THE BARBERSHOP OF THE COUNTERCULTURE

A History of Tattooing and Analysis of the Tattoo Culture

by Ryan Carney
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by

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Abstract

Tattoos are more popular than they have ever been; however, the history of tattooing is rich and diverse, with nearly every continent having cultures that at one time practiced tattooing. Christian missionaries largely eradicated tattooing worldwide through religious conversion or abusive coercion. In the United States, tattooing has gone through periods of extreme popularity and extreme stigmatization, with tattooing currently enjoying unprecedented levels of popularity. While the media portrayal of tattooing has greatly changed over the last ten to fifteen years, there are still plenty of people that dislike tattooing (but maybe that’s a good thing). Tattooing creates a community between tattooed individuals, all of which share the common bond and experience of getting a tattoo and being tattooed.
Tattooing, at one time or another, could be found on every corner of the Earth. The aboriginal people of nearly every continent tattooed themselves; some still do. Europeans, for the most part, broke this rich tradition of living art for the entire planet. When missionaries went to far off lands to “civilize” the native people, tattooing was considered a barbaric practice akin to cannibalism and human sacrifice. Much of the history of tattooing has been lost over the years – tribes that peacefully converted to Christianity generally phased out the practice of it; or excessive violence and disease completely destroyed entire tribes and cultures, and with it, a rich history of tattooing.

Charles Darwin was one of the first to witness firsthand how, for many cultures, tattoos were part of a complex social hierarchy; tattoos generally signified one of three things: signs of status, awards for bravery in battle, or a method to attract the opposite sex. When missionaries first went to the South Pacific, they brought with them sailors who became fascinated by the native tattooing. The sailors then went home with tattoos, and tattoos spread from the ports to the poorer parts of the cities. During the Industrial Revolution, when more and more people were attracted to the city, many found that city life was full of “urban competition, anonymity, and loneliness.” Tattoos became an affordable way to create connections with people that were in similar situations, one of the first examples of a modern tattoo community in the West.¹

But there is much more to the history of tattooing, and that rich history started long before Europeans were sending missionaries to every corner of the globe. It’s generally agreed upon that the discovery of tattoos by many cultures is accidental – usually rubbing a healing herb on a wound, resulting in a permanently colored scar.² Many cultures have their own stories of the origins of tattooing; however, the method for
applying a tattoo, tapping a needle on a stick with a hammer, was the same all over the
world until the late 19th Century with the invention of the electric tattoo machine.

The Many Births of a Worldwide Phenomenon

Most cultures throughout time have invented the process of tattooing independently from other cultures. The Polynesians, however, are one of the most important and influential groups of people in terms of spreading tattooing to the world. The discovery and practice of tattooing in Polynesia is thought to have began around 2000 BCE. From Polynesia, it's believed to have taken two courses: one course was going northwest to China and eventually migrating to Japan; another path that tattooing took was east. Tattooing spread from Polynesia across the Pacific Ocean (making a brief stop in Hawaii) to the West Coast of North America, from there it went north and across the Bering Strait into Siberia.

In the Pacific islands, tattoos were a sign of status, and those without tattoos were often times the subject of reticule, being called “roteo,” or “white man.” The Maori of New Zealand carved extremely ornate designs, called a “tā moko” into their faces and rubbed red ochre or blue pigment into it. Every moko was unique to each man and reflected his military achievements. The Samoans (along with the Burmese, Vietnamese and other Southeast Asians) wore a trouser tattoo which

![Painting of a Maori tribesman with moko.](image)
started above the knees upward to the waist, covering everything in between, including genitals and anus. The process of applying the tattoo could take weeks or months, and any outward sign of discomfort was greatly frowned upon. Indonesian tattooing involved thick, black, abstract designs and is the basis for modern-day tribal tattooing. At one time, there were as many tattoo styles in Oceania as there were islands; many have been lost but some are still practiced.

As tattoos migrated across the Pacific Ocean, they changed form and appearance just as those bearing the tattoos changed. Traditional Hawaiian tattoos feature geometric shapes arranged in patterns that were unique to the individual. Traditional tattoos of American-Indians varied just as widely as any other custom of the American-Indians. Along the west coast, stretching from Mexico to the sub-arctic, chin tattoos were found on both men and women, ensuring that one was beautiful and would age gracefully. Beyond the West Coast, almost all tribes tattooed their chiefs and warriors with signs of battle and conquest. Some tribes, such as the Neutral, would cover their warriors’ bodies in symbols like bears and tomahawks, while other tribes, such as the Iroquois, would tattoo totem symbols signifying how many men one had killed. Tattoos were taken very seriously by some tribes – if a chief felt that a warrior hadn’t earned his tattoo, it would be cut off.
The other path that tattooing took from Polynesia was northwest to China. The tradition of Chinese tattooing dates back to 200 BCE and was largely punitive. There were numerous offenses that would result in a facial tattoo with the catch being that if you have a facial tattoo, you weren’t allowed in the city. As a result, after years of punitive tattooing, the tattoo lost its stigmatization, and convicts and military personnel soon started to add their own designs. Around the 16th century, tattoos started to decline in China while at the same time, they were gaining popularity in Japan.\textsuperscript{x}

In Japan, tattooing was largely influenced by \textit{Ukiyo-e} prints and \textit{Suikoden}, a popular Chinese novel; both of which featured illustrative wood carvings depicting larger-than-life characters with elaborate tattoos. The illustrators of these wood carvings soon evolved into the tattoo artists and became known as the “horishi” or “the tattoo master;” an apt title, as Japanese tattooists were known as some of the best in the world.\textsuperscript{xi} The horishi were the first tattooists to have a large kit with varying needles, sometimes up to fifty different kinds with shafts ranging from one to up to thirty needles. The full body suit tattoo allowed a poor laborer to compete with the costly, extravagant clothing of the rich by having his own permanent extravagant suit of beautiful tattoos. Museums would pay for the skin of laborers with full body tattoos to preserve and exhibit; some of them still being displayed today.\textsuperscript{xii}
Tattooing even has a rich history in Europe despite the fact that it was eradicated by Christianity nearly 2000 years ago. Some of the earliest evidence of tattooing in Europe was discovered in 1991 on the border of Austria and Italy. Ötzi the Iceman is an extremely well-preserved, 5000 year old mummy that has over fifty tattoos, believed to be medicinal, on various parts of his body. Different groups in what is now modern-day Western Russia had ornate tattoos dating as far back as 1800 BCE. The Romans, like the Chinese, tattooed prisoners, slaves, gladiators, and soldiers, a practice passed on to the Romans by the Greeks who in turn acquired the practice from the Persians. In 55 BCE, Julius Caesar invaded Britannia to find the natives ornately tattooed with ferocious images. It is even speculated that “Britannia” might mean “land of the painted people” in Celtic.

