

The Prejudiced Look at the Practice of Tattooing

Nelson Eduardo Alvarez Licona, María de la Luz Sevilla González

Instituto Politécnico Nacional, Mexico City, Mexico

Email: nalvarez@ipn.mx

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Abstract

The word stigma is used to refer to disqualifying attributes based on body signs that were inflicted on slaves, prisoners or traitors. This practice < in the West has been related to disqualifying attributes for those who tattoo or are tattooed without their will. The stigma to this practice comes from learning processes with which we formalize, integrating these valuations into common sense. The unfounded nature of these discrediting attributes results from stereotypes with which social control is intended through control of the body. The first interpretative proposals of tattooing were made by Cesare Lombroso in 1876 in Italy. In the twentieth century continued the study of tattooing by criminalistics associating tattoos and crime, continuing with prisoners. In the mid-twentieth century proposed that tattooing was associated with sadomasochistic practices. To this fact we must add What approach has been based on the classification of tattoos. This type of interpretation suffers from a serious reflection, using arguments proposed since the nineteenth century, to which for convenience people returned to them a repeated mechanical application. These proposals do not take into consideration other aspects of behavior that are present in the decision to get tattooed and that are related to the way we build our identity. Nor do they consider analyzing the society where these social practices are developed. In these works, they also do not take into account aspects such as tattoos being imposed and not being the result of a personal decision; nor that it is a typical practice of societies where trademarks are used as a distinction, as a therapeutic or protective; resource as well as an aesthetic expression.

Keywords

Tattoos, Prejudice, Stigma, Classification

1. Introduction

Stigma is a word that comes from the Greeks and was used to designate the cor-

poral signs as disqualifying attributes of those who carried them, they consisted of cuts or burns that indicated that those who carried them were criminals, slaves, or traitors. Later in Christianity this also refers to eruptive outbreaks that indicated divine grace and were also related to physical injuries (Goffman, 1993: p. 11). Thus, the practice of tattooing in the West has a direct relationship with the creation of the word stigma and refers to the signs made on the body to denote disqualifying attributes of the subjects who carried them by imposition, as a procedure to mark criminals, traitors or slaves, which consisted of cuts or burns on the body, a practice that was performed for many centuries. Some tattoos were made as a mockery and in slavery this practice was common, using slaves as merchandise to distinguish the quality of this one: “Each one was marked on the chest with hot iron that printed the sign of the respective French, English or Dutch company to which they belonged, so that each nation could distinguish its slaves and prevent the natives from later changing the best for the worst, as they often tried to do. Care was taken to ensure that women, because they were weaker in their constitution, were not over burned” (Manix, 1970: p. 55). These marks speak of the infamy, the brutality they employed and sometimes put on the foreheads of criminals and runaway slaves. In France “according to the legislation of 1791, repeat offenders could in almost all cases be subject to a doubling of the penalty; according to the Floreal law of year X they were to be marked with the letter R” (Foucault, 1995: p. 105). When talking about “original accumulation” Karl Marx reproduces some laws on which this process was founded: “Edward VII: A statute issued in the first year of his reign, in 1547, orders that if someone refuses to work, he should be assigned as a slave to the person who accuses him.... If the slave disappears for two weeks, he will be condemned to slavery for life, marking him with fire with a B on the forehead or on the cheek... If it is found that a homeless man has been lazing around for three days, he will be sent to his hometown with a V marked on his chest... Elizabeth, 1752: beggars without a license and over fourteen years old shall be mercilessly whipped and marked with a burning iron in the left ear... James I... Dangerous and incorrigible vagrants should be marked with fire with an R on the left shoulder and subjected to forced labor...” (Marx, 1981: chap. XXIV). Let’s not forget that the Nazis tattooed numbers on the prisoners in their concentration camps and in the Nuremberg trials the tattoos appeared on the bodies of the tortured, as a sign of the brutality with which this regime was sustained. In the Judeo-Christian religion the prohibition to tattoo appears in the Old Testament, when Jehovah spoke to Moses saying: “You shall not scratch your body for a dead man, nor shall you imprint on you any sign” (Bible, Leviticus 19:28), although the church became unseen to the European pilgrims who went to Palestine to conquer the holy lands and whom they brought as irrefutable proof of their journey, tattoos with religious motives. Proof of this is illustrated by The Tombs of the Kings in Saint Denis, France, where the statue of Henry II (died in 1559), shows tattoos that proved his stay in the Holy Land.

