



Visible tattoos and the tension between employability and identity expression

A sociocultural approach

This thesis is submitted to the Tilburg University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Master track 'Management of Cultural Diversity' in the Faculty of Humanities and Digital Sciences

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Title of thesis: Visible tattoos and the tension between employability and identity expression - A *sociocultural approach*.

Abstract

Tattoos are nowadays a part of Western society. However, visible tattoos such as on the neck, hand, face, or skull being a specific form that may lead to economic consequences. Subsequently in the case of visibly tattooed individuals, a so-called clash of values may raise regarding identity expression and employability at the labor market. Given this tension, a qualitative study using semi-structured interviews was conducted to explore the impact of visible tattoos on identity expression and employability of visibly tattooed individuals from the innovative sociocultural perspective. Accordingly, the following research question was answered: What impact do visible tattoos have on the expression of identity on the one hand and employability of individuals on the other in organizations in Germany, examined from a sociocultural perspective? The results showed that visible tattoos have an impact on visibly tattooed individuals as they must be willing to compromise and accept the need for sacrifice while facing economic constraints and the desire for self-realization. The complex balancing act between the two sacred values is further complicated by the fact that visibly tattooed individuals are forced to develop certain personal attributes to a greater degree than non-visibly tattooed individuals in order to ensure their employability. In addition, recommendations for implementation at management level were developed based on the findings.

Keywords: tattoos, visible tattoos, identity expression, employability, sacred values, clash of values, tragic tradeoff

Word count: 17.416

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Preface

I hereby present my thesis entitled "Visible tattoos and the tension between employability and identity expression of individuals - A sociocultural approach on visible tattoos", which focuses on the impact of visible tattoos on identity expression and employability of individuals. This thesis was written in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Master of Arts degree of Master Track 'Management of Cultural Diversity' at Tilburg University.

The research and writing process took place between March 2021 and August 2021. I am grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Hoondert, for his expertise and professional guidance. His experience in research as well as his profound knowledge of sacred values proved to be very helpful in conducting the research and overcoming research problems, especially in light of the current Covid 19 pandemic. I would also like to thank my second reader, Dr. Siebers, for his valuable feedback on my thesis, which added a different perspective to the topic. Finally, I would like to thank my colleagues in the research circle with whom I was able to discuss the progress of the thesis and jointly evaluate different approaches.

Especially in the current pandemic situation, data collection was difficult as interviews could not be conducted in person. Since the research relied heavily on the participation of visibly tattooed individuals, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all participants!

I wish you a good read,

Eileen Eisenhut

15.08.2021

1. Introduction

In this thesis, I focus on the impact of visible tattoos on the expression of identity and employability of individuals in German organizations. Perspectives from the cultural sociology of the sacred by Gordon Lynch (2012) has been adopted to analyze the tension between the two concepts. This chapter first sets out the research context and problem statement and then presents previous research. Furthermore, the research approach and aim are discussed and clarified through the formulation of the main research question. Finally, the structure of the thesis is outlined.

1.1 Research context and problem statement

Tattoos are a popular way to modify one's body these days (Dillingh, Kooreman, Potters, 2016; Orend, Gagné, 2009; Doss, Hubbard, 2009; Ferreira, 2009; Kosut, 2015). As the body becomes a favored canvas for permanent ink, the number of people with tattoos in the labor market is on the rise. However, the increasing commonness of tattoos does not necessarily mean a positive connotation. While for some tattoos are unique, progressive, or simply esthetic, for others they represent immorality or unconventionality. Thus, depending on visibility, the decision to ink the body can have significant social and economic consequences for tattooed individuals (Armstrong et al., 2002; Buss, Hodges, 2017; Dillingh, Kooreman, Potters, 2016). These potential consequences may be correlated with perceptions and associations that stem from centuries of tattooing tradition. Irwin (2001: p.51) explained that tattoos have undergone a process of "redefinition". Body modification in the form of tattoos is considered to have its roots in ancient traditional tattooing and further evolved in a nonlinear fashion. In Western society, the incorporation into social settings was initiated in the 19th century. People of the social elite had small-scale and concealable tattoos. In the years following World War I, tattoos became associated with deviant groups, while 1960 marked a turning point in the social perception of tattoos and paved the way for tattoos to become part of mainstream culture in the 1980s and 1990s (Buss, Hodges, 2017; Irwin, 2001). Thus, the socio-cultural perception of tattoos in 20th century Western society changed from being exclusively associated with a minority of socially deviant individuals to a generally accepted body art associated with identity and self-expression. With this progressive change, not only the external perception has changed, but also the internal meaning for individuals.

In modern society, tattoos are no longer seen as a means to emphasize one's group membership and loyalty, but as an indispensable tool to express one's identity and uniqueness (Atkinson, 2003; Ferreira, 2009; Tiggemann, Golder, 2006). Despite the redefinition of tattoos and the clear change in meaning, a tattoo is still considered taboo in various cultures, such as China or Japan. The remnants of old perceptions of tattooed individuals and the association with deviant groups are still visible. Thus, tattooed individuals face stigma and negative attitude towards them (Buss, Hodges, 2017). In relation to the labor market, one consequence of this could be a so-called clash of sacred values.

The term sacred value refers to "moral imperatives that have their own intrinsic values that makes them non-comparable to, and nonfungible with, ordinary or profane values" (Ginges, Atran, 2013: p.274). Hereby nonfungible means non-negotiability. With the focus on sacred values, it is crucial to understand that the sacred differs from subject to subject and that the particular social context is essential to fully reveal the meaning of sacred values (Ginges, Atran, 2013). On the one hand, tattoos are amongst others an indispensable means of expressing one's identity. On the other hand, employability and more specifically certain elements of a job such as financial independence and contribution to society are also considered sacred values. The latter have been treated as 'occupational sacred values' in order to clarify the distinction between the opposing sacred values. The aforementioned values are at risk of potential collision in the labor market. In the context of the labor market, tattooed individuals may be forced to trade their values in tragic tradeoffs. In relation to multiple sacred values within certain social contexts, tradeoffs are a requirement for individuals on some occasions. The term tradeoff is understood as a trade between different values, as values may not always complement each other and may be in conflict. A tragic tradeoff refers to the exchange of one sacred value for another (Tetlock, 2003). Since tattoos have become an increasingly significant part of society, it is important for both employees and employers to question the potential impact of visible tattoos on employability and gain a deeper understanding of the tension between employability and identity expression.

1.2 Previous research

Looking at the economic impact, several researchers have found that in some cases hiring managers still take tattoos as a reason for refusing employment (e.g., Brallier et al., 2011; Swanger, 2006; Tews, Stafford, 2019). This impact on employment can be attributed to the influential effect of physical appearance in the labor market combined with the problem of social stigma and categorization of tattoos (Dillingh, Kooreman, Potters, 2016; Jibuti, 2018: p.26). This is underlined by the findings of Degelman and Price's (2002) research that individuals still attribute fewer positive characteristics to tattooed individuals than to non-tattooed individuals. Consequently, this view of tattoos may affect the employability of tattooed individuals in terms of obtaining employment, job retention and promotion. In terms of the personal significance of tattoos, tattooed individuals may need to balance the expression of their identity through tattoos with their employability.

While there has been research on redefining tattoos in relation to identification and tattoos with focus on employment opportunities, none has explicitly focused on the interdependence of visible tattoos and employability in addition to a potential clash of values. As a result, the existing literature has been predominantly legalistic, marketing-oriented (focus on customers), purely descriptive, or one-sided. I will neither focus on a juridical approach, such as Elzweig and Peppel (2011) have done, nor on discrimination as a core concept, as Timming, Nickson, Re and Perrett (2017) have done. In this thesis, I will add to the existing literature and contribute to the under-researched field of visible tattoos and the impact on employability and identity expression of tattooed individuals as core concepts by using the innovative approach of sacred values (Jibuti, 2018; Timming, 2015).

1.3 Research approach

For the purposes of this thesis, I will take a sociocultural approach and examine the impact of visible tattoos on individuals' employability and identity expression in light of clash of sacred values. Because of the expected greater impact on the external environment, the focus of the study was on obviously visible tattoos such as the neck, hands, face, or skull. According to the sociocultural approach, a consistent economic context had to be ensured. Thus, the research area was geographically narrowed down to one country. Germany was chosen due to various limitations of the study, such as time, financial support, and measurements of the current COVID-19 pandemic. As for the pandemic consultation, the geographical limitation to the

country where I currently live was the most convenient choice for finding interview partners. The search for interview partners took place over a period of three months and the research covered a total of six months.

1.4 Research objectives

The aim of this thesis was to investigate the influence of visible tattoos on identity expression and employability of individuals in organizations in Germany from a sociocultural perspective. By conducting semi-structured interviews, this thesis added to the sparse literature on employability in relation to visible tattoos and provided an understanding of visibly tattooed individuals' balancing act between employability and identity expression. Based on the findings, recommendations were formulated for optimized management-level interactions with visibly tattooed individuals in the labor market, from which HR managers can benefit.

1.5 Research question

The study was driven by the following research question:

What impact do visible tattoos have on the expression of identity on the one hand and employability of individuals on the other in organizations in Germany, examined from a sociocultural perspective?

To fulfill the objective and answer the research question, a qualitative research method was used. Using a pre-determined sample, semi-structured interviews were conducted with visibly tattooed individuals. To simplify the research process, six sub-questions were defined as guidelines based on the research question:

1. How do visibly tattooed individuals value the link between tattoos and identity expression?
2. Do visible tattoos have an influence on the identity expression of tattooed persons?
3. How do visibly tattooed individuals value employability?
4. Do visible tattoos have an impact on employment opportunities of tattooed individuals?

5. Do visible tattoos have an impact on development opportunities in employment of tattooed individuals?
6. How do visibly tattooed individuals balance the expression of their identity on the one hand and their employability on the other?
7. Are there differences in the balance of visible tattoos and employability in terms of gender, age, extent of visibility or occupational role?

1.6 Thesis structure

The following chapter will provide a deeper insight into the conceptual framework of this study. The discussion of previous research and relevant theories will provide a basic understanding of the topic at hand. Chapter 3 contains the methodological section detailing the sample size and limitations encountered, followed by a chapter discussing the findings. Finally, chapter 5 includes the conclusion of the results and the discussion with a critical evaluation of the findings in relation to the conceptual framework and the sociocultural approach. In addition, this chapter encompasses recommendations for management actions based on the results and provides recommendations for further research.

2. Conceptual framework

The aim of the following chapter is to provide an overview of the existing literature on the main concepts of identity expression and employability in order to provide a conceptual basis for the analyses and a sound understanding of the chosen approach. In six sections, the chapter reviews the current literature on visible tattoos and employment, the operational definition of the core concepts and finally the explanation of the socio-cultural approach.

2.1 Visible tattoos and employment

Tattoos as a form of body modification have been of interest in literature, with research focus predominantly on social and cultural changes in the perception of tattoos. Only recently have the interrelation of employment and visible tattoos been of interest. Despite the amount of research on tattoos in the sociocultural field, Timming (2015) and Jibuti (2018) noted that research on tattoos is marginal in terms of impact on employment. Therefore, in addition to

the literature on specifically visible tattoos, the literature on visible body modification (VBM) was also considered to provide a more comprehensive picture of the scope of literature on visible tattoos in the context of employment. The existing literature can be divided into the following research approaches: Employment opportunities by examining the perceptions of recruiters or employment opportunities by examining customer preferences (e.g., Dean, 2010; Kramer, 2006; Timming, 2015; Timming et al., 2017; Swanger, 2006).

In the article *Generation Y: Tattoos, Piercings, and Other Issues for the Private and Public Employer*, Kramer (2006) researched conflicts between VBM and public employer viewpoints using documents and case studies. He noted that VBMs are a sensitive factor in the workplace and advised that employers should be careful in formulating their policies and be wary of employers who associate their VBM with religion or with freedom of speech and expression. This approach to VBM was beneficial to employers. However, the recommended technique for handling VBM cannot be considered as a solution to the increasing number of employees with VBMs and the prejudices that still exist as it seemed to merely avoid employees with VBMs. Within Brabant and Mizer's (2010) article *Visible body modifications and future employment*, 79 college students were questioned. They discovered that female students were more likely to think about their future employment and the extent of VBM visibility. As a conclusion, they advised college career specialists to consider VBM when approaching students about their future employment. The descriptive article *Visible body modification (VBM): evidence from human resource managers and recruiters and the effects on employment* by Swanger (2006) examined recruiters' perceptions of applicants with VBM and found that visible body modifications have a negative impact on employment. The paper *Visible tattoos in the service sector: a new challenge to recruitment and selection* by Timming et al. (2017) also examined the impact of VBMs on employment opportunities. They emphasized the importance of the employment role (face-to-face customer service or not) of visibly body-modified employees. They concluded that visible body art "on the hands, neck, or face, poses a potential threat to one's employment chances" (p. 28) and that visible body modifications have a negative effect on employability when employment suggests face-to-face customer service. The studies by Kramer (2006), Brabant and Mizer (2010), Swanger (2006) and Timming et al. (2017) had a lack of focus in relation to the research subject, which is critical as tattoos and piercings differ significantly in nature. As tattoos, unlike piercings, are a permanent body modification, it can be assumed that the permanence factor has a

significant impact on the recruiter's perception. However, in relation to this thesis, these results can be seen as initial findings on VBM and the impact on employment.

