relationship going on with her.

Participant: Yeah that's right. To a degree, definitely.

Desley: It's not just give me money and I'll draw on you.

Participant: No that's exactly right. Whereas I can see when I am sitting in the shop where you get people coming in you can see she has enough...I think she's been doing this for about 6 years; she has enough perspective now to know when people are coming in, to know whether people are serious or whether they are just mucking about. I mean they always take a deposit to make sure people come back, because these things that people can easily change their minds about. But they put a lot of work into drawing them up. And if someone says I want a particular thing they put a lot of work into drawing them up and then making the stencil and everything. So you know they want to be compensated for their time and their effort that they put in. And you don't want someone to go aah you know I changed my mind. It's really disappointing for them. So she's developed a sense now I think, that when people come in, you can see the ways she treats them, whether. I mean she doesn't treat them nasty, but she treats them offhand if they come in and they're just not sure what they want, you can just tell that they are not committed. And therefore she just tells them I can do this or I can do that and they make a decision. Or other people that she can see are interested, she'll offer a bit more advice, bit more conversation and you can see that they are committed to it. But I would never myself personally, when people ask me about my arms or whatever, I would never advise someone to get a tattoo. To me to get mine, was all very personal and a decision between myself and my wife and I guess mostly myself, because I am the one that has to have it on my skin for the rest of my life. For my perspective, I am at a time where I am happy with you know how things will turn out, how I want to have my tattoos, but I would never say to someone, "I think you should get one." If they're going, you know I've been thinking of getting one, and try and convince hem, because you know, it could be something that they might regret. It might either be extremely painful or them or it could be just something they regret later on in life because oh, wow, either their future

husband or wife doesn't want one, didn't like it, or because a certain time in their career...for example there's a young lady that ... we drink a lot of coffee and go to Gloria Jean's and there was a young lady that, when she had a look at my arm, goes, " Oh, I've been wanting to have one for ages." I said, "Well you think about it. I wouldn't advise you to get one, but if you do want to go ahead anyway, I would think about it long and hard." Because at the moment she's young, she's working in this coffee shop, so obviously she's not on a career path yet. And if she chooses the wrong place to put it then it might end up being detrimental for later on. There is still a bit of a stigma there. The walls have broken down, but there is still a little bit of a stigma, and she wouldn't want to butt up against somebody who has still got that problem. It's not a great way to look at life, because unfortunately you'd like to be your own person and you'd like everyone to accept you for who you are, but reality is, that's not the case. It doesn't happen. It is a funny thing. I mean I get a lot of people coming up to me now. People have known me for years, so people still talk to me that know me and they have no problem because they know the sort of person I am is a nice person and not someone who.. you know, you look at some one and go "Oh!" But then a lot of other people that talk to me, you don't want to talk to {laughs} I mean Sutherland has a very diverse range of people. Without being nasty, I'll put it that way. A range of diverse people. And unfortunately some of the diverse people that have come up to talk to me have not been people that I had anything in common with.

Desley: So do you think they talk to you because of the tattoos?

Participant: I think so, yes. In a lot of ways, yeah. I don't always ride on my bike. I think maybe because the moustache has made an effect. And I think a lot because of the tattoos. They see the tattoos and they think, you know, "Wow, this guy is been in a Bikie Club," or whatever, and it just looks like that. But as I say the people who know me they know that obviously I am doing something different. I am going in different directions, but they can also see that I talk no differently or that my attitude is no different than anything else. I am the same person as before, just gone a little bit different. I think even if I hadn't got a bike, I think I probably would have still gone down the path of getting tattoos.

Desley: So when you got the first one you didn't have a bike?

Participant: No.

Desley: So how long did you think about it before you actually did it?

Participant: The first one?

Desley: Yeah.

Participant: Not long. Not long. Maybe even a couple of weeks, maybe even less.

Desley: And was it the same for this?

Participant: This one here? Yeah. That wasn't long either. That was probably, actually probably a millisecond. Because I looked at it and I thought that would make a great tattoo. The motivation for that was as I say the picture was great. The cigar thing cut it for me because I am a big cigar fan. So I thought that's it. The cigar thing cut it for me, and I thought that's gonna be it. And I said to my wife, I said to her this would make a great tattoo, and we both liked it. But at the same time, I did sort of go... I left the picture out, and I just looked at it and I left it go and I walked backwards and forwards looking at it, just to make up mind, just to make sure that I was sure, and when I realised yes, I am, and I went and...

Desley: So how long was that?

Participant: Probably around a week or so of looking at it. I mean the decision to get it was like immediate. I thought that'd have to be it. But the actual going ahead and getting it drawn up and getting it applied, probably about a week or so of the decision process, of the walking in and saying this is the tattoo studio, and then I went in there and showed them the picture and they said yeah we can do that, not a problem. And then it was just a matter of them drawing it up for me and then going back in. And that was no time at all. I mean I had no... once I, I think a lot of people would back out once the reality hit and you get to the place. But I think it was just all go forward from there.

WIFE: I remember with the Indian woman, when we went out for dinner that day, and we looked in the tattoo shop, and we both said that's what I looked like in the dream. And then it was like a week and a half you were there, and you had it done.

Participant: Maybe even less, I think. Maybe a couple of days – three days or something. Yeah that's right. I was working in there at the time, and it was a really short period of time and that was it. This one here, the goblin I think as my second one, I think that took about two or three sessions of about 4 or five hours each. The third session was just to go over, just to make sure everything was OK with the colours. But the other two sessions were getting it done, getting the colours done. Again she didn't want the colours to run because the colours mixed in together, so she did that in two sessions, 'cause that was not as big. But the Indian woman that took about two hours.

Desley: That's mainly just black though.

Participant: Yeah. Yeah. There was very little colour in it. When the guy originally did it, there was very little colour in it. But Ivana re-coloured it for me and she re-did the face. 'Cause the face was actually a bit distorted, it was different when he did it. And as I said, that's why I didn't like it when he did it. When I got older and looked at it and realised he hadn't done a good job on the face. He sort of thought this guy is just having this one done, probably the only one he ever gets done, so maybe it was even a bother to him. Because it wasn't very big. It's only a couple of hour's work, so he put it in there, so he just rushed it in. Yeah. He was very funny. You know we weren't married at the time, so he said, "I'll write the name here, but I'll put it in such a way that if she leaves you, you can just cover it or something, you can just cover the name up!" {laughs} Because a lot of people obviously go in there and get something done on the spur of the moment with their girlfriend or whatever, and next thing you know they've broken up and they've gotten stuck with a name that they can't get rid of.

Desley: I think that happens quite a bit.

Participant: I didn't realise, watching that show on the Friday night, I didn't realise how easy it is to then cover it up with something else, or go over it. I remember one of the guys making a comment. A young girl had come in for her first tattoo and someone had asked the guy, you know, "When was your first tattoo" and the guy had said "I had mine at sixteen," or something. And she goes "oh. Where is it?" and he goes, "Oh it's covered up by layers and layers of other pictures now." So over the years he's just gone over and over. Yeah. In terms of the tattoos I haven't stopped either. People have said to me it can be really addictive.

Desley: So you haven't stopped since the goblin? Coz you had the break?

Participant: Had the break there. See that was the first one. Then I had the goblin fifteen odd years later.

Desley: How long ago did you have that one?

Participant: This was a year. A year ago. Or thereabouts. I didn't even remember it. Ivana reminded me. She goes, "It's been a year since you had that one." She even remembered that. And then after that, then I had the names done. And then I had the snake done pretty quick after the names.

Desley: And that's been going for a while?

Participant: And that's been going for the last couple of months. Yeah, because we've just been doing the colours. I think she's been busy and we've been doing things so that's why it hadn't been finished earlier. Otherwise it probably would have been done. The next will be my back with the wings and then after that. Well we haven't designed it yet, but we're looking at a Japanese theme. A samurai or something like that on this forearm.

And then I'm thinking of continuing the ...because I wanna, it looks a bit funny when you've got the bare patch here. But then it's two different themes. So I'm thinking of we're going to try to do something where we can sort of mesh the two together. Perhaps do something Indian around the woman, so that it sort of moulds in and sort of joins together. Not to look the same but to have the same sort of style. Because they are both two different styles. So we'll use this same new style and come around and try to mould the woman in. and that way it should all mix together and should look fine. And then, I was talking to the kids, and I was thinking of filling all the arms in. So I was seriously thinking of having roses done up to the elbow, round the kids names just to fill them in. Not to cover them but to highlight them as well as being there, on both arms.

Desley: So you said earlier on that there has to be a reason behind getting them.

Participant: Yes.

Desley: What would you say the reason was, behind the goblin?

Participant: It was primarily.... It was two things. Because I really liked the picture – the theme of the picture. And the theme with the cigar was the big thing – the motivating factor in that.

Desley: So by the theme with the picture, you mean just the way he looked, or?

Participant: Yeah, the way he looked.

Desley: Does that mean something to you?

Participant: Does it mean something to me? Not the picture as such, no I guess not.

Desley: There must be a lot of pictures that you like. So why did you put that one and not something else?

Participant: Because of the cigar, because it was already involved into the picture. That was a big thing. And my wife's right. I do like gargoyles and that type of thing. So I thought well that's, um... And I hadn't come across a gargoyle picture that I had liked. But when I saw this one, that looked like that, and you know, it was really, it had something about it, and it had the cigar, which to me was the clinching factor, coz that was already there.

Desley: What is it about gargoyles that you like?

Participant: The way they look. The fact that they're... to me anyway, the way that they're fashioned... My wife and I were lucky enough to go to Paris in '91, a few years ago and we saw the architecture there and they have a lot of gargoyles in French history and on their buildings. And the way that they are portrayed as protectors. They look like protectors of the buildings. You know you see them standing up there on the corners of the buildings and they just look like protectors of the buildings and of everything. I liked them a lot because they are portrayed as protectors.

Desley: Do you like the idea of being a protector?

Participant: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Desley: You also said that you like to have something in your life that makes you feel relaxed. Do you mean.... you said getting the tattoo makes you feel relaxed. But does having it make you feel relaxed as well?

Participant: Yeah it does. Coz every time, I must admit...to a lot of people it would sound vain {laughs} I look at myself all the time. Yeah I look at it. When I look at my arm now, and even the kids' names I look at them and I think "wow!" you know. And I look at it and think back to when I was getting it done. I almost like put myself back as if I'm getting it done and remembering when I was sitting there having it done and having it evolve. I just thought WOW! It puts me back there again makes me feel relaxed again. I remember when I was having this done, having that done. It just makes me feel like I am back relaxed. But at the same time it also makes me think, the other way of having it relax me is ...I sit down and I think oh wow! Geed up and think What could my next one be? Where can I have my next one? 'Cause I must admit, when I was getting that one, I was a bit apprehensive about the forearm. As I said because it's such a big area, a showy area for everyone to see. But no sooner had I had it done, and it probably wasn't even finished and I was looking at it at and going " wow, what is the next thing I can do on THIS arm?" It already set me thinking about that. So when I look at this I think "Wow" you know. I think back to how relaxing it was when I had it done and then I am already thinking about having this done. So to me that's already thinking about the next stage of being relaxed. Or of enjoying it.

Desley: So it's something else that you can add to it.

Participant: It also makes you relaxed as well because you think I'll be back in that chair, I'll be back in there and it'll be quiet. And it's like you just think about be anything. People put whale music on or ocean music, and you can sit there and think, "Oh, I've got the ocean around me" I look at the arm and I think back to where this was being done, or one of the others and then I'll move into "oh, what's my next thing I wanna get done?" it's almost like putting yourself there and getting it done.

Desley: What is it about the next one...is it the feeling, that's the most important thing to you? Or was it more about matching it up? Or is there something else?

Participant: It's definitely never, it's not necessarily about matching it up. I must admit I am a bit unusual that way. A lot of people like to have running themes. They like to have the same sort of theme running through their tattoos, I guess. I met a guy the other day who... He didn't show me all of his body, but he showed me his arm and part of his leg. And he seemed to have a running theme with castles and dragons and things like that. He had a lot of tattoos and he had a running theme there. I don't like to think that way. I like to think that the ones that I'm getting are for my own personal reasons. This happened to be a snake, but on this side happened to be a Japanese warrior, or this happened to be a carp, or happened to be a whole bunch of flowers. It's only for my own benefit. It's not because someone said, "Well, I think you should have a matching theme running across your body. You should have something to do with a snake over there," or something like that. I don't think that way. I like to have what makes me happy. To me that's the whole point – to make me happy by looking at it and go "Wow!"

WIFE: you love things about samurais and swords. Even the Japanese guardian there.

Participant: Oh sure. I did martial arts for eight years. And that was a great thing for me, my health and for my mind as well. I had a couple of friends there who were right into it. So... and that again was a very relaxing thing. So I'd be able to look at that and it'd bring back all good memories. I think that's one of the biggest things. You look at things and it brings back all good memories. So well, you know, in terms of THIS, the memory of having it done at this point. But with having something else done perhaps the Japanese thing it would be a whole lot of other things of good memories.

Desley: So you'd have the memory of having it done plus...

Participant: Plus..yeah, yeah. That's one of the big things. I guess I don't aim for it, but it's one of the big things that comes out of it, for me, a big plus, is that you not only have the memory of having it done, but there's all these other things that you can think about, that are always good. There are too many.

Desley: So are there memories associated with the goblin?

Participant: It's funny you said that. Not long ago, there is, coz not long ago... coz there are memories associated with having it done and I looked at it and I went "it was so cool when I had that done, it was the second one I had done and it was such a long time, it was so good, you know. And it was good having it done, the actual having it done. And then a couple of times I've actually looked at it, it's reminded me to have a cigar you know. I used to smoke a lot, then I stopped for a while, because you just get too busy. But then a couple of times I've actually stopped and looked at it in the mirror and I've looked at it and thought, "wow, I should have a cigar now!" and I went out and had a cigar.

Desley: So is that something else you found relaxing? Having a cigar?

Participant: Ah yeah! God, yeah! oh yeah! That is awesome.

Desley: I think you said that none of them coincided with any particular event. Is that right?

Participant: No. Not particularly. No, no.

Desley: So it wasn't on the birthdays you got the kids' names, or something?

Participant: No, no. Purely just for the fact that I wanted it. It's just something that popped in my head kind of thing. I thought what other thing could I have on me that would be good, or would be nice. And I think I was just looking at something or tidying up something and I saw the kids' school photos. I think they were sitting on the dining table there for a long time, I was cleaning it up and I thought, it just popped in my head. "wow, wouldn't it be great to have the kids' pictures on my back!" I thought wow, that'd be cool, that'll be really cool. And I saw some other portraits, and I thought that'll be cool. Then I started the thought process. Then I realised, you know, portraits are hard. Maybe not as easy as I'd expect. I went to the next step and I thought...I didn't just dismiss it. I just stayed with it and thought I'd have my arms done instead, with just their names. That would be just as good. And I discussed it with the kids. Told the kids. And they were really excited and that made me really happy.

Desley: So did they go with you when you had it done?

Participant: No. no. because only for the fact that it is a sterile environment within the area, and it would be distracting to have the kids walking there. The kids can't just sit there, they'd be getting bored. I wasn't there all that long to have their names done, but that would still be a couple of hours and they would have nothing to do.

Desley: So do you typically go by yourself when you have your tattoos?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: All of them.

Participant: Yeah. Oh sorry. I beg your pardon. The very first one, the Indian woman, Jay was with me for that. That was 2 hours, but she sat there patiently.

Desley: So do you still like them all? I suppose you do.

Participant: Yeah, I do.

Desley: What about the Indian?

Participant: Yeah, I do.

Desley: So would you change it at all?

Participant: It's funny you ask that question. Because I said to Jay the other day... she said she hates it and I said "Do you want me to cover it?" I mean I would happily keep it for ever. No problem. But I gave Jay the option. If she wanted to change it, now that there's more modern styles and some bigger pictures around and things like that. She could always change it if she wanted to. If she wanted me to change it, I'll just change it. Even though she doesn't like it but she wants to keep it because it's special, then I'll keep it the way it is. I'll just move around it.

Desley: So you said you don't really feel any pain when you're having them done.

Participant: No. not really. I mean that's so far! I mean I have been told that...

Desley: Depends where you have it, I think.

Participant: yeah. On the ankle some people say it is quite bad, because it bounces on the bone.

Desley: Someone told me that the feet were painful because of all the bones. But I actually interviewed a podiatrist and he said there's heaps of nerves in your foot as well. So it's not just the bones.

Participant: Oh, OK. That's interesting. Coz a guy I was talking to the other day, he'd had his whole arm done, including his armpit. And he looked like he could take a lot, because he had a lot of them on. So he'd get used to it. But he said, under the armpit, because you've got a lot of nerves in there, he said that was crying material there.

Desley: I've seen a guy crying once, he was getting it done all around here. He was a big tough looking guy. Do you think there's something else you could have done, rather than had tattoo, that would have had the same effect for you? That would have given you the ability to tap into the relaxation?

Participant: Ooh. That's an interesting question .Ooooh! That's a hairy one!

Desley: it's psychology. I've got to ask you a hairy question!

Participant: I would have to say...I don't think you can categorically say no. I think there is a possibility that it could have been something else, I could have done, to probably have the same effect. But would the effect of something else have been as great or as euphoric as this, probably not. I've really enjoyed and will really enjoy having them done.

Desley: So is the euphoria just getting them, or having them?

Participant: Both.

Desley: Both? Yep?

Participant: Both.

Desley: Do you think of yourself as a person with tattoos, or are you a tattooed person?

Participant: I'd say, what was it? a person with tattoos. Because I have never, I'd never put myself up on a pedestal in terms of those. Because the books that I've read, with some people's artwork, on their backs, like full-back pieces, full chest pieces or even full arms, it's just such awesome work. And then some people that have had the whole lot done- chest, back, arms, legs, the works...and I mean those guys and women, some women too... are just, it's just awesome. The work. I mean the artist is the one doing it but at the same time that person's letting him do it. So those people are awesome. So to me, I would never consider myself anything at the moment. but just a novice at getting these things done. These people have been having it for years.

Desley: What kind of reactions have you had to the tattoos? Like you said you've had some really good ones. Have you had any bad things?

Participant: I don't think I've had any negative reactions, no. I think with the colours, with the colours, because they've been so bright, I think that's been a plus. I wear a singlet a lot when I've had it done, because you've got to put cream on, and it gets, as you know, and it gets sticky. So I put a singlet on, and the other ones come up then. But I think...I don't think I've had any adverse reactions. Because mostly, people have thought... as I've said, people have thought the names, they thought "hey that's so cool." That someone would, I mean you do lots of stuff for your kids, but to have that, they think to have that tattooed on your skin, knowing it's going to be forever... they think that's an awesome thing. Yeah, I've had people say that to me, even though it's not done yet, the fact that I've even thought about that and had it designed it, they thought that was pretty cool. The Principal, I had to go up there the other day and she was asking me, why a snake and why this and why that and why even get one. But it wasn't in a derogatory fashion or in a fashion that was bad. She just wanted to understand why someone would do that. Especially considering she knows me so well, that...she knows I am a quiet person, you know. I come from a catholic middle class family. This, ah, what an unusual departure, you know. Been clean skinned before and all of a sudden this.

Desley: It says in the bible that you shouldn't get tattoos, you know.

Participant: Does it? I didn't think so.

Desley: What do you think about other people that have tattoos?

Participant: What do I think about other people with tattoos? Gosh that's a big question. Is that, are you talking about men, women or anyone?

Desley: When you see people with tattoos, what kind of reaction do you have to them?

Participant: Yeah. I've had different reactions. Mainly I am just intrigued and interested to see what they have and to see what it looks like. You know, almost like, but it's not so much, when I look at them, it's not so much about them, but it's more what has been done to them. So when I look at them to me it's more like what kind of art work have you done and what has the artist done. Is that work a bit better than mine. I look at it and I think what has the artist done and what was going through their mind when they did that. Often I think did that person choose that pattern or did they design that pattern themselves, or is it something they pulled off the wall. And quite often you can see, some older people. I look at them briefly because I realise it will be something like an anchor or an ink mark like that one there of a lady, something like that, and I know is an old style, and they've had it done because they were either in the military or because they were young and foolish or something like that. And that doesn't really interest me because I know they're old style and a lot of them are faded. A lot of people just don't get them re-done. They're not that interested. They just had it done at the time because it was something to do. But a lot of other people, younger people today, you see a lot of different coloured designs. And I was at the coffee shop the other day and there was a young guy in there and he had a short sleeve shirt on, and he had one under there. And I just kept watching his arm as he was moving around, because it looked like a really intriguing design. And I wanted to just try and get the full grasp of what it looked like. So quite often when I look at other people, it's not so much about them. It's more about their art work and what it is. What it involves.

Desley: You don't think about why they got that picture?

Participant: Yeah, sometimes I do. Sometimes I look at them. If they look like a...this might sound bad, if they look like a normal person, I think, "I wonder why they got that?" and why

they got that where they got it But these other people who you can see they are either, I mean rightly or wrongly, there's other people I've seen where they mostly have tattoos on their legs or something, and they are like jailhouse tattoos. So therefore I don't think much about that. I just think well he's just got that done in jail. It has no meaning other than the fact that he's just got it done in there for some reason. To me that probably has no meaning. He's just been in there and he's just got it done. Other people, the people who intrigue me are people who look like you normal average Joe, and walks along the street and they've had something done and I think, "Wow!" You know, "what was the motivation behind that?" The first thing I think is "What is the pattern?" How did the artist do it? And what does it look like? Is it modern or whatever. Is it nice, is it done well. And then I look at the person... I think, Wow, you know, I wonder what the motivation was for that guy to go and get that done; or that girl. Especially girls. A lot of times I think, with girls I think, I wonder what the motivation was for that. You know, being a woman there is still a stigma involved with tattoos. I know for a while they were quite popular with women to get one on their spine, their tailbone. but you just sort of dismiss that. Because it was like a fad thing, hipster jeans or whatever. And they can't see it so they'll never regret it. But there's a lot of other women who I've seen in tattoo books, who have got like full on colour, artwork all over them. And I just think wow, what was their motivation. And they look like you know the average girl on the street and you think wow what was the motivation to get that? But at the same time it's not judgemental. Because I think it's a beautiful piece of artwork though, you know. And I think, you know, "I wonder what people must think about HER, when she walks along the street?" At first I guess I thought that about myself, but now I don't worry about it. Well some women do. It's funny. It could be also the way some people dress, the way some people carry themselves

Desley: the package?

Participant: just the package, it is, yeah. Yesterday or the day before we were at McDonald's and this woman rocked up. She was in this old Monaro and she got out. She had black Ugg boots on, really high Ugg boots. I think it was Wednesday and it was a hot day. And she was wearing a mini skirt and a singlet top and she had this old tattoo on her back shoulder. And for all I know she might have only had the one. We looked at ourselves, and you know this was a very bad thing, you know, being judgemental... we looked at ourselves, and I said to Jay "That's probably someone who shouldn't have a lot of tattoos, because it doesn't make them look very nice." You know, the way she dresses, doesn't make her look very nice. Makes her look like she's with a

Bikie guy or something like that. But other women, I've seen have tattoos, it enhances their beauty, you know. Makes them look gorgeous or makes them look really nice. It's just a... I don't know ...it's a weird thing. That makes me sound very bad now... very judgemental. {laughs} I sound very judgemental on people.

Desley: The trick question: What would be the opposite of your tattoos?

Participant: What would be the opposite of my tattoos? What do you mean by that?

Desley: Well I'm not sure what I mean. But some people take it to mean what will be the opposite picture, some people say having them off, some people say never getting them, and one person actually said the opposite feeling to the feeling they had when they got it. So it depends how you want to interpret it.

Participant: Well I'd never say having them off, or never getting them, because I waited.

Desley: What would be the opposite of you with your tattoos?

Participant: Opposite of me?

Desley: Or the opposite of your tattoos for you?

Participant: Probably an unhappy, grumpy bastard.

Desley: you yourself?

Participant: yeah. Probably an unhappy, grumpy bastard.

Desley: So you're saying it's more about the feeling?

Participant: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. More about the feeling, more about the feeling they gives me of relaxation. Of evenness. Of calmness. Of all that. Of serenity. All that.

Desley: So what about if it was an ugly tattoo? Would that be an opposite for you?

Participant: Yeah I think so. Yeah, yeah, definitely. I think an ugly tattoo would probably definitely be the opposite, that would be, yeah yeah. Definitely. That would be like... Well you've got good and evil. So I guess the good tattoo is the way ..the path I want to go down, the evil one would be the opposite.

Desley: Ok so a good tattoo is what? Like if you had to describe a good tattoo what would that be?

Participant: One that definitely has a meaning for me. One that other people get to enjoy as well, 'cause I do enjoy people making comments about my arm and so forth. When people ask me about it, I do enjoy that. Something I enjoy, something other people enjoy, something my family enjoys. So you know, I think all that, I think all that a good tattoo entails everything that involves happiness for people. Because there'd be nothing worse for me than having someone go "Oh my God! That looks shocking." Even if I try to convince myself that it looks good, but if I have people everyday going "that looks shocking" and the kids every day going " Geez, Dad!" or even Jay going " I wish you'd never had that done." That sort of thing, and that would weigh down heavily on me. Because I would be wondering, you know, whether I made a bad decision. It was a bad choice.

Desley: So you said something that had meaning, that gave people enjoyment and happiness.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: So what would be the opposite of those things for you? Like what's the opposite of happiness?

Participant: Errrr. The opposite of happiness? That would be... you know... stress and, and, and frustration.

WIFE: Well for instance. You never had a tattoo in your life, right? And you had a tattoo years ago and were too scared to show your family, 'cause they are in the old ways. And I reckon that back then I you didn't get a tattoo you'd be so frustrated that you couldn't get up the courage to

get one. Because you'd be so mad at yourself saying, "Why can't I get one, why can't I get one!" And now he started getting them like mad and he doesn't care what they say.

Participant: That's probably it in a nutshell. My family are very traditional Catholics. I guess in the younger days in my life, I hadn't seriously thought about getting one. It wasn't the first thing on my mind. But at the same time my life was very frustrating and what not. I mean I wouldn't say I had a bad life, by any stretch of the imagination, unlike some people, you know. I would never ever say that. But I would say that from my own personal picture, my life was a bit frustrating. Always trying to compare myself to other people or trying to be something for my parents that I didn't really want to be. They wanted me to be a certain person. I didn't want to be that person. So therefore, now I'm getting the tattoos now, it's a way for me to break out and go, "now I don't care about what other people say, this is for me." These are for me. These make me happy. These make me, you know, to a certain degree they make me complete. So the opposite of happiness would be yeah, frustration, would be stressed. Not so much anger or bitterness or anything like that. But frustration and stress, just disappointment, I guess, that you've allowed yourself to follow a path which is not yours. I don't think people should follow a path, now that I've experienced, and foolishly done it, I don't think people should follow a path that is not theirs. If you follow a path that someone else wants you to follow, then you are destined to have a really miserable life. Because you are doing things you don't wanna do. You're doing things to make other people happy. So now I don't do that.

Desley: You've got to be true to yourself.

Participant: Yeah that's right. So now I don't do that.

WIFE: we used to go over there and he'd be so excited to tell them about something he did and by the time you leave, you are just down.

Participant: that's it, that's it. And then you are back in the rut, by going I'd better stay back on the same path I was on, because that one I took just ran into a brick wall. {laughs} So you go back on the same path again but eventually you gotta, you know... Now I've broken out of that. It took me long enough. But now I'm out of that. By the same token, when I say I don't care what anyone says, I don't care what people say about my tattoos; about the way I do things or about the way I speak. Because I have an honest streak in me. I don't lie. I always tell the truth

and people find that confronting sometimes. Some people don't want to hear your honest opinion. {laughs} they want to hear something that's happy. They don't want to hear the honesty, but I don't do that now. The honesty, if you, if you want my opinion, if you want to ask me something I'll tell you straight what it is. That's that.

So the things I do, I respect other people and I expect other people to respect me. So I don't do anything that affects anyone's life adversely or want to do anything to affect anyone's life adversely. So when I say I don't care what other people say, I don't care what they say about what I've done to me, but I won't say anything bad about them either.

Desley: So you care about their feelings?

Participant: Yeah yeah. I care about people's feelings. I won't say... and I just hope they have that same respect when they talk about me or talk to me, that they have that same respect. If they don't well that's fine. I'm not gonna be nasty back, just for the sake of it.

Desley: Do you feel like the fact that you have a tattoo means that you identify with any particular group of people?

Participant: um. No, no, no. Perhaps it does automatically. I don't know. I don't know that. The answer to that I don't know. I don't believe, from my point of view, no I don't believe it puts me in any group of people. I don't believe it puts me into any group of people, No.

Desley: Is there anything else about your tattoos that you can think of, that I might not have asked you about? I think I've covered all my questions. Ah, there's one. Who else do you know that has a tattoo?

Participant: oh, wow. Jay's brother has a couple of tattoos, I've only seen a couple on his arm. Her brother has two tattoos that I've seen. But his were from when he was younger he was in a bikie gang in Melbourne or something. So he has one of his nickname which they gave him, which was Chopper. He's got that on his arm. He's got something else. I haven't really noticed that because, as I said to you before, with the older style ones, which, his were, because he's 50 now, 55, with the older style ones they're a bit, they were a bit clumsy, in those days I think. So I don't take much, I look at them, but they're sort of like in view, out of view, I don't pay much attention straight away if they're not interesting. But with other people who have something a bit

more intricate I find that extremely interesting and that's when I start asking why did they get that done, who did it, why did they, what was their reason behind that, that sort of thing. But without actually talking to somebody it's all guess work.

Desley: So apart from him, your friends don't have tattoos?

Participant: To be honest I don't have that many friends. I don't associate with people, I don't socialise that much any more. I used to work in the city. And I used to work, it was strange, I was, I guess it was all part of breaking out of that thing of the past, I used to work as a salesman. I used to work with my father for many years. So I was along that path. But then when I re-met this friend of mine, when I started training again, he got me into doing some bouncing work. And I ended up... When I first met my wife and we went overseas, I quit my job as a salesman, and we went overseas. That was sort of like a start of our journey. And when I came back, just in the meantime, because I had my Security licence, I started working again in the city, doing door work and things like that. After a few years of that though, of dealing with drunks and weird people, and drug addicts and things, 'cause it was in Kings Cross, it just happened I fell into that place so because of that I decided I'll pull back a bit. And we came out into this area, coz we lived in the city, so we came back out here and I probably lost touch with a lot of friends and things. A lot of people I knew. I don't socialise much. I don't drink. Lost touch with a lot of people I knew. I reconnected with a guy I knew at school and we went out a couple of times, had coffees and things like that. Catch up together, but he's, his job dictates little time as well, so. I train everyday with a guy at the gym. I met him at the gym so we train every day. But we don't socialize at all, that much, 'cause we do different things so that's different there. I think the only other person I know, and that's only really briefly at the moment, that's got tattoos, is this, ah, I went down to the bike shop the other day, to take my bike, at Taren Point. There's a guy down there. That's the guy I was talking about. He started showing me his arms and his legs. And he's got a lot of tattoos. I think he's pretty much covered. And he's only young, much, I'm what early forties, so he'd be in his mid twenties. And he's covered. He's pretty much done. He's got a lot to go, he wants to the back of his hands and stuff, but he's covered.

Desley: So there's nothing else that you can think of about, about your tattoos?

Participant: in regard to what?

Desley: just anything that might come to mind

Participant: No, not really. Not other than the fact that I really enjoy it. I really enjoy it. It's funny, you know, people from my past would probably look at me and go "wow he's not the kind of guy that we would have expected to get tattoos." A bit of a lout perhaps, but not the kind you'd expect to get tattoos." Other people though might turn around and say something different. I ran into a guy who is now an orthopaedic surgeon. It was only by chance. My wife had to go there 'cause she bugged up her thumb. And he was from my schooldays. And unfortunately we'd had a run-in when I was at school and I hurt him... bashed him up and I had a short sleeve shirt on. I didn't have the forearm tattoo, but I had the others. And I'm sure he looked at me and thought, "Turned out just as I expected." {laughs} That's just my thought. Whether he was actually thinking that, I mean he probably was. But that's just my thought. I'm sure he had something like that in mind. Other than the fact that I really enjoy them, I'm not the sort of guy that people would probably expect and I... Perhaps at one point in my life, I wouldn't have expected me to have so many, you know. At one point in my life I probably would have looked at people and thought it's a bit freaky getting that many tattoos. I mean tattoos are cool, but that's a lot. But now to me, especially since I had the forearm done, because that's a big showy piece, you know, in everyone's face. I think to myself no, well it's not such a big deal. After all, it's a personal choice. If you are comfortable with it, then it's fine. I mean, I didn't get it because I ride a Harley. A lot of people connect that. I didn't get them for that. It just happened that they were all connecting at the same time. I didn't get them for that. I know other people do. But no, I get them for my own reasons, for my own enjoyment. And that's really all it comes down to. It's nothing... There is some spiritual thing there and something there like that. But there's no great mystery as to why, you know, unsolved thing as to why I get them. I get 'em 'cause I like 'em. They have a meaning to me. And I enjoy it.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	3	1	4	Sad
Patient	3	1	2	2	2	3	3	5	3	1	1	2	Stressed
Caring	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	1	3	2	Rude
Kind	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	2	Unhelpful
Sense of humour	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	Too serious
Sociable	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	Introverted
Friendly	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	1	3	3	Arrogant
Active	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	Slack
Confident	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	3	1	5	2	4	Shy
Organised	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	3	3	4	Disorganised
Hard working	1	2	3	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	Lazy
Honest	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	3	1	1	Untrustworthy



Participant: I've got nine of them. They're all one of a kind bar one and I'm not very impressed with that one because I found a better one later on that I could have had. So I'm pretty pissed off with that. It doesn't matter. It's there for life. It's still my star sign so it doesn't really matter. I've got... What do you want to know? Why did I get them?

Desley: When you got them, what they are, where they are.

Participant: The one on my ankle was my first one and that was done two years ago and that's of my cat's paw print. And then the next one was my cat's head, then I've got the star sign, and for my 21st birthday I got three tattoos. I got one shoulder

Desley: front of your shoulder?

Participant: yeah. front of my shoulder and two on my ankle for my 21st. Then on May 2nd I finished that up, I got the other two put on and somewhere in between I got an ankh, I don't know when I got my ankh but I've got an ankh on my ankle as well.

Desley: Somewhere in between the first one and the last one?

Participant: No, somewhere in between the first one and the third one. I don't know whereabouts that one was put in but its there. I got a friend's brother to design two of them and the other two are my cats. I had to wake him up and it was quite rude of me to do it.

Desley: wake the cat up?

Participant: It took me several tries to get his paw print right. With the face one I had to do a bit of running around for. I had to go to a printer's store and get them to print a coloured one and a black and white and blow it up so they could see the detail and stuff like that. I wanted to get the ankh and all the wind, earth, fire, like all those symbols to represent like what it is. The next one I want to get is the spirit world, like the signs of that.

Desley: When you say earth, wind and fire, as that the signs of the zodiac, how they go into groups?

Participant: Yes.

Desley: So you had the ankh first?

Participant: I had the ankh first, then I got these two on my 21st birthday. That's why the 21 is in the water. Then on 2nd May I got these two done.

Desley: which is the wind, is it?

Participant: That's the wind and that's the earth.

Desley: Very nice.

Participant: yes. They all look good.

Desley: and you said next you're going to go with what?

Participant: All the ghost and things like that. Symbols.

Desley: How many of those are there?

Participant: No clue. That's why I've got to look into it further.

Desley: So, you've just got an idea that's what you want?

Participant: Yes and I want them on the inside of my ankle so they're both together. You know what I mean? Like one's all the living and then one's all the spirit world.

Desley: So you said the first one was your cat's paw print.

Participant: Yes.

Desley: cute. So why the paw print?

Participant: Because the last cat I had, I didn't have anything of her. I loved her so much and I just thought why not? And so every cat I get I'm just going to put a print on me and then get their name on it. But I haven't done with that one yet.

Desley: So you'll get the name near the paw print?

Participant: Yes, under or above. I've even got my kid's thing thought out as well. I've got to have one of them first though.

Desley: Was there any reason you got the paw rather than some other bit?

Participant: Because of the pad, so the ink wouldn't stick.

Desley: Because it was easy?

Participant: Yes, but it wasn't easy because he kept on moving and it didn't go on right.

Desley: What I mean is you could have got their name.

Participant: I just wanted a symbol of them as well. A name and that's for your kid, like a name and date of birth and all the rest of it. It's a kid's thing. So I thought do the paw print and then I got addicted to it so I did the head.

Desley: Got addicted to the tattooing?

Participant: Yes.

Desley: So it was the same cat?

Participant: Same cat, yes.

Desley: What is it about your cat that's important for you?

Participant: I love cats. Even the, see little bell around his neck – he's got a \$500 necklace, sterling silver, chunky. I love that cat. I loved the other cat and had a problem getting this one because they wouldn't give me a cat. I went to the RSPCA and they said na, you've got to grieve. So then I stuffed off the RSPCA. I shouldn't have done that because all those cats – you don't know what's happened to 'em, but they didn't want to give me one. It was dearer at the RSPCA to get it but I had to get a cat.

Desley: How long did you leave it?

Participant: Two days. Like my other cat passed and then I had to get him with two days between.

Desley: They thought you should have waited longer?

Participant: Yes, but I didn't want to wait because I didn't have anything left of my other cat.

Desley: How old was she?

Participant: 10 and she was a big deal of my life. I got her when my grandmother died. Her first litter of kittens was on my grandmother's birthday so she was important

Desley: special

Participant: and now I don't have anything to show, but with this one at least I do, forever.

Desley: well you can remember the other one.

Participant: yeah. I've got the shavings of her when they put her to sleep. Coz she had a kidney disease and I didn't want her going on like that. She fell off the bath tub and that's not nice. So...I was keeping her alive and that was mean on my part.

Desley: We had to do that with my cat too. Same deal – the kidneys.

Participant: They said it was 50:50 but it might slide down and I told them to give me the real chance, and they said no hope.

Desley: yuck. It's not an easy decision, is it?

Participant: No. But with this one I won't forget.

Desley: Why did you choose your ankle?

Participant: I've chosen spots that I thought would hurt because my mother doesn't want me to get any tattoos, but they don't hurt. I went to sleep when they did the one on my back so I've got a weird pain thing.

Desley: Can you explain more why you wanted them to hurt?

Participant: Because my mother doesn't want me to get them. I respect my mother but if they don't hurt, I'll get more. Like, in all spots. I've got one up high on my neck, just to see if that hurt. It didn't hurt. Got one here – that didn't hurt. I'm going for all the spots that would hurt so I would stop, but so far it's too addictive.

Desley: What is it about it that's addictive?

Participant: The noise, the adrenalin... the rush.

Desley: What do you think the rush is caused by? Coz I always thought that once it stopped it felt really good. But I think you get it before.

Participant: I think it's the noise. I like the noise. Every time I hear it in a shopping centre – some of the lights in shopping centres sort of sound like it when they're off a bit and they buzz – then I want a tattoo. Mum goes "you're not getting another tattoo", then I go out two days later and get one. So that's why.

Desley: Do you have music playing when you get them?

Participant: No, just the noise of the gun.

Desley: Do you find that you go into a different head space when you get it? You said you went to sleep.

Participant: I went to sleep with that one because it took an hour and a half and I was lying down. When they do the ones on my ankles I watch them do it. With my shoulder I was looking at him and talking to him.

Desley: So you really relax when you have it done? That's unusual, I think, from the people I've talked to.

Participant: I don't see it hurting.

Desley: I went to a tattoo convention a couple of weeks ago in Melbourne and there was a girl was getting one of those Koi carps all around here to cover something else up. She was lying there for four hours. All the people were walking around looking at her. She was as skinny as. Then she got up and went to the toilet and when she came back she couldn't handle it. She told him to stop. I think the adrenaline might have dropped down or something. The guy was Japanese and he didn't even speak English and she had to get her boyfriend to get an interpreter.

Participant: I'm going to the one person. I'll never go anywhere else.

Desley: So you've been to them from the start?

Participant: Yes. I've had two people tattoo me – Adam and Chris. Chris did Matey because he's the main guy that does portraits

Desley: is that at Corrimal?

Participant: yes. And they were fixing up their shop on the last two so I made sure I got Adam to go down to the other shop and do the other two.

Desley: yes. He's nice.

Participant: They're both nice.

Desley: I don't know Chris. I've never met him.

Participant: He's got piercings all over his face. They keep on asking you if you're okay and stuff like that. They look after you.

Desley: Can you say a bit about what it is you like about cats.

Participant: just, like they lay around all the time. They've got an awesome life. I'd love to have that life.

Desley: so are you jealous?

Participant: I've always loved cats. I love them more than dogs. I've always had a cat. I'm just a cat person. I wanted my whole back of cats. Mum through out the catalogue for that, so each cat I get, I'll get their footprint and their head.

Desley: so are there certain attributes of a cat that you like?

Participant: just their nature. Mine aren't mean or anything. They're good cats. They only play with me, like aggressively... like attack me. I think that's a good thing just in case a child comes around and they could attack and hurt badly. Look at him, he's just lovable. Look, he's on his back like a dog. Yeah. so...

Desley: One of ours does that. My son rubs his tummy.

Participant: Mine sleeps like that. It's like really weird. I just love them – they're my babies.

Desley: So you've got the cat. What did you say was on the front of your shoulder?

Participant: I've got me star sign.

Desley: That's the one you're not happy with?

Participant: Yes.

Desley: is that a scorpio.

Participant: Sagittarius. And then that one there is a design from a friend. I just wanted a tribal looking one and he came up with that.

Desley: They could almost look like cats there together.

Participant: You can always grow on one of these designs. But I would never do that. I don't want to go too far down my arms and my legs.

Desley: So you've got those and the one on your ankle, and the cat's face, and that's it?

Participant: Yes.

Desley: I just want to get the content straight in my head. Is there any reason you picked your star sign?

Participant: I had five necklaces with all different star signs, like all different designs, so I just thought why not get a tattoo of one of them? But I don't like it.

Desley: Maybe you can get it fixed or something.

Participant: Because of how it's shaped and that – I wanted a narrow one. The one I found was a narrow one so I don't think they'll be able to fix it.

Desley: possibly not. You might have to get a big tribal thing.

Participant: or I might get "Sagittarius" written across it and then another one, because it sort of looks like a t, not an arrow.

Desley: They're pretty good. If you talk to the guys, they can come up with something.

Participant: I went in there and just picked one of theirs off the wall and it was different to what it looked like on, but it's too late when the needle is already going.

Desley: So the other ones have all been unique for you, not flash or anything?

Participant: No.

Desley: With the tribal one, did you just want a tattoo there? Did you get the picture first?

Participant: I got my friend to draw three different designs. I liked this one better, took it into the shop and they said you have to make one part bigger because it would look funny because of where it is on my arm. I said that's fine as long as it looks like that.

Desley: So you're happy with that one?

Participant: Yes.

Desley: What was it about the earth, wind, fire and water?

Participant: Because I had the ankh first, it's like what can go with an ankh?

Desley: What does an ankh mean?

Participant: It's life. I got a friend to design that as well.

Desley: the ankh or the other bit.

Participant: no, the ankh. The other bits were free-handed by Adam – two of them, and then the other two were free-handed by the lady that actually runs the store.

Desley: oh, Sue! Is that Chris' mum?

Participant: Yeah. I believe so. I thought they were brothers but they're not. Chris and Adam. They're not. Yeah.

Desley: You said you put them in those places because you thought they'd hurt. Is there a place you wouldn't put a tattoo?

Participant: All the way up my leg or my arms, my lower arms.

Desley: ok. Why is that?

Participant: Because I reckon it looks trashy.

Desley: What about on your neck or your face?

Participant: I've got one on my neck.

Desley: I meant your throat.

Participant: Not too high up. Depends on the occasion, because I've got to cover two of them up for a wedding I've got to go to. I didn't realise I had to do that. For a wedding I have to wear a dress so I've got to cover two of them up. It's just, um finding a place where they're not that visible and if something does happen, if it is able to cover them up.

Desley: You prefer to be covered just in case?

Participant: Yes. No-one can see that I've got any tattoos. So no-one can pass judgement on me. Do you know what I mean? People see tattoos and think they're rednecks or something like that and no-one can see my tattoos so no-one can pass judgement.

Desley: It's just safer that way, isn't it?

Participant: Yep.

Desley: How long did you think about them before you actually had them, say with the first one?

Participant: The first one – me and my brother's ex-girlfriend were talking about it for two months, and then we went in and got them.

Desley: So she went with you?

Participant: She did it first and then it's like "yeah, I'm doin' it"

Desley: at the same time?

Participant: yep

Desley: ok. And so was it her idea or your idea or?

Participant: It was both of our ideas. I wasn't that sure of the idea, and then you're there and you hear the gun and it's like "yeah, let's do it". like before even having one.

Desley: I imagine that would put me off.

Participant: no. it didn't put me off. So I got one done.

Desley: and then with the others, how long did you think about it?

Participant: Near enough straightaway with Matey's head, but I had to do some planning about that one. I had to give them the picture for a week so they learnt how to draw it. Then I had to get them blown up and that took a day. Near enough as soon as that was done, I was in getting it done.

Desley: but did you think about getting it for a while?

Participant: no.

Desley: you sort of thought "I'll get his head" and you just went. Planned it.

Participant: yes. The waiting around is the money. That's the most expensive thing. You need money to get tattoos so you've got to wait around. As soon as I got the money I was in there getting it.

Desley: At the moment is that what's holding you back – just the money?

Participant: No, I need to find another design. So as soon as I get a design and a plan I'll be in for another one.

Desley: Will that be the spirit one or would it be something else?

Participant: I don't know yet. It could be the start of the spirit one. It depends on whether I want to pop out a kid or get another tattoo. They're the only two I've got in mind at the moment – the spirit and a kid.

Desley: You can't get tattooed when you're pregnant can you?

Participant: No. What I need to do is after it's born I'm getting... I don't want to say this, coz other people...

Desley: then don't say it.

Participant: other people have stolen the idea off me already. I want to get a foot print/hand print right inside of it the name, and the colour of, if it's a boy do it blue, if it's a girl purple or pink – outline the foot. Then inside the name.

Desley: That's a bit more unique than getting their face, too, isn't it?

Participant: mmm

Desley: I saw a woman in a magazine and she had the baby's face right across here and she was on about her next one and I thought "where are you going to put it?" for a start.

Participant: A baby's foot is like that

Desley: it's like the paw print

Participant: yeah. and I want to get it, along... like...Most girls get them on the lower back and I want to get that.

Desley: so you'll have to plan how many kids you have, eh?

Participant: couple. Maybe one. Maybe more. Don't know yet.

Desley: it's a bit hard sometimes.

Participant: yes.

Desley: I think you mentioned this, but do you consider that any of them coincided with any particular event in your life, like you said your 21st for the, two of the ones on your ankle?

Participant: I got them three days after my 21st coz I couldn't do it on my 21st because I went white water rafting and I was too drunk the next couple of days. So I had to do it on the third day. I had it booked in to get that one and the other two done.

Desley: That was his face was it?

Participant: No, the one on the front. I just said because it's my 21st can you put a 21 in there? He said that was fine.

Desley: and what about the other ones? Did they?

Participant: no.

Desley: nothing?

Participant: I had the last two done on my brother's birthday but that wasn't planned at all.

Desley: that was just a coincidence?

Participant: Yes, it was the only time that I could fit in.

Desley: So this one wasn't for your birthday or anything?

Participant: No.

Desley: Do you still like them all?

Participant: All but that one, but I still like it. yeah.

Desley: If you could change it, would you change it?

Participant: No.

Desley: Would you have them all again?

Participant: Yes.

Desley: Even that one?

Participant: Yes.

Desley: And you said you thought about having another one? You also said it doesn't hurt – is that right? For you the pain is not an issue at all?

Participant: Yes.

Desley: So it's not like you're addicted to the pain or anything?

Participant: No. It hurt a little bit doing one on my ankle last time – just the black outline, but that takes 5 seconds and then it's colour, so...

Desley: and the colour doesn't hurt.

Participant: no.

Desley: Do you consider that there's a, like a theme that runs through your tattoos, or...?

Participant: That one and my cat, but other than that I don't see a theme.

Desley: The tribal one and the star sign are like separate?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: Then there's a sort of a theme if you get the spirit one and I guess if you get one for a baby.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: that's sort of like your other baby.

Participant: yes. At the moment I'm too young for a baby so this will do me.

Desley: yes. Much easier to look after.

Participant: It's still expensive.

Desley: At least you can go out and you don't have to have a babysitter with the cat.

Participant: He cries when I go. He's bad. He wants me all the time, just like a kid, as mum keeps on saying. He even comes into the toilet with me and mum says that's what kids do. So I have no privacy at home because he's always wanting in.

Desley: At least he can't run and tell people.

Participant: oh, but he can, if people could understand him.

Desley: most people can't I guess. So would you ever consider getting your tattoos taken off?

Participant: No. I think that would hurt more than actually putting them on. I've seen some people that have got them off and I don't like the scarring.

Desley: I was talking to someone the other day and he said that a guy had them all down his arms and he got them off and the hair didn't grow back. So then he just had really disgusting scars everywhere. You're better off with a picture.

Participant: Yes, and if you don't like it, you shouldn't have had it done in the first place. You've got to plan these things. As I said I didn't plan it well, but I can't take it back.

Desley: So no regrets.

Participant: No regrets.

Desley: Do you think there is something else you could have done like, for example, to remember your cat, rather than get a tattoo?

Participant: No, because at times I forget the other cat, so I thought get a tattoo and never forget it.

Desley: no matter what happens.

Participant: no matter what.

Desley: So you don't think there's anything else you could have done. With the other ones – what about those?

Participant: what do you mean?

Desley: well is there anything else you could have done rather than have a tattoo?

Participant: I like tattoos, so I wouldn't have changed any of them. Do you know what I mean?

Desley: yeah. So why a tattoo rather than something else?

Participant: Because they last forever and you only have to pay for it once...

Desley: so value for money. You're not into like piercings or anything?

Participant: Nup. I got my ears pierced to spite my mother. She wouldn't let us have them done. Year 7 after school I went down and got one of them done. Two years later I got the other ones done with my sister. My mother and sister aren't always on talking terms so I did it to spite her as well.

Desley: Do you consider yourself to be a person who has tattoos or are you a tattooed person?

Participant: I'm a tattooed person.

Desley: Is that a function of how many tattoos you've got or is it more like how you feel?

Participant: It's how I feel. I've always liked tattoos.

Desley: coz I spoke to one person and they said they only had one tattoo, but they were a tattooed person because if they could they'd have heaps of them.

Participant: My brother wants to get one but he can't because of his skin. That's the only thing stopping him. I've got okay skin. It doesn't scar so I can do what I want.

Desley: So some people can't I've never heard that before.

Participant: My brother has... like when he cuts himself... he had a 3rd degree burn on his hand and he's still got a really big scar from it which is

Desley: so it's like keloid? That really hard lumpy

Participant: no, no, no. it's just like always there, like always bright. This one here dulls down and then pops back up, but his are always bright.

Desley: so it just wouldn't work to do.

Participant: I do it to spite him as well, because he can't and I can. His girlfriend I think does the same thing because she's getting more and more as well. I don't know if she wants them all, but... we keep on asking him to go....

Desley: Is that the same girl you got your first tattoo with?

Participant: No, a different one.

Desley: different girlfriend. So when you got most of them, were you alone for any of them?

Participant: My mum came with me for one, my brother left during these two coz he had a lady from America down so I was on me own with these two, and I took a friend in case I couldn't drive home with the ones lower on me ankle and this one, but she couldn't drive anyway

Desley: So the one on your ankle – the paw print – was the only one where someone else got one?

Participant: Yes. No-one else has got one with me, but I've had people in the room with me.

Desley: What do you think it means to other people that see your tattoos?

Participant: I don't know. I don't really care what they think. It's on my body. I only have to do it.

Desley: What kind of reactions have you had to them?

Participant: Good reactions to some, bad to others. It depends on the person. Like my dad hates all of them. Mum's gotten used to them. My brother keeps on dobbing me in "she's got another

tattoo” – mum already knows about it so he’s trying to get me in trouble. It’s a mixed reaction coz my dad doesn’t like it but all his other family have tattoos. Do you know what I mean? So he can’t really say anything.

Desley: Do you think it’s had any negative effects on your life?

Participant: No, because I can cover them.

Desley: because you’re being sensible, basically?

Participant: Yes.

Desley: Did you ever worry enough about other people’s reactions to think that maybe you shouldn’t?

Participant: Na. Because everywhere I’ve got them, no-one can really see them, unless I, like, “look, there’s a tattoo, oh, look, there’s another one”

Desley: What about your parents though?

Participant: Mum came with me to find out about this one and I was really shocked. And she was okay getting that one. So I just think that everything was okay.

Desley: So you didn’t really worry about it? you thought she was alright?

Participant: No. yeah.

Desley: Who do you know that’s got a tattoo?

Participant: My dad’s other family.

Desley: what do you mean by other? His brothers and sisters?

Participant: no. My parents are separated, so his girlfriend's got one, her daughter's got one, and one of her sons or both of her sons have got them. I'm not sure about that. I know one of her sons got the whole leg done and I just think that looks gross. That's why I don't want my whole leg getting done. I've seen it and I don't like it, so I don't want it.

Desley: What about your friends?

Participant: My brother's ex, his girlfriend now. None of my friends have got tattoos. Kevin and Slav have. Kevin's got four, three, four, and one of them has just got one.

Desley: Because you've got tattoos, do you feel like you identify with any particular group of people?

Participant: No.

Desley: and, my trick question... For you, what would be the opposite of your tattoos?

Participant: what do you mean?

Desley: The theory that I'm working with says you can't know what something is unless you know what it's not. So you've got no idea what cold is unless you've actually felt hot.

Participant: The first experience of getting a tattoo?

Desley: Well, it could be that. Some people say a different picture, some people say getting it taken off, some people say never getting it in the first place. One person actually said a different feeling to how it makes them feel, because he said that his tattoo makes him feel calm, so the opposite would be being stressed.

Participant: While you're lying on the bed you are calm. I don't know if you want it while actually there doing it or afterwards.

Desley: just having it, I think, as it being on you. What would be the opposite of that? I don't know if you want to treat them separate.

Participant: I just see them as body art and a reminder of my cat and the spirits and all the rest of it. It's all around you but just in case you want it on you, you've always got it. It's around all the time – wind, earth, all of it.

Desley: So, for your cat ones would the opposite be forgetting?

Participant: Yes

Desley: and the same with the paw?

Participant: yep but that sounds stupid because you never forget about any of that coz it's around you – wind and earth.

Desley: But it's probably not in your consciousness.

Participant: yeah. True. I thought of it as like a “churchy” thing. Coz they're all into...I used to be a greenie and I just thought of it like that. I did bush regeneration and all the elements, so I thought of it like that

Desley: for the tattoo?

Participant: yep.

Desley: So would the opposite of that tattoo be not being a greenie, or something?

Participant: I'm not a greenie now, but when I thought about it I was a greenie.

Desley: What about with your star sign? Can you say what the opposite of that would be?

Participant: Not being me, because it's my star sign so it wouldn't be me.

Desley: ok. That's a good one. What about the tribal one?

Participant: I just wanted to experiment with that one so I'd say I wouldn't experiment.

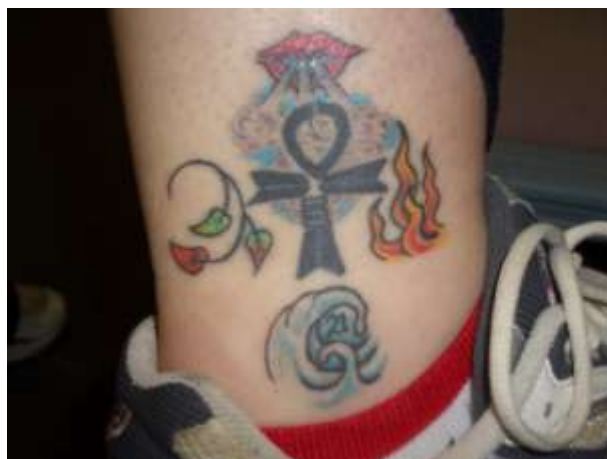
Desley: ok. That's a wonderful answer. That's a good answer. Do you have any idea how you think people see you when they see your tattoos? You said you think some are tacky if you get them on your legs and your arms.

Participant: it's just....The big ones I think are not right. It's just my opinion of them, but they might like it. I like little ones. They might like big ones. It's just difference of opinion.

Desley: So just say you were wearing a top where someone could see it, what do you think people would think when they saw your back?

Participant: I don't know. I've actually been at a nightclub and I'll wear a singlet top. I take off my other top and show schoolmates and they've liked it. Everyone I've shown the cat one to they've liked it.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	4	Sad
Patient	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	3	1	In your face
Caring	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	Hurtful
Kind	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	4	Mean
Sense of humour	3	2	2	2	4	5	4	2	3	3	3	4	Pig-headed
Sociable	3	2	2	2	4	4	4	1	3	2	2	5	Hermit
Friendly	2	3	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	Bitchiness
Active	2	1	1	1	2	3	2	1	2	3	1	4	Bum
Confident	3	1	1	1	4	4	4	1	2	2	2	4	Disappointed
Organised	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	3	3	2	4	Grub
Hard working	2	1	1	1	4	2	2	1	1	3	1	5	Lazy
Honest	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	4	Liar



7.3 RDT subgroup Personal Symbol

Participant RS30
Female, 18 years old

Interview date: 1/3/2006

Participant: Yeah. Ok. Well when I was I think thirteen about thirteen, I really wanted to get a tongue ring, and my mum wouldn't let me get one. And my dad said he would be really sad if I got one. And then one day, my mum said that if I forgot about the tongue ring, then she'd let me get a tattoo. I thought wow! That's bigger than a tongue ring. I didn't understand why she said that. But I was really stoked. So then she said if you still want one in a year, and I did. And I'd been thinking about it for the year what I wanted to get and. And my friends said you should get something to do with Buffy because I was obsessed with Buffy, but I said I wasn't going to be into Buffy forever, so that would be stupid. I was just trying to think of something that I wouldn't regret. Because obviously it's permanent and I can't afford to get rid of anything. And so I got my star sign. Coz I'm a Scorpio and I think scorpions are cool as well. And I thought I'm not going to regret that because I'm always going to be a Scorpio. And, it was my 15th birthday present, so I got it just before my 15th birthday, when I was still 14 and that was before it was illegal for kids to get one, just before, so I was stoked because all my friends wished they could get them but they were too late. And I got it purple because it suited. Even though red was my favourite colour, that would look pretty weird, I think.

Desley: it might look like a lobster.

Participant: It was just my psyche. People said that if I get fat then it would look like a crab or something. Yeah, that's about everything I have to say, I suppose.

Desley: So do you consider that being a Scorpio plays any part in who you think you are?

Participant: Well, I'm not all into star signs and everything. I suppose some generalizations happen to be right. I don't know whether that's because of the day you were born or just a coincidence. But I really like the idea of star signs even if I don't necessarily believe in all the superstitious stuff. And I really like my star sign and everything, but I'm not, as I said, superstitious.

Desley: So when you say you like your star sign, you like the symbol?

Participant: Yes. And I like thinking of myself as your typical Scorpio.

Desley: Ok. So what would a typical Scorpio be?

Participant: Very strong willed. Um... Another negative association is aggression, but I think I control it pretty well.

Desley: So you're saying that's typically associated with Scorpions?

Participant: Yes. Not with me. with Scorpions yeah. And I am fascinated with the animal as well. Although everyone is quite scared of them and spiders and everything.

Desley: Because they are quite poisonous aren't they?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: Is it all scorpions or just some?

Participant: I'm not sure. I know that it's the sting you've got to worry about, not the claws.

Desley: At the tail, isn't it?

Participant: Yeah. Which is funny, because that is the part of my tattoo that hurt the most, the tail.

Desley: Really?

Participant: I don't know, they had to go over it a bit. I had the outlined, there was purple outline and then light purple colouring in. you can see here they've gone over it a fair bit. So that's what bit hurt the most. I've heard a lot of people say that tattoos don't hurt at all, but it hurt me a lot. I don't know if that's because I have a lower pain threshold or what. Or if it was just a bad spot. Halfway through, the guy said it was a bad spot to get a tattoo and I was like thanks for telling

me now. Because the reason I picked that, was because I thought fleshy parts were less painful, but apparently not.

Desley: it seems to be that it depends on the person.

Participant: Mhmm. I've got really sensitive skin as well.

Desley: was there bone underneath it?

Participant: no, it's above my hip bone. I've got really sensitive skin though. It hurts to brush my hair a lot of the time.

Desley: It might just be that. It might have hurt that much no matter where you had it.

Participant: maybe.

Desley: So apart from the fact that it was your star sign was there any other reason why you picked that picture?

Participant: No. As I said, I knew I was going to get a tattoo; I just had to pick what. I was going to the tattoo place every time I was in town, and looking at all the pictures on the wall and they had quite a few different scorpions. This one I didn't think looked so scary, because I didn't want to look like a hostile person, and it wasn't too pussy either.

Desley: So you just picked it off the wall.

Participant: Yeah, just the one I liked the most and whatever was the right size. They accidentally did it one size too big. But I didn't mind because we only had to pay the price of the small one for a big one.

Desley: So you talked about the fact that Scorpios are strong willed. Are there any other attributes that you know of?

Participant: None that I can think of right now. I've got this friend who is obsessed with star signs and she is always going on about what certain people are like, and she dead-set believes that everyone's like that.

Desley: Like their star sign?

Participant: Yeah. That's a bit biased. I can't remember can't remember any of it right now, the particular attributes of a Scorpio.

Desley: So what about the scorpion is important to you?

Participant: I'm not obsessed with scorpions, but I do like them as an animal. I think they are pretty interesting. I've a different friend who found a scorpion and kept it as a pet which I thought was very funny. I don't know anything much about scorpions. I don't research them or anything. But I just think they are cool. They look so different than most creatures, and apparently they turn up in fluorescent lights, sorry UV lights and fluoresce...

Desley: do they?

Participant: I just learnt that today! In Geology.

Desley: different! So you like the fact that they are different?

Participant: Yeah. Definitely. I always consider myself as a very different person. I try not to... Well, it's not like I go out of my way to be different, but I'm pretty proud of the fact that I'm not like most people.

Desley: In what way?

Participant: Well, I suppose I act differently than most people. I say what I think. A lot of people say that I am FIG because I think so highly of myself.

Desley: You mean FIG JAM?

Participant: Yeah. Stuck up. Like the only person I seem to care about is myself. And I'm like yeah, who else is going to? Like I care about other people, but I always think of myself as the most the important person. I 'spose that might be a Scorpio attribute. You don't think of them as a particularly friendly animal.

Desley: I guess not, no. I suppose you think of them as able to kill you, or something.

Participant: Yeah. A lot of people in high school thought I was a bit psycho. I've never actually been in a fight. The thing is, I was known for doing karate, and no one was game enough to try me. Even though I'd never been in a fight before.

Desley: So your reputation was enough.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: You never had to back it up.

Participant: Yeah exactly. But I would probably be dropped in about two seconds. I don't know.