For many years, tattooing was thought to not exist in the majority of African nations because it was thought that dark ink pigments wouldn’t show on dark skin. It is now known that there was, in fact, tattooing in Africa, but as a result of earlier skepticism, the information that is available is somewhat limited. Ancient Egyptian mummies have been found with tattoos that are believed to be the first non-abstract tattoo design, a depiction of the god Bes, and many African tribes, from the Pygmies to the Bantu, tattooed themselves. Scarification was a much more popular alternative to tattooing in Africa. Girls of the Makalaka tribe in Southern Africa weren’t allowed to marry until their breasts and bellies...
had been cut 4000 times. Certain tribes of what is now modern-day the Congo would
gouge deep spiral patterns into their faces similar to the moko of the Maori.\textsuperscript{xvi}

It was once thought that tattooing originated in the Middle East due to the
discovery of tattooed mummies dating back to 3000 BCE. That has since been
disproved, but tattooing has nonetheless had a long, culturally significant history in the
Middle East. Tattoos were thought of as an “intimate jewelry” and were used to enhance
a girl’s \textit{lil-hilà}, or allure. Even though the Koran prohibits tattooing, tattoos have always
been popular amongst pilgrims upon the completion of the hajj to Mecca. Since the
Koran also prohibits the depiction of humans or animals, Muslim tattoos were
traditionally abstract designs, such as flowers, crosses, moons, or swastikas.\textsuperscript{xvii}

There were also many tribes in South America that tattooed. Evidence of
tattooing in South America can be hard to find for certain tribes (as they were wiped out and left no written record), or it can be fairly simple to find for certain tribes (as they have been so isolated that they still continue traditional tattooing practices). Recently, there was a tattooed, female mummy discovered in modern-day Peru. The mummy is very ornately tattooed and since it is a woman, baffling to anthropologists because this particular tribe was thought to be very cruel to its women.\textsuperscript{xviii} There are two styles of
tattooing that were prominent in South America. One was a small patch around the
mouth; the other consisted of lines extending from the corners of the mouth or chin to the
ears.\textsuperscript{xix}
The One Death of a Worldwide Phenomenon

Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead,
nor print any marks upon you: I am the LORD.
-- Leviticus 19:28

This one verse out of the Bible completely destroyed tattooing around the world. Christianity’s battle with tattoos began in the year 325 when the Emperor Constantine adopted Christianity for the Romans, and it became an official papal edict in the year 787 when Pope Hadrian I banned tattooing completely. Around the late 15th Century, European explorers, sailors, and conquistadors, began exploring the earth under the flag of colonialism. When Captain James Cook went to the South Pacific, he found the natives tattooing themselves; Cook even coined the term “tattoo,” derived from the Tahitian word “tatau.” Cook’s newly created word quickly spread across Europe with tales of Cook’s discoveries. The discovery of the Americas in the late 15th Century and further exploration of Africa in the 1600’s opened the doors of the New World to the Old World.

As word of the tattooed heathens spread through Europe, Christian missionaries took it upon themselves to enlighten all heathens around the world to the fact that the custom of tattooing (along with a number of other customs) which they’ve been practicing for centuries is, in fact, wrong. Catholics, Jesuits, and Protestants went all over the world, from Africa to Micronesia to South America, preaching the word of God and making new converts. As the world was Christianized, the rich tattoo history of countless cultures was all but destroyed.

The severed, intricately tattooed heads of Maori tribesmen became a much coveted commodity in Europe; in essence, degrading one’s moko, a very sacred religious
symbol, to "an object of commercial value." The tattooed heads became so sought after that some would decapitate common slaves, tattoo the faces, and sell them at an exorbitant amount.\textsuperscript{XXII} Some of these bootleg Maori heads are still thought to be unwittingly on display in British museums to this day.\textsuperscript{XXIII} However, some islands throughout the South Pacific were too isolated for missionaries to access; thus, traditional tattooing is still practiced today.\textsuperscript{XXIV}

Whereas the mission work done in the South Pacific was (mostly) good natured, the mission work done in the Americas was extremely brutal. As Europeans arrived in North America, the natives were greeted with war and European diseases, decimating the Native American population. By the 19\textsuperscript{th} Century, the splendor and tradition of North American tattooing was lost.\textsuperscript{XXX} As Europeans arrived in South America in the late 15\textsuperscript{th} and early 16\textsuperscript{th} Centuries, missionaries actively set out to eradicate tattooing, believing it to be sent to earth by Satan. One Catholic priest, Franciscan Diego de Landa, led a crusade against tattooing resulting in many deaths.\textsuperscript{XXV} In a practice that might seem hypocritical to some, slaves captured by Catholics were branded and subsequently tattooed. Some Amazonian tribes were able to resist the missionaries due to their isolation, while most tattooing in South America ceased, not out of religious conversion, but rather, out of fear of the Spanish missionaries.\textsuperscript{XXVI}

Besides a few highly isolated enclaves in the South Pacific islands and Amazon Jungle, Christianity had spread across the planet, ending tattooing wherever it went. However, there were some large areas of the world where Christianity never caught on. In both China and Japan, missionaries weren’t welcome. Tattooing in China was already very unpopular, though, and tattoos were going out of style in Japan, as the traditional
bodysuit became widely associated with the Yakuza, the Japanese mafia.\textsuperscript{xxviii} Traditional tattooing in the Arctic resisted missionaries for years; however, it died out on its own volition by the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} Century.\textsuperscript{xxix}

**But All Was Not Lost...**

The real irony of Europeans going to the ends of the Earth in a veritable crusade to abolish tattooing is that at the same time, tattoos were gaining popularity in Europe. The sailors that escorted the missionaries to Polynesia and other South Pacific islands would return home with their own tattoos, leading to an on-again/off-again fad in Europe for the next 150 to 200 years.\textsuperscript{x\textsuperscript{xx}} When tattooed severed heads of Maori tribesmen were brought back to Europe from New Zealand, Europeans flocked to see them.\textsuperscript{xxxi} In 1876, the first living, breathing tattooed natives were brought to Europe and North America to be placed on display.

The displaying of tattooed natives of various countries (Alaskans, Hawaiians, Samoans, and Japanese) led to the carnival sideshows and midways. The first carnival freak-show to feature heavily tattooed individuals was the 1901 World’s Fair in Buffalo, New York. The fair embodied humankind’s contrast of savagery and technology by exhibiting both tattooed “savages” along with the latest technological advancements and
inventions. Many heavily tattooed individuals, such as Prince Constantine, earned worldwide fame by touring with circuses and creating fanciful stories of being captured by natives and forcibly tattooed.³³²

German immigrant and influential artist, Martin Hildebrandt, using traditional needle and mallet techniques, tattooed many Union and Confederate soldiers during the Civil War, establishing a tradition of tattooed servicemen. In 1870, Hildebrandt opened the first professional tattoo studio in the United States (and possibly the West) in New York City.³³³ The invention that forever changed tattooing came in 1891 when self-proclaimed “Professor” Samuel O’Reilly invented the electric tattoo machine, based on Thomas Edison’s electric pen. Tattoos were revolutionized overnight, now being cheaper, less painful, and faster, for artists to administer. The traditional Americana style of tattooing was thus born; characterized by thick black outlines, heavy black shading, and a dab of color. Early influences on American tattooing came from popular tattoos in Europe (military insignia, hearts, roses, banners) and themes relevant to Americans (patriotism).³³⁴

