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Body Modifications in Professional Contexts

Examining body modifications' effects and implications for success in work environments

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<p>The primary question this thesis aims to answer is how body modifications affect success in a professional context. This study was done with a focus on Western societies, and where applicable and relevant especially on Finland. In efforts to finding an answer to the research question, the reasons behind possible stigmatised views, as well as the positive and negative effects and implications of body modifications were examined from the viewpoints of both individuals and organisations. Moreover, based on the findings, suggestions on how to eliminate or minimise the harmful effects and implications were given. The topic was analysed with the help of multiple theories from different fields of social science, and the results indicated that the cultural background of the perceiver, placement and nature of the body modification(s), industry, occupation and position, as well as gender of the individual sporting body modifications were all significant factors in determining how positively or negatively body modifications were perceived. Furthermore it was found that body modifications often caused negative effects and impacts, which proved to be harmful for individuals and organisations alike. On the other hand, in specific cases body modifications had the potential to serve as significant assets. However the negative effects and implications significantly outweighed the positives. Thus, it was concluded that making conscious efforts towards minimising the harmful biased views and subsequent actions would be in the best interest of individuals, organisations and subsequently societies alike. Moreover, the responsibility over the bettering of the situation was argued to be mainly on the organisations opposed to individuals, and the subsequent recommendation was for organisations to pay attention as well as allocate sufficient resources and tools to managerial selection and work.</p>	
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1 Defining the term body modification

Perhaps one of the most known and used definition for the term body modification (sometimes referred to as body art or body marking) is provided by Thompson and Black (2006, p.379) who state that body modification, alternatively known as body alteration, is “the deliberate altering of the human anatomy or human physical appearance.” This broad definition includes plastic surgery, socially acceptable decorations (for instance in Western societies common ear piercings that are fully acceptable) as well as different rites, including historic primarily lost practises (for instance skull shaping and feet binding), religious rites (for instance circumcision) and the modern primitive movement. The modern primitive movement involves modifying the body in ways that are based on indigenous people’s rites of passage (Hokkanen, 2012, p.10). Nevertheless, in the context of this thesis the term body modifications is used to refer mainly to tattoos and piercings (other than piercings situated in the soft part of the earlobe, i.e. the aforementioned socially acceptable common ear piercing). When relevant the term body modification may however additionally refer to ear lobe enlargements, intentional scarification or scar tattoos, branding or burn marking, subdermal implants, chiselled teeth, cosmetic prosthodontics, pointed ears, split tongue, or any other modifications that are done deliberately, voluntarily and for non-medical reasons and which can be executed without a surgical licence in Finland.

The choice to consider body modifications as a unity instead of choosing to focus on one specific modification or to address different modifications separately is firstly based on the findings of a thesis written by DiPopolo (2010). Dipopolo studied the social stigma attached to tattoos and piercings by using four samples: individuals with piercings only, individuals with tattoos only, individuals with piercings and tattoos, and all of these individuals combined. The results indicated that such differentiation is irrelevant and substantial differences between individuals occurred rather based on the amount of modifications individuals had in general, as well as depending on those modifications’ visibility, commonness and threatening nature. Secondly, Timming (2016) found that, amongst other factors, the genre and image content of tattoos, perceiver’s personal values, and gender of the individual wearing body modifications, affected the perception about body modifications considerably. Supporting these findings are the statements of multiple managers from multiple companies that, for instance, deem the placement and image content of tattoos crucial when assessing appropriateness in a work environment

(Kupila, 2011; Kosonen, 2014; Saurén, 2014; Singer, 2016b). Thus, it is just to state that the meaningful factor is not the type of the modification (tattoo, piercing, implant and so on) but the genre and nature of the modification (for example a tattoo depicting a flower in comparison to a tattoo depicting images of violent nature). Hence for the purpose of this thesis it is not relevant to distinguish between different types of modifications and therefore the umbrella term body modification is to be used throughout this thesis work.

2 Introduction

The human body has been modified throughout the whole history of mankind and in modern Western societies body modifications have proved to be increasingly popular (Ziemann, 2013; The Harris Poll, 2016). Nonetheless, even in the modern day body modifications can cause challenges in personal as well as professional contexts. Moreover, in professional environments these challenges can cause unnecessary harmful effects to both individuals as well as organisations, and ultimately through the aforementioned to whole societies. Thus it would be arguably important to study what these challenges and effects of body modifications are. Additionally, to be able to find effective actions to minimise the redundant unbeneficial implications, it is furthermore important to understand the underlying reasons to why body modifications bring about these negative consequences. Subsequently this thesis work aims to study body modifications' effects, and these effects' causes, in western societies, and where applicable and relevant specifically in Finland, to answer the primary question: how body modifications affect success in professional contexts.

To start off with, according to Charles Darwin there is no nation or tribe that would not recognise the phenomenon called tattooing (Hokkanen, 2012, p.19). The oldest written mentions of piercing and body modification rituals date back to over 5000 years and even Ötzi, the man who lived in the Alps 3300 years before the Common Era, was tattooed (Hokkanen, 2012, p.13). Hence, body modification has been an integral part of human history from the very beginning of humanity. Nevertheless, in Western societies tattoos and piercings were, and sometimes still are, considered to be the markers of individuals who are socially deviant, such as sailors, criminals and convicts (Hokkanen, 2012, p.28). This might be in part explained by the prohibition of tattoos in year 325 in Europe by the emperor Constantine the Great. Constantine thought that man was created to be the image of god and deemed intentional modification of this godly creation punishable. This halted the evolution of tattoos and banished them, alongside with all other forms of body modifications, from Europe for approximately one thousand years (Hokkanen, 2012, p.20). Nonetheless, in 1960s' America through rock band members tattoos started to gain popularity again amongst youth, and before long European youth followed in the footsteps of their American counterparts (Juntunen, 2004, p.52). Furthermore in Finland tattoos started to create excitement in the end of 1970s, as the industry's influencers started to gain visibility and rockabilly culture became popular (Hokkanen, 2012, p. 127;

Juntunen, 2004, p.196). The first ever tattoo parlour in Finland opened its doors in 1987 in Ruovesi (Hokkanen, 2012, p.128).

Hence, tattooing and other forms of body modification have a history that dates back thousands of years, but in its current form body art has been in the Western as well as Finnish culture a comparatively short period. This brings about challenges that relate to cultural relativism. Cultural relativism suggests that the meanings individuals give to anything are tied to the culture. (Lahikainen and Pirttilä-Backman, 2007, p.32) Considering that the culture surrounding body modifications is very new and has grown and developed very rapidly it is no surprise that individuals of different age and background in the present society may have drastically differentiating experiences, perceptions and reactions to body modifications, especially in a professional context. Furthermore, these differences in perceived meanings of body modifications can cause harmful effects in the work environment. They can hinder individual's chances of getting employed, being able to retain a job, lower the chances of organisations finding the most suitable and appropriate employees with most suitable talent and skills, as well as hamper organisations' abilities of attracting the right customers (Ellis, 2014; Weinstein, 2014; Timming, 2015b; Timming, 2016; Wallop, 2016). What is more, Seiter and Hatch (2005) additionally remind that identifying the nature of the relations between body modification and harmful attitudes is important, because negative outlooks may lead to explicit negative behaviour. This negative behaviour may encompass all kinds of inappropriate treatment, which refers to bullying that is continuous and consists of consistent negative treatment, insulting, purposefully hurting, oppressing or demeaning the targeted individual. (Ahlroth and Kess, 2012 s.40). Moreover, Ahlroth and Kess (2012, p.10) write that this kind of inappropriate treatment can cause for instance depression, nervousness, tiredness and sleep problems. All of these negative side effects can in addition be observed in individuals who merely witness the harassment. Additionally, the negative psychosocial burden can put an end to an individual's career, as much as for instance a physical injury. Efforts to resolve conflicts, whether they be official or unofficial, also take time as well as resources away from the primary function of a work community, namely from working. Ahlroth and Kess (2012, p.21) moreover state that poor atmosphere costs yearly around 30 billion euros in Finland.

Furthermore, as mentioned, body modifications are increasingly popular and subsequently they are no longer the craze of marginal groups. According to a quantitative research made by The Harris Poll in 2016, 29 percent of Americans have at least one

tattoo. Moreover, tattoos are especially widespread among the younger population, with nearly half of American Millennials, 47 percent precisely, sporting one. Respective numbers from Finland are hard to come by, but an extensive study on the subject was made in 2009 and at the time 13 percent of young adults had at least one tattoo and estimates say that this percentage has most likely increased thereafter (Ziemann, 2013). Ziemann furthermore wrote that in Western countries approximately 25 percent of twenty- to thirty-year-olds are tattooed. Moreover, all of these studies examined solely tattoos, excluding other kinds of body modifications. Therefore it can be assumed that these numbers underestimate the amount of modified individuals in reality. Regardless of the exact numbers based in these figures, it is safe to say that individuals sporting body modifications represent a major part of the demographic. Subsequently the challenges that body modifications bring about cannot be brushed off as minor insignificant matters.

3 Literature review

When doing the initial search for literature available on the topic of body modifications' effects in work environments, the publications seem plentiful. Nevertheless, as Singer (2016a) aptly points out, many of these texts refer to the same few and rather old sources. Singer for instance noted that two separate articles published in Forbes magazine two years apart make contradictory claims about tattoos' impact on employment, justifying their propositions with the conclusion of the same research. Hence, with further inspection many of the publications available turn out to have little credibility and cannot be considered as valid references and consequently the source selection ends up being substantially restricted.