Desley: You'll probably never know because no one's game to try!

Participant: Exactly!

Desley: So maybe that was a bit of the Scorpio thing, coz just the look of it probably scares people.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: an actual scorpion I mean. Like it's got a reputation for killing people and you've got a reputation for being able to fight, but no-one's actually tested it.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: So why did you put it on your hip?

Participant: Well. Firstly I was thinking it can't be too visible. Because a lot of people wouldn't give you a job if you had it like, I wouldn't want one on my face anyway, but if you had it like on your hand or arm or anything. I didn't want it here because that was too conventional and I like to be a bit different than most people. And I was also thinking where would it not hurt and I found out halfway through as I said, that it does hurt. So on my hip, or just above my hip, because it was fleshy and could be easily covered, and also I thought it was a cool place because it could be easily shown as well if people were like, can I see your tattoo. So whenever I wear a short top like today it is fully visible, and I can cover it with a longer top. Well, I suppose that's the reason. I kept changing my mind. Sometimes I wanted it on the front. Sometimes I wanted it on my back. This was just the place I had in mind when the time finally came around I suppose.

Desley: So is there somewhere you wouldn't put a tattoo?

Participant: On my face. On my hands. {pause} I think that would be the only places that I wouldn't. Except I mean, like really tender places. I suppose if I wanted to get another one, and tattoos are so addictive, the more you have the more you want. Right after you get one you're like, oh, I want another one. And now I want to get a cross. Not because I'm religious. Just because I like crosses. I think they look cool.

Desley: So you are thinking of doing a cross, like up and down, not an "X"

Participant: Yeah, yeah. Like a religious cross, but not because I'm religious. If I did decide to get that, I was thinking maybe on my back, either on the side or in the middle. Or I was also thinking about, not a cross, but if I wanted to get another one, maybe on my foot. I've heard that if you get one on the bottom of your foot, they're free for the rest of your life, because it's so painful, on the bottom of your foot. But I'd never do that. Maybe on the side or something. A little vine or something on the side of your foot. It would look cool.

Desley: I had a guy come and talk about his tattoo the other day, and he is a podiatrist.

Participant: Oh yeah?

Desley: And he said he would never get it on his foot because there are so many nerve endings in there. You might want to keep that in mind. I always thought the foot would be really painful because of your bones, but he said there's a lot of nerve endings there. So you might want to ask before you do that one.

Participant: I'm trying not to let myself get another one, because if I do I know I'll want another one and another one. And I don't want to end up as an old lady covered in ink. I think that would just look scary.

Desley: So why do you think they're addictive?

Participant: I'm not sure. I know that everyone I talk to agrees, though, who's had one. I've got this one friend, her name is Renée, and she gets animals. She's got like a teddy bear and a giraffe and she keeps getting them all in different places. The more she gets the more she wants. A lot of people find the actual pain of getting a tattoo addictive, which is a bit sinister, I suppose.

Desley: I wonder whether it's the pain, or whether, after it is over, and there's something about, yeah! I went through that. You've achieved something for yourself.

Participant: Yeah. Afterwards you get a sense of accomplishment. And also you've got the endorphins and adrenalin running, which is a bit of a high when you're done. The pain for me wasn't great. Maybe it was because I was yet pretty young, or maybe it's just because I'm not into it.

Desley: When you say it wasn't great, you mean it wasn't good.

Participant: Yeah I didn't enjoy it. Some people enjoy the pain of getting a tattoo. Sometimes pain isn't bad. Sometimes I enjoy physical pain, in a weird way, but not very often. Like if I'm working out, if I'm doing push-ups or something, my arms are just burning and I just keep going. Sometimes it's terrible, but sometimes if you are in the right mood, it's a good sort of pain. It's weird.

Desley: coz you know you're getting something out of it. So you said you thought about getting a tattoo for about a year?

Participant: Yeah. As soon as mum suggested it, I was so stoked. I didn't think that would come in the cards at all. So yeah. I thought about it and I kept changing my mind as to what I wanted and where I wanted it and what colour I wanted. I suppose if she had made me wait another year, it would have changed again. But this is just what I wanted at the time and I was sure of it and I've had no regrets since.

Desley: So you still like it?

Participant: Yes.

Desley: Would you try and change it at all?

Participant: I don't think so. Sometimes in High school when we were in Maths and bored we'd draw all over it. Like we'd give it a bottle of alcohol, we'd give it red eyes, and spitting out green something. Just for fun. And one of the guys in Maths was like, "Oh my God, did you draw that? It is so cool!" he didn't realise it was a real tattoo with drawings over it.

Desley: So you wouldn't do that permanently, though?

Participant: um. Not at the moment. Maybe in the future if I change my mind I might. But at the moment I am very happy with it.

Desley: So would you do it again? Get that tattoo?

Participant: The same tattoo? If I could go back?

Desley: Yeah.

Participant: Yeah. I would still do it. No regrets so far.

Desley: Ok. That's good. So you think you'll have another one? Or you're trying not to?

Participant: I'm trying not to, but I probably will. Not any time soon, because money is a big issue at the moment. I reckon if I have the money, which I will in the future, I will get definitely get another one – whether it's a cross or cherries, or whatever.

Desley: So when you think about getting another one do you think about what to get, or where to put it?

Participant: I think about everything. More so I think about what to get, what style, what colour, how big. And then where to get it, sort of comes second.

Desley: would you ever think about getting it taken off?

Participant: No, not at the moment.

Desley: Because?

Participant: Because that would be a waste of money. Waste of money getting it. Waste of pain getting it. I like it. I have no reason to get rid of it.

Desley: Why do you think...this might be a dumb question for you, but why a tattoo and not something else? Do you think if you'd said I'll wait another year and get a tongue piercing...

Participant: Well, I prefer a tattoo. Because it's permanent and it's really an art form. And I think tattoos are beautiful whereas piercings are less arty, I think. In my opinion, they're less permanent and you'd have to take it out every time you like work, or something. I don't know – a tongue ring sounds...just the idea of putting a needle through my tongue gives me the shivers. Just sounds painful. Most people would say it is not really painful. I don't know whether a tattoo is really painful, but I don't know. Just the idea of anything in my face really, I suppose.

Desley: But you did want a tongue piercing.

Participant: I did. Not for the pain bit though. I just wanted a tongue piercing, but I didn't want to have to go through.,,

Desley: Was it to be different, or?

Participant: Yeah. Originally I wanted a belly button piercing. And then that became trendy and everyone in high school in year eight and nine, was getting belly button rings, so I thought, mmmmm I don't want a belly button ring. I was going to go with something different – tongue ring, in a way I thought would be fun to play with. Mum didn't want me to wreck my teeth.

Desley: So do you think there's anything else you could have done, that would have had the same effect as having a tattoo?

Participant: I don't think that there's any replacement. I can't think of anything.

Desley: Ok. Do you think of yourself as a person with a tattoo, or are you a tattooed person?

Participant: When I think about who I am, the tattoo generally doesn't come into it. Because that's just part of my body. When I think about who I am, I think about who I am spiritually, and how other people relate to me and what they would think of my personality. Not about my body.

Desley: So do you think they react to you at all, because of the tattoo? Like if they saw it, do you think they would draw conclusions about your personality?

Participant: I think some probably would, but I don't worry about it. I've never really worried about what people think of my tattoo, or any other physical part of me, I suppose, if it's a negative thing. If it's a positive thing, then cool, but I don't really think about it. I worry more about what people think of the things I say and the way I act.

Desley: So even though you said before that people seem to think that you care about yourself more than anyone else?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: That to me doesn't quite gel with worrying about what people think about what you say. Do you know what I mean?

Participant: When I say I care more about what people think about what I say and the way I act, it's not that I go around censoring myself worrying about what they'll think of me. I honestly care more about what I think of myself than what other people think of me. But when I think about the way that other people react to me, I think more about my personality than my body and the way I look. But that's not a big issue in my life what other people think, because I know there's always going to be people who like you and people who don't. And I just go with the people who I like and who like me. Not going to try and change the way that I act, because of another person.

Desley: Because then you'd probably upset someone else anyway.

Participant: Exactly. Or the way that I look, come to think of it. That's just for me. And I am very confident about the way that I look and the way that I present myself and my personality. And I don't care if anyone else thinks that I am stuck up or ugly. Because I think that I am fantastic and that is all that matters to me.

Desley: Do you differentiate between having a picture and having a tattoo, if that makes any sense? Like is it more about the tattoo as a tattoo or more about the actual picture? Because some people just want a tattoo because they want a tattoo and the picture doesn't matter, I guess is what I'm trying to get at.

Participant: I sort of get ya, not entirely though. I'd say it'd be more about having a tattoo than having a picture. Because I didn't even know what I wanted in the start. I decided to get the tattoo first and then I decided what the picture would be.

Desley: and like you said if it was a year later you might not have got that picture.

Participant: yeah.

Desley: would you have still got a tattoo, do you think?

Participant: yeah.

Desley: What would you say would be the opposite of your tattoo?

Participant: I've no idea. That's a strange question. Um. Opposite of my tattoo. {pause} Any examples?

Desley: well people answer it differently. Some people say not having it. Some people say, having it off. Some people say a picture that would be the opposite. One person actually said how they would feel, because of the way the tattoo made them feel. So it depends how you want to interpret it.

Participant: When I think about that question, the first thing that came to mind was, tattoos in society, sort of how they are viewed as rebellious and I was thinking of something anti-rebellious. Like, I don't know, a cross necklace. So there, a cross necklace would be the opposite of my tattoo.

Desley: So when you went, did you go by yourself?

Participant: No. My mum couldn't go because she was working I think. I took one of my friends, Kate Brand. And she sat with me and again this was before it was illegal to have anyone else in there with you while having it done. And she held my hand the whole time, and I squeezed the shit out of her hand and it was going blue by the end of it.

Desley: I didn't know it was illegal to have anyone with you.

Participant: It is now because of sanitisation.

Desley: Really? When did that happen?

Participant: Recently. Or at least it wasn't in this one tattoo parlour I was in.

Desley: Was that down here?

Participant: That was in Surfer's Paradise on schoolies. And apparently word of mouth said that they were a dodgy tattoo place, so I would think all of them would do that.

Desley: I know someone who had one a couple of weeks ago, and I'm pretty sure they had someone with them.

Participant: Really? Well the guy in the tattoo shop said they weren't allowed to, anymore.

Desley: So maybe it depends. Were they little cubicles, or something?

Participant: no. It was a big room.

Desley: I thought maybe if it was close quarters they couldn't have someone in there. But in a big room, like at Corrimal..

Participant: Maybe it's a new rule they've brought in, then, I don't know.

Desley: So you had someone with you. Did she get a tattoo?

Participant: No. But she's always wanted one. She's old enough to get one, but she still hasn't got one.

Desley: So when other people see your tattoo what do you think they think it means?

Participant: I think people who are conservative about tattoos would think that this person is hard-core. Sort of like, a bit of an idiot, maybe.

Desley: Do you mean like lower intelligence, or just stupid to get a tattoo?

Participant: Sort of the same sort of thing as bungee jumping. Like a lot of people think that people who bungee jump are idiots. They are risking their lives when they don't need to. I suppose a conservative person would think that of someone with a tattoo. Someone who has a lot of tattoos who sees someone else with tattoos would probably think that, well they'd judge depending on what the tattoo was. Someone who has big like skulls and everything who saw a chick with a little butterfly on her shoulder would probably wouldn't think twice. Sort of cool but a bit soft

Desley: a scorpion's not quite as soft as a butterfly. So what kind of reactions have you had to your tattoo, from your friends?

Participant: "That's not real!" A lot of them thought that when I first got it done. Because I was so young, and everyone was just like, didn't believe it was real. But the sort of reaction I get nowadays is more like, "Oh wow! That's really cool." Nothing too out there

Desley: So you haven't really had any negative reactions to it?

Participant: No. I don't think I've ever had any negative reaction. I can't remember anyone saying like "you're going to hate that when you are old." Or anything like that.

Desley: that's unusual. So who else do you know that has a tattoo?

Participant: One of my friends from back home. She got one at the end of year twelve. It said, "cut your ribbon" along her back. It was something from a song. She's all into rock and everything. And then a little bit after that, she got this huge tattoo over it. Of like this big rose and a microphone and music. It was huge. I don't know. I think she'll regret that.

Desley: So could you still see the original?

Participant: Yeah. That was around it, not over it, sorry.

Desley: And she's the only one?

Participant: Another of my friends, Laura. This was at schoolies. This was way after I got mine. She got I think it was a butterfly that had, on, no it was a star actually, that had some special sort of ink used.

Desley: The UV ones?

Participant: I'm not sure. I know it wasn't regular ink. Sort of didn't look like it was skin anymore.

Desley: did it look bad, or?

Participant: No, it looked good. I wouldn't have got that tattoo. It looked good for the person that she was. It was pink, I think. She's all into pink. She was going to get another one too. A lot of my family members have tattoos. I have these four cousins. They're all brothers and they're all into tattoos a lot. And they, all of them have this same one on their forearm. It's like an infinity sign with three arches, instead of two.

Desley: Like the ABC thing?

Participant: No..it's sort of like (she draws it on a piece of paper)

Desley: Oh, ok.

Participant: and that to them means brotherhood forever, I don't know. And a few of them have like on their chest, and their arms and my mum, when she was young, had this boyfriend Ray and she did this homemade tattoo with Indian ink, matchstick and a needle and put Ray right here on her arm. And they broke up and she did a really stupid thing. She got a disposable camera and the acid that was in there, she put it on her arm to get rid of the tattoo, and it scarred it all up, but you could see a little bit of it. She went to the chemist and got it all fixed up and everything so she thought that's alright, so she did it again. And now she can never put her arm in the sunlight, 'cause it's really dangerous. And also there's a really ugly looking scar there.

Desley: that's not good. Does you dad have tattoos?

Participant: my dad's never had a tattoo.

Desley: So what did he think about the mess on your mother's arm?

Participant: I've never heard him comment on it. I've only heard her talk about it when he wasn't there. I don't think that he would have had any problem with it. He's a really easy sort of guy. And he's like "whatever floats your boat" sort of thing and he's always said to me, "you do whatever you like to do with your life, I'll back you up." He's never said you should do this, or this is wrong.

Desley: So do you think there's been any negative effect on your life at all, having a tattoo?

Participant: No. Only the pain to get it, which is over. And maybe I'm stronger for it.

Desley: Do you think the fact you have a tattoo, makes you identify with any particular group of people?

Participant: No, not at all. I think that some people would identify with people that have tattoos more. But to me, it's just a piece of art on my body now, it's nothing that categorizes me. And I generally have no trouble getting on with any sort of person that you could think of, unless they have a problem with me. I can get along with anyone, I think.

Desley: So what do you think about people with tattoos?

Participant: Depends on the tattoo. I suppose I don't judge people by their tattoo. As I wouldn't think of myself any differently because of my tattoo. I think it's just like someone putting a picture on their wall. It doesn't change who they are just because they've got a picture hanging up in their house. It's not even a part of them, really. Your skin is like an attachment. Your entire body is just an attachment to me. It's not part of who you are.

Desley: So you see your mind and body as separate?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: Is there anything else about your tattoo that you can think of?

Participant: No, that's about it.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	2	1	1	1	2	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	Depressed
Patient	3	1	1	1	2	3	4	4	3	5	2	4	Anxious
Caring	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	1	2	1	Bitch
Kind	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	2	1	1	Nasty
Sense of humour	2	1	1	1	2	3	2	5	4	2	4	4	Boring
Sociable	2	1	1	1	2	3	2	1	2	2	4	4	Withdrawn
Friendly	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	1	3	3	Withdrawn
Active	2	1	1	2	2	3	2	4	4	3	5	3	Slack
Confident	2	1	1	1	2	3	2	1	2	2	4	4	Shy
Organised	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	1	4	1	Sloppy
Hard working	3	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	4	2	5	2	Slack
Honest	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	3	2	3	1	Liar



7.4 RDT subgroup Philosophy

Participant RF13
Male, 25 years old

Interview date: 7/2/2006

Participant: Well the first tattoo I got was on my arm and I got that about 4 years ago, just over 4 years ago. It happens to be the logo of a band that I listen to and the reason I chose that band, they are not exactly my favourite band but lyrically the words that they've written, the lyrics they have written, I'd say are words that mean most to me, you know, it's affected the way I live and affected the way I look at life, my own life and other people's lives. So, I'd say, whenever I look at that tattoo, to me, it's like a reminder for what matters most to me, cause their lyrics are more about; respect for everyone, you know for myself and for other people and I view it as something really important, that to get respect, you have to respect other people and it's finding a balance, you know balancing it out between each other. At the same time I mean they also teach about like, um, it's I'd say it's more about what's right and wrong in life. For me it's something that I always, in all my decisions I always think about, I always have to think about what's, what I think is right and what's wrong, you know from what my parents had taught me as well and I guess you know I kind of combine what I hear in the music that I listen to in that band's lyrics that I can relate to my own life as well, you know through those lyrics. I don't know, it's just something I take with me all the time. It also reflects on a certain period of my life at the time where I wasn't so sure about life and my view on life, cause at the time I got it, it was just after September 11, the whole world was in quite a bit of a chaotic state. In those words I found I was able to see what mattered most, you know, things that mattered most to, should matter most to everyone, "I" think should matter most to people so... To me, I've always viewed things like pride, respect, I'm trying to think what other words to use, things like trust, as well, it's another thing, I've always viewed that as very important things. And for me to expect to get respect and trust and such other things like that from other people, I have to be willing to give the same back. So, it's just a reminder for me, I view this tattoo as a reminder of what's important in life.

Desley: So, where is it? On your arm?

Participant: Yep.

Desley: okay. And why did you put it there?

Participant: Well, it was the first tattoo I was getting, I mean the most common place is on the arm and I put it a bit further up the arm, just in case, if I were older and I wanted to cover it up, just, you know, wear a t-shirt, you know, most people don't need to see it, you know, I understand that some people they don't take too kindly to tattoos, they still have that stereotype that tattoos are like, you know, only bad people have tattoos so, you know. I tend to keep my tattoos hidden from plain views so that they, you know, so that people won't judge me like a, or certain people won't judge me based on like the tattoos. I mean, I've come across a few people, I've worked with a few people that they have pre-conceived notions of what, you know, people with tattoos are like, and, you know, they get along well with me and then, through chance, like because where I work, they have a gym and if I'm going up to the gym I might be wearing like a singlet top and they'll see the tattoo and it's like 'I didn't know you had a tattoo' and it's like a bit of a surprise to them and it's a good surprise to them because at least they learn not to judge people by what they've been led to believe is right and wrong, you know, that's why I chose to put it where I did.

Desley: So is there a place you wouldn't put a tattoo?

Participant: Well, there's a few places that I wouldn't put a tattoo. {laughs} Sorry, sorry. Um, well, I wouldn't really want to get one on my face or you know, people who get it on their hands, on their knuckles and, I mean, on my hands its more for, I'd say it's more a case of just, there's not much there to cover anyway. I like my tattoos to be a bit more detailed, if I'm going to get a tattoo, and on my hands, you know, people just get little words, typed up and if I'm going to have a word, I might as well just put it somewhere where it's out of sight anyway where people won't judge me as a result of the tattoos.

Desley: So you wouldn't have one anywhere that's visible fairly often?

Participant: Well,

Desley: or somewhere where you don't have a choice about showing it maybe is that a better way to put it?

Participant: I wouldn't mind having one on my forearm or something it wouldn't bother me so much there but, I mean for the most part I'd tend to put it somewhere where it's more... I tend to get tattoos more for myself so it doesn't matter if other people see 'em but, at the same time, some people, like I said, some people view it as a bad thing and I feel that I don't need that, you know, I don't need people judging me you know, as a result of that. I mean we can't help people judging us, that's just how people are but, you know but why give them something to judge me on you know, to add to...

Desley: yeah, why add to it..

Participant: yeah.

Desley: So when you had the tattoo, how long did you think about having it before you actually did it?

Participant: Well the first one, I thought about it for, I'd say was about three years. I'd, you know, I was thinking, should I or shouldn't I. I tend to think a lot about things I do so, that was, it was about three years before I finally decided, yep, I'm going to go and get one.

Desley: So how many do you have?

Participant: Two. One on my arm and one on my back.

Desley: Okay. So the one on your back, what's that a picture of?

Participant: Well, it's a fictional character from a story that I'm really into and the character himself he's a, I think he's a character that a lot of people could relate to. He's really unique, compared to everything around him and in the story he plays a very vital role for all the other characters like, all their fates depend on his choices. And he's, throughout the story, he's led to believe that he's not worth much, that he's just, he just serves a simple purpose, you know, to serve someone else and as the story goes on, he starts to realize that his role is much more important than what he's been told. And I think a lot of people, I can relate to it as well, because I've been, like, when I was younger I was always led to believe that I wasn't as good as someone else and it, I guess it comes back to a case of pride and you know, self worth, you

know and I think it's something that a lot of people could relate to, as I said earlier because they don't, they're led to believe they're not worth that much, they're led to believe that their life isn't that important, when it is. It is something that really matters to, it matters a lot to everyone in general you know. Like the character in the story, he realizes that at the end and you know, like the character in the story, he realizes that in the end, and you know, I don't want to wait until the end.

Desley: ...to figure that out. Okay, so. Why did you put that one on your back? Was that similar reasons?

Participant: Well, I wanted to get a bigger tattoo with a bit more detail and to get it on my arm I couldn't get all the detail that I wanted so to get all the detail, it had to be big and my back was the best place to get it.

Desley: other than that there's only your chest really?

Participant: No, the chest, I wouldn't be to keen on.

Desley: So when did you have that one?

Participant: Aaah, Um, it would have been about two and a half years ago.

Desley: Ok. and how long did you think about that one?

Participant. Um, I thought about that for about two years. I'd been looking up certain pictures of that character, looking for the right picture and then by chance, I just happened to come across that picture, a proper scale size of it and I just knew that was the one I wanted to get done on my back.

Desley: So with both of your tattoos, did any of them, for you, coincide with any life-changing events? Like you mentioned September 11 with the first one.

Participant: Well, I'd say, that the last four or five years of my life has been constantly changing. It's been, I'd say for lack of a better term, like a developmental stage of my life where I'm

coming out of things that when I was younger, things that used to bother me, certain, I'm trying to think of the correct word to use, aah.. I can't really, I don't remember the word, I can't think of the word to use, um, it's just things that, things that kind of affected me through being younger, like being the youngest in my family and things like that and I just, I kind of had a different view of the world and since I've got, over the time that I've got these tattoos, it's been at times when I've started to I guess the word would be mature, started to mature a bit more in that time and I guess its kind of like, the tattoos serve as a kind of reminder of what I was, how I was feeling at the time and you know when I got the tattoo and how, what, how my life was going at the time you know to, I take a look back at it now and I might not feel the same way as I did when I got those tattoos but its still good to know where I came from. You know, what, what, led me to make some of the decisions and I, I, remember what I was thinking when I decided to get these tattoos and it just helps. It serves as a reminder among other things, it serves as a reminder as well for many things. For what I was going through, for what matters most to me I suppose.

Desley: So it wasn't that someone died or you broke up with a girlfriend or something like that, but it was just a process you were going through.

Participant: Yeah it was just going through change, yeah going through a change in my life.

Desley: Okay. So do you still like the tattoos?

Participant: yeah.

Desley: Would you change either of them at all?

Participant: No.

Desley: Would you have them again?

Participant: What do you mean?

Desley: like if you had your time again, would you still do it?

Participant: Yeah. I think I'd take a bit more, eer, a few steps to see if I could get rid of the pain, like, the one on my arm wasn't so bad, it didn't hurt, but the one on my back, that was way too painful, I was, I didn't enjoy the pain too much.

Desley: So is that enough to stop you getting another one? The pain?

Participant: Not really because I mean, on my arm it was nothing bad, on my back, I mean, all in all, over several visits it was about seven and a half hours to get it done so I mean, when I look over, I mean, average of about two and a half hours per visit, it's nothing. It's not fun but at the same time, there's worse things in life I think so it wouldn't bother me too much.

Desley: So wasn't an actual plus for you like, some people actually enjoy it or look forward to it.

Participant: No, No, No. Pain does not excite me.

Desley: Okay. So you mentioned before we started talking properly you might have another one - that you were thinking about it.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: What kind of things would you think about before you got another one, would you think about the picture, where to have it, the tattoo artist, the pain killers?

Participant: Well, I don't think I'd worry about the pain killers because I'm considering getting one on my arm, though I was also considering getting the one on my back extended, so I would have to think about pain killers I suppose. But yeah, as for who does it, I'd go to the same person who did the other two I have. Yeah, it's just a case of knowing what I want to get, that I want to be sure of what I'm getting, I don't want to just jump straight into it.

Desley: So would you consider that your tattoos mean as a whole, something, or do you just consider them separate?

Participant: I consider them separate. They're two, the things that they represent to me are very similar, like the themes that they carry for me are very similar but they're from two totally

different, they're coming from two totally different things, like the one is of a band and another is of a fictional story that, things that have nothing to do with each other just... I don't know...

Desley: But you talked about the sense of pride with both of them.

Participant: Yeah. Cause, I mean, when I was younger and I was, I always had that chip on my shoulder I felt like you know, it's always, I always felt like its me against the world you know and I feel like I'm always going butting heads with someone or another so you know, I guess now, I've kind of mellowed out and I'm not so, I guess the word's confrontational, I mean I'm not a violent person, I don't, I haven't had a fight in like, since I was sixteen I think but at the same time I still can get very vocal and I can disagree a lot with people you know and even that, in the last few years I've kind of, I don't really, disagree with many people, I kind of tend to take what other people say into consideration and not just think that my view is the only view that is right. So. I suppose its just something to, it's just part of the way I've, I'm going along in life I suppose.

Desley: So, you might have already explained this but why was that fictional person important to you?

Participant: I think it was more just something that the first fictional character that really caught my attention. It was, I mean there are plenty of, I see stories and movies and things like that and I see characters that I find interesting but that one was probably the first one that actually really had me paying attention, you know that really had me listening to the story and taking it all in. I mean, a lot of times, I have to watch a movie or read a book a couple of times, I have to read, a couple of times just to know what's going on whereas this one, I was that interested in it that much, I put that much concentration into it that I got it the first time round. And yeah, so I think it was, I could find a lot of characters that are a lot like this character but this is the one that I'd say captured my...

Desley: So would you ever consider having your tattoos removed?

Participant. No.

Desley: So, why did you choose to have a tattoo as a way of marking this maturing, for want of a better word, or this process that you were going through rather than do something else?

Participant: I don't know, it's just been something that I'd always, when I was younger, I'd always see tattoos and I'd think, oh, I like tattoos I want to get one and as I got older it kind of stuck with me I suppose and I figured if it's something that I've wanted for so long and as I'm getting older I'm still wanting it, then maybe it's something I should consider you know. Besides, it's also, it's always with me, you know, so I always can look at it, well my back I need a mirror but I can always look at it and it's always there as a reminder. I mean some people use jewellery but I'm not very fond of jewellery, I don't wear...

Desley, so you couldn't have had a piercing or something.

Participant: I'm not too fond of piercings.

Desley: Okay. So do you distinguish between what that picture means to you and being a person that sits there, like do you consider your self a tattooed person or a person with a tattoo that means something, well two tattoos in this case.

Participant: Hmm. I never really thought about that actually. I just consider myself a person with a tattoo.

Desley: Okay, yeah. I think for some people there is a distinction but obviously not for everyone.

Participant: I just view it as I'm a person and I've got a tattoo.

Desley: Okay, trick question, and you might have to think about them separately for this one. What would be the opposite of your tattoo?

Participant: How do you mean? Like, what in, image wise or...

Desley: George Kelly tells us that you can't know something unless you know what it's not. So you can't know what it's like to be cold unless you know what its like to be hot. So I can't know

about your tattoo unless I know what it isn't. So you can look at the opposite as an opposite image or ...

Participant: ... not having a tattoo at all

Desley: Maybe yeah, for some people they say just not having it whereas other people say put it in a different place and make it a different picture. So it depends on how you want to interpret it.

Participant: That's a good one, it's making me think.

Desley: Hmm It's a trick question.

Participant: {long pause} I guess for me, the opposite would be not having it at all. I mean I, like I said, I look at these things and it reminds me of where I was at that period in my life and it also, it reminds me of what's most important to me, I mean I still know what matters most to me but these things, they're my reminder without having the tattoo I wouldn't have that reminder.

Desley: So do you think you wouldn't think about it as much.

Participant: I think to some extent.

Desley: or would you totally forget about it.

Participant: Well, I still would think about it but without it I don't think as much, but you know, like if I see the tattoo its like, yeah, that's what matters to me and without it, I don't see it and it's ot as much, and I don't have that visual connection, that thing that actually makes me think about what matters most to me.

Desley: so you're saying if you looked at your right arm you wouldn't think anything but if you looked at your left arm then you think.

Participant: Well yeah see, it is a good, it is a trick question, a tricky question and I guess the best thing, like I said the best answer I could give is it's a constant reminder so when certain times come up I can't help but think about what matters to me, like pride, like respect and trust

and things like that and you know certain things happen in life that remind us of it but there are times when maybe nothing's happening, you know and just sitting there relaxing or something and you just happen to look down and see the tattoo and it just reminds you. It's for all of those times that I don't need to, it's not necessarily needed to think about that, It's just, I suppose it's, it's not necessary but it's good to have there at the same. That's how I feel.

Desley: so the opposite would be not having it. What would it be for the back one? Same thing? Or something different?

Participant: Well, I always know like I always know like that I've got the tattoo there, if I'm getting changed or something, I'll see it in the mirror. I turn around and I might catch a glimpse of it and I'll turn around a try to have a proper look at it but yeah, I guess it would be the same as well as that one not having the tattoo.

Desley: So it wouldn't be a different person or a real person versus a fictional character or something?

Participant: Yeah. It's, to me it would be the opposite would be not having it.

Desley: So when you had the tattoos, did you go by yourself or did you go with somebody?

Participant: I went by myself for the first few stages but when I was getting the touch up done for the one on my back I went with a cousin and a friend as well, they both were just curious to see what it's like.

Desley: so they didn't want to get one or anything like that?

Participant: No.

Desley: So what do you think it means to other people that your tattoos? Like you mentioned that people at work had a preconceived idea that..

Participant: Well most of the people, well they, almost all of them are pretty good with the tattoos but there was one in particular that she didn't know that, you know, she would talk to me

and think I was, you know, her attitude changed once she realized I had a tattoo, she was of the notion, of the idea that I was like just this quiet little good hard worker and all things like that and when she saw the tattoos, she kind of saw that as an indication of a bit of a wild streak in me that I might be a bit out of control you know, that so, it was, I think, it kind of opened her eyes as well, because she started to realize that you don't really judge people based on things such as tattoos and I mean I guess it helped, you know, it helped in a way for her to open her eyes and not judge people so harshly, but for the most part most people are, they don't have a problem with the tattoos I have so.

Desley: So you have had pretty good reactions from your family and

Participant: Well, my mum doesn't like tattoos. So, see, that's another good thing that I can just put a shirt on and my mum doesn't have to see it, but sometimes if I'm wearing a short sleeve shirt and she can see them under my arm, it's happened and there will be times I'll be talking to her and I can see her eyes just moving down from my face, down to my arm. So, she's not too fond of 'em but I think she's accepted it, you know, she knows that I'm still the same person and she knows that it's just a picture. She just, she doesn't agree with it because she's deeply religious and she's of the belief that God made us the way we are supposed to be and adding something to your body is like saying to God, we're not happy with what he gave us. So.

Desley: Coz it does say in the bible that you shouldn't mark your skin as well so, some people have a problem with it for that. So you didn't worry enough about upsetting her that you wouldn't have them obviously coz you've got them?

Participant: Well, it wasn't so much not worrying about upsetting her, it was more a case of knowing that if I keep living my life the way somebody else wants me to I'll never be happy. There will be so many things that I'll want to do, that I don't do because I'm worried about what people are thinking. You know, she's my mother and I love her very much but there comes a point in my life where I have to say, it's my life, I have to live it as I see fit. I'm not hurting anyone by having a tattoo so.

Desley: So, what do you think about other people with tattoos?

Participant: Well, to me it doesn't matter. I mean, I know a lot of people with tattoos and as long as they show me respect, then they get my respect as well in equal measure.

Desley: So you don't, look at them and go they're ratbags because they have tattoos or they're cool or they're something else.

Participant: Naaah. I look at their tattoos and I think, you know I'll be looking and I'll be curious to see what it's like, you know, what the picture is. I'll look at it more for the artistic value than what I think it reflects in that person. I generally, don't, I don't really ask them what they, what it means to them because a lot of time it could be something personal that they might not want to discuss.

Desley: Yeah that's the thing isn't it. I talked to one person and they've got like the real reason and then the reason they tell everyone else which sounds right and it's enough that they don't have to get personal. Like you have to learn to cope with it don't you. So you said you know lots of people with tattoos. Is that mainly just your friends or family or?

Participant: oh, it's friends and family and co workers as well.

Desley: so do you think having tattoos has had any negative affects on your life or, it hasn't stopped you from getting a job or a girlfriend or

Participant: Not that I know of. I wouldn't want to know.

Desley: So does the fact that you have tattoos mean that feel like you identify with other people with tattoos or any particular group of people?

Participant: Not really, I mean to me, tattoos are more an individual thing. Even if you get an existing image, I mean. My tattoos are... I don't know anyone else who has tattoos like I do. Apart from... the one on my arm, a lot of people do have, but you know, I don't know anyone around here, I don't talk to anyone around here who has tattoos like me so I don't think it's really a case of something that I can relate to people I know through this tattoo it's just I got it more for me than anything else I suppose.

Desley: so you don't like go out and see someone with tattoos and think oh, I'm sort of like them because they've got tattoos and I've got a tattoo?

Participant: Naaah. I don't see it like that.

Desley: I've spoke to one person all together so far that did, but most people don't seem to.

Participant: Well I always view it as it is more a reflection of us the individual not of a group, unless it's some gang or something.

Desley: well, yeah, you know there's like the Bra Boys in Sydney, so, you know, they probably do do it.

Participant: Yeah, they probably do it as some sort of mark that they belong to that group of people but my tattoo is...

Desley: ... it's not that for you.

Participant: No. They don't. I don't belong to any group, my tattoos don't mean that I belong to a certain group so, well, not in my eyes anyway so some people, they could see it like they could see the tattoos on my arm and I mean I was up at a concert about two years ago and someone saw that I was wearing a singlet top and someone saw the tattoo and they straight away knew the band and they you know, they shook my hand as a result of it, they respected that I liked that band, because they liked it as well so I guess in a way somebody else, you know, they might see it and think that oh well, this person might, might have the same, share the same values that I do so I guess, it could be a bit of an ice breaker for somebody who just met me of course. It's just another way of looking at it I suppose.

Desley: So you said earlier that pride, respect and trust were things especially with this one, why are those things important to you?

Participant: It's, I guess I'm... It's just something that I really value, I mean, I know that, in life we can't do things, we need people in our life. We can't just go through life on our own. We need somebody's help at one stage or another and we need to know or the best that we can find

out anyway who we can trust and who are our friends and you know, who's just out to hurt us and who's out to take advantage of us so that's why, pride for me comes, goes back to when I was younger I always had that chip on my shoulder. I always felt like, I kind of put myself down, it's just now I'm older I'm through with putting myself down. And then I say that I want to be something more. I'm my own worst enemy, I'm the one who was putting myself down and if other people didn't think less of me because if thought less of me that what was keeping me down so. I just keep reminding myself to be proud of who I am, what I have achieved. It might not be as much as other people have achieved but still brought me this far.

Desley: And does that work in reverse? Like if you are proud of yourself then it doesn't matter whether other people are proud or not?

Participant: Well, that's true. It's also taught me not to worry about what other people think. So at one stage in my life, I did worry what other people think and I still do to some extent, we're human, we can't, some habits die hard, old habits die hard but, I mean it's, as I go on, you know, as I remember about, what matters, like pride and how it matters to me, I learnt to remember that some things you know, as long as I'm not hurting anyone I'm not, as long as I'm respecting other people and I respect myself, then I don't, then things should work out, you know, I shouldn't have to worry about what other people think. I believe life has a funny way of balancing itself out in the end so, I've kind of learnt that through just being more proud of what I have achieved, and it kind of makes me want to work harder to achieve more in life as well.

Desley: Okay. You also talked about if you saw other people's tattoos, you'd be more interested in, I think you said the artist...

Participant: ..yeah, the artistic value of it.

Desley: so what about that is important for you do you think?

Participant: Well, it's more just appreciating art in its simplest form. It's not so much about who drew it or who did the tattoo, but just the picture itself. If I like the image I want to find out more about the image, if it was designed by someone, you know, then maybe they could design or draw something for me or something like that or for the most part it's just enjoying, just appreciating the image itself, you know. I guess, that's the best answer I could possibly give.

Desley: okay. So is there anything else about your tattoo that you think is important, or relevant possibly?

Participant: Aaaah, I don't know, just to think about what in general, it's like in a general term, it's like the best thing is just to think about is just to think long and hard about what to get as a tattoo, for me. And for me, my tattoos, I thought long and hard about it and how, like, if I could relate to it and something like that, so I didn't want a just jump into something just because the picture looked cool or something...

Desley: ...so it had to have some deeper meaning for you.

Participant: yeah

Desley: and that for you was to do with the values that you have for your life basically.

Participant: yep.

Desley: and I hope I've got this right, it also a reminder for you of things that have happened.

Participant: Yes. It's also

Desley: Not necessarily big things but where your life's gone

Participant: Yeah. As life has changed coz I mean, life's always changing. It's some people they take a look at their life and they see it in stages which, yeah, I think it's kind of wrong to view it that way because we're changing on a day to day basis, you know, it's people, they take a look at tattoos and they see this is from my wild years, this is from my mellow years, this is from when I was doing this and to me I'd see it more as just flowing through you know, it's not like it's a the way they describe it, it makes it sound like chapters in a book, you know, it just stops and starts and moves onto the next bit just like that. It's not so simple and cut and dry. It's just constantly flowing we don't even realise those changes are happening until we go back.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	3	1	5	3	1	5	4	2	2	2	2	5	Depressed
Patient	2	1	3	1	1	5	5	4	1	2	2	5	Impatient
Caring	3	1	5	1	1	4	4	4	3	4	4	5	Selfish
Kind	3	1	3	1	4	4	4	1	1	1	1	5	Cruel
Sense of humour	1	1	4	1	1	1	1	2	2	3	3	5	Dull
Sociable	3	1	4	1	1	4	4	2	4	3	4	5	Anti-social
Friendly	3	1	4	1	1	5	2	3	1	1	1	1	Mean
Active	1	1	4	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	2	3	Lazy
Confident	3	1	4	1	1	4	4	1	2	4	4	3	Shy
Organised	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	3	3	2	Messy
Hard working	4	3	3	3	3	1	1	1	3	2	1	1	Lazy
Honest	2	1	1	1	1	4	2	3	4	5	4	5	Liar



Participant: I have two. I have two tattoos. One on my back, that was my first one and one on my stomach. The important thing for me with tattoos, I'm kind of probably going to get some more. But all of them have to have a meaning to me coz then you won't regret it later on in life. If you get a tattoo just because you think it looks cool, then, then five years go by and you're like, I don't like it any more, you're pretty much stuck with it, if you don't like it later on, which hasn't happened to me, but if you don't, it at least has meaning, so you can still appreciate it for what it is, even if you don't actually like the ink on your body. The one on my back kinda has... it says "life, love, laughter" the words actually came off a graphic on a skateboard deck. Skating was a huge part of my life, still, not to the same extent, but it's still a big part of my life. As well as, the overall design, I guess, kind of commemorates what's kind of important in my life but the words themselves have kind of separate meanings, being associated with the graphic on the board. Life: just living, and taking advantage of everything and living to the fullest, love: not just in the sense for family and friends but living with passion, just everything you do, you know, do with love and really enjoy yourself and do it and then laughter: just the importance of just being able to laugh at yourself and enjoy things and see the good side of everything. It's kind of words to, I guess, live by, and also like I said it commemorates the impact skateboarding has had on my life. The one on my stomach is a lot simpler, it's just a green star and that's off a Dr Seuss book – "The Sneetches and other stories" – I don't know if you're familiar with it. Which essentially it comes down to, the moral is that every person's just a person, it doesn't matter what you look like, essentially you know, we're all the same you should judge a person by who they are and not what they are. And so, um, it's kind of always been an important, I guess, moral value, for me, if that's the right word, I'm not too sure. And so it kind of demonstrates, and at the same time always reminds me everyone's you know, judge them as who they are as a person individually as opposed to the stereotypes around them. That's the meaning of that and I guess I'll get more. They are a bit addictive, like as soon as you get one you're like "ah, that'd be cool, that'd be cool" but I think keeping in mind that I always want to have meaning and some sort of significance it keeps me from going overboard. And on advice from my mum, which has been great advice, because she doesn't like tattoos, not getting them anywhere that can be seen when you're wearing a short-sleeved shirt and pants coz they'll never know you're in a job with long pants and a polo shirt if I had a massive tattoo on my forearm whether I like it or not, certain people hold certain things to that and you can get prejudice on

that, they can start conjuring up things about who you are and while I don't really care if people think that way, I don't want it if it's going to affect things in my life that I might want to do, so until I'm independently wealthy and I can say "it doesn't matter coz I'm rich" which won't happen, but I'm going to avoid tattoos anywhere I guess with what I'm wearing now, you can't see them, so. But I'd like to get a few more. I don't know, I think that's all right now, so if you have any questions...

Desley: so how old were you when you got them?

Participant: I got the one on my back about 19 and a half, and then I got this one 20 and a half.

Desley: so why did you pick that particular picture, like was there another picture you could have had?

Participant: well, the one on my back was actually my own design. I think I was looking through a catalogue and I saw this design for life, love, laughter and I was just like "yes", those for me are just three simple sick words to live by and I just really, I'd been thinking about, I was planning a tattoo but nothing ever really held meaning and that held meaning and I kind of decided that I wanted to commemorate the skating so the words are kind of in banners. And then shoe laces coz when you skate you rip through shoe laces like no-one's business, constantly tearing. And then the middle has my initials with like woodgrain in the background to depict the board and ramps and things. And then just 1982 - the year I was born, kind of putting me in context of skating, kind of almost like a seal of myself, I guess. I played with the design a lot, I guess, the picture came up, I just played with it til it had a lot of the elements I wanted to have and it looked right. And then the star is just a star because

Desley: the star's on the book?

Participant: the star's on the Sneetches. The Sneetches have, some of them had stars on their stomach and some of them didn't. I'd better explain it, it sounds bad at first, because the ones who had stars on their stomach thought they were better than the ones that didn't and they had all these like barbeques and didn't invite the other ones, that's why it sounds bad at first. But this guy comes along and he'll put a star on your stomach for like \$3 a pop and so all the ones without stars were like "yeah, sick" and they get the stars and they come out and they go "ha ha

you can't tell us apart". But the same guy'll take a star off your stomach for \$10 a pop, so in and out all day they go, because the ones with stars want to make sure they're different from the ones without to make sure they stay true to the star "clan" or whatever, the ones who are trying to get in. and then in the end they all run out of money and no-one knows which is which and they realise a Sneetch is a Sneetch and it doesn't matter if there's a star on your belly or not. When I tell people everyone always goes "so you think you're better than everyone else?" but it's more just the idea behind it is, you know, I guess the star is symbolic for race and culture and things like that, so instead of, I guess, a star on your belly makes me a Sneetch and a Sneetch is a Sneetch, it doesn't matter who you are. That's why I chose the design. Did I answer the question alright?

Desley: I think so. How long did you think about them before you had them? You said you played with the one on your back, was that weeks, months, years?

Participant: um, a few years before I'd had different ideas and went from a version I think that didn't have anything to do with skating at all and I guess I wanted a tattoo and I couldn't tell you why. The first time I remember even thinking about tattoos I was probably 5 or 6 years old. My grandfather had one from the war and he was like "don't get one, you're going to regret it" but I just thought it was cool and I don't know when that came out again but I was just like "I want to get a tattoo" but it was well before I was able to, coz my parents... when you're 18 you can do what you want, but until then no way. So a few years until then but the one that's on my back, the actual design I came up with, um, it was probably a couple of months, probably two months I played with it. I actually brought it in and the artist who put it on my back he took it and re-did it coz my drawing skills are so-so. He basically took it, took the idea and made it just look really, well, I think it looks really good

Desley: I think that's why they're good at what they do. Why you use someone like that rather than just go "here's a design". Because they are good at making it look better on your skin

Participant: definitely. I was really impressed with the job because if I get any more I'll go back to him because he just did an amazing job and the book they have of photographs of their work, all his work is really clean and it's good, so

Desley: did he do the other one as well?

Participant: no, it was the same shop. I wasn't so much worried about him doing that one because it was just simply a star and another guy in the shop did that, but anything else I'd get that would be a bit more intricate, not just a simple symbol, then I'd definitely get him, well, hopefully he's still there it was a few years ago. I'll look him up and try to get him to do my other work but he may or may not

Desley: I think you said before there are certain places you wouldn't have a tattoo, you said anywhere that would show

Participant: yeah. I love the forearm. I think the forearm is an awesome place for a tattoo, I have friends with it. but once again, you know, with the warm climate and you wear polo shirts, um, and you're pretty much, they're look at you going, you're going to have to cover that up, so, um, that's pretty much the only place. Other places I kind of want them, if you look at the art on there, but your body's a certain form too and I'd kind of want it to fit into a form, so you have to choose the picture that looks cool where it's at, if that makes sense, probably not. Like, I guess, if you have a canvas, you could have a really sick place, and a really good piece of art, you focus together on whether the composition of the canvas looks good. I guess that's why you have to take into account where you've got the tattoos. All together by one, it's kind of someone's pictures or someone you can just colour, pictures of someone you couldn't see who it was, you know, from far off you can still go "wow" I guess pleasing to the eye

Desley: on that part of the body

Participant: on that part of the body, yes, that kind of makes sense now

Desley: and I guess that's the same deal with the tattoo artist, that's why they're good at going "that's not going to look good in that spot" because of the shape of your muscles or whatever else

Participant: yeah. so

Desley: that's why you need them

Participant: yeah. that's why you don't go to a dodgy guy in the alley

Desley: or do it yourself with a pen

Participant: pen ink, yeah.

Desley: so why do you think, if we go with the star first, why is that important to you, the idea of symbolizing that lesson that the Sneetches learnt?

Participant: um, I just, I think the idea that, there's probably some deep psychological reason, a childhood thing, but, people, like racism really pisses me off. And I, I've been exposed to racist comments and stuff before and that really angers me, I guess in a way instead of kind of firing up I just learned to think they're ignorant on that subject. I don't like the idea of people getting judged before they're known. I don't know if that has some sort of, I've never really had past, I don't know if that has some sort of deep psychological thing, I don't know, I was always raised, it was never an issue, people are people and that was it. It's never been an issue. like my nephew's half south-American, half black and it was never an issue within my immediate family. My sister had black boyfriends I went to school with Hispanic girls and it just, it never, I've had friends, it's kind of upsetting, I had friends if they ever brought a non-white girl home and there was a reaction, I guess I just didn't understand it. It's really important to me that people are judged on their character as opposed to, I don't really think of anything else I guess coz that's how I've always been.

Desley: so judged on their character versus judged on their skin colour

Participant: more than skin colour. Skin colour, looks, everything you know. Someone sees someone, they're dressed a certain way, automatically they're, they pigeon-hole them and they don't know them yet. Everyone, myself included is, you see someone and automatically, you know, because of, you link certain looks or things with certain kind of actions. You can't help but think, to hold those in your mind as that's how they are. As opposed to going ok, that's maybe the norm, that's what he normally fits into but you can't hold that to him. You go, ok, as a rule, baggy pants, big gold chains and they're all fucked up. They could be extremely nice people and they could be real crazy intellectual and that's just how he was brought up, in his group of friends. That's just how he dresses, that's not who he is. So it's not just skin colour, I

think it's based on dress, looks, appearance in general. I gauge more on personality over your appearance.

Desley: I was just thinking then, the reason you're not getting one here is a similar thing, isn't it? Because people will then judge you as being a certain

Participant: yeah

Desley: type of person because you've got a visible tattoo

Participant: I never thought of it like that. I think it's more I don't want to do a shop because of that, so yeah, I guess it is racism. I never thought of it like that, so, that's a good observation. Um, yeah. wow. Ok. I never associated what the star stood for, you know, in the same way, kind of associated with why I won't get them visible, because people do judge. Wow.

Desley: with either of the tattoos, do you think they coincided with a particular event in your life?

Participant: the one on my back may have. I skated pretty consistently for 5 years. For a 1 or 2 year period it was actually every day, I know for a fact for one full year, every day when it snowed I would shovel off part of the skate part, it was to the point where it was unhealthy, it was an obsession but when I got the tattoo I'd actually stopped skating for a while, and then just recently, well not recently, a few months prior to getting it started to get back into it. perhaps maybe 5 or 6 months I'd started skating again so I think maybe it was after that. Maybe it was subconsciously after that period I realized that I'd stopped but it was always going to be part of my life. Like I'd stopped for 3 years and went to uni but recently took it up again so I guess probably did coincide with a revelation that it was something that was extremely important to me and I think it always will be, even if I'm not doing it. with the star, I don't think so, I just got it.

Desley: do you still like the tattoos?

Participant: yes.

Desley: would you change either of them?

Participant: no. I don't like, if I was getting them now, there may be something different but I won't change anything coz I got them at the time for a reason. Maybe I'd just, the star, no, the star's cool. The back one there's nothing. If my back was blank and I was going to do a tattoo now it wouldn't look the same as the one on my back does because maybe my feelings or my symbolism's a bit different or what not but I wouldn't change them. I'm quite happy with them.

Desley: so you wouldn't get them off

Participant: never get them off

Desley: so, I think you talked about this, but if you were going to get another one, would getting that guy to do it be the most important thing, or would the picture be more important, or where you put it?

Participant: the picture's a lot more important, the picture's the most important coz that's what you're going to be stuck with for your life. Um, and once again it's going to have some sort of standing meaning whether it be something that I believe's important for my entire life or just something that is extremely significant now and that, even if it's not an idea or a value I hold for my entire life I can look back and know at that point in time it was extremely important. So that's most important. I guess the artist is last important. The place once again that's what I'm stuck with. There's lots of good artists out there. I've seen some stuff on line that blows me away. There's some good stuff that gets done. I think I'd go back to him coz I know what he can do, I was very happy, I felt very comfortable when I was getting it. I gave him this kind of sketchy little picture and he said I can do this, I can do that, maybe look like this, the laces I had, you know, criss-crossing all way through and he said, well I can do that but over time it will bleed together and it won't look as good, whereas if I just do a few here and there it will be obvious it's laces. He went into the room for about 20 minutes and came back and said "how's that" so I guess I'd go back to him but that's not the most important. If he's no longer doing it, I'm not going to not get a tattoo if I want one. I'm just going to... I think I'll shop around a bit more than I did the first time. I kind of went there, the tattoo shop has, it's called "green man" in East Hartford, West Hartford, Conneticut and it had a really good reputation. I'd seen some friends got some stuff there, really well done. So I went there and made an appointment and he

just happened to have one available for when I wanted to come in. I think now, looking at it, if I couldn't get him to do it again I would shop around a lot more. I'd be, I'd probably ask for references and talk to people who've gotten tattoos through them, ask how was your experience. Yeah, to answer your question, picture's most important coz that's what you're stuck with, the part on the body's next and then the artist. I'm not going to get anything unless I'm comfortable with the artist, and his ability, coz it's permanent.

Desley: they don't make a rubber yet, do they?

Participant: yeah, they do, but they rub off in the shower afterwards.

Desley: so, what about the pain factor?

Participant: I was surprised. One on my back I thought it was just going to hurt coz it goes right over my spine and like that's going to hurt the most, be painful. Pain doesn't bother me too much.

Desley: I guess skating you probably get injured a bit

Participant: a lot. I guess, you learn to appreciate pain to an extent. Not to come across like masochist, but a good fall every now and then feels good, feels good to be sore and to get a few bruises. Actually, you know, it wakes you up, when I was skating I'd slam really hard. That's good, it wakens you up, it's like, alright, pull your finger out.

Desley: wakes you up as in, in case you're becoming complacent about it?

Participant: complacent...it just makes you feel alive too, it's just contrast. It's good to have that contrast. It's like after you go for a run, a workout, you're sore afterwards and if it comes down to it and someone's going to ask how do you want to feel the rest of your life? You're not going to say just like I left the gym, but you really enjoy it while it's there. I guess it's the contrast, like you've done something. So pain doesn't really bother me but there were a few points on my back, over the shoulder blades, that was the more painful part. A few points actually I kind of started chuckling because it just, I was surprised at how it didn't hurt. It was kind of like it tickled me. And it could be also by the time he got to the fine work, on my back, was probably

numb from the main writing of my initials and it maybe didn't hurt as much it surprisingly didn't hurt that much. The stomach one stung a bit. It wasn't much, I kind of thought it would be like when you get a shot (injection), it's a sharp pain, I thought it would be like a sharp pain for quite some time but it's more like a vibration. Like a pin pricking you over and over again. Like I said I laughed three times with my back and winched three times. So maybe that's just me though, coz I'm sure some people have had a lot worse experiences than that.

Desley: I heard of someone the other day who had a tattoo and a guy said to him "so, did you cry" and he's like "no" but he figured that guy must've cried because he wouldn't have asked him otherwise.

Participant: yeah. if he did.

Desley: yeah. there was someone the other day telling me how they put up with the pain but the way that they described it it didn't sound like they coped very well. Everyone's different, and I think where you get it's different and from what I've read and heard, you have like a rush of endorphins, so that sort of helps you cope with it too.

Participant: yeah. I think so. You're probably excited about it and yeah. also, another potential spot for a tattoo is inside the arm. One I think it looks good but one of the major factors too it's the most painful part of the body supposedly to get it done. So, between that and I just think it would look good on that part of your arm.

Desley: some people get them round like that but they don't get it under here

Participant: yeah. but um, see, mine would be completely on there I guess. So I guess I maybe enjoy the pain a bit

Desley: I think some people do, though. And some, I think, it's like some kind of challenge

Participant: ok

Desley: so it's like once it's over you can go "I'm proud of myself because I went through that"

Participant: the hard part, the painful part. Ok.

Desley: and I wonder when you were talking about skating and falling whether that's part of it too. Because you said when you fall you know you're alive, but you know that you get up and keep going

Participant: that could be it too, yeah

Desley: and you didn't wimp out on that either, coz you fell and hurt yourself

Participant: a kind of test of character.

Desley: not the insane kind you see in the movies where they're like "bring it on"

Participant: Yeah. psych themselves. I guess it is like looking back and you know you're sore and you took a beating. Yeah but I got back on my

Desley: so it's almost like a test of character because some people can't do that. Like I don't like being hurt! I'm a wuss.

Participant: each to their own. there could be, that could be a large, I think that could be a motivating factor for me. The fact that I found the most painful spot, that was why I think that it's a cool spot.

Desley: I think on your ribs would be pretty bad

Participant: I don't know. Tattoo artists you attend usually have full sleeves and neck tattoos. Um I've heard, females get them down there below the belt line. I've heard that is pretty painful, just sensitive skin down there. I think it could be, because my star, it was a bit. Like my back, I felt a bit of sting there. I don't know. It would be curious to see which ones hurt the most. I'm guessing also

Desley: I was always told anything near the bone hurt

Participant: I guess so, on my shoulder blades, near my spine for some reason, it didn't. I talked to a friend before I got mine and he said over his back was painful, down the spine one would hurt. Maybe mine got numbed down by the little needle, the fine skinny one that wouldn't hurt. My skin was alike "you've already abused this spot, I'm not sending little messages to your brain any more"

Desley: do you think there's something else you could have done rather than have a tattoo that would have still had the same effect for you?

Participant: I don't think so, I mean, it. there's not too much other that's permanent, that's with you the rest of your life. I've had a few piercings in the past but those don't really, you know, those just, kind of, you know, are just rings and not as much as images on your skin. You could make the image up and maybe hang it on your wall, or make a shirt, or whatnot, but you don't go with the, like it's on me for life, it really is a pretty big step. I don't think there's anything that could put the same level of importance on the ideas behind them, um, rather than a tattoo. At least for me, personally now. If I just get a tattoo coz I like the picture well I could probably make a shirt, my favourite shirt and I'd wear it all the time and then it would but I think just because of the permanence of it, even removal leaves scars from what I hear, so you can't truly ever get rid of it. maybe the ink, but the idea's always going to be there. So, no, I don't think for me there's anything else that can do that and hold the same meaning.

Desley: I was talking to a guy the other day and every tattoo he had, he got the picture off a shirt

Participant: really.

Desley: that was quite weird I thought.

Participant: interesting. I've seen also stuff, a friend of mine got a tattoo barcode, right there, and within a month he had it changed to something else, he didn't like it.

Desley: I've seen barcodes actually there

Participant: yeah. the back of the neck. There are some ones you typically see – the spider webs on the elbow, especially with the full sleeves, they get the spider webs on the elbow

Desley: it's supposed to mean something but I haven't been able to find out what

Participant: I have no idea what that would mean but I've seen it heaps, all the time

Desley: it's like the "13", people get that because it's supposed to stand for marijuana

Participant: really

Desley: yeah. coz "M" is the 13th letter of the alphabet

Participant: oh, ok

Desley: and there's a song, is it Offspring... and they say "he's getting a tattoo, he's getting ink done, he wanted a 13 but they drew a 31"

Participant: yeah, yeah, yeah, yep

Desley: I want to put that in my thesis somewhere but I can't work out how. I'll have to find someone with it on. So do you consider your tattoos as part of you, are you a tattooed person, or are you a person with tattoos?

Participant: physically, I'm a person with tattoos. Mentally I'm a tattooed person. If I found out the world was going to end in a year, the first thing I'd get is two full sleeve tattoos. Because, I won't be sick of them in a year. Full arm, I don't want to regret

Desley: you wouldn't have a job in a year either

Participant: yeah. exactly. If I was the only one who knew I'd just get a massive bank loan and not work. I wouldn't get sick of. Something like full sleeves is pretty substantial, you just can't get away from them. Eventually you'd look at them and not even recognise them. I guess I do now. Even a month out, the tattoo on my back, I forget, I was like "oh, yeah, I forgot! I have a tattoo". And the star it's kind of like I see it but, you know, I see it and it does remind me, but

it's not like a conscious thing I'm always going "wow". So maybe if I got full sleeves I wouldn't get sick of them because it just becomes part of you. What was the question again? I lost it.

Desley: I said are you a tattooed person?

Participant: yeah, um. I love tattoos. I think it looks, I love seeing good work, I love, I love the sleeves. I see people that, you know, I see people that have full bodies and things like that. That's not for me but I really enjoy it so in that sense I'm a tattooed person. I'm not a tattooed person in the sense where I don't... I won't do that to myself...

Desley: but if the situation was right, you might think about doing that to yourself?

Participant: yeah. if the world was going to end in a year.

Desley: or if everyone started wearing sleeves.

Participant: I probably wouldn't. I'm not one to consciously follow trends. Maybe if it was socially acceptable, where it wouldn't affect my job. Maybe. Only for jobs, not getting them. I still can get a job with one, I don't want to close doors, it's not worth it.

Desley: so, when you had the tattoos, were you by yourself?

Participant: yes

Desley: you didn't take anyone to hold your hand?

Participant: no. um, yeah. actually this one I hid from my parents. My dad still doesn't know about it because I know he doesn't like tattoos. Both of them know about on my back but my mum inadvertently, I was wiping my face with my shirt and she saw the one on my stomach. No-one knew about this one coz I got it and then a week later I flew back to Australia and I was here for a year, so no-one back home even knew I had it

Desley: so how long had you been in Australia before that?

Participant: 6 months. 4 months, I'd done a semester here. I'd gotten this 3 months before I came, came over here, went back and then about a week before I came back to Australia I got the star done and then no-one back in the States knew until I went back about a year later and they saw it.

Desley: so you don't think it was linked at all to being here

Participant: no. I think, I wanted to get, I'd been thinking about getting them well before that. I thought about it before I came to Australia and I thought about it when I was in Australia and I just decided if I was going to do it, I should do it now while I can go to Green Man which I can go in there to that specific tattoo artist. I have the money now, so I might as well go and do it, but I don't see in any way that linking to me being in Australia.

Desley: so what do you think it means to other people that see your tattoos?

Participant: for the star, they ask me why I got a star and I get different responses when I tell them the story. Some people are just like "wow, yeah, that's really, cool. That's sick, that's good" and other people are just like "couldn't you just be a Sneetch without a star". It's like, that's not the point, it doesn't remind you, it doesn't make a statement. But I don't, I haven't met anyone that has criticised my tattoos because, I think, because it has meaning. That's the reason I gauge it as. I had anything from, kind of just you know just on a scale of negative ten to ten, a zero response, that's nice, and I've had I really like that, really all about the words on my back. A close friend of mine back home she has "live, love, laugh" and I don't think she's seen my back, so obviously she's taken it on, having some sort of importance too. I guess it ranges but most of it has gone from just nothing to positive. Haven't had much negative response, except for the "couldn't you just be a Sneetch without a star". I guess that's a bit of a negative kind of

Desley: a bit ignorant

Participant: I think so. I think people are just you know, maybe they didn't understand the tattoos, or felt like taking the piss or antagonizing a bit, or I don't know. It was nothing really, I think it was just more a misunderstanding of, you know, having a star, that's a bit gay, you know. That's how I took it. Pink triangles or whatever. I think people see that location, a guy with a star, right above the belt line and they just kind of, they feel threatened or whatever. It

wasn't anything harsh. I've had a few people they've been definitely more on the positive side. A few people, I think they just look at it with a kind of critical eye and they're like why did you get that and I tell them the story, I think it maybe, I don't know

Desley: so is there somewhere else you could have put the star?

Participant: actually I should, there was a guy actually had the star, back in high school, I didn't know him, it was someone at a party and he actually had the Sneetch star on his forearm, I guess maybe that would have set the idea in my head. That's really cool, perhaps that did, I never really, wow, sick, I remember that story when I was a kid. That's awesome and then 4 years later I get one on the stomach. You could, personally I wouldn't. they had them on the stomach so I think it holds a little bit more symbolic. I kind of actually, I really like that location I think, just above the belt line, below the belly button is, I think, I personally like it for a spot for a tattoo I think it's aesthetically pleasing. There's a few spots, I think, like I said the forearm, big fan of, then there's spots, like, people get tattoos on their thighs, I just don't understand it to me I guess, personally, I don't like it as a spot. I guess each to his own. If you had tattoos of gun holsters there would be a decent spot for it, it wouldn't fit somewhere else, but just getting like a picture that doesn't have an actual meaning along with the thighs, that's not a good spot. As well as the Sneetches, I got it, yeah, the main reason, coz the Sneetches have them there.

Desley: so is there a meaning behind why you put the other one on your back?

Participant: um, no. I liked the place. I like the middle, it's right in the middle at the top of my back, it's a good spot for a tattoo. I guess it's a good, once again, aesthetically pleasing place for a tattoo and it's not in my face for a time too, which is good.

