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TATTOOING, BODIES AND WOMEN:
NOTIONS OF RESISTANCE

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ABSTRACT

Tattooing is a form of body modification that has existed in society for thousands of years. All societies place importance on the body, and bodies are modified throughout the world by a variety of practices, of which tattooing is one.

This thesis explores tattooing in relation to practices of body modification, and as an activity located within particular cultural, class and gendered norms. It analyses the discourses of tattooing, especially in relation to the body, gender and sexuality.

Michel Foucault’s views of the body, power and discourses are utilised to examine the tattooed subject. This is underpinned by what can be called a feminist poststructuralist perspective to provide an alternative view of tattooing and women’s bodies. Tattooing is suggested as a possible discourse of resistance which can challenge and disrupt dominant notions of women’s bodies.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The only difference between a tattooed person and a person who isn’t tattooed is that a tattooed person doesn’t care if you’re tattooed or not (Wroblewski, 1989:2).

Introduction

The phenomenon of tattooing has existed for thousands of years. Its origins date back to prehistoric time, where it was used as a form of identification and power. In ancient times it was also recognised as being a mysterious and exotic form of art (Delio, 1994:7). The development of tattooing over time has seen it go through periods of acceptability and unacceptability in many societies and cultures. The most prevalent perception of tattooees (tattooed people) in the Western World in the last few centuries has been as a form of class and sub group identity. Although rejected by the middle class for most of the twentieth century, in the last ten to twenty years, tattooing has become increasingly more accepted in varying social classes. It may be that the reason for this is the decline of conservatism and the increased acceptance of many behaviours as a result of the creation of populist culture, increased pluralisation, and disassociation of rigid normalisation structure. Hence, ear piercing, nose piercing, sex before marriage, children out of wedlock, less adherence to biblical control
and increased agnosticism and atheism can all be seen as manifestations of an increasingly diversified social structure. According to Delio (1994), Western society seems to be more willing to recognise that it is not necessarily one ‘type’ or person who obtains a tattoo. She points out that it is no longer the bikers, sailors and prisoners that get the stereotyped skull and crossbones tattoos (which are illustrations of their masculinity and power), but rather, even ‘ordinary’ people are now using the art of tattooing as a form of body modification.

Tattooing is becoming recognised as a mechanism central to the construction of identity. The tattoos that adorn a body are not only expressions of the self, but are also essential to its construction. They have meaning and significance for the wearer that defines the essence of subjectivity. No longer do people choose their tattoos off the wall of a seedy parlour. Tattooists are expected to be artists who are capable of reproducing a tattoo that may have been designed by the tattooee. There is a definite skill involved in the art of tattooing, as the skin is a ‘living canvas’, more malleable and temperamental than any meaning of expression (Johansson, 1994).

Elizabeth Grosz (1994) suggests that body marking conveys a message, as well as being a form of social inscription that is capable of binding people together. However, body marking, as tattooing is, is not simply a
behaviour that can be explained in terms of class, race, age and status. Although the body can be marked in permanent ways, such as tattooing, it can also be marked in more subtle forms that are often difficult to detect. These subtle forms of bodily marking, such as norms, values and beliefs, Grosz (1994) points out, play a significant role in the attitudes towards more permanent forms of inscription. It is therefore possible to think of the body as being involuntarily marked in terms of collecting these subtle forms of inscription. However, these values, norms and beliefs are developed and inscribed in a voluntary way. It is not only men but also women who partake in these procedures of subtle inscription. For example

Make-up, stilettos, bras, hair sprays, clothing, underclothing mark women's bodies whether black or white in ways which hairstyles, professional training, personal grooming, body building and sport may mark mens (Grosz, 1994:142).

As with many issues, it is debatable whether tattooed people can be considered as a collective, or whether it should be recognised that tattooing could mean different things depending on a number of variables. These variables include culture, race, class, age, and of particular importance is gender.

Tattooing and culture open up a wealth of issues and questions. While in Western culture tattooing has been seen as a barbaric form of self-
mutilation, or as something that only certain categories of people do (such as the criminal or mentally deranged), our long-standing acceptance of what might be called ‘cultural’ tattooing is somewhat contradictory. In non-Western cultures which use tattooing as a rite of passage, or as a mark of social standing, it is regarded as an act of bravery and courage to have the body adorned through a painful process. Similarly, in Western society, we too, regard ‘cultural’ tattooing as an indication of, and symbol of, prestige. For some unexplained reason, ‘cultural’ tattooing does not seem to be regarded with the same threat and fear as is exhibited by people when confronted with a visibly tattooed person of their own culture. One can only speculate that such contradictions in behaviour and attitudes are associated with what people expect to exist within one’s own environment. What is seen to be an appropriate expression of bravery and courage in one culture, is regarded in another as a crude and barbaric practice (Wroblewski, 1989:5). The context of tattooing within culture, is therefore one aspect which will be explored in this thesis.

Tattooing also transgresses boundaries of class and gender. As identified earlier, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the tattooee cannot be stereotyped to a particular culture or ethnic group, or class of people. Nor can it be seen to be linked to gender, in the sense that tattooing is associated with masculinity. In the same way that women
(and men) modify and adorn their bodies, women also become tattooed. A further issue to be examined in this thesis, then is tattooing in the context of gender.

Given that there are a variety of ways by which people choose to construct their appearances, and that these exhibit the control over social identity and self-definitions, the phenomenon of tattooing in relation to gender raises important questions about femininity and the body. This needs, however, to be read against the notion of culture, since, as Susan Bordo (1993) identifies, it is culture that produces what we eat, how we dress, and how we attend to our bodies. According to Mary Douglas

the body is a powerful form, a surface on which the central rules, hierarchies, and even metaphysical commitments of a culture are inscribed and these are reinforced through the concrete language of the body (cited by Bordo, 1993:165)

Of importance in this thesis, then, is the body and its relationship to culture, class, gender and power. The body is particularly important in terms of power, and analysing the tattooed body provides a further dimension to the relationship between the body and power. Also this relationship between the female body and power is of importance, given feminist views about these issues.
Why tattooing?

There is not a great deal of research about tattooing. What literature there is mainly gives accounts of tattooing in terms of its history. This generally takes the form of chronological narrative and explanations or interpretations of meanings of various tattoos. Some literature provides visually spectacular photographs of tattooed people with detailed descriptions of what the tattoos are and what they might represent (Grongard, 1994). Little is known about why people choose to become tattooed.

In the tattooing literature, some studies are specific to races and culture, and while they may be historical interpretations of tattooing, they are really a social commentary of the customs of various races. Robley's (circa 1894)\(^1\) historical account of the art of *moko* in New Zealand during the 19th century is compiled from personal observation, seemingly exhaustive consultations, and letters. Similarly, Alfred Gell's (1993) work regarding polynesian tattooing has been developed from various documents and anthropological observations. King's (1992) work on traditional Maori tattooing (the *moko*) provides an historical account of this through photographs and narrative.

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\(^1\) The date of original publication is not identified in the edition of this book, reprinted in 1987. The letters from various people appended in this edition suggest that 1894 may be the date of publication.
In the present day among certain groups in society, tattooing still has a stereotyped stigma attached to it. One reason for this may be that tattooing has been associated with deviant, pathological and criminal behaviour. Of the few studies that have been conducted in relation to tattooing, most relate to medical and psychological issues surrounding tattooing. Studies such as this have only served to perpetuate the existence of the most predominant discourse of tattooing - that only criminal or violent people are tattooed.

Duncan (1989), in a study of tattooed prisoners, concluded that among prisoners “the presence of a tattoo, or tattoos, can serve to indicate the presence of a personality disorder which could lead to or is characterised by, behaviour which deviates from contemporary social norms” (Duncan, 1989:685). It was found that at the very least tattoos could serve as marks of disaffiliation with law abiding society and of affiliation with outlaw subcultures. Such a discovery adds fuel to the argument that it is certain types of people that are tattooed. Perhaps more importantly, discovering this sort of information also implies that there is a correlation between people who are tattooed and illegal behavior. It is as if being or becoming a tattooed person creates an automatic rejection of social norms. But it is doubtful that tattooing is the only factor in such rejection. The difficulty with this perspective is
that it fails to address other factors or variables surrounding individual choice in becoming tattooed. Nor, for that matter, does it explain why some people reject social norms.

Other studies on prisoners have an underlying theme that suggests the reason inmates become tattooed in prison is as a functional response to the identity stripping that is experienced in such a depersonalised institution. In a study of tattooing among prisoners in the USA, Newman, (1982) concluded that the loss of independence and personal effects is replaced by acquiring tattoos, which cannot be taken away by prison officials. They also discovered that as the act of becoming tattooed - either by self or others - was banned by prison officials, becoming tattooed while in prison serves as an act of rebellion against authority. It seems that the reasons for becoming tattooed as a prisoner are more socially acceptable than if a non-criminal. Brain (1979) suggests that tattooing in prison is seen as one of the ways that the prisoner can cope with the pains of imprisonment. An inmate can affirm membership in a protective group, can assert independence from authority, and can symbolically re-establish aspects of identity.

Some studies have focussed on the sexual symbolism regarding tattooing. For example, heterosexual men tattooed with overtly 'pornographic' images of naked women have been discovered to be
'closet' homosexuals (Post, 1968). Furthermore, the actual process of tattooing has been described as essentially sexual in nature. Sharp, phallic needles piercing the skin, the mixture of pleasure and pain that accompanies this process, is said to be erotic (Parry, 1971). According to the findings of a study of tattooed female prisoners, tattoos were most commonly related to intense lesbian relationships (Argris, 1977).

Other studies have focussed on the psychodynamic implications of tattoos. For example, Grumet (1983) states that tattoos frequently appear on people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. He points out that tattoos are often overlooked as a source of substantial diagnostic information, as they can portray psychologically relevant themes. Psychological motives behind tattooing illustrate a host of functions. They serve to mark puberty, ritual, religious emblem, or love charm; status or identification symbol; protection against danger; warding off evil spirits; signs of mourning for the departed; identification with special qualities of a totemic animal or symbol; guarantee of safe passage to a life after death; signs of allegiance to families, tribes or totem groups, and so on. Grumet also suggests that of all of the personal motives that surround becoming tattooed, personal identity is the most central. He draws attention to the relationship between identity and Sigmund Freud's ideas concerning the ego. The ego in
Freudian terms, can be regarded as a mental project of the surface of the body, because it is ultimately derived from bodily sensations, in particular those which originate from the body's surface (Grumet, 1983). In this sense, then, becoming tattooed can be viewed as an extension to the boundary of the body in that it strengthens the ego. Grumet's point is that for people who become tattooed, there is a quest for self-definition. Tattooing may promise a final identity, and a clarity of the ego.

In the area of psychology and psychiatry, tattooing has been seen as an indicator of mental illness. Briggs (1958:1039) suggested that

the presence of a single meaningless tattoo mark suggests a prepsychotic phenomena ... the appearance of multiple tattoo marks which differ greatly in motivation, which have no symmetry, and which have no apparent connection one with the other, is always diagnostic of a severe psychoneurosis

This may, however, say more about cause and effect views of mental health at this time - that is the 1950s - than provide any accurate picture of anything other than a spectulative connection between the tattooed person and mental illness. It does highlight, however how tattoos are seen to be associated with pathological behaviour.
In general, studies about tattooing fail to explore the individual meaning of being tattooed. They appear to only focus on the behaviour of those who are tattooed (Goldstein, 1979; Newman, 1982; Buhrich, 1983; Duncan, 1989; Farrow, 1991). Despite the information from the literature on tattooing in prisons indicating an acceptable form of personal and artistic impression, and a method of affirming identity, the tattoo continues to be perceived as deviating from normal social experiences. Tattoos are still associated with criminal and deviant behaviour. And because tattoos are not enforced on anyone but are obtained voluntarily, this reinforces a belief about deviance. The decision to become tattooed is rarely seen in the literature as an act of self affirmation. Historically, there has been little regard by researchers for people who have purposely scarred their bodies. Research subjects have been selected from areas of society that are, or have always been, intensely populated by tattooed people. For example within prisons, mental hospitals, motorcycle gangs, and the armed forces.

Most of the literature that has explored the phenomenon of tattooing through studies of the behaviour of the tattooed person, then, has tended to present a relatively simplistic outline of the existing perspectives on the motives of the tattooed person. For example, many studies focus on the correlation between tattooed psychiatric patients
and pathological behaviour. Similarly, a correlation is considered to exist between tattooed prisoners and the propensity for criminal and violent behaviour. Such studies have only focussed on institutionalised subjects. They have failed to establish an involvement with tattooed people in the everyday environment, and thus been restricted to only one perspective. Rather than research subjects being selected at random, they have been selected from a very particular segment of society. Such methodology creates a highly subjective structure and outcomes. But perhaps more importantly, research such as this seem to have linked tattooing with some sort of 'abnormal' behaviour. All this leaves an impression that a tattooed person must be an 'abnormal' or deviant person to become tattooed in the first place.

My interest lies in analysing tattooing from a different perspective, that is, one which does not simply focuses on categories of individuals or groups, but rather takes a different perspective. There are several aspects to this perspective. First, various discourses exist in relation to tattooing. These need to be identified. Also, Grognard (1994) used the term "graffiti for the soul" to refer to tattooing and the tattooed person. I want to explore what this might mean from a poststructuralist view of the self, or the subjectivity of a tattooed person. I am particularly interested in this in relation to gender, that is in relation to women.
Purpose of the thesis

This thesis seeks to provide an analysis of the discourses of tattooing. It will explore the development of tattooing and the tattooed subject. This will involve assessing the historical development of perceptions associated with tattooing, and critically analysing the way in which tattooing is used as a method of inscribing a personal conception of the self and one's identity. In that this happens, what will also be explored is how tattooed individuals adopt the practices of the discourses of tattooing. Tattooing will be analysed as an activity central to the creation of subjectivity within a particular cultural and gendered order.

Since tattooing needs to be understood in relation to class, race and as a language which inscribes individual identity within group terms, what needs to be unravelled is its location in terms of gender, sexuality and the body. The theoretical framework by which this will be done will be by adopting concepts from the work of Michel Foucault, in particular his concepts of power and the body, discourses, (in the sense that Foucault uses this term), and subjectivity. Underpinning this, a feminist poststructuralist perspective will be used to examine tattooing in relation to gender, particularly in relation to the woman's body.
What I want to do in this thesis, then, is to consider the phenomenon of tattooing in relation to various discourses. As there are regularities and rules within any discourse, these determine the way in which a discourse operates. Also, various social practices are part of a discourse, such as habit, customs, events, institutions and politics. Since the purpose of analysing a discourse is to describe various contradictions once they become apparent, several questions need to be asked in relation to tattooing. These include: What is the importance of the body in society? What ways is the body modified? How did tattooing arise as a modification of the body? What are the practices associated with tattooing? How is it perceived in society? Are there gender and sexuality issues associated with tattooing? Are there differences for men and women? Why isn’t every body tattooed? How does tattooing relate to notions of power?

**Structure of the thesis**

This thesis is presented in seven chapters. In Chapter one an introduction to the topic, a brief review of the literature on tattooing, as well as the purpose of the thesis and an outline of the way it is organised is provided. Chapter two concentrates on methodological and theoretical issues, and outlines Foucault, poststructuralism, feminism, and examines some of the tensions between these concepts.
Chapter three outlines the historical development of tattooing, and discusses its discourses within the context of culture, class and race. Chapter four discusses various views of the importance of the body as a focus of study, and as a site of power.

Chapter five discusses the things that people do to alter the appearance of their bodies, and explores cultural matters in relation to the body and power in terms of what is done to the body. This includes cultural views about women in relation to notions of gender. Chapter six addresses sexuality, masculinity, femininity, identity and self, as well as examining issues in the meaning and experience of tattooing. Finally, Chapter seven summarises the discussions in each of the chapters of the thesis, and discusses the possibility of tattooing as a counter discourse of resistance for women.
CHAPTER TWO
THEORY AND METHOD

The best way to see that things might be otherwise is to see that they were once otherwise, and in some areas of life, still are ... A discourse analysis can show the accidental status of our sense of who we are, and can sensitize us to practices still alive that have not been co-opted or removed (Dreyfus, 1987:331).

