2011

Getting Ink: A Rhetorical Analysis of Miami Ink via Social Stigma and Narrative Paradigm

Joseph Robert Nicola
Bethel University

GETTING INK: A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF MIAMI INK VIA SOCIAL STIGMA AND NARRATIVE PARADIGM

A MASTERS THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
BETHEL UNIVERSITY

BY

JOSEPH ROBERT NICOLA

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN COMMUNICATION

SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA
OCTOBER, 2011
BETHEL UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

The following rhetorical analysis examines the various forms of tattoo stigma presented in the first American television program about tattooing, *Miami Ink*. This work includes the origins of tattoos and their development in North America. Within this framework, the varieties of tattoo stigma are discussed. The theory of Stigma and The Narrative Paradigm Theory are utilized to examine the narratives addressing tattoo stigma presented in *Miami Ink*.

Keywords: tattoo, stigma, narrative paradigm theory, stigma theory, stereotypes, Miami Ink, rhetoric, television

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter I: Introduction to the Study

Rationale

The TLC network reality series, *Miami Ink*, is the first American reality television series about a tattoo parlor, and the first show completely devoted to tattoos (Hibberd, 2005)[1]. The show closely follows four tattoo artists' journey into starting a tattoo studio and the clientele they tattoo in South Beach, Florida. The tattoo artists engage each client in conversation as to their personal reasons for getting a tattoo. In addition, the show highlights the intricate and inspiring tattoos the artists create on their clients.

Miami Ink seeks to challenge long standing negative societal views of tattoos as only worn by those outside societal norms. This is accomplished by addressing tattoo stereotypes and prejudices while working towards dispelling them. A method in which the show achieves this is by engaging in dialog with the many different people who wear tattoos. In addition, the show reveals the inner workings of a tattoo shop by presenting the protective measures practiced to maintain a clean and sterile environment. These deliberate choices of persuasion attempt to present tattooing in a less counter cultural dimension and to challenge the viewer to abandon the traditionally held tattoo stigma. *Miami Ink's* success has produced similar spin-off tattoo programs such as *L.A. Ink*, *London Ink,* and *N.Y. Ink*.

Relevance for Studying the Topic

Tattooing has only been legal throughout the United States since the year 2006 (Associated Press, 2006)[2]. As tattoos are becoming more acceptable in American society, one is now able to see tattoos on individuals from all walks of life. Research into this phenomenon has

[1] *Miami Ink* premiered on the TLC Network on Tuesday July 19, 2005. The following day on July 20th the competing show *Inked* was premiered on the A & E Network (Hibberd, 2005; Oldenburg, 2005).

[2] Oklahoma was the final state to legalize tattooing in 2006 (Associated Press, 2006).

attributed this rise of acceptance to open communication from the tattoo industry and positive media exposure of tattoos with celebrities, musicians, and professional athletes (DeMello, 2000). With these media influences helping advance the popularity of tattoos, it is then relevant to look closely at the first television show dedicated specifically to tattooing.

The practice and significance of tattooing has been extensively studied by anthropologists and the medical community but has been relatively neglected in communication literature (Doss & Hubbard, 2009). Conducting a rhetorical analysis of *Miami Ink* will serve as a basis from which an improved understanding of tattoos through communication can develop. Only after this process should one look at the ranging affects *Miami Ink*'s messages have on the larger population. Specifically, this analysis will examine the purpose of the show and what it accomplishes in terms of meaning.

The anticipated application of results are to add greater understanding of how the wearing of tattoos has increased in popularity despite continued prejudice from society. Examination of tattoo narratives will lend itself to the understanding of some of the many reasons people choose to be tattooed. An analysis of the tattoo narratives will be beneficial to those studying the stigma concerns of tattooed individuals. Findings may also prove helpful to media researchers looking to gauge the effectiveness of television's messages towards stigma issues. To better understand the topical messages of *Miami Ink*, an understanding must be formed of the vast use of tattoos throughout humanity's history, their expansion into American culture, and the stigma associated with them.

Chapter II: Literature Review

History

Tattooing has been practiced since the Stone Age and is the most ancient and widely practiced form of permanent body alteration in the world (Green, 2005; Levin, 2008; Levy, 2008; Porterfield, 2008). The functions of tattoos were to memorialize significant life experiences, protect one from harm, and enhance the beauty of the human form (Sanders, 1988). The oldest evidence for tattooing has been discoveries of 40,000 year old bone needles and hollow bone tubes, with traces of powered pigments, believed to be used for tattooing (Levy, 2008). Other ancient tattooing tools have been unearthed in France, Portugal and Scandinavia (Levin, 2008).

Tattooed mummies and other artifacts have been discovered in Europe, Asia, and parts of Egypt (Carswell, 1958; Levin, 2008). In 1991, the preserved human remains of a Bronze Age hunter were found in the mountains near the border of Italy and Austria. Later named Otzi "The Iceman," his body was preserved in ice soon after his death 5,300 years ago, two thousand years before the first pyramid was built. The ice and snow had perfectly preserved his skin, on which tattoos were displayed. His body was covered with tattoos of black parallel lines on his lower back, legs, ankles and wrist. Scientists believe the function of these tattoos were meant to relieve pain by their location above known pressure points on the body (Jennings, 1997; Levin, 2008; Levy, 2008; Porterfield, 2008).

Before Otzi, the oldest known tattooed mummies were Egyptians from around 2,000 BCE (Levy, 2008). The Egyptian priestess Amunet was discovered with tattooed parallel lines on her arms and thighs as well as below her navel (Jennings, 1997; Levin, 2008). Other mummified remains include those of the Pazyryk tribal nomads of Eastern Europe and Western

Asia from the six and seventh century BCE (Levin, 2008). Other tattooed mummies and various artifacts have also been discovered in South America and Pacific Islands, indicating that tattooing was a widespread practice throughout the world (Porterfield, 2008).

The presently accepted theory is that discovery of tattooing was unintentional. The current belief is that a prehistoric person got ashes pressed into his or her skin by accident when falling near a fire, liked the result, and tried to recreate it (Lautman, 1996).

In his book, "*The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*," Charles Darwin (1871) speaks of the vast utilization of tattoos throughout the world;

> Not one great country can be named, from the polar regions in the north to New Zealand in the south, in which the aborigines do not tattoo themselves. This practice was followed by the Jews of old, and by the ancient Britons. In Africa some of the natives tattoo themselves, but it is a much more common practice to raise protuberances by rubbing salt into incisions made in various parts of the body; and these are considered by the inhabitants of Kordofan and Darfur to be great personal attractions. In the Arab countries no beauty can be perfect until the cheeks or temples have been gashed. (p. 527)

Ancient societies used tattoos to serve several purposes. Reasons included religious devotion, a form of therapy or protection, to show one's status and affiliation with a particular tribe or group, to indicate bravery and frighten enemies in battle, and to indicate maturity for marriage (Gustafson, 2000; Levin, 2008; Levy, 2008; Porterfield, 2008; Sanders, 1990; Surles, 2008; Wyatt, 2003).

Societies that used tattoos included the ancient inhabitants of the British Isles, Greeks and Romans, Chinese and Japanese, indigenous peoples of the South Pacific, and Native Americans

(Doss & Hubbard, 2009; Levin, 2008; Levy, 2008; Sanders, 1988). The Picts, the ancient tribes that inhabited the British Isles, practiced tattooing. The Picts were named for the iron tools they used to create their tattoo designs. The word 'Briton' is originated from a Breton word meaning "painted in various colors" (Sanders, 1990, p. 13). Briton males were tattooed with animal designs to enhance their fearsome appearance. Julius Caesar noted in his memoirs that the Britons blue tattoos made them "frightful to look upon in battle" (Sanders, 1990, p. 13). The Roman introduction to tattoos by invading forces resulted in their adoption of the practice by tattooing the foreheads of criminals and slaves (Fisher, 2002; Jennings, 1997).

Ancient Greek and Roman civilizations utilized tattoos as marks of shame and disgrace. Popular tattooing practices were to tattoo slaves and criminals. The Greeks held the belief that tattooing someone against their will is to disgrace and violate them. The Greek word for tattoo "sigmates" gives us the word "stigma" as something that sets apart and is disgraceful (Levin, 2008, p. 19). Slaves that tried to escape the Roman authorities were tattooed on their foreheads with the letters F.U.G., short for the Latin word for fugitive.

This practice of tattooing slaves and criminals continued within the Roman military until the third century when the Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity and banned all tattooing of the face in 325 ACE. Constantine believed that tattooing of the face violated God's handiwork (Fisher, 2002; Jennings, 1997; Sanders, 1990). Constantine held the belief that a man's face was made in the image of God. Because of this, he suggested to his soldiers that only the hands and calves of criminals and slaves be tattooed (Fisher, 2002).

Many tattoo traditions existed amongst the Chinese and Japanese peoples. In 200 BCE, the Yue people of China wore tattoos of mythical animals as protection while fishing. The indigenous women of Hainan Island wore tattoos of flowers and butterflies on their faces as late

as the 1600s. Young women of the island would get their hand tattooed when they got engaged. On the night before their wedding, the groom would come to tattoo the signs of his family on her face (Levin, 2008).

Japanese communities have tattooed their entire bodies for centuries (Doss & Hubbard, 2009). Much like the Greeks and Romans, tattoos were also used as punishments in China and Japan. Soldiers and criminals who attempted to desert or escape were often tattooed with words depicting them as bad and evil. Some then began to take pride in their shameful markings by replacing them with more elaborate tattoos. They would either cover up their tattoos with beautiful ones of flowers and mountains while others banded together and formed gangs (Levin, 2008).

The original inhabitants of Japan were a people called the Ainu and settled Japan, and its surrounding islands, more than twelve thousand years ago. Among them, only women practiced tattooing. For hundreds of years the Ainu women of the island of Hokkaido tattooed their arms, the backs of their hands, and outer area of their mouths indicating that one was married. (Levin, 2008; Levy, 2008).

By the seventh century BCE, Japanese men began to wear tattoos exemplified by the first Japanese emperor Jimmu Tenno. By the fifth century ACE, later emperors used tattoos to punish and mark criminals (Levy, 2008). In the eighteenth century, Chinese literature depicting heroes with full-body tattoos became popular in Japan and consequently, the popularity of tattooing rose again. In the mid eighteenth century the Japanese government passed an edict outlawing the wearing of colorful kimonos (robes) deeming them only for the wealthy. The outrage from the merchant classes only made tattoos more popular and desirable. Such repression lead to ingenuity with the creation of the Japanese body suit; a series of interconnected tattoos that cover

the entire back and extends onto the chest, arms, and legs (Hemingson, 2009). In defiant response, many men then replaced their now outlawed kimonos with elaborate body suit tattoos that covered most of their bodies (Jennings, 1997; Levy, 2008). During 1872, the emergence of foreign trade and visitors prompted the emperor to ban all tattooing for fear of negative relations from foreign visitors. Tattooing continued to be illegal in Japan until after WWII (Levy, 2008, p. 16).

The Japanese would also develop more and elaborate tattoo images of real and fictitious animals and natural elements that would become popular throughout the world. These included fish, dragons, water, fire and wind among others. Between 1603 and 1868, Japan was closed to outsiders, and during this time, the art of making decorative prints from woodblocks was perfected. The style of these prints and technique of printing "one color at a time" led to the Japanese style of tattoo (Levin, 2008, p. 22). Depictions of nature and mythology are blended to make complex, colorful and realistic images (Levin, 2008). Tattooing also held a cultural tradition in other parts of Asia. The Pazyryks, of what is now Russia, were known to have practiced tattooing 2,400 years ago. (Levy, 2008).

In Samoa, in the South Pacific, tattooing was a rite of passage for teenage boys as they passed into manhood. Samoan women tattooed images of lace and flowers on their face, arms and thighs, which were a requirement for women to participate in certain cultural ceremonies (Levy, 2008). Samoans also used tattoos medicinally as a way to treat rheumatism (Schiffmacher & Riemschneider, 2001).

For the Maori people of New Zealand, women tattooed their lips and faces as evidence that they had reached puberty, to present their ancestral lineage, indicate that they were ready for marriage, and as a sign of beauty (Doss & Hubbard, 2009; Sanders, 1988). Maori men adorned

full facial tattoos known as Moko. The Moko was worn to signify family lineage and to strike fear in their enemies in battle. After Europeans colonized New Zealand, Maori men would copy the designs of their Moko marks as their signature on paper documents (Hemingson, 2009; Levy, 2008).

Nearly all Native American tribes practiced tattooing to some extent (Van Dinter, 2000; Levy, 2008). Tattooed Native American tribes included the Ojibwas, Sioux, and Haida. The Ojibwa tattooed for therapeutic purposes. To exorcise the malevolent spirits they believed were inflicting headaches and toothaches, the Ojibwa would tattoo the temples, forehead and cheeks of the afflicted (Hemingson, 2009).

The Sioux believed tattoos assisted in their journey to the afterlife. The tradition stated that before a warrior could pass into the afterlife, they are encountered by the spirit of an elderly woman who blocks his path. Before he can pass onto the afterlife, he must show the woman his tattoos. If he has none, the woman will condemn him to walk the earth as a ghost (Hemingson, 2009).

The Haida tattoo iconography consisted of depictions of family totems or crests. On male members, tattoos were placed between the shoulders, chests, thighs and just below the knees. Female members wore tattoos on the breast, shoulders, forearms and the back of the hands (Hemingson, 2009). Tattooing was greatly respected by the Mayan civilizations of Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, and Honduras between 250 ACE and 900 ACE (Levin, 2008). Tattooing indicated respected status among the Iroquois and Inuit of North America. Inuit men tattooed themselves to show how many whales they had killed. Inuit women's chin tattoos showed they were married (Levy, 2008). Along with the Native American peoples, tattoos share a long history of religious significance with other religions.