In the early 20th Century, the displaying of heavily tattooed “savages” in carnival sideshows fell out of popularity, as more and more Americans wanted to see heavily tattooed Westerners. With the help of these carnival sideshows and the 300+ full-time tattooed “freaks,” tattooing was able to move from the ports inland.³³⁵ Tattoos at the time cost between $0.50 and
$1.00; with full bodysuits going for about $33.00. The twenty years between World War I and World War II are known as the Golden Age of tattooing, as it was still inexpensive and socially acceptable, due to the patriotism associated with it at the time.xxxvi

Tattoos began to decline in popularity during and immediately following World War II. Americans finding out that the Nazis forcibly tattooed Jews contributed significantly to the post-WWII decline in tattoo popularity. The government also began to crack down on illegal tattooing. The first legal action taken against a tattoo artist came in 1944 when renowned artist Charlie Wagner was fined for not sterilizing needles; the charges were dropped when Wagner told the judge he didn’t have time to sterilize the needles since he was too busy complying with a 1908 rule against naked tattoos by tattooing clothes on nude pin-ups so men could join the Navy.xxxvii Soon after, William Irving was fined for tattooing a minor. After World War II, the military began discouraging tattoos, and the price of tattoos went up substantially, both adding to tattooing’s decline in popularity.xxxviii

It was in the post-World War II period that tattooing took on the stigma as being just for “bikers and convicts.” Many bikers were tattooed with motorcycle logos and Nazi symbols in defiance of the emerging conformist middle-class and the traditional patriotic theme of American tattooing. Chicano gangs and convicts were also tattooing themselves with themes that were culturally significant to themselves and, like bikers,
leaving behind the traditional theme of patriotism. Chicano tattoo style eventually turned into its own style of tattooing – fine line style – a style that is still popular today.\textsuperscript{XXIX}

In addition to tattooing becoming the mainstay of bikers and convicts, fears of disease drove tattooing back to the underground. In 1961, tattooing was banned in New York City because of an outbreak of hepatitis, with many of the cases being traced back to tattooing. The law declared that only a licensed doctor could tattoo humans.\textsuperscript{X} However, the Supreme Court found the ban to be unconstitutional in 1963, when it was decided that a total ban is overkill and guidelines calling for proper sterilization were all that were needed.\textsuperscript{XI}

Tattoos began to make a comeback in the late-1960's when celebrities like Janis Joplin, Peter Fonda, and Flip Wilson, all got tattooed. Some call the era of tattoo acceptance that started in the late-1960’s (and continues through today) the “Tattoo Renaissance,” as it was (and is) a period marked with “technological, artistic, and social changes.” Those changes were largely brought about by two legendary tattooists – Sailor Jerry and Lyle Tuttle. Sailor Jerry was the first artist to introduce Japanese techniques and fuse them with American designs. Sailor Jerry saw the whole body as a canvas and would link tattoos together instead of haphazardly placing designs on the body. Lyle Tuttle helped write most of the health regulations for tattooing including individual ink cups and sterilization of needles. Tuttle also modified the tattoo machine for quick changing of needles.\textsuperscript{XLI}

Tattooing has slowly and steadily been gaining popularity since the late-1960’s, and in the last ten years, it has literally exploded in popularity. As America’s attitude toward tattooing changes, so, too, does the media’s portrayal of tattooed America change.
Just watch any news story or read an article on the resurgence of tattooing and you’ll basically see the same three elements. First, it will lump bikers, convicts, and sailors into one category of low class (despite the wide variety of reasons that these different groups tattooed themselves) and easily discard them as the tattooed trash of yesteryear:

*Years ago – perhaps no more than a dozen – the word “tattoo” conjured up images of drunken sailors on shore leave, burly bikers, carnival roustabouts.*

Second, it will highlight the fact that it is now white collars and the college-educated being tattooed:

*[...Far more middle-class teenagers and adults, and especially women are getting tattoos.]*

And finally, it will only interview respectable members of the middle class, thus silencing the bikers and non-middle class:

*[In reference to her ankle tattoos] “I thought they were cool,” said Ms. Giachetti, a customer service representative and mother of two.*

Another element that is generally highlighted is the fact that there are now college-educated tattoo artists. In interviews with Muncie-area tattoo artists, Craig Mathis of Lucky Rabbit (who happens to be a college-educated artist) touched upon this:
as a more sophisticated crowd of people start to get tattoos (professionals, college-educated, etc.), you get a “more sophisticated crowd of artists – graphic designers, comic book artists, and art majors.” Craig continued that the shops are even beginning to look “more like art galleries... catering to a middle-class family attitude.”

The seemingly recent acceptance of tattooing by the media and society as a whole is generally viewed as a positive thing for the tattooed culture. Dave Rynes of Ground Zero Tattoos (again, a college-educated artist) thinks that “the more it comes into public acceptance, the easier it is for young [people] to get tattooed without being labeled a trouble-maker.” It’s also agreed upon by most that tattooing will eventually fall by the wayside: Craig of Lucky Rabbit says “tattooing is more popular than it’s ever been. Eventually it will be overkill, it’s going to fall eventually.” Dave of Ground Zero concurs, “It’ll be a cycle. Some celebrity will get into something else. Who knows what will grab our attention next?”

One needs to only look as far as the newsstand to see how tattooing has changed considerably in the eyes of the media. The popular, aptly titled magazine Tattoo has changed significantly in the last twenty years. Flipping through issues of Tattoo from the late-80’s and early-90’s, looking past the giant “Adults Only” bulletin on the front cover, one will see crudely-drawn tattoos, bikers, borderline S&M, and full frontal nudity. The articles, written by people, such as Pulsating Paula and Gonzer, compliment the photos well:
There ain’t no doubt about it... the Tattoo Society of New York may not be a full blown international art community, but it sure as hell is well known throughout the east coast for top notch tattoo events.¹

Many of the topics discussed are rather similar, for example, in one issue: Best in Biker Tats, NYC Biker Tat Contest, and Outlaws MC Club Tats.

Compare that to a recent issue of Tattoo, and it’s like comparing Hustler to Better Homes & Gardens. Similar to the aforementioned media accounts but on a larger scale, the magazine has completely shed its rough-and-tumble biker image, replacing it with a much cleaner, socially acceptable middle-class image.

The quality of the tattoos, the type of people interviewed, the caliber of the writing and photography, and even the paper on which the magazine is printed, have all drastically improved in the past twenty years. The genres of tattooing represented in an average issue of Tattoo have also greatly expanded, reflecting the trend of numerous styles that proliferate in tattooing today. The subjects of the articles have also been

Above: the highly evolved cover to the August, 2007 issue of Tattoo.
“middle-classized,” with subjects ranging from tattoo collectors that are yoga instructors and retired postal workers to recent a convention in Italy to the current state of tattooing in Bali.\footnote{11}

However, as much as tattooing has been accepted by the media and middle-class, there is still a significant cross-section of the population that still frowns upon tattooing. Not all printed articles about tattooing view it in such a favorable light and some are quite condescending toward tattooing:

\textit{If you... believe that 20 years from now you will still think that a small, tasteful rose on your bun... will mark you out as an individual, there’s a treat in store for you this weekend... I’ve never seen one so attractive that it seems to justify its permanent place in someone’s life.}\footnote{11i}

Or...