The mark on the body used as an object, as a commodity, as in slavery, in Mexico (August 2022), organized crime that traffics human beings by kidnapping them and demanding ransom to free them, have marked the face of those who pay them to let them go. On August 4th, 2022, the Milenio newspaper published this note: “Pedro Domínguez. Mexico City/04.08.2022. In Veracruz, surviving hell leaves a mark. A wound healing from the eyebrows to the nose is the safe conduct that crime gives to migrants so that they have a free passage to the border with the United States. With the uncontrolled migratory wave since the end of 2018, criminal organizations have focused their energy on kidnapping and those who manage to pay the ransom are marked, those who do not, disappear” (Milenio, 2020).

2. Prejudice in the Practice of Tattooing

The prejudgment, objectionable qualities to the tattoo come from learning processes from which we formalize what we perceive and find foundation in simple theoretical proposals that have been vulgarized and have been integrated into *common sense*, this being: “A relatively organized thought set of speculative thinking...they are (therefore) immediate releases from experience, and not deliberate reflections on it” (Geertz, 1994: p. 95). Thus, the prejudice to the practice of tattooing and tattooed people, shows the unfounded of a discrediting attribute that rests on stereotypes that seek the control of subjects under the rules of behavior that do nothing but subdue the impossible, since something that characterizes societies is diversity and plurality, which must be understood not only as a social reality, but also as a value. These prejudiced constructions regarding tattooing, constructed as immediate judgments and not as reflections, come from non-direct experiences in which the association of tattooing with delinquency and psychopathology, leads to discrimination and that would be the last stage of the rejection process that begins with prejudice and leads to discrimination (Allport, 1962: p. 29) of tattooed subjects, what is true is that many people who decide to tattoo choose a place where they can show their tattoo at will, and based on the rejection they experience due to their tattoos sometimes they decide to delete them, in addition to other reasons such as the one that is if the motives on why the tattoo was made changed or of the design was not elaborated as expected.

When a person presents himself to others, generates in turn an interpretation that can be very varied and sometimes does not necessarily correspond to the image that the person tried to project, so that the image provides information that in turn puts into action previous references that the interlocutors or observers have of similar people, Hence, stereotypes are false, insofar as they do not have the applicability they pretend to have when proposed as explanatory of human behavior, they are, on the other hand, elements of knowledge that, although false in the aforementioned sense, come into play when people interact. Our image generates expectations at the beginning of the interaction, since there

are previous experiences with similar people both by experience of the observer or by inference, they create information that is applied to the person with whom you are interacting, arising previous judgments and the expectation of certain type of behavior, especially when an interaction is initiated (Goffman, 1994: pp. 13-28).

These marks on the skin carry valuations that support the intention that is reinforced in the valuation and this in turn manifests, in some cases, the effectiveness of common sense in terms of the explanation of reality that is required, to give meaning to perception. Allport (1962) gives us several definitions of the category of prejudice, in which he advances in the analysis to the extent that he proposes them. “Perhaps the shortest definition that can be given of prejudice is the following: “thinking badly of other people without sufficient reason”, and this refers to the unfounded judgment and affective tone; The author goes on to mention that thinking badly of other people “includes feelings of contempt or displeasure, fear and aversion, as well as various forms of hostile behavior, such as speaking against certain people, practicing some kind of discrimination against them or attacking them with violence” (Allport, 1962: p. 21); As for the phrase “without sufficient reason”, it implies a judgment not based on facts. Another definition that Allport gives us is: “A hostile or cautious attitude towards a person belonging to a group, thus assuming that he possesses the objectionable qualities attributed to that group” Allport (1962: p. 20).

