Your Co-worker Undressed: Tattoos, Identity, and Stigma in the American White Collar Workplace

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Abstract

More than just marks of subversion, uncommon visual disturbances, or an academic anomaly, tattoos are increasingly common in the United States. Capitalizing on the social change surrounding tattoos, this research project addresses one major concern: do tattoos impact the lived experience of white collar workers in the United States. In order to accomplish this, the focus is on whether tattoos are stigmatized in the American white collar workplace and what impact this has on identity and social performance. Additionally, the project examines how individual and organizational understandings of popular culture and art inform perspectives on tattoos and the lived experience.

Utilizing a mixed methods approach, this project argues for an interdisciplinary theoretical approach synergistically utilizing figurational sociology and symbolic anthropology. In order to address the specific population of white collar workers, the theoretical orientation additionally draws upon neo-institutionalism. This research project also contributes to theoretical discussions in numerous areas of academic interest including body modifications, identity, stigma, workplaces, and popular culture.

The study posits that sociocultural understandings of tattoos in the United States are informed by the abstract notion of freedom. As tattoos are highly symbolic and impact identity, freedom plays a critical role in addressing issues of the authentic self and impression management in the white collar workplace. The highly interdependent nature of tattooing informs the conversation on identity and stigma in the white collar workplace, while affording the opportunity to address tattoo art and popular culture. Tattoos help define social groups which results in greater workplace fragmentation and reinforces stigma. Tattoo visual disruption in the workplace impacts social sanctioning, performance, and power, encouraging stigma. Individual perceptions of tattoos in the workplace are heavily influenced by organizations and impact other social realms. Finally, the project concludes with organizational applications of this data as well as suggestions for future research.

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Chapter 1 – "I hope you keep that covered at work…": Exploring Tattoos in the Workplace

Let's be honest, most Americans have worked some unconventional job. The capitalistic nature of the United States encourages people to do so. Maybe it was while they were a child learning a work ethic, a university student trying to make extra beer money or pay tuition, maybe when they were between jobs, or even the result of a midlife crisis. The truth is most Americans have all done some work that seems normal to them but catches the attention of others; and I am no exception. I have been a foreman at a landscaping company, a runner for live music concerts, and hunted an invasive species of snakes in the Everglades. But of the unconventional jobs I have worked, the one that stands out the most is a carnival worker. Generally, I operated carnival games or sold luminescent, flashing accessories; however, there was a period in the late 1990s I worked a temporary tattoo stand. Customers would pick a temporary tattoo, then I would shave them and apply it. As the day advanced, the clientele would become increasingly inebriated and ask for the application of temporary tattoos in progressively risqué corporeal locations. Frequently, this would result in situations which, in a manner consistent with Bakhtin's (1984) use of term, were *carnivalesque*.

Prior to working this job, I was already enamoured with tattoos; not from an academic perspective, but as an onlooker. It was during my tenure at the temporary tattoo stand that my voyeuristic interest in tattoos began to shift towards the academic. Some of the customers had permanent tattoos, but many did not. What struck me at the time was that people seemed so excited to get temporary tattoos *all* over and talk about how funny it would be when they went to work the following week. With the retrospective benefit of the research and theory drawn upon throughout this thesis, the fascinating aspect is why the clients thought going to work with temporary tattoos would be funny. Temporary tattoos look obviously fake and disappear in about a week. While tattoos were undergoing a social change in the United States during the 1990s, this fact does not explain the supposed comedy to me. Since working at the temporary tattoo booth, what has become glaringly apparent is that this was never meant to be funny in the classic sense. Rather, the comedy of these imagined scenarios resided in long term processes regarding the stigmas surrounding tattoos in United States culture. More concretely, the temporary tattoo stand was an interface between social notions of work and leisure, play and formality, and private and public space which highlighted

inherent tensions, value, and stigma of tattoos. The comedy resides in the shared understanding of the unacceptability of tattoos in the workplace.

In the contemporary and highly globalized world, Americans, regardless of demographics, must interact with the concepts of work and economy. It does not matter if one is homeless or a multibillionaire, all parties must interact with these large institutions. As such, children are brought up thinking about what they want to do when they grow up or attending school mandated career days, and eventually joining the workforce. But what of your schoolmate who got a tattoo at 14? Are they going to enter the workforce? What about the white collar workforce? Most importantly, why did the mention of a tattoo restructure your thought on their career?

My strange work history serves to mark a time in American culture when tattoos were simultaneously repulsive, fascinating, funny, exotic, and a mark of freedom. This account is underscored by the fact that Americans have a long history of engaging in practices of body modification. Tattoos, as a specific form of body modification, are highly visible and tend to be attention grabbing. While the public appeal of tattoos has ebbed and flowed throughout history in American culture, within the white collar workplace they have consistently been unacceptable. However, young people, like me, are receiving tattoos at an unprecedented rate. I have been told numerous times that tattoos are incompatible with the workplace and, if I ever wanted a good job, to never receive a tattoo. Or, at least, one that could be seen. But what are workplaces going to do when a large portion of their candidate pool are visibly tattooed? An organization cannot simply decide to proceed without workers. This line of inquiry led to the study at hand.

The United States is at a turning point in tattoo history. Norms and values surrounding tattoos that have historically functioned are reaching a tipping point. An influx of younger, tattooed workers who *like* tattoos will challenge the pre-existing notions of tattoos in the white collar workplace. Accordingly, at the most elementary level, this study aims to capture the lived experience of white collar workers in the United States. In doing so, this project explores how tattoos came to be transgressive of behavioural expectations in the white collar workplace. Additionally, this thesis addresses how such standards and expectations have changed over time. This project is concerned with how such changes in the status of tattoos in popular culture, in the workplace, and in the array of behavioural and normative expectations governing the display and management of the self in contemporary societies, relate to broader social

processes. More tangibly, this study asks what are people's experiences of displaying and concealing tattoos in the white collar workplaces of the contemporary United States? And, most crucially, how might an exploration and consideration of such experiences be used to inform contemporary debates surrounding the contested character of tattooing the modern world?

The premise for this study is undeniably a sociological problem. Starting with a relatively basic explanation, the social learning that informs our views of tattoos are impacted by our agents of socialization. How people are taught to conceptualize tattoos, like any other social phenomenon, impacts how they are seen. At a large, patterned level, this means that the view of tattoos in a given society is reflective of the teaching and subsequent social changes brought about by the agents of socialization. Additionally, this study is sociological in nature because the focus is not on the individual. Of course, individuals are used as the primary means of data collection; however, the interest lies in the patterns that appear. The patterns are indications of large scale social behaviours and illustrate a microsociological approach.

The sociological nature of this research project can also be addressed from the perspective of the workplace. C. Wright Mills (1951) introduced a "new class", deemed white collar workers, into sociological conversations. Through the analysis of 20th century United States working life, Mills is able to comment on modern society as a whole. The same white collar environment that Mills focuses on in his work is also the focus for this study as a medium by which larger conversations can take place. The white collar workplace in the United States is capitalism incarnate. Addressing variables that impact entrance, exit, or operation within this figuration is addressing how society impacts the lived experience of individuals and how the individuals impact their figurations. What more, the white collar workplace is framed as a goal within a capitalistic society, providing more support for the investigation of this figuration from a social perspective.

While there is no world in which I would argue this is not a sociological inquiry, framing it as exclusively sociological is a glaring issue. An aim of this study is to move beyond the exclusive confines of a strict sociological approach. Rather, I posit that this inquiry is inherently interdisciplinary and necessitates the use of notions spread across sociology, anthropology, economics, psychology, art, popular culture, American studies, biology, and a multitude of other fields. The interdisciplinary perspective allows

for a fuller picture of the tattooed individual in the white collar workplace and prevents researchers from falling into the current academic 'fad' of their field.

Yet, stating how, and why, this study is sociological in nature is only helpful if the purpose of the study is clear. This project is, at its core, focused on theory. Yes, the primary concern surrounds the lived experience of tattooed white collar workers in the United States; however, that concern is a medium by which theory may be addressed. Theory, in the social sciences, is often framed as a very erudite and impenetrable medium concerned with complex notions of ontology and epistemology. While those concerns are very real and worthwhile, theory does extend beyond these types of conversations. This project contributes to theoretical discussions in the traditional sense, as well as in a less traditional manner.

From the onset, it is important to understand that this study combines theoretical structures used in different fields. Specifically, this study combines figurational sociology with symbolic anthropology. The purpose of doing so is explained in Chapter 2 and evidenced throughout the analysis. However, in short, the combination of theories used here aids in the analysis of data due to the interdisciplinary approach. However, framing theory from this perspective is still harping on the erudite side of theory. In a less traditional sense of theory, this study extends beyond the erudite approach and contributes on multiple levels.

At the most fundamental level, this project contributes to theoretical discussions by clearly marking the lived experience of tattooed white collar workers at the time of writing. Noting, and analysing, the contemporary period is essential to discussing sociogenic change. The most recent substantial academic works aimed at capturing the lived experience of contemporary tattooed individuals were done by Margo DeMello in 2000, Michael Atkinson in 2003, and Beverly Yuen Thompson in 2015. DeMello focuses on the history of tattooing and how the practice developed over time; Atkinson looks at the sociogenesis of tattooing and the contemporary (in 2003) state of the tattoo figuration in Canada; and Thompson investigates the impact of tattooing on women. While these three projects are wonderful sources of information, and cited throughout this study, they cannot speak to the contemporary United States. Bluntly stated, the United States has substantially changed in the, roughly, two decades since DeMello and Atkinson's works. All the changes that have taken place in the past two decades have deeply impacted the ways in which tattoos, and tattooed individuals, are seen and treated in the United States. While Thompson's work is far more recent, the research

focuses on femininity with tattoos as the medium by which sex and gender are discussed. In order for any future sociogenic analysis to be undertaken, it is absolutely necessary to establish the state of tattooing in a given context over time. This project fulfils the current need for contemporary analysis of tattooing and tattooed individuals. This is undeniably a contribution to academic literature, but also comments upon the use of theory throughout this project.

Building upon the previous point, this study also contributes to social theory regarding social connections. This project comments on contemporary social connections, from a microsociological approach, in the form of social network analysis. Specifically, how the presence of tattoos, or lack thereof, impact social relations of individuals. However, once again, this is only scratching the surface. The project also contributes to theoretical conversations regarding social connections among organizations, organization-individuals, and spillover with other social institutions. The involvement of spillover leads to another area of theoretical contribution: power.

Specifically, this project investigates power in the white collar workplace and what impact this has on the lived experience of tattooed individuals. Through this conversation, it becomes apparent that there is a rationalized environment in which organizations, and individuals within organizations, are forced to operate within. The discussion of power is analysed from a figurational perspective in conjunction with a symbolic perspective. Utilizing these two perspectives is, in itself, another theoretical conversation in which the project contributes. Regarding the importance of interdisciplinary work through merged theoretical perspectives, this project comments very specifically on the need for greater cooperation between anthropology and sociology. What more, the interdisciplinary theoretical basis for this study illustrates that the process is not only possible, but leads to success that is greater than the sum of its parts.

The final realm of theory this study contributes to is identity. This project utilizes Goffman's notion of self, obviously framed from a dramaturlogical perspective, in which he posits that every person has multiple selves depending on their situation. For example, I am enacting a version of myself when I am with my family, but I am another self when I am lecturing to my students, and yet another version of self when speaking to my partner. The multiple and constantly shifting versions of self are situationally based and enacted through symbols. However, this study adds to this conversation by involving tattoos. Tattoos are a very permanent, highly visual marker

which elicits both positive and negative social responses. These indelible marks cannot be hidden (short of covering them with clothing) and thus provide some form of permanence which forces tattooed individuals to maintain that notion of self. This is illuminated throughout the project, but homed in upon in discussions of identity, authentic self, popular culture, and social media.

To reiterate, this study is organized around one major concern: whether having a tattoo impacts the lived experience of white collar workers in the United States. With a drastic increase of tattoos in the United States, and specifically on younger bodies, the white collar workplace is situated to deal with an influx of tattooed bodies. Historically speaking (see Chapters 3 & 4), tattoos have been unacceptable in the white collar workplace and highly stigmatized. With the inevitable increase of tattooed workers, there is a need to understand to what capacity the stigma still exists and what impacts it has on tattooed individuals as well as organizations. In order to address this concern, the project focuses on whether tattoos are still stigmatized in the American white collar workplace and what impact this has on identity. Specifically, this study addresses whether the stigmatization of tattoos in the workplace affects social performance within and beyond the workplace. Furthermore, this study is concerned with whether tattoos play a role in defining social groups among white collar workers within an organization.

Conjointly with the primary concern, this study examines how individual and organizational understandings of art and popular culture inform their view of tattoos and thus the lived experience of white collar workers. Through the critical inspection of tattoo and workplace narratives, the study is able to illustrate ongoing sociogenic processes to understand how tattoos became acceptable but still remain stigmatized. These sociogenic processes inform how individuals perceive and interact with tattooed others in the workplace. In order to address these areas of inquiry within the contemporary United States, it is first critical to address theoretical perspectives.

Theory, in the social sciences, is one of those topics that academics either love to hate or hate to love. Finding a theorist who completely loves theory is like spotting a pygmy three-toed sloth in the wild: they absolutely exist, but are incredibly rare. This statement is not meant to condemn theory as an area of academic interest; rather, it is meant to communicate the intellectual density of this topic. Despite the rarity of "full-fledged" theorists, the importance of theory is well understood among academics. One large reason why theory is addressed by all academics in some manner is quite simple: theory explains what can be known and how. In reference to this study, there is a clear

research question at hand. The discussion of theory, in Chapter 2, establishes the groundwork for all data collection and analysis. In other words, here is a problem; now, how can it be approached? Theory is the answer. Chapter 2 directly addresses the theoretical orientation of this study which couples figurational sociology and symbolic anthropology. Due to the deep, traditional divide between anthropology and sociology in academia, these two theoretical fields have been historically discreet units. However, the purpose of this chapter is to clearly show why and how these two conceptual notions synergize and, upon working together, benefit data analysis. Of course, there are differences in opinion regarding the "correct" theory. Chapter 2 addresses the critiques and concerns aimed at figurational sociology and symbolic anthropology in order to illustrate why their synergistic use accounts for their short comings. This chapter informs the whole study by clearly stating the conceptual and philosophical approach; however, beyond addressing the research question and aims, the chapter also serves as an illustration as to the importance, analytical power, and conceptual merit of interdisciplinary research between anthropology and sociology. Upon the conclusion of Chapter 2, it is evident figurational sociology necessitates, and justifies, the use of history and subsequent changes as a form of data. As such, it is critical to address the history of tattooing.

An entire history of tattooing is far, far outside the scope of this project. However, there needs to be some starting point to the conversation. Chapter 3, "Tribal tattoos are just trash", begins a summary and analysis of tattoo history pertinent to this study. Beginning in the late 1800s, the historical coverage and analysis addresses two eras of tattooing: The Late 1800s Shift and the Golden Age of Tattooing. These two eras establish the foundation upon which contemporary ideas of tattooing in the United States are built. Throughout this analysis, one theme consistently appears: freedom. Freedom, as it is used throughout this paper, is intentionally abstract. The denotation is variant depending on how it is applied (e.g. social control, economics, slavery, speech, etc.); however, the connotation remains the same; to not be controlled by *something*. Throughout this project, the use of 'freedom' refers to the connotations of freedom; regardless of how it is applied. Freedom is meant to be a neutral term to discuss a plethora of sociocultural conventions that might limit certain actions or behaviours. The connection between tattoos and freedom continues beyond the Golden Age of Tattooing, though.

Following a similar model as Chapter 3, Chapter 4 continues the analysis of different tattooing epochs. Specifically, Chapter 4 covers the Rebel Era, the Tattoo Renaissance, and the Contemporary Era. The final epoch (for now) is the Contemporary Era and addresses tattooing in the United States' current environment. These three periods are, again, characterized by the thematic presence of freedom. The notion of freedom is seen differently throughout the various stages of tattooing, but has been, and still is, deeply impactful to the general perception of tattoos. There is quite a bit of history not included in Chapter 3 or Chapter 4, but that is to be expected with a practice so old and widespread. The purpose of these chapters is not a holistic coverage of tattoo history; rather, it is meant to underpin this study. As such, only pertinent history is presented and analysed.

After the sociohistorical patterns have been established and analysed, the necessary next step is to address academic research. While analysing historical patterns is incredibly valuable, the fact remains that our current world is not the same as one hundred years ago. In order to answer the primary research questions, it is critical to look at other academic research. Afterall, what a waste this would be if the questions were already answered. Chapter 5 begins the review and analysis of academic literature with a focus on tattoos in relation to stigma, popular culture, art, and fashion. Chapter 6 continues the literature analysis, covering the white collar workplace, identity, and nonverbal communication. In addition to outlining previous work, these two chapters show how this study breaks historical convention and does not exclusively address tattooing from a medical & epidemiological, rite of passage, or cultural deviance perspective. Rather, this study weaves the three approaches together to address the overlapping notions necessary to discussing tattoos in the contemporary workplace. Given the interdisciplinary nature of this study, the reviewed literature is primarily anthropological and sociological, but also draws upon other fields to create a holistic conversation regarding tattoos in this context. The literature as a whole, spread across two chapters, clarifies another concern. While analysing sociohistorical patterns and other academic research can answer a lot, does it address the research aims? Simply put, no. So, what can be done? The answer is to go and gather primary data. However, before data can be collected, it is essential to establish what data will be collected, how it will be collected, and why the data should be collected at all. Enter, a discussion on research methods.

Chapter 7 covers the research methods utilized for this study. Given the nature of this study, Chapter 7 also addresses the pilot study that was conducted as well as subsequent modifications. Furthermore, the chapter also provides ethnographic context for the study detailing the pseudonyms of participants along with their occupation, industry, sex, and tattooed status. The purpose of this chapter is not to bog down the conversation with technical logistics. Instead, the conversation answers how to best collect data in order to answer the research questions.

After data collection, any researcher will note that there is an abundance of data which begs a very simple question: what does it mean? Chapter 8 begins the discussion of findings as an analysis of tattoos, identity, meaning, and symbolism. The chapter supports the notion that tattooing is an interdependent social activity which impacts the identity of white collar workers. Beginning with a short vignette as a reference point, the chapter proceeds with an analysis of tattoos and identity. Within the section on identity, specific attention is given to authenticity, the authentic self, and permanence; all in relation to tattooing among white collar workers in the United States. The conversation continues to address the body as an indicator of sociogenic change and a medium for performance. Moving onward, the following section of this chapter addresses the creation of meaning from a personal and public perspective which overlaps with performance and identity. Next, the discussion shifts to tattoos as a form of art and subsequent impacts. Specific attention is given to the ideas of "good" tattoos and fashion tattoos. Finally, the chapter concludes with a focus on media representation of tattoos which is interdependent with all the other notions presented in this chapter.

In order to address the inquiry, Chapter 9 focuses on the presence and social understanding of tattoos in the workplace with a specific focus on tattoos and stigma. Again, beginning with a vignette as a reference, the chapter moves into a discussion regarding the expectations of public space. Based upon narratives provided by participants, this section focuses on the presence of tattoos in the visual public space as well as on social media. Utilizing these notions, the conversation proceeds to discuss social sanctions in the workplace that specifically focus on tattoos and how they are enforced from legal and informal perspectives. Additionally, this section addresses the impact tattoos have on performance in the labour market. The chapter continues to discuss power and workplace culture from the perspective of an organization as well as the individual employee. Here, the white collar workplace is framed as a figuration, but also a member of an industry figuration which impacts formal and informal displays of

power as well as attitudes towards tattoos. The chapter concludes with a discussion about the future of tattoos in the white collar workplace. Based, again, on the narratives told by participants, this chapter addresses current and predicted future judgements towards tattoos and tattooed individuals in the white collar workplace.

The findings from this study lain forth, Chapter 10 concludes this project by readdressing the research question with a summation of the findings. The chapter clearly states how having, or not having, tattoos impacts the lived experience of white collar workers in the United States. Chapter 10 also demonstrates how this study addresses the impact tattoos have on identity and stigma in the American white collar workplace. This chapter also synthesises the findings of the study as a whole and provides suggestions for tattooed and non-tattooed individuals alike, as well as organizations of any size. However, it is important to clearly state that this study is not perfect and can absolutely be improved. The chapter includes limitations of this project and suggestions for future research.

There is an important point to acknowledge about the nature of the writing used in this project before proceeding. Namely, the writing deviates from a "traditional" academic tone. Throughout this project, there are "journalistic tools" that invariably stand out from the turgid and impenetrable language those who consume academic writing are used to. The purpose of utilizing this tone is twofold.

The first purpose relates to concerns I have regarding pedagogy in higher education. Challenging the strict notion of academic writing and making it more engaging through the use of these "journalistic devices" is challenging the notion of the "Ivory Tower" of academia. Tattoos are an engaging topic (there are many opinions about them, after all) and that interest can, and should, be a vehicle to engage with larger conversations whereby individuals are introduced to concepts outside the purview of laymen. The "journalistic devices" used throughout facilitate this goal without negatively impacting the academic argument. While this approach is absolutely considered unconventional, other academics have approached their work in a similar manner. One such example is C. Wright Mills. Beginning in his early career (Horowitz 1983; Mills 1959), Mills contributed to a more participatory form of writing which was aimed to "…restore the investigator's personal engagement with ordinary people's experience…" (Haney 2008:20). In fact, Mills himself spells out the flaws of traditional academic writing by stating, "Desire for status is one reason why academic men slip so readily into unintelligibility" (Mills 1959:7). Mills is referring to the unnecessary

reliance on “socspeak” by academics; a term first proposed by Malcom Cowley (1956) which Mills uses to refer to the dense, erudite, and indecipherable language sociologists frequently use in writing to convey their own prestige. Mills posits that writing well to communicate with the masses is not all that difficult; however, in order “to overcome the academic *prose,* you have first to overcome the academic *pose*” (Mills 1959:219). Mills is not the sole example of academics to address this, but simply an example to illustrate the intellectual backing this approach has.

The nature of the research topic at hand is something that highlights discrepancies. E.g. tattoos are increasingly common on younger bodies, but not socially accepted in the white collar workplace; tattoos are a subject of social interest but relatively ignored by academia; tattoos are trashy craft work while also transitioning into the fine art realm; popular culture vs high culture, etc. There are many that can be noted throughout this project. The point is, the “journalistic devices” highlight discrepancy in academic writing by nature of their very presence and thus challenge the need for absolute adherence to academic writing. As a point of note, I apply this logic to my professorial teaching. I speak to my students as if they are my friends that I am trying to teach as opposed to students in a higher education lecture hall. While jargon is used, theory discussed, etc. the long term comprehension of material and discussion that occurs outside class is much greater than adherence to rigid academic hierarchy. This is the same logic I apply to my writing as it is a direction, I feel, academia desperately needs to move towards.

The second purpose for deviating from traditional academic voice is to convey the argument of this project in a manner that is not as laborious to read. The “journalistic devices” make the material more engaging. When individuals engage with material, it encourages them to think about it outside the time they are reading it, thus inspiring reflection, discussion, and further knowledge. Additionally, this is a longer project. The majority of academic writing is, in my opinion, an exercise in focus. The dense language takes direct concentration where a minute lapse might disrupt the logic of a whole section. The use of comedy, example, vignette, etc. act as a change of writing language, thus revitalizing the interest (and attention) of the reader. The logic is not dissimilar to why highways in the United States are curvy. They could be straight, and at one time were, but the result is Highway Hypnosis; people enter a dazed state and do not process what is happening around them but are able to respond. The deviation

from traditional academic prose is sure to bother some, but the aim is to engage more people than it puts off.

This study is meant to express what it is like to be a tattooed individual in the American white collar workplace. How simply having corporeal adornment impacts one's professional life in such profound ways. This research is an interdisciplinary exploration, approached from anthropological and sociological perspectives, to address identity and stigma in the white collar workplace. Through the act of marking one's skin, one enters a figuration complete with their own norms and values. The tattoo figuration is more prevalent in American culture now, but it is just encroaching upon the white collar workplace. There are bound to be hiccups and stumbling moving forward, but the white collar workplace is in a liminal state. This study is far from a complete picture of every white collar organization, but it does highlight patterns that are highly impactful to the tattooed workers.

Chapter 2 – "Come for the anomaly, stay for the theory": Understanding Tattoos through Figurational Sociology & Symbolic Anthropology

Tattoos are subjectively weird. They are indelible visual marks that forever change a body. Removed from context, if you are told that *something* could be done that would make your skin forever an unnatural colour, it would be feasible to wonder if you were going to turn into an Oompa Loompa. But the fact is, people across the United States are doing just this. They are subjecting themselves to some relatively painful procedure, after which their skin is forever an unnatural hue. From that perspective, the mundane practice of tattooing transforms into something arcane. The reframing of a relatively common practice can drastically change perceptions and subsequent questions regarding the act. This notion is the heart of theory.

How one frames a question, regardless of what that question might be, will change the way in which it is answered. This project is concerned with capturing the lived experience of tattooed white collar workers in the United States. Sure, that may seem straight forward, but it could be approached from several perspectives. Those differing perspectives are a good way to comprehend the abstract notion of theory in the social sciences. None of the perspectives are inherently "correct"; rather, they each help reveal a different aspect of the conversation. The purpose, then, is to find which perspective best aids the interpretation of data so that the project may capture the lived experience of tattooed white collar workers. The question becomes whether the human condition can be studied through a sole theoretical lens. I posit that, when capturing a patterned lived experience, the answer is no. Instead, two theoretical lenses must be crossed. This chapter outlines why, and how, figurational sociology and symbolic anthropology are used as the theoretical structures for this research project.

When discussing their research, social scientists frequently refer to and discuss "theory". Simply addressing this concept can make any discussion seemingly erudite and impenetrable for individuals not inducted into the realm of academia. In actuality, the concept of "theory" is just academic shorthand to discuss abstract suggestions about how things are, should be, and could be (Harris 1968). In other words, theories act as lenses by which social scientists explain the social world and make predictions about the future. In the case of this project, the research is primarily framed through two theories: symbolic anthropology and figurational sociology.

The choice of using symbolic anthropology and figurational sociology is not a matter of "academic loyalty" to a school a thought, but rather a case of how these theories help one to understand the primary research questions and aims of the project. Using symbolic anthropology as a lens, the research questions and aims are framed as an attempt to understand the difference between a sign and a symbol (discussed below). While a variety of items and concepts can be investigated as symbols, the critical aspect is how individuals assign meaning to the symbols. In the case of this research, the symbolic avenue under investigation is tattooing. Furthermore, using symbolic anthropology as an explanatory tool alleviates the issues in separating academic discourse from everyday life. Symbolic anthropology plays a final role in how the research questions are understood. Interpreting the research goals with this theory highlights the importance of hermeneutical analysis in an interdisciplinary approach connecting it extremely well with figurational sociology.

Figurational sociology also helps to interpret the research questions and goals through this project. Figurational sociology stresses relationships as an abstract concept. Of course, this could mean among individuals; however, it can also address the relationship between trends (Elias 1994:446). Using this theory illustrates that process by which tattooed individuals become stigmatized and how that relationship to a symbolic structure changes over time. Using these theories as the major guiding principles suggests two abstract guidelines that this project will follow through the analysis and discussion: understanding symbols and understanding relationships. As such, it should be no surprise that the lived experience of the workers becomes a major point of academic inquiry.

With a grasp of the purpose symbolic anthropology and figurational sociology serve for this research project, there is one more concept worth addressing: what defines the schools of thought. The discussion regarding schools of thought are typically classified by their ontology and epistemology. Ontology is a term used to classify questions and thoughts about the nature of things that exist. Built upon, or in conjunction with, ontology is epistemology which addresses what kind of knowledge can actually be obtained about whatever is under study (Hollis 1994). Each school of thought has their own combination of ontology and epistemology that sets them apart from each other. Beyond the fact that these terms are going to be used in this chapter (and in other chapters for that matter), it is important to understand how exactly these concepts influence the nature of this research project. Specifically, this research utilizes

ontological and epistemological underpinnings inherent in symbolic anthropology and figurational sociology promoting a humanistic and hermeneutic approach.

The humanist epistemological focus prioritizes the understanding of human experience over explaining events. This philosophy is particularly applicable to the primary research aim of the research project; to capture the lived experience of American tattooed white collar workers. The humanist approach is the philosophical building block for a variety of different theories; however, this research project will specifically draw upon two major theories: symbolic anthropology and figurational sociology. To a lesser extent, this project also draws upon neo-institutionalism. Upon concluding this chapter, the suitability of these theoretical approaches in favour of others for this research project on tattoos, identity, and stigma in the American white collar workplace will be evident. Furthermore, the conceptual guidelines by which the methods, analyses, and discussions are undertaken will be clear.

Humanism & Hermeneutics

In order to understand why the hermeneutic philosophy is best suited for this research project, there is a need to clearly state the epistemological approach inherent in this philosophy. The lack of discussion regarding ontology and methodology is not to discredit their importance in formulating, undertaking, and analysing data collection; however, depending on the specific sub-philosophy a researcher adheres to, these points can differ wildly, even within hermeneutics (see Schleiermacher 1997, Weber 1947, and Gadamer 1989 for example). Despite the differences in sub-philosophies, hermeneutic theorists share a similar epistemology where the priority is the interpretation of meaning found in human experience (Weber 2006a:495). As in other forms of research, the purpose of social science theories is to frame questions. The aim of the research is to capture the lived experience of American tattooed white collar workers which necessitates the need for understanding experience. Since the goal of this research is to understand the lived experience, the epistemological foundation of hermeneutics directly applies. Unlike other philosophies, such as naturalism where the epistemological stress is on finding 'truth' in the natural and social world (Harris 1968:60) or critical social science which argues for emancipation instead of explanation or interpretation (Marx & Engles 2012:58), only the hermeneutic approach stresses explanation and interpretation.

A sub-philosophy of humanism, hermeneutics is particularly interested in language as a medium through which human lived experience and behaviour can be understood and interpreted. While the premise is simple enough, the fundamental principles regarding the way language, culture, and the human lived experience relate to each other are debated. The internal debate has given rise to a number of influential theoretical approaches to social science. Of primary importance to this research project are functionalism and symbolic anthropology.

"Functionalism" is frequently associated with the Bronislaw Malinowski tradition that evaluates how different, seemingly unrelated, aspects of society or material goods interact with each other and how they support the people who carry that particular culture (Malinowski 2006:164). Functionalism posits that cultures must maintain for their members, and not the social system as a whole. Another important aspect of functionalism is that not everything must be beneficial for the culture. Despite the shortcomings of functionalism, understanding the change in functionalism posited by Malinowski is essential to analysing the role of neo-institutionalism.

Despite the association with Malinowski, the father of functionalism is Emile Durkheim. Evident in his writings, one of Durkheim's primary concerns is how different aspects of a society interact with other parts of the culture as a whole; in other words, functionalism. Durkheim is one of the first people to write about functionalism, despite never using the term. Instead, Durkheim discusses social facts. He defines social facts as external and coercive phenomena, separate from biological phenomena, that, "…can exist without being at all useful…" (Durkheim 2006a:79). Utilizing this idea, Durkheim posits that human behaviour reflects the actual social structure of a society and it is through these actions that the framework can be defined (Durkheim 2006a:81). He is not suggesting that researchers take the social fact at face value though, but rather that social facts are a tool used to help uncover the principles of the society (Durkheim 2006b:50). The problem with this philosophy is that social facts, and by extension function, are predicated on a value judgement which is never made explicit. While functionalism made sizable contributions to the concepts of function, society, and social structure, the naturalistic holist ontology of social facts is not the primary philosophy of this research project. The discussion of social facts and their use in interpreting broad cultural rules is applicable, though, in the use of neo-institutional theory (discussed below).

The philosophical 'sibling' to functionalism, interpretive social science is another hermeneutic theory. Ontologically distinct from functionalism, interpretive social science is concerned with the rational behaviour of individuals (Weber 1947:115-188). Where functionalist enquiry is based on the idea that a culture can be studied like a language, interpretive social science focuses on what is said within that language. The difference in interpretive social science is more in line with a broad hermeneutic philosophy focusing on analysing meaning. Foundational to interpretive social science is that humans endow social events with meaning and significance. The meaning and significance manifests beliefs and values as real material forces which impact the social system (Weber 2006b:364). The interpretive view is directly relevant to this research project because, while using hermeneutic philosophy to capture the lived experience, the specific focus is broadened from explanation to interpretation. In addition to general interpretive social science, there is a need for interpreting the nonverbal communication inherent in tattoos. Understanding the lived experience, interpreting tattoos, and meaning of stigma creates different forms of discourse that are materially produced and maintained.

Symbolic Anthropology

The interpretive social science theory has since developed to include symbols in the form of symbolic anthropology. Initially proposed in 1973 by Clifford Geertz, symbolic anthropology emphasizes ways of analysing meaning and their relationship to the actors within a society (Geertz 1973). The premise of this theory is that social life is defined as the creation and negotiation of meaning regarding symbols in the culture (Geertz 1973:6). The form that these symbols can take vary as widely as cultures themselves, encompassing tattoos, language, clothing, art, and music, for example. According to this theory, in order to analyse the symbols specific to a cultural group, the social scientist must disregard the eclectic notions of culture that make up the "conceptual morass," and focus instead on a narrow, semiotic concept of culture in which analysis is an interpretive science in search of meaning (Geertz 1973:5).

Interestingly, the label "symbolic anthropology" was not used by the formational thinkers of the theory. In reality, the term was likely coined by opponents as a sort of shorthand in order to discuss a few different schools of thought (Ortner 1984:128). The different theories that were originally clumped together have resulted in a contemporary

field that is, similarly to other theoretical approaches, fissured. While the underlying principle of symbolic anthropology is to take a semiotic approach to interpreting a constructed cultural reality, the means by which symbols are approached differ. The conceptualization of symbols has two major variants in the school: one proposed by Geertz and the other by Victor Turner. The Geertzian school posits that the approach to understand and read symbols is to focus on how, "…symbols operate as vehicles of culture" (Ortner 1984:129). Symbols are then an embodiment of culture through which individuals communicate their worldview among themselves and to others. More clearly, the Geertzian focus is how symbols influence the way people think about the world. The second understanding of symbols come from structural functionalist Victor Turner who saw symbols as, "…operators in the social process, things that, when put together in certain arrangements in certain contexts (especially rituals), produce essentially social transformations" (Ortner 1984:131). According to this view, symbols act as a mechanism to maintain social solidarity. Turnerian thought is less concerned with how symbols shape the ethos of individuals in a culture and more focused on what role symbols have in producing social transformations (e.g. resolution of social conflict). As such, the Turnerian school of thought is more frequently applied to ritual analysis (Turner 1967, 1969). For the purpose of consistency, Geertz's conceptualization of symbols will be the understanding used in this project.

Contemporary social scientists use symbolic anthropology to define status, describe rituals, explain links and boundaries between cultures, and investigate identity (Schildkrout 2004). The primary methodology for interpreting meaning from symbols is through ethnographic research. The researcher needs to perform "thick description," which is, "sorting out the structures of signification […] and determining their social ground and import" (Geertz 1973:9). A researcher working within this theoretical framework needs to embrace the idea of thick description because the interpretation of meanings, both intended and perceived, from nonverbal communication is inherently ambiguous. Cultural connotations must be portrayed accurately, which means that a member of the culture must affirm any proposed interpretation (Yuan 2007:79–80).

The heart of symbolic anthropology lies in the understanding that there is a difference between a sign, significant to an individual, and a symbol, which is representative of something larger to a group of people. For a sign to become a symbol within a culture, there must be a shared cultural system of meaning among the members of a society (Geertz 1973:8). While the tattoos of an individual may have specific

stories attached to them regarding, for example, the participant's family, life story, or religious experience, their importance lies in how the participants assign meaning to the tattoos of other individuals. Further importance is placed on how they use this understanding to address questions about the self and the nature of others beyond, or in place of, verbal communication.

Contemporary social scientists utilize symbolic anthropology to study how the body takes on symbolic meaning, the commodification of the body, and how symbols are read differently by individuals within and excluded from a culture (Scheper-Hughes 2002; Trunev 2010; Wacquant 1995; Wohlrab et al. 2008). Precautions must be taken when utilizing this theoretical framework, so as not to simplify the culture as a purely symbolic system. By distancing the theoretical structure from cognitive anthropology and structuralism, the researcher is able to avoid the dangers of isolating cultural analysis from the informed logic of actual daily life. Symbolic anthropology thus locates culture and ethnography within the semiotic turn of anthropology and the general interest of hermeneutical analysis in other disciplines.

Similar to other theoretical orientations, symbolic anthropology has suffered a number of criticisms. The primary criticism revolves around the idea of "thick description." The criticism is that when this method is utilized in an ethnographic study, researchers are trying to understand the symbols of a culture and relate them to their own (Asad 1983). The proponents of symbolic anthropology posit that this criticism is invalid because the goal is not to relate the interpretation of the symbols to another culture, but rather understand how the symbols make up the complex matrix of a specific society (Keesing 1987). Another criticism of symbolic anthropology is that what a symbol is and how symbols should be analysed were never clearly explained by Geertz when he proposed the theory (Lieberson 1984:11). This criticism is significant because Geertz proceeds from an intuitive grasp of what is important for symbols and what constitutes a symbol. As such, a large debate has centred on the lack of clear criteria for analysing and evaluating cultural interpretations of symbols. Given these shortcomings, symbolic anthropology is not best suited for portraying issues of power, economics, historical change, and interests; nonetheless, it does an excellent job of clarifying participants' viewpoints, thereby allowing for the analysis of other concepts, such as identity and performance. In this light, the project draws upon figurational sociology to analyse the issues of power and economy.

Figurational Sociology

Situated in the humanist hermeneutic approach is figurational sociology. Developed by Norbert Elias, figurational sociology investigates the process surrounding the emergence of a social feature and the examination of the causal links related to its development (Hughes 1988:145). With the focus on this process, Elias strove to achieve a more compatible or harmonious relationship between research and theory by incorporating micro and macro trends to illuminate their interrelation (Elias 1994:446). While the concern for process is fundamental in figuration sociology, it is the deep interrelationship between social control and the human psychic structure that becomes manifest in research utilizing this theory. Specifically, Elias argues that psychogenesis and sociogenesis are deeply connected (Elias 1994:449).

With this assertion in mind, figurational sociology advances the research topic by framing the examination of chains of interdependence in a workplace as a reordering of the individuals who constitute them into different, shifting forms. Furthermore, with figurational sociology, the research is better able to examine the process of tattooed individuals emerging as a stigma and their evolution to an acceptable, yet still stigmatized, form within the white collar workplace social system. Finally, the use of figurational sociology benefits the research project because it highlights and connects the long-term perspective of 'the white collar workplace' with asymmetrical power balances inherent within that structure by focusing on the individual.

The notion of power connects to a variety of different academic fields and, consequently, is understood in a variety of different ways. Unfortunately, that makes it a complicated subject to address. The figurational approach to power is, unlike some other theories or fields, relatively simple. Power is a relationship between two (bi-polar) or frequently more (multi-polar) people, integral to human relationships, and can be unevenly distributed (Elias 1978:74). As such, power is not a reifying term for some standalone object at rest, but more closely equated to a set of balances constantly in flux. Utilizing this conception of power, the analysis of power among individuals within an organization can be clearly expressed. However, in addition to individuals, the same power structure can be used to analyse organizations as a whole. While the type of power 'game' individuals and organizations play may differ, the underlying principles of power and the resulting chains of interdependence all situate themselves in the realm of analysis guided by figurational sociology. The expression of the differing power

relationships remarks upon what can be stigmatized and whether or not that stigma will become established.

In addition to examining the process surrounding tattoos, power, and stigma, figurational sociology also plays a role in informing and interpreting how tattoos are understood. Instead of looking at personal motivation to receive tattoos and applying the findings to every situation, figurational sociology posits that a social act, in this case tattooing, cannot be understood outside of the figurations in which they were produced. These figurations, obviously a key aspect of figurational sociology, are complex webs of social relations that link group and individual social interdependencies (Atkinson 2004). The interdependencies connect different agents of socialization including family, workplace, religion, and leisure which binds individuals to each other through large, extended networks. Important to note, the individuals who comprise any given figuration can certainly change over time. In such a case, the figurations do continue to exist. A figuration will only cease to exist if there are no individuals at all (Krieken 1998). The importance of figurational continuation is that the social interactions among the individuals in the figuration will also continue. The social interactions that occur within figurations leads to "habituses" which are easily conceptualized as the common ways of thinking (Elias 1996). During the socialization process, the habituses becomes internalized and, as such, socially learned behaviour. The discussion ties back to tattoos because tattooing narratives illustrate that tattoos are learned cultural habituses. In this case, the understanding of body modifications as normative behaviour is learned and then reinforced through interdependencies (Atkinson 2004).

Building upon the idea that the normalization of tattoos is a learned habitus, tattoos would reinforce "I-WE" figurational relationships (Elias 1978;1991a). Within most circles, the tattooed body would be the "I" and start with intimate "WE" groups. Intimate "WE" groups, another way of stating primary groups, consist of individuals critical to the development of the self such as family, friends, and peers which align with the primary agents of socialization. Eventually, the intimate "WE" groups extend to secondary or larger groups, such as social classes and religious groups, connected by long chains of interdependency (Atkinson 2004). The long chains of interdependency explain why sweeping views of tattoos can be found among individuals in specific generations and social classes. As such, the use of figurational sociology inevitably informs why and how tattoos are understood in different social situation.

One of the more prolific concepts found throughout Elias' work is the focus on social transformation found within long-term Western nations. Initially, the social control found within these social configurations relied on external force and coercion. To clarify, the starting point that Elias is referring to is not a specific date or event in the recent past; rather, he is discussing the social configurations in a pre-Medieval Western nation. However, as Western nations developed and the roles of social institutions began to vary, individuals began to rely on other people more frequently, resulting in increased cognizance to the needs of other actors (Elias 1994). Understanding the needs of other actors within social configurations results in predictability, and thus control, of personal actions. Predictability and control are foundationally important to complex social figuration because, as social institutions become more multifaceted and specific, so do the independent roles of the players interacting with them (Elias 1983; 1994). As the social configurations change, personality structures of individuals are also subject to changes. Specifically, this results in cultural habits that provide high levels of norm commitment, goal orientation, and other intrinsic rewards to become part of the collective habitus (Elias 1996).

Utilizing the above idea as a foundation, Elias argues that individuals in Western nations self-regulate self-display and public conduct due to a fear of status loss. The fear of status loss resulting from norm violating behaviour is a change in social control that represents a "civilizing" change as it is dependent upon shame avoidance becoming part of the shared cultural habitus (Elias 1994). In this civilizing process, the body is critically important because it is the primary vehicle through which adherence to social norms and pressures inherent in the social configures are communicated. However, as the body is a communicative form for these social norms, it is also a symbolic text by which status and social distinction are performed (Atkinson 2003) but personal control is inscribed on the skin (Elias 1983; 1996). Utilizing these figurational ideas, tattoos and tattooed individuals can be examined as a symbolic text that goes beyond the established academic perspective of tattooed people as impulsive, social misfits, or deviant (Armstrong & Pace-Murphy 1997; Baldaev 2009; Wohlrap et al. 2009). In particular, figurational sociology highlights how popular uses of tattooing, "…reflect a collective sensitivity to the social importance of publicly performed inner restraint and acceptance of established cultural body habits" (Atkinson 2004). Furthermore, figurational sociology encourages tattoos to be understood by their embedded communications and the social interdependencies they express.

Despite the initial founding of figurational sociology in the late 1930's, contemporary sociologists still utilize this philosophy to understand the interplay between social, cultural, and psychological processes; the commodification of the body in western culture; and the relationship between deviance and body art (Atkinson 2003; Goodman 1993; Larsen et al. 2014). Figurational sociology does not have clear or fixed doctrines established defining it as a traditional theoretical approach. Instead, figurational sociology is a research tradition with a focus on the causal web of significance surrounding social interaction. Since the approach is looking to explain, but more so to interpret, the level of meaning surrounding people, the approach is best classified as a hermeneutic philosophical approach.

Neo-Institutionalism:

Rooted in sociology and a subset of organizational theory, neo-institutional theory seeks to understand the behaviour of organizations by means of broad cultural rules (Greenwood et al. 2008). The broad cultural rules result in the homogeneity of organizations within a field or discipline forcing the theory to examine the actors which are established as social entities who situate patterns of meaning and actions referred to as the 'rationalized environment' (Hasselbladh & Kallinikos 2000:698). In other words, the general perspective this theory fosters is to examine relationships between environments and organizations in order to understand the socially constructed organizational practices.

While there must be trendsetters within organizational disciplines who influence the 'rationalized environment' of the field, the generalized stigmatization or lessening of stigmatization within the white collar workplace is a manifestation for the patterns of meaning and actions. The notion of the 'rationalized environment' is doubly important because it is informed by the power relationships inherent in figurational sociology. What defines the leaders in a field, how much influence they have over any given scenario, and how they relate to others playing the same power 'game' is all framed and structured by the figurational notion of power discussed above. In short, relating the court scenario presented by Elias (1994) to contemporary white collar companies, the situation in a given company can only be understood in terms of how individuals relate to one another. Informed by neo-institutionalism and expanded, the ways in which

individuals in a given company relate to each other can be derived from a larger court scenario where companies are the players.

Neo-institutionalism is used in this research project in order to more accurately analyse the generalized stigma surrounding tattoos in the 'rationalized environment'. Regardless of the acceptability, or lack thereof, of tattoos within the white collar workplace, the different organizations are operating in the 'rationalized environment' indicating a shared system of meaning connecting to the figurational sociology and symbolic anthropology frameworks.

Working Together:

Symbolic anthropology, figurational sociology, and neo-institutionalism are clearly separate philosophical approaches to understand social entities. While each theory is suited to approach different aspects of a social entity, this study does not frame them as disparate worlds of thought; rather, they are combined in order to capture the lived experience of tattooed workers.

Admittedly, the proposal to utilize both symbolic anthropology and figurational sociology is certain to rub both symbolic anthropologists and figurationalists the wrong way. At a surface level, it makes sense why strict adherents to either field would be sceptical. In the academic world, anthropologists have always had an unofficial rivalry with sociology which can be attributed to limited scholarly resources, intellectual 'turf battles', and differing philosophical approaches to social entities (Kain et al. 2006). Combining the two fields could appear noncommittal to some or, intellectually worse, treasonous to one of the social sciences. Additionally, some figurationalists disagree that a symbolic element could be involved in the construction, implementation, and preservation of figurations. The main point of contention is that symbols are subject to the interpretation of individuals and those interpretations change over time. In actuality, combining the three theoretical approaches discussed above accentuates the strengths of each while mitigating their shortcomings allowing for a holistic construction of the lived experience.

The idea of "interpretation" is a major junction between figurational sociology and symbolic anthropology upon which their connection becomes evident. Figurations, regardless of the population involved, necessitate interpretation on the part of the researcher. Whatever the social act under investigation, the researcher must illustrate

how it is understood within the given figuration and interpret the different causal links allowing for an understanding of habituses within the figuration. Interpretation is also inherent within the act of studying and interpreting symbols. Both verbal and nonverbal symbols require interpretation (Adams 2009b). However, in order to mitigate the inherent ambiguity of symbols (Yuan 2007) in a given interconnected social group, imbedded exemplars or key informants must be used to affirm specific cultural connotations. This practice, well established in symbolic anthropology, is the same concept of interpreting different social actions to understand habituses found in figurational sociology. Both of these approaches aim to capture the internalized and common way of thinking through the act of interpretation.

The emphasis on "interpretation" among both of these theoretical perspectives aligns, but the foci of investigation can vary wildly. The wildly disjointed research foci are not a detriment though. In fact, it is this variability in research foci that illustrates an exigency to study the body and the subsequent modifications humans perform to it through these theoretical gazes. The seemingly simple concept of "interpretation" becomes a powerful tool for interacting with the body as a text of culture (Bordo 1989). Namely, that is how the body, its variant forms, and any modifications performed to it are influenced by the interactions with others in a given culture.

Further building on this conceptual bridge, one can look at the issues of change. Like most social and cultural ideals, individual interpretation of symbols can change over time. That said, the ability to accurately interpret a symbol is based upon one's membership in said group which also changes over time. Therefore, the changing interpretation of a symbol at any given moment by members of the group illustrates overall changes occurring in the figuration. Those changes can be investigated as a whole or further explored in the different parties linked by the chains of interdependence. Regardless of how the conclusions are understood, the act of changing interpretations is fundamentally important to conceptualizing how figurational sociology and symbolic anthropology work together.

The changes in symbol interpretation also acts as the means by which the theoretical model connects to neo-institutionalism. The changes in the figuration that happen over time is reflected in the system of figurations that make up the rationalized environment. As noted above, the rationalized environment is characterized by a shared system of meaning which is a shared habitus. The shared habitus is a result of interpretation that stems from the junction of symbolic anthropology and figurational

sociology. Furthermore, the idea of a rationalized environment works extremely well with the notion of figurational sociology. The purpose of neo-institutionalism is to understand the behaviour of organizations through shared cultural rules. The organizations themselves form a large figuration connected by the varying chains of interdependency. Within this figuration, each organization operates under a shared set of habituses. The habituses are shaped by trendsetters which is not so different from the quintessential Eliasian court example. The trendsetters play the part of royalty while the other organizations are the aristocracy comprising the court.

One final aspect that ties these theoretical models together is the idea of time. While this study in particular is not longitudinal in nature, drawing upon historical notions of tattoos in American culture is particularly important. The importance is connected regarding changes in interpretation of symbols. In order to capture the current lived experience of tattooed workers, historical approaches must frame the current situation. While a tattooed worker might be stigmatized in some way now, the question arises what that means without some historical tether. While symbolic anthropology is not suited for looking at historical changes, figurational sociology is particularly suited to do so. That in mind, using figurational sociology in conjunction with a figurational underpinning for neo-institutionalism allows this conceptual model to address the individual as well as the rationalized environment and, most importantly, what that means.

Conclusion

After looking at the different philosophies and theories presented above, questions about the human condition are inevitable. One such question that begs to be addressed is if the human condition, however conceived, experienced, and expressed, is resistant to study by a sole theoretical approach. As it applies to this research project, the answer is yes. In order to combat this resistance, the project is addressed primarily through a multipronged hermeneutic philosophical approach while drawing slightly upon neoinstitutional philosophy. Specifically, this focuses on symbolic anthropology, figurational sociology, and neo-institutional theory.

The purpose of this chapter is to determine and explain which philosophies and theories are best suited towards this research project. The ontology, epistemology, and methodology of the philosophies discussed above, humanism and hermeneutics, are

aimed to indicate how the study of society can be scientific. The question, then, is not on *if* the study of society can be scientific, but rather how researchers use philosophy and theory to balance their own social, economic, and political commitments with the scientific pursuit. The intellectual foundation of this study is woven throughout the data analysis, but also through the review and analysis of literature. Before analysing the contemporary world of tattooed white collar workers, it is vital to look at history. The sociogenic changes surrounding tattoos and the tattoo figuration elucidate patterns that impact the contemporary world.

Chapter 3 – "Tribal tattoos are just trash": Tattoo Culture, History, Popularization, & Change; Late 1800s Shift – Golden Age of Tattooing

In the United States, the 1980s was a time characterized by big hair, clashing colours, shoulder pads, Quaaludes, cocaine, the death of disco, the rise of new wave music, and hairy chests. As individuals and as a society, the United States understand that this is no longer in vogue. While the 80s are currently having a minor resurgence, the question is: would you wear 80s attire to an important business meeting you have tomorrow? Or, would you offer a bump of cocaine and suggest a double martini lunch to your boss before returning to meet with clients? For both of these questions, the answer is, generally, absolutely not. However, does that mean that sociocultural aspects prevalent during the 1980s are worth ignoring? Again, absolutely not.

At this point, it is reasonable to question whether this is still the same research project. It is. Contemporary trends in aesthetics, fashion, drug use, music, and everything else is built upon shared history. The past is used to inform the modern and impacts sociocultural understandings. As a result of the analytical power inherent in sociocultural history, it is worth taking a moment to look at the history of tattooing. Simply put, tattooing, like music, fashion, etc. changes over time and plays on similarly changing social norms and values. Understanding the changing social atmosphere surrounding tattoos allows for the understand of why, and how, the contemporary United States views tattoos the way they do. Specific to this project, conceptualizing how tattooing is understood throughout a relatively recent history informs the lived experience of contemporary white collar workers. Additionally, the variance in attitudes towards tattoos, illustrated across the epochs discussed in this, and the next, chapter serve to establish patterns across history that are still evident today. Namely, across all the eras of tattooing presented here, the notion of freedom is omnipresent.

This chapter begins with a very brief discussion on the origins of tattooing and how the historical analysis fits within the analytical and theoretical orientation of this project. Proceeding the preliminary conversation, the chapter focuses on the Late 1800s Shift and the Golden Era of Tattooing. These two epochs are unpacked and discussed from a sociocultural perspective with a focus on tattooing. Again, throughout both of

these eras, the notion of freedom is present. Of course, how freedom is understood across the time periods is also subject to variation.

There is a common myth among Americans, and those with an interest in tattoos, that tattooing was first discovered in Polynesia by Captain James Cook around the 1770s. In fact, the myth suggests that the term 'tattoo' is derived from the Polynesian word *ta-tu* (DeMello 2000). On one hand, there is some accuracy to this idea; but, ascribing to this myth marginalizes the established foothold tattoos already had in Europe (Gustafson 2000) as well other parts of the world (Bulwer 1653; Rosecrans 2000). There are a number of research projects that discuss the history of tattoos in the West (e.g. DeMello 2000; Gustafson 2000; Rosecrans 2000); however, for the purpose of this project, the important point is that the popularity and acceptability of tattoos has waxed and waned over time. The changes have affected the stereotypes associated with tattoos and tattooed individuals, how socially accepted tattoos are, the general purpose of tattoos, and everything in between. The 'discovery' of tattoos in Polynesia by Captain Cook was an impetus for one of the revitalizations of tattoos in the Western world. Focusing on the end of the 19th century through the early 2000s provides solid bookends to inform the contemporary lives of American tattooed workers.

Admittedly, examining such a relatively short time period through a figurational gaze might be a red flag for some figurationalists. After all, a primary concern of figurational sociology is how social transformations over a long period of time influence the social actors' perceptions and interactions with social behaviours; in this case, tattoos (Elias 1994). Selecting the end of the 19th century as a bookend might seem an arbitrary staring point; however, the time period is situated in a unique area of human history. Approximately 75 years after the Industrial Revolution, 25 years after the start of modern fashion, and before many of the dramatic social shifts associated with tattoos, the late 1800s is a time that encapsulates a period of relative economic and social stability before the tumultuous 20th century.

