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# Image, Industry, and Ink: Communication of Tattoo Policies By Human Resource Professionals

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# IMAGE, INDUSTRY, AND INK: COMMUNICATION OF TATTOO POLICIES BY HUMAN RESOURCE PROFESSIONALS

by

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ABSTRACT

IMAGE, INDUSTRY, AND INK: COMMUNICATION OF TATTOO POLICIES BY HUMAN RESOURCE PROFESSIONALS

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Despite growing popularity, tattoos have historically been taboo in workplace environments. Those with unconcealable tattoos, especially white-collar workers and women, suffer from a perceived lack of professionalism (Dean, 2010; Hawkes, Senn, & Thorn, 2004). Tattooed individuals often struggle between individual desires and the impression expected in work environments. Meanwhile organizations strike a balance between communicating the organization's values and employee expression of personal values. This study qualitatively investigates how values and tattoo policies are communicated in organizations, and whether value dissonance influences those communication process. Using a modified version of the Schwartz Value Survey (2006) and semi-structured interviews, the values of seven human resource professionals and their organizations are measured and compared. Results indicate that organizational policy enforcers communicate values through tattoo policies over time, and with unique communication tactics that evoke both organizational and personal values, modeling (conformity), throwing the book down (security), and hypotheticals (authority). Other tactics used by enforcers who experience value dissonance include identification (benevolence) and changing the policy (self-direction). When HR professional's values are similar to their employer's perceived organizational values, they are less likely to experience value dissonance. If tattoo policies are developed, communicated, and enforced consistently with organizational values, they can be important communicative tools for organizations.

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## Introduction

As of 2016, 27% of men and 31% of women in the United States reported having tattoos, with 69% of tattooed individuals having two or more (Shannon-Missal, 2016). Considering about a third of individuals have one or more tattoos, organizations that employ tattooed individuals face decisions on what body art policies to enact and enforce in the workplace. For example, in a 2017 interview regarding military dress code standards, the Marine Corps Commandant General—who is in charge of adapting this branch of the military's tattoo policy—refused to change inflexible tattoo visibility rules, saying of those with tattoo sleeves: "I don't judge them; I just don't want them being Marines." This policy has had a negative effect, with recruiters having to turn away otherwise promising applicants (Seck, 2018). Since the year 2003, people reporting to have at least one tattoo increased by 81.25% (Shannon-Missal, 2016). With tattoos and body modification becoming more widespread, it is important to understand how tattooing's prevalence is affecting workplace norms and policy communication.

Dress code policies are enacted by organizations in order to maintain a consistent physical identification amongst employees and portray professionalism appropriate to the profession (Cardon & Okoro, 2009), which is consistent with hiring practices. A meta-analysis found that a professional image (grooming, appearance, and demeanor) was paramount when rating job applicants (Barrick, Shaffer, & DeGrassi, 2009). Tattoo and piercing restrictions are included with clothing, hair, and make-up standards which serve to increase uniformity and are often correlated with a lower tolerance for visible tattoos amongst policy makers (Search et al., 2018). In the United States, laws regarding tattoo concealment in dress code policies allow for discrimination unless argued that they serve religious significance, such as Maori tribal tattoos (Calvasina & Calvasina, 2017). However, the individuals responsible for communicating tattoo

policies to the rest of employees may not agree with the policy substance, which could cause inconsistencies in policy application. A study of discussion board postings about organizational enforcement of tattoos found that policy discipline was unreliable (Ellis, 2015) which calls into question the effectiveness of maintaining a consistent organizational image. However, the tactics associated with the communication of tattoo policies of organizational enforcers and the values reinforced by that communication has not been addressed by previous scholarship. This study focuses on tattoo policy communication and value dissonance as a possible culprit for the variation of discipline and other communication surrounding policies policing tattoos.

## Tattoos and Values in Organizations

In the workforce, those in higher-paying occupations with tattoos are more stigmatized (Dean, 2010; Shannon-Missal, 2016). As the "professionalism" of the occupation increases, the negative perception of tattooed individuals in that profession also increases (Dean, 2010). This is demonstrated by how consumers view visible tattoos on white-collar workers (dentist, nurse, bank lenders) as inappropriate versus tattoos on blue-collar workers (bartender, hair stylist) which are considered less inappropriate (Dean, 2010). Occupations such as primary teachers and presidential candidates have the lowest approval rating when possessing tattoos, as well as jobs that have exposure to children (Shannon-Missal, 2016). Additionally, age plays a role in perceptions of tattoos; as age increases, negativity of visible tattoos across all professions increases (Shannon-Missal, 2016).

Some perceptions about tattoos are also based on the viewer having tattoos or not. Those with tattoos view others with tattoos more positively in terms of credibility and are more accepting compared to those without tattoos (Seiter & Hatch, 2005). As credibility is important for all working individuals, perceptions of credibility present the biggest challenge for tattooed

individuals who often must make the difficult decision to either risk being viewed as credible in the workplace or limit their self-expression.

Further, Boultinghouse (2015) found that for human resource managers in the nursing field, tattoos were among the top detriments in hiring new employees, just under bad breath and non-ear piercings. This evidence suggests that stigmatization is present in human resource perceptions when it comes to showing tattoos in the workplace, and until recently, was thought to hurt hiring prospects (at least in certain professions). In 2006, 80% of hiring managers felt negatively about tattoos, however a study by French, Mortensen and Timming (2018) report that tattoos now have no effect on hiring practices across industries. These and other recent findings may indicate that as the population of tattooed individuals increases, there is also greater acceptance of tattoos in workplace environments (Flanagan & Lewis, 2019). However, tattoo acceptance may not be communicated through official means, such as workplace policies and enforcement, especially since the organization creates policies to communicate organizational values which may not align with employees' personal values.

**Organizational Identity and Image**

One way to explore how values are communicated and made into policy is through organizational identity theory. Organizational identity theory, first explored by Albert and Whetten (1985), and later by Ashforth and Mael (1989), describes how top leaders of an organization determine an identity for the organization using values and beliefs to make decisions regarding the management, interactions, growth, and conflict within the organization and its members. Organizational leaders enact policies that directly reflect their own values.

Similar to the role identity plays for individuals, in order for an organizational attribute to be considered a part of its identity, the attribute must be central, enduring, and distinguishing

(Whetten, 2006). Specifically, central attributes reflect an organization's highest values, while distinguishing attributes can be used to describe the preferences of organizational leaders when it comes to ideal employees (Whetten, 2006). Both central and distinguishing attributes relate to tattoo policies in organizations because policies both ingrain the company's attitudes about organizational image and reflect the organizational leader's preferences for their employees. All these attributes (and the identity of organizations as a whole) are considered when establishing organizational policies for employees.

Organizational image is described as the "total impression an entity makes on the minds of people" (Dichter, 1985, p. 75) and comes from the identity of the organization, interaction with external audiences, and influence from other groups (Hatch & Schultz, 1997). While identity refers to the use of beliefs and values of core organizational members (Whetten, 2006), image is intentionally malleable by internal actors within the entity (such as a policy-maker in a company) in order to influence perceptions and appeal to the public or a desired group (Dowling, 1993). One way that employers can control the image of their organization, while also reflecting their values, is to create and communicate policies that regulate employee behaviors, such as dress codes, conduct standards, and in this case tattoo policies. Organization leaders hope that their members will share organizational values as a collective and therefore follow the existing policies (Pratt, 2001).

**Values, Motivation, and Dissonance in Tattooing**

As Whetten (2006) explains, organizational policies are the result of the communicated values of individual leaders within an organization. Therefore, another way to examine how tattoo policies are created and communicated is through the values and motivations of organizations and then individual actors. Schwartz (1992, 2005, 2006) outlines values theory,

defining values as guiding principles for peoples' lives which are situational, desirable, and ranked in order of importance. Values are beliefs tied to emotions and serve as standards of ideals that motivate behaviors. Schwartz (1992) identified ten values which satisfy needs of the human condition (individual survival, social interaction, and group welfare), which include: self-direction (independent thought and action), stimulation (novelty), hedonism (sensual pleasure), achievement (personal success), power (social status), security (safety), conformity (restraint), tradition (respect for traditional culture), benevolence (welfare for one's in-group), and universalism (welfare for all people/nature). A values theory model situates the ten values on a circular continuum, with values on the opposite sides of the circles having contrary motivations to each other (Table 1).

Individuals who participate in tattooing and other body modifications do so for a variety of motivations. Wohlrab and colleagues (2007) explain that tattoos are collected for beauty/art/fashion, individuality, and personal narrative (valuing self-direction); endurance (valuing stimulation); sexual motivations and addiction (valuing hedonism); and resistance (valuing universalism). Additionally, in cultures and subgroups where tattoos are integrated, motivations of spiritual/cultural tradition (valuing tradition) and group affiliation/commitment (valuing conformity) are observed (Wohlrab et al., 2007). Using the model of values theory, in cultures or subgroups where tattoos are not engrained, values contrary to deciding to get tattooed could be extrapolated as conformity, tradition, and security, and in the case of resistance as a motivation, benevolence. If an organization holds any of these values (conformity, tradition, security, and benevolence) more paramount than other values, the organizational leaders may decide to enact policies which are stricter than an organization which places less emphasis on those values. Additionally, if a person acting on behalf of an organization does not share the

organization's values, or disagrees with the policies, they must decide how to communicate that policy in their own behaviors and to other organizational members or choose to leave the organization.

For organizations and individuals, values influence behaviors. For example, the action of an individual getting tattoos and the action of an organizational member communicating organizational identity through policy enforcement are both motivated by values. An organization must balance between their organizational values, intended image, and the identity of their employees when creating policies about tattoos, considering that some motivations and values associated with tattooing may be contrary to organizational values. When an organizational member whose role is to enforce tattoo policies disagrees with those principles, or does not embrace the same values as the organization, the value difference likely affects how that policy is communicated.

Value dissonance is defined as "a distressing mental state in which people find themselves doing things that they do not highly value, or having opinions that do not fit institutional norms" (Bruhn, 2008, p. 21). This dissonance occurs more frequently in organizations in which norms are not consistently communicated or are unclear (Bruhn, 2008). For a member of an organization responsible for communicating the dress code to other employees, disagreement with the content of policies may result in emotive dissonance for the enforcer (Hochschild, 1983), inconsistent discipline (Bruhn, 2008), and gaps in maintaining organizational identity (Schinoff, Rogers, & Corley, 2016).

Human resource (HR) professionals act as the gatekeepers for policy enforcement in any given organization (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). Therefore, HR professionals are in a position

where they must be aware of what tattoo polices exist and how dress code policies (specifically those regarding tattoos) are communicated to employees.

