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# Tattooed Educators: Body Modifications, Visual Self-Presentation and Employment

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## Abstract

Popular culture projects a stylized image of a professorial-elite, Oxbridge and Ivy League style, based on a historical prep school teacher look, combining tweed suits, layered sweaters, corduroy pants, tortoise shell glasses, and a clean-cut look. Furthermore, the identity of this stereotypical image is a straight, white, middle-class, and mature-aged male. For aspiring graduate students, adjuncts, and junior faculty of other identities, this can cause insecurity, imposter syndrome, and potential hiring discrimination.

However, contemporary instructors and professors include all genders, ethnicities, and sexual orientations, yet with continued underrepresentation from African American and Latinx communities. Demographic diversity is also represented stylistically, and the academic profession includes staff with body modifications, tattoos, and other subcultural fashions. Subcultural expression may be responded to in socially diverse ways, and can include reward and affirmation or sanctions and discrimination.

Drawing theoretically on the work of sociologist Erving Goffman, this visual methods research is based upon video and photo interviews with twenty tattooed academics, primarily in the United States, who discuss the conflicts between their visual self-presentation and their career norms and expectations.

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