Nonetheless, commendable publications, along with the publications' writers, offering well researched and genuinely useful insights into the subject matter do exist. Perhaps the most prominent example of such is Dr Andrew Timming. Dr Timming is a Reader in Management at the University of St Andrews who specialises in examining how physical appearance effects employee selection, and considers the social psychological impacts in relations to topics such as aesthetic labour, stigma, prejudice, discrimination and diversity management (University of St Andrews, n.d.) Moreover, relating to the topic of tattoos and piercings' effect on employment, Timming has carried out controlled experiments as well as conducted qualitative interviews. Based on the findings from these he has written many well-constructed publications (some of which are collaborative efforts) that offer reliable contributions to the discussion over body modifications implications in a professional context. Timming's findings suggest that the prejudices against body modifications still persist, and that body modifications do have a significant impact on employee selection, especially in relations to job positions that are customer facing. Additionally Timming has found that depending on the nature or genre of body modifications their effects may differ greatly, and that in certain cases the effects may even be positive. Timming proposes that such positive effects surface primarily when applicant with body modification(s) is applying to a job offered by a company that aspires to convey an "edgy" image. Lastly, Timming additionally found that piercings have less impact than tattoos in hiring situation. This last claim however is arguably not reliable enough, at least yet, to be seen as a general rule. This is because as Timming himself stated, the nature of the body modification is a significant factor, and this aforementioned claim of lesser impact of piercings is based on a study where the effects of one specific piercing was compared to the effects of a one specific tattoo. Thus, further research

efforts are needed in order to determine if this claim proves to hold true in a consistent manner, or would significant deviations in the outcomes occur when the nature of the piercing and/or tattoo is changed.

Moreover, when it comes to limitations of Timming's research in general, he himself often acknowledges and addresses these. Based on the limitations detected he furthermore discusses the optimal future researches that would complement the existing publications. As an example, in an article published in 2015, Timming (2015b) points out that one important limiting factor in the study at hand was the single and standard nature of the stimulus used (in this case a tattoo). He stated that it is expected that the style and image content of the tattoo would result in significant differences in the acceptance of it. Surely by no coincidence the next publication from Timming, in cooperation with David Perrett, expected to be published in a forthcoming volume of the Journal of Trust Research in 2017, is titled "An experimental study of the effects of tattoo genre on perceived trustworthiness: not all tattoos are created equal". Hence, Timming's work proves to be logical as well as consistent and thus it can be argued that he is one of, if not the, most important individuals contributing to the subject matter of body modifications in work life. Nonetheless, for the purposes of this thesis, the most significant limitation about Timming's work is the heavy concentration on matters surrounding hiring and employee selection processes. This thesis work aims to additionally examine the effects of body modifications in the work place and in work life, and for this Timming's work offers a limited amount of inputs.

Beyond Timming there are no single outstanding authors who would have been able to offer similar consistent contributions to the subject matter. Nonetheless some other well executed publications are available. Singer (2016b) for example listed academic sources talking about tattoos in the work place such as Ruetzler et al. (2012), McLeod (2014) and Baumann, Timming and Gollan (2016). Regardless of their distinctive viewpoints all the authors agreed that tattoos had negative effects and that if given the choice both employers as well as customers preferred non tattooed workers. To be more specific, Ruetzler et al. (2012) examined multiple different appearance indicators and their effects in a hiring situation. Their study found that indicators such as grooming and business attire were deemed the most important and the impact of these clearly surpassed the impact of tattoos. Tattoos were nevertheless seen as undesirable, unprofessional and as a negative indicator. Supporting this Baumann, Timming and Gollan's (2016) research can be concluded by saying that people prefer customer facing staff, whether it be a

surgeon or a mechanic, without visible tattoos. McLeod (2014) in turn found out through qualitative interviews that individuals with tattoos felt that they were stereotyped as less capable and less intelligent. These individuals additionally felt the need to cover up their tattoos in certain professional situations. Furthermore, both men and women with tattoos reported to have experienced unconsented touching for instance in the form of other person aspiring to expose more of a tattoo by moving clothing out of the way.

Despite being palatable and academic in nature each aforementioned source listed by Singer (2016b) has its limitations. In context of this thesis the most evident limitation in common to all of these sources is the focus on tattoos and subsequently exclusion of other body modifications. Moreover, the research made by Ruetzler et al. (2012) is focused on a single industry, which might make the findings less generally applicable. Additionally their research was conducted in 2010, which can imply that the findings are inaccurate or even obsolete. Other significant limitations, which Singer pinpointed, are mostly related to these studies' samples. In McLeod's (2014) cases the sample size was very limited, and in Baumann, Timming and Gollan's (2016) case, the sample group could have been selected more randomly and female respondents were over-represented. These challenges with samples are furthermore not unique to the sources at hand. Body modifications and the topics relating to it are still in the interest of fairly few and subsequently the resources researches covering the subject matter receive are heavily restricted. Hence, the studies are only as encompassing as the resources and capabilities of few individuals allow, which in most cases suggests that the scope remains understandably, but disappointingly, small.

In addition to the above mentioned sources, some thesis and dissertation works provide valuable points of view to the subject of body modifications in the work environment. For instance Dipopolo (2010) talks about the social stigma relating to body modifications, Martin (2013) discusses women's experiences and expectations of stigma derived from body modification and Saurén (2014) examines how body modifications affect employee selection in Finland. Dipopolo (2010) executed a quantitative study, which main finding was that there is no significant difference between tattoos and piercings when it comes to causing stigma, however body modifications' nature and placement proved to be a prominent factor. Dipopolo additionally found that individuals' experiences of discrimination are connected to the degree of stigmatisation of their body modifications. Martin (2013) furthermore used Dipopolo's work as one of her main sources and added a qualitative research to complement the existing study. Martin, similarly to Dipopolo,

concluded that women experience notable stigma related to their body modifications in a professional context and that these experiences have various negative effects. Even with a slightly differentiating narrative, Saurén's findings, derived from qualitative interviews, were along the same lines. She observed that visible body modifications have a negative impact in recruitment situations and that the placement and nature of the image were seen as major factors by the hiring managers. Subsequently all of these sources further confirm the findings and hypotheses of previous researches, which is a valuable input because it gives credibility and reliability to popular claims surrounding body modification. On the other hand, confirming the conclusions of previous researches implies that nothing truly new and distinctive is being found. This can be seen as the most profound limitation to these sources. As a thesis by definition requires, all of these sources elaborately discuss and evaluate all the theories used as a framework, which takes up a lot of efforts, consequently taking away from the space for original findings. Moreover, as the literature surrounding body modifications is fairly limited to begin with, these theses reference the same sources used by many other authors. Thus even though all of the writers had some unique points and managed to relate topics in new ways, the true added value and new contributions remain limited.

Sources beyond these include mainly articles from different magazines and journals, of which some offer good inputs to the subject matter of body modifications in work contexts. Nonetheless, as discussed in the first paragraph of this chapter, often the background research, use of resources and the objective coverage is severely lacking and the personal opinions of the writer shine through. Hence, caution is to be practised when using sources like these. However, the benefit derived from these articles is based on the interviews that reveal the opinions and thoughts of relevant individuals, such as hiring managers. These opinions can be truly useful because of the highly complex nature of the subject. After all the perception of body modifications in the work environment can be affected by for example the nature, visibility and commonness of the modification (Dipopolo, 2010; Martin, 2013; Timming, 2015a; 2016; Timming and Perrett, 2017), the industry, the specific job position and values and experiences of managers, co-workers and customers (Timming, 2015a; 2015b, Singer 2016a), gender of the modified person (Timming, 2015b; 2016; Baumann Timming and Gollan, 2016) as well as the cultural background of the perceiver (Ellis, 2014). Thus it is truly hard to make accurate generalisations or create sufficiently inclusive statistics or models about the subject, and therefore hearing relevant individuals might be the best way of mapping out how much, or little, body modifications truly have effect in a certain contexts.

Lastly, in addition to literature that is strictly related to body modifications, this thesis refers to literature that explains the basics of human behaviour and underlying reasons for it. First theories derived from such literature and used in this thesis are provided by social psychology. The concepts used are of very fundamental nature and therefore any book on the subject matter could have sufficed. Nevertheless, the book that was selected to be used, mostly for availability reasons, is written by Lahikainen and Pirttilä-Backman (2007) and is called “Sosiaalipsykologian perusteet”. Moreover two books, “Monikulttuurinen johtaminen” by Lahti (2008) and “Johtamisen psykologia” by Perttula and Syväjärvi (2012), which both refer to basic psychology behind behaviour, are utilised to gain further understanding why individuals might behave a certain way in a specific situation. Lastly and most importantly a book called “Epäasiallinen kohtelu - häirintä ja syrjintä työyhteisössä”, written by Ahlroth and Kess (2012), is used to get an idea of what effects and implications inappropriate treatment as a general phenomenon has in work context. This book additionally offers a legal perspective and gives insight into what are the rights and responsibilities of employers in the Finnish work environments and what good managers should, and should not, do.

All of the books mentioned above approach their subjects from a very general and systematic viewpoint, are more descriptive than applying theory when presenting information, as well as use theories that are universally accepted. Hence, there is not much that could be criticised or argued over when it comes to the content. Nonetheless, it is good to remember that even if the theories, models and ideas offered by these books would be widely applicable and accepted as true and accurate, they are ultimately only efforts of trying to explain reality, no doubt in ways that are circumambient, but also simple enough to guarantee understandability, and general enough to guarantee applicability. Thus they are bound to overlook and leave out some complexities and exceptions that will inevitably occur in reality. It can be moreover argued that every model will always be reductive, because its primary function is to explain a phenomenon in a way that is, as said, general and recurrent. Hence, it is important to remember that even if these theories are reliable, life, along with the matters concerning body modifications in work context, are more complex and include deviances that even any complex theories would be unable to capture. These theories provided by the aforementioned books nonetheless provide a framework that helps to make the relevant issues surrounding body modifications in work context more confined, more approachable and more understandable.