Research regarding the enforcement of tattoo policies is limited (Flanagan & Lewis, 2019), but it is important to understand how changes in the mainstream culture — increases in individuals obtaining tattoos — affects the communication of organizational policies. This study explores the connection between the policy strictness regarding tattoo displays, the value dissonance among policy enforcers (e.g. human resource representatives), and the consistency in communication of those policies. Image and organizational identity may play a role in communicating organizational values through policy. However, communication may be disrupted by value dissonance of enforcers. Therefore, the following research questions will be explored:

Research Question 1: How do organizational policy enforcers communicate organizational values regarding tattoos and organizational identity?

Research Question 2: If policy enforcers experience value dissonance concerning their organization's tattoo policies, how does this dissonance influence the communication about and enforcement of those policies?

## Method

In the planning stages of this project, it was clear that a deep, contextual understanding of the communication processes in organizations regarding tattoo polices and values was necessary to provide a fuller description of the intersections. As Tracy (2010) notes, it is important to conduct research that reflects practical wisdom that can be applied in a broad range of organizational situations. For this reason, I chose qualitative methods to investigate a worthy topic that may resonate with many organizational leaders and tattooed individuals. The limited

research about tattoo policy communication suggests that there is untapped potential for providing qualitative insights. Therefore, interviews were used to allowed me to gain "insight into cultural activities that might otherwise be missed" (Tracy, 2020, p. 7). Prior to conducing the interviews, I used an online survey to collect information related to values and tattoo policies. In this section, I will discuss recruitment and general procedures of my survey, participant information gathered from the survey and interviews, overview specific interview question information and data collection, and finally describe my analysis methods.

**Recruitment and Survey Procedures**

Once approved by the institution's IRB, HR professionals were recruited to participate in the study. Participants were recruited using purposive sampling through in-person inquiries at university-sponsored events (career fairs), telephone inquiries through a list of businesses in the Wisconsin Dells, HR-focused Facebook groups, and through cold calls/emails to local businesses. University-sponsored events were chosen because job fair recruiters often are in HR departments or have access to HR professionals, while also representing a diversity of organization sizes and types. Telephone inquiries and Facebook groups were chosen to reach businesses not represented at the career fairs and gain perspectives of organizations outside the Milwaukee area. There were two stages of this study: firstly, a questionnaire that was designed to measure participants' personal values, perceived organizational values, and the strictness of their organization's tattoo polices/enforcement, and secondly those who indicated interest, were contacted separately for interviews.

***Questionnaire***

To better gauge an understanding of participants' and their organizations' views on tattoos, I first gave individuals who expressed interest in participating in the research a survey

using Qualtrics. The survey included scales that measured the participant's and the organization's most important values (from Schwartz's value theory, 2006), the perceived level of strictness for the organization's tattoo policy and enforcement of that policy (both formal and informal), and the participant's level of agreement with that policy/enforcement strictness (Appendix A). This survey was designed to capture participant and organizational demographics as well as value and tattoo policy information before participants were interviewed. The questionnaire also measured individual and perceived organizational values, policy strictness, and demographic information for interview participants. A scale measuring organizational identification was also included in the survey but was not used in this research study due to time restraints.

***Short Schwartz's Value Scale***

In order to measure the most important and least important values of each participant and the organization they represented, I used a modified Schwartz value scale from Lindeman and Verkasalo (2005). This scale allowed participants to rate the importance of each value as a "life-guiding principle" on a scale of 0 to 8 (0 being "opposed to my principles"; 1 being "not important"; and 8 being "of supreme importance"). Compared to the Schwartz Value Survey (SVS) (Schwartz, 1992), the Short Schwartz Value Survey (SSVS) is just as reliable and valid as the SVS, and reduces attrition by saving participants a significant amount of time answering the survey (Lindeman & Verkasalo, 2005). The researchers observed that "the new scale had good internal consistency and temporal stability, the scores obtained with the SSVS were highly correlated with those obtained with the original SVS" (p. 177).

To measure the perceived values of the participant's organization, I modified the SSVS by replacing the verbiage in the survey to reflect the organization rather than the individual.

Language asking to rate their ("my") values was modified to read as their organization's ("my organization's") values (see Appendix A). By using this altered scale, participants were already acclimated to answering questions in this format.

Using the SSVS I determined personal and perceived organization values of most and least importance to participants. I isolated scores which indicated values were "of supreme importance" or scores of 6-8 to represent most important values, and scores which indicated values were "not important" or scores of 1-3. The results of these most and least important personal and perceived organizational values are recorded in Table 2.

***Policy Strictness Scales***

To evaluate the HR professionals perceptions of the organization's policy strictness, the strictness of policy enforcement, and the participant's agreement with both the policy strictness and enforcement, the survey used an eight-point Likert-like scale (0 being no policy; 1 being strongly agree/not strict at all; 8 being strongly disagree/very strict). Participants were asked to answer this survey based upon their knowledge of their organization's formal and informal tattoo policies. Scores of 1-3 were categorized as more lenient policies, 4-6 as moderately strict, and 7-8 as very strict.

***Demographic Information***

To have a better contextual understanding of the participants and their organizations, demographic information was collected at the end of the survey. Personal information collected included the age of the participant, how many years they had been employed by their organization, ethnicity, and gender. The participant also completed information about their organization, including the industry and the number of employees.

**Interview Procedures**

Interviews are the most popular mode of qualitative social science research and were used in this study because interviews provide a rich and complex account of organizational policy (Tracy, 2020). In this study, one-on-one interviews were suitable because of the sensitive nature of gaining insight from those whose job entails enforcing policies appropriately. After IRB was obtained, I contacted potential participants and sent them the pre-survey along with a unique identifier code. Participant consent to participate was obtained prior to the interview by emailing consent forms to the participants in advance for them to review, sign, scan, and email back to the researcher.

Once consent was obtained, interviews were conducted over the telephone and recorded on a separate secure device. Participants were told that the interviews were part of a research study regarding dress code or "grooming" policies of organizations which include tattoo visibility. Providing this general overview of the study purpose allowed participants to speak to policies generally and to those related to tattoos specifically. Using a semi-structured interview format, participants were asked a series of questions (Appendix B) about their companies' policies regarding dress codes and how those policies are enforced. Some of those questions included, "Are there any screening processes used when interviewing candidates to screen out or make sure people hide tattoos?" and "How is compliance with the dress code policy assured in the organization?"

Then, participants were asked to describe how they had enforced specific tattoo and dress code policies, how employees responded to the enforcement, and how they enforced or would enforce a policy they *didn't* agree with. Sample interview questions for this section included questions like, "Have you ever had to enforce the dress code policy in this organization and how

was this communicated?" and "Have you ever had to enforce a dress code policy that you didn't agree with and if so, will you explain the situation or strategies you use?" A full listing of the interview questions appears in Appendix B. Further, during the interview, participants were asked to define what "professional" dress means in their organization, and what kind of tattoo and dress code policies they would enact if they had the authority to do so. Additionally, the pre-interview questionnaire focused solely on tattoo policies to prime the participants to be considering their organizations' tattoo policy prior to their interviews.

The seven interviews ranged in length between 10 and 22 minutes and averaged 15 minutes. In total, one hour and forty-four minutes of interview recordings were transcribed by the researcher, totaling 40 single-spaced typed pages of transcripts for analysis. Interviews were of shorter length due to the numerous responsibilities of the target population and their limited time to devote to the research. Interviews were often booked between full days of meetings and often rescheduled. Therefore, more focused questions were presented to participants to better optimize results. Although pithy, these interviews are still a rich source of data specific to the participant's position and the tattoo enforcement.

## Participants

### *Survey Participants*

The online survey resulted in 54 completed responses, 80% of which identified as female ($n$ = 43). Twenty-eight partially completed responses (75% completion or less) were not included in the data. The survey participants were overwhelmingly white, self-identifying as 83% Caucasian ($n$ = 45), 11% Asian ($n$ = 6), 4% Latinx ($n$ = 2), and 2% Other ($n$ = 1). The average age of participants was 42 (range between 25 and 65 years old).

Participant length of employment ranged from 3 months to 37 years, averaging 7 years. The size of organizations reflected in the survey fluctuated widely, from 20 to 60,000 employees (an average of 2,380 employees). Participants reported a variety of organization industries including manufacturing, K-12 education, consulting, healthcare, agritourism, cosmetics, retail, and fitness among others. Of the survey participants, seven indicated that they were willing to be interviewed and unique identifier codes were used to match their survey data to their interview data.

***Interview Participants***

In total, seven HR professionals were interviewed for this study. All interviewees identified as Caucasian women between the ages of 27 and 55 with an average age of 39 years old. Participants were employed across a wide range of industry sizes (30 to 57,000 employees) and types (e. g. tourism, non-profit, food manufacturing, etc.). Organizational tenure ranged between 1.5 and 37 years with an average of approximately 12 years. Table 2 includes a detailed overview of participant and organization demographic information, as well as personal and perceived organizational values. Further, I summarize participation information in terms of each organizational context below. These summaries are necessary to demonstrate the variety of organizations represented and to understand how industry and tenure influenced the individual narratives of participants.

My first participant, Phae worked for a large food manufacturing company for the past year and a half. She highly identified with her organization. However, she was the only participant who disagreed with her company's tattoo policies. Of this, she said that she didn't think that "tattoos should be restricted here," but indicated that tattoo placement was a relevant factor. Phae did not believe that people with facial tattoos would be hired because of the

conservative nature of organizational leadership, even though the company had no formal written tattoo policy.

Whitney was a branch owner in the financial and insurance industry for almost ten years before her current position. As a business run mostly by women in a small, conservative town, Whitney felt the need to enact very strict tattoo and piercing policies for her employees to not jeopardize their credibility. Her employers' corporate hubs had a very laisse faire dress code compared to those of client-facing offices. She talked about a recent conversation with another employee at one of the hubs regarding his tattoos:

> He told me, "here's what I think. You are far less likely to be hired for a position if you have visible tattoos or piercings in all areas, but once you are hired in, they really can't hassle you much."

Whitney agreed with that sentiment, stating that her organization was probably too worried about getting sued from employees to pursue action.

The medical device manufacturing company Josie worked for had many dress code restrictions for blue-collar workers because of strict federal regulations on safety, but none that restricted visible tattoos. However, client-facing employees were required to cover all visible tattoos. In her almost ten years working for this organization, she had seen more flexibility from managers in enforcing the policy, where as long as the tattoo or piercing wasn't distracting, it was tolerated.