The argument that various religions speak against the art of tattooing is misleading because doctrinal texts are not always interpreted the same way. Evidence for this occurrence is seen in the multiple sects and denominations in which many faiths distinguish themselves. Furthermore, in order to ban a behavior in a particular culture, the people of the culture must first be engaging in the specified behavior (Gilbert, 2001; Reardon, 2008). Ancient religious texts that speak against tattoos thereby give evidence to their existence within the time and culture when the texts were first produced. The five major world religions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam all share a history of tattoos being worn by their devotees.

Hindu Brahmins, the highest caste in Hindu society, have a long history of tattooing lines or circles on their foreheads, cheeks or chest to signify religious servitude (Hemingson, 2009; Schiffmacher & Riemschneider, 2001). Hindus in the Bengal region of India wear tattoos so that in death, relatives in the afterlife may recognize them (Hemingson, 2009).

In Buddhism, tattooing is performed as religious practice (Schiffmacher & Riemschneider, 2001). Buddhist monks in Thailand have practiced the art of spiritual tattooing since ancient times. Once a year thousands of followers journey to the Theravada temple of Wat Bang Phra (Temple of the Flying Tiger), outside of Bangkok, to be tattooed by and blessed by the monks who reside there (Green, 2005; Hemingson, 2009). One who gets tattooed by a monk is said to have the tattoo bring them good luck, fortune and protection. These protective tattoos are known as "sak yant" and have a long tradition of being worn by soldiers (Hemingson, 2009, p. 41).

Tattooing is growing in popularity among young people of the Jewish faith (Hemingson, 2009). Despite the centuries long tradition against marking one's body, and the forced tattooing of Jews by the Nazis during the Holocaust, tattoos are starting to become more popular

depictions of spirituality as some Jewish young adults are being tattooed. However distasteful Jewish leaders and elders may find this practice, there is a growing agreement that there is no basis for limiting one from religious participation or ritual because one has tattoos (Dorff & Newman, 2008; Green, 2011).

In Christianity, tattooing was utilized as a symbol of faith (Carswell, 1958). The first Christians branded themselves with small cross tattoos on the inside of their wrist and out of view from the Roman authority who despised Christianity. In early Christianity, the tattoo served as an indelible statement of faith in a time when discovery meant certain death (Jennings, 1997).

One of the oldest established churches in Christianity is the Coptic Church in Egypt. For centuries, after completing a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, it is custom that men, women and young children memorialize their journey by receiving tattoos on their hands, wrists and arms depicting images of the cross as well as other scenes from biblical scripture. Pilgrims from Armenian, Abyssinian, Syrian and Russian denominations have also chosen to incise this Coptic iconography to commemorate their own pilgrimages (Carswell, 1958). These tattooing practices lead to the creation of some the earliest iconography known to Christianity (Carswell, 1958; Jennings, 1997).

By the fourth century ACE, such a multitude of early Christians were being tattooed that Saint Basil the Great wrote that they should stop to separate themselves from the heathens that lived among them. This order was later repealed in 786 ACE when a report of the Papal Legates to Pope Hadrian declared;

> Certainly, if anyone were to undergo this injury of staining [tattoos] for the sake of God, he would receive a great reward for it. But if anyone does it from the superstition of the

> pagans, it will not contribute to his salvation any more than does circumcision of the body to the Jews with belief of heart. (MacQuarrie, 2000, p. 36)

The following ruling in 787 ACE, from the council of bishops in England, declared that Christians were to be praised for tattooing their bodies for God. However, tattooing for any other reason was still forbidden by the Church.

In the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries, Christian crusaders to the Holy Land had themselves tattooed in remembrance of their journeys (Doss & Hubbard, 2009; Jennings, 1997; Levin, 2008; Sanders, 1990). This was also done to insure they received a Christian burial if they died abroad (Jennings, 1997; Levy, 2008).

Evidence has uncovered that tattooing has been practiced in the Middle East for over 6,000 years. Tattoos were popular among Muslims of both sexes for health reasons. A series of dots would be tattooed on the vulnerable area of the body in the belief that it would relieve pain (Carswell, 1958). Many Arab nations also believed certain tattoos had the power to induce pregnancy. These tattoos consisted mostly of a small series of dots below the navel, the lower back and on the buttocks of women (Hemingson, 2009). Tattoos commemorating a pilgrimage to Mecca were and are still common among believers (Doss & Hubbard, 2009; Hemingson, 2009; Sanders, 1990).

An historic timeline of tattooing in America starts with the voyages of British explorers in the 18th century. Tattoos were then adapted and modified by 19th century service men and carnival workers and then by members of the American working class. Marginalized groups such as criminals and gangs also started to utilize tattoos. Finally in the late 20th century, tattoos were embraced by the American middle-class (DeMello, 2000).

The history of western tattooing starts in the mid-18th century with the exploratory English voyages of Captain (then Lieutenant) James Cook and his encounters with the indigenous peoples of the South Pacific (Gilbert, 2001; Sanders, 1988, 1990). On April 11, 1769, Captain Cook and his crew reached Matavia Bay in Tahiti. Hundreds of tattooed islanders came out to welcome him and his crew. In their three-month stay in Tahiti, Cook and his crew observed and participated in the natives' cultural and tattooing practices (Gilbert, 2001; Porterfield, 2008).

Cook went on several voyages in the South Pacific. Upon returning to England from his second voyage, Captain Cook returned with a heavily tattooed Tahitian prince named Omai. Prince Omai was exhibited as an object of great curiosity to members of the British upper class (Sanders, 1990). To describe the markings he observed on the various tribes he came across, Cook introduced the Tahitian word "ta-tu" meaning "to strike or mark" (Sanders, 1990, p. 14). The word "ta-tu" soon evolved into the word "tattoo" that is still used today (Jones, 2000; Sanders, 1990; Victionary, 2007). The practice of tattooing soon became popular among sailors, who wore them as exotic souvenirs of their travels and as superstitious good luck charms for protection on the high seas (Sanders, 1988).

The tales of Captain Cook and his crew, with their tattoos and adventures with exotic cultures, fascinated the British royalty and upper classes. As a result they became sought after guests at stylish dinner parties. Tattoos soon came into fashion and quickly spread through the upper classes of Europe. Members of the royal family and aristocracy were getting tattoos of their own.

In England, King Edward VII received his first tattoo in 1862. In 1882, his son King George V received a dragon tattoo on his arm. The mother of future Prime Minister Winston

Churchill, Lady Randolph Churchill, had a snake tattooed around her wrist (Levy, 2008). Other tattooed royalty included King Harold II of England, King George II of Greece, King Oscar of Sweden, King Frederick IX of Denmark, King Alfonso of Spain, King and Emperor Wilhelm II of Germany (Gilbert, 2000; Green, 2005; Levy, 2008; Sanders, 1990). With the popularity of tattoos with royalty, the British working class and military soon followed the fashion (Sanders, 1990). Tattoos remained fashionable for the next twenty years (Fisher, 2002). However, given the association with the lower class, the practice was generally looked down upon in the middle-class societies in both Europe and the United States (Sanders, 1988).

Despite enjoying a short period of popularity by European Nobility in the mid to late 19th century, by the mid-20th century tattooing was firmly recognized as a deviant practice (Fisher, 2002; Sanders, 1988). Those in the middle class viewed tattoos as a product distributed by unskilled enthusiasts practicing in bad neighborhoods. The tattoo then became a symbol of secession against the conventional and being drawn to the dangerous margins of society (DeMello, 2000; Sanders, 1988).

One of the first references to the tattoo practice in America was during the American Civil War (Fisher, 2002). Martin Hildebrandt is credited with tattooing thousands of both Confederate and Union forces during the Civil War (Sanders, 1990). American tattooing development and popularity continued to stay unassuming until the development of the electric tattoo machine in 1891 (Fisher, 2002; Gilbert, 2001; Hemingson, 2009; Von D, 2009).

The inventor was New York City tattooist Sam O'Reilly[3] (Levy, 2008; Porterfield, 2008; Reardon, 2008; G. Rautio, personal communication, February, 22, 2011). Basing his design on Thomas Edison's 1876 electric stencil pen patent, O'Reilly called his new device the

[3] In addition to inventing the tattoo machine O'Reilly is also credited with introducing Japanese-style tattoo designs to America (Fisher, 2002; Sanders, 1990).

"tattaugraph" (Fisher, 2002). The tattoo machine design consisted of a needle placed inside a tube and connected by an armature bar to either rotary or electromagnetic coils. By connecting the tattoo machine to a power source, the coils pushed the armature bar downward. The needles connected to the armature are then pushed down through the tube and into the skin (Von D, 2009). The original design and operation of the electric tattoo machine is still in use by modern tattoo artists (G. Rautio, personal communication, February, 22, 2011).

Before O'Reilly's electric tattoo machine, tattoos were applied by hand in various ways. Straightforward methods include cutting the skin and rubbing ash or soot into the wound, to dipping the end of a needle into ink and penetrating it into the skin. A more sophisticated style of hand tattooing known as Tebori was developed by the Japanese. The Tebori style of tattooing is accomplished by the tattoo artist using a long wand with needles at one end. Ink is placed on the needles and the wand is held like a pool cue by the artist whereby one hand serves to guide the needles direction while the other hand pushes the wand forcing the needles into the skin (Mandelbaum, 2008).

A comparable method to Tebori is that of the Polynesian islands. In traditional Polynesian hand tattooing, the tattoo is applied using two mallets. Attached to the end of the first mallet is a flat wedge of carved bone. At the end of this bone are multiple carved toothed points used to puncture the skin. The number of these saw-like points range to accommodate varying degrees of design. Holding the first mallet's bone wedge over the desired area of the skin, the tattooist then proceeds to hammer the first mallet with the second mallet repeatedly and in rapid succession, forcing the needles into the skin (Wroblewski, 2004).

The advent of the electric tattoo machine no longer required tattoos to be done by hand. This quickened the tattooing process, decreased the pain involved and allowed for greater detail

towards making the designs (Fisher, 2002; Levy, 2008; Sanders, 1990). The development of the electric tattoo machine changed the practice and market for tattoos (Levy, 2008). The invention of the electric tattoo machine was followed by an increase in the number of tattoo practitioners and clients throughout the country (Sanders, 1990). By the year 1900, every major American city had tattoo parlors (Levy, 2008). As the electric tattoo machine made tattooing easier and faster, it also became less expensive, which attracted customers from the working-classes of United States and England[4]. This development eventually caused tattoos to fall out of favor with royalty and the upper class (Levy, 2008).

During this shift in the tattoo market negative associations were attributed to tattooing. Tattoo parlors were often in bad parts of cities where respectable citizens did not frequent. Sanitary measures had not been developed and customers often risked infection and disease from unclean needles and ink. Those whose lifestyles were outside the mainstream made up a large portion of tattooists' customers. Such people included criminals, gang members, and people who became featured attractions in side-shows and carnivals (Levy, 2008).

Towards the beginning of the twentieth century, interest in the circus 'freak show' spectacle added to the upsurge in tattooists' business. Heavily tattooed performers would be put on display for onlookers and were paid up to two hundred dollars a week (Jennings, 1997). Fabricated tales of fear and adventure were told as an explanation for their appearance. As more and more people chose to tattoo themselves to earn money from public spectacle, these performers were forced to increase the number and diversity of their tattoos (Fisher, 2002). For over seventy years every major circus company employed tattooed side-show performers (Gilbert, 2001).

[4] Sam O'Reilly shared his invention with his cousin in London, Tom Riley. Tom Riley became the first British tattoo artist to use the machine and one of the most prominent tattoo artists in England (Gilbert, 2001).

In the 1880s, tattooed women started to perform and soon upstaged men completely (DeMello, 2000). Tattooed women performers felt pressure to wear more revealing costumes to show how much of their bodies were actually tattooed. As a result, their outfits became smaller and tighter. Such a "peep-show" soon made tattoos synonymous with crudeness and deviance in the public mindset (Fisher, 2002). Unlike male performers, tattooed women left their neck, hands, and heads free of tattoos to appear modest when not performing and to have another career if they retired from show business (Clerk, 2009; DeMello, 2000).

Tattooed women performers told shocking stories about how they acquired their tattoos, just as men did. The first tattooed woman on the sideshow circuit was Irene "La Belle" Woodward in 1882. The back-story to her tattoos was that they served as protection from the sexual advances of the unruly Red Indians of the wild west of Texas (Clerk, 2009; DeMello, 2000).

The Great Omi, also known as the Zebra Man, is the most famous example of the whole-body tattooed performers (Gilbert, 2001; Schiffmacher & Riemschneider, 2001). Although his real name continues to be a mystery, what is known about the Great Omi is that he was known the world over as the greatest tattooed performer to ever live. After being discharged from his career as a major in the British army, Omi found his soldier skill set unhelpful in landing a job outside the military. An educated and cultured man, Omi traveled the world and soon was inspired to join the ranks of the well-paid tattooed circus performers. In 1927, he petitioned the help of the English master tattoo artist George Burchett to tattoo his entire body with zebra stripes; it took over 550 million needle pricks in Omi's skin to reach his desired appearance. Afterwards known as the *Great Omi*, he enjoyed a successful career traveling the world entertaining thousands in sold out arenas and theater houses (Clerk, 2009; Gilbert, 2001).

Using tattoos to establish identity was becoming popular in the 1930s by ordinary American citizens. After the Lindbergh baby kidnapping and murder in 1932, many worried parents had their children tattooed with their names. When the first Social Security card was issued in 1936, people congregated to tattoo shops to have their number tattooed on them (DeMello, 2000).

During World War I and World War II, tattoos were extremely popular within the ranks of Military and Navy service members, serving to memorialize their active duty service and as a form of personal identity (McCallion, 2007). Navy sailors often visited tattoo shops in groups to compete with each other for the most and best tattoos (DeMello, 2000). American sailors were originally tattooed to record their voyages at sea and to serve as good luck charms (McCallion, 2007). Sailors by far have had the most well known superstitions with tattoos.

