Perception of Tattoos in Contemporary Japanese Society

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Abstract

This thesis analyses five in-depth interviews on Japanese tattoo culture conducted by the author and ten short interviews with tattooed Japanese people published by Japanese online tattoo magazine. The study focuses on inclusion and exclusion of tattooed Japanese people in contemporary Japanese society, relying on labeling theory and collectivism. The findings suggest that significant tattoo stigmatization prevails in contemporary Japanese society. Tattoos are often percieved as a bad label that is required to be concealed with cloths or make-up. Nonetheless, the label was accepted by the majority of the interviewees who did not want to advocate for their rights of individualistic self-expression. Having said that, there were some participants who refused to submit to the society's demand for good adjustment. I argue that the willingness to good adjustment is corelated with the values of collectivism.

Keywords: *Tattoos*, *Japanese society*, *Labelling theory*, *Collectivism*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Japanese tattoo culture is currently experiencing a turning point. Judicial proceeding is going to take place at Supreme Court of Japan[1], deciding whether medical license is necessary in order to tattoo. The process started in 2015, when a tattoo artist, who was charged for tattooing without medical license, decided to advocate for his rights and proceed the matter to the court. The verdict might influence the public opinion on tattoos. Additionally, two major international sport events that could affect the perception of tattoos are going to take place in Japan in near future, the Rugby World Cup in 2019 and the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2020.

In contemporary Japanese society, tattoos are rather stigmatized. Around one to two people out of one hundred have a tattoo in Japan, however most of the tattooed Japanese hide their tattoos (Kawasaki, 2018a). Similarly, tattoos persist expurgated from Japanese media. It is very unlikely to see a tattooed person on the Japanese television or in the Japanese magazines (ibid). The only notably visible narrative is the one produced by Japanese cinematography. There are lots of so-called 'gangster movies' in which tattoos serve as markers, distinguishing between the bad and good characters, the bad ones being the tattooed ones (Yamamoto, 2016:80–81).

Recently, there has been research that explores and discusses the ways in which tattoos are perceived in contemporary Japanese society, however most of it is available only in Japanese (e.g. Yamamoto, 2016 and 2005; Ono, 2010; Uda, 2009; Saitō, 2005). Meanwhile, the Western research that is available in English neglects this topic completely, focusing mainly on photo documentation or semi-academic descriptions and/or explanations of the tattoo motives (e.g. Thompson, 2017; Ashcraft and Benny, 2016; Hladík et al, 2012; Cooper, 2011; Fellman and Thomas, 1986). This thesis introduces perception of tattoos in contemporary Japanese society. I conducted five in-depth interviews, three with Japanese tattoo artists, one with scholar who specializes in Japanese tattoo culture and one with a former editor in chief of now defunct Japanese tattoo magazine, The Burst. The main focus of the interviews was the issue of inclusion and exclusion of tattooed Japanese people in contemporary Japanese society. Additionally, I also analyzed ten published interviews with tattooed Japanese people published by Japanese online magazine DOTT[2].

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[1] The prosecutor opposed the innocent verdict of Osaka High Court in 2018. The date of the trial that is going to be carried out by the Supreme Court of Japan has not been announced yet.

[2] In 2018, there were no longer any tattoo magazines in Japan. The last tattoo magazine went out of business in 2016 due to insufficient incomes from the sales.

It is important to highlight that the Japanese tattoo culture is not so different from the Western ones. I note this to clarify the lingering stereotypes that surround the Japanese tattooing culture. While tattoos might be less accepted in Japan than in some other Western countries, there are still people who choose to get tattooed, absolute minority of which is affiliated with criminal activities. Similarly, there are groups that have had their own tattoo culture for a long time, for instance fishermen, firemen or craftsmen or ethnic minorities like Ainu tattoo culture or Okinawa tattoo culture. Additionally, while the practice of the traditional Japanese style tattoos prevails in contemporary Japanese society, it is one of the many tattoo styles Japanese customers choose from. In this study, I make several comparisons of Japanese tattoo culture with Western tattoo culture. I do not focus on any other East Asian tattoo cultures, since the interviewees did not mention them and since I myself have quite limited knowledge of other than the Japanese East Asian tattoo cultures.

1.1 Statement of Purpose and Research Question

This thesis aims to acquire better understanding of Japanese tattoo culture by focusing on how tattoos are perceived in contemporary Japanese society through interviewees' experiences. I introduce what it means to have a tattoo in Japan when it comes to acceptance, restrictions, prejudice and exclusion of those with tattoos, focusing on Japanese people, not on foreigners. Furthermore, I aim to shed more light on who the tattooed Japanese are, confronting the lingering stereotypes and myths.

- **Research Question**: How do the tattooed Japanese participants of this study perceive themselves in contemporary Japanese society?

1.2 Research Value

Tattooing became a topic of academic study interest in the 1970s, when several significant anthropological studies were published (Atkinson, 2003:51); until then, only few academic studies on tattooing were conducted (e.g. Hambly, 1925). Most of these studies examined tribal tattooing practices. Recently, contemporary local tattooing practices eventually received consequential academic attention, mainly in the field of cultural anthropology and social theory (e.g. Barron, 2017; Winge, 2012; Sanders, 2008; DeMello, 2007; Kuwahara, 2005; Atkinson, 2003). Since then, tattoos have been studied from several different perspectives, including semiotics (Bitarello and Queiroz, 2014; Albin, 2006), feminism (Pitts, 2003) or memory

documentation (Sundberg and Kjellman, 2018). However, as the topic remains rather new, there are still many areas that have not been researched yet in English.

Japanese tattooing culture is one of them. The research on Japanese tattoo culture available in English focuses mainly on photo documentation or semi-academic descriptions and/or explanations of the tattoo motives (e.g. Thompson, 2017; Ashcraft and Benny, 2016; Hladík et al, 2012; Cooper, 2011; Fellman and Thomas, 1986). There is no research in English that would focus on the lives of the tattooed Japanese people and the level of their inclusion/exclusion in the contemporary Japanese society. This thesis aims to contribute to better understanding of Japanese tattoo culture through the lived experiences of the tattooed Japanese people with how tattoos are perceived in contemporary Japanese society and how are the tattooed Japanese treated. Additionally, the thesis can also be an insightful empirical addition to the theoretical work on tattooing that has been written so far.

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is divided in six parts. After this Introduction, I explain the theoretical framework and concepts I relied on. Methodology of the study is explained in Chapter 3. Thereafter Chapter 4 outlines relevant literature review that introduces history of tattooing practices in Europe, Northern America and Japan and academic literature on tattooing. Furthermore, research on acceptance of tattoos in contemporary Japanese society and on polarized attitudes of Japanese tattoo artists towards Japanese tattoo culture is outlined as well. Chapter 5 consists of the analysis, which is further divided in five sub-sections: introduction of the tattooed participants, identifying a bad label, explaining the consequences of having the bad label, recognizing different attitudes towards the bad label and outlining future prospects. The final chapter draws conclusions based on the findings of this study and includes an answer to the research question.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The focus of the study is a sociological inquiry of perception of tattooed Japanese people in contemporary Japanese society. In this section I explain theoretical standing points that regard the question of freedom to express one's self-identity that crosses boundaries of informal rules that are agreed on by most of the society. When studying tattoo culture from a sociological perspective, subculture theories, labeling theory or Goffman's dramaturgical theory are often used (Atkinson, 2003:58).

Tattooing can be studied within a subculture, for instance tattooing practices among heavy metal fans. But tattooing itself does not define a subculture on its own. Obtaining a tattoo is personal experience, permanent modification of one's physical body. Although motivations for getting tattoos differ and a wish to become part of a subculture where tattooing is often practiced might be one of it, there is not such a thing as a 'tattoo subculture'. Furthermore, subculture is often understood as a form of resistance to the dominant culture and/or ideology (e.g. Hebdige, 2002), which I believe is not generally applicable to tattooing. There are many motivations for obtaining tattoos, including ritual and protective functions, personal history, identity negotiation and pure decorative function, none of which are necessary connected to resistance to the dominant culture and/or ideology (Fisher, 2002; Albin, 2006; Mun et al, 2012; Martin, 2013; Bitarello and Queiroz, 2014). Since the focus of the study was put on interviewees' experiences with how tattoos are perceived by the society, and since the main themes turned out to revolve around issues of acceptance, restrictions, prejudice and exclusion of tattooed Japanese people, I chose to rely on labeling theory. Goffman's dramaturgical theory could also be applicable, but only on the aspect of how the tattooed individuals choose to present themselves in their everyday lives.

2.1 Labeling Theory

Labeling theory is "a school of thought based on the ideas of George Herbert Mead, John Dewey, W. I. Thomas, Charles Horton Cooley, and Herbert Blumer, among others" (Skaggs, 2016). The core subject of the study is the "notion of social reaction or response by others to the behavior or individual [when] an individual engages in a behavior that is deemed by others as inappropriate" (ibid). There are several different approaches depending on the kind of 'inappropriate' behavior, including criminal offences (Wellford, 1975), but also mental illness (Scheff, 1966), drug addiction (Ray and Downs, 1986) or homosexuality (Lisdonk et al, 2018). Furthermore, there are several theoretical directions to labeling theory: modified labeling theory (Link, 1989), reintegrative shaming theory (Braithwaite, 1989) and differential social control

theory (Matsueda and Heimer, 1994; in Skaggs, 2016). Howard Becker's (1963) and Erving Goffman's (1963) theories were used for the purpose of this thesis. Although published in the 1960s, Becker's and Goffman's arguments are still suitable and applicable to contemporary society in the context of social stigma.

Becker (1963:9) argues that "social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labeling them as outsiders […]; deviant behavior is behavior that people so label". He also highlights the fact that "different groups judge different thing to be deviant" (ibid:2). Similarly, he clarifies that there are different kinds of rules. Some of the rules are enacted into law, some are informal agreements that are connected to local customs and traditions or are simple the result of consensus (ibid). Becker uses the term 'outsiders' to refer to "those people who are judged by others to be deviant and thus to stand outside of "normal" members of the group" (ibid:15). He also points out that every society is heterogeneous to some extent, meaning there are different groups of people that agree on different sets of rules. He identifies 'actual operating rules' that are agreed on by the majority. He explains that those who break such rules "are likely to be quite different from those of the people who condemn it" (ibid:16). Becker (ibid:17) raises a question of "Who can, in fact, force others to accept their rules and what are the causes of their success?". He concludes that it is a question of economic and political power. This claim, however, applies mainly to law and official regulations. Thus, it is not sufficient answer in the case of tattooing stigmatization. Becker further claims that the process of labeling contributes to expansion of deviance as the rejected individuals eventually accept their labels and continue their 'deviant practices'. This thought is, however, also more applicable to illegal acts and restorative justice, not to tattooing.

Goffman's (1963) description of deviant label is similar to the one of Becker. However, unlike Becker, Goffman offers insights to how the 'outsiders' manage their stigmatized identity and how they control the information about it. He points out that in its demand for normalcy, society expects the 'outsiders' to accept their labels but at the same time to declare themselves as a 'resident aliens' that are part of society (ibid:123). He calls this process 'good adjustment', explaining that "the stigmatized individual cheerfully and unselfconsciously accept himself as essentially the same as normals, while at the same time he voluntarily withholds himself from those situations in which normals would find it difficult to give lip service to their similar acceptance of him" (ibid:121). This causes the 'outsider' to live in a divided world, which Goffman (ibid:81) categorizes into "three possible kinds of places": 1) forbidden places "where exposure means expulsion"; 2) civil places where the 'outsider' is "carefully, and sometimes

painfully" tolerated; and 3) back places where the 'outsider' can be exposed without need to conceal or dissimulate.

