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Behind the Ink NZ:
Tattoos in Aotearoa New Zealand and the Link to a
Process of Self-Healing

A thesis
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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the reasons why individuals in Aotearoa New Zealand tattoo their bodies and analyse the mechanism by which tattoo acts as a method of coping, self-healing and self-transformation for these individuals. Further this study aimed to investigate how tattoo allows individuals to re-write and transform their meaning of traumatic and/or stressful events into stories of empowerment, strength and survival. While tattoo has been explored for meaning and function in Aotearoa New Zealand, there was seen to be no empirically grounded research looking into how tattoo might serve as a therapeutic tool.

The study examined 427 survey respondents and eight interviewees across Aotearoa New Zealand. The participants ranged in age from 18 to 65-years-old and varied across multiple ethnicities.

This study combined quantitative and qualitative data collection methods in a two-phase project. Data collection phase one involved 427 participants respond to an online survey. This established a baseline for cross-comparison of attitudes, backgrounds and life experiences. Data collection phase two involved eight semi-structured interviews to explore individual experiences and uncover the relationship between their tattoos and how it had helped them to cope/heal in some way. To analyse these interviews, thematic analysis was combined with phenomenological analysis.

The findings from this study suggest that there are multiple reasons (expression of self, aesthetic aspects, identity, passage of rights, remembrance/tributes and personal healing among others) why individuals chose to engage in the art form of tattooing. Findings also suggest that tattoo, directly relating to the mind/body continuum of stress/trauma can serve as a mechanism to enable individuals to re-script stressful/traumatic events, reinforce identity and

self-acceptance, acknowledge past difficulties and turn them into positives and increase inner motivations and positive thinking which was seen to initiate healing and recovery. This suggests that tattoo serves as a powerful mechanism to aid in personal transformation, but also challenge previous meanings associated with the art form of tattoo.

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INTRODUCTION

“A tattoo is more than a painting on skin: its meaning and reverberations cannot be comprehended without the knowledge of the history and mythology of its bearer. Thus it is a true poetic creation, and is always more than meets the eye. As a tattoo is grounded on living skin, so its essence emotes a poignancy unique to the mortal human condition” (Vale & Juno, 1989, p. 11).

Tattooing is one of many forms of body modification/alteration, including piercing, scarification, branding and cicatrisation (to be closed by scar formation), and it is considered the oldest and most widespread of these. Physical evidence of tattooing practices date back to the late fourth millennium BC in Europe and from around 2000 BC in Egypt and has been found in almost all parts of the world at some time in history (Caplan, 2000).

Every tattoo speaks a thousand words, telling a different story to the next. It is a unique way for the wearer to speak ‘themselves,’ communicating information about their personal identities, their history, their culture, and their values. Tattoos have the ‘power’ to remind us who we are, who we were and even add influence over who we will become. With both personal and social meaning, tattoos can represent potentially powerful and extremely symbolic symbols of how we view both the world(s) we live in, but also how we view ourselves. This thesis examines the role of tattoo in Aotearoa New Zealand; the reasons individuals have chosen to tattoo their bodies and the process of self-healing associated with their tattoos.

Armstrong de Almeida (2009) describes in her thesis:

“My first tattoo gave me the strength to leave an abusive marriage. It was a phoenix because I needed to remind myself that I had survived many ‘fires’ and had always emerged stronger from the ashes... As I got more tattoos the images I chose were visual representations of the negotiations I undertook on a daily basis between who I was and who I wanted to become. My tattoos were about my fears and hopes. It came to me as a surprise when, during one long painful tattooing session, I went into a deep meditative state and heard my voice aloud in my mind: No-one can hurt me anymore. I control my pain. Controlling physical pain during a tattooing session took me to a different understanding of emotional pain; it helped me shift my self-image from victim to survivor” (p. 12).

The meaning of tattoos and how they shape and express ideas about the selves of the wearers but also how healing maybe achieved through the process is important to study in my mind as they not only tell stories of the individuals lives (Sweetman, 1999; Soyland, 1997) but they also offer glimpses into the wearers psyche that is seen to provide meaning beyond just decoration (Millner & Edenhom, 2001) and lastly because a large portion of the research about tattooed individuals has focused on small sub-groups of deviant individuals (Manuel & Sheehan, 2007; Perez-Cotapos & Cossio, 2006; Roberts & Ryan, 2002).

Previous studies have shown individuals all over the world have tattooed their bodies for many reasons. I seek to identify specific reasons within Aotearoa New Zealand, but more importantly the role of tattoo in relation to self-healing. Recent findings related to tattoo and its capability to function as a mechanism of self-healing have paved the way for my interest in this topic and exploring

whether this is something being utilised in Aotearoa New Zealand. (Armstrong de Almeida, 2009; Cortez, 2013; Shalley, 2014).

Chapter One provides an introduction to tattooing and an overview of the art forms history throughout the world. It explores the origins of tattooing and also the functions and stereotypes that tattoos have served throughout history. It also looks into the history of tā moko and tattooing in Aotearoa New Zealand. Given the rich history of tā moko, this chapter summarises the origins and functions throughout Māori history. It also provides an introduction to the concept of self-healing and traditional healing in varying cultures throughout the world and how tattoo may serve as a mechanism of healing for individuals.

Chapter Two describes the research process. This involves the use of a two-phase quantitative and qualitative process utilising both an online survey and eight semi-structured interviews. Both thematic analysis and phenomenological analysis were used to analyse the data.

Chapter Three presents an analysis of both the online survey and the interviews with participants, highlighting key themes and experiences through their journey to self-healing through tattoo. Firstly, the results of the online survey are discussed with tables and graphs used to illustrate certain findings. Secondly, the results of the semi-structured interviews are discussed with specific quotes from the interviews used to illustrate certain findings.

The final *Chapter Four* offers a detailed discussion of the key findings from this study, and also presents key ideas around self-healing and tattoos. This chapter also highlights the studies limitations and directions for future study around this topic.

For the purpose of this study, the word tattoo will be used generally as I aim to look at all forms of tattooing together, not individually. When talking about

a specific culture, the appropriate term will be used. When discussing Pacific tattoos specifically, the term tatau will be used and when talking about Māori tattoos specifically, moko will be used. These along with more Westernised tattoo processes represent the most dominant forms of tattooing within Aotearoa New Zealand (King, 2008).

Hypothesis

It is my hypothesis that reasons for tattooing ones body in Aotearoa New Zealand will be varied. Tattoos may serve a number of mechanisms for people, one of which will be the function of self-healing achieved through the process of tattooing and the assigned meanings associated to the tattoo(s) by the wearer.

Based on previous research, I would expect to see respondents achieving more awareness of themselves through increased self-identity, self-esteem and self-efficacy and ways of coping physically, emotionally and psychologically with trauma, stressors and transitions in their lives (Rubin, 1988b; Gentry & Alderman, 2007; Phillips, 2012; Shalley, 2014; Armstrong de Almeida, 2009; Cortez, 2013; Nikora & Te Awekotuku, 2002). I would also expect to find reasons such as having something unique and aesthetically pleasing tattooed on them as significant reasons as to why individuals become tattooed.

These factors may be achieved through the therapeutic aspect and pain associated with tattooing and the narratives formed through significant meanings given to the tattoo(s) by each individual.

CHAPTER ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW

Historical Tattoos

The term tattoo was first spoken through Captain James Cook's travels around Polynesia. In 1769 Cook witnessed Tahitians practice what they referred to as "tattooing" in their language. Cook described it as follows:

"Both sexes paint their bodies, Tattow, as it is called in their language. This is done by inlaying the colour of black under their skins, in such a manner as to be indelible. The colour they use is lamp black, prepar'd from the smoak of a kind of oily nut, used by them instead of candles. The instrument for pricking it under the skin is made of very thin flat pieces of bone or shell. One end is cut into sharp teeth and the other fastened to a handle. The teeth are dipped in black liquor and then drove, by quick sharp blows struck upon the hand with a stick..." (Cook, 1771, p. 45).

Cook's records mark the beginning of the modern history of tattoos. However, tattooing was seen in cultures across the world long before the European people became interested in Cook's adventures. In 1991, a discovery was made in the Italian Alps as climbers came across the frozen corpse of a Tyrolean Iceman named 'Otzi the Iceman'. Estimated to be a 5300-year-old mummy, he was adorned with 57 Geometric tattoos constructed using a pigment derived from soot (Pabst et al., 2009; Perzanowski, 2013).

'Otzi the Iceman' is not the only discovery of ancient tattooing as female Egyptian mummies dating back to 2100BC and a Scythian mummy from 500BC have been found with differing tattoos on their bodies. These tattoos have been linked to fertility and other medical/therapeutic functions (DeMello, 2000). 'Otzi

the Iceman' is the oldest body found to date (Gilbert, 2000b). In addition however, there have been many other findings that suggest the practice of tattooing pre-dates the 'Iceman's' time. Multiple engravings suggested to be signs of tattoos have been discovered from the Upper Paleolithic Period (10,000BC – 38,000BC) all over Europe (Gilbert, 2000a).

The art of tattooing was practiced throughout the ancient world. Japanese tattoos have been seen to date back to at least 300BC (DeMello, 2000). In the bible under Leviticus, it states that skin should not be marked with tattoos, suggesting the practice was known among the Israelites (Perzanowski, 2013). The ancient Greeks who used the term "stigmata" to describe images inscribed on the face or varying other body parts, learnt the art form from the Persians who in turn passed the practice onto the Romans (Jones, 2000). Across the centuries but also the varying cultures, the social meanings of the earliest tattoos were as diverse as the cultures that wore them. They ranged from purely ornamental to ceremonial or religious in function (Caplan, 2000).

Academics such as historian Steve Gilbert and Sociologist Clinton Sanders have acknowledged that the Japanese have played a significant role in the practice of tattooing. Tattooing in Japanese culture dates back to the 5th Century AD and was seen to experience a resurgence in the 13th Century, mostly in the function of marking criminals and other socially undesirable individuals (Gilbert, 2000b; Sanders, 2009).

Evidence has also been found throughout the world of various types of pre 18th Century tattooing. Many diverse cultures from countries including the Marquesas Islands, China, Mongolia, Borneo, Aotearoa New Zealand and Central and South America, among others, have been found to practice tattooing during this time period (Gilbert, 2000a).

Tattoos through Rome and Greece were used to mark criminals and slaves and have been suggested by many historians to have functioned as a visible sign of their social role (Fisher, 2002). The word tattoo itself in Greek terminology was 'stigmata', which gave origin to the word stigma (Fisher, 2002). The negative views of tattoos within Roman and Greek societies were so dominant that tattoos were often used to inflict pain, torture or punishment on people.

The meaning and functions of tattoos would again change in time as Christianity increased in the Roman Empire. Tattoos would gradually stop being a form of punishment and would take form of a person's Christian beliefs, for example, a 'cross' or 'Christ's' name. Still people would associate the practice with paganism and eventually Pope Hadrian outlawed tattooing in 787AD (Gilbert, 2000a).

When first discovered by European explorers during the 18th/19th century, individuals wearing tattoos were characterised as being exotic savages. One such example of this was on a Tahitian man named Omai. Omai was a heavily tattooed man who was seen to become an exotic curiosity upon being transported to London. Up until this time tattoos were unheard of in London society and had only been discovered via explorers (DeMello, 2000). Subsequently, tattoos became a mark of masculinity, daring and an adventure for many Europeans (Te Awekotuku, 2004).

Modern Day Tattoos

The modern history of European/Western tattooing is seen to begin with Captain James Cook and his crew's observations of native tattoo practices amongst Tahitian people in the 1770's. Cook's crew aboard the British naval vessel Endeavour, received tattoos from the Tahitian people to remember their

journey. These tales of strange, faraway lands, were brought back to England along with the Tahitian man Omai, who was exhibited as an object of curiosity for upper class citizens to marvel at (DeMello, 2000; Caplan, 2000).

Tattooing by the 19th Century had increased dramatically as European society was “gripped by a tattoo craze.” Although it was discussed as the fashionable society, a number of tattoo studios were opened where wealthy Londoners, such as the Prince of Wales, Lady Randolph Churchill and the Duke of York, joined the tattooed upper class. This period found not only tattoos on the wealthy but also more crude and inexpensive tattoos could be found among criminals, convicts, sailors and dockers throughout Europe (DeMello, 2000).

The first tattoo studio in the United States opened in New York in 1846 by Martin Hildebrandt. Early tattoo artists in the United States relied on similar methods for tattooing that had been used for thousands of years. 1891 saw the development of the electric tattoo machine by Samuel O’Reily. This reshaped tattooing by making the process faster, cheaper and some suggested less painful. This period defined the present American aesthetic characterised by thick black lines, black shading and dabs of the colours red, blue and green (Gilbert, 2000b).

With the emergence of the tattoo machine and more simple pre-made flash designs, the tattoo industry capitalised on the popularity of tattoos. Soldiers and sailors set the trend for the general public and bolstered its popularity, however post World War II many realised their tattoos were not so accepted outside of the military. Tattoo studios were not as sanitary as they could have been, contributing to hepatitis outbreaks and combined with conservative religious cultures during this period, tattoos during this time diminished somewhat (Rubin, 1988b).

The 1960’s saw a re-emergence as tattoo artists reconceptualised their work. Sailor Jerry, among other artists, challenged prevailing practices being

influenced by Japanese tattoo traditions. Flash tattoos were no longer the only style as Jerry sought to create elaborate, stylistically and thematically consistent work that used an individual's entire body as a canvas (Rubin, 1988a). Over the next few decades tattoos in the United States, but also across the world, rose to new levels. In what some call the 'tattoo renaissance', tattoos were becoming increasingly indicative of personal beliefs and values, but also an inscription of the self. From the late 1960's onwards, reflections of individuality were expected in tattoos. Throughout the 1960's and 1970's, during the 'tattoo renaissance', tattoos were still being associated by wider society with 'deviant others' such as criminals, bikers and hippies. However, during this period, tattoos began to gain an increased widespread acceptance as an art form (Polhemus, 2004).

Similar to other social change movements, tattoo behaviours reflect aspects of society, such as the advancement of technology, family structures, demographic shifts, social and community structures, changes in fashion and popular culture that have been seen to change over time (Sweetman, 1999; Mun, Janigo & Johnson, 2010).

Tattoos have merged into popular culture, aided by technological advancement of tattooing and also by media promotion of television shows such as 'Best Ink', 'Miami Ink' and 'Tattoo Highway' which have been shown in a number of countries worldwide (Vail, 1999; Adams, 2009).

The prevalence of tattoos has increased over the past century throughout today's western culture but among other cultures also. Surveys have estimated that in the United States, as many as 20% of all people have a tattoo with suburban females being the fastest growing tattooed demographic (Sever, 2003; Braverman, 2012). In 1997 the tattoo industry was reported to be one of the top growing businesses in the United States and since then has continued to rise (Vail,

1999, Braverman, 2012). In the early 1990's young North American women started to use the art form of tattooing as a way to challenge and subvert traditional beauty ideals (Pitts, 2003).

The popularity of tattoos in western society and the mass spread throughout other societies has not detracted from their function in indigenous societies where tattoos remain as icons for identity and community affiliation (Nikora, Rua & Te Awekotuku, 2007). While there are many other forms of body art, such as scarification, sub-dermal implants, branding or piercings, tattooing has become the most recognised and established form of body art in the west (Pitts, 2003).

Anthropologist John Rush (2005) stated that the spreading of body alteration, particularly tattoos, might suggest a natural tendency to identify and codify, using the body as a canvas. Tattoos are seen to capture cultural and personal ideas as well as beliefs on the skin, which is acknowledged by some as the original parchment. Rush (2005) emphasises that tattoos can be seen as markings of what an individual or a culture values and determines important. Rubin (1988a) further states that instead of tattoos being considered a "primitive" behaviour, they could be interpreted as uniquely human and seen as a mark of civilisation.

People attribute the greatest sense of self to their own physical bodies (Prelinger, 1959). Thus it can be assumed that tattoos may be strongly connected to one's sense of self as tattoos are permanent additions to one's body (Shelton & Peters, 2006). Participants in Sweetman's (1999) research acknowledged that after getting tattooed, their sense of uniqueness and self-confidence increased as their minds had completed an act of self-creation. In a further study, it was argued that tattoos are a form of visual communication of one's self and that individuals noted

their tattoos served as a basic mark of self-identification and a documentary of the self (Kosut, 2000).

Functions and Stereotypes of Tattoos

Wearing tattoos has withstood many changes in meaning, interpretation and judgement throughout its history (Gilbert, 2000a). Tattoos in the 18th Century were classified as vulgar and worn by “freaks” to opposite views where they were worn by the upper class throughout Europe. The following century saw tattooing lose acceptance as an upper class practice as it became associated with criminals, sailors, gang members and prostitutes (Chinchilla, 1997; De Mello, 2000; Mifflin, 1997; Adams, 2009). The early 20th Century saw tattoos used as a social control tool. Creating a negative shift in social ideology during World War II, Nazi Germany used tattoos as a means of controlling and stigmatising the bodies of Jews, homosexuals and gypsies (Fisher, 2002; MacCormack, 2006). Such social marginalisation was only seen to decrease towards the end of the 20th Century. Tattooing has since slowly regained social acceptance (Atkinson, 2003b; De Mello, 2000; Fisher, 2002).

The envisioned ‘tattoo renaissance’ of today is not a rare, isolated phenomenon in history as attitudes towards tattoos and tattooing have continually shifted back and forth from positive to negative throughout its long history (Atkinson, 2003b).

Historically, tattoos have served a large range of functions, both in an individual and social context for those persons wearing them. By 2000BC, evidence indicates that the practice of tattooing had reached the Pacific Islands via India, China and Japan (Caplan, 2000). Functions for tattoos during this period are believed to have served a ritualistic purpose, including devotion to a particular

god, achievement gained during battles, symbols of rank and indicators of tribal affiliation (Gilbert, 2000b; Schildkrout, 2004; Rush 2005).

Throughout its more than 5000-year history, the motivations behind tattooing one's self vary across time and location with tattoos possessing specific meanings within particular cultures (DeMello, 2000; Gilbert, 2000a). Motivations over time have included marking one's identity, assigning markers of social status such as tribal affiliation, family genealogy and other social indicators, as well as more individualistic motivations such as aesthetic enhancement or personal distinctiveness. Historical tattoos have also served as class markers around various cultures at differing time periods all over the world. In some cultures, for example among the Romans, Greeks and for a short period of time the English, aristocracy tattoos functioned as an indicator of high ranking status or notability. While in other cultures, such as the French, Japanese and Germans, the practice was punitive and was only seen to be used on criminals, slaves or individuals with disease (Gilbert, 2000a; Grosz, 1990). These vastly differing functions of social status were seen to vary not only amongst differing cultural groups from differing locations in the world but also at times within an individual context which was dependent on where they were in the historical era (Caplan, 2000).

Tattoos as a mark of social status and rank, appeared throughout multiple cultures including the Greeks and Romans. Contrary to this, as mentioned earlier, tattooing was also termed "stigma" and used for slaves and prisoners. Through the following centuries, many tattoos continued to serve these same functions. Although tattooing was practiced in the British Isles and other western cultures long before Cook's adventures to Polynesia, it was seen to change when he returned to Europe from his second circumnavigation of the world. His crewmen were wearing accounts of Polynesian tattoos but Omai (tattooed native of Tahiti)

was also onboard Cook's ship when they arrived. Initially, Europeans who were tattooed were comprised primarily of soldiers, sailors and adventurers who had travelled to lands faraway including Aotearoa New Zealand, Tahiti and others (Gilbert, 2000a; Atkinson, 2003b).

The ranging differences and wide inconsistency serves as a reminder that tattooing, like all other symbolic forms of communication, is dependent on historical location and time. Time and place provide specific messages that must be interpreted within specific social systems of organisation and meaning (Grosz, 1990). Mark Gustafson (2000) described tattooing as a universal and long-standing phenomenon with a long history of functions, including punitive, religious, magical, decorative and as an indication of status, occupation, ownership or identity.

As a social medium, both historically and present, tattoos have displayed various group memberships. Whilst the range of groups over history has changed, they have been seen to include religious, social and political affiliations. Tattoos traditionally worn by the Haida (between British Columbia and Alaska) and the Māori people of Aotearoa New Zealand, were seen as both elaborate and extensive with the design and pattern very rich in meaning, creating a carefully created image of identity (Gilbert, 2000b). Tattoos of this nature were unique to each individual, often documenting the person's life, indicating characteristics such as family ancestry and would often take place over the course of days, weeks or sometimes months (Atkinson, 2003b).

Tattoos could also indicate particular skills or abilities of the wearer such as a "warrior" or "healer". Throughout cultures, including the Kayen, Osage, Huron and the Maya, warriors would become tattooed to commemorate their achievements in battle. These designs were specifically placed to signify

achievements within that culture (Gilbert, 2000a; Rush, 2005). For decorative or personal adornment functions, tattoos have been used to beautify both female and male bodies throughout many cultures for thousands of years (Rush, 2005). Seen as an enhancement of their body, it was commonly used to attract sexual partners (Gilbert, 2000a; Rush, 2005).

One of the most written about functions of tattoos throughout history has to do with its part in ritual. Transitional rites in particular, that were seen to move the wearer from one status to another, have been a prominent aspect of social life for thousands of years. Such rites of passage have been documented among differing cultures all over the world (Gilbert, 2000b).