The tourism attraction that Fiona worked for only employed twenty staff year-round but would hire one hundred more (mostly young adults) every year for the summer months. Although staff had a mandatory dress code, showing tattoos was not something that was

enforced consistently. Organization leaders wanted a "clean-cut" look, and therefore making sure clothing and hair looked neat was of more importance than tattoo visibility.

Eleanor worked for a financial services organization for four years. Of the participants, she described her company as having the strictest policies, with client-facing employees having a mandated business professional dress code. All tattoos were expected to be covered during work hours. Eleanor wanted to demonstrate a corporate style of dress, saying that although at home she's a "sweatpants kind of girl," at work she is all business (professional).

At eight years on the job, Monica created all the tattoo and dress code policies for her organization— a science and technology museum. She explained how her organization used to have much stricter policies that included no tattoos. However, when the time came to restructure, Monica rewrote the policies to allow all non- "profane" tattoos. She shared that the change came from a lack of enforcement for the old policy first and then the new formal policy was re-written to follow the enforcement practice.

Sally had seen a lot of change in her fifteen years of employment at a university foundation. Typically, employees were undergraduate students, and so there was very little enforcement of the written tattoo policy:

> Moderate attire in clothing, jewelry, and other adornments is an important element in ensuring that the workplace is free of unnecessary distraction, and in projecting a positive corporate image to our business guests... Any clothing, words, terms, or pictures that might be offensive to other employees is unacceptable.

Sally expressed that many employees in her tenure had visible tattoos on their arms and legs, and that no one had ever expressed any issue about it.

In all, three of the organizations had policies that required tattoo concealment for all client-facing employees (Eleanor, Whitney, Josie). The strictest policies included enforcement that would require employees to immediately conceal the tattoo or be sent home. One of the organizations had no tattoo policy (Phae), but this participant believed that her employer's hiring practices screened out tattooed individuals, and that tattoo concealment was informally enforced. Another organization had a relatively new formal policy which was lenient towards tattoo visibility (Monica). The remaining two organizations had a moderately strict formal tattoo policy, but rarely enforced it (Sally and Fiona). After gathering contextual evidence from the interviews, I began the process of analyzing my data.

**Analysis**

Results from the survey were used for demographic information and background for the interview participants. Open-ended questions asking participants to explain their organization's tattoo policy and why they agreed or disagreed with it were gathered and analyzed in the coding process. The remaining quantitative data from survey participants who did not participate in interviews was reserved for use in a future study.

Analysis of the qualitative interviews used a constant comparative method and a version of grounded theory methods that derives meaning from the everyday experiences of participants (Glaser, 1967; Glaser & Strauss, 1999). My analysis began with manual coding using primary-cycle coding which involves assigning words and phrases that capture the essence of the data (Tracy, 2020). After primary-cycle coding, I considered each of the codes and their relationships to each other. For example, I first coded phrases where the participants mentioned having difficulty enforcing their dress code or tattoo policy into one code called "enforcement considerations" which included phrases involving warm-weather issues and how violations made

the company look bad. From there, I reanalyzed codes which were similar to each other (like "tensions" and "enforcement considerations") and combined or refined codes until I was satisfied with the codes I developed.

Then I moved to secondary-cycle coding where I organized my primary codes into interpretive concepts. A phronetic iterative approach was used to engage with existing literature on values, value dissonance, and communication tactics while comparing current scholarship to the themes I saw emerging (Tracy, 2020). Secondary-cycle codes included "initial communication of policy," "general enforcement of policy," "exceptions," "tactics when value dissonant," "direct enforcement," and "indirect enforcement." During secondary-cycle coding, I also used second-order interpretation to look at the deeper interpretation of participants' responses (e.g. did this participant have doubts about whether the tattoo policy was fair) by generating an explanation for their accounts (Tracy, 2020).

To assist with the secondary-cycle coding, I also used visual categorization by drawing visual models to organize relevant themes in the data and discover recurring and unique narratives (Tracy, 2020). Visual categorization in the context of this analysis involved physically mapping themes and connections derived from coding practices. Using many cycles of coding and visual categorization, I was able to derive relevant themes and concepts that reflected present scholarship and my own data.

## Results

As I will discuss in detail below, I begin by talking about "professionalism" as a way of understanding HR professional's interpretation of organizational values and the related types of policies. An overview of the types of policies observed is detailed through the strictness of the policy and policy enforcement. Then I discuss the primary themes that I identified from the

analysis of the data, including temporal stages of policy communication, direct and indirect communication tactics, organizational value-endorsing tactics, and organizational value-contradicting tactics. These themes help to explain how values were communicated through enforcing tattoo policies by analyzing which values were associated with different communication tactics. For my second research question, the themes helped to explain how value dissonance influences which communication tactics were used when someone did not agree with the tattoo policy, and what values they promoted in using those tactics.

**Professionalism**

Underlying all the policy communication, "professionalism" emerged as a lens used to interpret policy and communicate organizational values. Throughout the interviews, participants evoked the organization's desire for employees to be "polished" and "professional-looking" when confronting employees in violation. Whitney, Phae, Fiona, Josie, and Sally felt that their tattoo policy reflected the organization's values and expressed the need to adhere to those values for the good of the company.

Josie felt that the organizational values held employees to higher visual standards, and that culture needed to be followed; she said, "we're held to a higher standard… that speaks to kind of the culture [we have] and what we need to abide by when we're out interfacing with customers as well." Fiona expressed that the "clean-cut" look required of all employees should represent the good "all-American" traditionalism; having their uniforms identical allowed the company to abide by a value of conformity. Whitney said that the rural location of her previous agency made the values of the organization shift to reflect more conservative values, while Phae found that the company opted for a stricter dress code policy because it was more "traditional."

These perspectives on what it meant to be "professional" also were reflected in the tattoo policies and communication regarding policies.

**Types of Tattoo Policies**

In order to understand how organizational values are communicated through tattoo policies, it is first important to understand the policy strictness as well as how strictly the policy is enforced. Both characteristics affect policy communication. For example, a strict policy with lenient enforcement may result in appealing to organizational values as a communication tactic. Although different organizations and policy types were represented in the HR professional interviews, patterns emerged as to how tattoo policies were communicated and enforced. In the visual categorization phase of thematic analysis, three types of tattoo policies emerged. Using verbiage from the world of tattooing, those types of policies were named *clean canvas policies*, *traditional policies*, and *blown-out policies*.

***Clean canvas policies.*** "Clean canvas" refers to a person who has never gotten a tattoo before and is often perceived as inexperienced or unable to make a decision about what type of ink they would like to get. In this metaphor, the *clean canvas policy* is one where the organization has no policy or an extremely lenient policy set up regarding tattoos. Of the 54 survey participants 11 HR professionals who responded to the survey (20%) expressed the lack of need for a policy because of the irrelevance of visible tattoos based on their industry (e.g. construction, manufacturing, etc.). More than a quarter of all survey participants identified as having no formal tattoo policy (14 survey participants). Among this group, both blue collar and white-collar industries were represented, including state government, higher education, transportation, and retail. Of the organizations represented in the interview data, one had a clean canvas policy (Monica) that included lenient enforcement restricting explicit tattoos.

***Traditional policies.*** American traditional tattooing is a style of tattoo design that includes thick outlines and deeper ingrained meaning. This style, like many other "traditional" tattooing techniques, is very rigid in the rules of its design, requiring certain elements and excluding others. Similarly, *traditional policies* refer to the policies of organizations with very strict restrictions, limiting or banning all visible body modifications. Of the 54 surveys, 16 participants (30%) indicated this type of policy. Although traditional policies limit self-expression by employees, both formal written policies and enforcement of those policies are consistent. The standardizing of the employee's image harkens back to corporate-like depictions of businesses where values like conformity, tradition, and security are paramount. Of the interview participants' organizations, three had a traditional policy (Eleanor, Whitney, and Josie).

***Blown-out policies.*** The final type of tattoo policy comes from the phenomenon of the skin, where ink injected in the epidermis spreads out over time. A "blow-out" is a tattoo that has lost much of its former detail due to age, poor application by the artist, or ineffective aftercare by the bearer. Much like this unfortunate tattoo result, *blown-out policies* refer to the disconnect between intent and application. Twenty-three the 54 survey respondents (44%) reported this type of policy. These policies come in two different forms based on the strictness of informal and formal tattoo policies and enforcement: the organization has a strict written policy, but HR professionals do not strictly enforce the policy, or the organization has a leaner or more ambiguous formal policy (or no policy) regarding tattoos, but stricter informal rules are enforced by HR professionals. Of the 23 survey participants who reported having policies in this category, 5 (22%) reported a strict policy with lax enforcement and 18 (78%) reported an ambiguous policy with stricter enforcement. Of the interview participants three had a blown-out policy

(Sally, Phae, and Fiona), with two having more relaxed enforcement than the formal policy (Sally and Fiona). Both disregarded and implicit organizational rules cause employees uncertainty about appropriate conduct and may result in fragmentation of employee groups over value grounds (Ginger, 1998). However, variability in stated policies and application can also encourage diversity and facilitate organizational change (Eisenberg, 1984).

When considering the seven interviews with HR professionals, only one participant indicated any qualms with the organization's tattoo policy. Primary cycle coding, secondary cycle coding, and visual categorization revealed two dimensions in which values are applied to the communication of tattoo policies: temporal stages and policy communication tactics. Having different types of tattoo policies directly influenced the communication processes related to enforcement of those policies.

**Policy Communication Processes**

While taking into consideration the influence on the type of tattoo policies implemented by organizations, it is also important to understand the communication processes associated with the enforcement of those policies. The first research question asked: *How do organizational policy enforcers communicate organizational values regarding tattoos and organizational identity?* Analysis of the interviews allowed me to identify ways that participants enforced tattoo policies over time and used various tactics which reflected how the values of the organization or the enforcer were evoked. Two dominant themes emerged from the data that address this question, timing of when the policy is discussed (temporal stages) and the communication occurring during violations of the dress code policy (communication tactics).

### *Temporal Stages of Policy Communication*

The stages of the communication of the tattoo policy by HR professionals occurred over time and included pre-employment, onboarding, during violations, and seasonally. Through each of these stages, HR professionals embedded organizational values that helped employees align personal values with the organization's values to increase organizational identification.

***Pre-employment.*** Initial communication of organizational policies typically begins during the hiring process. As Nicotera (2020) explains, new employees begin in an organization and learn organizational expectations "during [the] first few days, weeks, or months of involvement in organizations through training or orientation" (p. 151). Even before employees start work though, interviews and onboarding procedures can be part of the initial phase of communicating policies (Anderson, 2018).

