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Abstract
The new generation of professors is set against a stereotype that emerged from the era of *The Organization Man* or *Man in a Grey Flannel Suit*—the 1950s white man, a family-wage earning provider for a family of dependents. Generation X and Millennial professors with subcultural affiliations and alternative appearances, including visible tattoos, are now altering the image of the new professor. Using the academic literature around fashion studies, this chapter contextualizes the voices of the participants as they speak in depth of the stylistic choices within the university, from pajama-clad students, power suit administrators, to faculty in activist T-shirts. Participants may have learned
appropriate professional dress choices from graduate school workshops on tackling the academic employment interview, or through snide remarks from advisors or colleagues about the appropriateness of their fashion choices. Looking around at fellow faculty in the university, workers begin to fit into or differentiate themselves from the professional dress choices of their peers. These stylistic choices impact their interactions with others of different levels of the university hierarchy, from students to administrators. Overall professors are able to dress in a variety of manners while facing few social sanctions. However, straight white men are provided with the most latitude, while those with increasingly marginalized identities felt more pressure to conform to a normative expectation of conservative dress.

KEYWORDS: tattoo, professor, professional dress, gender, fashion

The semiotics of fashion

Thus, fashion represents nothing more than one of the many forms of life by the aid of which we seek to combine in uniform spheres of activity the tendency towards social equalization with the desire for individual differentiation and change. Every phase of the conflicting pair strives visibly beyond the degree of satisfaction that any fashion offers to an absolute control of the sphere of life in question. (Simmel 1957, 543)

The predominance of intellectual impulses is seen above all in the clothes of the “professor”—when he attaches any importance at all to good dress… Here the effort is to have the general design reserved and neat; the color is “as decent as possible,” and is usually limited to subdued tones, in whose selection a marked sense of color is nevertheless revealed. Black-and-white combinations are favored, and a great deal of value is attached to the personal and the characteristic. Ornaments and decoration are carefully chosen, although they are often too intellectually and “inartistically” assimilated. (Harms 1938, 248)

My father represents to me the iconic image of how a professor is supposed to appear. He was born during the Great Depression era in Nebraska and was consumed with the study of mathematics, thus ending up as a professor in a regional state college. He paired dark blue suit pants with a blazer, sometimes matching, along with beige Polo-style knit shirts, yet never a tie. Elbow patches and tweed would not have looked misplaced in his wardrobe. I grew up in his office, with a “Dr. Thompson” plate on the door, hoping that one day that would mean me. Once I came of age, and became a professor in my own right,
I faced the moment of reckoning upon the type of professor I would become, and how this image would be visually manifested. In the above quotes, sociologist Simmel writes about the social context of fashion-messaging, while Harms reinforces the dominant narrative of the stereotypical image of an (absent-minded) professor and his presumed gender identity. These opening quotes establish a framework for us to consider the social context of the fashion, and body-modification choices, of younger (Gen X and Millennial) generations of aspiring professors, within an institution traditionally slow to prevailing adaptations.

The semiotics of fashion examines the social role of clothing within any given society and how these messages signify larger dynamics of the culture itself: distinctions, identities, hierarchies, stigma, and social-positioning (Barthes 2006; Davis 1992; Bourdieu 1986; Goffman 1986; Goffman 1959; Simmel 1957; Veblen 2009; Buckley and Clark 2012). Entwistle (2000) writes: "The social world is a world of dressed bodies," and those bodies are further demarcated by contemporary distinctions based on gender, sexuality, disability, size, and race (Butler 2006; Shaw 2006; Mitchell 2015; Pause, Wykes, and Murray 2014). Writing during my father’s era, Harms (1938) describes the cultural world which fashion signifies, and specifically he states, “fashion most intimately expresses his relation to the environment," (239) stressing the “element of costume” in dress (243). Besides establishing one’s group membership by donning the relevant costume, Connell (2013) reminds us that attention to fashion also brings potential pleasure, beyond simple conformity.

And as we will see from the participants of this study, fashion also brings one’s sense of identity to the visual foreground of their self-expression, as well as potential rebellion or similarly-visual social communications. For myself, and those similarly positioned within the subcultures of the 1990s, involved in political activism and aggressive music, skewed their appearance toward the hippie-punk-goth-queer end of the self-presentation spectrum. And while black skinny jeans and hoodies may get one through graduate school, entry into the academic profession often caused a conflict between one’s chosen fashion statements, and the expectations of the university institution.

To consider the semiotics of dress within academia in particular (and its opposite), we can employ a Bakhtinian understanding of carnivalesque—of the inversion of the normative binary opposition of the normal (employment) realm from which revelers have this brief holiday where they can challenge authority through mockery and laughter. As Lachmann, Eshelman, and Davis (1988) explain:

Folk culture appears periodically as a culture of laughter by means of an ensemble of rites and symbols, a temporarily existing life-form that enables the carnival to take place. By contrast, the principle of laughter that organizes the carnival is transtemporal and universal. Laughter rises above and transcends the objects at
which it is temporarily aimed: official institutions and the sacral. It is a laughter that shakes the species-body of humanity, it is collective and directed at the “world.” (123)

This carnivalesque release that provides an opening for people to challenge and mock authority and invert hierarchy symbolically and playfully, also provides a release of frustration and joy that can maintain the status quo by re-energizing people for their return to normal life. Kuntz and Gildersleeve (2012) take us further by asking to consider “the grotesque body a representation of the world as a carnival then—that is, if we understand it in terms of the carnivalesque, couldn’t that expose the absurdities of our normative logic around everyday activity?” (89–90). The authors continue to argue that “the body-as-event” could expose these multiple contexts and understanding of hierarchy, destabilizing carnivalesque mockery, and the binary of the neoliberal body project versus the “grotesque” body that challenges this conformity to corporate demands. Russo (1995) invites us to consider how female gender identity further constructs the concept of the grotesque body: it is one of exaggeration, deformation, indeed, it is monstrous. The tattooed female body becomes one that is the opposite of femininity: a gender inversion, a grotesque perversion of the appropriate beautifying efforts in which women are socially required to engage (Thompson 2015). Williams (2014) theorizes about the role of the literary character of the doppelganger—a personal inversion, usually of an evil or devious orientation. Williams (2014) describes it as such:

The confrontation of the Self with its grotesque contradiction, either as its exact opposite or as its exact similitude, provides one of the most powerful of psychological and philosophical paradoxes in human experience. One of the several monstrous figures that challenge confidence in the stability of the Self is the doppelganger or Double, a monster who appears in aesthetic tradition variously as the evil twin, the shape-shifter, the androgyne, and the Antipodes… The doppelganger is the monster of perfect sameness… It is based on the instinctive realization that paradoxically if there are multiple selves, there is no Self. The uniqueness of the Self, one’s individuality, dissipates in face of the existence of any being which is not Other. (3)

This concept of the carnivalesque or grotesque body can be applied to that of the tattooed body, especially the heavily tattooed female, queer, or racialized body. Inked skin disrupts the normative aesthetic expectations of the professional academic worker: the appearance of ink, unnaturally colored hair, facial piercings, or ethnic dress and hair styles challenge, and point to, the underlying expectations as stemming from a white, patriarchal, middle-class, heterosexual, and able bodied...
social and institutional culture. The appearance of the above body modifications creates a disruption, a challenge, perhaps even a mockery, of the expected. Thus, clothing and embodiment can contain the challenges of the carnivalesque and grotesque inversion of hierarchy within daily life, not only in an annual holiday. Indeed, Gill (1998) describes how clothing is embedded in lived relations:

Fashion is an ontological domain; in and through an interaction with fashion subjectivities are literally made and worldly relations established between clothes and bodies. In everyday speech, informed as it is by a pervasive metaphysical opposition between subject and object, we speak of the “body” that is subject to the clothes that literally enclothe it with a significance. Wearing clothing can also involve repetition that constructs an experience of the familiar and the habitual. An experience of the familiar in clothing can be thought of as a “habitus,” as clothing becomes a space of everyday inhabitance, dwelling and self-configuration. (43)

The heavily tattooed professional worker learns that their understanding of self, attached to their chosen body modification processes as a reflection of their authenticity, may need to be hidden from view, and even a wardrobe at odds with one’s self understanding, may be worn, to fit into the workplace. Then when one returns home from work and can switch back to their chosen style and visibly tattooed state—the contrast of the binary opposition based on appearance at work and at home reinforces this hierarchy of power and ideology on a very personal level.

Professional dress

My father entered the academic profession at a time of tremendous growth in both the student and faculty populations within American colleges. Originally modeled on the British and then Ivy League traditions of college life, both male students and faculty wore formal attire, the costumes of stereotypical representation in American movies:

With its origins in British traditions, the American version of this men’s style had developed early in the twentieth century and had its collegiate heyday from the 1920s until the late 1960s. What characterized it were fashions ...now unfamiliar to most Americans: tweed sport coats with three buttons and natural shoulders; cuffed unpleated pants (flannel, chino, or corduroy); penny loafers or white bucks; duffle coats for informal wear and Chesterfields for more formal occasions; button-down collars on Oxford cloth shirts; Repp or Foulard ties; gray flannel suits in the
winter and seersucker ones in the summer; Shetland sweaters; Madras pants, shirts, and sport jackets. (Horowitz 2015, 46)

While Horowitz outlines the time period and name brand style of the early days of campus attire, Roland Barthes (2006) outlines the ideological underpinning to men’s formal wear of this time period:

The first is a formal factor coming from England: men’s clothing originates in the Quaker outfit (tight, buttoned jacket, in neutral colors). The second factor is an ideological one. The democratization of society led to the promotion of the values of work over idleness, and developed in men an ideology of self-respect, originating with the English. In the Anglomania at the end of the eighteenth century, self-control found itself incarnated in France in the archetypically austere, constrained and closed nature of male clothing. This clothing ensured that class differences were not visible. (93)

As the American university was modeled on that of the British institution, so too were the formal fashionwear of college professors at the early part of the century (Corner 2014). Both professors and their students were formally dressed until the social and cultural changes stemming from social movements on campus in the 1960s and the trend toward athletic wear along with college athleticism became popular (Banks and De La Chapelle 2011).

De Casanova (2015) conducted ethnographic research in the corporate world, interviewing successful men about their experiences, including workplace attire. Still a male dominated arena, the suit remains a classic standard for formal meetings, and business casual is often acceptable. However, De Casanova’s findings demonstrated that most of her participants desired a normative dress code and feared making mistakes with their fashion choices if given too much latitude (3). This conservative orientation toward dress was based on conformity to office dynamics and continued access to privilege (3). Few of her participants felt unable to express their authentic selves, as they were overwhelmingly orientated toward conformity as a pathway for financial success (5). Within the male-dominated arena, De Casanova found women treated as outliers in their status in regard to how the men addressed them (i.e. “girls”), and their insecurity of dress standards in a world defined by formal male attire (6).

Because of this professional standard based on white middle-class men as the normative model, women often worry about being taken seriously, and this, of course, extends to their professional attire selection. Women often feel as though the power blazer is a required item of clothing, even if they may personally reject it (Davis 1992). Women often consider the sexiness of their outfit and adjust it accordingly
Among Steenbergen’s (2004) professor participants, women often agonized over their clothing choices and placed heavy significance on their self-representation, the impact on the students, and the professional environment. As one participant states:

To me, dressing was a personal choice (based largely on my own confidence and mood) and a political decision (what statement do I want to make?) and I felt the responsibility to my future students weighing on me heavily. I wanted to break down stereotypes and point out and tear down barriers to the performance, instigate a little gender play, while at the same time convey the message that there was absolutely nothing wrong with being—and dressing—the girl. (quoted in Steenbergen 2004, 80)

This quote resonates with the participants of my study, as the women were often burdened with their clothing selection, while the men had rarely, if ever, experienced social sanctions in regard to their work attire.

**Subcultural style and anti-fashion**

The literature on fashion and professional attire emphasizes conformity to the norm and fashion-forward presentations of beauty. However, for many of the participants in this study, they originate their style within a rebellion subculture of their youth, such as: punk rock, riot grrl, goth, heavy metal, or social justice activism, and define their look as one of “anti-fashion” (Davis 1992; Corner 2014; Connell 2013; Fincham 2008). The literature on subcultural style can help us understand the contradictions that participants face as current or former members of an anti-establishment subculture who have matured into adults with a need for professional employment in one’s field. Muggleton (2000) defines “subcultural styles ... as a symptom of postmodern hyper-individualism, and that this process can be traced back at least to the 1960s” (6). He continues: “Appearance is not free-floating, available to be put on and cast off as a mere whim. To engage in such acts would be evidence of one’s superficiality and inauthenticity, for style is viewed as an expression of one’s inner self” (103). Bennett (2006, 2013) addresses the aging process for older punk rockers and finds that his participants have had to subdue their former radical style statements for something more subdued to conform to employment and family expectations. Force (2009) agrees that punk style is often based on taste cultures and consumption patterns, particular objects represent this inner feeling of punk rock sensibility. Yet it is ironic that punk’s politics are decidedly anti-corporate, but to express one’s identity, one must consume particular products to express this image. The gender presentations within particular subcultures also add complexity to one’s continuing revolt fashion.
For example, while goth culture accentuates femininity for women and androgyny for men, punk women’s style is often a mashup of hyper feminine and masculine items presented together (Brill 2008; Suterwalla 2013). Hodkinson and Garland (2016) found that for those who have been members of subcultures and ascribed to anti-fashion stylistic trends that evoked social sanctions from the mainstream, being a victim of targeted harassment based on style strengthened their association with the subculture, against the larger society that had labeled them outsiders (Becker 1997). Now, to tone down their style to fit into the mainstream of academic employment, was more of a challenge for some of them.

