6-5-2023

PERCEPTIONS OF TATTOOS AND PIERCINGS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Diane Elizabeth Duncan
Rowan University

PERCEPTIONS OF TATTOOS AND PIERCINGS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

by

Diane E. Duncan

A Thesis

Submitted to the
Educational Services and Leadership
College of Education
In partial fulfillment of the requirement
For the degree of
Master of Arts in Higher Education
at
Rowan University
June 5, 2023

Thesis Chair: Stephanie Lezotte, Ph.D., Assistant Dean, School of Graduate Studies

Committee Members:
Andrew Tinnin, Ed.D., Associate Vice President for Student Life
Tyrone McCombs, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Educational Services and Leadership

Dedications

I would like to dedicate my thesis to everyone that has provided personal and professional support and guidance throughout this entire process and my academic success. I am immensely appreciative of the overwhelming encouragement and contribution from Rowan University's faculty, staff, and community.

Acknowledgments

To Associate Director, Dr. Julia Beth Rey, and my instructor and principal

investigator, Dr. Stephanie Lezotte, thank you for your open availability, as well as

timely and valuable feedback. I would also like to especially thank Holly Ashton, Maria

Lanza-Gladney, and Laurie Baker of Rowan University Global Learning & Partnerships.

You have given me numerous opportunities that have not only enhanced my college

student development, but my professional development as well. Your mentorship,

generosity, welcoming environment, and values have given me a sense of belonging and

you have aided in equipping me with the competency, knowledge, and skills to

confidently advise students. As a first-generation student, you all have positively

influenced me and are contributing factors to my academic and professional development

and success. Thank you for your unwavering support and being your true authentic

selves.

Abstract

Diane Elizabeth Duncan
PERCEPTIONS OF TATTOOS AND PIERCINGS IN HIGHER EDUCATION
2022-2023
Stephanie Lezotte, Ph.D.
Master of Arts in Higher Education

This study attempts to examine the perceptions of faculty and staff at Rowan University towards professionals with visible body modifications (VBM), specifically tattoos and piercings, in higher education. Five main research questions were addressed: (i) What are the attitudes towards professionals with VBM at Rowan University? (ii) How might the display of VBM affect Rowan University's values and objectives? (iii) How are professionals with VBM perceived by hiring managers at Rowan? (iv) In what ways do perceptions differ across campus units at Rowan University regarding professionals with VBM? (v) What kind of environment does staff and faculty at Rowan University provide for unconventional professionals? To answer these questions, a mixed method approach was utilized, which consisted of a 42 question Likert scale survey distributed to all active employees and a seven-question interview with randomly selected volunteers. Of the 4103 employees, 80 completed the survey and five respondents responsible for recruitment or hiring for their units were randomly selected to be interviewed. The study reveals a combination of indifference and acceptance among survey respondents, as well as understanding and encouragement of individuality and self-expression from interviewees. Overall, the study exposes positive views towards higher education professionals with visible body modifications and disputes discriminatory practices against unconventional prospective professionals.

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Chapter I

Introduction

The prevalence of body art or modifications within various societies worldwide, especially modern Western societies, has substantially increased and become more popular and accepted since its origin and practice centuries ago (Hilliker, 2021). Body modification is defined as "the (semi-) permanent, deliberate alteration of the human body and embraces procedures such as tattooing and body piercing" (Wohlrab et al., 2007, p.87). During its initial practice, depending on the part of the world, the reasons for tattoos and piercings varied greatly. Reasoning included cultural, tribal, religious, assorted rituals, identification, markings for warriors, and others (Swanger, 2006). Although the appearance of tattoos and body piercings varied geographically, they always possessed a very specific meaning for a particular culture. Piercings were often used in initiation rites, assigning their bearer to a certain social or age group (Gritton, 1988; Jonaitis, 1988; Wohlrab et al., 2007), whereas tattoos were utilized to signal religious affiliations, strength, or social status (Gathercole, 1988; Gilbert, 2001; Schildkrout, 2004; Wohlrab et al., 2007).

Body art, whether tattoos or piercings, has been used for thousands of years to express identity, religion, ideas, feelings, and sexuality (O'Malley, 2013). In today's Western cultures, reasons behind body modifications vary widely as well. Some motivating factors to consider include aesthetics, sensual pleasure or play, a symbol of commitment to a relationship, possession, a rite of passage, or a sign of reclamation (survival of abuse) (Swanger, 2006). Many authors argued that tattoos and body piercings today ''are nothing more than fashion accessories'' (Wohlrab et al., 2007, p.88), whereas

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others assigned them a deeper psychological meaning. According to a literature review of studies regarding motivations behind body modifications, there were ten motivational categories identified: beauty, art, and fashion, individuality, personal narratives, physical endurance, sexual motivations, group affiliations and commitment, resistance, spirituality and cultural tradition, addiction, and no specific reasons (Wohlrab et al., 2007). For some, visible body modifications represent their desire to be non-conformists or rebels (Swanger, 2006).

According to a leading provider in market and consumer data, Statista, tattoos, piercings, and plastic surgery are among the most common body modifications in the United States. The results from their study on body modifications in the United States conducted in December 2019, confirmed that nearly half of American adults have at least one tattoo and approximately 29% of Americans have several (Statista Research Department, 2021a). Body modifications have increased steadily, rising not only in numbers but also involving a broader range of social classes and age (DeMello, 2000; Sanders, 1989; Wohlrab et al., 2007). In 2021, Statista conducted another study pertaining to the share of Americans with one or more tattoos. Their study's results revealed that 13% of Baby Boomers, 32% of Gen X, 41% of Millennials, and 23% of Gen Z had one or more tattoos (Statista Research Department, 2021b).

Despite its growing popularity and personal reasoning, in modern U.S. society, body modifications, specifically tattoos, remain stigmatized and stereotyped as taboo, deviant, promiscuous, risky, foolish, abnormal, masculine, aggressive, inappropriate, unattractive, etc. (Hilliker, 2021). Those who are tattooed are perceived as straying from everyday social norms and violating popular expectations regarding appearance (Hilliker, 2021; Seiter & Hatch, 2005). Additionally, tattoos have been found to be associated with

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risk-taking behaviors and most common among people with lower levels of education (Tranter & Grant, 2018). The negative perception of those with body modifications tend to have a negative effect on their employment opportunities (Swanger, 2006; Timming, 2015), credibility and attractiveness (Seiter & Hatch, 2005), as well as interpersonal relationships (Hilliker, 2021).

Statement of the Problem

There are many articles that provide a diverse perspective on visible body modifications (VBM) in the workplace, especially pertaining to their impact on first impressions (Sokol, 2020; Hilliker, 2021; Ruetzler et al., 2012; Seiter & Hatch, 2005; Timming, 2015), stigmas and discrimination (Kjeldgaard & Bengtsson, 2005; Baumann et al., 2015), interpersonal relationships (Power & Lowe, 2018), recruitment and employment opportunities (French, et al., 2019; Swanger, 2006), professionalism (Miroński & Rao, 2019), and so much more. It is clear from the research reviewed that the perception of VBM in the workplace is becoming more accepted and inclusive in numerous occupations yet remains censored in others (Miroński & Rao, 2019). Despite these studies providing additional context on this subject, especially associated with marketing, customer service, law enforcement, hospitality and service sectors, there is still little definitive research completed on its significance in educational settings. There appears to be a disparity in general knowledge that specifically focuses on visible body modification's effect on employment opportunities for educational professionals. Although some previous studies have minimally included participants from educational backgrounds, a generalized perception had not been established. A study with an insufficient sample size may not have sufficient statistical power to detect meaningful

effects and may produce unreliable answers to important research questions (Guo et al., 2013).

Significance of the Study

A convergent parallel mixed method design will be used, and it is a type of design in which qualitative and quantitative data are collected in a parallel, analyzed separately, and then merged (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). This method will provide a complete investigation, review, and analysis on the complexity of unconventional professionals in academia. As the prevalence of body modifications and education professions continue to substantially increase, a study between them is necessary to confirm whether employment opportunities are at risk due to eccentric self-expression and identification. The intent of this study is to contribute to and advance the foundation of research pertaining to this subject and shine light on possible discriminatory practices directed at those with visible body art.

Assumptions

As a New Jersey state institution, Rowan University is subject to state legislation prohibiting discrimination (N.J.A.C. 4A:7-3) (Rowan University, 2021). I entered this study with the assumption that Rowan University has a written workplace appearance policy that directly or in-directly addresses their stance on visible body modifications of all active and prospective faculty and staff. I hypothesize that there will be lookism and social standards of professional appearance in particular units within Rowan University regarding professionals with visible body modifications representing their college or school, which will influence the probability of recruitment and employment opportunities offered. I expect what I consider to be more conservative or traditional colleges, schools,

and services—such as Business, Science & Mathematics, Engineering, Health Profession, Education, Human Resources, and Administration—to have an independent workplace appearance or dress code policy, which restricts or limits the display of visible body modifications. Whereas I also expect what I consider liberal or enlightened colleges and services such as Creative Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences, Performing Arts, and Student Affairs to have less stringent conditions regarding professional appearance.

Additionally, it is assumed that each participant will answer the survey and/or interview questions honestly. Since I identify as a person with visible body modifications, I believe my physical appearance may have an impact on interviewee responses in the qualitative study. A blinding technique was utilized to prevent participants from knowing certain information that may somehow influence them—thereby tainting the results (Institute for Work & Health, 2011). Given the anonymity and confidentiality of the quantitative study, the social desirability effect in which participants provide answers that reflect an attempt to enhance some socially desirable characteristics or minimize the presence of some socially undesirable characteristics (DeMaio, 1984) should not be present.

Operational Definitions

1. Body Art: For this study, the term body art is used interchangeably in references to tattoo art and/or body piercings.

2. Body Modification: The temporary or permanent physical alteration of a person's body from its natural state for aesthetic, cultural, societal, pleasure, self-expression, and other purposes.

3. Unconventional Professional: A licensed or qualified individual whose physical appearance does not conform to customary, formal, or accepted practices, standards, rules, etc.

4. Workplace Appearance Policy: Employer appearance standards or code of conduct that conveys their expectations regarding what they consider appropriate employee presentation based on the image they want the organization to convey.

5. Lookism: Discrimination or prejudice based on an individual's physical appearance.

Research Questions

1. What are the attitudes towards professionals with visible body modifications at Rowan University?

2. How might the display of visible body modifications affect Rowan University's values and objectives?

3. How are professionals with visible body modifications perceived by hiring managers at Rowan?

    a. In what ways do the qualitative data regarding hiring individuals with VBMs support or reject the quantitative findings?

4. In what ways do perceptions differ across campus units at Rowan University regarding professionals with visible body modifications?

5. What kind of environment does staff and faculty at Rowan University provide for unconventional professionals?

Organization of Remaining Chapters of Study

This study consists of four additional chapters. Chapter II will provide an overview of previously written literature related to the study's subject in various fields and viewpoints. This chapter highlights the impact visible modifications have on unconventional professionals' reputation, interpersonal relationship development, recruitment, and employment opportunities. Furthermore, it will support the idea that there has been very little exploration of this matter in educational settings.

Chapter III details the methodological approach of this study. More specifically, it includes an elaboration of the context and purpose of the study, the sample selection methods, the data instrumentation and collection, and the data analysis. Also, this chapter will contain background information and statistics pertaining to the growth and popularity of visible body modifications.

Chapter IV contains the findings from both qualitative and quantitative studies.

Chapter V summarizes the entire study, discusses its findings, concludes the study, and provides information on limitations and recommendations for future research.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

Overview of Attitudes towards VBMs

Individuals with visible body art or modifications (VBM), such as tattoos and piercings, are commonly stigmatized, stereotyped, and discriminated against. The appearance of VBM is often viewed as a stigma in most advanced industrialized societies due to its widespread attribution to those who display a marginal and sometimes deviant behavior (Kjeldgaard & Bengtsson, 2005; Baumann et al., 2015). Such negative perceptions can impact nonconformists' interpersonal and employment opportunities. This literature review will cover viewpoints of visible body modification in diverse occupations, as well as its impact on recruitment and employment opportunities, interpersonal relationships, credibility, and attractiveness, and much more.

Overall Public Perception of VBMs

Hilliker (2021) reviewed research on whether individuals with tattoos were looked down upon in their chosen profession simply based on visible body modifications (VBM). It was hypothesized that there is a stigma associated with individuals with body art in the workplace in comparison to non-tattooed employees. The article disclosed that research literature on tattoos and stigmas is limited despite several studies attempting to understand attitudes toward tattoos. Hilliker (2021) conducted a quasi-experimental study on 50 student participants (10 male and 40 female) to measure attitudes toward individuals with body art in various blue- and white-collar professions. She utilized a modified single survey, *Attitudes Toward Tattoos*, to not only measure participants' demeanor towards VBM, but also to determine whether personality characteristics and

physical traits influenced participants' perspectives. Hilliker's (2021) study found little

evidence of difference in attitudes between tattooed and non-tattooed employees. This

finding is in direct opposition to the study's original hypothesis. Regardless of the

perceiver's tattoo status, negative attitudes were not definitive. However, results from the

second part of her study, which consisted of ten attitudinal questions to determine if those

with tattoos in the workplace were viewed differently than those without on the aspects of

intelligence, rebelliousness, creativity, etc., determined that individuals with visible body

art were still viewed as more rebellious than those without. Although the study

conclusion found no overall negative attitudes towards tattooed individuals, variables

such as internal (participant's age) and external (overall sample and size) threatened the

study's validity and may have altered the results. It was suggested by Hilliker (2021) that

further research is necessary to delve into the attitudes towards tattooed individuals in the

workplace.