The first proposals for interpreting the practice of tattooing start from the Italian Positivist School. Cesare Lombroso (1876) in 1876, publishes his book *L’UOMO DELINQUENTE*, where he develops, in part III “BIOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY OF THE DELINQUENTE-NATO”; in chapter I “From the tattoo in the delinquent”, his explanation to the practice of tattooing. For Cesare Lombroso, from the perspective that Positivism gives him, he concludes that the causes that make people tattoo are the following:

“IV. Causes.—Among the reasons why such use is maintained in the lower classes, and even more so in the criminal classes, are to mention above all the following:

- 1) Religion, as seen in flocks of pilgrims.
- 2) Imitation, which works in the army, the navy and in prisons.
- 3) Revenge, which in this way they want to perpetuate, at least in effigy, as a commitment and a threat: it is important, because it corresponds to the record that savages serve, and because it demonstrates the recklessness of criminals.
- 4) Leisure and vanity, as it happens in the savages.
- 5) Above all, atavism, as a reproduction of a custom widespread among primitive people and savages, with whom criminals have so many affinities, as has already been noted, for the violence of passions, for the clumsiness of sensibility, for puerile vanity and prolonged leisure, and also historical atavism, as a substitute for a script with symbols and hieroglyphs for the common alphabetic script”.

A clear example of the ideas that guided sociology, psychology, and law, where evolution was the point of support from which social organization was interpreted and justified. It is in the twentieth century that and the stigmatizing character attributed to tattoos is still the judgment that prevails to qualify and observe them. While the disciplines that are responsible for the study of tattoos continue to be, Criminal Anthropology that later gives rise to Criminalistics, Legal Medicine, and Psychology. Criminal Anthropology “began properly with the investigations of Cesar Lombroso and became popular with the idea of the innate criminal. This science gave rise to anthropometry” (Orellana, 1993). Because tattoos are studied inside prisons, it is still related to prison practices, if not psychopathic. For Dr. Casanova, at the end of the description of an extensive tattoo that covered a large part of the body’s person, he concludes by saying: “How much sterile sacrifice, how much patience wasted, for such a degrading result!” Casanova (Casanova y Prets, 1937: p. 183).

Half a century had passed since the interpretation of Lombroso and now psychology makes an entrance with another opinion added to the atavistic regression of the primitive desire to adorn oneself, the manifestation of neurotic issues. Garner, qualifies the tattoo as follows:

“Among all the forms of the voluminous masochism practiced by that fragility known as man, none is completely as foolish as that of the acquisition of the tattoo. This egocentric perversion has had its devotees since the first dawn of Humanity, and in a somewhat altered order of succession, it has been a gentile custom, a penal stigma, a class mania, a arrogant ornament and finally a vulgar affectation. Among the Māori and various Hindustani sects, it is still a sign of caste and beauty, but among most Western people it is at best a youthful indiscretion, and at worst a cause of blush and disgust for those of our society who are tattooed. This causes the tattooed person to slowly separate itself from social life” (Garner, 1953).

Another 10 years passed, and the study of tattooing is still the field of Criminalistics, Psychology and Legal Medicine, and the association between prejudice and tattooing continues. In 1964 Donderis Torrens, in his Medico-Legal Study of Tattooing, reaches the following conclusion: “At present tattooing is a practice used in subjects of little culture and low morality, with significantly diminished painful sensitivity” (Donderis, 1964: p. 124). As it can be seen, and despite the time that has passed, the prejudice that someone has towards the practice of tattooing is maintained and similar to the positivist ideas, which as a basis for explaining culture no longer had greater relevance to the practice of tattooing in Western culture has continued to be associated with crime, as a remnant of this anachronistic interpretation, which from the perspective of the oldest positivism creates the idea: tattoo = delinquency or psychopathology.

In his psychology book, Marchiori (1978) comes to the following conclusions: “- Tattooing is a psychopathological feature.

Where there is an identity as a criminal and a behavior of self-destruction.

- Where the tattoo artist and the tattooed person establish a sadomasochistic relationship.
- Many subjects tattoo themselves as they have a great need to punish themselves.
- Although it is a behavior that will cause them harm, they agree to submit to it because of the tendency to self-punishment, because of the sadomasochistic components and because of the feelings of guilt of the tattooed person” (Marchiori, 1978: pp. 10-14).

