



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

Research Commons

<http://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/>

## Research Commons at the University of Waikato

### Copyright Statement:

The digital copy of this thesis is protected by the Copyright Act 1994 (New Zealand).

The thesis may be consulted by you, provided you comply with the provisions of the Act and the following conditions of use:

- Any use you make of these documents or images must be for research or private study purposes only, and you may not make them available to any other person.
- Authors control the copyright of their thesis. You will recognise the author's right to be identified as the author of the thesis, and due acknowledgement will be made to the author where appropriate.
- You will obtain the author's permission before publishing any material from the thesis.

**Art, The Aesthetics, and Ethics of Tattooing at Flax Roots  
Tattoo Studio**

A thesis  
submitted in fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree  
of  
**Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology**  
at  
**The University of Waikato**  
by  
**MANDY SHAVER**



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

2018

## **Abstract**

Flax Roots Tattoo Studio, a tattoo business in Hamilton, Waikato, New Zealand, offers clients different styles of tattooing to choose from, i.e. Moko, Traditional European, Portrait, and Traditional American. Tattoo artists and their clients differ in ethnicity, nationality, religion, sex, occupation, age, hobbies, and so on. Anthropological research and philosophical insight provided the framework texts for my case study. My fieldwork consisted of semi-structured interviews and photographs of artists and clients. By participating in tattooing, these individuals influence the art and the aesthetic tastes of their local culture. Additionally, tattoo artists follow an ethical code that dictates how to run their business, preserve their art, and protect their clients. By choosing Flax Roots Tattoo Studio as my fieldwork site, I was able to answer the questions: 1. How do tattoo artists and their clients engage with and shape tattoo art and its aesthetic at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio? ; and 2. How do these tattoo artists' ethics influence their relationships with their clients and art?

*Keywords:* aesthetic, agency, anthropology, art, culture, ethics, ethnography, Gell, Hamilton, Moko, Maori, Iban, Kelabit, tattoo, tattooing, tattoo studio

## **Acknowledgements**

Many thanks to the artists, Marc Wymer, Makkala Rose, Brandon Martin, and Ali Selliman, for welcoming me into the atmosphere of Flax Roots Tattoo Studio. Along with these artists, I thank the clients who were willing to be photographed and interviewed. Thanks to Gwenda Pennington for helping me navigate my scholarship. Thanks to Dr. Cathy Colborne, Dr. Kirstine Moffat, and the Postgraduate Studies Office for finding me a place at the Anthropology department within the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Waikato and offering valuable advice. I also thank Program Administrator for Social Sciences, Francis Douch, for leading me through the graduate funding paperwork. I thank Dr. Raymond Richards for initially paving my way to a successful PhD and his advice throughout the dissertation process. I especially thank my secondary supervisor, Dr. Justine Kingsbury for strongly supporting me while being critical of my work. She provided continual guidance through the dissertation process. My chief supervisor, Dr. Tom Ryan, helped clarify my thoughts and put them in an appropriate context for an anthropological case study.

Outside of my studies, my partner and husband, Ross Curnow, helped by listening to podcasts with me, backpacking with me, and arguing about the little details of most things to help us each become better persons. He is the wonderful reward I did not ask for from my time researching in New Zealand.

I have dearly missed my family and friends in the United States throughout my time in New Zealand. If it was not for their support, I do not think I would have attempted postgraduate study abroad, let alone attempted my earlier degrees. A special thanks to my friend, Carol Christensen, for the guidance on words about art

history and providing a place to recuperate in Saratoga Springs. I also thank these family members: Kimberley Shaver, Patrick Shaver, Sherrie Koch, Fred Koch, Smokey, Fitz, Ryan Golden, and Kristin Shaver. Dad and Mom, you worked so hard raising me so that now I am able to think about how I want to be happy and how to do good. Thank you for taking care of my cat, Mom.

To my red-haired and feisty Grandma, Roberta Adams, I thank you for being no one's fool and helping me be an assertive woman. I am deeply sad I can no longer drive to your house and take you to Denny's. You were a best friend, second mother, and my most trusted confidante. On many an occasion, I think of how you would look at the situations I am in and what pragmatic words you would speak; in this way, I live in the memory of you. I love you more than you will ever know.

### Hamilton, Waikato, New Zealand



*(New Zealand Map Blogspot, September 2011)*

## Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract.....	2
Acknowledgements.....	3
Hamilton, Waikato. New Zealand.....	5
List of Photographs.....	8
Introduction.....	10
 Chapters	
1. Preliminaries.....	18
Art and the Aesthetic: Theory and Praxis.....	18
Art: Apart from Society?.....	28
The Aesthetic: Apart from Society?.....	30
Modern Moko’s Historic Roots.....	33
The Culture of Moko in Contemporary New Zealand.....	37
Tattooing Culture: Research in the USA and Great Britain.....	42
Ethics of Tattoo Artists.....	51
Summary of Preliminaries.....	54
2. Methodology.....	57
My Role as Researcher.....	57
Data Analysis: Importance of Grounded Theory.....	58
Qualitative Approaches in My Case Study.....	60
Limitations.....	64
3. Interviews, Photographs, and Observations.....	66
The Tattoo Scene in Hamilton.....	66
Artists at the Tattoo Studio.....	68
Marc Wymer: Owner and Tattooist at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio.....	73
- Francis: Skulls.....	83
- Vaughan (and Marc): Kowhai Ridge.....	87
Brandon Martin: Tattoo Artist and Apprentice.....	98
- Rhian: First Time Tattooed.....	105
Ali: Artist who Tattoos.....	109
- Tracey: Attention to Detail.....	121

Chapters	Page
- Justin: Tattoos for Loved Ones.....	132
- Robert: First Among Equals.....	135
Makkala: Being a Tattooist is a Luxury.....	141
- Kylee and Darryn: A Couple in Love with Tattooing.....	147
- Lisa: The Crafty Tattoo.....	151
- Marc: Tattoos Tell My Story.....	158
4. Discussion.....	168
Individual Taste: Personal Aesthetic and Art Influenced By Culture.....	170
1. Describing and Valuing Tattoo Art.....	170
2. Global Cultures Influencing Taste and Tattoo Styles.....	189
The Culture of Tattooing and An Individual's Role in Tattoo Art....	199
1. The Role of the Aesthetic in Tattoo Art at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio.....	199
2. Tattoo Art as a Functional Practice .....	208
Ethical Practice at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio.....	216
Conclusion.....	226
Bibliography.....	247
Appendixes.....	259
Appendix I: Research Questions Table.....	259
Appendix II: Reference Chart of Participants' Tattoos.....	262
Appendix III: Brief Descriptions of Discussed Tattoo Styles .....	264



## List of Photographs

- (p. 68) Photo 1: Organization does not mean that an artist's taste in decoration is hindered.
- (p. 71) Photo 2: Rules and Etiquette at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio.
- (p. 73) Photo 3: Marc, left, discusses a tattoo drawing with Ali.
- (p. 79) Photo 4: A Neo-European Traditional style tattoo is on Marc's left arm.
- (p. 83) Photo 5: Francis is tattooed by Marc.
- (p. 85) Photo 6: Three Tattoos are on Francis's left arm.
- (p. 87) Photo 7: Marc tattooing Vaughan's left arm.
- (p. 89) Photo 8: Vaughan's, partially completed, Kowhai Ridge Tattoo. In the background, Ali tattoos Justin.
- (p. 90) Photo 9: "Live a Full Throttle Life"
- (p. 94) Photo 10: Vaughan's Systematic smile and Holly are glimpsed from his position on the tattoo chair.
- (p. 85) Photo 11: Brandon's station, and artwork, at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio.
- (p. 98) Photo 12: Brandon tattooing his client, Rhian, at his tattoo station.
- (p. 103) Photo 13: Brandon is tattooing at Ali's station.
- (p. 105) Photo 14: Rhian shows off her bass clef, right arm, and treble clef, left arm.
- (p. 109) Photo 15: Ali works in the foreground of his artworks.
- (p. 113) Photo 16: Some of Ali's drawings and painting; his artworks display at multiple locations on Flax Roots Tattoo Studio's walls.
- (p. 116) Photo 17: Ali's throat is tattooed with an Iban scorpion design.
- (p. 119) Photo 18: Ali's Attenborough face is above a pig.
- (p. 121) Photo 19: Tracey is viewing the news, while Ali tattoos Kaonashi on her leg.
- (p. 122) Photo 20: A finished TCOB is below an unfinished Kaonashi. Ali's sketch of Kaonashi lies beside Tracey's left leg, on the tattoo bed.
- (p. 123) Photo 21: Tracey considers Kaonashi the weirdest character she has seen in animation.
- (p. 124) Photo 22: Kitri dances on Tracey's arm.
- (p. 125) Photo 23: The tale of the Lantern and Oiwa is reproduced on Tracey's right, inner arm.
- (p. 126) Photo 24: The tale of the Geishas is retold on a right arm tattoo sleeve.

- (p. 130) Photo 25: A spider and spider web, which contains dollish people, possibly referring to the movie *Coraline* (2009), on Tracey's right leg.
- (p. 132) Photo 26: Justin getting ready to be tattooed by Ali.
- (p. 137) Photo 27: "First Among Equals" is tattooed on Robert's upper, left shoulder.
- (p. 139) Photo 28: By shaving Robert's shoulder blade, Ali prepares him for a tattoo session.
- (p. 143) Photo 29: Makkala looking over her client schedule for the day.
- (p. 146) Photo 30: Two of Makkala's art pieces that served as models for clients' tattoos. Brandon, camera right, tattoos a client in the background. Hangout Space and Waiting Area Studio is camera left.
- (p. 147) Photo 31: Darryn sits across from Kylee, who is being tattooed by Makkala.
- (p. 148) Photo 32: Kylee's tattoo signifies her connection to family.
- (p. 149) Photo 33: Makkala's artwork is of Kylee's tattoo; a future customer may purchase the work.
- (p. 151) Photo 34: Lisa happily waits for Makkala, who prepares equipment for tattooing. Ali's artwork is camera upper right. Makkala's artwork and station is camera center left.
- (p. 153) Photo 35: Makkala finishes Lisa's sewing notion tattoo.
- (p. 155) Photo 36: Lisa stands, in my office. Her sewing notions tattoo is on the top of her right foot.
- (p. 158) Photo 37: Tattooee enthusiast, Marc, pictured at our interview.
- (p. 164) Photo 38: Marc's most recent tattoo is on his chin was inked by Makkala, the night before our interview.
- (p. 218) Photo 39: Refer to p. 71 for another presentation of this picture.

## Introduction

My research details a variety of tattoo fine art styles and the associated aesthetic attitudes regarding tattoo artworks. My aim is to cover a broad range of tattooed work while noting the differences and similarities of its tattooed people. In my research, I explore the aesthetic attitudes of artists and clients at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio in Hamilton, Waikato, New Zealand. I chose Flax Roots because many tattoo styles are done, by artists there, on different types of clients. By choosing Flax Roots Tattoo Studio as my fieldwork site, I was able to answer specifically within my case study the questions: 1. How do tattoo artists and their clients engage with and shape tattoo art and its aesthetic at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio? ; and 2. How do these tattoo artists' ethics influence their relationships with their clients and art?

As an anthropologist doing fieldwork, it is also ethically important that I understand how my fieldwork is intertwined with peoples, artists, and clients associated with tattooing at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio. In regards to doing an ethnography, anthropologist Nicholas Thomas (2006) writes that "it seems that artistic engagement with an 'other' is pernicious, except when it is not" (p.178). Thomas comments eloquently on how the field of anthropology is embedded with questions concerning the self and other; this place and that place; tradition and modernization. An ethnographer walks on the delicate edge of cultural inquiry; one stumble off the endeavor to interpret a multitude of viewpoints and she tumbles into a single viewpoint that misses a milieu of human relationships. Additionally, an ethnographer who embarks on writing about the tattooed body may conjure up thoughts of eroticism and charges of voyeurism, no matter her intent (pp.178-179).

Let us turn now to my own experience in graduate school as an illumination of “pseudo-representations” (Thomas, 2006, p.179) of tattooed people. When I first proposed this research at another department that was not of an anthropological mindset, I was asked questions by an administrator that conveyed she thought all tattooed people, who do not come from a traditional tattooing culture, have a connection to heavy metal music and are of a low-to-middle social-economic class. Not only was I lucky to find my way into another department and connect back to my anthropological roots, but also I avoided doing fieldwork in a department which saw tattooed people as all the same, fitting into a traditional category of blurred identities without acknowledged differences or a non-traditional category of devotees stereotyped as a ‘white head bangers’. Although I proposed an examination of tattooing as an art form, she could not think past the view that tattooed people in New Zealand fit into neat categories that should be recorded in one long diary entry written to convey how I feel about myself as a tattooed woman with the ethnic identity of American living in New Zealand. The only plausible option, she believed, was for me to write an auto-ethnography! This discussion moves on now to consider how an ethnographer pursue fieldwork without insulting the people she interviews, photographs, and spends hours with over the course of months.

In order to understand the ethnographer’s role in anthropological research in the modern world, Thomas (2006) discusses the history of archiving artistic descriptions of tattooed bodies, many within the Pacific region, as well as how ethnographers’ descriptions of the tattooed body have changed based upon who the tattooed bodies were and who interpreted them. Europeans began using the word ‘tattoo’ in the 1770s when Captain Cook engaged with Tahitians during his explorations in the South Pacific. A Tahitian, named Mahine, who travelled with Cook, explained that the word ‘tattoo’ comes from Tahiti, where it

describes the act of inscribing designs and text on human skin. This explanation of the term 'tattoo' is described within Captain Cook's journals; an example of an outsider seeking information from an insider about the meaning of tattoos. In 1826, a Maori warrior, Te Pehi Kupe, visited Liverpool intending to trade with Europeans for firearms. Because Captain Cook had sparked interest among some Europeans, Te Pehi Kupe noticed the English interpretation of Moko lacked accurate cultural translation. Therefore, Te Pehi Kupe went to the task to complete detailed drawings of his Moko and other Moko from memory with commentary Europeans could understand in their culture (pp.179-181). For a contemporary example, ethnographer Michael Rees (2016) documented how people from Western cultures are interested in non-Western tattoo practices and often seek out a meaning for their tattoos. As demonstrated from this discussion, tattooed people have acted as cultural interpreters of their own and others' tattoos in tandem with cultural researchers or ethnographers for some time.

After discussing the history of images of tattooed bodies, Thomas (2006) discusses how the modern ethnographer will likely exist within a cross-cultural environment. Thomas's research on how artists are documenting their tattooing process in Auckland, New Zealand relates to my fieldwork in the city of Hamilton, which is approximately 170 kilometers from Auckland. Both Thomas and I document the creative milieux in which artists we photograph and interview exist. While doing our ethnographic works, we realize these artists produce and converse about their art within their local communities, while also sharing their artworks in a globalized context. Thomas's (2006) discussion of tattoo environments in New Zealand, highlighting the university-trained anthropologist Mark Adams's photographs of tattooed people, makes evident the cross-cultural issues embedded in the atmosphere of contemporary Auckland. Adams's photographs are

in black-and-white and display Polynesian tattooed bodies in urbanized scenes or against a back-drop with a focus on the posed tattooed body. In addition to Adams's photographs, his participants have taken their own sets of self-portraits (pp.183-186). Notably, Greg Semu sought "to recover his cultural identity" (p. 186) through the self-documentation of his tattoos. In Semu's photographs, Adams believes Semu positions his body:

...close to the camera...to the extent that the viewer of the prints experiences an illusion of three dimensionality: not only does the body stand before the backdrop but the stain stands before the skin. The hand across the penis is not only an expression of modesty but also an expression of the artist's controlled and limited self-representation, and a sort of stipulation that the viewer's regard ought to be framed by cross-cultural awe rather than sexualized curiosity. There is, of course, a marked residual eroticism in these images... that could be seen to renegotiate the stereotypic image of Polynesia as a site of license and voluptuousness (pp.185-186).

Thomas concludes that Adams's and Semu's images presented "[t]attooing...not as mute eroticism, but as an activity that [deals] knowingly with cultural difference" (p.189). In the modern landscape of ethnographies about art in New Zealand, the artist and the writer are represented as working together to understand the tattooed praxis. This observation is important because I will later argue that prominent anthropologist of art Alfred Gell's (1993; 1998) theory of an art object's agency is enhanced by arguments within Thomas's (2006) research, which imply that being tattooed is a representation of ethnic or cultural personhood exhibited in the tattoo art (p.182).

Seeking to establish myself as an anthropologist like Nicolas Thomas, I construct the blueprint of my dissertation in this

*Introduction* in order to demonstrate the way I worked in my research to answer specific questions about tattooing at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio. I photographed and interviewed participants in order to understand their interpretation of their tattoo art as well as identify how their tattoo art played a role in their social lives. I was careful to examine the cultural roles tattoos and tattooing have in their lives, while I also did my best to photograph participants' tattoos in a respectful manner.

Along with my considerations of the participants in my fieldwork, this dissertation is constructed to address the factors of art, the aesthetic, and ethics in this tattooed community. In order to examine these variables, I describe the work of and investigate the ideas of several social scientists, some of whom focus on philosophy of art and the aesthetic in my *Chapter 1 Preliminaries*. I discuss anthropologists who focus on the anthropology of art to assist me in comprehending my interviews with tattooists and their clients, or tattooees. The main anthropologist I discuss is Alfred Gell (1993; 1998), who urged fellow anthropologists to engage in the anthropology of art. Gell also wrote about the artistic practice of Polynesian tattooing. I utilize anthropologist Karel Arnaut's review article (2001) of Gell (1998) as an intellectual springboard to critique Gell's art theory. Also, I include in this critique other anthropological fieldworkers' research about art. These anthropologists include Linda Chua's and Mark Elliot's (2013) seminal collection of essays on anthropology of art, in which I have extracted important areas where my fieldwork makes an original contribution to understanding the role that culture plays in art and the aesthetic in diverse social systems.

To address the aesthetic as well as continue my discussion about tattoo art and its ties to culture, I discuss philosopher Stephen Davies (2006; 2012), who likewise writes about the aesthetic and art. I also discuss philosopher Immanuel Kant

(1790), who developed a universal theory of art. I connect these authors by comparing their ideas about art and the aesthetic with each another. I also detail in my discussion how other researchers have contributed to the understanding of art and the aesthetic in regards to tattooing through the method of interviews and photographs. I summarize the book, *Mau Moko: The World of the Maori Tattoo* (2007), by Ngahuaia Te Awekotuku and Linda Waimarie Nikora, to write more accurately about the tattoo style, Moko, which is indigenous to New Zealand. I also discuss the sociologist ethnographer, Clinton R. Sanders (2008), who interviewed tattooed people in the United States of America. To comprehend and better utilize the conclusions Sanders derives from his fieldwork, I engage with the fieldwork of Michael Rees (2016), who analyzed four factors that contributed to the growing legitimacy of tattooing in Great Britain and in social media. At the end of *Chapter 1 Preliminaries* and *Chapter 4 Discussion*, I discuss the ethics and etiquette of tattooists in response to what I observed in the client and tattooist relationship at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio.

In *Chapter 2 Methodology*, I discuss the reasoning behind my semi-structured interviews and photographs, my role as a researcher, and my choice of the location of Hamilton. I planned and designed my research with the help of the book *Practical Research: Planning and Design* (2010) by P.D. Leedy and J. Ormond. Throughout my research, I consistently checked my biases so as to draw as accurate a picture as possible of the tattooing culture at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio. My research is guided by one question: how do tattoo artists and their clients engage with and shape tattoo art and its aesthetic? Although many anthropologists have contributed, and continue to contribute, to tattooing research through evidence-based fieldwork in different cultures, a limited amount of quality in-depth research exists from an anthropological perspective about tattooing. I add



my research to the growing body of the anthropology of art about tattooing.

In *Chapter 3 Interviews, Photographs, and Observations*, I address my research question directly by presenting the interviews, observations, and photographs of clients and tattooists from Flax Roots Tattoo Studio. *Chapter 3* is a detailed case study informing the entirety of my research dissertation. Tattoo artists and tattooed clients willingly spoke to me during interviews. In return, I have striven to write clearly and carefully with intent to inform my readership. Each interviewee is paired with one or more photographs of their tattoos, so that I connect what they say with how their tattoos look.

*Chapter 4 Discussion* is about how my *Chapter 3* fieldwork informs and builds upon my preliminary investigation in *Chapter 1*, and then leads into a *Conclusion*. In *Chapter 4*, I discuss the questions I asked during interviews, which are found in Appendix I, near the end of my dissertation. I start with the interviews of tattooists, then the interviews of their clients. The respondents' conversations are analyzed through my questions, which are aimed at understanding the aesthetic and art of tattooing. There I draw on my *Chapter 1 Preliminaries* in order to convey what I found in my research that ties these authors' ideas to my fieldwork. Because I found out that ethics and etiquette are important in the business operations of Flax Roots Tattoo Studio, I devote paragraphs to discussing ethics and how it relates to this tattoo business.

In the *Conclusion*, I take into account the full scope of my fieldwork and its implications. After addressing the importance of ethics in tattooist and client relationships, I conclude that my research is significant because I described how tattoo artists and their clients engaged with and shaped tattoo art and the aesthetic in Flax Roots Tattoo Studio. Most important, I identify the significance of my case study, which fills a gap in the anthropology

of art literature by demonstrating that art and the aesthetic cannot be separated from culture as in Gell's (1993) theory of what roles art objects play in societies. The first gap I am filling is adding to the literature about art and the aesthetic in tattooed communities, in line with much of Gell's (1993; 1998) understanding of tattoo art. The second gap I am filling is providing an entrance into a deeper discussion about the role of ethics in tattoo art.

This *Introduction* demonstrated that the phenomenon of tattooing is a rich area for ethnographic study. It is now necessary in the chapters following to engage with the literature discussed in this *Introduction*, my methodology for understanding art, the aesthetic, and ethics, and my subsequent process of fieldwork. It includes a discussion of how my fieldwork relates to the literature. And finally, I explain how tattoo artists and their clients engage with and shape tattoo art and its aesthetic at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio, as well as how these tattoo artists' ethics influence their relationships with their clients and art.

## Chapter 1 Preliminaries

### *Art and the Aesthetic: Theory and Praxis*

How do tattoo artists and their clients engage with and shape tattoo art and its aesthetic at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio? How do these tattoo artists' ethics influence their relationships with their clients? Before I answered those questions, I needed to understand what art and the aesthetic meant in regards to tattooing. During my fieldwork, when I discovered that ethics in the tattooed community needed to be mentioned, I better acquainted myself with ethical discussions involving personhood and autonomy. The findings about ethics among tattoo artists were interesting, though I debated with myself whether to remain focused on art and the aesthetic in regards to tattooing. Upon reflection and consultations, findings about the ethics of the tattoo artists are worth mentioning in the *Chapter 4 Discussion*. I have included a discussion about ethics at the end of this chapter in preparation for the longer discussion in *Chapter 4*.

Thus, I primarily engage with the works of researchers who illuminate art and the aesthetic of tattooing in this chapter. I begin with a discussion of art and the aesthetic. Then, I detail how tattoo communities shape their art and engage with the aesthetic. A tattooist and a tattooee are in a dynamic relationship with art and the aesthetic; and in a dynamic relationship in their community. I cannot discuss the nomenclatures of art and the aesthetic in an abstract way because the researchers I have selected force me to concretely address these terms interacting in tattooed communities.

In the pursuit of the aim of offering a picture of art and the aesthetic in relation to tattooing in New Zealand, I rely on an anthropologist's work on cultural art. This anthropologist is Alfred

Gell and the first book of his I discuss is *Art and Agency* (1998). Gell wrote this book quickly, during a period of three weeks, before his death; it was a response to the diagnosis of terminal cancer. This last book is not a finished text. Gell offers no solid conclusion. However, *Art and Agency* is an embarkation towards the goal of developing an anthropological theory of art (p. vii) for the purpose of understanding cultural interactions with art and art's interactions with culture.

*Art and Agency* is Gell's attempt to understand art's role in social behavior. Because I am an anthropologist whose fieldwork is centered on a person or group's interaction with art, Gell's research is important to me because he is one of the few anthropologists of art who systematically, and in detail, discusses the reasons behind his theory of art. I simplify the wording of Gell's theory in order to draw attention to his important contribution to the examination of art objects and their agency. I consider his proposal for an anthropological theory of art useful and necessary for specific cultural contexts:

The aim of anthropological theory is to make sense of behavior in the context of social relations. Correspondingly, the objective of the anthropological theory of art is to account for the production and circulation of art objects as a function of this relational context (p.11).

His theory captures the intricacies of particular social exchanges about art in a situated environment. His theory embraces the idea of qualitatively observing the use of art within a certain social situation.

Gell's art theory is tied to philosopher Charles Peirce's semiotic writings. Although Gell does not claim visual art is like language, he borrows Peirce's term 'index' to explain art and social agency. He defines the visual index as a sign from which a person can make a causal inference from observing another person; Gell applies the term index to what he calls an 'art-like situation'. Gell

distinguishes an art-like situation as “...the material ‘index’ (the visible, physical, ‘thing’)” that initiates “...the abduction of agency” (p.13). ‘Abduction of agency’ refers to the meaning of a social interaction. In a simpler way, ‘abduction of agency’ means describing the social interactions involving an art object. Gell believes that the art object, or index, is the result of social agency (pp.14-16). According to Gell, anthropologists of art mainly concern themselves with indexes. Some of these indexes are artefacts, manufactured objects designed by their makers. Anthropologists can classify artefacts by their description and then make a guess as to the artists’ original intent. Yet, with the passing of time, the original use of an artefact can be lost or concealed by its present usage or interpretation (p.23).

Gell offers a categorization of the relationships between artefact and social agency, so as to help an anthropologist better understand the usage of an art object. The art object contains four types of social relations to an art object:

1. Indexes: [art objects] which motivate [social agency]...;
2. Artists (or other ‘originators’): to whom are ascribed, by [social agency], causal responsibility for the existence and the characteristics of the index;
3. Recipients: those in relation [to the] indexes...considered to exert [social] agency via the index;
4. Prototypes: [social agency]...represented in the [art object], often by virtue of visual resemblance, but not necessarily (p.27).

I provide the example of a common art object, in order to show how Gell meant an anthropologist to examine it. I’ll choose the art object of a nephew’s red sweater with a green Christmas tree on it knitted by a short-sighted great Aunt. The index is the Christmas tree sweater. The artist is the Great Aunt. The recipient is the nephew. The prototype is gift making and giving of an elder family member to a younger family member. The event is a Christmas

holiday celebrated by these family members. Interestingly, Gell does not mention the aesthetic of the art object in terms of taste, so I cannot comment on the tackiness of an ugly sweater as a gift in Gell's model. Anyhow, these four types of relations are not meant to be "...offering law-like generalizations..." (p.28). Gell employs these relations more like a classification system for understanding the art-like situation (p.28). Additionally, Gell creates a notational system for art object relations, where letters represent four variables of agency. A letter is used for each of the two statuses: agent and patient, or person looking at the index. Arrows demonstrate an action a variable has on another variable (pp.27-35). Although I think a notation could be helpful for large sets of data, I do not use this notation system in this thesis because I focus on one case study about art. More appropriately, I use interviews to describe the relationship between social agency and index in an art-like situation.

Gell's (1998) uses his concept of indexes in an art-like situation to describe Pacific art, including Maori tattoos. His four-type classification system is a method to find an index, or guess at an art object's original use. This system of classification was developed for the purpose of understanding not only the expansive group of indigenous Pacific art but also forms of art labelled as Western. For example, archaeologist Chris Gosden (2013) demonstrates he can apply Gell's (1998) classification system to the artefacts he found from the Bronze and Iron Age in Great Britain. Because one of the foci of my case study is Maori tattoo art, I will focus on Maori tattoo art in my case study. I focus on Non-western art and its social context for the remainder of this discussion. Non-western art worlds exist in a closed context (Arnaut, 2001, p.10). For example, the Maori tattooist understands the meaning of the design made on the tattooee's skin; the tattooee understands the meaning of his tattoo. The Maori tattooist (agent/artist) is slicing the tattooee's skin (recipient)

in order to produce a design (index) which refers to a supernatural entity and social rank (prototypes). These non-western indexes contain prototypes that are spiritual entities said to be held within an art object (Gell, 1998; pp.101-121). Also, these indexes contain the social investment of the artist and the recipient (pp.153-154; pp.232). Gosden (2013) states that *Art and Agency* concerns three key questions addressed to all art social worlds yet focused on art from the Pacific world: “how are artefacts ordered through evolving styles, how do such styles link to the broader ordering of cultures, [and] in what ways do both the ordering of material things and of culture” provide a foundation for understanding a social context? (p.39). Gell (1998) believes “that there is a linkage between the concept of [art]...and the concept of culture” (p.156). Art objects shape culture (Gosden, 2013, p.39).

Gell’s (1998) detailed classification system is interesting and progressive in its call to systematize anthropological observations about the creative processes of art which affect and is affected by its social world. However, his theory does not fully explain why it is necessary to categorize art in a four-type classification system in order to understand an artefact’s relation to a person in a group and to that group in the world. His book makes no attempt to posit an argument for anthropologists. It seems possible that if Gell considered and addressed possible objections to his theory, his argument for his conceptualization of art and agency would be regarded as sturdier. After carefully parsing through Gell’s tables, equations, and details about this classification system, I must admit I am not convinced of its reliability as a method for understanding social art. Therefore, I am also skeptical of Gell’s system because of potential problems of applicability. Other anthropologists have doubts about Gell’s system too. Nevertheless, these scholars recognize the importance of examining Gell’s writings for the purpose of elaborating upon his ideas of art and agency.

Anthropologist Karel Arnaut's review article (2001) about Gell's anthropological theory of art both praises and condemns Gell's classification system of the art-like situation:

Art and Agency: it goes theoretically too far and methodologically not far enough. It goes too far, I argue, in trying to devise a proper anthropological theory of material culture. Like other high theories in anthropology (Preuss, Mauss, Lévi-Strauss) this is above all a theory of difference and otherness. In this case, it proposes to exclude certain analytic practices (the iconographic and the aesthetic approach) as non-anthropological, and demarcate a preferred, allegedly 'anthropological', empirical field consisting of objects with coherent biographies (because of intra-group production-and-consumption or because they are produced by one artist). This ultimately makes for a highly consistent and powerful theory which reviewers have not failed to appreciate as the index of a powerful intellect. Nevertheless, the analytic and empirical limitations weigh heavily on the potential appeal of this theory (p.1).

Like Arnaut, I wonder how useful Gell's approach is for observing contemporary art, where boundaries between production and social use are blurred across cultures (p.2). Arnaut (as cited in Chua & Elliot, 2013) describes *Art and Agency* as a book divided into two parts. Gell's discussion of object and agency appears to be disconnected from the second section concerning the creative process and personhood situated within this creative process. Many researchers of anthropology of art have challenged Gell's theory of art and social relations on the grounds that his writing is disjointed and the second half does not follow the first half of his book (p.4). One question that needs to be asked, however, is whether the claim about the disjointedness of *Art and Agency* is true. Other researchers suggest that Gell's classification system of



art objects offers insights into the social processes interacting with these materials in a dialectic manner rather than simply the art object or art creator enacting on one or the other in linear fashion.

To be precise, Linda Chua and Mark Elliot (2013) argue that *Art and Agency* is a multifaceted book and some of those facets offer insights into social action and art. Despite its thorny language, the book could provide insight into how persons relate to one another in relationship with art objects in specific cultural settings. Persons become material objects when they wear and share art (pp. 4-5), to be more precise persons become part of the art they are creating and the art becomes part of the social agency of these persons. Chua and Elliot (2013) advocate that Chapter 8 of *Art and Agency* is the most developed explanation of the possibility for art objects to act on each other and persons within a social context. Agency is embedded in the human relations and material relations in a creative process that is continuous and actively changing (p.9). Gell (1998) describes this process as a connection between materials, persons, and their world (p.141). Therefore artworks are described as “a macro-object, or temporal object, which evolves over time” (p.233). A person’s agency is not defined only by their physiology. Instead, their biological material is united with other persons and objects bound together in a place in time (p.222). Still, Chua and Elliot (2013) ponder on whether Gell would have altered his theory of art and agency if he had lived longer to further consider the role of the aesthetic response in social situations (pp.12-13).

Another reason anthropologists of art do not consider Gell’s (1998) anthropological theory of art complete is that he excludes analyses offered by philosophers of the aesthetic. Unlike Gell, they believe that an anthropologist of art can have a close relationship to aesthetic philosophy (Chua & Elliot, 2013). The philosophy of aesthetics is about people’s responses to art and what makes

something art. Gell seems to omit any discussion of aesthetics in analyzing art-like situations because of his limited understanding of the range of aesthetic ideas about art. For example, Gell (1998) describes the aesthetic theories of art as:

...predicated on the idea that artists are exclusively aesthetic agents, who produce works of art which manifest their aesthetic intentions, and that those intentions are communicated to the public who views their works in the light of approximately the same set of aesthetic intentions, vicariously entertained (p.66).

Gell's skepticism of aesthetic theories of art would be warranted if all philosophers of the aesthetic were trying to understand an artist's initial aesthetic intentions. Unlike Gell, I have reason to believe, based on the evidence of quality scholarly work done on the subject, philosophers of the aesthetic can be a valuable source for a researcher's understanding of art in part because philosophers doubt aesthetic attitudes are as simple as Gell believe them to be.

Philosopher Stephen Davies, in *The Philosophy of Art* (2006), offers insights into art and the aesthetic that encourage skepticism about the expressive theory of art and what Gell (1998) believes is the foundation for all theories of the aesthetic. Davies's main objection to the expressive theory is the desire of those people, who follow it, to preserve the idea that artists can embody their feelings into visual art (p.241). Davies does not mean that an audience member at a gallery opening cannot infer what an artist's emotional state was when the art object was produced. But to suppose that an audience member can feel the artist's emotional state, and understand her intentions, is to assume too much without evidence. In regards to the practice of body modification, could a stranger, seeing a woman with a floral design tattooed on her arm, know the emotional state of the artist who tattooed it? Instead of using only an expressive theory of art to explain its use

in culture, Davies (2006) discusses an expressive theory of art as a component of two views regarding the concept of art. The first position is a biological, or evolutionary, basis for art. The second position is a cultural basis for art (p.1). Davies believes that most of the art theorists who are sympathetic to one or the other of these categories, either biological or cultural, are in fact not on opposite ends of a false dichotomy of nature versus nurture.

I discuss Davies's account of these views of art in order to illuminate Gell's theoretical distance from the academic schemes of strong biological determinism (i.e. deterministic genetic social construction) versus strong cultural relativism (i.e. human systems are composed of local opinions). Gell's (1998) art theory falls somewhere in the grey area between these two positions. A biological basis for art does not necessarily contradict Gell's theory of art and agency. Nor does a cultural basis for art necessarily contradict his theory of art and agency.

Davies (2006) creates one story about each theoretical position on art, in order to compare the two theories. An evolutionary theorist may describe the biological basis of art in this manner:

Art is universal....Art is also ancient in its origins....As well, art is a source of pleasure and value....These three features—universality, historical age, and intrinsic pleasure or value—are indicative of the biological adaptiveness of the behaviors of which they were associated. In other words, these characteristics are symptomatic of underlying genetic dispositions passed from generation to generation because they enhance the reproductive success of the people who have them. The behaviors in question are universal because they reflect a genetic inheritance that is common to humankind. They are old because humans reached their current biological form some 20,000 years ago....And they are a source of pleasure (like food, sex, and healthy exercise) in

order to motivate people to pursue them and thereby pass their genes to future generations who will be successful breeders in their turn (pp.2-3).

A biologist can choose from three accounts about the connection to the creation of art. The first account is that the tendency to create art is a biological adaptation. The first account seems to fail to appreciate the significance the culture plays in creating art. Theorists proclaiming an evolutionary basis for art may neglect to describe the social roles of the artist, the art object, and the observer of art. Both biology and culture play a role in human evolution of art (p.2).

The second account is that art (Davies, 2006), as its function as a by-product of evolution, works to ensure reproductive success by enriching social lives. Davies objects to this second account because it does not distinguish the by-product of art from, let's say, other by-products like language and sport (p.3). A social scientist, like Gell, might believe art is the product of a particular culture instead of biology. The third account is that art helps establish a community that flourishes, so adult members support the upbringing of children who then raise children of their own (pp.3-4). Davies considers the third account the most credible because it recognizes the social importance of art. In spite of this, Davies thinks that the last biological account could be faulty on the grounds that it fails to account for an evolved human, without children to raise, who engages in making art on a regular basis during leisure time (p.4).

*Art: Apart from Society?*

In western societies, the arts being separated from daily activity into the realm of leisure time is culturally new for a great number of working members of society. This conception of art as not work and transcending daily life, is relatively modern and was captured by the writings of Immanuel Kant. I include Kant's discussion of art and craft because it assists me in distinguishing tattoos by skilled artists from tattoos by someone without much experience in *Chapter 4 Discussion*. Kant (1790, 2000) defines "...art in general" as "...a skill of human beings...distinguished from science [and] theory" (pp. 182-183). Kant's third defining factor of art is "...it[s] [difference] from handicraft. [Art is]...an occupation that is agreeable in itself; [handicraft] is regarded as labor, i.e. an occupation that is disagreeable (burdensome) in itself and is attractive only because of its effect..." (p.183). Kant determines art can only be art if it exists in a state of play without form and function; an object not produced to satisfy the simple likings of its audience. Kant incorporates Plato's notion of pure form and Aristotle's idea of art as social function to create a separate category of skillful art differing from nature yet ordered by the work of its artists, whom Kant calls geniuses:

Genius can only provide rich material for products of art; its elaboration and form require a talent that has been academically trained, in order to make a use of it that can stand up to the power of judgment (p.189).

If Kant lived in the 21<sup>st</sup> century western society, he possibly would not consider what is called art by this culture to be art. Or maybe he would. On p.189, if I substitute "professionally trained" for "academically trained" then movies, T.V., music, and tattoos could be considered art in the global world, not merely craft.

Kant wrote in the time of the Enlightenment when an increasing number of people had the purchasing power, although not as diverse and as many people as in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, to buy art. Importantly, the Enlightenment period artists began to

produce art objects without a specific buyer who commissioned them. Carol Christenson (“Personal Correspondence”), an artist and art historian, writes “[b]efore [the Enlightenment] there was a lot of art around, but it was generally public art, commissioned by churches, and its function was to illustrate a religious story for those who could not read (January 5, 2016). She describes how art continued to be created for a pragmatic purpose during the Enlightenment, although not necessarily for religious purposes. Christenson writes that “[i]n 17th century Holland, paintings were produced for the first time without being commissioned by a specific patron, and they were sold in galleries or markets to whomever came by” (January 5, 2016). These paintings were not made to serve a dual use, for leisure and for work. However, these art objects could be thought of as indications of an owner’s financial wealth and social class. Thus, the phenomenon of the art world is fairly recent. Until modern times, art was not separated from craft and work; art became a separate sphere in the late Enlightenment period (Davies, 2006, p.6) A growing middle class obtained purchasing power to buy art, and they used that art to signal their identification with a highly valued art world; what took place was a recognition of art as something to be valued personally and socially. Still, the social capital of art cannot completely explain its older origins associated closely with traditional crafts (pp.7-9).

Rather than the use of Kant’s definition of art or the either/or option of a biological or social concept of art, I adopt Davies’s view of art; “I am inclined to the conviction that art is old and universal in ways that suggest no single culture or period can claim exclusive ownership of the concept” (p.12). Later on in my dissertation, I do not attempt to answer what tattoo art is for all cultures. But, I answer what tattoo art is understood to be by some tattooed people, of different cultural backgrounds, in Hamilton, New Zealand.

*The Aesthetic: Apart from Society?*

A conversation about art often includes a conversation about the aesthetic. Immanuel Kant (1790, 2000) shares his view on the aesthetic as well. When he wrote that the aesthetic feeling was not mere pleasure upon viewing an art object, Kant set up a judgment-based critique of aesthetic beauty. Beautiful art, according to Kant, is created by the feeling of freedom to play within a concept of possibility: "...that is beautiful which pleases in the mere judging (neither in sensation nor through a concept)" (p.185). This beautiful, free art is aesthetically pleasing because of its imaginative portrayal of the natural object it is representing; however, it does not depend on whether an object is aesthetically pleasing in nature. For example, Kant describes war and disease as harmful events that can be portrayed aesthetically in art. A genius artist portrays war and disease in a way that is aesthetically pleasing, although war and disease are usually not considered aesthetically pleasing outside of art (pp. 189-190). What would Kant say about *Apollo and Daphne* (1794-1795) by Andrea Appiani, a painting considered to be aesthetically pleasing in the Enlightenment period and considered to be aesthetically pleasing by many people in contemporary times? Since the raping of Daphne by Apollo is ugly in its portrayal of rape culture in Ancient Greece, then the imaginative portrayal of this myth mixed with the darker side of human nature is why it is beautiful. Would *Apollo and Daphne* be aesthetically pleasing tattooed on some one's arm? Could a tattoo artist describe war and disease on the flesh in an aesthetically pleasing way? Kant might say so, if the tattoo artist was a genius portraying these dire circumstances aesthetically.

What is aesthetic taste in art? Reflecting on an individual's subjective taste in art among his contemporaries, Kant proposes an antinomy, or two incompatible laws regarding taste:

1. Thesis. The judgment of taste is not based on concepts, for otherwise, it would be possible to dispute about it (decide by means of proofs).

2. Antithesis. The judgment of taste is based on concepts, for otherwise, despite its variety, it would not even be possible to argue about it (to lay claim to the necessary assent of others to this judgment) (p.215).

Kant details how these laws are not in conflict. He postulates that the judgment of taste is based on an indeterminate concept. A concept of universal beauty exists; it is the basis of judgment of taste (pp. 216-217).

In another book, *The Artful Species...* (2012), Stephen Davies explores the concept of the aesthetic, in addition to art, as an essential part of human experience. In order to understand how human agency views artistic objects, an operational definition of 'the aesthetic' and 'the aesthetic experience' is necessary. Davies defines the contemporary aesthetic as a "...wide range of properties...often... viewed as subspecies of the beautiful, the sublime, or their opposites" (p.230). Examples of the sublime could be the sky darkening in warning of an approaching thunderstorm or the roar of a tiger as it approaches a day-dreaming monkey. When compared to the beautiful, which is safe and elegant, the sublime conveys a sense of surprising wonder. Observers may engage in an "...awareness and appreciation of [art's] aesthetic properties" (p.9) which invokes the beautiful or the sublime. This contemporary idea of the aesthetic conflicts with how it was understood at its birth in early modern philosophy in the Enlightenment period of defining art from craft. Therefore, Davies disagrees with Kant's theory that aesthetic judgments of art outside nature are free from its tie to concepts. Davies reasons that people's aesthetic judgments are influenced by evolution and governed by differentiations of sociocultural as well as psychological kinds and classes. Conceivably, Kant's notion of free



beauty may apply to an aesthetic judgment made of a certain object (pp. 89-91). For example, a person may find the inside of a hadron collider pleasing to the visual sense, although that person does not know how a hadron collider works. But in most cases, Davies concludes, aesthetic judgments are most likely based upon an artwork's functional beauty. Functionality is defined in a broader sense than its usefulness as a material object in daily living. Functionality includes an art piece's representation of an object as well as an art piece's more abstract social representations:

Aesthetic judgments of functional beauty take as their objects items appropriately identified in terms of the primary purposes that make them what they are. These judgments do not merely consider if those functions are satisfied but also take account of the manner in which aesthetic properties of the item in question shape how it addresses and achieves this function....It shows how art might have primary functions that are practical and not self-regarding, and thereby lends plausibility to the idea that art is found beyond the confines of the world of high Western art (pp. 101-102).

Functional beauty, Davies continues, as a model for aesthetic judgments is not supportive of either the free beauty argument or the dependent beauty argument, whereby art has an intrinsic purpose regardless of its location in praxis. Functional beauty takes into account how artworks are valued for their own sakes. And, at the same time, how artworks are being used within a cultural context (pp. 99-100).

In small, pre-industrial societies, most of the art that is produced is utilitarian. According to the ethnologist Ellen Dissanayake (1988), art is a brand of "making special" that has adaptive value, in that it enhances the reproductive success of individuals by forging and solidifying cooperation, group

cohesiveness, and a rewarding sense of social belonging (p.100). Recall, too, that Alfred Gell (1998) describes an artwork as functional and calls for an anthropological study of art focusing on analyzing human social behaviors in a relational context with art objects (pp.10-11). Art thus serves as an end to its functional use within social agency. In my view, Gell's *Art and Agency* succeeds in its methodological attempt to understand how an art object can be contextually understood. Keeping in mind the social functionality of art and questions brought up by the readings of Kant and Davies, how does art and the aesthetic interplay with a social community? Specifically, how does a New Zealand community interact with tattoo art and how does this community form an aesthetic appreciation of tattoo art?

#### *Modern Moko's Historic Roots*

None other than anthropologist Alfred Gell writes about the practice of tattooing among indigenous peoples of the Pacific Island region, which includes the Maori peoples of Aoteara New Zealand. Gell offers a compelling anthropological introduction to the players, setting, and themes of these tattooed people, specifically in *Wrapping in Images...* (Gell, 1993). His book's late-twentieth-century critical attempt at detailing the dynamics of Maori tattoo culture is limited by Gell's geographic distance from New Zealand. He lived in Great Britain when it was written. However, do not toss Gell aside! As comfortable as he may have been in the armchair, he was thinking seriously about the importance of tattooing culture in the South Pacific region.

