

✓

**AN INTERPRETATIVE ACCOUNT OF WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE OF
BODY PIERCING**

by

Ashmin Devikosha Singh

**submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts (Research Psychology) in the Department of
Psychology, in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Durban-
Westville.**

Supervisor: Dr. Inge Petersen

Date Submitted: SEPTEMBER 2002

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	i
ABSTRACT	ii
 CHAPTER ONE :	
1. Introduction	1
1.1. Overview of Chapters	3
 CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.1. Introduction	5
2.2. Historical Background	6
2.3. Contemporary Overviews	8
2.4. Modernity versus Postmodernity	10
2.5. Social Constructionism and Identity.....	11
2.6. Body Image	13
2.7. Psychoanalysis and Sexuality	16
2.7.1. Sado-Masochism	17
2.7.2. Cathartic Pain	19
2.7.3. Aggression	20
2.8. Reclamation of the Abused Body	21
2.9. Difference and Refusal	23

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Aim and Objectives	25
3.2. Participants	25
3.2.1. Consent	26
3.2.2. Brief Overview of Participants.....	26
3.3. Data Collection	29
3.3.1. The Interviews	29
3.4. Data Analysis	30
3.4.1. Hermeneutic Phenomenology.....	33
3.4.1.1. Distanciation and Appropriation.....	38
3.5. Theoretical framework informing interpretation.....	41

CHAPTER FOUR: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK - FEMINIST PSYCHOANALYSIS

4.1. Introduction	43
4.2. Psychoanalysis and Identity	45
4.3. Critical Approach	48

CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1. Introduction	57
5.2. Defence(s) Against Loss	58
5.2.1. Introjection	63
5.2.2. Within Without	64

5.2.3. Reifying Loss	67
5.2.4. Repetition	74
5.2.5. The Gaze	76
5.3. (I)dentify	78
5.3.1. Refusal and Defiance: Rebellion Against (I)dentify...	87
5.3.2. Individuation and Difference	89
5.3.3. Surfaces	92
5.3.4. Body Image	94
5.4. Piercings and Femininity	97
5.4.1. Aesthetic Appeal	99
5.4.2. Rebellion Against Femininity.....	101
5.5. Control	105
5.5.1. Intrinsic Pain and Masochism: The Emotional Abstract	107
5.5.2. Reclamation of the Body	110
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION	113
CHAPTER SEVEN: LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.....	115
REFERENCES	121
APPENDIX	128

Acknowledgement(s)

I would like to thank:

my supervisor, Inge Petersen, for her continuous guidance, and, for bringing her gravitational force to this study;

the National Research Foundation (NRF), for funding this research;

my participants. Without them, this research would not have been possible;

my parents, Ashnee and Neeshan Singh, for their unerring support and continuous encouragement;

my sister, Neeshi, for her invaluable assistance and 'brother', Ren, for his support;

my brother, Ravi, and family, for their belief in me, and, teaching me that
Absence(s) and distance do not remove presence(s) and closeness;

my friend, Emma Caruth, for her moral support and positive criticism of my
work;

and finally, 'God', my illuminative source (/force) of inspiration, my
(in)visible guiding 'spirit', and for my transcendental metamorphosis.

Abstract

The spate of people with body piercings has drastically increased, yet research on this issue has been frugal. This research was undertaken to develop an understanding of the meanings that multiple body piercings has for women, specifically in terms of their experiences of piercing. Moreover, an emphasis was placed on attaining the participants' experiences of their (i)dentit(y)ies, and body image in terms of their piercings. A hermeneutic phenomenology methodology was used to develop this understanding premised upon the participants' experiences of multiple body piercings. The sample consisted of six women participants. Their ages ranged from twenty-one to twenty-eight. Interviews conducted, were transcribed verbatim. The interpretation of the data, was informed by a feminist psychoanalytic perspective. There were four themes overall. The over-arching theme that subsequently emerged, was that of Defence(s) against Loss, the second theme was that of (I)dentit(y), the third was Piercings and Femininity, and finally, the fourth theme was that of Control. Each of the themes were further broken down into significant sub-themes.

Chapter One

Introduction

"Appearances are a glimpse of the obscure "

Anaxagoras of Clazomenak (c. 500 - 428 B C E)

'As we advance ever so rapidly in this twenty first century , we are suffused with(in) a plethora of images. In an increasingly technology era, thousands of pixels canvas to form a homologous image. Human identity is exceedingly thrown into disarray as it dissipates into the vortex of the screen. The corporeal body becomes one of the images evidential of the physical, tangible material human existence. Whilst some view conformity as an adaptation to the 'norm', 'others' prefer to assert their individuality on the one 'thing' that they truly 'possess', their body. To advance, or to regress, under the aegis of a womb - like existence. '

There has been a proliferation in the occurrence of multiple body piercings. Whilst seemingly appearing to be a 'modern trend', body piercing is actually a resurgence of ancient practices. The practice of body piercing dates back thousands of years, performed ritualistically in 'tribal days'. It was English Christianity that indoctrinated the use of clothing on the human body, for 'man' who 'came into' this world nude, had sinned. Also, because of 'sins that Adam' had done, 'we' are not allowed to deviate from the appearance that 'God' has given us. With the spread of Christianity into mainstream, popular culture, there was large - scale suppression of 'other' (pagan) beliefs as Christian attempted to

bring 'civility' to them. Thus any form of body modification was 'taken' to be 'acts of devil worshippers' (Shakoor, 1998).

Body piercing saw a resurgence in the late 1970's and 1980's with the rise of the 'punk movement'. This sub - culture grew in popularity, as it became a form of overt expression, against the dominant political ideologies of the time. The punk movement began with the British working class, who felt oppressed by rigid class structures and a society that denigrated their self - worth. Appearance then became symbolic of the rejection against an authoritative culture, and in so doing, rebelling against the 'norms' which a 'tainted society' dictates. Body piercing was a subversive act, done intentionally to evoke shock and offend 'civilised' society (Shakoor, 1998).

More recently, there has been a revival in body piercing. However, as body piercing gained popularity in the 'west', a renewed interest was transmitted to South africa as well. Typically, body piercing today, is associated with aesthetic expressions of a sub - culture, a form of rebellion, an assertion of individuality in a conformist world. Given our country's violent history, and more recent emancipation, issues revolving around identity come to the fore. Although, body piercing is becoming exceedingly more accepted, the practice of piercing necessitates that the 'acceptable is unacceptable'(as piercing is definitive of that which is non-conformist), the practice of piercing, then become even more radical and 'obscure'.

This research was undertaken in an attempt to understand the meaning of the eruption of metal on flesh. The aim of this research was to understand body piercing and the experience of 'being pierced' for women, more specifically in terms of identity and body image. Reality is a perceived reality. Perceptions provide the basis upon which we begin to construct the 'world' and understand our experiences. In pursuit of this aim, a qualitative investigation using a hermeneutical phenomenological approach was used. The theoretical framework that was used to inform the interpretation was a feminist interpretation of psychoanalysis.

Overview of Chapters

The second chapter focuses on the literature relating to body piercing. This chapter includes : a historical background; a contemporary overview; modernity versus postmodernity; social constructionism and identity; body image; psychoanalysis and sexuality; sado-masochism; cathartic pain; aggression; reclamation of the abused body; and difference and refusal.

Chapter three elaborates the methodological analysis, where hermeneutical phenomenology was used. 'Understanding of the meaning(s)' that body piercing has for women, is emphasised in the hermeneutic approach, whilst the phenomenological aspect of the approach emphasises and describes the 'lived experience(s)' of the participants.

The fourth chapter expands upon the theoretical framework: a feminist interpretation

of psychoanalysis which informed the interpretation of the emergent data. Although psychoanalysis has been/ is enshrouded in controversy, with regard to its (mis)recognition of (wo)men, feminist psychoanalysis necessitate a re - reading of psychoanalysis. Also, according to Lacan, the 'sign' is arbitrary, and hence, this discloses its 'bogusness'. (Minsky, 1996) In other words, the vituperation of (wo)men is predicated upon 'signs' that are socially sanctioned.

Chapter five brings to fore the practical aspect of this research. This chapter entails the interpretation and discussion. Excerpts from the transcripts metamorphosize theory into a practical realm, where theory transcendently explodes into 'life'. The interpretation is divided into themes and subthemes that have arisen from the transcripts, and further elaborated by relevant theoretical concepts.

The subsequent chapter, chapter six, is the conclusion. Included herein, are the limitations that were experienced, as well as the resultant recommendations emanating from this study. There is a brief synopsis of the meaning(s) that the participants attached to their piercings. Also, there is a summary of the main themes and sub-themes that emerged.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

"Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind."

- Immanuel Kant (1724 - 1804).

(2.1) Introduction

According to Douglas (1970), "the social body constrains the way the physical body is perceived. The physical experience of the body is always modified by the social categories through which it is known, sustains a particular view of society. There is a continual exchange of information between the two kinds of bodily experience so that each reinforces the experience of the other " (p.93). In other words, for Douglas, that which is acceptable for the individual in relation to her or his body, is mediated by and through societal constructs of the 'body'.

Recently, there has been a vast increase in the number of individuals, more specifically for this research purpose, there has been a vast increase in the number of women, who have obtained multiple body piercings. This occurrence has arisen both globally, and, more recently, locally as well. In light of this fairly new development, there has been a paucity of research conducted with regard to an understanding of body piercing issues, as well as an understanding based upon the experiences of body piercing.

For some 'piercees', piercing their body serves as a form of rebellion either against their parents, authority figures, or, on a broader scale, against societal conventions.

According to Ron Athey, a performance artist who has become a central figure on the West Coast of the United States, body decoration is symbolic of the 'fuck – you' aspect (Neufield, 1997). Whilst others who have piercings view it as a form of self-expression, for some, the piercing is a personal statement. According to the owner of a body piercing studio, " it is experimentation with the one thing you truly own; your body. It is a way of saying we don't want to be like everybody else on this planet " (Thomas, 1998, p.2). In other words, many are trying to affirm their sense of identity their personal individuality, and avoiding conforming to society's norms (Higgins. 1996).

(2.2) Historical Background

Body piercing is thought to have taken place since humans have been painting on cave walls. For 'primitives' (according to western society), body piercing was used as an art form. In every civilization from the grandeur of Egypt to the Aboriginal tribes of New Zealand, piercing has been a popular form of adornment. In ancient times, a navel ring worn along the banks of the Nile, suggested royalty, and women of Hindu and Muslim faith, where as they have for centuries, nose rings to signify their religious devotion (Neufield, 1997). "East Indian women pierce their noses when they become engaged. Aboriginal tribes pierced their bodies with sticks. Native Americans taking part in powerful sundances (O-Kee-Paa) were tethered to strings or ropes attached to a deep piercing behind each nipple and then inserting hooks into the piercings in their skin, the initiate was spun around in circles until he lost consciousness. This ritual is performed every year by the Cheyenne, and, allows a renewal and revitalization of culture " (Thomas, 1998, p.3). The significance of these rituals were premised upon the physical

scarring of the people, but more importantly, was the spiritual transcendence of the pierced people, where the ceremony was reified via the piercing ceremony. The 'voz' (body modification magazine), cited in Shakoor (1998), say that " The significance of this 'torture' is that symbolic death and rebirth accordingly have to be experienced intensely, both in mind and body, in terms of physical suffering " (p.4). The significance that piercings serve according to this ritual can be likened to the significance that the piercings appear to have for people who have experienced abuse. This will be further elaborated in the section on *Cathartic Pain*.

There were instances where the piercings were used in 'praise of a God ' (Brain, 1979, p.166). Piercings were also used in ritual ceremonies to understand a God. They served as a form of supernatural protection to protect the soul by warding off evil spirits and also, "in Indian religious thought a sense of bodily aesthetics was linked to an inner harmony with the soul" (Brain, 1979, p.9).

Victorian Englishwomen (particularly aristocracy), drove rings through their nipples, which they embellished with sparkling jewels (Neufield, 1997). According to Turner (1996), marriage was the only legitimate sexual outlet for these women, but was usually delayed according to usual European marriage traditions. Perhaps then, these piercings may be seen as a legitimate way in which these women could 'obtain pleasure'.

Within some cultures such as the Maori, body piercing serves as a rite of passage. The gradual process of development is celebrated with body piercing. The rite of passage,

then, marks the transitional development from childhood into adulthood. As the child develops, every status change is marked by a change in body adornment. "At weaning, when they walk, and talk and when they are old enough . . . their bodies are ritually marked " (Brain, 1979, p.179). According to Doctor Carlos Wartor (cited in Shared Visions Library, 1996), anthropological studies that he had done of people that he knew, that experienced adolescent initiations "experienced the death of the child within themselves in order to precipitate the birth of the adult " (p.2).

Fisher cited in Shakoor (1998), discusses African practices which include the Lobi women in Ghana and the Ivory Coast and the Kirdi of Cameroon who wear lip plugs as protective devices to ward off evil spirits from entering their mouths. A mother pierces a child's lip with a thorn. The women of Chad and Sudan wear lip plates to resemble the spoonbill or broadbill, considered to be sacred amongst the people. Secondly, it was thought to ward off slave traders. These African piercings assert human will over nature, also providing supernatural protection. Dogon women have brass rings pierced through their lips, where the mouth was thought to be representative of the weaving loom where language originated from. Dogon men regard a woman without this bronze lip and nose rings as naked and "for a woman to be naked is to be speechless " (Shakoor, 1998, p.4).

(2.3) Contemporary Overviews

According to Leo (1995), "Piercing is part of the broader 'body modification'

movement. It's a sign of the times (the emergence of the modern self) that the more bizarre the expressions of this movement keep pushing into mainstream " (p.3). For Turner (1994), "The emergence of the modern self is closely related to the development of consumerism and consumption" (p.7). According to Schilder, in Turner (1996), "the notion of the self in consumer society ought to be seen in terms of body image that plays the distinctive role of understanding and evaluation of the self within the public arena" (p.7). Turner goes on to say that "it is typically the body surfaces which are the foci of the social stigmatization...the modern consuming self is a representational being" (p.7). Because the body represents the external surface of an individual in society, society prescribes or dictates what this surface should be like. According to Jenkins (1996), "Public image may become self - image, our own sense of humanity is a hostage to the categorizing judgement of others " (p.57).

In contemporary western society, body piercing serves as a form of self-expression for some. Higgins (1996) describes Jane Wildon, 28, who had her navel pierced, who said it was a way to express herself. For her it was just her. According to Stam (1998), "If embodiment is a condition for expression, and if displays are the medium by which expression is achieved, then people's actions signify something not only beyond the mundane present, but also about it. The key point is that expressive displays produce a world of virtual powers on which the actors appear to draw, and which their actions embody. What is expressed is not intrinsic to individuals, but virtual forms which displays make possible" (p.24). If one had to deconstruct people's actions, their expressions then, represent the manner in which our bodies symbolize certain ways of

being, that bring about certain social worlds.

Those who pierce their bodies in order to express their individuality in a new way by putting a needle through themselves, mark their bodies as their own, where "they do not want to be like everybody else in the planet" (Delaney, 1995, p.1).

The concept of display is a useful one according to Stam (1998) because not only is groundedness of 'being' emphasized, but also people are placed in relation to each other in mutual visibility. "Expression is, then, a kind of communication of ideas about something or someone, that happens to employ the special channels available because people have bodies" (Stam, 1998, p.24). Stam makes two points with regard to expression. Firstly he says that displays used for expression cannot be reduced to categorization and, secondly, expression is linked with and transforms the material world. According to Merleau – Ponty (1968), cited in Stam (1998), "embodiment is the 'exemplar sensible' that makes it possible for us to incorporate things in the fragment of the present, and yet transcend them in the anticipation and configuring of alternative past and futures " (p.24). Merleau - Ponty uses this concept to exemplify the way in which knowledge of the physical world in individuals' lives is obtained.

(2.4) Modernity versus Postmodernity

Frosh (1991) contrasts the modernist approach to the postmodernist approach with regard to the 'self'. In modernism the 'self' is not a static being, but a "summary and integration of personal being: it is constructed out of bits and pieces of experience and is

in a dialectical relationship with social organization . . .but there is a chance something more cohesive can be created" (Frosh, 1991, p.31). In contrast to this, postmodernism highlights the fragmented self in the present time. It opposes any coherence that lies beneath "all the glittering surfaces, and, on the individual level, there is something real and true lying behind the sense of self which is created within each individual...fragments are meaningless in their interchangeability and lack of significant relationships" (Frosh, 1991, p.31). Frosh writes of television images that lack substance. They may appear 'fluid and provocative' but it is "anarchistic because it offers no roots and no sources of value " (Frosh, 1991, p.31).

Where modernists cast the image of human beings as having control, postmodernists such as Zygmunt Bauman (1992) depict the "frailty and vulnerability of human beings as lonely, homeless and alienated creatures subject to the new world of consumerism " (Turner, 1994, p.19). Turner criticizes Foucault for neglecting the importance of consumerism, fashion and lifestyle on contemporary discussions of the self. "In the postmodern cultural context within which the self evolves, the boundary of the self becomes uncertain and problematic. . . and the body can be restructured and refashioned to bring about profound changes of identity " (Turner, 1994, p.21).

(2.5) Social Constructionism and Identity

Cited in Shilling (1993), Goffman emphasizes that the body is an integral part of human agency. He specifically focuses on how the body allows people to intervene in

social life and does make a difference. However, Goffman was aware that there are 'rules' that serve to "guide people's perceptions of bodily appearances and performances, and provide a sense of social constraints under which body management occurs " (p.82). According to Goffman, cited in Shilling (1993), bodies may belong to a single person, yet their significance and meaning is determined and defined by society. The body, then, has a significant role in defining the relationship between a person's self-identity and their social identity. "...the social meanings which are attached to particular body forms and performances tend to become internalized and exert a powerful influence on an individual's sense of self and feelings of inner worth " (Shilling, 1993, p.83). According to Jenkins (1996), "the self is altogether individual and intrinsically social. It arises within social interaction. It is constructed within the internal - external dialectic of social identification. It draws upon the external environment of people and things for its content on which it depends. It depends for its ongoing security upon the validation of others, in its initial emergence and in the dialect of continuing social identifications (1993, p.50).

Acceptance into society is extremely important to a person's self-identity. A negative or spoiled identity develops when a person's bodily appearance fails to conform to that which is acceptable in society. According to Goffman, in Shilling (1993), "we tend to perceive our bodies as if looking into a mirror which offers a reflection framed in terms of society's views and prejudices " (p.85). Using a psychoanalytic perspective, Lacan (1977), incorporates the mirror (a reflecting surface) as the starting point to the formation of one's identity.

(2.6) Body Image

Body image refers to the way in which one views or 'sees' one's body, or how one appears to oneself. In Silverman (1996), Schilder writes of the importance of images of the body with regard to 'self' formation. His analysis is more or less parallel with that of Lacan's essay on the mirror stage. Schilder talks of the postural model of the body, which has to be built up. "Moreover, this process of construction must be endlessly repeated, since lacking any stable referent - it undergoes repeated disintegration and transformation. Like the specular image which forms the basis of the Lacanian ego, cutaneous sensation is conferred upon the subject from the outside " (Silverman, 1996, p.11). In other words, for Schilder it is social interaction, which necessitates the formation of the self. The relationship between the 'body and the world of objects' is definitive of the self.

Body image issues appear to be growing in importance. In western society, for women, looking good has become synonymous with being thin (where it is a popular belief that thinness is representative of a healthy or good body image), wherein a good body image represents a good self-image. In contemporary society the self is the representational self, whose value and meaning is ascribed to the individual by the shape and image of their external body, or more precisely, through their body image.

A study reported in *Psychology Today* (1997), argues that most people think of body image in terms of physical appearance, attractiveness and beauty. However there is more

to body image than these aspects. "It's our mental representation of ourselves, its what allows us to contemplate ourselves. Body image isn't simply influenced by feelings, and it actively influences much of our behaviour, self - esteem, and psychopathology, our beliefs that govern our life plan - who we meet, who we marry, the nature of our interactions, our daily comfort level. Our body is a personal billboard, providing others with first - and sometimes only - impressions " (Psychology Today, 1997, p.1).

The same study suggested that one could find a major link between the way we feel about our body and the ways in which we perceive others' perceptions of it. Cited in Polhemus (1978), Schilder suggests that "body image is moulded by one's interactions with others, and to the extent that these interactions are faulty, the body image will be inadequately developed" (p.178). Schilder, cited in Silverman (1996), says that one is only able to perceive one's bodily surface when it comes into contact with another surface. He says that the body is not just a product of physical contact, " but that it is also profoundly shaped by the desires which are addressed to it, and by the values imprinted on it through touch" (p.13).

A significant finding in the study reported in *Psychology Today* (1997), revealed that the connection between body and mood is critical, for it suggests that "body dissatisfaction is not a static entity, but rather is governed, at least in part, by our emotional state. When we feel bad about something, our bodies get dragged in the negative tide " (p.12). It follows then that body piercing may be perceived as a "powerful tool for self - expression and emotional security " (Thomas, 1998, p.3). For Schilder

(1964), emotion and body image are closely connected to each other. Also, he says that "the perception of the bodies of others and their expression of emotions is as primary as the perception of our own body and its emotion and expressions" (p.226). For Schilder cited in Silverman (1996), "every emotion. . .changes the body image " (p.13). For Polhemus, "a person's chosen image is a more effective resume` of their inner self than anything they might put into words" (Manning, 1998, p.1).

Although individuals may believe that piercing makes them different or more distinctive from others, according to Finkelstein (1991), one inadvertently becomes "more common and conventional" (p.144), when one tries to be fashionable. The irony, then, of viewing fashionability as an answer to expressing individuality, "is that fashions do not distinguish people; on the contrary, fashion embed and integrate the individuals in society" (Finkelstein, 1991, p.144). In other words, one who pierces their body in an attempt to defy conformity are paradoxically conforming, in their very act of defiance. Piercing would then serve as an act of conformity, a conformity to a piercing subculture, wherein piercing is regarded as the 'norm'.

According to the study reported in *Psychology Today* (1997), sexual experiences affect our body image, and our body image in turn, affects our sexual liaisons. The motivation behind body piercing for many is highly sexual. According to one piercer, Alexander, cited in Thomas (1998) one of the main reasons behind nipple and genital piercings, is to exacerbate sexual pleasure. When the nipples are pierced the entire area becomes more sensitive and is said to heighten sexual pleasure. "The point is extra

pleasure during sex . . . On women, the bead from the ring is resting on the clitoris, which causes extra sensation. Male genital piercings are for the pleasure of both the wearer and the partner" (Neufield, 1997, p.3). The type of male piercings which increase sexual pleasure, include: the amphallang (horizontal bar through the penis head), apadravya (same but vertical), dydoe (side of penis head), frenum (ring through loose flesh below the penis head), foreskin hafada (side of scrotum), Prince Albert (ring through the urethra), and guiche (ring through the perineum). Female genital piercings include the labia (usually with rings), and the clitori (usually with a stud). A local piercer, commented that increasingly more strippers have pierced their nipples as this has improved 'performances' (pers.com, Edwards, 2001).

(2.7) Psychoanalysis and Sexuality

All humans are sexual beings from birth until death. Sexuality for Freud, was not only restricted to coitus, but encompassed a whole array of meanings. These include sexual roles (the way in which individuals become gendered); pleasure and unpleasure (bodily), as well as the libidinal instinct that drives us from birth. Freud cited in an article by Bloom (1991), says that "sexuality is divorced from too close a connection with the genitals and is regarded as a more comprehensive bodily function, having pleasure as its goal. . . (and) the sexual impulses are regarded as including all of those merely affectionate and friendly impulses to which the usage applies the exceedingly ambiguous word love " (p.9). The way in which we develop, sexually, the way in which we develop a sense of our bodies, and our gendered identities is constructed socially. Children learn

from and identify with gender roles from their parents, siblings, and caretakers. This is not a static process but evolves as societal norms change. Also, children learn from a very young age, what they can and can't do with their bodies, as society (or more closer to 'home', their parents), may be very restrictive with regard to issues involving sexuality. In other words, one's sexuality is to a large extent socially constructed.

(2.7.1) Sado - Masochism

Sado - masochism is one of the perversions discussed in Freud's essays on the theory of sexuality. According to Freud (1953), "The most significant of all the perversions - the desire to inflict pain upon the sexual object and its reverse - received from Krafft - Ebbing the names 'sadism and masochism' for its active and passive forms respectively" (p.70). Some writers emphasize the pleasurable aspect of pain, whilst Krafft - Ebbing cited in Freud (1953) discussed the presence of pleasure in humiliation and subjugation. A typical trait of the active (sadism) component is aggressivity (part of the sexual instinct) "which has become independent and exaggerated and, by displacement, has usurped the leading position " (p.71). Freud goes on to say that it is only extreme cases that are perverse. Masochism, according to Freud, may be the result of an inversion of the sadistic instinct, where the individual inflicts pain onto her or himself. Extreme cases have indicated that many factors such as the 'castration complex ' and the 'sense of guilt' combine to exacerbate the original passive instinct.

Milia (2000) discusses Freud's concept of fetishes, "Just as a body part may function as a fetish, it is possible that a self - mutilator's wound may also become an object of

erotic fascination and fixation " (p.55). Furthermore, the pain involved in severing the skin in body piercing may then act as a substitute for, or the gratification of sexual purposes. It may also serve to eliminate unwelcomed feelings of sexual arousal. "The possibility that displaced symbolic genitals may in fact generate erotic sensation is supported by Freud's (1905) suggestion that any area of the skin or mucous membrane may be experienced as sexually stimulating " (Milia, 2000, p.55). In other words, in a sublimatory act of piercing, the skin 'symbolizes' the genitals, and therein, by way of association, the skin becomes a substitute for 'pleasuring the genitals'.

The sado - masochist instinct of body piercing is being repositioned to look spiritually high - toned. Cited by Leo (1995), Fakir Musafar, a knowledgeable person on body modification, said, " Many people found that sadomasochism play is a way of opening up the body - spirit connection" (p.2). In a similar vein, Hewitt cited in Milia (2000), views piercing on a comparative level to scarification, and eating disorders. For Hewitt then, "Pain administered to the body is intrinsic to the process of transformation, because the pain response provides a confirmation of existence, while endurance of pain produces evidence of the transcendence of bodily limitation " (Milia, 2000, p.45). Musafar cited in Leo (1998), is quoted as saying, "there is another side to this movement (which refers to the people with piercings): the conscious attempt to repudiate Western norms and values by adopting the marks and rings of primitive cultures" (Leo, 1995, p.2). According to Freud (1953), "It has been maintained that every pain contains in itself the possibility of feeling a pleasure "(p.72).

(2,7.2) Cathartic Pain

According to Thomas, pain is an intrinsic part of body piercing (which he refers to as a ritual), and sometimes the only reason for getting pierced. " Body piercing is seen by many to be a pain inducing ritual, which can be used to attain elevated states of consciousness. The idea of voluntary pain induction as a spiritual ritual is highly cathartic and often symbolizes the death of an unpleasant memory or part of one's life" (Thomas, 1998, p.3). Higgins (1996) says that many people enjoy pain involved with piercing and they feel that they have accomplished something when they overcome this pain. Sustaining this view, Vogels (1997) understands " the discipline aspect of it, forcing yourself to go through something that is not necessarily pleasurable to have a pleasurable result. It's the feeling of overcoming the fear of pain" (Kim, 1995, p.3). In an interview by Kim (1995), Musafar talks about the spiritual aspect to piercing. He says, "One of the first altered states you can learn is to separate your consciousness from your body, that makes it possible for you to push a needle through. You don't feel the pain; the body feels the pain " (p.2). Rogers (1993) suggests that, "*piercing* (writer's emphasis) is a spiritual outlet in a society that long ago lost its taste for dramatic rites of passage. Also Victoria Wolf cited in Roger's article, suggests that, "Other people internalize their rituals, we put them on our *body* " (p.1). The significance of this quote illustrates the way in which piercing appears to serve as a ritual of release. The flesh / skin (ritualistically - because it is done repetitively) serves as the outlet for one's pain.

Howard (1995) makes reference to Stock, a piercee who had his lips and tongue pierced for psychological reasons. According to the piercee, "I got my lip pierced to

satisfy my oral fixations. Since then, I've majorly cut down on smoking cigarettes " (p.2). Thomas (1998) suggests that one of the motivations behind the increasing popularity in piercings is because "it is a means of spiritual, mental, and emotional cleansing." (1998, p.2).

(2.7.3) Aggression

Anna Freud, cited in Milia (2000), discusses aggression as a component of sexual development. In the course of development, the child gradually learns to curb this 'primordial aggression', with playful rather than hostile behaviour towards the (m)other. Galenson, cited in Milia (2000), contends that "if the primary caretaker is particularly uncomfortable with the infant's expression of aggression and harshly restricts them, the child may experience a buildup of hostile aggression turned inward and toward the self. " (p.57). Therefore, in order to maintain a relationship with the (m)other, the child would be compelled to direct aggression towards itself, accepting self - inflicted pain as a necessary means of continuing the relationship with its (m)other. This is corroborated by Milia (2000), who suggests that, "This choice represents the lesser of the two evils, pain as opposed to loss of love and abandonment." (pp 58-59). This behaviour of self – inflicted pain (such as that of body piercing) that develops in early childhood becomes a defence mechanism, as it is maintained and reinforced in adulthood when the person foresees being abandoned by loved one.

Milia (2000) suggests that the 'holding environment', a concept developed by Winnicott, is of significant importance. Milia maintains that infants who have only

experienced hostility and aggression with their primary caretakers, may only be able to associate these emotions with affection. Hence, in adulthood, painful experiences become pleasurable because of their association to the early relationship with the primary caretaker as affectionate impulses. Quoted in Milia (2000), Anna Freud coined the term 'identification with the aggressor'. The child defensively internalizes " an extremely harsh or nonempathic parental figure (in order to) create the circumstances for extreme forms of self - punishment." (pp. 58-59). In this light, body piercing would be a form of self – punishment.

(2.8) Reclamation of the Abused Body

Abuse has been found to contribute to why people have piercings done. The personal accounts of some respondents leave no doubt as to the devastating effects of sexual and/or physical abuse. According to Thomas (1998), " Body piercing is a conscious act of reclamation of the body and taking it, into possession as their own. Genital piercings are often done as a sexual reclamation ritual; that is, it's done as a means of reclaiming the body as your own to signify a recovery from sexual abuse. . . you're imprinting a part of your psyche on that part of your body, marking it as exclusively yours " (p.2).

Rycroft (1968) describes 'splitting' as a, "Process (**defence** mechanism) by which a mental structure loses its integrity and becomes replaced by two or more part structures. Splitting of both **ego** and **object** is described. After splitting of the ego, typically only one resulting part-ego is experienced as '**self**', the other constituting a (usually) unconscious 'splitting part of the ego'. After splitting of an object, the emotional attitude towards the

two part-structures is typically antithetical, one object being experienced as '**good**' (accepting, benevolent, etc.), the other as '**bad**' (rejecting, malevolent, etc.) " (p.173). 'Splitting' is one of the defences used by victims of abuse. The piercings appear to serve as a 'splitting off' of the bad self, thereby, allowing the piercee to maintain a 'good (inner) self'. The pierced person is considered to be the 'bad self'.

Cited on Milia (2000), van der Kolk (discussing the defence of dissociation) suggests that acts of mutilation are preceded by 'feelings of loss' or 'threatened abandonment', where one's sense of self is reified through the appearance of blood. "Just as the 'sacrificial crisis' of chaos, loss of boundaries, and uncontrolled violence is brought under control through the legitimate violence of sacrifice (body), the self - mutilator's act of self directed violence may help to restore calm and order to an inner state of chaos and disintegration " (Milia, 2000, p.71). This may be related to the previous section on *Aggression*, where the piercee identifies with the aggressor, and in the process of 'splitting off' the 'bad object', where the piercings (metal) are symbolic of the 'bad object', pierces themselves.

According to Milia (2000), abusive experiences results in " repeated violation of the boundaries of the body and the self, so that a sense of bodily integrity may never develop. There may be no clear sense of where the 'self' ends and the world and others begin. The fear of invasion, grounded in real experiences of violation, coupled with a fear of engulfment due to unclear boundaries may contribute to the need for distancing and isolation." (2000, p.73). In other words, not entirely recovering from the abused

experience, the abused person may find comfort in keeping others away, where body piercing would effectively serve this purpose. Furthermore, Milia (2000), goes on to state that the ability to change and manipulate one's body image provides a strong incentive, thereby serving to enhance feelings of empowerment to the disempowered person who experienced abuse.

(2.9) Difference and Refusal

Neufield (1997), suggests that piercing's legacy is " Difference, Deviance, Defiance." (p.2). She discusses the punk culture of the late 1970's whose members disfigured their appearance by putting safety pins through their cheeks. As advocated by Shakoor(1998), body piercing was reincarnated by the punk subculture, where piercing was an act of defiance of the oppressive, dominant political ideologies of the time. Hebdige (1979) concurs, suggesting that the implicit meaning of style, is, always in contradiction to style. He elaborates his argument by citing Genet's work on subcultures. For Genet the formation of subcultures "ends in the construction of a style, in a gesture of defiance or contempt, in a smile or sneer. It signals a Refusal" (Hebdige, 1979, p.3). The 'Refusal' that Genet mentions, is overtly expressed by way of appearance (which is impregnated with symbolic meanings). It is an outward refusal, of inner intolerances. The punk genre's explicit defiance of abiding to societal 'norms', and, implicitly, societal regulations as defined by 'the law'. For Hebdige (1979), style is embedded with significance. "It's transformations go 'against nature', interrupting the process of 'normalization'. As such, there are gestures, movements towards a speech which offends the 'silent (conforming) majority', which challenges the principle of unity and cohesion, which contradicts the

myth of consensus." (p. 18).

Hebdige's work, although written in 1979 is highly relevant to the reasons as to why people in contemporary society, choose to pierce. Pursuing Hebdige's work on subcultures into new areas, Polhemus and Randall cited in Manning (1998), view piercing as a "distinctly conventional view of unconventionality " (p.1). Customizing the body seems merely to be an adoption of another conventionality, albeit a 'tribal one'. Polhemus cited in Manning (1998) "invokes tribal societies, citing art as an attempt to counteract the speed and ephemerality of postmodern life.. . In an age which increasingly shows signs of being out of control, the most fundamental sphere of control is re – employed: mastery over one's body. This betrays the naivete - or disingenuousness of much postmodern thought in its conception that the personal is not just political but revolutionary. " (Manning, 1998, p.2). In this vein, piercing transcends the political boundaries by way of appearance, thereby rendering it a 'revolt' in its own right.

Chapter Three

Methodology

"Always the beautiful answer who asks a more beautiful question.

- e.e. cummings.

(1) Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study was primarily to develop an understanding of the meaning(s) that body piercing has for women with multiple body piercings. The objectives were (i) to attain the participants' understanding of the meaning(s) of their body piercing; (ii) to develop an understanding of this meaning from a psychoanalytic perspective. This understanding was not done in a vacuum for it was informed by feminist psychoanalytic theory. A hermeneutic phenomenological approach informed the analysis of the 'data'.

Please Note : The key research questions are attached in appendix A

(1) Participants

A total of six voluntary participants were used in this research. In order that the participants be easily contacted during the research, they were chosen from the greater Durban area. Their ages ranged between twenty - one and twenty - eight. Volunteer purposive sampling was used with one of the criteria of their selection, being the need to have multiple body piercings, other than just the earlobe , or the nostril , or the navel piercings, as these were considered to be 'popular' piercings. The sample

consisted solely of women because, given that this is a qualitative study, it was conceived that the information received would be contextually richer, instead of using a comparative analysis between women and men.

(2.1) Consent

Each of the participants signed a consent form, in acknowledgment that they had participated of their own free will, under no circumstances of coercion. A stipulation within the consent form, was that the confidentiality of the participants would be guaranteed. According to May (1997), there are two approaches regarding the ethical issues guiding social research . The first is that of 'informed consent', which is premised upon 'freely given consent' given by the participant to the researcher. The second is that of consequentialism. Basically this involves an awareness (on the researcher's part) of the consequences of her or his actions with regard to what may become of the research (May, 1997). In this research, all participants signed consent forms, which guaranteed their anonymity. (See Appendix B for a copy of the consent form)

(2.2) Brief Overview of Participants

Participant 1 - J had lost her father when she was four. She was sexually abused as a child, which she only disclosed in the latter part of her teen life. She admits that she initially subscribed to the 'conventional beauty' as dictated by societal norms, but her view deferred when she realised that she did not want to be like the abiding crowd. Her piercings, consisted of twenty - two in total. These ranged from facial (overt) piercings to

more covert, sexual piercings.

Participant 2 - R had lost her father when she was thirteen. He died from a heart attack on the way to hospital, in R's arms. Her grief of this experience resulted in R believing that she had to 'become head of the household'. Her grief gave way to a manic-depressive period, for which she was hospitalised for a week. R's piercings comprised of multiple ear piercings, genital and nipple piercings and a tongue piercing.

Participant 3 - B's father had left her and her mother when she was an infant. She had never known him. Her mother was an alcoholic and prone to physically abusing B. Up until the age of five years, B had been given to neighbours to look after. She had believed up to that age that the neighbour was her mother. At this stage, her grandmother looked after B, however B never felt as though she really knew what the experience of having a real mother was like. She grew up, looking out for herself. At the age of twenty she set out to find her biological father to give her some answers as to why he never attempted to contact her, but her questions were unanswered. B had to be interviewed twice owing to insufficient information obtained from her. Also, extreme extraneous conditions during the interview, made the transcript almost incomprehensible. B had a navel piercing, a labrette piercing, a tongue piercing and her eyebrow pierced.

Participant 4 - T's parents divorced when she was three years old. She described herself as a rebellious, defiant child. She had experienced problems as a result of the

divorce as her father got custody of T and her brother, because her mother had had cancer. Thereafter, he refused to allow her mother to see them. When she was twelve, T was removed from the house by her step - mother. T said that she was 'an unmanageable child when she moved in with her mother. Subsequently, T ' deeply resented' her mother for sending her to boarding school. She gradually adapted. T had multiple ear piercings, an eyebrow piercing, a lip piercing, a nostril piercing, a navel piercing, as well as her tongue pierced.

Participant 5 - Ta's mother died of cancer when she was eleven. She was then brought up by her father, who, she referred to as a stranger. Having to take care of her mother from a young age, Ta had lost out on much of her childhood. Ta had several ear piercings, a nose piercing, a navel piercing, a tongue piercing, an eyebrow piercing, and a labrette piercing.

Participant 6 - Z was a second - language English speaker, therefore her transcript is interspersed with Afrikaans words. Her parents were divorced when Z was eleven. Her father was particularly absent after the divorce, having re - married. For Z the divorce increased her 'strength', where she would not cry as other girls would. She admitted to being a 'mummy's girl' but her father's absence evoked a 'sadness' within her. Z had several ear piercings, a navel piercing and her tongue pierced.

(2) Data Collection

In depth, unstructured interviews guided by key questions were used to collect 'data'. (see Appendix section 'A' for key questions) The direction of the interview, to a large extent, was determined by the participant's response, whereupon clarificatory questions, and questions that afforded a deeper understanding and explanation, were used. This form of interviewing affords open - endedness, allowing as much insight and reflection by the participants, as possible. May (1997) provides the following reasons for choosing unstructured interviews. Firstly it allows subjects to tap into their own meanings and ideas, thereby providing a "qualitative depth by allowing interviewees to talk about the subject in terms of their own frames of reference "(p.112). In other words, this form of interview, allows the participants to explain the 'phenomenon' of their body piercings from their own experience of having done them. Secondly, this elicits a better understanding from the subject's vantage point, or, understanding is elaborated from the participants' 'lived experience'.

(2.1) The Interviews

The interview period ranged from thirty-five minutes to a hundred and sixty minutes. This was dependant upon the number of piercings that the participant had, as well as the length of conversation that the participant was willing to engage in. The interview began with biographical questions and rapport building. Introductory questions were used. Thereafter questions that related to the participants' responses were asked, to elicit a greater understanding (Refer to appendix A for transcripts). The interviews served to clarify misunderstandings, as well as to enhance or elaborate explanations, in order to

obtain as much insight into the participants' understanding as possible. All interviews were taped and transcribed verbatim. The textual transcription includes intonation, accentuation, and emphases of the participants' responses.

(3) Data Analysis

Although qualitative analysis may be conceptualised as a linear process, this is done more as a matter of convenience. For, it is inherently cyclical in nature with the interviewing, transcription, coding, and conceptualising all occurring more or less simultaneously, although their rates progress differentially. As Bauman (1978), pertinently puts it " Understanding means going in circles: rather than a unilinear progress towards better and less vulnerable knowledge, it consists of an endless recapitulation and reassessment of collective memories - even more voluminous, but always selective " (p.17). The need for validity overrides the formation of premature conclusions, which can be easily arrived at given the sheer volume of information that has been accumulated (Lindlof, 1995).

The volume of information necessitates the reduction of data. In qualitative analysis, this is done in two ways. Firstly, there is a physical reduction, which basically comprises of sorting out the data into categories, prioritizing the data, and making a comparative analysis using the emerging themes, referred to as thematic analysis (Lindlof, 1995).

A thematic analysis of the text renders the information manageable. Prior to coding, the researcher has to acquaint her or himself with reading material pertaining to the research topic. This 'preliminary reading', acquaints the researcher with material that arises from her / his own data. A secondary reading is done with more insight into the nature of the topic, informing the researcher of essential issues. These readings are pertinent to the researcher for coding (Lindlof, 1995).

According to O'Connell Davidson and Layder (1994), "Coding the data in terms of main themes or concepts that are the focus of the research allows the researcher to condense the data " (p.178). Lindlof (1995), lays bare the significance of coding, " The purpose of qualitative coding are to tag segments of interest and to look for ways to categorise action or talk that will lead toward inductive proposition " (p.221). Using coding to interpret the data, also allows for two more processes to occur. Firstly, it highlights particular parts of the transcript(s), thereby allowing for easier comparability to other transcripts. This is referred to as a 'constant comparative method' by Glaser and Straus, cited in Lindlof (1995). This stage essentially involves the fleshing out of essential themes from one set of data (transcripts), which is then used as a point of comparison to information collected in other sets of data. An important part of this 'constant comparative method' is to "integrate categories and their properties" (Lindlof, 1995, p.224). This integration precipitates the movement of the nature of the categories from mere codes to what Lincoln and Guba cited in Lindlof (1995), called a 'particular construction of the situations at hand'. Intrinsic to this stage is 'delimiting the theory', where the particular situations now take on meaning within a theoretical framework.

Secondly, the most significant aspect of coding is that in laying bare essential themes, concepts and ideas, coding thereby 'paves the way' for analysis of the text. "By ordering the data in this way it becomes possible to construct forms of description and explanation for the activities and behaviour that has been observed and recorded in terms of these themes and concepts " (O' Connell Davidson and Layder, 1994, p.178).

The second form of reduction is a conceptual analysis. It is a creative process, that requires the researcher to make inferences 'reflexively'. An important point to note is that the researcher must be aware of not imposing information external to the data. The concepts should ideally emerge out of the fieldwork data and the theory that informs the researcher. The concepts that come out as a result of the interpretation, must not only be understood, but explained, using what was described by Geertz, cited in Denzin (1989) as 'thick descriptions'. This entails providing a richly entailed explanation of the participant's transcripts, including all 'their' eccentricities.

Beyond these thick descriptions is the development of a 'conceptual understanding'. This is where the thick descriptions are useful in highlighting the relevance of the theory. Also, one can infer from the theory, the significance of one's findings in the data. Within a conceptual understanding together with inferences, of major significance is 'exemplars'. This is used to corroborate what is advocated in the research and derived from 'the real life experiences' of the participants. Also, exemplars are useful in helping to 'validate' one's research, by verifying the accuracy and merit of interpretation (Lindlof, 1995).

(3.1) Hermeneutic Phenomenology

“hermeneutic phenomenological reflection deepens thought and therefore radicalizes thinking ”

- Van Manen (1992)

What is seemingly superficial and surface, is made somewhat comprehensible by interpretation. However, one must take into cognizance that an interpretation is one layer of multifarious meanings, for meanings are sedimented and one hopes to resuscitate meaning(s) by and through the process of interpretation. In the primacy of understanding, describing (explaining) experience cannot be neglected, for it 'plays' a significant role in developing an understanding of the meaning(s) that piercings appear to have for the participants.

The aim of this research was to develop an understanding of the meaning that body piercing has for pierced women. Understanding has been a key element of this research so that an understanding of the meaning(s) that body piercing has for the participants, elicited by their experience of their piercings, comes to the fore. Cited in Madison (1990), Ricoeur highlights the significance of the hermeneutic phenomenological method in his approach to subjectivity, by pertinently saying, "phenomenological, in that it seeks to clarify through reflective analysis that which is immediately and indubitably given to consciousness: the fact of the subject's own existence, the 'mineness' characteristic of existence; hermeneutical, in that this reflective analysis is not descriptive in an intuitive or introspective sort of way but is indirect and interpretive and is, moreover, motivated by the basic goal of all hermeneutics: a heightened self-understanding ...genuine self-

understanding is an arduous, *never-to-be-completed* task " (p.90, 94) (own emphasis added). Or, as, Merleau-Ponty cited in Madison (1990), contends with regard to 'phenomenological hermeneutics', "One of the central theses of phenomenological hermeneutics, derived from its theory of understanding, is that, like understanding, the object of understanding, textual meaning, has a temporal mode of being, which is to say that it is ever in the process of becoming and thus never fully *is* " (p.34). This highlights the extent to which interpretation can never be fully complete, for an inherent aspect of this methodology affords primacy to fit open-endedness.

Given that the aim of this research was to understand the meaning of the 'lived experience' that body piercing has for women, a hermeneutic phenomenological analysis serves the aim of this study. For Heidegger cited in Bauman (1978), " the activity of understanding can be grasped solely as an aspect of being, as an essence of existence...*always incomplete and open-ended as existence itself*" (p.148, 170) (own emphasis added). Bauman traces "the original Greek word for that what exists, for the being, to *physis*...translated into Latin ...as *natura*...the word *physis* denotes self-blossoming emergence (e.g. the blossoming of a rose), opening up, unfolding, that which manifests itself in such unfolding ... *Physis* is the process of a-rising, of emerging from the hidden, whereby the hidden is first made to stand " (p.150). Unfortunately, given the enormity of literature detailing hermeneutics and phenomenology, it is beyond the scope of his research to go into explicit details of the two distinctive approaches. A brief overview is given of each, and a more expansive discussion is provided on the collusion

of the two approaches.

Primarily governing interpretative analysis in qualitative research is the principle of understanding, or '*verstehen*' as prescribed by Dilthey in Lindlof (1995). Also cited in Lindlof (1995), Kant advocated that the 'conceptual categories' informed one's perception of the world. It was understanding that formed the basis of hermeneutics, then, in the early twentieth century. Ricoeur, cited in Lindlof (1995), indicates that "The hermeneutical method involves interpreting the meaning of the text through continual reference to its context." (p.31). Husserl quoted in Lindlof (1995), made further extensions to interpretative analysis, by introducing phenomenology, which he interpreted as "the essence of the objects of our perceptions" (p.32).

Where phenomenology has been used to 'describe' the experiences of the women who are pierced, a hermeneutical approach is used simultaneously, to understand and interpret this world of 'lived experience'. According to Heidegger (1962), the maxim of phenomenology translates as "To the thing themselves" (p.50). The word culminates in the amalgamation of two Greek words, namely, *phenomenon*, which is translated as "to show itself" (Heidegger, 1962, p.51), and *logos*, meaning "word for word translation" (Heidegger, 1962, p.55). However, *phenomenon*, is not simply 'to show itself', but "the showing - itself- in - itself" (Heidegger, 1962, p.54), in a manner such that the 'object' is experienced. Merleau - Ponty cited in a paper by Parkins (2000), "emphasizes our experiences as embodied subjects in the world...it is what opens me out upon the world and places me in a situation there" (p.60). In other words, in phenomenology 'lived

experience' is concretized in a situatedness that occurs in the world. We are allowed an 'expressive space' in the world, through our bodies. The formative understanding implicit in phenomenology is "a question about the meaning of being" (Thompson, 1981, p.114).

Literally translated, 'hermeneutic' means the 'art of interpretation'. The word is derived from Greek mythology, where the 'God' by the name of 'Hermes' would deliver messages from the 'Gods' to mortals. In other words 'Hermes' played a 'messenger God', where he would have to ensure that messages were correctly interpreted and understood. However, psychological interpretation attempts to return to the original or individual meaning by "recreating the creative act", and according to Schleiermacher (cited in Thomas, 1981), one has to "make explicit the assumptions in accordance with which the original expression was produced, and thereby 'understand the author as well as and even better than he understands himself " (Thompson, 1981, p.37). In other words, the 'creative act' that had to be 'recreated', was the product of the subject's expression (speech). This has to be interpreted in such a way as to make explicit the subject's intentions as well as the underlying assumptions. The interpretation had to be done such that the 'reader' is able to understand the subject as well or even better than the subject understands her or him self.

It should, however, be noted that understanding and interpretation is subjective , because it is the researcher's understanding and interpretation of the participants' experiences. In other words, "Hermeneutics thus constitutes the objectified layer of

understanding " (Thompson, 1981, p.51). An objective interpretation is an ideal of the hermeneutical approach, although, it must be taken into consideration, that there are sedimented 'layers' of understanding. Moreover, the researcher never fully removes her or himself from the research, and hence, the research is never fully objective. In other words, it is a subjective process, therefore it requires critical reflexivity on the part of the researcher.