When a sailor had gone five thousand miles at sea, they acquired a bluebird tattooed on their chest; when they logged ten thousand miles, they got a second bluebird on the other side (DeMello, 2000). The tattoo of an anchor served to show that its wearer has sailed the Atlantic Ocean. A full-rigged ship tattoo meant one has sailed around Cape Horn. Those that had served on a station near China received a tattoo of a dragon. The words "hold" and "fast" tattooed on the knuckles of the hands were believed to allow the bearer to grip the rigging better on the high seas (McCallion, 2007). If a sailor crossed the equator, he would get the Roman God Neptune on his leg or a Shellback Turtle (DeMello, 2000; Jennings, 1997; McCallion, 2007). To protect themselves from drowning at sea, they would tattoo a rooster and chicken on their feet (DeMello, 2000). Since roosters and chickens tend to avoid water, it was believed that tattoos of these animals would help get the sailor quickly to shore if he fell overboard (McCallion, 2007). All these tattoos went to create a living resume on the skin. An experienced sailor who documented

his achievements with tattoos could easily be recognized and respected by other sailors, on any sea vessel, throughout his career.

In North America, the tattoo profession quietly existed in small spaces hidden away at the margins of society in dirty corners of arcades, under circus tents, and carnival midways in the early twentieth-century (DeMello, 2000). Despite the once elitist romance with tattooing, by the mid twentieth-century tattooing was established as a tradition of the lower class (Sanders, 1990). As Levin (2008) posits, "no account of history would be complete without some reference to the darker side of human nature" (p. 15). As the popularity of tattoos began to gradually decline in the general population tattoos eventually became associated with criminals and degenerates (McCallion, 2007).

Select groups of people were recognized to tattoo themselves to show identity or loyalty towards a specific group or belief. Such groups included prisoners and gang members (Doss & Hubbard, 2009). The understanding is that the act of tattooing becomes a form of protest against the system that inhibits them. Receiving and displaying tattoos serves as a rebellion to show that the prisoner cannot be conquered or broken by the system that incarcerates them (Schiffmacher & Riemschneider, 2001). Tattooing has been attributed to crime by their association with criminals, gangs and organized crime. Examples of gangs that have developed deep connections with tattoos include the Crips & Bloods, Latin Kings, Aryan Brotherhood, Mexican Mafia, The Yakuza, and The Chinese Triads (Porterfield, 2008).

The counter culture of the 1960's enjoyed a brief renaissance in tattoos (Fisher, 2002; Ritz, 2005; Sanders, 1988, 1990;). However, it was not until the mid 1980's that society's negative association with tattoos began to shift. This watershed moment was started by the work of Sailor Jerry in the 1970's (Levin, 2008). Sailor Jerry, born Norman Keith Collins, was a

former sailor turned tattoo artist and operated a tattoo parlor in Honolulu, Hawaii. Sailor Jerry contributed to the art form and safety practices of tattooing by making the medium safer and more appealing to a larger audience. Before Sailor Jerry, American tattooists only used three or four colors for creating tattoos which greatly limited the design and scope of tattoos. Jerry's research in finding new color pigments and testing their safety greatly expanded the color pallet tattoo artists could use. Sailor Jerry's creative innovations were instrumental in changing the idea of what a tattoo could look like. Previously, the American tradition of tattoo iconography consisted of simple, unrelated tattoos scattered across the body. Sailor Jerry took inspiration from the Japanese style tattooing, which promoted the notion of large, unified, custom designs and specific body placement (Levy, 2008). The incorporation of international designs and more color options broadened tattoo appeal and clientele.

However, possibly Sailor Jerry's most important contribution to the tattooing arts was his development of consistent safety and health standards. He was one of the first to use and promote single-service needles and inks that would be used for one customer only and then thrown away, and was also one of the first to sterilize his equipment. These sanitary changes from earlier methods helped prevent the spread of infectious diseases (Levy, 2008).

At the time when other tattooists were working in seclusion from one another, Sailor Jerry worked to help create an international network of artists to share ideas and techniques. All of his efforts coalesced in 1972 with his organization of the first international tattoo convention; the first of many and a major catalyst for the industry's boom starting in the 1980's (Levy, 2008).

American children today are growing up in a cultural landscape that is more tattoo conscious than at any other time in history (Kosut, 2006). Studies have reported that at least

twenty percent of the American population is presently tattooed (Kosut, 2006; Mayers, Judelson, Moriarty, & Rundell, 2002). These numbers are continuing to grow (Org, 2003). What has attributed to this rise in popularity of tattoos is the increased coverage of tattoos in print and television media (DeMello, 2000; Wyatt, 2003; Yamada, 2009). Countless celebrities are tattooed (Ritz, 2005) as well as over seventy percent of the National Basketball Association (Gottlieb, 2003). Former Guinness World Record holder for most tattoos, Tattoo Stiggy, states that historically there has always been a;

> Certain part of the population that is getting tattooed. But now there's just more people cause there's more on television and movies. It's the thing now today. The rock stars and the movie stars are tattooed, more people in the limelight that are tattooed than probably before. (Wyatt, 2003, p. 90)

Along with increased television and print media exposure of tattooed individuals, another significant aspect in the elevation of tattoo's status can be attributed to the establishment of tattoos as a legitimate art form. The art world soon caught on with the organization and improvement of the tattoo industry. The influence resulting from Sailor Jerry and many other artists' involvement in advancing the industry was realized by the art world fourteen years later. In 1986, the National Museum of American Art in New York, confirmed tattoo's legitimacy as an art form by adding them to its permanent collection displays. Tattooing was now viewed as art and placed equal to other art forms (Levin, 2008).

By 1998, several more galleries were exhibiting tattoo art. With the art world's new recognition of tattoos as a form of high art, the businesses formerly called "tattoo parlors" became known as "tattoo art studios" (Levin, 2008, p. 27). This sophistication also was applied to the tattoos themselves. As the book *Tattoo Art and Design* describes;

> The range, grace and complexity of graphically striking tattoo styles have given tattooing the status of men's most sophisticated artistic genre. As much as it's a formidable aesthetic movement, tattoos as graphic art of color, form and text permanently inscribed on the canvas of human skin, are also the ultimate cultural and personal insignia. They go beyond the decorative to the symbolic, articulating the identify of a group or an individual as they carry symbols of spirituality, personal growth, passion and belief. (Victionary, 2007, p. 4)

With the selections and techniques of tattoos improving, along with the growing acceptance as a legitimate art form, a new mainstream audience for tattoos developed. Tattooing was now becoming popular with the educated middle class of America (Levin, 2008). Several published tattooed materials provide the analogy of the body as a canvas for art. The skin as an artistic canvas metaphor presents the body as a legitimate artistic medium; to be decorated, among clothing and jewelry, via tattoos. Ancient cultures have considered tattoos as art and contemporary society is now embracing this long-standing view. As these legitimate aesthetic views of tattoos have once again come into the current culture's mind frame, much of the American population, of all social classes, have been attracted to them (Kosut, 2006). Significant changes have also been occurring within the profession. New tattoo artists are now entering the field with backgrounds in traditional art training (Victionary, 2007; Wyatt, 2003; G. Rautio, personal communication, February, 22, 2011). Many female tattoo artists are now entering the industry; one that has been predominantly dominated by men for centuries (Martens, 2010).

With classically trained tattooists now joining the field their focus is on the creative and custom designing of tattoos rather than run-of-the-mill generic designs. They view themselves

as artists and present their designs as a legitimate art form. Much of their work is now being shown in museums and is gaining the attention of critics and academics in the art world (Sanders, 1988;1990).

Western society's attitude toward tattoos has been repositioned back and forth over the last few centuries (Levy, 2008). Although tattooing is ancient, it has just recently begun to rise in public popularity as Western society's attitude toward tattoos has shifted (Hawkes, Senn, & Thorn, 2004; Levy, 2008). No longer are tattoos solely for the skin of the blue-collar working class, bikers, gang members, criminals or miscreants. People from all walks of life are now getting tattoos (Org, 2003; Porterfield, 2008; Reardon, 2008; Roleff, 2007; Trebay, 2008; Victionary, 2007). As Gustafson (2000) indicates;

> We are witnesses to a tattoo revival. We see bodies emblazoned with [tattoos] everywhere, it seems, in our media-saturated society. Tattoos are flaunted in public, exhibited proudly on television and the Internet, in magazines and films, and touted as body art in glossy books of photographs. (p. 17)

As wearers become more white-collar, the tattoos, as well as the studios themselves, have become increasingly fashionable and artistic (Org, 2003).

In response to the growing popularity of tattoos among their employees many businesses, including Ford Motor Company, Target, and the US Postal Service, are now permitting their employees to display their tattoos as long as they are not offensive (Org, 2003; Roleff, 2007). However, despite these advancements there is still a lingering view that the appearances of tattoos represent signs of degradation, criminality and deviance (Gustafson, 2000, p. 17). Yet despite the historical use of tattoos and its continuous rise in popularity in many respected circles, tattooed individuals are still often evaluated and associated with negative characteristics

by society (Doss & Hubbard, 2009; Yamada, 2009). Victionary (2007) explicates; "Tattoos are a passion for some, an art form for others, and for most, a popular fashion trend. But despite its prevalence in mainstream popular culture, tattoos' relation with social deviance is still hard to shake off" (p. 4). First impressions are hard to break and developed stereotypes of tattoos are no exception. The history of tattoos rise to prominence has led to their association of being worn by people of ill repute, violence, profanity and deviance (Schiffmacher & Riemschneider, 2001). The history of how tattoo stigma developed in the public mindset are as vast as the history of the tattoo itself.

Psychological and Societal Factors

Basic human psychological processes create a tendency to judge based on appearance, and much stigma has historically been attached to tattoo recipients who tend to be seen as socially deviant (Hawkes, Senn, & Thorn, 2004). The appearance of tattoos is deemed as "an assault on the viewer" (Gustafson, 2000, p. 17). Schiffmacher and Reimschneider (2001) elaborate on how tattoos are perceived by others;

> Tattoos evoke a range of reactions – from interest, astonishment, admiration and reverence to consternation and abhorrence. They are met with open mouths or frowns, their bearers are judged or misjudged, awaking fear or desire. A tattoo always raises questions, whether in the mind of a friend or foe, consciously or unconsciously, whether the person concerned is educated and generous or narrow-minded and short-sighted, approving or disapproving. (p. 6)

Much research has been focused on tattoos and the characteristics associate with them. Such characteristics include being unsuccessful in school and work, coming from broken homes, lack of ethics and morals, having poor decision-making skills, risk taking, irresponsible, drug abuse,

and being rebellious, (Armstrong, 1994; Roberts & Ryan, 2002; Hawkes, Senn, & Thorn, 2004; Roleff, 2007; Porterfield, 2008). Furthermore, tattooing has been viewed by many as an impulsive or irresponsible behavior and has been associated with psychiatric disturbances in some literature (Martin & Dula, 2010).

General population studies of adolescents have found correlations between tattoos and high risk behaviors among teenagers. Tattooed adolescents reported higher participation in substance abuse and sexual intercourse than adolescents without tattoos. Tattoos among adolescents were also associated with violent behaviors and academic problems (Roberts & Ryan, 2002).

A characteristic given to tattoo wearers is that they do it to form some sort of identity they currently lack. Such stereotypes are that tattoos are worn by males who are not health conscious and have masochistic tendencies (Huxley & Grogan, 2005; Millner & Eichold, 2001). Findings of more recent studies of tattoos are found to dismiss these old stereotypes and support the growing population's view of tattoos as socially acceptable.

New insights have determined that there is no difference between one's gender and ethnic background and getting tattooed (Millner & Eichold, 2001). A study conducted in the U.K. studied to see if health conscious people stayed away from tattoos. Findings did not support their hypotheses and concluded that all types of people get tattoos and are not worried of un-sanitary studio conditions (Huxley & Grogan, 2005). The conclusion can be drawn that people do not get tattooed out of a desire to hurt themselves, yet tattoos still carry with them stereotypes that need to be understood through theory.

The Theory of Stigma

The theory of Stigma was first published by Erving Goffman in 1963 and posits that society naturally categorizes people in relation to specific societal norms. Those that adhere to societal structure are referred to as "normals" while those that do not conform to society's standards are called "deviants" (Carnevale, 2007, p. 10). Goffman identifies stigma as "an attribute that is deeply discrediting" to someone (Goffman, 1963, p. 3). The term stigma is then an encompassment of both the attributes and stereotypes that go towards discrediting someone. When the normals in a society are presented with a deviant, they construct a stigma-theory to explain the deviant's inferiority and the danger they present to society; "On this assumption, society exercises varieties of discrimination, through which we effectively, if often unthinkingly, reduce his [the stigmatized] life chances" (Goffman, 1963, p. 5). Individuals that are stigmatized as deviant are then "displaced by a sense of deep abnormality in the presence of normals, frequently resulting in feelings of self-hate, self-isolation, depression and/or hostility" (Carnevale, 2007, p. 10).

The theory of Stigma identifies three different types of stigma; physical deformities, blemishes of character, and ancestral (Goffman, 1963). Researchers have since abridged these three types of stigma into the categories of physical, social and moral (Meisenbach, 2010). Physical stigma is stigma stemming from the deformities of one's physical body. Social stigma consists of stigma related to blemishes of character, unnatural passions and ridged beliefs. Moral stigma encompasses the stigma of race, nation and religion. Stigma is then utilized to explain one's physical appearance, their place within society, and their system of beliefs and actions (Goffman, 1963).

Normals in society are unlikely to openly recognize that which is discrediting of the stigmatized individual. This lack of recognition can cause encounters between normals and deviants to become tense and ambiguous (Goffman, 1963). These qualities of stigmatized groups help one to understand some perspectives of those in the tattoo community.

The possibility exists for the stigmatized individual to fail to achieve what society demands and yet be unaffected by this failure. Protected by their identity, the stigmatized person feels they are a normal human being and that those in society are intolerant. Fundamentally the stigmatized individual shares similar beliefs about identity as the rest of society. Their identity is rooted in their "sense of being a 'normal person,' a human being like anyone else, a person, therefore, who deserves a fair chance and a fair break" at life (Goffman, 1963, p. 7).

Interestingly, Goffman asserts that the stigmatized individual may use their stigma for secondary gains, view it as a blessing in disguise, and to re-assess the limitations of the normal (Goffman, 1963). These attributes will be considered and discussed when they are presented within the text.