In contrast, Brallier et al. (2011) analyzed employment in the restaurant service industry focused explicitly on visible tattoos in their study *Visible Tattoos and Employment in the Restaurant Service Industry*. In their quantitative study, they sent out resumes of one female and one male job applicant with and without visible tattoos, as well as an additional survey. A total of 192 female and male employers in the restaurant industry were reached in South Carolina. Results indicated that participating recruiters viewed visible tattoos negatively with regard to restaurant service employment and preferred applicants with non-visible tattoos. In addition, women with visible tattoos were found to be subject to greater negative bias from managers than men with similar visible tattoos. At this point, it is important to note that the term 'visible tattoo' is used differently than in this study. Brallier et al. (2011) did not further specify the extent of tattoo visibility. This can lead to complications in terms of usability of the results, as tattoos on the arm are easily concealed and may not be perceived as strongly negatively by recruiters as tattoos on the neck, hands, face or skull.

In 25 in-depth interviews with visibly tattooed individuals and recruiters, Timming (2015) specified visible tattoos as not being as easily concealed. He found that visible tattoos have a negative impact on employment and noted that the extent of employer prejudice is mitigated by certain factors. He highlighted that recruiters' prejudice "were driven largely by imputed stereotypes about consumer expectations" (p. 73) and that "the degree of employer prejudice appeared to vary according to the extent of visibility of the tattoo"(p. 74). In addition, proximity to customers and the age of customers are important factors as young customers are more likely to accept visible tattoos. Recruiters are more positive about hiring visible tattoos for behind-the-scenes jobs than for jobs with strong client connections. The genre of the tattoo and the esthetic factor were also reported as influencing recruiters' choices. These findings were underlined in the article *Taboo Tattoos? A study of the gendered effects of body art on consumer's attitudes toward visibly tattooed front line staff* by Baumann, Timming and Gollan (2016). They focused on visible tattoos and addressed the negative impact on employment opportunities for individuals in occupations that require customer contact. Unlike Timming (2015), they focused on the perceptions of customers rather than HR professionals. Using a survey, they asked 354 respondents about their preferences for

frontline service workers. By specifically examining the relationship between gender and visible tattoos from the perspective of customers on frontline service workers, they found that work context matters. For example, female mechanics had an impact on customer perceptions regardless of visible tattoos, while female surgeons were preferred by patients even though visible tattoos had a significant negative effect. Baumann, Timming, and Gollan (2016: p.21) suggested that employees should carefully consider the motive and placement of visible tattoos as they "may reduce employment options or indeed be career hindering in the services sector". In addition, the article *Consumer perceptions of visible tattoos on service personnel* by Dean (2010) further examined customer perceptions of visible tattoos using the distinction between white-collar and blue-collar occupations. While visible tattoos were perceived as inappropriate in white-collar occupations because the appearance did not match customer expectations of an employee's appearance, visible tattoos were perceived as appropriate in blue-collar occupations. Thus, in addition to the extent of visibility, demographic age of customers, and proximity to customers, patients, etc., the nature of the work are important factors to consider with regard to the impact of visible tattoos on employment.

The review of the current literature revealed a wide variation in methodological approach across studies. However, a common feature of the existing literature is an interest in the employer and customer perspective. These views neglect the perspective of visibly tattooed individuals, and thus misses the tension between identity expression and employability. Therefore, rather than following existing approaches to visible tattoos and employability, this study developed an innovative approach that focuses on the perspective of the individual and conceives of their identity expression and employability as sacred values.

2.2 The concept of employability

Employability is a term used in a variety of contexts. In their explanatory article *The Concept of Employability*, McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) analyzed the uses and values of the concept employability with a view to popular usage within different market policies. This explanatory approach of the different uses and definitions is useful for this study to successfully embed the concept within the sociocultural approach that is used in this thesis. According to McQuaid and Lindsay (2005), it is an important concept to consider as an essential factor in individual development processes in improving access to employment and strategies against

unemployment and exclusion. However, they called for caution in the use of this concept as it is often ill defined and unclear. Nowadays, the concept occupies a central role in the labor market policies of the European Union and is promoted by the United Nations as "one of its four priorities for national policy action on youth employment" (p.198) as it is by the OECD. They listed previous definitions of the concept and stated that the main differences in definitions are whether "the focus is upon the individual's characteristics and 'readiness' for work, or upon the factors influencing a person getting into a job [...], moving jobs or improving their job" (p.200). The different analytics approaches to this concept were categorized into (1.) supply-side labor market policy and (2.) labor market and policy. Looking at the supply-side labor market policy approach, the concept is interpreted as focusing solely on the "interaction of the individual with the labor market" (p.205). However, this can be criticized as a one-dimensional focus on the individual and the neglect of important contextual workplace and employer characteristics (Adams et. al, 2000). In contrast, labor market and policy analysts adopt a broader approach to the concept. Hillage and Pollard (1998) and McQuaid, Green and Danson (2005) defined employability as focused on an individual's ability to successfully navigate through the labor market in terms of obtaining, maintaining, changing and advancing in employment depending on the interrelated elements of socio-economic (external) and personal circumstances (internal) factors. While "E[*e*]xternal conditions such as local labor market demand and employer attitudes will impact upon the availability of suitable opportunities", personal circumstances are considered to have an impact on "the ability of individuals to seek and benefit from opportunities" (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005: p.208). In line with this study, an example would be individuals choosing to get visibly tattooed and as a result being hindered in their job opportunities by employer preferences. This broad approach is advantageous as it allows an interrelation of various barriers and thus operationalizes the determination of the key factors which truly hampers an individual to obtain employment (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005).

As this study focuses on personal factors related to employability from the perspective of visibly tattooed individuals, the broad approach of the concept of employability allows the concept of identity expression to be linked to employability. Furthermore, this allows for an analysis of the results in terms of the impact of visible tattoos on both concepts.

2.3 Identity expression in form of tattoos

According to Kosut (2000), tattooing the body is a negotiation of the body with the self, interrelated with society's view on the body. Mutually it “reveal[s] information about how the body and self-identity are reflexively constructed and interconnected” (p.99). In line with this theory, Shelton and Peters (2008) applied Brewer's optimal distinctiveness theory on tattoos and the relation to identity to examine tattoo acquisition and removal as a form of identity negotiation. Optimal distinctiveness theory encompasses two opposing needs of humans, mainly social group membership and self-concept. This means that people regulate the need for individuality and the need for shared identity with certain groups (Leonardelli et al., 2010). In line with this theory, tattoos convey social features of the tattooed individuals' identity. On the one hand, tattoos can be a tool to communicate group membership and conformity, and on the other hand, they can be a strong signifier of personal individuation as expressing personal relationships and/ or autonomy (Cseszneki, Stemate, 2019; Shelton, Peters, 2008). In either case, according to Shelton and Peters (2008: p.10), “tattoos were typically acquired under the implicit assumption that factors influencing the tattoo's identity ramifications would remain stable over time”. Since social roles can change, Shelton and Peters (2008) claimed that getting tattoos can be seen as an identity negotiation in which role transitions are an essential component for individuals to take the plunge and adorn themselves with tattoos. Henceforth, individuals who perceive tattoos construct a connection between the current social role and the new tattooed identity, which is subject to potential changes. These changes may lead to tattoo removal as the social role and tattooed identity are no longer seen as compatible. In line with this study this can be understood that if the job perspective of an individual changes, the tattooed identity potential collides with the changed job perspective as it might demand a non-compatible social role.

In the exploratory approach by Phelan and Hunt (1998) in *Prison Gang Members' Tattoos as Identity Work: The Visual Communication of Moral Careers*, tattoos were understood as symbolic self-completion. They examined the relation of identity expression and career perspectives with the concept of ‘identity work’. Based on Goffman's (1959) identity theory, that claims ascribed and self-desired identity to be not necessarily in line, which consequently demands (identity) work to correct and clarify the self-presentation. According to Phelan and Hunt (1998: p.280), tattoos are “expressions of cultural values and practices, and announcements of group solidarity” and can be thus “conceptualized as a form

of identity work". With this approach they discovered that "tattoos visually communicate an individual's past accomplishments, present status, and possible future behavior" (p.292). Attention has to be given to the isolated social context this study was conducted. Since a specific case structure in a prison was researched, the findings are questionable to be useful for the understanding of public sociocultural structures in relation to tattoos.

In Ferreira's (2009) *Youth scenes, body marks and bio-sociabilities*, tattoos were studied as an expression of identity taken as an indicator of the contemporary social structure of youth. He pointed out that the social structure of belonging has transformed into a more fragmented sphere of what he calls, "micro-cultural sociabilities". Micro-cultures represent a loose structure of groups built on criteria that go beyond ideology or social status and focus more on the body as a central aspect of shared bodily performance or esthetics. The term microcultural sociabilities refers to "sociability formed by groups of private interest" (Ferreira, 2009: p.288) constructed according to criteria involving the body. Between these loose fragments, individuals move without strong ties and affiliations. Instead of identify with societies as "us" and abandoning the commonalities within the group, the uniqueness of the individual is maintained and the differences of temporary individuals are emphasized. In this social structure, tattoos are no longer used to emphasize belonging to a group, "to show stable and long-lasting commitment to collective identities" (Ferreira, 2019: p.291). On the contrary, tattoos are expressions of the 'self' rather than "ideological loyalties and social commitments" (Ferreira, 2009: p.299), as these features are transient, unstable and in constant flux. This theory of tattoos in contemporary society as an expression of individuality and uniqueness was underlined by Atkinson (2003) in *Tattooed: The sociogenesis of a body art* who stressed the association of tattoos with identity. Tattoos are sources of identity, a tool to gain autonomy and express independence from social networks. In contrary, in the explorative research *Corporate Logo Tattoos and the Commodification of the Body*, Orend and Gagné (2009) examined corporate logos in relation to the commodification of the body through tattoos and found that individuals perceive corporate logo tattoos to express affiliation, loyalty and belonging to a particular social group. Thus, even though contemporary social structures have caused the assumption about the meaning of tattoos to change from an identifier of group membership to a sole identifier of uniqueness and a tool for expressing independence, group membership expressed through tattoos remains a part of contemporary tattoos.

Regarding the extant literature it cannot be pinned down if tattoos are solely a unique feature which opt to demonstrate one's own self and distinguish from others or rather a sign of loyalty and group affiliation. In any case, authors commonly agreed on the fact that tattoos represent a form of identity expression which is undertaken by constant negotiation of the self, the tattooed body and society. As this study interrelates identity expression and employability within the expectation of tensions, the extant literature is relevant to frame visible tattoos as identity expression and emphasize the importance for individuals. The assumption that tattoos are an individual expression of the self was pursued as the main understanding of tattoos and identity, as this corresponds to the approach of individual sacred values (see section 2.4.1). However, the aspect of expressing affiliation and group membership of tattoos was not completely excluded.

2.4 The cultural sociology of the sacred

Since visible tattoos have been researched in relation to employability mainly from an economical viewpoint, this study takes an innovative lens: the cultural sociology of the sacred. In order to encompass the meaning of the sacred used in the cultural sociology of the sacred it is important to notice that the sacred supports the direct link to the religious dimension, though, it does not necessarily have to be related to religion (Lynch, 2012). Lynch (2012) noted that while some forms of the sacred may well have a religious past, contemporary understandings of the sacred (e.g., family care, welfare, etc.) transcend the boundaries of religion. Therefore, limiting it to the religious dimension is not sufficient to understand the meaning of the sacred. This is also underlined by the structure of contemporary society, which enables the existence of multiple forms of the sacred, "shaped through individual subjectivities" (Lynch, 2012: p.18).