**Modified bodies in the workplace**

The body in the workplace can be restricted by employer rules of proper appearance as stated in an employee handbook. In lawsuits challenging such controls, the employers often win, even when the characteristic is related to race, but not an intrinsic result (Elzweig 2011). For example, while it is illegal to discriminate against an employee because they are black, an employer can require them to change their hairstyle out of dreadlocks or braids, since one’s race does not require such a hairstyle, even if such a hairstyle may be an ethnic or cultural characteristic. Yet, being authentic in the expression of one’s ethnic, gender, or subcultural identity through embodiment is “increasingly central to the modern person’s sense of self-identity” (Shilling 1993, 1; Sims 2018). One of the most visible forms of this self-expression is that of tattooing, a painful practice resulting in a permanent marker of individualism (Eason and Hodges 2011; Siorat 2006). The pain acts as a deterrent to keep those too afraid of temporary discomfort from collecting such permanent body modifications (Siorat 2006). A tattoo collected to express one’s authentic self may now need to be hidden in one’s place of employment (Pappas 2014, 195). For professors in particular, universities do not have dress codes for faculty, but rely on an internalized sense of professional dress equivalent to suits or a business casual environment. Administrators and faculty may informally police each other through snide comments or stares (Garland-Thomson 2009). For faculty, professional dress is based on the norms of individual universities, or colleges, or even departments, and can range from formal to casual. For office staff in universities, they often follow a more corporate professional dress standard that results in more contrast of gendered appearance. For white male faculty in particular, they can often dress very casually—jeans and a T-shirt—and still retain their professional status, whereas for women and people of color, when they dress very casual, they may lose status as people begin to be surprised when discovering that they are indeed faculty. This may be compounded for those with visible tattoos, piercings, or alternative hair styles (Hawkes, Senn, and Thorn 2004; Holland 2004; Mifflin 1997; Schertenlieb 2004). For men of color
with tattoos, “It is not just a bold act of social defiance from a dark skinned male. But a signifier of a criminal past spent between gang warfare and jail” (Gomez-Pena 2002, 101). Thus, we can see that the various intersectional identities pair with an alternative appearance to have significantly different outcomes, which is always more repressive for people of color and the cultural association with criminality, whereas whites have more freedom to be eccentric. In this research project, many of the white men themselves stated that they have far greater freedom of appearance (and sloppiness) than that of their female- and colleagues of color.

Indeed, we can see in the management-oriented literature focused on hiring and discrimination practices, white men face far fewer questions about their abilities and their fit within the company culture (Timming et al. 2017; Dickson et al. 2014). However, social standards are shifting quickly as the millennial generation enters the workforce and tattoos become more prevalent in society. For some service work oriented toward younger crowds, especially in the context of night life employment, tattoos can be a benefit in order to attract a younger and hip crowd (Timming et al. 2017; Timming 2017). The latest research is beginning to show that tattoos can benefit some employment arenas while retaining stigma in more conservative fields, but tattoos were not correlated with making less money or lack of employment (French 2018; Baumann, Timming, and Gollan 2016). Management is now following different advice for increasing flexibility toward contemporary social trends:

As society evolves, so should employers’ policies and procedures. From a practical standpoint, all policies and procedures must be viewed from an EEOC perspective. Not only can their inquiries be a nuisance, at best, but they take valuable resources of money and time to address—even ones that are unwarranted. Considerations should also include the impact on the organization. (Elzewig 2011, 21)

Now the advice for management is to have legitimate and specific reasons for particular dress code requirements, especially when they infringe upon one’s identity. As more and more workers have visible tattoos on all levels of employment, from service workers to white collar professions, flexibility in professional dress standards and dress codes must adapt to the prevailing norms in society.

Methodology

Herbert Blumer (1969) states, “‘symbolic interaction’ refers, of course, to the particular and distinctive character of interaction as it takes place between human beings” (79). He encourages sociologists to examine the
ways in which behavior is conducted at the interpersonal level of social engagement, and the ways in which individuals conduct and interpret their own behavior and behaviors around them (Blumer 1969, 86). Howard Becker (1998) warns us to examine our own biases and interpretations, as he cautions:

We social scientists always, implicitly or explicitly, attribute a point of view, a perspective, and motives to the people whose actions we analyze. We always, for instance, describe the meanings the people we have studied give to the events they participate in, so the only is not whether we should do that, but how accurately we do it. (14)

This research engages with participants from the methodological orientation of symbolic interaction: understanding how participants themselves understand their world and how they conduct themselves within it. Therefore, in-depth interviews are central to this data collection, with general questions that ask participants to describe their employment trajectory, almost in the manner of an oral history. Questions also ask the participants to describe their identities in relation to their institutional workplace. For example, in Cheryl E. Matias (2016) book Feeling White: Whiteness, Emotionality, and Education, she describes the micro- and macro-aggressions that faculty of color encounter in an institution that reflects white, heterosexual, middle-class values, and a student body that can feel at odds with the embodiment of faculty of color, especially when they teach on the topics of racial identity. Therefore, focusing on the experience of embodiment is a topic generally overlooked, but attributed to feminist theorists to reframe our perspective on such concerns of material existence. For embodied professors working in institutional settings, such institutions are not value neutral but assume certain identity expectations embedded into the built environment (Atkinson, Delamont, and Housley 2008).