The stigmatized want acceptance from society and will respond by making "a direct attempt to correct" what they view as incorrect assumptions about themselves (Goffman, 1963, p. 9). An important attribute about American culture is stressed; "no matter how small and how badly off a particular stigmatized category is, the viewpoint of its members is likely to be given public presentation of some kind" (Goffman, 1963, p. 25). It could then be argued that *Miami Ink* is a direct attempt to correct the long standing social misconceptions about tattoos held by the culturally conditioned viewer.

A stigmatized person is likely to feel exposed to invasions of privacy from normals. This displeasure can be amplified by being approached by those curious about their condition. The

resulting implication of this actuality is that the stigmatized is then viewed as one who is willing to openly discuss themselves to strangers (Goffman, 1963).

With the understanding of the existence of tattoo stigma in society, it is relevant to discuss the fact that, in American culture, tattoos are a voluntary choice; what Goffman (1963) would categorize as "stigma symbols that are voluntary employed" (p. 46). Americans with tattoos knowingly choose to become stigmatized by society. Intentionally putting something on their body which is; "especially effective in drawing attention to a debasing identity discrepancy, breaking up what would otherwise be a coherent overall picture, with a consequent reduction in our [society's] validation of the individual" (Goffman, 1963, pp. 43-44). With the understanding that a tattoo may cause one to appear less respectable to others, the question is raised as to why someone in society still chooses to tattoo themselves? Such action inevitably creates unjustified social suspicions in which they must manage (Goffman, 1963).

Tattoos evoke negative associations from normals regardless of a tattoos' intended meaning or lack thereof. This is supported in Goffman's (1961) discussion; "Further, a sign that appears to be present for non-informational reasons may sometimes be manufactured with malice aforethought solely because of its informing functions" (p. 45). Tattoos can inadvertently convey negative attributes that may not be true of the individual.

The theory of Stigma states that stereotyping is; "basic in our society" and part "of our normative expectations regarding conduct and character" of others (Goffman, 1963, p. 51). People naturally judge others but getting to know the stigmatized person as an individual does serve to reduce stigma held by the normal. The theory of Stigma supports the assumption that; "impersonal contacts between strangers are particularly subject to stereotypical responses, as persons come to be on closer terms with each other this categoric approach recedes and gradually

sympathy, understanding, and a realistic assessment of personal qualities takes place" (Goffman, 1963, p. 51). In order to reduce stigma held by the normals, the stigmatized must present themselves as personable towards the normals and actively create environments of inclusion.

Goffman examines the variety of strategies stigmatized people use to cope with society's stigma. The theory of Stigma holds that the stigmatized individual will seek out support from other stigmatized individuals as well as a set of guidelines that will make sense of their situation. Social groups comprised of similar stigmatized individuals can provide support for each other as well as promote codes of conduct to facilitate navigation through a society that deems them inferior (Goffman, 1963). This formation of collective self-identity by means of shared social stigma empowers the stigmatized to navigate through society (Carnevale, 2007).

Along with these strategies, the theory of Stigma further posits that it is the responsibility of stigmatized social groups to bring awareness to the normals; "the stigmatized individual should make an effort at sympathetic re-education of the normal, showing [society]…that in spite of appearances, the stigmatized individual, is underneath it all, a fully-human being" (Goffman, 1963, p. 116). Doing so will in turn lessen the stigma projected by the normals they educate. An implication of such advocacy can stimulate the stigmatized individual to become a commentator of their society (Goffman, 1963).

Another task the stigmatized undertake is to present themselves as representatives before various audiences. In doing so, they create the argument of the stigmatized as good people capable of normal achievement. Frequently those possessing a particular stigma will promote a medium to formulate their beliefs (Goffman, 1963). It could then be argued that the television program *Miami Ink* serves as a catalyst for presenting the case against tattoo stigma and that the

clients presented on the show are considered the ideal representation of tattoo wearers to the normals of society.

Individuals who possess a particular stigma have a propensity to have similar experiences regarding their predicament and their formation of self; a moral career. In taking account of one's moral career, the stigmatized individual may distinguish and expand on the experiences which have lead to their beliefs and practices (Goffman, 1963). The client testimonials on *Miami Ink* would support this supposition of a stigmatized individual explaining why they chose to be tattooed.

In addition Goffman claims that those who work with the stigmatized possess an insight on the issues they face;

> One type of wise person is he whose wiseness comes from working in an establishment which caters either to the wants of those with a particular stigma or to actions that society takes in regard to these persons. (p. 29)

Goffman would attribute this wisdom to the tattoo artists presented in the program. Application of the theory of Stigma would depict them as experts in their field and a credible source of knowledge on the topic of tattoo stigma and social issues.

Narrative Paradigm Theory

In conjunction with the theory of Stigma, this thesis will also incorporate the Narrative Paradigm Theory (NPT), developed by Walter Fisher as a framework for looking at stories. Fisher (1985) explains that;

> The primary function of the paradigm is to offer a way of interpreting and assessing human communication that leads to critique, a determination of whether or not a given

> instance of discourse provides a reliable, trustworthy, and desirable guide to thought and action in the world. (p. 351)

The theory contends that, with any narrative, there is more being communicated than is always recognized by the listener or viewer. Subsequently, NPT is designed to draw attention to these overlooked messages and provides a way of thinking that take them fully into account (Fisher, 1985).

Narrative Paradigm Theory holds five assumptions: (1) all humans are storytellers, (2) a story's worth is based on good reasons, (3) good reasons are determined by one's personal background, experiences, culture, and character, (4) rationality is formulated by people's judgments of a story's reliability and truthfulness, and (5) individuals experience the world through stories and must choose among them (Fisher, 1984; West & Turner, 2000).

With these five assumptions, Narrative Paradigm Theory approaches stories as a means of influencing others. The Narrative Paradigm then; "seeks to account for *how* people come to adopt stories that guide behavior" by providing "a 'logic' for assessing stories, for determining whether or not one *should* adhere to the stories one is encouraged to endorse or to accept as the basis for decision and action" (Fisher, 1985, p. 348).

Fisher proposes that compelling stories provide a rationale for decisions and actions (Fisher, 1984, 1985, 1989). Understanding that life is experienced through narratives, a method for judging which stories to believe and which to ignore is fundamental. Fisher provides such a method through narrative rationality. Narrative rationality operates on the two principles of coherence and fidelity (West & Turner, 2000).

The principle of coherence refers to the believability of a narrative; of whether or not the story told makes rational and coherent sense to the viewer (Fisher, 1985). When one is judging a

story's logic, narrative coherence asks "whether or not a story coheres or 'hangs together,' whether or not the story is free of contradictions" (Fisher, 1985, p. 349). Judging a story's coherence causes the viewer to ask if the story appears to provide the full picture. Coherence then is the method of sense making applied to a narrative. When utilizing coherence in judging the merit of a story the viewer must ask if the story told appears plausible to them. Fundamentally, do the characters in the story behave in consistent ways? (West & Turner, 2000).

The second principle for judging narrative rationality is fidelity, which is the reliability or the truthfulness of the story. Narrative fidelity refers to the story's ability to relate to the viewers' personal beliefs and values and is evident when a story represents accurate assertions about reality (Eaves & Savoie, 2005; Fisher, 1985). When a narrative possesses fidelity, it provides good reasons for a person to hold a belief or to take a specific action. Narrative paradigm affirms that when a story contains both coherence and fidelity, it will be believed and accepted by its listeners (West & Turner, 2000).

As an example of coherence and fidelity, consider the following story: on a beautiful summer day, a customer walks into a department store and purchases an umbrella. Such a paradigm at first appears contradictory, for one does not have to deal with rain when the sky is free of clouds. After purchasing the umbrella, the customer states that they are replacing a friend's umbrella that they borrowed last week and subsequently lost. The customer's rationale for buying an umbrella now provides their story with coherence and fidelity. The story is now free from contradiction and possesses good reason for buying the umbrella.

Narrative Paradigm Theory holds that meaning is continually created by stories. Stories are either true or untrue. The theory provides a framework to judging a story's credibility. For a story to be believable, it must meet the requirements of coherence and fidelity. In order to

establish credibility of the stories presented in *Miami Ink*, Narrative Paradigm Theory will be used to explore four selected episodes from season one of *Miami Ink*. The episodes titles are "*Growing Up*," "*The Family*," "*Finding Balance*," and "*While Ami's Away...*".

As far as evidence allows us to discover, human beings have been tattooing themselves for the last 40,000 years. Every culture holds their own tattoo histories and meanings. Since the transition from oral to written histories, it has been documented that tattoos have come and gone in popularity within their residing cultures. Even in societies that prohibited tattoos, evidence proves otherwise to their existence. Alan Govenar elaborates on this phenomenon by explaining that "the individual has always pursued the tattoo even if it runs counter to the beliefs and values of the society in which he or she may exist" (A & E Ancient Mysteries: Tattooing, 1997). This observation is supported by Margo DeMello's (2000) claim that tattoos give one the "literal ability to 'write oneself' and subsequently to be 'read' by others" (p. 12). Hudson (2007) poetically affirms that;

> Every tattoo has a story. It may not be an exciting story. It may not be the story you would expect. . . .all tattoos have some kind of history. They speak the unspoken testament to the true heart of an introvert. They declare feelings of love, devotion, and sadness. Tattoos convey deeply entrenched emotions or just a simple appreciation for art. (p. xiii)

In American culture, tattoos are once again gaining popularity and causing people to take notice who otherwise would not.

Applying the strategies outlined in the theory of Stigma, this thesis will look at episodes from the first season of *Miami Ink* for specific instances that address stigma issues. The

narratives within these instances will then be judged for believability using Narrative Paradigm's principles of coherence and fidelity.

Research Question

The principle research question of this thesis is; "Through *Miami Ink*, what tattoo stigma is *Miami Ink* trying to dispel and how does the show tailor its messages to address them?" This thesis will argue that part of the intentions of *Miami Ink* is to address and dismiss current American societal stigma of people who adorn tattoos.

Chapter III: Methodology

Conceptual and Operational Definitions

In order to effectively study the thesis topic, conceptual and operational definitions must first be defined for the purposes of this discussion. Tattoo: a tattoo is a permanent design made on the skin using ink and a needle. This process is accomplished by hand or by using an electric tattoo machine. The needle places several ink pigments directly under the skin by penetrating the top outer layer of the skin (Reardon, 2008). With mastery of the art form, almost any image can be fashioned into a tattoo. Tattoo studio: the actual building structure where the tattoo artists tattoo their clients. A tattoo studio is synonymously called a tattoo shop. The tattoo studio presented in the show is located in the upscale tourist South Beach neighborhood of Miami, Florida.

Data Collection

The process for collecting data for the rhetorical analysis was to look at personal narratives from four episodes from *Miami Ink's* first season now available on DVD, offering a convenient method of analysis. In order to better serve this thesis, episodes were chosen arbitrarily to insure randomness. For simplistic sampling, one episode was selected from each of the first four DVD's in the first season. All episodes are approximately forty-two minutes long and presented without commercial interruption. *Miami Ink* is presented in the format of a reality show in which actual customers come into the tattoo shop to be tattooed and to subsequently share their story for getting a tattoo. Along with this, the program also devotes much of its time following each artist's personal life outside the shop.

After viewing each of the selected four episodes in full, the principles of Goffman's theory of Stigma was applied to select scenes that addressed tattoo stigma. These scenes were

then transcribed and further examined. By means of Narrative Paradigm Theory, the narratives within these specific scenes were then assessed for coherence and fidelity. Selected episodes were carefully and repeatedly viewed to seek descriptive evidence in the narratives based on this study's theoretical perspectives. The research is tempered by the following questions; (a) What tattoo stigma is being addressed and how? (b) What ideas is the stigma being replaced with? (c) Could these narratives be considered rational by the principles of Narrative Paradigm Theory?

With the understanding set forth by the theory of Stigma that those who work with the stigmatized possess insight on the issues they face, this author interviewed tattoo artist Garrett Rautio of Monster Ink Tattoo located at 1088 Rice Street, Saint Paul, Minnesota. The interview took place in this tattoo studio on February 22nd, 2011. The discussion covered a wide range of tattoo stigma, history and tradition. The interview was beneficial in providing an insider's perspective on certain aspects of *Miami Ink*. Paraphrased notes were taken during the interview and afterwards organized by subject matter. When applicable, Rautio's vast knowledge of tattoo stigma and social issues was utilized during this research process and has been cited within this text.

Understanding that *Miami Ink* is a produced television show incurs the understanding then that everything portrayed is intentional. Clients are selected by the show's producers and situational dialog in the show is set up beforehand (Emmabalmer, 2008). Therefore, the viewer has an understanding that the show's messages, of all forms, are intentional and presented for a reason.

Miami Ink averaged 1.2 million viewers during its first season on the TLC network. The TLC network's targeted audience demographic was adults ages 18 to 54. The median age of the

adult viewer of the program was 33 years of age (Azote, 2005). This seems to correlate with the ages of the principle characters on the program and possibly contributes to its success.

Introduction of Texts

Each episode of *Miami Ink* starts with the show's introduction. The background theme music is "Funky Kingston" by the artist Toots and the Maytals. The narrator of the introduction, as well as the show itself, is the owner of the tattoo studio Ami James. The show's introduction sets up the premise:

> My name is Ami James and I'm a tattoo artist. You can see most of my work right here on South Beach. When it came down to opening my own shop, I called three of the greatest artists and four of the greatest friends a guy could ever have; Chris Nunez, Darren Brass, Chris Garver, and my loyal apprentice Yogi Harada. We poured our heart and souls into the shop. We worked our asses off. And opening our tattoo shop is going to be a big challenge for all of us. But this is our shot and we're going to take it.