In terms of tattoo policy, five of the seven participants discussed how interviews were an important opportunity to begin socializing potential employees to understand the organizational policies. Whitney demonstrated how tattoo policy influenced hiring communication when she explained "I would say that if I were advising someone trying to come work for us, and they had a visible tattoo, I would advise that they hide it in an interview." Eleanor also expressed the importance of a "strong first impression approach" in the hiring process, because "[her] first impression to [the employee], is always going to be the first impression of a client as well."

However, unless employees violated organizational values in the interview, tattoo policies were not evoked, as expressed by both Phae and Fiona. Phae shared that expectations around tattoos wouldn't normally come up in the interview process unless someone had ink on their neck or face. Fiona agreed with this statement, indicating that the policy would not be

mentioned unless there was a visible indication during the interview that the policy would need to be enforced.

As early as the interview stage, employees were socialized about organizational values regarding tattoo policies. The "first impression" was extremely important for new candidates to consider, with HR professionals suggesting that tattoos be hidden during the interview. It is possible that people with tattoos might be screened out (consciously or unconsciously) based on organizational values that recruiters or those in charge of hiring assume during the interview. However, unless a tattooed individual showed tattoos during the hiring process, they would likely not be introduced to the tattoo policy until they were hired.

***Onboarding.*** Once the interview was completed and the employee was hired, HR professionals gave employees organizational policy information. For five of the HR professionals interviewed, the dress code policy was included the employee handbook or new hire package and given to new employees during the onboarding process. Some of the HR professionals explained how organizational values were engrained in the language of the policy. For example, Sally shared that her company policy stated, "It is extremely important that the initial impression of the [company name] be positive and collective appearance of our employee's dress plays an important part in that first impression." Sally pointed to this part of the policy specifically, saying, "I think this is the part you need about tattoos." This section indicated conformity in appearance was an organizational value, as well as the importance of a first impression. Tattoos because of their expressive nature, are unique and therefore contrary to conformity. Language common in the participants' descriptions of onboarding procedures repeatedly included the abstruse phrase "being professional" when describing how employees

were expected to dress in general, although none of the participants would explicitly say that tattoos were unprofessional.

Orientation programs have been shown to be affirmed sources of learning organizational norms and values (Stevens, 1999), which makes orientation an ideal place to highlight policies related to organizational values. Although many of the human resource professionals expressed that going over the dress code policy was a part of their onboarding process, many of them didn't know specifically whether or not tattoos were covered as a part of that onboarding. If tattoos were not mentioned in onboarding discussions, it would be difficult for employees to understand organizational expectations and values. Therefore, when organization values are not upheld and a policy needs to be imposed, the situation contributed to the discomfort HR professionals felt during enforcement.

***During violations.*** From the interviews, enforcement of the tattoo policy on a day-to-day basis appeared to be a more unpleasant subject; notably more pauses, stuttering, and carefully thought out language were observed during interview questions relating to having to approach employees regarding their policy-breaking behavior, which are all indications of nervous nonverbal communication (Laukka et al., 2008). Once the employee was past the orientation process, the enforcement of the tattoo and dress code policy by participants tended to be situational on a case-by-basis.

All the participants explained that supervisors and HR professionals were not necessarily seeking out non-compliant individuals, rather, they addressed individuals separately when a rule was broken. They did not seek out infractions because, as one participant explained, they had "bigger fish to fry!" Sally pointed out, HR departments were "not seeking it out, but if it comes to [their] attention," the policy violation had to be confronted. In moments of emending

violations to the tattoo policy, the value of the policy was conveyed. Although day-to-day policy enforcement occurred sporadically, participants did note that some parts of the year were more difficult on compliance that others.

***Seasonally***. Although violations occurred, all the participants reported that compliance with their dress code and tattoo policy was not a regularly recurring issue. However, situations arose that warranted the need to remind employees of the policy. For example, five of the seven HR professionals mentioned how the summer months could be wrought with policy violations. With the hot weather, employees wanted to wear lighter, less concealing clothing, which made it harder to hide tattoos. Eleanor called the situation "messy" and mentioned that as the weather got warmer, her department sent out a reminder to comply with dress code regulations. She reported that employees typically responded accordingly by "shaping up" their professionalism after email reminders. Fiona found that most employees complied after the first warning. Overall, tattoo policies were communicated over time, but there were specific strategies enforcers used to enforce policy violations.

***Policy Communication Tactics***

In addition to the importance of the timing of policy communication, specific tactics were used to gain employee compliance and are important to consider in addressing my first research question. Further, when employees violated what it meant to be "professional" and failed in adhering to organizational values and policies, HR professionals used a range of informal and formal communication to reinforce tattoo and dress code policies. Formal and informal methods were used to carry out specific communication tactics and were utilized regardless of the presence of value dissonance. Informal and formal communication (similar to professionalism)

was a lens for understanding specific communication strategies. I will first discuss informal/formal communication of participants, then outline specific communication strategies.

***Informal communication***. Although professionalism may be an attribute that organizations want to present to the public, the directness in the enforcement of "professional" standards varied across participants. Between HR professionals, there emerged a split between those who preferred informal enforcement and those preferring formal enforcement. Sally, Monica, Phae, and Josie expressed the desire to keep the whole process of dress code policy enforcement informal; they all felt that more casual enforcement prevented escalation on the part of the employee. For example, Josie explained that her conversation with an offending employee would begin with something like motioning to the employee's appearance and saying, "FYI, *this*… not acceptable." Monica preferred to approach employees "off to the side" to keep things private and informal. The participants expressed that the nature of the conversation was very situational depending upon the severity, meaning that should escalation occur, more formal measures would be taken.

***Formal communication***. Whitney, Eleanor, and Fiona however, indicated that they communicated with greater severity and punishment for not complying with the policy, treating the policy enforcement with more formality. Whitney noted how she addressed the tattoo policy with an egregious employee explaining, "I definitely enforced it. You were sent home and you needed to go change if there was a visible tattoo in my office." Communicating the infraction was something these HR professionals preferred to do formally and in a private, such as in their own office after calling a "sit-down discussion" with the individual.

As demonstrated by Whitney's response, a corrective action was taken immediately, whether that meant sending the employee home without pay for the rest of the day, sending the

employee home to change, or covering the tattoo up. Fiona said that part of the employee uniform entailed wearing polos and shorts; since changing uniforms would not necessarily solve the problem of a visible tattoo, the employee was required to "cover that somehow." Eleanor agreed that in the long-term, dress code policies must be strictly enforced. In promoting professionalism both directly and indirectly, organizational values like power, security, and conformity were evoked through enforcement, although not all tactics evoked organizational values. As detailed in the next two sections, informal and formal communication was woven into both organizational value-endorsing and value-contradicting tactics.

### *Organizational Value-Endorsing Tactics*

The specific tactics HR professionals used to enforce tattoo and dress code policies either endorsed or contradicted organizational values. In addition to informal and formal communication patterns, the specific tactics HR professionals used also appealed to the organization's values of power, security, and conformity (Schwartz, 2006) when communication involved using hypotheticals, throwing the book down, and modelling. In the process of communicating tattoo policies, informal methods that promoted organizational values included hypotheticals and modeling, while throwing the book down was a formal method.

***Hypotheticals.*** The first communication strategy that promoted professionalism was using hypotheticals in informal situations. Phae and Eleanor employed a tactic of hypothetical anecdotes to get employees to sympathize with their handling of the policy using two methods. The first method, "trading spaces" involved asking the employee to put themselves in the shoes of the HR professional. Eleanor described one hypothetical she gave to an employee when she told them, "If the roles were reversed, would you prefer working with someone that had that polished nature, or a more casual nature? Traditionally, the consensus is always that [they] want

that polished viewpoint." Using hypotheticals in this case was an informal way to insinuate to violating employees that they should live up to professional standards, as they would expect others to do.

The second hypothetical method, "authority threats" refers to when an enforcer gave an employee a scenario where they were confronted by an organizational leader. Phae said that one of the lines she gave was:

> So, you would be comfortable standing in front of [the president of the company] saying that that's business casual? If you could walk up to [president of the company] and argue to his face that that is business casual, then I would agree with you.

Phae evoked the judgement of the president of the company to convince the employee that they shouldn't argue with her about the policy. References to organizational leaders were used to simulate professional behaviors. These authority threats directly referenced professional standards less informally than trading spaces. Using hypotheticals was a way to evoke organizational values from the offending employee and suggest that employees were not conforming to those values, or to authority figures who hold those organizational values. One possibility for why HR professionals used authority threats as hypothetical anecdotes was that they believed that their authority in the organization wasn't enough to convince the offending employee to change their behaviors.

Hypotheticals evoked the will of authority and the value of power. Schwartz (2006) describes power as valuing social hierarchies and respecting authority. For some participants, this meant that the decisions made by their organizational leaders shouldn't be questioned or critiqued. Eleanor believed that the managing director and the managing partner of her firm

knew what was best for their institution based upon their combined years of experience and dedication to the organization. She rationalized her reason for complying with the policy herself was because of loyalty to the leadership of these individuals. This sentiment relates to previous scholarship suggesting that organizational leaders further their own professionalism preferences through policies and rely on trust in those leaders to be followed (Whetten, 2006).

Josie, on the other hand, felt that conformity was necessary because compliance and consistency was paramount in her organization. She noted, "at any time we could be audited" meaning that regulators may assume that relaxed compliance with some policies might indicate other issues. This justification put the need to explain why certain tattoo policies were in the hands of others in authority, representing the power value. Both "trading spaces" and "authority threats" reinforced organizational values that held authority and social hierarchies in high regard.

***Throwing the Book Down.*** The second value-endorsing tactic used by enforcers of tattoo policies was "throwing the book down" when the HR professional drew directly from the written policy. This tactic was formal, often the finishing move, for participants who felt like their words were not enough; they chose to point to the organization's formal policy as a way of getting employees to comply. When using this method, the organizational value the enforcer evoked was *security*. Security is often associated with the belief that social order should be complied with, which includes following organizational policies (Schwartz, 2006). For Phae, saying things like, "nah, that's not dress code, sorry" or "stick to the policy; then I won't have to talk to you" worked when other tactics initially did not.

Whitney experienced an employee who became defensive about a situation where she was told to remove her nose piercing. When presented with the policy, the employee "acknowledged that it was in the handbook but didn't think that [Whitney] would actually

enforce it." After the employee insisted that she wasn't concerned about the perception customers had of her, eventually she complied because Whitney referenced the policy.