Unlike its positivistic predecessor (quantitative research), qualitative research privileges meaning and understanding above prediction and control. Cited in Lindlof (1995), Ricoeur advocates that "we begin to unpack the meaningfulness of lived experience by presupposing that it is just as purposeful as a written text " (p.28). In other words, the researcher cannot undermine what is said in the interviews because it is not already written. One must be open to the meaning of lived experience as equally important to written text.

"The semantics of discourse sheds light on the primitive processes of creativity and interpretation in ordinary language" (Thompson, 1981, p.11). Ricoeur talks of the 'intrinsic polysemy of words'. Essentially, this refers to the multiplicity of meanings that words have. To understand polysemic words, a contextualisation of the sentence is required, in order that a univocal interpretation be produced. Ricoeur makes the transition from semantics into proper hermeneutics with formulating the concept of the text. "As a work of discourse, the text preserves the properties of the sentence, but presents them in a new type of constellation which calls for its own type of constellation" (Thompson, 1981,

p.13). Ricoeur makes use of two concepts, namely, distancing and appropriation.

According to Ricoeur, a text has a 'threefold autonomy'. This comprises the author's intentions, the cultural and social situation within which the text is produced, as well as the original addressee.

For Ricoeur, distancing is part of the interpretation. The moment of distancing begins with the writing of the spoken word. In the interviews that were conducted the spoken discourse was interpreted using the transcripts, or the written discourse.

Distancing began at the moment that the interviews were being transcribed. Ricoeur emphasises the difference between speaking and writing modes, whereby the processes of distancing and appropriation are used so that an objective interpretation may be obtained.

(3.1.1) Distancing and Appropriation

The first form of distancing lies in 'stepping away' from the material in order to arrive at an objective understanding of the work. This is substantiated by the following quote, " For it is meaning which is inscribed in writing, and this inscription is rendered possible by the 'exteriorisation' of the speech act " (Thompson, 1981, p.53). In other words, one has to 'move away' from what has been said by the participants, to arrive at a meaning of what has been said. The second form of distancing concerns the relation between the text and its author. That is, once spoken speech is captured into a text, according to Ricoeur, the "text's career escapes the finite horizon lived by its author "

(Thompson, 1981, p.52). In other words, the interpretation goes beyond the text's capture by the author, for what becomes of the text in the future is an infinite capacity of interpretations by the reader(s). In a similar context, the third form of distancing addresses the relation between the text and the original audience. When spoken, the meaning was directed towards (a) specific listener(s). In the case of this study, the spoken word was directed towards the researcher.

Finally, the fourth form of distancing "concerns the emancipation of the text from the limits of ostensive research" (Thompson, 1981, p.52). This opens up the text from the confines of the original dialogical situation. Hence, interpretation of the transcripts traverse the dialogue that took place in the original interview situation. In doing so, no single, fixed meaning is attached to the original interview.

Distancing severs the relations between that which has been 'said' and the meaning of what has been 'said', which, effectively eclipses the meaning from the original speaker. It follows then, that the meaning that is to be understood, will not be the same meaning that the author intended it to be. This is further substantiated by Ricoeur, who says, "the problem of right understanding can no longer be solved by a simple return to the alleged intention of the author" (Thompson, 1981, p.53).

Appropriation may be understood as the opposite of distancing. Ricoeur emphasises that appropriation is just as imperative for interpretation. Literally translated

from the German term, 'Aneignung', this means to 'make ones own' what was 'alien' prior to this. According to Ricoeur, "The goal of interpretation is only attained insofar as interpretation actualises the meaning of the text for the reader. Appropriation is the concept which is suitable for the actualisation of meaning as addressed to someone. The interpretation is complete when the reading releases something like an event. As appropriation, the interpretation becomes an event" (Thompson, 1981, p.185). Moreover, for Ricoeur, appropriation is the resultant reflexive self understanding that arises from an understanding of the text.

Ricoeur says that "reflection is the appropriation of our effort to exist and our desire to be, through the works that bear witness to that effort and desire...reflection must become interpretation because I cannot grasp the act of existing except in signs scattered in the world " (Thompson, 1981, p.55). In other words, the world for us, exists in our efforts to make our desires 'known' through the words that we use. To understand and ultimately to interpret these words, one needs to reflect on what has been said. In arriving at an understanding of this reflection, one then arrives at an understanding of that which the author (s) have said, but from one's own reflection of what has been said. It follows that, "Appropriation is not so much an act of possession as an act of dispossession, in which self understanding of the immediate ego is replaced by a self reflection through the world of the text (Thompson, 1981, p.55). However, the interpretation that one ultimately arrives at, is not just any interpretation, but upon reflection of the text, it is the most probable one.

A significant point that Madison (1990), discusses with regard to Ricoeur's method, is that, "there is no possible way in which the 'postulate of meaningfulness' could be 'verified'...His (Ricoeur) ontological commitment to meaning is firmly grounded in the phenomenological makeup of human existence, in undeniable facts of experience...The fact that we are inescapably acting and narrating beings is sufficient justification for what is no doubt the ultimate underlying category in Ricoeur's philosophy: *hope* " (p. 102, 103).

It was in a central moment of philosophical interpretation that led Ricoeur into psychoanalysis. Ricoeur undertakes a systematic reading of Freud's text, thereby situating psychoanalysis within the hermeneutic field. "The notion of semantics of desire provides the parameters for Ricoeur's approach to the epistemological status of psychoanalysis " (Thompson, 1981, p.7). The role of language, that is used by Ricoeur in his hermeneutic approach, also, brings his work closer to the 'position' of Lacan.

(4) Theoretical framework informing interpretation

A feminist psychoanalytic approach was used to inform the interpretation. This particular framework was essentially chosen to exemplify the 'story(ies)' about 'women who have body piercings. Given the patriarchal predominance in the history of psychoanalysis, feminist psychoanalysts provide a refreshing rereading of Freudian and Lacanian concepts, thereby rendering its applicability about 'women' by '(wo)men'. Braidotti cited in Heywood and Sandywell (1999), contends that ". . . it is impossible

strictly speaking, to talk about the feminine independently of the lived experience of women, of their social, sexual and textual reality " (p. 245). Chapter four has been designated to *feminist psychoanalysis*, which elaborates upon the literature that has been used to inform the interpretations.

Chapter Four

Theoretical Framework : Feminist Psychoanalysis

"And so the lure : the fish grabs the bait, thinking it can digest it, only to discover the hook, the line that ties the seemingly assimilable world to another world, which lures the fish out of its element, beyond the reach of its perspicacity, entices the reader into his own assimilation."

- Jane Gallop (1985).

(4.1) Introduction

A feminist psychoanalytic approach, is the theoretical framework, that has been used to inform my interpretation. This approach, was particularly chosen for its critical approach in understanding a (wo)man's psyche. The brackets place emphasis on the particularly patriarchal nature of psychoanalysis that has to a certain extent foreshadowed and silenced (wo)men. In a similar vein, Braidotti cited in Heywood and Sandywell (1999), advocates that "Feminism has revealed the fact that our socio-cultural order rests on the exchange and silence of women; it follows that the project to express the *other* feminine coincides with the invention of an other relation to feminine sexuality" (p. 245). Eliciting the meaning of feminist research Heywood and Sandywell (1999), contend that "Feminist research and writing revolves around the deconstruction of the binary oppositions, hierarchies, and dominant discourses espoused by patriarchal and phallogocentric forms of life " (p. 244).

What is also intriguing about psychoanalysis, is that by definition, it acknowledges its 'ignorance', or as Phillips (2001) says "Psychoanalysis, of course, does not reveal what

people are really like, because we are not really like anything " (p.25). Further extending this point, Appignanesi and Forrester (2000), contend that psychoanalysis "immediately undercuts this habitual certainty of ours, because it shows that each individual is neither wholly a man nor wholly a woman, but rather both at once. When one turns to the sociological meaning of masculine and feminine, one is simply reduced to observing actually existing behaviour, that is, observing that those human beings who go into the doors marked 'Gentleman' must be men " (p.420). There is still a lot that psychoanalysis has to offer women, which is why feminist psychoanalysts like Juliet Mitchell, Luce Irigaray, Elizabeth Grosz, Jacqueline Rose, Julia Kristeva, Jane Gallop, Ellie Ragland - Sullivan, Helene Cixous (to name but a few), have not given up on psychoanalysis.

For Rose (1986), "The way we live as 'ideas' where the necessary laws of human society is not so much conscious as unconscious - the particular task of psychoanalysis is to decipher how we acquire our heritage of the ideas and laws of human society within the unconscious mind, or, to put it another way, the unconscious mind is the way we acquire these laws. . .where Marxist theory explains the historical and economic situation, psychoanalysis, in conjunction with the notions of ideology, already gained dialectical materialism, is the way into understanding ideology and sexuality" (p.7). In a similar vein, Hayes (1984), contends that Lacan's work has been used by both Marxists and feminists alike, because of its revelatory potential with regard to "a more socialist and materialist understanding of human individuality"(p.46). Furthermore, Hayes (1984), adds that the dynamic interplay between sociality and individuality comes to fore, in a materialist conception of Lacanian psychoanalysis.

(4.2) Psychoanalysis and Identity

Kaja Silverman (1996) includes in her writings the work of Freud and Lacan. For Freud, our experience of the self is always derived from the body. According to Freud (1923), cited in Silverman (1996) "the ego is first and foremost, a bodily ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but itself the projection of a surface " (p.10). Lacan cited in Silverman (1996), emphasises that "the projection of the ego is important but equally significant is that it also functions as a mirror, a 'site', "where images are integrated " (p.10). Paradoxically, in Lacan's analysis of the mirror stage, he insists on both 'sameness' and 'otherness' of the image within which the child initially finds itself. For Lacan, this is vital for the primary formation of the ego. "Wallon argued that a human being can have no coherent self - image without him or her having distinguished him or herself from others, i.e. without having acknowledged the difference between inside and outside " (Nobus, 1998, pp.105-106). Laplanche cited in Silverman (1996), expands Lacan's paradox. On the one hand he explains, "the specular image allows an 'apprehension of the body as a separate object', while on the other hand 'the body is apprehended by the subject as its 'own' "(Silverman, 1996, p.11).

According to Lacan (1977a) we need , "to understand the mirror stage *as an identification*, in the full sense that analysis gives to the term : namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image - whose predestination to this phase - effect is sufficiently indicated by the use, in analytic theory, of the ancient term

imago " (p.2). For Lacan, the 'imaginary', 'symbolic' and 'real' are vital concepts in his theory of the human subject. The 'Real' is impossible' according to Lacan, where the 'Real' refers to a 'lack of a lack', wherein the child is in a state of 'Complete Fulfillment'. It is the mirror stage that alerts the child to 'loss or lack'. The child has to accept that the (m)other is separate from itself and it is no longer in "that happy state of satisfaction, protected by and merged with the (m)other. . . lack, gap, splitting will be its mode of being. It will attempt to fill its (impossible, unfillable) lack. . . this lack signals an ontological rift with the Real" (Grosz, 1990, p.35). This gap propels the child into "seeking an identificatory image of its own stability and permanence (imaginary), and eventually language (symbolic)" (Grosz, 1990, p.35).

According to Hayes (1984), "The preverbal world of "images" has been referred to by Lacan as *the imaginary order*. This "imaginary order", this world of "images" is meant quite concretely " (p.88). Cited in Hayes (1984), Leavy "pertinently says , He {Lacan} does not mean 'illusory' by the word 'imaginary', but rather the organization of 'images' in the Freudian sense, undisciplined by language, and *by virtue of their modes of appearance, essentially misrecognition*" (p.88). Hayes (1984), contends that it is the function of these 'images' to develop a relationship "between the child and its reality " (p.88). Furthermore, Hayes elaborates the significance of these 'images', which "stand between the fluctuating and fragmentary psychic world that precede them and the ensuing 'achievement' of subjectivity " (1984, p.88). According to Ror Malone and Friedlander (2000) " In reworking the structuralist notion of language as a symbolic order, Lacan

further articulates the way in which the preexisting structure of language provides the very possibility of an enunciative position from which any subject may be recognised. Thus, in a reversal of the position articulated by Chomsky, the subject is only manifest in and through its realization in the social field of language " (p.75) Also, for Lacan, cited in Elliot (1992), the symbolic is that "plane of social meanings, differentiation, individuation. Central to the subject's separation from the imaginary into the symbolic is the function of language " (Elliot, 1992, p.124). The 'imaginary' for Lacan, is formed in the pre - Oedipal experience, where there is no differentiation between subject and object.

Lacan owes a great debt to Hegel and Kojève, who are constantly cited in his work. In the emergence of self identity, Lacan follows Kojève's work where one's first experience of a sense of differentiation between self and other, is through rupture. The 'other' (person) is required for a sense of self to emerge, but it is also a reminder of the 'lack' that the subject experiences. "The subject has to recognise that there is desire, or lack, in the place of the Other, that there is 'no ultimate certainty or truth and the status of the phallus is a fraud (this is for Lacan, the meaning of castration)'. The phallus can only take up its place by indicating the precariousness of any identity assumed by the subject on the basis of its token " (Rose, 1986, p.64). "Words come to 'stand in' for the loss of imaginary desires and loves, as the small child seeks to overcome 'lack' through symbolic expression" (Elliot, 1992, p.132).

(4.3)Critical Approach

Psychoanalytic studies, with regard to the nature of female identity, development and sexuality, and libido are of significant importance to feminism. Grosz(1990) elaborates her point by adding that despite the problems that have 'arisen' in psychoanalysis, it "is still by far the most complex, well -developed, and useful psychological theory at hand " (1990, p.8). This point is further expanded in the proceeding paragraph. Grosz (1990) goes on to say that psychoanalysis affords women a rare opportunity, as it is open and honest in its attitude towards women, in an otherwise patriarchal culture.

According to Juliet Mitchell (1974), Freud's theory of sexuality (which has been extended by Lacan) is useful in understanding the way in which sexual development becomes institutionalised. "She argued that Freud " (and subsequently Lacan), "was not prescribing what women and femininity should be, but describing what patriarchal culture '*demands*' of women and femininity " (Grosz. 1990, p.19) (own '*emphasis*' added). Using an example, Horney (a social psychoanalyst) cited in Mitchell (1974) contended that women are not actually inferior but subject to a masculine culture (p.128). In line with this example, though on a comparatively larger scale, Kristeva advocates that women are part of a much wider group in society. Comparing women to the Jewish during Hitler's reign, women are societal scapegoats (Minsky, 1996). Essentially, Kristeva is assimilating the misogynistic effects of patriarchal order upon women, to the oppressive dominant political order experienced by the Jewish people during Hitler's reign. Just as the Jewish people had become the 'bad Other', so to, are women 'viewed' in a 'negative light'.

However, positioning the 'phallus' in line with the entrance into the *symbolic* world is what Mitchell finds problematic, for it creates unequal gender relations. In Lacanian theory, it is the 'Father' who breaks up the (m)other-child dyad, bringing the child out of the *Imaginary* order into the *Symbolic* order (usually predominated by words - language). The works of Kristeva, Cixous, and Irigaray open up a discussion with regard to the position or place from whence a woman speaks, for if she speaks once she has entered into the *Symbolic* order, she subverts her identity. According to these authors, "The problem that they tackle is that if women speak from the place of their father they will be alienated from their own identity and desire. But if they speak from the place of their mother in the *Imaginary* outside the *Symbolic*, they risk being engulfed in what is normally considered an infantile realm whose form in adult experience is hysteria and madness " (Minsky, 1996, p.180). In other words, the aporia that is trying to be understood is, how is a woman able to assert her own identity without having to be 'insane' ?

One of the crucial points that Cixous and Irigaray make, is that expressing a woman's sexuality under the patriarchal system of the *phallic law*, does violence to women (Elliot, 1992). According to Grosz, "Lacan discovered the *phallic* signifier, its effects and the resulting structure of substitutive desire. These intrinsically neutral elements give rise to ideologies of masculine and feminine that cluster around the male - female difference and dramatize themselves in a parade " (1990, p.143). Feminists such as Michele Montrelay,

Jacqueline Rousseau-Dujardin , and academics such as Jacqueline Rose defend Lacan against criticisms for his conception of women as 'lack', as 'Other', as 'castrated' by "arguing that he is merely describing but not advocating patriarchal forms of social production " (Grosz, 1990, p.143).

The mirror stage begins a process which culminates in the oedipus complex or paternal metaphor. Conjointly they provide reasons for the social construction of subjectivity, through the social dimension. Without these 'cultural givens' the child is without a stable identity or a 'determinate sexuality'. This process of social construction is dependent upon the child breaking away from the mother - child dyad and accepting the transition into the *Symbolic*, and hence the Law of the Father. The father then, is representative of the *power of the phallus*. The child's submission to the power of the phallus is a pre - requisite for the child to enter into the socio - symbolic order, or a position from whence one can speak. For Mitchell, the phallus is " a 'neutral signifier' equally affecting both sexes, introducing to both the concept of loss or lack (actual in the girl and only possible in the boy) and law. The phallus subjects both sexes to the *symbolic*; it is a neutral term in relation to which the subject is positioned as masculine or feminine in the socio - cultural and linguistic order." (Grosz, 1990, pps 142 - 143). Essentially, what Mitchell is saying, is that the phallus has no 'power' on its own, albeit for the power that is 'socially constructed' around it. Following Mitchell's argument about the socially valorised phallus, Minsky (1996) contends that for Lacan the phallus is not an actual organ nor is it phantastical. However, the 'power' it 'holds', is one that is conferred upon it as a 'potent sign'. Signifiers in and of themselves are arbitrary, and hence

worthless, albeit for the value that is given to it. Therefore, according to Lacan the 'status of the phallus is bogus', "because it lacks any justification for the power it confers." (Minsky, 1996, p.159).

Rose (1986) criticizes Lacan's account of assimilating women to the *Imaginary*, where the child has not formed a sense of self yet, and assimilating men to the *Symbolic*. For her, Lacan's understanding of childhood is dependent upon an identity that occurs within language, "but only at a cost" (lack) (Grosz, 1990, p.55). Rose further establishes that, "The fact that refusal of the phallus turns out once again to be a refusal of the symbolic does not close, but leaves open as still unanswered, the question as to why that necessary symbolisation and the privileged status of the phallus appear as interdependent in the structuring and securing (never secure) of human subjectivity." (Grosz, 1990, p.80). In other words, Rose challenges the 'unchallenged status' that the phallus 'appears to have' with regard to the construction of identity, for it seemingly appears to be autonomous and without influence. Irigaray, cited in Brennan (1989), succinctly sums up this point, "'The symbolic that you (Messieurs les pschanalystes) impose as a universal, free of all empirical or historical contingency, is *your* imaginary transformed into an order, a social order.'" (p.118).

Kristeva emphasises the semiotic (pre - oedipal) state. Therefore this is a pleasure seeking state. According to Kristeva, cited in Grosz (1990), the semiotic is a number of forces which aspire to increase pleasure in the child's body, "it is the repressed condition

of the *Symbolic*", and, "like the repressed, the semiotic can return in / as irruptions within the *Symbolic*."(p.152). In other words, "The semiotic is both the precondition of the *Symbolic* functioning and its uncontrollable excess. It is used by discourse but cannot be articulated by them." (Grosz, 1990, p.152). Also, Kristeva emphasises that the *Symbolic's* existence is largely dependent upon the "unspeakable and unrepresentable semiotic/maternal/feminine" (Grosz, 1990, p.153). For Kristeva, the *Symbolic* is emphasised at the expense of the preoedipal stage which allows the *Symbolic* to come into being (to exist). This pre - stage is crucial, albeit is not representable in the *Symbolic* realm.

Lacan's analysis of sexuality is dependent upon a differentiation between need, demand, and desire. These are the effects of the orders of the *Real*, the *Imaginary*, and the *Symbolic*. "The child's 'development' from need to demand to desire is congruous with its movement out of the *Real* and into the *Imaginary* and *Symbolic*" (Grosz, 1990, p.59). Need is the human equivalent to nature, and comes closest to instincts. Need concurs with the basic human survival and include shelter, warmth, food, that which the infant is unable to attain by itself. Therefore the infant is dependent on the '(m)other' to provide these 'physical objects'. "The child is dependent on its mother (or her substitute) for the satisfaction of his needs - her absence means growing internal tension because the baby cannot be satisfied, and the baby is helpless." (Mitchell, 1974, p.82). This '(m)other' then has control over the infant's 'pleasure and pain'. (Note: this was mentioned in Chapter three under the subtitle of *Separation and Individuation*, where a hostile (m)other may result in an infant who is anxious, clingy, and passive in this sado-masochistic

relationship. Mastery over pain for the infant and later adult may take the form of self – inflicted pain, used defensively as an 'Identification with the Aggressor'.

The infant believes to be the only 'object' of the (m)other's desire at this stage. However, this is somewhat short-lived, as the (m)other's absence(s) increase as the infant develops. Need is overtaken by demand. The infant has to enter into the '*Symbolic*'. "According to this model (need-demand-desire triad), the shift from that narcissistically enclosed space of the imaginary into the symbolic order of language comes through absence and loss. Words come to 'stand in' for the loss of imaginary desire and loves, as the child seeks to overcome 'lack' through symbolic expression "(Elliot, 1992, p.132). An observation that Freud made as he watched his grandson, was how he (his grandson) was able to 'master' presence(s) and absence(s) to avert his anxiety when his mother was absent. By using a cotton reel, which the child repeatedly threw away, and then recovered, he simultaneously uttered 'fort' (gone) and 'da'(there). Hence , through the use of language, Freud's grandson is able to avert anxiety, by learning to 'master' language.

The infant moves into the realm of the *Symbolic* and into a stage of demand, in order to regain the (m)other's presence/affection. Demand, however is intrinsically insatiable, for however demand manifests, it is actually a latent demand for that which the infant cannot have, namely the (m)other." The opening up of the unconscious through language thereby functions, paradoxically, as a site for the 'impossibility' of desire. It is through the *splitting* of need and demand - a gap which is constituted by language - that unconscious

desire is born " (Elliot, 1992, p.132). For Lacan, cited in Hill (1997), desire develops (marginally) with the separating of need from demand. Desire plays a significant role in our lives. It refers to that "which is missing: the object of desire " (p65). Hence desire is co-terminous to 'lack'. Desire is unconscious and therefore, inherently, inarticulable/unrepresentable. Desire underlies demand.

Discussing Lacan's 'mirror stage', Grosz highlights the significance (albeit covertly dangerous) of the 'visual'. "Of all the senses, vision remains the one which most readily confirms the separation of the subject from object. Vision performs a distancing function, leaving the looker unimplicated in or uncontaminated by its object " (Grosz, 1990, p.38). What is referred to as 'covertly dangerous' is that, in emphasising the 'visual', Grosz criticizes Lacan (who complies with Freud), for if 'ocularocentrism' is complicit with that which 'stands out' (phallus) "the female body can be construed as castrated, lacking a sexual organ, only on information provided by vision " (Grosz, 1990, p.39). Lacan redeems himself in his discussion of the 'gaze', for vision is differentiated from the other senses by virtue of its characteristics. This argument is elaborated by Ror Malone and Friedlander (2000), who say that "The gaze is not reduced to a function of the organ of scopophilia; it is sui generis a function by which one sees oneself as an object seen in the eyes of others. Thus the gaze is not involved in all perception; it is the medium of (self-) consciousness, the Ur-experience of self. . .an unconscious formation where the imaginary and symbolic meet " (p.255). Lacan explains that vision 'is' the only sense, that 'allows' one to simultaneously be a subject as well as an object, and, emphasises that

because of this complexity, the individual cannot be seen solely in *phallic* terms. This is essentially encapsulated by Grosz (1990), "For Lacan, the formula best capturing the complexity of the scopic drive is the statement, from Paul Valery, 'I saw myself seeing myself'. This makes clear that the subject cannot be reduced to the sum of anatomical functions "(p.79) .

Lacan differentiates vision from other sensations such as touch, where one is 'at one' with this sensation, for it is 'felt bodily'. Using (being in) the scopic field, affords one sight. However, more importantly for Lacan, this affords one to be seen. In other words, at a point of reiteration, one is both 'seeing' and being 'seen', or, both 'subject' and 'object'. This is substantiated by Shron (1996) who says that the way in which women have been taught by cultural institutions to internalize the gaze was reinforced by laws and images that privileged men. For Wittgenstein, cited in Heywood and Sandywell (1999), "The human gaze has the power of conferring value on things, but it makes them cost more too" (p. 57).

Cited in Shron(1996), Berger elaborates in the implicit meaning of *the Gaze*, "(Woman) come to consider the surveyor and the surveyed within her as the two constituent yet always distinct elements of her identity as a woman. . .men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves " (p.11). In a similar vein, Lacan cited in Grosz (1990), succinctly puts it that, " The gaze is what ensures that when I see, at the same time, 'I am photo - graphed'"

(p.79). Loosely translated Lacan means that implicit in the gaze, is that one is a subject, for one is seeing, yet, concomitantly, one is 'objectified'.

Chapter Five

Interpretation and Discussion

"Between the meanings of consciousness and reality there yawns a veritable abyss."

- Edmund Husserl (1859 - 1938).

Introduction

"the function of language is not to inform but to evoke"

- Jacques Lacan (1977).

Upon analysis, one is faced with a barrage of information by way of the transcripts, albeit Lacan emphasises that analysis (interpretation) requires an underlying understanding. An interpretation that is not based upon *prima facie* information, but upon a deep understanding, revealed/evoked by language (of the participants).

Using thematic analysis, this chapter has been divided into significant themes, that have arisen upon interpretation of the participants' (pierces') interviews (transcripts). Each of the themes consists of sub - themes. The four major themes that have emerged from the analysis, and subsequent sub - themes include:

- (i) *Defence(s) Against Loss*, under which are the sub - themes *Introjection, Within Without, Reifying Loss, Repitition, and The Gaze*;
- (ii) *(I)dentify* which comprises of the sub-themes of: *Refusal and Defiance - A Rebellion Against (I)dentify, Individuation and Difference, Surfaces, and Body Image*;
- (iii) *Piercings and Femininty*, within which the sub-theme of *Aesthetic Appeal* is juxtaposed against *Rebellion Against Femininty*, and,

(iv) the theme of *Control* is discussed, which, includes the sub-themes of *Intrinsic Pain and Masochism : The Emotional Abstract*, and *Reclamation of the Abused Body*.

(I) Defence(s) Against Loss

"Despite a clouded memory, the mind seeks its own good, though like a drunkard it cannot find the path home."

- Ancius Manlius Severinus Boethius (c. 480 - c.524).

All participants were found to have experienced loss of their parents, either by way of death or divorce. Whilst several of the sub-themes that have arisen from the transcripts, reflect the various psychoanalytic defences used by the participants to defend against these issues, *Defence(s) Against Loss* emerged as an over-arching theme from the analysis.

Whilst Ricoeur's hermeneutic phenomenology, the method used in this research, combines both understanding and explanation, to elaborate interpretation, a point that merits attention is that the participants do not 'always' explicitly state that the piercings are meaningful in the sense that they are used in *Defence(s) Against Loss*. However, there are traces of this meaning that have been interpreted as such from the excerpts. Bearing in mind that a *Psychoanalytic* approach informs the interpretation, meaning is not necessarily strikingly 'visible' in the excerpts, for psychoanalysis advocates that it is latent (unconscious) meaning which 'determines' conscious meaning.

With regard to participants B, T and Z, their parents are divorced. J and R's father died, as well as Ta's mother. For these participants, piercing appears to serve as a defence against anxiety that has arisen from the loss of significant 'other'(s) in the piercees' lives. The physical pain that resulted from the piercing process, was interpreted as attaining symbolic significance associated with the loss experienced by all the participants. An example of how this *pain* manifests as a piercing for this participant, is illustrated by the following quotation, below. The latter part of the excerpt, "*it's adding parts of your body*", shows how the piercings 'become' a compensation for the participant; a compensation premised upon the death (loss) of her father.

"you know it was a good couple months until I'd wake up one morning and think I really (drawn out) wanna go today I feel ready for it now ummm that's to get rid of the pain. . . it takes you a couple of weeks to sit down properly yeah. . but. . it it's definitely when you feel eh yah I think it's it's a I donno I can't explain it it's a very emotional it's an emotional thing (piercing) you know it's adding parts of your body and you're taking away parts of your body. . ."
(Transcript 2, 2000, p.9)

This is discussed further in the sub-theme of *Within Without*. The pain that the participants talk about, is the pain of losing a 'significant other' in their lives either by way of death of a parent or through separation by their parents' divorce. The following excerpt shows the effect that her parent's divorce had on the participant (Z).

"I was very sad I mean any girl would be sad losing her dad and I also felt it made me a lot stronger you know I'm a stronger person I can stand up for myself I've I've learnt you know not to run to my parents when I need help I've learnt to help myself when I need if I need anything else " (Transcript 6, 2000, p.1-2).

When Z was questioned as to what 'weak' meant to her, she responded by saying :

"mmm . . . weak I dunno . . . weak as when you can't take care of yourself you need someone else to be there for you the whole time. . . yah I'll say that's weak . . ."(Transcript 6, 2000, p.2).

Z's parents' divorce made her a stronger person as opposed to having to depend on her father because she said that he was never there for her (p.3). The following excerpt reflects his absence for Z, and, also, a sense of Z being ignored (which was understood because her father was 'never there' for Z). As shown in one of this participant's quotes above, Z said that she was 'sad losing her dad'. Her sadness would have been reinforced by his (absence) rejection of her.

"well I just. . . I just ignored it if he wasn't if he was never there for me . . . what is there what must I do you know. . . because he wasn't really there for me he wasn't there when I went to my matric dance he wasn't there when I turned sixteen. . . it's little things like that. . . lot of Christmases we didn't spend with them (father and stepmother)" (Transcript 6, 2000, p.3).

Therefore, upon reflection, the piercing served as an attempt to gain her father's attention (even negative attention because her father dislikes any body alterations), The following quotation substantiates this.

"if he had seen it . . . welllll (drawn out) I actually don't know because my dad he actually doesn't like piercings. . . heee (drawn out) hates piercings and he hates tattoos he hates everything . . . he doesn't like

piercings because he's a karate instructor and this one guy walked in with an earring and he just pulled it out. . I think he'll actually pull this one out as well" (Transcript 6, 2000, pp 6:7).

For another participant, the piercings were done with a similar motive, in an evocative attempt to obtain a response from her mother who was dying with cancer. She said she showed her mother the piercings but ,

"my father threw an absolute fit my mother had no response (quietly)" (Transcript 5, 2000, p.5).

Further substantiating how the piercings may have been a frugal attempt to 'seek' a attention from her dying mother, later in the interview, Ta says with regard to her piercings:

". . . okay I guess I'm a bit of an attention seeker in some ways . . . everyone likes attention " (Transcript 5, 2000, p.11).

In the same quote, Ta reveals how 'rewarding' the piercings were in terms of the attention received from strangers (somewhat of a compensation for Ta's inattentive mother).

*" just seeing the expression or shock on peoples' faces is when they **notice** that I've got a bar of metal stuck through my tongue or my lips it's. . . it is quite funny to see how shocked they are "* (Transcript 5, 2000, p.11) (own emphasis).

The word 'notice' has been highlighted to show the significance of Ta's piercings as an attempt to be noticed by her mother, the 'notice' that she would have liked to have received from her mother, but instead took pleasure in receiving this attention from strangers.

Another participant whose parents were divorced 'found' that she had to depend on herself. She says up until the age of five she thought that the neighbour was her mother having been left in the neighbour's care for so long. Up until the age of twelve, she was also mistaken as to the identity of her biological father. This will be further elaborated in the theme of *(I)identity*. The following quotation substantiates her 'unknowingness' with regard to the identity of her mother and father :

"my mom was never theree soo (drawn out) I was always passed onto the next door neighbour up until the age of five the next door neighbour I actually used to think that the next door neighbour was my mother to a point because my mom always went out and used to point you know 'Go There' and you know you don't really know, , , when I was twelve I only found out the guy I thought was my father wasn't my father and it's pretty hectic for a child that age to go through " (Transcript 3.1, 2000, p. 1)

There is strong evidence from the excerpts, for the piercings being used as *Defence(s) Against Loss*, in the way that it appears to alleviate underlying anxiety. This is corroborated by Strong, who, cited in Beauregard (1999), " suggests that while not all people who pierce themselves have psychological disorders, it becomes difficult to argue that someone whose identity lifestyle seems arranged around reconfiguring their body is not acting out deeper conflicts" (p.5).

(i) Introjection

"All things appear, but we cannot see the gate from which they come "

- Chuangste (1948).

At the point of renouncing language, the 'significant other' who is an 'extension of the participants, becomes 'physically embodied' (/ part of the participants' bodies) by way of piercings (the jewelery). The piercings do not 'leave' (because they are attached to the body as significant 'others' have in the participants' lives). This excerpt elaborates the way in which the piercings become that physical 'something' that the participant can hold onto. Also, this excerpt demonstrates upon how the piercings *become part of the self*/ an extension of this participants.

"you know something (piercings) I can hold onto. . . yah it's it's almost llike (thinking draws out word) an extension of you. . . you have them there for the very just for the very knowledge that you have them umm it's very odd . . . it's an odd thing to explain because you you Fully conscious of them all the time but you know they're (piercings) there" (Transcript 2, 2000, p.12).

A poignant point that R makes, is that *'you know they're there'*. This substantiates the physical presence of her piercings.

One of the defences that the participants appear to have used against loss, is *Introjection*. This is a normal developmental process whereby a person 'takes into one's self', characteristics of a significant 'other' person. Rycroft (1965) defines introjection as

“the process by which the functions of an external object are taken over by mental representations by which the relationship with an object ‘out there’ is replaced by one with an imagined object ‘inside’ ” (p.87). It is a way of developing an individual's sense of identity in relation to significant others (usually caretakers), whereby absences are compensated for. The infant learns to introject ‘objects’ to overcome anxiety that may result from the absence of the (m)other. Freud's grandson made use of a cotton reel as a transient object. In Freud's famous account of this ‘game’, which was referred to as the Fort / Da (Gone / Here) game, the cotton reel served as a physical means of facilitating the child's understanding of presence(s) and absence(s), whereby the cotton reel appeared to be symbolic of his mother. Furthermore, he (grandson) used the cotton reel in order to ‘master’ language, thereby paving the way for his entry into the ‘*Symbolic order*’. In addition, Rycroft's definition explains that this process is used both defensively (to allay anxiety) as well as in the normal developmental process so that an individual may attain autonomy from caretakers and develop a separate sense of identity.

(ii) Within Without

*"If I were a leaded pane I could not summon your outer gaze
more into myself than I do your inner thought"*

- Dante (Inferno)

As with everybody, the participants as infants had to learn to differentiate their bodies from significant ‘others’, an inner subjective ‘sense of self’ (a sense of ‘mineness’), from an outer objective sense of ‘others’ (a sense of ‘otherness’). In this sense, then the piercee's body ‘gives’ one a sense of identity, and more specifically in this research the skin was

found to be used to make explicit this differentiation. The piercings, appear to 'serve' as 'taking into piercee's self' that which is not part of the piercee, whereby the jewelry would come to be symbolic of the 'not self' (the significant 'others'). Piercing as opposed to tattooing, scarring, branding, sewing and other body modifications, is 'different' because it 'sticks out'. The jewelry used in the piercings, then, is a parody, for it is simultaneously part of the participants, cutaneously, forming part of the skin, yet also not part of the participants, because it is 'beyond their skin' (in the way that it 'sticks out'). The following excerpt has been repeated for it illustrates the way in which jewelry appears to be '*within without*'.

"...but... it it's definitely when you feel eh yah I think it's it's a I donno I can't explain it it's a very emotional it's a very emotional thing (piercing) you know it's you adding parts of your body and you're taking away parts of your body... " (Transcript 2, 2000, p.9).

The piercings are concomitantly 'within without'. They are part of the piercees because the piercings 'penetrate the skin' (within), albeit it is also exteriorized, external to the piercees' skin (because the jewelry sticks out beyond the skin) and inadvertently external to the piercees (without). At a psychological level the piercings appear to 'allow' the participants to 'take' a significant 'other' ('lost object') 'within', that 'other', which the participants are 'without', "*you adding parts of your body*". This is further exemplified by the following excerpt from a participant who also used her piercings to deal with her anxiety. Ta, whose mother had died, said that her mother was creative. The following excerpt substantiates this.

"I was raised for the earlier part of my life by my mother who's very creative" (Transcript 5, 2000, p.1).

The piercings appear a way for Ta to identify with her mother's creativity, for later on in the interview, when questioned as to 'what makes Ta want to be different' , she replied :

"I found that I am different from most other people in most respects I can't really say how I am different 'cos most of the time I don't see it I find myse (thought interrupts speech) I believe myself to be completely normal just like everyone else I just happen to like pieces of metal stuck through me I like the way it looks. . . I think I'm just a bit more re - spirited more creative than other people "(Transcript 5, 2000, p. 8).

This is significant because Ta is unconsciously identifying (" *'cos most of the time I don't see it'*") with her mother's creativeness, by way of her piercings. In so doing, Ta is 'taking in' (creativeness of mother), that which she is 'without' (her mother).

An understanding that occurs primarily at a physical level (usually early childhood), and, secondarily at a psychological level (usually later childhood and adulthood), is that the significant 'other' (in the example mentioned this is represented by the mother) is not part of the infant (piercee) and is therefore beyond the infant's (piercee's) capacity to control presence(s) and absence(s). The infant has to find a way of 'dealing' with this important discovery. That 'other' which is 'part' of piercee's self is 'beyond the self', because they are absent from the participants' lives. In Lacanian terms this discovery of 'self' and '(m)other' is said to take place in the *Imaginary* stage, where the infant believes that the (m)other is available on the infant's 'demand'. It is through the infant's entry into

the *Symbolic* order that this *Imaginary* dyad between infant and (m)other is broken. There is a transition from the *Imaginary* stage to the *Symbolic* stage which *enables* the infant to *deal with* the (m)other's absence, where words come to represent the absent (m)other. The renouncing of 'words' and resultant celebration of the bodies by the piercees are explored within *Piercings and Femininity*.

(iii) Reifying Loss

"The way out is via the door. Why is it that no one will use this way ?

- Confucious.

Piercings also appear to be used as a way of 'taking into the piercees (physically) the significant 'other' who is absent. For the participants whose parent (object) is dead (non presence), the piercings, appears to be symbolic of the lost 'other'.

In essence, what R is saying in the quotation that follows, is that she can handle the pain of the piercings as opposed to the loss of her father. In this way, the piercings attempt to compensate for what she has lost. When she says, "*look what you now have*", it's almost as if a parent is attempting to console a child with a gift to compensate for her loss. This is illustrated by the following excerpt.

*" I needed that little bit of extra to be comfortable with myself
umm I needed uh . . . you know a type of pain that I can hold
onto that is you know something that I can hold onto and let go
of myself physically or or uh properly you know . . . yah it's it's almost
like an extension of you . . . it's that little bit of extra . . . that little*

bit of extra boost that makes you feel a bigger a better person. . . you look at yourself you say look what I've done this isss (thought draws out word). . . you know I can handle it (piercings) it's not unmanageable nothing's unmanageable look what you now have. . . to ease (the pain). . . you know . . . think that" (Transcript 2, 2000, p. 12).

Where death renders one helpless, the piercings 'extend' a sense of control by way of introjection and identification. (Extend is placed within inverted commas to emphasise how the piercings appear to be an 'extension of the piercees/ selves'). In other words, there appears to be an I/ 'other' conflict that takes place 'at the *Surface*' that is reflective of a 'deeper' conflict.

Using piercings to reify loss may also be reflected in an understanding of 'divorced daughters', whereby a significant 'other' (in the interviews conducted this was attributed to the father) is absent. According to B her piercings accentuated her differences from other people because she didn't want 'to be *NORMAL*'. She considered the way she was brought up, without her 'real' father, to be '*like a normal life*'. The piercings, appear inadvertently to be a rejection of a life she regarded as normal. The first two excerpts illustrates this.

*"y' know it's weird I tell people my life story and they're 'oh wow it's so terrible' and 'oh shame' y' know but for me it was **like** a normal life " (Transcript 3.2, 2001, p.4) (own emphasis added).*

*"I like to have piercings and I like to be different . . . tooo. . . be eccentric and to do other things and to to I don't like to be **NORMAL** (emphasized)" (Transcript 3.2, 2001, p. 23).*

Interestingly, B describes her life *'like a normal life'* in the first excerpt. It is almost as if she is not entirely convinced / does not really feel that it is 'normal'. Yet in the second excerpt, she emphasises she does not like to be 'NORMAL'. The piercings appears to be an 'unconscious' repudiation of the 'normal' life that she would have 'liked' to have. The next quote shows how her piercings make her feel like an outcast.

"I wouldn't go far as sayyy. . . rejection. . . as being rejected though . . . I would sayy (pause) that they would look at you funny and think maybe an outcast. . . or mayb just just different I don't think rejection I think rejection is a strong word I think just as an outcast" (Transcript 3.2, 2001, p.6)

In this quote, B discusses 'pain' she felt when she broke up with her boyfriend.

"thepainoffeelingrejected (one breathe) when you cry so HARD (emphasized) and you put so much into something and somebody will just turn around and walk away anger is the worst pain I could ever feel" (Transcript 3.2, 2001, p. 18).

The following excerpt reveals the length she went to, to track down her biological father. Her attempts to find her father, reflects the way in which this piercee was in want of ('search of') a 'normal' childhood.

"it's not like I needed a dad okay it's just that I knew that there was somebody out there whooo I had come from . . . my biological father I knew he was out there and all I wanted to do was just to speak to the guy and I think ask him a few things y' know like 'why didn't you ever get hold of me ?' because the whole thing is he knew exactly where I was

and I didn't know where he was his parents lived up the road from me y' know what I mean andd. . . he never even bothered he'd. . . he just didn't bother so. . . in a way y' know I thought hey y' know why didn't you do that why you didn't . . . make the effort I mean I made an effort after eight years he just seemed to blow it off maybe he feels a little bit guilty about everything . . . as well (softly) " (Transcript 3.2, 2001, p.2).

"I asked him why he didn't contact me and he couldn't give me a straight answer there's just like 'uhhh whatever' and he still didn't give me a straight answer . . . which means he's guilty. . . surely. . . doesn't it ? (Transcript 3.2, 2001, p.25).

In this sense, B appears to be identifying with her father who abandoned her, "*maybe he feels a little bit guilty about everything . . . as well (softly)*" (own emphasis added).

When B adds, 'as well' she appears to be admitting to her own feelings of guilt because she felt angry towards her father. The quote below exemplifies her anger.

"I was angry no I was angry when I first spoke to him (biological father) and I asked him nnn (recollection of experience) oh when I first got there he told me 'no I'm not your father' I was angry y' know because I've looked for you for eight years I've travelled alll (emphasised) this way to see you. . . he couldn't give me a real reason (why he didn't contact B) and that made me angry " (Transcript 3.2, 2001, p.).

Collectively, these quotes illustrate the anger and helplessness that she felt as a child, that can now be redirected towards her, masochistically. In this way the physical piercings are her way of 'mastering' the *psychological pain of loss*. Interestingly in the one quote B is uncertain about her father's guilt, whilst in the second quote, his guilt is comparatively

more definitive, '*he's guilty*'. Moreover, the word 'rejection' which B replaces with 'outcast' appears to describe the way in which piercings effectuated this position, however the piercings appear to be reflective of B's life, where she was 'abandoned' (by her parents). In this way, the piercings appear to reify loss. Ironically, the word 'rejected' that B initially denied, was used to describe her pain (all said in one breathe). This further substantiates the way in which the piercings 'reify' the loss that B felt, with regard to 'being rejected' by her parents. Also, a quote that reflects the loss that B felt because of the absence of her father, is substantiated by the quote below.

" . . . I think it was one of my it was like. . uh an emptying. . . emptiness (long pause) that was just something missing I KNEW (emphasised) that there was just somebody out there and I think it helped me get through the whole situation. . . I just wanted to speak to him REALLY (emphasised) but I ended up meeting him and I found out what he was like and whatever and I moved on and I think that was like closure for me" (Transcript 3.2, 2001, p.5).

A psychological pain experienced by the piercees are compensated for by physical pain rendered by the process of piercing, which in this research manifests as multiple body piercings. This is further elaborated within the theme of *Intrinsic Pain and Masochism*, the physical pain experienced by piercing compensates for the abstract psychological pain. The excerpt that follows illustrates the way in which the piercings assist R in transforming unpalatable abstract pain into 'something beautiful', that allows the person to be 'productive' in the sense that it serves to enhance her'.

"it makes all the pain and emotions you just can't express it makes themm. . . tangible. . . that hurts (piercings) but it's beautiful and I can change it it's something that uhhmm I can take all a lot of pain and I can make it into something beautiful it's it's no longer gonna hurt me it's gonna be something that enhances me and makes it a bit better. . . "(Transcript 2, 2000, pps. 7-8).

Another form of loss that affords interpretation, is the loss of a 'sense of self' experienced by some who were abused. As a discussion that could be elaborated in '*Reclamation of the Body*', it appears, however, to be more relevant within a discussion of *(I)identity*. Elaborated in the literature review, Milia elaborated on the defensive process of 'splitting' used by victims of abuse. This is where the 'bad other' takes the form of the jewelry in piercings, which serve as a form of 'reintegration' and harmonisation between 'inner and outer worlds'. Also, cited in Milia (2000), Van der Kolk discussed dissociation, which is used by people who have been abused as a form of defence. Van der Kolk contends that the piercings then appear to reintegrate/merge a 'cut-off' sense of self (participants who were abused) The blood that results from the piercings 'allow' for this reintegration, upon its appearance The bleeding that arises from the piercings appear to reinforce the piercees' 'being' (whereby bleeding is indubitably associated with 'humaness' - it is only human to bleed). Upon interpretation the piercing serves to reinforce the 'splitting' because the 'bad object' is externalized as the jewelry, and in this way the piercing help to transform the participant, because the piercings serve to 'restore a balance "between inner and outer worlds "(Milia, 2000, p.73). At the same time, the piercings appear to counteract the 'dissociation' experienced (usually linked with people who have experienced abuse) because of the bleeding that occurs when the

participants pierce (needle/instrument that punctures)their flesh. Furthermore, piercings appear to serves as a way of 'distancing people', piercings thereby reinstates 'power' to the 'victim of abuse'. J 'discusses' how her abuse had affected her, and, inadvertently, how the piercings helped her. (Although the word 'victim' is not one that would have been ideally chosen or used, used here, it emphasises the sense of empowerment conveyed to the piercee by and through the piercings which effectively keeps people away) After the interview J admitted that pain made her feel 'real' (counteracting the defence of dissociation). Also, the jewelry in the piercing process appear to allow the participant to exteriorize the 'the bad self'. Moreover, the piercings effectively 'distanced' J from the 'bad object' (the man who was the perpetrator of her abuse).

"I suppose it's so long when you block something off or keep it down because 'you can't really feel yourself' because you haven't come to terms with it you know. . it took me about eight years off. . quite a bit of emotional turmoil because by the time I was twenty- five I really did make a conscious decision to try and be happier. . try and live my life to the fullest so I think I was about twenty - five when I started thinking that I have a right to 'live and be happy' and I mustn't be so hard on men because for a lon (change in direction of thought) it can mess up your relationships you know I've never had a relationship that worked"
(Transcript 1, 2000, p.7)

J said that she had started piercing when she was twenty-three. however, she began to feel at 'peace' when she was twenty-five. This substantiates the way in which her piercings appear to serve their defensive purposes, for she began piercing when she was twenty-three and as the piercings appear to have helped to return 'control' (discussed in *Reclamation of the abused body*) to J, they 'allowed' her to 'happy' when she was twenty-five.

(iv) Repetition

" There are strange paths in life, some of which look like circles "

- Georg Groddeck.

Participants indicated that the piercings were addictive. What unfolds as interesting is the way in which the participants necessarily 'have to have' more piercings. The excerpts reveal the addictive aspect of piercing(s).

"when people are looking for something that they can't get hold of they become obsessive because what it's just oeh you know they just can't find it they're looking for something they just can't get a hold of. . . it's addictive (piercings) . . . it's incredibly addictive" (Transcript 2, 2000, p.8).

"it's like a rush I suppose it must be 'cos it's addictive (laughter) I think that's like the main thing 'cos once you've had it done you have to keep it going because they are addictive . . . it's so addictive you have to get more done I don't know why (whisperingly) I suppose it's got deep psychological undertones (laughter) " (Transcript 4, 2000, p. 9).

The above quotes substantiate how the piercings appear to be somewhat of a fulfillment of a 'lack', a lack which is inherently unfulfilled. The piercings are an attempt to fulfill them, so the person may feel complete, hence the addictive aspect of the piercing(s).

Cited in Milia (2000), "Van der Kolk (1996) suggests that repetitive self - abuse

behaviours may be related to Freud's idea of a compulsion to repeat in the present emotionally charged experiences that are unintegrated and repressed from conscious memory " (p.70). One of the stipulations for the selection of participants was that they had multiple piercings. However, not only do they feel compelled to pierce, but they also felt compelled to repeat piercings that were not successful the first time around, even when they were aware of the pain that they would experience. This following excerpt showed this. The participant is referring to a facial piercing that would not 'take' in her left cheek, because according to her the left cheek is about a millimetre thicker than the right cheek.

"err just a millimeter probably not quite but anyway enough for it to swell and become very very sore so after a while I took it out but it was difficult to take it out because it was swelling and because your cheek is soft the back had sunk in the cheek so I couldn't grab it for like three days I was like in agony it was really really sore so I eventually I managed to get it out and I just never got round to re - doing it " (Transcript 1, 2000, p.55).