4 Theoretical framework

To reiterate, the primary question this thesis is aiming to answer is, how body modifications affect success in professional context. This question encompasses the examination of challenges that are related to getting employment, as well as retaining a job, and in relation to the latter, how the individual feels they are perceived and treated in the work place based on their body modifications. Moreover, this thesis aims to answer the question of why people might hold stigmas against people with body modifications and where these stigmas might stem from. Furthermore, it is studied how these stigmatised views may in turn manifest into behaviour, what are the effects of these views and subsequent behaviours to both individuals and companies, and what are the implications of these effects, again to both individuals and companies. Lastly, answers and suggestions are offered to the questions of what could be done to eliminate, or at least minimise, the above-mentioned effects and implications in cases where they are harmful for any party involved.

The first theoretical framework that is to be utilised to answer the aforementioned questions is derived from psychology, especially from social psychology. This framework's primary value is to provide insights into why people might have certain perceptions and behave a certain way in a given situation. Similarly, and in relation to this, additionally theories of stigma, and furthermore prejudices (views stemming from stigma) and discrimination (actions stemming from stigmatise views), are used to gain understanding and to explain the causes of the harmful opinions held against, and actions towards, individuals with body modifications. Finding and understanding the reasons and root causes for these perceptions and behaviours can furthermore help in realising how the negative implications of these perceptions and behaviours could be possibly reduced.

Moreover, when examining the differentiating effects and implications of the occurring perceptions and subsequent behaviours based on body modifications in work environments, many different fields of research and theoretical framework are combined to form a coherent and extensive wholeness. Most of these theoretical frameworks are derived from the sources that apply these theories into their discussion over body modifications effects in modern work context. As an example, as mentioned in the previous chapter, in his works Timming (2015a; 2015b; 2016) introduces the theories relating to such topics as employee selection, aesthetic labour, stigma, prejudice,

discrimination, diversity management and before mentioned social psychology. Furthermore Dipopolo (2010) as well as Martin (2013) introduce and talk about the theories of stigma, as well as implement these theories to the subject of body modifications in work environments. In addition, this thesis utilises and discusses different legal frameworks. For instance Ahlroth and Kess (2012) use behavioural psychology in combination with law of Finland as well as European Union. This legal framework is complemented by Elzweig and Peeples (2011) who furthermore discuss, based on law of United States and exemplary rulings of real cases, the legal restrictions and freedom to discriminate against body modifications and what policies and instructions can and cannot be present, and what should be considered when drafting these instructions, in order for them to be legally sound, as well as ethically and morally appropriate. Hence, as a totality this thesis is a multidisciplinary study that utilises an ample amount of different theories, thereby aspiring to form an encompassing and coherent theoretical framework to help in answering to the central questions presented in the first paragraph of this chapter.

5 Findings

5.1 Factors

5.1.1 Societal change

To begin, Ellis (2014) wrote that even if all members of the same generation and society do not have same, or even similar, perceptions on body modifications, the age of the perceiver can have significant effects. She stated that in general older bosses and peers are more likely to have more negative attitudes towards body modification, in comparison to younger bosses and peers, who are not only more likely to have more positive attitudes, but are additionally more likely to have body modifications themselves. As previously suggested in the chapter “Introduction”, this might be at least partly explained by cultural relativism. As body modifications and the culture surrounding them in their modern form have been present in the Finnish society for only 30-40 years (Hokkanen, 2012, p.127; Juntunen, 2004, p.196), it is understandable that individuals of different age and background may perceive body modifications notably differently. Furthermore, Lahikainen and Pirttilä-Backman (2007, p.75) discuss a phenomenon called “the generational gap”, which is typical for fast developing Western societies. The rapid big changes in modern society inevitably exacerbate differences in experiences, beliefs and values of individuals. What is more, the generational gap is made possible by the ways in which adults absorb and process information. Lahikainen and Pirttilä-Backman (2007: 66, 73-74) explain that adults select, evaluate and adjust new information to knowledge previously assumed. The critical consideration of information is time consuming and therefore individuals sometimes utilise simpler means to examine new matters. Such means may be for example the unquestioned acceptance of opinions of specialists or authorities (Lahikainen and Pirttilä-Backman, 2007, p.66). Utilising such simplified information evaluation methods that are not base on critical thinking may lead to old outdated views persisting for longer than what would be sensible and necessary. When it comes to body modifications, this would likely imply that the old association between body modifications and deviant and stigmatised groups such as bikers, gang members and convicts (Hokkanen, 2012, p.28) can still persist, even if the relationship between the matters is no longer relevant in the present society.

Furthermore, the differences in perceptions might derive from individual experiences and commonness of the subject being evaluated. Dipopolo (2010) proposes that individuals may be inclined to stereotype things of which they do not have first-hand experiences from. She links this to the commonness dimension of stigma, which suggests that the

more common something is, the less stigmatised it usually is. Martin (2013) further explains that in regards of body modifications this would imply that a person who does not have body modifications and has not had previous encounters with individuals with body modifications would be more likely to depend on stereotypes when assessing an individual sporting body modifications and hold stronger stigmas against them based on their body art. However, after meeting multiple individuals with body modifications, a person making the judgements might start to understand that the modifications have little, if anything, to do with the internal qualities of the person they wish to evaluate. Thus, there are clear and understandable reasons why body modifications might be accepted, or unaccepted, in different degrees even within the same generation within the same culture. Nonetheless, in reference to the commonness argument, it would seem probable that as body modifications become increasingly common, the negative associations connected to them should lessen. However, Lahikainen and Pirttilä-Backman (2007, pp.73-74) additionally point out that as society changes in an exponentially increasing pace it is correspondingly increasingly important that individuals of all ages are able to learn anew and let go of the old in order to survive in the changing circumstances. Hence, in addition to the natural change in opinion and perceptions occurring in societies over time, conscious efforts towards changing old outdated views and values should be made.

Such changes are fortunately evident in the Finnish professional environment. For instance, in an article written by Kupila (2011), the service manager of Raha-automaattiyhdistys (Veikkaus at present (Veikkaus, 2017)), Ulla Maksimainen stated that their table game dealers cannot look provocative or scary. She continued by saying that therefore all tattoos have to be concealable and when relevant a long sleeved shirt is the only option, even in summer or in other hot environments. On the other hand, in an article by Rautio (2013) another service manager from Raha-automaattiyhdistys, Anne Hakala, contemplated the matter of tattoos by saying that “years ago tattoos evoked a certain image” and that “it was seen that people working in customer service positions should look neutral and clean-cut” (quotations authors translations). Hence, even if Hakala did not address the official stance of Raha-automaattiyhdisty regarding visible tattoos at the time, it is clear that the attitude much differs from the one held by Maksimainen only two years prior. Whereas Maksimainen related tattoos to provocative and scary appearance, Hakala speaks about tattoos’ negative effects as well as conservative appearance as things of the past. On the other hand, even if these statement suggest a change in the values in the company, it is good to remember that

both Maksimainen and Hakala could have been projecting their personal values into their answers. Especially when companies lack clear guidelines regarding the acceptability of body modifications, or where these guidelines leave room for interpretation, the opinions start to take an effect. (Timming, 2016) Indeed Perttula and Syvä-järvi (2013, p.22) remind that ultimately every organisation is composed of individuals' differentiating viewpoints which manifests as ambiguity. Situations, persons and matters do not have one correct explanation, because their "correctness" or "wrongness" is dependent on the perspective they are viewed from.

5.1.2 Placement and nature

Another factor that significantly effects how body modifications may be perceived is their placement and nature. These factors are seen as so significant that even tattoo studios have disclaimers in their sites, suggesting that potential clients carefully consider the placement and theme of the tattoo:

"Tattoo is a permanent illustration on your skin that does not only modifies your own body image, but also how others see you. Reactions of some people may be severe and tattoos may have an effect on for instance employment and relationships. Therefore use common sense when choosing the placement and motif of the tattoo." (Krunikan Leima, n.d. Authors translation)

At first it might seem peculiar that the ones earning their living by creating tattoos would make such a statement. Nevertheless, through the examination of the basic theory of stigma it becomes evident that such plea for consideration is not unfounded. For instance DiPopolo (2010) writes that in addition to commonness, the amount and prominence of stigma is dependent on visibility and threatening nature of the cause of the stigma. It is indeed not hard to understand why the placement and subsequent visibility plays a substantial role on how individuals perceive and react to body modifications. For example, in a social situation where the body modification is not visible and cannot be observed, it naturally has no effects. Moreover, the importance of the placement and visibility aspect is additionally discussed by for example Timming (2015b), who concluded that visible body art on the face, neck or hands can hurt employment chances. Similarly Saurén (2014) found that visible tattoos had a negative effect in job interviews and on employment prospects. Multiple managers interviewed by Saurén saw tattoos as

displeasing as well as harmful to credibility and trustworthiness if they were situated in face or neck or were otherwise located in a visible spot. In Kupila's (2011) article Petri Ahonen, at the time director of business development and community affairs of Staffpoint, stated that tattoos in the area of head and neck are "strong distinctive marks" but speculated that a wedding ring tattoo would not be marvelled by anyone anymore.