The Industrial Revolution, one of the primary historical economic movements in Western history, was a volatile time that resulted in countless social changes (e.g. rise of modern corporations, beginning of a manufacturing economy, increase in urbanization, rapid technological change). The end of the 19th century was a time in which most of those changes calmed down and became well established before the next set of rapid changes associated with the 20th century began. Furthermore, to examine the lived

experience of contemporary white collar workers necessitates a white collar work environment; something that was established with the Industrial Revolution (Mills 1951). Certainly, a project examining the lived experience of white collar workers could predate the Industrial Revolution and examine the factors that shaped the social environment and the resulting sociogenesis; however, the research aims of such a project would be much broader than this one. Since the aim of this study is not to capture the lived experience of white collar workers, but rather *tattooed* white collar workers, the emphasis is on the history of tattoos in conjunction with economic history illustrating why the end of the 19th century has been chosen as a starting point. In order to maintain a figurational approach, the focus of this section is on the shifting social interdependencies that have had an impact on individual personalities and social behaviours while commenting on the resulting sociogenesis.

The Late 1800s Shift

Already past the wonder of "rediscovering" tattoos that can be attributed to the Captain Cook Polynesian expeditions, Europeans and North Americans shared a fascination and repulsion towards the tattooed body. The fascination is clearly illustrated through the parading and formalized display of tattooed bodies, such as the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia and the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. At these events, as well as others like them, there were exhibits of "native villages" so that fairgoers could observe tattooed native families in an "authentic" cultural environment (Bogdan 1988). The obvious fascination of fairgoers is starkly contrasted by the colonialist overtones whereby a 'savage' or 'primitive' group is divorced from their social and cultural environment in order to be displayed for gawking, or indeed shocking, amusement of 'civilized' folk. This fascination, and subsequent repulsion, of the tattooed form in North America was influenced by the European colonial connection between the tattooed body and primitivism. The 1876 Centennial Exposition is among one of the first staged public exhibitions of 'primitive people' in the United States (DeMello 2000).

Indeed, the display of 'primitive peoples' at major cultural events was done for more than just sheer shock value; it created a dichotomy between civilization and savagery. The practice of displaying people for the purpose of public ogling paved the way for 'freak shows' which involved the exhibition of tattooed bodies. The first 'freak

show', appearing in 1901 at the World Fair in Buffalo, contained heavily tattooed individuals (Mifflin 1997). The dichotomy of civilization and savagery, coupled with the accepted display of the tattooed body, reified a social subtext that had been hinted at; a cultural connection between tattoos and the carnival.

The exhibition of 'primitive peoples' at freak shows became a highly popular, and thusly lucrative, trade that Americans and Europeans indulged in. At times, the individuals displayed were actually indigenous folk who were tattooed according to their specific cultural traditions. In these instances, though, the tattooed natives were often held as slaves and displayed in chains and loincloths (Atkinson 2003). While this practice certainly existed, the trend began to shift from tattooed natives towards heavily tattooed white people with invented histories and stories. The shift can primarily be attributed to P.T. Barnum, an eminent character in the freak show industry and partial namesake of the modern Barnum & Bailey Circus. P.T. Barnum displayed a number of white tattooed individuals with falsified pasts; of which Prince Constantine was the most successful and gained substantial notoriety (Mifflin 1997). Prince Constantine, along with other notable performers such as 'The Great Omi (a.k.a Horace Riddler) and James O'Connell, presented themselves as rulers of tribes or captives of non-Christian savages during which they were forced to undergo torture in the form of tattooing (DeMello 2000). The fanciful tales of exotic tribes, blood curdling torture, and daring escapes became overwhelmingly popular across the United States and Europe. These tales, coupled with their vast popularity, cemented tattooing as a part of North American working-class life.

Contemporaneously with the surging freak show and carnival trends, an already established practice of tattooing among the British and American navies gained public attention. Illustrated by the Captain Cook Polynesian expeditions, sailors were among the first individuals to be exposed to tattooed peoples. Despite the obvious framing of tattoos as marks of savagery during the 1800s, sailors frequently received tattoos from the populations they encountered (Guest 2000). The tattooed sailors, working-class individuals in both the United States and Britain, became iconic for their fellow working-class individuals. In this context, the tattooed body represented all the romanticized ideas surrounding the life of a sailor: adventure, exploration, travel, and freedom. While certainly important to the discussion of tattoos in contemporary Europe, these traits became ingrained in the American working-class (DeMello 2000).

What makes this period especially interesting is the blatant juxtaposition of the tattooed savage and the free-spirited sailor. Mirroring the savage/civilized dichotomy seen in the sterile displays of 'primitive peoples' from large fairs, the public perception of tattoos in the United States became deeply incongruous. The shift from displaying actual indigenous peoples to white individuals helped alleviate this perception by divorcing tattoos from exotic displays and furthering the incorporation (and arguably normalization) of tattooing into American life. In this sense, sailors and carnies acted as the medium by which tattoos changed from a mark of savagery to a mark of freedom. The result of this transformation was an increase in demand for tattoos among the American layman.

With an increased demand for tattooed people on the midway and general desire for tattoos rising, there was a logical increase in professional tattooists in the United States. At the forefront of this movement was Milton Hildebrandt; often hailed as the first professional tattooist in North America. Hildebrandt was responsible for tattooing many sailors and soldiers and instrumental in establishing the American tradition of tattooed servicemen (McCabe 1997). Prior to establishing a permanent shop, Hildebrandt travelled around the country tattooing soldiers on both sides of the Civil War (Sanders 1989)[1]. Upon ceasing his nomadic tattooing around the country, Hildebrandt settled in New York City during the 1870s and worked out of his atelier (Parry 1933). At his atelier, Hildebrandt tattooed many servicemen; however, he also worked with a recently emerging clientele: "high society personnel".

High society, as it is used here, is specifically referring to individuals occupying a high socioeconomic status and/or have a significant amount of social prestige. Those individuals who made up the high society had substantial access to resources which allowed them, like sailors, to travel frequently. Hildebrandt is well documented to have tattooed men and women of American high society including a "Bedouin emblem" on the arm of a governor's daughter, the blush on two women who "offered no end of money" for the effort, some "private kind of marks" on an affluent gentleman who lived on Fifth Avenue, and full leg sleeves of roses that covered the sexual organs on "the scion of a rich [American] family" (Parry 1933; Sanders 1989).

[1] As a point of note: tattooing during this time was performed by piercing the skin with a metal stick whose tip was covered in ink; not dissimilar to the contemporary "stick-and-poke" trend.

It was during this same time period that English society influence interacted with American. English society gentlemen and women were also receiving tattoos. The difference, though, is that the tattooing trend was not exactly new for English high society. As a result of colonialism, English patricians had been exposed to "exotic" cultures and subsequently been receiving tattoos for some years; however, they were simply not discussed in polite conversation. During the late 1800s, the social faux pas of discussing tattoos was replaced with public adoration which aligned with the changes occurring in American high society. One such notable example can be drawn from the well-publicized Tichborne trials in the early 1870s. During the trial, it was disclosed that Roger Tichborne had received distinctive tattoos (anchor, heart, cross, and his initials) 20 years prior to the trial (Woodruff 1957). The tattoo evidence acted as a primary means to settle the case. The Tichborne case is only one such example of tattooing among English society. Among others, rewards posted in the *London Standard* for information on the kidnapped tattooed daughters of English elites and *New York Times* articles discussing the rate of English aristocratic tattooing illustrate that this was a practice already observed in English society.

Even though tattooing among English society may have predated the trend in America, there is an even more socially elite group that influences both parties: English royalty. When exactly tattooing among English royalty began adds a bit of opaqueness to the conversation. The lack of clarity can be attributed to King Harold II. King Harold II received tattoos on his torso when he made a pilgrimage to The Holy Land. The exact date of application is unclear; however, those tattoos were used to identify his body in 1066 C.E. when he died at the Battle of Hastings (Rosen 2015). While this is fact, accounting for King Harold II's tattoos significantly predates the scope under investigation for this study. If his tattoos are used for analysis, then one must account for all the social factors surrounding his decision to receive and live with tattoos at the time. As such, the English royalty that is of particular importance for this study, and is attributed with starting the trend of publicly displaying tattoos among the social elite in both England and the United States, is the twentieth English Prince of Wales, Albert Edward (later King Edward VII).

Edward departed (or was sent by Queen Victoria, depending on the account) for an extensive tour of the Middle East in 1861 after Prince Albert's death (Bentley-Cranch 1992). During his time in Jerusalem, Edward had a Jerusalem cross tattooed onto his arm which he would frequently show and discuss (Rosen 2015). Edward's

return to England heralded the acceptable public discussion and practice of tattooing among the English and American elite. The acceptability of tattoos among the social elites was further perpetuated by Edwards' sons, the ninth Duke of York, George Albert (later King George V) and his brother Albert Victor, the first Duke of Clarence and Avondale. These two members of the English royal family were arguably the greatest impetus for the acceptability of tattooing among the English & American elite.

George V visited Japan with his brother in 1882 to visit Emperor Meiji. During the diplomatic mission, the brothers met with a tattoo artist who marked them both with a dragon on their arms (Rosen 2015). These tattoos, placed in a highly visible location, were easily observed by members of English society as well as other European aristocracy. As noted, the practice spread quickly among these groups, with the English nobility and society folk thusly receiving copies of the dragons, coats-of-arms, images of fox hunts, flowers, the five-pound note, and names of sweethearts (Angel 2018). In addition to English high society, tattooing became noticeable among other European aristocratic families. In order to illustrate how extensive this trend became, a select roster of rulers and their courtiers from the 1880s and 1890s follows: Czar Nicholas II of Russia; Grand Dukes Alexis, Constantine, and Michael of Russia; Prince Henry of Prussia (brother of Kaiser Wilhelm); Queen Olga of Greece, King George of Greece; King Oscar of Sweden; Prince & Princess Waldemar of Denmark; and Prince Phillipe de Caramen-Chimay of contemporary Belgium (Parry 1933).

The prevalence and popularity of tattooing among the European and American social elite, coupled with the established practice found in carnivals, leaves this point of tattoo history in a liminal state. All considered, tattoos occupied multiple social positions whereby tattoos were for the elite, for the free spirited, for the "savage", and for the entrepreneurial. Connecting these disparate themes is a major concept that has a lasting influence on tattoos throughout history: freedom.

Freedom is an idea that connects how tattoos were seen at the time as well as the dissimilar parties that received tattoos. The notion of freedom is observed with the social elites due to the simple fact that in order to receive tattoos, one must have freedom of time and finances to travel. While the tattoos were certainly symbolic of the economic status of these individuals, they were also symbolic of the social freedom required to receive them whilst maintaining socioeconomic status. Freedom has an obvious connection to the sailors and free-spirited attitude associated with them at the time. As discussed above, sailors were seen as free of the mundane humdrum of

everyday life. Tattoos were symbolic of the adventure sailors had in exploring far-flung places and escaping the ennui of civilized monotony.

On a similar vein, the association of "savagery" or "barbarism" with tattoos is also underpinned by the concept of freedom. The 'primitive peoples' were certainly exoticized; however, they were inherently free of civilized social control. These groups were free from society as the general public understood it, and the marketing done by carnival owners reified this perception. Finally, the entrepreneurial connection to tattoos, illustrated by carnival owners, carnival performers, and tattooists, is also deeply connected to the idea of freedom. These individuals had the freedom to make a profit utilizing tattoos in some form. While not as immediately recognizable to the general public as the previous points, the importance of this is not to be understated. The freedom and ability to take advantage of tattoos as a concept, as well as an industry, set the stage for future perceptions of tattoos in the United States. Furthermore, this practice became anchored in a deeply American concept: success in a Capitalist market.

Undeniably, the fad ended; otherwise, there would not be a large portion of the United States that still associates tattoos with social deviance. The question becomes, why did the fad end? The answer, not as succinct as the question, is rooted in two aspects: changing technology and the increasingly licentious perception of carnivals.

Tattoos during this time period were done by hand. The tattooist would hold a metal rod with one or more needles attached to the end, dip it in ink, and pierce the skin creating the indelible mark most are familiar with. While this practice still exists with some variations in contemporary cultures around the world, such as *sak yant* in Thailand which is done with a meter long bamboo rod carved down to a point, or done as an artistic style by modern tattoo artists, such as Sarah Lu, the practice has mostly been replaced by a mechanized tattoo machine. The mechanized "coiled" tattoo machine was popularized by Samuel O'Reilly in 1891 and is a play on Thomas Edison's electric pen (DeMello 2000)[2]. Changing from a hand pricked method to a mechanized one allowed the tattooist to use multiple needles at the same time. Multiple needles, moving far fast than a human can move, means more tattoos can be produced. Tattoos produced with a machine are less painful, cheaper, and easier to administer. Furthermore, using multiple

[2] Since 1891, the basic machine has stayed practically unchanged and is still used today. Contemporary tattoo machines either work off the "coiled" design or a similar "rotary" design. Both designs have the capability to be powered by electricity or compressed air. Either way (design or power), the principle is the same and for the purpose of this study, tattoo machines have remained unchanged since the late 1800s.

needles allows for outlining and shading at the same time. The changes associated with tattoo machines gave rise to the Americana style of tattooing: bold black lines, heavy black shading, and a splash of select colours.

The result of switching to a tattoo machine, more quantity, less pain, less expensive, and easier to administer, drastically changed the way tattoos were viewed. Of course, this was not an overnight process. Due to the increased ease of access stemming from the invention of tattoo machines, tattoos slowly became less associated with the social elite and more commonly associated with the general public. One no longer needed excessive wealth or to embark on an extended adventure to receive a tattoo. The slow shift away from associating exclusivity or prestige with tattoos set the stage for the changing perceptions found at the start of the 20th century.

By the early 1900s, the viewing of tattooed carnival folk had become prosaic. A tattooed individual could no longer make a living simply being tattooed and possibly with a fanciful (and false) story about their past. In order to combat this, carnival operators combined forces with circus acts to displace the 'live savage' exhibit with tattooed sword swallowers, tattooed bearded ladies, and tattooed lion tamers (Rubin 1988). Tattooed everything and everyone became the new, and required, norm for carnivals to maintain public interest.

In order to increase public attendance, and indirectly supplement faltering income, female tattooed attractions were given the centre ring. These women, sometimes established performers, sometimes girlfriends or wives of performers, were seduced with promises of fortune and fame (Thompson 2015). These women, still capitalizing on exotic tales of capture and forced tattooing, pushed men out of the limelight. These women challenged the stereotypical perception of women at the time as well as feminized a culturally masculine practice (Wroblewski 1992). Exposing their tattooed bodies, these female performers aroused the male members of the audience while simultaneously stigmatizing themselves with the female members of the audience. Typically speaking, these acts would reach a climax during which the woman would strip in front of the crowd and thus frame the performance as softcore pornography. In addition to the predictable crowd drawing effect this type of performance had, concluding a performance in this manner had the tangential consequence of altering the general perception of the carnival. What was once a fun pastime for the family quickly became an event laden with a libidinous atmosphere. These bona fide raree shows altered the way in which tattoos were viewed; shifting from something associated with

the exotic to something connected to social and sexual deviance. This licentious body presentation became the means by which the American public could play with deviant practices. The shift in how carnivals were seen by the public, and thus how the tattooed form was understood, created an association between tattoos and opprobrium.

The changes in tattooing technology as well as the increasingly deviant perception of carnivals ends the 19th century and catapults the history of tattoos into the 20th century.



Figure 1: Poster advertising Prince Constantine, a.k.a. George Costentenus ~c. 1880. Image from Circus World Museum.



Figure 2: Czar Nicholas II showing his dragon tattoo c. 1900



Figure 3: Hand-poked tattoo by Sarah Lu titled Dapper Stag. Image from Sarah Lu.



Figure 4: Example of Americana tattoo by Mike Wilson. Image from Mike Wilson.

The Golden Age of Tattooing

Around the turn of the century, tattoos became less associated with the elite while the newly mechanized tattoo application process situated tattoos squarely in the American popular culture. While the mechanized process of tattooing may seem tangentially related to the shift towards popular culture, it is worth noting two points. The first, discussed above, is the affect tattoo machines had on the ease of acquisition. The second, requiring a larger frame of reference, is that the machination of the tattooing process aligns with the results of the Industrial Revolution; specifically, the

perception of mechanical *anything* as the height of modernity. These two points resulted in tattooing exiting from high culture and becoming established in popular culture. As an established, if still deviant, part of popular culture, the individuals who received tattoos during this period were working class men.

Tattoo shops, also called tattoos parlours, became iconic mainstays in major American cities by the early 20th century. Unsurprisingly, as tattooing became increasingly associated with the working class man, the individuals patroning tattoo shops were working class men and military personnel. Tattoo shops were affected by the subversive and deviant perception of tattooing as a bodily practice, directly resulting from the carnival influences in the late 19th century. As a result, tattoo parlours were subject to a socially *de facto* practice of geographically situating in seedier neighbourhoods and staying out of public sight such as in "…the backs of barber shops or pool halls…" (Atkinson 2003:36). Even the most notable tattooists of the time were subject to these pressures, such as Samuel O'Reilly who established his tattoo shop at the mouth of the Thieves Highway in New York City (Parry 1933). As a business that caters to the working class man, tattoo shops were frequented by "tough guys", servicemen, carnival workers, criminals, and social outcasts. These individuals, marginal characters of society, utilized tattoo parlours as social clubs where they would exchange stories of splendour and adventure (McCabe 1997). The shops became hotspots for working class masculinity where stories of exploration, sexual conquest, and war were exchanged among the patrons. Combining the fact that tattoo shops were located in less than reputable locations within a city, had a rough and tumble clientele, and beacons for working class men, social perceptions of tattoos and those who had them changed. The sexually charged and profligate nature of tattoos epitomized during the late 19th century shifted towards icons of patriotism and jingoism.

Before addressing those receiving tattoos, it is worth taking a moment to discuss the people who were creating the tattoos. Tattooists during this time were not the same as contemporary tattooists. The people providing tattoos were, like the people receiving tattoos, predominantly working class men with no artistic training. The tattooists frequently started in another, unrelated, profession and took up tattooing for the supposed easy money that they learned about from men's magazines or other periodicals (DeMello 2000). Tattooists during this time period tended to learn the craft from one of three different avenues. The first, which is frowned upon in the contemporary practice, is trial by fire. The tattoo artists would just go out and tattoo

themselves, their family, and their friends until they learned enough to charge for the act. The second method by which people would learn to tattoo is from a printed pamphlet they purchased from established tattooists. The third is from an apprenticeship where the apprentice would, "…trace flash, cut stencils, clean equipment, fix machines, make needles, and run errands" (DeMello 2000:52). The apprenticeship is most notable because this is the appearance of a semi-formalized training program. In order to have some sort of semi-formalized training program, whatever is being trained for must have shared social understandings of what is acceptable and what is unacceptable. With the introduction of apprenticeships for tattooing, it becomes clear that there is a shared social understanding of what makes an acceptable tattoo compared to an unacceptable tattoo. The shared understanding of tattoo quality indicates that tattooing has undergone a shift from a bodily practice that is just remarkable or gawk worthy, to a craft with differing qualities that result in different social perceptions. Simply put, the apprenticeship programs surrounding tattoos are an indicator of the social acceptance and importance of tattoos at the time.

For the most part, tattooists at the time were not artists. With the shift from hand poked tattoos, a practice that requires a lot of skill, time, and attention to detail, to machined tattoos, the calibre of tattooists fell. Tattoo machines were easily accessible and could be bought from the backs of magazines. For example, the practice of tattooing was advertised as so easy "even a child can do good Tattooing" (Zeis 1952). However, that is not to suggest that very skilled tattooists did not exist. There were a number of them who left lasting impressions on the field. Many of the major tattooists at the time had humorous or outlandish names with no tangible connection to their lives. This can be seen with "Professor" Samuel O'Reilly who created the tattoo machine, Lew "the Jew" Alberts (born Albert Kurzman and worked as a wallpaper designer) who was the first major proponent of flash, "Electric" Elmer Getchell who was the first to utilize negative media for positive publicity, Edward "Dad" Liberty established business cards, Albert "Old Dutch" Herman who kept the hand prick method alive, and Norman "Sailor Jerry" Collins who was widely acknowledged as the most skilled tattooist. The practice of using partial or full pseudonyms was adopted by less skilled tattooists as well, such as "Sailor" Joe Van Hart, "Lame" Leroy, "Texas" Bob Wicks (born Robert Ferraiolo and never travelled West of Ohio), and "Lefty Lee of Philadelphia". Certainly useful for a smile or two, noting the adoption of these names is academically relevant as well.

Firstly, the widespread adoption of pseudonyms suggests that the profession of tattooist was still not socially accepted as one can hide their actual identity behind a pseudonym. This analysis is supported by the social contexts surrounding tattoos at the time. While tattoos were becoming more accepted, the stigma from the late 19th century carried over with them. As a result, the use of partial pseudonyms indicates that a stigma still existed but was lessening. Secondly, the use of pseudonyms is worth noting because it is a trend that still exists in contemporary American tattoo culture. The difference is that the adoption of pseudonyms by contemporary tattooists is less common and primarily associated with elite tattooists such as "Dr." Brian Woo and Keith "Mr. K" McCurdy. Applying the same analysis, this is suggestive of a contemporary level of stigma surrounding tattoos which will be discussed later in this research.

Undeniably, many different types of people were receiving tattoos during the early 20th century; however, a large portion of the American customer base was from the military. The branch most notably tattooed was the Navy. Associating tattoos with the military in the United States is far from new. Whether referencing tattooing during the Civil War, which is what slingshotted Hildebrandt's career, or the Korean War, times of war have always been very profitable for tattooists. Even outside the United States there are connections to the military with the English navy during Captain Cook's expedition and throughout the 19th century. In the United States, military personnel received tattoos that exemplified their patriotism with military insignias and battle commemorations as well as tattoos to remind them of their lives as civilians; names of loved ones or, the now stereotypically classic, 'mom' in a red heart. Many of these designs were established at this time, in the era of tattoo machines, which explains the association of traditional Americana tattoos with military designs.

While servicemen, and sailors in particular, have been consistent and good tattoo customers, the United States Navy has not always been so supportive. In order to deal with the large influx of tattoos on sailors that were a result of tattoos machines, the navy declared in 1909 that, "Indecent or obscene tattooing is cause for rejection but the applicant should be given an opportunity to alter his design in which case he may, if otherwise qualified, be accepted" (Tuttle 1985:11). It might appear that this would be the death knell for tattooing in the Navy, but in actuality this declaration increased servicemen's presence in the tattoo world. By the 1940's, having a naked woman tattooed somewhere on one's body was enough to be rejected from the Navy. In

response, tattooists advertised to "correct" tattoos so that individuals could enter the Navy (DeMello 2000); a practice now called "a cover up".

The adoption of tattoos among servicemen at this time has been well documented as a historical practice by DeMello (2000). Much can be said of these findings, but a key point is the use of tattoos in a post-World War I environment as hyper-patriotic symbols and the excitement of American culture as a result of the war. The connection between tattoos and patriotic exuberance helps clarify and explain the process of destigmatization that tattoos were socially subjected to at the time. Additionally, the connection also helps explain how tattoo shops quickly spread across the United States and became epicentres for working class social gatherings. As a result of this rapid expansion and increased acceptance, tattoo parlours exchanged flash designs and 'proven' techniques for affectively healing tattoos so that the design would remain (Atkinson 2003). The exchange of information, knowledge about tattoos and tattooists, and exchange of social information among individuals at a given tattoo parlour, or among multiple tattoo parlours, illustrates that there is a clear tattoo figuration in place with chains of interdependency connecting the different players and additional figurations. With that perspective, the social life of tattooists, tattooed people, working class, the military, and American culture as a whole are not isolated entities, but rather mutually related interdependent figurations working to reify meaning of tattoos as a symbolic element.

This time period, DeMello (2000) has argued, is characterized by the least amount of stigma associated with tattoos since they expressed patriotism among the working class. Furthermore, tattooing flourished during this epoch and spread across the United States. Both these components, the lessening of stigma and the spreading of tattoos, is why academic discussion of this period deems it the Golden Age of Tattooing. Another key aspect that happened during this time period is the establishment of tattoo parlours as meeting places for the fringe members of society. The connection between tattoos and people in the social frontier maintained an air of disrepute surrounding the practice, despite the fact that tattooing had become a normative bodily practice for the working class and servicemen. Tattooing became a socially acceptable practice of communicating class status, despite the conservative practices pervading society regarding bodily display and bodily play. However, as with all social events, this perception of tattooing changed. As the mid-20th century approaches, a new group of individuals become entrenched in the practice of tattooing

which almost entirely deconstructs the semi-normative understandings surrounding tattoos built during this period.



Figure 5: Example of flash from 1940s drawn by Ted Inman.

Chapter 4 – "Whose got 'em? Bikers, criminals, artists, freaks, and now, geeks": Tattoo Culture, History, Popularization, & Change; Rebel Era – Contemporary Era

After establishing the first two primary eras of modern tattooing, I believe it is a fairly safe statement to say that the history of tattooing is pretty strange. Not strange in a bad way, but strange in a "wow, who would have thought?!" kind of manner. The majority of people in the United States are unaware of the complex history surrounding tattoos in the culture. However, Americans are keenly aware of how tattoos are seen now. Yet, the question arises, are they? I would argue that most people are not aware of even the recent history of tattooing; yet, the general populace shares generalized understandings of tattoos.

This chapter continues the history of tattooing in the United States and covers The Rebel Era, The Tattoo Renaissance, and the Contemporary Era. Once again, all of these epochs are characterized by their underpinning of freedom. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the contemporary United States tattoo environment and how this impacts the research aims of this project. Analysing all the historical periods of tattooing in the United States allows one to view the tattoo figuration in an informed environment. Additionally, the sociohistorical information also allows for a greater understanding of symbols, identity, stigma, and power in relation to tattoos in the American white collar workplace.

The Rebel Era

Entering the mid-20th century (approximately 1950-1969) the United States is in a post-World War I and Word War II era. Well documented by academics from a variety of fields, the aftereffects of the World Wars influenced massive swaths of American culture including music (Hitchcock 1974), economics (Pitruzzello 2004), environmentalism (Dukakis 1996), and infant food (Bentley 2006), to name a few. Certainly an erratic mixture of topics, the choices serve to illustrate how far reaching, and significant, impacts from the World Wars were on American society as a whole. With such a broad impact, it should be no surprise to learn that the post-World Wars environment had lasting impacts on tattoos as well. Whether approaching the topic from the perspective of decreased nationalism in the United States (Glenn 2006; Hummel

2016) which would obviously impact the jingoism pervading tattoos during the Golden Era, from the association with Nazi Germany tattooing Jews in concentration camps (Govenar 1984), or countless other perspectives, it should be clear that tattoos as a craft and the social perspectives surrounding them would be influenced. While there are many different perspectives to approach this era of tattooing from, at the core of them all is a change in the people involved with tattooing.

While tattooing was still practiced in inner-cities and port-towns, the middle class burgeoned in a post-World War II environment and increasingly occupied the suburbs. As a result, a large population of would be tattooees were no longer frequenting tattoo parlours. Furthermore, those individuals who joined the middle class were no long members of the working class, which resulted in tattoo shops no longer serving as a social nexus. In response to this movement, tattoos quickly adopted symbolism. vested upon them by American cultural perceptions, as icons of defiance. Under this context, tattoos became a challenge to the middle class as well as the former patriotism associated with tattoos during the Golden Era. This challenge to American ideals establishes tattoos as a negative act in the post-World War II environment and underpins the negative view of tattoos that some members of American society hold today.

During the Golden Era, one can note the introduction of fringe members of society. The Rebel Era is characterized by those fringe members becoming central to the tattoo figuration yet remaining on the outskirts of American society as a whole. Members of different marginal groups, such as hippies and rockabillies, received tattoos throughout this time period cementing tattoos as not only marks of defiance, but also marks of marginality. Of the different fringe members, two groups are of major importance: motorcycle gangs and prisoners. These groups are not just nonabrasive periphery groups. Both motorcycle gangs and prisoners are clear examples of social deviants. These socially deviant groups utilized tattooing to visually, and permanently, express estrangement from their hegemonic cultural surroundings. Admittedly, a third group, Chicano gangs, could be discussed here; however, for the purpose of this research project, the conclusions drawn about this group (e.g. DeMello 2000; Govenar 1988; Kent 1997) fall within the scope of motorcycle gangs and prisoners. As such, while slight mention of them is made in this project, an in-depth analysis does not take place.

For better or for worse, motorcycle gangs are deeply entrenched and classic icons of the United States. In the last decade alone, numerous television shows have been produced (and been extremely successful) that centre on the culturally romanticized and feared image of the "outlaw motorcycle gang". *Sons of Anarchy*, *Gangland Undercover*, and *Mayans M.C.* to name just a few. What more though, the characters in these shows are frequently shown with tattoos, further reinforcing the image of the tattooed American motorcycle gang member. The association with tattoos and motorcycle gangs is so great that it has likely surpassed tattoos with sailors in popular perception (DeMello 2000). Performing a content analysis on the pilot episode of *Sons of Anarchy* (2008), of the 12 motorcycle gang members and their wives shown, 10 have visible tattoos. Additionally, only three of the scenes that included the protagonist did not show his tattoos. Finally, the title sequence opens displaying a tattoo that morphs into an actor's name and, over the next one minute and 15 seconds, shows a total of six tattoos that do the same thing. This one example is not meant to be a criticism of the show; rather, it is meant to illustrate how deeply integrated the idea of tattoos and motorcycle gangs are to the American populace.

During the Golden Age of Tattooing, the invention of the tattoo machine allowed for new techniques and images to be created which firmly codified traditional Americana tattooing. The Rebel Era also had characteristic changes to the aesthetic which can be seen in the tattoos of motorcycle gangs. Biker tattoos, even now, are relatively easy to identify in a line up. What makes biker tattoos so distinct is the almost exclusive use of black ink and negative space (i.e. little to no colour beyond black throughout) combined with very thin lines from using a single needle tattoo machine. Biker tattoos are stylistically similar to convict tattoos and Chicano tattoos. Short of a few minor logistical differences in application that leave an indelible mark (discussed below in reference to convict tattooing), biker tattoos can be differentiated by their designs and physical location.

Radically different than the political and nationalistic tattoos of the Golden Age, biker tattoos do not represent social values; instead, they are unambiguously antisocial. The quintessential biker tattoos are Harley-Davidson motorcycle emblems, club (the preferred lingo over "gang") emblems such as the Hell's Angels, marijuana leaves, and skulls. Additionally, biker tattoos are also logos such as the unsettling FTW (Fuck The World), 'Born to Lose', EWMN (Evil, Wicked, Mean, Nasty), and 'Property of [biker's name]' on women bikers (Atkinson 2003; Eldridge 1992; DeMello 2000; Katz 2011;

Kuldova 2016). These tattoos are placed on highly visible locations such as arms, hands, heads, chests, and breasts. Placing tattoos in highly visible locations is worth noting because it suggests that the tattoos are not private expressions, but meant for public consumption. These tattoos act as a visual symbol illustrating the semipermeable and impermeable barriers surrounding the figuration. For instance, my tattoos[3] are quite distinct from biker tattoos; however, when a biker notices them in a social context, I am almost always complemented followed by the question "do you ride?". While I am certainly not a part of biker culture, the practice illustrates that tattoos act as means for cultural entry and to help bypass the semipermeable barrier surrounding bikers. The impermeability is clear in so far that possessing classic biker tattoos would suggest something else entirely to members of a biker figuration.

When explaining the relationship between motorcycle gangs and tattoos during the Rebel Era, it is easy to quickly glance over the material with the assumption that, as an American, the information is obvious. The understanding of this knowledge about bikers and tattoos is frequently attributed to some sort of media outlet. That attribution is the crux of this discussion. The outcome of motorcycle gangs adopting tattooing into their cultural milieu is the damaging exposure tattoos received in the media (Katz 2011). By the tail end of the Rebel Era (late 1960s/early 1970s), motorcycle gangs were a standard feature in the media with stories revolving around rape, extortion, murder, kidnapping, drug dealing, and gun running. At this point, motorcycle gangs had become a scapegoat for a wide spectrum of social issues. The media became a mouthpiece whereby the government could use the fear surrounding motorcycle gangs to maintain social order (Furedi 2005; Veno & van de Enyde 2007). Thomas (2005), discussing government use of media, posited that the nature of government is to "…feed demons and create hobgoblins from which the Saviours within the state can rescue us." The result was a moral panic across the United States focused on bikers. Tattoos just happened to get caught in the crossfire. Tattoos became interwoven with bikers in this moral panic because of one simple question: how can you tell who is in a motorcycle gang? The answer, posited by the media, supported by pop-psychology at the time, and absorbed by the public, was equally simple as the question: if the person has tattoos,

[3] Done in 2008 and 2009, my back is covered in *sak yant* which is a traditional and ritually prescribed form of tattooing done in Thailand by Thai Theravada Buddhist monks with a single, meter long bamboo rod. The ink is a mixture of bloods, saps, venoms, and ashes. The iconography is Kohm Sanskrit writing with images symbolic to Thai Theravada Buddhism. Additionally, during participant observation for this research project, I received tattoos on my left arm with a modern tattoo machine.

then they are predisposed to crime (DeMello 2000). The alarming aspect of this social perspective is that, compared to the media presentation of bikers, motorcycle gangs were relatively tame. The image of the dangerous motorcycle rider who threatens the pristine American way of life was a concerted effort to distract the general population from imposing international events; specifically, the Cold War (Austin et al. 2010). Framing all motorcycle riders as outlaws and identifying a motorcycle rider as a tattooed individual has serious impacts on the perception of tattoos. The outcome was that the public doubled down on the demonization of tattoos. Tattoos became an undeniable marker of criminality and social outliers.

The second major group that contributed to the American reinterpretation of tattoos are convicts. Unfortunately, pegging down a rough date (let alone a hard one) when prisoners began tattooing one another is very difficult. However, acknowledging tattoos as a symbol for social or political dissent can likely be pinned on prisoners and traced back to at least 450 B.C.E. Greeks permanently and corporeally marked criminals with a '*stigma*' (Goffman 1963a); a burn, cut, or tattoo indicating their criminal nature (Gustafson 2000). This practice has been performed by other nation-states throughout history and is described by Garfinkel (1956) as a 'degradation ceremony'. In essence, deviant individuals can be identified and separated from normative behaviour through a ritual action. In this case, the ritual action is receiving the mark of criminality (tattoo, brand, scar, etc.). The deviant action, then, becomes symbolically labelled thereby symbolically labelling the individual. In the case of these permanent corporeal markings, the symbolic label persists a lifetime unless somehow covered or removed.

The marking of prisoners by a social institution is undeniably a punitive act. However, the punitive act is transformed when it is no longer the social institution applying a symbolic mark, but rather a convict marking another convict. Similar to the motorcycle gang tattoos, convict tattoos applied by one convict onto another become a subcultural symbolic, nonverbal code of resistance against larger social norms and values. With prisoners becoming tattooed, the tattooed body quickly became symbolically charged as a deviant other. Returning to the Rebel Era, the process is, again, not dissimilar to what can be observed with motorcycle gangs.

During the Rebel Era, tattooing among prisoners in the United States consistently, and dramatically, increased (DeMello 1993; Phelan & Hunt 1998). Convict tattooing during this period continued to act as an encrypted means of communicating gang affiliation, position in said gang, and expressing discontent at confinement. While

certainly powerful messages, the depth of communication was less than prison tattoos found in other countries such as the then U.S.S.R. In the gulags of Soviet Russia, convict tattoos similarly communicated the topics of American convict tattoos; however, they also included a multitude of other aspects such as previous convicted crimes, previous unconvicted crimes, sentencing length, skills, and escapes (Baldaev 2009). In essence, convict tattooing in the U.S.S.R. acted as a type of criminal résumé while in the United States it communicated group affiliation and social discontent.

Stylistically, prison tattoos are very similar to motorcycle gang tattoos. Characterized by the use of fine lines from a single needle (either applied by hand or with a rudimentary rotary device cannibalized from sewing machines or something similar) and the exclusive use of black or dark blue ink from soot or pen ink, these tattoos also stand out in a line-up. Iconography is variant based upon gang membership and position (Govenar 1988; Phelan & Hunt 1998); however, a few common images are spider webs, tear drops under the eye, racist slogans, and swastikas. These tattoos are placed in highly visible locations in order to communicate the intended symbolic messages to others in their social network.

With the increasing popularity of tattooing among the American prison system, convicts from all walks of life began receiving tattoos. What was once associated with white, working class, urban, males spread across racial boundaries in prison. Native Americans, blacks, whites, Chicanos, Asians all received prison tattoos during this era. Interestingly, the interracial flow of tattooing was not only limited to the tattooee; it also extended to the tattooist. DeMello (2000) exemplifies how tattooing crosses racial boundaries in prison when discussing how a Chicano tattooist would be tattooing white supremacist racial slogans on members of the Aryan Nation. By the conclusion of the Rebel Era, the prison tattoo style would enter the public conception of tattooing and influence practices in the future (Atkinson 2003; DeMello 2000; Kent 1997).

As with biker tattoos, when prison tattooing entered into the American popular perception, the process reified tattoos as a mark of social deviance. These marks resulted in lasting stigma surrounding the American tattooed body. With the media acting as a support structure, tattoos became a mark of the socially marginalized. The former servicemen, the older working class, the psychedelic-dropping hippie, the pot-smoking Easy Rider, the outlaw motorcycle gangs, and the prison convicts all became the same in American cultural conceptions. Despite the vastly different groups which

these individuals occupy, they all became icons of social discontent codifying tattoos as marks of social deviance.

Where the previous epoch was the Golden Age of Tattooing, it would be very reasonable to support Atkinson (2003) and declare this period, not the Rebel Era, but the Dark Ages of Tattooing. Despite the new social perception of tattoos at this time, there is a thematic vein connecting this view of tattoos to past and future perspectives. Furthermore, this theme connects the radically different groups receiving tattoos at the time. Once again, there is a return to the idea of freedom.

As discussed above, freedom is a critical theme in understanding how the popular conception of tattoos relate to social evets. With the idea of freedom underpinning the views of "tattooed savages", society folk, servicemen, and the working class, the historical connection should be clear. In relation to the Rebel Era, tattooing as a mark of freedom is once again apparent. The image of marginal members of society, be they gruff mountain men, commune living hippies, or outlaw bikers, is someone free of social constraints. Freedom from norms and values that guide aspects of life, freedom to travel the open road, freedom from the urban life, freedom from fears. Tattoos continue to be marks of freedom. Seen in the perception of motorcycle gangs and convicts, that freedom is not always a positive notion. But it is still freedom. Even in the case of prisoners, arguably the population with the least amount of agency and freedom in contemporary United States, tattoos are still marks of freedom. Whether one wants to suggest the freedom from laws or, more tangibly, the desire for freedom. As noted above, one of the iconic themes found in the images of convict tattoos is the desire to not be, and expressing discontent at being, contained (e.g. spider webs, barbed wire, etc.). In this sense, tattoos are a corporeal inscription symbolically communicating the desire for freedom which clearly supports freedom as an underlying theme for tattoos. The adoption of tattoos as marks of social marginality within American popular culture illustrates the continued idea of freedom with tattoos.

No longer the exclusive, culturally celebrated custody of "savages" from far flung cultures, tattoos have undergone radical restructurings since their reintroduction into Western culture. Shifting from fascination, to disgust, to patriotic, to deviant, tattoos have had a tumultuous recent history in the United States. By the end of the Rebel Era, the American cultural perception left tattoos classified as voluntary marks of social deviance. Counterintuitive on the surface, the volatile historical perception of tattooing interacting with American sociocultural factors is what allows tattoos to enter

into popular culture and undergo a process of popularization. During this process, tattoos become increasingly accepted by the middle class and, returning to where this tale started, once again become marks of exoticism. The next stop on the American tattoo journey is the Tattoo Renaissance.

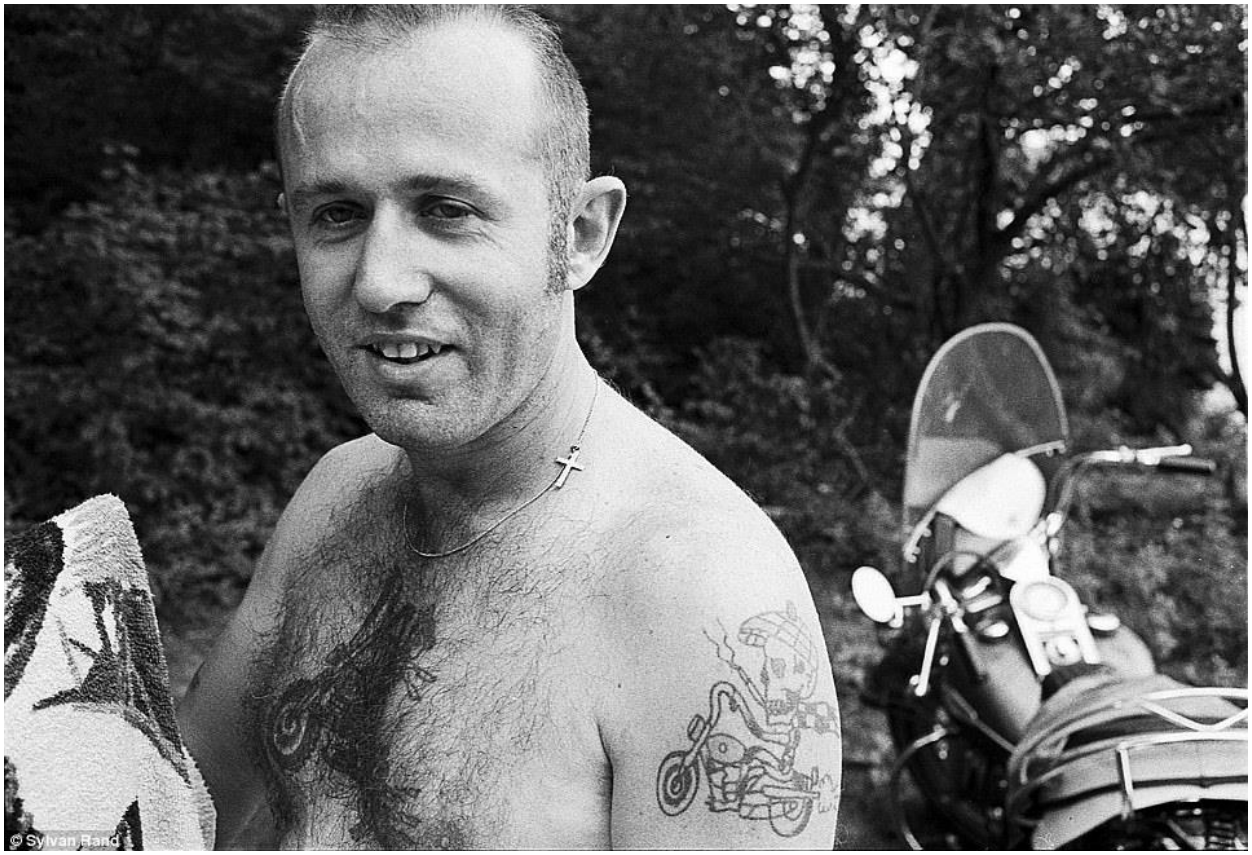


Figure 6: Tattooed motorcycle club member c. 1967. Photographed by Sylvan Rand.

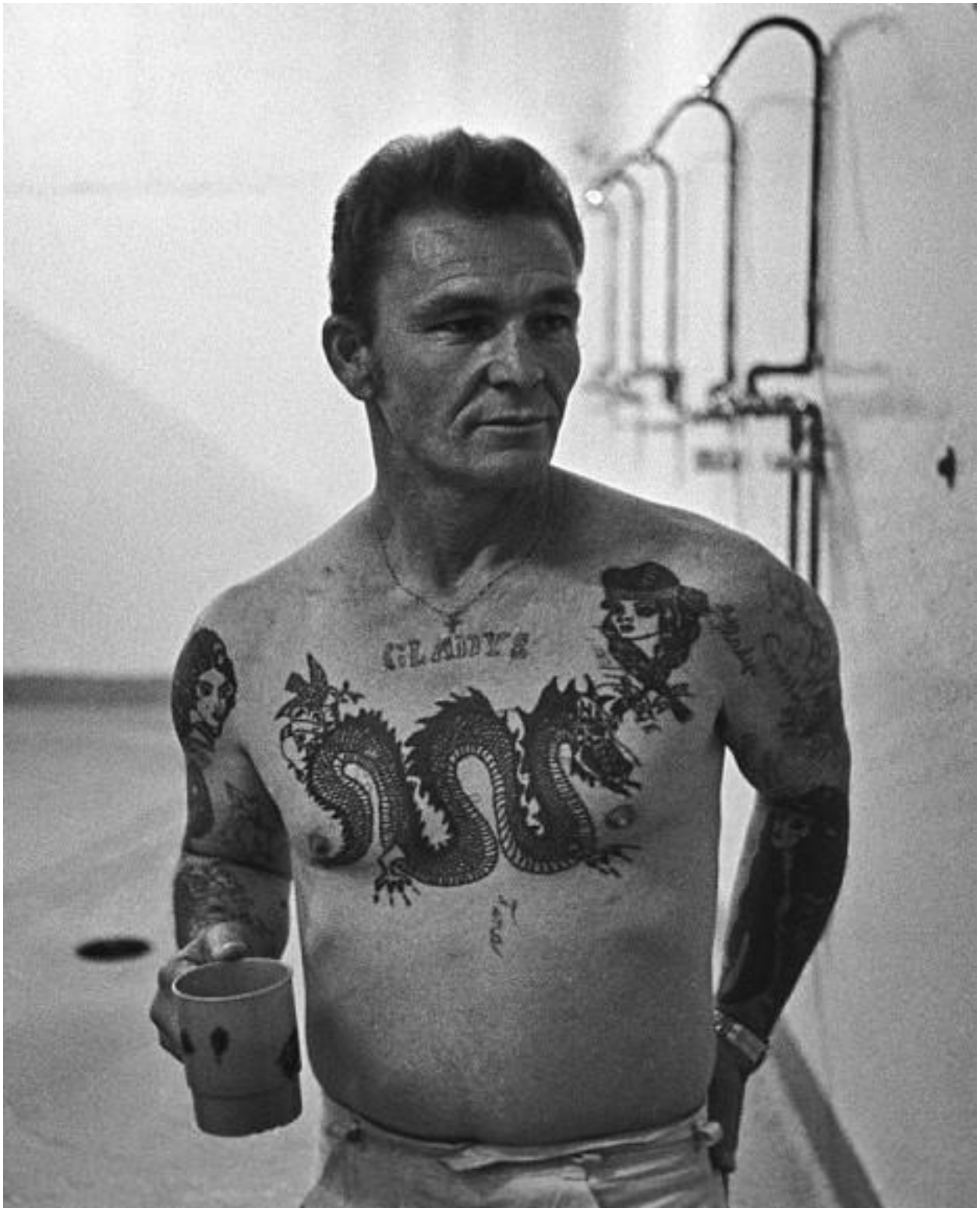


Figure 7: Example of prison tattoo on prisoner in Arkansas. C. 1975, photograph by Bruce Jackson

The Tattoo Renaissance

In the contemporary United States, tattoos are seen much more frequently on younger bodies (The Harris Poll 2016). However, the frequency at which tattoos are observed among this population in the United States is higher now than the recent past. One such attribution for this trend can be given to the emergence of the Tattoo Renaissance.

The Tattoo Renaissance, a term coined by Rubin (1988), is a movement that began in the 1970s. The movement is characterized by artistic and social changes. This period is easily understood as the period at which young, university trained artists got involved with tattooing. These *avant garde* artists transitioned from the almost exclusive practice of applying flash to creating and applying original work with tattooing as their medium. Flash, as a point of reference, is, "…a set of images that show potential customers the types of tattoos that a tattooist is presumed to be capable of producing" (Lane 2014:404). The trained artists that got involved in the tattoo world changed the aesthetics of tattooing which, at the time, was classical Americana and designs of marginality (as discussed in reference to motorcycle gang and convict tattooing above). Americana as a style of tattooing is characterized by bold black lines, a limited colour palette, and designs typically attributed to flash such as eagles, hearts, and lighthouses. The introduction of these artists brought with it the first consistent application of custom work. The transition from the virtual exclusivity of flash application to custom pieces transformed the tattoo scene and underpins much of the conversation surrounding the contemporary artification of tattoos (discussed further in Chapter 5). Aligning with the introduction of classically trained artists as tattooists, a new population of clients emerged. Attributed to the new tattooists and clients, the American tattoo figuration underwent another restructuring.

A new population entered into the realm of tattooists. Up to this point, tattooists were people who had varying level of skill in tattooing, either self-taught or underwent an apprenticeship, and had little to no artistic training. The Tattoo Renaissance heralded the introduction of classically trained artists who used tattooing as their artistic medium. These artists entered into the tattoo figuration with the aid of professional art communities (Rubin 1988). Upon entering the tattoo profession, the newly introduced artists brought with them new sterilization and care techniques which allowed for a higher quality finished product. Additionally, trained artists, entering a field with no traditional artists, unsurprisingly radically reformed the aesthetic.

The breadth and impact on tattoo aesthetic from artists entering into the tattoo figuration is far beyond the scope of this project. Numerous academic papers and books have covered this topic in depth (see DeMello 2000; Rubin 1988; Vale & Juno 1989). Of importance is that these artists drew inspiration from other cultures (e.g. Japan, Hawaiian, New Zealand), specifically their "traditional" styles, which enveloped American tattooing in a process of globalization. Creating tattoos with design aspect hailing from these arcane cultures, at least to the American popular cultural perception, ironically revitalized a perception of tattoos that faded at the end of the 19th century. Tattoos had, once again, become conceptual property of the exotic. This international and "traditionally" inspired style appealed to the burgeoning customer base who was entering the tattoo figuration. Furthermore, these artists would design custom pieces for their clients which allowed customers who disliked the Americana style to engage with the tattoo figuration.

The stylistic and demographic changes that occurred during the Tattoo Renaissance gave rise to a new type of tattooist: the tattoo artists. This era marks the first widespread use of the term "tattoo artist" which, given the training allotted to tattooists in the past, makes sense. While still predominantly men, this period also introduces some of the first female tattooists. Like their male colleagues, these women were classically trained artists and focused on corporeal modification as their medium (DeMello 2000; Mifflin 1997). The introduction of tattoo artists into the tattoo figuration changed the artist/client relationship. Tattooists listened to and created their work for the clients which resulted in thematic shifts. No longer relegated to stock flash designs, tattooing began to appear in idiocultures such as hentai/anime, gothic, skater, and modern primitives (Atkinson 2003). One notable result is that tattoo shops began to relocate within urban geography. Traditionally relegated to the periphery or seedy areas of a city, tattoo shops began to emerge in trendy, youth-oriented neighbourhoods. The thematic shifts and geographic relocations are directly resultant from the introduction of artists as tattooists. This process, coupled with changes in the clientele, restructured the social image of tattoos in American popular culture.

On the clientele side of the equation, the shifting perception and participation in the American tattoo figuration can be seen in the introduction of a younger, more mainstream population. This population adopted tattoos, and their socially deviant understanding pervasive at the end of the Rebel Era, as a marker for the counterculture movement. The utilization of tattoos as a part of the counterculture movement is an

important touchstone in order to discuss the other parties involved during the Tattoo Renaissance. Tattoos became a sign of resistance to norms inherent in the American figuration; heterosexuality, middle class values, and whiteness. With this understanding, tattooing becomes a means to interact with, what Dunn (1998) calls 'identity politics'. Identity politics is a process of aligning oneself and building chains of interdependency with others who intersubjectively feel oppression or marginalized in a figuration. Those individuals actively engaged in identity politics work to redefine identity (both individually and as a group) within the framing of positive ideologies dictated by a culture. While that might seem to suggest that the individuals must adhere to the norms and values of that culture, in actuality it is the norm and value violations that become critical to supporting cultural practices. In these violations, social structures are changed; therefore, those changes come from the act of identity work by challenging hegemonic social constructions. The process is not dissimilar to an in-group orientation where previous norms and values are eschewed for new, informally but collectively built, standards. As noted by Atkinson (2003), movements that stem from identity politics have been influential parts of recent North American social history including the women's liberation movement, civil rights movement, and the sexual revolution. In the case of the Tattoo Renaissance, the challenged hegemonic social construction was corporeal exploration.

The Vietnam War and the resulting social movements that grew from overwhelming public dissent (some of which are mentioned above) contributed to the changing American conception of tattoos. These movements became the heart of the counterculture movement with disenchanted youths participating in their development and execution. As a result, the socially estranged youth used tattoos as a sign of rebellion. Contemporaneously, gays, particularly kinky gays, were using tattoos for their own sexual rebellion and exploration (Klesse 1999; Rosenblatt 1997). The use of tattoos as a symbol of social rebellion was, not necessarily accepted by the general population, but not demonized as it was when bikers and convicts performed this act of corporeal modification. Tattooing as a form of social rebellion gained unprecedented attention when a number of extremely popular individuals received, and openly discussed, their tattoos. The celebrities that received tattoos were also, typically, the faces of the counterculture movement. Some of these celebrities include Joan Baez, Cher, Bill Graham, and Janis Joplin. Joplin, in particular, is well known for discussing (and showing) her tattoo during shows while remarking about why tattoos are great. One

widely discussed example is when Joplin stood on stage, drunk, holding her Chihuahua and stated, “People who get tattooed like to fuck a lot” (DeMello 2000; Morse 1977). The adoption of tattoos by the counterculture movement provided the catalyst for two major groups to enter the tattoo figuration which subsequently altered how tattoos were viewed by American culture.

Women, one of the two new populations to enter the tattoo figuration during this era, actively used tattoos as a tool in their identity politics activities. Women have been involved with the tattoo figuration in the past; however, they were either a limited population, such as biker molls during the Rebel Era, or icons of deviancy illustrated by tattooed carnival sideshow workers. What separates this period from the past is a massive influx of women into the tattoo figuration (Mifflin 1997; Thompson 2015). Women embraced the countercultural association of tattooing which allowed the tattooed female form to take on a new meaning. No longer symbolic of a licentiously deviant woman, the female tattooed form became a site to regain agency and fight for social liberation.