This chapter introduces the theoretical framework and methodology used in this thesis. It looks at poststructuralist perspectives, and in particular, discusses Michel Foucault's ideas of discourse, power and subjectivity, and discourse analysis as an approach to examining the tattooed subject. An exploration of poststructuralist feminism is also undertaken to provide an analysis of the appropriateness of a Foucauldian method.

What is Poststructuralism?

The body of ideas that are represented by the term poststructuralism have their origins in three schools of thought. Firstly, architecture. Secondly, the poststructural writings of French philosophers such as Foucault and Derrida. And thirdly from new developments in technology and social forms that have prompted new conceptions of social organisation (Green 1994).
To advocates of poststructuralism, history has no meaning, and there is not one truth, but many. They devalue the search for universal laws and theories and focus on local meanings that are socially constructed (Sands and Nuccio, 1992). However, what is important to acknowledge in this respect is that if poststructuralists say there is not a unitary truth, then they are in one sense sabotaging the credibility of their approach, because it advocates a truth in itself. Poststructuralism is trying to convince people of the accuracy of its own themes for explaining the world, but in doing this risks the creation of a metanarrative that it seeks to eliminate. So it is important to distinguish structuralism from poststructuralism. Structuralism emphasises historical progress, autonomy of the individual subject and scientific rationality, which are all features of the enlightenment. Poststructuralism regards history as arbitrary and directionless. The first obvious problem with poststructuralism then, is that it is ahistorical. The second problem is that poststructural thought is anti-rationalist. This is, therefore, in direct contrast to the ideas of liberalism and the Enlightenment. The most important criticism of poststructuralism in terms of application to the phenomenon of tattooing is that it is deficient in its treatment of issues of gender and self (Flax, 1990). Poststructuralism has an important aim, which is to invoke scepticism concerning Enlightenment ideas about truth, knowledge, power and history, self and language. In particular,
poststructuralism is concerned with challenging the structuralist idea that knowledge has been defined in terms of 'man' (Hekman, 1990). Structuralists see these as being taken for granted and legitimating contemporary Western culture (Flax, 1990). Poststructuralists reject the structuralist acceptance of the themes of the Enlightenment. These themes include a coherent and stable self, a distinctive political philosophy, a transparent medium of expression, a rationalist and teleological philosophy of history, an optimistic and rationalist philosophy of human nature and a philosophy of knowledge (Flax, 1990). Poststructuralists wish to destroy conceptions of these themes. They emphasise the death of man, history and metaphysics.

The poststructuralist wish to destroy history is of particular interest to this thesis. According to poststructuralists, Man constructs stories he calls History, in order to find or justify a place for him in time (Flax, 1990). If this is so, then it is possible that the poststructural approach may prove difficult for explaining how perceptions of tattooing have changed over time and developed into the current perceptions of today. The problem may lie in the historical nature of poststructuralist thought, and the way that tattooing as it exists now has eventuated as a direct result of the influence of historical changes in attitudes within society. However, what is also to be investigated within what may be called a poststructuralist framework, is the meaning of tattooing
within the dominant culture. Tattooing may be, in Foucauldian terms, a 'subjugated discourse'. But it may also be a 'counter discourse' in terms of resistance, so this too needs to be critically analysed.

The ideas of Foucault

Michel Foucault is one philosopher aligned with the school of thought associated with poststructuralism. Unlike structuralists, who advocate that there is an essential or real structure underpinning certain events of historical materials, Michel Foucault holds that ideas are in no way mere effects of real structures or a baseline from which reality is constructed (McHoul and Grace, 1993). Foucault's work was, in essence, an exploitation of the crisis of Marxist thought. He was concerned with shifting the regions of social and political thought (McHoul and Grace, 1993). This is in contrast to the Marxist model which was under threat from the 'mode of production', for example computing, education and cinema (Poster, 1984). Foucault provides a more subtle detailed historical analysis of the local and specific effects of power (McHoul and Grace, 1993). Power is especially important when looking at tattooing as it can perhaps be regarded as an expression of power or as an act of empowerment, in terms of the way in which individuals create or invent an identity.
Discourse, Foucault and discourse analysis

The concept of discourse is used in different ways (Potter and Weatherall, 1987; Weedon, 1987, Gavey, 1989, Lupton, 1992). One way of defining discourse is as a "group of ideas or patterned way of thinking which can be identified in textual and verbal communications, and can also be located in wider social structures" (Lupton, 1992:145). Discourse used in the general sense, refers to any regularised set of statements. This means it can refer to any spoken or written account of something, such as discourse on parenting, fitness and health and so on. But as Jones, et al (1990:89) point out

there is not one discourse which is *invariably* better or 'more correct' than others. Rather, different discourses may be more or less useful in different contexts, and they may be more or less dominant. (Italics in original).

Foucault’s notion of discourse, however, is more inclusive than spoken or written accounts of how something is considered by people. He includes rituals, practices and social power relations that are inherent to the discourse (Foucault, 1977). Key to understanding Foucault’s use of discourse is the recognition that a regularised system of statements implies more than what is usually considered to be discourse in the general sense of the concept.
Foucault thinks of discourse in terms of bodies of knowledge. In this way he shifts the concept away from something only concerned with language to being concerned with discipline. His use of discourse shows the historically specific relations between disciplines, which are defined as bodies of knowledge, and forms of social control and social possibility, which are seen as disciplinary practices. In any given historical period, we think, write or speak about a given social object or practice in certain specific ways and not in other ways. So a discourse in Foucauldian terms is whatever constrains as well as whatever enables thinking, writing or speaking within such historical limits. Therefore, in order to analyse and describe what makes a discourse, it must be seen in terms of its historical and specific conditions. Events must happen according to certain conditions, rules or constraints of possibility. These mean that discourses always function in terms of power relations (McHoul and Grace (1993). Foucault argued that discourse, knowledge and power are so closely interrelated, that a field of discourse co-exists with a field of power. Hence his use of the term 'power/knowledge' with respect to discourse.

Lupton (1992) identifies that discourse analysis is a relatively recent method of examining the way in which systems of knowledge have been constructed. Although there are procedural variations in the way that a discourse analysis can be undertaken, common goals and
assumptions can be seen to exist. One possible methodology is to utilise 
an analysis of discourses derived from the works of Michel Foucault. 
Within this framework, discourse is viewed as relations of 
power/knowledge which are encoded in the social processes of 
language and action (McHoul and Grace, 1993). In the Foucauldian use 
of discourse, all discourses contain contradictions and silences. 
Therefore, analysis of these is an important consideration in a 
Foucauldian discourse analysis. The conceptual and social conditions 
that made it possible for the discourse to come into existence in the first 
place, as well as the assumptions and effects of the discourse in the 
social world need to be considered. That is to say, that when analysing a 
discourse, attention must be given to understanding how the discourse 
first emerged, and what is being said or done differently as a result of 
the existence of a particular discourse.

**Foucault and power**

According to Foucault, power relations are not separate from other 
relations, but are contained within them. Foucault argues that no 
scientific discourse can represent the truth of things such as crime, 
madness, sexuality and so on. It can only contain them somehow in 
relation to another, and power is always a discursive relation rather 
than something which a person or group wields or bears. Thus 
Foucault’s view of power is that it
must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization; as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them; as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another; and lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect... (Foucault, 1978:92-93).

All Foucault's works can be seen to be associated with power. Or more specifically, about power/knowledge, which was how he perceived the workings of power. Foucault's work has been divided into three areas, all of which are associated with the workings of power in a different way. Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982) identify that Foucault's early work, referred to as archeology, and his later work, which they say actually extends on archeology, is referred to as genealogy, illustrates the different approaches Foucault took in analysing power/knowledge. It is important to discuss these further to make the differences clear.

In the framework of archeology, Foucault looked at practices and techniques to determine the relationship between the subject and power. This approach can be seen in some of his earlier works, such as in *Madness and Civilization* (1965), *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) and *The Birth of the Clinic* (1973).¹

¹ These are the dates of English translations of Foucault's works and are the versions used in this thesis.
These works exemplify Foucault’s interest in how human beings were objectified through discursive practices. Rabinow (1984) explains this is done through ‘dividing practices’, such as categories of madness and sanity, evident in *Madness and Civilisation*. Later, in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, a scientific classification of people as an object of study was an attempt to isolate various discursive systems and practices associated with this. However, Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982:99) say that Foucault’s notion of archaeology failed, as it “was not as autonomous or stable as he thought, because it required theories to objectify the conditions which made the objectification possible”. They point out that this is what led Foucault to move to develop his concern with subjectification, or how people actively engage in forming themselves. This analysis of subjectification was referred to as genealogy, and required a particular form of historical analysis, which Foucault claims is a form of history which can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects etc., without having to make reference to a subject which is either transcendental in relation to the field of event, or runs its sameness throughout the course of history (Foucault, 1980:117).
In all three volumes of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1978, 1985, 1988) explored what he eventually came to refer to as "technologies of the self". These, he said

permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others, certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thought, and conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves (Foucault, 1982:18).

Both these latter aspects are useful in exploring power, discourse, the body and subjectivity - all of which are essential components of this thesis in terms of the tattooed person.

**Feminism and Foucault - tensions**

There are some tensions between Foucault and feminism which need to be explored. Most of the tensions seem to be related to feminist views of masculine domination. Singer (1989) identifies that Helene Cixous argues that phallocentric hegemony is maintained by masculine control over the production, circulation and representation of pleasure. Thus absence of such things which allow women to be represented as themselves in ways that give pleasure, perpetuates the dominance of men, and allows them to reinforce their masculine identity and concepts of masculinity. Cixous emphasises the need for women to write about what gives them pleasure, not within the male construction, but within their own. Such women's discourse will have
a self-validating effect for women's wants, desires and needs.

In contrast to Cixous' analysis which stresses the stability and centrality of sexual difference as a constitutive principle, Foucault's analysis of power emphasises the flexibility and diversity of power deployment. Foucault questions the adequacy of Cixous' notion of sexual liberation for women through sexual discourse. If power does not operate primarily as repression, liberation of sex can no longer be conceived of as the disclosure of sex through discourse (Singer, 1989). However, as Cixous is writing from the perspective of a woman, she is more able to see and understand how power has been used to the advantage of the masculine position which retains control over women. More importantly, she is speaking as a woman.

Nancy Hartsock (1990) has a similar position to Cixous. She considers that power is associated firmly with the male and masculinity. She argues that the only way to change the status of women as inferior to men, is to change the nature of power relations. However, in order to be able to change the nature of power, she claims we need to understand how power works. Hartsock claims that postmodern theories, such as those advocated by Foucault, fail to provide a theory of power that adequately explains the role of women.
Foucault, however, makes it difficult to locate the domination theme in his views about power. In particular, domination in power relations, as he considers power must not be seen as either a single individual dominating others, or a group or class dominating others. Foucault treats power as a commodity which can be owned and exchanged, so that ownership determines who has power (Marshall, 1989). Given this view, it is difficult to understand how women have come to be subjugated by men, if men are not able to be a dominating group according to the way that power works for Foucault. Such a definition of power makes explaining the autonomy of the masculine identity difficult to comprehend. According to Hartsock (1990), Foucault’s account of power makes room only for abstract individuals, not for women or men. Similarly, it does seem to imply that women are capable of obtaining power if they so desire and if they pay the right price, they too will ‘own’ power in the way that men do. However, the social and political power and autonomy of men eludes them. It is this that makes Foucault’s view of power problematic for some feminist writers.

In this respect then, perhaps Foucault is deficient in his views about why women have not had power to create a discourse of their own. Therefore, in order to transform the power relations that exist between men and women, it is important to develop an account of the world
which treats women's perspectives not as an inferior kind of knowledge, but as a constitutive different kind of world perspective. This may best be done through the creation of a women's discourse as Cixous advocates. However, the problem for feminists, is that for Foucault, the construction of a discourse can only be located in power, so considering men as the dominators and the retainers of power and autonomy means that women may not be able to develop their own discourse through discussion and application of their own experience, and the discourses of men remain significant. Foucault mentions women as one of the subjected or marginalised and resisting elements within contemporary culture. He stresses the need to pay attention to the minute, local and differentiated forms of events and power that are said to constitute 'history'. However, he does not consider the feminist claim that in important ways, the histories of men and women are themselves differentiated and heterogenous. It seems puzzling to feminists that Foucault neglects any consideration of gender issues as he claims to be writing 'histories of the present'. It is considered that if this is to be of use to marginalised groups, then it should be directly applicable to the role of women in contemporary society (McNay, 1992).

One of the problems with Foucault in terms of gender issues and identity politics is that feminists have had, as part of the feminist project, to 'name ourselves' (Jones and Guy, 1993). In this regard, asks
Nancy Hartsock:

Why is it that just at the moment when so many of us who have been silenced begin demand the right to name ourselves to act as subjects rather than objects of history, that just then the problem of subjecthood becomes problematic? (Hartsock, 1990:163).

One reason for this view is because, Lather (1991) suggests, in order to address the liberation of women from oppression that feminists appeal to the "power of individual agency and subjectivity as necessary components of socially transformative struggle" (Lather, 1991:28).

In terms of the limitations of Foucault, then, the main criticism is that his definitions of power, and thus discourse seem inadequate. This is because power is seen as historically controlled by men and groups of men, and is therefore paramount in perpetuating the idea of gender difference. Discourses always function in relation to power, and as discussed earlier, this is what constrains speaking and thinking within historical limitations. Thus in terms of the creation of gender difference, discourses in an historical sense of men's autonomy, have subjugated women in relation to sexuality and succeeded in creating gender divisions. The issue, according to poststructuralist feminists such as Cixous and Hartsock, that Foucault fails to address, is the role of women. Therefore in neglecting to do this, Foucault has created a dichotomy between his theory of power and discourse, and reality. By
this I mean that he is seen to have failed to recognise that it is men who have had power historically and thus the only discourses available to women are those that have been created by men. In Chapter four I will discuss how this is viewed by feminists in relation to the body.

It needs to be made clear that although there are critics of Foucault (and it is not only feminists in this regard) there are many feminist writers who support the critical aspects of poststructuralism. Yates (1992:124) is one who sees that it is “challenging, politically aware, disruptive, creative, rightly suspicious of authority and grand claims”. Weedon (1987) points out that poststructuralism offers feminists a way of avoiding dogmatism and reductionism associated with cause and effect analysis, and produces knowledge from which to act. In this sense poststructuralism can be seen to be useful to feminists, but only with careful consideration of Foucault’s work and its implications for women.

**Foucault and feminism - convergences**

Not all feminists reject Foucault’s views in relation to feminism. Sawicki (1988:) asserts that Foucauldian poststructuralism is an “emancipatory politics”. Ramazanoglu (1993) provides three reasons for feminists to attend to what Foucault is saying in his works. Firstly, Foucault’s power relations, for offering productive insights into the
relationships between and among men and women in terms of different views of social construction. Secondly, Foucault's challenge to several assumptions in regard to both the nature and causes of women's subordination. In particular, the implications of Foucault's work in this respect is the suggestion that the processes of feminist politics are based on a misunderstanding of the power relations that feminism seeks to transform. Thirdly, (and possibly one of the most important reasons for this thesis), is because there has been little work which connects feminism and poststructuralism, particularly, Foucauldian poststructuralism.

Diamond and Quinby, (1988) identify four convergences between Foucault and feminism. First, the body is recognised as the site of power through which subjectivity is constituted. Secondly, rather than focusing exclusively on the state or mode of production, both focus on local and intimate operations of power. Thirdly, both Foucault and feminism highlight the crucial role of discourse in producing and sustaining power. And fourthly, both criticise the privileging of Western masculine elites who proclaim universals about truth and human nature. In addition, as Diamond and Quinby (1988:x) identify, "these convergences comprise some of the most powerful forms of resistance available to us ... each approach asks different questions and offers distinctive insights that the other has ignored or missed and ...
that these can be mutually corrective”. These four points of convergence then, could be summarised as

1. The body as a site of power.
2. The local and intimate relations of power.
3. The role of discourse in the production of power.
4. The privileging of particular truth claims.