In the interview, along with re-piercing her left cheek, J also discussed that along with re-piercing her left cheek, she would like to get other piercings such as one on the small inner cartilage in her ear.

(v) The Gaze

" You never look at me from the place at which I see you"

- Jacques Lacan (1977).

As elaborated upon in chapter four, according to Lacan, *the Gaze* confers objectivity, \ because 'others' (people) **see** the participants, as well as subjectivity because the participants are aware of themselves, being **seen** by 'others'. J elaborates upon this, when she discusses how her piercings 'give her a sense of identity / a subjective sense of herself, objectified by those who see her.

"they said 'you know the girl with the short blonde hair and the big tattoo on her back and all the piercings' and they would say 'Oh J' you know what I mean so it's quite a . . . strange thing how it's made me look at myself because now suddenly people know who I am in Durban " (Transcript 1, 2000 p.59).

In line with this Lacanian view of *the Gaze*, one 'sees', whilst concomitantly, one is seen. It is the 'other', the person(s) that one is seen by who confirms a sense of self, and , given the primacy of vision, piercings appear to confirm a sense of identity by way of *the Gaze*. Berger cited in Shron (1996), says that the *Gaze* makes women aware of themselves. Following this line of thought, Lacan, cited in Grosz (1990) says, " The gaze is what ensures that when I see, at the same time, 'I am photo - graphed' "(p.79).

The excerpts below show how the following participants feel 'objectified' by people looking at them, because they have piercings. What is emphasised in the excerpts

is that participants B and Ta, 'would' like to be more than 'mere objects'

"some people look and some people don't accept it" (Transcript 3.2, 2001, p.5).

B goes on to say:

". . . if somebody's going to look at me funny. . . and they gonna move on okay that's their opinion that's fine but if they're not going to take the time and get to know who I am. . . if they could be somebody who looks strange I would take the time to get to know them I don't like I said now I don't lookk at people face value "
(Transcript 3.2, 2001, p.3).

Ta says:

"I DON'T REALLY WANT PEOPLE (emphasised) that aren't prepared to accept me for who I am. . . go away I don't care about you if you're prepared to look pass at everything and look at who I actually am then I w than I want to speak to you" (Transcript 5, 2000, p.14).

Through the process of evolution, the sense of smell, has become subverted to the auspice of 'sight'. Occular - centredness then is privileged in a patriarchal world where the 'phallus' is celebrated as the visual signifier, thereby, tending to attain more significance than that which is not visual. By way of sex, the penis tends to be privileged over the vagina because of its visibility. The piercings stick out, affording the piercees a privilege usually occupied by men. The gaze which appears to be shallow is not superficial, although it is done only at a surface level. Whether the piercings are done

consciously in an attempt to seek attention (as elaborated in *Defence(s) Against Loss*) or they are done as an expression of the participants as individuals, they stick out, they are visible. A participant mentioned that the piercings act as a way of filtering people. In this way the piercings defensively distance others. This process filters people who are affected by what appears on the surface, and would not take the time to get to know you, from those who look beneath the mask, to find the 'real' person. People who fall into the category of the latter are regarded as being less likely 'to leave'. This is extremely important, given that most participants in retrospect, have lost a significant 'other'. This then comes full circle to the initial theme where the piercings serve as *Defence(s) Against Loss*.

(II)(I)identity

*"Just as you cannot survive without dreams
You cannot move on without the memory of where you
come from, even if that journey is fictitious,
Is what we call identity not that situation made up of bits and pieces
which one remembers from previous encounters, events and situations.
Is memory not hanging from the branches ?*

- Breyten Bretenbach (1998).

The 'I' in identity is placed within brackets throughout this section. One's identity is contingent upon 'I', for one cannot develop a 'sense of self', an 'I', if one cannot conceive of one's self as a separate person. In other words 'I' is formative of one's identity. Cited in Hayes (1984), Wilden contends that "He (the child) cannot become a subject until he can say 'I'" (p.88). Questions relating to (i)identity were one of the essential focal areas of this research, in an attempt to understand how the participants

experiences of piercing impacted upon their (i)dentities.

The following excerpt serves as an exemplar of how piercings affected the (i)identity of the participants:

"it sort of gives me an identity. . I thinkk because. I've been referred to as 'that girl with the piercings and the big tattoo'. . I . . . stick out in that crowd it's given me an identity " (Transcript 1, 2000, p.59).

The skin is the surface layer. Its purpose is multifaceted. In terms of (i)identity, the skin differentiates the participants from 'others' . It separates beings (pierced and other people), consequently giving each a piercee a unique, individual sense of self. The skin 'is' the boundary that defines an individual's (participant's) sense of self (within), from the external, outer world of 'other(s)' (without).

As elaborated in chapter 4, the 'mirror stage', according to Lacan, serves to form the bedrock of one's sense of self / (i)identity. The mirror stage is symbolic of the perspicacious permanence of the 'I', whilst simultaneously allowing one to project one's self, where in an ambiguously self determinate world, one aspires to find completion. The discord herein lies at the basis of attaining this (i)identity, for this is based on a presumption of completion, whilst the infant is biologically incomplete. In the aforementioned sub - theme of *Reifying Loss*, there was a discussion of how the piercings are compensatory for the participants, with regard to the loss of significant

others that are either dead or absent. The piercings are enmeshed in one's sense of self in order to compensate for this loss. However, just as the mirror stage culminates in an identity that is inherently precarious, so too are the identities of the piercees, because their sense of selves / (i)dentities are fabricated upon a psychological compensation. So whilst the piercings are separatist, in so far as it highlights the boundary (distinction) between inner and outer worlds, it is concomitantly 'fusionist'. A fusion that is premised upon that fabrication. This will be elaborated in the theme of *Surfaces*.

The (m)other - infant dyad, according to Lacan, is constituted by the Imaginary order. The (m)other then becomes significant in the infant's and consequently adult's life in terms of identifications. Albeit it is the mirror stage which composes the infant's *primary identification*, the (m)other has a important influence in this. For the participants, their mothers played a significant role in this, as reflected by the following quotations :

"my mom and I are really close. . . my mother and I were always very close" (Transcript 1, p.1, 2000).

"I think it would have to be my mom. . . she (referring to herself) saw her mom and her mom loved her. . . sort of a model for you growing up. . . she's gonna have to be the most incredible person I've ever ever known in the world not just because I love her but because she's I I jusst can't comprehend how amazing she is".
(Transcript 2, p.4, 2000).

"my mom love my mom. . . my mom. . . very similar to me she's into all the same things as me so we get along very well. . . I don't know it's just like we completely we almost identical like clones of one another"

(Transcript 4, p2, 2000).

"oh my mom my beautiful mom. . . well I think if my mom wasn't there in my life I would have been a very soft person my mom is very strong that's where I got my strength from. . . she's a very strong person you know herr 'gees' . . . spirit is very strong. . . she's influenced me to be a woman. . . i think I'm a very mommy's girl . . . I donno my mom didn't teach me how to be strong I think it's because she's so strong that I just looked up to her and followed her footsteps how to be a strong woman " (Transcript 6, pps. 3-4, 2000).

All of the above participants have navel piercings. In terms of identifying with their mother, this piercing seems to celebrate their birth and hence this identification. Poignantly, the navel is the site of creation, symbolic of women. The piercing is significant because it is corporeally acknowledging a 'fusion' with the mother (creator of self) in terms of establishing a sense of (i)identity. It serves as a powerful means of re – enacting/ returning to the original bond.

J's mother 'freaked out' about her navel piercing. Her mother said *"That's where they cut you from me and you're piercing it"*, to which J's response was *"Momm I'm decorating it to show them how proud I am that that's where they cut you from me"* (Transcript 1, 2000, p.31).

Cited in Minsky (1996), "Lacan calls this early and fragile kind of identity an *Imaginary* one because, although it feels real to us, it unconsciously depends on someone or something outside ourselves, from which we are separated, for its support. This self or ego is never our own because it depends on our identifications - it is always fused with

other people or other things, who then form a part of us " (p.141). The navel piercing appears to serve as a means of identifying with their mother(who most participants agreed to be the most significant influence in their life/ could most identify with).

The above findings do not apply for B (Transcript 3), her relationship with her mother was physically abusive as her mother was an alcoholic. She was passed onto her grandmother when she was five.

"umm my momm. . . uh I stayed with my mom till I was about five and then she gave mme to my gran basically. . . my mom was never there soo I was always passed onto the next door neighbour I actually used to think that the next door neighbour was my mother but if it wasn't for my gran I probably wouldn't be where I was. . . she gave me everything. . . she gave up her life for me. . . as far as a MOTHER a mother's influence on a child what iss . . what is wrong and right in life andd how to use decisions in life I had to do that all on my own " (Transcript 3.2, 2000, p 1).

With regard to transcript 5, Ta's mother was ill with cancer and died when she was young. According to her, her father predominantly, influenced her, albeit, her mother had a significant impact on her development as she grew up stronger than she otherwise would have. As already discussed under the theme *Defence(s) Against Loss*, within the sub-theme *Within Without*, Ta remarks on the creative aspect of her mother, which she inadvertently identified with, by way of her piercings.

According to Storr (1997), citing Brown and Harris "loss of mother before eleven may well permanently lower a woman's feeling of mastery and self - esteem and hence act as a vulnerability factor by interfering with the way she deals with loss in adulthood" (p.126). Piercing attempts to assist in recovering the lowered esteem, and mastery, by allowing the piercee to 'master' her 'body' (the one 'thing' she truly owns), in this way defending against the helplessness she felt as a child when she lost her mother (Storr, 1997).

According to Evans (1996), the *Imaginary* dyad of (m)other and infant is 'broken up' by the 'father's' intervention. This precipitates the infant's entry into the *Symbolic* order, predominated by symbols (usually in the form of words and hence language). "Since the most basic form of exchange is communication itself (the exchange of words, the gift of speech, and since the concepts of LAW and STRUCTURE are unthinkable without LANGUAGE, the symbolic is essentially a linguistic dimension " (Evans, 1996, p.201). The infant's *Demands* are frustrated as it realises that the (m)other cannot provide all that is wanted. With the movement from the *Imaginary* to the *Symbolic*, the child is then in a position "to start identifying its own *desire*, as separate from its mother's" (Hill, 1997, p.66). *Desire* is congruous with *lack*, that which is not there, 'the object of *Desire*'. In other words, the participants cannot desire 'something' that they have, because desire in itself denotes a desire for that which the participants do not have, 'that' which the participants are lacking.

The piercings appear to play a significant role in attempting to complete the lack, thereby satiating their *Desire*. Moreover, if *lack* is the object of *desire* then the piercings in this light may serve as a way of making up for the lack in an attempt to find fulfillment.

All of the participants have tongue piercings. J elaborates on what 'one' does with 'one's mouth. In the second quote J discusses how her tongue piercing affected her speech as well as what she could eat. She also differentiates the experience of the healing process for the tongue piercing from the other piercings because 'the healing time can be felt', as the tongue is an integral part of J's body.

"what do you do with your mouth you kiss you eat you speak "
(Transcript 1, 2000 p.41).

" it affects the way you spoke. . . so it's another whole thing it's not just. . . ju (thought interrupted) done and you forget about it for a couple of days you do speak with a slight like thick tongue you know because the tongue does swell a bit. . . it was quite hectic 'cos you actually feel the healing time the others (piercings) just heal slowly this one you're always aware of it because it's your tongue's gotten swollen you can't swallow" (Transcript 1, 2000, p. 48).

For J, the tongue piercing has become an important 'part' of her. The following quote substantiates this claim.

"when I take my tongue piercing out which I only have like probably three times ever just to see what the hole looks like my tongue suddenly felt terrible I thought ' Oh my God something's missing something's missing' like I hated the feeling of not having it in" (Transcript 1, 2000, p. 50).

Interestingly, J 'personifies her tongue' when she says that *'my tongue suddenly felt terrible'*, almost as if J's tongue has a 'mind of its own'.

J adds that along with the nipple and genital piercings the tongue piercing does serve to be sexually enhancing.

"I suppose that these does these (piercings)ones do come into sex I suppose your tongue and your nipples and your clitoris or genital piercings whichever piercings you do now come into like getting involved in sex and a little bit more exciting because you now got something else" (Transcript 1, 2000, p.51).

In Freud's 'psychosexual stages of development, he discusses the 'oral stage', where the infant experiences the world primarily through its mouth. Freud (1916), describes the infant at the mother's breast when 'it' is not propelled by 'hunger', as 'sensual sucking'. According to Freud (1916), "Sucking at the mother's breast is the starting-point of the whole sexual life the unmatched prototype of every later sexual satisfaction, to which phantasy often recurs in times of need. This sucking involves making the mother's breast

the first object of the sexual instinct. I can give you no idea of the important bearing of this first object upon the choice of every later object, of the profound effects it has in its transformations and substitutions in even the remotest regions in our sexual life...in his sucking activity, (the infant) gives up this object and replaces it by a part of his own body. He begins to suck his thumb or his own tongue " (p.356). Furthermore, in his *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, Freud writes "if hunger and thirst (the two most elementary self - preservative instincts) are unsatisfied, the result is never their transformation into anxiety, whereas the changing of unsatisfied libido into anxiety is " (1916, p.462). What Freud is saying then, is that if hunger and thirst are not met, this does not transform into anxiety. However, the unsatiated libido does result in the formation of anxiety.

I suggest the following analysis of tongue piercing as playing a significant role in attaining the fulfillment of desire.

The tongue is a sexual organ. Piercing the tongue then subverts / alleviates anxiety. Also, significant is that the tongue is imperative in the articulation of words and the production of speech. In light of this, the piercing is almost a disavowal of speech, a 'refusal' of speech. The order in which the interviewee describes what is done with one's mouth is ironic. For 'kissing' can be associated with affection, that which results in anxiety if unsatiated, for it is libidinal. Secondly, what Freud refers to as one of the most important self - preservative instincts, is mentioned second, the deprivation of which does not result in anxiety. Thirdly, assimilating to Lacan's triad of need-demand-desire, the

infant is 'forced' into the '*Symbolic order*', so that anxiety may be alleviated. The infant learns language in an attempt to overcome loss and 'lack'. A poignant point that Grosz makes (when differentiating vision from other senses) is that "taste further implicates the subject, for the subject must be ingested, internalized in order for it to be accessible to taste" (Grosz, 1990, p.38). The tongue is the organ of taste. The tongue piercing cannot be ingested, thereby never leaving the piercee in want. The tongue piercing is *par excellence* that which is 'almost' satiable, "closing upon its own satisfaction" (Lacan cited in Grosz, 1990, p. 77).

(i) Refusal and Defiance : Rebellion Against (I)identity

"We become what we are by the radical and deep-seated refusal of what others make of us"

- Jean Paul Sartre.

Following from this quotation above, for all the participants, piercings appear to serve the purpose of asserting their (i)identity, by refusing to comply with 'others' ('authority figures - parents, societal restrictions) expectations of them. This excerpt below substantiates this, where Ta 'refuses to remove' her piercings, because they are an integral part of who she is (her identity).

"so by me decorating my body and things like refusing to take out piercings for a job things like that I think it represents the fact that I'm very determined to be who I am and not let anyone change who I am" (Transcript 5, 2000, p.4).

"cos I told her (mother) my boyfriends got a tongue ring and she said you'd NEVERR get a tongue ring and I said yah bugger you I want one and I'll go and get one uhhm I donno I think she still doesn't like it but it's there and you get used to it " (Transcript 6, 2000, p.7).

It seems that parents usually are the first authoritative influence in a child's life. It follows that the piercees would be the first to 'rebel' against their parents, in order to assert one's sense of individuation.

"for me to be me and not conform to . . any ideal of what they (parents) think I should be to what society thinks I should be" (Transcript 4, 2000, p.5).

This is a significant sub - theme, whereby excerpts illustrate the way in which the 'conventional' is rebelled against, resulting in the formation of an alterior (I). In other words it results in the formation of a piercing sub - culture, which inherently, appears to be a sub-culture 'marked' by rebellion..

Defying convention is eloquently substantiated by Hebdige with regard to the meaning of subculture, "whereby objects are made to mean and mean again as style in subculture...in a gesture of defiance it signals a Refusal" (Hebdige, 1979, p.3). In a 'male - dominated' society, women and femininity tends to be related to submission and passivity, whilst men and masculinity tends to be regarded as active. Defying these conventions through piercing their bodies, allows the piercees to defy societal

conventions by transgressing the 'boundaries', is elaborated by B below.

"you can either be the way society wants you to be . . 'cos that's all it boils down tooo . . . I think or well you can be somebody else. . . on the outside. . . over the line. . . you can go over the line. . . the line being the boundary"(Transcript 3.2, 2001, p 16).

(ii) Individuation and Difference

"At best, daily life, like art is revolutionary. At worst it is a prison-house"

- Paul Willis.

An integral meaning that piercing has for the participants is the assertion of their selves as 'individuals'. A piercing subculture does not / refuses to conform to the abiding 'masses'. Being different from the 'conventional' was important for five of the six participants. The quotation below is a sarcastic allusion to the individual's body. In other words, what J is saying, is that the meaning of body piercings for her are predicated upon the way in which the 'pierced body' differentiates and is distinguishable from other bodies, both in general as well as in comparison to other 'pierced bodies', because for J, piercings are done according to an 'individual's' own 'taste'.

"we weren't born with a sign saying 'pierce here'" (Transcript 1, 2000, p.8).

Being different from what is considered to be 'the normal' is illustrated in the following quotation. Towards the latter part of the second interview, B explicitly says :

" being different and being eccentric y' know that's what they (piercings) are. . . it's just ME me saying y' know I like to have piercings and I like to be different. . . I don't like to be NORMAL" (Transcript 3.2, 2001, p. 23).

If piercings definitively 'mark' one's identity, J describes people without piercings.

"don't seem to try and want anything else different . . . like they quite happy" (Transcript 1, 2000, p.11).

Furthermore J adds,

"society's idea of what's normal whatever you see advertised in magazines in on t.v. that's accepted by general society. . . to me that is normal" (Transcript 1, 2000, p.13).

Piercings challenge the 'normative' conventions by using the same 'visual sense'. The 'norm' is opposed to that which is visible. A sense of 'pleasure' then is derived from doing what is 'other' to the 'norm'.

"I don't class myself as weird I definitely do class myself as different" (Transcript 1, 2000, p.15).

"I think it's expressing my openness . . . myyy openness tooo y' know something different I just seeee. . . I don't really like everyday things . . . I prefer things that are a little bit out of the ordinary a little bit different out of the ordinary a little bit different and I think thattt I'm a bit different to most people . . . there are justt so many stereotyped people out there. . . they're just all the same" (Transcript 3.2, 2001, p.9).

"I don't know I don't know I just liked the idea when I had it done noo noone had it it was something unique I think that's a massive thing to have is to be unique instead of (whisperingly) copy everyone else like sheep (loudly) DON'T WANNA BE A SHEEP. . .uhmmm I think that was like the main reason I had it done becasuse it was so unique" (Transcript 4, 2000, pp 12 : 13).

Subscribing to stereotypes was regarded as disempowering. For the participants piercing was understood as a way of liberating themselves from this stereotype.

"another type of power a very I AM ME type of power" (Transcript 1, 2000, p.20).

"I dunno . . . I I guess it (piercings) just represented a form of rebellion. . . I like that people who are really different were usually people with a lot of piercings and I think that was what attracted me to it first" (Transcript 5, 2000, p. 5).

(iii) Surfaces

"The 'appearing' is not secondary . . . to the contrary [it is] a presentation of the essence itself"

- Nicholas Davey.

For T, the quotation below shows how the piercings were able to 'release this person screaming inside' of her, that part of her which is hidden. In other words, the piercings for T, allowed that part of her which was hidden and 'inexpressible', to surface

"everyone tell I'm shy they laugh at me okay but I think I'm shy uhmmm inside I'm just this person screaming out 'cos I'm not shy uhmmm inside I'm just this person screaming out like 'cos I'm like Not (emphasised) shy if that makes any sense it's just that I have these issues with myself and I think a way of expressing like the. . . more extrovert me is the way I dress. . . uhhm but my appearance which is why I have piercings"
(Transcript 4, 2000, pps .4-5).

Hence, illustrated by the above excerpt, the piercings appear to have an emancipatory effect of allowing a part of the 'self', which has been dormant, to surface, through the eruption(s) of piercings. For this participant, the piercings have the power of transforming her 'inner self', outwards.

In addition to the discussion on the separatist merit of the piercings in terms of identity, the piercing in vast contradiction to the above paragraph, is separatist in so far as to 'portray' an image that is non-revealing. In other words the image portrayed 'creates' an impression of a person, which, is in opposition to what the person is 'really like'. One of

the participants explained how people got an impression of her from her piercings as a *"hectic hard girl"* (Transcript 1, 2000, p.42). This misconceived perception was exacerbated by the metal on flesh.

"it is really strange how people can see me you know lots of people do think yah you're this (loud) rough tough bitch or something and I'm really not " (Transcript 1, 2000, p.42).

Later on J added to the above excerpt when she talked about the way in which J appears to other people because of the piercings. The piercings give them a sense of J, that is 'not' a true reflection of what J is 'really like', *'the people think of you as hard and you and your friends know you inside to be soft'* (p. 44 - Point of elaborating what J had said earlier).

"... I think it's almost like a contradiction of some kind because I don't intentionally do this " (Transcript 1, 2000, p.44).

In her book, *Self - Mutilation and Art Therapy : Violent Creation*, Milia (2000) discusses the popular stereotype of the 'tough - skinned individual with a soft interior'. Piercing "may provide a symbolic function of adding protection and extra containment to the self " (2000, p.62). Linked to the sub - theme of *The Gaze*, 'others' are influenced by the piercings, which, appear on the surface. Hence, piercings appear to defensively

distance people.

"I find that it sieves out people. . . it kind of filters people" (Transcript 4, 2000, p.6).

Already discussed under *The Gaze*, the piercings 'sieve out' the people who would 'look past' the exterior, pierced person, and take the time to get to know the person 'behind the piercings'. In this way, the piercings appear to serve as a defensive way of 'filtering out' people who would take the time to get to know the piercee, and hence are more like 'not to leave', from those superficial people, who are affected by the 'surface'.

(iv) Body Image

"The simulacrum is not what conceals the truth, it is the truth which conceal there is none.

- Jean Baudrillard.

Piercings largely seem to serve to enhance the piercees' body images. What is strikingly apparent from the data is the valorization of the 'skinny body'. This idealization is by and large perpetuated and reinforced by consumerist versions of what an ideal body should 'look like'. Ironically, then, for these non - conformist individuals the popularist notion of body image is still viewed in high regard and deemed necessary and feminine.

In the quotations below, the participants describe how the piercings [for them] appear to enhance their body image. For J, the navel piercing accentuates [valorises] her thinness.

"because a woman's body shape you know like the belly area is like the thinnest part and girls who are wearing like pants or a skirt and a short top and it just it looked sexy "
(Transcript 1, 2000, p.36).

"I have the dress sense of a much skinnier person. . . it's a whole woman pride thing if I feel good and I look good you know I feel better you know I can handle things I have more confidence more self esteem . . . you know your femininity comes out when you feel good"
(Transcript 2, 2000, pps. 13-14).

In this sense the aesthetic appeal of the piercings do not only merit a more appealing *surface* but, the piercee's body image is enhanced with the piercings, where she feels more attractive and confident of herself. R's excerpt illustrates this.

"a bit of confidence it(piercing) gives you a lot more confidence you know when you go out and wear something . . . you know it gives you that kind of confidence. . . I think it's also very sexual as well as . . . well obviously it has to be it's it's um I donno maybe being attractive to yourself as well I meann. . . (Transcript 2, 2000, pp 10, 11).

R's body image (in relation to her piercings) was interpreted as an important aspect of uplifting her self-esteem, because her weight was affected by medication that she had had been taking. Her piercings then afforded R to 're-look' at herself.

"I suppose it's you know changing at the moment my whole perspective on it because of I've just come off the tablets and stuff I'm having a problem with my body weight" (Transcript 2, 2000, p.6).

Another participant, T had body image 'issues'.

*"my body (whisperingly) I have major issues with my body (laughter)
uhh my body's my body umm I'm trying to learn to love my body"*
(Transcript 4, 2000, p.6).

Z advocates that media is largely responsible for perpetuating the 'skinny' body.

*"I think they get it from the models like if you watch TV I mean all you
see is skin and bones these models are so skinny. . . magazines and on
TV you never ever see uhhh chubby women you never see a girl with
a little bit of a stomach or a bit of flab you know modelling you never
see a person like that on the cover of a magazine"* (Transcript 6, 2000, p.11).

Ironically for this participant *"I saw Naomi Campbell (super - model)
yah . . you know when she did that modelling thing to me it (navel piercing)
looked very nice so I went and got it and I donno I'm happy with mine I
would never take it out. . ."* (Transcript 6, 2000, p.6).

This female super - model, is what appears to be an 'acceptable image' of women, for
this participant, whilst another participant quoted Madonna's image as appealing.

*"looking good for myself looks to me means thattt I wanna be happy
with what I look like. . . I wouldn't be able to have that super - model
body my bone structure is too big but I would like to be defined like ripped
. . . cut defined y'know muscular . . . like Madonna (quietly) "* (Transcript 3.2,
2001, pps.22-23).

Baudrillard(1996), discusses the 'Maddona Deconnection'. According to him " She

[Madonna] lacks nothing...is desperately seeking a body able to generate illusion, a naked body costumed by its own appearance...paradoxically she ends up personifying the frenetic frigidity of our age " (pp 126, 127). In other words, Baudrillard elaborates on the illusive aspect of the 'image' that 'does not exist', but women, particularly like B, valorise the image on the illusive basis of [its] completion. Baudrillard emphasises the way in which the idealisation of this image is an idealisation of a cold nothingness.

Interestingly J uses the term 'pierced people' rather than saying people who have piercings. This suggests the way in which the piercings tend to 'become' definitive of the self .

(III) Piercings and Femininity

"There are no gratuitous appropriation for 'I, woman' am the direct empirical referent of all that has been theorised about femininity, the female subject, and the feminine, 'I, woman' am affected directly and in everyday life of what has been made of the subject of woman; I have paid in my very body for all the metaphors and images that our culture has deemed fit to produce of woman.

- Rosi Braidotti (1996).

One participant, J, understood that a woman's identity was to orbit around a 'man's world'. She elaborates upon her understanding of a woman's identity.

"women lose their identity you know to become somebody's wife you know that's a woman's role for the most of her life they're either a wife a daughter a lover or a mother or it's just you know what I mean it's like women really are. . . exist in relation to other people " (Transcript 1, 2000, p.26).

Cited in Mitchell (1974), de Beauvoir says that "Woman is the archetype of the oppressed consciousness : the second sex. Her biological characteristics have been exploited so that she has become the receptacle for the alienation all men must feel; she *contains* man's otherness, and in doing so is denied her own humanity. " (p. 307).

For some of the participants, the piercings appear to reinforce their femininity and enhance their sexuality. This can be assimilated to the aesthetic appeal of the piercings. In the following excerpts the piercings appear to be almost maintaining and sustaining the piercee's femininity.

"you know it's it's I donno it's like a bit of extra also it makes you feel beautiful . . . you know it's like wearing a diamond or something you know it's there . . . it's more uhh actually I consider myself more feminine because of this (piercings) yeah I think so " (Transcript 2, 2000, p.12).

"gives you a bit of confidence it gives you a lot of confidence you know . . . female piercings are A LOT MORE (emphasized) attractive. . . it's also a lot of fun you know in the whole bedroom area. . . it's like a bit of extra also it makes you feel more beautiful. . . it's more uhh actually I donno I maybe consider myself more MORE (emphasized) feminine . . . it's it's on pretty much the parts of your body that if that if you know you were to create something that's where it is you know it's an important parts of you. . ." (Transcript 2, 2000, pp. 10 : 12).

For Freud, 'Anatomy is destiny'. By this statement, Freud was referring to the way in

which anatomy predetermines one's destiny by the process of culture and socialisation. One is not born female or male, for Freud, infants are 'bisexual'. Their sexuality is not carved in titanium, but has the ability to go either way, albeit, the path of sexuality tends to become prescribed by the manner in which one is socialized. Mitchell (1974) elaborates upon Freud's discussion. She discusses how Freud (1912 : 1934), demonstrates that the psychoanalytic concept of the unconscious is "a concept of mankind's transmission and inheritance of his social (cultural) laws. . . A primary aspect of the law is that we live according to our sexed identity, our ever imperfect 'masculinity' or 'femininity' "(1974, p.403). Interestingly, the piercings are considered to be aesthetically appealing to the participants, yet, they are simultaneously a 'rebellion' against conforming to an 'acceptable aesthetic', 'typically' associated with femininity. In this way, the piercings serve as a 'rebellious aesthetic', against the normative and rigidistic conceptions of 'femininity'.

i) Aesthetic Appeal

*"If ever any beauty I did see which I desir'd and got
t'was but a dream of thee"*

- John Donne.

The excerpts that follow merit the aesthetic enhancement that the piercings appear to serve the participants. Many of the participants have said that they have done the piercings because they 'looked nice', where the piercings have a decorative purpose.

"it's actually really beautiful to have something really beautiful to have and use your body like a well you know cliché' again is canvas for a bit of art it's it's an amazing thing especially when it's something you really think is pretty" (Transcript 2, 2000, p.7).

"me decorating my body" (Transcript 5, 2000, p.4).

The piercings in their 'decorative' role, assist in metamorphosing the body into something seemingly more attractive.

"it's it's I love sparkly things I absolutely love them and some of the (jewelry used in piercings) got these little gem stones in them" (Transcript 2, 2000, p.11).

Aesthetic appeal appears to be a juxtaposition of a *Rebellion Against Femininity*.

"Paine argues that piercing provides the means for an individual to 'attempt to forge a genuine mode of self exploration which does not rely on the current authenticating narratives of fashion'" (Holtman, 2000, p.3). For the participants, the piercings serve as appealing and increasing their attractiveness to the piercees. They refuse to conform to that which is acceptable by conventional fashion.

T030020



(ii) Rebellion Against Femininity

"I speak through my clothes"

- Umberto Eco.

In the interviews conducted, all the participants indicated that their childhoods were predominantly that of 'Tom boys'. This gender stereotype is used to 'explain' a girl's behaviour that is 'typical' to that of a boy's behaviour. According to this stereotype then, the participants as children did not conduct themselves in what was (is) considered 'acceptable girl (feminine) behaviour'. They 'accepted' and 'wore' this label as part of their selves, not part of the restrictive 'normative' behaviour ascribed to 'girls'. Playing with dolls, playing 'house' games did not appeal to them, as they preferred the 'rough and tumble' games played by boys.

"I was a tom boy (laughter) . . . I wore a spiderman suit and rode a BMX" (Transcript 3.2, p.15, 2000).

"I grew up a bit of a tom boy I think a bit tougher than I would have" (Transcript 5, p.1, 2000).

"when I was a child I was doing boy's stuff I never used to play with my cousin I used to er I donno niggie. . . I used to be a helluva tom boy . . . I never used to play with nieces (cousins) with dolls. . . I had one Barbie doll I killed it I took off her hair and I chopped her hands I always used to be between my nephews (cousins) my brothers I used to go skateboarding with them I used to go climbing mountains. . . I used to be a real tom boy I had bruises everywhere . . . and now there's hardly any bruises" (Transcript 6, pps.4-5, 2000).

Although not specifically referring to body piercing, Judith Butler (1995), suggests that women behaving in a brutal, tough manner (associated with male behaviour), and who engage in the practice of piercing may be acting out against 'normative rigidistic' conceptions of gender and conventions of beauty. The following quotes substantiate this contention.

"Girl must be pretty must wear dresses like why ! it's only because we grow up learning that we believe it to be right" (Transcript 1, 2000, p. 15).

On page 18, J goes on to say :

"it reallyyy. . .used to bother me that the way a woman looked the waaay way men reacted to the way a woman looked you know and obviously it comes from the whole deal from when I was young . . . it is quite strange you know to realize how dramatic or how it could change people's perceptions of you or whatever and I thought well that's what I wanted I didn't want people to flatter me like meaningless you know umm. . .and it's not like I wanted to attract those type of people the type of people I'm interested in are . . . are the type of guys who like women with piercings" (Trancript 1, 2000 p.19).

As exemplified above, that which manifests externally (without) is typified 'boy' behavior, albeit one is psychologically (within) a girl. On the other hand, that which may appear to be blatantly obvious are the physiological or bodily characteristics (without) of female, whilst one has characteristics (within) which tend to reflect 'maleness'. That is an

extrovert character is 'typically' assimilated to masculinity, and, by 'association' the privilege of the phallus (socially privileged). Inadvertently, the piercings are in 'seen' in accordance with the 'masculine' as they appear to be viewed as 'the valorisation of the visual'.

As 'tom - boys', in their childhood, and, by having piercings in their adulthood, the participants tend to defy what may be considered as 'conventional beauty' typical of women in their adulthood. Butler elaborates upon this contradiction, where according to her [Butler] the piercings do enhance the participants' femininity in their own right that defy the norms of 'conventional beauty'. The meanings of the piercings are inherently paradoxical as whilst some participants maintain that it enhances their femininity, it is simultaneously viewed as 'other' than feminine by society.

"for a woman to have a piercing and have another woman see you with those piercings. . . it showsss . . . you know woman admire other woman who do things s take a step further . . go pass the boundaries that sort of thing " (Transcript 3.1, 2000, p.4).

For another piercee the piercings serve to counteract stereotypes that dictate prescriptive ideologies about women thereby subjugating themselves to the 'law of patriarchy'. For J (piercee), women are 'moulded' into a role which is subversive / secondary to mens' role. The piercings 'seen' from this perspective then seem to be 'overthrowing' the 'patriarchal order' of submissivity / passivity that tends to 'be naturally'

associated with women and femininity. In this sense the piercings serve to oppose the delinealization and marginalisation of women and femininity. In the quotation below, R contests the 'rules' that we live by.

"the whole rules of life who makes up the rules of life. . . who says that girls have to do this or guys have to do that or girls have to look like this it's just . . . I just see people living on one level and there's just so much more to life than that. . . there shouldn't be rules because people should actually be higher evolved" (Transcript 2, 2000, p. 6).

If words tend to be associated with the submission to the '*phallic order*', it 'becomes' difficult not to reinforce this oppressive structure at the level of perpetuating and maintaining a patriarchal stance. Hence, at one level, whilst women are 'within' a society, they are concomitantly 'without' the necessary means of representation. In a 'predominantly patriarchal' society, the entry into the *Symbolic* is predicated upon the subversion to the '*phallic order*'. Piercings represent a refusal to be subjugated to this order. A refusal to use the 'word' (masculine), but instead use the body (feminine) as a means of 'expression' in order to assert one's sense of self as 'woman'. The piercings defy and 'uproot' the patriarchal order which advocates for the movement from the *Imaginary* to the *Symbolic* realm of words. The piercings *refuse* words therein legitimating the female body in its own right. The following excerpt demonstrates this.

"you know it might have something to do with -like . . . going against peop society's idea of women and how women should be like pretty and long hair and submissive and I just say 'bollocks' to that you know what I mean" (Transcript 1, 2000, p.4).

(IV) Control

"Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but it comes from everywhere "

-Michel Foucault (1926 - 1984).

The piercees bodies are the only means that they have of asserting their sense of control in an otherwise helpless situation. In the excerpt below, R emphasises the way in which the piercings help her in regaining a 'sense of control' over her own body as a compensation for that which is beyond her means of control.

"being angry at your dad for leaving you and you can't say anything because how was he supposed to help having a heart attack. . . you know the thing that you can't express or other things you keep bottled up . . . you can't say anything. . . you hold up inside and you know it's an outlet"
(Transcript 2, 2000,p.13).

This issue was already mentioned under the theme of *Defence(s) Against Loss*, where in the case of the death of a significant 'other', one is rendered helpless and hence without any means of control. This may also be relevant for the piercees of divorced parents where the separation was beyond their control. The piercing facilitates a sense of control by allowing expression to those unpalatable feelings of helplessness, it serves as an 'outlet'. This hints into the sub - theme that follows, that of *Intrinsic Pain and Masochism*. Cited in Mitchell (1974), Freud explains that sadism changes into masochism when there is no *outlet for aggression*. This shall be further elaborated within the sub-

theme of *Intrinsic Pain and Masochism*.

Also, significantly the piercings contribute to a sense of control with regard to *body image*. At a point of repetition, the piercings serve to enhance the piercees' body image. Where 'skinniness' is valorized, the piercings serve to 'decorate' that 'unwanted' image, thereby controlling what is 'seen' by 'others'. All of the participants had belly button piercings, and all participants expressed that they would like flatter stomachs. To a certain extent, the piercing affords the piercees control, because it controls what is seen by 'others' and more importantly, themselves. In the excerpt below, the participant was unhappy with her weight, and, by decorating her navel (stomach), she was inadvertently identifying with Naomi Campbell (flat stomach), and, hence, the controlling aspect. Z was 'attracted' to the aesthetic appeal of the navel piercing, and, moreover, her piercing was influenced by the fact that Naomi Campbell had this piercing. The piercing adorns her stomach, as it does Naomi Campbell's stomach. However, it also allows Z to control how she (and 'others') sees her stomach No longer is her stomach 'disproportionate', but the piercing appears to exert the aesthetic appeal associated with the flat stomach. This is illustrated by the following excerpt.

"I think my belly ring would say 'lose more weight'. . . aah you should see my stomach geez. . . I donno I think I've always had this stomach and I've always wanted a flat stomach I think the people I see you know who are always skinny people it's not that I want to be as skinny as them I mean I wanna be beautiful and better" (Transcript 6, 2000, p.11).

Control also filters into the 'pain' aspect of body piercing. Discussed in more detail in *Reclamation of the Body*, the participants are able to control / allow themselves to feel a certain amount of pain because of the piercings.

(ii) **Intrinsic Pain and Masochism : The Emotional Abstract**

*" When the horizon disappears, what then appears is
the horizon of disappearance"*

- Dietmar Kamper.

Each of the participants had differentially experienced pain in the process of being Pierced. The pain that they have experienced and subsequently understood was, based on a large extent on their past experiences of what pain had come to mean for them [participants]. The following quotation illustrates J's experience of the pain she felt having had her navel pierced.

"I thought I was going to die (one breath). . . I remember thinking 'what am I doing here' once I done it I was like 'I've done it !' it was like an achievement (Transcript 1, 2000, p 34).

For B:

"I don't really worry about the pain I don't . . . it's nott. . . the pain doesn't bother me" (Transcript 3.2, 2001, p.12). This is in contradiction to what the participant goes on to say "yah. . . all my piercings I closed my eyes. . . 'cos the needles. . they are very very big . . . keep my eyes closed so you can't actually see what's going on so you can only feel it REALLY. . . I just take deep breaths anndd. . blank my mind's just nothing in my minddd. . . I just don't think" (Transcript 3.2, 2001, p.13).

Individuals experience pain differentially. Whilst pain is an intrinsic part of piercing, because pain is experienced with the severing of the participants' skin, each participant had a unique pain threshold. In retrospect having a 'rough and tumble' childhood, may have prepared the participants to experience the pain associated with the piercings. Pain is an intrinsic part of the piercing process. Overcoming this pain, or feeling this pain was significance in relation to the meaning that piercing had for the participants.

Masochism is the attainment of pleasure from self inflicted pain. The above two excerpts were both from the participants who were abused, either sexually or physically. In Rycroft, one of the explanations for masochism is an "identification with a sadistic partner" (1968, p.100). In this way the pain inflicted by having piercings done is pleasurable because 'they' 'become' the punisher. There are deep underpinnings of control. In 'allowing' themselves to be pierced, they are simultaneously 'allowing' themselves to feel pain and hence the control it.

"what is pain you know we deal with pain all the time that not really a big issue in my life. . . it's not unbearable pain"
(Transcript 4, 2000, p.13).

"it's it's such a minor discomfort that it doesn't really matter that much . . . such a small amount of pain. . . discomfort is so minor and it's going to be over so quickly that it's easy to deal with"
(Transcript 5, 2000, p.15).

"it's extremely painful. . .it makes all the pain and emotions you just can't express it makes themm. . . . tangible. . . it 's something that you can actually touch physically focus upon and say that hurts okay that hurts but its beautiful and I can change it into something beautiful it it's no longer gonna hurt me it's gonna be uhh something that enhances me and makes it a bit better . . . it's fixable when it's outside and outside your body it's fixable uhmmm but also it's just that whole transformation it's something that really really a lot of pain I know something you can't reach and something you can't get hold of and finally you grab onto it and hold it and do it your way and fix this (Transcript 2, 2000, pps. 9,10,13).

For the participants, psychological pain seems to be more difficult to 'deal with'. Than physical pain. Attempting to deal with this abstract pain, or that which is not 'visually' / physically available is more difficult (for the participants) to understand and come to terms with than that which is physically present (piercings). It's almost in a sense trying to fight a battle against the '(in)visible', their (participants') inner demons. In an attempt to understand and overcome their psychic pain, it seems that the participants then pierce their bodies. In addition, piercing appears then to serve as a way to release this psychological pain, and in so 'doing', have a therapeutic effect.

"it's a very odd feeling it's it's almost like a release like I said it's it's opening up that inner thing it heals everything you can't see and can't touch and it's there my eyes are open and . . . deal with it you know it's eaasy pain you can focus on and it's only physical pain it's only your body you know it's only skin deal with it it's not hard it's easier to deal with anything else. . . you know emo emotional mental pain of being angry with your dad for leaving you and you can't say anything becasue how was he supposed to help having a heart attack . . .the thing that you can't express or . . .you keep bottled up. . . you hold up inside and you know it's an outlet. . . there's little bits of pain and hurt they give me are nothing compared to this this is real that isn't real " (Transcript 2, 2000, p.13).

Another participant subsequent to the interview, admitted that the pain made her feel 'real'. So the pain which is felt psychologically has to be transformed into something physical (piercings) in order to deal with the pain. This psychological pain is not 'real' because it is abstract, mental pain. The piercings metamorphosise the psychological pain into a pain that is real because it is visible. This finding concurs with Herman cited in Milia (2000) who suggests that, "The mutilation eventually brings relief and calm, as though the administration of physical pain quiets and soothes emotional pain '...the self – mutilator's act of self – directed violence may help to restore calm and order to an inner state of chaos and disintegration " (p.71).

(iii) Reclamation of the Body

"We are surrounded with emptiness but it is an emptiness filled with signs "

- Lefebvre.

The pain that the participants voluntarily experiences significantly hints into issues of control and what can and cannot be done to their bodies, where the body has been abused.

"sort of a way of claiming your body back when something traumatic has hapened in your life orrr you come to a milestone in your life or something. . .it's often a way of getting control" (Transcript 1, 2000, p.3).

"this is me and this is who I am now and I'm responsible for anything that I do to my body" (Transcript 1, 2000, p.3).

"this is the type of pain that I am ready for you know I asked for it to be done"
(Transcript 1, 2000, p.9).

By allowing their body to be pierced the piercees move from a position of being
was abused, having control over their bodies, and in this way *reclaiming their bodies* as
their own.

" I STUCK THIS (piercing) THERE I CAN TAKE IT OUT"
(Transcript 1, 2000, p.39).

Also significant is the effect that the piercings have on 'others' perceptions of them.
Already mentioned within the sub-theme of *the Gaze*, the piercings serves as a
protective measure, where the cold steel on the surface, veils a 'soft person'.

Another type of reclamation was experienced by another participant. She had
been hospitalised for suffering from manic depression and the piercings were a way of her
reclaiming her control over her body.

*"I suppose it's changing at the moment my whole perspective on it
because I've just come off the tablets and stuff"* (Transcript 2, 2000, p. 6).

Whether it may be a *reclamation of the body* in order to overcome experiences of physical or sexual abuse, or regain control over your body after 'battling' against an illness, it is quite apparent that the piercings were used to assist the participants to overcome various issues that they are/ had experience(ing)d in their lives.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

“As doors close, others open”

- Chinese Proverb.

One of the limitations that are severely criticized is implicit in the method of analysis. This is implicit in the meaning(s) that lay bear the 'author's understanding of what the participants have said.(Cited in Thomas and other authors concur with this criticism)

Another limitation was finding women with multiple body piercings, for 'tracking down' (literally) proved to be an arduous and time-consuming endeavour. This appears to be a point of contradiction, given the 'popularity' of piercing. Another limitation that merits mentioning, is the discussion of psychoanalytic literature. Due to the expansive volume of literature available on the concepts that have been used in this research, there was a frugal discussion (much to my disappointment) of theory.

Also, a limitation (that perhaps required greater reflection of what the participants had said), was that I do not have multiple piercings. This, however, is to some extent compensated by Fay (1996) who states " The thesis that states 'You must be one to know one' mistakenly equates understanding with empathy or psychological closeness or transcultural identification. But we understand others not when we become them (something we cannot do in any case), but when we are able to translate what they are experiencing or doing into terms which *render them intelligible* " (p. 25).

Initially, I had wanted to elicit an understanding of body piercing for women, situated

within a South African dynamic. However this proved fruitless when none of the participants related their piercings to their South African identity. This is an interesting point that I believe could be explored in further (culturally centred) research. As a feminist study, many of the themes and resultant sub-themes (Defences Against Loss, Identity, Femininity, Control and so forth) that have been 'explored' (satiric allusion to Freud's description of 'Women as the dark continent - Africa, the unexplored') would be useful to be further developed in 'their own right'. Also, a useful study that could be researched further (not just in a 'Cosmopolitan, Elle, Fair Lady' magazine article – to name a few – research should guard against giving a 'rundown' of an issue as important as this), is, how body image (the feminine image) is mediated and scrutinized with the view to understanding the overall impact this has on the understanding that women have in relation to their image. What indubitably stands out in this research is the role of the 'other(s)' in 'mediating' the image of the self. Also, one of the formative themes that have emanated from this research is that of (I)identity. It would be interesting to pursue a line of research upon the developmental notions that women have of their identity(ies), as individuals, and, as women.

Chapter Seven

Limitations and Recommendations for future research

"Nothing that is human is alien, but nothing that is human can do without the idea of alien, to protect itself"

- Adam Phillips .

If body piercing , in Lacanian terms, is a demand, and demands are inherently insatiable, then multiple body piercings are an attempt to satiate these demands. For Lacan, (All) demand is a (demand for) Love. In choosing not to expressly state this demand is perhaps a regression to a 'place of plenitude', a return to the Imaginary, where one does not have to demand for one 'is' fulfilled.

One of the maxims of 'human' evolution to 'survival of the fittest', is to 'adapt or die.' In our endeavour to 'adapt' to an exceedingly changing environment, we appear to have developed enigmatic ways to overcome the 'subjective' hardships of human existence. For some piercings appear to be the *force majeure* to counteract the calamities of the inevitable human condition. As suggested by Strong in Chapter five, the piercings appear to have undertones that are reflective of deeper psychological issues. What is strikingly apparent in the interpretations is the over-arching *Defence(s) Against Loss*, whereby piercings are symptomatic of underlying issues that have not been adequately 'dealt with'. One of the exceedingly difficult issues that piercees tried to deal with and overcome, was that of psychological pain. This pain that participants have experienced in the development of their (I)identity, becomes entrenched in their sense of (I)identity.

In relation to the first objective, which was to understand the meaning that piercings had for the participants, what follows is a brief synopsis of the individual meaning(s) that the piercings appear to have for them. However, it should be noted that the meaning(s) of their piercings had been used to develop the themes and sub-themes contained in the results and discussion chapter. For J, her piercings (twenty - two in total) ranging from facial (overt) piercings to more covert, sexual piercings, were used to assert her difference. Furthermore, they were used as a reclamation of her body, with the piercings serving a protective measure, assisting J to overcome the psychological effects of her abuse. For R, surviving a reckless relationship, and attempting to overcome her (dis)ease, the piercings served as 'an outlet' for the emotional trauma she could not conceive of because it was abstract. The physical pain was easier to 'deal with'. Also, having been on tablets because of her manic - depression, the piercings secondarily allowed R to reclaim her body and her 'self'. R's piercings comprised of multiple ear piercings, genital and nipple piercings and a tongue piercing. The piercings for B were an attempt at forging her own identity, overcoming the loss of her father's presence, as well as overcoming the abuse of a hostile mother. B had a labrette piercing, an eyebrow piercing (which she did on her own – without a professional piercer), a navel piercing, as well as a tongue piercing. A significant point that T makes is that she is outwardly a shy person, but the piercings empowered her in the sense that they allowed her radical, extrovert 'self' that was hidden 'to surface'. In other words they afforded T the opportunity of being 'truly herself'. T had multiple ear piercings, an eyebrow piercing, a lip piercing, a nostril piercing, a navel piercing, as well as her tongue pierced. For Ta, piercings done whilst her mother was

alive, was a vain attempt at evoking a response from her ailing mother. She admitted that her mother was creative, and later said that the piercings were a creative aspect of herself, inadvertently identifying with her mother. Ta also confessed that she enjoys the 'attention' she received from strangers, because of her piercings. Ta had several ear piercings, a nose piercing, a navel piercing, a tongue piercing, an eyebrow piercing, and a labrette piercing. For Z, her piercings were informed by a rebellious streak, as well as a lure to conventions of the 'ideal body'. Z had several ear piercings, a navel piercing and her tongue pierced. The proceeding paragraphs summarize the major themes and sub-themes that have arisen from the interpretation.