Gell's assessment of the social world of tattooing relies significantly on historical and anthropological documents. If one is looking at current practices of tattooing in the Pacific Island region, Gell's texts are not entirely accurate for research purposes. However, I use Gell's textual inquiry into tattooing because his

research is valuable for understanding his concept of the social functionality of art. Traditional Maori society, in particular, consisted of many people who had tattoos and who did tattooing. Being part of Maori society, it meant it was socially acceptable to be tattooed. Therefore, there were frequent interactions occurring between the Maori tattooed individual and others of the Maori social world (pp.237-238). Gell suggests that the interaction between tattooed bodies, both in groups and as individuals, "...produce a certain mind-set, a certain frame of social classification, a certain notion of person, self-hood, and empowerment, which was an enabling factor in the reproduction of the specific types of social and political regimes" (p.8). In order to understand how tattoos functioned culturally in traditional Maori societies, the socio-political environment must be understood. According to Gell, Moko kuri were tattoos consisting of three, non-curvilinear lines. During the time of the Moko kuri, wood-carving was not practiced as a functional art form. Later, the recognition and assimilation of wood-carving designs into tattooing practice produced what Gell calls Classic Moko which exhibited a new, elaborate style. This Moko application of a curvilinear design was possibly of 19<sup>th</sup> century origin (pp.249-250).

Tattooing prospered in times of intensive exploitation of the local wildlife and fauna which led to competition between chiefs, or ariki. Because ariki were responsible for the livelihood of their sub-tribe (hapu) or tribe (iwi), male sons were prized among the higher social ranks (pp. 239-240). These men were tattooed in recognition of their privileged status. Ariki, and future ariki, began being tattooed early in life. Facial tattooing was common among Maori men. Other important and common anatomical areas were the buttocks and thighs. Only facial tattooing was traditionally done with a small chisel. Female chin tattoos, and the thighs and buttocks of males, were done with a comb (pp.246-247). Black ink

played an important sacred role in Classic Moko. Moko black ink was made from soot which:

...was secured by burning resinous wood in a flue, made by tunneling a shaft inside a low cliff, so that the smoke from the fire at the bottom emerged to the top. The soot was collected by packing the flue with flower-heads of the toetoe tree. Once collected, the soot would be mixed with sap, kneaded into balls, and then, wrapped in bird-skins, would be kept buried in the earth for many years. There was a practical reason for burying tattoo-black, in that it apparently produced a deeper shade if it was not allowed to dry out. But it is notable that the means of producing soot by 'digesting' wood in a shaft, and burying it subsequently in the earth (like corpses and feces) motivate a symbolic convergence between the tattooing pigment and excrement (p.248).

Both males and females were tattooed with black ink. However, the meaning of their Moko differed depending on social rank and sex.

Unlike Maori men, Maori women of lower-status were often tattooed in their youth. An important distinction was that women of high-status were often not tattooed, unlike the males of high-status and females of lower-status. "The 'ideal' destiny for young women of exceptionally high rank (i.e. girls who were first-born daughters of the unbroken male line of the hapu founder) was not to get married at all..." (p.241). Unlike girls and women of lower status, many of these ariki first-born daughters were not tattooed before marriage. If one of these high-ranked women wanted to get a tattoo before beginning a sexual relationship or marrying, then a tattooist could refuse her request (p.265). If the first daughter did marry, she could possibly cause political conflict as well. Young, highly-ranked women who married lesser ranked men were not given a dowry. The absence of dowries, or marital gift, contributed to a hierarchal structure across classic Maori societies. By not

engaging in ceremonial exchange for a highly ranked woman, reciprocity conflict in each hapu unit ensued. Gifts were given for political accrual but not for marriage. Gift exchange, or lack thereof, exemplified the belief of tattoos connection with the gods (p. 242). In this environment, tattoos functioned as images of the supernatural in Maori society.

Tattooing...is...a reproductive device in the imaginary or artefactual mode....It can sometimes be the case that the multiplication of this throng of familiar spirits and fantasized 'companions' inscribed within the skin can actually be a surrogate for reproduction in the more mundane (physiological) sense, so the tattooed person is ipso facto a reproducer, vicariously, if not in reality (p.8).

Gell here argues that tattooing was understood, by its participants, as a permanent linking of humans to ancestors and gods.

Classic (historical) Moko is embedded with designs that recognize social rank and sex difference. These socially functional designs rely on narratives about the supernatural. Central to Maori culture's appreciation of Classic Moko was its founding myth, the tale of Mataroa's facial tattoos. Mataroa had been banished to the underworld because he beat his wife, Niwareka. His face paintings were removed by Uetonga, a tattooist in the underworld. Uetonga, then, painstakingly tattooed Mataroa's face. Eventually, forgiven, Mataroa, wearing his tattoos, returned to the living world (pp. 244-255). His tattoos marked his journey into and out of the supernatural domain.

In Classic Maori society, men and gods occupied this supernatural space. Moko was a sign of recognition of rank and proximity to the gods. Privileged and specific designs were given to the chiefly members of a hapu or iwi. Specific Moko designs marked specific, individual chiefs. A Moko marked a certain chief and this marking could serve as his signature. It was a signature that could not be stolen as it was written in the skin (p.245).

*The Culture of Moko in Contemporary New Zealand*

What is the contemporary culture of tattoo art in New Zealand? As I have discussed, tattooing in the Pacific Islands region, which includes New Zealand, has existed for millenia. It is believed that the practice of tattooing came from Southeast Asia with the first migrants into then remote Oceania and Polynesia over 3,000 years ago. I have summarized and clarified Alfred Gell's anthropological inquiry into the classical tattoo social world of the Maori. From here, we move forward into contemporary tattooing in New Zealand. We embark on this modern journey by delving into *Mau Moko: The World of the Maori Tattoo* (2007) by Ngahuia Te Awekotuku and Linda Waimarie Nikora.

In order to understand the specific tattoo culture of Aotearoa, one must understand the basic current-day concepts of Maori tattoo art, Moko. I focus on the above-cited book Chapters Four and Five (pp.106-209) because of these sections' content about Moko artists and tattoo wearers in contemporary New Zealand. Moko, or "permanent markings on the skin" (p.235), were traditionally done by a narrow blade cutting the skin (p.20). Sometimes, today, Maori tattooists, or Ta Moko artists, continue to mark the skin in this manner. The way Maori artists do a tattoo is influenced by the "...conflicting opinions, beliefs, and values about the meaning of Moko..." (p.110); these differences of view affect the application of Moko. An artist's training impacts his or her ideological practices regarding Moko. Te Awekotuku and Nikora interviewed some artists who had tertiary-level training in fine arts. Other artists learned the art of Moko at workshops. Additionally, some artists received cultural training from family and friends. A number of artists learned how to carve wood first, whakairo, before testing carving skills on the body (p.118). Ta Moko artist, Te Rangikaihoro, explains:

... [W]e learned where Moko patterns were placed and why they were placed and the different names for parts of the body, so you are learning two different skill sets - whakairo and ta moko - simultaneously. You are also learning how to unlock the secrets of patterning, what works and what doesn't (p.120).

Many artists consider the design linked to well-practiced technique (p.125). Artist Rikirangi describes his carving competence as preparation, although not a technique substitution, for doing Moko:

I also like weaving patterns, taniko patterns, rather than carving images, because carving images are for wood....As a carver, I recognize the fluid lines of Moko on the skin....If you want to do carving, get some wood!...Whereas graphic line...(like weaving patterns)...has more respect for the body. It flows into and comes out of the muscles beneath (p.126).

A Moko practitioner balances knowledge of traditional art forms and knowledge of appropriate design application for a client. Once a potential tattoo artist begins grasping patterns, she surrounds herself with other practitioners. At a shop or home, she is mentored by an experienced tattooist (p.124). Maori designs are linked to whakapapa (genealogy). Christine Harvey, one of the few well-known Maori female tattoo artists, explains:

Whakapapa is so important to me as a designer because often it is the first piece in the puzzle: I am expected to know designs relevant to the person who comes in...I will create a piece for you alone, it will be unique, drawn straight onto your skin, and not stuck on with a stencil, or copied from a book (p.125).

Another important linkage from Moko to tradition, according to tattooists, is karakia, which is defined as "... [an]...incantation; particularly in the ancient rites proper to every important matter in the life of the Maori" (p.129). Modern Maori artists often refer to

the importance of reciting karakia. When a pattern is being inscribed on skin, they believe these chants offer protection and safety for a client. Christine Harvey relies upon karakia to prepare herself to create a Moko. “If the client want karakia, it is between the person and me, and every situation is different, so I allow for that, and go with the flow” (p.130). Many clients believe recitation of a karakia is proof of a truly skilled artist (p.130). Moko is a demonstration of pride in Maori culture. Aneta, a client, talks about her Moko as being “...a lost taonga... [(treasure)]...that was taken away through the process of colonization, almost to extinction. It is my external way of showing that I’m proud to be a Maori” (p.152).

In the mid-twentieth century, many young Maori children and teenagers, in an attempt to repossess their traditions and communities, inscribed their skin through self-infliction; some of these people became well-known and respected by their peers. By marking their skins, Maori connect back to their whanau, or family, support system. Other Maori do their own tattoos on themselves; sometimes these tattoos are gang symbols and prison motifs. As a result, traditional Ta Moko and contemporary Neo-Moko emerged as features from this cultural revival. The reactions to Moko are mixed amongst New Zealanders. Some Maori and non-Maori may falsely infer that a person’s facial tattoo is a symbol of a gang membership, despite that person having no such affiliation. A wearing of Moko, in numerous circumstances, can be seen as a political statement against the marginalization of Maori culture (pp.161-165). A wearer of Moko can also create a story, from the fabric of Maori heritage, which comments on the aesthetic and art. A recipient, Ayson describes the tupuna, or ancestry, of his design:

The puhoro [(design on the thigh)] is a thing of beauty - it enhances the body, it is an adornment. It is about who I am, a Maori belonging to a certain iwi [(tribe)]. There is no



whakapapa or actual tipuna depicted except for my name Wharepakau, which comes from the Ngati Whare side of Te Whaiti. I remember one of my uncles telling me that Wharepakau was a kaitiaki [(guardian)] depicted as a great big bird with his wings outstretched protecting his people. That is what is depicted on my back, its head at the top and its wings extending over my waist. The eagle's talons extend down into the taurape [(buttocks)] (p.176).

Ayson's tattoo took many sessions. Often, he consulted friends, his artist, and a local librarian about what arrangement of narrative he should get for his tupuna Moko. Intending clients may ask permission from elders and friends to get a certain tattoo. Usually, though, when likely clients talk about getting a tattoo, they want a trusted individual's support (p.176).

Though the Maori community supports Moko, a tattoo wearer may opt out of getting a traditional design because of perceived unworthiness. A person may feel unfit to get a kauae, or facial tattoo, because it is regarded as honorable. To obtain that honor, according to client Olivia, one should: "...have... [an ability to speak the Maori language]...fluently.... [Y]ou should not drink, smoke, swear, or take drugs because it's about being pure" (p.176). Other Moko wearers feel that any individual Maori has a cultural right to a facial tattoo. Many wearers, as interviewed by Te Awekotuku and Nikora, believe they face hostility in society because they are Maori. For example, by confidently displaying facial tattoos of Moko, they assert that they are not apologizing for being Maori (pp.177-179). Raymond, an interviewee, explains that "[T]he warrior part [of Ta Moko], in today's society, is about breaking out of the mental slavery" (p. 180). Despite an individual's reason for choosing to adorn Moko, he cannot control his community's understanding of why he does so. Another interviewee, Rau, confides that "[Some Maori people]...suddenly talk to me in Maori. They say, "Oh, but you have Moko!" and I say,

“Yeah, but I didn’t take Moko for that reason, for te reo, I took it as a tohu [(symbol)] to remember my parents and family” (p.182). Maori who seek Moko often choose designs to connect them to their culture. After deciding to get a specific Moko, the next step is selecting an artist to mark it on their skin. When considering artists, according to Te Awekotuku and Nikora, Moko seekers base their decisions on an artist’s knowledge of Maori culture, proficiency of work, tribal kinship, hygienic practices, reputation, and ethics. Although some Moko seekers impulsively choose an artist, many carefully consider their artists. An amiable relationship between artist and client is essential before doing a Moko (p.182).

The environment, also, varies as to where a client receives a Moko. Many artists and clients prefer a studio environment where relationship rules are professional. Some clients get work done at festivals. Other clients adhere to a more traditional setting; they have their Moko done at home or on a marae (ceremonial place). Whanau members can witness the application of Moko at a marae; Ta Moko is celebrated there. Background sounds, such as the chatting of friends, provide solace to a Maori person getting a tattoo. Music is a popular choice for artists and clients. Te Awekotuku and Nikora report many clients talking about how music helped them manage the pain of the needle. At home, customary music is often sung by family and friends. In the studio, music is varied. Genres range from reggae to classical, traditional to relaxation. Some clients ask for no music, instead preferring the silence (p.189).

Although some clients prefer an anesthetic to help numb distressing sensations, many wearers remember the pain as integral to their Ta Moko experience (p.190). Pouroto believes that enduring pain, by the blade, is atonement for the behavior of some Maori men:

Generally, Maori men are not confident enough to confront the issue about the way we mistreat our women....I'm one of those too that have been colonized by society in terms of devaluing women. I wanted to see this as a way to come to terms within myself, being empowered by my own tribal knowledge, our history, and my own responsibilities. Like having a balanced view, both respecting the male and female, in terms of the marae and the roles that we have. There has been a huge power imbalance for us as men, and how we've mistreated women. Because it is very painful, getting puhoro [(Moko design on thighs)] was one way to honor our women, and recognize the things that we've done wrong in the past (pp.193-194).

Pourotu remembers agonizing soreness and awareness of sex roles when he thinks of Moko. Other wearers consider identity, society, tradition, kinship, responsibility, the designs, accomplishment, and acoustic associations when attaining a Moko (pp.208-209). Maori communicate the history, present, and future of tattooing in Aotearoa by wearing Moko. Moko, one of many tattoo art styles practiced in New Zealand, is considered one of the most aesthetically pleasing, if done by a skilled artist and worn by a proud recipient.

### *Tattooing Culture: Research in the USA and Great Britain*

Aesthetic taste influences how a tattooed person identifies oneself and other tattooed people within a situated environment. The tattooed body is a social site in which to ponder about an individual's relationship to art. Human scarification, in particular tattooing, exists in a social-cultural environment where a range aesthetic tastes are exhibited within a population. Like many other forms of art, tattoos identify individuals as belonging to a group. Anthropologist Donald E. Brown (1991) lists 67 cultural universals

unique to humans; many universals concern elements of art and the aesthetic. The tattooing praxis is included in the categories of bodily adornment, decorative art, propitiation of supernatural beings, religious ritual, residence rules, puberty customs, soul concepts, status differentiation, tool-making, and sexual restrictions. In order to examine a range of styles that exist at fine art studios in New Zealand, I turn to an American sociologist, Clinton R. Sanders, who writes about the art and culture of contemporary tattooing in the United States. Because modern-day New Zealand's tattoo culture, like the United States, is influenced by many artistic styles and appreciated by people with an array of aesthetic attitudes, I include Sanders's research about tattooing practices in this dissertation.

Unless a studio specifies that its artists will only do Moko, New Zealand tattoo studios often do more than one tattoo style. Sanders extensively studied United States tattooing practices, at the studio, through interviews and ethnography. For a tattoo researcher, his work is informative and lends insight into New Zealand tattoo culture. The revised and expanded 1989 version *Customizing the Body: The Art and Culture of Tattooing* (2008) explores the popularity of tattooing in American culture. An important change from his 1998 version is that tattooing is no longer considered deviant; it has become a part of mainstream Americana (vii-viii). This dominant cultural aesthetic attitude began shifting in the 1960s, from one that saw tattoos as simple designs done without much skill to one that appreciated tattoos as art, because the tattooists changed. The primary motivator of most early Western Style tattooists was monetary gain; the primary motivator of these new tattooists was art. Tattoo artists, in the United States, continue to apprentice at studios. Yet, more than likely, these tattoo artists have also attended art schools. Their artworks are displayed in museums, on postcards, and high-paying customer bodies (pp.18-19).

In the United States of America, tattoos can mark one's economic status and social associations. Over the course of years visiting tattoo studios, Sanders noted a rabbit breeder who got a rabbit tattoo, zodiac signs to represent birth dates, matching bluebirds that represented friendship, military insignia, gang insignia, and an English literature major's recognition of their degree by a medieval castle (pp.46-47). Other tattoo wearers, as in the following interview, were keenly aware of the aesthetic criteria they wanted their art to fulfill:

(I didn't get this tattoo) because of being bad or cool or anything like that. It's like a picture. You see a picture you like and you put it in your room or your house or something like that. It's just a piece of work that you like. I like the artwork they do here. I like the color (on my tattoo). It really brings it out- the orange and the green. I like that- the colors (p.47).

Tattoos may make a person feel special because their artwork is perceived as making them unique. A tattoo artist compares a person's tattoo to a customized car:

Tattooing is just a form of personal adornment. Why does someone get a new car and get all the paint stripped off of it and paint it candy-apple red? Why spend \$10,000 on a car and then spend another \$20,000 to make it look different from the car you bought? I associate it with ownership. Your body is one of the things you indisputably own. There is a tendency to adorn things that you own to make them especially yours (pp.51-52).

Although reactions to tattoos are generally positive, this rather permanent adornment comes with some social costs. Strangers may identify a tattooed person wrongly. For example, a man holding a skull could be mistaken for a gang symbol instead of Hamlet. Oftentimes, a family member, co-worker, or friend may react negatively to a person's tattoo. One woman recalls how a

tattoo affected her husband: “He...almost threw up. It grossed him out” (p.55). If tattoos are met with negative responses, then a tattoo wearer may try to hide a tattoo. Positive responses, by contrast, may encourage a wearer to display a tattoo to mark affiliation with groups and specific interests (p.57).

Through a shared interest in making art, fine-art graduates often begin apprenticing under an experienced tattooist. Many of these fine artists realize the limited career options and low chance of monetary success in the elite fine-art world. By doing tattoo art, these fine artists satisfy their aesthetic need to produce beautiful art and make enough money to live financially well (p.63). The machines and inks needed are not cheap, so are not often available to new tattoo artists. Therefore, the appeal of apprenticing is valued also for the use of tattoo equipment (p.69). However, an apprenticeship can be monetarily costly. Experienced tattooists may charge new tattooists thousands of dollars to learn from them. Most apprentices learn gradually on the job. When they are not observing tattoos being done and learning their art style, they clean the studio and prepare the machines. “Tattooist initiates commonly spend considerable time soldering needles to the needle bars used in the tattoo machines, cutting...stencils [of] designs, mixing pigment, [and] helping during the application process...” (p.72). New tattooists commonly practice on their own bodies, and bodies of friends, before doing art on clients (p.73).

Most tattooists Sanders interviews want to do great art. And those tattooists whose main goal is to make money or gain fame acknowledge that doing great art is their second motivation. Most artists will only do custom work and will not do flash, or frequently reproduced art. A custom design, marked on a client’s skin, displays creative, artistic mastery (p.87). “As tattooing has begun to enjoy a modest level of legitimacy in the larger art world, tattooists’ positive self-definitions as creative artists...have been bolstered and enhanced. In turn, the technical and artistic quality

of the tattoos being produced has risen significantly” (p.108).

Because tattooists appreciate their art, they have an ethical attitude which relies on an elevated, aesthetic judgment:

One fine art tattooist with an established reputation presented his decisions to refuse certain client requests in political as well as aesthetic terms. I refuse to put down company imagery. To me it's the most repulsive shit in the world.... [People] want me to do Playboy bunnies. Now what does Playboy Magazine have to do with being a man in our culture? Nothing! It just manufactures this phony fucking concept about life. What does the Rolling Stones tongue have to do with your life? It's a marketing image...If you want an icon, let's search for one that has some meaning for you. So I don't do company logos. I don't do anarchist slogans like “fuck the world”...I won't tattoo someone, regardless of the choice of the tattoo, if I feel that person has totally unrealistic expectations...I know when a fragile person walks through the door...I explain all the ramifications there are, that people will reject you as a result of the tattoo, people will consider you to be a certain kind of person....Then I'll say to them, “If you really want the tattoo come back in about three or four days.” They never come back (pp.84-84).

Visible fine art tattoos are recognized on tattooed people, whether they are Maori or not, and that affects their different self-identities and varied social interactions. One question that needs to be asked, however, is whether the appreciation of tattoo art and tattoo people would differ in a New Zealand context compared to that of United States of America.

Another insightful exploration of tattooing is an article born out of anthropologist Michael Rees's research in Great Britain. Rees's (2016) ethnographic data is based on a mixed-method approach of semi-structured interviews, media analysis, and

participant observation. He analyzed his data through a grounded theory approach (p.158). Using Rees's article as a starting point, I will discuss what he discovered about tattooed communities in Great Britain before I mention what could be similar and different about tattooing among a community of people in New Zealand. Rees believes that tattooing has changed from a practice done by people outside mainstream society to a practice done inside mainstream society. Therefore, tattoos signal insider-status and acceptable fashion to mainstream society if done in agreement with Western cultural beauty standards (pp.159-160). In his Abstract, he:

...proposes that four inter-related developments contributed to the redefinition of tattooing: the increasing importance of the body as a site for constructing identity; processes of cultural diversity and globalization; the increased visibility of the practice in popular culture; and attempts to legitimize the practice as an acceptable art form (p. 157).

Rees's first claim is that the body has become a fundamental object for identity formation. In Rees's fieldwork, his participants seem to support his belief that the process of becoming more and more tattooed is an attempt to construct individual identity. Some of his interview participants see their tattoos in relation to hobbies, sexuality, body art goals, and social image. Other participants view their tattoos as evidence that they are rebelling against social norms and choosing a more moral beauty standard by rejecting body modifications such as breast implants and liposuction. In either case, individuals believe they are choosing their identities through being tattooed (pp.158-161).

In order to support that tattoos are increasingly signaling insider-status, in the next section of his essay Rees describes how celebrities are often seen in popular media as tattooed. The worldwide football celebrity David Beckham is used as an example of a highly publicized figure who is heavily tattooed (p.162) and



seen by many as role model; though this could be for a variety of factors such as his good looks, his fame, or his family. Another place that tattoos are glamourized into the high fashions celebrities often wear is in reality TV shows. In particular, Rees draws the reader's attention to the franchise *Ink* (pp.162-163). An interview respondent named Damien states "[that] now you get celebrity artists with TV shows like Miami Ink, London Ink etc. it does put [tattooing] out there and make it more seen and more mainstream" (p.163). High profile tattoo artists are becoming famous because they are associated with high status people, so their tattoos become recognized among insider groups (p.163).

Celebrity endorsements of tattoo artists are linked to the increased glamorization of tattooing in a globalized world; Rees's third claim in support of his belief that tattooing is increasingly given insider-status over outsider-status. Not only are famous persons' tattoos glamorized, specific types of cultural tattoos are also known and held in esteem throughout the world. Maori tattoos are one of these celebrated tattoo cultures and classed in the category of 'tribal' defined by Rees "as a catch-all phrase for all non-Western cultures" (p.166). Rees comments on how the categorization of all tattoos that are not viewed as coming from Western cultures is problematic because of the cultural appropriation and stereotypes, but he also points out that tattooed individuals see these tattoos are representative of their choice to have tattooed pieces different from their own cultures in order to establish their affinity with cultures dissimilar from the one they reside in. Additionally, the individual may display a tattoo piece derived from a non-Western culture because of the in-group belief of cultural acceptance and tolerance in many Western countries (pp.166-167). Rees believes that individuals are "...learn[ing] to become more tolerant of other cultures' body practices..." (p.167). But, I am not convinced of the conclusion that tattooed people are becoming more tolerant of cultural body practices and even if

tolerance is a good end goal to aspire to. More case studies about tattooing should be analyzed and quantitative data should be cited or done before conclusions are made about Western tattooed peoples' beliefs about non-Western tattooed peoples. Nevertheless, Rees's interviews are important to consider because the participants' statements demonstrate how tattooing is a global phenomenon. Rees's final claim connects the globalized practice of tattooing to its place in the art world.

Rees's interviewees discuss how many tattoo artists make a decent living doing tattoos and are held in high esteem by scholars and the media. However, Rees cautions the reader that tattooing has not been accepted by all as art, yet as tattoos become openly worn and conversed about, tattooing is further solidified as an art form. Based upon Sanders (2008), Rees emphasizes that a substantial number of university trained artists entered the tattoo world in the 1970s and many more continue to become tattoo artists today (p.167). I discussed Sanders (2008) in the previous section, so I think it is helpful to point out the Sanders's interviews of tattooed people in the USA and Rees's interviews of tattooed people in Great Britain create a detailed and fuller picture of the Western tattoo art world. Rees believes that tattoo art is becoming more accepted by contemporary Western society than in previous eras and this acceptance is in part because tattoo artworks are increasingly being displayed at museums, conventions, art studio displays, and in books. In Rees's discussion of how tattooing work is being seen as tattoo art, he makes many references to *Customizing the Body: The Art and Culture of Tattooing* (2008) in support of the four factors he identifies as moving tattooed people from outsider to insider status. Like Sanders, Rees believes that tattooing is being legitimized in the art world though it is not fully legitimized (p.169-172). Some of the ways that tattooists seek legitimacy is their continual engagement with other art practices in addition to doing their tattoo artworks (p.168). Sometimes it is not

legitimacy that encourages tattoo artists to engage with other art forms; it is their status as an artist that has established a market for their other aesthetic endeavors (p.169). Notably, Rees concludes his article by a statement from one of his interviewees that likely holds true in Western cultures: “tattooing has lost its outsider status” (p.172). Has tattooing lost its outsider status in non-Western cultures?

Are tattooing art, tattoo artists, and tattooed people becoming a part of mainstream culture in New Zealand as in the Great Britain of Rees (2016) the United States of America in Sanders (2008)? Or was tattooing culture, especially from its thousands of years of history in the South Pacific region, already an integral part of what it is New Zealand culture? The research of Te Awekotuku and Nikora (2007) demonstrate the historical and contemporary importance of Moko. Perhaps unlike North America and Europe, tattooing culture is not simply becoming mainstream in New Zealand. Instead, tattooing culture was prevalent in Aotearoa or New Zealand because of its place in the traditions of the Maori peoples. Only within the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was tattooing not regarded as part of New Zealand culture by some of the more recent immigrants to New Zealand. Now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in part because of the Maori cultural revival, tattooing is once again becoming part of New Zealand culture. The main question I ask from my research at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio, after reading Sanders (2008), Rees (2016), and Te Awekotuku and Nikora (2007), is this: is tattooing already part of the mainstream among some peoples in New Zealand culture so that New Zealand’s acceptance and display of tattooing differ significantly from its acceptance and display in The United States of America and Great Britain? As was pointed out earlier in the *Introduction* and within this chapter, researchers have touched upon the relationship of tattoo artists and their clients. Many consumers of the tattoo industry are knowledgeable about different tattoo styles, are

familiar with popular tattoo artists, and seek out well-known studios. Anthropologists, Alfred Gell and Michael Rees among them, have written about tattooing. Why, then, do I research tattooing when there is already a literature on the subject? Because, I believe more questions should be asked how art and the aesthetic is understood by the people involved within tattooed communities, especially in understanding the role of ethics within a tattooed community.

### *Ethics of Tattoo Artists*

In the previous discussion, I discussed Sanders's (2008) cultural observations of the United States tattooing scene yet again. A common narrative in his observations is that tattooists value being ethical before, during, and after the tattooing process. In order to address how tattooists' ethics will be analyzed in my *Chapter 4 Discussion*, some discussion of tattooists' ethics in New Zealand is needed in my preliminary discussion. To start, the first ethics focus in New Zealand is on the paternalist efforts from outside organizations, outside the tattoo studio and within New Zealand that is, that regulate specific tattooing practices. Gerald Dworkin (1972) defines paternalism "...as the use of coercion to achieve a good which is not recognized as such by those persons for whom the good is intended" (p.68). Tattoo industries are regulated paternalistically through restrictions on age and sanitation standards.

New Zealand does not have a national law that requires a person to be of a certain age for getting tattooed. Yet, many localities require a person to be a minimum of 18 years of age to get a tattoo. Hamilton, New Zealand, where I have undertaken my tattoo research, does not require a certain age for a tattoo. However, a person under 16 years of age must have parental or guardian consent before being tattooed at a tattoo studio.

Concerns about how old individuals are when getting tattooed is a paternalistic concern but does not directly address the quality of the tattoo work done on client skins because regulations for age would not take into account the skill level of the artist doing the tattooing. Additionally, regulations for a certain age to be tattooed do not address where a tattoo may be placed. Noteworthy are the tattoo artists who elect to be part of an organization dedicated to not tattooing someone under the age of 18. New Zealand tattoo artists, who are interested in adhering to this ethical code, can join the Tattoo Artists Association of New Zealand (TAANZ). However, TAANZ functions primarily as a lobbying group for safety of tattooing rather than a safety enforcement agency (“tattoos & piercings”, Youth Law Aotearoa, 2015).

Tattooing businesses in Hamilton are regulated by sanitation codes, yet no rules regulate the quality of inks used in the tattoo gun. Similarly, no basic requirements are available for the education of a tattooist before he or she can work on clients (“Tattoos and Piercing Facilities”, *Hamilton County Health Guidelines*, 2015). Sanitation requirements do not directly address the quality of art, the application of the art, the quality of the inks, the type of designs allowed, and where artists tattoo on a person. Discussion of tattooing ethics is usually framed within the context of sanitation requirements and age concerns.

Another aspect of tattooing ethics in New Zealand is that it does not have the amount of commentary about it that other countries have though less commentary may be correlated with New Zealand’s smaller population size. Although I came across a few blogs written by tattoo artists who live outside New Zealand, I was not able to find blogs specifically addressing ethics and tattooing from artists in New Zealand. I was not able to find research articles specifically addressing an ethical code followed by many tattoo artists, or an ethical code of certain artists, within the confines of a tattoo business or businesses in New Zealand. I was

not aware of ethics and etiquette rules playing an important role in the tattoo industry until I did my research. A research gap in literature about tattooing exists because tattoo artists and their ethics are not often discussed in anthropological texts. My fieldwork was centered on art and the aesthetic, but I will address some of the implications of the ethical code and etiquette rules of tattoo artists at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio at the end of *Ch.4 Discussion*.

### *Summary of Preliminaries*

Utilizing information from the texts *Wrapping in Images* (1993) and *Art and Agency* (1998) by Alfred Gell, I assess the social world of tattooing through the anthropological data I collected at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio. New Zealand society consists of many people who have tattoos and who do tattooing. These New Zealanders may or may not be of Maori descent. Gell suggests that the interaction between tattooed bodies, group and individual, reinforces self-identity and identity with a group that is influenced by a cultural environment (1993, p.8). Within the traditional social world of tattooing in Aotearoa, Classic (historical) Moko was reliant on designs which classify the individual by rank and sex. Many designs rely on narratives about the supernatural. Additionally, rite of passage narratives are constructed on the skin with Moko (Gell, 1993). Te Awekotuku and Linda Waimarie Nikora (2007) discuss the designs and skills essential for Moko in Aotearoa. They detail how traditional Moko designs converge with Contemporary Moko practices. Moko is worn by Maori and non-Maori globally, not just in New Zealand.

Therefore it was surprising to me that there is not more anthropological fieldwork that specifically focuses on art and the aesthetic in respect to contemporary fine-art styles of tattooing and its relation to traditional indigenous tattooing practices in the Pacific Island region. Sanders's research (2008) focuses on the social world of contemporary tattooing in the United States of America, but some of the contemporary tattoo styles he describes are also found in Hamilton, New Zealand. Because not enough is known about the convergence of tattoo art styles in a tattoo business setting in New Zealand, where Polynesian and Western styles influence each other, I highlight the different styles, artists, and tattooed persons within the fine art tattoo business of Flax Roots Tattoo Studio. Flax Roots Tattoo Studio's physical location is

in the central part of Hamilton, Waikato, New Zealand, where I place the tattooed person in the context of local social interactions. I focus my research at on Flax Roots Tattoo Studio because of the different tattoo artworks that are done there by four artists who each have an aesthetic style. Some of the styles done there are Polynesian, and some are Western. Similarities and dissimilarities arise when I compare different tattoo art styles and aesthetic attitudes in my fieldwork.

Sometimes I refer to the physical or online locations outside Hamilton that have influenced, or been influenced by, tattooed people at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio. I acknowledge that tattooing exists in a globalized space, as evident from Rees (2016) and my fieldwork. As Rees pointed out, tattoo art is becoming legitimized. Increasingly, upper class and middle class people in New Zealand buy tattoo art. They can wear fine art tattoos to signal their identification with a highly valued art world. However, the theory of art as social capital cannot completely explain its older origins associated closely with traditional crafts. Stephen Davies (2006) suggests that no single culture or period can claim exclusive ownership of the concept of art. Davies makes the case again in *The Artful Species...* (2012) where he concludes that aesthetic attitudes are both biologically and socially made. Davies (2006; 2012), Sanders (2008), and Rees (2016) would perhaps agree with Kant (1790) that aesthetically pleasing tattoo artworks are viewed across cultures as good art, but they seem to disagree with Kant about a universal and permanent legitimacy of artworks.

I consider my research about the aesthetic and art of tattooing to be important in three ways: it explores the phenomenon of tattooing in an understudied tattooed community in contemporary New Zealand; it focuses on art and the aesthetic in relation to tattooing; and it includes anthropological fieldwork to support my conclusions about this specific tattoo studio. All of these factors contribute to knowledge about tattooing in social



science literature. I do not make general claims about tattooing everywhere as my fieldwork's intention from the outset was to be a case study of a fine art tattoo business that drew clients mainly from a localized space yet had ties to the international tattooing community. My goal is to achieve an in-depth look at the ways in which art and the aesthetic operate within a small social group of tattooists and clients who are embedded within their local culture and sometimes connected to other tattooed cultures in single or multitude of social spaces. I ask and answer these questions: 1. How do tattoo artists and their clients engage with and shape tattoo art and its aesthetic at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio? ; and 2. How do these tattoo artists' ethics influence their relationships with their clients and art?

## Chapter 2 Methodology

“The aim of anthropological theory is to make sense of behavior in the context of social relations” (Gell, 1998, p.11)

My research project enables the reader to develop a better understanding of tattooing in practice at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio in Hamilton, Waikato, New Zealand because I have carefully selected methodology that enabled me to investigate this community properly. The methods for gathering data I employed are grounded theory, interviews and photography, fieldwork, and verification of my interviews and photographs by participants. Each of my methods involved carefully planned steps and questions. Each of my methods involved a careful way of checking my beliefs and updating my beliefs about my fieldwork based on evidence from interviews and photographs. Therefore, in this second chapter, I explain my role as researcher before detailing my methodology.

### *My Role as Researcher*

Through critical inquiry using well-thought out research methods, I tried to objectively document the phenomena of tattooing. I strived to be objective; and this meant being aware of my intuitive judgments. For example, I could easily have made things up in order to fit my conclusion to a prescriptive paradigm. In *Practical Research: Planning and Design* (2010), P.D. Leedy and J. Ormond discuss the importance of evidence in interpreting data. Researchers can sometimes make unwarranted claims and far-flung inferences from their data. Often, the pressure to produce

something new in an academic field rushes a researcher to make incorrect conclusions (E-book loc. 8847). So, I did not rush, unthinkingly, to quick conclusions.

Furthermore, I aimed for objectivity as “[I] recognize[d] that the power of the documentation is in its objectivity, in its chilling irrefutability, not in its neutrality... [I was]...prepared for some serious tests of [my] ability to remain a[n]...observer” (Bernard, *Research Methods In Anthropology...*, 2002, pp.349-350). I am biased because I think as a human; but I stated my biases and strove to analyze social interactions without prejudice. Instead of fitting my fieldwork findings into a narrow slot, which is too narrow for the width of information my fieldwork produced, I preferred reaching evidence-based conclusions drawn from qualitative research methods. As an evidence-based anthropologist, I updated my beliefs based on the findings from my fieldwork. When my fieldwork pointed to a different conclusion than I thought it would, then I changed my beliefs about what I thought would be the result. This sort of applied rationality to research was part of my goal of striving to be engaged objectively with my work. Therefore, I identified, addressed, and communicate any assumptions, beliefs, or biases which may have influenced interpretations of research within my dissertation and when relevant to ethical guidelines standardized by the University of Waikato. I maintained a willingness to modify my interpretations of data when new information conflicts with previously held provisional conclusions.

### *Data Analysis: Importance of Grounded Theory*

Grounded-theory research helped me understand the phenomenon of tattooing, as reflected in my case study. According to the book *Practical Research* (2010), “[t]he major purpose of a

grounded-theory approach is to begin with the data...” and use it to develop a theory (Leedy and Ormrod, electronic loc. 4865). My fieldwork informed the literature. Before I began my research at Flax Roots, I familiarized myself with a wide range of texts, some of which became part of my literature review. Not all of the texts I considered survived the final cut into my dissertation. The texts I left out no longer stood up after data analysis. This intentional editing was based on the importance of grounded-theory research. “The whole idea is to discover patterns of behavior or thought in a set of texts” (Bernard, 2002, p.464). Anthropologist Russell Bernard lays out six purposes of using grounded theory as a methodological approach in field studies:

- (1) Produce transcripts of interviews and read through a small sample of text.
- (2) Identify potential analytic categories- that is, potential themes- that arise.
- (3) As the categories emerge, pull all the data from those categories together and compare them.
- (4) Think about how categories are linked together.
- (5) Use the relations among categories to build theoretical models, constantly checking the models against the data- particularly against negative cases.
- (6) Present the results of the analysis using exemplars, that is, quotes from interviews that illuminate the theory (p.446).

I set out to address each of the six points. First, I transcribed and read each interview. Second, I identified themes that arose from my interviews, photographs, and observations. Third, I compared emerging sociocultural categories that (fourth) required thinking about possible categorical linkages. If relations existed between sociocultural categories, then I (fifth) checked these categories against negative cases. Sixth and last, I presented the analysis coupled with quotations from field notes and interviews.

### *Qualitative Approaches in My Case Study*

In my case study, data analysis involves five steps. The first step is the “Organization of details about the case” (Leedy and Ormond, 2010, loc. 4691). I arranged my observations of Flax Roots Tattoo Studio closest to time and date an interview or photograph was taken. The second step is “Categorization of the data” (loc.4691). In *Chapter 3 Interviews, Photographs, and Observations*, I categorized each client’s interview under one of the four artists. An artist’s interview is before their clients’ interviews in each artist category. So, I categorize clients’ interviews by their artists, then I chronologically order the clients’ interviews under each specific artist. In my transcription of each interview, the punctuation and spelling reflect the interviewees’ way of speaking to me. Sometimes specific photographs, interviews, or observations may need interpretation. The third step is my *Chapter 4 Discussion*. I categorized the interviews based on how the interview questions were answered by participants. Some participants’ responses do not fit neatly into a specific category or an interview question (loc.4691; loc. 4698). Step four is to identify the patterns in my research. I looked at my overall fieldwork and found the patterns to summarize in my conclusion.

In *Conclusion*, observable conclusions are drawn about tattooing at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio in Hamilton, New Zealand. This fifth step avoids generalization of research findings to environments outside my research. As an alternative to concluding in a sweeping generalization, I note the similarities and dissimilarities of the interview content (loc. 4721). I conclude by offering provisional answers and an analysis of the socio-cultural environment of Flax Roots Tattoo Studio.

My research project is a case study because, for a specific length of time, I observed a tattoo community at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio and analyzed its environment. Specifically, I looked for insight into socio-cultural factors which possibly influenced a tattooed person's aesthetic attitude and choice of art; and how a tattooed person may have influenced these socio-cultural factors. Since I am attempting to reach conclusions from my tattooing research, my three qualitative approaches (interview, observation, grounded theory) follow four guiding principles discussed by Alan Peshkin ("The Goodness of Qualitative Research", 1993).

The first, used for observations and interviews, is the operations categorized under the detailing of description. Description, or an account, contains the operations of "...processes, relationships, settings and situations, systems, and people" (p.24). In my description of the tattoo studio, I explain the social operations around tattooing. Relationships, between tattooists and tattooees, often are influenced by these social factors. After detailing the interpersonal exchanges at the studio, I interpret these observations. Peshkin's second guiding principle is interpretation, or a "[c]larifying and understanding [of] complexity..." (p.27) which draws on evidence-based insights and concepts (p.25). I interpret the interviews and ethnographic data, within the socio-cultural area of Hamilton, in relation to concepts explored in the aesthetic and art.

The third principle is verification, which is validating data (p.27). Interview transcripts were approved by participants. No participants disagreed with or clarified the statements I recorded and, subsequently, used for my dissertation. The fourth and final guiding principle discussed by Peshkin is evaluation; that is, research implications (p.28). After assessing observations and interviews, I describe sociocultural factors that may influence individual preferences regarding a tattoo. I point out the dynamic

relationship of people influencing culture and culture influencing people. From the academic writing about tattooing, I use some of the best literature about contemporary tattooing practices for help in evaluating my fieldwork. I describe the tattoo studio environment when relevant to my research questions. P.D. Leedy and J. Ormond (2010) explain the methods of a case study; methods I use. I collect data from observations, interviews, and photographs (E-book loc.4683). I focus on a single tattoo case study because contextual make-up offers the possibility of a detailed understanding of that specific situation (loc. 4672). My hope is that the details and conclusions of my case study can be used as reference for other researchers inquiring into the social world of tattoo art (loc. 4688).

My field notes consist of three types of data: methodological, descriptive, and analytic. Methodological notes described where, when, and how I collected the field data. Descriptive notes detail what I saw and heard, comprising the bulk of my records. Analytic notes are the observations I wrote based on my methodological notes and descriptive notes (Ibid, pp.376-377). My field notes assisted me in “(1) identifying categories and concepts that emerge from... [my literature review] and (2) linking... [these]...concepts...” (Ibid, p.462) in order to ground my research within the social science discipline. I noted observations at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio for about five hours a day, two days a week, during mid-January to March 2015. I spent a number of random hours and days at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio and at my office at the University of Waikato interviewing tattooists and tattooees. The last interview was done at a local coffee shop, near Flax Roots Tattoo Studio, at the request of the interviewee. Interviews allow me to ask questions about clients’ and artists’ associations with tattooing. These interviews required approximately one hour of a participant’s time at a safe, private, and convenient location. Thirteen people, who were tattooed by one or more Flax Roots Tattoo Studio’s artists,

consented to photographs and interviews. Out of those people who consented, ten clients were interviewed because three people who filled out consent forms did not respond when later contacted about doing an interview. Additionally, four tattoo artists working at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio were interviewed there. Photographs were taken at the tattoo studio. Photographs were sometimes taken during the time of the interview.

As an interviewer, I followed specific guidelines outlined by Leedy and Ormrod (2010) in order to conduct a semi-structured interview that was contextually accurate. Semi-structured interviews are useful in this research because I recorded perceptions of participants about tattooing at a specific place (p.181). The interview format mainly consisted of two people, a one-to-one ratio of researcher-to-participant. In two instances, I interviewed more than one individual (an artist and his client; a couple and an artist). I had prepared interview questions in advance (See Appendix I). These questions were created with my guiding research question in mind and encourage interviewees to talk about tattooing in a conversational approach without hinting at particular answers. I asked questions aimed at gaining a description of each person's tattoo(s) as well as a description of their occupation, hobby, gender, sex, age, tattoo art preference(s), and aesthetic outlook. Additionally, I asked questions about their perceptions of other people with tattoos located in Hamilton; sometimes this led participants to talk about tattooed people living elsewhere in New Zealand and the world. Based on a participant's response, I followed up with specific questions that varied from participant to participant. The center column of Appendix I contains examples of how a question could have been followed up by me. In order to be interviewed and possibly photographed, tattoo artists and their clients were given the same information letter and consent form. I took photos before, during, and after a particular tattoo piece was done. These photographs were of



clients' tattoos, artists doing tattoo work, tattoo drawings, and Flax Roots Tattoo Studio's interior and exterior. I took photographs with the same audio-recording device I used for interviewing.

### *Limitations*

My research increases the knowledge of tattooed people involved with Flax Roots Tattoo Studio in Hamilton. I cannot generalize my case study, and in effect my fieldwork, to all people in tattooed communities in New Zealand and in other countries. I do not claim that the global tattooed community will exhibit the same ideas about art and the aesthetic. Nevertheless, my fieldwork sheds light on tattooing practices in New Zealand and perhaps the rest of the world.

Another limitation was the budget and time constraints embedded in the completion of my dissertation. I would have liked to interview and observe several different fine art tattoo studios within Hamilton and elsewhere in New Zealand. I chose to gather as much quality information as I could, with time and budget allowance, at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio. Yet, I also view a case study as a strength because I was able to focus on one community; this intentional focus added insights to my research I may not have been able to include had I not interacted with participants to the extent I did. Had I done my study in multiple places in a constrained amount of time, I may have not developed the trust of participants.

Yet, limitations should be mentioned in a case study with one interviewer. I am perceived certain ways by the tattooed people I interviewed and other interviewers may have been perceived in different ways. A different interviewer may have been got different responses from my research questions. For example, some men

were hesitant when answering the gender and sex question. Would some men have answered that question a similar way if I had been a man conducting the interviews? Would women have answered the gender and sex question in a different way? Ultimately, I did the best I could do with the knowledge I gathered from participants from my fieldwork.

### **Chapter 3 Interviews, Photographs, and Observations**

#### *The Tattoo Scene in Hamilton*

I did my research in Hamilton, the fourth largest urban area in New Zealand. Hamilton could be described as a small city with a suburb-like feel. Hamilton is in the region of Waikato, which has historically depended largely on manufacturing and agriculture. Despite the number of single-family homes, Hamilton contains a significant transient population. Many of these people are students, some are stopping on their way to other places, and some are looking for work. Hamilton is inland, near a river, and close to the neighboring towns of Cambridge, Ngaruawahia, and Te Awamutu. The town of Rotorua, a popular tourist destination and the birth place of one of the interviewees, is on the edge of the Waikato region.

Central Hamilton, the area where I did interviews at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio, is near the Waikato River. Central Hamilton has a mall which has two movie theaters. Fast food shops, small gyms, a large park, a technical school, a pricey used book store, thrift shops, great family-owned Asian cuisine restaurants, grocery stores, art venues, and housing units are also found in Central Hamilton. A glance from a pedestrian sees students, single workers, artists, families, business people, and a number of homeless people. Many of the stores are vacant, which may be in part due to local consumers doing the bulk of their purchasing at the commercial stores and restaurants on the outskirts of Hamilton City. Yet, a few high-end fashion stores and expensive eateries are frequented by locals; and many tattoo shops and bars appear to be thriving.