Desley: so did you ever worry enough about what your parents would think that you had second thoughts about getting it?

Participant: no. I've kind of always, very much, I take into account other people's advice, I take into account how it could affect me in life, but ultimately the decision's mine if I want to get it, I'm going to get it. my parents aren't going to get it. like dad hated my piercings with a passion. He was like... I had a tongue piercing he saw whenever I'd play with it he was like "put it back in your mouth" he just hated it and my mum just didn't care... "as long as it doesn't chip your

teeth honey” and the labret piercing, he would hate that one. I had it over here and I took it out before I actually went back home. Not because I didn’t want him to see it, I guess I was kind of hoping he’s see it coz it would piss him off a bit, just for fun. I actually told my parents I was going to get a tattoo and she came back, it’s bigger than I thought, but it’s nice. I like how it fits under your shirt. I don’t want to see, you know. Can’t get a job because of it so I took that into advice. Not I appreciate that but there’s not much my parents could have said, if anything, that would have discouraged me from getting a tattoo. I don’t think there’s much most people could have said, anyone really. They could discourage me I guess, but I would have been like, well I’m going to get one now. I think, in my mind I wanted them and unless they had a very convincing argument I hadn’t heard before not to get it...

Desley: it wasn’t going to work. you’ve mentioned that a few of your friends have tattoos

Participant: especially back home. In Australia, not too many. Can’t think of anyone. My friend Howard back home has 2 tattoos on his forearms. One was in a tattoo magazine, it was really well done, it was actually. He got tanned, it actually changed colour almost, it went darker to lighter. He got it out of a book. Kind of a lot like a fantasy look coz it’s kind of like a fairy thing, just a face, a really cool looking face. And then he got this stylised spade with his initials going down the middle. Another guy, Ryan, back home, he was a graffiti artist, done it for quite some time, getting into other art as well, he actually got, one of his graffiti pieces he’d drawn on the side of his arm. I think he got things like on my back to commemorate points in his life. Like the friend who had a barcode who got it changed to éclair. His tattoo seemed more, less for meaning and more tattoo for the sake of getting tattooed. You know, they look cool and I think he’s the type of person who may regret them later on in life, possibly. Those ones come into my head. And a female friend who got she’s half Vietnamese and half Italian and she, she grew up in America, but her dad was Italian, and she and her older sister went and got tattoos, both the same in the same spot. Hers was little sister in writing down here and her sister had it big, writing down the back of her neck big sister. My friend Jen got a rose around her ankle, actually when she was young, 16 or 17, so it was dodgy coz it was done through a friend of her mum’s. she wasn’t old enough to get one yet. so she went back and got it fixed up a bit. I think she may get it covered up with something else maybe a bigger flower so it’s not so dodgy looking.

Desley: isn’t it illegal in some states in the US?

Participant: I don't know about full states, but I know some counties, certain areas are. I've actually been on line, especially down in the south, there are certain areas where lots of things aren't allowed. There's places where it's illegal to get tattoos which I think is just a blatant violation of the bill of rights, supposedly, which is great, what it stands for and all, but obviously it has its sections.

Desley: you've had no negative effects of having a tattoo, on your life?

Participant: no. I don't think so. Not yet. I guess I somewhat worry, not really worry, but maybe partial concern, I don't think about work because at work I won't take my shirt off and just more

Desley: in finance they don't really do that do they?

Participant: I don't plan to be in finance.... I don't know if it's for me, but we'll see. I guess if I ever meet a really "good" girl and you meet females or people in general who are just really open, you know, and their parents are completely different and I guess the only concern is if I meet someone I want to be with for quite some time and because my tattoos, her parents kind of have this just real reservation towards me. "no, he's got tattoos, he's one of THOSE types" and it's easy to say that personally if you meet someone that has that well, kind of mind-frame you probably don't want to be that close to them anyway, but you get stuck with family of people you're with so, that's the only potential I see for it being, and hopefully through time if that does happen they can learn to look past the ink on my body and I think in this day and age tattoos are more accepting unless I have once again two full sleeves, a few tattoos here and there, I don't think would cause that great a stress but I guess you know, it's unlikely because a female that would appeal to me would be that open and stuff probably most likely wouldn't have a close relationship with that close-minded of a family members. But that's the only thing I kind of risk that potentially could cause negative effects in the future. Besides that I don't think that there's much that I'll regret about it

Desley: on the bright side, you're probably not going to show her parents your tattoos the first time you meet them

Participant: unless I meet them at the beach for the first time

Desley: they'll probably know you before they find out

Participant: yes. It's also very unlikely so it's not something that will affect my decisions. ...
'what is that?' yeah, I don't think it will be an issue, only a kind of potential one, but I think it can be avoided

Desley: do you think having the tattoos means that you identify with any particular group?

Participant: um

Desley: apart from the Sneetches?

Participant: apart from the imaginary creatures that live on beaches. I don't know. Certainly, I guess certain groups typically you'll find a lot more tattoos, punk rock scene you'll find a lot more people with tattoos, and, I guess, you get the muscle guys with the arm bands but I don't think my tattoos will associate me with any group. They don't... any group I think I kind of associate myself with I don't think it's because of my tattoos

Desley: so even skateboarders, you'd be more associated with them because you skate, not because you have a tattoo?

Participant: because I skate, yeah. and I think even more so what you're wearing would be associated... I mean if, if I walk into a bar or in any kind of area and I'm looking to identify someone who skates, I'm looking for shoes, I'm looking for someone who skates I'm looking for shoes, someone who's rocking with certain kinds of clothes and stuff, ok, well, they look like a skater. If I'm interested in tattoos that's only secondary to skating, compared with what they're wearing. Skating all the time has a certain type of style. Look, go out, skating has to do more with the fact that I skate, more, more my fashion choice, I think you know if anything maybe if I did have more tattoos may be an association with a certain kind of, more of a punk kind of scene, but even then there's plenty of guys that have major tattoos that are not in the punk scene and there's plenty of people in the punk scene that don't have tattoos. I think it's more that I'll be at a show and I'll see people who rock to the music, or the way they dress but it's not, for me it's not like the Maoris where they have the facial tattoo and that's like they associate with Maoris, I don't think I have that as much through people I, it kind of supplements it. maybe

people see that I skate and see that I have tattoos and so I fit more of the image of a skater but personally I don't, I don't associate my tattoos with groups I hang out with. You know, I guess, if that makes sense

Desley: so if you went into a bar or something and you saw people with tattoos, would you feel like you had something in common with them?

Participant: no. not actually in common with them. I don't know, everybody, if you rock in some place and you're by yourself and you're looking for someone, you look for people that you would associate with, I guess in a sense if you saw tattoos you'd have a similar kind of mind-frame as me. Obviously, not obviously, talking about close-minded about tattoos. But maybe if you see someone, you know, with tattoos, they're more likely going to be someone I could get along with than someone over there, but once again I'd have to look into one's person because you know I could go over to the guys with tattoos and they could be absolutely complete jerks. I could go over to the guy wearing the pink collared shirt with the collar up and he could be the guy that's like "sick, yeah, awesome", get me a beer and we could hang out all night. So I think that there could be like a certain association with, I guess that goes for everything, I guess that goes against what the star stands for but I think it gives, it definitely gives a kind of first impression that maybe I walk in and there's two groups of guys with pink collar shirts with the collars up, salmon collar shirts, sorry and guys with tattoos, I'm going to go to the guys with tattoos first because, to me, their image more identifies with who I am, but if they're jerks I'll rock over to the guys with the pink collar shirts and just see what's going on. If they're also jerks I'll go to a different bar. There is a certain kind of identification, but more so along the lines that maybe it signifies a certain kind of person. Like maybe if they have tattoos they're more into punk music, maybe they are skate boarders

Desley: does that depend on the tattoo?

Participant: I think it could. I think if they also had muscle shirts and armbands that's going to signify someone different to with a full sleeve, which is going to signify someone different with giant neck tattoo. You know, at the tattooist I saw a picture of this awesome guy whose entire body is covered in puzzle pieces

Desley: Enigma. He's got horns.

Participant: yeah. did he shave his teeth down into spikes too?

Desley: no. that's another guy, I think, that did that

Participant: and split the tongue, too.

Desley: they split other things too. I don't want to think about it.

Participant: I guess it depends, certain tattoo types, placement kind of tattoos as well as other things

Desley: I spoke to one guy in the Navy, you know the old stereo type of sailors with tattoos and we were in Sydney in a coffee shop, and everyone that walked past, if they had a tattoo that looked like flash, he was like "they suck" but if it was something unusual, they were cool. So he discriminated between people who just go and pick a tattoo off the wall and get it and ones that actually put some kind of thought into it

Participant: I think that would be, and like I said, I find it's natural to automatically identify certain things with different people. I can't say tribe because I kind of go against that and try to see the other person, but yeah, similar to, if you see someone, I guess, looking very hip and has a butterfly or a fairy or obviously flash you just go "oh, no". I mean, I hate flash tattoo. More so I think people often regret it. it's flash, they rock in and go "I want a tattoo, I don't know what, I want that one" kind of and it's like "do you know what you're doing?". You're 19 years old, you have like sixty seventy years to go, you're stuck with that thing. At least get your picture, take it, do something with it, get it, try it. Whenever someone wants to get a tattoo I always try to give them advice. I'm like do what you want but I suggest it have meaning, at least you'll like it later on. It's not just a picture that you picked off the wall. I'm not a fan of flash tattoo coz it's not very, it's not real. I like seeing more interesting, artistic pieces. I love blackwork. A lot of guys get full sleeves where it's just all black and greys and I think it looks really cool, but yeah, I guess. I don't think that people who get flash tattoos you're probably not going to notice as much. They're generally something small and in more inconspicuous areas. Or if you rock into a bar you notice the tattoos coz they're probably Sorry I'm kind of rambling here.

Desley: I've saved the best question for last.

Participant: ok

Desley: what would be the opposite of your tattoos?

Participant: Nazi symbol. On my back... I don't know... just get the antonyms of life, love, laughter, but with the meaning, just some flash that has no meaning. Both of them I mean, a swastika pretty much is the opposite, close to the exact opposite of what the star stands for. The back, I said, antonyms for life, love, laughter, you know, even death, hate, sadness would have some sort of meaning but not very positive, maybe death, depending on how you view death. But I think mainly on my back just a pretty picture as opposed to something that has meaning, that'd be the opposite. Something that would be a real cliché. A big dragon on my back with Asian symbols that I can't understand, I think that'd maybe be the opposite. But in Asia that probably means something but just a random one "I like how that Asian symbol looks, I'm gonna put it on my back", a dragon, I think that'd be the opposite of my tattoo on my back. So the opposite me would have that, and the Nazi symbol on my stomach. the kind of person I'd avoid in a bar.

Desley: I was just wondering when you talked earlier about the Sneetches, with no star, whether your opposite would be not having one.

Participant: no. coz I think, in the end that was the point. It didn't really matter if they had a star or didn't have a star. Without having a star it can have the same meaning to you. But it's more normal, you can live your entire life with no star. Unless you consciously go "I don't have a star", but you know...

Desley: so it would be taking it away, maybe, if you'd had one?

Participant: yeah maybe if I just removed it

Desley: you'd have the scar, so you'd have like the shadow

Participant: as if, yeah, I mean, yeah, that might actually, it probably would be, if I had it removed I'd be over the change of mind thing and I had that significant a change of mind that I want to remove a tattoo that means something like that then obviously you've changed your perception on things. I guess, yeah, removing it and having the scar there would mean that for me. but the opposite if I just wanted to get it done and get the opposite I'd get a swastika. That's a good thought. I can't get it removed because now I've had it, taking it away is like taking away the meaning

Desley: so is there anything else you can think of about your tattoos?

Participant: not really. That's mostly it.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	1	1	1	1	1	5	1	3	1	5	3	3	Sad
Patient	1	1	1	1	1	5	1	3	3	5	5	1	Simon
Caring	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	5	5	1	Neglecting
Kind	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	5	4	2	Mean
Sense of humour	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	4	3	Bitter
Sociable	4	3	5	5	1	1	1	3	1	1	5	2	Reserved
Friendly	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	5	3	3	Nasty
Active	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	5	1	4	4	5	Lethargic
Confident	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	5	1	5	Insecure
Organised	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	2	5	4	5	Disjointed
Hard working	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	3	1	5	4	5	Lazy
Honest	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	5	3	2	Liar



Participant: Well, I'll talk about the first tattoo I got. I have two tattoos all up. This is my first one, the one I've already told you about. I got this in 2001, 2002 I can't actually remember. I have this theory that unlike a lot of my other body mods, I get a tattoo to mark off every significant point in my life every significant thing I go through; every achievement, I mark it off with a tattoo that symbolises that. I believe in designing my own tattoos so it has to be a personal representation to me. Personal symbolism that chances are, I'm not going to regret when I'm older. 'Cause I can look at it when I'm 80 years old and say - "I got that because..." , "I designed this because...". This one is a thinking fairy, as I call her, on blood red rose which has a thorn on it and her ankles are attached to a spider web. If you look on the rose, there's still bits of white and that's in relation to Oscar Wilde's story "The Nightingale and the Rose" and in a nutshell a nightingale falls in love with a student, she lives in his garden and she loves him so much she sings for him all the time but he really just ignores her and brushes her off and he falls in love with this girl but the girl said she'd only be with him if he brought her a blood red rose. There was only white roses in his garden, however, the nightingale loved him so much that she sacrificed herself at midnight on a full moon she pierced her heart on the thorn and made the white rose red so that the boy could give it so he could find true love just like she had and he got the rose and then the girl told him she wasn't interested anymore and the rose just ended up getting thrown into the gutter. So she'd sacrificed her life, for her love for this boy and it didn't mean very much to him after all as it turned out. I went through, at a young age, I was young I was very much in love with a young man and at a stupidly young age, we got "engaged" so to speak. He ended up running off with my best friend which tends to happen with young people, childish things like that. And I let him go and said fine, be with her. You know, I felt sad because I loved him so much and obviously he doesn't love me to the same extent back and he just wanted to be with this other girl who ended up saying 'I don't want to be with you anymore' and she just chucked him aside like the rose and so that's how I see this rose. As well, not only is it an Oscar Wilde reference but I see it as Nietzschean reference, Frederic Nietzsche reference – who I've always been a big fan of. Is a, as you know, one of his major theories is; every day is an authentic progression of the self every day is another stepping stone in the path of your life and you take responsibility for your own actions being existentialist, and every day you just say ok this is what I did today, I'm learning from this, I'm moving on to tomorrow and you live in the moment. And so, that's what the cobwebs also symbolize. It's attached to her ankles saying

don't forget that every day you've lived from that past, every day is another stepping stone to where you are today, every day symbolises something. So yeah, in a nutshell, she's a thinking fairy as I call her because my parents used to always call me their little blonde fairy and I was always thinking and I was always writing stories, making up stories and doing crazy things in the garden, running around naked in the garden amongst the flower beds so I was always their fairy and then as I grew older I became their thinking fairy as they called me and I had long black hair and that's why she's got long black hair and she's thinking. So, yes. This fairy has been through a lot and she has sacrificed herself for certain people and she has bled on the rose for that. And which also leads on to my next tattoo. I got this about August 2005 so only last year and this is another very symbolic tattoo to me. I've been deferred from uni for the last 2 years because I've been really really messed up. I've been in and out of hospital with very bad anxiety and depression to the point that doctors kept putting me on lots of different medications trying everything to get me better and nothing seemed to work to the point where I got tried on this one particular medication and I had... My doctor accidentally prescribed me four times the dosage I was supposed to have and I had an overdose and I could have been killed. And it was a very traumatic experience and I didn't even link it to it initially, it happened on a train. His doctor's office is in St Leonards and he just said 'oh just take this tablet with a meal and hopefully you know your anxiety and depression and anger issues will start to get better'. So I thought nothing of it, I went and had lunch, I took the tablet and got on the train and fifteen minutes into the train trip I just suddenly had no proprioception, I had no sense of where I was in space, I could have been upside down as far as I knew and my whole nervous system just was suppressed. I was drooling. I couldn't talk. I couldn't breathe properly. I couldn't walk properly and I was trying to ask people for help at the station but they all thought I was a junkie. I said "please help me" and I'm drooling and no-one would help me because they thought I was some junkie and I eventually found a train station guard guy and said "I need help". He actually took notice of me and said "oh, maybe I should help this chick". And I got to the managers office just in time and I passed out on the floor and I'd come into consciousness every five or ten minutes for a few minutes and I somehow convinced them not to call an ambulance. I don't know why I did that. I was in a delusional state. All I was thinking was that I can't afford an ambulance and I don't want any trouble. I don't want to try to get any attention. I don't want to cause any problems. I just said, "no, don't get an ambulance, don't get an ambulance". And they're like, "I really think we should get you an ambulance, you know, you look you're about to die or something". So I'm like, "No, No, ambulance!" and then I'd pass out again. It was a very interesting ordeal. Umm. At that stage my anxiety had gotten really bad but that day, one of the

reasons I was given the medication was for my anxiety, umm, and it's one of the reasons I deferred from uni for the last two years. I'd wake up in the middle of the night with panic attacks and I'd wake up in the morning and have a panic attack and I'd go to uni lecture and have a panic attack. I just started missing lectures and I think it might have been one of your classes and we had a test in the tutorial and I just sat there the whole time going, like that, thinking I just can't leave the tutorial, I can't leave. Your mind just goes into a weird state and I didn't even do the test. And... So... sorry I've kind of gone on a bit of a tangent, I'm kind of tired. So, after this experience with the medication my anxiety got even worse and I actually became agoraphobic and I couldn't leave my house for three months and it ended up getting to that point where my doctors would come to my house to see me. And my psychologist helped me a lot. She'd convince me to sort of walk up to the end of the street, she'd come out the front of the house with me and actually literally take my hand and like "it's okay" and I'd be freaking out like "no, no, come on we can go to the top of the street" and I would and I'd vomit and I'd be like 'hey! I did it. I did it'. And within six months after that, everyday I'd try and go out a little bit further. I'd go to the next street and sort of go a little bit further and further and then finally I was put on prozac and it was like I stopped feeling sorry for myself. I stopped going why has this happened to me. It's not fair, why do I have this, I want to go out and experience life. I couldn't hang out with friends, I couldn't go to parties. I couldn't go and see my friends' bands play. I couldn't do anything and I got to the point where I just thought "fuck it, I'm going to kill myself" and I was that close to killing myself that I... I did actually attempt to hang myself but it went terribly wrong but I won't go into that. And after I was put on prozac, I stopped feeling sorry for myself. I stopped thinking "I'm a victim. I thought, "no, I've got to be proactive here' I've got to take, grab it by the balls and say, 'no, I'm not going to be controlled by my anxiety and depression any longer'. And it was like, with the help of this medication, it cleared my brain so I could personally change my thought patterns and my pathways of facilitation. I could change the way I thought. It wasn't that the Prozac that changed the way I thought, it swept the leaves out of the way so to speak so I could actually do something about it. And after a few weeks of being on Prozac I felt so much better. I was still fairly depressed and anxious but I could actually go out of the house and I would say to myself 'No, I'm going to stay out of the house for an hour' and would do it. I wouldn't go back inside and everyday I started getting a bit better and a bit better and a bit better until I still remember going to my first gig, the first, my first, my friends band was playing and it was the first time I'd been out for ages and I was really anxious but I managed to do it and I was crying and I was scared of walking into the club and I didn't want to go. I just wanted to turn around and go home, where was I, it was this big scary place and I just

went in and I did it and I felt so happy afterwards. And it occurred to me after a few weeks of feeling so much better that, you know, I still get anxious sometimes. I still get depressed sometimes. But I am so much better than I used to be that I can actually live life and enjoy life. And where I was living at that point in time wasn't the happiest place in the world. It was very dark, I only lived with one of my friends and she worked all night and slept all day so I never saw her and being alone all the time and being agoraphobic I had no contact with anyone and I started getting very depressed. I ended up moving out of that house once I'd overcome my agoraphobia and I moved into a house just of artists and musicians who would, like the TV is non-existent in my house. My last housemate would either sleep, work or watch TV and we have an art studio, we have a band studio, everything is just there for me to take and for me to give back. It's just the most brilliant environment in the world. I live with an artist, a painter, a photographer/painter and I live with a few members of a band called 'The Follow' who are very good musicians and being friends with them and being very successful musicians I get to go backstage to all these really cool concerts. They opened for 'Nine Inch Nails' and I got to hang out backstage just, after I'd become friends with these people and I moved in with them my life is just so much better. I realized that, my god, life really is cyclical. I used to be happy and then I became really depressed and really sick and now I'm happy again and I was looking at these, the theories behind the runes - the ancient north runes and they have this idea that the three aetts, I think it's pronounced etts. A E double T S. There's three aetts and they represent three significant phases in your life like; childhood, adulthood, elderly. And there's different phases and different stages in these three aetts and this particular one on my arm called (hera) - it's written J E R A - is called the, jera stands for the spring harvest - or the thaw after winter. It's when you've been through a really stagnant, frozen, cold, horrible part of your life and finally spring has come and everything's getting better and the ice has melted so that's why I got that rune and the snake around it, the aroarboris as it's called, is used in so much symbolism throughout history of mankind it basically is just a snake holding it's own tail and it just states that life is cyclical, everything is cyclical so by combining that with my rune, by designing this, it says to me that no matter what I go through, if I go through a bad point in my life again, I know life is cyclical and that I'm at another point on the snake and I know that I'll come back to jera again so if I'm having a really bad day and I'm feeling really depressed to the point that I can't get out of bed I'll just look at that in the mirror and go "oh no, tomorrow might be ok". So this just makes me remember that life can actually be really pretty good. So that's my tattoos.

Desley: Thats good. So can you tell me why you put them where you put them?

Participant: Umm, that's pretty interesting. I guess it's probably more cosmetic than anything. My, the symbolism behind my tattoos is more the actual tattoo not where I put it. Umm. My fairy on the rose is just above my right knee.

Desley: Which is a pretty unusual place.

Participant: yeah, it is an unusual place. I guess one of the reasons, I didn't want to do, I was originally going to put it on my forearm, underneath my forearm but I thought, if I'm getting a job interview or something, I don't want it to be really straight out obvious but I want people to see it and I want people to ask about it and I want people to, you know, find out more about me so, if I put it there then when I wear a skirt you can see it. So I put that one there and that one's similar, if I wear a singlet you can see it or if I wear a shirt with short sleeves you can see it, but if I ever want to hide it I can just put the sleeves back down over it. So, yeah. It's not that great a significance so.

Desley: So it's more about hiding it. So is there somewhere you wouldn't put a tattoo?

Participant: Umm. Where I wouldn't put a tattoo {long pause}... No.

Desley: So you'd put one on your face?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: Yeah?

Participant: I don't know. It's, I think if you're getting a tattoo, it's gonna be, I'm not one of those people that go oh, that's pretty, I'm going to get that. It has to mean something for me, something to me and if I was going to put a tattoo on my face it'd be for a particular reason, it would be for a reason, it wouldn't just be for shock value, it wouldn't be just I'm going to put a tattoo on my face; it would be because it meant something to me. I was considering getting some tattoos on the back of my head and maybe shaving the back of my head that's the closest I've come to my face but, yeah, no, I don't see any reason why I wouldn't put a tattoo on my face

Desley: or anywhere else.

Participant: or anywhere else.

Desley: Okay, so I think you said when you had them. How long did you think about them before you had them?

Participant: Umm, my fairy on the rose? I thought about that one for about a year and a half. I, no it would have been a year. I believe that if you just get one on impulse, no matter how symbolic it is, you might say a few months later, you might say, "Oh, I should have actually done it like this, I should have changed this bit instead " so if I design the tattoo it took me about a year. I kept changing the design then I waited a few months didn't want to change it at all then it was "ok that's the tattoo I'm getting". Same with this one. It was just a matter of going okay, every day I'd look at it and say "yep, I still want it, I still want it, there's nothing I want to change about it" and it's not that I'd want to change any of the symbolism, because that marks that particular point in my life so I just might want to change the bits of the design or how it would look cosmetically but that's about it.

Desley: Okay. So do you still like them?

Participant: Yes, definitely. I've only had this one for almost a year and I've had this one for five years and no I don't regret them at all.

Desley: So would you change them at all do you think?

Participant: No.

Desley: Wouldn't get them off?

Participant: Nope. Never. Can I just say that even if I was like years old and if I didn't like them anymore I'd still keep them because even if I don't like them they still signify that point in my life where I can say, that marks off this chapter of my book, that marks off this point. So I would never, I don't think I would ever want to remove them no matter what.

Desley: So this is probably a dumb question. I think you covered it but do you consider that your tattoos are related to a particular event in your life? Or is it more of a...

Participant: Definitely. I like to get tattoos to signify an event in my life or a particular chapter of my life, an experience I've been through, a collection of experiences I've been through. Something I have been through that has changed me significantly in who I am today. Things that if they didn't happen I'd almost definitely be a different person today and I consider that a lot of things I've been through have made me a stronger person than if they hadn't happened. Yeah so definitely.

Desley: Okay, so the fairy on the rose, what's the event that led to that? The boyfriend?

Participant: That's the boyfriend and that whole chunk of my life. That whole chunk of my teenagehood. That wasn't just my boyfriend that was like a whole six years of teen angst and depression and being betrayed by people, doing stupid things, just having a huge portion of my life completely out of control and that tattoo symbolises that every day of that out of control has created who I am today. So yeah.

Desley: Okay. And with the snake.

Participant: That one's overcoming pretty bad anxiety and depression altogether coming out as ... Yeah this one's coming out from a fairly bad, pretty bad anxiety depression and coming out the other side. Literally coming out the other side and saying 'wow, life is pretty cool' which is something I never would have said a few years ago.

Desley: But I remember when you talked about that one too, last time you said something about your friend, you had a friend that died...

Participant: Oh yes. My friend Rachael, umm, died of leukaemia around about the time I got this tattoo and like I said, everything that happened at that point of my life is reflected in this tattoos somehow and yeah, her death would definitely be a part of that but I wouldn't say it's a really significant part of, they're all equally significant.

Desley: I just remember you said something about promising her.

Participant: Oh yes. She said, Yes of course, I almost forgot that. When she was on her deathbed she made me promise that I wouldn't try and do anything stupid like try and kill myself again or you know, do all these outrageous drugs and speed in my car and stuff. She made me promise not to do that anymore. And I made that promise and I kept that promise for quite a few years and when I became agoraphobic and severely depressed, when I could really see no way out, except suicide. I remember thinking, "Rachael, Rachel would understand and I know she wouldn't understand and she wouldn't approve of it but I remember think no, Rachael doesn't know what I'm going through right now". She knew a particular aspect of feeling trapped and having no way out but, I know I guess I did betray her in that sense, I guess I did betray her but at that point nothing is as important as you trying to find relief you know? Even if you think, oh yeah, I promised one of my friends on her death bed that I wouldn't attempt suicide again, you think 'yeah well, right now I just want relief out of this hell' and that's all I was really thinking of. So I guess I did betray her.

Desley: But I guess that's why you maybe you botched it up because underneath it all you didn't want to betray her.

Participant: Maybe. Maybe that's it. Who knows.

Desley: Maybe you knew it was going to get better. So. What about the pain aspect?

Participant: Oh, that's a very interesting one. I am a self-confessed sado-masochist.

Desley: oh, ok. So you tattoo yourself?

Participant: I ADORE. I absolutely adore the feeling of needles, piercings, tattoos, scarification, branding, burning – I love it! I pierce myself, I do my own piercings and by piercings, I mean play piercings as in, for fun more than anything I guess. I like to pierce my arms is my favourite and so I'll just put a big row of needles up my arm. You just use surgical hypodermic needles and I also, this heart didn't come up very well, there's a thing called scarification, where you cut like a particular pattern in each arm and then you irritate it with alcohol or something so you have the scar of like whatever you want to use. I've tried out a few of those just practicing but they didn't work or turn out very well so I let them heal.

Desley: Hmm. You look like you heal fairly well. If it were me I'd be all lumpy.

Participant: See I was doing a pattern of cuts down my arm, like big going to small going to big going to small going to big and that's about nine years old. My friend did that cause she didn't believe that I enjoyed it and so about nine years ago she got a hunk of metal put in a fire and strapped it to my arm and I just sat there going, it's cool. So yeah, a lot of people don't understand it - they think you're being angsty and, "oh I cut myself to relieve the pain" and it's like, 'no', it's, I consider it art. I consider it beauty. By doing things such as piercing, cutting, branding, not only is it a body modification where you can make your body look beautiful, but you can make yourself feel beautiful because you feel these things inside your skin, inside your flesh and you feel this pain and you know that you can become a stronger person through this. You know where your thresholds are, you know where your limits are. You know what you can do and what you can't. I don't know, I guess I can't completely explain it but yeah, the pain can be mind altering. Pain is a concept of the mind. You can change that pain. Instead of when you're getting a tattoo, instead of feeling that pain and going 'oh it hurts, It really hurts', you can change it and make it into a positive experience. I actually find it, and this is I don't you, you probably find this relevant, but I actually find it quite arousing so to speak, the pain of tattoos in particular. I find it makes me, I get shivers all up and down my body and I just feel almost enlightened. Your body goes into this other state - I see it as a form of meditation. Meditation is turning something into something else. It's not ignoring the pain, it's embracing it and putting it towards something else and that's what I see as body modification such as tattoos, piercing etc.

Desley: So the pain of each of those is of a similar thing or?

Participant: Do you mean is the pain of piercing the same as ..

Desley: No, sorry I didn't say that very well. Your experience of the pain like would you use them differently? Tattoos versus piercings or is it all about the same thing?

Participant: I think that.

Desley: Do you know what I mean?

Participant: Yeah I think I know what you mean. With piercings it's more of a sudden immediate pain and so it's more like a "pop" kind of pain and so it's not as intense as a tattoo where a tattoo can last for hours, just this, feels like a burning or someone dragging a razor across your skin. It can last for hours and you just sit there and you go into deeper deeper states of meditation. While you can't necessarily deeply meditate on piercings.

Desley: So that's more of an immediate...

Participant: Yeah. Piercing is more of a sudden burst of satisfaction so to speak. It's like, oh yeah, like you get a rush. Endorphins are released, adrenaline is realised. it's like a natural high, It's like 'oooh' and you're just sitting there giggling. I actually do get a bit of a headspin and stuff like, it's amazing, whilst a tattoo is, depending on how long it takes or what colour ink you're using, because some inks go deeper. you just feel really... it's a really bizarre experience to describe. It's like you're sitting in this room, all you can hear is zzzzz and you're just sitting there, feeling this burning on your arm, your leg your back, wherever and it's just this intense gratification. It's almost sexual it's just such an amazing feeling. It really is enlightening. I went with my friend Bizzaro, he came with me to get my tattoo and he just stood there and laughed at me - he said the expressions on my face were priceless. I was just like, 'oh'. He was like, he just stood there laughing at me. I mean.

Desley: See most people wouldn't, well, most people I've talked to ...

Participant: Yeah. Well like, I've had friends who have had tattoos and it's like, 'oh it hurts so much'. I'm like yeah...

Desley: Do you think it's more to do with your attitude before you go in? What I'm thinking of is Fakir, you know the body modification guy Mustafa the founder of body modification or whatever his name is. He does the American Indian tribal flesh thingy and all that stuff and he said he won't do any of that stuff unless his mind's in the right place first.

Participant: Oh really! Oh, I totally agree.

Desley: He does the flesh hooks and he was piercing himself when he was eleven or something.

Participant: Wow! That's amazing. That's beautiful.

Desley: Yeah, but he said he's got to be in the right head space.

Participant: Yeah, you've definitely got to be in the right head space, like if I go and get a, like I do my own play piercings, as in I'll put needles in my arm, but I won't put jewelery in it because I don't trust myself to do it well enough 'cause I'm not fully qualified. But if I'm getting a piercing to stay in, like my belly button, my labret, my nose wherever, I'll go and get it professionally done. And before you go in, for some reason, getting it professionally done, you have this little tinge of anxiety - it's a little bit more serious. It's a bit more serious because you know the needle's going to be a larger gauge, there's going to be a lot more going on. It's got to be a lot of precision and accuracy and you know it's going to be a very serious situation. And yeah, so you do feel a little bit of nervousness but it's more of an excitement, like you just have this thought going through your head; 'oh, I'm getting a new piercing, I'm getting a new piercing!!! Oh, this is going to be awesome'. Oh, there's a website you might like to check out actually, it's called bmezine.com. Have you seen it? Yeah and I was like, reading some interviews with this girl, she's like got this obsessed, she's got like over two hundred piercings and she gets them done professionally and I completely related to what she was saying in this interview. She was saying when she gets a piercing it's like a baby, it's like getting a new pet. She nurses it, she cleans it she eats healthy to make sure it heals properly she gets all the right vitamins in her diet and I was just thinking "yes, exactly, yes it's like a child. It's like you have this maternal instinct and you go and into the delivery room and say I want a baby and it's like pop! and instantly you have a baby and you go home and you wipe the blood off and you sit and look after it and all your friends go "awwww. let me look at the baby". It's really like getting a baby, it's so cool.

Desley: I wish getting a baby was that quick.

Participant: Yeah and that painless. It would be pretty cool if it was just a 'pop' and 'ahh' and one little sharp pain. It would be pretty cool. But yeah, no.....what was the question?

Desley: I don't know, I was just thinking that myself. I think we were talking about the pain actually. Do you think the tattoos mean anything? Like are they related or do you see them as being separate?

Participant: Umm. That's a good question. I'd have to say they are related in the sense that they signify different points in my life and that this tattoo up here, the jera rune, wouldn't have happened, probably wouldn't have happened without the part of my life that signified the fairy tattoo. They link to each other in the sense they both mark off significant points of my life and that I believe that everything that happened today was somehow caused by what happened yesterday. Therefore in that sense they are linked and they are both about becoming a stronger person at the end of a particular situation. In a nutshell they're about learning from your mistakes. Well this one is about learning from your mistakes. The fairy is about learning from your mistakes of all the things. And this one is about becoming a stronger person by realizing who you are and what you can do and so yeah, I guess they are, they are related in that sense.

Desley: I think before when you talked about that one, you said something, to do with the spiderweb I thought, good coming out of bad.

Participant: Yeah and that's also the wings as well. The wings are sky blue and you can always fly off into the sky. I don't know, it sounds kind of cheesy but yeah, no, the spiderweb was like, every day produces another day, you learn from past mistakes. Every day produces another day and yeah, it symbolizes how you grow from your past and it's very, yeah... I don't know how else to say it. Grow from your past.

Desley: I've probably got enough I think to talk about that. Now. A tricky question. Why did you choose a tattoo instead of something else? For example, a different piercing or dying your hair blond again.

Participant: I do know of people that get piercings to mark off significant points in their lives. I've heard of people saying things like that. Umm. I can understand that but to me, a symbol, a picture is more, well above anything, it's more graphic of what I'm trying to say because it actually says this. While this one, if I got this to represent something, well it actually did represent something, it represents me quitting smoking but that didn't last very long as you can see by the cigarette behind my ear.

Desley: but you've still got the piercing.

Participant: Yeah, I've got it, I should take it out shouldn't I?

Desley: You should.

Participant: I should take it out. Well it doesn't necessary represent that, my parents said they'd pay for it if I quit smoking. So I was like, 'ok, I've quit smoking' and they bought it for me and a year later I started up again. But I stopped for a year.

Desley: They didn't say for how long.

Participant: Yeah exactly! They didn't say for how long. Yeah no, but more than anything I guess it's just a graphic representation of you know, how I feel, what I felt at the time, what I want to mark off in my life. While a piercing can still signify that, still symbolize it just as well but it's not graphic.

Desley: So is there something you could have done that would have had the same effect like having a picture if you wanted something graphic?

Participant: What do you mean sorry?

Desley: Like drawing a picture and sticking it on your wall. Hanging it on your wall.

Participant: Yeah, you could do that but it's so temporary. It's so, oh, yeah, in a few years I might lose it or the ink will fade or it'll crumple up or get torn or the cat will piss on it or which happens a lot in my house. It's just so temporary, it doesn't necessarily say, it's not like everyone's going to see it and say, what did you go through to get this.

Desley: Yeah I guess you can't really walk around going

Participant: Yeah. I could get a shirt made out of it. And wear the shirt every day and go 'yeah, look what I've been through'. No, it's just not the same.

Desley: It doesn't quite work does it?

Participant: Yeah and also too, you're going through the pain of getting it as well and you know you really mean it. Like, I paint and I do photography and I write music and they're all, I see them as very permanent things but you don't go through this pain and this blood and these needles and these sounds and this whole amazing experience. You don't go through all of that so it's not imprinted in your flesh in more than one way.

Desley: So it could be imprinted in your heart...

Participant: Yeah exactly.

Desley: Alright. So do you consider yourself to be a person who has tattoos or are you a tattooed person?

Participant: oooh. Well I've always considered part of myself as part of the body modification scene so I don't know if that classifies me I guess... I believe in the philosophy of body modification. Whether to say I'm a tattooed person or I'm a person with tattoos. ..

Desley: It's probably not really appropriate then is it?

Participant: I don't know. It's ..

Desley: Because on the whole, you're a body modifier which, part that is tattooing but there are other things to it.

Participant: yeah. there's other things to it. It's...Hmmm...[long pause] I don't think my tattoos define who I am, but they can help tell stories about myself and where I've been. That's a really hard one to answer.

Desley: It's a tricky one. How about we just leave it. So when you had your tattoos did you go by yourself?

Participant: Umm. My first tattoo, my friend and my mum actually came. They both wanted to see it.

Desley: you would have been under eighteen and you had to get...

Participant: Yeah, so I had to get my parents permission. I was seventeen, something like that. So I had to get a justice of the peace to sign the thing, get my mum and dad to sign it, the justice of the peace to sign it and my mum had to come, so, yeah it was a pretty big ordeal and my friend Lauren came as well and it was actually a beautiful experience. I got it at 'In Denial' at Glebe and from this guy from Chile who was this amazing artist and oh, that's one thing I should tell you. My favourite song at the time was this song called 'Schism' by Tool. It's about relationships and your soul even breaking up because you don't communicate, you don't talk about how you feel and you end up, hence, you end up losing significant relationships in your life. And I walked into the room, and that's one of the things that this tattoo also signified is the philosophies of that song. Like it's very similar to what was saying. And I still remember, I walked in and laid down, I had to lay down for this one, he started going 'zzzzzz' and he said, oh, do you want me to put some music on?' and I was like, 'yeah' and he pressed play and this song started 'diddle dim derm derm derm' and I was like 'no way!'. That is true, it was so freaky, it was like, I don't believe in fate I don't necessarily believe in the supernatural but that was just a really strange coincidence. He didn't even ask me, he, that was really weird. It just happened to be one of his favourite songs and he put it on but it was just so strange. I don't know. ...sorry... what was the question?

Desley: I said did you go by yourself.

Participant: sorry I got carried away. Oh, yeah. That's right. So, yeah, my mum and friend came.

Desley: Did your friend or your mum have a tattoo?

Participant: My friend had a tattoo. I came with her to get her first tattoo like a few months ago. Yeah, so she came with me to get mine. My friend Azaria came with me to get this one. So, yeah. I've never had a tattoo by myself. In fact, I've never had a jewellery piercing done by myself either. I always seem to have a friend with me or. I did my bellybutton on impulse I just, I get these urges I have to be pierced. I get urges the way I have to be tattooed as well, but I

don't let myself, I'm like no. A tattoo has to be a symbolic not cosmetic. It has to be a symbolic significant thing. So I'm like finding excuses. I'm like, well I think it's very significant that today I didn't have chocolate cake, so it's like "no! that's not significant enough. That's why you only have two tattoos." If I didn't have that philosophy, I'd be covered in tattoos from head to toe by now. Seriously, but I'm like, no. Like, I walk into tattoo shops just because friends are interested to browsing. I just get drawn in by the sound of the machine and I don't know, and I walk in and I'm like 'im going to get that one and then, like, 'no, you're not!'. But, yeah, it's very hard for me to do. I got this one on impulse but someone happened to be with me at the time. So, yeah.

Desley: So what do you think it means to other people that see your tattoos?

Participant: Umm, surprisingly enough, a lot of people ask me what they mean. Actually I've never had a person that hasn't looked at my tattoo and hasn't said what does that mean. Everyone always says what does that mean. I don't know whether they just see that it's not your ordinary pretty picture of a butterfly or, not that there's anything wrong with getting butterfly tattoos but it's obviously not your normal, butterfly, skull and crossbones, Celtic thing. It's obviously something different. And so everyone always says to me oh, what does that mean? So like in two seconds I'll say, oh, it's blah-blah-blah because I don't have time to do all of this when I'm in a club or something so.

Desley: So what kind of reactions have you had? Have you had anything bad?

Participant: Umm. No, I've never had a bad reaction to any of my tattoos.

Desley: Do you think that's because of the company you keep?

Participant: Possibly. But I do hang out with lots of different types of people and I do sometimes go to clubs and things where there's people I would not normally ever hang out with and I've never had a bad reaction. I get dirty looks all the time. Even at uni today. But I don't think that's anything to do with my tattoos. I think it's just my general appearance. I don't care at all so. It doesn't affect me.

Desley: So you never had worry about anyone else would think when you thought about getting your tattoo?

Participant: Nope. The only thing I've ever gotten, people disapproving of, is my scarification. They seem to think, oh, I must be some angsty teenager who cuts to feel or whatever. But that's not me at all.

Desley: There was a movie on the weekend actually that was called, 'painful secrets'...

Participant: oh really?

Desley: about this girl who was cutting to cope basically because her family life was just a mess and her mother was just really controlling and whenever things got out of control she would just run off and cut. But I guess that's the view most people have of it.

Participant: Well it is probably the most common.

Desley: like you're a weirdo who would go and do that. Most of the other girls just go and pick on her and go well you're strange, why are you doing that? can we watch?

Participant: Well I think that is probably the most common reason people do do it.

Desley: It's funny though, if you think about a two year old having a tantrum, probably, I don't know, eight out of ten of them, bang their head against the wall inflicting pain on themselves, like that's somehow normal.

Participant: Yeah, we have this natural masochistic nature as humans. We really do, it's very strange. It's like, I went through a phase where everyday I'd have to either cut or pierce myself. I couldn't sleep unless I'd cut or pierced myself. I still can't explain it, I actually, I see my psychiatrist every few months, just general check ups and last time I saw him, I was like, is there anything wrong with me? There isn't anything wrong with me? I can't sleep unless I cut or pierce myself. He's like, well what do you think? I'm like, well I think it's body modification. I think it's a form of art and expression. I don't think there's anything wrong with it but do you? He's like, it's not what I think, do you think there's anything wrong with it? I'm like no, then

it's okay and I'm like alright cool. Awesome. Sweet. It's all good. But I went to this café frequently and there's all these different things on my arms and the boss just sort of went oh, hi. And she walked away and I was like oh no, oh no! and so sometimes I find myself covering them up and going what! No, I shouldn't have to cover them up. I'm not doing it to you know, anything angsty. And then my waiter said to me, he was, man, what are those cuts on your arms, what are you doing? They're for art! He goes, oh I thought they were like oh I cut myself so I don't have to feel the pain and I'm like, no. that's not it Pete, thank you. But I also paint with my own blood as well so on canvas I'll put my own blood on the canvas, so that's another reason I cut myself, just to get blood, 'cause my veins are too hard to find so.

Desley: My daughter had to have a blood test once and she said can you take some extra out coz I want to use it for painting.

Participant: Did they let her?

Desley: Yeah. And they put anti-coagulant in it so it wouldn't go all thick and revolting.

Participant: I should ask them to do that for me next time because my housemate tried to draw blood for me. Azaria tried to draw blood for me but she couldn't find my vein either. I tried and I could not find my vein either. My veins are impossible to find. She does it all the time, we'll just be sitting there and she'll go uh-huh, uh-huh, and she'll casually get out a syringe and go like uh-huh, uh-huh sweet, yeah. She just did it really casually. I wish I could do that but I can't find my veins.

Desley: I've heard of people doing it with their periods.

Participant: Yeah, I know someone who does that.

Desley: I think I'd probably draw the line at that myself.

Participant: I have no problem with it. It's not me. It's not something that I'd do personally but I have no problem with it.

Desley: That's what I mean. Well I can't paint. So it's a bit... So what do you think about other people with tattoos?

Participant: Umm. I think...how much time do you have left?

Desley: It's alright. I've got another tape.

Participant: Lots of different people have lots of different tattoos for lots of different types of reasons. Umm. One of the most common reasons I see people with tattoos is they woke up one day and said, I'm going to get a tattoo and they walk into a tattoo shop and they choose a pretty picture and then got a tattoo. Umm, I see no, I have nothing against that, but at the same time I find it, I don't know, I guess it's not necessarily sad because they might just see it just like getting a new t-shirt, just something else to wear. But there's such a good chance in twenty years time, they're going to go, why the hell did I get that? you know? And it just, you know I would never do that, I've had the impulse to do that sometimes but I deny that impulse and say no I'm not going to do that, that's stupid. I see there's nothing wrong with getting tattoos for any reason at all, there's nothing wrong with getting tattoos but some people get them for stupid reasons and some people I think a lot of the time, are trying to fit into a certain scene and so they get these tattoos that make them look like they're a part of that scene. They're obviously very identity crisis ridden and not quite sure of who they are or what they're doing in their life and they just want to fit into some sort of genre whether it be you know, homey, goth, metal, I don't know, they're just trying to fit into something. Like there's this girl I know, she's really sweet, she's a really sweet girl but she's a bit confused and she became obsessed with her housemate who's a very independent woman and much older than her and knows what she wants in life, gets what she wants in life, knows exactly who she is, she has no identity crisis whatsoever and she's a huge fan of Placebo, the band and Marilyn Manson, so she has a Marilyn Manson tattoo and this girl thought, that's a good idea, I'm going to get a Marilyn Manson tattoo then she got a Placebo tattoo and it just started going from there to the point where it's like, yeah, they're really nice tattoos but doesn't Amanda have them? And it was sort of, some people really do just want to fit in or they want to emulate someone. It's, for that reason, I think it's sad. I think that is the wrong reason to get a tattoo. If you really want to be like someone, buy the same clothes that they wear if are really that desperate and pathetic. But to alter permanently your appearance... doesn't seem right in my mind.

Desley: See, to me, it's a bit like having a boob job or a nose job or anything else because they're trying to alter their appearance to be like perfect or like Pamela Anderson or something stupid. Yet somehow that's acceptable. I went to the body modification conference last year at Macquarie Uni and they were talking about voluntary amputations and I happened to go on the Friday night to my parents and my sister was there and she was going off you know about how weird these people are. 'Cause there'd been a bit thing about it in the media about it and how they were trying to convince people to do amputations which was just not true. Yeah, it was a bit over the top but to me that's no different to having a sex change operation. That fundamentally you're going, the body I was born with, the way I see myself we're going to change it.

Participant: I see it no different from a boob job or a tattoo not even necessarily a sex change, I see it as just knowing I feel right I feel like I mean even if I cut off this finger, I mean, it's not that something that I personally would think I would do, well not at this point in my life I don't feel a need for it, but philosophically I have no qualms with it, I don't see anything wrong with it.

Desley: and it's so...

Participant: I think it's sad that people are prejudice and so, discriminate against people with piercings or tattoos, stretchings, brandings whatever, merely on the basis of how they look, they say well must be really fucked up, they must be really screwed in the head, I don't want anything to do them. I've heard of people yelling at people on the street and stuff. It's like, why? Why does it affect you so much that you need to abuse the person with these body modifications.

Desley: You've got to wonder if there's a bit of projection or something.

Participant: Yeah, you've got to wonder if they're questioning their own self.

Desley: And you know years ago, people used to go ballistic at homosexuals and stuff it's like.

Participant: Yeah, but it still happens. It still happens. Like I was absolutely disgusted, I'll say it quickly 'cause we are at an interview not just chatting but um, I went and saw some old high school friends a year or so back, I went to this party with them and got a lift home with them and

on the way home we were talking about people that we knew, and they were like 'oh you know he turned out to be a poofte?' and they were like 'oh, yeah, he's a fucking dirty faggot' and I was like, 'excuse me?'. And I was like, I was disgusted. I was like, that's disgusting, why does that make him a bad person because he's gay? I don't know, it just made me SO angry. My best friend is gay. He's my closest, the closest person to me in my life is gay and once he called me up in tears and I said 'what's wrong' and he said, 'I just went to a party and someone tried to pick a fight with me because they found out was gay'. It's like, I was furious! Anyway, I'm off the topic...

Desley: So I think you've talked about this before but how do you think people see you?

Participant: How do people see me? I think that lots of different people would see me in their own unique way.

Desley: I guess it's hard because like you said, you've got piercings, you've got it's red in your hair.

Participant: oh really? Cool. I think a lot of people might look at me and say, oh, she's a goth, or a hippy, or a raver or something, I don't know what categories there are these days, I don't worry myself about these categories. A lot of people like, try to put me into some category, some chunk of... set of appearances but at the end of the day, I don't dress to look like anyone or to fit into any one particular genre, to fit into any particular scene. I just, I just dress the way I feel I want to dress and my piercings are just... another way of dress, another way to look. and my tattoos aren't even necessarily cosmetic, they can be, I love the look of my tattoos but above all they're significant things in my life. Some people will understand that and some people will say, oh, cool, I really like your style. Like, today after I bought my uni books, I was sitting down, having a cigarette and this woman came up to me and said, oh, did you do your hair yourself? She was about 40 years old, she looked pretty average wearing an addidas tracksuit and I thought she was about to give me shit and she's like, I really like your hair, it's very creative. I was like, oh, thank you very much and like, 'oh, I really like your piercings and I went, 'oh, thank you very much' that's really cool, thanks and some people find it really refreshing some people are really like, 'oh, I love your tattoos, I love your piercings, I love your sense of style. Some people will yell at you, some people will just walk past you and go like 'you fucking freak!' just abusing you and I'll just be like, 'what did I do?', 'what did I do?' and I'll just, and to

those people I'll just smile and nod and go 'yeah that's nice dude, that's nice'. But I have friends who go psycho and like go 'What? What? Do you have a problem?' and I'll be like, dude, they're not worth it, let it go. But people that do yell at me and hoot their horns at me and yell obscenities out their windows at me that are passing through Newtown or whatever. I just think, well, well, dude if you don't like the way I look, you're probably in the wrong town for a start. And second of all, I just think, sometimes I say to people that are up in my face, why do you get yourself so worked up over something that doesn't even need to affect you and I just say, you need to chill out man. Stop being so negative and you know, live in the moment, stop having peoples appearances, control your way of life, it doesn't matter, dude, it doesn't matter. They're like, Yeah, fuck you! That's great dude, *have a great day* and I just walk away and they just stand there and I'm like, whatever, that's great, I'm really happy for you. Well, lots of different people have lots of different opinions, I get negative, I get positive, I get in-between, there are some people that aren't too sure. They don't feel happy about it, they don't feel bad about it and they're like, oh, I don't know, like, when I got I think it was my nose pierced, my dad was like, oh I don't know if I like that, oh I guess it's okay, it doesn't look that bad, yeah, whatever makes you happy. So I'm like, cool. So, yeah, everyone reacts differently. It just depends who they are. Yeah, they think if they get the chance they probably think you're really fucked in the head and it's probably because they're really fucked in the head, so...

Desley: So, who do you know that's got a tattoo. Everybody?

Participant: No, not everybody. Actually, only, a lot of my friends have piercings but only a few of my friends actually have tattoos. Yeah

Desley: what about family?

Participant: I'm the only one in my entire extended family that has a tattoo.

Desley: You're the rebel.

Participant: Oh, I'm such a rebel. Though a well brought up... Oh, my god, you have a tattoo {with English accent} They don't actually mind that much, they're like...

Desley: So do you find that you identify with any particular group of people?

Participant: Umm. I hate putting myself into categories but yes, I definitely do. I find, and it's not, I find that I relate to more artsy type people. My friends are predominately musicians, painters, photographers, mainly musicians, I find that I get along, all the people I hang out with, tend to be very open minded people that, even though I don't share similar ideas to people around them, they accept their ideas and embrace them, and say I think it's great that you think that I think this and the other person will say, it's great that you think that. Do you want to go get a drink? You know, we all, it's like some people call me and my group of friends the Manson family. Like we're so, open and loving and we're all, half of my friends are just complete hippies and like, I love all of my friends, dearly, they're just beautiful, open minded creative talented people. Yeah, I definitely identify with a particular group. I don't get along very well with right winged, liberal voting, John Howard suit wearing, sorts of people like that, we tend to clash. They are entitled to their opinions but they don't seem to think I'm entitled to mine, so we don't get along very well. So yeah, I guess I tend to get along with the artsy, philosophical sort of people

Desley: So none of that's really linked to the fact that you've got a tattoo?

Participant: no.

Desley: Okay. So, I've saved you the best question to last. What would be the opposite of your tattoos?

Participant: The opposite of my tattoos. Oh, {pause} of each individual tattoo? Or one idea of the complete opposite? Um. The complete opposite of my tattoos would probably be some, I'm not saying there's anything wrong with it, but it would probably be some happy, bubbly, spur of the moment, pretty picture of a girl with big boobs on a skateboard, or something. With a butterfly on her head. It's something that's non-significant, spur of the moment just looks pretty, why don't you just buy a new thing of lipstick, that sort of tattoo.

Desley: How did big boobs come into it?

Participant: You see people that have, guys that have tattoos with big boobs on their arm, or skull. No! skull and cross bones, that would be it, a skull and crossbones. You know, the big

metal heads with the big skull and crossbones, yeah, that would be my anti-tattoo. That would be my anti-tattoo. Or a band's tattoo. Because I, music is my life and I would not be ALIVE without music because there would be no point in living. Like music is my life but to get a particular band's tattoo on my body, I don't know, it's kind of strange. It's a little bit weird. My friend Amanda has a Marilyn Manson tattoo, one of Marilyn Manson's symbols and she was the co-manager at the Nine Inch Nails concert and Jordie White who was the ex-bass player for Marilyn Manson was there and she was talking to him and she was made sure she covered up the tattoo because she said "I know he'd feel really weird if he saw that tattoo" was like "ok, that's the album I wrote and you've got it tattooed on your arm, that's not weird at all". And so she made a point of covering it up because she didn't want Jordie White to see that tattoo and she was really anxious about seeing him and she was like "oh, what if he sees the tattoo" and it was sort of like "if you're going to think that, then why get it?" like, it's a really nice tattoo, and it's one of my favourite symbols but I wouldn't get it because it's a band symbol, it's, unless it was my band. And, yeah, not that I really care what people think about me but people might think you're a complete obsessed fanatic, think you are Marilyn Manson, you know those Mansonite type people and yeah, I just wouldn't. I guess it sounds kind of hypocritical because I'm thinking what would other people think but, no matter how much I don't really care about what people think about me, you always care to a certain extent what other people think about you and even though I don't care about people being against tattoos or my pink hair or my piercings or whatever I just think, well, they mean something to me and that tattoo I guess means something to her but I don't know, Unless it was my own band, I would think I could get a band tattoo. So yeah, either a skull and cross bones or a band tattoo. Yeah.

Desley: so is there anything else about your tattoo that you can think of that is important?

Participant: Oh, my brains gone dead. There probably is something that I've forgotten what I was going to say. Umm, I can't think of anything.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	3	1	1	1	2	4	4	2	2	2	2	5	Depressed
Patient	3	2	2	2	3	4	3	3	1	3	4	5	Stressed
Caring	2	1	1	1	3	4	3	1	1	3	5	5	Unsympathetic
Kind	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	1	1	2	4	5	Narcissistic
Sense of humour	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	4	5	Accountant
Sociable	2	1	4	2	2	3	2	3	1	1	1	3	Anti-social
Friendly	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	1	2	3	5	Mean
Active	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	4	3	3	Apathetic
Confident	3	2	2	2	2	5	3	4	1	3	1	2	Shy
Organised	3	2	3	2	3	4	3	2	3	4	5	2	Messy
Hard working	3	2	2	1	3	2	3	1	1	4	4	3	Lazy
Honest	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	4	4	4	Deceitful



7.5 RDT subgroup Remembrance

Participant RR29
Male, 30 years old

Interview date: 28/2/2006

Participant: Yeah. I've got just the one, which is a band around my arm. I got that in 1998, in Scotland. I was overseas, sort of a working holiday thing. So I would have been 21 or 22. And I got it. It's something I had at the back of my mind for a while. I spoke about it with a friend. I was staying over there with sort of my best friend. And we always said, ah yeah, you know, we'll get them and all this sort of stuff. Well anyway, I got mine and he didn't. but yeah, there were just few people at the time. I remember another one of my flatmates, she got one. And that was sort of my, I thought to me, it was sort of my Scotland souvenir type thing. So I went to this guy, Bill's Tattoos. It was just on this street in Edinburgh, called Lee Fawks, it's a fairly famous sort of street, but that's sort of the I guess the working class area of the street down to the docks and that sort of thing in Edinburgh. And the thing I remember about it is the sign on the door saying "Cash Only." Yeah, so I just went in and picked the... I quite liked the design. It's just like one of those Celtic bands. I thought, Ah that's alright. And just, yeah, asked him for that and he did it. It was no major drama. It was sort of like, the way I remember it was sort of like being pinched non-stop for you know, a couple of hours. He wrapped it in a bit of cling wrap and said "there you go" sort of thing and it bled and this that and the other. Haven't had any problems with it. Get a few comments every now and then like when people see it. I guess it is a little bit of a surprise almost, I guess, cause I am pretty you know, sort of, it's a little bit out of, almost out of character. I am pretty straight down the middle with most things so I guess it's considered... it's a bit outlandish for want of a better word. I actually walked in to a place a couple of months after that and I was seriously considering getting another one. I was in the Middle East and the symbol they had everywhere like on all the like cars, was like a. It's sort of an Islamic type thing I think, like an evil eye. It's meant to see. It's just like a round, three round symbols. The idea was it was meant to see backwards and see you know, evil behind. And that was sort of all, all through the middle east, it was painted on the backs of cars and this that and the other. I thought that would be alright, I'll get it on my shoulder blade. So I walked into a tattoo sort of parlour, shall we say in Egypt. Then thought the better of it. Could do without the hepatitis. It's good, I'm glad I've got it, certainly not one of those things that you look at, you know, people sort of have regrets about them and that sort of thing. So yeah. I like it so I don't regret it. I don't know that I'll get too many more. But never know. Never say never.

Desley: So why do you think you picked that particular design?

Participant: I think the design... it wasn't so much the design. I think I liked the look of it. And the guy said apparently in all the, they were big on bands in like the Celtic stuff, sort of spirals you know. It's continuous. All life, you know, that kind of stuff. It's just a continuous sort of cycle. I am not really sure that that's exactly why I got it. I guess, it's probably a reasonably fashionable sort of a design at the time. I wasn't keen on barbed wire or something like that. I am not sure it's the design. I guess it's sort of like a souvenir, everywhere I've been I've sort of got one thing in every, every trip that I've done, like a souvenir. And I guess this is the Scottish one. I spent 12 months there and so it's a Scottish design really.

Desley: So getting some other kind of design wouldn't have been appropriate.

Participant: Not really, no. Yeah. No. Yeah. Yeah. Cause I remember another friend of mine. He got his done in Greece coz he was, he's stupid. And it was a silver sort of Celtic design on the back of his neck almost. It's funny though, coz he's sort of bigger and softer than me, but he got it in. He was in Greece when he got it, but he got it to remind him of when he was in Scotland. I thought that was a bit strange but, yeah. I thought that was silly rather than getting the Scottish design in Scotland.

Desley: Bit like me getting one of the American flag to remind me that I went to America...

Participant: Yeah, yeah. That's right. That's exactly what it would be like.

So I guess that was sort of the main reason. Souvenir. It is good. Because it does reminds me of that. As I say I am glad.

Desley: So it is important to you that it was linked to where you were when you had it?

Participant: Yeah. I think so, yeah. Because it's sort of that whole 12 months type thing. If you, in your day to day, life sort of thing, you know, it's good to remind yourself of that, you know I did this, I did that.

Desley: So it is like a little piece of the story of your life?

Participant: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Most definitely. Most definitely.

Desley: Was there one particular event that happened over there that you remember, or was it just the whole 12 months.

Participant: No there wasn't one particular big event really. Myself and my friend that I went with and I we sort of we did plan it for a couple of years.

Desley: The trip or the tattoo?

Participant: No, certainly the trip. It meant quite a bit, like we probably planned it quite a bit, almost from our last year of school. Four years, type of thing. So it was sort of a pretty important sort of...trip to have done. So I guess that's a reminder of all of that.

Desley: So did you travel together the whole time?

Participant: No. We lived together, but we didn't travel together the whole time. Went off. Did our own things. Did some together.

Desley: So it was more about going to live in another place?

Participant: Yeah. That was my first time out of home and all that sort of stuff as well, so it's all that. I'm a man now.

Desley: Ok so why Scotland?

Participant: That was 'cause you could do the working holiday type thing. So with the visa and all that type of thing. He was born there, so I think he had more contacts and that sort of stuff. He went out a couple of months before me and I caught up with him over there. Had a base and all that sort of stuff, so it was convenient. More convenient than London.

Desley: And you speak English, sort of!

Participant: Yeah, that's right.

Desley: I met a guy in the Sates. He's from Huddersfield in the north and I had so much trouble understanding him. He just laughed at me all day. Fun. So why did you put it where you put it on your arm?

Participant: Good question. I don't know.

Desley: You were what, like 22?

Participant: Yeah. To be honest with you it may have been a little bit of, a little bit of proves how tough I am.

Desley: So people could see it?

Participant: yeah, yeah, yeah.

Desley: some people would put it there so they could cover it up.

Participant: Yes, that's another thing, you can cover it up.

Desley: But you only thought about being able to show it off?

Participant: a little bit, yeah. In the back of my mind. Probably over that a bit now.

Desley: So is there somewhere you wouldn't put a tattoo?

Participant: I probably wouldn't as you say, anywhere that I couldn't cover it up, if need be. Face, probably even forearms and that sort of thing. It's a bit, in sort of the work I do, it could look a bit, you know, unprofessional.

Desley: What about on your feet, given the work you do.

Participant: Good point. Probably not actually. I think the hands and feet look a little bit, um, yeah, no I wouldn't. Because I'm always a little bit sus when I see it. But I've noticed some

women have them on their ankle. That looks alright. But your actual foot would be no good I think. And I saw that some American did a tribal tattoo on his whole face. A Maori one. But he's never been to New Zealand. So that looks a bit strange.

Desley: a bit like Mike Tyson isn't it?

Participant: Yeah. That's a bit...Poor old Mike Tyson's sort of run off the rails a bit I think, a bit more attention seeking.

Desley: there's a guy I talked to had words written across his feet so when they're like this you can read it

Participant: words? Seriously. Another thing I would worry about there is you know, few too many nerves and things there. Bit sensitive.

Desley: I didn't even think of that. I was thinking of all the bones.

Participant: a it would be pretty sensitive. I wouldn't want to be doing much damage.

Desley: So what about somewhere like your bottom because that is not easily visible.

Participant: Sounds like a lot of trouble to go to, seriously. Probably not.