In his work *The Sacred in the Modern World* Lynch (2012) pleads for the necessity of a sociology of the sacred. According to him, the modern pluralist societies need to understand the magnitude of the sacred on social complex structures to avoid an endless continuum of relapsing conflicts "through sacred reflexes" (p.3). Despite the amount of criticism to these theories, Lynch (2012) addressed Émile Durkheim's *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912) and Rudolf Otto's *The Idea of the Holy* (1917) as the fundamental works on the sacred. Durkheim's approach was based on cultural sociological theories, referring to the cultural

construction of sacred forms framed in social context. He understood sacrality as “a particular form of cultural significance in which symbols, objects, sentiments, and practices are experienced as expressions of a normative, absolute reality” (Lynch, 2012: p.15). Whereas Rudolf Otto’s approach was driven out of an ontological theory in which the sacred is perceived as emerged out of universal ontological structures and fundamental patterns of individual experiences (Lynch, 2012). The main question of interest of the displayed approaches is, on the one hand for the ontological approach: “what sacred forms emerge out of a fundamental experience underlying sacred forms” and on the other hand for the cultural approach: “what specific kinds of experience [...] are bound up with historically contingent and socially constructed forms of the sacred” (Lynch, 2012: p.15).

The aim of this study is to explore the social-cultural construction of historically contingent sacred forms in form of visible tattoos as identity expression and employability, to discover the impact of contrasting sacred forms on individuals. Thus, in line with Durkheim, this study supports the presumption of the sacred forms to perceive their sacred status as a result of cultural significance rather than fundamental experiences of the sacred and adds a specific focus on a plurality of sacred forms.

2.5 Sacred values

The sacred forms discussed in the preceding sections are expressions of sacred values. Much of our most important decision-making and significant conflict is determined by culturally bound sacred values (Ginges, Atran, 2014; Baron, Spranca, 1997; Tetlock, 2003). Sagiv et. al. (2017) distinguished between two forms of sacred: collective and individual value. The concept of collective value refers to goals pursued by subjects of the social collective, whereas individual value refers to "goals that motivate people's action and serve as guiding principles in their lives" (p.3). Since the focus of this study is on identity expression, this study is mainly concerned with individual values. Nevertheless, attention must be paid to the connection between cultural and individual values, as they may influence each other. An example derived from this study topic is the socio-economic factors such as the attitudes of employers or customers, patients and clients, which constitute a collective value and may have an influence on the individual's decision to get a visible tattoo. Therefore, collective values cannot be completely ruled out.

In terms of sacred values, it can be noted that the existing literature is relatively consistent. Baron and Spranca (1997) explored the concept of sacred values by using the terminology of 'protected values'. In their theory, a protected value is one to which an individual shows absolute commitment while leaving no room for negotiation of that value. Tetlock et al. (2000) further elaborated the concept of sacred values by acknowledging the plurality of those in modern society and defined sacred values as ones that have infinite or transcendent value and are not accepted to be traded off. Recent literature by Ginges et al. (2007) and Ginges and Atran (2013) characterized sacred values as absolute, normative, and non-negotiable values that cannot be valued along a material or monetary scale.

This research uses the terminology sacred values within a plurality of sacred values according to the assumption that they are normative and non-negotiable, as the tension between two competing sacred values was explored.

2.6 Non-negotiable values and the need of trade-offs

Despite Tetlock et al.'s (2000) assertion that sacred values are not tradeable, in his paper *Thinking the unthinkable: Sacred values and taboo cognitions about value conflicts*, he acknowledged that in some cases a conflict of sacred values occurs that requires trade-offs (Tetlock, 2003). He went on to explain that value conflicts related to "economic necessities," "cultural identities," and "moral-religious imperatives" (p.320) are common in today's environment. This means that sacred values intertwined with individuals' identities are likely to clash especially with economic sacred values (Carmichael et al., 2013). To manage the clash of non-negotiable values, Ginges and Atran (2014) have identified two mechanisms for balancing sacred values. The first is reframing, which deals with some form of reinterpretation or repositioning of a particular sacred value in order to reframe the decision as more acceptable. The second mechanism is reprioritization, which refers to the adaptation of values to particular circumstances (Atran, Axelrod, 2008). Both mechanisms are relevant when there is a sacred value 'trade-off'. Tetlock (2003) explained the common definition of trade-offs as achieving a balance between conflicting but desired elements and distinguished between different forms of trade-offs. He distinguished between "taboo trade-offs (which pit sacred values against secular ones), routine trade-offs (which pit secular values against each other)" and "tragic tradeoffs (which pit sacred values against each other)" (p.322). In relation to tragic trade-offs, Mandel and Vartanian (2008: p.218) stated that a "key feature of tragic trade-offs

is that they force decision makers to choose the lesser of multiple evils, thus making them hard to reason through or "dilemma-ish". Moreover, they emphasized that tragic trade-offs do not offer the decision maker a way out of the dilemma. This intense situation without an acceptable solution was further explored by Hanselmann and Tanner (2008). They discovered that decision-making processes involving sacred values are perceived by people as stressful and difficult, especially in the context of a tragic trade-off.

In a world of multiple values and scarce resources, trade-offs of even non-negotiable values are unavoidable. Consequently, a clash between identity expression and valued factors of an individual's employability in the labor market is inevitable. In line with this study's aim to explore the tension between employability and identity expression, tragic trade-offs are a relevant approach.

3. Method

The problem statement and the theoretical background of this research have now been explained. In this chapter, the methodological framework of this study will be discussed by explaining the research design, the exact data collection and the appropriate sampling strategy. It also presents the data analysis and provides indicators of research quality.

3.1 Research design

In line with the research aim to investigate and analyze the impact of visible tattoos on identity expression and employability of individuals in organizations in Germany, this study addresses the perspectives and experiences of visibly tattooed individuals. Due to the under-researched relationship between visible tattoos and the employability of individuals, as well as the innovative view from a socio-cultural perspective, the study is based on a qualitative approach. It is inductive in that it provides an explanation for the phenomena discussed. In order to meet the exploratory nature of the study, a qualitative approach was considered most appropriate. Under this approach, semi-structured interviews were chosen to answer the research question as this type of interview helps to discover perceptions and experiences of the interviewees (Dwyer et al., 2012; Hammarberg, Kirkman, Lacey, 2016; Newman, 2000).

3.2 Data collection

The semi-structured interviews as the core method of data collection allowed for adaptations to additional questions that may arise from the dialog (Dicicco-Bloom, Crabtree, 2006). With the exception of the pilot interview, which was conducted initially to adapt and optimize the interview guide, no further hierarchical ordering of the voluntary interviewees was undertaken as this was not particularly conducive to the research. In line with nationwide measurements and indications of the Covid-19 pandemic, all interviews were conducted online via various video communication platforms. As digital interactions cannot quite reach the benefits of physical ones, the potential disadvantages of digital interaction were minimized by using the vidoechat option of Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and Skype. However, it should be noted that this was subject to the necessary condition of internet-enabled devices. Individuals without internet access were thus excluded from the study. Only two interviewees were not able to conduct the interview via vidoechat. For them, the interview took place over a mobile phone call. However, no negative impact on the interview could be detected. The program 'Diktiergerät' version 5 (40.0) was used for the audio recording of the interviews. In order to avoid any possible bias on the part of the participants, the research nature of the interview was explained and independence from any organizations was emphasized. The anonymous handling of personal data was clarified in detail and it was explained that only the industry field would be mentioned if applicable. The interview was conducted in German to ensure that no language barriers influenced the interviews. To avoid bias due to social desirability or social acceptance, sensitive questions were phrased indirectly or addressed sensitively.

The structure of the interviews was determined as follows: Interview questions were developed in relation to the main research question and guided by the sub-questions. First, general questions were asked to embed the interviewee in the sample size. Second, based on sub-questions 1 and 2, questions were asked about the construction of visible tattoos as identity expression and the value of identity expression. This was followed by questions based on sub-question 3 on the value of employability. Questions under sub-questions 3 and 4 were asked to determine the impact of visible tattoos on participants' employability. Finally, the question derived from sub-question 6 provided insight into the tension between identity expression and employability. No questions were set for sub-question 7 as the answer was derived from the responses to the previous questions. In addition to the pre-determined

questions, questions that arose during the interview were also discussed with the participants. Thus, this approach provided space for respondents to express personal opinions and beliefs on relevant topics that were not addressed in the questions derived from the sub-questions. In appendix 2 and 3 the English and German interview script can be found.

At this point, it must be mentioned that due to the exceptional circumstances of the Covid- 19 pandemic, the search for interview partners was negatively affected. This constraint, along with other potential factors beyond knowledge, made the search difficult and resulted in a limited number of interviewees. The search for interviewees was adapted to these constraints as follows: Initial contact with respondents was made through the researcher's own social network on a snowball basis and further extended with the respondents' social network. To reach interviewees not covered by the previous social networks, a digital flyer with relevant data was created to find interviewees and the search was extended to social media platforms. I conducted social media outreach on relevant Facebook groups on the topic of tattoos in Germany and additionally, on Instagram via accounts of tattoo artists and acquaintances. Despite the limited number of participants, the search via social media can be considered successful as the recall rate was high. During the search, more than 200 hundred potential participants were contacted. However, due to the explicit variables of the ideal sample, only 17 out of 24 could be interviewed (Appendix 1). Despite the limited number, the results of the study had not been negatively affected as the data set can be considered saturated. The proportion of respondents was well weighted in the categories of age, gender, extent visibility of tattoos and customer, patient etc. contact which will be further specified in the following section.

3.3 Sample strategy

Due to the exploratory nature of this study in relation to a very specific target group and the financial and time constraints, the non-probability sampling method was considered most appropriate. This method was further specified in the snowball method, which was best suited for accessing visibly tattooed individuals because they were difficult to reach and could best be approached through the network of participants (Naderifar et al., 2017). As tattoo visibility was a conditional factor that participants needed to have, the following characteristics were used to specify the term visible tattoos: Tattoos on the neck, tattoos on the hand(s) and finger(s), and tattoos on the face and skull. Respondents were thus selected on the basis that

they had visible tattoos in at least one of the above areas. Since this study was based on a new approach to explore visible tattoos in relation to employability of individuals, the study focused on visibly tattooed individuals while HR managers were not part of the study. This decision was further supported by the assumption that tragic tradeoffs is more present in visibly tattooed individuals than in HR managers. Furthermore, this study was bound by limited resources for which an additional focus on recruiters/ HR managers would have required a reduction in significant variables such as extent visibility or age, which would have negatively impacted the validity of this study. Therefore, this study focused exclusively on visibly tattooed individuals.

The ideal sample size consists of 24 visibly tattooed individuals based on four variables. 'Gender' represents the first control variable, which is tied to the traditional gender norm due to resource constraints and thus consisted of: male and female. It was based on the research findings of Brallier and Maguire (2011) who showed that gender has a significant impact on the employment of tattooed individuals. The second variable 'age' consisted of three groups: 18 to 29 years, 30 to 49 years, 50 to 65 years. Since it was presumed that age has an influence on the employability of individuals that may be extended by visible tattoos, this variable was included. The age groups are an average derived from various studies. The third variable was 'extent of visibility', based on the findings of Timming (2015) that the extent of visibility of tattoos has a relevant influence on the degree of prejudice of recruiters. The variable 'extent of visibility' focused on facial or skull tattoos as the head is a central point in social interactions with other individuals. Facial and frontal skull tattoos are a conspicuous feature. In work-related interactions, especially facial tattoos cannot be concealed by posture or clothing (other than balaclavas and helmets). Skull tattoos visible on the front part of the head were added to 'extent of visibility' because tattoos on the face are extremely rare. To avoid classification as a hidden tattoo, e.g. with hair, respondents were explicitly asked whether they regularly shaved their heads. In the interviews, the difference between facial tattoos and other visible tattoos was confirmed by the interviewees, as facial tattoos were considered more visible and critical in terms of socioeconomic consequences. The fourth variable 'occupational role' referred to the professional role towards customers, clients or patients. It was differentiated into 'direct contact' and 'non-direct contact' as proximity to customers, clients or patients makes a significant difference to whether or not visibly tattooed people are exposed to stereotypes and prejudice (Timming, 2015).

3.4 Data analysis

The analysis process was initiated with an 'intelligent transcription' of the audio records using the non-automated software 'oTranscribe' (oTranscribe.de). This form of transcription mainly ignored aspects that were not relevant to the study, such as emotional tone and pauses. In addition, the social conversation was marked as social talk with the exact time. Finally, the transcripts were analyzed by a combination of data-driven codes and pre-defined codes (Brinkman, Kvale, 2015). The coding methods were selected according to the epistemological nature of the research question. The coding process was divided into two coding cycles. Within the first cycle, 'open coding' was implied to get a first impression of the data and to derive possible new aspects and categories. This approach was paired with 'value coding' to explore the values, perceptions and experiences of the respondents. In the second cycle, the first set of coding was re-evaluated and recoded through 'axial coding' which further connected and related the categories from the first cycle (Saldaña, 2013). This resulted in a list of core categories that were useful for contextualizing the independent variables and identifying differences, similarities, and patterns within respondents' answers. The sociocultural lens was used to analyze these results and determine the impact of visible tattoos on the employability of tattooed individuals.