The following paragraphs elaborate on the second objective of this research, which, was to develop an understanding of the participants' meaning from a psychoanalytic perspective

The effects of death and divorce have seemed to play an imperative role in the participants' piercings. Advancing the defence of *Introjection*, piercings appear to be a useful way of 'taking in' to the piercees' bodies, that which they are without (absent parents by way of death or divorce). This leads into the discussion entitled *Within Without*. The piercings afford the piercees to have within that which they are without (lost 'others'). The piercings appear to compensate for their loss, and, hence, serve as a way of *Reifying Loss*. Externalizing or corporealizing their internal pain, to an extent reifies their pain and the intrinsic pain experienced through loss. Multiple piercings have been associated with repetition, in a manner similar to which people who have been traumatized 'need' to

repeat emotionally laden experiences that have been severed from consciousness (discussed at length in the preceding chapter). *The Gaze* alludes to the 'power of the visible', whereby the piercees are simultaneously objectified and subjectified. . The piercings predicated upon the primacy of the visible, 'immediately' serve as a filter, whereupon it appears to serve as a way of 'filtering people'. In this way, the piercings filter those people who would 'look beyond' the piercings that the participants have, from those who are intimidated by the 'appearance' / surface of the participants and thereby maintain a distance from the piercees.

To an extent, *The Gaze* hints into the theme of *(I)identity*. This is corroborated by Lacan's dialectical discussion on *The Gaze*, for one is simultaneously both subject and object. That is, the participants are seen by 'others', whilst they experience themselves being seen by 'others'. The next major theme of *(I)identity*, is premised upon an alienating fragmentary concept of the 'self', through the *meconnaissance* (misrecognition) of the 'self' in the 'mirror'. The disjunctive 'self' is predicated upon a 'lack', where the piercings appear to fulfill this 'inherent' 'lack'. In accordance with the sub-theme of *Reifying Loss*, piercings are 'seen' to be compensating for those ('others') that the participants have lost. The piercings appear to serve as both 'separatist' and 'fusionist'. The former term highlighting the 'need' to distinguish an inner 'sense of self' from an outer 'sense of self', whilst the latter signifies a collusion of an inner and an outer 'sense of self'. Body image plays a pertinent role in the participants' piercings. As substantiated by the participants in chapter five, the piercings have become definitive of the 'way in which they view' themselves.

On a more expansive note, in relation to (I)identity, Cruice (1999) views piercings psychoanalytically, albeit, from a different angle. According to Cruice (1999), "It (psychoanalysis) is in the overlapping time & space of Uncertainty that we find the unarticulated **questioning marks** of punctures and paintings at the surface of the flesh of Bodies of Knowledges. Such **markings** are like corporeal body piercings . . .that symbolize the struggles inherent in **questioning** and challenging traditionally powerful and dominant world views while protecting such **question marks** from being absorbed by the established order and disappearing. . .the unique Body languages of markings and piercings 'speak' an individual as they are 'spoken' by and through that individual " (p.9).

Interestingly, all of the participants have navel piercings. In terms of 'identification with the (m)other, this was interpreted as a 'wish to return to the original undifferentiated state', where the piercees were 'completely' satiated. Moreover, all participants had tongue piercings, which was interpreted as a 'disavowal of speech' and, concomitantly, a return to what Freud (1916) referred to as '*the oral phase*', where the infant 'experiences the world of objects' through its mouth. This emphasizes the significance that the tongue piercings have, and in a revelatory comparison to the participants' navel piercings, the 'two types' of piercings appear to suggest a 'wish to return' / a regression to an earlier, more secure state.

The piercings were also interpreted as accentuating the piercee's identity as 'different' from the conventionally normative acceptable non-pierced 'others'. In defying conventions in this way the piercings secondarily appeared to be a 'refusal' of the 'acceptable. The piercings allowed the piercees to assert their individuality, by 'marking

their bodies as their own' (Delaney, 1995, p.1). Moreover, in usurping conventionality (by way of appearances), they also defied the stereotypical 'notions' of femininity, by transgressing acceptable 'boundaries'. This *Rebellion against Femininity* was juxtaposed against the *Aesthetic Appeal* that the piercings were found to have for some of the participants, where piercings were used to enhance the 'body beautiful'. Also, what appears to be interesting is the way in which the aesthetic appeals of the piercings are suffused within the whole rebelliousness of the piercing subculture. In this way, body piercings appear to be an anathema. The participants with their piercings contravene 'conventions', appealing to an 'aesthetic' within a piercing subculture.

The final theme of *Control*, brings to fore, the way in which the piercings 'renew' in the piercees a 'sense of control' over their bodies, by reifying abstract pain, or, as a way of reclaiming their bodies as their own. Pain that cannot be seen, but only felt, psychologically. Or to use Merleau-Ponty's words, cited in Lindlof (1995), piercing becomes the 'exemplar sensible' for the participant trying to understand their pain. Piercings necessitate an 'outlet' for this abstract suffering, thereby transforming the opaque to some 'thing' (piercings) that is lucid. Therefore, that which appears to be surface in the form of piercings can be likened to psychological symptoms, which, if interpreted, can lead to latent, unconscious meanings. If arbitrary signs are the means by which we mediate our perceptions of the world, and implicitly ourselves, then it appears apt to conclude, with an idea, in relation to the opening quotation, whereby :

Obscurity gives Dimension to the inexplicable.

References

- Alexander, K. (1994). About body piercing .<http://www.bme.freeq.com>
- Appignanesi, L., & Forrester, J. (Eds.). (2000). Freud's women.
Hammondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Baudrillard, J. (1996). The perfect crime. London : Verso.
- Bauman, Z. (1978). Hermeneutics and Social Science: Approaches to understanding. London: Hutchinson & Co (Publishers) Ltd.
- Beauregard, J. A. (1999). Metal and flesh are cool : The meaning of body piercing to females attending Throughfare Mountain University.
(http://www.iso.gmu.edu/~jbeaureg/documentation/edrs812_3.html),
December
- Bloom, L. (1991). Back to Freud: A radicalism recalled. Psychology In Society,
15, 4-23.
- Bosma, H. A., Gaafsma, T. L .G., Grotevant, H. D., & de Levita, D. J. (Eds.).
(1994). Identity and development : An interdisciplinary approach. London:
Sage Publications.
- Braidotti, R. (2000). The relevance of gender for the issue of "women and science". In R. Braidotti & E. Vonk (Eds.), The making Of European women's studies (pp.153-164) Utrecht University : ATHENA - Advanced Thematic Network in Activities in Women's Studies in Europe.
- Brain, R. (1979). The decorated body. New York: Harper & Row.

Brennan, T. (Ed.). (1989). Between feminism & psychoanalysis. London: Routledge.

Butler, J. (1993). Bodies that matter: On the discursive limits of sex. New York: Routledge.

Clement, B. (1998). *Piercing*.
(<http://www.actrix.gen.nz/users/bclement/piercing.html>.),

Cruice, G.E. (1999) *Question-ing Bodies of Knowledges and Mark-ing Psychoanalysis as Uncertainty*. . . ?. (file:///C:/WINDOWS/Temporary Internet Files/cache4/cruice2.html).

Delaney, J. (1995, January 26). Piercing for Beginners. Prime Magazine . 19-23.

Denzin, N. K. (1989). Interpretative interactionism. London: Sage Publications.

D. Edwards, (personal communication, February, 2001)

Evans, D. (1996). An introductory dictionary of Lacanian psychoanalysis. London: Routledge.

Fay, B. (1998). Contemporary philosophy of Social Science. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Files, G. (1992). Holy Body Piercing ! More people getting perforated in more places. (<http://www.eyc.net/Arts/Art/1992/ar0702.html>.)

Finkelstein, J. (1991). The fashioned self. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Freud, S. (1953). On sexuality : Three essays on the theory of sexuality. Harmondsworth: Penguin Freud Library.

Freud, S. (1973). Introductory lectures on psychoanalysis. Harmondsworth: Penguin Freud Library.

Frosh, S. (1991). Identity crisis : Modernity, psychoanalysis and the self. Hampshire: Macmillan Education Ltd.

Grosz, E. (1990). Jacques Lacan: A feminist introduction. London: Routledge.

Hayes, G. (1984). A social analysis of psychological disturbance in children: The significance of Jacques Lacan. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

Hebdige, D. (1979). Subculture : The meaning of style. New York: Martheun & Company.

Heidegger, M. (1962). Being and time. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Heywood, I., & Sandywell, B. (Eds.). (1999). Interpreting visual culture: Explorations in the hermeneutics of the visual. London: Routledge.

Higgin, G. (1999). Porcupines: A philosophical anthology. Hammondsworth: Penguin Books.

Higgins, M. (1996) *Piercing. . . Why I like it and why others do it*.
([http: www.cybercondo.com/PUB/BODART/aboutp.html](http://www.cybercondo.com/PUB/BODART/aboutp.html).)

Hill, P. (1997). Lacan: For beginners. New York: Writers and Readers Publishing, Inc.

Howard, D. (1995) *Holier than Thou .. Nipples, noses, eyebrows, bellybuttons ... any and every part gets a little silver and gold with body piercing*.
(<http://www.yale.edu/ymn/paper/11.10.95al/11.10.95storyno.CAal.html>)

Jenkins, R. (1996). Social identity. London: Routledge.

Klages, M. (1998). *Gender Trouble: Judith Butler*.
(<http://www.colorado.edu/English/ENGL2012Klages/butler.html>.)

Krueger, M. D. (1989). Body self and psychological self: A developmental and clinical integration of the disorders of the self. New York: Brunner / Mazel Publishers.

Lacan, J. (1977). Ecrits: A selection. London: Tavistock Publications Limited.

Leo, J. (1995). The modern primitives. US News & World Report. July 31, 1995.

Lindlof, T. R. (1995). Qualitative communication research methods. California: Sage Publications, Inc.

Macey, D. (1988). Lacan in contexts. London: Verso.

Madison, G.B. (1990). The hermeneutics of postmodernity: Figures and themes. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Manning, T. (1998). The customized body. World Wide Web.

May, T. (1997). Social research: Issues, methods and process (2nd ed.). Buckingham: Open University Press.

Milia, D. (2000). Self-mutilation and art therapy: Violent creation. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers Ltd.

Minsky, R. (ed.), (1996). Psychoanalysis and gender: An introductory reader. London: Routledge.

Mitchell, J. (1974). Psychoanalysis and feminism : A radical reassessment of Freudian psychoanalysis. Hammondsworth: Penguin Books.

Neufield, P. (1997). *From Punk To Plebian - Body Piercing: Old news or the Next Big Thing ?*. (<http://www.netspace.org/indy/issues/05-01-97/features1.html>.)

Nobus, D. (Ed.). (1998). Key concepts of Lacanian psychoanalysis. London: Rebus Press.

O' Connell Davidson, J., & Layder, D. (1994). Methods: Sex and madness. London: Routledge.

Parkins, W. (2000). Protesting like a girl: embodiment, dissent and feminist Agency. Feminist Theory, 1 (1), 59-78.

Philips, A. (1994). Terrors and experts. London : Faber and Faber Limited.

Philips, A. (2001). Houdini's box: On the arts of escape. London: Faber and Faber Limited.

Polhemus, T. (Ed.). (1978). Social aspects of the human body. Middlesex: Penguin Books.

Psychology Today. (1997). *Building a Better Body Image*.
(<http://www.emelina.com/building.html>)

Rogers, P & Crandall, R. (1993). *Think of it as therapy*.
(<http://www.epnet.com/bin/epwgargoyle/submit=text/session=rB7qNSx/st=68/qn=1/fte>)

Rose, J. (1986). Sexuality in the field of vision. Norfolk: Thetford Press Limited.

Rycroft, C. (1968). A critical dictionary of psychoanalysis. London: Penguin Books.

Schilder, P. (1964). The image and appearance of the human body. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Shakoor, M. (1998). *The Resurgence of Body Ornamentation and Augmentation in Current Western Civilization*.
(<http://www-mcnair.berkeley.edu/98journal/mshakoor.html>)

Shared Visions Library. (1996). *Body Piercing, is it good for you ?*.
(<http://www.shared-vision.com/magazine/oct96/oct10.html>.)

Shilling, C. (1993). The body and social theory. London: Sage Publications.

Shron, J. (1996). *Contemporary Theory Through Photography*.
(<http://www.finearts.yorku.ca/rwickens/CTTPOnlineAdvance/PAPERS96.97/Fe16/19/01.html>).

Stam, H. J. (Ed.). (1998). *The body and psychology*. London: Sage Publications.

Silverman, K. (1996). *The threshold of the visible world*. London: Routledge.

Thomas, S. (1998). *Body Piercing: Reclamation, Enhancement, and Self-Expression*. (<http://www.bme.freeq.com/pierce/reclaim.html>)

Thompson, J. B. (Ed.) (1981). *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Thompson, J.B. (1981). *Critical hermeneutics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Turner, B. S. (1996). *The body and society*. London: Sage Publications.

Vogels, J. (1997). *My Messy Bedroom*.
(<http://www.greatwest.ca/see/issues/1997/970130/josey.html>.)

Yardley, K., & Honess, T. (1987). *Self and identity: Psychosocial perspectives*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

APPENDIX A

Transcript 1

A: Can you tell me about your family as you were growing up?

J: ummmm...(pause).. I was the only for about ten years and um..when I was young....tche.. when I was young..four years old my father died and my mom remarried when I was seven ..and so she had my sister when I was about ten years old..umm.. I was very close to my mom and I get on very well with my step father so much so that he adopted me and he's my father you know and he pays..paid for my schooling whatever even though there was a trustfund for me..uhmm..so when my sister was born that was the happiest day of my life..we're so close even though she's ten years younger than me ..she's now eighteen and I'm twenty - eight and she's just amazing we don't we never had a fight about anything very hectic..um..I'm very close to my family..I spent a hell of a lot of time there like I eat there every night ..my mother says I'm lazy (laughingly) but because I really do get on well with them I actually lived at home underneath the house so it was quite separate and I didn't have to go upstairs for anything lived there until I was about twenty-six which just shows that I really do get on well with them..umm I've lived in Durban for most of my life since I was about four years old..umm...anything else ?

A: Prior to four years old where did you live ?

J: We lived in Empangeni Kwazulu Natal umm Zululand..that's where my dad's family was from so when he died we moved to Durban.

A: and how did that affect you?

J: umm.. I don't really ever remember it affecting me.. negatively.. because my mother and I were always very close and I was really young and I don't know how much a four year old really understands about it you

know.. and it was only later in life like about twenty-five that I started asking questions..I think I didn't want to ask earlier because I didn't want my mother to get upset and also she was happy ..you know..she's happy now so I didn't really feel the need to bring it up but only about twenty-five I started asking a lot more and I like I learnt a lot about him..but it does make me sad .. like the rest of my life's been okay with my family ..you know what I mean..umm..I just do..I've heard that I'm very much like him which makes me happy and I wish that I'd known him butt..things happen for a reason and I donno what it is but I don't think it affected me in a negative way because when my mom remarried her husband was fantastic..and he didn't try and take the place of my father..he was just a ..he was really a nice man.

A: How soon afterwards did your mum remarry ?

J: I think I was about seven...seven years old.

A: ..so it was about three years ?

J: um..round about ..yah.

A: ..uh.. you said that you were alone till you were about ten years old ..who did you play with ?

J: uhmm..noo ..I got umm normal school friends.. you know..some school friends coming over..andcousins coming over ..a bit younger than me butt..we used tooo..yah..really I wanted a siblinglike the whole time I was saying every year (gasp) when am I getting a brother or sister that's why when she was born it was so amazing.

A: ..okay and your teen years...how were those ?

J: ummm.weell..umm it was quite strange..when I ..when I thought about piercing..umm like answer your question but when I ..I've also wondered like why do people ..you know..gget pierced..and I've also read up quite a lot on the subject and ..a lott off women that get pierced often they say well piercing and tatoos like that's sort of a way of claiming your body back when something traumatic has happened in your life orr you come to a milestone in your life or something ..it's often a way of getting in control you know I have spoken to a few people..for others it's just like the next big thing that's happening orr..they find it attractive or whatever...I know a lot of women it'sss... I think it's got something to do with it part of their lives andd..II... it was never a conscious decision for me to get pierced because of anything that's happened but I think it might because when I was young I was abused as a child and I only started dealing with that when I was about seventeen ...and..as I got olderrr...(reflecting)..because I only started getting piercings when I was older abouttt... twenty-three years old ..twenty-four..umm..so it wasn't like a rebellious thing to do..cause I would have done that at seventeen or something or eighteen like a lot of girls do..so I was like twenty-three.. twenty-four years old which is an adult old enough to make decisions and it might be.. I don't know like...(sigh) I don't know if I'm like reading into it at all...but it might be because of that like it's my way of saying this is me and this is who I am now and I'm responsible for anything that 'I'do to my body it could be..so my teenage years were quite ..traumatic in that sense ..I hadn't told anybody about it until I was seventeen..I told my mom but I did very well at school I was valor-victorian I was head girl..well I did very very well it wasn't it didn't affect me in my performance in general life but it was something that I had kept a secret for like (pause) ten years..ummm so it might be

related to why I (laughingly) do myself in..to do myself and shave my head off or whatever it is you know it might have something to do with like ..going against peop.. society's idea of women and how women should be like pretty and long hair and 'submissive' and I just say 'bollocks' to that you know what I mean...

A: ..yah (acknowledgement)

J: ..so it was no conscious decision that I went out and said alright you know..but as I get older I think it might definitely might be.

A: so you were like seven when you were..

J: uhh..that's another thing ...I don't even really know I caann't tell you the exact time because I think for so long I ..did block it out of my head or pretend it didn't happen or ..(pause) whatever but it was around about that time between the ages off...(long pause) four andd nine years old over a period of years...

A: (laughingly) okay you pretty much covering a lot of my umm questions

J: (laughing)..sorry..

A: no it's fine

J: ..I suppose because I thought about it a lot before you know and and I really have read a lot on the subject there's a really good book called the mo the modern primitives ..have you seen that book ? I can't remember who it's by...

A: yah..I've read some parts of the book by Leo John I think..

J: yah.. but it's a very very good book and it does explain a lot and also

with tattoos..I've read a lot of tattoo magazines a lot of women have said it's like that time of their life that either some women like have their first tattoos when they have a baby you know.. like it's like a ..it marks an important part of their life and it is quite strange ..like my first tattoo I got when I started coming to terms with everything like at twenty three but it's grown over the years grown..I donno it'sss strange.

A: umm okay what does your body mean to you ?

J: uhh..umm..I've always been very lucky in that I've always been very 'slim' and I've never had to watch what I eat or do exercise..umm..when I was going 'I hated my body' because I was really really thin because people used to ..you know it's like when people are FAT (emphasised) people mock fat people you know behind their backs they don't really go "Hey Fatty" nobody's going to be that outright and rude but when you're really thin people 'feel nothing' to tell you to like I remember one girl used to say lie 'walk on your hands your legs are so thin ' you know people really didn't realise how much it hurt being thin was as bad in a sense because I could not put on weight...I went to the doctor and everything so I must say growing up as a teenager I really 'didn't like my body at all' and used to wear really baggy clothes to hide how thin I was but then my mother once said "just wait until you're older when all your friends have ..are putting on weight and they can't lose it and you're just going to start laughing" and I thought wellll.. and it's true like as I got older I started getting slightly more shape and I didn't get fat and everybody started putting on weight and it only just last year that I put on weight because I haven't really put on weight because I haven't done any exercise this year so..umm. this is the biggest I've ever been in my life and it's still not big..but I..as I got

older about twenty..twenty - one I did start to appreciate the fact that I was thin and could wear anything and ummm I realised I suppose it happened because of what happened when I was young like uh..how see women's bodies like I really really hate the way men could be so easily influenced by looking at a woman's body you know it's so sexual andd..ahh I donno but it didn't stop me from uh like if I'd gone carried on with that thought I would never ever have worn like short skirts or tight tops whatever I thought 'no stuff you' why must I stop dressing just because..stop dressing sexily or whatever wearing clothes that suit me just because ngh... sixty seventy I don't know whatever percentage of men are ..you know turned on by what women wear so I think 'stuff you I'll dress for myself' and what that all does the things I do the things I wear is for me it's not for anybody else.

A: around what age did you come to this decision..I mean what brought you there ?

J: umm..welll..I think from the age of seventeen when I first told my mom I started going on the road to healing I suppose it's so long when you block something off or keep it down because 'you can't really feel yourself' because you haven't come to terms with it with it you know ..it took me about eight years off ..quite a bit of emotional turmoil because by the time I was twenty - five I really did make a conscious decision to try and be happier and..try and live my life to the fullest so I think I was about twenty - five when I started thinking that I have a right to 'live and be happy' and I musn't be so hard on men because for a lon it can mess up your relationships you know I've never had a relationship that worked ...some have lasted for a long time but I broke up with every single guy

that I've went out with because I just..I don't know because maybe I've been scared or whatever andd..I don't know I just started thinking ..musn't be so hard on other ..on men like just because so many men are like idiots are perverts and rapists and whatever sooo...dunno (reflecting) now I just sort of try and be .(pause) me..yeah I think I am you know not what other people want me to be or what society says you must be.

A: so..you got your first piercing when you were twenty five ?

J: uhh..I think I was about twenty - three uhh. I think I got a belly button piercing..uhh at that stage like..thats when it started happening..uhh lots of people started getting belly button piercings so I think a lot of my getting one was it was quite a different thing so I got that and then that's where a lot of people stopped because it was the thing to do at that stage and I went to London I spent quite a lot of time in London like over the last seven years I've gone over for anything from a month up to four months that was in the summer for the music and the festivals and when you go to a lace like that and spend time there you really get freaked on the whole South African way of thinking and you start rginking 'well being different is okay' ot doesn't mean you're a drug addict or a bad person or a criminal because you've got tatoos or piercings like a lot of people still look at you sideways like you got a tattoo must mean you are X Y Z ..and I just get so frustrated with people like why does that mean that you know how can you say because somebody's got a tattoo or a piercing you can now know what they..what kind of people they are..it took my family a while to understand like my way of thinking they were like "how can you do that why are you doing that " I said well you all take ear piercing soo much for granted.. what about the first time

somebody ever pierced their ear I bet you all like '(gasp) how can you do that.. that is so terrible' but because of socialisation where people now are..well you can't remember when you didn't see someone with pierced ears it's okay but suddenly someone pierces through their eyebrow why..why is the eyebrow any different to the ear when you come to think of it you know..we weren't born with a 'sign' saying 'pierce here'..you know it just happened that way that somebody pierced their ear and everybody started doing it..you know when I pierced my eyebrow and that was like the next thing..umm..my mother was just like..whenever we went to the Pavilion people just like stared and stared at me and I said 'Mom . I hate it..it's not my problem it's their problem..it's something they.. ccan't deal with' you know but you can walk around with your ears pierced like I want to shake people and say 'but your ears are pierced what's the difference !' you've also had like a gun shooting here (pointing to her ear) or any.. you know it's like the same thing and also I did quite bit of research about other cultures and I ..a lot of Indian people they pierce their noses..

A: That's to some extent tied up in a traditional..

J: ..it's a traditional thing you know so...so just ahhh anyway so London I think made me open my eyes a little bit I came back with my eyebrow ring my mother was horrified (in one breathe) ...and then I think the next thing was just getting a few more on my ears...and even here people still look and they go "Oh my God !" and I go "so it's only four centimetres up from what you're used to " you know it's like not really that big a deal..umm...and then of course the tongue but now again everybody ...it might be like somebody's first piercing..but I've seen a lot of people got a tongue piercing you know and ..I think it's quite a hectic piercing it's

through a muscle it's not through skin and people like freak out about this (pointing to her right cheek piercing) and I say ' it's nothing it's just a piece of skin' it's like going in here (demonstrating the piercing) and in here through you know the tongue is so much more hectic but people have never seen this before so it's like "oh my God, was that sore ?" and sometimes they've got a tongue piercing and they ask me this question and I say 'but you got your tongue pierced and that is a muscle..this is a piece of skin you know..it's ..it's a completely different thing ' but because but tongue piercings became very commercial and popular all of a sudden it was seen to be okay to do ..ummm but I I've had mine like over the passttt..how old am I ..twenty-eight..for the past five years so I didn't go out and have them all done at once you know like once a year I'll ..or two times a year I'll go out and do something like extreme but generally like the ears and the belly button and the eyebrow thatss..uhh. quite common placed.

A: What do you mean by common placed ?

J: welll... like nipple piercings and genital piercings ..those are obviously a little bit more hectic because..for one you obviously not doing it for anybody to see because of...nobody can see it .mm..you know it's not like putting make - up on to make yourself look better for people or piercing your ears because it's shiny and pretty on your ears you know because it's something a lot more personal and...(long pause) also I think because it's going into the reproductive system and sex and blah blah blah...ummm...and I read up again a lot on nipple piercings because a lot of people said you can block your milk ducts and when you umm..breast feed it can be really painful but then I read up a lot of other stuff from women who had pierced their nipples who said it's fine as long as

you...umm...take the piercing out when you breast feed because it will obviously be hard for the umm.. baby but they breast fed fine you know some people will obviously have problems others won't some people have.. pierced belly buttons that never heal sooo..it's like how you heal and I know I heal well so I don't think I'd have a problem and then ..like ...uhh I don't even know why..but like I always wanted to have them so I had them done and..aboutttt..a year and a bit ago I went had my clitoral hood done which is just like the skin..

A: (nodding)

J: ..and it (getting softer) wasn't excessively 'painful' (spoken really softly)...(rapid change in tone) also because I think I had so many the pain isn't a thing anymore because I...it's not like I like pain..I definitely don't have piercings because I'ma painn (thinking) addict umm...if I hurt myself I would cry as much as the next person whatever but...this is the 'type of pain that I am ready for I know it's being done I've asked for it to be done' you know what I mean so it's it's a different type of pain I don't psyche myself up or go into ant type of trance..I want this done so why must you know what I mean it is a bit

A: no tell me..

J: it is a bit ..mind over matter I suppose because I know I want this done umm..it (eishh) it's sort of like I can just sit there take a deep breath (demonstrating taking in air) breathe out it's so quick it's no use getting worked up about it if you going to get worked up about it then don't do it you know because(long pause) I think half the thing is (long pause)... is gettinggg over that that (short pause) pain thing like some people say like 'oahh ! they're so scared they're so scared they're

so scared' and I say "well then don't do it" you know because well you're obviously getting it done for the wrong reason you must be getting it done then for more of a cosmetic thing like oohh now that everybody's doing it .. it's something I get for myself like people have said to me that 'it's ugly how can you do that?' abd I say 'well don't look at it because I'm not doing it for you' you know or people point and they stare ...

A: How does that affect you ?

J: umm. it's different there are days when I look at people and I stare straight back at them..umm and I'll feel like being nasty I I couldn't I couldn't never actually say to somebody 'oh look at your hair or look how fat you are or look at your clothes or look at your shoes ' you know like I could never ever do that umm..I don't want to uhh..I just couldn't but sometimes I just look at them back like 'what's your problem' you know 'why are you staring at me' like and then I just think of saying 'it's not my problem it's your problem' umm and sometimes I feel quite liberated 'cause I think I'm doing something that those people probably love to do because it's something slightly a little bit different to their ordinary lives and they would never andd..I've done it so I feel GGREAT and I can walk and feel taller and feel fantastic and I think I'm different I'm not a sheep I don't follow what they're all doing I might be following a piercing type of route you know where all piercings..pierced people look the same but I don't do it for any reason just because to belong to a certain group because not all my friends got piercings..umm obviously the type of people I hang out with..in that group they do a lot of people do have piercings but not all my friends like not all belong to this 'pierced gang' or whatever but all my friends have tattoos so ..I definitely I don't go to clubs like Chaos or Bonkers or Bourbon Street ...that is not

my scene you know we obviously do stick together to a uhh type of 'subculture' if you can call it I don't know ummm... but yah umm. some days I love it and other days I just think ooahhh 'why can't I just be normal and stop these people staring ' you know..

A: What do you consider normal ?

J: ummm...someboddddy whooo doesn't do anythingggg ...like...permanent... to change their appearance...ummm... people who are quite happy to buy from stores that are advertised on t.v. and the radio and whatever magazines like when they all wear the same type of clothes ..I mean I've got some very ordinary type of clothes whatever but every now and again I'll go out and buy something different and it's normal to me I know normal can mean anything but normal to me is somebody whooo...I suppose doesn't seem tooo try and want anything else different ..like they quite happy - I don't know if they're happy but they seem quite happy to just(long pause) I don't uh maybe ummmm...(long pause) it's just that if you look at ..if you go to a place like for example where I think is like a club like Chaos..like I've been there like you know a few times and ..like if you look around everybody can over there looks the same...because all the girls well not all obviously I'm generalising..you can look around and most of the girls have got long hair till about here (below shoulders, halfway down their back) a brown blonde maybe it's got highlights umm..they've all got their same like high heel strappy shoes with the same type of shorts..I mean skirts and the same type of tops or these little dresses and you can sort of like put them all into a group together they would look the same the same with the men like the big thing with men is to have spikyy um bleached hair all of a sudden you know and they all wearing...so that's people it's people that follow the

....society's idea of what's normal whatever you see advertised in magazines in on t.v. that's accepted by general society..to mee that is normal.

A: and you consider yourself..?

J: ummm. you see ..I'mmm ...I think I'm normal too because 'I'm just expressing myself in a different way' to um..most people but nowadays piercing is so common place like I don't feel feel like I'm different really..uhh..when I first got them I definitely was one of the first people to have an eyebrow ring in 'Durban' (emphasised) little Durban ummm ..but going to London you lose all sense of being different because there you fit in with the crowd because there's going to be like fifteen other people who are weirder than you you know so I don't class myself as weird I definitely do class myself as different to those people in Durban or if you stuck me inside Chaos 'I would stick out'but I don't go to those type of places and the people I mix with are similar to me sooo..you know if everybody else looked like..that and I looked like this then I wouldn't consider myself 'normal' but I'm normal because my group of people all do so...

<INTERRUPTION>

umm..whether it's dying their hair getting piercings tattoos whatever they all do something slightly non ..I don't know but then again it's all changing it's all becoming so commercial like I've been selling hair dye for the past seven years at Musgrave Centre and when I first started selling it was like sooo sloww people would only buy the small bottles because they..they only wanted to do silly streaks in their hair and you know and geez I went in the other day and he says 'well here's five

hundred rand because ther's this big rave coming up ' so they'd be buying hair dye and suddenly it's like alright you know and oah everybody dyes their hair and my sister's friend came to our place with like and eyebrow ring and I said to my mom "like look you know everybody's doing it now.. isn't it crazy " like we're all doing it or I was doiug it like five years ago and suddenly now it's become accepted and I just say to people like...<INTERRUPTION> umm..what was I saying ?

A: you were saying that everybody's doing...

J: oh yah so now it just doesn't seem so different anymore and like I actually laugh when I see like friends of my mom orr whatever the people that used to say like 'oohh, what's J doing now ?' their daughters are coming home with piercings and I'm like 'hahahah!' (mockingly) which is great like I love part of it I think it's absolutely fantastic that that's happening because like five years ago I was looked at like 'ohh you're an absolute FREAK' and now everyone's doing it but at the same time like I don't like it 'cos I don't wanna look like everyone else you know what I mean it's quite ehheh..

A: Tell me about it..how's it feel ..you wanting to be different and..

J: that's the thing ..I really don't ever remember having this big decision to say 'ooaahh ! I just want to be different from everybody else' I think it's in you ..you are either like that or you're not there's a very good poster umm..I think it's my friend who's a tattooist at his shop...it's got a picture of a guy with piercings all over his face and it says ' If you have to Ask You Wouldn't Understand 'and I thought that was so true if you have to ask ...'cos people are very interested in it and if you have to ask about it then I don't think you would understand ..d'you

do you know what I mean like... 'cos I can't really explain ...so well ...I think it's something in you you are that type of person that ..does these things or you're not...you know and that's what makes us all so 'unique' and individual' because there are some people that like climbing mountains and the thrill of bungy jumping is for them where it isn't.. it's a different way of ..I pierce my body they fling their bodies off cliffs you know ...it's like... just...what's in you and what isn't in you I don't think I've always been an exhibitionist either because I used to be very shy at school and I had long blonde hair and I looked quite sweet and whatever ...and I was just very intrigued London I think is a wonderful place and I love the fact that...it's not even I think that when you..you want to be different like you can do what you want..like society doesn't say that 'Girl must be pretty must wear dresses' like why ! it's only because you grow up learning that we believe it to be right I just like the idea well if I feel like waking up tomorrow and wearing an overall and boots I should be able to because that's what I feel like you know...umm..and I just I I do feel sad for people at some time..especially when you see like people who are grown up you think that they'll be more open-minded because they've lived and seen things and understand how the world's revolving and whatever... like umf..there's times when I feel like going and standing on a podium or whatever and say to people 'but you put like whale fat on your lips..you know..coloured whale fat and you put this what whatever like you put they a mask on your face I mean I wear 'make-up I'm not saying anything against make-up I'm just trying to make people understand well I'd like to like you do this why do you do that 'cos you don't know any different because it's been done as long as you can remember the only reason why you're staring at me is because it's something you've had a hinder for it's like your ...your problem you know

what I mean you are reminded to change

A: Their own objections ?

J: yes..and my mother has become fantastic in the first year or two she was like horrified she said 'what are you doing to yourself' and then one of her friends said 'what's wrong with J, what happened to J' my mother said 'it's something I've come to accept' I haven't changed one bit from who I was I'm the same type of person I have the same personality I'm just wearing trinkets on my face as my gran calls them you know.. instead of wearing it around my neck I'm wearing it through my eyebrow (laughingly) it's like I haven't changed as a person my mother is quite amazing she like stands up for me or used to stand up for me quite a lot she doesn't really have to now because like I said everybody's doing it buttt she used to say to friends 'you've spoke to J she's the same as she was like because her hair's blue listen to what you're saying, you are saying that my daughter's decided to change because her hair is a different colour.. you bleach your hair you make it white from black why should black to blue be any different whatever' I just think people need to just like chill whatever just listen to themselves and I'm sure I'm a like it's actually made me very aware umm..this how people stare at me I thought 'gosh! I hope I don't stare at people or you know what I mean .. I see disabled people I think 'oh so you musn't look and pretend you never saw it' you know because some people do that as well like omigosh ...but at the same time umm..you can also I'm sure I caught myself like staring at something or seeing anything that's slightly not the norm like the first time you see a ..uh a inter - racial couple it's like it does cause it's something we not used to 'cause growing up in South Africa we haven't experienced it..but there's other times when it's fine you know soo it to it took me a

while at least at first to to like don't blink an eyelid you know ..but actually it's taught me a lot of how to respect other people like I don't stare at people just because I think that they've got something weird or wonderful and then I do I still find myself saying like 'Gee, that's weird' and then I think 'Who are you to say that's weird' you know...so it's definitely.. been good for me it's made me think you know to respect other people and made more open minded to other people's ideas but (loudly) I WOULD NEVER STICK CORAL THROUGH MY HEAD you know the implants ?...

A: yeah..

J: ...it actually sticks to you bone..the coral yah and it actually sticks to your bone so I think that is tototally bizarre but those people and that little group that they live in ..and people they go out with that's quite the norm I've seen so many pictures of these people and they've got implants in their arms of coral it's like changing..(long pause) ohh..I think for so many years people have always followed along like sheep you know ????? and ???? and whatever I think a lot of people have just said stuff it I I I'm me I can do whatever I like ..like people are amputating fingers and toes and branding and scarring themselves and it's funny 'cos when you look back it's almost as if it's come full circle because so many tribes did that and still do that you know ...and because we're so civilised...

A: (laughter)

J: ...and that's a terrible thing to think of...and now we're actually mutilating ourselves meanwhile like africans they ...mm..scar themselves on purpose these tribes that stick bones through their noses and you know

it's like 'the Modern Primitive' like that book says you know we sort of going back to ... it's quite strange hey..like how that happens.

A: yah..uhmm..you mentioned uhmm this thing about umm okay going a bit back

J: yah..

A: you mentioned uhmm..the thing about being pretty ..what does it mean for you being a woman ?

J: well..when I was young I had like long blonde hair and a lot of men used to approach me because I was slim ...and ..auhh.. a lot of men used to always come and talk to me and whatever whatever and I ...
...
...(sigh)..obviously it's very flattering and I always say that I (emphasised) HATED it ..it was very flattering to get attention from men but umm.. half the time I knew it was because I had blonde hair 'cos I've seen men ..go gaga over a blonde girl and you look at her face and her face is not that attractive and and there's tons of things written about it how blondes have more..you know what I mean it's I was telling you it does stand for something and it is so true I got a helluva lot of attention when my hair was long and blonde from that type of guy.. I don't know the man about town whatever ..umm.. so I LIKED it and I HATED it and the first thing I did was cut off my hair

<INTERRUPTION>

<UPON RETURN>

A: okay we were talking about how it feels to be a woman..

J: yahh.. so I got to a stage where it reallyyy..used to bother me that the way a woman looked the waaay way men reacted to the way a woman looked you know and obviously it comes from the whole deal from when I was young and it would really freak me out sometimes how men would behave they don't even know you and.. they come up and say all these terrible well not terrible they try and flatter me and I think I'm an intelligent woman I don't need to be flattered by some idiot you know.. umm.. and I think I just got the hell I donno I just used to dye my hair a lot at least all different colours and black whatever and then one day I just chopped it all off ..'cos a friend of mine said 'you cut your hair'..you just feel so like liberated you don't feel like you conforming to any like ideal and uh it was so strange it really was an amazing feeling and I cut it really short and I just felt like I'd a whole different attitude like a more spunky and funky and whatever you know and I didn't feel like when I had (with accent) loong blonde pretty hair so it was actually quite a big thing cutting my hair because I was so used to the ... it's almost like a curtain you know I used to always ... not hide behind it but I know when I had long blonde hair I looked good and people used to compliment me so it was a nice feeling and when I used to dye it or cut it I didn't get that same type of attention it is quite strange you know to realise how dramatic or how it could change people's perception of you or whatever and I thought well that's what I wanted you know I didn't want people to flatter me like meaningless you know umm...and it's not like I wanted to attract those type of people the type of people I'm interested in are... are the type of guys who like women with piercings and tattoos and short

it doesn't leave me like being narrow - minded in this way I think you know just because I'm like this doesn't mean I couldn't be narrow - minded a lot of people can be you know they like look at other people and say 'o how can they be like that' and I say 'well they're happy I donno how they can be like that they're obviously happy' or maybe they just need that extra bit of kick you know or they need somebody to say 'you know come on try this'..I donno (softly)

A: It's an interesting analogy you used of 'hiding behind the curtain'...

J: mmm I definitely used to I used to wear my hair like this

(demonstrating hair blocking her face) a friend of mine used to say 'put it behind your ears man' and I used to go 'no no no' I used to always hide behind my hair I used to dance and always have my hair hanging down never ever like up or back always down and one of my best friends said to me 'you'll never cut your hair' and I said 'why?' 'it seems just just I can't see you ever cutting your hair' and I thought about that for a while and I thought 'Gosh! she's right I don't think I would cut my hair because I'd be losing someth...like the bit of power that you have when you like realize what (pause) men are like a lot of men are like the way they love women and whatever and whatever and the way they flatter you and whatever because it does make you feel good you can use it you know what I mean you have a special type of power before I used to always feel like a victim you know like 'ohh how can men do this to women whatever but I think like my God ! imagine being a man being so bloody weak that you have to always come to these...mm sexual things are like terrible' I'm so glad I'm a woman it made me feel stronger sooo... you can actually use it to your benefit you know and in a way I felt I sort of lost a bit of that when I cut my hair...but then I got another type of power a very 'I AM ME' type of power

you know where 'you can't ... can't BREAK ME ' you know because I'm doing exactly what I want to do and it's not for any reason other than I want to do it...you know everything's got like several sides to it it's never like just the one way of thinking.

A: yahh..umm that's quite a umm.. powerful word 'BREAK" ..one may associate that with something really fragile..umm what do you associate that with ?

J: I think it's for so many years being suppressed and women are physically weaker than men ummm... you know like I think that if we were on the same physical strength things wouldn't be the way they are today it's like very sad that just because women are physically weaker they can get so abused and whatever but umm I just I do martial arts I've been doing it for about five years ..I'm almost black belt except last year I did so much travelling that I missed out on so much training but I just hope I get that but then again I'm sure I did that to..it's self defence so my mind was getting stronger but I still needed to feel stronger physically like if ever I was attacked would I be able to fight back you know I don't know if I would I hope I would umm ...and even with religion religion is like so masculine it's like 'Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit' like whe where's the women in that you know I know Catholicism they've got like the Virgin Mary or whatever but (pause) euh even the way I think about religion I don't believe in a particular religion but I do believe in a spirituality and I (long pause) I think ...uohh I just wish the world would change...it's just that I don't have any respect for a religion that can be ... soooo... just ...ahhh..so hypocritical really like ...Christian wars ...blows my mind...like Holy Crusade...like what is that about what does it mean you know like a God that you are ...scared of

I can't understand that really it seems bizarre to me and so bizarre that there are millions of followers you know because can't you just see like surely God or whatever should be something that's within you and without it's like all over and how can it be a masculine thing when the world is fifty percent women and fifty percent men who I..uh it just it is soooo obvious to me that it just freaks me out that so many people are just blinded by it you know ...it's pretty strange...it's sad that people need something to believe in so much.

A: umm..okay you were talking about tribal roots..what does it mean for you being a South African ?

J: ummm...I think because South Africa has been so closed off from the world for so long... I donno there doesn't seem to be an identity or culture that I feel I belong to in South Africa...you know that whole braaivleis and biltong braai thing that is that's sport that is soo not the way I think but I'm obviously South African because I choose to live here umm.. and I do love my country but I definitely don't agree with the way it's runnn... and I don't really feel like I belong to the culture very much but I'mmm...i donno it's quite strange actually because I don't feel like I belong to anything else really like half my family is Scottish I don't have this big like desire to live in Scotland and the other half is Afrikaans and I don't feel any ties tooo like the Dutch side of things I just ..I think that's why so many South Africans are mixed up because they don't have an identity like Europe ..when I travelled in Europe they say to me so much like each place has got its own... music its own language its own currency its own little history its own type of traditional clothing you know it's just so amazing it must be such an amazing feeling to be like Italian or French and to have that type of

identity I think South Africans are just so like...wedon't have that type of thing you know...and I think travelling and stuff has really opened my eyes up so much to other ways of thinking so when I say I'm proud to be South African I think it's just out of a 'natural' love of you know 'this is where I was born' type of thingI think it's something you can't really describe it's like a feeling of home more than any big political and cultural thing really.

A: If you had to link your piercings to your identity as such how would you ?

J; uuhhhmm.. I thinkk...I think it comes from I don't know if you can really say a country or anything like that because I think I travelled so much in Eng around England I seem to always think of London you know ...but maybe it is 'cos if you think of London in terms of the world London is where everything happens it is the hotpot city like there's that saying like 'if you're tired of London you're tired of life' it's just because it always has been the place you know it really compared to anywhere else it's really not quite like London like even these festivals that I go to where you see these people in their mid - forties with their children like ...I love so much that people can just do whatever they like really you know there seems to be a feeling that there just isn't here like or you can be forty years old and... you still living like they go to festivals and they still do things like here people seem to get old so quickly they really do and it makes me so sad like although a lot has changed like it's when you in school it's drummed into you okay you get married get a a nice job have a nice house have a child all by the time you're twenty-five you know and I went through some strange thing when I was twenty-five I was like Oh God ! I don't even have a permanent job

don'ttt...have a boyfriend I don't see any sight of marriage or children you know and I did freak out a bit because so many of my peers were getting married and settling down and doing all that but then when I saw them they had just aged so much because they had to become responsible and grown up like I'm twenty-eight years old and I still skip and hop and jump and scream I think it's so important to like retain that in a child 'don't get so serious and don't grow up too quickly' because this time of your life is like the most fantastic you know you never going to look this good you never gonna have this amount of energy you never gonna have (quietly) this much freedom just try and enjoy it as much as you can (lump in throat kind of voice) and I just really get sad when I see women that are like twenty-five years old they look so drained and old because it's the life they've chosen I mean they must be happy I don't know if they are but I just can't see myself settling down for a long time ...and I think that comes from a place like London where there aren't restrictions like there are here you know but I've never been ambitious to be at the top the MD of a company what's also different is my way of thinking is just so be comfortable and to have as many different experiences as possible and I don't think you can do that if you're working like from eight to five every single day of your life and one day you wake up and you're forty years old and you think 'Oh my God where did my life go !' have you seen people like that I 've seen people where one day they're fifteen years old and the next day they're like forty years old and their life has just passed them by I really live such a full life like I've travelled a lot done lots of different things and am lucky that I am able to 'cos I've had this small trustfund when I turned twenty-one I definitely know that not everybody can do this type of thing but...sheeuu...I just I donno (laughingly) I hope to get married I do believe in that whole thing..

that's the thing about life there's just like so many contradictions like I don't ever see myself ...being married in a church I just think it would be hypocritical if I did 'cos I don't go to church ummm but I would like a service of sorts ummm...and I'd never wear a big white like meringue wedding dress but I like the sort of tradition behind it you know I think it's beautiful it's such a special day you must make it important enough and have a huge party I'm sure but when I'm around thirty I still got time I'm twenty something I haven't turned thirty yet and I want to have children ..one day...

A: okay... one day...<CHANGED TAPE OVER>...okay you were saying...

J: ...like taking your husband's name and that it also like freaks me out like women lose their identity you know to become somebody's wife you know that's a woman's role for most of her life they either a wife a daughter a lover or a mother or it's just you know what I mean it's like women really are ..exist in relation to other people...

A: objects ?

J: (whisperingly) yahhh just like me (laughter) I know a lot of my friends ..all my friends are incredibly independant they've all chosen not to follow society which is quite difficult sometimes...especially like in South Africa you know where this is all new to we only now like learning about other countries and cultures and sooo..

A: soo how do you think growing up in the South African culture with reference to the so called 'Rainbow Nation' effects the meaning piercing has for you ?

J: umm.. I don't think so because I never really ...identified with the African like the whole ethnic..African thing .. like I've never really identified with it at all so even like with the tribal whole thing I don't feel like I'm going back to my African roots at all because I don't feel like I'm an African you know what I mean like some people do because they from Africa or whatever but I don't feel that way at all I don't think any of my piercings got anything to do with ...living in Africa as such like the way I think it's definitely got more to do with ...like even my sense of like the type of humour I enjoy British humour things I relate to definitely the more like European United Kingdom like America I've got no time for America at all ...I think personally that Americans are all aliens interbred and totally ridiculous.

A: (laughter)

J: ...I promise you I've been to America and I just can't understand the people there you know umm..I think....I'm sure living in South Africa has taught me some good things I don't know what like how to improve the person I am and besides the crime I think it's a lovely country ..I would move to England though if I could stand the cold.

A: okay what do you mean by 'improve the person I am'

J: maybe because we're living in a country that's got so much change you have to ... like you'd be learning so much like people that have grown up in other countries although there still is racism in those countries ummm...it's just that we've been forced as a nation to look at ourselves and look at the way we think and...ouhh our country's changed a helluvah lot in the last ten years I know when I ...like I have a lot of sympathy for especially black African women I think they've had the rawest deal

ever and it just sucks so much ummm ...so I've got a lot of empathy for those people and umm...we also living in a country where the child abuse rate is so high it really is ridiculous.. ummm worked at umm.. Childline before but then it was at the wrong time of my life because I hadn't dealt with anything properly I was like 'cos maybe it would help by talking (abrupt change in direction) and I needed to deal with it (softly) and I hadn't so that was a very hectic experience like I remember this one day I couldn't even count how many phone calls there were I just thought this iss..sick this is too much these people that are caught making calls you know how many hundreds of thousands never pick up a phone...I NEVER DID I know countless girls that had been abused and never ever called Childline and they are sitting in one office in Morinigside in Durban and they have all these calls coming in all the time and I was just thinking they're sick they're sickI don't know what I can do about it but it's definitely made me a very aware ...ummm...I think I've become... I think I that I'm an open-minded person and it might be because I'm living in such a narrow-minded society ...like if I had grown up in London where things was...coollll..maybe I wouldn't be o.. open-minded you know what I mean 'cos it's quite strange because there are people there who even though they do whatever they want they can still be very nasty..and selfish you know...they'll..I'd like to think that even though I don't always understand the way other people think like I accept it you don't have to like it but you can respect them for their ideas ...um maybe I wouldn't have been like that before..I donno.

A: before..?

J: like oh no not before but if I had lived in a different place ..I don't know ...but I don't I haven't really thought about it much I obviously

haven't attached too much to being South African... I don't know I'd like to because I've lived here my whole life.

A: umm..okay you talked about umm you hadn't dealt with it when you were at Childline what you had experienced..how did that feel that kind of living with it day to day ?

J: uhmmm..well my years at school were just very lonely 'cos you've got this big secret that nobody else knows ...a lot of your behaviour is because of that like a lot of my anger and bitterness and you know the way I behaved as a teenager was because of that notttt..uhh..I wass very bitter for a very long time umm...and I can remember like sometimes like at Christmas there was like a whole lot of family members and I used to just sit in my room and my mother thought I was just being very rude you know maybe if I tried to explain things to her earlier ...she would have probably just understood and made other arrangements for me or something you know but because she didn't know what I was going through ...she used to think that I was..had a terrible attitude problem like all the time...but as soon as she did find out she was like 'Oh my God ! I can remeber this time I can rtemeber that time why didn't you tell me' and it upset my mother like a helluva lot annd sometimes I do wish I told her earlier.. but obviously I had to say it when I did because it was just the right time you know it was ...but I'm like so much easier now after you tell one person it took a long time to tell the next person but a little bit less time to tell the third person now I actually feel fine talking about it I don't feel you know all this time you don't know any better and you just think that you..you know a victim you mustn't I think you dirty or there's something wrong with you that somebody would do that to you you know you get a very very very poor SELF IMAGE and...for now somebody's

who's accepting I mean I know I by no means healed if you do feel healed umm.. but I'm definitely a lot stronger than I was like I can talk about it without bursting into tears you know but it definitely does affect your relationships with people (quietly) especially men ...I've been nasty to a lot of boys and (laughingly) I'm very sorry butt...yah...