2.2 Individualism–Collectivism Dimension

Furthermore, the context of collectivism–individualism dimension needs to be addressed. Although the processes explained by labeling theory occur in both environments, they are not the same, especially in the context of tattooing. By obtaining a tattoo, one physically differentiates himself/herself from the rest. What might be celebrated as a right to express oneself in one environment might be condemned and/or feared by the other. Similarly, what might be labeled as 'normal' in one might be labeled as 'deviant' in the other due to different norms and values in the collectivism–individualism dimension.

Collectivism can be defined as "social pattern consisting of closely linked individuals who see themselves as parts of one or more collectives" (Hamamura, 2012:3). In collectivism, individuals are "primarily motivated by the norms of, and duties imposed by, those collectives; are willing to give priority to the goals of these collectives over their own personal goals; and emphasize their connectedness to members of these collectives" (ibid). In individualistically oriented societies, on the other hand, individuals are "independent of collectives; are primarily motivated by their own preferences, needs, rights, and contracts they establish with others; give priority to their personal goals over the goals of others; and emphasize rational analysis of the advantages and disadvantages to associating with others" (ibid).

Hamamura (2012) conducted a research examining the individualism–collectivism dimension in the USA and Japan. He took into account the modernization theory, that suggests the rise of individualism as one of the consequences of economic growth; and on the cultural heritage theory, that on the other hand predicts continuity in a cultural pattern over time despite of technical innovation and economic growth. Hamamura criticized modernization theory as inadequate and highlighted that new theory is needed in order to fully understand the contemporary state of Japanese society. He concludes with findings that there has been rise of individualism in Japan over past several decades, however at the same time, persistence of collectivism is evident. The rise of individualism was detected in residential and family environments with rising importance of independence in child socialization. At the same time, "the importance social obligations has increased, whereas respect for individual rights has become less important" (ibid:14). He concludes that Japanese society "reported continuing emphasis on group orientation, social harmony, and obligation […] even during a period of significant economic development" (ibid:16–17).

According to Hamamura (2012), persistence of collectivism with emphasis on social harmony and obligation is evident in contemporary Japanese society. Furthermore, his findings suggest that the significance of social obligations has elevated, whereas the concern for individual rights has decreased. However, as suggested by Becker (1963:15), every society is heterogenous to some extent, therefore it is likely there will be individuals who will not agree on the consensus. At the same time, it is probable that society that highlights the values of collectivism will expect its 'outsiders' to adjust. An outsider who is not willing to adjust to the 'actual operating rules' is likely to be labeled a 'deviant', which will case restrictions for the outsider.

2.3 Concepts Used in the Analysis

Deviant behavior = the kind of behavior that is considered deviant by most of the society; result of law, informal agreements, local customs and traditions and consensus

Actual operating rules = social expectations that are agreed on by most of the society

Outsider = individual who has been labeled as deviant by significant part of the society

Good adjustment = willingness of the deviant to accepts his/her label and ideally behave according to the actual operating rules

Forbidden places = places where the deviant is forbidden to go

Civil places = places where the deviant might be tolerated

Back places = places where the deviant can expose his/her label without being expulsed

Collectivism (see the definition above)

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Design

Qualitative research interview was used in this thesis, as it "attempts to understand the world from the subjects' points of view, to unfold the meaning of their experience, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations" (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:1), which I consider most suitable for my research question. Thus, for my primary data, I conducted five in-depth semi-structured interviews. Additionally, I include three interviews with one of my interviewees (Miho Kawasaki) that were published online[3] and ten short interviews with tattooed Japanese people published by Japanese online tattoo magazine DOTT[4] as my secondary data. DOTT was established in 2018 and is administered by Ryōtarō Kudō (僚太郎工藤). I analyze how the interviewees understand and interpret contemporary Japanese tattoo culture. The focus was put on themes of acceptance, restrictions, prejudice and exclusion of those with tattoos, although the overall specifics of Japanese tattoo culture were discussed as well. Furthermore, from the secondary data I analyze what the tattooed Japanese think about their own tattoos and what were their motivations for obtaining them. The analysis relies on interpretivist epistemological position and constructionist ontological standpoint (see e.g. Bryman, 2012:380).

3.2 Sample

In this section I briefly introduce my interviewees and the people interviewed in the secondary data source. I provide more detailed introduction of the interviewees later in the analysis. Initially, I wanted to interview only Japanese tattoo artists, however many of them said they did not have time for interviews or simply did not answer. Additionally, one tattoo artist, who specializes in traditional Japanese tattooing, said he does not give interviews as he is not the authority in the field. This led me to change my strategy and include wider spectrum of specialists. I interviewed three tattoo artists, one scholar and a former editor in chief of a Japanese tattoo magazine. Four of the five participants have tattoos. The three tattoo artists were the only tattoo artists who agreed to participate in my study. The other two participants were contacted through 'snowball effect' (see e.g. Bryman, 2012:424).

The first interview I conducted was with professor **Yoshimi Yamamoto**. Yamamoto is an anthropologist who is currently affiliated with Tsuru University, she specializes in Japanese

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[3] Published online by Masumi Toyota (2018). See bibliography for the link.
[4] See bibliography for the links.

tattoo culture. Out of the three tattoo artists, **Horiyoshi III** is the most experienced one. He has been tattooing for over forty years and is considered a great authority. His expertise is traditional Japanese tattoo style. The second tattoo artist I interviewed, **Sayaka**[5], has been tattooing for over 20 years. Her focus is modern style tattoo. **Taiki Masuda** is the youngest tattoo artist I interviewed. He primarily designs modern style tattoos. Taiki formed a social justice movement, the Save Tattooing in Japan organization[6]. After he was fined by Osaka police for practicing tattooing without medical license, he took the matter to Osaka court. The last interview I conducted was with **Miho Kawasaki**, a former chief editor of now defunct Japanese tattoo magazine. Miho has a significant insight into Japanese tattoo culture and is now working on a project called Tattoo Friendly[7].

All the participants from the interviews published by the Japanese online magazine, DOTT are Japanese. The participants include six men and four women. Majority of the interviewees were in their twenties or thirties; two female participants did not wish to reveal their ages. The first interview was published on 22nd August 2018, the last on 7th December 2018.

3.3 Interview Process

I conducted the interviews in Japan during January 2019. Four of the interviews were conducted in Japanese, one in English. All the published interviews were in Japanese. I had one general interview guide (see Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:134–137) that I used for each participant. Furthermore, I added specific questions to the interviews with the scholars. The interview guide was designed to cover the topics of acceptance, restrictions, prejudice and exclusion of tattooed Japanese people, as well as specifics of Japanese tattoo culture. Before conducting the interviews, I sent a brief introduction of my research explaining the themes covered in the interview to all my participants. The interviews with Yoshimi Yamamoto, Miho Kawasaki and Sayaka were conducted face-to-face, the interview with Taiki Masuda was conducted via Skype and the interview with Horiyoshi III occurred via mail. The face-to-face and Skype interviews took around 60 minutes each. The written interviews consisted of the same main questions as the oral interviews. Permission for audio recording was given by three participants, one participant did not wish to be recorded. I took as much notes as possible during

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[5] This name is fictional, the interviewee wished to remain anonymous.
[6] For more information about the project see http://savetattooing.org/.
[7] For more information about the project see https://tattoo-friendly.jp/.

and after the oral interview that I did not have a recording of. The recorded interviews were transcribed. The written interview was copy pasted into one document.

3.4 Data Analysis

The qualitative interview transcripts consist of large corpus of text and are therefore not straightforward to analyze (Bryman, 2012:565–566). The large corpus of text needs to be broken down into smaller components. Open coding (ibid:575–578) and meaning condensation (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:205–207) serve as such tools and were therefore used in data analysis. Themes were formed from codes and condensations and were thereafter organized into a common storyline. The storyline was analyzed by using labeling theory. Furthermore, values and beliefs of collectivism were taken into account.

3.5 Reflexivity

There are many challenges to providing an objective depiction of a cultural reality. The data is being collected and analyzed by the researcher, whose impressions and biases might affect it. Although complete objectivity may not be possible, I believe it can be approximated. In order to do so, it is necessary to consider one's reflexivity and freedom from bias (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:242).

I am a young female researcher who was raised and educated in strongly individualistic society of Czech Republic. I graduated in Japanese philology and moved to Sweden to study Asian studies. I conduct research on Japanese society which puts, opposed to the Czech one, emphasis on collectivism. The biggest bias I am aware of is that I am fond of individualistic expression of beauty and I believe anyone should be able to express themselves as they wish, even if it pushes societal boundaries. Having prepared interview guide helped me to be observant of subjective question that might have pushed the interviewee to a specific answer.

3.6 Ethical Consideration

Researching different cultures carries ethical sensitivity. Gobo (2011:15) argues that "ethnography is still a colonial method that must be de-colonized". This is especially of concern when exploring topics that tend to be exoticized in the Western society. Japanese tattoo culture is one of such topics. After the interview with doctor Yamamoto, I realized how sensitive this issue was to the local people who work in the field of tattooing. I learned from my interviewees that there seems to be extensive experience with Western journalists and researchers who

mistreated information their interviewees gave them and produced stereotypical, simplified and overly exoticized conclusions about Japanese tattoo culture, which the local specialists see as a violation of their culture that hurts its reputation abroad. After the discussion I had with doctor Yamamoto I wrote to the specialists I included (as well as to those I was still trying to include) in my study, explaining I did not wish to exoticize Japanese tattoo culture and that I respect the ethical sensitivity the research carries. This additionally led to more participants that agreed to be interviewed by me.

I followed the ethical guidelines established by the Swedish Research Council (2017), as well as the recommendations of ethical interviewing suggested by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009:61–79). The interviewees participation was voluntary with the possibility to withdraw at any time. All participants had the choice to remain anonymous. I am tremendously grateful for all the free time my interviewees gave me.

3.7 Limitations and Demarcations

The interview information presented in this thesis is not fully representative of all possible experiences since the size of the sample of the study is too small. Nonetheless, it provides an example that can be useful in understanding Japanese tattoo culture. The data can be furthermore employed as empirical evidence to the theoretical studies on tattooing. Furthermore, although I include several Japanese studies in the literature review, I did not manage to review all the major studies on Japanese tattoo culture that have been written in Japanese.

Another insufficiency is the lacking context of East Asian tattoo cultures. It is without doubt that including local context of the issue would be beneficial. However, my knowledge of Chinese, Korean and Mongolian tattoo cultures is quite limited. Furthermore, my interviewees did not compare Japanese tattoo culture to any of the of East Asian ones, but they did refer to the Western one several times. Additionally, the size of this study scope is limited, and it would be difficult to cover both Western and East Asian contexts. Therefore, I decided not to include them in this study.