Behar (1996) encourages us to locate ourselves within the research, in order to more honestly locate and assess our own embodied materiality, background, and perspective and how such details influence the interactions with participants and with the final research product. Both Behar and Matias encourage researchers to pay attention to emotions—their own and that of the participants—and the significance of emotions in addition to embodiment, and Behar encourages us further to be open to the vulnerability that such feelings can offer to the interpersonal encounter with participants, as well as in the writing process. Finally, Ntarangwi’s (2010) study Reversed Gaze: An African Ethnography of American Anthropology is insightful for those of us taking our critical research eye to our own institutions in which we are embedded:

As an African anthropologist writing about American anthropology and anthropologists, I create an ethnography that
represents a drastic role reversal especially because Africans and Africa have been among the quintessential objects of Western anthropological inquiry and writing for decades. (x)

From his “reverse” perspective, he is able to reveal the hidden side of Western anthropology, those accounts left out of their fieldnotes and published ethnographies, a rare interrogation into the privileged position of the institution of anthropology in relation to its subjects. For this research in Academ-Ink, I examine the academic institutional from the perspective of embedded participants from various levels of experience, but predominantly including the most vulnerable and newest, contingent, members of it. While the dominant, public narrative of the university often comes from the top of the institutional hierarchy, this research provides insight from the faculty-workers themselves on how they experience, understand, and engage with employment in academia.

**Methodological process**

I gained IRB approval to conduct interviews (including photographs and video) in early 2018 from Siena College. I then began a snowballing approach to reach out to professors, adjunct, and graduate students that I knew, to recruit for the interview process. I posted a call for participants on social media. Over the following year, I conducted interviews with fifty-two individuals who were either graduate students, adjuncts, or full-time professors. Each interview was conducted on Skype, audio recorded, transcribed in full, and analyzed for themes. The interviews lasted around one hour in length, with some nearing two hours. The participants selected the name that would be used for themselves in the study, be it their real name, their first name, or an alias. They signed consent forms and provided verbal consent. Consent is an ongoing process and not a one-time event; it can be revoked after the interview and consent form signing.

**Demographic information of participants**

Many participants were within the field of sociology (45) and the majority were in the school of liberal arts. Three participants were in geography and forestry economics; with one participant each in the school of business and the school of law. The majority of the participants (43) had a Ph.D. and other degrees, while nine participants had only a master’s degree or were still in school pursuing their Ph.D. 26 participants had student debt and 23 had no student debt. Ten participants had debt over $100,000, with one outlier holding $400,000 in student loans. Six participants had between $50k–90k in student debt.

Participants were mostly non-religious (35), while seventeen participants identified with a religion, including Catholic, Christian, Lutheran, Pagan, Sensoria, Spiritual, Buddhist, and Jewish. 14 of the participants
had learned a second or third language, 6 participants had a native language other than English, and 30 participants spoke only English. Five participants were non-American, including one Australian, one Italian, and three from the United Kingdom. Of the Americans, 18 were on the east coast, 6 were located in the south, 14 were in the Midwest, and 6 were on the west coast. 29 participants did not have children and 23 had children. 10 participants were single, 21 were in long-term committed relationships, and 21 were also married. 21 participants identified as heterosexual, 15 identified as queer, nine identified as bisexual, and seven identified as hetero-flexible. There were 30 female-identified participants, 15 male-identified, 5 that identified as they/them, and two identified as trans-masculine—there were no trans women included in the study. For racial identity, 37 of the participants were white identified, five were Latina, five were Asian, four were Black, and one identified as Native American. Men of color were few, and future studies should focus on this demographic. The age range was from 20 to 55, with the bulk of the participants in their thirties (26), and the second largest group in their forties (18), while five were in their twenties and only three were in their early fifties.

Findings: Professional attire options, personal style, and the academic context

Encountering professional academic standards of dress

The participants of this study work in the academic institution as faculty, graduate students, or adjuncts, and have at least one tattoo, but many are considered “heavily tattooed.” For those who have only one or two tattoos, or for those whose tattoos are not visible when dressed, they may experience little social static regarding their minimal body modifications. However, for those who are heavily tattooed, have alternative style, or are dressed flamboyantly in other ways, their self-presentation may be at odds with the expectations of academic life. Lulu is one participant that called herself “heavily tattooed” and defined what it meant to her:

I would qualify myself as heavily tattooed: about 50% to 60% of my body is covered. My hands, my throat, and my face are not. That is my personal boundary of where I get tattooed. I would love my hands and knuckles tattooed, but I understand that if I want to go into the job market then that’s going to be an issue for people. My aesthetic for tattooing is generally traditional American, like 1950s Sailor Jerry. American traditional and Japanese style. I do keep that traditional style, heavy lines and bold color. I’m fully sleeved down to my wrists. My chest, stomach, feet, and legs are tattooed. So, if I want to look
professional, I have to wear a long sleeve button up, socks, and slacks to cover everything.

Indeed, the entry into the job market is often the initial, and most formal, interaction with academia as a potential employment site. Before that experience, graduate students begin to be groomed for the profession. Professors may offer workshops on job interview practice for graduate students, including messaging on what to wear. Professors control graduate students through their mentoring and by writing, or not writing, letters of recommendation for potentially competing students from the same cohort. Lulu had the experience of having professors tell her that her tattoos were not appropriate for the academic work environment. She states:

I have older faculty tell me not to get any more tattoos. I actually had a professor say that to me. On the other hand, I’ve had faculty tell me that when I go to present that I should highlight my tattoos and show them off. I do get mixed signals that way. I would just say it all comes down to my personal comfort level. I don’t want people to touch me. I don’t want people to think that I’m not a good researcher. I don’t want these preconceived notions about tattooed women to affect me, because I feel that I am a good researcher and that on paper my CV looks really good. I’m proud of my CV. I’m proud of the work that I do, and I feel that if someone sees me, they might not know that that’s my CV. You don’t see many professors that are heavily tattooed.

Because of the lingering association of tattoos with deviant subcultures, especially among more senior faculty members, who remain a significant percentage of the workforce, these increasingly outdated perspectives remain relevant longer than in other institutions. Lulu already associates her self-presentation with the assumption that tattoos represent anti-intellectualism and that professors are not supposed to be visibly tattooed. She fears risking not being taken seriously, or impressively, if her tattoos were exposed, especially on the job market. Therefore, like most participants, during the job interview, tattoos are usually hidden. A brazen few argue that they would not want to be employed by a school that would exercise such discrimination. However, the pressures of the few jobs offered in the academic market, the extensive student debt, and the time committed to earning advanced degrees, makes this moment especially serious and best to reduce potential negative associations—until after one has earned the job. That was the choice Alex made during his interview process:

When I was interviewing for my current position, I had my sleeves buttoned up. After I got accepted, I just can’t teach with
closed sleeves, it just makes me feel like I’m suffocating, so I always roll my sleeves up, and my tattoos are always visible. I never got a word for it, neither from students nor other teachers, and we have a relatively young faculty so I don’t think anybody cares, and I don’t think I would care if anybody cared. Nobody’s going to do anything over somebody having tattoos these days.