Instead of trying to rewrite previous perceptions of tattooing, women during this era embraced the changes in tattooing attributed to the counterculture movement. The result of this ideological approach can be seen in new designs and bodily placement of tattoos. New designs started to enter the flash of tattooists, starting in San Francisco, but quickly spreading across the country. These new designs were seen as more feminine and included yin/yangs, peace symbols, “cute” animals such as dolphins and butterflies, and astrological symbols (DeMello 2000; Thompson 2015). Furthermore, tattoos increasingly appeared on women’s ankles, shoulders, and, unsurprisingly, breasts. These locations, coupled with the feminine designs, were clear symbols of increasing social and sexual independence of women (Mifflin 1997). The introduction of women into the tattoo figuration, along with the resulting social movements, challenged the antiquated, yet persistent, idea that “nice girls don’t get tattoos” (Steward 1990: 71) or that the women who do receive tattoos are “large lank-haired skags, with ruined landscapes of faces and sagging hose and run-over heels” (Steward 1990:128). It is relatively agreed upon (Atkinson & Young 2001; Mifflin 1997; Thompson 2015; Wroblewski 1992) that the introduction and acceptance of women into the tattoo figuration at this time has had lasting effects on the figuration as a whole. The result was obviously the lasting inclusion of a new population and liberation of the female form, but also an avenue for tattoo acceptance among the middle class.

The second population introduced to the tattoo figuration during the Tattoo Renaissance was the middle class. As women gained increased acceptance in the tattoo figuration, a growing contingent of fascinated middle class individuals began to enter the figuration as well. The involvement of the middle class should not come as a surprise since this period was characterized by mind expansion, self-exploration, and physical experimentation. The genteel tattoo designs aligning with the inclusion of women into the tattoo figuration appealed to the middle class as well (DeMello 2000). As the middle class individuals become more and more involved with the tattoo figuration, tattoos began an emancipation process by which they would become free of their working class roots and deviant past (Irwin 2003). The shifting consumer base during the Tattoo Renaissance reinforced the dichotomy emerging at the time; a dualism of high and low status. High status tattoos, partially attributed to the introduction of tattoo artists, became reified in the tattoo figuration as a result of middle class aesthetic standards which emphasized the artistic nature of tattooing and dismissed the craft of tattooing.

The results of the Tattoo Renaissance on the contemporary tattoo figuration in the United States is evident in the divide among perception of different tattoos. Specifically, the divide separates the folk craft of tattooing and the art of tattooing. The divide is a result of more than just the introduction of *avant garde* artists, it is also the result of those who consume art. Those individuals who consume art started to pay attention to tattooing which created a dichotomy in the consumer base (Kosut 2006a; Vail 2000). DeMello (2000) documented the dichotomy and classified them as two different worlds. On one hand, there is the high art world which is characterized by the artistic nature of the practice. This perspective emphasizes the legitimacy of collecting tattoos and working as a professional tattoo artist. On the other hand, there is a lower class tattoo which evokes the folk craft roots of United States tattooing. Those that adhere to this perspective reject the elite approach to tattooing. Again, both of these perspectives are a direct result of the shifting consumer base of tattoos as a product of introducing trained artists.



Figure 8: Example of Traditional Flash. Photographed by the author in 2018



Figure 9: Example of Globalization Influence. Sanskrit prayer. Made with a tattoo machine in the United States. Photographed by the author in 2018

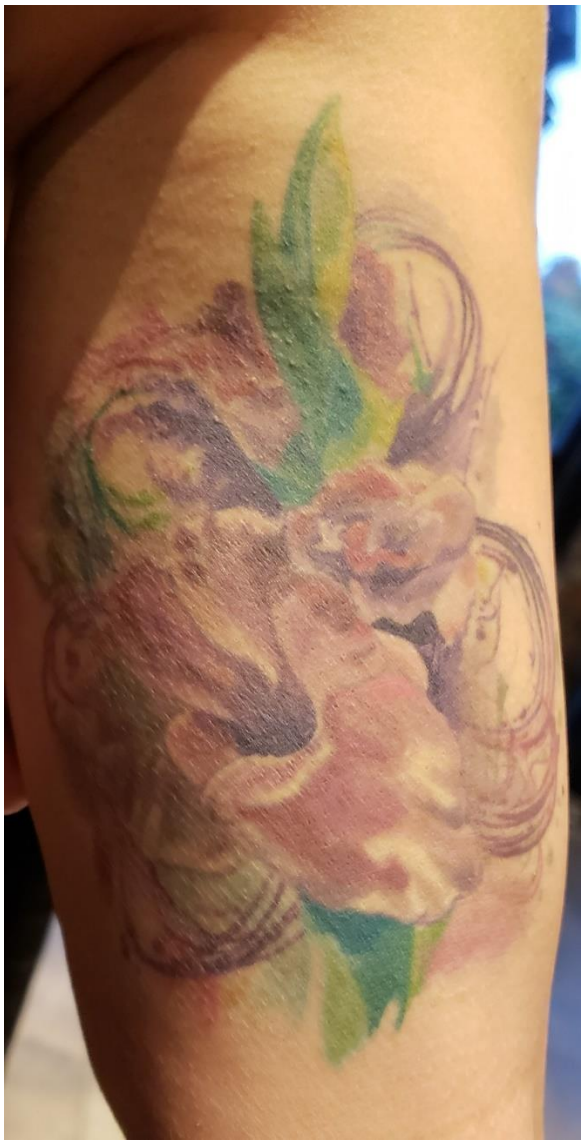


Figure 10: Example of Tattoo as Identity Politics Work. Photographed by the author in 2018

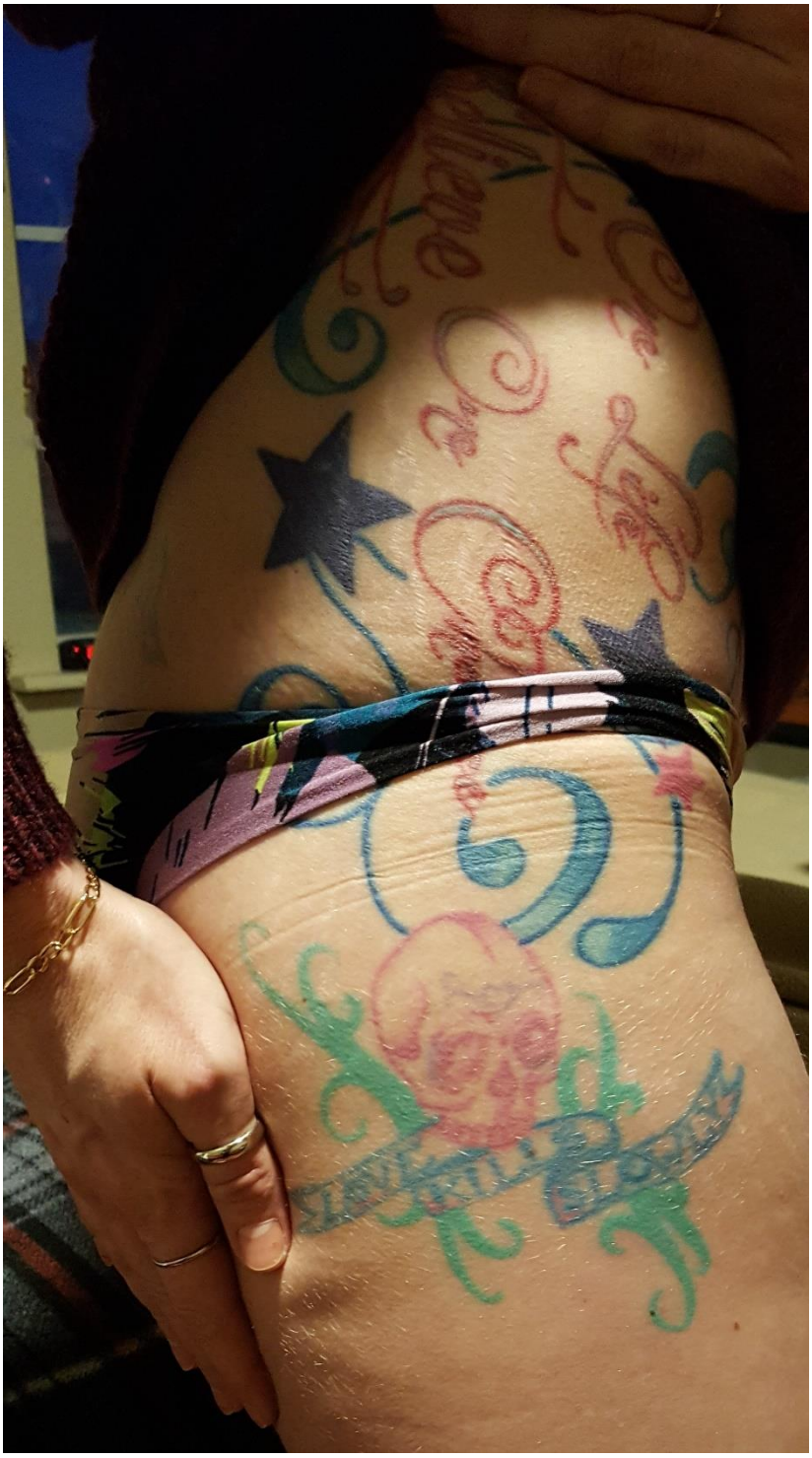


Figure 11: Example of Tattoo on female to regain agency. Photographed by the author in 2018



Figure 12: Example of Tattoo Evocative of Folk Craft Roots. Photographed by the author in 2018

A Monster of Your Own Design

Choice. This word summarizes the conceptual, thematic, and symbolic nature of the modern American tattoo environment. The contemporary American tattoo figuration is dominated and characterized by choice. DeMello (2000), Vail (1999), and others have deemed the contemporary period in which Americans are living as the 'Second Tattoo Renaissance'. Others (e.g. Atkinson 2003) have dubbed it 'The Supermarket Era'. The first obfuscates the importance of the Tattoo Renaissance while the second engenders mass production with ease of consumption. Ascribing a name to this period, beginning in the early 1990s and continuing to this day, is no easy task. Giving this time a discreet label will certainly bias the analysis of data from this era; however, having one allows

for an easy reference point. For this reason, the modern time period will be referred to simply as the Contemporary Era in this project.

Continuing a trend associated with the Tattoo Renaissance, tattooists are more frequently trained artists who prefer to create custom work. While not every tattooist is a tattoo artist and the practice of applying flash still exists for all tattooists, the increased application of custom pieces is an important point. This practice illustrates that clients are paying, not only for the application of a tattoo, but also for the artistic consultation. Most tattooists who began tattooing since the Tattoo Renaissance have made it a point to try and apply more custom pieces and significantly less flash (DeMello 2000; Benson 2000). The same practice is adopted by tattoo artists who began during the Contemporary Era. One example of this can be seen with well-known Cleveland tattoo artist Lauren Vandevier who typically creates detailed and remarkably well shaded black work. Vandevier, a trained artist, creates custom pieces for her clients and rarely applies flash outside her once a month "flash day" when she accepts clients without appointments which, "…gives people an extra opportunity to get tattooed at my discretion" (Lauren V., tattoo artist). The rest of her schedule, booked months in advance, is dominated by custom work. The implication of client preference for custom work reinforces the divide between the craft of tattooing and the art of tattooing.

The clients themselves are another iconic aspect of this era. No longer exclusively associated with a given subset of the population or limited to people who know a tattooist, tattooees come from all walks of life. Tattoo shops now compete with each other for clients targeting males and females, the spectrum of ethnic backgrounds, religion, sexual orientation, and deviancy (Atkinson 2003; Irwin 2003; Vail 1999). Despite what media accounts might suggest (Lodder 2010), tattooing is no longer exclusively associated with the middle class. The population diversification of the tattoo figuration works in conjunction with the preference for custom tattoo artwork to reinforce attitudes that suffuse the service industry. Namely, the trope 'the customer is always right' which has empowered the tattooee to shop around for the artist, style, or price of their choosing. As noted by Atkinson (2003), the onus of individuality and self-exploration are the primary principles directing the interactions between tattooist and tattooee.

The dictum of personal choice is juxtaposed with the power invested into the tattoo artists. The result of different figurations interacting, coupled with the chains of interdependency within the tattoo figuration, have vested tattooists with the power to

choose what pieces will be applied and to influence the choice of clients. The power of choice and influence granted to tattooists can be seen in the short quotation from Vandevier above. Vandevier notes that her monthly flash day is time in which she can apply tattoos at her discretion; an overt display of her power as a known tattoo artist. Interestingly, this practice becomes particularly evident in the discussion of tattooed names. The practice of tattooing names was what provided a reliable daily income for tattooists during the Golden Age of Tattooing; however, now it is almost universally belittled by modern tattoo artists. The Contemporary Era has seen a decline in tattooed names and a connotation of negativity surrounding the practice (DeMello 2000; Maroto 2011). One dermatologist, who frequently performs tattoo removals, discussing tattooed names says,

> I think it is the death sentence for a relationship if you put someone's name on there. It is a very desperate attempt to maintain something. Like ownership. By one, or the other. I think break ups are the biggest thing. And it's not really right after the break up. It is when you find someone else that jealousness is experienced. When someone else is branded with your name or someone else's name. And that's, you know, ugly. Socially and artistically. Even if it's not spoken out loud. (Jane M., dermatologist)

The same themes that Jane discusses, short-sightedness, impulsiveness, and unsophistication, echo the criticisms of tattooed names that one hears from tattoo artists (DeMello 2000). Interestingly, the criticisms that surround this tattoo choice resemble some of the major issues that non-tattooed white collar workers mentioned when discussing why they do not have tattoos. A project engineer working in the energy industry notes,

> The permanence [of a tattoo] disturbs me as my interests change so much over time. Also, the social stigma of having one in the workplace and the fear of being seen as irresponsible has kept me from it. (Hank H., project engineer)

Another example, a senior network engineer for a major tech company discussing why he does not have any tattoos says,

> Fear of commitment. Especially with how much I've changed over the years in my interests. Also, I'm really scared of needles. And my mom would probably get really pissed. I'm supposed to be a professional after all! (Bruce W., senior network engineer)

The concerns surrounding short-sightedness, impulsiveness, and unsophistication are common sentiments from individuals in the white collar workplace without tattoos. The occurrence of these themes among multiple participants suggests that the working class association with tattoos, seen during the Golden Age, is beginning to return. However, instead of the re-emergence of a previous association, consider the tattoo figuration as interactional with larger cultural practices in the United States. The interactional nature of the tattoo figuration with a broader American figuration indicates that tattoos are meant to be thoughtful items of self-expression (e.g. Hank and Bruce's changing interests as marks of what should be tattooed) but situated within a larger conversation of acceptability and respect. The creation, perpetuation, and dissemination of these conversations can be attributed to the interdependent nature of figurations; illustrated through the history of tattooing in the United States. The independency of these figurations situates tattooing during the Contemporary Era as an expression of cultural affiliations guided by the interactional power vested to tattooists. In this sense, a seemingly *non sequitur* discussion of tattooed names acts as a medium by which the tattoo figuration is shown to be highly interdependent in the Contemporary Era.

The final characteristic of the tattoo figuration during the Contemporary Era is discussed by DeMello (2000). Since the start of the Information Revolution, technology has been developing at an exponential rate (e.g. Moore's Law). The rapidly developing technology has brought with it high speed systems of information exchange which has altered the way members of the tattoo figuration interact. DeMello discusses how Internet newsgroups, online periodicals, and "World Wide Web pages" have transformed the tattoo community by instilling the social actors with copious amounts of information. DeMello continues this line of thought to express how tattooees have much greater group cohesion during this epoch than ever before. The ability to learn about different artists, styles, and locations has been greatly facilitated by these technological advancements and allowed tattooing to be emancipated from the social demonization of bygone days. The conclusion suggests that due to the ease of

communication, the tattoo figuration has undergone significant change in unplanned ways.

Written in 2000, DeMello's argument makes sense. However, given that technology is developing at such an accelerated rate, the question becomes: approximately 20 years later, does this logic still hold? Frankly, this argument is more relevant than ever before. When DeMello laid out this argument, the world was in a pre-social network era. To be clear, in this instance social network does not refer to the data collection and analysis method utilized in this, and other, projects. Social network, as it is used in this specific instance, refers to an online platform to build or maintain social relations. With the advent and mass popularity of different social network platforms, MySpace in 2003, Facebook in 2004, Twitter in 2006, and Instagram in 2010 (to name just a few), the ease of sharing information about *anything* jumped to truly unprecedented levels. Additionally, including forum-based, interest focused websites, such as Reddit (created in 2005), there are digital communities far larger and easier to access than nearly any traditional interest-based recreation or leisure group that requires corporeal involvement. The process of learning about the tattoo figuration, different aspects of tattoo design and artistry, locating a tattooist who aligned with a given style, and countless other topics that potential tattooees develop knowledge of was once a nearly Sisyphean endeavour. Now, with the advent of expansive social networks, the process has been streamlined to unforeseen levels. Now, instead of scouring tattoo magazines, speaking to countless tattooed people, and visiting many studios to examine tattooists work, potential clients can merely turn to developed social networks. All one has to do is simply enter 'tattoo', 'Americana tattoo', or any similar term into the Instagram search bar and then deal with the bombardment of images and accompanying information.

The inclusion of social networks into this argument illustrates a key characteristic of the tattoo figuration moving forward: it is nearly impossible to predict. Certainly, in the short term one could make predictions about the tattoo figuration and where it would go; but to try and predict the next 20 years is an exercise in futility. Expecting anyone to accurately predict the sophistication, expansiveness, and complexities of social networks in 2000 would have been virtually impossible. People can look back on the past 20 years and absolutely understand the implications of the social network era; however, expecting exponential growth moving forward results in a

position to only speculate about the future of technology and what affect it will have on the tattoo figuration.

Atkinson (2003), DeMello (2000), Lodder (2012), Schonberger (2012), Yamada (2009), and other academics have made predictions about the future of tattooing and the tattoo figuration. Some of these academics have tried to narrowly project the future while others aim for broad trends or key influences. The issue with these predictions is not in the accuracy or logical validity of the statements. Rather, the issue is one that the fields of anthropology and sociology faced at the start of the Industrial Revolution. The United States, as a Western figuration, is living in a liminal state. The Industrial Revolution radically reshaped the lives of Americans in ways the laymen rarely, if ever, considers but has daily implications. The conceptions of self, the structure and interaction with agents of socialization, the work week (Boeckelman 1995), urban development (Dunham-Jones 2000), how and where cheese is produced (Paxson 2013), leisure & recreation, overwhelming levels of mycophobia (Arora & Shepard 2008), and countless other aspects of American life were significantly altered. Facetious examples included, the point is the Industrial Revolution reshaped the lives of agents operating within Western figurations. Now, the United States is undergoing the Information Revolution which has already had equally significant impacts. The issue is, Americans are still experiencing these changes with no foreseeable end nearby. So, what does this mean for the future of tattoos? Simply put, the future is unpredictable because humans have never experienced the exact types of social changes brought about by the Information Revolution.

The unpredictability for the future of tattoo figurations leads to a logical question: so what? After all of this discussion surrounding the history of tattooing in the United States and the resulting sociogenesis, I am positing that the future is unclear. So why care? The answer can be, again, drawn from history. The United States is at a kairotic moment for the Western world and the practice of tattooing. Adhering to Eliasian perspectives, one would hope that future tattoo researchers would, "…follow the path carved out by historians…in documenting the social significance of tattooing" (Atkinson 2003: 50). Chronicling the past and current state of the tattoo figuration from a social science perspective frames tattooing as a form of cultural production and performance providing an intersectionality between countless anthropological and sociological topics. In addition to contributing to larger academic and social conversations, capturing the lived experience of tattooed white collar workers in the

United States records contemporary figurational states informed by historical accounts. Furthermore, the study documents aspects of the liminal period Americans are experiencing allowing for an informed analysis of tattoos based upon empirical knowledge.

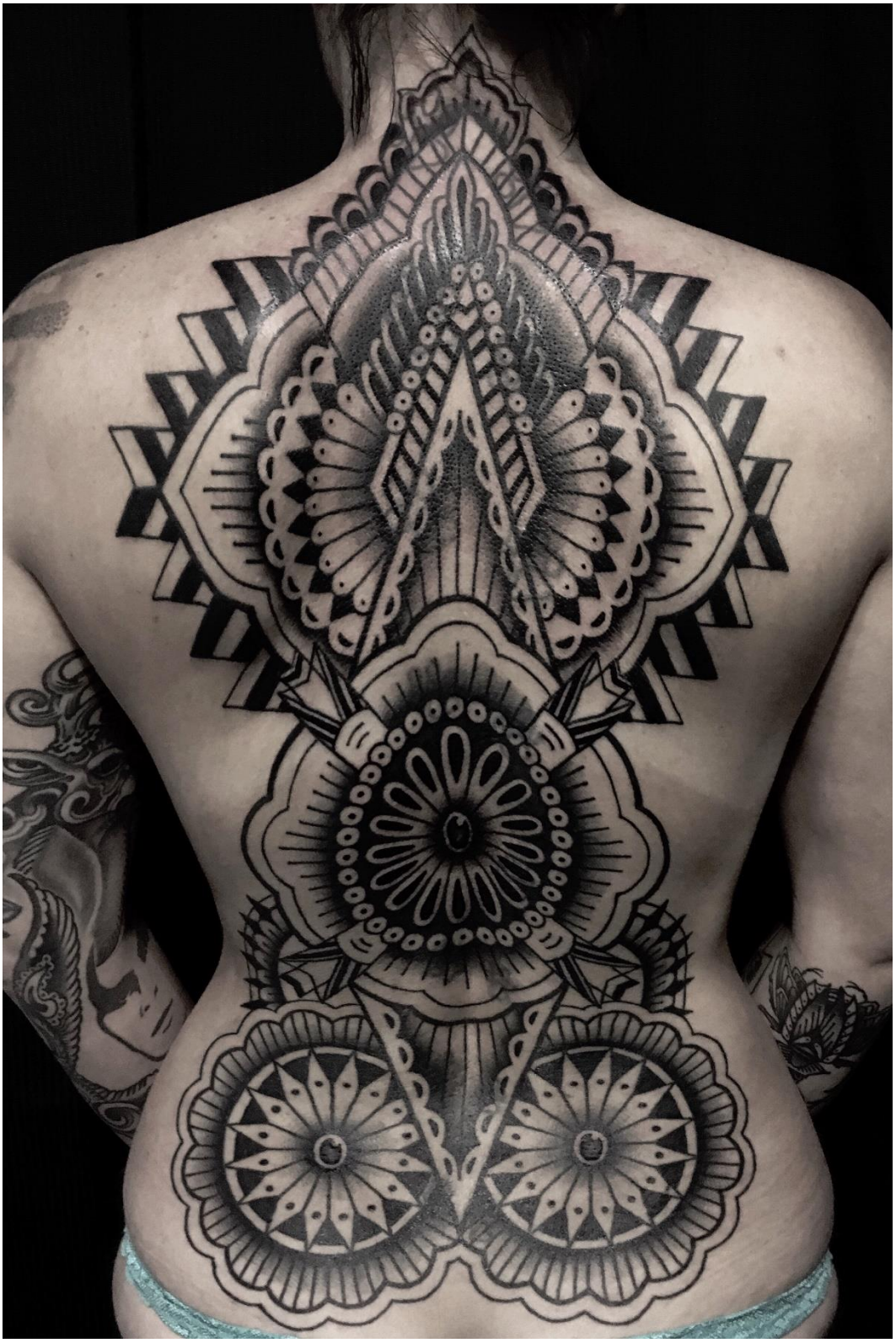


Figure 13: Example of a black work tattoo by Lauren Vandevier.

Chapter 5 – "Tattoos are everywhere!": Literature Analysis Part I

Ask nearly every American about tattoos and you are likely to get a response similar to "Oh, I have tattoos!" or "My friend, Weston, has a tattoo". Despite the apparent ubiquitous nature of tattoos in the United States, The Harris Poll (2016, February 10) found that only 29% of Americans are tattooed and that about 70% of those individuals who are tattooed have two or more. As a point of reference, in 2006, 24% of Americans had a tattoo (Laumann & Derick 2006), and in the early 1980s a mere 1% of Americans had tattoos (Org 2003). While these numbers may indicate that tattoos are quite rare in the United States, tattoos are acknowledged to be, "…as American as baseball, Mom, and apple pie" (DeMello 2000:44). Yet, tattooing did not originate in America.

Tattoos have an expansive history outside of America and their introduction to the Western world is shrouded in colonialism, historical revisionism, and cultural appropriation. Due to the expansive history, this chapter does not cover the history of body modifications as a whole. Instead, this chapter aims to provide a groundwork of pertinent tattoo literature in order to discuss the contemporary lived experience of tattooed white collar workers in the United States.

Despite the fact that tattoos have been studied for the past century (Darwin 1902; Lombroso 1896; Sinclair 1909), they have long been viewed as the butt of a joke by the old guard in academia. One colleague, to use a personal example, recently took a new position. During his public introduction, a list of his professional publications was read aloud. He was met with laughs and jeers by his new colleagues when they got to his work on tattoos. The sheer fact that something like this happens in a contemporary professional academic setting illustrates how tattoos have historically been viewed as a subject of research. However, that antiquated view is changing. Just recently, tattoos are starting to be seen as the subject of serious intellectual inquiry. Across academic fields, there are growing bodies of literature surrounding the discussion of tattoos including in sociology, anthropology, psychology, medicine, gender studies, history, and art.

Among the different fields, there have been consistent approaches to the study of body modifications. The classical approaches frame any given form of body modification and the role it holds in a social web in one of three manners: medical &

epidemiological, rite of passage, or cultural deviance (Atkinson 2003). These three approaches have historically been isolated from each other in the studies they appear; however, that is not to say they should be. To illustrate this point, consider the body modification practice of subincision. Subincision is when a penis is split along the urethra from the base of the scrotum to the glans and forced to heal separated. The goal of such a body modification is to produce hypospadias and substantially enlarge the penis when erection occurs. Certainly, there is a purpose to approaching subincision through a medical & epidemiological gaze; however, strictly adhering to this point of view obfuscates the social conditions surrounding such a practice. The practice of subincision may, in the case of the Tiwi, serve as a rite of passage from boyhood to manhood (Singer & Desole 1967). In contrast, subincision may be performed as an act of body play for sexual fulfilment to illustrate cultural deviance, as is the case among the modern primitivist movement (Klesse 1999). Regardless of how the practice is approached as an object of study, the modified form is a symbol. The symbol in this case communicates something about the overlapping chains of interdependency among the surrounding figurations (or the cultural web of significance) woven around the practice. As such, it is critical to understand that the literature surrounding body modifications, and specifically tattooing, approach the practice in one of these three classical manners. However, as the literature illustrates, exclusively binding the analysis of any given form of body modification in one approach limits the true potential. As such, this study weaves the three approaches together in order to accurately address the overlapping chains of interdependency inherent to the discussion of tattoos in the American white collar workplace.

The primary research that this study draws upon is sociological and anthropological; however, the characteristic interdisciplinary approach of this study invariably draws upon other fields as well. Covering the applicable literature traverses a number of topics including stigma, popular culture, art & fashion, the workplace, identity, and nonverbal communication.

Tattoos & Stigma

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, there certainly has been, and continues to be, a stigma surrounding the academic inquiry into tattoos. However, the academic field is far from unique in holding this point of view. Tattoos and tattooees in

the contemporary Western world are still shrouded in stigma. As discussed in Chapter 4, the Rebel Era is when the association between tattooing and marginal groups became linked in the American mindscape. The connection to fringe members of society is a primary link to the stigma tattoos may hold in contemporary American culture.

Stigma as an academic concept is entrenched in the social sciences. Regardless of the field, Erving Goffman is the touchstone that people typically start the conversation with. Goffman (1963a) posits that stigma is some characteristic that is undesirable by a society and devalues the individual with said characteristic. Stigma is an intentionally broad concept as it is meant to encompass such a huge variety of characteristics. Regardless of the characteristic at hand, stigmatized individuals are typically subject to negative stereotypes and may be discriminated against by the society as a whole (Major & O'Brien 2005). Simply put, in order to become stigmatized, one must violate a norm for a given society which classifies an individual as deviant. Once deviant, the person must experience some form of negative reaction from society as a whole for violating said norm, which then classifies them as stigmatized. Because society and culture change over time, norms change over time. What this means is that deviancy, and importantly stigma, change over time as well.

The idea of stigma certainly has individualistic elements to the conversation; however, it is critical to keep in mind that stigma does not occur within an individual. Stigma is a result of context and highly dependent upon the norms of a society which members are subject (Yang et al. 2007). This is important because the development of normative stereotypes (Goffman 1963a) is informed by associations and meanings individuals have with a multitude of objects; such as skin (Patterson & Schroeder 2010).

Since Goffman's seminal work on stigma, the concept has been utilized to examine a variety of topics. Ranging from the medical perspective, such as leprosy (Opala & Boillot 1996), mental illness (Link 1987; Phelan et al. 2000), and cancer (Fife & Wright 2000), to complex social issues such as racial inequality (Crockett 2017) and welfare use (Walsgrove 1987), to the socially deviant like exotic dancing (Lewis 1998) and, unsurprisingly, body piercings and tattoos (Larsen et al. 2014; Martin & Cairns 2015; Miller et al. 2009), the application of stigma to research is profound. Jones et al. (1984) posit the parameters along which stigmas can vary:

- Aesthetic qualities;
- Concealability;
- Course;

- Danger;
- Disruptiveness; and
- Origin

With the abundance of research utilizing and relating to stigma, it is unsurprising that some academics have taken to assessing the idea of stigma as a whole; whether it is returning to a strict sociological approach and addressing core criticisms (Link & Phelan 2001) or reframing stigma through a conflict theory perspective as a means to maintain existing social hierarchy (Coleman-Brown 2013). While stigma can be used as a means to debate epistemology, for the purpose of this project the dominant notion of stigma found among the social sciences is utilized to address the tattooed population. Specifically, the parameters laid forth by Jones et al. (1984) clearly capture characteristics of tattooing and are used in this project to assess stigmatization of tattooed white collar workers.

A point of clarification before moving forward: this section is meant to broadly look at stigma in the workplace. The workplace, as it is used in this section specifically, is intentionally broad and not exclusive to the white collar workplace. Furthermore, this section absolutely addresses tattoos and body modifications; however, these points are addressed more fully in the Tattoos & Workplace section below. This section is meant to serve as a broad discussion of stigma in order to focus the conversation later on.

The Psychological Approach

Unlike anthropology or sociology, psychology has consistently approached the study of tattoos as something deviant. Discussed in depth by Atkinson (2003), psychological research surrounding tattoos has been organized around "…personality disorder, ego identity, and stigma…" (53). This approach has undeniably advanced understandings surrounding how tattoos are understood among criminal groups. Approaching tattoos from this perspective also explains how tattoos can be an indicator of membership to less reputable communities. However, this perspective should have been left in the Rebel Era.

Much of the research produced with a psychological approach has mirrored the ideas pervasive among popular culture during the Rebel Era: tattoos are for criminals, something must be wrong with this person, this individual is a social outlier, etc. This is inherently problematic as it does not account for the dynamic changes seen in the Tattoo

Renaissance and the Contemporary Era. Summarizing Atkinson (2003), the basic idea found in psychological research is that tattooing is best conceptualized as a personality defect. The basic idea is that the tattooed body is a manifestation of mind that is unable to conform to social norms and values. In fact, tattooing is an indicator of future deviance (e.g. criminality, sexual predation, homosexuality) due to the bestial manner in which the body marking takes place (Ferguson-Rayport et al. 1955; Gittleson et al. 1969; Goldstein 1979; Measey 1972).

The argument that Atkinson (2003) posits is absolutely antiquated in that the sources regarding this perspective are from the mid-20th century. However, when applied to a more contemporary discussion, the psychological literature is still limiting. Contemporary literature still frames tattooing as a corporeal manifestation of some personality disorder which results in future deviance (Burger & Finkel 2002; Drews et al. 2000; Koch et al. 2007, 2010). This suggests that tattooing is perpetually for the maladjusted in American society and incapable of producing meaningful communication. This notion is also something suggested by Atkinson (2003), but updated with more recent literature to illustrate the point. Stigma is a necessity when discussing tattoos in the contemporary world, but how the idea of stigma is framed and the purpose it holds is essential. While the psychological approach has some value, in practice the view on stigma must be broadened and tempered with an anthropological and sociological approach.

The purpose of including this section is not to dismiss psychological research or demean the field. In fact, the purpose is to illustrate why the fields of anthropology and sociology should bridge the crevasse traditionally separating them. Psychological research has drawn upon anthropological studies which posit that tattooing is a process of group formation. This perspective would inform the psychological ideals surrounding tattoos as criminal group identification and identity work. The issue is that, with a few exceptions, the anthropological data regarding American tattooing does not extend beyond the Rebel Era outside of deviant subcultures such as prisoners, gangs, and modern primitivists. Sociological accounts of tattooing typically frame the practice as an analysis of the tattoo business, political resistance, and social deviance. Grossly generalizing and oversimplifying, sociology has generally focused on groups in the Western world while anthropology has focused on groups outside the Western world. There is immense value in approaching tattooing from a group perspective both within and beyond the Western world which would serve to inform each other.

As this relates to the psychological approach towards tattoos and stigma, stigma is classically a notion to discuss group life and not the individual. Both anthropology and sociology address this well while psychology is focused on the individualistic perspective. Applying the notion of stigma from an individualistic perspective can certainly work; however, applied with the notion of tattooing as a normative act of group formation and discounting sociological perspectives is quite damaging. Similarly to how the psychological approach utilizes anthropology to inform their analysis and does not account for contemporary sociological perspectives, anthropology and sociology have not worked together to inform their perspectives. As asinine as it is to think that every person with a tattoo has some personality defect, it will someday soon appear similarly ridiculous when analysing anthropological and sociological perspectives of tattoos. The two fields need to work together to inform their perspectives with social and cultural data from within and beyond Western perspectives.

Workplace Stigmas

Actual or inferred characteristics of an individual act as symbols which other members of a figuration interpret to inform the perception of an individual as deviant, aberrant, or an outlier. In the workplace, this means that stigmatized individuals are likely subject to treatment problems in employment. Specifically, these employment biases frequently manifest in the form of, "…[poor] performance evaluation, dead-end or low level jobs, lower pay and benefits, low promotion rates, insufficient opportunities for training and development, absence of in-group status, absence of relevant mentors, treatment as token, self-esteem problems, and problems arising from a host of self-limiting problems" (Miller et al. 2009: 622). While this applies to a number of stigmatized characteristics in the workplace (e.g. obesity (Carr & Friedman 2005), disability (Stone & Colella 1996; Schweitzer et al. 2018), online degrees (Merriman 2006), affirmative action (Slaughter et al. 2005)), if tattoos and other forms of body modification are subject to the same perception, then the phenomena is of dire importance to examine. With the recent and drastic increase of tattooed individuals in the United States, especially among a younger population, the decision to mark one's skin could have the potential to significantly impact employment and employment opportunities.

The changing attitudes towards tattoos and tattooees throughout American history undeniably shape how tattoos are perceived in the workplace. Discussed in the two previous chapters, across the major tattoo eras there has been a consistent attitude that tattoos are symbolic of freedom. In the workplace, freedom is frequently framed as something that needs to be controlled or, in extreme cases, detrimental (Ezorsky 2007). Imaging the workplace as an environment to control or eliminate freedom is absolutely disconcerting; however, one need only examine facial hair to illustrate the point.

Like tattoos, beards have gone through their own historical eras in which they range in social acceptability based upon a number of factors including style, grooming, and presence (Oldstone-Moore 2015). In the contemporary United States, beards are seeing a resurgence among younger individuals (similar to tattoos); however, they are still discouraged in work environments. Beards (and other facial hair) have historically been viewed as unprofessional in the United States workplace because they make men appear more socially and physically dominant, aggressive, and provide a real or imagined corporeal history (i.e. seasoned by years of experience) (Dixson & Vasey 2012; Neave & Shields 2008). These perceptions result in people viewing bearded men as individuals with higher social status which, in the workplace, are associated with positions of power. In the same vein, those individuals characterized by "baby-facedness" are perceived as more honest and warmer (Livingston & Pearce 2009) which could also aid individuals. Furthermore, beards need to be examined from an evolutionary perspective as well. Humans, like other primates, utilize autonomic arousal in the form of piloerection (hair standing on end) as nonverbal communication (Benedek & Kaernback 2011). Piloerection in humans expresses physiological conditions, such as thermoregulation (Chaplin et al. 2014) and orgasm (Courtois et al. 2013), as well as strong emotional experiences, like arousal (Salimpoor et al. 2009) and aggression (McEllistrem 2004). Plainly put, this means that when a person is very upset, they will involuntarily get goose bumps which puffs out their body hair: including beards. Since a person cannot control piloerection, a person is unable to control their expression of aggression or anger. This supports the idea that a beard in the workplace is symbolic of a person who is not afraid of competitors and willing to show aggression. Coupling the sociocultural and biological arguments illustrates the symbolic power vested into beards and why they have been stigmatized by all but the most socially elite in the workplace.

Again, the purpose of discussing beards in the workplace is to illustrate that workplaces actively expend effort to control or deny freedoms to individuals through appearance. The argument is critical to understanding stigma in the workplace because there is undeniably appearance-based discrimination in the workplace (Toledano 2013). Workplace appearance-based discrimination is especially relevant when discussing prejudices and stigma towards individuals with body modifications. Tattoos, a consistent symbol of freedom, thus make for an easy target in the workplace. Similar to the control exerted over facial hair, limiting the exposure of tattoos in the workplace is an easy avenue for companies to control visually overt expressions of freedom. The stigmas that exist in the American workplace are real and have a very tangible effect on the lives of workers.

Does Tattoo Stigma Still Exist?

Acknowledging that stigmas exist and have a very real effect on the lives of individuals allows the conversation to shift towards the question I am most frequently asked when discussing my work: are tattoos still stigmatized? The lack of specificity is irksome; however, it is understandable since most Americans do not think like an argumentative academic. Demographic contexts and time period are essential to addressing this question accurately. So, are tattoos still stigmatized in the contemporary United States? In a word: yes. However, simply stating "yes" is misleading.

The social norms and values that informed the Silent Generation's perspective on tattoos is what gave rise to the Rebel Era of tattooing; the thought that tattoos are indicative of some abstract social deviance about the wearer. These ideas also informed the Baby Boomers' perspectives on tattooing. However, the Baby Boomers took the fully negative image of tattoos and tattooees found among the Silent Generation and altered them slightly with the inclusion of social outliers like hippies and rockabillies. As discussed in Chapters 3 & 4, this set the stage for the Tattoo Renaissance. This might seem a minor change, but in reality, this addresses the contemporary stigma surrounding tattoos. Among these two generations, tattooing was framed as something socially deviant; whether that was from a criminality perspective or from a socially discontent one. These two perspectives effectively capture the "stigma of deviance" that has surrounded tattooing. Relative to the history of tattooing in the West, the "stigma of

deviance" has been short lived; however, it has had profound impacts on the contemporary perspective of tattoos.

Because Baby Boomers are now the generation in social power, including the workplace, they are the ones perpetuating the hegemonic perspective of tattoos in the United States. Despite the Tattoo Renaissance and Contemporary Era, perspectives found among the late Rebel Era (the era in which Baby Boomers went through their primary socialization) are still part of the hegemonic ideals. To illustrate this point, one need only look at popular culture. One example is the "Strange" commercial for Progressive Insurance (2019). The premise of the commercial is a younger couple buys a house in a neighbourhood where all of the neighbours are their same age, but act like their parents by making "dad jokes" and discussing lawn mowers. Of particular note, though, is a comment meant to illicit a laugh from the viewer, "You have a tattoo! Oh, fun. Do you not work?" (Progressive Insurance 2019: 12"-15"). While admittedly comical, this seemingly innocuous comment is quite telling. The quotation plays on the idea that adults/parents in the United States still maintain a stigma of deviance regarding tattooees. Because the commercial is made for the general American populace, this suggests that the message is something that multigenerational parties can relate to and understand. Examples like this are prolific among American popular culture and speak to the norms and values still at play. The hegemonic perspective is not that tattoos are for criminals, as it was with the Silent Generation and during the Rebel Era, but rather that having a tattoo makes one incapable of holding a job or that the tattooee does not work. This mentality is, unfortunately, something that does persist outside of popular culture.

Ask a tattooed American if they have ever encountered someone who makes snap judgements about them simply for having a tattoo and most assuredly they will have some tale. Tattooed college students tend to be hyper cognizant of the stigmatization process and choose to get tattooed in easily concealable places (Martin & Dula 2010). Every semester, at least one student (frequently more) tell me how they have a tattoo but keep it hidden from their parents because of the hatred their parents hold for tattoos and tattooed people. More often than not, these students are female, which aligns with research positing that women typically have fewer tattoos and hide them more frequently despite having an equal rate of being tattooed as men (Horne et al. 2007). During the question and answer section of a guest lecture I gave in 2018 about tattoos, one woman who (I am guessing) was a member of the Baby Boomers asked me

in front of the room, “My daughter has a tattoo. How do I deal with her now?” Had I the brazenness to address this women directly in front of a room of people and not just provide a platitude, she might have found it interesting to note that individuals with tattoos are more likely to have friends and family members with tattoos (Adams 2009a; Forbes 2001) and experience more positive association with less stigma if their family is supportive (Pettigrew & Tropp 2006). Regrettably, I was not that tenacious.

Despite tattooed individuals becoming increasingly diverse, academic research has suggested that tattooing is seen as socially improper behaviour and results in stigmatization (Hawkes et al. 2004; Roberts 2012). The stigmas result in the stereotyping of tattooed individuals as people with poor decision-making skills, of low socioeconomic status, engage in excessive inebriation, and numerous sexual partners (Armstrong 1991; Braverman 2012; Roberts & Ryan 2002; Wohlrab et al. 2009). Interestingly, the older an individual is when receiving a tattoo, the greater the likelihood that they will be subject to stigma victimization. In the same vein, the more tattoos an individual has, the greater the likelihood they will receive more and experience less perceived social stigma (Dickson et al. 2014). While the stigma of deviance surrounding tattoos does still exist, it is rapidly fading and changing forms; a fact clearly illustrated by the perception of tattoos by younger individuals.

Since the Tattoo Renaissance, tattooed individuals have occupied more diverse social groups in the United States (Armstrong 1991; DeMello 2000; Kosut 2006a). As a result of the changing tattoo epochs, the once marginalized act of tattooing has entered the American mainstream (Kosut 2006a). The association of tattoos with deviant behaviours and lower socioeconomic statuses are attributed to older generations in the United States (Burgess & Clark 2010; Ewey 1998; Martin 1997). The stigma of deviance is changing forms by requiring a legitimizing process. The tattooed individual is expected to have some form of “real” narrative that addresses the responsibility of the individual, class values, restraint, deferred gratification, and semantic meaning (Madfis & Arford 2013). This argument is supported by college students in the United States who have agreed that tattooing has become more mainstreamed and, given the parameters above, more acceptable (Dickson et al. 2014; Manuel & Sheehan 2007). Counter to the archaic stigma of deviance, adolescents without tattoos (Benjamins et al. 2006; Dukes & Stein 2011) and both tattooed and non-tattooed college students (Swami & Furnham 2007) seriously consider receiving tattoos in the future.

Returning to how this section begins, the answer regarding whether stigma surrounding tattoos still exists is not a simple yes. The stigma of deviance still exists in some compacity; however, it has changed form. The changes in social attitude since the Rebel Era have brought with them different perspectives towards tattoos that inform the stigma in a new way. The complexity of the Contemporary Era is informed by the Tattoo Renaissance which establishes what Larsen et al. (2014) have coined a "stigma of the commodity". As the tattoo world has become more commodified (see the section on art & fashion below), tattoo related stigma has shifted towards increasing complexity. The contemporary American tattoo figuration requires individuals to utilize a multitude of attributes to interpret tattoos and the tattooee. These attributes include knowledge of the tattooee personally, ascribed meaning of the tattoo, corporeal location of the tattoo, context of display, artistic value of the tattoo, and uniqueness (Larsen et al. 2014). These factors echo those posited by Madfis & Arford (2013) and contribute to the lack of shared American tattoo related stigma and forces individuals to assess tattoos on a case by case basis. These unstable social norms contribute to the changing status of tattoos in American society and, importantly for this research project, the precarious position of tattoo related stigma in the white collar workplace.

The stigma of commodification is a much more accurate way to discuss the current tattoo related stigma in the United States. It is not nearly as binary as the stigma of deviance and allows for increasingly complex shades of grey which helps explain why Americans feel compelled to ask if there is tattoo related stigma still in existence. Social interactions act a medium by which tattooed and non-tattooed individuals can inform each other about the commodification surrounding a given tattoo. In this sense, the stigmatizers can be tattooed and non-tattooed individuals alike as the tattoo becomes a symbol. The meaning of said symbol is reified by the interactions occurring from the overlapping chains of interdependency found within and between figurations.

Tattoos & Popular Culture

When I meet someone new and they find out I am an anthropologist/sociologist, one of the first questions they ask (after how I make a living) is what I research. Popular culture tends to come up, as it is inherently a topic that the general public can relate to. Without fail, the person I am speaking with immediately shifts the conversation by asking questions like "who is your favourite Kardashian?", "did you see that party Paris Hilton posted about on Snapchat yesterday?", "what do you think is going to happen in

the next season of *Game of Thrones*?", "can you believe Robert De Niro is getting divorced?", and "isn't that new Cardi B banger fire?!". These types of questions are to be expected, but unfortunately tend to obfuscate what popular culture is to academics. The topics certainly fit within the realm of popular culture, but the questions themselves do not. Popular culture, as a social science concept, focuses on the norms, values, and material culture that are ubiquitous in a figuration at a given time.

The trite cliché "we are all dwarfs standing on the shoulders of giants" is pervasive among the arts and sciences. The metaphor is used to express that everyone in those fields is discovering or accomplishing something by building on previous research or innovations. However, the saying can, and should, be applied to popular culture as well. Even the most creative popular culture has connections to the past. Sublime's 1997 song "Doin' Time" is a clear example of how this metaphor applies to popular culture.

"Doin' Time" was released as a single in 1997 and achieved the 28th position on the Billboard U.S. Modern Rock chart. The song is a loose cover of Janis Joplin's song "Summertime" which was released in 1969. Joplin's version is full of the sounds associated with the 1960s hippie counterculture movement; including a lengthy psychedelic guitar introduction by Peter Albin. However, Joplin's version is a cover of Miles Davis' "Summertime", released in 1959, which is overflowing with hypnotically beautiful tones attributed to Davis' muted trumpet. Davis' version, though, is inspired by Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong's cover of "Summertime". Released in 1957, Fitzgerald and Armstrong's cover brought bluesy chords to the song and has been hailed as the "pinnacle of popular singing" (Jasen & Jones 2001). As suggested, Fitzgerald and Armstrong's version is a cover of the 1934 aria composed by George Gershwin for the opera *Porgy and Bess*. This, the original version, was intended to sound like a folk song which was, "reinforced by his extensive use of the pentatonic scale (C-D-E-G-A) in the context of the A minor tonality and slow-moving harmonic progression that suggests a 'blues'" (McElrath 2013). Gershwin did not create this out of nowhere, though. His inspiration came from DuBose Heyward's poem, found in the novel *Porgy,* which was the inspiration for the opera. Gershwin used Heyward's exact words for the song which entitled Heyward to a co-credit as the lyricist. Gershwin's inspiration for the music came from a different source; the Ukrainian Yiddish lullaby "Pipi-pipipee" (Gottlieb 2004) and the Ukrainian lullaby "Oi Khodyt Son Kolo Vikon" ("A Dream Passes by the Windows") (Smindak 1998).

The history of this song is, admittedly, confusing. However, with over 25,000 recordings and covers of "Summertime" (Nocera 2012), it is well worth teasing apart. More importantly though, what does this have to do with Sublime or popular culture? Each version of this song that entered into popular culture builds upon the previous iterations and added new elements which continued its popularity. Illustrated by the quotation above, while the implication of 'blues' was present in the original, it was not until the Fitzgerald and Armstrong version that it became explicit. The same logic applies to all the major iterations through Sublime's version of "Doin' Time". Despite their dissolution due to lead singer Bradley Nowell's death, Sublime is still an extremely popular band. Throughout their discography, they combine multiple musical genera including surf music, reggae, ska, punk rock, hardcore punk, hip hop, heavy metal, dancehall, trip hop, and reggae rock. Some of the musical classifications can seem repetitive or too niche for the general populace, and that may be true; however, the variety serves to indicate how far reaching this band's appeal and influence still stretches. If one goes to any university campus in the United States while it is warm out, they are bound to find people playing Sublime and relaxing outside. Bands that produce music in any of the genera listed above are bound to be influenced by Sublime, just as Gershwin was inspired by Ukrainian lullabies. This process is already evident as contemporary artist Lana Del Rey released a cover of "Doin' Time" in 2019. Lana Del Rey's iteration utilizes the same lyrics as Sublime's; however, she layers her iconic, wistful vocals over the original beat while adding reedy ad-lips and mild electronic notes. These additions create a haunting tune that engenders nihilistic feelings of bygone happiness and changes the nature of the song whilst adding another element. All of these musicians are standing on the shoulders of giants who, in turn, are the shoulders others will stand on. The point of all of this is that popular culture can transcend the historical period it was created in and become a beacon of rediscovery and innovation (Griswold 1986). This example is just one among all of the different popular culture icons available to the contemporary population in the United States. Each one has its own history and complexities which helps create the current form it takes.

The examples above are simply that: examples. However, as an aggregate, these instances illustrate that popular culture is, "…produced, consumed, and experienced within a context of overlapping sets of social relationships" (Grazen 2017:6). The interactional nature of figurations and the resulting chains of interdependency that pop culture is predicated on suggests that popular culture lends itself to analysis through a

figurational perspective. One of the major ideas of Elias's research (1983; 1994) regarding the civilizing process is that members of Western figurations have developed a need to carefully regulate their public behaviour as a response to the sociogenesis of state formation. The regulation of these public behaviours can be illustrated through popular culture. The different media outputs associated with pop culture act as a double-edged sword. On one side, the media as an agent of socialization can teach and reaffirm norms and values which instructs the populace regarding which public behaviours need to be regulated and how. However, the other side is that media is understood as an acceptable outlet for public behaviour that would normally be regulated within the figuration. Coupled together, popular culture acts as an indicator of sociogenesis among that figuration. Additionally, since popular culture builds on previous iterations over a long period of time and alters them for changing cultural landscapes, the use of figurational sociology becomes clarified. The long term and responsive nature of popular culture indicates how context, socially and historically, is critical to the analysis of any aspect of pop culture.

The figurational understanding of popular culture is further strengthened when applying it to tattoos. As states developed monopolistic controls of violence, social control shifted from an outward display of restraint to inward restraint (Elias 1983; 1994). The internal restraint became displayed through corporeal performance. Tattoos, a quintessential example of corporeal performance, act as a medium by which one can examine the mutual recognitions (I, WE, THEY) developed among individuals. Western figurations deeply control the interactions members have which requires an inspection of their collective ability to relate and respond to cultural habituses. Tattoos as a part of popular culture illustrate these points over a long period of time as well as how they develop during the life of an individual.

Emphasizing that popular culture is the result of long-term social changes due to interactions of members within a figuration, as well as among figurations, reveals a striking similarity to symbolic anthropological understanding of popular culture. Symbolic anthropology conceptualizes popular culture very similarly to how culture is understood: a highly interdependent system of meaning shared among members and deciphered by interpreting symbols and rituals (St John 2008). This conception suggests that popular culture is spread throughout a society as a result of interpersonal interactions which highlights the importance of social networks. A symbolic anthropological understanding of popular culture works very well with a figurational

approach since the area of importance lies in the mutual recognitions and performances among members of a given figuration. Symbolic anthropology adds that these interactions are symbolically based necessitating that individuals are members of the same cultural group. As members of the same group, individuals are able to accurately interpret the symbols as they were broadcasted. Tying this once again to a figurational perspective, the communication through symbols changes over time as a response to social and cultural change thus giving a given symbol multiple meanings over a long period. Coupling both figurational and symbolic anthropological understandings of popular culture illustrates a pivotal unification between two seemingly incongruent academics fields and results in a more holistic understanding of popular culture.

Regardless of theoretical orientation, there is little debate that by nature of simply existing, popular culture has a foil which is high culture. Where popular culture is understood as cultural expression typically associated with the masses, high culture is cultural expression usually associated with the elites. The divide between high culture and popular culture has given rise to countless social issues over the history of Western figurations. Of course, some are minor, and some are major. One such example of this at play is the contention surrounding *The Art of the Motorcycle* exhibit at the Guggenheim Museum. *The Art of the Motorcycle* was exhibited at the Guggenheim in 1998 which displayed motorcycles along the iconic Frank Lloyd Wright spiral ramp inside the museum (Thompson 2000). Renown art critic for *Salon*, Cintra Wilson, described the exhibit as the Guggenheim "wear[ing] its cultural pants around its ankles…and sucking down to our lowest impulses" (1999). Jed Perl, art critic for the *New Republic*, opened his critique by stating that the exhibit, "…is a pop nostalgia orgy masquerading as a major artistic statement" (1998). Those are bold and powerful ways to describe an art exhibit. However, despite being a critical failure, *The Art of the Motorcycle* broke museum attendance records and was extremely well received by the public (Thompson 2000). The discrepancy between critic and public reception can be attributed to the view that popular culture (motorcycles) invaded a high culture venue (the Guggenheim). This example illustrates three major aspects of the high/popular culture divide.

First, the divide between high and popular culture is real. Of course, one could cite a number of academic articles to prove this; however, the Guggenheim example is a real-life instance which reifies an ephemeral concept. Second, the categories are not mutually exclusive. Something can coexist as both popular and high culture; which

leads to the third characteristic that this example indicates. The boundaries between popular culture and high culture are very permeable. The permeability of these groups allows for an object or symbol to exist as both popular and high culture. This is illustrated by the motorcycles. On one hand, motorcycles are associated with working class and outlaw society (discussed previously in reference to the Rebel Era of tattooing). On the other, they can be the medium for extensive artistic work which explains their exhibition in the Guggenheim as art. The permeability of popular culture and high culture indicates one other concept; that how a figuration categorizes topics can change over time. The ability to change over time highlights the importance of including historical analysis into sociological and anthropological research of a popular or high culture concept. The changing classification over time is very clearly exemplified by Shakespearean plays. As most are taught in high school, Shakespearean dramas were originally written for the commoner and filled with low brow humour. However, over time they have shifted to icons of high culture and sophistication. Understanding these aspects of popular culture is critical when applying the conversation to tattoos.