The biggest demarcation I am aware of is the extent of emphasis I put on collectivism–individualism dichotomy in the analysis. I eventually argue that Western culture in general tends to be rather individualistic, whereas the Japanese one leans towards collectivism. I am aware of the simplification this implies. The dichotomy does not fully explain the variation that I later identify in the Japanese tattoo culture. However, I do believe it is a relevant factor and possibly the main theoretical explanation, although it does not explain every single aspect of the complex issue of alternation.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 History of Tattooing Practices in Europe, Northern America and Japan

The first historically documented European tattoo is the one of 'Ötzi', a tattooed man whose around 5 000 years old frozen body was found in Ötztal Alps (Rychlík, 2014:33). However, based on the archeological artifacts, it has been estimated that tattooing might have been practice in Europe for more than 37 000 years (ibid:30). Nonetheless, there were not many tattoo cultures in ancient Europe. Rather, tattooing was practiced for punitive purposes, from Ancient Greece and Rome until Middle Ages (Fisher, 2002:92–93). European tattooing was also oppressed by Christianity (Barron, 2017:8). In 4th century, Christians were forbidden to obtain tattoos, as it was seen as 'heathen practice' (ibid). Although tattooing was practice among some priests as a symbol of devotion to God, this practice was eventually nearly abolished (ibid; Rychlík, 2014:54–57). There were groups that kept their tattoo cultures, e.g. Christian pilgrims travelling to Italian Loreto or Christians (especially peasant women) of Balkan peninsula, however such groups were rather rare (ibid:170–171). In Norther America, on the other hand, tattooing was popular among many Native Americans (ibid:75–85).

The situation in Europe changed in 18th century during the colonization era. Captain Cook spread popularity of tattooing among British society, when he returned from his voyage to Tahiti and brought several heavily tattooed locals (Atkinson, 2003:30; Barron, 2017:10–11). Many European sailors returned from their voyages with tattoos and tattooing has eventually become prevalent among them (Atkinson, 2003:31). During the Victorian era, tattooing was evident among army and has become a class signifier of soldiers who returned from war (Barron, 2017:14). Tattoos were associated with masculinity and bravery of undergoing pain, furthermore they were also seen as 'working class jewelry'(ibid:13–14). With the invention of tattoo machine in 19th century, tattoos become more available and spread among both European and North American society (Rychlík, 2014:173). Rich elite, who collected tattoos from their journeys abroad, saw tattoos as impressive and exotic decoration (Fisher, 2002:95). At the same time, tattooing was also popular among the lower class as a symbol of self-expression (ibid). During the late 19th and early 20th century, heavily tattooed female fashion emerged within so-called 'freak shows' that took place at carnivals and circuses (Barron, 2017:16; Atkinson, 2003:33–36). Tattoos eventually become depicted as rather primitive and naïve or even vulgar practices (Rychlík, 2014:181). From the 1920s until the end of the World War II, tattoo salons started to emerge within "dirty alleys, in pool halls, across areas of cities characterized by poverty and crime" (Baron, 2017:18). At that time, tattoos were significant among working class, soldiers and criminals in prison, who obtained tattoos as a form or rebellion, boredom or

protection (Rychlík, 2014:181). Soldiers obtained tattoos with patriotic motives, but also as a form of memory (ibid:190). Between the 1950s and 1970s, tattoos become symbols for rebellion and protests against social conventions and were mostly associated with gangs, criminals and deviant youth subcultures (Barron, 2017:19; Atkinson, 2003:38–42).

From the late 1970s, perception of tattoos shifted once more. Tattoos started to be recognized as statements of the self and gained popularity as means of self-expression (Barron, 2017:23). Atkinson (2003:42) argues, that "the body became a popular billboard for 'doing' identity politics". By the late 1990s and early 2000s, popularity of tattoos became visibly significant. Atkinson (ibid:46) calls this period 'The Supermarket Era', arguing that tattoos have become so popular that the clients became consumers. Furthermore, by this time, tattoo studios can be found in most of the major urban areas in Europe and North America. Barron (2017:14) identifies a new phase from the 2010s, 'The Era of Inked Individualism'. Furthermore, he highlights that in the contemporary tattoo culture, individuals do not solely acquire tattoos because of their personal choices but also because of the influence of the popular culture that has adopted and popularized tattooing (ibid:26). Tattoos have entered the European and North American mainstream popular culture. Influential celebrities like Lady Gaga, Cara Delevingne, Beyoncé, Johnny Depp, Adele or Katy Perry are wearing tattoos and that has, according to Barron (2017:34–49), heavily influenced the public perception and acceptance of tattoos. Tattoos are commonly seen on TV, newspapers, social media and the Internet and have therefore become quite ordinary (ibid).

The oldest evidence of possible tattoo practices in Japan date back to Jōmon period (10 000 BC–300 BC; DeMello, 2007:167). The ceramic dogū figurines that were made during that era have ornaments that have been interpreted as possible tattooing practices (Takayama, 1968) or body painting practices (Yamamoto, 2016:32). The first historically documented evidence of Japanese tattooing comes from Chinese chronicle Wei in 297 AD (Rychlík, 2014:113). In Yayoi period (300 BC–300 AD), tattoos were worn by farmers (DeMello, 2007:167). Mentions of tattooing can be also found in Japanese chronicles Kojiki in 712 AD and Nihon shoki in 720 AD (Rychlík, 2014:114–115; Yamamoto, 2005:83–85). Women of Ainu ethnic group have worn upper lip tattoos for possibly even thousands of years (DeMello, 2007:167). Tattoos were markers of status, but also religious talismans (ibid). However, during the Kofun period (300–600), the practice of tattooing was soon rejected as 'primitive practice' and punitive tattooing started to be practiced instead. The practice of punitive tattooing prevailed in Japan until 1870. Criminals and people of social outcast (非人, *hinin*) were marked on their foreheads or upper arms (DeMello, 2007:167). During the early 17th century, non-pictorial tattooing became

popular (Sanders, 2008:12). There were practiced as pledges among lovers and Buddhist monks, however this practiced died out due to government's suppression (ibid).

Around the mid-18th century, the traditional Japanese tattooing practice as known today was developed (Yamamoto, 2016:37). With growth of urban culture, the specific Japanese style tattooing gained popularity (DeMello, 2007:167–168; Yamamoto, 2016:37). During the same time, Chinese novel called *Suikoden* in Japanese became very popular for its anti-authoritarian tinge, which was very applicable on the Japanese political situation and social oppression at that time, that is especially for the lower class (Yamamoto, 2016:41–42). Some of the heroes of *Suikoden* were heavily tattooed (ibid). The tattoos were thus often seen as symbols for bravery and heroism, but also for rejection of the superior class (DeMello, 2007:189). The tattooing became popular especially among the lower-class citizens of Edo, the capital. Many men of occupations which often required half-naked bodies, like firemen, craftsmen, carpenters, palanquin bearers or artisans, decorated their skins with tattoos and showed them with pride. Tattooing became popular also among lovers once more, who acquired 'a vow tattoo' in order to express a pledge of their love. At the same time, street gangs and criminals covered their punitive tattoos with large traditional Japanese tattoos (Yamamoto, 2016:38).

The situation changed with the Meiji Restoration, after which the government banned the practice of tattooing in 1872, claiming it might be seen as 'primitive barbarian practice' in the eyes of Westerners (Yamamoto, 2016:49; Sanders, 2008:12). Having said that, the tattooing of Japanese was forbidden but tattooing of foreigners was not. This ban was lifted after the World War II in 1948 (Yamamoto, 2016:49). Meanwhile, tattooing turned into secretive practice. Many tattoo artists moved to seaports, mainly to Yokohama and Kobe, where many foreigners were coming and many of which desired to obtain the traditional Japanese tattoo (DeMello, 2007:168; Koyama, 2010; Sanders, 2008:12). The traditional Japanese style tattooing was however still practiced among Japanese as well, especially laborers, carpenters, firemen, artisans, entertainers and also by criminals (Sanders, 2008:12). Despite the legalization of tattooing in 1948, the negative image among society has prevailed (Itō et al, 2001:71).

Japanese traditional style tattooing fell into disfavor and continued to be stigmatized (Sanders, 2008:13). Nonetheless, a sizeable Japanese tattoo subculture endures (ibid). In 1981, Japan Tattoo Institute was established with the aim to preserve and encourage the traditional Japanese tattoo art (DeMello, 2007:170) The Japan Tattoo Institute publishes books, videos and CDs about Japanese tattooing and tattoo artists (ibid). Some argue that due to American popular culture, modern style tattoos are gaining popularity among young Japanese generation, although, at the same time, the traditional Japanese tattoo remain stigmatized (DeMello, 2007:170).

The history of tattooing practices in Europe, Northern America and Japan share more similarities than differences. In all these regions, tattoos have been practiced since ancient history. Similarly, both Europe (Christian pilgrims and Christians of Balkan peninsula) and Japan (Ainu, people of Ryukyu islands) had tattoo cultures that practiced and maintained their tattooing customs on the periphery for a long time, regardless the dominant social customs. Punitive tattooing was practiced both in Europe and Japan, however the European punitive tattooing was more seldom and died out sooner. Furthermore, tattooing was stigmatized by the authorities in all the regions for various reasons. In Europe and Norther America, significant shift from tattoo stigmatization has recently emerged. Nonetheless, in Japan, tattoos remain stigmatized to a certain degree. Moreover, presentation and the level of censorship of tattoos in media, which is correlated to the stigma, differs. Tattoos are visible in Western media, which is parallel to the amount of tattooed Western celebrities. In Japan, on the other hand, it is not common to see tattooed person on TV or in the newspapers, magazines or other mass media.

4.2 Tattooing in Academic Literature Available in English

There are several different understandings of tattoos in academic literature, some of which are conflicting. During the 19th and early 20th century, tattoos were mostly theorized as marks of deviance and/or indication of predisposition to crime. Lombroso (1911) included tattoos in his criminological study, claiming that tattoos indicate inclination to violence and crime, as only 'uncivilized' and 'culturally inferior' individuals would decide to get tattooed. In psychology, tattoos were long understood as a sign of psychological disorder and prediction of future deviance. The desire to obtain tattoos was understood as a sign of pathology or ego deficiency, where the individual gets tattooed as a coping mechanism for his/her disability to adapt to social norms, beliefs and values (Ferguson-Rayport et al., 1955; Gittleson et al, 1969; Measey, 1972; Goldstein, 1979). A significant flaw that can be found in these studies is that they all lack empirical evidence.

In cultural anthropology, tattooing of tribal cultures became a topic of study interest. Hambly (1925) argued that within tribal cultures tattooing signified various specific meaning and that tattoos were not practiced for the sake of visual ornamentation itself. Many anthropological texts and/or documentations on tattooing were published during the 1970s and 1980s (Atkinson, 2003:51), including prominent studies by Brain (1979) and Ebin (1979). Many meanings of tattooing were identified, including rite of passage, signature of identity, social status, sacred ceremony, trophy, religion or magical protection (Hambly, 1925; Brain, 1979; Ebin, 1979; Rubin, 1988). Anthropological research has proved the fact that there are

many different motivations behind tattoos and that tattooing practices are fairly ordinary around the world (Atkinson, 2003:52).

While cultural anthropology mostly explores tattooing as "normative process of group foundation" (ibid:55), sociological studies on tattooing have offered a scope of theoretical interpretations and definitions (ibid). Sanders's book 'Customizing the Body' (1989) is one of the first studies that examines tattooing in contemporary society and argues that the society's understanding of tattooing is socially constructed. Furthermore, Sanders explores tattoos as both voluntary and involuntary marks of stigma. According to Sanders, tattooing functions as social communication and cultural signifier (tattoo as a symbol with cultural meaning). Steward's (1990) sociological study 'Bad Boys and Tough Tattoos' offered a new angle on understanding of contemporary Western tattoo culture and inspired other researches to conduct similar type of sociological inquiry. Steward is a tattoo artist who wrote an academic study about his clients' motivations for obtaining tattoos. He identified several inducements: purely decorative motivation, wish to beautify one's body, psychological reasons, religious beliefs, political statements and fandom motivations. According to Steward, tattoos are form of media for self-expression. Another perspective that can be found in sociological studies on tattooing is the political exploration of tattoos. In such theories, tattooing is comprehended as social resistance to capitalist ideologies (Rosenblatt, 1997), rejection of dominant cultural beauty standards (Mifflin, 1997) or as a feminist dismissal of male dominance and demands for 'proper femininity' (Pitts, 2003). What all the recent sociologic studies have in common is that they all focus on the meaning of tattoos while reducing the prominence given to the stigma related to tattoos (Atkinson, 2003:57).