In addition to indicating the importance of the placement, the last comment made by Ahonen touched upon the already mentioned third factor of stigma, the threatening nature. A wedding ring tattoo is likely commonly affiliated with meanings such as commitment, trust and love. These meanings are, in turn, most likely seen as positive ones and therefore the tattoo may spark a more positive response in comparison to something that would have a similar size and placement, but a different perceived meaning. Accordingly, in a very recent publication Timming (2016) stated that while some tattoos decrease employability, others can actually increase employability, and that the nature of the image is a significant factor to this phenomenon. In Timming's qualitative interviews employers that indicated a preference for employees with body modifications without exception noted that regardless of their preference not all tattoos are acceptable. Offensive material such as hate speech, racial abuse and inappropriate language were listed to be amongst the completely unacceptable motifs. In the same manner a manager interviewed by Saurén (2014) mentioned that the acceptability of a tattoo is dependent on the image content. The manager continued by saying he would not approve a tattoo that is for example racist in nature. Moreover, Timming and Perrett's (2017) research found that in particular tattoos with images of nudity or with a theme that can be associated with violence resulted in low levels of perceived trustworthiness. In comparison to this tattoos with tribal style earned a neutral response and tattoos portraying Christianity (especially when the perceiver shares the faith) or natural flora resulted in highest perceived trustworthiness.

Besides tattoos, similar in depth research about the differentiating effects of other body modifications according to their nature has not been conducted. Nevertheless, the basic principles as well as general findings are most likely applicable to all body modifications. For instance regarding visibility, it is highly unlikely that nipple piercings would have any effect in an everyday social situation as it usually is hidden under the clothes and cannot be observed. On the other hand, visible piercings have been proved to have substantial effects in interpersonal situations (Ruetzler et al., 2012; Martin, 2013; Timming, 2015b). Furthermore, these effects most likely differ depending on the nature of the piercing. For

instance a little delicate lip piercing could be assumed to get a different response compared to a lip piercing with a protrusion. Hence it can be argued that regardless of the body modification at hand, the placement and nature play a significant role when assessing its effects.

5.1.3 Industry, occupation and position

Thus far the wider psychological and sociocultural frameworks, as well as more specific visibility and genre aspects affecting the perception of body modifications, have been discussed. The next step is to consider how the professional context and its nuances furthermore affect this perception. The professional context is a meaningful dimension to consider, because as Timming (2016) points out, the perception of the same physical characteristic can be negative in one context but positive in another. Accordingly, Timming's research findings suggested that in a context of a fine dining restaurant tattoos were a disadvantage, but in a context of a nightclub the same tattoos gave an advantage for a job applicant. Nevertheless, the results additionally indicate that the benefits derived from tattoos when seeking employment from the nightclub are not as significant as the harm caused by tattoos when seeking employment from the fine dining restaurant. Thus, the research at hand would propose that in general the negative effects of body modifications would outweigh the positive, but industry differences are significant.

What is more, earlier studies from Timming (2015a; 2015b) looked into the effects of tattoos on employee selection and found that visible tattoos had a primarily negative effect, but more importantly found that the magnitude of this negative effect was determined not only by the location and content of the tattoo, but also by the type of organisation and by the job position's proximity to the customer. Singer (2016a) supports this view by writing that highly visible tattoos can still bring about negative impacts, especially in jobs that are customer facing. Singer pinpoints that in service jobs the negative attitudes held by employers are often and largely due to the fear of customer reactions and perceptions. Timming (2015a) agrees by writing that the negative effects to selection were driven by the negative attitudes of hiring managers, and these attitudes in turn were driven by managers' perceptions of customer expectations. By interviewing hiring managers from a wide variety of organizational type, size, and from a wide variety of industries including retail, higher education, finance, and local council, Timming found that each recruiter, including the managers who had non-visible tattoos themselves, harboured negative attitudes towards job applicants sporting visible tattoos. All recruiters

furthermore admitted to having prejudices against tattoos and the candidates wearing them, as well as acknowledging that those prejudices and personal feelings are largely irrelevant, but explained their stance by saying they fear that customers would see visibly tattooed employees as distasteful.

By contrast, through his research Timming (2015a) was additionally able to conclude that employers were generally significantly less prejudiced against body modifications when hiring for a non-customer-facing job. Hence it is evident that the industry as well as the position in the given industry affect the degree to which employee can expect their body modifications to be approved, or conversely disapproved. It is arguably also very important to note, for the sake of fully understanding the challenges related to body modifications in a work context, that negative attitudes often derive from the fear of customer reaction, rather than from the managers' own opinions. It is nevertheless unclear to what extent the underlying opinions of managers affect. This can be argued firstly because in all existing researches hiring managers have had the freedom to express their opinions, rather than their actions being monitored to perhaps reveal possible latent or subconscious biases. Secondly, because even if the rational explanation would be based on the organisation's success through consumers' perceptions, these customer perceptions about body modifications are largely unknown, unstudied and highly dependent on the individual at hand, which in turn makes forming any accurate generalisations very hard, or even impossible. This convoluted nature of customer perception then makes the argument based on these perceptions seem somewhat vague, and subsequently begs the question of where these negative attitudes towards body modifications really stem from.

5.1.4 Gender

Lastly, the effect of gender can be examined in relations to how positively or negatively body modifications are perceived. Baumann, Timming and Gollan (2016) interestingly found that the gender of the person perceiving, assessing and judging body modifications and their wearer is insignificant, but the gender of the person displaying body modifications and being perceived, assessed and judged is a significant factor. Furthermore, Timming (2015b) clarified that tattoos and piercings had negative effects on employee selection for both men and women, but these modifications seemed to have a more negative effect when carried by a man. Timming speculated that this inequality might be due to body modifications being perceived as more threatening on men than

on women. What is more, Timming (2016) additionally found that in the context of a nightclub tattoos were seen as positive factors for both men and women, but when compared to one another tattoos had a more positive effect when carried by a woman. Timming did not directly address why this might be, but his findings suggested that tattoos in general may serve as an asset in employee selection when the company hiring wants to convey a certain trendy, young, and edgy image. Subsequently, it could be speculated that because historically body modifications have been more common and accepted amongst men, they are seen as more edgy and perhaps even more provocative on women than on men, which in these certain cases works for women's advantage.

On the other hand however, Timming (2016) points out that the few studies that have examined the gender aspect in relations to body modifications have concluded that women can generally expect more negative stigmas, stereotypes, prejudices and other effects in comparison to men. Moreover, Baumann, Timming and Gollan's (2016) research indicated that consumers preferred tattooed male employees over tattooed females in customer serving positions. Furthermore, a Finnish hiring manager interviewed by Saurén (2014) stated that even if he had never before thought about gender aspects in relations to tattoos, when presented with pictures of tattooed male and female he found the male to be more "natural" and concluded that he feels as body modifications are more acceptable on men than women. Understandably this is only a representation of one distinctive opinion, nonetheless it is interesting to note how differentiating research results can be from one another, and furthermore how opinions may deviate from the objective results all the more.

Regardless, despite the seemingly opposite results these findings are not necessarily contradictory. It might be that gender in relation to body modifications is merely such a complex and possibly constantly evolving factor that it can only be examined case by case. Alternatively, it might be merely a problem of rather small individual studies being unable to capture a comprehensive view, even if some general rules would be applicable to the matter. Whichever the case, further extensive research would be needed to accurately determine the extent to and way in which body modifications are perceived differently depending on the gender of their wearer. Currently the only certain thing is, as also Timming (2016) states, body art is a gendered phenomenon, one way or the other.

5.2 Body modification's effects

5.2.1 Hiring and employability

It is highly likely that no one would deny that appearance may significantly help or hinder one's employment chances. As Timming (2015b, p.135) aptly writes:

“It is well established that corporeal and aesthetic attributes influence one's chances of success in a job interview. The probability of being offered a position is generally reduced if an applicant presents as obese (Rudolph, Wells, Weller, & Baltes, 2008), physically unattractive (Hosoda, Stone-Romero, & Coats, 2003), facially disfigured (Stevenage & McKay, 1999), unfashionably or inappropriately dressed (Christman & Branson, 1990), visibly disabled (Jenkins & Rigg, 2004), or even, simply, female or nonwhite, as widely reported in the workplace discrimination literature.”

Sometimes these factors may have influence on subconscious levels. However Saurén (2014) states that most employers are ready to admit that appearance plays a significant role in employee selections. Managers interviewed by Saurén stressed looking neat, clean and neutral. Attention grabbing appearance was seen as a negative factor, and subsequently body modifications were often seen as additional negative traits, as they usually attract attention. Accordingly Saurén (2014) and Timming (2015b; 2016) both state that based on their researches employers still hold measurable and significant prejudices against job applicants with visible body modifications. Similarly, an article published in Financial Times mentions that a survey questioning hiring managers found out that visible tattoos can considerably decrease employment probabilities (Wallop, 2016). Moreover, Ruetzler et al. (2012) found that even if grooming and business attire were the most important indicators in a hiring situation, subsequently surpassing the significance of tattoos and piercings, body modifications were still seen as negative indicators and visible modifications led to decreased chances of being hired. Hence, it is not hard to find evidence to support the argument that body modifications can be a significant impediment when trying to find employment.