While this narration is taking place, a montage of scenes are shown. This video collage includes the artists physically building the tattoo studio, tattooing clients, displaying their own tattoos, driving in classic cars, and enjoying the glamorous South Beach nightlife. Segmented in between these images are numerous images of young, tattooed-adorned women in bikinis on the beach. The tattoo artists featured in this program are all well-groomed, dressed casually, and in their early thirties. For some episodes, the show also brings in guest artists to tattoo in the studio. One artist that is featured in much of *Miami Ink*'s first season is female tattoo artist Kat Von D, an outstanding young artist that specializes in life-like portrait tattoos. The following selected scenes for analysis focus on the clients of tattoo artists Ami James, Chris Nunez, Chris Garver, and Kat Von D.

Disk 1/Episode 4 "*Growing Up*"

The first selection observed is from the episode titled "*Growing Up*." The client that comes in to be tattooed is Ashley, a soon to be eighteen year old that brings her Mom with her to share in the experience of her first tattoo. The scene opens with the two of them entering the tattoo studio and walking up to the front desk. Ashley and her mother come into the tattoo studio at 8pm the day before she will celebrate her eighteenth birthday. When the artists learn that she is still under legal age, they deny her request to be tattooed. The artists then invite her and her mother to return at midnight when she will be officially eighteen and a legal adult.

Ashley and her Mom are both casually well dressed and speak in a way reflecting a middle-class background. The tattoo design she wishes to get is of two small birds tattooed on the left side of her lower back. She explains that the image of the two birds represent her and her mother and celebrates her entrance into womanhood. The bird representing Ashley's mother is portrayed with its wings closed. The other bird represents Ashley and has its wings open in flight symbolizing her going out on her own and looking forward to the future. The explanation of the tattoo's meaning is then followed by an off-camera narration by Ami James, "Mom was very nervous. But the fact that she was there at all shows the negative stigma, that is associated with tattoos, is being replaced by understanding and acceptance."

As the tattoo artist, Chris Nunez, is setting up for the tattoo the Mom asks if all of the tattooing equipment is sterile. Chris Nunez responds in agreement, "Everything is brand new. Just like the Dentist. And the needles and everything are all new-a hundred percent." The scene then shows a brief montage of the several stages of the tattoo's progression to completion. Ashley's mother is subsequently shown speaking to the camera. She states very matter-of-factly,

"I was against the idea of her having one [a tattoo]. But this is something she wants to do so I decided to support her."

Audio of Chris Nunez speaking off camera is then heard, "Women take tattoos better than men. They have a higher pain threshold." As Ashley's tattoo is completed, both her and her mother stand in front of the mirror smiling and admiring her now completed tattoo. Ashley's mother is then shown speaking directly to the camera: "It wasn't as bad as I thought. It actually came out really pretty. It's something special that we've done together. And she'll always remember this and so will I." The scene ends with both Ashley and Mom smiling and thanking everyone as they walk out of the tattoo studio.

Disk 2/ Episode 6 "*The Family*"

The second selection observed was from the episode titled "*The Family*." The first tattoo narrative examined is from The Wiz, a local events producer in Miami. He appears to be in his early thirties and of a pleasant disposition. The Wiz came in to get a tattoo on his neck as a sign of solidarity for his group. He wanted to get the letters "C.B.S. Right Hand of Big Cheese" tattooed on his neck. He explains the tattoo's meaning and his reasons for getting it to the camera;

> C.B.S. stands for 'Can't Be Stopped.' It's just a bunch of hommies making money and we're just family. We've been together for so many years we just want to make it kind of a blood brother kind of deal. No way better than ink. Once I get my tattoo the circle will be complete. All of my friends will have it. We'll all have it and then they'll finally leave me alone.

His decision for the placement of the tattoo on his neck is then explained;

> I chose my neck because it's prominent. It's very visible. You can't deny it. You can't hide it. I mean even a collared shirt guess what? It's still there. So I mean it's something I'm devoted to. It's my people, my friends. I don't want to hide it. I want it to be visible all the time because I'm proud of it. Why get it if you're not proud of it?

The Wiz then details the rest of the meaning behind the tattoo;

> C.B.S. stands for 'Can't Be Stopped.' Which is kind of self explanatory. Underneath it is "Right Hand of Big Cheese." And I used work for Big Cheese back when we were younger and in school…promotions company. And I've always been his right hand and, you know, now that we've transcended…you know…I still want to give him the love and credit. If it weren't for Cheese I wouldn't be here. So you know…that's just it.

As tattoo artist begins applying the tattoo, Chris Nunez, then states, "When everybody feels strongly about something you band together. I guess your tattoo is like the last show of solidarity. You know, keep it tight." The scene then leads into the tattoo artists providing their opinion on neck tattoos off camera. Ami James narrates;

> Getting a neck tattoo is always a big decision. (Ami now speaking directly to the camera) I think the tattoo on *my* neck was probably a bad choice for me. I love the tattoo I just don't like what it brings to me. Every time I fly to another country, you know I go to London or I go here, the immigration always looks at me funny you know like the customs. It's always got to be like, you know, somebody always looks at you and already profiles you.

The artist Chris Nunez is then featured commenting on people with neck tattoos;

> Those aren't nine to fivers. You're not going to blow their opportunities in life because you tattooed their neck. Now if an eighteen-year-old girl or guy comes in the shop and

> wants to make a move onto their neck and they don't have any tattoos and they're not covered like we are then you would definitely steer them in a different direction because you don't want them to make a bad life choice on a whim.

Ami James concludes the topic of neck tattoos by speaking directly to the camera;

> The decision to get a tattoo on your neck is not one to be taken lightly. You live in a society that's, you know, a certain way and you got to fit in it basically. And if you don't, you're always going to be running behind a truck.

The Wiz's story is concluded by an off camera narration by Ami James; "In the case of The Wiz he obviously put a lot of thought into the commitment that a neck tattoo brings. And it's the *only* reason why we would *ever* tattoo somebody's neck."

Along with the artists' views on neck tattoos, "*The Family*" episode also presents the experiences of clients Michelle, and father and son Rick and Ryan. Michelle is a young professional working as a high-end hair stylist. Michelle's story for getting tattooed is told almost entirely from the perspective of the narrator. Off camera, the narrator explains that Michelle's tattoos are only for her and not for anyone else to see,

> Michelle came in to get a Koi Fish tattooed on her hip. She loves her tattoos but she doesn't feel that she needs to share them with the world or her clientele for that matter. In Michelle's case, she didn't want a tattoo where anybody could see it. Frequently we have clients that want tattoos, but they don't want the whole world to know about it.

Michelle is briefly featured saying

> "I enjoy getting them [tattoos]. I love the way that they look on your body. I mean everybody always asks you that…what are you going to do when you're older? How are you going to hide your tattoos? I don't think I'll be walking around naked when I'm 80."

The scene then promptly exhibits the creation to completion of her tattoo and is ended with the narration, "A lot of people get tattoos in places where other people won't see them. And in Michelle's line of work it's important for her to be discrete." This scene ends with Michelle thanking the artist and smiling as she leaves the tattoo shop.

The scene featuring father and son Rick and Ryan opens with the artist Ami James speaking to camera about how society judges those with tattoos,

> You know, people are shallow. People don't give people a chance. You know, people just judge people for no reason. You know, it's so stereotyped this world is. This world evolves around stereotyping. You know, that's what happens. Profiling – whatever you want to call it. Twelve years ago I would walk down the street and they [the police] always used to judge me and I would get pulled over right away for speeding and 'ah he's got a tattoo let's call his name in – let's check on him.'

The artist Chris Nunez is then shown explaining to the camera, "Right now we're coming into a time where tattooing is really accepted. Within the last ten years tattooing has made a massive movement." A voice over narration by Ami James then explains how a perfect example of how tattoos have hit the mainstream is with their father and son clients Rick and Ryan.

Both Rick and his eighteen year old son Ryan came into the shop to each get Christian cross tattoos in different styles. The family of Rick, his wife, and their eighteen year-old son Ryan are all portrayed as an educated, affluent, close-knit middle-class American Christian family. Sitting next to his father, Ryan explains to the camera where he is getting his tattoo of a Christian cross,

> I'm putting mine on my back just below my neck. Because that way it's not always shown but if I wanted people to see it's easy to show it to them. And I was thinking

about it the other day, and that's that Jesus carried his cross on his back and I thought that was a cool symbolistic thing.

The father Rick then comments that coming together as a family to be tattooed serves as a bonding experience for them. Rick is getting his cross tattoo on his outer left bicep. He then confidently affirms, "A lot of negative on tattoos. Stereotypes. And that was over the past 50 years. And it's slowly changing."

The mother of the family is then interviewed,

I came here today because yesterday my son and my husband told me they were coming together to get a tattoo. And I went what? A tattoo! . . . The symbolism [of the cross tattoo] is that we are Christians and they thought it would be a cool design to get and they probably would never get tired of it.

The camera then cuts to Ami James commenting on the family, "It's getting more open every day you know. People are more accepted to it." The mother then follows up with humorously saying with a smile, "The family that gets tattooed together stays together!" The scene ends with both Rick and Ryan admiring their new tattoos and then posing with the tattoo artists for a photograph taken by the mother with her camera.

Disk 3/ Episode 10 "*Finding Balance*"

The third selection from the episode "*Finding Balance*" highlighted the story of Robert, a father getting a memorial portrait tattoo of his teenage son Allen, on his outer right thigh. Eleven years ago, his son Allen was killed in a car accident. His other son Adrian came with Robert for support. Robert looks to be in his early forties and is well groomed with glasses.

> I came in today to get a tattoo from Kat [Von D] and I brought the same photo I put on my son's headstone to be put on my leg. Eleven years ago my life was turned upside down because my oldest son was killed in a freak accident at a stop sign.

An off camera narration follows, "After the death of their son, the family begins to heal in a very unconventional way." Robert explains his history with tattoos in his soft-spoken demeanor,

> It was only a few weeks, as I remember, when my wife wanted to get a tattoo in remembrance of him. But I was resistant to the idea because I was raised against tattoos and she persisted and so I took her to a tattoo shop which at that time was very scary for me. She got a tattoo and it was fascinating. I'm an artist. I've been an artist all my life. And so I asked the guy "how could I get a job at the shop?" Within four months, I took over her shop and was running it. And then within a year I took my life savings and opened my own tattoo shop in Little Rock.

An off camera narration further comments, "Robert has gone from having no tattoos to having a lot of tattoos and it's brought his family closer together." Robert then continues, "We were *The Brady Bunch*. We had the pool and all the kids came to our house. We really were *The Brady Bunch*. Now we're *The Brady Bunch* with tattoos."

Robert explains that eleven years after his son's death, he is finally ready to have his son's portrait tattooed on his body.

> I flew in from Arkansas especially for Kat to do this tattoo on me. Because I knew she was here in Miami and I'm ready to complete this. And it's important to me that Kat did it because I don't want just anybody to do it. I like Kat. She's very good artistically and so I really wouldn't want anyone else to do it but Kat.

He makes clear that he has to go through the pain of getting the tattoo in order for him to get over the pain of his son's death. He waited eleven years to get this tattoo because he needed to find the just right artist. Robert has found that special tattoo artist with Kat Von D.

Kat Von D, provides in a brief soliloquy why portrait tattoos are special to her;

> I like doing portraits because it's a challenge. It's easy for me to look at a photo and see how it would transfer as a tattoo. So for me it's a lot of fun. I love the outcome of them. I love making things look super realistic and wowing people. With portraits it's really easy to do that.

After the tattoo is finished, Robert's story concludes with him saying, "I have a living piece of art on my leg of my son. It's unbelievable…If I'm not careful, I'll cry. It's that amazing."

Disk 4/ Episode 17 "*While Ami's Away…*"

The fourth selection observed was from the episode titled "W*hile Ami's Away…*" The client is John, a soft-spoken husband and father appearing to be in his mid-thirties. John came into the shop to have a portrait of his two and a half year old daughter Elise tattooed on his chest. Elise has Tay-Sachs disease, a genetic disorder that is terminal.

John explains further;

> She is two and a half years old now. Most children don't usually survive past around the age of five. So I need something for myself that when she's gone I'll always have a piece of her with me…It's absolutely every parent's nightmare. You can't tell someone that your child is going to die before you. There is no way to describe that emotion…Every day you wake up in the morning and you don't know what to expect. And you want to spend every minute you can with Elise because you don't know how long you have

> left…Having a child is supposed to be a great part of your life. And watching them grow up and we're not going to have that. And that bothers me.

John very softly conveys his reason for getting a tattoo to the camera,

> I'm here to get a tattoo of my daughter from Kat [Von D]. The tattoo is going to be a portrait and the reason is because my daughter has Tay-Sachs disease. It's a terminal illness and I don't know how much longer I'm going to have with her so I want to have something to always remember her by.

As the artist is setting up her tattoo station, John explains his reasons for the specific tattoo he came for.

> There's one photo of Elise sleeping on my shoulder and it just hit me as soon as I saw it that would be a photo that I would love to have a tattoo of on the spot where she sleeps. Because that's something then, no matter where she is, it will always be where she's sleeping on my shoulder.

The artist begins to apply the tattoo and John continues;

> Everyone always kind of feels like you're never supposed to watch your child fade away before you. It's really hard to hold it all together all the time. And I have my own kind of moments where I can't. There's a lot of pain involved. Every minute [holding back his emotion]…yep, every minute.

As the tattoo is nearing completion, the scene shows John speaking off camera,

> The tattoo is going to give me a little more peace. Because I always have this feeling that once she's gone…she's going to be gone. And although you'll have pictures and you'll have your memories and once the tattoo's on it's on. I want something…permanent.

Once the tattoo is completed, John admires his new tattoo in the mirror. The sight of his daughter's life-like image on his chest causes him to tear up and say, "that's her" and then hug the tattoo artist. The scene closes with the artist Kat Von D sharing her thoughts on the experience of doing John's portrait tattoo of his daughter,

> I definitely feel honored to have done John's tattoo today. In the end when he looked in the mirror and then gave me this hug and just totally didn't let go…it was just one of those things where it was just like…I'm glad I totally made his day.