> I calmly explained that this was in the handbook and "if that's not gonna work for you, this may not be a good fit for you. I understand that and respect you and will help you find another job anywhere else; I will give great recommendations. But that's why it was in the handbook."

This tactic wasn't always used at the climax of the conflict; for Monica, it was a way to enter the conversation. She would reference the manual to directly point to inconsistencies in the employee's adherence to the policy, saying things like, "hey, just so you know, [sic] aren't allowed."

Justification for employing "throwing the book down" pertained to maintaining a specific organizational image. Employees with customer-facing roles were consistently judged with a higher standard of needing to be "presentable" and "palatable." Whitney described the need to look more presentable in visible positions:

> I think [the company] is very careful with image. In positions like mine, I'll dress very professional—what anybody would consider corporate America; that's how we dress, and how we conduct ourselves.

The theme of a "corporate" image was echoed in many of the discourses about expectations around employees. Whitney also described how she never saw an employee who works directly with clients have any visible tattoos. Many survey respondents reported similar polices, with one participant saying, "the company is trying to protect their image… a tattoo might not be what it wants to showcase."

Sally's company policy directly addressed how employee appearance affected the organizational image, stating, "Dress, grooming, and personal cleanliness standards contribute to the morale of all employees, and affects the business image of the [company name] wishes to present to our donors, customers, and many visitors." Eleanor expanded on the idea of employees as company representatives when she said, "no matter where you go, you are carrying the [company] brand." The need to sustain a positive organizational image to the public and other interacting organizations was an understandable requirement. Desire for maintaining current organizational hierarchies indicated a strong value for security, which could lead to creating policies to protect an organization's image (Dowling, 1993).

***Modelling***. The final communication tactic that reinforced organizational values used informal modeling of proper compliance with the policy without talking to employees at all. Eleanor used this method and explained:

> Obviously, us working in a leadership fashion, we have to set the example. So, what we do to keep people compliant is that we lead by example. We have to reengage that messaging as: how we would want others to dress, that's how we dress.

She referenced specific psychological benefits to dressing better in the workplace and believed that her workplace reflected that. Eleanor's embodiment of the policy extended to how getting dressed in a blazer or a suit made her feel more confident, a motivation she wished to expand to other employees. Modelling was an indirect tactic because the intended receiver was not communicated with directly. Instead, this approach allowed the enforcer to act as a positive role model to the offending employee without communicating that a violation had taken place.

Justification for using modeling came from the desire to fulfill the value of conformity. Self-discipline, obedience, and consistency all relate to conformity as a life-guiding principle (Schwartz, 2006). In Sally's organization, the policy demonstrated conformity by stating, "It is extremely important that the initial impression of the [company name] be positive and collective appearance of our employee's dress plays an important part in that first impression." Phae expressed a similar message when she had to rebuke a colleague who was not wearing the standard attire, imploring him to understand that he had to be an example of the model employee.

The desire for conformity was parallel to the responsibility many of the participants felt they had in applying the policy consistently across the organization. The avoidance of "special treatment" for employees who would break the policy was paramount to ensure trust in the department's ability to enforce policies equally. Phae would ask her employees, "what makes you so special," implying that they were not above the policy.

Tactics used for enforcing the tattoo policy were present when addressing both client-facing and non-client-facing individuals. The tactics that evoked of the values of power, security, and conformity worked to reinforce organizational values. However, there were also cases where the individual tasked with enforcing a tattoo policy did not identify with the values associated with tactics of professionalism-focused enforcement strategies. In this case, other tactics were utilized and justified by personal, rather than organizational values.

***Organizational Value-Contradicting Tactics***

Two communication tactics observed did not reflect organizational values: identification and changing the policy. Instead of promoting professionalism, benevolence and self-direction were used as a tactic for enforcing/changing the policy. Identification represents an informal tactic of communication, while changing the policy is the most formal of all methods outlined.

When addressing employees regarding a violation of tattoo polices, HR professionals and other organizational enforcers chose to enact the policy using varied rationales. Each of the previous tattoo policy enforcement tactics (hypotheticals, throwing the book down, and modeling) were justified by reinforcing organizational values (power, security, and conformity, respectively). However, identification and changing the policy did not reflect these organizational values. Using these tactics was an indication that the organizational enforcer was experiencing value dissonance.

When HR professionals did not agree with the policy, they experienced value dissonance. One example from a survey participant who reported strict informal enforcement of the tattoo policy said:

> We do not have a written policy, however there are very few employees with visible tattoos and those who do have them are often looked down upon. Tattoos are a form of self-expression and I disagree with judging anyone for having visible tattoos as much as I would disagree with judging someone for the clothes they wear.

As defined by Bruhn (2008), value dissonance occurs when an employee must succumb to organizational norms that they do not agree with or follow rules that they do not value.

Those experiencing value dissonance used both formal and informal communication tactics. Rather than promoting professionalism in term of the organizational values, the way these tactics were used evoked personal values like benevolence and self-direction. These findings address the second research question: *If policy enforcers experience value dissonance concerning their organization's tattoo policies, how does this dissonance influence the communication about and enforcement of those policies?*

Most of the human resource professionals interviewed reported that they were neutral about or agreed with the policy they enforced (both formally and informally). However, one of the participants expressed disagreement with the tattoo policy and enforcement (Phae) and engaged in both identification and changing the policy. Another participant felt their tattoo policy did not reflect their organization's culture when she first was hired and changed it to a clean canvas policy a few years prior to her interview for this study (Monica).

The difference in policy preference regarding tattoos was reflected in the variance between the values that Phae deemed important and what her organization deemed important, suggesting that she experienced value dissonance (Bruhn, 2008). She explained in her survey response that, "I do not think that tattoos should be restricted… however, I do not think anyone with [visible] tattoos would be hired here, in general, the leadership is too conservative for that." Phae disagreed with the reasoning behind her organization's tattoo policy. She attributed the strict policy to more traditional organizational leadership and perceived her organization as holding the values of security and conformity as most important. The three values of conformity, security, and tradition represent the motivation of conservation in the value theory model (Schwartz, 2006) and are associated with less acceptance of tattoos. The only values that Phae strongly identified with in common with her employer were benevolence and universalism, with conformity being ranked as one of her least important values. Phae's response acts as a negative case to the tactics described above, as it is deviant from the conclusions made about how policy enforcement is communicated due to the influence of value dissonance. A negative case analysis involves seeking out data that the contradicts the emerging hypothesis, then revising existing arguments (Tracy, 2020). This type of analysis prevents cherry-picking data, and directly relates to answering how deviant tactics may be used by those experiencing value dissonance.

Although someone who does not agree with the tattoo or dress code policy may still want to promote professionalism, they may not think that visible tattoos are unprofessional. Phae used the policy communication tactics differently compared to the other HR professionals who ascribed to organizational values. As someone experiencing value dissonance, when Phae was required to enforce the tattoo policy on employees who did not comply she preferred to use identification and worked to change the policy.

***Identification***. Identification or empathizing with the employee being reprimanded was employed as an informal tool to let the employee know that HR professionals were capable of understanding what the employees were going through. For example, Josie would say to her employees, "we understand that mistakes happen, and misinterpretations happen, so you [they] have to plan accordingly for the following day." Phae stated that her reaction to employees arguing with the dress code was to say: "Do you think that I want to wear this every day? I want jeans and a t-shirt!" Whitney's initial response was to agree with her disgruntled former employees if they expressed concern over having to adhere to a strict policy, but that the expectations of the community their organization was located meant they had to operate under those cultural norms.

Eleanor also expressed that when employees were not meeting with clients, they sometimes fell short of meeting organizational expectations of the dress code policy:

> Traditionally it'll get more lax during weeks where [employees are] not as face-to-face with the clients…[Those employees] don't always receive [enforcement] great simply because that's their *out* is to say, "well I don't have any client meetings today so I thought that it would be okay."

The employees in this case hoped that Eleanor would identify with their reasoning because she understood the rule was there for client-facing staff. Employees did not want to adhere to rules guarding organizational image when they were not interacting with the public and asked Eleanor to empathize with their irritation. Because Eleanor was not experiencing value dissonance, this tactic was not reciprocated. Identification was also done without directly referencing the policy, making it the least forthright method of direct communication.

Although identification used direct communication, unlike the previous communication tactics, this strategy did not evoke justifications that appealed to organizational values. Rather than reinforcing security, conformity, or power, the value that identification reinforced was benevolence. Benevolence is related to helpfulness, forgiveness, and honesty (Schwartz, 2006). Being truthful about one's own opinion of the tattoo policy was a way for organizational enforcers to gain trust from their employees and promote solidarity. Monica, who had a nose piercing herself, sympathized with employees who she was required to police for their organization's old dress code policy; this was one of the reasons that she eventually changed the organization's policy.

Phae preferred using identification or empathizing for day-to-day policy enforcement. When she approached employees violating part of the policy she did not agree with, Phae explained, "The strategy that I use is identification. I identify with you. I also don't like the dress code policy, you know? I identify with them and tell them I don't like it either." This quote demonstrates that Phae, in not agreeing with the tattoo policy, suggested that the enforcement, although contrary to her own values, must be followed.

Identification is an important tool in strengthening interpersonal relationships (Ayres, 1983) which are crucial for HR personnel to maintain with other employees. Trust between employees and their HR department increases organizational performance (Gould-Williams, 2003) and can be an important factor in keeping organizations accountable and equitable (Simmons, 2003). As mentioned in the previous discussion of identification, using identification indicates a value of benevolence, rather than reinforcing organizational values of authority, security, and conformity. Unlike the other communication tactics used by HR professionals to seek policy compliance, the identification tactic did not use "professionalism" as a justification for enforcement, rather it acknowledged that following the policy was something that just needed to be done.

***Changing the policy***. The other strategy used by Phae and previously Monica when experiencing value dissonance was to remove the need to enforce the policy by changing the policy. Changing the policy was the most formal of the communication tactics identified. Phae and other members of the staff persuaded their organizational leaders to change the dress code policy by selling it as "more restrictive than [their] old dress codes." In using an appeal to her organization's values of conformity and tradition, Phae enacted organizational change instead of continuing to blindly enforce the tattoo policy she had qualms with. While changing the policy may seem to be contrary to promoting professionalism, it instead changes what the organization considers to be professional dress.

By changing the policy, Phae's actions evoked the value of self-direction. Self-direction indicates a value of choosing one's own goals and independence (Schwartz, 2006). In changing the policy, HR professionals eliminated the value dissonance they felt in enforcing a policy they

did not agree with and maintained employees' freedom of expression to show visible tattoos. Monica described her thought process when deciding to make the tattoo policy more lenient:

> I did have the option to make changes to it if I wanted. So, I made it as relaxed as we possibly could because of the environment that we're in. We want people to be comfortable at work and not feel like they have to be rigid or conform to rigid rules.