Gendered Effects of VBMs within Contrasting Professions

Consumers' attitudes were examined in Baumann et al. (2015) study on gendered

effects of body art towards visibly tattooed employees in two different service sector job

roles (a surgeon and auto mechanic). Their study focused on drawing attention to the

intersectionality between gender and body art to contribute to the small, but emerging

literature on tattoos in the workplace. In addition, they analyzed the interaction of gender-

based and tattooed-based discrimination against front line employees by consumers.

Baumann et al. (2015) hypothesized that there would be a preference for male front line

workers over female, consumers would prefer front line workers without visible body

modifications (VBM) over workers with them, and consumers would prefer male

frontline workers with VBM significantly more than females with them. A quantitative

visual methodology, which consisted of a series of photographs, was utilized to assess

these hypotheses. This study consisted of a total of 262 participants (131 female and 131

male), which was considered a very large sample in the context of experimental

psychology. The results gathered demonstrated a significant interaction between three

dimensions: (a) job context, (b) sex of face, and (c) tattoo presence, as well as pointed to

the intersectionality of gender-based and tattoo-based discrimination. The results partially

confirmed that consumers preferred male workers over females, found that tattoos were a

significant liability for frontline workers in both job contexts, and suggested there was no

evidence of intersectionality between gender and visible body art, but there was between

gender-based and tattoo-based discrimination. There were no statistically significant

differences in responses given by different genders, which is to say that male and female

consumers hold roughly the same gendered views on body art in the workplace. Baumann

et al. (2015) suggested that for future research, consumer interaction models should seek

to include other services such as education, financial services, and more generic

industries. This suggestion emphasizes the importance of inclusivity in research and

reconfirms the lack of knowledge concerning visible body modifications in educational

services.

VBMs Impact on Credibility & Attractiveness

Seiter and Hatch (2005) examined the effects of body art, specifically tattoos, on

perceptions of credibility and attractiveness of male and female models. They stated that

previous literature had neglected to examine the influence of a particular appearance cue.

They limited their investigation to these two variables because several authors reported

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that a common reason behind tattoos was the belief that they will make one more

attractive (DeMello, 1995; Libbon, 2000; Atkinson, 2002; Seiter & Hatch, 2005). Also,

extensive previous research suggested that both credibility and attractiveness played

significant roles in the process of persuasion (Gass & Seiter, 2003; Seiter & Hatch, 2005)

and are two of the primary aims of impression management (Burgoon, et al, 1996; Seiter

& Hatch, 2005). There have only been a handful of empirical studies that have examined

the role of tattooing in the process of person perception. Such studies have commonly

reported that perceptions of tattooed people tend to be less positive than those without

tattoos. Seiter and Hatch (2005) hypothesized that participants would perceive males and

females with tattoos as significantly less credible and attractive than people without

tattoos. Like the methodological approach of Hilliker (2021), they utilized four

photographs (two different photographs for both male and female with and without a

visible tattoo) and a questionnaire, which included two 7-point, Likert-type scales, to

assess participants' responses. Their study consisted of 148 (96 women and 52 men)

undergraduate student participants. To aid in preventing validity threats, the questionnaire

was randomly distributed to participants: tattooed male model (rated by 15 men and 23

women), non-tattooed male model (rated by 14 men and 22 women), tattooed female

model (rated by 10 men and 26 women), and non-tattooed female model (rated by 13

men and 25 women). Their analysis indicated that regardless of the sex of the tattooed

model, tattoos tended to impair people's image more than it helped. The tattooed models

were rated lower on competence, character, and sociability. Although the results

suggested that body art tends to have a negative effect on credibility, the models were

perceived as significantly more extroverted than those without tattoos. Also, despite

tattoos affecting the perception of credibility, it did not affect participants' perception of attractiveness. Due to the study's limited sample size, its results cannot be generalized to perceptions of different men and women without the assistance of future research. Seiter and Hatch (2005) advised that other researchers should explore whether variations in location, color, and type of tattoo affect perceptions. Also suggested was an investigation into whether stereotypes regarding the masculinity of tattoos were disintegrating. Seiter and Hatch's (2005) study provided further confirmation that individuals with body art are perceived as violating popular expectations and social norms regarding appearance. This finding is consistent with both previous research and traditional social expectations.

Hospitality Viewpoint of Tattooed Interviewees

Swanger (2006) analyzed a study to measure the perceptions of hospitality industry human resource managers and recruiters of interviewees with VBM, which included tattoos and piercings, and its impact on employment. Its contributions lie in the clarification of the importance of appearance on hiring in the hospitality field, especially because research regarding VBM and its effect on employment in the business literature is very limited. Most literature addressing VBM, from a business perspective, is typically found in newspapers or trade magazines rather than peer reviewed journals. Unlike previous studies, Swanger (2006) did not formulate a hypothesis on the expected outcome of her research. This may stem from the lack of preceding investigation regarding the subject in the hospitality realm. As commonly used, Swanger (2006) utilized a quantitative approach to her study by issuing a self-administered, online survey questionnaire to collect data. The questionnaire only consisted of a single open-ended question, "What view does your organization take of interviewees, regardless of gender,

who have visible tattoos and/or piercings (nose, tongue, eyebrows, single or multiple piercings of the ears, etc.)?" Her participants consisted of 37 industry professionals, 19 of which were recruiters or human resources managers who recruited on college campuses for hospitality program interns and graduates. The participants from those 19 companies— including employees from nine hotels, six restaurants, two managed services companies, one theme park, and one recreation area—provided a diverse baseline of employers affected by visible body modifications. Swanger's (2006) study resulted in most of the participants saying that VBM on an interviewee would be viewed negatively by their organization. While there are a few exceptions, the hospitality industry overall tends to remain conservative in their approach to employee grooming and appearance. Although the findings cannot be generalized, considering there are few studies that have explored this topic, the study still provided some baseline information about the effects of VBM on employment opportunities in the hospitality industry. It was suggested that future replication should utilize larger sample sizes to validate the findings for generalizability purposes. Another recommendation was to analyze more hospitality companies in different geographic locations (nation and worldwide) to determine whether there are differing levels of tolerance for VBM in certain areas.

VMBs Effect on Recruitment and Employment

Differing from previous approaches, Timming (2015) had conducted a qualitative analysis on the impact of visible tattoos in the service sector and its challenges to recruitment and employee selection. With 25 in-depth, face-to-face interviews with hiring managers (15) and visibly tattooed respondents (10), Timming (2015) explored the nature of prejudice surrounding visible tattoos in the workplace. The purpose of this study was

to determine whether recruiters project negative associations onto visibly tattooed job applicants, as well as to gain the perspective of tattooed individuals. There was an incorporation of various types of service sector organizations (e.g., hotels, retail, restaurants, and financial service firms) for generalizability purposes. The results of this study revealed that there is a predominantly negative effect on visibly tattooed job applicants. However, due to fast changing social attitudes towards body art because of growth in popularity, the extent of employer prejudice is altering. This alteration of perception is influenced by the tattoo's location on the body, the type of organization or industry, the tattooed employee's proximity to the customers, and the genre of the tattoo. Timming (2015) suggested that further exploration of the *drivers* of workplace prejudice, the *effects* of tattoo prejudice on social stratification, and how employees' tattoos intersect with the marketing of an organization's brand is needed in future research. Also, Timming (2015) was forthcoming about the overall literature on tattoos in employment. He considered the range to be small with the need to become wider and within more established fields. He proposed that future research should engage more extensively with how employees' body art, particularly tattoos, intersect with the marketing of an organization's brand.

Perception of VBMs in Workplace Settings (Different Industries)

Additionally, through a mixed method approach, Miroński and Rao (2019) examined the perceptions of tattoos and piercings in the service industry of today's society. The purpose of this study was to answer two main research questions: (i) Is there prejudice towards visible body art in the service industry? (ii) Does visible body art affect career opportunities in the service industry? A three-point study was designed to gather

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various points of view from managers, customers who patronized establishments such as hotels, airlines, and retailers, and visibly tattooed or pierced professionals. Their qualitative analysis consisted of 12 interviews with managers from human resources or training departments of different service industries: seven hotels, one airline, three retail companies, and one tour operator. Also, a second group of respondents consisted of eight professionals with visible tattoos or body piercings who either currently worked or have previously worked in the service industry. These participants came from various occupations: advertising, fitness, hospitality, fashion, and education.

The study's quantitative approach was an online survey via Surveyplanet to gather public opinion on the subject and understand attitudes of customers when they interact with service providers with visible body art. Miroński and Rao (2019) developed a set of 21 survey questions, in which 20 questions were prepared with a multiple-choice response while one required a scoring response. The scoring response question consisted of seven statements with responses set on a five-point scale from one to five, where one meant "strongly agree", two was "agree", three stood for "neither agree nor disagree", four denoted "disagree", and five was "strongly disagree". In total, there were 188 responses to the online survey and the results were downloaded from Surveyplanet in Excel format, which was then modified to be analyzed using SPSS Statistics. The nationality of the respondents varied greatly showing that 5.9% came from Australia, 16.5% from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), 9.6% from the United Kingdom (UK), and 26.6% from Austria. Due to the remaining countries having too few respondents to be statistically significant, Miroński and Rao (2019) consolidated them together as the "rest of the world", which represented 41% of the respondents. The largest group of

respondents work in the airline sector (22%), followed by educational institutions (15%), hospitality (12%), sales and marketing (10%), and the health sector (4%); 3% of respondents worked in some sort of creative field. Retail and banks each accounted for 2%.

Their qualitative interviews yielded mixed results when it came to the participants' perspectives on visible body art. There was a total of 51 comments collected, in which 25 respondents voiced positive reviews about body art, while 26 were negative. Regarding official policy on visible body art, two hotels and one airline had an official "Not Allowed" policy for all customer-facing positions. One manager expressed that although visible body art is not allowed on service and front-office staff, kitchen staff who have tattoos in visible areas of the body and sometimes need to work in public areas like open kitchens of the hotel are an "exception to this rule" (Miroński & Rao, 2019, p. 137). Managers from these organizations said that visible body art was allowed under the condition that they were covered by clothes or a band aid. Four hotel managers, one tour operator, and three retail companies expressed that their employer had no official policy in place, and that all visible tattoos on staff were dealt with on a case-by-case basis depending on factors, such as location, size, and genre. Only one participant stated there was no policy in place because they explicitly allowed tattoos everywhere on the body except when they are political or religious.

Miroński and Rao (2019) noted that policies regarding visible piercings were slightly different. Most food establishments disallowed piercings while on duty, citing health and safety concerns as the primary reason. Four hotels stated that all piercings were required to be removed while on duty. One hotel only applied their piercing policy

to kitchen staff and another stated that stretched ear plugs could be worn by staff. Nose and septum piercings were not allowed. The remaining respondents confirmed they had no policy on piercings in place and that decisions were always taken on a case-by-case basis.

Miroński and Rao (2019) inquired on industry professionals' perception of looking "professional" and how visible tattoos and piercings compare when it pertains to someone looking "professional". Most responses expressed that looking professional depends less on visible body art or modifications but rather on the whole persona. Factors including professional attire, personal hygiene, body language, and communication skills were considered attributes of a persona. Among the managers there was an agreement that the decision to accept visible tattoos and piercings depends on the brand image an organization is trying to project to their consumers. As for the qualitative results regarding the interviews with professionals with visible body art, most have had generally positive experiences during job interviews. One respondent from an educational institution, who worked closely with educational professionals and students, stated that he was never perceived any different because of his visible tattoos and nothing changed in the dynamic between him, colleagues, or seniors. Many other respondents, especially from hospitality sectors, expressed never having a problem from management and customers. Regarding policies of employers on visible body art, there was a range of opinions from the tattooed professionals. Some believed employers have the right to hire whomever to represent their business and brand, while others felt differently and considered them unfair. Those opposed expressed that their recruitment should not be based on their body art, but their qualifications and self-worth.

A Shift towards Acceptance of VBMs in the Workplace

In addition to the findings above, the quantitative results from Miroński and Rao's (2019) 21-question online survey for the public revealed some positive views of visible body art and showed that stereotypes are slowly evolving to acceptance. Approximately 71.3% of the respondents stated that they did not view people with tattoos or piercings as different from anyone else, while approximately 21.3% viewed them negatively and only 7.4% viewed them positively (Miroński & Rao, 2019). There were mixed views on whether respondents felt that tattoos and piercings reflected what kind of person someone was. Negative views included- "they have a don't-care attitude", "those who seldom respect authority", "criminals/prisoners", "into pain", "low in intelligence", and "blue collar worker." Meanwhile positive views included- "artsy types", "cool", "I love them", "pleasure seeking/hedonistic", and "committed to the cause/determine". The survey revealed that the public harbors certain stereotypes about people with visible tattoos and piercings. However, the results show that the general attitude of the public is in favor of visible body art on others. Each of the three groups of respondents provided their perspectives on the subject, which either corroborated or invalidated well accepted claims about people with visible tattoos and piercings. It was speculated that a certain stigma still exists within the service sector, but it is not as profound as previously assumed (Miroński & Rao, 2019, p. 143). Miroński and Rao (2019) results conclude that from a management perspective, it can be affirmed that the industry is slowly moving forward and changing their regulations to be more inclusive. In this regard, retail organizations are leading the way with more acceptance and leeway given to this kind of self-expression. Some hotels and tour operators are also changing long-standing grooming

and recruitment policies to allow employees with visible body art in. Airlines seem to be the only industry where almost no progress has been made. Other than the one participant from an educational institution, there was not enough substantial data to reflect the perspectives of those in educational settings. Miroński and Rao (2019) suggested that future investigations could further explore the employers' perspective by designing a quantitative approach based on a representative sample, which may include cross-cultural and cross-industry comparisons. Also, recommended was periodic research on all three groups (employer, employee, and customers) that could capture existing trends in terms of changing stereotypes and prejudice about visible body art, as well as organizational policies and procedures in this area.