At least six tattoo studios have been in business in Hamilton for more than a couple of years. A tattoo studio in Hamilton can offer potential tattoo clients different styles of tattooing to do or choose from; these clients may differ in family history, ethnicity, nationality, sex, occupation, gender, age, and so on. New Zealand has three main tattoo types to offer its clients; commercial style (e.g. butterflies, lucky charms, anchors, and “Mom”); fine-art style (e.g. commissioned specific pieces); and traditional South Pacific tattoos (Maori and other Pacific Island styles). Although Maori style tattoos are frequently done in other countries, it is usually an artistic representation of what these tattoo artists and clients think traditional Maori tattoo art is. Because I am interested in the art of Moko and fine-art tattooing, I chose Flax Roots Tattoo Studio. I could easily have chosen to do research at another tattoo studio in Hamilton. Yet, Flax Roots Tattoo Studio stood out as the place to do my research. Or rather, I was easily persuaded by word-of-mouth recommendations in the tattoo community in Hamilton to ask permission from artists to embark on my project there. The owner, who is also a tattooist, welcomed my project. I felt comfortable at the studio. It is in a safe location. Also, its location is convenient for me. I established a good relationship with Flax Roots Tattoo Studio, maybe because I am tattooed. Whether or not a conscious recognition of bias exists in a tattooed community, I may have been seen as an outsider if I had no tattoos. I had a good rapport in the studio and felt comfortable to ask questions. Nevertheless, I refrained from sharing my thoughts with interviewees about their responses during my fieldwork so as not to influence what they told me. As a result, my interviews detailed a wide range of specific points of view from people associated with Flax Roots Tattoo Studio.

*Artists at the Tattoo Studio*

Flax Roots Tattoo Studio is open six days a week, Monday through Saturday, for at least 41 hours. On a regular basis, four artists work there. Marc Wymer is the owner of the studio. He does many styles of tattooing. He may do tattooing freehand or without drawing the tattoo first before inking it on the skin. Brandon Martin, a tattoo apprentice, specializes in American Traditional style tattoos. (See Appendix III for brief descriptions of tattoo styles in this chapter). Second to Marc, Ali Selliman has tattooed the longest at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio. He has a degree in Media Arts, specializing in painting and drawing. Makkala Rose, the only female tattooist at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio, also has completed higher education courses in art.



*Photo 1: Organization does not mean that an artist's taste in decoration is hindered.*

*Ali's desk, in his studio space, is a set-up niche.*

On any given day, any of the four artists may be present at one of the four tattoo stations. Tattoo stations are kept clean and organized. Throughout the day, these artists additionally work diligently to keep the studio clean and a playlist running on the loud speakers. Clients, or potential clients, enter and exit the studio throughout the day. Artists take short breaks when they can. Breaks happen when there are no clients and no tattoo pieces to draw. Breaks often happen when a rest is needed during an intricate tattoo piece on a client. Frequently, tattoo artists work after-hours. They take on clients who cannot come in during the time the studio is officially open. After-hour time is likewise needed when an artist may be working on a client whose tattoo art piece is large and complex in design. Artists work before-hours too. They set up their stations. They prepare whatever inks they will be using for the day. They review, or sometimes complete, tattoo drawings to be used on future clients.

Since the tattoo artists at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio create culturally-inspired, yet unique drawings, a substantial amount of time is spent refining their drawings of future tattoos. Artists prepare their drawings for application to skins. Artists may consult with one another about their drawings and how their piece will be applied to the skin; the shading, colors, inks, and lines it will consist of, and figuring out the line proportions for where a tattoo will be placed on the body. Sometimes, people come into the studio unsure of what tattoo to get and which artist to get it from. Artists will work together to see if this person is ready to be tattooed, what tattoo suits this person, and which one of them should do the tattooing. Another potential scenario is that an artist may not feel comfortable doing a certain tattoo for a specific person. This person may demand things from the artist that is against Flax Roots Tattoo Studio rules for client behavior. For example, a stranger may try to bring the price down for a tattoo. Because of the many hours spent drawing tattoos and consulting

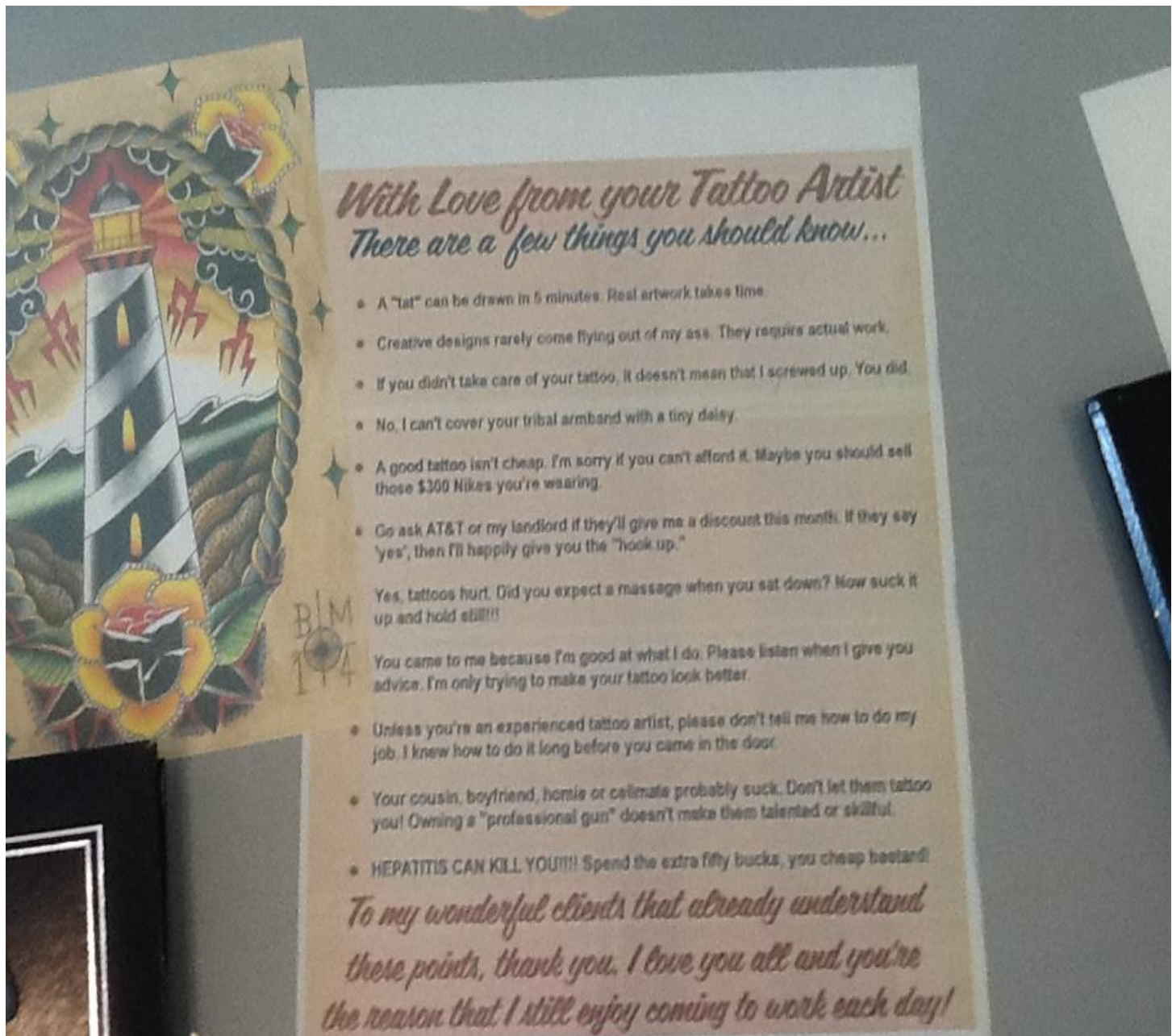
with other artists, an artist will not dramatically lower the price of a tattoo. Furthermore, the artist is factoring the amount of future work needed to do the stranger's tattoo. Tattoos cost time. Artists refuse to do a cheap tattoo because, in their eyes, the tattoo would be of low quality and would portray Flax Roots Tattoo Studio as a producer of poor tattoos. In addition to these rules, a person may want a tattoo which is against the written ethical code there.

Other ethical rules are not clearly stated in writing in the studio. Marc explains, to me, his ethics regarding a neck tattoo or facial tattoo; and consequently, the ethics of Flax Roots Tattoo Studio:

I believe there's more than just getting nice tattoos. Sometimes it's got to be the right tattoo, you know. Anything on an 18 year old's neck that hasn't even had a job interview or anything in his life is probably not the right tattoo...I don't ever want to do anything that's a hindrance to anyone's life...I love doing what I'm doing. But I'd hate to see, in 20 years time, the same kid: he's homeless and [pause] or even worse. A young man could never really land a job because of this thing [he's] got on [his] neck...

Me: So if someone comes in wanting a facial and neck tattoo that's young, do you suggest doing the tattoo someplace else, and has that ever worked before?

Marc: Well yeah, we've [artists at Flax Roots]...explained and managed to get most people not to do it. Some are just going to go elsewhere and get it done anyway...[T]he only thing I can do about that is safeguard myself, so I'm not part of it. I tattoo ethically and hope for the best. I think at the end of



*Photo 2: Rules and Etiquette at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio.*

the day, if I'm not the guy who tattooed it then I'm fine with that. And usually you can get some understanding out of people when you're telling them, look man, if I didn't give a shit I'd take your money and do it....It's not about the money, as much as people think (February 3, 2015).

Marc will tattoo the face and neck of a client if that client already has many tattoos and understands the possible social



consequences of these tattoos. A client who gets a face or neck tattoo at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio is usually of a mature attitude; judged to be somewhere around 30 years old and above in age. Another rule is that artists do not tattoo partner initials. Often, these tattoos are requested by a client who wants to demonstrate an emotional attachment for a relationship that has yet to become a mature one and perhaps never will. Marc, Ali, Makkala, and Brandon share an ethical code that is a consequence of valuing their artwork. They value tattoo artwork, other local Hamilton tattoo artists, tattoo art studios in New Zealand, and abroad. By valuing the lives of their clients and being proud of their artwork, they respect their clients and their tattoos. I will elaborate on the ethics of artists at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio and how their ethics relates to research literature about ethics in *Chapter Four Discussion*.

For now, I divide the following interviews (interview questions are located in Appendix I), into four sections by artist. Each artist's interview is followed by the interviews of the clients he or she tattooed. The ten clients' interviews are organized under their artist. I summarize the descriptions of tattoos on artists and clients in Appendix III. Later in *Ch. 4*, I analyze the interviews, photographs, and observations found in *Ch.3*. For now, let's delve into the time I spent, January 2015 through March 2015, at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio.

Marc Wymer: Owner and Tattooist at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio



*Photo 3: Marc, left, discusses a tattoo drawing with Ali.*

Flax Roots Tattoo Studio owner and artist Marc Wymer is covered with a variety of tattoo art styles. Both his arms are tattooed. He has a Ta Moko on the right arm representing his immediate family: his siblings who passed away, his siblings who are alive, his children, and his mother and father. On his left arm, he has a Neo-European Traditional tattoo of a scene with owls, ghouls, and gypsy women. This left arm tattoo was done by a guest artist at Flax Roots who decided Marc did not have enough tattoos. Marc describes how the guest artist worked on him as well as details about the artwork:

We got one piece of it one day, which was just this rose with [my] kids' names in it. Then the next week [the guest artist] came down [again]. We were kind of working every weekend, while [he was] setting [his] own studio up in downtown Auckland...[Again], the next week he came back he had all this owl and lamb thing drawn up. And we kind of just

chipped away at it like that. I didn't really have a say in lots. I didn't mind that; it wasn't costing me nothing. Sometimes I need a bit of freedom around what I do (February 3, 2015).

Marc emphasizes that tattoo artists should have freedom to decide how an art piece is designed on the skin.

Another tattoo artist who has worked on Marc is a Borneo artist, from Malaysia, who does traditional Iban-style tattoos. The artist hand-tapped the Iban dots on Marc's shoulder. Each collection of dots makes up a flower, called a Bunga Terung. Its name's English translation is 'eggplant flower'. Marc has two Bunga Terung tattoos. Each flower is about a medium man's hand size. Each Bunga Terung took two hours, for a total of four hours. The Iban artist used a mallet that consisted of a cluster of needles on a piece of wood. He tapped a needle with a mallet, so it could pierce Marc's skin. Because the tattoos took four hours of time and each pierce was felt by Marc, one might expect that the process was uncomfortable. Yet, according to Marc, it was an enjoyable process:

[T]here wasn't really any talking. I just lay on a mat on the ground and sort of drifted off. I found that the rhythmic elements of the tapping was really soothing. It was kind of surreal...I felt kind of a spiritual connection with it. [There was] some traditional Borneo music on. [The artist wore] traditional Borneo dress. [I was] on a flax mat, Samoan mat actually, and getting tattooed...I felt like I was in another time and place. Maybe that's why it seemed to not take long at all. Very painless. Like I said, getting this done, it was a really enjoyable experience. I felt no pain. I felt more in touch with myself and maybe my [Maori] ancestors as well. It was a fantastic experience. Highly recommended (Ibid).

Marc has tattoos on his hands, poked with needles, by the hand of a Swedish artist. He is continually growing as an artist by experimenting with new tattoo techniques. He wants to try doing a tattoo without the use of an ink machine which he has not yet done. Marc, especially, wants to try doing a Ta Moko without a machine:

Marc: Probably one of the things that keeps me the busiest [is doing Moko], and seeing, I'm the only one that does it in the studio too. There's plenty of other good places around that I highly recommend in Hamilton for Moko. A lot around the country, of course. Sometimes it's a lot better to get something tattooed by somebody who geographically relates to you. If [the client is] from that area maybe the artist should be. Doesn't happen all the time but New Zealand's not as big as the States or anything. You should be able to travel to your extended family member to have it done and be home the same day, or maybe the next day. A lot of people I think don't really look at [a Moko tattoo]. It's become quite generic and more of a fashion statement, which is fine as long as it's aesthetically nice to look at (Ibid).

I wondered why Marc saw Moko as increasingly being treated as a fashion statement and what he meant by aesthetically pleasing. When I inquired, he explained what he meant and the possible cultural issues from the popularity of Moko perceived by other Maori:

Marc: Even before I started tattooing, that movie that came out, *Once Were Warriors*, in the early 90s where some of the characters were heavily tattooed with Moko. Gang members and that [the movie] aroused a huge interest back in Moko. I imagined, or I believed, that it was a lost art. It's something that people tread around lightly in terms of Maori, very carefully in terms of Maori beliefs. We have a terminology in

Maori of Ta Moko. Oh, more than a terminology, we have a state called tapu where things are sacred. I think most indigenous cultures have it as well, where if you mingle with it or toy with it, things could happen (Ibid).

Me: So what do you think of toying with Moko? For example, what would you think of a Maori style tattoo being done in the States and other places? Do those tattoo artists understand the tattoos they are doing? And do Moko well, with quality?

Marc: Yeah! I'm more than anything hugely flattered by it. I think that it's fabulous that somebody a million miles across the world thinks that this is the art I like. "I love these Maori tattoos. I don't understand them. I don't know what they mean." But they choose to wear it on their skins. I'm flattered by that. Whether to say that that's the right idea? But, I'm only here saying how I feel about it, not whether it's right or wrong, you know. I know in Europe it's a really big deal. A lot of Ta Moko artists live there; are based there now because that's where the money is. Funny thing is, a lot of them are the same people that were saying Moko [is] for Maori only...But now, it's like, I think we are understanding evolution of art to survive. If people didn't see [Moko] across the world, then they wouldn't be asking for it. So maybe we're blessed that it's getting out there. You can usually tell Moko from the Maori sort of looking tattoos. [The latter] generally doesn't have much flow to it or anything like that, eh. Yeah, I don't know. I haven't really stopped to think about how I actually feel about it. But my first response would be I'm flattered, to be honest (Ibid).

Just as some European tattoo artists wear and do Moko, Marc wears cultural references to other countries. He has Iban style tattoos. He is tattooed by artists who are not from New

Zealand. He wears Moko. And he wears pop culture icons. Marc has a tattoo of Bob Marley's image on his leg. Once, a couple of children, whose Mom was getting tattooed by Marc, asked about his Bob Marley tattoo. Marc says "They're the only people that have ever asked....I said to them "Oh, it's Jesus Christ". And they said "That's not Jesus Christ". I said "Oh well, it's my Jesus Christ" (Ibid). Since he was a child, Marc has enjoyed Marley's music:

Marc: ...I don't think there's any kid in New Zealand that never listened to Bob Marley. And I've been told too, no matter where in the world you go, you put on a Bob Marley song everybody will know it. It's a universal language these days. Breaks down barriers with anyone. But more so the message. Some of the messages are the lifestyle in a way. I believe, or to me it seemed, Bob really lived the pure life. He didn't chase money. Gave a lot of it away. Dressed in rags just so kids wouldn't try to mimic him and go out and buy expensive clothes, which is the total opposite to what we see these days in terms of American rap music, you know...Which has even had a massive affect on tattooing.

Me: What do you mean by that?

Marc: I mean kids of really young ages got their faces tattooed. They got their necks tattooed. No one was doing that before Little Wayne and these rappers started tattooing their whole bodies. These kids, they idolize their idols. I don't think I was seeing that sort of behavior before these American hip hop stars starting doing it. Tattooing their whole bodies. I see kids walking to high school with just their hand and necks tattooed...[T]here's a lot of people tattooing that aren't making the money nowadays...The bills keep coming for some shops. If you haven't seen anybody walk through the door for a couple of days and a kid walks in

wanting a tattoo on his face, that's driven [certain people who do tattooing] to make their money. But in saying that, maybe [they are] in the wrong profession.

Me: Would you still consider that tattoo art, if it's only done because the person's willing to pay? What do you think?

Marc: Yeah, I guess art's in the eye of the beholder. Some of the greatest pieces of art on the planet are what a lot of people would class as rubbish. It's not that I wouldn't class it as art (Ibid).

Marc may classify a cheap and not well-executed tattoo as art, but he does not classify a cheap tattoo as ethical.

As part of an ethical tattoo community, Marc supports future tattoo studio owners who care about their art. At the same time, he believes that competitors should respect studio boundaries. The guest artist at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio, who did Marc's left arm tattoo, is opening a tattoo studio in downtown Auckland. The larger city of Auckland is about a two-hour drive from Hamilton, so the guest artist is not Marc's local competition. Though Hamilton has a smaller population density, enough of those people are interested in getting tattooed. Marc choose to tattoo in Hamilton because the market for tattooing exists there. Additionally, Marc choose to open Flax Roots Tattoo Studio in Hamilton because his "...wife's cousin already has a tattoo studio in Ngaruawahia [a nearby town where Marc lives]. It's her first cousin as well, so it would just be unethical to go and open up down the road from him" (Ibid). He opened his studio in September 2014.



*Photo 4: A Neo-European Traditional style tattoo is on Marc's left arm.*

Although Marc's studio is in Hamilton, his life-long friends are in Ngaruawahia. Some of these friends are men he played competitive football with. He played and coached for two decades. He continues to play football with these friends. 20 years later, Marc and his friends remember the dedication, through teamwork, to the sport. Marc's fifteen-year-old son plays sports, and Marc believes commitment to teamwork will make his son "...a stand-up guy" (Ibid). Marc imagines his son will make friends for life, like he did. Marc's friends respond quickly to his requests for a favor or help; and vice-versa. His experience, of growing up supported well by friends and family influences how Flax Roots Tattoo Studio is managed:

Marc: One of my mates, who was just here, he's a 147kg gentle giant. But when we first opened the studio, it was all new to me...And he just looked at the place and goes, "It looks pretty awesome bro...Just love everyone that comes through the door and your shop will be successful." [My



friends] influence me whether they know or not. I'm always worried about what they think. Like when something's looking iffy, they'll let me know straight away. They'll be like, "What this fella up to, it's wack, you know, he's losing it." Not so much losing it but, he's losing touch with who he is... [I stay] grounded (Ibid).

Along with his friends and family on Facebook, Marc connects with tattoo artists from around the world. Instagram enables Marc, and other artists, to share their tattoos with the wide world of the web. According to Marc, social media has changed the tattoo industry and "there's so much amazing stuff...it would be ludicrous not to be looking" (Ibid). He spends at least 20 hours per week looking at tattoos in addition to the 30 hours per week he tattoos:

Marc: ... [I]t's like tattoos are pretty much everything you want, from the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel to a simple mum with a flower ankle tattoo. So there's lots of amazing artists...I'm lucky enough to be in touch with them even though we don't know each other personally. It's still amazing when people come in [Flax Roots Tattoo Studio], and there is an artist [I] know [from the interweb]. Imagine 20 years ago, or even more, when there was no internet. Now you can learn to tattoo via YouTube. You can learn to play the piano via YouTube. You can learn fix someone's washing machine via YouTube. The wonderful world of the web (Ibid).

Potential clients can view tattoos online and choose to be tattooed by Marc.

According to Marc, more people are recognizing tattooing as an art form; clients make judgments on tattoo art online. From there, these tattoo connoisseurs decide which artist does quality tattoos and where to go to get that artist to tattoo their skins. Yet, some people don't shop around online or tour tattoo studios where

they live. Often, cheap tattoos result in a tattooee's dissatisfaction. So sometimes, artists at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio do cover ups of poor quality tattoos for clients who did not research a tattooist before getting a tattoo. Marc believes he is lucky to have a shop filled with talented artists. They share ideas with each other and express their opinions in a constructive manner. Marc recognizes that each artist's training contributes to their artistic style and tattoo wearing preferences. Marc, for example, compares his experience of learning art to Ali and Makkala. He learned tattooing by apprenticing and no art school. Marc sees value in the knowledge gained at school by what Makkala and Ali can do.

Other tattooists, though, may not necessarily be respected tattoo artist even though they may satisfy the tastes of their university art teachers:

Marc: [A] lot of tattooists now are, of course, art school students. So they've been through and studied art. And that's why when we look, there's a lot more amazing work as well as the technologies that have come so far as well. I failed art, mainly because Miss Buckley, my art teacher, wanted me to draw a bowl of fruit. [A]nd I just wanted to draw Conan the Barbarian.

Me: So the only the type of art she wanted you to do was what she considered art.

Marc: Yeah. So she looked at art. And, I'm saying that "look at" [is of] the educated artist... [E]verything is nitted out like a mathematical equation, you know. There's the odd natural genius and artist that can do everything and was just born to do it. Anybody else is just trying to catch up (Ibid).

In addition to university trained tattoo artists, and social media popularizing tattoo art, Marc perceives other changes as well in the tattoo community. He is tattooing more women than in previous

years. He guesses that tattooed women are becoming socially acceptable amongst the non-tattooed, and tattooed, community. Despite the popularity of getting tattooed in the early twenty-first century, Marc guesses that “real tattoo enthusiasts are becoming quite extinct” (Ibid). He perceives many people buying into tattooing as a fashion trend. And tattooing for fashion, he reasons, has peaked and is now on the decline. He believes the current generation of children and teens desire clean skin, or no tattoos. At the same time, he believes tattoo enthusiasts will continue to collect artworks on their skins (Ibid).

*Francis: Skulls*

*Photo 5: Francis is tattooed by Marc.*

Francis is originally from Invercargill, New Zealand. All Francis's siblings are tattooed despite his "parents absolutely hat[ing] tattoos" (February 2, 2015). Since Francis was the first of his siblings to be tattooed, he was seen as a poor role model. He was blamed for his brothers and sisters getting tattooed. According to Francis, "When I had my neck done that was the whole thing of falling out big time [with his parents]. It was "you look like an animal" and I was "oh well, so be it"" (Ibid). Soon after their falling-out, Francis left home. He moved around New Zealand, until he settled in Hamilton. He's been in Hamilton for 15 years.

In the last two years, he's had seven out of his 15 tattoos completed in Hamilton. Most of Francis's tattoos are black and white. However, he has color tattoos on his feet, ankles, and knees. On his legs, little cartoon devils mischievously romp in

various positions. Colored stars, at random, embrace his feet. Soon after this interview, Francis will have 16 tattoos, none of which he regrets having done. However, he does regret the location of his neck tattoo. "I love the ink work on my neck. It has a lot of meaning for me. But, I just regret the location" (Ibid). All Francis's tattoos have meaning for him:

Francis: For me tattoos have been a journey of self-expression. That one that was just done; I've just been through a pretty dark part in my life, and it was a release for me. It's my addiction. Some people have alcohol or drugs and whatnot, but I love getting tattoos (Ibid).

Before getting inked, he makes a point to visit a new tattoo studio, so that he can find a new experience. And after each tattoo, Francis goes to a bar to celebrate with a few drinks. Usually, he delights in the effects of two bourbons. Francis journeyed to Flax Roots Tattoo Studio looking for one tattoo, and inevitably, the trip to a bar afterwards. His latest skull tattoo, at the time of this interview, was done by tattooist Marc. Francis was extremely impressed by Marc's artistic skills; so much so that shortly after my interview with him, Francis would have gotten another skull tattoo by Marc. The skull is located on his inner, lower left arm. Wisps of smoke wrap around the skull. Above the skull is a large pentagram. Francis believes the pentagram represents ancient pagan beliefs. "You know, you've got the soul and the four elements of the earth – air, fire, wind and water" (Ibid). Below the skull is a radio-active sign. He chose the toxic sign to represent a feeling he had, in the past, which was associated with being a metal head.

Francis identifies as a Bogan, or a member of the culture of metal music. According to Francis, the Bogan community has grown in Hamilton because of the popularity of metal music among younger generations. Some of the events where Francis sees fellow

Hamilton residents' tattoos are music concerts. Francis describes tattoos he saw at a particular metal concert:

Oh it was a good night out. Enjoyed examining some other different people's tattoos. That's what I've found, a lot of the Metallers, or Bogan sort of fraternity, are absolutely covered in tattoo work and whatnot.

Me: Were there any tattoos you particularly liked?



*Photo 6: Three Tattoos are on Francis's left arm.*

Francis: Yeah, there was quite a few different sort of tattoos. I liked the ideas that I had seen, and they assisted me with making further decisions about different work at Flax Roots. Yeah, there was some that I saw that I liked and some that I saw that were, in my opinion, just straight shit.

Me: What tattoos were well done, in your opinion?

Francis: A lot of the flesh work was really, really nice. I've got a mate who's pretty much just gone through 50 hours work on his arm. Really, really impressive.

Me: And some of the tattoos that you didn't like, what were they like?

Me: They looked like five year olds had scribbled on them, but each to their own journey of life (Ibid).

Francis clearly sees being a Bogan as the driving influence in his tattoo choices. Francis believes he would have been a Bogan, and chosen the same tattoos, if he was born a female:

Me: Do you think [your sex] played any role in the choice of tattoos you've got?

Francis: No. Not at all. If I was of the female variety, I'd probably still be exactly me. Probably worse.

Me: With a different name.

Me: No, not according to my parents. I probably still would have had my name, just spelt slightly differently (Ibid).

When Francis is not hanging out with his Bogan friends and girlfriend, he is working on classic motor vehicles. What started out as a hobby has turned into Francis's occupation. He works for a company that does custom fabrications and restorations of vehicles. He loves it. Francis's other hobby is drawing. The devil tattoos on his legs were originally drawn by him. In fact, he tattooed these devils on:

Me: Wow, pretty talented.

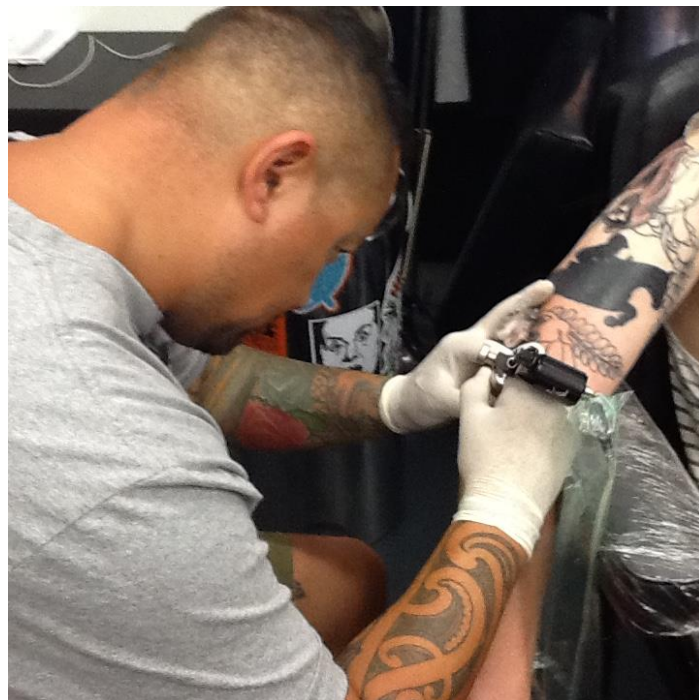
Francis: Handy with my hands.

Me: Yeah. Last question, is there anything you want to add?

Francis: No. Get more ink. Hamilton, get more ink (Ibid).

*Vaughan (and Marc): Kowhai Ridge*

I interviewed client, Vaughan, and artist, Marc. As he was tattooing, Marc asked if I would do an interview over the buzz of the tattoo needle. This joint interview is the first of two; the other interview is later with Makkala Rose and her two clients. The Vaughan and Marc interview was, later, a bit harder to transcribe. The loud rock music enveloped the tattoo station. The background of our conversation became a mixture of rock music and the buzz of the tattoo needle. This joint interview captured the comradery between Marc and his client, Vaughan. Since Marc was interviewed a few hours earlier, he was able to include additional commentary about tattooing he didn't mention before in his interview with me.



*Photo 7: Marc tattooing Vaughan's left arm.*

Vaughan's latest tattoo is dedicated to his family, above all his little sister. Vaughan describes his tattoo:



The kowhai [a small tree that blooms yellow flowers] represents pretty much where I came from, the farm I was brought up on was called Kowhai Ridge, back in Rotorua. [The tattoo] represent[s] my family and whoever I was involved with on the farm. Very family orientated. Then the horses, they also represent my little sister who rides horses her whole life and whatnot. Really it's just a big piece for my little sister mainly but also my family. I'm a very family orientated guy brought up to have pride around my family, and I lived on a farm with all my family. Really this is to solidify how much they mean to me (February 5, 2015).

His only younger sister is 13. Vaughan is 22 years old. The picture of the tattoo, Vaughan sent her on his phone, centered on the black horse. His almost-decade-younger sister thinks the tattoo is neat, especially because of the horse. The horse is shaded and colored dark to stand out as the centerpiece of the artwork.

Vaughan got his first tattoo shy of 18. The Kowhai Ridge art piece is his seventh tattoo. Actually, it is his eighth tattoo.

Vaughan got an earlier tattoo covered up and explains why:

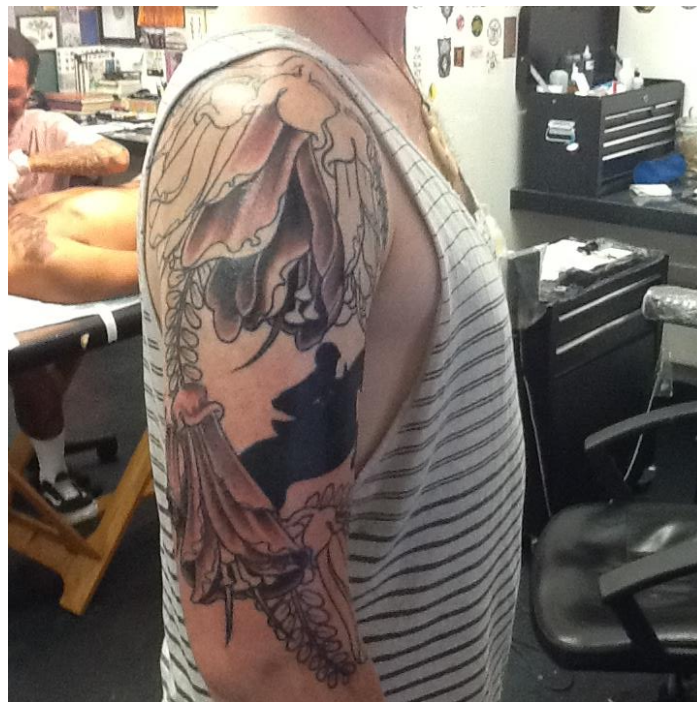
Vaughan: It did mean something but it wasn't cool, you know. I wanted to make the most of my arm. I got a couple when I was younger that I'm not overly happy with.

Me: Is that because...of the application or the actual images?

Vaughan: It's probably where it is on my body, and I could have done it bigger and better. When I was a kid, I just wanted tattoos. And, I only had this much money sort of thing. I wanted tattoos, so I got little ones here and there, as opposed to I could have filled that space with something bigger and better. That's really all. I don't regret them. I just regret getting little ones when I could have a bigger piece for what it meant, spent a bit more time and money on it. But

that's when I didn't have a job and wasn't mooching off my parents (Ibid).

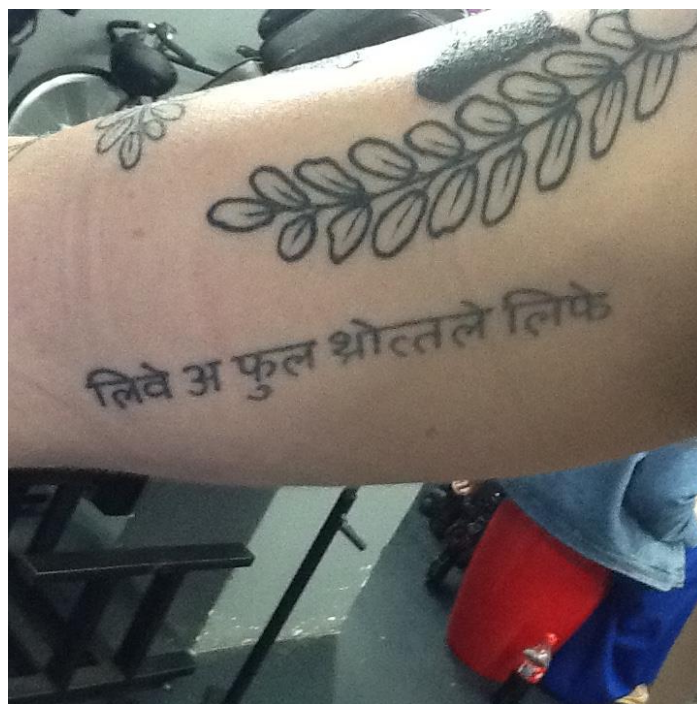
One of the tattoos, his first, Vaughan wished he had spent more money on; it is on his chest, on his heart. It is a New Zealand mistletoe. The tattoo references a cousin, who died quite young, whose name was Holly. She was like a little sister to Vaughan when he was a child. This first tattoo is fading, so Vaughan plans to get it redone. Not only will he get Holly's tattoo touched-up, he will expand the tattoo to capture the image of her life.



*Photo 8: Vaughan's, partially completed, Kowhai Ridge Tattoo. In the background, Ali tattoos Justin.*

Most of Vaughan's tattoos connect to his family. A few of his tattoos symbolize a hobby, a journey, and a personal transformation. A line of music lyrics, "Systematic smiles..." from Vaughan's favorite song called "Sophie" (2001) by the New Zealand band Goodshirt, plays across his collar bone. He loves music; especially New Zealand music because he supposes it does not sound like any other country's music. When he has spare time, he studies music. He wants to be a music journalist.

Another tattoo, of a Nepalese word, is under his arm. The translation is “live a full throttle life....So always live your life to the fullest, don’t regret anything” (Ibid). The phrase also refers to Vaughan participating in motocross most of his remembered life. Vaughan went to Nepal, where he received the phrase for a tattoo he did a few years after his trip, and wants to go back there. The phrase was translated and written out, by a Nepalese person, on a paper. He fell in love with the countryside: the mountains, the people, and the culture.



*Photo 9: “Live a Full Throttle Life”*

On each calf, Vaughan has a tattoo representing his physical transformation. He finished losing weight a year ago, at the age of 21. Then, he got calf tattoos to represent his weight loss transformation. He lost 20 kilograms in six months. When he was younger, Vaughan got four or five tattoos in one year. Now, older, Vaughan gets a new tattoo every two to three years. He explains the interval change between tattoos:

I’ll normally try and wait for things in my life to come along, before I want to [be tattooed]. The reason I go and got four or

five in one year, when I was younger, was because certain things I had throughout my childhood. I guess that changed in me over time. Now I just wait until something else comes up (Ibid).

I asked Vaughan if his family and friends reacted differently to him, as an adult than when he was a teen or child, because of his tattoos. For the most part, they have remarked positively about his tattoos and not made any noticeably negative reactions. His father, however:

Vaughan: My father's never too happy with any of my work, but it's more because he doesn't want me to waste my money. He doesn't want me to do this or that. That's just being over-protective.

Me: So how did you, then, justify your decision to get tattoos?

Vaughan: Oh, the only justification I need for anything I do is because I wanted to do it; it made me happy. It sounds again really rude and selfish. But I don't care. I don't care if people don't like my tattoos. I like them, so I'm going to make myself happy (Ibid).

Vaughan's comments about liking tattoos versus other people liking his tattoos encouraged Marc to speak at length about the public perception of tattoos.

Marc: Not that people ever really let you know [what they think about your tattoos], probably. Nine times out of ten. And I heard the bro's [Vaughan's] response was like I don't really have any offensive tattoos, but some people just find tattoos offensive regardless. And then the other thing that he said was my dad wasn't too happy about it because he doesn't want me to waste my money. In my eyes, you couldn't have spent your money any better. Your clothes,

\$1,000, shoes are \$300, whatever. Whatever you pay for this, you'll take it to the grave with you eh. It's one of the only lifelong products you sort of get...[I]t's a common thing in New Zealand, that people will walk in here with a \$100 cap on, \$120 tee-shirt, \$300 jeans, \$300 sneakers, \$1,000 phone. They'll ask for the price of a tattoo and then go 'oh nah, I'll go see my cousin somewhere else'. And all the flash stuff you're wearing just looks like nothing if you've got shit work...See people in New Zealand are backwards thinking of what's a good purchase. Whatever you paid for this you'll pay tenfold for your house, oh a million fold. You'll pay tenfold for your bedroom, then you'll pay for another one and another one and another one and end up spending \$200,000 in a lifetime on bedrooms. This'll still be there. Your \$800 tattoo you got back in 2014, 15, will still be there. The value's immeasurable (Ibid).

Marc elaborates on the consumer's attitude towards tattooing and the tattoo business's connection to the current economy:

Me: Marc, has that attitude changed towards tattoos so far as people seeing it as a wise investment or not?

Marc: I think it has in some circles, and it still hasn't in others. Let's face it; New Zealand has the highest tattooed population per capita. Any street corner you go on, in any neighborhood, there'll be some kid, some uncle, some cousin, tattooing out of the garage. People think, even for us, that it's just a hobby. It's a serious art these days, if not the most serious art. Yeah, I think there's definitely people that don't mind paying for their tattoos. They have faith in you, they know the product's good, they believe in what you do, trust and faith, you know. Most of the people that are about cheap, moaning or turning their nose up at your prices, are people who just want something that's minimum

charge anyway. But they want [a tattoo] for a quarter of the minimum charge. Usually they have no understanding of how the industry works, in an actual business sense. We're not allowed to be here for free – the lease, the overheads, nobody thinks about the overheads.

Me: Is it also a misunderstanding of your art too?

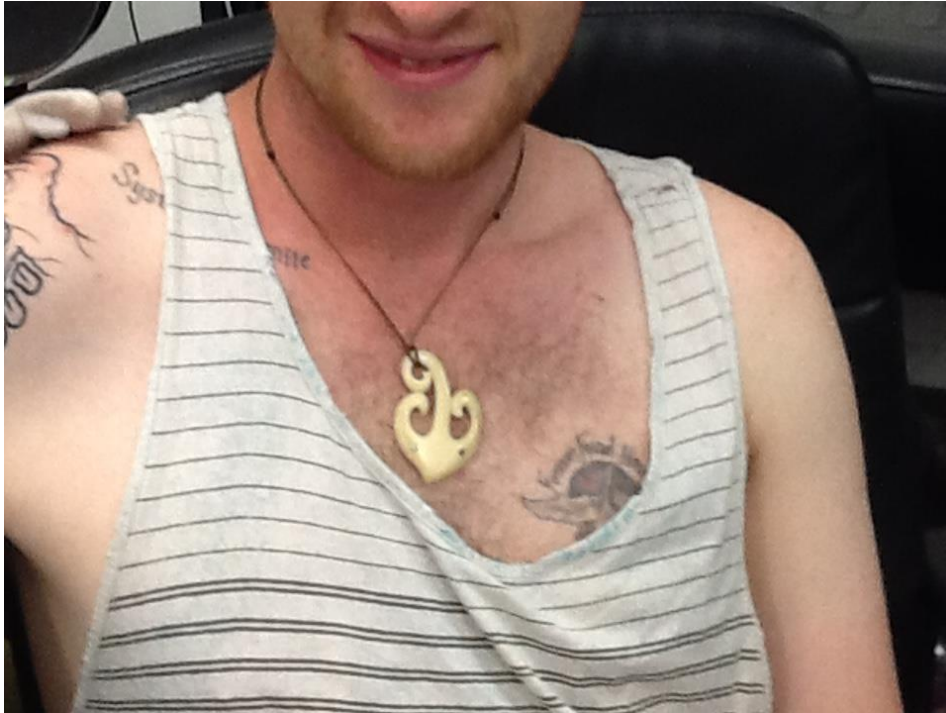
Marc: Yeah. A lot of people think it's a hobby and a lot of people just don't have the nous for art. You could show them a rose done by Nikko Hurtado, one of the world's best tattooists at \$300 an hour, and you could show them one from some backyard person that's half decent, and to them it's a rose – "I don't see the difference in it, it's a rose, it's alright and why would I pay Nikko Hurtado \$1,000 for that rose when this is still a rose." Some people don't have the nous for art, man...People have got to remember that tattoos are like jewelry. They can't get stolen...All we're doing is for body enhancement, to make ourselves look better in some way. Or feel better. And that's why through the recession or whatever, when people said money was scarce people still got tattoos because it's a feel good thing to do. It makes people feel good.

Me: So the recession. I know it didn't hit New Zealand as bad as other countries.

Marc: No.

Me: You didn't really see your business decrease?

Marc: A decline? No. People when they're depressed will get tattooed. People, when they split up or someone dies, they'll get tattooed (Ibid).



*Photo 10: Vaughan's Systematic smile and Holly are glimpsed from his position on the tattoo chair.*

Marc reflects on Flax Roots Tattoo studio as a monetary, and artistically, successful business in Hamilton. Vaughan shares his views of Hamilton as a tattoo client and a more recent resident. He chose Flax Roots Tattoo Studio because he thinks the tattooists are the best because they consider tattooing an art and not solely as a profit maker. Summarizing Marc's earlier comment about tattoo work, Vaughan says:

...a lot of people these days, they get tattoos because they're cool and that makes me feel they feed off others sometimes. They get a tattoo because they can and they like it. But these guys, their work is the best. Everything about the work is really good. They're actually into it because it's an art form, not just a thing to do.

Me: So not like a fad?

Vaughan: Yeah, like I said, it's not a hobby. It is a life... to me, tattooing, the culture around it is a lifestyle (Ibid).

Vaughan works as a bar tender. His co-workers and manager are accepting of his tattoos at the workplace. Vaughan spends most of his time working at a bar and observes different people, various nationalities and occupations, there. He is a bar manager, so part of his job description is talking with his co-workers and customers. In contrast to his co-workers and customers, the people he lives with stay in close proximity to their house and "...they're gamers [who] don't leave their room. They're always quiet, always messy. I don't know if I'm allowed to say it but they're always get stoned and whatnot. Yet my workmates are very social, open people" (Ibid). At the time of this interview, Vaughan had been in Hamilton a little over two years. Hamilton is not a city with a large population, but it feels like a big city to Vaughan. Coming from a farm where his most frequent contacts were his family, he feels like Hamilton is a place where people come "...from every walk of life yet that all manage to come together pretty well" (Ibid). He appreciates meeting new people. His best friends, two Maori women also from Rotorua, struck some people as an unfathomable friendship in Rotorua. Fewer people see their close relationships as odd in Hamilton, according to Vaughan. But he thinks some people do not venture far from their comfort zone in Hamilton, like the stoner gamers Vaughan lives with.

Vaughan appreciates his interactions with the majority of people, as well as being able to view their tattoos, in Hamilton. Occasionally, Vaughan sees, or hears about, a tattoo done on-the-fly in some one's house or backyard:

Me: Are there any tattoos you particularly like? In a certain style, or a location on the body?

Vaughan: Certain style? Yeah. I'm pretty fond of water color. I've always looked at the water color ones and thought those are pretty nice looking. Water color and black and grey I'm pretty fond of. I like tattoos with no color, but then again,



yeah I like everything really. Again like I said, if you're close minded... I like everything and everything, but those two are probably my favorite ones at least.

Me: Any tattoos you wouldn't choose for yourself?

Vaughan: I wouldn't get a big 'fuck the world' on my forehead. Nah, not really. If it means something to you it means something to you.

Me: Even 'fuck the world'?

Vaughan: Well it might mean something to someone. Me personally, I wouldn't get it, but everything means something to someone. Unless you're pissed as a chook in Las Vegas on a Monday night or whatever you do in America. But I think most people have to actually think about getting a tattoo before they do it. So there is some meaning to everything for everyone (Ibid).

Although Vaughan appreciates the designs of different people's tattoos, he does not think he has been influenced by other people's tattoos. He believes his tattoos are constructed from his personal values in life. Additionally, he does not think that being a male influenced his tattoo choices:

Vaughan: I'm a male.

Me: Do you think that influenced the type of tattoos you got?

Vaughan: No, not really. I do think it influences a lot of people. It's not very often you see a guy getting a sleeve of flowers, but to me a sleeve of flowers would be for my family...[Y]ou'd see that sort of thing on females but to me, nah again, if it means something it means something.