One possible explanation to why this is so is offered by Martin and Dula (2010) who write about how individuals who deviate from the norms and do not conform to conventional values, customs or practices often suffer from increased negative stigmas. These

stigmas are furthermore often emphasised in situations where the perceiver has to, or is expected to, make a quick conclusion about the individual being evaluated. Job interviews often times represent situations like this, hence the probability of hasty and negative judgements based on body modifications would seem to be a likely phenomenon. Additionally, as discussed in chapter 5.1.3, many sources mention the fact that often times it is not the hiring managers themselves that would harbour negative attitudes against body modifications, but they fear that customers might. Timming (2015b) for instance stated that employability of tattooed job applicants is not particularly dependent on the perception of recruiters, but rather on recruiters' perceptions of customers' perception on body art. Supporting this, a director of an accounting firm admitted that he would avoid hiring an applicant with visible tattoos because clients and customers might be put off by the modifications (Wallop, 2016). Moreover, in Saurén's (2014) interviews multiple managers said they base their reserved or even negative stances on body modifications on customers' possible negative reactions to modifications. Most of these managers said that they do not oppose tattoos nor believe that tattoos would affect employment, but when presented with the option of choosing between two equal candidates of which one was tattooed and one was not, most managers chose the applicant without tattoos. For instance, one manager stated that in principle tattoos would not matter but that they would still choose the candidate without, and another manager admitted they would choose the applicant with tattoos only if they would be significantly better in "other ways" when compared to the applicant without tattoos.

Thus, it would seem that even if the attitudes towards tattoos would be becoming more accepting in general, the negative effects and implications may persist in unproportioned amounts. When hiring managers reflect the fear stemming from worse case scenarios to hiring decisions, the organisational culture might end up developing more slowly than the overall culture of the surrounding society. Hence, in addition to the fact that many research findings indicate that body modifications hinder employment chances, it is likely that in hiring situations responses to body modifications are more severe, and therefore body modifications' effects are even more substantial, than what could be assumed based on the values and responses of the surrounding society.

5.2.2 Success and satisfaction at work

In addition to hindering employment chances, body modifications also have significant effects in work environments, because despite body modifications' increased popularity and commonness as well as the development of attitudes for the better, many stereotypes about modified individuals persist. Ellis (2014) lists that tattooed and pierced persons are still often viewed as irresponsible, unprofessional, and less qualified in comparison to their unmodified peers. Seiter and Hatch (2005) add that individuals with tattoos were rated lower on competence, character, sociability and credibility, as well as overall perception of these individuals was more negative when compared to individuals without tattoos. The only characteristic that was found not to be affected by tattoos was attractiveness. Seiter and Hatch point out that it is an interesting fact that tattoos, albeit being external decorations, affected perception of all internal characteristic (competence, character, sociability and credibility) but not the external one (attractiveness). Similarly, a study by The Harris Poll (2016) found that 45 percent of respondents believed that tattoos make an individual more rebellious, 34 percent thought tattoos make person less respectable and 29 saw tattooed individuals as less intelligent. Tattoos additionally negatively affected the perception of characteristics such as health and spirituality. In addition, differing from the results of Seiter and Hatch, the research made by The Harris Poll found that tattoos moreover negatively affected external characteristic such as attractiveness and sex appeal.

Regardless of the characteristics at hand and whether they are external or internal, tattooed individuals themselves report that getting a tattoo has had no influence over how they feel about themselves (The Harris Poll, 2016). Moreover, Martin and Dula (2010) stated that their research finding would indicate no significant differences in the grade point average of tattooed versus non-tattooed college students. Hence, there is a clear discordance between what tattoos (and other body modifications in similar manner) mean to individuals acquiring them, how these modifications affect individuals' self-image, as well as what these modifications are able, or rather unable, to communicate about the traits of the individual supporting them, and the way in which others perceive these modifications and their wearers. Such disparities between perceptions can cause challenges both in personal and professional lives. For instance McLeod (2014) writes that heavily tattooed professionals feel pressured especially by co-workers and superiors aged fifty years and older. On the other hand these same professionals feel their modifications make them more easily approachable and relatable to younger co-workers. Such situations can lead to an individual feeling torn and unsure about what is acceptable and desirable as well as how they should act in the work environment. Moreover, these

heavily tattooed individuals also reported experiencing unwanted and unconsented touching in work environment, such as people trying to move a piece of clothing in order to reveal and see a tattoo. (McLeod, 2014) This undoubtedly adds to the unpleasant experience of body modifications in work context.

What is more, individuals with body modifications may end up encountering varying negative responses from managers. For example, in Saurén's (2014) interview one manager described tattooed individuals as repulsive and rebarbative. Another strict, even if not as belittling, reaction comes from Iiris Heikkinen, who is the human resource manager of Turun Osuuspankki. She stated that tattoos and piercings are unacceptable for a bank official and dismissal of an employee is possible if modifications are not agreed to be either taken off or hidden, or the employee does not agree to change their work post (Kosonen, 2014). Additionally, in an article published in Financial Times (Wallop, 2016) and in Saurén's (2014) interviews multiple managers described body modifications as distractions that take customers' attention away from the actual work and performance of the employee. Body modifications were in addition seen as harmful for the credibility and approachability of an employee, and some managers expressed worry over body modifications of workers being harmful to the company image (Saurén, 2014). Hence the opinions held against body modification do not only affect hiring and the perceived personal traits of individuals with modifications, but also their perceived professionalism and capability to perform in a work environment.

Nonetheless, Kupila (2011) writes that in some companies visible tattoos and piercings are accepted even in customer service positions. Kupila pinpoints that this is nevertheless often only if the company's image or brand is associated with strong individuality and in many customer service industries, such as hotels and banks, many established standards over how an employee is supposed to look apply. Supporting this, Jan Söderholm, the regional director of Nordea in Turku, states in an article written by Kosonen (2014) that even if Nordea does not have official stance, guidelines, nor regulations about how an employee is supposed to look, if an employee would obtain a visible tattoo or piercing the situation would require a discussion. Söderholm continues to say that if after discussion the employee does not agree to hide their body modification they can be forced to change their job post. This situation described by Söderholm serves as a prime example of one of the biggest problems Martin (2013) found in relation to body modifications in the work environment. Through the qualitative studies Martin carried out it was concluded that individuals often experience discordances and

inconsistencies between company policies and opinions as well as consequent acts of managers. These deviations of opinions and acts from the official company stance or policies leave employees uncertain how to act and what to expect in situations where body modifications may have an effect. This in turn can lead the employee to have feelings of for instance uncertainty, anxiety and fear.

In some occasions clear policies regarding body modifications in work context do however exist, but often times these are related to legal obligations. Most often strict and clear regulations regarding body modifications are crafted by national institutions and companies are then obliged to reinforce these regulations. A good example of such is the S Group. As a whole S Group does not have a unanimous stance on tattoos and piercings and subsequently the level in which body modifications are accepted in the work place is dependent on the cooperative at hand. However, where relevant piercings are prohibited based on the omavalvonta (In English self-surveillance) regulations (Kupila, 2011). Omavalvonta is a written plan for risk management in social and health industries created and supervised by Valvira, a National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health (Valvira, 2015). Hence sometimes body modifications' acceptability and subsequent effects in work environment can be determined by a higher body. Such regulations may moreover eliminate and lessen, or conversely support and strengthen, the influence of organisational culture and managers as well as co-workers' values over how individuals with body modifications are seen and treated in the work place.

5.2.3 Positive developments and effects

In 2005 Seiter and Hatch predicted that if body modifications continue to gain popularity the general stance towards them might become more accepting. This idea is in agreement with the commonness factor in stigma, discussed by DiPopolo (2010), introduced in the chapter 5.1.1. Indeed, already in Kupila (2011) a director of a personnel service company Staffpoint, Petri Ahonen, stated that diversity in the professional environment has increased so significantly that a visibly tattooed individual can have a wide range of career opportunities. Similarly, the human resource consultant of an agency worker intermediation firm VMP, Meri Grönroos, said that even big and visible tattoos are not a hindrance in any job. Grönroos based her opinion on the fact that she had never heard any negative feedback from employers about the employees' appearance. Moreover, Grönroos continued by saying that rather than external factors, the most important factors are internal, namely the attitude and skill level of the employee

(Rautio, 2013). In continuum, a manager interviewed by Saurén (2014) contemplated that ten years ago they would have seen a tattooed individual as being deviant in a negative manner, but now, as tattoos have gained popularity and the number of them has increased, they have become a part of the norm and subsequently have far less, if any, significance when assessing an individual. Additionally, Singer (2016) and The Harris Poll (2016) discuss that based on recent researches it is evident that the negative attitudes towards body modifications have declined as the commonness of them has increased. Thus in conclusion it is safe to say that Seiter and Hatch (2005) were right in their prediction; the increased commonness of body modifications has significantly changed the level of acceptance of them for the better.

Furthermore, Lahti (2008, pp.26-27) writes that humans have a natural tendency to surround themselves with people they feel to be similar to themselves. This is due to the inherent want to belong and to be accepted. Seiter and Hatch (2005) additionally point out that the more similar the individual judging and the individual being judged, the more favourable the outcomes. Hence, in addition to reducing stigmatised views in general, commonness is additionally likely to increase the identification and social cohesion between individuals, which in turn is likely to reduce discrimination, to increase understanding and sense of belonging as well as should ultimately lead to change in broader social norms. Accordingly, McLeod (2014) found that tattooed professionals did feel that they were more accessible to younger co-workers due to their tattoos. Moreover, the same effect would be likely with customers who have body modifications, or customers who are interested in them. Multiple employers have indeed realised that as the commonness and acceptance of body modifications increase, there is a need for not only managers' values, but also companies' stance and policies to adapt correspondingly. For example, in an interview done by Rautio (2013) the head of Danske Bank, Pia Lehto-Halonen, stated that body modifications are not necessarily impediments even in the bank industry. Lehto-Halonen said that the status symbolism tattoos used to have is not relevant in today's world and reminded that as the world develops and becomes more liberal employers have to change in accordance.