Evidence has been found dating back to 500BC on both male and female mummies from Pazyryk tombs displaying tattoos considered to be part of a ritual rite of passage marking the transition from adolescence into adulthood (Rush, 2005; Gilbert, 2000b). The tattoos not only aided the wearer in recognising and accepting their new status but also their community. The ceremonies were used as part of a ritualised cleansing process often incorporating physical pain and emotional and/or psychological suffering (Rush, 2005).

The intent in rites of passage was considered to be about removing a former status and the behaviour that was associated with it, allowing a cathartic alteration of one's self or a 'rebirth' into their new status in their community (Featherstone, Hepworth & Turner, 1991).

Rites of passage, although still practiced by a wide range of cultures in the 21st century, are not as common or may not be perceived as important in much of mainstream Western society. Modern social changes such as self-reliance, disconnected family groups and religious traditions have been a few factors called into question for this decrease (Rush, 2005).

Alongside these social changes is the development and increasingly pervasive presence of electronic media across the world. These factors were considered to have contributed to a shift in the interpretation and engagement in tattooing for individuals, particularly modern Western tattooing that began with the ‘tattooing renaissance’ of the 1970’s. Historically, for many cultures across the world, tattooing had been a community-based or social practice whereas modern tattooing may have become increasingly associated as an act of personal choice incorporating a voluntary act of the wearer’s personal identity combined with personal meanings (Rush, 2005).

Western tattooing in modern times has been more frequently perceived as generally directed towards the self or individualism, as opposed to the historical roots of the art form as a ritualised act incorporating both the community and the individual. Given these points, the importance of recognising the complex and sometimes overlapping layers of meaning between both social and personal, will be crucial as one considers the motivations and functions of tattooing among individuals in today’s society as they engage with the multiple and complex social, emotional and physical transitions that are in their everyday lives (Cortez, 2013; Rush, 2005).

Over the last century there has been extensive research and analysis across a multitude of professional fields including psychology, anthropology and sociology, among others, looking into the motivations of modern tattooing (Cortez, 2013). Opinions and classifications have varied widely and vary according to author and discipline. Some authors have suggested that all motivations can be traced to one evolutionary reason: the perpetuation of an individual’s genes (Carmen, Guitar & Dillon, 2012). Others have stated that there are a wide variety of reasons why individuals are becoming tattooed that are often

influenced by personal demographic factors such as gender, age, subcultural identifications, socioeconomic background and sexual preferences (Kang & Jones, 2007; Nikora & Te Awekotuku, 2002).

Kang and Jones (2007) suggest that while there is no single explanation as to why the practice of tattooing is increasing, researchers have found that individuals are seen to use tattoos to express who they are, what they have lived through and how an individual sees themselves in relation to others around them and their social worlds. Research has also suggested that people do not have full control of the meaning of their tattoos outside of their own thoughts and beliefs as the social contexts with which they live in, can shape the responses and interpretations of their own tattoos by others (Kang & Jones, 2007; Rua, 2003).

To date, research from diverse fields have produced a large body of work relating to the reasons behind the engagement with contemporary tattoo (Cortez, 2013). Wohlrab, Stahl and Kappeler (2007) identified 10 motivational categories for both contemporary tattooing and body piercing including individuality, personal narrative, fashion and art, beauty, cultural tradition, addiction, personal endurance, group affiliations and commitment, resistance, sexual motivation, and cultural tradition and spirituality. Other studies in feminist studies, sociology and psychology for example, have examined the motivations and rates of engagement in particular groups such as athletes, university students, military groups, ethnic groups, women and others (Armstrong & McConnell, 1994; Nikora & Te Awekotuku, 2002; Armstrong, Murphy, Sallee & Watson, 2000; Ceniceros, 1998; Fisher, 2002; Greif, Hewitt & Armstrong, 1999; Mun, Janigo & Johnson, 2010; Post & Hull, 2012).

The majority of previous tattoo research has focused on the art form of tattooing through varying times throughout history, the health risks associated

with tattooing and some interpersonal variables relating to individuals with tattoos (Lin, 2002; Atkinson, 2001; Sweetman, 1999).

The majority of individuals with tattoos have more than one reason for getting them, which are seen to vary due to differing contexts and times in their life (Cortez, 2013; DeMello, 2000). The practice of tattooing has become part of mainstream pop culture and has seen an exponential increase in popularity in the past few decades, rising not only in numbers but in the broad range of social classes where it has become incorporated into the movement of mainstream cultural expression (Nikora & Te Awekotuku, 2002; DeMello, 2000). Despite past connotations in recent history with criminality and lower-class status, the direct link between deviance and tattoos has been seen to weaken (despite some claims to the contrary) with today's popular culture, particularly among young people (Koch, Roberts, Armstrong & Owen, 2010). This is suggested to be because the art form of tattooing has become diffused across a range of gender, class and ethnic categories due to increasing technological advancements, the media, easier access to tattoos, a heightened popularity among modern day pop culture icons, including athletes, musicians, and the development of reality television shows featuring tattoo artists such as 'Best Ink' (DeMello, 2000; Caplan, 2000; Sanders 2009).

While some critics discuss tattooing as a form of self-mutilation and in some cases this may be true, the stories and self-described experiences of most tattooed individuals seem to contradict this idea (Atkinson, 2003a). While most people who engage in self-harm such as cutting are ashamed of and attempt to hide their scars, most tattooed individuals see their tattoos as a source of pride and works of art that empower them, even individuals who may be hesitant to display them in public (Kang & Jones, 2007).

Tattoos and other body modifications have become increasingly popular in the last few decades, especially among young people. With this increase in popularity, individuals have questioned whether body modifications should be classified as self-injury (Sutton, 2007). Some have argued that any form of modification to the body is self-injury, however, others have made clear distinctions between the two (Lader, 2006).

Findings from recent research suggest that body modifications, especially tattoos, are rarely undertaken with the intention of injury or hurting oneself. Reasons for tattooing oneself have been found to be more than just for aesthetic purposes (Cortez, 2013). Reasons such as improving self-image or to look different, can be linked to aesthetic functions however contrastingly to self-injury, individuals more often than not wear and display their tattoos with pride. This is different to self-injury behaviour, which is rooted in shame and feeling alone, thus the scars and injuries are most often hidden (Sutton, 2007).

Self-injury behaviour is normally inflicted by the individual themselves, whereas tattoos are typically conducted by someone else. Although this subject has not been widely discussed in the literature and most opinions have come from second-hand opinions, one must give weight to and become interested in what tattooed individuals have said (Lader, 2006; Shalley, 2014).

Sutton (2007) provides multiple thoughts from individuals who have engaged in both self-injury and tattoos. Some examples are provided below:

“I had a tattoo done when I decided to stop self-injuring...” (p. 86).

“I do think that body modification is used by some individuals as socially acceptable forms of self-injury, but I doubt this is true for everyone” (p. 86).

“A tattoo or piercing can offer a huge release of whatever is kept inside you. I am always more peaceful after I get work done on my body. I have also covered some of my bigger, uglier scars (from self-injury) with tattoos. And now they are beautiful” (p. 87).

Comparisons and beliefs, although very different, may continue to be made for tattoos to be considered self-injury, along with previous stereotypes of criminality and deviancy, however more recent research has found contrasting views which are seen to challenge more historical opinions and provide a number of positive functions for the wearers (Shalley, 2014).

Sutton (2007) acknowledged links for how body modifications may relate to self-injury and how they may provide a means of self-healing for previous self-injury behaviour. She emphasised the following:

“...body modifications maybe used as a way of avoiding self-injury; they maybe used to cover up old scars from self-injury; they maybe used as a healthier and more socially acceptable method to self-injury; they may arouse similar emotions to those experienced from self-injury, for example, an internal high or sense of relief; they may satisfy the need to feel pain, thus reducing feelings of depersonalisation (feeling unconnected, feeling unreal) similar to those experienced through self-injury by some; and urges for body modifications may replicate urges for self-injury” (p. 88).

Throughout the history of tattooing, one common function that has been discussed and critiqued by many is the notion that tattoos can serve as a mechanism for self-healing or healing more generally. Previous research from modern day studies and ancient findings has looked into tattoos ability to heal,

both physically and psychologically (Cortez, 2013; Shalley, 2014; Gentry & Alderman, 2007). The therapeutic function of tattooing has been briefly touched upon in this chapter, however, it will be explored further in the coming chapter 'Self-healing and Tattoos'.

Tattoos in Aotearoa New Zealand

The earliest form of tattooing in Aotearoa New Zealand is known as tā moko, which is a traditional and sacred Māori tattoo. The story of tā moko is seen to have many beginnings, dating back to the earliest days of Māori settlement in Aotearoa New Zealand (Te Awekotuku, Nikora, Rua & Karapu, 2007). Tā refers to the process of application of the design and moko refers to the product or outcome (Te Awekotuku et al., 2007). It has been acknowledged to have diverged from Polynesian tattooing and progressed into a unique art form that belonged to Aotearoa New Zealand (King, 2008).

Tā moko is considered different to tattooing by Māori people because of the different processes and meanings associated to and within the art form. The rituals and sacredness involved speaks to Māori culture and the importance of tradition, beliefs and values (Gilbert, 2000a; Te Awekotuku et al., 2007). The term moko was traditionally seen through the art form applied to men's faces, while kauae was seen to refer to moko on the chins of women. Throughout the history of moko, there were other specific terms for tattooing other parts of the body, however, eventually moko became to be used for Māori tattooing in general. Tattoo is seen as the English version of the Tahitian term tatu. Tattoo was historically seen as a tradition involving the marking of the skin by placing the pigment underneath the skin, whereas tā moko was seen as the practice of scarring and marking the individual's skin to reflect their whakapapa (genealogy) (Gilbert, 2000a; King, 2008).

One Māori mythology has suggested that tattooing came about through a love affair between a young man by the name of Mataora and a young princess of the underworld by the name of Niwareka. The two lived happily together until one day Mataora became jealous and angry enough with Niwareka that he hit her.

Niwareka fled back to her people of the underworld. Mataora being distressed and feeling heartbroken, followed her into the underworld, but not before dressing in his finest clothes and painting his already handsome face. Once Mataora reached the underworld he was so exhausted that his clothing no longer looked fresh and the pigments on his face had begun to run. Niwareka's family were seen to have beautiful patterned artwork on their bodies that did not run and seemingly lasted forever. Mataora, despite being embarrassed and angry, remained humble and began to express his sorrow and begged forgiveness of Niwareka and her father Uetonga. Niwareka and her family forgave Mataora and shared their knowledge, teaching him the art of tā moko. Mataora, with his new skills, returned to the world of light with Niwareka, sharing his beautiful new skills of tā moko with the rest of the world (Te Awekotuku et al., 2007).

The complex patterned designs of moko were literally carved into the skin using uhi (tattoo chisels) to both the body and face of men and women. The power of moko could not be denied with the lines of the moko rich in meaning. They were seen to transform the wearer, defining their identity, displaying their whakapapa (genealogy), ancestry and the essence of their identity (Johansson, 1994). Moko is seen to symbolically connect an individual with their ancestors and lineage, which is why it is considered a very sacred process surrounded by strict tapu (taboo) and protocol (Starzecka, 1996; King, 2008).

As mentioned in the story above with Niwareka and Mataora, the art form of moko reaching the world of light, was a sign of reconciliation between divinity and man. It was seen as a gift from the gods, which is another reason it is considered a sacred act (Hiroa, 1982). It has been stated that Māori chiefs could differentiate between each line of their moko and re-draw their moko from their memory (Gilbert, 2000b).

The art of moko was and is seen as unique in appearance, design and significance (Robley, 1998). Initially there were two methods involved when creating tā moko: one method involved carving the flesh away and placing the pigment inside the grooves which presented deep dark lines. The second initial method was seen to be similar to the processes Polynesian artists used which involved inserting the pigment underneath the skin using a sharp-toothed comb (Gell, 1993, pp. 246-247). In recent times, new technologies have surfaced and moko is now also created using tattoo machines with needles which has become popular in many cultures across the world (Johansson, 1994; Nicholas, 1994).

Previous reports have suggested that the art form of tā moko is estimated between 700-800 years old (King, 2008). Houhora in Northland and Wairau Bar are two of Aotearoa New Zealand's oldest archaeological sites where ancient moko tools have been discovered. Tā moko bone chisels, bearing similar resemblance to ancient tools used in Samoa and the Marquesas, were excavated from these ancient sites with an estimated time range somewhere in the eleventh century (King, 2008).

In recent times, the moko just as the Māori culture itself, has made a resurgence among both men and women. It has been noted that the moko, especially the facial moko, became very sparse during the time period estimated between the 1860's and the mid 19th century (King, 2008).

Over the past two to three decades, there has been an increase in both the number of Māori wearing moko but also other cultures wearing other forms of tattoos throughout Aotearoa New Zealand (Nikora et al., 2007; King, 2008). For Māori as indigenous people, the resurgence in the art form of moko challenges and disproves the myth of a 'dying race' (Nikora et al., 2007).

Gilbert (2000b) has suggested that the decrease in Māori tattooing can be attributed to the loss of Māori lands, cultural degradation through this process and being forced into a European way of living. Gell (1993) agreed with Gilbert but also acknowledged that the moko was a part of Māori social structure and when the Europeans forced their ways of living on Māori, this social structure disappeared as did the moko. Blackburn (1999) acknowledges that the growth of Christianity during this period also links to the decline of the moko. He emphasised that the missionaries showed disapproval of this art form describing it as a “heathen practice”. Interestingly during this time, Christian converts would mark their bodies with their newly baptismal names which emphasised the cultural significance of tattoos in general.

There are many differing reasons suggesting multiple causes involved in the moko becoming less and less. All of these reasons, however, have been directly associated and linked to the arrival of the Europeans in Aotearoa New Zealand and the resulting colonisation, leading to differing political, economic and religious structures (Blackburn, 1999; Gell, 1993; Robley, 1998). It has been noted that despite the moko becoming increasingly rare around this time, females still wore moko throughout this period and into the 1950’s (Blackburn, 1999).

Fascination with Māori tattooing and artwork is evident through the large amount of books available and the depictions of moko show that the fascination still exists. Although the writings and pictorial presentations display beautiful images and interpretations some fail to recognise the political, economic and cultural battles faced by Māori and the fight for cultural self-determination (Camphausen, 1997).

The impact of colonisation has seen many of Māori’s taonga (treasures) taken to various museums and differing locations around the world. Moko is seen

as a link to Māori ancestors and to the past, which portrays the importance to the continuation and promotion of not only the art form itself but also to the culture (Neleman, 1999; Palmer & Mervyn, 2004).

Urbanised Māori in the 1970's searched for powerful symbols of ethnic identity rediscovering the moko. Neleman (1999) described this time as a new generation of moko acknowledging its importance in Māori identity and cultural resilience. Wearing moko has been stated to install a sense of belonging and pride to the individual and can be intimately related to personal and social identities that are linked to psychosocial and personified processes such as wearing ones ancestors on their skin that assist or hinder how wearers navigate their individual worlds (Breakwell, 1986; Tyler, Brome & Williams, 1991). Within Māori families and communities, the moko can be a mark of conscious choice and critical reflection and is seen as a sign of an ongoing engagement with decolonization (Nikora et al., 2007).

As the moko is seen to be once again resurgent in Aotearoa New Zealand, so to are the practices of other forms of tattooing. Tattoo artists are incorporating Maori influence with European and Pasifika designs (tatau) among others. We are seeing individuals with Māori and Pakeha ancestry incorporating both sides into their tattoos/moko. With moko, tatau and Pakeha tattoo designs being regarded as the three most dominant tattoo cultures in Aotearoa New Zealand, the evidence of combining approaches into individual's tattoos is growing (King, 2008).

Nikora and Te Awekotuku's (2002) study revealed seven themes related to why individuals in Aotearoa New Zealand tattoo themselves. These included identity, desire-design or wanting a particular design, to mark a significant event, group association, to mark a significant other, youth or not thinking through the process clearly and image to look a certain way. Their results suggested that

becoming tattooed could be linked to an expression of personal identity that more often than not, is related to cultural or social group belonging or membership. Although cultural tattoos were associated with negative descriptors, they were far outweighed by more positive descriptors such as pride, identity and group belonging. Contemporary day wearers of both moko and other forms of tattoo are likely to reveal positive responses to the resurgence of moko as an art form, but also tattoos in the modern day (Nikora & Te Awekotuku, 2002).

In recent times, tā moko has been linked to a process of self-healing and seen as a type of therapy. Speaking at a 2014 hui in Wellington, Psychiatrist, Dr Diana Rangihuna suggested that the art of applying moko to an individual can be therapeutic (Radio New Zealand News, 2014).

A survey conducted by the New Zealand Herald found that out of 750 respondents, 18.2% had at least one tattoo. It also found that slightly more females than males had tattoos and 55% of those who had tattoos had received it in the last ten-years, confirming the resurgence of tattoos in the modern day (Booker, 2011).

Pihama (2005) acknowledged that the Internet is currently increasing accessibility and communication regarding tattoos and specifically the representation of the moko as a cultural art form and expression of identity. The wearer and viewer of the tattoo interact in the same physical and public space. Bodies, as well as cultures, are never seen to be static as they change and adapt in accordance with their environment, be it political, social or physical.

The modern day Māori cultural renaissance, which combined with the western tattooing renaissance, began in the 1960's and 1970's and has seen the revival of the moko and western tattooing (King, 2008). While still considered a sacred process, it is also more common for non-Māori artists to practice designs

similar to moko but also for non-Māori to wear similar patterns to moko, which has been called kirituhi (drawn skin). Kirituhi is considered a Māori style tattoo either made by a non-Māori tattooist or made for a non-Māori wearer that bears similar resemblance to the moko (Te Awekotuku et al., 2007). It is no longer uncommon to see the unique and detailed art form whether on the legs, arms, or on the face of wearers. A combination of factors have been attributed to this such as an increasing amount of individuals wearing tattoos, the influence of social media, the popularity among athletes and ‘celebrities,’ and the renaissance of cultural and a greater understanding of individual and social identity (Pihama, 2005).

The popularity of tattoos in Western society has not been seen to detract from their function and sacredness in indigenous societies. They still remain icons for identity and community affiliation (Nikora et al., 2007). Throughout Aotearoa New Zealand the popularity of tattoos among wearers continues to grow and has been associated with Western popularity. The practice of tattooing has seen studios open all over the country and artists in popular demand. Varying styles and influences from countries around the world enable individuals to select whatever they would like to represent or want to wear, with the guidance of their artist (Nicholas, 1994; Gilbert, 2000b).

Self-healing and Tattoo

Self-healing has been described as the process of accessing your own inner powers to create better health. It is the process of recovery (most commonly from trauma and psychological disturbances) which is carried out by the individual through their own motivations and instinct (Fashing, 2008). Changes that have been linked to self-healing include decrease in stress, improved sleep, feeling more relaxed, improvements in emotional tensions such as depression, anger and other emotions and an increase in social relationships/activity. Self-healing incorporates multiple aspects of a person including spirituality, physical, mental and social (Rankin, 2013).

Self-healing has been described as a journey where the person travelling not only finds their destination but also enjoys the accomplishments along the way. The process of self-healing has been found to be an integral part of a person's spiritual existence. It is a process that can be practiced consciously with self-awareness, resources and the help of professionals, or unconsciously without awareness but a willingness and motivation to improve on aspects of oneself. Some researchers have compared self-healing to the human body's healing capabilities. Some physical wounds are seen to heal so well they don't leave a scar. Self-healing involves both healing from the inside out to the outside in (Rankin, 2013).

It is suggested that in the practice of psychology the client holds the majority of the power to whether their well-being improves or not. Despite being guided by professionals, the clients motivations and inner processes such as thinking and emotions, are key to success during therapy. The support of the professional is crucial, but without the engagement and willingness of the client it is highly unlikely that they will improve in any way (Bohart, 2000).

Classifying traditional healing has been described as a complex task as the diversity makes categorisation difficult (Shankar, Saravanan & Jacob, 2006). Struthers, Eschiti and Patchell (2004) use the term 'traditional healing' instead of 'medicine' as they state that traditional healing is an ancient and complex holistic approach practised by indigenous people all over the world that acknowledges the importance of indigenous traditions and beliefs around the healing process. It is considered critical that consideration to these traditions and beliefs are acknowledged as indigenous people have used their own approaches to healing that date back to prehistoric times (Struthers et al., 2004).

The term traditional healing encompasses the cultural beliefs, knowledge and practices as well as acknowledging the variety of healing methods involved. Traditional as a word, is often used to identify indigenous people who may have a distinct religion, culture, language, beliefs as well as economic, social and political systems. Indigenous people often maintain usage of native resources as well as ancestral environments and history (Gracey & King, 2009).

The notion of 'healing' in traditional healing systems refers to a large variety of healing practices. Although originally the focus was on herbal remedies and spiritual techniques, traditional healing systems can include various methods (Abdou, 2007; Portman & Garrett, 2006; Harley, 2006). The healing practices within varying indigenous cultures are seen to differ, but are all based on knowledge accumulated from their culture's history (Horrigan, 2005; Marks, 2006). Traditional healing is seen as a holistic way of life, collective and spiritual and expressed both through the land and ceremonies (Hill, 2003).