The most prominent studies on contemporary tattooing available in English that I am aware of are the ones of Sanders (1989), DeMello (2000), Atkinson (2003) and Barron (2017). DeMello (2000) explores the middle-class tattoo narratives of the United States. She examines the creation of American tattoo community and the creation of meanings that are associated with tattoos while focusing on the cultural context of tattooing. DeMello identified several themes of her participants' tattoo motivations, including individualistic self-expression, spirituality and personal growth through self-help and empowerment. Additionally, DeMello identified distinct differences between women's and men's tattoo motivation. According to DeMello, women are much likely to explain their tattoos in terms of healing, control or empowerment. Atkinson (2003) studies the tattoo culture of Canada. He argues that tattoos are best understood within generational moments and that tattoo becomes normative after it has been embedded in the culture, similarly as e.g. plastic surgery or dieting. Furthermore,

Atkinson's study offers profound understanding of tattooing within historical contexts through space and time. He identified six eras: the Colonist/Pioneer Era (1760s–1870s), the Circus/Carnival Era (1880s–1920s), the Working Class Era (1920s–1950s), the Rebel Era (1950s–1970s), the New Age Era (1970s–1990s) and the Supermarket Era (1990s–present). Barron (2017) explores growing popularity of tattoos in the context of society, history and popular culture. He argues that tattooed celebrities have significantly influenced the public precision of tattoos. Additionally, he also explored tattoo motivations of his interviewees. His findings were similar to those of Sanders, Steward and DeMello. Mun et al (2012) and Martin (2013) also offer examination of their interviewees' tattoo motivations. According to Martin, tattooing needs to be understood as endless potential of self-expression. At the same time, Martin highlights the affect of social construction of reality, arguing that "marking the skin with ink must always be understood as both an individual and cultural affair" and that "becoming tattooed will also have deep and varied interpretations and systems of significance" (2013:4). Apart from the motivations that have been already mentioned, Martin (2013) and Mun et al (2012) identified the following incentives: tattoo as a form of memory, physical attraction and overcoming discomfort of one's physical appearance. Moreover, both Martin (2013) and Mun et al (2012) spotted participants' inconsistencies with their tattoos in form of changing self-perception. They point out that some of their participants put different meanings to their tattoos over time due to different self-perception and/or behavior change.

Tattoos have also been explored from the semiotic perspective (Albin, 2006; Bitarello and Queiroz, 2014; Barron, 2017). In semiotics, tattoos are understood as signs that are being interpreted through 'semiotic niches' (ibid:76), as people make sense of tattoos based on learned social conventions and constructions. Based on De Saussure (1959) and Pierce's theory of signs (Short, 2007), tattoos are understood as a sign (signifier) that is being constituted through semiotic systems (niches) and are eventually assigned a meaning (a signified). The semiotic niches, through which individuals make sense of signs, are not rational, are socially constructed and are influenced by individuals' lived experiences. In other words, there is no rational link between the sign and the given meaning. The semiotics usually understands motivation to tattoo as a basic human need to communicate.

Nonetheless, tattoos are usually studied within the field of sociology, culture anthropology and social psychology. However, with the increasing popularity of tattoos, new studies with new approaches are emerging. Case studies on perception of tattoos, where attitudes towards tattooed people are investigated, have been of interest among several scholars (Kosut, 2006; Hawkes at al, 2004; Horne et al, 2007). Sundberg and Kjellman (2018) offer a

new perspective on tattooing, seeing tattoos as a means of memory and evidence documentation. Additionally, there are many photo documentations of various tattoo cultures (e.g. Cooper, 2011; Hladík, 2012; Verzosa, 2017).

4.3 English and Japanese Literature on Japanese Tattoo Culture

There is not much academic literature providing detailed examinations of Japanese tattoo culture available in English. Most of the studies focus on history of Japanese tattooing as a section of world's tattoo history (DeMello, 2007; Sanders, 2008) or on photography documentation (Fellman, 1986; Kitamura and Kitamura, 2001; Cooper, 2011). The only studies available in English that examine Japanese tattooing in greater detail that I am aware of are the ones by Yamada (2009) and Okazaki (2013). Yamada (2009) analyzes Japanese tattoo culture in the context of globalization, arguing that there appears to be schism that divides Japanese tattoo culture into two 'parties', the 'traditionalists' and the 'modernists'. Okazaki (2013) explores traditional style tattoos. Although her study offers significant photo documentation, Okazaki also includes transcripts of interviews she conducted with Japanese tattoo artists, a writer Shoko Tendo, who is heavily tattooed, and ukiyo-e artist Motoharu Asaka.

Recently, tattoos have been of interest among several Japanese scholars (published in Japanese). Yoshioka (1996) examines the motivations and beginnings of Japanese tattooing practices in Jōmon, Yayoi and Kofun periods, including the tattooing practices of Ainu Japanese ethnical minorities and those practiced on Ryukyu Islands. Jōmon tattooing practices are furthermore described in detail by Takayama (1969). Matsuda (2015) explores the tattooing from visual perspective from ancient family clan tattoos, through the tattoos of Edo ruffians until the recent trends. In his other book (2016), he argues traditional Japanese tattooing is 'hidden beauty' due its stigmatization in Japanese society. The overall history of Japanese tattooing is well documented by Iizawa (1973) and Yamamoto (2005). Saitō (2005) studies the late and contemporary Japanese tattoo culture, including the daily practices of Japanese tattoo artists. The contemporary Japanese tattoo culture is also well documented by Ono (2010). Murasawa (2002) examines tattoos as a part of emerging fashion among young generation. Nishiyama (2007) explores tattoos as part of young generation's self-expression and identity making. Furthermore, studies on perceptions of tattoos have recently emerged (Yamamoto, 2016; Okabayashi et al, 2017; Suzuki and Ōkubo, 2018). Masaki (2009) examines personal motivations for tattooing among Japanese tattooed people. He focuses on emotional reasons behind tattoos, exploring issues of family love, vow tattoos or child loss.

4.4 Acceptance of Tattoos in Contemporary Japanese Society

Several opinion polls and surveys exploring the public perception of tattoos were conducted recently by Japanese scholars and organizations. For illustration, I introduce two of them as the results are very similar. Next, I discuss Yamada's (2009) description of the issue whose findings are seemingly contradictory.

Kanto Federation of Bar Associations conducted a survey with 1 000 respondents in 2014 (Yamamoto (2016:14–22)) Japanese residents of age between 20 and 69 were questioned, 100 men and 100 women in each category. The majority (86 %) of respondents said they were certain they did not want to obtain a tattoo. Almost third of the respondents stated they did not like people with tattoos (38 %) and another third said they do not mind tattoos but only in the case of tattooed foreigners (33 %). When asked about associations with tattoos, the most frequent answers were 'outlaw' (56 %), 'crime' (48 %), 'fashion' (25 %) and 'sport' (6 %).

Similar questionnaire survey was conducted by Okabayashi et al (2017). They questioned 482 female university students in Tokyo about their opinions on and personal experiences with beauty modification. The majority of their sample underwent only minor beauty modifications (dying hair, ear piercing). There was no participant with tattoo. The majority of respondents expressed negative view of tattooing, however not in case when the tattooed person is foreigner. Okabayashi et al (ibid) argue that the reason for resistance to tattooing within Japanese society has to do with concept of 'public self-consciousness' (公的自意識, *kōteki ji'ishiki*). In other words, Japanese person who chooses to 'stand out on purpose' is not to be trusted in the eyes of many Japanese people. However, in case of foreigners there is significantly lower stigma, because Japanese people are aware of the popularity and non-stigmatization of tattoos in the West, therefore they do not necessary assume the individual is 'suspicious'.

Based on these surveys, we can conclude that tattoos remain stigmatized within Japanese society. However, on the contrary, Yamada (2009: 322–323) claims that "tattoos are again considered fashionable in Japan" and that "The fascination with West, especially US culture, has increased popularity of tattoos.". She also mentions that "Japanese celebrities with tattoos appear in the media, and young people tend to follow their styles" (ibid:323). Furthermore, although it is not so common, there still are tattooed Japanese celebrities, for instance rappers KOHH and Son Gong, musician Miyavi or recording artist Namie Amuro. These finding suggest that tattooing became more popular among Japanese people than it was several decades ago. Nonetheless, it does not mean the stigmatization disappeared with the rise of popularity. On the contrary, as the findings of the surveys mentioned above indicate, the tattoo stigmatization still prevails.

4.5 The Seeming Existence of Two Japanese Tattoo Cultures

There seem to be two different attitudes within Japanese tattoo culture, the one represented by 'traditionalists' and the one of 'modernists'. The schism explained by Yamada (2009) consists mainly in the question of open acceptance of tattoos. Whereas the 'modernists', who are mostly represented by the young tattoo artist generation, wished to legalize tattooing and overcome the stigma, the 'traditionalists', who are mostly represented by the older tattoo artist generation, wish to keep the current conditions and were mostly against the legalization of tattooing. The 'modernists' usually specify in modern style tattoos or both in the traditional and modern styles, whereas the 'traditionalists' usually specify only in the old traditional style.

From the interviews with the 'traditionalists' by Okazaki (2013), it is apparent that they clearly separate the traditional Japanese tattoo from the modern style ones. They do not think of it as the same tattoo culture. Rather, they consider the traditional Japanese tattoos a form of distinct live-style and commitment that has certain philosophy connected to it. For instance, Horiyoshi III claimed that "Japanese traditional tattoos are something that is outlaw or counterculture in nature, […] they shouldn't be socially acceptable as that would be sacrilegious." or that "Nowadays, people get tattooed so that people can see it […] and in doing so the charm of the tattoos disappears." (ibid:36). The 'traditionalists' seem to wish to keep the secrecy that surrounds tattoos in Japan as they see it as part of its heritage. There is more emphasis on the philosophy and meaning behind the tattooing act and its result than on the visual aspect of it (ibid:53). There are no academic studies on the 'modernists' that I am aware of.

5. ANALYSIS

Heretofore, I have identified that although tattoos had become more popular among some Japanese, the tattoo stigma prevails. In this chapter I define the tattoo stigma based on the interviewees' experiences. I rely on Becker's (1963) and Goffman's (1963) labeling theory, arguing that in contemporary Japanese society, tattoos are perceived as a deviant behavior, because being tattooed contradicts the social expectations that are agreed on by the majority of the Japanese society. The tattooed Japanese are thus labeled as outsiders, who are expected to submit to good adjustment. I first introduce my participants and their experiences with and motivations behind their tattoos. Then, I address and analyze the bad label. Thereafter I identify burdens and limitations the bad label causes to the outsiders. After that, I focus on different standpoints of the interviewees towards the bad label and stigmatization. Finally, I outline participants' thoughts on possible future prospects regarding the tattoo stigmatization in Japan.

5.1 Who are the Tattooed Japanese?

In this such-chapter I introduce my participants as well as the interviewees from online Japanese tattoo magazine DOTT. Participants' profiles are sometimes excluded from the analysis and only used as an appendix of the study. Nonetheless, since I later examine the interviewees' opinions on and experiences with inclusion in and exclusion from Japanese society because of their tattoos, I believe it is important to understand their positionalities. This sub-chapter aims to a) introduce my participants and their positionalities; b) examine motivations and experiences of the tattooed Japanese interviewed by the DOTT magazine.