This type of interpretation suffers from a serious reflection, using arguments put forward since the nineteenth century to which for convenience is returned in a repeated mechanical application that comfortably answers the question why do people get tattooed? Using the explanation of this psychopathological vision offers risky judgments from which absurd generalizations are allowed to the practice of tattooing; and these proposals do not take into account different aspects of behavior that are present in the decision to tattoo and that are related to the way we interpret reality, with this constant construct that is identity, nor do they develop the study of the society where these social practices are gestated; this type of interpretation does not take into account other aspects such as tattoos being imposed and not being the result of a personal decision. We do not doubt that in some tattoos there is some indicator that is related to criminal organizations or that shows some type of psychopathological phenomena, but to make this a generalization reaches the absurd, through induction that cannot even be proven, where it is shown that these proposals are anachronistic applications. That they do not start from the scientific explanations of the proposals from generative mechanisms of the phenomenon that is observed, where the elements proposed for the integration of the mechanism, must show operational coherence.

An important problem in these explanations that are made about the practice of tattooing, is that this criteria are what judge the behavior of people, inside and outside prisons. When asked about why the prohibition to tattoo inside prisons? Or of the disqualifying judgments from which this practice is evaluated in civil society?, the answer is found involved between questionable propositions as to its scientific validity, non-reflective repressive attitudes that are also passionate and unintelligent when applying common sense in a non-reflexive way. If on the one hand tattooing is a practice of psychopaths, we should ask ourselves if prohibiting the practice of tattooing removes the sick from the psychopath? and on the other hand if it is intended with this prohibition that the patient is not rejected in the street for his tattoos, why spread and maintain the idea tattoo = delinquency, psychopathy? As the police are the first ones to associate tattooing with crime, if a person is arrested on the street it is immediately questioned about its tattoos and even tattoos become a reason for someone to be arrested and questioned.

What exists at the heart of the prohibition to tattoo inside prisons, is the absolute control of the spaces of expression of those who have lost their freedom

and who are no longer part of civil society, becoming part of the dark spaces of political society, punishing no longer the body directly, but “the soul”¹, by attacking freedom. “But we can certainly establish the general thesis that, in our societies, punitive systems must be placed in a certain political economy of the body, even if they do not appeal to violent or bloody punishments, even when they use the gentle methods that enclose or correct, it is always the body the main character—the body and its forces, of its usefulness and its docility, of its distribution and its submission” (Foucault, 1995: p. 32). Submission that we also see within civil society, where, if it is not forbidden to tattoo, there are prejudices that make this practice not being performed without the presence of these judgments that entail stereotyped disqualifying attributes (Goffman, 1994: p. 14), which although they confirm the identity of the evaluating subject, in that one of the elements that allow the construction of this is based on differentiation, On the other hand, it makes communication impossible or at least difficult, preventing interaction on a level of respect, bringing rejection, product of prejudice, to levels of differentiated and exclusive treatment, to individuals or groups.

We are faced with discrimination problems. “Discrimination includes any conduct based on distinctions made on the basis of natural or social status, unrelated to individual abilities or merits, or to a specific conduct of the person. It is a distinction that is made to the detriment of someone without taking into account the particular characteristics of the individual as such” (Allport, 1962: p. 70). Discriminatory practices towards tattooed people are common and some institutions do not hire them, hence it is common for people to choose the place on the body where the tattoo is to be done, based on seeking a certain functional efficiency in which to show the tattoo or be able to hide it at will is, among other things, one of the reasons that help explain the choice of the tattooed place.

These explicit theories that see in the tattoo delinquency or psychopathies, are the foundation and justification of domination through exclusion, since in these evaluative judgments where prejudice anticipates the real interaction of the subjects and conditions and even determines it, a form is manifested in which the social control that is intended to be made of men is expressed, In these relations of power and domination that condition the freedom to make with our body an exercise of freedom; hence the control of the body is seen in this attempt to create docile and submissive beings in all spaces, from family, church, school, to labor relations, controlling and supervising individuals, determining how they