What is more, it is not only that the perception of body modifications would have become less negative in recent years, but it has been found that in some cases body modifications may actually serve as a significant asset. Timming (2016) introduces two frameworks in relation to this idea of body modifications granting advantages in certain

work environments: aesthetic labour and branded labour. He explains the main idea behind aesthetic labour in very concise and apt manner:

“The theory of aesthetic labour has examined how managers can leverage employees’ physical appearance and corporeal attributes on the production side to promote a positive consumer experience, primarily in the interactive services industries (Witz et al, 2003; Entwistle and Wissinger, 2006; Warhurst and Nickson, 2007).” “The key contribution of the aesthetic labour framework is to impress the idea that an employee with the right ‘looks’ can be just as important as an employee with the right skills, aptitudes or emotional dispositions (Hochschild, 1983; Bolton and Boyd, 2003).” (Timming 2016, p.5)

Similarly, the main idea behind the theory of branded labour is that consumers’ perception of frontline employees is paramount for consumer behaviour. The main argument is that consumers’ ability to relate, identify, build a strong bond, or establish even a long term relationship with employees correlates to customer satisfaction which in turn correlates to the inclination and probability to buy (Timming, 2016). Traditionally body modifications have been seen as being negative influencers an attributes in the eyes of both of these branches of research. Nonetheless, based on these theoretical frameworks Timming argued that firms that seek to project an edgy, youthful, exciting, or similar image could profit from actively seeking job applicants with visible body modifications. Indeed, Timming’s studies showed that for instance tattoos can be used to denote matters such as rebellion, transgression and strong individualism, which can be leveraged to target primarily young ‘edgy’ demographic of customers. Supporting Timming’s findings a considerably older study made by Seiter and Hatch (2005) found that tattooed individuals were perceived to be considerably more extroverted in comparison to individuals without tattoos. Moreover, Seiter and Hatch mention that this perceived extroversion can lead to the tattooed individual be associated with characteristics such as being bold, being a nonconformist and having fewer inhibitions. These traits would undoubtedly seem appropriate when soliciting an exciting, youthful and edgy image or brand. Thus it can be concluded that body art can be indeed used to convey a certain image and brand, and therefore in some cases body modifications may be a valuable asset to the individual wearing them.

5.3 Implications

5.3.1 Individuals

In addition to determining why body modifications may cause effect and what these effects may be, it is important to understand what can be the implications of these effects. This is because as Martin and Dula (2010) write “As employers, healthcare professionals, teachers, judges, and the like, hold sway over people with tattoos, it is important to learn to what degree key decision-makers may hold negative attitudes toward tattooing and to what degree such attitudes affect their decision-making regarding their subordinates or those in their care.” This same principle is applicable additionally to other body modifications. Moreover, Ellis (2014) adds that “prejudice and discrimination based on body art can have significant repercussions for individuals and their organizations.” Indeed, also Ahlroth and Kess (2012 p.10) state that the psychosocial risks are amongst the most central challenges in the modern work environments. Harmful psychosocial strain may at its worse lead to work impairment and inability to continue working. Furthermore, the negative effects caused by inappropriate behaviour can be observed from individuals who fall victim to the workplace bullying, as well as from individuals who merely witness it. Such effects include increased chances of depression, nervousness, tiredness and sleep problems (Ahlroth and Kess, 2012 p.10). Additionally, resolving conflict situations requires a lot of official and unofficial resources from organisations as well as their members. In 2012 it was estimated that poor workplace atmosphere costs approximately 30 billion euros per year in Finland. (Ahlroth and Kess, 2012 p.12) Hence the implications of body modifications’ effects may be more pervasive than initially assumed, and they can severely impact not only individuals but also organisations.

Continuing with interpersonal matters, Martin and Dula (2010) state that humans’ basic psychological processes make individuals inclined to judge others based on their appearance. Moreover, not surprisingly much stigma has been attached to individuals sporting body modifications, because these individuals often have a look that is considered to be outside of the norm and are subsequently tend to be seen as socially deviant. Martin and Dula add that this is furthermore a significant problem, because stigmas can cause feelings of fear, isolation, and discrimination. In addition Martin (2013) writes that stigma’s effects may be experienced as prejudice (negative attitudes), or discrimination (negative behaviours), and Ellis (2014) indeed states that both job

applicants and employees with body modifications often report feeling prejudiced or discriminated against. These individuals feel, rightly or wrongly, that they are perceived differently and rejected based on their body modifications regardless of their qualifications. Applicant who felt they experienced such dismissal based on body modification indicated frustration and anger. Ellis additionally states that employees who felt stigmas' effects in the work place often saw the job environment unjust and felt resentment towards their work environment.

Specifically, when it comes to hiring, Singer (2016b) concluded that having visible body modifications might make it slightly harder to get employment in general, or if one is looking for employment in a field that is primarily customer-facing, body modifications might make getting hired substantially harder. Timming's (2015b) study results indicate the same, and subsequently he lists suggestions for job seekers who are thinking of acquiring body modifications, or who already have visible body modifications. Firstly Timming says that individuals seeking for employment would perhaps want to make an informed decision about where on the body modifications should be located, since visible body art might be harmful to employment chances. Timming continues by stating that job seekers that already have obtained visible body modifications can on the other hand make an informed decision of what types of jobs to apply for if they want to maximise their chances of success. He further clarifies that these individuals should apply for "behind the scenes" positions that require minimum customer interaction. Nonetheless, later Timming (2016 p.26) writes that even if from the point of view of success maximisation job seekers supporting visible body modifications should deliberately target some organisations and positions whilst avoid others, in actuality "the ideal to which we should strive, as a society, is one of inclusiveness and the rejection of stereotypes in the labour market."

This last comment proves to hold great importance, because as Ellis (2014) and Singer (2016b) point out, body modifications represent and express personal identity and having to hide these to "pass as normal" or to be accepted, or in other words having to manage separate personal and professional identities, feels inauthentic to many. Concealing body art out of fear of negative consequences or sanction, or even out of compulsion, may feel like denial of one self and often leads to feeling of detachment from and resentment towards the organisation that facilitates the situation. Additionally, many individuals express experiencing discomfort caused by the extra layers of clothes that are required to conceal body modifications, especially in hot working environments.

Perhaps due to these negative physical and mental repercussions individuals with visible body modifications, even if aware of the stigmas and stereotypes and capable of making 'informed decisions', might choose to take the chance of potential rejection based on their true self rather than trying to be accepted based on a false representation of identity. Still, be it that the possible risks are known in advance, those who ended up receiving ill-disposed feedback on their identity reported experiencing negative mood and those who were excoriated based on their identity experienced anger. Even only believing a superior, supervisor, hiring manager or person in a similar position is prejudiced against one's personal identity, partly or completely, results in decreased motivation and reduced performance (Ellis, 2014).

Moreover, Ellis (2014) reminds that even if body modifications represent personal identity, they do not capture or display an individual's entire identity. Body art may well provide some insight into a part of the person's selfhood, but body modifications do not define or even tell-tale about the knowledge, skills, and abilities that an individual is able to offer in the work environment. Ellis (2014) furthermore writes that in cases where companies are able to see beyond body modifications and are accepting of body art, they enjoy an increased trust, as well as other positive effects, from their employees sporting body art. Employees with visible body modifications, who have previously had poor experiences at past workplaces, are likely to value supportive work environments that allow authentic self-expression. Moreover, the mutual valuation between the employee and the organisation will lead to increased self-esteem and organisational commitment on the part of the employee (Ellis, 2014). Hence the importance of an inclusive work environment where discrimination is being minimised becomes obvious. The negative consequences derived from the trade-off between maintaining authentic personal identity and separate acceptable professional identity are not only harmful for the individuals, but also for organisations.

5.3.2 Organisations

Hence, as Timming (2016) states, it is important for organisations to aim to minimise unconscious biases in recruitment and selection as well as in the working environment. He continues to say that this might be especially relevant for instance where an older manager, who could perhaps be antagonistic towards body art, is hiring for a position where body art is not truly relevant, or where body modifications could even be seen as an asset for the company. Timming (2015b) furthermore reminds that as the younger

and generally more body modifications sporting and approving demographics age, they will become a major consumer portion that holds different expectations regarding the physical and corporeal attributes of those who serve them. Similarly, Ellis (2014) concludes that as the older population retires and a new younger work force emerges, companies that have held strict body modifications policies because of their short-term concerns over the organisation's image may find that they have alienated a large segment of their future applicants and customers. Ellis continues by saying that managers certainly can, and should, consider the organisation's public image, but at the same time managers should be mindful of the implications of making decisions based on the fear of customer reactions at the expense of possibly rejecting the most qualified employees without further significant reasons. Simply put by Jonny Gifford: "by refusing to hire those with visible tattoos employers limit their pool of talent" (Wallop, 2016).

Moreover, unnecessary discrimination against body modifications may not only harm the ability to hire the best and the most suitable employees, but may additionally harm the probability of retaining workers. As Weinstein (2014) puts it, with a young workforce entering professional life and being more likely to support body modifications in comparison to their successors, executive boards are faced with the decision of either broadening their appearance expectations or to keep requiring employees to conform to the conventional standards in place. Weinstein makes an assumption that in most cases an employee would choose to conform when it is a necessity for them, for instance due to financial situation, but says that this is not likely to yield employee satisfaction nor commitment for the long term. She believes that integral part of satisfactory and successful longevity at any work position or career is feeling truly accepted and appreciated and having to conform, to change, or to hide a part of oneself actively prevents this feeling of approval from forming. Weinstein's ideas are indeed well in line with the arguments discussed in previous chapter, presented by Ellis (2014) and Singer (2016b), over the importance of personal identity being in unison with the professional identity. Thus it would seem safe to state that the degree of acceptance of body modifications has potential to considerably affect both obtaining and retaining the ideal workforce.