5.1.1 Introducing my participants

Sayaka, female, in her 40s. Sayaka is a tattoo artist based in Tokyo and has been tattooing for over 20 years. She tattoos in her apartment that is located in a hidden street corner. She prefers not to draw attention to her tattoo business as she sees it as an unnecessary risk. Sayaka focuses on modern style tattooing and most of her customers are foreigners. She has several visible tattoos, but she usually covers them with clothing, and she says she likes to dress in a neat and unobtrusive way.

"I want to present myself as a good person. I try to show people that I am decent, I have a dog, and I always greet people. When I go out, I always dress nice and I hide my tattoos. It is better to hide them if you want people to treat you well or for instance if you want to get good service in a restaurant."

She points out she does not mind practicing tattooing in secret and hiding her tattoos, although she wishes Japanese society was more open-minded. She accepts her label of an outsider and is a good example of the good adjustment concept identified by Goffman (1963). Sayaka expresses gratitude for being able to make a living by working as a tattoo artist and despite the restrictions her business and identity are tied with, she feels free.

Taiki Masuda, male, in his 30s. Taiki is a tattoo artists and activist based in Osaka. Taiki likes to paint, which has inspired him to become a tattoo artist. He started his career almost 10 years ago, however, his line of work was interrupted after 4 years since he opened his tattoo studio. In 2015, Taiki was charged and fined for tattooing without medical license. The charge was based on police's interpretation of medical law, which does not clearly state tattooing can only be practiced by those who have a medical license.

"There was no way I could accept the charge, so I decided to take the case to court. It is a human rights issue for me. My means of expression were taken away from me, my rights were violated. It is not like a wanted to fight this. I was cornered and put in a situation where I had no choice. But I stand by my decision."

Taiki started organization 'Save Tattooing in Japan' with few of his colleagues. He collected over 100 000 petitions and took the case to court in 2015. After he was found guilty in 2017, he immediately appealed the verdict. In 2018, Osaka High Court ruled in his favor, stating that tattooing is not medical practice and thus medical license is not required. Nonetheless, the prosecution has objected the verdict, thus the case will proceed at the Supreme Court of Japan where final appeal will be decided.

"There is still no official guideline nor license system for tattoo artists in Japan. Therefore, we have established Japan Tattooist Association[8]. We have to create clear rules."

Taiki is a good example of new generation of Japanese tattoo artists. He does not want to hide and tattoo in secret. He dresses casually and sometimes he rolls up his sleeves to show his tattoos. He wants tattooing to be recognized as a legitimate business and practice. In his opinion, Japanese tattooing culture has changed significantly in the past 30 years. New tattoo artists and styles are emerging. He himself focuses on modern style tattoos. He feels the modern style gives him freedom to express himself. Nonetheless, he likes the traditional Japanese tattooing as well. Most of his customers are Japanese.

Taiki got his first tattoo because he wanted to try how it feels to be tattooed, since at that time he already had the aspiration to become a tattoo artist. He even practiced tattooing on

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[8] For more information about the Japan Tattooist Association visit https://tattooist.jp/ (in Japanese).

himself. He eventually obtained many tattoos, including a tattoo of a toddler who is holding a tattoo machine, which symbolizes his dream to become a tattoo artist or a tattoo he had done as a commemoration after his grandfather passed away.

Horiyoshi III, male, in his 70s. Horiyoshi III has been tattooing for over 40 years and is based in Yokohama. He focuses on traditional Japanese style tattoos and he himself has 'full body-suit' tattoo in traditional Japanese style. For Horiyoshi III, tattoos are part of counterculture that is meant to be hidden. Horiyoshi III is significantly different from the rest of my interviewees. He started his apprenticeship in the 1960s, when he became part of his master's family, where he helped around the household in exchange for the knowledge his master passed on him. He feels the old tradition of Japanese tattooing is gone and only its version is now prevailing. He seems not to be a fan of the modern tattooing style.

"Contemporary Japanese tattoo scene is just copying overseas, I don't like it. The tattoo population in Japan has increased. When tattoos become fashion, fascinating elements of them disappear. Now that everyone can freely find a tattoo artist, part of Japanese tattooing culture is in decline."

For Horiyoshi III, tattoos are affiliated with secrecy. He, similarly like Sayaka, could be considered an example of 'good adjustment'. However, he made clear he wished people were more accepting of tattooing. Nonetheless, he criticized Taiki for bringing tattooing to court. He said it was unnecessary provocation that would not help anything. Most of his customers are Japanese.

Miho Kawasaki, female, in her 40s. Miho is a journalist and a tattoo fan. She was editor in chief of now defunct Japanese tattoo magazine Tattoo Burst. Nowadays Miho runs a website called 'Tattoo Friendly' where she features facilities (mostly spas, public bathhouses, swimming pools and gyms) that allow tattooed customers. Miho has 'full sleeve' tattoo on her right arm and several other visible tattoos. The design of her tattoo is very cute (可愛い, *kawaii*), which she says she chose on purpose.

"Even when I am 80 years old, I will be cute [laughs]!"

Her office is full of books on tattooing, especially the traditional Japanese style tattoos. It is clear Miho has a great passion for tattooing. However, she usually covers her tattoos with clothing. She was part of Taiki Masuda's team during his trials in Osaka.

Yoshimi Yamamoto, female, in her 50s. Yamamoto has a doctorate in cultural anthropology and is the first Japanese scholar who obtained a PhD for dissertation on tattooing. She studies Japanese and Taiwanese tattoo culture and is active in several projects, including conferences on tattoos bans in contemporary Japan. She also consulted and supported Taiki Masuda in his movement 'Save Tattooing in Japan' and his trials in Osaka. Yamamoto is supportive of overcoming the tattoo stigmatization in Japan, although she is a bit skeptical.

5.1.2 The tattooed Japanese interviewed by DOTT

To grasp better understanding of who the tattooed Japanese are, I include analysis of interviews with tattooed Japanese people conducted by Japanese online tattoo magazine DOTT. In this section, I introduce the interviewees and their motivations to obtain tattoos. I state their names, age (if provided), gender and occupation. I also include their opinions on concealing their tattoos in public, some of their experiences regarding other's reactions to their tattoos and their general thoughts on tattooing. However, not all the interviewees touched upon all these issues, therefore it is not consistently reflected on in each case.

Kyōhei, male, 30 years old. Kyōhei works as a tattoo artist in Machida. His first tattoo was a star on an ankle. By the time he went to get his first tattoo, Kyōhei knew he wanted to become a tattoo artist and he was curious how it feels to be tattooed. He soon went to get another tattoo to gain more observation experience. That time he chose logo of his favorite band, Red Hot Chili Peppers. Nowadays Kyōhei has many tattoos, each of which has a story behind it.

"This one I got done in a tattoo convention abroad by my favorite tattoo artist. It is an eagle. Since I love his style, I only decided on the placement and approximate price and left the rest to him. It was funny, I couldn't speak English much, so I just said 'Yes, I love birds, pigeon, hawk, owl, anything is ok'. He agreed."

Hachi, female, 23 years old. Hachi works as a white-collar worker for a company in Osaka. Hachi is a rockabilly fan and she is quite heavily tattooed. She has both of her upper arms covered with tattoos, as well as her upper chest, right leg and right upper back. Most of her tattoos are animal designs. Her first tattoo was a buffalo that she has on her right upper back. She said she wanted to get tattooed because many of her favorite artists had tattoos. She claims most of her tattoos do not have any specific meanings, but she mentions she has one that means something to her, a tattoo of compass she has on her left arm.

"Now since I have this compass, I cannot get lost. I will always find my way."

Hachi says she is not done with tattoos and that she already knows what her next design will be, an elephant on her left upper back facing her buffalo. Hachi mentions it is natural to her to cover up her tattoos. She had several negative experiences with people reacting to her tattoos, however she says as long as she is nice, the other people are usually nice back.

Fumi, female, does not wish to reveal her age. Fumi lives in a small village close to Kyoto and works as a tattoo artist. Her first tattoo was an ornament of her right wrist she got about 18 years ago. She chose a wrist because she could easily cover the tattoo with watch. However, as she started to like tattoos more, she eventually become covered with them. Both of her legs and arms are heavily tattooed. Fumi likes reptiles, she had several of them as pets and she also has them tattooed on her.

"This is a ruby with a number 7 in the middle. I have to children and both were born in July. I wanted to commemorate that with this tattoo."

Fumi likes to draw a lot, which is what inspired her to become a tattoo artist. She has been tattooing for over 15 years. She says her experiences with people reacting to her tattoos are overall good, but she always advises her customers to think twice when they want to get tattooed on a body part that is unpractical to cover up, for instance fingers or neck.

Uta, male, 22 years old. Uta works as a fashion shop assistant in Kanagawa, he is also a part time musician. Uta says he wanted to get a tattoo since primary school. He was inspired by tattoos of his favorite musicians who had several geometric tattoos. Therefore, his first tattoo were three horizontal lines that go all around his upper left arm.

"My tattoo stands out, there are not many people with such tattoo. Many people told me they thought it was unique and interesting."

For his next tattoo, Uta chose three triangles connected with a circle. He said he had that one done at the time when he was feeling depressed and the tattoo represented a motivation to fight his depression. He also has a tattoo of a wolf that is half realistic style and half geometric style. Uta says he has always liked wolfs and he really liked the idea of connecting realism with geometry.

"I am a lone wolf, I am self-reliant. At the same time, the wolf symbolizes protection."

Uta says he had little struggle finding a job because of his tattoos. He was refused several times because of them. Nonetheless, he eventually got a job in a fashion boutique where he

does not have to cover up his tattoos. He says that on the contrary, he received many good comments from his customers.

Yuka, female, 31 years old. Yuka works as a manager for a warehouse in Chiba that supplies fashion boutiques. Yuka is quite heavily tattooed. She has tattoos on both of her upper arms, one on her left forearm, one on her right upper thigh, one on her left ear and a big tattoo that covers most of her back. She got her first tattoo when she was 18 years old, a dragon in traditional Japanese style. Yuka has an interest in Buddhism and esoterism, she has a big tattoo on her back depicting a nine-tailed fox, a mythological creature. She says her tattoos supplement what is lacking in her life. She has several tattoos, that have deeper meaning to her. One of such is a tattoo of nautical star, which she says symbolizes the ability to find one's way when lost. Furthermore, she also has a commemoration tattoo.

"This one is a spider with a sacred lotus. I have an interest in Buddhism and also there is a saying that spider represents the spirit of the deceased ones. I got this done around the time my grandfather and my friend died as a commemoration."

Yuka thinks 'tattoo' is a wide term and can mean anything depending on the person. For her, tattoos are meant to please the one who wears them. She points out it is important to remember that tattoo does not define a person, she does not believe in labeling.

Maruyama, male, 45 years old. Maruyama owns a restaurant in Osaka. He has 'full-sleeve' tattoos on both of his arms, most of which is done in traditional Japanese style. He got his first tattoo when he was 22 years old. He has two daughters, Tsuki and San. He chose their names as an inspiration and got a tattoo of a moon (月, *tsuki*, in Japanese) and sun (resembles English pronunciation of sun). He also has a tattoo inspired by his wife, a rabbit, as his wife was born in the year of rabbit. Maruyama also has several tattoos symbolizing his favorite animated characters.

"This is a seal of Nine-Tails fox beast from Naruto. As in the anime, it seals my negative opinions and helps me to be always nice to the customers. It helps me to control my temper [laughs]."