\textit{It’s a fair bet that the average female vicar rolling up her surplice sleeves for her sermon will soon display a forearm engraved with loaves and fishes – or whichever design was most fashionable at theological college.}\footnote{11ii}

As is plain to see, not all journalists are as accepting of tattooing as others. And despite the 40 million Americans with tattoos, there are still many who find them unfavorable.\footnote{11v}

Many Americans think that having excessive amounts of body art could be detrimental to one’s future prospects of employment. A nation-wide survey conducted in
2001 found that 85% of respondents agreed with the statement “people who have visible tattoos... should realize that this... is likely to create obstacles in their career or personal relationships.”

Closer to home, a survey of 446 Ball State students and faculty found that 96.9% of respondents answered “yes” to a similar question, “Do you think that having visible tattoos would/does affect one’s potential for getting a job?” In a series of personal interviews with tattooed Ball State students, 18 of 21 respondents also answered “yes” to the same question.

The survey of 446 Ball State students and faculty divided people into two groups (tattooed and non-tattooed) and asked participants to do some word association. The survey provided a list of fifteen words often associated with tattooing and asked participants to choose the three that they agree with most. The top two words associated with tattooing among both tattooed and non-tattooed participants were “artistic” (26.9% among tattooed, 19.0% among non-tattooed) and “experimental” (15.7% among tattooed, 15.0% among non-tattooed).

It’s where the tattooed and non-tattooed participants disagreed that it is interesting. The third most-chosen word associated with tattooing among the non-tattooed participants was “rebellious” with 13.4% of respondents choosing it. The third most-chosen word among the tattooed participants, however, was “normal” with 11.8% choosing it. Compare that to 8.5% of tattooed participants choosing “rebellious” and only 5.5% of non-tattooed participants choosing “normal.” Another interesting discovery from the survey is that 11.2% of tattooed respondents associated the word “sexy” with tattooing compared to only 4.9% among non-tattooed participants. Similarly, 7.2% of
non-tattooed participants associated “biker” with tattooing while only 2.4% of tattooed participants did.\textsuperscript{lviii}  

In the interview conducted with Craig of Lucky Rabbit, Craig believes that the tattooed community needs some of the population to not like tattooing. Referencing a recent Larry King interview with Judge Judy where she spoke of how kids today are only concerned with their next tattoo, Craig said that, “We need [Judge Judy hating tattoos] because when [she] accepts tattoos, we’ve lost that rebelliousness.” And on the subject of the eighteen year old girl who needs to hide the butterfly on her hip from her dad: “We need that, too; if we lose that, we lose [the] edge.”\textsuperscript{lix} Dave of Ground Zero echoes a similar sentiment: “The most common things we hear are ‘Dad will cut me off,’ ‘Mom will kick my ass,’ and ‘my girlfriend will break up with me.’ I guess there’s a little stigma still left... People still stare [at me].”\textsuperscript{lx}

**Tattoo Community**

But so what if people still stare at tattooed people; that’s part of the reason that we got them in the first place, right? Anyone that has a tattoo can attest to the fact that there are still plenty of people in the world that don’t like tattoos, but what of the people with tattoos? Is there an unspoken bond that brings all of us together? There are certainly many forums for the discussion of tattoos: tattoo conventions, tattoo parlors, magazines, and countless internet message boards. But is there a “tattoo community?” In the interviews that I conducted with tattooed Ball State students and Muncie-area tattoo artists, I found that there is a wide variety of opinions on the state of tattooing in Muncie and the idea of a tattoo community, as a whole.
If someone is going to get a sense of a tattoo community, the first place that he/she would sense it would be where it all starts – the tattoo studio. Camaraderie in the studio depends on a lot of things: atmosphere of the shop, type of artists, type of clientele, and location, to name a few. In a series of interviews with 21 different tattooed Ball State students, seventeen said that they do feel a sense of camaraderie when going to the tattoo studio. Rhiannon C., commenting on the chattiness of artists, said that “a good tattoo artist is personable because it makes the experience that much more memorable.” Greg K. says if you’re a regular customer, “it’s like the local hang out. Everybody knows your name; Cheers and all that.”

Many tattooed people develop a relationship with their tattoo artist, since they spend anywhere from 20 minutes to hours upon hours in each other’s company. Dave at Ground Zero says, “Some people treat you as the poor man’s therapist or the bartender or the barber. People always have a story to tell.” Tattooed Ball State student Rachel E. feels an instant camaraderie when walking into a studio since everyone there has “experienced the pain and decision making process.” Jaime C., another student, echoed the same sentiment, “You instantly have something in common when you walk in... you always have something to talk about.”

When asked about tattooing in Muncie, students’ reactions run the gamut, from “a blast” to “I wouldn’t get tattooed in Muncie again.” Charles S. said of the Muncie tattoo scene, “The [shops] in Muncie are great... there’s great camaraderie.” On the other hand, Jessica B. felt that Anderson-area studios, such as Black Rose, were “a lot more personable. I feel more of connection with the guys at Black Rose than at [Ground Zero].” Jade M. felt similarly about shops in Muncie but thought “it could be because
the artists here in Muncie have a wide base of students here at Ball State that like getting
tattoos. They care more about getting quality artwork than with creating a community so
the artists are more stand-offish simply because they can be.” [xix]

But is there a community? The numbers of tattooed Americans and tattoo artists
have been steadily on the rise for the last fifty years. In 1959, it was estimated that there
were 20 million tattooed Americans and about 250 tattoo artists. [xx] It’s now estimated
that there are 40 million tattooed Americans and over 10,000 artists. [xxi] In addition, if one
breaks it down to age demographics, 36% of Americans age 18 to 25 have at least one
tattoo and 40% of Americans age 26 to 40 have at least one. Studies show that men and
women are nearly equal in being tattooed: 16% of men compared to 15% of women. [xxii]

While the number of tattooed Americans has steadily been on the rise, many (if
not most) aspects of civic and community involvement have been on the decline. For
example, membership levels in civic organizations have fallen to a tenth of what they
were in 1962. Similarly, membership in labor unions has declined over 50% since the
mid-1950’s while membership in bowling leagues has fallen from 128,000 in 1962 to an
estimated 9,000 in 2005. [xxiii] As civic engagement falls and tattoos continue to rise, there
arises the possibility of the tattoo studio becoming the new barbershop or community
hangout.

Of the 21 tattooed Ball State students interviewed, eighteen of them agreed with
the idea of the tattoo parlor becoming the new barbershop (with two saying it depends on
the shop). Rhiannon C. says every generation has “a meeting place that defined the
generation: the speakeasy, the malt shop, Studio 54. Our generation will be defined by
the tattoo studio. Our barber shop is the tattoo studio.” [xxiv] Tattooed student and Ground
Zero piercer Alan D. says since you’re sitting there for so long “you have to make small talk of some sort and some people just come into the shop to hang out. It’s definitely more liberal than your traditional barber shop.”