Favorable First Impression Qualities

Ruetzler et al. (2012) performed a quantitative study during the 2010 National Restaurant Association (NRA) Show in Chicago to identify which personal attributes were associated with favorable interview presentation. They specifically investigated a total of seven attributes, which included overall physical attractiveness, neatness and grooming, clothing color, conservative versus trendy attire, professional versus casual attire, and body modifications (piercings and tattoos). Despite the show being the largest exposition of its type with more than 2,000 exhibitors and 70,000 participants, the study consisted of 108 randomly selected participants that completed the research task completely. Every participant was requested to assume they were human resource managers for a hospitality management company and hire a new employee. They analyzed an orthogonal array of 16 full-color, laminated cards, which bore photos of theoretical student applicants that represented combinations of varying levels of the seven

characteristics previously mentioned. Upon review, each applicant was ranked based on hiring preference on a scale running from 1 (most desirable) to 16 (least desirable). The study's results implied that the most significant indicators of professionalism are grooming, business attire, and conservative piercings. It is apparent that tattoos are not desirable for indicating professionalism. Ruetzler et al. (2012) identified the lack of specification of the company or segment of the hospitality industry as one of the study's major limitations. Despite this limitation, the study's results provided empirical evidence suggesting that many apparently conservative attributes, such as neatness and grooming, dressing in business attire, and limiting or at least cover body modifications, are important in securing a job. For future reference, Ruetzler et al. (2012) proposed that hospitality educators would do well to heed to these findings because their primary roles are to teach, mentor, guide, and prepare graduates to enter the workforce. It recommended that hospitality programs emphasize the importance of the job interview and how candidates' physical appearance, which is especially influential on initial impressions, will likely affect interviewer's perceptions.

Visible Body Modifications in Healthcare

Another study that explored the impact of visible body modifications on the perception of professionalism was completed by Power and Lowe (2018). Differing from previously referenced articles, their work delved into the personal experience of Justine, a midwife with tattoos and colorful hair to confirm whether her reality concurred with U.S.-based research findings, which suggests that VBM have a negative impact on interpersonal perceptions and employability. This study examined how tattoos and 'colorful' hair are perceived by colleagues and the women in a maternity setting. The

article explains in chronological order Justine's background and personal journey to becoming a midwife. As a qualified healthcare professional, Justine enjoys consistently changing her hair color and increasing her body art, which typically is perceived as less professional and leads to negative assumptions. She has expressed that despite her non-traditional physical appearance, she never considered her self-expression and individuality as a concern of others. With certainty, Justine confirmed that she has never had any negative experiences or complaints from employers, colleagues, and patients regarding her appearance. On the contrary, she has received many compliments. Qualified midwifes are responsible for upholding the integrity of The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) code, which is the professional standards of practice and behavior for nurses, midwives, and nursing associates. The four key principles of the Code are: to prioritize people, to practice effectively, to preserve safety, and to promote professionalism and trust. It instructs midwives to treat women as individuals and "avoid making assumptions and recognize diversity and individual choice" (Power & Lowe, 2018, p. 187). Although these instructions are in reference to perceptions about female patients, there are no indications that these set of principles apply to the perception of midwives with visible body art.

Tattoos in Law Enforcement

Unlike the approach and methodology of previous researchers, McMullen and Gibbs (2019) conducted a qualitative review on tattoo policies of policing agencies across the United States. These policies affect the recruitment of qualified police candidates in various law enforcement agencies. They analyzed appearance policies of all 50 state-level policing agencies (i.e., State Police, State Highway Patrol, and Department of Public

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Safety) to explore the similarities and state-level correlations. McMullen and Gibbs

(2019) reviewed each policy based on seven binary variables: whether tattoos were

permitted, as long as they were covered by the uniform of the day; whether tattoos were

permitted except on the neck, face, or hands; whether tattoos were permitted, but must be

covered if visible. Only one state prohibited tattoos altogether and four agencies had no

restrictions. Their findings revealed that only one state policing agency located in

Michigan has a policy prohibiting any tattoos, while four agencies in Alaska, Hawaii,

Mississippi, and Oregon have no restrictions. State policing agencies that have "no

visibility" (McMullen & Gibbs, 2019, p. 415-416) policies regarding tattoos are more

often in states with a low percentage of millennial residence and high percentage of

young veterans, and non-Hispanic white citizens, which is significantly different from

other states in the demographic of non-Hispanic white citizens and low crime. Further,

states with a "no visibility" policy tend to be in northern states, with the southern states

having the fewest state policing agencies with such policies. McMullen and Gibbs (2019)

suggested future research explore the public perceptions of tattooed police in different

geographic locations on the state and local level. They recommended that a large-scale

survey randomly sampling the population should be served to assess citizens' opinions of

officers with visible tattoos. Also, they advocated that future studies should consider

investing resources to assess the influence of current tattoo policies on recruitment.

The Effects VBMs Have on Wages

French, et al. (2019) completed a quantitative study to determine whether job

applicants and employees with tattoos experienced financial penalties because of their

body art. With a focus of collecting multiple measures of respondents' tattoos and labor

market outcomes, they elected to employ Mechanical Turk (MTurk), which is a popular crowdsourcing platform often utilized to procure large-scale samples, in conjunction with a survey via Qualtrics. In total, 2064 respondents, who represented all 50 states, completed the study's questionnaire. French, et al. (2019) considered numerous factors that may be correlated with their outcome variables, which they included as control variables. Those variables comprised of: conventional socio-demographics, health status, risky behaviors, age, race (White, Black, Asian, and Other), Hispanic ethnicity, marital status (married, separated, divorced, or single), number of children, respondents' education, both parents' education, religiosity, self-reports of overall health status, self-reports of socio-economic status, sexual orientation, whether respondent is a smoker, whether respondent consumes alcohol, whether respondent has been in jail or prison, and whether respondent has ever been diagnosed with a mental health issue. French, et al. (2019) figured that by parceling out the influence of these variables in their models, they would be better able to estimate the true effect of body art on labor market outcomes. They examined a total of six labor market outcome variables (employment status, hours worked per week, weeks worked per year, annual earnings, hourly rate of pay, and weekly rate of pay), which had eight specifications each, including four for gender. Because earlier research has shown that gender differences are present with labor market discrimination, labor supply and earnings (French et al., 2009; Hamermesh and Biddle, 1994; Robins et al., 2011; French, et al., 2019), they analyzed men and women separately. Contrary to popular opinion, their results suggest that tattoos are not significantly associated with employment or earnings discrimination.

Potential Explanations for the Misconception of Discrimination

French, et al. (2019) considered a few explanations for the apparent disconnection between perceived discrimination and actual discrimination against tattooed job applicants and employees. It was implied that the distorted effects of stereotypes may have diminished our ability to accurately perceive the social world. Another potential explanation is that discrimination against tattooed people exists, but the effects are disguised within the data and confined only to particular sectors or types of workplaces. A third explanation is that discrimination has diminished in recent years due to the meteoric rise in popularity of tattoos. This study implied that the overall negative effects of tattoos appear to be diminishing, possibly to the point at which they have become an unremarkable and even mainstream characteristic of the workplace. It's indicated that tattooed job seekers and employees face no discrimination in the labor market. French, et al. (2019) viewed the direction for future research as approaching the point at which additional studies can suspend this line of research in favor of the more enduring forms of workplace discrimination. It was suggested that if research findings consistently confirm that tattooed people suffer no serious labor market discrimination, attention should perhaps be spent on investigating the real targets of workplace discrimination.

Need for Additional Research

There are many articles that provide a diverse perspective on visible body modifications in the workplace, especially pertaining to their impact on first impressions, stigmas and discrimination, interpersonal relationships, recruitment and employment opportunities, professionalism, and so much more. It is clear from the research reviewed that the perception of VBM in the workplace is becoming more accepted and inclusive in numerous occupations yet remains censored in others. Despite these studies providing additional context on this subject, especially associated with marketing, customer service, law enforcement, hospitality and service sectors, there is still little definitive research completed on its significance in educational settings. There appears to be a disparity in general knowledge that specifically focuses on visible body modification's effect on employment opportunities and workplace environments for educational professionals. Although previous studies have minimally included participants from said field, a thorough analysis on visible modifications effect in academia has not been fully developed, processed, and completed to provide an objective viewpoint.

Study's Contribution

This field inquiry is essential as it will provide an in-depth understanding and perspective on the complexity of unconventional professionals in academia. As the prevalence of body modifications and education professions continue to substantially increase, an investigation between them is necessary to confirm whether employment opportunities are at risk due to eccentric self-expression and identification. This study's intentions are to contribute to and advance the foundation of research pertaining to this

subject and shine light on possible discriminatory practices directed at those with visible

body art.

Chapter III

Methodology

To explore VBM's effect on recruitment and employment of unconventional professionals in education settings, I utilized a convergent parallel mixed method approach to this study by conducting qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys with consenting participants. This methodology involved a questionnaire followed by interviews with respondents who occupied faculty and staff positions at Rowan University. These groups offered a manageable approach to exploring educational professionals' perceptions regarding visible body modifications on interviewees and employees in higher education. Due to limited investigation on the impact of VBM in an educational environment, this is an original study with primary data collection.

Context of the Study

This convergent parallel mixed method study was conducted at Rowan University, a public research, four-year, university with its main campus located in Glassboro, New Jersey. Also included was Rowan's satellite campuses, located in Stratford, Hammonton, Mount Laurel, Washington Township, and Sewell, and Camden, New Jersey. Presently, Rowan University has nine colleges and nine schools: Rohrer College of Business (RCB), Ric Edelman College of Communication & Creative Arts (Edelman CCCA), College of Education (CEAC), Henry M. Rowan College of Engineering (COEng), John H. Martinson Honors College (Rowan Honors), College of Humanities & Social Sciences (CHSS), College of Performing Arts (CPA), College of Science & Mathematics (CSM), School of Earth & Environment (Rowan Earth), School of Nursing & Health Professions (SNHP), Global Learning & Partnerships (Rowan

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Global), Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, Cooper Medical School of Rowan University (CMSRU), Rowan University School of Osteopathic Medicine (RowanSOM), Rowan University School of Veterinary Medicine (RUSVM), School of Innovation & Entrepreneurship (RCB), College of Medicine & Life Sciences, School of Professional Studies, and School of Translational Biomedical Engineering & Sciences. Additionally, Rowan offers a variety of Student Success Programs: Academic Advising, Student Support Services, Achieving Success through Collaboration, Engagement, And Determination (ASCEND), Career Advancement, Accessibility Services, Success Coaching, Testing, Tutoring, Military Services, and much more (Rowan University, 2022).

Per Rowan University Fast Facts (2022), there are 19,568 undergraduate and graduate students attending Rowan across all categories. According to correspondence from the Director of Human Resources Information Systems (HRIS) & Shared Services, there is approximately 3,325 faculty and staff members (including part-time hourly and adjuncts) for the Glassboro and Camden campus combined, as well as approximately 778 for the School of Osteopathic Medicine (SOM). In total, the population size for this study is approximately 4,103. For the quantitative portion of the study, the target sample size for the above population is 352 with a 95% confidence rate and 5% margin of error.

Rowan University demonstrates support of equal opportunity for all persons within its campus community. As of January 2019, The Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) was initiated, becoming the first division of its kind at a higher education institution in New Jersey. The division is charged with facilitating systemic change that addresses the following strategic priorities: creating an inclusive and

equitable campus, recruiting, and retaining diverse students, faculty, and staff, and

promoting and supporting inclusive scholarship, teaching, and professional development

(Rowan University, n.d.a.,n.p). This department has many sub-departments within it,

including the Office of Social Justice and Inclusion and Conflict Resolution (SJICR),

Center for Access, Persistence and Achievement (CAPA), Center for Neurodiversity, the

Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at RowanSOM, and the Faculty Center for

Excellence in Teaching and Learning. Its core values include collaboration, inclusion,

life-long learning, respect, and introspection. The DEI Division's mission is to lead and

support initiatives that promote diversity, equity and inclusion by developing and

sustaining meaningful and collaborative relationships that result in a more diverse and

inclusive community and centering the voices of our community to drive university-wide

culturally sustaining initiatives and equitable opportunities (Rowan University, n.d.a.,

n.p). A published statement on behalf of the institution regarding diversity states:

> "Rowan University promotes a diverse community that begins with students,
>
> faculty, staff, and administration who respect each other and value each other's
>
> dignity. By identifying and removing barriers and fostering individual potential,
>
> Rowan will cultivate a community where all members can learn and grow. The
>
> Rowan University community is committed to a safe environment that encourages
>
> intellectual, academic, and social interaction and engagement across multiple
>
> intersections of identities. At Rowan University, creating and maintaining a caring
>
> community that embraces diversity in its broadest sense is among the highest
>
> priorities" (Rowan University, n.d.b., n.p).