A: you said that you could only tell your mum when you were ready to tell her..how did you come to that..

J: because I uuh..it's pretty understandable why I was seventeen years old and I started going out with this boy it was my first serious boyfriend I was in matric andddd...you know when you have your first serious boyfriend you start experimenting like a little bit and I was suddenly like freaked out completely and started crying and going crazy and he asked me 'What's wrong? what's wrong what's wrong' and like eventually I told him he was the first person I ever told was my boyfriend at the time and ...he said 'Go and tell your mother right now just go and tell your mother' and he was very was ..very cool and so I told him and told my mother the same night it was quite a hectic (laughingly) and yah I think a lot of people they start dealing with things at that point of adolescence when suddenly you are experimenting with sex or you're about to experiment with sex..it suddenly brings it all back because it's ...it's a sexual thing you know...ooouhh so ...I think yah..it was natural that I told her right then ...my sister's actually studying child psychology it's amazing she's actually started this year because she wants to help ...children and my little sister she's like eighteen years old...when this was all going on she wasn't born you know when I told her...I only told her last year but she said she knew something was amiss but she didn't know what it was and I only told her last year I think because she's such a little girl I never

wanted to ...tell her such a horrible thing you know she said 'Why didn't you tell me like why didn't you tell me what happened ' and we so close now even though we're ten years apart I said 'Sharon you weren't even BORN (emphasized) when this happened' 'Oh yah'and it is so amazing because shes she says she WISHES (emphasised) she could have been there to help me but she wasn't so she wants to do child psychology to maybe help other young children she's very nice she's a lovely girl.

A: Tell me about your piercings in the order that they were done.

J; ummm okay the first two piercings I had when I was five years old I had two ear piercings like most little girls get at about six whatever and then atfer that it was the second and third piercing in the ear ..and thenn...

A: that was your upper ear ?

J: nnoo it was just after the first and the second the inner ear ..yah still on the lobe andddd..I think the first one I did was at five years old everyone was getting their ear pierced like the thing to do at five and the second and the third werree..jeez in those days it seemed like ...to some people quite a hectic thing to have your ears pierced twice ..anyway..when I was out we used to go to this nightclub The Rift like the only alternative nightclub in Durban and...many people were a lot more expressive and you would see like tattoos it wasn't hectic in those days and then uhmm.. the one night I was out and I took my stud and I just pierced my ear myself at the club I don't know why ..a friend at school wanted to do it so I did hers for her and then I just pierced most of these (ear) myself like how many are there ..one two three four five six seven eight and that one I also did myself so I did nine on my left ear by

myse.. well first six of those by myself 'cos threee I probably had at umm. a jew jewellery shop 'cos the only place you could go was at a jewellery shop and with a gunand then ummm... I had my belly button pierced and that was my first real piercing and I say that because it wass..not at a jewellery shop by sommme granny with a gun it was the whole hypodermic needle uhmm..and also the first non - ear piercing and that I did also because at the time I think it was ..quite..fashionable for like the girls that we knew uhmm. my mother freaked out about this one quite a bit because it was like 'That's where they cut you from me and you're piercing it' you know and I was like ...'Mommm I'm decorating it to show them how proud I am that that's where they cut you from me' whatever you know I'd always have an answer and it was quite strange 'cos this piercing takes nine months to heal and I told my mother and she was like 'aww'

A: the top or the bottom (of belly button - two piercings there - one ring on top and one bar at the bottom)

J: no it goes through ..

A: okay the bar

J: yah ..and I've since read which is quite funny because these days people that are piercing also like anybody could do it like you could go to The Wheel (mall) and somebody would be doing a belly button piercing anndd.. I didn't really know I didn't go to one of those I went to a real piercer but uhmm I didn't really know the dangers of piercing in those days and when I read up about it they say this (belly button) is one of the most dangerous piercings to get because if you accidentally pierce the skin where your umbilical cord was attached like my the skin there if that

gets infected that directly uhmm the infection goes directly to your liver...like having a ...ticking time bomb in your stomach...this one of the most dangerous piercings to get in that respect

A: and what does that do to your...

J: I was just saying thank goodness I've been to a real piercer and...I must tell everybody I know not to go to these little places to get pierced and I must make sure the piercer I go to has quite a good qualification 'cos in London you can have an apprenticeship for three years you study anatomy you study you know blood tissues muscles blah blah blah knows what parts of the body can be pierced what can't blah blah blah so I made a point then of saying well if I'm going to get a piercing I'm going to do it properly and the next piercing I had done was in London I did this one the others so far had been in Durban.

A: okay could you tell me your experience of the piercing itself.

J: okay because it was my first non - ear piercing it was the first major piercing I had ..and I was quite nervous I wasn't sure what to expect at all ..uhhmm anddd...I went with a friend and he like cleaned it ...and stuck the needle through and I thought I was going to die (one breath) it was really really sore it felt like ..I just remember saying it feels like he was ripping my intestines out through my belly button (laughingly) I really felt I thought it was really sore I felt quite weak but I'm glad I've done it you know I.. had the pain for a couple of seconds but it's done .and I was quite you know few of my friends had it done so I was quite happy to do it uhmm..I think that's where it all started 'cos once you have one it's so much easier to have the second and I knew what to experience what the experience was what the pain and how the big the

needle was andd it was quite hectic it's a helluva big needle you know it's not jusst a little gun a gun doesn't seem as... hectic and also I learnt a lot from this piercing because they don't use guns on other parts of your body because it's so quick..the uhmm..body actually goes into like shock ..the skin it tears ..apparently this is what the guy was telling me uhmm...and it causes more stress on the skin than the needle that you're pushing through because the time you know the one is very very quick and the other ..so uhh. that was my first real real piercing ..anything else you want to know ?

A: yah..you said that the pain was only a few seconds

J: okay uhmm...I just remember thinking 'Oh my God why am I doing this is it worth it ?' and I was quite tanned and he did say if your skin is tanned it can be a bit more leathery you know soft skin it just goes right through and I was I was thin so I didn't have any like fat it was this skin that he was trying to grab and..I remember thinking 'oh my goodness what am I doing' once I done it I was like I've done it it was like an achievement because so many of my friends wouldn't do it like the girls that did it and there were girls that were just too scared (accentuated) it can be quite a good feeling I thought I've done it so I'm obviously quite thrilled you know I'm obviously can handle that it wasn't great but I I've done it it gave me quite a good feeling and that's why it was so much easier to have the next one and next one and next one 'cos I knew I could handle it.

A: You knew you could handle the piercing or the pain?

J: I suppose it must be both like because maybe then it was sort of the thing to do .. I'd like done that thing now andd.. the painn... like there

with that first one I didn't really think about how to deal with the pain or any of it 'cos I didn't know what to expect it was only after these others thattt I..knew how to think about it you know this one (belly) I didn't know and was very nervous and then I realised it's the worst thing you can doo...is to think about it 'cos I thought about it all the time booked made an appointment for the following week the whole week it's all I thought about now when I have a piercing I know what I want in the back of mind and then I subconsciously think about it and then I know that's what I'm going to get but I don't have any plans for when I'm getting it so I basically just walk into a piercing shop and I say 'okay I want this pierced' and that takes away that WHOLE week or two days of sitting and thinking about it that appointment you know so I don't think about it at all I walk in and I say I'm going to get this pierced and I'll just wait for a few minutes and because it had dwelled over in my mind and I've had so many others it is like no big deal any more ..this (belly) was a helluva big deal you know it really was .

A: You said it took a week..

J: yah I wanted it for a while ..but I made an appointment and a week later I went in.

A: specifically your belly button ?

J: yes..uhmmmI hadn't really seen other ones that much that time that I'd wanted to have ..I've been to London but ..I hadn't ..really thought too much about it you know the belly button I've seen like five other girls with it and I thought they were so nice just ..

A: What about it appealed to you ?

J: uhmm...at first because a woman's body shape you know like the belly area is like the thinnest part and girls who are wearing like pants or a skirt and a short top and it just it looked sexy it looked nice I liked it to see a little sparkling thing in the belly button you know and uhmm my guy friends they thought it was very nice and a lot of the time when you do things it is for other people more than it is for yourself you do it because somebody says 'ohh that's nice' whatever and I think that's definitely why I did that piercing because people said that's nice you know and I thought I could be like that you know what I mean the ones that followed I did mostly for me .

A: what does your belly button mean to you ?

J: uhmm.. other than the fact that's .. I mean it is a quite physically important thing that's where I was attached to my mother (laughter) as she put it butt...I don't really have anyyy... like if I think about it people at the time were doing ...lip rings you know what I mean I would have done that then 'cos that was the at the time the next thing that girls were doing you like pierced your ears and girls had done their noses and this was the next exciting thing you know so I don't think particularly because it was a belly button it just happened to be... the belly button that people were doing at the particular time and that I came into because now eyebrows you know what I mean like that was its time now it's eyebrows everybody's getting their eyebrow pierced you know so...

A: and what was the next one?

J: after the belly was the..eyebrow ...I think it does sort of follow in a sort of order in a way I just think South Africa's a bit behind in that order you know because ...definitely look at when I had my belly button

pierced if you would have told me like five years later I'd have all these piercings I would have said no ways I don't think so no !..uhmm ..but eyebrow again it doesn't mean anything special to me to have my eyebrow pierced it was just I started seeing them in London I hadn't seen any in Durban and I was seeing them in London and I thought 'gosh that's nice that's different quite cool 'y know..

A: what was appealing about it ?

J: like...taking your flesh a strange part of your body and just sticking surgical steel through it like ...it was shuuu... it just gave me a ..I don't know if ..maybe they do go in a certain you know you get your ears then you nose and then your belly and your eyebrow ..I don't know if it does go in a certain way for me it sort of has like the most popular ones I sort of had done first umm.. but then I went and welll okay much later I had my cheek done but like I still just don't see people with it so I think in the beginning even then it still was like a because I had seen other eyebrows in London I hadn't seen any in Durban and I'd seen them in London and going back to Durban I felt like having something new you know some people buy new shoes I felt like having a new piercing ..so I don't think the eyebrow was anything specific about it .. being near your eye or being.. I don't I don... for me it certainly I don't think it had any hidden meaning not that I really not that I can think of I just do think it was because I saw them and I liked them I thought they were nice ..you know...

A: uhuh.

J: ..thennn it was my nose I'd never pierced my nose before..which was strange because a lot of my friends had pierced their noses ..lots and

lots and lots and lots ..but I NEVER LIKED MY NOSE (emphasised) I HATED MY NOSE...when I was sixteen my friend and I used to always say we going to have nose jobs..so I just thought it wouldn't suit my nose that's why I never had it and one day I thought 'uhh let me just try it' ..so I know why I didn't do it..for so long but why I did do it .. I think at that stage I wasn't brave enough to do anything else you know 'cos I'd done my eyebrow done my belly button ..

A: how old were you ?

J: I think I was about twenty-three ...I could work it all out ummm.. I think I was about ..twenty-three when I had my belly button ..probably twenty-four when I had my eyebrow ummm...uhh and my nose ..

A: as we get to the others you can talk about them ...you said you're not to sure as to what is significant about your nose ?

J: yah I think I said like I knew why I didn't ever get it done I always wanted one ..uhmm..but I just didn't couldn't think it suited me andd...because like it'd be like my nose and I didn't want to draw any more attention to it you know (laughingly) ummm.. anndd not like that because I didn't want one ...but mm 'cos I wanted one but I didn't want to draw any more attention to it but I think because I had the others it didn't mean I wanted to draw attention to them you know what I mean like maybe the belly button because ... the belly button doesn't look nice on a fat person but I was thin so maybe I could have one so maybe I wanted one because it was would draw attention to myyy waist I don't know I don't like again I don't think I consciously made a decision to do it ..uhh if I was fat I would never had done it ..'cos I personally don't think it looks nice..on fat..I've seen them and I don't think it looks nice..so

like if they do obviously piercings do draw attention to the ear in which they pierced but I don't think I had my eyebrow pierced to draw attention to my eyes ..anyway yahhh...the eyebrow the first one grew out incidentally uhh because a lot of piercings certain areas are called migrating piercings they doo...grow out the skin does reject them uhmm belly buttons and eyebrows seem to be the most common migrating piercings as the piercers call it so I mine grew out and I had another one done..

A: what causes them to grow out is it just the body ?

J: just the body like a filter you know your body justtt...it's like I used tooo eh...like.. battle with it when I'd go 'oh no shame' like here I am like willingly sticking something through my body and my poor little body is just healing itself like it's meant to do and pushing this thing out and I just go and stick it straight back in you know like (laughingly) my poor body's like doing it's best to do its job properly and I'm just saying 'stuff you' sooo yah when it grew out it was quite people would go 'shame' you know but then again also with piercings people say 'how can you do that' and I say well they not permanent you know the scars they leave are permanent butt..it's not like a tattoo that's another whole subject all together you know ...piercings at the end of the day I can take these all out they'll eventually heal I could put up with the scars I could have cosmetic surgeryyy..not that ever would think about it 'cos I've already got a scar here (belly button) and it doesn't bother me from the first piercing uhmm but you know it's not permanent ...so what you know I STUCK THIS THERE I CAN TAKE IT OUT....uhhhmm...seeing as how piercing is so popular I think it is because it's so popular that is why it's so popular because it's not a permanent thingg..

A: your next one ?

J: uhmm ..next one after the..this one

A: your lip !

J: yah..uhmm....I hadn't seen any I'd seen a few in the centre at that stage again.. tshhh I don't think I'd seen any in Durban at that time ...annnddd normally I wear a stud (currently wearing a ring) with like a flat back now this is one of the dangers of piercing we can into it wears away your gum sooo.. my gum was worn away quite a bit by the back constantly rubbing like I never felt it it never was sore but like I'm talking right now it would wear away slightly and a part of it got to be a bit sore like I spoke to some friends in London and they said 'yah' that's also like piercers now learning like everybody's learning at the same time like now piercers know like when they di.. rather do it like a millimetre higher up so that the back doesn't rub against the gum

A: what about your teeth

J: but teeth yah it won't really harm you teeth anddd so I must now wear this (ring) 'cos it's actually worn away quite a bit and sometimes it's sore and I think the nerve is exposed and I went to the dentist and they said 'no they can't do anything once the gum is gone it can't grow back' but it's not sore when I eat it isn't like an exposed nerve ..so now I live in pain 'cos now and again I used to get a sharp pain.

A: so the hoop was a preventative measure ?

J: umm...when I first got it pierced I got the hoop initially it was a hoop..yah and then I just started buying different types of jewellery 'cos

you get spikes all different types luminous things plastic ..I've got hundreds of different things well had I lost half of them but uhhmm I used to have a small little spike sticking out here (bottom lip) so this I just put back in after the ..it's actually here mmm I took the lip one out (showing her spike)

A: ohh okay ..

J: flat back..the top is actually removable so you can add anything luminous or whatever..okay so after my lip...do you want to talk about the lip some more

A: yah..just at the top of your mind what does your lip mean to you ?

J: yahhh..uhmmm...II donno if it'seven then like now it's like the first time I'm actually really really really really thinking about it ...(playing with the lip hoop)..I don't think that there were these really big decisions and your lip...what do you do with your mouth you kiss you eat you speak.....(long pause) I think drawing attention to your lips but not I definitely didn't make any conscious decision to do it uhh when you think about it most people for some reason they dooo... pierce your face and like not the back of your head orrr because your face is what people see you know soalthough some people I know are getting piercings done on their spine (laughingly) but anyway uhhh

A: and what is it you wanting ?

J: I don't know maybe just that I'mm nottt I don't mind expressing myself uhgg for me it's just jewellery like everybody else wears jewellery mine just happens to be through my skin umm but then again people have always had earrings and it's like you know ..why do people first have earrings I

don't know maybe ...if I was the first person to ever get pierced I might be able to ..say more (said quickly) but maybe the places I've been to travelled I see it all the time for me it was ...(whisper) I don't know (louder) maybe coming back to South Africa where you don't see it much was my way of ...standing out little bit from the crowd ...but then again most of my friends were living out in London and they were doing piercing whatever ...so when they all came back I didn't stand out from the crowd people did start copying on and started doing piercing so you know ummm shhuuu

A: it's interesting you said that's it's a way of expressing yourself though it's as non verbal as you can get .

J: mmm...but I know that people look at me and think they do have a perception of me because like some of my friends who aren't into piercing at all say 'aww it makes you look so much harder... you just so not hard' like it's strange for them to see how other people react and a lot of people who I meet for the first time and after a while they say 'geez I thought you were going to be this hectic ... hectic hard girl with all these piercings ' I'm like 'why should it make me hard (said softly) you know because I can take the pain ' does that now make me a hard person like do I look hard because it's metal if it was plastic would I look less hard you know a lot of my friends says it does does does they were actually there when other people go like (whispering)'check what a hectic chick you know' and they go 'J, not at all' so it is strange how people can see me you know lots of people do think you're yah this (loud) ROUGH TOUGH ..BITCH OR SOMETHING' and I'm really not

A: what significance does steel have ?

J: yah surgical steel because your body ..it's the best thing for healing ..any other type of umm material obviously the piercers have been doing this for a long time and they've realised that surgical steel and now added a few others as well like titanium one or two other things those are the only things that you can use that your body does not wel well not reject but can heal like your body doesn't grow around it like put it that way like silver if you had to put silver in your body could actually grow ..could grow around that silver ..there are certain types of material which your body can grow around or just would not heal like this here (left cheek) when I had this piercing done the guy didn't have a long enough surgical steel uhmm jewellery so he used silver and my skin inside my gum or at the back skin my cheek greww over completely grew over ..he had to ...dig it with a scalpel which my friend nearly fainted when she saw all the blood (laughingly) but then that didn't bother me at all like having it dug ..it was just..

A: were you under any anaesthetic ?

J: no that's the thing it's like I don't believe in any anaesthetic for piercing..

A: because ..

J: because ..that sort of makes it so much easier for everybody to do you know like ...then why don't you just go and have anaesthetic lie down and have like twenty piercings how like I said earlier I don't really love the pain I don't go there for the pain but I'm sure it's part of why you're doing it ..like I know that I can go through that I can go and sit down and have somebody stick a needle through my eyebrow..it gives me maybe a certain kind of strength within myself which maybe I need you know I

obviously get off on it somehow psychologically because otherwise I wouldn't be doing it you know I'm sure there must be something not ...not just because I think it looks nice or something ..there must be something that makes me go in there say to somebody do this and I walk out and I'm like 'cool' definitely after it you get a helluva adrenaline rush..you get like a 'hhheheheheh' it's it's a fantastic feeling it really is good and for people to go and just get anaesthetized it makes me like I hate hearing that I just think (click sound) 'why like why can't you take the pain' so they must be anaesthetized then they're doing it for the wrong reasons you know they just doing it because they want ...piercings because it's fashionable ...

A: it's ironic that that people think of you as hard and you and your friends know you inside to be soft .

J: mmm another way it is ..I think it's almost like a contradiction of some kind because I don't intentionally do this but at the same time I'm thinking you know like ouhh like 'whyyy they're doing that can't they take the pain or

A: your mouth was it painful ?

J: it wasn't bad at all it's very very soft skin and it actually just, felt like jelly it didn't bother me at all it really didn't ummm...also by now I was getting used to it I knew what to expect ..soo.. and also Mia wanted a piercing but we were at Gay Pride and walking around and there's this piercing place and ahh we just go in and I remember just standing around it was such an amazing day seeing all these lesbians and gays just totally just their day to be themselves andd there were like all these ballons...released like red balloons like filled the sky likeabout HIV and

AIDS whatever uhh..I was just like I'd went to Gay Pride with my boyfriend and a few friends you know just because I was like.. fairly believe you want to be gay or lesbian it's nobody else's problem I felt good about being at Gay Pride it was like marking the day I don't know.

A: marking the day ?

J: no just that I was happy to be at an event that like I hadn't been to Gay Pride in South Africa and the Gay Pride in South Africa was like small and nothing compared to this hundreds and thousands of people this huge day in London and I was like 'wow ' it's so fantastic the people can be who they are you know I've since been to Gay Pride in like Jo'burg but generally when they do it's like twenty people you know I was just saying to these chaps like 'go go people do it you know have a day to prove that you are humans like everyone else

A: in any sense could you identify with them at all ?

J: oh indeed like uhhmmm they are not the norm like society says you should be with a boy if you are a girl anddd. yah they a lot of people are a lot more open-minded and accepting you know they didn't look at me like I was a freak and I didn't look at them like they were a freak because they were gay definitely you can identify with them you know on some level like.. you going against society's norm

A: okay while we on this topic of sexuality you clitoris was you last piercing

J: no this one was (cheek)

A: okay so it was your second last piercing ?

J: yah

A: in terms of meaning and finding your identity how would you relate it to that particular part of your body ?

J: uhmmmm...uhhagain I've always wanted it for a year I had been thinking about it ..and I was not worried about the pain at all at all uhmm. I was ..the thought of going into that place and was like having a pap smear you know like not the greatest thought to sit there and open your legs to some stranger butt.. my only.. like I decided if I'm doing it it was only going to be a woman there definitely no way I'm going to have a man doing it and preferably a woman who had done one before like had had one done herself I did speak to a few girls before like I always I never really went out and did something that I hadn't spoken or researched in some way and I was speaking to spoken to some women and ...like those women that I had talked to like their reason for doing it was you know definitely a sexual nature you know they said they get more turned on easily and when they walk or cross their legs they tend to feel more sexual orr some way ..that was interesting but definitely not the only reason for doing it uhmm I just it just sort of seemed like...I think it probably was the most extreme ..that you can do uhmm... and maybe this is like the most like if I had to think of the reason for doing it was probably because this is MY VAGINA and if I'm going to do something to it I'M DOING IT YOU know or like it is like claiming your body back in a sense for that particular piercing definitely do think that at that time I was starting to think along those lines whereas before I think a lot of it was because I was interested and tend to be like different and exciting I don't think it was like a ...okay this is me give my body back you know definitely the last two ones were like the nipples and the clitoris.

A: you did your nipples before your clitoris ?

J: yah

A: okay so they were linked ?

J: ummm. they were done ..I had the one done the nipple done ...the clitoris about a week later and then the other nipple done about a month later..so I had them all done in two months ..those three..and the reason it was one one (nipples) was because I'd heard that it's quite painful when it heals and I sleep on my stomach and I just thought that would be too sore ..but actually I didn't battle they healed completely.

A: and in terms of the piercing how painful was that ?

J: uhmmm....it wasss... again by that stage ... the pain wasn't really on my mind that much like when I had my tongue I was worried about the pain because I hadn't really pierced a muscle before so up until my tongue the pain thing was a bit on my mind but at this stage like I knew I wanted them and the pain was like if there's pain it'd last for a second a fraction of a second and ..afterwards you got the piercing you know ..it's so worth is you know because it's something you want to do so much it's something you want to do then that second of pain is worth it and that second of pain is not ...screaming pain you know you might go 'oeh' like that but it's definitely I've never screamed.

A: your tongue you did after your eyebrow ?

J: yah eyebrow lips and then tongue.

A: okay can you tell me about your tongue ?

J: okay that uhmm..I was nervous because it's different to just skin to skin piercing andd..uhmm.. it affects the way you spoke..so it's another whole thing it's not just ...ju done and you forget about it for a couple of days you do speak with a slight like thick tongue you know because the tongue does swell a bit sooo...uuu I was staying with friends with my boyfriend's family's friend in London and she was quite a ..like PR business woman then I thought 'oh God what is she going to think about getting my piercing done' so I was a bit worried about having it done then because I was going to be talking funny and I'd have to explain myself and I wasn't quite confident enough then to start explaining myself you know nowadays I don't mind if people ask because I'mmm ... used to it in those days it was like 'why you're having it done?' 'I donno I just wanted to ' you know it seemed like a good enough answer so I was quite nervous about getting my tongue done anddd.. uhmm I went in with my boyfriend and I had it done and I was like very happy it was ouhh that was like quite a big one because it was the tongue muscle you know and it bled a bit I remember that like wow because the others didn't really bleed too much and I was like when he was finished I was like thanking him and he says 'don't be so happy look at your mouth man' I looked and it was like all blood and oooh it was terrible but I washed it out and it was fine ..that one though was the only one not the only one was the first one where I thought like 'oh my goodness' it was quite hectic 'cos you actually feel the healing time the others just healing slowly this one you're always aware of it because it's your tongue's gotten swollen you can't swallow ..

A: yoghurt.

J: yes yoghurt..I was starving and I could not eat food so I had to drink a lot and you dribblewhich is bloody irritating like in your sleep you

dribble because your tongue you know naturally you have your tongue like that (normal position of tongue whilst breathing in) can't do it soo...the healing period was the most irritating out of all of them.

A: how long ?

J: the belly button was nine months the tongue took like five days to go down before I felt like it was normal andd within two weeks it had healed 'cos your mouth heals quicker than any other part of your body so uhhh.. yah it healed very very fast your mouth and your genitals 'cos they've got natural bacteria .

A: and your tongue ..what influenced you ?

J: uhhh....a friend of mine we were talking about it one day and saying how like we wanted to get another piercing ...it's strange I think it sort of works this way for me like I don't think about the actual place but I think (softly) it's time to get a new piercing and I don't know why and where it comes from I don't know if it's from anything that happened..but I generally I get a feeling like I need to have something more piercing it doesn't mean that I'd die if I don't but I'm I'm ready for the next one orrr something like that and I was in London and that's another thing is because I would only really try people in London and I only went to London once a year it would have had to have been within that time so I was like here what sort of piercing and once while I'm in London you know it's got to be here so

A: so this was twenty - four (belly) and this was twenty - five (eyebrow)

J: the tongue was just before my twenty - sixth birthday..okay and then

A: is it tiring talking ?

J: it doesn't bother you in any way with eating at all speaking at all it doesn't bother you it's actually weird how quickly you adapt to something new like you know when like you have like a tooth breaks or you have a filling a little bit too high it irritates you for a while and then you get used to it so quickly like when I take my tongue piercing out which I only have probably like three times ever just to see what the hole looks like my tongue suddenly felt terrible I thought 'oh my God something's missing something's missing' like I hated the feeling of not having it in and..

A: what was it like ?

J: like I don't feel it a lot to be honest some people constantly play with it which irritates me so much all these people that are just having their tongue pierced for a tongue piercing it's funny I've noticed that I really really have like I see people that have got other piercings and I notice that they don't play with it or anything there's other people who really go to tilt every Friday night and they all got tongue piercings and all you ever see is their I don't know if they take too much Ecstasy but all the time I say 'stop it it looks stupid' you know 'why are you doing that are you trying to show people like you've got a tongue piercing is it like a big deal for you' you know like I don't know it irritates me so much but I don't think you can even see that I got one but I see some people talk and they 'LAAA' (laughter) oh dear silly..so no it doesn't affect me at all it really doesn't get and stuck and the only difference is like I can't eat suckers you know suckers are like..

A: dead centre.

J: yahh...so I eat suckers like this (sideways)

A: so do you miss suckers ?

J: I eat the still but yah find a way of overcoming the pain a bit yah and getting chocolate in your mouth on your tongue getting a piece of chocolate and I just start sucking it and I'm scared like it'll leak through..

A: so you can melt chocolate

J: noo it'll come out

A: uhmmm your next one ...your next one was your nipple

J: yah that's right after the tongue the nipple and that was now because this is the first one th thattt you can't really see

A: your right nipple ?

J: yeeess (thinking) I did think so yah well it might have ben on the left because for some reason I do a lot on the lefthand side my eyebrow my nose these I had both done but I won't talk about these now (cheeks) but generally I had seemed to have things on the left even my first tattoo was on the lefthand side I don't know why tthe significance or anything but I felt like that was right you know I might have had that one first (left nipple) and earlier I said to you I was like nervous about the whole milk duct thing like one day when I have children but I was confident enough that there wasn't going to be a problem and again it was a woman that was the only specification someone who had had it done before so she could talk to me about it uhmm...but I think it like goes through stages like if I 'd had my nipple done first I think it would have been a big

deal because I had others it's you know what I mean it's sort of become less of a big deal ..uhmm

A: so you got used to it ?

J: yahh..I obviously like piercing I'm going to my nipple right now like it's the next thing to do you know uhmm.. so it didn't really.... I liked the way they looked that was one of the first things that I really really liked like I'd seen pictures of pierced nipples and I thought that was really sexy and I really liked it and on men well I think it's very oh I don't know and also I suppose that does come these ones do come into sex I suppose your tongue and your nipples and your clitoris or genital piercings whichever piercings you do now come into like getting involved in sex and a little bit more exciting because now you've got something else and like somebody had said to me 'when it's really cold your steel gets really cold' (laughter) and so it was like interesting to me like I suppose just experimenting like some people go out and buy sex toys and I've never really been interested in that you know but I'm not I don't think it was purely for sex ..mmm you know what I mean I never like thought 'great this is going to make sex better or whatever' it just was like the logical next best thing to do for me uhmm..because you can sort of get away withhaving your eyebrow and your tongue and your ears done but you not necessarily a pierced person you know you just got piercings because they are..popular but when you start going into like body parts like that like that it's it's two different things you know what I mean like my friend's got her tongue and her lip done but I don't see her as a pierced person she's just uh she seems to have the piercings that are..very common

A: more acceptable ?

J: and more acceptable.. so yah it's funny I don't see those people as being pierced I see them as following fashion in a way..and I feel like I'm doing it for a different reason ..to just just following fashion because it's obviously fashionable that's why people things and I probably would never have thought about piercing myself if I hadn't seen it first so I also followed a certain fashion but notte.. then it wasn't quite as commercial but now people don't stare as much they just stare at this (cheek) because they haven't seen it before but they don't stare as much

A: at your cheek

J: yahh it freaks people out so much it's a bit strange.

A: uhmm..what do you feel about that ?

J: it's because they haven't seen it before they don't ask about the eyebrow now probably because their niece has got one or their somebody that they know's probably got one by now but it's like 'was that sore ?' and I'm like (long sigh) some days I'm like 'nonono' other days I 'm like 'No!' it's just I don't know... okay I did that after I did my nipples

A: how old were you when you did your nipples?

J: it was beginning of ninety-eight ...

A: it was after your twenty - sixth birthday

J: yess I can remember these dates because they were not so long ago ..January ninety-eight had the cartilage to cartilage done it wasn't

anywhere near the lobe and that was quite different 'cos it looks different (bar across two piercings on top right ear) if I had two piercings like an earring there and an earring there it wouldn't be such a big deal but because the jewellery is joined it just makes it hectic to people they like (gasp) it's still just two holes in your ear the jewellery's joined and suddenly they seeing a lot more steel so it makes it look more hectic a lot more steel with the flesh you know these people ask me about this a lot ..the cartilage is quite sore and this is the first time I had two piercings done within a matter of seconds of each other they did this one and then that one and pushed it through.

A: oh you mean the top and then the bottom .

J: yah...and oh this one oh yerre it's been two years and it takes so long to heal cartilage ..every now and again it'll flare up not because of anything I've done just suddenly like it will just get quite sore and it's hard to sleep on but not so much that I (accent) have to take it out in the morning so January ninety-eight was that one ummm and then December ninety-eight January ninety-nine was the nipples and the clitoral hoop soo...

A: okay you did them singly your left and then right ?

J: sort of like ..in a month I'd done all three .

A: and then you went to your cheek ?

J: yah...my eyebrow had grown out and I redid my eyebrow .the cheek I got the same time I was in Cape Town so I did both nipples the genital piercing and redid the eyebrow all in like two months.

A: okay so these piercings you did locally ?

J: yah in Cape TOWN because by then people had been doing it for much longer like this is only a year ago so compare it to like four years ago people had just been studying overseas and in Cape Town again like I wouldn't do it in Durban as much but Cape Town they have got quite a registered piercing places...they really do know what they are doing.. so I do trust them ..so yahhh...then in Mayyy ninety - nine I had both cheeks pierced.

A; simultaneously ?

J: at the same time yah..andd the sort of idea is that they're dimples uhmmmn because I don't have dimples but most people whe ..when they like saw it like they'd say 'oh you've had your dimples pierced' and I 'd say' no I wasn't born with dimples' which is a funny thing like and my joke is like 'if God didn't give you something like make it yourself' you know like I wasn't born with dimples so I made them like even in Jo'burg I was in Jo'burg the other day and some girl saw me from afar and she said 'oh my God when I saw you from afar I said to my boyfriend how deep is that girl's dimples and then I saw you and I said no it's actually not a dimple it's ...jewellery' sooo yah not dimples but uhmm... uh.. this is the reason why I I went to a guy in Durban he wasn't that experienced uhmm .. he was like second time he'd ever been piercing in Durban and again it's made me say 'yes like don't be impatient' rather go somewhere else and the whole thing with piercers like proper piercers they measure everything so well like they have this special thing where they measure the length of your teeth they then select the right jewelery allowing space for swelling but often you can go and change it for a smaller one when the

swelling's down but this guy wasn't too on it unfortunately anddd he did both and this cheek is slightly probably only a millimetre thicker to that one but a millimetre counts because they go by millimetres .

A: so your left is a millimetre thicker than your right ?

J: err just a millimetre probably not quite but anyway enough for it to swell and become very very sore so after a while I took it out but it was difficult to take it out because it was swelling and because your cheek is soft the back had sunk in the cheek so I couldn't grab it for like three days I was in like agony it was really really sore so I eventually I managed to get it out and I just never got round to re-doing it ..

A: do you really want to?

J: sometimes I do ummm..but for a while like since May I haven't really si...then again I think like 'mmm what should I do now' but I haven't really had to get a piercing you know like sometimes I was like 'okay I want to get pierced now' and I've been London since the May piercing so it's not like 'cos I needed to be somewhere to do it properly like when I was there this last time I didn't really think about it pretty much and I haven't really got plans for the next one but I know of a few places I'd like to pierce I don't have any ..I haven't like made an appointment or I'm not making an appointment or I'm not even thinking really about it ..I don't know why.

A: and these places being ?

J: if I did?

A: yah .

J: uhmmm... there's like some areas in your ear like this bit here that is nice there's also that little bit there in your ear (inner cartilage)..there's another really cool sign in a tattoo shop that says 'if it sticks out pierce it if it doesn't tattoo it' (laughter) kinda cool so yah anything that sticks out you can pierce..uhmmm so there's those two places in your ear obviously my other cheek there's doing like multiple like eyebrows you can have like three I've got a friend whose got hers pierced here (middle of throat) it looks stunning on her but I don't think it would suit me I think I'd do my nose anyway again..

A: what happened to your nose ?

J: I took it off like after about a month just didn't like it uhmmdidn't seemm...there's the area between your eyes your eyebrows really soft skin but I think I would only have that if I didn't have the other piercings I like that piercing if there's nothing else because it's such a different piercing I like the way it it it must sort of be on its own do you know what I mean like I've seen it on a guy and it looks so nice just there but I think if I had that one it would just be too much and I don't really feel like that ..umm..there's another place another place that looks very nice I've seen a few people and I was saying to this friend of mine when I was in Cape Town in December you know and she was saying 'let's get another piercing' so she had her eyebrows done and I was like 'yah I donno what I would do' I thought maybe I would do this area here in your mouth (upper wedge between two main canines where upper lip joins top gum) and I would pierce through here and through here and when you smile you just see a little like it's a very thin like this type of ring (on lip) thin gold sleepers umm very thin jewellery like not a big fat one like that' would be ugly.

A: you'd have to be careful brushing your teeth .

J: yahh .. and I actually saw a girl with one just this week and I was quite.. but she's not from Durban she was a backpacker and I said 'oh there's one of those ' like it's quite nice to get unhhmm that's probably the only places a few well I've seen one here well it's called the Madonna actually ..

A: oh 'cos of her beauty spot.

J: yah the beauty spot..they've all got names

A: ohhh you want to tell these..

J: well I can't remember them all normally like young people seem to attach these names to them like when I was in this club in London there was this very very young girls probably about like sixteen and the one says 'oh you got a scaffolding or construction' and I said 'pardon' she got a construction and I said 'I don't know what you're talking about' and she said this the bar on your ear it's called a construction' I said 'I never knew that but thank you' and then I don't even know what they all are but I never really paid much attention to the names like even with the mens' genitals there's like a Prince Albert and whatever and whatever and whatever...so they all...got names.

A: and umm with regard to the piercings ummm in terms of whats going on the goings on in your life was there any significance that you may have...

J: yahhh... probably I think the genital piercings the nipple piercings probably because I was at a stage in my life I was about twenty-six twenty- seven andddd...at that stage I was thinking a lot about like the

age I was like what does it mean to be a twenty - seven year old woman
uhmmm and I thought 'well I'm independant I can make choices I can do any
thing I like and I don't have to answer to anybody uhmm..as long as I
don't break the law I basically can do whatever I want and with regards to
my body like sexually I'm not nineteen years old so if I sleep with
somebody it's because I've made a decision it's not because they've
influenced me' you know just like thinking about that type of thing at
that time andd...thinking like how great it was to be an independant woman
living in the nineties and being able to make these choices without havin
guilt uhhmm.. but at the same time there is still guilt just because I
think of morals ...it's good to have certain morals ..it's wonderful to be
an independant woman of the nineties and that you feeling like you can go
and have sex but at the same time ..you don't want to do that you
know..but it's still nice to know that you could you could have that type
of freedom I suppose it's all just about sexual freedom uhmm ..but then
morally would you feel good about it like I wouldn't like some women can
go and do that and they don't care they probably have a wonderful time
being that type of woman uhmmm... so it's great for them but uhmm.. I jus
know I couldn't you know uhh ..so I think it was I was thinking about
being a sexually active twenty - seven year old woman so maybe those
piercings had to do with it because they are...(gestured completion)

A: uhh okay uhmm.. so where did you see yourself prior to the piercings
..if you had to compare it to your life now ?

J: uhmm okay obviously not as interesting otherwise people wouldn't ask me
all the time because I must be more interesting to people (laughingly)
because they ask me so many questions so uhmm ..it sort of gives me an
identity ..I thinck because ..I've been refered to as 'that girl with t

he piercings and the big tattoo'..you know before I would have just been the girl with the long blonde hair which could have been a number of women in that crowd..but noww because I ... stick out in that crowd it's given me an identity whereas the other people like if you said 'that girl with the long blonde hair ' you wouldn't really know what to talk about who you're talking about but if you were at... the club that I go to and they said 'you know the girl with the short blonde hair and the big tattoo on her back and all the piercings ' and they would say 'Oh J' you know what I mean so it's quite a....strange thing how it's made me look at myself because now suddenly people know who I am in Durban because Durban is so smalll I mean in London I'm like nobody which is quite strange because ...when I hear about this I like think 'oh God that's quite strange' you know and then 'God why were they talking about what were they saying ' and it's obviously because a lot of people haven't seen it before or they like haven't seen it to the extent because they probably haven't travelled orr only seen it in pictures and then thought ' God that couldn't be a person' but then they maybe met me and they said 'oh it doesn't take a ... weirdo to be hectic to go and do it you know I thought maybe it makes them think a little bit you know uhmmm... definitely been good for like my mom's outlook on life..she's definitely ..she even said to me 'Thank you for making me realise that you can't judge a book by its cover'and how to tell other people that ..you know just because of what a person looks like on the outside it doesn't really say what they like on the inside so it's given me a better relationship with my mother because she understands me more and umm.. and I think she does understand why I do this to myself and I think she does see it as because of the abuse I think that I don't just want to be a little girl you know ..maybe thiss..this appearance of being this hectic looking woman is my was of ...not looking like a victim ..you know ...

END OF TAPED INTERVIEW

POSTSCRIPT: When interviewee was chatting about the pain she did say that the 'Pain made her feel real'.

Transcript 2

A: Can you tell me about your family background ... as you were a kid growing up ?

R: uh what kind of..wha details are you looking for ?

A: anything..how was it ..as you were a kid growing up..how did you find it in terms of your relationships and...

R: uh I had a good childhood very very comfortable very ..loved very well looked after uhmm I have a sister a mom a sort of vaguely religious background most of the time very humble the values and yeah well taught well looked after very English very proper...uhmm (pause change in tone) my dad died when I was thirteen...anddd my mom my sister and I have been living together for a while my sister moves out every now and again if she finds someone and then comes back..and that's about it .

A: okayy..you said your dad died when you were thirteen ..how did that affect you ?

R: uhhh..quite badly ...had therapy for about five or six years ..umm he died ..he had a heart attack an asthma attack and I was my mom and I was actually at home when we drove him and he died when I was holding him soo.. when you're thirteen that hits you quite hard uhmmm it took a good couple years to get over that and...(pause) it's very difficult ..and umm (pause) yah you kinda have to become head of the household .

A: your sister's older than you ?

R: yah she is but she's very ..a very gentle much more gentle much more softer person she's umm she doesn't have to be one who does everything so

she can ruin her life and not be wrong.

A: okay what kind of person would you say you are ?

R: very capable uhm...strrrong..very humble very kind don't need assistance my own ..you know I have a very rigid set of needs not narrow - minded I just need proof of something before I can believe it in any kind of way... I tend to be the type of person who doesn't care about physical appearance I believe its...through many many years ago when I was a child with my parents they used to see people not at face value you take them from emotions... uhh feelings instincts my mom never used to treat us like children or babies she always treated us like adults so we've always had the chance to make our own decisions our ownn... our own judgement about everything and it felt better I think ...o having a different sense... a different view a different perspective on many things uhmm I think perhaps it gave a different meaning.

A: do you want to tell me what those are your 'rigid beliefs'..you want to elaborate on it ?

R: uhmm okay maybe it 's the wrong term of usage because I'm still in the process of learning uhmmm I think part of my father dying I definitely did a lot of research on into ..the concepts people have on death you know a lot of extra stuff the way just on levels of thinking different perspectives different uhmm... you know not just the shallow mundane sort of eat drink sleep work and whatever there's definitely something after life and ..uhm.. you know seeing what you can use your mind how you can think of things andf how you can see things and how you can change things to make them better or worse or how you can affect things or how you can use your own welll power to change your life or to change others around

you orr uhmm.. you know to adapt to your environment uhmm actually at the moment I've been doing spiritual courses another lady who's teaching me to do healings and stuff to go take over some of her courses on healings uhmm all sorts of stuff uh empowerment spiritual you know uh everything where you're going what you're doing uh how to how to understand yourself how to see where ..where you're going what you want from life whatt..you know how to how to make sure that when you go to bed and you say to yourself what did I learn today am I a better person that you have something to say to yourself you're not you don't just go to sleep the same person day after day.

A: what have you discovered by doing this about yourself ?

R: uhmm.. quite a bit actually uhmm..since I think since I was about fourteen I've I was well... well I've been a clinically uhmmm manic well they call me manic - depressive and I've been on medication for the last six or seven years uhmm I've come of it ..you know within weeks uhmm.. I think that's part of having stable relationships and stuff as well for the first time being able to see different sides of things different uhmm points of views other people's a lot more empathy a lot more insight into the way other people feel and motivation behind things I think I've always been interested in not the actions of people but why they've done them uhmm and and once you once you can actually once you have the ability to step inside someone else's shoes not literally but to have that ability to empathise and to work with a bit of compassion a bit of understand where they're coming from even if they do something really mean and horrible to be able to forgive them and carry on and use that as a learning process it doesn't you know smack you sideways it picks you up to another another step up the ladder.

A: you said you were manic - depressive after your dad's...

R: yeahh...well welll we sorta based it on well at least we're finding out now if there's something in life you have to learn and you don't learn it well lesson's gonna keep coming at you until you finally learn it and uhh I think it did for the last seven couple of six or seven years I can't even count on my hands how many very close people have either died or killed themselves around me.. which for a good couple of years have really affected me very badly uhhm..I think once you once you can step away from things put everything into perspective and understand uhhh..yah you have to you can't just you know you can't just fade away andd and you have to take control over what you wanna do and where you're going you have to ..um..yah understand yourself take a take hold of your soul kind of and shake it around and say hey you know this isn't what you're here for you're not here to do homework everyday you're not here to work tonight you're not here to to get upset when people cry you have to to learn and to help and to do things so uhhh..you get uh you know the usual sort of upset every now and again but not the horrific hypertensions and mood swings and just you know I wanna look at a wall for the rest of my life...I was hospitalised for a week and a bit and I think you know you learn a lot you don't at the time I think once it's over you you can actually see things from a lighter point of view.

A: you want to talk a bit about the hospitalisation and that ?

R: uhhh...it wasn't you know it wasn't amazing it's just that my mom's been incredible for the past couple of years she's been the most incredible person the most amazing strength and ability to cope and sh'e changed so much from learning from me and from trying to understand that

she's become the most amazing person uhmm.. and I think one day I came home and I just didn't want to deal with anything anymore and she she could just see it she just she's a very uhmm ..extremely perceptive extremely intelligent uhmm...I think probably borderline extremely intuitive borderline you know psychic she knows what's going on even if you don't tell her even if she has no idea where you are whatever uhmm so she actually realised that there's nothing she could have done so she called up my my doctor and she said well there's nothing I can do you have to sort her out and they put me in there for about well it was like a week six seven days I actually can't remember uhmm...

A: how old were you at the time ?

R: it was attt.. it was the beginning of last year uhmm...cause we had a ..I was stuck in a an extremely bad relationship for two years a very very destructive relationship umm but I think because you have no respect and low self esteem you just can't get out of it we had a car accident and he died uhmm for a couple of months no I hate to say it but umm it was about the best thing that ever happened to me yahh it took me uhmm.. yah it freed me that was I've never been in a more horrific relationship in my life it was just so.. lack of respect and lack of love and understanding and ..almost hatred you know the thin line between love and hate is so easily crossed it is unbelievable uhmm..but I think because of that and speaking to the people that I've spoken to and people certain people actually listening to me I'm now in the best relationship which I wouldn't have the experience to judge against now I wouldn't have learnt that lesson as to how to appreciate and respect somebody else on their level uhmm...I've never had that now but as far as I'm concerned it's gonna last the rest of my life as far as he's concerned he thinks pretty

much as well uhmm and after all that happened and you know I really liked him and I thought that he you know I put every bit of stability I had on him and you know he just didn't see it he asked somebody else out which lasted for three days and that was just that and I just thought that's it head on out the door I don't want to be here anymore uhmm...yah and I went in and I came out and it may have been about three weeks when he realised that he made a big mistake... he's not complicated he's just sometimes a brickwall..it's a good thing a very very good thing I think probably the best thing that actually ever happened to me...(almost whisperingly) horrific at the time.

A: who would you say has had the greatest influence on you in terms of the way your identity ?

R: I think it would have to be my mom ... at the risk of sounding cliché shee...coming from a a very you know old English colonial family wherte she grew up with a nurse and a cook in the house and a guy who did everything and she she saw her mom and her mom loved her but wasn't touchy and affectionate uhmm bringing up just from just from a couple of perspectives from from the you know from the appeared perspective what's the word I'm looking for ...not idol...sort of a model for you growing up with two girls uhmm.... battling to be you know to be a women when only a couple years ago when everything was so sexist...still is anyway...having to actually get lawyers and battle to keep the roof over our heads and keeping you know the millions of animals we have got and cars and schools and fixing everything and then getting Leukaemia and still carrying on for the last six years and driving herself every single day because she loves us and for the simple reason is you know that's it she's here because she loves us even the doctors say well I can't believe well she's still here

uhmmm is ...she's gonna have to be the most incredible person I've ever ever known in the world not just because I love her but because she's I I jusst can't comprehend how amazing that is.

A: okay uhmmm. are there any other influences you would say you've had in your life that influences the way you see yourself ?

