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# The adorned feminine body: a qualitative exploration of media representations of tattooed women in the UK



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## Context

Tattoos are becoming more and more popular, and a large proportion of those who are tattooed are women<sup>1</sup>.

Despite their popularity and seeming acceptance in mainstream society, the traditional, negative stereotype for those who bear tattoos is still held<sup>3</sup>.

The media produces and reproduces dominant notions of what it is to be female and feminine within our society<sup>2</sup>; being tattooed is rarely viewed as feminine.

The aim of this research is to explore how the media represents and constructs tattooed women.



## Methodology

Twenty five media articles were selected systemically, and reviewed to explore patterns of representations of tattooed women from a range of online media sources.

Five articles were then chosen to provide focus for the analysis. These articles contained clear and dominant stereotypical constructs of women.

Foucauldian Discourse Analysis enabled focus on the dominant constructs of femininity, body art and consumer discourses, to explore the construction of 'the tattooed woman' in the media.



## Article quotes

'Tattoos are no longer about standing out. They're about fitting in'

'All Saints, Britney – they all chose to mark themselves and, naturally, a generation of young girls follow in their wake'

'Some things I have heard about women's tattoos: they are chavvy, common, tasteless. They are the mark of the slut, the slapper, the loose woman'

'When a woman makes her own mark on [her skin], she isn't quite as available to receive whatever fantasies you might want to project on to her'



## Outcomes

Perception of tattoos is class oriented – this can be seen through where the articles are published, the presumptive, negative language used.

There is a traditional representation for women as fragile, attractive and well-behaved – tattoos challenge this outdated notion.

Conflict between conforming and being an individual/ unique.



## Conclusion

This provides a deeper understanding of the way in which tattooed women are constructed and represented in our society.

Though tattooed women are not viewed as 'the norm', through coverage in the media, alternate constructions of femininity are represented, and can be reconstructed.

### References

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