

## MAKING

### **The tattooed feminine body: Considerations for sexuality and British culture**

**Charlotte Dann**

While numerous pieces of research discuss the rise in popularity of tattoos, especially among women, there is still more to be said about how these tattooed feminine bodies are navigated within specific cultures – in this instance, in Britain. Though there are still clearly traditional ideals of femininity that influence how we make sense of women's bodies, there is a need for more specific focus on *intersecting* issues such as gender, class, and sexuality. In this chapter, I explore tattooed women's bodies in a British cultural context, through discourses of femininity, gender, and class.<sup>1</sup> I consider the influence that normative constructions of femininity, and tattoos being embedded within a classed culture, have had on how tattooed women make sense of their bodies.

#### **Situating femininity, tattoos, and culture**

In order to make sense of women's tattooed bodies in this cultural context, we first need to understand those normative ideals of femininity in Britain which are constructed around white, middle-class, and thin ideals for women which serve to 'other' different understandings of femininity.<sup>2</sup> Tattooed women have historically been associated with working-class bodies. Class-based constructions shape how the tattooed body is read, with particular implications for how tattoos are seen as tasteful and authentic. The intersections of tattooed bodies with factors such as class and gender serve as points of tension to unpack in terms of how women navigate their feminine positions. Here, I consider how women constitute themselves as tattooed subjects; how social discourses and practices surrounding tattooing and femininity are constructed in contemporary British culture; and what the implications of these constructions are for how women position themselves as tattooed feminine subjects.

Dominant ideas about femininity are always-already classed. As British sociologist Bev Skeggs notes, 'respectability has always been a marker and a burden of class, a standard to which to aspire'.<sup>3</sup> This classed femininity is also imbued with a clear value judgement: middle-class femininity is positioned socially as desirable,

while 'other' femininities are viewed more negatively. Their positioning outside the normative ideal also means that these 'other' femininities are often more visible and subject to particular forms of regulation. We must also consider how practices of body modification challenge oppressive hegemonic boundaries, especially in terms of beauty, gender and sexuality. In this respect, those who are considered as 'other' are able to re/construct their own narrative bodies, taking agency for them and forming their own identities. Tattoos provide the wearer with the ability to challenge representations of women and femininity, resisting regulative constructions.

The vast majority of research that is available on tattoos concerns mostly men, or does not fully understand the implications that gender has for bodily adornment, let alone other factors such as sexuality and race. In previous work, I have sought to expand understandings of how we make sense of our tattooed feminine bodies, paying particular attention to how, for women, meaning is situated within expectations of caregiving, being a 'good citizen', and a skilful understanding of 'right' and 'wrong' in relation to being tattooed.<sup>4</sup> As a form of social and material practice, tattoos communicate social and economic identities, potentially enabling the person's background, culture and history to be 'read' by the observer. The placement of a tattoo provides societal perceptions of class, sexuality, and mental health, among other intersections, showing the difference that placement and visibility can make. This has an impact on how femininity is read by others, as those who have hidden tattoos are less likely to experience negativity, or to be subjected to stereotypical constructions of resisting femininity.

Tattooing in itself subverts traditional, middle-class notions of what it is to be feminine. First, feminine beauty is viewed as pure and natural – by permanently inking the skin, the body is no longer pure. As Skeggs notes, 'the surface of their bodies is the site upon which distinctions are drawn', suggesting that a tattoo visibly displays the class of the woman, which permanently positions them within working-class boundaries.<sup>5</sup> This is important for how women position themselves as feminine subjects, by having to keep in mind how they might be perceived by others. Given that tattoos are both classed and visible, to be tattooed within this class context permanently positions the person who bears it as 'other' – it inscribes their class location onto their body. For women this is particularly the case, as the tattooed body so entirely violates class-based norms of femininity. Sexuality and culture are crucial

in tandem in the context of tattoos, because focusing on each separately is to ignore the nuances that emerge through the ways they intersect.

My qualitative research focused on regulation, conformity, and resistance as discourses regarding women's tattooed bodies. For this British-centred research, fourteen Midlands-based women were interviewed, answering questions relating to their tattoos, especially in terms of how they felt their tattoos related to their work and to their understanding of femininity.