3.5 Research quality indicators

The research objective of investigating the impact of visible tattoos on the employability of individuals in organizations in Germany was achieved by exploring the experiences, perceptions and perspectives of the target group through rigorous description and interpretation of coded data. Additionally, the snowball strategy and redistribution of the digital flyer were used to avoid biased selection of interviewees and ensure neutrality. The semi-structured method of data collection used, as well as the clearly defined coding, guaranteed an accurate representation of the interviewees' opinions and experiences, thus underlining the internal validity of the research.

In terms of external validity, the research sample was limited to 24 respondents. The importance of values and perceptions in this research made the results highly dependent on the contextual circumstances of socio-economic and cultural factors. This refers to the cultural environment of the country in which the research was conducted, in this case Germany, as well as the social and economic environment and status of the respondents. This made

generalization to other countries and to all employment sectors difficult, as visible tattoos are welcome and even desired in some workplaces (e.g., tattoo studios, modeling business). However, because the target group was well defined and contextualized within specific types of organizations, and the standardized data collection and data analysis was transparently listed, dependability was assured. Thus, the results can be generalized to some degree beyond the sample, assuming that societal perceptions of visible tattoos are consistent within the types of organizations studied. Rescoring the codes in two cycles avoided confirmation bias in the analysis. To further minimize the subjective lens within the analysis process, the coding of the transcripts was discussed with the supervisor. In addition, the risk of the influence of the researcher's personal worldview on data collection and analysis was minimized through subsequent reflection on the researcher's worldview to identify and mitigate the personal lens. Considering possible biases influencing me as a researcher, particularly in relation to the physical aspect of the research and taste-related body modifications in the form of tattoos, it is important to consider that the researcher is not visibly tattooed but appreciates this type of body modification. I do not associate visible tattoos with people's professional qualifications and rejects any form of prejudice against visibly tattooed people in the labor market. Due to my predefined point of view, complete objectivity cannot be claimed. However, this clear standpoint on visible tattoos helped to approach respondents without prejudice and to successfully conduct in-depth interviews that require a personal approach (DiCicco-Bloom, Crabtre, 2006). It also helped in interpreting the data and thus understanding the topic under study.

Since the research was well defined and standardized, and bias and limitations were accounted for, the study is reliable. Therefore, conducting it again based on this methodological approach is expected to yield the same results.

4. Findings

In this chapter, the main findings are presented, divided into subchapters main themes derived from the analysis of the interviews, followed by a discussion regarding the tension between the concepts of identity expression and employability. First, identity expression is discussed with an focus on the relation of tattoo visibility and identity, followed by a look at the construction of visible tattoos as identity expression and identity expression as a sacred value. Second, employability is discussed in relation to visible tattoos. Employability as a sacred value is presented and the compatibility of tattoos with the labour market is discussed. Third, the tension between identity expression and employability is examined in terms of the interviewees' approach to balancing these sacred values. Interview data is referenced in footnotes, each of which includes the participant's code name. An overview of the interviewees can be found in the appendix 1 to this thesis.

4.1 Identity expression and visible tattoos

Before a relation can be drawn to the impact of visible tattoos on an individual's identity expression, it is important to understand the meaning and value of visible tattoos and how they are constructed as an identity expression. The following three sections will therefore answer the sub-questions: How do visibly tattooed individuals value the link between tattoos and identity expression? Do visible tattoos have an influence on the identity expression of tattooed persons?

4.1.1 Tattoo visibility and the relation to identity expression

The explicit visibility of tattoos cannot be understood as a relevant point in the link between visible tattoos (VT) and identity. All respondents, with the exception of R16, R1 and R14, agreed that the decision to visibly place a tattoo was not linked to the idea of intentionally expressing identity, but rather to personal meaning and aesthetic standards. R1 and R14 stated that tattoos were intentionally placed visibly so that they would be visible to outsiders. In contrast to R14, who referred to the importance of visible tattoos and the significance of placement, R16 based the statement more on social and economic consequences that could be caused by the visibility of the tattoos. The thoughts and concerns regarding socio-economic consequences were also shared by other interviewees, although no connection was made to

identity expression in relation to the visibility of the tattoo. R11 even reversed the intention of visibility as a relevant indicator of identity expression:

I sincerely believe that the ones without sense are the visible ones. I think due people constantly asking, one cannot bare it anymore. It's always the question, what sense do your tattoos have. At some point I just did not want to talk about it any longer and did not want that everyone makes sense.¹

The interviewee addressed a commonly stated situation of societal expectation of tattoos having deep meaning, which is usually met with resistance by tattooed individuals. Therefore, tattoos themselves are seen as an expression of identity, regardless of their visibility. Thus, it can be said that the placement of tattoos in general has no explicit meaning. In the following sections, the terms identity tattoos and visible tattoos have therefore been used interchangeably.

4.1.2 Construction of visible tattoos as Identity expression

The association of visible tattoos with identity has been made in a number of ways. In addition to the frequently asserted esthetic aspect of VT, tattoos were displayed as an expression of emotional attachment to personal interests or relevant people or groups in life. The values of self-realization and self-determination were particularly palpable. Some respondents mentioned that visible tattoos are a special form to emphasize one's uniqueness and individuality.² Interviewee R1 likened the expression through tattoos to an attitude of life that allows one to project oneself onto one's surroundings. However, R1, R14 and R15 underlined that not all visible tattoos are an expression of the self, but also a symbol of belonging and affiliation. For example, R1 stressed a visible tattoo on the neck which shows the emblem of the motorcycle group to which the participant belongs. The point of view of belonging was also made by R10, however, in this case it was an external ascription of identity rather than a conscious expression of belonging. Furthermore, in all interviews, tattoos were considered part of the self. Despite piercings or clothing, tattoos were perceived as something eternal

¹ R11

² R2, R6, R11, R13, R14,

that does not change and also depicts memories and parts of past life. This was expressed by R7 who said:

*It just belongs to me and I also express myself with it.*³

Most of the respondents mentioned the discrepancy between their own intention of identity expression through visible tattoos and the ascribed identity by the social environment. In particular, respondents with facial tattoos indicated that negative stereotypes and prejudices were intertwined with their social and economic lives.⁴ However, these negative attributions were also used as an advantage by some participants. On the one hand, R9 and R2 used the ascribed identity as a tool to create protection against third parties and thus created a particular form of expression of a self-desired identity with the visible tattoos. Another example represents R9, who emphasized the use of visible tattoos to escape bullying and express self-desired toughness. On the other hand, R13 used ascribed identity as a kind of justification to get visible tattoos and had the ambition to obviously isolate the self from the other people. These examples already show that visible tattoos are not only used to express identity, but also a means of self-realization. It represents something private that is not necessarily expressed intentionally. Starting from the choice of the motif to the meaning behind it. Moreover, VT in particular can be a source of character development. As participant R6 noted, VT and consequently glances of third parties changed one's personality, from rather shy to confident.

With view on the mentioned statements, tattoos are perceived as a means of expressing identity, but at the same time represent something that is not fully comprehensible to outsiders and has a private sanctity for the tattooed person. Therefore, visible tattoos cannot be considered as a mere expression of identity, but rather as a form of identity construction based on one's own values and attitudes. They alter the self to a certain extent and are a means of emphasizing and highlighting certain elements of identity.

However, three respondents explicitly denied a connection between their visible tattoos and their identity. R12 said that tattoos represent a certain expression of life, but over time identification with these expressions can no longer be established. In this sense, tattoos are not an expression of identity, but rather an expression of past life events. For R8, it is

³ R7

⁴ R4, R8, R9, R16, R17

rather an instrument that has shaped personality, while R3 generally sees tattoos as something unimportant that does not express or emphasize one's personality. It is worth mentioning that the latter two were grouped in the area of extended visibility and have, among other visible tattoos, facial tattoos. These statements illustrate the complexity of the concept of identity and shows the different approaches to visible tattoos.

4.1.3 Identity expression as sacred value

Two core characteristics of sacred values in particular became visible in the form of visible tattoos as expressions of identity: emotional attachment and non-negotiability. First, emotional attachment was an obvious factor of relevance, in four interviews in particular. For R8, the sacrality lies in the tattoo motif coupled with the placement. It is a form of processing traumatic events in the past. R4 and R12 covered scars to symbolize that they are no longer part of their lives and R17 used visible tattoos to counteract unwanted effects of an illness on the body. As these examples show, visible tattoos can have effective psychological value for the tattooed person. Second, in addition to the deep emotional attachment, identity expression in the form of self-realization takes on a sacred value for participants that they are not readily willing to trade. This indicates the resistance to hide the visible tattoos or stopping to obtain more desired VTs. Apart from R3, all respondents stated that hiding the tattoo for a job would not be an option, and if it was, it would be just temporary⁵ as it hides not only the inked images but also the self. This was illustrated by respondent R11:

I cannot be someone I am not for 8 hours each day at work.⁶

Moreover, participants would not stop getting more visible tattoos or laser their existing visible tattoos for social or economic reasons (e.g., promotion or relationships). However, the detected non-negotiability is limited to certain boundaries. For example, identity expression becomes negotiable in situations where the visibly tattooed person takes on a particular social or economic role with responsibilities for others. For example, nursing patients or childcare.⁷ Thus, when tattoos negatively affect third parties who are under the responsibility of the visibly tattooed individual, self-realization in the form of visible tattoos is transformed into a limited and negotiable value. Furthermore, potential economic consequences can be so

⁵ R4

⁶ R11

⁷ R11, R15, R17, R7

severe that tattooed individuals decide to stop getting visibly tattooed and express their identity through visible tattoos.⁸ As R16 argued, facial tattoos in particular restrict a person both socially and economically, which makes desired facial tattoos a negotiable point.

At this point, a comment must be made about the holistic process of tattooing as sacred. Participant R17 asserted that it is not only the tattoo itself that was inked that has meaning and can be constructed as a sacred value to the self, but also the entire process of tattooing. Beginning with the choice of motif and placement and ending with the tattooing and the finished result. This process has been described as a ritual that holds sacred meaning for the participant. The approach to the holistic process of tattooing was also evident in the interview with interviewee R8. Here, the so-called rite of passage⁹ was clearly illustrated, where the participant transformed into a new self and assumed a new social status in society through the visible tattoos. Respondents mentioned that social status changes with visible tattoos, therefore it can be argued that all visible tattoos are themselves a means that evokes a rite of passage.

4.2 Employability and visible tattoos

This section presents the findings on employability. Before the impact of visible tattoos on employability can be presented, the value of employability must first be examined. In the next step the compatibility of visible tattoos and the labor market was discussed. Thus, in these sections the following sub-questions were answered: How do visibly tattooed individuals value employability? Do visible tattoos have an impact on employment opportunities of tattooed individuals? Do visible tattoos have an impact on development opportunities in employment of tattooed individuals?

4.2.1 Employability as sacred value

In addition to the expression of identity, employability was presented as a sacred value by the participants. Although all respondents valued employment not only for earning money, but they also portrayed it as something important in life that enables one to be independent and

⁸ R3, R15

⁹ A rite of passage refers to a transformation and redefinition of an individual's identity evoked by ritual or ceremony (Durel, 1993)

self-determined. Moreover, it provides an indispensable means of fulfilling certain standards of living. It also adds to one's own well-being, as a job fulfills the need to contribute to society.¹⁰ Besides, two important aspects were frequently mentioned, among other factors, which enables the conceptualization of employability as a sacred value: Identification and joy. R15 and R7 stressed that identification with the profession is important. Enjoyment and a good working environment were mentioned several times as a necessity for a healthy work-life balance, as a large proportion of time is spent at work. R11 mentioned that colleagues can be considered as family as almost more time is spent with them than with the private social environment. In line with the well-being aspects, the importance of a certain degree of job security was emphasized by all respondents. Meaning that the perceived security of having and keeping a job is hugely important. This was particularly evident in the case of participant R13. The participant mentioned reluctance and prolonged resistance to regular employment as it limits opportunities for self-realization. However, looking to the future, the participant stated:

Let's just say it like this, I follow the social constraints. It is good to have safety in your life.¹¹

Thus, perceived security in the labor market is associated with social constraints that have an impact on individuals. In addition, future job prospects were a facet where the aspect of security also comes into focus. Some of the respondents expressed some anxiety and concern about their future career prospects in the current labor market. The labor market was presented as unstable and oversaturated, making it especially difficult for visible tattooed individuals to obtain a job.¹² In this context, the security of keeping a job and getting another job was highly valued. Some interviewees showed great ambition not only to get and keep a job, but also to develop within a particular line of work and to continuously and successfully train.¹³ Regarding job development every interviewee declared that the visible tattoos are no perceived obstacle. Though, R16 expressed concerns about being able to move up to a higher position due to the visible tattoo and the factor external representation of the company which is part of this position.