Participants

The study's participants purposely consisted of all active part-time and full-time faculty and staff members at Rowan University from all campuses to analyze the overall attitude of employees at the institution. Recruitment of participants for the quantitative study was done through a series of Employee Rowan Announcer advertisements of the study. Once a week for the entire duration of the study, a message advertising it was published offering every employee an opportunity to participate. The advertisement mimicked the consent information displayed on the front page of the survey. It explained to prospective participants the nature of the study, why they were an ideal candidate, clarified that there was no obligation for its completion, assured that there is no risk associated with taking the survey, as well as provided an approximate timeframe for how long the survey would take. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary and the identity of each participant remained anonymous unless they provided their contact information for direct outreach. The qualitative study recruitment process solely relied on respondents of the survey volunteering to be interviewed following the completion of the questionnaire.

Quantitative Data Collection

The starting point for the design of the survey was to ensure that it improved upon the above-mentioned limitations in the literature review regarding the lack of perception from individuals with visible body modifications in education settings. The objective of this survey was to collect multiple measures of respondents' viewpoints pertaining to the attitudes directed towards individuals with visible tattoos and/or piercings, especially in

higher education, and whether they felt VBM had an effect on employment opportunities and workplace environment.

The questionnaire was designed and completed via Qualtrics, an official Rowan University survey tool approved by the Institutional Research Board (IRB) for data collection. A five-point Likert scale like questionnaire was utilized to measure the holistic view of each participants' opinions regarding tattooed and pierced professionals. The survey began with informed consent language, which required respondents to select 'yes' following the consent statement indicating that they voluntarily gave approval to participate in the study.

The questionnaire purposely consisted of two demographic and two closed-ended questions, which were to be answered with a one-word answer, such as 'yes' or 'no'. Additionally, it contained 42 closed statements, which required an answer of 'Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Indifference, Agree, and Strongly Agree'. Respondents could not save answers and return at a later time. All submissions were to be completed entirely in one sitting without any time restrictions.

Qualitative Data Collection

The semi-structured, qualitative interviews with each higher education professional composed of seven open-ended questions pertaining to their professional and institutional perceptions of visible body art (tattoos and piercings) in the workplace. According to Dawson (2002), semi-structured interviewing is perhaps the most common type of interview used in qualitative social research. In this type of interview, the researcher wants to know specific information which can be compared with information gained in other interviews. To do this, the same questions need to be asked in each

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interview. However, the researcher also wants the interview to remain flexible so that other important information can still arise. The participants of this method volunteered via the survey to partake in an interview following the completion of their questionnaires. The purpose of this part of the study was to determine whether participant's perceptions influenced the recruitment and employment of non-conventional individuals, as well as to collaborate findings from the quantitative portion of the study. These interviews were offered to be conducted in-person on the respectable campus each participant worked at, as well as via WebEx, a Rowan University approved videoconference application, for the convenience of each participant. Informed consent was again obtained. Each interview was scheduled to last approximately an hour in length to allow enough time for the planned questions to be answered, as well as any questions participants may have had regarding the study. Each respondent was asked the same questions in a homogeneous arrangement. Data were collected via manual note taking, in addition to visual and audio recordings and transcriptions via WebEx.

Data Analysis

To determine whether visible body modifications affected nonconventional individuals' opportunities of recruitment and employment, manual notes, visual and audio recordings, and transcripts were analyzed to identify consistency in participants' responses between survey and interview, as well as investigate whether there were personal prejudices in decision making pertaining to hiring an individual with visible body modifications. As for the quantitative study, statistical analysis tools via Qualtrics were utilized to analyze and visualize survey data, particularly frequency distributions. A thematic analysis was used to organize data collected from the semi-structured

interviews. According to Caulfield (2019), thematic analysis is a method of analyzing qualitative data which is usually applied to a set of texts, such as interview transcripts. All interviews were audio and visually recorded, as well as transcribed verbatim. Coding was used to identify and label relevant words, phrases, actions, opinions, processes, etc. mentioned during the interviews. Relevancy was determined by repetitious patterns, the interviewee explicitly stated that something was important, responses that surprised me, responses that corresponded with or disputed previously published articles, and responses that I believed provided a clear and concise viewpoint on visible body modifications in higher education.

Furthermore, a blinding technique (Institute for Work & Health, 2011) was utilized in the qualitative study to reduce intentional and unintentional performance bias, in which I concealed my facial features (nose and mouth) with a mask and ear piercings with a headset or wig to cover all cartilage jewelry and removed all earlobe accessories. This method was essential to reduce social desirability in virtual interviews and disguise my personal connection to the study.

<center>**Chapter IV**</center>

<center>**Findings**</center>

Profile of the Quantitative Sample

Following IRB approval (Appendix A), a brief description of the study along with

the Qualtrics survey link was submitted via Rowan Daily Mail- Employees, beneath the

Volunteer Opportunities category, to approximately 4103 active faculty and staff of

Rowan University. The sample size was calculated and provided by Rowan University's

Human Resources (HR) department. All employees with an active, designated Rowan

email address were eligible to access and complete the study. The 42 question Likert

scale survey (Appendix B) was launched on December 1, 2022, and manually scheduled

to distribute via Rowan Daily Mail- Employees for once a week (on the same day of each

week) for a maximum of four weeks. A second launch was issued on January 12, 2023,

for an additional four weeks, totaling eight weeks of data collection. The survey was

closed on February 7, 2023. Of those 4103 employees, 80 responses were recorded for a

response rate of 1.9%. All questionnaires completed in its entirety amounted for the

responses.

Table 1 displays the demographic information of the respondents, which includes

the school/college they represent. Specific identifiers, such as job titles, were not required

for anonymity purposes. The intention of respondents identifying their units was for a

comparison of viewpoints to answer the fourth research question. Of these 80 survey

participants, 49/61.25% verified that recruitment or hiring prospective employees is a

part of their position's responsibilities, whereas 31/38.75% confirmed that it is not.

Table 1

Unit

Which college/school/service do you represent	%
Rohrer College of Business (RCB)	1.25
Ric Edelman College of Communication & Creative Arts (Edelman CCCA)	8.75
College of Education (CEAC)	7.50
Henry M/ Rowan College of Engineering (COEng)	2.50
John H. Martinson Honors College (Rowan Honors)	1.25
College of Humanities & Social Sciences (CHSS)	5.00
College of Performing Arts (CPA)	5.00
College of Science & Mathematics (CSM)	6.25
School of Earth & Environment (Rowan Earth)	1.25
School of Nursing & Health Professions (SNHP)	5.00
Global Learning & Partnerships (Rowan Global)	3.75
Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences	0.00
Cooper Medical School of Rowan Medicine (CMSRU)	2.50
Rowan University School of Osteopathic Medicine (RowanSOM)	8.75
Rowan University of Veterinary Medicine (RUSVM)	0.00

Unit

Which college/school/service do you represent	%
School of Innovation & Entrepreneurship (RCB)	1.25
University Advising Services (UAS)	7.50
Office of Career Advancement	0.00
Accessibility Services	2.50
Military Services	0.00
Other	30.00

Survey Questions

Faculty and staff were requested to rate their perceptions of visible body modifications in higher education on a Likert scale. Each Likert scale statement had five points: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Indifferent, Agree, and Strongly Agree. Tables 2 – 43 show the responses of 80 participants collected over a duration of eight weeks.

Analysis of the Data

Research Question One

What are the attitudes towards professionals with visible body modifications (VBM) at Rowan University?

Specific questions throughout the survey captured respondents' perceptions of individuals with visible tattoos and/or piercings. Strongly disagree and disagree as well as strongly agree and agree responses were combined for a collaborative analysis. Table 2

shows that more than half of the respondents, 65/81.25%, collectively disagreed that individuals with body modifications are socially abnormal, while 10/12.50% were indifferent, and 5/6.25% collectively agreed that they are.

Table 2

Individuals with Body Modifications are Socially Abnormal

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	39	48.75
Disagree	26	32.50
Indifferent	10	12.50
Agree	3	3.75
Strongly Agree	2	2.50

Table 3 identifies that 9/11.25% of the participants disagreed that tattoos are attractive, 30/37.50% were indifferent on the matter, and more than half, 41/51.25%, agreed that they think tattoos are attractive. Table 4 displays identical collective disagree results, 9/11.25%, regarding the attractiveness of piercings. Respondents were more indifferent on this matter than on tattoos with 38/47.50% and 33/41.25% agreed that piercings are attractive.

Table 3

Tattoos are Attractive

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	2	2.50
Disagree	7	8.75
Indifferent	30	37.50
Agree	22	27.50
Strongly Agree	19	23.75

Table 4

Piercings are Attractive

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	4	5.00
Disagree	5	6.25
Indifferent	38	47.50
Agree	23	28.75
Strongly Agree	10	12.50

Regarding viewpoints on specific genders with visible body modifications, there was not a significant difference in the results. Tables 5 - 8 include the perceptions of tattoos and piercings on women and men. Most respondents, 65/81.25%, disagreed that women with visible tattoos are unattractive, meanwhile 69/86.25% disagreed that men with visible tattoos are unattractive. Altogether 12/15.00% were indifferent on the

attractiveness of women and 10/12.50% were indifferent on the attractiveness of men with visible tattoos. Additionally, 3/3.75% agreed that women and 1/1.25% agreed that men with visible tattoos are unattractive. Perceptions on the attractiveness of pierced women and men were relatively similar. Jointly, 67/83.75% disagreed that women with visible piercings are unattractive, while 66/82.50% disagreed that men with visible piercings are unattractive. Respondents were identically indifferent on the matter regarding both genders with a collective result of 9/11.25%. Furthermore, men were slightly viewed as more unattractive with visible piercings than women. 5/6.25% of respondents agreed that men with piercings are unattractive, meanwhile 4/5.00% agreed that women with piercings are unattractive.

Table 5

Women with Visible Tattoos are Unattractive

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	51	63.75
Disagree	14	17.50
Indifferent	12	15.00
Agree	3	3.75
Strongly Agree	0	0.00

Table 6

Women with Visible Piercings are Unattractive

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	48	60.00
Disagree	19	23.75
Indifferent	9	11.25
Agree	4	5.00
Strongly Agree	0	0.00

Table 7

Men with Visible Tattoos are Unattractive

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	55	68.75
Disagree	14	17.50
Indifferent	10	12.50
Agree	1	1.25
Strongly Agree	0	0.00

Table 8

Men with Visible Piercings are Unattractive

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	49	61.25
Disagree	17	21.25
Indifferent	9	11.25
Agree	5	6.25
Strongly Agree	0	0.00

Table 9 breaks down the viewpoints of respondents regarding the professionalism of individuals who display body art in the workplace. The majority of the participants, 68/85.00%, did not agree that the display of body art in the workplace was unprofessional. However, 10/12.50% were indifferent and 2/2.50% agreed that displaying body art, whether tattoos or piercings, in the workplace is unprofessional.

Table 9

I Think the Display of Body Art in the Workplace is Unprofessional

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	38	47.50
Disagree	30	37.50
Indifferent	10	12.50
Agree	1	1.25
Strongly Agree	1	1.25

Table 10 addresses whether respondents think that individuals with VBM are attention seekers. A serious number of participants, 70/87.50%, do not consider individuals with VBM to be attention seekers. Meanwhile 4/5.00% were indifferent and 6/7.50% agreed that they consider tattooed and/or pierced individuals to be attention seekers.

Table 10

I Think that Individuals with Visible Body Modifications are Attention Seekers

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	41	51.25
Disagree	29	36.25
Indifferent	4	5.00
Agree	5	6.25
Strongly Agree	1	1.25

Tables 11 and 12 address the comfortability of respondents having an individual with visible body modifications representing their unit within Rowan University. Both tables had identical collective disagree results. Most of the respondents, 73/91.25%, would not mind if an individual with either visible tattoos or piercings represented their unit. 2/2.50% respondents were indifferent regarding individuals with visible piercings and 3/3.75% were indifferent regarding individuals with visible tattoos representing their units. Slightly differing, only 5/6.25% confirmed that they would mind someone with visible piercings and 4/5.00% would mind someone with visible tattoos representing their unit within Rowan University.

Table 11

I Would Mind if an Individual with Visible Tattoos Represented My Unit

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	57	71.25
Disagree	16	20.00
Indifferent	3	3.75
Agree	4	5.00
Strongly Agree	0	0.00

Table 12

I Would Mind if an Individual with Visible Piercings Represented My Unit

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	55	68.75
Disagree	18	22.50
Indifferent	2	2.50
Agree	3	3.75
Strongly Agree	2	2.50

Tables 13 and 14 concentrate on the negative connotation associated with visible body modifications. Table 13 identifies that 67/83.75% of respondents do not agree that visible tattoos are taboo, while slightly differing, Table 14 reflects that 65/81.25% do not

agree that visible piercings are taboo. Only 4/5.00% were indifferent about visible

tattoos, yet twice as many, 8/10.00% were indifferent about visible piercings being taboo.