However, when it comes to legal aspects surrounding body modifications in a work context, matters are often not clearly defined and rulings are heavily dependent on circumstances. Ellis (2014) writes that neither the United States, the United Kingdom nor Australia provide legal protection for discrimination based on body modification in the

work environment and organisations are generally free to regulate body modification practices and dictate dress codes or grooming practices. Similarly, Elzweig and Peeples (2011, p.13) state that discrimination on the basis of body modification is not illegal, but “exception to this general rule comes when individuals claim that the tattoo or piercing is a part of their being a member of a protected class (primarily, but not solely limited to, based on religion).” Nonetheless, Eva-Niina Jänne, a Varatuomari (vice-judge; Master of Laws with court training), says that in Finland expression of personal identity and subsequent appearance has to be allowed in the work environment. She states that for example acquiring a visible body modification is not generally legally sufficient reason for a layoff. Jänne nonetheless additionally reminds that employer has the baseline right for management and supervision of work. This allows the employer to determine certain dress and appearance regulations and requirements at a general level (Kosonen, 2014).

Nevertheless, Elzweig and Peeples (2011) further contemplate that whilst society’s view of body modifications changes and increasing amount of individuals acquire tattoos, piercings and other modifications, employers’ arguments against hiring or retaining individuals with body modifications are becoming increasingly weaker in many legal cases. Moreover, when it comes to challenges between individuals at workplace, rather than between organisation and individual, employers might be required by law to step in as intermediaries. Ahlroth and Kess (2012, p.41) write that harassment, discrimination and other inappropriate treatment in the work context goes not only against good manners, but additionally it is against work obligations and law. They continue to clarify that in Finland under the Occupational Safety and Health Act the employer is obliged to act if any inappropriate treatment that might possibly cause health problems (whether it be mental or physical) comes to their attention. Furthermore, if the employer has crafted an early intervention directive (varhaisen puuttumisen toimintaohjeistus) and has implemented it when a case of inappropriate treatment has surfaced, the Social Insurance Institution of Finland will reimburse a majority of the occupational health care costs resulting from the effects of this inappropriate treatment (Ahlroth and Kess, 2012, p.9).

Hence, based on legal aspects as well as the best interest of organisations it is evidently increasingly hard and unbeneficial for employers to totally prohibit body modifications, disregard employees on the basis of these and furthermore ignore the possible effects of them in the work place. This is simply put by Elzweig and Peeples (2011) who state that discriminating against applicants with body modifications can become “adverse to

the interest of the organisation.” Weinstein (2014) suggests that organisations would begin to slowly hire and integrate qualified employees who deviate from the norm and from the “usual look” of employees. This could spark a change in the organisational culture and help other employees as well as clients and customers to become accustomed to the broadening appearance standards. Weinstein additionally proposes that the cultural change could be leveraged to convey a positive image about the organisation and its values and philosophy. This could be done by for example stating that the organisation values employees on the basis of their quality of work and ability to perform as well as to deliver, and does not wish to select nor assess employees based on specific external features.

Ultimately for organisations the core challenge with body modifications in the work context is about attaining the appropriate balance between professionalism and self-expression and understanding and being able to manage differences. The fundamental steps for improving the current situation are being mindful of the biases and underlying reasons behind certain attitudes, perceptions and consequent actions as well as knowing organisations’ customer bases and making rational, objective and clear policies based on that. Managers and workers alike should additionally take into account the fact that the culture around body modification is constantly evolving. As Elzweig and Peebles (2011 p.22) aptly conclude: “A little patience, a little tolerance and a little common sense may go a long way towards reducing the friction during the transitional period.”

6 Suggestions

Currently in Western society body modifications are significantly more common and more approved than how they used to be. Nonetheless, it is additionally evident that some old negative associations as well as opinions, and subsequent challenges, persist. For job applicants as well as employees this implies the possible experience of a trade-off between free self-expression and getting or retaining the desired job position within a certain company and industry. Unfortunately this is however substantially reliant on the specific case at hand, and subsequently forming accurate risk assessments are practically impossible without knowing the organisational culture, work place culture, as well as individual managers' values and opinions, in detail. As knowing and furthermore accurately analysing all of this can arguably be unfeasible, it would be advisable that the individual with visible, or possibly visible, body modifications would carefully assess what they deem as most important in their work place. Subsequently this would help them to decide in advance what they would, if necessary, rather compromise; the freedom of being able to fully express their authentic personal identity, or being deemed acceptable to work in the desired industry, company and job position.

Nevertheless, even if body modifications would spark some negative opinions and resultant actions in modern work environments, Ahlroth and Kess (2012 p.12) write that in general level the phenomenon of inappropriate treatment occurring in work context has been brought up, discussed and combatted in an increasing manner. It is indeed suggested that individuals who encounter bullying in work place would be vocal about it and report their experiences to their employer. Nonetheless, Ahlroth and Kess additionally remind that there are still plenty of work places, and even whole industries, where inappropriate treatment and bullying is a taboo that is not to be addressed. This is especially prevalent in industries that are predominantly male, due to the fact that in comparison with men, women are more prone to detect, experience and report inappropriate treatment and bullying in a work context (Ahlroth and Kess, 2012, p.9). In such cases, where the work place along with its managers are perceived being unreceptive towards the issues at hand, the employer can turn to occupational safety and health organisations.

However, it can be argued that the main responsibility over the wellbeing of workers should be on the organisation and not on the individuals. This is because, as mentioned in multiple instances in this thesis, prejudices, discrimination and conflicts do not only

harm the individuals involved, but also bystanders and organisations allowing the aforementioned. Moreover, Ahlroth and Kess (2012 p.12) state that challenges and problems in the work context are especially prevalent in work places where the managerial work is lacking or in worst cases completely absent. Hence the importance of management and managerial competence becomes clear. Therefore, the next and most encompassing suggestion is that organisations should pay mind to their manager selection and manager's competence, as well as management strategy, its implementation and its success. Relating to this organisations should additionally strive to create and maintain an organisational culture that serves as reference point in human resource management decision making. Furthermore, based on the broader organisational culture organisations should create management strategies as well as formulate clear and concise instructions, policies and regulations that would accurately indicate what is acceptable within the professional context to managers and other employees alike.

The significance of such instructions, policies and regulations in relation to body modifications was for instance briefly discussed in an article published in the Financial Times, where it was pointed out that few work places have strict prohibitive policies concerning body modification. However often rather vague instructions regarding dress code such as "dress professionally" or "business wear" can be present. (Wallop, 2016) Such descriptions are open for interpretation and can cause more harm than be of help because of their ambiguity. Moreover, Ellis (2014) writes that most individuals understand and accept tattoo policies in the work context, but some feel these policies are applied inconsistently. Supporting this Martin (2013) found through qualitative studies that many individuals report experiencing inconsistencies between company policies and opinions as well as consequent acts of managers. As mentioned before in chapter 5.2.2, such deviations of opinions and acts from the official company stance or policies might leave employees uncertain how to act and what to expect, as well as can lead the employees to have feelings of for instance uncertainty, anxiety, fear and unjustness.

Hence, the rules should be explicit and moreover they should be based on reason. Timming (2016) for instance suggests that for the use of selection "a set of marketing-informed dress and appearance guidelines" should be implemented in order to reduce harmful and unnecessary biases. Elzweig and Peebles (2011) furthermore add that when creating an employment policy relating to body modifications, state and local statues and

ordinances involving discrimination must additionally be taken into account. Moreover, Elzweig and Peeples remind that while courts might currently uphold dress codes that include limiting tattoos and body piercings, such limitations may become increasingly harder to enforce as body modifications become more common and mainstream. Subsequently it is likely that companies are soon forced to be more specific with their dress codes. Beyond compulsion however as society moves forward, so should organisations' policies. Accordingly, Elzweig and Peeples (2011 pp.21-22) state that "unintended consequences can accrue from uninformed or biased views" and subsequently they suggest the following when crafting or updating any policies:

- Conforming to any and all laws that might be applicable in the case at hand
- Taking serious claims of religious and other forms of discrimination
- Having legitimate business reason for restrictions in the dress code
- Knowing organisation's customer base
- Knowing the implications of organisation's dress code
- Being fair, mentoring employees
- Knowing when to change stance
- Making the repercussions of violations of the dress code clear in advance

Lastly, Elzweig and Peeples emphasise that organisations may wish to consider also changing demographics and social norms, because even if a policy would technically be legal, it may be practically or ethically wrong. Ellis (2014) further highlights the importance of the matter by writing that clear and fairly applied policies able applicants and employees feel a sense of procedural justice, given that the policy is perceived as fair and compatible with the already established organisational culture in the first place:

"For both self-interest and interest in the well-being of current and future employees, organizations can adopt consistent and compassionate approaches toward body modification. They can do this by ensuring any published policies are fair and reasonable, they can engage current employees who have body art, and they can promote education through training and communication." (Ellis, 2014, p.111)

Hence it is evident that in many cases the first practical and very fundamental, but simultaneously arguably often overlooked or insufficiently created, aspect to tackle some of the challenges that relate to body modifications in work context would be the formulation of clear and concise instructions, policies and regulations about body modifications in the work place. Nonetheless, it is also evident that even the mere composing of instructions can be complicated, not to mention the subsequent implementation, the sufficient monitoring of their implementation and possible corrections, adjustments or developments to the instructions based on the findings gained through surveillance. Furthermore, satisfactory management requires more than clear instructions and thus finding the right management strategy as well as right managers can prove to be quite complex and challenging, yet highly important. Subsequently, the last suggestion is concerned about the next research that should, reflecting the findings of this thesis, find appropriate and extensive management strategies, procedures and measures which could be utilised in combatting the unnecessary harmful effects and implications of body modifications in work contexts. This research could utilise such theoretical frameworks as for example organisational behaviour, human resource management, strategic management, diversity management and change management, as well as dive deeper into topics relating to for instance psychology (in relations to for example leadership, management and discrimination), wellbeing at work (especially relating to workers' wellbeing being a driver to organisations' success) and workplace bullying.