Despite Whitney also experiencing a disagreement with the tattoo policy in her old position, she expressed the need to adhere to a more traditional policy because of the community they served, and it was her job to keep the company's image positive (justifying enforcing the policy by valuing tradition). Therefore, she did not attempt to change the policy. Without the value justification for changing the policy or using identification, these tactics were not utilized by HR professionals. Instead, organizational enforcers who experienced value dissonance regarding the tattoo policy communicated the values of benevolence and self-direction.

Whitney's anecdote indicates that those who experience value dissonance use different communication tactics than those who do not. This demonstrates that enforcers with value dissonance use tactics that contradict organizational values. Organizational value-contradicting tactics and organizational value-endorsing tactics were used both formally and informally to promote or reorient the organization's conception of professionalism.

## Discussion

This study explored the connections between tattoo policy strictness, enforcement, and the value dissonance of policy communicators. Considering the increasing proportion of the population who have tattoos and are participating in the workforce, it is important to explore how tattoo policies are used to enforce perceived organizational values. When addressing the research

questions, it is through communication processes over time and using communication tactics that organizational values are conveyed to employees by policy enforcers. However, the tactics and values evoked differ if the enforcer of the tattoo policy experiences value dissonance, specifically if the enforcers of those policies disagree with the perceived values associated with having a stricter or leaner tattoo policy. In general, organizations with HR departments fall into three categories of tattoo policies, all which come with different benefits and challenges. Tactics and timing of communication are affected by what type of tattoo policies are in place. Through this study, exploration of the relationship between value dissonance and communication practices in organizations can further add to the literature about tattoos in the workplace.

The differences in the values of organizational enforcers and the organization itself can create longstanding issues. Employees who are organizational enforcers may not agree with the tattoo policy, which creates a clash between organizational values and individual values. When experiencing value dissonance, HR personnel were shown to use tactics that reinforced values other than those that adhere to organizational values, like benevolence and self-direction. Likewise, the participants with *blown-out* policies experienced a disconnect between the perceived organizational values and what was being communicated to staff which made adhering to the rules problematic.

If an organization relies too much on adhering to strong uncompromising values, it can lead to employees' dissatisfaction and disenchantment (Cha & Edmondson, 2006). Although an employee having identical values to an organization is not necessary or realistic, having policies that foster values important to the individual can lead to having a more unified and motivated team (Paalberg & Perry, 2007). Results in this study strengthen the claim that value dissonance contributes to discipline that may be contrary to organizational values (Bruhn, 2008), emotive

dissonance (Hochschild, 1983), and disparities in maintaining an organization's image of professionalism (Schinoff, Rogers, & Corley, 2016). For human resource professionals, implementing policies that align with their values can make enforcement more effective; it also helps the HR professional to identify more with their organization based on those shared values (Nicotera, 2020).

Nobody likes to have the hard discussions about what people can and cannot show on their bodies. For the participants, the discomfort in having to enforce the tattoo or dress code policy left them feeling awkward. However, some participants managed this anxiety more easily than others. When using indirect strategies for disciplining violators of the dress code policy (like modelling), human resource professionals avoided confronting the employee directly; the violation of the policy was not addressed or corrected. Ambiguity in enforcement related to perceived ambiguity in the policy as well; when the tattoo policy was not seen as definitive and specific, or enforcement did not reflect the formal policy (blown-out policies), it left employees and enforcers unclear of the best ways to enforce perceived organizational expectations. This supports Schinoff, Rogers and Corley's (2016) research that indicates that when uncertainties exist in either the tattoo policy or the enforcement of the policy, it can create a loss of organizational identity.

From the interviews, it became evident that when tattoo polices and enforcement were well-defined for both enforcers (HR professional, managers, and supervisors) and employees, compliance was less challenging to implement and to follow. This finding supports research indicating that for new employees entering an organization, initial communication with employee networks are paramount in learning outcomes, especially when it comes to reducing uncertainty (Kramer, 1993). Therefore, it is important for organizations to set clear standards for

tattoo policies early in the employment process and be consistent with those policies as violations occur. Findings also indicated that HR personnel that utilized organizational value-endorsing strategies for enforcement (hypotheticals, throwing the book down, and modeling) better disseminated organizational values to employees rather than their individual values.

When human resource professionals perceived they had similar values to their organization or used justifications that aligned with their personal values, enforcing a tattoo policy were more effective and consistent across the organization. However, for enforcers who experienced value dissonance or disagreed with the policy, there were gaps in the execution of the organization's policies. This effect was more common for organizations which enacted a *blown-out policy*, rather than a *traditional policy* or a *clean canvas policy*, because of the uncertainty that came with divergence between how strict a tattoo policy was on paper and how strictly that policy was enforced. However, the negative effects of inconsistent enforcement can be mitigated by setting clear tattoo policies that reflect organizational values, and by hiring HR professionals who share organizational values and use direct organizational value-endorsing communication tactics.

The shifts in cultural attitudes about tattoos, the need to acquire talent, and relaxing enforcement are all potential factors in the changing of tattoo policies, however, they are not always reflected in formal organizational documents, which compromises consistency. Organizations should consider the role of personal and organizational values in the hiring practices of policy enforcers, as well as their styles of communication. Organizational leaders should also implement policies and enforcement strategies that are consistent and reflect organizational values.

***Implications***

From the conclusions drawn in this research, there are practical implications that organizational leaders and HR professionals can utilize, the first being policy modifications based on changing attitudes about tattoos. When HR professionals talked about the current culture of their organization and the dress code as it pertained to tattoos, they often referred to the demographics of their employees. As a large portion of her organization's workers were undergraduate students, Sally explained that the employees often had more progressive styles, like wearing leggings and coloring their hair. This was apparent in the lack of concealment by those employees:

> We've got quite a few employees in our office that have tattoos visible on their arms. Some are on their legs or on their back where you can see it by the neck or by the top of the shirt.

The adaptation of organizations to current trends and mainstream fashion was significant in this participant's response. Sally explained how change came about in her organization through the kinds of conversations policy makers would have: "this is just the way people dress now. We should probably adapt to this."

Given that their main workforce was a younger generation, this flexibility based on current styles was adaptable, but could also create inconsistent application and enforcement, and thus confusion. Fiona expressed that breaking of the tattoo and other dress code policies were often looked past, while Eleanor explained how things like the size and "dramatic nature" of the body modification were considered when issues arose. Informal exceptions were very common in many of the organizations studied, and for some, it led to concrete policy changes. As

mentioned previously, Monica changed the policy in her organization to reflect changing organizational values:

> In the old policies, it was written that facial piercings [and tattoos] are not allowed… that was in there before; that is no longer in the policies or the handbook. I think [relaxing the policy] became the informal unwritten word, and then we just took it out of everything.

According to her description, the change was primarily initiated by a lessening in the enforcement of the tattoo policy. As a whole, the organization became more relaxed in the past five years and the change in written policy reflected the overall organizational culture change. Relaxing enforcement was more informal than changing the policy directly, but it used the same method of reorienting the definition of professionalism for the organization. Relaxing enforcement and changing the policy may be necessary as more tattooed individuals enter the workforce. Regarding hiring tattooed employees, Josie said, "it's more so just what we're seeing. As employees are coming to the organization and seeing that [tattoos and piercings] are something more common…" She added that restricting candidates based on visible tattoos could leave the organization missing out on talented potential employees.

While expanding talent pools and cultural shifts may be some reasons for change, Sally attributed changes to the departure of older, more traditional organizational leaders who were in charge of implementing the dress code practices. She explained, "our board used to be made up of …an older crowd that was a little bit more old-school; who might look at that differently than most people look at it now." Sally made the assumption that the strictness of the tattoo enforcement was due in part to the "old-school" or traditional values that an older generation at the masthead of an organization may weave into their policies. This assumption by Sally can be

substantiated by research that suggests older sections of the population are less accepting of tattoos in the workforce (Shannon-Missal, 2016). A tension present from her understanding of the formal policy in the organization's handbook was the perception of the mandate that employees conform to a corporate or "business-like" image, while she and other enforcers engaged in relaxing the informal policy and enforcement. In ignoring the formal language of the policy, the members of the organization enacted *strategic dissent*. This dissent can help employees feel more satisfied in their organization and initiate change (Garner, 2009).

As more organizations must adapt to a younger generation of candidates, perhaps strategic dissent amongst members will become more common, with formal policies not reflecting the reality of what an organization expects of its members. As previously mentioned, in having a *blown-out policy*, the confusion caused by having essentially two policies (formal and informal) made application unclear for employees and organizational leaders.

Having clear and consistently enforced tattoo policies is critical for an organization to maintain their values. Of the three types of tattoo policies identified here, it is important for organizations to enact the policy which best suits the context and environment of their organization. As some participants mentioned, less progressive areas with older adults may be less accepting of tattoos, which must be taken into consideration; in this case, a *traditional policy* may be the most appropriate. Factors like organizational image, employee values, and the values of organizational leaders all play a role in organizational decision making. Findings from this research indicate that before enacting or changing an existing tattoo policy, adequate research must be done by the employer to sufficiently weight their options.

When making hiring decisions about who will be interpreting and applying policies, it would behoove organizational leaders to consider looking for candidates that have similar values

to their organization. An employee who is tasked with correcting the behavior of other employees is bound to feel some trepidation, especially when the policy involves something that may be of personal importance to them, like tattoos. People who value similar life-guiding principles to a company may feel stronger identification with the organization and use justifications to enforce the policy that accurately represent the organization's goals.

Another factor to consider in the hiring practice is which tactics are used by potential new hires (in human resource positions or other enforcing roles) in communicating polices and organizational values. As my analysis suggested, using direct tactics like hypotheticals, throwing the book down, and identification are more effective than indirect tactics like modelling, regardless of how the endorse or contradict organizational values. According to social learning theory, modelling is not enough to enact significant change in offending employees although it may increase an employee's positive perception of the enforcer (Bandura & Walters, 1977; Weiss, 1977). The organizational context plays a role in the effectiveness of direct messaging; however, direct tactics are better suited for correcting the behavior of policy-breakers (Singh, Dong, & Gero, 2013). The human resource department of an organization is crucial to the longevity and morale of other employees, and although they may be upstanding employees, a lack of proper communication channels and tactics can be devastating (Hailey, Farndale, & Truss, 2005). The importance of a good communicator in an enforcement position is paramount for hiring teams to consider, along with coordination during the onboarding process which lays out how the organization wants the policy to be administered.