Amanda S. thinks it depends on the shop but that it could be considered “the counter-culture barbershop.”

In *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putnam points out that many of today’s civic organizations are centered in Washington DC and are professionally staffed. They are no longer the member-centered, locally based associations. Putnam asserts that this is part of the reason for the drastic decline in community and civic involvement.

Interestingly enough, the tattoo community, whose membership is consistently on the rise, is completely based locally at the studio level and goes up to the regional/national level with tattoo conventions. There certainly isn’t a central headquarters for tattooing anywhere; it’s completely widespread, yet local at the same time. And as for a membership card – all you have to do is roll up your sleeve.

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2 Van Dinter. pg 15
3 ibid. pg 264
5 Thomas, Cole, & Douglas. pg 43
6 Van Dinter. pg 140-148
7 ibid. pg 100
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10 Gilbert. pg 77
12 Van Dinter. pg 66-68
13 Gilbert. pg 11
14 Van Dinter. pg 24-32
15 Gilbert. pg 13
16 Van Dinter. pg 193-198

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Thomas, Cole, & Douglas. pg 197.

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Van Dinter. pg 234.

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James. pg 2.


Personal interviews conducted with 21 Ball State students from February to April of 2007.

Mathis interview.

Rynes interview.
Cizon, Rhiannon (tattooed Ball State student). Interview with author. Conducted at Ball State University Student Center, Muncie, Indiana, on February 6, 2007.

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page 9 – Gilbert. page 171.

page 10 – ibid. page 139.

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Appendix

The following pages are devoted to the tattooed Ball State students I interviewed between February and April, 2007, that essentially made this whole project possible. My original vision of this project consisted mainly of these interviews and pictures along with a short history of tattooing. As you can see, the project evolved far beyond my first idea. But in the end, one of the most important aspects of this project is the interviews with tattooed individuals giving me some perspective on the ideas of a tattoo community and the new “barber shop.”

I wasn’t able to include everything I was told about tattooing or all of the photos of tattoos I took. There were just too many great quotes about tattooing to list, and there were way too many incredible tattoos for me to be able to include them all (I certainly wanted to, though). But included here are the best of the tattoos and best of the comments on tattooing from the many students kind enough to allow me to interview them.

Enjoy.
Jessica B.
Jessica is a 19-year old apparel design major with a minor in art. At the time of the interview, Jessica had four tattoos, she has since acquired more. She was 18 when got her first piece inked.

Jessica’s first tattoo, seen at the bottom right, is a friendship symbol she shares with her best friend with whom she went through some hard times together.

When Jessica went to get the tattoo with her friend, she ended up with a different artist than expected. The artist blasted some noise core at high volume and further relaxed Jessica by telling her the ribs were one of the most painful places to get tattooed. “It was the scariest fifteen minutes of my life.”

The cross-anchor, seen below, is inspired by Christians in the times of ancient Rome. “When the Romans would persecute the Christians, sailors would get this tattoo. The anchor harbors the cross within.”

Jessica got the koi fish and violets, seen at the top right, after going through some hard times. Koi fish have a 3-second memory and the tattoo represents Jessica “trying not to hold on to the things of the past.”

Thoughts on tattoos
Jessica’s parents aren’t too supportive of her tattoos (they usually aren’t). Her dad thinks she “is mutilating [her] body.” However, Jessica’s uncle, who works with musicians, often comes to her defense. “He explained to my dad that tattoos and piercings are a generational thing, and everyone is doing it.”

On the idea of the tattoo parlor becoming the next barber shop, Jessica isn’t quite convinced, however, she thinks that maybe the way tattooed people are perceived will change. “I don’t know if it will take the place of the barber shop, but maybe it will change people’s perspectives on body modification. We’re not all convicts; we’re still people out to make the world a better place.”
Rhiannon C.
Rhiannon, a 23-year fashion design and history major, has three tattoos. Tattooed for the first time at age eighteen, themes for Rhiannon’s tattoos range from a good luck charm to her favorite Canadian ruminant.

Rhiannon’s first tattoo, the shamrock at the top right was a result of her agreeing to go to church with a friend on the condition that the friend go with Rhiannon to get a tattoo.

Rhiannon’s latest tattoo, the moose at the middle right is for her favorite animal. When asked about it, Rhiannon replied, “Some call it an obsession; I call it a way of life.”

Thoughts on tattoos
Rhiannon faced some token objection from her parents when she first got tattooed, however, they don’t really mind anymore. The real problem, Rhiannon says, is from the judges at pageants since she competes in pageantry, such as Miss Ball State. No one involved with the pageants has ever told Rhiannon to cover her tattoos, but they say that it would help her.

Rhiannon likes tattoos that have stories behind them. She doesn’t much care for the lower back tattoos (“tramp stamps” as Rhiannon calls them) since they are a fashion statement. People that get tattooed for the fashion aspect of it lack the story, and as Rhiannon believes “half the fun of having a tattoo is the story behind it”
Jaime C.
Jaime is a 20-year old psychology major with a minor in anthropology. She has five tattoos and was only the tender age of 16 when she got her first tattoo.

The penguin, seen below is dedicated to her mom. Jaime’s mom “is real short and squat and kind of waddles when she walks. And her name is Gwen, so her nickname has always been Penguin.”

Jaime’s chest piece, seen at the top right, is a modification of a painting by artist Clarke Barker. Jaime loves his work as an author and illustrator, and “this is one of his less homo-erotic works so I thought it’d be safe as a tattoo.”

The scorpion tattooed behind Jaime’s ear, seen at the bottom right, was inspired by Jaime’s favorite Shakespeare play, *Macbeth*. Right as the plans are beginning to fall apart, Macbeth cries, “My mind is full of scorpions!”

Thoughts on tattoos
Jaime’s father isn’t supportive of Jaime’s tattoos (he doesn’t even know about the chest piece, yet). “I think [tattoos have] affected our relationship.” However, it hasn’t dissuaded Jaime from getting further tattooed: “He’s kind of learned to let me be me. So I guess in a way it’s kind of been positive.”

When asked about being a tattoo enthusiast, Jaime replied, “[Tattooing] is like a hobby. Every few months I’m like ‘Gee, I wish I had another tattoo.’ Like right after I got my chest piece, I was like ‘Wow, now my shoulders look awfully bare.’ It’s sad how much money I’m going to dump into tattoos over the course of my life. I plan on having a full body suit eventually.”
Ally C.
Ally is a 19-year old natural resources major. She has one tattoo and was 18 when she got it done, and she plans on getting more in the future.

The tattoo, seen below, is a cross inspired by a keychain that Ally has had for years. “I always just thought it would be a cool tattoo.”