Throughout this thesis these four points of convergence will become apparent as they are able to be identified within the various chapters. They can be seen as part of the framework which analyses the body, gender and sexuality in relation to tattooing, power and the truth claims of discourses.

Chris Weedon (1987) identifies that to undertake a discourse analysis within a Foucauldian framework involves the careful reading of texts in relation to one another. In this way it is possible to interpret patterns, assumptions, silences, inconsistencies, implications and consequences. In this thesis the ‘text’ is the literature of tattooing, read in relation to the literature of gender and sexuality.

The interrelatedness of discourses makes it problematic to consider only one discourse when undertaking a discourse analysis. This makes
it difficult, if not impossible, to find a conceptual position outside the discourse under discussion in order to determine some ‘truth’ as a way of making a definitive analysis. Conflict between various perspectives within a discourse can not be explained by appealing to some other discourse, such as historical or scientific discourses, or other analytical frameworks in order to provide meaning to some contradiction which may be perplexing. Internal contradictions make sense only in respect to context, because all discourses are historically situated. Thus as I am in a sense co-existing with the discourse that is being analysed, I can not say ‘this is what is really happening here’. All that can be done is to describe contradictions as they become apparent. So in undertaking a discourse analysis, it needs to be recognised that it is a historically situated interpretation of a historically situated discourse, which Bouchard (1977:205) says is a “tool for radical political action”.

CHAPTER THREE
TATTOOING IN THE CONTEXT OF HISTORY

This chapter will explore the phenomenon of tattooing as a cultural language that has significance in different contexts. Specifically, it will explore the historical existence and development of tattooing, and its meaning within the cultural context of race and class themes.

Ancient tattooing

As discussed in chapter one, tattooing has existed for thousands of years as an exotic and mysterious form of art. Perceptions of tattooing and attitudes towards it have undergone changes in the many years of its existence. The prominence and acceptability of tattooing has been influenced by many factors, which includes culture, class, religion, travel, and more practically, electricity and engineering.

Tattooing is recognised as the first form of writing to be used in the human race. Even in ancient times, reasons for tattooing appear to be associated with the development of the awareness of the self as well as a desire to create something which is aesthetically pleasing (Grognard, 1994:20). Evidence (such as mummified remains) from archeological excavations indicates that tattooing was probably used by people in the
Stone Age. European sites have produced figures that can be dated back to 6000 B.C., and Egyptian sites have yielded figurines that show evidence of facial and body markings dated 4000 B.C. which were thought to be representative of tattoos. Proof of the first actual tattoo was discovered in the form of a mummified priestess dated 2000 B.C. that has line markings on the abdomen which are thought to have been for fertility (Hambly, 1974).

Tattooing spread throughout different areas of the world. According to Hambly (1974), this occurred as early as 2000 B.C. from the Middle East to the Pacific Islands. It is difficult to pinpoint exactly how tattooing was diffused, but one view is that a nomadic group situated on the northernmost island of Japan carried the practice into the Pacific region. Alternative theories suggest that Samoan explorers may have acquired the skill of tattooing in journeys to the west, and subsequently introduced it into other parts of the Pacific, including Australia and New Zealand (Delio, 1994). It is also apparent from mummified remains found in Peruvian excavations, that tattooing was a feature of the Aztec, Mayan and Inca cultures of South America. Hambly (1974) claims that tattooing in the Pacific could have originated from contact with travellers from South America. Whatever its origins and spread throughout the world, tattooing was a feature of many cultures and races in early history.
Historical symbolism of tattooing in the Western world

Historically, tattooing has been used as a form of symbolism and identification which varies in different societies according to class, gender and race. Grognard (1994) identifies that in ancient Greece, citizens who were in positions of power were tattooed to show their status. For example, architects had a triangle on the left bicep, and priests had a sun on their thigh. As a result of these methods of identification, professional labels developed. Tattooed insignia were mainly carried by French craftsmen. In their travels from town to town, it was their tattooed mark of professionalism that identified their legitimacy. The permanence of the tattoo allowed the craftsmen to find work throughout Europe, despite whatever lack of ability they had to otherwise communicate. The tattooed insignia of craftsmen included: butchers, a bull's head on crossed knives; cobblers, and awl and boot; blacksmiths, an anvil and hammer; sailors, an anchor; wine growers, a bunch of grapes. Although the tattooing of craftsmen gradually declined as a result of the 1791 "le Chapelier law" which abolished the guilds of craftsmen, it is still possible today to find men who remain loyal to this tradition and bear a tattoo representing their status (Grognard, 1994).
Tattooing and religion

One anxiety that surfaces in discussions of tattooing today may have originated from Christianity. Associated with worshipping the body (created in the image of God) as the essence of the soul, tattooing is a direct violation of the writings of the Bible. Similarly, in the Middle Ages, the occult and mysticism were regarded with great fear, and tattoos were seen to be "... an expression of the Devils' work" (Grognard, 1994, 20). It is not surprising that Celtic warriors tattooed themselves before battle, so as to inspire terror in their foes. As Julius Caesar remarked in the Gallic War, "they are fearful to look upon in battle" (cited by Delio, 1994:64). This practice was adopted as well by Roman soldiers, and spread through the military. However, it was banned in the third century by the Christian emperor Constantine, who, reflecting on the anxiety of religion, maintained that it violated God's handiwork.

Tattooing and war

The practice of tattooing in battle was again adopted centuries later by the Anglo-Saxons. However, from the eighth to the tenth century, the Church banned tattooing as a form of deviltry, and because it disfigured the body created in God's image. This ban is somewhat incongruous to
behaviour during the wars with the Muslims, as it became common practice for crusaders to tattoo themselves with a crucifix to ensure a Christian burial, should they die in a foreign land. Up until the eighteenth century, the only significant form of tattooing practised was the inscription of religious images that symbolised a devotion to God (Sanders, 1989).

After this period of time, tattooing in the Western world declined (Delio, 1994). The fierce tattooing of warriors, nor the insignia of the craftsmen were no longer employed. It was the development of travel in the form of sea voyages from Europe to the Pacific Islands and Asia which prompted a resurgence in the interest of tattooing. Souvenirs of voyages to Pacific Islands, which adorned the skin of sailors who had travelled the South Seas, fascinated the public of the Western world. According to Delio (1994), for some time sailors who had travelled the South Seas exhibited their tattoos to both the public and medical associations in order to make a living. The tales that sailors relayed and the increase in travel to Japan and the Orient, led to a tattoo fad.

**Tattooing in the Orient**

Tattooing in Japan appears to have existed since at least the fifteenth century B.C. Figurines found near Osaka dated in this period show facial markings that are thought to have performed some decorative,
religious, or status display functions. This form of tattooing died out around the fifth century A.D., but was revived in the thirteenth century as a means of marking criminals and other social undesirables (Sanders, 1989). One of the most recognisable forms of Japanese tattooing as it is known in the present day originated with firemen. As traditional Japanese houses were constructed from paper and wood, the towns required courageous fire-fighters. In order to easily identify such people, they wore coats decorated with dragons and clouds. These images were repeated on the skin under their coats, and were regarded as medals of bravery as well as symbolic protection against the dangers of fire. Due to the prestige associated with such tattoos, Japanese fire-fighters enjoyed a privileged status (Grognard, 1994).

As these tattooed images gradually became the representative art form of Japan, tattooing was forbidden in the 1870s by Emperor Meiji. He was fearful that such body art would discredit the Japanese in the eyes of the Western world. But, as illustrated by the bourgeoisie of England, Westerners were fascinated rather than repelled by the colours and images of Japanese tattooing, and adopted the practices themselves (Grognard, 1994). This ensured the popularity of tattooing worldwide, as the aristocracy were figures to look up to. After the defeat of the Japanese in the second world war, tattooing was again legalised in Japan. However, it was only an elite few who kept up the tradition,
most notably, those who belonged to the Japanese mafia, the Yukusa (Grognard, 1994). This differs from the trend that tattooing followed in Europe. Where the frequency of tattooed artistry was declining due to its increased popularity in working class individuals, only the Japanese elite were tattooed. One of the reasons for this was that tattooing was associated with the criminal underworld and not something that most members of society would like to identify with.

Tattooing and class

According to Sanders (1989), initially, the new interest in tattooing in the Western world was exclusively exhibited in sailors, craftsmen, and the bourgeoisie. It was the upper class aristocrats who could afford to import the Chinese and Japanese masters of tattooing to engage in long hours of intricate and difficult manual etching of the skin. Male members of the British royal family were among the famous aristocracy tattooed.

According to Marxist thinking, the ideas of the ruling class are such, that the material and intellectual force of society are ruled by these ideas. Whomever has control of material production, has control over mental production too. Thus, the ideas of the ruling class are the ideas of any other class. The very existence of this power resulted in the working class wanting what the ruling class had. The working class
expressed the dominance of the ruling class (Hebdige, 1979). This power relationship is prevalent in all aspects of society. For example, government rules its citizens. We follow the ideas created by those in power. They make the law.

The accessibility of tattooing to the aristocracy and its inaccessibility to the working class might have been one reason which promoted the increased desire for those in the working class to have what they might not have been able to otherwise afford. Working class sailors returned from the South Seas tattooed. Hence a trend for the working class stigma attached to people who are tattooed began. The more working class people became tattooed, the less prestigious and unique the aristocratic tattooing became. Why would the rich and wealthy want to decorate themselves in the same fashion that the working class were now doing? (Sanders, 1989). Perhaps tattooing was a power issue, not so much in terms of one class dominating the other, but rather as a means of control of the self, something that money, wealth and position could not reach. Thus, tattooing illustrates Foucault’s concept of power. That is, tattoos indicate that power is enabling.

However, as power can not only be repressive, but also enabling, this was what tattooing became for the working class. Control over themselves, and identifying together as a group, was a strengthening
exercise. Being tattooed created a unity and an individuality for the working class that had previously only been accessible to the aristocracy. Tattoos showed toughness, not necessarily a physical toughness, but a mental strength that reflected the lifestyle of the working class.

Tattooing in the Western world

Thus it was the British who were the pioneers of the art of tattooing in the Western world until tattoo popularity made its way across the Atlantic. The influence of technology is important in considering the assessability of tattooing. For example, until the invention of the electric tattooing machine by Samuel O'Reilly in 1891, Sanders (1989) notes that tattooing was only available (apart from in crude form to sailors and the like) to the rich and powerful Americans who could afford the skills of Japanese master tattooists. Historically, it is the oriental tattooists in the late nineteenth century who are responsible for the introduction of dragons and serpents into American folk tattoo imagery. The invention of this electric tattoo machine was a major technological invention in that it increased the rate that tattooing was introduced into society. Tattooing was now able to become a transatlantic phenomenon. A colleague of O'Reilly, Lew Alberts became a creator of tattoo patterns. In relation to the course of Western tattooing, his work became important, as it was distributed among
his fellow tattooists. It is still used as a wall 'flash' in many contemporary tattoo premises (Sanders, 1989).

Early in the twentieth century tattooing began to lose favour among the American elite, as it became readily accessible to the more 'unsavoury' social types, of which sailors were considered as one. According to Sanders (1989), their skin became adorned with anchors, skulls, snakes and pin-up girls. Such images became expressions of machoness and masculinity, and tattooing became the domain of marginal groups. In the early 1920s, the challenge to social conventions began again. Initially, much of the early disapproval of tattooing was because of its reputation as a deviant behaviour. Tattooed men, women, dwarfs, wrestlers and entire families were exhibited as curiosities in circuses. The definition of the tattooed person as a freak was strengthened and perpetuated in the Depression, when unemployed men and women became heavily tattooed as a way of earning money (Fried and Fried, 1978).

Tribal tattooing

Despite the ambiguity of the exact origins of tattooing in many cultures, what is known is that by 1000 B.C. it was a well-established decorative form. It is therefore interesting to compare perceptions of different types of tattooing, especially in relation to assessing its cultural status.
Tribal tattooing appears to be unaccepted in Western societies, perhaps as a result of our lack of involvement with such tattoos. Regarded as a sign of status in 'primitive' cultures, tattooing is predominantly seen in Western society as a sign of marginal groups (Sanders, 1989).

The word tattoo as it is used in English language has its roots in Polynesian language. Grognard (1994) identifies that Polynesian people appear to have derived the word from ‘ta’ (drawing) and ‘toua’ (spirit). The word ‘tatau’ is used to refer to marks made on the bodies of people, and the link between the marks and the spirit world is said to be an aspect of its etymology. However, Grognard (1994) also acknowledges that there are other suggestions of the word tattoo, for example another interpretation of the word ‘ta’ is to beat; yet another is that ‘tatau’ was derived from the word ‘tatatu’, (to wound). While the accuracy of these views is not able to be determined, it seems that its meaning is associated in tribal tattooing with the spirit world as well as to pain which marks transitional periods in the life of an individual. In Polynesian, African and Indian culture, tattooing represents a process or rite of passage, often from childhood to adulthood. The pain caused by tattooing is viewed as a courageous and even cathartic experience, by which the tattooee transfers from one state of being to another, and reaches a higher spiritual level (Grognard, 1994). Illustrative of these religious or magical purposes of tattooing is women in Fiji, who, if
they died without tattoos, were believed to be beaten by spirits of other women and served as food to the gods (Hambly, 1974). Interestingly as well as assuring a good life after death, tattooing in tribal cultures was often believed to do other things, such as ensure the bearer's good luck, help charm members of the opposite sex, protect from accident, preserve youth and bring good health (Thevoz, 1984).

**Samoan tattooing**

Tattooing in a cultural/ethnic context has varying degrees of acceptance, according to the importance placed on it as an aspect of an ethnic group's traditions. An illustration of the difference in perceptions of tattooing can be seen in the way that tattooing is regarded in Polynesian cultures. In Samoan society, the tattoo is, and always has been, one of respect. The very nature of traditional Samoan tattooing is such that only the bravest, most courageous, and strongest people undertake such a procedure.

Avea (1994) points out that Samoan tattooing is carried out by a 'tufuga tatau'. This is the tattoo artist, whose tools of trade are very primitive. Traditional tattooing tools are made out of fish bone and turtle shell into combs. The combs by which the tattoo is inscribed are pointed and extremely sharp, and as the designs differ, there are different size combs. Each of the different designs incorporated into the traditional
tattoos ('pe’a' for men and 'malu' for women) are representative of meaning regarding nature and the things that hold power in Samoa (Gell, 1993; Avea, 1994). In traditional Samoan tattooing the colouring - or ink - used is made from a mixture of burnt candle nuts and water (Avea, 1994). This colouring is then embedded in the flesh through a steady repetitive action of tapping a wooden mallet against the combs. Samoan tattooing is considered to be the most painful method of tattooing that exists in the world. Avea (1994) notes that loss of blood can cause the tattooee to pass out, and prior to the existence of antibiotics to deal with the ever-present risk of infection, death was not uncommon. Since the 'pe’a' can take anywhere from three days to three weeks to complete it is hardly surprising that it is seen as an act of courage to become tattooed in the traditional Samoan way. The design of the 'p'ea' is always completed in a specific order, and after completion, the whole tattoo is raw. It must be massaged and soaked every day to work out impurities, and the entire tattoo takes almost a year to heal completely. Avea (1994) claims that one of the proudest moments in Samoan society is when a newly tattooed man does his first dance to the chiefs. He has shown that he is capable of holding a title ('matai') through becoming tattooed, by demonstration of his determination and responsibility. On the other hand, the shame and embarrassment of being unable to complete a 'pe’a' lives with the subject forever.
For Samoan women to become tattooed with the traditional ‘malu’, they had to be of chiefly descent. The ‘malu’ begins at the knee and reaches to the top of the thigh (Avea. 1994). It was considered to be a sign of social standing, and although traditionally, ‘malu’ have been covered from all but the woman’s husband, more recently they are less precisely hidden (Grognard, 1994). In all Samoan tattooing processes in which the traditional method is used, the tattooee’s family must present the ‘tufuga’ with money, fine mats, and precious heirlooms. Gifts such as these are said to show honour, respect and trust (Avea, 1994).