***Limitations and Future Research***

During the process of collecting data for this research, the world experienced an event which affected every aspect of our society and daily lives. In March 2020, the COVID-19 virus

pandemic swept the nation, and created organizational crises in all corners of industries. Human resource professionals, by nature of their position, were at the epicenter of the response for every company in the nation, which caused a significant influx of human resource problems to tackle. The pandemic and safer-at-home order that was put in place prevented further interviews from being conducted. I was very grateful for the participants I was able to interview and survey during this tumultuous situation; those who gave me their greatest precious resource, time.

One of my first participants, and many others after her, echoed the sentiment that "there is always an HR emergency." The participants that I had chosen to research were both arduous to attain and invaluable for the wellspring of organizational knowledge that they provided. However, despite the limited number of participants, the complexity of the data I was able to gather from human resource professionals during a time of uncertainty and disarray is indispensable.

Based upon insights from my participants, further research should expand to management and supervisory positions. Many of the HR professionals were only involved with the enforcement of policies if they required escalation (e.g. an employee was not complying at the direction of the supervisor). Although they may not be as concerned with the implementation of values as HR professional would be, managers and supervisors can help broaden the scholarship about the effect value dissonance has on the enforcement of tattoo policies. There may have also been a carry-over effect in that self-reported perceived organizational values potentially affected how participants responded when asked to assess the values of the organization, especially if they had high organizational identification. Future studies should consider the placement of the individual and perceived organizational value scales to limit this effect.

Another limitation of this research was the homogeneity of participants. Current employment statistics for human resources managers in the United States indicates that over three quarters of people in this profession identify as female (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020) of which the survey data was able to get an accurate sampling of without the use of purposive sampling methods. Interview participants, however, were entirely female-identifying and Caucasian, which cannot account for differences in cultural acceptance of tattoos. Perhaps in an expansion of this research, using an intersectional approach or snowball sampling may improve the representation of more diverse backgrounds of human resource professionals.

In terms of future directions for exploring these topics, another notable finding in the analysis was that five of the seven HR professionals thought that their company least valued hedonism or stimulation, the values most associated with self-indulgence, gratification of desires, and enjoyment in life (for the former), and living an exciting life (for the latter) (Schwartz, 1999). At the same time, many of the interviewees indicated that hedonism, stimulation, or self-direction was one of their most important values. As was previously hypothesized, hedonism, stimulation, and self-direction are values associated with the motivation to receive a tattoo (Wohlrab, et al., 2007). Although human resource professionals and other enforcers may not be interested in getting a tattoo themselves, the ability to sympathize and rationalize with the decision to do so is more understandable than for someone who does not identify highly with values of hedonism, stimulation, and self-direction.

In the original outline for this research, I had intended to analyze variables both qualitatively and quantitatively. However, circumstances resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic forced me to limit my analysis to the interview participants' statements. For future

inquiries into tattoo policies, it would be beneficial to explore whether there exists an empirical connection between tattoo policy strictness and organizational values. In the collection of data for this study, a scale of organizational identification was given to participants along with the measurements of their personal values and their organization's values. In future studies, I plan to use this data quantitatively to explore a statistical connection between value dissonance, the enforcement of tattoo polices, and organizational identification.

The opportunities to gain new ground in the area of tattoo policy research is exciting and full of untapped potential. In applying Schwartz's Value Theory to organizational policies, this research was able to uncover a previously unknown effect of value dissonance on policy enforcement and helped to categorize the communication processes and justifications involved in tattoo policy enforcement. I hope to further this research and desire for others to explore other intersections between tattoos and the workplace.

## Conclusion

This research sought to explore the relationship between the communication of organizational values and the enforcement of tattoo policies by human resource professionals. Through the analysis of interviews and survey data, I revealed three types of tattoo policies present in organizations and discovered how professionalism is used to justify maintaining organizational image through polices. The process of communicating tattoo policies occurred over time during an employee's tenure and using both formal and informal communication tactics. Each of the tactics can be associated with a justification that evokes either perceived organizational values or the HR personnel's values. If the enforcer of tattoo policies experiences value dissonance, they either use identification or change the policy to adjust how the organization views professionalism.

Conclusions drawn from the results indicate that organizations should enact unambiguous tattoo policies and enforcement that reflect their organizational values. Organizational leaders should also consider the values of potential employees and the changing public image of tattoos in their hiring practices. By exploring tattoos in the workplace, implications from this research can lead to conversations about policy development and enforcement between HR professionals and organizational leaders that reflects both organizational context and the changing face (and skin) of employees.

Table 1

Schwartz's Value Theory Model (2006, p. 3)

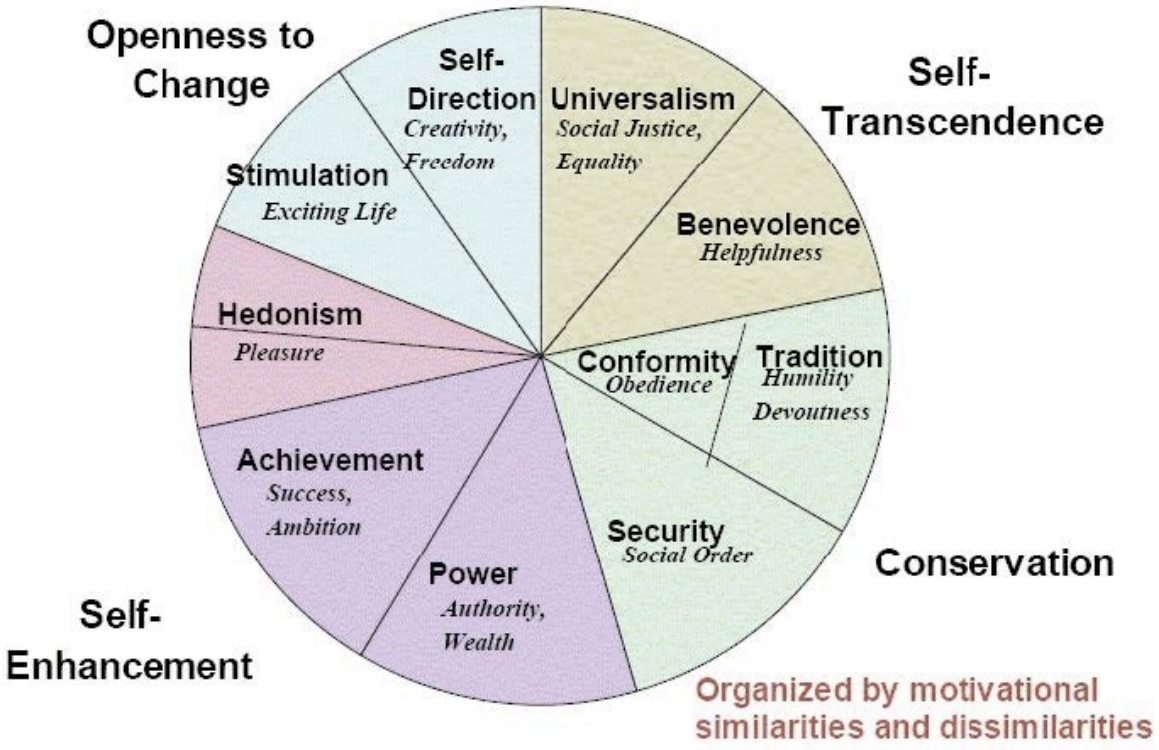


Table 2

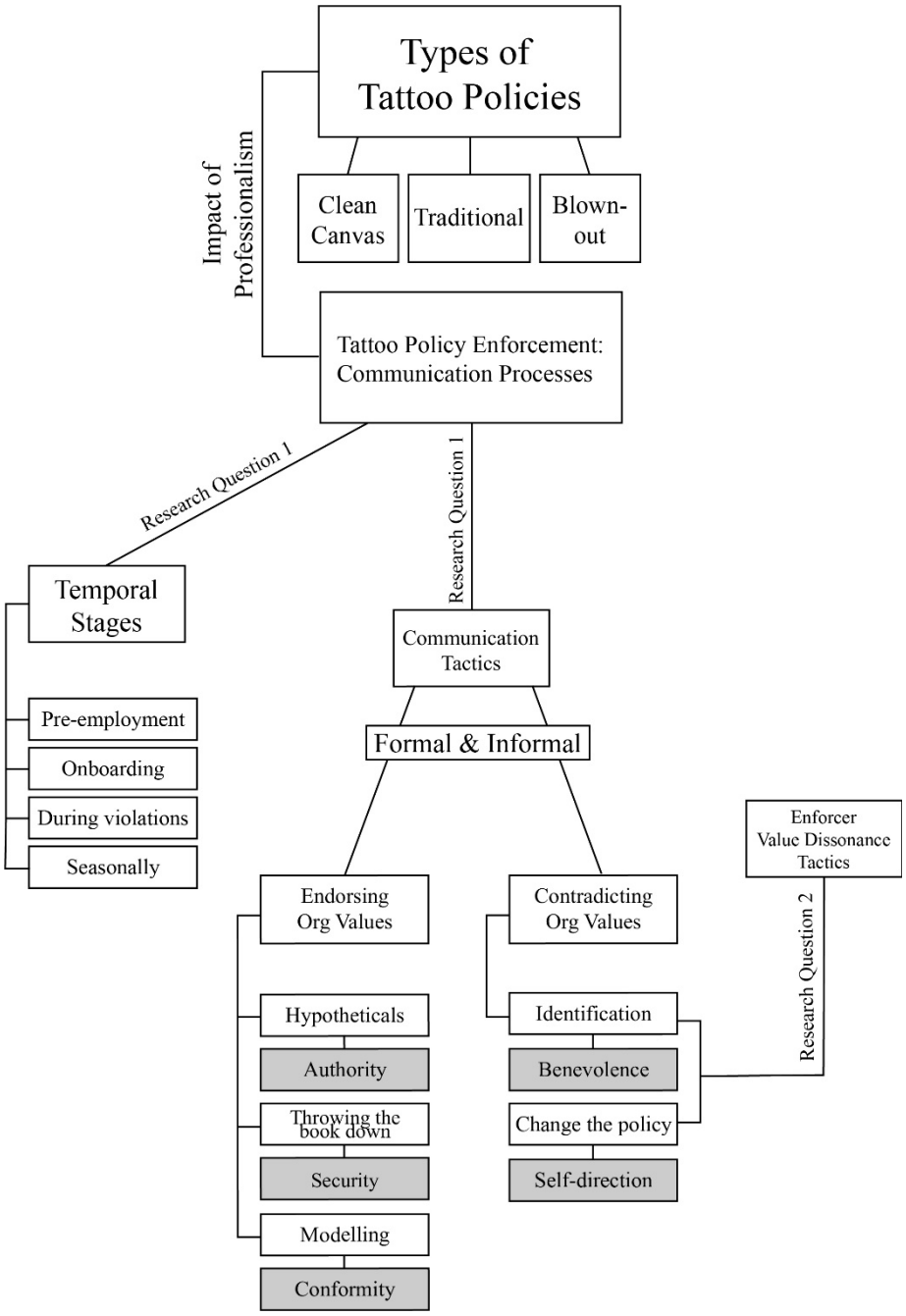
Description of all interview participants, including their value measures, industry, years employed, and their organization's perceived value measures.