R: uhmm yeah ..quite a few I think when I was about fourteen or fifteen uhmm my dad had a great love of bikes and cars very very much so he took me on my first bike ride when I was very young about eleven or ten without a helmet that was just it I was sold I think I was about you know fifteen I think I was fifteen I saw my first biker gang and I thought hoochoo and that was that uhmmm and I've been involved with them since then many many years a good seven or eight years involved in the whole bike ideology you know you're going to die anyway so do it the way you enjoy it and live with a little bit of risk you know and divorce your reason (laughter) there's lot of things that I don't agree with especially the politics and stuff but the uh people that I got are some of the most worthwhile people I've ever met uhh the most genuine people they'll say exactly what they think to you and you just don't actually give a damn unless it's about you umm.. you know it's a very definite family of of people they care for you look after you and if something happens they're the first people there beside you and um I think they interest me A Lot the way I think andd especially the attitude umm you know I've had my own bike for a good three or four years as well ummjust the way they think their attitude towards things in life so the way that you've really you've been in school for twelve years and then university people have been telling you what to do your entire life you know you're old enough for you you have the complete mental ability to do exactly what you want when you want how you want

there is Nobody that is going to tell you what to do uhmm and every single day you live and every minute you live it's your own choice umm... you know it's a bit it's very difficult to come you know explain I think it's a lot of ego as well my pride you know and that's that and when you walk into a room and you know you got you just got of a bike and you got a helmet and you've just had an entire day of drinking so you fall on the ground and loads of fun and you know two hundred and twenty on the highway back home dodging cars there's just there's nothing that feels like it..on this earth...I think it's also seeing people... nervous of you and I think they're nervous because they're actually jealous they actually sit there and think you know I wish I could do that I wish I could give back my bond my home loan my new car and stuff like that and do whatever I wanna do it's not like they go yes sir no sir it's like who're you why why must I call you sir..ummm I've been influenced a lot by the man in my life at the moment uhmm.. he's an incredible person he's the most stable the most genuine and loving person I've ever met uhmm who you know doesn't hate anything but gives so much in return it's all out of love you know it's not from wanting to take something from you which most people do uhmm.. my sister .. a bit ..but she's (sigh) I think I've learn't a bit more of what not to do from her (laughingly) 'cos I really love her I really do but she's... in a different generation and she's grown up such a gap that the material things in life matter uhmm designer jeans designer tops the hair has to be perfect three thousand rands of make - up every month umm the best you know um night clubs the proper drinks and the best for me is beer because it's all I can afford she is amazing because I know that beneath all that she is incredibly intelligent perceptive girl that people don't pick up on because she doesn't let them pick up on it umm .. she gets me very annoyed and very angry so we don't have the best relationship we do

really love each other she knows that..uhmm.. my gran that's why I think I've had very strong very strong will of mind my gran was incredibly strong and very... very very proper very English quite a snob actually but she had the ... very intelligent woman you could ask her anything and she would not have an opinion she would actually know about it she'd tell you little bits and pieces of you know interesting stuff and she'd she never you know she was a strong woman other people didn't make up her mind for her she she knew what she'd want she knew who she loved and she was loyal and loving to the very last second of her life uhmm..many many people people that inspire me a lot of a lot of everyday sort of diverse people those people who are stuck in wheelchairs andd you know people you talk to at work and they stuck in wheelchairs and they're just so amazing and like even Lee on campus like every time I see him I just wanna go Wow you're amazing to lose something so fundamental to your living and to carry on it's just really...you know everyday you just sit there people take it for granted they don't wake up and go hey I've woken up my eyes open I'm getting out of bed...it's only when something happens like they get in a car accident and they learn how to walk again that they go Wow I'm so glad I'm I can walk that people like having Lee just he everyday his influence me it's just like Wow I'm so lucky that I have these things and I should use them to the best of my ability.

A: you were talking about when you were on the bike and other people were saying I wish I could be you and the fact that you have all this freedom and nobody tells you what to do..was there any point where somebody did...and how did you feel about it ?

R: umm..no as I said I've never I've never actually been in a family where

my mom and dad treat me like babies and children they've never said you will do this and you will do that they've always tood back and said this is what I think make your own decision umm you know shown us all the facts and said this is what it is and you step back and you make a mistake if you want to we'll be here umm I think it was a lot at school as well umm I was definitely not a I was one of those people that Hated uh I loved the challenge of the work but every single day the uniforms you have to do this you have to do that the institution drove me insane umm and then I find myself at university ..very odd...umm yeahh I actually had the headmistress say if they brought me in the prefect's room one more time she'd take away all their badges so I was there every single day ummm..

A: what did you do ?

R: ueh nothing I just couldn't be bothered they'd say oh your skirt is too short or your nails are too long you know just all crap and I'd just think that's not important it's so irrelevant you know what what is their problem I think ... people I might have upset ..I don't like people telling me what to do when you don't know what's wrong with yourself dson't turn around and tell me what to do or what's wrong because you know..its true people see in other people they hate in other people whayt they see in themselves and they never realise it noone's ever looked at themselves in the mirror and says Who am I you know Why I don't like this person..you know I've been saying that to a few people and uh there's people you just eugh there's people you just can't get through to and you say that you know you're the last person on earth if you stuck with yourself for an eternity when are you gonna be happy with yourself are you gonna actually sit there and enjoy your own company because I don't think you will and they actually stop and go Wow I actually think you're right I

don't like who I am but I'm having so much fun that I don't want to change umm yah and the whole rules of life who makes up the rules of life...who says that girls have to do this or guys have to do that or girls have to look like this it's just...I just see people living on one level and there's just so much more to life then that..there shouldn't be rules because people should actually be so so higher evolved you know that they don't need to set down a piece of paper you will do this or or you will do that but you don't need to do that.

A: okay ..what does yur body mean to you ?

R: mmm...uhmm...well..I suppose it's you know changing at the moment my whole perspective on it because of I've just come off the tablets and stuff I'm having a problem with my body weight at the moment which is ... evry depressing uhmm.. so I defintely you know.. like my leather stuff and that and you just can't wear it when things bulge uhmm but I think as you know I did a bit of weapons training and a bit of marshal arts and stuff and yoga ..it's an incredible thing your body's an incredible thing ..it is it s I think when they say it's a temple it really really is it's um something that noone else can ever have they can't ever feel it they can't ever be in it and it's it's pretty much sacred uhmm...you decide what it looks like what it is and what it does and if you you want ot sit around and never be fit or do anything orr you know never feel that rush of adrenalin or anything then it's your purogative but ...you know if you actually really think about it your body's around for the rest of your life and when you sit around you can actually feel sometimes you feel lethargic and you uhmm you know you just don't want to do things ...you know people should take a bit better care of it you need to understand every perspective of it you know your body needs to ...it's like your mind

you need to tone it and sharpen it and what it does and why it does it if something goes wrong you need to fix it ..umm. you know I've seen I've seen some amazing things with some of the healing that goes on and people don't realise that what goes on they cause what happens and they can fix what happens too you know there are things that just ignore ..you know if you're gonna get sick or something there's a reason for it if you if you just stop and think about it for a few minutes and ask yourself why you find out and you can change it you can fix it anyway...it's I think this is what just pisses me off about people they just never listen to themselves they sit there and they think ooh doctor I have to go to the doctor he has to fix this and whatever not true you know you can do it yourself.. it's from you you fix it .

A: how would you relate this to the piercings ..what your body means to you ?

R: uhmmm... I've actu... when I was quite young actually I remember ..I remember wanting to get my ears pierced and I thought Wow and I begged and I begged and I begged and they said okay you can have one and I remember a school holiday that they absolutely forbid me to ever have it done you know more than once'cos it'll look cheap uhmm so they said.. uhmm ...and I remember there's I think three weeks of school holiday and every week I went and got a different piercing up my ear until eventually I had five and four on one side uhmmm...I I think it actually really changed because I always liked the ideas of tattoos and stuff it's just that I wasn't keen on on the pain and and like someone sticking a needle into meuhhhh... uh my best my best friend a couple years ago she's got one more than me but hers are Mainly genital piercings she's got about five or six genital piercings no uh that's just the one area and ... I think she did it a lot

for ...I know the reason she did it and I think mine were the same at the beginning but they they changed quite a Lot I think I do it mainly now because it's it's actually really beautiful to have something really beautiful to have and use your body like a well you know cliché again is canvas for a bit of art it's it's an amazing thing especially when it's something you really think is pretty and uhmm you know sort of like an enhancer but it's also very personal it's also something that that's yours and it's always there and other people you know you don't sh you don't just go up to someone and say hey you wanna see my piercings you know it's very personal it's umm.. it's hidden it's yours and you've been through A Lot to have it and believe me sometimes it's extremely painful uhmm... I actually fainted I had my my second nipple piercing and I fainted on him (piercer) I was so embarrassed but it's ... I think right from the very beginning when I had them it's it's a lot to you know I was going through quite a difficult time it makes all the pain and emotions you just can't express it makes themm... tangible...it 's something you can actually touch physically focus upon and say that hurts okay that hurts but it's beautiful and I can change it it's something that uhmm I can take all a lot of pain and I can make in into something beautiful it's it's no longer gonna hurt me it's gonna be uhh something that enhances me and makes it a bit better makes it I don't know ...you know it's like a christmas tree ..it's really beautiful christmas tree smells wonderful and it's not Christmas unless you have a christmas tree but when you put all those ornaments on it's just it's so much more amazing it shines and it sparkles and you become ...you become something else... something else becomes part of you it's uhh... it's almost like things that you want like your ideologies emerge...ummm.. I think now it's mostly because I think it's very beautiful and it's umm the pain you know the pain is ..justified in

some way it always seems the gain because I I get very angry about a lot of things and it's something that I can hold onto and it's tangible and I can you know it's it's fixable when it's outside and outside your body it's fixable uhmmm but also it's just that whole transformation it's something that really really a lot of pain I know something you can't reach and something you can't get hold of and finally you can grab onto it and hold it and do it your way and fix this it's a.. I think it also depends on just people you know.. some people just have all this crap all over their body and it looks awful..yah I mean a guy had steel teeth...you get very odd people in this world but but I think a lot of people just do it because they feel really inadequate they just you know there's bits and pieces of them that just don't know where they are they don't know where to find those parts of themselves and they add on more and more to try and find it and I think it's where people get obsessive because what it's just oeh you know they just can't find it...it's not you know some people just sleep around they they're looking for something they can just never get a hold of what they're looking for uhmmm... besides that it's addictive ..it's incredibly addictive I know I first had to uhhh was on an incredibly sensitive spot on my side uhmmm.. and my body went into shock and I'm shaking so hard and I just remember thinking Ow I'm in this pain I want this to stop uhmmmbut as soon as I walked out that door I just thought hey Don't worry Don't worry and I had the other two and they were just so amazing I just didn't want to get the other two they were just Wow and the thing with the piercings you can be really proud and Wow I've got them and you but I suppose you don't really do much afterwards you can but it depends where they are it's just it's like you know Wow this is mine this is my sort of flag to the world this is me hey ..just got to be certain of what you're doing ...ususally .

A: okay you said you got your ears and after that you wanna tell me the order you got them in and if there were any significant event that uh propelled this ?

R: uhmm I did all my ears umm...

A: which are how many ?

R: there are four on one side and five on the other side uhmm I've always wanted a nose piercing Always my mom strictly forbid it (laughingly) if she only knew about all the others uhmm I then got a genital piercing uhmm the clitoris but a bit further up because you either orgasm every minute you walk or you or else you actually just have no feeling whatsoever he actually advised me not to so I didn't umm... but I think that was after I met my best friend umm...

A: that was six years ago ?

R: I think aboutt five... and she's she's got I think about six and they're clitoral piercings and I donno you know she just has this way of saying like ...yah they just look beautiful on her you know we were in such a relationship she'd sit in the bath and chat to me and you know we felt completely relaxed around each other it was never anything sexual it was just she was another whole part of Meand she just was ..it like looked really really beautiful you know and I thought Wow I really want something like that as well and she even held my hand when I had it done so we went and got it done not sweet drop Winnie the Pooh pants in front of Dave (piercer) and see what happens it's very embarrassing until you realise that he does this every day ten time a day and he actually doesn't care uhmm and then I had both these nipples pierced..

A: so there wasn't any uhh..particular significant event that that got you to do that particular piercing ?

R: no it was more her saying ..it was more just seeing how amazing it looked on her and I thought Wow I want that too.

A: This was five years ago ?

R: uhh I met her five and a half years ago and I had them done about four or three ..four years ago.. four years ago...yah this was when I was in that same really horrific relationship as well... um I thought it was a bit of defiance as well you know that I I eh ummm not that particular an order I just had one I had it done then and I waited and instead of having them done all at once or just going every weekend or whatever I ..you know it was a good couple months until I'd wake up one morning and think I really wanna go today I feel ready for it now ummm that's to get rid of the pain ... it takes you a couple of weeks to sit down properly yeah..but ...it it's definitely when you feel eh yah I think it's It's a I donno I can't explain it it's a very emotional it's an emotional thing you know it's you adding parts of your body and you're taking away parts of your body...you know you can't just get up one morning and say whooo I'm gonna have piercings..it's not like that at all.. I suppose it is for some people but it's not like that for me I couldn't do it...I it took a lot of persuading to get out of the car that day... I knew it was going to be sore but I really wanted it done I really wanted it done uhmmm and it took me a while to get the top ones done it took me a good cou ..almost a year actually and I had them done yah I had my tummy one done ..twice ...I did it myself which came out..it just pulled out of the skin and I had it done again by this lady but did it with a piercing gun not a needle and she did

it three times because I had scar tissue soo... she didn't put a proper thing in so it came out as well...it broke through the skin or pulled through ..actually your body tries to get rid of it anyway ..you know people who have it are going to have to eventually realise that they are going to have it again as well...and that came out as well so I have to go and get my belly button done again...it's just that I 've been putting it off because it's gonna be quite painful..it's actually gonna take quite a bit of skin because a lot of scar tissue ...not really looking forward to you know not being able to put jeans on or something for the next couple of days or to lean over or something.. cos my mom well you know she wasn't happy when she saw it for the first time...but I suppose she thinks it's already still done so I suppose I still try you know do it again.

A: uh you said there was this passion ?

R: It's kinda like if ...you draw..you know if you're a painter or if you draw if you wake up and you know there's this something in your head that you really really wanna draw and you you know just can't get it right until eventually one day you wake up and you know it pick up a paintbrush and you draw it and you know it comes out you know exactly the way you want it to you know it's perfect...it's like that kinda you know it's that kinda drive it's that force that you wake up and you knowww what you want you just have to wait until you're ready for it it's a ...you know when you just need...I know you doing it today you know this is what I really want and you think about it all the time I want that I want that I want that and you know you go and look in at the window every week and you say I want the blue one or I want that one until you like eventually gooo away or get it done so...yah ..it'sss like a ..it's almost like that that creative drive when you know when you wanna paint or you wanna draw

something and you wanna write something you just can't get it right until eventually you wake up and you think hey this is the day I'm gonna do it .

A: How long afterwards did you get your nipples pierced...were they done together ?

R: yah I had them done together... and it's a fact that if I had them done one at a time I wouldn't have them done ..again...umm.. yah it was about a year afterwards I had it done .

A: and was there any particular event that got you that piercing ...your nipple?

R: well.. I kinda ran outta space everywhere else uhh... no not really you know it's just that it's it's more personal than anything else..it's not it's not the cheap sort of revolting through your through your lip or through your cheek or something which is just horrific I think it looks reeally horrible and it's not that cheesy sort of eyebrow everyone else has it is something extremely personal only you know it's there ..well at the time...and it's also I donno it also gives you a bit of confidence it gives you a lot of confidence you know when you go out and you wear something really small or whatever and you know that you got the best cleavage in the room... you know it gives you that kind of confidence as in like if you knew what I have you wouldn't be me ..whatever..umm..I know a forty year old women who went out and got one and she got one because I said Wow go and get one and she did and it didn't hurt her one little bit she was fine absolutely fine uhhh that shee she feels the same way .. she just absolutely loves having it it's sorta umm. it's sorta bit of secretive rush of having you know having something you guys don't know but I suppose it's really childish for us to say.. I think it's also very

sexual as well..well obviously it has to be it's it's um I donno maybe being attractive to yourself as well I meann...it's it's I love sparkly things I absolutely llove them and someof them got these little gem stones in them and ..

A: are they rings orr..?

R: yah rings with little gemstones on them .. all of them are rings it yah it does look very nice rings with little studs on them or it looks awful actually uhh...yah also it's a big confidence thing it really is it's abig confidence thing ..you know you know it's there and it's something you go back to the office and you know you got really nice underwear on and it feels really good the whole day and you you go whoowhoo I feel really greatt...yeah it's a different... feeling.

A: what does it feel like to be a woman ..what does it mean to you?

R:uhmm...I I'm actually still you know trying to discover the whole significance of that at the moment uhmm... you know being in a different existence every month and it's actually it's a real pain when I realise that there's actually a lot of hell that goes with it I think you have to ...acknowledge that exploitation that goes with it uhh.. sexual exploitation is just soo unbelievable.. you do like get anything you want ... you can and it's you know there's that little power of being women it's you know the tone of your voice eventually when you change the tone of your voice ... it's body language and understanding and using body language it's umm it's a frame of mind as well you know when .. you know you're not a guy ...you know if you sleep with someone it's a total submission it's not only a total submission you know it's you you're letting someone into Youuu ..you know ..I I don't believe in this you know

there is just sex and just whatever but then someone you really deal with there's a real change you know in letting someone in and understand and and even just sleeping with them it changes things on such a different level umm... yah I think it's it's difficult in this day and age because you have to ..you have to fight for all your rights...you have to fight to be heard you know you have to you have too...you end up actually I end up wishing sometimes that I was one of these nice little girls that sits and goes (childish accent) Yes ! NO ! that people open doors for me and whatever and it would be nice but then I realise that I wouldn't be who I am and I actually wouldn't be who I am and I actually wouldn't get struck down and I mean you sit around and wait for other people to open doors for you you gonna stand there the whole day um.....yah I'm I'm still trying to work on That...I know there's something more to it there's something...I mean it's incredible if you really think about it someone who's actually affected by a planet who is so far away you know that our bodies actually go in time with it you know it's incredible guys don't really have that.. at all..um you know the whowhole creation thing is the most amazing thing uhh we've got a woman pregnant at work and every time I just walk in I just want to touch her tummy uh I don't want kids but it's incredible to think we can do that II think realizing that we have that power of exploitation we have a power off creation and one not one up effectively on men but we have that power over men because they know even unconsciously they realise that we do hold that bit of life in our hands I think they respect that as well I think they're very jealous of it..very jealous of it and I don't think they realise this..at all.

A: being a woman in terms of your piercings..what does that mean to you ..relate to them ?

R:well..guys have them as well.. yah I think it's it's Wow that's difficult umm.. I never actually thought about it in any way uhhh ..it's never.. I suppose it's obviously come into it I think it's much more attractive than male female piercings are A Lot More attractive I've seen a lot of male piercings and you know I've seen my ex - boyfriend I've watched him get a Prince Albert which is right through.. well you know what it is anyway... definitely not on the uhmm.. it's also about fun it's a lot of fun you know in the whole bedroom area it's a lot of fun umm... you know it's it's I don't know it's like a bit of extra also it makes you feel more beautiful,,you know it's like wearing a diamond or something you know it's there and it's very precious and it's it cost A Lot and it's it's more exciting.. it's more uhh actually I don't know I maybe consider myself more More feminine because of this yeah I think so because it's it's not it's not something everybody else has it's not common every day kind of thing and yah more the fact that you know it's there and you know where they are and and you know it's it's on pretty much the parts of your body that if that if you know you were to create something that's where it is you know it's an important part of you that's very...don't ask me this now.

A: okay you have piercings but you said they're personal private..what is it saying about you ?

R: umm.....I think it's probably saying that I needed that little bit extra to be comfortable with myself ummI needed uh..you know a type of of pain that I can hold onto that is you know something that I can hold onto and let go of myself physically or or uh properly you know ...yah it's it's almost like an extension of you you feel that hurt when you have them for the very just for the very knowledge that you have them umm it's very

odd... it's an odd thing to explain because you you Fully conscious of them all the time you you know you can't feel them all the time but you know they're there but you don't think about it all the time it's just it's that little bit of extra it's like ..it's like wearing high heels or boots you know it it gives you that little bit of extra confidence that little bit of extra boost that makes you feel a bigger person a better person and it make you feel more confident and more 'I can handle this' you know 'Look what I've done' you look at yourself you say look what I've done this isss. you know I can handle it it's not unmanageable nothing's unmanageable look what you know have ..to ease you know ..think that.

A: you wanna describe the experience of being pierced ..I mean you're talking about the pain and that ?

R: uhh...(long pause) uhh okay I have to admit that it is Incredibly painful it depends where you have it umm... I know I was getting my tummy done three times it actually wasn't that painful at all I mean although she was making a mess of it it wan't that painful youu I didn't manage it with the other ones but with my tummy you manage to sorta separate yourself uhmm. . you know that it's like having your ears pierced you know that something's going through your skin and it's making a hole and it's changing you but it's not it's not a pain it's a change you know my ears never feel sore if I get them pierce they feel hot and you can feel the burn where the skin's parted but you know you can't feel the pain umm.. I think the nipple piercing I wasn't ready for that uh Wow it whacked me umm..yah I think it was where I was at the time as well umm I was with my ex-boyfriend and I wasn't happy and I wasn't there and I was just wanting to getting it done and over for just for the sake of

getting it done and stuff and I wasn't it wasn't for anything higher up for me it was just ...That I think it was because of him being around as well it became uhh...more painful uhh I mean I had my friend holding holding my hand when I had the other one done uhh I remember holding his hand and I actually felt better when I was holding my friend's hand I actually don't remember him being there much.. I remember her holding my hand and her being there and you know that reflex I'm gonna hit him (piercer) 'cos someone's hurt you she said 'Don't do it to Dave it's not a good idea' ...umm...it's a very odd feeling it's it's almost like a release like i said it's it's opening up that inner thing it heals every thing you can't see and you can't touch and it's there my eyes are open and ...I deal with it you know it's eaasy pain you can focus on and it's only physical pain it's only your body it's only you know it's only skin deal with it it's not hard it's easier to deal with than anything else..

A: anything else ? such as ?

R: umm... you know emo emotional mental pain of being angry at your dad for leaving you and you can't say anything because how was he supposed to help having a heart attack orr umm you going to be angry at people for not trying to understand them orr you know the thing that you can't express or other things that you keep bottled up.. just the day to day anger you know people annoy you and you can't say anything because they're your boss or whatever you hold up inside and you know it's an outlet for which you can eventually say oh cool I can focus on this and there's little bits of pain and hurt they give me are nothing compared to this this is real that isn't real.

A: you talked before about not being happy with your body weight and that ..you wanna elaborate on that ?

R: uhh.. I have the dress sense of a much skinnier person (laughter)

A: where did that come from ?

R: well I've never I've never been like really overweight uhh I think the most I've weighed is seventy - seven seventy - six which I'm very unhappy with umm...I've always you know I like to be comfortable with who I am and what I am which means you know it's a whole woman pride thing if I feel good and I look good you know I feel better you know I can handle things I have more self confidence more self esteem like you walk into a room and instead of feeling embarrassed about you know pull your shirt down or you know or neaten up or or look nice whatever I think hey they're looking at me I know i look good it's okay I can deal with anything it gives you that just one step up that feeling that I feel good and you start to you know you start to sparkle and shine and I feel good ummm you get that kind of glow when you know that you know your femininity comes out and you feel good and you know that whatever you want you can get it because you obviously want you know good things if you like a guy and you smile at him and you sorta edge up to him you know things are gonna work out because you look good and you feel good even if you don't look so good you know to you that you feel better you feel good with yourself you feel you know you sort of feel at peace with yourself

A: so where does that come from ?

R: opening up I think it actually comes from identity and stuff of the body you know

A: what ?

R: I get annoyed if I get upstairs and I I get tired I get really

irritated because you know I know that the body is has this capacity for so much incredible things umm.. you know you want to feel comfortable you know not be skinny not feel anorexic or anything jyou know that feel good when you that that other's acknowledgement you know they don't have to say to you their body language changes towards you they like a you know when you have guys at work or something they just they you know the body language when sitting and chatting to a friend than with a nice girl they'll be talking to you more they'll turn inwards and talk to you they'll they'll pay more attention to you umm you know you chat to them more and you interact with them more and you feel better it's just that umm feel better thing.

A: okay ..how does it feel being South African ... what does it mean to you ?

R: (laughter) uh you know wee we have have the most beautiful country in the world the country itself is incredibly beautiful and.. people just don't take the time to realise it people don't care I think in South Africa that's the worst thing is that people don't care they have no respect for life they have no respect for who you are where you're coming from you know no respect for for what you are when you look at somebody even even I do it all the time as well when I'm working I look at people and I think irritating irritating customer I don't think look at that person who's had so much joy and so much pain and happiness and so much emotion in their life I don't look at them as a separate entity I look at them as an irritation and I IU think everybody does it umm..you know I watched American History X the other night and I think you know it should be made compulsory it should actually be made compulsory for every school and institution to watch because people just.. people you know it's facism

I'm better than everyone else and it's just not right... the not caring goes for everything I mean I spent I spent half an hour this morning before varsity you know crawling through bushes trying to find this little dog that I think its been in had its leg in a bit of a crush... on the highway and four people walked pass four people walked pass this little thing to leave for dead on the road and when you have to pick this thing up and have it put down by the S P C A because nobody cares noone umm.. it just destroyed me you know it doesn't make any sense you know for five days I just don't understand it the other day as well we picked up this dead cat you know people have no respect for any kind of life people you know they don't care and once we you know get that respect not for property or anything else because that's that's quite trivial.. you respect people and you respect their lives you respect their property you respect their rights umm the respect for life is nothing people don't look beyond like they take that first level of living people don't look beyond they don't go beyond it uh I'm going shopping I have to get new jeans I have to get nice food I have to work I need money I have to pay this account people don't look beyond that so they don't actually sit down and look at themselves or spend an hour with themselves during you know every single day and say ' Do I like who I am.. Do I like other people' yah there's no love there's no love and there's no respect and there's noo... compassion for anything or anyone

A: do you do this ?

R: what ?

A: look at the mirror everyday ?

R: you know actually sometimes I try not to uhmm with the spiritual course

I'm on at the moment you know we have to ..I prefer to help other people umm I'm supposed to you know eventually come on and have to be a healer I have to you know you can't you can't help someone else unless you've cleared everything away yourself ummm... you know I do I do tend to I know for a fact that if i don't spend a little bit of time with myself you know who I am or trying to figure out something orr you know when I end up sitting with my arms crossed and I have to go around to a corner and figure out why are my arms crossed what's affecting me why am I upset what's going on and then I have to sit there and try and relax and just just feel better maybe do a little bit of meditation and sit there and say well what did I do today that I don't like about myself why did I think that and consciously just before you say something consciously think I can't say that that will hurt somebody or that's not right or you can't do something like that you know you consciously think okay I know you had a long day I know they 've had a long day you know but Stop you know maybe you should just smile at them see what happens and it's amazing the changes that happens if you just stop and smile at somebody and you say you know not only can I help you with this or whatever you just say half the sentence you know it's really good like you have good taste in music or something anything you just say it to make people feel better you kinda see like a door open people relax their whole bodies and they stand up straight feel better it gives them that little bit of extra light and help through the day that they need and if everyone said one little thing to everyone else all the time there would be a change you know everything would change.

A: okay thank for your time.

Transcript 3.1

A: you wanna tell me about your family background as you were a kid growing up ?

B: my family background...I lived with my gran ...quite a hectic background actually...umm my momm ... uh I stayed with my mom till I was about five and then she gave mme to my gran basically... uh I stayed with my gran all my life uhh went into good private schools Thomas Moore College...matriculated studied photography ... uh that's about it uhh met my real father when I was about twenty for the first time I went to Malawi ..no brothers and sisters..only child .

A: how did you feel when you were five being given up ?

B: well I was basically happy to go to my gran because my mom didn't pay much attention uhh it was only when I was older that I asked my mom why did you why did you run away from your problems and she just.. sort of .. well she feels very guilty about it so she just reacted in a kind of aggressive way that's her way of reacting to things.. uhm obviously I'm angry at my mom for what she did... not because... not just because she gave me up that sort of thing but also because I thought she was a strong person I was more disappointed in her than who she I thought she was a stronger person than just running away from her problems.

A: You said your life as a kid was pretty hectic you want to elaborate on that ?

B: hectic in the sense that uhh.. my mom was never theree soo I was always passed onto the next door neighbour up until the age of five the next door neighbour I actually used to think that the next door neighbours was my

mother to a point because my mom always went out and used to point you know Go There and you know you don't really know and also my mom's very aggressive so most of the time I was either beaten up or by my mother not just .. not.. I mean for stupid things you know and my mom sort of used to take a lot of alcohol take drugs and stuff so she's very ...she has a short temper you know what I mean she just snaps...uhmm hectic in the sense that when I was twelve I only found out the guy that I thought was my father wasn't my father and it's pretty hectic for a child that age to go through and to fly all the way to Malawi to meet the guy and get told that I'm not his daughter after all it's like hectic to have to go through all those things when you're ...throughout your life and you get your heart hopes up and you're ready to meet him and then it turns out that he's not really your dad sort of thing.. . but if it wasn't for mt gran I probably wouldn't be where I was ...she gave me everything... she gave up her life for me.

A: so who would you say influenced you in terms of your identity ?

B: myself.

A: yourself ?

B: yah myself... I don't my gran's my gran's ... my gran's seventy years old the generation gap is Huge.. there is no way she can ever influence me the only she really does for me is give me advice and you know life situations and stuff like that but most of the time yah... I had just myself I sort of had to do things yahh..I had to make my own decisions in life and I have for a long time because of of the position I was in really ... you learn to look after yourself really .

A: so there is noone that you could identify with ?

B: my mom was never there for me ... my gran always just did everything for me so I never got a chance to learn anything from her because everything was done for me from my gran sooo.. when I got to fifteen sixteen I started doing things for myself ...so I just ... basically ..yah find out for myself...the long hard road.

A: okay so what does your body mean to you ?

B: that's a good question hey ...what does it mean to me ?

A: yah...

B: welll.. I suppose everything because it's Mee and it's the only one that I have ... and every women wants to be gorgeous and thin sooo (laughter)...no I'm just kidding... no it is me it's Who I am ...is it physical me you mean ?

A: yeah

B: I never thought of it ...what does it mean to me ?..ummm..

A: okay what does it mean to be seen by others ?

B: uhh... okay . you mean how do I feel about other's perceptions of me ?

A: uhuh !

B: welll....I don't I don't I'm not too bothered about how people see me this is how this is who I am and if they don't like who I am for who I am then then you know I don't need people like that in my life...most of the people that I am around accept me for who I am ...how I feel about myself

I feel very good about myself ... as far as getting piercings and stuff I don't do it because I'm trying to draw attention to myself or because I like people to go 'Oh my Word' because it's not...it's because it's an expression of myself it's who I am it's what I ... I like the look of it ... I like to have it ...and it's just purely me...

A: okay uhh..when you say expression what are you expressing ?

B: it's my body ...this is my body and it's an expression of myself as an outgoing eccentric person as well as being able to make her own decisions uhhh.. her own choices in life uhh stand up for herself... that sort of thing... confidence.

A: okay you want to talk about the piercings... what piercings do you have ?

B: I got my tongue pierced ...my ..it's called a labrette piercing in your chin I pierced my own eyebrow my belly button pierced piercing and my nose and my ears.

A: Can you tell me the order of the piercings you had done ?

B: first ?

A: yah !

B: my ears were first my nose my belly button my tongue and my labrette.

A: was there anything significant that happened prior to you piercing that particular area ?

B: the ears don't really mean anything .. the nose was a friend of mine we met went to The Wheel one day and we did it as a friendship thing let's

get our nose pierced doing an exciting thing so that was that that was in standard eight years ago and umm... my tongue ... I just liked it I saw somebody's friend had it and I looked .. I thought it looked very cool... so I decided to go and have it done and also it was given to me as a birthday present my tongue piercing by my boyfriend ex - boyfriend.. he got it done at the same time so we ended up doing the same thing it's like a memory thing uhmmm my belly button ... I was just walking around in a shopping centre and someone had a sign saying Belly piercings so I had it pierced...and my and my labrette piercing initially I wanted my lip pierced like a sleeper but then I uhh ended up having this ..it's just as well.

A: so is there any meaning that you attach to the piercings ?

B: no..no real meaning I just thought they looked nice

A: okay .. what does it mean to be a woman to you ?

B: shooouh ... a woman in this country ?

A: yah !

B: it means a lot..because through the years women have become ????

(excessive background noise muffled the participant's voice) as opposed to the woman who just sits there and does whatever she told to do you know woman are doing things for themselves now standing up for themselves making something of themselves and just going out there.

A: How would you relate being a woman to your piercings.. ?

B: I don't really think so because piercings are eh you know men and women do it I don't see it as being a woman's doing it any different to a

man having a it .

A: In relation to you..

B: For Mee ?

A: yah

B: uhmm ..it's gonna come out wrong but how other women see mee ...it sort of would say something yah .. but for mee you know what I mean .. eh how do I put it ...I don't do it because I want people to look at me But for a woman to have a piercing and have another woman see you with those piercings ...it showsss... you know women admire other women whoo do thingss take a step furtherrr.. go pass the boundaries that sort of thing.. I know other women admire ...men not rreally because men do it all the time .

A: okayy can you tell me the experience of getting pierced itself ?

B: shoouuh ...my tongue piercing I was pierced by a very good friend of mine ..his first tongue piercing ...he pierced it and he left this plastic tube in my tongue and they dropped the bolt through the plastic tube... now when he was dropping the bolt through... the plastic tube fell to the bottom so the tongue ring was only half-way through and your tongue heals almost immediately it's the most fastest healing piercings you can have so the tongue ring was only half - way through so he basically hit it ..it went straight through my tongue and of course my tongue was a little bit sore ...your tongue swells to about three times its size for about a week you can't eat solid foods you drink you eat you know yoghurts and ice - creams ..you take a lot of pain killers and after a while about a week a so your tongue goes down...okayy but the tongue was the least painful

except for that I mean but your tongue doesn't have any nerve endings in it ..sooo it's basicly a muscle you if you ask anybody who's had it done they'd probably tell you there's no pain at all... the worst piercing was over in about ten seconds it was like a slice a pressure and a slice and that was it... uhmm everything else was done with a gun so basicly it's not really sore belly button ..nose all done with a gun.

A: There was no pain ?

B: no..my eyebrow I pierced myself with a needle and that was not sore at all...nothing was sore.

A: okay so it wasn't sore ...would you have thought that...

B: was there going to be any pain ?

A: yeah

B: definitely afraid ...especially my lip because the lip is so sensitive soft and the skin is so sensitive butt it was over and it was finished I had a very good piercer do my labrette he is from Jo'burg and he was very very good.

A: okay despite knowing that it was going to be painful what kind of drove you to it anyway ?

B: having it .

A: having it ?... but what does it mean to you ?

B: to have it ?

A: yah

B: it's ...like I said it's an expression of myself I don't think about the pain I think about the result basicly ..

A: uhmm...

B: ..it is a bit scary though because the pain obviously hurts it tends to be fast so all of a sudden you realise that there was nothing to worry about.

A: what does it mean to you to be South African ?

B: well it's a time of my life where I actually wish I wasn't even in the country but after all South Africa is where it will end... you know it's hard to say because the country is going to the dogs...but eh I was born here and I will stay here ...I am South African so yah

A: okay I asked you what your body means to you anmd you talked about how other women see you ..umm in terms of physicality ... your body contours ... do you worry about it ?

B: uhmm no not really ...I don't put on a lot of weight and I don't lose a lot of weight so I 'm not the kind of person who is worried about having love handles and stuff like that but hey I got them but that's who I am you know what I mean .. I don't have to worry about those things in life they are like petty little things for me...there's Far greater things in life to worry about than being fat .

A: such as ?

B: Such as life money looking after your family uhh love ..making people happy making yourself happy...not just by the way that you look you know but by enjoying life .

A: do you make yourself happy ?

B: oh I make myself always happy that's one thing I do do is make myself happy.

A: and others ?

B: do I make others happy ... yah I think I do I make them laugh ..others tend to feel more relaxed around me or whatever

A: do you go out of your way to make people happy ?

B: Defintely ...if there's somebody that I want to make happy then I'll definitely gonna make them happy.

Transcript 3.2

A: How did it feel being the only child ?

B : ummmm I actually enjoyed it because I got a lot off well okay everything that I wanted because I lived with my gran didn't live with my mom...

A: yeah...

B: ...so my gran looked after me she gave me everything she put me through good schooling umm... sh shee gave me uhh y' know like money to do photography and stuff like that ...it was fine...

A: uhuh...

B: just that I don't ..I can't really tell you if I missed a sister or brother growing up because I never really experienced it... 'cos to me it was just like a normal family.

A: How would you describe the relationship with your mother ?

B: the relationship I have with my mother now is more like a friendship not like a mother - daughter relationship the one thing that I DO RESENT FOR (emphasised) my mother for is running away from her problems and not being responsible..her problems being MEE uhmm which was basically just as well y' know (softly) I don't want her anymore and I'm ...the whole story really is that when my gran used to come ..when I did stay with my mom up to the age of five...my gran used to come and check the clothes and whether there was enough food and my mom got irritated about it and said 'well if you think you can do a better job well TAKE HER'(emphasised) an that's basically what happened...so that's the only thing that I have.. my

mom's the kind of person who's not very responsible and she lives with her own guilt for her...from her life and to her like even now she still runs away from her problems every time she gets into a sticky situation she just runs...that's basically the kind of person that she is but I've learnt too... I've learnt to get over it I'm now living my own life supporting myself (softly) AND you know you just gotta forgive and forget really I really... I don't hold grudges so...BUT as far as the piercings are concerned it didn't influence me in any way 'cos by the time I got the piercings I was basically my own person I was basically my own person frommm (sigh) say the age of sixteen y' know teaching I had to teach my own self myself everything when I say my gran GAVE (emphasised) me everything it was what she thought was the right thing to do for a child uh education uh y' know make sure they got food school clothes that sort of thing but as far as a MOTHER a mother's influence on a child what isss ...what is wrong and right in life and how to use decisions in life I had to do that all on my own...(softly) if you know what I mean.

A: and howw did that feel having too...to learn yourself ?

B: I wouldn't change it I would I like I like the way it turned out because I became a strong person and I found myself and I was able to become the person that I wanted to be without having too...I had I became myself the person that I wanted to be not somebody that my gran thought I should grow up to be or my mother thought that that was the right way to be y' know what I mean it was who I am.

A: who are you ?

B: who am I ??...you asked me this before??..

A: yaahh..yah.

B: ummm... I think I'm a bi I'm a very strong person and I've got a lot of theories in life and I think they make a lot of sense purely because I've been through them first - hand so I've got I've got the experience first - handd.. as far as my experiences goo..uhh it's uhhm it's jus I think I've got a lot off a lot off things to teach people ummm I've changed a lot since the last interview I think I 've I see people morrrre ...I give people I don't read people at face value I give them a chance to get to know them anddd I learn about them andd yahh I think I'm pretty open - minded.

A: uhuh..you said you're strong ..what.. what..

B: oh dear me..

A: (laughter)

B: what I mean by strong is I don't ...umm when something comes along in my life I don't let it REALLLY bother me I DEAL WITH IT that sort of way I don't get too stressed out about .. I get stressed out about things and I worry about things but I KNOWWW that I can handle them and that I'm strong enough to deal with them and that I'm strong enough t...to deal with anything really afterwa after my childhood experience after everything that I've been through I know I can handle anyhthing and I look at things in a rational way I don't I don't y' know FREAK OUT like some people do if y'know what I mean (quickly)...

A: freak out ?

B: like..GET ALL WORRIED ABOUT IT AND OHH WHAT ARE THEY GOING TO DO ABOUT

IT (loud) n n and like my gran she worries about everything and everybody and she just lives a life off complete..WORRIES that's all she ever does whereas In don't worry about things I deal with things everyday and I sort them out aanndd I move onn and uhm uhm I that's what I mean by a strong person..

A: okay

B:..and I DON'T LET PEOPLE WALK ALL OVER ME (emphasised) if I have something to say I'll say it and if I have something to do I'll do it n I'll do it MY WAY (emphasised) and it's not such that if I do it my way y' know who cares what everybody else thinks because I DO also care what everybody else thinks but I'll stillll do it my way provided I don't step on anybody else's toes I don't like to that it either.

A: you said you got over it your mum..how did you do that ?

B: I just don't blame her for anything that shee that shee did orr did'nt do with me I DON'T BLAME HER (emphasised) I resent her YES but I don't blame her and I also got through it because I told you before I met my real father for the first time ...

A: In Malawi ?

B: yahh and I think I got it throu'' I think that was one of my it was like..uh an emoptying... emptiness (long pause) that was just something missing I KNEW (emphasised) that there was just somebody out there and I think it helped me get through that whole situation.

A: how ?

B: I didn't want a relationship with him I just wanted to meet him I actually didn't want anything I just wanted to speak to him REALLY but I ended up meeting him and I found out what he was like and whatever and I moved on and I think that was like closure for me y' know what I mean...

A: ummm did you say before that he wasn't your real father ?

B: no he is my real father he is my biological father.

A: ohh okay uhh you said that your mum used to get aggressive with you ?

B: see because because my mom's grown up with a lot of violence in her own home with her father and my grandmother there was quite a few children in the family and his way of ... dealing with problems wa was violence ...and aggression which got passed onto the children they learn't well that's the only way you deal with situations then my mom got...married dadd he beat her up all the boyfriends she's had they've beaten her so she feels that the only way you deal is with problems so when it came down to me because I never see her very often when I did see her her theory is that I'm still your mother and I can tell you what to do ...and because she was feeling guilty the only way she can have that power over me sometimes was byy ..getting aggressive.

A: and what did that do to you ?

B: in the beginning I obviously I didn't I felt..I didn't feel like ohh my mom hates me orr that I'm leading such a bad life... because I think I understood early what was what was actually happening uhmm...butt NOWW....I don I don't deal with it I won't have it I'd I'd just she knows uh it's only been recently in the last few months that I actually stood up

to her and I've actually told her NO ! that's not how it's going to happen whereas BEFORRE the way I used to try and get it across to her was if she came to hit me I used to say fine hit me if you think that's the way it's going to be if that's how you wanna do it hit me because it's not going to solve any problems...and uhmm...y' know noone really likes to be hit nobody really likes to be hit orr beaten up orr whatever... but I don't blame my mother for that I don't I don't Hate (emphasised) her for that.

A: uhh what is your way of umm reacting to things ?

B: I used to react violently because I only had myy when my momm was there when I livedd with my gran there weren't any problems there weren't any really big fights to react in a big way when I was with my mom her reaction was aggression so I used to uh...react aggressively and then I said no that's not going to happen anymore andd noww there's a better way..iffff ittt comes to the point of off an argument I feel it's better for me to walk awaay and if if it's a really big problem then it needs to be spek sspoken about and I'lll explain my point of view and I'll listen to whoever's point of view it is and we'll talk rationally about it and hopefully we'll sort it out and if not well thennn we'll move on..that's how I deal with it.

A: you said you came to this recently umm this point in your life...the way in which you deal with things ?

B: umm I think it all started when I was aboutt.. seventeen eighteen about then when I sorta said I'm not gonna let it go on anymore I'm gonna deal with things rationally buttt at that time I didn't have that many problems what I mean is recently I mean y know...now living on your own and

becoming independent and having somebody else like a boyfriend instead of a mother figure and you have this different types of feelings for somebody and different types of relationships when we get into a problem we talk about it rationally...noww it's like these kind of problems that I'm dealing with NOWW I deal with rationally I don't really see my mom very often so I don't really have many problems with her.

A: As a kid what did you used to do with them..the problems that you had ?

B: (long pause) I ddidn't reallly bother about them I don't think (almost whisperingly) I just thought...y' know it's weird I tell people my sto life and they're oh wow it's so terrible and oh shame y'know but for me it was like a normal life I didn't know anything I didn't have anything to compare it to so I didn't I just there were a few times when I got a bit worried and I went and spoke to friends or orr priests or or counsellors or something that would come to us for not like specifically go look for help but like teachers y' know somebody close to me I would go and speak to them whatever but most of the time in my life people actually come to me with their problems and I seem to deal with my problems on my own and that's ...basically it soo..

A: you depend on you ?

B: yah I make my own decisions I I will I don't have many influences as far as prob y ' know people give me advice and I do take advice butt it'ssss notttt very often.

A: ummm the way in which you developed then...uhh from ...

[INTERRUPTION>

B: from ?

A: over the years umm the sense of self that you have ?

B: sense of self that I have...how th how do I see myself? what do I think of myself ?

A: yeah

B: ...in being a stronger person or in dealing with problems or life in general

A: yah in general .

B: I think I've gone from somebody who was insecure but never showed it to somebody that is s can... ummm <INTERRUPTION> from somebody that was insecure and never showed it and to just hold it in to somebody thatt became a person that was able to deal with their own problems and stand up for herself I think that's definitely it.

A: ummm how did you look after yourself ?

B: from a very young age just the general stuff as far as getting to where you wanna goo getting money... I think I learn't on my own by oeh just sorting myself out I never I never euh I'd say from the age of eighteen because before that if I wanted to go anywhere I'd say to my gran please will you take me ...but where it got to the point where I couldn't actually do that anymore and I didn't want to rely on her I would ... just make a plan phone somebody just pick me up do this do that y' know just make a plan for myselff... REALLY (emphasisied) and now that I'm living on my own it's it's more difficult than what I thought it would be even though I did start looking after myself from a young age it is difficult

financially whatever because of the state y' know that the country's in whatever y' know everything is very expensive umm butt you still point things out plan things carefully andd ..you'll be fine that's how I deal with it.

A: okayy ummm...the times that you were looking out for yourself what was going through your mind ?

B: not muchhh...noww themnn you mean right from the beginning ?..

A: (nod)

B then it was more like I gotta go here becaussse we gonna go party so I may as well get there..it waasn't much of a worry there wasn't many things I wasn't really worried aboutt aboutt the same with family life and parents and all these things about...

A: I'm talking about you specifically uh having to look after yourself anddd.. what it mean't to you having going through your mind as you had to do that ?

B: there wasn't much going through my mind at the time I don't think I don't I didn't have any worries .

A: okay we talked about the staring where people stare at you because of your piercings ...and uh yah...

B: if I remember it was about people who stay away ?

A: yah..you said ...

B: some people look and some people don't accept it ..yah !

A: and you said people must like you for who you are

B: then that's their problem..REALLY if somebody's not going to take the time...what I mean is is if if somebody's going to look at me funnyand they gonna move on okay that's their opinion that's fine but if they're not going to take the time to get to know who I am ...thenn then they're really aren't worth it as far in my my y' know what I mean if they could be somebody who looks strange I would take the time to get to know them I don't like I said now I don't lookk at people face value I try to take the time to get to know them and if they have'nt got the time to do that for me ...and get to know MEE (emphasised) then they really aren't worth it and I don't want to want them in my life if y' know what I mean..

A: would you say it's kind of like ...rejection ?

B: by the people ?

A: yah

B: I wouldn't go far as sayyy... rejection..as being rejected though.. I would sayy (pause) that they would just look at you funny and think maybe an outcast...or mayb just just different I don't think rejection I think rejection is a strong word I think just as an outcast orrr... y'know it just dependss on their background and what they've grown up to believe in and y' know everyone's got their own way of seeing things and accepting things and some people just don't accept it .

A: okay you talked about your dad and the lack that wa there because of your biological father...what did it mean for you not to have him around ?

B: it didd it's not like I needed a dad I had a dad okay it's just that I knew that there was somebody out there whooo I had come from my biological

father I knew he was out there and all I wanted to do was just speak to the guy and n I think I did ask him a few things y' know like 'why didn't you ever get hold of me ?' because the whole thing is he knew exactly where I was and I didn't know where he was his parents lived up the road from me y' know what I mean andd... he never even bothered he'd.. he just didn't bother so...in a way y' know I thought hey y' know why you didn't do that why you didn't...make the effort I mean I made an effort after eight years he just seemed to blow it off maybe he feels a little bit guilty about everything...as well (softly)

A: mmm and how did you feel about him not making the effort ?

B: I was angry no I was angry when I first spoke to him and I asked him nnn oh when I first got there he told me noo but I'm not your father I was angry y' know because I've looked for you for eight years I've travelled all this way to see you and I arrive at the airport and the first thing you say is I'm not your father and when I ask him why he doesn't contact me he says oh well y' know things happen there wasn't just a real reason he couldn't give me a real reason and that made me angry because I I I'm always making the effort y' know why must I make the effort if he knows where I am ...he should have justtt...all he had to do was just phone me that's all he has to do and I would have been fine...I just felt like I had done so much and I had gone through so much and at the end of the day it..he just couldn't give me a straight answer...y' know what I mean

A: ummm oh wait another thing about your mum what she was going through butt at that young an age y' know you were like five or something when your mum gave you to your gran mmm...how didi it feel being...

B: passed on (slight laughter)?

A: hey ?

B: just being given over ?

A: yah

B: I don't really...remember how it felt I remember crying a lot I remember spending a lot of time with my aunt and my gran and my aunt and and my gran and my mother always fighting my gran and my aunt were always... against my mother because my momm's like the badd...sheep in the family y' know she's the one ...always ...expected never to get anywhere in life so I can remember a lot of fighting and my gran always shouting at my mother but for mee...I don't really remember...what it was like I just really remember being with my gran most of my life ?I don't remember actually being handed over or how that felt no .

A: and umm when you thought about it later ?

B: like I said I resent my mom for what she did and I wish she could beee a little more reponsible in life I think she's just I think she just needs to get overr what happened to herr and deal with it and move onnn and you know the past is the past you can't change it but at least you can change the future and that's the way see it ...she doesn't do that she just keeps on running y' know life's a big party for her she doesn't ... she just wants to move on and and the thing that makes me angry is that when she does see me she puts her foot down and says 'WELL I'M STILL YOUR MOTHER SO I CAN STILL TELL YOU WHAT TO DO' (said in accentuated tone) y' know and I'd rather just... because my mom's quite aggressive and because (pause) it hurts herr and I know that she lives her whole life in guilt because of what she's done I KNOW THAT IT HURTS HER (emphasised) but she

chooses not to talk about it and I just rather keep the peace and not say anything...jjusstt.. y' know leave it at that I'd just rather not bring it up we don't really talk about it because I know that it hurts her she lives her whol I mean y' know it would hurt anybody to knoww thatt ...you were never good enough... you could never doo what you wanted to do for your child...it must be a terrible feeling.

A: okay you're telling me about the hurt that she's having..and you ?

B: wh...nooo I've moved onn I don't have hurtt for III resent my mom and I think she should grow but as far as I'm concerned I've moved onn I learnt it doesn't bother me I live my own life.

A: okkayyy beforre I asked you about ummm ...you said that the piercing is just an expression of yourself...ummm and I asked you what is it expressing ummm...