The women ranged in age from 18-57, and came from a diverse range of backgrounds. They had different employment histories, education, and life experiences, and I gave the women pseudonyms for confidentiality.<sup>6</sup> I drew on Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) to explore how language was used, and how power was produced in the interviews.<sup>7</sup> In my analysis of our conversations, I identified the multiple ways in which objects such as tattoos, clothing, and accessories were spoken about, always trying to understand the different positions that the women offered, and allowing for the relationship between these objects and subjects (women). I employed FDA from an intersectional perspective, being alert to the layers of meaning and experience that made up the discussions, and paying particular attention to intersections such as class, gender, and age.

I was a part of the interview process (and, indeed, of the research overall) – I am a part of British culture, having been brought up here, and in the Midlands; I am visibly tattooed, with larger pieces on my arms; and I am from a working-class background. These points are important to take into account when considering the power relations and subjectivities in the interviews, as I sit in insider and outsider positions simultaneously with the women with whom I spoke.<sup>8</sup> Here, two discourses are presented which focus explicitly on sexuality and culture in the context of tattooed women's bodies.

### **Pervasive notions of normative femininity**

Expectations of femininity, especially in terms of its ideal representation, relate not only to the *tattooed* feminine body, but also to expectations around appearance and sexuality. The idea of femininity I am discussing here exists in a heteronormative context, and, because of this, we can see how any other expression of sexuality is positioned as 'other'. One of the interviewed women, Mae, notes the discord between societal perceptions of 'pretty', and how tattoos fit with this:

Yeah 'cause they're not pretty tattoos. If you're a girl you should have pretty tattoos, or they ruin you [...]. My favourite one is actually: 'You're quite good looking so why [*sic.*] have you done them for?'

Interesting here is the notion of having a 'pretty' tattoo, which could be read as a more 'girly'-looking tattoo: smaller, with imagery that is more traditionally associated with femininity. This is in contrast to Mae's tattoos. She explains elsewhere in her interview that she does not like 'girly' designs, and has several skulls and oddities in the imagery of her tattoos. The point being made here, which highlights some of the complexity in navigating femininity and 'othered' positions, is not that women cannot have tattoos – tattoos can still be feminine – but they need to be 'pretty' to be acceptable.

Mae's point that non-pretty tattoos would 'ruin you' is suggestive, in a negative way, as it reduces the whole person to how the body looks in relation to perceptions of femininity. This produces an assumption about what the person must be like as a whole, based solely on their tattoos. Being 'ruined' through a tattoo reduces a woman to their looks, reinforcing superficial notions of what should be important for women: it is not just about the tattoo, but 'ruined' becomes an identity, based on what is visible. The statement is positioned almost as a warning, but at the same time, Mae shrugs it off, knowing that it is not the case for her – her tattoos have given her confidence and she does not see herself as being 'ruined' because of the tattoos that she has. She is creating a distinguishing feature between herself and these 'other women', implying that it is perhaps a sense of self confidence and a level of identification with her tattoos that enables her to see past this negative construction. At the same time, it is precisely through the use of constructions such as authenticity and distancing herself from class representations that she distinguishes herself.

Mae draws on others' comments on her tattoos to highlight how feminine prettiness is constructed culturally as antithetical to tattoos. In this construction, tattoos become emblematic of a spoiled femininity; as the mark of the 'anti-feminine'. She suggests that others ask her 'so why [*sic.*] have you done them for?' as though a woman cannot be both pretty (or good-looking, as she highlighted) and tattooed. By considering what it means to be feminine, we can ascertain what *non*-feminine is too: femininity and being pretty are presented in a certain way, without tattoos. This is not to say that those with tattoos cannot be deemed 'pretty'. However, Mae's statement does suggest that if you are tattooed, you are less likely to be considered attractive.<sup>9</sup>

A complex relationship with the gaze is being articulated here: Mae draws on her position as traditionally feminine, while simultaneously resisting it.

Constructions of femininity were not lost on my other interviewees, either. As Artoria told me:

It's difficult to accept that women are wanting and getting more tattoos, but it's just: 'Look, ooh, well, that's not going to look right', and it's the whole 1940s kind of ladylike way, because I still think people expect women to have long hair, not short hair, and to be prim and proper [...]. See, like, I could wear the same outfit as a boy now, because the fashion and times have changed so much, like I'm wearing Converse. Boys wear Converse. I'm wearing skinny jeans. Boys wear skinny jeans now. And just a plain top. They all blend into one but they still expect you to look feminine, 'cause if I had short hair and [was] wearing this someone would be like 'Oh, she's a lesbian'. You just know that [...] they expect you to wear make-up.