Me: You'll get it.

Vaughan: Yeah (Ibid).

Coupled with an artist's visionary skill, Vaughan believes meaning, which he defines as his openness to cultures, his hobbies, family, friends, music, and personal accomplishments, matter the most when he chooses to wear a tattoo.

*Brandon Martin: Tattoo Artist and Apprentice*

Because Marc is strict when it comes to producing quality tattoo artworks, he accepts few apprentices at Flax Roots. Brandon Martin has been selected as the newest member of the artist team at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio. As a tattoo apprentice, Brandon does not have as many clients as the other artists at Flax Roots; he is learning with the guidance of Marc and the help of Ali and Makkala. At Flax Roots Tattoo Studio, an apprenticeship means the artist has proper training to succeed, financially and ethically, in the tattoo business. An apprenticeship requires Brandon to learn about the sterilization of needles and skin, tattoo station preparation, advertising, customer service skills, and, of course, artistic competence.



*Photo 11: Brandon's station, and artwork, at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio.*

Brandon is from Hamilton, which he considers a small city. When Brandon is not spending hours tattooing at Flax Roots, he

enjoys leisure activities that have occupied much of his free time. He is a graffiti artist, which is another artistic outlet for him. For physical activity, he rides mountain bikes. He has a four-year-old daughter he spends the remainder of his free time with. Over the years, he has seen tattoo studios open and close in Hamilton.

Flax Roots Tattoo Studio is at the location of a former tattoo studio that was called Custom Collective. Marc co-owned the former studio. After an amiable split with his tattooist business partner, Marc's new studio Flax Roots benefitted from his efficacious reputation, built from years of creative and excellent tattooing in Hamilton. Brandon was friends with Marc, and had been tattooed at Flax Roots many times, before he became an apprentice there. Additionally, Brandon chose to work at Flax Roots because of the quality of the artwork there:

Brandon: Pretty much, yeah. I wasn't going to go and start my career out with a bunch of chumps who didn't know what they were up to. This place is pretty sharp and the work speaks for itself. I believed and still do believe that I'm in the right place (February 2, 2015).

Before apprenticing, Brandon started an Instagram account. He has a growing number of social network followers who look at his art on Instagram. His artwork changed on his Instagram, from more colorful tattoos to more black and grey tattoos.

When he first came to Flax Roots Tattoo Studio, Brandon was intent on doing bright and colorful tattoos. During his time as an apprentice, he has transitioned to focusing on doing tattoos in black and grey colors. Brandon's reason for the color change is he "...find(s) it looks cleaner, it looks sharper; it's stripped back to just the fundamentals of tattooing..." (Ibid). The tattoos on Brandon's body are mainly colorful; these tattoos reflect his former interest in

using color. I asked Brandon if he could give me examples of these American Classic style tattoos:

Brandon: Sailor Jerry. A design that's been around for 50 years, and it'll be around for 50 more, and it's still just as powerful as the day it was first tattooed.

Me: Can you give me an example of any Classic [Flash] tattoos?

Brandon: Sailor Jerry swallows. Sailor Jerry pin ups. Pretty much anything that Sailor Jerry drew is going to be around forever. As long as people are holding tattoo machines someone's going to be tattooing that stuff (Ibid).

Sometimes American Traditional tattoos, and other tattoo styles, are turned into Flash; thereby, standardized to fit a quick sell to a tattooed consumer. Brandon does not have a problem with doing what a customer wants because he explains to me that he is not emotionally invested in the tattoos he has or does, so he is satisfied if the customer is satisfied in a quality tattoo of any style. However, he abides by the rules of Flax Roots and that means no flash tattoos.

Brandon follows the rules at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio because it is "...a good place to start" (Ibid) for an ethical tattoo artist when working on a client. Like Marc, he does not tattoo necks and faces unless a client is already heavily tattooed. Brandon says, "As far as design wise goes, that's up to the individual. You can't judge someone on that – bad taste or not, that's what they want. You can always try and steer the direction" (Ibid). I asked Brandon what he thought of tattoos, done by other people at other locations, in Hamilton:

Brandon: In general, I guess most of it's shit.

Me: So how do you compare bad tattoos from what are the better tattoos?

Brandon: Application. Application of design can be as wacky as you want. As long as it's cleanly applied, then I think you are okay.

Me: So it's more that the artist is doing a quality tattoo?

Brandon: Yeah. I think so.

Me: And have you seen many tattoos around Hamilton that make you go wow, that'd be cool to have or to do?

Brandon: Anything that Ali Selliman does pretty much.

Me: Okay, then you are at the right place to tattoo.

Brandon: Yeah.

Me: Are there any styles of tattooing you won't do or dislike?

Brandon: No. I think if you limit yourself like that you're beating yourself before you even begin. This is a street shop; you should be able to do whatever the customer wants. Not that I'm at that point but I want to get to that point; it's something I definitely strive for (Ibid).



*Photo 12: Brandon tattooing his client, Rhian, at his tattoo station.*

Brandon judges bad tattoos to be ones that are not applied well to the skin. The tattoo design can be of anything, since Brandon values the customer's tattoo choice. Concurrently, he values being an artist in the company of other skilled artists. Brandon values his artistic responsibilities at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio, and he balances satisfying those responsibilities with satisfying a client.

As an adult, Brandon values quality tattoo artworks. In the past, his first thought about what to get as a tattoo was simply a desire to get a tattoo. Brandon got his first tattoo at age fourteen. The tattoo is on his chest, so he was not immediately recognized, by family and friends, as being tattooed. I questioned why he decided to get a tattoo in his mid-teens, and Brandon said, "I just wanted a tattoo, man" (Ibid). Later, Brandon got this tattoo covered-up because he believed it to be of low artistic quality. The other tattoo he has covered-up is a wedding ring, which symbolized a previous marriage. Both of these covered-up tattoos were done in Hamilton at tattoo studios. In addition to covered-ups, Brandon has 15 plus tattoos. Brandon does not consider his sex and

gender to be a limiting factor, or substantial factor, for the tattoo choices he made in the past and present. He believes his tattoo choices reflect his personality type, rather than being male.



*Photo 13: Brandon is tattooing at Ali's station.*

Brandon says, "There's probably plenty of males out there that are getting bird silhouettes and feathers tattooed, it's just not me. I don't think gender constrains you to anything" (Ibid).

I asked Brandon if anyone looked at him differently after being visibly tattooed:

Brandon: Once I started getting tattoos on my arms and hands and fingers and neck and whatnot, then, yeah, people are automatically going to look at you differently because it's the unknown. People are scared of that.

Me: Did most people react positively?

Brandon: I'd say most people, yeah....Oh, there's always negative instances. You can't go out and make yourself look different to everyone else without expecting some sort of a reaction from people.



Me: Was there a certain generation or age group that reacted more than another?

Brandon: Oh yeah. Older generations obviously aren't so desensitized to tattooing as a younger generation who's grown up with it being part of everyday life. Sixteen to eighteen year olds, everyone has always had them. For someone [like me] who's [in the] forty to fifty year age bracket when they were coming up, the only people that were tattooed had been to prison or they were in a gang...It's changing (Ibid).

He has seen the attitude towards tattoos change, from more negative reactions to more positive reactions, during his course of years in Hamilton. Brandon is almost ready to shed his apprenticeship for a simpler title of tattooist. He plans to continue tattooing at Flax Roots, so he can see more people enjoying the look of their tattoo art.

*Rhian: First Time Tattooed*

*Photo 14: Rhian shows off her bass clef, right arm, and treble clef, left arm. Makkala tattoos a client in the background.*

Rhian, tattooed by Brandon, loves music. So, she got a bass clef on her right arm and a treble clef on her left arm. She plays guitars in bass and treble clefs. She plays guitars in bass and treble clefs, and so she chose these music symbols. When Rhian is not listening to music, she writes it. She does not consider herself a good writer, but she nevertheless enjoys attempting to write music. For her, music is a hobby but not a career she wants to pursue. However, she may aspire to make a career from drawing and painting. She isn't sure; possibly one day. She is currently a waitress, bar tender, and barista at a Hamilton restaurant establishment.

At age nineteen, these two music notations are Rhian's first tattoos. She decided to get tattooed because she had the money to. She chose to get tattooed at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio because of

the studio's quality reputation, and its convenient location close to her house. Her easy-going personality matched Brandon's quiet application of her tattoos. Not only is she impressed with Brandon's work, she is happy that the inking process was tolerable and, relatively, pain-free. Moreover, she is happy she decided to go to a well-known tattoo studio in order to avoid getting a bad tattoo. She describes to me what bad tattoos and good tattoos are for her:

Rhian: I've seen a lot of really bad [tattoos]. You know like mates rates...or like "Oh bro, I'll just do your tattoo for free, just for practice". They always turn out awful and shocking. But the ones where people go to good places- they do amazing, good stuff, high quality.

Me: Okay, so what bad ones have you seen?

Rhian: I've seen a skull on someone's back, in just a silly place, like the middle of the side of their back. And then it was crooked and one half was bigger than the other. One eye was black and the other one was hollow. Unfinished, no shading, just lines. And I saw a heart, someone's heart, and they'd tried to get it anatomically correct but obviously didn't do too well. Then, I've seen some flowers and stuff that were all crooked. Just like fat lines and skinny lines, shadings missed. Just bad stuff with home jobs.

Me: What would you consider a good tattoo to be?

Rhian: You can just tell. They've just got good flow with them. They look finished, not like half done or still needs work or anything. They look just aesthetically pleasing, really (January 28, 2015).

Rhian has an aesthetic taste, based upon well-designed shading and lining, which contributes to what she considers are bad tattoos and good tattoos. She is not a fan of a particular style, though. She finds different tattoos appealing and good for different people.

Unlike the influence of music on Rhian's tattoos, she does not think that being a female played a role in her choosing music notation tattoos. While making the decision to get tattooed, Rhian also did not anticipate other peoples' reactions:

Me: How do you think people will respond to your tattoo?

Rhian: To be honest, I don't care how they respond. But I think that they will be neutral. Not be like 'ahhh' and not be like 'ohhh', you know. Yeah, haven't really thought about it (Ibid).

Rhian lives in Hamilton, and she views Hamilton as a place where similar people are not judgmental of other people. I asked why she thought Hamilton is a judgement free zone, so I could better understand Rhian's perception of Hamilton. She described the people of Hamilton as:

Rhian: Pretty chilled. Just do whatever and no one really cares. But we all care at the same time.

Me: What do you mean by no one really cares but we all care?

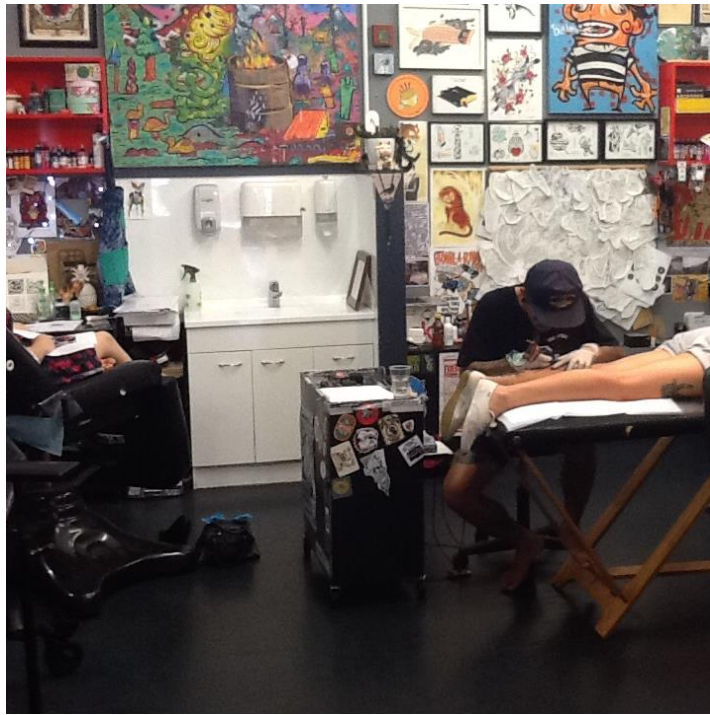
Rhian: No one's really judging, you can just be yourself – chill out, whatever – and no one's going to hate you for it. [A]t the same time we're all strangers who care about each other. You can feel it.

Me: What do you mean then by don't really care? What does that mean?

Rhian: We won't care about what you believe in, what you look like, any of that kind of stuff, but we all care about you as a person (Ibid).

Identifying herself as a non-judgmental person, Rhian "...goes-with-the-flow..." (Ibid) and believes she gets along with all groups of people. Then again, Rhian claims she would be okay if people do

not like her tattoos, so I wonder if there are certain people she does not think she could get along with. Rhian implied to me that her choice to be tattooed reflects her positive attitude and love of tattooing.

*Ali: Artist who Tattoos*

*Photo 15: Ali works in the foreground of his artworks.*

Ali Selliman has worked at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio for four years. He credits Marc for introducing him to studio tattooing and sobriety. After graduating with an art degree, Ali worked at Waikato Museum in central Hamilton before working at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio. During his museum job, he was unhappy. Although Ali was fully tattooed by the time he started work at Waikato Museum, he was not working at a tattoo studio. Unluckily, he was not making money doing art. However, he did tattoo at his home for about two years to supplement his income. Yet Ali says:

I wasn't going anywhere; I wasn't learning. I wasn't doing any shading [on tattoos]. I was just doing strictly line work because I was too scared to do shading. You get all these people coming in wanting to do really wack stuff [in home studios]. Anyway I was like, "nah I'm over tattooing". Ended up, I was a big alcoholic and a stoner. At that time my job

stopped at the museum. And I was just kind of like ‘ohhh’. Ended up selling all my gear, my tattoo gear, so I could buy some alcohol and some weed. And when that money ran down I came to Marc. Apparently, he’d seen some of my stuff on Facebook and said, “We’ve seen your stuff, we know who you are, why don’t you just do some trials?” And he pretty much gave me everything (February 3, 2015).

Initially, Ali came to Flax Roots Tattoo Studio and asked Marc about cleaning and front desk work, harboring a hope to try tattooing in a studio. Because Marc is aware of artists on Facebook and pays attention to tattoo cultures, he recognized Ali and encouraged him to become a professional tattoo artist. In the present day, Ali is a busy and well-known, respected artist. He works long hours. He tattoos Monday through Saturday. On Sunday evening, he prepares his studio for the week ahead. Although he can find tattooing physically and mentally draining, he feels lucky to do this type of art. When he worked at Waikato Museum, he sold art paintings. However, income is generally not steady when one sells paintings. Ali sold a painting about every four weeks. He spent hours working on a painting for relatively little monetary pay in return. Tattooing provides a steady income for Ali, and tattooing is an outlet for his creative work. Like Brandon, who aspires to the quality of work Ali does, Ali prefers to tattoo in shades of black. Also, like Brandon, Ali used to prefer doing color tattoos:

Ali: I used to do a lot of really arty looking abstract tattoos, really, what do you call it, just gestural kind of tattoos. Someone asked me the other day how long do you think, not the style, but the tattoo will last; in a sense of, will it still look good in 30 years, 40 years time? That’s really important to me at the moment. I kind of stripped it down. And, I’m just going to work on black and grey stuff. Because I think

by the time you're 60, 70; it's still black and grey. Hopefully, [the tattoo will be] still as strong as when you first did it.  
(Softly spoken) [C]olors tend to fade down a little bit.

Me: So when a person wants a tattoo in color that could be black and white, do you bring up what that potential tattoo could look like in 30 years?

Ali: Yeah, though it doesn't help that Makkala's beside me. It sounds like I'm putting her down too, with her color work. But by the look of her work, it will still be strong. It looks super strong; the colors are so vibrant. And if the person that's carrying the tattoo knows how to look after it, it can last for so long (Ibid).

Ali informs his clients of the benefits of different kinds of tattoos. Sometimes, a client "...comes in with really shitty ideas" (Ibid). Ali can try and persuade a client to consider other ideas for a piece. Yet, he believes that people come to a shop for a reason, and his primary job is to provide a service.

Although Ali is paid to enact the service of tattooing, he sometimes feels unfortunate that people do not listen to an artist. Occasionally people come to a tattoo shop and are given a bad tattoo by an artist. Ali has seen both clients and artists enabling the application of bad tattoos in Hamilton. According to Ali, sometimes a tattoo is fundamentally applied wrong. For example, the lines in a tattoo are not parallel when the lines are supposed to be. Another example is a tattoo portrait of a person that does not look like the living person. Ali begins to doubt the tattoo profession when he sees the work of other tattooists who care little about learning about art; and less about their clients. Later on in our conversation, when I ask about who Ali identifies with, he touched again on doubt about the quality of work of tattoo artists. And the tattoo organizational environment:



Me: Is there a particular group of people you identify with?

Ali: Mainly with just artists. Not tattoo artists. I kind of hate tattoo artists actually. (Hesitates) Oh, I don't know. There's a certain few [artists] that are super cool here in Hamilton, but I hate going to conventions. (Pauses) It's just like man you look so rock star. And they are sometimes. You try to introduce yourself. I just kind of wave hello, and they don't want any of it. That's the vibe I get. It's a great lifestyle being a tattoo artist. I can say that, but people take it the wrong way sometimes. I tend to hang out with a lot more artists, fine artists that do paintings and things (Ibid).

One of those things Ali does is murals. He used to do many more murals a week, but tattooing requires most of his time. He is often asked about doing more painting shows, putting on an exhibition, providing illustrations, or being hired to do a mural. Nevertheless, Ali considers himself the type of person who commits to one job at a time. Although most of his hobbies are art related, he has other hobbies that do not cross between the work and leisure divide. He bikes mainly for transportation, but he skateboards mainly for fun.



*Photo 16: Some of Ali's drawings and painting; his artworks display at multiple locations on Flax Root Tattoo Studio's walls.*

Ali is not originally from Hamilton. He is not originally from New Zealand. His family moved to Auckland, from Borneo, Malaysia, when Ali was a teenager. Specifically, Ali is from the state of Borneo, that Ali and many other people call Sarawak. Ali believes his ancestry and his male identity influenced the ways he thinks about tattooing. Certainly, Ali's experiences as a male from Borneo, whose ancestry is to the Iban people and Kelabit people, have informed what tattoos he does and what tattoos he has. Ali has done a few traditional Iban hand tattoos, Bunga Terung flowers like Marc has on his hands, but not in the traditional style of using coconut soot and a bamboo chisel. He is apprehensive about doing hand tattoos in soot because he fears he may cause

clients to become ill. Nonetheless, Ali believes in the staying power of Iban tattoos:

Ali: Where this modern tribal came from, it all came from Iban tattoos, it's just been made longer, made sharper, whatever. Part of me goes, oh I can't stand looking at someone with a big black tribal. But I started going back to it again and started thinking about how strong it looks and how long it will last. You get like old farmers with throat tattoos and their flowers in Borneo, they're out in the sun every day on their farm, and it's only made out of soot too. And it's still super, super strong (Ibid).

The males in Iban culture wear tattoos. The females rarely get tattooed. Ali's Iban tattoos are traditionally worn on males. However, the first art piece he got on his forearm is from his culture, his Mother's tribe, in Borneo. He was 21 years old when he got the motif tattoo representing the Kelabit of Bario, in Borneo. The motif does not mean anything specific, according to Ali. The tattoo is for beautification, which is what most of the tattoos are done for in Kelabit culture. Kelabit women mainly get tattooed, not the men. Ali thinks Kelabit tattoos bear "...a lot of resemblance to a Maori design, the weaving patterns and whatnot. But like I said, it's just aesthetics; it's just to beautify" (Ibid). The norm for Kelabit women was to have tattoos "...from their forearms all the way down to their fingers" (Ibid) and from the top of their thighs to their feet. "Yeah, top of the thigh and all the way down to their feet but nothing else on the body. And that's normally consistent of little lines. It's just lines they make up. So from far away it might look like a solid black tattoo, but if you look closer it's all individual lines" (Ibid), Ali enthusiastically describes to me. Kelabit women may have beautified themselves in other ways, besides tattooing. They chiseled their teeth by rubbing charcoal along the rows of enamel. The Kelabit stopped preserving much of their cultural

heritage and customs once Christianity was adopted as their religion and cultural system.

Ali's parents are not tattooed. The majority of Malaysians are Muslims, but the rural areas of Borneo tend to be populated by Christians. Ali explains: "The Muslims never really got into the rural area to convert people, so [Christian] missionaries from Australia came" (Ibid). His parents "...unfortunately turned Christian. Their parents were pretty much the first Christians in the village, so when they grew up all the traditions were pretty much cancelled" (Ibid). However, the Ibans, compared to the Kelabits, remember myths and traditions. But, the Iban culture is not preserved because of the societal importance of practicing Christianity. "But from my Dad's tribe, who are the Iban, tattooing is coming back. It's like how big Maori [tattoos are] now", acknowledges Ali (Ibid). The Iban flowers, in black, are popular amongst Ibans and some people who are not Iban. Marc, owner of Flax Roots Tattoo Studio, has these flowers on his hands. Oftentimes, the Iban flowers are found on shoulders in addition to the hands. Ali explains what these Iban flowers can be interpreted as:

The flowers kind of represent, I classify them as a passport tattoo, so you travel and you get tattoos. When you come back, it's just a sign to say you've travelled. And you've gained all this knowledge and what you can share back with the villages. Stuff like that. It's a status more than anything, so the further you go [travelling] [, the more flowers] add[ed] down to your back.

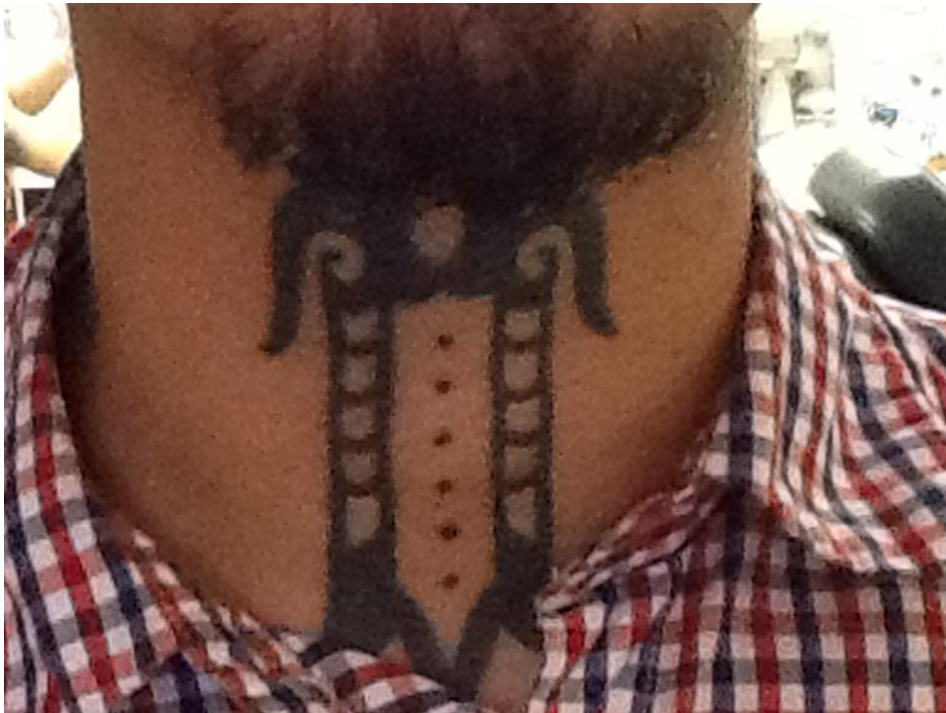
Me: What do you mean a status thing?

Ali: A status in as you're this knowledgeable person now. You're entitled to marry, because you've travelled. In travelling, I'm not meaning by going to another country. It's

more like if you can picture yourself in a jungle going to another tribe; that can be a traveler. Knowing things about other tribes. [For example,] maybe they use this kind of wood to make their blowpipes instead of this kind of wood we use to make a blowpipe (Ibid).

Since men do much of the travelling, women are rarely tattooed. A husband may leave home for years. His wife, and members of her village, will take care of their children. When her husband comes home, he will bring back gifts. These gifts are modern inventions, like sewing machines and boat engines. These gifts are for the whole village, not directly for the wife:

Ali: The whole village [receives the] gift...We live in this community; it's called a longhouse. And within a longhouse, there can be up to 20 to 50 families. They'll live in one consecutive longhouse. And people share. If my clothes were torn, I'd go to the other lady to get what her husband has got (Ibid).



*Photo 17: Ali's throat is tattooed with an Iban scorpion design.*

Ali interviewed tribe members on his Father's and Mother's side for a media arts project. His research and interviews focused on myths and traditions. Many of Ali's tattoos reflect the myths of Iban:

Ali: The [tattoo] that I've got on my throat; it's like a scorpion. Those are the two pincers there, and the tail comes down here. So scorpions are kind of a big creature in Iban mythology – it's a poisonous creature. It can kill you. Also Shamans pray through it, to get to the spiritual world. For me to get this, let's say if someone poisons me it filters, it filters the poison. Your speech will be better; you can talk properly. Like saying you will be a better talker, speaker, or whatever; you can represent your village as a speaker.... Funnily enough, when I go home I start thinking about spirits and ghosts and stuff. You start feeling a bit spooky. You come to New Zealand; no one talks about that. And I completely change without me knowing it here. Only when I go home and I stay in a village, I start being like 'ooh'. People have got all these superstitions, and it's not for me to go oh I don't believe that. I love those things. I love superstitious belief. And there must be a reason behind why people invent stuff, stories like that. Whether it's to scare your kids not to go to the forest at night or things like that. You know, they've got weird things. Like if this special kind of bird flew from the right to your left, it means you can't go to the farm today. Those kinds of things. Just little, little things that can change the whole day's activities (Ibid).

In New Zealand, Ali's daily activities may be interrupted by people asking about his throat tattoo. The Iban throat tattoo is not well known among New Zealanders, of either European or Maori descent. Auspiciously for Ali, most New Zealanders are good-naturedly interested rather than questioning in a display of

disgust. In Borneo, Ali feels pressured that he should offer an explanation of why he has wears a throat tattoo. Ali explains:

It's only the tattooist that gets them [in Borneo]...And funnily enough, [traditionally] it's one of the first tattoos you need to get being an Iban; before you become a man you have to get your throat tattooed. Yeah, I think I just fall into this whole category of tattooed guy, a tattoo artist. So people don't really question it [once they know I am] (Ibid).

Different tattoos of Ali's receive different cultural reactions. Some of these tattoos are representative of traditional peoples in Borneo, and other tattoos reflect Ali's life in New Zealand. Ali's latest tattoo is on his calve and is a portrait of David Attenborough, an English broadcaster and naturalist. His friend, Alex, did the tattoo. Although Alex is primarily an illustrator, Ali taught him a selection of skills for tattooing. The Attenborough tattoo was done in a home. Some of Ali's home tattoos did not turn out as well:

Ali: I've got really shitty tattoos that I've placed on myself. But no, it would go against my whole principle of getting tattoos [to get a cover-up]. My thing is it's not so much meanings in why I got tattoos. It's more I like that picture and possibly it marks a point in time during my life (Ibid).

Ali does not like the tattoos he considers he did poorly, but he likes the ideas he had for those tattoos. He believes that if he did not practice tattooing, while learning from making mistakes along the

way, he would not know how to tattoo.



*Photo 18: Ali's Attenborough face is above a pig.*

Ali wants more Portrait style tattoos and will probably get tattooed again by Alex. At the time of this interview, Ali, age 34, had 30 plus tattoos. Many of his tattoos are symmetrical pairs. Ali and I were a bit unsure of what to count as one tattoo when different tattoos are part of one piece. Many of Ali's tattoos resemble sticker tattoos, or tattoos not connected to each other by a common theme or style. Unless it's an Iban tattoo, he does not get consecutive tattoo pieces. Ali's medium size sticker tattoos last about two hours to three hours. Ali does not like pain and sitting still for hours, so he prefers smaller tattoos. As an artist and consumer of tattoo art, he is careful of the use and application of particular tattoo styles. Ali discusses his concerns about giving or receiving Japanese style tattoos:

Japanese tattoos, it's...a lot of understanding that you need to do, before things need to be drawn out...I never used to want to do Japanese tattoos just because [I could without asking a sort of permission]. Just visually, like wow, that



looks nice. I don't know nothing about Japanese tattoos; it probably takes years to study it.

Me: Have you been to Japan?

Ali: No, no, I've never been there. It's not really one of the places that I really want to go to either. Yeah, I probably wouldn't get Japanese tattoos, just for that matter (Ibid).

In modern Japanese culture, tattoos are not considered taboo. Ali finds this strange:

Ali: Yeah, it's weird eh. It's really weird, I find. I can see it too, because a lot of the gangs were tattooed.

Me: I think, partly, they're trying to be modern.

Ali: Yeah, in Malaysia it's the same thing. To have tattoos is to say that you're still primitive (Ibid).

Ali contrasts the majority of Malaysian peoples' and Japanese peoples' view of tattoos with those views of a significant number of people in countries of primarily European ancestry. Ali observes, "Today's day and age, tattoos are so popular. You get different kinds, and you don't even have to have meaning any more. The majority of people that come here are like - I like that picture, I like coloured tattoos, I just get anything coloured" (Ibid). Yet, the modern day Japanese tattoo culture is not dead. It's flourishing underground, as one of Ali's clients told me.

*Tracey: Attention to Detail*

*Photo 19: Tracey is viewing the news, while Ali tattoos Kaonashi on her leg.*

Tracey discovers inspiration from travels, whether for leisure or work; and from art, whether it be music, fashion, dance, or film. Inspiration informs her selection of tattoo artworks on her body. Tracey was first tattooed at age 18. At 29 years old, she has accumulated an array of tattoo art. She described a selection of her artworks in ink to me. Her first tattoos are swallows on her back. The swallows are smaller than most of her tattoos, and they can be hidden by her clothing. First, she wanted to feel being tattooed, before getting serious about larger tattoo pieces. Her latest tattoos, done by Ali, indicate where she finds herself situated in her life. On the back of her lower right ankle are the letters TCOB in Old English font. The letters stand for “Taking Care of Business”. “TCOB”, from the album *Kings of Crime* (1990), is a song by New York City hardcore punk band, Skarhead. The other new tattoo is

Kaonashi on her left, upper calve. Kaonashi, or 'No-Face', is a character from one of Tracey's favorite Japanese films, *Spirited Away* (2001). Kaonashi, in an ornamental frame, is standing on a traditional Japanese red bridge. In the background, a bit of cloud plays across the sky like a scene in the film.



*Photo 20: A finished TCOB is below an unfinished Kaonashi. Ali's sketch of Kaonashi lies beside Tracey's left leg, on the tattoo bed.*

These two new tattoos carry on Tracey's older nod to the preservation of the arts. In addition to the Skarhead song, Tracey has the album cover, Jane Doe, from the band Converge, tattooed on her inner, left arm. The album cover is an ornamental frame that Tracey's Nana has. On the outside of her left arm, she has a tattoo of Kitri from the ballet Don Quixote. Tracey danced ballet, on stage, for many years. Kitri's dress, in the tattoo, is based on Tracey's dress in a final recital. Kitri is framed in stage curtains.

On Tracey's right arm is a tattoo sleeve, or a tattoo art piece which takes up much of a person's arm. The sleeve tattoo is another stage production. However, instead of a western dance stage drama, it is a tattoo of a Japanese classical dance stage drama, known as Kabuki. Tracey studied Japanese language and culture.



*Photo 21: Tracey considers Kaonashi the weirdest character she has seen in animation.*

As an undergraduate university student, she learned about Kabuki and identified with the performers, who are often absurd and fantastically dressed in throughout a stage production.

Her right sleeve is specifically based on a production of a tale about geishas. The geishas, in the geisha house, would be bidden on by a man who wanted to sleep with one or more of them. A geisha would not sleep with a man until that man offered her a price that would cover the cost of her living expenses at the geisha house. Usually, a single man did not cover her entire debt to the geisha house. Until the geisha house was paid what was owed, she could not be free to leave it. Sometimes these women worked for

many years. Tracey's tattoo consists of geishas who are dressed in the traditional patterns found on kimonos.



*Photo 22: Kitri dances on Tracey's arm.*

A younger female geisha is pretty and is the color green. Green conveys her lively youth. Another female geisha is older and in blue. Blue conveys her sorrowful death. The older geisha killed herself because she could not be free. The younger geisha is haunted by the suicidal act of the older geisha because she fears that she will have to commit suicide if she cannot buy her freedom. In the background of the tattoo is a lantern:

Tracey: There's a... [Kabuki]...story where [a] ghost hop[s] out of a lantern. Oiwa is the name of the ghost. And she comes out of this lantern. But I didn't want to get [the ghost tattooed] because...a lot of people have that image. [A]nd it

put me off, so I just got a lantern in there. I actually got that one done traditionally in Japan by hand when I was living there (February 3, 2015).



*Photo 23: The tale of the Lantern and Oiwa is reproduced on Tracey's right, inner arm.*

I asked Tracey how hard it was for her to find a Japanese artist to tattoo the story onto her skin:

Tracey: It was pretty hard. It's kind of a complicated story...I'd left the inside [of the Kabuki tattoo] undone, like blank, specifically to get done over there [in Japan]. My tattooist [, who did the rest of the Kabuki tattoo,] recommended [I do it in Japan]. [H]e was drawing up some things, and I wasn't happy, and he was like just leave it, get it done over there [in Japan]. So, I was in a tattoo studio [, in Japan,] and I showed the artist in there my sleeve. [H]e said he wouldn't touch it because it was so high quality. And he recommended me to this older guy who had been tattooing for years, like he was a generation above him and

he does it by hand, which is what I wanted. I was like “cool”, and he goes “yeah” and “he doesn’t tattoo everyone, he might not tattoo you”. So I wrote an email [to the expert tattooist], and we got a meeting. The meeting was like 11pm. (Pauses) Yeah, and it was in a blizzard. I went with my Japanese friend because it was all going to be conducted in Japanese. I speak a little bit but I was still nervous, so I took one of my very polite Japanese friends with me. I met [the expert tattooist]. And after we talked a little bit, did all the greetings and stuff and I talked some Japanese, he was like yeah alright, “I’ll tattoo you”. And then I had another session...where he actually tattooed me. I loved autumn over there, and I loved all the maple trees, so the tattoo that’s what that is [by the lantern]. .And...a little skull in the background [for the ghost, Oiwa] is hidden (Ibid).



*Photo 24: The tale of the Geishas is retold on a right arm tattoo sleeve.*

The Japanese tattoo artist lives in a city called Isesaki, in the Gunma prefecture. Tracey lived an hour south of where her tattoos were done. When she lived in Japan, she covered up her tattoos. For a month, she lived with some Japanese co-workers who did not know she had tattoos. She resorted to using a band aid to cover-up her only touched-up tattoo; a series of the letter “x” was re-done because they looked like the letter “k”, which symbolizes a friendship. For a month, she lived with some Japanese co-workers who did not know she had tattoos. In Japan, Tracey went to her favorite tattoo convention. People were walking in from the cold, seemingly unmarked and un-inked, until they shed their clothing accessories and showed their art; being tattooed in Japan meant being part of a social category.

Like in Japan, Tracey keeps in mind other peoples’ perceptions of tattoos in New Zealand. Tracey works in high end retail. She has not gotten any tattoo art that she imagines could be considered gruesome or offensive by her customers. If she decides to get a tattoo with a zombie murder scene, she will get it down her side so it can be hidden. She has made a decision to keep her often visible tattoos in line with what the New Zealand predominant culture believes is feminine art. Yet, she does occasionally encounter the glares and words of scrutiny from customers:

Tracey: Working in retail, I’ve been told by women in Remuera, Auckland, that I would never get a husband. (Tracey and I share a laugh.) And I’ve had women say to me, oh I really like your tights, like your stockings, because they can see the pattern through my tights. And they’re like what is that, is that like (Pauses to think) and they’ll say some designer. And I’m like it’s my tattoo. One lady got in a huff and walked out.



Me: Pretty strong reaction. Do you consider the location of where you worked in Auckland, or your occupation as a high-end retailer, as what possibly put you in the front line of these women who think tattooing is a breach of social etiquette or moral conduct?

Tracey: [I]t's just in that certain area of Auckland, I guess. To make a generalization: white, female, wealthy women.

Me: Like upper middle class?

Tracey: Yeah. I'm just making a generalization. I don't know what their life has been like, but I would assume that they've kind of been there their whole lives (Ibid).

Tracey reasons that people, who are not tattooed, are not necessarily people she cannot identify with. Instead, she believes she encounters people, whether or not tattooed, who share an interest of hers. A shared interest could be snowboarding, veganism, or music taste. Tattoos can help her identify these interests, like if someone has a reference to a band she enjoys listening to.

However, Tracey is keenly aware that not all people with tattoos are similar to her:

Tracey: I went to a tattoo convention in New Zealand when it first started, in Palmerston North, I think it was, or New Plymouth. It was the first time they had it, and I just hated it. I really hated it. And I was like no, never going to one again.

Me: Why? Because it was too crowded?

Tracey: Yeah. It was crowded and people were, I don't know, not my people. I just thought it would be more like a whole lot of people that I could have fun with or identify with, and it wasn't. So that opened my mind to being like, okay just

because I have a tattoo and you have a tattoo does not mean you are like me. It does not mean that you should in any way talk to me, or I should talk to you (Ibid).

Tracey is not a fan of tattoos that are supposed to be Celtic style designs that, instead, are reproduced Flash. Unlike the excitement she feels when she identifies with a person's tattoo referring to a type of music she likes that "...would have a positive identification rather than seeing some guy with like the Celtic band... [referring to]...some band playing somewhere" (Ibid), she slightly cringes internally when she views a Celtic knock-off. However, she is trying not to judge other tattooed peoples:

Tracey: ...I'm not going to judge anyone any more. I feel like I have very strong opinions against everything that looks slightly new metal. Or like someone could be a Korn fan or like a druggie or anything like that. Very strong opinions against anyone with most tattoos that you see on the street. I really only like people that have similar tattoos to me.

Me: Okay, so what do you think changed? You did?

Tracey: (Laughs) Grow up. (Ibid).



*Photo 25: A spider and spider web, which contains dollish people, possibly referring to the movie Coraline (2009), on Tracey's right leg.*

Tracey does not have Moko tattoos. Though these tattoos are not worn by Tracey, she "...feel(s) really stoked to see around Hamilton....Especially on women. And even ones that have the Moko on their chins. I think it's nice that they're taking ownership. Well to me, my perception, that they're taking ownership of their culture" (Ibid). Tracey finds the lifestyle of Hamilton convenient because Auckland is close by, the mountains are near, and the beach is a 35 minute drive away. The housing is cheaper in Hamilton than in some more populated cities. But, Tracey does not find much to do in Hamilton. Because Hamilton is a transient city, many people come only to study at University of Waikato; or see Hamilton as a brief stopping point to Auckland or Raglan. According to Tracy, many of the creative people who are born in Hamilton leave when they are self-sufficient and migrate to places where they can grow a business or foster their craft.

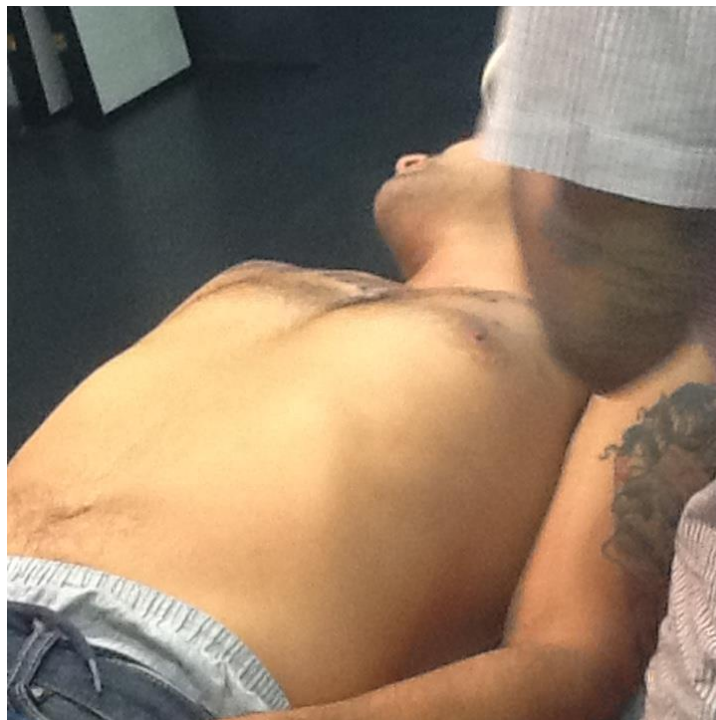
Tracey is not from Hamilton. Originally born in a pleasant New Zealand rural town and living in places like London, she has

lived in Hamilton for seven years. She recently enrolled in a Nutrition Science degree program, which will be her third bachelor's degree, at the University of Auckland. So at the time of this interview, she was about to move to Auckland. Flax Roots Tattoo Studio made it onto her radar before the move.

Tracey heard about Ali from a friend's recommendation. And she plans to come back after being tattooed by him as “[He] was a lot better than I was hoping” (Ibid). Ali's artistic skills, and resulting tattoo artwork, exceeded Tracey's expectations. Tracey has a scene, from the ballet *Swan Lake*, which she desires to be tattooed on her chest. Originally, she wished another female tattoo artist, from Auckland, to do it. But the female artist moved to New York. She is contemplating having Ali tattoo her *Swan Lake*.

*Justin: Tattoos for Loved Ones*

Justin has four tattoos. Three of his four tattoos were done at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio. His first tattoo, at another studio, is his brother's name on his back. Justin's brother passed away at 13, and he got that tattoo done to honor his brother's life. Justin was 17 when his brother died, and his brother's name was sketched into his skin that year. Justin is now 31 years old. The first tattoo he had done at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio was by Marc is, in part as a tribute to another loved one. He has a heart on his left arm, which is partly covered by scales. The heart represents his love for his partner. The scales represent his living with diabetes. Justin was diagnosed with diabetes five years ago. A few of his friends have been diagnosed as well.



*Photo 26: Justin getting ready to be tattooed by Ali.*

On this occasion, Justin came to Flax Roots to be tattooed by Ali. Justin got a tattoo piece a while ago; he added onto it with Ali's help. Justin's older tattoos are two roses, one on the front of

each shoulder. Ali inked the word “Bella Rose” onto the center of Ali’s chest. Justin’s daughter’s name is Bella Rose. Bella Rose completes Justin’s tattoo because he “...thought why not have Bella Rose put in the middle, just to bring it all together. Sometimes I get a question, oh why’d you get those [roses]? Now it’s just easy [to answer]” (February, 5, 2015).

Ali is a close friend of Justin, and he has gotten to know Marc. Justin considers himself a skater, and he developed a relationship with Ali initially through skateboarding. Justin met Ali 17 years ago when they both were newcomers to Hamilton. Justin trusts Ali, as a friend and as a tattooist. Justin likes most sports that involve a board. Like tattooing, these board sports rev up his adrenaline. At the same time, he likes the peace and silence of being out on the board in a place that he calls home, Hamilton. He enjoys the quiet of being tattooed. He listened to the faint sound of the needle and relaxed from his roles as a father, partner, friend, and occupation as a house plasterer.

Justin is unsure what other tattoos he will get by Ali or Marc. People, strangers or familiars, have reacted positively to his tattoos so far. He thinks people will respond well to his beloved daughter’s name. Yet, he is unsure if there are types of tattoos he would not get. And he is not sure if there are locations on his body where he would not get a tattoo. He is unsure if being a male influenced his tattoo choices because “[I]t’s a hard one” (Ibid). He is exploring the tattoo world and part of that exploration is being aware of tattooed people in Hamilton:

Justin: I find a lot of people get crazy things, like weird tattoos. I don’t know, for me, I like a name or the meaning behind it. Some people don’t have meaning; they just like the way it looks. I guess it’s what they’re into and what they like to look at (Ibid).

Without doubt though, Justin is sure that he chose his tattoos for personal meaning.

*Robert: First Among Equals*

Robert's tattoos reflect what he wishes others to see him as; a man who carries his family and friends with him in his heart and mind. He has three tattoos which reference his relationship to family and community. Two of these tattoos were not done at Flax Roots. However, Makkala was the artist for the previous tattoos. She did them, at another tattoo studio in Hamilton, before coming to work at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio. These tattoos, Robert's firsts at age twenty, are situated on his ribs. On his upper ribs, closer to his arm, he has a symbolic tattoo which is intended to convey that he carries his family. Makkala tattooed three different pieces, to form a joint piece, on Robert's left rib cage. In the middle is the New Zealand silver fern. Above the silver fern is the New South Wales large shrub, the waratah; and below the fern is the Queensland orchid. Robert talks about these tattoos:

So the silver fern is colored in green, but the other two flowers haven't been colored in yet. I'm still getting around to doing that. For me, the silver fern represents my dad because he's New Zealand born. The Queensland orchid represents my brothers and my mum and my grandmother because they were all born in the same state. Then above that, the New South Wales waratah is for my granddad because my mum's dad was born in New South Wales (January 27, 2015).

Originally, Robert came to Flax Roots Tattoo Studio specifically for Makkala. He wanted to finish the silver fern by adding the green onto the flowers, and he wanted a new tattoo. He could not book an appointment with Makkala because he waited too long to get back to her about finishing, so she ended up being booked out a few months in advance. Also, Robert wanted to save



up money before completing one of his first tattoos. Another reason he waited to finish the tattoo was that he "...wanted to have something done but...I was at university going through lectures. And having people brushing past you, it's quite painful, especially when it's quite large on your rib cage" (Ibid). When Robert had money and was ready to finish the fern, he had a choice as to whether to wait for a slot in Makkala's time schedule or whether to be worked on by an artist Makkala suggested. Instead, he chose to get a new tattoo with another artist and finish the fern, with Makkala, at a later date. Robert is immensely satisfied he chose to explore a new artist because of his comfortable experience being tattooed and the quality of his latest tattoo. Ali was the artist for Robert's latest tattoo:

Robert: My tattoo is a Latin...phrase, based on the Macedonian army, which translates to first among equals, "primus inter pares". So essentially it was to say like no matter how great the person was, they still bleed the same as everyone else. They still die the same as everyone else. So no matter where you go in life, no matter what you do in life; you're still going to be the same as the people that you came from and the people that you're with (Ibid).