Throughout the different tattoo eras, media as a social institution has recounted stories of tattooing in different ways. From romantic and poetic accounts during the Late 1800s Shift, to inflammatory or terrifying tales during the Rebel Era, to emotionally evocative or consumerist anecdotes during the Contemporary Era, tattoos have been omnipresent in popular media. Unsurprisingly, many of these accounts have historically been reported via newspaper. News media has been, and still is, a powerful force to present and frame social understandings of cultural events for the masses (Mulcahy 1995; Tuchman 1978). In regard to tattoos, newspaper articles have covered a wide spectrum of issues following some premeditated perspective of the act. In the 1990s, American newspaper articles addressing tattoos framed them as controversial and were primarily concerned with shock value (Pitts 1999). This perspective aligns with the ideas surrounding tattoos pervasive in the United States during the Tattoo Renaissance. The use of newspapers to frame something, in this case tattoos, as a social problem that needs to be addressed typifies the sensationalist news coverage which aims "…to convince others that X is a social problem or that Y offers the solution" (Best 1989:1). However, given that it is common knowledge traditional newsprint is struggling in the contemporary United States, it is worth looking beyond newspaper articles when addressing popular media representations of tattoos.

In non-news printed periodicals and television, the visibility of tattooed bodies has increased dramatically. As the tattoo figuration is primarily comprised of younger bodies, it is unsurprising that television advertisers have attempted to capitalize on the increasing tattoo phenomena. Advertisers have, over the past twenty years, made a targeted effort to display younger tattooed bodies in commercials attempting to sell everything from cell phones to alcohol (Atkinson 2003). Using tattoos as a tool for advertisement is not exclusive to television commercials; one need only look at popular culture magazines. Advertisements in magazines like *GQ*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Esquire* show young, tattooed bodies to portray how the object of consumption is cutting-edge or chic. The use of tattooed bodies as an advertising tool is worth noting because the types of bodies that people see in advertisements absolutely influences the perception of the commodity, the body, and corporeal norms (and by proxy deviance). The models are selected and displayed in a very intentional manner to establish or reinforce some type of message (Puhl et al. 2013). The conversation of corporeal presentation in advertisements is typically associated with ideas of body "normality", disability, and body idealism; however, the same logic does apply to tattoos as well.

Popular culture magazines even advertise themselves with the use of tattooed bodies. *People* is well known for annually releasing an issue focused on "the sexiest man alive". From the year 2000, in ascending chronology the list is: Brad Pitt, Pierce Brosnan, Ben Affleck, Johnny Depp, Jude Law, Matthew McConaughey, George Clooney, Matt Damon, Hugh Jackman, Johnny Depp (again), Ryan Reynolds, Bradley Cooper, Channing Tatum, Adam Levine, Chris Hemsworth, David Beckham, Dwayne Johnson, Blake Shelton, and Idris Elba. This litany of actors and musicians is predicable, yes, but serves to illustrate the importance of tattoos to contemporary popular culture in the United States. Of the 17 people listed here, 13 have tattoos and six of the 18 cover photographs display the tattooed body. Advertisements surrounding the tattooed body indicate how inked skin has been commercialized in contemporary American popular culture and furthers the idea that tattoos are associated with freedom, sexuality, and power by the general public in the Contemporary Era.

Taking a prominent place in American popular culture beyond advertising, tattooing is central to "reality voyeurism". Admittedly, the first academic appearance of reality voyeurism is this research project. I use the term simply as a catchall for the practice of, and the multitude of media avenues the American populace utilizes to, observe someone else's projected life. For instance, the term includes reality television,

Instagram accounts, Twitch feeds, reality podcasts, and Youtube channels. Reality voyeurism treats the relationship between the subject and the viewer in such a way that the innermost thoughts, emotions, worldview, strengths, and weaknesses of the subject become visible to the audience and available for their enjoyment and contemplation.

Reality television is a staged performance, ostensibly in a documentary format, that is intended to communicate some type of "real life" drama or narrative guided by producers, directors, and writers. That, I hope, is not a surprise. There are a number of reality television shows surrounding tattoos; *Miami Ink*, *Skindigenous*, *Ink Master*, and *Tattoo Fixers*, to name just a few. While these series showcase tattooing as the primary focus, they are not actually about tattooing. The shows are about the life-stories and narratives of the participants, presented from their own (often tumultuous) perspectives. In this sense, the tattooed forms act as a canvas to present thoughts on morality, story-telling, and normalization of tattooing from a hegemonic perspective (Lodder 2010). Reality television shows are analogous to modern iterations of 19th century freakshows. Shows like *My 600-lb Life*, *Hoarders*, and *Little People, Big World* are avenues by which individuals can gawk at people who violate some corporeal norm while in the comfort of their own living rooms. In the same way that culturally deviant bodies were displayed in freakshows, reality television showcasing tattooing frames tattoos as socially deviant through a lens of normalization. While the shows allow those who dislike, or are uncomfortable with, tattooing to be exposed to contemporary people engaged with the practice in a tame and controlled manner, the problem with this reality voyeurism is that it is constrained by historical factors. Backstrom (2012) addresses a similar issue in regard to dwarfism and obesity in the media. Without some form of actual education content, the shows simply act as a means to reproduce the symbolic knowledge associated with the practice.

Reality voyeurism is about image management. People are presenting an image (often fictional) of what their daily life is and the type of people they are while others voraciously consume that content. The content is then used a means of reference for the conceptualization of an ideal or best life. Instagram "influencers", those accounts with very large followings, are deeply ingrained in American popular culture. These accounts, not the people but the accounts as they have the power, make tattooing extremely accessible to American popular culture and serve to normalize the practice. Table 1 depicts the top ten private, North American based Instagram accounts with the

most followers as an example. Only Kim Kardashian[4], Taylor Swift[5], and Jennifer Lopez[6] do not have tattoos on this list. That leaves seven of the most popular private North American Instagram accounts as individuals who frequently post pictures of, or discuss, their tattoos; a combined follower count of 1.16 billion. That is a staggering number of people exposed to tattoos via reality voyeurism who then use these images to form life ideals for themselves. In practice, the abundance of tattooed images the American populace is exposed to through reality voyeurism act as a basis for evaluative judgements and ingrains tattooing into the contemporary popular culture.

The evaluative judgements that stem from reality voyeurism are not only informed by media accounts, but also influenced by the figurations one is a member of. Social influence can stem from any agent of socialization (e.g. media, family, school); however, one of the major forms of social influence Americans are subject to in the contemporary world is from peers. This idea aligns with the influential power associated with figuration members and can impart strong social pressure on individuals to conform. These pressures can be minor, such as making people like music that they think is popular but is actually not (Salganik et al. 2006; Salganik & Watts 2008). The pressure can also be quite extreme, such as convincing individuals to willing participate in torture (Milgram 1975). The same logic is applied to the impact of reality voyeurism. The images that are a part of popular culture, and regularly consumed, absolutely influence people to conform. While the discussion is targeted towards American culture, in practice this applies to the idea of figurations as a whole as well. This is the same logic used by popular corporations, such as Uber, Airbnb, and Yelp, to unite their userbase and collaborate for a shared rating system that is eventually taken as gospel (Thompson 2014). What this means is that, while the production of popular culture is attributed to a handful of individuals, such as Instagram influencers, the success of

[4] Of the three individuals mentioned, Kim Kardashian is the one true, and vocal, proponent against tattoos. Discussing why she would never receive a tattoo, Kardashian has been quoted by her sister Khloé Kardashian as saying, "You don't put a bumper sticker on a Bentley." (Kardashian 2015) Interesting, Khloé stated this as a caption to an Instagram video of her lower back tattoo removal.

[5] Despite having no tattoos, the cover of Taylor Swift's 2019 single, "You Need To Calm Down", depicts a rear-facing topless picture of Swift. Her back, in this image, is covered with black butterfly tattoos in differing sizes. This image has sparked a lot of conversation and speculation among her fans whether the tattoos are real. In reality, these tattoos are fake and simply act as a means to capture public attention and hype the upcoming album. The tactic is not dissimilar to Jennifer Lopez's use of tattoos in her professional career.

[6] While Jennifer Lopez has no tattoos, it is worth noting that she has received a number of false tattoos for her music videos which people frequently associate as real. They are not, evidenced by the fact they change every music video.

incorporating the messages is in the informal, symbolic micro-level interactions within a given figuration. In this sense, the idea of reality voyeurism is not suggesting that the tattoo figuration is an interpretive community (Radway 1991; Fish 1980). If that was the case, there would be a completely shared sense of tattoo quality and aesthetics. The idea is more analogous to challenging cultural conventions (Becker 1982) surrounding tattooing. By challenging cultural conventions, reality voyeurism provides the groundwork for the normalization or deviation of a practice.

Reality voyeurism is a social phenomenon associated with the mass technological advancement of the Information Revolution which is normalizing tattoos among younger bodies in the United States. The inclusion of tattoos into so many different popular culture arenas further expands the population subject to the destigmatization of tattoos in American culture and provides much of the justification for changes found in the Contemporary Era. Tattoos serve as an intersectional point between figurational and symbolic anthropological thought. Tattoos are absolutely symbols; communicating freedom, sexuality, and power. This nonverbal symbolic communication is deeply entrenched in American popular culture furthering the tattoo figuration and the resulting body projects the general public adopts. The increased media exposure of tattoos highlights the contested nature of tattooing in contemporary United States. Through reality voyeurism, the frequency of tattooed skin in American society is on display for the general public to observe. While the current status, norms, and values surrounding tattooing in the Contemporary Era are still developing, marking these changes in popular culture gives insight into the developing tattoo figuration.

Reality voyeurism is acting as a means to normalize, and formalize, tattooing. The act of normalizing tattooing is connected to the formalization of tattoo styles, tattooist training, value, and fashion. Clearly, the permeable nature of high culture and popular culture explain tattooing across Western history; however, it also allows the formalization process to get underway. In the next section, the ideas of popular culture and high culture are used to unpack the art and fashion of tattooing.

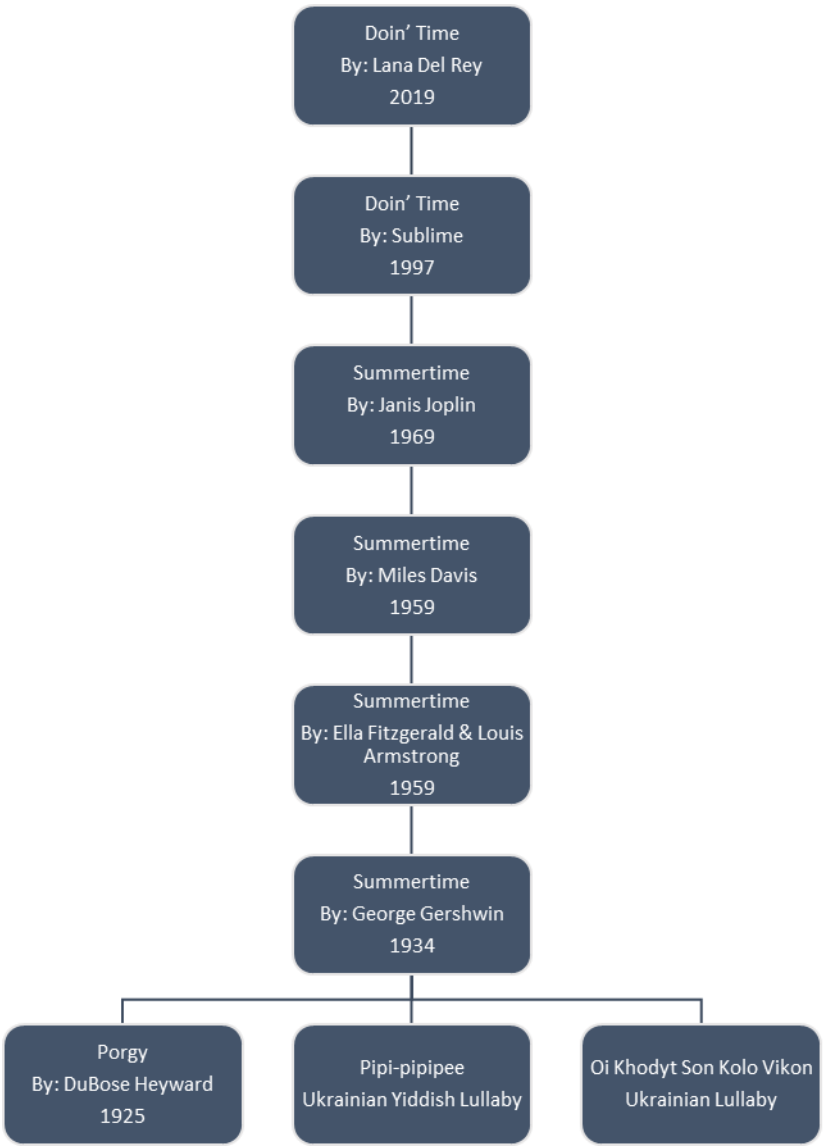


Figure 14: Inspiration for Doin' Time

Table 1: Top 10 North American Based Instagram Accounts [7]

Name	Follower Number in Millions	Has Tattoos
Ariana Grande	191	Yes
Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson	188	Yes
Kylie Jenner	182	Yes
Selena Gomez	181	Yes
Kim Kardashian	176	No
Beyoncé	149	Yes
Justin Bieber	139	Yes
Taylor Swift	135	No
Kendall Jenner	132	Yes
Jennifer Lopez	124	No

Art, Fashion & Tattoos

Fashion as a field of academic inquiry is inherently interdisciplinary. Whether looking at history, economics, sociology, anthropology, politics, semiotics, gender, design, or whatever else fits into the massive conceptual notion of fashion, there is little question that the scholarly interest draws upon a number of academic fields of research. It is the interdisciplinary nature of fashion, in addition to the well documented historical changes, that makes it highly applicable to the discussion of tattoos in contemporary society. Regardless of whether discussing "old fashioned" attire from the 1850s or "Boho-chic" from the early 2000s, the need for historical perspective and interdisciplinary knowledge is paramount (Miller & Hunt 1997). Regardless of the time period in which fashion is under investigation, there is one undeniable truth: fashion is directly related to the prevailing fine and decorative arts (Cole & Deihl 2015).

The ties between fashion and art leaves the discussion of tattoos connecting to either body in a precarious position. Due to this deep interconnectivity, this section is broken into two parts: art and fashion. The discussion of each topic as it relates to tattoos allows for a comprehensive view of tattoos in the contemporary world.

[7] This information is accurate as of 26/6/2020

Furthermore, the pervasiveness of both art and fashion in relation to tattoos informs other aspects of the literature analysis which is why, despite a best effort, the notions cannot be kept in discreet sections, cut off from other aspects of the literature analysis.

Art

While there is certainly a level of personal subjectivity to what makes 'good' art, Western culture (in addition to others) has a shared understanding of elite artists (e.g. Salvador Dali, Pablo Picasso, Claude Monet, Andy Warhol, and Jackson Pollock, to name only a few). Becoming an elite artist is a complex process that involves a number of factors; however, what these artists all have in common is that they have been imbued with some arbitrary level of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984) that is deemed as appropriate by the social whole. Once this happens, the artist and their works shift through a semi-permeable social barrier and become classified as high culture.

Art, as a broad concept, can be created or expressed through numerous forms. Some of the more common artistic forms in the West are painting, sculpture, drawing, photography, and architecture. The different artistic forms can be produced through a staggering number of mediums; the materials used to create the art. Table 2 presents a small number of mediums with some associated modern, contemporary, or established artists that work in said medium. It should be clear that this means a conversation about art needs to cover a very large spectrum. However, this is still only one part of the conversation. There is a distinction between visual arts, like the examples in Table 2, and performing arts (not to be confused with performance art). Performing arts encompass artistic forms in which the artist uses their bodies and voices to convey art (Oliver 2010). Examples include dance, theatre, and music. While not meant to be a primer on art studies, the relevance of this discussion is illustrated through the body. The body in art occupies a liminal state; simultaneously a part of visual arts and performing arts (O'Reilly 2009). In practice this means that the body can be the artistic form, medium, and canvas. In the case of tattoos, the body can act as medium and canvas.

Fine art, as a category, is a recent invention. The boundaries separating fine art and craft are culturally constructed and mediated (Becker 1978; Shiner 2001). William Morris founded the Arts & Crafts movement in the 1800s to address the decline of artisanal goods with the rise of industrialization. Morris' position is that art and craft are

two oppositional ideas based upon whether the good is authentic/non-authentic, revolutionary/mainstream, and made by an artist/factory (Rice 2015). The argument is predicated on the idea that an object is a craft if the item is utilitarian and art if it is expressive. While this is a seemingly easy concept, the binary nature disallows for any intermediary positions inevitably leading to debate. The art/craft divide takes shape in a number of areas, such as glass. A glass craft could be conceptualized as a cup blown in a factory. However, that same cup shape could be produced by Lalique, a famous French atelier, and seen as an art piece; despite its production in a factory and a mainstream item. What more, if that same cup shape is produced by Dante Marioni, a glass artist who creates utilitarian vessel shapes in enormous size and colours, it is undeniably conceived of as art. The ambiguity of art/craft is important when exploring tattoos as an art form because they, too, are subject to the same conversation.

Art, approached from a sociocultural perspective, removes the humanistic notions of a piece. The sociocultural perspective frames art as a cultural product that is subject to social processes which create meanings (Inglis 2005). The legitimization of cultural fields, discussed by Bourdieu (1996), allows for items to receive symbolic capital. Framing artistic fields as a figuration, when the I-WE figuration is isolated from external chains of interdependency, it remains autonomous. However, altering the figuration to a WE-THEY figuration results in an increased susceptibility to commercial fields.

Relating specific tattoos to an art, distinctly separate from a mundane craft, is a result of the Tattoo Renaissance and the American media (DeMello 2000; Pitts 2003; Kosut 2014). Some tattooists are situated in a socially ambiguous area in which they simultaneously occupy the traditional art world and tattooing. Academics have, relatively recently, began debating whether tattooing can be classified as fine art (Kosut 2014; Lodder 2012; Schonberger 2012). The most commonly accepted argument refers back to Rubin (1988), the scholar who coined the term 'Tattoo Renaissance', in which he posits that there is a categorical separation among tattoos of folk art and *avant garde*. Interestingly, his use of *avant garde* engenders the *avant garde* artists who acted as the catalyst for the Tattoo Renaissance. While the nature of tattoos as fine art may still be classified as traditionally classical *avant garde*, an unusual or experimental idea in the arts, it is worth noting that the process of artification has imbued tattoos with a symbolic meaning of cultural legitimacy (Kosut 2014).

Artification addresses an important criticism tattoos receive from Americans: not all tattoos are art. Frankly, some tattoos are really, really bad; in execution, design, and composition. Tattoos, like photographs (Bourdieu 1996; Christopherson 1974), may not earn the designation of art. Artification is the process by which non-art becomes art. Kosut (2014) traces the changes in American tattoo culture to illustrate how certain pieces become more valued than others and become tattoo art. The artification process investigates the "process of processes" (Shapiro & Heinich 2012) which creates a more interconnective model. The artification process has been used to empirically study media that is considered unconventional as an art form: video games (Smuts 2005; Tavinor 2008, 2011), street art (Andrzejewski 2017; Vital da Cunha 2016), comics (Beaty 2011; Groensteen 2007); natural history museums (Mäki-Peräjä 2012), and aquariums (Leddy 2012). Like these other unconventional art forms, tattooing is a cultural form that is valued by some experts and demonized by others (Austin 2001; Kosut 2014)

The preferred aesthetic for tattoos, like other art forms, has changed over time. With the introduction of *avant garde* artists during the Tattoo Renaissance, and further entrenched during the Contemporary Era, a less conventional approach to design has appeared more frequently. The changing aesthetic challenges institutional perceptions of tattoo cultural legitimacy. Some museums have supported the artistic legitimacy of tattooing by exhibiting work. The museum exhibits mostly started in New York City during the early 1990s (Kosut 2014) with *Pierced Hearts and True Love* at Soho's Drawing Center (1995) as the first show. Other exhibits, *Body Art: Marks of Identity* at the American Museum of Natural history (1999), *The Art of Gus Wagner* at South Street Seaport Museum (1999), *Adorning the World: Art of the Marquesas Islands* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (2005), and *Ed Hardy: Deeper than Skin* at de Young Museum (2019) are just some of the recent examples of institutional support for the artistic legitimacy of tattooing. However, the way these exhibits portrayed tattooing was not as an artistic form of its own; rather, it was presented as a mark of ethnographic exotification or as a subset of folk art.

Recently, art institutions have started to forego the previous messages of cultural legitimacy presented in past exhibits. The Museum of Contemporary Art – Denver held an exhibit featuring the art of Amanda Wachob titled, *Amanda Wachob: Tattoo This* (2019). Amanda Wachob is a New York based tattoo artist who pioneered the watercolour tattoo. The exhibit featured her work as photographs of tattoos on skin,

tattoos on lemons, canvas work, and live tattooing. Displaying tattooing in a formalized art institution adds cultural legitimacy to the practice of tattooing beyond the "savage origins" or craft appeal. Despite the mainstreaming of watercolour tattoos, Wachob certainly challenges the general perception of tattoo art.

Another recent exhibit adding to the institutional legitimacy of tattooing is *Tattoo* (2017), which travelled to a number of institutions in the United States and internationally. The exhibit made such an impact that the Musée de l'Homme in Paris purchased a piece by *avant garde* tattoo artist Yann Black to add to their permanent exhibit. Black works exclusively in black and red vegan inks to create eerie, atmospheric landscapes; geometric patterns one would associate with inking; and images reminiscent of child-like drawings. His work is quite divisive as it challenges what tattooing should look like. Black recounts the perception of his tattooing:

> "When I first started tattooing 25 or 30 years ago, and people started seeing my work, I started to get threats [from tattooists and clients]. 'I'm gonna break your hands with a hammer' and things like that. It was the start of a change. And people don't like that. But now things are getting different" (Yann Black, tattoo artist)

The changing perception of art is a result of the artification process and imbues tattooing with cultural legitimacy. The artification process is aided by formalized institutions which have charged certain styles of tattooing with artistic legitimacy. Now, Black has a year long wait list and never tattoos outside Montreal. He has become a member of the informal elite tattoo artists figuration and his work is accepted by formal institutions, academics, and bourgeois audiences.

As tattooing is an art form, and accepting that society shares an understanding of elite artists, the logical progression is to address the topic of elite tattoo artists. Undeniably, elite tattoo artists do exist. While these artists might not be as well-known as elite painters or elite sculptors, the individuals who have gained the appropriate cultural capital know who they are and how to seek them out. Like more traditional art forms, there are people who want to collect the elite artwork. The process of becoming an elite tattoo collector has been well documented and discussed (Vail 1999, 2000). In short, these collectors seek to have significant portions of their bodies tattooed from a number of tattoo artists with well-established reputations and some level of exclusivity.

Vail's research concludes that the social processes of learning to consume high culture is very similar to those involved with becoming an elite tattoo collector. Utilizing this notion, it is quite realistic to state that how one individual views tattoos, compared to another, could be radically different. Those differences can easily address why some participants have 'trashy' tattoos compared to 'classy' ones (a concept referred to further in later chapters).



Figure 15: The Art of the Motorcycle exhibit at The Guggenheim Museum c. 2015. Retrieved from Guggenheim.org

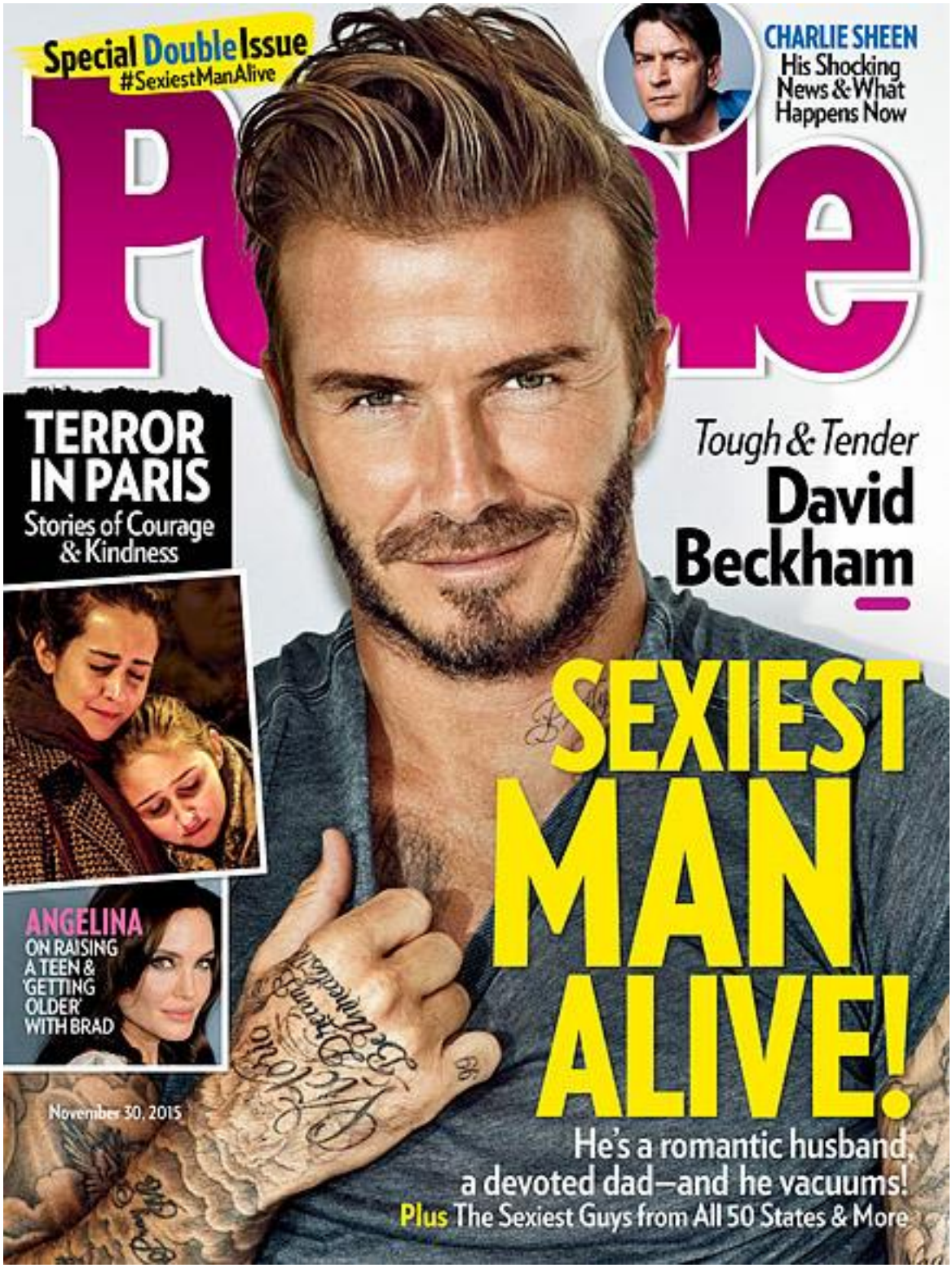


Figure 16: People's 2015 'Sexiest Man Alive' cover featuring David Beckham. Retrieved from People.com



Figure 17: Example of watercolour tattoo by Amanda Wachob retrieved from amandawachob.com



Figure 18: Example of avant garde tattoo by Yann Black. Retrieved from yourmeatismine.com

Table 2: Select Artistic Mediums & Artists

Medium	Artists
Glass	William Carlson, Dale Chihuly, Paul Stankard

Digital Photography	Marc Adamus, Andreas Gursky, Annie Leibovitz
Wood	Philip Moulthrop, Seiji Kawasaki, Ursula von Rydingsvard
Graffiti	Banksy, Blek le Rat, David Choe
Screen Printing	Laurie Hastings, Roy Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol
Oil Painting	Whitney Bedford, Salvador Dali, Pablo Picasso
Stone	Pablo Atchugarry, Barry X Ball, Michelangelo Buonarroti
Ceramic	Zemer Peled, Toshiko Takaezu, Lei Xue

Fashion

As noted above, the topic of appearance and dress draws on a number of fields. Underpinning all of these conversations is the idea that fashion is more than just personal adornment. While a number of definitions exist that attempt to simplify the complex notion of *fashion*, for the purpose of this research project it is worth noting how *fashion* is understood and used. Leaning into the interdisciplinary nature of fashion, and coupled with the figurational and symbolic perspectives of this project, *fashion* is understood as, "the inscription of the obscure relationship of art, personal psychology, and social order on our bodies" (Wilson 1985: 246-247). Utilizing this conception of fashion allows one to frame fashion as a figuration connected by chains of interdependency to social bodies. Furthermore, this understanding of fashion directly addresses the necessity of corporeality in the unpacking of such a concept.

Fashion connects to the understanding of presentation of the self (Goffman 1959). Despite the connection to dramaturgy and other ideas regarding the construction of self, sociologists have largely ignored the idea of dress and fashion as a valid form of academic inquiry (Miller & Hunt 1997). One such explanation for the ignorance shown towards fashion is the apparent suggestion that dress is nonrational behaviour and, as such, situates a status that cannot be systematically analysed. Unquestionably, dress is personal adornment; however, it is much more than that as well. Fashion is a rational choice informed by larger social structures. Narrowly relegating fashion to personal adornment overlooks that dress is an understanding and expression of collective norms. Dress plays as important a role in understanding identity as it does to actual adornment (Arthur 1997).

In organizational and institutional settings, which is of particular importance to this study, dress is highly symbolic. The importance of these symbols and what exactly dress symbolizes are understood and debated scientifically (Bort & Kieser 2011; Cummins & Blum 2015; Pratt & Rafaeli 1997). In all of these articles, dress is used as identity embracing and distancing.

Body modifications have been a part of fashion for a very long time. For clarity, 'body modifications' does not exclusively relate to visually arresting or socially deviant corporeal alteration. Body modifications are, "…temporary or permanent aesthetic modifications of the body, for some expressive or other purpose" (Thomas 2014). Under this definition, one can absolutely include the more stereotypical modifications such as piercing, scarification, branding, and yes, tattooing. However, utilizing this definition also opens the conversation to include other forms that are less frequently acknowledged as body modification like haircuts and colouring, dieting, makeup, and building muscle. Both tame and extreme forms of body modification are present throughout the history of modern Western fashion.

In regard to more commonly accepted forms of body modification according to the contemporary American perspective, one need only explore muscle building. Eugen Sandow, "father of modern body building", was the first strongman to gain public attention outside the circus in 1893 (Jowett 1927). Sandow was not known for his feats of strength like circus strongmen. Instead, Sandow gained popularity for his flexing and posing which mirrored Greco-Roman statuary (Cole & Deihl 2015). Through rigorous physical training, Sandow sculpted his body and became the primary influence that, "…led humanity from the stranglehold of Victorian foppery" (Jowett 1927) and set the groundwork for the modern ideal of the gym-toned physique.

Another tame example of body modification in Western history is seen through "flesh reducing" measures common among woman in the early 1900s. Seemingly demonic or medically horrific by name alone, these practices mirror actions still taken in contemporary United States. These acts included wearing compression undergarments and consuming slimming drinks to prevent "…roly-poly plumpness [that] takes all the youth out of a woman's face and step…" (Fletcher 1901: 410) and mirror Venus de Milo; seen as the image of female perfection. The practice is not dissimilar to donning shapewear pieces common today, like Spanx or Waist Gang Society, and drinking "diet drinks", like gin and diet tonic or Skinny Girl Margaritas.

More extreme forms of body modification are also utilized in fashion. Of course, easy examples abound, like plastic surgery which, discounting medically necessary procedures, include beautifying practices like facelifts, breast augmentations, and other dollification modifications (Lee & Ryu 2012). Historically, more extreme body modifications were also incorporated into fashion. The Price Albert, a piercing through the underside of a penis where the glans meets the shaft and exiting through the urethral opening, is one of the most common male genital piercings (Gage et al. 2002). Still done today, this piercing was wildly popular in Victorian England. The difference is that in Victorian England, the Prince Albert was done for fashion reasons. During the Victorian era, trousers became increasingly tighter to create a stovepipe silhouette with buttoned fly fronts (Cole & Deihl 2015). As the trousers became tighter, a very practical questions arose: what does one do with the penis? The answer came in the form of the Prince Albert. The jewellery would connect to the trousers to keep the penis in place (Schultheiss et al. 2003; Vale & Juno 1989). Undeniably, the fashion trend has faded; however, the point is that body modifications, both mild and extreme, have been a part of Western fashion practices for many years.

Tattooing is well entrenched in this conversation. As a fashion point, simply examine the influence of royals with tattoos in Europe (discussed in Chapter 3). Royals with tattoos influenced the aristocracy, society folk, and eventually commoners in Europe and the United States. During the 1990s, women's magazines printed articles discussing appropriate tattoos for women, how to use tattoos in fashion, and how to hide tattoos with fashion (Cole & Deihl 2015; Mifflin 1997). Musicians and other popular culture figures, like Red Hot Chili Peppers lead singer Anthony Kiedis, utilized clothing (or the lack thereof) to accentuate tattoos in print and live performances (e.g. 1998 Tibetan Freedom Concert; 1991 Lollapalooza music festival). Like clothing, the images and locations of tattoos have also changed over time which is in response to fashion. This is a major reason why some tattoos, like a male with barbed wire tattooed around their bicep, is highly indicative of a time period.

The inclusion of tattoos into the academic realm of fashion is not something that is holistically agreed upon. The difficulties associated with characterizing tattoos as an expression of fashion lie in their permanence. Tattoos as a form of permanent (or semi-permanent depending on the corporeal location) body modification have been traditionally classified as anti-fashion as a result of their inclusion in deviant subcultures (Hebdige 1979). The inclusion of permanence into fashion is still problematic for

contemporary researchers in that, "any permanent body decoration…is as anti-fashion as it is possible to get" (Polhemus 1995: 13). In fact, some cultural theorists who study fashion suggest that 'true fashion' can only be defined as "a system of continual and perpetual…change" (Polhemus & Proctor 1978: 25) which clearly excludes tattoos from fashion and relegates their importance to experience as opposed to accessory.

The paradox of discussing tattoos as fashion lies in the permanence of body modifications. One term that constantly appears in the critique of tattoos as a part of fashion is the idea of 'anti-fashion' (e.g. Hebdige 1979; Polhemus 1995; Sweetman 1999). Anti-fashion is a blanket term used to label any adornment that falls outside the system of fashion change. Examples of these anti-fashion adornments include uniforms, 'traditional' forms of dress, as well as subcultural styles (Sweetman 1999). The argument surrounding anti-fashion simplifies to a key aspect; the lack of interchangeability. The irreversibility, and thus lack of interchangeability, of tattoos could clearly align them as 'the ultimate' in anti-fashion. This idea is supported by Curry (1993) who posits that, despite whatever popularity tattoos might have at a given time in history, they "can never be a true fashion…because tattoos cannot be put on and left off by the season… [t]he same is true for body piercing…with the proviso that piercings are semi-permanent rather than permanent" (Curry 1993: 80). A major issue in applying this mentality to tattoos is that, while tattoos are undeniably permanent and difficult to change in line with fashion trends, their meanings can be mutable. While this perspective might suggest that a postmodernist approach is necessary to understand the lived experience of tattooed individuals, in actuality it would not serve to address the symbolic markers that are in place or how those are informed by the differing chains of interdependency.

Whether anti-fashion or fashion, tattoos undeniably lack the interchangeable property associated with more traditional accessories. As such, the threat of fashion obsoleteness is tied to tattoos in relation to fashion. In order to combat seeming dated or becoming a 'sign of the time', there is a need to craft individual tattoos (Kjeldgard & Bengtsson 2005). The popularization of uniquely crafted tattoos can be directly attributed to the Tattoo Renaissance with the introduction of *avant garde* artists utilizing the tattoos as an artistic medium. Furthermore, those individuals who receive tattoos have the ability to reflexively personalize the meanings of tattoos in order to incorporate them into one's projection of the self.

Tattoos, as they relate to fashion, can certainly be viewed through the perspective of identity work, but doing so is only one aspect of the whole. In practice, tattoos need to be viewed through the lens of consumption. Getting a tattoo is like any other consumptive practice that has the endgame of beautifying the body; especially in relation to fashion norms (Kjeldgaard & Bengtsson 2005; Kosut 2006a; Turner 1999). As a consumptive fashion, tattoos act as a consumer commodity and sold as "cool" through different media outlets (Turner 1999). Although obvious, worth stating is that tattoos are permanent. If tattoos are framed as a consumptive fad and the language of capitalism is used to describe them (good, commodity, fad), then they begin to lose their authenticity (Kosut 2006a). This locates tattoos at an interesting crossroads with fashion. As fashion shifts and changes about every decade (Cole & Deihl 2015), tattoos endure and relocate in the market. In this way, tattoos are framed as art pieces, similar to haute fashion.

Some previous studies have framed tattoos as something socially disvalued (Sanders 1985). This study does not. Instead, tattooing is framed as a mass phenomenon in the United States that has undergone a number of shifting views throughout time.

The framing of tattoos as a mass phenomenon, coupled with their role as a consumptive practice to beautify the body, leads to the discussion of the 'fashion tattoo'. A fashion tattoo is a classification for a tattoo that has been done without the intention of getting more (Goulding et al. 2004) or multiple tattoos done without meaning outside of their artistic value (Kjeldgaard & Bengtsson 2005). The idea of a fashion tattoo is predicated on the statement that, in the eyes of the consumer, tattoos are (or can be) art.

The issue surrounding fashion tattoos is, quite simply, can an object of fashion truly be devoid of meaning? The postmodern approach to fashion posits that the Western cultural conception of fashion is mired in a "carnival of signs with no meaning attached" (Tseëlon 1995:124) attempting to reference anything but lacking external referentiality (Falk 1995). The problem with adhering to this perspective is that fashion, regardless of conservativeness or whimsy, still maintains overt links to social reality which suggests that fashion is symbolic of signification (Sweetman 1999). Understanding that all objects of fashion inherently have symbolic meaning is important because it reframes an otherwise nihilistic view of social trends as a figuration situated in a given cultural morass. At the very least, what this view of fashion suggests is that modern fashion is characterized by, "a blurring between mainstream and countercultural

fashions: all fashion has become ‘stagey’, self-conscious about its own status and discourse” (Wilson 1990:222). Thus, framing tattoos as an aspect of modern, and historical, fashion trends is appropriate and directly addresses the critiques of Curry, Polhemus, and Proctor.



Figure 19: Eugene Sandow c. 1900. Retrieved from Artstor



Figure 20: Image of tattooed musician. Saul Hudson, a.k.a. Slash, from Guns N' Roses c. 2004. Photographed by Janet Macoska



Figure 21: Example of a Fashion Tattoo. Photographed by author 2018

Chapter 6 – "It just becomes…addicting!": Literature Analysis Part II

The realms of literature covered in Chapter 5 establish important foundational information upon which the analysis for this research has begun. However, in a study addressing tattoos, identity, and stigma in the white collar workplace, there are some huge holes that have yet to be filled. This chapter continues the analysis of established literature and specifically addresses the workplace, identity, and nonverbal communication. Upon the completion of this chapter, the totality of necessary research should be evident. The importance of covering literature relating to the study is to make sure the research has not already been done, yes, but also to establish how this project engages conversations in multiple fields. Additionally, an in-depth literature analysis aids in the analytical process. Finally, completing an analysis of established literature and research illustrates the need for primary data collection which is more fully discussed in Chapter 7.

Tattoos & The Workplace

Given the mainstreaming of tattoos attributed to the Tattoo Renaissance and the Contemporary Era, the question remains whether tattoos persist as a taboo in the workplace. The workplace, though, is an abstract notion. Typically, "the workplace" is associated with a building or office; however, this presupposes that work can only be done in some formalized location. Utilizing this assumption ignores individuals who do not work in a traditional environment. For instance, a professional surfer could view the ocean as their workplace similarly to how a professional mushroom forager might view the woods as their workplace. While there are other conceptions of "workplace" that exist, the majority of individuals will resonate with the post-industrial conception of workplace which is some building.

Like the abstractness of a workplace, the idea of white collar workers, the focus of this project, is also subject to some variability. The term first appears in the mid-1930s when American writer, Upton Sinclair, discusses some workers (van Horn & Schaffner 2003). "White collar" achieved some level of authenticity and became entrenched in academia with the publication of *White Collar* in 1951 by C. Wright Mills. One aspect of Mills' seminal work is the description of a "new class" which he codifies as white collar workers. The concept and importance of white collar workers

has been discussed in depth by academics since Mills' work. As such, it is worth noting how the term "white collar workers" is used throughout this project. Simply put, a white collar worker is anyone working in administrative, managerial, or professional work; typically in an office or administrative setting. This understanding of white collar workers builds on Mills' suggestion of white collar, established in a world of advanced capitalism dominated by salesmanship mentality, and accounts for contemporary use of the term by academics and laymen alike (Mills 1951; van Horn & Schaffner 2003; Watanabe et al. 2018).

In the contemporary American white collar workplace, tattoos are still not normative. That is not to suggest tattoos do not exist, because they do; rather, individuals in this environment typically have tattoos in easily concealed locations (Atkinson 2003). In practice, this means that corporeal locations which are often exposed, hands, forearms, and feet for instance, are less frequently tattooed for fear of reprisal. This idea alone illustrates that the workplace environment can greatly impact the activities of employees (Hutchinson & Wilson 2011) which is one reason this project is of value. The contemporary changing age in workplaces, especially white collar workplace, is coupled with notions of stigma and power to address the relationship of tattoos and the workplace.

Age

Noted numerous times in this chapter, tattoos in the United States are more common on younger bodies. I am aware this might seem like beating a dead horse, but this point is applicable when discussing the workplace because there are multiple generations that comprise nearly every workplace. In practice, workplaces tend to have the presence of four generations of workers (Constanza & Finkelstein 2015). Tattoos are not normative in the workplace; however, as younger people enter the workforce and older individuals exit, the frequency of tattoos in the workplace will absolutely increase. Preconceived notions regarding age in the workplace have the potential to influence the perception of tattoos based upon the individuals sporting them.

The presence of four different generations has led to the common perception in American culture that each age group understands the nature of work and workplace relations differently. The perception persists despite little empirical evidence suggesting differences based upon generation in the workplace (Constanza et al. 2012; Parry &

Urwin 2010), no satisfactory explanation as to why the differences should occur (Parry & Urwin 2010), and a multitude of other explanations for the differences supposedly attributed to generational ranges (e.g. Meyer et al. 2002; Ng & Feldman 2010). The supposed differences in perception lead to stereotyping behaviour in the workplace based upon age (McCann & Giles 2002). For instance, the Silent Generation are supposedly disciplined and conservative (Strauss & Howe 1991), Baby Boomers are materialistic and time stressed (Constanza & Finkelstein 2015), Gen Xers are individualist and sceptical (Twenge et al. 2010), and Millennials are narcissistic and socially conscious (Foltz 2014). While Americans in general tend to implicitly prefer young individuals over old (Levy & Banaji 2002), and even more so in the workplace due to associations of youth with increased competence (Abrams et al. 2011; Fiske et al. 2002), the stereotyping behaviour influences hirability (Abrams et al. 2016) and organizational culture (Schloegel et al. 2018).

The workplace generational stereotyping is unfounded and highly problematic when applied (Constanza & Finkelstein 2015; Jorgensen 2003; Macky et al. 2008). The connection to tattoos, age, and the workplace should be evident: if nature of the workplace and work relations is subject to false stereotyping based upon age, tattooing may be no different. However, since tattoos are more common on young bodies, the *de facto* stereotypes associated with tattoos based upon age (e.g. those that went through primary socialization of tattoos during the Rebel Era typically view them as signs of sociocultural or criminal deviancy) may potentially be assigned to the individuals sporting tattoos. Bearing this in mind, it is worth noting the assumptions and stereotypes workplaces assign to tattooed individuals as a broad concept. Ellis (2015) suggests actions that can be taken by organizations and tattooed individuals to help alleviate the replacement of older populations with Gen Xers and Millennials. The suggestions, grossly simplified, are that both parties need to get over themselves and work together. Specifically, companies need to understand that antiquated dress codes and policies designed to hide body modifications are detrimental to employees' "authentic self" which results in diminished motivation, performance, and job satisfaction. Ellis also suggests that tattooed employees need to be patient with organizations as they change and adopt an educational approach rather than a confrontational one. With an increasing number of Millennials entering the workforce, the false assumptions regarding age, as well as the antiquated associations with tattoos, play a critical role in defining the future of the workplace.

Business *Faux Pas*?

Would you walk into a job interview wearing paint splattered athletic shorts, a sleeveless t-shirt spotted with holes, and worn flip-flops? It is well understood (I hope) why you would not do this: it is not professional. In both the academic and layman perspective, it is well known that aesthetic and corporeal attributes influence the outcome of interviews. Noted in the discussion of stigma above, obese applicants are probabilistically offered jobs less frequently than individuals in the 'normal' weight range (Rudolph et al. 2008). Job applicants with facial birthmarks or scars (Stevenage & McKay 1999), visually disabled (Jenkins & Rigg 2004), unattractive (Hosoda et al. 2003), or poorly dressed (Christman & Branson 1990) are all in the same situation. One area of corporeal adornment that is not well addressed in workplace literature, though, is tattooing.

Academic work on the effects of body art and the workplace are sparse. The focus of this project is on white collar workers; however, it is worth noting that across industries, the perception of tattoos is consistently negative (Foltz 2014; Timming et al. 2017). The first study to explore tattoos and the workplace, conducted by Bekhor et al. (1995), concluded that mangers tend to avoid hiring tattooed people in the beauty, hospitality, retail, and service sectors. In the abstract "sales position", customers with tattoos are more likely to trust salespeople who also have tattoos (Arndt & Glassman 2012), although tattooed people are rated as less intelligent and honest than non-tattooed individuals, even when rated by other tattooed people (Degelman & Price 2002). Furthermore, despite tattooees trusting tattooed salespeople more, consumers as a whole are less confident in tattooed employees and typically less satisfied with the service experience (Dean 2011). In the restaurant industry, restaurant managers hire people without visible tattoos more frequently than those with visible tattoos (Brallier et al. 2011). In fact, managers in general prefer to hire employees without visible tattoos (Swanger 2006). Visibly tattooed dental hygienists (Search et al. 2018), as well as other medical professionals (Motluk 2018; Pfeifer 2012), are associated with lower perceived rates of competency and trustworthiness by patients and other medical practitioners. Social workers are increasingly required to cover tattoos and piercings by their employers (Williams et al. 2014) underpinned by the logic that if an unconventional appearance (e.g. tattoos, piercings, unnaturally coloured hair) "…turns off your clients,

colleagues, and administration, then [workers] may wish to forgo such bits of self-expression" (Kirst-Ashman & Hull 2015: 419). Defence attorneys cover any visible tattoos they might have while in court and, "…often advise their clients that visible tattoos can have a negative influence of middle-class (and white) jurors and judges" (Kang & Jones 2014: 271). Broadly speaking, there is a belief in the United States that tattooed individuals are more likely to abuse alcohol and drugs (Lipscomb et al. 2008) which supports the conclusion that tattoos and other forms of body art are not appropriate for white collar employees (Dean 2010). However, tattoos are seen as more acceptable in blue collar jobs (Dean 2010). Interviews with recruiters, performed by Timming (2015), clearly highlighted a negative attitude towards tattooees, leading to the conclusion that possessing tattoos would preclude a job candidate from receiving the position.

Studies specifically focusing on tattoos and employment within the white collar environment are sparse. The topic, addressed from a legal perspective, concludes that body art, and tattoos specifically, are not protected characteristics when addressing discrimination against job applicants (Cavico et al. 2012; Elzweig & Peeples 2011). To be clear, this means that it is legal in the United States and United Kingdom to act discriminatorily towards a job applicant based upon tattoos due to a lack of legal sanctions. Regardless of tattooed status, workers in an office setting prefer to not work on teams with tattooed co-workers when there is a shared reward (Miller et al. 2009). Among the finance field, where large sums of money are involved and trust is paramount, tattoos are seen as inappropriate and suggest impulsiveness (Dean 2010). The issue with these studies, though, is that the conclusions are based upon limited sample sizes. Furthermore, these studies do not address the processes that underpin the prejudice of tattoos in the workplace.

The research conducted on tattoos in the workplace generally concludes that employers hold a negative attitude towards tattoos in the workplace. The reason why this attitude exists, though, is situated in marketing literature: most managerial decisions are driven by the consumer (French et al. 2018). Visibly tattooed workers are perceived as less honest and less intelligent than non-tattooed individuals by older consumers (Dean 2010). Women in customer-facing positions receive antagonistic attitudes from consumers when they have more masculine tattoos (Arndt & Glassman 2012). Consumers purchase less of a product when a vendor has visible tattoos (Doleac & Stein

2013) due to the stigma still attached to tattoos and other forms of body art in the United States (Larsen et al. 2014).

Given the negative attitudes towards tattoos in the workplace, it is not a far stretch to inquire about earnings. A variety of noncognitive traits, such as beauty (Hamermesh & Biddle 1994) and grooming (Robins et al. 2011), play a critical role in determining earnings in the labour market. Those that are more beautiful and those who are more well-groomed tend to make five percent more than their colleagues. With those conclusions in mind, researchers have investigated pay discrepancy in regard to tattoos. There is a widely held belief among Americans that tattooed individuals are less employable and have lower earnings than their non-tattooed counterparts (Gouveia 2013; Notte 2013). French et al. (2016) empirically addresses this perspective and concludes that there is no significant relationship between tattoos and earnings. Dillingh et al. (2016) corroborates extant literature and, like French et al. (2016), found no significant effect on personal income and body art. In regard to employment, French et al. (2018) found that tattoos have a likelihood, and in some cases greater likelihood, to positively impact employment. These findings are powerful in addressing whether tattoos are a business *faux pas*. If there had been evidence illustrating a lack of employability or decreased income due to tattoos, there would be a strong argument that tattoos should not be in the workplace. However, given the findings concluded no significance in both fields, and that employability may be increased by tattoos, the data dispels the "common sense" explanation and suggests societal norms regarding tattoos are changing. These changes illustrate how important contemporary studies of tattoos in the workplace are given the mercurial contemporary environment.

The current literature regarding body art and the workplace paints a gloomy picture for those individuals with tattoos. Recent research has suggested that the previous negative attitudes are fading. Societal attitudes towards body modifications are changing rapidly and becoming less stigmatizing (Timming 2015). From a legal perspective, contemporary managers marginalize tattooed employees at their own peril. There is increasing risk for rejecting a tattooed employee for simply having tattoos. Courts have been sympathetic towards employers when legal cases arise, but there is an increase in court cases where the employer cannot illustrate a rational basis for limiting the display of tattoos on the job (Allred 2016). The social shifts associated with changing tattoo eras, in this case entering the Contemporary Era, are reshaping how tattoos are seen in the workplace. One of the important recent shifts associated with the

Contemporary Era is that context now plays a critical role when assessing tattoos. Managers stereotype tattooed applicants as less responsible with decreasing frequency and are, instead, focused on tattoos and their impact on the company image (Arndt et al. 2017). This supports Timming's (2017) conclusion that tattoos in the workplace can be an asset or a liability. What defines whether a tattoo is an asset or liability is the 'brand personality' (Aaker 1997) an organization is attempting to communicate or build.

The recent studies that present a different perspective than previous research on tattoos in the workplace inform why this project is so critical: the changing societal attitudes associated with the Contemporary Era are upsetting previous knowledge of the workplace allowing for original contributions to the niche field of tattoos and the workplace.

Tattoos & Identity Work

It would be wonderful to say that there is one perfect definition for identity and it is universally agreed upon in academics. In truth though, the concept of identity is a multifaceted topic that can be approached from a number of different theoretical stances as well as different fields. The space here is not about discussing the different views of identity and giving a holistic view of the concept; rather, it is a more targeted conversation regarding how the term 'identity' is used throughout this project. Unsurprisingly, the way that 'identity' is understood throughout this project is through an anthropological and sociological perspective.

Identity, as it is used here forth, is best conceptualized in terms of 'impression management'. Impression management is a type of identity work which is, "an interactional accomplishment that is socially constructed, interpreted, and communicated via words, deeds, and images" (Hunt & Benford 1994:491). Utilizing this perspective aligns with the theoretical orientation of this project as it supplements the Eliasian understanding of identity. Elias posits that identity is, "…not completely free from established cultural expectations, the self is clearly dialogical with established constructions of bodies" (Elias 1983, 1996). Adhering to this perspective not only engages the theoretical perspectives of this project, but it also allows for the communication of particular world views through nonverbal communication. The use of nonverbal communication is particularly important for this research due to tattoos acting as an obvious, if dense, form of nonverbal communication (discussed below).

Impression management is comprised of two different parts that contribute to identity work: identity avowals and identity attributions. Identity avowal addresses how actors situate themselves relative to others in their environment, while identity attribution is concerned with a collectivity relative to the person making the attributions (Hunt & Miller 1997). Both of these concepts rely on identity typifications which is predicated on some sort of normative order. As such, identity is a discourse that reflects an individual's perceptions of a social order that, when investigated as a collective, illustrate the interplay between the individual and the social order. The notion that identity is socially constructed and interactional with the larger social order has been used in other research projects that focus on tattoos (e.g. Atkinson 2003; Irwin 2001; Phelan & Hunt 1998). Conceptualizing identity in this manner is particularly applicable to this project due to the figurational sociology and symbolic anthropology theoretical underpinnings. In this sense, the tattoos are symbolic of the figurations that make up the large social order.

In attempting to look at any body of literature regarding tattoos and identity work, one is immediately faced with a hotly debated intellectual question: is identity a product of the self or of a group? The debate is relevant to this body of literature because it comments on the nature of the tattoo and the tattooed individual. Addressing both sides of this debate not only provides an intellectual exercise in the nature of identity work, but also provides a holistic review of identity work literature as it relates to tattoos.

Individualist Approach

The argument adhering to an individualistic approach is driven by the personal meanings people attach to their tattoos. This point of view is certainly supported by a number of researchers which, when simplified, posits that all tattoos have a noteworthy meaning for the tattooed individual (Bell 1999; Irwin 2001; Kosut 2000). The underpinning notion for the individualistic approach is that if one can understand what tattoos mean to the wearer, then the importance of the body marks to identity formation can be assessed. As such, in these studies, identity is not a reflexive confirmation of the self by others as one would see in the looking-glass self theory (Cooley 1902) or the mind, self, and society theory (Mead 1934). Instead, the studies focus on the tattooed individual's own perception of identity. Adhering to this perspective, tattoos act as a

communicative device between people making the tattooed body a form of textual and visual social interaction (Kosut 2000).

Also in line with the individualistic approach is research surrounding what it means to be tattooed, and the implications that has for identity. Irwin (2001) suggests that middle-class individuals have circumvented the existing stigma surrounding tattoos by creating different meanings. When a different meaning is created in this fashion, the individuals are altering the meaning of having a tattooed identity. Correctly, Bell (1999) points out that not all tattoos have significant meaning and that it is the actual *process* of getting tattooed that has meaning. This point is particularly important because it connects to the notion of fashion tattoos and the role they play in regard to identity. If an individual ascribes meaning to the process as opposed to the outcome, it frames the tattoo as a tangible reminder of an act which allows meaning to shift over time.

