Tattoo Research Paper

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Interviewee

Pseudonym: Rick

Information: A straight, Caucasian male in his early 20s and is currently attending college in Connecticut. Is also a Roman Catholic and Muay Thai fighter.

Interview:

 a.       Why did he/she decide to get a tattoo?

"I got my tattoos mainly because religion and fighting were big parts of my life. I really wanted to accentuate that fact about me to others without even needing to use my voice. I wanted the world to see who I was and what I represented."

 b.      Take a picture or sketch of the tattoo to include in your analysis.  If your interviewee objects to this, this portion of the assignment may be skipped.  In either case, describe the tattoo image and its location on the body.

"One on my back is a psalm and I recently got a new one on my left arm of an angel's wing and roses."

 c.       How did he/she decide where to have it placed?

"I figured text on my back fit well enough and pictures would be well suited for my arms."

 d.      What does the tattoo symbolize to that person?

"I don't mean to repeat myself but to me, the tattoos represent who I am. The psalms I have are representative of my strifes throughout life and how religion helped me through it, while the Muay Thai quotes are representative of what I do for not just fun but camaraderie and discipline in my life."

 e.       How does your interviewee think different people react to the fact that he/she has a tattoo?

"My tattoos are kind of big and bold. Because of that, I think people that aren't really into tattoos will likely discredit me most of the time. However, it can be a great conversation starter to those that are impressed as well as fellow tattoo owners."

 f.       Does the person who has it think that it has or will affect their social standing?

"I'd like to hope not. I mean, it might affect me in fancier situations causing others to look down on me, but I doubt there'll come a time in an event like that where I'll be taking enough of my clothes off for it to be seen. Also, I guess it could affect my chances of getting a job if they have that kind of record."

As the previously seen information indicates, an interview was conducted with a man by the name of “Rick”. Rick was forthcoming and open with information requested of him, answering every question to the best of his ability. Something worth noting, despite the information of the interview, photos reveal Rick has four tattoos. That being said, what is the meaning of his tattoos? Rick merely explained the base layer and nothing more, but there’s always more. This essay will dive deeper into the world of tattoos to determine what is hidden in plain sight.

The first observation needed would be the tattoo’s indication of social position. In the interview, Rick stated that, “it might affect me in fancier situations causing others to look down on me.” He was aware that people of the upper class look down on things like tattoos, making them seem much more pure in appearance. This statement alone indicates where in the rungs of society tattooed members lie, that being the middle and lower classes of people. But where does he stand even within that grouping? Well Rick, is certainly not in the lower class of people, being a white male attending college in a somewhat modified Subaru, so he must be middle class. There needs to be more though. This needs to go deeper. Does the tattoo make him as much of a delinquent as the upper-crust would believe? Certainly not, but that needs to be covered in the next section.

That brings one to the next observation. What does the image of each tattoo symbolize? Firstly, the tattoo on his back which says “I will fear no evil.” This is in reference to Psalm 23:4 of the Bible, a religious work. With that being said, it is clear that this symbolizes when Rick ever had a challenging moment in his life, a real struggle, he would turn to his religion for strength and persevere. The next is on his left and right arm, an angel’s wing shrouded in darkness and barbed roses. A less obvious call to his religious background, this image must symbolize his good nature and Catholic faith pulling him through a dark and deadly world filled with things like pestilence, poverty, and even death. The roses themselves can be symbolized as Rick’s blooming thanks to his own inner light and the light of God. From what can be gathered so far, religion is Rick’s life support. It’s something he clings to in order to survive a world where the bad guys can and will win, leaving the good people to suffer and die out. Lastly, comes the picture of Rick’s left torso, where more text is located. This text isn’t in English, however. It is actually “Muay Thai” in the language of the Thai people. This is more of a reference of his specific lifestyle than anything. Besides religion, Rick has one other thing keeping his head above the water. He has Muay Thai fighting and is quite experienced at it. This activity isn’t just a brutish means of releasing one’s anger. It requires the skill and understanding to determine the proper fighting style, the endurance and determination to continue fighting to the end, and the cool-headedness to prevent oneself from getting excited and making a poor choice. Simply put, each fight is a true trial of mind and body while his religious side takes care of the soul. Rick has everything in his mind set up.

Now that the images themselves have been covered, there remains one other thing, the meaning behind the images’ locations. For the first tattoo, Rick claimed there was no reason other than his desire to place the big letters on his back. One could believe this claim since Rick has proclaimed himself to be a simple man with simple desires and simple dreams in the past. However, there is one theorized meaning behind particular tat. The theory revolves around the idea that Rick is constantly turning his back to all darkness and evil in the world, simply progressing as an individual in the proper manner. For the second and third tattoos on his arms, Rick claimed they were most appropriate on those parts as he couldn’t think of a better place. The truth behind this placement maybe much deeper than even he realizes. With each arm representing a half of Rick, it could symbolize an eternal struggle between his moral righteousness and his own natural desires. Greed, envy, and the other deadly sins are quite easy to fall to when presented with the opportunity. In a way, the barbs on the angel wing could be his own darker side holding him back. Lastly, there the Muay Thai tattoo, located on Rick’s left side torso, near where the heart is located. This seems fairly straightforward but it could certainly represent that Muay Thai is his heart and that he puts his heart into Muay Thai. He and fighting are one and the same, part of the same individual, inseparable.

With the symbolization covered, it’s time to delve into the impact in general American society from the tattoos. Rick himself makes it clear how he thinks society looks at him now, saying things like. He believes that people in the higher echelons of society will look down on him as a rebel of some sort. Ironically, his fellow religious family members and peers may think that since according to Leviticus 19:28 of the Bible one should, “not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves.” Some people looking to hire him may look into his past and determine him a poor business partner simply because of his tattoos. This closes a few doors for Rick. The same applies to him if he simply wants to conversate but people become intimidated.