Of the 80 respondents, 9/11.25% agreed that visible tattoos and 7/8.25% agree that

visible piercings are taboo.

Table 13

Visible Tattoos are Taboo

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	41	51.25
Disagree	26	32.50
Indifferent	4	5.00
Agree	8	10.00
Strongly Agree	1	1.25

Table 14

Visible Piercings are Taboo

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	41	51.25
Disagree	24	30.00
Indifferent	8	10.00
Agree	7	8.75
Strongly Agree	0	0.00

Lastly, Table 15 provides insight on how respondents view the recognition of individuals with VBM at Rowan University. A total of 13/16.25% respondents disagreed, 46/57.50% were indifferent, and 21/26.25% agreed that individuals with VBM are well perceived at Rowan University.

Table 15

Individuals with Visible Body Modifications are Well Perceived at Rowan University

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	3	3.75
Disagree	10	12.50
Indifferent	46	57.50
Agree	18	22.50
Strongly Agree	3	3.75

Research Question Two

How might the display of visible body modifications affect Rowan University's values and objectives?

A mission within Rowan University is to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion (Rowan University, n.d.b, n.p), as well as a vision to create an environment free from discrimination and harassment. Some core values within the institution's units include respect (Rowan University, n.d.c., n.p), wellness, professionalism, humanism, empathy, compassion, ethics, integrity (Rowan University, n.d.d., n.p), and empowerment (Rowan University, n.d.e., n.p). Table 16 reflects respondent's perception on whether hiring an individual with body modifications reflects Rowan's values and objections. A total of 18/22.50% disagreed that hiring an unconventional professional reflects the institution's values and objectives. 30/37.50% were indifferent on the matter, while 32/40.00% agreed

that the employment of an individual with visible body modifications coincides with the

university's morals.

Table 16

Hiring an Individual with Body Modifications Reflects Rowan's Values and Objectives

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	10	12.50
Disagree	8	10.00
Indifferent	30	37.50
Agree	22	27.50
Strongly Agree	10	12.50

Research Question Three

How are professionals with visible body modifications perceived by hiring managers at Rowan University?

Rowan University advocates that it is committed to a policy of nondiscrimination for all its students and employees and for applicants for admission and employment. Their goal is to eliminate any patterns of prohibited unequal treatment from a community that prizes inclusion and fosters an environment of civility and respect (Rowan University, n.d.f., n.p). Specific questions throughout the survey captured respondents' viewpoints on the employability, impression, professionalism, and credibility of qualified professionals with visible body modifications. Respondents were also asked to provide their input on potential conscious or unconscious prejudice against individuals with visible body modifications.

Tables 17 and 18 focus on perceptions of whether respondents would employ a qualified applicant with either visible tattoos or piercings. Of the 80 participants, 8/10.00% strongly disagreed that they would hire a qualified professional with visible tattoos. 4/5.00% were indifferent and 68/85.00% collectively agreed that they would employ a tattooed professional. There were close results in Table 18 regarding the employability of professionals with visible piercings. Fewer respondents, 7/8.75%, disagreed that they would hire an individual with visible piercings while more, 6/7.50%, were indifferent on the matter. Nearly identical to the agreement results of visible tattoos, 67/83.75% agreed that they would employ a visibly pierced professional.

Table 17

I Would Hire a Qualified Professional with Visible Tattoos

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	8	10.00
Disagree	0	0.00
Indifferent	4	5.00
Agree	18	22.50
Strongly Agree	50	62.50

Table 18

I Would Hire a Qualified Professional with Visible Piercings

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	4	5.00
Disagree	3	3.75
Indifferent	6	7.50
Agree	19	23.75
Strongly Agree	48	60.00

Table 19 displays whether there is a preference for hiring individuals without visible body modifications over those with them. More than half, 51/63.75%, collectively

disagreed that they have a preference between hiring those without over those with VBM, while 24/30.00% were indifferent on whether they had a preference. 5/6.25% of respondents confirmed that they would prefer to employ someone without visible body modifications over someone with them.

Table 19

I'd Prefer to Hire Someone Without Visible Body Modifications Over Someone With Them

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	30	37.50
Disagree	21	26.25
Indifferent	24	30.00
Agree	3	3.75
Strongly Agree	2	2.50

Table 20 shows that most respondents, 46/57.50%, do not agree that individuals with body modifications jeopardize their careers. Meanwhile, 16/20.00% were indifferent and 18/22.50% agreed that body modifications negatively impacted careers.

Table 20

Individuals with Body Modifications Jeopardize Their Careers

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	19	23.75
Disagree	27	33.75
Indifferent	16	20.00
Agree	17	21.25
Strongly Agree	1	1.25

Table 21 and 22 aimed to answer if participants believed that visible tattoos and piercings can affect someone's credibility. Both tables had identical collective disagree, indifferent, and agree responses. 55/68.75% answered that they disagree that visible tattoos and piercings affected someone's credibility. 10/12.50% were indifferent while 15/18.75% agreed that both tattoos and piercings affected someone's credibility.

Table 21

Visible Tattoos can Affect Someone's Credibility

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	30	37.50
Disagree	25	31.25
Indifferent	10	12.50
Agree	15	18.75
Strongly Agree	0	0.00

Table 22

Visible Piercings can Affect Someone's Credibility

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	28	35.00
Disagree	27	33.75
Indifferent	10	12.50
Agree	15	18.75
Strongly Agree	0	0.00

Table 23 sheds light on the acceptance of visible body modifications within the institution. Altogether, 12/15.00% disagreed that visible body modifications, whether tattoos or piercings, are acceptable in the workplace. Likewise, the same amount rated

that they were indifferent to the statement. In total, 56/70.00% of participants agreed that they considered visible body modifications to be acceptable in the workplace.

Table 23

Visible Body Modifications are Acceptable in the Workplace

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	2	2.50
Disagree	10	12.50
Indifferent	12	15.00
Agree	29	36.25
Strongly Agree	27	33.75

Respondents were required to consider whether visible body modifications impacted prospective applicant's employability regardless of their qualifications. Table 24 verifies that a considerable portion of respondents, 74/92.50%, disagreed that they think candidates should not be hired if they have VBM regardless of their qualifications. Only 4/5.00% were indifferent and 2/2.50% agreed that qualifications did not supersede the decision to offer employment to an individual with visible body modifications.

Table 24

Regardless of Their Qualifications for a Position at My Unit, Candidates Should Not be Hired if They have Visible Body Modifications

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	60	75.00
Disagree	14	17.50
Indifferent	4	5.00
Agree	1	1.25
Strongly Agree	1	1.25

Rowan University is committed to equity, which is the guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all students, faculty, and staff, while identifying and eliminating barriers that prevent full participation of some groups. The institution stands by a pledge to work actively to challenge and respond to bias, harassment, and discrimination. They are committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all persons (Rowan University, n.d.b., n.p). Table 25 shows the results of whether participants would give equal opportunity to a person with visible body modifications. Of the 80 responses, 8/10.00% disagreed that they would and 2/2.50% were indifferent on if they would or not. A great number of respondents, 70/87.50%, collectively agreed that they would provide equal opportunities to a person with visible body modifications.

Table 25

I Would Give Equal Opportunity to a Person with Visible Body Modifications

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	7	8.75
Disagree	1	1.25
Indifferent	2	2.50
Agree	23	28.75
Strongly Agree	47	58.75

Regarding the impact visible body art has on first impressions, Table 26 addresses the perception of how respondents view individuals with visible tattoos and/or piercings during an initial encounter. Most answers, 63/78.75%, disagreed that individuals with body modifications do not leave a positive first impression. A fair number of respondents, 14/17.50%, were indifferent of their views and 3/3.75% agreed that tattooed and/or pierced individuals did not leave a positive first impression.

Table 26

Individuals with Body Modifications Do Not Leave Positive First Impressions

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	35	43.75
Disagree	28	35.00
Indifferent	14	17.50
Agree	3	3.75
Strongly Agree	0	0.00

Table 27 concentrates on participant's opinion of whether an individual can simultaneously be professional while having visible body modifications. A substantial number of respondents, 70/87.50%, disagreed that people with VBM cannot appear professional at the same time. 4/5.00% were indifferent as to whether professional appearance and visible body modifications can coexist. 6/7.50% agreed that a person cannot present themselves as professional while having visible body modifications.

Table 27

People with Visible Body Modifications Cannot Appear Professional at the Same Time

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	43	53.75
Disagree	27	33.75
Indifferent	4	5.00
Agree	4	5.00
Strongly Agree	2	2.50

Table 28 recognizes participants' comfortability employing someone with visible body modifications. A larger part of them, 71/88.75%, disagreed that they are uncomfortable hiring an individual with tattoos and/or piercings. 5/6.25% were indifferent about their comfortability, while 4/5.00% agreed that they are uncomfortable hiring a person with visible body modifications.

Table 28

I am Uncomfortable Hiring an Individual with Visible Body Modifications

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	50	62.50
Disagree	21	26.25
Indifferent	5	6.25
Agree	4	5.00
Strongly Agree	0	0.00

Tables 29 and 30 demonstrate whether respondents believe visible tattoos and piercings have an impact on prospective employer's first impression. This data differs from Table 26 because it required participants to consider another party's perception other than their own. Table 29 shows that 21/26.25% disagreed that visible tattoos have an impact on employer's first impression, while in Table 30, 24/30.00% disagreed that visible piercings did. Both tables had identical indifferent results of 19/23.75%. Slightly differing, Table 29 had half the respondents, 40/50.00%, agree that visible tattoos impacted employer's first impressions compared to Table 30, which had 37/46.25% participants agree that visible piercings had an impact.

Table 29

Visible Tattoos Impact Prospective Employer's First Impressions

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	9	11.25
Disagree	12	15.00
Indifferent	19	23.75
Agree	38	47.50
Strongly Agree	2	2.50

Table 30

Visible Piercings Impact Prospective Employer's First Impressions

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	5	6.25
Disagree	19	23.75
Indifferent	19	23.75
Agree	35	43.75
Strongly Agree	2	2.50

The survey statements in Tables 31 and 32 required respondents to consciously conduct a self-introspection to identify potential implicit biases towards people with visible body modifications. Table 31 shows that 71/88.75% disagreed that they have a

personal prejudice against interviewees with multiple tattoos. 8/10.00% were indifferent and 1/1.25% agreed that they do have a prejudice against multiple tattooed interviewees. As for Table 32, 69/86.25% disagreed with having a personal prejudice against interviewees with multiple piercings. Fewer respondents were indifferent regarding piercings than tattoos. A total of 5/6.25% were indifferent. However more respondents agreed that they had a personal prejudice against multiple pierced interviewees than tattooed. Collectively, 6/7.50% agreed that they have a prejudice against pierced interviewees.

Table 31

I Have a Personal Prejudice Against Interviewees with Multiple Tattoos

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	58	72.50
Disagree	13	16.25
Indifferent	8	10.00
Agree	1	1.25
Strongly Agree	0	0.00

Table 32

I Have a Personal Prejudice Against Interviewees with Multiple Piercings

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	56	70.00
Disagree	13	16.25
Indifferent	5	6.25
Agree	6	7.50
Strongly Agree	0	0.00

Participants were requested to determine whether hiring an individual with visible body modifications corresponds with the standards of the specific unit within Rowan University that they represent. Table 33 shows that 16/20.00% disagreed that the employment of an individual with VBM reflects their unit's values and objectives. The mass, 33/41.25%, were indifferent and 31/38.75% agreed that hiring an individual with visible tattoos and/or piercings coincides with their unit's principles.

Table 33

Hiring an Individual with Visible Body Modifications Reflects My Unit's Values and Objectives

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	6	7.50
Disagree	10	12.50
Indifferent	33	41.25
Agree	23	28.75
Strongly Agree	8	10.00

Research Question Four

In what ways do perceptions differ across campus units at Rowan University regarding professionals with visible body modifications?

The statement within Table 34 was intended to determine whether respondents' units had an established appearance protocol, which could be a contributing factor towards their perceptions of visible body modifications at Rowan University. A total of 35/43.75% disagreed that their unit has a code of conduct or appearance policy. 25/31.25% were indifferent and 20/25.00% agreed that there is a protocol in place within their unit.

Table 34

My Unit Has a Code of Conduct or Appearance Policy in Place

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	16	20.00
Disagree	19	23.75
Indifferent	25	31.25
Agree	20	25.00
Strongly Agree	0	0.00

Research Question Five

What kind of environment does staff and faculty at Rowan University provide for unconventional professionals?

Tables 35 and 36 address whether respondents would be reluctant to engage with individuals with visible body modifications. In Table 35, nearly all the respondents, 77/96.25%, confirmed that they would not hesitate to approach someone with visible tattoos. Only 1/1.25% was indifferent and 2/2.50% strongly agreed that they would hesitate. Similarly, Table 36 had nearly identical results for those who collectively disagreed, 78/97.50% that they would hesitate to approach someone with visible piercings. There were not any respondents indifferent on the matter, however there was an identical number, 2/2.50%, that confirmed that they hesitate to approach an individual with visible piercings.