Maori tattooing

According to King (1992), tattooing among the Maori people has some features in common with other Pacific cultures, such as Samoan and Tahitian tattooing, which suggests a common origin rather than a unique indigenous cultural development. Bone chisels that have been excavated from archeological sites, thought to date from the eleventh century A.D. support this view. However, at some point in history, the moko, although diverged from Polynesian tattooing, became unique to the Maori. King (1992) identifies that the moko has been differentiated from the tattoo, in that the former leaves a grooved scar on the skin, whereas a tattoo leaves a coloured pattern under smooth skin. The two terms are used synonymously in the twentieth century to represent the
unique patterns of the *moko*, but historically there has been a
difference between the *moko* created through chisel tattooing and
needle tattooing. These differences reflected the different instruments
involved in the process, as well as the influence of travellers to New
Zealand who introduced metal needles as part of European
encroachment on existing cultural practices. King (1992) identifies that
chisel tattooing stopped after the First World War, and that needle
tattooing increased in popularity to the point of a revival of *moko* in
the 1930s.¹ The *moko* lost its significance in the early 19th century.
However, its cultural/ethnic importance, both as part of being Maori
and in terms of cultural diversity, is enjoying a resurgence (Harawira et
al, 1995). The *moko*, or traditional facial tattoo of the Maori people is
becoming more popular as an illustration and identification for Maori
with their ethnic identity. Johansson (1994) provides an example of one
Maori man who became tattooed with a moko because in moving from
a small rural village to Auckland, he felt bereft of his Maoritanga. He
felt a need to have something that showed he was Maori, and said:
"you must go through the channels, the rituals, that you believe in,
and know within yourself that you are doing the right thing. I believe
that this is the final completion of myself" (Herbie King, cited by

¹ This is a brief summary of Maori tattooing. For an extensive discussion of the art of
*Moko*, see Michael King’s book *Moko: Maori tattooing in the 20th century.*
According to Harawira et al (1995) a little known traditional Maori moko known as the puhora is enjoying a resurgence among Maori people. This is similar to the Samoan ‘p’ea’, in that it starts at the waist and ends at the knees. The design includes the traditional kowhahai pattern of swirls and circles. However, the process of obtaining such a tattoo within Maori culture involves consultation with kaumatua (Maori elders) and tipuna (ancestors) as well as family before the tattoo can be done. The obtaining of such tattoos is seen as a commitment to Maori origins and a celebration of spirituality (Harawira et al, 1995).

The difference in perceptions of Samoan and European tattooing is that Samoan tattooing is revered and upheld as a courageous and honourable bodily adornment. The general and most historically consistent perception of the tattooed person in European society is that of distaste, repugnance and fear. However, Grognard (1994) suggests that it is apparent even in European society that tattoos regarded as a representation of cultural and ethnic pride, are less feared and more respected than those worn by someone of one’s own ethnicity. This, however, may not be the case for the traditional moko of the Maori among non-Maori people of New Zealand. The facial tattooing traditionally associated with Maori has been modified by some individuals to symbolise membership of other ‘fringe’ groups, with the effect of being intimidatory to society (Sanders, 1989).
A similarity to cultural tattooing practices exists in the Western world, for example, the teenager may use the tattoo as a sort of affirmation of adult status. Because of the pain involved in the process of tattooing, and the courage it involves, can give an impression of belonging in the adult world. It can represent a symbolic 'rite of passage' (Segal, 1990). Thus, in this sense, to some extent the tattooed Westerner undergoes a similar process to people in tribal cultures. However, the opposite effect is also apparent, in that the tribal tattoo lifts the individual from a lowly to a higher status. The Western tattoo symbolises all that is wild and uncontainable. Grognard (1994) suggests the Westerner denies civilisation and its customs by finding strength in ancient traditions.

It can also be seen that tribal tattooing was not confined exclusively to one sex or the other. Furthermore, in direct contrast to Western perceptions of people with tattoos, tribal tattooing has traditionally been confined to persons of status and authority. In New Zealand Maori tribes, tattooing of the face (the \textit{moko}) was originally reserved for chiefs as a sign of their power and authority. Each design was unique and was often used as a signature method in the absence of a written language (Graham, 1994). Maori women who did not have their lips decorated in the lines of the \textit{moko} were regarded as lacking beauty (Robley, circa 1894). Women of the Sarawak tribe in Canada have their weaving qualifications tattooed on their forearms.
The more tattoos, the more eligible they are for marriage, as the images show their status (Grognard, 1994). Tribal tattoos are a sign of maturity, male virility and female charm.

During the first two thirds of the nineteenth century, tattooing was practised outside the constraints of the professional art world. Since this time, tattooing has generally been regarded with disapproval. Despite the growing exposure of tattooing by celebrities and people with a high public profile (movie stars, models and musicians, for example), tattooing is regarded with suspicion, and is linked to membership of marginal groups. Grognard (1994) identifies that such attitudes have been reinforced in the last fifty years by the adoption of tattooing by groups (subcultures) within society who choose to use its images as a method of identification, and for its shock value. For example, motorcycle clubs, such as ‘Hell’s Angels’ adopted tattooing as a sign that was similar to the patches worn on their leather jackets. The tattoos they choose are representative of the images associated with their ‘club, that is, helmeted skulls, eagles, and Harley Davidson motorcycles (Grognard, 1994). Some individuals have chosen to have these images and symbols tattooed on their faces, and in some instances these are incorporated with aspects of traditional moko patterns.
This chapter has discussed the historical context of tattooing in relation to culture and class and race. Being tattooed clearly has different purposes and meanings according to these, and does not mean the same in one culture as it does in another. This is particularly so for Western society. Tattooing is becoming increasingly regarded as an art form that rejects the norms and conventions of Western society. These images are emotive souvenirs etched on the skin for a lifetime (unless removed by surgery which involves skin grafting). They challenge the restrictions of society, and perhaps this is what makes Western civilization condemn them. Tattooing is a language of expression of the self through the body. What this might mean is explored in the next chapter.
CHAPTER FOUR

NOTIONS OF THE BODY

Everything is related to the body, as if it had just been discovered after being long forgotten; body image, body language, body consciousness, liberation of the body are the passwords (Starobinski, 1989:353).

This chapter will explore conceptualisations of the body and in particular examine the place of the body in society and social life. To do this it is necessary to examine notions of the body from several different perspectives. Firstly, how the body has been conceptualised in philosophy, secondly, the body in anthropology, and thirdly, the location of the body in social theory. Also important is how the body has changed in social theory in relation to society in general but the state in particular. Foucault’s views of the body and the state are utilised in this chapter as a way of illustrating a different view of the body as a site of power.

Philosophies of the body

One of the earliest philosophers to write about the body was Descartes. The legacy of his writings is referred to as Cartesian dualism, which is based on the assumption that the body and the mind are separate in that there is no interaction between these two components. This has
meant that the body and the mind have been treated as two distinct spheres. The body became the object of study for the ‘natural’ sciences, in particular, medicine, and the mind became the topic for study of sciences such as psychiatry, psychology, and those classified under the label ‘humanities’ (Turner, 1992).

However, Descartes did actually focus on the mind and the body (Turner, 1992). What he recognised was the metaphysical difficulty in having a body and being a body. He makes the interdependence of the body and mind apparent when he observed that

\[
\text{nature ... teaches me by ... feelings of pain, hunger, thirst, etc. that I am not only lodged in my body like a pilot in his ship, but besides, that I am joined to it very closely and indeed so compounded and intermingled with my body, that I form, as it were, a single whole with it (Descartes, 1986:159).}
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Nonetheless, the Cartesian legacy of mind/body duality has meant that rather than dealing with the problems of the mind as well the body, disciplines have focussed either on the mind or the body.

Jean-Paul Sartre, who was predominantly interested in the existential self, tried to show that to be a person and to be embodied was interdependent. He wrote
We cannot perceive the Other's body as *flesh*, as if it were an isolated object having purely external relations with other things. That is true only of a *corpse*. The Other's body as flesh is immediately given as the center of reference in a situation which is synthetically organized around it, and it is inseparable from this situation. Therefore we should not ask how the Other's body can be first body for me and subsequently enter into a situation. The Other is originally given to me as a *body in situation* (Sartre, 1956:344).

So for Sartre, the body is both a thing, in the sense of a being for itself, and an instrument for social interaction, in the sense of being for others. It is the latter that makes a body socially constructed and able to be objectified, but this must be in context.

Merleau-Ponty, (1962), like Sartre, believed that it was important to locate the body in context. He emphasised the context of time and space, and considered that because of the personal and private notion of who we are and how we interact with others, the body is central to the development of identity, and therefore existence. He said

The body is the vehicle of being in the world, and having a body is, for a living creature, to be involved in a definite environment, to identify oneself with certain projects and to be continually committed to them (Merleau-Ponty, 1962:82).

Therefore for Merleau-Ponty, although the body expresses an individual's existence, it cannot be reduced to experience.
The body in anthropology

In her book *Purity and Danger*, Mary Douglas has been influential in the social meaning of the body from an anthropological perspective. She argues that in all cultures the body is central because it "... provides a basic scheme for all symbolism" (Douglas, 1966:163). She asserts that in all cultures there are political and moral symbolic systems, all of which are dominated by the functions and the products of the body. Each culture, she says, has its own patterns of belief about the body, body functions and body products. This has led to systems of management of the body, and especially body products. But there is a uniformity among cultures in the sense that each develops a pattern of beliefs about the body.

Elias (1978) in his book *The Civilising Process*, traces the history of the management of the body in relation to its functions and products in particular. He identifies, for example, that several body functions which were previously acceptable as public acts (such as farting and defaecating) were privatised towards the middle of the sixteenth century. The ‘privatising’ of body parts had a corollary of modesty. This had the effect of a ‘civilising process’, which then had the effect of making "... all bodily functions more intimate, to enclose them in particular enclaves, to put them ‘behind closed doors’, resulting in restraint over sexual matters and sociogenic shame and
embarrassment" (Elias, 1978, 189-190). He asserts that this 'civilising process' has led to various rituals and taboos concerning bodily functions and activities, bodily exposure, and a variety of beliefs about body matters.

The body in social theory

Brian Turner (1984) considers that the body has been absent from sociology. In his book *The Body and Society: Explorations in Social Theory*, he wants to construct a sociology of the body, which he sees as absent because sociologists have not taken the body seriously, which he says is because sociology has attempted to disassociate itself from biological determinism. Turner also claims that what has happened because of rejecting this biological determinism, is that the body is excluded from sociology, which is defined within the self/society dichotomy rather than nature/culture (Turner, 1984).

Because Turner believes that a sociology of the body must take into account the body-self dialectic, he argues that it must be interactive. This refers to the interface between biology and the social meanings which are imposed on that biology must be addressed, which means a political sociology. As he said, the interrelationships between self and society must be accounted for because the body is "... crucial to both the micro and macro orders of society" (Turner, 1984:40). What he
proposes, in addition to these elements for a sociology of the body is that it needs to be organised around four issues: "... reproduction and regulation of populations in time and space, and the restraint and the representation of the body as a vehicle for the self ... (which) ... will hinge ultimately on the nature of the sexual and emotional division of labour" (Turner, 1984:115).

Bethelot (1986) however, is sceptical of the place of the body in sociology. He claims there is a sociology of the body in the sense that it has always existed under other guises, such as sexuality, beauty care and diet, for example. He argues that the body is the particular site of an interface between a number of different domains: the biological and the social, the collective and the individual, that of structure and agent, cause and meaning, constraint and free-will. But this interface only emerges in sociological discourse because it is at the same time the objective centrepoint of the internal tension existing between the social and the human sciences and because it is materialized in an irreducible, unique being: the individual who is both object and subject, product and actor, structure and meaning (1986:159).

From his assumptions about the body apparent in this quotation, Bethelot (1986) suggests that the body can be examined within a theoretical framework which consists of three levels. The first of these entails an historical viewing of the body against a backdrop of social
movements, where the body can be studied in the context of social change. This, he argues, would assist in the understanding of the place of bodies at work in relation to industrialisation, which provided the notion of 'mechanical man'. The second level would see the body located within social thought in terms of different ideologies which influence thinking about the body. And thirdly, he suggests a level of analysis within the social sciences, which elucidates how the inscriptions of psychology and psychoanalysis on the body determine its location as central in social life.

These two examples about the body illustrate beliefs that the body should be contained or confined within the boundaries of one discipline for the purposes of analysis. This is why poststructuralism is useful. It deconstructs such disciplinary boundaries, and locates the body in a space that permits a different level of analysis. Foucault is particularly useful in this regard.

**Feminism and the body**

The body has always been important for feminism. A central concern is men's control over women's bodies, especially in sexual and reproductive matters. Lois McNay (1992) says the body is particularly associated with gender identity, the acquisition of which involves active individual participation. Judith Butler (1987:133-4) suggests that
"the body becomes a particular nexus of culture and choice, and existing 'ones' body becomes a personal way of taking up and reinterpreting received gender norms".

Elizabeth Grosz (1994:13) makes an important point when she suggests that it is convenient for women to be contained within their bodies constructed as "frail, imperfect, unruly and unreliable". This justifies the secondary social positions women inhabit. Thus the characteristics that define women are based on the body. Women are defined by connecting them more closely to the body than men, especially in terms of sexuality and reproduction. These issues will become apparent in Chapters 5 and 6. I have simply introduced here the importance of the body to feminism. Grosz (1994) also notes that feminists have a wide range of attitudes to conceptions of the body. Generally, however, feminists attempt to position the body at the centre of political action. However, it is because of the feminist concern with men taking control of women's bodies that some feminists object strongly to poststructural/postmodern thinking. In respect of this, Somer Brodribb (1992:xvi) claims

Once satisfied to control her body and her movements, once pleased to create images of her and then order her body to conform, the Master of Discourse now aspires to the most divine of tasks: to create her in his image, which is ultimately to annihilate her ... taking her body, taking her mind and now taking her image.
Foucault and the body

According to Axel Honneth (1991) the body assumes an essential function in Foucault's works. He points out that when Foucault refers to body and life processes he subsumes all expressions of life that are tied directly to the basic functions of the human body - on the one hand, purely motor and gestural movements; on the other hand, the elementary organic processes of procreation and illness (Honneth, 1991:167).

Thus in relating the body to power in terms of the conduct of the human body, Honneth (1991) suggests that Foucault is able to highlight how modern techniques of power are not only able to suppress or control the conduct of human bodies, but are also able to create it.

Foucault's views about the body are interrelated with his views about power and the State. About this he said

I don't want to say that the State isn't important; what I want to say is that relations of power, and hence the analysis that must be made of them, necessarily extend beyond the limits of the State ... the State is superstructural in relation to a whole series of power networks that invest the body, sexuality, the family, kinship, knowledge, technology and so forth ... but this metapower with its prohibitions can only take hold and secure its footing where it is rooted in a whole series of multiple and indefinite power relations that supply the necessary basis for the great negative forms of power (Foucault, 1980:122).
So what he shows here is that the power of the State is limited, because social power structures cannot be set up, maintained and controlled by a central structure, as the networks which are interconnected to the centre keep changing. This is especially so in situations of conflict and struggle. The relationship of discourses which change over time can be seen to be a part of this newtwork of power relationships.

Foucault identified the body as being of importance to his views of power and knowledge. As he said, “the body is the inscribed surface of events” (Foucault, 1984:83). Or as Lois McNay (1992:15) puts it, the body is shaped and reshaped by the different warring forces acting upon it. Foucault suggests, for example in *Discipline and Punish, Birth of the Clinic* and *The History of Sexuality*, that processes of social control exist to control the body. These processes of social control in which the body is controlled operate within systems of power/knowledge by the development of discourses which articulate the body. Thus for Foucault, the body, power and knowledge are all closely interrelated. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1977:136) portrayed the body as a ‘docile body’ and claimed “a body is docile that may be subjected, used and transformed”. What he implied here is that the body is an object and target of power. Knowledge of the body made it possible to organise and subjugate bodies into docile and useful roles. This is done through the “disciplinary practices” of surveillance, normalising judgements
and examination” (Ball, 1990). As a result of these disciplinary practices, Foucault claimed that the connection between power and knowledge is apparent. He states that through his study of the prison system, he identified that what is produced is

A certain policy of the body, a certain way of rendering the group of men docile and useful. This policy required the involvement of a definite relations of knowledge in relations of power; it called for a technique of overlapping subjection and objectification; it brought with it new procedures of individualization ... knowable man (soul), individuality, consciousness, conduct, whatever this is called) is the object - effect of this analytical investment of this domination-observation (Foucault, 1977:305).