This completes the depiction of scenes, within the selected four episodes of *Miami Ink*, which demonstrated the theoretical actions detailed in theory of Stigma. An analysis of these scenes will now be conducted using the theory of Narrative Paradigm's principles of coherence and fidelity. This analysis will articulate what known stigma is addressed, either directly or indirectly, within each scene and the rationality of the narratives told.

Chapter IV: Analysis of Text

Stigma 1: Tattoos are Unsanitary and Unprofessional, Bad Parenting

The episode titled "*Growing Up*" contains the scene with Ashley and her mother. This scene addresses the long standing social stigma that tattoos are both unsanitary and unprofessional; creating obstacles to future employment opportunities. The narrative was that Ashley just turned eighteen and her decision to be tattooed is supported by her mother. If anyone would be concerned about the tattoo hindering Ashley's future employment opportunities, it would be her mother. The mother showing her support as a parent thereby helps to provide evidence against this stereotype. This understanding is directly supported by the narration, "the negative stigma, that is associated with tattoos, is being replaced by understanding and acceptance."

The stigma of tattoo studios being unsanitary is based on fact as there are indeed health concerns to take precaution with when tattooing. Hepatitis and other blood borne pathogens do pose a risk when proper health codes are not practiced. The mother's question to the equipments' sterilization was welcomed cordially by the artist and explained that, similar to the dentist office, all the equipment was either sterilized or brand new. By presenting this question in the scene's narrative, an attempt is made to refute the misconception that tattoo studios are still unsanitary.

The type of stigma presented in this narrative is social stigma. Ashley made a decision to be tattooed; creating the likelihood of being viewed by society as a bad decision. The support of her mother attempts to refute this conception by showing parental approval for her choice.

The mother could be considered morally deviant in supporting her child getting a tattoo. This stigma allows for the interpretation of the mother as an unconcerned parent; allowing her

daughter to subject herself to the possibility of disease or infection. The mother could be seen as possessing blemish of individual character based on society's expectation of how a good mother should behave. The strategy used to dispel this social stigma is the portrayal of the mother asking questions of the sanitary measures taken. Her taking this precaution serves to refute the stigma that allowing her child to be tattooed makes her a deviant parent. The portrayal of the mother showing her support and asking questions of the tattoo artist serve to make her appear as a caring mother concerned about the health and wellness of her daughter.

The mother's questions serve to present her as a concerned parent; thereby debunking societal stigma of her as a bad mother. This fact provides coherence and fidelity to her actions. Society is conditioned to expect the mother to ask questions. The absence of this action would portray the mother as morally deviant by implying she was not concerned about the health of her child.

The idea of Ashley wanting to celebrate and commemorate her becoming a legal adult is not uncommon. People celebrating rites of passage in life are existent in cultures throughout the world. Ashley's desire to do so through the ceremony of being tattooed is presented as acceptable. The support of her mother serves to increase the credibility to her narrative.

For the artists at *Miami Ink* to deny Ashley's request to be tattooed before she was eighteen years old addresses the social stigma of underage tattooing practices. Refusing to tattoo someone because they are not of legal adult age addresses the social tattoo stigma of tattoos being associated with high risk behavior in adolescents. Correlations have been found between tattoos and high risk behaviors among teenagers. The strategy of addressing the stigma associated with underage tattoos does not refute stigma but seeks to clarify the stigma's parameters. Teenagers with tattoos may indeed posses high risk behaviors, but they did not get

their tattoos from a professional tattoo studio. Disassociating themselves from this demographic does not remove the social stigma associated with tattooed teenagers. However, doing so does add clarity towards distinguishing the stigma away from professional tattoo establishments. This scene provides the understanding that adolescents with tattoos did not receive them from professional tattoo studios but through some other means. This narrative supports the idea that tattoo studios are a clean and safe place for tattooing adults.

Stigma 2: Cultural Taboo

The episode titled "*The Family*" follows the stories of The Wiz, Michelle, and Rick and Ryan. The story of The Wiz addresses the present cultural taboo of a neck tattoos. Addressing this social stigma attempts to illustrate that there are indeed limits to tattoos. Within any culture, there are norms to follow and certain tattoos are only for certain people.

The artists at *Miami Ink* recognize that while acceptance of tattoos is growing, they can still hinder one's employment in society. The belief is then advanced that deciding to become tattooed is a serious decision; requiring much thought and consideration. The artist Ami James poignantly explains;

> The decision to get a tattoo on your neck is not one to be taken lightly. You live in a society that's, you know, a certain way and you got to fit in it basically. And if you don't, you're always going to be running behind a truck.

By the tattoo artists' own admission, tattoos on one's neck will create difficulties in many career fields and social settings. Chris Nunez's following statement clearly explains his opinion of what type of individual qualifies as an acceptable neck tattoo candidate; "Those aren't nine to fivers. You're not going to blow their opportunities in life because you tattooed their neck." For the artists at *Miami Ink* to do a neck tattoo the client must not be employed in a traditional nine-

to-five work setting, be a mature adult, and have other tattoos. Nunez's statement also implies that a neck tattoo could be viewed by others as "a bad life choice."

In addition, The Wiz admits to feeling pressure by his peers to get the tattoo, "Once I get my tattoo the circle will be complete. All of my friends will have it. We'll all have it and then they'll finally leave me alone." By his testimony, he is the only one without a neck tattoo and wants their criticisms to end. He admits that once he gets tattooed he will be fully accepted by his peers and their harassment will stop. His reasoning could be viewed as an unacceptable reason to be tattooed on one's neck because being tattooed because of peer influence is already an established stereotype of tattoos. A possible explanation is that The Wiz works in the entertainment industry, an industry shown to be more accommodating of tattoos as is evident by their popularity with celebrities and musicians. Many in the entertainment industry do not have the traditional nine to five workday. However, the appearance of The Wiz does not satisfy the other requirement of having other tattoos.

The appearance and narrative of The Wiz does not match the criteria of an acceptable neck tattoo candidate set forth by the artists. The requirement will be remembered that neck tattoos are for those that already have multiple tattoos. By Nunez's example, The Wiz should also meet this qualification before receiving a tattoo on his neck. According to the perspectives of Narrative Paradigm theory, it could be argued that The Wiz's narrative then fails to achieve coherence and fidelity within the viewer. *Miami Ink* never communicates if The Wiz has any other tattoos besides the one he came to get on his neck. No other tattoos are visible on The Wiz. His clothing only reveals the un-tattooed skin on his forearms below the elbows. This lack of information appears contradictory to the standards the artists' practice for neck tattoos. This paradox lends the narrative to appear contradictory to the viewer.

The choice to tattoo one's neck is acknowledged as appearing deviant in society and requires certain variables in order to be considered an appropriate choice. The Wiz's reasoning for tattooing his neck appears paradoxical. He is already stigmatized by his friends for not being tattooed. Tattooing his neck thereby transfers the stigma projected from his friends to the rest of society. His testimony intended to support his decision instead goes to support the current social stigma of tattoos being worn by those susceptible to peer pressure. The narrative of The Wiz makes him appear as longing for acceptance from his friends. His reasoning for his decision appears incoherent and fragile as he admittedly attests to being pressured to have his neck tattooed. The narrative of The Wiz fails to present a premise against tattoo stigma but instead supports the stigma of tattoos being a careless decision associated with unsatisfactory character and integrity.

As the scene is concluded, the narrator states that The Wiz, "…obviously put a lot of thought into the commitment that a neck tattoo brings." However, The Wiz's own narrative does not support this statement. The Wiz's appearance and narrative fail to support the standards given by the tattoo artists as appropriate for tattooing one's neck. According to the principles of Narrative Paradigm theory, this lack of information may hinder the viewer from accepting The Wiz's tattoo narrative. It can then be argued that this lack of coherence and fidelity in The Wiz's narrative renders it ineffective towards removing tattoo stigma in the viewer.

What The Wiz's narrative does achieve is that it provides an explanation as to the reason why an individual may choose to tattoo their neck, "I chose my neck because it's prominent . . . it's something I'm devoted to . . . I want it to be visible all the time because I'm proud of it." The reasoning is then advanced that neck tattoos represent that which is very important to the wearer. When one sees a tattoo on somebody's neck, regardless of how one feels about them,

the understanding is instilled that such a tattoo represents something of the upmost importance to the wearer and that they are proud to wear it for all to see.

Stigma 3: Tattoos Are Unprofessional, Can be Discreet

Unlike The Wiz, the scene featuring Michelle presents the idea that not everyone with tattoos displays them in public, "frequently we have clients that want tattoos, but they don't want the whole world to know about it." The narrative of Michelle addresses the stigma that people with tattoos are unprofessional. This stereotype is challenged with the image of Michelle, a working young professional that values her career and chooses to keep her tattoos private and out of view from others.

Michelle's narrative is unique, from the rest of the client narratives, in that the majority of it is not told by her, but through the show's narrator Ami James. The narrator serves as the all-knowing force that guides each episode's storyline. As outlined in the theory of Stigma, a story told from the prospective of one who works with stigmatized individuals [a tattoo artist] is considered credible to society. This understanding offers Michelle's narrative as coming from a subject matter expert and thereby free of apparent contradictions.

A paradox occurs with Michelle's narrative, the question of why her narrative is not told through her. This may cause the viewer to question this choice of the show and the credibility of Michelle. Furthermore, the narrative of Michelle provides no explanation as to her reason for tattooing.

The ambiguity of Michelle's story carries over into the stigma type presented. Her decision to be tattooed would be classified either as social or moral stigma. The viewer is not told what her reasons for tattooing are. Tattoos for Michelle are either a personal preference, a part of her cultural tradition, or a confluence of the two. It is left unsaid whether her decision to

tattoo stems from a social or moral stigma persuasion. Michelle's choice of tattoo imagery is also not clarified. What does the tattoo image of a Koi fish represent to her? An explanation would provide greater clarity to her motivations. The absence of this information from the narrative leads the viewer to the more likely conclusion of tattoos being her personal choice and a characteristic of social stigma she must encounter.

The strategy used to dispel tattoo stigma is the statement that tattoos can be private and only enjoyed by the wearer does serve as an explanation for her choices. Simply put, Michelle gets tattooed because she likes tattoos. Michelle's ethnicity is not readily apparent to the viewer. Her ancestry may hold rich traditions of tattooing that she now embraces; leaving the possibility of her decision to tattoo being a moral stigma. With these motivations left unsaid, the viewer is persuaded to view Michelle's decision to tattoo as a personal choice and thereby an example of social stigma.

In a brief soliloquy she acknowledges that she has been questioned as to how she feels her tattoos will look when she is older. She retorts by quipping "I don't think I'll be walking around naked when I'm 80." This retort to the question of how she will feel when her tattoos change as she gets older makes her attitude to the fact of aging appear inconsequential. She enjoys her tattoos now and will continue to appreciate them throughout her life. The question to regretting her decision to tattoo herself is insignificant to her thought process. She is reserved in displaying her tattoos. Her tattoos are not visible by others and thereby not subject to their criticisms. She is not ashamed or embarrassed and will continue not to be. Her tattoos are permanent as are her feelings towards them.

The central message communicated in Michelle's narrative is that tattoos can be just for the person wearing them and can be discreetly worn on the body. Michelle is someone who gets

tattooed for no one other then themselves. Tattoos are something they enjoy privately. Such statements attempt to make tattoos more personal and subsequently to encourage the growth of the industry by appealing to a new demographic for tattoos – people who would want a tattoo only for themselves to see.

Stigma 4: Dysfunctional Families

The narrative of Rick and Ryan addresses the two stigma categories of moral and physical. Moral stigma is existent in that their decision to get tattooed stems from their identified religious beliefs. Tattooing to express one's religious beliefs could be considered as social stigma in that the religious majority is still growing in acceptance of tattoos. In this light of religious viewpoints, the narrative of Rick and Ryan can be seen to counter against the physical stigma because their faith has at times viewed tattooing as a physical desecration of the body. Presenting themselves as a loving Christian family serves to debunk this mindset by showing it in practice. Tattoos serve to strengthen their faith and advertise their beliefs to the public.

Through the narrative of Rick and Ryan, this episode also challenges the stereotype that all tattooed people come from dysfunctional families. Through the father and son team, Rick and Ryan, this stigma is dismissed as they together planned and came as a family to support each other being tattooed. Their reasons for getting tattooed is that they are devoted Christians and believe their cross tattoos will help to reflect their faith. Reiterating that the negative stigma of tattoos is changing for the better, the narrative of Rick and Ryan reflects the growing understanding that tattoos are now embraced by those whose religious lifestyle has not always lent itself to tattoos. Their narrative presents the idea that tattoos can help to positively express one's spiritual faith; serving as an outward reflection of one's central beliefs. The narrative of

Rick and Ryan presents a family in support of one another. Making tattooing a family activity supports the paradigm described of them as a loving and supportive family.

The narrative of Rick and Ryan could be viewed as an appeal to the conservative religious majority. The scene starts with presenting the idea that tattoos are now becoming acceptable in society. "Right now we're coming into a time where tattooing is really accepted. Within the last ten years tattooing has made a massive movement." The catalyst for this new mindset is presented with the loving Christian family of Rick, Ryan and Mom. This idea is supported by the father Rick, "A lot of negative on tattoos. Stereotypes. And that was over the past 50 years. And it's slowly changing." The presentation of the religious minded family supporting tattoos provides dissonance against the socially held viewpoint of tattoos representing lack of character and morality. The mother playing off the adage of "the family that *prays* together stays together" with "the family that *gets tattooed* together stays together" goes to solidify this persuasion. The scene ending with a family photo goes to support the belief of tattooing as a family friendly activity worth memorializing with pictures.

For Rick and Ryan, tattoos serve as a catalyst for sharing their faith. As described in the theory of Stigma, a characteristic of stigmatized individuals is that they may be approached by strangers curious about their stigma. This lends to the understanding that tattoos serve as secondary gains for Rick and Ryan, as a chance to share their Christian faith with strangers. To accomplish their goals of sharing their religious faith with others, they wish to be approached by strangers. They want to be looked at and engaged in conversation about their Christian cross tattoos.