When she went to the parlor to get tattooed, she nearly passed out from not breathing. ”I was so nervous going in, and I had no idea what to expect.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thoughts on tattoos</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ally’s parents weren’t very upset when Ally got her tattoo, in fact, after Ally got her tattoo, her father went out got himself some ink, as well.</td>
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</table>

Ally’s grandma, however, wasn’t too happy about her tattoos. “She didn’t mind too much since it’s so easily hidden but if I got one that was everyday visible, she would freak.” Ally’s grandma eventually cooled off figuring that “at least it’s a cross and not a gang symbol.”
Alan D.

Alan is a 24-year old general studies major. When asked how many tattoos he has, Alan just laughs, “Umm... I’m working on one big one.” Alan was by far the most heavily tattooed individual interviewed, and first tattooed at age 12, a self-administered Slayer tattoo. In addition to being the only interviewee to warrant two pages, he’s also the only one to have more tattoos than the author.

Alan’s most prominent tattoo, the sleeve to the right, is an amalgamation of different themes, ranging from skateboarding to veganism to atheism to a cat’s butt.

The forearm portion of Alan’s sleeve was inspired by a skateboard of Alan’s favorite skater and is a pro-vegan farm scene. There’s a butterfly with an upside-down cross for a body, for Alan’s atheism. When Alan completed his piercing apprenticeship, he got the skull and piercing needles. The cat’s butt is a tattoo he shares with his girlfriend; when the tails are put together, they form a heart.

On Alan’s back are three large straightedge X’s (an anti-drug way of life), and he’s starting a scene from a Dr. Seuss book.

On Alan’s fingers is the word “Liberate” – an homage to animal liberation. In between Alan’s fingers are three X’s in honor of ten years of being straightedge.

Alan is also working on a literature themed leg sleeve. He already has tributes to Kurt Vonnegut’s Breakfast of Champions and Louis Sachar’s Sideways Stories from Wayside High with plans for more.
Alan D. (continued)
Alan’s inner-lip is also tattooed with the year of his birth, but instead of a normal tattoo machine, he used a device used to tattoo the inner-lips of pigs – “another animal rights thing.”

There were plenty more tattoos, but there isn’t enough space here to cover them all.

Thoughts on tattoos
Alan’s family was at one time concerned with Alan’s growing collection of tattoos, however, they’ve come to accept it and are even excited about the Alan’s new tattoos.

Alan has a unique perspective on tattooing in that he works as a piercer at Ground Zero Tattoos. On the idea of the new barber shop, Alan thinks that since you’re sitting there so long, you talk and a relationship is born. People then come back to the “shop to hang out, some more than others. It’s definitely more liberal than your traditional barber shop.”
Annie D.
Annie is a 22-year old speech pathology graduate student. She has three tattoos and was first tattooed at the age of 18, just out of high school.

Annie’s first tattoo, seen below, is a pair of stars on her hips. There isn’t much of a story behind them; “they were in response to my sister getting tattooed.” Annie says she regrets them now, only because they seem like wasted space to her, since they “are so simple. Now that I’m more into tattooing it will be hard to incorporate or cover them (which I will do either one of the two).”

Annie’s second tattoo is the inner lip tattoo, seen at the top right. The design is the classic Aerosmith logo, since Annie is a huge fan. She got the tattoo with during a piercing/tattoo party at Ground Zero thrown by the Ball State Body Modification Club (of which Annie was then president).

Annie’s third tattoo, seen at the bottom right, is a grouping of leaves that goes from her sides up her back. The leaves compliment the brandings of flowers that Annie has on her sides.

Thoughts on tattoos
Annie’s tattoos are not quite family favorites: “My grandma tells me every time she sees me that I’m ruining my beautiful body. She always cringes.”

“It’s just odd that even though we’re intelligent folk... our family thinks we’re not as smart... when we get tattooed.”

The discreet placement of Annie’s tattoos is in response to her field not looking kindly on tattoos. Ironically, though, Annie has experienced the opposite of discrimination because of tattoos. “I worked at Hot Topic for a summer, and they hired me because I have brands and a lip tattoo, so it can be a positive thing.”
Rachel E.
Rachel is a 21-year old fashion merchandising major. She has seven tattoos with big plans for a lot more.

Rachel’s wrist tattoo, seen below, is a variation of a ring her mother gave her. The text reads, “To thine ownself be true.” Below that is an infinite loop, a tattoo she shares with her best friend.

The dead bird and skull-rose tattoos at the top right don’t really have any deep symbolism for Rachel. “An artist-friend drew them up and tattooed them on.”

The tattoo on her left arm, seen at the bottom right, was Rachel’s attempt to conquer her biggest fear: snakes. The first version of it was done in London but was “real sucky.” So when Rachel got back to the States, her artist-friend touched it up and “made it kick ass.”

**Thoughts on tattoos**
Rachel’s parents aren’t exactly crazy about her tattoos, but “as long as I do ok in school, they’ve gotten over the tattoos.” Her grandparents “hate” her tattoos, “I’ll get the occasional stare, and I just know what they’re thinking.”

On getting old with tattoos, Rachel had this to say: “People ask me what am I going to do when I’m old and have tattoos. ‘Well, I’ll be old and have tattoos.’ You’re gonna be ugly when you’re old anyways, you might as well be ugly with tattoos.”
**Ashley F.**  
Ashley is a senior theatre major. She is 21 years old and has five tattoos. Ashley is very interested in “vintage anything” and her tattoos are a definite reflection of that.

Ashley’s favorite tattoo is the pin-up girl on her waist, seen at the top right. Ashley has always loved pin-ups and “wants more pin-ups” in the future. Ashley’s mother paid for part of the tattoo, which Ashley finds “funny since so many of my friends’ parents hate tattoos and my mom paid for one.”

Continuing with the theme of vintage tattoos, Ashley got “Lady Luck” on her forearms, seen at the bottom right. A fan of “traditional tattoos and classic artists like Sailor Jerry,” Ashley thought “Lady Luck” would be a good homage.

The skeleton key tattoo on her right arm, seen below, is yet another extension of Ashley’s love for the past. Ashley had “always wanted a skeleton key tattoo” and an ex-boyfriend got it for her for her birthday. They “broke up recently and every time I look at it I just think, ‘Oh, you...’”

**Thoughts on tattoos**  
Ashley has actually experienced some discrimination in the workplace from her more visible tattoos, having being rejected from Pita Pit and Indiana Academy because of them. “Casting directors and professors also tell me to cover them up.”
Heather H.
Heather is a freshman telecommunications major. She’s 19 years old and has two tattoos.

Heather’s first tattoo, the combination ankh and heart, at the top right, was “a result of Woo-hoo! I’m in college. Let’s get a tattoo.” Heather says that there really isn’t any sort of special meaning behind the tattoo; she just liked the design when she saw the flash.

Heather’s latest tattoo, seen at the bottom right, is a symbol for the band Evanescence. She greatly enjoys their music, and it helped her through a hard time in her life. It is her most memorable tattoo as an ex-girlfriend was there and “really inspired me to get it.”

Thoughts on tattoos
When it comes to her family and tattoos, Dad doesn’t quite approve, even though her uncles are all tattooed, which “indirectly influenced me to get tattooed.” Heather’s mother, however, is fine with her tattoos (although she hasn’t seen the second one).