Another body of research adhering to the individualistic approach relates to decisions one makes when getting tattooed (Sanders 1991). Specifically, the focus tends to be on where the tattoo is located on the body, what design is chosen, and the size, which are all supposedly accounted for in anticipation of what will be seen by others (Lane 2014). Those differing elements comment on the worldview of the individuals getting tattooed and, by proxy, make the tattoo a marker of identity.

Getting to the heart of the individualist perspective, tattoos mark an aspect of identity transformation. Given that tattoos take innumerable shapes, colours, forms, locations, meanings, and cultural interpretations, the individualistic perspective is, admittedly, positing something quite bold. To connect these wildly mutable variables, the contemporary approach is to understand tattoos as a marker for different 'stages' in an individual's life. The 'stages' are not dissimilar to the different phases found among traditional rites of passage (Belkin & Sheptak 2018). Individuals begin in a non-tattooed condition and then enter a liminal space in which the tattoo is applied and ritualized hazing (e.g. the pain of receiving a tattoo and the subsequent healing process) takes place. The individual then re-emerges in a new social condition (van Gennep 1909) with a tangible marker communicating their new 'stage'. In this sense, the tattoos act as a symbolic marker.

Viewing tattoos as symbolic markers regarding group membership, rank, or status (Coe et al. 1993; Phelan & Hunt 1998) clearly aligns with the theoretical principles guiding this study as well as informing the current individualist perspective. Specific examples of tattoos acting as symbolic transitional markers into a new identity,

status, or role can be among prisoners in the United States. The purpose of tattoos among this population is to clearly mark and communicate the status, rank, and accomplishments of the tattooed individual (Phelan & Hunt 1998). The same concept has been observed among Russian prisoners who use tattoos to denote the honourable and dishonourable behaviours of the tattooed person (Baldaev 2009; Schonberger 2012). However, this practice is not confined exclusively to criminals. Tattoos as symbolic markers have been found among professional and collegiate basketball players in the United States (Belkin & Sheptak 2018) and sailors to symbolize professional experience (DeMello 2000; Schonberger 2009). Marking the body for symbolic purposed is a clear illustration of identity work and, like the rite of passage, frequently ritualized.

The contemporary individualist approach eschews the classical attitude that dominated academic understanding of tattoos. The classical approach posits that tattoos need to be examined as a marker of deviancy (Lombroso 1896) which thusly dominates and unfairly colours the interpretation of the lived experience of individuals who have tattoos. Furthermore, the classical approach suggests that the deviant identity of an individual, solely attributed to the fact they are tattooed, must somehow be managed (Sanders 1989). In addition to tattoos marking different ‘stages’ in life, recent scholarship also frames tattoos as a form of cultural resistance (Antoszewski et al. 2010; Atkinson 2003; Nikora et al. 2007). Adhering to this viewpoint, the corporeal body is a medium through which identity can be politicized.

The politicizing of body through tattoos has been adopted quite heavily by postmodern scholars. These scholars draw upon the individualistic perspective to posit that the tattooed body acts as a medium through which the dominant political narrative can be challenged and, in the process, displays personal politics to others (Giddens 1991). This notion posits that bodily transformations, which includes tattooing, are causally linked to political motives. As such, the body acts as a project that develops as identity is constructed. The supposition of body politics used in this manner is logically flawed when framed through the individualistic perspective due to the base principle that identity is not a reflexive confirmation of the self by others.

Another vein of postmodern scholars address the thought that establishing any form of coherent identity is problematic and that tattooing acts as a social anchor in a constantly changing world (Sweetman 1999). According to this thought process, body work is part of the self so tattooing, a permanent mark, is an important practice to

construct identity and ground the body's fluid character (Lane 2014). Disregarding the mercurial nature of postmodernism, there is a major issue in this discussion: tattooing is only partially permanent. It is common for old tattoos to be retouched and slightly changed, covered up entirely by new tattoos, removed through laser treatment or surgical processes, or simply worn away if in an area with thin skin or subject to a lot of friction. If these permanent marks are so vital to ground the fluid body, then why do all of these types of modifications, alterations, and removals happen to the work? Adhering to this postmodern perspective places the interpretation of identity through tattoos in a precarious position that seems to ignore the actual lived experience of individuals and rely on a hopeful, but unrealistic, caricature of the real world.

Group Approach

The other side of the argument regarding the origin of identity is the notion that it stems from group behaviour. As this relates to tattoos, researchers have attempted to understand how groups and collectives have used tattoos. As with most discussions regarding groups, it is unsurprising that much of the research has worked to explain the construction of group boundaries and subsequently boundary maintenance. Tattooing as a part of group behaviour can be understood in three ways. Each of the three directly relate to the symbolic uses discussed in the individualist approach; however, the three ways also directly connect to larger uses and understandings of symbols.

The first way that group behaviour draws upon tattoos is to frame them as lines of stratification that create or perpetuate status hierarchies (DeMello 2000; Irwin 2003; Vail 2000). The studies that approach identity through status hierarchies illustrate that there are distinct differences in how tattoos are consumed among tattooed individuals. As discussed above, underpinning the Tattoo Renaissance was a contingent of young, college trained *avant garde* artists working to transform tattooing from a craft to an art form (Lodder 2012). These artists worked to reframe tattooing from a deviant practice to an established practice among the United States working class. In this sense, the working class population utilized tattoos as a form of cultural boundary marking. Specifically, it has been posited that meanings ascribed to tattoos have helped address the identity crisis plaguing the working class (Halnon & Cohen 2006).

In line with the idea that tattoos act as lines of stratification to perpetuate status hierarchies, one must look beyond the working class. In particular, a light should be

shed upon the elite world of tattoos and tattoo collecting (Vail 2000). The process of collecting elite tattoos illustrates that there is a definite hierarchy in place which reinforces the dualism of high/low status and further acts a boundary marker outside the working class. Understanding this point demonstrates the applicability of this literature to the study of white collar workers in the United States.

The second perspective addressing group behaviour and identity is the use of tattoos to mark insiders or affiliation (Coe et al. 1993; Phelan & Hunt 1998). The groups that use tattoos in this manner vary in purpose and structure; thematically ranging from military, gangs, and other subgroups such as those adhering to the modern primitivist movement. The issue with this perspective is that not every tattooed individual is a participant in the groups noted above. As such, the tattoos may not reflect a collective norm, but rather an individual in relation to the social conditions around them. One such example is clearly seen in the modern primitivist movement. The individuals who participate in this subgroup centrally focus around the broad idea of body play; however, that ephemeral collectivity obfuscates the sub-subgroups such as punk groups, gay groups, and BDSM (a form of erotic practices involving bondage, discipline, submission, and sadomasochism) (Klesse 1999; Rosenblatt 1997; Vale & Juno 1989). The tattooing for this broad modern primitive group is used to connect themselves to their 'primitive' side which loosely connects all the iterations of this movement.

Similar to the second use of tattoos, the third method that groups can use tattoos for is the marking of outsiders (Gustafson 2000; Schrader 2000). The use of tattoos as a marker of exclusion in a group does not necessarily align with the use of tattoos as basis for hierarchical structure. The focus is not on individual status, but rather on the traits found among groups with strong cohesion; dedication or loyalty. Typically, these types of marks include some form of ritualized application or display (Govenar 1988) which acts as a rite of passage. Framing the discussion in this manner clearly roots this practice in the classical approaches to body modifications; specially, rite of passage.

The use of tattoos as marks of exclusion is well established in history, across cultures, and state legitimized (e.g. Holy Roman Empire, Pre-Edo Japan, and Nazi Germany). The use of tattoos in this manner allows the state, and members of the state, to easily identify those classified as deviant or transgressors (Gustafson 2000). The association of criminality with tattooing has shaped the way tattooing is contemporarily understood and, at times, has led to a concentrated effort by the state to eradicate tattooing. An example of this can be seen in Japan where tattoos have a very well

established connection to social deviance, outsiders of the hegemonic group, and criminality (Richie & Buruma 1980; Saga 2013). In Japan, the *iresumi* (translated to mean 'the insertion of ink') style of tattooing developed around the 8th century by the *Yakuza* (akin to the Japanese mafia) as a response to authorities tattooing prisoners with words like 'pig' or 'dog' (Kitamura & Kitamura 2001). The criminals collectively addressed the punitive markings by creating a secretive tattooing style with a shared symbolic meaning among the criminal underground. While the act of tattooing criminals is no longer in practice, the idea of tattooing as whole, let alone the *iresumi* style in particular, is still closely related to the *Yakuza* and intensely stigmatized in contemporary society.

Nonverbal Communication

I am not a social person. And yes; the irony that I am an anthropologist and sociologist does not escape me. However, despite a constant desire to avoid many social interactions, I am still subject to one inescapable fact: humans are social animals. Humans are not lone creatures traversing the planet in an attempt to eke out some form of existence; rather, humans seek to build relations with others. Even the most reclusive individuals interact with others in some capacity. In order to interact with others, humans use communication.

Communication is in inescapable necessity to human life. We are doing it now. You are currently looking at a combination of squiggly marks and somehow understanding my message. There is a reason that writing has been considered magic (e.g. a means by which the dead are capable of communicating with the living) by many cultures around the world and throughout time (Styers 2004). Communication as a broad concept manifests in two forms: verbal communication and nonverbal communication. Simply put, verbal communication is speaking to relay a message and nonverbal communication, "…encompasses almost all of human communication except the spoken word" (Matsumoto et al. 2016: xix).

Verbal and nonverbal communication are distinct; however, they are connected in how they operate (Richmond & McCroskey 2004). The two forms of communication are capable of contradicting, accenting, repeating, complementing, and substituting each other. Furthermore, the meanings attached to any form of nonverbal communication is either culturally based or biologically based. The cultural basis for nonverbal

communication is rooted in semiotics (discussed below) and sociocultural forces that shape different nonverbal behaviour (Matsumoto 2006) for different figurations. The biological perspective posits that the meanings of some nonverbal cues, such as base emotions (anger, fear, happiness, sadness, etc.) (Ekman 1972), are universalities which suggests that their meanings are a result of evolutionary adaptation (Floyd 2006). For a more in-depth example of the interplay between biological and cultural forces in nonverbal communication, refer to the discussion on facial hair and piloerection in the stigma section. While presented as a discussion on stigma, the example also applies to the interplay between cultural forces and biology. Given that tattoos are inherently nonverbal in nature, the focus for this research project is on nonverbal communication.

Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication is a part of daily interactions with others and plays an equally important role as verbal communication. For instance, nonverbal communication has the capability to express different attitudes when speaking. Imagine the different uses for the word "okay". The word is always verbally the same; however, it can be used as acknowledgement, dismissal, sarcasm, disgust, confusion, or a plethora of other linguistic modalities. As such, humans utilize nonverbal communication through five different channels: face and eyes, gestures, touch, paralinguistics, and body (Matsumoto et al. 2016; Soukup 2019). Of these five channels, paralinguistics is the one that is less intuitive. Paralinguistics accounts for nonverbal language in verbal language; for instance, volume, tone, pitch, and silence (Acheson 2008; Jõemets 2014). In popular culture, these five channels are typically merged together to discuss "body language" (Soukup 2019) which is simply a catchall for discussing nonverbal communication. Paralinguistics plays an important role in this study due to colour. The colour of a tattoo can absolutely communicate style; however, it can also influence how the image is read. The colour of ink used to write social media posts and professional emails influences judgements; with red engendering more negative emotions and black as more passive (Richards & Fink 2017). The same logic has the potential to apply to tattoos as well. While all of these areas are important to the discussion of nonverbal communication as a whole, of particular importance to the study of body modifications, and specifically tattoos, is the body channel.

The body allows others to make inferences about the character of a person. Typically, this is in reference to posture, movement, corpulence, musculature, and disability. The studies done in this area typically investigate what can be transmitted through the positionality of a body or body part (Bahns et al. 2016) and the communication associated with a specific body type (Backstrom 2012; Puhl et al. 2013; Trunev 2010). However, what these bodies of literature tend to side-line are corporeal markings on the body. Tattoos and other forms of body modification, permanent or not, are tangible markings on the body that communicate some message. Where the tattoo is placed, what the image is, and the quality of the tattoo are examples of how body modifications as a whole fit into the bodily channel of nonverbal communication. Linguistic anthropology, one of the primary schools of anthropology that informs the four field approach, does address these areas more directly than other fields. Nonverbal communication in anthropology addresses a variety of topics including cosmetics (Mendoza-Denton 1996), body modifications as a whole (Adams 2009b; Olguín 1997), graffiti (Gross & Gross 2016), and tattoos (Belkin & Sheptak 2018).

Another area of nonverbal communication that has broad application, but particularly useful in the discussion of tattoos as nonverbal communication, is spatiotemporal codes. Spatiotemporal code is a blanket term that includes chronemics, environment, and proxemics. *Chronemics*, less applicable to this study, addresses the communicative aspects of promptness, punctuality, walking speed, and work speed (McGrath & Tschan 2004; White et al. 2011). Environment as a spatiotemporal code is also less applicable to this study. *Environment* addresses the meaning one's surroundings convey (Burgoon et al. 2011). Important to the nonverbal communication of body modifications is proxemics. *Proxemics* refers to the communicative property of space and space relations with the body (Andersen et al. 2013). Broadly speaking, proxemics can refer to topics such as greeting vs conversing distance (Hall 1968) and flirting styles (Hall & Xing 2015). As this relates to tattoos, proxemics can address where on the body a tattoo is located (e.g. face, hands, stomach, back). For instance, a facial tattoo is received more negatively than other tattoos (Zestcott et al. 2017).

Situated in semiotics, one last important aspect of nonverbal communication for this project is that the nonverbal stimuli generate, "…potential message value for the source or receiver" (Samovar & Porter 2004: 169). This aspect of nonverbal communication is critical given that a message, like a word, inherently has no meaning. The meaning only comes when a culture symbolically charges a given noise, gesture, or

character. As with all symbols, without verbal confirmation from members of a given figuration nonverbal communication is characteristically ambiguous (Yuan 2007). Tattoos, in this sense, act the same way. Not unlike how a prison tattoo can communicate different messages based upon corporeal location, gang affiliation, and culture (Baldaev 2009; Vegrichtová 2018; Phelan & Hunt 1998), the location and images of tattoos among white collar workers can communicate different, intended and unintended, messages to others. The ambiguity itself is a result of symbolic power vested by a given figuration (discussed more fully in Chapter 2).

The symbolic element of nonverbal communication necessitates a conversation regarding the context. Generally, contexts in regard to nonverbal communication deal with interpersonal, micro interaction (Soukup 2019) similar to the microsociological perspective associated with figurational sociology and symbolic anthropology. The interpersonal interaction creates meaning for a given symbol within a given figuration. The actors in said figuration learn to process the social signal and carry out a response dictated by norms and values without conscious reflection. The shared meaning of a symbol, in this case nonverbal communication, create or strengthen the chains of interdependency found in any given figuration. Creating and strengthening the chains of interdependency through a shared symbol act as a meaning making process for figuration members which ultimately becomes symbolic boundary maintenance for the figuration as a whole. This social signalling process allows for an interfacing within and among figurations. In less erudite language, the process is similar to when an attractive stranger asks someone about their sexual preferences and physical types. If the attractive stranger shows sexual interest through nonverbal communication, the person mimics the strangers' flirting styles (Hall & Xing 2015; Watkins & Hall 2014) and body type (Farley 2014) in their answer. However, should the pair not have shared symbolic sexual cues, such as the meaning behind holding hands (Bodie & Villaume 2008), then the chance of a sexual encounter and long-term relationship drop substantially (La France 2010). What all this suggests is that how individuals interpret tattoos (image, location, colour, etc.) is dependent upon the microinteractions found among their figurations which is shared and reproduced among the other members of a figuration. Of particular importance is when there is overlap between figurations. Individuals bring the interpretation of a symbol from one figuration to another and possess the power to change or establish new meaning as a result of the overlapping chains of interdependency.

Nonverbal Communication in the Workplace

Whether by choice or obligation, the overwhelming majority of Americans enter the workplace. Regardless of the type of workplace or the nature of work, nonverbal communication, also referred to as nonverbal immediacy (Andersen 2012; Kay & Christophel 1995; Richmond et al. 2003), is essential. The importance of nonverbal behaviours to communication in workplace is a topic addressed by both popular culture and academic work. On the popular culture side, there are countless books (e.g. Goman 2008; Hogan 2008; Miller 2000), newspaper articles (e.g. Bauerlein 2009; Pease & Pease 2006), and blog posts (e.g. Price 2013; Smith 2013) that promise some sort of "secret advantage" to individuals if they understand nonverbal communication in the workplace. Publications like this, meant for the general public, are wildly popular and have been around for a number of years. Through their consumption, seemingly arbitrary knowledge about the workplace and nonverbal communication has saturated the American population. For instance, if someone, and women in particular, want to succeed in the workplace, then they should display "power poses" (Cuddy 2013). Or, the idea that interviewers establish an opinion of a job seeker within seven seconds of meeting them (Pitts 2013). Popular publications tend to present academic topics, like the role of socialization and emotional expression in recognizing and sending nonverbal cues, interacting with co-workers in the workplace, and evolutionary explanations of nonverbal expressions, in a manner more digestible to the layman. However, since the popular publications are based upon academic studies, the focus here is in the academic work.

As noted above, the body is a critical medium by which nonverbal communication is transmitted. When applied to the workplace, physical appearance is still essential to nonverbal communication. Beyond the discussion of different body types and the communicative power they hold, nonverbal communication in the workplace is also concerned with corporeal adornment. Specifically, the characteristics of importance beyond body type are skin, eye, and hair colour; colour, style, and cleanliness of clothing and accessories; body art; and grooming (Burgoon et al. 2011). These physical characteristics are interpreted as a signal of traits. For instance, attractive individuals are associated with higher levels of health, competence, courage, and intelligence (Zebrowitz et al. 2013). The communicative power of physical appearance

in the workplace is also notable during job interviews. Applicants with facial scars or facial birthmarks are seen as less favourable and less memorable than other candidates (Madera & Hebel 2012). Worth noting, some researchers have posited that physical appearance has no impact when other nonverbal behaviour is accounted for (Tsai et al. 2010); however, suggesting that this is the case obfuscates the communicative power appearance and the body hold. While physical appearance may not fully determine the outcome of an interview, it is certainly an important factor in self-presentation (Ambady et al. 2000; McElroy et al. 2014; Riggio & Throckmorton 1988). As body art is part of this category, tattoos enter the discussion. For instance, individuals with facial tattoos and tattoos near the face trigger implicit negative reactions (Zestcott et al. 2017).

The cliché that superiors ("bosses") are aggressive, controlling, and socially dominant is an American trope reinforced by popular culture. One need only look at a wide spectrum of television shows to illustrate the point (e.g. Mr. Spacely in *The Jetsons* (1962), Gavin Belson in *Silicon Valley* (2014), Don Draper in *Mad Men* (2007), Alice Murphy in *Workaholics* (2011), Mr. Burns in *The Simpsons* (1989), and Mr. Krabs in *Spongebob SquarePants* (1999)). As such, research surrounding nonverbal communication in the workplace unsurprisingly frequently prioritizes superior-subordinate communication. Contrary to the image of bosses in popular culture, when nonverbal superior immediacy is looked at as an intervening variable between superior verbal aggression and subordinate perception of superior credibility, those bosses that do not use verbal aggression and use nonverbal immediacy are perceived as possessing higher competence (Teven 2010; Lybarger et al. 2017). Furthermore, superiors that utilize nonverbal immediacy with subordinates increase communication satisfaction from both parties (Madlock 2008) as well as increase employee emotion and motivation (Jia et al. 2017).

Additional research on nonverbal communication and the workplace focuses on interviews and job training. Verbal and nonverbal communication skills are essential to successful job training (Olszewski et al. 2017). When individuals rely on nonverbal behaviours during training and interviews, the accuracy of assessing social skills and work motivation increases substantially (Gifford et al. 1985). Better use of nonverbal communication increases interview performance (Chaplin et al. 2000; DeGroot & Gooty 2009), intercultural business practices (Self 2009), and office romance (Cowan & Horan 2014). Through these different avenues, it is clear that nonverbal communication plays an important role in the workplace.

Conclusion

In order to capture the lived experience of tattooed white collar workers in the United States, there is a need to address the sociohistory of tattoos. Additionally, it is vital to analyse academic literature to frame how this project contributes and fits into established academic conversations, regardless of specific field. However, despite the copious information provided by exploring the sociohistory of tattooing in the West and the literature, the data does not address the primary concerns of this project. As such, there was a need for empirical data collection. Chapter 3 – 6 address extant history and literature to illustrate the relevant social processes and pressures that shaped the contemporary tattoo figuration. In an effort to make this information more easily referenced, I created a visual illustration of the tattoo epochs, primary populations involved, and the major social forces influencing the tattoo figuration during specific eras (see Figure 22).

The sociohistory and literature analysis make up the first part of this research project. The next section addresses the empirical data collected for this project. The material in the first part of the project informs the empirical data analysis which comprises the second part of this project.

Figure 22: Tattoo Eras, Populations, & Characteristics

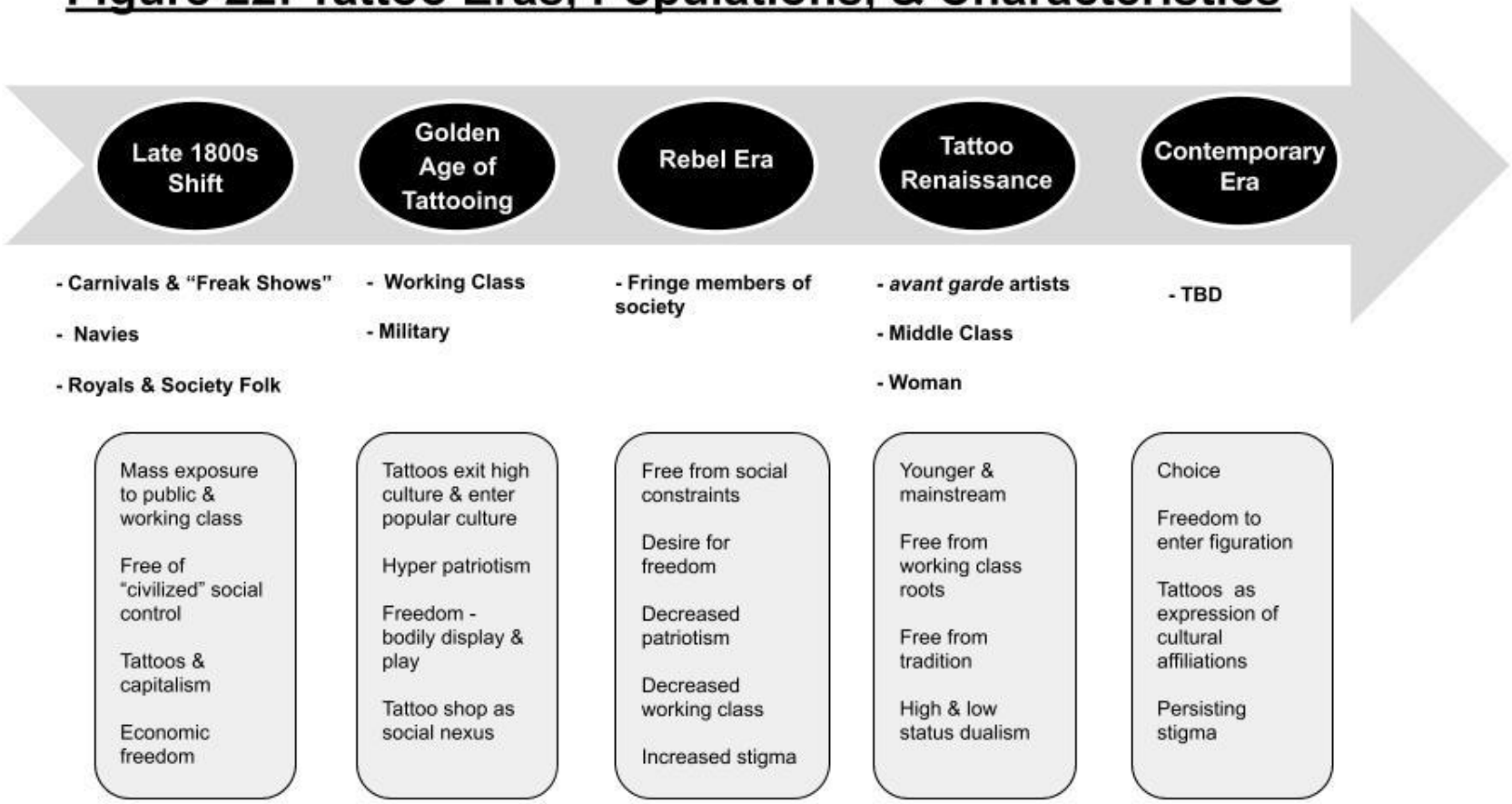


Figure 22: Tattoo Eras, Populations, & Characteristics

Chapter 7 – "Needle, thorn, bone, bamboo…so long as the ink get under your skin, you have a tattoo": Methods & Methodology

The research project is focused on investigating the relationship between tattoos, identity, and stigma in the American white collar workplace. Utilizing a humanistic and hermeneutic perspective, this study is primarily concerned with capturing and understanding the lived experience of tattooed white collar workers. In understanding this holistic lived experience, the secondary aims of the research are addressed. The first of these secondary aims is to identify and understand any stigma surrounding tattoos in the workplace. The second is to address the process regarding how tattoos ended up as a physical manifestation of cognitive dissonance. An important assumption underlying this research is that it was entered with a hypothesis that there is stigma associated with tattoos that relates to identity in the white collar workplace.

The joint figurational and symbolic anthropological perspectives utilized in this study highlight the importance of sociohistorical data. In order to analyse contemporary figurations, there is a critical need to address the processes by which they developed and changed. Hence, the focus on pertinent history and change within tattoo culture found in Chapter 3 & 4.

However, the use of sociohistorical accounts needs to be supplemented with academic rigor. Thus, a second type of data was used: academic literature. Spread across multiple fields, the analysis of interdisciplinary academic literature in Chapter 5 & 6 aids in the theoretical contributions this study makes, but also establishes legitimate research that has already been conducted. When combined with sociohistorical analysis, long-term processual patterns surrounding figurations become apparent and can be understood through different academic perspectives. Yet, this assumes that all possible knowledge has already been gathered. Given this project is focused on the relationship between tattoos, identity, and stigma in the American white collar workplace, there is a need for current data. Because, how can one scientifically analyse the current state of something without information on the current state? Thus, this project necessitates empirical data collection.

Since the goals of this research did not align with other works, there was a process of empirical data collection. The data are comprised of 20 semi-structured interviews, that lasted between an hour and an hour and a half, during which a variety of topics were discussed (see Appendix for list of interview questions). Photographs of

participants' tattoos were taken during the interviews (when applicable and with their permission). The semi-structured interviews were conducted in secluded areas of the participants' choosing in order to aid in their comfort, and to allow photographs of tattoos to be taken privately. In addition to semi-structured interviews, structured observation was conducted in one instance. The structured observation took place in a medical office during which employees went about their normal work routines. I did not enter examinations rooms with patients. In all of the public areas, as well as offices, the focus was on who interacted with whom for reasons beyond work responsibilities. Additionally, the tattooed status of each individual was observed. On all occasions, structured field notes were taken according to established guidelines (Bernard 2006).

Pilot Study

As the semi-structured interview questions were created for this research project, the structure and layout of the questions were piloted beforehand. The pilot study was a small scale endeavour solely designed to test the internal logic of the line of questioning, the quality of data that would result from the questions, and modifying interview questions. Conducting a small scale pilot study for these reasons is an established practice in phenomenological qualitative research and has a beneficial result (Kim 2010). The pilot study was conducted in January 2018 and consisted of two white collar workers: one with tattoos and one without. Of course, the resulting data from the pilot study is not presented in the research findings.

The pilot study was done in locations chosen by the participants which allows them to be comfortable. The initial set of questions were relatively successful; however, some questions had to be eliminated as the data did not relate to the primary research question or aims of the study. Additionally, one question was added in order to utilize social mapping. Given the results, the social mapping did not yield relevant data and, as such, is not discussed in this project. Finally, upon completion of the interview, both participants provided verbal feedback. One participant was very excited to discuss the material and requested I ask all the participants about regrets they have about their choice of tattoo; not the corporeal location or regrets due to social impact. This feedback was incorporated as an area for probing in the final study, but not added to the list of questions as it does not apply to all parties. The other participant stated they enjoyed answering the questions, but noted that they struggled with some of the

concepts. This feedback was utilized to eliminate some jargon that appeared in the research questions. After these modifications, both participants were given the new list of questions and agreed it was more accessible. Those questions were used in the final study.

Ethnographic Context

The data was collected from 20 white collar workers in the United States between July 2018 and September 2018. Participants were selected through purposive sampling with the understanding that this is not representative of a statistically significant population, yet qualitatively generalizable. The participants were born, raised, and work all over the country and ranged in age from 25-59. Of the 20 participants, eleven are tattooed and work in a variety of positions. Half of the participants are male, and half are female. The participants work in a variety of industries and positions which include medical, energy, information technology, finance, law, supply chain, and academia. The positions within this industry included management (upper and middle), practitioner (medical fields), graphic designer, project manager, executive assistant, accountant, financial advisor, lawyer, and consultant, among others. For a visual representation of the ethnographic context, see Table 3 which includes the pseudonyms. The project has undergone an ethical review by the University of Leicester University Ethics Committee and was approved. The relevant paperwork can be found in the appendix.

Visual Methods

The photographs that were taken during the semi-structured interviews were used to address the secondary aims of this research. Specifically, the images allowed for the utilization of visual methods. The use of visual methods has an established history as a qualitative investigative strategy in the social sciences (e.g. Fleming 1997; Gell 1993; Mead 1928). Generally speaking, the use of visual methods aims to incorporate some form of visual data into research (Twine 2016:968). Utilizing visual methods may be as simple as showing an image during an interview and asking the participant to discuss it or as complex as having a participant produce some type of image. Regardless of the specific approach, the goal of using visual methods is to access different forms of symbolic representation from the participants in order to elicit some form of information

(Harper 2002:13). Within the general field of visual methods, there are a number of differentiations that become important when discussing how this approach is used in a given study. For the purpose of this research, the specific visual method that was utilized is a form of self-generated photo-elicitation.

In the traditional sense, photo-elicitation is the use of images in interviews to generate data (Williams & Whitehouse 2015:304). The definition, like many others in academia, is very broad which allows for it to apply in a number of scenarios. In the case of this study, the participants were not shown new images during the interviews; rather, the tattooed individuals were shown images of their own tattoos and asked to discuss and interpret them. The way in which photo-elicitation was used may be unconventional; however, it still adheres to the denotation and connotation of the method. As with any method, there are critics who argue the efficacy of such an approach. Those criticisms aside, one point that is worth noting is the use of self-generated evidence. While the images shown to the qualifying participants were produced by the researcher (in the form of photographs), the actual tattoos were done by others which discounts this type image as self-generated.

Scenario Analysis

A portion of the semi-structured interviews drew upon scenario analysis. The use of scenario analysis in the social sciences is unconventional; however, there is a long history of use in other fields. Scenario analysis has appeared in a variety of fields including economics, environmental science, policy science, and management (van Notten et al. 2003:424). Pertinent to the methodology of this study is the fact that scenario analysis appears in the management field which ties into the neo-institutionalist framing.

Since the word ‘scenario’ has been used in a multitude of situations, it is worth clarifying how the term is used in reference to scenario analysis before discussing the method as a whole. In scenario analysis, a ‘scenario’ is understood as, “…a small bespoke set of structured conceptual systems of equally plausible contexts, often presented as narrative descriptions, manufactured for someone and for a purpose…” (Ramirez et al. 2015:71). Clarifying a definition for ‘scenario’ is important because it clearly illustrates what is presented to participants as well as limiting potential criticism.

With that term established, the method of scenario analysis can be discussed. Scenario analysis, as a qualitative research method, is characterized by constructing one or more scenarios and presenting them to participants. The participants evaluate the scenarios and provide feedback which is then either used to redraft the scenario until satisfactory for the purpose of data collection or the feedback is used as data itself and then analysed (Liu et al. 2007:682). In this study, the latter is how scenario analysis was utilized. The findings from scenario analysis in this project act as supporting evidence rather than driving the argument. How the data is analysed is what weights the process as a more qualitative approach or roots it in mixed methods.

Social Network Analysis

One portion of the semi-structured interviews directly addressed the social networks of participants. As a point of clarity, the term 'social networks' does not refer to internet websites associated with this concept, such as Facebook and Twitter; rather, the term is in reference to social network analysis. Social network analysis is a methodology as well as theoretical orientation for interpreting data. The methodology focuses on the measurement of relations between people by quantifying them and utilizing established models and techniques. On the other hand, the theoretical orientation focuses on the consequences and causes of relations between people (Hanneman & Riddle 2005). The analysis of the social network data draws upon the theoretical insights to interpret the patterns uncovered through the application of social network methodology (discussed further in the appendix).

Social network analysis is used in this study by interpreting qualitative information from the semi-structured interviews and analysing it quantitatively. The practice of a researcher quantitatively interpreting qualitative data is far from unheard of. Quite common in sociological research, the practice of quantitative analysis of qualitative data is known as quantizing and is approached with caution (Tashakkori & Teddlie 1998) (discussed further in the appendix). Of particular importance to this section is the fact that social network analysis utilizes both qualitative and quantitative data analysis which labels this study as mixed methods.

Mixed Methods

The mixed methods approach of this study informs the ontology underpinning this work. In "pure" qualitative research, the ontology would typically surround the study of meaning and the epistemology would utilize an interpretivist approach in order to illustrate how the object of research is understood, produced, and experienced (Mason 2002:3). However, the "pure" idea of qualitative research is not holistically agreed upon in the social sciences. Even within specific social science fields, such as sociology, the epistemologically "correct" qualitative approach is debated. There is a stark contrast between researchers who approach an object of study with a constructivist view and those who utilize a positivist view; both of which are valid forms of intellectual thought. The epistemological differences between the two viewpoints surround what kind of knowledge one can actually have; those who believe that reality is a unique construct by each person and those who approach the discovery and explanation of reality through the use of increasingly better guesses (Bernard 2006:3). Since the debate is ongoing, it is inaccurate to state whether a study adheres to a "pure" qualitative approach or not. Rather, it is more applicable to state what the ontological framings are and how they inform the methodology.

Since this research drew upon both qualitative and quantitative methods, the ontology drew upon both methodological fields. Working with the humanist and hermeneutic approaches inherent in symbolic anthropology and figuration sociology (discussed further in Chapter 2), the ontology is focused on the study of meaning. Specifically, the study looks at the meaning of tattoos in the white collar workplace and how they intersected with three areas: culture, self and identity, and actions/behaviour/stigma. Each one of these three areas can, and do, act as a point of ingress for larger conversations.

In addition to the ontological and epistemological problem associated with labelling a framework as "purely" qualitative, there is also a problem classifying research as solely qualitative or quantitative. While attempting to limit a social inquiry to a strictly qualitative or quantitative approach is theoretically possible, in practice, research is not a clean binary. The pedagogical practice of dividing research methods and methodology into a dualistic paradigm certainly serves a purpose in education; however, the result is reductionist and results in a counterproductive approach to understanding research and the resulting data as a whole. The blurred relationship

between quantitative and qualitative research allows for, if not encourages, the utilization of mixed methods approaches.

The use of mixed methods directly influences an underpinning methodology of this research because it draws upon a paradigm that is a sort of middle ground between qualitative and quantitative approaches. The resulting paradigm is typically called the "pragmatic approach" (Creswell 2003; Morgan 2007) and is characterized by recognizing that all data can be translated to other settings and social moments (Pearce 2012:833). Use of the pragmatic approach does not necessitate a strict adherence to the use of mixed methods; rather, it requires an acceptance that there is no unconditionally superior research tool and that there are strengths in a variety of methods (Pearce 2012:833).

Methods of Analysis

Atlas.ti 7 was used during the analysis in order to organize and code the interview transcripts, tattoo photographs, and field notes. The data was coded along the lines of the pilot study, with modifications following established guidelines (MacQueen et al. 1998). In line with the humanistic and hermeneutic approaches of the study, the analysis centres around hermeneutic text analysis which attempts to establish connections between symbols and a culture (Bernard 2006:475). Utilizing this analytical method ties this portion back to the symbolic anthropology and figurational sociology framework. For the sake of transparency, some examples of the hermeneutic units that were used include "view of co-workers with tattoos", "view of co-workers without tattoos", "meaning of tattoos", "dress policy regulations", "experience", "organization view of tattoos", and "hiring impact". While this is far from a complete list, it serves to show an example of the coding process.

To support the hermeneutic text analysis, there are exemplar quotes selected from the interview transcripts presented throughout this project. The exemplar quotes are also presented to convey the voice of participants. Furthermore, the quotes serve to accurately illustrate the ideas they expressed during the interviews. Using exemplar quotes in conjunction with hermeneutic text analysis helps capture the lived experience of the participants which relates back to the theoretical foundations of this research as well as addressing the primary research question.

The social network analysis data was analysed using UCINET. Specifically, UCINET was used to produce a graphical representation of the social network as well as run the different analyses. The different analyses that were run include betweenness, degree of centrality, geodesic distance, the creation of the visual representation, and network density. These analyses were run in order to measure how closely the members of each network were connected, how many members had tattoos, and how central the tattooed members were (Hanneman & Riddle 2005; Reid et al. 2008). Discussed at length in the appendix, the connectivity of the network and centrality of tattooed individuals indicates how strongly tattoos are influencing the social system which, by extension, addresses both identity and social stigma within the network. The data of the social network analysis works in conjunction with the hermeneutic text analysis to identify patterns in the participants' views of self and other.

Table 3: Participant Demographic Information

Pseudonym	Profession	Industry	Tattooed Status	Sex
Jane M.	Doctor	Medical	No	F
Melissa K.	Dental Hygienist	Medical	Yes	F
Megan S.	Head Nurse	Medical	Yes	F
Olivia C.	Research & Pharmaceutical Liaison	Academia / Pharmaceutical	Yes	F
Heather E.	Graphic Designer	Tech	Yes	F
Ryan S.	warehouse operations consultant	Logistics & Supply Chain	Yes	M
Hank H.	Project Engineer & Manager	Oil & Gas	No	M
Bruce W.	Senior Network Engineer	Tech	No	M
Paul R.	Loans Associate	Finance	Yes	M
Mark S.	Lawyer	Law	Yes	M
Morgan R.	Project Manager	Construction	No	F
Bonnie F.	Dental Hygienist	Medical	Yes	M
Gene H.	Financial Advisor	Finance	No	M
Mary N.	Professor	Academia	Yes	F
Gary P.	Lawyer	Law	Yes	M
Nichole P.	Executive Assistant	Design	No	F
Harrold M.	Doctor	Medical	No	M
Quinn F.	Architect	Construction	No	M
Magnus V.	Accountant	Finance	No	M
Ciri J.	Nurse	Medical	Yes	F

Chapter 8 – "You Can Be Classy, or You Can Be Trashy…I Guess You Chose Trashy": Tattoos, Meaning, Symbolism, & Identity

"It's nice, but what does it mean?" Every tattooed individual receives some variation of this question at some point. Americans, tattooed and non-tattooed alike, are fascinated by what a tattoo means. Even if, like my sleeve, the tattoo has no self-ascribed meaning, Americans seem to crave a response. If there is no adequate response, the assumption is that the tattooed individual just does not want to share the 'real' meaning. Why does a tattoo need to mean something deeper? Why can a tattoo not be something for simple aesthetic enjoyment? Even if it is only for aesthetic enjoyment, does the tattoo actually have a deeper meaning? Is the deeper meaning a part of one's identity? And what does any of this have to do with the workplace?

This chapter builds upon the idea that tattooing is best conceptualized as an interdependent social activity (Atkinson 2003) which allows for the exploration of white collar employees' body projects. The exploration of body projects from this perspective aids in the understanding of meaning, symbolism, and identity among this population by directly addressing and capturing the lived experience. In order to accomplish this, the chapter is divided into five main sections. The conversation begins with the relationship between tattoos and identity, followed by how the body is related to identity. The chapter then proceeds to address the creation of meaning regarding tattoos. Next, the chapter addresses tattoos and art, and, finally, concludes with a discussion of media representations and influence. All of these topics inform each other and, working together, provide a holistic understanding of tattoos and identity in the white collar workplace.

The conversations within this chapter are presented through participants' narratives. The narratives serve an important purpose beyond research methods; they act as a reminder that this research is discussing real people and their lives. Conversations surrounding erudite notions like identity and symbolism have the potential to quickly obfuscate the idea that real people are the subject of discussion. The use of participants' words and lives serve to mitigate this. As such, the chapter begins with a vignette which acts as a reference point for all the subsequent discussion.

"Get in here so I can take my pants off" -Megan S.

Megan and I meet in a hotel lobby while she is in town for work. With shoulder length red hair, high cheek bones, and a lithe body, Megan cuts a striking image. Wearing casual yet ostentatious clothing, splashes of colour peeking out from beneath her shirt sleeves, she gesticulates wildly with every sentence.

Not a minute into our interview, Megan is pulling up her sleeves to show me her tattoos. She is undeniably proud of her 19 tattoos. "My first one was a butterfly. A tribal butterfly. That I kind of, modified? And it is right above my butt crack. And it is in light pink. In case I ever decided I didn't want it, so it would fade. Which is has, actually. Probably the only tattoo I have that has faded. I think that-" Megan stops mid-sentence as an impish grin spread across her face. "Let's go over here so we can speak with less noise".

I follow Megan around a corner to a hallway, where she pulls out a key card. She quickly opens a door, looks at me with that impish smile, and loudly states "Sam, come into my room. Quickly! Get in here so I can take my pants off!" Instantly, I am caught off guard and at a loss for words. Megan lets out a loud laugh, pulls me into the room, and nonchalantly says, "Relax! I'm messing with you. I just want to show you my butt."

Originally from California, but growing up in Arizona, Megan now works as the head nurse at a leading cosmetic dermatology clinic. Prior to that, she worked as a nurse in the hospice unit of a hospital. Growing up, Megan's mother would frequently say, "well, you can decide to be trashy or classy. If you get a tattoo, everyone will know which you are." Megan's mother felt so strongly about body modifications that, when Megan got her tongue pierced at the age of 20, "my mom actually took me out of her will. Because I got my tongue pierced. Seriously." Megan received her first tattoo when she was 22; the butterfly mentioned above. Megan has self-ascribed meaning for all of her tattoos. The meaning behind her first tattoo is straightforward, "I always thought butterflies were free, so I wanted one of those. So I could be free, and remember to always stay that way."

Immediately after receiving her first tattoo, Megan called her mother who told her, "I've always said that you can choose to be classy or you can choose to be trashy. I guess you decided to be trashy. You got the tattoo" and then hung up on her. Despite the meaning that Megan ascribed to her butterfly tattoo, her mother only saw it as a marker of one associated with lower socioeconomic status and sexually unrestraint.

Megan's second and third tattoos were done at the same time. A hummingbird on her lower right back "which is the same design that is on my grandma's gravestone, so I never forget how important she was to me." The other tattoo she received at this time is in the central lower back; blue and pink overlapping script that says, 'West Coast Girl'.

> I got the West Coast Girl in pink and blue because when I was 10 years old, we moved from California to Arizona. So, I always thought that the beach was like my Zen zone. I actually used to have, you know those bumper stickers people get in their teenage years and put on their cars? I had one that said 'West Coast Girl' on the front of my hood. Now I have one on my rear bumper *slaps her butt*. It's there to remember I'm from the West, to remind me of my Zen place, and to remind me of the fun during my teen years.

All of Megan's tattoos have meanings, with life stories and experiences attached to them. The rest of her tattoos she received after she was 25 with self-ascribed meanings including memorials to deceased relatives (e.g. father, both grandmothers), birth of a child, inspirational message (e.g. 'happiness', 'West Coat Girl', etc.), and life lessons (e.g. a flower that says 'trust no one'). The tattoo images include words in varying colours, animals, zodiac signs, sugar skulls, flowers, hearts, stars, and feathers.

All the variations in meaning and image included, Megan sums up why she has tattoos by saying "My tattoos are all about freedom of expression. All tattoos are. I swear, you're gonna be able to roll my body since most of my tattoos are words and you'll know about my life and my spunky, goofy, Aquarius personality. I'm free, I'm me, and I'm tattooed."

The importance that Megan places on her tattoos, as tangible reminders of life experience, are one way in which tattoos are critical to identity. However, the process of body play during the tattooing process is also important. Furthermore, the meaning of tattoos is frequently understood through symbolism and nonverbal communication. Finally, the underpinning notion is the concept of freedom. Throughout this chapter, this vignette acts as a reference point to see how the abstract concepts addressed herein are applicable in real life scenarios. This acts as a means to clarify the lived experience of tattooed individuals.

Identity

Generally speaking, tattoos in American culture are a choice. One chooses whether they want to receive a tattoo and whether they actually follow through with the process. There is a frequent theme in contemporary, non-psychological, research that suggests tattooing is an essential part of self-identity creation (Atkinson & Young 2001; Stirn 2003; Vignoles et al. 2006). However, before progressing any further, it should be noted that despite the abundance of evidence indicating that tattoos are connected to identity, they do not provide a full picture. Meaning that tattoos, in addition to other forms of body modification, provide a glimpse into someone's self-identity, but do not capture the whole narrative of self. For instance, one's tattooed status by no means illustrates their skillsets and knowledge; two critical aspects that white collar employees bring to the workplace. In the United States, tattoos act as a visual means to communicate some aspect of self and personal identity (Ellis 2015). According to the literature, the tattoos one receives are meant to commemorate or memorialize some event or personal struggle. However, there is also a thought that if a tattoo is not meant to commemorate something, then the other reason individuals get tattooed is for personal empowerment (Osterud 2009). Both of these perspectives, though, are highly reminiscent of the "ego skin".

Ego skin (Anzieu 1989) is the notion that the skin of an individual, and any markings that might be present, is an interface between the body, the self, and others. The notion of ego skin is particularly useful here as it implies that tattoos can have different meanings to the individual who wears them, compared to those that view them. Additionally, ego skin synergizes well with the figurational perspective utilized in this project.

Elias' (1991a; 1994) view of individualization, the creation and perpetuation of "I" groups through the process of learning and becoming who a person is, works through complex figurations. The same applies to the adoption of "WE" groups; the process of learning and becoming a group member. As the chains of interdependency consolidate and expand into complex webs, the mechanisms of social control shift from external to internal. Here is where the connection to ego skin is evident. The markings on one's skin are a connection in "I-WE" structures and act as a form of internal social

control that others can see. This allows for the inclusion of individuals into WE structures in the functionally complex figurations found among contemporary American culture and the white collar workplace. Furthermore, with the external demand for control of affective behaviour, regulated internally within a figuration, socioculturally understood "morally repugnant" acts are controlled through mimetic social activities like sports (Elias & Dunning 1986; Dunning 1999; Dunning & Rojek 1992) and, pertinent here, tattooing (Atkinson 2003; Atkinson & Young 2001).

As a result of the long-term sociogenic processes, habituses reflect poorly surrounding uncontrolled bodily behaviours (Elias 1983) which situates tattooing in a precarious position. Bodies, then, become social symbols communicating status and corporeal control (Elias 1991b). The intextualization of the body as a primary text lends itself to interpretation through ego skin whereby the individual is communicating with the figuration. How the corporeal displays are understood in a given figuration are subject to the habituses surrounding bodily control. As such, the body becomes a medium through which an individual may display desirable images and communicate affective control. Simply put, the body as a site to display civility and markings, or the lack thereof, is the interface in I-WE configurations as well as WE-THEY structures. This understanding situates tattooing as an integral aspect of self-identity, but also group identity because the body is understood as a marker of dominant norms and values.

Tattoos & Authenticity: "I'm me. Even if I have to wear a burqa at work, I'm still me."

The way in which identity is understood in this project, something related to impression management (see Chapter 6), leads to a conversation on authentic self. The notion of one's authentic self pertains to their own understanding of self; both in identification and performance. Authenticity and the authentic self is "the unobstructed operation of one's true or core self in one's daily enterprise" (Goldman & Kernis 2002:18). As noted, long-term sociogenic movements influence the habituses surrounding bodily control in any given figuration. In the American white collar workplace environment, there is a classic notion that one with visible tattoos is unable to obtain employment (discussed further in Chapter 9). This suggests that if an individual is tattooed, they would be forced to concede some aspect of their self-expression in order to adhere to the social norms, informed by the current habituses,

associated with their social role in the workplace. As tattooing is a critical form of self-expression, asking one to cover a tattoo is asking them to limit their sense of self. This, then, is a challenge to one's authentic self.

A common theme that appeared during the interview process was to ask participants if they could picture themselves with or without tattoos. While all the participants were certainly capable of imagining themselves as their opposed tattoo status, none of them wanted to. The question was never received well and resulted in comments like, "so you want me to picture myself as a boring, prude blank canvas with no personality?" (Gary P.) and, "might as well ask me to picture myself as a heroin junky, because that's easier than imaging I have to live with ink under my skin" (Quinn F.). Asking individuals to picture themselves as the opposed tattooed status resulted in very visceral responses because the question is, in essence, asking the participants to imagine themselves with a new self-identity. However, in white collar settings, many participants are asked to do just this very thing. To ask a tattooed individual to actively cover their tattoos during work is analogous to asking them to adopt a new persona or, at the least, hide their full self. Asking an individual to cover their tattoo or to "pass as a normal" (Ciri J.) is tantamount to self-denial and inauthenticity. While the request may be made to align with an organizational dress policy or adherence to organizational culture, the request itself is quite powerful and impactful.

Challenges to the authenticity of an individual have implications on self-esteem. Without authenticity, individuals have a rapid decline in self-esteem (Goldman & Kernis 2002; Heppner et al. 2008). Lowered self-esteem in the workplace results in negative moods and even overt expressions of anger (Sedikides & Gaertner 2001). In the white collar workplace, if one feels that their supervisor is prejudiced against them, regardless of the reason, they have a significant decrease in motivation and impaired workplace performance (Eccleston & Major 2010). As such, challenging the authenticity of white collar workers by disparaging or asking them to cover their tattoos has a very tangible impact on their lived experience, as well as the organization as a whole.

This level of appearance regulation is additionally problematic for the lived experience of tattooed individuals, in general and in the workplace, because it causes distress by challenging core norms and values. The norms and values may be political, educational, ethnic, religious, or any other found in numerous sociocultural realms. Furthermore, appearance regulation also impacts the performance aspect of authenticity.

Specifically, that authentic performance is acting in line with one's values and norms, "as opposed to acting merely to please others or to attain rewards or avoid punishments…authenticity is not reflected in a compulsion to be one's true self, but rather in the free and natural expressions of one's core feelings" (Goldman & Kernis 2002: 19). One participant stated that when she has to cover her tattoos at work, for whatever reason,

> It is like I'm putting on this mask. And then I have to listen to people talk about dumb shit like *Vanderpump Rules* and their weekend activities. Shit, I don't care! By the time I get home, my mask is broken, and I immediately get my shirt off so I can be me again. (Heather E.)

Heather's quotation illustrates a large problem facing tattooed individuals in the workplace based upon the forced inauthenticity: their identity is challenged and forces them to live a double life. The impact of stifling an employee's identity, even through something as seemingly innocuous as covering tattoos, exacerbates existing stigma, challenges equal opportunity, and dissolves self-esteem. This is fundamentally important because, as discussed in Chapters 3 & 4, throughout the relatively recent history of tattooing, an underlying symbolic understanding is freedom. While freedom is still an expression of tattooing in the Contemporary Era, in the American white collar workplace this notion is challenged.

Permanence: "You put more thought into what you want tattooed than most people do about having kids!"

Tattoos are a very permanent endeavour. Short of costly and painful procedures, tattoos are something one will have for the rest of their lives. Thinking about the rest of one's life requires an extraordinary amount of reflexivity; however, actually understanding the rest of one one's life requires time conceptualization. Time conceptualization is different than time perception. Time perception is the ability to track time but fails to explain concepts like "future" and "past" (Buonomano 2007), while time conceptualization is a process that allows for the sequencing of time and duration (Núñez & Cooperrider 2013). Time conceptualization, it should be noted, is culturally mediated through language and bodily experience. As tattooing is a very corporeal experience, this aids in the understanding of time conceptualization. However,

the permanence that surrounds tattooing is both fear inducing as well as enchanting. Before broaching the impact permeance has on the conception of tattooing among the participants, it is worth taking a moment to address, very logistically, how tattooing is done.

Dispelling the seemingly arcane nature of tattooing not only provides an understanding of the process, but also illustrates the level of permanence inherent in tattooing. A tattoo needle is used to penetrate the epidermis (the outer layer of skin) to insert indelible ink onto the dermis layer of the skin (deeper layer that contains blood vessels and nerves) which changes the pigment of the dermis (Luebberding & Alexiades-Armenakas 2014). Logistically, there are many methods to accomplish the insertion of ink; hence the variety of tattoo methods used cross culturally. Regardless of the method used, once ink has been applied onto the dermis, the immune system is stimulated and sends cells to begin the inflammatory process. During this stimulation, macrophages respond to eat up any ink they can. The ink that is left behind is soaked into the dermis through fibroblasts. During the healing process, the macrophages and fibroblasts get trapped in and around the dermis suspending them for perpetuity. Interestingly, the stimulation to the immune system acts in a similar manner as vaccinations (habituation or inoculation effect) and makes a tattooed individual less susceptible to pathogenic infiltration in the future (Lynn et al. 2016).

One of the big concerns with the practice of tattooing is that, in the United States, no regulatory body, such as the Food and Drug Administration agency, regulates the inks that are used in tattooing. As such, the manufacturers of tattoo inks do not legally need to disclose ingredients nor maintain any pharmaceutically clean composition (Kent & Graber 2012). Practically, this means that detailed knowledge of the chemical composition for different inks is not widely known which makes the tattoo removal process more difficult, invasive, and painful. This is the reality for tattoos in the United States: you get one and either have it forever or have painful surgery to remove it.

The permeance around tattooing is something that repulses people as well as appeals to them. The repulsion that comes from the permanence of tattoos is something that frequently arose in conversation with participants. All participants, tattooed and non-tattooed alike, noted how it is important to remember tattoos are permanent. One non-tattooed participant noted that when they were younger, their parents told them that "tattoos are forever, so when people get them, they have to mean a lot" (Magnus V.). A

similar idea was expressed by tattooed participants who noted that, “it is important to know where [on the body] a tattoo is going to go because it doesn’t just go away; it’s there for life” (Gary P.). The fact that both tattooed and non-tattooed participants discuss the importance of permeance to the tattooing process indicates there is some further importance here.