*Photo 27: "First Among Equals" is tattooed on Robert's upper, left shoulder.*

Robert chose the Latin phrase "Primus Inter Pares" because he believes it is a message he can wear with pride:

Robert: I think if you believe in anything, you should be able to wear it with pride, so that people know exactly what you see yourself as. For me, it was growing up in high school. I was always top of my class and had a lot of my friends. I'd still enjoy hanging out with people that weren't to the same level and I always felt that I was the same level as them. That there was no difference. So for me, I always enjoyed the idea that I'm still the same. I'm still accepted by them....I still feel confident that even when I finish my university degree that despite what they've got, I'm still on the same basis with them (Ibid).

Robert believes that he can connect, across the boundaries of time and place, with his friends and family. Robert's tattoos connect him to people, yet his tattoos alienate him from people as well.

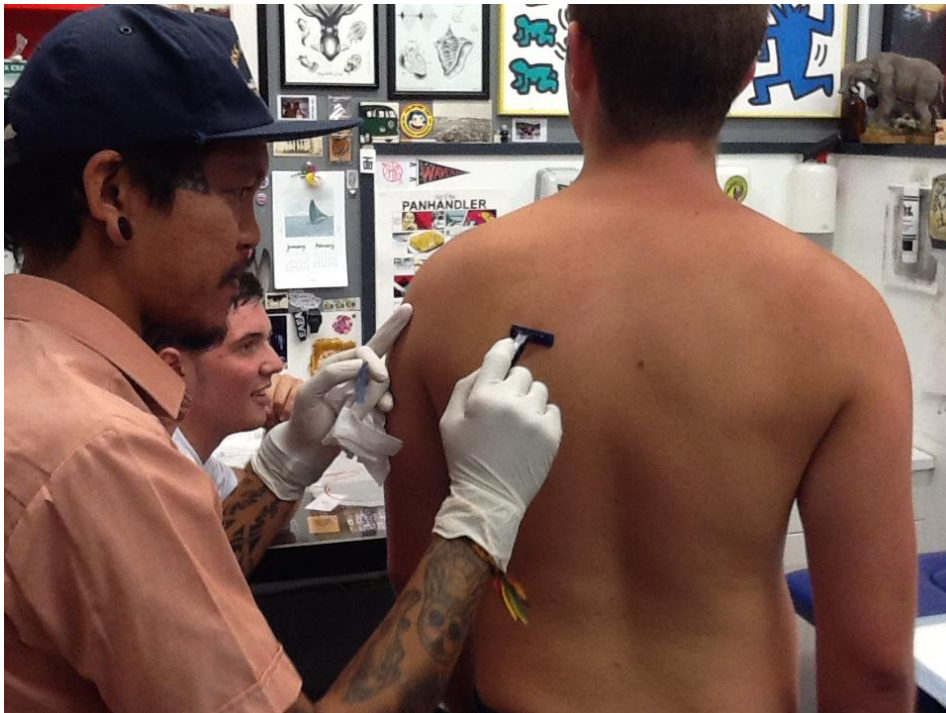
When Robert's former girlfriend's father found out about his tattoo, the father ordered the girlfriend to break up with him. And she did. In spite of this negative episode, other peoples' reactions to his tattoos have been positive. People like that his tattoos symbolize his intimate, familiar connections. They seem to positively react to his tattoos because they convey an egalitarian meaning. A meaningful conceptual framework for Robert is essential:

Robert: Personally, I think a tattoo should reveal something meaningful towards yourself. If it doesn't really have any meaning, if you get to 60 and your skin starts sagging, you're not really going to appreciate what's left of it. Whereas if you've got something that means something to you, even when it starts to lose its quality, it still holds the meaning (Ibid).

During our interview, which was at my office at the University of Waikato not at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio, Robert frequently referred back to a belief about being the same person throughout the course of his lifetime. He is Australian born and lived in Auckland for ten years before moving to Hamilton for study at the University of Waikato: "I moved here for university" (Ibid). He enjoys living in Hamilton more than Auckland because he perceives Hamilton as a calmer place, less traffic, and a politer attitude from people. Although Robert especially likes the Hamilton Gardens, he does not dislike any part of the small city. He views Hamilton as a place where strangers can settle into.

Robert is getting two bachelor's degrees, one in law and one in psychology. To help fund his education, he works in a bookstore. His employers are fine with him having tattoos, to a certain extent. His tattoos are easy to conceal under the rules of the bookstore's dress code. On the odd occasion when he has free time, Robert plays piano and guitar. His "biggest love" (Ibid) is

classic rock, although he has no plans to become a professional musician. As a long-term immigrant, university student, retail worker, and lover of classic rock music, Robert meets people who fall into one or none of those categories. Though he loves classic rock, he does not single out those fans as the people he will essentially get along with. Robert does not think that his gender played a role in his tattoo choices, and he does not believe “...any tattoo should be confined to one gender” (Ibid). What Robert values is positive thinking, like “...that your life isn’t just one stop. You’ve got to continue and continue...I associate myself with people who are motivated. You always need to be on the up and up” (Ibid). He values their personality, not their extrinsic associations.



*Photo 28: By shaving Robert's shoulder blade, Ali prepares him for a tattoo session.*

So when Robert judges other peoples' tattoos, he tries to refrain from judging what they like. He alternatively judges the quality and location of their designs:

Robert: I've seen some pretty bad ones. I've seen people that have got what looks like a lion but the eyes seem crossed or unbalanced. I don't think it's really a part of the design because the rest of it looked like it's a very detailed lion. But I've seen some quite interesting tattoos. There's quite a lot of Polynesian tattoos in Hamilton. Amazing designs but also you need to consider how much pain someone has to go through to get those as well. That shows a lot of heart (Ibid).

Most of the tattoos Robert has seen in Hamilton are Polynesian tattoos or badly applied tattoos. He saw good tattoos, which could have been Polynesian, in Auckland. But he has not seen many good tattoos done in Hamilton. Robert dislikes face tattoos and neck tattoos. He explains why:

Me: Is that more personally or are you okay with other people but for you personally that wouldn't be... or is it a little bit of both?

Robert: It's a bit of both. I do think face tattoos can come off as intimidating. And neck tattoos, I'm always worried personally if the tattooist pushes too hard on the wrong vein and I'll pass out.

Me: (laughs) Yeah that could be a real problem there.

According to Robert, a tattoo piece should be meaningful, should avoid the head and neck, and should be applied with artistic quality.

*Makkala: Being a Tattooist is a Luxury*

Makkala Rose is 23 years old and got her first tattoo at age 19 or 20. She currently has over 15 tattoos. Makkala was recently tattooed by Kirk Jones, a tattooist in Melbourne, Australia. This collage tattoo, done in a colorful variant of the European Traditional style, is on the back of her thigh. The colors pop out, so that the tattoo appears to be 3D. Another art piece that Makkala loves is a mandala on the back of her neck, done by a tattoo artist who used to work at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio and happens to be an inspiration to Makkala because of his utilization of color. Some of Makkala's tattoos are not as well loved by her any longer. But, she does not regret these less loved tattoos. Some of these tattoos are meant to be symmetrical when, in actuality, they are not exactly adjacent to each other. Makkala says, "One of the sort of the pairs that I've got; they're not even the same size. That bothers me, but I can't see them very often...I'll probably get them covered up eventually, but it's in such a painful spot. I just don't really care anymore (February 3, 2015). Some people do care about the tattoos Makkala has on her body, not because they are concerned about how symmetrical her tattoos are but because they think her tattoos are cool. Makkala has not had any memorable negative reactions to her tattoos but guesses she would not pay much attention to the opinions of people who view tattoos in a negative way.

Makkala, like Ali, studied art. When Makkala finished her correspondence art course, she already had been tattooing for a few years. At the end of her art course, she started tattooing full-time. However, she started as a piercer in a tattoo studio and not a tattoo artist:

Makkala: It was weird how I got into the industry. It was a lot of self- direction, self-teaching with a few people that kind of help you with bits of pieces about the kind of machines I was running and things on the side. But yeah...And I just started tattooing one of my friends, in his studio. I tattooed him for a really long time, maybe once a month or twice a month. Then, [I] eventually started tattooing more of my friends. And then they referred other people to come to me and get tattooed. It all sort of built up from that really (Ibid).

People come to Makkala for her style, which she describes as "...illustrative looking, quite girly and quite cutesy...." (Ibid). Although Makkala is a female, she is not certain that her gender and sex influenced the type of tattoos she wears. And yet, on her clients, she believes her artwork to be slightly more feminine than many male artists' works. She critiques her tattoo artworks as having "a little bit of a cutesy look to it" and that she does not "intend for it to happen but it just does" (Ibid). She enjoys the tattooing process, so she strives to do tattoos that reflect her artistic style. Makkala does not tattoo clients if she thinks another artist can do their suggested tattoo better based upon that artist's style compared to her style.



*Photo 29: Makkala looking over her client schedule for the day.*

Makkala has always tattooed in Hamilton, although she attends conferences at different locations. She attended tattoo conferences in Hamilton and New Plymouth in New Zealand. She preferred the New Plymouth tattoo convention because:

Makkala: I think they cater really well. It's just set up really well to have patrons, people getting tattooed and people just coming along to have a look. Hamilton does a similar thing as well, but it's just changed. We have, not a menu in particular...I think they're lucky with the venue in New Plymouth...It's unusual the set-up they got at Claudelands [, an event center in Hamilton] (Ibid).

In addition to the conventions in New Zealand, Makkala attended a tattoo convention in Sydney, Australia. The tattoo convention in



Sydney was quite busy, so that she did not have much time to rest in-between client consults and tattoo sessions. She thinks she is lucky to be able to work at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio and go to conferences.

Makkala has recently been looking at a few studios to visit in the United States of America. According to Makkala, many studios in the United States contain superb artists. Though, some tattoo studios in New Zealand and Australia rival the tattoo artistry of American studios. When looking at American studios, Makkala says it was:

...shocking to me. I was like wow Hamilton is right up there. But I think New Zealand in general and Australia have quite a high quality of artists. But there's obviously a balance of [positive and the negative]. There are quite a few people I probably wouldn't get tattooed by [in Oceania]. There's plenty of things I personally don't like but that doesn't mean to say they're bad. (Pause) Who am I to judge, you know? Everyone's allowed to do what they want, have what they like." (Ibid).

Makkala has lived in Hamilton, New Zealand for four years. She began tattooing in Hamilton and stayed because of Flax Roots Tattoo Studio. Makkala has "worked at other shops but Flax Roots by far is the most creative" and she feels Flax Roots has "got a really nice atmosphere for the people that are coming in as well as the artists, and everyone just gets along" (Ibid).

Makkala spends most of her time in Flax Roots Tattoo Studio. When she is not tattooing, she might enhance the drawings of tattoos she did for clients. Oftentimes, she sells these former transitional pieces as paintings. She thinks that Hamilton probably has "...a small subculture of creative people and artists" (Ibid). She does not believe many creative businesses or organized

social outlets are available for people in Hamilton. So, she thinks many of these creative individuals are responsible for their inventive conceptions. When Makkala is not at the tattoo studio, she explores busy, productive leisures. In 2014, Makkala overworked doing tattoos, so she tries to take off two days a week from doing tattoos and drawing tattoos. During that time, she may paint. She is learning digital arts. Recently, she began surfing. She loves baking. Other times, she tries to keep her house in order so then she can relax.

Makkala values her free time. She values her social life. Occasionally, her career as a tattooist influences her social associations:

Makkala: Often when you go places, and you'll not be there with other tattooists, you'll often get people talking to you just about tattoos for the whole night. I used to work with a guy, and he said when he used to go places, he'd just tell people he worked at a petrol station because he didn't want to talk about tattoos the whole night (Ibid).

However, Makkala understands that the majority of the general public, who do not tattoo or know much about tattooing, can be better informed by casual discussions with a knowledgeable artist at a social event. She:

...guess[es] there's probably a lot of educating for the public; to do their research about what they're wanting to get and the specific sort of look that they're wanting to achieve, and to actually go through and have a look at lots of different artists' work, and pick who they can identify with for what they are wanting (Ibid).



*Photo 30: Two of Makkala's art pieces that served as models for clients' tattoos. Brandon, camera right, tattoos a client in the background. Hangout Space and Waiting Area Studio is camera left.*

Makkala sees the many people who come into Flax Roots for cover-ups. She thinks more discussion about tattooing, instead of less, is better for the clients and general public. She tries her best to ensure that her clients understand what they want and that they have looked at an array of artists' works. Then, if she feels she is the best artist for the job, Makkala strives to provide her clients with a tattoo they are happy with. When I asked Makkala if she wanted to add anything else to our interview, she reiterated that people interested in getting a tattoo should "just check out who is around and [know] what you're wanting to get in the way of style" (Ibid).

*Kylee and Darryn: A Couple in Love with Tattooing*

*Photo 31: Darryn sits across from Kylee, who is being tattooed by Makkala.*

Kylee scheduled a tattoo session with Makkala because it was her birthday. She has been to Makkala before and is impressed by her art style. Makkala intervened, on occasion, during Kylee's interview. Darryn, Kylee's boyfriend and a partnered tattoo enthusiast, accompanied Kylee during the tattoo. I interviewed Darryn separately from Makkala, but somehow lost his interview. Unfortunately, after he contacted me about the transcribing issue, Darryn did not respond to my email about scheduling a redo interview. Somewhat luckily, he chimed in during Kylee's interview. Additionally, I have our interview notes.

Kylee is 21 years old. Kylee got her first tattoo, at age 17, on her upper back. When she wanted to touch-up this tattoo,

Darryn suggested she come to Makkala. Darryn had been tattooed by Makkala. Makkala did Darryn's chest tattoo in intervals, within the time span of April 2014 to November 2014, because of the complexity of his design and their financial payment agreement. When Kylee saw Darryn's tattoos, a month later she decided to get Makkala to touch-up her tattoo. This touched-up tattoo symbolizes her connection to family. She emotionally expresses her love in the phrase "Love Family". The inked last names are of her maternal family and paternal family.



*Photo 32: Kylee's tattoo signifies her connection to family.*

Kylee's latest tattoo is one that Makkala sketched. Kylee "...wanted it, for a while, because the meaning behind it. [Her] granddad was a hunter, and so [she] wanted something resembling a forest" (February 3, 2015). Kylee spends much of her free time in the outdoors, so she expresses her love of nature in her tattoos, with butterflies, deer, and bright, sun-kissed colors. In addition to the two tattoos done by Makkala, Kylee has a tattoo on her ankle. Her grandmother loved flowers, so Kylee has brightly colored flowers around her ankle.

Kylee believes being a female definitely played a role in the tattoos she got. She states that, “Obviously, being a female, you’ve got to get more feminine looking tattoos. You can’t go too masculine” (Ibid). Darryn, then, joked, “No skulls?” to which Kylee replies, “Can’t just go get something like that; it won’t suit my personality” (Ibid). Kylee’s occupation is a hairdresser, so she feels she needs to be aware of how people see her physically; and part of her identity is being a fit, healthy person:

Kylee: I love fitness. I’m always at the gym...I’m more of an active person. I hate being inside. Like I work inside so I just hate being inside on the weekends. I love going out and doing things. Like I love, I haven’t been for a while but I love waterskiing and stuff like that. Wakeboarding and stuff, so much fun (Ibid).



*Photo 33: Makkala’s artwork is of Kylee’s tattoo; a future customer may purchase the work.*

Despite Kylee's affiliation with the feminine, she does not consider herself to be a part of a group. However, she is a bit unsure about identifying with other people:

Me: Do you identify with any particular group of people? Or you identify with certain activities people do? Or not?

Kylee: So is that describe myself?

Me: Yeah. If people that you feel you identify with,

Kylee: I don't know how to describe myself really.

Me: So would you think you share similar beliefs with certain people?

Kylee: Not really.

Me: So you would say you're an individual?

Kylee: Yeah, I try to be myself and not follow anybody.

Me: Do you think that that's because of the tattoos you choose to get, because you've put a lot of thought into the tattoos?

Kylee: Yeah. I think so (Ibid).

Then, I proceeded to ask Kylee about the different tattoos she has seen in Hamilton. She believes many good artists exist in Hamilton. She does not favor any particular artist or style because she enjoys seeing how each artist and style fits a particular person. She thinks that "every person's got a different personality so like it fits them" (Ibid). Kylee is not from Hamilton, and she does not live in Hamilton. She works in Cambridge, about 20 minutes southwest of Hamilton. She lives in Ohaupo, which is about 10 minutes south of Hamilton. So, she says, "Hamilton's not really my town then" (Ibid). She describes Hamilton as "an okay place. But certain parts of it isn't as good as another" (Ibid). She comes to the central part of Hamilton for tattoos and shopping.

*Lisa: The Crafty Tattoo*

*Photo 34: Lisa happily waits for Makkala, who prepares equipment for tattooing. Ali's artwork is camera upper right. Makkala's artwork and station is camera center left.*

Lisa decided to get a tattoo at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio because of her interest in Makkala's tattoo artworks:

Lisa: I really liked for some reason the idea of a female tattoo artist...I got onto [Makkala's] Facebook page and I kind of followed her. And I really like her style, I guess girly/colorful kind of style. I've been looking around a few places, and there's certainly so many talented tattoo artists around. But something about her just really spoke to me. I didn't decide to go and get it right then, I was still toying up, knew what I wanted but it was when she put on her Facebook page just before Christmas saying I'm having a day of consults if you want to come and see. So that kind of made me go oh, I'm going to do it (February 22, 2015).



The tattoo Lisa decided to get is a compilation of sewing notions. Her tattoo, on her right foot, contains "...two cotton reels, some pins, a needle and thread, and a love heart that looks like it's stitched on or patched on. It's quite colorful, done in the watercolor type of painting look so it's got kind of splashes around it" (Ibid). The tumbleweed of threads, rolling down the top of her foot, converge on three buttons. These blue buttons have quite a lot to hold. The spools are miniature compared to the lavish, juicy heart half-strung by a needle. Lisa is a keen sewer.

Lisa is 33 years old and a sewing and crafting enthusiast. She thought about the design of this tattoo for three years. She wanted a tattoo which was meaningful for her. Her mother is a sewer. Lisa is the youngest sibling out of three sisters. She is the only sister who shares her mother's passion for sewing and craft arts. She is happy that her sewing tattoo is not something she has seen anyone else have online or in person. She feels her newest tattoo is special and unique to her. Her latest tattoo is not her first tattoo. Lisa got a tattoo when she was 16 that she does not think she put a lot of thought into. At that time, she desired a tattoo and got a kind of Japanese symbol that was popular seventeen years ago, in the year 1998. Over time, the Japanese tattooed symbol has lost meaning and importance for Lisa. The tattoo is on her abdomen, so she is grateful it is not often seen.

Lisa, who lives in Hamilton, spent time contemplating her sewing notions tattoo. Although she appreciates the art that different tattooists do, she did not want a tattoo she would regret getting because of what it depicted. When I interviewed Lisa, on a late Friday afternoon at my office at University of Waikato, she conveyed what she did not want tattooed on her skin:

Me: So are there any particular tattoos in a style or place you wouldn't get? That just don't appeal to you?

Lisa: I guess so. Like on Facebook, I follow quite a few tattoo pages, and I really appreciate the art [skills]. [Tattoos] are just a different medium that people are using, a canvas is the body, that kind of thing. So everyone that I follow I think, oh that's amazing. Not necessarily what I would get, but I can still appreciate the work on it. I guess there are some that I just wouldn't get.... There's a lot of the tattoo artists, say Nadine Bryant for example. She's an amazing tattooist. But then, even like skulls and stuff like that. I totally appreciate the work that goes into them and amazing shading and things like that, but it's not something I would get. But I could appreciate it on someone else if that's what they wanted or liked....I think I just know what I liked and what I don't like.



*Photo 35: Makkala finishes Lisa's sewing notion tattoo.*

Me: You appreciate the art?

Lisa: Yes.

Me: But not necessarily something you would have on you forever.

Lisa: That's right. And sometimes there are a few tattooists around that I have looked and thought, ooh, maybe they need to work on it, you know. That sounds awful.

Me: Why do you think they need to work on it?

Lisa: I think maybe because when I look at Makkala or Nadine or even some other ones, they've just got these amazing lines and they're straight and they've got these faces and they look amazing; they could be a photo. And then, you sometimes see other ones and they are not very good. But I don't know if they need to work on it is the right thing, because maybe they're just not as great an artist (Ibid).

Lisa chose Makkala because her tattoos seemed more girly than Nadine's more masculine tattoos. However, Lisa appreciates the talent and skill of artists in Hamilton regardless the types of tattoos they do.

Lisa recognizes that particular tattoos can be seen as stereotypically feminine or masculine. I asked Lisa about other stereotypical tattoos in New Zealand:

Me: Do you think there are any stereotypical tattoos, particularly in Hamilton or New Zealand, that you see a lot?

Lisa: I guess in New Zealand you see a lot of the Maori inspired ones... [W]hen I got my Japanese symbol, lots of other people had them as well. Or things like, you know, when they say like 'tramp stamps' [or tattoos on a woman's mid-lower back, closely near or on her sacrum]. [L]ately, you see a lot of the inner wrist and maybe the calf, or even foot tattoos. But then I don't know if you're just seeing them more because we have social media now, and you see a lot

more of what happens....I don't know if it's totally between male or female, maybe its age. I definitely think through the 90s, the 2000s, and 2010s, in my experience, the fashion's changed.

Me: Do you think that change is influenced more by local Hamilton or greater New Zealand or globally? And how?

Lisa: Probably greater globally. But then I guess anything globally starts locally doesn't it? Yeah, something would start and it would carry on that way. I feel like I've seen a lot more kind of sisterhood tattoos, like mothers and daughters getting matching tattoos. Or three sisters [getting matching tattoos]. I had a friend the other day, who her and her sisters got matching tattoos on their feet (Ibid).



*Photo 36: Lisa stands, in my office. Her sewing notions tattoo is on the top of her right foot.*

Lisa has lived in Hamilton since she was eight years old. As an adult, she works in the health insurance industry as part of a group called team knowledge specialists. While on the job, she

answers peoples' questions about options for their supervision of care. Lisa does not get much leisure time outside of her family and work. She works full-time, Monday to Friday. On the weekends, her daughter takes dance lessons. When they get a bit more time, they drive about an-hour-and-a-half to Auckland to visit a sister. Auckland provides more activities for Lisa and her daughter to engage in. Other times, Lisa chooses to take her daughter to Raglan because it is closer to Hamilton. Sometimes, she craves not to be going anywhere and relaxing at home. Her husband is supportive of her family and work goals; he is fine with Lisa's tattoo:

Lisa: My husband didn't really care, but he does not want a tattoo. And he would never get one himself, but didn't really have an opinion on it. I can think of two of my friends, their husbands are like "what do you want to do that for, I don't like them on women" or something like that (Ibid).

Lisa has more female friends that have tattoos than her male friends. Sometimes, a tattoo causes strife in a marital relationship. Lisa has had a number of interesting, sometimes contentious, interactions with people she associates with:

Lisa: ...I found too that when I got this tattoo, people become very open about giving you their opinion on tattoos...I noticed a few people have been kind of like "Oh, what did you, why would you get one?"

Me: So the reaction to your tattoo has been mixed?

Lisa: Yeah. "Why would you do that or what's the point". Or people think it has to mean something, that you would only get a tattoo because it was meaningful. [People, who question the reasons I decided to get tattooed, are] not usually [tattooed themselves]. So I don't know if that's a little bit of ignorance, I guess. Or they're not very accepting

because it's not for them. But they don't really see a line between okay that's their body, they can do what they like. But they feel like it's okay to pass judgement. It reminded me of when I first become pregnant with my daughter, and all of a sudden your body becomes public property. Or a talking point because people are like "oh you're not very big or oh you're quite small, or oh you're carrying this way". Kind of reminded me of that. People feel free to have an opinion on something where people wouldn't necessarily. If you got a haircut that they didn't really like, or a hair color, they don't necessarily go "oh what did you do that for?" They might just not say anything. But with tattoos people are a lot more free in expressing their opinion, whether it's invited or not. [M]y beauty therapist, just going to get my eyebrows done, and she was like "oh yeah you got a tattoo, I suppose you could always get it removed". I was like oh I guess I could, but I don't want to. But I think it's people's own thought process. And some people just feel comfortable or they have no filter.

Me: But you've had- positive reactions as well?

Lisa: I have. I've had a lot of people say and again, "probably not something they would necessarily get themselves". But people have just appreciated that it's a really good tattoo...Makkala, did a really good job of it type thing. So I have had a lot of positive as well. But I have found it quite interesting what some people have said (Ibid).

At the end of the interview, Lisa cheerfully posed with her sewing tattoo and happily left to enjoy the weekend with her family.

*Marc: Tattoos Tell My Story*

“My tattoos, the first thing they are is they’re actually for me even though they’re visible to other people. They’re actually for me. I don’t wear them for other people. I wear them for myself. I wear them as an expression of what I stand for and who I am. I like story tattoos whether it goes back to the gangs or whether it’s to do with my family. Or it’s to do with where I’m from or maybe where I’m going.” – Marc in Interview (February 7, 2015)



*Photo 37: Tattooe enthusiast, Marc, pictured at our interview.*

The year was 1971 when Marc got his first tattoo at age 11. The tattoo was a cross; it has since been covered-up:

Marc: But what I find interesting about the cross is the fact it was the very first tattoo that I did. And the circle of my life has actually brought me back to that religious tattoo, which is interesting (February 7, 2015).

The cross tattoo was done in Wellington by a professional tattoo artist named Roger Ingerton. He is considered a granddaddy of the tattooing profession in New Zealand.

Marc the client, who is not to be confused with artist Marc Wymer, is now 54 years old. During his 43 years of getting tattooed, he has altered his beliefs, changed his personal associations, and lived in different environments within New Zealand. Marc is originally from Wellington City. We talked about his experience, his growing-up in Wellington, and his perceptions of the dominant culture in Hamilton:

Marc: I had the privilege of growing up in Wellington, which is a really cosmopolitan place...I think that the nearest civilization here [in Hamilton] is pretty thin. I think if you scratch it with any sort of depth then it reveals itself for what is. It has the façade of culture. But I think that the way you can tell what a society is really like is how its young people are at night time when they're out...And it's an angry. (Pause) [T]here's an undercurrent of anger and fear in young people.

Me: How many years have you been in Hamilton?

Marc: Over 20 years.

Me: So how has the culture of Hamilton changed since you've been here, since 20 years ago? Where is it more fearful or angrier than it has been in the past?

Marc: I think it's angrier. I think the young people, and it's males as well as females, [and] I think people lack a feeling of security and they hide that. [T]hey hide that fear in themselves, and their own insecurity by getting absolutely smashed. Yep (Ibid).



In Hamilton, Marc has been attracted to the culture of its local cafes. Flax Roots Tattoo Studio, where he often visits, is close to one of his favorite cafes. Our interview was held, between sips of freshly brewed coffee, at this café. The coffee was damn good. On the occasion Marc drinks alcohol, he does so at a café rather than at a bar. Unlike the bars, pubs, and clubs, Marc has been to outside of Hamilton, he feels that the atmosphere is unhappy. He finds that the bars in Hamilton attract mainly young people who wear facades and are not interested in being friendly.

Then, I proceeded to ask Marc if he identified with a particular group of people, and he cheerfully replied, “Yeah, yeah, the human race” (Ibid). His response, which I considered to be a great answer at the time and said so, led me to question how his affinity with the human race impacted decisions for tattoo designs:

Me: ...Recognizing yourself as human, essentially, do you think that has greatly influenced where you've gotten tattoos, when you've gotten tattoos; the types of tattoos you've gotten?

Marc: That's a good question. And I'm not sure if my answer is going to cover it. I think that for me, for me personally, it's always been about how I've felt about myself and the tattoos that I've chosen to use. Initially, when I was really young, it was counterculture. I came from a good, white middle-class home, and it was so boring. Don't get me wrong, mum and dad loved me to bits and they were quite caring. But it was boring and it seemed to be so focused and regimented, and I just needed to break out of it. And tattooing myself was one way of breaking out of that; I was actually identifying myself as something different to that.

Me: So would you say it's identifying with tattooing was your own way of showing your humanity, being human? As an individual? Feel free to correct me if I'm wrong.

Marc: That's an interesting comment. I think that people think that being tattooed makes us part of a particular group. We're not. Because we're not all the same, you know what I mean? Having art on our skin doesn't make us the same. It can be a point of dialogue, of course. And it can actually be something where it can actually bridge a gap. There will always be something that we have as a starting point of conversation. But in some ways, just because we're tattooed doesn't mean that we're the same...It seems like just because five guys are wearing suits; it doesn't make them the same (Ibid).

Marc carried on our conversation into the realm of tattooing in Hamilton:

Marc: ...I think that with some people it has no passion element associated with it. And that concerns me, for them. Because, okay you can get it lasered off, which is something you never used to be able to do. You had to get them cut out. But I think that people see them as accessories like shoes or purses. And I think that some of the resonance and some of the meaning of getting tattooed is gone. That might just be because I'm a guy who's getting older....

Me: ... So for you, you are saying that it's not a particular tattoo style that may be you are wary of but the intent behind the tattoo.

Marc: Yeah. I mean I like good art. Art is subjective. It's like music and clothes, all those things, it's subjective. There is some incredibly good art, but I look at some artwork on people and I wonder why they wear it. I find it

interesting, what they choose to wear. I find that very interesting.... I think one thing I'd like to say is that tattooed people don't mind if you're not tattooed...And what I would like for people who feel intimidated or threatened by tattooed people [is not to be afraid to ask a tattooed person a question about their tattoos]. Old ladies will ask me. Old ladies are amazing like that. They'll just come up and say, "Now why did you do that to yourself?" It's really interesting. (Pause to think) I think that they've done enough life to know that they've got nothing to lose, anyway, if things go pear shaped. (Pause to think) I think it's generational. And I think that is the act of doing life and living a life, understanding how things work, and therefore knowing there's no question that you can't ask (Ibid).

Marc and I delved into the stories of his tattoos. Before I investigated why he had chosen to get specific tattoos, and get specific tattoos covered-up, he told me there was not a question I could not ask him. Since I respond well to freely speaking with individuals and try to do so, Marc proceeded to autodidactically narrate the tales of his tattoos. Marc spoke about his tattoos in order of importance, saying that:

...My face tattoos are my important ones, the ones on my face. They're Christian tattoos. I'm a Jesus freak, and they are incredibly important to me because tattoos are the interface you have with other people, especially on your face. And so when they look at my face [now], I've had gang stuff tattooed on my face that I had lasered off, and so people see it, and they ask about it. The whole point of my face tattoos is a story of redemption; a story of love, forgiveness, second chances. And I really want people to understand that. Your time and place in life isn't always going to be that way. There's always an opportunity to change direction; there's

always something that can be put right. And there's always hope, and it's about hope (Ibid).

Marc's gang tattoos are covered over by symbolic tattoos referencing Christianity.

Marc cannot travel outside of New Zealand. In spite of that, he observes how foreign tourists react to his visible tattoos, especially the ones on his face:

Marc: ...I was actually in a hotel having breakfast one morning, and I walked through the foyer to where the restaurant was. And there was a guy sitting there with his wife, and he turned around and said "Martha, would you look at that?" It was funny. So Martha turned around and had a look with her fork half way up to her mouth.

Me: So not a delightful experience for you.

Marc: It was funny; it was funny (Ibid).

After Marc had a wife and family, he started lasering off his gang tattoos:

Marc: [I] used to walk the children up the road, take them to kindergarten, and I used to have gang tattoos on my face....So I made the decision that for my children. I didn't want them growing up with their daddy having face tattoos, gang tattoos on his face. Because life is tough enough without your daddy looking like that. And so I decided to get them lasered off and started getting them lasered off. [I]t used to swell my eyes shut...I used to get it done in Auckland. By the time I got back to Hamilton, my eyes would be swollen shut.

Me: Well, that is a traumatic experience basically?

Marc: Yeah. Big time. (Pauses) It hurts. It hurts so bad.

Me: Did your kids then comment on it?

Marc: And they said to me, “Daddy, you don’t have to do that for us. We love you just the way you are. I nearly cried (Ibid).

Marc’s children are not tattooed. Marc’s oldest son, at age nineteen, is not tattooed; he does not plan to be. When tattooee Marc talked to tattooist Marc, they discussed why younger generations seem to not be getting tattooed. Marc says that they were “actually out for a drink the other day. There was a group of us, artists and stuff, and we were actually laughing, thinking that very soon the counterculture would be not tattooed. Plenty of clean skin” (Ibid).



*Photo 38: Marc’s most recent tattoo is on his chin was inked by Makkala, the night before our interview.*

Marc’s most recent tattoo on his chin was done by Makkala. The tattoo is an iconography, a sacred heart of Jesus. The style is a Classic Flash design from the 1930s or 1940s. Makkala also did the praying hands, on Marc’s left cheek. The biblical quote from

Revelation 16:19 “The lord of lords”, is above his left eyebrow. Makkala did that too. Additionally Makkala, or Micky as Marc calls her, tattooed “The alpha and omega” from Revelation 22:13. Makkala, or Micky, keeps bringing Marc back to Flax Roots Tattoo Studio:

Marc: Mickey is a prodigious talent...I have absolute admiration for her. She’s young, and she’s just so talented. And one of the things I like about Mickey is that she is so focused at what she does; she puts everything into what she does. It’s not a vocation for her. It’s what drives her. It’s what motivates her...Every man that has a female tattooist is just a little bit in love with her, you know. It’s not a sexual thing, there’s that thing, there’s that thing there so you get quite close. And she’s a really good friend. So we talk. As we get tattooed, we talk. And when all her mates used to be going out partying and stuff like that, she was at home drawing. She had a focus about where she wanted to go. And that’s so important (Ibid).

Marc appreciates the friendship and expertise of the artist Makkala. He is charmed that Makkala is a compassionate and steadfast female artist.

Marc believes that being a male played a role in his tattoo choices. He says that, “artwork is cross-gender, but I also think that it has particular focus for gender as well” (Ibid). Most of Marc’s tattoos are black. He assesses that:

If you look at black and white photography, it has the most depth and the most resonance. I think it captures the subject beautifully. And once you are surrounded with color, then it seems to blend clarity and focus outwards. Or even draw it inwards. And so for me being European, having dark on the pale, I think is quite striking (Ibid).

Marc's legs are tattooed with a collection of Pictish rock drawings, in the color black. His family heritage hails from the northernmost part of Scotland. Marc researched his Scottish heritage, so he could be as best informed as he could before getting the Pictish tattoos. The Pictish people, the Picts, had their own language, which is extinct. The males, in pictures and engravings of the Picts, are believed to have had tattoos referring to their status as warriors (A. Richie, 1989).

When Marc is not being tattooed or visiting with friends at a local café, he portions out plenty of his daytime to read. He grew up in a household with a large library filled with books on numerous topics. Stories of his ancestry fascinate him. Additionally, he is interested in subjects like science, philosophy, history, and art. He believes that he “never has enough time to read” (Ibid). In spite of that, he believes in the importance of being physically active. He enjoys sports, such as cycling, swimming, and surfing. He “...like sports that use either your own power or harness what's natural” (Ibid). Marc defines himself first by what his hobbies are and not his occupation:

Marc: Okay, what I do. I'll start with what I like. One of the terrible things about our culture is that people tend to feel that your job defines who you are. I don't think it does. I think a lot of people do things because they have to, not because they particularly want to. So I'll start with what I like. I love cooking (Ibid).

Marc especially enjoys cooking Modern Asian cuisine. He loves curry. He likes Classical French cuisine. For years, he worked as a cook in the restaurant industry. After he had children, he transitioned to a more financially stable career in the construction business:

Marc: I've been in construction most of my working life. Dams in Twizel [in the Canterbury region of the South Island], high-rises in Wellington. I think construction, for me, was part of the redemptive part of my life because I've spent a lot of my life being destructive. Especially house building. I find enormous satisfaction in the fact that I drive something. This sounds corny as, I know, but it's a bit *Edward Scissorhands*. You drive down one of the white middle class ghettos over in the north east [of Hamilton]. And there's kids outside, and dads out there washing the car. And you drive past and think I built that. There's life and there's things happening; it's like you left a fingerprint on it. You've built something that is useful and actually adds some joy and security to peoples' lives. I know that sounds corny, but that's actually how I feel about it (Ibid).

After our interview, my boyfriend joined Marc and I at the café table. We casually talked a bit more. My boyfriend, who is not tattooed, sat in contrast to inked skins. The conversation did not have much to do about tattooing; it had more to do with music and the value of discussion between seemingly different points of well-thought out opinions.



## Chapter 4 Discussion

I presented the interviews, photographs, and my observations in *Chapter 3* so as to demonstrate how a tattooed community informed me about art, the aesthetic, and ethics. I rely on specific photographs, interviews, and observations as support for the cultural findings associated with Flax Roots Tattoo Studio. In this chapter I discuss my findings through the lens of my research questions, 1. How do tattoo artists and their clients engage with and shape tattoo art and its aesthetic at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio? ; and 2. How do these tattoo artists' ethics influence their relationships with their clients and art? In this fourth chapter, I divide the interview questions into sections. These sections are divided by the categories of interview questions I asked and how these questions were answered by participants. Notably, I make a distinction between two categories of how questions were answered by interviewees. The first section centers on what an interview participant perceives as his or her personal opinion on art and the aesthetic. The second section centers on what an interview participant perceives as his or her relation to other tattooed people and the environment of Hamilton.

In order to also assist in answering my research questions, I continue to utilize literature consistent with my grounded theory method. I refer back to the authors discussed in the *Chapter 1 Preliminaries* so as to place the observations of Flax Roots Tattoo Studio into the broader context of written work about the aesthetic, art, and tattooing. Additionally, I review and discuss the ethical code and etiquette of tattooists there. The ethical standards of tattoo artists vary significantly from the paternalistic regulations addressing the health and safety of tattooing. Specifically, tattoo artists at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio engage in an ethics dependent

on professional knowledge; their ethics are based largely in part on ideas about art and the aesthetic.

Collectively, I think that the results of my fieldwork detail a tattooed community engaged with an art practice that relates to the aesthetic and ethics on a local, national, and global scale. My fieldwork is a case study of one tattoo studio, yet it has important implications within anthropology, philosophy, and other fields of social sciences as well as the tattoo industry. My research highlights the important implications of how the culture of tattoo art influences ideas about the aesthetic and ethics of art in relation to the body in a globalized economy. In my *Conclusion*, I will elaborate on how my case study's conclusions about art, the aesthetic, and ethics in relation to tattooing are relevant for contemporary scholarship about tattooing and potentially other forms of body modification art. The first section of my discussion is titled "Individual Taste: Personal Aesthetic and Art Influenced by Culture" and is divided into three sections: *Describing and Valuing Tattoo Art*; *Global Cultures Influencing Aesthetic Taste and Tattoo Styles*; and *Views of Local and Traditional Tattoos Interacting with the Global and New Tattoos*.

*Individual Taste: Personal Aesthetic and Art Influenced By Culture*

*1. Describing and Valuing Tattoo Art*

The interview questions I include in this section are those in which the answers given hint at an individual's personal aesthetic and artistic tastes (refer to Appendix I for these interview questions). These three questions are: please describe your tattoos; what do you think of the tattoos you have seen in Hamilton? ; and do you identify with a certain group of people? I focus on the artists first, so that I can differentiate the tattooists' opinions about the aesthetic and art from the tattooees' opinions about the aesthetic and art. All of the respondents have an opinion about their tattoos and the tattoos on other people. Some respondents were more critical about others' tattoos while others were more interested in their own tattoo experience. I start with tattooist respondents, then their clients. These interviewees' conversations are analyzed for their similarities and dissimilarities, especially in the realms of the aesthetic, art, and ethics.

The tattoo artists at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio differ stylistically in the tattoo artwork they do on clients. Marc Wymer primarily tattoos Moko as well as a mix of European styles. Additionally, he has experimented with many tattoo styles and continues to learn with other artists around the globe. Brandon Martin prefers to do tattoos in the American Classic Style (please refer to Appendix III for descriptions of this and subsequent tattoo styles), although he is learning to reinvent these tattoos in black and white. Brandon has been inspired by Ali Selliman's black and white portrait art. Ali experiments in Portrait and Abstract tattoos; he has many small pieces, almost like stickers, of these styles of tattoos. He engages in Iban tattooing, though he primarily tattoos

American and European Styles. Makkala Rose does European and American Style tattoos in which some respondents commented on her touch of femininity. Makkala states that she respects each client's requests, so that she can do tattoos that are considered masculine in western culture for either males or females. Whether her standard tattoos are actually of a style that is in some sense "feminine", or are viewed as feminine because she is a female artist, is something I will discuss in detail later in this chapter.

Before I examine in depth the tattoo artists' various styles, it is necessary to discuss ways in which these four tattoo artists relate emotionally to their own tattoos and how tattoo style differentiate from each other. These artists also discussed what emotions were felt when they are being tattooed rather than doing tattoos. For example, when an Iban artist dotted Marc's skin, Marc (*Interview*, February 5, 2015) tells me about the sense of relaxation he felt as he lay on a Samoan mat. He also states he felt a sense of connection to the Iban artist, possibly because of his Maori ancestors. Perhaps, one reason for Marc's feelings of relaxation and connection to the Iban style tattoos is his appreciation for traditional forms of tattoo art. Marc places great importance on the style of traditional forms of tattoo art in the Pacific Islands, artworks which are gaining increased legitimacy in modern art culture. Although New Zealand has a long history of tattooing and tattoo art appreciation, tattooing is not necessarily considered a high art by all New Zealanders. Michael Rees (2016), in his fieldwork on tattooing in Great Britain, observed that some tattooists sought legitimacy through an engagement with other art practices in addition to doing their tattoo artworks (p.168). Although Marc (*Interview*, February 5, 2015) was not engaging in another art form different from tattooing, he was engaging with quite a different tattoo practice, encompassed in the hand-tapping rather than electric needle driven application of a tattoo art piece. Another reason Marc may have felt emotionally connected to the

Iban artist is that the hand-tapping method felt peaceful to him, just as getting or doing Moko also feels to him. Ngahua Te Awekotuku and Linda Waimarie Nikora (2007) interviewed a client called Pouroto, who believed that remembering harmful events was linked to the pain of Moko (p.190). Marc (*Interview*, February 5, 2015), while not viewing Moko or Iban tattooing practices as painful, finds that getting Moko and Iban tattoos done in a traditional way is integral to his appreciation of tattoo cultures. Marc echoes Pouroto's view of tattooing "...as being empowered by my own tribal knowledge, our history, and my own responsibilities" (Te Awekotuku and Nikora, (2007), p. 193). Marc (*Interview*, February 5, 2015) values the experience of being tattooed and relating stories of the meaning of his tattoos. Marc's Iban, Moko, and Bob Marley tattoos are good examples of how the tattooist and the observers of his tattoos engage in the social interaction of abduction of agency. (Gell, 1998, pp.14-16). Explicitly, Marc relates to the icons and styles socially constructed from the cultures of Borneo, New Zealand, and Jamaica and expresses his affinity through his tattoo art in his social relationships with clients, other tattooists, family, and friends. By extension, Marc's tattoos may depict him in a particular way within these social relationships.

While Marc (*Interview*, February 5, 2015) feels a connection to his Moko tattoos and Neo-European tattoos that testify to his family and heritage, he also feels a connection to European Traditional tattoos. He wears the tattoo of Bob Marley as a reminder of joy and simple, pure living. When Marc was asked the identification of his Bob Marley tattoo by children in a public setting, he replied that it was Jesus Christ. Although the joke was not lost on the children, the gratitude Mark has for Marley's music and how he lived ethically promotes Marley from a man to a god-like figure. Marc's spiritual connection to Bob Marley is a reminder

of what Alfred Gell (1993) discusses about the supernatural in Maori society. According to Gell:

Tattooing...is...a reproductive device in the imaginary or artefactual mode....It can sometimes be the case that the multiplication of this throng of familiar spirits and fantasized 'companions' inscribed within the skin can actually be a surrogate for reproduction in the more mundane (physiological) sense, so the tattooed person is ipso facto a reproducer, vicariously, if not in reality (p.8).

Yet, it is important to point out that Marc does not live in the past time of economic and social strife that Gell seemed to believe he was describing accurately when he wrote about Moko practiced in Maori society before the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Instead, Marc (*Interview*, February 5, 2015) connects positive emotions to Bob Marley, which reflect his associations with family, heritage, lifestyle, and art. Marc states that "Bob really lived the pure life. He didn't chase money. Gave a lot of it away. Dressed in rags just so kids wouldn't try to mimic him and go out and buy expensive clothes..." (Ibid). Bob Marley represents a role model for Marc. He believes that Bob Marley valued simplicity and did not value wealth. When Marc spoke to me about Bob Marley, he spoke compassionately about the role people like Bob Marley can play in creating a better society. Marc spoke to me about Marley like other conversations I have had where people speak to me about their spiritual figure. Indeed, Marc stated he considered Marley as his Jesus. Gell (1993) states that heroic icons, like Marley, are tattooed companions, which are supernatural in the sense that they affect the person without their presence being physically real. Yet, I suggest that caution is necessary when analyzing Marc's (*Interview*, February 5, 2015) analogy of Jesus to Marley. I think Marc believes in the value of Marley and hopes to express those values in his own life; his tattoo reminds him of that goal. However, I do not have reason

to believe that Marc believes the spirit of Marley acts on the tattoo. Although this tattooed companion has a real felt sense and implication for how Marc connects to others and his ethics in life, Marc's 'Jesus and Marley analogy' seems like Marc was portraying that Marley was a person and now a hero figure that he emotionally connects with and wishes to embody in his life. His tattoo is physiologically sensed and actively remarked upon by observers in daily life. Therefore, the actions and reactions of the observers of Marc's tattoos are not dependent on the dead Bob Marley, but on the ideas that Bob Marley expressed through his life and how that is interpreted by Marc and by those people who view this tattoo. Marc's Bob Marley tattoo is now an art object to be commented upon and used in social exchanges.