Heather feels a sense of camaraderie in tattoo parlors, since as a customer returning to the same artist, she “felt at home.”

When asked about the tattoo parlor becoming the next barber shop, Heather replied, “Very much so.” She then explained how she met a good friend at a tattoo parlor. She started asking another girl that was getting tattooed a few questions, and a friendship blossomed.
Brittany is a 19-year freshman who is currently undecided about her major. Brittany has two tattoos and plans on getting plenty more.

Brittany’s tattoos are largely about her own personality, and she says that much of her is in her tattoos.

Her first tattoo, seen below, was her back piece, an ankh with the sun and moon – the eternal light. She has since expanded the piece by adding the wings. After getting her first tattoo, Brittany “knew [she] was addicted from the beginning.”

Brittany’s second tattoo, at the top right, is more than a small heart. Brittany doesn’t believe in sex before marriage, and the heart is for her one special someone. As Brittany says, “Only one person will know that heart for what it truly means.”

Brittany agrees with the notion of the tattoo parlor becoming the next barber shop since it provides a place for creative people to come together.

“Many times, creative people are kind of odd, and with a tattoo parlor, they have a place to meet and bond over art (among other things).
**Greg K.**

Greg is a 20-year old business major. He has eight tattoos and was 19-years old when first tattooed.

Greg’s first two tattoos, the crosses seen at the top right, are memorial tattoos for both of his grandmas. The red and white coloring is for the Polish flag since both of his grandmothers were Polish.

The pirate skull on Greg’s leg, seen below, is one of three skulls that Greg has tattooed on his body. This particular one was designed by Greg, since he wants to be a tattoo artist some day.

The pirate skull is also Greg’s most memorable tattoo as it was his first big one. “Each one gets progressively bigger. This was the one where I broke my fear of getting a bigger tattoo.”

And Greg did go big with his next tattoo, the Spiderman themed “Greg” on his back, seen at the bottom right. Another self-designed tattoo, Greg incorporated different passions into this tattoo: “I had always been big into comic books, especially Spiderman... It went through many different looks; I eventually went with the webbing and the Chicago skyline in the background.”

**Thoughts on tattoos**

“I get questions about ‘what if they go out of style?’ If I was worried about tattoos being in style all the time, I wouldn’t have gotten them. Tattoos are never a fashion statement to me; I’ve put a lot of thought into them... I’ll probably be one of those tattooed freaks eventually. Each tattoo has its own story and memory tied to it and you can’t regret that.”

“It’s like the local hang out. Everybody knows your name; Cheers and all that. It’s like the barber shop. You become a walk-in customer. It’s got a loyalty aspect to it, and it helps both ways. There’s definitely a friendship aspect when it comes to tattooing.”
Mary Beth L.
Mary Beth is a 22-year old music education major. She is a senior and has one tattoo. Mary Beth got the tattoo on her 22nd birthday, having decided to wait after seeing her mother get a tattoo a couple years earlier (which incidentally irked Mary Beth as she was the one always interested in tattoos, not her mom).

Mary Beth’s tattoo is very much inspired by Hindu art. Mary Beth originally wanted a lotus, but since her favorite flower is the pansy, she went with it instead, telling the artist she “wanted it ‘Hindu-y.’”

A particularly memorable aspect of her trip to the tattoo parlor was the artist. “He was the oldest guy in the shop so it was this older hippie guy with all these younger guys in the shop. He was just an awesome guy.”

Thoughts on tattoos
Mary Beth is of the opinion that tattoos could potentially harm you in the workplace unless one’s career is “anything related to art.”

When meeting people with tattoos, Mary Beth thinks that “there are two schools of thought there.” One is (“and I’m not being judgmental”) if she sees someone with a “trend tattoo,” she doesn’t quite feel a connection. “But if I see someone who has a tattoo and an appreciation for tattoos, I see that as a sign of open-mindedness.”

Concerning the idea of the tattoo shop becoming the next barber shop, Mary Beth wholeheartedly agrees. She went on to explain how when she got her tattoo, “the artists would always talk a lot with [my and my friends]. The [artists] definitely have the same viewpoints on various subjects. We all once had a lengthy discussion on pharmaceutical companies in America; stuff you wouldn’t think of being in a tattoo studio.”
Jade M.
Jade is a 20-year old communication studies major with a minor in women’s studies. She has one tattoo and was 19 when she had it done.

Jade’s tattoo, seen below, is a lotus flower based on Arabic design with “Egyptian tweaks and Hindu colors.” The tattoo holds a lot of meaning for Jade in that she came from a hard background, and Ball State was one of her first places where she felt protected and safe. The tattoo represents that symbol of protection. She’s also a pagan, and the four sides represent the four elements.

When Jade and a couple friends first went to the tattoo parlor, the artist changed the design into hearts. Jade didn’t want to hurt the artist’s feelings so she said she would think about it and decided to leave and come back when a different artist is there.

The experience taught her to not settle for less when it comes to tattoos – something that’s so permanent on your body. “Go for what you want.”

Thoughts on tattoos
The placement of Jade’s tattoo was a definite factor since she plans to be a lawyer (a quite conservative profession). “It would affect my decision to be a lawyer if I had knuckle tattoos or something... I think that’s why a lot of people get tattoos on their backs or legs because we have this idea that even though a lot of people have tattoos, they’re still not socially acceptable yet.”

Even though her collection is small, Jade is quite the tattoo enthusiast. “The cool thing about tattoos is you have that automatic connection... It immediately gives you conversation. And if you should have the same reasons for getting a tattoo, it’s just that much more [of a connection].”

Jade feels that the idea of the tattoo parlor as the new barber shop is a little too far. “It’s still not socially acceptable. It doesn’t have the wholesome image the barber shop does. Most people who get tattoos are social deviants so it’s hard to get the tattoo community to open up.”

However, Jade thinks that the barber shop could be easily be the next evolutionary step: “but as a counter-culture, if we learned to open up more, the barber shop could happen.”
**David R.**

David, a 33-year old psychological science major, has one tattoo and was the only non-traditional student to be interviewed for this project.

David was one of the few people interviewed that was older than age 19 before getting his/her first tattoo. David was 25 when he first got ink in the skin, a wedding gift from a friend.

The design is rune symbolic of David’s pagan name, Aravis Ravenswing Silverstar. Each rune is unique to the individual and is a combination of the initials. A friend, notorious for talking David into things, came to town for his wedding and tried to convince David to get some ink. Once his friend offered to pay for the tattoo, David was in.

**Thoughts on tattoos**

David highly believes that “tattoos affect people’s perception of you,” and therefore, he tried to keep it hidden from his parents for a while since he didn’t know how they’d react. When his parents eventually saw the tattoo, they really didn’t care.

In the workplace, David doesn’t think his tattoos will be a problem. “In psychology, I think I could get away with tattoos a little more. But if I’m counseling people, they might react weird to a lot of tattoos.” Oddly enough, instead of tattoos, David has been advised to not have any facial hair.
Rebekah R.
Rebekah is a 23-year old anthropology major. She has seven tattoos and was 18 years old when she got her first.