Besides the professors of graduate students providing advice for their advisees and students within their program, junior faculty may encounter messages about appropriate dress in many arenas of professional life: from departmental colleagues, deans, students, and within the context of professional conferences. Such messages are not presented as official policy in the faculty handbook, so individuals in their professional positions may take it upon themselves to police the dress and behavior of their colleagues. This is especially powerful when those individuals hold power over the other via their position. For example, Laura was addressed by an administrator about her appearance:

One administrator asked if I was comfortable with my lack of professionalism, or my lack of professional attire. I simply said, “yes, I am.” That was the end of the conversation. Academia runs on white civility. My response should have been an apology and a promise to change, but I did not respond appropriately. I almost always get comments from students. We get end of semester student feedback. I almost always get comments from students such as, “sloppy dresser,” “too casual,” or “unprofessional.”

Laura demonstrates resistance in this interpersonal interaction and describes how she knows the administrator expected her to answer, and yet she does not provide the appropriate response, but one of resistance—she defended her casual style of dress. Laura also demonstrates how those beneath her position of power—the student—also challenge her dress within the classroom, and demonstrates that students do comment on, especially female faculty appearance within student evaluations whereas male faculty may get less comments about their appearance. A great deal of literature has demonstrated that classroom evaluations are often biased against white women, faculty of color, and those who may have other minority identities (Mitchell and Martin 2018). Gabrielle describes how the social context at the Association of Black Sociologists promotes a higher standard of dress than the general sociological conferences such as the American Sociological Association:

Of the first conferences I started going to, one was the Association of Black Sociologists (ABS), and among the older crowd, dress is important. You do not show up to ABS looking like you would show up to ASA. You better come in your heels,
men better have on their suits, with their hair cut. You come to ABS and you look good. The older women will compliment a younger professor, “Oh your presentation was great, and your outfit looked good.” ... Also, when I don’t feel like doing my hair, I will wrap it up. I will wrap it up with an African style with the knot right in the front, or I’ll wear it and get mistaken for Muslim. I’ve learned to just say, “As-salāmu ālaykum,” right back. Because I get mistaken for Muslim. I will wrap my hair up when I don’t have time, or it’s going to rain all week. I was nervous to start doing it, because of how the students would respond, but then nobody really seemed to notice. Great, I’m going to do it more often.

Gabrielle demonstrates the additional pressures on women of color within the academy, as their dress may differ significantly from the unspoken norm. In a later section, I will present how the participants felt about their embodied experience in the classroom, especially contrasting white men’s position with that of white women, faculty of color, as well as queer and trans folks. Without few examples of similar styles around them, it can feel like taking a risk, as Gabrielle mentions how she worried about wearing a hair wrap in a context where there are few black women on the faculty. In these two quotes, we see that the social pressure within academic is oriented toward professional dress, and when Laura dressed, as her students call her, “sloppy,” she faced sanctions from those both above and below her in the power hierarchy within academia. Gabrielle pointed out that in the professional environment, especially among black professionals, there is an expectation of dressing well and respecting the role and performance of being a professor.

Other participants stated that they either wear a suit to class, an outfit that is an equivalent to a suit, or at least, dress up for the first part of the semester as they condition the students to take them seriously before loosening their attire norms to something a bit more casual. Professors conduct their work in a variety of contexts, and they dress according to which they are performing within that day. Presenting at a conference or giving a campus-wide talk are the most formal events, followed by the classroom, campus-wide meetings, and then days spent primarily in one’s office. Participants often dress most formally in the classroom. Joe, a white male, talks about the variety of venues on campus and how he dresses for each:

When I teach, I wear basically a suit without a tie. I typically leave my jacket off and the students see the tattoo then. I definitely don’t hide it, but I like to try to present myself as a blank slate in the beginning of the semester. Therefore, they are not responding to who they think I am and what they think I
believe. When I have office hours, I take my jacket off. In faculty meetings, I don’t try to hide them at all. Typically, I do not wear long sleeve. I usually wear short sleeve button-downs or a country western shirt.

While he spends a few weeks at the beginning of the semester dressing more formally and hiding his tattoos until the students have a chance to get to know and respect him in his position, he soon feels comfortable enough to expose his tattoos both in the classroom as well as at faculty meetings. As we will see, white male faculty often spent the least amount of time considering, and worrying about, their dress. But female faculty often worried about being taken seriously and feeling that if they dressed less professionally, they may be easily mistaken for someone in a lower status-oriented role, such as student or administrative staff. Tatiana discusses the importance of dressing professionally, as she walks a tightrope of impression management based on her past experiences:

If I’m teaching, I’m in professional clothes. Tailored pants, I never look messy. I don’t want to dress like my students. I feel like if I take myself seriously, they’ll take me seriously. I do follow some of those professional ways to dress. And it’s a stark difference. If I ran into a student of mine on the weekend, they don’t recognize me. At all. I’d be wearing chucks, jeans, super casual, and with my kids. I know in spaces outside of the university, no one ever thinks I’m a professor. Parents at my kids’ school don’t think I’m a professor. On the soccer field. I mean, like no one thinks I’m a professor. When, for whatever reason, if we have to reveal that information, their reaction is always surprise.

Clothing plays a crucial role in her performance as a professor, as she is often reminded that without it, her embodied presentation does not align with how people imagine a professor to appear.

That stereotypical image of what a professor looks like rests firmly on the category of white male embodiment. Several of the participants spoke to this point, including white men who recognized their privileged treatment in comparison to how they have seen their female and faculty of color colleagues treated. William Force summarized how his “white cis dude” identity provides him with automatic legitimacy that others struggle to elicit:

I’m the resident weirdo here [at my school]. There are a few others, such as the music professor with purple hair. Ok, only the two of us, actually. Everyone is cool, everyone is extremely accepting. I've never gotten so much as the sense that people think I should dress differently. Again, I think that’s a function of
my discipline and other stuff. They hired a weirdo sociologist on purpose, kind of ... There's stuff that I just know based on commonsense and professional socialization to not push, right? I didn't identify as an anarchist until my third year. Generally, I let my freak flag fly a little bit. I openly identify as queer. I come out the gate with my feminism, with being an advocate for racial revolution, that's my job as a sociologist, presenting a critique of the norm. The fact that I am a white cis dude helps lower the guard of a lot of people who would be immediately resistant to these things. I trade on my race and my gender on purpose knowing that I secure an ordinate amount of privilege and authority automatically granted to me as a result of these things. I feel it is my obligation to chip away at it immediately. Since I do read as conventional, if you don't know the cultural symbols, I think I have no choice to not challenge that right away, with the nail polish, or dropping the F bomb in class, or tattoos that show from underneath my clothes. I'm obligated to start trouble to compensate for the ease with which I get out of trouble.