Continuing down this line of inquiry, participants noted that once a person has been tattooed, regardless of design and location, they are forever changed. The change may be simply an aesthetic alteration; however, mostly the participants were focused on changes to the person. The participants are referring to a reification of self. Upon receiving a tattoo, an individual is committing to a lifelong physical alteration that impacts how others see them as well as how they see themselves. The change in how others see them is clear in the sense that, if an individual has any connotations associated with tattoos, then a newly tattooed individual is subject to those thoughts. The thoughts may be positive or negative; however, this is discussed further in Chapter 9. Furthermore, the acquisition of a tattoo is referred to by participants as something akin to a change in status. Upon the completion of a tattoo, one is associated with different roles within the groups they are members of. This thought process is very similar to a rite of passage.

A rite of passage is a ritualized practice to publicly display a change in status. Some clichéd examples are the transition from boy to man, woman to mother, adult to elder, layman to specialist; however, these examples are typically associated with exotified cultures. In contemporary American culture, there are countless rites of passage that individuals undergo that are not dissimilar to those frequently attributed to foreign cultures: graduation ceremonies communicating uneducated to graduate, white coat ceremonies in medical school communicating layman to medical specialist, marriage which communicates a clear change in marital status, or even tattooing among professional and college basketball players (Belkin & Sheptak 2018) (to name only a few). As American culture utilizes rites of passages in many forms, it is not surprising that tattooing is viewed this way as well.

Regardless of status change, every rite of passage undergoes three distinct stages. Individuals begin occupying a status, then proceed to enter a liminal space in which ritualized hazing takes place, and finally re-emerge and re-enter the community with a new social condition (van Gennep 1960). The liminal phase, a highly symbolic state, is a critical aspect here because this is the part in which people undergo the

tattooing process. An individual must put in some level of work to receive education regarding where and how to get tattoos, think about the body part and image they want, and undergo and withstand the pain associated with tattooing as well as the healing. The process of receiving a tattoo in American culture is well documented (e.g. Atkinson 2003; DeMello 2000) and is easily understood as a rite of passage. Framed as a rite of passage, the acquisition of tattoos in American culture acts as a highly visible form of nonverbal communication. Upon completion, individuals are imbued with some form of social power that alters the way in which others view them. The social power in which individuals are imbued with absolutely influence identity and the lived experience of these people. Within the white collar workplace, the change in identity can be particularly impactful and can cause issues when contradictions to the authentic self occur (discussed further in Chapter 9).

The tattooing process as a rite of passage also serves to illustrate the complex interactions that happen between an individual, their body, other tattooed individuals, non-tattooed individuals, and American society as a whole. In other words, this process epitomizes the notion of ego skin as the body acts as an interface between the self, the figurations, and other figurations. Here, then, the process of tattooing in American culture serves to deepen the traditional notion of ego skin. Framed from a figurationalist perspective, ego skin is a term to discuss chains of interdependency that lengthen and shorten. Ego skin aids in the development of I-WE and WE-THEM groups illustrating the importance skin has to the notion of civility. Americans, and white collar employees in particular, utilize this form of ego skin as a vehicle to interface with complex webs of meaning and overlapping chains of interdependency.

Also pertinent to this chapter are the changes to how one sees themselves. Upon deciding to receive a tattoo, one must then go through the process of research and decision making noted above. Both the lack of tattoos, and the acquisition of tattoos, are actions that reify identity as an individual. Undeniably an individualistic approach to the notion of identity, the process of choosing one's tattooed status acts as a means to establish self-identity due to the permanent state of change to the skin. When the skin is changed, one quickly occupies a different state of social being (Wohlrap et al. 2009) predicated on the idea of choice. Again, in American culture, there is no forced pressure to receive tattoos which situates this conversation well within the realm of personal agency. Like other long lasting or impactful decisions made in life (Koch et al. 2010),

choosing whether to accept or pass upon the tattooing process results in an individual's sense of identity becoming more firmly established in that decision.

The notion of permanence also extends to the decision making process surrounding whether one will get tattooed, where they will get tattoos, and what they will get tattooed. Among those without tattoos, the hesitation associated with a permanent change to the skin makes sense. After all, the first lifelong change to one's skin is dauting. Even among individuals with tattoos, the notion of permanence is cause for pause. However, the reservation extends beyond just changing your skin. There is an idea among tattooed and non-tattooed individuals alike that if you are going to have something on you for the rest of your life, it had better mean something. This connection to meaning and interest is evident in two exemplar quotations presented in Chapter 4.

> The permanence [of a tattoo] disturbs me as my interests change so much over time. (Hank H.)

> Fear of commitment. Especially with how much I've changed over the years in my interests. (Bruce W.)

Both of these quotations, coming from two individuals without tattoos, make clear mention of fear underpinned by permanence. Here, it is clear that one of the major reasons why they do not receive tattoos is the permanent commitment to a design, image, word, etc. However, simply presenting individuals without tattoos potentially biases the conclusion. Tattooed participants noted similar thoughts; even when it was not their first tattoo.

> You have to be careful about what you get because it will be there for the rest of your life. I was going to get a poppy, but my brother had some issues with opiates and heroin. So, yeah, that would be a really bad idea to get. Any time someone would see it, if they knew my brother, they'd make that connection. Made me scared for a bit to get any other tattoos. What if I messed up again? I eventually got some watercolour flowers, but it was close. And that isn't even talking about how much I stressed over the

> location! That matters too because, like I said, it's going to be there forever. (Melissa K.)

Once again, the fear of permanence is clear here, despite the fact that Melissa has numerous tattoos. Subjectively, I also experienced this sensation. When I went to receive my sleeve, I was fully committed; I had waited almost a year for the appointment with the artist I had researched. During that time, I knew where I wanted the tattoo and what it would (generally) look like. However, when I arrived at the appointment and the outline was drawn on my arm (see Figure 22), I began quietly and internally panicking. I could not escape the overwhelming thought that this would be here for the rest of my life. That this decision, right now, would forever change my skin and how other viewed me. However, when the tattooing process began and the outline was inked (see Figure 23), any reservations were things of the past. While this is a subjective example, based upon the empirical evidence from this study, tattooed white collar workers in the United States share this sentiment as well.

The permanence of tattooing is also a draw for some individuals. The draw lies in the fact that a person can get an image tattooed and it will be there forever, despite all the changes happening in society and life. In essence, tattooing acts as a means to combat anomie. The social listlessness that occurs with anomie is frequently attributed to a lack of social anchors; something tattooing clearly provides. A similar concept has been posited in previous academic works surrounding tattoos; however, the application is narrow and specific to niche groups like elite tattoo collectors (Irwin 2003) and modern primitives (Turner 1999). Here, though, the concept can be extended to the far more expansive category of American white collar workers. This notion ties back to the idea of time conceptualization. Tattoos have the capability to act as a corporeal interaction with abstract notions like time; one of the ways in which humans deal with this idea. Furthermore, tattoos are instilled with symbolic power whereby complex messages, meanings, and life experiences can be quickly recalled or transmitted. Furthermore, with the increased use of temporary forms of social media, like Instagram stories and Snapchat, the sense of permanence is particularly appealing; a fact mentioned by most tattooed participants.

Certainly, this does not apply to all members of this population, otherwise the above argument would not exist. Yet, nine out of the eleven tattooed participants noted that they like their tattoos because it anchored them in something whenever they looked

at them. Eight of those nine participants also noted that the permanence of tattoos causes them hesitation. As such, it is important to clearly state that having a fear of permanency surrounding tattoos and acknowledging the appeal of permanency are not mutually exclusive. The two forms work together to inform why a voluntary corporeal mark on the skin, or the lack of that mark, is so powerful for identity reification.

The permanence of tattooing impacts decisions of white collar employees regarding a myriad of different topics. However, there is a way in which this could be mitigated. Bruce Klitzman designed a microencapsulated tattoo ink that utilizes bioresorbable and insoluble pigments compressed in polymethylmethacrylate beads (Klitzman 1998). For those who decided to skip the jargon in the last sentence, please take a moment to reread it, because that sentence has the potential to reshape tattooing as it is known across the planet. In non-jargon terms, Klitzman created a tattoo ink that is permanent, but can be 80% - 100% removed in a single laser treatment that is not unhealthy and relatively painless. As a point of reference, laser treatment[8] of standard tattoos typically removes 20% of the tattoo ink (Luebberding & Alexiades-Armenakas 2014). The patent for this technology was submitted in 1998. Since then, more advances have been made, yet the technology is still relatively unknown. If such a technology exists, then why are people still using traditional inks? Yes, there is a need for more data in regard to human trial; however, the reason is deeper than that.

When participants were asked if they had heard of this technology, only those that work in the field of dermatology had heard of it. Beyond those two participants, none of the others knew this existed. The participants who have tattoos were asked, if they had access to the technology, would they ever get a tattoo with this ink. They were also asked whether they wish their previous tattoos were done in this ink. All of the tattooed participants stated that they would have liked their tattoos to be done in this ink had they been given the option; however, it would not be a determining factor. After all, "you don't get a tattoo to get it removed" (Paul R.). The participants without tattoos were asked whether they would receive a tattoo utilizing this ink as well as if the ease of removal made tattoos more or less appealing. Of the nine non-tattooed participants, seven said they would be more inclined to receive a tattoo with this ink, and three stated they would go as soon as possible if it was an option. However, eight of the nine

[8] Laser treatment for the removal of tattoos is a broad statement as there are numerous different methods. Some of the more common forms include multipass treatment, dermal scatter reduction, and picosecond laser treatment.

believed that the widespread knowledge and implementation of a microencapsulated tattoo ink would make no difference on the perception of tattoos; especially in the white collar workplace.

The positive and negative idea of tattoo permanence leads to a conversation on freedom. As freedom is a consistent theme among the history of tattooing and, as I posit in Chapters 3 & 4, still applicable in the Contemporary Era, permanence is situated in an ambiguous position. On one hand, tattoos are permanent, and the choice made regarding image, style, and corporeal location limit freedoms. For instance, applications to fashion through organizational dress policy (discussed in Chapter 9). On the other hand, the ability to get any tattoo, in any location, and still function in society is quintessentially freedom. While this freedom absolutely takes a different form than freedom in past epochs, the fact of the matter is that freedom as a principle for tattooing persists and is seen through permanence; a statement that is admittedly counterintuitive until broken down. The inclusion of freedom as an operating principle for tattooing in the Contemporary Era is exacerbated by the technological developments in tattooing as well as the increased social acceptability of the act. There is now more freedom to choose images, styles, artists, and locations than ever before. Freedom, then, is a guiding aspect of identity in the Contemporary era among tattooed white collar workers. One's identity is constantly informed by the ideas of freedom which develops the lived experience of these individuals.

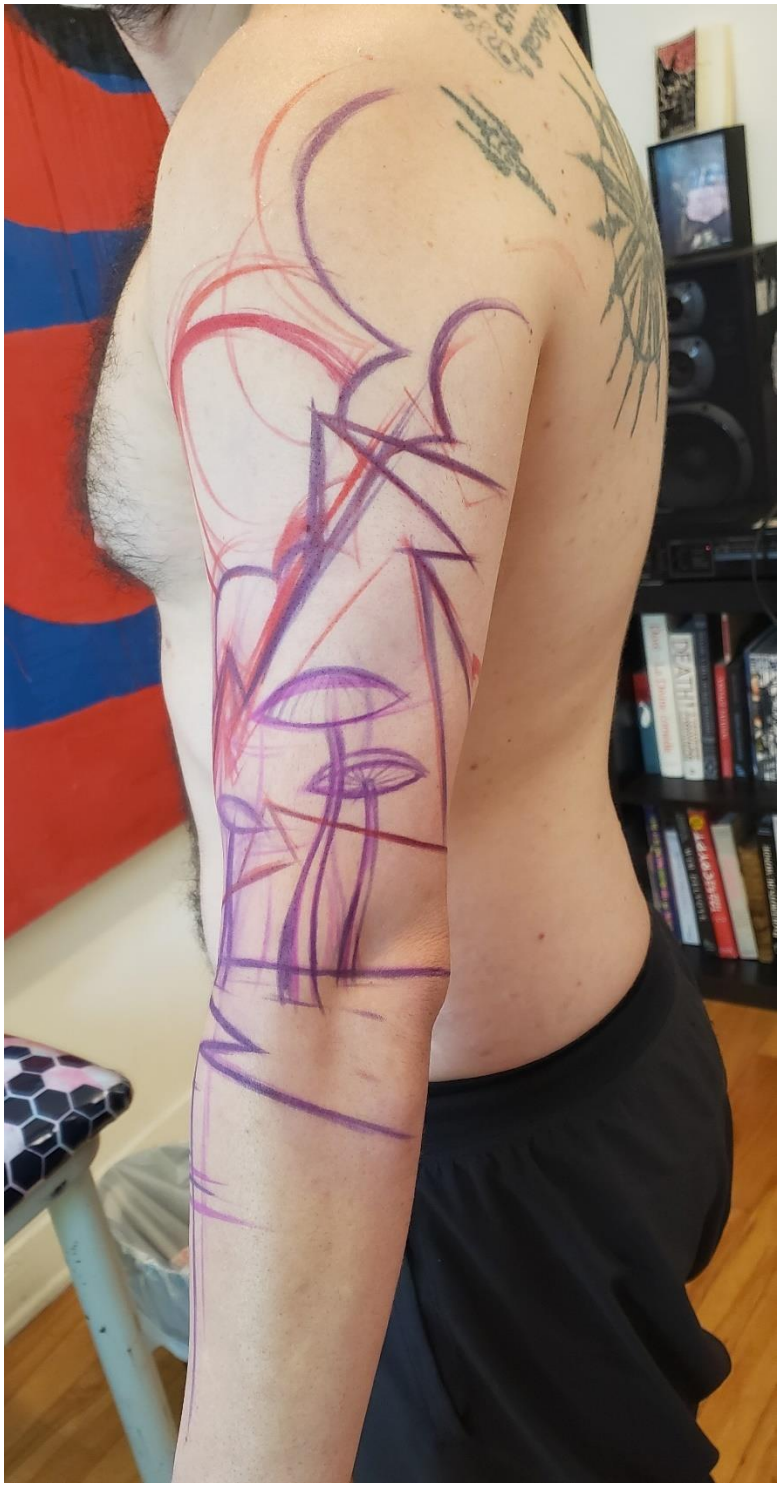


Figure 23: Drawn Tattoo Outline. Photographed by the author in 2019



Figure 24: Inked Tattoo Outline. Photographed by the author in 2019

The Body: "I'm going to leave this world like I entered it: naked. But, this time, covered in ink"

Approaching an academic conversation about the body from a figurationalist perspective has the potential to be quite divisive. Throughout Norbert Elias' writings, he

builds a strong argument that bodies, social relationships, and emotions are not discreet notions. The division of body and self as analytical concepts is a binary and static description; something Elias frequently condemns in his writings. However, Elias' focus on sociohistoric processes does allow for a conversation of the body and embodiment. Seemingly overlooked by many figurationalist as well as critics of figurational sociology, Elias point blank presents his thoughts on the body in *The Civilizing Process*. The same oft overlooked ideas surrounding bodies in general, found in *The Civilizing Process*, is also frequently praised in the sociology of sport (Dunning 1999). In the context of sociology of sport and sociology of leisure, the figurationalist approach is commonly praised for the way in which bodies reveal civilizing trends across demographic and historical spaces. The body, then, is not a singular entity in a vacuum, but rather an indicator of sociohistoric processes as well as social relationships.

A figurationalist approach to the body is predicated on the notion of *process*, a concept paramount in Elias' works. Elias' interest in process, and what this means for the notion of body, has already been addressed (Goudsblom 1977), and contemporarily reassessed (Atkinson 2012). Without rehashing what has already been well stated, the way in which bodies, as well as lived experiences and relationships, must be understood and examined is wholly processual (Atkinson 2012: 50).

The body, serving as an indicator of sociogenic change, and how it is used as a medium for performance, is shaped by the overlapping chains of interdependency within and between figurations. The chains of interdependency are shifting in response to changes in relationships which situates understandings of the body as a constantly mutating corporeal ideology. In order to address this concept of the body, figurationalist research focuses on "forms of body behaviour, movement, ritual, treatment, modification, and representation" (Atkinson 2012: 52) which addresses the sociogenic process (Mennell 1989, 2007; Salumets 2001). What this means is that the body, approached from a figurationalist perspective, must be studied in conjunction with figurations, interdependencies, and sociogenesis (van Krieken 1998).

Applied directly to the discussion of tattoos, identity, and workplace, the figurationalist approach to body is understood through the constant socialization process all are subject to which reveal conceptions of corporeality and how they are expressed in everyday behaviour. The everyday behaviour includes modifications, like tattooing, and accounts for interdependencies. The Eliasian understanding of bodies is distinct from other understandings of the body looking at the intersections between the "natural

body" (Elias 1987) and the culturally intextuated body (Maguire 1993). This understanding of the body synergizes with the notion of ego skin in that the body is a congruence between "natural" and sociocultural construction which allows the body to act as an interface between self and others.

Creation of Meaning: "But what does it mean?!"

Meaning of tattoos is not a simple subject to address. Yes, it is easy to ask someone what their tattoo means and, given enough trust between the parties, the tattooed individual might answer. However, there are issues with this line of inquiry. For instance, what if the tattoo has no meaning? Or, the meaning is extremely personal and not something a person wants to discuss. Perhaps the meaning is impossible to decipher. Furthermore, do personally ascribed meanings even matter? Despite this ambiguity, the meaning of tattoos is an important area of inquiry. At an individual level, the meanings could illustrate a pattern. However, what is of particular interest to this project is that tattoos must be read and then interpreted. That simple concept is fascinating because it supersedes personally ascribed meanings and puts the onus of interpretation on WE or THEY members of a figuration.

In order for the interpretive process to begin, a tattoo must be displayed. The act of displaying a tattoo is a socially precarious performative act. Given that tattoos are not readily accepted by everyone in the United States, the context of the display is critical. Tattooed individuals utilize numerous interpretive tools and skills (discussed at length in Atkinson 2003) which allow them to identify acceptable social contexts for the display of tattoos. Furthermore, tattooed individuals learn how their bodies and body projects will be interpreted by those with whom interdependencies exist (e.g. family, coworkers, peers). This notion suggests that the concept of performance is critical to the meaning of tattoos within and across figurations.

Performance, as an area of academic inquiry, has been addressed in the humanities as well as the social sciences. Anthropologists and sociologists, in particular, have studied performance in various sociocultural environments in order to comment on human institutions (e.g. Bateson & Mead 1952; Geertz 1980; Hymes 1975; Turner 1974, 1986). Performance can take numerous forms including ritual, games, sports, play activities, theatre, and face-to-face interaction. Discussed above, bodies in general are the result of long-term sociogenic processes that comment on the conceptions of

corporeality and restraint within and across figurations. Utilizing this approach to the body, performance becomes paramount.

Performance, as it is used in this project, is some set of actions or behaviours that embody central symbolic aspects of a sociocultural tradition and done for the benefit of the observer. A similar understanding of performance has been used in previous research (e.g. Beeman 1993; Belkin & Sheptak 2018; Turner 1990). This understanding of performance meshes with a figurationalist perspective of the body as well as ego skin. Combining these notions, performance is done in an attempt to communication some message, through the use of corporeal symbols, to the observer. To be clear, the corporeal symbols do not have to be tattoos or the lack of tattoos. Broadly speaking, any bodily marking or body project would suffice as they all engage symbolically. Regardless of the corporeal symbols used, it is of the utmost importance that the symbols are culturally understood among a figuration; otherwise, they will fail to communicate any mutually understood meaning. The performance, then, contributes to what cultural materials mean in different figurations and therefore affects the interpretation of those materials.

When communicative performance is undertaken, the body becomes framed as a text. In order for the tattooed body to be read as a text (Barthes 1972, 1975; Fiske 1989a, 1989b), tattooed individuals must bare their bodies. The reasons individuals expose their bodies as text range from personal, political, and cultural reasons (Atkinson 2003). The context of corporeal display is critical, as any tattooed individual will remark. People learn when it is appropriate, and when it is inappropriate, to display the body and the purpose it serves. For instance, an outsider challenging the sociocultural stigma surrounding tattoos in the United States could display their tattoos as a form of resistance. The meaning of the corporeal display, then, is not about self-ascribed meaning such as “I got this tattoo to commemorate my dead pet”. Rather, the display is a performance that is understood based upon the existing interdependencies. Among the tattoo figuration, the performance is understood as a form of cultural resistance; however, among a general population the meaning could simply be lost. As such, there is a time and place for effective performance which can mitigate issues with the individual’s interdependencies. The notion of performance laid out, the conversation can shift towards meaning.

Specifically among American white collar workers, there is the thought that tattoos should have meaning. While this sentiment mirrors a similar perspective in

American culture as a whole, among white collar workers the notion frequently came up. Discussing what tattoos mean, one participant stated:

> I think every tattoo has a meaning to that individual and why they got it. And there is *always* a story behind why someone has what they have. I really don't think people just go randomly put, you know, *stuff* on their bodies for no reason. People have, tattoos all have, everything has meaning. (Olivia C.)

This sentiment is far from unique to Olivia C. Tattooed and non-tattooed participants alike felt that meanings of tattoos are important to their acceptability. So important, in fact, that the meaning of a tattoo can offset other factors, such as size, corporeal location, and image, that would otherwise make a tattoo more or less acceptable in the white collar workplace. One such example can be seen with Megan S. Megan has a number of visible tattoos including script on her wrists (see Figure 24).

> I would say, most of the time, my workers and clients have a negative reaction [about my wrist tattoos]. Something like, "Why don't you get it removed? You should get it removed." Until I tell them, "Oh! It's for my dad. He is dead." Then it is immediately "Oh! Oh! Oh! I'm so sorry!" and then onto another topic. Even though they had all that negative attitude. It's like Jekyll and Hyde. They see [the tattoos] and then make judgements about me until they learn the meaning. And then those judgements just go away. It's like they aren't cool with tattoos, but because my dad is dead and I got a tattoo to remember him, it's fine now. Meaning is everything, I guess. (Megan S.)

The meaning Megan has ascribed to one of her wrist tattoos is not evident from the image. Without prior knowledge, the tattoo does not communicate that it is memorializing her deceased father. As such, it engenders all the stereotypes associated with a deviant corporeal practice within this population (discussed further in Chapter 9). However, upon disclosing the meaning, the abstraction surrounding the tattoo disappears and the acceptability of her tattoo increases among co-workers and clients. In order to achieve this level of acceptability, Megan must disclose personal information to

her figuration which alters the way her tattoos are seen. Megan, like other tattooed participants, is not ashamed or embarrassed about her tattoos or the meanings surrounding them. Disclosure of meaning deepens the ego skin interfacing taking place allowing for a tattooed individual's self-conception to be transmitted through performance.

Even among non-tattooed white collar workers, the fascination surrounding meaning is evident. Frequently, non-tattooed participants noted that they "need to know the meaning of a tattoo before I say it is okay or not in the office" (Nichole P.) or a similar sentiment. Jane M., a non-tattooed dermatologist, discussed how the meaning of a tattoo comments on the quality of the person.

> I know there are so many gestalt factors at play. But if my daughter came home with a guy with tattoos, that's not going to bother me. So long as he has a job, potential, and knows things. And his tattoos have meaning. I don't care. If they were stupid tattoos, I'd wonder *laugh*. But then I'd want to hear the history of them. What is the fascinating story behind the tattoo? If there is no story, there is no meaning. Then it's like "what were you thinking?! Where were you at that point in time that has no meaning and yet you are permanently putting it on your body? Why would you make that choice?" If there is a meaning, whatever that meaning is, it is more acceptable. But if there is no meaning, I'm going to look down on that guy and not be happy my daughter brought him home. (Jane M.)

The meaning of a tattoo comments, not only on the tattoo itself, but the acceptability of the person. This sentiment is, again, shared by many of the participants; however, there are notably three exceptions. Two tattooed participants and one non-tattooed participant commented that tattoos do not need to have meaning. A tattoo without meaning is still art and that is sufficient. The non-tattooed participant that spoke against the need for meaning, Harrold M, is also the participant who actively dislikes all tattoos. Harrold commented that:

> Every tattoo has meaning. Maybe it is because someone died, or you really like a band. But it doesn't have to be. Because every tattoo means something to me: the person with it is dumb. Who would permanently

> mark their skin like that? And then to be seen that way. Tattoos always mean that the person is breaking the rules that hold our country together. (Harrold M.)

Overt biases aside, Harrold makes a good point. Tattoos inherently have meaning among the white collar figuration because they are different than 'normal'. They communicate the involvement in non-normative behaviour which can absolutely result in stigmatizing behaviour. While a tattoo can certainly have a personally ascribed meaning, at their core tattoos act as intentional cultural discord. However, cultural discord is predicated on the visibility of tattoos. Among this population, tattoos in highly visible locations are intentionally placed to incite some response from the people around them. If tattoos simply existing are symbolic of deviant involvement, a tattooed individual is labelled as such. In situations where this happens upon discovery of a tattoo, as opposed to overt public display, the individual could be framed as a "discredited outlier" (Atkinson 2003). Even participants that have a loose meaning ascribed to their tattoo, or no overt meaning, acknowledge that visibility is important to any potential performance and that they serve to elicit a response of some type when displayed.

> I think most tattoos do have a meaning. And others are just for art. Which has meaning on its own but not like a deep "I want this exact thing for this exact reason". And if it is just art, it is still a tattoo which people feel strongly about. Mine can be kind of aggressive on the eyes because it is a skeleton which people will look at and be like "ugh!". But after I talk to them and show them the trumpet and explain I went to college down in New Orleans and this represents the culture, they think it's cool. But that's what I mean. I have to explain it to them so that they don't just see it as a tattoo. If I don't explain the meaning, it can come across as a reflection of me. Just trying to upset people. Even if it isn't real. People will see it that way. (Ryan S.)

The juxtaposition between personal meaning and public meaning (within and beyond a figuration) is an aspect of performance that tattooed individuals, especially among the white collar workplace, are hyper cognizant of. In situations where the

display of tattoos is understood as a declaration of social identity or exhibition of art, white collar workers will readily present their tattoos. However, if tattoos are associated with violations of bodily norms or membership in fringe figurations, the display is more limited. This suggests that requirements, *de jure* and *de facto*, limiting the public display of tattoos have very real impacts on the identity of tattooed individuals.

The social context of performance is critical here. Discussed further in Chapter 9, the organizational culture of a workplace heavily impacts how employees perceive tattoos in general. In a workplace approving of tattoos, the authentic display of self and open discussion of meaning allows for greater display of identity. This, coupled with the discussion surrounding creation of meaning, evidences that the ways in which others understand and react to the tattooed form is predicated on others. In other words, tattooing is a highly interdependent activity that has impacts on identity as well as the white collar figuration.



Figure 25: Visible Wrist Tattoos. Photographed by the author in 2018

Art: "If I do cocaine off a log, is that art?

A tattoo is easy to identify. Sure, a tattoo can take countless forms and sizes, but at their core they are all just pigment trapped beneath the skin. The same can be said for paintings. They are easy to identify because they are just pigment on canvas. But that does not mean they are all the same. Like painting, which can use different styles (e.g. impressionism, photorealism, surrealism) and different types of paints (e.g. oil, acrylic, spray), tattooing also allows for this type of variability. From an academic perspective, this variability is what leads to a distinction between the craft of tattoo and tattoo art (Kosut 2014). It is also this variability that allows for a conversation on importance, or the lack thereof, of art in relation to tattoos among white collar workers in the United States.

Broadly speaking, the way in which a tattooed individual views another's tattoos is different than someone without tattoos. When a non-tattooed individual approaches someone about their tattoos, they are often "othering" them. Regardless of what they ask or say, positive or negative, they are illustrating that the tattooed individual is distinctly different. When tattooed individuals interact, they are not "othering" the individual. Rather, the two individuals frequently bond over shared figurational membership (Thompson 2015). The tattoo figuration, like other figurations, has their own set of hierarchal divisions based upon power. In the case of the tattoo figuration, power is expressed by a knowledge of the figuration and internal chains of interdependency (Atkinson 2003; DeMello 2000; Irwin 2003). Since tattooing is an interactive process, simply possessing a tattoo allows one access to the tattoo figuration. However, within the figuration there is a group of elite tattoo collectors that distinguish their work from the "typical" tattoos people think of (Irwin 2003; Vail 1999, 2000). The distinction comes from the quality of work, but also from style and artist. The latter two points are more important to identifying what constitutes tattoo art as opposed to craft. The process of tattoos becoming tattoo art is the notion of artification discussed in Chapter 5. The presence of tattoo art, and the increasing presence in popular culture, are impactful for the lived experience of tattooed white collar workers in the United States.

"Good" Tattoos

Noted in Chapter 5, art is subjective. But some art is understood as "good" based upon the artist, provenance, and price. And like traditional art forms, there are "good" tattoos and "bad" tattoos. Whether a tattoo is good or bad has an impact on the way in which it is perceived by others. The American white collar workplace is no different. Good work is perceived as more acceptable. But this necessitates a discussion on what determines "good" art. In order to address this concept, the conversation must begin with the idea of *habitus*.

A term coined by Pierre Bourdieu (1980), *habitus* addresses the underlying frameworks that guide a culture, figuration, or group's actions, logic, perception, and comprehension. The inclusion of comprehension is important here because it also refers to the limits of comprehension. Of course, individuals are constantly operating in numerous habituses which inform their worldview and informs taste. However, while Bourdieu posits that habitus informs taste (1984), he also states that "tastes are perhaps first and foremost distastes, disgust provoked by horror or visceral intolerance of the tastes of others" (1984:56). If tastes develop from distastes, this sheds an interesting light on the discussion of good tattoos.

As discussed in Chapters 3 & 4, body modification habits, including tattooing, are processually impacted by shifting interdependencies over one's life as well as in a long-term sociogenic perspective. In reference to establishing a tattoo as good, this notion works well with the concept that taste develops from distaste. Whether tattoos are generally seen as acceptable or unacceptable, desirable or undesirable, and any socioeconomic associations are a result of the shifting chains of interdependency connecting cultural specialists and large scale social institutions (Becker 1982; Crane 1987; Kosut 2006b; Peterson 1997). This means that art objects, inclusive of tattoos, and their subsequent quality within a given figuration, are constructed among multiple social fields. Relating to the long-term processes, this means that cultural ascriptions of what makes good tattoos is based upon processes embedded within the social world and, importantly, dominant discourse regarding the object or action. Given that, "any object or action may come to be legitimated as art" (Becker 1982:163), institutional consent, illustrated through dominant discourse, lies in the hands of social elites.

Applied to the white collar workplace, the social elites who control the dominant discourse are those individuals who have the most power within the figurations. In this case, the discussion could focus on individuals in positions of power or organizations

that lead an industry. Either way, the onus of establishing good, or more specifically legitimized, art can be identified as resting upon the powerful members of a figuration. Here, then, the conversation can become more specific. What constitutes good tattoo art, or frankly if tattoo art can even exist, is not subject to individual members of a figuration. Rather, the members with power perpetuate a dominant discourse surrounding tattoos and further establish hegemonic ideals. This process is similar to legitimization discourse seen in other artistic realms like haute gastronomic traditions (Ferguson 1998, 2004) and country music (Peterson 1997). This notion is particularly important to understanding identity and stigma in the white collar workplace because whether tattoos can be art, and what styles, images, or artists are considered artistic, are the purview of powerful figurational members. The habitus and tastes of those powerful members transform and define tattoo meaning and design among their given figuration. What this means is that the symbolic redefining of tattoo art among the tattoo figuration (Kosut 2014) does not align with understandings of art in the white collar workplace. In a very tangible sense, this means that those individuals with "good" tattoos, and even elite tattoos collectors, can absolutely frame their work as high-end within the tattoo figuration; however, in other social contexts they can be marked as deviant for simply having tattoos.

With an understanding of how "good" tattoos are socially created and understood, the focus can turn to the impact this has on American white collar workers. The possession, presence, and display of good tattoo art allows for greater social acceptance among this population. Every participant noted that they could clearly identify good tattoos and bad tattoos. However, when asked to specifically qualify what this meant, the answers were variant. Despite the various responses, four primary factors appeared as patterned responses in order to qualify a tattoo as good: "crisp lines", "style", "image", and "skill". These four categories are absolutely subjective; however, the fact that all four appeared across all participants is telling.

> I feel like I'm carrying art around on my body at all times. Is it good art? I fucking hope so! I think a good tattoo is art. Most tattoo artists I've met or found on Instagram, they also do more standard art at the same time. And images for traditional art don't always make good tattoos. I think good tattooing requires very specific and trained skill. Something I don't think I can do; and I've done art. Heck, I do art for a living! People find

> out I do art outside work and ask me to draw their tattoos. No. No, no, no. I fucking hate when people do that. "Oh my god! You art?! Draw me a tattoo!" "Nope, you can fuck right off". Because I don't have the level [of skill] that [tattoo artists] do. You're holding a vibrating needle. You really have to train yourself to do that. I respect any art that I know took some serious fucking skill. And that means style too. Every style takes specific skills. If a tattoo really shows the style, then you know it's good. Like watercolour [style] tattoos. The artist needs to know how to layer and blend. But they need to make crisp lines too. (Heather E.)

Heather obviously knows what she understands to be good tattoo art. The four factors that participants spoke of that qualify good art are clearly displayed here. The pattern indicates a shared understanding in regard to good tattoos among tattooed and non-tattooed individuals. This would be a direct application of American cultural habitus informing notions of good art.

The problem is that style and image are two categories that are very subjective. Again, to frame this from a more traditional perspective, the variability can be as significant as discussing the following paintings: impressionistic skull, surreal landscape, abstract computer, and photorealistic mushroom. The point is that these two aspects are so variant that finding something that most participants agreed upon is difficult. With one very important exception. Those individuals that worked for the same company for extended periods of time shared similar notions of good styles and images. This suggests that their tastes had been influenced by prolonged exposure to their workplace figurations. Specifically, the powerful members within the figurations disseminate a discourse regarding what style(s) of tattooing is/are good and what images are good. The discourse influences the tastes of the figuration members and further informs their habitus. The process is not dissimilar to the impacts of organizational dress policy discussed in Chapter 9.

Furthermore, the tattooed participants who possess tattoos which align with their shared (I-WE) sense of good tattoos[9] were less stigmatized in their workplaces. The "better" a tattoo is, according to the norms and values of a given workplace figuration,

[9] To address a question that likely arises from this statement: no, not all tattooed participants think of their tattoos as "good tattoos". In fact, some describe their tattoos as "bad" or "pretty shitty".

the more easily it is accepted. The inverse is true as well. While there is far from a mass acceptance of tattoos across the whole white collar environment, there is an increasing acceptance of good quality tattoos. The greater acceptance of subjectively higher quality tattoos is important to the lived experience of American white collar workers because that acceptance illustrates a challenge to traditional stigmas surrounding tattoos in the workplace. The acceptance of good tattoos normalizes the presence of tattoos in the white collar workplace which, by logical extension, has an impact on identity. When tattoos, regardless of quality, are more readily accepted in the workplace, tattooed employees have the capability to display them openly. The open display is a performance of authentic self which, as discussed above, has large impacts on identity.

The acceptance of higher quality tattoos among the white collar workplace is critical in a larger conversation about tattoos in United States. Americans are currently living in the Contemporary Era which brings with it changes; as did the previous epochs. The acceptance of good quality tattoos in the white collar workplace illustrates the changes that are taking place. Furthermore, this change holds the potential to be a key point in future thought surrounding the sociogenesis of tattoos. Undeniably, this is a process necessitating the involvement of multiple figurations; however, the data illustrates that the change is taking place. Broadly, these changes have been observed among the tattoo figuration as a whole with the changing eras (discussed in Chapters 3 & 4), but this is one of the first real indications that resocialization regarding tattoos is taking place in a historically isolated figuration. The increasing acceptance of tattooing among the white collar workplace allows more opportunity for tattooed individuals to perform their authentic self. The acceptance of this performance mitigates deleterious psychosocial impacts associated with stifling performance of one's authentic self. Furthermore, this process also indicates that tattoos are becoming accepted among the white collar figuration as an artistic endeavour with varying qualities. And the lynchpin of these findings rests upon the subjective notion of "good" tattoos.

Fashion Tattoos

The fashion industry is, broadly understood, a part of the entertainment industry. As a medium for communicating popular culture, fashion helps to shape and illustrate mass culture (Kosut 2006a). Fashion also engages with the notion of art. Through these two approaches, tattooing can be investigated through involvement with fashion. While

some fashion scholars have debated issues with the inclusion of tattooing into any fashion conversation (discussed further in Chapter 5), there is little debating that, from a popular cultural perspective, tattoos are deeply involved with fashion. One need only think of 22-karat gold temporary tattoos that obtained public obsession in 2002 upon their unveiling at the Afridesia fashion show during the Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week (Molofsky 2002). Or, perhaps, different designs or corporeal locations that gain mass popularity. Either way, tattooing can be framed as involved with fashion.

In highly industrialized and post-industrial societies, like the United States, fashion intersects with the goods market. Fashion becomes a sector preoccupied with the creation and renewal of tastes. The constantly shifting and altering notions of fashion encourage an agility to the market which additionally assures the success of the industry (Walzer & Sanjurjo 2016). This notion suggests that fashion in a market is heavily based in consumption; yet, there are additional avenues through which fashion can be understood. Namely, that if a market is entrenched in popular culture, highly agile, and understood through notions of habitus, then the market must be understood through images and reason; not dissimilar to the notion of tattoos as a whole. In essence, this suggests that fashion is entrenched with meaning that is understood by those who engage with the practice. As such, it is viable to understand fashion as a symbolic system which encourages additional economic involvement through purchase (Barthes 2003), but also through interpretation by those members involved which necessitates a reassessment of taste. Additionally, fashion as a symbolic system allows for an analysis of what individuals cover their bodies with, but also the ways in which the body is displayed.

Any fashionable phenomena must contain an "element of attraction" which can be traced to a "transitory character" (Levine 1971). This notion seems to exclude tattoos since the result is permanent. However, tattoos are something that persist for a life-time and, by that nature, retain a level of cultural significance. For this reason, while a tattoo is not transitory in nature, the image, style, or corporeal location as a cultural focus is. It is this logic that allows something as permanent as tattooing to be addressed from a fashion perspective and not allocated to the stock of anti-fashion concepts.

In order to avoid the potential obsoleteness that can be associated with tattoos as a result of changing times, individuals place emphasis on the crafting of a unique tattoo. The unique tattoo can absolutely be unique in the visual sense (Kjeldgaard & Bengtsson 2005), but also through meaning.

The customization of visual design is one way in which personalization manifests. Of all the tattooed participants, only two had pieces that were not customized in any capacity (see Figure 25). The lack of visual customization on these pieces was mitigated by the ascription of personal meaning which allowed for a conceptual customization. Yet, the majority of individuals had some form of customization in place. As a result of the customization, individuals integrated something that was an item of fashion into their personal identity while establishing some level of permanence.

The crafting of a personal meaning to any tattoo inherently personalizes it and allows it to persist as something meaningful once the aspect(s) that make it fashionable fade. Once a personalized meaning has been placed upon a tattoo, the display of said tattoo changes from the public display of an art or fashion piece to a display of authentic self. The display of authentic self, as discussed above, has strong implications into the lived experience. When linked to one's personal biography or some other personally ascribed area of meaning, the tattoos act as a contextual representation of self. Yet worth noting, the stories that are personally ascribed to tattoos typically borrow from perceived "acceptable" meanings entrenched in popular culture (Patterson 2018). It is unsurprising, then, that many contemporary tattoo narratives comment on individuality as a result of customization.

The customization of tattoos, visually and through meaning, are ways to engage the ego skin whereby one's sense of self is communicated to those around them through indelible marks on the skin. The anchoring of one's self through customization of tattoos allows for a sense of permeance, despite shifting desires among the popular culture fashion industry. Customization roots tattoos as a form of symbolic work communicating identity to others. The customization choices allow for individual autonomy and freedom. The presence of freedom here is noteworthy given that freedom has underpinned much of the sociogenic movements surrounding tattoos in Western culture.

But what about tattoos without meaning? When tattoos are done for no reason beyond the aesthetics of a piece, the tattoo is known as a "fashion tattoo" (Kjeldgaard & Bengtsson 2005). A fashion tattoo simply acts as bodily adornment or bodily beautification (Goulding & Follet 2002). However, the tattoo is still a symbol. The symbolic power ascribed to tattoos means that, when situated in any given social web, the disparate actors ascribe meaning to the tattoo. For the acquisition of any given tattoo, including my sleeve which I wholeheartedly state was done without meaning

beyond aesthetics, is an expression of aesthetic preference which is symbolic in itself. This notion is symbolic, and as such possesses meaning, because it is a display of personal traits and communicates those traits that inform said aesthetic choice to the members of the social web in which one is entrenched.

Tattooing is a process, as is identity creations, which forces constant negotiation and renegotiation with others (Sullivan 2001). The contemporary cultural imperative of customization to combat obsoleteness challenges the mass-marketed, standard flash designs of the past. This change, marked by the entrance into the Contemporary Era, is connected to the prioritization on individuality and difference in contemporary American culture. As such, the connection to fashion is exactly that: tattoos are a means to engage with popular culture fads, visually display artistic taste, and express identity.



Figure 26: Non-customized Tattoo. Photographed by the author in 2018

Media Representations & Reality Voyeurism

Upon entering the Information Revolution, there has been a proliferation of media and media forms. The massive increase in media availability and production has resulted in a drastic upsurge in visible areas on which visible images are displayed and

consumed. The consumption of these images, whether swiping through Instagram, viewing a movie, or simply turning on the television, illustrate methods of hegemonic discourse in which tattoos make an appearance. Another area of inclusion, frequently overlooked as a part of popular culture, is advertisements which is, unquestionably, a form of communication. The prolific inclusion of tattoos in mediated popular culture illustrates that tattoos are a part of the social mainstream and that media representations influence body modification practices.

The proliferation of media forms has opened up numerous avenues by which prescriptions and proscriptions of corporeal practices are made available to the general public; an illustration of the hegemonic discourse. Situated in the hegemonic discourse is the frequent display of modified bodies (e.g. plastic surgery, bodily fashion practices, tattoos). But not just arbitrary bodies, bodies of lionized individuals. These glorified individuals include actors/actresses, social media influencers, and professional athletes. While not all public figures are tattooed, there has been an increase. The increased representation of these idolized individuals can result in a desire to replicate their corporeal images by audience members. An applied example of this is documented among American collegiate basketball players who desire to become professional players whereby they receive more tattoos in order to capitalize on the image of professional basketball players as tattooed (Belkin & Sheptak 2018). The idea that media representations influence engagement in corporeal alterations was noted by participants:

> Who did I admire growing up? Lots of people. My parents, duh. Some teachers I had growing up…and a book of athletes. A ton of them, mostly on the Browns and Indians. A lot of the athletes had tattoos and I thought it was pretty cool. They definitely encouraged me to get tattoos. (Ryan S.)

Given the abundant presence of athletes in popular culture and represented in multiple media forms, it is not difficult to encounter some that appeal to one's tastes. The concept is similar to the appeal of musicians in the early 2000s and the influence their corporeal images had in lifestyle tastes (Kosut 2006a). However, the increased representation of tattoos in contemporary media opens the practice up to banality where tattoos will no longer be framed as "rebellious" (Hebdige 1979; Kosut 2006a).

While the repackaging of tattoos as something hip could be framed as problematic for the practice, it is worth noting that tattooing is not static. Despite notions of permanency, tattooing is processual. The contemporary meaning of tattooing in American culture is understood as a result of long-term sociogenic processes rife with overlapping chains of interdependency. What this means is that this is not the first challenge to a social understanding of tattooing, nor will it be the last. The united States has passed the Rebel Era where tattoos were a sign of social marginality and moved beyond the Tattoo Renaissance to the Contemporary Era. The Contemporary Era has been, and will continue to be, marked by large changes to the social understandings of tattooing; just as the previous epochs. The media representations of tattooing are reshaping social understandings of tattooing. While some individuals may not like the direction, social change is a predictable pattern and should not be framed as something appalling or terrifying; rather, it should simply be addressed.

The use of tattoos as an advertising tool also indicates their mainstreaming. The Progressive commercial, mentioned in Chapter 5, is one applied example of this. The visual or even conceptual presence of tattoos are used to target specific audiences based upon how they are presented. Regardless of presentation, the presence of tattoos in advertising helps to disseminate messages regarding tattoos and tattooed individuals within popular culture. From this perspective, the media representations of tattoos and other body modifications highlight an elevation of their cultural status.

The increased representation of tattoos in media have also helped draw attention towards different tattoo styles. There have been numerous television shows, in different genres, that focus on tattooing in some capacity. The first of these shows was *Miami Ink*, initially airing in 2005, which became an international television sensation (Walzer & Sanjurjo 2016). The success of this show lead to others which established a place for tattoo artists in the media. Now, it is extremely common for a tattoo artist or studio to have their own websites and social media accounts. Tattooed participants that conducted research before receiving a tattoo frequently attributed their research to the social media accounts of artists. Of the different social media outlets, participants primarily focused on Instagram. By researching different tattoo artists, the participants noted that they had exposed themselves to numerous tattooing styles and images that they did not know existed. Ease of access to tattoo artists and studios around the world via social media indicates that tattooing is undergoing a process of globalization and infiltrating new (for the Contemporary Era) cultural realms.

The abundant use of social media by content producers and consumers informs the process of commodification. The commodification of tattoos has clearly taken place in contemporary society. While tattoos can certainly be done for some personally ascribed meaning or a customized design, the fact is that tattooing extends beyond embodied status symbols. Tattoos are used in advertising which helps to sell commodities. The commodification of tattoos thus informs notions of representation. The use of social media as a medium for reality voyeurism allows greater access to the world which subjects individuals to a new and contemporary form of self-representation. As a member of social media, and especially image centric platforms like Instagram, individuals become a part of an extensive digital figuration. Membership in this digital figuration necessitates a collective interest in accessing representations of everyday life through image circulation. Since the body is a mouldable text of representation, engaging in this practice results in an active knowledge regarding self-representation surrounding corporeal display. As a result, the members of this figurations are interdependent with other members which informs taste and corporeal display. The importance of visual representation to the digital figuration, where they will be subject to practices of reality voyeurism, in constantly noted. Through reality voyeurism, an individually involved process of media representation, the shared understanding of physical display of body modifications has been influenced by the use of electronic media.

The result of this is that tattoos now occupy a liminal state. Tattoos are highly customizable, in visual display and self-ascribed meaning, as well as highly privatized. Yet, with the abundant media representation of tattoos and tattooed individuals, the body as a medium for identity display is challenged. The sociogenic changes resulting from increased media representation situate the tattooed body as a public form of individualism and reveals how corporeal alterations, focused on self-representation, inform and are informed by cultural habituses. In essence, sociogenic changes in media representations of the tattooed body have resulted in engagement with reality voyeurism which influence body and body modification structures.

Chapter 9 – "Oh, you have a tattoo. Do you not work?": Tattoos & Stigma in the Workplace

In 2009, I was an undergraduate in Miami, Florida with a full back of *sak yant* tattoos. I had a very particular look; not one I curated, but one that just seemed to develop. As an undergraduate student, I looked like the quintessential beach bum. Pectoral length, sun bleached, curly, brown hair; tanned skin; athletic shorts or swim trunks; a T-shirt riddled with holes; and *if* I was wearing shoes (a very big if), flip flops. Before the start of my senior year, I was asked to be a teaching assistant with lecture responsibilities for the anthropology department and it dawned on me: I had to look professional. The intense humidity and hellish heat of Miami dictate how people dress. I cut my hair, bought closed toed shoes, started wearing shirts without holes, and pants.

During that process of self-professionalization, it became obvious that professional male clothing easily hides back tattoos. When I lectured, the students had no idea my back was covered in tattoos. Students would see me at the beach or at a party and be stunned I had tattoos. I quickly realized that for my peers, regardless of my age, occupying a professional role was incongruous with having tattoos. Upon receiving my first university professor job in Cleveland, Ohio, the cold and volatile weather necessitated I wore more concealing clothing. During those lectures, students were always stunned when I would show a picture of my back. Many of my colleagues would gossip among each other to try and ascertain the identity of the "tattooed professor" and speculate on their "disreputable nature". As it was my first teaching job, and only temporary, I kept quiet.

The circumstances surrounding my transition into the professional workplace depict the impact tattoos potentially have in the white collar environment. While the relationship between identity and tattoos is evident among this population (see Chapter 8), there is still a need to investigate stigma and tattoos. Since the identity of white collar workers is impacted by the presence of tattoos, the logical follow up is to inquire about what happens when tattoos are not allowed in the workplace. Or, more dramatically, what happens when there is obvious animosity towards tattooed individuals within the workplace.

Through the continued analysis of empirical data, this chapter addresses tattooed employees in the white collar workplace. Specifically, this chapter presents the experiences of tattooed and non-tattooed employees to examine expectations of visual

and literal public space in the workplace. Utilizing vignettes, the chapter continues the conversation to address the impact of dress codes in the workplace. The conversation on dress codes leads to performance, power, and workplace culture. Finally, the chapter concludes with how employees conceptualize their future job prospects and future tattoo plans.

"Yes, I'm hot! Fuck you!" – Mark S.:

I felt bad for Mark because many Americans, including myself, have been in a similar situation. It was brutally hot, and Mark was sweating through his heavy clothes, but could not take them off.

I met up with Mark after he played a round of golf with his co-workers. Mark is a lawyer for a law firm in New York City who focuses on local municipality tax law. He is just south of six foot, clean shaven, with close-cropped brown hair. In this specific instance, his face is bright red and profusely dripping sweat. He is wearing long, pink pants; white golf shoes; a baseball cap; and a bright yellow, long sleeved, heavy polo shirt soaked through with sweat. On his way over to me, a man looked over to him and said, "Hey buddy, you look a bit hot". Mark shot the man a piercing gaze and followed up with "Yes, I'm hot! Fuck you!", before continuing over to meet me.

We sat down inside, and Mark apologized for his outburst, "I know I shouldn't have said that, but it just sucks to golf in heavy clothes on a day over 100 degrees". Yes, I imagine it does. Mark explained that he has to golf like this because he is tattooed and extremely fearful that one of his co-workers might learn that. Given the lengths to which he went to cover his body, I was imagining a body suit not dissimilar to a Japanese *donburi soshinbori*. When he finally showed me his tattoo, I have to admit I was underwhelmed. He had a simple barbed wire strand circling his bicep. Why did he need to go to such lengths?

Mark fears reprisal from his employer, should they learn he is tattooed. The company itself has a formalized policy in place forbidding tattoos in the workplace or any time an employee is representing the company. Even though Mark likes his tattoo, he fears the repercussions that might come from others learning he is tattooed; even when he is off work and not representing the company.

This is an extremely abbreviated account of our meeting and subsequent interview; however, I include it here as a reference point. Throughout this chapter, the different areas of analysis that are discussed easily relate back to Mark's account. Dress code, spillover, stigma, power, and performance to name just a few. While a comical instance, I encourage you to come back and read this account after you have finished this chapter. Understanding Mark's words on a deeper level truly provides a tangible instance of the lived experience, and what this can mean, for a tattooed white collar employee in the United States.

Public Space

Any conversation addressing public and private space from a sociological perspective necessitates starting with Erving Goffman. Goffman utilizes his notion of dramaturgy to address the divide between public space and private space through the language of 'front' and 'back' respectively (Goffman 1963b). Public space, as a sociological concept, is generally understood as an area in which an individual engages in exchange and contact with strangers (Goffman 1959). While the concepts of public and private are seen as mutually exclusive concepts, they are also understood to be inseparable.

Interaction in public space, regardless of context, is predicated on visibility. Visibility is a broad term to address the idea that within public spaces, an individual observes others while simultaneously being observed (Madanipour 2003). In reference to public space, visibility situates in the locus between aesthetics and power (Brighenti 2007). This intersection is particularly important when discussing tattoos in the workplace as tattoos as inherently visual and contextually situated in an environment with hierarchical power structures.

Regardless of sociocultural environment, individuals who interact in any capacity within public space are expected to "…keep one's nose out of other people's activity and go about one's own business" (Goffman 1959: 230). However, the civil inattention is interrupted by simply having tattoos and results in others interacting with the tattooed individual in some capacity. Beverly Thompson (2015) posits the corporeal display of heavily tattooed women in public results in the breakdown of civil inattention which necessitates ritualized forgiveness. Through the ritualized forgiveness, microlevel interactions between the offending party and the offended restructure the meaning of

said event and restructures how the activity is understood in the future. The process described here is extremely similar to Goffman's ideas of dramaturgy; specifically, how the interaction between individuals is symbolically charged and expressing worthiness.

In order to interact in a public space and encourage others to mind their own business, Goffman (1963b) suggests that people need to appear neutral and provide minimal information about themselves. When applied to tattooed individuals, this suggests that they need to find a balance between appearing bland enough to fade into the background and their presentation of self. When an individual does not negotiate these realms effectively, they are subject to some form of social sanctioning. One need only ask a visibly tattooed person, and I assure they will mention that people stare or make comments. The comments and stares can have a variety of meanings ranging from admiration to hostility.

All this said, it is highly relevant to address the white collar workplace as a form of public space. Yes, it is not as widely accessible as a place like a grocery store; however, the workplace has been framed as a public space in academic literature (Hyll 2017; Sheehan 2010). Adhering to the workplace as a public space, one can apply all the logic surrounding individual interaction to this area. This suggests that individuals in the workplace are expected to appear neutral and meld with the background. The problem arises when tattooed individuals are put into this context. Companies can have a range of perspectives and policies regarding tattoos which can absolutely impact the lived experience of tattooed and non-tattooed workers alike. In regard to the presentation of tattoos in public space, one must turn towards visual importance in public space and social media.

Visual Public Space

Communication in public spaces is typically conducted through nonverbal means. Of course, there is the very real ability to speak to others; however, nonverbal and visual ephemera are far more frequent among strangers (Murphy & O'Driscoll 2015). Nonverbal communication is a broad subject that can include text, but traditional text is not always necessary. In fact, studies regarding the increasing prevalence of visual communication in contemporary American culture suggests that the visual vocabulary of Americans has reached a point of such sophistication that traditional written text is secondary, or completely unnecessary, to the comprehension of nonverbal

communication in public spaces (Siber 2005). While perspectives regarding visual communication in public spaces typically focus on advertisements or clothing, the logic is equally applicable to tattoos.