In perceptions of femininities, anything less than the ideal can be seen in an unfavourable way, and in the example of Artoria, one construction which is seen as unfavourable is to be viewed as a lesbian – as though sexual orientation has an impact on the representation of femininity, and vice versa. The issue of not being perceived as feminine is not just an issue of gender, then, but is also a factor in respect to heteronormative ideals placed upon women. Stereotypes in relation to sexual orientation are formed around perceptions of women who are othered in relation to ideal femininity.

Artoria describes how dress sense has evolved over the decades, and suggests that contemporary fashion is more androgynous than it has been previously. However, she also suggests that to avoid censure as 'too masculine', she needs to manage her appearance, by compensating for her tattoos and short hair with other markers of femininity – for example, by wearing make-up. She makes specific reference to an era when clothing for women was hyper-feminine; hair was quite elaborate; and women did not do as much as they would be able to do today. The managing of feminine appearance detailed here is very much in line with traditional heterosexual expectations of feminine appearance. Heterosexuality is assumed, as the hyper-feminine appearance that Artoria portrays is subjected to the male gaze. Clothing and how the body is read as feminine change over time, with policing and self-regulating of dress to show 'appropriate' positionings.

Other interviewees discussed how heteronormative assumptions and ideals of femininity became issues. Violet told me that:

[I]f you've got a woman covered in tattoos they're automatically seen as gay because they're not pretty and pristine, and it's not like that at all. [...] I think for me, it doesn't affect me 'cause I personally get the really frustrating thing of 'You're not gay, you're too pretty to be gay', and I'm like, 'Excuse me!' like, because I will like when I go out like I will put make-up on. I will have my hair down. I will wear heels. I'll wear dresses, and that's an automatic thing for a guy. I'm like 'No'.

Violet makes explicit reference to the intersections of her sexuality, her tattoos, and the heteronormative assumptions of culture in relation to sexuality and the performance of femininity. She describes how she 'achieves' in some ways the heteronormative standard of femininity – by being pretty and by wearing typically feminine clothes. However, her tattoos are at odds with that construction, due to their visibility, and their larger size.<sup>10</sup> In this sense, the tattoo might be read as functioning explicitly to disrupt heteronormative standards for feminine beauty. Violet's is a complex statement, and it is a complex position she is articulating. It shows not only how women are navigating the interplay of gender and sexuality in the context of British culture, but also opinions about tattoos today.

A key issue Violet raises is the assumption that the performance of femininity is conflated with perceived sexual availability (or willingness?), and that this is for the pleasure of men, rather than being for the woman herself. Under a male gaze, her feminine presentation is constructed as an indication of (hetero)sexual availability, and she expresses frustration with that. Violet narrates a more complex construction of gender, sexuality and the presentation of femininity. You can have tattoos and still be read as feminine (and straight), if, in other ways, you present the complete 'package' of femininity. There is almost an expectation that making 'an effort' and being feminine are for the purpose of others – a heteronormative assumption to which Violet does not subscribe, and from which she feels almost removed, given her sexual orientation as a lesbian. At the same time, there is also pressure for women to 'do' their appearance *for themselves*. This is part of the 'Because you're worth it' culture of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Women should *want* to look attractive, because that expresses the authentic self, because it is a form of self-care. Looking good is thus framed as a moral virtue, and

not caring about your appearance is regarded as a character flaw, and dressing nicely *for others* is seen as inauthentic.

Another key consideration is the importance of placement and size of the tattoos. In literature, we see reference to placement of the tattoo in the context of employment, and even in terms of identity more broadly, but it is often overlooked in the context of perceptions of gender expectation and expression of sexuality. As Annie told me:

Anywhere that I wouldn't get a tattoo? Erm, probably I wouldn't have it at the top of my arm, you know, I've got the old bingo wings. I did see on the telly, a girl like she had some writing there [inside of the arm] and it looked really pretty, looked really funky on her. I like things that are sort of different, a bit funky [...] but, yeah, I think I'd end up looking a bit, I don't want to use like the stereotypical, but I'd look a bit butch [*laughs*].

Here, we see Annie discussing the potential placement of her tattoo, with an almost passing comment that references sexuality as a negative. To be seen to be 'butch' is positioned as unfavourable – not feminine, and not desirable. This then, is not just about who you are as a person (someone who has tattoos), but what the *performance* of that person is (or, how the body is 'read'). 'Butch' is quite a specific performance of 'othered' femininity, engrained within sexuality as much as it is gender.