Stigma 5: Criminality and Aggressive Behavior

The episode "*Finding Balance*" depicted the story of Robert, a middle-aged family man who came in to receive a memorial portrait tattoo of his son who passed away. The narrative and kind-hearted demeanor of Robert attempts to disassociate the stigma of all tattoo wearers being associated with criminality and aggressive behavior. Robert is a soft-spoken man who loves and supports his family through tattoos and tattooing for a living. His reason for getting the tattoo is to memorialize the life of his son who was killed in a car accident.

The stigma type presented in the narrative of Robert is social. In his reasoning for embracing tattoos, he explains his initial uncertainty and clarifies how tattoos have served him as a form of therapy and subsequent career path. Robert's story of his instilled aversion to tattoos is common of many in American society. This point provides commonality and allows for greater acceptance for the views he holds now. He understands the fear one would have of first going into a tattoo shop. His narrative then goes on to explain the fascination and personal fulfillment that has resulted in him being open to tattoos.

The fact that Robert articulates the cultural taboo of entering a tattoo establishment allows the viewer to self-reflect on their own opinion on the subject. The theory of Stigma articulates that normals in society are unlikely to openly recognize what is discrediting of the stigmatized; causing the situation to become tense and ambiguous for all involved. Voicing that which is discrediting creates the opportunity for one to then recognize and potentially adjust their views on the topic. Robert admitting his own past tattoo prejudices helps to create a commonality with many in society and serves as an example of one changing their views on tattoos.

Wanting to memorialize the death of their son was the catalyst for Robert's wife to get her first tattoo. The exposure he had of tattoos through her experience led him to embrace tattoos himself; both as a wearer and as a tattoo artist. Eleven years later, he is finally ready to memorialize his son through a tattoo.

In this narrative tattoos are suggested to help one deal with grief. Robert suggests that the tattoo of his deceased son will help him achieve closure for his death. Robert's decision to wait to get a memorial tattoo suggests that tattoos are not something to rush into. As a tattoo artist himself, he knew that not any artist could capture his son's likeness forever in his skin. It took eleven years for him to be able to put that kind of confidence in an artist.

Robert describes his family in the metaphor of the iconic happy family from the classic television sitcom *The Brady Bunch*. Even with tattoos, they are still that loving family. His story tactfully explains that tattoos do not change who people are. Robert's story also alludes to the idea that tattoos are for any age and are not restricted to ne'er-do-wells or youthful angst.

Upon further examination of Robert's account of tattoos, evidence for additional persuasion is found. Robert describes that their house was the place where all their children's friends like to socialize. In this account he mentions that they had a pool. A possible explanation for this is to suggest that he was financially comfortable enough to own the luxury item of a pool. His further account that tattoos have not changed who they are adds support to the idea that tattooing can be a profitable profession.

The story Robert tells of how he came to tattoos, and subsequently became a tattoo artist himself later in life, appears coherent and free of blatant contradictions. His reason for getting the tattoo to honor the life of his son is understandable. Robert's son died unexpectedly, never affording his father the chance to say goodbye. For Robert, the sudden death of his son was

preventing him from getting over grieving his death. Grieving is understood as a personal process; experienced and dealt with in one's own individual way. This paradigm in itself then provides coherence and fidelity to his decision to tattoo his son's portrait on his body.

Stigma 6: Rebellious

The final episode "*While Ami's Away…*" observed the story of John, a father whose infant daughter is dying from the genetic disorder Tay-Sachs, a rare degenerative disease that attacks the nervous system and slowly shuts down the body. The social stigma addressed here was that of people who choose to be tattooed are rebellious. John's tattoo narrative does not reflect any of those attributes. The strategy used to dispel this stigma is the story that his young daughter is terminally ill and he wants something to remember her by. He has put time and effort into his decision to be tattooed. John's narrative depicts him as a loving and caring father who is doing the only thing he believes will immortalize the memory of his daughter. "It's absolutely every parent's nightmare. You can't tell someone that your child is going to die before you. There is no way to describe that emotion." Through the emotional appeal of a father who knows he will outlive his own child, the act of getting a tattoo to memorialize her memory and immortalize her bond with her father is presented as acceptable and poses no direct challenge to coherence and fidelity.

Tay-Sachs is a genetic disease that is predominantly common among the Ashkenazi Jewish population (Sheth, 2010). The conception of an afterlife is not integral to the Jewish faith (Steinberg, 1947). Viewing John as coming from a Jewish background gives clarity for his belief that he will never see his daughter again once she dies. The paradigm of a father who knows his child will die before him, added to the belief that the present life is all they have

together provides clarification to John's earlier statement, "The tattoo is going to give me a little more peace. Because I always have this feeling that once she's gone…she's going to be gone."

For John, a tattoo is a way to preserve the memory of his child. To receive a realistic portrait tattoo of his daughter will allow him to look at her face even after she passes away. With the tattoo, she will always be sleeping on his shoulder; forever preserving their bond as a father and daughter.

John's tattoo also speaks to the moral stigma of tattoos being worn by those of the Jewish faith. The traditional practice of abstaining from tattoos is changing as many within the faith are choosing to tattoo themselves for religious and secular reasons. John choosing to tattoo serves to support this changing mentality.

Overarching Narratives

In relation to each of the individual narratives, used to explain and address the stigmas either successfully or not, there are overarching narratives that all episodes present collectively. A feature quite distinct is that of the physical tattoo studio that the show is filmed in. For instance, it will be remembered that tattoo studios have had the long-standing stigma of being unsanitary and in sordid parts of cities. The show presents several factors to weigh against this stigma. The physical location of the tattoo studio is in the upscale, tourist neighborhood of South Beach, Florida. Depictions of sunny skies and shopping tourists provide the viewer dissonance towards this tattoo stigma. The multitude of scenes depicting entire families in the shop, presents the tattoo shop as a family friendly location.

Inside the tattoo studio the floor plan is open with good lighting throughout. The front desk and waiting area of the shop presents a likeness to more of a hair salon than a tattoo studio.

The tattoo studio itself is clean and orderly. The geography of the studio is rather modest with only four stations used for tattooing. All of these deliberate design choices play into people feeling comfortable; creating an intimate setting for clients and their families to feel at ease. Unlike traditional tattoo studios, no flash tattoo designs adorn the walls of the studio. *Miami Ink* presents their tattoo studio as a custom shop that only does original, one of a kind, tattoo designs. This concept is reinforced with the walls of the tattoo studio being decorated with colorful custom paintings of tattoo themes and the abstract.

The introduction that begins each episode may well be interpreted as an appeal to the American dream of owning one's own business, "We poured our heart and souls into the shop…opening our tattoo shop is going to be a big challenge for all of us. But this is our shot and we're going to take it." This statement in turn gives gratification to the entrepreneurial spirit and spirit of adventure. Such an appeal would be seen purposeful in appealing to a large demographic.

The physical pain associated with getting a tattoo is not discussed in the observed episodes. The necessity to puncture the skin to inject pigments to form a design will cause varying degrees of pain and discomfort during application of the tattoo. Signs of pain, flinching, and facial distortions are not observed by the clients while they are filmed getting tattooed. This calculated omission creates the mentality in the viewer that the pain brought on by the tattoo process is predominantly bearable enough to sit through and to carry on a conversation. Tattooing is unique in that it requires one to willingly expose themselves to someone with a sharp needle. This paradigm creates that mentality that tattoos are special, something to be proud of, and worth putting oneself through the process. In the adage of one must work hard to achieve greatness, to achieve a tattoo, one must first endure discomfort.

The portrayal of Kat Von D, a female tattoo artist, goes counter to the tradition of tattooing being a male-dominated profession. Showing a capable and talented female tattoo artist argues against to the long standing tradition of tattooing being a male dominated industry. Furthermore, the presentation of Kat Von D goes to support the idea of tattooing as a new and viable emerging industry for women.

Alongside these overarching themes displayed, *Miami Ink* achieves something quite more significant. It will be remembered that the theory of Stigma states that stigmatized individuals will seek out a code of conduct for navigating through society. Undeniably, the show provides a doctrine for how one is to behave, and what one can expect to experience, in a tattoo studio. The program invites the viewer into the culture of a specific tattoo studio. Depicting through the characters what the roles are for the client and artist. These messages suggest that, before getting tattooed, one should to have a tattoo image or idea ready beforehand to show the tattoo artist. Along with the design, the client should have an idea of the body placement they wish the tattoo to be.

Another feature that that *Miami Ink* accomplishes is that it allows one to experience getting a tattoo vicariously through the clients on the show. Through empathy, one is able to displace their identity through others and experience the tattoo process through the show. *Miami Ink* causes one to think in the frame of images; causing one to contemplate what particular images would represent their personality in a tattoo.

Miami Ink presents the idea that normal people may choose to tattoo themselves for many reasons. Those demonstrated include wanting to remember an important event in one's life, to generate a form of self-help through its permanence, to create a sense of community or belonging

to a particular group-beliefs-lineage, to simply a reflection of their personality through the artistic medium that is tattooing.

However when one looks at the historical reasons why people have tattooed, one notices dissimilarity in society's present reasons for tattooing. Archaeological evidence suggests that historically, human beings tattooed their bodies to show that they were a brave hunter, a leader, a religious observer, were ready to be married, or to show group affiliation. Some of these historical motivations do not fit with the client narratives specified in the observed text. The understanding can then be formed that the tattoo possesses the ability to transcend time and culture by continually attaining meaning contingent on the prominent beliefs of the culture it inhabits.

Along with what *Miami Ink* accomplishes, it is relevant to discuss what it fails to achieve. Collectively, *Miami Ink* lacks depth of evaluation and discussion. The show in addition fails to achieve deeper expressions of what is really going on in these narratives.

Miami Ink is unsuccessful in making coherent how long the tattoo process actually takes. Designing a custom tattoo can take hours to draw and many more to apply to the skin. For large tattoos, it is common for a client to have more than one session with an artist to complete. A tattoo does not always come out perfect the first time. An artist will often need to touch up parts of the tattoo before it is considered complete. Many of the tattoos the clients received took several hours to complete but were edited down to only a few minutes. The cost of the tattoos is also never discussed, providing illusion to the high expense of a custom tattoo (G. Rautio, personal communication, February, 22, 2011).

Incongruities in the chronology of clientele are also observable in many of *Miami Ink's* episodes. A recurring example is that the same client featured getting tattooed in one episode

will be seen in the background of a later episode supposedly days later. This fact is not addressed in the episodes in which they occurred. This incongruity is not so much intentional as a byproduct of the way the show was filmed and edited.

Through open dialog into the personal clients' reasons for tattooing, *Miami Ink* unconsciously facilitates the idea that anyone with a tattoo is willing to talk about it and cares about tattoo social issues. In consequence, this offers a potential hazard to overturning tattoo stereotypes by suggesting another one; that those with tattoos wish to forgo their privacy by openly discussing their tattoos with inquiring strangers. The doctrinal formation of personal privacy is not formulated by the show.

Chapter V: Conclusions and Areas for Further Study

The subject of tattoos appears remarkable when one reflects on the history of its use. Historically speaking, tattoos have been an integral part of the human experience. Ancient peoples throughout the world, isolated from one another, developed techniques and motives to tattoo themselves. Even despite persecution in some cultures, tattooing has survived and evolved throughout human existence to a world-wide audience. History has shown the variability of tattoo popularity. Throughout time and culture, the desirability of tattoos has risen and fallen. It is reasonable to then forecast that this variability will continue in the future. Tattoos will always be existent; at times popular, at times scorned. However, despite tattoos present growing popularity we are just learning what makes society's present culture attracted to them.

Evidence collected through the application of the theory of Stigma has led this author to conclude that part of the intention of *Miami Ink* was to challenge current tattoo stigma held by society. *Miami Ink* does attempt to re-educate the culturally conditioned viewer's perception about who gets tattooed. Through the partisan testimonials of the artists and clients, dialog of tattoo stigma and social issues was portrayed and discussed. Counter arguments and opinions were shared and positive portrayal of tattoos was communicated. Did *Miami Ink* succeed in removing stigma? According to the theory of Stigma, it is the responsibility of the stigmatized to bring awareness and re-educate society on the issues they face. Through the client narratives addressing tattoo stigmas, the show did follow the guidelines set forth by the theory to lessen the stigma projected by society.

Miami Ink supports the theory of Stigma's assumption that stigmatized individuals will come together to support one another and to promote codes of conduct for navigating through a society that deems them inferior. Such doctrine formation is evident in the observed episodes

and client narratives. The theory of Stigma puts forward that it is the responsibility of stigmatized social groups to bring awareness and re-educate society that the stigmatized individual is still human and a member of society. *Miami Ink* succeeds in this requirement by presenting tattoo clients from diverse backgrounds and beliefs but that are united in their assurance that tattoos serve a personal purpose for them.

By applying Narrative Paradigm Theory to *Miami Ink* episodes this author has come to the inference that tattoo narratives can provide essential rational against tattoo stigma. The tattoo narratives studied portray a diverse demographic expressing rational feelings and motivations for tattooing. Before a story can influence someone, it must appear free of contradictions and provide an acceptable reason for a particular behavior or action. The narratives examined all attempt to present these attributes for the viewer.

Of the six client narratives analyzed only the narrative of The Wiz was observed to pose a direct challenge to coherence and fidelity. Within the study parameters, the remaining client narratives then appeared free of contradictions and provided good reasons for their actions. Through the principles of Narrative Paradigm Theory these narratives would then appear believable to the viewer.

For this discussion it is worthy to address that The Wiz is of African American descent. Based on the section about The Wiz, it would be interesting to either speculate or investigate if there is a tribal stigma commonality with the African American community and neck tattoos. Such investigation would look to see if variance in stigma exists when comparing different societal groups.

Study Limitations

The limitations of this thesis are its sample size with only four episodes studied. The first season of *Miami Ink* contains twenty-one episodes each averaging forty-two minutes in length. Inquiry into the client narratives of these episodes would be beneficial in determining what further tattoo stigma is addressed. In addition, this study did not distinguish nor address the differences in tattoo imagery among client gender and age.