7 Conclusion

There is a vast amount of factors that have the potential to impact the way body modifications are perceived in professional contexts, such as cultural relativism, age of the perceiver and generational gap, commonness as well as placement and nature of the body modification, work industry, occupation, and position, as well as the gender of the individual sporting body modifications. All of these factors affect how positively or negatively the body modifications at hand are perceived and what are their consequences, if any. Most often body modifications do have effects and thus impose consequences, and furthermore most often these effects are negative. When it comes to hiring, body art usually results in decreased employability chances. This is due to employers holding measurable and significant prejudices against job applicants with visible body modifications. Moreover these negative attitudes often stem from the fear of customer reaction, rather than being based on the managers' personal opinions. In such cases, where managers' decision making is based on the possible negative outcomes of the worst case scenarios, it is probable that the organisational culture ends up being more conservative than the general culture of the surrounding society, and thus negative effects and implications of body modifications may occur in disproportionate amounts. Subsequently body modifications' effects might be more substantial than what could be assumed based on the values and responses of the society.

Furthermore, prejudices against personal characteristics of individuals with body modifications persist, which harms success in hiring situations as well as in work environments for the aforementioned individuals. Tattooed and pierced persons are often viewed as irresponsible, unprofessional, and less qualified in comparison to their unmodified peers. Individuals with tattoos were additionally rated lower on competence, character, sociability and credibility. Furthermore the overall perception of these individuals was more negative, when compared to individuals without tattoos. However tattooed individuals themselves report that getting a tattoo has had no influence over how they feel about themselves. Moreover, no significant differences were found in grade point averages when comparing college students with and without body modifications. This could indicate that there is a discordance between what body modifications mean to individuals acquiring them, how these modifications effect individuals' self-image and what these modifications are able, or rather unable, to communicate about the traits and skills of the individual sporting them, and the way in which others perceive these modifications as well as their wearers.

This aforementioned discordance stemming from stigmatised views can furthermore bring about many negative implications. For example job applicant who felt they were dismissed when seeking employment based on their body modification indicated frustration and anger. Moreover, being the target of stigmatised views in general can cause feelings of fear, isolation as well as discrimination, and employees who report feeling stigmas' effects in the work place often see the job environment unjust and feel resentment towards their work environment. Accordingly, it was found that concealing body art out of fear of negative consequences or sanction, or even out of compulsion, feels like denial of one self for many, and often leads to feeling of detachment from and resentment towards the organisation that facilitates the situation. In addition, those who ended up receiving ill-disposed feedback on their personal identity (of which body modifications may be a part of) reported experiencing negative mood and those who were excoriated based on their identity experienced anger. Merely believing a superior, supervisor, hiring manager or person in a similar position is prejudiced against one's personal identity often results in decreased motivation and declined performance.

Additionally individuals with body modifications often report experiencing discordances and inconsistencies between company policies and opinions, as well as consequent acts, of managers. These deviations of opinions and acts from the official company stance or policies leave employees uncertain how to act and what to expect in situations where body modifications may have an effect. This in turn can lead the employee to have feelings of for instance uncertainty, anxiety, fear and injustice. Furthermore individuals sporting visible body art report experiencing inappropriate treatment and behaviour in work places. They reported feeling pressured especially by co-workers and superiors aged fifty years and older. In addition these individuals reported experiencing unwanted and unconsented touching in work environment, for example a co-workers or clients trying to move a piece of clothing in order to reveal a tattoo. This undoubtedly results in unpleasant experiences in relation to body modifications in the work context and negatively effects wellbeing at work.

Moreover the negative effects caused by inappropriate behaviour can be observed not only from individuals who fall victim to the workplace bullying, but additionally from individuals who merely witness it. Such negative effects include increased chances of depression, nervousness, tiredness and sleep problems. Furthermore, in 2012 it was estimated that poor workplace atmosphere costs approximately 30 billion euros per year

in Finland. Additionally, resolving conflict situations requires a vast amount of official and unofficial resources from organisations as well as their members. Hence the implications of body modifications' effects can severely impact not only individuals but also organisations. In addition, companies that have held strict body modifications policies because of their short term concerns over the organisations image may alienate a large segment of their future applicants and customers. What is more unnecessary, discrimination against body modifications may not only harm the ability to hire the best and the most suitable employees and attract right customers, but may additionally harm the probability of retaining workers. This is because, arguably, an integral part of satisfactory and successful longevity at any work position or career is feeling truly accepted and appreciated. Having to conform, to change, or to hide a part of oneself actively prevents this feeling of approval from forming. Thus, it would seem safe to state that through obtaining and retaining the right work force as well as clientele, the degree of acceptance of body modifications has potential to considerably affect the success of the company.

On the other hand, employees with visible body modifications, who have previously had poor experiences at past workplaces, are likely to value supportive work environments that allow the authentic self-expression. Moreover the mutual valuation between the employee and the organisation will lead to increased self-esteem and organisational commitment in part of the employee. Furthermore, through increased commonness of body modifications the negative perceptions about them, along with the harmful effects and implications, have lessened significantly in recent years. This is because increased commonness of body modifications is likely to increase the identification and social cohesion between individuals, because the more similar the individual judging and the individual being judged, the more favourable the outcomes. This in turn is likely to reduce discrimination, to increase understanding and sense of belonging as well as ultimately leading to change in broader social norms. Accordingly tattooed professionals reported feeling that they were more accessible to younger co-workers due to their tattoos. Moreover, the same effect would be likely with customers who are young, have body modifications, or are interested in them. Furthermore, body modifications are indeed proven to be assets in specific work contexts. This is due to individuals with body modifications being perceived as extroverted, which in turn can lead to the individual being associated with characteristics such as being bold, being a nonconformist and having fewer inhibitions. These traits are seen appropriate when soliciting an exciting, youthful and edgy image or brand. Thus, body art can be a powerful tool to convey a

certain image and brand and therefore in some cases body modifications may be a valuable asset to the individual wearing them.

Beyond considering what is fair, just, beneficial, and profitable, legal matters have to be additionally included in the discussion over body modifications in a professional context. It was found that, for instance in United States, United Kingdom and Australia, no legal protection is provided for discrimination based on body modification in work environment. Thus, organisations are generally free to regulate body modification practices and dictate dress codes as well as grooming practices. Exceptions can surface in cases where individuals claim that the body modification is a part of their being a member of a protected group. On the other hand however, in Finland, expression of personal identity through appearance has to be allowed in the work environment. Moreover, acquiring a visible body modification is not generally legally sufficient reason for a layoff in Finland. Nonetheless, the employer has the baseline right for management and supervision of work, which allows the employer to determine certain dress and appearance regulations and requirements at a general level. Additionally, when it comes to interpersonal matters caused by, for example, body modifications, in Finland under the Occupational Safety and Health Act the employer is obliged to act if any inappropriate treatment that might possibly cause health problems to employees comes to their attention. If the employer has crafted an early intervention directive (*varhaisen puuttumisen toimintaohjeistus*) and has implemented it when a case of inappropriate treatment has surfaced, the Social Insurance Institution of Finland will reimburse the majority of the occupational health care costs resulting from the effects of this inappropriate treatment. Thus, employers should be mindful of the laws that are implemented in the country of operation and refer to these when making guidelines, policies, and decisions that concern body modifications or issues deriving from them.

Ultimately, the core challenge with body modifications in the work context is about attaining the appropriate balance between professionalism, self-expression, understanding, and being able to manage differences. The fundamental steps to improving the current situation are being mindful of the biases and underlying reasons behind certain attitudes, perceptions and consequent actions as well as knowing organisations' customer bases therefore making rational, objective, and clear policies based on that. Managers and workers alike should additionally take into account the fact that the culture around body modification is constantly evolving. Moreover it would be advisable that the individual with visible, or possibly visible, body modifications would

carefully assess what they deem as most important in their work place. Subsequently this would help them to decide in advance from what they would, if necessary, rather compromise; the freedom of being able to fully express the authentic personal identity, or being deemed acceptable to work in the desired industry, company and job position. Nonetheless, it can be argued that the main responsibility over the wellbeing of workers should be on the organisation and not on the individuals, because prejudices, discrimination, and conflicts do not only harm the individuals involved, but also bystanders and organisations allowing the aforementioned. Thus, organisations should pay mind to their manager selection and managers' competence, as well as management strategy, its implementation and its success. The creation and implementation of clear policies, for example, can aid this managerial work significantly. Lastly, based on the main issues described in this thesis, in the future it could be beneficial to do more research utilising the theoretical frameworks such as behavioural and social psychology, organisational behaviour, human resource management, strategic management, diversity management and change management, as well as to look into topics such as wellbeing at work and workplace bullying, to determine the appropriate and desirable managerial actions to combat the harmful effects of body modifications in professional contexts.

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