Overall, the perception of femininities and how they are constructed is a complex issue, constituted in intersections with factors like gender, sexuality, and class. In the interviews, we see how the ideal of the heterosexual and feminine woman reigns as the norm with all else othered – though the femininities discussed are in different forms, they are still positioned in relation to this ideal. Concepts of heteronormativity are applied to femininity – the heteronormative focus presented here further compounds the othering not just of gendered expectations, but of how tattoos and dress intertwine in a British cultural context. Regardless of how women dress, there are still certain expectations that need to be adhered to for women to be seen as favourably feminine.

In the interviewees' talk about tattoos, it is clear that dominant constructions of idealised femininity play a significant role in how they narrate the tattooed body. However, constructing their *own* femininities is a fraught process in relation to tattoos, with clear tensions in the need to negotiate a clear sense of self that adheres to expectations of femininity in some respects, while at the same time resisting traditional

and outdated views of femininity through tattoos. Tattoo imagery is crucial here, enabling women either to resist or to conform to constructions of femininity depending on the imagery they choose. However, the choices women make about their tattoos are not just confined to themselves – given the cultural context within which they are located, women’s tattooed bodies are open to be read by others, and from multiple viewpoints.

### **Tattoos as embedded in a classed culture**

Femininities and class-based positionings intersect in British culture. Normative femininities are historically rooted in white, middle-class ideals of being ‘ladylike’, with other forms of femininities often being ‘othered’. Class was discussed both explicitly and implicitly in the interviews, always in terms of tattoos being working-class, and ‘other’. For example, in this extract, Nora talks about class and tattoos as an issue for other people:

If you’re middle-class and you’re coated in tattoos, you’re gonna get, sort of, shunned from your society from everyone else that’s around you, whereas in a lower class where everyone else already has all of the tattoos, it’s culture, really: [if] everyone around you has a tattoo, you’re gonna wanna get one as well.

Here, class, like gender, is produced as binary: working class and middle class. Nora describes it as a shared, working-class phenomenon, framing tattoos as part of belonging for working-class people. In contrast, she suggests that extensive tattoos are inappropriate for middle-class people. She implies that there are rules, and that transgressing those can result in being excluded from that culture. Middle-class people are often cited as referring to tattoos more as ‘artwork’, changing the meaning of the tattoo to something with more cultural capital. In addition, there is the suggestion that smaller, daintier, and hidden tattoos are more alluring than heavier skin coverage. Nora seems to refer to more heavy coverage (‘coated in tattoos’), which would not be seen as something desired by those in the middle classes.

Nora positions it almost as abnormal not to be tattooed if you are from a ‘lower class’ – this class association is seen by Nora as influential in the choices being made in getting tattooed. How class is presented here (middle class as better) is replicated within tattooed circles, as a kind of hierarchy – those who have more skin coverage and tattoos by well-known artists are seen to be higher up the hierarchy, with those

who have been recently tattooed or only have small or hidden pieces being nearer to the bottom. This apparently subversive hierarchy still replicates expectations of the self in terms of what is considered 'good' and 'other'.

Different attitudes emerge in the interviews, a fact which highlights variability in readings of tattooed feminine bodies. For some, larger tattoos are an indicator of authenticity (an authentic self), while, for others, they are a sign of poor taste. Either way, this shows the regulative practices around tattooing, from the point of view of the tattoo community, and also from gendered and classed norms. The perspective of gender and class norms is demonstrated by Maud, discussing the tattoo choices of a friend:

I think she'll regret [it]; she's like so well-spoken, and she portrays this image, they don't match the person that she is now. [...] I mean, she went to the south of France with his family, and I said 'Did you get your tattoos out? Did you wear shorts?' and she said 'Yeah', and I said 'Did people look at you?' and she said 'Yeah', and I said, 'Well, were you embarrassed?' and she said 'Well, I wasn't embarrassed because of my tattoos, but people were looking at me'. So, you know, she's not going to have another one.

While she is discussing the tattoos and associated issues of other people, the story in this extract still articulates Maud's position – tattoos should be hidden and they should be small, so that you are not read unfavourably. In this sense, she positions her friend in a way that does not allow her to transcend class boundaries – her extensive tattoo places her in a position of being read as working class. This sits at odds with her current lifestyle, and being part of an affluent family. 'Tattoo regret' has been noted as common when the symbolic nature of the tattoo no longer represents something meaningful to the wearer. It must, however, be acknowledged that there is not always a relationship between meaning and social class – therefore, simply positioning 'regret' as a singular position fails to recognise the social discourses at play.