Areas of Future Research

This analysis has looked at what tattoo stigma was addressed in the first ever American television series devoted to tattoos. Further inquiry into the tattoo medium would be advantageous for social scientists to discover if *Miami Ink's* messages are effective enough to actually decrease one's prejudice towards those with tattoos. Further qualitative and quantitative studies to gauge the show's persuasiveness on people getting tattoos would be beneficial. A plausible application would be a quantitative study that would analyze individuals who got their first tattoo as a result of watching *Miami Ink* or another form of contemporary media that implements positive portrayal of tattoos.

A qualitative study application could look into the actual tattoo images presented and the possible implications such iconography holds. Analysis on the types of tattoos received on the show may uncover patterns in imagery within the gender, demographic, race, and religious beliefs of its clientele. Inquiry into how spin-off tattoo programs idealize tattoos could prove valuable as positive tattoo portrayals are presented through multiple characters and scenarios.

Incorporating additional theories to look for other instances of tattoo persuasion will prove beneficial in broadening the present understanding of tattoo stigma in society. Through inclusion hegemony, the concept of domination of one group over another, *Miami Ink's* portrayal

of affluent citizens with tattoos, instead of criminals and those outside of societal norms, could be viewed as a counter-hegemic response to the current depiction of tattoos on television. Leon Festinger's Cognitive Dissonance Theory could be exercised to show that when people see tattoos in a positive light, dissonance occurs towards their opposing understanding and persuasion can occur.

The narratives studied contained depictions of Christian and Jewish traditions. Further inquiry into the show would be beneficial to see if other religious faiths were discussed elsewhere in the television series. Such examination would look to see if the religions of Islam and Buddhism were presented and how their depictions differed from the other faiths.

The two stigma types observed in client narratives are social and tribal stigma. Further analysis of client narratives for instances that address physical stigma would be advantageous. The theory of Stigma outlines the stigma associated to those with various physical abnormalities. Such investigation would look for examples of physically disabled clientele and their narratives for tattooing.

This thesis has contributed to the body of knowledge by conducting a rhetorical analysis through the theory of Stigma and Narrative Paradigm Theory. The further significance of this study is that my research has indicated that there is very limited or non-existent analysis of this subject matter. It is this author's hope that the discussion within this thesis will contribute to ongoing dialog regarding the practice of tattooing and its social acceptance.

Regardless of the challenges society has posed to tattoos, the use of tattoos has persisted throughout history. Many in society are unaware that they hold negative attitudes towards those with tattoos. Not being aware that one possesses such views can work to society's supreme disadvantage through unconscious discrimination. It is this author's conviction that further study

and dialog into this phenomenon holds great significance not only in academia but to the betterment of society as a whole.

References

Armstrong, M. L. (1994). *Tattoos: A risk-taking art*. Texas Nursing, 68(2), 8-9.

Associated Press (2006, May 08). Oklahoma tattoo ban expected to be lifted. *Fox News*. Retrieved from http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,194672,00.html

Azote, A. (2005). Ink tales: Tattooing as the new reality. *Media Life Magazine*. Retrieved from http://www.medialifemagazine.com/news2005/sep05/sept12/3_wed/news5wednesday.html

Carnevale, F. A. (2007). Revisiting Goffman's stigma: The social experience of families with children requiring mechanical ventilation at home. *Journal of Child Health Care,* 11(1), 7-18. doi: 10.1177/1367493507073057

Carswell, J. (1958). *Coptic tattoo designs*. Beirut, Lebanon: Faculty of Arts and Sciences The American University of Beirut.

Clerk, C. (2009). *Vintage tattoos: The book of old-school skin art*. New York, NY: Universe.

Darwin, C. (2004). *The descent of man and selection in relation to sex*. Whitefish, MT: Kessinger.

DeMello, M. (2000). *Bodies of inscription: A cultural history of the modern tattoo community*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Dorff , E., & Newman, L. (2008). *Jewish choices, Jewish voices*. Philadelphia , PA: Jewish Publication Society of America.

Doss, K., & Ebesu Hubbard, A. (2009). The communicative value of tattoos: The role of public self-consciousness on tattoo visibility. *Communication Research Reports*, *26*, 62-74. doi:10.1080/08824090802637072

Eaves, M. H., & Savoie, M. (2005). Big brother: Merging reality and fiction: An application of the narrative paradigm. *Texas Speech Communication Journal*, *29*(2), 91-97. Retrieved from EBSCO*host*

Emmabalmer. (2008). How to get tattooed on Miami Ink [Web log post]. Retrieved from http://hubpages.com/hub/How-To-Get-Yourself-On-Television

Fisher, J. A. (2002). Tattooing the body, marking culture. *Body & Society*, *8*,91-107. doi: 10.1177/1357034X02008004005

Fisher, W. R. (1984). Narration as a human communication paradigm: The case of public moral argument. *Communication Monographs*, 51 (1), 1-22 Retrieved from EBSCO*host*

Fisher, W. R. (1985). The narrative paradigm: An elaboration. *Communication Monographs*, 52 (4), 347-367 Retrieved from EBSCO*host*

Fisher, W. R. (1989). Clarifying the narrative paradigm. *Communication Monographs*, 56 (1), 55-58 Retrieved from EBSCO*host*

Gilbert, S. (2001). *The tattoo history sourcebook*. Brooklyn, NY: Power House Books.

Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, Inc.

Gottlieb, A. (2003). *In the paint: Tattoos of the nba and the stories behind them*. New York, NY: Hyperion.

Grasse, S. (Producer), & Weiss, E. (Director). (2008). *Smoku Sailor Jerry: The life and times of American tattoo master Norman K. Collins* [Motion picture]. USA: FHP Productions.

Green, T. (2005). *Ink: The not-just-skin-deep guide to getting a tattoo*. New York, NY: New American Library.

Greene, R. A. (2011, July 26). Winehouse burial raises jewish questions about tattoos, cremation. *CNN*. Retrieved from http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2011/07/26/winehouse-burial-raises-jewish-questions-about-tattoos-cremation/?iref=allsearch

Gustafson, M. (2000). The tattoo in the later roman empire and beyond. J. Caplan (Ed.), *Written on the body: The tattoo in European and American history*. (pp. 17-31). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Hawkes, D., Senn, C. Y., & Thorn, C. (2004). Factors that influence attitudes toward women with tattoos. *Sex Roles:* 50(9/10), 593-604. Retrieved May 13, 2011, from ProQuest Psychology Journals. (Document ID: 642277761)

Hemingson, V. (2009). *Tattoo design directory: The essential reference for body art*. New York, NY: Chartwell Books, Inc.

Hibberd, J. (2005, April). TLC inks reality series. *Television Week*, *24*(17), 1-72. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

Hudson, K. L. (2007). *Chick ink: 40 stories of tattoos and the women who wear them*. New York, NY: Polka Dot Press.

Huxley, C., & Grogan, S. (2005). Tattooing, piercing, healthy behaviours and health value. *Journal of Health Psychology*, *10*, 831-841. doi:10.1177/1359105305057317

Jennings, T. (Producer). 1997. *A & E Ancient Mysteries: Tattooing*. [Motion picture]. USA: Filmroos.

Jones, C. P. (2000). Stigma and tattoo. Jane Caplan (Eds.), *Written on the body: The tattoo in European and American history*. (pp. 1-17). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Kosut, M. (2006). An ironic fad: The commodification and consumption of tattoos. *Journal of Popular Culture*, *39*, 1035-1048. doi:10.1111/j.1540-5931.2006.00333

Lautman, V. (1996). *The new tattoo*. New York. NY: Abbeville Press.

Levin, J. (2008). *Tattoos and indigenous peoples*. New York, NY: Rosen.

Levy, J. (2008). *Tattoos in modern society*. New York, NY: Rosen.

MacQuarrie, C. W. (2000). Insular Celtic tattooing: history, myth and metaphor. J. Caplan (Ed.), *Written on the body: The tattoo in European and American history*. (pp. 32-45). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University.

Mandelbaum, J. (2008). *Studying Horiyoshi III: A westerner's journey into Japanese tattoo*. Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing.

Martens, M. (2010, July 20). Female tattoo artist makes her mark in male-dominated industry. *Turlock journal*. Retrieved from http://www.turlockjournal.com/archives/4853/

Martin, B., & Dula, C. (2010). More than skin deep: Perceptions of, and stigma against, tattoos. *College Student Journal*, 44 (1), 200-206. Retrieved from EBSCO*host*

McCallion, F. (2007). Tattoos are part of military tradition. In T. Roleff (Ed.), *Body piercing and tattoos*. (pp. 81-85). San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press.

Mayers, L. B., Judelson, D. A., Moriarty, B. W., & Rundell, K. W. (2002). Prevalence of body art (body piercing and tattooing) in university undergraduates and incidence of medical complications. *Mayo Clinic Proceedings*, *77*, 29-34. doi: 10.4065/77.1.29

Meisenbach, R.J. (2010). Stigma management communication: A theory and agenda for applied research on how individual manage moments of stigmatized identity. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 38(3), 268-292 doi:10.1080/00909882.2010.490841

Millner, V., & Eichold II, B. (2001). Body piercing and tattooing perspectives. *Clinical Nursing Research*, *10*, 424. doi:10.1177/10547730122159030

Oldenburg, A. (2005, July 18). Tattoo parlors: Indelible reality tv? *USA Today*. Retrieved from http://www.usatoday.com/life/television/news/2005-07-18-tattoo-shows_x.htm

Org, M. (September 10, 2003) Tattoos and piercings come out at the office. *The Wall Street Journal Online*. Retrieved from http://www.collegejournal.com/successwork/onjob/20030904-org.html

Porterfield, J. (2008). *Tattoos and secret societies*. New York, NY: Rosen Publishing Group.

Reardon, J. (2008). *The complete idiot's guide to getting a tattoo*. New York, NY: Alpha.

Ritz, D. (2005). *Tattoo nation: portraits of celebrity body art*. Boston, MA: Rolling Stone Press.

Roberts, T.A., & Ryan, S.A. (2002) Tattooing and high-risk behavior in adolescents. *Pediatrics*, 110, 1058–1063. Retrieved from EBSCO*host*

Roleff, T. (2007). *Body piercing and tattoos*. San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press.

Sanders, C. R. (1988). Marks of mischief: Becoming and being tattooed, *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, *16*, 395-429. doi: 10.1177/0891241688164001

Sanders, C. R. (1990). *Customizing the body: The art and culture of tattooing*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Schiffmacher, H., & Riemschneider, B. (2001). *1000 tattoos*. Miami, FL: Taschen.

Sheth, K. (2010). Tay-Sachs disease. *National Center for Biotechnology Information*. Retrieved from http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0002390/

Steinberg, M. (1947). *Basic Judaism*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace.

Surles, J. (2008). *Tattoo – from idea to ink*. Stillwater, MN: Wolfgang Publications, Inc.

Trebay, G. (2008, September 24). Tattoos gain even more visibility. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/25/fashion/25tattoo.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1

Van Dinter, M. (2000). *Tribal tattoo designs*. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: The Pepin Press.

Victionary. (2007). *Tattoo art and design*. New York, NY: Universe Publishing.

Von D, K. (2009). *High voltage tattoo*. New York, NY: Collins Design.

Wroblewski, C. (2004). *Skin shows: The tattoo bible*. London, England: Collins & Brown.

Wyatt, J. (2003). *Under my skin*. Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing.

Yamada, M. (2009). Westernization and cultural resistance in tattooing practices in contemporary Japan. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, *12*, 319-338. doi: 10.1177/1367877909104241

RAUTIO INTERVIEW WITH GARRETT RAUTIO FEBRUARY 22, 2011

AT MONSTER INK TATTOO 4088 RICE STREET, SAINT PAUL, MN

I. Tattoo stigma is changing
    a. TV shows have helped to take away the stigma
    b. Tattooing used to be handed down; now people *want* to join the profession
    c. Many tattoo artists are also coming into the field with art degrees
    d. Better designs also help to change the stigma. It's an art form

II. Tattoos are now becoming fads
    a. It's a trend, tattooing will decrease in popularity
        i. A public health disaster would do this
    b. FDA does not like it

III. Tattoo market is already saturated
    a. In 2001, tattoo shops grew 400% in one year!

IV. Discrimination
    a. You see it with older people. Everybody judges one another
    b. The rules of life…people judge
        i. Garrett judges those that have bad and cheap tattoos
    c. Tattoos *do* say something about the individual
    d. In eastern cultures, tattoos are still taboo

V. Tattooing Technology
    a. Technology has not change much
        i. The majority is untouched

b. Artists are still using electromagnetic coil machines
    i. Some still use rotary tattoo machines
c. Slight improvement in metals used for the machines
d. Many artists are going back to the old way of making their own inks
e. There have been improvements in needle setup

VI. Art Limitations

a. Having a tattoo last
    i. Every skin cell is regenerated every 8 years
b. The sun is a killer on tattoos
c. Tattoo lines get thicker with age

VII. Misconceptions about Miami Ink

a. It takes more than an hour to draw a tattoo
b. It takes longer than fifteen minutes to draw one up
c. Touch ups are a part of the business
    i. Tattoos don't always come out perfect the first time.
d. The tattoo artist doesn't care about your story for getting the tattoo
e. Kat Von D is not the best artist in the world.
f. You can't just walk in of the street and get a full back piece tattoo
    i. It take time and planning

VIII. What Garrett will not do as an artist

a. Won't tattoo marijuana leaves
b. Won't tattoo someone's face

c. “I don’t want my name on a bad tattoo idea. Not worth losing my dignity for $100.”

IX. Hazards of the job

a. Arthritis

b. Bad back

c. Disease

i. blood borne pathogens

d. Tattoo shops get robbed

X. Industry

a. Nice people…but backstabbers

i. Set fire to your shop, etc.

b. Old school mentality

i. Need to ask permission from others before opening your shop in someone else’s territory

c. Very territorial industry (can be nomadic too)

d. Need the respect of other artists

e. Easily average 60 hours a week in the shop

i. Work never ends

ii. Lots of prep time (always seeing ideas for tattoos)

iii. Always drawing