But Foucault did not relate this only to the prison system. He makes it clear that this new “political anatomy”, that is, body discipline, was not a sudden discovery. He identified the existence of these disciplinary processes which produced docile bodies in factories, the military, the education system and in hospitals as well.

Sandra Bartky (1990) complains that Foucault overlooks differences between men and women in his explanation of docile bodies. She says this is because he fails to account for the disciplinary practices that make women’s bodies more docile than men’s bodies. It seems that her complaint may be suggesting that the disciplinary practices which constitute a women’s body operate from a different conceptualisation
of power than the way in which Foucault conceives it. She seems to be associating power with domination. Men are subjected to the same processes of surveillance and normalisation as women. These are important in notions of masculinity in the same way as notions of feminity, as the disciplinary processes are just as pervasive for either gender. Lois McNay (1992) is another feminist writer who criticises Foucault’s notion of ‘docile bodies’, because, she says, it pushes women back into a position of passivity and silence. These criticisms of Foucault’s disciplinary technologies will be discussed again in Chapter Five and Chapter Six. I have mentioned it here in relation to Foucault’s views about the body, because it highlights, I think, one of the reasons why Ramazanoglu (1993) says Foucault challenges assumptions about power relations.

The body can be seen as a site of power in terms of the ‘docile body’, and is an example of Foucault’s genealogy, because the body was situated in particular discourses. But this is not totally able to explain how individuals effected what Foucault (1982:18) referred to as “... operations on their own bodies and souls, thought, conduct and ways of being so as to transform themselves”.

Foucault (1985:364) in saying that "... I perhaps insisted too much on the techniques of domination ...", acknowledged (like his critics) that putting such an emphasis on the effects of power on the body reinforced a monolithic view of power and resulted in an understanding for some, of people as passive bodies within this structure. So Foucault, in three volumes of The History of Sexuality, explored this in terms of what he calls "technologies of the self" (Foucault, 1982:) to propose the connection between this aspect of power in relation to the body. His focus became concerned on how individuals interpreted their experiences. However, he is still concerned about the body; it is just that it is not so apparent. According to Lois McNay (1992:73), for Foucault, the body is now understood in a more dynamic fashion as a "... variable surface or boundary which shapes the individual's stylistics of existence".

Now the body, rather than a single-dimensional 'docile body', as it was in Foucault's earlier works, becomes more self-determining, and within certain constraints can be configured according to how an individual chooses. This is important for analysing the tattooed subject, and will be explored in Chapter Six in relation to choices that are made about becoming tattooed.
Chapter Summary

In summary, then, the body has an important place in this thesis for understanding notions of power and relationships between individuals and society. Although various philosophers and social theorists, including sociologists have studied the body, their views tend to represent the legacy of Cartesian Dualism. The body is clearly important to feminism, especially in terms of the power of men to control women's bodies. Foucault's views about the body in terms of power and knowledge provide a perspective which might help explain the complexity of the tattooed person.
CHAPTER FIVE
THE ALTERED BODY

There is no natural norm; there are only cultural forms of the body, which do or do not conform to social norms. The problem is not the conformity to cultural patterns, models, or even stereotypes, but which particular ones are used and with what effect (Grosz, 1994:143).

Human beings have a body which is recognisable from other species. Each person has a form or a shape which establishes that she or he - given variations in size as well as and skin colour - is a human being. Archaeologists can determine humans from other animals through the features or characteristics of the human skeleton. But humans, both through accident and by design, may not always look as the 'blueprint for human beings' intended. Bodies have changed over time in concert with social trends and influences, such as on clothing and fashion, culture, and lifestyle. Nutritional factors have also altered the size and shape of the body. Many of these trends and influences, however, are closely interrelated. This chapter will therefore discuss some of the things that people 'do' or have done to their bodies to alter or re-create them in some way that either distinguishes them from others, or makes them similar. It also discusses this in the context of culture and social issues.
Modifications of the body

There are a variety of ways by which people choose to construct their appearances. Such differences are an exhibition of the control that people have over their social identities and self-definitions. The way in which people choose to wear clothing and follow fashion, is one of the simplest ways to illustrate symbolic displays of gender, social status, lifestyle values and personal interests. In modern society, the clothing and fashion industry is so immense and influential that it spends millions of dollars a year promoting its products with the aim of shaping the mind of consumers (Sanders, 1989).

Some of these trends in fashion are associated with various groups or subcultures. One example of clothing being as a mechanism to identify oneself as part of a subculture is the attire worn by 'hippies' in the 1960s. The beaded vests, peace pendants and psychedelic t-shirts were the easily identifiable symbolic of hippies. Similar symbolic clothing is illustrated by the safety pins of the punks, and the biker’s leather jacket. Clothing and fashion is one simple example of the methods of modification to appearance that indicates a voluntary desire to be seen apart from the mainstream of society (Sanders, 1989). But also often accompanying the wearing of symbolic clothing was some other alteration to the appearance of the body. The hippies usually had long
flowing hair. The punks alter the style of their hair through seemingly outrageous spikes and a variety of colours. All these represent modifications to the body that can be seen as transitory or temporary, in the sense that they are not permanent and may be reversed.

**Non-permanent body modification**

Both in the past, as well as in the present, one of the most common ways to alter appearance and enhance beauty (albeit in the eye of the beholder) has been through the application of paint to the body. According to Hambly (1974) in many cultures that use body paint, it is often 'event-orientated'. In certain rituals, the paint sets a person apart from their everyday appearance and symbolises their importance. Body painting is recognised to be ancient and a geographically widespread activity. Excavations of European burial sites, for example, have revealed various implements and pigments used to decorate the skin, as well as representations of painted figures (Hambly, 1974). However, there seems to be little difference in the modern Western world, for example, the United States of America, where it is estimated that around $5 billion dollars a year is spent on make up and hair care products, and among tribal groups. In both situations a woman's beauty is appreciated according to the enhancement of her attractiveness by her body 'paint' (Freedman, 1986).
Hair is another part of the body that is regularly changed and modified; used by its owner in an aesthetic way. It is not only head hair, but the facial hair of males that has been used as a means of social communication. For example, it has been used to symbolise high or low status within particular groups, and symbolises youth or respected age (Sanders, 1989). The wearing of wigs by both men and women at various times in earlier history served a dual purpose. It disguised the dirt and possibly also lice that was associated with views about body cleanliness, as well as acting as a symbol of status for certain classes in society (Polhemus, 1978). For both males and females, hair style and colour is seen as a semi-permanent outlet to demonstrate feelings towards the existing trends in mainstream society. Greying hair is generally associated with age, and is disguised in various applications of colour. Although colouring hair to disguise greyness was once the domain of women, it also applies to men. In fact it is now possible to purchase hair colouring products for men - “Grecian 2000” for men is really no different than the vast array of semi-permanent tints and bleaches and temporary “shampoo-in” hair colourings available for women (Sanders, 1989). Whether there is any difference between such products is a moot point.

Baldness, once seen as a sign of age in men (or the effect of cancer-destroying drugs) is now seen as fashionable. Recent publicity about
'shaved heads' for fund raising purposes by some male and female members of the police force and sporting idols, means that baldness can no longer be seen to be associated only with aging men. Although baldness is not the same as having a shaved head, what can be illustrated here is that having no hair on one's head is seen to be as acceptable as other 'adornments' of the body. It may also serve to 'destigmatise' the baldness associated with medical treatments. For example, the use of chemotherapy which usually causes the hair to fall out, leads to various camouflaging such as wigs and head coverings in the form of scarfs which women wear to hide hair loss. But the wearing of head scarfs is in itself often a symbol of hair loss, so the attempt to disguise can be self-defeating.

**Permanent forms of body modification**

The preceding outline of non-permanent forms of altering appearances indicated that they are methods that are usually associated with temporary events, or even a transitional period in a person's life. However, the major forms of permanent modification, body sculpting, piercing, scarification, and tattooing, are usually connected to permanent statuses of gender and maturity, social connections, or generational conceptions of beauty, for example, head shaping in some American Indian tribes. In all cultures, the function of any type of body modification, whether for the communication of sexual availability.
demonstration of courage, or protection from supernatural forces, it is primarily decorative. Such transformations are aesthetically pleasing to the individual as well as their relevant reference group within their culture or society (Sanders, 1989).

**Body sculpting**

Many cultures use the practice of body sculpting to meet the expectations of what is deemed to be beautiful for that culture. The age-old Chinese practice of foot binding was carried out on young girls was done in order to make them more physically appealing to members of the opposite sex. According to Brain, 1979), the size of the foot was restricted to three inches, just the right size to fit in the palm of a man's hand. Not only was the 'lotus foot' a form of both symbolism and social incapacitation, its erotic significance as an erogenous zone was adopted by prostitutes, male homosexuals and transvestites. Despite the putrification caused by restricted circulation in the foot, women of the Chinese aristocracy were expected to undertake the procedure lest they became unmarriageable (Brain, 1979).

While such practices may seem abhorrent to Western society, we do not have to look very far back in our own history for similar practices that sculpted the shape of the body. The use of the corset is a paramount example of the mis-shaping of women's bodies to fit a
particular perception of the ideal body for a woman to have. That it frequently caused some permanent damage to a woman’s internal organs became obvious later. Such information did not, however, necessarily prevent women from wearing a restricting corset. (Roberts, 1977; Colmer, 1979).

Currently, in Western Societies, beauty and status can be obtained through body sculpting. Increasingly, this is being done through plastic surgery - to change the shape of the nose, erase signs of aging by lifting the tissue of the sagging face or breasts, increase or dease breast size, remove unwanted fatty tissue, such as “apron tucks” to reshape the sagging belly, and so on (Sanders, 1989). In America alone, it is estimated that around 5 percent of the population (200,000 a year) submit to cosmetic reconstruction of the body.

Plastic surgery may also be used to mould the person into some perceived range of physical beauty or attractiveness. This passion for perfection is illustrated by the American singer Michael Jackson, who in a television interview spoke about undergoing plastic surgery. As his wife (at that time), Lisa-Marie Presley said so succinctly: “Michael is an artist. If he sees something he doesn’t like, he changes it .... Michael has resculpted his face” (60 minutes, Television 3, 18 June, 1995).
Another prime example of the use (or misuse) of plastic surgery to sculpt the body, is that of American actor/singer Cher. She represents the ever useful version of feminine beauty ... Cher admits to having had her breasts ‘done’, her nose bobbed, and her teeth straightened; reportedly she has also had a rib removed, her buttocks reshaped, and cheek implants (Bordo, 1993:197).

What can be seen in these examples is that the body has a plastic quality to it. Bodies can be moulded, shaped and sculpted, and this illustrates how the body is seen as something to be controlled and managed. It is not only through the skill of the plastic surgeon, however, that the body can be sculpted into a particular shape. In Western society of the 1990’s the prevailing notion of the ideal body shape is that it is thin and fit, and athletic (Bordo, 1993). Both exercise and diet are examples of how the body is sculpted into a seemingly desirable shape by its owner. Body building through exercise enlarges the body. Exercise may reduce body size. As Sandra Bartky (1990) notes, both men and women exercise, and she provides an exhausting list of activities they engage in to sculpt their bodies:

Men as well as women lift weights, do yoga, calesthenics, and aerobics, though “jazzercise” is a largely female pursuit. Men and women alike engage themselves with a variety of machines, each designed to call forth from the body a different exertion: There are Nautilus machines, rowing machines, ordinary and motorized exercycles, portable hip and leg cycles, belt massagers, trampolines, treadmills, arm and leg pulleys ... (Bartky, 1990:67).
But while exercise may sculpt the shape of the body, so does food. Food has an important role in sculpting the body, because it can either increase or decrease its size and shape. The emphasis in Western society on the stereotypical "slender body" has meant that organisations such as "Weight Watchers" have fed their coffers from what Sandra Bartky (1990:66) refers to as the "tyranny of slenderness". Dieting, she claims, "disciplines the body's hungers: Appetite must be monitored at all times and governed by an iron will" (Bartky, 1990:66). In this way the body becomes the enemy. This can be seen in the development of various "eating disorders", such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia, which are now so prevalent in Western society that they are structured around psychiatric criteria (Bartky, 1990).

Sawicki (1994) argues that eating disorders, such as anorexia nervosa, need to be seen around the cultural production of norms of femininity. Definitions tend to centre around the extreme weight loss that its victims suffer, and the physiological symptoms associated with this. Explanations of why this weight loss occurs, however, focus on the various causes of why anorexia may develop. Defining the cause of anorexia is further complicated by issues of culture, and whether it can be regarded as an exclusively Western phenomenon. One of the pioneers in the research, understanding and treatment of eating disorders, Hilde Bruch, was still saying that anorexia was uncommon
(cited by Bordo, 1985). However, less than ten years later, Bruch (1981) stated that the pressure to be thin was on the increase, and that thinness was encouraged and condoned by parents and physicians. Taub and blinds (1992) note that recent increases in eating disorders have been explained as resulting from the ideal of slimness that society has established for women, as well as the gender-based socialisation that encourages women's adherence to traditional feminine gender norms.

Bordo (1988) approaches the issue of anorexia nervosa from a Foucauldian perspective. I have quoted her at length because her view illustrates the significance of cultural practices in forming the body. What she says is that

the body, far from being some fundamentally stable, actual constant to which we must contrast all culturally relative and institutional forms, is constantly 'in the grip', as Foucault puts it, of cultural practices. Not that this is a matter of cultural repression of the instinctual or natural body. Rather, there is no 'natural' body. Cultural practices, far from exerting their power against spontaneous needs, 'basic' pleasures or instincts, or 'fundamental' structures of body experience, are already and always inscribed, as Foucault has emphasised, 'on our bodies and their materiality, their forces, energies, sensations and pleasures'. Our bodies, no less than anything else that is human is constituted by culture (Bordo, 1988:90). (Italics in original).
This can also be highlighted in the emphasis that society places on being fit and trim, but for women, fit petite and slim, promotes the myth that positive personality attributes are associated with being dainty, thin and attractive (Muuss, 1985). Further confusion is perpetuated for young women, when popular magazines such as *Cleo*, publish articles about feeling good about yourself, who you are, and advise on dieting in the same issue (*Cleo*, May 1993). As Muuss (1985) observes, it is not surprising that the result is that women receive such mixed messages about themselves. Western society has a preoccupation with food, thinness and dieting, and thus cultural pressures are particularly strong for women to be slim, and this plays an important part in the perpetuation of eating disorders, such as anorexia is called. As Hsu (1989:395) points out: “an environment that emphasises weight and shape control ... emphasises the development of an eating disorder”. Or as Naomi Wolf (1990) points out, it is all part of the “beauty myth”.

I have used the example of anorexia here to show how cultural and societal activities, such as exercise and dieting, which are acceptable practices in terms of sculpting the body, have socially and culturally defined limits of ‘normality’. It is not acceptable for people (women) to sculpt their bodies through dieting to become ‘too thin’. However, the example of altering body shape and size is a good example of what
Western culture finds acceptable, and to some extent, is encouraged as part of being a member of Western society. There are some practices, however, which although once racially and culturally specific, have penetrated Western culture, and are seemingly less acceptable. I will now discuss these.

Body piercing and scarification

Piercing and scarring the body are two means of permanent body modification that are used in a variety of cultures around the world. Vlahos (1979) identifies that in most societies, the primary function of piercing seems to be decorative. However, some non-Western cultures use it (particularly among women) as a way of symbolising social status. In central Brazil, for example, the Tchikrin tribe pierce the ears of both girl and boy babies at birth with cigar-like plugs. Male infants also have their lower lip pierced, and the size of the hole is gradually increased, until at puberty, the lip ornament is changed to one worn by adult men (Vlahos, 1979).