Maruyama also has a small tattoo of My Melo, the animated character Hello Kitty's best friend. He also points out that his tattoos make him very happy, he likes to look at himself in the mirror every morning and see how handsome he is. He also admits tattoos are a bit of addiction for him and that he cannot imagine his life without them. Maruyama usually hides his tattoos but he says he is happy to show them when his customers ask.

"My Melo always breaks the ice. Even when people are obviously afraid of me because of my tattoos, when they see My Melo, they calm down and start talking to me, saying how cute it is."

Thinfanfan, male, 23 years old. Thinfanfan works for a factory in Yokohama. Thinfanfan is quite heavily tattooed, he has six tattoos on his torso and five tattoos on his legs. His first tattoo was a tattoo of Jason Voorhees's mask, a character from a horror movie. He says he chose this design because he likes the movie character. However, the motivation was rather spontaneous. He decided to get tattooed after a night out when he was celebrating his birthday. After he arrived home, he immediately booked an appointment. He also has his nickname, Thinfanfan, tattooed as part of a tattoo that is on his stomach. Thinfanfan thinks his tattoos make him more attractive.

"This one is a Grim Reaper. It has 'sushi' written next to it, that is because I love sushi."

Thinfanfan seems to like spontaneous tattoo ideas that represent something that he likes. He has a tattoo of kamaneko character eating ramen noodles, which he says he enjoys eating very much.

Son Gong, male, 31 years old. Son Gong is a Japanese rapper based in Kyoto. His father is a respected authority figure in yakuza, thus Son Gong was in contact with tattoos since his early childhood. He first started to think about obtaining a tattoo when he was 16 years old, however, he decided to get his first tattoo only 4 years ago. Son Gong said he did not want to join yakuza, but rather wanted to live ordinary life, thus he chose placements where tattoos can be easily hidden. His first tattoo is a logo of his hip hop crew on his upper right arm. On the top of it, there is a tattoo of shining Kyoto tower, which peek is bended into snake shape.

"My life was full of zigs and zags, therefore the Kyoto tower is curved too."

The Tokyo tower symbolized Son Gong's affection for his hometown. On his left upper arm, Son Gong has a depiction of Bull Demon King, a character from Chinese novel Journey to the West, that for Son Gong symbolizes protection. On his upper chest, Son Gong has a big tattoo of Shenron dragon, a character from Japanese manga Dragon ball. According to him, the dragon can make one's wishes come true. He also has a daruma tattooed on his belly. Son Gong thinks his tattoos make him more handsome. Furthermore, he believes that tattoos can connect people. Son Gong says that although minority of tattooed people are affiliated with criminal activities, many Japanese people think individuals obtain tattoos because they want to intimidate others. On the other hand, he mentions there are more people who like tattoos as

fashion statement, which he thinks is a good change, however he highlights tattoos should not be limited to their visual aspects as there are many stories and motivations behind them.

Yuma, male, 20 years old. Yuma works for a call center in Yamato and he is a part time musician. Yuma is a rock music fan, most of his tattoos are inspired by his favorite musicians. He got his first tattoo, a tribal design of sun with a star in the middle, when he was 18 years old. The sun symbolizes positive energy and the star stands for his aspiration to foster his music ambitions. Yuma is quite heavily tattooed, he has many tattoos on both of his arms, a big lettering tattoo on his chest and a small lettering tattoo behind his left ear. All his lettering tattoos are in English. On his right arm, he has a big tattoo that says 'stay real 'and is surrounded by barbed wire. He was inspired by his favorite singer who is known for saying this phrase a lot. He added the wire because he thought it would look good. His other lettering tattoos include lyrics of his favorite song, phrases 'kind and honest', 'be strong' and 'the core side vengeance'. The last one is a name of his band.

"We were always labeled as the different ones, the dropouts, the losers. The name stands for our will to fight back, to show the people around us our worth."

For Yuma, tattoos are expressions of his individuality and character. However, he usually hides his tattoos from public, he only shows them when he is around his friends and family.

Ayano, female, does not wish to tell her age. Ayano lives in Oita, she is currently unemployed. Ayano is heavily tattooed, she has tattoos on both of her upper arms and wrists, on both of her legs, on her upper chest and all over her back. Her first tattoo was a sparrow on her chest. Ayano fell in love with the character of Jack Sparrow from the movie series Pirates of Caribbean and decided to commemorate the idea of a person she aspired to become.

"I really admire Jack Sparrow, he is strong, kind and interesting! I want to be like him!"

Ayano had an interest in tattooing for a long time. She thought she would only get this one tattoo, however she ended up collecting many more. She has several tattoos inspired by her favorite band, including a tattoo portrait of her favorite band's front-man.

"I tend to be quite negative person. Music has always cheered me up, so I wanted to have some representation of it on my skin."

Although most of Ayano's tattoos have deeper meanings behind them, she believes there is no problem with obtaining tattoos for only their visual aspect. Ayano admits at first she would

never get a tattoo without meaning, however over time she become to appreciate some artists' designs and she acknowledges she sometimes things of tattoos as of a product she wants to buy just because she likes the way it looks.

In this sub-chapter, I have introduced my interviewees and the tattooed Japanese interviewed by Japanese online magazine DOTT. People of many different professions were presented, and many distinct motivations were identified. What most of the interviewees had in common is that most of them did not choose tattoos spontaneously but rather had specific motivation for obtaining tattoos. Emotional comfort was probably the most common motivation that many interviewees mentioned about some of their tattoos. Depictions of favorite musicians, movie, anime and book characters, favorite animals or symbols of one's hometown could be understood as a way of self-comfort by having something positive and important permanently present. Tattoo as a form of memory was also mentioned by several participants, whether in form of celebrating one's children or in form of commemorating deceased family members and friends. Life aspiration was also quite common inspiration. Several male interviewees mentioned they think their tattoos make them more handsome, although it was not their main motivation to obtain tattoos. Most of the participants mentioned they hide their tattoos in public.

These findings are very similar to the ones identified by Mun et al (2012) and by Martin (2013), who questioned tattooed individuals in the USA (Mun et al, 2012) and Canada (Martin, 2013) about their motivations for obtaining tattoos, although their interviewees were not concerned about hiding their tattoos.

5.2 A Proper Japanese Citizen Does not Have Tattoos

In this subchapter I address the bad label of a tattooed outsider and identify interviewees' opinions on what seems to be causing it. In the third part of the sub-chapter I explore the demand for good adjustment in form of concealing one's tattoos. Furthermore, I discuss the motivation for concealing one's tattoos, arguing that the values of collectivism play a significant part.

5.2.1 Addressing the label

In the previous chapter I introduced two Japanese surveys that examined public perception of tattoos, which results indicated prevailing stigmatization. The most common association were 'outlaw', 'crime', 'fashion' and 'sport'. Most of my interviewees made remarks about prevailing societal bias towards tattoos. Taiki feels there is still a strong prejudice

against tattoos in Japanese society. He mentioned that at the time he established the Save Tattooing in Japan organization, he received lot of criticism and negative comments from the public. Sayaka unequivocally claimed that tattoos have bad reputation in Japan.

"I started to tattoo about 20 years ago and I don't think anything changed. In fact, I think nowadays people are even more conservative, including the young generation." – Sayaka

Taiki believes that by obtaining a tattoo one puts himself/herself in a risk that he/she will be judged badly by the society. Furthermore, he explained that once one gets tattooed, several restrictions follow, for instance not being able to enter certain facilities or having difficulties when looking for a job. Miho described the situation as a 'curse' that still surrounds the mind of Japanese society. She explained that many Japanese people are afraid of tattooed Japanese because they associate tattoos with criminals and delinquents. Additionally, according to professor Yamamoto, tattooed Japanese often face 'peer pressure' (同調圧力, *dōchō atsuryoku*) from the collectives they belong to.

"When I expose my tattoos, sometimes people look at me like I am a scumbag, maybe even a criminal. I feel I am being watched. It doesn't feel nice." - Taiki

Applying Becker's (1963) and Goffman's (1963) theories, we can argue that tattoos seem to be deemed by many as an inappropriate behavior or are associated with such type of behavior. The tattooed individuals are often labeled as outsiders. Resulting from collectivism, the outsiders are encouraged to change their behavior and values in order to conform to the actual operating rules. They are expected to submit to good adjustment (to hide their tattoos), which might be encouraged by the peer pressure.

At this point, ethical sensitivity regarding the cultural differences and tendency towards exaggeration needs to be addressed. As discussed in the previous chapter, tattoo stigmatization is not unique to Japan in any way. On the contrary, tattoos were heavily stigmatized both in Europe and Northern America in several points of history. Additionally, from interviews with tattooed people, it is evident that tattoo stigmatization sometimes still occurs both in Europe and Northern America. For instance, all the participants in Martin's (2013) study on individuals' motivations behind their tattoos indicated some form of concern for their tattoos when it came to employment. Sayaka, Miho, Taiki and professor Yamamoto addressed this issue in the interviews. They did not wish to single Japan out nor to criticize Japanese society too much, which I believe related to the fact they were talking to an outsider. Several times they highlighted that Japan is not the only country where tattoos are stigmatized and compared the situation to European countries. On the contrary, they tended to be more critical in the

interviews they conducted with Japanese journalists that I accessed and read before interviewing them (Miho, Yamamoto and Taiki). In these interviews, they more openly criticized the tattoo stigmatization and pointed out it was a problem Japanese society needs to deal with.

5.2.2 Where does the label come from?

As I discussed in the Chapter 4, it is unlikely that the current stigma that surrounds tattoos in Japan is solely a result of Japanese history. Tattoos were significantly stigmatized both in Europe and Northern America several times in the history, yet the USA, Canada and many European countries moved on from the stigma recently. According to Barron (2017), the recent acceptance of tattoos is interconnected to the point where tattooing entered mainstream popular Western culture. Professor Yamamoto explained that the way in which Japanese media treat tattoos plays a major factor in the labeling process. Most Japanese people encounter tattoos only through movies and TV series, where tattoos function as a mark of 'the bad guy'. This issue was also addressed by Miho.

"The only characters with tattoo you can see in Japanese movies and TV shows are reckless villains who fight all the time and kill people. Similarly, when somebody with tattoos gets in trouble or violates the law, there is always a close up on the tattoo in the news." - Miho

"The mass media have pushed this idea that tattoos equal gangsters, gangsters equal bad, and bad equals tattoos. Most people with tattoos are not gangsters. Having a tattoo doesn't make you dangerous. But I don't think that is something you should pay too much attention to." - Horiyoshi III

Professor Yamamoto clarifies that the absolute minority of tattooed Japanese people are criminals. Miho and Sayaka believe that the fact that most tattooed Japanese people hide their tattoos has a big impact on the prejudice. In fact, Kyōhei suggested that the tattooed Japanese should expose their tattoos occasionally in order to challenge the stigma.

"Japanese people lack good experience with tattoos. I think if every tattooed Japanese exposed their tattoos, the society would eventually understand that most of us are good people that are not to be feared. We are just like everybody else." - Kyōhei

Furthermore, Japanese media seem to be quite persistent in censoring tattoos. According to Sayaka and Miho, Japanese media do not usually show tattooed Japanese celebrities. Instead, they photoshop their tattoos or hide them behind cloths or make-up. In fact, Miho explained that after one TV channel lifted the rules and started to show tattooed celebrities, the channel received lot of negative criticism from the public, which led the headquarters to withdraw the

policy. She said nowadays it is very rare to see a tattooed person on TV or any other Japanese media, that is unless they are charged with criminal activities. According to Sayaka and Miho, even tattooed musicians must hide their tattoos when they perform on TV. Similarly, tattoos are often not tolerated in the advertisement industry.

