Body Modifications
Our Approach

Extreme body modifications
Subtle changes
Sensitive

Our selection was based on parts of the Pitts reading.
## Scar Tattoo –
http://www.dragonflyink.com/scar_tattoo.html

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What can tattooing over scars do?</th>
<th>Are there risks?</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Disguise scar with colour,</td>
<td>Sometimes ink needs to be re-applied or lines may not keep</td>
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<tr>
<td>shape, design, and placement</td>
<td>shape as well as other skin. Both are easily remedied by des</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Create beautiful work of art</td>
<td>ign and placement. Very rarely, a keloid maybe irritated, but</td>
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<tr>
<td>from a painful experience</td>
<td>all caution is used in every tattoo</td>
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<td>• Celebrate survival and health</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>and Life</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Reclaim body after illness or</td>
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<td>injury</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Add femininity after mastectomy</td>
<td></td>
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<td>surgery</td>
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Cindy breast cancer survivor

After my mastectomy and reconstruction, I knew I wouldn't be happy with a grafted or tattooed nipple. I wanted to be able to look at my new breast and say, "Oh, how lovely!" One day, surfing the web, I came across Dragonfly Ink. When I saw Sasha's beautiful botanical tattoos, I knew immediately that's what I wanted. Sasha worked with me to create an original design, customized to incorporate my scar. I was so excited when tattoo-day finally arrived! The result was exactly what I was looking for -- more like a piece of fine art than a traditional tattoo. I left Sasha's studio feeling that I had finally taken the first step in reclaiming my body. It was very empowering to be able to produce a thing of beauty from a year's difficult ordeal."
Tattoos as self-expression

Aim: To discuss ideas of radical feminists that tattoos and piercings represent negative self image for women and explain how I believe tattooing is a positive form of self-expression.

Main readings:
History of tattoos/type of person

- In ancient times only those of high state or royal birth had tattoos.
- Still in cultures, tattooing as right of passage into adult life.
- Now 36% of 18-25 year olds have one or more and 40% of 26-40 year olds.
- No class type, in Anderson’s study found 77.5% of those he interviewed had a uni degree.
Radical feminist views

- violates beauty norms
- Not feminine
- ‘They represent women’s self hatred of the flesh’
- Shelia Jerrey’s links body piercings and tattoos which addict self-harm
Beauty norms/Femininity of tattoos

- many women have very beautiful tattoos, often women have bright colours and feminine images such as flowers, butterflies
- In Andersons study, 2/3rds of women interviewed conformed to established constructions of femininity through tattooing projects
- By the 1990s tattoos on the bodies of young feminists were beginning to be embraced by postmodern feminists as subversions of ‘traditional notions of feminine beauty;
Healthy Vs Unhealthy

- Social view of ‘over tattooing’
- Breast augmentation and excessive dieting are ok expressions of the self but tattoo isn’t?
- Why: Goes against cultural beauty norms, we expect thin big boobs from culture see around us.
- Women changing this: suicide girls
Expression of the self

✓ In the same way Sasha wanted to symbolise her struggle and fight with a tattoo as do many women.

✓ In pitt reading, example of a women who suffered abuse and has a dragon tattoo which for her marks independence and recovery

✓ Each tattoo is individual

✓ Do you get them for social reasons/pressure from society: No many women get hidden tattoos and piercings as it is a person picture

✓ Zeta (aged 25) ‘A body is a temple and how I decorate mine is a forever thing’
Gender Implications

- Diversion from a mainstream representation of femininity
- Reclamation of the female body
- Rebellion against patriarchal objectification of the body
- Radical feminists like Catherine Mackinnon believe tattooing represents women's 'self hatred of the flesh'
- Transformation of the relationship between the self, body and culture
- Female power or female victimisation?
Differing attitudes towards normative & non-normative body projects

What are people’s attitudes towards non-normative body projects?
How & Why are these attitudes different from those towards normative body projects?

I aim to show that...
Accounts of body modification are very similar to one another, regardless of whether procedures & outcomes are normative within the current social framework of acceptability, or counter-normative standing in conflict with social expectations and cultural values.
Jefferey’s a radical feminist would regard this image as self-mutilation.

Healthcare professionals & the media would consider this counter normative response an indicator of mental instability.

It is interesting that biomedical professionals often think of people who engage in body modification of this counter normative nature as mentally ill, yet they do not regard normative modification such as the biomedical breast reconstruction in this way.
Why is one choice more acceptable than another?

- Body modifications are generally socially unacceptable because of the thought of pain and procedures undergone to achieve the outcome.