¹⁰ R5, R1

¹¹ R13

¹² R12

¹³ R10, R16

However, one participant disagreed with the view that employability is sacred and presented a limitation of sacredness. The participant linked the value of employability to the conditions of the German state. According to the participant, unlike other countries, German citizens are not required to have jobs due to German welfare policies. Thus, because of Germany's welfare state, the interviewee denied the need for a job and security in terms of employment and future job perspective and did not perceive employability as a sacred value.¹⁴

4.2.2 Tattoo compatibility and economic consequences

All interviewees stated that visible tattoos set economic limits. The acquisition of a visible tattoo automatically entails economic consequences for the tattooed person, as visible tattoos are not accepted and thus a hindrance in certain professions. All interviewees agreed that visible tattoos limit career choices and therefore need to be considered in advance. However, it is necessary to differentiate between different professions here. On the one hand, the social and health care sector and so-called blue-collar jobs are inclusive and accept visible tattoos according to the participants. On the other hand, white-collar jobs with a high degree of representation of the company or organization by the employee, such as teachers or bank clerks, were mentioned as incompatible with visible tattoos.¹⁵ This connection of occupation and tattoo compatibility was illustrated by R3:

*They also work in health and social care sector and there is no one who works as a teacher and has his neck tattooed, although teacher in a sense it belongs to the social sector. Anyway, I think in some professions it is not accepted. If you want to work as a banker and that is your big dream, then you should not destroy it with visible tattoos.*¹⁶

As this example shows, the factor of representative work is bendable and cannot be taken as a singular explanation for the compatibility of tattoos in different occupations. R11 and R6 pointed to underemployment in the health sector and suggested that this might explain the acceptance and tolerance of visible tattoos, as HR managers cannot choose between several applicants. Thus, the occupation level of organizations and companies could have an impact on the employment opportunities of visibly tattooed individuals. In addition,

¹⁴ R12

¹⁵ R1, R7, R8, R15

¹⁶ R3

proximity to clients or customers was a frequently mentioned factor. As mentioned earlier, the health and social care sector is considered tolerant of visible tattoos, so proximity to patients is not a relevant factor in the employability of visibly tattooed individuals. Participants viewed workplaces with client or customer contact as not accessible with visible tattoos or just with a requirement to conceal tattoos.¹⁷ There, the reference was made to customers' or clients' perceptions of visible tattoos being of value to the business or organization. These perceived negative economic consequences for visibly tattooed individuals were underlined by R1 and R8's experiences. R1 was rejected when applying for a job as a soldier in the German military. According to R1, it was mainly the incompatibility of visible tattoos with the representational factor of this job that led to the rejection. However, because the military solidly screened the participant's social environment, the exact reason for rejection could not be pinned down to the visible tattoos. Participant R1, however, viewed the visible tattoos as the primary reason that would lead to rejection even in the absence of other factors. In contrast, respondent R8 described a work situation where the visible tattoos would most likely be the deciding factor. The respondent pictured a situation where customers rejected the respondent's work at first sight. It should be mentioned here that the respondent has facial tattoos. In addition to these real-life experiences, another respondent mentioned job application rejections for jobs involving customer contact. The respondent suspected that the rejection was based on the visible tattoos.¹⁸ Regarding the compatibility of tattoos in certain professions, R4, R8, R12 and R15 stated that they were sympathetic to HR managerial decisions against visibly tattooed individuals. According to these participants, visible tattoos are incompatible with certain representative jobs as they may not be in line with the image of the organization or company and could be detrimental to the business. This assumption was made with regard to customers' and clients' perceptions of visible tattoos.

Despite negative economic consequences, participant R2 explained that visible tattoos can be beneficial in certain sales professions, as the marketing strategy of some companies nowadays includes the representative factor of the salesperson in the store matching the alternative brands. In addition, visible tattoos can be beneficial in professions where respect for the working person is highly valued, such as police officers or in the case of participant R1 who works in the waste disposal industry, as the existing stereotypes and prejudices can

¹⁷ R17

¹⁸ R17

influence third parties. Negative perceptions of third parties about visible tattoos can thus be used as adventurous by visibly tattooed individuals in certain professions and situations.

A final remark must be made on two additional influences on the employability of visible tattooed individuals: the cultural context and the visible tattooed motif. Regarding the cultural context, R4, R2, R17, and R7 mentioned a perceived difference between acceptance and tolerance of visible tattoos due to cultural differences. On the one hand, R4, R7 and R13 said that attitudes towards visible tattoos vary from country to country. R13, emphasized the cultural differences using the example of the New Zealand President, who has a facial tattoo, and explained that this would not be possible in Germany, as the cultural attitude towards visible tattoos is fundamentally different. Moreover, R7 perceived Belgians to be more open-minded towards visible tattoos, while R4 claimed that Japanese people were against visible tattoos. The participant R7 could not explain the reason for the perceived difference, whereas R4 based the assumption on the history of tattoos in Japan, where tattoos have long been associated with the Yakuza¹⁹ and tattooed individuals are therefore subject to prejudices. Thus, the cultural historical context might be an influence on the social perception of visible tattoos. R2 and R17, on the other hand, perceived a difference between the federal states in Germany. According to R2, citizens in the northern federal states are less tolerant of visible tattoos, while R17 perceived citizens in the southern federal states as more prejudiced towards visible tattoos. Regarding the motif of the visible tattoo, some respondents mentioned the significance of the motif of visible tattoos and related it to their job opportunities.²⁰ It was thought that visible tattoos with a violent expression, such as skulls or knives and blood, could make hiring more difficult. The respondent R6 illustrated a situation where a job offer in a mental health clinic was rejected because of the visible tattoo motif, as they could potentially cause psychological harm to patients. Another aspect of the motif is the quality of the VT. Participant R8 commented this as follows:

*I suspect if I had applied with a crummy face tattoo, I might have been questioned more about myself and my personal circumstances. Anyway, since my face tattoo is of high quality, I may have better job chances.*²¹

¹⁹ Yakuza is the terminology used to refer to the Japanese mafia.

²⁰ R6, R17

²¹ R8

4.3 The tension between identity expression and employability

The previous sections discussed the influence of visible tattoos on the core concepts and examined these as sacred values. As both employability and identity expression are sacred values and are relevant concepts in the labor market, they potentially collide with each other and lead to a complex tension between the two concepts that affects visibly tattooed individuals. The guiding questions are therefore: How do visibly tattooed individuals balance the expression of their identity on the one hand and their employability on the other? and, Are there differences in the balance of visible tattoos and employability in terms of gender, age, extent of visibility or occupational role? The following section discusses the main factors in the tension between identity expression and employability and answers the mentioned sub-questions.

4.3.1 Balancing identity expression and employability

Regarding the complex task of balancing identity expression and employability, one participant addressed the conflict of values on an occasion where the participant was forced to hide the visible tattoos and was hidden by the manager from costumers and higher internal positions. The participant stated that direct harassment in the workplace created tremendous pressure and anxiety about keeping the job, so the respondent felt reduced to having visible tattoos. However, changing jobs directly was not an option. While the tattoos were not only a tool to express identity but also a means to accept the body and enhance the feeling of beauty for oneself, the job was an existential part of life to be a role model for the daughter on the one hand and to contribute to the family life on the other hand.²² Consequently, this situation of non-acceptance and hiding led to a change of job at the first opportunity.

R8 also described a similar situation where the visible tattoos had to be concealed for a job. However, unlike R17, the latter participant's job performance resulted in the disappearance of former perceptions of visible tattoos by management and thus concealment of visible tattoos was no longer required. R8 also mentioned another situation in which the visible tattoos interfered with work performance. These situations changed both participants' perceptions and they stated that they were not willing to hide their visible tattoos again as they were a part of their self. With the perceived certainty of being able to find another job,

²² R17

both participants clarified that visible tattoos and self-realization are more important to them personally than a specific career path.

In addition to this situation of direct harassment in the workplace, other interviewees also presented the tension between a secure career prospect and self-realization. With regard to the perception that certain professions with close proximity to customers and clients are potentially difficult to access or inaccessible to visibly tattooed individuals²³ all interviewees mentioned the need to consider a visible tattoo in relation to their desired occupation. This excludes professions in the health and social care sector or professions where the marketing strategy of the company or organization is based on an alternative appearance, such as kindergarten teacher, nurse or salesperson of certain brands.²⁴ This crucial process of consideration was illustrated by R14 as follows:

*Of course, you have to think about, what career you want. Where do you want to work, in what sector you want to work, with client or customer contact or without. If you want to work with customers, of course you have to think about whether that is an area where you can get tattoos or not.*²⁵

Thus, in order to successfully balance identity expression and employability, it is inevitable to balance the desired occupational sector with the desire to have visible tattoos in order to avoid a value conflict. Additionally, future career prospects were mentioned as important. As R8 and R4 pointed out, job changes or changes in the workplace could lead to conflict as visible tattoos could be weighted differently. This tension was underlined by R15 who said that although a facial tattoo was interesting, it was out of the question during working life as future career perspectives could change. As a consequence of the social and economic implications, some respondents stated that people should wait until they had a safe working environment before having a visible tattoo, or that they should not have visible tattoos at all.²⁶ According to participant R1, this process of weighing economic consequences is linked to social circumstances. Thus, poor social circumstances did not lead to considerations about visible

²³ R7, R13, R15

²⁴ R2, R3, R7, R11, R12

²⁵ R14

²⁶ R3, R4, R8, R9, R16

tattoos, nor did they lead to considerations about reconciling them with future career prospects.

Moreover, R10 argued that it is important to be willing to compromise. That is, if, for example, banker is the desired profession, alternatives should be considered and preference should be given to organizations and companies with a high degree of work-life balance. Another important factor are good communication skills. It was considered imperative to have a high level of communication skills in order to successfully articulate the value and importance of visible tattoos to third parties and to establish a tattoo compatibility with one's profession in job interviews or other situations in the job market.²⁷ In line with this assumption, it was stated that visibly tattooed individuals must behave differently in the job market than non-visibly tattooed individuals. The perceived reduction in employment opportunities due to prejudice against visible tattoos requires a higher degree of marketing of one's skills and the need to effectively demonstrate qualifications than for individuals without visible tattoos.²⁸ In addition, it was stressed that it is important to be friendly in any situation, even if this is in contrast to one's current emotional status, in order to reduce prejudices and stereotypes and improve employment chances.²⁹ In this context, the need to have or develop a strong and confident character in order to navigate through precarious situations in working life was also mentioned. The importance of self-confidence was exemplified by participant R17 who described the initial uncertainty of how to deal with the visible tattoos in a job interview. These thoughts had a major impact on the participant and led to doubts about the decision to have visible tattoos. This insecurity was also portrayed by R11 who was worried about possible consequences in the first job interview with the newly acquired visible tattoos.

Some of the respondents explicitly mentioned ways to efficiently balancing visible tattoos and especially application processes.³⁰ Despite hiding the visible tattoos, they should rather be visible on the application photo, otherwise the self is hidden and false expectations are aroused.³¹ In job interviews, tattoos should not be the topic or focus of conversation, but

²⁷ R3, R4, R5, R14

²⁸ R1, R13, R14, R15

²⁹ R11

³⁰ R8, R11, R15, R17

³¹ R11, R17

rather skills and qualifications. Therefore, as long as the recruiter does not address the visible tattoos, subliminal glances and facial expressions from the recruiter should be ignored.³²

4.3.2 Influential factors on the balance of identity expression and employability

This research was based on the consideration of variables that may influence the results. Thus, age, gender, extent visibility, and occupation role were determined. First, age could not be detected as a factor that influenced the results in a relevant way. However, it could be seen that especially the respondents between 50 and 65 years agreed with the fact that one should wait to have visible tattoos until one has a safe working environment and matured taste regarding the tattoo motif. Otherwise, one would be more likely to regret getting visible tattoos or having problems establishing oneself in the labor market. Furthermore, this age group had no understanding of young people getting visible tattoos and referred to today's tattoo boom as simply a fashion trend.³³ The participant R4 assumed that older visibly tattooed individuals would be better able to balance the expression of identity and employability than younger visibly tattooed individuals. The participant clarified this assumption on the following experience:

*Of course, you always hear: I would never hire anything like you. But this cannot get to me anymore. I am 51 years old now, so accusations like that cannot hurt me anymore. Although hearing something like that when you are 23 or 24 must be tough.*³⁴

However, awareness of economic consequences and consideration of employability and visible tattoos were also relevant in the perceptions of the other age groups. On average, the age groups of 18-29 years old and 30-49 years old did not relevantly differ in their responses. In both groups, participants conveyed some confidence in successfully integrating visible tattoos into the labor market.