"There is this Japanese football player who is very famous in Japan. Everyone knows he has tattoos. Once he did a commercial for one Japanese company, the posters were everywhere. But they erased his tattoos. I was very shocked, I didn't understand it. Why to choose a tattooed celebrity and photoshop his tattoos? They could have chosen somebody else. Instead, they stripped him of his personality. I think it was quite rude." - Miho

Moreover, Miho further stated that there is a significant lack of knowledge about tattoos among Japanese people. For instance, she claims many people do not like tattoos because they think they are unhygienic. Furthermore, since there are no official rules restricting tattooing practices, some might believe it is risky procedure which only simple-minded individuals or criminals would undergo.

"Most of the Japanese people never visited a tattoo studio, they don't know about the level of hygiene and the actual conditions. They only hear the scandalous news about an unprofessional tattooists who did something wrong."

Miho believes it is necessary to establish mandatory rules and license system for tattoo artists. She explains that so far anyone can establish a tattoo business, no matter what experience and skill they have. She hopes official guidance and license system would also help to set up better image for tattoos among Japanese society.

Tattoos have entered Western mainstream popular culture, which has a major positive impact on tattoo acceptance in the contemporary Western societies (Baron, 2017). In Japan, on the other hand, tattoos remain hidden on the periphery of the society. Most of the non-tattooed Japanese encounter tattoos only through Japanese media that depicts tattoos in a negative light. The majority of tattooed Japanese choose to hide their tattoos. Moreover, tattoos continue to be censored from mainstream Japanese media, including advertisement industry. Furthermore, majority of Japanese citizens are unfamiliar with the level of hygiene and professionality of tattoo studios that are based in Japan. Additionally, tattooing in Japan lacks formal guidelines and legal restrictions, which can also be understood as an element that undermines its reputation.

5.2.3 "In Japan, Hiding Tattoos Is Considered Good Manner"

In an environment where tattoos are associated with deviant behavior, hiding tattoos is a self-evident option how to control the information about stigmatized identity. According to Sayaka, it is better to hide one's tattoos because many Japanese people associate them with criminals and outlaws. She hides her tattoos under cloth even during warm summers.

"When you walk outside in summer, you don't usually meet people with tattoos, because most of us, including myself, prefer to hide them. So, it looks like nobody is tattooed in Japan, although that is not true."

Miho mentioned the same issue. She said there are tattooed Japanese, however absolute majority of them hide their tattoos, because that is the manner in Japan. Horiyoshi III, on the other hand, claims, that there is an apparent change compared to the past. He said that in the past, everyone hid their tattoos, and nobody would have a tattoo on a body part where it could be seen. He feels that nowadays, people care less about hiding their tattoos.

Ayano mentioned that at the time she was thinking about her first tattoo, she consulted her employer about it. She was told in case she gets a tattoo on visible body part she will be immediately fired, therefore Ayano chose a placement where the tattoo would be hidden behind the cloths. She said she does not regret getting tattoos, although she is disappointed when people turn her down only because she is tattooed.

"Sometimes when I admit I have tattoos people stop talking to me."

Thinfanfan mentioned he does not want to get tattoos on visible body parts, because of the prejudice in his hometown, which he still occasionally visits. Furthermore, he likes to participate in his hometown's street celebrations, where, as he explains, is an unspoken rule about hiding tattoos.

"My hometown is very small, and I don't want people to think badly of me. By hiding my tattoos, I am able to enjoy the two cultures I really like."

On the other hand, Yuma said he sometimes hides his tattoos and sometimes he does not, depending on his mood. The only exception is his workplace where he has to hide his tattoos. In his experience, some people accept his tattoos, and some do not.

"Sometimes strangers approach me and lecture me on my bad decision, saying I will regret my tattoos in the future. But I am not bothered by it."

Fumi said she does not experience problems with her tattoos, nonetheless she admits she does not expose her tattoos outside her tattoo studio, so except for her family and her close friends, nobody knows she has them.

"I usually cover my tattoos because when I don't, some people express discomfort."

Yuka also mentioned she has rather positive experience with people reacting to her tattoos. In fact, Yuka said she does not have to cover up her tattoos in her job (manager of a warehouse suppling fashion boutiques). She does not usually hide her tattoos, only for ceremonial occasions. Yuka thinks her behavior should be more important than her appearance.

"In my work, I am a manager and sometimes I instruct new employees. I have many experiences with people approaching me several months later saying they were afraid of me because of my tattoos and that they are very surprised how easygoing and nice I am."

Based on the interviewees experiences, we can assume that hiding tattoos is expected by most of the Japanese society. However, according to Yuka and Yuma, not everyone is so judgmental. Furthermore, as suggested by Horiyoshi III and several other interviewees, there are some tattooed Japanese that do not want to hide their tattoos. For instance, Fumi mentioned she had several clients that wished to be tattooed on visible body parts. Yuka refuses to hide her tattoos except for special family occasions. Nonetheless, the demand for good adjustment in form of hiding one's tattoos is evident. Many interviewees mentioned they are judged badly once they reveal their tattoos. For this reason, many participants choose to hide their label. At the same time, many of them seem to be accepting of it. Most of them were aware of the stigma before they got tattooed and although they do express a wish for better treatment, they do not seem to have the need to fight for their rights. I think this fact raises interesting questions. Why do they not advocate for their rights? Why do they not clear their names? Why do they choose to hide?

This distinction could be understood within the collectivism-individualism dichotomy. We could assume that the individuals who chose not to hide their tattoos lean more towards individualism and do not agree with the values that are required by collectivism. The findings of Okabayashi et al (2017), who claimed the demand for 'public self-consciousness' constitutes one of the reasons why Japanese society fears the tattooed Japanese, support this hypothesis. The 'public self-consciousness' represents a social expectation of a collective and those who do not obey it are thus labeled as outsiders. Although the individualism-collectivism dichotomy does not explain why some individuals are different, it does explain why they are outcasted for being different. Additionally, it could be another reason why some individuals submit to the label. The peer pressure is presumably too powerful to go against it. Therefore, the individual who likes something that is not approved by the majority choses to do it in secret. Additionally, concealing tattoos might be acknowledged as a part of Japanese tattoo culture and its tradition.

For this reason, some tattooed individuals might submit to the demand for 'normalcy', understanding it as their duty they naturally submiss to. Furthermore, the preference to hide or show one's tattoos is related to one's personality and personal boundaries. In other words, not every tattooed person wants to display his/her tattoos as he/she might perceive it too personal level of information.

"I think it is better to stay hidden. I don't want to be famous and I don't want tattooing to become more popular. I want to enjoy it on my own, in secret. I have my tattoos for myself, I don't need to show them to anyone." – Sayaka

5.3 Burden of the Bad Label: The Divided World

The demand for concealing tattoos is not the only burden the tattooed Japanese face. Once obtaining a tattoo, certain level of exclusion follows. In Japan, tattooed individuals are often restricted from entering facilities where skin is being exposed, especially gyms, swimming pools, beaches, spas and public bath-houses. Sayaka added that some tattooed Japanese experienced expulsion from amusement parks. According to Miho, in the past the ban started as a way of disabling gangsters to enter the facilities, however it the present, the reason is different. The ban is often a result of customer's requests or is carried out based on municipal and police instructions. Miho started an online project where she publishes facilities that allow tattooed customers. In December 2018, she listed over 1 000 facilities. Taiki mentioned that as a result of the upcoming Rugby World Cup and Olympic and Paralympic Games that will take place in Japan in 2019 and 2020, the number of facilities that allow tattooed customers is slowly growing. Professor Yamamoto participated in academic symposium that addressed this issue. She said it was first such academic symposium ever that took place in Japan. Slight shift towards tattoo acceptance can be detected in this sense, however, there still seems to be place for improvement.

Some participants believe the issue of forbidding tattooed individuals to enter certain facilities might change due to the upcoming Olympic and Paralympic Games that will take part in Tokyo in 2020, nonetheless majority of the interviewees remain rather skeptical. Sayaka and professor Yamamoto believe it is more likely that an exception for tourists will be made, leaving the tattooed Japanese restrained.

"I think Japan should change its attitudes towards tattooing, otherwise people wouldn't want to come here. There will be many foreigners with tattoos during the Olympics. If they can't visit pools or spas, it'll be discrimination. It would be dangerous for Japan to have such discrimination." – Horiyoshi III

Tattooed Japanese also face constraints when looking for a job. According to Miho, there are occupations where tattoos are not accepted, especially in the service sector and occupations that require being in contact with the customers. Furthermore, civil service and big companies often do not accept tattooed employees. Tattoos might be tolerated in administrative positions in case the employee is willing to conceal them. Nonetheless, according to Sayaka there are several workplaces when employees' tattoos might be tolerated even in its non-hidden form, for instance bars, call centers or IT positions, although the conditions vary.

Similarly, the workplace of tattoo artists themselves continues to be divided. According to Taiki, there are tattoo artists who wish to establish 'official' studio but also those who prefer to tattoo at their homes. Taiki explained that although obtaining a permit for official tattoo studio had become a bit easier recently, it is still problematic. He mentioned many tattoo artists might not find an owner who will agree to rent their property for such purpose, thus many tattooists have no choice but to establish their business in their own homes. Moreover, some tattoo artists prefer to hide. According to Sayaka, establishing a visible tattoo studio can be risky. Sayaka claims that even after the Osaka trial in 2018, tattooing is still in a grey zone, thus it is safer to stay hidden.

According to Goffman (1963), the individuals that have been labeled as the outsiders live in a divided world that consist of three types of places based on the level of exclusion and inclusion: forbidden places, civil places and back places. Tattooed Japanese are restricted from entering public facilities where a skin is being exposed. The ban is often a result of customers' demands and local restrains form the municipal office and/or police department. These facilities represent forbidden places from where the labeled outsider will be expulsed once exposed. The workplace ranges through all the three categories, as there are both positions where tattoos are not allowed and positions where even uncovered tattoos are accepted. Most of the public places could be probably understood as civil place, since the tattooed individuals are usually, however not always, tolerated there. For instance, the street festivals often allow tattooed participants, although there are exceptions, as in the example mentioned by Thinfanfan. Similarly, absolute majority of the enterprises and venues do not exclude tattooed customers. At the same time, however, majority of the tattooed individuals choose to hide their tattoos in such places. Sayaka pointed out that she received better service when she hid her tattoos. There are probably not that many back places, when the tattooed individuals can expose their tattoos freely without the likelihood of being treated badly. The fact that there are forbidden and civil places where the tattooed individual will not be allowed or accepted confirms the existence of stigma labelling.

As long as tattooed Japanese are prohibited from exposing their tattoos in public spaces, we can assume rather strong prejudice prevails.

5.4 Division around Stigma Acceptance and Fight for Rights

Polarized attitudes regarding the self-demarcation towards the societal stigma can be found among Japanese tattoo artists. Yamada (2009) argued, that due to globalization tensions and contradictions emerge between Japanese traditions and new values that have been adopted by some Japanese tattoo artists from the Western culture. I detected several patterns in my findings that confirm Yamada's argument. In this analysis I identify two types of attitudes among Japanese tattoo artists, the 'traditionalists' and the 'modernists'. Apart from societal and culture values and believes, the two groups are usually divided in their opinions on Taiki's decision to go to trial as a tattoo artist against Japanese police in 2015 and in his effort to establish official guidelines and rules by the Japanese Tattooist Association.