Maud does not just detail an issue with tattoos, but also with classed locations – it is the social space and context that dictate the appropriateness of the tattoo, or in this case, the revelation of flesh that is tattooed. The normalised discourse for the 'well-spoken' person produces the kind of femininity that would be appropriate. Visibility of tattoos on the skin in everyday life is often overlooked in considering factors around tattoos and women's bodies.

The final point about Maud is that in evaluating the other woman's tattoos, she reproduces a class-based gaze, imposing her own standards for middle-class femininity on her friend. Her presumption that others would stare at her friend's tattoos reflects her own evaluative gaze. She judges her for her tattoo choices, their visibility, and their size. Her suggestion that her friend is 'well-spoken' and will therefore regret her choice is a clear indication of a class-based judgement around appropriate tattoo choices. There is a perceived difference between the class of person who is well-spoken and the class of person who has large, visible tattoos. In displaying visible tattoos, she sees her friend as exceeding the boundaries of appropriateness for a nice, 'well-spoken' lady. This is continued in Maud's reference to society's judgement based on tattoo visibility:

Me: Is there anywhere that you wouldn't get tattooed?

Maud: On my face [*laughs*], on my arms, my legs, somewhere you can see.

Me: Yeah, but it's on your foot. Surely that's visible?

Maud: Yeah, but I can cover it up.

Me: But can you not cover it up if it was on your legs? Or your arms?

Maud: Mmm no. It's different [...] no [...] that's unacceptable. *That* is not where I would have it done, ever ever.

Me: Why so?

Maud: Because society judge you.

This extract shows the link that has been made between a visible tattoo and how you may be perceived for having one. Maud only has one tattoo, on her foot and, as discussed in her interview, this was deliberate so that it could not be seen, and she could cover it if she needed to. She distinguishes between different parts of the body in a way that would deem it more or less acceptable to have a tattoo depending on how on show it might be. Further, she states how 'unacceptable' it is to have a tattoo on a part of the body that may be more visible, and justifies this unacceptability by linking it to society, and potential judgement from others.

While some of the women I interviewed were referring to specific class-based contexts for their tattoos, they rarely mentioned their own views of their class in an explicit way. Mae, however, the most heavily tattooed out of the women who were interviewed, drew on her class background frequently, in a way that related to what was almost expected of her as a tattooed woman. We discussed how we may be seen

by others as tattooed women, and what she feels about those who, she feels, judge her:

I don't judge them. I don't care if you've got tattoos or you haven't got tattoos. [...] You know I'm from a council area which was rough as fuck [*laughs*], like proper ghetto shit. I'm an alright person now: it's like I never lived there. It's weird.

This extract starts with Mae positioning herself in a good light, which is placed in the context of her being from a working-class background. The inference is that because she has experienced life from a working-class perspective, and those are the kinds of people who are more often than not judged by others, it has taught her not to do the same. She does not see the judging of others as a good trait, as though it would make her better than someone else, and she does not want people to think this of her. She does suggest here that regardless of tattoos (and by extension, regardless of social class), you can choose to be a good person.

While Mae discusses her council house background in a jokey way, at the same time, she is perpetuating the kinds of stereotypes associated with those from a working-class background: she refers to the area that she lived in as 'rough', indicating social issues such as unemployment, young parenting, and drugs. The fact that she is a heavily tattooed woman feeds into the working-class construction, so while she might not feel as though she associates herself with being working class anymore, there is a clear narrative produced with a sense of 'then' versus 'now', which still problematises the working-class roots that she 'doesn't judge'. She explains how she has almost gone through a transformation ('I'm an alright person now'), as though she is expected to continue to be working class and to act like a working-class individual permanently. Tattoos are not an indicator of how a person will behave or act, but more an outward reflection of parts of their personal narrative. However, the discussions here do demonstrate how pervasive some classed constructions are.

It is clear from the analysis so far that women's talk about tattoos draws on discourses of gender, class and community in British culture. Tattooed women's talk about their bodies and the meanings of their tattoos is not monolithic; it is varied and complex. As each participant talked about herself as a 'tattooed woman', she engaged in a kind of 'identity project', positioning herself in relation to her sense of how tattoos are read in relation to gender and class. From a class perspective – specifically working class – tattoos are almost expected. Through a middle-class lens, tattoos are

seen differently – they are likened more closely to artwork than to ‘just’ a tattoo - to be seen more favourably, and also vary in their size and their location in relation to working-class cultural norms for tattoos. In this sense, tattoos can impede social mobility – being visibly tattooed may prevent someone from being constructed as middle class, and instead be associated with more working-class behaviours.