Secondly, gender was a factor that could have an impact on employment outcomes, as mentioned by R11 and R2. It was assumed that male colleagues would be preferred for higher positions. However, as this assumption is based on the subjective perceptions of the

³² R8, R15, R17

³³ R4, R9, R13

³⁴ R4

participants, this could be a relevant factor in employability alongside visible tattoos but cannot be considered a relevant influencing factor for this thesis due to a lack of data. Another aspect was the implications and association of visible tattoos with identity expression, that were not gender neutral and can be distinguished by different forms of expression. For example, male respondent R9 wanted to express toughness through visible tattoos and participant R15 also frequently linked visible tattoos to a tough external appearance, while female respondent R14 wanted to express aesthetic aspirations and R17 linked them to a form of protection and well-being. Moreover, female participants were more likely to emphasize the importance of VT as a means of uniqueness. However, the differential association of visible tattoos and identity expression cannot be linked to a gendered approach to balancing identity expression and employability.

Third, the extent of visibility in the form of facial or visible skull tattoos was found to have a major impact on the balance of identity expression and visible tattoos. As mentioned in the previous sections, all respondents indicated that facial tattoos in particular are generally considered more likely to cause social and economic consequences than other visible tattoos because they are highly visible and cannot be hidden. Despite wanting a facial tattoo, R17 and R15 expressed concern about compatibility with their jobs and career prospects. In addition, respondent R16 expressed ambivalent feelings towards face tattoos. The respondent emphasized the serious social and economic consequences and stated that if he were born again, he would never do visible tattoos again. Apart from R11 and R15, this view was shared by other participants with facial tattoos in that they specifically emphasized that they would not recommend facial tattoos to others due to the social and economic consequences.³⁵ Finally, occupational role also had an impact like the extent of visibility. Despite patient proximity which was not seen as a problem, client or customer contact was portrayed as often incompatible with visible tattoos. This perception influenced participants to perceive a restriction in their employment prospects, particularly those occupations that had a representational role. Thus, close proximity to clients and customers were no longer seen as an employment option. This was underlined by participant R6, who described a situation where concerns about taking up an occupation with close proximity to clients actually impacted on the participant and evoked concerns and anxiety of rejection.

³⁵ R3, R4, R8, R9, R16

5. Conclusion and discussion

In the following chapter, I will reflect on the main findings and draw on a conclusion to answer the research question. Subsequently, the findings and conclusions will be critical assessed in light of the theoretical framework. Finally, a recommendation for the management level so as for further research will be established.

5.1 Conclusion

The objective of this thesis was to investigate the impact of visible tattoos on the employability and identity expression of individuals in organizations in Germany from a socio-cultural perspective. Subsequently, this thesis aimed to answer the following research question: What impact do visible tattoos have on the expression of identity on the one hand and employability of individuals on the other in organizations in Germany, examined from a sociocultural perspective? To answer this question, the findings were divided into three main sections based on the core concepts of identity expression and employability, and the tension between the two, using the sociocultural perspective of sacred value chosen for this research. Firstly, the concept of identity expression was explored in relation to visible tattoos. This involved discussing the relationship between visible tattoos and identity expression to provide an initial understanding of the anchoring of the concept, followed by exploring the value of the link between identity expression and tattoos by visibly tattooed individuals (Sq 1). In addition, participants' perceptions of the influence of visible tattoos on identity expression were explored to determine whether visible tattoos have a relevant influence on identity expression (Sq 2). The next section involved exploring the value of employability to participants. Using these findings, it was possible to explore participants' experiences and perceptions of the impact of visible tattoos on their employment and development opportunities (Sq. 1, 2, and 3). Based on these findings, a conclusion could be drawn about the impact of visible tattoos on the employability of visibly tattooed individuals. Finally, the last section built on the previous ones and presented the examination of the interviews in terms of the tension between the two concepts as sacred values and the balance between identity expression on the one hand and employability on the other, of the participants (Sq.4). Additionally, the variables used to categorize the interviewees were explored as a possible influencing factor on the balance of visible tattoos and employability (Sq.5).

The labor market is a place that encompasses a variety of sacred values. This diversity leads to collisions and conflicts between sacred values, with significant implications for the individuals involved. Visible tattoos as a means of expressing identity continue to be fraught with stereotypes and prejudice, and thus represent a point of conflict for visibly tattooed individuals. As the results demonstrated, with social and economic consequences. The method of interviewing visibly tattooed individuals successfully determined the impact of visible tattoos on the identity expression of visibly tattooed individuals. First, the results revealed new insights into the relationship between tattoo visibility and identity expression. According to the participants, tattoo visibility is not an important factor for most individuals in relation to their identity. Secondly, while the complex concept of identity limits generalization due to different definitions of the concept, the approach taken still provided new insights into the relationship between tattoos and identity. Socio-economic implications aside, tattoos are mainly constructed as a sacred value, being an instrument that not only expresses identity, but also constructs and shapes it in terms of self-realization. Therefore, the sole notion of expressing identity does not encompass the very intention of tattoos of an individual. In addition to the expected non-negotiability of identity expression or self-realization in visibly tattooed individuals, factors have also been identified that potentially transform the concept into a tradable one, such as responsibility to third parties or severe economic constraints to assure operate in conflict with sacred values.

As expected, employability is another important concept in the labor market that plays a crucial role for individuals and is influenced by visible tattoos. As demonstrated by the participants, employability is an indispensable part of life and assures highly valued factors such as independence, self-determination, economic security. It thus embodies a sacred value that is linked to the psychological and physiological well-being of individuals, enabling them to play a meaningful social role and contribute to society. The impact on employment opportunities and employment development was made clear by participants through real experiences and perceived constraints. Using this approach, it was found that visible tattoos have a perceived impact on employment opportunities and can potentially lead to precarious situations during interviews as well as in the workplace. Although white collar occupations with a high level of representation and proximity to customers were presented as inaccessible, whereas the health and social care sector was assumed to be accessible to visibly tattooed individuals. The assumption by some respondents that a low occupational rate could be the

source of accessibility raised further questions about the relationship between occupational rate and the impact of visible tattoos on the employability of individuals. In addition, the findings raised further questions about the influence of contextual circumstances, the possible link to cultural influence and the role of motif of the visible tattoos on the impact of visible tattoos on employability as a sacred value.

Looking at the potential conflict between these two sacred values, the tension between employability and identity expression in relation to visible tattoos requires the act of balancing the two in order to minimize the negative effects. As a result, balancing the desired career field with the desire for visible tattoos is inevitable, especially with regard to future career prospects. Thus, trade-offs in career choice or not having additional visible tattoos or having visible tattoos at all are inevitable. In addition, the results provided insight into what traits visibly tattooed individuals must possess at a higher level than non-visibly tattooed individuals to ensure their employability. These are self-confidence, a high level of communication skills and the ability to highlight one's qualities and competencies. In this sense, visibly tattooed individuals, in addition to exchanging elements of identity expression and self-realization with factors of their employability, must also make additional efforts in terms of personal traits. Furthermore, as expected, the aspect of proximity to customers or clients and facial or skull tattooing in particular are influencing factors on the tension between the two concepts. By establishing age as not significantly relevant, the question of the possible influence of gender arose, as the data collected could not ensure a valid understanding.

Based on the qualitative analysis of the experiences and perceptions of visibly tattooed individuals, it can be concluded that visible tattoos in the context of organizations in Germany, on the one hand, shape and construct identity and enable the tattooed individual to express the self and belonging. On the other hand, they restrict employability by limiting employment opportunities specifically white-collar occupations with customer and client contact. Since both concepts are sacred values, visibly tattooed individuals must view visible tattoos in the context of work-related aspects as a future prospect, meaning they must be willing to compromise and accept the need for sacrifice while facing economic constraints and self-realization. The complex balancing act between the two sacred values is further complicated by the fact that visibly tattooed individuals are forced to develop certain personal attributes to a greater degree than non-visibly tattooed individuals in order to ensure their employability.

The method and socio-cultural approach thus provided new insights into the relationship between visible tattoos and identity expression and employability of individuals and provided results through which the research question could be successfully answered. A critical evaluation is provided in the next chapter.

5.2 Discussion

Before discussing the results, it is important to critically reflect on the methodological approach. With view on the data collection, it must be mentioned that due to the exceptional circumstances of the Covid- 19 pandemic, the search for interview partners was negatively affected. First of all, it was not possible to take into account the customer flows of tattoo studios and of tattoo conventions. The tense situation, especially in the labor market, which resulted from the measurements, could also had an impact on the willingness of potential interview partners to cooperate. The snowball strategy did not work sufficiently as many respondents expressed that most people in their social circle have concealable tattoos and not visible ones. This difficulty encountered is consistent with the study's problem statement regarding the potential for conflict between visible tattoos and the workplace. Thus, the difficulty of finding visibly tattooed individuals, particularly those with facial tattoos, underscores the tension between employability and identity expression that this study addresses. Furthermore, the duration of the interview of one hour could also have an influence on the willingness to participate. Another aspect was the intimacy of the questions, as respondents were asked about their social and economic situations.

Another aspect that needs to be considered was the asymmetrical power relation between interviewer and interviewee, which can bias the interview and influence the interviewee's responses. While on one hand the interviewer can control the length of the interview and steer the interview with strategic questions, on the other hand the interviewee can stop the interview, dodging questions or withholding relevant information. As this research involved intimate questions such as: "Have you ever been fired?", the interview was designed to be conversational and any contact with the interviewee was on a non-formal basis in order to "build a sympathetic relationship and a sense of mutual trust in the research interview" (Anyan, 2013: p.5). On the one hand, this approach succeeded in creating a relaxed atmosphere, which was evident in the feedback received. On the other hand, this led to a misconceived intimacy which might had a negative impact on the responses. In order to

maintain a professional distance, I attempted to reject attempts at flirtation or any inappropriate behavior on the part of the interviewee. However, some potential interviewees were not interviewed because of this, and one interview conducted could not be used because the interviewee did not sign the consent form and could not be reached.

Despite these problems, the research was successful in answering the research question as stated in the conclusion. The conclusion suggested that visible tattoos have an impact on identity expression and employability of individuals in German organizations and are thus important factors to consider when looking at individuals within the labor market. The decision to focus on visible tattoos rather than the generic term VBM was confirmed by participants as they particularly emphasized the unrestricted nature of tattoos, which is not comparable to other VBMs such as piercings. Despite some previous literature on the relationship between individuals' employability and VBM, this work focused on visible tattoos, contributing to a clearer understanding of the impact of visible tattoos on employability and identity expression (Kramer, 2006; Brabant and Mizer, 2010; Swanger, 2006; Timming et al., 2017). Furthermore, the study demonstrated the important role of sacred values and the resulting implications of the tension between the two concepts. In line with Lynch's (2012) statement about the relevance of understanding the sacred in our lives, this thesis contributed to the existing literature on visible tattoos and the impact on employability and identity expression by highlighting the importance of sacred values in relation to both concepts.

First of all, the findings on visible tattoos and the link to identity expression confirmed previous research, but at the same time emphasized that generalization is not possible and a one-dimensional approach not functional (Cseszneki, Stemate, 2019; Shelton, Peters, 2008). It has been found that tattoos as an expression of identity express not only uniqueness but also affiliation to films, people or groups. Thus, Ferreira's (2009) theory of tattoos as an expression of identity in modern society did not adequately capture non-generalizability. Furthermore, the findings are consistent with Shelton and Peters' (2008) research, which applied optimal distinctiveness theory to tattoos. By emphasizing uniqueness with visible tattoos, participants followed the need for distinctiveness from others, and by emphasizing belonging and affiliation, such as through fandom tattoos or group tattoos, participants clearly gave in to the need for shared identity (Leonardelli et al., 2010). This relationship between the need for distinction and belonging is therefore of great importance in understanding the reasons for tattooing and the willingness of visibly tattooed individuals to face the resulting

social and economic consequences. Moreover, the findings confirmed Kosut's (2000) research on the relationship between identity and the tattooed body, as tattoos were presented not only as a means of expressing identity, but also of constructing and shaping identity in relation to society's view of the body. In addition, new insights were gained into the relationship between the visibility of tattoos and the expression of identity. Apart from the effect on third parties, the visibility of tattoos is not an important factor for most individuals in relation to their identity, as the placement is generally not a matter of expression but rather of esthetics. As for the innovative conceptualization of identity expression as sacred values, the results are slightly at odds with the findings of previous researchers Baron and Spranca (1997). Despite the theory that sacred values are non-negotiable, the results suggested that identity expression in the form of visible tattoos has limits of non-negotiability when it comes to harming third parties for whom the tattooed person bears responsibility or in terms of serious economic consequences. However, identity expression and self-realization can still be interpreted as a sacred value, as it is a value to which the participants are absolutely committed. It also became clear that it is an infinite value that cannot be evaluated along a material or monetary scale (Ginges et al., 2007; Ginges and Atran, 2013; Tetlock et al., 2000). Henceforth, this deviation from theory can be seen more as agreement with Tetlock et al. (2000), who recognized a multiplicity of sacred values that require trade-offs to balance different values in a clash of values (Tetlock, 2013).

