Terms: Body art Body piercing, tattoos, scarification, body/self modification, self mutilation, self harm

Reasons: beauty, spontinaity (fun), rite of passage, memorial, brotherhood identification,

Issues: Nature of body (imago Dei, cosmic trash, ); Cultural norms (honor of parents and neighbor); Modesty; Motive (rebellion, irrational act\*, sexual, identification change “I’ll be someone else,” prestige—“I’ll be cool/people will notice me.”); Health risks; nature of image (what does tattoo represent/communicate—relationship, brotherhood, political, religious)

<http://www.crispinsartwell.com/madness.htm>

More generally, the permanence of the mark is a trace or index of the **existential** quality of the decision, the "leap" quality that we have associated with Kierkegaard. The tattoo, hence, is not only a particular decision; it is an enactment of the human situation in which we must act, and in which each act is irrevocable. Hence each act is a leap; no act can be withdrawn once it is made, because time is irreversible. Thus the decision, and in particular the spontaneous decision, to make a permanent mark on oneself, is an attempt to show to oneself and to others that one has the courage required to live: that one is able to make decisions.

Because of the permanence of the mark it is a mark of bravery, *of the willingness to make an irrevocable decision*, and is hence a resolution to life in the face of death, as well as *a kind of ritual reflection of the permanence of suicide.*

[*http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/popular-culture-meets-psychology/200907/tattoos-and-body-piercing-adolescent-self-expression-or*](http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/popular-culture-meets-psychology/200907/tattoos-and-body-piercing-adolescent-self-expression-or)

Perhaps, as postmodernists might argue, this self-marking is a means of asserting mastery and control over our boides, and anchoring ourselves, quite lterally during a time of life when the only constant is change. Maybe it is not self-mutilation, but rather  self enhancement and adornment, a means of saying "I am' in a way that is heard...body [bling](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bling)!  And don't forget the socio/anthropological possibility that tats and piercings may demonstrate loyalty, affiliation or be a ritualistic rite of passage. For some, it may simply be the  rush of adrenaline that accompanies a self-chosen and self-controlled moment of physical pain.

<http://ezinearticles.com/?The-History-of-Body-Piercings---Ancient-and-Fascinating-Around-the-World&id=2948> History of Body piercing

Great article (though obviously favoring peircings) that shows many motives for piercing and that piercings virtually died out in times/regions where Christianity was dominant. Motives: Immodesty of strength (warrior intimidation) or wealth, eroticism,

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Body_piercing>

Reasons for piercing vary greatly. A 2001 survey in *Clinical Nursing Research*, an international publication, found that 62% of people who pierced had done so in an effort "to express their individuality."[[45]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Body_piercing#cite_note-CM29-44) People also pierce to commemorate landmark events or to overcome traumatic ones.[[46]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Body_piercing#cite_note-45) According to the assistant director of the Frankfurt University Teaching Hospital for Psychosomatic Medicine and Psychotherapy, some sexual abuse survivors choose body piercing as a means of "reclaiming body parts from memories of abuse".[[47]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Body_piercing#cite_note-CM34-46) Piercing can also be chosen for simple aesthetic value, to highlight particular areas of the body, as a navel piercing may reflect a woman's satisfaction with the shape and condition of her stomach.[[48]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Body_piercing#cite_note-47) Some people pierce, permanently or temporarily, to enhance sexual pleasure. Genital and nipple piercings may increase sexual satisfaction.[[45]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Body_piercing#cite_note-CM29-44)[[49]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Body_piercing#cite_note-AFP-48) Some people participate in a form of body play known as [play piercing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Play_piercing), in which piercings may be done temporarily on the genitals or elsewhere on the body for sexual gratification.[[50]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Body_piercing#cite_note-49)

Piercing combined with [suspension](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suspension_(body_modification)) was historically important in the religious ceremonies of some [Native Americans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous_peoples_of_the_Americas), featuring in many variants of the [Sun Dance](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sun_Dance) ceremony,[[37]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Body_piercing#cite_note-Porterfield-36) including that practiced by the [Crow Nation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crow_Nation).[[51]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Body_piercing#cite_note-50) During the Crow ceremony, men who wished to obtain visions were pierced in the shoulders or chest by men who had undergone the ceremony in the past and then suspended by these piercings from poles in or outside of the Sun Dance Lodge. Some contemporary Southeast Asian rituals also practice body piercing, as a form of spiritual [self-mortification](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-mortification). Generally, the subject attempts to enter an analgesic [trance](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trance) prior to the piercing.[[52]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Body_piercing#cite_note-51)

Bridging the gap between self-expressive piercing and spiritual piercing, modern primitives use piercing and other forms of body modification as a way of ritually reconnecting with themselves and society, which according to Musafar once used piercing as a culturally binding ritual.[[47]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Body_piercing#cite_note-CM34-46) But at the same time that piercing can be culturally binding, it may also be a means of rebellion, particularly for adolescents in Western cultures.[[53]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Body_piercing#cite_note-52)

Officially titled "Most Pierced Woman", [Elaine Davidson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elaine_Davidson) of Scotland holds the Guinness World Record for most permanent piercings, first setting this record in 2000 upon verification by Guinness judges of 462 body piercings, with 192 at the time being around her head and face.[[59]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Body_piercing#cite_note-TDT-58) As of 8 June 2006, her Guinness-certified piercings numbered 4,225.[[60]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Body_piercing#cite_note-GWR-59) She has more piercings in her [genitalia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genitalia) than in any other part of the body - 500 in all, externally and internally.[[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elaine_Davidson#cite_note-SMH-2) As of May 2008, Davidson's piercings total 5,920.[[5]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elaine_Davidson#cite_note-4) As of Feb. 2009 her piercings total 6,005.[[6]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elaine_Davidson#cite_note-telegraph-5) In March 2010, Elaine reported a total of 6,725 piercings She claims she does not drink or use drugs.

In February 2009, [*The Daily Telegraph*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Daily_Telegraph) reported that she had 6,005.[[59]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Body_piercing#cite_note-TDT-58) The "Most Pierced Man" as of 2009 was [Luis Antonio Agüero](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Luis_Antonio_Ag%C3%BCero&action=edit&redlink=1), who had 230 permanent piercings