¹I understand the category of “soul”, as Foucault uses it: “Rather than seeing in this soul the reactivated remnants of an ideology, one would rather recognize in it the current correlation of a certain technology of power over the body. It should not be said that the soul is an illusion, or an ideological effect. But it does exist, it has a reality, which is produced permanently around, on the surface and inside of the body by the functioning of a power that is exerted over those who are watched, educated and fixed... This real and incorporeal soul is not at all substance, it is the element in which the effects of a certain type of power and the reference of a knowledge are articulated, the gear by which the references of a knowledge give rise to a possible knowledge and knowledge prolongs and reinforces the effects of power. On this reality-reference diverse concepts have been built and fields of analysis have been delimited: psyche, subjectivity, personality, consciousness, etc...” (Foucault, 1995: p. 36).

should behave, deciding what use we should make of our body, which is not ours in terms of property, but of this body that we are. These relations of power and domination are intended to make us more profitable in this political economy of the body.

“But the body is also directly immersed in a political field, power relations operate on it as an immediate prey, surrounding it, marking it, taming it, subjecting it to torture, forcing it to some jobs, forcing it to ceremonies, demanding signs from it. This political encirclement of the body is linked, according to complex and reciprocal relations, to the economic use of the body; the body, to a large extent, is imbued with relations of power and domination, as a force of production; But on the other hand, its constitution as a labor force is only possible if it is caught in a system of subjection (in which necessity is also a political instrument carefully arranged, calculated and used). The body only becomes a useful force when it is both a productive body and a subdued body” (Foucault, 1995: p. 33).

So, we must ask ourselves: to whom does the body, his body or mine belong? The body as such, is nothing but ourselves, if we can be sure that we have something as possession is our body or and we are certain because we are body, in which cognitive processes are carried out and have as support biological structures (body) as well as mental structures, that as systems of relationships and systems of representations are socially gestated, We should ask ourselves if the body; his, mine, should belong to society? Body subdued and blackmailed by social conventions that determine our attire and as criteria of truth are conformed in moral laws, which seek to rest in their prescriptions the peace, order, and happiness of men, determining as implacable judges the way we should appear in society. Validity of old treaties of morality and urbanity, which reflects in involuntary humor these absurd laws, norms, and rules. Bodies subdued and blackmailed with such primary needs as food, when we see that people hide their tattoos to go ask for employment, while the voices of their mothers resound in consciousness: <<do not paint yourself, you are not in prison>> and we see the bodies tamed and subdued in it, their being in uniforms. However, the uselessness of these regulations that prohibit the practice of tattooing is clear and these moral judgments based on prejudices, which sustain power relations and try to drown this cultural expression, as if they could, are less and less valid. In many cities, in Western culture, it is increasingly common to use tattoos, just look at the magazines in newsstands and we find that many, especially those that are aimed at young people, are illustrated with striking tattoos, actors and singers bring their body full of stories, of their own stories that were told on their skin.

THE PREJUDICED LOOK IN THE CLASSIFICATION OF TATTOOS. Within the works of criminalistics, the study of tattooing has been done with a character of practical application, highlighting mainly the value that tattoos have to help with the identification of people, hence the constant insistence on classifying tattoos. In psychology, mainly in the works that initiate, from this discip-

line, the study of the practice of tattooing, the classification is also the resource by means of which it is intended to interpret the practice of tattooing and see in these images psychopathological behaviors. Hence, both from the perspective of criminalistics and in psychology works, the studies start from the biases that occur in the personal equation that causes the approach of the researcher with the phenomenon of study, but when this approach is made from a theoretical perspective, the construction of the object of study already carries the prejudiced perspective, to the extent that the theoretical categories with which the researcher perceives the phenomenon, are abstract representations that give meaning, formalizing the phenomenon that is observed; That is why, starting from classifications, understood as a mechanism, they lead to immobility and explanatory anticipation of the phenomenon from a supposed function, the evaluative judgment is taken in advance without allowing generative analysis of phenomena, where the logical arbitrariness of any phenomenon of identity should be considered. In this way, structuring the interpretation of tattoo, understood as a practice, from theoretical assumptions implicit in the images, where we find in the classifications locations with stigmatizing referents, leads us to the interpretative process that parts from them, It will carry the bias of disqualification coming from structures that start from prejudiced visions of the practice of tattooing, where we find in the classifications disqualifying judgments of this practice, because it is studied among prisoners, criminals, sex workers, pimps or the use of substances of prohibited usage such as morphine that leaves epidermal marks, which although they cannot be recognized as tattoos since the intention of the tattoo or the one who imposes it is missing, they are for those who recognize them, a stigma. The tattoos, in order to be so, require the intention of indelibly marking the skin, even in the marks that are made without the use of dyes, it is the intention to make in the image by one constructed, the constancy of the phenomenon sensibly significant; Although sometimes it does not correspond to the skill of the tattoo artist and that it is sought to disappear, going from being the constancy of someone, to something that is unpleasant.