Table 35

I Would Hesitate to Approach Someone with Visible Tattoos

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	59	73.75
Disagree	18	22.50
Indifferent	1	1.25
Agree	0	0.00
Strongly Agree	2	2.50

Table 36

I Would Hesitate to Approach Someone with Visible Piercings

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	58	72.50
Disagree	20	25.00
Indifferent	0	0.00
Agree	2	2.50
Strongly Agree	0	0.00

Tables 37 and 38 show the perceptions of whether professionals with visible piercings and/or tattoos should be required to conceal or remove them. According to table 37, collectively 71/88.75% disagreed that individuals with visible piercings should be required to cover or remove them. 4/5.00% were indifferent regarding the requirement for concealment or removal, while 5/6.25% agreed that piercings should be covered or removed entirely. As for opinions on visible tattoos in Table 38, 67/83.75% disagreed that professionals with them should be enforced to have them covered. Over twice as many respondents, 9/11.25%, were indifferent as to whether visible tattoos should be covered than piercings. However, less respondents, 2/2.50%, agreed for the required concealment of tattoos than piercings.

Table 37

Professionals with Visible Piercings Should be Required to Cover or Remove Them

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	49	61.25
Disagree	22	27.50
Indifferent	4	5.00
Agree	4	5.00
Strongly Agree	1	1.25

Table 38

Professionals with Visible Tattoos Should be Required to Cover or Remove Them

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	47	58.75
Disagree	20	25.00
Indifferent	9	11.25
Agree	1	1.25
Strongly Agree	3	3.75

Participants were required to answer whether they would want someone with visible body modifications representing Rowan University. Table 39 differs from Tables 11 and 12 because it asks respondents' viewpoint of visibly tattooed and/or pierced

professionals representing the institution holistically instead of just a fraction of it. A significant number of respondents, 74/92.50%, disagreed that they would not want someone with visible body modifications representing Rowan University. 4/5.00% were indifferent on their preference and 2/2.50% agreed that they would not want a visibly tattooed and/or pierced individual representing Rowan University.

Table 39

I Would Not Want Someone with Visible Body Modifications Representing Rowan University

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	54	67.50
Disagree	20	25.00
Indifferent	4	5.00
Agree	2	2.50
Strongly Agree	0	0.00

Table 40 displays the perceptions of faculty and staff specifically towards professionals in higher education with visible body modifications. A meaningful number of respondents, 68/85.00%, disagreed that professionals in higher education should not display their visible body modifications. 9/11.25% were indifferent and 3/3.75% agreed that professionals in higher education should not display their visible tattoos and/or piercings.

Table 40

Professionals in Higher Education Should Not Display Their Visible Body Modifications

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	50	62.50
Disagree	18	22.50
Indifferent	9	11.25
Agree	2	2.50
Strongly Agree	1	1.25

Tables 41 and 42 show respondents' views on the acceptance of hiring an individual with visible body art within the unit they represent at Rowan University. A notable number of participants, 63/78.75%, disagreed that hiring an individual with visible tattoos would not be well received in their units, while 67/83.75% disagreed that visible piercings would not be accepted. There were nearly identical indifferent results. 14/17.50% were indifferent as to whether visible tattoos would be well received and 12/15.00% were indifferent on the approval of visible piercings. A total of 3/3.75% agreed that visible tattoos and 1/1.25% agreed that visible piercings would not be well received in their units.

Table 41

Hiring an Individual with Visible Tattoos Would Not be Well Received in My Unit

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	32	40.00
Disagree	31	38.75
Indifferent	14	17.50
Agree	3	3.75
Strongly Agree	0	0.00

Table 42

Hiring an Individual with Visible Piercings Would Not be Well Received in My Unit

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	37	46.25
Disagree	30	37.50
Indifferent	12	15.00
Agree	1	1.25
Strongly Agree	0	0.00

Data shown in Table 43 reflects whether respondents perceive Rowan University as the equal opportunist it publicly advocates to be. Collectively 6/7.50% disagreed that

the institution is an equal opportunity employer. 15/18.75% were indifferent and a substantial number of respondents, 59/73.75% collectively agreed that Rowan University offers equal opportunities to prospective and active employees.

Table 43

Rowan University is an Equal Opportunity Employer

	f	%
Strongly Disagree	1	1.25
Disagree	5	6.25
Indifferent	15	18.75
Agree	32	40.00
Strongly Agree	27	33.75

Profile of the Qualitative Sample

Subjects for the qualitative study consisted of survey participants that volunteered to partake in a seven-question interview (Appendix C), in which 48/60.00% volunteered to be interviewed and 32/40.00% declined. There was not an expectancy number established prior. Of those 48 volunteers, five were randomly selected for interviews and contacted via the email address provided at the conclusion of the survey. During correspondence, availability and location preferences were exchanged to coordinate a meeting at each other's convenience. Following the confirmation of each meeting, the Adult Consent Form for Social & Behavioral Research and Audio/Videotape Consent Form were sent to participants for review, signature, and return prior to the interviews being conducted.

All five interviews were administered via Webex, where recordings and transcriptions were generated by the platform. Each interview was recorded to ensure transcripts could be analyzed accurately. At the beginning of each interview, a protocol was read aloud to reassure participants that their identity would remain anonymous, that their participation was strictly voluntary, and they had the option to withdraw their consent at any time. Despite having their written consent, recorded verbal consent was requested to commence the questioning. The interviews were intended to provide additional information from faculty and staff responsible for recruitment or hiring perceive individuals with visible body modifications and whether their views influenced the employability of an unconventional professional. Additionally, specific questions were asked to determine how they believe those individuals would be perceived by other employees and students at Rowan University. Transcriptions were reviewed to extract

quotes, keywords, phrases, and/or topics. Cross-referencing between each transcript was done to determine themes.

Sample Biographies

Before evaluating the findings of the qualitative study, I thought it was necessary to include general identifiers of each interview participant (Table 44), which includes their corresponding college/school/service and gender. This information can assist in future research on the subject, which will be further elaborated on in Chapter 5. Each participant's real name was replaced with a pseudonym to keep their identities confidential during the duration of this research study.

Table 44

Biographies of Interviewees

Pseudonym	College/School/Service	Gender
P1	Other	Female
P2	School of Nursing & Health Professions	Female
P3	Other	Female
P4	Other	Female
P5	Global Learning & Partnerships	Female

Interviews

Participants were asked seven open-ended questions in a homogeneous arrangement. Each interview was scheduled to last approximately an hour in length to allow enough time for the planned questions to be answered, as well as any questions participants may have had regarding the study. During the time of questioning, they could speak openly and share their views on the subject. To avoid potentially influencing participant's perceptions because of my own visible body modifications, my facial features (nose and mouth) and ears were concealed from view with a face mask and headset.

Analysis of the Data

Perceptions toward Professionals with VBM in Academia

Question two of each interview was targeted to collect each participant's view on professionals with visible tattoos and/or piercings in academia. Overall, none of the five participants expressed a negative personal view towards individuals with visible body modifications in education. On the contrary, participants were either neutral or openly accepting towards professionals with VBM and considered their self-expression as admirable, captivating, not problematic, a conversation starter, and a characteristic that students could relate to. P2 elaborated on her personal experience working alongside professionals with VBM by stating:

> I have worked with a lot of fellow professors and professional staff and support
> that have both piercings and tattoos and my feelings are that I'm very neutral. As
> far as that goes, I don't have any sort of positive or negative feelings. I just always

value the person as far as their personality, kindness, professionalism is

concerned. I'm not opposed and I'm certainly not against it. I've admired some

tattoos because of their beauty and the artistic component of it.

Additionally, during the interviews with P4 and P5, they were very expressive of their

attitudes towards VBM by saying:

I think they're so cool. I think that it shows a lot of individuality and confidence

in whatever your thing is. I think that it sparks questions like "tell me about your

tattoo", "what does it mean?", "what's it symbolize?", "why do you have it?".

Interesting questions rather than implying that they shouldn't have it.

Honestly, I think it kind of endears me to them more like in academia. When I had

professors in undergrad and graduate school who had body modifications,

especially tattoos, I automatically thought they were cool individuals. If someone

has a gorgeous piercing like a nice nose ring or a little piercing over the eyebrow,

I'll notice it and think it looks nice, but it doesn't change my perception of them

either way.

When addressing their views on employees hiding their body art during an interview then

revealing it upon hiring, participants expressed an understanding of why interviewees felt

the need to conceal it due to stigmatization. Some participants had expressed that the

suppression of an interviewee's self-expression is unfortunate because they cannot be

their true authentic self. P3 vocalized her feelings on the matter stating:

I understand why they hide their body art during interviews. Personally, I don't

think it's necessary. I understand the stigmatization behind it and why they would

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do it. I feel that it's a shame since they've paid that kind of money and trying to

express themselves but feel the need to cover them up.

Also, P4 shared a similar perspective. She stated:

Honestly, I think it would bother me more that they felt a need to hide it because

that would indicate they felt it wasn't a comfortable work environment to bring all

of themselves to and I would feel kind of bad.

Regarding their perceptions of how faculty, staff, and students would respond or react to

the hiring of a visibly tattooed and/or pierced profession and its impact on unit ethos, all

of the participants shared similar responses. Each claimed that VBM would not

negatively affect their unit's principles or cause an interruption in functionality if the

employee is fulfilling their position's duties and responsibilities. Professionals within

their units are less concerned about physical appearance than they are regarding

productivity. Some participants disclosed that many faculty and staff within their unit

have visible body modifications, which may have influenced their belief that an

additional unconventional professional to their unit would not be negatively impactful.

All respondents agreed that hiring a visibly tattooed and/or pierced professional would be

well received by students. P1 shared her opinion on the matter by saying:

Students would be more receptive than faculty and staff because of the current

culture in the world. Tattoos and piercings are accepted a lot of the time,

especially within the younger generation because they're going to be more open.

It was expressed that there is a greater tolerability to visible body modifications

nowadays because they're becoming more mainstream and prevalent among Gen Z and

millennials. Professionals with visible tattoos and/or piercings were considered to be potentially more relatable to the diverse demographic of students at Rowan University.

Employment Roles & Appearance Expectations

Participants were asked if they have ever interviewed an individual with visible body modifications and many of them confirmed that they have experience with that demographic. It was mentioned numerous times that the position or institutional role a candidate is applying for may influence the determination of employment. Some participants suggested that positions that are considered less customer or student facing were less likely impacted by the appearance of visible body modifications than roles with direct student and faculty interactions. P1 provided her input on the matter by stating:

> We are behind the scenes in my particular role and the roles that I would be interviewing candidates for so I think it matters a lot less than it might for someone who is more customer facing.

P4, who occupies a student facing role, shared her thoughts on the subject expressing:

> I don't think it would be a big deal at most levels. However, if you're going up to higher levels or executive levels, people may have thoughts about it.

Furthermore, when questioned what factors were considered when deciding the employability of an interviewee with visible body modifications, participants verified that professionalism, qualifications, and experience superseded their nontraditional appearance. A candidate's skilled ability to develop interpersonal relationships, answer interview inquiries, and convey their motivations for the position during an interview

were more impressionable qualities than their visible tattoos and/or piercings. All participants expressed similar perceptions regarding the characteristics they seek in interviewees. P2 disclosed certain appearance expectations of an interviewee by stating:

> Do they have good eye contact with me? Are they professional and polite and answering the questions appropriately? And then again, at the end of the day, because of all their experience and their answers, are they able to, you know, physically, emotionally, mentally, and academically do this job.

P3 responded to the question by stating:

> I go by how they answer the questions and how their resume is and their experience, not by their physical appearance.

Similarly, P5 said:

> I usually just look at them as a person, overall, their qualities during the interview not their body. Modifications wouldn't really sway me one way or the other, but I feel like that's because I'm in higher education.

Convergence of Findings

Research question 3a was designed as a mixed methods question. The quantitative and qualitative findings were separately analyzed and addressed above. This section discusses triangulation of the data as a whole to examine: in what ways do the qualitative data regarding hiring individuals with VBMs support or reject the quantitative findings? The interview responses of all five volunteers were analyzed and compared to their survey results to evaluate the consistency in their answers. In both studies, all participants

steadily confirmed that they would employ a candidate with visible body modification. Collectively they agreed that the qualifications of an unconventional professional influence the likelihood of a job offering rather than their unconventional physical appearance. This is complimentary to their survey responses that unanimously strongly agreed that they would give equal opportunities to individuals with visible body modifications. None of the participants expressed a negative perception towards the display of visible tattoos and/or piercings in the workplace in either survey or interview. Unitedly they discouraged the concealment of an individual's self-expression and denied having a personal prejudice against interviewees with tattoos and/or piercings. This study's survey and interview responses suggest that professionals in higher education with visible body modifications would be generally welcomed by faculty and staff at Rowan University. In both the survey and interviews, participants provided primarily positive responses regarding their perceptions of professionals with visible body modifications in academia.