In contemporary Western society, ear piercing is recognised to be conventional. It is seen to be acceptable to have one’s ears pierced and decorated with ear-rings. This, while once the domain of women, is now part of the social appearance of (some) men. But there are limits to this acceptability. The limit seems to be one earring for each ear, or in
some cases, one ear with one earring. Anything else is bordering on something more unusual, and this has accompanying connotations of being socially unacceptable. As in the socially defined boundaries of 'acceptable' body size/shape/weight, there seems to be a limit of 'normality'. In addition, the piercing of other body parts, such as the nose, tongue, eyebrows, nipples and genitals, are commonly viewed with aversion. This sort of attitude is one which reinforces the idea that anyone who alters their body in this way is somehow part of a group that mocks the mainstream values of society (Sanders, 1989).

Scarification is another way in which individuals alter their bodies for a decorative or symbolic purpose. This procedure involves lifting and cutting the skin and inserting ash or some other similar substance into the wound to promote the formation of a raised keloid scar. Scarification is usually employed by dark-skinned people on whom tattooing would normally be ineffective. Its primary intention is to indicate a person's position in the tribal hierarchy. In the Nuban tribe in Africa, cuts are made at puberty, the onset of menstruation, the birth of a child, or some other significant life event (Brain, 1979). Deliberate scarification of the body in the Western world goes beyond the boundaries of what is acceptable body modification. (Brain, 1979). Tattooing does not seem to create the same aversion; but it is a form of body modification that connotes something other than 'normality'.
Tattooing and permanence

In chapter three, I outlined the historical and cultural context of tattooing. Here I noted that tattooing in Western society rejects its norms and conventions, and flaunts its restrictions. I will now explore this further.

In relation to other permanent forms of body marking, and body shaping, tattooing might be regarded from a perspective of the message that the tattooed person seeks to convey. The conventional attitudes towards appearance may become less meaningful for the tattooed person, as perhaps the tattoo is more symbolic of an individual than hairstyle and make-up, or than body size and shape. Perceptions of tattooing have changed over time, according to class, race and gender. These changes might be considered in terms of ‘social evolution’, or through the altering views of society in terms of what is socially acceptable, in the same way that various other aspects of the body can be considered. But these changes also need to be considered in terms of what is seen as acceptable for women.

The growing awareness in society for a ‘healthy mind, healthy body’ attitude, has led to some focus on exploration of the self. In accordance with this, tattooing has been said to have become more of a meaningful experience for those who undergo the process (Grognard,
Instead of choosing a tattoo design from the wall of a tattoo 'parlour', the tattooee is now much more likely to have a design that they themselves have created. These designs hold some significance and symbolism for the person, as they may be related to a life experience that has recently occurred, such as the birth of a child or the death of a parent (Grognard, 1994). So the memory of an important life event or decision, may be etched for eternity on the skin. As the popularity of this type of tattooing increases, so too does the recognition of tattooing as a form of art. Tattooists are now expected to be more skilled at their profession than they have ever been in the past. One New Zealand tattoo artist, Roger Ingerson, for example, describes himself as an "art labourer" (Johansson, 1994:93).

**Cultural boundaries of tattooing**

In *Excesses: Eros and Culture*, Lingis (1984) suggests the body is considered in relation to how it can become a product of culture and how it is possible to inscribe it with social norms, practices and beliefs. In this sense, bodily marking becomes significant because of its permanence. Inscriptions on the body convey messages to the rest of society. The body is used as the bearer of such messages (Grosz, 1994). According to Lingis (1984) in non-Western cultures, there is also some significance of tattooing when it comes to social hierarchies. Tattoos can be seen as a map that allows others to understand the wearer's
social, sexual, familial, marital or economic position. The question arises then, as to whether it is feasible to suggest that the body can be used in a similar fashion in Western society to convey position in a social hierarchy. Given that many people in Western society hold perceptions of body marking such as tattooing as belonging only to a certain 'type' of person. Such a person does not fit the 'normal' mould of society, and is regarded as someone who is part of a marginalized group of society. As with any behaviour, there are, however, always exceptions to the rules. It remains to be seen whether there are rigid rules about tattooing in the contemporary world, since the body is increasingly seen as a symbol of the self and identity. Tattooing in this sense, can be seen to convey the same message.

Elizabeth Grosz (1994) argues that although we are caught up in the pervasiveness of social norms, we are not entirely subservient to them. We are not as passive as sometimes we would like to believe. Illustrative of this is an example which comes from the January 1996 issue of Next magazine. In an article titled "The truth about beauty", women were asked to talk candidly about what makes them attractive. Many of the answers reflect the influence that men have over women in our culture. One answer put it in this way
I am almost ashamed to confess that I am probably less conscious of how I appear when I am in the company of women (which I love) than I am if men are there. When men are around I make more of an effort to hold my tummy in... This realisation is completely annoying as I class myself as confident, independent, and I like me and the way I look (Next, January 1996:107).

Although this woman knows she is conforming to the expectations of what is expected of a woman, she admits she is choosing to do so. This raises the issue of whether the historical forms of what is ‘feminine’ is so ingrained, that apparently even a confident and self-assured woman is subjected to its control. This is a point made by Foucault and Bordo. Ability to control subjectivity and thus personal identity, is compromised by historical terms of expectations of gender. I will now look at how this might happen.

**Culture and gender - the normalisation of women**

Susan Bordo (1988) argues that the way we attend to the daily needs of our bodies is a medium of culture. Culture rules how we dress, what we eat and the images we portray. The body is therefore a symbolic form. The language of the body represents and reinforces the rules and hierarchies of culture. The effect that the culture of the body has had on women has already been identified (see chapter four) as creating what Foucault calls “docile bodies”. Female bodies are regulated, subjugated and transformed by the whims and fancies of society (Bordo, 1993).
The example of the sculpting of the body of Cher, discussed earlier, provides an example of this process of normalisation. As Susan Bordo (1993:187) succinctly says

... whatever she has or has not done, the transformation ... is striking: in Foucauldian terminology, Cher has gradually ‘normalised’ herself ... her normalised image (the only ‘reality’ which counts), now acts as a standard by which other women will measure judge, discipline and ‘correct’ themselves.

Society has become focussed on directing women towards self-modification. However, this modification is in line with whatever current fashion dictates in society. There are certain practices of femininity that women have to live up to, and these practices primarily revolve around appearances. Most often, this relates to the size and shape of the body. Such expectations of what constitutes femininity raises questions about why it is that a woman’s appearance seems to be of such importance. Also, why it is that this appearance comes to be judged by men. Physical appearance is inextricably linked with culture, and there are clearly certain appearances that are associated with particular cultures. The essence of a person, however, is for some, the shell. In some situations it is understandable that decisions are made about a person based on appearance alone. Without knowing a person, judgements may be made on external appearance.
Considering that in our daily lives we come across a variety of people unknown to us, whether it be in the corner dairy or in the corporate office, first impressions may be crucial. Of course there are always exceptions. The tattooed person seems to have connotations of criminality or deviance (hardly surprising, given what the literature reveals). But this means judgements are made on external appearance alone, in a way that may be questionable. For example, the story of a tattooed Australian woman who was convicted of murder in part because her tattoos were used by the prosecution in her trial to discredit her. It was alleged that she was a psychopath involved in the occult and ritualistic paganism, because her tattoos were representative of occult myths and legends (*She*, November 1995:103). The point I am making here is that her appearance did not conform to cultural expectations, so was used against her. Had she looked like *Cher* (who incidentally has a tattoo) the prosecution may have followed a different line. Although the woman convicted of murder may have actually committed the murder, she may also have been using her body as a symbolic form and as a medium for expression of her personal beliefs, she was seen as a 'bad person' because of what they represented. However, being tattooed is not synonymous with being 'bad' or someone to be afraid of. It can be argued that the only commonality between people who are tattooed is that the designs they have etched on their bodies are significant to the wearer. They are expressions of the self and part of identity.
In this chapter I have explored various activities that people undertake to modify their bodies, either temporarily or permanently. These have been discussed within social and cultural contexts. It is apparent that the practices acceptable within the social norm, are those which surrender to, and are controlled by, the status quo. Foucault looks to remind us that our daily lives are organised and regulated, and our bodies are trained to respond to the predominant standards that exist within society, and which have been moulded and reinforced by historical forms of self, masculinity and femininity (Bordo, 1993). In this sense, tattooing challenges the collective constraints of the body. The influences of culture in determining various practices in relation to the body means that culture can be regarded, as Foucault considers, as a direct locus of social control.

Grognard (1994) has identified that there are preferences men and women have when deciding where on the body they will get a tattoo. Not only are these preferences a consideration in the placement of a tattoo, but also in the type of tattoo which is eventually obtained. Such differences between men and women indicate that tattooing encompasses issues relating to masculinity and femininity. In the next chapter I will discuss the notions of masculinity and femininity in relation to sexuality and identity as further dimensions to consider in terms of power and its relationship to tattooing.
CHAPTER SIX
TATTOOING, SEXUALITY AND IDENTITY

People select tattoos that make physical - and permanent - their dreams and desires, their inner demons, and their world view (Krakow, 1994:77).

This chapter examines tattooing in relation to sexuality and identity. Foucault's ideas on sexuality and poststructuralist feminist criticisms of these ideas are explored. Sexuality is examined in relation to tattooing because it is important to look at sexuality to understand that there might be certain differences in terms of meaning, experience and identity for men and women. The relevance and importance of sexuality in relation to tattooing is explored to determine this.

Foucault and Sexuality
Victor Seidler (1987) comments in Reason, Desire and Male Sexuality that rationality has a strong connection with men in terms of their masculine identity. Rationality versus emotionality, (alias men versus women) has become the critical basis for the superiority of men within social life. If men want to be regarded as ‘masculine’, then displays of emotions and feelings are taboo, as these are signs of weakness and femininity. Discussion of men's sexuality has largely been a male enterprise with men both setting the limits of theorisation, but also
establishing the boundaries of sexual difference. In essence, men were responsible for the construction of both male and female sexuality (Brittan, 1990).

In terms of sexuality, Foucault overturned the conception that 'sexuality' is a human 'constant' (McHoul and Grace, 1993). Foucault believes that the discovery of sexuality in the 18th and 19th century was not a discovery at all, but rather an effect of discourse. Essentially there was just more open talking about sexuality, but there was no actual difference in the sexuality that was in existence (Brittan, 1990). In contrast to this, Seidler (1987) points out that it is difficult to accept approaches towards sexuality that relegate it strictly to discourse and social construction. There is no account made for the emotions that are associated with experiences of desire.

However, Brittan (1990) identifies that Foucault is not actually denying the existence and effects of desire, but is rather emphasising the idea that there can be no general theory which tells us the universal truth about the nature of sexuality. Men are susceptible to being a reflection of their sexuality as everywhere they go, they are presented with images of the power of the phallus, the tyranny of maleness. Female sexuality is portrayed in one of two ways, women are either seen as being sexually abused or as be rescued by a male hero. This view suggests the absolute dependence of women on men. If men are presented with such images, it is no wonder that they come to believe in the reality of their sexuality.
(Brittan, 1990). Such images only serve to reinforce and naturalise male control over sexuality. Feminism, however, has challenged the ways in which women are objectified by and subordinated to men. The theme in all discussion of the relationships between men and women can be identified as power. Such power relations are considered by Flax (1990) to profoundly affect the freedom and autonomy of women. She claims that in essence, gender relations have been defined and controlled by only one of their aspects - man.

The way in which men demonstrated their superiority over women, and indeed among one another, was said to be related to the amount of knowledge that they possessed. Thus, it can also be seen that within a rationalist tradition such as this, it was emotions and desires that were seen to be weak and threatening. According to Seidler (1987), men have a problem with displaying emotions and feelings. This is threatening to them as it compromises their positions of power and autonomy. It not only makes them look weak to women, but even worse, they look weak to their 'masculine' colleagues. In this sense, displays of such feminine qualities as emotions threaten a man's sense of his own masculine identity. To be masculine does not equate with having emotions. To be staunchly masculine is to be stoic and staid, rational and logical. It does not mean to have sympathy and concern, or feeling and emotion. It is important to recognise that with masculinity we are dealing with a social and historical discourse. Masculinity is often treated as a fixed category because of power relations in terms of women. However, as
concepts of masculinity and the masculine identity as such have changed over time, they cannot be regarded as fixed.

In relation to sexuality, women have been seen as creatures who have tempted men away from the path of reason and morality. The idea of men's sexuality is threatening in itself as it challenges the very sense of self-control that defines a man's rationality. As far as philosophers such as Rousseau were concerned, women were "made to please and be subjected to man" and "it is according to nature for the women to obey the man" (Seidler, 1987:88). Therefore, the problem of sexuality was not regarded as a problem of relationships to other people, but of the relationship to oneself. However, as Seidler (1987) points out that Foucault notes that issues of sexuality are potentially threatening because they challenge the ideals of a rational culture which has been created by men. As far as men's sexuality is concerned, the body is to be feared as it threatens to disturb the kind of control identified by masculinity.

A critical account of the inadequacies of Foucault's theory in relation to sexuality and power is provided by Helene Cixous. Her main argument centres around the absence of a sexual discourse adequate for women's wants, needs and desires. (Singer, 1989). For Cixous, Foucault fails to consider male dominance as an effect that has been produced by sexual discourse. In this sense, Cixous and Foucault differ in their assessments of how power has worked to produce sexuality and the consequences
of these historically specific constructions. Cixous views sexuality as being produced by a male dominated and masculine economy which is responsible for the distribution of ideals of pleasure differentially according to gender. These ideals disadvantage women and perpetuate male dominance and the masculine identity of power and autonomy. The non-existence of a sexual discourse that is truly representative of women is symptomatic of and instrumental in the continued subordination of women by men within society (Singer, 1989).

However, in regard to tattooing and the power between men and women, perhaps it could be, or even is, a representation of equality. That is, tattooing does not differentiate between the two. Firstly because to obtain a tattoo there is no discrimination on the basis of sex. Pain does not distinguish its victims. Secondly, it would seem that it is not the person per se that is regarded with disdain, but rather the tattoo. In considering tattooing from this perspective, a significant issue becomes apparent. That is, whether the women with tattoos are more marginalised as a group than men with tattoos. Suffice it to say that this is more than likely, but a debate about about affirmative action and reverse discrimination is not the issue with which this thesis is concerned.

Sexuality and the Women's Movement

The women's movement and feminism have set out to challenge conceptions of sexual equality. Women have fought and continued to
fight to exist as a people in their own right in direct contrast to existing in relation to men and children. It is due to this, that women have questioned the structures of power in personal and domestic relations. This has resulted in changes in the relations of power and views about subordination. Thus, the significance and power of sexual identity needs to be recognised.

It is also important to understand how concepts of male sexuality have been constructed historically if we are to understand how they still have predominance today. Historically, men have displayed mastery over the physical world, by asserting their dominance over their own desires. This ability to dominate is a notion that has been closely associated with the idea of masculinity. The obvious physical dominance of men over women has led women to be reduced to creatures who were of little or no importance except for the reproduction of the male line.

Susan Griffin, (in Siedler 1987), in her discussion of male sexuality and power, states that it is only through separating sex from intimacy and turning it into performance that it can still be seen by men as an issue of dominance and control. Thus, it is the nature of this displacement from emotional lives and needs for dependency that has so deeply formed in masculine sexuality. Male sexuality as explained through the Oedipus complex is defined in terms of a fear of castration. It is this fear that ensures that feelings of need, dependency and emotionality to achieve a masculine identity. Masculine identity is not established by
the threat of these feelings and emotions, but that the denial of these emotions is the very essence of masculine identity (Seidler, 1987). For masculine identity to be asserted, there has to be a constant denial of feminine emotions and feminine qualities.

It can be said that this has posed some difficulty for men over the years. Perhaps it even provides insight into the idea of the masculine identity crisis. If men have been conditioned into thinking that 'feminine' qualities are things to be threatened by, then the 'natural' display of such qualities by men, leads them to think that they are inadequate in some way, and are compromising their masculinity. However, it can also be said that the women's movement, has had an effect in changing traditional concepts of masculinity for some men, as it has provided an 'excuse' for them to be able to act in a way that has historically been unacceptable. Of course, the women's movement has conversely provided a threat to many men's identities as it has challenged the very notion of masculinity and masculine identity that men have for so long taken for granted and felt at ease with.