Indigenous healing practices incorporate a range of interventions from rituals to faith healing, herbal remedies, therapeutic physical touch and spiritual practices (Marks, 2006). Spirituality is suggested throughout literature to be

intrinsic to all aspects of traditional healing systems. This is due to the widespread acknowledgment and description of spiritual methods and techniques involved with traditional healing (Joshi, 2004; Hewson, 1998; Koss-chioino, 2006).

Traditional indigenous healing is noted throughout literature for being a holistic form of treatment and healing where the spiritual and physical worlds are interrelated (Weigand, 1999; Marks, 2006).

The holistic nature of healing is explained in the following quote:

“The concept of healing holistically is a fluid and dynamic process for an individual or community. Healing holistically starts at any point in life and includes following a cultural path (losing and regaining culture), regaining balance (physically, spiritually, emotionally, and mentally), and sharing in the circle of life (respectful interactions with others). This process does not have an end point, but rather it continues throughout the life span and becomes part of living. The process of healing holistically contributes to an enhanced sense of wellbeing through the use of traditional healing practices, which is “empowering and transforming” (Hunter, Logan, Barton & Goulet, 2004, p. 21).

The idea that traditional healing is holistic is reported in other literature stating indigenous healing involves a balance of the spirit, body and mind with the wholeness of the person being the focus (Struthers & Eschiti, 2004; Hunter et al., 2004).

One study that focused on understanding how Māori people perceive illness, health and healing found that wairua (spirit) was an essential element to the healing process. Mcleod (1999) suggested that spirituality gifts a high sensory perception that is far beyond the normal range of human senses. He stated that

often divine insight and guidance combined with being able to focus on inner feelings and knowing could also be achieved by individuals experiencing spirituality through healing practices (Meleod, 1999).

The present days see Māori health described as a holistic set of components that are seen to aid in the wellbeing of Māori people (Durie, 2001). The Whare Tapa Wha model of Māori health discusses health being represented by the four walls of a whare/house represented by a persons wairua (spirit), tinana (body), hinengaro (mind or thinking) and whānau (family). These four elements are described as the essential elements of health for Māori people (Durie, 2001).

The Māori view of health, wellbeing and healing is seen to involve both internal and external worlds where health involves a spiritual, physical, psychological and family wellbeing but also a balance among individuals and their environment such as natural resources, land and other people around them (Tapsell, Thompson & Hughes, 2008).

It is important in Māori health and in traditional healing systems to preserve and protect the cultural traditions behind traditional healing and to preserve the healing knowledge of their ancestors but also to ensure the continuity of the culture itself, which is seen to be embedded into healing processes (Mark, 2012).

Mark's (2012) thesis revealed several underlying philosophies of traditional Māori healing. These philosophies included: that healing is a continuous process of life, it is a construction of healing through the relationship of client and healer, it identifies the importance and power of emotions to create or destroy health, it aims to facilitate change for the client and incorporates the tīpuna (ancestors) as the wairua that conduct the healing.

Mark (2012) interviewed Māori healers to draw insight into what they considered to be critical elements of their healing practice. One healer found that one of the most important elements for healing to take effect was for the individual to have a strong sense of self and to focus on self-awareness and self-knowledge.

When describing what this healer thought was the underlying theory of rongoa Māori (traditional healing system of the indigenous Māori people in Aotearoa New Zealand), she acknowledged that it is whakawhanaugatanga (establishing relationships), relationships and whakapapa (geneology) that provide a sense of where one comes from. The symbol this healer chose to represent healing was the physical sense of touch which enabled the individual to connect to the process of healing through their body.

Another healer interviewed believed that Māori could be strengthened by including their ancestors in the healing process and that this would make them strong. She stated that there were no boundaries to healing and that all things could be a possibility if an open mind and true intentions were important. She also referred to the importance of having her ancestors with her by wearing her grandmother's earrings which was seen to represent healing for her and was also seen to give her strength from her tīpuna.

The last healer described the most important aspect of healing for him as the use of stories and legends to illustrate Māori philosophy. He described one healing journey that incorporated a poutama pattern (step like pattern) in tukutuku (art panels) in the process of better well-being. He shared that he used stories of Māori gods to illustrate to people how they could take personal responsibility for their actions. He also acknowledged that conscious action required thinking about different choices and that any choice was considered a good choice (Mark, 2012).

Each indigenous culture but also varying other cultures, have their own specific traditional healing processes. Acknowledgement of these differing practices alongside Western approaches, may allow for a more complete process to healing (Janes, 1999). By looking at traditional cultural beliefs and values surrounding traditional healing, it emphasises that indigenous knowledge systems should be privileged but also that health treatments and healing for indigenous people should incorporate core values and beliefs (Janes, 1999).

This study aims to maintain the cultural integrity of traditional health and healing systems which are based on the theory that cultural values and beliefs around health, illness and healing are just as important as the healing practices.

Today, tattoos are thought to give individuals the means to work out their personal psychological and emotional difficulties on their bodies. This is achieved by firstly, tattooing personal, meaningful images or artwork on their bodies and secondly, by interpreting those images with a therapeutic framework (Rubin, 1988). Previous writings about tattoos have reported that people live their lives through their bodies and in this process their bodies become sites of negotiation over the meanings an individual creates for him/herself but also the meanings others may have for us (Nikora et al., 2007).

For some individuals, tattoos are purely decorative but for many they are heavily symbolic. In Miffins (1997) book “Bodies of Subversion: A Secret History of Women and Tattoo” she highlights an example of one of her interviewees and how transformative to her life tattoos were or at least how much they felt like it.

“I have a picture of me taken before and after” says Rasner, “and I can see the change in my eyes in those pictures. It’s a feeling of having taken

something essentially negative and turned it into something beautiful”
(Mifflin, 1997, p. 3).

This example illustrates the influence of the wearers tattoo and how influential and transformative it was for her in reclaiming her body after an abusive relationship. The process is transformative for her physical body but also for her mind and how she viewed her body and also how she viewed herself. The trauma experienced is displayed in her tattoo and envisioned in a new meaning symbolic of strength and recreating herself via her body, her thoughts and her emotions (Mifflin, 1997).

Tattoo enthusiasts alike seem to prefer to rework their bodies through tattooing, engaging in what could be considered innovative self-help (Atkinson, 2004). The act of tattoos have been seen to result in changes in how individuals have viewed themselves and also caused behavioural change. Tattooed individuals have stated that as a result of their tattoo(s) they gained confidence and also experienced changes in their self-perceptions (Jung, Janigo & Johnson, 2012). Motivations including personal catharsis, rites of passage as well as the expression of personal values and experiences, are also mentioned frequently in the literature regarding individual healing (Vale & Juno, 1989).

Tattoos throughout the past and present have served many functions. Jane Caplan (2000) acknowledged that nearly all cultures had practiced tattooing at one time or another. As mentioned earlier, the earliest evidence of tattooing was discovered in 1991 (by hikers) on the Italian Alps. ‘Otzi the Iceman’, had 57 geometric tattoos constructed using a pigment derived from soot. In examining the 57 tattoos from his preserved body, researchers discovered that around 80% of the tattoos overlapped with classical Chinese acupuncture points which were used to treat the many medical conditions he suffered from. The locations of the

tattooed symbols and dots on his body corresponded with areas of strain-induced degeneration and pain which suggests they may have been used to diminish pain and were essentially therapeutic (Pabst et al, 2009).

Psychotherapist Shalley (2014) emphasises the similarities between the process of acupuncture and tattooing. Acupuncture is thought to restore health by shifting or removing energy blockages in a person's body. Traditionally, the process of tattooing involved cutting designs into a person's skin with animal bones, sticks or a sharp point set with a wooden handle. Modern times have seen the electric tattoo gun developed which inserts ink into the skin via the use of single or multiple needles. Acupuncture practitioners believe that through the process of acupuncture on a psycho-emotional level, can access emotions, attitudes and beliefs via subtle energies which release any negative grasp on the body where the client may be storing this pattern (Shalley, 2014). Denis Willmont (1998) stated that acupuncture can adjust the subtle energy so the emotion, for example repressed anger, can be released. With modern science confirming a mind-body connection, one must consider if tattooing can have a similar therapeutic effect as acupuncture. It was theorised through findings on the body of 'Otzi' that through mechanisms of pain, relieving stress, energies and other mechanisms such as the living memory of the process of tattooing, acupuncture and tattoos may share similar healing mechanisms, helping individuals achieve varying levels of healing both physically, emotionally and psychologically. Acupuncture has been shown to have therapeutic and healing effects on both emotional and mental difficulties such as anxiety, depression and trauma (Shalley, 2014).

Rush (2005) and Caplan (2000) have suggested that tattooing maybe an example of a mind/body process. The mind/body process is seen as a uniquely

human process where bodies are coded, labelled or categorised via a symbolic artistic method. Mayer (2007) who is a psychotherapist, uses the term 'bodymind' to highlight that the mind is indistinguishable from the body. He incorporates the body and the healing power of life energy with the mind in his practice with clients suggesting that the body is an important agent in self-healing. These authors theorise that an idea, belief or behaviour is constructed by an individual through analogies in nature then mentally transferred from the 'outside' (an event in nature or an image) to 'inside their self' (their thoughts) back to the 'outside' (in the form of an artistic representation) where they would need assistance (or tools) to place the symbol or thought back 'into'/or 'onto' the body such as a tattoo beneath the skin. These suggestions represent a large difference concerning the mentality behind why individuals become tattooed from the popular 'consumerist' approach that has been described by other authors (DeMello, 2000).

The psychological process of re-organising past trauma through tattoos enables individuals to develop new thoughts, beliefs and ways of living in regards to what they may have experienced in the past. The new thoughts and emotions attached to the tattoo(s) is acknowledged to serve as a positive reminder of multiple factors, for example, resilience, strength and transformation (Rubin, 1988b).

Two previous studies on Māori healing have found that Māori healers suggested that individual's emotions held or trapped in their body, may develop into illness or disease, especially when they are held in for a long time (McLeod, 1999; Mark, 2008). This finding was believed to be due to certain emotional blockages that were stored as negative feelings that could originate from childhood. The two studies also believed that this could be due to the Māori belief in a mind/body connection that emphasised negative thoughts as powerful

because they may manifest into reality and have a negative effect on an individual's physical and emotional wellbeing (McLeod, 1999; Mark, 2008).

As discussed earlier, tattoos in some cultures may have been primarily medicinal and/or therapeutic. In some cultures, including ancient Chinese, the Aleut, the St Lawrence Islanders and the Egyptians, tattoos were used not only to decrease or diminish a person's pain but also for promoting endurance, creating an anaesthetic effect and detoxification. For other cultures, including some originating in Japan, Thailand, Cambodia, Hawaii and India, the art form of tattoo was considered to have magical power and was traditionally seen to provide a protective function. With the tattoos representing culturally specific designs, the wearers physical and spiritual wellbeing was considered to be guarded (Caplan, 2000). Other cultures, including the Aztecs and the Mayans, used tattoos to serve as a permanent, visual representation of the individual's devotion to a specific super-natural being with each tattoo showing particular ritualised or religious meaning (Rush, 2005).

Tattoos have been suggested to carry out a similar process, both through unconscious and conscious attempts to effect emotional, physical, mental and/or spiritual healing through balancing electromagnetic and subtle energies associated with particular body parts where trauma may have been inflicted (Shalley, 2014).

Krutak (2012) described this process in his book "Spiritual Skin: Magical Tattoos and Scarification," sharing the example of tattooist Colin Dale from Denmark. Dale conducted a small test by tattooing a client suffering from rheumatism, asthma, headaches, tinnitus in his ear and a loud snoring habit with tattoo marks similar to spots on 'Otzi the Iceman's' body. With an acupuncturist on hand recommending locations that aligned with certain acupuncture pressure points, Dale tattooed the areas with positive results. Three months past tattooing,

the client reported that all pains and symptoms had noticeably eased if they had not completely disappeared. One year after, some symptoms did return, but vastly less intense than the original symptoms, showing that tattooing of acupuncture points can have a therapeutic effect not just short term but also for a long term period as well (Krutak, 2012). Tattooing is “part of our world’s cultural and artistic heritage”, Krutak says. Respect should be shown by recognising and honouring the art forms roots (Krutak, 2012).

Krutak discovered two other cultures presently using tattoos as a process of healing. In Borneo, some Kayan men and women tattooed dots on their joints when they suffered a sprain or injury. Applied to the injured areas, the tattoos typically returned full mobility within a week. Similar practices were also found among the Inland Aroma people of Papua New Guinea (Krutak, 2012).

“As one can imagine, there maybe many more possible relationships and connections between organs, points, joints and tattoos that are waiting to be discovered “ (Krutak, 2012, p. 18).

Phillips (2012) acknowledges that close consideration suggests that an individual’s reasons and the choice of their tattoos reflect many of the factors considered to be associated with the recovery after trauma. She suggests that whether a traumatic event involves the loss of a family member, a car accident or being involved in a natural disaster, it becomes registered in our body through the survival reflexes being to fight, flight or freeze. She further states that the individual’s memory of the traumatic event is not registered as narrative but through visual images and physical or sensory sensations and reactivity to reminders of the event (Phillips, 2012). Trauma experts encourage individuals who have experienced a trauma to work from the body out during the course of

recovery and healing, the aim being to focus on and work through the images, sensations and senses that may have been left behind from the trauma. The tattoos use of the individual's physical body to register a traumatic event is seen as a powerful re-doing. Starting with what is seen as a person's barrier of protection, the skin, it acts as a canvas to express, release and unlock the extremes felt during trauma (Phillips, 2012).

Creative outlets such as music, writing and art, draw upon a person's brain and whilst doing so provide a way of expressing certain aspects of trauma that may never have been encoded into words. There are many variations of tattoos including colours, details and personalisations, confirming their nature as a creative outlet of expression and one in which the role of the art form can be considered a healing narrative (Phillips, 2012).

Gentry and Alderman's (2007) study of tattooing found that after Hurricane Katrina, people were using tattoos as a means of uncovering and making visible their personal journey, stories and memories about their traumatic experience. Tattoos are seen to invite inquiry as they can offer an opportunity for the individual to translate trauma into words or a story to another individual who cares enough to listen. The idea that tattoo can serve as a narrative also plays a critical role for the tattooed individual as they can recreate, rewrite or transform trauma/stress through the process of receiving a tattoo by discussing it in their own minds and to others.

Gentry and Alderman acknowledged that through the process of thinking about a tattoo design and the actual inking of the tattoo, the discussion with the tattoo artist almost always involved some verbal accounts of the trauma story helping release painful emotions (Gentry & Alderman, 2007).

For a person to recover from trauma, it is suggested that they will be able to both remember it and come to terms with what happened in order to cope with it (Phillips, 2012). Being a visible art form that the individual chooses to wear and be seen, can undo the shame that is so often associated with trauma. Phillips (2012) states that the connection with oneself and others, in a way that enables the sharing and acknowledgement of the trauma, is a critical part in healing and being able to move on from trauma. For individuals who consider their tattoo to be more than a static sign of identification with pain or loss, when it is a live reminder of what has been suffered and survived, it can become transformative and gives the wearer an ongoing sign and hope of resiliency and possibility.

There are multiple websites and Facebook pages such as 'Personal Ink' or 'P.INK' designated to helping breast cancer survivors consider tattoo ideas or find suitable artists to tattoo over their scars. This process of reclamation and transformation is becoming more common as more women are seeking tattoos to represent their journey, their trauma and rediscovery when recovering from breast cancer instead of further reconstruction surgery (Cortez, 2013). Alongside these websites showing the process of transformation and reclamation for women surviving and recovering from breast cancer are hundreds of websites, including multiple professional sites (including anthropologists and psychologists) re-telling and examining stories from other individuals who have used tattoos as a process of self-healing (Cortez, 2013; Armstrong de Almeida, 2009).

Women have pioneered the use of tattoos to transform and reclaim their bodies from traumatic experiences which have included disease, miscarriage and abuse (Kang & Jones, 2007). Atkinson (2002) reported that some women, who had been previously abused, create a new understanding of their injured body and reclaim possession through the painful, deliberate process of tattooing.

Some individuals who have experienced bodily trauma are seen to mark their bodies on or very close to the site of trauma. This reinforces Caruth's (1996) theory that individuals are compelled to repeat or re-live the trauma in a new, creative way or setting that may allow the individual to experience a different, life affirming signification of the trauma while still being able to witness it.

One example of Caruth's (1996) notion, as explained above, is where women use tattoos to cover their mastectomy scars as a way of healing and recovery from the loss of a breast to cancer. The repetition of pain and trauma is clearly illustrated by this example, but the pain caused through the tattooing process is different in that it marks the trauma spot with a positive, life-affirming image of the individual's decision. The tattoo serves as a way to understand and incorporate a psychological and physical trauma or loss while regaining a new sense of control and potentially a new sense of empowerment (Sarnecki, 2001). Marking one's body with a tattoo has been acknowledged to help individuals reclaim lost or violated parts of their body with previous findings emphasising this as an important process for women healing from physical abuse or trauma (Atkinson, 2003b; Kang & Jones, 2007).

During a 2014 hui (meeting/gathering) held in Wellington, New Zealand, Psychiatrist Diana Rangihuna told the forum that the process of applying a tā moko to a person's skin can be therapeutic. She discussed how some Māori tā moko artists informed her of how individuals have sought tā moko to cover up scars, to remember a moment or a person as a form of intervention from harm. Dr Rangihuna shared that some individuals were visiting tā moko artists to improve their wellbeing and to try and prevent themselves from harming themselves due to being in a dark place in their lives. She further commented that the process of

getting a moko provides a space to share the individual's story which maybe healing in itself (Radio New Zealand News, 2014).

A 2013 report emphasised how Māori wellbeing can be enhanced with whanau-centred approaches combined with acknowledging and addressing historical trauma (Māori Affairs Committee, 2013). Māori have promoted the use of traditional healings, knowledge and practice to enhance a person's wellbeing for many years (Durie 2003). The use of art or performing art, are seen as some Māori methods of expressing emotions. These can include dance, song, chant, lament and formal speech which have been found to be highly therapeutic and a healing process for emotional distress (Durie, 2003).

Te Awekotuku et al., (2007) suggest that through the journey and process of receiving a moko, selective trauma and recovery is engaged in but also the state of consciousness is altered and through this the individual encounters the spirit; the connection that is often appropriated from someone, or something else.

The use of traditional healing methods across varying indigenous cultures may support the idea that the art of tattooing could serve as a mechanism for self-healing. Multiple factors are tied into the process of tattooing and when consideration is paid to the level of depth in which individuals think through their tattoos, one can see how much time and effort is put into what they want to get tattooed and why (Durie, 2003; Atkinson, 2003a).

Art Therapist Cathy Malchiodi's (2012) theory on healing is explained below:

“Art has the potential to transform lives and often in profound ways. When words are not enough, we turn to images and symbols to tell our stories. And in telling our stories through art, we find a path to healing, recovery, and transformation” (p. 48).

One of the ideas of Art Therapy involves the individual expressing their feelings through any art form enabling them to reach a sense of healing within. With this theory in mind, the art form of tattooing may differ in the sense that the individual might not be drawing or tattooing their image or symbol, but their representation and construction of their image in their mind and how it can be attached to emotions, cognitions and oneself is seen to be where the healing may derive from (Shalley, 2014; Malchiodi, 2012). It has been stated that the living image coming about through the art process is the real teacher, leading the individual towards a greater personal understanding (Meyer, 2013).

Professor Stan Grof (1988) suggests that trauma healing comes through completing an experience emotionally that may have taken place physically a long time ago. An indigenous healing practice known as Dadirri in Australia allows individuals to open up trapped pain and trauma in a sacred place with the support of those around them. It allows someone to finally feel it in order for it to be released. The essence of Dadirri is the creation of a space to develop a deep contemplative ability to listen and re-tell stories of trauma and pain. Similar to this ancient healing method, the ability to realign past difficulties and re-tell narratives through tattoo is seen to allow individuals to heal over time (Atkinson, 2003a).

Burkhardt (1998) bridges the idea of self-reflection and self-healing in the following quote:

“Personal reflection enables us to gain insight into our own experience and understanding of these life issues and to develop a deeper understanding of who we are. Attention to our own questions, wonderings, pain, joy, and struggles facilitates and shapes our healing” (p. 128).

The reclamation of one's body is acknowledged to play a crucial role, assigning tattoos to a self-healing effect (Stirn, 2003, 2004b; Atkinson, 2002). The physical pain that is associated with the process of receiving a tattoo is greatly valued in the body modification society (Stirn, 2004b). Painful stimulation has been associated with a release of endorphins in one's body which can generate positive emotions (Winchel & Stanley, 1991; Stirn, 2004a).

Although mostly misinterpreted in previous literature, certain feelings of anxiety and fear have been seen to motivate tattooing projects. Some individuals have tattooed their bodies in response to fears or anxieties produced by a range of diseases (e.g., AIDS/HIV, cancer and Alzheimers), social situations or experiences placing them at risk (e.g., poverty, discrimination, war, terrorism and crime), and cultural trends restructuring their social or cultural group identification (e.g., globalisation, fragmentation and gentrification). These specific tattoo projects taken on by individuals communicate a sense of self-empowerment, efficacy and a level of fight in the face of very daunting conditions (Atkinson, 2004).