Visual display and subsequent communication in public space is based upon how much someone or something stands out. In order to stand out, visual appearance is absolutely essential; colour, shape, size, iconography, etc. For instance, clothing can stand out with a mark that looks out of place or has intense colour juxtaposition: e.g. a very large "JUICY" label across the seat of pants or a white Nike swoosh on a black shirt. The two examples are displays of visual commercial communication in public space; however, the logic applies to tattoos as well. Like commercial communication, magazine covers, and political propaganda, tattoos utilize words or short phrases in large fonts, frequently coupled with graphic symbols, to quickly communicate. When tattoos are in visible locations, the communication if often times intended for a broad audience. What is important to understand, though, is that given the context of this conversation, intended or personally ascribed messages are not necessarily what is referred to as communication here[10]. Rather, what communication is referring to is the (frequently) unintended communication; simply communicating difference to others. When others interpret that message, it results in civil inattention and many times forced engagement.

A visible tattoo is inherently something that stands out; after all, 71% of Americans do not have tattoos (The Harris Poll 2016). However, like all numbers, this concept can be misleading. The 29% of Americans that do have tattoos, do not all have visible tattoos. As such, when a person does see a visibly tattooed individual, they immediately stand out in a public space. When something, like an advertisement or tattoo, stands out in public space, it forces strangers to stop engaging in civil inattention and interact in some capacity. The interaction could be as simple as a passing glance, interpreting the symbolic and nonverbal communication, then moving on. On the other hand, the interaction could be much more in depth and result in interpersonal interaction like conversation or touching. Regardless of the interaction, visibly tattooed individuals draw attention to interrupt the civil inattention and force some level of engagement.

Forcing engagement violates the norms of operating in public space. Tattooed individuals, then, are very frequently subjected to this practice which can absolutely

[10] Meaning and symbolism is discussed further in Chapter 8

impact the mundane activities necessary to daily life. This phenomenon is remarked upon by every tattooed participant in this study. Every single participant had some easily recollected story about how their tattoos draw attention in public spaces and any subsequent actions that they took to mitigate or emphasize the forced engagement.

> I was in line to pick up a script at CVS [a pharmacy], debating if I wanted to make lemon chicken or chicken parm for dinner; just looking around. Next thing I know, my shirt is being pulled down from behind! I turned around and it was this fuckin' dude touching my back! I couldn't figure it out. I looked at him and was like 'what the hell are you doing?!' Guy looked shocked and unsure how to respond. He eventually sputtered out that he just wanted to see my tattoo. I mean, what the fuck is that about?! Who does that shit? And not only was he pulling down my clothes, he was touching it. Crazy people, right? And that was only yesterday. How many more examples do you want? (Mary N.)

> Okay, you want to hear a real crazy one? This one happened, I don't know, two months ago? Sure, two months. I was at the grocery store picking out a watermelon and this really, really attractive woman walks up to me. I'm not one to get flirted with often, so I thought she was going to ask me to move or something. She says 'hey', smiles, gets closer, and says 'I really like your tats hun. I've heard they mean a person is freaky. I bet you like to play rough.' I didn't know what to do! (Gary P.)

> Yeah, I get people that stop me in public to talk about my tattoos a lot. I get some complements, but mostly I get people throwing shade. Like, people say to me all the time, when I'm just walking to get lunch or at work, 'But you're so pretty. Why would you do that to yourself?' It's like, just leave me alone already. But you can't say that. So, I just try to deal with it and not strangle them. (Olivia C.)

These three quotations from participants clearly illustrate the frequency of civil interruption that tattoos cause in public spaces. The forced engagement that occurs takes a multitude of forms; invasive, sexual, and condescending. Again, I stress that every

tattooed participant had multiple stories like this. As an individual with visible tattoos, I can personally attest that forced engagement in public spheres as a result of tattoos is a *very* real phenomenon and something that is frequently experienced in the United States.

When the participants without tattoos were asked about this, they obviously had stories of their own. The big difference, though, is that tattooed participants immediately recounted stories that centred on their tattoos while non-tattooed participants, unsurprisingly, did not. The participants without tattoos instead focused on two factors that caused forced engagement in public spaces: clothing and hair. Both of these factors align with the notion that visual ephemera that makes a person stand out in public spaces caused some form of disruption and results in forced engagement.

Applying these concepts of public space to the white collar workplace, the conversation begins to focus on the purpose of this study. The white collar workplace is absolutely a form of public space and, as such, must be evaluated in a similar manner. If visible tattoos are disruptive to the way in which individuals interact in public space, then it would make sense that tattoos are disruptive in the workplace. Before continuing, it is worth clarifying a critical point: 'disruptive' has a negative connotation in the workplace, but it is actually a neutral term. Things (as an abstract concept) that are disruptive can be good, bad, or neutral.

Disruption to the workplace as a result of visual ephemera has been framed in numerous ways. For instance, individuals who violate organizational dress policies very realistically disrupt the workplace in a negative manner (Monty 2006). Yet the presence of pet dogs in the workplace, not as something to interact with but to simply visually interact with, have a positive disruptive presence which increases employee morale and well-being (Foreman et al. 2017). The point is simply that when it is stated that tattoos are disruptive in the workplace, one must not immediately connect this to negative connotations.

The manner in which tattoos are disruptive to the workplace is not necessarily relevant here as there are numerous factors at play, such as industry, position, and dress policy, that inform that conclusion. Instead, what is important is that visible tattoos are not standard in American culture and, as such, disrupt the white collar workplace. Given the fact that the visibly tattooed population in the United States and in the white collar workplace is low, there is a logical connection to stigma. As noted in Chapter 5, stigmatization is a result of deviancy which is predicated on an individual violating a

norm and receiving a negative reaction from a group. Despite changing norms surrounding tattoos in the Contemporary Era, the hegemonic position is still of no tattoos. Aligning with this notion, it makes sense that a minority population that causes visual disruption in public space draws attention. Simply put, regardless of the white collar workplace, if tattoos are visible, they will cause a disruption which can very realistically result in stigma.

The focus, then, shifts to the tattooed individual. Do tattooed individuals feel any impact from visually disrupting the workplace? The simple answer to this is yes because, again, impact is an abstract and neutral term. Here, however, there is a more concreate answer. The visibly tattooed participants indicated that the display of tattoos in the workplace frequently had a negative impact on workplace efficiency. The caveat is that participants only felt this way in reference to organizations that have some policy, *de facto* or *de jure*, that frames tattoos as deviant or problematic. Specifically, participants referenced three areas of concern:

1) Increased interruption
2) Increased workplace observation
3) Decreased enjoyable social interactions

These three patterned responses have profound impact on the lived experience of American white collar workers. Increased interruption includes interruptions from colleagues, subordinates, and superordinates. The types of interruptions vary from interested and admiration to condemnation and, in one instance, workplace bullying. One situation that the participants did mention is other employees with tattoos interrupt to speak with them about tattoos in general. However, most participants indicated that this was a negligible disruption because "those conversations are over very quickly. I won't say much of anything to people about their tattoos unless it is seriously off the wall". The fact is, if something is interrupting the work process, positively or negatively, there is less time spent towards accomplish tasks which impacts how the employee is perceived. In this instance, having visible tattoos in this type of environment makes it more difficult for the tattooed employee to accomplish tasks in the same amount of time as a non-tattooed employee.

The second major response is, again, predictable. When an individual's tattooed status is divulged to a group, they are seen differently. Again, not better, or worse, just

different than they were before. In this case, tattooed and non-tattooed workers indicated that they look at people who are tattooed far more frequently than others. The participant observation conducted for this study verified this statement. The negative impact to visibly tattooed workers is that they are intentionally and unintentionally subjected to greater level of observation which disallows minor resistance strategies, like checking social media or online shopping. Under the intense observation, minor infractions are noted more frequently and result in an increased negative attitude toward the visibly tattooed employee. Of course, the intention of most white collar workers is not to observe the visibly tattooed employee for the sole purpose of catching infractions. All but one participant, who actively stereotypes tattooees, stated that they are "just looking at their tattoos" or "didn't realize where I was looking".

Finally, the third patterned response aligns with the other responses. Deeply connected to the idea of dress policy and workplace culture (both discussed below), if one is entrenched in an environment where individuals frame tattoos as something negative, there will undeniably be an impact when one's tattooed status is disclosed. As one participant succinctly stated, "they just don't want to be near you when they know you're no longer one of them". This intentional, or unintentional, workplace ostracization could have profound impacts, such as increasing a sense of anomie.

All considered, communication in any contemporary American public space primarily happens through visual and nonverbal means. Any type of visual ephemera that makes an individual stand out causes a social disruption which results in forced engagement. Framing the workplace generally, and the white collar workplace specifically, as an area of public space allows the variable environment to be analysed in a consistent manner. As tattooed individuals are a significant minority in the United States, and visibly tattooed individuals even more so, the presence of tattoos in a white collar workplace are disruptive, but not necessarily in a negative way. However, the presence of visible tattoos in a white collar workplace that disapproves of tattoos negatively impacts the lived experience and work efficiency of the visibly tattooed individual. While all of this informs a conversation on tattoos, stigma, and the white collar workplace, there is another area of public space that must be considered; social media.

Social Media

In contemporary American culture, social media has seen a meteoric rise in popularity since its inception. Social media is, broadly speaking, a website or application that allows individuals to build networks and share content (Pittman & Reich 2016). Unquestionably, there are numerous social media platforms that range from widely accessed by the general public, to those that serve a niche audience. While some platforms eventually fade away, such as Vine, others are extremely present in the public realm. So present, in fact, that Facebook currently has over 90% of internet users engaged in one of their four primary services: Facebook, Facebook Messenger, Instagram, and WhatsApp (Global Web Index 2018). The use of social media across the planet has fundamentally altered the way and the scope in which individuals interact (Marder et al. 2016). With such an abundance of users and the sheer social power attributed to social media, there is little question that a discussion of public space necessitates addressing social media.

Social media is understood as an area of public space (Lewis 2018; Marwick 2012) and, as such, is subject to the same form of analysis utilized in more traditional public spaces. As noted above, a large aspect of public space is self-presentation where an individual engages in some performance for others. Of course, that performance could be to blend into the background, to stand out, or anything between. By carefully curating an image that is displayed in public space, one is engaging in impression management and allowing others to engage in reality voyeurism (a term presented in Chapter 5). Impression management is conducted through multiple means, such as deciding what messages or images to post, tagging and untagging, deleting, network management through friending and unfriending, and hashtag use. At this point in time, there is limited research investigating how individuals play with self-presentation and impression management on social media (Fox & Rooney 2015); and especially "selfie posting" (Ridgway & Clayton 2016).

Civil inattention is a fundamental aspect of public space, but social media does challenge this perspective. Social media users are frequently posting something with the aim of a response; comments, likes, or attention (Ridgway & Clayton 2016). With that in mind, the idea that individuals attempt to fade into the background whilst engaged with public spaced is challenged. People garner social media attention (likes, comments, friends/followers) by interrupting the civil inattention and forcing engagement. Certainly, individuals can be "lurkers", those that are present and engage with the

contributions of others while contributing nothing themselves (Sun et al. 2014), but those individuals are still engaged in reality voyeurism. Lurkers are absolutely operating in the public space of social media; however, they are not conducting civil interruptions and adhering to civil inattention. Since lurkers are still engaging with others, they are furthering the civil interruption conducted by content producers. What this is suggesting is that in order to engage with social media as a public space, one can either actively take part in civil inattention as a lurker, or in civil interruption as a content producer. This is not dissimilar to traditional public space with the notable exception that more people actively engage in civil interruption on social media.

The dramatic increase and engagement with social media have had a mark on tattoos as well; tattoos are becoming increasingly visible. Anyone with a social media account has the capability to engage with the increasing visibility of tattoos. The type of engagement could be personal display, commenting positively or negatively, or sharing the work of others with their network. However, the important aspect is that tattoos have also entered public culture utilizing social media as a medium. This means that tattoos are presented in this public space very frequently and do not hold the same civil interrupting power that they possess in more traditional realms. The reason for this is that the display of tattoos on social media is very common and increasing (Allan 2015; Bergh et al. 2017). That is not to say tattoos do not still hold interrupting power in social media though. Organizations utilize tattooed forms for disruptive marketing; the idea that content needs to disrupt what users are doing and make them pause to consume the content (Colon 2016). Tattoos can serve this purpose very effectively as they can easily be applied to a number of situations where they traditionally do not occur. This illustrates that tattoos still have interruptive power on social media, just in a different manner than traditional public space.

While individuals engage with social media, organizations are also engaged. Organizations engage with social media for a number of reasons; however, one of the primary purposes is marketing. As of 2019, 91% of United States companies utilize social media for marketing purposes (Guttman 2019), with Facebook as the platform for 61% of organizational marketing (Statista 2019). Social media marketing is extremely successful for organizations, yielding just over $129 USD for the organization per internet user (Statista 2019); yet, there is another way in which organizations utilize social media: surveillance.

Surveillance, as it is used here, is referring to a system of watching and being watched. This perspective is far more neutral than traditional post-structuralist (Deleuze 1992) and post-Marxist (Galloway 2004) scholars who focus on surveillance as some type of sinister or dystopian phenomenon. A neutral perspective, introduced by Haggerty & Ericson (2000), allows for the presentation of information on social media to be approached as a deliberate choice by content makers on different platforms. This is distinctly different than the Foucauldian panopticon and associated theorization of normalization (Kotsopolous 2010; Foucault 1977) and allows for participatory surveillance (Albrechtslund 2008) where individuals willingly participate and consciously understand they are watched. With a neutral understanding, one is able to frame organizational actions in a less biased light.

The way in which organizations engage in surveillance on social media is quite simple. Numerous organizations, including white collar companies, have historically required employees to provide all usernames and passwords for their social media accounts. Companies have cited a number of reasons (see Trivedi & Trivedi 2018) why they need to oversee employee use of social media, with one of them pertaining to image. Specifically, the concern that employees will present an image of themselves that does not align with the organization. While there are certainly ethical considerations to address, that is not the purpose of this project. Rather, what can be gleaned from this is that the public display of self is important enough to companies that they encroach upon personal privacy. Since 2012 when Maryland became the first state to pass such a law, state lawmakers have introduced legislation to disallow employers requiring or even requesting personal social media account information (National Conference of State Legislatures 2019).

Employer oversight of employee social media accounts can absolutely have impacts on the lived experience of workers. If there are certain ideas, images, etc. that do not violate social norms but do violate organizational norms, then there is a distinct possibly for conflict to occur. One such area where this does take form is tattoos.

As noted above, tattoos in traditional public space act as civil interruption which draws forced engagement. In social media, the presence of visible tattoos is far more common but still has interrupting power. Companies that monitor individual's personal social media accounts have the capability to regulate what content is posted and in what context. This can, and does, happen to the point where individuals may not post content about tattoos due to fear of professional reprisal. As tattoos are important to identity

(see Chapter 8), the results of organizations monitoring or limiting employee presence of social media can have profound impacts on the individual. These results include negative impacts on romantic relationships (Ridgway & Clayton 2016), anomie as a result of impermanent (Bergh et al. 2017), and issues relating to group dynamics (Lewis 2018).

Multiple participants, tattooed and non-tattooed alike, note upon the surveillance of their companies through social media. While none of the employees actively work for an organization that control their social media accounts, there is a constant theme that emerges: a fear of being caught. Interesting, the fear does not stem from having done something wrong; rather, it is rooted in the unpredictability of the organizations. Participants frequently note that they have to be careful what they post to social media so that they do not get in trouble; even in private groups. This is not an uncommon idea and is absolutely prevalent in the American mindscape (Ballantyne et al. 2017). This conversation becomes particularly applicable when discussing tattoos. Five of the tattooed participants indicated that they actively engaged in self-censoring activities (e.g. deleting content, untagging, etc.) in order to hide the fact they are tattooed or even interested in tattoos. At the greatest level of self-censoring, one participant went so far as to delete any contacts from their network with visual tattoos, delete any pictures of them that could suggest their tattooed status, unfollowed any pages about tattoos or body modifications, untagged themselves from any pictures with others who have tattoos, and would only post fully clothed pictures. All of these actions were done with the justification that the employer could not find out about tattoos due to the established workplace policy on tattoos. These actions are undeniably extreme and not taken by everyone; however, those that did engage in any of these self-censoring activities did so out of fear that their lives would be judged out of context by their employer and they would be professionally penalized.

The fear that personal life can impact professional life, a phenomenon called spillover (discussed below), absolutely shapes how individuals are living their lives. For those participants with tattoos that did engage in self-censorship, this is their attempt at passing. On the flip side, two tattooed participants actively engaged as outsiders by doubling down on their tattooed status. Those two participants actively posted pictures of their tattoos, receiving more, and discussing why tattoos are beautiful or artistic. Either way, both of these activities indicate that tattoos are still stigmatized as they had

to engage in stigma management activities. The activities of these participants further illustrate the interruptive power of tattoos on social media.

Social media as a realm of public space is impactful for individuals that are content producers as well as content consumers. Individuals engage this area of public space in a similar manner as traditional public space; image management, social interaction, and presentation of self. Tattoo display on social media is increasingly common and acts as a form of civil interruption. However, the social interruption resulting from tattoos is a different form than in traditional public space. The civil interruption can be used effectively by organizations for marketing purposes and image management. Organizations have historically controlled social media accounts of their employees to ensure image management; however, contemporary legislation is actively changing that policy. The control of employee social media content has impacts on the lived experience of white collar employees in the United States. Framed in a larger context, the control of image in public space directly relates to concepts that appear in social sanctioning, performance, and power.

Social Sanctions in the Workplace

You are out on a first date and your partner makes direct eye contact, smiles, and releases a thunderous, vitriolic fart. Your reaction will likely be surprise, shock, discomfort, disgust, or some combination thereof. The patrons around you may stop and stare, make loud comments, try to ignore the situation, or up and leave. The responses are meant to communicate that the action was rude or inappropriate; that some social norm was violated. Every social norm is accompanied by social sanctions that act to either punish norm violators in some manner (Masclet et al. 2003; Nelissen & Mulder 2013; Noussair & Tucker 2005) or reward their cooperation (Chen et al. 2009). Social sanctions are an essential part of social control. Whether formal or informal, social sanctions allow one to know they have done something socially wrong.

Ultimately, the existence of social sanctions inherently suggests the possibility for social exclusion (Tyler 1990). When an individual experiences ostracism as a result of violating a social norm, there are extreme emotional consequences (Williams et al. 2005) that act upon the same neural substrate as physical pain (Eisenberger et al. 2003). Important to this project, when one is subject to social sanctions, they are either supporting stigma or subjected to stigma.

In the workplace, social sanctions exist for the same reason. When it comes to tattoos in the workplace, social sanctions can be codified or informal. The clearest example of codified social sanctions in the workplace is dress codes; formal rules set forth by the organization dictating what employees may and may not wear. An informal social sanction is who people are spending time with; illustrated through social network analysis in the appendix. Dress policies in the workplace are of particular importance because they force employees to change their behaviour in some way. In order to examine how dress policy, and by extension social sanctions as a whole, impacts the lived experience of tattooed white collar workers, it is important to approach the topic from multiple angles. As such, this section will cover the legal aspects of dress policy and any associated discrimination. The section continues to focus on dress policy and the resulting impact it has, and finally conclude with performance in the workplace.

Enforcing Social Sanctions

Noted above, social sanctions are enforced in order to maintain social norms and to punish norm violators. In order to maintain social norms, teach others about social norms, punish norm violators, or prevent others from violating norms, the social rules are enforced by, what Howard Becker (1963) calls, "moral entrepreneurs". Moral entrepreneurs are either individuals or organizations that publicly display the social infraction of a party to others in order to enforce a social rule. The notion of a moral entrepreneur is similar, albeit distinct from, Bourdieu's (1984) concept of "aesthetic intolerance" which focuses on maintaining a distinction between popular culture and high culture tastes.

Aesthetic intolerance and moral entrepreneurs both actively reinforce social stigmas against tattoos in the white collar workplace. For those that adhere to aesthetic intolerance, tattoos can be framed as ugly or bad art which suggests one has bad taste. Moral entrepreneurs reinforce tattoo stigma in the workplace by suggesting that tattoos are deviant. While the stigmas and stereotypes associated with tattoos in the United States are fading, moral entrepreneurs reinforce the stigma in the workplace. Through this lens, moral entrepreneurs suggest that tattooed individuals in the workplace are to blame for the social sanctioning because tattooed individuals do not accept the practice of tattooing or displaying tattoos in the workplace as inappropriate. As such, tattooees must be subject to sanctioning in formal and informal ways.

Stigmas surrounding tattoos in the workplace, then, are a corporeal manifestation of bad taste, deviance, and subverting American bodily norms. Despite the lessening of tattoo stigma in American culture as a whole, the white collar workplace is still dealing with these perceptions. The white collar workplace is subject to different norms than American culture as a whole which forces the figuration as a whole to interact with these changing ideals. The enactment of social sanctions by parts of the white collar figuration are moral entrepreneurs shaming tattooed white collar workers for their engagement in body play and manipulation.

Legal Tattoo Discrimination

This statement needs to be abundantly clear: yes, it is legal for United States employers to ban visible tattoos and piercings in the workplace. If you have a visible tattoo or are planning to receive one, it critical that you understand the tattoo can impact your employment. The caveat is that the policy must apply to all employees with similar jobs (Lau 2016). However, it is also worth noting that people can, and do, file lawsuits for whatever reason. Some organizations have instituted zero tolerance tattoo policies which forces employees to comply. The employees that refuse to comply with the policy are frequently discharged and then sue the organization for the action. The same organizations have also been sued by their employees to overturn their policies. As such, it is critical that the dress policy regarding tattoos is not too rigid.

The best defence for both organizations with a no tattoo policy and tattooed employees who want to take legal action against the company is Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title VII prohibits discrimination based upon specific categories: "race, religion, sex, or national origin" (Civil Rights Act 1964: §2000). The justification behind these specific categories is that none of them are personal choice and immutable. The purpose of Title VII is to strike a balance between "traditional rights of employers to run their companies as they see fit…against the prohibitions of discrimination" (Bandsuch 2009:318). Importantly, Title VII does not prohibit organizational policies that dictate any part of an employee's appearance.

Tattoos, though, are considered mutable characteristics and are viable means of discrimination (from a federal perspective, at least) (Elzweig & Peeples 2011). In court cases addressing tattoos and discrimination, courts do not protect the display of identity. Based upon the language used in Title VII, displays of identity include cultural

behaviours, like facial hair, for religious reasons or religious dress (Thompson 2015). Bible (2010) and Allred (2016) follow the development of cases regarding the discrimination of tattooed employees in the United States through the use of Title VII. Bible and Allred conclude that when lawsuits regarding discrimination of tattooed employees are tried, there have been mixed results. At times courts have sided with the plaintiff and at others they have sided with the defendant; however, more often than not, courts side with the employer.

Historically, courts followed the logic used by companies; customer preference is for non-tattooed employees. Adhering to this logic is a problem for two major reasons: younger people are receiving tattoos frequently and tattoos do not mean what they used to. The former is easy logic to follow; the increase in younger tattooed bodies must go somewhere in the workforce. As such, there will be an abundance of qualified tattooed younger people entering the workforce, yes; however, that also means that the nature of customers is changing. The increase of younger, tattooed individuals in the workforce means more young, tattooed individuals who will have wealth and thus become customers.

The second problem is one entrenched in antiquated ideas about tattoos. As discussed in Chapter 4, tattoos are no longer associated with the Rebel Era. The Contemporary Era has radically reshaped conventions surrounding tattoos in the United States, yet the general attitude has not caught up with the changes. While general attitudes towards tattooed bodies are changing, there are still people who adhere to the notions they grew up with. In 2009, The American Society of Radiologic Technologists published responses regarding if tattoos are acceptable in the radiological workplace. While both sides of the argument are presented, one response is particularly striking.

> If ever I become a hospital patient, and if the R.T. performing my radiographic exams has tattoos all over his or her body and piercings from his or her nose and lips, I'm sure that will scare me, as I will have been through enough pain already. How do you think most patients would react to this unprofessional technologist? As a patient, I would not show my disgust or comment to the R.T. personally, but when I got home, I'd talk to my friends about it…We have been taught to be hygienic, passionate, caring and professional. Why degrade our profession? Fulgencio Pol, R.T.(R)(CT) (Pol 2009: 55)

The individual who submitted this piece did not disclose any demographic features, but we do know that Fulgencio is a radiologic technologist (R.T.) with certifications in radiography (R) and computed tomography (CT) which indicates this person has undergone a lot of work in the field. That stated, the quotation is worth noting for a few reasons. First, the idea that tattoos and piercings are painful so they will cause distress for someone who has undergone pain is simply illogical. That is simply not how pain works, yet this is a fundamental argument for the quotation. Second, Fulgencio works on the assumption that anyone with a tattoo or piercing is unprofessional. Third, Fulgencio indicates that she would engage in shame, gossip, and ridicule as forms of social control about this person. Fourth, Fulgencio posits that having a tattoo makes one unhygienic, dispassionate, and uncaring. Finally, having tattoos degrades the professional as whole. These are deeply impactful statements that make sweeping comments about tattooed individuals as a whole, let alone in the workplace. These ideas echo the notions that were prevalent about tattooed people during the Rebel Era but failed to progress from there. These antiquated notions are extremely detrimental to the inclusion of tattooed individuals in the white collar workplace.

Despite some people in positions of workplace power holding archaic and stereotypical views of tattoos, general opinion towards tattoos in the United States continues to change. As such, the preferences of individuals in the United States will also. In this sense, "it seems possible that the court's rationale – customer preference – may cause more problems in the future, as it hardly seems likely that customer preference will suffice as a justification in all, or perhaps even many, cases" (Fox 2006: 546).

The laws surrounding discrimination of tattoos in the workplace are clear and backed with legal precedent; however, they are undoubtedly set to change. At this point, the change in employee demographics inevitably brings a rise in tattooed individuals. While having tattoos in the white collar workplace used to be an absolute nonstarter, the times have changed. As such, companies must be mindful to not engage in unwise employment practices. Given the changing demographics and social norms in the white collar workplace, organizations may wish to reanalyse dress codes and other policies that seem obvious for those entrenched in the field to prevent potential litigation. Technically legal policies do not mean they are ethically, socially, or culturally valid. In

the same vein, it falls upon the employee to realize that, legally, employers can still discriminate based upon appearance and specifically tattoos. The negative impacts can be more than just legal though. The following section addresses the impact of dress codes outside of a legal perspective.

Dress Codes

Numerous workplaces and schools enforce dress code policies. As a primary agent of socialization, schools use dress codes to teach students how to appropriately dress for different situations (Garot 2010). Garot (2010) suggests that the purpose of dress codes in schools goes beyond the role of socialization; rather, the hidden purpose lies in the display of power from the administration. The control exerted over the student body is similar to dress codes in the workplace.

Companies, like schools, frequently enforce dress codes arbitrarily. Legally speaking, as discussed above, it is okay for a company to dictate dress and grooming practices as long as they do not infringe upon any of the protected classes laid forth by Title VII. When dictating a dress policy, companies can have a codified dress code that is given to all employees, have a dress code in place that is not enforced until an issue arises, or have no formalized dress code and enforce points haphazardly. These three situations may seem unimportant; however, the inconsistent and arbitrary nature of these policies potentially lead to conflict for tattooed employees.

Service jobs typically have dress codes that require the "clean cut" and gender normative look which includes no body modifications except ear piercing for women (Thompson 2015). Due to the recent increase in tattooed bodies, hospitality organizations in the United States have been wrestling with their dress policies (Tews & Stafford 2019). To illustrate this point, Starbucks historically did not allow for any visible tattoos. Due to employee pushback, in October 2014 the organization rewrote their dress policy towards piercings and tattoos (Canedo 2014; Goad 2014). Starbucks allows no more than two ear piercings, gauged ears no bigger than 10mm, a small nose stud, and no other piercings. As for tattoos, the dress codes states, "We want customers to focus on you, not your body art. Tattoos are allowed, but not on your face or throat. Treat tattoos as you treat speech – you can't swear, make hateful comments or lewd

jokes in the workplace, neither can your tattoos" (Starbucks 2014)[11]. The dress code from Starbucks illustrates that the change in perception toward tattoos found in the Contemporary Era is not something that can be dismissed. Employees and customers alike forced a major corporation to reassess the policy toward tattoos which impacts the lived experience of these service workers.

While the service sector is struggling with the way tattoos and other body modifications are displayed in the workplace, the white collar workplace is the primary concern of this project. Of particular interest to this project is whether organizations have dress codes in place that affect tattooed white collar employees, if the affect stems from a formalized or informalized dress code, how the dress codes are shaped, and what this means for the lived experience of the tattooed employees.

Regardless of tattooed status, people tend to have strong feelings about dress codes. In regard to tattoos though, the conversation can really be separated into broad categories: those that find a no tattoo policy acceptable, and those that do not. Thompson (2015) addresses the notion of dress code as a form of discrimination against tattooed individuals. While there is some validity to this perspective, legally speaking that is not the case. Rather, Thompson is suggesting that it is a form of social discrimination. To address this form of social discrimination, the conversation should shift focus from whether skin is tattooed to "job performance, workers' rights, and job protection." (Thompson 2015: 103) While I do not disagree with this optimistic perspective, in practice the focus needs to stay on what life is like for the tattooed individuals. Simply jumping to a solution without understanding the whole picture runs the risk of obscuring critical components of the conversation.

Regardless of the policies any given organization have, it should be noted that in the white collar workplace, the most logical thing a tattooed employee can do to protect their job and avoid any potential social discrimination is to keep their tattoos covered and secret. Of course, this is not always possible, or desired, which complicates the conversation. This becomes an important point that reoccurs in the data; participants are highly cognizant of where (corporeally) they are receiving tattoos so that they can either be viewed publicly or privately. All of the tattooed participants made some remark

[11] Artificially colored hair that looks "unnatural" is still banned by Starbucks in addition to rings (except plain bands), watches, bracelets, wristbands, necklaces, and colored nails.

regarding their tattoo placement and the ability to hide them for work. Two examples of this:

> My tattoos haven't made me not get a job yet. But that's because I usually keep them covered until I'm hired. That's why I got them where I did. But for this job, I didn't keep 'em hidden. They hired me remotely, so I came in already having [the job]. So, they couldn't be like 'Oh, shoot', you know? But I do think, I really do believe, that if they had seen me before, I might not have gotten the job. I really do believe that. That's why you get 'em in places you can hide. (Megan S.)

> I see someone with a facial tattoo and go 'Ahh!! That's a terrible decision!' It's worse than the rest of your body because you can't hide it if you need to. Unless, I guess, you wear a ton of makeup. It's like finger tattoos too, for example. I like them, but I don't know if I would ever actually get one. Because I can't hide it. Mine [on left forearm, left shoulder, and right ankle] I can hide. My parents want me to meet some old dude and ask me to cover them, I don't fucking care. I'm meeting this person once. I'll hide them. I don't give a shit. Because I can and thought ahead. (Heather, E.)

These two quotations illustrate how tattooed employees are highly cognizant of where their tattoos are located. Both Megan and Heather make an effort to illustrate why their tattoos are better because they can be hidden. Despite the knowledge that tattoos are still not widely accepted in the white collar workplace, the participants in this study still receive tattoos; many times in highly visible locations that require covering up. Whether this is better or not for a tattoo is not the point. The point is that tattooed employees are receiving tattoos in places that they know can be hidden because they are acutely aware that there is still some stigma present.

Non-tattooed employees share a similar perspective as well. Obviously, they are not discussing their own tattoos; however, non-tattooed employees do judge others based upon the location of their tattoos. "Judge", as I use it here, does not necessarily mean it is associated with a negative connotation. Simply, judgement is passed that informs the individual's reality. With the exception of the one individual in my data set

who is zealously against tattoos, the non-tattooed workers framed tattoos as more or less acceptable based upon location.

Jane M. is a former full-time artist and now practicing cosmetic dermatologist. Jane has no tattoos, with no desire to receive a tattoo, and works for a practice that does not have a dress policy requiring tattoos to be covered. Of all the non-tattooed participants in this study, Jane is hands down the most interested in tattoos from an aesthetic and scientific perspective. After all, one of her primary duties at work is tattoo removal.

> I don't see all the people [the company] doesn't hire. But we see people with too many tattoos up and down their arms, or God forbid their face. On their face, they aren't getting hired. I guarantee you. It just makes you think 'why the frick did they do that to themselves?' I mean, they have to know they aren't getting this job. It's the aesthetic world… If [the tattoo] is from here *points at chest* up, I will have a little more trouble with them being around the office. Because I think those tattoos are unfortunate choices 90% of the time… But from here *points at neck* up, to me, is, you better have a damn good reason for having that tattoo. 'It's a scar that I got for this and I highlight it' then it's like alright, whatever. Go for it. But mostly, tattoos that can be hidden are just better. Not aesthetically or artistically, just practically. (Jane M.)

For tattooed and non-tattooed employees alike, co-workers or applicants with neck and facial tattoos is jarring. In the United States, there is certainly still a major stigma surrounding facial markings in general (Funk & Todorov 2013; Madera & Hebel 2012; McElroy et al. 2014). Dress policies can act as means to help normalize non-facial tattoos and frame them as something acceptable. The problem is, the acceptability of tattoos, even excluding facial tattoos, is not fully accepted in the white collar workplace. The judgements by both parties based upon corporeal location of tattoos illustrates that the location of a tattoo really does matter; even in an accepting work environment. This finding is important because previous studies (see Chapter 6) simply discuss the presence of tattoos in the workplace and do not address the importance of corporeal location.

Heather E. is a graphic designer in the marketing department of a software company in Cleveland, Ohio. Her company does not have a formalized dress code in order to keep morale high and she is allowed to show her tattoos at the workplace. Heather has two large tattoos on her arm and a smaller tattoo on her ankle. Despite the organization having not formalized dress code, Heather still frequently covers her tattoos.

> I don't cover [my tattoos] intentionally and all of my co-workers know about them. This one *points to forearm tattoo* because it's on my forearm. But if I wear long sleeves, then it's covered. And the one on my ankle I cover with socks. But if I'm wearing a dress or sandals, it's there. And I showed everyone this one *points to shoulder tattoo*. And I'll probably wear tank tops when it's actually warm outside. [The company] has no policy. If they did, I guess I'd keep them covered. Can't say fuck The Man yet. But I guess I cover them if I ever have to meet with clients. Except the young ones! *laughs* Didn't really think about that… (Heather E., graphic designer)

With no formalized dress policy, Heather still covers her tattoos in front of clients; with the notable exception of younger individuals. Whether an active or passive decision, Heather is conforming and reproducing hegemonic prescriptions regarding corporeal display of bodily adornment. Through her actions, Heather is prioritizing work relationships with clients. In this sense, even though tattoos are allowed in her workplace, Heather is relegating her tattooed status to internal organization and to individuals she believes are more sympathetic towards tattoos.

Unlike Heather, Mark S. works for a company with a formalized dress code. Mark is a lawyer for a law firm in New York City with a barbed wire tattoo circling his bicep. The company has a complete ban on the display of tattoos or piercings (except ear piercings on women) in the workplace or any time the employee is representing the law firm. The company's policy is that tattoos can exist but should never be seen.

> I like my tattoo. I really do. But I am nervous someone I work with or a client might see it. It's not like they'd fire me if they saw it. I just know I would never move up [in the law firm]. I swear. I've seen it before. One

> guy had a small tattoo on his ankle and one of the partners saw it. He never got a raise or promotion and eventually quit. So, I always wear an undershirt in case I have my jacket off. White shirts are just too see-through. (Mark S., lawyer)

To be clear, Mark is afraid that a co-worker or client might see a small, unoffensive tattoo on his arm because it could jeopardize his career. Mark's quotation clearly depicts how a tattoo can limit career growth in the white collar industry. In this case, the company's dress policy is that tattoos are "allowed" but, in reality, should not be seen or discussed. Since tattoos are "allowed" by the company's dress code, they can exist; however, they limit one's promotion potential. This thought is not totally unjustified. A survey given to hiring managers in 2011 found that 43 percent has passed over a job candidate based upon their appearance (Hakim 2011). While the survey is not specifically about tattooed appearance, undeniably appearance as a general concept is influential in job potential (discussed in Chapters 5 & 6, e.g. Hamermesh & Biddle 1994; Robins et al. 2011; Schweitzer et al. 2018).

Mark's experience aligns with similar tales Thompson (2015) recounts in her study of heavily tattooed women in the workplace; namely, how they fear the display of their tattooed bodies can limit their promotion potential. Mark's experience is also similar to studies done regarding the use of marijuana in the workplace (Hathaway 1997) and concealing visible markers of Skinhead membership (Young & Craig 1997). Specifically, tattooed individuals learn how to engage with non-normative practices in workplace settings.

The fact is, the relationships that tattooed employees have inside the tattoo figuration and outside are created, shaped, and changed through tattooing. The chains of interdependency both lengthen and shorten through the act of tattooing which realistically redefines or alters workplace responsibilities, relationships, and identity. Atkinson (2003) posits that understanding the act of tattooing as a private act that is based upon mutual dependency requires a restructuring of understanding that frames tattooing as an Elisian (1978, 1991a, 1994) figuration. Aligning with this perspective, the tattoo figuration is deeply interdependent with the white collar workplace, partially as a result of dress codes. The fact that individuals are entrenched in chains of interdependency (as a figurationalist would say), or caught in a web of cultural meaning (as a symbolic anthropologist would frame it), illustrates the importance of interpersonal

ties that connect individuals in social exchange. In the white collar workplace, dress codes act as a chain of interdependency that binds individuals associated with different figurations.

Performance in the Labour Market

Performance is a broad concept that can apply to countless situations. Whether it is approached by the layman or the academic can drastically change how the term is understood. While performance is discussed in Chapter 8 as it relates to symbols, meaning, and identity, there is another way to conceptualize the notion of performance. In this section, performance aligns with a more vernacular meaning where the term is used to address the quality of one's work.

To address how an employee is performing in the workplace, organizations utilize numerous metrics and analysis tools to quantify the quality of work, the amount of work completed or left incomplete, interpersonal skills, leadership styles and the associated effectiveness, etc. On top of this, each position within an organization is subject to specific analyses that are specific to the organization or to the position. As such, this section is not an analysis through these different metrics, but an analysis of performance in the labour market. In other words, this is analysing payment in the workplace. The purpose of this section is to address the popular notion (Gouveia 2013; Notte 2013) that individual with tattoos are paid less for the same job as individuals without tattoos.

The concept that noncognitive traits can influence the labour market is far from new. As discussed previously, there are numerous noncognitive factors that can influence whether an individual gets a job or how much they are compensated. Beauty, for instance, is the first topic studied in this area (Hamermesh & Biddle 1994) and is continually researched (Lopez Boo et al. 2013; Robins et al. 2011; Ruffle & Shtudiner 2014). As such, it does make sense that visible tattoos can influence this as well.

This topic has been addressed in previous academic research (French et al. 2016; French et al. 2018; Timming 2017) although it has been outside the white collar sector. The previous work has indicated that, with very little exception (Timming 2017), organizations do not look favourably upon norm violating body modifications (Bekhor et al. 1995; Brallier et al. 2011). In order to address this point, French and colleagues (2016) utilized numerous econometric methods to empirically analyse data from the

United States and Australia. When controlling for demographic variables, French and colleagues concluded that, contrary to popular opinion and research, visible tattoos did not have a negative impact on the labour market. However, this study is among a huge international population that crosses sector lines. Given the nature of this research project, the same scope or statistical significance cannot be addressed. Rather, this project addresses these concerns through the perspective of tattooed and non-tattooed individuals in the white collar workplace and investigating whether these perceptions have an impact on the lived experience of white collar workers.

Since the analysis is not quantitative in nature, the data collected was not highly specific. Rather, participants were asked whether they feel they are compensated adequately for their job, how it compares to others in the field, if they feel tattoos impact this in any way, and related inquires. The answers to these questions were counterintuitive to contemporary research on wage discrepancies in the labour market (Dillingh et al. 2016; French et al. 2018). All but four of the participants indicated that they believe tattoos impact labour market outcomes and drew upon ideas that had been presented to them either by family or higher education. These feelings crossed the tattooed and non-tattooed boundary.

The belief among American white collar workers that tattoos influence the outcomes of labour markets is deeply impactful to this project. Whether or not tattooed individuals are actually paid less is not relevant here because the widely held belief that it is true is a form of social control. As one who violates a minor norm is subject to shame or gossip which may or may not be true, tattooed individuals are subject to imagined social controls from supposed labour market outcomes. Participants clearly stated that they "won't get a tattoo until I'm the boss…otherwise I know I won't get a raise or promotion" or that "I have to keep my tattoos hidden until I'm rich enough to say 'fuck this job' in case they aren't cool with my tats". These two quotations are examples that clearly impact the lived experience of these workers.

Furthermore, the fact that this myth is continually pushed by family and higher education is alarming. The reason this is alarming lies in the simple fact that these two agents of socialization subject individuals to a socialization perspective that impacts tattooed individuals from a stance of authority. In order to analyse the different lived experiences of tattooed and non-tattooed individuals, as well as opinions formulated in higher education regarding tattoos and professionalization, participant observation was conducted in a higher education environment. Specifically, I drew upon my seven years

of experience as an educator in higher education (with one year of structured field notes) without visible tattoos and four months with a visible tattoo (with structured field notes). During the time with no visible tattoos, colleagues approached me throughout the day more frequency. Additionally, I was stopped around campus by unknown students and parents (depending on the time of year) to ask for directions or small talk quite commonly.

When I first revealed my visible tattoos to the class (simply rolling my sleeve up), silence immediately fell upon the eighty-person lecture hall. Afterwards, a handful of students milled about but did not directly ask about the tattoos and instead danced around the topic. One student finally approached me after the following class and said, "I had no idea professors could have tattoos. Why does everyone keep telling me that I won't get a good job if I get a tattoo then?". This statement illustrates the biases that individuals are subject to during higher education in the United States. The fact that students are under the impression that tattoos have a deep impact in the labour market, despite no empirical evidence to support this claim, is staggering; especially in a realm where evidence is critical.

Almost two weeks after the reveal, colleagues began to change interactions. Colleagues approached me to engage in small talk less frequently. Furthermore, colleagues and other employees of the university asked some variation of "why would you do that?" and "what does it mean?". One colleague went so far as to pull me into their office and directly tell me "you know you'll never get a tenure track position looking like that, right?".

What became quite evident, though, is that whenever I walked around campus with visible tattoos, I was stopped by students at an increased rate. Furthermore, requests for overrides into my classes nearly doubled. Students stopped to speak with me about tattoos, yes, but also about a myriad of other topics ranging from popular culture, to leisure activities, to the weather. These patterns obviously have exceptions; however, there is little doubt that the presence of visible tattoos impacted my lived experience in the white collar workplace. I interacted outside of class, but still on campus, with students far more frequently, and my colleagues were generally less socially approving. While all of these factors impacted my lived experience and were quite informative regarding tattoos and stigma in the workplace, the presence of tattoos did not have any impact on the labour market.

The fear of reprisal in the labour market acts as a form of social control continuing to stigmatize tattoos. Through the continuation of the myth that tattoos impact the labour market by family and higher education, the myth stays entrenched in American culture despite the empirical inaccuracies. As such, there is little doubt that the false myth surrounding tattoos and the labour market in the United States perpetuates stigma and impacts the lives of both tattooed and non-tattooed workers.

Power & Workplace Culture

Spillover is a conceptual phenomenon representing multiple processes that make emotions, behaviours, moods, and stress from one social realm affect those in another (Frone et al. 1997; Mennino et al. 2005; Williams & Alliger 1994). Broadly speaking, spillover can be both positive and negative which is particularly important for this project. Specifically, spillover here is used to investigate whether any work-life conflict or benefit results from tattoos in the Contemporary Era. For instance, negative spillover occurs when a worker's parent is extremely ill, and they are less able to focus on their job. Likewise, a worker who is under a lot of pressure from their company to fix a broken product line will have less time for their family or to help around the house. The balance between work and other social realms has been increasingly difficult due to the highly competitive nature of a global economy coupled with workplaces becoming "greedy institutions" (Epstein et al. 1999) by requiring more time and offering less professional and financial stability. Unsurprisingly, this has put more pressure on workers due to the increased responsibilities and finite time (Rubin 1996; Rubin & Brody 2002).

The use of neo-institutionalism is especially useful in investigating spillover. Since the primary goal of this theoretical approach is to understand socially constructed organizational practices, the focus here is on the sociocultural components of organizational life. The social relations found in an organization, and outside an organization, are reproduced through everyday interactions (Meyer & Rowen 1977; Zucker 1991) meaning that the formal rules and behaviours in an organization influence the behaviour of individuals entrenched in the organization. One other critical component of neo-institutionalism is that norms are associated with standardized behaviours and expectations posited by the organization (Jepperson 1991). Applying this abstract concept to dress code and tattoos, if an organization has a no tattoos dress

policy and it becomes part of the standardized behaviours of the organizational life, then spillover is bound to occur with the employees.

Workplace culture, according to neo-institutionalism, includes more than just employment practices. Beyond the formalized practices, workplace culture also includes the informal rules regarding relationships and dictates how the relationships "should be structured" (Fligstein 2001) suggesting that the norms and values found within an organization also comprise the workplace culture (Gherardi 1994). Admittedly, conversation on theory can begin to obfuscate tangible notions of everyday life; however, understanding these components of neo-institutionalism underpin the following finding. Utilizing these notions of neo-intuitional theory, the data suggest that workplace culture norms and values regarding tattoos heavily influence the norms and values of employees entrenched in said workplace.

Workplace Culture & Individual Perspective

The way in which white collar employees conceptualize the appropriateness of tattoos, theirs or others, in the workplace is heavily influenced by the informal environment of an organization which reflects the workplace culture. For instance, if a company does not have a formalized dress policy but has disapproving norms regarding tattoos, the social influence exerted by the company forces employees to go through a process of identification and internalization regarding this norm:

> Growing up, I admired lots of people! My uncle, he was a guy I always looked up to growing up. And he has a lot of tattoos. And I thought they were pretty nice. Very nice. I always liked them, and he's always had a [white collar] job. When I got my tattoo, I showed it to everyone. But I cover it up at work now. I just don't want to talk about it at work. Not even talk, but like, have it linger in me that that person could walk and talk about it, make a comment on it, or something. Because they do when they find out about other people's tattoos. They go 'Whoa!' and the bosses don't like it…Now, I guess I think tattoos aren't that professional. I want more *points to upper arm* but I need to be professional for now. (Ryan S., warehouse operations consultant)

Similarly, a tattoo-free project manager in Atlanta, Georgia named Morgan R. stated:

> My family hates tattoos. Nobody in my family has tattoos except my sister. Growing up, they said that people are individuals and can do whatever they want, but if they get a tattoo they'll never work in an office. Constantly telling us 'don't get tattoos!'. My father told me that if I got a tattoo, the only job I could do was a prostitute. So, I grew up *knowing* tattoos aren't professional. Then I got a job. Some people at my company have tattoos, and it doesn't matter. The company doesn't care so long as you do your work. I found out, tattoos don't mean you're unprofessional. It was a lightbulb…I actually like tattoos on people now. But I'll never get one! (Morgan R., project manager)

Both Ryan S. and Morgan R. exemplify the notion that employees are subject to the social influences dictated by the company. Ryan did not grow up considering tattoos to be unprofessional, but his company has forced a new set of norms upon him that have replaced his previous notions about tattoos. Morgan R. is a great example of the inverse.

The influence that an organization's workplace culture has on the employees is profound. The informal environment of a workplace informs the workplace culture which forces employees to adhere to prescriptions and proscriptions. In the case of tattooing, this means that employees are initially forced to go through an identification process to establish or maintain relationships within the workplace. The identification process forces employees to make a choice: conform to the organizational norms or leave. Once the identification process is completed, prolonged exposure to the workplace culture subjects the employees to an internalization process whereby they adopt the norms and values as their own and actually act that way. In essence, workplace culture is a means by which resocialization occurs. As both a positive and a negative, the impact of workplace culture on the lived experience of employees is established in the white collar sector (Daft 2008; Jung 2016; Nordsteien & Byström 2018).

> The tech world is strange. You meet people for the first time and they want to know your name, where you're from, what your position is, and how much you make. I have guesses why this happens, but a weird part of this

> is tattoos. Everyone wants to know if you have tattoos. And they are accepted! I always want to call my mother and tell her that everything she told me about people with tattoos while I was growing up is wrong. You can really have a tattoo and work in an office now. I'm getting a tattoo in December. I'm going to go into the office and Clark Kent the place. Just open my shirt and become Super Man in front of everyone. And then do it do my mother when I see her next. Maybe. (Bruce W.)

The data illustrates that the personal opinion white collar employees have towards tattoos outside the workplace is not impactful when addressing whether they are appropriate in the workplace. The influential factor here is the workplace norms and values regarding tattoos and tattooed employees. If an organization disapproves of tattoos, employees who maintain employment will internalize the perspective and view tattoos as inappropriate for the workplace; regardless of tattooed status. The inverse of this is valid as well. With the exception of one tattooed individual, this mentality was shared among all participants.

The idea that workplace culture influences how employees conceptualize the acceptability of tattoos in the workplace also serves to illustrate the importance of spillover. The resocialization regarding tattoos that occurs due to workplace culture changes the individual perception of tattoos. Once the personal perception has been altered, the way an individual conceptualizes and interacts with tattoos in other social realms is impacted.

Family as a social realm is a major area that is impacted by spillover. Participants frequently discussed family in reference to their perspectives on tattoos; both how they were formed and how they are impacted. The quotations above from Ryan, Morgan, and Bruce all refer to family when discussing where their un/professional perspective regarding tattoos originated. As both a positive and a negative, participants indicate that family is very important when discussing where their ideas regarding tattoos originated. Given the family is a primary agent of socialization and deeply impactful when establishing norms and values, this makes sense.

Of particular interest, though, is how the resocialization resulting from workplace culture is impacted. For instance, when an individual who thinks of tattoos as neutral or professional internalizes a workplace culture that frames tattoos as unprofessional, the individual's perspective changes and impacts the family. Bonnie F.

has numerous tattoos and works for a company that is decidedly against tattoos. During her fourteen years working for the same company, she has internalized the perspective that tattoos are unprofessional. When discussing how she would feel if her children would receive tattoos, she stated:

> My son like tattoos. Oh, yes he likes tattoos! We get temporary tattoos all the time. We pick the nice big ones and fill up his little arms. He got one on his leg one time and came up to my husband and said, 'Daddy, I'm badder than you! I got one on my leg!' So it's kind of funny. But I do eventually see him and my daughter wanting tattoos because my husband and I both have a lot of tattoos. And my husband and I differ on this now. I would want them to be legal and have a job. They need to be professional and enter careers before they gets them. My husband would sign though. He'd let them get tattoos underage. And it bothers me. Personally, I think you should wait because you need to get a job. And what you like and don't like changes too. We play with temporary tattoos, but I really hope my kids get it. My parents never taught me that. I like mine, but I know it doesn't look professional like I thought. (Bonnie F., dental hygienist)

Bonnie's statement conveys that her perception regarding tattoos is impacting her family. This is a clear example of spillover. Due to the workplace culture, Bonnie has changed her perspective regarding tattoos as professional and now teaches her children the new perspective. Spillover, here, does not impact whether white collar employees like or dislike tattoos on a personal or aesthetic level; rather, it is in regard to how professional they appear. As such, despite liking tattoos and passing that perspective to her children, Bonnie is also passing along the perspective that tattoos are unprofessional.

Spillover from work to family is not limited to just child rearing. Bonnie briefly eludes to this when discussing her husband above; undergoing a resocialization process that changes the way in which one perceives tattoos can impact other familial relationships. Spillover from work to family can impact interactions with significant others and parents. If a significant other is tattooed and an individual is subject to pressure from workplace culture to reframe tattoos as unprofessional, this can impact the way individuals view their significant other. While this is not addressing like or

dislike of tattoos, it is reframing the acceptability of tattoos in specific social realms. Furthermore, if parents dislike tattoos and individuals decide to receive tattoos due to workplace resocialization, then that can have impactful consequences on relationships. Olivia C received her first tattoo after working for a company that was supportive of tattoos. She was raised by her parents in California who actively dislike tattoos and passed this along to her.

> My family would *prefer* I didn't have any tattoos, but they also know I'm going to do whatever the fuck I want. The problem is when we're swimming or something, the kids would ask 'what is that?' and the whole family would jump in 'Oh! It's just some drawing on your Auntie' trying to play it off. My mom would try to sidestep the question and even the whole conversation but would say 'don't be like your Auntie!' When I got my tattoo, I never told my parents about it. When they finally saw it, they were like whatever. After they tried to find a way for me to take it out. Like it was a piercing or something. My father is even worse. He's come to a point where he understands he can't control me, but he was the most controlling and disapproving of all. He is okay now, but he would definitely prefer I never got it or get another. (Olivia C., medical science liaison)

Internalizing a new set of norms and values regarding the professional acceptability of tattoos resulted in spillover that impacted Olivia's family. While this may seem a negligible point as her parents got over the disapproval, the fact remains that workplace culture impacted family dynamics and structure.

Spillover also occurs from work to peers as well. As peers are another agent of socialization, this concept is particularly important. Similar to the conversation on workplace to family spillover, peer groups are influenced by workplace culture. Atkinson (2003) discusses how and why the tattooed community in North America can be viewed as a figuration. When people are interested in joining the tattoo figuration, one of the processes they need to consider is where they will place the tattoo. The participants in this study discuss this concept and, again, reflect the workplace culture. In the situations where the workplace culture is not accepting of tattoos, those members inform their peer group that "tattoos should be in a spot that can be easily hidden"

(Ryan S.) and to "make sure your bosses never know you have a tattoo…even if they have one" (Mark S.). The inverse is accurate as well with statements like "just don't get [tattoos] on your face and you're good" (Melissa K.) and "be loud and proud of your tat! You like 'em so show them off. You don't buy a painting to hide it" (Megan S.). Drawing upon norms and values that originate from workplace culture to inform peer groups is a very impactful way to replicate the perspective and influence the tattoo figuration.

Through these different examples, it is clear that workplace culture subjects employees to a process of resocialization. The resocialization process results in spillover to different social fields which impacts how employees interact with the different agents of socialization. The whole process reinforces or challenges workplace stigma of tattoo and can potentially challenge the identity of employees if they or any members of figurations they are members of have tattoos. Furthermore, the spillover originating from workplace culture alters the way employees view other and their opinion regarding whether tattoos are acceptable in the white collar workplace or not.

Power & The White Collar Figurations

White collar organizations themselves can be framed as a figuration. Framed this way, I groups are the individual, WE groups are the organization as a whole, and THEY groups are individuals not involved in the organization. From this perspective, the chains of interdependency connecting the figuration dictate how closely one must adhere workplace culture which comes a way to discuss the norms and values of the organization. At the I-We level, the hierarchical structure of a white collar organization lends itself to understanding why individual members of the figuration adopt norms and values promulgated by the more central actors in the figuration. However, how or why the figuration adopts these norms and values is not clarified.