BUT in this case...

the woman has undergone such a significant amount of pain already that she perceives her body modification as closure.

• Although it is generally preferred for breast reconstruction to be performed in the same operation as the cancer and breast removal, for cosmetic purposes of using the same skin, if the cancer is severe then the operations have to be separate.

- This appears to be the case for the woman concerned, and therefore to reconstruct her breasts she would have had to endure a risky technological procedure and pain.
So, what is the difference between the choice to have an operation to artificially reconstruct her breasts, or to have a tattoo in their place to conceal the scar?

The extent of power and control an individual has over their own body is significant. Choosing to have reconstructed breasts is accepted & will result in greater social acceptance and understanding. Society feels they can identify with the wish to fit within the normal curve.

If it became fashionable and more popular to opt for a tattoo instead of breast reconstruction, would this gain social acceptance?

In some societies or subcultures this choice for a tattoo rather than reconstruction could be normative.
Undergoing mastectomy and Breast Reconstruction

In this video by TV360, you learn how a patient undergoes mastectomy and breast reconstruction from their own point of view. This is just one example, since there are multiple types of breast reconstruction surgeries.

http://www.5min.com/Video/Undergoing-mastectomy-and-Breast-Reconstruction-Part-12-287359457

The language used...
‘the beautification doctor slits me open from hip to hip... it’s going to be my new nipple .... then they tattoo it to make it look like my nipple colour rather than my stomach colour ... I never actually lost my breasts’
Clearly a lot of risk involved in a highly medical and technical and fake operation, watching this video evokes repulsion, more so or to the same extent as a video of the procedure of getting a tattoo instead.

This video can be understood as presenting breast reconstruction as fake and false, yet it has become socially acceptable, condoned and promoted by biomedical professionals, whilst tattooing is still regarded as risky, quirky and non-conformist.

The woman in the video believes she never lost her breasts. Says she is no longer embarrassed of her body and is proud to be a woman, pleased with who she is – same end feeling as the woman with the tattoo yet society perceives each woman differently.
What is normative changes over time

For example… Chinese foot-binding, Victorian corset-wearing, etc were socially acceptable, expected & socio-cultural norms despite the risks involved.

-Yet now these body modifications are unacceptable, and perhaps in the next millennium the procedure of breast reconstruction will also be unacceptable, & maybe tattooing over scarred chests will become the norm. It is not known.

But what is known is that our judgements and what we perceive are clouded by socio-cultural context and normative expectations.
So in answer to the question of whether this woman’s body modification is any different than to the breast reconstruction that has become normative and socially accepted?

The only difference is that one body modification choice works towards normative ideals and the other walks away from them.

Bodies, how we perceive them and our attitudes towards them are dependant on social cultural context.
Acceptable choices, controlled choices
Deviance and challenging behaviours...

- Deviance is a break with cultural norms accepted by a society.
- Many of those norms are given by the social system and hardly often we take part in their articulation.
- “Deviant” acts can be challenging and politically rebellious.
… but they can be assimilated by the cultural system

- Classical functionalism (Durkheim): moral boundaries, cultural conceptions (a crime is a crime because we punish it), different contexts (temporal, geographical, situational).

- Marxism (Spitzer): ruling class' acts are never conceive as deviant (eg increase rents or decrease wages, they are for benefit of the “public interest”).
Symbolic Interactionism

- S.I: the individual learn how to be deviant (socialization). It is not a biological process; deviance lies within society an its innermost core. There is no “natural” deviance, it is culturally constructed.

- Howard Becker: we attach labels to people, and these labels contain certain values which make up our expectantions.

- Erving Goffman: the stigma is the visual proof of a deviant status. Society socializes through them and individuals reaffirm their identities showing the stigma.

- However, those labels and stigmas can become socially accepted and no longer harmful.
Extinguishing defiant positions

- Self-surveillance (Foucault): we can understand phenomena like MTV as a subtle way to control and mitigate defiant positions. It is subtle because we can think we are being defiant and challenging the established norms.
Conclusion

- Nowadays women have more rights than in the old days, none the less we should take into account that;
  - These rights do not mean a total emancipation.
  - Some social achievements are in fact subtle ways to reproduce asymmetrical gender/class relations.
  - The cultural system can control the ways we use to try to challenge it by means of ideology (example: MTV and its new rock stars who, in fact, are tied up to capitalism and its sexist/classist ideology).
- “Religion is the opium of the people” (Karl Marx). Today we should add “mass media”, who reproduce the prevailing ideology and subvert challenging attitudes into ways of spread that ideology.