Other white male participants also offered similar statements about the privilege of being left alone and still taken seriously in regard to dress and behavior, as they have witnessed or heard stories about their colleagues struggling for equally respectful treatment. Joe states:

I'm quite tall and there is a certain amount of privilege with being a male in this profession, in terms of how to present one's self. Even with the tattoos, there's just more of an acceptance. I don't think about what to wear very much, honestly, other than what's comfortable, something somewhat professional. I do consider it a privilege to not think about these things. I have had conversations with some of my women colleagues and they think about these things much more than I do.

Zack Furness echoes Joe's statement:

I never really worried about it. I've never really done much to hide how I look. I've always been pretty comfortable... When it's warm, I'll go teach classes wearing a T-shirt. If I was told I needed to dress more appropriately, I would, but no one ever really got on my case about it. The only person that I ever think really consciously disapproved of the way I looked was the older chancellor at my school. The only things that I would not wear to class were T-shirts that had any sort of swearing on them, sleeveless shirts, or stuff with holes in them. That was my dressier end of things. As long as I'm not wearing that, it would pretty much be fine. I probably dress a little bit more semi-professionally
than I used to, but I haven’t changed style a whole lot over the years. I wear pretty simple stuff and kind of rock that as a uniform. Usually black jeans, black T-shirt, combat boots, then sweaters or button-down shirts, which I usually wear with my sleeves rolled up.

For the white male participants, they echoed the word “comfortable,” and that they have not received critique from colleagues with the frequency of minority colleagues. They themselves recognized this explicitly. This reinforces the conceptualization of white men being in the center of the profession visually and needing little else that this embodiment to perform the role of professor, even if wearing black jeans, a T-shirt, and combat boots. In the next section, we will turn to personal style and how faculty have adapted their own sense of self to conform to, or challenge, this professorial image in their daily work life. As we can anticipate, those with personal styles most closely in line to professional male dress would be the ones least likely to face social sanctions.

**Personal style, identity, and embodiment**

Academia, supposedly being the place of the mind, de-accentuates dress to moderate and bleak choices in fashion, choices that hide the body and cover up flesh. Unlike the corporate world, where elite professional workers may wear fashionable suits or short dresses, academics are not known for their fashion sense (their anti-fashion sense, perhaps). Many of the participants struggled to merge their personal style, developed over the decades, often favoring an anti-authoritarian subcultural style, with their professional role in the educational institution. For white men, even their alternative style could blend in with formal dress more easily than that of women’s fashion. For Rick Elmore, he resists professional attire by not wearing a tie, however, even his subcultural dress fits in better than that of women, as far as being under the radar.

Never a tie. Jeans. And boots. Or skater shoes, I’m not a very formal person. ...I’m very much in line with how the rest of my department dresses. The chair wears a tie, but everyone else just wears dress shirts. Some don’t even wear that much; they teach in T-shirts all the time. I wear Timberland boots, Vans, or Sketchers. I never wear anything but jeans to teach in. I mean, if I go to a funeral I will, but not for academic things. Black and blue formfitting skinny jeans, darker blue. It’s a bootcut style jean. Very much in the trend of men between the ages of 30 and 40.

In contrast to Rick’s comfortable style at his large state school, Devon is also at a large state school in the middle of the country,
however, her colorful outfits stand out much more than Rick’s fashion choices, based on gendered clothing and color selections. Women’s dress is far more visible and ornamental, while women’s role in society is more of a visual spectacle than that of men. Devon’s attention to fashion draws attention to itself, even though it is more formal and curated than that of Rick’s casual fashion.

I have a really cool mix of pieces that are mostly vintage-inspired. I wear a lot of cardigans, a lot of fancy flat, colorful shoes. And then I have many different colors of pants. I piece them together to make great outfits, which is so much fun. At least I do when it’s warm enough. I have a lot of skirts. Other people wear skirts and dresses sporadically. I think if I stood out for any reason, it would be because my clothing is less conservative than the general population in Colorado. It’s more brightly colored. I have a skirt that I love that has ice cream cones all over it. Like I said, the vintage-inspired sort of older type looking clothing I think is different. I don’t shop at Kohl’s, or Target, or all the basic places where people around here shop. I do all my shopping online and the thrift stores.

Devon, a white woman who enjoys colorful, vintage fashion, and once the weather warms, her tattoos become more visible, thus demonstrating the variety possible in the enactment of the professor role. She does talk about hiding tattoos in the beginning of the semester and establishing her professionalism before allowing her students to witness her more personal style. For faculty of color, and of other marginalized identities, their self-presentation brought them anxiety as they worried about acceptance, especially from those who could negatively impact their working experience. This self-consciousness reminds those individuals that they remain on the outside of the assumed professor image. Some felt sheltered by the progressive nature of their department or disciplinary topic. Such was the case for M. O’Brien:

Specifically, because of my department—Gender, Race, Sexuality and Social Justice—and the subjects I was teaching, mostly to do with social justice, and classes filled with young women of color, I was fine. I use the idea of teaching with your body: you are an embodied presence in that room. “This is what a professor looks like,” sort of movement. I felt like that mattered significantly. I’m young, a person of color, and I have tattoos. Yet, I’m still competent, a more than adequate professor. I tell my students my pronouns and talk a bit about the gender spectrum. I often end up with a lot of trans students asking to switch to be my advisees. Since I was a TA, I’ve had a lot of young women of color that I’ve mentored, not just in English comp classes, but throughout
their academic lives. Their questions of fitting in, in Canada, and what it’s like to deal with these subjects, they have a lot of personal meaning. There’s a couple of students that I’ve mentored that have specifically sought out my ethnic background… “Oh, I’ve never thought that I could have a professor who is Sri Lankan, or from southeast Asia, and connect with them.”