Desley: So it's not just covering it up. There's obviously something else going on.

Participant: Yeah. Yeah. a, I imagine it would be pretty sensitive. But b, oh, what was I going to say, takes a while to heal up, I don't know that I particularly want to go through that. And then you'd even have trouble seeing it yourself. Unless you had a partner or someone who desperately wanted you to have them on your bottom, fair enough, but I can't see the point of that myself.

Desley: So how long do you think you thought about the tattoo before you got it? Was it like just that day?

Participant: No no no no. it was probably months. I'm pretty good like that. Like I'll, when I sort of, it can be at the back of mind, I want to do that, sort of, you know, one day, and then I'll at some stage make the decision and go I'm going to get it done tomorrow. It had been at the back of my mind for a while. We sort of talked about it, a few people. So over, I guess, a couple of weeks and then decided, "in Action" amongst other people that I was with to go this day and get it.

Desley: So was that all while you were there?

Participant: No, I probably thought about it before I left.

Desley: Thought about getting it over there or just thought about getting it?

Participant: no, just thought about getting a tattoo. And I was just 22. You know, trying to find your way.

Desley: So do you still like it?

Participant: Yeah. Yeah. I do.

Desley: Would you change it at all?

Participant: I don't think so. I've got a cousin that got his changed recently, but no I don't. It's good. It's a little bit, like it's there, but it's almost understated, if you know what I mean. It doesn't go "look at me!" like a massive thing. It's just quite small, goes all the way round which is another thing coz I know lots of people don't have them there coz it hurts through there. I like it and I don't think I would change it.

Desley: So would you have it again?

Participant: Yeah. For sure.

Desley: Never thought of getting it off?

Participant: No, it's part of me now. It's funny. Like I often don't even, like for long periods of time I'll forget that it's there. And then you know, there'd be something like. I remember I was doing a CPR last year just on the mannequin and the sleeves were rolled up, and people that I've known for years, they were going " Oh, what's that all about?" went through the story. It's good.

Desley: So it's sort of like you know how you have a mole and you don't really notice that it's there

Participant: Yeah, for sure.

Desley: And you said you didn't know if you'd have another one?

Participant: no. every now and then, as I say, I think about another one. But it would be, again it would be fairly small. I wouldn't get it all over the arm. I'd get a little, like on my shoulder blade or something like that. Every now and then I think about it. It'd only be fairly small. I like the idea of that you know the yin and the yang. Yeah. I like that idea. Balance or something like that. I can't see myself getting a Chinese symbols and

Desley: Dragons?

Participant: Yeah yeah. Nothing like that. So. But it's a possibility.

Desley: So what is about balance that appeals to you?

Participant: I think it's good. You can get, I think it's a big danger to get too obsessed you know, too specialised in one thing. I like the idea of Ok work hard and you sort of want to be successful at that, but not at the expense of you know, letting yourself go physically. I know like I deal with a lot of people, like a lot of people I deal with have chronic health problems- the obesity, the diabetes, the vascular disease, that sort of stuff. I think a lot of that comes down to, if you, almost, it's at the expense of your... say you work hard so you've got you know a big television, so you've given up the other, the price to pay for that is your physical well being. You know I've had, I've put myself in, well not myself but I've been in bad situations with people with depression and stuff like that and it seemed really clear to me that if you just sort of

slowed down a little a bit, and maybe got another interest or something like that then that would be a big help.

Desley: so if they had more balance

Participant: yeah, yeah. That's what I think it comes down to. I've sort of set myself interests outside work you know, sport and always have something that I'm reading, that's a bit of a, always make sure you do a bit of exercise most days and all that sort of thing. I think that would be a nice...every now and then that would be sort of a nice reminder, you know what I mean. When you are obsessed with, you worry too much, you know because you are busy or something like that and then you think ah hang on, you know.

Desley: Funny that you would pick the same side.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: When you say balanced you think you would go with the other side of your body

Participant: Yeah. Yeah. Good point. very good.

Desley: That's unusual.

Participant: The left. I don't know. The weaker left side.

Desley: Ooooh! Are you right handed?

Participant: I am, yeah.

Desley: So do you consider your left side weaker?

Participant: I suppose, physically, yeah. Maybe there might be something.

Desley: It's the left side of your brain that controls your strong side

Participant: Really. Is it? Oh well, maybe it... so what does that mean?

Desley: I don't know. You might need Freud... I was just wondering... you talked about balance.

Participant: I think that's another reason why I sort of like the

Desley: The band?

Participant: Yeah. I like people's reaction to it. I didn't expect that

Desley: It's the opposite of what they expect.

Participant: Yeah yeah.

Desley: So you seem to be saying that people not having physical health, or mental health, like depression, that's the result of not having balance?

Participant: I think so. Yeah.

Desley: So what would be the result of having balance? Like what would that be, better health or?

Participant: My aim I guess then, is health I guess. If you are healthy, you then feel, you're more aware, you're more, you just function better, essentially. So I know I wake up in the morning and you want to get out of bed and face the day sort of thing. You know, you go through that bit in your late teens, early twenties sort of thing where you're out til 3 o'clock every morning and get on the drink and what not. And then when you wake up, you can't get out of bed. You know what I mean? I prefer to feel strong and healthy and all that.

Desley: So you are saying that you function better when you feel strong and healthy?

Participant: Most definitely, yeah.

Desley: So why is it important for you to feel like you function better?

Participant: Because, I guess, it's sort of been, it's almost like an obligation. You've been given a healthy body and all that sort of stuff by whatever lucky thing that's come along. Quirk of fate. So you are healthy so you might as well make use of the opportunity.

Desley: So you are saying it's a big obligation

Participant: Almost.

Desley: but it's good luck I guess

Participant: Yeah, yeah, that's right. You see I deal with people, who, not so much in the private practice that I do, but certainly the clinic at the university I've just started again, a day a week at Port Kembla hospital, where what I do is a lot of wound management and that sort of thing, which is really long term complications of say diabetes and all that sort of thing. People come into my treatment room, with an ulcer on their foot and leg and that sort of thing. They've got their can of Coke. Seriously! And they expect me to fix this problem. Whereas they don't really take any responsibility for their own health. And that's something now that I am acutely aware of. I didn't use to be.

Desley: is this turning thirty?

Participant: I think so, yeah! no, I'm turning 26!

Desley: Ah, OK.

Participant: it's alright, we resolve these issues. Yeah that's part of it.

Desley: and with what you see at work the consequences would be more obvious than they would to some people

Participant: And the other thing is as I said because I've travelled and that sort of thing, I was away from home for a few years, and I see my friends and all that sort of thing, and every one had got fat! They started ruining their health

Desley: So they go on with this drinking 'til 3 in the morning and not looking after themselves?

Participant: Yeah. definitely. And then in professional and so through working at the uni and all that sort of thing. You know, you sit around and everyone's telling you how well they're doing and you know, make this much money a day and all that sort of carry on.

Desley: But they don't look after themselves.

Participant: Yeah that's right. That's why

Desley: they still haven't figured it out.

Participant: To me, yeah. That's right. But what do I know, that's my way of...

Desley: but a lot of people don't. I mean men have heart attacks at such a young age.

Participant: For sure. You hear about it fairly regularly. It's not good. It's the price you pay.

Desley: It's funny. The president of our soccer club had an angina attack at the end of last year and he said I'll stop smoking, and I'll stop drinking; you should have been able to figure that out anyway.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: Without nearly dying.

Participant: That's right, yeah.

Desley: What can you do? Some people are slow learners.

Participant: Yeah. But you know it's alright, but you what I mean? You could be just like that with your PhD. Obviously I meet a lot of PhD candidates and stuff and some of them are just brilliant in their field but can't talk about

Desley: Anything else.

Participant: Anything else, you know.

Desley: And they don't do anything else.

Participant: Yeah yeah.

Desley: I must say, here most of the girls go to the gym and ..

Participant: Yeah, yeah.

Desley: Maybe that's a function of the department we are in. We might be a bit more aware of that stuff, than straight scientists.

Participant: Yeah. Yeah.

Desley: So if you were going to have another tattoo, would where you were going to put it be more important than what you would put?

Participant: No, I don't think so.

Desley: Is the same or would you think about the picture before the place? Because every time you talk about it you...

Participant: Yeah, I know. That's an interesting question. I don't know. I think I'll probably consider both of them. Like you said, because I had that other design I was going to get, and I fully intended getting it on the same side. I don't know. I think I'll probably consider both of them, I have two spots either there or there. Doesn't really make much difference! Left hand

side! I can't clearly I can't give an honest answer, I guess I've considered both of them. I've thought about both.

Desley: You mean place and design?

Participant: Yeah yeah.

Desley: Some people tend to prefer one over the other. They think I really what to get a tattoo on this spot and then worry about what it is, whereas other people think I want this picture and then think where to put it. So you think both?

Participant: I guess I am

Desley: So what about a pain thing did you consider it to be a bonus or did it detract from it or?

Participant: no. As I said, it felt like pinchy. To be quite diplomatic about it, to me, quite honestly I don't remember it being anywhere near the worst pain I have ever been in. Remember I told you about that guy who got it sort of on the base of his neck, he was a bit silly? He said "did you cry" and I said "no, did you" and he said just a little bit. To me it seriously it wasn't.

Desley: I've seen a big guy crying, but he was getting it here, not here. It's probably a bit more

Participant: It's a bit more sensitive yeah.

Desley: He wasn't like sobbing!

Participant: Yeah. Yeah. But sometimes guys like that are a bit, what is it, tats are a bit...on some people I'm sure it's a show and try to counteract the fact that they're not as....probably seen as tougher than outside compensation.

Desley: Okay.

Participant: But to be honest with you the pain wasn't that excruciating. I remember the funny thing was, when I was getting it done, the Edinburgh Military tattoo was on at the same time,

like where they do the performance and all that sort of thing. And this group of Fijians walked in. they would have been in the Fijian you know rugby players they would have been in the Fijian army, they were in the band, and the guy said “does it hurt? And I thought I’m not going to tell him that it did. I was like “no, no, it’s fine!” that was a bit uncomfortable. This 6-foot Fijian guy talking behind me!

Desley: It seems to be a male thing, though, don’t let anyone know that it hurts.

Participant: That’s for sure.

Desley: My husband got hit with a cricket ball recently while they were playing, and the other team was going” oh are you OK?”

Participant: Yeah, for sure.

Desley: You can’t let them know that they hurt you.

Participant: Yeah, yeah. It’s a male thing. That’s the whole thing, ‘cause you know. Got to prove how tough we are, don’t we, to try and impress you lot! I don’t know what it is. Coz you think we’re stupid lots of times, all that sort of carry on.

Desley: I’m just wondering if it’s an evolutionary thing.

Participant: I don’t know, but like the same thing, I always grew up, you know, you play football and this that and the other. And that’s the, I broke my leg quite badly at one stage, and the first thought I remember was, cause I looked down and it was bent over there like that. So my leg was straight and the foot was on the side and obviously something was wrong, and my first thought was “oh, you know. Don’t cry”

Desley: Is that coz your dad wouldn’t have been impressed.

Participant: Dad wasn’t there, he’s a wuss, but he’s all talk too. He would have been quite distressed. It’s the same thing as I say. Like the man with the angina attack, he wouldn’t give up, he wants to drink and smoke, to impress the... to impress somebody.

Desley: I think with some of them it's their way of managing their stress.

Participant: Yeah, for sure.

Desley: And all the boys do it. You know.

Participant: peer group and all that sort of stuff

Desley: So all the boys go for a beer after training, they drink.

Participant: for sure. Yeah yeah. Cause I don't drink any more. All my friends would come,, aaah, you know. Yeah, well. Wish I could. 'cause you feel bad, you know. It's sad. You start to realise that. When you are drinking people they are the ones who bale you up, you know, at midnight and tell you all their problems. It is nice in a way, but still.

Desley: So do you know, or can you tell me, why you chose to have a tattoo rather than do anything else? Like you said you got souvenirs.

Participant: Yeah, yeah. Good point.

Desley: Why a tattoo?

Participant: I don't know. I honestly don't know. Maybe that was part of the you know try and impress people. See how tough I was could have got a tattoo. I... honestly don't know. Guess the opportunity was there and I was walking around with my camel bag, you know, I saw it and I thought ah, that looks good..

Desley: Were you homesick at all, because that was your first time?

Participant: First time. Yeah, yeah.

Desley: I am just wondering if you were proving to yourself that you were tough and you could get through it. That if you could get through having a tattoo you can survive being alone.

Participant: You could be right. You are probably onto something there. Yeah, probably.

Desley: Cause it must be hard I guess. For a girl if you are home sick they'd ring mum and start crying. Boys can't really do that.

Participant: yeah, yeah that's right.

Desley: You were with a friend, and he's probably ok. He's probably crying in his room.

Participant: Yeah. I was over there and I had no money. It probably cost me the best part of a week's wages. But that was yeah, possibly

Desley: That probably says something too, that you were prepared to spend your money

Participant: Yeah, yeah. that's right

Desley: If you did it on something else, you'd be going,

Participant: Yeah, yeah.

Desley: What and idiot or ..

Participant: well yes, I don't know. it probably was a part of that actually.

Desley: Cause I wonder with some people if hey get a tattoo to try and not prove a point exactly, but to show themselves that they can get through the pain thing. Because a lot of people don't like pain. So many people say I got a tattoo but I'm scared of needles. It's almost like you know, I've done it! A couple of people have said you know if I got a tattoo then I can get through that, I can get through some other situation life throws at me.

Participant: Yeah, more than likely. Probably right.

Desley: Not that it was in the front of your mind, but you might have been thinking if I can get a tattoo...

Participant: Yeah. Because I didn't tell anybody at home either. So when I walked out the first few days, "is that real?"

Desley: Funny how you said that. When my daughter got her first one, my mum said, "it's not real, is it?"

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: So do you think there is anything else you could have done that would have had the same effect for you?

Participant: I don't think so. Never really considered that. Probably was. Not that ever occurred to me.

Desley: So have you ever thought about having piercings or things like that?

Participant: No no, no. that's never ever appealed to me.. Never occurred to me.

Desley: So do you think of yourself as a tattooed person or are you a person with a tattoo?

Participant: A person with a tattoo.

Desley: Do you look at it as a picture that you have or do you look at it more as a tattoo than a picture?

Participant: Probably more the fact that I've got a tattoo, than the significance of the picture so much.

Desley: the Design?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: But the design is like your little reminder of Scotland and all that stuff?

Participant: Yeah. Yeah.

Desley: Are you ready for the hard question?

Participant: Oh, I suppose so.

Desley: What would be the opposite of your tattoo?

Participant: To be, I don't know. Have nothing. Dull and boring.

Desley: To not have one at all?

Participant: Yeah, that would be the opposite I guess.

Desley: So when you had the tattoo, did anyone go with you?

Participant: No, no.

Desley: all by yourself?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: Very brave.

Participant: that's me

Desley: So what do you think it means to other people that see it? Like you've mentioned stuff about they are surprised.

Participant: Yeah, yeah. For sure.

Desley: So it is like showing a side of you that they haven't seen before?

Participant: Yeah. again it's just that...It is. I think they, It's the whole male tough football type thing.

Desley: So is that when they see you, or after they see the tattoo?

Participant: When they see that. It depends what circle's you're in too. Coz if I'm with people I went to school with it means something different to the people I teach podiatry to, you know what I mean.

Desley: So the people you went to school with it would be a little less of a surprise?

Participant: Yeah, because they've known me longer.

Desley: They know all facets of you.

Participant: yeah, yeah. For sure.

Desley: Whereas the people that you teach probably just see you as this professional, probably boring teacher person.

Participant: That's right. Yeah.

Desley: So then they might go, Oh, there's more to him than we thought.

Participant: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Desley: So what kind of reactions have you had to it?

Participant: People comment on it when they see it. Nothing dramatic but.

Desley: What about your mum?

Participant: Ah she, when I first walked out, she was like “is that a tattoo?” is that real? and then sort of pushed at it. Then she phoned my grand mother and told her. That was about it.

Desley: But she didn’t go at you?

Participant: No no. Not my mother.

Desley: Well some do!

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: So did you ever worry about having a bad reaction to it, enough to think maybe I shouldn’t do it?

Participant: No.

Desley: Because you don’t worry about that kind of stuff or because you didn’t think you would get that kind of reaction?

Participant: It never occurred to me, yeah. It is not overly dramatic.

Desley: Whereas a lot of girls at uni, last time I talked to them, they’d come in going, “ Oh my parents don’t know I’ve got it!”

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: And even one woman who had a tattoo is a rep from one of the publishers and she said “I got it in a place where my mother would never see it.”

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: Part of her is like I really want to piss her off. But she says I can never tell her because she would be so upset.

Participant: Yeah, yeah.

Desley: Even though this woman's 40 or something. It's quite funny. So what do you think about other people with tattoos?

Participant: Depends how it's done, I guess. Obviously it means a lot to some people. I think there's a fair bit of trying to, you know how we talked about the sort of Mike Tyson, attention-seeking type aspect of it or so you see the big guy with the goatee and lots of tats and all that sort of thing, and some of them are mean buggers and some of them are trying to be mean buggers. There's a difference I think. Yeah.

Desley: What about girls?

Participant: I was with one girl once who had a big tiger across her stomach, like that. Took me back a little bit!

Desley: What do you mean?

Participant: Didn't really expect it. It was alright.

Desley: I just imagine, girls aren't really trying to look like mean buggers.

Participant: that's true, oh, I don't know, she was trying to prove something, I think.

Desley: Well, yeah, but I don't know if it is toughness or... I think with some of them it probably is.

Participant: So do I. Some of them are very feminine and attractive and all that.

Desley: Have you seen that movie Wedding Crashers?

Participant: No, no. I haven't.

Desley: There are these two guys and they go to weddings to pick up girls. And there's one where the girl who has got a tattoo across her back. And they're like, that's like an invitation.

Participant: Ah yeah. Ok. It's part of that. I once saw a dragon on the small of a girl's back, over there. That was interesting. Because say, like she wears a bikini or whatever, and that was about that big. That was interesting as I say, I don't know about...

Desley: It goes along with, I suppose, if you think of the old stereotype of bikers and the biker chicks, looser women. So I guess there's a hint of that in there

Participant: probably does. Something like that it might be but then there's the little, you know, dainty ones and it's not really thinking of that.

Desley: So who do you know that's got a tattoo? Someone in your family?

Participant: My sister. Sara has got a small one. There's some cousins who have got some quite big ones. That's more of the "prove how tough we are"

Desley: What about your friends?

Participant: Na. no real friends that I know, have. Just cousins.

Desley: So do you think the tattoo had any negative effect on your life at all?

Participant: No, I don't think so.

Desley: You haven't lost any jobs?

Participant: No, no no.

Desley: Lost any girlfriends?

Participant: No, no.

Desley: nothing. Ok. Do you think that the fact that you have a tattoo makes you identify with any particular group of people?

Participant: I hope not.

Desley: So you wouldn't like to.

Participant: No, I'd rather be me.

Desley: Do you think there is anything about your tattoo that might be relevant that I might have forgotten?

Participant: I don't think so, no. not really.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	4	1	1	1	2	5	4	1	2	3	3	3	Sad
Patient	5	2	4	2	2	4	4	3	3	5	1	5	Impatient
Caring	2	1	1	1	2	3	2	2	1	2	3	5	Selfish
Kind	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	5	Cruel
Sense of humour	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	1	1	3	1	5	Negative
Sociable	4	1	2	2	2	5	3	1	1	3	2	4	Isolated
Friendly	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	2	3	2	5	Stuck-up
Active	2	2	2	2	3	2	3	3	1	4	4	1	Slothful
Confident	3	2	3	2	2	5	4	4	2	3	1	1	Lacking in confidence
Organised	2	2	1	2	1	2	2	3	4	5	5	1	Chaotic
Hard working	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	4	3	5	4	2	Wasteful
Honest	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	4	4	3	Shifty



Participant: Well, I, the person that suggested, or brought up the subject of getting tattoos was my mom, and this was, we were living in Singapore before coming here and that was all of high school for me. So, she never had a tattoo when she was young so she just one day out of the blue, said oh did you ever think about getting a tattoo? And I said oh, yeah that would be nice and she's like, ok well you know talk to your dad and maybe he'll let you get one. So I asked my dad and he's like yeah, ok, but what if it's permanent and what if you don't like it and this and that... so I had to sign like a contract saying I would never regret getting a tattoo, with my dad. So, and then I had to decide what I wanted and oh, that took forever, cause I went into the tattoo parlour and there's just tons of books and tons of pictures of everything and I didn't know what I wanted. And then they have like, the year of the dragon, the year of the goat, that's how their calendar is. And I think it was the year of the dragon then, so I looked at all the photos of dragons and I found one that I really liked, so I picked that one and got that one done. And like, I just wanted something oriental just cause I had so much fun living in Singapore meeting all of these people and friends and everything and just having fun at school. So, um, just a little reminder, yeah, and I got it done

Desley: So how old were you when you had it?

Participant: I was, that would have been, 16, yep.

Desley: And did you say your mum did have one or she wanted one?

Participant: No she didn't, she wanted one but she was too scared to get one then, so she suggested I get it. She went with me and held my hand because I was screaming in pain.

Desley: was it scary?

Participant: Yeah

Desley: So what is it about dragons you think that's important to you?

Participant: I just, well the ones that, just, there were a lot of just kind of story book ones, like, not as in pretty looking dragons, but those ones with, they're sort of alien looking ones and just the way they're done looks so nice and just so artistic and nice and . I don't know... I didn't really want that big of a dragon so mine's just really simple and just black and... I like this one because its, like its one colour and I didn't want to fill in the eye or anything. I just wanted one colour, but its, it just curves nicely and its decorative on its own. Doesn't need anything much to it, yeah.

Desley: So what, if decorative, would that be the best thing about it do you think, or?

Participant: I think so, just because its so, it's not just a line drawing of a dragon, it's got flairs on its tail and stuff. It just, like its, as simple as it sounds, when you look at it on someone's skin, or if they had anything, it would be like an arty kind of decorative, just as in wearing jewellery and like its just, it just adds a little to it and its also a little bit about their personality, because like, I don't know, different people get different things and flowers and this and that and like, it doesn't reflect on who you are but more of like, someone who's, I don't know, sits at home all the time and is really quiet and withdrawn is not going to have like a devil on their back, they might have a flower or something. Just like...

Desley: So you're saying the dragon reflects, the tattoo reflects the personality of the person?

Participant: Yeah, cause I didn't want something girly, like flower or a heart, cause its just been done. And I've never seen anyone have a dragon so I thought, oh this is something different.

Desley: So what aspects of a dragon appeal to you?

Participant: Just cause it's, like it's not a real thing, it doesn't exist. Its only from books, and cartoons and pictures and whatever and its just, like everyone knows of it, and it's, because its well known you'd think its real, but its not, they're just fiction. But, like, I don't know, in sort of a mysterious way, cause you can just design any kind of dragon, and like... There's so many pictures of how you can draw a dragon, but its still a dragon- you know it's a dragon, yeah.

Desley: So, I'm just wondering what it is that appeals to you though, about a dragon?

Participant: I don't know, I just, if someone was to say what do you think of when you hear the word dragon I'd think of this huge, mean looking thing, breathing fire out of their mouth and stuff. But, like mine doesn't look that threatening, not breathing fire or anything. I don't know, it's different to getting... its just, I don't know, like when you... I don't know how to explain this... it's so unique and different, like everyone gets their angels or tigers or whatever, but like when you see a dragon it just looks different.

Desley: So you liked it for you because it's unusual?

Participant: Yeah, yeah

Desley: But what about dragons in general?

Participant: I think the reason I got a dragon was because of all the dragons I looked at in the book, there wasn't a single one I didn't find nice in a way. Just the way they were depicted, like, they looked; every one of them looked different from each other but then the way the colour was done, or their skin or their eyes, it was just nice looking, like it looked really decorative, and colourful, just not your every day tattoo that you would see on people.

Desley: So it's more decorative as a tattoo, not just decorative as a picture?

Participant: Yeah

Desley: So you wouldn't necessarily have a picture of a dragon?

Participant: I wouldn't, but I've... I've seen a lot of antique stores in Singapore and they would have, umm, actually we bought one of them, and it's a dragon but it's like a candleholder and the dragon faces downwards and it's like all coiled up and its really nice. Like, I think as a decoration, even like in your house or on the wall or anything, a dragon is nice because its not threatening or anything, it's just like a, sort of, like some people might put you know, Indian arrows, or bow and arrows on their wall or whatever. A dragon is sort of like that because it's not your every day decoration but then again, it fits everywhere just because it doesn't connect to anything that you have in your household so you can put it anywhere and it'll have like a spot and a space basically its own kind of thing.

Desley: Is that, do you think, because it's not real?

Participant: Yeah, yeah

Desley: So it's not tied down to anything in the real world?

Participant: Yeah, yeah

Desley: Why did you put it on your shoulder?

Participant: well, I didn't know where to put it. I was going to put it on my ankle but then I thought that would hurt. I was going to put it on my stomach but then I thought you know what if one day I get pregnant and I end up with a dragon this big instead of this big. And then I thought ok, what if my dad's right and I do get sick of it? I'll just put it on my back so I don't have to see it. So I put it on my back, and it was a good choice because I know its there and I don't have to keep on looking at it. Like, if its on my arm I would keep on touching it and looking at it all the time and it'd get boring, but this way like, if I walk by a mirror I glance at it but I wouldn't have to constantly look at it and I know its there and people are like, oh, yeah, nice tattoo, so others see it too, like it's not hidden all the time, and I know its there, so.

Desley: So does it matter to you whether you can hide it or not?

Participant: No, not really, like, I like to show it just because I like it, so, like I, it doesn't bother me if it's hidden or not. I know that I have it, and like, even if it's hidden just the fact that I know I've got a tattoo and people don't even have to know. Yeah, it's nice.

Desley: Some people say they get it purposely where they can hide it because of work and stuff like that...

Participant: Oh really? Work, yeah, yeah, true

Desley: But that doesn't worry you?

Participant: Not now... probably would if I had to work

Desley: So is there anywhere that you wouldn't have put a tattoo? Like you mentioned your stomach...

Participant: Yeah I don't think I'd put it on my arm. I don't know, I just associate the whole arm thing with those tribal ones that you know, guys have or sailors put their wives names down here or whatever... they always end up looking really ugly and big. Yeah, I just, I might put one on my ankle, I wouldn't mind putting it there, but I don't know, just people get so carried away when they get their whole calf covered in a tattoo, or I don't know, I just... I'd rather keep it where it's not so obvious.

Desley: So you wouldn't put one like on your face or something?

Participant: No, no

Desley: So how long do you think it was between when your mum said about getting a tattoo till you got it?

Participant: It wasn't that long. Because we went on a holiday and came back and I think 2 weeks later we went to see different places and what they have and my mom was worried, she was worried about the whole sterile issue and she went in with me and made sure that the needle was clean, but yeah.

Desley: So only a few weeks?

Participant: Yeah, yeah

Desley: So you said that you got it while you were living in Singapore?

Participant: umm hmm

Desley: Is there any particular event that you link to that or just the whole period of time?

Participant: Just the whole period. They do their calendar in like, the year of the dragon. They do that dragon dance and sort of, just tiny little reminders of living in Singapore.

Desley: So do you think there's anything else you could have done that would have reminded you of living there?

Participant: Any other tattoo?

Desley: No, any other thing, like instead of getting a tattoo, doing something else.

Participant: Well, probably, like, I just have, just memories that I have, like of school, of friends, of going out... school trips... but um, I don't need a tattoo to remind me, its just something that like, has meaning, it's not just a tattoo, but it has meaning, like it, has something, like it would remind me and if I look at it I'd be like, oh yeah, I remember Singapore and that's why I got it.

Desley: So it sort of jogs your memory?

Participant: Yeah, yeah

Desley: So there's nothing else you could have done that would have the same effect?

Participant: I don't know, I could have made like a huge photo album and a scrapbook, but I just thought getting a tattoo would be something different. Like, not really different, as in, a lot of people do get tattoos, but different because, like no one in my family has it, so something different.

Desley: Do you still like the tattoo?

Participant: Yeah

Desley: So would you change it at all?

Participant: No... I was thinking of maybe filling in the eye with a green or a red, but it would lose its originality.

Desley: So would you ever think about getting it taken off?

Participant: No, I wouldn't... Just because, I don't know, I've never thought about getting it removed, but just going through all that pain to get it removed... no... I think I'll keep it.

Desley: So do you think you'd have another one?

Participant: I've thought about that. I can see how people get addicted to getting more and more tattoos. I would but I just wouldn't know what to get. Because...

Desley: So would that be the most important thing for you? What picture to get?

Participant: Yeah, because I wouldn't put it on my back again, so it would have to be somewhere on the front and it would be something I'd have to look at so it'd have to be something I like. I wouldn't have a clue what, I don't know, I'd have to think about that and look at some more pictures.

Desley: So why do you think they're addictive?

Participant: It's just, I don't know why, but just the idea that you're putting something on you that you can't take off. Like it's not a sticker or a piece of jewellery you take off whenever- it stays on. You can do with it what you like, you can make it big or small, or black or white or red, just so, just the amount that you can do with it. You can do any... like it's up to you. And you can even get it designed and tell them ahh, this is what I want. And it'd be what you want.

Desley: What about the pain thing?

Participant: Yeah, it... well... mine's worth the pain for sure, cause I really like it and I'm so happy with it. But umm, I guess different body parts would hurt more depending on the tissues, so.

Desley: Some people actually like, enjoy the pain. And other people are like, I'd get another one but it'd hurt too much.

Participant: Yeah, I know... but it'd hurt, yeah... The pain was a little uncomfortable, and having a scab afterwards for weeks- so annoying, but I don't know- the result you get afterwards is satisfying.

Desley: I wonder too, whether sometimes the feeling you get when it's over, so you go wow, I really did that and I put up with the pain, whether that's part of the addiction?

Participant: It is... because...

Desley: Because you feel so good?

Participant: You do and people who don't have a tattoo are like- Oh my gosh, did that hurt? And then you're like yes, but you know, it was worth it.

Desley: It always seems like a silly question- to go did it hurt.

Participant: Yeah, I know.

Desley: Its like when you get a piercing and go did that hurt? Well what do you think, I stuck a piece of metal through my skin.

Participant: Yeah

Desley: Do you consider yourself to be a tattooed person or are you just a person who has a tattoo?

Participant: No, I've never even thought of having a tattoo. I'm just a person with a tattoo, yeah.

Desley: So umm, do you separate having a picture of a dragon from having a tattoo? Like was it important for you to have a tattoo no matter what it was, or is it important that it's the dragon?

Participant: No, its important that it's the dragon, because I was about to give up on getting a tattoo when I couldn't find what I wanted and I went through so many books and I was about to

be like, oh, mom I don't want a tattoo, there's nothing I like. But then I saw the dragon and I was like, oh, I do want a tattoo. So I think, yeah, it's about what it is, not just a tattoo, yeah.

Desley: It's a tricky question, but what would be the opposite of your tattoo?

Participant: The opposite, hmm, probably something like a butterfly, or , oh gosh, a flower or heart or just anything sort of, I don't know... dragons are seen more like you know, night-time and dark, whereas anything else would be daylight and light and clouds and I don't know, little pretty things, that you'd call pretty, whereas a dragon you wouldn't really say oh its pretty, you might say oh its cool, its different, but I don't think you'd call it pretty.

Desley: So if you had your choice in general would you go for pretty or would you go for something cool?

Participant: I think I'd go for something cool just because pretty, everyone does pretty and everyone does flowers and hearts and everything like that. So, I don't know, getting something different, is like, you get a different response and you get a different feeling too when you know you have something that no one else does. That's why I didn't want to get my belly button pierced because everyone has it, so I was like, oh no, it's just another piercing.

Desley: So for you, it's more about being unique?

Participant: Yeah

Desley: Ok so why would that be important to you, to be unique?

Participant: Its not, its not too important and I don't, not in unique as in I want to stand out from the crowd, but just sort of, people don't even have to know, like it's just as long as I know that I have something different, then, that's, like that's good enough for me.

Desley: So what is it about that though?

Participant: Just knowing that I have a tattoo that maybe, I don't know, well I haven't met anyone else who has a dragon. Like, I've seen dragons on people, but they're all big, like none

of them are this small or anything, so I feel kind of special that I have something that no one else does.

Desley: So you said you went with your mum? But she didn't get one?

Participant: Umm hmm, no...

Desley: What do you think it means to other people that see your tattoo?

Participant: The only response I ever got was oh wow I like your tattoo- its cool, wow, its really nice. So, I don't know...

Desley: So you haven't had any bad reactions to it?

Participant: No

Desley: Was your dad alright about it?

Participant: Yeah, he actually liked it. He was like wow this is the coolest dragon that I've seen, so he was happy.

Desley: That's good.

Participant: Yeah

Desley: So did you ever worry, you know, that maybe you'd get a boyfriend in the future that will hate it or something?

Participant: I have never thought about it that way, no... yeah, my boyfriend likes this one, so... and he wants to get a tattoo.

Desley: So they're addictive across people as well....

Participant: Yeah...

Desley: So, what do you think about other people that have tattoos? Like when you see them?

Participant: There's a lot of people, that I, like I would see their tattoo and just really not like it- just as anything, just as not liking someone's car or not liking someone's hair or whatever. It's just, but umm...

Desley: Not liking the look of it?

Participant: Yeah, just the look. Not the person themselves, but just the look of the tattoo. But there are a lot that I've really liked. Even if, and it's nice when you, there's a couple people back at college who I had no idea they have a tattoo until they're like, oh look I have a tattoo and then they show me and I'm like oh wow. So its, like its strange when like, you see the people and they don't look like they have a tattoo but then they end up having two. And like, it just shows that getting a tattoo has nothing to really do with your personality, like its irrelevant of that and anyone can have a tattoo.

Desley: But you said at the beginning...

Participant: Yeah I did, at the beginning I did, but it's more of like,

Desley: What it is?

Participant: Like, just yeah, I think its more of people, like what they get, it doesn't reflect on their personality, but then whether they do have one or not might, or the other way around. Like, what they, the fact that they do or not have a tattoo doesn't reflect their personality because like even the quietest person can say oh look I have a tattoo, but then maybe what they get could reflect...

Desley: So the quiet person wouldn't have something really violent, or you wouldn't think?

Participant: Yeah, true

Desley: So who do you know that has a tattoo?

Participant: Well, I heard my brother's getting one. He's getting a pair of lips on his bottom. There's a couple of people at college who have tattoos and they're not in obvious places, there's maybe three people that do have tattoos. They're not in as obvious, one has it down on his calf, another girl has it here...

Desley: So they're not your friends?

Participant: They're friends, just, just know them, yeah

Desley: But your own close friends?

Participant: Of my close friends, no. One has a nose ring and a belly button ring but not tattoos.

Desley: And no one in your family?

Participant: No

Desley: Do you feel like the fact that you have a tattoo means that you identify with any particular group of people?

Participant: No, not really, just because anyone can have it. I don't think it's a particular group or society or anything.

Desley: Do you think you have any like stereotypes in your head about people that have tattoos?

Participant: Before I got a tattoo the only people to me that had tattoos were you know, those punks that you see with pierced everywhere and tattoos or like, gangsters or whatever, but now it's more, like it doesn't have to be a display that much, it can be something hidden. And, so, like, I don't know, I think, I don't know, years ago I think tattoos were more of like a threatening thing to just look tough and umm, threatening. But now I think it's just more of a personal decoration or an, an art.

Desley: Do you think your attitude has changed or has society changed?

Participant: I think so yeah, well I think different too, like years before I would think, oh you know, he has a tattoo, he must be bad but now it's like oh, that's a nice tattoo.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	2	1	2	2	1	3	2	1	2	4	3	3	Sad
Patient	3	1	2	2	3	2	3	2	1	5	2	4	Impatient
Caring	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	4	3	4	Careless
Kind	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	3	Selfish
Sense of humour	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	Serious
Sociable	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	4	3	Withdrawn
Friendly	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	Shy
Active	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	5	3	5	5	4	Lethargic
Confident	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	1	5	3	5	Unsure
Organised	2	1	1	2	2	1	3	3	2	4	3	3	Messy
Hard working	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	5	3	3	Lazy
Honest	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	4	Deceiving



8 RGT subgroup Rite of Passage

8.1 RDT subgroup Aesthetics

Participant PA12

Female, 37 years old

Interview date: 2/2/2006

Participant: Ok. There's actually not that much to tell to be honest. I got my tattoo when I was 18, I'd always wanted a tattoo, from I guess when I was a teenager. And I wanted a cat or a panther. A black panther or something along those lines. I think that was because it represented something a little bit mysterious and I have a love of cats. And when I went to get the tattoo I was told I couldn't get something like that that small coz it would just look like a black spot, and so there was absolutely nothing behind it other than I wanted a tattoo so I looked for a nice one that was quite pretty and picked a rose and it's on my left shoulder blade and that's it really. There's not a lot of significance behind it. There probably would have been a lot more significance behind it if it had been the panther, just because of my love of that and I think I sort of associate with cats in that respect, you know. But, yes, the rose is just a, it was like the other option, basically.

Desley: ok. So was it an option, you wouldn't have had it in your head before, you went?

Participant: no, no. didn't think about it when I went in there. It was literally just happened on the spur of the moment

Desley: because you couldn't get the one you wanted?

Participant: that's right. I could've, but it would have had to have been really large and I didn't want that. I wanted it to be petite, small, it was probably more for aesthetic purposes, really, that I was getting it.

Desley: ok. So the picture was more just about being pretty?

Participant: yeah, yes. The panther would've been more about, I think it would have had a bit more, reason for doing, I think it was how I was feeling at the time. Loved cats, loved panthers, they're mysterious, they're sexy, I think that's what I was aiming for and then when

it came down to it, couldn't get that, so I just went for, oh, I'll go for something that's quite nice and looks nice and went with that.

Desley: so if you think about looking nice, why would that be important to you?

Participant: when I think back to how old I was. I was just 18, at the time, I was new to Sydney, I was branching out on my own. I wasn't living at home, so I guess it was my, second or third year into adulthood, because of my past, so I think it was probably a step in being really independent. Actually, I'll go deeper. It was probably also a step away from my upbringing, which was very religious. And so I think, that's not looked upon as, you're not allowed to really have tattoos and everything – I was a Jehovah's Witness, so I think it was part of my stepping away, call it rebellious, step-out, so, if I think about it in those terms, that's probably what it was. The looking pretty thing, I think in a way it was, whatever I was going to get tattoo-wise, I wanted it to look aesthetically pleasing, I wanted it to look funky, sexy, you know. When I was thinking about when I was getting it, but actually getting it I think there was probably a deeper reason for it, as I say, escaping my childhood.

Desley: so what would be the opposite for you of looking pretty?

Participant: um. Well I guess looking gaudy, looking contrived. And try-hard, that sort of thing. I guess pretty or beautiful or whatever to me is probably a bit more subtle.

Desley: so if you think about life in general, do you prefer something that's gaudy and contrived, or something that's a bit more subtle?

Participant: definitely something more subtle.

Desley: and then why would that be important for you?

Participant: I think part of it is a, I guess it's how I see aesthetics, like what I find beautiful. I find subtle and simple, guess I find that less contrived and anything to me that is contrived, the intent behind it is generally for show, for other people's benefit, etcetera, yet even simple and all of that, beautiful things can be for the same purpose, but I for some reason associate,

yeah, the gaudy etcetera with that, trying to be in your face, pushing a certain way. Just off the top of my head, I probably should have thought about it a bit more.

Desley: so you were talking about things being simple. Is that important to you for some reason?

Participant: yes. Actually. Yeah. Very very important. I think, it's funny actually I've always had an idea of doing some sort of visual book about simplicity and I think part of it is because, you know, harping back to the 70s or early 80s, where everything seemed to be a lot simpler, without mobile phones, technology, all of that, you know, you could have decent conversations with people, it wasn't quick quick quick quick quick. I think I found in my, especially over the last five to ten years, especially the kind of work that I do and all the office situation, everything is just so fast moving that I've probably not found enough time for peace and hence I sometimes just try to simplify my life as much as possible, no clutter, basically. The clutter kind of sends me insane, so it's that sort of thing.

Desley: so it gives you a sense of peace?

Participant: gives me a, yeah, simpleness. I think it gives me a sense of peace, clarity and I guess control as well. I can see and feel what I'm controlling, you know, I'm talking on a day to day level or whatever. Yeah, the more noise or whatever clutter in my life, the less focused I get and the less clarified, and I think my need for clarity is more than anything else.

Desley: so for you, what would be the opposite of having that clarity and control?

Participant: um, it would be chaos I guess, and just mess, clutter. You know, as an example, if I walk into my flat and there's just bits everywhere and cat fur and all that sort of stuff, it makes me unsettled. Not that I'm overly, I like to live life, but I don't, I won't tolerate, there's a point where I've just got to put it all away, otherwise I feel annoyed, actually, or irritated.

Desley: so having that sense of peace, that's the opposite for you....

Participant: of being annoyed.

Desley: with the mess and clutter....

Participant: yes. The sense of peace would come from, just, harping back to simple things, not a lot of noise. For me a peaceful moment is when I'm by myself, you know, sitting in a tiny flat, or sitting outside in the garden or whatever, quietly, you know, no-one's talking to me, no-one's demanding anything of me. That, to me, is peace.

Desley: ok. And why is that important?

Participant: um. I think that's where I get my energy from. It's a balance thing, because the other aspect of that is that my life is very much the opposite to that, as in, I think in a work situation it's just constant day in day out getting demanded or having to put demands on all that, it's just a constant thing. Go home, obviously with a relationship, same sort of thing, the day to day, coming home cooking dinner, all of those demands. Two very demanding cats, it's all, in actual fact very social, so social demands, all that sort of thing, and things I... it's a constant strive for balance to have that, but then I need this other side to me to I guess give me the glue for all of that other stuff. When I came out of my marriage I took a place by myself and lived there for five years, it was the longest time I'd ever lived in one spot and probably I could count on my hands how many of times I invited people into my home. That was literally my base, I'd come home and that was my space to do whatever I wanted, clean up, the washing, if I wanted to, whatever, but it was my little simple place that I had. While I went out I could be as social as I wanted or whatever. It's just, I've always needed that balance.

Desley: so you think that's really important for your sense of who you are?

Participant: I think definitely. I think without that... I was actually told by a kinesiologist who I have been going to on and off for about three or four years, I probably went to her about twelve times, and she is a lovely, lovely woman and I go in there she was good at clarifying a lot of things that are already in my head you know she would just bring them out and she actually said to me one time, you know, you need to have at least half an hour every day by yourself and I have always known that but, you see, in a normal day you just don't give yourself that half an hour time or whatever it is that you personally need and now I walk to work you know, but even

that is still lots of the phone might ringing or whatever but I try and do that because with out it, I do just get unclear. I just feel get hemmed in by all the demands sometimes you've just got to have that space.

Desley: So would you link your tattoo with any of that?

Participant: I think my tattoo really, umm, I think it, in fact because I'm thinking it, that was was, god, it was almost twenty years ago now that I got it and it's now very faded and just nearly green; everyone calls it a 'thistle' because all of the red has gone out of it. It's kind of been... it's a symbol from a long time ago. I think at the time, I think the innate simplicity that I like was aesthetically shown in just wanting the size of it cause it's very small but I also wanted it to be seen. So I think in a way that there was two aspects of that you know, the simplicity thing of its... I find it attractive but the wanting it to be seen being on my back and I always would wear backless tops and everything like that and even now I will, on a weekend, is... I guess more a mark of my individuality and um like a, yeah, its that stepping away from quite a controlled past. Which being my you know, Jehovah's Witness upbringing, I think that's really, I think a lot of it was to do with that it was the intention when I got it was, you know in my head, you know it was probably like was a I would just get a funky tattoo that looks really cool on my back and I can wear my you know and get tanned or whatever but if I think about why I really wanted it was a really big step away from what was allowed in my childhood. And I had quite great pleasure in telling my mother, you know, that I got it. And bless her, she was just like 'oh that's lovely dear' but you know I think at the time that was probably more than anything that was what that was about but the aesthetics side of it I think I find it very interesting but it was all, the choices when I made it were all very subconscious and I don't think there was a lot of. I haven't analysed it enough I guess to, you know, know.

Desley: So, why on your back, is it just so that people can see it?

Participant: Was there a conscious choice? I think for some reason, I guess the decision making that went behind that is kind of the way I make my decisions all of the time which is it um, you know, it seemed like a good idea and it feels like a good idea and so, and I get a sort of like a little flash in my head like a, you know could be I might be planning something and I'll get a flash of a date and I'll decide and I'll sort of sense feel it out and I think, yep, that feels right and I'll do that and you know I'm planning my marriage at the moment. And I'll think of date and

I'll actually look at it and go oh does that, rationally does that fit in and usually it does and I've always done that, it's the same sort of thing, it's like, left shoulder blade felt like a good idea, I think probably on, and so it's, I guess my feelings and my intuition if you like lead into then me into going like rationally what does that mean, do you know what I mean? So I guess that's where the decision came from it wasn't really like oh what do I think was there any other options I just, that thought felt like a really great idea. And if I think about it was too, my style, because my style was like you know eighties, early eighties or whatever, you know like asymmetrical stuff and you know, bits cut out of dresses and I used to wear a lot of backless dresses and I guess it could be seen then, um and, but I could also hide it as well that was the other aspect of it so yes there was more to it, yes because obviously if it was on my, an arm or ankle or if it was generally on show so there I knew if I come to work and there everyone would know I had a tattoo. So I can choose.

Desley: So, um, is there a place you wouldn't put a tattoo?

Participant: A few places I wouldn't put a tattoo. Um I think oh, I would, you know, would never want to do, you know, either of my boobs or anything, or um I think that would just be painful and wrong. I think now, I sometimes think would I get another tattoo and then I think and every now and then, when Sam and I have kind of toyed with the idea of, you know, because he's never had one, but I don't know if I would cause there's another aspect to it now. Do I really want to do that, you know, its just a more mature way of looking at than the eighteen year old but um, yeah I guess the tender bits of your body I wouldn't put it on and you know or face or hands and if I was to get, if I was ever to get another one probably, I might put it on my ankle or arm but I don't think I would get another one. So.

Desley: so do you still like it?

Participant: Um, I think it's a little bit um, I don't even know it's there anymore, it's sort of long forgotten nearly, um, I only every now and again someone will say 'oh you've got a tattoo' and I'll remember, so, and it's not visually the most beautiful tattoo anymore, it really is just sort of quite faded but I've sort of forgotten it and then I think to myself sometimes should I get it removed um, but then I just feel it is just part of me and part of my life from a certain time and it's not doing anyone any harm you know and it's, if I want to, I could make it prettier again, I could probably get it done again, but now I still think I could probably get it done again where

now I think it's a different, you I could still think that I could probably get something from it it's a different, you know, back then I was so reckless, you know its like a great idea I'm doing it. A girlfriend and I went down and did it and I even remember actually where I got it done it really reminds me of Sydney at that time, it was up the road actually near Central and um, ah so I guess if I think about my tattoo then I think about a certain time in my life as well um, and that was on new beginning stage of my life, you know, moving to Sydney, boyfriend you know it was a whole new beginning coming from quite a...

Desley: did you live in the country or in another city

Participant: I lived, I was brought up in Melbourne moved when I was eight to the gold coast and then moved down here when I was 17 nearly 18 and then I lived here until I was 20 and then I went to London for 6 ½ years so I've sort of moved around a lot and um, that time when I first moved to Sydney was the most exciting time, one of the most exciting times I guess and that's why I can remember it so well, I guess I was open to new opportunities and a life where I called the shots. So there was a lot attached to my freedom I think in that time.

Desley: so it really was a life changing that happened.

Participant: it was a life changing time but yeah. I remember I would walk down the street and just be ecstatic that I was living in Sydney, had my own apartment and you know, good looking boyfriend and you know, it was just this whole sort of um, new scene so I think that yeah there was just a lot attached to that.

Desley: So um, did the pain like, did that play any part in having it.

Participant: Um the pain? No. Definitely not if I, if it wasn't painful I would probably get another one. It was funny um, I dealt with it and because it was on the bone it hurt a little bit, but no it certainly didn't go, you know, I think that I want that pain or anything it was more as I said before it was something nice that would look pretty or whatever and I wanted and I...

Desley: ...and the pain was just something

Participant: Yes, it was just something that I had to endure.

Desley: so you said you think about getting it removed, do you think that you would?

Participant: I don't know I guess it's not on my priority list at the moment. Um ah, down the track when if I was you know getting older, back starts getting uglier you know I mean, I could be in my sixties or something and just sort of decide it's not one of the nicest things to have, especially on the back, but at this point in time I'm not really fussed, I don't really think about.

Desley: So, why did you choose to have a tattoo rather than do something else to mark that point in your life?

Participant: Good question! Aaah, um, I think, it would, I guess, and there's varying levels of consciousness of going and doing the tattoo so at the time to me it just was, you know, this seems like a great idea and is cute and whatever, but if I look at it as an adult and then knowing myself better now etcetera, I look at why I went so extreme, I guess if there'd been piercing around at the time, um, I mean I did actually get my ears pierced sort of five times in that ear and a couple of times in that ear which was quite and, but they didn't do other piercings in Australia or anywhere else, so, you know, or actually maybe nose, you know I actually thought of getting a nose ring, but I decided not to, it just didn't feel right or whatever and I actually let all of those close up after a month or something, it seemed like a great idea but maybe it just wasn't me. And I was a teenager that tried you know, every coloured hair, so I did a lot of things I think visually, to, to take a stand I guess so, I probably did other things as well as having the tattoo but yeah, I didn't never want to the next level and get a second piercing or whatever. I think also there's a part of me that probably was creatively felt um, oppressed, due to my upbringing, I don't know if you know much about Jehovah's Witness.

Desley: no, No I don't know a lot.

Participant: Yeah, so, it is very extreme religion and you know indoctrinated kind of religion, beautiful in a lot of ways, and very, you know, in one way... In so many and so you know, you don't really get to express yourself the way you'd like to so I think, growing up in that, what happens in, actually that's a whole other psychological study I can tell you, I actually did some of it in my Masters, I chose the Jehovah's Witness because of it, but a lot of ex Jehovah's Witnesses who have decided to, you know, leave that, have gone from, it's like one extreme to

another so they've just gone off and gone wild because they were so kind of kept in a box and if you are any, you know, somebody who has quite a strong personality or quite creative or whatever and that's all been, you know, that sort of tempered, you then just go the other way. And funny enough, I meet people and I'm attracted to them as people and friends and find out, you know, I've got five friends like that, find out that they've been Jehovah's Witnesses in their childhood is quite funny so there's a whole other aspect to that. I think. It's interesting.

Desley: Yeah. So, do you look at yourself as attention person with a tattoo or do you think now, it doesn't make, like, it doesn't ...?

Participant: I don't really know, I mean if someone mentions that I've got a tattoo or something, or talking about tattoos I might not offer or not say anything depending on how I feel um, that I've got one, but I don't think of myself, it's not something I've, I've kind of um, yeah, I'm not one of those people who have gone, okay, that's my thing. I'm going to get tattoos, it just happens that I chose that as a one way of expressing myself at that point in time.

Desley: So, I think you said you were with a girlfriend?

Participant: I was, yes.

Desley: So did she get one as well?

Participant: No she came along for moral support and I think she was thinking about getting one but didn't have the money at the time or you know, whatever her situation she just decided not to get one and to this day hasn't got one actually.

Desley: So, when other people see it, what do you think they think?

Participant: Aah, interesting. For a long time, I think, especially when I was single and you know, going out and sort of, you know, partying or whatever, I think it was a bit of a, a thing of maybe I found it to be sexually attractive so I thought it was for men's benefit, not that it was for anyone's benefit but I think that was, it was something that would open for conversation with some people, um, so I guess some people found it attractive or interesting, um and I guess too, socially, people I was, you know, I would go out with or whatever, to them its like, you know,

everyone's got a tattoo or something, you know, they're a little bit different or creative or whatever so it's not really what my mother was thinking. So I guess it is all really in the I mean, you know, I could just use my judgement on where and why peoples perspectives is on it so for my peers, it wouldn't even phase them because they've probably got one or you know, a piercing or you know, you know, or in their past have, you know, I think there's probably a lot of people have grown up or grown out of that now. Um, but yes, you know, people like sort of my mum or other people, or, even though she does she wouldn't probably talk about it now, but in her mind she would be thinking 'oh my god', what's my daughter done to herself. So, you know, it depends.

Desley: on the person?

Participant: absolutely.

Desley: So would hers be the most extreme reaction you've had?

Participant: In actual fact, no hers wasn't extreme funnily enough, hers was what my mum has always done with me, she loves me and she'd always say you know, I can sense her cause I know her stance on things cause you know, cause I grew up with it. Um, but she will always go you know, 'oh that's lovely', you know and then not want to talk about it because she doesn't think it's lovely but she's not willing to say that to me, she doesn't push me away or whatever so, ah, but I can read her in that respect. No actually the most extreme that I remember at the time was my ex-boyfriend so it was a boyfriend I'd had for four years, my first boyfriend and one of the reasons why I moved to Sydney and um, we were sort of like, he'd moved back to the Gold Coast and we were kind of long distance relationship thing and nearly breaking up and you know, it was one of those things and um, his reaction was 'oh my god, what have you done to yourself' and he had a real preconception about what a tattoo meant and it was sort of like a, either a, you know, a slut or a you know, his whole preconceptions were so actually quite shocking to me, I think because of him, and what he did, he was a musician, um, you know when I came down here, all our peers, were his musician friends who were like, you know, all the Aussie Rock you know, Divinyls and all of those kind of people so you know, in that kind of group you would think that, there was tattoos and a lot of other things going around and you know, here I was you know, pure living you know as opposed to some of the things that he was getting up to and whatever yadah-yadah-yadah but had gotten a tattoo and he was really opposed

to it, it was quite interesting, so that was his, and he was older, like he was quite a lot older than me, so there was obviously some predisposition in him of where, what a tattoo means. So, yeah..

Desley: So did the possibility of a reaction from say from him or your mum, did you worry about that before you got the tattoo?

Participant: No I didn't actually. No, I think because subconsciously now, looking back, I think I was, this is what I'm doing you know and when I make decisions like that, you know I'm doing this, I'm, um, and it's my decision and it was about my body so no, I didn't even think about it.

Desley: Trick question. What would be the opposite of your tattoo

Participant: The opposite... That's interesting. Um. Mmm. The first thing that came into my head was a gargoyle. So something quite, um, aah, yeah evil-looking and yeah, you know just a bit garish and evil-looking.

Desley: Okay. Do you know many people with tattoos?

Participant: Aaah. Yes. Yeah I do. Yeah. Yes.

Desley: So is that mainly friends or family or...

Participant: Aaah...well friends basically. Mainly friends you know just with the same sort of idea. Odd... people I was telling you about. Um, they probably have completely different reasons for getting it. But um, you know, all the, most of my girlfriends have one, just a flower somewhere or a symbol somewhere or whatever.

Desley: Do you think it's had any negative affect on your life?

Participant: Um...No. No. I guess the reason being that I, you know say in a work situation, and thinking about being judged or whatever, that's why, one of the reasons I can actually cover it up and no-one has to know about it. It's not something I need to talk about. You know, these days everyone's usually got a tattoo or you know whatever, its not, it's a different story, but back then, especially starting in the work force and all of that sort of thing and yeah, I was

pretty, actually I was quite coveted about it, I didn't let anyone know. Obviously friends, but not in a work place I would never dream of and even now, you know, in a work place, I'm always, never, I'm sort of always covered, um, I've just learnt very quickly that from a young age its the best way to be in a work situation but it's um, that thing of aaah... so I think I've always known that people could judge therefore you know, it's my discretion as to who I'd let see. And so, you know, sorry to answer your question, pretty long-winded, no it hasn't but I think it's because I managed that.

Desley: So do you think you identify with any particular group because you have a tattoo?

Participant: Mmm.. no. No. The tattoo is sort of I think umm a, what is the word, the word appendage comes, it's more of an adornment.

Desley: ... and so you are a person who has a tattoo.

Participant: Yes. It's sort of like putting on a ring or I think there are, because it's permanent, there is a deeper thing to it and the extremity of it at the time, but, the way I'd view it was it's just another adornment.

Desley: Okay. So I think I've asked you just about everything... Is there anything else you think about your tattoo that you think is important that we haven't talked about?

Participant: Um, The fact that it has faded. I think there is something in that too. Just um, you know, sort of leaving something behind in a way. Just to, you know, stand from the past but, brought it into now...

Desley: So do you think you would ever like go and get it touched up?

Participant: I have thought about it and Sam's actually mentioned it sometime you know because there is absolutely no, it's all green now you know, it's quite faded and um, so I've thought about it but again, not on my priority list to do. I certainly don't feel like going through that pain, excuse me, so, no but I think that's pretty much it.

Desley: So the fact that it's faded do you think that sort of adds to what it means to you?

Participant: Um {long pause} I haven't thought about it, but I guess, um, it's like I think a lot of things in my, you know, in anyone's life, but in my life where, I guess I'm quite a, what's the word, can't think of it, um, not nostalgic, what's the word?

Desley: ...like sentimental?

Participant: sentimental! Thank you. Um, sentimental person. And I think that um, even things like your scars or you know, whatever it is, I'll kind of think just that it grounds me, it makes it, there's meaning in it. There's a life there or whatever, and I think that there's if I think about it with my tattoo I guess there's a bit of that as well. This is a time in my life and you know, and it's still part of my life and the fact that it's faded is just natural life, if I look at it that way,

Desley: so it's sort of like getting wrinkles,

Participant: Yeah exactly! It's that thing of, and it's still with me and but it's, it's just a part of it but it represents I guess, another time in my life and a very freedom finding time in my life so but the fact that it's faded is just sort of um, it's real. It hasn't been tampered with. It's authentic. Um, perhaps, yeah, and you know, just so I guess the aesthetic value is really not like it was and the fact that I barely show it now and I really don't think about it, so it's not like I wear certain things to show it off now. If it happens to happen then fantastic, but it's more about like a symbol from my past.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	3	2	2	2	2	4	2	1	3	3	2	3	Despondent
Patient	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	4	4	4	3	Feisty
Caring	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	4	3	4	4	Hurtful
Kind	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	1	4	2	3	3	Cruel
Sense of humour	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	2	4	2	4	Wry
Sociable	3	2	2	2	3	5	3	1	2	3	2	2	Hermit
Friendly	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	4	1	2	3	Unkind
Active	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	Passive
Confident	3	2	3	2	4	4	3	2	1	3	1	1	Insecure
Organised	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	4	3	Messy
Hard working	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	3	4	3	Complacent
Honest	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	3	3	3	Slimy

8.2 RDT subgroup Belonging

Participant PB24
Female, 22 years old

Interview date: 22/2/2006

Participant: I have got two. First one I got when I was 18, at schoolies week. I wanted to get it, I wasn't drunk or anything, and I was with a boy friend for about 4 years and we got each other's star sign, but it is also my sister's star sign as well so I was kind of hedging my bets there in case it didn't work out, which it didn't. ahm, it's just a Pisces sort of a thing, just two fish, and I got it there like on my ribcage, so I figured no one would see it there, and the other one is on my foot. One day I was hanging out with my sister, we're chalk and cheese, complete polar opposites in every way and we couldn't agree on what to do and then she suggested that she wanted to go and have a look at tattoos, so I said ok we'll do that, and we wound up thinking about getting one done together, and I thought well it is a safe bet, we'll never find anything we can agree on, it's just four little stars and we both liked it so we got it done on our foot and that is the only thing that is the same about us.

Desley: So how old were you when you got it done?

Participant: about 20.

Desley: and how much of an age gap is there between you and your sister?

Participant: about 2 years and 4 months.

Desley: Is it just the two of you?

Participant: No, between me and my sister 2 years, 4 months and 4 days, and between my sister and my brother 2 years 4 months and 4 days.

Desley: With the Pisces, you chose it because it was your boy friends star sign

Participant: Yes my sisters as well.

Desley: and you said why you put it there. Why did you put the other one on your foot?

Participant: I sort of, I probably thought I won't be wearing strappy sandals in a nursing home, I guess it was somewhere that I thought was interesting

Desley: so not the typical put it on your arm?

Participant: no, well, I don't, I never wanted anything like across my back because that is what every one does lately, so I thought I would be a bit individual, and I put it on my foot.

Desley: Is there somewhere that you wouldn't put a tattoo?

Participant: Yeah anywhere, that is always going to be visible. Obviously, you are going to want to work and that is probably not, the best thing to have like all on your arms or face or chest or anything.

Desley: With each of them, how long did you think about them before you actually had them?

Participant: Not that long.

Desley: so are we talking minutes, months, years, weeks

Participant: Well I had always for a few years had thought about having one done when I turned 18. and then while I was up at schoolies I thought I'd get it done just so it would always be a permanent reminder of that, sort of a rite of passage. I had always thought about getting a blue rose and I still never got that one done, I just wound up getting something different.

Desley: Does the blue rose mean any thing?

Participant: Just because it does not exist. I do not know if that means something, but

Desley: Probably does, if you want to spend a few hours

Participant: going into it. probably

Desley: So you said that that was like a symbol or reminder of schoolies, was the other tattoo linked to any particular event in your life.

Participant: I suppose it was. My sister was spending a lot of time with me, because I had split up with another boy friend, which we're back together now, like we spent about 6 months in limbo land, we were split up, but we still saw each other, and I just wasn't getting over it, wasn't dealing with it too well, so I had a lot of people in my life trying to distract me, and like my sister doesn't see me very much at all now but during that time she was making an effort to try and get me out to do things and we couldn't agree on any thing to do except that. We didn't really go to the tattoo shop to get a tattoo. We just went to look at them, so really from walking into the shop to actually getting it done was less than half an hour I suppose.

Desley: Do you still like the tattoos?

Participant: Yeah I do. I do not think about them a great deal, but I do like them.

Desley: Would you change some of them?

Participant: Possibly the first one I got. I don't know whether, as I was only going to get one fish, then it couldn't really be too obviously anything, and then they said, you know, I couldn't decide what colour I wanted it and they said we can just do another one, they pretty much like didn't charge anything extra to do the second one like really cheap, so I ended up getting two, just because I couldn't make up my mind. I might now have only chosen to do the one but its not a big issue to me.

Desley: So would you do it again, do you think?

Participant: I probably would, yeah

Desley: For both of them?

Participant: Yeah. probably

Desley: So have you ever thought about getting them taken off?

Participant: Not really, like I've thought how much it would cost, how expensive but I don't think I would go through it.

Desley: So do you think you would have another one

Participant: Yes, I am still thinking about a blue rose. I might inevitably end up with that somewhere.

Desley: So if you were to have another one would it be the picture that's the most important thing?

Participant: The one that I always thought of doing yeah.

Desley: Do you know where you would put it? or you haven't thought that hard about it?

Participant: I have thought now and then I give it some thought but I have not really decided on a place. I could put it next to the stars on my foot or something, I don't know if I would want it on a whole other place. I might try to incorporate it somewhere near one of the other two.

Desley: So do you consider that your tattoos, like is there any relationship between the two of them for you?