The scientific character that is given to criminalistics arises from the work of Cesar Lombroso in 1876, with his book *Criminal Man* since this discipline is helped by others such as anthropology, psychology, medicine, sociology and law. The studies that have been done on tattoos are framed within the search for explanations for antisocial behaviors, mainly those indicated as crimes; trying to explain the motives, causes or factors that affect the man to commit crimes (Orellana, 1993: p. 33). It is from this perspective that tattoo studies have been carried out, thus using the classification criterion as an anticipated way of understanding behavior.

In the following classificatory structures, it will be possible to observe the categorization of behaviors from assumptions implicit in the images on the body, which are observed without the necessary consideration of logical arbitrariness and also allows us to understand the decision-making of the subjects of getting a tattoo, both in the choice of design, the part in the body where the tattoo is

made, such as the construction of the meaning that is given to it by the tattooed subjects, a construction that varies depending on the context in which the subject observes, which is not possible to implement if it parts from a categorization that is beyond the practice of social actors.

“Locard (Apellido) distinguishes from the etiological point of view the following varieties:

- 1) The <<decorative tattoo>> considered as an ornament.
- 2) The <<synolectic tattoo>>, worn by individuals belonging to the same race (Muslim), a religion, a sect, the same association (gang of evildoers), the same profession, the same regiment, etc.
- 3) The <<therapeutic tattoo>>, used among Muslims to prevent or cure disease.
- 4) The <<surgical tattoo>> of white dyes, aimed at decreasing nevus, tumors, purple plaques, etc.
- 5) The <<medicated tattoo>> due to pigmentation by abandonment, in morphinomaniacs, caused by dirty injections.
- 6) The <<professional tattoo>> determined by the inlay as it is being painted, on the bare parts, of coal dust, metal clays, etc.
- 7) The <<tattoo>> by grains of gunpowder when a gun is shoot up close” (Locard, 1964: pp. 25-27).

In Mexico, *Martínez Baca (1899)* gives us his classification, proposing that: “Six are the motives that impel them (criminals) to engrave on their body signs and symbols, namely: religious beliefs, erotic-religious, erotic, simply decorative, decorative-representative and anti-religious beliefs. We have made this classification, because the meaning of symbols and signs forces us, and is the one that will best make us know the state of passion of our criminals in the three categories in which we have found the tattoo, that is, in the prisoners for injuries, in the murderers and in the thieves (*Martínez, 1899: p. 63*). Adding, in the case of tattoos among the Military, the Technical Tattoos.

In 1966, Benigno di Tullio in his treatise on Clinical Criminology and Forensic Psychiatry, presents the following classification:

“...In general, tattoos are divided into: affective (figures of women who remember the mother, the woman, the girlfriend, phrases of affective sentimentality, promises of fidelity and love until death, etc.); ornamental (flowers especially, various objects of ornamentation, designs, etc.); artistic (reproduction of figures especially and paintings); ethnic (known landscapes, local customs); religious (images of saints, religious rites); politicians (names of political men, political ideas); sexual (figures of women who remember episodes of love, kisses, signs of affection); obscene (figures of women in obscene attitudes, etc.); criminals (figures of objects or instruments suitable for committing crimes, daggers, and weapons in general, criminal episodes, symbolic figures of professional crime); humorous, etc.” (*Di Tullio, 1966: p. 203*).

This way of interpreting tattoos continues and in 1966 another detailed classification appears in Brazil:

“As for human groups: 1) Convicts; 2) Criminals 3) Psychotic or Neurotic people; 4) Prostitutes, pimps and homosexuals; 5) Sailors; 6) Military; 7) Operators and craftsmen; 8) Snobs.”