Chapter V

Summary, Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary of the Study

This mixed method study investigated the perspectives of faculty and staff at Rowan University toward individuals with visible body modifications, more specifically their input on professionals in academia with them. This analysis sought to determine whether unconventional self-expression affected the employability of a qualified interviewee. An advertisement for the study, which included the link to the Qualtrics survey, was conducted via Rowan Daily Mail- Employees for once a week for an eight-week duration. The survey was accessible to all active 4103 employees. A total of 80 employees completed the survey in its entirety. Following the completion of each survey, respondents had the opportunity to volunteer to participate in an interview, in which 49 employees volunteered and provided their contact information. Of those respondents, five were randomly selected to be interviewed to collect additional insight on their views of the subject. Participants were asked a series of questions about their experience interviewing individuals with VBM, how they perceive those professionals in academia, what factors were taken into consideration when determining the employability of an unconventional professional, and how they believed Rowan's campus community would react or respond to employment of a professional with visible body art. All interviews were administered via Webex and were recorded, transcribed, coded, and used to retrieve direct quotes from participants. Both quantitative and qualitative data suggest that

employment opportunities at Rowan University are not endangered due to unconventional self-expression.

Discussion of the Findings

The results suggest that, overall, there is not a collective negative or discriminatory perception towards professionals in higher education with visible body modifications. Qualified professionals with visible body art were not considered to be less professional, favored, credible, or attractive than someone without them. Faculty and staff at Rowan University were rather accepting of individualism in the workplace and the expressivity of those within their campus community and prospective employees. Both quantitative and qualitative results from this study confirm that physical attributes are not a characteristic taken into consideration when determining the recruitment or employment of a prospective applicant. Individuals responsible for hiring within their respective units were interested in professional and personality traits, such as experience, competency, and impressionability, which satisfied the qualifications for the position than unorthodox physical features. This perspective is correspondent to the results of the mixed methods study conducted by Mironski and Rao (2019), in which the impression of professionalism depended more on personal attributes than physical features.

This study's findings do not support previous literature (Baumann et al., 2015; Hilliker, 2021; Seiter & Hatch, 2005; Swanger, 2006, Timming, 2015) with results displaying stigmatization, discrimination, or stereotyping against people with visible body modifications, especially tattoos. Some interview participants verbally expressed an understanding of the increasing prevalence of visible body modifications in present

society and how it is continuously becoming incorporated into societal norms and considered 'mainstream'. The assimilation of visible body modifications into social norms may be a considerable influence on participants' perceptions and acceptance. The increasing frequency and popularity of visible body modifications may explain why a significant number of participants disagreed that visible tattoos and piercings are taboo, that individuals with VBM are socially abnormal, that they would prefer someone without VBM over someone with them, that people with VBM do not leave positive first impressions, and that the display of body art in the workplace is unprofessional. Another potential influence on participants' approval, could be their personal connection to the subject. Some interviewees disclosed that they have one or more body modifications. Other than the five participants from the qualitative study, it is unknown how many survey respondents have tattoos and/or piercings.

When taking these points into consideration, it supports this study's results that participants would hiring an individual with VBM and would be unbothered by them representing a specific unit or the institution entirely. Like the study conducted by Timming (2015) concerning investigating various sectors' perspectives, an analysis of how VBM impacts recruitment and employment within diverse disciplines was completed and produced opposite results. In both studies, majority of the respondents verified that they would give equal opportunity to a person with VBM, are comfortable hiring an individual with VBM, do not have a personal prejudice against interviewees with visible tattoos and/or piercings, and do not agree that unconventional physical appearances surpass qualifications when considering employment.

Unlike the findings of Baumann et al. (2015), participants did not have a significant or evident preference between either gender with visible tattoos and/or piercings. Contrary to the results of Seiter and Hatch (2005), participants did not indicate that visible tattoos impaired a person's representation regarding credibility and attractiveness. In fact, more than half of the participants confirmed that they believe tattoos are attractive and a substantial amount shared the same perception towards piercings. Most of the study's participants did not believe that first impressions were negatively affected by visible body modifications. In contrast to the results of previous studies (Baumann et al., 2015; Hilliker, 2021; Seiter & Hatch, 2005; Swanger, 2006, Timming, 2015), the participants of this mixed method research perceived non-traditional professionals with VBM with a composition of positive and neutral attitudes.

Study's Assumptions

In addition to this study's results challenging previous research outcomes, it also contested my assumptions I outlined in Chapter 1 in reference to Rowan University having an established workplace appearance policy that addressed their position on visible body modifications, as well as the appearance expectations between conservative and liberal disciplines within the institution. A search of specific terms such as 'tattoos', 'piercing', 'appearance policy', and 'code of conduct' on Rowan University's main page, did not provide any results reflecting the institution's expectations regarding student, faculty, and staff appearance standards. However, within the results there were specifically four units, School of Osteopathic Medicine (Rowan University, 2018), Cooper Medical School (Rowan University, 2022b), School of Health Professions (Rowan University, 2021b), and Department of Psychology (Rowan University, 2016),

that had independent professional appearance policies published directly for students that addressed their stance on professionalism, as well as visible body art and jewelry in the workplace.

State Discrimination Policy Criteria

An effective policy or code of conduct on the matter is not legally required because visible body modifications are not applicable to be considered a protected category in the New Jersey State Policy Prohibiting Discrimination in the Workplace (2020). Under this policy, forms of employment discrimination or harassment based upon the following protected categories are prohibited and will not be tolerated: race, creed, color, national origin, nationality, ancestry, age, sex/gender, pregnancy, marital status, civil union status, domestic partnership status, familial status, religion, affectional or sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, atypical hereditary cellular or blood trait, genetic information, liability for service in the Armed Forces of the United States, or disability (New Jersey State Policy Prohibiting Discrimination in the Workplace, 2020). Due to the lack of state and federal protection for visible body modifications, employers may develop professional appearance policies that require visible tattoos and/or piercings to be concealed or removed and it will not be considered legally discriminatory or punishable.

Unit Policies

According to the student handbook for the School of Osteopathic Medicine (Rowan University, 2018), professional appearance and attitude are essential to good doctor-patient relationships. Students are expected to maintain high professional

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standards of dress and behavior to create a favorable, positive image as representative of the medical profession. Jewelry may be worn around the neck, wrists, ankles, or ears provided it is safe and not excessive. In general, body piercing is not acceptable, but it is recognized that some piercings may have religious/cultural significance and may be tastefully worn.

Within the Cooper Medical School of Rowan University Compendium of Student Policies for Faculty, Residents, and Staff (Rowan University, 2018), it states:

"Tattoos must be modest and may need to be covered while at work in a manner that does not interfere with patient safety, infection control or equipment operation. Tattoos shall be prohibited if they contain nudity, foul language, gang symbols, convey an expression of hate, violate Cooper's Harassment-Free Workplace Policy and/or are inconsistent with a professional environment. It also addresses their stance on visible piercings stating, earrings can be worn on the ears and generally should be no larger than one inch in diameter. Ear piercing will be limited to a maximum of three (3) earrings per ear. Nose jewelry is discouraged and if worn, must be limited to one small stud no larger than three (3) millimeters in diameter. Pierced jewelry and rings are not permitted on any other visible body part (including but not limited to, eyebrows, lip, and tongue). No ear gauges/expanders permitted."

Similarly, the School of Health Professions' Coordinated Master's Program in Dietetics Student Handbook and Policy and Procedures (Rowan University, 2021b) expressed that because dietetics students present a particular image to the patient, a neat,

professional appearance is especially important. Students were advised that only one pair of non-dangling, non-obtrusive earrings can be worn in clinical, community or foodservice areas. Tattoos and body piercings should be attempted to be covered during any lab or supervised practice. Facial piercings, such as a nose ring, should be removed during any lab or supervised practice.

Likewise, the Department of Psychology's Mater of Arts & Certificate of Advance Graduate Study in Applied Behavior Analysis (Rowan University, 2016) restricted the appearance of visible body modifications. Their dress code expectations were expressed beneath Professional Behavior for Practicum saying students must dress professionally and conservatively while at the practicum site. Tattoos and piercings are required to be concealed appropriately.

Rowan University Policy

With respect to Rowan's Policy Prohibiting Discrimination in the Workplace and Educational Environment (2021a), prohibited conduct that violates this policy does not include censorship of visible body modifications or discriminatory practices when determining the employment of an individual with visible tattoos and/or piercings. Some examples of behaviors that may constitute a violation of this policy include, but are not limited to:

1. Discriminating against an individual with regard to terms and conditions of employment or education because of being in one or more of the protected categories referred to above.

2. Treating an individual differently because of the individual's race, color, national origin, or other protected category, or because an individual has the physical, cultural or linguistic characteristics of a racial, religious, or other protected category.

3. Treating an individual differently because of marriage to, civil union to, domestic partnership with, or association with persons of a racial, religious or other protected category; or due to the individual's membership in or association with an organization identified with the interests of a certain racial, religious or other protected category; or because an individual's name, domestic partner's name, or spouse's name is associated with a certain racial, religious or other protected category (Rowan University, 2021a).

Conservative vs. Liberal Academic Disciplines

It was previously speculated that disciplines or units I consider to be more conservative at Rowan University would have an independent workplace appearance or dress code policy, which restricts or limits the display of visible body modifications. Whereas liberal units I expected to have less stringent conditions regarding professional appearance. Other than the formerly discussed units regarding their upheld appearance expectations from professional students, no other college, school, or service, whether conservative or liberal, at Rowan University had a self-governing policy in place accessible via the school's main page. Since survey respondents were required to verify the unit they represented and confirm or deny whether their unit had a set policy regarding appearances (Table 34), each participating units' attitude was analyzed and compared.

The quantitative results verified that some of the assumed conservative units: Rohrer College of Business (RCB), Henry M. Rowan College of Engineering (COEng), Cooper Medical School of Rowan University (CMSRU), College of Education (CEAC), John H. Martinson Honors College (Rowan Honors), and School of Innovation & Entrepreneurship (RCB) do not have a code of conduct or appearance policy in place. There were mixed responses on the matter within each the other participating conservative units: College of Science & Mathematics (CSM), School of Nursing & Health Professions (SNHP), Rowan University School of Osteopathic Medicine (RowanSOM), College of Education (CEAC), and Human Resources.

Contrary to the conservative results, respondents representing liberal units including: The Wellness Center, Rowan University Libraries, and the Division of Information Resources & Technology (IRT) confirmed there was a code of conduct or appearance policy in place. A participant from the Office of Accessibility Services confirmed there is no policy. Like more conservative disciplines, there were mixed responses within liberal units as well, which included: The Ric Edelman College of Communication & Creative Arts (Edelman CCCA), College of Humanities & Social Sciences (CHSS), College of Performing Arts, Global Learning & Partnership, University Advising Services (UAS), The Office of Advancement Services, and Student Affairs.

The inconsistency in responses within a unit could account for the variety of roles, functions, and subdivisions in each college, school, and service department. These factors are likely subjected to different rules and expectations. Dress code guidelines may vary by department, job function and location. Department dress codes may be more

restrictive (Cooper Medical School, 2022b). Higher Education institutions are almost

always organized into a hierarchical assortment of departments, schools, divisions, and

colleges. In addition to considerable variation across higher education institutions,

organization of academic units are quite fluid within institutions; they are reorganized

repeatedly and frequently (Graves & Cherry, 2022, p.84). The participants of this study

occupied roles from technical support to administration. Each role has different

appearance expectations, responsibilities, and consumer engagement.

Limitations

This study was strictly limited to investigating and analyzing the attitudes of full

and part-time faculty and staff members from all campuses of Rowan University towards

visible body modifications of qualified professionals in higher education. Individuals

occupying the role of student workers and any other temporary position that did not have

an employee email address were excluded. These temporary positions do not have the

authority to make recruitment and/or hiring decisions and are not included on the

Employee Rowan Daily Mail.

As a mixed method, there is a limitation of generalizability. The results of this

study may not be generalizable to other institutions of higher education. Rowan

University is a four-year, public institution with approximately 22,080 enrolled students

as of fall 2022 (Rowan University, 2022a) therefore these results may not apply to larger

or smaller, rurally or central city located, and/or nonpublic institutions. Although the

sample size of the quantitative study was impressive, it did not meet the target sample

size of 352 respondents. Additionally, the five interviewees' perceptions on visible body

modifications are not representative of their respective units as a whole. Another issue

regarding generalizability in both studies is that particular units had only one agent providing their views, which again cannot be considered the viewpoints of others within the same unit or the entire institution. The data from the qualitative study only reflects the perspectives of females. Unlike the quantitative study, the interview data lacks diversity and participants self-disclosed their personal association to the subject, which included some having body modifications of their own. Nevertheless, this study contributes to and advances the foundation of research pertaining to perceptions towards visible tattoos and piercings in higher education and its effect on prospective employment opportunities. The use of confidential surveys and interviews is potentially useful for future research in this area to continue developing a holistic understanding on the subject in academia. Researchers should be mindful to have diversity within their samples.

A significant limitation was access to literature relevant to visible body modifications in academia or educational settings. Due to an incommensurable amount of research pertaining to VBM's effect on employment opportunities and workplace environments for educational professionals, this study did not have any reliable, published sources to reference.

Conclusion

The purpose of this mixed method study was to examine Rowan University employees' perception of tattoos and piercings in higher education, while simultaneously determining whether visible body modifications have an effect on nontraditional professional's employability. The results of this analysis reveal a combination of indifference and acceptance among survey respondents, as well as understanding and encouragement of individuality and self-expression from interviewees. There is

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acknowledgement of the prevalence of visible body modifications in today's society and its integration into societal norms and standards. Overall, the study exposes positive views towards higher education professionals with visible body modifications and disputes speculation of discriminatory practices against unconventional prospective professionals.