Participant: Both of them in a way I link to my sister. I guess coz I always wanted to be closer to her I suppose, it's sort of a way of... sometimes we don't even see each other because we don't, our lives don't really cross paths.

Desley: So you don't both live at home?

Participant: No, I moved out with the first boyfriend when I was 18, and I just have not gone back.

Desley: So why did you choose to have a tattoo rather than something else?

Participant: well, coz, my sister got piercings when she was really young and I don't like 'em. And I don't know really. I just always remember thinking about it like from when I was 12, 13, I suppose and when it started becoming more popular, I guess. My friends used to like get all those fake ones, get that henna stuff and paint, and dye your skin and. We used to do that when we were 14.

Desley: So was it because you thought it looked good or was there some other reason?

Participant: No, I s'pose because I thought they looked good. Just also like I don't know, facing a fear, because I have a real fear of needles and everyone says, I always talked about getting one and everyone always said "you won't get one", so I think it's part of that too, like

Desley: It's amazing how many people that have tattoos who say they're scared of needles. It's quite funny

Participant: I just like it because people just don't know I've got 'em, and when the topic comes up and I'm like "yeah, I've got two" and it sort of shocks people as they don't expect it.

Desley: so you like shocking people?

Participant: Yeah I just like... I forget the word....My mum used to call me contrary

Desley: such an old-fashioned word isn't it?

Participant: and she used to call me that when I was a little kid and I haven't changed, so I suppose that is part of it too.

Desley: What do you mean?

Participant: it's being contrary, doing something that people don't expect.

Desley: Getting the tattoos is part of being contrary?

Participant: Yes.

Desley: Do you think that there's something else you could have done that would've had the same effect as having the tattoo?

Participant: I don't know. Not really. Nothing else is permanent, anything else you can sort of undo, I s'pose like plastic surgery or something, I don't know, na, not really wouldn't have had the same effect.

Desley: So when you got the first one that was with a boy friend... so that was a sign because you'd been together for a while?

Participant: yeah we got together when I was 14 and got engaged when I was 18, split up a few months after we moved in together because he had a temper, but I don't know, I just sort of grew up in fairytale where everyone who got married lived happily ever after. So, I don't come from a broken home, I don't know, my uncle got divorced, a bit after that but that is the only divorce in a very, very big family. And so I just I thought I love him so we will live happily ever after.

Desley: So you were going with the conventional road of getting engaged, getting married when you were 18?

Participant: yeah

Desley: So was he on schoolies with you?

Participant: Yeah he was 2 years older than me, he came with me any way, because we'd never really, I had always been too young for us to really go away and do that sort of a thing together, so that was sort of a whole lot of rites of passage in one thing, I guess, like going together on a holiday, me going away on a holiday without my parents for the first time together, finishing school all that stuff, so...

Desley: So was it his idea to get a tattoo or yours?

Participant: Don't remember, I think it was a bit of both. I went first though, as I said no way will I go second because I might see the needle and then go no way I am going to do it so and I wanted to do it so, I did not want a reason to chicken out so.

Desley: So it's not like he talked you into it?

Participant: No, no. I can't be talked into any thing really.

Desley: So do you consider yourself as a tattooed person or are you just someone who has a tattoo?

Participant: I am just some one who has a tattoo, tattoos, my sister I would consider as a tattooed person.

Desley: She has got more or?

Participant: She's got three, but she's got one that she shows off like all the time so, it's a big tribal symbol vertical down her spine, a couple of inches long, she has got short hair, she always wears tops with no material covering it, and she's got one on her ankle and then the one on her foot. So hers are always on display like even when she is working, she wears those 3-quarter pants or whatever and you can see them.

Desley: So for you the distinction is whether they are on display all the time?

Participant: Part of it yeah, but my sister is also, she's doing fashion design at TAFE, and she always looks like she has stepped out of the hair dressers, where as I am not like that so I think its part of that as well, image.

Desley:, So do you want the hard question now or will I save it for later?

Participant: Now I suppose.

Desley: What would be the opposite of your tattoos?

Participant: the opposite? Like in design of tattoo or the opposite to a tattoo?

Desley: how would you want to interpret it?

Participant: I don't know. Opposite in design, well, one's fish so opposite of fish - bird, and the other one's stars. I don't know what the opposite of a star is.

Desley: a black hole? I don't know...

Participant: As for the opposite of what a tattoo is, I don't know. wearing clothes or something I suppose because clothes you can just take off. It's still the same thing. It's about image, and creativity, and design, and stuff but it's not permanent.

Desley: So the opposite would be something that's not permanent because it is something that is.

Participant: Yeah

Desley: But still have things in common with that.

Participant: suppose so. doesn't make a lot of sense, but yeah

Desley:So you were with some one both times you got the tattoos.

Participant: Yeah

Desley: and with your sister, like the one on your foot, was that her idea to get it her idea to actually go ahead and get them or, because you said she said lets go and look at the tattoo parlor?

Participant: She kind of knew the guys that run it, but my sister tends to think she knows every one she has met once so, that was why we went and she didn't really talk me into that either. Like we were sort of looking at things, and she'd say "oh, I like that" and I'd go "I sort of like that one" and we were talking about it lot as you do and we sort of said we should get something the same so that there's something the same about us. I sort of said, if we can agree on some

thing we'll have a look, and when we did, she was like do you want to get it done, and I'm "yeah I don't mind getting it done, do you want to get it done?" so it wasn't anything like that.

Desley: so it was a totally mutual thing?

Participant: yes.

Desley: So what do you think it means to other people that see your tattoos.

Participant: I don't know. I know my mum, it doesn't mean any thing good. When I came home the first time she thought, I'd just got another fake one and that I was trying to freak her out and she denied it about three or four times until I seriously went mum seriously it's real, there is still a bit of a scarring, come and have a look. She said oh you didn't and just walked away, quite unimpressed. Since then she's just resigned to it because now it's just so common. My cousins have them but, it didn't mean anything good to her but she thinks it's silly and because it was fashionable at the moment, she reckons I'll totally regret it when I get old.

Desley: What about say when you are at the beach and people can see you, do you think they think anything?

Participant: The real reaction I get is surprise because people can know me for quite some time before they see them. Recently I was very skinny so when I went to the beach they used to see the one on my ribs, but now you don't really see it, but the one on my foot people just don't notice unless you really draw attention to it. I wear thongs a lot and sandals and don't wear lace-ups except in winter usually, but sometimes people just happen to be looking down and they go oh you have a tattoo there and I go yeah its always been there. Mostly its just surprise. A lot of people think it is interesting that I have got one the same as my sister, specially when they know my sister, so I don't think it means anything other than that.

Desley: So have you had any negative reactions to them apart from your mum?

Participant: Not really. Some people sort of say I'd never get that done, coz I'd look stupid or I'd get sick of it, eventually. Thought that through at the time didn't bother me at the time does not bother me now.

Desley: and I guess you said you were careful you said that it was your sister's birth sign as well

Participant: yeah I thought that through too, even though I thought this is for ever and ever.

People still say you never get someones name or what ever else plus I've always had fish. I had goldfish, when I was a little kid, I've always been into fish and I had a tropical tank and trying to get some money together to setup a salt water setup now, so somehow it is still linked to me as well, personality and what I am interested in, its not something out of the blue.

Desley: So did you ever worry enough about what your mum would think to think well maybe I shouldn't get it?

Participant: No.

Desley: Not that kind of a person?

Participant: Not that I am not that kind of person, but I am not my mum, and I moved out at 18, despite the fact that she didn't like it, she still says "oh, you do things the hard way", but I was very consistent in that I do things my way. Whether or not it's the hard way, it wasn't really a big issue for me because I was always going to do what I was going to do, she knows that.

Desley: I talked to girls at uni, a couple of them actually who had tattoos and their parents didn't even know, because they were so scared of what their mother's reaction would be.

Participant: Yeah I know someone who did that, and got really really really drunk and then their parents found out because they put her in the shower and they were sort of "wer..." and she wound up blaming it on the boy friend saying that he took her to get it done, while she was drunk, and that relationship didn't last.

Desley: that was surprising I suppose, was it?

Participant: Not really didn't want to take responsibility for it herself

Desley: Apart from your sister, who do you know who has a tattoo?

Participant: One of my cousins does, I know that. a couple of them do I think, one of my friends got it done in a very interesting place. It's where she waxes.

Desley: I have spoken to a few people like that and they say I'll send you a photo when we tidy up.

Participant: She took that to the extreme. She's been my friend since year 2. I don't know that many people who have them really.

Desley: So do you think having a tattoo means that you identify with any particular group of people?

Participant: I think people who identify with certain groups of people are more likely to have tattoos but I don't think its reversed. I don't think necessarily if you have a tattoo that you belong to any set group, like those punk kind of people, my brother calls them "emos" I don't know why, apparently it is a term for those people, but a lot of them tend to have tattoos and like the people who hang out at the oxford tavern. They tend to have tattoos but not every one who has a tattoo belongs to any set group.

Desley: and you don't see yourself as belonging to a group.

Participant: No, I don't think of myself as in a set group. When I was 18, I suppose I saw myself yeah not really a group but like typical 18-year-old, follow fashion, follow trends what ever, but by the second one, I wasn't like that at all.

Desley: So is there anything else that you can think of about your tattoo that seems important?

Participant: Not really. Not that I can think of. It's all pretty straightforward.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	3	Sad
Patient	3	1	2	1	3	3	3	3	1	4	4	2	Intolerant
Caring	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	5	2	1	Distant
Kind	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	4	3	3	Rude
Sense of humour	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	3	1	3	Dry
Sociable	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	1	4	Recluse
Friendly	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	3	2	3	Horrible
Active	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	2	5	Vegetative
Confident	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	1	3	Shy
Organised	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	1	2	4	4	2	Chaotic
Hard working	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	4	4	1	Lazy
Honest	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	4	3	1	Liar



8.3 RDT subgroup Personal Symbol

Participant PS31
Female, 21 years old

Interview date: 1/3/2006

Participant: Ok. I always wanted a tattoo. And it just took me a while to figure out where I wanted it and what I wanted to get. Because obviously it's something that's going to last forever. So last summer, I decided that I wanted an astrological symbol. Because it's something that would never change. You know, it's not a fad, type of thing. I could keep it relatively small and simple. I didn't want to go for anything extravagant. So last summer I decided that I wanted it on my hip, because then I could keep it out of sight, from people you know, if I don't, in a special setting, and it seemed a relatively safe place, because I am a safe tattoo getter. Last Summer I went at the end of summer with a couple of friends they got their ears pierced and I got my tattoo.

Desley: So when you say last Summer, that's last Summer in America?

Participant: Yes.

Desley: So that's 15 months ago, 18 months ago?

Participant: Let's see. August. Only about a year ago.

Desley: Six months.

Participant: Yeah six months ago. Sorry. So, last August.

Desley: So you had that done in the States?

Participant: Yes.

Desley: So what's your star sign?

Participant: Sagittarius. It's like an axe with an arrow at one end. All in black. About the size of a coin. It's not really big.

Desley: Ok. So are there attributes of Sagittarians that you relate to?

Participant: I don't really know very much about them. The good, Sagittarius qualities...well, I don't know. I can't talk very much about that.

Desley: So you just knew it was your star sign and that's about all?

Participant: Yes.

Desley: Ok. So can you say anything about why it was important for you to get your star sign?

Participant: A big part of it was that it was not fad thing. Like people get butterflies or fairies. You know something that's much more contemporary, just kind of with the times. But this is something that, I don't know, it doesn't change. It's part of my identity. I'm a Sagittarius, whether I know what that means or not. And I guess that's it...

Desley: So you put it on your hip, basically so it couldn't be seen?

Participant: Yes. And I was worried about how it would look, you know after I get pregnant and with age and stuff. And I think it's a fairly semi-safe place. I didn't want to get it on my back, a lot of people get them on their backs. I didn't want to do the same thing everybody else does, so it's a little different.

Desley: so is that the front of your hip or the back?

Participant: the front, yeah.

Desley: Is there some place you wouldn't put a tattoo?

Participant: Definitely not on my stomach. Probably not on my back, at least the lower back. Not on my face obviously. Probably not anywhere I would have to cover it up to work in a professional setting. not arms or the legs, probably.

Desley: So when you had it, how long did you think about it seriously before you had it?

Participant: Probably started thinking about it when I turned eighteen, because you can't do one before, without the consent of your parents. So when I turned 18, I started thinking about it seriously. It took me 2 years.

Desley: Do you consider that having a tattoo coincided with any particular event in your life?

Participant: Yeah. Actually I had a boyfriend for three and a half years prior to this summer. And after we broke up, it was part of my decision to do something different, do something I've never done before, on my own. So it definitely coincided with that.

Desley: So do you think it helped you to get through the break up or anything like that?

Participant: No. but it was, I don't think, I mean, it did, it helped me. I think it maybe showed that I could be independent and that I could do things on my own. It's not a big thing. But I guess it did help me with independence a little bit

Desley: So you still like the tattoo?

Participant: Mhmm.

Desley: Do you think you'd change it at all?

Participant: No, I don't think so. I'm pretty happy with it.

Desley: So you'd do it again?

Participant: Mhmm.

Desley: So do you think you'll ever get another one?

Participant: Well actually my friends and I are actually talking about getting one while we are in Australia. So I have to think about that one.

Desley: So how many of your friends are you out here with?

Participant: fifteen of us from my school.

Desley: Oh really? Wow. So you are just out here for six months.

Participant: Just this semester. Yeah.

Desley: So do you think you'd ever get it taken off?

Participant: No. One because I don't want to, but it would be like basically I failed you know... the reason for getting it in the first place. But also because the removal process pretty much makes it look pretty disgusting.

Desley: You're probably better off with a nice picture than a scar. So if you think about another one, is the most important thing the picture you get, or where you put it?

Participant: The picture.

Desley: The picture? So do you have any idea about what that would be?

Participant: No. I have no idea.

Desley: So why did you choose to get a tattoo, rather than do something else?

Participant: I think I liked the idea that it was permanent. It's not something that can go away. I don't know. I was just think, it's something that will never go away. I feel very I ...don't know how to put it into words. I was strong to have the energy like, to do something that will never go away.

Desley: I think I know what you mean. So do you think there's anything else that you could have done, that would have had the same effect? That would have made you feel strong?

Participant: I'm sure there's lots I could have. For instance, I suppose I could have moved away. Like live on my own for the summer, or something like that. That probably would have had the same feeling, but that's also a little harder, than going for half an hour to get a tattoo. I could have pierced my ears or something again. But that can be taken away, you know, I can let the hole close up and it wouldn't exactly be the same thing.

Desley: And I guess even with moving away, you'd be moving back.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: but you've come over the other side of the world. That's something! So do you distinguish at all, between the fact that you have a tattoo? I can never word this question properly. Is it more important that you have a tattoo or that you have that particular tattoo?

Participant: That I have a tattoo.

Desley: The particular picture was secondary?

Participant: Mhmm.

Desley: But you said if you got another one, you'd probably worry more about the picture?

Participant: More than about where it is, yeah.

Desley: Gotchya. All right. Trick question. What would be the opposite of your tattoo?

Participant: {pause} The opposite of my tattoo. Errr. Like the opposite picture?

Desley: However you want to think about it. Some people say a picture, some people say other stuff.

Participant: I think the opposite...hmmm. {pause} I think the opposite would be...of the tattoo...like getting a barbed wire or tribal symbols along the arm a lot of the guys get. Because

they get those to show people that they have this tattoo, they are strong, or whatever. But for me it's more personal. It's more for me than for other people to see.

Desley: So is it about strength at all, though? Well, you said they get it to show that they are tough.

Participant: Yeah. Yeah.

Desley: Is yours about toughness in yourself or something different?

Participant: Not physical tough. It's more emotional, not spiritual...more a mental toughness I think.

Desley: So mentally in a way of putting up with getting the tattoo or the way of getting over the relationship, do you think?

Participant: The relationship. I think.

Desley: Ok. Are you alright talking about it now?

Participant: Yeah. Yeah.

Desley: So you said you were with your friends and they just got their ears pierced.

Participant: Mhmmm.

Desley: So was it your idea to get a tattoo and they said we'll come with you and get our ears pierced?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: What do you think it means to other people that see your tattoo?

Participant: I think they are surprised. I am not the type of person who would normally get a tattoo. They see me as a type of person who wouldn't get a tattoo. So I think it surprises them, shocks them a little bit that I am not as innocent as I seem.

Desley: How does that make you feel?

Participant: I feel proud. Proud.

Desley: Proud that you did it or that you surprised them?

Participant: Both.

Desley: Both? So what kind of reactions have you had to it?

Participant: Well lots of people think it's pretty cool, though some of the thoughts have not been very positive. My parents...were just, they probably didn't like it but they let me do it, they can't really say no. it's a very generational thing...People my age think it's cool. But my parents and other people think differently about it.

Desley: So did you ever worry enough that your mother would freak out that you think maybe I won't do it?

Participant: No. She's pretty relaxed about that kind of thing. I mean she doesn't exactly tell me to go get one, but she doesn't mind so much that I did it.

Desley: So what do you think about other people that have tattoos?

Participant: Depends on the tattoo and where they get it. I think some are a cliché kind of thing. getting the tribal signs is just overdone, they just do it for a fad. But for people who have a personal meaning attached to their tattoos, I think it's a good thing for them to do. It's important.

Desley: Why do you think it's important?

Participant: To do something permanent to yourself, it attaches a special significance to whatever the circumstance for having that particular tattoo, I think it takes a lot of inner strength to say I'm gonna do this, it's going to last for ever, but they still want it.

Desley: So you said it attaches a special significance to the event. So the event associated with your tattoo is that the break-up or is it more you coming out of it, or?

Participant: Me coming out of it and being my own person.

Desley: So when you look back at it in ten years time, or something, you'll remember you being strong, rather than breaking up with a boy or something?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: Cool. Who do you know that has a tattoo?

Participant: A lot of people.

Desley: Friends?

Participant: Yeah friends. A lot of adults I know too.

Desley: So family, or?

Participant: Not so much my family. My friends. Not within in my family.

Desley: Do you think it's had any negative effects on your life at all?

Participant: No.

Desley: Do you think because you have a tattoo, you identify with any particular group of people?

Participant: No. I think it shows a side of me that people didn't realise I had. But I don't think, for me personally it hasn't changed how I think about, or how I associate myself.

Desley: Is there anything else that you can think of?

Participant: No, that's it.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	2	2	4	3	2	Sad
Patient	3	2	3	2	2	3	3	1	4	3	3	2	Impulsive
Caring	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	4	2	1	Callous
Kind	2	1	2	2	3	2	2	1	2	3	2	1	Mean
Sense of humour	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	Dry
Sociable	3	2	3	2	2	3	3	1	1	4	1	2	Quiet
Friendly	2	1	2	2	3	2	2	1	1	3	3	1	Anti-social
Active	2	1	3	2	2	1	2	3	4	5	4	4	Idle
Confident	2	2	2	2	1	3	2	2	1	3	1	3	Shy
Organised	4	1	3	1	5	4	4	1	2	2	1	1	Reckless
Hard working	4	2	3	2	2	2	3	1	3	4	2	1	Lazy
Honest	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	4	2	2	Lying



Participant: Ok. I've got two on my tailbone. One's a really big blue scorpion, 'cause I'm a Scorpio. So that just represents me and I'm a pretty strong Scorpio. I actually believe in the things that describe a Scorpio and think that I kind of link with that. And the other one is my boyfriend's name in Japanese, which is Alex. I put it in Japanese because I thought, it means something, he speaks Japanese, he's not Japanese but he speaks it, and he understands that, and I understand that. And only people who are important to us have to know what it is. But I thought it would mean a lot for our relationship, so I did that. They turned out a bit bigger than I thought they would. Like they drew it, and said it will be about this big, and once they actually did it, it was actually an extra quarter bigger than what I thought it would be. So it's quite big and quite bright. I got them done when I turned 21. I thought I'd do something different to celebrate my 21st birthday. And I've always wanted a tattoo. I didn't just... I wanted to try something different and that's probably why I got it. Yeah. That's about it.

Desley: Did you get them separately or at the same time?

Participant: at the same time. I thought I might as well get them all done in one go. I was expecting it to be more painful than it was, which is why I was hoping to see it all done in one big shot. But it wasn't too bad, actually. So, yeah.

Desley: So they're really close together?

Participant: Yeah. they are. There's a gap between, but they're still pretty close together.

Desley: So how long did you seriously think about it before you actually got them?

Participant: Well, one of them, since I was probably like 17, 18. But what I wanted I actually didn't know, until roughly like about a month or two before I actually got it. That's when I started thinking seriously about what I wanted. Yeah, so probably about a month or two.

Desley: And you said you got a scorpion because you are a Scorpio. So what are the characteristics of a Scorpio?

Participant: Probably that I can be a bit bossy, if I want my own way. I think the personality traits like once I learn to trust someone, I trust someone a lot, with everything within me. But I find it hard at the beginning to trust people. It just takes a while, but once I get there you've pretty much got it for life. Probably I'm fairly passionate. Possibly a perfectionist, can't keep anything like not organised. It's all got to be precise and in some kind of order and... Probably stubborn, I think. Really hard to change my mind or my opinion. I'll agree with you to have yours, but I won't, it's really rare that I'll change mine, just because someone else has brought their arguments up. So probably just those kinds of things.

Desley: Are they typical Scorpio attributes?

Participant: Yeah. Yeah.

Desley: Ok. So why was it important for you to have your boyfriend's name?

Participant: Probably because it was my way of committing to our relationship, letting him know that I felt strongly about our relationship and that he meant a lot to me. That even if we didn't spend the rest of our lives together, that it meant enough to me that I had something from it for pretty much the rest of my life. 'Cause I don't really think there'd be any reason for me to want to get it removed, even if we weren't together anymore. It's just kind of to signify that part of my life.

Desley: So how long had you been with him?

Participant: A year. Not as long as some people would think, but it's still long for me. It just depends on how you feel.

Desley: It does, yeah. So why did you put it on your lower back?

Participant: um. I don't know. I think it's because if you want to show it you can, but if you don't you can hide it. Like if you have it on your arm, you can't really hide it as easily. Plus I didn't think that it would hurt as much there, as like other places. Like if people get it on their butt then that would hurt a little bit more, 'cause it's really sensitive flesh. But while doing it she

goes, “do you know you are going to feel it pretty much at the back of your neck?” and I go “Ah great!”

Desley: It would have been quite painful, I think.

Participant: Yeah, but that was just my little theory. I just thought it was a good place. That way, if you wanted to hide it, you could.

Desley: So are there places that you would never have a tattoo?

Participant: My arm. Probably just anywhere on my arms and legs. And not on my face.

Desley: So you wouldn't go the Tongan bracelet or anything like that?

Participant: No, that's for some people. It's not for me. Because especially now, with a lot of, when you go for jobs and things, first impression is pretty much how you look as well. And they'll say, oh, you're not kind of like what we were looking for, you don't want to lose opportunities because of something that isn't that important.

Desley: Ok. So you said you had it about two years ago? Was there any particular event in your life? Ah you said the 21st, didn't you?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: So was there anything else you could have done, that would have had the same effect as having a tattoo?

Participant: probably... ok, something memorable. I did do something else. I went crazy I think. Coz at that point of my life, I moved out of home. So it was a really big change for me. So I think I just looked for anything different. Probably just to further highlight that part of my life. It was like a coming of independence. I don't know what it was, coz I did bungee jumping as well. So I think it was just looking for whatever it is that I could, and could afford to do at that time. I probably would have done a lot more if I could have afforded it. I would have probably done as many things as I could. I think I would have just decided on one.

Desley: So what else would you have done if you could?

Participant: I would've sky dived. Anything extreme, I reckon. I think I get a thrill out of that adrenaline. It's just something that, even if you don't have anything to show for it it's inside you, that you remember that you've done something like that. I would also have liked to go on a speed track, you know. Bu I only recently got my licence, so that wouldn't have worked back then. Anything along those lines.

Desley: So anything, like any extreme sports or something?

Participant: Yeah. definitely.

Desley: Ok, so why a tattoo. Why not say, get a piercing or something?

Participant: I think because with piercings if you don't maintain it, if you don't look after it, kind of like, it can disappear, you can lose it. Whereas with a tattoo unless you go and actually pay to get it removed it's always there. So whenever you are feeling a little bit down you don't do something stupid, like you can't just, you wouldn't walk over to a place and say, "hey, could you remove this." Like just out of a little low point in your life, you are not going to go out there one day and do it. Whereas with a piercing or something, you can just take it out and it will close and that's it. Probably something like that.

Desley: So it is something that's a bit more permanent?

Participant: Yeah. definitely.

Desley: Ok, so do you still like the tattoo?

Participant: Yeah, I do.

Desley: Would you change it at all?

Participant: It took me a while to get used to the size, but I actually don't mind it now, coz I'm so used to it. I don't really picture myself with anything different now. So no, I think I'll keep it pretty much as it is.

Desley: So you would do it again?

Participant: Yeah definitely. If I could think of something else, but

Desley: But you would have that same one again if you had your time over?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: And you wouldn't get it removed?

Participant: No.

Desley: So would you think about getting another one?

Participant: I'm open to it. If something came along and I thought Ah, I wouldn't mind that as a tattoo. But I'd probably have it like somewhere on my shoulder blade or something like that. Different. A different place. But that is also where you can be discreet if you need to be.

Desley: fair enough. So do you consider the tattoos as separate?

Participant: The two that I've got?

Desley: Yeah.

Participant: yeah.

Desley: So is there any link between them as far as you are concerned?

Participant: Mmm. He's a Scorpio too. So we have quite an interesting relationship because we are both strong people. Very stubborn. It could be that link. Probably the fact that we are both

Scorpios could have made me decide more on the scorpion. But I still really think of them as separate. I don't think of them as something I got, depending on each other.

Desley: I was also wondering too, is the writing over the scorpion, or is the scorpion a scorpion? Like on your back...

Participant: The writing's like on the lower side so there's a gap between that and the scorpion. So they are not really touching at all.

Desley: I was wondering, like relative to each other which one would you say was the most prominent?

Participant: The scorpion, because it's big and blue and yeah.

Desley: And is it relevant that it's on top of the writing?

Participant: No actually. That was just the tattoo artist said that it would be better if we positioned it like that. Because I was going to get them as two different ones in just two different places, but she said it would look really nice if I put them the way she's put them. And coz she's done so many I took her opinion. And in the end it was a better idea than what I previously had. So there's no reason why they're in that position, except for the fact that she suggested it.

Desley: So they're close, but actually just separate.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: What about the pain factor? Do you consider that to be a bonus? Like is it something you enjoyed, or is it bad enough that you'd go I don't think I will do that again? Or is it just like something you had to put up with?

Participant: Well I didn't enjoy it.

Desley: Some people do.

Participant: I'd do it again. It was a lot less painful than I thought it would be. Coz I've spoken to people who've had it before, and they've complained about how they almost fainted and stuff because the pain was so bad. And even when I got there, she goes, "Oh, if you feel a bit faint just let me know!" so that freaked me out too. I was like "great! They were right" Once she started going, it was like an uncomfortable feeling, but it wasn't really painful. I didn't enjoy it, but it's not something that would deter me from doing it again. If I wanted to do it again, I would do it without worrying about it, because it was not as painful as I thought.

Desley: And I guess it stops once it's done basically

Participant: Yeah. It's not like you feel anything afterwards. Like when you get stitches you still feel a bit sore afterwards. There's nothing like that. When they finish, that's it.

Desley: except for the itching

Participant: that with me was probably the worst thing.

Desley: So did you go by yourself, to get it?

Participant: no. I went with my boyfriend.

Desley: And did he get a tattoo as well?

Participant: No. He's a little bit more conservative, I think, because he comes from a conservative family. Whereas, um. He's a bit of a nerd. I guess you could say. Because he's not... he just likes his computer and that's about it. That's the extreme view of his life. But he's thinking about it, I've got him thinking about it. He's thinking of getting something, but I'm a bit more spontaneous. I just do things right away. I think, "Ah, I'm going to do this!" and "I'll have this done". He's a bit more of a planned person. He doesn't really fit the Scorpio like personality traits as I do. He's a bit more of something else. I haven't figured out yet. I should ask his parents if he was really born in a different month! He went mainly because he thought I was going to pass out, or something. If it was a lot more painful than it was. He doesn't like the sight of blood, so when there was blood he was a bit uncomfortable.

Desley: So if you were going to have another one, would you think more about what picture to have, or where to put it or would you go back to the same woman? What would be the first thing?

Participant: I'd probably go back to the same place. And I'd probably have it like on my shoulder blade or something. But as for what I'll have, not really, no real ideas.

Desley: So it'd be the place you have it? Or the tattoo parlour would be the most important thing?

Participant: Probably the tattoo parlour. Because I know the quality of their work's really good. And she actually cares about the people who walk in there, and you can watch them sterilise everything, right in front of your eyes, which is really important. You don't want to go to any dodgy place and get it done. So yeah, that would be the first thing I think of. Definitely.

Desley: Ok. Do you think about the fact that you have a tattoo... I can never word this question properly. Is it more important to you that you have a tattoo or that you have that tattoo, like that picture?

Participant: I think that I have that tattoo. To me it's not so much about having one. Like it doesn't make me any better than I was before. But what I have is like something that symbolises part of my life. And it's something you've always got with you. It's like photos except it's on you. I think it's just what it is, rather than the fact that it is a tattoo. Like what the picture's actually of.

Desley: So could you have had the picture on a piece of paper and carried it around with you?

Participant: No. Knowing me, and my ability to lose things, I don't know. it wouldn't have been that easy.

Desley: Wouldn't have kept it this long?

Participant: I could have tried. But it probably would have looked like something that came from the 1800's or something, burnt around the edges. I don't know.

Desley: with coffee rings.

Participant: I definitely would've spilt something on it.

Desley: So do you consider yourself a tattooed person, or a person with tattoos?

Participant: um... first one... tattooed person....I'm just a person with tattoos.

Desley: So what would be the opposite of your tattoos?

Participant: What do you mean, sorry? The opposite?

Desley: Mmmm.

Participant: {pause} um... I don't know {long pause}... I don't know... I don't know what that actually means!

Desley: Well some people take it to mean just not having a tattoo, or like doing something different. Some people take it to mean the opposite picture. And a couple of people have taken it to mean the opposite feeling. So the feeling they got from getting a tattoo, how they would feel, like what would be the opposite of that. One girl actually said, I can't remember what her tattoo was, but she said the opposite would be a certain thing on a necklace because a necklace she can take off, but it was also an opposite image at the same time. So take your pick!

Participant: oh boy!

Desley: or make up your own!

Participant: Hmmm. {long pause} I think the jewellery one sounds a bit more like me. I did wear Scorpio like pendants and stuff, and I stopped once I got the tattoo. But I don't think I did that intentionally. It's something that happened at that time, like I felt like I didn't want to wear too much. Like I didn't want to be too showy with it. But probably just no tattoo. I think I will go with that. I don't really think much more than that.

Desley: Is that the same with the one of your boyfriend's name too?

Participant: I'd probably just carry a picture of him in my wallet or something. Whereas now I don't really do that. I feel like I am already carrying a piece of him with me wherever I go. Um.

Desley: Wait til you get pregnant!

Participant: um. yeah, but, maybe just carrying a photo of him instead. Or saving a photo of him on my wall paper on my phone or something. I've got the tattoo and that's what I take around and he's got a photo of me on his phone, which is what he takes around. So that's kind of like our equivalent. Yeah, so probably just something like that.

Desley: So what do you think it means to other people who see your tattoo?

Participant: I think they would obviously tell that I am a proud Scorpio. And from the few people who know what it means, at the bottom, that I probably love my boy friend a fair bit. Coz not many people, I guess, go out there and mark themselves with their name. probably... I don't think much more of it than probably nice design.

Desley: So what kind of reactions have you had?

Participant: um. Younger people go "aaaaaaaw Cool! Cool tattoo! Cool tatt! Oh, how much did that hurt?" I think the most questions I got were mainly about the pain and the cost, how much it cost to get something so big and colourful and stuff. I don't think particularly what I get stands out as much as the fact I've got one. And it's so big and it stands out. Mainly younger people pay attention. Or people would read the bottom, just wanting to let me know they could read it. They'd go "Oh Alex!"

Desley: So do you think it's had any negative effect on your life?

Participant: I don't think so. My mum wouldn't like it. That's probably the only negative point.

Desley: What do you mean by wouldn't like I?

Participant: She just doesn't like tattoos.

Desley: Does she know you've got it?

Participant: No she doesn't. We don't really see each other any more. We don't really speak any more. So when I left home when I was 21 and all these things happened, it was kind of like just everything happened at once. That's when I also stopped my real communication with her. So I think that's what made me feel like I had that freedom to do what I wanted. Because when I was younger and still living at home, it's not something you can just go out there and do. She'd probably pay for me to get it removed, even though it's expensive. But it's just like another sign of independence when I moved out that I could do it without worrying about that negative impact that it'd have on my family. That's about it. Because mostly with jobs and stuff that I've gone for, it's always been covered. And with one job I had, which was about the time I got it, which was at the Subway, my boss actually complimented it, saying he'd never have had the guts to do it. So it hasn't really brought much negative at all.

Desley: So just say that you and your boyfriend split up and you got another boyfriend and he's like "cool tatt" and then one day he goes "what does that say?" what do you tell him?

Participant: I'll tell him the truth.

Desley: What if he goes, I want my name on there too. Or I want you to get his crossed out, or something?

Participant: That's a tough one. I wouldn't get it removed. If he wanted one little thin line or something through it, maybe. But you'd still be able to read it. He'd just kind of have to understand that it is a part of my history that I want to hold onto. And obviously if I mean enough, then that should be fine. I'd put one of him as well. Like I don't agree he's more special than you coz that doesn't work. I don't think I'd get it removed. If they were that upset about it, I think they're not really that understanding of my feelings and aren't really worth it. Yeah, but, um. coz my boyfriend said that too. What if it doesn't work out? Then you regret it? It just marks a point in your life like if someone got the logo of their favourite football team or something it marks that part of their life or something that they support that much. Even if they

change teams the chances are they are not going to get that removed. That was from that part of their life and they can go and get another for the other one.

Desley: I think sometimes though it depends on how much thought they put into it in the first place.

Participant: Oh yeah. yeah. Definitely.

Desley: some people just go and do something and then go, why did I do that?

Participant: If I did it when I was probably drunk or something and it was just a really spontaneous thing. Like at the moment. Like I was walking past it and decided to do it. But the fact that I actually put a lot of thought into it and decided what I wanted that makes it like a lot different. So I'd keep I'd it.

Desley: How long did you say you thought about it before you got it?

Participant: before I actually got these ones? Or before I wanted them?

Desley: before you got them

Participant: Probably about two months.

Desley: So did you ever worry enough about someone else reacting to it to think maybe I shouldn't do this? Like did you think about what your mum would say?

Participant: Yeah I did, but also at that point I had moved out. I thought it was a time I should stop worrying about whether I'm going to let her down or not. Because it wasn't much to let her down. You could do pretty much anything and that'd let her down, so I just figured you've gotta do what's right for you. And I think that was one of the first big steps I took besides moving out, was to do something like that. Which I know she wouldn't have approved of, but I always wanted. I worried a little bit too, about his parents. They were a bit more conservative. They come from a Macedonian background. I wasn't sure whether they'd be very cultural, where they don't want girls to do certain things. But when they saw it they were like so, I don't know, they

were happy and it was really different. Yeah, I don't think I really worried, I wanted pretty much to do what I wanted to do. I think.

Desley: So who do you know that has a tattoo?

Participant: My step dad.

Desley: And is his a Tongan one?

Participant: yeah, he's Tongan.

Desley: but it's a Tongan tattoo?

Participant: Yes. They've got the bars and the little figures and the... He has a few. But mainly with them it's.... coz he grew up overseas, so it was pretty much all they could do over there. They weren't too creative with the western societies. Not too much colour. Just the normal greenish they have. Errrm. Not too many people that I've interacted with a lot have tattoos. So I don't think I was influenced by any of them to have them. None of my closest friends have them. My boyfriend's family- none of them have them. Pretty much my step dad's it. Maybe a few of my male cousins on that side. But no girls that I know. When you go around, you see a few people with them but not anyone that I specifically....

Desley: The girl I interviewed this morning said there was a girl round campus with tattoos all down there and across her chest and stuff.

Participant: I was working in Sydney a while back, like for a year. There was a girl in my office. She had from her neck down, like completely covered, from her neck downwards. And she had a few on her face. I'm used to seeing some people with them all over, but not on their face. And she had it and she even had it, it looked like a red paint all over her face. And then she had like darker lines and stuff tattooed, and I thought Wow! Coz this was in an office environment where you get like big, like, it was a big company. You get national managers coming over and international managers coming over. I was really surprised that they let her be in such an open area, where when they go through that, they'll see them. You get a bit worried. You think, "Oh she looks a bit tough," and you don't want to really interact with her. She's one of the nicest

people there. It's good though that she got the job based on her personality and not the fact that she was covered in her favourite markings. And she got them all done by the same tattoo artist. So whenever she went back, they knew exactly where to start from and what the pattern was. She was very dedicated. It's just too much.

Desley: So do you feel like because you have a tattoo you identify with any particular group of people?

Participant: Not really. I don't think it alters who I am. I think it, um. The only change is the fact that I am able to just take along with me everywhere, a part of my life that I want to show when I want to show it. I don't think it really altered my perspective on who I am and what kind of people I belong to, or anything like that. I'm still me that I was before, just with a bit of extra colour.

Desley: Is there anything else you can think of, coz my brain's gone to sleep?

Participant: I don't think so. I think you've covered everything and more than I thought I was going to cover.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	2	1	2	2	4	2	2	1	3	1	1	5	Sad
Patient	3	1	2	1	1	1	4	2	4	2	1	3	Rushed
Caring	2	1	2	2	3	3	2	2	3	3	1	3	Nasty
Kind	1	1	1	2	3	2	1	1	3	1	1	3	Mean
Sense of humour	3	2	2	2	3	1	5	3	4	3	2	5	Serious
Sociable	1	2	2	2	3	2	1	2	3	2	1	5	Reclusive
Friendly	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	3	1	1	3	Anti-social
Active	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	3	5	3	3	5	Laid back
Confident	3	1	2	1	1	3	2	1	3	3	2	4	Unhappy
Organised	4	1	2	2	1	3	4	1	4	2	2	4	Messy
Hard working	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	1	5	3	1	3	Lazy
Honest	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	4	3	1	3	Dishonest



8.4 RDT subgroup Philosophy

Participant PF2

Female, 40 years old

Interview date: 23/11/2005

Participant: I had left my second husband and it was my birthday and I was talking to a girlfriend about tattoos and we decided that for our birthdays we were going to get a tattoo and mine was my 30th birthday and it signified for me more of an initiation almost it was like suddenly I was free of the past and the ex and my life was opening up for me as who I was as a single person. And so it was a celebration of that not only my thirtieth but a celebration of being single so that is why I got my tattoo. Now it was a butterfly and it's a very small one and it's just down here, I suppose inside my hip. It's a tiny little thing went down to Central Station, I can't remember what it's called "central station tattoos" I think who apparently are the best tattooists in Sydney. They've won heaps of awards and I had this great big burly sort of, um, bikie doing it and he was down there between my legs it was really quite uncomfortable. I chose a butterfly because it was tiny and it was a beautiful little creature.

Desley: so what is it about the beauty aspect of it that's important to you?

Participant: the colour

Desley: the colour or the fact that it had lots of colours?

Participant: the fact that it had lots of colours, yeah, um. So many of the tattoos I found very dull but this butterfly had, the little butterfly they had had a few different colours on there so I chose that and it was such a, I suppose, a tiny pretty little creature too, so yeah.

Desley: so tiny and pretty and colourful

Participant: metamorphosis. You go from being a caterpillar to a butterfly and so, yeah, yeah the colour, those two things. And I associated with that, you know, I was shedding my old life, stepping into a new one so, that was there for me. Hence the association with a butterfly.

Desley: So that was like, a way of signifying this new life?

Participant: Yeah. It sort of, I could look at it and remember that whole period you know, those previous ten years that were so tumultuous and you know the good, the bad, the ugly, everything. And how I metamorphosised I suppose into myself and I think in your early 20s or in your 20s you hate yourself. You go through a period where you're just trying to find who you are and then in your 30s you step into that so that's what that signified.

Desley: So what about the place that you had it? The actual place on your body...

Participant: Why?

Desley: yes.

Participant: I'd heard so many horror stories about when women get older and the tattoo gets all shriveled and horrible so I wanted it in a place that I could still look at it but also be discrete about it and not have it go all saggy and shriveled and yucky. So yeah. That's why I chose that place.

Desley: So was there some aspect of you wanted to have it in a place where not everyone could see it?

Participant: I suppose it wasn't a showy thing, it was a personal, it WAS a personal decision, for personal reasons and it wasn't anything based on being tough, or anything like that, like to show the world that I was, um, I mean usually you associate tattoos with bikies etc, so it was nothing to do with, um, a rite of passage into adulthood or being tough or anything like that. It was all purely personal and that's probably why it's in a personal place, yeah. I didn't need to show that to anybody. It was all about what was happening for me, yeah.

Desley: but you said before it was about coming out of that 20s period, so it sort of was a rite of passage, in that way

Participant: but that's such a personal existence, yeah. That's such a personal sorry, experience, not existence. When you go from your 20s to your 30s and you step, that happens right throughout your life but that's such a significant one and you step into your 30s. that's so different for everybody and it's, it's not something generally that people talk about, except

with really close friends or, um. It's hidden, I think, it's hidden. What were your 20s like for you? Were there ups were there downs?. How bad was it? How great was it? What was it like, you know. Whereas for me it just exists as something that's hidden in society, you know.

Desley: the period of your 20s you mean?

Participant: um.

Desley: or the transition?

Participant: the personal growth you go through. It's very much, um, it's a cycle, spiritual, all of that, that change is quite significant in your 20s for a woman, so yeah, yeah. It was something that I was going through personally. It was my experience, yet it wasn't anyone else's. they had their own experience. Does that make sense?

Desley: um, I think so, yeah.

Participant: yeah.

Desley: so you're saying it wasn't a cultural thing, or a public...

Participant: no. it was all about self realisation, really. Yeah. Self realisation and self being the important thing because I wasn't trying to fit into a tribe or anything, you know. I wasn't trying to be tough, to make it with my peers or whatever other reasons people get tattoos. For me it was about realizing myself and who I was for me. Yeah. Someone that I could be with, who I choose to be with. You know. Yeah. So that's what it was, probably. Do you know there was probably some sort of sexual connotation to it too...

Desley: because of the placement?

Participant: because, yeah the placement, you know. That was something that I could, um, in a way I'd been married, um, you know for so long. It was like a coming out – I'm not gay or

anything – but it was a coming out for me sexually. It was like “where to now, I don’t need to get married”.

Desley: so an awakening?

Participant: yeah. So there’s a lot of spiritual aspects to this for me. It was like “I’m in total control of my life.” Yeah.

Desley: you know that, I think it’s in Ancient Greek, the word for “butterfly” is the same as the word for “psyche” or “soul”?

Participant: isn’t that weird? Isn’t that... ooh!

Desley: yeah. It gives me goose bumps actually

Participant: there’s no such thing as coincidence. I firmly believe that. I firmly believe that. And the more you pay attention to it, the more the serendipitous events occur. My life is full of those events now and it’s, I notice that now, I notice it.

Desley: a woman I spoke to had a bumble bee and she said “I don’t know” ... was it a hummingbird or a bumble bee – I can’t remember...

Participant: I like bumble bees

Desley: and she said “I don’t’ know why I got it” – it might have been a hummingbird because it’s the only one that can actually

Participant: fly backwards

Desley: yeah. And that meant something to her

Participant: interesting

Desley: and she’s like “wow, I didn’t know that”

Participant: wow. Interesting

Desley: so how long did you think about it before you had it?

Participant: um, probably a couple of days. I'd wanted a tattoo. I'd never done anything about it. Um, but it was after I'd left Brian, the whole thing and I was, I was charged, I was being powerful and I thought, yeah, let's do it, let's action this, because so many times in life you say something but you never action it. So it was like, yeah, I can action it, because no-one's going to get in my way. And so I would say in that time period it was only about two days but it was something that had been on my mind for a few years.

Desley: and you said you went with a girlfriend?

Participant: I went a girlfriend

Desley: and did she get a tattoo as well?

Participant: she did later, yeah. Not at the same time, no, no. but she did later. I can't even remember what she got.

Desley: so did you go with her when she had hers?

Participant: no. she got hers I think in England.

Desley: oh.

Participant: she's actually English. Yeah. Can't remember. I'll have to get back to you about that. Not sure. Yeah, I think it was in England.

Desley: it's just interesting whether you do it with someone

Participant: or by yourself

Desley: or by yourself. I got mine with my daughter on mother's day.

Participant: oh, cool.

Desley: we just went together. It's nice. So do you still like the tattoo?

Participant: yes.

Desley: would you change it at all?

Participant: no.

Desley: not at all?

Participant: no. I don't need to.

Desley: that's good! So, would you have it again?

Participant: another tattoo?

Desley: the same one

Participant: the same one?

Desley: would you have it again?

Participant: I'd probably have a fairy. A fairy or an angel, something like that. But once again, it would have to be something small because I don't, I don't want one of those big tattoos I've had friends with huge big tattoos all over their body, like girlfriends and stuff and that's not something that I want. I'd want a small one and it would be something like... Which is also along the lines of a butterfly, you know, a winged creature, with colour. Yeah. So a fairy or an angel.

Desley: so the idea of flight is something...

Participant: um, it has probably more of a spiritual aspect to me. The change, the growth, for me, um, from one creature to another. Um, etheric, um, flight can signify change, I suppose. You know, there's movement there. Yeah. So it's moving it forward. Yeah. So yeah, it does appeal to me. But look, I'm happy with my tattoo, my little butterfly

Desley: so would you have another one?

Participant: a second one? It has occurred to me but no, I'm getting too old, I think. There's other ways, you know, I had a piercing instead.

Desley: mine went the other way. So having another tattoo's not something you'd consider?

Participant: um, look it does occur to me. Either one on my back or one on my arms but I'd probably wouldn't action it, no.

Desley: so, if you were going to get another one, would it be more important where you put it, or what it was? Like is there one thing that would stand out for you?

Participant: I think I'd make the decision based on where I'd put it. And then what it was. Because choosing where it goes will dictate what you get, for me. Yeah.

Desley: so, why did you choose at that point to have a tattoo, rather than do something else?

Participant: like a piercing or something?

Desley: yeah, or take a holiday or jump off a cliff or bungee jump...

Participant: why? Because part of it was also rebellious, I think. Um, it would really piss my mother off, you know, and she was already annoyed at the fact that I was getting divorced and my whole life was so not what she wanted, um, and that was just one other thing that would also be something that would annoy her. Because she'd given me so much grief, too, you know. She has a certain view of the world, being Croatian, you know, what a daughter should be like and what they should be doing and how everything I was doing was not that.

Desley: my mother literally threw my clothes out of the house when I left my husband

Participant: yes. She'd just disowned me for two years, she didn't talk to me. Interesting. So I think that, that also, that drove my decision too. Um, why else? Someone else in our group had gotten a tattoo. Like it was, yeah, it was almost a tribal thing. We were going through our own personal journeys and that's what was existant, that's what came up in our group. It started off as a conversation between three or four of us girls. And then it happened for all of us.

Desley: the tattoo, or...

Participant: the tattoo. Yeah. "Let's get a tattoo". I can't remember who said it. We all did it at different times for different reasons. Um, just trying to remember... good question. We were also in the party scene, you know, clubbing, and there were a few people out there with tattoos and, yeah.

Desley: so is there something else you could have done that would have had the same effect for you?

Participant: probably, but the thing I suppose with tattoos is that it was cheap. You know, um, just about to get divorced, financially I just wasn't doing too well. Um, so going on a holiday would have been a great idea, but it would have cost about \$2000 whereas a tattoo only cost a few hundred. Not even I think, it was \$100, so it was really cheap. Yeah. Really cheap.

Desley: and do you think of it as being more permanent than going on a holiday?

Participant: absolutely. It's for a lifetime. Yeah. Definitely. Yeah. Whereas a holiday it's something you have every, every year, hopefully, or not. Not. But I mean you forget them, you know, whereas this stays, and you remember that, always.

Desley: and even if you have photos, it's like you have to go and drag them out to look at them

Participant: yeah, you do. Whereas this, it's funny, you don't even have to look at it, you know it's there.

Desley: yeah, but some people get to the point where they forget they have them, and then, they say, they can see it and go "oh, yeah! I have a tattoo!" but that might be more if it's on their back, perhaps

Participant: could be. Because I'm aware of the exact spot. It's almost like I, you know the phantom limbs, where people get them amputated? It's like there's a phantom there that I'm aware that there's something there. I'm aware of my piercing too, you know. I know that they're there.

Desley: but a piercing's a bit more, you know, because it can rub on your clothes and stuff, so it's a bit more physical, almost

Participant: but I know that... there's moments that you do forget about them, but I know that I've got one, you know. I don't know, because there was so much of an emotional charge behind it.

Desley: so do you walk around looking at yourself as a tattooed person, or are you a person with a tattoo?

Participant: interesting question. I'm a person with a tattoo. Yeah.

Desley: it doesn't, like, pervade your life or anything?

Participant: no. no. I meant there are people out there that would be tattooed people, it's a way of life for them, it signifies a lot more for them. Yeah, no. I'm just a person with a tattoo.

Desley: ok. So, what would be the opposite of your tattoo, for you?

Participant: the opposite? As in a tattoo that would signify something completely...

Desley: perhaps, yeah

Participant: the opposite? A scar? Taking the tattoo off. Um, the opposite to a tattoo....

Desley: looking at this from a Kellian perspective, I don't know if you know anything about George Kelly and Personal Construct Psychology?

Participant: no

Desley: but he says that to understand something, you have to understand what it's not.

Participant: ah! Relativity. The dyad, got ya. Ok. What made me choose, and what's the opposite? Good question. For me to choose that I had a tattoo I wanted to be reminded of my life and not forget that and so the opposite is just not having a tattoo at all,

Desley: and therefore not remembering?

Participant: yeah. Because I'm not the type of person who keeps pictures or writes things down or has diaries or anything, you know. I have something that will recall a memory, you know, um, so that's what a tattoo is. I see it and then I recall it. So I'm not this sort of, I don't really have any photos or anything. So yeah, the opposite for me would be to just not have had it. And even, you know, even just erasing it and having a scar there or whatever, that wouldn't even work because that would once again recall that whole thing, so it would have been just to not have it

Desley: and not have that trigger point?

Participant: yeah. To not have it at all. Yeah.

Desley: so does having a tattoo mean something different to having a picture of a butterfly on you?

Participant: yeah, it does. Because it's personal. Whereas a picture of a butterfly

Desley: on you though, you know? Having a tattoo, how do I put this? The process of having it, was that ...

Participant: the process of having the tattoo.... Interesting.... These are all great questions.... There's so much thought involved in having a tattoo....

Desley: there is! You didn't know did you?

Participant: it's interesting. You know you go through some pain in having a tattoo, you do and hence that's why I can feel it. Like I can feel, you know, for me, you can feel the individual pins going in, and I recall all of that, and I suppose that, I mean, that signifies your life, doesn't it? you go through pain to get to the breakthrough on the other side. Breakthrough, breakdown, breakthrough. Yeah. So, it's just a um.... it is, it's just an imprint of what your life actually is.

Desley: some people see the going through the pain as some kind of "test" I guess, you know, like how much I can put up with, and

Participant: I was scared of it but it was. I mean going, I was going through that anyway, um, where I, you know, in any stage in your life where there's going to be a huge change where you deconstruct your whole world and then you end up with a whole different view of the world. There's fear associated with that, and there's going to be pain and there's going to be all of the things you're going to go through to get to the other side. And the tattoo's like a microcosm of that, you know, um. But it wasn't to see how much pain I could handle, because it was tiny, it only took an hour. But, um, it wasn't as painful as I thought, either, um, but there was fear associated with getting it.

Desley: so was there a sense of accomplishment once you'd been through it?

Participant: yes! I did it!!!

Desley: I think that was what I was trying to get at. Was it like "can I do... whatever"

Participant: yeah. at the time too, I was reading Susan someone or other “feel the fear and do it anyway”. Um, you’ve probably heard of that.

Desley: I’ve heard of it but I couldn’t say who wrote it.

Participant: Susan something or other. And, Susan York I think it was. Yeah. I was reading that too, you know. And it was going out on my own, leaving the husband, starting a new career, getting a tattoo, all of that, it was just a major, major upheaval in my life. And so that was to signify and recall that, you know. Then that’s just one of the periods in my life that was like that. So, yeah.

Desley: so you didn’t think about having tattoos at those other periods?

Participant: no.

Desley: why would that be, do you think?

Participant: um, let’s have a think about that. One I got a piercing and that will remind me of that time in my life. Um, the other time..... do you know, for me, I mean this is how it occurred for me, um, I’d been married twice, right, and I’d had a third defacto. The first time I’d gotten married, I was very young, grew up in a very protected sort of environment, having a Croatian background. Got married and ended up leaving him to find out about myself, that that’s not me. I’m not part of the tribe. So for me it was going through a process of individuation. You know, and so I was just starting to get to know who I was away from, like, the tribe or the family. Then going into my second marriage, which really, I mean it was a great marriage, it was very nurturing, and I really grew. The sense of self really really grew, you know, and something happened and I knew that that was not what I wanted in my life so in a sense that not only did the process of individuation grow I suppose, but also my empowerment and who I was for my self. What I could and couldn’t do, um, I really stepped into actually liking who I was then. That was important to remember, you know, that was the next journey. The third one was more getting to know the dark side, I suppose, and who I was not, or didn’t want to be, but going to the worst that you could possibly go and knowing that that was not where I wanted to be. That’s not where I choose to, that’s not who I choose to become, so hence the piercing with that one. Um, so yeah, the first one it was just, it didn’t

need signifying, I knew I'd stepped away from the family and all that, you know, and yeah. but the second one was really important to me, you know, I guess I look at relationships as an opportunity for self-realisation. It's an odd way to look at relationships I think.

Desley: yeah, it's probably unusual

Participant: yeah

Desley: but it does make sense

Participant: yeah. so when you realize the self and you empower the self, for me, you really have a relationship that's really positive, because you're both two powerful people and there's not the underdog and the overdog, sort of thing, you can nurture each other, and that's how I look at it. so it's almost, um, and that's difficult for a lot of people, because there's a sense of independence, rather than codependence, yeah. so, but that one was really important for me. When I left Brian it was such an important time for me because it was all about empowerment and aware of being... powerful as a person. self-worth, yeah. getting a sense of self, self-worth. It really was. It was great!

Desley: so what do you think your tattoo means to other people when they see it?

Participant: not many people see it. um, what does it mean? Oh, that's a pretty thing. That's about it. you know what, I've never really asked, never stopped to ask.

Desley: you haven't had any specific comments?

Participant: Why did you get that done? Yeah. that's the only comment I have heard.

Desley: and at that point did you go into the full explanation, or did you just say because I felt like it or something?

Participant: I just say "it was for my birthday, yeah, and I'd just left the ex-husband so it was to celebrate that"

Desley: so the simple...

Participant: yeah. very simple.

Desley: so, what about the reactions from, say, your friends or family?

Participant: my mother still doesn't know. She would totally freak out.

Desley: so you said before part of the reason for getting it was to actually piss her off

Participant: it would piss her off, so that's not something

Desley: so you don't want to piss her off

Participant: no, I don't need to piss her off, but I know it would piss her off.

Desley: ok. So it's a little secret you have to yourself

Participant: it's not something... look if she sees me naked she'll see the tattoo, but she doesn't see me naked, so she doesn't see the tattoo, you know, and she'd probably say something about it. but that's her problem, not my problem. Does that make sense? You know? She will see something and she'll make it mean something whereas and I can be ok that she makes that mean something, that's ok, you know, she'll run with that and, um, yeah. look I haven't gone out of my way to show her but then I haven't gone out of my way to show anyone. You know, it's, it's not something I felt I needed to do. You know?

Desley: so when you first got it you didn't run around going

Participant: I did to my girlfriends. You know, the ones that we were all saying "let's get a tattoo" so there was Katie and there was Karen and myself and like the three of us, we did, we compared tattoos. And Katie went on to have a second one, so yeah, there were a, yeah, I did. Yeah, but no-one aside from that really, yeah.

Desley: and that was, do you think, because they knew what it meant to you?

Participant: they did, yeah. they knew exactly what it meant. They'd ridden a wave with me, sort of thing, so yeah, they knew, but, um

Desley: so it didn't really need an explanation for them?

Participant: no. they knew, yes. I didn't have to sit there and break that all down, whereas, I didn't see the point in, you know, taking the thing down, my tattoo! I didn't see the point, yeah. but you know, if, on the other hand, if someone asked about tattoos and stuff, like the topic came up with you, it was like "I've got one", yeah, so that's something if it came up in conversation, yeah, I'd be there saying "I've got one too" but not necessarily showing them that.

Desley: so you draw the line...

Participant: if they asked to see it then I'd show them. You know.

Desley: but you wouldn't volunteer?

Participant: no. I'd tell them I had it and if they asked the reasons why I'd tell them that, but yeah. it would really lie in the other's person's court as to. I suppose it depended upon where I was, obviously those factors come into it. you're not going to stand in the middle of the street and show your tattoo, that sort of, yeah

Desley: so how do you think people see you, do you think they see you any differently because you have a tattoo?

Participant: depends on the person. It really is dependent on the person, I mean, you have a generation of people that think of people with tattoos as bikies and scums and whatever version of that they have and that's my mother, she would think of me as less because I have a tattoo, whereas we have a whole other generation such as my friends who are professionals etcetera who have tattoos but it doesn't mean anything, it's not associated with the character of the person. It just signifies something for that person, so there's a difference, yeah. it really is dependent on the person who you're talking to.

Desley: so has it had any negative effects on your life?

Participant: no. no.

Desley: so only positive things for you?

Participant: yeah. it's in too discrete a place for it to impact on me negatively, I think, you know. Unless I was to meet a man who just hated tattoos. No, yeah, look, no.

Desley: but then you would hope that he would know you enough to like you anyway before he got to

Participant: yeah, you think. Because if it was the other way then you wouldn't want to be with him.

Desley: I guess it depends how soon you got physical too.

Participant: yeah, it does, doesn't it? yeah. no negative

Desley: that's good. Does having the tattoo mean that you identify with any particular group?

Participant: no. definitely not. That's an interesting question. Does that happen for people? That they identify with a particular group?

Desley: I suspect some. Because I know there's the old thing of you get a tattoo because you're a bit of a rebel, but then if you think about your stereotypes, you know bikies or sailors, they're a specific group of people. So are they getting the tattoo because they feel like they belong to that group

Participant: yeah. no. because I don't feel like I belong to any specific group at all, in any area of my life. There's just components of those areas of my life making up who I choose to be.

Desley: so you just pick and choose which bits work for you?

Participant: well, doesn't anyone? I mean, who are you really? Yeah. who are you really? They're only definitions of who you are, they don't describe who you really are. So who you are, for me, or who I am, for me, exists only in language, and so I'm a conversation in a skin bag really, and I choose that conversation at any one particular time, of who I want to be because I made everything all up anyway.

Desley: that's part of what I'm looking at. That people, like you said, you're a skin bag, people are putting pictures

Participant: on the skin bag

Desley: for some people maybe they can't carry out the conversation, so they use the pictures instead

Participant: the pictures to do that, yeah. I got that, yeah. totally.

Desley: I like that analogy.

Participant: conversation in a skin bag.

Desley: that's a good one. I might steal that.

Participant: you can steal that.

Desley: I'll put a little copyright down the bottom...

Participant: I have a few of those sayings.

Desley: so is there anything else about your tattoo that you think is important, apart from the things that you've said?

Participant: um....it signifies possibility for me, um.... in reminding me about the journey of self-realisation, you know. That everything, there's possibility in everything, even in the most horrible things there's also a breakthrough on the other side of that. Yeah, so that's, it's like an opening up, there's a huge world of possibility rather than something that's closed down because so many times in life you come through carrying your baggage, you know, and you close down all possibility coz something keeps happening. And so for me, its the other way – it just signifies that there is a world of possibility and that in having the joy you need to, there's that dyad again, in having the joy you need to have the pain so that you know you can choose the joy over the pain so yeah, that's what it signifies, possibility.

Desley: which is good, isn't it?

Participant: yeah, it's great.

Desley: wonderful. So, do you mind if we play around with this idea of change or growth for a second? So, for you, what would be the opposite of change or growth?

Participant: stagnation, um, interesting. Not, no self-realisation, no having a world view. You know, you've got your rose coloured glasses on as we all do and having those same rose coloured glasses that you've had since you were a teenager and the world view never changes. Nothing changes, you still have the same opinions, you still have the idea that people should be this way and not that way. There's only black and white, so yeah, stagnation.

Desley: so if you had to choose in general between stagnation and growth, which one would you choose?

Participant: growth, change, upheaval. All that – bring it on.

Desley: so why is that important for you?

Participant: ah... why? Um, it's all about self-realisation, you know, um, when you're fully realized as a person you're fully empowered, so that's why I like change, because it dismantles your world view, it deconstructs who you thought you were as a person and who the world was

to that person, it totally deconstructs that and then you have to rebuild that and that can be really frightening, but it's fantastic because on the other side it's a whole different person, and a whole different world view comes out, so, yeah, upheaval. Yeah. I like that. It's exciting for me, whereas most people get so distraught by it. you know, whereas I look at that as an opportunity almost to me there is no difference between good and bad. It's just a process because on the other side of good is always bad and on the other side of bad is always good, so it's a process you experience. It's, I really see myself as an experiential being, so that's, that's it and whatever I experience is good.

Desley: Ok so you have three tattoos?

Participant: Ok yeah, the first one I got was on my left hip, it's a Celtic knot. The second one I got is on my back its Celtic design with bands that come out its right on my spine that comes up reaching up to the other two. And the one I have on my right hip is a tricycle.

Desley: A tricycle?

Participant: T-r-i-s-k-e-l-l (spelt out) It's got origins in paganism and in Celtic history.

Desley: Oh Ok.

Participant: Kind of like protection, represents three, karma, that sort of thing

Desley: Okay, So how old were you when you got each of them?

Participant: First one I got in 99, when I was graduating the first time so when I was 22, twenty somewhere around there, the second one I got was about 2 years later and the third one I got was during the Olympics, no that doesn't work, maybe I got this one first, that one first then this one, hips first then the back. Sorry, I get mixed up.

Desley: So you said about 22 and then about 24?

Participant: Early twenties.

Desley: Cause they were all within a couple of years.

Participant: Basically yeah. Every 12 to 18 months I think I was getting them.

Desley: Ok so, before you had each one how long did you think about it?

Participant: Oh about 2 years, 18 months, I thought about them for a long time, it would take me forever to decide what I wanted. And I'd think about that for six months or so and then I'd start thinking I've got that and where do I want to put it and I'd think about that and if I still liked it after 12 months then I'd do it.

Desley: Fair enough, so do you know why you picked those particular pictures? Like the knot for example?