The traditionalists are often represented by the older generation of Japanese tattoo artists who usually specialize in the traditional Japanese style tattooing. More importantly, the traditionalists seem to put more emphasis on what they call 'old Japanese values', which include hierarchy, respect towards the older and more experienced masters and general humility. The traditionalists usually prefer to conceal their tattoos and they do not seem to wish for any change. They prefer to hide in the 'grey zone'. Some of them belief that compared to the other countries and regions, Japanese tattooing has a unique history because of its associations with criminals and therefore must be handled differently even in the present. Some traditionalists further claim that Japanese tattoo culture could not have survived with its level of skill if it was not for Japanese organized crime whose members were prominent clients of some tattoo artists, therefore certain humility and respect towards them is in order. This proposition refers to the period between 1872 and 1948, when tattooing was legally prohibited by Japanese law.

"I don't think we should necessarily be thankful to yakuza in particular. We should be thankful to those who love tattoos." – Horiyoshi III

The modernists, on the other hand, are often represented by the young generation of Japanese tattoo artists who want tattooing to be legally recognized as a legitimate profession. They are probably a bit more individualistic then the traditionalists and they are more open to fight for their rights. Many of the modernists do not like hiding, they desire official workplace where they can openly practice tattooing. Furthermore, they aspire to establish official guidelines, rules and license system for tattoo artists, which the traditionalists often oppose.

According to professor Yamamoto, this issue became a turning point among Japanese tattoo artists. Moreover, as the younger generation of Japanese tattoo artists often specialize in modern style tattoos, they refuse any kind of gratitude and/or debt towards the Japanese organized crime. The modernists separate themselves from the old Japanese tattooing culture and its values. They wish to establish modern style business with the recognition compared to the one of their colleagues in the West.

"I just don't know why tattooists should be indebted to gangsters for the industry's survival. I don't belong to that generation." - Taiki

Apart from different values, approaches and goals, the division becomes more apparent when it comes to the question of fighting the legal prosecution. After being charged for practicing tattooing without medical license, Taiki decided to go to trial in 2015. He was found guilty by the Osaka District Court in 2017. After appealing the verdict, he was found innocent by the Osaka High Court in 2018. The prosecution has objected the verdict, therefore the whole matter will proceed to the Supreme Court of Japan. The final appeal will have significant impact on the future of Japanese tattoo artists. While some tattoo artists agree that Taiki's action is worth the risk, others disagree. Some tattoo artists think that while it is important to fight for tattoo recognition and acceptance, there is a limit to what they can do. They think that the police are too powerful, and it is too risky to go against them. The final appeal of the Supreme Court of Japan will have major effect on every tattoo artist in Japan. Therefore, some believe it is too big of a risk for one person to put everyone else through. Moreover, according to Sayaka, some tattoo artists believe it is embarrassing to bring the issue of legitimacy of Japanese tattoo artists across the world, arguing that since the issue is happening in Japan, it should stay within the country. This claim referrers to the international attention the Osaka case has been receiving so far.

The division among Japanese tattoo artists can be applied to tattooed Japanese as well, especially regarding the questions of concealing one's tattoos, acceptance of the outsider label and willingness to submit to the demand for good adjustment. This argument would suggest that those who prefer the old Japanese tattoo culture accept the submission to the bad label because it is a part of the old tattoo culture itself.

5.5 Future Prospects

This sub-chapter presents interviewees' opinions on the possibility of overcoming the tattoo stigma in near future. Two upcoming major sport events, Rugby World Cup (2019) and Olympic and Paralympic Games (2020), represent probably the biggest hope. Furthermore, the verdict of Osaka Supreme Court will certainly play a significant role. In case Taiki is found innocent, Japanese tattoo artists would be able to stop hiding and new discussions regarding tattoos acceptance might emerge. On the other hand, in case he is found guilty, the tattoo artists will have to quit their jobs or continue in secret. Guilty verdict would probably also strengthen the stigma and the number of facilities forbidding tattooed customers to enter might increase.

According to professor Yamamoto, Japanese people are not very politically active. Many tattooed Japanese are satisfied with having tattoo in secret and they do not have the will to fight for their rights. She also pointed out that there is quite strong rivalry among Japanese tattoo artists, not only between the traditionalists and modernists but also within their own fractions. Professor Yamamoto thinks it is hard to make a change in such conditions. She compared the situation in her home country with the one in Taiwan, highlighting that tattooed Taiwanese people are more active and successful in fighting for their rights. She pointed out Taiki is very brave, considering the fact that conviction rate is very high in Japan. According to professor Yamamoto, Japanese government and police department do not want the Osaka case to be successful, as they would 'lose the face'.

Sayaka thinks tattoos will not be accepted by majority of Japanese society any time soon. She feels younger generation is quite conservative and will not be any different. Sayaka is also skeptical about future international tattoo conventions in Japan. She said unless the law will change, nothing will, and she does not believe the law will be changed any time soon. As for the possible impact of the Olympic and Paralympic Games in the 2020, Sayaka does not suspect Japanese society will change their minds because of tattooed foreigners. Instead, Sayaka is convinced Japanese society will not mind tattooed foreigners, because they are often treated differently than natives, and once the Olympic and Paralympic Games will be over, the situation will return to the previous stage.

Miho is a bit more optimistic. According to her, tourism in Japan has increased in last five years, which she believes had a certain effect on tattoo acceptance in Japan. Japanese tourism office has been appealing for lifting the bans that forbid tattooed customers to enter certain facilities. The facilities that have lifted the bans so far allow everyone with tattoos, not only foreigners. On the other hand, she admits number of Japanese people who accept tattooed foreigners but continue to denounce tattooed Japanese has increased. However, Miho does not

think that public opinion on tattoos will change in near future. She is convinced the final appeal of Supreme Court of Japan will have the biggest influence. Additionally, Miho believes that as long as most of the Japanese society encounters tattoos only via Japanese media that stigmatize tattoos, nothing will change. To overcome the bad label, it is necessary to encounter tattoos in various situations to realize most of the tattooed Japanese are ordinary people.

For Taiki, the Osaka case represents a human right issue. His lawyer said she was certain the matter would proceed to the Supreme Court of Japan, but she believes it is a case worth fighting for, as it represents social justice issue. Taiki mentioned when he started the Save Tattooing in Japan organization, he received lot of negative comments from the Japanese public, however as he kept going, his confidence grew. He believes he can win.

"It is fact that I tattooed my customers. However, I cannot understand why my action is considered a crime. Unless I fight this case, my occupation will cease to exist." - Taiki

Based on the interviewees' opinions, it seems a shift towards acceptance of tattooed Japanese remain unlikely in near future. There are many 'obstacles' that need to be overcome, most of which is hard to change. As long as Japanese media keep censoring ordinary tattooed people and highlighting tattooed criminals, a change in public opinion seems unrealistic. The most important factor that will undoubtedly influence the prevailing tattoo stigma is the final appeal of the Osaka case that remains to be decided by the Supreme Court of Japan.

6. CONCLUSION

Japanese tattoo culture has changed significantly over the past 30 years. The new generation of Japanese tattoo artists focusing on modern style tattoos have emerged. Many tattooed Japanese chose modern style tattoos over the ones in traditional Japanese style, similarly to tattoo customers around the world. People across several generations obtain tattoos and their motivations and stories behind their tattoos vary. Absolute majority of the interviewees chose their tattoos for a specific reason or because they admired the tattoo artist's work and/or style. Inspirations behind the interviewees' tattoos included themes of life aspiration, protection, commemoration and emotional comfort in form of having something positive and important permanently present. Two of the interviewees admitted they chose some of their tattoos solely because of its visual affect. These findings are very similar to the ones identified by Mun et al (2012) and by Martin (2013), who questioned tattooed individuals in the USA (Mun et al, 2012) and Canada (Martin, 2013) about their motivations for obtaining tattoos.

It is evident that tattoos are surrounded with a certain level of stigma in Japan. Tattooed individuals are often labeled as outsiders. Resulting from collectivism, the outsiders are encouraged to change their behavior and values in order to conform to the actual operating rules. They are expected to submit to good adjustment, that is to hide their tattoos, which is sometimes encouraged by peer pressure from the collective(s) the individual belongs to. Furthermore, the outsiders are prohibited from entering certain facilities and their options of employment are limited. Nonetheless, many of the outsiders submit to their label and conceal their tattoos. Majority of the participants I examined in this study accept the stigma and do not have the need to fight for their rights. This issue is presumably connected to the values and believes of collectivism, where norms and duties imposed by the collective(s) are more important than respect for individual rights.

There are polarized attitudes regarding the self-demarcation towards the societal stigma among Japanese tattoo artists. The traditionalists, who are usually represented by the old generation of Japanese tattoo artists, wish to stay hidden. They do not want tattooing to be officially recognized as a legitimate profession, or rather they are not willing to fight for their rights. Similarly, they do not support efforts to create official rules, guidelines and license system for tattooing. On the contrary, the modernists, who are often represented by the young generation of Japanese tattoo artists, want tattooing to be legally recognized and advocate for official rules. The modernists do not want to hide, they desire legitimate workplace. The division among Japanese tattoo artists can also be applied to tattooed Japanese, especially

regarding the questions of concealing one's tattoos, acceptance of the outsider label and willingness to submit to the demand for good adjustment.

Many Japanese seem to think that the history of Japanese tattoo culture is unique and significantly different from the history of other countries' tattoo cultures because of the stigmatization and association with criminals. Although the historical aspects play a certain part in the current situation, it is not the major factor in case of Japan. Instead, the way how Japanese mass media portray tattoos accounts for a prominent aspect. In Japanese cinematography, tattoos symbolize a visual signifier of villains. Additionally, Japanese media do not issue tattooed celebrities without concealing their stigmatized marks first. Similarly, majority of tattooed Japanese hide their tattoos under cloths. Tattoos of the ordinary people remain hidden, leaving the stigmatized image of Japanese cinematography as the only narrative. Furthermore, due to its current legal conditions, which put tattooing into legal grey zone, tattoos remain understood as a deviant behavior by many untattooed Japanese people.

According to the interviewees, the two major international sport events that will take place in Japan, the Rugby World Cup in 2019 and the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2020, might come to the aid of overcoming the tattoo stigmatization. Nonetheless, the interviewees had different opinions on the level of impact these events might have. Furthermore, result of the Osaka case, which proceeds to the Supreme Court of Japan, will undoubtedly have the most significant influence on public opinion. In case of guilty verdict, tattooing could be practiced only by medical doctors and the present-day tattoo artists would have to quit or illegally continue in secret. Additionally, guilty verdict would probably also strengthen the tattoo stigma and the number of facilities forbidding tattooed customers to enter might increase. On the other hand, in case the prosecution loses, tattooing would be legally recognized as a lawful profession, which might open possibility for new discussions. Nonetheless, as long as Japanese mass media continue to stigmatize tattoos, relevant change towards tattoo acceptance and de-stigmatization persist unlikely.

The topic of this thesis impinges on ethical sensitivity, as it deals with social justice issues of different culture with different societal and cultural values and beliefs. This thesis does not aim to judge nor criticize any values or beliefs. Furthermore, it is important to bear in mind the study is written from a perspective of a young female student who was risen in society that highlights individualism. In the need for normalcy, the actual operating rules violate tattooed individuals' freedom to express themselves freely. On the other hand, due to the significant stigmatization and association with criminals, it is natural that the ordinary Japanese, whose

only encounter with tattoos via Japanese media, continue to be scarred of tattoos and are not comfortable around tattooed Japanese.

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