Recommendations for Practice/Practitioners

The data from this thesis suggests that negative stereotypes, stigmatization, and attitudes towards visible body modifications have diminished, especially compared to previous research, due to its popularity and integration into modern social norms. Professionals in higher education settings seem rather accepting of unconventional self-expression. Student affairs practitioners may want to clarify on job postings or institution websites that concealment of tattoos and/or piercings are not expected or necessary for prospective interviewees. This clarification will address conscious concerns unconventional professionals have when seeking employment and could potentially increase applications from them because they're not second guessing their eligibility.

Recommendations for Future Research

This topic is still severely understudied and future researchers can either replicate this original study or conduct alternative studies to examine the impact visible body modifications have on unconventional professionals' employment eligibility. Investigators may want to interview or survey a substantial number of participants within the same unit to possibly establish a general perception. Additionally, it is encouraged to limit a study to only hiring managers and recruiters to specifically analyze their

viewpoints on the subject. Further research will continue to provide an explicit

understanding of VBM's impact on public perceptions and employment, as well as

provide a solution to the disparity in general knowledge on the subject.

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DHHS Federal Wide Assurance Identifier: FWA00007111
Rowan IORG/IRB: Glassboro/CMSRU
IRB Chair Person: Dr. Ane Johnson
IRB Director: Eric Gregory
Effective Date: November 23, 2022

Notice of Approval - Initial

Study ID: PRO-2022-282
Title: Perceptions of Tattoos and Piercings in Higher Education
Principal Investigator: Stephanie Lezotte
Study Coordinator: Diane Duncan
Co-Investigator(s): Diane Duncan
Sponsor: Internal

Submission Type: Initial
Submission Status: Approved

Approval Date: November 23, 2022
Expiration Date: November 22, 2023
Approval Cycle: 12 months
Continuation Review Required: Yes
Closure Required: Yes

Review Type: Expedited
Expedited Category: 7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

ALL APPROVED INVESTIGATOR(S) MUST COMPLY WITH THE FOLLOWING:

1. Conduct the research in accordance with the protocol, applicable laws and regulations, and the principles of research ethics as set forth in the Belmont Report.
2a. Continuing Review: Approval is valid until the protocol expiration date shown above. To avoid lapses in approval, submit a continuation application at least eight weeks before the study expiration date.

2b. Progress Report: Approval is valid until the protocol expiration date shown above. To avoid lapses, an annual progress report is required at least 21 days prior to the expiration date.

3a. Expiration of IRB Approval: If IRB approval expires, effective the date of expiration and until the continuing review approval is issued: All research activities must stop unless the IRB finds that it is in the best interest of individual subjects to continue. (This determination shall be based on a separate written request from the PI to the IRB.) No new subjects may be enrolled and no samples/charts/surveys may be collected, reviewed, and/or analyzed.

3b. Human Subjects Research Training: Proper training in the conduct of human subjects research must be current and not expired. It is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator and the investigator to complete training when expired. Any modifications and renewals will not be approved until training is not expired and current.

4. Amendments/Modifications/Revisions: If you wish to change any aspect of this study after the approval date mentioned in this letter, including but not limited to, study procedures, consent form(s), investigators, advertisements, the protocol document, investigator drug brochure, or accrual goals, you are required to obtain IRB review and approval prior to implementation of these changes unless necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects. This policy is also applicable to progress reports.

5. Unanticipated Problems: Unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or others must be reported to the IRB Office
(45 CFR 46, 21 CFR 312, 812) as required, in the appropriate time as specified in the attachment online at:
https://research.rowan.edu/officeofresearch/compliance/irb/index.html

6. Protocol Deviations and Violations: Deviations from/violations of the approved study protocol must be reported to the IRB Office (45 CFR 46, 21 CFR 312, 812) as required, in the appropriate time as specified in the attachment online at: https://research.rowan.edu/officeofresearch/compliance/irb/index.html

7. Consent/Assent: The IRB has reviewed and approved the consent and/or assent process, waiver and/or alteration described in this protocol as required by 45 CFR 46 and 21 CFR 50, 56, (if FDA regulated research). Only the versions of the documents included in the approved process may be used to document informed consent and/or assent of study subjects; each subject must receive a copy of the approved form(s); and a copy of each signed form must be filed in a secure place in the subject's medical/patient/research record.

8. Completion of Study: Notify the IRB when your study has been completed or stopped for any reason. Neither study closure by the sponsor nor the investigator removes the obligation for submission of timely continuing review application, progress report or final report.

9. The Investigator(s) did not participate in the review, discussion, or vote of this protocol.

10. Research protocol and study documentation and instruments is approved as of the Approval Date on this letter. All final approved versions of the study documentation, including but not limited to the protocol, advertisements and recruitment instruments, pre-screening instruments, surveys, interviews, scripts, data collection documents, all manner of consent forms, and all other documentation attached to this submission are approved for final use by the investigators up to the expiration date listed above (Expiration Date) in this letter.

11. Letter Comments: There are no additional comments.

12. **NJDOH Approved Studies**: IRB approval granted per the Data Use Agreement. Upon receipt of the fully executed Data Use Agreement (DUA) from NJDOH, the Principal Investigator is responsible for ensuring an electronic, fully signed DUA is emailed to the Rowan University IRB.

Appendix B

Survey Questions

Quantitative Study

For my thesis, under the supervision of Stephanie Lezotte, you are invited to participate in this online research survey entitled Perceptions of Tattoos and Piercings in Higher Education. You are included in this survey because your administrative leadership or professional role contributes to Rowan University's educational environment. The number of subjects to be enrolled in the study will be approximately 352.

The survey may take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary. If you do not wish to participate in this survey, do not respond to this online survey. Completing this survey indicates that you are voluntarily giving consent to participate in the survey.

The purpose of this research study is to analyze the viewpoints of all Rowan University employees regarding higher educational professionals with visible body modifications. The results of this survey will contribute to and advance the foundation of research pertaining to this subject and shine light on possible discriminatory practices directed at those with visible body art.

There are no risks or discomforts associated with this survey. There may be no direct benefit to you, however, by participating in this study, you may help us understand how visible body modifications on higher education professionals impacts recruitment and employment opportunities.

Your response will be kept confidential. We will store the data in a secure computer file and the file will destroyed once the data has been published. Any part of the research that is published as part of this study will not include your individual information. If you have any questions about the survey, you can contact the researcher at the address provided below, but you do not have to give your personal identification.

Principal Investigator: Stephanie Lezotte at (856) 256-4124 | E: lezotte@rowan.edu
Co-Investigator: Diane Duncan |E: duncan73@students.rowan.edu

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at (856) 256-4078– Glassboro/CMSRU. This study has been approved by the Rowan IRB, PRO-2022-282.

To participate in this survey, you must be 18 years or older and occupy a part-time or full-time faculty/staff position at Rowan University.

○ Yes, I met this survey's participant criteria

Completing this survey indicates that you are voluntarily giving consent to participate in the survey.

○ Yes

Which college/school/service do you represent?

○ Rohrer College of Business (RCB)
○ Ric Edelman College of Communication & Creative Arts (Edelman CCCA)
○ College of Education (CEAC)
○ Henry M. Rowan College of Engineering (COEng)
○ John H. Martinson Honors College (Rowan Honors)
○ College of Humanities & Social Sciences (CHSS)
○ College of Performing Arts
○ College of Science & Mathematics (CSM)
○ School of Earth & Environment (Rowan Earth)
○ School of Nursing & Health Professions (SNHP)
○ Global Learning & Partnership
○ Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences
○ Cooper Medical School of Rowan University (CMSRU)
○ Rowan University School of Osteopathic Medicine (RowanSOM)
○ Rowan University School of Veterinary Medicine (RUSVM)
○ School of Innovation & Entrepreneurship (RCB)
○ University Advising Services (UAS)

○ Office of Career Advancement

○ Accessibility Services

○ Military Services

○ Other

If you have selected other, please identify the college/school/service department that you work for.

[   ]

What is your title role at Rowan University? *Not required*

[   ]

Is recruitment or hiring prospective employees a part of your position's responsibilities?

○ Yes

○ No

Perceptions of Tattoos and Piercings in Higher Education

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Indifferent	Agree	Strongly Agree
I would hire a qualified professional with visible tattoos	○	○	○	○	○
I would hire a qualified professional with visible piercings	○	○	○	○	○
Individuals with body modifications are socially abnormal	○	○	○	○	○
Individuals with body modifications jeopardize their careers	○	○	○	○	○
I'd prefer to hire someone without visible body modifications over someone with them	○	○	○	○	○

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Indifferent	Agree	Strongly Agree
Visible tattoos can affect someone's credibility	○	○	○	○	○
Visible piercings can affect someone's credibility	○	○	○	○	○
Tattoos are attractive	○	○	○	○	○
Piercings are attractive	○	○	○	○	○
Visible body modifications are acceptable in the workplace	○	○	○	○	○
I think the display of body art in the workplace is unprofessional	○	○	○	○	○
I think that individuals with visible body modifications are attention seekers	○	○	○	○	○
I would hesitate to approach someone with visible tattoos	○	○	○	○	○
I would hesitate to approach someone with visible piercings	○	○	○	○	○
Women with visible tattoos are unattractive	○	○	○	○	○
Women with visible piercings are unattractive	○	○	○	○	○
Men with visible tattoos are unattractive	○	○	○	○	○
Men with visible piercings are unattractive	○	○	○	○	○
Regardless of their qualifications for a position at my unit, candidates should not be hired if they have visible body modifications	○	○	○	○	○

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Indifferent	Agree	Strongly Agree
I would mind if an individual with visible tattoos represented my unit	○	○	○	○	○
I would mind if an individual with visible piercings represented my unit	○	○	○	○	○

Perceptions of Tattoos and Piercings in Higher Education

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Indifferent	Agree	Strongly Agree
I would give equal opportunity to a person with visible body modifications	○	○	○	○	○
My unit has a code of conduct or appearance policy in place	○	○	○	○	○
Individuals with body modifications do not leave positive first impressions	○	○	○	○	○
People with visible body modifications cannot appear professional at the same time	○	○	○	○	○
Professionals with visible tattoos should be required to cover them	○	○	○	○	○
Professionals with visible piercings should be required to cover or remove them	○	○	○	○	○
Professionals in higher education should not display their visible body modifications	○	○	○	○	○
Hiring an individual with visible tattoos would not be well received in my unit	○	○	○	○	○

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Indifferent	Agree	Strongly Agree
Hiring an individual with visible piercings would not be well received in my unit	○	○	○	○	○
Visible tattoos are taboo	○	○	○	○	○
Visible piercings are taboo	○	○	○	○	○
I am uncomfortable hiring an individual with visible body modifications	○	○	○	○	○
Hiring an individual with body modifications reflects Rowan's values and objectives	○	○	○	○	○
Hiring an individual with body modifications reflects my unit's values and objectives	○	○	○	○	○
I would not want someone with visible body modifications representing Rowan University	○	○	○	○	○
Individuals with visible body modifications are well perceived at Rowan University	○	○	○	○	○
Visible tattoos impact prospective employer's first impressions	○	○	○	○	○
Visible piercings impact prospective employer's first impressions	○	○	○	○	○
I have a personal prejudice against interviewees with multiple tattoos	○	○	○	○	○
I have a personal prejudice against an interviewee with multiple piercings	○	○	○	○	○
Rowan University is an equal opportunity employer	○	○	○	○	○

Would you like to volunteer to be interviewed?

○ Yes
○ No

If you have answered 'Yes' to the previous question, please provide your email address below for a direct out reach following the completion of this survey.

Email Address:

[   ]

Appendix C

Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Introduction:

Hello, my name is Diane Duncan, and I am a Master's student at Rowan University. First, I would like to thank you for taking time to participate in this interview/focus group. I would like to talk with you about your perceptions of tattooed and pierced professionals in higher education because it will further support the data collected from the survey you've completed.

This interview will be recorded for the purposes of ensuring accuracy in reporting. Your identity will remain confidential and will not be shared. Following the interview, all data will be transcribed. Recordings will be maintained until completion of the thesis; at which time they will be destroyed. In the transcripts you can be referred to by a pseudonym, ensuring that information shared during this interview is not associated with you. With this information, I want to remind you that this is strictly a volunteer activity so you may decline to participate at any time. If you are okay with moving forward, I would first like to get your consent and then ask you some questions.

1. Have you ever interviewed an individual with visible body modifications? Could you tell me about that experience?

2. How do you perceive professionals with visible tattoos and/or piercings on professionals in academia?

3. What factors do you consider when deciding the employability of an interviewee with visible body modifications?

4. How do you feel about a prospective employee hiding their body art during an interview, then revealing it on the job upon hiring?

5. In what ways would hiring an individual with visible tattoos and/or piercings have an influence on the ethos of your unit?

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6. How do you think the staff/faculty of your unit would respond/react to the hiring of a visibly tattooed and/or pierced professional? What experiences lead to your answer?

7. How do you think the students at Rowan University would respond/react to the hiring of a visibly tattooed and/or pierced professional? What experiences lead to your answer?

I've come to the end of my questions. I want to thank you for your honest opinions – I appreciate your participation and hope your efforts to create a more diverse and inclusive engineering culture meet continued success. May I reach out to you again if I have any additional questions or need clarifications?

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