Secondly, the concept of employability has been defined according to Hillage and Pollard (1998) and McQuaid, Green and Danson (2005) who stated that the focus is on an individual's ability to successfully navigate the labor market in terms of obtaining, maintaining, changing and progressing in employment in the context of external and internal factors. Therefore, elements of the socioeconomic and personal circumstances of visibly tattooed individuals were examined as interrelated factors influenced by visible tattoos. Negative effects on employment opportunities in the form of employment limitations due to visible tattoos were found, confirming McQuaid and Lindsay's (2005) theory that personal circumstances and external conditions, are interrelated and affect employment opportunities. The findings show that the impact on employment opportunities needs to be differentiated as it is not holistic. The results showed that especially in white-collar occupations with a representative factor and proximity to customers employment constraints were perceived. These findings are consistent with Dean's (2010) findings that the distinction between white-

collar and blue-collar occupations is important in relation to the employment opportunities of visibly tattooed individuals and that white-collar occupations in particular are perceived by visibly tattooed individuals as inaccessible with visible tattoos due to proximity to customers and clients. Furthermore, the identified perception of a reduction in employment opportunities in occupations with customer and client contact is transferable to real-world structures, as previous literature by Baumann, Timming and Gollan (2016) and Timming (2015), who examined HR managerial preferences and customer preferences, showed. Thus, participants' perceptions of customer preferences in this thesis are congruent with studies of real customer perceptions. However, despite Baumann, Timming and Gollan's (2016) generalization about the impact of visible tattoos on service sector employment, the results showed that some service sector occupations were excluded. Health and social care occupations were presented by the participants as accessible with visible tattoos and thus are an exception. Consequently, these findings contradict a generalized assumption about the employment prospects of visibly tattooed individuals and require a more nuanced approach. While the data do not provide a firm explanation of "why," they do suggest that the employment opportunities of visibly tattooed individuals may be related to, among other things, the employment rates of companies and organizations. As expected, employability, along with identity expression, was presented as a sacred value by participants. As employability was portrayed as an indispensable part of life that ensures highly valued factors such as independence, self-determination and economic security, it is consistent with the definition of the literature on sacred values (Baron, Spranca, 1997; Tetlock et al., 2000; Ginges et al., 2007; Ginges, Atran, 2013). The findings are also consistent with Tetlock's (2003) trade-off theory as participants emphasized the non-negotiability of their employability as it enables them to play a meaningful social role and contribute to society.

Finally, as Carmichael et al. (2013) predicted, sacred values are intertwined with individuals' identities and can clash with economic sacred values in particular. Given the innovative sociocultural approach of this thesis, the data provided new insights into the tension between identity expression and employability of visibly tattooed individuals. The findings indicate that visibly tattooed individuals must balance their identity expression and employability in order to successfully navigate the labor market. Subsequently, the data suggest that participants in the labor market are sometimes forced to choose between identity expression and employability. Because both concepts were presented as sacred

values, Ginges and Atran's (2014) mechanisms for balancing sacred values were valuable. Although sacred values were reframed in different ways to make the trade-off as more acceptable, the reprioritization mechanism was more likely to be used by participants as the non-negotiability of sacred values was adapted to specific circumstances, such as third-party responsibility or severe economic consequences. Consistent with Tetlock's (2003) and Mandel and Vartanian's (2008) theory of different types of trade-offs, the results shows that this conflictual situation of visibly tattooed individuals calls for a tragic trade-off. As this thesis focused on the impact of visible tattoos on individuals' employability and identity expression, the explicit psychological aspect of tragic trade-off on individuals was not fully explored, and therefore Hanselmann and Tanner's (2008) theory that tragic trade-offs in particular are perceived as stressful and difficult by individuals could not be clearly confirmed. However, the findings revealed the complexity and difficulty of tragic trade-offs for visibly tattooed individuals, as they need to consider tattooing in relation to current and future career prospects and perceive the need to invest correspondingly more effort in establishing certain personal traits to ensure their employability. Thus, the data can be interpreted in line with Hanselmann and Tanner's (2008) theory. In order to successfully explore the tension between the two concepts and contribute to previous research, the variables of age, gender, extended visibility and occupational role were derived from previous literature as possible influencing factors. No relevant influence of age on the balance of the two concepts was found on visibly tattooed individuals. Despite previous research by Brallier et al. (2011) and Baumann, Timming and Gollan (2016), who claimed that gender plays a role in employment opportunities related to client preferences alongside visible tattoos, the results of this thesis could not confirm these findings due to missing data. However, gender differentiation in linking visible tattoos to identity expression was found, as women were more likely to associate visible tattoos with uniqueness and men were more likely to associate visible tattoos with personal characteristics such as toughness. Nevertheless, the data did not reveal a link to a gendered approach to aligning identity expression and employability. In contrast, the results clearly indicated a large impact of extended visibility of tattoos on the face and front of the skull on individuals' employability, which is consistent with the findings of Timming (2015). Furthermore, the data confirmed the research of Timming et al. (2017) and provided a clearer understanding of the impact of client and customer contact on individuals' employability from the perspective of the individual with the specific focus on visible tattoos. Thus, sound evidence was obtained in

this thesis showing that customer and client contact in particular leads to a perceived inaccessibility of certain occupations by individuals with visible tattoos, as customer and client perceptions are likely to be loaded with prejudice and negative stereotypes. The data also suggested that these employment restrictions are not only received with negative emotions by visibly tattooed individuals but are also tolerated and understood. Some participants clearly stated that visible tattoos are not compatible with all types of occupations.

In summary, the innovative sacred values approach to the impact of visible tattoos on identity expression and employability of individuals provided new data that contributes to the existing literature by creating a new understanding about the perceptions of visibly tattooed individuals on the impact of visible tattoos on identity expression and employability in the context of organizations in Germany. At this point, it must be noted that the perceived tension between identity expression and employability of individuals requires a differentiated approach from HR managers in employment processes, since, as mentioned, they have an impact on the employability of visibly tattooed individuals. Furthermore, new questions and requirements for further research also emerged from the data collected. Therefore, Practical recommendations on manager level and further research recommendations are presented in the next section.

5.3 Practical recommendations on management level

Looking at the impact of visible tattoos on the employability of individuals in terms of tension with their identity expression, it merits a recommendation to invest in providing a guide for HR managers to manage the implications. For HR managers, this primarily means being aware of the tension between employability and identity expression and the resulting impact on visibly tattooed individuals. As mentioned earlier, white-collar occupations with customer or client contact in particular are perceived as inaccessible by visibly tattooed individuals. This perception has a potentially negative impact on the employment rate of organizations and companies that require a representative work situation, as it could reduce applications from qualified and competent applicants with visible tattoos. To avoid this, HR managers are advised to firstly optimize recruitment procedures, secondly provide a good working environment and thirdly take into account actual customer and client preferences.

In terms of the hiring process, this means that first, unless required by business, application for employment should be worded accordingly, without soft skills, which refer to Dress-Codes, and focus on hard skills, that is, work qualifications. Fair assessment could be done through an applicant tracking system that pre-selects applicants based on hard skills to mitigate taste-based decisions by HR managers. In addition, a multi-cycle selection by the HR team could ensure a more nuanced view of applicants and reduce taste-based decisions. Moreover, it is advisable for the HR manager to recognize the problem of comparing applicants on their soft skills based on biased criteria. Thus, possible biased criteria should be identified in advance. In this sense, a checklist can be useful to challenge one's biases and judgmental thinking to defuse assumptions and taste-based decisions during a job interview. The checklist also ensures that the HR team bases their decisions on the same criteria, promoting fair evaluation on a standardized basis.

In regard of creating a good working environment, it is advisable to recognize the importance of expressing identity in the form of visible tattoos to the individual and the impact this has on the working environment. Therefore, a company policy should be established that allows employees to work and develop without restricting their identity expression. In addition, the policy should include an anti-discrimination contract signed by all employees to ensure a good working environment without discrimination or exclusion based on the employee's personal characteristics.

As the results showed that customer preference is an important determinant of employment, it is important to identify actual customer preference regarding visible tattoos and avoid assumptions. To gain insights into the actual preferences of customers and clients, a survey could be helpful. In addition, the marketing messages delivered by the companies or organizations could influence the preferences of customers and clients. In the future, the marketing strategy should be re-evaluated and adapted with regard to a prejudice-free approach towards visible tattoos.

5.4 Limitations

Despite the limitations due to the Covid-19 pandemic influencing the data collection (see section 3.2), the results revealed further limitations of this research that need to be mentioned. During the research, respondents brought up unexpected factors. The nature of the semi-structured interviews allowed for further questions to be asked about the unexpected factors, however, the emerging issues could not be discussed with the previously interviewed participants. This resulted in a lack of data to answer and discuss the questions raised on a valid basis. However, as the nature of scientific research requires focus on one topic, new questions for further research cannot be avoided.

Another limitation to consider stems from my inexperience as a researcher, particularly with regard to conducting semi-structured interviews. During the research process, I learned valuable lessons and gained a deeper and more grounded knowledge of qualitative research. This limitation was mitigated by the supervision of my research experienced first reader and the support of my second reader.

5.4 Research recommendation

In addition to providing valuable new data for understanding the impact of visible tattoos on individuals' identity expression and employability, and the tension between the two concepts, the study has also raised new questions that require further research. The following recommendations for future research can be divided into 1. extending this research and 2. conducting a research with a new focus.

1. The results provided a new view on a possible cultural influence on the perception of visible tattoos. Since the context of this work was limited to Germany, it would be useful to conduct a similar study in another country for comparison. This could lead to different results and provide new insights, including into the contextual aspect of sacred values. Finally, future studies might consider different factors of additional influence, as the quality or motif of the visible tattoos.

2. As mentioned earlier, the perception of visibly tattooed individuals regarding the accessibility of health and social care sector could not be explained and it was only suggested that the employment rate of an organization or company may have an influence. This perception represents a discrepancy with the findings that client or customer proximity is a

factor in employment constraint. It should therefore be investigated whether and how a level of employment of relevant organizations, companies or institutions affects the employment opportunities of visibly tattooed individuals. A case study of, for example, a hospital or childcare facility would be appropriate for this purpose.

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Appendix 1. Overview of the interviews

6. Variable	Number of groups	Groups and abbreviation
Gender (traditional gender norm)	2	M (Male) F (Female)
Age (in years)	3	A1 (18-29) A2 (30-49) A3 (50-65)
Extent visibility	2	Y (Yes) N (No)
Contact to customers, clients, patients	2	Y (Yes) N (No)

→ (2) x (3) x (2) x (2) = 24

01. (F – A1 – Y – Y) R11	07. (F – A1 – N – Y) R2	13. (F – A1 – Y – N)	19. (F – A1 – N – N) R14
02. (M – A1 – Y – Y)	08. (M – A1 – N – Y) R7	14. (M – A1 – Y – N) R16	20. (M – A1 – N – N) R12
03. (F – A2 – Y – Y) R3	09. (F – A2 – N – Y) R6	15. (F – A2 – Y – N) R10	21. (F – A2 – N – N) R17
04. (M – A2 – Y – Y) R8	10. (M – A2 – N – Y) R1	16. (M – A2 – Y – N) R5	22. (M – A2 – N – N) R15
05. (F – A3 – Y – Y)	11. (F – A3 – N – Y) R13	17. (F – A3 – Y – N) R4	23. (F – A3 – N – N)
06. (M – A3 – Y – Y) R9	12. (M – A3 – N – Y)	18. (M – A3 – Y – N)	24. (M – A3 – N – N)

Appendix 2. Interview script in English

General questions:

- Could you briefly describe where you have your visible tattoos (VT) and what designs you have tattooed?
- If you are employed, could you briefly explain what you do for a living? / If you are not currently employed, could you say what career field you are applying for have applied for?
- Do you/would you have direct contact with customers/patients etc. in your work?
 - Is there a Dress Code?
- Have you entered or settled into professional life with your VT?