M. O’Brien demonstrates the power of what happens when a professor reflects a different identity and the impact this has on students. Students have the diversity of professors modeling different approaches to the professor performance. This helps shift public perception from the stereotypical image of professor to the reality of the diversity of the professorate. Sharon Yam brings out attention to how one’s height—let along race and gender—is another aspect of deviating from the embodied professor stereotype. As the authority figure in the classroom, and potentially teaching hundreds of students at once, a professor would be assumed to have a certain weight of presence reinforced with stature. She states:

I’m 5’2”. I almost always wear shoes with a bit of height when I teach. It also makes me feel, when I put those shoes on, it’s “game on.” Mentally, there’s a big shift. And also, it influences the way that I speak. The heeled shoes are switching persona into professional mode. Yeah, I’m an Asian woman with an accent, going in to teach a bunch of Wisconsin kids how to write in English. I think I had at the time a lot of anxiety about how to assert the authority while also wanting to be liked by my students. And increasingly I was able to let that go a little bit. I think that I have crafted a persona in which I’m very no-nonsense in the classroom, but at the same time, I am not strict. One time, I had a student comment in the eval that I’m intimidating. I had a lot of mixed feelings about it. One is like, oh perhaps I was succeeding. They see me as this authority figure. On the other hand, it’s like, what does that mean? Calling a woman intimidating shows the expectation is different. You’re a young woman, I expect you to be softer, nicer, and if you’re not meeting those expectations, yeah. One of my older, white male mentors said, “just take it as a compliment.”

In the Wisconsin classroom, Sharon may be one of the shortest people in the room, and yet she needs to command authority, respect, and manage all aspects of the classroom environment. She shows how she understands the biases stemming from gender identity that guide student expectations, and how gender discrimination is reinforced on student evaluation forms. Sharon agonized over the double-edge sword of being called “intimidating,” perhaps a compliment for her white male advisor,
but for herself, she was more uneasy with this label as she still wanted “to be liked by her students.”

T. J. Tallie maintains a fashion blog where he posts images of his outfits, knowing that his performance of professor is an eccentric one. Indeed, as an Africanist scholar, he often dresses in historical costume to dramatize the classroom lecture. Yet even with his extravagant regalia, he still notices that he gets away with his performance, without comment, while his female colleagues face sanctions for pencil skirts. T. J. states:

I think about the ways in which I am simultaneously reaffirmed in my authority and undercut by it. As a cis man, there’s a certain level at which I take up space, where my authority is granted. Although, when I talk about race or queerness, as a queer black man, then it becomes weirdly subjective. I was not only was very aware of my body, I dress the part. I actually have a fashion blog; it’s called Clockwork Black. I wore very specific afro-futurist, neo-Victorian, black clothing. I had top hats. I had capes. I wore waistcoats. It was a colder climate so I could get away with it. But for me, a lot of it was entering a space where I knew I was not historically meant to belong. I was teaching about ancient Egypt in my Africa survey class, so I had a decorative crown made from just two loops of wire that I wore around my head. I had contacts and I wore a good cat’s eye eyeliner and a simple button-down shirt. And then a blazer, slacks, and two onyx rings. I’m playful about it. I’m going to own this space. … This occurred to me when I was talking to my female colleagues in my department. I realized that I dressed like a walking Janelle Monáe stage show every fucking day; and yet, they got comments on their pencil skirts. I had no comment on my clothing, which was surreal because it was like my whole shtick was my clothing. And yet, nobody commented on it on my evaluations as a professor. If a female professor was just wearing like a light pink sweater, like, “She dresses great.” And you’re like… so hyper aware in some ways which my body takes up space and can be seen as intimidating at times. And I have to think about times in which I have to moderate my tone, or my anger, in terms of thinking about things that make me very angry, like institutional violence and racism. I’m not super tall, but I am sizable, right? In a way that can make people feel uncomfortable. So, I have to be aware of how I talk about hard truths, and challenge my students, while also not playing into their own racist fears, which is annoying. (T. J. Tallie)

As we see from the participants’ experience, the majority dress in a way that they find in conflict with the normatively professional, yet
bland, dress expectations at their place of employment. There were participants who did not have visible tattoos and their dress was casual, but in line, with the professional context of their position. However, the participants quoted in this chapter were at odds with expectations in some ways. While the white male participants often identified with a subcultural past such as goth, punk, or bike messenger, their transgressions were enacted without comment from others—especially biting comments meant as a nudge to change the other’s behavior. These men commented on their experiences in contrast to the women and faculty of color whom they witnessed receiving differential treatment for less transgressive fashion statements. From these experiences, some faculty are made to feel comfortable and accepted, indeed, the white men used the word “comfortable,” in several of their responses. The word “anxious,” and “intimidating,” was used by the faculty of color, who were often made nervous about their appearances because they knew they were already coming from an assumed outsider position, as T. J. states he was already in a place where he was “not historically meant to belong.” Other than monied white men, none of us are in a place where we were historically meant to belong, but some have been integrated better than others, notably, white women. Therefore, this causes anxiety, the imposter syndrome, and the general feeling that one must hide one’s authentic sense or personal style if one is perceived as already being an outsider.

Managing tattoo exposure in academia

Because of these stereotypes of what a professor looks like, and what they do not look like, the participants who feel askew from this image struggle to define themselves within this context. They choose to compromise their personal style to accommodate their professional position expectations and institutional location context. Most of the professors talk about how important the first few weeks of school are to establish their authority and a rapport with students before exposing any visible tattoos or wearing their more flamboyant colored clothing. But they also feel a loss of authenticity as they cover themselves up to hide these aspects of themselves that makes them most uniquely themselves, but fear at the same time it may be off-putting to a general audience. Jo Davis-McElligat makes a poignant statement about fitting into this environment:

I’ve kept my body from being seen. I own a lot of cardigans. Normally I wear really bright, loud colors. I dyed my hair blue a couple years ago. I’ve noticed myself trying to hide, even as I’m super visible. But not wanting to hide because I love my tattoos, my body, and I love myself. I’m feeling vulnerable and nervous all the time. It’s weird to have something so liberating as tattooing in
my life, and simultaneously feel so anxious about something that makes me feel so liberated. I have wondered if I would ever be able to work in administration. I look at the pictures of people in administration, but I’m never going to look like them. The face of the university. I can automatically see that there’s a limit to how far I can go, being this type of black person.