Cortez's (2013) research found that the narratives of transition, self-making and self-transformation surrounding individuals most meaningful tattoos suggested that these elements, when taken together, give potential of tattoo as a creative coping mechanism. Several themes were seen to emerge from her research including how: the accessibility of tattoos today, the potential transformative power of the art form, the roles of both pain and permanence and the mind/body mechanisms of trauma and stress act as a means of assisting the healing/coping process and how tattoos can act as way of creative healing and coping from the impact of various kinds of stress and trauma (Cortez, 2013).

The number of individuals engaging in tattooing is increasing, as is the art form in the business world, suggesting that in the near future these numbers are likely to increase further. Throughout history tattoos have served multiple functions, held many reasons behind engaging in the practice and have spread almost across the whole world at differing times. At times functions of tattoos have served a positive nature for the wearer and at times they have been associated with a negative stigma. With the rise of tattoos in popular culture and the dominant rise of tattooing across Western cultures, the availability of social media has almost increased acceptance across the world for the art form of tattooing. However, tattoo associations to this day are still linked to some form of negative stigma but the positive nature of the art form is becoming more widely researched and spoken about suggesting that attitudes and functions towards tattooing may be changing and becoming more positive (DeMello, 2000; Cortez, 2013).

The importance of acknowledging other forms of health and healing, not considered dominant Western knowledge, may provide valuable insights into differing processes that varying cultures and individuals may use or find helpful, serving as a function of self-healing (Durie, 1985; Durie, 2003; Atkinson, 2003a).

Tattoos are a form of body modification, a form of a self-inflicted wound and a physical bodily sensation of pain that some individuals freely chose. Whether individuals chose tattoos as a part of personal ritual of recovery or as a form of memorial to pain, tattoos “turn inside out” by highlighting feelings too premature to express in words. The very existence of tattoos as a part of our body’s landscape can be seen to serve as a testimonial to survival. By choosing to tattoo their bodies many individuals find a creative life affirming function to

memorialise and heal from life's traumatic events through one of, or combinations of, physical healing and psychological healing.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I describe the research methodology used within this thesis. A 2-phase, mixed-methods approach incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data was used. The aim was to examine the experiences and attitudes of tattooed individuals within Aotearoa New Zealand, discovering their reasons for tattooing their bodies and if tattoos can serve as a process of self-healing. A mixed methods approach was used to effectively explore individuals attitudes, experiences and reasons for getting tattooed through a survey incorporating both quantitative and qualitative measures. This was combined with semi-structured interviews to further explore in more depth these experiences and the possible link to self-healing.

Mixed methods research has been on the rise since its emergence in the 1950's (Creswell, 2009). John Creswell acknowledges that "the situation today is less quantitative vs qualitative and more how research practices lie somewhere on a continuum between the two" (Creswell, 2009, p.63). This really stood out for me as I saw the advantage of an increased flexibility and adaptability as it is not limited to either qualitative or quantitative and enabled me to use certain methods during different parts of the research.

By starting with a mixed online survey involving both quantitative and qualitative aspects, I was able to establish a baseline for the comparison of attitudes, beliefs, social backgrounds and life experiences. This data enabled me to identify trends amongst individuals who had tattooed their bodies. It provided me with some statistical information, enabled cross-comparisons, both across and within certain sub-groups, which in turn revealed possible trends or patterns amongst individuals attitudes, beliefs, social backgrounds and life experiences.

Most importantly, it enabled me to identify individuals meeting certain criteria as potential interviewees in the semi-structured interview phase.

Ethical approval

The proposed research was approved by the Psychology Research and Ethics Committee at the University of Waikato (see Appendix G).

Resource development

Survey design

Participants were asked to complete the 44 item survey online (see Appendix E) designed to take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. It was developed through researching surveys (Armstrong de Almeida, 2005; Cortez, 2013) looking into similar topics and taking into account the recommendations from each, whilst keeping to the research goals for this study. The survey was designed using Qualtrics software and was available at the following link <http://psychology.waikato.ac.nz/behindtheinknz.html>. This link opened up the Qualtrics software online where it remained for the entire research project. Qualtrics software (provided by Qualtrics) is a generalised survey service permitting the creation of survey instruments, distribution of the surveys, data storage and analysis, which is accessible and performed online in your own browser. If participants had any queries or concerns relating to the survey they were informed that they could contact myself by email or the convener of the Research and Ethics Committee at the University of Waikato.

Once the survey was ready it was tested on two friends who provided valuable feedback and corrections before it was launched online. Only once these corrections were made and it had been checked over again did I launch the survey.

The survey was divided up into three parts: (1) Demographic information which included: sex, ethnic identification, age, religion and background information such as employment and/or study, (2) tattoos, experiences, attitudes and perceptions of their own tattoos and other tattooed persons and (3) self-healing and personal experiences including stressful and/or traumatic life events, situations and symptoms and the link to the process of self-healing through their own tattoo(s).

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were added to my data collection process with the primary goal of describing the lived experiences of individuals who have chosen to be tattooed and the link to a process of self-healing it has had for them. The interviews added a more in-depth look into individual responses than what could be gathered in the survey alone. The finalised version of the interview questions were piloted with a few friends (whom were all aware of the research and what it was seeking) and adjusted to correct any errors. The final schedule was used as the basis for all further interviews (see Appendix F).

The interviewees were selected from answering ‘yes’ to two specific questions in the survey:

6. Has any tattoo(s) helped you heal in any way (from the examples shown on the page on self-healing)?
 - Yes
 - No

7. Would you like to be apart of the next step of this research talking about your story, tattoo(s) and self-healing?
- Yes
 - No

Participant consent forms

Consent forms were developed to ensure that participants in both the survey and interview process understood their rights fully and what was required of them. Consent forms for the interviews included researcher contact details, a brief statement of agreement, participant demographics including name, age, ethnicity, and a section for them to provide their signature and the date (interview) (see Appendix H). Consent for the survey required participants to read over a brief statement of agreement after being provided with an information page online which contained all of the above information. The brief statement is provided in the survey section below.

Finding the participants

The use of social media, including Facebook, was a significant factor in recruiting potential participants. Through using social media, I was able to set up a designated Facebook page outlining the research idea and answer any specific questions people may have had. The Facebook page was shared around by friends, a local tattoo studio (Skinks Tattoo Studio) and fellow tattoo enthusiasts contributing to over 5500 followers on the page. A research flyer (see Appendix A) was also designed and shared on Facebook, handed out in a local tattoo studio and around the University of Waikato where people could take a copy if they wished. Participants could complete the survey on their own as both the Facebook

page and the flyers invited them to share their story and displayed where to find the link to the survey and where they could find more information. Flyers included researcher contact details and a brief description of what the research entailed including the research aim.

Research process

I chose to use a thematic analysis approach for both the qualitative aspects in the survey and for analysing the data set from the interviews. Thematic analysis is seen as a flexible research tool “which can provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78). Within the realms of thematic analysis, I wanted to take an inductive approach which bears some similarity to grounded theory (Stiles, 1993). It promotes the process of coding the data without trying to fit it into previous findings around this topic, the researchers desired findings or any other pre-existing coding frame. Essentially, it is a ‘bottom up’ or ‘data-driven’ method of analysing the data where I wanted the data to do the ‘talking’ as such. For determining the level at which the themes amongst the data would be identified, I chose to use a latent/interpretive approach which aims to examine the underlying assumptions, ideas, conceptualisations and ideologies through the data set. Through combining the inductive and latent/interpretive approaches, it enabled me to find common data trends further forming them into themes across the data and finally interpreting the meaning for each theme. I further integrated components of phenomenological analysis which enabled me to use the participant’s own descriptions of their experiences and understanding. By using this approach I was able to incorporate and use the participant’s detailed accounts of personal experience into my interpretations. Phenomenological analysis takes an idiographic focus to qualitative research

where it aims to offer insights into how any individual, in a given context, makes sense of a given phenomenon. Phenomena in this case relates to experiences with tattoos combined with personal significance such as healing through a particular life period, event or grievance. (Brocki & Weraden, 2006).

Survey data was analysed using Qualtrics analysis software which includes specific filtering, cross-tabulations of participant responses and text analysis which was immensely helpful for finding themes and analysing responses to the open-ended questions in the survey.

Survey

After clicking on the link provided, a brief introduction was displayed outlining the study's purpose, what would be required of participants and information regarding respondent's voluntary involvement. The introduction specified that participation could be stopped at any point during the survey without penalty and by choosing to select 'yes' for the question and information provided below acted as participants consent.

'I agree to participate in this research project and I understand that I may withdraw at any time. If I have any concerns about this project, I may contact the convener of the Research and Ethics Committee (Professor Michael O'Driscoll, Tel: 07 838 4466 ext. 8899 or email: m.odriscoll@waikato.ac.nz).'

The survey itself consisted of both quantitative and qualitative measures with a variety of questions including closed questions, questions containing Likert scales and rating scales, to open-ended questions where participants were given the opportunity to expand on their answers. This enabled participants to comment further on their experiences and attitudes towards tattoos and their thoughts and experiences on the link tattoos have to self-healing.

The survey was conducted over a period of six months, between July 2014 and December 2014. Three conditions were put in place for recruiting participants which were, only Aotearoa New Zealand citizens or individuals living in Aotearoa New Zealand for two years or more could respond to the survey, participants had to be at least 18-years-old and participants had to have at least one tattoo on their own body. This was done to capture responses, attitudes and experiences within a New Zealand cultural context.

The word culture has a range of differing meanings, (Lederach, 1995) but in this context culture will refer to the shared knowledge and schemas that have been created by individuals within Aotearoa New Zealand for expressing and interpreting their environments that they are involved in and at the same time responding to the social realities that make up some or all of their environments.

In total 425 participants responded to the survey with a total of 388 finishing the survey. Of the 388 participants who completed the survey 307 were female and 81 were male with an average age of 29.7-years-old. These were made up of people from New Zealand European (75%), Māori (15%), other (12%), Indian (1%), Chinese (1%) and Cook Island (1%). These responses (n=388) to the survey were analysed for percentages, comparisons and potential trends across multiple topics relating to tattoos including sex, age, perceptions of tattoos and the impact on both personal and social life and reasoning for engaging in tattooing.

Semi-structured interviews

The interviews were conducted according to a semi-structured interview format with prompts and guidelines to follow in the interview schedule. Participants were encouraged to share their experiences as they felt necessary and to include any information they thought was relevant.

As with the survey, interview questions were modeled from previous research looking into tattoos (Armstrong de Almeida, 2005; Cortez, 2013; Agustin, 2011; Alcina, 2009; Nikora & Te Awekotuku, 2002). Questions were designed to target the research questions, however recommendations and suggestions from previous research were taken into account where appropriate.

Eight interviewees (n=8) from over 100 willing respondents were randomly selected from the survey by selecting 'yes' on both questions (42 & 45) mentioned earlier. Respondents were asked to leave their first name and contact details (either phone number or email address) if they were willing to be interviewed. Information regarding the interview process was then sent to the interviewees and they could participate if they wished. I selected a smaller more purposeful sample size for the interviews as this enabled a greater focus on particular characteristics of the population of interest. By doing this, it added a more targeted approach to answering my specific research questions. Also, as there were a large number of participants willing to be interviewed, limiting the sample size would not push the time limits too far as participants were spread across Aotearoa New Zealand and the availability was varied. All interviewees have been given a pseudonym to protect their identity and ensure that their information remained confidential. The ages of the interviewees ranged from mid-20's to early 40's with seven being female and one being male. The ethnicities as identified by the eight interviewees included: four New Zealand European, two New Zealand Māori, one Māori and one French.

Once each interviewee consented to take part in the interview process, they were given the option of choosing a suitable time and location for the interview to take place. Interviews were conducted in the most appropriate, quiet, secure and relaxing environment that could possibly be used. Two interviews

were conducted at the participant's workplace, four at the participant's home, one at a local café, and one at the local University Library.

The length of each interview varied from 30 to 45 minutes with interviewees informed prior to the start that there were no time restrictions on the length of the interview. All interviews were recorded using a dictaphone and transcribed verbatim.

Once completed the transcripts were sent to the participants to be reviewed for accuracy. They were asked to read over the transcript if they wished and inform me of any errors and their overall thoughts. Once they were satisfied with their transcripts, I started the thematic analysis process. After transcribing the interviews and before discarding the audio files permanently, I went over them one last time whilst reading through the transcripts. This enabled me to better listen out for certain things such as the participant's tone, pauses, sighs and volume of voice. Through this process I was able to re-live the experience of the interview and focus on the emotional nuances of non-verbal language.

At the beginning of the interviews, participants received both verbal and written explanations of the research project including the research aims. Participants were also invited to ask questions for clarification of any uncertainties pertaining to the research project. Once the participants were satisfied with the information that had been provided, consent forms were provided for them to sign, followed by the commencement of the interviews.

Due to the sensitive nature of discussing difficult situations relating to self-healing, recruitment took place in a tactful and cautious manner which enabled participants to decline without feeling pressured. Participants were given the chance to decline at any time both before and during the interview process with no penalty if they decided that they did not want to continue on with the

research. All information regarding what the interview would consist of was added to the initial email so participants knew what to expect and this was outlined again before the interview. All participants had completed the initial survey so they were familiar with the research goals and were happy to help.

The interview process began with an outline of the research, the purpose of the research and potential benefits of the research. Participants were taken through the consent forms and were offered time to reflect on this and time to ask any questions that they had before the interview would start. Each participant was informed that the interview would be audio-recorded and that their personal details and information would remain anonymous and protected within the results and discussions of the research. Once the interview commenced, prepared questions (see Appendix F) were asked to follow the semi-structured nature of the interview. Each interview varied according to the information discussed by the participant and during multiple interviews I did not have to ask all the prepared questions as I felt they had already been answered.

A crucial part of the interviewing process was building *whakawhanaungatanga* which for Māori is the forming of a relationship and a sense of togetherness (Mead, 2003; Bishop, 1995). This was crucial for all interviewees, especially Māori interviewees, as allowing time and space to build and establish relationships is seen as a key aspect of persons becoming relaxed and open to sharing personal information (Mead, 2003 & Smith, 1999). I started each interview by engaging in a general conversation with each interviewee, getting to know them and also by sharing whom I was, what my interests are and why I had chosen to research this topic. I felt this was a critical aspect of the interviews as previous research shows that it is essential that a relationship be

established before asking interviewees to share personal stories and/or experiences with an interviewer (Jones, Crengle & McCreanor, 2006).

I wanted to acknowledge the interviewees by showing respect for whom they were, the time they were sharing with me and their role in the research as without them there would be no findings. I also endeavoured to acknowledge the interviewees role as the expert as they were the ones with the experience and knowledge with regards to their tattoos and I wanted to respect that fact throughout the process.

Cultural Considerations

It was important for me to consider alternative models of wellbeing across the varying ethnicities that may partake in this study. The Whare Tapa Wha Model, which is used to understand Māori health and wellbeing, could be vital to understanding how tattoo helped Māori individuals to achieve self-healing. Consideration was given to all participants with regards to their ideas on healing and views on health within their culture, beliefs and values they identified with.

CHAPTER THREE: RESULTS

As a researcher, it is important to acknowledge one's theoretical positions and beliefs/values in relation to the research and to recognise that the world view they hold provides the instrument of analysis through which the data is identified and created (Sanchez-Jankowski, 2002; Braun & Clarke, 2006). With these views in mind, it is considered critically important to show an empathetic understanding (Stiles, 1993) of the participants world views and their thoughts imbedded within their stories.

The findings that are discussed in this chapter firstly highlight the survey data that was used to establish a baseline for comparison of personal and social backgrounds, attributes, life experiences and attitudes. Through the survey data I was able to identify trends and patterns in attitudes, behaviours and experiences among individuals who are tattooed in Aotearoa New Zealand. It provided statistical information, measured information regarding specific experiences, attitudes and ideas for differing demographic subsets and allowed cross-comparisons both across and within sub-groups which also identified trends. Most importantly, it enabled me to identify individuals who met criteria as potential participants for the semi-structured interview phase.

The qualitative data gathered in the interview phase also served multiple purposes, supporting and adding more detail to specific questions from the data gathered from the survey data collection phase.

Thematic analysis was used to process and extract key findings from the interview transcripts of each of the eight interviewees. In order to facilitate more meaningful outcomes to this research, the findings from the interviews were then organised into categories that were seen to directly relate to the research question.

This research sought to gain an understanding and an awareness of why individuals in Aotearoa New Zealand tattooed their bodies, what their attitudes and experiences were with regards to tattooing and if their tattoos had been in some way healing for them and if so how.

Thematic analysis

This methodology was used to identify the themes and trends in the stories and experiences of the interviewees. It is a process that identifies, describes patterns or phenomena, organises themes (Boyatzis, 1998), and works both to reflect reality and to examine and provide details for the meaning of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 81). Thematic analysis allows the researcher to “...capture something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82).

The data from the interviews was transcribed and analysed enabling extracts from each interview to be organised into themes that related directly to the research question. The key themes from the data were created showing a total of 13 categories. These included:

- Identity
- Empowerment
- Pain and the process of tattooing
- Strength
- Self-confidence
- Reminders or remembrance
- Motivation
- Transformation

- Family
- Transition in life
- Trauma and/or psychological difficulties
- The process of relief
- The spiritual aspect of tattooing

As part of the thematic analysis process, the identified themes and findings were reviewed by my supervisor to check for irrelevant themes, consistency and errors. Following on from this, the next process of thematic analysis required a re-examination of the categories created. This involved re-reading all material concerning each of the major categories and then coding that information into common themes. During this process categories were refined, changed or added to and enabled further identification of consistent themes across all interviews. Once this process was completed, new categories were created in order to present the findings.

From my analysis and information of the stories and experiences of each interviewee, themes have been created into six key sections including:

- Identity
- Reminders/Motivations
- Empowerment
- Transformation
- Pain and the process of tattooing
- The spiritual aspect involved with the process of tattooing

Within each category, examples and quotations from the interviews are shown to detail and highlight the various stages and themes which emerged throughout the analysis.

This chapter will outline my analysis of the results from the data I collected through conducting the survey and the semi-structured interviews. It was found that personal experiences, cultural, ethnic and gender status all play roles in shaping individual's relationships to their perceptions of tattooing. Responses indicated both relatively high levels of engagement with the art form of tattooing and extremely positive associations with tattoo.

Several common themes found woven throughout this group of individuals experiences of tattoo reveal differing complexities of the interaction of these factors throughout the lives and minds of all that took part in this research. Through both the survey and interview findings, it appears clear that tattoos as a specific mechanism do play a role in healing the individual in varying ways. Through analysing and comparing participant responses from all the data I collected, I believe that the unique potential for creating a process of self-healing through tattoo is very important for all that had responded so. The data shows that through the mind/body mechanisms of trauma and stress, the increasing accessibility of tattoos for people today, the potential transformative power of tattoos and the role that both pain and the permanence of a tattoo play, can function as a process of self-healing. Participants discussed being faced with a range of traumas, life events, relationships, and idiosyncratic challenges that have been difficult to cope with. Through the process of tattooing, not only as a means of self-expression but also as a potential therapeutic mechanism for dealing with these difficulties, participants have been seen to find something positive through their experience with creativity and resourcefulness.

Results from the Survey

Overall, 427 participants started the survey with 388 individuals completing it. Of the 388 respondents, 307 were female and 81 were male. The age range for the survey varied with the youngest respondent being 18-years-old and the oldest being 65-years-old, with an average age range over the survey of 29.7-years-old. In total 285 of the respondents were New Zealand European, 50 identified as Māori, 38 as other (including French, Dutch, Japanese, Chinese, and British among others), 10 as Samoan and five as Indian.

In total, 71% of respondents stated that they had three or more tattoos with an average age of 22 for their first time receiving a tattoo. The youngest age someone received their first tattoo was 18-years-old, with 54-years-old being the oldest a respondent had received their first tattoo. Most respondents (92%) stated that it was likely that they would want more tattoos in the future. Of the 388 respondents, 14% stated that they regretted one or more of their tattoos. This was mostly due to receiving a poor tattoo from their chosen artist. 100% of respondents stated that they knew one family member or friend that had at least one tattoo, showing the widespread popularity of tattoos among today's modern society.

Overall, 356 respondents stated that their chosen artwork/ink was a tattoo, 34 described their ink as a moko, four as tatau and 11 as other. Some respondents stated that they had incorporated multiple aspects into their tattoos, including more Western style tattoos in with their moko. It also highlights that individuals who had been tattooed have more than one type on their bodies.

51% of respondents acknowledged that they currently cover one or more of their tattoos during some point during an average week with 60% of those stating that it was for the reason of employment.

The results of the survey and interviews are discussed according to participants responses to the categories and questions (which are attached in Appendix D).

Below Figure 1 shows the varying reasons why individuals in Aotearoa New Zealand have tattooed their bodies and the differing reasons for New Zealand Europeans (Figure 2) and Māori individuals (Figure 3).