Many of Marc's tattoos are also meaningful to him because of his heritage and occupation as a tattoo artist in connection with other tattoo artists. The Bob Marley tattoo and other tattoos on Marc are emotional companions to his living experience. Like Marc, Ali emotionally connects to his Iban and Kelabit tattoos in a meaningful way. Ali (*Interview*, February 3, 2015) jokingly, but also seriously, discussed how Iban and Kelabit tattoos carry the superstitious beliefs of their people. These deeply held tribal beliefs exist slightly hidden underneath and interwoven with Christianity in his birth place of Borneo. His parents are not tattooed, and many Iban and Kelabit in his and their generations are also not tattooed. Ali has made an effort to research the history of tattooing in Borneo. His Iban and Kelabit tattoos reproduce a time in which the myths connected to his tattoos had agency and acted within the Iban and Kelabit communities. These tattoos were believed to have agency in the daily lives of those community members. Ali's scorpion tattoo is a good example of how Ali connects back to the tattoo beliefs of Iban and physiologically sensed this tattoo's agency:

So scorpions are kind of a big creature in Iban mythology – it's a poisonous creature. It can kill you. Also Shamans pray through it, to get to the spiritual world...Funnily enough, when I go home [back to New Zealand] I start thinking about spirits and ghosts and stuff. You start feeling a bit spooky....People have got all these superstitions...I love superstitious belief (Ibid).

Remember that in *Chapter 1 Preliminaries*, I discussed how Alfred Gell (1993) believes that social interaction between individuals in social groups “...produce a certain mind-set, a certain frame of social classification, a certain notion of person, self-hood, and empowerment...” (p.8). Whether Ali is in Borneo or is in New Zealand, his tattoos are seen differently by the people who exist in these environments. The ways in which Ali emotionally relates to his tattoos also change in relation to the place in which his tattoos are active agents in social exchanges (Gell, 1998).

However, in my observations of Ali, it is not apparent that he emotionally connected to his Western style tattoos like Marc did in our conversations. I am not sure that Ali emotionally connected to his tattoo of British legendary and celebrity figure David Attenborough. In retrospect, I think that I could have asked clarifying questions about his Attenborough Portrait style tattoo. Yet, Ali's choice of having this David Attenborough tattooed on him further stresses the ways in which Ali and Marc gain insider-status in New Zealand culture through their tattoos. Before I discuss Brandon's and Makkala's possible emotional connections to their tattoos, it is important to mention again Michael Rees's (2016) research about outsider-status and insider-status. As was mentioned in *Chapter 1 Preliminaries*, Rees sees contemporary tattooing as increasingly reflective of the insider-status of participants.



I use Rees's (2016) article to explore how Ali's and Marc's tattoos signal insider-status yet also identify them as outsiders in certain geographical and social contexts. Rees believes that tattooing changed from an art form done by people outside mainstream society in Great Britain to an art form mainly done within the boundaries of mainstream Western cultural acceptance and beauty standards (pp.159-160). In my *Chapter 1*, I showed how Rees identified four developments that led to tattoo art's move from outsider-status to insider-status, namely: 1. The increased valuing of the body as a focus of social identity, 2. The effects of globalization of culture on tattooing, 3. The increased visibility of tattoos in mainstream culture in Great Britain, and 4. The tattooed participants' efforts to promote the art practice as a socially respected art form (p. 157). As I will now show, aspects – the first and second- are evident within the interviews with Ali and Marc, in particular about how they emotionally connect to their tattoos. Rees's first principle is that the body is fundamental in constructing a tattooed person's identity. The second is that the tattoo process is affected by cultural diversity and effects of globalization.

Ali (*Interview*, February 3, 2015) has an almost patchwork like array of tattoos from his Iban, Kelabit, and Kiwi cultural experiences which were done in studios, homes, and public spaces in New Zealand or Borneo. Depending on where Ali is geographically and socially situated, he is viewed as an insider or outsider within that culture. For example, when Ali is skating with other friends in Hamilton or discussing aesthetics with his friends who do graffiti art, his tattoos are a way of connecting to that culture of people. He sees tattoo art and graffiti art as engaging with local people of Hamilton because of their public display and reflection of the culture. In contrast, Ali's tattoos, because they are not as common in Borneo in contemporary times as in past times, often make him an outsider in his own ethnic birthplace. In spite

of, or because of, how Ali is viewed by other tattooed or not tattooed people in Borneo and New Zealand, the process of him becoming more tattooed could be his endeavor to construct an individual identity that is comprised of a combination of elements from his own traditional Borneo heritage and comprised of his experience as an immigrant in New Zealand. It is interesting to note that Ali identifies with aspects of each of these places yet forges an identity of a person who is between these two places; his tattoo patchwork is representative of this network of places in his identity construction. In a similar respect, Marc's (*Interview*, February 5, 2015) artworks reflect a range of Western European style tattoos and Moko which were selected because of his Maori heritage and because of his interests in hobbies and music produced from Western culture.

In Rees's fieldwork in Great Britain, tattooees often believed that the process of becoming tattooed is a construction of individual identity, while some other tattooees see their tattoos as signals of rebellion against the society they live within (pp. 158-161). It is clear to me that Marc and Ali see their tattoos as part of the cultural make-up of their respective heritages and social interests. Although Marc and Ali are aware that not everyone understands the emotional meaning and cultural connections behind their tattoos, they are not trying to rebel against society. Rather, their tattoos are markers of identity that act as informative visual aids in social interactions.

In contrast, Brandon and Makkala are interested in sharing their tattoo art with society but do not demonstrate the same emotional investment in their tattoos, that is to say, by not making their heritage a focal point of their tattooed artworks. Unlike Marc, apprentice artist Brandon (*Interview*, February 2, 2015) did not express to me an interest in emotionally connecting to his tattoos. Because Brandon quickly dismissed my question about whether he

emotionally connected in some way to his tattoos, I did not press him about emotionally connecting in his process of being tattooed. For Brandon, the aesthetic of the tattoo artwork is what he believes is interesting to him. He portrays himself as uninterested in whether or not a tattoo is meaningful; he is skeptical of what is meaningful and emotional when a person talks about their tattoo or any other artwork.

Makkala, like Brandon, perceives tattoo art as primarily made to be aesthetically pleasing and technically well done. Makkala (*Interview*, February 3, 2015) acknowledges that her art may carry emotional meaning for her clients. Additionally, while she cares about how her clients feel, she considers her primary responsibility to be to produce good work as paramount in her role as a tattoo artist; good application of tattoo art is of foremost importance to her. From what I understand, Makkala ensures her well-being, including emotional fulfilment, within her leisure activities. It may be that tattooing, and even the tattoos she has, is seen as more a part of her work identity than part of herself; that what she values is her personhood in private life. Or, perhaps, it is hard for her to separate her feelings about tattoo art from other forms of art she engages with on a regular basis. Upon reflection, I think I could have inquired how she felt about all the forms of art she engages in and whether she feels emotionally connected to art and other creative people she classes as a group in Hamilton. Nevertheless, discussion of the process of tattooing and being tattooed did not spark a conversation about meaning and emotional connections the way it did when I interviewed Ali and Marc.

So far in this section, it has been explained that artists Marc and Ali consider their emotional investment and connection to their tattoos and the tattooing process to be of greater significance than do artists Brandon and Makkala. Before I transition to

discussing clients' emotional investment in their tattoos, and the perception of the emotional investment in other people regarding their tattoos, I think it is important to discuss the contestability of expressive theories, essentially emotional theories of art, in the field of philosophy of art. In my *Chapter 1 Preliminaries*, Stephen Davies (2006) is skeptical about the expressive theory of art, which as I mentioned is in disagreement with Gell's (1998) insistence that emotion is inherent in the social connections surrounding the art object and its agency. Yet, I am not convinced that Davies's main objection to the expressive theory is supported or not supported by the tattoo artists' statements about emotional connection to art at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio. Davies (2006) remains skeptical of the view that artists can embody their feelings into visual art (p.241), and of expressive theories of art. For instance, nowhere in my interviews with Marc and Ali (*Interviews*, February 5, 2015 and February 3, 2015) do they state that other people can know how they feel about their own tattoos and the artworks they do for other people. Actually, it seems that if Marc and Ali are quite careful when they talk about their tattoos in ways that could only be felt by them. Additionally, they are careful not to assume that they understand exactly how a client or another tattoo artist feel about their tattoos.

From observations in my fieldwork, I agree with Davies (2006) that expressive theories of art do not provide enough justifiable evidence to explain why individuals and groups value art in a society. Davies's account of the evolutionary reasons why humans participate in art, assimilating as well as rejecting ideas from other philosophers and scholars, is that factors of biology and culture are of foremost importance of social art (pp.3-4). Emotionally connecting to their tattoos and the tattoo process matter to Marc and Ali, yet in our interviews (February 5, 2015 and February 3, 2015) the aesthetic of art and how it appears to others were spoken about in greater detail and enthusiasm. In contrast,

Brandon and Makkala (*Interviews*, February 2, 2015 and February 3, 2015) did not place emphasis on emotionally connecting with their tattoos. Brandon (*Interview*, February 2, 2015) especially did not find any reason to support the idea that emotions play a role in appreciating and participating in art modalities. Therefore, my interviews may support Davies's (2006) account of art. According to my research, I cannot confidently state that emotion plays a primary role in the agency (Gell, 1993; 1998) of tattoo art. However, cultural identity seems to be a significant factor in aesthetic consideration of the tattooists' artworks.

Although emotion may not be the deciding factor as to whether a tattoo is good or bad art, emotion may color an individual artist's judgment of how aesthetically pleasing a tattoo artwork is. Makkala, Brandon, Ali, and Marc understand what artistic skills are needed to create a foundation for aesthetically-pleasing art. At the beginning of this section, nevertheless, these artists also felt in some ways emotionally connected to or emotionally disconnected from their being tattooed, wearing tattoos, and their recognizing other tattooed people.

Do clients emotionally connect to their tattoos in the same way as artists? How do clients judge tattoo artworks aesthetically? It is important to attempt to answer these questions in order to see whether there are similarities and differences between artists' judgments and clients' judgments. Thus far, I have demonstrated that the tattoo artists at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio emotionally connect in different ways to the tattoo art form. They relate differently to their clientele as well. However, these artists agree on what is art and what is aesthetic on the body even among the different tattoo styles they do on clients; the aesthetic takes precedence over emotional investment in their art.

This aesthetic investment of a tattoo artist is given a monetary figure at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio. These artists share

the view that good quality tattoos are not cheap; you can expect to pay at least 50 New Zealand dollars for a small tattoo that takes under an hour. Marc (*Interview*, February 5, 2015) believes tattooing is “a serious art these days, if not the most serious art...I think there’s definitely people that don’t mind paying for their tattoos. They have faith in you, they know the product’s good, they believe in what you do, trust and faith...” (Ibid) in the ability of a knowledgeable tattoo artist to do good art on clients. Brandon (*Interview*, February 2, 2015), who does not think emotional meaning plays an important role in tattooing, also stresses that good application of design is essential. He says “application of design can be as wacky as you want. As long as it’s cleanly applied, then I think you are okay” (Ibid). Ali also agrees with Brandon and Marc. Ali (*Interview*, February 3, 2015) believes good application is fundamental for a quality tattoo. Like the other three tattoo artists, Makkala (*Interview*, February 3, 2015) stresses the line symmetry in a piece. She believes that one of her roles as a tattoo artist is to spread knowledge about tattoo art, so that people do not get bad tattoos. Makkala strongly believes that any tattoo deserves quality, time, and an artist’s precise application.

And clients do adhere to the advice of Makkala and the other three tattoo artists at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio. In some way, clients all mentioned being aesthetically interested in tattoo art and finding meaning in their tattoos. On one hand, clients saw their own tattoos as a form of self-expression, yet there was less commentary about other peoples’ tattoos being a form of self-expression. Instead, most clients’ commentary about other tattooed people were in terms of aesthetic value and descriptions of the quality of their art. During the course of my interviews, it was clear to me when tattoo artists were expressing emotional meaning in regards to tattooing and being tattooed from discussing the aesthetic aspects of process and display of tattoo art. Yet when I interviewed clients, it was clear to me that the majority of clients

did not make a sound distinction between the meaning of their tattoos and the aesthetic qualities of their tattoos. Some clients were aware of how their perceptions might influence their judgments of others' tattoos, while other clients were not aware of personal biases coloring their judgments of others' tattoos. The lack of awareness of how emotional biases and social biases influenced a person's perception of tattoo art evident in some of my interviews. I observed these embedded biases in clients' responses to my three questions: please describe your tattoos; what do you think of the tattoos you have seen in Hamilton? ; and do you identify with a certain group of people? Before discussing the aesthetic attitudes of clients, I think it is important to focus on Immanuel Kant's ideas about art and how he may have not been aware how biases could have affected his theories about the aesthetic.

In my *Chapter 1 Preliminaries*, I discussed the historical importance of Kant (1790, 2000) that influenced many philosophers and Western ideas about the arts. In particular, Kant elevated artists to the status of geniuses (p.189). He was not known for his artwork though known for his commentary about art in philosophical circles. So, I wonder if Kant elevated the forms of art he admired because he invested emotions, money, education, and status in it. As I mentioned in *Chapter 1* in my personal correspondence with art historian and art restorer Carol Christenson (January 5, 2016), she stated that the Enlightenment's middle class invested money and status in their accumulation of art. Thus, Kant (1790, 2000) commented on art in a period of time in which the appreciation and judgment of art was in vogue among fashionable members of a growing middle class. The clients at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio have sufficient income, some appear to belong to the middle class, and all to have their basic needs of shelter, food, and health met. All clients are able to purchase tattoos, and the ones I interviewed had the leisure

time engage in interviews with me about their and others tattoos. Although tattooing can be done at a relatively low cost or for free, these clients are willing to pay the price of at least 50 dollars for a consultation and usually at least 150 dollars for an hour of being tattooed. These clients may judge the aesthetics of tattoos they see on other people more harshly than they judge their own tattoos in terms of the aesthetic. In an example from our interview, Tracey (February 3, 2015) recognized that she judged tattoo art in the past based, in part, on how she felt about the kind of tattoo rather than the aesthetic quality of the artwork. She explained to me that “I feel like I have very strong opinions against everything that looks slightly new metal...Very strong opinions against anyone with most tattoos that you see on the street. I really only like people that have similar tattoos to me” (Ibid). She explained to me how she is careful to avoid judging tattoos aesthetically and judging the person by opinion because of this recognized bias of personal taste.

In my interviews conducted at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio, all clients, to varying degrees, expressed opinions based on a perceived aesthetic taste. Their preferences influence what they value as art and what is aesthetically pleasing to them. Foremost, the clients Francis, Vaughan, Rhian, Darryn, Kylee, Lisa, and Marc (not to be confused with the tattooist Marc) judge tattoos by the quality of art, not what the artwork depicts. The quality of artwork is measured by how well the tattoo is applied, how well the tattoo is positioned on the body, and the expertise of the tattooist. An artistic appreciation of their tattoo art does not mean they passively admire the beauty of their tattoos. For instance, Tracey (*Interview*, February 3, 2015) researches specific artists for the tattoos she gets and discusses her tattoo artwork in great detail. In my conversations with other clients mentioned in this paragraph, they often judge what tattoos depict and where tattoos are placed on the body. Justin, Robert, and Tracey value tattoo art which is applied well, and they also judge types of tattoos and their



depiction on the body. Judgments of where tattoos should be placed on the body is evident in my interviews with Justin and Robert; specifically, they talk about tattoos they would never get. Robert (*Interview*, January 27, 2015) believes he would not get facial tattoos because the location is somehow feared by him. It is not that Robert views such tattooed people as necessarily to be feared, but he does mention that facial tattoos can be perceived as intimidating and that may signal he does feel a degree of fear towards wearers of facial tattoos.

On the other hand, Justin (*Interview*, February, 5, 2015) believes tattoos, wherever located, must be coupled with a personal meaning to be appreciated as art. This judgment, that aesthetic beauty must have meaning, is probably connected to how Justin chooses what tattoos to get and where these tattoos belong on his body. Such aesthetic judgment can be illustrated by Justin's Bella Rose tattoo, which is strategically placed on his heart to signify his love for his daughter. Justin and Robert are not advocating banning certain tattoos nor are they suggesting that other people should not choose the kinds of tattoos they want, in any location they want, but they do make judgments as to what sort of tattoos a person should want based on their personal, possibly emotional, choices of tattoo art.

Though Tracey's (*Interview*, February 3, 2015) comments about tattoo art and aesthetics have similarities with some of Justin's and Robert's assertions about particular kinds of tattoos displayed on people they see, she is aware that she may be judging because of cognitive bias and as less than thoughtful appraisal of tattoo artworks. In spite of a strong bias against Flash Celtic Style tattoos, Tracey avoids pre-judging these tattoos and their recipients at least until she knows that individual's story. Unlike Robert, Tracey appreciates facial tattoos. Though Tracey does not have facial tattoos, she does not fear these tattoos and explained

that she "...feel(s) really stoked to see (Moko) around Hamilton....Especially on women. And even ones that have the Moko on their chins. I think it's nice that they're taking ownership. Well to me, my perception, that they're taking ownership of their culture" (Ibid). It may be that since Tracey has spent a number of years living and learning in different cultures outside New Zealand, she can more easily appreciate than Robert the cultural meaning behind facial Moko and suspend judgment of others' tattoos.

As stated, Robert (*Interview*, January 27, 2015) is especially wary of Polynesian throat tattoos. His dislike of throat tattoos is partly from imagined fear of getting his throat accidentally cut if he was tattooed on his neck area. He also views throat and facial tattoos as intimidating. He thinks that the majority of people in New Zealand society find these tattoos intimidating. Whether or not it is true that a majority of people perceive face and neck tattoos as intimidating, Robert does not think that many people will understand the cultural meanings of these tattoos just as he does not understand these tattoos' cultural meanings. Yet, not every New Zealander of European descent explicitly conveys the meaning of their tattoo in a social context either. Moreover, some clients I interviewed did not care if their tattoos were understood and found to be meaningful by their local community. For example, Rhian (*Interview*, January 28, 2015) says she does not care what people might think about her tattoos. Yet, she considers herself to be part of the music community, and she got music clefs that mark her association. Unlike Robert, she does not care what tattoos other people get, as she sees wearing a tattoo as an expression of individual taste. Nevertheless, Rhian believes that a tattoo should be finished and drawn correctly and should be "aesthetically pleasing" (Ibid).

Rhian's concept of the aesthetic is different from Lisa's (*Interview*, February 22, 2015). While Lisa makes judgments about what tattoos could be inappropriate for people holding certain occupational positions, she recognizes that an inappropriate tattoo can still be considered art. Lisa spoke about a specific example of a tattooist on Instagram who she views as having artistic skills, though Lisa believes that the skulls this artist tattoos are not artworks she wants on her own body. Although Lisa can appreciate and judge these skulls as aesthetically pleasing, she does not want them on her body because of her aesthetic taste. Additionally, she is concerned that she will be seen as too masculine or potentially deviant by workers, family, and friends in Hamilton. Later in the second section of this chapter, I will discuss her comments about masculinity and femininity in comparison with other interviewees. For the purposes of this paragraph, Lisa does not find the skulls aesthetically pleasing enough to have them put on her body. Stephen Davies (2006), contrary to Immanuel Kant's idea of free beauty (1790), concludes that peoples' aesthetic judgments cannot in most cases likely be separated from their social involvements. Davies's account of functional beauty seems to capture most of my interview respondents' answers about what is to be appreciated about art and whether or not an art piece is aesthetically pleasing. Thus, a tattoo art piece's representation of an object, as well as its more abstract social representations, are important. Davies summarizes:

Aesthetic judgments of functional beauty take as their objects items appropriately identified in terms of the primary purposes that make them what they are. These judgments do not merely consider if those functions are satisfied but also take account of the manner in which aesthetic properties of the item in question shape how it addresses and achieves this function...It shows how art might have primary functions that are practical and not self-regarding,

and thereby lends plausibility to the idea that art is found beyond the confines of the world of high Western art (pp. 101-102).

Tattoo art is a social endeavor at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio. Aesthetic beauty, quality design, and the applied skills of an artist contribute to how artworks are valued for their own sake. At the same time, an aesthetic judgement of art depends on how well a tattoo artwork functions within a specific cultural context (Davies, 2006, pp. 99-100). For instance, the client Francis (*Interview*, February 2, 2015) does not regret his 16 tattoos, but he does regret the location of one tattoo on his neck in our conversation. Francis referred to a dark period in his life, and I suspect the decision to have a tattoo on his neck was made during that time. It may be that residents of Hamilton know the meaning of the tattoo or dislike the location of his neck tattoo. In Francis's case, his neck tattoo elicits reactions from society that he would rather not have, and this tattoo does not seem to function well in the Hamilton society. In the next section of this chapter, I will delve into how clients' see their tattoos in the geographic location of Hamilton and how they relate to other tattooed people in Hamilton.

For the purposes of this section, in Hamilton today, non-tattooed people also judge tattooed people aesthetically and may express their opinions more quickly about tattooing than about other art modalities, especially those modalities classified as being higher art forms. It may be that tattooing is recognized as an art form, but usually as a lower form of art. A person may feel safe criticizing tattooing because it has not traditionally been highly regarded in western cultures generally. For example, client Lisa (*Interview*, February 22, 2015) stated, "...with tattoos, people are a lot more free in expressing their opinion, whether it's invited or not" (Ibid). Clients seemed comfortable discussing their opinions of tattoo art with me and less careful when discussing other tattooed

artwork on people than did the tattoo artists at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio. My observations and interviews pointed out that clients are more strict as to what qualifies as tattoo art than their tattoo artists. Also, clients tend to engage with their art emotionally rather than passively. The four tattoo artists appear to think that they can be professionally invested yet emotionally disengaged when doing a client's tattoo. However, artists do express concern about clients being treated unethically and were consequently moved to adopt a code of ethics at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio to ensure the well-being of their current and future clients. For example, when he was tattooing Vaughan, tattooist Marc (*Interview*, February 5, 2015) spoke at length about how tattooing is a fashion statement for some clients and how some tattoo artists prey on the fad-driven client.

As far as Marc is concerned, the practice of tattooing the faces, throats, and hands of young people for a measly amount of money by less scrupulous tattoo studios is an ethical issue. One of his concerns is that tattoo studios are capitalizing on the popularity of tattooing without considering the quality of their art or their clients' best interests. Marc's concern about clients' tattoo requests reflect his tattoo ethics, which I will discuss at the end of this chapter. Makkala (*Interview*, February 3, 2015) also is concerned about clients who are not well-educated about the procedure of tattoo selection and application and considers that part of her ethical duty is to educate the public about the tattooing process and art product. However, Flax Roots Tattoo Studio's tattoo artists do not judge a client's choice of a tattoo based solely on what that tattoo depicts or how popular a certain tattoo is.

I mention ethics briefly here in order to demonstrate its connection to the art the artists at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio are willing to do and the types of tattoos they are not willing to create on clients. So far I have demonstrated in this section that

respondents in my interviews varied in their opinions about art and the aesthetic regarding tattoos. The interview questions I included in this section were focused on targeting an individual's preference for certain tattoos and unwillingness to get other types of tattoos. I first focused on the tattoo artists who, in general, appear more concerned about the quality of the artwork and the client's ability to appreciate that art rather than what a client's tattoo artwork is in reference to. Tattoo artists like Ali and Marc are also emotionally engaged with their art practice and the tattoos they get. In general, the statements from clients seem to demonstrate that they are less concerned about the emotional investment of other tattooed people in their art and more focused on their own emotional and aesthetic investment in their artworks. Clients also do not seem to give much thought to the ethical considerations of certain tattoo artworks and their locations; instead, they are more concerned about the appearance of these tattoos as bad art. In contrast, Marc and Makkala are especially bothered by potentially unethical business practices surrounding low quality artworks that are considered bad art by clients. In a global world in which tattooing is becoming ever more popular, the different opinions arising from the convergence or clash of tattoo styles and their locations on the body influence the aesthetic tastes of clients and artists. Before I move on to discuss my next set of questions from my interviews, it is important to reflect on how Flax Roots Tattoo Studio is influenced by a globalized world because its local aesthetic cannot exist in a cultural vacuum.

## *2. Global Cultures Influencing Taste and Tattoo Styles*

Clinton R. Sanders (2008) documents tattoo culture in the United States of America, and his research has relevance to my

interviews in New Zealand. In the United States, contemporary tattoo artists often have art degrees and have completed apprenticeships at a tattoo studio; contemporary tattooists in New Zealand often have a similar background. Sanders writes that “[as] tattooing has begun to enjoy a modest level of legitimacy in the larger art world, tattooists’ positive self-definitions as creative artists...have been bolstered and enhanced. In turn, the technical and artistic quality of the tattoos being produced has risen significantly” (p.108). Most tattooists that Sanders spoke to, and whom I spoke with in my fieldwork at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio, want to do great art. Despite the number of hours worked and time spent practicing skills such as line drawing and shading, many of the American tattooists had been unable to provide for their financial need when they were making artworks honed at universities, like paintings and sculptures. So, in spite of the risk of becoming further in debt, artists trained in other art applications became retrained in the art of tattooing. The tattooing industry offers formally trained artists an opportunity, earned through a studio apprenticeship, to engage in creating art that sustains them financially (pp.72-73). My interviews of tattoo artists were, of course, not in the United States of America. Yet, two artists at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio, Makkala and Ali, were trained at art schools. Ali entered into the lucrative business of tattooing following a difficult lifestyle as a paint artist, whereas Makkala did tattooing while completing her degree. Importantly, Ali and Makkala have not forgotten what they learned at school. They developed their own aesthetic attitude partly in response to their formal training. Both Ali and Makkala can sell their tattoo drawings and other art with descriptions understood by people trained as artists or by people who believe they know art by its description.

However, I thought that all four artists I interviewed had a strong approach to their tattoo art and offered a critical evaluation

of their own and others art. All four tattoo artists' aesthetic tastes are reflected in their work. Ali (*Interview*, February 3, 2015) told me about the difficulty of selling paintings and being employed at an art museum but not doing art there. He was surrounded by art, local and global, yet he had feelings of frustration and sadness because he did not feel he was participating fully in the local and global art scene. Tattooing offered Ali a chance to express his aesthetic and participate in local and global art while being able to refine his skills through the application of his art education to the tattoo industry (pp.81-83). Like his fellow co-workers and the American tattoo artists (Sanders, 2008), Ali promotes his tattoo art locally, nationally, and globally through social media outlets and tattoo conventions.

Brandon and Marc are also successful at selling their tattoo art, even without formal art training. Both Marc and Brandon learned tattooing by apprenticing. During our interview on February 5, 2015, Marc Wymer spoke about his educational experience in relation to Makkala and Ali at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio. Marc enjoys seeing how Ali and Makkala apply the techniques they learned in art school to the application of tattoos. However, Marc does not believe that getting an art degree is necessary to do art, especially tattoo art. He believes that “[t]here’s the odd natural genius and artist that can do everything and was just born to do it. Anybody else is just trying to catch up” (Ibid). The path to becoming a tattoo artist requires dedication, skill, a positive reputation for doing valuable artworks, and business sense, according to Marc. Marc’s statements seem to mimic American artists’ statements about the value to them of promoting their work through established marketing channels (Sanders, 2008).

My fieldwork in New Zealand, like the fieldwork of Sanders (2008) in the United States of America, shows that there is a high



demand for tattoo work. Flax Roots Tattoo Studio's artists are busy because the market for tattooing exists and the demand is high; a significant proportion of people in the body modification market will also pay for tattoo art. Marc's experience in the tattoo business in Hamilton is comparable to many tattoo artists' experience around the world in the sense that many of the same distribution channels are used to promote their art. For example, Marc (*Interview*, February 5, 2015) does not do exactly the same tattoos as American artists, but he can view their artworks on social media and share his art there too. Thereby, he participates in a dialectic conversation on how to make the most aesthetically pleasing art, whether or not the tattooist exists in his location, a nearby location, or farther away. Brandon (*Interview*, February 2, 2015) also shares his tattoos on Instagram, another social media service, for promotional feedback. Client Lisa (*Interview*, February 22, 2015) found Makkala's tattoo works on Facebook. Many clients, like Tracy (*Interview*, February 3, 2015), came to Ali based on word-of-mouth recommendations in Hamilton and elsewhere in New Zealand. The contemporary tattoo art business scene in New Zealand, as well as the United States, relies largely on modern reinventions of global and local communications yet longstanding practices like recommendations from word-of-mouth are profitable for tattoo artists.

In order to elaborate on how tattooing cultures and its art are being viewed, I refer back to Michael Rees (2016) mentioned in my *Chapter 1 Preliminaries*. Rees's fieldwork in Great Britain and my fieldwork in New Zealand demonstrate how tattoos are being bought by people without any ancestral connection to its culture in this globalized, contemporary world. In Rees's fieldwork (2016), he remarks on the point that iconography and script from other cultures found in regions outside of Great Britain are asked to be inscribed on skin by people who have no associations with that culture besides long-distance admiration. Often, these same

individuals have seen a particular tattoo on Instagram, researched its cultural meaning, and interpreted to fit their own definition of self. Other times, it is purely the admiration of the aesthetics of a tattoo that attract clients to seek out that particular tattoo done by a capable artist (pp.165-167). During my fieldwork, client Vaughan (*Interview*, February 5, 2015) discussed how he likes looking at other tattoos on people and appreciating the different places and cultures they come from. Yet, Vaughan does not think he has been influenced by the tattoos of other people. Based on his comments, I would disagree that his tattoo choices exist in a vacuum outside of social influence because the symbols and depictions of meaning to family he chose were influenced by his knowing of Marc's style of tattooing through Marc's marketing efforts. Additionally, he chose to have a Nepalese word inscribed on his skin after going to Nepal. Although he did not see the word as a tattoo, he did assimilate a cultural artefact into his skin. The mere awareness Vaughan has of tattoo styles, and their possible connections to culture, influence what tattoos he will choose to display on his body.

Rees (2016) also believes that the assimilation of traditional tattoo art is partly because of its growing acceptance in museums and even within well-regarded art institutions (p.169). The role the internet also plays in marketing tattoo artists' works is particularly evident in conversations with Marc about the popularization of Moko style tattoos. Marc (*Interview*, February 5, 2015) is enthralled that artists, millions of miles away from New Zealand, emulate Moko or Neo-Moko style tattoos. Although Marc is flattered by talented artists doing Moko, he remembers "...a terminology in Maori of Ta Moko. Oh, more than a terminology, we have a state called tapu where things are sacred. I think most indigenous cultures have it as well, where if you mingle with it or toy with it, things could happen" (Ibid). Marc's wariness of Ta Moko being used as a pawn for financial gain, without a respect for

its art and possibly knowledge of its origins, is a caution shared by several interviewees in *Mau Moko: The World of Maori Tattoo* (2007).

Ngahuia Te Awekotuku and Linda Waimarie Nikora interviewed Moko artists who completed tertiary education, and some who learned about art through wood-carving or apprentice-style intimate relationships. Like many American tattoo artists and non-Maori New Zealand tattoo artists encountered in my fieldwork, Moko artists prize well-done application of a quality tattoo. However, the cultural ties to being a Maori and doing Moko add a layer of identification beyond the title of tattoo artist. Unlike the American and British cultures described by Clinton R. Sanders (2008) and Michael Rees (2016), there is a culturally remembered history of tattooing in New Zealand and in Polynesia. Consequently, I believe that the acceptance of tattooing in New Zealand is significantly different from its growing acceptance in mainstream culture in the United States of America and Great Britain. Tattooing played, and continues to play, a significant role in the cultural history of Aotearoa by helping solidify social networks and integrating other art forms and styles in its active role as an art object to be exchanged among trading societies across Polynesia. By contrast, tattooing cultures endemic to North America and Western Europe did not come close to flourishing to the extent they did in the South Pacific.

The tattooing practice of Moko is therefore seen as a crucial cultural part of contemporary New Zealand, both locally and globally. Recall in *Chapter 1* that the word 'karakia', used in conjunction with the application of Moko, is defined as "... [an]...incantation; particularly in the ancient rites proper to every important matter in the life of the Maori" (p.129). Artists, like Christine Harvey, chant karakia as preparation for a Moko design. She says that "[if] the client want karakia, it is between the person and me, and every situation is different, so I allow for that, and go

with the flow” (p.130). And recall that Aneta, a client, talks about her Moko as being “a lost taonga [(or treasured possession)] that was taken away through the process of colonization, almost to extinction. It is my external way of showing that I’m proud to be a Maori” (p.152). Artist Marc’s Moko is on his right arm; his Moko is an external way of connecting to his family. His Moko are traditionally done for males and indicate his status position in his ancestral lineage. However, in the present era, men and women of any status can buy a tattoo. The popularity of Moko and Neo-Moko tattoos render a different contemporary narrative from the summarized historical practice of Moko in Alfred Gell’s, *Wrapping in Images: Tattooing in Polynesia* (1993). Many people in New Zealand continue to place great importance in the work of the Moko artist. Other New Zealanders may not understand or embrace the knowledge of Moko embedded within tattooists like Marc; yet, many do. Marc’s Moko tattoos are black, demonstrating his knowledge that traditional Moko is done in black soot. Also, some of Ali’s tattoos were done in soot, as Maori did in traditional times.

Ali’s (*Interview*, February 3, 2015) experiences in Borneo, as son of the Iban people and as son of the Kelabit people, contribute to the shaping of his identity as an artist in New Zealand. His Iban tattoos, the scorpion and flower dots, are the backbone for modern tribal tattoo designs. Iban tattoos are traditionally done in soot, which Ali has respect for because of the soot’s durability in tough manual labor conditions. Gell (1993) does not comment specifically on the Iban people or the Kelabit people of Borneo. Nevertheless, the tattoo cultures found in Borneo reflect some of the practices of some part of Polynesia. Tattoos in Borneo are more similar to less hierarchical Polynesian societies, in contrast with the traditionally hierarchical model of Moko in New Zealand. Kelabit tattoos resemble Maori designs, though in contrast, Kelabit tattoos reflect the beauty of women rather than their rank.

Additionally, in contrast to Maori societies, Kelabit women mainly get tattooed, not the men. Ali (*Interview*, February 3, 2015) thinks Kelabit tattoos bear "...a lot of resemblance to a Maori design, the weaving patterns and whatnot. But, like I said, it's just aesthetics; it's just to beautify" (Ibid). Kelabit women had tattoos "...from their forearms all the way down to their fingers" (Ibid) and thighs to feet. Kelabit women chiseled their teeth with charcoal yet avoided tattooing their chins, unlike Maori women. Chiseling teeth was primarily done for beautification rather than as a recognition of rank.

The culture of tattooing among the Maori is different compared to the Iban and the Kelabit because it is globally recognized by tattooed and non-tattooed peoples. For instance, Ali is one of the shrinking number of men in Borneo to be tattooed and to have knowledge of Borneo tattooing practices. Ali's non-tattooed parents are both Christians, his father an Iban and his mother a Kelabit. In our interview, Ali (February 3, 2015) spoke about how the Kelabit adopted Christianity, ending the body modification practices of their cultural heritage because tattooing is no longer considered socially acceptable. Ali mentioned, however, that tattooing among the Iban people is becoming popular again, especially within the younger generation. In hindsight, I wish I had asked Ali about discussions he possibly engaged in among Iban youth about tattooing. Many Ibans of all generations, according to Ali, remember their myths and traditions yet most do not choose to inscribe their skins. Ali's flower dots are recognized by other Iban members as a signal of Ali being a world traveler. In this way, Ali's status is of a knowledgeable man; he is well-travelled, read as a possible indication of his wealth. Ali is questioned by Iban men and women about his scorpion tattoo; they know the traditional meaning of the scorpion protection, unlike most New Zealanders. But according to Ali, these Iban men and women do not understand why Ali would want a throat tattoo

now that he is a successful immigrant to New Zealand in the twenty-first century.

Why did Moko receive world-wide recognition, whereas the Iban tribal tattoos, the basis of many popular tribal style tattoos, not receive world-wide recognition? Moko's popularity is due, in part, to the Maori cultural renaissance of the 1960s-1980s. Since that time period, many New Zealanders, Maori and non-Maori alike, have gained some understanding of traditional Maori tattooing. Like the Kelabit and the Iban, Maori cannot verify the exact meaning of all of their tattoo designs because there is no authoritative source for such knowledge. The adoption of Christianity amongst many Maori, akin to the Iban, influenced what type of tattoos were appropriate to get, which may not necessarily mean these types of Maori tattoos were appropriate to get in the traditional past. Why, then, is the meaning of the Kelabit tattoos largely forgotten? In the case of the Kelabits, the adoption of Christianity eventually destroyed their traditional tattooing practices. Perhaps, anthropological insights from future fieldwork into tattoo art practices and the aesthetic appreciation of tattoos can assist in discussing the phenomenon of the emergence of the modern Maori tattoo culture and other popular tattoo styles compared to the endangered tattoo styles of Borneo.

As it is the end of this section in *Chapter 4*, I think it is important to again mention what Nicholas Thomas (2006) concludes about the application of tattoo art by contemporary artists for their clients who may not be traditionally associated with the particular style they choose: "It seems that artistic engagement with an 'other' is pernicious, except when it is not" (p.178). As an ethnographer describing and interpreting the comments of tattooed participants at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio, I have walked that delicate line of being an outside foreign researcher with insider-status by being tattooed. Thus far, I

successfully differentiated the tattooists' opinions about the aesthetic and art from the tattooees' opinions about the aesthetic and art by discussing the questions I asked in interviews, which are: please describe your tattoos; what do you think of the tattoos you have seen in Hamilton? ; and do you identify with a certain group of people? In the next section of this chapter, I specifically discuss ways in which clients and artists perceive how their tattoos interact with others in their local environment.

*The Culture of Tattooing and An Individual's Role in Tattoo Art*

The questions, from my interviews, I include in this section are questions in which individuals' answers conveyed their thoughts about their responsibility for their tattoo choices. Additionally, individuals' answers conveyed how they thought their tattoo choices were determined by their environment, whether it pertains to their biological environment or cultural environment (refer to Appendix I for these interview questions). These four questions are: please describe your occupations and hobbies; what is your age? ; what is your gender and sex? ; and please describe Hamilton, New Zealand. All of the respondents had an opinion about their tattoos, the tattoos on other people, and Hamilton. I relied on my research literature, specifically discussing the sections on Immanuel Kant, Stephen Davies, and Alfred Gell in order to comprehend the social roles tattoo art played in Flax Roots Tattoo Studio and the local surrounding environment, which includes Hamilton and the greater Waikato region.

*1. The Role of the Aesthetic in Tattoo Art at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio*

As stated earlier in this chapter, Immanuel Kant (1790, 2000) considered an individual's aesthetic when judging art and proposed an antinomy, in which a thesis and antithesis were both true, regarding taste. Kant's view is that certain artworks perceived as aesthetically pleasing are reflective of a conceptual framework existing across all cultures; there is an indeterminate concept of aesthetic taste that is both subjective and universal (pp. 216-217). The statements expressed by my interview participants support Kant's antimony statements. The tattoos done at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio are regarded by its tattooed artists and



tattooed clients as aesthetically pleasing. Moreover, the tattoos done at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio are regarded highly online as the art there is known throughout New Zealand and internationally as good art. However, the artwork there can be viewed by different people with varying degrees of aesthetic taste and opinions on what makes that art good. Though I discussed the aesthetic and art in this first section of this chapter, more examination of these terms is needed in the second section of this chapter in order to delve into how these terms are related to environment, ideas of gender and sex, and biological age.

Moreover, to support the claim that tattoo artworks are based in part on a conceptual framework of an aesthetic as well as socio-environmental factors, each of the four tattoo artists at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio refer to an ideal tattoo application and style. Makkala (*Interview*, February 3, 2015) mentions the display of her paired tattoos being done well because they are symmetrical and reflective of each other. The commentary on this matching pair represents an artist's ability to measure ink lines in order to achieve symmetry. The principles of symmetry and asymmetry are applied by both university trained tattoo artists and non-university trained tattoo artists alike throughout the world. Ali (*Interview*, February 3, 2015) agrees with Makkala that symmetry is important and says:

Sometimes bad tattoos can be just bad application. I get it too; you're just so kind of over all these people coming in with shitty stuff you don't really take pride in your own anymore. If these three lines are supposed to be parallel you just kind of, you know, you just don't care about it. It's a really bad thing (Ibid).

Agreeing with Ali's and Makkala's appreciation of tattoo application, Brandon (*Interview*, February 2, 2015) firmly supports the importance of application by a skilled artist when he says,

“Application of design can be as wacky as you want, as long as it’s cleanly applied, then I think you are okay” (Ibid). Marc (*Interviews*, February 3, 2015 and February 5, 2015) concurs with the other tattoo artists at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio about application. Marc also stresses that good art costs money because a good artist spends a lot of time doing tattoos and preparing for a tattoo artwork.

The aesthetic appreciation of the tattoo art of Flax Roots Tattoo Studio is evident in the local, national, and global communities because other artists and general tattooed enthusiasts recognize quality application design according to Marc, Makkala, Brandon, and Ali. As evident in the previous section, these tattoo artists’ artworks are popular on social media and regarded highly by tattoo artists around the world. Regardless of geographical location, their tattoo art is appreciated aesthetically by other tattoo artists on the basis of its application by a skilled person. According to the profiles of artists at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio, this skilled artist can be educated at an institution, educated through an apprenticeship, or educated by a local community of knowledgeable tattooists; where artists learn their tattooing skills does not matter as much as how they learn. The conceptual underpinnings of a tattooed artwork matter because that artwork is critiqued for its portrayal of popular societal images or objects of culture. Tattoo art is considered aesthetically pleasing to look at because it is applied well. Yet tattoo artworks are also judged by varying views of aesthetic taste.

Each client interviewed at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio had an aesthetic opinion about their tattoos or other peoples’ tattoos. Some clients were more apt to share their opinions with me, the interviewer. Other clients displayed restraint by answering my interview questions with hesitancy. Hesitancy could have meant that interviewees were taking their time to think and then respond

to a question. Clients may have been thinking about the best way to convey information about their opinion of art to me. Hesitancy could also have meant that an interviewee exhibited all-or-none thinking. Rather than comment on whether a tattoo subject was good art or bad art, some clients appeared to censor their aesthetic judgments by not directly stating that some tattooed artwork was badly done. Still, many more tattoo clients and artists commented on what they liked or did not like about a particular tattoo. Additionally, many clients stated they did not feel equipped to judge what was good or bad art. Clients were not as aware as artists about the tattoo application process. Yet, some clients I interviewed were sure to mention the bad tattoos they happened to see in Hamilton. In contrast, artists were careful about harshly judging other artists' work.

In order to demonstrate how clients aesthetically judge tattoo work, I refer first to clients' interviews in which aesthetic judgments are clearly expressed to me. Client Marc (*Interview*, February 7, 2015) likes good art. But, he thinks art is subjective. He appreciates the intent behind some one's tattoo more than how the tattoo looks. Marc says he chose his tattoos because of their meaning, which is most important for him. He is a Christian and wears Christian imagery. He marks his body with Pictish tattoos in order to assimilate himself with his ancestry. He believes that many people get tattoos to be fashionable, with no real meaning behind their tattoos, which is a concern for him. Marc views passion and purpose as positive qualities associated with tattoo choices, but he does not value the actions of people who make rash decisions when choosing a tattoo based solely on how it will look on them. Although, Marc thinks he may be acting a bit like a curmudgeon. He realizes that he may be judging younger generations too harshly for their rashness. Experience has taught Marc that permanence is rare. He is in his mid-50s and has seen various tattoo trends. He has changed belief systems a few times

as well as jobs. He has made, and sometimes lost, friendships. Marc values clear goals and intelligence, perhaps values he perceives in his tattooist, Makkala.

One of Makkala's other clients is Lisa. She is in her mid-30s and shares similar insights with the client Marc about tattooing and Makkala's artistic skills. First, Lisa (*Interview*, February 22, 2015) values Makkala as an artist because of her application skills. Second, she values Makkala's tattoo art because it appeals to her femininity. She considered another female tattoo artist. Yet after looking at the other artist's work on Facebook, she ultimately decided to go to Makkala because the other tattoo artist's more masculine style was not for her; she appreciated the artworks but did not feel that the art was right to wear on her skin. Lisa's job is in health insurance, so a tattoo like a skull may not be appropriate because of the clientele she serves on a daily basis.

Also like the client Marc, Lisa is careful about what tattoo she gets because not all tattoos are acceptable within her social circles consisting of friends, family, and co-workers. This awareness of her social network's aesthetic tastes influenced her choice of what tattoo art to get. Her experience in getting a tattoo as a young adult also influenced what type of art she is interested in getting on her body. When Lisa was younger, she got a Japanese symbol that was popular at that time. Unlike for Marc, the symbol was not gang related, and she did not have the tattoo removed when she had children. Just as Marc viewed some younger generations tattoo choices as being a way to fit in with their peer groups, Lisa assessed that she wanted the Japanese symbol because it was popular at that time. Now in her mid-30s, with a career and family, she chose sewing notions because the hobby means much to her and her mother although it does not mean much in terms of cultural popularity.

Makkala's clients, couple Kylee and Darryn (*Interviews*, February 3, 2015), are in their early 20s. Though they are part of the younger generation, they were careful about what tattoos they chose. Kylee went to Makkala because she saw the tattoo Makkala had done on Darryn. Makkala, then, sketched Kylee a deer in a nature scene that appealed to her; Kylee viewed it as feminine and a reflection of her love of the outdoors. Kylee talks about tattoos being seen as masculine or feminine. As I mentioned earlier in this section, Lisa (*Interview*, February 22, 2015) chose Makkala as well because she views Makkala's artworks as being feminine. Like Lisa, Kylee (*Interviews*, February 3, 2015) does not want a skull; Kylee works at a beauty shop and views a skull as a possible hindrance to attracting new clients. Makkala (*Interview*, February 3, 2015) also views her artwork as "girly" (*Ibid*). What is a feminine tattoo compared to a masculine tattoo? As evidenced by the pictures I took during my fieldwork, feminine tattoo art could be classified by these women in Hamilton as that which has flowers, brighter colors, and docile animals.