Identity

Foucault considers identity in relation to how the dominant discourses have categorised individuals and the way that they should behave and then attached these expectations to their identities (Sawicki, 1991). This is especially appropriate when discussing sexuality, but is equally applicable in a discussion of tattooing.
When approaching a discussion of the self and identity in this way, it is important to establish that socialisation is not the dominant process. The relationship between the individual and society is not seen as one of social determination. The individual has some agency in the development of the self as it is not predetermined entirely by social factors (Sawicki, 1991).

Such a view provides a compelling argument when considering identity in relation to tattooing. If socialisation was an all-encompassing, totally invasive process with no room for freedom of choice or self-determination, then only certain types of people would become tattooed. For example, only bikers and sailors. If the individual did not have any choice as to his/her social role, then there would be no movement between classes. People born on 'the wrong side of the tracks' would have no opportunity to exit from that lifestyle. In the same sense, people have a choice about becoming tattooed. Such a decision involves the self. It is an identity issue. As is stated by Sawicki (1991:42), the interests of a person are connected to their place in the social field - "they are constantly open to change and contestation".

Identity can be thought of in terms of a collection of an individuals values, beliefs and experiences. When looking at the construction of identity it is difficult to pinpoint whether it has social or personal origins. Perhaps the most accurate representation or definition of the construction of identity is that it is an interactive relationship between
social norms and independent will. In some ways it can be related to the 'nature/nurture' debate. A person's response to any occurrence in their lives or decision that needs to be made can be defined by their experiences (which exist within both a home and social environment).

Personal experience can be seen to be the variable in the individual/society equation. Identity contains elements of social and elements of individual, and experience is partially defined by both aspects. Initially people can be argued to be created by the socialisation process. People are primarily social. However, it is inevitable that people end up with feet in both the social and the individual domains. The deciding factor in how much attention is paid to each of these areas relies on experiences. To some extent it can be argued that the socialisation process and social norms are the cause of individuality in the sense that something social occurred that caused you to reject it. A person can either accept or reject social norms. For some individuals, it is important to strive to achieve an acceptable social existence, and for others it is just as important to reject conformity. The defining element in such a decision boils down to experience. And it is experience that is a constitutive part of our identities.

When relating feminist poststructuralist identity theory to the ideas of Michel Foucault, positions generally fall into two categories. Feminists such as Bordo and Bartky, use his analyses of power to isolate practices that subjugate women as subjects and objects of knowledge (Sawicki,
Bartky discusses the issue of identity in relation to how, for women, it is tied up with discourses on how to walk, talk, style hair, look after skin and wear makeup. It is a way of subjugating women by influencing them to develop norms and competencies (Sawicki, 1994). Therefore, in this sense our identities are entwined with ideas and beliefs about who we should be. So for tattooed people, the process is a way of escaping the norms and competencies that society establishes for us. Tattooed women for example, rather than taking power away from themselves by conforming to traditional discourses, they empower themselves by engaging in a behaviour that rejects these. So in doing so they are creating resistance - Foucault's notion of power as enabling.

It is worth considering that perhaps tattooing is different for men and women, because: (1) men are embracing the traditional masculine discourses by being brave and courageous and (2) women are rejecting the traditional feminine discourses by undergoing a process usually associated with affirmation of masculinity. But, of what importance is it when issues of masculine and feminine identity per se become irrelevant and the issue becomes one of the individual. Where does tattoo design fit in? What if the only marginalised group of subculture that a person can be categorised in is that of tattooed person. The tattoo becomes something personal. Not as an affirmation of neither masculinity nor femininity, but a personal/individual decision. Not a decision that revolves around deliberately becoming part of a marginalised group, but as a decision that is said to actually involve an
almost cathartic release from inhibitions suffocation of perhaps a transition from one phase of life to another (Sanders, 1989; Grognard, 1994). A tattoo that is representative of this kind of process is often designed by the individual as something which symbolises a journey, their life so far or perhaps their life to come. It is something which is not displayed to the world as perhaps are the tattoos of others. It is a momento, a totem, an inner strength that reminds them where they’ve been, what they’ve done and perhaps most importantly who they are.

Difficulties arise when trying to establish the identity of a tattooed person. Whether we can categorise the tattooed in one group with a collective identity is doubtful. Just like so much has been made of recent trends to change masculine stereotypes, no longer can we speak of the collective identity of men (Hearn, 1994). Most certainly there are parallels and common factors, but to speak of a collective identity would be inaccurate. So too, is this true of the tattooed.

Bartky (1990) suggests that the resistance by many women to embrace feminist critiques of current standards of fashion and beauty result because abandoning these norms would challenge their sense of identity. This is one way that patriarchal power operates to attach women to certain ideals of feminine identity. This statement by Bartky, however, Sawicki (1994) suggests, relates to women’s reluctance to give up the traditional feminine identity and take up a discourse of their own. I agree.
Bordo, like Foucault, treats the body as a product of cultural practices. These practices are prevalent in shaping and manipulating both the physical body and the way that women experience their bodies (Sawicki, 1994). According to Bordo this has been a strategy to maintain power relations between the sexes. Again, a resistance strategy for women to regain power over their own bodies is to become tattooed.

Types of people and types of tattoos
I identified in chapters three and five that tattooed people in Western society are quite often viewed negatively. In line with studies that have been conducted and also a general perception that people who are tattooed are violent or of a criminal, there is little time or thought attributed to the fact that becoming tattooed is a highly personal experience. Whether it is because someone is identifying with a "marginalised" group, such as the Hell's Angels, or whether it is because someone is being tattooed to connect with their inner self, the undeniable fact is that tattooing is a choice. That choice seems to involve an introspective experience.

The mystery and perceptions that surround the 'type' of people that become tattooed exists because the act is a behaviour that deviates from actual everyday phenomenon (Sanders, 1989). Suspicions about motives arise when an act is one that is not something that is usually carried out by society as a whole. Perceptual problems become
exacerbated when the phenomenon occurring is one that is controversial, unusual, deviant and otherwise outside the immediate experience of the average person.

The decision to become a tattooed person is highly integrated with the way in which a person defines themselves and the overall acceptability of tattooing in the culture. The tattoo becomes a part of the persons identity-kit. Not only is the tattoo used by its owner as a measure of one’s identity, but also by the people in their environment that place them into a social category. Tattooed people within the Western world are usually associated with marginalised groups. There are many different reasons why a person makes the decision to get tattooed. Sometimes decisions are not entirely personal. Influences such as peers, friends and family can often play a part in a tattooee’s decision. Interactions in a person’s life that exposes them to people who are tattooed invariably has an effect on whether they too will get tattooed and also what sort of tattoo they will get (Sanders, 1989). Hanging around with a crowd of people who are tattooed produces the response that ‘everyone’s got one, I want one too’.

Often tattooees describe the basic reasons for becoming tattooed as to be connected with significant others who were also tattooed, the uniqueness of flouting conventions, symbolised freedom and self-control and the desire to adorn the body with something that is aesthetically pleasing (Sanders, 1989; Grognard, 1994). However, in
contrast to this, the image that a person chooses to adorn themselves with is selected for a specific reason. Generally speaking the design is related to a person's emotional connection to others, or a definition of self. More often though, in the case of women, it is the desire to beautify and enhance the body (Grognard, 1994).

Underlying the reasons for becoming tattooed, three main themes can be identified. Firstly, is becoming tattooed to affiliate with a primary associate. This type of tattoo is illustrated by the vow tattoo, for example “MOM”. This is indicative of expressing love and commitment (Grognard, 1994). The second theme is illustrated by tattoos demonstrating connection or commitment to a group. This would include groups such as the military, motorcycle gangs and sports teams. The third, and perhaps most significant theme is how tattoos are employed as symbolic representations of how one conceives of the self, or interests and activities that are key definitions of the self. For example:

I put a lot of thought into this tattoo. I'm an English lit major and I thought that the mediaeval castle had a lot of significance. I'm an idealist and I thought that that was well expressed by a castle with clouds. Plus, I'm blond and I wanted something blue (Sanders, 1989:46).

Those who become tattooed often choose designs that symbolise important activities, hobbies and personal involvements (Grognard, 1994).
Examples of these choices are included in some observations made by Sanders (1989:47)

a rabbit breeder acquired a rabbit, a young man requested a cartoon frog because the Little League team he coached was named the 'frogs', a fireman received a fire fighters cross insignia surrounded by flame, and an optician chose a flaming eye.

Such choices illustrate how much importance the individual places on the meaning and personal symbolism of the tattoo that obtain. Inextricably linked with all three themes is the common awareness of the decorative and aesthetic function of the tattoo. In choosing a tattoo design, aesthetic criteria such as colours and 'prettiness' have to be met (Sanders, 1989).

**Bodily location of tattoos as a factor in becoming tattooed**

Another of the most important factors to consider when becoming tattooed, is apparently the location. This is significant in that specific locations can incur different reactions, depending on the visibility. Areas of the body that are frequently tattooed differ somewhat between men and women. Most men that become tattooed receive their first on the upper arm, and most women receive their first tattoo on the breast. However, there is a significant difference in the percentages for body location. While 71% of men get tattooed on the arm, only 35% of women become tattooed on the breast. Other popular areas for women include, the back and shoulder and the hip (Sanders, 1989).
It is possible to attribute one of the reasons for this difference as the pain factor. More or less pain is caused to the tattooee depending on the sensitivity of the area. In general, the process of tattooing causes more pain when there is a higher concentration of nerve endings, or parts of the body that are not cushioned by muscle tissue. Therefore, tattooing on the arms or legs is never as painful as tattooing on some other parts of the body (Sanders, 1989). This raises an interesting gender issue. It would appear that as pain is a contributing factor in the choice of a body location, women exhibit less concern about pain than men. There is a predominant variety in the locations that women become tattooed as opposed to men. This may indicate that the pain thresholds for women are at a considerably higher level than that for men (Scarry, 1985).

One of the factors that can be associated with women and tattooing is that of pain. An interesting aspect to explore in terms of pain is self injurious behaviour. Feminist frameworks regard the body as an inscriptive surface that provides an interface between subject and object (Grosz, 1994). Often, the language that is available to women is inadequate as far as a means of self expression. This leaves women with little choice but to use a non-verbal option of expression.

Research suggests that women are more likely to deliberately harm their bodies than men (Barstow, 1995). One means of non-verbal self expression is ‘cutting up ‘or deliberate self injurious behaviour. Sometimes this activity of cutting up can provide a release for women
who have suffered abuse. Cutting up is defined as the action of taking a sharp instrument and incising the skin which results in scarification of body tissue. Women often harm themselves in this way when they feel overwhelming stress associated with physical or sexual abuse. It provides a means to feel something other than numbness, punish herself for thoughts or behaviours, physically represent psychic pain, and or feel centred in her body.

The central themes that these explanations provide is that cutting up occurs when women experience their bodies as objects solely for the use of others rather than as something through which they can express they own subjectivity. The specific act of cutting up is seen as a signifier of an experience or feeling for which the woman has no other means of signification. This is an interesting concept in relation to tattooing, as it provokes the exploration of tattooing as a deliberate means of expressing pain and other past experiences.

Barstow (1995) has suggested that the function of self-inflicted injury includes reduction of tension, communication of feelings, the termination of dissociation, the gaining of control through reenactment and the replacement of emotional pain by physical pain and self punishment. It could be argued that these reasons are similar to those given by women who have become tattooed. As previous research has indicated, women tend to get tattoos on parts of the body that are traditionally more painful than the body parts that are chosen by men.
Feminist discourse emphasises that the body is essential to women's place in a social existence. However, the body that distinguishes the subject is inscribed by social and political meaning, as the features of being a subject are not continuous but rather "socially instituted and maintained norms of intelligibility" (Butler, 1990:17). Thus, the analysis of cutting up in relation to tattooing is that it can be interpreted as a social transaction of both the signifier and the signified, a representation and an interpretation. This relates back to the discourse proposed by Helen Cixous (1981) discussed in chapter two regarding the importance of women writing for themselves.

Another factor to consider in the different body locations between men and women is the symbolic functions that tattoos serve for each gender. For women, choosing to become tattooed is done for personal pleasure. A tattoo is regarded as a permanent body decoration with aesthetic functions and for the enjoyment of themselves and those with whom they are intimate (Sanders, 1989). As far as social acceptability of tattoos on women goes, choosing a body location that avoids stigmatization upon contact with associates or strangers appears to be an important factor.

On the other hand, tattooing for men is related to symbolising masculinity. Tattoos chosen by men are placed on an area of the body than can easily be made public and they are representations of more
dominant and violent images. An interesting point that can be related back to pain, is that one of the main reasons for men to become tattooed might be to affirm their masculinity. That is, their toughness, bravery and courage. That they had to endure substantial pain to achieve this, only serves to reinforce how ‘manly’ they are.

However, the difference with women becoming tattooed is that it is almost solely for personal pleasure. Women do not generally become tattooed to affirm their machoness. If it was measured, the pain that women endure is far greater than men due to the more sensitive body locations. This would essentially make the tattooed masculine toughness of men redundant.

Experiences of Being Tattooed
The underlying theme for the reasons (affiliation with: close associate, groups and representation of the self) for becoming tattooed is their impact on the definition of self and the demonstration of unique interests and social connections (Goffman, 1963). Tattooees seem to feel special with their own design and expression of identity. For example

Having a tattoo changes how you see yourself. It is a way of choosing to change your body. I enjoy that. I enjoy having a tattoo because it makes me different from other people. There is no one in the whole world who has a right arm that looks anything like mine. I’ve always valued being different from other people. Tattooing is a way of expressing that difference. It is a way of saying, ‘I am unique’ (Sanders, 1989:51).
For some, becoming tattooed can be seen as memorialising significant aspects of past experience. For example:

In the future when I’m sitting around and bored with my life and I wonder if I was ever young once and did exciting things, I can look at the tattoo and remember (Delio, 1994:25).

These two examples are simply that: two examples. All that can be said about experiences of being tattooed is that it is a personal choice which may relate to an expression of self or identity.

Chapter summary

This chapter has explored tattooing in relation to sexuality and identity. There may be differences between men and woman in terms of the reasons they become tattooed. This may be because of the discourses of sexuality that are defined by society. What seems to be clear is that there are strong indications that tattooing is associated with being different as well as being similar. It is this difference that can create a discourse of resistance, and the next chapter will expand on this.
CHAPTER SEVEN

TATTOOING: AN ICON OF POWER

Destabilising the identity of women necessitates a new politics for feminism without a stable subject or universal normative goals (Hekman, 1996:4).

In analysing tattooing, a network of complex but interrelated elements which make up the discourses of tattooing have been identified and unravelled. It is argued that in analysing these elements of tattooing, a different perspective can be considered; one which suggests that tattooing might be seen as a discourse of resistance, particularly in terms of women, and women's bodies. This chapter examines this claim, and provides a summary of each of these elements in relation to the tattooed subject.

In this thesis I have suggested that the tattooed subject creates his or her subjectivity through becoming tattooed. The tattooed woman in particular, (in the Foucauldian sense of two meanings of subject), cannot escape the process of subjection or subjectivity which is associated with the discourse of tattooing. But she does create a subjectivity which is tied to her own identity of being a tattooed person. This subject position is different from the normalised view of women in Western society, and different from the gendered subjectivity that Wendy Hollway (1984) identifies as a crucial aspect of the way in which
women are positioned in society. Subjectivity is produced through discourses, and their discursive practices. These practices are social, political and economic, and revolve around power. Tattooing can be regarded as a form of subjectivity that challenges the power of existing dominant discourses. But challenge to dominant discourses can result in marginalisation as a deviation from the norms of mainstream society. Thus tattooing is a form of subjectivity in which its subjects have been viewed as marginal in relation to dominant discourses, but which can create a counter discourses by resisting the values and beliefs of the dominant discourse.