Figure 1. Reasons why individuals in Aotearoa New Zealand have tattooed their bodies

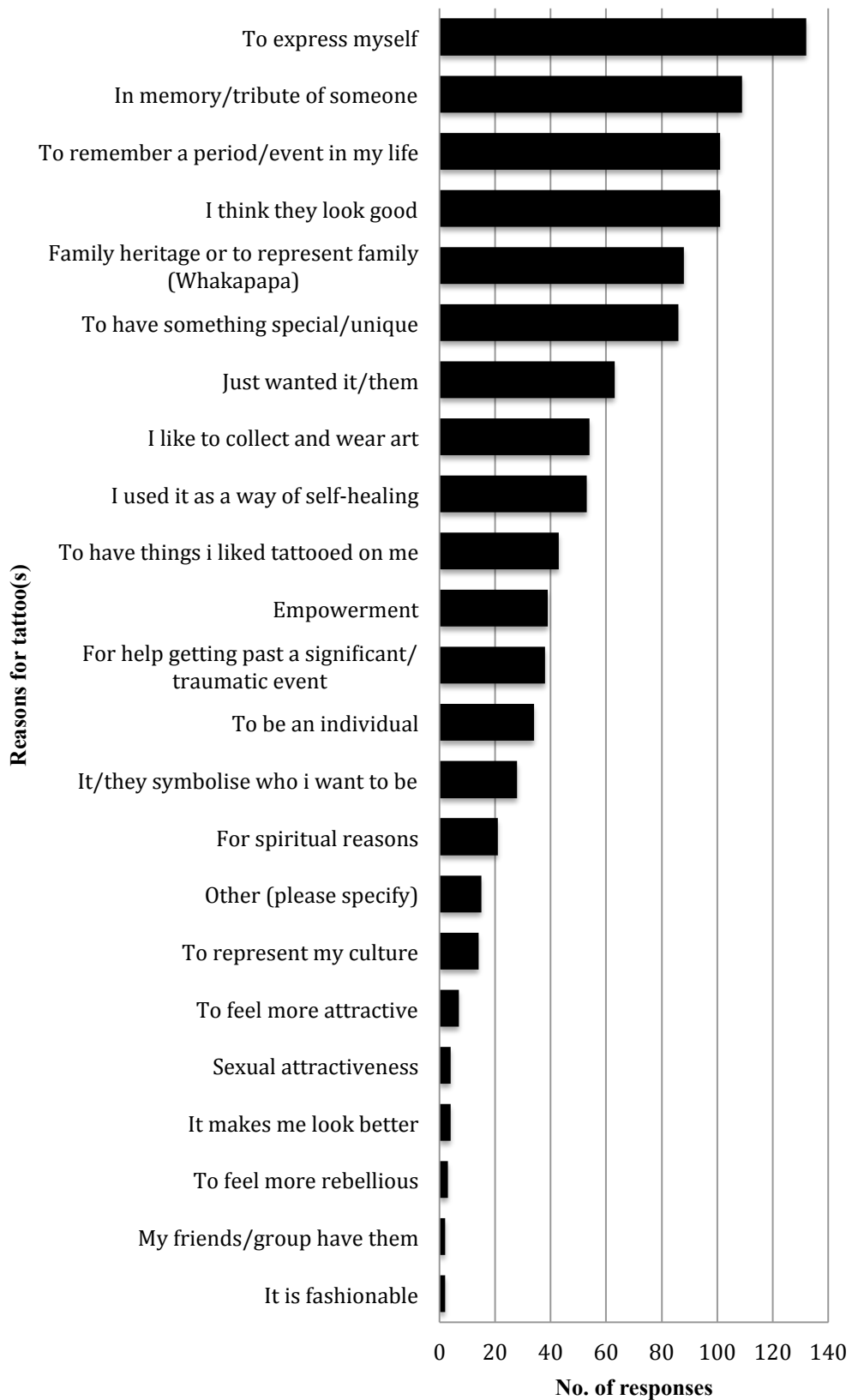


Figure 2. Reasons why New Zealand European individuals in Aotearoa New Zealand have tattooed their bodies

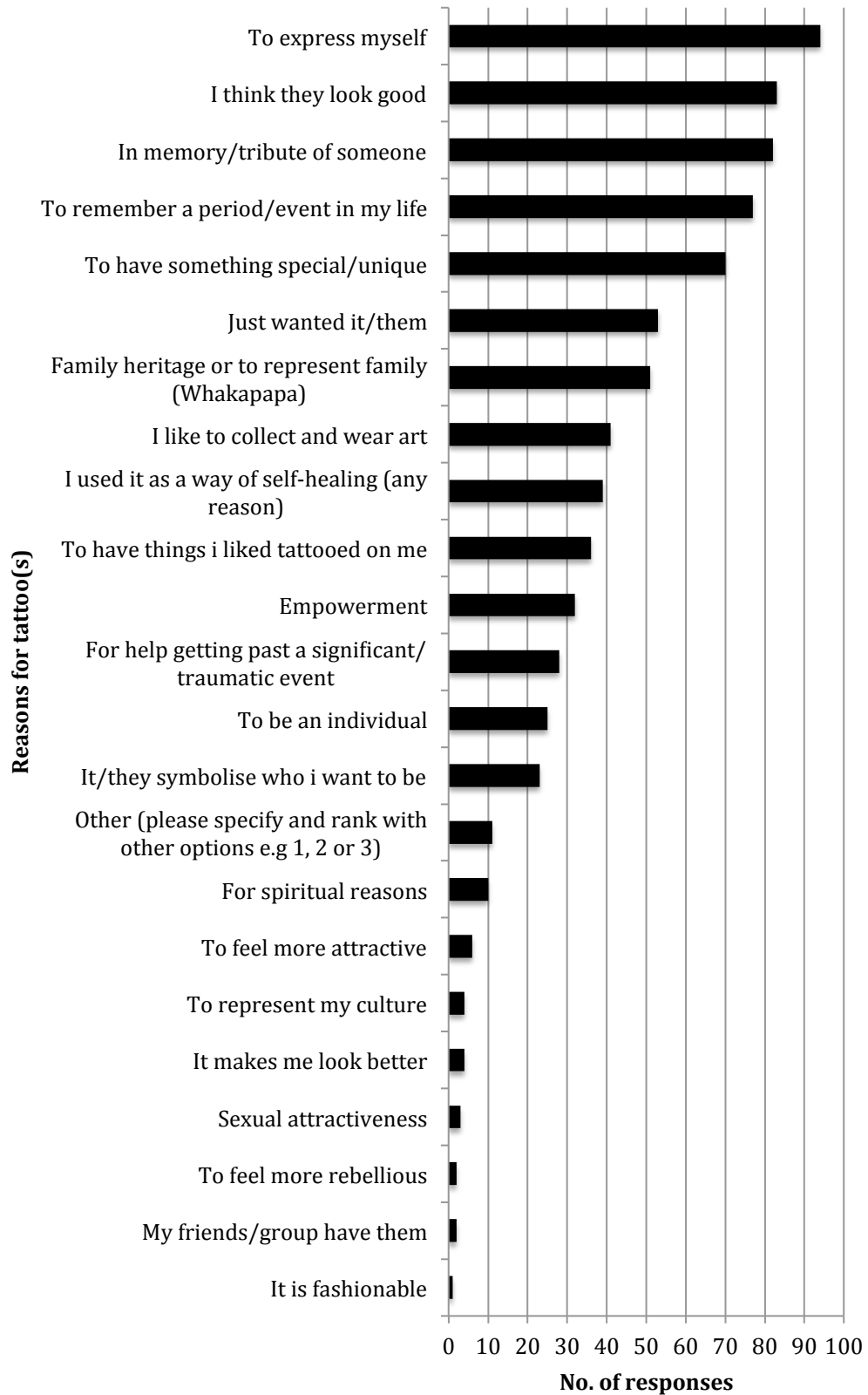
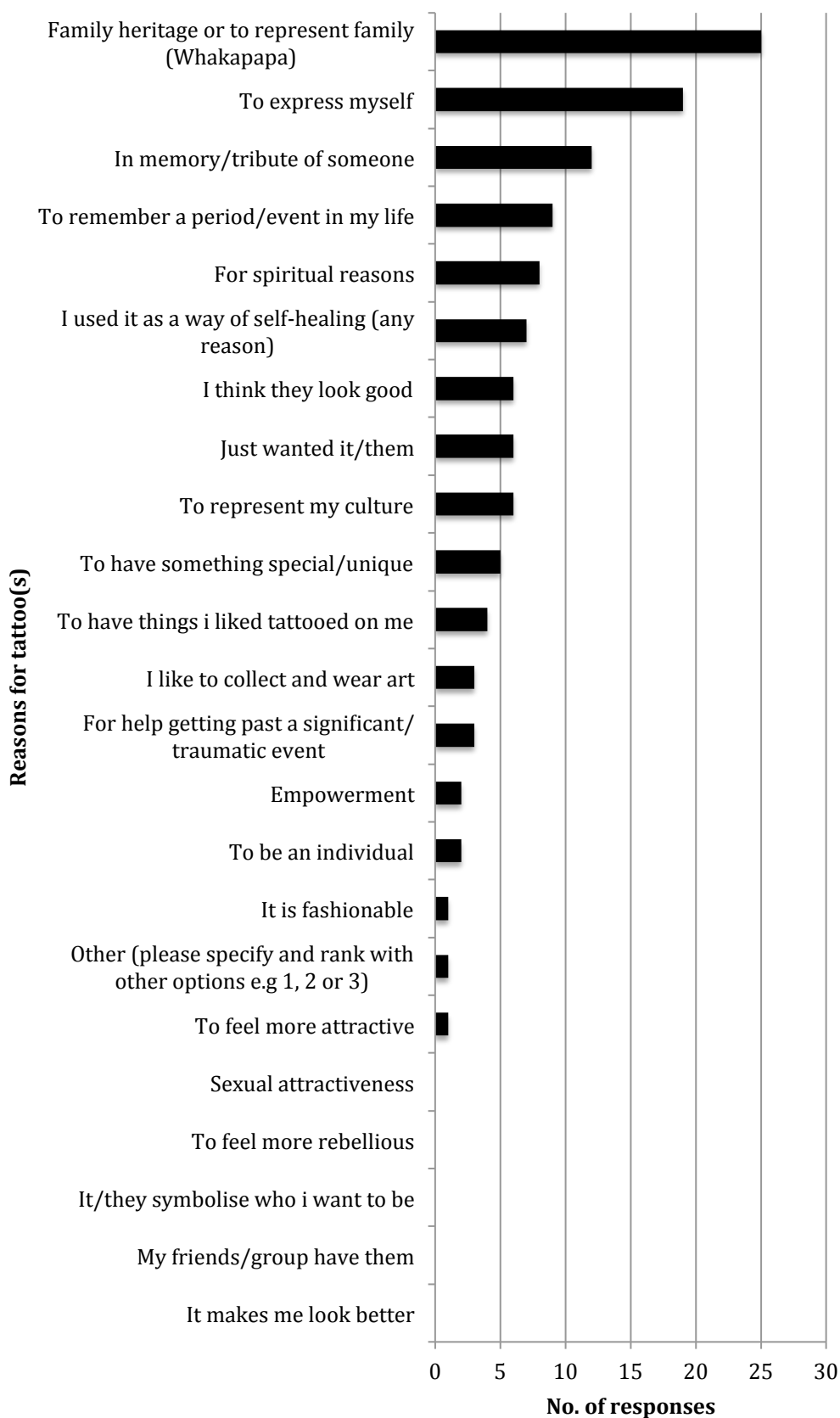


Figure 3. Reasons why Māori individuals in Aotearoa New Zealand have tattooed their bodies



Respondents were encouraged to select their reasons for tattooing their bodies in order of the importance to them. They could select up to three reasons with one being the most important and three being the least important out of the three reasons. The rankings were seen to vary with no apparent co-relations across the three ratings. The three reasons with the highest percentages of number one ratings in order of importance were “to express myself”, “family heritage or to represent family (whakapapa)” and “in memory/tribute of someone.”

Figure 1 shows the reasons behind all respondents throughout the survey. Figures 2 and 3 show the reasons behind the two groups of highest respondents throughout the survey being New Zealand European and Māori. According to survey data, the most common overall reason (37 percent) to get tattooed was “to express myself” which was seen to link into the theme of identity, having self-acceptance and acknowledging family. One respondent acknowledged the following quote suggesting that it represents herself, her son and family but also that it enabled her to be whom she wanted:

“I got my tattoo as an expression of myself – to be me and for my son”

As the results in Figures 2 and 3 show, respondents were seen to acknowledge the role of appearance in how they or others view their tattoo(s). Tattoos can have profound effects on an individual's personal and social relationships (Cortez, 2013). Given this, it is not surprising that the appearance element of one's tattoo(s), including colours, design, placement, and the skill and execution would be considered important. By permanently altering their physical appearance, individuals across the survey stated that they were making more than just an aesthetic choice, as it was more acknowledged as a statement about who they believe themselves to be. However, for most respondents in this research the

appearance and aesthetic considerations were seen as not enough to go and get a tattoo. Although it was considered an important element for individuals to consider, the motivations for their tattoo(s) were seen as more critical in their decisions, often representing deeper and more complex preferences.

The most significant difference across Figures 2 and 3 display the importance of family heritage and representing family in the tattoos of Māori respondents and the relationship to the spiritual element of tattooing and family. Two examples are shown from Māori respondents below:

“It was a very spiritual experience for me and I felt very connected to past family.”

“I wanted to express my family and culture in a physical way.”

Family and the link to identity as well as tributes to past family/friends, was seen as very important across the survey responses.

Table 1 below shows the responses to whether participants considered themselves to be generally more positive after receiving a tattoo than before receiving one.

Table 1

Attitudes towards oneself after receiving a tattoo

Question:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
After getting tattooed, my feelings about myself are generally more positive than they were before getting tattooed:	4	19	123	40	58

As seen above, 60% of respondents noticed that they became more positive after receiving a tattoo than before, compared to seven percent that did not agree with this. 33% felt neutral or did not consider themselves to be more positive than before receiving their tattoo. Positive features identified included; positive thinking about oneself and others and increased self-esteem and self-efficacy.

Respondents considered others with tattoos to be self-confident (56%), independent (55%), capable (30%), well educated (30%), intelligent (25%) and trustworthy (20%). Except for the categories of self-confidence and independence, 50% of respondents remained neutral on the above categories. Given these results, it is fair to suggest that the practice of tattooing represents a creative way that individuals are choosing to affirm and visually display these positive characteristics in themselves. This can be suggested for the individuals themselves but also for other members of their social group who may share the same positive associations.

Table 2 shows the different responses to how tattoos may impact on different areas in one's life.

“In your opinion, would having one or many tattoo have a positive or negative effect on the following areas in your life”?

Table 2

Attitudes towards tattoos

Question	Positive	Negative	Neutral/No effect
My own self-esteem/self-worth	210	0	130
Acceptance by my peers	51	15	274
My family relationships	35	50	255

My sexual attractiveness	105	5	230
Advancement in my job/career	11	112	217

Two significant aspects shown above relate to respondent's views of their own self-esteem and self-worth but also their views on how tattoos are viewed in the workplace. Examples from respondents mentioned below (page 71) highlight how tattoos have been seen to increase their self-esteem and self-worth. However, despite mostly positive associations with their tattoo(s), respondents still acknowledged that they relate a certain stigma in the workplace and that these attitudes may have a negative impact on their careers and advancement. Respondents (112) acknowledged that they cover their tattoos up for work and some (36) acknowledged that they would cover them up when around certain family members.

Figure 4 shows the number of respondents (no=310) who consider that tattoos can serve as a process of self-healing or not. The survey showed that 96% of respondents consider that the process of tattooing can be healing in some way for the wearer.

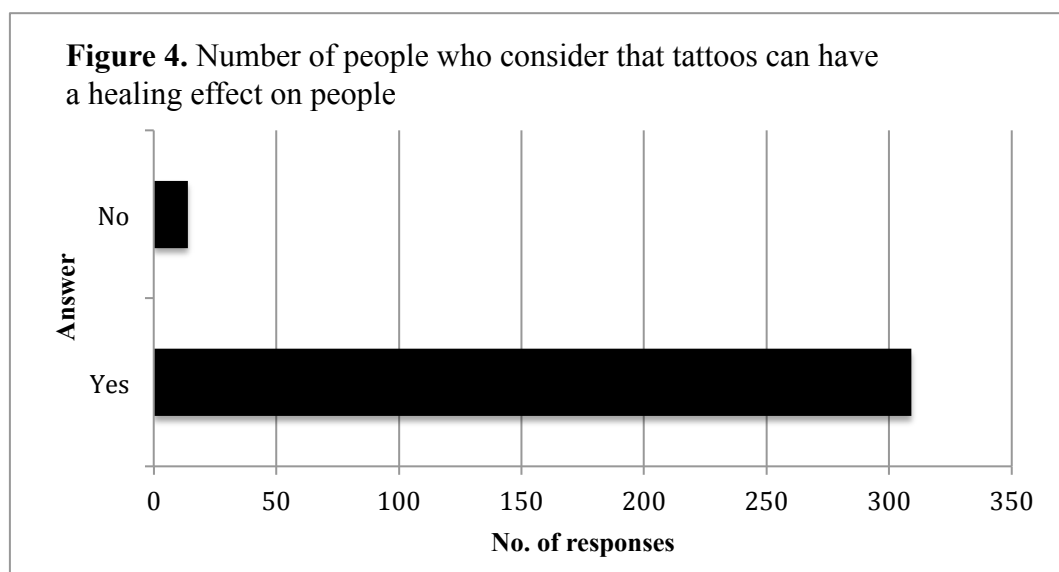
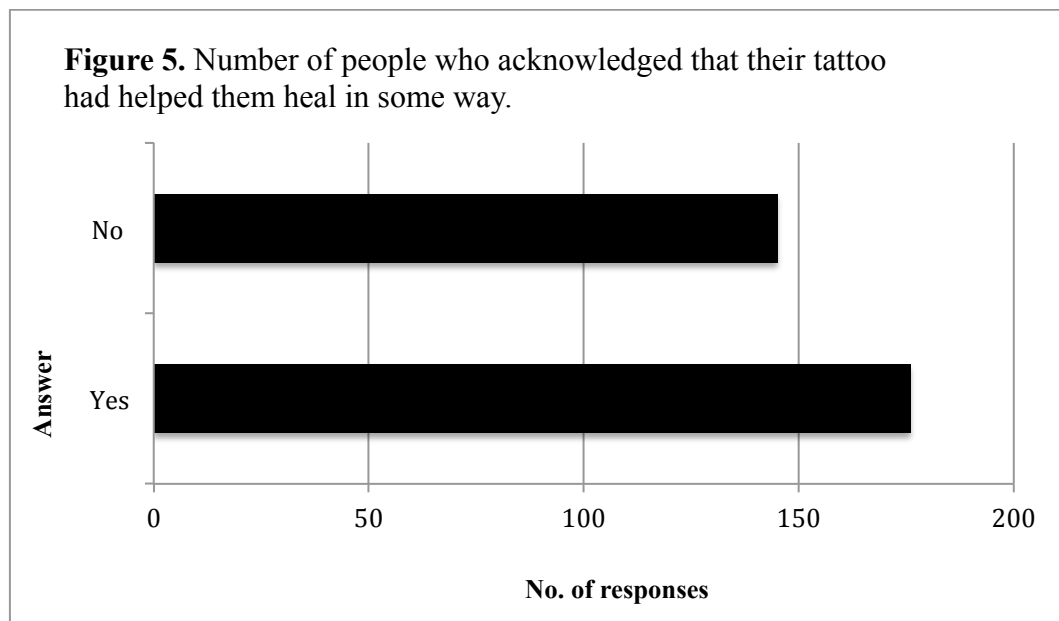


Figure 5 shows that 56% of respondents (no=176) have found that their tattoo(s) has served as a process of self-healing for themselves in someway.



One respondent explained:

“In certain situations I look at or sometimes I instinctively touch one of my tattoos & remind myself of how far I have come & that there are other reactions & feelings available to me. A few of my tattoos are kind of like my own personal private cheerleaders, always there ready to remind me that I can get through this & that I am the awesome person I know myself to be.”

And another respondent explained:

“They have given me some more confidence, as it is a big commitment and its a commitment I am making to myself, and seeing my tattoo everyday that I got as a reminder that I am strong and have overcome a traumatic experience and it does make me feel like it has helped with the healing process.”

The positive feelings and experiences reported in the survey maybe a reflection of their relatively high participation and engagement in this practice, how they relate or perceive themselves and their choices with regards to getting a tattoo, as well as the findings in the survey that 100% of the respondents indicated that they had at least one family member or friend with tattoos. This may have contributed to more positive associations and perceptions due to familiarity and normalisation. Very few respondents indicated that they were not happy with their tattoo(s). In total, 14% stated that they regretted one of their tattoos with almost all acknowledging that this was because the finished art was not to the quality they expected which was seen to correlate with getting tattooed by friends or non-professional tattoo artists. Given the high level of positive experiences, feelings and links to a process of healing, it is not surprising that most respondents (81%) also indicated that they were very likely to receive more tattoos in the near future.

This high trend is seen in contrast to other recent studies that suggest the numbers of people removing their tattoos has begun to rise significantly over the past decade in response to perceived pressures and restrictions that are seen to discourage individuals from having visible tattoos in the workplace (Aslam & Owen, 2013).