B: I think it's expressing my opennes...myyy opennes tooo y' know something different I just seeee...I don't really like everyday things I don't enjoy them I prefer things that are a little bit out of the ordinary a little bit different and I think thattt I'm a bit different to most people I know a bit eccentric and that's how I prefer myself so that'sss I think it maybe expressing just the type of person that I am ...when somebody sees mee... like for example Scot my boyfriend said that when he saw me and he saw the piercings he thought that I was an independant person I was somebody different and he wanted to get to know that person buttt don't get me wrongg I know what you are going to ask me I don't do it too.. so that people will see me or so that so that I'm not doing it for somebody else I'm purely doing it for myself but it's just to show..express that I'm not an everyday person 'cos I'm I don't thomk I am.

A: okay what does an everyday person mean to you what do you consider 'everyday'?

B: purely by appearance only ...not by who they are because you can't tell.. what kind of person they are just by looking at them but purely by appearance there are jusstt so many stereotyped people out there...people that have the same hairstyles people that wear the same clothes people that go the same places it's just it's just a whole lot of stereotyped people they're just all the same.

A: andd ummm there's lots of things you could have done to be different umm paint your hair shave your hair whatever...

B: I've done it

A: okayy.. but the piercings you have.. still.. what then does it mean for you to have the piercings.

B: what instead of dying my hair or...

A: yahh

B: but I did all that before you see I dyed my hair all before I just gott before I even knew about piercings really and then I saww okay well ...the piercngs came along and sooo it was two different times the first time was the hair dying and the purple hair and the pink hair and the dreadlocks and whatever and the second lot was the piercings and they just stayed I think I prefer them to actually dying my hair.

A: because?

B: well because dying your hair messes up your hair...

(laughter)

B: ...and it's a lot more expensive.

A: and the piercings ?

B: noo well y' know you can take them out...it's nott you hair can be damaged and you have to wait a long time for it to grow it back whereas piercings you can take it out and it's one moment there and the next minute...not.

A: and it does not leave a scar?

B: the only one that will leave a scar is this one here...

A: the labrette .

B: yahh did you know me when I had my eyeybrow ring I pierced my own eyebrow what did I have it then ?

A: uhh

B: I think I did it after the interview...

A: oh you did no you said you pierced it yourself...

B: yah was it before the interview ?

A: yah it was.

B: that's the only piercing that left a scar I didn't know that that was going to happen and then this one here (labrette) doesn't close other than that you you won't really see much of a scar on any of the others.

A: okay the eyebrow ring came out ?

B: yah it grew out...because when you pierce it if you don't pierce it deep enough and you don't pierce it with a thick enough bar then the rest of your body just treats it like a splint and just pushes it out and that's what happened.

A: okay at what age did you start with your piercing ?

B: standard eight so that was.. about sixteen..my nose - ring was the first one and then I got my belly - button pierced when I was nineteen...and then I got my tongue pierced and then I got my lip pierced and then my eyebrow.

A: okayy so your eyebrow was last ?

B: oh yah I did that myself soo...it wasn't really professional I don't think it really count.

A: was there anything that happened prior to you wanting to pierce your eyebrow ...what brings you...?

B: to make ..do another piercing ?

A: yahhh.

B: I just wanted another piercing but I didn't want to be stupid about itt...I think my eyebrow was probably the dumbest piercing I've ever done because it's on your face okay the labrette piercing wasn't sore because it was done professionally whereas the eyebrow I thought y' know I'm gonna buy a needle so I'm just gonna pierce my eyebrow because I want one and it was stupid because it's on your face and now I've got a scar there and

it's never gonna go away whereas if it's done professionally you'll find the hole closes it doesn'ttt...it doesn't have this much of a scar won't leave this much of a scar as much of a scar.

A: and ummm...what did it mean for you to have to do it yourself ?

B: It..didn't..mean...much (almost robotic tone) I just wanted it there and then I didn't want to have to waitt y' know and also I think I wa I wanted to do it myself to see what it was gonna look like and if it looked good then I'd go and get it done properly which was stupid if I'm gonna do it go and get it done properly y' know what I mean...don't try and do itr yourselfff firstt and thenn...

A: learn the hard way ?

B: (laughter) yahhh.

A: okayy I asked you this before but just tooo ummm get back to that ummm uhh what did the tongue mean to you orr...?

B: you asked oh yahh ..that's about that's when I was going out with Chris and uhh we all it's all caught up in a big ...go to the club and let's get a tongue ring and you knoww...why not and y' know he bought it for me it was a bbirthday present so I thought well ... y' know why not let's just do it and and at that time of my life I wasn't really ... focused I don't think it was all just oh you're so in love with Chris and ohhh y' know let's go clubbing every Saturday y' know just fell inn to it it's the same as my tattoo it's all it's all the same thing I'm actually gonna cover my tattoo up because when I look at it noww I think it was a stupid thing to do and a tattoo you have for life whereas a piercing isn't y'know I can take my tongue ring out and it'll close in half an hour but the tattoo

there is there for life that's the one thing that I regret piercings I don't mind piercings are fine... I think it's also because you knowww that if you have a piercing you cann take it out you don't have to feel that.. regret.

A: ummm uhh the labrette piercing what was significant about that what was happening around then ?

B: uhhmy best friend Kerry and I she wanted to go and get her tongue pierced and I was actually gonna get my lip pierced on that dayy and uhh I said if I get excuse me (took breathe in) if I get my lip pierced you have to as well and she said no well I 'm getting my tongue pierced and I said well okay then I'll get a labrette piercing initially I wanted an actual lip ring not a not a stud I wanted it to be higher up but it just ended up ...it was just purely because she was gonna get one done so I thought ' know ... may as well go and get another one.

A: are you wanting do any more piercing (s)?

B: I 'd like to get one done though here...

A: what's that called ?

B: I don't know I don't know what it's called it just goes through there I know it's very sore though because it's pure cartilage...and I'm just gonna get a tattoo.

A: okay you know it's gonna be sore but you 're gonna do it anyway ?

B: well like I don't..most of the piercings actually aren't that sore I know this one's going to be sore because it's like through your cartilage..ummm...but I don't really worry about the pain I don't..it's

nott..the pain doesn't bother me...initially yah maybey'know like if you get a labrette piercing you think but awww but it's so soft inside there y' know your skin's so soft but actuall the pai ..there's no pain at all.

A: okayyy...

B: I know what you gonna ask me !

A: ehk yah you were scared about the labrette piercing...

B: yahh initially like when you bite your lip or something and the skin is very very soft on the inside of your lip so you think it's gonna be sore...so I phoned a few people and I asked them y' know what am I in for here and whatever and they said yah it's gonna be a bit sore so initially I was ...I waas a little bit scared but when I actually came down to the crunch I said let's just do it and I was quite relaxed about it and thennn it really wasn't that badd REALLY (emphasised).

A: how did you come to that point where you came down to...

B: let's just do it ?

A: yeah..

B: it's aa it happens quickly in a few seconds actually ..one minute you're...nervous and you won't go anywhere and the next minute you just think that you either do it or you don't and that's the thing you say to yourself y'know you either walk out of here NOWWW (emphasised) or you do it y'know obviously it's just one of those things so you just calm down and relax and take a deep breathe and close you eyes if you have to andd..you do it.

A: okay did you close your eyes ?

B: I did yah..al all my piercings I closed my eyes...'cos the needles they ..are very very big.

A:uhhh what was going through your mind durng the piercing piercings ?

B: what was actually going through my mind while I was actually being pierced?

A: yah

B: some some of the time I ...it was justt I was... just before the piercing I would think when is it going to happen and it would happen and my mind would be blank while it's actually going through and then afterwards I think well oh that's not too badd orrrr I would think it's going to be worse like when I got my tongue pierced wheen when I heard him say does anybody have any scissors ?'and when the actual piercer's ..y'know getting a bit worried then it was it was going through my mind what is he doing this for what is actually happening I kind of ...my mindd y'know is this actually gonna be over it'ss jusst like all these questions because y'know you've..he knows what he's doing...but uhhh...but with my eyebrow ring I was thinking okayyy basically okay you're doing this to yourself andddd you either do it or you don't....orrr and then initially you're thinking okay maybe I should do it okay don't do it.. I mean while it's actually going through my mind's blank I mean most of the time 'cos I'm relaxing I mean you can't think and actually get piercings I mean well I wouldn't be able to I think I'd just freak out too much sooo my mind's blank yahh.

A: freak out ?

B: yahh get worried y' knoww... what's happening... 'cos I keep my eyes closed so you can't actually see what's going on so you can only feel it REALLY (emphasised) like... it's like going to the dentist realllly an and having an anaesthetic and hearing everything but you can't feel it..it's the same sort of experience y'know what I meann...sooo initially I just take deep breathes anndd...blank my mind just nothing in my minddd... I just don't thinkkk.

A: uhhh we were talking about what does it mean for you to be a woman ?

B: aoooh these are hard questions...uhhhmmm what didi I tell you the last time...mmm what does it mean for me to be a woman....uhhhmmm...I was single then so I think my theories have changed uhhh to beee a womannnn...do you mean what do I want t o achieve by being a woman...is that what you want to know ?

A: no...what does it MEAN being a woman a bodied woman uhhh psychologically ...as opposed to being a man ?

B: As far as femininity is concerned I don't see myself as being very feminine...maybe NOW (emphasised) I see myself as being feminine..but I don't really see myself as being a feminine ...girl...I can be if I wanna be..if I try really hardd (laughter) but I don't see myself as being feminine ...noo I don't ...'yknow I am a woman yess but maybe just not a feminine woman so being feminine ... I think it's only starting to mean something to me noww because there's somebody I like that I've got to be feminine for whereas before ..y'know there really wasn't whether I was younger or whether I was in relationships it didn't really matter I didn't really care what they thought orr what they didn't think but now this is a serious relationship and you've got somebody to look beautiful for and

look sexy forr and that's all about being feminine so it's starting to mean something to me now because I've got something..somebodyy to show it to... to be feminine forrr.

A: uhmmm as a kid what were youuu...

B: I was a tomboy (laughter) ...I wore a spiderman suit and rode a BMX (laughter).

A: okayy n the last interview you said that you don't see being a woman any different to being a man... with regard to the piercing ?

B: yahh because sometimes it dependsss... it depends on what piercings you have some piercings are feminine some aren't men can have the same piercings and they can you know... I mean like if a guy has a has a labrette piercing and a woman has one it might make the woman look feminine but it might make the it doesn't make the guy look feminine it shouldn't really make a difference if you know what I meann...

A: tell me..

B: I don't see them as being different... between a man and a woman... he can have one and I can have one...

A: okay the last time you ssaid being a woman means a lott because women have come so far as opposed to women who just sit there and does whatever she's told..

B: ooh in that sense...women can be well besides being...well because she can make her own mind up....in that sense yahhh being a woman...what did I say ?

A: umm "a woman who does something as opposed to a woman who just sits there and does whatever she's told"

B: by a man obviously...or by anybody really...yah you...why I ...it's good for women to get out there it's good for anyone to get out there and do things for themselves instead off... waiting around for someone to tell them what to do and if someone is telling them what to do they shouldn't be listening to them anyway because they don't become their own person I think that's what I was trying to say...you gotta be you gatta be yourself why sit aroundd and let somebody else tell you what to do what's the point of that ...it's like being a sheep y'know

A: okay I asked you how would you relate being a woman to your piercings...and you said " I don't think so because piercings ...uhh...men and women do it and I don't seee any difference between a man having a piercing...

B: yahh...

A: and I said in relation to you andd..

B: it was mean't for me ...as a woman ?

A: yahhh...

B: but that all goes back to being independant and strong and different and eccentric andd...

A: uhuh...

B: it doesn't really mean much to me as a woman...what did I say ?

A: you were saying the thing about " it 's gonna come out wrong"

B: well I said it sooo

A: nooo that's what you said it's gonna come out wrong

B: ohh

A: uhmm "it shows you women admire other women who do things take it a step further and pass the boundaries uhmm does it ring any bells ?

B: well you see women admire other women thatt gooo thattt take it to the limits or whatever yah I think that's I think I've yah that would be because of woman friends that I have and people that I've...helped throughout my life women that I've helped wit giving advice and stuff and I think they see mee as someone who will take a stand and will stand up for themselves and will go pass their boundaries for whatever reason for whatever situation you're in.

A: uhh

B: does it make sense ?

A: yahhh...I would like you to elaborate on boundaries...for example...

B: it all depends on what you're talking about it alll depends on what you're talking about it all depends on what's happening in your life at the time...what are you talking about as far as the piercings are concerned ?

A: yahh

B: welll you can either be a personnn whooo y'know liikke a a stereeeotyped person I don't want tooo say itt say it on tape because it would make me feel like I was judging somebody else...if y'know what I

mean ...you can either beee.. somebody very strong like mee... or you can have somebody who'll go get a job have piercings get tattoos...that sort of thing those are the boundaries those are the limits as as society sees people that's what it is society sees people in a certain way and you can either be the way society wants you to be... 'cos that's what it all boils down tooo...I think or well you can be somebody else...on the outside ...over the line... you can go over the line ..really the line being the boundary.

A: that's what you've done ?

B: I think ...yah...I don't see myself as a stereotyped person both... in appearance and the type of person that I am.

A: okay and what does it mean for you to be on the outside ?

B: I feel good about myself.

A: uhuh...(laughter)

B; is that what youuu ... I feel good about myself...I feel happy with who I feel good mmm.I feel glad that I was able tooo tooo be different tooo go over the line.

A: okay we talked about this but I need to know about the pain ...

B: I've got a high pain threshold so I don'tt...pain as innn... the piercing ?

A: uhuh.

B: ohh...just that I was a bit worried because I had an experience...everyone's afraid of the unknown butt when I actually had it

done my experience it wasn't really that badd what was she talking about but then you know everyone's got differentttt... pain thresholds sooo it wasn't really bad for me it wasn't really sore at all REALLY (emphasised) the healing the healing of my tongue that was sore that was take like five myprodols a day ...just to talk because your tongue swells like three times its size so y'know...n you forget...you take for granted how much you actually use your tongue you have to actually take a piece of food the size of your fingernail and place it between your teeth because you can't actually move the healing is sore but the piercing is not sore and what I thought about that wasss...initially I thought yussis this is sore butt when youuu buy a couple of myprodol you can't really feel it so it's okay...sort of anaesthetic.

A: did you know about this at all before you did this...not being able to talk and thhee...

B: swelling ?

A: yah !

B: I'd spoken to my best friend he lives in Cape Town he told me you can't eat solids for ten days you have to eat ice - cream you have to take myprodol your tongue swells dedede and I knew itt...but I wasn't worried about the pain I wasn't going to not do it 'cos it was sore...

A: uhuh...

B: 'cos I wanted it.

A: ummm in general ... uhh you asked me if it was specifically about the piercings...but in general umm pain...

B: any pain ?

A: yahhh

B: the only pain that I don't like is the pain that I feel when I hurt someone else orrrr yahh when I see sssss somebody else in pain and I know that it's my fault can't handle that orr thepainoffeelingrejected (one breathe) when you cry so HARD (emphasised) and you put so much into something and somebody will just turn around and walk away anger is the worst pain that I could ever feel.

A: for example ?

B: Pain of hurting somebody else is in that...if III said something and if I don't think about what I've said I say it and the person feels hurt like I make someone else feel second best when they should be the number one person in my life or whatever the case may be and I can see how hurt they are and I feel that I feelll...terrible I I I just wannaa... ccrawl up in a little ball and just disappear because I I don't like to hurt people I don't like to make people uh feel second best I like to make people feel happy all the time and as far as rejection nobody likes to feel rejected y'know ...you can you can be in a relationship with a guy for ages for months and you can think everything's going wonderfully and then one day he can just phone you and say listen y' know since what happened with Chris I need to find myself I need a little bit of space and you can just feel that emptiness in your stomach and you know it's coming in and then it's over...what do you do what do you do you know what I mean on the weekends when you see him when you go to clubs what do you do ...you're not there anymore just just everyone gets into such a routine ...and you know you're friends with his friends and you go to a place where he wants to go

there and you do things because he wants to do it and whatever it's not like the relationship I now know because there's a lot of compromising but in the relationship I now know ...it's a lot like relationship in the past in the past I mean and then one minute you'll turn around and he won't be there anymore and he just doesn't....(voice faltering) want you anymore...so when it comes to those weekends and it comes to the thursday nights and it comes to whatever nights it is what d'you do you feel so alone and sooo lost you can lost you can bbee inn...a room filled with people but you're completely alone ...if y'know what I mean.

A: how did you deal with that ?

B: how did I deal with that ...I cried for four days...solid ! I could be walking down the street and I burst out crying...and I wouldn't know why I ...I didn't go out I still don't go to the places where he goes to I still can't do it...ummm I could probably nah I lie I could probably do it because I'm with Scott and I love him VERY VERY much but maybe five months ago or something I would never be able to do it...ummm...I I phoned him and I uhh ..tried o speak to him and I tried to be his friend and uhhh I swore at her a couple of times...

A: at herrr ?

B: yah..at herrr a couple of times jahh...herr the new girlfriend...he was he was actually with another girl before he broke up with me...which makes it ten times worse...sooo I swore at her and I swore him and uhhhh after that I uhh I thinkkk uh like initially afterwards like after those four days I still hadn't come to terms so I'd phone him all the time and I'd wanna see him all the time and everything and then after that I just sort

offf...my ff my my mommm actually helped me through ittt she just sort
offf took me for drives and spoke to me about it and my friends comforted
me a lottt and everything and stuff like that so it was okayy my friends
helped me through a lott... a little kitten (walked pass)

A: yeahh...and umm the hurt part of it ...when you hurt somebody else how
did you deal with that ?

B: hmmm initially I just cried I just wanted tooo.. I just kept quiet and
I just cried and I thought about what I had done anddd after that I wenbt
to the person and I apologised and I said I would never put them in that
situation again orrr and I would never make them feelll... like that again
I apologisedd... as much as I could and thennn... that's about itt...okay
like what else can you doo...okay like afterwards in the long run in the
future you can show them you can not do it again.

A: was it always youu ...

B: what making somebody else feel hurt ?

A: yah !

B: nooo...ummm...it's only been reallly twooo y' know not very many
painful times for me uhhhmmm the first time was when Chris broke up with
meeeee thatttt was mee getting the pain after that was uhh me making Scott
feel second best that was me feeling the painnn ummm...

A: how did you do that ?

B: what how did I make him feel second best ?

A: uhuh.

B: he's a verrrryyy uhhh ...jealous person because he's endured a lot in his life and ummm... basically everything he's ever loved in his life has been taken away from himm either the person's died orrr his girlfriend left him forr another guyy orrr whatever the case may bee y'know what I mean and I've got a very good friend of mine from Cape Town who I've known for like fourteen years of my life and I told Scott that he was gonna come downn now I live hereand Scott keeps telling me it's my home so I live here and I said to him Mark's gonna come down from Cape Town and he's gonna stay with me and he said noo Mark is not staying here and I said if Mark is not staying here neither am I which means... which means he basically saw it as me choosing himm Mark over Scott and it's a difficult thing because he's never met Mark he doesn't knowww who Mark is he doesn't knowww howww.... he doesn't know the relationship Mark and I have so it'ss it's difficult for him and he initially thought that I was choosing him Mark over him made him feel second best when he should be he feeels he should benumber one in my life because I'm number one in his life and also he's VERY scared that I'm just gonna turn around one day and and walk out of him he's he's scared that he's gonna lose me because of what's happened in his life and he just never wants to go through that again soo I feel terrible about it.

A: okay you talked about leaving him but you've also been left ?

B: I'm not going to leave him !

A: nooo nooo I'm talking about ...you've been left in the past..

B: yahh...

A:.....andd ummm how did umm howw did that feell?

B: terrible ...when I gottt the person when Chris broke up with me ?

A: uhmm nooo I mean't back to yourr mumm and dadd again ?

B: when who left me ... when I went to stay with my gran ?

A: yah.

B: yah I don't really remember.

A: your dad wasn't around from the time you were born...you told me your biological dad ?

B: noo the first time I ever met him was when I was twenty no I didn't...
no he wasn't around.

A: and uhhh...okay I asked you about...mmm you told me there's far greater things in life to worry about than being fat ...

B: (laughter) it's funny now because I'm on aa...it's called muscle science which is for body builders and stuff and it actually ehh speeds up your metabolism to lose weight but it's not because III wass...especially the last time I didn't have anybody to look good for Scott's not only my boyfriend and I love him but he's also a body builder himself...but I'm not obsessed about it you know what I mean I do a little training every now and again I could see that I was that I wasss...putting on a bit of weight not like I'm obsessed about it and I'm gonna go out ...orrr I'm no gonna wear bikinis or whatever the case may be I doo exercise NOW and take my science...just to speed up your metabolism I think I've got a slowww metabolism...nothing serious.

A: okay the thing you said was that there are far greater things in life

to worry about than being fat and I said such as and you replied such as looking after your family..making them happy and not just by the way you look...uhh making yourself happy not just by the way you look but by enjoying life...ummm what does your looks mean to you ?

B: ummm what do they mean to me...mm...remember I told you about being feminine and stuff that's part of howw of of what that means to me now because Scott is around what it means to me is I wanna look good for myself as well as nowww I can lookkk it's like he gave me this little push you knoww like y' know what I meann it was like a little influence uyou know it's like NOWW I'm not only looking good for himm but I'm also looking good for myself looks to me means thattt I wanna be happy with what I look like...physicallly...whatever.

A: as opposed to ?

B: wot d'you mean physically as opposed to what ?

A: noo I mean you wanna ber happy with what you look like...

B: as opposed to not being happy....

A: yahh

B: I wanna be happy with wot I look like wot d'you wanna know what will make me happy ?

A: yeah.

B: I wanna beee... I actually wanna be defined and muscular...to be honest (quietly)...not big not like body builder type but I wanna be defined not slim 'cos I wouldn't be able to have that supermodel body my bone

structure is too big but I would like to be defined like ripped...

A: ripped ?

B: yah cut defined y'know muscular ...like madonna(quietly)

A: role model ?

B: well she has a good body...

A: okay the last time we talked about going out of your way for others...making other people happy..what does it mean for you to go out of your way ?

B: what do I actually do to go out of my way or how do I actually feel ?

A: uhh yah.

B: I feel happy....it actually makes me happy to...to pleasure other people I get more satisfaction out of making other people happy than actually making myself happy which is wrong in a way...unless you get to the point where you're only making everyone else happy and not yourself... I feel good when I do that I like to make people happy.

A: and what about yourself ?

B: ummm it's like... byyy making someone else happy I'm happy so I do make myself happy just uhh yah in that way at the momentt... Scott makes me happy living on my own makes me very very happy andd knowing that I can can that I'm surviving I'm doing this on my own makes me happy andd...emmhh...friends make me happy...and my gran (almost whispering)

A: sorry ?

B: my gran makes me happy.

A: okayyy ...survivingg ?

B: nonono I mean like I'm making it...I'm doing it on my own y' know like I'm living with Scott y' know I'm living my own life I'm living in my own house y'know I'm living with somebody yess but I'm living in my own house we're sharing the costs I'm doing I'm doing monthly shopping (laughter) y' know which I never did before I'm cleaning the house I'm buying... bath mats and soap y' know.

A: okayyy ...if your piercings had to speak what would they say ?

B: hellllloo ...noo I'm kidding what would they say is that what you asked me ?

A: yah.

B: I'd...oah.. I have no idea...welll what do you what are you aiming to get out of that question.

A: ummm the way in which piercings are an expression of yourself...not a verbal one.

B: but they not a verbal.

A: yahhh you have to translate it into verbal.

B: but really but what I said before about them being an expression of myself it's it's who I am...

A: yeahh.

B: being different and being eccentric y'know that's what they are ...it's

just ME me saying y'know I like to have piercings and I like to be different...tooo...be eccentric and to do other things and to to I don't like to be NORMAL I don't like to be stereotyped... but they would say it's cool.

A: okayy what does it mean to be stereotyped ?

B: I I would never I would never be able to handle it I don't particularly get along with the average stereotyped person...

A: which is what to you ?

B: ...which is either loong blonde hair big boobs with small thighs tight little knee skirts and cashmere sweaters orrrhot pants knee high boots peroxidized blonde hair y' know there's just so many of them and sure I'll speak to them but I'll never actually... I can't get along with them I would get too irritated I would speak to them for a while and then I would move on because I just thiuk I just think that they are not even narrow - minded and I can't understand how somebody can live like that it's like it's exactly like you know there's this nice outfit so I'm going to go buy it or Truworth's got this outfit this teeny bitty thing and like twenty thousand girls inside of a nightclub they wear the same thing... I can't handle that I really can't I think it's boring it's irritatingit's too narrow - minded.

A: you said your mom re- married right ?

B: nooo'she only married once but that was only uptil the age of five then she got divorced in eighty three and then I lived with my gran...my gran lived on her own so it was just mee anddd there was never a guy in my gran's life...my grandfather got re - married lived in Maritzburg anddd

that was it.

A: So how did you feel not having a male figure around ?

B: I don't think it affected me in a bad way because I don't I don't know like what it was to....have a male figure like I mean I said to me it was like the norm to me it was like oh well you know I think ... I don't think... I donno I don't really knowww I don't know what kind of relationships...y' know girls have with their fathers really except the one that I have with mine and I love him very much BUT I don't...he didn't really influence me much in my life.

A: what was it like without him ?

B: I knew there was something missing in my life... I knew he was out there and I wanted to find him just that I knew for myself who he was what he was aboutt ask hin a few questions why he didn't do this why he did do this whatever the case may be and move onn because my mom never ever spoke about it they never help me find him they never wanted anything to do with him so it's best I do it on my own and I needed to do it just so that I knew that I met the guy...not not forrr ... father - daughter relationship at all...I didn't want that at all.

A: did you get the answers you were looking forr ...from the questions you asked?

B: NO I didn't get any answers I was looking for at all... all I got was money andddd... that was it.

A: what did that mean to you then ?

B: I was angry because he just ..he would awww he never gave me any answers he couldn't give me a straight answer obviously because he retreated whatever the case may be and he was guilty and ... that was it so now I've just...well anyway thanks very much...

A: how did...

B: doesn't bother me.

A: how did you understand his guilt ?

B: well because when I because when I asked him why he never con when hee why he never contact ...ted mee if he knew wherer I was he couldn't give me a straight answer he couldn't tell me why meanwhile he was...his parents were living up the road from me he knew where I grans is see the thing is he my gran's my gran's known him since he was a little kid basically so it's not like he didn't know where she was and I lived with my gran and I know that he knew where I lived and I asked him why he didn't contact me he couldn't give me a straight answer there's just like uhh uhhh whatever and he didn't he still didn't give me an answer...which means he's guilty ...surely...doesn't it ?

A: I don't know.

B: I think so.

A: ummm okay thank you for your time.

B: did you get everything you needed ?

A: I'll contact you if I haven't...thanks.

Transcript 4.

A: Can you describe your family background as you were a kid growing up ?

T: my family background...okay uhmm....I don't know what to say really
...parents got divorced around when I was three...uh my dad got custody
because my mom was very very ill they thought she was going to die because
she had cancer...she obviously didn't uhmm I don't remember anything up
till the age of I think it is six yah I don't know why but I heard from
my mom that my aunt and dad used to like (quietly) take us away so my mom
couldn't see us ...uuuhhmm..had lots of hassles with my parents like my
mom wanting to live with her and my dad wanting..normal divorce parent
thing..uhmm.. my dad remarried when I was in standard three and my step -
mom kicked me out of the house when I was twelve which really
(laughtingly) did my head in ...uhh..that's your grim family
background...(loudly) don't really get along with my family get along with
my mom love my mom love my brother love my dad that's about it
really...can't stand the rest of my family.

A: okay do you remember at all how the divorce affected you then ?

T: no I don't I was only three so I mean I think it upset me for a long
time to come to terms with a lot of it now uh I don't think I even
realised that it affected me when I was younger it's like you know only...
the past few years that I realised how it affected me... I don't think it
affects me anymore... I did hold a grudge against my dad for a while you
know 'cos he let my mom kick me out and everything but...(softly) there's
nothing there any more.

A: and how do you feel about your step - mum 'kicking you out' ?

T: uhmmm... I HATED (emphasised) her for a long time but we get on so well now get along very well I go and stay there for weekends and stuff 'cos my uhmm I've got a sister from that marriage as well soo uh in the beginning it was like I had to get along with her (step - mum) but now we actually get on very very well I think we both grown up and..ummm and she'd never had kids or anything so I think it was like difficult trying and getting used to half - grown up kids I think I understand that now ...

A: so you think that kind of puts it in....

T: yeahhh I think the fact that I can look back at it now and think okay well I can understand why she did this I was really difficult I was this horrible horrible child so I can understand like looking back and seeing the way I was and the fact that she never had kids and probably didn't know how to deal with us..soo..that makes it easier..

A: what does that mean you were a 'horrible child' ?

T: no I was just difficult I was cheeky I was ju just completely unreasonable it I was just so stubborn I wouldn't listen to anything or anyone everything had to be my way anddd...I don't know ..maybe it's because I come from (laughingly) a dysfunctional family..then who doesn't yeah ..that's it ...I always had a problem with authority (whispering) especially in school..

A: your teens ?

T: I got shipped off to boarding school (laughingly) 'cos noone knew quite

what to do with me ..uhmmm that was another really difficult stage ..I didn't speak to my mom for aboutt... three four months she had to be there every weekend to fetch me and bring me home I didn't speak to her (softly) and I didn't want anything to do with her and I HATED (emphasised) her she used to phone me and I used to lie and say I was in the bath or something it was just that I was...soo angry with her I still fight with her a lot but I think it's because we're so similar.

A: You were angry with her because ...?

T: she shipped me off to boarding school...uh there was like this DEEP RESENTMENT (emphasised) and towards her and then I loved it (boarding school) and then I was like so upset when I got kicked out but then I loved it after that.

A: how did you come to that change ?

T: 'cos it was August and because they start at the beginning of the year they all had their little cliques and I was like this complete outsider andd... like I really battled ...to make friends and everything but then when I started the new year I kind of like got to know everyone and so I formed my own group of friends so it was okay the minute I started the beginning of the year it was okay and then my relationship with my mom was sorted out so it was okay... then I wouldn't go home my mom used to call me up and ask 'aren't you coming home' and I used to go 'no mom free weekend coming up'

A:how would you describe your family relations now ?

T: noww..uhmm..my mom my dad I love them to bits and vice versa uhmm my dad annoys me a bit because he's a complete religious fanatic but umm... it used to bug me a lot when I was younger and I couldn't stand it but I think now that I'm older I realised it makes him happy and (softly) as long as you're happy it's okay ..uhhm and I kind of just put up with it even though he runs at me (laughingly) now and then uhm.. my mom as I said very similar to me she's into all the same things as me so we get along very well...

A: for example ?

T: uhmm we both really into holistic healing anddd ummm strange things (laughingly) I don't know it's just like we completely we almost identical like clones of one another it's really strange uhh it's not strange 'cos she's always been really uhh what's the word... she always allowed me to be what I wanted to she never tried to restrict me in any way you know she never like tried to mould me into the same thing as she is which sounds quite bizarre but we turned out fine but sheee I think because we're so similar we fight a lot (whispering) and I'm a very angry person (laughter) I have like the world of patience with like most people and then there's like certain little things that annoy me so much and I go like zero to explosive in like point zero seconds (laughingly) and my mom seems to touch all those buttons ...ummm and then other family like my gran I can't stand my gran I tolerate my gran (whispering) I hate her... but I think that's from when I was younger as well because she can't stand me so it's kind of just it's actually not even that I hate her any more I used to but now it's actually like I couldn't be bothered like if I didn't see her again ...it wouldn'tttt matter but if I see her it doesn't matter I

just kind of tolerate her if it makes ant sense but I don't have any real emotion towards her (softly) anymore soo.. which is quite sad really... like I said (laughingly) a dysfunctional family.

A: what did she do to you when you were young ?

T: uhhmm various things like my uncle who's sitting in the lounge he's the same age as me umm he's my half - uncle andd we're always like brother and sister and we grew up together and everything and we're always ... yah together andd of course we hit our teens and we started going out and doing everything together andd everything he did I got blamed for because he was her little angel and he couldn't do anything wrong so the first time he got pissed it was MY fault (emphasised) my influence (softly) it was the other way around and but like every little thing he did he started smoking so it was obviously my fault even though I didn't smoke uhhh and just things like that and she got drunk once and I remember it clearly there were various things but this one occasion I remember she got very very drunk andd stood there screaming at me telling me I was a stupid bitch and she hates me andd I was thirteen at the time andd it used to really bother me and everything but noww it doesn't matter I won't let it affect me .

A: so it doesn't do anything to you ?

T: not anymore no I mean I think maybe it me hurts a bit 'cos I just like look at my friends who got these wonderful grans but then my gran's she like looks like my mom she's not really a gran is she ..she's not your stereotypical grandmother at all umm..and I think I understand as well in

a way umm.. uh her mother didn't allow her to do anything andd she's been trapped by her kids in a way you know what I mean she's never been allowed to do any of the things she's wanted to do she's had to work umm she's been stuck in a job she hates because she had to support her kids and I think maybe she took that resentment out on me ...and my brother ...I think she didn't want my mother to end up in the same sort off ..you know scenario I think she's just worried about that butt as I say now that I'm older it's sort of okay we've both come to sort of tolerate each other and I'm not too fussed the minute she starts I'm like 'okay' and I walk away ..(softly) couldn't be bothered..so.

A: so who would you say had the greatest influence on you ?

T: uhmm I think ..no.. I don't think I can really say in fact my parents... my parents probably umm..my dad completely pushed me away from religion which has made me who I am he used to drum it down our throats when we were kids ummm and it's not that I'm against religion I just don't believe in dogma I've got a major problem with dogma 'cos I've seen what it does to people uhh... so I think that's made me who I am in the spiritual sense and uhh my mom as well but my dad even though he's so religious uhmm he's always just let me be who I am like now that I'M OLDE (emphasised) it's like 'dad I don't believe in God I don't believe whatever' and he's okay with it like he'll sit there and he's like you know will pray for me whatever but he doesn't try and force it on me as much as he used to uhh.. also one thing I realised when I was in um England 'cos I never realised how much they pushed me ..to just BE AN INDIVIDUAL (emphasised) when I was in England my dad turned around and he was boasting about me to one of my friends and he just said he's so proud

of me even though I hadn't accomplished anything I haven't studied I'm not some..FANTASTIC (emphasised) I'm (softly) fantastic because I'M ME (emphasised) I think that (laughingly) one of the GREATEST THINGS ANYONE'S EVER SAID (emphasised) that uh no made me realise that both my parents actually just pushed so hard for me to just be me and not to conform to..any ideal of what they think I should be to what society thinks I should be I think that's been my greatest influence.

A: okay ..what is 'me' ?

T: ooohhh there we go (laughingly) DON'T EVEN GO THERE (emphasised)..this I'm battling uhh I think this is one of the biggest questions I'm going through uhh.. suddenly all these new questions popped up and I think 'oh no' but it brought me closer I think.. to this GREAT ...QUEST (emphasised) (softly) of finding out who me is and come to peace with me uhhmm...I think also that's why I was such a problem child because I was so confused ... when I was younger uhhm.. I don't know who me is (laughingly) basically what you see is what you get uhhm.. there's no masks like whatever .

A: okay you said that with regard to religion you don't want to go there because you've seen what it does to people ...

T: not that I've seen what it does to people I mean there's certain religions or spiritualities like umm... there's a lot of aspects of Buddhism that I really believe in like the whole respect thing respect everythin living everything around you uh... also like Paganism there's a lot of aspects there but once again Paganism I mean they worship nature

uhmm.. you know things like that certain things and I think there's a lot of aspects in every religion that are right...well they are things that we should live by or abide by butt.. my problem is dogma this whole thing of praying and worshiping to just this one thing and the fact that people become so confined within those walls of whatever religion they're in and there's no bending in either way take Christianity for God's sake we're in the twenty - first century (laughingly) things have changed since Adam and Eve years ago.. you can't I feel that if if there's a God and He would come back now He would realise things have changed and I (God) can't expect this anymore andd .. I think as long as you're a good person and you don't go out of your way to harm anyone or (softly) to hurt anyone or do (loudly) BAD THINGS (emphasised) I don't see how you can go to a so called Hell and it bothers me that Christians and whatever other religion you know what I mean that whole ..like what's the word.. I'm so tired my brain's dead...(laughingly) ..uhmm..but you know what I mean I don't see how you can go to Hell because you I donno swore or you've been a drunk all your life if you've been a good person deep down I don't see how you can be judged for that ..I think that's one problem with dogma in the differnt religions.

A: okay soo you said 'deep down' ..uh you realise that there's a difference between inner and outer selves

T: mmm

A: so describe your inner self in comparison to how you present your outer self ?

T: okayy I'm very shy I'm deeply deeply shy I am (laughingly) seriously everyone's got this weird conce like uh what's the name of this 'cos everyone I tell I'm shy they laugh at me okay but I think I'm shy uhmmm inside I'm just this person screaming out like 'cos I'm like NOT shy if that makes any sense it's just that I have these issues with myself and I think a way of expressing like the ... more extrovert me is the way I dress ...(softly) not today 'cos I've just come from work ..uhmm but my appearance which is why I have the piercings I had more obviously took them out I had to work uhh my hair was shaved (softly) completely off for about two years (laughingly) I 've had to go look for work... and just things like that also I find that it sieves out people the people that uhmmm .. I find people with masks people who are worried about image and that sort of thing with um.. I can't stand people like that I don't have time for people like that uhmm they won't come up to me they won't bother talking to me and then the kind of people I would normally talk to immediately are attracted to me I don't know if it makes any sense that's why I say it kind of filters people

A: okay you have your own filtering system..

T: (uproaring laughter) it works .

A: okay ..uh what does it mean for you to be a woman ?

T: uhmm nothing really I'm not worried I'm not too fucked about gender in the least I'm kind of (laughingly) I don't really care...I don't think men are any better than women and vice versa I think we're completely equal uhmm feminists annoy me completely and male chauvinist pigs annoy me

uhhh I think one of the biggest problem with men and women is that instead of looking each other as people we look at each other as men and women (softly) if that makes any sense...I mean obviously there's the whole gender thing but basically it comes down to we exactly the same thing and.. I donno I can't differentiate between the two other than the gender thing because I don't think men are any more capable than women or women any capable of men except that we can ..produce babies (laughingly) and men can't..but well they they I suppose have a part really but other than that there's not really any more that a man can do than a woman and vice versa (softly) and I don't think you can draw a line between the two

A: okay what does you body mean to you

T: my body (whisperingly) I have major issues with my body (laughter) uhh my body's my body umm I'm trying to learn to love my body it's a majot issue in my life my mother's trying to do ... visualisation meditations with me she's trying to make me accept myself so body's probably a bad issue (laughter) uhmm.. what can I say about my body (talking to herself) what does my body mean to me uhh.. I would never do anything tooo change now there's a contradiction in terms (roaring laughter) okay I would never doo... I would never have uhmm do anything drastic like plastic surgery or anything like that 'cos I think I'm mean't to be the way I am and there's this deeper inner thing within me saying you know 'look your body's the way you are you're fantastic the way you are love it but on the surface level I'm having problems with this uhmm ..and the piercings and that I DON'T KNOW (emphasised) tattoos I love tattoos it's just bizarre as well I say I wouldn't change my body butt I wil I love tattoos I love piercings so I don't know quite what to say there umm... and I love being

a woman I think that a woman's body is beautiful I'm not gay not that I have anything wrong any problem with them uhhmmm no I've got loads of friends who are gay and lesbian whatever I've got family members who are lesbian so I don't have a problem with that but umm I think that the woman's body is beautiful so I'm happy being a woman.

A: okay you said you're 'trying to love your body' ?

T: (huge sigh) (laughter) yeah umm... I've always always had major issues with my body even when I put on ten kilograms when I've been overseas so I'm now I feel ABSOLUTELY HUGE (emphasised) and (softly) disgusting uhhh I was just unhappy with my weight before but now I've put on even MORE (emphasised) weight 'cos I mean I was unhappy with my body before I always felt like I'm too big and I'm too whatever uhh and now I put on all this weight so I feel disgusting but I'm coming to realise (loudly) that there's actually nothing that I can do because it's the shape of my body I HAVE MASSIVE HIPS (emphasised) and this tiny waist so I just have this problem no matter what I do I'm never going to really lose these hips I just need to learn accept (whisperingly) these hips are there (laughter) and men are supposed to like little waists and big hips so but I'm not really worried about men it's how I see myself I think that's my biggest problem no matter how much people say to me 'look you're fine you're beautiful or whatever' I don't see that so until I can see that it's not going to make any difference (almost inaudibly) to how I see myself.

A: okay...

T: (laughter) major issues.

A: okay we have to come back to that...

T: (roaring laughter)

A: okay what does it mean for you to be South African ?

T: for me to be South African... (laughter) NOTHING (emphasised) ..sorry ..no umm..the thing iss I've got very strong European ties I think everyone in South Africa does but my dad's my dad is from Holland and my momm's father is from Ireland uhmm and the Dutch thing because it's so kind of close and I've always been like the next generation so like I'm half Dutch you know what I mean so I'm very proud of that and when IK went to England I realised that I come from such a wide like it's so colorful and it's so full of like recent history and culture and everything so I mean it's all so intermingled and I go into England and see how everything's so like with traditions and stuff it's so old noone even knows what they're doing it for anymore (laughingly) you know what I mean noone's even got a clue like um 'why are you doing this ?' 'because like my grandparents did it ' uhmm and then like coming back... I never thought I'd miss South Africa and then when I went to England it's like ..for the first few months it was like 'yeah I'm away ' but then it was like 'oh I really miss it because it's just we've got ' even though it's so similar because we are a first world and a third world in one uhh. so a lot of the stuff is similar in England but there's so much that's completely differant uhmmm and you don't realise how many differant languages we incorporate into our everyday speech until you got to England and NOONE

UNDERSTANDS YOU (emphasised) (laughter) 'WHAT ?' 'oh yeah that's afrikaans that's zulu that's whatever ' ummm and then coming back um I just uh you know being a South African you're always going to be a South African there's this deep rooted 'when I'll retire I'll come back' (laughter) when all this shits sorted out in South Africa I'll come back .

A: okay ..let's talk about your piercings... the order in which you had them done ?

T: okay ..order...in South Africa I had three holes in my ears the first I had done with a gun everyone does it with a gun... the second two (upper left ear) I did myself ...my belly button I pierced when I was in standard

..nne yeah end of standard nine my friends and I were mean't to be studying and we were bored so we all decided to peirce our belly buttons (laughter) it was surprisingly painless...

A: was it ?

T: well it wasn't painless but it was so much less painless than I thought it was going to be I mean there were these things with needles trying to push these things through and we had to bring it back ...so we did it ourselves 'cos we didn't want each other to do it 'cos everyone was like 'no no no we'll do it 'cos if it's painful we'll just stop ' and then these stupid needles just got stuck they wouldn't go through the back skin(back end of skin on 'belly button') anyway we did it but it was too shallow so they just grew out and my friends took them out uhmmm...

A: what does it mean for you to have pierced your belly button ?

T: Nothing...it was justt.. there was absolutely nothing I've had so many people like ask me 'but why do you have them done' and I honestly can't tell you.

A: no no I mean specifically your belly button...

T: uhmm...it was nothing absolutely nothing I could have it done the reason I had it (belly button) done was that we were at school so we could hide it do you know what I mean ..like noone could freak out because it wasn't like a thing on my face so noone would really say anything uhmm I mean I showed my mother and she kind of went 'ueeh' and then it was over but umm and I could go to school and not worry about it 'cos noone could see it ..

A: and how did you feel about your mum's reaction to it ..your mum's ?

T: I wasn't really too phased (laughter) 'cos I knew that she would kind of go ...I had my first hole pierced when I was sixteen 'cos my dad was like 'no you can't do that it's like work of the devil' umm...(laughter) he's pretty religious and then the second hole I went I did and my mother sort of ..she freaked out and like a day later it was like fine I had the third one done and she went 'eeuuhh' and then it was okay so I knew like if I did my belly button she was gonna kind of go 'ooh that's bad' and then 'oh it's your body do what you want' uhmm I wasn't really I didn't even really consider it ...to be honest (laughter)

A: okay if your belly had to speak out at the time what do you think it would say ?

T: 'ouch' (roaring laughter) 'what are you doing to me'

A: okay and after that ?

T: okay and then I went to England 'cos my mom's always been like you can have tattoos you can have belly button er piercings but just wait till you go to England or overseas or wherever you go I don't want to see it ' so I got to England and I thought 'oh yeah'

A: you were how old ?

T: I was nineteen I just turned nineteen so I got to England and I said 'okay I can do whatever I want my mother can't see it I can like tell her about it but I think when I finally return the shock 'll be over' so the first thing I had done was this here...

A: okay your the top ear...

T: yah I hadd (sorry I got really bad circulation)

A: (asked if T wanted to walk around to which she replied no it's fine)

T: the second one...

A: okay before we get into that what does your upper ear mean to you ?

T: nothing it was just I wanted to get it done I was scared I was I think I didn't want to go completely way out I mean the first thing i wanted done was my lip or my eyebrow it was like a toss between the two but 'let me just go slowly kind of like ease myself into it ' and I had that done and it's like SO ADDICTIVE (emphasised) I mean like once you have that done it's like really ..so I had that done and like a week a week later no that same day I went back and I was like 'okay can you do my nose please' I think I went back like an hour later 'do my nose' so I had my nose done ..

A: okay you got like a spike coming out there ?

T: yeah uhmm I had it pierced with a ring uhmm no I didn't I had a stud and then I tried to change it and then it closed and I left it for months and then I had it re - pierced again and then I had a ring but I've only just recently put the stud because (softly) the ring is like too in your face uhhmmm then I had the second one in my ear done which was probably about a week later uhmmm thennn I had my tongue done..

A: and how long ago was this ?

T: my tongue was about two years ago...no wait longer I had it done three months after I arrived in England I kind of got there and went 'Bad Piercing' (laughter) uhmm...these are ear rims by the way (piercing on upper left ear) that's basically what they are uhmm.. then i had my tongue done oh no wait sorry before my tongue I had my belly button done ..

A: again ..

and go 'oh yes you know it's like a rush ' I suppose it must be 'cos it's addictive (laughter) I think that's like the main thing 'cos once you've had one done you have to keep it going because they are addictive it's like tattoos you ask anyone who's had a tattoo it's so addictive you have to get more done I don't know why (whisperingly) I suppose it's got deep psychological undertones (laughter) .

A: your tongue...that's a muscle ..how was the pain there ?

T: I didn't even feel it go through I mean you bite your tongue and it is so incredibly painful whoa I was so scared when I went for it I like sat down I was like in two minds whether I was going to get it done so I was just like 'I can't deal this pain' and I spoke to the guy it was a really nice guy that I went to and he was just like 'look it doesn't hurt..you've had your nose done your nose hurts more than this ' so I thought 'okay I'm going to do it' 'cos my friend had it done and I was like (whisperingly) 'if she can have it done so can I' (laughter) and I really wanted it done... andd...I just like closed my eyes and he was like 'okay ..it's over' and I looked in the mirror and it was there now and I thought 'wow I didn't even feel it'umm I kind of felt him fiddling around but you know like other people I know say it was like really really painful so I suppose it just depends .

A: okay so you said you went back the same day the first time when you said it was kind of safe and then you went back and had your nose done ...

T: yeah because I really wanted this kind of drastic change 'cos I've always loved piercings I don't know why uhmm maybe it's the whole (softly)

I suppose the annihilistic sort of (Loud laughter) uhh I donno I just always liked piercings so I kind of wanted to go slowly 'cos I was working at the time as well with Butterworth Publishers in England soo.. it's an international company ...really improper so I couldn't really turn up with these things in my eyebrow and lip and everything uhh but then I quit my job so I thought 'doesn't matter I can do it what I want' soo I went through this whole ...like ...self ..discovery thing and I don't know if maybe that's why the piercings happened when they did or (softly) whatever ...uhmm when I first arrived in England I was very depressed soo maybe that's also why so I (softly) 'm kind of calmed down now (laughinly).

A: you were depressed because...?

T: uhmmm I was missing my mother terribly (laughter) uhmmm my friend my best friend was over there and I met her and I thought 'okay this is great' she tried to kill herself a week before I got there sooo I just stepped into this MAJOR DRAMA and this house I moved into as well everyone was fighting I didn't know anyone my best friend was SO DEPRESSED and wrapped up in her own world (whisperingly) well she always is (laughter) and she uhh yah well it's like I didn't have her to lean on for comfort and I couldn't talk to her or anything ...uhh I could speak to my mom but I didn't want to make her worry so I didn't want to like tell her anything ..but then my other friend came back and then everything was okay and then everything calmed down again.

A: what is the meaning of having your tongue pierced ?

T: I don't know I don't know I just liked the idea when I had it done noo

noone had it it was something unique i think that's a massive thing to have is to be unique instead of (whisperingly) copy everyone like sheep (loudly) DON'T WANNA BE A SHEEP umm so I had it done and suddenly everyone had it done so then it was like I had my lip done because noone had it done and now everyone's got it done soo (whisperingly) it's like really annoying right (loudly) it's like you never going to be one up from everyone else because it just catches on too quickly uhmmm and I think that was like the main reason I had it done because it was so unique.

A: and uhmyou said you have a high pain threshold...did you think at all about the pain prior to the piercings ?

T: uhmm I think my whole thing is just that it lasts for just like a few seconds uhmm what is pain you know we deal with pain all the time that's not really a big issue in my life and if they were breaking my hand i would be really (laughingly) but it's like maybe thirty seconds of pain if that and it's not unbearable pain it's more like you know a stingng I mean you know you got your ears pierced it doesn't last very long...and I mean can you even remember the pain now..you can but not really do you know what i mean it's like no really big issue.