Hegemony

Dominant discourses, and how social and other situations are able to be defined by dominant groups, can be understood through the Gramscian concept of hegemony. Carl Boggs provides a clear description of this concept. He states

By hegemony Gramsci mean the permeation throughout civil society - including a whole range of structures and activities like trade unions schools, the churches, and family - of an entire system of values, attitudes, beliefs, morality etc. that is in one way or another supportive of the established order and the class interests that dominate it. Hegemony in this sense might be defined as as ‘organizing principle’ or world view (or combination of such world views), that is diffused by agencies of ideological control and socialization into every area of daily life. To the extent that this prevailing consciousness is internalized by the broad masses, it becomes part of ‘common sense’; as all
ruling elites seek to perpetuate their power, wealth, and status, they necessarily attempt to popularize their own philosophy, culture, morality etc. and render them unchallengeable, part of the natural order of things (Boggs, 1976:39).

Hegemony, then, relates to an affiliation of certain groups within society who can exert control over other groups. Hegemony is a process that is not necessarily coercive; rather it wins and shapes consent so that the power exerted by dominant groups appears legitimate (Hebdige, 1979). By definition, it is not something that is held by the same group or groups over a particular section of society. It is a presence that has to be “won, reproduced and sustained” (Hebdige, 1979:17). Hegemony is able to maintain existing belief and value systems by shaping the consciousness of individuals. But hegemonic structures can be transformed by both individual and collective action. The nature of hegemony, hegemonic ideologies and discourses create resistance. An expression of this resistance is tattooing. Tattooing challenges the status quo. The status quo is produced by hegemony and dominant discourses. As Hebdige (1979:17) points out

The struggle between different discourses, different definitions and meanings with ideology is therefore always, at the same time, a struggle with signification: a struggle for possession of the sign which extends to even the most mundane areas of everyday life.
Tattooing and resistance

Theories of resistance have come from various educational theorists, for example, Friere (1972) and Giroux (1983). In general these have been concerned to address the way ideological or other forces are resisted by individuals. Often resistance is associated with oppression and what are perceived as oppressed groups. There has also been feminist perspectives of resistance which have been critical of resistance theorists in terms of gender. In the area of education, for example, the work of Lather (1991), Yeatman (1993).

However, in relation to tattooing as resistance, the act of becoming a tattooed person may not have been intentionally done as an act of actual resistance. But in choosing to become tattooed, an individual creates a discourse of tattooing that is different from that of the status quo. As one feminist puts it “to resist effectively we must create, for resistance is not a mere withdrawal of energy, but a posing of a reality that challenges power over” (Starhawk, 1987:314). So the tattooed woman (subject) is in effect, using power as resistance.

Analysis of the tattooed subject through a feminist poststructuralist approach is able to provide a different understanding of bodies, power and subjectivity from the prevailing socially and culturally constructed views about identity. Such analysis can identify ways to recognise that
there can be resistance to such hegemonic beliefs about who or what people are, and how they came to be that way. This has the effect of offering new "regimes of truth", and while it may leave much unanswered, this is in keeping with a poststructural analysis. Also, important is that Foucault (1978) resisted generalising statements and making recommendations for action that were based on practices of resistance. He was concerned that this could mean they could become co-opted and become repressive in and of themselves.

In chapter two, I outlined the theoretical framework by which the relationship of tattooing to power might be considered, through the work of Michel Foucault, but also with recognition of elements of feminist viewpoints that can be merged into Foucault's work. I also suggested that the convergences between Foucault and feminism could be constructively incorporated into a framework. Within each of the chapters of this thesis, these points of convergence are able to be identified in two ways. Firstly, in terms of the body as a site of power and the local and intimate workings of power as they relate to the body. Secondly, the production of power through discourse; and the way in which particular discourses become dominant or privileged. The importance of power and discourses is very apparent in relation to tattooing.
Chapter three provided an account of the history of tattooing within the contexts of culture, race, and class. What is illustrated here, is that tattooing is an ancient form of body modification, and that it has varying degrees of use according to the traditional beliefs and customs of certain groups. It was also pointed out that perceptions of tattooing have changed over time, and its acceptability in non-Western societies does not mean its automatic acceptance in Western societies.

The one consistent factor in all societies is the form of the human body. In chapter four, the place of the body was discussed as a significant factor in all human society and cultures. The body is paramount in analysing the discourses of tattooing. It represents, as Grosz (1994:117) reminds us "a writing surface on which messages, a text ... a blank page on which engraving, graffiti, tattooing, or inscription can take place". Harre (1991) has highlighted the multitude of ways which the body is used in societies, and it is worth quoting him at length here to remind us of the importance of the body. He states

We use our bodies for grounding personal identity in ourselves and recognising it in others. We use our bodies as points of reference in relating to material things. We use our bodies for the assignment of all sorts of roles, tasks, duties and strategies. We use our bodies for practical action. We use our bodies for the expression of moral judgments. We use the conditions of the body for legitimating its withdrawal from everyday life. We use our bodies for artwork, as surfaces for decoration, and as new material for sculpture. We use human bodies for reproducing the
human species. We use human bodies for the management of people so embodied. We use our own bodies and those of others to command the cosmos. We use our bodies as message boards, and their parts as succinct codes. We use our bodies for fun, for amusement, and for pastimes (Harre, 1991:257).

Just as bodies are used for a variety of purposes, so too, has the body become a matter of interest in terms of analysis. Frank (1990) suggests that increasing interest in the body in recent years can be attributed to two main points: the development of feminist theories and critiques and the influence of the works of Foucault. From the literature about the body, Frank (1990) identifies that the body is now becoming discursively analysed according to several different characterisations. He states that these are (i) the medicalized body; (ii) the sexual body; (iii) the disciplined body; and (iv) the talking body. The last three of these characterisations can be seen to be part of the discussion in this thesis, although the most relevant of these is the characterisation of the talking body, in the sense that the tattooed person 'speaks a message'. But in the same way that the body talks, the body is also read by others, and the body that talks is also a body that has knowledge. As Anne Game (1991) argues

the body provides the basis for a different conception of knowledge: we know with our bodies. In this regard, the authenticics of experience might be reclaimed; if there is any truth, it is the truth of the body (Game, 1991:192).
However, there needs to be some caution in what message it is that we read from the ‘truth of the body’. For example, according to Bordieu (1984) the body is the fundamental focus for taste and distinction. Managing the human form is part of cultural or physical capital. He claims that different classes develop different body images. For example, he claims the working class develops bodies which exhibit male strength; the middle class prefers a body that signals fitness. Bordieu claims that the way that the physical body is constructed symbolises class differences.

But bodies may be imbued with the particularities of class, sex, culture and race, so as Grosz (1994) suggests, it is not possible to have one model of the body. She asserts that “if bodies are always sexually and racially distinct, incapable of being incorporated into a singular universal model, then the very forms that subjectivity takes are not generalizable” Grosz (1994:19). The poststructural body is one in which ‘anything goes’, and the boundaries of class and gender may become blurred. Therefore subjectivity may also be altered. The case of women body builders is a good example of this. Like any situation where the body is altered or modified in some way, both positive and negative images can be produced. As Haber (1996:145) shows
the "muscled Superwoman" ... makes her body ... resistant to readings of timidity, weakness and inferiority, creating a body as her own interpretation. Her reshaped body forces the revelation that the idea that woman are by nature destined to be weak and delicate is an invention - an invention that doesn't suit her purposes. The Superwoman is not constrained by gender roles; she eschews the idea of an essence, a nature to which she must conform. She denies the existence of a naturally proper feminine bodily comportment ... .

Thus in chapter five, the various cultural and social practices associated with modifying the body have been fleshed out. It can be seen that although there may be similarities in terms of things that are done to modify the body, they have different meanings in different cultures and societies. The relationship of the body to tattooing emphasises several key differences in terms of the way that the body is seen in Western society and in non-Western society. This is particularly important in terms of various practices of body modification as well as tattooing. For example, while body piercing and scarification as well as tattooing are an accepted part of the practices of one culture, plastic surgery and other body-sculpting practices that modify the body in much the same way are accepted in another. However, in either situation there seem to be particularly defined limits of acceptability. Although these practices relate to both men and women, various gendered discourses are analysed so that the issue of tattooing in relation to women begins to take shape.
The tattooed woman seems to create something of a dilemma for society which has particular views about women and women's bodies. According to Grognard (1994:115) "naked skin provokes. Tattooed skin is suggestive because it conceals and exposes simultaneously ... The tattooed woman represents feminine duplicity in the juxtaposition of appearance and reality, the visible and the concealed. The contradiction gives her a mysterious quality which is both frightening and fascinating". Grognard (1994:79) asserts that "women's tattoos almost always have erotic connotations. Hidden tattoos represent part of the self in that they are concealed from the gaze of others and reserved for the privileged".

Grognard (1994:32) states that in the final analysis, tattooing is an act which distinguishes the individual from the masses as well as the standardised uniformity of the individual. What tattooing does is construct a different subjectivity - the tattooed subject is one which society endeavours to locate according to cultural, class or stereotypical norms. The tattooed subject, in particular, the tattooed women does not fit into this construction, and in this way may create what Foucault refers to as a 'counter discourse'. This has the effect of creating 'multiple truths', as it cannot be assumed that there is one identity for all tattooed people or for tattooed women. So these discourses are powerful in the sense that they create new images of women.
Resistance to the culturally defined norms of femininity in Western society might emerge in the form of tattooing. In the same way that the emphasis in today's society which produces an image of women being fit and muscular, and may be empowering in terms of self esteem, tattooing can be seen as having a similar effect. The tattooed woman takes control of her body, and does with it what she chooses. This is part of resistance to the traditional discourses of femininity that exist for women. Perhaps, then, a reason for becoming tattooed is to gain personal and individual control of the body. There does not appear to be any overt and covert media messages that instruct or suggest becoming tattooed. It is a choice which requires the active compliance of the subject.

Tattooing and Stigma

Not to be overlooked in this thesis is the way that society might view tattooed people, that is, tattooing in relation to the notion of stigma. The word "stigma" means a mark or brand, and originates from a Greek word meaning to tattoo or "stick". People with a stigma may be treated differently from those without. Goffman (1963:4) said that a stigma is "... really a special kind of relationship between an attribute and a stereotype". A stigma, then is an undesirable attribute, and if a person has some sort of stigma they are "... thus reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one" (p.3).
An assumption is made that the person with the stigma is very different from us, or as Goffman points out, we think the stigmatized person is not quite human. On this assumption, various types of discrimination are acted out, and construct a 'stigma-theory', which Goffman states is a rationale to explain this person's difference and to account for the danger that people feel this such a person represents to us. What we do is to distance ourselves from the person with a stigma from ourselves, and create a notion of 'otherness'. This may be gender, race, social class, or some other physical difference. Once the 'otherness' of the stigmatized person is established with negative feelings based on that particular attribute, according to Goffman (1963:5), "we tend to impute a wide range of imperfections on the basis of the original one". So it is not difficult to imagine that the visible sign of a tattoo can cause the same reaction in people as any other form of stigma may do.

The limits of acceptability of various practices of body modification can also be seen to be associated with expectations of gender and sex. In Western society it is apparent that the female body is constructed in a way that differs from non-Western society. This influences society's perceptions about the female body, gender, and sex. Women's concepts of their bodies result from interaction with both macro and micro levels of the society in which they live. Both cultural and social
interactions are important in this process. Socially and culturally
sanctioned ways of being female are learned through families, peers,
school and life experiences and exposure to 'ideal' notions of the
female body produced in various media. But to say there is a 'female
body' leads to an assumption that all women are the same irrespective
of their culture, race, sexual orientation and ethnicity (Grosz, 1994).

Gender is a social and cultural construct. Bartky, (1990) says it is not
simply a collection of biological traits but includes those attributes
society and culture assigns to the sex of a person. Western society has
constructed a gender dichotomy of two genders - male and female.
Those genders have attributes ascribed to them. As a simple example,
females are seen to be subjective, emotional and caring, passive as well
as less intellectual than males, who are seen to be objective, strong and
intelligent, cold and uncaring, as well as innately violent. Both
genders develop their sense of self or identity through culturally
accepted norms of what is acceptable in terms of appearance and
behaviour. Thus the social construction of the female gender means
that there are stereotyped notions of the 'ideal' woman as well as of
the 'deviant' woman. In terms of the external aspects of the ideal
woman, there is an expectation of an ideal shape and size - not too fat,
not too thin, not too tall, not too short, and so on. In Western societies
the ideal also means white skinned; or at least in New Zealand
society our predominant heritage of British, Scottish and Irish ancestry may also mean that ‘ideal’ can refer to those who are most similar to our ideal notions of ourselves in terms of our genetic legacy.

The focus on gender in Western society, then, excludes other intersections which are equally important for interpreting people’s difference. Such aspects would include race, ethnicity, class, or sexual identity. Chapter six explores tattooing in relation to notions of sexual identity in an attempt to analyse possible differences in this regard. Grosz (1994:157) asks “do sexually different bodies require different inscriptive tools to etch their different surfaces? Or rather, is it the inscription of power on bodies that produces bodies as sexually different?”

In *The History of Sexuality*, Volume I, Foucault (1978) investigated how discourses about sexuality and deviance were produced by and produce relations of power. For Foucault, sex is the pivotal factor in discipline and normalisation and the separation of the deviant, the criminal and the homosexual. In the same way that Foucault offers an account of how we have come to believe what being deviant, criminal, or having sex means, the discourse of tattooing is constructed through cultural meanings.
Tattooing has been a practice of human society for a long time. But it cannot be assumed that the rules, regularities and practices for tattooing are the same today as they were centuries ago. So a discourse cannot be seen as something that is static. It changes over time, because the subjects of the discourse, as well as its rules and concepts are constructed and deconstructed in relation to other discourses. The subjects of the discourse of tattooing is what the discourse is concerned with.

The description of the tattooed person (subject) constructs the identity, which means the discourse cannot exist without the subject. A Foucauldian discourse analysis does not produce causal information, but instead interprets historical discourses in terms of concerns of power and resistance. Foucault (1982:211-212) states

In order to find out what power relations are about, perhaps we should investigate the forms of resistance ... they are struggles which question the status of the individual: on the one hand, they assert the right to be different, and they underline everything which makes individuals truly individual. On the other hand, they attack everything which separates the individual, breaks his links with others, splits up community life, forces the individual back on himself and ties him to his own identity in a constraining way.

Foucault (1982:212) claimed that there were three types of struggles evident in society: against forms of domination against forms of
exploitation, and "against that which ties the individual to himself and submits him to others in this way (struggles against subjection, against forms of subjectivity and submission)". Thus the analysis of a discourse from a Foucauldian perspective is useful because it is able to illustrate the third type of struggle - the struggle against subjection. The self that is sought to be created, as Nikolas Rose (1989:253-254) suggests "... is the entity able to steer its individual path through life by means of the act of personal decision and the assumption of personal responsibility". So what is asserted in this thesis is that it is important to consider all the intersections in relation to identity, since all identity is fundamentally individual. The individuality of the self may also mean that it is for each person to define what is 'normal' or what is 'ideal', outside any conventionally and socially constructed views.

Concluding statement

The language of tattooing can be seen to give voice to the notion of resistance in the same way that other body 'differences' do, such as body building in women. It represents a redesigning of the self in a way that disrupts and challenges perceptions of gender. Women destabilise feminine body identity and confuse gender through the creation of new images, which "defy the canons of the feminine aesthetic" (Sawicki, 1988:175). Being tattooed can create its own 'truth' for the
body, and for the woman’s body can be a site and source of power through its discourse. In this respect, convergences between feminism and Foucault in terms of body, power and discourses are apparent.

Haber (1996) reminds us that such redesigning of bodies forces re-reading through a politics of embodiment, which creates an aesthetic revolution. This contributes to new ways of thinking about others, new identities, new selves. As Elspeth Probyn (1993:172-173) suggests, this represents a ‘geography of the possible’, in that these selves carry with them the movement of bone, of body, of breath, of imagination, of muscle, and the conviction of stubborness that there are other possibilities. These selves are made to speak of transformation, retracted they provide glimpses of other positions, lodged in the terrain of the social they rearticulate a geography of the possible”.
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