Common themes from the survey present across the 176 respondents who indicated that their tattoo had served as a function of self-healing included: empowerment, self-confidence, motivation, positive thinking, remembrance, diminishing self-harm and decreasing stress, anxiety and depressive symptoms.

Self-confidence was linked to feeling more positive about oneself, improved self-esteem and confidence in one's identity and not being afraid to express who they were. Empowerment was linked to self-confidence in that individuals felt like they could accomplish anything and having a symbol to

remind them was encouraging. It was also linked to transformation and re-claiming oneself after significant trauma, for example, after leaving an abusive relationship or losing a child, as illustrated below.

“It gave me a line in the sand - a physical sign that I had survived the emotional experience of all those miscarriages.”

The process of receiving or having a tattoo was also seen to motivate individuals. The actual process of receiving the tattoo indicated to individuals that they were strong and the image itself was a daily reminder of what they had been through and where they wanted to go. It also enabled individuals to accept the past and create an inner strength to move forward. The daily reminder seemed to enable individuals to create more positive thinking about any given situation, especially when stress or worry was experienced. The physical and visual representation of their personal experiences and identities encouraged individuals to focus on what they had achieved in life and their aspirations for the future.

“I’m more confident and feel a sense of calm despite the sadness of past loss. I’ve become more spiritual and less afraid to express myself through tattoos. My children also know what my tattoos mean and they know they are about them and they report feeling very special and loved by this act. I love that as a parent.”

Being able to focus on positive thoughts, reclaim one’s self-identity, transform into the person they want to be and cope with significant trauma and loss through remembrance, was seen to help individuals decrease stress in their life as well as their depressive and anxiety symptoms if they suffered from these difficulties.

“I have become more accepting of myself resulting in calmness, less self-doubt, the ability to deal with my depression in a positive light, not letting it control me...instead I'm in control.”

Overall, 79% of respondents in the survey were female highlighting a large gap between the numbers of females and males who completed the survey. Although there was no significant difference between genders when considering if tattoos had the potential to heal someone, there was a significant difference between genders with regards to if tattoos had healed them personally. Overall, 93% of men and 96% of women considered that tattoos had the potential to heal, compared to 35% (male) and 59% (female) who stated that tattoo had helped them heal in some way.

Between ethnicities, findings suggested similar responses for New Zealand European (53%), Māori (55%) and other ethnicities (60%) acknowledging that their tattoo(s) had helped them heal in some way. Similarly, but with higher percentages, they considered that the art of tattooing had the power to heal a person in some way, with 95% New Zealand Europeans, 100% Māori and 94% of other ethnicities acknowledging this.

Interview Results

It became very clear that for each of the eight interviewees in this research, their choice to tattoo their bodies goes far beyond seeking to be fashionable or for the purpose of enhancing their aesthetic.

Although each interviewee acknowledged that they did not go into the process of getting a tattoo to achieve a function of self-healing, each person reinforced that they could not imagine where they would be without their tattoo(s) and the journey they have experienced. It was acknowledged that for some of the

interviewees their tattoos had not all been healing for them, but for others every one of their tattoos had served as a process of self-healing. The eight interviewees were randomly selected from the group of respondents that had identified their tattoo(s) as serving a function of self-healing for them, from the survey results.

At first, 13 sub-themes were identified through the coding phase. This was achieved through listening and reading through the interviewees transcripts and interviews. Once these 13 sub-themes mentioned earlier were identified, I sought to understand them better by again listening for context and individual experience within the interviews, as well as the individuals thoughts around their experience. After much consideration, I was able to narrow the sub-themes down through thematic analysis to the six most common themes mentioned earlier being: identity, reminders/motivations, pain and the process of tattooing, transformation, empowerment and the spiritual aspect of tattooing.

Identity

It became apparent that tattoos amongst all interviewees shaped the way in which they negotiated their subjectivity amongst the range of varying socio-political contexts that are involved in their lives. Each interviewee discussed the importance of the symbol or image for them and the period of time that they would spend planning what they wanted to get. They all reiterated the personal significance of the permanent art form and why careful, well thought out choices were made.

The first aspect of the interviewees narratives that stood out was the link they described between their tattoos and their self-identities. The tattoos they had chosen to wear were symbols of identity, desired and current and were

acknowledged to help them transform themselves. Two interviewees acknowledged the following:

“It was a way of letting myself feel comfortable being me.”

“It showed parts of me through art work and enabled me to understand myself better as I wrestled with who I was for years before getting tattooed.”

Once tattooed, some interviewees were seen to incorporate those images or symbols into their identity becoming a part of them both physically and metaphorically. The incorporation of symbols into one’s body or identity has been stated to be understood as inscription (Davies, 2000). The interviewees often referred to parts of their identities being written by their tattoos but also at the same time described that their tattoos were representative of their own identities. This was reported to be in a web of influence over which at times they did not always control as they could not control how others perceived their identity.

One interviewee discussed, through receiving her tattoo, how she felt more connected to her family but also more connected to her ancestors as it enabled her to feel a sense of self-acceptance. She acknowledged that although physically she did not feel fully connected to her family or look like the rest of her family, the tattoo represented who she thought she was and how she viewed herself on the inside. She expressed the following:

“This gives me strength because this makes me feel like this is who I am on the inside and links me to my Māori culture.”

“It felt like it was exactly what I had been waiting for and exactly what I needed at the time... I know my ancestors and family are with me and it makes me feel like I have a spiritual protection around me.”

All eight interviewees acknowledged that through the process of receiving and living with their tattoos, it felt like they were becoming more self-accepting and increasingly aligned with their individual identity. One interviewee acknowledged that through her tattoos:

“It allowed me to discover who I was and gave me permission to be myself and that it was ok.”

Others acknowledged that it enabled them to show parts of who they were through artwork. It enabled them to consider certain symbols and images which was seen to give them a greater understanding of themselves through their comprehensive planning.

One interviewee acknowledged that her tattoo incorporated her son, her family and her homeland with each story represented by differing lines and patterns. She stated:

“I’m always walking with my son and my family. It is all encompassing of where I come from and it gives me a great sense of who I am.”

Another interviewee acknowledged the following about her identity:

“This is who I am, and through the consideration of what tattoo I wanted and the process it gave me the courage to accept who I was. It allowed me to be more social and that I could be myself, which gave me more confidence in myself as I was not concerned with what others thought of me. I did not doubt myself or my identity anymore.”

The idea of identity was seen to differ among the findings but for most interviewees it was seen to include key healing points for each individual. Findings suggest that family (both past and present), self-acceptance and the courage to be who they wanted to be or who they considered themselves on the inside to be, were the most significant factors serving as a function of self-healing but also transformation. Through placing symbols and images on their physical bodies, it no longer remained hidden and enabled individuals to embrace their inner thoughts thus becoming more confident in themselves. Most participants were seen to connect some aspect of themselves to their tattoos. They used expressions such as “it represents me” or “it is a reflection of myself” when they discussed their tattoos. Previous research has shown that tattoos are considered to be markers of individuality (Sweetman, 1999; Shelton & Peters, 2006), forms of personal expression (Shelton & Peters, 2006; Atkinson, 2004) and statements of “who I am” (Kosut, 2000).

Transformation

The interviewee’s ability to re-appropriate the “damaged” or “weak” identity and turn it in the complete opposite direction reinforced that their inner strength is something to be feared, not pitied. This transformation and the ability to rewrite and script their worth as a strong person was seen as a central function to their healing and their identity.

A common finding across all interviewees was similar time periods when they would choose to get tattooed. They described these captivating times to get tattooed as significant times in their lives, times when they felt especially driven to transform and adapt their own self-image from feeling helpless, weak or broken to capable, motivated, and mindfully strong individuals. The interviewees saw

tattoo as a very important part of their own creative mechanisms of recovery, self-healing and self-transformation. The below answers may give clues as to how and why tattoo may play an important role in their attempts at working out and negotiating some of their stress, anxieties and trauma they may have or are experiencing. Also, multiple interviewees discussed tattoos as a means of moving past self-injury or a means of turning their scars into something they are proud of.

“I used to be pretty bad at cutting and self-harming and one of the main things was always on my arms. Now that I have my ink there I don’t touch them. I never have again and it’s sort of like, moving on through the grieving process in ways. I definitely have felt it has healed some part of me since I have got them.”

“I look at the tiger and you sit there and if you saw a tiger in person you know it would wipe you out. In ways I have to have that attitude in my life against depression because I don’t want it to come near me again. It probably doesn’t want to come near me again because I am going to wipe it out and that’s the attitude I have to take to survive myself and it’s a good reminder when I look at it.”

This suggests that for individuals whom tattoo is weighted with multiple layers of overlapping and complex psychological, emotional and social meanings, the art of tattooing may in fact have potential transformative power for wearers.

According to all interviewees, marking significant transitions in their lives was found to be very healing for them. Varying transitions were discussed from different interviewees, however a common theme was that they tended to get tattooed at times when they were trying to cope with stressful, difficult and potentially traumatic circumstances or events in their lives, which included: a

significant other passing away, leaving negative relationships, serious illness, problems in personal relationships and psychological difficulties, among others. Their tattoos were seen to serve as a mechanism that enabled them to cope with difficult transitions and transformations not only in themselves but also in their lives. The art form of tattooing as well as the process allowed interviewees to move forward through the difficulties and create a new story of themselves based on strength, self-acceptance and survival.

Rather than being acquired as a memorial or reminder to past events, some interviewees said their tattoos were acquired in the “midst” of their difficulties as attempts for them to better grasp their current situation and to cope with the internal stressors and difficulties they were experiencing. This is contrary to popular theories that have described tattoo as essentially a milestone of past growth and reclamation. It suggests that the practice can be a part of the process of coping, self-healing and change. As mentioned below, two interviewees described how their tattoos played a part in the process of the healing and recovery phase, not just a symbol of the past, but a way for them to actively start to move on and heal.

“It was in a way a parallel process between the tattoo appearing, being uncovered and me discovering aspects of my personality and my resilience.”

“This one is my choice to pull myself out of depression. It embraces a new life and the importance of my daughter. Still remembering my past, my family and my ancestors but moving forward from the dark place I was in to a better place.”

As some interviewees attempted to cope with their loss and/or pain whilst trying to make sense of themselves in the world, their tattoos served as a newly empowered and transformed subject. They described the experience of getting tattooed as a way to create a platform for a new story of the self, which was seen to be based around strength, identity, creativity and survival. These findings suggest that tattoos can be understood as personal attempts to better understand and transform themselves from powerless to active and strong.

“If you had met me ten years ago it would be completely different. I definitely have to say this is how I have changed my life with tattoos, especially with healing.”

“It was very empowering for me. It was like a really special feeling for me. It was a very sacred feeling really. It was like, I’ve done this, I feel really empowered by it. I feel really blessed by it. It was very healing for me to do it. It’s something of significance because I always know it’s there. Every now and then I just reach up and brush the shoulder and you know it’s the thought, you know its there.”

Pain and the process of tattooing

Some interviewees spoke of an embodied healing ritual which involved them submitting to the pain of tattooing as a mechanism to release emotional pain and to become more present in their bodies. This was also linked to past trauma where the individual acknowledged transforming their body and mind from their past negative experiences to the present positive one.

Findings consistent across all eight stories (100%) from the interviewees indicated that the pain experienced during tattooing may have an almost cathartic

and meditative effect. This suggests that there maybe a link to the brain/mind/body connections that are often ignored in individual's day-to-day lives, which may allow the wearer to develop and/or regain their own ability to control and work with their reactions to physical and emotional pain. The process seemed to promote a release of built-up emotions from within the wearer, but at the same time it provided them with a calming effect that enabled them to sit with the discomfort and envision that everything would be alright.

The interviewees all seemed to draw parallels between their experienced physical pain and their psychological/emotional pain, often gaining reassurance through their ability to be able to experience the pain but also, and more importantly, to "deal" with the pain and "survive." This pain element in their process of tattooing seemed to function as a fundamental role in the interviewee's attempts to construct or reconstruct this "new self."

The increase of endorphins, which maybe released by the physical pain of being tattooed, may contribute to a "dream like" body and mind state described by some of the interviewees and may have provided a few of the interviewees with a process to stop self-injuring themselves, but still achieve the desired pain, release or associated feelings in a more acceptable way.

"I think part of the healing process with it was the pain involved in getting them... You have got it emotionally inside of you, which I do. I wake up with it, I go to sleep with it and sometimes I forget about it and sometimes I don't. But when it's on your arm, you see it everyday and you know who you are and I know what I have to do each day. I look at them sometimes and think, it's bloody hard, what a past I have had, other times I look at them and think, shit yeah, I've smashed that, I've got through it. So I get a lot out of them."

Another explained:

“It (cutting) reminded me I was alive by feeling severe pain. Since I’ve had the tattoos I don’t need to do that anymore because I look at my arms now and I am alive.”

“I got a different end result. I didn’t end up with a scar, I ended up with artwork.”

Somewhere between the pain and pleasure process, the initial part of the transformative state seemed to encourage interviewees to create parallels between the psychological and emotional pain they were experiencing at the time and the tattoo process itself. This may have allowed them to start working through and releasing some of their stress and difficulties they were trying to cope with.

“For me my tattoo felt like pain with a purpose. Because of the painful condition I suffer from it enabled me to feel normal as I was experiencing what others were experiencing and I could relate to them. My tattoo combined with mindfulness helps with the pain I experience. It works as a combination with everything, the breathing etc., but I think if this were not tattooed here it wouldn’t have the same effect. I know it is there and I can touch it, I can put my hands there.”

This process may have served as a space for safer renegotiation of the wearer’s traumatic experience(s), allowing a release of the highly pressed survival energies that may have been stored in the body, enabling them to let go of their trauma.

The interviewees were also found to build resiliency, often taking away an increased confidence in their own ability to cope with differing kinds of painful

and traumatic events within their lives including psychological and emotional pain. The significance of pain was seen to transform during the process of tattooing from a source of worry to one of empowering the wearer. Multiple interviewees described feeling a sense of pride and accomplishment when their tattoo had been completed and related this to increases in both personal strength and resilience. Peter Levine (2005) states that rather than intense emotion, the body sensation is the key to healing trauma.

So, although the process of receiving a tattoo remains physically and intrinsically associated to the idea of pain, all eight interviewees in this study still reflected that their experiences of the process of tattooing were positive, increasing their self-esteem and enabling them to feel better about themselves and also their bodies. They were seen to draw explicit parallels between the physical pain of experiencing a tattoo and the emotional/psychological pain, envisioning that their tattoo(s) provided them with a means of understanding and being able to work through this by means of the physical and somewhat cathartic experience.

Another theme that was prominent throughout the interview process was pain as a therapeutic tool and the function of self-inflicting pain through the process of tattooing. This theme can be linked to associations to the mental health discourse of body modifications as self-mutilations. The view of body modifications as self-mutilations is seen by some as quite pervasive but others have drawn links to the blood and pain suggesting suspicion and have linked the process to associations with death and illness (Pitts, 1998). The interviewees stories about the pain associated with tattooing, opened up ideas for challenging the mental health discourse of self-inflicted pain as pathological. It raises questions about how society may view pain within the contexts into which individuals insert themselves.

“I have always found that the process of getting the tattoo and going through the pain is a very introspective moment. I never read or listen to music....Its quite a meditative process and I think that’s why I know when I feel ready to get a new tattoo. Its like a time to pause and reflect on the changes that have happened and digest it in this special tattoo state.”

Throughout all eight interviews, the interviewees often made connections between physical symptoms and emotional and psychological distress they were experiencing around the time they received their tattoos, suggesting they made sense of their stressors and trauma as not just emotional and psychological, but also as an embodied experience.

Cortez (2013) argues that individuals make tattoo an effective tool for coping, healing and self-transformation. She emphasises that by the art of tattooing providing access to the brain, mind and body processes that may be necessary for successful negotiation of compounded, stressful and traumatic life periods or transitions, such practices can serve as a creative mechanism for survival.

The theme of pain and the process of tattooing combined with the knowing of what pain is so one can learn how to heal their emotional pain, is quite reasonable if we consider the pain associated with their trauma to be a result of oppression and oppressive in and also of itself. From an embodied perspective, if an individual wants to reclaim their body for themselves, to free themselves from an “embodied domination,” tattoo and the associated pain may provide opportunity for this.

Empowerment

The notion of shielding oneself and gaining strength through tattooing was discussed throughout the interviews. Some interviewees spoke of their tattoos in metaphors such as “wearing their heart on their sleeve” or “feeling protected by a warrior” so they could be stronger and protected from all things that may hurt them in a negative way. It empowered them to move past difficult times or challenge themselves to take on more challenges. Tattoos were found to give them a newfound strength, courage and self-confidence. This is illustrated by three differing respondent’s thoughts below:

“You wear your heart on your sleeve, well I literally do.”

“It’s like they are my own personal cheerleading squad.”

“I feel like they are like a warrior watching over me and protecting me.”

Pinderhughes (1989) states that empowerment requires the use of certain strategies that enable individuals to experience themselves as valuable, competent, strong and worthwhile, both as individuals and as members of any cultural group they may belong to (p. 111).

Multiple interviewees spoke of the importance of tattooing in changing how they would think about themselves and how it enabled them to feel strong and empowered. Going through the process of receiving a tattoo, combined with the reminder of its meaning and motivation which were attached to it, was seen to empower them to push forward in times of difficulty. They also felt more confident in their abilities to work through any problems that arise in everyday living. One interviewee stated the following:

“It increases my self-esteem when it’s personal and your carrying it all the time. It has enabled me to be a bit more outgoing and confident as a person. It has taken on somewhat of a healing process as you look inside yourself more. It helped me through my self-confidence issues and enabled me to find my inner self, letting myself feel more confident being me. Being able to be who I am was quite a powerful thing.”

Another acknowledged:

“Looking at them reminds me of what I like about myself. What I like about the life I have built around me and what life was like before.”

The notion of personal strength, courage and the belief in their own abilities to achieve what they wanted to, but to also overcome difficult times, enabled the symbols and images of each tattoo to empower individuals in many situations. The idea of empowerment was seen to extend beyond their own strength as some interviewees spoke of feeling empowered through having their identity and ancestors tattooed on their skin. One interviewee explained:

“It is my family and it is very spiritual, giving me strength and protection around me. It is like my ancestors are protecting me through their spirits and knowing this empowers me and I feel strong when I look at it. I know that I will get through anything and that I can achieve anything with my own strength but also their strength.”

The theme of empowerment is seen to serve as ongoing strength, but it also links into the following theme as individuals acknowledged feeling motivated when reminded of what their tattoo(s) mean for them.

Reminders and Motivation

Interviewees acknowledged that when they view their tattoo(s) or discuss them with others, they become engaged in a process of deeper encoding of these new messages of healing and reconstruction which was seen to serve as re-affirming their new “story” or “narrative” based around their inner motivations, survivorship and courage. Their tattoo(s) were seen then to become a constant reminder of an inner drive to “do well” and “be strong”. They were also a reminder of an event, period or a significant other in their lives that had been associated with a painful meaning (passing away), one that had become transformed into a source of strength, pride and motivation in the present moment and also moving forward in their lives. Interviewees discussed the relationship between their tattoo(s) and a significant other in their lives. Their tattoo was often seen to help with grieving the loss of the significant other, but also as a reminder of everything positive about them and how they could now live their lives with a part of them on their skin. As one participant discussed below:

“It is a reminder that he is always with me. He always encouraged me to make the most of time, so the watchstrap serves to motivate me to live my life to the fullest and makes me proud and happy to look at it everyday.”

Another acknowledged:

“My tattoos tell a story of my journey. They are symbolic to me, personal to me and I wear it with pride. I look at them everyday and it reminds me of where I was and where I am going. It is a positive motivation that I was lacking in the past.”

Tattoos serve as a permanent alteration of the body and transform it for better or worse. The permanence is one of the main factors that distinguish it from many other forms of bodywork (for example, hair, nails or even exercise). It has the power to alter the way a person views themselves and also alter the way that others may perceive them as well, especially those who may not know the wearer.

Individuals indicated that they were well aware of and considered the potential of tattoos to transform the way they think or feel about themselves and also that they may have a significant effect on how others may view them as well.

For all eight interviewees, the permanent mark of tattoo was seen to serve as an anchor for the memory of the tattoo process itself, the negotiation of pain and the ability to overcome this, a new way to move past a difficult situation, a new-found positive regard for themselves and positive thinking towards all areas of their life. They emphasised that it served as a mark of strength and a reminder of their own courage and depth of inner power that they possess. This was linked to times when they felt stressed or were experiencing difficulties in their lives and the importance of being able to look at their tattoo(s), at any time, any day, for the rest of their lives and the empowerment it served for them to move on from their present difficulties. The important factor here was found to be the positive thinking attached to their tattoo(s) and the reminder of other times they had overcome stressful and traumatic events, giving them a great sense of confidence and motivation to overcome their difficulties. This is illustrated by the examples below:

“I can look down at them and be reminded that what I am doing now is much better than who I was in the past. It gives me motivation and it makes me feel like a stronger person. It is acknowledging the past but encouraging me not to re-live it.”

“It reminds me that they would always be apart of me. My Māori ancestors living with me in the present but also in the future.”

“It reminds me that you can turn not so good things around. It has made my thoughts about myself much more positive by encouraging me to look at the positive aspects of life. I feel all the insights I have gained through hardship and difficult times are wrapped in my tattoos and when I look at them it gives me strength.”