| Participant | Phae | Whitney | Josie | Fiona | Eleanor | Monica | Sally |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Years employed** | 1.5 | 13 | 9.5 | 37 | 4 | 8 | 15 |
| **Age** | 43 | 43 | 39 | 55 | 27 | 31 | 38 |
| **Most Important Personal Values (SSVS)** | Self-direction, universalism, and benevolence | Achievement, hedonism, stimulation, and self-direction | Achievement, stimulation, self-direction, and benevolence | Self-direction and benevolence | Achievement, hedonism, self-direction, and benevolence | Benevolence, self-direction, hedonism, and stimulation | Importance associated with all values |
| **Least Important Personal Values (SSVS)** | Hedonism, stimulation, and conformity | Tradition, achievement, and power | Hedonism, universalism, and tradition | Hedonism and stimulation | Universalism, power, stimulation, tradition, and security | Power | Less association with power |
| **Organization Industry** | Food Manufacturing | Insurance and financial services | Medical Device Manufacturing | Amusement/ family attraction | Financial Services | Non-profit museum | Non-profit financial |
| **Total Employees** | 7000 | 57,000 | 150 | 120 | 30 | 115 | 20 |
| **FPS** | None | Moderate | Moderate | More than Moderate | Moderate | Moderate | Lenient |
| **FPE** | None | Moderate | Moderate | Moderate | More than Moderate | Lenient | Lenient |
| **FPA** | None | Neutral | Neutral | Neutral | Agree | Neutral | Strongly disagree |
| **IPS** | None | More than slightly strict | None | Moderate | More than Moderate | None | Lenient |
| **IPE** | None | More than slightly strict | None | Moderate | More than moderate | None | Lenient |
| **IPA** | Strongly Agree | Neutral | None | Neutral | Agree | None | None |
| **Agrees with Policy** | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| **Most Important Organization Values (SSVS)** | Universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, and security | Achievement, universalism, benevolence, and tradition | Power and achievement | Benevolence and universalism | Achievement and benevolence | Self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, security | All important |
| **Least Important Organizational Values (SSVS)** | Power, hedonism, and stimulation | None (all important) | Hedonism, conformity, and security | Power, hedonism, and security | Power and stimulation | Power | Power hedonism and stimulation |

Abbreviations: SSVS: Short Schwartz Value Survey (Lindeman & Verkasalo, 2005); FPS: Formal Policy Strictness; FPE: Formal Policy Enforcement; FPA: Agreement with Formal Policy; IPS: Informal Policy Strictness; IPE: Informal Policy Enforcement; IPA: Agreement with Informal Policy

Table 3

Visual categorization of relevant themes and argument organization.



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# Appendix A

## Pre-Interview Questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey! This survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Later follow-up interviews are anticipated to take between 30 and 60 minutes.

If you are participating in our interviews, you will be asked to record your participant code, which was given to you by the researcher. This code will be used to pair your answers with your interview answers. If you have not been given a participant code, please contact the researcher, Sabrina Fuller, safuller@uwm.edu.

Firstly, you will be asked to rate how much you identify with your current organization. Next, you will be asked to answer questions about your and your organization's values. Then there will be various open- and closed-ended questions asked about what tattoo policies are in place in your organization and how they are communicated. Lastly, questions about your demographics will be asked.

Participation in this survey and interview is completely voluntary. If at any point you do not want to answer a question, you may skip it. If you would like to stop participating in the survey or interview at any point, you may do so, and your answers will be discarded. All answers for this survey will be confidential.

We do not foresee any risks associated with this study aside from mild discomfort when answering questions about enforcing dress code policies in your organization.

By clicking the next button, you are again agreeing to take part in the survey and certify that you are above 18 years old, and are a currently employed human resource professional.

Please indicate your unique identifier code below:

☐ _____

PART 1:

Instructions: Please rate the following statements in terms of how much you identify with each statement. Use the 5-point scale in which 1 indicates that you identify very weakly with the statement, and 5 indicates that you identify very strongly with the statement.

1. When someone criticizes my organization, it feels like a personal insult.
2. I am very interested in what others think about my organization.
3. When I talk about my organization, I usually say ''we'' rather than ''they.''
4. My organization's successes are my successes.
5. When someone praises my organization, it feels like a personal compliment.
6. If a story in the media criticized my organization, I would feel embarrassed.

Instructions: Please rate the importance of the following values as a life-guiding principle **for you**. Use the 8-point scale in which 0 indicates that the value is opposed to your principles, 1 indicates that the values is not important for you, 4 indicates that the values is important, and 8 indicates that the value is of supreme importance for you.

The scale:

| | Opposed to my principles | Not important | | | Important | | | | Of supreme importance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. POWER (social power, authority, wealth) | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 2. ACHIEVEMENT (success, capability, ambition, influence on people and events) | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 3. HEDONISM (gratification of desires, enjoyment in life, self-indulgence) | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 4. STIMULATION (daring, a varied and challenging life, an exciting life) | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 5. SELF-DIRECTION (creativity, freedom, curiosity, independence, choosing one's own goals) | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 6. UNIVERSALISM (broad-mindedness, beauty of nature and arts, social justice, a world at peace, equality, wisdom, unity with nature, environmental protection) | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 7. BENEVOLENCE (helpfulness, honesty, forgiveness, loyalty, responsibility) | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 8. TRADITION (respect for tradition, humbleness, accepting one's portion in life, devotion, modesty) | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 9. CONFORMITY (obedience, honoring parents and elders, self-discipline, politeness) | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 10. SECURITY (national security, family security, social order, cleanliness, reciprocation of favors) | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |

Instructions: Please rate the importance of the following values as a life-guiding principle **for your organization**. Use the 8-point scale in which 0 indicates that the value is opposed to **your organization's** principles, 1 indicates that the values is not important for your organization, 4 indicates that the values is important, and 8 indicates that the value is of supreme importance for your organization.

The scale:

| | Opposed to my organization's principles | Not important | | | Important | | | | Of supreme importance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. POWER (social power, authority, wealth) | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 2. ACHIEVEMENT (success, capability, ambition, influence on people and events) | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 3. HEDONISM (gratification of desires, enjoyment in life, self-indulgence) | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 4. STIMULATION (daring, a varied and challenging life, an exciting life) | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 5. SELF-DIRECTION (creativity, freedom, curiosity, independence, choosing one's own goals) | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 6. UNIVERSALISM (broad-mindedness, beauty of nature and arts, social justice, a world at peace, equality, wisdom, unity with nature, environmental protection) | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 7. BENEVOLENCE (helpfulness, honesty, forgiveness, loyalty, responsibility) | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 8. TRADITION (respect for tradition, humbleness, accepting one's portion in life, devotion, modesty) | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 9. CONFORMITY (obedience, honoring parents and elders, self-discipline, politeness) | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 10. SECURITY (national security, family security, social order, cleanliness, reciprocation of favors) | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |

PART 3:

Instructions: Please fill out the following questionnaire about your organization's tattoo policies to the best of your knowledge:

| | No policy | Not strict at all | | | Moderately strict | | | | Very strict |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1A: In your organization, rate the strictness of the *formal* tattoo visibility policy: | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |

1B: What are the *formal* tattoo policies for employees in your organization?

| | No policy | Not strict at all | | | Moderately strict | | | | Very strict |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2: In your organization, rate the strictness of enforcement of *formal* tattoo visibility policy: | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |

| | No policy | Strongly Disagree | | | Neutral | | | | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3A: Personally, do you agree with the *formal* tattoo policy: | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |

3B: Please explain your answer:

| | No policy | Not strict at all | | | Moderately strict | | | | Very strict |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4A: In your organization, rate the strictness of the *informal* tattoo visibility policy: | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |

4B: What are the *informal* tattoo policies for employees in your organization?

| | No policy | Not strict at all | | | Moderately strict | | | | Very strict |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5: In your organization, rate the strictness of enforcement of *informal* tattoo visibility policy: | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |

| | No policy | Strongly Disagree | | | Neutral | | | | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6A: Personally, do you agree with the *informal* tattoo policy: | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |

6B: Please explain your answer:

PART 4:

Instructions: Please fill out the following demographic questions about you and your organization:

Industry:

Date of Organization's Establishment (year):

Number of Employees:

Participant Pseudonym (name not your own that you would like to be referred to as):

Length of Participant Employment (years):

Participant Gender:

Participant Age:

Participant Ethnicity:

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. Will you please tell me a little bit about your organization?
2. What is "professional" dress in your organization?
3. Are there any specific rules or policies about clothing, jewelry, or tattoos?
    a. How are dress codes communicated to employees initially (for example, do employees read a handbook? Are employees given a copy? etc.)?
    b. How strict do you feel the policies are?
    c. Are the policies enforced? What does that enforcement look like?
    d. To your knowledge, when was the policy developed? Have the dress code policies changed in any way since you've been employed? What was your involvement?
4. Is the dress code (tattoos and other grooming) discussed in interviews or job offers? What do you/they say?
    a. Are there any screening processes used when interviewing candidates to screen out or make sure people hide tattoos?
5. Have you ever had to enforce the dress code policy in this organization? How was this communicated?
    a. How did the employee respond?
    b. Have you ever had to enforce a dress code policy that you didn't agree with? Explain the situation or strategies you use.
    c. Have others in the organization ever had to enforce the dress code policy to your knowledge? How would they communicate this enforcement?
    d. How is compliance with the dress code policy assured in the organization (i.e., are supervisors/HR departments watching for compliance, or are noncompliant individuals approached separately)?
    e. Is compliance with the dress code policy a recurring issue within the organization?
6. If you were in charge, what dress code policies would you put in place and why?
7. Is there anything else you want to share about your organization, policies or tattoos that I missed?