Rebekah’s foot tattoo, seen below, represents her religious upbringing. Rebekah doesn’t consider herself religious, “but I believe in the whole Christian thing.” The location was an important factor in this tattoo: “I got it on foot because I think my feet walk me in the right direction.”

The revolver tattoo at the top right is a tattoo shared by two other friends. They really bonded over music and decided to get the logo for Ferret records. The three X’s are for being straightedge.

The kanji at the middle right translates to “faith,” “respect,” “loyalty,” and “beauty”. The first three are very important to Rebekah, and “beauty” because “I think I’m a beautiful person. I like who I am and I’m not going to change for anybody.”

The butterfly with brass knuckle wings, seen at the bottom right, is another straightedge tribute. It was drawn and tattooed by a friend, and Rebekah considers it “kinda hardcore I guess.”
Amanda S.

Amanda, a 20-year old sophomore, is a landscape architecture major and at the time of the interview, had two tattoos, having since acquired two more. Amanda was 19 when first tattooed even though she had wanted one the day she turned 18, but she opted to wait to make sure it was the right design and placement since “you have to live with it for the rest of your life.”

Amanda’s first tattoo, the spider-web at to the right, was designed by a friend and tattooed by another friend. It’s her favorite tattoo since she thought it’d be cool to have a spider-web that went up onto her shoulder, almost “turning [herself] into a doorway.” Amanda also likes the traditional meaning behind a spider-web tattoo: the feeling of being trapped.

Amanda’s second tattoo, at the bottom right, is a music-related one: the bass clef and treble clef. Amanda has been “in love with music since childhood.” Even though they are on her hands and could potentially hurt her later in life job wise, she has no regrets: “If I have to cover my tattoos, I will.”

Thoughts on tattoos

Amanda hasn’t received much flak from her parents over her tattoos, since, even though they didn’t want to get any, her “whole family is tattooed, anyway” so not much could really be said.

When she first got tattooed, her family asked all the usual questions: where did she get it? Why this design? Her uncle, who is heavily tattooed and knows many of the traditional meanings behind tattoos, “grilled me over the meaning of the spider-web.”

Going into a traditionally conservative field with hand tattoos doesn’t worry Amanda, since there are some firms that go a little more with the flow. Also, Amanda says, “As tattoos become more mainstream, it shouldn’t be a problem.”

Amanda believes that the tattoo parlor could become the next barber shop but only for a certain crowd – “the counter-culture barber shop.”

“It’s like everyone says if you get one, you’re totally addicted. I didn’t believe them at first because it hurt so bad, but after a couple days, I wanted another one.”
Charles S.
Charles, a 21-year old telecommunications student had, at the time of this interview, six tattoos; he has since acquired more. Eighteen when he got his first tattoo, Charles’s tattoos are results of home-state pride and good times with friends.

Charles is working on an Indiana themed sleeve on his right leg. Seen here at top right, it is a silhouette of Indiana on an ear of corn with an upside-down burning candle because as Charles explains, “when you’re living in Indiana, you’re burning the candle at both ends.”

Charles’s favorite tattoo, pictured at the middle right, is the word “Awesome” across his chest. At a friend’s shop in Chicago, it was 7 letters for $20 or “Baby’s Daddy’s Name Day” as Charles calls it. Charles couldn’t think of anything so he got “Awesome.”

Thoughts on tattoos
Charles is of the opinion that tattoos could hurt you in the workplace but in only certain instances, such as working with the public. However, when it comes to family, Charles must keep his tattoos hidden from his parents since if they see them, “they’ll stop paying for my college.”

On camaraderie in the studios, Charles says that except for a select few studios, he always feels welcome and has fun at studios. “Everybody’s on the same level at most studios,” and if you know the people well enough to just hang out at the studio, “it can be like a big ol’ family.”
Katie S.
Kate is a 19-year old speech pathology and audiology major. She is a freshman and has two tattoos. Wanting to get tattooed since she turned 18, Katie decided to wait until she was 19 before letting the needle hit her flesh.

Katie’s first tattoo, seen at the bottom right, is a cluster of five stars with a nautical star in the center. When asked about the placement, Katie says that she wanted to keep it hidden and “my mom suggested I get it on the side of my boob.”

Her most memorable tattoo, Katie just told the artist what she wanted and where, and “the artist just drew it up.” Getting the tattoo was quite the painful process. “It hurt really bad and I had to rest my head on my friend’s hand the whole time.”

Katie’s mother was the impetus behind her second tattoo. “She was getting this flower tattoo on her ankle and I decided to get the same tattoo in the same location but with different colors.”

Thoughts on tattoos
When first tattooed, Katie was somewhat worried about what her grandma might think. “Grandma was cool with them, but Dad hasn’t seen either tattoo yet,” and she’s not exactly sure how he’ll react to seeing them for the first time.

Katie is also concerned about how her tattoos might be seen in the workplace, which accounts for the placement of both: “they’re both easily hidden and my ankle tattoo isn’t too flashy or gaudy.”
Jake W.
Jake, a 21-year old English education major, has five tattoos. He was first tattooed on the day he turned 18.

Jake’s first tattoo is the sun on his back seen at the top left. Since he was 11, Jake knew he was going to be tattooed. He didn’t really have an idea of what to get, “I just went in and said slap something on me.”

The stars, seen at the bottom left, were Jake’s next endeavor into inkdom. While drinking one night, Jake went and got the star on his right arm, keeping it hidden from his parents for a few weeks. A couple months later, he went back to get the left arm done.

The dragonfly on the back of Jake’s left arm, seen above, was inspired by the band Coheed and Cambria. “All the guys had a similar tattoo, and I thought it was bad, so I went and got it.” Jake regrets the tattoo now and would eventually like to get it filled in or covered.

The eagle on Jake’s chest, seen below, is kind of a funny story. Jake badly wanted a tattoo of an eagle silhouette. After searching high and low for a good picture, Jake finally settled on the American Eagle logo. Not that Jake is a huge fan of American Eagle clothing, but “there isn’t any better [eagle] than the AE logo.”
**Stefanie W.**

Stefanie is a 24-year old second-year graduate student majoring in music performance. She has four tattoos and was got her first the day after turning 18.

Stefanie’s first tattoo has actually been covered up by the butterfly at the top right. Originally it was the name of a boyfriend, “I was in love then we broke up. I know you’re shocked.” When she got it covered by a tribal piece, her friends laughed saying it looked like the Batman symbol. So, Stefanie had the piece expanded with the butterfly.

After joining a sorority, Stefanie and a sister both got the rose, seen at the middle right.

The lyre on the ankle opposite the rose, seen at the bottom right, is because it’s an ancient instrument, and Stefanie is a music major.

**Thoughts on tattoos**

Stefanie is certain that visible tattoos would hurt her in her chosen job field. “That’s why I don’t have any visible tats. My field involves a lot of PR and dealing with people. I try to keep them hidden.”