Women and Tattoos: Identity Construction

ABSTRACT
In the western societies, there has been a lot of investigation around the body since 1980. The body as a whole concept tends to become a resource that can be worked upon at the will of the individual, and one of the common ways to change the body aspect is through tattoos.

Tattoos suffered a big transformation in their graphics, social and symbolical design in the last decades of the twentieth century, which contributed to the standardization of the changes that can be made to the human body. Men and Women were slowly but surely attracted by the general idea of getting tattoos, and as these were spreading throughout the different social classes they earned new insightful meanings.

In a consumerist society with strict rules when it comes to behavior, individuals are forced to follow standardized body projects. Furthermore, when we speak about heavily tattooed bodies, we can acknowledge that these individuals deviate from the previously determined standards. And if we focus on women, these almost seem forgotten about their tattoos, especially the heavily tattooed bodies create a silent social phenomenon within the same consumerists societies. This scenario makes the study of the phenomenon a useful and prolific way of understanding tattoos in a social context, and possibly generate more interest surrounding this subject.

Our work tries to identify the role of tattoos in the foundations of the female identity. Our objective consist of: identifying the reasons that take women to get tattoos, understanding the importance and visibility of these body changes and their social, professional and personal context. Using a methodology based on qualitative procedures, with a special focus on data recovered from in-depht interviews to women who have highly visible tattoos that are hard to hide in a public scenario.

Our findings revealed that women with an overwhelming number of tattoos, have gained new body projects that are not contained inside the norms of society. Tattoos are a clear representation of the "I", as well as a way to show the criteria in which the "Self" can express itself, showing a disdain towards the social pressure. These body changes create an image that each individual wants of his own body and also raises their self-esteem as a result of set changes. Ultimately the will of pursuing each personal projects prevails over any behavior or beauty standards.

Keywords: body, tattoos, identity, women, body projects.