Thus, one must question who or what is setting the trends toward tattoo acceptability in the workplace. In order to answer this question, there is a need to refer back to neo-institutionalism. Utilizing the notions discussed in Chapter 2, the rationalized environment stems from industry leaders. The white collar workplace is a generalized structure that has many different industries involved which can complicate the situation. In order to address this, participants were asked whether their company is an industry leader and why they provided said response. Figure 27 depicts the responses

of participants to describe whether the company they work for is an industry leader or not. The 20 participants work for 15 organizations. Those participants that work for the same organization unanimously provided the same response in regard to industry leadership which is why the N value is 15. The organizations that are not industry leaders or attempting to become industry leaders used some other company as a point of reference to justify their position on tattoos. The reference company was always an industry leader. Interesting, those organizations that are considered industry leaders decide their policies themselves. The industry leaders did not work with other industry leaders to come up with their policy regarding tattoos. The data suggests that industry leaders establish a policy towards the un/acceptability of tattoos in the workplace which is then adopted by those companies attempting to become an industry leader or not an industry leader. In essence, industry leaders create or reinforce a hegemonic perspective towards some norm or value within their given industry.

The fact that industry leaders are creating the rationalized environment other companies operate in is especially interesting when framed from a figurational perspective. Each organization can be viewed as a figuration; however, each industry can also be viewed as a figuration. If each industry is a figuration, then it can be concluded that companies that operate in said industry are members of the figuration with connecting chains of interdependency. From this perspective, each individual organization is an I group, each industry is a WE group. The lengthening and shortening of the chains of interdependency illustrate power differentials within the figuration whereby the industry leaders are like the king from Elias' (1994) example and other companies are vying for closeness to the king to elevate their position. In this case, companies adopt norms and values about the workplace, specifically in regard to tattoo acceptability here, that follow the industry leaders. Shortening the chain of interdependency increases the power a company has in the industry as the industry leader(s) are creating the rationalized environment. The I-WE figurations at play are entirely reliant upon the shared notion of what is in considered acceptable within a rationalized environment perpetuated by industry leaders. While every change is not adopted by the figuration as a whole, changes to acceptability of tattoos, and presumably other forms of workplace culture, by industry leaders do spread within the industry.

> Yeah! Oh yeah the company is a leader in the industry. When [the company founder] opened it, it was kind of revolutionary. Leading the industry in consulting for distribution. Ever since then, we have been in the front of the industry. Obviously, there are competitors now. But when we make a change, even to how offices are set up or I guess tattoo stuff, those competitors do the same thing. You have a warehouse and you want to improve it, we're always the first people you contact. Domestically and internationally. (Ryan, S.)

It is worth noting that not all changes are readily accepted by industries; despite what organization suggests the change. The fact that certain members of a company figuration, industry figuration, or the white collar figuration are resistant to change aligns with previous findings. Elias and Scotson's (1965) historical analysis of the small British community, give the pseudonym Winston Parva, suggests that class position does not supersede other sources of social power in a given figuration nor solely explain how individuals in said figuration identify with one another. The established groups are more deeply embedded in the base and superstructural segments of a figuration. Elias and Scotson suggest that those groups are more deeply entrenched due to longer histories with the figuration which allows them to have greater influence over ideological state apparatuses.

Elias and Scotson's analysis is particularly applicable here as the industry leaders that comprise the white collar figuration are companies with longer histories and greater influence over the norms and values. Companies with a shorter history or a lesser market share occupy less power positions and are incentivized to adopt social changes due to their limited status and potential to occupy power position. Those organizations that do not occupy power positions and do not conform to the industry trends are frequently viewed as "rebel companies doing their own thing with their own personality" (Gene H.) or, in words Elias might use (1983, 1991a, 1994), uncivilized. These types of companies are more fringe members of figurations; however, they are still linked through chains of interdependency, just not as deeply as more central members.

Echoing some of Elias' earlier works (1983, 1991a, 1994), social standards, including the norms guiding corporeal display, protect the interests of actors occupying power positions within the figuration (Elias & Scotson 1965). Reminiscent of these

findings, the data from this study suggests that the norms surrounding the acceptability of tattoos are defined by industry leaders and develop into recognized social authority. In essence, established groups are able to dictate norms regarding bodily adornment and display which become codified into social norms and values.

Applying the figurational ideas to the white collar workplace as a whole, it begins to clarify why there is not a unified view toward tattoo acceptance. The white collar workplace is comprised of multiple industries, each with their own leaders. Those leaders are still embedded in the white collar figuration and interdependent with other industry leaders. As one industry leader changes their stance, their associated industry will follow. However, when a leading bank provides a stance towards tattoos, that does not mean it is quickly replicated in the technology industry. That said, the industries cannot be fully removed from each other. For instance, the banking industry is deeply interconnected with the technology industry. However, given the limitations of this data set, it is unclear how the changes in one industry within the white collar environment impact other industries.

The data set does, though, explain why historically industries perceive tattoos in generally the same manner and have shifted together over time. Furthermore, it also explains why there are major discrepancies towards to acceptability of tattoos in the white collar workplace among industries. For example, the technology industry which is notoriously accepting of "unconventional lifestyles"[12] (Bruce W.) and the legal industry that "generally promotes [tattoos as] better neither seen nor heard" (Paul R.). The interaction of individuals within a given organization illustrates how symbolic concepts, like dress codes as well as other norms and values, are understood and applied within and across figurations. Furthermore, these symbolic concepts are understood through the interaction of companies within a given industry, and across industries. As such, this analysis aids the predictive power of social sciences to reify the lived experience of American tattooed white collar workers as well as future industry and white collar workplace norms and values.

[12] e.g. visible tattoos, casual clothing, accepted marijuana use in & outside the workplace, and alcohol use in the workplace

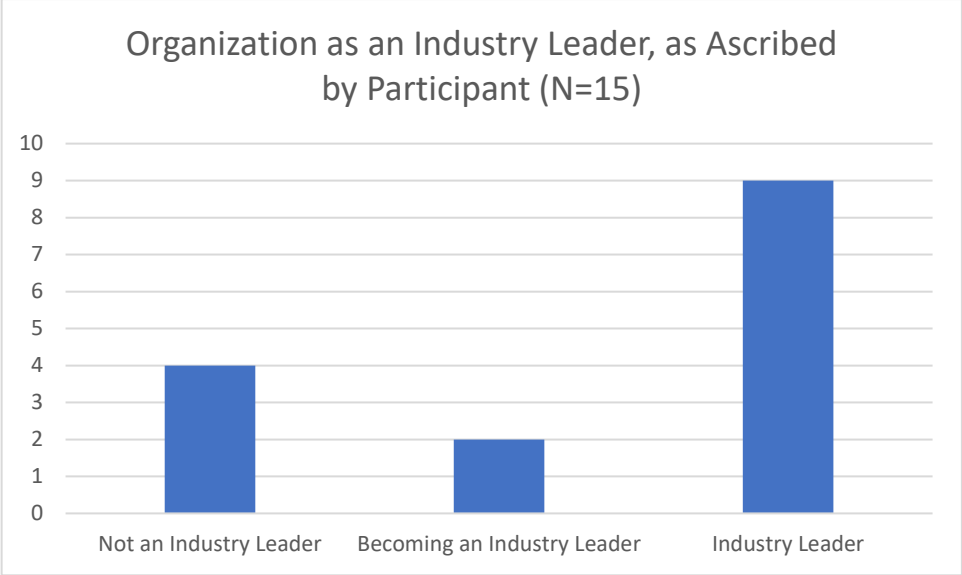


Figure 27: Organization as an Industry Leader, as Ascribed by Participant (N=15)

Moving Forward

The idea that a tattooed person needs to hide their tattoos at work is now antiquated. I by no means am suggesting that every white collar workplace will readily accept a tattooed employee. What I am suggesting is that Americans are living in a liminal time where the meanings and stigmas surrounding tattoos are changing. The changes are reflected by some companies that do allow, or even support, tattoos in the workplace. Some of the holdouts are reflected by the companies that uphold a no tattoo dress policy and the ways in which agents of socialization teach and shape the perception of tattoos in the white collar workplace; despite the lack of empirical evidence.

As noted multiple times, there is an increasing number of tattooed bodies in the United States and, of those, the majority are younger bodies. Some companies understand this and can foresee a change in the type of applicant they will receive. In the same vein, companies can also conceptualize that the market is changing as well. The previous notion underpinning the no tattoo dress policy was that employees would not offend customers. The fact is, tattoos are a part of popular culture now and seen everywhere; movies, television, internet, billboards, etc. The display of tattooed bodies in advertisements is not an accidental occurrence and acts as a means to reinforce stigma, challenge stigma, target consumers, shape organizational culture, and establish an organizational image in the industry figuration.

One aspect of this chapter that is worth revisiting is how white collar workers view individuals with tattoos and without. This concept applies to the workplace and beyond. While this concept is addressed in regard to how organizational culture influences the individual perception of tattoos, the discussion of future action is left ambiguous. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the judgements made by American white collar employees surrounding tattoos in the workplace.

Judgements

The purpose of any science is not just to mark what is happening, but also to use that information to make predictions. While this is more difficult to do with a study that is not statistically significant (like this one), that does not mean the data lacks predictive power. One area in which the data from this study can be used for prediction is in the realm of judgements. Judgements, as it is used here, is in reference to how tattooed and non-tattooed individuals judge others in the white collar workplace based upon their tattooed status. While the term judgement typically has negative connotation, here it is meant to be neutral. The information surrounding judgements based upon tattoos not only captures the lived experience of white collar workers, but also speaks to the future of tattoo perception.

The tattooed and non-tattooed participants were both asked to discuss their perception of individuals with tattoos[13] and individuals without tattoos. Those individuals without tattoos frequently harkened to Rebel Era associations when discussing flash judgements of people with tattoos. Many stated that, despite their conscious awareness of how unacceptable it is, their first thought when seeing someone with tattoos is that they are criminals or marginal members of society. For instance, one non-tattooed participant stated that tattoos are an indication of "just how broken a person is. Inside. They're just trying to relieve whatever emotion and whatever expression is broken in them. And probably doing smack too" (Harrold M.). Those individuals that do have tattoos typically judged a tattooed individual as someone who has a "greater appreciation of art" (Megan S.), is "a regular but far more interesting person" (Melissa K.), and "a professional, a skater, a nerdy person, or anyone that is just cooler" (Olivia C.). These perceptions are generally what participants stated; however,

[13] Participants were specifically asked to discount non-cosmetic facial tattoos and overtly offensive tattoos

one tattooed participant commented that they have a negative view of people with tattoos in general until they know the person. Additionally, two non-tattooed participants stated that tattooed people are "just people like anyone else; good, bad, peaceful, and hateful" (Jane M.).

When asked their judgements towards non-tattooed individuals, the results were almost unanimous. Participants, tattooed and non-tattooed alike, judged non-tattooed individuals as "your regular guy; pays bills, has a job…just an upstanding dude" (Hank H.). Two tattooed participants deviated from this response though. One stated that a person without tattoos is "either some crotchety old fart or a young person that's been brainwashed and probably loves guns, is part of the NRA[14], voted for Trump, and thinks he will actually build a wall" (Heather E.). Undeniably, this is an opinion loaded with political biases; however, it is interesting that some tattooed individuals make snap judgements towards non-tattooed individuals in this manner; especially because of the historical association of tattoos with military personnel. The second tattooed participant who deviated from the other responses stated that a non-tattooed person is "someone who is scared of pain, scared of how they might be seen as others, and just needs to get a grip" (Olivia C.). These judgements of, and by, both tattooed and non-tattooed individuals would suggest that the way in which tattoos are seen in the white collar workplace would be relatively unanimous and adhere to one's tattooed status. However, that is not correct.

The participants were also asked to discuss some different hypothetical scenarios where they were in a hiring position. In these hypothetical scenarios, each participant was faced with different types of job candidates to assess whether tattoos had an influence on their final hiring decision. Participants were faced with a dilemma where two equal candidates are applying for the same position, but one has tattoos and the other does not. Of course, the use of scenario analysis cannot be taken in isolation. Given the statistically insignificant sample size for this study, the results of scenario analysis do not drive the argument here; rather, the results act as support for data from other employed empirical methods. The results can be seen in Figure 28. 12 participants stated they would preferentially hire a tattooed applicant, three stated that they would preferentially hire the tattooed candidate on the condition that all tattoos would be covered during work hours but would not hire them if the tattoos were visible at all, and

[14] National Rifle Association

five stated that they would not hire a tattooed candidate at all. Figure 28 also displays the tattooed status of participants in reference to their responses.

The result of this hypothetical scenario analysis is that 60% of participants indicated that, if they were in a hiring position, they would preferentially hire a tattooed candidate, 15% would preferentially hire a tattooed applicant without visible tattoos, and 25% would not hire a tattooed candidate. Before addressing the tattooed status of the participants, it is worth noting what this means in reference to the larger conversation of tattoos and stigma in the white collar workplace. Despite the fact that a stigma towards tattoos does still exist in the white collar workplace, 60% of participants indicated they would preferentially select a tattooed applicant over a non-tattooed one.

This result is interesting because it suggests that the workplace stigma towards tattoos is changing rapidly. The majority of participants indicated that if they were in a position of power, they would challenge the current stigma towards tattoos. However, they are not only suggesting they would challenge the stigma, they are indicating that they would actively oppose the stigma towards tattoos by preferentially selecting tattooed candidates. The data suggests that, with the normalization of tattoos in American society and an introduction of younger individuals in the workplace, the stigma surrounding tattoos is becoming antiquated and will begin to fade away. The key aspect here is the preferential hiring because this shows a conscious and concerted effort to break previous associations of tattoos in the workplace. These results support the conclusions from the semi-structured interviews.

The tattooed status of participants further refines this analysis. Of the 60% that responded with preferential hiring for tattooed candidates, 58.3% (seven participants) are tattooed and 41.6% are non-tattooed. This result challenges the hypothesis that the increase of tattooed white collar workers is the reason why tattoos are becoming more acceptable. In fact, this suggests that non-tattooed workers are also deeply involved in the changes taking place. Taken as a whole, the data suggests that it is logical moving forward that there will be an increase in visibly tattooed workers in the white collar workplace. What more, one could project that once the stigma is openly challenged, a job candidate occupying a tattooed status will actually be situated in a more advantageous position than their non-tattooed counterparts. As noted above, this discounts facial tattoos and overtly offensive tattoos.

However, this is not the end of the analysis. One of the important aspects that must be considered here is the reason why the majority of white collar employees

preferentially select a tattooed candidate. The reasons that the participants cited focused on two primary explanations: to overtly challenge those that dislike tattoos and/or a sense of community.

> I've grown up with my family, teachers, professors, and friends telling me that tattoos aren't acceptable in a professional area. But, when I'm hiring someone or selecting someone for my team, I say bring on the tats! I like how uncomfortable it makes everyone else. I don't have any tattoos myself, but I love watching everyone get confused. I will, every time, pick the tattooed person over the one without [tattoos]. I know I'm trolling my work and it feels good. I troll in games, in real life, and at work. Things won't change without someone pushing everyone's buttons. And I'm that someone. It's not about watching the world burn, it's about tattooing of society's scars. It worked for a bit, but now tattoos are different. People need to just get over themselves. (Ciri J., director of human resources)

> I would mainly be like, "haha this dude has tattoos! Let's get him in here!" Again, it would be dependent on the tattoos not being offensive or anything. Which is totally subjective. There is no way to classify what that line is. But so long as it's inside the line I draw, I would totally hire the tattoo guy. Honestly, just to rebel against what most people think. I mean, fuck it. Right? (Magnus V. accountant)

Both Ciri and Magnus' quotations clearly illustrates the notion that some white collar workers preferentially prioritize tattooed individuals in the workplace just to challenge the assumption that tattooed people are bad.

> I would like to think that whether or not [the job applicant] has any tattoos wouldn't sway me in either direction. But, come on, that's just optimistic. No one is that apathetic. Honestly, I'd see the tattoos and associate them with myself and be like "oh, you're probably pretty damn cool". (Heather E., graphic designer)

Here, Heather is clearly discussing the idea of community. She is suggesting that because someone is a member of the tattoo figuration, like her, then they will share personality traits. As such, they become a preferential hire. All of the participants who preferentially select tattooed applicants spoke about the justification for their selection along these two lines.

If the decision to preferentially hire tattooed applicants does not align with the tattooed status of the individual hiring, the area of inquiry shifts towards the cause of this. Yes, the justifications that these individuals provided answer the 'why', but this does not address a root cause. In order to do this, it is necessary to look at what has already been discussed in this chapter. The preferential decision is rooted in organizational culture. The fact that organizational culture, and organizational social sanctions like dress policy, influence the perception of tattoos by employees is highly impactful here.

Once again, these aspects of organizational life are shaping the lived experience of these workers and influencing their world views. Those individuals that have worked for an extended period at an organization with a no tattoo dress policy, or that just broadly disapproves of tattoos, indicated that they would not hire a tattooed individual. In the same vein, those individuals that work for an organization that is neutral or positive towards tattoos indicated they would preferentially select for tattoos on a job candidate. The return to organizational culture as the medium by which hiring decisions are made is important because this deeply impacts the lived experience of individuals hoping to enter the white collar workplace. The organizations that operate in a rationalized environment that disapproves of tattoos profoundly alter the hiring process. Furthermore, organizational culture in general is shaping what type of job candidate is selected based upon tattoos. That is quite jarring and speaks to the power that organizational culture, and the rationalized environment of an industry, holds over the future of tattoos in the American white collar workplace.

The judgements that are passed by tattooed and non-tattooed American white collar workers onto individuals with and without tattoos are not based upon their own tattooed status. Rather, the organizational culture and the rationalized environment in which one operates becomes the foundation for which judgements are passed. Those judgements have the potential to deeply impact the lived experience of tattooed white collar workers, but also has the potential to impact the lived experience of non-tattooed white collar workers. If the stigma surrounding tattoos in the white collar workplace

continues to lessen, as the data suggests it has and will continue to do, then both parties will be subject to profound changes in employment norms. While lasting changes to stigma are in no way fast, they are profoundly impactful as they speak to changes in deviancy, social control, norms, culture, and society.

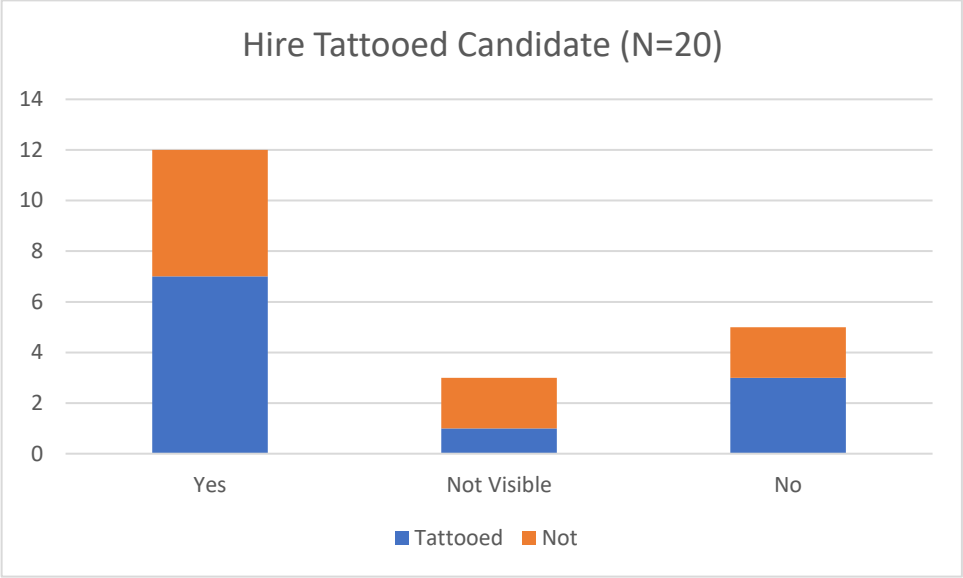


Figure 28: Hire Tattooed Candidate (N=20)

Chapter 10 – "Don't pick at it, keep it clean, and, whatever you do, stay out of the sun": Conclusion

The aim of this study is to capture the lived experience of tattooed white collar workers in the United States, yes. However, the purpose of this study extends beyond satiating my curiosity. I do not deny that this is a topic I have thought about for years, but the truth is, this is a topic that is overdue for study. After analysing the sociohistoric data, examining the existing academic literature, establishing a need for data collection, and subsequently evaluating the empirical data, there is still the lingering question as to why this topic deserves to be researched. Like other figurations, the white collar figuration has been undergoing significant sociogenic change. The changes are a response to interdependencies within and beyond the figuration. Among these changes are perceptions of tattoos and an influx of younger individuals. Feeling that these changes need to be addressed, I wanted to seriously engage the lived experience of tattooed white collar workers for a few reasons.

First, tattooing currently occupies a liminal state in the United States. In some contexts, tattooing is an acceptable practice. Other times, tattooing is framed as a horrific practice. Mentioned throughout this piece, there is an unprecedented influx of tattoos on younger bodies who are entering, or poised to enter, the white collar workforce. From a figurational perspective, capturing this moment has the potential to significantly aid any sociogenic inquiries regarding bodily practices or workplace norms. Additionally, the sociogenic investigation in this study illustrates that tattoos have a consistent meaning in American culture; freedom. The connection to freedom is a concept that has been largely ignored in other analyses as a connective theme across the various epochs. Freedom is essential, though, because it frames the way in which Americans view tattooed individuals, impacting interactions with them.

The second reason for this study builds from the increased presence of tattoos on younger bodies. The influx of young, tattooed bodies is something that individuals and organizations will have to deal with. After analysing the data throughout this project, this study clearly shows that adhering to traditional workplace stigmas surrounding tattoos is inadvisable and will have negative impacts for the organization as well as their employees.

Thirdly, this study is built upon an interdisciplinary foundation; specifically, utilizing anthropology and sociology. This study is meant to illustrate that the historical

animosity between the two fields is not only foolish, but detrimental to scientific inquiry. Both fields have long histories of engaging in interdisciplinary research; however, it is uncommon between the two. Utilizing theoretical approaches, methods, and literature from both fields, a more holistic approach to any sociocultural phenomenon can be captured which helps to build knowledge. To be clear, I am by no means suggesting that every research project should be interdisciplinary, or that every sociocultural inquiry must be addressed from both fields. Nor am I suggesting that the two disciplines should be merged. I am suggesting that it is past time for both fields to get over the antiquated bitterness and learn to use each other for their own benefit. There is absolutely a place for complete interdisciplinary research, as well as disciplinary research, but there is also a middle ground whereby knowledge from one field can be utilized to inform the other. Here, again, the conversation is specifically pointed toward anthropology and sociology.

Finally, the fourth purpose of this research is to challenge the dominant narratives surrounding tattoos in the United States as well as academia. In the United States, the tattoo narrative seems to be stuck between the Rebel Era and the Tattoo Renaissance. According to this narrative, tattoos are marks of deviance and indicate a problematic person, but they can also be artistic and have meaning which makes them acceptable. This aligns with the disjunction found among academia where tattoos are, again, signs of deviance, but also exist without stigma. That is ridiculous. In practice, tattoos are absolutely still stigmatized in the United States; and the white collar workplace in particular. Is this changing? Yes, it unquestionably is. But simply because it is changing does not mean one can jump the gun and state a stigma does not exist.

Capturing the lived experience of American tattooed white collar workers is far more than a novelty. Tattoos are not, nor should be framed as, some joke in academia. Investigating tattoos in a variety of sociocultural contexts contributes to academic understanding of the sociocultural realms in which Americans operate. Excluding The Late 1800s Shift, tattooing is not associated with the social elite and, as such, excluded from the white collar workplace. But contemporary tattooed individuals *are* involved in the white collar workplace and *are* impacted by these perceptions. Moving through the different tattoo eras, freedom is a connective theme. How freedom is understood and expressed in the different ages is variant; but that freedom is challenged in the contemporary white collar workplace in the United States.

Predicting the future of tattooing is an exercise in futility as the United States is still immersed in changes associated with the Information Revolution. However, the value in this work is the marking of historical change as well as adding to numerous academic conversations. Of course, workplace, stigma, and identity are avenues in which this study contributes, but also popular culture, art, fashion, the body & performance, and nonverbal communication. Finally, the history of tattooing informs the analysis of contemporary empirical data allowing for eventual predictive power.

Drawing upon the interdisciplinary focus between anthropology and sociology, this study combines symbolic anthropology and figurational sociology as the theoretical basis. Attempting to capture the lived experience of American white collar workers from a single perspective is problematic. The human condition is resistant to study by a single theoretical approach. In order to address this, it is necessary to free oneself from the confines of a single field perspective. Combining symbolic anthropology and figurational sociology allows for a multipronged study that assures, and furthers, the scientific nature of a study.

Tattoos are highly symbolic and impact identity. Tattoos are an expression of one's authentic self which, when stifled, has negative impacts on self-esteem and work performance. The concept of living a double life as a result of forced impression management in the workplace has large impacts on the individuals as well as the organization. Additionally, this challenges the underpinning notion of freedom seen throughout American tattoo history and illustrates issues that arise when the freedom is tested. The permanence of tattoos impacts identity as well. Permanence and freedom are inextricably linked which aligns with how the body is understood and displayed in American culture. In that same vein, tattoo meaning is highly impactful to identity. Personally ascribed meaning is juxtaposed with public meaning which, when coupled with notions of performance, suggest that tattooing is a highly interdependent activity which impacts identity. The distinction between tattoo art and tattoo craft underpins conditional judgements of "good" tattoos and the impacts of "good" and "bad" tattoos in the workplace. Additionally, tattoo art lends itself to the discussion of fashion and impacts of fashion in the workplace. Finally, contemporary media representations of tattooed bodies interact with notions of reality voyeurism and influence habituses surrounding body play.

Tattoos within the workplace aid in defining social groups. While the information presented in this study is far from statistically significant, the presence of

patterns among the different workplaces suggest that this a widespread phenomenon. Despite tattooed and non-tattooed individuals indicating that they get along with everyone in the workplace, the reality is that they are not interacting with all parties. The presence of groups within an organization based upon tattoos has negative impacts on communication and transmission of knowledge. This results in as more fragmented workplace and reinforces stigma surrounding tattoos. However, whether a tattoo is subjectively "good" can impact the communicative relationship and whether the individual is acceptable. This notion is problematic for organizations as well as the individuals and impacts the productivity and efficiency of an organization.

Tattoos in the workplace are visually disruptive, but that is not necessarily a bad thing. However, in an organization that disapproves of tattoos, the presence of tattoos negatively impacts the quality and efficiency of visibly tattooed individuals. Social media, a different but valid form of public space, is impactful to individuals as well as organizations. Tattoos, again, serve as a form of visual disruption but can be utilized by individuals and organizations for image management and marketing which impacts social sanctioning, performance, and power. The numerous social sanctions that exist in a workplace are enforced and, those targeting tattoos, are predicated upon figuration specific associations of tattoos with bad taste and deviance. Despite differing from American norms, the social sanctions serve to shame tattooed white collar workers whereby negatively impacting identity and reinforcing tattoo stigma. Perpetuation of the false myth that tattoos will make white collar employment more difficult or that tattooed individuals will receive less pay promotes stigma surrounding tattoos in American culture and impacts the lives of tattooed and non-tattooed individuals alike.

Within a workplace, individuals are subject to processes of resocialization. The way in which an organization frames tattoos impacts the individual's perception of tattoos, as well as tattooed individuals, by tattooed and non-tattooed participants. As a result of spillover, individuals utilize their workplace ideas of tattoos outside the workplace which immediately impacts other social realms. The organizational attitudes towards tattoos are created and reinforced through power structures within and across figurations. These attitudes are communicated through symbolic and formal means, like dress policies. The organizational perception of tattoos is replicated by employees and impacts judgements towards other individuals as well as organizations. This area of discussion clearly illustrates that the stigma surrounding tattoos in the white collar

workplace is lessening and thus impacting the lives and identity all white collar employees.

While this study has provided numerous insights into the lived experience of tattooed American white collar workers as well as white collar organizations, there are a number of ways in which future research could go. Of course, a statistically significant population would be outstanding; however, the logistics of engaging with a study that large are far outside the realms of this project. Regardless, increasing the sample size of both tattooed and non-tattooed participants will provide greater insight into their lived experiences and allows patterns to be discussed at a larger level. I would, however, suggest continuing to use a variety of industries in future research as it provides a cross-sectional view of the white collar figuration. Additionally, I would also suggest that future studies continue to be interdisciplinary in nature. While I personally favour anthropology and sociology, there are numerous areas that would benefit from the use of other subfields within anthropology and sociology, as well as other fields of study completely. The continuance of interdisciplinary research is essential because it provides varied theoretical orientations, increases relevant literature, and breaches communication gaps between disciplines.

Another suggestion for future research is related to social network analysis. A study of this nature would absolutely benefit from the construction and analysis of complete networks as opposed to exclusively egocentric networks. Approached from a complete network perspective, the primary research concern would shift to focus on the general influences exerted between all members of each network. This could be particularly interesting when focused through a single industry with multiple interdependent organizations.

From an organizational perspective, the insights resulting from this project do provide a framework for moving forward. The first, and arguably most important, action any organization should take is to assess their tattoo policy. Particularly, is there a policy, what is it, and when was it drafted. Once that basic step is out of the way, I would suggest that the organizational dress policy be very, very specific regarding the acceptability of tattoos within the workplace. There should be clear guidelines regarding acceptable and unacceptable corporeal placement of visible tattoos. Additionally, the dress policy must be specific regarding what images or phrases are expressly forbidden. It should go without stating, but for the sake of clarity, if a tattoo is not visible, it is far outside the purview of an organizational dress policy. There is no need to make a large,

sweeping policy that all tattoos are acceptable, or all tattoos are unacceptable. In the former, you will undeniably run across individuals with obscene images or vulgarity tattooed on their faces. But the latter reinforces stigmas surrounding tattoos, limits the employee applicant pool, negatively impacts the workplace performance of tattooed employees, negatively impacts the attitudes of all employees, negatively impacts the productivity and efficiency of an organization, and impacts social realms outside the workplace. Given the abundance of data, having a zero-tolerance policy for tattoos is absolutely problematic for all parties. But simply having a clear and specific tattoo policy for the workplace assists in breaking down the stigma surrounding tattoos; even if it is at a slower rate than allowing all tattoos. It is important to remember that challenging a stigma is a process. As a process, there will be times it goes quickly, and times it moves by baby steps. Both are acceptable.

Another suggestion moving forward is for all parties, employees, organization leaders, policy makers, activist, and everyone else, to understand that everything changes over time. I am aware that this is a grandiose statement, but it is true; especially for deviancy and stigma. What constitutes deviant action, and by extension stigma, is not static. Understanding this notion is critical because the historical fear and disgust surrounding tattoos have stagnated in the white collar environment. While the stigma is lessening, if tattooing is not directly addressed, then misconceptions regarding tattoos and tattooed individuals have a very real chance of replicating and repeating.

Americans are living in a reality where body modification practices abound; that includes tattooing. The tattooed population in the United States is growing and entering the white collar workplace. The presence of tattoos in numerous forms of popular culture, and the massive consumption of popular culture through reality voyeurism, has shifted tattooing from a fringe practice to something artistic and increasingly accepted. While tattoos are popular now, there is no saying what the future holds. Other, more obscure or seemingly grotesque, forms of body modification could become the new normal. But, as it stands, the contemporary United States is marked by increasing numbers of tattooed bodies which impacts their lives; within and beyond the white collar workplace. I excitedly await the day when I encounter someone who looks at my tattooed body and does not blurt out “Why?! But what does it mean?” or that colleagues no longer open my office door, look at my tattoos, and say “you know this office is for Professor Belkin, not students”. Because, when that day comes, tattoos will really be characterized by freedom.

Appendix

Semi-Structured Interview Questions for Tattooed Participants

1. Name and age
2. Where were you born? [If different than present, when did they move]
3. Where do you work? How long have you worked there?
4. Is your company a leader in the industry? How so?
5. What is your position? How long have you been working in this industry?
6. How did you get involved with your field?
7. Do you have tattoos?
8. How many tattoos do you have and where are they on your body?
9. Who knows you have tattoos?
10. Which tattoo was your first?
11. When did you get your first tattoo? [age and year]
12. What was it like? Describe the experience
13. Does it have any special meaning? If so, what is it?
14. How do you think other people see it?
    a. Do your other tattoos have meaning? What are they?
    b. How do you think other people see them?
15. Do you cover them while at work? Why/why not?
    a. Yes → Are you required to cover them by a company policy? What is it?
    b. Do you think that is common in your industry? Why?
16. Did you look up to or admire anyone in particular growing up? Why?
    a. Did they have tattoos? How many and where?
17. What influenced your decision to get a tattoo?
18. How does having tattoos influence your relationship with coworkers?
19. How do you view coworkers/employees with tattoos?
    a. Those you directly work with?
    b. People you don't really know?
    c. Does location of the tattoo matter? How so?
20. How about coworkers/employees without tattoos?
21. How do you think other employees view individuals with tattoos?
    a. What influences their opinions?
22. Tell me what is was like applying and interviewing for your position
23. Has having tattoos ever affected your chance at a job?
    a. Yes → Tell me about it.
    b. No → How do you know?
24. What do you think you are communicating to other people with your tattoos?
25. What role do you think tattoos play in the workplace?
26. Do you think tattoos are appropriate? Why/why not?
    a. In the workplace?
    b. Outside the workplace?
27. Why do people get tattoos?
28. Is tattooing a fad?
    a. Yes→ why the shift from non-permanent fads like hair color, facial hair, etc to permanent ones like tattoos?
    b. No → why weren't they more common before then? Why do so many people have them?
29. Do you think tattooing and art are connected? In what way?
30. How about fashion? In what way?

31. Do you hang out with anyone from work?
    a. Yes → Who? How often? Do any of them have tattoos?
    b. No → Why not?
32. Do you hang out with people who don't work with you? How often? Could you name them? Do they have tattoos?
33. Where do you typically spend your free time? How about with your friends? Are there any places you tend to avoid?
34. Do you think a lot of people have tattoos? What percent of America do you think?
35. Is there a bias against tattoos?
36. Describe a person who gets tattoos
    a. [Probe for personality traits, physical attributes, socioeconomics, intelligence, etc]
37. Describe a person who doesn't have tattoos
    a. [same probes as above]
38. Would you hire/work with a person with tattoos? Why/why not?
39. Would you prefer to hire/work with a person, who was identical in every way, but didn't have tattoos? Why?

Semi-Structured Interview Questions for Non-Tattooed Participants

Many of the questions are the same. Those that are different are bolded for ease of reading.

1. Name and age
2. Where were you born? [If different than present, when did they move]
3. Where do you work? How long have you worked there?
4. Is your company a leader in the industry? How so?
5. What is your position? How long have you been working in this industry?
6. How did you get involved with your field?
7. Do you have tattoos?
8. **Why don't you have any tattoos?**
9. **Do you know anyone with tattoos? Who?**
10. **Does anyone in your family have tattoos? How about your friends?**
11. **Have you felt any pressure to get tattoos? From whom?**
12. **How do you view people with tattoos?**
13. **How do you think other people see tattoos?**
14. **Do you see tattoos on coworkers while at work? Why/why not?**
    a. **Yes → Where at? [company department, body location, etc]**
    b. **No → Are people required to cover them by a company policy? What is it?**
    c. Do you think that is common in your industry? Why?
15. Did you look up to or admire anyone in particular growing up? Why?
    a. Did they have tattoos? How many and where?
16. **What influenced your decision to not get a tattoo?**
17. **Do you feel like you are treated differently because you don't have tattoos?**
    a. **Yes → How so?**
18. How do you view coworkers/employees with tattoos?
    a. Those you directly work with?
    b. People you don't really know?
    c. Does location of the tattoo matter? How so?
19. How about coworkers/employees without tattoos?
20. How do you think other employees view individuals with tattoos?
    a. What influences their opinions?
21. Tell me what is was like applying and interviewing for your position
22. **Has not having tattoos ever affected your chance at a job?**
    a. Yes → Tell me about it.
    b. No → How do you know?
23. **What do you think people communicate with their tattoos?**
24. What role do you think tattoos play in the workplace?
25. Do you think tattoos are appropriate? Why/why not?
    a. In the workplace?
    b. Outside the workplace?
26. Why do people get tattoos?
27. Is tattooing a fad?
    a. Yes→ why the shift from non-permanent fads like hair color, facial hair, etc to permanent ones like tattoos?
    b. No → why weren't they more common before then? Why do so many people have them?
28. Do you think tattooing and art are connected? In what way?
29. How about fashion? In what way?

30. Do you hang out with anyone from work?
    a. Yes → Who? How often? Do any of them have tattoos?
    b. No → Why not?
31. Do you hang out with people who don't work with you? How often? Could you name them? Do they have tattoos?
32. Where do you typically spend your free time? How about with your friends? Are there any places you tend to avoid?
33. Do you think a lot of people have tattoos? What percent of America do you think?
34. Is there a bias against tattoos?
35. Describe a person who gets tattoos
    a. [Probe for personality traits, physical attributes, socioeconomics, intelligence, etc]
36. Describe a person who doesn't have tattoos
    a. [same probes as above]
37. Would you hire/work with a person with tattoos? Why/why not?
38. Would you prefer to hire/work with a person, who was identical in every way, but didn't have tattoos?

"It's like I can sniff out the other tattooed people in the office": Social Network Analysis

The information presented here is important and provides guidelines for future research. However, the nature of the findings did not strengthen the argument for this paper. Instead of eschewing this information, it is included as an appendix. This line of inquiry has strong potential but requires a more robust population.

Humans are highly social creatures. Like other primates, humans have a need to interact with others. Undeniably there are exceptions; there always are. One could think of the hermit who lives alone in the woods and subsists on eel fishing or the ascetic living on a mountain focusing on spiritual development. But these are exceptions. The majority of individuals will be members of, and interact with, primary and secondary groups. As any introductory text to sociology will clearly state (e.g. Eglitis & Chambliss 2019; Ferris & Stein 2008; Ritzer & Murphy 2019), group membership heavily influences daily practices, norms, and values. In other words, our group memberships influence our lived experiences. Since this study is concerned with the lived experience of tattooed American white collar workers, there is value in investigating the groups in which the participants are entrenched.

One method to scientifically investigate groups is social network analysis (SNA). In recent years, SNA has been gaining increasing attention among the social sciences in the United Kingdom as well as the United States. However, despite the growing attention, SNA is still a relatively underutilized approach.

Noted briefly in Chapter 7, SNA is both a set of methods and a theoretical orientation. While the details of this are not to be restated here, it is worth reiterating a critical point that frequently causes confusion: social network, as it is used here, is not referencing social media. SNA is concerned with face-to-face relations (Hanneman & Riddle 2005) and mapping of the networks. In 'formal' SNA, the mapping of networks is done through quantitative means (Heath et al. 2009); however, SNA as a whole does not preclude the use of qualitative data (Scott 2002; Trotter 1999, Trotter et al. 1995). In fact, utilizing qualitative data to investigate structural relations informs the quantitative analysis whereby SNA is able to map networks of entities (e.g. organizations, nation states, groups, etc.) (Knoke & Yang 2008) as well as explain relations among actors in a network (Hanneman & Riddle 2005). However, despite the qualitative roots of this

method, most individuals engage it as a quantitative-oriented approach. For this reason, the study at hand is mixed methods in nature and engages quantizing (Tashakkori & Teddlie 1998).

The quantizing that takes place in this study is at the intersection of methods. Engaging the mixed methods nature of SNA, the method synergizes remarkably well with hermeneutic text analysis. Through the use of social network data, collected through structured observation and semi-structured interviews, network structures can be built and then interpreted through the words of participants. The use of SNA with hermeneutic text analysis allows for the identification of patterns revolving around the network itself, but also participants' views of others and of self.

The type of network that formed the focus of SNA in this project is understood as an 'egocentric' network. Egocentric networks utilize an individual, referred to as 'ego' or 'focal individual', to construct a network consisting of ego and individuals who are directly linked (Trotter 1999). Egocentric networks are the foil to 'complete networks' which are networks that account for all links in a bounded population (Heath et al. 2009). In the contexts of this study, complete networks have the potential to yield fascinating data about a bound workplace; however, given the confines of this study, it was never the intention to extend the network in this manner. The use of egocentric networks allows for an analysis of variant workplaces. While the networks are accurate for ego, the limitation with this is obvious: there are a vast number of white collar workplaces in the United States. As such, the findings in one network are not statistically significant and do not necessarily apply to every white collar workplace; however, the fact that patterns have emerged is substantial. This study adheres to the figurational concept that culture and context are inextricably linked (Elias 1994). Similar views have been utilized under different names in the context of SNA (Fiori et al. 2008; Miller 1999, 2002). This means that a simple binary dichotomy between individual and collective is problematic. Instead, there needs to be a recognition that "heterogeneity and overlap that exists between and within different cultural communities" (Miller 2002: 104) are a result of interdependency within the network which is illustrated through patterns.

Despite the inability to collect social network data from every member of the workplace for each participant, enough data was gathered to create egocentric networks for multiple networks. In this chapter, one visual representation of the social networks is presented. This network has been selected because it most clearly illustrates patterns

and conclusions found among the networks. As such, the networks discussed in this chapter are a reference point that can be applied to variant white collar workplaces. Additionally, the network is the workplace where structured observation took place to verify the accounts of participants.

The different analyses run on each network (discussed briefly in Chapter 7), coupled with the associated qualitative data, indicate that social positioning in workplace networks is influenced by an individual's tattooed status. Furthermore, social positioning based upon tattooed status is also influenced by organizational perspective of tattooing. These findings illustrate the value of qualitative approaches to SNA (Trotter 1999).

Before delving into the data, it is worth noting that some upcoming descriptions are intentionally vague. This is done since identifying the exact workplace would be easy for those even remotely involved with the organization. Even with the use of pseudonyms, the combination of profession, region, speech patterns (from exemplar quotations), and images of tattoos throughout this project make the potential for identification higher. In order to mitigate risk, some details about ethnographic context will remain opaque.

Social Network X – Medical Office

The social network discussed here is from a medical office. The medical office is privately owned and operated. Individuals who have a terminal medical degree are afforded their own offices while nurses who manage other workers have their own "stations". Non-management nurses and non-medical workers have a general "break room" as well as locations they are expected to occupy during work (e.g. reception desk, a set of specific examination rooms, etc.). The network is a depiction of the workplace presented as a graphical representation in Figure 26.

Data was collected from five participants who work in various positions within the same organization. As such, the egocentric network provides an additional level of analytical depth. Tattooed individuals are coloured orange in the graphical representation, while non-tattooed individuals are blue. Actors A, B, C, D, and E are all participants in the study and underwent structured observation in the workplace as well as semi-structured interviews. The other actors were not interviewed, so social network information was not inferred or implemented into the diagram. Of particular note,

among all the members of this workplace, only three have tattoos (B, E, & G) and only actor B has visible tattoos. The data from this social network is focused on interactions within the workplace that do not directly concern work. Presented this way, the network is able to depict who is socially interacting with whom which captures the lived experience.

The visual representation of this network immediately makes two things clear. First, there are only three tattooed individuals in this workplace. Second, there are two cliques present. Beyond simply looking at the network to define cliques, the number of closed triad memberships each actor is involved in can be analysed. As an egocentric social network, the analysis positions each individual as ego whereby the final number indicates their personal membership. These analyses indicate that actors A, B, C, E, F, G, and H are part of closed triads and, accounting for the number of directed ties, suggests that there are two cliques present.

The first clique (referred to as doctor clique) is comprised of actors A, C, and F while the second clique (referred to as tattoo clique) contains actors B, E, G, and H. These cliques are not totally isolated and, as such, have semi-permeable barriers allowing for the transmission of sociocultural data. The doctor clique is comprised of the three individuals who have medical doctorates while the tattoo clique is comprised of the head nurse (B), two nurses (E & G), and one individual who specializes in cosmetic applications and sales (H).

The presence of these two cliques illustrates that there are social divides taking place in the workplace. The first aspect of distinction is in relation to level of education. The doctor clique is comprised of the only three individuals in the company that possess a M.D. This distinction suggests that social interactions between co-workers is influenced by status and subsequent roles in the workplace. This is far from a new discovery, yet it is worth mentioning.

The second defining aspect is tattoo possession. Members of the tattoo clique possess tattoos with the exception of actor H. However, the participants mentioned during their interviews that actor H is interested in obtaining tattoos but, at the time of research, did not have any. The rest of the network does not possess tattoos. Here, then, tattoos become relevant. As members of the tattoo clique range in their position within the organization, there is a need to look beyond the positions one holds. This illustrates that organizational hierarchy is not fully determinant in explaining social relations among co-workers. While organizational hierarchical positioning certainly can have an

influence, the possession of tattoos is a defining aspect that causes social groups within a workplace to develop.

Within this network, the average geodesic distance is 1.217 with a standard deviation of .412 indicating the average distance apart between two people. Due to the missing social network data from five actors in the network, the number is not perfectly representative of the network. However, the purpose of mentioning this is that, even with the other members, only three actors possess tattoos. The distance between cliques is further than the average for the network. This indicates that communication between the doctor clique and the tattoo clique is possible but must go through a number of liaisons. As such, the exchange of information and sociocultural features among the cliques is substantially limited.

Continuing to address the geodesic distance in this network, if a member of the tattoo clique wants to interact with the other members, they are required to utilize non-tattooed members of the workplace. Undeniably, this impacts the lived experience of both tattooed and non-tattooed individuals alike. This conclusion is further strengthened by the number of weak components within the network. Specifically, actor D and actor J. Actor J did not have social network data collected, so they can be discounted; however, actor D is important.

Actor D is an "executive medical assistant/scheduling receptionist". They are not a part of either clique but did provide social network data. The presence of actor D as a non-member for either clique illustrates that neither aspect is working in isolation. The social groups found in workplaces are subject to the interconnective pressures which are used to inform how social groups develop. The interconnected pressures are a result of organizational culture (discussed further in Chapter 9) which inform individual perceptions towards socially defining characteristics. However, aligning with the data from this study, tattoo possession also defines social groups. In this case, the visual confirmation of tattoos possession is not important; rather, the focus is placed on knowledge of supposed tattoo possession in the workplace.

The findings from this social network are echoed in the others SNA run for this study. While observation and interviews substantiate these data, individuals involved in the network do not knowingly address these points. Namely, tattooed and non-tattooed participants consistently mentioned that they generally get along with everyone in their workplace and see each other socially. However, when pressed for details regarding names and frequency, these points become very apparent. Tattooed individuals are

associating, with non-work socialization, with other tattooed individuals they work with at a very high frequency; both within and outside the physical workplace. The same can be said for non-tattooed individuals. This same occurrence is noted among all participants with the exception of one individual who openly dislikes tattooed individuals and is sure no one has tattoos at his workplace.

The presence of social groups influenced by the possession of tattoos in the workplace is challenged by social learning in the networks. Specifically, social learning focused on tattoos. In the case where individuals in hierarchical positions of power appreciate a tattoo, the network is receiving validation regarding tattoos a whole. However, the appreciation of tattoos is normally based upon the appreciation of creative work and not a tattoo's meaning. According to participants, if a tattoo is understood as "creative" or artistically "good", then the stigmatizing presence of tattoos in the workplace can be mitigated. This is a process that multiple participants noted. In this case, the people defining what makes a "good tattoo" are those in positions of power in the workplace and, as such, are a mirror for their personal taste. The notion of what makes a tattoo artistically "good" or "creative" is addressed further in Chapter 8.

These findings have impacts in the transmission of knowledge within the workplace. Despite the network displaying non-work focused socialization, that does not mean work does not come up in conversation. Work is just not the focus. Thus, there is a socially limiting factor at play as well as negative impacts to communication within the workplace.

The presence of cliques that are influenced by tattoo possession replicate established stigmas surrounding tattoos in the workplace. The limitation in social and workplace communication as a result of cliques in the workplace limits teamwork and cooperation among all employees. Furthermore, the cliques become socially reified due to the lack of communication; even if this is in direct conflict with an organizational culture. In order to remediate these issues, it is essential for workplaces, and specifically decision-making leaders in the workplace, to openly address these issues despite any short-term repercussions this might cause. Once the issues are acknowledged, the groups can be potentially dissolved which challenges the stigma of tattoos in the white collar workplace as well as encouraging a more cohesive workplace. A more cohesive workplace results in greater communication which has further impacts in dissolving the stigma surrounding tattoos (discussed further in Chapter 9) as well as increasing the productivity and efficiency of an organization.

The information presented here is insightful regarding the American white collar workplace as a whole and has the potential to impact numerous industries and organizations, yet specific application to an organization requires additional work. Leadership intending to address this issue needs to be cognizant of who has a tattoo, of course, but also how individuals within the organization understand the presence of tattoos. This is not a minor step because, while a manager or decision maker may be able to understand the thoughts or possession of tattoos among the five or six people closest to them in the workplace, their assumptions about others are usually incorrect (Krackhardt & Hansen 1993).

While it is understood that SNA is valuable in addressing communication within a company and allows individuals to pointedly intervene at critical points (Cross et al. 2002), the value is not limited to formal networks. As such, SNA can be an extremely valuable tool to assess informal networks within the workplace. In this case, the presence of cliques informed by tattoo status. Once this is completed, a formalized SNA should be conducted which allows for a comparison between the complete network and any informal networks that have developed. While visually assessing a network could potentially illustrate the presence of informal groups, assessment of these informal groups necessitates technical knowledge. Addressing these areas of concern can help alleviate issues tattooed individuals face in the white collar workplace as well as benefit the profitability and efficiency of the company as a whole.

The findings from the SNA conducted in this study address a recent area of discussion among the management discipline surrounding the extent to which life, work, and informal networks are connected within organizations (e.g. Lincoln 1982; Nohria & Eccles 1992). A primary focus in this research pertains to the forces that influence the emergence of informational networks within organizations (Monge & Eisenberg 1987; Monge & Contractor 2000) and subsequent impacts on communication (Stevenson & Gilly 1993) with a focus on homophily (Ibarra 1992). The findings from this study can clearly add to this conversation by contributing information on tattoos and the white collar workplace to the discussion. Furthermore, in conjunction with information from other areas of this study, a holistic picture can be created regarding the impact of limiting or supporting tattoos in the American white collar workplace.

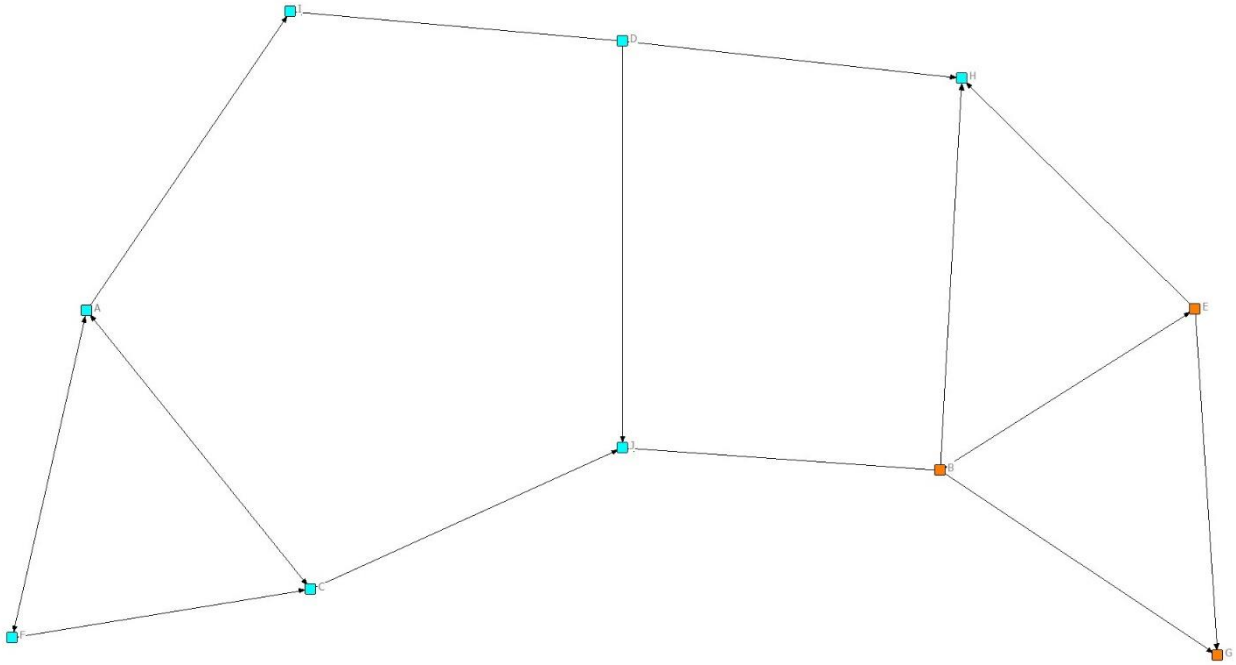


Figure 29: Social Network of Medical Office. Orange nodes are tattooed individuals. Blue nodes are non-tattooed individuals.

Ethics Approval Letter from University of Leicester UEIC

University Ethics Sub-Committee for Media and Communication and Sociology

23/07/2018

Ethics Reference: 14603-sb787-ss/mc:sociology

TO:

Name of Researcher Applicant: Sam Belkin

Department: Sociology

Research Project Title: Your Coworker Undressed: Tattoos, Identity, and Stigma in the Workplace

Dear Sam Belkin,

RE: Ethics review of Research Study application

The University Ethics Sub-Committee for Media and Communication and Sociology has reviewed and discussed the above application.

1. Ethical opinion

The Sub-Committee grants ethical approval to the above research project on the basis described in the application form and supporting documentation, subject to the conditions specified below.

2. Summary of ethics review discussion

The Committee noted the following issues:

Application satisfies ethics requirements.

3. General conditions of the ethical approval

The ethics approval is subject to the following general conditions being met prior to the start of the project:

As the Principal Investigator, you are expected to deliver the research project in accordance with the University's policies and procedures, which includes the University's Research Code of Conduct and the University's Research Ethics Policy.

If relevant, management permission or approval (gate keeper role) must be obtained from host organisation prior to the start of the study at the site concerned.

4. Reporting requirements after ethical approval

You are expected to notify the Sub-Committee about:

- Significant amendments to the project
- Serious breaches of the protocol
- Annual progress reports
- Notifying the end of the study

5. Use of application information

Details from your ethics application will be stored on the University Ethics Online System. With your permission, the Sub-Committee may wish to use parts of the application in an anonymised format for training or sharing best practice. Please let me know if you do not want the application details to be used in this manner.

Best wishes for the success of this research project.

Yours sincerely,

Yujie Chen

Chair

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