Their tattoo(s) are a permanent source of inspiration to rise to any occasion which was acknowledged in the interviews to help them face their self-doubt and continue their own efforts to cope, self-heal and overcome challenges that they may continue to face in their everyday lives.

Being able to claim the full range of memories of a given traumatic event may serve to help individuals to better deal with the lasting impact. Marking their bodies with images and symbols associated with pain, strength, empowerment and pride in overcoming the difficulties may help them explore their memories in a more therapeutic manner. Reavey and Brown (2006) state that memories are seen to serve as active resources for expressions of agency or resistance. These memories may have multiple layers and such layers may hold within them evidence of both rebellion and pleasure but also pain and ambivalent emotions towards a traumatic event. In this way, individuals may actively construct meaning from their past experience to help them make sense of their present identity.

The Spiritual Nature of Tattooing

All eight interviewees described similar feelings around how their tattoos felt like a spiritual process and that the connection with their tattoo was more than skin deep. This included feeling more connected to not only themselves but also family/friends in the present but also those of whom had passed. One interviewee described how:

“It felt like a light had been shined down on me and the darkness had lifted and all of a sudden I felt like my ancestors were with me and protecting my spirit.”

The process of receiving their tattoo(s) in the given location and who completed the tattoo was also seen to impact on the spiritual nature felt by each of the interviewees. Some discussed receiving tattoos in places and by artists they felt extremely comfortable with, which suggests that the role of the artist and environment where the tattoo takes place, holds important value and meaning for certain individuals when receiving a tattoo. One interviewee explains:

“The artist really understood my story and my family background so I felt more comfortable and relaxed throughout the process. The environment was blessed thus to acknowledge the sacredness of the process and the spiritual feeling throughout was really special.”

The spiritual aspect assigned to the interviewees tattoos was seen to differ among individuals and differing cultures but a common theme was the notion that they felt connected to their tattoo and the anchors that it served for them both through the process of receiving it and up until the present day. For Māori interviewees especially, the sacred process of receiving a moko was

acknowledged as well as the spiritual feeling of receiving their family and family history on their body. All interviewees described that their emotions and inner pain felt uplifted which could be linked to the spiritual feeling both at the time of tattooing and post receiving the tattoo(s). The spiritual feeling was also seen to be linked in with the deep meanings associated to the tattoo(s) but also the pain associated with the process.

Personal Narratives

One key finding throughout the survey and interviews, that were seen as separate from the key themes, was the impact that personal narratives played in scripting their tattoos.

The interviewees were seen to construct new meanings for their psychological and emotional pain and their previous experiences, around the tattoo image they had decided to get and then literally transfer that given meaning onto their own bodies, making it very much a part of themselves. This constant reminder may encourage them to continually view, create, re-term and re-construct their own self-narratives of healing, which may enable them to better face potential difficulties with an increased confidence in their own capabilities.

A common theme among the interviewees narratives were epiphanies, which are defined as “those interactional moments that leave marks on people’s lives....In these moments, personal character is manifested and made apparent” (Denzin, 2001, p. 34).

Frank (1993) acknowledges that to be able to narrate your identity, you must in fact change your life; making epiphanies; in a sense a re-birth and a shift in an individual’s identity.

In one example, an epiphany occurred as a result of one interviewee's decision to submit themselves to pain in order to gain an insight into their emotional pain. In another example, one interviewee's epiphany comes through years of reflection on the trauma and results in the recognition that their self had been formed through the trauma. They discovered new information about themselves during the process of considering their choice of tattoo that had previously not been known to them.

"It started feeling like I was not adding onto the tattoo but more like, every time I got tattooed it almost felt like something that was already there was uncovered."

There was seen to be an importance of renewing its potency and transformative power, for every time each individual re-tells the story of their tattoo and its given meaning, either to others or to themselves, it was acknowledged to become stronger.

Themes were seen to cross over one another throughout the findings and in some cases multiple themes were seen to cross over with what the interviewee was describing. The example below displays the notion of pain, combined with self-transformation, control and empowerment.

"It was almost like a way of re-appropriating my body and making it my own and something hopeful. In retrospect I think it was something about the pain as well. It was something traumatic just like the surgery and recovering from it had been quite painful and I had no idea of what a tattoo would feel like but there was something re-assuring about inflicting this pain on myself rather than something that just happened to me."

CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION

This chapter summarises the results of this research project, which aimed to explore attitudes, experiences and reasons as to why individuals in Aotearoa New Zealand tattoo their bodies and the link to tattoos serving as a process of self-healing. I also discuss new directions for future research, including a more in-depth look into how tattoos may function as a mechanism for dealing with trauma and stress and how they help individuals achieve a process of self-healing.

The literature review offered an examination of the topics including: the history of tattooing, both in Aotearoa New Zealand and worldwide and its current revitalisation, functions of tattoo, body and mind processes and trauma and tattooing. Additionally, it explored self-healing and aspects of traditional healing and the relationship to tattooing.

The varying ways participants established and displayed aspects of the “self”, including trauma, stress and insecurities which were aided by the mechanism of their tattoo, holds important information as to the ways individuals are attempting to manipulate both their understanding of not only themselves, but also ways they are attempting to communicate that information and understanding to others around them.

Consciously and intentionally tattooing and altering their bodies during times of trauma, stress and transition, individuals told their stories of engaging in a process of self-transformation, healing and creation. Although some respondents sought out seeking their tattoos as a way of healing themselves, not all were found to seek or expect the process of self-healing that they went through.

The findings in this study provide evidence that tattoo, as practiced by participants in both the survey and interviews, acts as a creative, effective and increasingly accessible mechanism for achieving a process of self-healing.

Cortez (2013) argues that such practices have very important political implications for how individuals in today's society are potentially engaging in processes of creative healing to achieve a better wellbeing that is often associated with medicine or medical professionals. As the findings in this research displayed, nearly every person who took the survey acknowledged that tattoos may play a role in self-healing. These very high percentages may show that individuals throughout Aotearoa New Zealand are thinking about or discovering new ways to help with every day difficulties including; physical, emotional and psychological difficulties, as well as previous and current trauma.

The participants in this study are not simply utilising tattoo as a means of decoration of the self, but are seen to be using tattoo as a mechanism in which certain contradictory intersections come together in a complex, uniquely culturally situated and embodied experience. The findings suggest this lets them recreate their meaning of physical, emotional and psychological pain and assign it with a new meaning or significance.

The stories described by the individuals within the research are seen to contradict long established stereotypes of tattooed people, especially thoughts of tattooed individuals as impulsive, narrow-minded and thoughtless or deviant and self-destructive. Participants were seen to direct a large amount of attention and energy into choosing specific tattoos with great meaning and importance to them.

Several respondents through the survey and interviews chose to use metaphors to describe the role of their tattoos. Previous discussion has suggested that individuals assign a variety of meanings and roles to their tattoo(s). The tattoos have been acknowledged to act as anchors for aspects of an individual's personality, for significant others in their life (both past and present), their identity, and as a general locus for memories. The variety of participant metaphors support

the notion that there seem to be varying rules about the role of tattoos. Unlike traditional societies practice of tattooing (Tahitian, Samoan and Māori) in which tattoos generally are seen to display the same styles, culture and social designations, the practice amongst other cultures in Aotearoa New Zealand seem to utilise tattoos to represent whatever they want.

Velliquette's (2004) study argued for the significance of an individual's tattoo(s) role as anchors for personal identity. As individuals are bombarded with rapid and unpredictable change in modern society, she suggests that personal anchors needed for one's identity are lost as a result. From the responses throughout this study, the emerging significance of tattoos can be seen in terms of how they tell or create their story and how they then create their sense of self in what Velliquette (2004) describes as in the midst of a loss in traditional sources of identification throughout society.

Atkinson (2003b) suggested that by tattooing one's body, individuals may be actively and purposefully searching for culture through their physical alterations. Inscribing permanent tattoos as one's symbolic version of culture is also considered by Atkinson to represent one's symbolic version of the self's identity. He further states that one may consider this as a theory of tattooing as cultural memory and a redemption of cultural disintegration (Atkinson, 2003b).

As discussed in chapter two, the transitional rituals and rites of passage of past years, used in societies all over the world for the purposes of helping individuals and communities, recognise and accept an individual's new or changed state have for the most part been abandoned in modern Western society. Without these processes, individuals may be left without specific rituals or symbols which serve to mark physical, emotional and psychological life transitions. It may also take away the suggested cathartic release or adjustment to

their “self” which may be needed for individuals to be transitioned into their new status (community or individual transitions).

Feminist studies around tattoos have stated that women often see tattoos as a sign of freedom and liberation from oppressive conditions as it can allow them to construct or reconstruct their identity away from traditional ideals of beauty and femininity and move past significant traumas. It has been found that women often describe tattooing as a strengthening act that can enable them to take control over their lives, while also defying traditional roles of being weak, helpless and delicate (DeMello, 1995; Mifflin, 1997; Irwin, 2001).

However, contrasting views acknowledged by Alcina (2009), suggest that tattoos can also serve as a highly selective form of remembering that may involve selective forgetfulness as it can exclude perceptions of oneself that individuals do not want to incorporate into their story.

Atkinson (2003b) identified a noticeable gap in previous literature as most research in the area of tattooing was not focused on women. This study emphasised the growing idea that tattoos are becoming more popular with females in the present time, given the large difference between male and female participation in this study and previous statistics found in relation to today’s tattooing (Cortez, 2013; Alcina, 2009).

The idea of marking a passage or transition in life is also common, from a repressive state to a liberating experience, such as leaving an abusive relationship and reclaiming their bodies back from male control (Irwin, 2001).

With two of the three most popular reasons found in this research for acquiring a tattoo, being to mark a major transition or event in one’s life, it is important to consider why individuals were choosing to heal through this process. Further to this finding, interviewees acknowledged that they would often get their

most meaningful tattoos at times when they were experiencing great stress, trauma or anxiety; times associated with transition and instability, when they felt some aspect of their identity was changing or threatened and they were not sure of their own ability to manage or adjust to the new roles or challenges. The process of receiving their tattoo enabled them to transition similar to ways in which historical rights of passage functioned. Participants were able to decrease or stop unwanted negative thoughts associated with certain events and move forward with an increased and more secure sense of self and maintain a more assured and confident place in their communities (Featherstone, Hepworth & Turner, 1991).

It has been stated that teaching the body a new skill is not as simple as reading an instruction manual and acting upon it. A new skill, for example projecting strength in the case of the interviewees, requires repetition until it becomes familiar enough to become “second nature” (Ledar, 1990, p. 32).

Cortez (2013) has proposed that similar to somatic experiencing, the process of tattooing may help and enable wearers to focus on their perceived body sensations, which in turn may help restore the self-regulating function of their autonomic nervous system effected by the trauma and stress. By proving their ability to withstand pain, tattooing seems to help restore many of the participants’ confidence in their own ability to get through other types of pain, installing a sense of strength, courage and pride.

This study showed how the participants use the physical experience of pain through the practice of tattooing to achieve therapeutic effects and to also construct positive identities. It could be argued that tattooing only addresses the immediate self-body relationship. The body is an important site of communication, however at times it is also kept hidden under individuals clothing and the power of such communication is lessened. Tattooing as a resistance therefore, is seen to

take on more of an individual meaning rather than a social meaning as individuals who have re-appropriated their bodies can hide their tattoos and still live through their hidden meanings without another person viewing them.

This study also showed how individuals used the painful embodied process of tattooing to achieve therapeutic effects and to re-script, create or transform positive identities. It also uncovered alternative ways of conceptualising tattooing, painful embodied experiences, body reclamation projects and emotional trauma release. It offered insights into how individuals break apart their own views on self and how they took ownership of their identities. Also, how they tried to positively influence their own environments, seek healing both inside and out and incorporate that healing both within and outside of traditional therapeutic environments.

Some interviewees practices of body reclamation started with an understanding of the ways their body had already been inscribed for them without their consent. This was often through violence but also included losing an unborn child or another family member. This awareness did not assure the success or failure in their reclamation of their bodies, but it does suggest that through seeking alternative meanings and rewriting the trauma associated with their experiences may challenge the silencing and normalising pressures people can face, especially in relation to victimisation (Pitts, 1998).

Although for some individual's tattoos may serve similar functions to self-injury, the findings from each interviewee suggest that this is only in a positive form. Similar to previous findings that have stated tattoos may help an individual stop self-injury and offer a way to cover up their scars (Lader, 2006; Cortez, 2013), this research has also discovered that individuals may use tattoos to re-

script and transform scars and previous self-injury behaviours into something more positive and something that they are proud of.

Similar physical and emotional feelings and releases were seen to be experienced across both gaining a tattoo and similarly to self-injury (Lader, 2006; Sutton, 2007), however interviewees reported that since tattooing their bodies they had not engaged in self-injury and were generally in a much more positive frame of mind. This may be because of the tattooed image(s) that they were proud of or the re-scripted positive narratives that they had associated to their tattoo(s); in comparison to the negative views of their self-injury scars. It may have allowed them to re-appropriate and heal their bodies whilst at the same time heal the psychological and emotional difficulties discussed relating to their previous self-injury behaviour.

It is clear through the findings of this research that pain is recognised as an important factor and part of the healing process through tattooing. If, as recent studies looking into trauma have suggested, the effects of trauma, stress and other everyday difficulties can become “trapped” in the individual’s body, then it would seem fair to suggest that the most effective therapeutic treatments would involve the psyche but also the body as well (King, 2013).

The art form of tattooing as a form of resistance is seen as another paradox as it simultaneously makes the body “louder” by marking it and also can make it “silent” by hiding the symbols or images of re-appropriating (Pitts, 1998). Participants in this study suggest that this process of re-appropriating oneself is more about their own inner processes as opposed to what others see or what others assign to the tattooed individual. The main process of self-healing involving others was seen to be the narratives expressed by the tattooed individual

and the affirmation engaged in each time they re-told their story, which served to confirm the key themes found in the previous section.

It is seen that capitalism has commodified the body, demanding that one becomes fluid and available to the short lasting and ever changing demands of fashion. The fashionable body therefore is never really committed to one thing as it is always looking for a makeover and may be constantly modifying itself in the short term through such modifications as manicures and haircuts. Fashion does not encourage permanence and permanence does not encourage further consumption beyond the initial purchase. Permanence implies confidence, satisfaction and self-sufficiency, suggesting that permanent body modifications are often vilified and discriminated against as they are seen as a threat to consumption and capitalism (Fisher, 2002). There is a certain irony as tattoos may now be considered fashionable and are being “packaged” as a current resistance to capitalism (Irwin, 2003).

Psychologist Bryant-Davis argues that experiencing discrimination, racism and biases are traumatic in and of themselves (Bryant-Davis, 2005). Individuals experiencing such negativity may be particularly vulnerable to trauma and emotional stress. It poses the challenge of maintaining a coherent sense of self whilst being faced with multiple and quite often contradictory subjectivities of trying to negotiate unfamiliar or new systems. It has been argued that moving between and among differing social and cultural worlds, whilst also being burdened by the stressors of marginalisation, can increase the level of stress and anxieties experienced and causing the individual to feel threatened over their sense of safety, sense of self and may cause the individual to feel overwhelmed and/or powerless (Anzaldúa, 1990). Two interviewees discussed their reclamation of their personal and cultural identity through their tattoos. Both had come

through periods in their life where they had felt discriminated against and their tattoos were acknowledged to re-script and maintain their sense of self and where they had come from. This may be linked to the renaissance of moko but also the Māori culture within Aotearoa New Zealand.

For Māori and many other cultures, the processes involved in the art form of tattoo/tā moko/tatau maybe understood within a holistic framework/model such as Te Whare Tapa Whā, which is used to understand Māori health and wellbeing. Throughout the interview and survey process, it became very evident that the important aspects of tattooing and the link to self-healing for individuals mirrored the “four corners” of the Māori model of health and wellbeing, Te Whare Tapa Whā. The Whare Tapa Whā model emphasises the point that Māori health and wellbeing should be understood through four main areas including taha whānau/social wellbeing, taha tinana/physical wellbeing, taha wairua/spiritual wellbeing and taha hinengaro/mental wellbeing.

Important themes identified through this study show that for individuals being tattooed, the link to self-healing is associated with factors categorised as identity, pain and the process of tattooing, reminders/motivation, empowerment and the sacred or spiritual process of receiving a tattoo. Each of these factors seem to align to a specific part of the Whare Tapa Whā model. The whānau aspect of the model is reflected through the theme of identity and also through the interviewee’s expression of their desire to represent their family through their tattoo(s) and also to remember past family members or ancestors through the process. It was also linked to self-acceptance of who they were as an individual, and also who they were as a part of their family and wider community. Having family represented in their tattoo(s) was central to a better wellbeing as they felt whole and connected to them. Interviewees also stated that their social confidence

was seen to increase as having a better sense of self and family enabled them to interact amongst society in a more confident way.

Hinengaro or mental wellbeing is seen to be associated with the reminders and motivations or empowerment theme, as all interviewees commented that thinking about their past and future with specific motivations and positive associations was critical in their journey of self-healing. The representation of positive thinking to remembering significant others and significant events from their past through their tattoo was also seen as very important in all interviewees responses as it also served as a reminder of their resilience and determination which aided in the healing process.

The tinana/physical aspect of the model is represented by the overwhelming theme of the presence of pain and how important it was acknowledged to be throughout the process. Tinana includes the individuals own physical body but also their environment, so incorporated into this was the environment of the tattoo studio and the presence of sounds, smells and the therapeutic nature described by some interviewees. Interviewees all described feeling alive by experiencing the pain and that it made their story or narrative seem like it was living within them through their tattoo. The findings also suggest that the pain was associated with a meditative feeling providing a release of built up emotions and inner pains for individuals. Their tattoos in turn increased their self-confidence and enabled them to get out of their house and into their community.

Lastly, wairua/spiritual was seen to incorporate a number of themes within this area of the model. Some interviewees described the process of receiving their tattoo(s) as sacred and spiritual. It was reported to protect them, link them to past family, enable them to transition in their life, enabled them to feel a sense of pride,

self-worth or an increased self-efficacy. Also, as described in the tinana aspect of the model, the sense of feeling a cathartic release or experience of a meditative feeling was acknowledged to be very spiritual and healing for almost all interviewees. This link to the Whare Tapa Wha model and areas that were found to be associated with self-healing, may indicate that for some individuals in Aotearoa New Zealand the process of healing through tattoos mirrors similar processes found to be important for the wellbeing of Māori people.

A better understanding of differing cultural values and beliefs towards traditional healing systems could aid discussions around how varying healing systems meet the health needs of a wide range of people including indigenous communities. Mainstream approaches to healing and health could learn from traditional healing systems with the goal of attempting to integrate indigenous, traditional and Western medicine to ensure that all cultures integrity is maintained.

Te Awekotuku et al., (2007) suggest that through the journey and process of receiving a moko, selective trauma and recovery is engaged in and the state of consciousness is altered. Through this the individual encounters the spirit; the connection that is often appropriated from someone or something else. The findings of this study suggest that the wearers of tattoos from varying cultures experience similar processes throughout thinking about getting a tattoo, the process of receiving a tattoo and post receiving their tattoo(s). The spiritual elements of tattooing maybe linked to not only incorporating family, tributes, reminders or symbols of empowerment, but it may provide a sense of heightened positivity and enables the individual to experience something very unique, something only the wearer could describe and discover.

Some see trauma as unhealthy, non-adaptive cognitions that diminish the ability of individuals to move beyond their experiences and remaining stuck with

what they have been through. For individuals to effectively recover, they may need to develop new or alternative self-scripts and go some way to break the cycle and start moving towards a new, healthy frame of reference (Bryant-Davis, 2005). Tattoo may provide individuals with a new way of thinking about their past or present experiences and maybe used as a mechanism to enable them to access and re-write their unpleasant/traumatic events, thus starting the process to emotional, spiritual and psychological healing and recovery.

Given the literature on both historical and present day tattoo practices, the mind-body aspects of trauma and stress and paying attention to the responses of participants in this research, it is fair to come to an understanding of the art form of tattoo as having the ability to act as a potential mechanism for self-creation, self-transformation and self-healing. By tattoo tapping into the mind-brain-body continuum, it can potentially serve as a tool to help restore health and balance to people suffering from current or previous traumas and difficulties.

It is possible that the “tattoo renaissance” will eventually change the landscape of social opinion and tolerance towards the art form of tattooing, leaving these acts of self-healing and transformation powerful beyond the individual themselves, bringing awareness of their journey not only to their community but to the more dominant health practices.

Similar to previous theories, ancient findings and current conclusions, one thing that is certain is that tattoos have always been documented to have some form of a healing effect on people. Over time this healing process and function has varied as to whether it be healing on the spirit, the physical body, the psychological wellbeing or all of the previous. The findings from this research suggest that all of the above have been achieved by varying participants as shared throughout this study. The importance of their tattoo/moko/tatau is undeniable and

the function that it has served for each person varies according to their life experiences, but one finding that was found across all interviewees was that they would potentially not be in the positive space or mind state that they are in today without them. The findings within this research have emphasised similar findings from recent previous studies looking at the healing potential of tattoos (Cortez, 2013; Armstrong de Almeida, 2009). The notion of re-scripting, transforming and healing through tattoo is something that is being discovered in a range of countries, across a variety of differing cultures.