Jo’s reflection on how the things about herself that make her feel the most proud and authentic, are also what would make her be an inappropriate selection for administration, according to the faces on the wall of those in the roles. This reinforces the feeling that one doesn’t belong in these halls, and those that look like them will only make it so far before hitting a barrier. Yet, they love their jobs, their research, and provide important mentorship and visibility for the student population. One of the more striking stories of covering one’s playful self-expression was that of Steph Tai, a child of immigrants from Hong Kong, they have a degree from MIT, a Ph.D. in Chemistry, and a law degree, and teach at a law school in a large research university in the Midwest. But Steph feels that if they do expose their often blue-colored hair, they receive bad student evaluations. Steph’s solution—a teaching wig:

I usually wear a dress shirt, a vest, suit pants matching the vest; or I’ll wear a suit jacket, a vest, and a tie. I’m now wearing pocket squares; I’m folding them in weird ways. Yes, I have a teaching wig. That’s my one big, big, huge concession to the students, is that I teach with a teaching wig that looks like a rumpled anime boy’s haircut. At one point, I was like I really, really just want to dye my [blue] hair again, but not get bad evals. At some point, it occurred to me, oh, I should just get a wig and then I can put that on and that will be fine. That’s what I ended up doing. In my office, if I have the door closed, I’ll just take it off, but colleagues know. They know I’m wearing it, because when I see them at faculty receptions off campus, I don’t wear the wig.

Steph’s style is colorful, often wearing flamboyant blue-colored dandy-style specialty clothing, their CV, legal working experience, and publication record are world-class, and yet this insecurity based on alternative appearance compels them to hide their blue mohawk under a black teaching wig. Akello Stone in Los Angeles has sleeve tattoos and an outgoing personality, yet he keeps his ink hidden for the first part of the semester, especially in consideration of the diverse, international body of students he teaches:

I often have class comprised of 30 percent international students, many from Korea or China. They’re from countries where tattoos
are highly stigmatized. I obviously don’t meet the stereotypical appearance of the professor. People still have a stereotype in their mind of the jacket with elbow patches, an ascot, pipe, and glasses. If I add another layer of confusion, it may render me less effective in being able to deliver the information. I want to take time on the first day to establish what I’m bringing to the class. Then the next week, when I do roll up my sleeves, the tattoos are revealed. For many people, it shakes them into thinking, wait a second, everything that I know about tattoos... and then you’re the professor. It’s almost like I tricked them into examining their own belief system.

Akello teaches courses in sociology, as many of the participants do, and they often use their tattoo revealing process as a strategy in the classroom as a lesson on perception, role play, and stigma. Even for those that are in fields other than sociology, it is obvious the significance of being in the role of a professor and having the disconnect when one roles up one’s sleeves and sees the shocked student faces staring back at them.

**Discussion and conclusion**

The sociology of fashion presents the manner and style of dress in which we engage as individuals to be a part of their social role (Simmel 1957; Barthes 2006; Barnard 2002). Within academia, the stereotype stemming from mid-century portrays a professor as a middle- to upper-class, white male, in a tweed suit jacket, glasses, often quite nerdy or boring, and sometimes with a touch of mad genius eccentricity coming to the fore in some manner. Social class and refinement of character are part of this image of the professor, or distinction of taste, if not wealth (Bourdieu 1986). For the participants of this study, however, they often define themselves against this stereotype, as they identify with a rebellion-oriented subculture resulting in a continued adaptation of oppositional style, even if toned down now for middle age, including punk (Bennett 2006, 2013; Force 2009), goth (Brill 2008), gender or sexuality queer (Butler 2006; Connell 2013) or simply as possessing an embodied existence that marks one as unlikely to be a professor, from a normative perspective (Shaw 2006). The professors quoted in this chapter discuss their struggle to reconcile their alternative personal style with that of institutional expectations of moderate, if not bland, dress. While overall, the participants represent the full range from those lightly tattooed, with perhaps one or two small and hidden tattoos, to those, such as Lulu, who called herself “heavily tattooed,” pointing out the distinction that the percentage of ink coverage matters in regards to being perceived as deviant (Becker 1997).
In academia, unlike other professions, professors are given a high level of independence, and therefore do not have formal dress codes. However, messages about appropriateness of dress are conveyed in other, nonofficial, methods of communication. These messages can come from supervisors, senior faculty, or even from students via student evaluation forms, on which females notoriously receive more comments on appearance than those of male colleagues (Mitchell and Martin 2018). Gabrielle noted that at the Association of Black Sociologists, she finds an even higher standards of professional dress expectation, compared to the large-scale American Sociological Association. For faculty of color, they especially felt outside of the professorial norm and therefore often dressed to a higher standard in order to compensate. Meanwhile, the men quoted in this chapter recognized that their appearance was almost never commented upon, even when they were quite theatrical in presentation, in the case of T. J. Tallie, or consistently dressed down, as in the case of William Force and Zack Furness. The participants discussed how the most important times to dress formally include the job interview and the first few weeks of class. Once colleagues and students have gotten to know the individual and their professional abilities, then the participants were more inclined to loosen up and wear clothes that were more reflective of their personal style and perhaps let some tattoos be seen publicly.

However, some faculty never felt comfortable exposing their body modifications. Some used words such as “anxiety,” or “intimidating,” when they thought about presenting their authentic self within the academic context and potentially limited their professional development, in the case of Jo, who could not imagine her face among the pictures on the wall of those individuals in administration positions. Steph wore a teaching wig to cover their blue mohawk in the classroom and they had previously received lower student evaluations when exposing the blue hair style. Only behind the closed office door, would Steph remove the wig. Both Sharon and T. J. used the word “intimidating,” as a word used on one student evaluation of Sharon’s, while T. J. was simply hyper-aware of the stereotypical role he could potentially be placed in by students as a black male, and therefore he moderated his behavior and performance accordingly, if not begrudgingly.

These anxieties are a normal part of the shifting demographic transition within the academic work environment. Currently, graduate schools produce over fifty thousand new Ph.Ds each year in the United States alone, and these Generation X and Millennials entering the profession look, act, and present themselves differently than that of the Baby Boomer generation, which has had such an image impact upon the profession as they slowly exit into retirement. These younger generation grew up in a different context of the subcultural music scenes of the 1990s or into the new millennium. The prejudices against body modification and flashier modes of dress does not have the impact that it did
on previous generations. Those coming of age in 2020, born well within
the new millennium, often find professors showing ink younger-appear-
ing or more relatable. Indeed, the college students born in the new mil-
leennium do not perceive the deviance of tattooing, but they also do not
realize the extent to which their professors conceal their inked status in
order to uphold the illusion that professors still do not collect extensive
tattoo art. After students spend a semester with a professor whom they
have developed a rapport with, they are quite surprised during the
wamer weather to see ink creep down the arms of newly exposed flesh,
when the suit jacket is taken off.

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