“As for motivation: 1) Erotic: a) amorous, b) lust and perversion, c) obscene, d) pornographic. 2) Humor: a) hate (revenge), b) sadness, c) joy, d) despair. 3) Religious: a) votive, b) superstitious and related to the Cabala, c) Exorcistic. 4) Political: a) pseudo-patriotic and sectarian, b) bellicose, c) hierarchical. 5) Episodic: a) commemorative, b) autobiographical, c) humorous. 6) Identification: a) professional, b) judicial” (Meton, 1966: p. 73).

Going beyond the prejudiced perspective but continuing with the classification as a study system to which a certain mobility is printed, complex tattoos, in terms of the construction that the subject who observes them can perform, in 1970. Sergio García Ramírez in Mexico, takes up the classification made by Martínez Baca in 1899 and proposes: “replace it with another one of three terms: religious, ornamental and loving tattoos in a broad range of aspects, terms that in turn can—and usually do—appear combined in order to give place to complex tattoos as they associate several more or less independent figures of the same species (specific complex), either insofar as they offer—and this is the most frequent—different figures corresponding to diverse species (generic complex)” (García, 1994: p. 217).

In the studies that have been made of tattoos from the classification of these ones, they show us these boxed symbols, where tattoos are observed as a static expression, by removing the possibility of generative analysis for the study of collective identity phenomena, which starts from the consideration of a double methodological moment.

“A phenomenological moment in which identity, belief, feeling, consciousness in question, its definition of reality and how it determines behavior; This moment guarantees the absence of a judgment on the scientific image of reality, which would constitute a real valuable judgment. The genetic moment guarantees the consideration of the image as a dependent variable, bringing us closer to its objective determinations and to the social mechanisms of production and reproduction of the image. This double moment brings us closer to the logical arbitrariness and social determination of every social phenomenon... to ignore the fetishes and illusions of an age is to ignore that which moves human beings; to recognize them as the only reality would be to recognize that there is no better sociology than common sense, in the most statistical sense we can give to the expression” (Pérez-Argote, 1986: pp. 89-90).

3. Conclusion

The prejudiced view of the practice of tattooing comes from proposals made by Italian positivists in the nineteenth (XIX) century, tattoos being studied from the

image and not properly from the practice of tattooing from generative model proposals that part from decision making. Being tattoos observed from the perspective of classification, they are presented to us as a static expression objectifying the man, generative mechanisms of the behavior (the practice of tattooing) are not proposed. Being the man the object of study who carries these marks, of the significant experience of tattooing, of the society that is embodied in men, who in turn are particular actors with their own interests and experiences and that are immersed in concrete situations that leads them, on many occasions, to decide to get tattooed.

When classifying tattoos, it is left aside that these symbols are present different reasons that precede the tattoo and that have their explanation in the society that creates them, because as a cultural manifestation that tattoos are, they are generated and recreated in society itself. And while we must part from society as the generator of identity, we must also accept that we do not mechanically reproduce the patterns of behavior that are spreading; In addition, in these classifications it has been left aside, or better to say, it has not been taken into account, the why? of the decision to get tattooed, which is complemented by the following questions that allow us to have a more complete observation of the phenomenon: What?, where the tattooed person tells you what is his tattoo, from a superficial look at the phenomenon; How?, interesting process, where the knowledge that is had on the subject is shared and from which possible solutions arise such as how to erase a tattoo or very varied information as anecdotal, in this moment an adequate personal equation is built Where?, which implies narrating the context, the tattoo as an experience When?, that leads to a personal encounter, space and time With Whom?, of this level of intimacy where history creates by recreating memories, in order to access to the most sensibly significant Why?, a space of intimacy where no one can access without our will.

When classifying tattoos, they are shown to us as a cultural manifestation detached from society and without intervening with it, in the case of tattoos made as a mockery, the presence of society in the practice of tattooing is direct and without taking into account the opinion of the tattooed person. In these interpretations based on classification, it is impossible to make generalizations. By showing us the tattoo in a static way it is overlooked, or better to say that the phenomena are not observed, that as a result of their interaction allow us to propose generative mechanisms, that as a result of their actions give place to the phenomenon that is observed.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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