Tattoos are encoded with a broad range of thoughts and emotions. By inspecting the stories of New Zealand tattoo wearers, we learn how the art form is not merely a rampant outcome of uncontrolled emotionality, but it is one stage in a greater process of individual and social experience of affect. By letting go of historical and presumably preferred theoretical constructions of tattooing and engaging with tattoo enthusiasts, we may begin to appreciate alternative ideas, values and beliefs about this form of body modification.

Given the findings and responses, I believe that the art form of tattooing may allow individuals to achieve a process of self-healing and may also provide an alternative option for them as they struggle with difficulties in their lives, including trauma, stress, loss and transitions.

Limitations of this research

The present study has several limitations. First of all, the survey and interviews represent only a small selection or sample size of tattooed individuals within Aotearoa New Zealand. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalised to all individuals or cultures within this study. It should be noted however, that the results of small quantitative or qualitative studies are not typically generalised, but

rather are normally used to generate deeper understanding of the researched sample.

Secondly, there is research to suggest bias may exist as the researcher conducted the interviews, translations and analysis independently. Previous research in this area suggests that bias maybe found in qualitative research when human participants, narratives, observations and interpretations are involved (Beck, 2009).

Thirdly, as with all studies that rely on the information provided by human beings, attention should be paid to the fallibility of human memory. The experiences provided by participants were reconstructed by memory of actual events that took place, in some cases months and in some examples years earlier. It should be noted that these accounts maybe subject to distortion and reinterpretation as it may likely have taken place over time.

Further, this study incorporates a number of tattooing processes including styles from varying cultures. This may confuse readers and not allow them to consider if the participants were discussing what they call “tattoo”, “moko” or “tatau.”

Lastly, this study has mainly focused on the function as to which tattoos may serve as a process of self-healing for the wearer. It is acknowledged that this is not the main reason as to why individuals were found to tattoo their bodies in Aotearoa New Zealand, but is one that is incorporated into a number of the main reasons, for example expressing the self, in memory/tribute of someone, to remember a period/event in a person’s life and family heritage or to represent family, among others.

Suggestions for further study

One possible suggestion for further research is a more comprehensive and detailed study of the mental, physical and emotional processes associated with the experiences of the art of tattooing as individuals are engaging with the process as they become tattooed. Participants would need to be identified before they receive their tattoo to enable complete documentation of the actual experience, including their thoughts and emotions prior to receiving their tattoo, but also during (including the physical element) and post receiving their tattoo. This would allow a more current and full account of their experience.

Another suggestion for further research would be to expand the research to increase the sample size across Aotearoa New Zealand. This would enable more generalised conclusions to be reached and give a more detailed picture of how tattoos may serve as a function of self-healing. The interview durations should be prolonged to give participants more space and time to recall, respond and supplement their responses. Also, the addition of a separate interviewer or analyst may decrease the likelihood of bias to gain more reliable data.

In reflection on the process and outcome of the current study, consideration for future research should also pay attention to the notion that tattoos may in fact serve as a function of self-healing for people and incorporate more time and resources into this rewarding topic.

By being open-minded practitioners and instead of asking ourselves how healthy the clients are we are working with, we should hold up all possibilities whilst working with them. We need to be open and ask ourselves about our own beliefs around healing and trauma. By exploring an individual's own healing practices with our support opens up a space for more expanded healing to take

place and eliminates alienating the individual for incorporating different or new practices (Armstrong de Almeida, 2009).

My experiences during this research have led me to a deeper understanding of the ways in which some individuals are dealing with every day difficulties, trauma and life transitions and ways the art form of tattooing has assisted in their individual healing journey. The original thoughts and ideas that prompted this study have been satisfied as I feel privileged to have been given the chance to study this rewarding topic, but also meet a group of individuals whom I now admire greatly for their strength shown but also for sharing their personal journeys around tattooing.

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APPENDICES:

Appendix A: Research Flyer

do you have a Tattoo?



My name is Brent Membery. I am a student at the University of Waikato. I would like to invite you to participate in my research looking at why individuals in Aotearoa/New Zealand tattoo their bodies, who they are and if tattoos can act as a way of self-healing/help for that individual (Self-healing has been described as the process of accessing your inner powers to create better health, (Self-healing Research Foundation, 2004). More details provided in the survey.

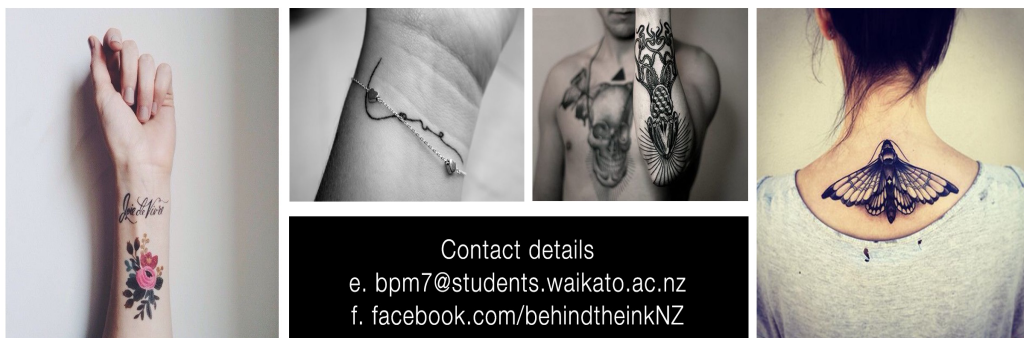
Aotearoa/New Zealand has a long history of tattoos, Ta Moko (Maori tattoo) and Tatau (Pacific tattoo) as well as tattoos from other diverse cultures/ethnicities. It is my aim to investigate reasons why people in Aotearoa/New Zealand have chosen to have tattoo/Ta Moko/Tatau (and other) art work on their body.

You will be required to complete an online survey. All information is confidential and anonymous.

Thank you

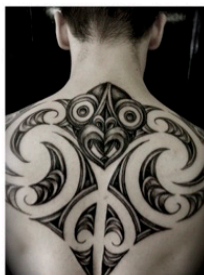


Click here to take part in the survey



Contact details
 e. bpm7@students.waikato.ac.nz
 f. facebook.com/behindtheinkNZ

Appendix B: Information sheet (survey) for participants



Information



My name is Brent Membery, I am a student at the University of Waikato. I would like to invite you to participate in my research looking at why individuals in Aotearoa/New Zealand tattoo their bodies, who they are and if tattoos can act as a way of self-healing for that individual. Aotearoa/New Zealand has a long history of tattoos, Moko (Maori tattoo) and Tatau (Pacific tattoo) as well as tattoos from other diverse cultures. It is my aim to investigate reasons among Aotearoa/New Zealand's diverse ethnicities as to why they have partaken in tattoo/Moko/Tatau or differing terms for work on their body.

You will be required to:

- Read through/accept the consent form if you so wish
- Tell your story through answering the online survey questions
- Answer each question (most are multi choice, some are written enabling you to discuss your thoughts and some are scales)

Data will remain anonymous and confidential:

Contact details and your name will only appear if you continue on with the study and not at all on the survey data. Demographic details will remain anonymous and be used for analytic purposes only. Voluntary and informed consent is required before participating in this study. Consent forms and data will be kept securely at the University of Waikato or under lock and key security for a period of three years at which point the data will be destroyed.

Participation in this study is voluntary - You are not required to participate and are free to withdraw at any time without question or negative consequence.

Thank you for taking the time to share your story, experiences and being apart of this study looking at tattoos in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

If you have any enquiries regarding your participation in this study feel free to contact the researcher:

Researcher: Brent Membery

School of Psychology at the University of Waikato

Email: bpm7@students.waikato.ac.nz

Phone: 0274201339



Appendix C: Information letter (interviews) for participants



Hello Mr/Ms

My Name is Brent and I am conducting research looking into tattoos as part of my Masters Thesis (Behind the Ink NZ).

Thank you so much for sharing your story through my survey. It is much appreciated. You have shared that your tattoo has helped you heal in some form and you are interested in being apart of the next step in the research.

This will involve you sharing more of your story in more detail. It will be an interview type process (30-60 minutes) where we will meet and go through some questions I have prepared. The interview will be recorded for the purpose of the study but all your details will remain completely anonymous.

The interview will be conducted in the most convenient quiet location which best suits you such as a library, coffee shop or home. If there is quite a distance to travel we can look into other options such as Skype if you have access to this. My first preference would be to do the interview in person so that the voice recording is clear and gathers all of the information.

If this is something you feel you would like to be a part of, then I would appreciate you getting in touch with me at the details provided below. If you are not comfortable and would prefer not to be a part of the research, then I completely understand.

Thank you so much for your support and I look forward to hearing back from you and more of your story.

Regards

Brent Membery

School of Psychology at the University of Waikato

Email: bpm7@students.waikato.ac.nz

Phone: 0274201339

Appendix D: Information sheet (interviews) for participants

Interview Information

First name _____

Time _____ Date _____

Interview location _____

My name is Brent Membery. I am a student at the University of Waikato. I would like to invite you to participate in my research to look at why individuals in Aotearoa/New Zealand tattoo their bodies, who they are and if tattoos can act as a way of self-healing for that individual. Self-healing has been described as the process of accessing your inner powers to create better health (Self-healing Research Foundation, 2004). More details provided in the survey. Aotearoa/New Zealand has a long history of tattoos, Ta Moko (Maori tattoo) and Tatau (Pacific tattoo) as well as tattoos from other diverse cultures/ethnicities. It is my aim to investigate reasons why people in Aotearoa/New Zealand have chosen to have tattoo/ Ta Moko/Tatau (and other) art work on their body.

In order to do this, I am interviewing participants such as yourself about their experiences with their own tattoo(s), Ta Moko, Tatau or other reference from within their individual culture. My goal is to hear their stories, understand their reasons and better understand the ways in which tattoos might have the capacity to change not only the bodies but also the minds and other aspects of the self, such as self-healing.

Important information to know before the interview:

- The School of Psychology at the University of Waikato has given permission for this research to be carried out (see consent form).
- With your permission, the interview will be recorded.
- The interview is confidential and you will remain anonymous, meaning that no comments will be associated with your name in the research document. No other data will be used from the interview that may identify you.
- You are free to withdraw from this interview at any point with no consequence and the transcript will not be used.
- A transcript of the interview will be written up and you will get a copy to make sure that it is correct.

The interview will take approximately one hour to complete. You will need to be 18 years or older to participate. As stated above, if at any time you feel uncomfortable, need a break or if you decide you wish to pull out from the interview, you may do so without any consequence.

Thank you for your time and for agreeing to share your experiences with me. It is much appreciated.

Is there anything you would like to know before we start? Do you have any questions?

Appendix E: Survey questions

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

PART 1: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

- Were you born in New Zealand or do you currently live in New Zealand (permanent resident)? (if not the survey will come to an end)
 - Yes
 - No

- What city/town do you currently live in? (can be a foreign city/town if living there but born in New Zealand)

- What is your gender?
 - Male
 - Female

- How old are you?

- What is your ethnicity?
 - New Zealand European
 - Māori
 - Samoaan
 - Cook Islands
 - Tongan
 - Niuean
 - Chinese
 - Indian
 - Korean
 - Japanese
 - African
 - Other (such as Dutch, French, German, Middle Eastern, Latin American) Please state

- What is your religion?
 - No religion

Christian

Buddhist

Hindu

Muslim

Jewish

Other religion (please state what it is)

- Where would you place yourself on the socio-economic spectrum?

Poor

Lower middle-class

Middle-class

Upper middle-class

Wealthy

- What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Pre-finishing high school

Finished high school

University or other degree

Postgraduate qualification

- Are you currently?

Working full-time

Working part-time

Studying/student

Studying and working

Unemployed and not studying

Retired

- Which work industry best describes your current position?

Retail

Hospitality (hotels, fast food, restaurant etc.)

Beauty (hairdresser, beautician etc.)

Private sector (banking, insurance, travel agent etc.)

Trades (builder, plumber, electrician, painter etc.)

Motor (repairs, services etc.)

- Personal care (children, home help, nursing etc.)
 - Public service (teachers etc.)
 - Agriculture (farming etc.)
 - Creative industries (designer, tattooist, photographer etc.)
 - Other (please specify)
-

PART 2: TATTOOS, EXPERIENCES, ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS

- Select one or more of the following that best describes your ink: (the term tattoos will be used in the remaining questions as this study is looking generally and not specifically at one type)
 - Tattoo
 - Tā moko
 - Tatau
 - Other (please state)

- How many tattoos do you have?
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5 or more

- How old were you when you got your first tattoo?
(age slider)

- I have at least one family member/friend who has at least one tattoo:
 - True
 - False
 - Don't know

- Is your tattoo(s)?
 - Small
 - Large (including sleeves)
 - A mix of both

- Whilst wearing your normal clothes, is/are your tattoo(s):
 - Visible
 - Not visible
 - Mix of both visible and non-visible

- How long ago did you get your most recent tattoo?
 - Within the last month
 - 2-6 months
 - 7-12 months
 - More than a year ago

- How likely is it that you will continue to add to your tattoos?
 - Not likely
 - Somewhat likely
 - Very likely

- Have you been tattooed outside of New Zealand?
 - Yes
 - No

- Do you ever cover your tattoo(s) up with clothing or other means?
 - Yes
 - No

- Do you cover them up for any of the following reasons? (choose all that apply)
 - Employment
 - University
 - Parents/family
 - Religion
 - Other (please specify)

- Do you regret any of your tattoos?
 - Yes (please state why if comfortable)
 - No

- Have you ever had a tattoo covered up? (tattooed over or removed via laser treatment)
 - Yes
 - No
- Why did you get a cover up/laser treatment?
- There are many reasons to get a tattoo. Do any of these apply to you? Please choose up to 3 and rank them in order of importance with 1 being the most important and 3 being the least important (2 in the middle)

I think they look good

I like to collect and wear art

To express myself

To have something special/unique

To feel more rebellious

To feel more attractive

For help getting past a significant/traumatic event

Empowerment

It makes me look better

It is fashionable

My friends/group have them

Sexual attractiveness

I used it as a way of self-healing (any reason)

Just wanted it/them

Family heritage or to represent family (Whakapapa)

To have things I like tattooed on me

In memory/tribute of someone

To remember a period/event in my life

To be an individual

It/they symbolize who I want to be

For spiritual reasons

To represent my culture

Other please specify (and add either 1, 2 or 3)

- Tell me about the reasons you have selected (why these reasons? Explain in a few of sentences)

- Does your tattoo(s) relate to any particular group/community tradition? (choose all that apply)
 - Gang
 - Cultural
 - Military
 - Religious
 - Athletic
 - Club
 - Music
 - Prison
 - Artistic
 - Other (please specify)
 - No it does not

- Before getting tattooed, my feelings about myself and my body were generally positive:
 - Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree

- After getting tattooed, my feelings about myself are generally more positive than they were before getting tattooed:
 - Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree

- Does having a tattoo increase someone's sexual attractiveness?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Unsure

- Are tattoos fashion?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Unsure

- In general, I think of people with tattoos as being (5 meaning "strongly agree", 1 meaning "strongly disagree" and 3 being neutral):

Independent	1	2	3	4	5
Sexy	1	2	3	4	5
Attractive	1	2	3	4	5
Self confident	1	2	3	4	5
Independent	1	2	3	4	5
Trustworthy	1	2	3	4	5
Aggressive	1	2	3	4	5
Well educated	1	2	3	4	5
Intelligent	1	2	3	4	5
Capable	1	2	3	4	5

- In your opinion, would having one or more tattoos have a positive or negative effect on the following areas of your life? (positive, negative or neutral/no effect)
 - My own self esteem/self worth
 - Acceptance by my peers
 - My family relationships
 - My sexual attractiveness
 - Advancement in my job career

- I have experienced the following situations in my life (check all that apply):
 - Severe illness or injury
 - Death of someone close to me
 - Divorce or separation from a domestic partner
 - Loss of employment or other financial support
 - Emotional abuse
 - Natural disaster (e.g. earthquake, cyclone, flood)
 - Physical abuse/assault
 - Sexual abuse/assault
 - Abortion
 - Miscarriage
 - None of the above

- I have sought professional help/counseling for one or more of the situations described in the previous question?
 - Yes
 - No

- Did getting a tattoo help you (in any way) with any of those situations?
 - Yes (please explain how)
 - No

- I have experienced the following (check all that apply):
 - Sleeplessness
 - Panic attacks
 - Eating disorder
 - Anxiety
 - Substance abuse
 - Abrupt mood swings (e.g. rage reactions, shame)
 - Difficulty coping with the loss of a loved one
 - Nightmares/night terrors
 - Stress-related head, neck or abdominal pain
 - Depression

Suicidal thoughts
 Amnesia/forgetfulness
 Visual hallucinations or “flashbacks”
 None of the above

- I have sought professional help/counseling for one or more of the symptom(s)/condition(s) described in the previous question?
 Yes
 No

- Did getting a tattoo help you (in any way) with any of the previous symptom(s)/condition(s)?
 Yes (please explain how)
 No

- In my own experience, modifications of the body (e.g. tattoos) can reflect modifications in my mind and spirit?
 Yes
 No
 Unsure

PART 3: SELF-HEALING AND PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Self-healing

Please read the following on self-healing to answer the next 3 questions

What is it?

Self-healing has been described as the process of accessing your inner powers to create better health (Self-healing Research Foundation, 2004).

It is the process of recovery (most commonly trauma and psychological disturbances) that is carried out by the individuals through their own motivations and instinct.

Self-healing has been seen to improve both the psychological and physical conditions of a person. Research confirms that this can be achieved through

numerous means, such as imagery, meditation, fitness exercises, breathing techniques and relaxation techniques (Fashing, 2008).

Changes that can be attributed to self-healing include:

Decrease in stress

Improved sleep

More relaxed

Improvements in emotional tensions, depression, anger and other emotions

Increase in social activity (enhancement in relationships)

Thinking becomes more positive

Increase in motivation

Feeling better than before

Re-discovery

Empowerment

Peacefulness/Calmness

- Can tattoos have a healing affect on someone?
 - Yes
 - No

- Has any tattoo(s) helped you heal in any way (from the examples shown on the page on self-healing)?
 - Yes
 - No

- How has your tattoo(s) had a healing effect on you (what have you noticed about yourself)?

- Has your tattoo(s) changed in meaning from when you got it until now?
 - Yes (please say a little bit about why if comfortable)
 - No

- Would you like to be a part of the next step of this research talking about your story, tattoo(s) and self-healing?
Yes/No
- Please leave your first name only and a contact number or email address (all details will remain confidential and anonymous):
- Would you like to receive a summary of the findings from this survey?
Yes (please provide an email address)
No
- Thank you for taking part in this survey.

Appendix F: Interview questions

Interview questions

Personal experience/history through tattoo:

Tell me about your tattoos/Ta Tā moko/Tatau (age when first tattooed, how did you come to think about getting tattooed, what was life like around that time?)

How many do you have?

What do your tattoos mean to you?

Tell me a bit about how you decided to get tattooed and the meaning attached for you?

Are some of your tattoos more personal than others?

Why that location on your body?

Why that tattoo? What does it signify for you?

How close after the significant event did you get it?

Has your tattoo(s) changed in meaning since you got it/them? How?

If your (favourite/most meaningful) tattoo could speak, what do you think it would say?

Healing through tattoo:

How has your tattoo(s) helped you?

Have you noticed any changes within yourself (such as thinking) or behaviour since you got the tattoo?

What sort of changes did/have you noticed?

What was life like before/at the time of and after getting your tattoo(s)?

Is there anything we have not discussed that you would like to talk about?

Appendix G: Waikato University Ethics approval

School of Psychology
The University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton 3240,
New Zealand

Phone 64-7-856 2889
Facsimile 64-7-858 5132
www.waikato.ac.nz/psychology



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

18 June 2014

Brent Membro
5 Holcroft Place
Rototuna
Hamilton

Dear Brent

Ethics Approval Application – # 14:32
Title: Behind the ink

Thank you for your ethics application which has been fully considered and approved by the Psychology Research and Ethics Committee.

Please note that approval is for three years. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of this letter, you must request reapproval.

If any modifications are required to your application, e.g., nature, content, location, procedures or personnel these will need to be submitted to the Convenor of the Committee.

I wish you success with your research.

Yours sincerely

Professor Michael O'Driscoll
Convenor
Psychology Research and Ethics Committee
School of Psychology
University of Waikato

Appendix H: Consent form

Consent Form



RESEARCHER'S COPY

Research Project: Behind the ink NZ

Name of Researcher: Brent Membery

Name of Supervisor (if applicable): Jo Thakker and Armon Tamatea

I have received an information sheet about this research project or the researcher has explained the study to me. I have had the chance to ask any questions and discuss my participation with other people. Any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in this research project and I understand that I may withdraw at any time. If I have any concerns about this project, I may contact the convenor of the Research and Ethics Committee. Professor Michael O'Driscoll (School of Psychology), Tel: 07 838 4466 ext 8899 and email: m.odriscoll@waikato.ac.nz)

I would like to receive a summary of the findings at the completion of the research:

Yes

No

Email address or post address.....

Participant's Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____