This is not to say that working-class people and working-class tattooed people are bad, though this is positioned by my interviewees as almost expected. The working-class woman is perceived as louder, and more visible. Participants navigate their subject positions in relation to these dominant constructions when positioning themselves as tattooed women, with extensive tattoos being ‘working class’ or ‘chavvy’, in relation to middle-class femininity, while other women position the ‘delicate and small’ as inauthentic, suggesting that extensive and artistic tattoos are more ‘real’.<sup>11</sup> What is being achieved through these varying positions is a sense that, regardless of the type of tattoo, the visibility of it, or the perceived class of the individual, there are multiple ways in which women are regulated in respect to femininities. This regulation is not just imposed by others, but also by the self, and is constituted as skilful consumption in displaying the ‘right’ kind of femininity at the right time.

### **Conclusions to be drawn**

Some distinctive factors play a part in how women make sense of their tattooed bodies (and indeed, how others make sense of them). Threaded throughout this sense-making is identity work that is being navigated within a cultural (British) context, with explicit intersections of class and gender, which it is difficult to disentangle from other issues raised by the women (such as employment, society more generally, expectations of age, and so on).

British femininity is different to that in other cultures; our class system is a part of everyday life, though not always in an explicit way. Further, general heteronormative ideals of femininity continue to ‘other’ sexualities (and associated identities) that tattooed women are able to make sense of, whether that is through resistance against, or conformity to, them. In understanding the discourses surrounding tattooed women’s bodies, we can gain more insights into the social and cultural issues that play just as much a part in these women’s identity work as their own choices.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this chapter, reference to femininity is also supported with reference to 'femininities', acknowledging the different kinds of femininity that can be embodied, depending on context.

<sup>2</sup> For more on the normative ideas around femininity, see Jessica Francombe-Webb and Michael Silk, 'Young Girls' Embodied Experiences of Femininity and Social Class', *Sociology*, 50 (2016), 652–72.

<sup>3</sup> Beverley Skeggs, *Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable* (London: SAGE Publications, 1997), p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Charlotte Dann and Jane Callaghan, 'Meaning-Making in Women's Tattooed Bodies', *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12438>, n.p. – emphasis added is my own.

<sup>5</sup> Skeggs, p. 84.

<sup>6</sup> Ethical approval was obtained through the University of Northampton's Research Degree Board, in accordance with the British Psychological Society's standards.

<sup>7</sup> M. Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality: 1* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1976); while there is no one set definition for how FDA should be used, broadly speaking, it seeks to explore how knowledge is produced within contexts (in this case, the interviews), taking into account our own subjectivities and power.

<sup>8</sup> S. Corbin Dwyer and J. L. Buckle, 'The Space between: On Being an Insider-Outsider in Qualitative Research', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 8.1 (2009), 54–63; the approach to discourse analysis that I used followed the analytic guidelines of Parker which outline how discourses produce representations of the world, not least in the context of the interview situation. See P Banister and others, *Qualitative Methods in Psychology: A Research Guide*, 2nd edn (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2011).

<sup>9</sup> Research conducted by Viren Swami and Adrian Furnham explored the perceptions that people have about tattooed women, with 'unattractive' being used for women with visible tattoos. This leads us back to outdated and traditional views of femininity, where this is represented by 'purity', which we could read here as purity in terms of the skin. See Swami, Viren, and Adrian Furnham, 'Unattractive, Promiscuous and Heavy Drinkers: Perceptions of Women with Tattoos.', *Body Image*, 4 (2007), 343–52.

<sup>10</sup> The points around size and location are important for understanding the perception of tattoos on women's bodies. First, if a tattoo is not visible, it is not open to judgement. The *visibility* of the tattoo opens up space for people to make assumptions. Second, the *size* of the tattoo can be linked to notions of femininity – small, daintier tattoos are generally more accepted on women (such as a heart on the ankle), as opposed to larger coverage on the skin. See Dann ['Navigating Tattooed Women's Bodies', 2-6](#) & Callaghan, ['Meaning-Making'](#), for more detail on this.

<sup>11</sup> Drawing on work from Imogen Tyler referring to 'chav' discourses – a term encompassing white, working class, associated with anti-social behaviour, with specific dress and appearance associated with it. Tattoos are a part of this aesthetic - see Dann & Callaghan, 'Meaning Making'.