Participant: Yeah, the knot it actually has tradition in Celtic, you see a lot of the Celtic stuff wasn't recorded, it's not like other cultures where it gets passed down and everybody knows what it means, this is kind of what they think it might have been from back when, it is a knot within a circle and a circle is suppose to encompass everything, keep everything together, this one's actually also got an eternity symbol woven through it but I can't remember how it goes now. Took me forever to find it the first time, so yeah it's knot work, and knot work's very important to all Celtic design. Any Celtic design you look at will have a knot work somewhere.

Desley: Ok and is the knot significant?

Participant: It kind of, it depends on how technical you want to get, it depends on how many bumps it has, if it has four or three, depends on which path you go and others. Because it's not just straight Celtic there's also other influences, so it's like the Triskell I've got, is a pagan influence on the Celtic history, some of have to do with more with like have a really strong thing like this is all the goddesses and gods and trees and stuff, but knot work, was I recently found out, was actually probably more a common this is how they identify themselves, kind of like a family crest almost.

Desley: Oh okay.

Participant: But it was never recorded, so nobody can be sure what they mean

Desley: Would it have been different knots for different families or?

Participant: Yeah or different cultural groups within the Celts

Desley: Oh okay, so different clans or whatever?

Participant: Yeah, whatever they wanted to call themselves and like different affiliations, I'm not really sure but it could have been like different professions,

Desley: Oh Okay.

Participant: It could have been anything but again they didn't record it,

Desley: So you don't know.

Participant: It's the whole the Druids and the Celts and that they didn't have a written history it was all verbal so, a lot of it's been lost especially when the English decided to civilise them

Desley: So why did you pick the knot work?

Participant: The first one was because it was Celtic I was very much into Celtic history, I love the whole idea of it. I actually want to go over there, but... yeah it was just the eternity thing, it kind of represented everything I felt at the time, you know, it was, it's all together, it's all interconnected, it's kind of forever,

Desley: So was it any particular event or anything like that?

Participant: Ummm, it was graduating, it was supposed to be the next step, I was going to leave uni and I was going to go out and move forward, but it didn't work that way but at the time that's what it was suppose to be

Desley: So was it more a representation of I've finished Uni or I'm about to start something else?

Participant: I think it was a bit of both it's like I have achieved this, so I am ready to move on to this, if that makes sense.

Desley: Yep okay. So what about with the other two, why did you pick those particular designs?

Participant: Ah, the Triskell was kind of heavily influenced by someone I was seeing at the time, she was very much into paganism and that but I wasn't so much so I went more for the Celtic side and I just started researching it and it's kind of umm, if you look at it strictly from a pagan point of view, it's a protection symbol, umm, and all the stuff I was looking at the time was basically you know live life do whatever makes you happy as long as it doesn't hurt anyone else which kind of brought in all the ideas of karma and you know, what you do to others will come back to you. It kind of became just a general reminder like to be nice because it's going to bite you in the butt if you're not.

Desley: Yeah

Participant: Just a kind of a lifestyle, this is how I want to live, I'm not going to be a religious person but I'm going to have certain morals and standards that I'm going to live by

Desley: So is it more a protection thing or a reminder to live like that?

Participant: To me, it's because I modified it, from the design I was shown, so for me it's more of a reminder, that this is how I have chosen to live my life. Kind of starting to accept who I was,

Desley: And what about the one that goes between the two, like is it significant that it goes from one to the other?

Participant: It doesn't quite touch but yeah it's lined up so the centre it's a knot and then the arms come out and at the time I got it low enough that I could actually that it wouldn't be seen which I didn't realise that it sits right on my spine and runs up my hipbone, which hurts.

{Laughs} Yeah when the drills, When the things going it vibrates right up into your head. And I actually got it done for free by the brother of someone I was seeing at the time so I was sitting cross legged on a piano bench for 4 hours while he did it.

Desley: Ow.

Participant: so that was fun. Hmm but yeah its knot work, you know, symbolism of knot work in the middle and the arms kind of joining because everything is interconnected.

Desley: So, um, why did you pick those places to have them?

Participant: Partly because they are hidden, because my Dad would kill me if he ever finds out. I mean I've had them for 8 years and he still doesn't know. I guess a lot of it was yeah they're just for me and not, I didn't get them to show other people and say ha ha look I've got a tattoo it was more these are for me and nobody else needed to see them unless I decided to show them.

Desley: So it's a private thing?

Participant: Yeah that and a lot of jobs if you've got visible tattoos they won't hire you.

Desley: Yeah.

Participant: So I was kind of thinking ahead with that too.

Desley: So is there a place where you wouldn't get a tattoo?

Participant: Probably anywhere really visible. Like you know, your head or arms or... I mean back of the shoulders yeah I've been thinking about that or like subtle ones cause you see like some of them and the whole arm's tattooed or they're big chunky things like that and I just don't like it. its personal choice I mean if that's what they want they can have it.

Desley: But it's not for you?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: So do you still like your tattoos?

Participant: Yep.

Desley: Would you change any of them?

Participant: Umm, the Triskell one on my hip I'd like to fix up a bit, cause I got it done in Bondi and the guy didn't quite do it right, but I still like what it means I just wish he'd been a bit neater.

Desley: Ok so would you get them all again?

Participant: Probably yeah.

Desley: And would you have another tattoo?

Participant: Yeah I've been thinking about it.

Desley: uhuh.

Participant: Starting to contemplate.

Desley: You're just in the planning phase?

Participant: Yeah just where would I want it or what would I get.

Desley: What would be the first thing you would consider then? Is it more what you want or where you want it or?

Participant: I was actually starting to look at what I was, what I wanted more than anything yeah okay I want to get another tattoo and start thinking why do I want to get it, do I want it to be a special occasion, to represent something, what exactly do I want, what do I want to say, what do I want it to mean to me.

Desley: So that's more important than where it is?

Participant: Yeah once I have decided that, then once I've got a design that I like I start thinking where can I get it and do I have to modify it to fit that spot and then it's like well can I afford it.

But mostly its what do I want to get, where do I want to get it, how do I modify it and if I'm happy with that then I'll wait 12 months and if I still like the idea then I'll do it.

Desley: So wait 12 months because it's permanent and?

Participant: Yeah if I am going to change my mind two months after I get it...

Desley: what's the point.

Participant: yeah

Desley: So you said one was when you graduated, did the other two coincide with any particular event?

Participant: The Triskell was when I started accepting who I was and just saying yes, this is me and I can't change cause all my life I grew up around my parents Christian and I was sent to a Christian school and I'm the black sheep of the family because I'm totally different to everyone. And it's like cause I'm gay right and all my life I've heard gay jokes even now, they're like you know they all should be shot and all this sort of stuff and it kind of messed with my head for a long time and I tried everything I could to be like them and it just didn't work so finally I started accepting who I was, didn't mean I'd tell everyone but I started accepting who I was so that's why I got the second one plus

Desley: So it meant something to you

Participant: Yeah so that's kind of what it meant, I don't just get them cause there is also a reason for doing it.

Desley: So what would be the reason for the big one?

Participant: The one on my back, again it was taking charge of my life. Okay this is who I am, this is what I want to do and this is who I'm gonna be but I'm open to the fact that I may change.

Desley: Ok so that's different from the Triskell too.

Participant: Yeah, but that's more just reasons yeah ok, yeah cause ok, I don't know how to put this but it's like the design meant something but the reason I'm getting it they don't have to be the same thing. Like I want a reminder of what I have decided, what I have done, what I've...

Desley: Ok so it's a reminder for you of something that

Participant: Yeah, I guess that's yeah, I don't know, it's all mixed up in my head

Desley: Probably makes sense in there. Umm, would you ever consider getting your tattoos taken off?

Participant: No

Desley: So you've said like each design means something, do they mean something as a whole as well?

Participant: Yeah they're all Celtic so everything I get is interconnected, cause I mean, there's some cool ones, I like Ankh's, and I like some Egyptian stuff and some Roman stuff but I don't have any connection to it, just coz I like the design doesn't mean I'm gonna get it. If I want it I will do like this, I will get the necklace or something that's not permanent that I can get rid of just because I like it because it doesn't mean anything to me, it's not tied to anything to do with me

Desley: Whereas the Celtic's your background.

Participant: Yeah cause all whole family if you trace it back their all Irish, Scottish, English, Welsh and Gypsy apparently

Desley: What ever that is, I'm not even sure what gypsies are.

Participant: Ah North some country my grandfather was

Desley: Could be Bavaria but I don't know

Participant: There were also gypsies in the United Kingdom.

Desley: Ah okay.

Participant: A separate branch that split and my grandfather came from there cause nobody could understand a word he said. Cause he spoke English but not English like we speak it. Yeah so he had to learn how to speak English, even though he was from England

Desley: that's a bit weird. For those things why did you choose to have a tattoo rather than do something else?

Participant: I don't know

Desley: Because it's not like it's a spur of the moment thing for you.

Participant: No, I actually don't know when or why I got the idea of a tattoo. I remember around the time the first one I actually started thinking about in my third year of Uni because I took five years to do my first degree so it was 2, 2 and a half years before I got it done. And, I don't know we'd been studying something in English about stuff that might be, we looked at um, oh, what was the book umm. One of those books and they had all the umm the designs of like kind of like the Maoris where they do designs for that. And I thought well I don't have any connection to any culture like that and then I started, I did this family tree thing I was helping someone else tutor and I did my family tree thing that showed how to do it and I went oh ok this is my background. I've always liked Irish history , oh this is me, this may be why I've always been drawn to this stuff. I don't know exactly when it came about though, it's just it was something that I decided to do.

Desley: so you don't really know why?

Participant: Could have been anything.

Desley: Is there something else you could have done that would have had the same effect for you?

Participant: I don't think so, cause I'd already done, cause somebody suggested that "oh no the tattoos are just a rebellion thing", but pretty sure my life is a straight rebellion.

Desley: {Laughs} So hunting for the next?

Participant: No no, I've already done the whole you know cut my hair short as I could, grow it long, colour it all weird colours, I had multiple earrings half way up everywhere, so it was like the tattoos are this rebellion thing that I know is going to upset my parents. Cause I didn't tell them, cause Mum found out by accident and Dad still doesn't know so it was definitely something for me not for anyone else.

Desley: So what do you think would have been the closest thing you could have done than having a tattoo?

Participant: I don't know. nothing else ever occurred to me I've done other stuff.

Desley: So you didn't want to get some sort of weird piercing?

Participant: Oh I've got weird piercings but they don't really mean much.

Desley: They're not really linked to anything?

Participant: No, its just not to the same degree. Yeah there were reasons I got them at the time but no, they're not linked to the same degree because you can take them out, you can throw them away, they're not permanent. And they hurt, the pain's pretty much the same

Desley: Speaking of which, do you think the pain is a plus or a minus or just..

Participant: The first one I got he actually missed the hipbone he put it up a little bit too high and I was tickling, I was ticklish. I was laughing, it was this big beefy guy when I got it and he's sitting there going "Grrrrrrr", and I'm laughing and he thought I was a freak. Mind you I was supremely messed up. Like Um, what was it, oh yeah, I got warned that if I didn't do this they'd put me in a mental hospital for suicide watch for seventy two hours

Desley: if you didn't?

Participant: Oh um, I had a habit of doing weird stuff. Yeah, so at this time I was just like nothing hurts. So it didn't, it wasn't the first one wasn't because I thought it would hurt because I didn't feel it. Which was like, yeah you done, yeah okay off we go. The next two hurt but I was feeling again by then. I was actually aware of everything that was going on around me. But the first one I didn't care about anything

Desley: but the pain wasn't something you... cause some people say they get addicted to the pain?

Participant: Yeah well it is kind of addictive.

Desley: Can you explain why?

Participant: Um, depends why, I mean, sometimes it's just because I feel so detached from the world that it's like nothing's real and pain kind of makes everything real again.

Desley: Um, Okay, It puts you back in touch?

Participant: For a little while, then sometimes, it's like, it just never worked or

Desley: So that would be umm, With the first one where you said you weren't feeling anything that wasn't why you had the tattoo though?

Participant: Um, No It had nothing to do with it and actually the next two times I didn't get them done because I knew it would hurt, I mean it hurt, but that wasn't the reason I was getting it done. Mind you the one on my back I got done in Liverpool and half an hour after he did it I had to go home and all I had were jeans so I had my jeans on and had to drive home. I was driving like this, with a gap between me and the seat.

Desley: Yuck. Do you distinguish, like are you a person with tattoos or a tattooed person?

Participant: I'm a person who has some tattoos

Desley: Okay

Participant: I don't define myself by them because I don't show them to people, I mean, yeah I've shown them to people but a stranger can't just walk up and say "ah yeah you've got tattoos".

Desley: Cause they're not in a place that others can see them?

Participant: No, they're not

Desley: And it's just this concept that I struggle with the idea of having a tattoo versus having a picture on your skin. But I'm not sure, I haven't worked out how to articulate that.

Participant: What you mean, the difference between people who get tattoos and people who get tattoos of pictures of like faces and like that or..

Desley: Yeah I don't know what it is.

Participant: Yeah, I don't get the ones where they do like cartoons or they do like famous actors or... they get them tattooed... I don't get that.

Desley: Maybe that's a bit weird with them though?

Participant: I mean even the ones like, I've got friends who've tattoos and they get like animals and stuff and they're like yeah cause I really like them. I just don't get why people get people's faces tattooed on them. It's bizarre.

Desley: I think someone the other day was saying something about getting Elvis Presley or something

Participant: Yeah well, there all nuts aren't they.

Desley: I guess

Participant: The ones I don't get are when they get, where you go into the tattoo place and they've got all the pictures up and like boards and boards of like Indian faces with feathers and chieftains and most of it's not correct anyway, if you look at it historically that wouldn't have been correct. You end up getting all these white guys getting Indian tattooed faces on them and

Desley: Like guys getting the Maori stuff.

Participant: Yeah cause that's kind of rude.

Desley: Yeah that's what I think that the Maoris are probably really offended, by them, especially if you think of Mike Tyson, like and his facial one.

Participant: But some definitely have a, they mean something, they have a strong cultural tie and these people who have no idea what they're even getting.

Desley: It's like a lot of people say they wouldn't get a Chinese symbol because they don't know what it says but they go out and get a Maori symbol and they don't know what that means.

Participant: Yeah but it doesn't mean anything because it's not writing as identified but it is. Oh I always like the ones where you get these cartoons and they get Chinese symbols and it actually is like a lunchtime menu or...

Desley: Yeah that's what someone said the other day they didn't want to get Chinese because they thought it might say beef in black bean.

Participant: That would serve them right.

Desley: I figure

Participant: You can go online and get cause actually, I was skimming through e-bay and that and you can actually buy disks and there's like thousands of Japanese or Chinese symbols that you can tattoo yourself with. Whatever.

Desley: Whatever, so tricky question. What would be the opposite of each of your tattoos?

Participant: Oh crap, um,

Desley: that's unusual

Participant: yeah, that would be a good answer. Um, the first one's, the first one's kind of like eternity so it's a permanent tattoo, so, what a stick on tattoo or what do they mean or?

Desley: What about the opposite of the picture?

Participant: Well there are death symbols that could probably replace them because mine are mostly about life and change and doing and like reminding you that you need to do this. There are like um death symbols with like the one that's half that has a pagan influence that um like other Wiccan symbols that indicate inner evil and cause the thing about the symbols is some of them were actually like equivalent to the Caduceus for doctors they actually had symbols because people couldn't read so these symbols would actually tell the person what this person was. So like a witch doctor would have a certain symbol tattooed on them. Like job description. You really wouldn't want to change jobs

Desley: Isn't that where all the surnames came from though

Participant: Yeah

Desley: farmer and butcher and

Participant: mine - Johnson son of John or... yeah so you could walk into this village and you would see this sign so, you know there are ones you know some symbols that you know, warn that the devil could be here kind of like the hallow's eve the tradition behind that I love that one do you know that one

Desley: No

Participant: Okay, All hallow's eve is actually a time where it's between gotta get this the right way round between spring and winter, so going into the dead season, it was actually a time that was feared because it was said to be the weakest link between earth and the afterlife and spirits would come back to haunt people. the masks came from the fact that you have to wear a mask because if these spirits could see you and identify you they could take you with them. So it was actually people were terrified, they wouldn't go out they would make offerings to appease the spirits and the masks to hide themselves. It was this big, it was a very serious religious festival, that has been corrupted because the English took over and you know we can't have that it's All Saints and that's how and then it became Halloween and candy and kids.

Desley: I read somewhere, cause we have people come around for Halloween and It annoys me because it's not Australian. Um, and they said it started in England and people use to come and beg, and they would give the beggars stuff to protect them from the spirits.

Participant: Well this actually goes back further.

Desley: Makes more sense

Participant: Yeah, this goes back to, superstition and all that, but it goes back right back to the history and all whatever the whole Celtic.

Desley: But it's such a big thing in America

Participant: It's a whole thing in America we had kids come trick or treating and I was going to tell them the full story, yeah fine you want to come trick or treat, yeah fine we'll sit down and we'll give you a lecture.

Desley: When you had the tattoo you were alone?

Participant: No.

Desley: So you had someone with you for each of them

Participant: Yeah actually, Shirlyn I met her in my second year at Uni, for my first degree, she came with me for my first one cause the deal was she kept whingeing, I had already decided to do it, I had already made the appointment and she kept on whingeing that if you get it done then I'll get one done, she wouldn't get a tattoo but "ohhh I'll get something pierced" So I did it and she's like "oh, damn" so when we drove up and she got something pierced and the stupid thing was I always said I wasn't ever gonna get anything done apart from getting my ears pierced. So that blew out of the window. Yeah, so she did the first one, the second one we were working up at the Olympics at the same time and so um, we finished work at like three in the afternoon because we started at like four in the morning we drove out to Bondi cause we got lost so we said oh ok there we go, let's do it.

Desley: So that was the?

Participant: The Triskell

Desley: Ok

Participant: Most people picture a little bike. It's not, and then the one on my back is, yeah I went up to see my girlfriend and her brother was there so he was down from Rock Hampton so he did it for free which is good cause it was a couple of hundred dollars worth of work.

Desley: Yeah it would have been, so when you got the tattoos no one else got a tattoo with you though?

Participant: No

Desley: So, it was just you?

Participant: Just me. So it wasn't a group outing, I wasn't doing it because other people were doing it.

Desley: Of the people who have seen them what do you think they mean to them?

Participant: Unless I've told them, most of them just think Oh, yeah, tattoo, bit of a rebel, but no, it's not..

Desley: So, you said that your dad'd kill you, that he'll be thinking it'll stop you getting it, did it make you think twice about it or anything?

Participant: Made me think hard, very hard about where I'm going to get them. Cause I found a really nice one that I was planning on getting on my foot but then I like but then it was like no, I'll get to summer and I'll walk around and he'll see it. See I'm still very much scared of my father.

Desley: Hmmm, I was saying to someone the other day I think this parental thing, it's just there; you can't get away from it,

Participant: No, but he's very controlling of my life, he always has been, he's unemployed now so he's at home all the time.

Desley: I was talking to a woman the other day and she said part of why she got her tattoo was because she knew it would piss her parents off, but, she hasn't shown them so it's like I've got this, if you knew you'd be really cranky

Participant: Yeah my ah, mini rebellion is that I would cut my hair and dye it really weird colours. I'd get like I got these, cause that's like "oh yeah I'm rebelling" I'm nothing bad but the rest is I know I've got and they don't don't and it's like he he he see I can do what I like.

Desley: So um, have you had like bad reactions to the tattoos or just more indifferent?

Participant: Most, um, people that have liked them have been indifferent, but then again, who I choose who to show them too, I think when I was working at the hospital one of the social workers started telling me off saying I shouldn't get tattoos so I figured who cares I don't care what your opinion is, this was for me, I didn't do it for you, I didn't do it for anyone else.

Desley: I think from nursing from the research I've looked at, they all in tune because you can get an infection or catch something

Participant: Well yeah that's it, she actually gave me this brochure on safe body art and body modification I said "I'm at work can I get back to you" "no" she said and she goes and brings out all these brochures and says "you know the dangers you can have and trusting who gives them to you and the infections and you know their permanent", yeah I had figured that out,

Desley: Like a lot of people go "did it hurt" and you want to say "No you want to stick a needle in me a couple of thousand times tell me"

Participant: What does it feel like?

Desley: Um, pain

Participant: The closest I've come to is you know when you get sunburn and you scratch it.

Desley: Ooh Yeah

Participant: When they're doing the colouring, yeah it's kind of like that. Ow, why would you do that? Ok if you don't get it then I'm not going to explain it.

Desley: There's no point is there, so, um, what do you think about other people that have tattoos

Participant: I think if it makes you happy and it's not hurting anyone then go for it, its kind of individual choice, but, I mean some of them I just don't get. Like with people who have you know like all over their bodies, because they have to realise that, yeah ok as if it's as long as it's not hurting anyone and it makes you happy, then great, but you've got to realise that it also puts out an image about you and this is who you're projecting and a lot of people won't look beyond the tattoos to see the person, they will like this guy, this guy I know he's got em all up his arms and he's a big guy and you look at him and you think I wouldn't want to meet him in a dark alley, but he's the sweetest guy, I mean all through the exams he would let me jump in, we'll jump the lines and chat to each other and he would just let me rant, and he'd go you feel better now and yeah ok cool, but he's such a sweet little teddy bear and he looks like a big tough guy. Cause most people look at the tattoos and go Oh, hmmm.

Desley: Someone said the other day that people who don't have tattoos judge the people who do but that it doesn't work in reverse, so if you have tattoos you don't tend to judge people on that superficial level

Participant: I don't know sometimes I still look at people with certain tattoos and I'll, first thing I think is that must mean... Then I'll stop and go no hang on wait a second yeah but yeah some tattoos even now I'll still look at and go oh I'm not sure if I'd want... Like if I see somebody walking down the street like this guy like Steve his, my first impression is ooh I think I will be a bit careful.

Desley: But at least I guess, you're still willing to give him a chance, rather than go No, I won't get near him.

Participant: I love the stereotypes, cause I do security and the first time I told the guys I had tattoos, and they were like "No you don't", and I said "Why Not" I'm security, security have tattoos and they're like "yeah" but your not really security.

Desley: A guy the other day told me that he thinks 70% of the security guys in Wollongong have an arm band.

Participant: No I think it's just the same guy that rotates. No um, but actually most of the guards that I've worked with have got a tattoo. But a lot of the guys I've worked with it's a macho thing. Like, yeah. Should see em, we are getting ready for work and um, it's always fun cause we get shoved in some back room so I always come dressed cause it's just not worth it, but they come there've all got their, they've got their shirts on and their all um, and they're flexing their muscles and yeah um I've got a tattoo and it's all about how tough am I. and it's like... but then the other one is that if you have female security guards you get weird looks anyway cause you must be gay, the funny thing is most of them are, but oh you've got a tattoo that does it. I hate that being judged by.

Desley: Just the stereotype

Participant: yeah. But its not, I don't do stuff because it fits the stereotype, it's just what I like, I hate being judged like that.

Desley: I guess in a reverse kind of way they're stereotyping themselves for being so small minded.

Participant: I like the funny ones, you get these um, older ladies they're in their 50's whatever, and they're drunk and you've got to toss them out and when they cause when they come in and their all so prim and proper and oh yes , when it's the end of the night they're drunk of their face and your hauling them out and your polite and they've got tattoos and it's like you cow you gave me such a hard time at the beginning of the night for being prim and proper and I love that.

Desley: Does the fact that you have tattoos mean that you identify with any type of particular group?

Participant: I don't think so because mostly I got them for me, I didn't get them to be part of a group, I didn't get them to say yes I am part of a group, I got them because I wanted them.

Desley: And you wanted reminders?

Participant: Yes of certain things and decisions I've made and but no, I don't, I don't, its not like a secret oh look at this I've got this tattoo let me into your club, cause most of them I won't tell them. So yeah again it goes back to, cause I'm not telling them, I'm not really using them to identify as

Desley: But not like you see other people with tattoos you don't go like I've got those too

Participant: No, I usually just go "oh, wow" what have you got, oh cool, you've got a tattoo that's pretty cool. Yeah. No, I suppose that's what it is, like you've got a tattoo that's oh well that's a nice one, then it's oh I wonder why they got that and what it means and.

Desley: Yeah a woman I spoke to the other day doesn't always tell people the real reason, like the whole reason, like I got it when my husband left me or...

Participant: Yeah, like I say look I got that one when I graduated Uni and I got that one when I was up in Sydney and.

Desley: Like linking it to the Olympics

Participant: Yeah I'll do something generic that doesn't mean anything cause they don't need to know

Desley: So, does the fact that you were in the Olymp..., in the Olympics... the star

Participant: I was a traitor I worked for the American's

Desley: Oh really

Participant: Cause they paid us.

Desley: I spent one day working at NBC or someone like that.

Participant: NBC, the Americans were NBC cause I worked for them.

Desley: That was because I injured myself I couldn't do anything else I had to sit still

Participant: I was in um, I was with the drivers the transport department and I kept getting lost so I got a promotion up to dispatcher, but then I'd kind of bounce between.

Desley: and then everyone got lost?

Participant: No, it was mainly just organizing cars and we were at the IBC the International Broadcast Centre, right next to the stadium and we'd sneak in all the time, we had passes and we had American passes, you see, everyone else to get into IBC you just needed the normal badge to get in. to get into the American compound which was about a third of it you had to have a separate one, another one, security was just amazing for the Americans they were so paranoid, so between those two I could pretty much go anywhere, and we had um like the jackets for NBC and which we weren't suppose to wear outside of work because they could identify us and we'd go shopping with and we'd use American accents because we got bored, and I mean I was working with American and Canadians and I mimic people after a while. So we'd go shopping

and they'd go oh you're from American and you'd go yeah and they'd give us discounts cause we were overseas. Oh we had so much fun. We seriously just played the whole time, I don't think we slept, I think most nights we'd get 2 or 3 hours sleep cause we'd start work at 4 or 4:30 so we'd get to work at 4 and we'd work through till like 2, or 2:30, 3, or somewhere around there depending on when the next shift show up, you'd go home, grab a shower, put on your uniform for the next day and go out and party all night, because you were transport, you'd ring up, is there a shuttle coming, yeah, come pick me up. They'd pick you up, drive you back to work, you'd sleep for 2 hours in the backroom and go to work again. I did that for three months.

Desley: Hmmm, wow.

Participant: Man it was fun. Mind you I think I came home and slept for like a week straight

Desley: Yeah I bet, so. Um. Is there anything else about your tattoos that you think's important. As in what they mean or?

Participant: No, I think that's pretty much why I got them.

Desley: I was just, I don't know if you answered this or not, but the one, the Triskell, is that linked to the fact that you were at the Olympics or was that just a coincidence?

Participant: No it's just that I just happened to be up there at the time.

Desley: So it's not a reminder of that it's a remind of other stuff

Participant: yeah. The fact that I got it up there was mainly because I was hanging out with Megan and we were just talking and I thought "well" I was going to wait, cause it was near the end of the Olympics, and I was going to like wait till I get home but this guys going to do it for the same price, I may as well get it done now, I was like and then part.. I suppose technically I can say yeah I got it while I was in the Olympics, so I guess, but that's not, that's kind of the blow off reason, but that's not the reason, I didn't go the Olympics and go "I'm going to the Olympics I'm gonna get a tattoo." That just happened to be where I was when I got it.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	3	2	2	2	3	5	3	2	1	3	2	4	Sad
Patient	3	2	1	1	3	4	3	1	3	4	5	5	Anxious
Caring	2	1	1	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	4	5	Cold
Kind	2	1	1	2	2	3	2	1	3	2	3	5	Mean
Sense of humour	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	2	3	5	Humourless
Sociable	2	1	1	2	2	4	3	1	1	2	1	4	Unsociable
Friendly	2	1	1	1	2	3	2	1	2	3	3	5	Nasty
Active	3	1	1	2	3	4	3	3	3	4	4	5	Lazy
Confident	3	1	2	2	3	4	4	2	1	4	1	1	Scared
Organised	2	1	1	1	3	3	3	3	3	4	5	3	Chaotic
Hard working	2	1	2	1	2	4	3	2	3	3	5	4	Slacker
Honest	2	1	1	1	2	2	3	2	2	3	4	5	Liar



Participant: I got my tattoo October last year and it's an Egyptian ankh and it symbolises eternal life. Basically I said to myself, when I turned 18, it was going to be pretty much a pinnacle in my life, so I said I'll get a tattoo to kind of signify that. That's kind of why I got it and when I was getting it, it didn't really hurt that much. I expected the pain to be a lot worse than what it was. And then it was like over and done with. The initial outline wasn't as bad as the colouring in, the colouring in hurt. It was a pretty good experience. I'm still pretty happy with it now. Like I don't regret doing it. Cause one of my mottos is "don't live with any regrets." Its in a nice spot, well I think it's a nice spot and I'll be able to cover it when I'm older, so yeah.

Desley: So why Egyptian?

Participant: Egyptian? I have an interest in the earlier cultures. I really love Egyptian artwork; I love, like, just the whole kind of sketch of it. Learning about the past, what their ideas were and just everything surrounding that kind of thing. It's kind of that and Celtic. I've got, I've got like an interest in, so and I just thought it was really appropriate to get it, especially for what it signifies.

Desley: What do you mean by that?

Participant: I'm one of these people who likes to believe, like, in reincarnation, so, and that kind of, well I see it stemming from the Egyptian mummification and all that type of thing, so I thought it was relevant. It's just such a nice symbol to have. So yeah, I just thought it was really appropriate so that's why I chose it.

Desley: So there's no Celtic equivalent?

Participant: There's no Celtic, well not yet. I'm actually planning on getting a tattoo when I go to Dublin. So... that's still in the works. I really like all the Celtic things that you hear about. I really have an attachment with Ireland. I can't explain, I can't explain- like the Egyptian one. I don't have any specific immediate heritage there.

Desley: Maybe it was a past life.

Participant: Yeah, see that's what I like to believe- like, I've been here before. Umm, I think, yeah that stems back to why. Like I have distant, distant relations coming from like, the UK and everything, but like, I think I'm about 4th generation Australian so...

Desley: No question about that one. So why eternal life?

Participant: Why eternal life?

Desley: was that to do with reincarnation?

Participant: Yeah, to do with reincarnation. I believe that the soul does initially, it goes on. Each time we're here we come back and we're meant to learn a lesson, so, I just think its just appropriate, so when my soul initially does leave this lifetime, it will always be kind of a symbol that even when my body dies and decomposes or whatever, it'll, I don't know. It's just a significant thing to have symbolised. I think it's significant anyway.

Desley: So, 18- what does that mean to you?

Participant: 18? 18 was a pinnacle in my life because there were a lot of things happened. I'd just finished my HSC. It was quite an emotional time in my life. Really, at one stage I really broke down there. And like, psychologically, from that perspective, I think that symbolises that. Coming through the other side of that, it, it really kind of changed my life a lot. When I had my year off last year, cause I deferred, I just kind of said, well, you know, that's significant to me and I just kind of stemmed from that experience. Also, I don't know, I suppose its, initially in Australia 18's kind of the age that they say, you're legal, you're allowed to vote, you're allowed to drink, you're allowed to do everything. So I think its symbolizing my youth as well. I kind of tie that in, and the experiences that I've had.

Desley: You mean the end of your youth?

Participant: No, like, I don't know, its, reincarnation, the idea of eternal life means kind even though our body ages, our soul doesn't. I mean, it evolves in the fact that you learn things, and

you learn different things. But essentially at the heart of it you're kind of always you. Like you never really age in that perspective. Do you understand where I'm going?

Desley: Yeah... so you said that you broke down?

Participant: Yeah

Desley: Was that during the HSC?

Participant: Yeah

Desley: So that was just like too much stress or something?

Participant: Yeah, yeah. A lot of, a lot of stress.

Desley: And you said that you came through and that was significant. Do you mean in the way that, that you made it through?

Participant: Yeah, yeah I think so. I learned a lot from that experience. I hope never to go back to that. There's a lot of like, positive things to come out of it. I see that as... Never looking back I suppose. It's like a thing like... I'm also a firm believer in not living with regrets. And I don't regret that experience. As hard as it was, I don't regret that experience, from all the positive things that I can look back in hindsight and see from it.

Desley: So it's like, everything happens for a reason?

Participant: Yeah... I know, it's very unscientific...

Desley: So why did you choose to get a symbol of something? Like, if you say don't look back, but do you not look back and go, like when you see your tattoo, doesn't it remind you of that?

Participant: Yeah it does, but its like, it's like one of those... how can I explain it. You know how you pick up scars along the way? It's like one of those things that kind of reminds you of that but it's significant cause you kind of think, oh, I can look back now and see how I've

changed, and changed for the better. Its more of that perspective, not so much as it's a bad thing to look back on. I think even the bad experiences that we have it changes us for the better. And how we handle the situations, so... I don't know if that answers your question.

Desley: So when you look at the tattoo what do you think of?

Participant: I just see it's me at 18. I know it's only been a year but like, it's significant to me because I initially always had a drive to say look, when I'm 18 I'm getting a tattoo. I always wanted a black ankh on my back and that's where I got it. And, yeah, just, I don't know, it was just a drive. I think with everything that happened it pushed me and motivated me further to get it done.

Desley: So you wanted to get the tattoo for how long?

Participant: Not that long. Probably when I was about 16, 17- that kind of age. I think a lot of things kind of influenced that, like.... I can't explain... I'm very alternative and I had my tarot cards read, had a reading done. Not saying you get a tattoo as such. It kind of changed my experience. From that experience I ended up getting my nose pierced, to remind me of that and how significant that was, and my nose piercing got infected so I took it out. I suppose I've got that drive to kind of, ok this is a significant point in my life. I want something to remind me of that. I think 18 was kind of, it was just one of those things. I kind of said yeah, I want to remember, I want to live this year especially to the fullest and go from there. So it symbolises that, me just, you know, being me. I don't know if that answers your question but...

Desley: I guess so. I'm just wondering, like if you imagine in 10 or 20 years time, when you look at it what kind of thing you'll think about?

Participant: Me? Thinking about it... I don't know.

Desley: Like will you just think, I got that when I was 18 and that's it or do you think there's other things?

Participant: No, I think it will always link back to my life at that time. Like...

Desley: So going through what you went through?

Participant: Yeah, yeah. It has that significance. It has my interest in like, Egyptian mythology. It symbolises all that, that's happening. When I look back in 10 or 20 years time and see it in the mirror I will just be like, I remember why I got that. I got that for me and it was essentially something really personal. I just, I don't think I'll regret looking back at it. I think it's a positive thing to have one. To see it in that respect.

Desley: So when you said that you broke down and then you came through the tattoo was after all that was over?

Participant: Yeah

Desley: So it wasn't part of getting through whatever was going on?

Participant: No, it wasn't part of it. It was essentially like an end product of it.

Desley: So whereabouts is it?

Participant: It's an Egyptian ankh. Its black and its umm..

Desley: Lower back?

Participant: It's my lower back, yeah.

Desley: So why did you put it there?

Participant: My lower back? Ok... I think its, well I didn't want it in a place that was going to be visible all the time to certain people. Like I know a lot of women get it on their shoulder blades, they get them on their ankles, and I don't know, I mean, depending on what they get I think it looks pretty tacky sometimes. Also, when you're wearing t-shirts or shirts or even just like open-toed shoes, like, or if you're in a nice gown like going to an evening ball, you'll be able to see the tattoo straight away. That's why I avoided those places. Also I think, it kind of, this is going

to sound weird, another one of my little theories, the chakras, its at my base chakra, so I don't know, I see it as an aligning thing. It just kind of...

Desley: so it balances you?

Participant: Yeah, yeah

Desley: Maybe that's what I need. So, do you still like it?

Participant: Yeah

Desley: So you wouldn't get it changed or taken off or anything?

Participant: No, no. Yeah, that's what a lot of people say- they come back and they say you want more, you want more. Nope. I haven't had that drive. That's what they say. Once you get one tattoo you have to extend it or make it bigger or modify it.

Desley: But then you did say you might get another one.

Participant: Yeah, see that, that was when I was originally planning a trip to Ireland last year. But unfortunately I got sick, really sick, and I couldn't go. So that's going to be one of those things that I do, just going to Ireland, being there, and that'll be significant because when I come home I can say I got this tattoo in Ireland. This is what this experience stemmed from.

Desley: So do you know what design you'd get?

Participant: From Ireland? The Celtic one? Probably, definitely a Celtic knot. Possibly a Rhiannon's knot which is like in a diamond shape, or even like just a circular one. Like it'll just be a nice... it's going to be little.

Desley: And do you know where its going to go?

Participant: I haven't worked that one out yet. I was thinking maybe on my hip, one of my hips or, I don't know. Cause you can't... if I ever decide to have kids, it'll stretch, so I wouldn't put it on my stomach. I don't know. It'd be somewhere little and I'd be able to hide it up, cover it up.

Desley: So what do the knots mean?

Participant: The Celtic knots? Well, Rhiannon's knot that I was looking into getting, is umm, essentially because it doesn't end, it represents the song bird, she's associated with the song bird. Like music and all kind of the Celtic, like roots... I don't know, I can't explain... essentially from musicians and people like that. She's the goddess that influences that. There's also, I just think even like a plain circular one, just represents eternity. Like essentially how, like we start at one point and we always come back to that point. It's evolutionary, like, its just what I see... I don't know...

Desley: So are you a musician?

Participant: I used to be. I used to sing quite a bit. Yeah, since then I haven't really taken it up much, like recently...

Desley: So, what about the pain aspect of it?

Participant: The pain aspect?

Desley: The fun bit...

Participant: The fun bit... it wasn't too bad. Like, I expected it to hurt so much. I, essentially, I tell people oh it doesn't hurt, like the outline, I found, didn't hurt- whereas other people said the outline hurt, the colouring in was easy, you know. I was a bit of a wuss, I had numbing cream, a bit of numbing cream on it. It just felt like the outline was just a pen being drawn on my back. But it kind of, I thought the colouring in hurt the most. Because it was like, the little do-hicky, it was like scratching across my bone, so umm, it was like, I describe it as a razor blade across your bone. But, like I said, I'd be crazy enough to go and get another one. So, I couldn't really rate the pain. It's not as bad as what everyone thinks. And like afterwards you kind of get it

done, and you have to like wash it and make sure its clean and put cream on it. It was easy as, it didn't hurt from that point on. It was just the initial pain.

Desley: Some people say they're addictive.

Participant: Yeah

Desley: Do you think that's true?

Participant: I think so. You see like, people, like one of the chefs that I work with, he initially started with one on his upper arm and it's, he's slowly but surely getting like a full sleeve done, like you know. It's really cool, but you see people that add to their tattoos and... one of my friends, she's got a lotus on her back and she's planning on getting a star on her calf. That's coming up soon. So, I don't know. I'd say they are addictive. I don't know what it means to other people but for me, I just, I kind of know what I want and I don't want to change that in any respect. I have no desire to go back and say oh can you fix this ankh up and can you put something to the sides of it, can you colour it in a different colour, or, I'm just content with what it is now.

Desley: Do you think once you get your knot that'll be the end of it?

Participant: Yeah, yeah, so...

Desley: Simple... do you consider they'll be sort of related?

Participant: Yeah, I think so. I think, well even though they're completely different, they are in the same respect that they all stem from, I don't know, early civilization, and the ideas are kind of linked, however they are interpreted differently. I just think back to the Celtic times, like the Druids and all that kind of mythology. Like, as soon as you mentioned Celtic, anything Celtic I relate to the book of Cells. Just the beautiful designs and the patterns and just the artwork, I think is absolutely gorgeous. Essentially the ideas that are built into that, I think it's important. I see the same thing with Egyptian mythology, like how the hieroglyphics are symbols and to everyday people they're just symbols of this and that, but I think every kind of symbol has an important message in it.

Desley: And so what's the message, do you think?

Participant: For me? For me, I think the idea that, yeah, our physical bodies may die but our soul lives on, and get reincarnated many times. I don't know. We have scars from that and I think these, they symbolize things to me that are close at heart, and my beliefs and structures or that kind of, I don't know. Just yeah, eternity. That even though we pass on, civilization's going to keep going. And I think it also represents that, like I'm just one person, you know what I mean, and the unity of the whole, the idea that everything's intertwined with the Celtic knot. Every generation has their different things and life will progress after, much after like, us now, this moment, like yeah, so, and that relates to eternal life, with my ankh on my back. Yeah...

Desley: So do you think there's something else you could have done, rather than have a tattoo, to mark being 18?

Participant: Yeah, I could of. Like I could have got another piercing. But umm, no, I, piercings, I suppose, like a lot of people look at the aspect of when they're like ancient, when they're aged, you know, they're going to regret that so much, they're going to, you know, which is fair enough. I like where it is. I like that it is permanent. Like, I like that fact, whereas a piercing you can always take out. Like, there's some piercings that I wouldn't get. I'm pretty happy with just having my ears pierced at the moment. I don't know, I think a tattoo, I just like the fact that it is permanent and that it will always be there as long as I'm around, and fully conscious. Yeah, and when people ask me oh what's that? I'll say well, this is what was happening in my life at that time. Kind of, it's a record of my history. I created my own history. I don't know, that's what I see it as.

Desley: So you don't think that down the track there will be some other point in your history that you would want to mark yourself again?

Participant: No, only going to Ireland. That's it. As crazy as that sounds.

Desley: So you'll have a really boring life after that?

Participant: No, probably not boring. I don't know, I just, I figure by the time that happens, I've gotta be turning into a responsible mother maybe.

Desley: what, and responsible mothers don't get tattoos?

Participant: Some older women do. I just, I think by that stage in my life I'll have done, you know, all the things that you're meant to do when you're 18 and when you're late teens and like 20s. and then you hit a certain age where you think, oh ok, now I've got to take on a different role. That's significant for sure but I think when you're living, really like, for yourself and being single and being free, when you're in like your early 20s, or late teens, early 20s, so I think that's the life where you, you're kind of discovering who you are so then hopefully later down the track people, I don't know, you'll meet your partner or whatever and they'll know who you are and where you come from. I think from then on its kind of not so much you're living for yourself, you're living for your family, your immediate family and like, yeah. I don't know, its kind of that tough thing. It just doesn't, like I wouldn't go in and just say oh yeah I got married at 21, oh heaven forbid, God, get married at 21, and you know, get a tattoo for that. Its not that reason. Like, you know, it's not...

Desley: So its not like you have to plot out every thing in your life?

Participant: Yeah, its just certain significant things that appeal to me as a person, its not, yeah. That's why I think, well, because I'm young, at the moment, I just think, yeah, I wanted to get a tattoo when I was 18 because that marks my youth and everything that was going on in my life. Then maybe one time, maybe later on, when I eventually do, if I do get married, or whatever, lots of ifs and buts here. You know, then he'll know, ahh this is her history, this is what this means. She got this because you know, it'll, it will kind of signify to him a bit more of who I am and who I was and who I've become and how'd I get from point A to point B.

Desley: So if all that stuff hadn't happened do you think you still would've had the tattoo?

Participant: I don't know. Possibly. I mean, I was adamant, even growing up I thought, well, towards my middle teens I was like, oh when I go to Ireland I'm going to get a tattoo. Just to mark that experience because its one of those things that I just, ever since I was about 14 I've always wanted to go overseas and travelling and I think its, that was instilled in me. And then it

kind of changed toward my late teens. Where I went, oh I'm going to turn 18. I think, you know, there was the consideration, but there was never the real drive or the motivation behind it until that happened and I thought, I had all those experiences and I thought, na, I'm going to get this. Yeah.

Desley: So did you go by yourself to get it?

Participant: Actually it's quite funny. My mum took me. Cause a lot of people say- oh, you know, your parents, you know, what do they think? Do they know, you know? Cause I have a lot of my friends, they've moved on to uni and they've got tattoos and their parents would totally disapprove of it. Whereas I'm just too honest and my mum, she'd be able to pick, same as my sister, I'm just too close to them. So my mum actually drove me out to get the tattoo. Yeah, she sat down there and she's like ohhh, ohhh, and she was just looking at all the designs. And she's, she's kind of the same, like, it kind of stems from me, since I've done research on like, like Egyptian assignments that you do through school or whatever and even the Celtic things. It's kind of, mum's kind of picked up a couple of my, like my books and she started reading them and she's become really interested too. She doesn't see it as a bad thing either. She thinks, that's just Kate, that's just what she's all about. So, yeah.

Desley: But your mum didn't get a tattoo?

Participant: No she didn't.

Desley: So, what do you think it means to other people that see it?

Participant: I don't know. To some people, well some guys, they probably think oh, you know, you fashion statement, like, or even chicks, girls I should say, it's a fashion statement. Like, I mean, a lot of girls have it on their lower back and they have like a design they have a surfy design or whatever. But, mine's significant to me. Although its funny because, a lot of my mates, cause I cover it up generally, its only if I bend down you'll see a little bit of it, and a lot of my mates go- oh have you got a tattoo, like I haven't noticed and I'm like- really? Whereas a lot of girls, I think, I suppose, the fashion these days is also designed to show off that part of your body, like the low cut jeans and everything. So I think that, yeah, I'd say some people would see it as a fashion statement if they didn't know me, whereas my friend know me and

they're like, oh what does that mean to you? Like, and they're, they're intrigued by that part. And personally sometimes I really just don't really care what other people think, like, cause it's important to me and that's what matters I think.

Desley: So what kind of reactions have you had to it?

Participant: Good ones generally. They're like oh, you know, the essential, does it hurt, or oh would you go get another one? Underneath it all, it generally is, what does it mean to you? My girlfriend who has the one, the lotus on her back, she's like, oh it's really nice and simple. And she said, it's just personal, it's the same as her tattoo, she's like, I see it as getting it for the right reasons. Like, something personal to you. It's not just going out and getting a random dragon down your arm. It's all conceptual, it's all the ideas behind it. They're generally intrigued. They're like what does it mean? And I'm like eternal life you know, and they're like oh how'd you get to that? Oh yeah, and I start explaining it.

Desley: So you haven't had any negative reactions?

Participant: No, no. Except for my grandfather and grandmother. Which, that wasn't really that bad. I just said, oh yeah I got a tattoo. And they're like, they just started laughing. Which, they were kind of shocked, it was initial shock. But then they're just like, yep that's our granddaughter, she wouldn't be any other way. Yeah, so even that was accepting, it was just the initial shock and then they burst into laughter. So...

Desley: When my daughter got hers, like, she just got a little Chinese symbol and my mum- oh that's pretty, it'll come off won't it and she said no and she just went white, promise me you'll never do that again... but yeah, she didn't keep that promise, she's a naughty girl... So you didn't ever worry about having, someone having a reaction, like your grandparents or something and go oh maybe I shouldn't do this?

Participant: No, no... I'm a person who sees something, or if it's significant to me I'll be very passionate about it and essentially I'm the one who has to live with the consequences of my decisions. And, so I don't see it as a negative thing and when people say oh, well I haven't had a person say oh, it's horrible, I don't like it or whatever, I just kind of shrug my shoulders and you know, go on my way. It doesn't really worry me. Like, it's something for me. I did it for myself.

Desley: It's funny though because people seem to be happy to say I don't like your tattoo. They wouldn't go- I don't like the shape of your ears.

Participant: Yeah, exactly, exactly

Desley: It's because you have a choice.

Participant: Yeah, yeah. It's about who you are and if people are going to accept you or not accept you- if they accept you good, if they don't, who cares?

Desley: Some people I guess

Participant: Yeah

Desley: So, hard question- gotta have one... What would be the opposite of your tattoo?

Participant: The opposite? What do you mean, like the opposite of eternal life or the opposite of...?

Desley: It's open to interpretation

Participant: I don't know. Well I suppose an atheist approach. I don't know. I've never even thought of it that way. The opposite to my tattoo... I don't know, I suppose if a person got like a different symbol from a different culture. That would be, like, you know, kind of an opposite in conflicting natures. The only other way I can think of eternal life is that if you're an atheist and believe you just die and there's nothing beyond that. That stumped me, I really, I don't know. Is that an appropriate answer, or?

Desley: Yeah, yeah, anything is. Because it's just however you take it.

Participant: Yeah, yeah, well yeah, I don't know. I just suppose it would be the belief systems. The different way people perceive them. Mine's different to everyone else's and they're fine to

have their opinion and I'm fine to have my opinion. So, I don't know. I'd say the opposite would be the opposite meaning I suppose.

Desley: Ok, so does the fact that you have that tattoo mean that you identify with any particular group of people?

Participant: Like, one of my, like my friends, or any specific... no not really.

Desley: Not bikers, coz they have tattoos?

Participant: Yeah that's what I thought of. No, I think it's more of a personal decision. Like, it wasn't oh yeah I'm going to get a tattoo of like an Egyptian thing cause I'm going to join an Egyptian club, or I'm going to get a tattoo of a flower cause I'm going to become a hippie. It wasn't like that. It was, it was just, I think it's just personal. It's a personal decision. I just decided to get one for me. Not essentially maybe in any kind of hip hop, you know hip trend or just to join a club, or it was just yeah.

Desley: So do you think of yourself as a tattooed person or just a person with a tattoo?

Participant: I'd say probably the second one. I'm just a person with a tattoo, you know. Who has a history just like anyone else. And I think in many aspects that history's symbolised by my tattoo. But on the exterior to people it would just be oh, she's a person with a tattoo. Like I like to think it was that, and if they knew me or they wanted to get to know me better, they'd ask oh what does it mean or they'd ask me the concepts behind that. So, yeah...

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	2	2	1	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	4	4	Sad
Patient	3	2	3	2	4	3	3	4	4	2	5	1	Impatient
Caring	2	2	1	2	3	2	2	4	3	3	5	1	Heartless
Kind	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	4	1	Cruel
Sense of humour	2	3	3	3	3	1	3	4	2	3	2	3	Grouchy personality
Sociable	1	2	2	1	1	5	2	3	1	3	1	4	Unsociable
Friendly	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	1	3	4	2	Anti-social
Active	2	1	1	1	1	4	3	4	4	4	3	5	Couch potato
Confident	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	3	2	4	1	4	Insecure
Organised	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	5	4	4	3	5	Scattered
Hard working	2	3	2	2	2	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	Bludging
Honest	2	3	2	2	1	2	2	4	4	4	5	4	Liar



Participant: Well, I have four tattoos. I got my first one in about the year 2000, roughly. I'd always wanted a tattoo from the age of about 15 onwards and obviously I wasn't allowed to have one, it was against the law, and then I was seeing a fellow by the name of Paul, who said I don't want a girlfriend with tattoos so I waited and I waited and I waited until about the year 2000. And I'd actually broken up with Paul and so I went and got a tattoo and I was so excited because I always wanted one. And I got a frog on my foot and it really hurt, it really hurt, it was like someone sticking a knife in between your toes and twisting it and it really hurt but it was so cool and I was really excited about having it and all that kind of stuff so, that was really, really exciting. I've got a bee on my hip and that was, I'm not even sure, I think because I love tattoos, I just love them and so I got the bee that was just really lovely and people are like oh, that looks really cool. I think it was just one of those things that you just go oh I've got one, might as well have two, you know. And then after that I started thinking about wanting another tattoo. They say they're addictive and I'm sure that they are, I'm sure. But umm, yeah, I've got, I started thinking about it and I thought well where would I get one because I want them in a place where I can hide them if I want to hide them. But, so that I can show them off if I want to show them off. Because I think it's a very important social thing that if you want to have tattoos you want to have, be, not come across with you know, the one on the shoulder or you know, the chick from the garage, you know, down the street at the welfare homes and all that. So I've got them in discrete places where I've hidden them. So I've got, the next one I got after the bee was the gecko on my ankle and it's wrapped around and it's really cool. I love it. And I'm actually planning another one. I'm going to get a gecko on the top of my foot so it's like a gecko trail going up my foot. Because I just love nature. They're all animals. And I think when my son turned 2, no 3, it wasn't too long ago actually, only about a year ago, I'd been thinking about another tattoo for a little while and going with the theme of wildlife and lizards and frogs. I went to a tattoo place and I said look, I really want a tattoo, not sure what to get, want to make it wildlife, what have you got? And they, you know, said oh well here's a couple books, went through a couple books and I just saw this lizard one and it's just awesome and I went, I like that but it's too small and they go oh we can blow it up so they blew it up and I got to about oh say, 4 inches high- I don't know if that's 4 inches, I don't know how much it turns out to be... Yeah and then I changed the colouring on it because I wasn't happy with the colouring and they put that in between my shoulder blades which is another place if I have my hair down you can't see

it and if I'm wearing a jumper or a t-shirt or that kind of thing you can't see it but if I want to show it off then I show it off and people are like, wow that's really, I didn't know you had one and I'm like yeah, well I love it, so... Yeah, the only downside is, having the ones on my feet, they wear, they get a bit, the colour seems to fade quicker because there's a lot of wear and tear on your feet, pull your shoes on and off, sweating, blah blah blah, so you get, they wear away a bit. I've had the frog re-inked on my foot once, probably about the same time as I got the lizard on my back, so yeah.

Desley: Is that all?

Participant: That's the four.

Desley: So why did you pick nature?

Participant: I actually picked it because a lot of people, a lot of women, as far as I can tell, go for things like roses and unicorns and just smellsy crap that I don't like. And I thought well you know, you can be run of the mill or you could have something that you really enjoy looking at. And the frog came about because people were like oh you're going off like a frog in a sock and I thought hmm, frog in a sock heh. So I thought about it and I went to the tattoo shop and there were these pictures of frogs and I went that's ideal. I'll just stick that on my foot and I will have a frog, in a sock. Done. So yeah, that's how that tattoo came about there. Don't know what to say.

Desley: So nature's obviously important to you.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: So what is it about it, can you say?

Participant: I don't know. I think it's just, I think it's just lovely to look at. It's, it's different. Like a lot of people get different things. My thing is that I like the animals. I love geckos. I absolutely adore geckos and lizards and stuff like that. So I figure just, nature's great and yeah the next one would be gecko obviously. But yeah, I wanted a snow leopard when I was younger but then it came down to well, snow leopard on a full back is A) too gaudy, it will fade too

easily because it's white colour, a pale colour and sort of just the logistics of it, but yeah it's always going to be nature for me because I think the old roses and names, just a ridiculous idea. And you know, just the standard chic ones, dolphins, just, they don't interest me, at all.

Desley: Is that because you don't see yourself as a standard chic, or?

Participant: I think it's that I don't want to look the same as everyone else. You know, I just, I'd rather, like if it came down to being the same as, having the same tattoo as someone else and going oh you've got the same tattoo and standing there going "wooh I can't take that one off". Not like a dress, you know?

Desley: That's bad enough isn't it?

Participant: Yeah, so, if you make it a bit different and then, then you don't have the issue of people coming up and going oh, I've got that very same tattoo. It's like oh crap, that's great, now I feel special. Yeah, just be different I guess.

Desley: So is there a place you wouldn't put a tattoo?

Participant: Yep, there are. I wouldn't do... I wouldn't do visible areas. Like the sleeves and on the hands, shoulders and all that kind of stuff. I wouldn't do breasts- anything that sags basically. No bum, no boobs, no belly, none of that. On the hip's cool cause you know, things move but your hips kind stay there so it's handy. Yeah, I think anything below the bikini line kind of area... people have tattoos across their vaginas and eh... that freaks me out. And underneath my arms. Apparently it's really sensitive there and I'm a sook, so I wouldn't do that. And like those people who do it around the neck and on the head and stuff. I wouldn't do that just because you can see it, you know. And it's, there is a social stigma, whether it's right or not, there is a social stigma to having the tattoos visible, especially on a female.

Desley: So, you said when you had them, how long did you think about each one before you actually went and got them?

Participant: Oh, the first one, 10 years? No, was only about 7... but I'd wanted one for ages. But yeah, the second one, I didn't really think about what I wanted but I did think that I wanted one

as soon as I had the first one, so it's like you kind of, you have one and then you're like, ok oh where else I could put one. But you don't really think of oh, I wonder where I can put this specific tattoo, it's like, I wonder where I could put another one and then when it comes to oh I can get another one, what's it going to be? So yeah.

Desley: So it's having a tattoo's more important for you than the picture, sorry, where to put it?

Participant: Having, having, yeah. I like them. I like having them on my body. I think at this stage there's only going to be a couple more that I can put on before I run out of places that I can hide. But I like having them. I think they're just, just beautiful. It's like body art? And it is important for me to have them. I think, having, having the tattoos, yeah, as you say, is more important as to how long you sit and think about it and where it goes and all that kind of stuff...I think I like the tattoos, I want them. It's quite sad.

Desley: Not really. So do you still like all the tattoos?

Participant: I love them, I love them. People go to me- you've got a frog on your foot. And I'm like- yeah. I love it. They're like oh what's that on your ankle, is that a lizard, it's like no, it's a gecko. I got a gecko. On my ankle. They're like, you got any more? Yeah.. they're right here and they're right there, it's like a strip down contest to show all your tattoos, I love them.

Desley: shades of Mel Gibson showing off his wounds in that movie.

Participant: it's like a battle scar, but it's pretty colours

Desley: So would you change any of them?

Participant: No

Desley: And you'd do it all over again?

Participant: Oh yeah.

Desley: And you already said you'd have another one?

Participant: Yeah

Desley: So, did having any of the tattoos coincide with any particular events in your life?

Participant: I think that the frog one was the break-up, the break-up with Paul. It was like, ok, sweet, free to get a tattoo.

Desley: So, was it, was it any kind of like celebration of starting a new life or anything like that?

Participant: No

Desley: So it wasn't actually because you broke up with him that you got a tattoo, it was more because you broke up with him you were free to get one?

Participant: Yeah, yeah, pretty much, yeah. It's like, yeah, I guess so. It wasn't like a new beginning or anything like that. It wasn't like that.

Desley: Cause a lot of women get them when they get divorced.

Participant: Really?

Desley: Apparently.

Participant: Wow

Desley: Yeah, cause it's like celebrating that they're now going to start this new life as a single person.

Participant: Hmm... sorry...

Desley: So it wasn't anything like that?

Participant: No

Desley: So none of them?

Participant: No, I can't say it's any, any of them really were...

Desley: So it was just more when it was the right, like convenient for you to get them?

Participant: Yeah, I think, yeah. Cause I was pregnant in between time, my first one and my second one and yeah, I just think just when it's convenient and when it's safe to do so. Cause like, you don't want to go getting a tattoo when you're pregnant, cause infection and all that kind of stuff and... There's always danger of getting injuries and infections like hepatitis and all that so you don't want to do that.

Desley: Would you bleed more when you're pregnant?

Participant: I have no idea.

Desley: Wonder..

Participant: Mmm

Desley: Seems to make sense...

Participant: although there's a lot of relaxant, so you'd probably be more relaxed about it.

Desley: should get one while you're in labour, it will take your mind off of it.

Participant: Don't know...

Desley: What about the pain thing? Is that like a plus for you or a minus or is it just something you have to go through?

Participant: I think it's a neutral, yeah. Something, it's a means to an end kind of thing.

Desley: So is there any sense of accomplishment when you get through it?

Participant: um. I wouldn't say so. Like, I think, it hurts, but it's not, it's not like well, yay, I won, I beat the tattoo guy with the gun that I just paid to put a tattoo on me. I wouldn't say there's any sense of accomplishment, no.

Desley: It's just that, you know how you said that they're addictive and I wonder if part of it is, cause a lot of people say they feel really good when they do it, and whether that feeling is part of the addiction?

Participant: No, I wouldn't say it's that, not at all. I don't know. It's been ages since I've had one so... {long pause} I like the, when it's done and they're like oh wow that looks really cool and you get the photos and all that kind of stuff and then it's like whoa, I've got a new tattoo and here's the pictures and stuff like that and I guess people do want to look so you become more... I don't know, it's just like having people look at you. But then a lot of people look at me anyway, so... I like being the centre of attention... Yeah, no I wouldn't say there's any specific sense of achievement there.

Desley: So why do you think they're addictive then?

Participant: Cause they're so pretty... I don't know...

Desley: But pictures are pretty.

Participant: Yeah, yeah that's a very good point.

Desley: So what's different about a tattoo?

Participant: You get to keep it. I think, you get to keep it and you're like... I don't know. It's bizarre because it's not something that you go out and you go after, looking for hey that looks really good or you know, but that kind of is part of it, you know what I mean? It's an acknowledgement of the pain I guess and there's an acknowledgement of wow that looks really good, that kind of thing and I guess... I don't know. I'm not really sure if there's any. Hadn't really thought about it to be honest.

Desley: Someone the other day said it's more like you know, you put a picture on your wall and then you go oh that looks really good I think I'll have another one over here. That kind of thing. So you do it with pictures. And he said to think for him, that was just the same thing with his tattoos.

Participant: Like decorating, yeah, yeah.

Desley: Cause you wouldn't just have a whole house with one picture and nothing else.

Participant: Yeah, that's a very good way of looking at it.

Desley: it might not make sense for a lot of people...

Participant: Yeah, no that makes perfect sense. Yeah, it's like well here I've got one which is what I've wanted one for ages and then it's like well it's so great, look at the outcome, then it's like well ok, well I've got lots of skin... where can I put another one

Desley: Do you think you'd ever think about getting your tattoos taken off?

Participant: No, no...

Desley: Do you consider that they mean anything as a whole or are they all separate?

Participant: I think they're very much separate as their own thing and they all, like they all, see I've got two tattoos by one place and two tattoos by another place. And I think just, it's like well, that's where I started and this is really cool but then there's this, these other ones and they're really cool as well. It's, they're not, they're definite separate entities as far as they go but, I think, they're just lovely as a, well you know, I, here I am, I've got four tattoos. They're all different but they're all part of me as well, so that's really cool.

Desley: So do you consider that they represent particular parts of you, like for example the bee- does a bee mean anything to you?

Participant: No... actually, it's got a little venom thing on the end of it and I was like, yeah, that's like me... every now and then I can be a bit waspish

Desley: So the sting?

Participant: Yeah, yeah, have a little bit of... but yeah I think they're just pretty pictures, yeah for the most part.

Desley: So there's no hidden agenda or anything?

Participant: No...

Desley: Like some people get their star sign because they say they have similar traits to whatever that star sign is supposed to have. Like I've had a few girls that are Scorpios and that's supposed to mean they are this, this and this, and they think they are, so they get that. So you don't consider that a frog is anything in particular, or a gecko?

Participant: No, they're just gorgeous. They're gorgeous little things to hold. You can play with them and they're cute.

Desley: Do you think there's something else you could have done rather than have a tattoo that would have the same effect for you? Like you talked about wanting to be the centre of attention so you could have gotten your nose pierced or?

Participant: Oh, no, see I don't like the idea of piercings. They just scare me to be honest. But I, like I tend to do a lot of things that require a lot of attention, like I perform vocally and I do things like ride horses for a job, and I pack parachutes, which is for me it's a very fulfilling job because I get a lot of attention. People come in and they're like oh ok, that was great, fantastic, here we go, here's another, you know, eight parachutes to pack. And so you get to be in the centre of focus and I like that. I'm a very attention seeking person.

Desley: So you don't think there's something else you could have done rather than have a tattoo?

Participant: I guess there's plenty of things you could do, it's just, what you think, what I thought was good at the time, yeah, but there's things that I just won't do. Like piercings and stuff like that. I had a belly ring and I didn't really, it was like, well yeah, there it is but...