Interestingly, the men I interviewed seem to care less than the women about the classifications of feminine and masculine tattoo art. Vaughan (*Interview*, February 5, 2015) believes his tattoos, in particular the tattoo of the horse and flower in remembrance of his family and birthplace, could be seen as feminine and that does not bother him. Another interesting point is that Brandon (*Interview*, February 2, 2015) seemed confused by my question asking his sex and gender. He made an expression of confusion and asked to me repeat the question, only to then dismiss it. It also seems that the women in my fieldwork, in general, paid closer attention to how their tattoos would be perceived by others. Nevertheless, I do not think I am able to state that men cared less about being perceived masculine or feminine by others judging their tattoos. My question about sex and gender was simply too open-ended. I tried not to mistakenly lead the

participants to answer that their tattoos definitely had a connection to sex and gender as that association could be false. Nevertheless, I could have worded the question in a different way so as to better understand how participants think about sex and gender, and how it could relate to art and the aesthetic; simply put, I could have asked, ‘Do you think sex and gender influence tattoo art and its aesthetic?’

Another way that Kylee is similar to Lisa, besides viewing Makkala’s tattoo work as feminine, is that she values her family. Her other tattoos are words describing her family. Like Kylee, Darryn shares his love of family (*Interviews*, February 3, 2015). Their tattoos reflect their family connections in the Waikato region. Like Darryn and Kylee, Robert’s (*Interview*, January 27, 2015) tattoos, the latest by Ali, place him on the timeline of his family and connect him to geographical locations. Besides connection to place and family, Robert’s tattoos figuratively signal solidarity with like-minded, go-getter, others. Robert likes rock music and is an Australian. He seems to think that being Australian and listening to rock music can limit the types of people he calls friends. However, Robert does not feel being Australian or a rocker limits his involvement with people who have positive outlooks and who strive for their goals. He appreciates tattoos that mean something for each person. As a person ages, he believes meaning is especially important because a tattoo may fade and sag. Robert appreciates the meaning of Polynesian tattoos yet finds facial tattoos intimidating. Though these facial tattoos are considered art by many and he acknowledges this, unlike the tattoos he sees frequently around Hamilton that are disproportioned and missing lines; Robert made clear to me he would never get a facial tattoo.

Unlike Robert, Justin (*Interview*, February 5, 2015) considers himself a ‘newbie’ to tattooing and was hesitant to make aesthetic judgments on a type of tattoo or location of a tattoo. Therefore, he

does not judge the category of facial and neck tattoos aesthetically; rather, he avoids these tattoos because he adheres to Flax Roots Tattoo Studio's rule not to tattoo the face and neck of people relatively new to being tattooed. Tattooists Marc and Ali have created artwork on his skin. Ali is Justin's friend and skateboard buddy, so Justin trusts Ali to do good work and lead him through his tattooing choices. Justin has a heart, surrounded by thorns, which represents his partner's love existing in the entanglement of his diagnosis of diabetes. His daughter's name is the center of another tattoo piece. Like the other tattoo clients discussed in relation to Kant's context dependent antimony, Justin wants to be tattooed with personalized, meaningful art. Justin judges weird tattoos as tattoos without meaning, possibly tattoos that signal a person's fashion statement. In *Chapter 3*, I wrote that Justin says:

I find a lot of people get crazy things, like weird tattoos. I don't know, for me, I like a name or the meaning behind it. Some people don't have meaning; they just like the way it looks. I guess it's what they're into and what they like to look at (Ibid).

Tattoo client, Mark, and tattooist Ali value aesthetic meaning in addition to the application of a tattoo and the skills of an artist. Yet, not all people who pass through Flax Roots Tattoo Studio's doors can appreciate tattoos too dissimilar from their own. In contrast to Ali's family, Robert's family is of European heritage. Robert (*Interview*, January 27, 2015) is an immigrant like Ali, but he comes from Australia. And this "but" is important because the ideal warrior of Macedonia, which is Robert's "first among equals", is a recognizable hero arch type in Western culture. Whereas Ali's (*Interview*, February 3, 2015) Iban tattoos, which are less closely related to status and more closely related to Robert's tattoo meaning of exceptional person, are not known well in western style tattooing. Alfred Gell's (1998) anthropological study of art focused

on the analysis of human social behaviors in an interpersonal context with art objects (pp.10-11) and sheds light on the divergent experiences of Ali's and Robert's aesthetic understanding of their art upon reflection of their immigration to New Zealand. Gell's concept of categorical indexes can be operationally employed as a method for understanding why, for example, Iban tattoos are not appreciated among the general population of the world compared to western style tattoo practices. Non-western indexes contain spiritual meanings and social meanings (pp.101-121; pp.153-154; pp.232). Iban tattoos offer protection and recognition of social achievement that benefits the tribe, as in the case of Ali's scorpion (*Interview*, February 3, 2015). Art in non-western societies traditionally existed in a closed context, so that the understanding of their tattoos was primarily within a particular culture (Arnaut, 2001, p.10).

Yet, traditional tattoo cultures can now be understood outside of this closed context. Marc (*Interview*, February 5, 2015) understands the meaning of the dotted Iban Burung design and the ritual practice of applying it to his skin; the tattooee comprehends the meaning of his tattoo. The Iban tattooist (agent/artist) is chiseling dots into the tattooee's skin (recipient Marc) in order to produce a design (index) which refers to a supernatural entity and his social rank (prototypes). Therefore, the survival of tattooing in Oceanic societies, including Maori, Iban, and Kelabit, may depend on its adaptive value. Part of the reason the art of Moko has survived and is recognized by western societies is that enough Maori continued to understand and promote Moko's meaning, so that outsiders of Maori culture thereby recognized Moko's functional use as an art object in social interactions. According to the ethnologist Ellen Dissanayake (1988), art has the capability of branding itself as special; it has adaptive value when the art enhances social belonging within a cohesive group. For example, Marc (*Interview*, February 5, 2015) recalled how special it



was for an Iban artist to dot his skin in the traditional way, using chisel and soot. Even though Marc is not Iban, the Iban tattooist agreed to tattoo Marc in a traditional way. Marc getting a tattoo by an Iban artist can also be seen as Marc and the Iban artist acknowledging a social belonging as tattoo artists who appreciate traditional ways of tattooing. Ali (*Interview*, February 3, 2015) told me about his feeling of safety when wearing the throat scorpion. By talking about his scorpion tattoo with me, Ali reflected on the myths of the Iban that are unique in contrast to the modern, popular culture in New Zealand (p.87). Ali's client Tracey (*Interview*, February 3, 2015) remarked that her tattoo done by an esteemed Japanese artist demonstrated her social belonging through the aesthetic appreciation of tattoo art, even though she was a foreign worker at that time. Likewise, Kylee and Darryn (*Interviews*, February 3, 2015) continue to share a love of tattooing as a form of social belonging; tattooing is part of their romantic relationship. Another client, Francis (*Interview*, February 2, 2015), believes that his tattoos mark him as a 'metal head', allowing him to readily rock out with other metal heads at concerts. And finally, Robert's (*Interview*, January 27, 2015) tattoos reflect his family heritage and the determinacy of the individual. These artists and clients engage with the meanings behind their tattoos both individually and communally, in the process help shape conceptualization of tattoo art and its aesthetic at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio.

## *2. Tattoo Art as a Functional Practice*

Two authors considered in my *Chapter 1 Preliminaries* discuss the impact of biological and cultural factors on individuals' choices. The first author, Stephen Davies (2006), places art in the

scope of human experience. He limits Kant's concept of universal beauty to the natural world; the idea of an aesthetic that exists outside of the natural world without some kind of social or evolutionary determinacy is problematic to him. Davies concludes that art is functional; art serves a social function.

Davies offers an account of art by stating: "I am incline[d] to the conviction that art is old and universal in ways that suggest no single culture or period can claim exclusive ownership of the concept" (p.12). The art form of tattooing is indeed an old practice. Tattooing is found on many places on the Iceman's 5,300-year-old body. And tattooing has traditionally existed on every continent except Antarctica. Tattoo art evolved, in application of style and ingredients for inks used, across centuries of human technological creativity, philosophical inquiries, and social conflict. No one culture, no time period, and no specific place can lay claim to the contemporary versions of tattoo art.

At Flax Roots Tattoo Studio, the tattoos reflect the history of humanity, with its cultural influences on art. In our interview (February 3, 2015), Marc talks about the popularity of Moko, which has changed style and meaning through its modern reemergence in Maori culture, appreciated by countless people around the world. He is in demand for Moko tattoos. He knows of many Moko artists, personally and through social media like Facebook, who have left New Zealand to tattoo people in other countries. Marc says:

A lot of Ta Moko artists live [in Europe] because that's where the money is. Funny thing is, a lot of them are the same people that were saying Moko for Maori only...I think [now] we are understanding evolution of art to survive. If people didn't see [Moko] across the world, then they wouldn't be asking for it. So maybe we're blessed that it's getting out there (Ibid).

Marc is not upset the some tattoo wearers do not understand the complexities of Moko; as long as the artist knows what she is doing, then the resulting Moko design moves easily into and along the skin.

Marc readily accepts being tattooed and doing tattoos. He continues to expand his knowledge of the array of tattoo styles. So that he can understand the complexities of the tattoo world, he oftentimes invites a tattooist to Flax Roots Tattoo Studio. The invited tattooist may introduce Marc to the workings of an unfamiliar tattoo style. Obviously not everyone in Marc's generation accepts the wearing and doing of tattoos. Brandon (*Interview*, February 2, 2015) spoke to me about the generational divide concerning the acceptance of tattoos as art:

Older generations, obviously, aren't so desensitized to tattooing as a younger generation who's grown up with it being part of everyday life. Sixteen to eighteen year olds, everyone has always had them. For someone [like me] who's [in the] forty to fifty year age bracket when they were coming up, the only people that were tattooed had been to prison or they were in a gang...It's changing (Ibid).

According to Brandon, if people are not familiar with tattooing, then they can be afraid of this seemingly deviant body modification practice. In contemporary New Zealand society, rare is the individual who is under age 24 that has not been exposed to tattoos and the people who wear them; especially in more populated and culturally diverse areas such as Hamilton. Many of the young adult clients frequenting Flax Roots Tattoo Studio grew up in middle-income families in, or near, Hamilton. Tattoo work at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio is not cheap as a small, simple tattoo can cost at least 50 New Zealand dollars. These young clientele are willing and able to save up for their artworks. Younger and older clients are willing to pay a higher price for tattoo work because

they understand skill is needed to tattoo and that their art has social value (Davies, 2006, p.7).

However, a person's appreciation of tattoo art does not mean that person necessarily understands the emotional meaning tattooists may connect to their art. Though Ali and Marc emotionally connect to how some of their tattoos were done, tattooist Brandon (*Interview*, February 2, 2015) does not connect personal emotion to his art or draw an emotional meaning from the tattoo art he sees on himself and others. Brandon has two cover-ups on his body. He chose to get his first tattoo, from age 14, covered-up because he thought it was low-quality art; expressing himself better was not a reason Brandon had this cover-up. Brandon's second cover-up is over an original tattoo of a wedding ring (*Ibid*). Brandon's cover-up of a wedding ring does not express the exact emotions he feels about his former wife to me. Yet, I surmise that Brandon chose to get a wedding ring tattoo because of powerful emotions he felt for his then wife, and he later got the wedding ring tattoo covered up because he no longer felt those same powerful emotions. Nevertheless, Brandon could have chosen to get the wedding ring tattoo because of the symbolic meaning it provided for his former wife instead of any emotion he felt for the wedding ring tattoo.

Like Brandon, Makkala does not talk to me about her emotional attachment to tattoo art. Their answers to my questions do not provide evidence for an expressive theory of art. Makkala's (*Interview*, February 3, 2015) focus is on doing the best tattoos she can do, stylistically, for clients. However, she does not ignore what a client wants. In order to work with clients, she invites them to explore tattoo styles. If she does not believe she is the best artist for a style, she will suggest another tattooist for that client. Makkala describes her style as "illustrative looking, quite girly and quite cutesy" (*Ibid*). She is not certain that her biological sex

influenced the type of tattoos she wears and does. She does not assume she has individual control, outside of society's influence, when she creates tattoos that are characterized as feminine for she does not "intend for it to happen but it just does" (Ibid). Makkala neither asserts nor denies that social factors or biological factors influence the designs she creates. My assumption, however, is that both social and biological factors influence her tattoo designs.

Makkala's tattoo works are usually done in vibrantly strong colors. By contrast, Brandon's and Ali's tattoo works are usually done in black and white. Ali (*Interview*, February 3, 2015) says that Makkala's artwork "...will still be strong. [I]f the person that's carrying the tattoo knows how to look after it, it can last for so long" (Ibid). Although Ali does different tattoos than Makkala, they share a goal of doing the best tattoos, stylistically and in functional value, for their clients. Ali's body is covered with tattoos influenced by different cultures, although he creates tattoo art for clients that function, mainly, in New Zealand society. In Hamilton, Ali's David Attenborough portrait tattoo is perceived differently than his Iban scorpion tattoo; Anglo-influenced New Zealand society contains a majority of people who do not know the history and culture of the Iban. Rather, many people in New Zealand know who David Attenborough is and, therefore, recognize the face of this British commentator (Ibid).

Nevertheless, the tattoos Ali wears or creates on clients are not purely socially functional. Karel Arnaut's review (2001) of Alfred Gell's *Art and Agency* suggests that art functions through the evolutionary needs of humans and their creativity bounded by their culture. Gell (1998) proposed an anthropological theory of art that accounted for and focused on the function of the art object in its cultural use. Gell's research is useful for looking at other ways in which Ali's tattoos signal social belonging without necessarily discounting emotions. His argument is that emotional ties to art

play a crucial component in the sense that a tattooed person feels their tattoos connect to their social world, and other people in turn may feel connected to that person by recognizing, on some level, the social function of these artworks. Gell's anthropological theory of art relies on the idea that cultural environment, both past and present, shapes a community's classification of art objects.

In his cultural analysis of tattooing, Gell (1993) comments on the underlying similarity of tattoo designs in the Pacific region. He died before he had experienced the advent of social media. He did not have the knowledge to predict the ways in which social media, like Instagram and Facebook, would change tattoo art. Gell chose the South Pacific region to look at tattooing from afar and the absence of the twenty-first century internet made it impossible for him to fully account for how art functions in present-day Oceanic societies. Gell may have offered a clearer connection between Pacific tattooing and its equivalents in other regions of the world; if so, he possibly would have enjoyed the ability to deeply understand the function of tattoo art on local, regional, and global levels. Though, Gell may have felt his analysis was on weaker ground if he extended it beyond the South Pacific; I can understand that as I am careful not to imply that Flax Roots Tattoo Studio represents all or most tattoo studios in the world. Gell, remember, wrote from England about tattooing in the South Pacific. In Gell's world in 1993, tattooing in a particular region did not exist isolated from the world but knowledge of tattoo artists and their work spread more slowly throughout this less globalized world. And, tattooing in 1993 was not the same as tattooing in my 2015 fieldwork. In 2015, well after the creation of the Internet and the extension of telecommunications into areas considered geographically remote

Tattoo art has become part of contemporary fashion. At the same time, tattoo art pieces continue to be done for additional cultural reasons. Anthropologist Donald E. Brown's (*Human*

*Universals*, 1991) list of human cultural universals includes possible reasons, reflected in my dissertation, for the wearing of tattoo art, such as bodily adornment, decoration, belief in the supernatural, religious ritual, status and hierarchy, sexual division, coming-of-age markers, and the idea of a self which is separate from a biologically produced body. Client Marc wears religious tattoos that help cover-up gang symbols. Kylee and Tracey wear tattoos that symbolize their interests in physical pursuits. Lisa wears a tattoo symbolizing the practice of sewing, decoration yet a status marker of place in her family heritage. Tattooist Marc has Moko representing his family, his place in a hierarchal iwi, and a symbol that he is a man. Tattooist Ali has tattoos representing his coming-of-age and Iban belief in the supernatural. Makkala adorns her body with feminine decoration. And Brandon has a body adorned with the cultural symbols of his time.

Flax Roots Tattoo Studio in Hamilton, Waikato, New Zealand is influenced by a global tattoo art. This global tattoo art diverges in different ways on a local level, but also shares universal features. For instance, while tattooists and tattooees hold varying aesthetic attitudes, they fundamentally appreciate an art of quality application and good design. My interviews suggest that, in 2015, tattoos are likely to be discussed in the context of the local, national, regional, international, and digital landscape. In this section of this *Chapter 4 Discussion*, I asked these four questions in the social context of Flax Roots Tattoo Studio: please describe your occupations and hobbies; what is your age? ; what is your gender and sex? ; and please describe Hamilton, New Zealand. Hamilton and its surroundings are described in objective and subjective terms. Tattooists and their clients described their hobbies and discussed their occupations with me. The age, sex, and gender of clients and tattooists were noted, with interviewees perceiving these biological and social factors as having little or a lot

of influence on their choice of tattoos; that may be because once a person notices gender, for instance, having an impact on their social lives and identity, then the factor of gender becomes apparent to them and others around them in their environment. However, the influence of tattoo styles from around the world, kinship ties, and the indigenous tattoo style of Moko seem to greatly influence what clients and artists chose as tattoos, how they discussed their tattoos, and how they saw others with tattoos within their local social environments and global interactions, especially online. Within the context of Flax Roots Tattoo Studio, I demonstrated how tattoo artists and their clients engage with and shape tattoo art and its aesthetic at this studio and beyond it.



*Ethical Practice at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio*

The tattoo artists at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio follow an ethical code and etiquette rules, which are displayed under table glass in the lounge area adjacent to the front desk, for public knowledge. The displayed paper, mainly created by owner Marc, concerns how the artists treat their clients; how the clients should treat their artists; the type of artwork done at the studio; and sanitary conditions. I separate the bulleted points on the displayed paper into three categories of ethics. One category is paternalistic, which is discussed in *Chapter 1*. In that chapter, Gerald Dworkin (1972) defines paternalism "...as the use of coercion to achieve a good which is not recognized as such by those persons for whom the good is intended" (p.68). Paternalism, simply, can be described as limitations on the autonomy of a person or group by an authority for the perceived good of that person or group. Often, it is seen as negative word in conversation because of the assumption that less autonomy is bad. However, paternalism allows for the government sanitation requirements on tattoo artists' materials and tattooing process. It promotes safety for both artists and clients.

The second category of ethics which I earlier discussed is professional tattooist ethics. In the context of tattoo artists working on clients in a studio, I define this as the artists' responsibility to their own clients as well as their responsibility to their co-workers at their workplace. Professional tattooist ethics also mean a commitment to promoting studio artworks and preserving a positive reputation. The third category of ethics relates to tattoo aesthetics, which is the commitment to providing clients with good art.

Most of the bullet points in the document (*Photo 39*) I took a photograph of fall under more than one category. I explore the bullet points that fit under one category first, and then I discuss bullet points which fall under multiple categories. I number the bullet points from 1 – 11 in order to make categorizing easier, starting with ‘1’ “A “tat” can be drawn” and ending with ‘11’ “Hepatitis can kill you” (Ibid). I include the exclamatory phrase “To my wonderful clients...” (Ibid) in my categories, but without a number, because it was not a bullet point yet an important value judgment that requires discussion. Importantly, no bullet points fit strictly into the first category of paternalistic ethics. Even ‘11’ is a suggestion and warning rather than a command to clients from artists at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio.

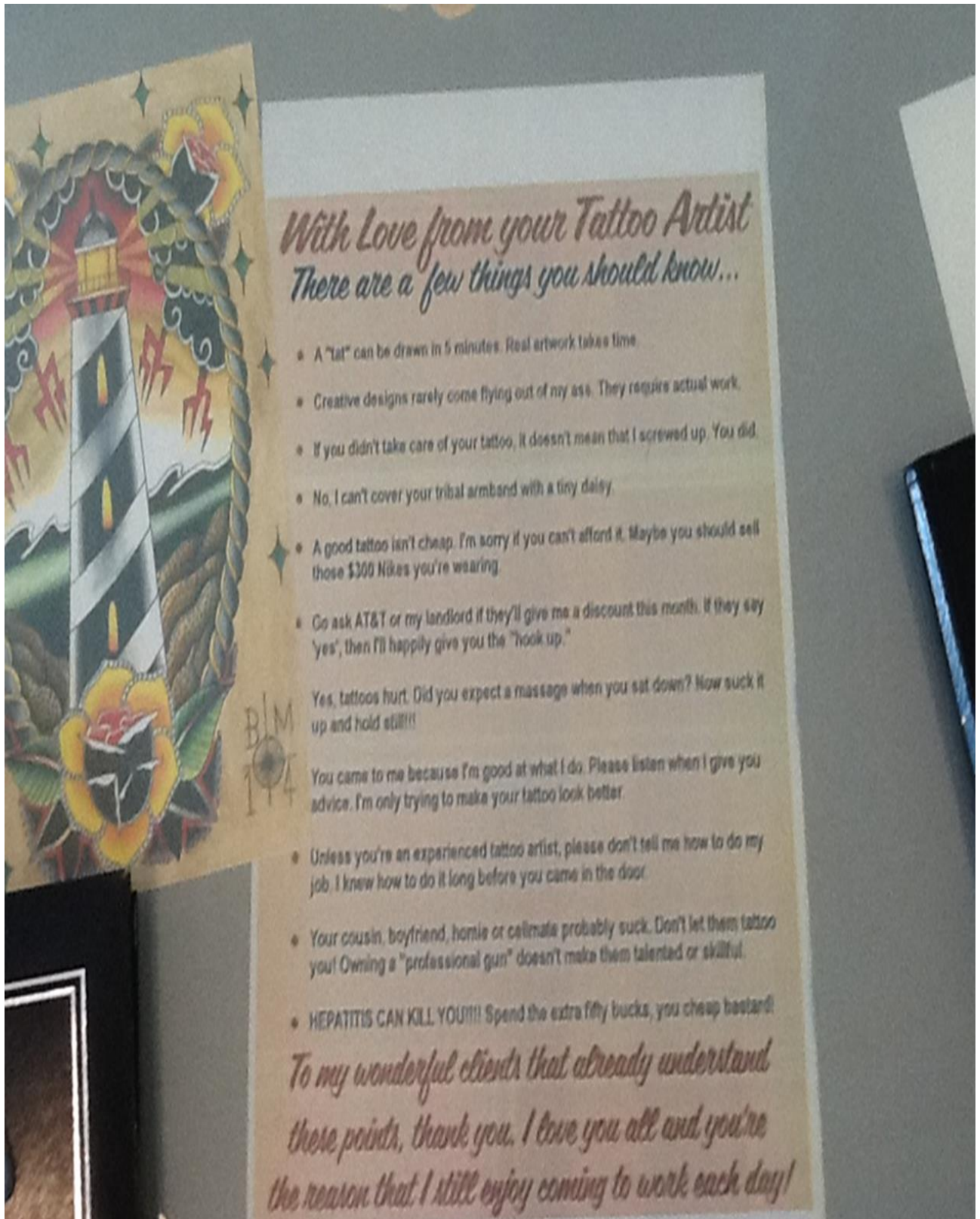


Photo 39: Refer to p. 71 for another presentation of this picture.

The second category of professional tattooist ethics relates to '3' and '6'. Point '3' is "If you didn't take care of your tattoo, it doesn't mean that I screwed up. You did" (Ibid). Tattooists imply they did their professional duty and the aftercare of tattoos is the duty of the client. By mentioning a client's responsibility of care for a tattoo, the tattooists avoid responsibility for tattoo trouble caused by a client's irresponsibility. Point '6' is "Go ask AT&T or my landlord if they'll give me a discount this month. If they say 'yes', then I'll happily give you the "hook-up"" (Ibid). Tattoo artists will not do artwork cheaply because of the costs of operating the shop and the need to take home a pay check. To do tattoo work cheaply would price the pieces at a lower cost to clients, which would lower the profit of Flax Roots Tattoo Studio and hurt its reputation.

Additionally, Point '6' demonstrates that tattooist Marc (*Interview*, February 5, 2015) believes some people lack aesthetic awareness because they think getting a tattoo is like getting any other product. Marc does not believe that good art should be discounted and rendered a cheap product. He believes aesthetic awareness is necessary to know art. If a person lacks aesthetic awareness, then the artistic quality of a tattoo does not matter to that person; that person does not care about art but cares instead that a tattoo is cheap and to be worn fashionably. Some people look for the cheapest tattoo they can get, according to Marc: "[u]sually, they have no understanding of how the industry works, in an actual business sense. We're not allowed to be here for free – the lease, the overheads, nobody thinks about the overhead" (Ibid).

The exclamatory sentence at the end of the displayed paper (*Photo 39*) is also representative of a tattooist professional ethics because it states, "To my wonderful clients that already understand these points, thank you. I love you all and you're the reason that I still enjoy coming to work each day!" (Ibid). Marc, Ali,

Makkala, and Brandon thank their knowledgeable clients because of genuine appreciation for the clients who make it easier for the artists to perform their professional duties in an undeterred manner.

Point '2' falls under the third category of aesthetic ethics. Point '2' is "Creative designs rarely come flying out of my ass. They require actual work" (Ibid); it explains to the client that good art requires work. However, Point '1', "A "tat" can be drawn in 5 minutes. Real artwork takes time" (Ibid) is an aesthetic value judgment of art and a recognition of the amount of work that a tattoo can take in a professional setting; therefore Point '1' is both an aesthetic ethical judgment and professional tattooist's ethical judgment. Point '5', "A good tattoo isn't cheap. I'm sorry if you can't afford it. Maybe you should sell those \$300.00 Nikes you're wearing" (Ibid) also fits under an aesthetic ethic and a professional ethic. Marc (*Interview*, February 5, 2015) discussed the value of art and its cost in relation to material goods. He talked about what some clients are willing to pay or not pay for tattoos and whether these clients value transitory material goods more than a good tattoo. When talking with client Vaughan and me, Marc said he believes that tattoos are a good purchase; tattoos will last for many years if not one's whole life:

Marc: In my eyes, you couldn't have spent your money any better [than on a quality tattoo]. Your clothes, \$1,000, shoes are \$300, whatever. Whatever you pay for this, you'll take it to the grave with you, eh. It's one of the only lifelong products you sort of get. [I]t's a common thing in New Zealand, that people will walk in here with a \$100 cap on, \$120 tee-shirt, \$300 jeans, \$300 sneakers, \$1,000 phone. They'll ask for the price of a tattoo and then go 'Oh nah, I'll go see my cousin somewhere else'. And all the flash stuff you're wearing just looks like nothing if you've got shit work.

See, people in New Zealand are backwards thinking of what's a good purchase (Ibid).

A way to solve the lack of awareness that cheap tattoo art is not usually good tattoo art could be through educating people about what defines a good tattoo. Makkala (*Interview*, February 3, 2015):

...guess[es] there's probably a lot of educating for the public; to do their research about what they're wanting to get and the specific sort of look that they're wanting to achieve, and to actually go through and have a look at lots of different artists' work, and pick who they can identify with for what they are wanting (Ibid).

Marc and Makkala prize good tattoo art. They believe knowledge of what constitutes good tattoo art is necessary for artists while being likely helpful for clients; that is why two of the bullet points concern both an aesthetic ethical judgment and a paternalistic ethical judgment. Point '7' (*Photo 39*), "Yes, tattoos hurt. Did you expect a massage when you sit down? Now suck it up and hold still" (Ibid), informs clients that getting tattoos can be painful and uncomfortable. Yet, a client must hold still in order for a tattooist to complete an artwork accurately. Point '9' is "Unless you're an experienced tattoo artist, please don't tell me how to do my job. I knew how to do it long before you came in the door" (Ibid). Point '9' suggests that a client should listen to the artist unless a client is an experienced tattoo artist who can make informed judgments; obedience to a tattoo artist is a necessary ingredient for good art. Flax Roots Tattoo Studio's artists make informed choices about the art they are inscribing on their clients' skins because they generally have more information and more practice than their clients at utilizing that information.

The last bullet point on the sheet belongs to both the professional ethics category and a paternalistic ethics category.

Point '11', "HEPATITIS CAN KILL YOU!!! Spend the extra fifty bucks, you cheap bastard!" (Ibid) strongly implies to clients that getting a tattoo at a studio, rather than at a local fair or an acquaintance's house, prevents communicable diseases from spreading. The last bullet point is in accordance with the Hamilton City Health Code as well; a code that is paternalistic because Hamilton City is regulating the health and safety standards of Flax Roots Tattoo Studio and other tattoo studios in the city.

Points '10', '8', and '4' also reflect an aesthetic ethical code, a professional ethical code, and a paternalistic ethical code, that is, all three ethical categories. Point '10' warns clients of dangers from tattoo work done by non-professionals: "Your cousin, boyfriend, homie or cellmate probably suck. Don't let them tattoo you! Owning a "professional gun" doesn't make them talented or skillful" (Ibid). Point '10' suggests that most people do not know how to tattoo, so probably a person would get a bad quality tattoo from a friend without work experience at a tattoo studio. Point '10' affirms the level of skill needed to obtain a status of professional tattoo artist, while also being a clear warning to a client about the dangers of a tattoo gun in the wrong hands. Point '8' is "You came to me because I'm good at what I do. Please listen when I give you advice. I'm only trying to make your tattoo look better" (Ibid), and Point '4' is "No, I can't cover your tribal armband with a little daisy" (Ibid) explains to the client why a tattoo artist is an authority on doing tattoos and why being a knowledgeable authority is crucial for doing good tattoo art. When Ali (*Interview*, February 3, 2015) assesses that he cannot do a style as well as another artist at the studio, he suggests the client choose that other artist instead of him. Similarly, Brandon (*Interview*, February 2, 2015) came to Flax Roots Tattoo Studio in order to learn from the best. Brandon says he "wasn't going to go and start my career out with a bunch of chumps who didn't know what they were up to. This place is pretty sharp, and the work speaks for itself" (Ibid). Most clients listen to

tattoo artists about proposed pieces because they feel the artist knows best. Clearly, Flax Roots Tattoo Studio's artists value their work. Evidently, they understand that clients will value their art more if they never produce low-quality art. The studio is a successful business because the artists produce buyable art for a clientele willing to pay in time and money.

Flax Roots Tattoo Studio is also a successful business because its unwritten rules are honored by its tattooed community. Not all of the ethical rules are explicitly advertised in the lounge area of the studio. The unwritten rules concern what will not be tattooed, and where, on particular groups of clients. Marc (*Interview*, February 3, 2015) does not tattoo young adults whom he feels are not mature enough to make likely permanent decisions:

Marc: These kids, they idolize their idols. I don't think I was seeing that sort of behavior before these American hip hop stars starting doing it. Tattooing their whole bodies. I see kids walking to high school with just their hand and necks tattooed. There's a lot of people tattooing that aren't making the money nowadays. The bills keep coming for some shops. If you haven't seen anybody walk through the door for a couple of days and a kid walks in wanting a tattoo on his face, that's driven [certain people who do tattooing] to make their money. But in saying that, maybe [they are] in the wrong profession.

Me: Would you still consider that tattoo art, if it's only done because the person's willing to pay? What do you think?

Marc: Yeah, I guess art's in the eye of the beholder. Some of the greatest pieces of art on the planet are what a lot of people would class as rubbish. It's not that I wouldn't class it as art (*Ibid*).



In the above statement, the distinction between what is art and what is not art lacks clarity. According to Marc, art can be art even when it may be judged as bad art by the majority of people who see it. Since Flax Roots Tattoo Studio's tattooists know the guidelines of their studio, they abide by an ethical code within their workplace. Brandon, Makkala, Ali, and Marc make recommendations to clients and insist on rules of behavior during tattoos done in their shop. Would a tattoo artist, willing to do any type of tattoo anywhere on a juvenile's body, by doing something unethical? Marc is unsure an artist is doing something unethical unless he knows the context and artist's intent. He applies his ethical code, a mix of paternalistic and professional ethics as well as etiquette rules, inside Flax Roots Tattoo Studio, but he does not control what his clients get tattooed on themselves outside his studio's walls.

In summary, I do not make general claims about how tattooists practice ethics everywhere based on the ethical guidelines at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio and the Hamilton City regulations that govern its sanitary operations. Instead, my goal was to achieve an in-depth look at the ways in which ethical considerations relate to tattoo art and its aesthetic within a close-knit social community of tattooists and their clients. Nevertheless, my fieldwork may have implications about how tattoo art is viewed aesthetically and ethically by its participants. Tattoo artists' ethics influence their relationships with their clients and art by specifying what artworks they will do at the studio, and how they will do those artworks based on agreed upon ethical guidelines. Because ethical practice at one studio does not exist in a vacuum, the practices of Flax Roots Tattoo Studio's artists could influence the ways other artists and the New Zealand government regulators may view what and how art is done for a tattoo studio's clients. Additionally, within their local culture, national environment, regional place, and globalized interactions, perhaps it can be

argued that all tattoo artists and clients engage with and shape tattoo art and its aesthetic on the basis of an ethical framework intrinsically embedded in their social relationships.

## Conclusion

I summarized my *Chapter 4 Discussion* by emphasizing tattoo artists' ethical, aesthetic, and artistic decisions when tattooing clients at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio, and how the outcomes of their decisions dialectically interact within their local environment and online world. My fieldwork has significant implications regarding how tattoo art is viewed aesthetically and ethically by its participants. Although the topic of ethics was not initially the main focus of my research on tattooing in a social context, during my fieldwork it became evident that tattoo ethics and etiquette are important aspects of the overall operations at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio. The artists there do not make quick ethical judgments about a client's choice of tattoo art. Instead, artists deliberately contemplate the consequences of the tattoo to be worn by their clients; they consider age, location on body, and subject of tattoo with the intent that in doing a certain tattoo will not bring unintentional harms to the client in a way they can foresee. Most body modifications, like tattooing, do require pain in order for a length of permanency on the skin; therefore, the future interests of the tattooed must be taken into account, according to Flax Roots Tattoo Studio's artists, more than the impermanent pain of getting a tattoo done. To avoid negative ramifications for themselves and clients, Flax Roots Tattoo Studio's artists operate within the ethical frameworks of paternalism, aesthetics, and professional business standards. The artists' ethical code and etiquette rules are strictly adhered to in the studio because of their knowledge of tattoo art and their aesthetic judgments based on that art. Marc, Makkala, Ali, and Brandon believe their knowledge of tattooing enables them to better inform their clients about tattoos. Likewise, Flax Roots Tattoo Studio clients agree to the ethical standards of the studio when they sign an agreement to be

tattooed by the artists there. The clients also understand the unwritten etiquette of the studio as evident from my interviews with them.

The clients' deference to tattoo artists when it comes to artistic decision-making demonstrates a genuine high level of trust. As an important aside, I have been tattooed at other studios around the world where I remember arguments between certain clients and tattoo artists about how their tattoo is to be done, where it is to be done, and how it is to be done. The level of trust in the artists at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio is higher than in most studios, since I did not observe arguments between clients and tattooists in my fieldwork there. I am not claiming arguments between artist and client do not happen at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio. Rather, I have reason to think, from my observations, that these arguments about how a tattoo artwork should be done are less frequent at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio than at many other tattoo studios elsewhere. My fieldwork has identified that the frequency of arguments centered on the conceptions of what it means to do a good tattoo that is in line with ethical principles may be considerably lessened if the rules of ethical practices are specifically written for clients, and tattoo etiquette practices are agreed upon by all tattoo artists. It also is evident from my fieldwork that an implication of this agreement between client and tattooist is a demonstration of an effective form of paternalism that serves both client and artist at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio.

Although tattooists' ethics became apparent during my fieldwork, the main focus of my research continued to be art and the aesthetic in this particular tattooed community in Hamilton, New Zealand. My research questions, 1. How do tattoo artists and their clients engage with and shape tattoo art and its aesthetic at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio? ; and 2. How do these tattoo artists' ethics influence their relationships with their clients and art?, are

both the groundwork of my fieldwork. It was initially surprising to me that there was not more anthropological fieldwork that specifically focused on art and the aesthetic when discussing modern tattoo styles and traditional tattoo styles in the South Pacific Island region, including Aotearoa or New Zealand. The literature said very little about the social networks that act upon the artistic creation of tattoo art styles in New Zealand, where Polynesian and Western styles influence each other. Consequently, my research questions directed to the tattooed people at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio are important because they expand the scholarly discussion about art in anthropology.

Turning now to *Chapter 2 Methodology*, I detailed how, as an anthropologist, I used critical thinking and grounded theory to investigate with the intention of understanding what was happening in regards to art and the aesthetic at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio. As stated earlier in *Chapter 2*, the methods I used for gathering data were grounded theory and interviews and photography during my fieldwork. I verified my interviews and photographs by having participants check my interview transcripts and photographs. Then, importantly, I updated my beliefs about tattoo art based on interviews, photographs, and observation findings from my fieldwork. For example, when my fieldwork revealed how tattoo art has a social function and an indeterminate aesthetic, I changed my beliefs about what I thought would be the result. Initially, I thought my research would point to either the function of tattoo art in a culture or indeterminacy of tattoo art across cultures. Instead, both the social use of tattooing and its aesthetic ideal were demonstrated at the studio. I strived for evidence-based statements and conclusions that will be forthcoming in this chapter.

To obtain conclusions from my research, my first method of grounded-theory research helped me understand the phenomenon

of tattooing in the context of my interviews at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio. As mentioned in *Chapter 2*, the goal of the grounded theory approach is to begin with the data and use it to develop a theory (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010). Utilizing the literature discussed in *Chapter 1 Preliminaries*, I analyzed the data from my fieldwork and used it in my *Chapter 4 Discussion and Conclusion*. Therefore, my fieldwork succeeded in informing the literature about tattooing practices. I successfully gleaned the benefits of anthropologist Russell Bernard's (2002) six purposes of using grounded theory as a methodological approach in my fieldwork (p. 466). To begin, I transcribed and read each interview. Then, I identified themes according to the interviewees' responses to questions I asked as well as their photographs. Third, I linked these responses to categories and then, fourth, linked those categories to each other in order to understand the social and cultural environment of Flax Roots Tattoo Studio. Then, I checked my biases by trying to link categories that seemed unlikely at first to each other, as well as checking them against the selected literature. Sixth, I wrote my analysis, coupled with quotations from field notes and interviews, in the *Chapter 4 Discussion and Conclusion*.

My field notes consist of methodological data, descriptive data, and analytic data, as detailed and observed at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio and during my thirteen semi-structured interviews and related photographs. As stated in the *Limitations* section of *Chapter 2*, I could not generalize the statements from interviewees and the findings of my fieldwork to comment on all tattoo studios and tattooed people everywhere in New Zealand and beyond. Even so, my fieldwork was a case study of a particular tattooed community and highlighted important aspects of ethical practice, art theory, and the philosophy of the aesthetic in relation to tattooing in contemporary times.

This case study was discussed in my *Chapter 3 Interviews, Photographs, and Observations*, which examined tattooists' ethics, detailed the functionality of art in a social environment, and drew attention to the aesthetic of tattoo works in order to answer my research questions, which were developed, in part, from the theoretical literature discussed in my *Chapter 1 Preliminaries*. These texts were chosen to address the ethical attitudes expressed by tattooists, the social and cultural function of tattoo art, and its aesthetic appeal in a tattooed community. Using the literature discussed in *Chapter 1* and the results of my fieldwork in the *Chapter 4 Discussion*, I conclude that aesthetic taste influences how a tattooed person identifies oneself and other tattooed people within the Flax Roots Tattoo Studio community, in the Waikato region of New Zealand, as well as globally through mainly online social media interactions. The tattooed body thus becomes a social site in which to ponder an individual's relationship to art and possible ethical implications and one's connection to the idea of an aesthetic in tattoo art.

Taken together, the results from my fieldwork and previous findings from grounded theory based upon literature inform this concluding chapter. Within the context of my research questions about tattooing and the location where I did my research, my conclusions can be divided into three main areas. These areas are interrelated and consist of: tattoo art's role in cultural behavior; how tattoo art can be aesthetically appealing to a person, community, and culture; and how tattoo artists navigate their interests and their clients' interests while incorporating professional tattoo ethics. My fieldwork and analysis strengthen the idea that tattoo art has a role in cultural behavior beyond identifying similar social groups based upon tattoo style. Though I did a case study, my work has implications for other tattoo research. I will now discuss the importance of my fieldwork, its

implications, and how my fieldwork relates to authors' works discussed throughout this dissertation.

I begin with a discussion of Alfred Gell's (1993; 1998) conception of how art operates, acts upon, and is used in social contexts. After a concise synthesis of Gell with researchers I mentioned in *Chapter 1 Preliminaries*, I discuss how his work is critiqued by my research. Then, I conclude my discussion of Gell by suggesting future research within anthropology of art based on some of Gell's concepts. Alfred Gell (1998) explored art's role in social behavior. The purpose of the anthropological theory of art he developed is to analyze the function of objects of art in a socio-cultural environment (p. 11). He used the phrase an "art-like situation" (p. 13), which I describe as social interactions which are related to an art object or artwork. Like Gell, I share the belief that qualitatively observing these social interactions in relation to art is a key way to know more about how art is used by people in a particular environment. Therefore, my research consisted of the qualitative data of photographs and interviews. By utilizing the grounded theory presented by Gell (1993) in order to interpret tattoo art in the social environment of Flax Roots Tattoo Studio, I classified tattoo art by its styles and discussed tattoos in relation to the artist who did them and on which clients. Through this interpretation, I am able to understand how a particular tattoo art piece could have agency in the way Gell (1993) describes, when he details the four types of social relations within an art object (p. 27). So, in this *Conclusion*, I provide an example from my fieldwork in order to see how Gell's system of classification could be applied and critiqued upon when looking at the social relations involved in the expressed agency of tattoo art.

For my example, in order to establish my concluding thoughts on Gell's (1993) theory of the anthropology of art, which includes his four types of social relations within an art object, I



analyze the client Marc's (*Interview*, February 7, 2015) facial tattooing and how changing the tattoos on his face related to social interactions within a cultural environment. When client Marc was a young man, he was a member of a gang and tattooed the symbols of that gang on his face. Those tattoos signaled his participation in that gang. Therefore, these facial tattoos were "[i]ndexes: [art objects] which motivate[d] [social agency]..." (Gell, 1993, p. 27). When Marc (*Interview*, February 7, 2015) had some of these facial tattoos removed and subsequently covered-up with tattoos that depicted Christian iconography, he signaled his membership of a dominant religion instead of an outsider gang.

In both instances of client Marc displaying his affiliation with a religion or a gang, a tattoo artist "... (or other 'originators') ...ascribed...causal responsibility for the existence and the characteristics of the index" or tattoo on him, the recipient (Gell, 1993, p. 27). I do not know who did Marc's (*Interview*, February 7, 2015) original facial tattoos. I do know Makkala did the cross on his face as one of the cover-up tattoos on his face. Also, Marc is a returning customer to Makkala and Flax Roots Tattoo Studio. Makkala is responsible for Marc's cross tattoo and how it appears to other people because she created it. Therefore, Marc can signal his Christian identity and seek to affiliate with other Christians "...by virtue of visual resemblance...", called a prototype (Gell, 1993, p. 27). However, Marc (*Interview*, February 7, 2015) does not always successfully engage with other Christians on the basis of his tattoos because these facial tattoos also act to identify him as part of a tattooing culture which may not be accepted by those Christians who adhere to the Old Testament of the Bible, which says "Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the LORD" (Leviticus 19:28, New International Version). By providing the example of client Marc's interview from my fieldwork, I have shown how a capstone of Gell's (1993) theory

of art and agency can be applied in understanding the agency of a tattoo art piece.

In addition to Gell's (1993) commentary about how art can act as an agent in a person's social relationships, my interview with Marc is illuminated by Michael Rees's (2016) research. As mentioned throughout my dissertation, Rees discusses insider-outsider status in relation to tattooing culture. His observations from his fieldwork are important in this conclusion because they illuminate how theoretical propositions, like those proposed by Alfred Gell (1993; 1998), benefit from praxis because the qualitative data tests and refines theory in the anthropology of art. Specifically, Rees (2016) discusses insider-status and outsider-status, and as analyzed in my discussion, he underscores how a client like Marc (*Interview*, February 7, 2015) has tattoos which mark him as part of a group. Marc moved from insider-status from a gang to outsider-status in Hamilton's mainstream society because he removed the symbols of gang membership on his face, covering-up these symbols with Christian symbols. Although he may feel like an insider in places like Flax Roots Tattoo Studio, he does not feel he is fully accepted by most people in Hamilton because of his facial tattoos. Rees's (2016) conclusions from his fieldwork add an important dimension to the agency-of-art theory of Gell (1993). Specifically, there are likely smaller, more intricate steps involved in an artwork's ability to act on individuals and their social relations within a culture. Therefore, I suggest that the concept of insider-status and outsider-status should be integrated into future fieldwork and analysis by looking at tattooed communities and other communities where artworks could play a central role.

Nevertheless, I am not convinced that the role that insider-status and outsider-status plays, in regards to art and the individual in a culture, are necessarily equally valid in all cultures.

If a culture has already accepted a form of art, then is the dynamic process of insider to outsider status irrelevant? In my *Introduction*, I was not convinced that Rees's (2016) fieldwork significantly demonstrated that tattooed people, throughout the world, are becoming more tolerant of each other's tattoos and, by extension, cultures. I am also not convinced that tolerance is something that should be always aspired to, because while it implies a willingness to accept other cultures in global society, it does not necessarily imply a willingness to investigate why individuals from a culture may express themselves in a certain way. And, in some cases, tolerance negates the important role of criticism, whether artistic or not, and to contribute to preventing harmful cultural practices and highlighting beneficial cultural practices. More to the point about my reflections on Rees (2016), my fieldwork suggests that more case studies of tattooing should be done in order to comment on tattooing outside of one's own culture. As my research has pointed out, tattooing in New Zealand is likely more an accepted and mainstream practice than in Great Britain. However, I am still careful to not conclude that a tattooed person in New Zealand is more likely to have more insider-status than a tattooed person in Great Britain because I do not have the data to support that claim.

