The Meaning of Symbolism in Tattoos: A Qualitative Inquiry into the Relationship Between Individuals and their Body Art

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This study investigated the nature of the relationships between individuals and their own tattoo(s). Through considering the personal construction of symbolic meaning involved with getting and having a tattoo, this research addressed how tattoos serve a performative, significant function for the individuals who wear them. Specifically, attention was paid to how tattoos and their capacity for constructed symbolism play an important, long-term role in how individuals are connected to themselves and/or to the greater world. To address this question, semi-structured in-person interviews were conducted with individuals with one or more tattoo(s). Data were analyzed in a qualitative manner, specifically using the method of inductive thematic analysis. This study was ideographic in nature, as this topic had not previously been explored, nor have previous studies utilized qualitative methodology as a means of research for this subject.