Desley: So you didn't get any enjoyment out of it or anything?

Participant: Yeah, no, it was just hurt and was a pain in the ass cause it got infected, and cleaning and all that whole, bleh.

Desley: It took me three tries to realize that wasn't going to work. I'm a bit slow... So do you consider you're a person with tattoos or are you a tattooed person?

Participant: Bloody hell. A tattooed person or a person with tattoos. I'm a person with tattoos, yeah.

Desley: And do you think it's more important, or what's more important for you to have a tattoo or, like have that tattoo, or just have any tattoo?

Participant: I definitely would say that all of the tattoos had to feel right. It's not like you go out and you go I want a tattoo, that'll do. You know what I mean? You go out and you go, look I want a tattoo, what things do I like, and for me it was nature. And it was like, well, ok, and then you look. Like there's always a range of tattoos, there's always what you can do. And I actually made adjustments to the ones that I got. Because they kinda didn't, just didn't fit, you know? And personalized them in my own way and then just went ok, well I like that and I'd like to keep that, you know what I mean? So wop that on the skin and there it stays.

Desley: So when you went and got the tattoos did you go by yourself?

Participant: Yes, yep all four of them.

Desley: Very brave.

Participant: Yeah, well, didn't bother me.

Desley: So what do you think it means to other people that see them?

Participant: To some people I know they think that it's a cheap way of trying to get some attention. I know that a lot, well not a lot of people, but some people do, some people think that only, only sluts, that kind of person, or bikie chicks get tattoos. Some people love them and they just, they're like oh wow I could never do that because whatever reason they have. But they like them. And some people are like well, it's a tattoo, people have tattoos. It's like having a nose. Everyone's got a nose. That kind of thing, so I think the reaction's varied. And like my mum, my mum approves but kind of doesn't approve. She's like, oh you've got a bandage on your foot... I'm like yeah... does it have colours on it? Yeah... bloody hell... So, yeah, I think just reactions vary. And I think also, people will react, I'm a very big believer that people will react the way you allow them to react. Like if people are "oh, what'd you frigging do", it's like well you know, if you don't know me that's fine. You're free to make an opinion, but understand that I'm not what you think that I am. I am who I am. If you're prepared to get to know me, then that's great. And if you're not, then be miserable over there. Have your own opinions over there. I don't want to know. So, yeah, I think there's a process there where people can go either way. and whether you're defensive or happy to have them and be proud to have them, that can go good or bad for you. Yeah.

Desley: So have you had any really negative things happen because of the tattoos? Like where you've not got jobs, or lost boyfriends, or?

Participant: No, no, I think cause I have mine in spots where I cover them and because I don't, like I don't do work at this stage where I'm in an answerable position for that kind of thing. Like I work in a stable. I love working in the stable. I work in a drop zone. And people aren't going to say oh you can't pack my parachute because you got a tattoo, you know and people aren't going to say you can't ride this horse because you got a tattoo. And if they do, I mean there's laws these days, you know, stick your job up your nose, kind of thing, so. Yeah, I think, yeah just you've got to find where your niche is.

Desley: So do you actually skydive or do you just pack?

Participant: I do, yeah, yeah.

Desley: Cause one thing I wonder about is whether like, that's obviously some kind of thrill seeking experience, not having done it I don't know, but I imagine it would be. Whether there's any similar feeling to that to getting a tattoo?

Participant: No, not for me, not for me. For tattooing, it's like a bit of oh, well here we go, getting a tattoo, yay kind of thing. For skydiving it's like oh my god, oh my god, ok, it's alright, I'm fine, ok, get the adrenaline going. For the tattoos it's like, ok we'll get a picture on our foot.

Desley: So there was no adrenaline rush for you?

Participant: No, not really, no. It's like yeah, I got one, it's...

Desley: So when you went to get it were you excited?

Participant: I was, I was a bit excited. I was a bit nervous coz of the pain thing.

Desley: So was that similar to being excited because you were about to throw yourself out of a plane or not?

Participant: No, I think that's the whole, that's overcoming a base fear, you know? That's ok, falling, there's a lot to come to terms with right there. I'm falling towards the earth and I have a parachute, but what if it doesn't open? And then, then there's the gradual becoming accustomed to it, where, where by it's not so much the heart attack anymore, it's just like ok, we're going to do something really cool and here we go. And then I think like down to about 70 jumps you get to the stage where it becomes a little bit like you know, hey I'm going to do this and then you do it and it's like yay I did it, kind of thing. Which is similar to the tattoo but not really. Something you go and like oh my god you know, I'm going to ohhh... get the tattoo and it's going to... it's not a big scary thing, to venture straight into a tattoo, whereas it is with your sky diving.

Desley: Because you could die.

Participant: Yeah, or you could die with blood poisoning, but that's really...

Desley: A bit more gradual...

Participant: A bit more gradual, yeah

Desley: Than a splat on the ground...

Participant: a minute and a half of scary, terrible before death

Desley: So you said that there's a base fear, I think you called it, a fear of falling?

Participant: Yeah

Desley: was there no fear of pain then, with the tattoo?

Participant: Not really, pain hurts obviously, otherwise it wouldn't be called pain. It's not like a terrifying fear of pain.

Desley: So it doesn't seem as life threatening?

Participant: No, not at all.

Desley: And I guess you could say, if you really wanted to, you could say stop, whereas if you're half way out of a plane, it's a bit late to go ok, I don't want to do that.

Participant: Back it up, I don't want be in free fall... pull me back in.

Desley: Did you ever worry about someone else's reaction enough to where you would have second thoughts about getting a tattoo?

Participant: Yeah, yeah I didn't get a tattoo when I was with Paul for years. Like I turned 18 and we broke up when I was 20, 21, 20... no 20... how old am I now... 27... what year is it? 2006...

Desley: so about 6 years ago

Participant: Yeah, yeah, so 21ish... who knows. So as soon as I broke up with him I was like ok, that's it, done, good. I didn't have one when I was with him because he didn't want me to have one and that really pissed me off. I was like fine, whatever. But yeah, he was one influencing factor.

Desley: What do you think when you see other people's tattoos? What do you think of them?

Participant: I usually go oh my god they've got a tattoo and I want to look at it! There's some of them, some of them that I really don't like, just some body artists, like well, I think you went over the top. You know, and it's like well you know, obviously you're excessive, so I don't want to party with you... And then there's some, some people, I think, not so much the tattoos influence me, but the way they're dressed or the way they behave and I think there's certain tattoos that are stereotyped with certain behaviours like the bikies and you know their girlfriends... and then there's you know, people who go out after a mid-life crisis and get a frigging sleeve-full or they're jail tattoos you know, the ones that fade and they leak... you just go oh what did you do? And yeah it's just I think more, more the person, if I see someone with a tattoo... someone with a tattoo, someone with a tattoo... The package, different story. Ok, you've got long hair and you're wearing leather and you're bashing your girlfriend- clearly not a good type.

Desley: So it's not really whether they have a tattoo or not then?

Participant: It's about yeah, the person, I think. Which I think is an easy thing to say when you have tattoos.

Desley: Well apparently they say the difference between people with tattoos and people that don't is that people with tattoos don't mind if you have one. It's people that don't have them, I think are really polarized. They either say oh we like them and we'd like to have one, or they're very negative. Like I've had some serious reactions to, like cause we had to put a poster up like that, only mine was bigger and this person just started going off at me about how bad it was to have tattoos and stuff. Ok... I'm just asking the questions...

Participant: Don't have one, not getting one, relax... Yeah and older people think of me that I don't have any because they are well hidden. I just think, well hey, you've got a tattoo, hey I've got a tattoo too, check it out. And they're like oh wow, cool.

Desley: Yeah I had one student come in and she just straight away started with the every female that has a tattoo is a slut and she was just going off... and I would never associate with anyone that had a tattoo and she went on for like 20-25 minutes and then she went... oh I just remembered my best friend's got a tattoo...

Participant: {laughing} ... oops!

Desley: didn't say anything... So who do you know that has a tattoo?

Participant: Quite a few people actually. A lot of skydivers. There's loads of them. I know people, like working in the stable, and my mum used to foster people as well. There's lots of people in stables with tattoos. I know a lot of people with bkie tattoos and jail tattoos and all that kind of stuff. Friends who have like tiny little tattoos and huge ones and one of my ex-partners has a million tattoos and I just, I don't know, there's something about them, I find a lot of tattooed people wherever I go. And I think also, my personality is if I see someone with a cool tattoo I'm like, oh hey how you going, you've got a really cool tattoo, and I'll go and meet them, you know, and I think a lot of friendships start that way just like oh hey, how you going? You know, so, I know quite a few people with tattoos, probably ranging into hundreds...

Desley: So what about in your family?

Participant: Not immediate family. My sisters don't like them on themselves but they don't mind them on other people. They're not, whatever. My mum's not a fan of having tattoos cause she's not a fan of needles and she's not a fan of pain. But she has 3 kids, go figure. Yeah, just my dad doesn't, my dad was in the navy and he's probably one of the only people in the navy that I know that doesn't have a tattoo. Yeah, not immediate family but I'm not sure about the rest of my family. I think maybe my uncle has a tattoo but I wouldn't, like if he does I wouldn't ask to see it.

Desley: Ok, leave that alone... Do you feel that having a tattoo means you identify with any particular group of people?

Participant: No, not with any particular group. I'm a very gregarious person by nature and yeah, I identify with everyone and if I don't identify with them I make an effort.

Desley: Unless you don't want to.

Participant: Yeah, yeah.

Desley: Ok, trick question time. What would be the opposite of your tattoos?

Participant: What would be the opposite? Just clarifying the question- the opposite of the symbol or the opposite of having tattoos? Or is that the trick of the question? Ok... The opposite of my tattoos...

Desley: Cause it's however you want to interpret the question.

Participant: Ok. I don't know. The opposite of the tattoos themselves... I don't know. I think I would have more. Not really sure how to answer it. The opposite of having tattoos in itself I think I'd be quite a gregarious person with an outstanding array of bright coloured clothing. I think that would be a more outgoing nature, personality.

Desley: You would be?

Participant: Yeah I think I'd, yeah. More so than what I am now. Having that expressiveness on the outside, as opposed to put something on my body to say hey, this is me, this is what I'm meant for, just to have that come out creatively and expressively. I'm not really sure how to answer it.

Desley: Some people just say a different picture, some people say taking it off, some people say never having it. One person said that it would be a different feeling they would have.

Participant: I think it would definitely be, I definitely would be doing something different. I think, just creativity wise, I have, I have a very creative nature and I think just, I dull down my clothes a lot. I think I wouldn't be dulling down anything. I wouldn't be so concerned, I guess, having them where they are. I would probably say that the anti-having them where I have them would be to have them garish- like somewhere completely visible or dressing in a way that would expose tattoos on arms, boobs, whatever.

Desley: Would they be different tattoos as well?

Participant: No, I don't know. I don't think so. Maybe. See, I care about what, what people think, in the fact that I like these pictures, they're nice pictures and they represent what calms me and what is important to me. I think any other picture is just getting art for the sake of art.

Desley: But if we're talking about the opposite, like if you're saying it's something you like that makes you calm, then what would be the opposite of that?

Participant: Oh god, I guess the really annoying tattoos like topless chicks on Harleys. Or you know, dolphins or roses or unicorns.

Desley: And somewhere visible?

Participant: Yeah

Desley: So it would be like the opposite picture and also the opposite sort of message that you're putting out there?

Participant: Yeah, like something completely different to what I am into and in a place where everyone can see it, you know? This is my art, if I want you to see it, I'll show you. Rather than I have tattoos, yeah, deal with it.

Desley: Is there anything else you can think of about your tattoos?

Participant: Not really...

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	4	Sad
Patient	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	5	Unforgiving
Caring	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	1	3	3	5	Inattentive
Kind	2	1	2	2	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	5	Mean
Sense of humour	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	4	2	Staid
Sociable	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	4	Cliquey
Friendly	2	1	3	1	3	3	2	1	1	3	1	5	Hostile
Active	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	4	2	4	3	2	Slobs
Confident	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	1	3	1	3	Shy
Organised	4	2	3	2	3	3	4	3	2	4	2	2	Cluttered
Hard working	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	1	3	3	2	Lazy
Honest	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	3	1	Untrustworthy



9 RGT subgroup Wanted for a Long Time

9.1 RDT subgroup Philosophy

Participant WF28

Female, 40 years old

Interview date: 26/2/2006

Participant: Ok. The first one is butterfly and that's simply because I love butterflies. And the other one's – they were both designed by the same guy and the other one is really personal to me. It's my ancient Libran glyph - a piece of it - my zodiac glyph.... yeah and it's got really nice swirly bits around it and that. yeah. They're both very very personal, that's probably what I think about them.

Desley: So when did you get them?

Participant: um , I got one when I was mid twenties, the butterfly and the other one I only got last September for my 40th birthday. It was my birthday gift to myself.

Desley: That's really nice.

Participant: Yeah. I planned it about a couple of years and said that's when I'm gonna get it. Yeah.

Desley: So where are they?

Participant: The butterfly's on my left hip. And the Libran glyph one is on the lower back.

Desley: ok. So, can you say a bit about why you put them where you put them?

Participant: um. Coz they weren't out on display where everybody sees them. You can see them when I wear low shorts and that, but really if I want to go out and wear a nice dress, out to a wedding or something, there's nothing visible. That makes them even more personal to me.

Desley: so you can choose whether people see them or not?

Participant: yeah.

Desley: So you said that you like butterflies.

Participant: Oh yeah.

Desley: What is it about butterflies that you like?

Participant: They're magical. I think they are. Just their whole evolution cycle, the way they happen, the way they only live for a couple of days, the colours, the just, yeah. I just think they are magical creatures. Like unicorns

Desley: So can you say a bit about what's important to you about something magical?

Participant: Not really. Well you know, anything magical, a butterfly is symbolic of, I'm pagan. And the butterfly is symbolic of Aphrodite the goddess of love and beauty. And, yeah, and the Libran glyph is also an ode to Artemis, also, another ancient goddess who was in charge of the zodiac, astrology, things like that. Yeah.

Desley: So was the paganism part of why you got these tattoos. Does that make sense?

Participant: No. No. Paganism wasn't part of why I got the tattoos. But it is a part of me. So the tattoos do reflect the paganism, I suppose. If that makes sense?

Desley: um, I think so. I'm just thinking. I don't think I asked the question very well.

Participant: No. No. I get what you mean. Did pagan influence me getting the tattoos? No it didn't. What tattoos I got, was influenced by my paganism which is important to me. It was a respectful symbolic thing to the goddesses.

Desley: But it's not really out there. Like you didn't have Pagan written on it.

Participant: Oh no, no. oh, goodness, no, no.

Desley: It's just that you know what it means to you, but people don't have to. Unless you choose to tell them.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: So is there a place you wouldn't put a tattoo?

Participant: On my face. I would never put a tattoo on my face, or probably on my arms. I wouldn't put one on my arms.

Desley: What about your belly or somewhere like that?

Participant: um, well the butterfly is sort of on the hip, which is near the belly. So probably face and arms would be somewhere I wouldn't.

Desley: So somewhere that's usually visible?

Participant: Yeah. Yeah.

Desley: So how long did you think about the butterfly before you had it? Because you said the other one you thought about it for a couple of years.

Participant: Yeah. The butterfly about 5 years before I decided to actually get it. I'm different. I can't make a decision. So I thought about it long and hard before I did them, and I never regretted it for a day. Yeah.

Desley: That's good. So with the butterfly, do you link that to any particular event in your life?

Participant: No. No. Just liked them.

Desley: The other one you said you got for your 40th?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: So I was wondering if there was an event linked not necessarily to the butterfly, but to getting the tattoo?

Participant: No not really. Just like I thought about it for a long time, and it was time, I made the decision, I had a day off and I booked it and that's what I was doing that day. Yeah.

Desley: So did you draw it yourself?

Participant: No, the tattoo artist drew it for me. He drew a few and I chose from them.

Desley: That was nice.

Participant: mmm. Yeah.

Desley: So I can't remember if you said when you had that one.

Participant: I was about 25. Twenty five, 26, thereabouts.

Desley: So do you still like both of them?

Participant: Mhmm. Yep. I love them.

Desley: Do you think you would change them in any way?

Participant: Nothing. Nothing at all.

Desley: You wouldn't take them off?

Participant: No. Never.

Desley: Do you think you'd have another one?

Participant: No, I don't think I would. Simply because I'm really happy with the two I've got and I really like them where they are and if I put something else, that would be in a similar place, like near them, and I think it'd detract from them.

Desley: So would you have them again, if you had a choice?

Participant: Ah yeah. Yeah. You mean if I had my time over?

Desley: Yes.

Participant: Yeah. Absolutely. The only thing I would do different is I'd probably actually would get the one on my back sooner. Probably my 30th instead of my 40th.

Desley: So what about the pain aspect?

Participant: Oh it was horrific. It was horrible. Yeah. It was awful.

Desley: Not bad enough to stop you going back, though?

Participant: No. No. when I got the second one, I was like, "oh, I remember it hurts but I can't remember what it feels like" and when they start it was like, "oh shit, that's what it feels like, that's right".

Desley: Have you got children?

Participant: Yeah, I've got two.

Desley: cause I always say with my first child I had fear of the unknown, but with the second it was fear of the known.

Participant: Yeah. Yeah. It does

Desley: My fourth one, I had nine year gap. And as soon as they put that mask on my face, "I remember now!"

Participant: Exactly! Yeah.

Desley: So was it a bit like that?

Participant: Yes, it was a bit. He said to me after about 40 minutes, when he was doing the one on the back, “take a break” and I said “thank goodness” and went to the mirror and had a look, and that was enough inspiration for me to get back in the chair and said “keep going”.

Desley: Really?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: Cause my daughter had one a couple of years ago and the guy kept saying, “tell me if you need a break.” And eventually when he got out near her spine she said “yeah, I want a break” and then she thought, “Oh now I’ve got to say start hurting me again”

Participant: Yeah, with mine actually there are 4 points there, which are acu-pressure points where I’ve got 4 coloured dots, like jewels. And the best way I could describe it was “acupuncture and speed.” It was crazy.

Desley: Not something you’d recommend?

Participant: If it’s something your really want, yeah, absolutely go ahead and do it.

Desley: So do you think was there any aspect to the pain that was actually a plus for you, or?

Participant: No.

Desley: Something you had to go through?

Participant: Just something you had to go through to get to the end. If there was a painless way, I’d choose that.

Desley: So do you consider that your tattoos are related to each other, or do you think of them as separate?

Participant: I think of them as separate. Yeah, definitely.

Desley: There's no theme that runs through?

Participant: No, no. Each one's got its own individual... even, I guess, the only common link between them is that they are pagan symbolic things, but really I think of them as individual.

Desley: And you didn't choose the second one with that particular theme in mind or anything?

Participant: No. No. Cause there wasn't something near it, or seen at the same time, you don't bother.

Desley: So why did you choose to have a tattoo rather than do something else?

Participant: I don't know. Just something really personal that's going to be with me forever. Can't break it. Can't lose it. Can't put it in a drawer and forget about it. It's always with you. It's personal. It's yours and no one else has got something exactly the same. Yeah. Yeah. That's why.

Desley: So do you think you could have done something else that could have had the same effect for you?

Participant: Not really. I sky dive!

Desley: What about a piercing or something.

Participant: Not really. I'm not big on needles. I'm quite scared of needles, piercings.

Desley: Very strange that people that have tattoos say they are scared of needles.

Participant: Yeah. Yeah.

Desley: It's quite funny isn't it?

Participant: Yeah. No I don't really like it. I've never been big on piercings. And also there's a danger element. I know they've got caught on things and tear... I got my ears pierced but that's it.

Desley: So do you consider that the picture means one thing to you and the fact that you have a tattoo means something else?

Participant: It's funny with the tattoo. Probably the only time that it actually gives me a bit of a chuckle sometimes, is, I was at work and I had on pair of low cut pants, and a top that wasn't real long, but I was covered. But when I bent down to get something out of the cupboard there was a gap on my back and it was exposed and one of the guys at work, who is a bit of a fuddy duddy, was standing behind me. And when I turned around he visibly had his mouth open with his jaw dropped to the ground kind of look on him. Yeah, that gave me a bit of a chuckle actually. I just thought that was funny. No. But nothing else really. It is special to me.

Desley: So do you think of yourself as a tattooed person or are you a person who has tattoos?

Participant: That's an interesting question. I can see the difference. I see myself as a person who has two tattoos. I don't see the tattoos first, I see me first and that's a part of me.

Desley: Someone said that in their mind they were a tattooed person, but if you looked at them they were a person with tattoos because they didn't have enough, they thought to qualify as a tattooed person.

Participant: I don't know. It's probably because of the way I look at people too. You might describe somebody, and you'd say "oh you know who he is, the one with all the tats," or something, but I wouldn't see them as that first. I'd see them as that person first before the tattoos.

Desley: So my trick question. What would be the opposite of your tattoos?

Participant: As a tattoo, the opposite?

Desley: However you want to interpret it.

Participant: um. Opposite of my tattoos. I guess the opposite would be not to have them in the first place. But if it was the actual opposite of the tattoo that I have, I guess the opposite of the butterfly would be a bird. The opposite of the one on my back would be probably the Taurus glyph because it's opposite to Libra on the Zodiac.

Desley: So did you go by yourself to have the tattoos or did you go with somebody?

Participant: Well, the first one I went with a friend who I'd met up in Cairns. It was a holiday sort of thing. The second one my brother was with me. He lives up there, so. He met me there but I went in by myself, but he met there halfway through and laughed at me. coz he has tattoos.

Desley: So did the other person get a tattoo as well, or just you?

Participant: No, just me.

Desley: They were just there for moral support?

Participant: They were there, just browsing. Decided not to. They just kind of left and came back later and we met and had coffee or something. It wasn't any big outing or anything.

Desley: So what do you think it means to other people that see them?

Participant: Well like that guy at work the other day, it obviously shocked him and I found that a bit amusing. I don't know, I guess some people would look at it and go, "Oh! I hate tattoos especially on women. It's disgusting!" other people might go "Cool tatt!" or something. But really I don't care what it means to other people. Whatever it means to other people is their choice and their problem

Desley: So what kind of reactions have you had apart from the open mouth?

Participant: The only people I really know, friends who've seen it, who knew I was getting it and had a look afterwards. I think the closest I had to a negative was, wow, it's bigger than I thought it would be. But that's about it. Everybody seems to like it.

Desley: And I guess because it's hidden you can choose who you show it too.

Participant: Oh, except my mother. My mother told me it was disgusting, but I expected that.

Desley: So did ever you worry enough about your mother's reaction or anything to have second thoughts about it?

Participant: Oh no.

Desley: Didn't care that much.

Participant: No.

Desley: What do you think about people who have tattoos?

Participant: I usually look at them and decide... I don't think anything of the person themselves. I usually look at them and decide whether they are nice or not, whether I like them. If I know the person, it is sometimes interesting to chat to them and see if they have some special symbolic meaning to them. That's about it.

Desley: So who do you know that has a tattoo?

Participant: My brothers do. Both my brothers. Holly. Three or four other friends of mine, girls that have tattoos. Probably half a dozen guys spring to mind. Might be more. I don't know

Desley: So quite a few of your friends.

Participant: Yeah. I don't really think about them as who have them and who don't.

Desley: So do you think they've had any negative effect on your life at all?

Participant: No. Not one single one. Except when it was itchy in the first week. That's about the closest it gets to negative. I have never ever looked at them and gone I wish I didn't do that. I just love them, and I am totally open about my kids knowing about them. My son wanted to get one when he was 17, and I said no, you have to wait 'til you are 18. And he sort of tried the "but you've got one" I said yes. I said, if I had to sign a piece of paper, then it is not 100% your decision. I said I have no problem with you getting one, but it has to be 100% your decision.

Desley: yeah. He can't turn around and say

Participant: "you signed the paper." I said no it has to be your decision, and if I've got to sign a piece of paper then it means somebody else has had something to do with the decision and I won't.

Desley: So do you feel like, the fact that you've got tattoos makes you identify with any particular groups of people?

Participant: No, not really. Not at all. No.

Desley: I'm playing around with this idea. Have you heard of Maslow?

Participant: Who?

Desley: Abraham Maslow? He's a psychologist. And he says that when people go through what he calls a peak experience you get down to like the essence of yourself. And I am wondering if things like, obviously, jumping out of a plane, would qualify, I'd think. Whether there is any element of that, that you can relate to having a tattoo.

Participant: Errmm.

Desley: Well you know. I've never jumped out of a plane. I imagine there'll be this big thrill, and it'd be really exciting and everything. And it seems to be with a tattoo a part of is.... and just the sense of accomplishment, that you've gone through that pain and you made it on the other side. So you've done like a personal challenge thing.

Participant: Yeah. No, I don't look at it that way. Getting down to the essence of who you are, I don't see that as defining that but it is part of who I am. They are part of me now because I am totally happy with them. Yeah, I guess it does form part of you in a way. But again you see yourself as a person with tattoos not a tattooed person.

Desley: Yeah. But do you see any link at all between that and the skydiving?

Participant: No.

Desley: nothing at all. So there's nothing similar in the two experiences?

Participant: No. nothing, no. Not really. No I can't see any. No.

Desley: It's just that you look at a lot of people who do extreme sports, seem to have tattoos. I'm just wondering why that is.

Participant: I don't know.

Desley: Maybe. Maybe it's just a coincidence.

Participant: Yeah. I don't see tattoos as a culture in this sport. Maybe motorcycle riding or something like that, tattoos are very much the culture.

Desley: So you think maybe it depends on the sport?

Participant: Maybe it depends on the sport. Yeah. I reckon over 50% of the people who jump probably would not have tattoos. Yet if you look at people in motorcycle clubs, 99% of them would have at least one.

Desley: 'Cause there's the old stereotype like that...

Participant: Yeah. Yeah. But I don't really see it linked to this sport at all.

Desley: A lot of footballers seem to. So is there anything else you think about your tattoo that might be relevant as far as what it means to you?

Participant: No, just the symbolic things, like I said with why I chose them. Yeah, no nothing really.

Desley: Do you feel like it's like part of your identity?

Participant: It's part of who I am and as I said before I wouldn't... because it is not out there. If it were out there more, I wouldn't have any problem with people describe me as , you know, the one, the woman with a big tattoo on her back. I wouldn't have a problem with that at all. I mean that's how people describe who you are, or whatever. But, um, yeah. But I just see 'em as part of me that's just there. Yeah. I love 'em.

Desley: Do you find that you like forget they're there almost, or

Participant: Yeah, I do. Quite often.

Desley: So do you think it just becomes like a part of you like a mole or..

Participant: Absolutely. A scar or anything. It's just there. It's no different to a freckle or pimple that won't go away or something like that.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	2	2	2	2	1	3	2	3	3	4	4	4	Upset
Patient	4	3	3	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	4	4	Short-tempered
Caring	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	1	4	4	4	3	Nasty
Kind	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	4	4	4	3	Spiteful
Sense of humour	2	1	2	1	3	3	2	3	3	4	3	1	Stony-faced
Sociable	2	2	2	2	4	4	3	3	3	4	4	1	Snobby
Friendly	3	1	2	1	4	4	3	2	3	4	5	1	Hostile
Active	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	5	5	2	Lazy
Confident	3	2	2	2	4	3	3	2	3	4	4	1	Dependent
Organised	1	3	1	3	1	1	1	2	4	3	4	4	Disorganised
Hard working	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	5	4	4	3	Bludger
Honest	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	4	1	4	1	Liar



Desley: Tell me about your tattoos whenever you're ready, whatever comes to mind.

Participant: Such as? You'll kind of find I'm the sort of person who needs a leading question.

Desley: What are they of? When did you get them? Which one did you get first?

Participant: The first one I got when I was 19, 20, I can't remember now, it was a long time ago, umm, what's that, a quarter of a century. I was at the Sydney motor bike show, the international motor bike show, so that's the little one, just up here, about the only one you can't see these days.

Desley: So what's that of?

Participant: Just a little ghosty guy, this little fiddly one, got it actually was to cover up a vaccination scar from when I went overseas earlier. That was back in the days when you used to get vaccinations to go overseas. That was before plane travel, that's how long ago that is. The other ones I got, I don't know, probably over the next five years, they're all within that 5 -6 year period. The other ones were all when I was involved in motorbike culture for want of a better term.

Desley: so are they related to that?

Participant: No. I liked tattoos and all even when I was a kid. It's got nothing to do with the sort of culture I was in *at the time*. I would have got them anyway. The content might have been different, but I don't think so.

Desley: so, how many do you have, or is that too tricky?

Participant: ah...six

Desley: So, is there some kind of theme that runs through the six of them? Are they all separate? Do some relate to each other?

Participant: there's not a conscious theme.

Desley: Okay, so if you go through and list them, this one's a little ghosty guy...

Participant: There's death running through most of them, four of them certainly umm, but.

Desley: And is that, do you think, a result of being in the motorbike culture?

Participant: No, it's a personal philosophy more than anything else. Yes, I was born in Australia but culturally I suppose my background is Celtic. And for the Celts death wasn't something to be feared, it was just a transition. Same with a lot of South American cultures, it's just part of a cycle. So even though they're reminders of mortality they're not actually anything in themselves. It's that duality that's inherent in there but other people see them as just death.

Desley: Okay, so for you they're not just death?

Participant: Not by any stretch.

Desley: So they're just part of the circle of life for want of a better term?

Participant: yeah. exactly.

Desley: So, what about the two that aren't?

Participant: The two that aren't are this little wizard guy, I just liked him. That one was of a girlfriend I had at the time. I used to have her name buried in it around here but when we broke up I went to see a tattoo artist to get barbed wire put around her instead, but he said fuck off, that's a bit harsh, so he made some flowers and plants and stuff and they use a lot of that these days.

Desley: So the two that aren't, like do the death ones go 1,2,3,4 or?

Participant: What, you mean, in sequence?

Desley: In sequence, yeah, like when you got them.

Participant: Oh. That one was first, um, I can't remember to be honest.

Desley: ok. Can you remember the last one you got?

Participant: It might have been this one, no actually this one came after that. Probably this one – the forearm. I think she was second next, actually, and the others came after that Yeah, she was second.

Desley: so you got the Ghosty guy

Participant: Yep, the little ghosty guy and then the girlfriend

Desley: And was that something she wanted you to do?

Participant: no. just an idea I had. Given what that particular girl was like, her transient nature, probably not the best idea, but hey, he was a good artist.

Desley: So, with the Ghosty guy, you said you got that to cover up a scar?

Participant: I liked tattoos and I was thinking about one anyway but the reason I specifically got it there was to cover up. 'Cause nowadays you get these nice little pinpricks and that's it. When I got that vaccination done, just over 30 years ago, when you still had to go to England by ship. The scar's, I don't know if you can see it properly but, the scar is about that wide, that big, you see, that's what they did, they stroked it all over your skin. That's why he's up there, I mean it wasn't something that I thought I'm going to be embarrassed by this, so I'll get it up tucked up under my shirt out of the way, it just happened to be for a particular purpose.

Desley: so it was more to cover up. So the idea was I'd like to get a tattoo, I know, I can put it over the scar?

Participant: yeah. Pretty much

Desley: so why a ghost?

Participant: Why not ?

Desley: Well, why not an elephant? I don't know.

Participant: I think if you get into elephants and stuff like that you get into the symbology. And at that stage in life, like most people, you're not sure where your allegiances, are from, not allegiances, but you're still working out your symbology. Whereas a ghost is more neutral. I think.

Desley: so does a ghost meaning something in particular to you? I always think of Casper.

Participant: No. I've seen ghosts and that sort of stuff from when I was a little kid.

Desley: so when you say you've seen them, you mean...

Participant: Really seen them. They do exist, if anybody says they don't, that's fine, that's their choice of belief, I know they do. Not a problem. But they're another form of the cycle, but they're just sort of like stuck between parts of the cycle.

Desley: So does it symbolise anyone in particular or any thing in particular for you?

Participant: No, it's more a symbol of a concept rather than, certainly not a specific person, so not a specific ghost. In many ways it's a bit like the death thing. But it's... a recognition of what comes after. This isn't just all there is, it's tied up with all of that. I think.

Desley: you said that ghosts are stuck between parts of the cycle.

Participant: Yeah. Most of them. Well, that's a generalisation. Some travel between the two, 2, 3, 4, whichever you prefer. Different phases.

Desley: So when you say two, do you mean life and death?

Participant: No. You can think of it as life, death, rebirth or whatever. However suits your own cultural stuff, but we come round and around and around and around and sometimes the ghost we see now isn't somebody who's dead, it's just a somebody who's in another plane of existence who we just happen, the way the astral planes are working out, maybe they're just really close at that time. And you see them, and think I see a ghost. It's alive but not with us, in that sense. It's all to do with the planes of existence.

Desley: I have a bit of trouble getting my head around that.

Participant: it's... a lot of ancient religions, paganism, are based on and around those concepts. I mean Halloween is basically Samhain, which is the old pagan festival when the two worlds are close to each other. The other world as it was termed, was close to our world and used to cross-over between the two. I suppose you can think of it like two islands drifting together, at that time of year

Desley: or even like the planets

Participant: yeah. But they're a bit further apart. But if it was two islands they could be close enough that you could walk across from one to the other. They don't actually touch but the waters are shallow enough to actually reach and the rest of the year they move too far apart. So if you think of the planes as like that, sometimes.

Desley: so are there only two planes though?

Participant: Oh, no there's more than that but certainly for Pagan Celts for instance, there was our world and the other world, that was it.

Desley: so the other world might consist of multiple islands, for example, for want of a better way to put it

Participant: yeah.

Desley: so we could go from this one to that one

Participant: yeah although there tend to be... really their main time was Samhain, which, coz Australia's back to front, I've always got to get my head around it, roughly equates to about now in Australian seasons. Because Samhain is six months from now in Europe, Halloween comes from All Hallow's Eve which comes from All Saints' which comes from Samhain, which in itself has other pagan rituals and it's all tied up.

Desley: so, why ghosts and not some other symbol of that

Participant: Because that's the symbol, that's the point. The ghost is, can be, is non-specific. Whereas once you get an elephant, for instance, you know, using your example, it's very specific. If you're not Hindu, you wouldn't really use, in our society, an elephant as a symbol and that's because of its connections to Ganesha, ah, God of prosperity if I recall. So that's very much culture represented and that's not my train, and at that stage, I consciously chose not to get something that represented something. Most of them, actually all of them, with that one exception, don't represent something in particular.

Desley: But doesn't the ghost represent the circle of life thing?

Participant: it can, it depends on your own interpretation.

Desley: Okay, and in your interpretation it doesn't?

Participant: No. I don't think it does. I suppose you could think of it as something we all go through, so it's a representation of self. Just a different aspect of self.

Desley: Sorry if I'm pushing it here... what aspect of self would you say it was for you?

Participant: I wouldn't actually say it was, it's not, I mean representation of the whole of your self, rather than part of it

Desley: ok. Gotcha. So, after the ghost,

Participant: She came next.

Desley: she? So does she have a name now that you give her?

Participant: no, no. she's just the girl tattoo.

Desley: are the rest of them boys?

Participant: I've no idea. He's a boy. The rest of them are skulls, you can't tell.

Desley: I was told skulls are boy tattoos.

Participant: I wouldn't necessarily agree there.

Desley: women do have skulls

Participant: Yeah, they might be a tattoo that a boy gets, but that doesn't mean they're OF a boy

Desley: no. that's what he was trying to say, coz he had a flower the same as his girlfriend but he got a skull in his, so to make it a boy thing, rather than just a flower which, to him, was a girly thing

Participant: I actually think you can view them as parallel to each other. Coz flowers have a relatively short lifespan and then they die, then their seeds renew so that's death and rebirth as well so they actually run together. I don't see there's a problem there.

Desley: No but I guess some people would.

Participant: yeah. That's the point. It's the way 'other' people view it, rather than the way you view it yourself.

Desley: And that works a lot I guess even with the way death thing that works whereas some people look at that and say you're really negative with all your death symbols.

Participant: Yes but that's THEIR version of it of the cultural... It's like if you go into our house just over the main entrance door there's a carving, sculpture, actually I'm not quite sure what you'd call it, of, from South America. What it is, is a squid, it's about this big, about 80cm across and it's a person's face cut in half, inside that is an older face, cut in half and inside that is a skull and inside that one is a baby's face. It's the same sort of thing, death isn't an ending, it's the beginning. The people who look them and think it's all nasty and horrible and this sort of stuff I think they've got troubles. That's THEIR issue, not mine. Don't dispute death as something, as the end of everything. As if THIS life means everything. Yes, you should value this life, don't dispute that ever. But that doesn't mean that's all there is.

Desley: So, if I be a dag and go back to your tattoos. So you've got the girl's face, like the girl you were going out with, that was her face and you have her name on

Participant: Yeah, it was underneath it. There's a "Y" in there, you can almost see it. Her name was Mandy. So it came across to about there. He done a very, very good job I think

Desley: How long were you going out with her before you got the tattoo?

Participant: not that long. about 6 months.

Desley: How long after you split up did you go and get it changed.

Participant: About a month. If you're not actually with that person, it's not appropriate... I didn't want to get the tattoo, gone, I still liked the tattoo, it's a great tattoo, but it's not appropriate for it to be attributed. I didn't take a photo in and get them to do it freehand. It was just one that I looked at and said, oh, that's her. I've always thought of it as her.

Desley: So it's not literally her face

Participant: It's not literally, but it's so close it's amazing.

Desley: Okay, yeah, do you remember why you wanted to put her face on your arm?

Participant: No, I wanted another tattoo at the time. I 'spose nothing else popped to mind.

Desley: Did you go into the parlour going "I want to get a tattoo of her"...

Participant: No, I didn't

Desley: ok. So you went in thinking about another tattoo

Participant: So what is there? I came across this one and went "wow". It was a place in Pitt St, up in Sydney actually, George St. I don't go to Sydney that often these days, I lose track of which streets are which. I got them all done when I was totally sober. Anybody who gets tattoos done when they're drunk is stupid.

Desley: so you just went in, had a look, saw that one

Participant: yeah. it just struck me, I've gonna get that one

Desley: And how long afterwards did you actually get it, like on the day?

Participant: On the day, yeah

Desley: So, with most of them did you just decide and get them or did you think about them for some period of time

Participant: ah, do you mean think about what I'd have or actually getting them done?

Desley: both

Participant: I always think about, not just tattoos, I try to have a policy of thinking about something before I actually do it rather than just being impulsive. Experience tells me impulsiveness screws up. Just thinking about it. I think about the style. Unless something actually says I want to get this, I mean, if there's something there that I like just get that.

Desley: So you would get it pretty much straight away.

Participant: Yeah. Just go to the tattoo place and choose the one I want. If there wasn't one there that I thought "oh I like that" I wouldn't get it. I wouldn't get it just for the sake of getting it, when it's something so permanent, you've got to feel an affinity to it.

Desley: but you don't go in and look at it and go away and think about it

Participant: No. For all of them I've thought about them beforehand about what I might get.

Desley: so you had a few things in mind?

Participant: Yeah. A few different options. But even then, it's not like I've got a fascination with ghosts, it's just happens to be that they're the ones that struck me. The pictures I thought about getting for the later ones, getting a picture of an elephant, to represent Ganesha, because I was associated with some people who were involved in that culture. But when it came down to it, actually looking at the ones that were available, unless it's got an affinity for you, say, well, no, I'll just get something else.

Desley: Because it has to mean something to you?

Participant: Yeah. it has to mean something to you. It's not something you can take off, so it's gotta be related. You've gotta to live with it, you have to feel comfortable with it.

Desley: so what is this one here that's poking out your sleeve?

Participant: that's a ghost, two, three skulls, and you've got the little, the spirits all come out. But that's I just think that's ...nice.... Nice, everyone looks at me as though it's the creepy... I think it's really nice, it's an encapsulation of life within life and death within death as well. I mean if one person dies it has constant effects on other people too. But again, it's just mortality. How you view it. That's the skulls and these are the spirits coming out of it. It's not an end.
{long pause}

Desley: This one here on your neck. Skull and

Participant: skull and crossbones, Skull and swords.

Desley: I can see the handle

Participant: it used to have blood on it, faded out over the years

Desley: so it was red?

Participant: that was blood dripping off the swords

Desley: Yeah, you can see it just there. So what does that mean for you?

Participant: It's tied in with others. It doesn't have any violent connotations, despite blood dripping off.... As you would expect, not for me anyway.

Desley: so what kind of connotations does it have?

Participant: it's just mortality. You don't know what's going to happen tomorrow, this afternoon. You could say right, there's dripping swords....certainly that stage in life I was around some fairly dangerous people. So that may have influence in that respect. The central piece is still skull which is just mortality.

Desley: so when you say you were around dangerous people, do you think that this was an effort for you to appear that you weren't scared of them or?

Participant: No. I never really cared about that.

Desley: Okay. Never really cared what happened, or

Participant: Wouldn't necessarily go that far. Never really cared what they thought.

Desley: and you weren't scared of them.

Participant: no. I was accepted amongst them so it wasn't really an issue

Desley: do you think that they influenced the content at all?

Participant: no. to them, see most of them had tattoos that weren't related to death. They'd get things like, a lot of them had family members and all this sort of stuff. Just things that they liked, whether it be tigers, or dragons or whatever. Whereas I was actually the odd one out, because of the death motifs. But I had some of those before I was in that situation, so it was just a continuation.

Desley: So it wasn't like you joined a group and then suddenly started to get skulls.

Participant: No. That comes from a long time before.

Desley: And the one on your forearm, that was the last one?

Participant: One of these two was the last one. The wizard came before certainly.

Desley: So that skull, what is the black thing?

Participant. A scalp-lock.

Desley: Well, I don't know that that is.

Participant: There's some tribes, I think from Mongolia, that's why they call it a scalp-lock. Basically, they shave their whole head except for a patch about that big, which they grew really long hair. So that was called a scalp lock and they just tied it up at the base and just let it grow like a mane and that's basically what that is. It's hair. You can't really see it very well now, it's looks like a spurt of blood or something but it's just hair.

Desley: Yeah you can just see it sort of coming out there.

Participant: Yeah, except you can't see dripping blood any more. Red doesn't seem to last very well.

Desley: And what colour was that skull? What colour did it used to be?

Participant: It was a bit of purple, purple shading.

Desley: So, what does that represent? Why the scalp lock?

Participant: Because of the same theme all the way through. It doesn't represent...

Desley: So it's variations on a theme.

Participant: Pretty much, although I did get that one consciously in a prominent place. And I thought that even you can see it when you're walking along. You know, your sleeve's rolled up even to there and you can't see anything. This side, you can't do that. Umm I think that was just a case of being not so much what it is but where it is. A case of saying, this is me, if you can't cope with that, that's your problem.

Desley: And did that happen at a particular period in your life?

Participant: Umm, no I was riding with some bike groups at the time and I don't, it wasn't something that was associated with them but certainly, even though I got it done at the same time. Umm. I 'spose it caused some troubles over the years I got to say.

Desley: In what way?

Participant: Oh, just some prejudice.

Desley: Prejudice from people or?

Participant: Yeah just people being pig ignorant. People judge you. Because you've got a few tattoos, you know, you're this sort of person and you think Hello! Wake up!

Desley: I read somewhere that the difference between people with tattoos and people that are people that have them don't judge other people.

Participant: That's pretty much it

Desley: And it's funny 'cause even some people I've talked to that have tattoos because they have the nice tame little hippy ones still sometimes have a reaction to someone who's got one...with certain kind of content. Even though they say, I shouldn't

Participant: Yeah, that's true. But I think those sorts of people are doing it for tribal issues. It comes down to their, to a psychological aspect. They're getting a tattoo to be part of the crowd even though it's hidden. There's so many people with those hidden tattoos and I just think its fashion rather than, they're getting it for a transient reason rather than a permanent reason even though it's a permanent fixture.

Desley: So if you think they're getting it for a transient reason, I assume you're not?

Participant: Well, each one in one way or another is representation of self or view point, for me. I mean, getting a flower wouldn't say anything more than I like flowers.

Desley: So it wouldn't symbolise life or

Participant: Well if I had the tree of life, that's different. But a flower wouldn't mean anything to me.

Desley: even though flowers are...

Participant: I love flowers, yes, but there's better, symbology to use to represent my beliefs than that. My wife actually just got a little tattoo, I'm dreading her parents coming over later this year and seeing it because they're in England and they're going to say it's my influence.

Desley: How long since you've had one?

Participant: Oh, a long time. But that's purely financial, I'd get another one tomorrow but I just can't afford it. Umm, we've got four kids so they get fed first. What's left doesn't leave any more room for tattoos. Umm. She just got one of those hibiscus flowers on her shoulder which is

hidden most of the time. And I just, that's her choice, personally I wouldn't be comfortable doing that. Cause that's, I don't know, it's hiding. It's not the site of tattoo, it's hiding you.

Desley: What do you mean?

Participant: I like to be upfront. Umm. This is who I am and if you don't like it, that's your choice. I don't care. But if I have at least, say all these, were hidden under my shirt and you couldn't see them, that's me being ashamed of who I am. I just think of that as, I don't want to get any in hidden places. Umm, Not so much as that's being a cop out, but as a sign of basic insecurity of self.

Desley: What about when people get them in places where they can hide them.

Participant: Sometimes.

Desley: Like some people get them, like if they're in business, they get them so that people can't see them at work.

Participant: They get them so that they can display them in a certain social context and hide them in other social contexts. Look, again, it's for a sexual analogy but it's like coming out of the closet when you choose but then going back into it again and hiding whenever you choose. But it's still a denial of self. I mean, I can understand it to a certain degree. As I said, I have experienced different forms of prejudice over the years and I've not got jobs 'cause I've got tattoos but at the same time, I take the view that if they're not going to employ me because of these which make no difference to my performance, at all, except if I were a model or something, then it would make a difference, but for the sort of work I want to do it makes no difference. But that's probably not a company I'd work for anyway.

Desley: So, you said you had all of the tattoos over.

Participant: Yeah, five or six year period. The earliest when I was nineteen or twenty-ish. Yeah, at that stage I went. The most recent one was done about eight months before I went over to the UK but other things took over then.

Desley: So was it that you didn't want to get anymore after that?

Participant: Oh, no, I was thinking over the last twenty years, that I'd like to get another one. It's a matter of being able to, our youngest eldest is fourteen now, and it's a matter of balancing up what you can justify with what you spend your money on. There's many a time I've thought, maybe I'll get another tattoo. Then a bill comes in and it's like, maybe I won't.

Desley: So, with the placement, was there any one, apart from covering up the scar, you said you put this one there so that people would see.

Participant: Yeah, that was deliberate.

Desley: The others, did the placement mean anything in particular?

Participant: No, this one was placed there because I wanted that to bend.

Desley: Okay.

Participant: I don't know why, I just fancied doing it. And similarly that one needed a large, a larger area so you couldn't put it down low because it wouldn't really fit down there. She was already up there, this was already there. So it really brought it down here. And this one I wanted as a pendant to go right around the neck.

Desley: Okay, that would have tickled.

Participant: It did, you wouldn't actually be allowed to do it now. Coz they had to tattoo across the spine, you can't do that. Not up there anyway.

Desley: Okay. So umm, you didn't have any on your back?

Participant: I can't see 'em there.

Desley: I thought you might say that. So with the wizard, what does a wizard mean to you?

Participant: I just like them. I don't know I suppose there's all sorts of things there in the transformation and being able to make a difference in your own life. There's all sorts of things you can read into it. Umm, it's such a long time ago now, I can't say I got because of those reasons. But, you know, I might have. Umm, I've been reading Lord of the Rings and all of that sort of stuff about stage. I've read it lots of times since well. But when I got it done and I was quite into wizardry and that sort of stuff so there was no sort of societal or social influences at the time. So I look back at them and probably put interpretations on them now easier than I could have done it then.

Desley: So as far as placement of them, what, probably half of them are just whatever, sort of thing.

Participant: Yeah, I mean, for instance, she was inappropriate for anywhere but your upper arm. I don't know why, I just felt that she should be, that's where she belongs.

Desley: some of the literature that you read tells you that your body tells you where to get them, if you are into the body modification culture, their literature. And some people say that the body speaks to you where it wants it.

Participant: I'll go along with that.

Desley: I wouldn't suggest that to some people though. I thought you might be open to that idea.

Participant: Yeah, I don't have a problem with that at all. But there was never any hint that there was anywhere else, it had to be on the upper right arm. It wasn't even a choice of right or left, it had to go on the right.

Desley: someone told me once one side of your body's feminine and one's... I can't remember which side of the body.

Participant: yeah, don't ask me anything about that, which side of the brain, left or right that sort of thing, I can never remember which. So I suppose that might be connected with the left brain thing, unless of course it's the other way around.

Desley: Now, I've got a book drawing on the right side of your brain.

Participant: So that means

Desley: that left is probably the artistic one because if it was right, then you wouldn't probably use it. So you wanted somewhere you could see them.

Participant: Yeah, well I can't see that one, but it's just where I wanted it.

Desley: okay. Umm, and apart from that one, did you necessarily put that one where it wouldn't be seen?

Participant: Not consciously no. I mean, I wouldn't necessarily say, I wouldn't get one on my back but I've always thought that if you one on your back, it tends to be a larger one, then you absolutely, one hundred percent positive, you want a large canvas and what you're getting on there needs to be appropriate for that canvas. And I just hope, when I have the money, I'd like to get one that big because they're not cheap. But the little one my wife got, the hibiscus my wife's just got, it's only about three inches, two or three inches, cost about \$130 or \$140. So if you get your back done, you're talking thousands.

Desley: Yeah, and many hours of pain there

Participant: Many hours and many trips. Whereas all of mine, like, each individual has only been done in one sitting.

Desley: Except the flower.

Participant: Oh yeah. That's different, that was time frame.

Desley: So you said that the four of yours have the mortality theme. Why is that important to you?

Participant: I don't know, to be honest.

Desley: Do you think it was something that you grew up with or?

Participant: No, I don't, 'cause I got it.. Death isn't really, consciously touches us, I mean mum and dad are still kicking around. Sometimes I wonder for how long. My grandma died, my grandad died. I didn't go to funerals, it wasn't something that was in your face. Umm, I think it's just something that develops. And, because I always read a lot, and always read a lot of esoteric stuff. And that concept of there being more than just this life, and still is, very much, to me a focal point. I think it was just that, sort of coming out as my personal ideology.

Desley: Right, even at twenty?

Participant: yeah. Absolutely.

Desley: Is there somewhere you wouldn't put a tattoo?

Participant: Yeah. I've seen pictures of people with tattoos on every part of their body and I wouldn't go there.

Desley: So you're talking your genitals.

Participant: Yeah. Apart from that I wouldn't go down my face. Because the thing is, that the face itself is a window. Tattoos are anonymous though but they're on parts of your body that don't express themselves. The face doesn't need it. Besides that I couldn't have a beard. I don't like to shave.

Desley: But you can get them on the neck here so.

Participant: Yeah, I don't really see the point of that. I knew a bloke like that. You only ever saw, he shaved his head once every six months or so to see the tattoo. It's quite bizarre. I just don't see the logic.

Desley: No, I guess, you don't like covering them up.

Participant: No, I don't criticise them for it. But I guess I don't get it.

Desley: I imagine that would hurt a bit too.

Participant: Yeah, well it does. Similar to this. That's quite boney. that hurt far worse than any of the others 'cause there's no flesh there.

Desley: it's so delicate

Participant: It is, but it's only bone just like under the skin. Your stomach would be even worse.

Desley: So do you think any of your tattoos coincided with any particular event in your life?

Participant: No I don't. There may have been a trigger that I don't remember. Umm, even the most recent one is over twenty years old.

Desley: But there's nothing you think? It's not like I got this one when I joined the Navy and I got this one...

Participant: No, the only one I particularly remember with an association is the first one probably because it was, the first one.

Desley: But that was going back to England?

Participant: No, No, No. that was one I got at the Sydney bike show, that was this one there.

Desley: Okay

Participant: I probably only remember where I got it. I mean, I remember the artist, on the other ones and I can remember being in the studios but I don't make the connection between I got this to commemorate this or that. It's like, you know, I've thought a few times about getting the names of my family put on. and if I did that then it would be for a specific purpose but the thing is there's no, there's nothing like that with these.

Desley: So do you still like them all?

Participant: Yep.

Desley: Would you change any of them?

Participant: Nope.

Desley: Have them off?

Participant: Nope

Desley: And, if you were going to get another one, if you were rich, do you think you'd think mostly about the content or the placement or the artist?

Participant: Umm, all of the above. It would depend on what it was. Umm. I've always maintained to make sure you get a good artist. It's something you've got to live with for a long time. If you go to a dodgy artist then it's going to run and be horrible within five or six years and then that looks terrible. I don't care whether other people think they look feral, it's their choice, but I've got to look at them except if it's on my back but, obviously and so the artist is a major consideration. And the quality of the artist would dictate the quality of the artwork you can get. If you wanted a tree for instance, you just, or you wanted the bare shell of a tree you could pretty much go to anybody. But if you wanted one with beautiful definition on the leaves then it depends very much on who you would go to. Umm, if I got one now, I'd probably get one, I probably wouldn't be death ones, it would probably be more cultural. But that would represent an acculturation of things I've picked up since the last one. Not necessarily a deviation from them, It's just a representation of how I've changed since then.

Desley: Okay. So when you said more cultural, what do you mean by that?

Participant: I'd probably get aaah, Thor's hammer.

Desley: ... which represents?

Participant: Umm. It doesn't represent anything in specific I suppose, but umm, In the Scandinavian mythology, Thor is a symbol of change, is an instrument of change. And the hammer is used for doing so.

Desley: Right.

Participant: You can actually make links with the death motifs through that but then that's change and transformation but it's a different way of representing it. But I would view that as not associated with the death transformation but current life.

Desley: Do you consider your tattoos as like a whole thing? Or are they separate to you? Or do you have like the death tattoos and ...

Participant: I, with the exception of these two I think... There was a cartoon strip around at the time called "Frank and Ernest" and I think this is Frank and this one's Ernest. I don't know why, they don't look anything like them. I just call them Frank and Ernest. But apart from that, no I don't view them as being connected. I view them all as being part of self, part of life experience, and they're connected in that sense. But not connected through a narrative.

Desley: So what about the pain aspect. Do you consider that to be a plus or a minus? Or do you think it's just something that you have to go through to get it.

Participant: I think you would be a very sick person to consider the pain's a bonus

Desley: like that girl I was talking about

Participant: Yes I know, I've known people like that. I used to know a girl, one I went out with and she was into masochism and I didn't know of anybody who went out with her for more than one night because he went out with her and came back with these huge welts on his back because she whipped him with a power cord and the plug.

Desley: But wouldn't that make her a sadist?

Participant: Oh, yeah, a sadist, yeah sadist. The pain as a plus, you could make connections again, with the celtic beliefs. Who, you have to go through the dark to come into the light. The celtic year starts at the equinox. At the equinox the days are in balance and then the nights get longer so you go through the dark and come into the light. You go through the pain. You could make connections there. I'm not necessarily saying so it would be valid but you could.

Desley: ok. would you?

Participant: I spose you, I'd make connections with it being, I'd view them as being very worthwhile. I don't regret any of the tattoos. I spose you could say that pain is a validation if you wanted to get psychological about it. Because it's something good from your point of view, personal point of view comes out of it. Which fits with that celtic stuff

Desley: But in itself.

Participant: I'm quite happy to live without pain.

Desley: So would you do it and have anaesthetic?

Participant: No, I'm not a big fan of anaesthetic at the best of times. Umm, if I can avoid it I will.

Desley: Okay, so you'd prefer to go through the pain.

Participant: It's not so much that I'd prefer to go through the pain, it's if you feel the pain, you know what your body is going through. If you can't feel it, then you don't quite trust your body because you don't, it's not giving you the signals.

Desley: Yeah, it's just you're making me think of a woman I heard of the other other day had an epidural to have the baby and then she just suddenly went, I need to feel it so they had to turn it down.

Participant: Well we've had all our four kids at home. None of this hospital crap. That was me supporting the wife, not me saying you had to have them at home. Umm. Pain, you should, I

know it's not a good thing to want to want to feel pain that's a psychological issue, but pain itself is a signal and it's a connection for you to what you're experiencing.

Desley: So it guess if you got a tattoo and didn't feel anything...

Participant: the thing is, it's not like we're talking intense, excruciating pain. If you, part of the thing is, if you can't cope with the pain of getting a tattoo, then you probably shouldn't be getting one anyway. Because long term, chances are, in one way or another it's going to cause you more pain than you are in at that instant whether it's through discrimination or whatever. Different sorts of pain admittedly. But it's a personal thing. If obviously you have a very very high threshold for pain then that would be a different issue entirely. I'm not saying I do, I'm not saying I have a high one either, admittedly. I tend to bleed a lot like, every time I've gone to get tattoo, they've said "god you bleed a lot".

Desley: There's a guy I'm talking to on Thursday, I've been trying to talk to him for a month, but he did some kind of blood something or other tattoo where they actually take an imprint of it while you're bleeding, and the ink goes with the blood. And apparently you've got to bleed a certain amount, not too much, not everyone can do it. But they've done it with him.

Participant: I don't know about those.

Desley: Yeah, he's been the subject of at least one PhD thesis. And he's been in a tattoo photo exhibition in Canberra and he's going to have his stuff to show me so, it should be interesting, I hope. Okay. So, we'll get into the tricky questions now. Is there something else you could have done rather than have the tattoo that would have had the same affect for you?

Participant: I don't think so. Umm, because the tattoos are the only thing that are umm, permanent. If I got a new bit of jewellery for instance, you could just toss it out. Fashions come and go anyway and I've never been a slave to fashion. Umm. So I don't really think so, no because I want things more permanent.

Desley: and to be able to express yourself.

Participant: Not as, I've never thought of myself as being able to express myself to other people. That's never been an issue, It's just me expressing me, for me. Sounds terribly selfish.

Desley: we need to do that sometimes. Is that like someone who draws because they want to express themselves? That kind of thing? Or is it different for you.

Participant: I think it's different. Because it's permanent thing, if you draw, yes, you pass it on. My little girl does these drawings all the time, she's a really good little artist, she's nine and she's always drawing and giving them to people, friends, family whatever and that's her giving a bit of herself to other people but tattoos you keep it. You don't give it away you see.

Desley: What about when you display them.

Participant: They're still yours.

Desley: And they get, It's your interpretation of what's there.

Participant: Well, that's the thing, it's never anyone else's possession. You know, people go, oh, I like that one, I don't like that. And I go, 'fine' that's subjective like in any art form. It's just totally subjective. But they never belong to anyone else.

Desley: okay. So do you consider that there's a difference between having that picture and having a tattoo?

Participant: How do you mean?

Desley: I don't know quite.

Participant: Do you mean like that picture, if I was to have that picture on the wall for instance and have that picture up here? Yes, absolutely because this is the only place that this exists, whereas I exist in a lot of different other places.

Desley: so it's because it's always with you.

Participant: Yeah, absolutely

Desley: So are you a person with tattoos or are you a tattooed person?

Participant: Both I suppose.

Desley: Okay. Can you tell me what you think the difference is?

Participant: what you feel like.

Desley: somebody told me that they look like a person with a tattoo but they felt like a tattooed person. Some people think it's like, how many you have, whether you are serious.

Participant: Oh, yeah, but I think that's trying to get into the status symbol debate and all that guff and the tribalism and I think the content of a lot of modern forms tattoos is pretty tribal, it's not about personal presentation, it's about recognising your self as a part of a larger group.

Desley: meaning people that have tattoos?

Participant: not even just people that have tattoos. Like a particular type of tattoo.

Desley: when you don't mean tribal, like when you say tribal, you don't mean tribal pictures.

Participant: To a large degree, yes. A lot of the branding that you see is tribal tattooing from the Pacific islands and other islands too but they're the specific ones. But it's cultural and people in certain groupings favour certain types of tattoos and that's belonging to the group rather than putting yourself out there.

Desley: I wonder whether they would say that

Participant: They probably wouldn't, they're looking from the outside and when you try to look at tattoos, especially fashion ones, if I see somebody with one, I try to get my head around why they've got it or even where it is, umm, and I think that's happening more and more now. The tattoos 40 or 50 years ago were outside of Japan, where there's always been, if you had tattoos

you were a gangster, you were Yakuza. You were... outside of that sort of context if you got tattoos because of the culture you were in, you got the ones that YOU wanted. Whereas there are a lot of these tribal tattoos it's a matter now of belonging rather than presenting yourself.

Desley: it's a bit of a worry

Participant: I think it is.

Desley: So trick question. I don't know if you want to think about these separately or together here. What would be the opposite of your tattoos?

Participant: Opposite? Do they need an opposite? Do you mean the content or what they actually are?

Desley: Well it depends on how you want to interpret it. Some people have taken it to mean some people have said not having it, some people have said having it removed. It depends how you...

Participant: I knew a lady once who had tattoos from her shoulder to her wrist and she's had laser surgery to have them all taken off and it didn't work and now she's got like scars from her shoulders to her wrists on both arms. That to me would be the opposite because that would be not just a denial of who you once were but it would also be a reminder of that, but without the soul, for want of a better term. It would be like if you accept that the tattoos are a part of you and a representation of you, then to have them not just removed, but defaced, then, then essentially what happens in her case,...

Desley: unintentionally

Participant: Yeah, unintentionally but that's not the point. She wanted to present herself as more "feminine" and has had quite the opposite effect. To me that would be the reverse. Cause she has essentially had her soul taken away from her because being unable to replace it. Because it didn't have the intended effect, and she can't be feminine now. I mean from her point of view. She always was feminine it never made any difference as far as I was concerned, so. But now she views she can't, she can never be that way.

Desley: She probably feels maybe less feminine than she was with the tattoos.

Participant: yeah, because she's very, the scars are up to here as well as on her arms, both arms. And I would think that would be the reverse for me because they're very personal. I view them that way. They wouldn't be suitable for someone else, they're suitable for me. So to have that ripped away, not just taken away, actually defaced, I think it was in the Taliban, it's a matter of disrespect, like damaging those Buddhist statues. I almost got it. And it's that sort of thing. I would go that reason.

Desley: Okay. I'll go back into lighter stuff now. When you went and had your tattoos were you by yourself?

Participant: My brother was there with that one, but that was because he took me to the bike show.

Desley: So it was actually at the bike show

Participant: yeah, it was actually at the motorbike show a tattoo artist that was there. I didn't go thinking that there would be a tattoo artist there. But I had it in my mind and I just saw him there and thought alright, fine, and it's just one of those things you just think are recognise, not just tattoos, it could be anything and things have a certain time to be done. That was fine, for me.

Desley: so did your brother get one done as well?

Participant: No, he still hasn't got one. He was in the navy for twenty five years and never got a tattoo at all.

Desley: That's amazing

Participant: yes it is actually.

Desley: so what about the other ones?

Participant: I think I was on my own.

Desley: so it was just something you wanted to do?

Participant: It certainly was. Yeah, that one, I'm not sure, there may have been somebody else there because I know the bloke I was flatting or housing with at the time he was going to get a tattoo as well, whether he was there or not I don't know but certainly with the others I was on my own. It's not sort of like peer pressure or a group thing. It was just a conscious thing by me.