A: At this point in your life looking back which would you say has been the most significant part of it ?

T: uhmm I have no idea (loud laughter) meeting my spirit guide uhmm not many people belive in that.. I don't know that's a very good question..

A: Do you get a visual er visual perception of this spiritual guide or..?

T: um yeah my mommm doess angel workshops well you can look at it either way you want it's basically getting in touch with your intuition... 'cos as we grow older we kind of get out of touch and we kind of like taught in a way not to listen to that andd that's what she does and she does some meditations it's meditations you do is it's very visual and I mean you can see I'm vewry sceptical I'm ver sceptical about everything uhh I was kind of like 'yeah whatever' you know and you come out of it and you just know if that makes any sense I kept sitting there thinking 'no this absolute nonsense' but then it's just this voice at the back of your head and you just know that it's not something you've just made up it was just too bizarre for you to have made up because it's not something you can really think of soo...and also I felt presences since I was really young ummm and I've always been scared of them and since I've met my spirit gude I've been really comfortable with them instead of being afraid so I think that's also kind of made me accept that it's real

A: okay you said when you were young ...how old were you ?

T: Since I can remember .

A: which is around sixx ?

T: (roaring laughter) it's quite a big chunk really I rember something from the stuff that my parents told me do you know what I mean like the only memories I've had of my childhood are things I can I'd know if my parents told me 'cos there are no things that I can recall it's like ..uhmmm.. I can't actually remember the uhmm ... the actual instances it's more like just what my parents have told me ..sort of like a visual thing

it's more like aa er what's the word ..it's not visual...do you know when you recall memories from your childhood it will be more of a visual thing mine's just basically 'okay this happened like I had a dog called Muffin or whatever' like that you know but I can't remember the dog like what it looked like or anything like that ...

A: do you want to tell me more about this spirit guide what does it mean to you ?

T: uhmm...to me well I'm not religious but I'm quite spiritual I don't know if I believe in some GOD or ..I have this major problem thinking that there's this BIG BEING up THERE ...as far as I'm concerned we're all energy...well scientifically we all are energy everything about us is energy... so we 're all uh inter - connected uhh...and because I believe we're all energy I believe we cannot die I don't know...I'm very confused here I kind of believe in reincarnation but I kind of don't because ...but I don't believe in reincarnation in the sense that we're building up some higher purpose then again I'm confused I don't believe we're building up to something to go a Heaven or a Hell or whatever...or any higher plane I think if there is reincarnation ummm I think it's more off ...like we try to reach like a spiritual umm... spiritual purity if that makes any sense ... so kind of along the lines of normal reincarnation we use trying to be the best that you can be and when you become that it's gonna end but I don't know what's gonna happen after that because I don't believe in God I don't believe in a Heaven and a Hell I don't know what happens after that maybe we just become ...nothing we become (inaudible)

A: okay what does spiritual purity mean to you ?

T: uhmm ...I think it really difficult to explain at the moment because I', not sure what I mean I'm kind off ...fighting within my own head I've got this great war going on because I'm not sure as I say like I believe in reincarnation but I don't because everything contradicts itself uhh but then there are somethings like because I believe we are energy we can't die so even if there's a next life.. we kind of going to become one with everything anyway whether I become part of a tree or whatever uhh spiritual purity I think being at one with everything ...realising that we're completely one with everything like I'm no better than you you're no better than me...noone's better than anyone ..do you know what I mean...knowing like every living creature is like equal...humans have this really terrible conception that they're really better than the animals which is total bullshit (laughingly) 'cos I think we're equal but I think they're probably more intelligent than use because they live in harmony with the other animals and we're busy bugging up the world and (laughter) anyway spiritual purity is being at peace with one's self ..with one's surroundings ..not having any hang - ups being able to accept everything because it is .

A: tell me a bit more about these visual images that you see .

T: (whisperingly) you think I've got a deep psychological problem (loud laughter) no it's not ..I meditate a lot I need to ...it relaxes me more than anything else...I stress so much I'm like the biggest stress - pot...

A: because ?

T: I don't know I feel like I'm doing nothing with my life uhmmI 've got

no direction in my life I feel like I'm supposed to have this amazing job and this degree behind me 'cos that's what everyone expects...but that's not what I want to do ..uhmmm sooo I'm like really unhappy 'cos I like force myself to do these things but if I don't do them I 'm like stressed because I'm like not pleasing everyone ..uhhmm so because I get stressed I meditate and the best way to meditate is visualisation meditation you go to your little special place uhmm ...uhhmmm and you'll still have visualisation like meditation my mom did with me was basically you visualise this special place and you walk along the path and there's this white figure and as you get closer it catches up umm..and d

A: what does yours look like ?

T: well mine's a Druid (laughter) it's all so amazing soo uhmmm and the whole time I was like doing it I was like so ' this is like nonsense' I was like really really like against the whole thing uhmmm but the minute I spoke to my spirit guide and kind of accepted it I felt so peaceful more peace than I ever felt in my life uhmmm and you can uh my spirit guide (whisperingly) you gonna think I'm absolutely crazy (louder) and my spirit guide like holds my hand ..you can actually feel something holding your hand so it's not completely ma I mean that freaked me out completely I was just like 'no this is weird' uhmm but as I say since I can remember I've always felt presences and they've always used to scare me I've always felt like there's something at my shoulder uhmm... and it used to freak me out so much that I couldn't be alone I'm talking not even when I was little even now I'm mean where it's so bad that I can't even be in the house alone on my own and I can't be and it's not that I'm scared of intruders or anything like that you know what I mean I'm not scared of boogie men or

anything it's just 'cos I've always felt this presence and the minute I met my spirit guide it was okay i felt at peace and I've been okay with since and I've actually felt safe ..

A: you were resistant initially because ?

T: uhmm I 'm very sceptical about everything uhmm i never just believe something because you say so do you know what I mean and I won't believe something because my brain says so because (whisperingly) the brain is a strange thing (laughter) so I'm very very sceptical about everything..I kind of believe in tarot but I don't because I donno and i believe in acupuncture ..it's um basically color therapy...if you give me proof then I'll believe it.

A: okay there is no physical evidence that your unconscious exists does that mean you don't believe in your unconscious ?

T: I don't mean physical evidence I mean it's just gotta be something that I'm happy with that is real ...not that it's real thatttt there's a possibility ...I'm not set on anything uhh I'm always open to new approaches new ideas so I'm always changing ...it's just I've seen too much...there's too much bullshit to just believe in anything ..you've got to give me like reasonable okay well not reasonable ..I can't just believe something you have to give me some sort of proof not necessarily solid uhmm you don't have to show it to me in black and white but there's got to be some sort of backing to it.

A:okay how do you feel about people's reactions to your piercings ?

T: It totally ANNOYS me..i don't do them for attention I do it 'cos it's me it's a way of me expressing who I am and I 'd rather people like in England it was fine like people either just accept it orr don't they don't stare ..it's either they don't approve or they just don't care whereas here people would like blatantly stare at you and like ..sit there and talk about you and I just feel likw telling them 'you're so rude where did you come from what's wrong with you didn't your parents bring you up properly ?' and in England I was never bothered by anyone because I never had any reaction from anyone soo ht eminate I came back to South Africa it was like 'oahh' 'you've had piercing oah' and I wasn't you know what I mean I didn't have it done for that I didn't want theiur reactiona and the..and I couldn't really deal with it and that's why i took my lip ring out .

A: okay you said said that your piercings are a way of expressing who you are so what are these piercings saying about you ?

T: uhh I think inside I'm more I'm quite extravagant I'm quite outrageous I'm quite uhmm (whisperingly) mad (laughter) completely insane complete freak uhmm but i don't come across as that 'cos I don't 'cos I've got too many issues i'm too unsure of myself i'm too uhh. i 've got too low self confidence and the the only way of expressing that is through my actual physical appearance .

A: okay thank you for you time

Transcript 5

A: Can you tell me about your childhood..as you were a kid growing up ?

Ta: I grew up ...mostly by myself...I was raised for the earlier part of my life by my mother who's very creative ...and then... after she passed on by my father whom I hardly knew so most of the time I was by myself.

A: umm.. how did you feel at the time that your mother ...

Ta: uhhh ..when my mother was sick I was like very worried about her...I had to take care of her..anddd after she passed on I started being very worried about my father..he was alone and the two of us had to take care of each other ..we were basically estranged.

A: um and how did your mum pass on ?

Ta: She died of cancer.

A: What did that do to you ..what was going on in your mind at the time ?

Ta: I think in many ways it made me grow up pretty quickly as well ...I think it developed most of my strengths ways in ways where I suddenly had to take care of people which I mmph... which at that age I didn't know how to do...I had to learn very quickly how to get along by.

A: It seems like it was a difficult period for you at that time.

Ta : it was ... strangely enough I didn't find it that difficult...but it was scary.

A: Can you elaborate ?

Ta : well suddenly having to take care of adults ...being about eleven

years old ..I didn't know what to do...and that made me to have to open up my mind to the adult world a lot quicker...it made me lose out on most of my childhood.

A: How did losing your mum affect you ?

Ta : welll... it made me lose out on a lot of the feminine side of being raised I think... being mostly influenced by my father from thereon ummm... I grew up a bit of a 'tom boy' I think a bit tougher than I would have ... ummm other than that ummm not really that much it ummm brought my father into my life in a that he never would have played a part if my mom was still there ..and and it actually makes me happy because my father and I are so similar in ways that I never would have known about so it's brought out things in my life ..taken away other things but I don't think I suffered much for it.

A: and what were you going through at the time ?

Ta: (long silence) whew I can't really say... the only memories that I have of that time was being worried about the people around me and having to take care of them .

A: ...and were you eh...at any time did you feel that despair or were you ...

Ta: ...ehhh... well...ove over the years I'vee...every now and thenn gottt (said very quickly) through a bit of despair..but I think everyone does that to get worried about life.. butt I think that those experiences ..the earlier part of my life taught me how to get over problems...and to deal with them.

A:umm...that grieving period...how would you describe it ?

Ta: I didn't really have a grieving period um when my mom died I was ...relieved that she wasn't suffering anymore...like part of a heavy burden being lifted off my shoulders and I'd I'd actually felt happy that she'd she'd moved on.

A:...and did you..grieve at all afterwards ?

Ta: uhmm...right after the death.. no no I didn't ..it was about ..it was about a year and a half before I even cried about it...and that was only when something happened and I was depressed and III (softly) unleashed it

A: Could you elaborate on what happened ?

Ta: uh what what went wrong ?

A: yah .

Ta: I don't remember it was something insignificant.

A:and how old were you at this time ?

Ta: When my mom died orr...?

A; when this happened

Ta: uhh..I was probably about ...probably about thirteen then..

A: and your mum died when you wereee ?

Ta: about eleven.

A: So whoo would you say has the most influence on you ?

Ta: Definitely my father...although he doesn't influence me the way he would like to..he's Afrikaans and in the military soo.. being brought up in aa..very strict Afrikaans family all of HIS life wanting to carry that across to me and it (laughingly) didn't quite work...I somehow turned out exactly the opposite of what he wanted.

A: and how did you feel about that ?...having to...

Ta: ummm it was a bit difficult because I'm a lot more free - thinking than my father is soo.. in a lot of ways we had very serious disagreements like every time I would come home with a new piercing or a strange hairstyle he'd ground me for a bit a few days later we'd be smiling and I'd be out again and everything would be fine...so umm he's come to slowly start accepting me for my differences butt...still quite comfortable..

A: okay.. so in terms of your identity then ?

Ta: ummm..Specifically what about my identity ?

A: how would you say he's influenced ?

Ta: well. he's a very quiet unassuming person and I thinkk.. through that he's taught me to sort of sit back and look at things analyze things first ..then solve the problem...

A:umm..okay..your teen years ..what were you going through then ?..can you describe it ?

Ta: uhh..lots off.. hanging about with friends..partying..trying to (laughingly) ignore studying as much as possible...nothing very interesting.

A: uhh was there any event which affected you... the way in which you saw yourself ..your identity?

Ta: umm I felt very much alone um most of my friends were guys.. didn't get along very well with females soo most of my friends were going out and getting raucous so oo I think that that I guess changed things a bit.. I (laughingly) ended up a bit more masculine than most people..butt...yah growing up in nn fights and drinking and swearing ...only later on did I start to develop the whole feminine aspect.

A: How did this come about ?

Ta: uhh..I donno ..justtt staring to appreciate things like dresses and make - up and hair..styles...starting to chase after guys instead of fighting with them...I think that developed a bitt later than other women.

A: mm at around what age would you say ?

Ta: probably aboutttt sixteennn sixteennnn yeah.

A: umm what does your body mean to you?

Ta: mmph..welll body in the physical having to carry you around and stuff...virtuallly...I donno..umm..reckon the NATURAL (emphasised) HUMAN BODY as it is doesn't have any REAL (my emphasis) meaning to me..but the way we change our bodies to represent ourselves I thinkk represents how each one of us are..so by me decorating my body andd things like refusing to take out piercings for a job things like that I think it represents th fact that I'm very determined to be who I am and not let anyone change wh I am so I think I reflect that in myself..

A: Who are you ?

Ta: I'mmm a crazy little hippie goth girl...very confused very versatile...try and open my mind to as many things as possible and experience as many things as possible.

A: okay...can you tell me about your piercings ...when uh you got themm.. you could go through each one ?

Ta: ..umm...altogether there's like sixteen alright..uhh over the years....let's see..started off with the with the ears...

A: the ones at the bottom lobe ?

Ta: yah..actually my first piercings I got when I was I think ... three years old...my sister actually took me to the um Hub in Amanzimtoti and had my ears pierced my father threw an absolute fit my mother had no response (quietly)...

A: and you ...was it painful ?

Ta: I screamed (laughter) I very clearly remember that...I think I was more scared than anything else...

A: Do you rememeber the pain ?

Ta: Nooo I remember a hot flushng and I remember screaming that's about it...umm the second holes ...I gottt... would be aboutt standard eight I think uhh it was pretty much a craze at that stage..people were staring..second piercing I thought it looked really cool soo...

A: on your ears ?

Ta: yahh...I got most of my piercings in my ears before I started going over to others...

A: okay !

Ta: uhh...just basically liking the whole look of an ear full of metal...

A: what about it ?

Ta: I dunno..II guess it just represented a a form of form of rebellion..I like that people who are really ..really different were usually people with a lot of piercings and I think thatwas what attracted me to it first...then after that I just started doing piercings because I liked them.. . except forthe one on my nose... a friend of mine wanted to have his nose pierced he was too scared to go by himself soo I said I'd have mine done as well...which I think was more an excuse than anything else 'cos I'd wanted one for quite a while and then after thatt it...

A: so how many do you have in your ears ?

Ta: I got seven in my left ear and four in my right.

A: and you've had those done all first ?

Ta: yah welll ummm up until about the top three in my left ear I think it's been done between the other piercings...

A: okay..

Ta: umm the otherssss I have just basically...

A: okay what was done after your ear

Ta: okayy let's see after my nose it was my belly button...which was terribly terribly painful...

A: Was there anything that happended that made you pierce that particular area...

Ta: umm I think that each of my piercings has been the same on way that it's something I've seen on other peoples and then liked thought about it for a while and the one day justt out of the blue I'll have time or nothing to do feel like doing something not being able to think of anything else I' go and have a piercing done umm like for instance my lip..I was supposed to go the Lenny Kravitz concert everyone knew about it and the next day I got to work and I hadn't gone to the concert and everyone was asking me about it I thought stuff you people this is just getting too irritating sooo I took my lunch break went off and had my lip pierced just to distract everyone to give them something new to talk about... like I said it's just an excuse to have it done...

A: that's a labrette piercing right ?

Ta: yah...all of them were things that ...I just liked the look off.

A: and the labrette was done after your nose ?

Ta: ya the labrette was the more recent one.

A: so after your ears you did your belly ?

Ta: yah and thenn my eyeybrow was next and the labrette.

A: okay umm what motivated you to pierce your eyebrow ?

Ta: umm I just liked it and I had been living with a guy at that stage who

was doing piercings and I hadn't done a piercing for quite a while felt like having another one done so ..I decide to go with the eyebrow.

A: okay could you clarify the order for me ?

Ta: okay mostly the ones in the ears and then the eyebrow aagh sorry the nose belly button eyebrow and then the labrette.

A: umm okay and your age at the time of these piercings ?

Ta: let's see the nose was done at about sixteen uhh the belly button was about eighteen the eyebrow at about twentylip at about umm...twenty-two it's all been spaced out about two years in between (softly)

A: sorry ?

Ta: it's all been spaced out about two years between them I didn't think of that one..

A: anything at the top of your mind is significant about a two year break or..

T: I think it just takes probably me about two years before I get bored.

A: okay... and what brings you to this point of boredom ?

Ta: Umm I think everyone goes through changes in life ...when you don't have enough significant changes in your life think you tend to change things just to make life interesting I guess.

A: significant changes such as ?

Ta: umm....personal evolution I think going through steady stages of umm (to self) what do I wanna say - not transforming - ...evolution if you

don't I think it's ...I don't know actually...umm...everyone changes and grows through life and sometimes you get stuck in stagnant places where ... you're not changing orr you're not evolving ..you're not getting to the point where you should be getting in...(whisperingly) I donno .

A: and which point is that ?

Ta: a turning point.

A: okay umm what thennn. do the piercings mean to you ?

Ta: (silence)

A: what do they signify to you ?

Ta: other than decoration I don't think they signify a lot to me..it's just a way that.. I like looking most of the time you'll find that having piercings you forget about them you don't even realise how people are going to react when they see them ...it'ss... just something that I like.

A: okay...umm...earlier on you talked about...being different...umm what ..what makes you want to be different ?

Ta: I don't think it's wanting to be different I think it is well I've said that over the years I've had to get ...I found that I am different from most other people in most respects I can't really say how I am different 'cos most of the time I don't really see it I find myself I believe myself to be completely normal just like everyone else I just happen to like pieces of metal stuck through me I like the way it looks...I think I'm a bit more open - minded than some people butttt...everyone is diff going to be different noone is going to be the same I think I'm just a bit more re - spirited more creative than other people.

A: what do you consider normal ?

Ta: uhmmm I'veee uh tried to define that one but then you have to look at whether I would say I'm normal which I do which I think is a well balanced person that looks at things and appreciates them for what they are.....(long pause) goes out and and see's what life is and works and keeps herself busy ...has friends.....just being balanced I think.

A: and you believe you are...

Ta: yes I believe I'm quite normal... (whisper) I think

A: and you talked about the actions of other people ...how did that affect you

Ta: (laughingly) it's interesting...okay I guess I'm a bit of an attention seeker in some ways... everyone likes attention but it'ss...it's quite interesting to have people a whole lot of strangers come up to you and ask you ...did that hurt or people commenting on what they think is a piercing okay fine working in a bar sometimes it's very inebriated people that suddenly feel they can now voice their opinion butt..just seeing the expression or the shock on peoples' faces is when the they notice that I've got a bar of metal stuck through my tongue or my lip it's ... it is quite funny to see how shocked people are.

A: you've got a tongue piercing as well ?

Ta: yes...didn't mention that one sorry...I completely forget about them I guess they're like like normal to me I don't even take them out...people would say for instance like ...doesn't it take you ages to get ready for work and get up in the morning ..and I would say ..what do you mean

..doesn't it take ages to put all those earrings and things (laughter)..and I say actually no I don't take them out...I do completely forget about them.

A: okay when did you get your tongue pierced ?

Ta: uhhhh probabillly whennn I wasss...also about twenty I think ..it was before the eyebrow after the uh between the belly button and the eyebrow ring..

A: okay so you didn't talk about this at all was there...

Ta: sorry

A: no no it's fine was there anything significant ..

Ta: I've been wanting a tongue ring for ages and I thought that it looked really cool just I woke up one morning and I thought Damn it today I'm having it done so I phoned up a friend said You're taking me into Durban booked made the appointment .

A: You talked about when you were there you screamed out...so uhm you were aware of the pain..

Ta: I was more scared than it was sore really.

A: really...uhmm did you think about the pain at all prior to piercing ?

Ta: It's ALWAYS (emphasised) a bit scary when you're about to have a piercing done I mean some of the are some pretty damn HUGE needles that are being stuck through pretty sensitive parts of the body ..sooo it's a bit of a panic but most of the time I just find myself thinking that Hell considering the piercings that I've had done already and most of them

weren't really that sore and the pain...goes away really quickly...you tend to ..I tend to panic for a about a second or two before the needle goes through but other than that ...not really.

A: what does the pain mean to you ?

Ta: uhmmm(long pause) Nothing really.. it's just a just a few moments discomfort to gett to get a decoration that's going to be there for as long as I want..

A: how do you understand you body image the way your body is ?

Ta: well in most same as the rest of myself I pretty much see myself as average average build everyone like to improve things I'd like to improve things a little bit here and there as much as I can but other than that pre.. pretty much average.

A: improve things ?

Ta: well well like toning muscles and plucking eyebrows and changing your hair colour same as that occasionally get a piercing to to change things in a way that I like butt..other than that file nails do a bit of exercise you know ...

A: when would you say you became aware of this ?

Ta: Probably satndard six or so ...I developed breasts quite late so I started becoming very self conscious at that stage suddenly everybody was blooming and I just thought Hell our bodies are so different so like woke up a bit

A: what influenced you at the time ..how you saw yourself ?

Ta: uhh well in some ways I guess other people's opinions at that stage is very important what people think of you and trying to get the nice you at school and looking at what everyone else looks like and I was doing modelling at that stage as well soooo that I guess influenced me in a way as well that you have to look good and that also taught me queen stuff like posture and make - up and hair that made me more aware of umhow you can actually change your looks 'how you can change the way you are by the way you look.

A: you said people's influences..which people ?

Ta: well people all around us ..friends other people at school people that you see around ummgrowing up in a place like Amanzimtoti it's right on right on the beach you spend a lot of time in the surf most of the time you wear a costume orr baggies whatever sooo...everyone WANTS TO LOOK GOOD.

A: uhhh what does it mean for you to be a woman ?

Ta: mmm...(long pause) I think it gives me an ability to look even better than everyone else it'sss...I dunno I 'd have to say that I'm very glad that I'm a woman and not a guy I think we're built better umm it's a bit confusing the way we think but I donno everything has its pluses and its drawbacks I think everything at the end of the day balances out so whoever you end up being...life is going to be different.

A: could you elaborate on 'we're built better'?

Ta: ok I like bel I like the female body the curves guys are just too square female bodies are more interesting.. I think.

A: okay could you tell me about the pluses and minuses what are they for you ?

Ta: well the fact that women tend to be more conscious of their appearance therefore make a lot more effort to look the way they want to and also to think about that actually the way that men perceive us uhmm the way that they look at our bodies completely different from the way we do uhmm (long pause) we have to make a lot of effort butt yet the effort that we make isn't even noticed so much of the time it's more being worried about your appearance for yourself than it is for anyone else (pause) I think yah ..being more worried about the way we look on the plus side I donno I think we have more freedom to do whatever we want to we tend to be able to get away with some things more than others would lot of people tend to put it down to hormone imbalances (laughingly) or something dippy like that .

A: anything else ?

Ta: choice fetishes (laughter) I think it mostly goes back to appearances.

A: eh..you said appearances for yourself are more important ?

Ta: uhh...for me it is butt it'll depend on the situation as well I I can walk around a music festival andd torn baggies and a t - shirt that's like twenty years old with scrappy hair and I still can feel completely comfortable but when I go out to a nightclub like for instance they'll have costume parties with a theme or even if it's just a theme night like they'll hve a gothic night and a heavy metal night being able to create different appearances.

A: and that does what for you ?

Ta: it makes me feel good it feels good to look nice...it's it's marvellous to walk into a club and have everyone stop and turn their heads and look at you ..it feels good...Yah it makes me feel more confident.

A: and the piercings ?

Ta: well...I think other people's response anddd.. people's response make me feel goodthat gives me a bit more of attention a bit of shock value but for myself it's just something I like and I like having because of the fact that I like them I just ...it doesn't really have that much of an impact .

A: uhmm would you say piercings are addictive ?

Ta: YES..very much very very addictive

A: wha wha how does that happen ?

Ta: I have no idea why...I 've I've had this discussion with a few peoples few times none of us have been able to come up with a reason.

A: at the top of your head what does it mean to you?

Ta: it's.... like I said it's a decoration.. some people like wearing white some people like wearing black some people don't wear make - up at all some people are more conservative than others some people will go and shave half their head off.

A: yah but the level at which they do it is uhmm superficial it's uh...

Ta: that's..okay in this country it's it's not that popular uhmm but theyy.. there's just a small section of us that do slightly more way out things uhmm.. I think most of us are more people that aren't afraid to do the slightly more way out things uhhmm I know a lot of people who like the piercings and freaky hairstyles and stuff but they wouldn't do it because it's not them or they're too scared of how people are going to react a lot

of people wouldn't even mention the fact that they'd love to have their nose pierced but they just couldn't because of society and the way people would react..yah but I think a lot more people are starting to be open minded are starting to do those things because they like it if not being able to stop themselves from doing it just because of what other people will think...but if you go to a place like London for instance you will find so many people like walking around that ..half of the people in this country would stand there in awe just gaping at all these freaks but there it's become more normal...(quietly) it's become more accepted.

A: you mentioned the word FREAK uhm...

Ta: freak as in not being the same as everyone else..being reckless being way out a lot of people consider it very strange.

A: uh FREAK is a a negative word...

Ta: yes it is but it is said in in a perspective where it's more other people's conceptions of who we are.

A: and how do you feel about that ?

Ta: I find it quite funny...I'm exactly the same person I would be if I didn't have all the piercings you'd actually..it's quite shocking how many for instance jobs that I would apply for which I would be told I'm the perfect person for the job but they want me to take out the piercings..and I refuse to on the basis that I can still do the job just as well as I could if I didn't have the piercings.

A: it closes a lot of doors for you?

Ta: it does it closes a lot of doors a lot of people for instance wouldn't

even speak to me because of the way I look but if they hang around for a while and see me speaking to other people and pay attention they will eventually start talking to me because they then eventually will notice that I am really just a sweet little girl who just happens to have lots o pieces of metal stuck through her.

A: and how does that make you feel when they won't speak to you because o the way you look ?

Ta: it's ..it doesn't really bother me that much 'cos I DON'T REALLY WANT PEOPLE (emphasised) that aren't prepared to accept me for who I am talking to me if you don't like me for who I then fine go away I don't care about you if you're prepared to look past at everything and look at who I actually am not just who I look like physically then marvellous ther I w then I want to speak to you.

A: what does it mean for you to be South African ?

Ta: (long pause) to be South African mmm...veryy uhhh...there's this perfect word for this...can't think of the word...uhhh CONSERVATIVE I think this country is very conservative I think a lot of poeple need to open up their aminds think that is going to take us quite a while before we catch up with the rest of the world but I think we have much a... we have much stronger valuesas well in some ways than the rest of than the rest of the world.

A: such as ?

Ta: uhhmm such as ..mmm...privacy I think we value our privacy and respect other people' privacy a lot more than for instance in America I think we a lot more down to earth as well where they will tend to sue

somebody for something utterly ridiculous whereas here it will just get thrown out of court I think we're a lot more English in some ways also a lot more close - minded.

A: would you describe your experiences of being pierced...in terms of what was going through your mind at the time...how you felt?

Ta:I can't really say that I felt much other than wanting a new piercing and being suddenly spurred on attitude to have it done...feeling like...I think a bit of a thrill for a while like afterwards because I got this new piercing and I'm happy and I finally got it and I'm getting a bit more extra attention you're a bit upset when people don't notice it...nothing very...nothing very strange I'd say it's the same as dying your hair...waiting for people to respond to it...feeling good about that little bit of a change you got a little bit of a boost.

A: what I mean't was when you were doing it the experience of doing it what was going through your mind ?

Ta: ohh I think of ..I think of for instance the sensation of the needle going through the flesh hoping that it's not too sore and thinking about how the ring is going to work and how much maintenance there's going to be uhmm how long before the discomfort goes away sometimes wondering a little about how people are going to reactther's nto a helluva lot going through my mind .

A: okayyy...eh so you knew there was going to be discomfort and that ...and what did that discomfort mean to you to be able to do it anyway

Ta: welll...it's it's such a minor discomfort thatt it really doesn't matter that much...such a small amount of pain that it's not something that I should should worry about it's it's not something that's going to play such a large part of my life...discomfort is so minor and it's going to be over so quickly thatt it's easy to deal with.

A: as compared to ?

Ta: as compared to ...having an accident and losing a leg orr...losing your sight or starting a new job and having to get used to a whole new different life it's not really it's not a big step to take.

A: was there anyy a uhh significant event that happened prior to your piercings that uhh kinda spurred you on to do any of your piercings ?

Ta: NO...no ...nothing.

A: uhmm are you any relationship right now ?

Ta: yes I amm

A: could you tell me a bit about that ?

Ta: uhh I usually date guys a few years younger than me for the first time in quite a while my boyfriend is seven years older than me uhh somebody who iss... in the same sense considered ...WEIRD by other people but yet he is a very gentle and sweet person ummmhe's a biker looks really scary and tough and mean but he is one of the gentlest littie children I've ever met.

A: You met after the piercings ?

Ta: yes.

A: were you in any relationships during the time of getting your piercings done?

Ta: I've been in relationships most pretty much most of the time I I get lonely really quickly uhh but I've had one boyfriend leave me because I was too strange yet in the years afterwards he'd never been able to tell me what he mean't by me being too strange he even told me that he takes that back a few times.

A: how did you feel about being left for being too uh strange ?

Ta: uhh I was I was upset because I thought he knew me better than than somebody off the street who would normally would think that I'm strange butt... (said quickly) ver things pretty quickly soo...it didn't really bother me for too long and we're still really good friends uhm we did have a relationship again afterwards for a short time buttt not much really bugs me I've I've learn't to deal with things pretty quickly.

A: how do you deal with it...okay you can light your cigarette before you answer the question..

Ta: uhmm "I tend to deal with it by just moving on...iff if something isn't mean't to be then it's not going to be uhh if the right person's out there I believe I will find them one day iff I'm not mean't for a job and I won't be happy in it then I won't get the job I believe that we'll end up in the place that we're mean't to be and the place that we'll be the happiest in if we're prepared to keep on looking for that place if you keep on getting upset about things and having it ruin your life you're just holding yourself back.

A: uh soo are you happy right now where you are...

Ta: Yes I am.

A: is there anything else that you would like to add in terms of your piercings and what it holds for you...if it had to speak out what would say ?

Ta: you know that's really strange (laughter) uhmm I guess it would have to say ...I like shocking people and I like piercings I like the way it looks I'm not conformist I have an open mind.

A: okay thanks for your time.

[Afterwards in speaking to Ta she confessed to having a great fear of needles]

Transcript 6

A: Can you tell me about your family background as you were a child growing up ?

Z: okay I've got a father and a dad and a mom...my parents divorced when I was in standard four..out of my dad's second marriage we've got a little baby sister...uh my stepdad ..uh well they not married yet but they're going to get married when we're all out of the house...has got an elder son and a younger son and I've got an elder brother and a younger brother ..yah and my childhood's normal...I was naughty like everyone else is when they're small.

A: naughty ?

Z : oooh naughty oohh ...we've got underneath our house we've got like a granny flat and we used to o all the kids used to sleep downstairs and we were smoking and we almost burn't down the house...oh I'll never forget that ..my mom used to..before she became an accountancy teacher she used to type and she had all her typing papers on top of my cupboard and my brother climbed up with matches and he lift thee some paper and he threw it down to me and says catch oeehh I'm not going to catch that so he burn't my carpet big brown hole and I got the hiding because it was my room..

A: how did you feel about that ..how old were you ?

Z: I was...six seven yah eight...I was very angry at my mom..yah ver / angry but I still got grounded yah grounded two weeks no TV very angry with my mom I'm still angry with...every time we talk about it and I ask

her why did I get the hiding and she can't explain she just smiles and says I'm sorry.

A: how did that make you feel towards your brother ?

Z: aargh when we were young we used to hate each other we used to fight and kill each other so we just ignored each other like we used to ..I dunno we were always angry at each other I don't know why family I don't know .

A: this is your biological brother ?

Z: yah..now we love each other..we phone each other every weekend and tell I don't know why ..

A: how did the divorce affect you ..you were twelve at the time right ?

Z: I was in standard four so I wasss eleven..like I said at first you know I was very sad I mean any any girl would be sad losing her dad and I also felt it made me a lot stronger you know I'm a stronger person I can stand up for myself I've I've learn't you know not to run to my parents when I need help I 've learn't to help myself when I need if I need anything else.

A: for example ?

Z: well uh..like if someone hurts you or if you have a fight with a girl or with a guy or whatever normally..normal girls would run to their parents you know he did that to me or she did that to me I'd just I just back - mouthed them and carried on with the rest of my life.

A: okay you say normal girl what do you mean by that ?

Z: well normally like I got this one friend when ever anything used to happen to her she'd always run to her parents for help you know like what must I do now being doing this and this and this to me I just thought all girls were like that ..I don't actually know ..from experience I think all girls are like that they always run to their parents or to their boyfriends for help..I'm big I take care of everything myself.

A: and how does that make you feel having to take care of yourself ?

Z: I donno it's it's never been a problem uhhh I 'm used to it you know I'm uh that's how I am I'm a strong person I'm always I've always helped myself if I'm angry at my brother you know I'll go and klap him and then run to my mom before he klaps me back (laughter) you know but I'm always standing up for myself.

A: okay you say you're a strong person...what would weak mean to you ?

Z: mmmm...weak I dunno..weak as when you can't take care of yourself you need someone else to be there for you the whole time...yah I'll say that's weak..

A: in your teen years how would you describe your family and life?

Z: as a teenager I was naughty ..smoke and sneak out with my friends and everything I think that every teenager's life is the same you know you grow up and you sneak out and your parents say don't do that and you'll do it ... I think any teenager's like that and I yah my teenage life my teenage life was actually very uhhh exciting I'll say ... we used to uhhh because my parents are divorced we had too... one Christmas we went with my dad to Pretoria uhh it was the first and last holiday we went on we went with him uhhh it was very exciting you know he taught us how to ski

and everything and on my mom's side like every October holiday we used to like go to the Berg and I think that's exciting to go out with your family and see the world out there.

A: you said you went up with your dad once..because?

Z: once in a long time.. I dunno whm I think he ot so busy with his new wife and you know their new child and you know this new girl there's something wrong with her..but we don't..uhh she had a lack of oxygen when she was born so I think he's spending more time with her ..now..she's er three years old...before thatt uhh we didn't actually see my dad that much..we went on that holiday and if we wanted to see him we have to phone him and tell him that we want to see you...we have to drive all the way to Westville to go and visit him ...I dunno why he's like that but he's always been like that

A: okay you said that this new kid's three years old ..what was happening before her birth ?

Z: yahh well...what do you mean ?

A: well he didn't have to look after your sister ?

Z: oh when my sister wasn't there ..I dunno why we didn't spend more time together... I think I was more a mommy's girl you know I liked to spend more time with my mom but I actually don't know why we never spent a lot of time with my dad 'cos he used to have a flat in town uh just when they got divorced we spent a lot of time we used to spend there we used to go there every second weekend but then his second wife moved into the flat and we didn't see him again... it's like please come pick us up we wanna come visit you ..we don't see him a lot I think the last time I slept over

when I was in standardd six seven was actually the last time I spent time with him staying whatever.

A: and how does this make you feel ?

Z: well I just ..I just ignored it if he wasn't if he was never there for me I just turned to my stepdad uh Fran and anything that I wanted help with I'll always ask him you know...what is there what must I do you know so I think that Fran is more a dad to me than my real dad because he wasn't really there for me he wasn't there when I when I went to my matric dance he wasn't there when I turned sixteen he was there when I turned twenty - one ...it's little things like that ..lot of christmases we didn't spend with them and then on my mom's side everyy single Christmas we spent with them yahh..

A: so the person that you would say that you identify with most would be ?

Z: oh my mom..my beautiful momm

A: okay ..how did he influence the way you see yourself ?

Z: well I think if my mom wasn't there in my life I would have been a very soft person my mom is like very strong that's where I got my strength from... she never like had to look after herself she's a very strong person you know herr gees herr what's the word ?

A: spirit.

Z: her spirit is very strong..she influenced me to be a woman heheh I used to be a hellavu tom - boy I donno because my mom is a teacher I always wanted to become a teacher I wanna follow in her footsteps eh you know teach little kids but then er the college closed and I don't want to study

in English because my English is not very good ...the only way that I can become a teacher in Afrikaans now is if I go to Cape Town or move to Johannesburg and I don't think I wanna be that far away from my mom (laughter).

A: what does that mean being that far away from your mom ?

Z: I donno when I just finished school our last matric exam my boyfriend and myself we got onto a train and we went to Cape Town for a holiday and that was my first holiday without my mom I phoned her every second day Oh mom I miss you ..crying..ohh I want to come home...I think I'm a very I 'm a mommy's girl a couple of times I moved out and moved in with my boyfriend you know at his parent's house but I always used to visit home ... I think I'm a very mommy's girl.

A: okay you said that your mum taught you how to be a woman ...what does it mean for you to be a woman ?

Z: welll it means a lot to me because okay women a few years ago we were nothing we were there to get married and to have children now we're business women we're going to run this country..we're very strong..my mom's always told me you don't need a man to be happy and you don't you don't need a man to give you money...you can go out and make your own money and buy your own things you don't need a man to buy things for you you can do it yourself.. I donno my mom didn't teach me how to be strong I think it's because she's so strong that I just looked up to her and followed her footsteps how to be a strong woman.

A: as opposed to tom - boy...what do you mean when you say tom - boy ?

Z: okay when I was a child I was doing boy's stuff I never used to play

with my cousin I used to er I donno niggie...is the girl cousin and I had a boy cousin

A: niece and nephew

Z: niece and nephew okay...I never used to play with my nieces with dolls and that I had one Barbie doll and I killed it I took of her hair and I chopped her hands I always used to be between my nephews my brothers I used to go skate - boarding with them I used to go climbing mountains we had like this huge sandhill at the bottom of our road that you could like climb up there and I always used to be dirty and you know short short hair I used to be a real tom - boy I had bruises everywhere in my legs and now there's hardly any bruises on my legs I've become more lady - like.

A: when did you realize this transformation ?

Z: I donno say when I finished school when I I especially when we got engaged I think I got more lady - like...I donno I think it's because I'm so much older in age orr..I donno I started yah when we finished school and we got engaged I started getting more lady - like instead of doing boy's things like running up the street and climbing stairs or whatever .

A: what does it mean to be a lady ?

Z: well lady - like I'll say wearing more dresses I used to you know just wear pants uhmmmmI donno I got a very loud voice LOUD if I get angry I use to scream and kill him with my words but now when I get angry with him I'll just raise my voice a little bit and say you know I'm not happy with what he's doing I donno lady - like is being ...sweet friendly I donno how to explain it .

A: what does your body mean to you ?

Z: well my body means everything to me ...it's my body and I look after it
it's what God gave to me he gave me this body ..

A: okay ...eh how do you see... what does your body image mean to you the
way in which you 'see' your body ?

Z: oh I see myself as a big and beautiful lady ...okay I'm a very strong
built big boned but I'm I'm happy with myself like I said I see myself as
a woman I know that this body is mine and it will always be mine .

A: okay could you tell me about your piercings ?

Z: okay I got this belly ring I think in standard ...eight nine ...I got
it you wanna know why I got it ?

A: what meaning does it have ?

Z: oh it doesn't really have a meaning I saw uhhmmm Naomi Campbell
yah..you know when she did that modelling thing to me it looked very nice
so I went and got it and I donno I'm happy with mine I would never take it
out...(laughter) maybe when I'm pregnant..

A: in standard eight..you were still a 'tom - boy then'?

Z: yah yah but everybody had I mean my school the girls had piercings
everywhere piercings in the ear and piercings in the belly.

A: did school allow this ?

Z: they used to put ehh bristles in the ear and the belly ring nobody can
actually see it ..only when we were like swimming and the guys would go aw

what's that cool we also want one.

A: Is there anything that happened at the time that affected you or you considered significant ?

Z: noo

A: and the next piercing you got ?

Z: it was my tongue..don't ask me why I got it 'cos I don't know why.

A: uhmm when did you get that ?

Z: uhmm...three months ago ...I phoned through ...just after my birthday
I think in July I got it...yes .

A: was that your birthday gift ?

Z: no no I got it myself I just had to wait until after my birthday
because my dad will kill me if he sees this thing in my tongue so I had to
wait after my birthday because I wanted to do it the morning of my
birthday...butt you tongue swells up and you can't eat and you can't even
talk I think my dad would have noticed this so I waited until after my
birthday ..

A: what would have happened if your dad had ...

Z: if he had seen it ..welllll I actually don't know because my dad he
actually doesn't like piercings..heee hates piercings and he hates tattoos
he hates everything umm I think that my dad uhh even my stepmom she like
got two holes in her two earlobes but she only likes to wear one I think
that's how he was brought up you know with only one piercing he doesn't
like piercings because he's a karate instructor and this one guy walked

with an earring and he just pulled it out.. I think he'll actually pull this one out as well (laughter).

A: what does it mean for you to have to go against that ?

Z: well it doesn't actually ... I think I feel safe because I don't actually see him that much he'll never see it but if he had to see it I'll say he'll be very disappointed in what I've done I don't actually I don't feel that I'm going against him I know he doesn't like it but then he's never going to see it and if he does see it oehhh I'll be sitting in Cape Town get onto a plane and fly away.

A: what does it mean for you to disappoint him ?

Z: welll ummm I 'd rather say if I had to disappoint my mom I'll feel bad uhmmm I don't think I'll feel bad if I had to disappoint my dad because he's never been there you know he's I think if I had to be living with him and I had to disappoint him I'd actually feel very bad and very sorry that I had to do it you know disappoint him like that but actually I don't think h...he will be disappointed but I don't think I'll actually feel anything 'cos he's never been there.

A: and how does your mom feel about the piercings ?

Z: uhh my mom she actually liked the belly ring the tongue piercing she wasn't too happy about because we heard a story that a lady had too er I donno something went wrong with her tongue it didn't wanna swell orr swell uhh ...

A: it got infected ?

Z: it got infected and they had to cut it out.

A: cut her tongue out ?

Z: yeeesss ...I actually hid it from my mom for three days and she asked me why am I talking so funny ...because my tongue was still swollen up so I showed it to her ...I think she was very shocked...because I did it... 'cos I told her my boyfriend's got a tongue ring and she said you'd NEVERR get a tongue ring and I went yahh bugger you I want one and I'll go and get one uhhmm I donno I think she still doesn't like it but it's there nad you get used to it.

A: you knew about this story before...

Z: yes yes I did.

A: and you went and did it anyway ?

Z: yes uhh it's a chance that you have to take ...it's like everyday life there's a chance you take walking on the side path..anything can happen a car can run you over you can get stabbed you can get shot I think it's just a chance that you have to take.

A: okay but the difference is you having control...

Z: yah yah you've got control...it's I donno I suppose because I wanted it and I didn't well at that time I just thought well let's just forget about everything everybody told me and just go and do it and I think that's what happened I just went and had it because I WANTED IT.

A: okay what does having it mean ?

Z: well now that I have it ...it's I donno when I saw twhen my one friend had got it it was so nice and it was so you know I wanted it ...but now

that I've got it I donno it's just it's just something on my tongue uhmm :
wouldn't say that I'm not happy with it I am happy with it butt... I can't
say that it doesn't mean anything to me it's just something that I went
and did and it's now there you know butt... I donno.. now I'm actually
feeling very irritated with it...because the stud is very long and I had
to go and buy myself a shorter stud that cost me a hundred and twenty rands
and it didn't fit and I couldn't take it back so that's the part that
really irritates me you know because it's so long every time when I eat
something now I bite the ball you know on top (demonstrating) the top part
of the stud I will bite or because it's so long when I sometimes lie bac
I get verrrry uh very uh marr...

A: nauseus.

Z: that I wanna puke.. uh because the ball is so heavy it falls to the
back but I donno I actually think I'll take it out at some point in my
life if I can't get a shorter stud I'll have to take it out it's getting
irritated... because the shorter stud is like on your tongue.. this one
has a huge gap.

A: what was appealing about it ?

Z: uhmm to me it's like gee if I go out then I can show everyone THAT I'VE
GOT A TONGUE PIERCING you know you don't have any I donno uhh they'll all
say you know you want to show off but it's something that everyone's
scared to go and do because it's so sore .

A: was it sore ?

Z: it was PAINFUL..because he takes like pliers I think and he squashes
your tongue and he pulls your tongue out it's a needle with a tube inside

the needle so you can imagine he's actually pushing a piece of your skin away...well when he did it I could feel you know thw thing going through my tongue it was a bit sore the first time uhh after that it was painful when it started swelling up and I had to go I went to bed I fell asleep with the pain because it was so SORE it felt like you know you bite your tongue... ten times worse you know it was really really really sore...after a day or two it went away but I had to eat soups and that ...the pain went away .

A: did you know about the pain prior to the piercing ?

Z: not exactly my one friend said it was sore butt she's got a tattoo as well and she says that the tattoo was more painful than her tongue piercing so I decide to try it out I got a tattoo it was that sore ...the piercing is far more worse it's very sore I think if I knew that it would be so sore and that my tongue would be swollen like that big and I couldn't eat I think I actually wouldn't think I would have gone and done it you know I think I would have waited and waited and waited until I got all the guts to go and do it...nobody explained it .. I asked the lady before but she didn't tell me I think it's her job to actually tell me what's going to happen you know.

A: was the belly piercing painful ?

Z: no not really I got my belly pierced the same way you do your ears with a gun...I didn't feel anything afterwards you feel a bit irritated you have to get used to it but then it was fine it wasn't sore at all.

A: were you scared at all before the piercing ?

Z: very scared because we went and did it in the beachfront in a tent and the girl before me we watched it actually looked very sore but then we walked around it was like a TWA(emulating the sound) and that's all

A: you said you were really scared but you did it anyway ?

Z: yahh

A: what does it mean for you to overcome it ?

Z: well I would say because I wanted it ...and then in the same way I'm very scared of heights I'll want to go and do bungy jumping and I think you know it's because I want it so bad that I'll go and do it ...the same with my belly ring it's because I wanted it so much I said bugger everything and let's go let's just do it.

A: what does it mean for you to be South African ?

Z: well to me I uh I'm very proud to be a South African I think it's the fact I would say I'm not very aware of what's going on in the world around us I've never gone and seen it ...for me I think we've got a beautiful country one of the moist beautiful countries in the whole world.

A: okay if I had to ask you who are you what would you say ?

Z: I would say I'm Z I'm a very friendly person very lovable I love everything around me..that's about it .

A: you said that God gave you this body and you're happy with it ...what does it mean then for you to alter it as you have ?

Z: well uh to me I don't feel that way because I can take it out and my body will still be the same it's not like one thing I really regret is

having a tattoo I went and I did something I put something on my skin that I would never be able to take away whereas I can take the piercing away you know and nothing it will still be the same but I think I'm more sad that I went and did the tattoo 'cos I can't take it away it's always gonna be there but like I said it's something that I really wanted do I went AND DID IT WITHOUT THINKING THAT IT'S GONNA BE THERE FOR THE THE REST OF MY LIFE .

A: but if you had to take the piercing out the scar still remains ?

Z: well what I realised when I took my tongue ring out for fifteen minutes and I cleaned and I couldn't get it back in it's like the middle part drew close so I think it would grow close you know I don't know but if I take it out you don't actually see the hole it's very small buttt on my belly I don't know I don't know if the scar is actually going to go away...I I don't know so...but if it does I'm not going to be happy about it.

A: how do the scars make you feel ?

Z: I donno I'm a very shy person you know if I walk around in my bikini I always wear a bathing towel I think to me I don't like people staring at my scar that I've got .

A: what would that mean if they had to stare at your scar ?

Z: I donno I'd feel shy you know I'll feel you know why are you staring at my scar I'll feel bad that I went and did it and went and got myself this ugly scar .

A: if your piercings had to speak what would they be saying ?

Z: I think my belly ring would say lose more weight..ahh you should see my stomach geez..

A: tell me more about that ?

Z: you know I'm happy with my body but I won't mind to lose a bit more of these love handles that I got ..I am happy with my body I won't go and get a boob job and have these massive boobs I won't go on a helluva diet to become this skinny lady I just wanna ..just trim it a little down .

A: where'd you get this from ..trimming it down ?

Z: I donno I think I've always had this stomach and I've always wanted a flat stomach I think the people I see you know you always see skinny people it's not that I want to be as skinny as them I mean I wanna be beautiful and better...

A: people you see ?

Z: well school girls they tend to.. I donno they all wanna be this skinny skinny girl don't ask me why butt I think they get it from the models like if you watch TV I mean all you see is skin and bones these models are so skinny and I think girls tend tooo. they see that and they want to become that you know maybe in school I saw a lot of skinny kids and magazines and on TV you never seee uh chubby women you never see a girl with a little bit of a stomach or a bit of flab you know modelling you never see a person like that on a cover of a magazine you know I think that's where everybody is going wrong they need to put everyday people on the cover of magazines so young girls can see it's not too bad to be like that soo.

A: okay thanks for you time

[afterwards talked about the privacy of piercings not visible to others]

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

I, _____, hereby give my full consent with regard to my participation in the research undertaken by Ashmin D Singh. I do acknowledge that I am voluntarily participating in the research and, that my identity will at no time be disclosed. Also I acknowledge that the interview (s) will be tape recorded and transcribed verbatim so as to be included in the appendix of the dissertation.

DATE: _____ PRINTED NAME: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

WITNESSED BY:

ASHMIN D. SINGH