In spite of my conclusion that I cannot make broad claims regarding the acceptance of tattooed people in New Zealand or global society, I can conclude that Alfred Gell's (1993) theory that an interaction between tattooed people reaffirms social ties, social classification, and cultural rituals (p.8) is likely true. Specifically in Aotearoa, where my fieldwork at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio took place, the indigenous cultures of this Pacific Island region have used tattoos to reaffirm these socio-cultural ties. In traditional Maori culture, Classic Moko reflected the socio-political environment; its designs and placement recognized social ranks, sex and gender differences, and kin groups (pp. 249- 250). To understand how tattoos operated as art objects within a social

exchange in contemporary Maori society and in respect to my fieldwork in present-day New Zealand, I utilized excellent research on the socio-political environment of Moko in Aotearoa in order to draw conclusions from my fieldwork at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio. After Alfred Gell died, Ngahuia Te Awekotuku and Linda Waimarie Nikora (2007) produced a book which explored Moko firsthand and provided a detailed account of the role of tattooing in Maori communities in Aotearoa New Zealand. When I discussed their book in previous chapters, a tattoo client, Aneta, talked about her Moko as being "...a lost taonga... [(treasure)]...that was taken away through the process of colonization, almost to extinction. It is my external way of showing that I'm proud to be a Maori" (p.152). Then in my discussion of my fieldwork at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio, the tattoo artist Ali (*Interview* February 3, 2015) talked with me about his Iban flower tattoos that are a sign that he has travelled to his Iban community. Like Te Awekotuku's and Waimarie Nikora's (2007) interviews, some of my interviews were examples of how indigenous peoples' tattoos express their linkage to a cultural identity, contemporary or remembered. The Iban community primarily views Ali (*Interview*, February 3, 2015), because of his tattoos, as a respectable man. Ali signals by his tattoo art that he has travelled outside of Borneo. And, to Ali, his tattoos mean he remembers his Iban heritage through the significance of the flowers while living in New Zealand. Though, Ali's Iban tattoos are viewed in different ways by the people of New Zealand and by the people of Borneo because each understand Ali's tattoos in the context of their own culture. Many New Zealanders aesthetically appreciate Ali's Iban flower tattoos, but they do not know the cultural history of the flowers. Yet, many people from Borneo would not understand the cultural references inscribed in skin on New Zealanders either. I conclude that the social role of Ali's tattoo art, and of tattooist Marc, are similar to Ngahuia Te Awekotuku's and Linda Waimarie Nikora's (2007) observations. Taken together, our

interviews suggest that Alfred Gell (1993) was correct in his view that being a tattooed person reaffirms social ties within cultural groups. Additionally, Gell was correct in his view that tattoos act as an agent in classifying that individual to belong to a certain group (p.8). My first research question asked how do tattoo artists and their clients engage with and shape tattoo art and its aesthetic at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio. I answer that question by stating that, as my examples have shown in my interviews with artist Ali (*Interview*, February 3, 2015) and client Marc (*Interview*, February 7, 2015), clients' and artists' cultural identity or identities are embodied in their tattoo art. The aesthetic of tattoo art is then shaped in part by how the residents in the place of Hamilton, New Zealand, and the global culture in which Flax Roots Tattoo Studio is situated, respond to the agency of a particular tattoo artwork.

My conclusion that the aesthetic of tattoo art is shaped and engaged with by the embodiment of cultural agency within an individual's tattoo art can be expanded upon further by comparing and contrasting my fieldwork to the earlier fieldwork findings of Clinton R. Sanders's (2008). As in my case study of Flax Roots Tattoo Studio, Sanders (2008) interviewed tattooed people who tied their tattoo art to the culture and place they were from, had been to, or wanted to go to. These cultural themes of nationality, heritage, family, occupation, religion, and social interest, often in the form of hobbies, were identified based on a tattoo piece a person choose to wear. These cultural factors continued to act on the individual, the artist, and the social relations in which that person interacted within as a tattoo artwork was being judged aesthetically. My case study confirms previous findings which Sanders (2008) documented in his interviewees' tattoo artworks regarding the significance of national flags, musicians, and gang affiliations. My case study also contributes additional evidence that group affiliation and perceived meaning of art and its agency among tattoo clients are significant among both indigenous and

non-indigenous peoples who were tattooed by artists at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio.

For further clarification of my conclusion that cultural identity is intermixed with ideas of aesthetically pleasing art, my discussions about tattoo art with artists and clients confirms previous findings and contributes additional evidence that suggests artworks, in this case tattoos, are recognized by other people for both their cultural value and their aesthetic value, which jointly contribute to an individual's judgment of an artwork. As with Sanders's (2008) interviewees, my interviewees consisted of people getting tattoos that expressed their leisure interests, religion, and family as well as their aesthetic taste. Tattoos are markers of reference for a person or group within a culture as well as actors in aesthetic expression. Even when an interviewee had a tattooed motto or tattooed reference to a tribulation, these tattoos involved elements of art representing their social ties. For example, Justin (*Interview*, February 5, 2015) has a tattoo of a heart surrounded by thorns, which represents his partner's love and living with diabetes. During our interview, Justin made it clear to me that he defers to Ali's judgment on how to do a good tattoo, based upon Ali's formal artistic education and Justin's friendship with him. It did not appear to me that social ties could be separated from an aesthetic judgment of what is good tattoo art for Justin. In another example from my fieldwork, client Vaughan (*Interview*, February 5, 2015) showed me a tattoo of a Nepalese word translated as the phrase "live a full throttle life" (*Ibid*). Vaughan got the tattooed motto to represent his love of motocross and his time spent in Nepal. The specific font Vaughan decided upon was a joint decision with the tattoo artist who did that tattoo. Therefore, social ties, cultural reference, the artistic actor, and the participant receiver Vaughan are acted upon and act upon the tattoo art object. Justin's and Vaughan's tattoos are intricately connected to their social experiences and the aesthetic of their tattoo artist.

A key strength of my case study is to draw attention to the conclusion that tattoo people are influenced by their culture and social ties when choosing a tattoo which would be considered a good piece of aesthetically pleasing art. Clients and artists shared their love of music, dance, nature, national symbols, family experiences, celebrities, and friendships with me. For another example, the tattoo artist Marc (*Interview*, February 3, 2015) talked about his Moko as representative of his family and community; his Moko are recognized by people who understand the significance of Moko. However, Marc also pointed out how Moko also is connecting non-Maori people to tattooing. Marc said: “A lot of Ta Moko artists live [in Europe]...a lot of the same people that were saying Moko [is] for Maori only...But now, it’s like, I think we are understanding evolution of art to survive. “ (Ibid). Marc is satisfied with non-Maori peoples also doing Moko, too, as long as their artwork is of good quality. During Vaughan’s interview (February 5, 2015), Marc spoke at length about how quality of art matters, no matter who the artist is and what that art is about. During my fieldwork, all tattoo artists emphasized the importance of learning the skills of tattooing to do good art and being a proper fit for a client’s artwork preference. All clients, no matter their cultural background, valued the appearance of good tattoo work. Perhaps, based on my fieldwork at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio, the judgment of good tattoo art is seen as aesthetically pleasing by all cultures so long as that tattoo artwork is recognized as connecting to an aesthetic identity based on the idea that an art object must connect a tattooed person to a social tie on some level; the tattoo artwork must function in society to be judged as aesthetically pleasing by someone.

This investigation of art and the aesthetic in regards to tattooing has shown that the cultural environment influences both the social groups’ and individual’s judgment of tattoo artworks. My second section discussed the connections to the philosophy of art

and the aesthetic and culture. The investigation of literature in my *Chapter 1 Introduction* established as foundation for my discussion of the main differences between Alfred Gell's (1993; 1998) understanding of art and Immanuel Kant's (1790) understanding of art. Additionally, my fieldwork contributed to clarifying the main difference between Kant's understanding of the aesthetic (1993; 1998) and Stephen Davies's (2006; 2012) understanding of the aesthetic, which connected to art's social roles as noted in Gell's (1993; 1998) research and also my own research. Tattooing's associated skills and practices appear, from my interviews, to be needed to make quality tattoo art that is viewed as aesthetically pleasing to clients and their community. Immanuel Kant's (1790) indeterminate concept of beauty, or perfection in an original form, supports the idea that good tattoo artworks are viewed across cultures as aesthetically pleasing, even if the tattooed artist's intent and the subject are not understood by all in society. Linking my fieldwork in regards to Kant (1790), he wrote that "Genius can only provide rich material for products of art; its elaboration and form require a talent that has been academically trained, in order...to stand up to...judgement" (Ibid). I argue that aesthetically pleasing tattoo artwork is achieved through a method of training as well as through the practice and imagination of the tattoo artist. However, I disagree with Kant because it is evident to me that the academic training can be in the form of an apprenticeship within a less formal setting than a university or other tertiary institution. Marc (Interview, February 3, 2015) discussed how Ali and Makkala are tertiary trained artists, while he and Brandon are not formally trained artists. Despite differences in the artists' trainings, they all understand the techniques to apply tattoos and how to work with clients to achieve aesthetically pleasing art.

A tattoo art piece done by a trained and skilled artist at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio represents a particular object, conceptual or material. I found out that aesthetically pleasing tattoo art is made



by a skilled artist who understands artistic concepts to produce great tattoo work, yet the skilled artist does not solely rely on a conceptual framework because knowledge of how a tattoo art piece will be seen on a client in society is important as well. Good tattoo art is conceptually created by a skilled artist and links to culture in some way, while bad tattoo art lacks conceptual imagination, artistic skill, and social connection. Yet, the most important limitation of my case study lies in the statement that I do not know if good tattoo art can be conceived of as good without any connection to any level of social interaction or any tie to cultural art. I am not even sure if art can exist without culture; I suspect not though.

Additionally, although Flax Roots Tattoo Studio's artists described good and bad art based on training principles, they never told me the name of a tattooist who does bad art. So, I construct a hypothetical example of the types of training two tattoo artists could have had and how that could affect their tattoo artwork based on the data collected from my fieldwork. In my hypothetical example, which explains the use of concepts and skills for tattooed artists, the first artist trained as an apprentice. The second artist did not have training with a skilled artist. The first tattoo artist apprenticed under a senior artist who demanded matching line work and hours spent drawing tattoos. This tattoo artist produced better artwork than the second tattoo artist, who never cared to do line work or spend many hours drawing tattoos. Both tattoo artists felt an emotional connection with each client. But, the first artist learned how to tattoo and received more clients. The first artist's Instagram page is frequented by people because these artworks are considered aesthetically pleasing. The second artist did not spend the hours learning to do tattooing, so this artist takes little money from clients. These clients can not feel these tattoo artists' emotions, no matter whether the artist, whether doing tattoos that are good or bad, is emotionally invested in the

work. The quality and depiction of their tattoos will be judged over time by their clients and others who view them within the context of their society.

Within the context of a social environment, a tattoo art piece from an artist at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio is aesthetically pleasing according to a particular person or group in Hamilton or online through social media, where the artists' work may be viewed as internationally beautiful. In order for tattooist Brandon's (*Interview*, February 2, 2015) artwork to be considered aesthetically pleasing, the object and conceptual idea that the tattoo art represents must be judged as beautiful; beautiful in the sense that it invokes the indeterminate concept of beauty found in culture. Even Brandon judges his own art by choosing now to do black and grey work instead of how he used to tattoo using more colors. Again, the choice to do or have a certain type of tattoo artwork is based on social relationships because after seeing the crisp, clear tattoos that Ali does on clients, Brandon changed the way he does art. Brandon still mainly chooses to do American Traditional Style and European Traditional Style tattoo art, which is a smaller style pallet than Ali, because the styles strongly represent the ideas and material objects of a culture Brandon connects with. Although Brandon discussed how tattooing is not about meaning for him, I conclude that a tattooed person must relate that art to some concept, even if it is undefined. As seen in Brandon's artworks, the judgment of aesthetic taste of a tattoo art piece is not solely based on artistic concepts, and at the same time, the judgment of aesthetic taste of a tattoo art piece is based on artistic concepts. The judgment of aesthetic taste is not solely based on artistic concepts, for otherwise, tattoo artists and clients would not be able to judge tattoo art. And, the judgment of aesthetic taste is not solely based on artistic concepts because certain tattoo art pieces are globally considered great art because of the skill of the tattoo artist (Kant, 1790, p.215). A tattoo

apprentice like Brandon, under an expert tattooist, learns the skills needed to advance artistically, master marketing, and earn respect in the tattoo industry. The tattoo apprentice learns what is aesthetically pleasing through interactions with colleagues and clients. Artistic talent is essential for tattooists at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio, but they cannot depend on their understanding of what art is to make aesthetically pleasing tattoos for their clients.

Furthermore, in my conclusion about how art can be made aesthetically by an artist yet is limited in its appreciation by its links to cultural environment, Stephen Davies (2006; 2012) suggests art and the aesthetic are not free entirely from the conceptual underpinnings of a localized place, its biological features, and its social features. Unlike Kant (1790), who believed objects of art and their conceptual underpinnings are what makes beautiful artworks, Davies (2006; 2012) suggests that the aesthetic artwork is judged by an individual or a group of people who are viewing that artwork through a lens that is both biologically and culturally shaped. Davies (2012) argues that art is functional, which Davies defines as an artwork representing both an object and its social uses. An aesthetic artwork has a functional beauty that is valued for its applicability to daily life and its social associations in a culture. I agree that art functions as aesthetically pleasing for its own art sake, and in relation to both its biological and cultural significances (2012, pp. 99-102).

Still, I have a caveat about Davies's (2006; 2012) and Kant's (1790) positions on aesthetically pleasing art because their conclusions too readily generalize the acceptance of an art object within a culture. Tattoo art that is viewed as aesthetically pleasing by certain cultures or members of a society may not be aesthetically pleasing to all people in that society or outside a particular tattooing culture. In my interview of client Robert (January 27, 2015), he expressed his dislike of facial tattoos.

Although Robert said he did like some of the Polynesian facial tattoos he saw in Moko, the appearance of these tattoos were not automatically pleasing to him. Client Marc (*Interview*, February 7, 2015) told me another story of tattoo artwork not being viewed as aesthetically pleasing. As mentioned previously, Marc's facial tattoos are sometimes met with unkind remarks and stares. Although artist Makkala did beautiful color and line work on Marc's religious heart tattoo, it is on his face and may not be aesthetically pleasing to all.

I provide another hypothetical example that was created out of what clients Robert (*Interview*, January 27, 2015) and Marc (*Interview*, February 5, 2015) stated to me about their and others' tattoos. In this example, a woman can choose to wear a tattoo that represents her kin group in Waikato without being understood by the popular culture in her Hamilton location. She values the meaning of her Moko, but she is not always met with kindness and understanding in Hamilton because her tattoo is not received well by individuals who do not value Moko. Perhaps these individuals do not consider Moko in some places, such as the face and arms, as aesthetically pleasing. Like artist Ali's scorpion tattoo on his throat, particular people may not find his artwork aesthetically pleasing because of where his tattoos are placed on his body. Places on the body where some tattooed art is located may not be considered universally aesthetically pleasing, despite meeting Davies's (2012) functional beauty standard and Kant's (1790) indeterminate concept of beauty.

Therefore, I conclude that although my case study is based on a small sample of participants, my research findings suggest that Alfred Gell (1993; 1998), though distrustful of aesthetic philosophy, produced research that is valuable to understanding the aesthetic of art. His work is also valuable for me, as an anthropologist, seeking to understand the intricacies, and

seemingly apparent contradictions, in what is aesthetically pleasing tattoo artwork. As an anthropologist of art, Gell's observations center on the importance of looking at how an artwork operates pragmatically within a culture. It is with Gell's "pragmatic approach to art" (1998, p.2) that I also see tattoo art's adaptive value (Dissanayake, 1988) in societies, where the well-trained conceptual artists of Kant's (1790) philosophical vision of the aesthetic and Davies's (2006; 2012) functional aesthetic of art play a role in what a specific culture values aesthetically in tattoo art. However, art and the aesthetic cannot, entirely, be determined by their social environment. People across cultures can see the beauty in the symmetrical lining within a tattoo. Nevertheless, some people may not want a tattoo or particularly like tattoos, no matter how aesthetically pleasing a tattoo art piece is on a human body. The most important limitation lies in the fact that my fieldwork sample of tattooed people was small, and there are not a significant number of large-scale anthropological studies that analyze metadata on tattoo art and its relation to the aesthetic. Further studies need to be carried out in order to validate or invalidate the conclusions I draw from my fieldwork. The contribution of this study has been to contribute to the understanding of art and the aesthetic in relation to how they are shaped by culture and its social participants. My fieldwork also contributes to knowledge on art and the aesthetic by providing an analysis of interviews and photographs from artists and clients in order to clarify how cultural place and identity in social systems are integral to constructing art and judging art aesthetically.

In my fieldwork at Flax Roots Tattoo Studio, tattooed people shared their aesthetic tastes with me, and although good art skills were always recognized in a tattoo artist, clients may not have liked a particular tattoo no matter how aesthetically pleasing it was to other members of that society. One of my fieldwork outcomes was that it pointed out that tattoo artists shape the images inked into

skin, and skilled artists are recognized for their skills and practice. Tattoo artists also shape how their artwork is viewed on social media and show how tattooing as an art form is shared through their communications with artists and clients across countries and regions. Another of my fieldwork outcomes was that it showed how tattooed clients share their art with others and recommend tattooists who do aesthetically pleasing artworks.

Yet, an important contribution of my fieldwork is that tattooed clients and non-tattooed people are likely to judge artworks outside of their conceptual manifestations and representations of objects. When a tattooed artwork is only understood within a specific culture and rejected by members of outside cultures because it was not aesthetically pleasing, Gell's (1998) pragmatic theory of art could be of most use in understanding instances of cultural clashing about tattoo art and aesthetic values. Perhaps, in this turmoil where individuals and groups have invested in the social judgment of tattooed artworks in an array of cultures, members of a social group can benefit from knowledge about tattoo art's culture or cultures.

I conclude that my research is significant because I described how tattoo artists and their clients engaged with and shaped tattoo art and the aesthetic in Flax Roots Tattoo Studio, where different cultures congregate in its place of central Hamilton, Waikato, New Zealand. I have suggested earlier in this chapter that more anthropological and philosophical studies are needed to understand how a specific culture judges art and how a specific cultural tattoo is judged as an aesthetically pleasing art piece or otherwise. Additionally, little work has been done on the ethics of tattoo artists and how an acceptable paternal relationship could benefit the quality of a tattooed artwork done by an artist on a client; this would be a fruitful area for further work. Most important, with the help of tattoo artists and tattooed clients at

Flax Roots Tattoo Studio, the contribution of this study has been to conclude and confirm that art and the aesthetic cannot be separated from its function in social ties in local culture and in global cultures.

## Bibliography

- Adams, Josh. (Spring 2009). Bodies of Change: A Comparative Analysis of Media Representations of Body Modification Practices. *Sociological Perspectives*, 52, 1, 103-129. Retrieved from <http://library.gmu.edu>
- Appel, Jabob M. (Fall 2005). In Defense of Tongue Splitting. Medicine and Public Policy, *The Journal of Clinical Ethics*, 236-238. Retrieved from <http://waikato.ac.nz/library/>
- Anon. (2007). *Hamilton City Public Health Guidelines*. Retrieved from <http://www.hamilton.govt.nz/our-services/permits-and-alcohol-licensing/regulated-businesses/Pages/default.aspx>
- Aristotle. Translated by S. H. Butcher. (350 B.C.E). *Poetics*. Retrieved from [classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/poetics.html](http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/poetics.html)
- Arnaut, Karel. (2001). A pragmatic impulse in the anthropology of art? Alfred Gell and the semiotics of social objects. *Journal des Africanistes*, 71, 2, 191-208. Retrieved from <http://www.africana.ugent.be/file/8>
- Appiani, Andrea. (1794-1795). Apollo and Daphne. Retrieved from [foundinantiquity.com/2013/10/06/rape-culture-in-classical-mythology/comment-page-1/](http://foundinantiquity.com/2013/10/06/rape-culture-in-classical-mythology/comment-page-1/)
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. Translated by Helene Iswolsky. (1968, ed. 1984). *Rabelais and His World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Bazeley, Pat and Jackson, Kristi. (2013). *Qualitative Data Analysis with NVIVO* (2nd ed.). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Boas, Franz. (1914). Mythology and folk-tales of the North American Indians. *Journal of American Folklore*, 27, 106, Oct.-Dec. 374-410.



- Bernard, H. Russell. (2002). *Research Methods In Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (3rd ed.). Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. Translated by Richard Nice. (1979, ed. 1989). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgment of taste*. London: Routledge.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. Randal Johnson (Ed.). (1993). *The Field of the Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*. Oxford, UK: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. Richard Nice (Translator). (2002). *Masculine Domination*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. Richard Nice (Translator). (2004). *Science of Science and Reflexivity*. Cambridge, UK: University of Chicago Press.
- Bragg, Melvyn. (May 23, 2013). Lévi-Strauss. *In Our Time* [Podcast episode]. Retrieved from <http://itunes.apple.com>.
- Brown, Donald E. (1991). *Human Universals*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Camus, Albert. Stuart Gilbert (Translator). (1962). *The Collected Fiction of Albert Camus: The Outsider; The Plague; The Fall; Exile and the Kingdom*. London: Hamish Hamilton Ltd.
- Christensen, Carol. (January 5, 2016). Personal Correspondence.
- Chua, Liana and Elliot, Mark. (2013). Adventures in the Art Nexus. In L. Chua and M. Elliot (Eds.), *Meaning and Mattering after Alfred Gell* (pp. 1-24). United States: Berghahn Books.
- Committee on Bible Translation. (1973). *Holy Bible*. New York: The New York Bible Society.

- Creswell, John W. (2008). *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating, Quantitative and Qualitative Research (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.)*. New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Creswell, John W. (2013). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Crossley, Nick. (March 25, 2012). Mapping Reflexive Body Techniques: On Body Modification and Maintenance. *Body & Society*, 11, 1, 1-35.
- Danto, Arthur Coleman. (1998). *After the end of art: contemporary art and the pale of history*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Deleuze, Gilles. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Translators). (1995; original 1963). *Kant's Critical Philosophy*. London, UK: The Athlone Press.
- Deleuze, Gilles. Translated by Paul Patton. (1994; original 1968). *Difference and Repetition*. Great Britain: The Athlone Press.
- Davies, Stephen. (2006). *Philosophical Perspectives on Art*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Davies, Stephen. (2012). *The Artful Species: Aesthetics, Art, and Evolution*. USA: Oxford University Press.
- Dissanayake, Ellen. (Summer, 1980). Art as a Human Behavior: Toward an Ethological View of Art. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 38, 4, 397-406. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/430321>

- Dutton, Denis. (1994). Kant and the Conditions of Artistic Beauty. *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, 34, 226-241.
- Dutton, Denis. Gaut, Berys and McIver Lopes (Eds.). (2002). Aesthetic Universals. *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*. Retrieved from [www.denisdutton.com/universal.htm](http://www.denisdutton.com/universal.htm)
- Dworkin, Gerald. (January 1972). Paternalism. *Philosophy and Public Policy*, 56, 5, 64-84. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27902250>
- Fisher, Jill A. (2002). Tattooing the Body, Marking Culture. *Body and Society*, 8, 4, 91-107. Retrieved from <http://library.gmu.edu>
- Franklin, Sarah. (1996). Postmodern Body Techniques: Some Anthropological Considerations on Natural and Postnatural Bodies. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*, 18, S95-S106.
- Frueh, Joanna. (Fall 1991). Fear of Flesh That Moves. *High Performance*, Out of Print, 70-71.
- Galliot, Sébastien. (2014). *Tatouages d'Océanie : rites, techniques et images*. Paris, France: Société des Océanistes.
- Gell, Alfred. (1993). *Wrapping in Images: Tattooing in Polynesia*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press.
- Gell, Alfred. (1998). *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press.
- Geertz, Clifford. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York, NY: Basic Books, Inc.
- Geertz, Clifford. (1983). *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

- Goltermann, Svenja. (2004). Exercise and Perfection: Embodying the Nation in Nineteenth-century Germany. *European Review of History*, 11, 3, 333-346.
- Grosz, Elizabeth. (2011). *Becoming undone: Darwinian Reflections on Life, Politics, and Art*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.
- Gosden, Chris. (2013). Technologies Of Routine And Of Enchantment. In L. Chua and M. Elliot (Eds.), *Meaning and Mattering after Alfred Gell* (pp. 39-57). United States: Berghahn Books.
- Guyer, Paul. (2014). *Kant* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Hargreaves, Jennifer and Patricia Vertinsky (Eds.). (2007). *Physical culture, power, and the body*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Harris, Oliver J.T. and Robb, John. (2012). Multiple Ontologies and the Problem of the Body in History. *American Anthropologist*, 114, 4, 668-679.
- Heath, Thomas. (2012, February 27). Tattooist's art helps breast cancer patients. The Business Section of the Washington Post. *The Washington Post*.
- Humphreys, Macartan and Jacobs, Alan. (2014). *Mixed Methods: A Bayesian Integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches to Causal Inference (Version 2.1)*. Retrieved from [www.columbia.edu/~mh2245/papers1/BIQQ.pdf](http://www.columbia.edu/~mh2245/papers1/BIQQ.pdf)

- James, George. (2001, July 29). From Back Alleys to Beauty Queens. *The New York Times*.
- Joyce, James. (1994, original 1916). *A Portrait Of The Artist As A Young Man*. Toronto, Canada: Dover Publications, Inc.
- Joyce, Rosemary A. (2005). Archaeology of the Body. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 34, 139-158. Retrieved from <http://library.gmu.edu>
- Kant, Immanuel. Paul Guyer (Translator). (2000, original 1790). *The Critique of the Power of Judgement*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Kane, Danielle. (2003). Distinction worldwide? : Bourdieu's theory of taste in international context. *Poetics*, 31, 403-421. Retrieved from [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com)
- Kivy, Peter (Ed). (2004). *The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics*. USA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Cohen, Ted. The Philosophy of Taste: Thoughts on the Idea. 167-173.
  - Guyer, Paul. The Origins of Modern Aesthetics: 1711-1735. 15-21.
  - Eaton, Marcia Muelder. Art of the Aesthetic. 63-77.
  - Mothersill, Mary. Beauty and the Critic's Judgment Remapping Aesthetics. 152-166.
- Lebaron, Frederic. (2008). How Bourdieu "Quantified" Bourdieu: The Geometric Modelling of Data. Originally from Robson, K. and Sanders, C. (Eds.) (2009). *Quantifying Theory: Pierre*

- Bourdieu. *Springer Science + Business Media*. Retrieved from [upicardie.fr/labo/curapp/IMG/pdf/Robson\\_Ch02.pdf](http://upicardie.fr/labo/curapp/IMG/pdf/Robson_Ch02.pdf)
- Leedy, P. D. and Ormrod, J. (2010). *Practical Research: Planning and Design* (9th ed.) [E-library version]. New Jersey: Pearson.
- Levi-Strauss, Claude. John Russell (Translator). (1961). *A World on the Wane*. New York: Criterion Books.
- Levi-Strauss, Claude. (1978). *Myth and Meaning*. New York, NY: Random House, Inc.
- Malacrida, Claudia and Low, Jacqueline (Eds). (2008). *Sociology of the Body: A Reader*. Canada: Oxford University Press Canada.
- Marcus, G.E. (2014). How 'an anthropology of the contemporary' dwells.... *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute: 20*, 564-566. Retrieved from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1467-9655.12122/full>
- New Zealand Map Blogspot. (September, 2011). Hamilton-Waikato Map Regional City. Retrieved from <http://new-zealand-map.blogspot.co.nz/2011/09/hamilton-waikato-map-regional-city.html>
- O'Byrne, Ryan. (2011). Collective person, Connected gift: some preliminary thoughts on taonga, whakapapa, and 'the gift' in maori art. *Sites: new series*, 8, 2. Retrieved from <https://sites.otago.ac.nz/Sites/article/view/163>

- Phillips, W.J. and Huria, John. (June 27, 2008). *Maori Life & Custom. New Zealand: Raupo Publishing Ltd.*
- Peskin, A. (1993). The Goodness of Qualitative Research. *Educational Researcher*, 22 (2), 23-29.
- Plato. Translated by Benjamin Jowett. (360 B.C.E.) *The Republic*. Retrieved from [classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.html](http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.html)
- Pinker, Steven. (2014). *The Sense of Style: the Thinking Person's Guide to Writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century!* New York, NY: Penguin Group.
- Pitts-Taylor, Victoria. (1999). Body Modification, Self-Mutilation and Agency in Media Accounts of a Subculture. *Body & Society*, 5, 291-303. Retrieved from <http://waikato.ac.nz/library/>
- Pitts-Taylor, Victoria (2003). *In the Flesh: The Cultural Politics of Body Modification*. USA: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rabinow, Paul M. (1997) *Essays in the Anthropology of Reason*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Rees, Michael. (2016). From Outsider to Established- Explaining the Current Popularity and Acceptability of Tattooing. *Historical Social Research*, 41 (3), 157-174.
- Reybol, L Earle, Lammert, Jill D, and Stribling, Stacia M. (2013). Qualitative Research. *Sage Publishing*, 13, 699-716. Retrieved from <http://waikato.ac.nz/library/>
- Ritchie, A. (1989). *Picts: An Introduction to the Life of the Picts and the Carved Stones in the Care of the Secretary of State for Scotland*. Stationery Office Books (TSO).

- Robley, H.G. (1896, 1998 ed.) *Moko: The Art and History of Maori Tattooing*. Chantham, Kent: Senate Press Limited.
- Sanders, Clinton R. with D. Angus Vail. *Customising the Body: The Art and Culture of Tattooing*. (2008). Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Sanders, Clinton R. (1988). Marks of Mischief: Becoming and Being Tattooed. *Journal of – Contemporary Ethnography*, 16, 395, 395-432. Retrieved from <http://waikato.ac.nz/library/>
- Sanders, Clinton R. (2000). Tattooing and Body Piercing. Entry in Charles Faupel and Paul Roman (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Criminology and Deviant Behavior* (Volume Four: Self-Destructive Behavior and Devalued Identity), Philadelphia: Taylor and Francis, pp. 531-534.
- Sanders, Clinton R. (2009). Colorful Writing: Doing and Living with a Tattoo Ethnography. Anthony Puddephat, William Shaffir, and Steven Kleinknecht (eds.), *Ethnography Revisited*. Boston: Routledge, pp. 63-76.
- Sanders, Clinton R. (2010). Ethnography as Dangerous, Sad, and Dirty Work. *New Frontiers in Ethnography: Studies in Qualitative Methodology*, 11, 101-124. Retrieved from <http://waikato.ac.nz/library/>
- Sapir, E. Symbols. *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, XIV. New York; Macmillan.
- Sheets-Johnstone, Maxine. (May 1999). *The Primacy of Movement*. Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Silverman, David. (1993). Beginning Research. *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analysing Talk, Text and Interaction*. Londres, France: Sage Publications.



Smeaton, Winifred. (March, 1936). Tattooing Among The Arabs Of Iraq. Oral Presentation to the American Oriental Society.

Snell, Dave. (2012). Embodying Identity Through Tattooing: Auto-Ethnography and the Bodyscape. Retrieved from [http://researcharchive.wintec.ac.nz/2224/2/Embodying\\_identity\\_through\\_tattooing\\_\(edited\).pdf](http://researcharchive.wintec.ac.nz/2224/2/Embodying_identity_through_tattooing_(edited).pdf)

Spencer-Oatey, H. (2011). Conceptualising 'the relational' in pragmatics: insights from metapragmatic emotion and (im)politeness comments. *Journal of Pragmatics*: 43,14, 3565 – 3578. Retrieved from <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/staff/teaching/spencer-oatey/>

Stewart, Susan. (1993). *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Thomas, Nicholas. (2006). The Case of Tattooing. In A. Schneider and C. Wright (Eds.), *Contemporary Art and Anthropology* (pp. 177-189). New York, NY: Berg.

Te Awekotuku, Ngahuia and Nikora, Linda Waimarie. (2007). *Mau Moko: The World of Maori Tattoo*. Auckland, New Zealand: Penguin Group Ltd.

Turner, Bryan S. (Ed.). (2012). *Routledge Handbook of Body Studies*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Turner, Bryan S. & Featherstone (Eds). (1995-2014). *Body and Society*. Sage Journals. USA: Sage Publishing.

- Turner, Victor. (1967). *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Turner, Victor. (1974). Ritual Paradigm and Political Action: Thomas Becket at the Council of Northampton. In *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*, 60-97. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Turner, Victor. (1974). Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow, and Ritual: An Essay in Comparative Symbology. *The Rice University Studies*, 60, 3, 53-92. Retrieved from [http://scholarship.rice.edu/bitstream/handle/1911/63159/article\\_RIP603\\_part4.pdf?sequence=1](http://scholarship.rice.edu/bitstream/handle/1911/63159/article_RIP603_part4.pdf?sequence=1)
- Walsh, Ryan J. (2011). Painting on a Canvas of Skin: Tattooing and the First Amendment. *The University of Chicago Law Review*. Retrieved from [https://lawreview.uchicago.edu/sites/lawreview.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/78.3/78\\_3\\_Walsh.pdf](https://lawreview.uchicago.edu/sites/lawreview.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/78.3/78_3_Walsh.pdf)
- Williams, DJ. (2009). Deviant Leisure: Rethinking “The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly”. *Leisure Sciences*, 31, 207-213.
- Wilson, Carla. (2001). Review: Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples. *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, 17, 214-218. Retrieved from <http://www.msd.govt.nz>
- Wright, Christopher. (2010). In the Thick of It: Notes on Observation and Context. In A. Schneider and C. Wright (Eds.), *Between Art and Anthropology: Contemporary Ethnographic Practice* (pp. 67-74). New York, NY: Berg.
- Van, Duser. (2015, February 18). Tattoo Style Guide. *Inked*. Retrieved from <http://www.inkedmag.com/tattoo-style-guide/1/>

- Van Gennep, A. 1960. *The Rites of Passage*. London, UK: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Veblen, Thorstein. (1899; Ebook ed. 2013). *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. Retrieved from [www.guttenbuerg.org/files/833/833-h/833-h.htm](http://www.guttenbuerg.org/files/833/833-h/833-h.htm)
- University of Waikato. (2013). *Ethical Conduct in Human Research and Related Activities Regulations*. Retrieved from <http://calendar.waikato.ac.nz/assessment/ethicalConduct.html>
- University of Waikato. (2013). *Postgraduate Higher Degree Handbook*. Waikato, New Zealand: University of Waikato.
- Youth Law Aotearoa. (2015). Tattoos & piercings. *Youth Law Aotearoa*. Retrieved from <http://www.youthlaw.co.nz/information/health-wellbeing/tattoos-and-piercings/>

## Appendixes

### Appendix I

#### Research Questions Table

[Based on a participant's response, I followed-up with specific questions that were not asked of every participant. The center column contains examples of how one question may have been followed-up by me.]

Main Question	Follow-up Question Examples (only asked when relevant)	Relation to Research (for researcher only)
<b>1. Please describe your tattoo (s).</b>	<b>A) Where is that tattoo located?</b>  <b>B) What is the color and shading of that tattoo?</b>  <b>C) Why (don't you like/do you like) doing that tattoo on your clients? [Tattoo Artists]</b>	<p>How are tattoos related to aesthetic of the human body and artistic preferences?</p> <p>Are different tattoos on different people considered to be more or less aesthetically pleasing or artistically valued by specific people?</p>
<b>2. What was your age when you obtained that tattoo?</b>	<b>A) Why do you (regret) decide/ing to get that tattoo at that age?</b>  <b>B) Why did you get that tattoo removed/ covered up?</b>  <b>C) Did people look at you differently (before/after) obtaining that tattoo?</b>	<p>Does age play a role in how an individual believes a tattoo to be aesthetically pleasing, artistically valuable, and socially acceptable?</p> <p>Do different generations of people view a particular tattoo, tattoo style, or tattooing different ways?</p>
<b>3. Please describe Hamilton, New Zealand.</b>	<b>A) Why do you prefer that area to reside at instead of another place to reside at within Hamilton?</b>  <b>B) Why (did you choose/didn't you choose) to work here [Tattoo Artists]?</b>	<p>To what extent does geographical location influence the type of tattoo an individual has on one's body?</p> <p>To what extent does an artist at a tattoo studio influence a person's</p>

		decision to have a particular tattoo done?
<b>4. Do you identify with a certain group of people? (if needed to give examples for interviewee, such as: ethnically; nationally; politically; collectively; religiously; secularly; (etc.)?)</b>	<p><b>A) Why do you belong to that particular group? (Why do you share those beliefs)?</b></p> <p><b>B) [Tattoo Artists] Since you share this group's ideologies, is that why you (do/do not do) that type of tattoo?</b></p> <p><b>C) Why did that group association influence you to get that tattoo? (if person mentions group's influence to get a certain tattoo)</b></p>	<p>To what extent does an individual's group affiliation influence their beliefs about tattooing?</p> <p>To what extent does belonging or not belonging to a group of people affect a person's judgments about art and aesthetics in regard to tattooing?</p>
<b>5. What do you think of the tattoos you have seen in Hamilton?</b>	<p><b>A) Why (do you like/don't you like) that person's tattoo?</b></p> <p><b>B) Why do you desire a tattoo like that or Why do you desire to do a tattoo (like that/different from) that [Tattoo Artists]?</b></p> <p><b>C) Why do you (like/dislike) doing tattoos in that style [Tattoo Artists]?</b></p>	<p>Why does an individual perceive a tattoo as aesthetically pleasing and/or artistically acceptable or not acceptable?</p> <p>How do a people identify themselves in relation to others known to be tattooed?</p> <p>To what extent do sociocultural factors influence a person's decision to be tattooed in a particular way?</p>
<b>6. What is your gender and sex?</b>	<b>A) Why do you think/don't you think) your gender identity and sexual identity play a role in your choice of tattoo?</b>	Does self-identified gender and sex play a role in the choice of a particular tattoo?

<p><b>7. Please describe your occupation (s) and hobbies.</b></p>	<p><b>A) Did you get your tattoos before or after you started that particular (job/hobby) in Hamilton?</b></p> <p><b>B) Has working in a tattoo studio influenced the way you think about tattooing and create tattoos [Tattoo Artist]?</b></p> <p><b>C) Does that tattoo have any relation to that (job/hobby)?</b></p>	<p>To what extent do occupations and hobbies influence the type of tattoo an individual has?</p>
---	--	--

## Appendix II

### Reference Chart of Participants' Tattoos

Name (*for artists)	Tattoo(s) Described (with Location)	# of Tattoo(s)
Brandon*	First tattoo (covered-up chest); Wedding Ring (covered-up); Japanese-Inspired collage in European Traditional Style (right arm) [many tattoos]	15+
Darryn	Design on chest	1
Francis	Many references to Bogan lifestyle- Black Skull (inner, lower left arm); Pentagram (above black skull on left arm); Nuclear Sign (below black skull on left arm); Lighter Black Skull (finished after interview); Demon-like cartoon figures (on legs at various locations); Colored Stars (feet); Made in NZ (ankle); Initials (neck) [15 tattoos total]	15
Justin	Daughter's name, Bella Rose (chest), in middle of two roses (one on each front shoulder); Heart covered by Scales that represents partner and diabetes (upper, left arm)	4
Kylee	Two Butterflies lifting four words, in an oval, describing family (touched-up, on upper back); Male Deer head with flowers that represents love of nature (upper half of left arm); flower ankle bracelet for her Grandma on ankle	3
Lisa	Sewing Notions referring to her, and her mother's love, of sewing (top of right foot); Japanese symbol (abdomen)	2
Makkala*	Colorful collage in European Traditional Style (back of thigh); Symmetrical Designs (various locations); butterfly (back of left knee)	15+
Marc W. *	Moko referring to immediate family (on right arm); Neo-Traditional Style of owls, ghouls, and gypsy women (left arm); Rose with Kids Names on it (left	15+

	forearm); Borneo Flowers (on shoulders); Dots tattoos (hands); Bob Marley (leg)	
Rhian	Treble Cleft (inside left wrist) and Bass Cleft (inside right wrist)	2
Robert	Primus Inter Pares, Latin phrase for “First Among Equals” (upper left, back shoulder); Tattoo of Place and Family - Silver fern for New Zealand above the fern is the New South Wales, Waratah and below is the Queensland orchid, Kanuka (left rib cage); tattoo (upper ribs closer to arm) refers to carrying his family	3
Tracey	From <i>Spirited Away</i> , the character is Kaonashi or No Face (back of upper left calve); TCOB, for “taking care of business” in Old English referring to a song from New York hardcore band, Skarhead (lower, back of left ankle); imagery of cover song, “Jane Doe” from band Converge (inner left arm); bird Swallows (on back); tale of Japanese Kabuki theater centering on Geishas (left arm); Xs referring to a friend (touched-up, inner right wrist); Spider and spider web (inner left leg)	7-10
Vaughan	Horses with flowers, in the foreground, represent his sister’s horseback riding. The background of Kowhai Ridge, in Rotorua, is surrounded by a clouds that represents family and people involved on the family farm (left arm); Couple he wasn’t happy with (covered-up); New Zealand mistletoe for cousin, Holly, who died (wants to get cover-up or re-done, on chest); lyrics from a New Zealand song called “Sophie”, by the band Goodshirt (collarbone); “Live a full throttle life” in Nepalese (inner left arm); “Be the one to guide me if I need but never hold me down” (on calves)	7/8



## Appendix III

### Brief Descriptions of Discussed Tattoo Styles

(Some of these alphabetized tattoo descriptions are on the website page called “Tattoo Style Guide” from author, Natasha Van Duser, which is on the website of the magazine *Inked*; other descriptions are summarized from my notes.)

Abstract- are tattoos that alter the reality of a particular subject matter. These tattoos may be modern designs, like surrealism or cubism, or they can be playful absurdist reproductions (Shaver, 2015).

American Traditional- “Popularized by tattooist Norman “Sailor Jerry” Collins in the 1930s, this style is based on bold, clean black outlines and a minimal, well saturated color palette consisting mainly of primary colors. Traditional imagery typically consists of skulls, roses, and daggers” (Duser, 2015).

Celtic- were originally done, for warriors, by the Woad plant in the Northern European isles. Although not all Celts spoke Gaelic, ancestral speakers or current Gaelic speakers often use these symbolic tattoos for present-day designs. Additionally, Celtic tattoos are popular among people who do not speak a Gaelic language (Shaver, 2015).

European Traditional- comprises a vast array of traditional tattoo styles originating from Eastern and Western Europe.

Neo-European Traditional – “Neo-traditional is a more modern twist on American [T]raditional tattooing, ...[or European Traditional tattooing]... in which more realistic depth, shading,

color and detail are added to traditional conventions. Many neo-traditional images include stylized portrait-like images of women and personified animals (Duser, 2015).

Flash– are tattoo sketches that have achieved celebrity status and are inked on many clients (Shaver, 2015).

Classic Flash- sometimes Sailor Jerry tattoos are considered this, as well as certain types of Celtic and Traditional European style tattoos (Shaver, 2015).

Iban – are that tattoos come from the Iban people from Borneo, Indonesia. Many of these tattoos are black and represent transitions of life phases, often connected with the natural and supernatural worlds (Shaver, 2015).

Japanese- “Inspired by the ancient Japanese tebori (hand carved) tattooing techniques, the traditional Japanese style was popularized in Japan by the Yakuza, the Japanese criminal underworld. Like American traditional, it is based on bold black outlines and minimal shading, but typically features images inspired by traditional Japanese art and nature as well as creatures and characters from Japanese folklore. Traditional Japanese imagery typically consists of lotus flowers, koi fish, tigers, warriors and waves” (Duser, 2015).

Kelabit – weaving and spiral designs that resemble the Maori designs for women. However, Kelabit tattoos are primarily for beautification purposes and rarely reflect status rank.

Ta Moko- was traditionally done with chisels and from the soot of burned Kauri gum by the Maoris of New Zealand. The body and face were tattooed by designs that could symbolize family, place, hierarchy; oftentimes with an underlying supernatural meaning (Shaver, 2015).

Neo-Moko- has blossomed after Maori artists, and non-Maori artists, play with Ta Moko designs that are considered traditional. As what often happens when an artist challenges what is deemed culturally significant, some socio-political backlash has occurred mainly in New Zealand (Shaver, 2015).

Pictish- are tattoos done on the warrior males of the Picts people who lived in northern Scotland. Not much is known about the meanings of these tattoos, but more information is being produced by scholars who study these descendants of the Romans. However, Pictish designs have interwoven histories with Celtic designs (Shaver, 2015).

Polynesian- are tattoos found in various parts of the South Pacific islands. Many of these tattoos symbolize relationships to family, place, spirituality, gender, and status. Iban, Moko, and Samoan tattoos are from the Polynesian region.

Portrait- “Portraiture is a style typically done in realism in which a portrait of someone is recreated as a tattoo. Realism portraits can be found in color or black and grey and usually are created by making a stencil over a pre-existing photograph or image in order to get an exact likeness of the image to be inked” (Duser, 2015).

Religious- are symbols, iconographies, or phrases referencing a belief and cultural system. One of the most popular religious systems that has globally recognizable symbols is Christianity, so Christians may choose to identify themselves by tattoos. I focus on Christianity as an example of religious tattoos because a few interviewees discussed Christianity and tattooing in my fieldwork. Oddly enough, the Old Testament of the Bible says “Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the LORD” (Leviticus 19:28, New International Version). The New Testament does not directly address tattooing, although it has a few phrases on the subject of body purity. I am assuming that

some tattooed Christians do not interpret the New Testament as prohibiting tattooing (Shaver, 2015).

Samoan- are tattoos traditionally done by the people of Samoa in a type of black soot from coconuts. Many Samoan tattooists perform these tattoos, which can be done most places on the body, by dotting the skin with a sharp instrument, oftentimes a piece of bamboo. The tattooing process can be quite painful for some people. Samoan tattoos symbolize status, gender, and cultural identity (Shaver, 2015).

Tribal – simple or complex black tattoos based on traditional tattoo styles such as Iban, Maori, and Celtic designs.