Desley: so what do you think they mean to other people when they see them?

Participant: rough, untrustworthy etcetera, stereotypes

Desley: and the death thing

Participant: yeah, they creep people out on the whole.

Desley: what kind of reactions to do you get?

Participant: In non-employment situations?

Desley: I don't know

Participant: You get some very... The classic one I suppose was on a train to Sydney and this mum and little girl sits next to me, it was a long time ago. She just took one look at me and turned to her mum and said, 'mum, is that the boogey man?' That pretty much sums it up. Because she was just a little kid, probably about nine or ten. And they're just not afraid of articulating what they think whereas other people keep it buried, even though they're thinking it even if they're not actually saying it.

Desley: Well that's like when they get a Christmas present. 'oh, I've already got one of these!'.

Participant: Yeah I know. It takes them a while to get those sensitivities. Tact only has four letters but it's a lot harder to learn.

Desley: Yes. So you mentioned employment situations, so you've not got jobs because of them?

Participant: Yeah, there was one job with the yellow pages, just a job before I went to England, so that would have been when I was 25, I think thereabouts, and I needed this job, so I consciously rolled down my sleeves and I didn't roll them up for about a week. Couple of week and I proved that I could do the job better than anyone else and they actually said, if we'd known you had tattoos at the start we wouldn't have employed you, but we're glad we didn't know. So it was never an issue after that. But they wouldn't have employed me, it was just a policy not to employ people with tattoos. Disney don't employ people with tattoos even if they're inside the Mickey Mouse costume, they can't have tattoos because they're not nice people. It doesn't matter what job you're doing or if you're in those costumes, you can't be employed by Disney if you have a tattoo, anywhere.

Desley: lovely.

Participant: And I had actually had a case on prac last year. I had to change schools because the headmistress wouldn't let me stay there unless I covered up my tattoos for the whole 5 weeks of prac.

Desley: So you're doing teaching?

Participant: oh yeah. I graduated in Bachelor of Teaching early December and doing the Honours in Education this year. And she was like, I don't care, tattoos aren't appropriate, she actually said, 'our parents expect a better standard'.

Desley: Of what?

Participant: Of person! So I couldn't stay unless I agreed to cover them up. Bear in mind that this is October, so it was flaming hot, as it turned out it was really hot. I said, there's no way I can guarantee that so I would have walked around like this with my sleeves down for the full five weeks. And it's just not going to happen, so I had to change schools.

Desley: So it has had negative effects on your life?

Participant: Absolutely. Some people just, you know, you might be say down, as an example, I mean, I'm not saying it is the case, but you might be at your local soccer club and your kid might be playing at the local soccer club and you might be down there and some people they just won't talk to you because you're not approachable.

Desley: Because you're scary aren't you?

Participant: So, you get those sorts of things all the time.

Desley: So you just have to learn to..

Participant: That's their issue. Well if they've got those sorts of problems then like I said, that's their issue, I'm not going to get hung up about their problems.

Desley: so do you ever worry enough about somebody else's that you think, maybe I shouldn't do this?

Participant: Show them?

Desley: No, have them.

Participant: What before I got them? I think for all of them I've been aware of what the implications are but I've got them anyway. On that similar basis, it's somebody else's issue not mine. If they perceive things in a certain way, that's their problem.

Desley: But it has become your problem?

Participant: well it's only a problem to me if I view it as a problem.

Desley: Like having to move schools.

Participant: Yeah but that's not becoming my problem, that's still their problem, yes I had to change schools but...

Desley: so it's more like an annoyance for you.

Participant: yeah, but it's not the tattoos that were annoying, it's other people's attitudes. Like for instance, the school that I got transferred to, the teacher actually viewed my tattoos as a positive... you couldn't have gotten a bigger contrast for the very simple reason that that school viewed me as having, long hair, tattoos, earrings and beard and all the rest of it as positive because I've viewed it as a positive role model that broke the mould.

Desley: so they viewed a person with tattoos can be a good teacher,

Participant: can still be a good teacher, nice person and all of this sort of stuff. So to break the stereotypes with the children before they became entrenched. That was the whole, I mean I've been involved in well that was my first prac and I've done prac on three, if you count the one I couldn't stay at, that's prac at four schools, we've done, I've done research work with lecturers in four other schools and that's the only place that it was even mentioned, let alone make an issue, but even mentioned.

Desley: So was it a problem for the school it came from?

Participant: No it was just the principal's personal prejudices. She was a Margaret Thatcher clone and still is. It was quite bizarre actually because when it all came up, I had to come back here for a debriefing meeting with the people and one of the people who was there, I've known him since first year said, have you got tattoos? That's the difference you see. It would never register because it's not important.

Desley: so what do you think about other people who have tattoos?

Participant: it's their choice. I have very little problem with what anybody does with their own body so long as it doesn't harm anybody else.

Desley: So do you try and think "what does that one mean?"?

Participant: To them? Yeah, sometimes I just look at them and think, oh, that's interesting, I wonder why they got that one. I was following this one girl up the street, I shouldn't say following her, I was walking behind her, and she had a Celtic symbol which was like that, can I do it, that's the question, I'm a lousy artist, but it's like that sort of thing and she had this on the back of her ankle and I just thought why does she have it, she didn't look Celtic. Celts have big heads, pale skins and all of that sort of stuff and she didn't have any of that, but the way she had it done was specifically Celtic and why there? You think about 'em, but I wouldn't see her any differently because of it. But yeah, at times, it just gets, pardon the expression, under my skin, trying to work it out. But that's us, as we do.

Desley: How many people do you know that have a tattoo?

Participant: Now? I'm the only one in the family that has them. Friends are a bit thin on the ground these days, because apart from family it's all university work and I'm very much the odd one out in that context. Not because they don't have tattoos but because I can't think of anyone with visible ones that I've either been associated with at uni or in a social sense. They probably do have them. My wife does family day care and she has a couple of her parents have a butterfly on their shoulder or this sort of stuff, that sort of stuff is very common, not in the sense of that sort thing being common, but people. But no, in my current environment I am very definitely the odd one out.

Desley: Do you feel like you identify with any particular group of people because of your tattoos?

Participant: well I mean, I suppose you could say that when I was in the bike group, I was justifiably associated with them, coz I was with them. That was never really an issue. I find it interesting that 20 years after that time, I'm still associated with that sort of culture, by other people... yeah with my tattoos.

Desley: do you ride a motorbike?

Participant: I can't afford it. I'd love a new motorbike but kids come first, I'd love to get a motor bike. When I finally start to get real pay I'll have to buy a mini bus to get around. It's more

practical. I mean, people do pigeon hole you according to their perceptions, different people pigeon hole in different ways but there are universal negatives.

Desley: if a biker saw you. Do you think he would pigeon hole you as a biker or?

Participant: Umm, they'd probably think of me as a biker or ex-biker. While they do, bear in mind that I make distinctions between bikers and bikies. Most people who are called bikies are just people who are out on the weekends ride their bikes when it's sunny, even the bike riders I was associated with, I was the only real hardcore one there. I'd get on my bike, rain, hail or shine. Whereas when the rain came, they'd jump in their utes or whatever. So there's distinctions within there.

Desley: Whereas a biker is a

Participant: Weekender.

Desley: biker? as opposed to a bikee

Participant: Yeah a bikee rides a bike all the time. It's a lifestyle rather than something you do to enjoy yourself. Oh, the ones who ride on a Sunday, no they'd be the biker's. They might look the part and some of them might even have the tattoos but they're not bikees in my mind, certainly not in the context that I'm using.

Desley: okay so is there anything else you can think of that I might have forgotten.

Participant: oh, I'd say it's been fairly comprehensive to me. Apart from the fact that I don't mind talking. I don't know what else to cover.

Desley: I find it interesting that you say it as an expression of yourself.

Participant: Well it is and it should be

Desley: I don't know that it is for everybody though. Like people who get it for group...

Participant: Yeah, they worry me. I mean, people who get them as a group tattoo, who just roll up and go right, you see a tattoo, a tribal, no seriously, the tribal tattoos are not individual tattoos. I've seen quite a few of them at the footy and that to me is symptomatic, just a sign that...

Desley: ...the fact they're getting it...

Participant: ...that they're tribal. The fact they're tribal rather than reflecting your individuality.

Desley: And the fact that these girls with celtic is bizarre

Participant: Her particular one happens to be individual because of what it was but these other ones are specifically tribal. The tattoos themselves are from a tribal culture and are used in a tribal context.

Desley: I wonder if they think about it.

Participant: I'm not even sure it's conscious.

Desley: do you think it's fashion?

Participant: No, I think it's more than fashion. I think its fashion as much the same way and punk fashion was in that context the glam in this context... but they're different contexts and you could say they are fashion within their contexts, those tribal tattoos. So you can say they're fashionable not in a wider context but in their group contexts.

Desley: I'm just wondering why they are becoming fashionable, that particular type of tattoo.

Participant: I don't know. The ones that are used tend to be Polynesian, Maori. Sonny-Bill Williams has got one as well. He's from the League, he's been out for quite a while with injury but he's got one too. He's got a tribal one.

Desley: if he's a Kiwi, you can kind of understand

Participant: You can but people make not necessarily valid, but they make connections between the sort of decoration a person has whether it's tattoos, clothes or whatever with the culture they come from and you can see that culture as being a united culture.

Desley: The Maori?

Participant: Yeah being united culture. So in a sense, they don't even recognise it as tribal but by duplicating that they're actually consciously or unconsciously duplicating that tribal, whether they want to be in it...

Desley: yeah, so I guess being here, 'cause I was thinking maybe the Celtic thing is another cultural... but that's probably too far away for us to draw any inference on what it would mean

Participant: Well it is. Certainly

Desley: even though that's our history

Participant: It's near Polynesia.

Desley: geographically.

Participant: the tribal here is very much Polynesian

Desley: cause we don't really get a lot of Japanese culture

Participant: no we don't. You'd probably find within certain sections of the community we do as that's tribal within the culture.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	2	1	2	2	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	Glum
Patient	2	1	2	2	3	4	4	2	3	5	4	2	Frustrated
Caring	2	1	1	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	4	2	Callous
Kind	2	1	2	2	2	3	3	2	3	3	2	2	Bastard
Sense of humour	2	1	2	3	3	2	2	1	3	3	2	2	Dull
Sociable	3	3	2	3	4	4	3	2	2	1	1	2	Miserable
Friendly	1	1	1	1	3	3	3	1	3	3	5	1	Antagonistic
Active	2	1	2	2	2	2	1	3	3	1	2	3	Sluggish
Confident	4	2	2	3	3	3	3	2	4	3	2	3	Wallflower
Organised	3	1	2	2	3	3	3	2	4	2	3	2	Messy
Hard working	2	1	2	2	4	2	2	1	3	1	2	1	Bludger
Honest	2	1	2	1	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	Deceitful



Participant: Umm, I always wanted to get a tattoo. I don't do piercings and stuff like that so that it was something that was me. And I wanted to get it as a teen, younger, lucky I didn't because the one I wanted to get was, it was a bit, bit not me, so it was good thing that I actually waited, until I made my decision. And I was looking around and I was thinking. One day I dreamt, that I was watching myself riding a bike and I had this tattoo. So, the next day I used to work in a publishing company - magazines, so the next day I got some people from the design department to design the woman. Cause it's a lady praying in front of a cross. And I don't know why or how I got about to do it but I got it and somebody designed the woman and somebody did the cross and put it together and I got it done. Yeah, so it was just something I liked as well and I was like, whoa, it's like I was looking for this symbol but I couldn't find it and then I dreamt it, so I was like ok. So that was how I got around to doing it.

Desley: So how old were you?

Participant: I was 18, 18 and 6 months when I got my tattoo.

Desley: And how long did you think about it then before you actually did it?

Participant: Since I was 16, so about 3 years I thought about what I wanted, getting a tattoo.

Desley: But when you decided on that one?

Participant: Oh, it was instant. It was that month.

Desley: So what is it about that picture that appeals to you?

Participant: um. I don't know. I'm a Christian so the Cross is a symbol, but I didn't really like the idea of having just the cross there. I'm also feminine as well. The girl, she's naked but you can't see anything, just her back. I think that symbolizes a bit of fem, puts some femininity into it. And umm, yeah, to me, just, it was something, it was unique. She's praying, it's her, it shows that she's Christian. Its like she prays for me, I don't have to do it.

Desley: So is she you sort of?

Participant: Yeah, when I used to have long hair. It was weird, yeah. it's like she prays for me, I don't need to do it. I've never prayed before, haven't tried to. But she does it for me and that's it.

Desley: So obviously the idea of praying appealed to you in some respect, if she does it for you?

Participant: not real....Yeah, in a way. I think its good to do it, but I don't. I'm just not that religious. But, it just adds, for her, it does a bit of things I'm supposed to do. It's like she's always doing it. She's always there.

Desley: So it's not there as a reminder for you to go and pray, its like umm... instead of you doing it?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: So where is the tattoo?

Participant: Its on my lower back on my left side.

Desley: So why did you put it there?

Participant: I don't like them to be seen, its just for myself. Coz if my father saw it he would be like "oh, God, what does that mean?" So, its for myself and its not on my back, it's not on my arms where its visible. Its on my lower back, you wouldn't see it if I..., you could though, but its not as obvious. The reason I got it there, its just the spot I dreamt where I had it.

Desley: So when you thought about a tattoo before that did you think of the same spot?

Participant: No, I didn't. I didn't even think of that, where to put it. I just wanted one, I didn't know where.

Desley: So is there somewhere you wouldn't put a tattoo?

Participant: On my arm, on my arms and where it's visible.

Desley: So not on your face?

Participant: No...

Desley: What about on your stomach or somewhere like that?

Participant: No...

Desley: because why?

Participant: It's painful. Doesn't make a difference, still hurts... it depends on your pain threshold.

Desley: So you said you had it when you were 18. Do you consider having a tattoo coincided with any particular event in your life?

Participant: No...

Desley: Do you still like the tattoo?

Participant: yeah

Desley: Would you change it at all?

Participant: no

Desley: Would you ever think about getting it taken off?

Participant: No

Desley: Would you have another one?

Participant: Don't know yet. No, I don't think so. Something, no, I don't think I would get another one.

Desley: So why do you think you wanted that one?

Participant: I don't know, it just appealed to me.

Desley: The idea of having a tattoo?

Participant: The idea of having one... but it's not about being the cool thing because not many people know about it, so it's not about that, its about wanting to have something.

Desley: You mentioned the pain...

Participant: Oh, yeah. It was painful?

Desley: Was that, like did that detract from it, did it make it more worthwhile or was it just something you had to go through?

Participant: Something I had to go through.

Desley: So you didn't like the pain?

Participant: No, not at all. I was like, oh what did I do to myself. It was a bit like that but umm, after it was like, oh that was nothing. Like after... it was so painful but so easy to forget. Like I don't remember, I remember I was in so much pain but I don't remember what kind of pain it was.

Desley: So as soon as it stops basically that was it?

Participant: Soon as it stops you forget what kind of pain it was, what the feeling was, you forget that. I remember I was in so much pain I was like, you get a bit...need sugar and that sort of stuff. I just felt a bit

Desley: like dizzy or something?

Participant: yeah. dizzy. And they had to get me a juice.

Desley: I spoke to someone who fainted- they had 2 and they fainted both times.

Participant: Yeah, it happens.

Desley: So what about how you felt after it?

Participant: I don't know, umm, was a bit, I don't remember really, umm, I felt like it was something I had to look after. You know it was I had to look after it, make sure it, I just felt like I had achieved what I wanted to do.

Desley: So there was a sense of achievement?

Participant: Yeah, in a way. Sounds really weird, but yeah, it is true.

Desley: So do you think there is something else you could have done rather than have a tattoo that would have given you that same sense of achievement?

Participant: No, no, nothing, no piercings, nothing.

Desley: So do you consider yourself a tattooed person or are you a person with a tattoo?

Participant: A person with a tattoo. I think if I had more than one I'd consider myself that, a tattooed person...

Desley: Umm, did you go by yourself to have it?

Participant: No, with my best friend.

Desley: And did she have one as well?

Participant: She's got two.

Desley: So did she have one when you did?

Participant: Oh no, no, but her brother did, just before me.

Desley: So do you think you were influenced by the fact that he was going to have one?

Participant: No, I think he was influenced by the fact that I was going to have one.

Desley: Ok, so I need to talk to him... (laughter) What do you think it means when other people see it?

Participant: I haven't asked anyone that question.

Desley: So they haven't talked to you about it?

Participant: I don't know, they just say oh that's really cool, oh that's a good idea, like they never seen it before, I've never seen one, I haven't seen it before, its not something that I copied out of a magazine or something

Desley: No, you had it done specially... So what kind of reactions have you had?

Participant: Like, today I had reactions. They're like what are you doing? I'm like, research. They're like it says you have to have a tattoo. Umm, that's cause I have one. You know, my friends, my close friends. They're like I didn't know that. I'm like, well I just don't like showing it a lot, you just forget that its there half the time. They're like ok, let me see it. And they're like oh my God, like I never thought you would have one, they're a bit, they were surprised.

Desley: Do you think they have some kind of stereotype in their minds about who has a tattoo?

Participant: Umm, maybe, not really, I don't know, it was sort of brushed off, wasn't talked about.

Desley: So have you had any really negative reactions?

Participant: I have, a boy wouldn't go out with me because I had a tattoo. He likes women to be nice and clear and I said well, go, bad luck, see you later. That's how sad they're becoming.

Desley: Yes, it is, isn't it. It's like because you have the wrong colour hair or something. So umm, what about your family, how did they react?

Participant: My dad doesn't know because he'd probably chop my butt off. My mom, she knows, and she's like, ok, you know cause she knows I'm not really into piercings and the stuff. Even though I like it, I love it, but I just don't, I don't know, you know its just not you. And she's like ok, if you want it. But then when I got it done, she's like oh shit I didn't think that you'd do it. But she didn't yell or scream or anything, she's like, its your body, do what you want.

Desley: So who do you know that has a tattoo?

Participant: A fair few people.

Desley: So your friends?

Participant: Yeah

Desley: What about in your family?

Participant: Yeah a few cousins and stuff, uncles that have tattoos. And then war back, they tattooed themselves they did home jobs. My dad doesn't have any tattoos but I know a lot of people that do.

Desley: Do you think, apart from losing the boy, has it had any negative effects on your life?

Participant: No, no, it's in a good spot, don't have to worry about going to dinner, wearing a dress, or something elegant and having a tattoo there. But yeah, no, it doesn't bother me. Haven't had any negative effects besides that.

Desley: So how do you think people see you if they know you've got a tattoo?

Participant: I don't really care. I don't really care what they think. You know, it's something, it's personal choice I think, I think somebody, if they want to do that, its fine. I don't know, I don't really care what, never really thought about it that way.

Desley: So what do you think when you see someone else with a tattoo?

Participant: I look at it, I look at what the symbol is. And, I think in the back of my head, I wonder what that means to them. You know what I'm trying to say? My cousin's got his son tattooed on his arm.

Desley: A picture?

Participant: A picture of his son, he just got it done. When I looked at it, when I saw it I didn't know he was actually getting it done. Because he had a brain tumor and he died, so it was actually, his son was 2 months old, so I think it was like he lived for his son. You just sort of think about what the tattoo means for that person. And you kind of, not judge them, you're not judging them in a negative way but a nice way, like I wonder what it means for them.

Desley: So try to understand?

Participant: Yeah, try to understand the tattoo and ask them what it means to them.

Desley: So does the fact that you have a tattoo mean that you feel like you identify with a particular group of people?

Participant: No, not really. I'm Christian but I'm not really, I don't feel part of the Christian group, I'm not really part of the group. Only my best friend out of my group of friends has a tattoo, so it doesn't, its not part of our group. I know a lot of people that do, some other friends

from high school that all got the same tattoo in their group because it symbolized their group. And only their group had that tattoo, so I understand they got that... but it was never me to do something what someone else did.

Desley: What would be the opposite of your tattoo?

Participant: A lady looking at the devil, a devil thing, that would be the opposite.

Desley: Is there anything else you can think of about it?

Participant: Umm, no, don't know, did I miss something?

Desley: No, no.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	3	1	1	3	3	Sad
Patient	3	1	1	1	3	4	3	3	1	4	5	1	Impatient
Caring	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	4	1	Don't care
Kind	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	3	5	1	Nasty
Sense of humour	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	Too serious
Sociable	1	2	2	1	2	1	2	5	2	1	1	1	Anti-social
Friendly	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	3	1	Rude
Active	2	1	1	1	1	3	2	1	1	1	3	2	Lazy
Confident	2	1	1	1	2	3	1	2	1	1	1	3	Shy
Organised	3	2	1	1	2	5	3	1	1	5	4	1	Disorganised
Hard working	2	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	3	1	1	Laid back
Honest	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	3	1	1	5	1	Liar



9.2 RDT subgroup Remembrance

Participant WR26
Male, 47 years old

Interview date: 23/2/2006

Participant: I've got two tattoos. First one I had for six years, second one for about 8 months. I had probably always wanted in some way to have a tattoo and eventually... I've seen them on my friends - I thought it was pretty cool. But that's not how I wanted it. I wanted a tattoo to be discreet, because in my profession I can't have them hanging out on my arms. But so that I knew that it was there and when on the weekends, coz on the weekends I look like a different person, I don't look particularly like a dentist. Because with the short hair, goatee and motorbike. It's just a different part of me. So not the quiet retiring professional. And having the tattoo, it makes me just, I get the feeling that it is, it just makes me feel different or fit more into the role, actually it probably is a bit of a role, that I'm a motorcyclist. Although I've had the tattoo a lot longer than I've had the Harley. It makes me feel, it makes me feel good. I particularly like the later one that I got.

Desley: So what do you mean when you said "good?"

Participant: With hairstyles, clothing styles, they can change. And you can change them very quickly. But the tattoo is there. It's permanent now. Although I could get it removed... but I'm not about to go and do that. It's not something you can do easily. I like the look of it, both of them. And ...don't know how else to describe it.

Desley: So is it something about the way it looks on your body?

Participant: Yeah. Yeah. It's, it was something that I decided myself the later one. That's the one that I prefer the look of the most. It follows the line of the muscle on the top of my arm. It just accentuates the roundness of my shoulder I haven't seen one like it before. Also, another good thing about it, when it was done it was done in a particular way. It wasn't done with a machine. It was done by hand. With the artist, basically using his tools. His tattooing tools. It was done, almost as though it had been painted on by hand, rather than using the vibrating machine. I thought it was, ... the skill involved in him doing it has some significance to me as well.

Desley: so is having skill something that is important to you?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: What is it about that, that's important?

Participant: Skill? Um. His skill as an artist. Skills are important to me. If you can get a tattoo simply by going and having something stuck on your arm, they won't be the same. I like I guess that they're, that each one is individual, they're all different and, I don't know. I pride myself on my own skills. I'm a bit of a perfectionist and the way that the tattoo was done, the second one, the skill he exhibited in putting it there, I was impressed with that. That's probably about it for skill.

Desley: So if you think about it, you mentioned about your skills. Why is it important for you to have good skills?

Participant: I think I might have mentioned it, that I am perhaps a bit of a perfectionist in what I do. Coz I like to get what I do right, first time. Because if I make an error, you can't, you can't step back. You can't change it. Coz once, if an error is made, it's permanent. You've got to try and resurrect the situation. I like to do things right first time.

Desley: So is that because it saves you having to correct mistakes? Save time?

Participant: Saves me having to correct mistakes, and produce a job which is second rate. The recipient of it will benefit from it because they don't have to get it redone. It'll last longer. From my point of view, for the work that I do. And with the tattoo, he was obviously a skilled man, because it didn't take him a very long time to do what to me looks like an intricate job. Although somebody looking at what I do, could say the same thing. Once you are skilled at it, you can make it look easy.

Desley: So you think he was just really good at it so it looked...

Participant: He made it look easy but he did a good job at it.

Desley: Which I guess is a sign of someone who is skilled, someone who is good at what they do.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: So are they pictures, or are they just...?

Participant: there's um, one, the one on my left arm is a Celtic design in a band. And then the right one is... I don't know how you describe that.

Desley: Yeah. Different.

Participant: Yeah. It's just shaded to give it a 3-dimensional look. And that's probably all I'm going to get. I won't get any more. 'Cause it's, I feel balanced.

Desley: So can you say why you chose those designs?

Participant: The Celtic design on my left arm. Probably coz there, there's a little bit to do with Janet's background. With, um, well I think anyway, the Celtic background and the Scottish. I wanted something that ... I don't like pictures. I didn't want pictures of an eagle or a motorcycle or of a particular object. I wanted something that was a little bit abstract but still had structure to the design. And didn't want a lot of colours, I just wanted it to be reasonably, reasonably bold, simple, not too big and the Celtic band has got black and brown shadings in it. Whereas a lot of tattoos would be more blue black. I wanted the brown in it, so it would look different.

Desley: And does the same thing apply to the other one, that you just wanted something that was a bit different but simple?

Participant: Yes. Now that one's, that one's not so much in the one colour, coz that one's in the one colour. But it's the intensity of colour in the various parts, to give it the shading and it was of interest to see how a hand applied tattoo compared to the machine applied one.

Desley: Was in terms of how it felt or how it looked?

Participant: How it felt, how long it took, how good the design was and the experience of getting it done. It hurt, it hurt less. Tattoos hurt. But it was a lot easier to get that one done than it was to get the first one done.

Desley: do you think part of that's where it is, because I have heard that under here's really painful.

Participant: It hurts under the arm. That one also hurt, as I was going around, around the top. But that was more uncomfortable even in the same areas that I had for the second one. Under the arm stings. It felt like I was getting my arm cut off, but the hand done one, I could almost fall asleep while that was being done.

Desley: You think that was because of the endorphins kicking in, or do you think it was just not...

Participant: It didn't hurt as much. The technique of having it done, it may not have penetrated as deeply through the skin, with the needles that were used. It's...I don't know what it is about it, but it just didn't hurt as much.

Desley: I'd always read that hand done ones hurt more, but the ones I read about were the ones where they hammered it in.

Participant: Ok.

Desley: I imagine if they were over the bone and someone's hammering stuff in that would be fairly painful.

Participant: Yeah. That'd hurt, yes, I can see how that could hurt.

Desley: So it might be just the technique.

Participant: With the hand done one, it looks like a paintbrush with just a little stack of needles taped onto the end. So it's simply to go along the design. The design is actually drawn it or applied it onto the skin first, as most of them will be. This is just resting on his finger and he

dips it in ink, and just catching the skin as he pulled it back and going around. I would feel that the machine one, that would be penetrating deeper into the skin. Afterwards, there was much more scabbing with that, with the machine one. The hand done one, very little scabbing of that one. And it looked healed, completely healed in about a week.

Desley: And did that bleed about the same, or?

Participant: Yeah. Bled about the same. A little bit of bleeding. But the second one, the hand done one was so much easier. It didn't hurt. It scabbed less. If I ever got another one done, which I doubt, it would be hand done. But you have to go to Perth to find the same guy.

Desley: So for each of the tattoos, how long did you think about them before you actually had them?

Participant: The first one, I'd already been thinking about it in some form or another for a couple of years. And it took ...a friend of mine to...one night say right we're going down to I think it's Dave Rand in Corrimal, and we'll go down there tomorrow and get yourself tattooed. I was extremely apprehensive at the time when we went down there. It was a little bit of pushing from him. He knew I was going to get one, Janet knew I was going to get one, but taking that final step of having it put there, took a bit. The second one, it was, I actively, I wanted to get something else, just on my other arm. We found this tattoo parlour in Perth. We'd known about them already. Then pretty much it only took me perhaps a couple of days really to decide. OK I want to go over there and get one done. Went there one day looked through designs went back the next morning and had it inked in. The first one was the difficult one.

Desley: Cause it was breaking that barrier.

Participant: Yes.

Desley: Taking the step!

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: So is there somewhere you wouldn't put a tattoo?

Participant: Face. Hands. Neck. Somewhere that can't be covered up.

Desley: Would you put one on your bottom?

Participant: Nah. I'd do it, I want it to be able to be covered up, but I also want to be able to show it.

Desley: Oh. Ok. Somewhere that you could see, say at the beach. Not say when you're wearing, say your uniform.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: Ok. Do you consider that either of your tattoos coincided with any particular event in your life?

Participant: I don't think so. No, nothing specific. But lots of other things had happened prior to then. I've been divorced. Re-married.

Desley: it wasn't like a wedding anniversary or something?

Participant: No.

Desley: Nothing you can think of?

Participant: Nothing.

Desley: So do you still like the tattoos?

Participant: Yes, I do.

Desley: Would you change them at all?

Participant: The only way I'd change the first one is to re-emphasise some of the colour in. Because some of the colour is a bit washed out in a couple of spots. But I wouldn't change the design.

Desley: Ok. So would you think about having them taken off?

Participant: No.

Desley: No? Ok. And you said you don't think you'd have another one?

Participant: No I don't think so. I think that's it. I made a statement to myself. I made a statement to the world, if I want to make a statement to the world that I have got a tattoo.

Desley: So what kind of statement would that be?

Participant: mmm. {long pause} I AM a dentist but I'm not, perhaps I'm not boring.

Desley: So you're not just a dentist.

Participant: Not just a dentist. There's more to me than just being a dentist. That's probably, I think that would be one of the reasons that I got the tattoos. The other thing is, I love my profession but I don't want to be lumped in and to be looked at as being the same as the other thousands of dentists that are out there. which seem to be stereotyped as boring golf players.

Desley: I thought it was doctors who played golf.

Participant: Dentists do it too.

Desley: Do they? No hope is there?

Participant: Today is the dentists' golf day prior to the conference that's on the weekend.

Desley: Ah Ok! And you're not there.

Participant: I used to play golf, but I don't play golf anymore.

Desley: does that mean there's hope for my husband yet.

Participant: Does he enjoy his golf?

Desley: Yes. Unfortunately yes. He even got hit by lightening at the Illawarra once. That didn't stop him. So, I figure if that didn't, nothing will. So do you consider your tattoos are related at all? Like is there a theme or something that binds them together or are they just separate?

Participant: Hmmm. There are design elements about them that are related. There's the curves on them.

Desley: Yeas, they are similar aren't they? That one down there.

Participant: The curves, the curvy elements are similar. The curves and the points. They've probably got similar curves and points on some design features on the motorcycle too.

Desley: OK. So should we investigate that – the curvy and the pointy thing?

Participant: I don't know what it really is. I have no idea.

Desley: I'm sure if we had a few hours, we...

Participant: possibly, yeah

Desley: lay you down on the couch and ... So curves and points don't necessarily mean anything to you off the top of your head?

Participant: Not... no. They're just something that's flowing.

Desley: So what about a point? What does that say to you?

Participant: {long pause} Nup. Don't know.

Desley: To me a point I think of an abrupt end. It would be the opposite of flowing. So.

Participant: Yeah. That's {long pause} that's valid. I wouldn't want the whole thing to just be curves. The point does bring that feature to it – to an end. And if actually, if you had a look at a motorbike, you would see several bits - similar sorts of things. The curve, the slight curve there, looks, the mirrors on the bike look like that. My exhaust pipe looks like that. The design piece in the wheels are similar. I like, I do like the curve but it has to, it has to finish.

Desley: So some element of control, or something.

Participant: Perhaps. Because all curves to me, is boring.

Desley: Because it is all the same?

Participant: Yes. It's all the same. It just looks like flower power to me. I'm well over that.

Desley: So what about the pain aspect. Do you consider that a plus or a minus or just part of getting the tattoo?

Participant: Errr. Pain. I knew it was going to hurt, I did not know how much it was going to hurt.

Desley: Do you mean that in the sense of "how much" as in it was very painful, or?

Participant: Yeah. I had nothing to... I knew that lots of people have had tattoos and they've survived it. Oh, ok...

Desley: So it's not unbearable.

Participant: It's obviously not unbearable and...

Desley: But people survive root canal, but you wouldn't really front up for that if you didn't have to, would you? I know I didn't!

Participant: I know I have hurt heard people occasionally doing that. But that doesn't last very long. They don't sit there for an hour having somebody jabbing 'em to a vital nerve in your tooth.

Desley: So are you saying tattooing is about as painful, but it lasts longer?

Participant: I can't really compare it to a root canal. I've never had it.

Desley: Ok.

Participant: It does last. It sort of reaches a plateau level, sort of goes.... you work through it. It just happens, it's just... ok, I've got to put up with this. As I said, I always knew it was going to hurt. Not how much. But I realised pretty quickly how much it was, what it was going to be like. Alright, can't turn back now. Can't take the mark off my arm that's already there. So ok, finish it off.

Desley: maybe do you think they should first try it with no ink.

Participant: no, that's for wimps

Desley: Somebody I talked to, they said the guy did. They just did it on a couple of different spots on his body, to show him the different levels of pain. With no ink.

Participant: Ah, OK.

Desley: Because obviously some places hurt more than others. I can't remember where he put it, but yeah.

Participant: Never thought about that. But I don't need to do it now, I know what it's like.

Desley: So why did you choose to have the tattoo rather than do something else? Apart from the fact that you were dragged in there.

Participant: Well the tattoo is permanent.

Desley: So's a nose job.

Participant: Yeah. Well, didn't need one of them.

Desley: Didn't *need* a tattoo, did you?

Participant: Probably not. No. There's lots of things – needs and wants. {long pause} I certainly, I *wanted* a tattoo.

Desley: As opposed to a piercing, or...

Participant: Yeah. The only piercing I've done is a single stud in my ear. That's the end of my piercings. A friend of mine in Kalgoorlie, he had several piercings. His tattooing experience extended beyond tattooing. He got a bit of branding done as well, which is getting a bit aggressive.

Desley: I imagine that would hurt for a while.

Participant: Yes. So I didn't, I really didn't want to go down that road. Tattoo, discrete, although there's nothing actually discrete about it. It's something that could be covered when needed and uncovered when needed.

Desley: and I guess if you talk about that versus branding it's a bit more acceptable, isn't it?

Participant: Yes. Yeah. I think so. Branding, I hadn't really heard much about branding until Graham had his done. ooh it's gotta hurt!

Desley: Did you use to watch Kung fu?

Participant: Yes, yes I did. He had some on his forearms yes. I don't know how they applied the branding. With a hot wire. It was actually a design similar ...

Desley: I think sometimes they do it in bits

Participant: it was a design similar to the Celtic band I got on my arm, around his upper arm.
{sigh} Nah!

Desley: Barbaric?

Participant: it's too much. too much!

Desley: I guess that's what they do to animals. Brand them.

Participant: to claim ownership

Desley: So does it just look like a red mark all the time, or does it go keloid, or

Participant: it goes... he hasn't got the right sort of skin for it, he was too pale. And a scar is often pale, so it doesn't show up very much. For all the pain and effort that he went through to get it, it doesn't look like any...you can still see the design, but it's not very, it's not particularly bold. I'm not going there.

Desley: So do you think there's anything else you could have done rather than have the tattoo that would have had the same effect for you?

Participant: No.

Desley: So riding a motorbike isn't enough for you to go "this proves I'm not one of the typical run-of-the-mill dentist"?

Participant: Not entirely. A lot of dentists will ride a motorbike. I suppose I want something personal about me. Not just something that I do. Something personal about me, that I can say, I'm not just an average dentist. Dentists I look at as a conforming group, that's conservative. And I just didn't want to be lumped in with the whole group. I just wanted to be I enjoy dentistry immensely. I didn't want to be seen as the same though as all the other dentists. I wanted something that could say I'm different.

Desley: Do you think of yourself as a person who has tattoos or a tattooed person?

Participant: Tattoos aren't, aren't controlling my life. I'm a person who has a couple of tattoos.

Desley: Ok. Do you want the trick question now or later?

Participant: it's got to happen, I suppose

Desley: What would be the opposite of your tattoos?

Participant: Opposite. {long pause} (clears throat) {long pause} I don't quite know how to put it. {long pause} Don't know how to answer that one. {long pause} Probably having them removed.

Desley: Mhm. So not never having had them?

Participant: No. I suppose it depends on what stand point you are making the statement from. Whereas now I am someone who has tattoos, so for me now the opposite would be having them removed.

Desley: So what would that mean?

Participant: To have them removed?

Desley: mmm

Participant: I certainly wouldn't want to do it. {long pause} I can't see myself ever wanting to have them removed.

Desley: So do you think if you did have them removed, would that put you back into that little melting pot of conforming dentists?

Participant: Yeah it probably would. Um, I'd say it'd be a wasted effort that I'd done previously. I can't see why I would ever what to have them off.

Desley: Shall we just leave it there?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: So you said one of your friends took you to get the first one.

Participant: Yes.

Desley: Did they have a tattoo as well?

Participant: He did.

Desley: So do you consider that was more like his idea, or just your idea but he helped you put it into practise?

Participant: My idea, but he was a bit of the...

Desley: catalyst?

Participant: the help, yes, definitely

Desley: And with the second one?

Participant: That was probably my instigation. Janet and I both wanted another tattoo. I know she didn't want much. Nothing large. And this place where we went to get it done, was actually where Graham got his branding done, the guy in Kalgoorlie. But I didn't need the catalyst to get the second one done. Because it had already been done. I'd made the move already. You can't have your first tattoo again. So the second one was easy. Psychologically and physically.

Desley: which was lucky. So what do you think it means to other people that see you with tattoos?

Participant: Don't know. Um, Nobody else comments on it. It's just something there that's personal to me.

Desley: So say for example, you were out some where with your tattoos showing and a patient saw you, what kind of reaction do you think they would have?

Participant: Mmm. Most of them know I ride a motorbike. Haven't really had any responses from patients or people that have seen them. There certainly hasn't been any ...no real positive or negative responses. I don't know. They are, they are there.

Desley: So you haven't had any negative reactions to them?

Participant: No.

Desley: What about from family, or anything?

Participant: Both of my sons reckoned they look pretty cool. My ex wife reckons it was stupid.

Desley: did she put it down to a mid life crisis or something?

Participant: Ah. Probably lumps it with the motorbike world as well. And getting a ute. But I don't really care.

Desley: So did you ever worry about a reaction from someone else to the point that you thought, ah, maybe I shouldn't do this.

Participant: No.

Desley: No? What do you think about other people that have tattoos?

Participant: Ummm. I look at the design, I wonder what, perhaps why whether they are trying to make a statement themselves. Actually a lot of the time I don't think about it much at all. I think, oh, Ok, yeah. that looks good, or ah! The design looks crap! One of my patients who I saw

yesterday, I think he's ...the tattoos he's got, none of them are professionally done. I don't know whether they were done in prison or by friends or whatever. He's got them all over him. I just thought to myself "if you had had them done professionally the designs would have been really nice" perhaps that's not why he got them, I guess. I don't think much one way or the other about other people's tattoos. Except perhaps to admire the design.

Desley: They say that the difference between people who have tattoos and people who don't, is that people who do don't mind if you do. They're less likely to judge. Whereas the people without usually have these bi-polar reactions, quite often they're...well probably not bi-polar, one end is they don't mind or they think that look's nice, but the other end is so extremely anti. And I've heard that just in my research. A couple of people at uni, I'd set a poster up at a conference and they just started going off about it.

Participant: No one's forcing you to get one.

Desley: no. So who do you know who has a tattoo?

Participant: Janet , Janet's dad, Darren

Desley: So these are friends?

Participant: Yes.

Desley: What about in your family?

Participant: My own family, no one.

Desley: Does having a tattoo mean that you feel like identify with any particular group? Or does it, maybe in your case, make you not identify with a group of dentists?

Participant: Just makes me feel a little different to the group that I am... different to the group of dentists, but not a particular group I identify with.

Desley: So you think if you had gone to the golf day and one of the other dentists took the shirt off and you saw he had a tattoo, what would you think about that?

Participant: Probably not much, except that it would be unusual to see a dentist with a tattoo.

Desley: So would you feel like you had something more in common with him than inflicting pain on people?

Participant: ahh. yeah, I'm sure there are dentists out there with tattoos. There's gotta be. But I don't use the tattoo as something to form a ...if I see somebody with a... I don't feel an affinity or a bonding with them.

Desley: So you don't feel the need to go and say something to them or anything. Ok. Is there anything else that you can think of about your tattoos?

Participant: No. I, I like having them. I wouldn't not have them. That's about it.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	2	1	1	1	2	3	2	2	4	4	3	4	Sad
Patient	2	3	2	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	3	3	Rushed
Caring	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	3	4	4	3	3	Cruel
Kind	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	4	2	2	Cruel
Sense of humour	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	4	2	4	A professional
Sociable	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	3	3	4	1	3	Lonely
Friendly	2	1	2	2	1	2	2	3	3	4	2	3	Nasty
Active	2	1	2	2	1	3	2	3	3	3	3	4	Idle
Confident	2	1	1	1	2	3	2	2	3	4	2	4	Shy
Organised	2	1	2	1	3	3	2	2	3	5	3	3	Messy
Hard working	2	1	2	2	2	3	2	2	4	4	3	4	Lazy
Honest	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	1	3	3	1	3	Treacherous



Participant: I don't know why it was always something that I had wanted, I can't even recall where at first you know I saw it or whatever, but I had wanted it for a long time and I remember asking my father when I was probably 16 or 17 before I was of legal age you know to go on my own, and we discussed it and he was never against that sort of thing, but I he was like its something you really need to think about. I had and it never went away, I always just wanted it because in my mind it was just a symbol of life, in Egypt the ankh it's, you know, the hooped cross, it's life and fertility and you know, yeah and I've never wanted to get any more, its never been something that I have wanted to do like full body art, like its somewhere where I forget where it is. I think most people who are in my life probably, my family knows its there but where ever it is but it was really something more for me. So, yeah. I had it done and I really, I don't know why at the time, and I still like the fact that it is there because to me it is part of the heritage of the family and everything to do with that. But yeah, I ended up not getting it done till I was eighteen, you know, we discussed it and he said if you really want it done that much he'd come, you know he's sign, you can have parental consent, but I said look I can wait and I didn't get it done like the second I turned 18, I waited a bit longer and I went and saw a few people about it, and yeah. But it was just something that I knew I wouldn't let up on until I got it. I am very happy. I have never regretted, you know, getting it. I think its something that if my daughter asks about it, it is not just a picture or something I had put there for no reason, you know, it does have symbolism to me so that's the most important thing, that I don't necessarily agree with just tattoos everywhere, so yeah, but it's personal. My husband he is not particularly fond of it, he never was. I was with him at the time but not married, obviously he was just my partner at that stage, but again he just sort of said it is your choice and it meant something so that is about it.

Desley: Does it symbolize your Egyptian heritage, or is there something about the life aspect?

Participant: Yes it does. I like the fact that, one it is mainly, it has to do with the Egyptian heritage, it is something to be, you know proud of the family has a background and it is not some thing you come across every day. You know it is a culture that has so much history and I've always been incredibly interested in Egyptian history, but also when I was learning a lot

about it was such an important symbol in their history because it meant life. It is the fertility symbol and it just symbolizes eternal life, so it was both.

Desley: So is your dad Egyptian?

Participant: No Australian.

Desley: So you were born in Australia.

Participant: yes I was.

Desley: So you said you were about 18 when you got it?

Participant: I was eighteen, I'd just had, yeah.

Desley: Why did you put it on the back of your hip?

Participant: I wanted it somewhere where it wasn't open to be seen by every body at the time. I don't. I spoke to the guy at the place, like I said I'd spoken to a few people, and they just said. One it was sort of less painful, I didn't want it on my ankle or anywhere it was incredibly bony and I didn't want, sometimes people can get, "I" think sometimes people can get the wrong impression of people when they see tattoos, but I don't think that is necessary, do you know what I mean, but I thought I'm young, it is not going anywhere, do you know what I mean and I didn't want to, you never know when you are going to come across a person in life who has that view, and you're not going to get a job or you're not going to get the right impression of your self put across, or whatever it may be. I still had my entire life ahead. If I was older, like my aunt Ket, she got hers much later in life, she's got it on her ankle, and I think it's really lovely. She's passed that stage in her life where she is worried about the impression she is putting out on people, and whatever else, you know the initial start, so pretty much just because, and I also wanted it to be, to be sure that people knew it wasn't for other people, it was just for me, you know, so it didn't need to be seen, so that is just about it no real significance.

Desley: So why not your front why your back, if it was for you?

Participant: I don't know, I really don't. I guess I could've. I don't like them around the chest and the breast area. I don't like seeing women with tattoos there, so that personally to me was I just didn't like it. At the time, I was much much skinnier. You know the gentleman himself suggested that area. We had just talked about a few, and he said the front part here was the bonier, the hip area and that part here was just,

Desley: Painful

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: I think they discourage girls from getting them on their stomachs.

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: Like you've just had a baby.

Participant: Yeah that's it, it stretches right out any way. Exactly, so...

Desley: Do you think there is a place that you wouldn't put a tattoo?

Participant: Yeah I wouldn't put it near my breasts. I don't like that. I don't know why. I wouldn't put it there. I don't mind some thing tasteful, just something small on the top of an arm or something like that and ankle but again it is just a painful spot with the bones and stuff like that, I was warned against it but, probably the only place I really wouldn't go is you know, hands or the front of my chest, I don't...

Desley: face?

Participant: oh yeah face, I wasn't really thinking about that. yeah face, neck, those sort of areas. No. I personally wouldn't, no.

Desley: So you said you were thinking about a it for a few years basically before you had it, do you consider that having a tattoo was linked to any particular event in your life?

Participant: um

Desley: like I know it was after you turned 18, but...

Participant: um, yeah. I, probably in the sense that I had thought about it, I had thought about it, but myself, I was in a relationship for a couple of years, because mum and I had a very volatile relationship when I was a child and a teenager and I have an older sister, who left home very young. She is six years older than me am. She left when she was about thirteen and then I consequently left at fifteen, and so I was on my own. I had my father as a support but I didn't live with him, at the time I was living with a partner who was considerably older he was in his twenties, early to mid twenties.

Desley: So were your parents separated?

Participant: Yes ever since I was three, and my father is not my sisters father, my mother was married twice. I was very close to my father. I would see him all the time, I would talk to him a lot but he, but again I think he didn't want to insist. One he was living with my grandmother and it is a small unit and it was much further away from where I was working, because I had already left school when I was fifteen, like I said I did year 10 and I started my apprenticeship, so he helped me to find somewhere to live and I thought about it a lot like I said I was in this relationship with someone and I moved in with them and that was 2 or three years, sort of at a point where I was so young and it ended up being a very controlling and you know, sort of bordering on abusive relationship and when I came out, and he would never allow something like that, and that was the thing he did this whole like, almost like this fatherly thing over me, went na na you're not you know, and like I said I talked to my dad about it, he knew I, every... people in my life knew I wanted it, and I think it was the break from that that really and I met my now husband that, there were a few things I did almost just as I sort of independence from him. You know it was something I wanted and I was like you can't stop, no one is going to stop me, I want it, and I had my father behind me and almost just when I got it, probably just a back lash of my previous relationship that I did those things I wanted, because it made me feel better that's for sure.

Desley: No, I have talked to other people who have said that, it is like taking themselves back.

Participant: It was, it was, it was really, I did. When I say, I did a few things not all just like that. Just when it came to jobs, when it came to decisions that I made, because it took me a long time to make the decision to break away from him, you know and it took. By this stage I was much closer to my sister, we had reconnected, and she helped my and I had already met my husband, my now husband, but I was only working with him, we weren't together, we weren't, you know, but he became a very good friend at that stage and I talked to him as a work colleague and there were a few people that helped me realize that I was in the wrong place, and yeah and after I got out of it, then I really felt like I just needed to do a few things for me before I moved on.

Desley: It was young to get into a relationship.

Participant: It was. It was. Because I just left that before I had turned eighteen, so 15, 16, 17 and in the middle of it all too, I got quite sick, and I was sick for about a year. I had Crohn's disease, I was in and out of hospital and had operations, you know and so I had been through a lot in that three years, with not only him but also physically just myself, like I was finally feeling better and everything.

Desley: Did you start getting better with your mum too at that point too?

Participant: Yeah probably. My husband did a lot of that, you know when we partnered and when we realized, because I had only been with him for about a year and my father who was my sole strength in everything, you know, got sick. He got sick with cancer of the voice box and so at the time I was working with my husband and he was the head chef and he would work the hours so I could go and come as I needed and I was at the hospital with my father and all the rest of it and that was a pretty short illness. After about 3 months, we lost him, so my mother tried a bit, to sort of be there. It was very hard because it had been such a long gap of not really having much to do with each other and just when we were together it would just be aggression, constant, we would fight about stupid things just because we were just used to being that way with each other, so he encouraged that you know. Just slowly small things. We'd go to dinner or he'd ring up, and he'd just sort of say to me if things get heated, just say I can't talk right now, put the phone down, don't let it get crazy and over the last it has been six years nearly, five and a half years, I have had kids and you know like, you see things from a different perspective and you never want to admit. Wait until you have children is the line they give you, but it is so true. And it, we'd started mending the bridges before then and it's just sort of gone from strength to

strength, and now, you know, so I am a completely different person, than I was sort of 7 or 8 years ago.

Desley: I think kids work miracles

Participant: Oh, they do because you really feel, you step out of the selfish side of your personality. You can't afford to have that any more. You can't afford to think about your self all the time, and you do think much more about the consequences to your actions, and how what you do effects not only your children but the relationship your children have with the people that love you, and you know, so it has changed every thing.

Desley: You don't want to deny your kids their grandmother

Participant: no, and I'd hate to, like my sister, she held her resentment a long time, so even when I was seeing her as a teenager, she was not seeing mum, and she had her first child, she is 7 and a half and mum, Tarnie, and mum didn't really manage to become a part of their lives till she'd had her second child Tyrin and he's nearly five, until probably he was about one, one and a bit and I sort of said to my sister, you know, I'd like to bring her in, that was when we really started to get, you know coz when I was pregnant with my daughter, and one of the first times I got her to allow me to bring her was to mum's grandsons first birthday. Like I say he's nearly five, but things have gotten better, since then. They still don't really have an independent relationship like if we go visit I take mum, but they are much better, you know Renee might ring her sometimes or you know. There is definitely no bickering any more, but yeah, so things just sort of went... they're getting better.

Desley: So you said you really liked the tattoo. Would you do it again?

Participant: If something meant that much to me again I would.

Desley: No, the same one, if you had your time over, type thing?

Participant: Oh yeah I would still have done it. I don't regret it at all.

Desley: So would you have another one?

Participant: like I said not unless it meant as much to me, or I'd thought about it as much you know. There's nothing else at the moment, that, that

Desley: so you're talking about a symbol?

Participant: the symbol isn't like. I wouldn't go get something just for the sake of it, I'm not, I didn't do it just because.

Desley: So it is not really like you wanted to get a tattoo on your arm or?

Participant: No no, I definitely don't want it.

Desley: What about the pain aspect?

Participant: It didn't hurt really. After everything people that sort of get you like, you know you are a bit more worried, but it wasn't really that bad, you don't know what to think when people talk about an incredibly fast jagged needle. Yeah it was definitely not as bad as I had expected and the not doing it again has nothing to do with that.

Desley: So when you talk about the actual picture, how do you say it ankh?

Participant: Yeah.

Desley: I'm too Australian, so that is about life. So can you say a bit, about what is important to you about that idea?

Participant: um, I personally always liked the symbol, my mum always had it so much of it around we were kids, I have got much of it at my place now, but it was one I had always liked it aesthetically, it is a pretty thing, I think it is a nice symbol, but two I mean, at the time things were so volatile with us and we wanted for us like it was just almost a symbol of something better, you know, like it symbolizes a different life, a new life. I don't know so much about their meanings for it, to me it was just I liked the symbol, I liked the symbol itself, I liked the fact that it was such a strange thing in Egyptian communities because like I said the fertility aspect of it

you know, I did want to have children and what ever else and I um, I can't even think the words. Umm, I don't know.

Desley: So do you think any of it was like trying to link up with your roots?

Participant: yeah I definitely part of it was because, you know just the Egyptian part of it and mum was Egyptian, so you know.

Desley: So you never thought about having one that would link up with your dad's?

Participant: I know I don't know, I don't know whether it's because I am so Australian already, I already feel like so much of me is Australian, I am an Australian child, that's what I speak, it's what I am, it is something that is undeniable you know, so that was kind of putting a little bit of the other side in. I guess I never thought about putting anything on me in that sense that's Australian, because here we are, we're Aussies, so

Desley: it's a bit hard like what would you put a...

Participant: a kangaroo.

Desley: So why did you choose to have tattoo rather than do something else?

Participant: No idea, I don't know, um I guess it's permanent, something that once you commit to and that is why I thought about it a long time and once you commit to. It's a commitment to your ethnic roots, and whatever else and you've got to be proud of that, you don't want to, you hear people talk about wogs and whatever else and it's not nice, but I guess, but not really, but in a way it is an ultimate commitment, just to show, like you can wear a cross for your religion, you can, you know hang fluffy dice from your windscreen, whatever, but like, you know, and that is why I say I didn't want to hide it from shame, the hiding was for, one like I said it was personal, but two you don't know what people are going to think of you, not for what it is not for what it symbolizes but what it is, a tattoo. So, you know...

Desley: So do you think there is something else you could have done that would have had the same effect?

Participant: I don't know I haven't really thought about it. I don't know why in my mind it was so strong that I wanted to do the tattoo part of it, I mean I probably could have but it wasn't, it wasn't something I ever really ventured into thinking about. I had that in my mind like I was from about 16.

Desley: So nothing else?

Participant: Not really, it's just what I wanted so... I'm one of those people that do, I get a lot of things in my head, I want to do this, I want to do that, and my husband says to me, sleep on it, because you know I bet you tomorrow you won't, and that is what I am like, that is very much my personality, so having a year or two to think about it, there was no doubt to me that I wouldn't regret it. I always wanted it.

Desley: So do you think yourself as a person with a tattoo, or are you a tattooed person?

Participant: I don't I forget the majority of the time,

Desley: so neither?

Participant: na.

Desley: No one has said that before.

Participant: Really? I don't ...

Desley: If you were given a choice between the two? Then you're probably a person...

Participant: so what was the sorry... read it again...

Desley: A person with a tattoo or a tattooed person.

Participant: oh, sorry. Yeah, um. A person with a tattoo, like do you know what I mean? You hear so much, people can say about them what ever else and it just takes me a little time to click in, that oh yeah that is me I fit into that category.

Desley: Some one said that it is just like, you know, the fact that you've got whatever colour eyes or something

Participant: yeah.

Desley: that it's just a part of them.

Participant: yeah. Honestly, it takes me a little bit of time, to sort of go, yeah that's a category I fit into. It's not just a yeah, yeah, it is just such a natural thing, you know I will get undressed in the bathroom, walk past the mirror and do like, what is that, you know catch a side like it is not something that will wear off or fall. Once I had it done, it was good. I mean my sister, I know she wanted for a long time she had always talked about tattoos and then after I got mine it took her a couple of years but she made me take her in to where I went and she was a bit frightened, she had both of her kids by that stage, she had a flower put in the small of her back, but she you know day to day basis, wears hipsters and midriffs so that everyone can see it. It really is a big show off thing for her. It does not have a meaning it's not, you know so we have a very different. I don't know in her mind, what she saw it to be, you know that sort of a thing, but we really had different reasons for doing things, I think she did hers so that she could draw a pretty picture, and she thought, aww, I will whack that on and like I say there's rarely a day when you know you can't see it, you know, on her.

Desley: So when you got yours did you go by yourself?

Participant: I was with a girlfriend who came with me, she didn't get one, she just happened to be with me, she was a close girlfriend and she came with me that day just you know we were in the city and I was going to the city and I said to her do you want to come. I went intentionally to do it and she just came with me, so it was nice to just have some one else and she is actually Arabic herself, not Egyptian but Palestinian. she was one of my very close friends, so yeah. Actually physically got it alone. But had someone with me

Desley: What I was going to ask you was do you feel like you identify with any particular group because you have a tattoo?

Participant: no

Desley: I figured you'd say that

Participant: No sorry.

Desley: What do you think it means to other people that seen it?

Participant: I really hope if and when people do see it, which is rare, that they don't see it just like you know you mutilated your body or what ever else, I hope they see it as a symbol that has meaning and most people recognize that symbol as an Egyptian symbol and even if they don't know the back ground to the symbol or anything about it, I just hope that it says something like, you know that it is an Egyptian link. A lot of people these days have just such a lot of fascination with Egypt and I don't mind because I am proud of the country and I really do like the history and the heritage and what ever else, so what ever they think you know, I don't know why I'd care what people think. When it's your decision, but I always did. I guess you don't want people to think you did it just, because it is something stupid, or just as a lash out or what ever.

Desley: So what kind of reactions have you had to it?

Participant: As I said, my husband at the time wasn't too impressed, only because he does not like them at all, on women, anyway. Mind you, he doesn't have any you know. My ex partner had a few on his arms and things like that.

Desley: The one that wouldn't let you?

Participant: Exactly you know what I mean, there's many many stupidities in that. I don't know, I guess coz I didn't go flash it around really, the reactions have all been relatively positive, because it's not lairy, it's not, you know, like I say, like my ex had like a dragon around a sword,

he never could bring up a meaning for him, but yep I have never really had anybody turn around and go what the hell did you do that for.

Desley: So you have not had any negative effects on your life?

Participant: Not really, not really, no. It hasn't had any negative effects on my life. Like I said my partner at the time, my husband he just sort of said, look it is your decision but, and he was glad that it is just somewhere where it's not very obvious. So now, it is something that is not even a factor. It is just a part of me. If someone said does your wife have a tattoo, he would probably go, ahh, you know, like it's not....

Desley: So did you ever worry about some one's reaction that you thought might be you shouldn't do it?

Participant: No

Desley: What do you think about other people who have tattoos?

Participant: I don't have that much you know not a really great opinion, I guess like I said it depends where, I got to be honest like sometimes you see women with like I said you see women plastered somewhere like that, I just don't think it portrays the right image, I do think that that is a bit attention seeking in a sense, like why else are you going to stick it there, but really it's such a personal choice and I only know because I felt that I, it was a personal thing for me, that really you can't judge what other peoples personal choices are and for what reasons, I don't know. I guess you can say I have no personal opinion but then I do. I do, I just don't think they all look nice.

Desley: So do you think you find yourself stereotyping people with tattoos?

Participant: Probably and again, I am not even thinking about myself as fitting into the group. You know, you do it like, like tunnel vision. I don't put myself, I look at people and think Ooh. Sort of look at that and whatever else and don't even think that there could be some one could be behind me, looking at me saying that and putting me in that category, it's not, it doesn't even factor in, so yeah probably, probably depending on what it is, where it is and the actual image.

Desley: there's a guy I talked to and he's got heaps and he said when he walks down through the mall in Wollongong, the people just...

Participant: separate (laughs) like Moses and the red sea, like a real gift. Honestly, I don't know why it is and they can really portray as scary

Desley: yeah. coz the old stereotype is you're a criminals or a psychopath

Participant: and when you see them on, I mean you see older guys especially with them and you immediately go "jail", like they were in prison or something

Desley: It is like the standard of tattooing too, because a lot of people do get tattoos in prison, but it is not with the proper tattoo gun, it's the home job.

Participant: And you can see. You can see that, you know. But, um, yeah, I guess it does, it does. Some of them can be a bit scary. I don't know why. You wonder how

Desley: I find that myself like you can talk to someone with a tattoo but some of them are like...

Participant: a bit iffy. what to say? What do I say? Or what NOT to say

Desley: Exactly, so who do you know that has a tattoo? Is it your sister, Ket...

Participant: that's right, my ex partner had a few, I had one friend who had one, I'm just trying to think, not a ...Ket's son my cousin, Nicholas. He has them on his legs. I know a cousin of my father's side of the family. His grandfather has them, but like the hands and on his arms, but he was in the navy or some thing. It does not say hate, it says something else, but he was yeah in the armed forces, in the navy or what ever, and they did it on the ships. I don't know a great deal of people who have it but I guess a number of acquaintances just three or four people, that I wouldn't even go so far as to name or whatever else, but just acquaintances through my teenage years, as I got to the you know seventeen, eighteen, like I was friends with them for you know, during this period of my life, or they were a friend of a friend that I knew for about a year, a few people I've come across but not a majority.

Desley: It is not like you have this group of friends and they've all got tattoos?

Participant: No.

Desley: I saved the best question for last, what would be the opposite of your tattoo?

Participant: the opposite?

Desley: yeah.

Participant: In what sense, as a physical picture, or in my mind.

Desley: yeah. people have answered it in different ways. The theoretical basis that I'm using, the guy said that you can't know what something is unless you know what it's not, so you wouldn't recognize hot unless you'd felt cold.

Participant: yeah. see, to me, in my mind, I don't know... well, this... . The way I have always interpreted the difference between the Egyptian symbol which is life which has the hooped top which is never ending you know that is they're game, to the cross which signifies death, well I don't even see it as the Christian cross but you see the RIP on the graves, what ever that has the top that ends, so to me that would be the opposite, I don't know, so just a standard, like you say, a Christian cross, because to me that signifies not seeing it around some ones neck as a Catholic, the cross, it signifies somewhere some one has died, life ending. So, the cross. That would be the immediate reaction to my answer to that question.

Desley: So is there any thing else, you can think of that I might have forgotten to talk about.

Participant: I don't know, I didn't know there was so much I could say. You know you think to yourself you know, yeah. I don't know. I just think that pretty much sums it up like I say, I did it for my own reasons. It's never been a major factor in my life, in a negative way. I felt a great positive for doing it at the time, um, and now it is just part of me.

Desley: When you say you felt a great positive, in what sense?

Participant: That I did something positive for me, that I wanted for such a long time. I have never had a day when I thought I shouldn't have done it ever. Never. So, for any reason, any reason. So that is the best thing for me, having the time to think about having it stuck there in my mind and whatever else and I have never once for any reason that I should you know have regretted it. So I guess it is the main thing in my mind if I would have regretted it you know. I've had one friend who has undergone the painful treatment of having one removed, he had because he had it put on his hand and you know he was having those negative reactions at job interviews, whatever it is just not the right image. If you are in personal relations or anywhere else, you go to shake some one's hand, they don't want to see you know, and so he had to go through the removal process, so I am just glad that that's never become an issue. So, yeah. apart from that I think that's about it.

	Self	Ideal self	Future self	Self As I'd Like Others To See	Self As Seen By Others	Self Before Tattoo	Self Now If No Tattoo	Someone Without Tattoos	Someone With Tattoos	Someone Who Conforms	Someone Who Rebels	Someone I Don't Like The Look Of	
Happy	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	4	2	Sad
Patient	2	1	2	2	1	3	2	4	2	4	2	3	Aggressive
Caring	2	2	2	1	2	2	3	3	1	2	2	2	Unkind
Kind	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	3	1	3	3	2	Mean
Sense of humour	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	1	3	1	2	Bland
Sociable	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	2	1	Recluse
Friendly	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	3	2	3	2	3	Anti-social
Active	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	3	1	5	3	5	Lazy
Confident	2	1	1	1	2	3	3	2	1	3	1	2	Low self-esteem
Organised	3	2	3	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	5	1	Hectic
Hard working	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	4	2	Slacker
Honest	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	3	2	2	3	2	Liar