1. How do visibly tattooed individuals value the link between tattoos and identity expression? / 2. Do visible tattoos have an influence on the identity expression of tattooed persons?

- What do your visible tattoos express to you, what meanings do they have?
- Why did you get your visible tattoos?
- Do your visible tattoos have a different meaning than your non-visible ones?
- Would you agree that your visible tattoos express parts of your identity? Please explain.
- If yes: Why did you choose to express your identity through tattoos?
- Could you imagine getting more visible tattoos?
- If yes: Could you explain what you would consider in making this decision? (Would your decision depend on whether your tattoos fit your current/future job?)
- If no: Why not?

3. How do visibly tattooed individuals value employability?

- What does it mean to you to get a foothold in the working life?
- How important is it for you to be valued in the job market?
 - Why is it (not) important to you?
- Would you agree that getting a job/progressing in a job/keeping a job is important in life?
- Why are these factors important to you?
 - Would you give up other elements in your life to achieve these factors?

4. Do visible tattoos have an impact on employment opportunities of tattooed individuals?

- Can you recall an occasion when you felt hindered in your employment opportunities because of your visible tattoos, or even rejected because of your VT?
 - What happened?
 - Can you indicate how you felt hindered?
 - How did the HR manager/recruiter reason their decision?
 - How did you know the problem was related to your visible tattoos and not your job qualifications?
 - Was the problem with the VT related to external factors (contact with customers/patients, etc.) or internal factors (colleagues), or other factors?
 - What was the impact on your employment opportunities?
 - Has this situation only occurred once?
- Have you ever not applied for a job that seemed compatible with your professional qualifications because of the company/organization's dress code, and could you explain why?
- If applicable, could you describe how your employment opportunities changed after you obtained visible tattoos?
- Looking back, have you ever been fired or put in a position of underemployment?
 - What happened?
 - Was this related to your VT?
 - How did you know the problem was related to your visible tattoos and not your work qualifications?

5. Do visible tattoos have an impact on development opportunities in employment of tattooed individuals?

- Can you recall a situation where you felt hindered in your professional development at work because of your visible tattoos?
 - What happened?
 - Can you specify how you felt hindered?
 - How your former chef argued to fire you?
 - How did you know the problem was related to your visible tattoos and not your job qualifications?
- Were the problems related to external or internal factors?

- Did this situation occur only once?
- If applicable, could you describe how your career development opportunities changed after you were tattooed with VT?

6. How do visibly tattooed individuals balance the expression of identity on the one hand, and employability on the other (and possible other sacred values)?

- In the past, have you considered your future occupation when deciding whether or not to get VT? Could you elaborate on your answer.
- Would you consider hiding or removing your VT? Please explain your answer.
- Looking at your career, has there ever been a situation where you regretted having VT and could you explain why?
- Have you ever been forced to decide whether to hide your tattoos or get more tattoos and keep a job?
- Could you explain how you integrate your VT into your professional life? (Certain strategies such as communicative?)
- Have you ever felt pressured to choose between getting more VT or not and keeping your job?
 - If so, could you explain the situation?
 - How did you feel pressured?
 - How did you decide in the end?
- Imagine your chef is against your new visible tattoo: how would you argue that your visible tattoos and your current job are compatible?
- What would you say to a colleague or a client/patient, etc. who claimed that your VT is incompatible with your job?
- Imagine your chef is against your new visible tattoo: how would you argue that your visible tattoos and your current job are compatible?
- What advice do you have for visibly tattooed people who are new to the job market to keep their body art and careers compatible?
- Would you agree that your employability is more important than your visible tattoos or the other was around? Please give reasons for your answer.

7. Are there differences in the balance of visible tattoos & employability in relation to gender, age, extent of visibility or professional role?

Appendix 3. Interview script in German

General questions:

- Kannst du mir kurz sagen wo du sichtbare Tattoos hast und beschreiben was du dort tätowiert hast? (Hals, Hand, Gesicht)
- Wenn du zurzeit eine feste Arbeitsstelle hast, kannst du kurz erzählen was du machst?
 - Hast du Kundenkontakt auf deiner Arbeit?
 - Sieht man deine Tattoos oder trägst du Kleidung, die diese versteckt?
 - Gibt es einen Dress-Code?
- Falls du zurzeit nicht angestellt bist, für welches Berufsfeld bewirbst du dich bewirbst, oder dich beworben hast?
- Bist du mit deinen sichtbaren Tattoos in das Berufsleben eingestiegen, oder hast du diese erst später stechen lassen?

1. How do visibly tattooed individuals value the link between tattoos and identity expression? / 2. Do visible tattoos have an influence on the identity expression of tattooed persons?

- Was drücken deine Tattoos für dich aus, welche Bedeutung haben die für dich?
- Wieswegen hast du dir diese stechen lassen?
- Haben deine sichtbaren Tattoos eine andere Bedeutung für dich als die nicht direkt sichtbaren?
- Würdest du zustimmen, dass deine (sichtbaren) Tattoos deine Identität ausdrücken? Bitte erkläre deine Antwort.
- Falls ja: Warum hast du Tattoos gewählt, um deine Identität auszudrücken?
- Kannst du dir vorstellen noch weitere sichtbare Tattoos dir stechen zu lassen?
- Falls ja: Könntest du beschreiben was du bei dieser Entscheidung beachten würdest? (Würde deine Entscheidung davon abhängig sein, ob die zukünftigen Tattoos zu deiner Stelle passen bzw. zu zukünftigen Jobs?)
- Falls nein: Warum nicht?

3. How do visibly tattooed individuals value employability?

- Was bedeutet es für dich im Berufsleben Fuß zu fassen?
- Wie wichtig ist es für dich auf dem Arbeitsmarkt wertgeschätzt zu werden?

- Würdest du damit übereinstimmen, dass einen Job zu bekommen/ in einem Job weiter aufzusteigen/ einen Job zu behalten wichtig im Leben ist?

- Weswegen sind dir diese Punkte persönlich wichtig?

- Würdest du, um diese Punkte zu erreichen andere Punkte in deinem Leben aufgeben?

4. Do visible tattoos have an impact on employment opportunities of tattooed individuals?

- Erinnerst du dich an einen Vorfall, bei dem du dich aufgrund deiner sichtbaren Tattoos in deinen Einstellungsmöglichkeiten gehindert gefühlt hast oder sogar aufgrund dessen abgelehnt wurdest?

- Was ist passiert?

- Kannst du genauer erklären wie du dich gehindert gefühlt hast?

- Wie wurden die Probleme von den Personen begründet?

- Wie ist es dir aufgefallen, dass das Problem an deinen sichtbaren Tattoos lag und nicht in deinen Arbeitsqualifikationen?

- Waren die Probleme eher auf externe Faktoren bezogen oder intern, oder waren andere Faktoren involviert?

- Wie haben sich die Auswirkungen auf deine Einstellungsmöglichkeiten bemerkbar gemacht?

- Kam das nur einmal vor, oder gab es mehrere solcher Situationen?

- Hast du dich jemals von einem Dresscode einer Organisation/ Firma abschrecken lassen, dich dort zu bewerben?

- Falls zutreffend, könntest du beschreiben wie deine Einstellungschancen sich geändert haben nachdem du dir sichtbare Tattoos stechen lassen hast?

- Wenn du zurück denkst an deine Arbeitskarriere, wurdest du jemals gefeuert oder in deiner Position degradiert?

- Was ist passiert?

- Hat das mit deinen sichtbaren Tattoos zu tun gehabt?

- Woher weißt du, dass das mit deinen Tattoos zu tun gehabt hat?

5. Do visible tattoos have an impact on development opportunities in employment of tattooed individuals?

- Erinnerst du dich an einen Vorfall bei dem du dich aufgrund deiner sichtbaren Tattoos, gehindert gefühlt hast in deinen Aufstiegsmöglichkeiten?

- Was ist passiert?
- Kannst du genauer erklären wie du dich gehindert gefühlt hast?
- Wie wurden die Probleme von den Personen begründet?
- Wie ist es dir aufgefallen, dass das Problem in deinen sichtbaren Tattoos lag und nicht in deinen Arbeitsqualifikationen?
- Waren die Probleme eher auf externe Faktoren bezogen oder intern?
- Wie haben sich die Auswirkungen auf deine Aufstiegsmöglichkeiten bemerkbar gemacht?
- Kam das nur einmal vor, oder gab es mehrere solcher Situationen?
- Falls zutreffend, könntest du beschreiben wie deine beruflichen Aufstiegsmöglichkeiten sich geändert haben nachdem du dir sichtbare Tattoos stechen lassen hast?

6. How do visibly tattooed individuals balance the expression of identity on the one hand, and employability on the other (and possible other sacred values)?

- Hast du in Hinsicht auf die Berufsgruppe, die du angestrebt hast, damals schon abgewägt, ob sichtbare Tattoos für dich in Frage kommen? Bitte erkläre deine Antwort.
- Würdest du in Betracht ziehen deine Tattoos zu verstecken und sogar wegmachen zu lassen für einen Job? Bitte erkläre deine Antwort.
- In Hinblick auf dein Arbeitsleben und Karriere, warst du mal in einer Situation, in der du es bereut hast, sichtbare Tattoos zu haben? Kannst du erklären, warum, ja oder nein?
- Kannst du erklären, wie du deine sichtbaren Tattoos und in dein Berufsleben integrierst? Verfolgst du eine bestimmte Strategie (Kommunikation etc.)?
- Hast du dich jemals gedrängt gefühlt dich zu entscheiden ob du deine jetzigen sichtbaren Tattoos versteckst, weitere sichtbare Tattoos dir stechen lässt oder in deinem Arbeitsleben erfolgreich bist?
 - Falls ja, kannst du diese Situation ausführen?
 - Wie kam es dazu, dass du dich gedrängt gefühlt hast?
 - Wie ist die Situation ausgegangen?
- Stell dir vor, du lässt dir ein neues sichtbare Tattoo stechen und dein Chef beschwert sich darüber: Wie würdest du argumentieren, dass deine sichtbaren Tattoos mit deinem Job kompatibel sind?
- Was würdest du einem Kollegen/ einer Kollegin bzw. Kunden/Gästen/ Patienten sagen, die behauptet, dass deine sichtbaren Tattoos in deinem Beruf nichts zu suchen haben?

- Welchen Ratschlag würdest du jemanden geben der sichtbar tätowiert ist und neue auf dem Arbeitsmarkt ist, um Arbeit und Tattoos unter einem Hut zu bekommen?
- Würdest du sagen, dass dir Beschäftigungsfähigkeit wichtiger ist als sichtbare Tattoos, oder andersherum? Bitte erkläre deine Antwort.

7. Are there differences in the balance of visible tattoos & employability in relation to gender, age, extent of visibility or professional role?

Appendix 4. Informed consent form

Einverständniserklärung

Forschungstitel: A socio-cultural approach: Visible tattoos and the employability of individuals; Masterarbeit für den Masterstudiengang 'Management of Cultural Diversity' (Tilburg University)

Forschende Studentin: Eileen Vanessa Eisenhut

Zu unterschreiben von dem Teilnehmer/ der Teilnehmerin:

Hiermit erkläre ich, dass ich über den Zweck, die Methode, das Ziel und (falls zutreffend) den Risiken der Forschung aufgeklärt wurde. Weiter bin ich mir bewusst, dass das Interview auditiv aufgenommen wird. Ich weiß, dass die erhobenen Daten anonymisiert und vertraulich behandelt werden, sowie nur innerhalb der Masterarbeit zum Masterstudiengang 'Management of Cultural Diversity', welchen die forschende Studentin besucht, genutzt werden. Weitere Fragen wurden mir zufriedenstellend beantwortet (falls zutreffend).

Ich nehme freiwillig an der Forschung teil. Ich habe das Recht die Teilnahme an der Forschung zu jedem Zeitpunkt zu beenden, ohne die Angabe eines Grundes.

Name des Teilnehmenden:

Datum:

Unterschrift des Teilnehmenden:

Zu unterschreiben von der forschenden Studentin:

Ich habe eine mündliche oder schriftliche Erklärung zu der Forschung abgegeben. Ich habe alle noch offenen Fragen bestmöglich beantworten. Der/die Teilnehmende wird keine Benachteiligung, bei einer vorzeitigen Beendigung der Teilnahme, tragen.

Name der forschenden Studentin:

Datum:

Unterschrift der forschenden Studentin: