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Millennial Retail Employees Experiences and Perceptions of Leaders with Body Image Modifications

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Walden University
2019

Abstract

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Modifications

by

Jennifer McClure

MS, Walden University, 2012

BS, University of Phoenix, 2010

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Organizational Psychology

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Abstract

Millennials in retail account for a large portion of the U.S. workforce and have the highest

number of body image modifications from tattoos, piercings, and/or gauges. Following

Moustakas concept of perception, the purpose of this transcendental phenomenology study was

to explore how Millennial-aged retail employees describe and experience leaders with body

image modifications from tattoos, piercings, and/or gauges. Participants were sought from

various retail locations and were required to be born between 1981 and 1996. Data were

collected through interviews with 6 participants and the data were analyzed using Moustakas

modification of the Van Kamm Method. The results showed that employees typically felt good

about their experiences with their leaders, yet varied on how effective and personable their

leaders were; however, employees did not ascribe any impact on leadership effectiveness to the

body image modifications of their leaders. Implications of this result extends to an increased

openness towards traits that make others different, theoretical changes that note visual cues are

important for ideal leader categorization, and increased understanding of follower views in

relation to leader-follower relationship development.

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Dedication

       To my husband for his unending love, encouragement, and belief in me. To my daughter, may you be inspired to follow your dreams. To my parents for their continual love and support. I love each of you more than I can say.

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Thank you to the many instructors that participated in my education, but especially Dr. Thompson and Dr. Lyons. I appreciate all the encouragement and guidance you provided to push me through each win and challenge of this journey.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

As Millennial-aged individuals, born between 1981 and 1996 (Dimock, 2018), continue to enter the workforce, an increase of employees with body image modifications is likely to occur, given that 47% of Millennials have at least one tattoo (Gardyn & Whelan, 2001; McKee, 2015; Shannon-Missal, 2016). Many of these individuals are also likely to become leaders, but their body image modifications could impact how they are viewed by followers. Body image modifications, specifically tattoos, piercings, and gauges, have been and continue to be stigmatized (Tabbassum, Korcuska, & McCullagh, 2014). As followers are driven by visual images of their ideal leaders, they will attribute certain traits to leaders, but stigmas and other negative perceptions surrounding body image modifications may affect followers' views (van Quaquebeke & van Knippenberg, 2012). If individuals with body image modifications do not meet follower ideals, they may struggle with being effective leaders and maintaining their leadership positions.

The stigma surrounding people with tattoos, piercings, and gauges has been around for many years (Tabbassum et al., 2014). In the history of body image modifications, people have revealed the negative connotations they hold, as individuals with body image modifications have been labeled as rebellious, tough, irresponsible, unprofessional, and criminal (DiPopolo, 2010; Ellis, 2014; Elzweig & Peeples, 2011; Hill, Ogletree, & McCrary, 2016; Struppy, Armstrong, & Casals-Ariet, 1998). Some believe the views surrounding these body image modifications are changing as scholars

show that negative views still exist and continue to have a negative impact on the lives of those with the body image modifications, especially in regard to employability and leadership attainment (Avilla, 2014; Dean, 2010; Dipopolo, 2010; Ellis, 2014; Melcon, 2014; Swanger, 2006).

Employability becomes an issue as the stigma surrounding body image modifications is prevalent in most workplaces and may affect the views of followers towards their leaders (McLeod, 2014). Companies support stigmas surrounding body image modifications by placing restrictions on individuals with body image modifications, either denying them employment or requiring employees to cover up their body image modifications (Ellis, 2014; McKee, 2015). The Pew Research (2010) found that 70% of Millennials made sure to get tattoos that are not visible. Companies state various concerns about body image modifications in the workplace, such as how the body image modifications may offend customers, may distract coworkers, and display an unprofessional presence, which supports the negative connotations attached to body image modifications (Acor, 2001; Behrens, 2009; Ellis, 2014; Friesen, 2013; Struppy et al., 1998; Swanger, 2006). Societal views further support these reasons, lending more support to the negative connotations (DiPopolo, 2010; Elzweig & Peeples, 2011; Hill et al., 2016; Struppy et al., 1998). In some cases, the person may be forced to cover his or her body image modifications to conform to the views of others (Ellis, 2014). The person may also have to seek out alternate leadership opportunities with others who have similar views and give up on the opportunities he or she desires.

The pursuit of leadership opportunities becomes a challenge as a person who seeks to lead others must, by the nature of leading, have followers or people who will support and work towards a common goal with the leader. If the body image modifications a person has will affect the willingness of others to follow that person, those with body image modifications may not pursue or be considered for leadership opportunities. This could be a problem if an increase in body image modifications among working-aged individuals, especially Millennials, continues to rise and a company's only choice for a leadership position is someone with a body image modification (Gardyn & Whelan, 2001; McKee, 2015; Shannon-Missal, 2016). The increase in individuals with body image modifications may provide an increase in followers who support body image modifications; however, the assumption that those followers approve of leaders having body image modifications has not been studied.

The leader-follower relationship impacts an organization in a variety of ways, such as coworker relationships, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, so companies need to pay attention to leader-follower dynamics (Mayer, Keller, Leslie, & Hanges, 2008). Understanding how leaders with body image modifications may impact followers becomes important to ensuring leader-follower relationships remain strong and have a positive impact on those involved as well as the organization (Ellis, 2014; van Quaquebeke & van Knippenberg, 2012).

In this chapter, I explore why the leader-follower relationship needs further investigation as it relates to body image modifications. Moustakas's concept of

perception is used to understand the leader-follower dynamic, terms are defined to ensure consistent understanding of the relevant topics, the research problem is defined with a focus on need and purpose for the study, the methodology for the study is explained, and the chapter concludes with assumptions and limitations for the study as well as contributions the study can make.

Background of the Problem

Kulkarni and Ramamoorthy (2011) discussed the importance of the leader-follower relationship in an effective workplace as followers will either support or ignore the vision of their leaders. Attention should be placed on ensuring a positive leader-follower relationship develops; however, adding the element of a leader with body image modifications to the relationship may affect a follower's view. Followers use their observations and interactions with the various leaders they encounter to build visual prototypes of their ideal leaders or those they are willing to follow (Carton & Rosette, 2011; van Quaquebeke & van Knippenberg, 2012). The visual cue of body image modifications should be accounted for in understanding the leader-follower relationship.

Although research exists on the topic of body image modifications and the workplace, it is mostly focused on perceptions of the employer, perceptions of customers, and perceptions of society in general. Employer perceptions remain focused on how business will be affected and how customers will perceive employees or the business in general (Allan, 2016; Dorwart, Kuntz, & Armstrong, 2010; Melcon, 2014; McGregor, 2015; Schouten, 2016). Employers have concerns of offending customers and negatively

impacting operations (McKee, 2015). The issue is often addressed by asking employees to cover their body image modifications (Ellis, 2014).

In the Harris Poll of 2015, research was conducted to discern the professions that people would not mind a tattooed person working in, such as police officers and doctors, and the results were favorable, but the concept of leadership was not addressed (Shannon-Missal, 2016). Society also still holds mainly negative views of body image modifications in general, as people with body image modifications are still stereotyped and stigmatized (DiPopolo, 2010; Elzweig & Peeples, 2011; Hill et al., 2016; Struppy et al., 1998; Wohlrab, Fink, Kappeler, & Brewer, 2009).

There are many questions left unanswered in understanding how body image modifications play a role in the leader-follower relationship; however, knowing how important visual cues are to followers, knowing how leader-follower relationships can impact an organization, and understanding how negative perceptions surrounding body image modifications continue to impact individuals requires addressing at least one additional aspect to further the understanding of the leader-follower relationship and how it will be impacted.

Statement of Problem

Millennials with body image modifications are working or will be entering the workforce and many may have, or will eventually take, leadership positions. Dale, Bevill, Roach, Glasgow, and Bracy (2009) found that 81.92% of business people did not like visible tattoos in the workplace and would not hire individuals with tattoos. If

employees are not willing to accept other employees with body image modifications, the employees with body image modifications may not be accepted as leaders. This could limit the applicant pool for leadership positions, potentially causing implications for organizations. Organizations may also place limitations on advancement for employees when body image modifications are a consideration (Elzweig & Peeples, 2011), which could decrease the leadership opportunities for those employees with body image modifications.

Some research on body image modification and the workplace has been conducted, but only from the employer or organizational viewpoint. Scholars are not giving any consideration to the perceptions of followers or how followers perceive leaders with body image modifications. For example, Gardyn (2001) found that people in general see visible body modifications as a career obstacle; Dorwart et al. (2010) found that employment policies for nurses have negatively changed towards body modifications, but employers did not state a reason for the changes; and Behrens (2009) noted that workers coming from the Millennial generation will need to be told why tattoos are not appropriate for the workplace. Dale et al. (2009) found a dislike for tattoos in the workplace as well as how individuals would be inclined to cover their tattoos before an interview; however, scholars have not shown a link between any aspect of followership, leadership, and body image modifications. McKee (2015) examined the perceptions of trainees in regard to trainer trustworthiness when the trainer had a visible body modification, but the leadership attribute was still not included.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences and descriptions of retail employees' perceptions of the leadership exhibited by leaders with body image modifications by tattoos, piercings, and gauges. Millennials in retail positions make up the second largest portion of the current workforce (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017; Fry, 2015), so those who have interacted with a leader with body image modifications were asked to share their experiences with those leaders. They were also asked to provide their descriptions of the perceived effectiveness of those leaders. Common themes about leaders with body image modifications from the viewpoint of followers were then developed.

Research Question

Within the Millennial generation, what is the retail employee experience and description of the leadership exhibited by leaders with body image modification by tattoos, piercings, and/or gauges?

Conceptual Framework

Discerning follower perceptions in regard to leaders with body image modifications requires an understanding of perceptions. This study was guided by the concept of perceptions developed by Moustakas. Moustakas (1994) described perceptions as a starting point for knowledge, a foundation upon which people develop judgements about the world and others around them. Moustakas also noted the importance of each perception as a person will use each perception he or she holds to

understand an experience. Accuracy in perceptions varies, but the need for perceptions is required for the formation of judgment and an individual's ability to develop or enhance experiences from interactions with others and the world.

The connection between perceptions and experiences is further influenced by generational viewpoints. Within the Millennial generation, body image modifications are accepted as common (Manuel & Sheehan, 2007). Their experiences with body image modifications, seeing an increase of people with body image modifications in a variety of situations, has created a perception of acceptance; however, who this acceptance extends to is not defined. Foltz (2014) found that Millennial-aged students were noted as understanding the negative impact body image modifications could have on their employability; yet, they still wanted to pursue body image modifications. This implies a perception of acceptance towards themselves having body image modifications.

Compared to the Millennial generation, older generations do not have the same perception of acceptance, or at least not the same level of acceptance. Dean (2010) found that older people held negative perceptions towards people with tattoos. This extends to older workers who also hold negative viewpoints towards people with body image modifications (Dale et al., 2009). Older generations had different experiences with body image modifications, so a difference in their perceptions of body image modifications is not surprising; however, they have established many views and policies towards body image modifications in the working world that Millennials may be forced to experience.

Additional workplace experiences will continue to impact Millennial perceptions, especially when those experiences involve a leader that has body image modifications. Followers use the perceptions they have already built about leaders and body image modifications to expand their perceptions when they encounter leaders with body image modifications. Their perceptions become a guiding point to further judgement and discovery as followers decide if the connection between leaders and body image modifications is important enough to change their perceptions.

With a focus on understanding how Millennial-aged followers experience and describe leaders with body image modifications, Moustakas's (1994) concept of perceptions also lends to guiding the research process of this study. Questioning people about their experiences provides insight into their perceptions of a topic. I used interviews, asking people to share their experiences regarding leaders with body image modifications, specifically leaders to whom they have reported. The concept is further explored in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

Because I sought to understand perceptions of a particular group, I used a phenomenological approach, specifically transcendental, based on Moustaka's (1994) concept of perceptions. Moustaka's transcendental phenomenological research process was used to discover what employee perceptions exist about leaders with body image modifications based on the experiences retail employees have had with leaders with body image modifications. During the interview phase of this process, meaningful descriptions

were obtained that allowed for further interpretations about the follower-leader relationship.

The purpose of a qualitative phenomenological research study is to analyze and describe a phenomenon based on an individual's experience(s). In this study, the phenomenon was follower perspectives related to leaders with body image modifications. As each individual's experience is likely to be different, descriptions of the phenomenon may vary as well. Moustakas (1994) noted the challenge to analyzing the phenomenon is "discerning the features of consciousness and arriving at an understanding of the essences of the experience" (p. 49).

To facilitate the data analysis process and ensure my biases do not affect the interpretation of information shared by participants, the Epoche process was used throughout the study. The Epoche process allows me to set aside prejudgments, so bias was kept out of the interview process. I implemented the Epoche process by using a journal to write out any preconceived ideas and bias I may have had regarding each topic of my study. Completing this process before interviews, before data analysis, and before writing the results of the study, allowed for a focused and fresh view of the experiences shared by participants.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews of six individuals. Interview data were then reviewed so a listing of significant statements could be developed that identify the essence of the phenomenon. A final report, composite description, provides rich description of the common essence of the shared phenomenological experiences.

Operational Definitions

This section provides definitions of the main terms used throughout this study to ensure a consistent understanding of the terms.

Body image modifications: Making both a physical and permanent change to a person's appearance (DiPopolo, 2010; Ellis, 2014; Elzweig & Peeples, 2011).

Leader: A person who has commanding authority or influence (Merriam-Webster, 2017).

Leader-follower relationship: An interpersonal devotee relationship between two agents (Ruiz, Ruiz, & Martinez, 2011).

Leader prototypicality: "Mental representations of attributes that people implicitly think characterize leaders" (van Quaquebeke & van Knippenberg, 2012, p. #).

Millennial generation: Individuals born between 1981 and 1996, providing an age range of 22-years-old to 37-years-old (Dimock, 2018).

Retail: To sell in small quantities directly to the ultimate consumer (Merriam-Webster, 2017).

Assumptions

For this study, I assumed that those chosen to participate were sharing true experiences and honest descriptions. As the interviewer, I also anticipated noting participant comments with accuracy and without personal bias as well as questioning participants without implying any bias. Additionally, I assumed that I would conduct the

interviews appropriately, especially in regard to asking study questions and prompt questions.

Scope and Delimitations

The leader-follower relationship exists in every type of work industry; however, for this study, I focused on one work industry, retail. This limited the types of leader-follower relationships that were explored, as well as the types of experiences and perceptions followers may have had about leaders with body image modifications. The types of body image modifications leaders may possess was also delimited because I only focused on certain main stream body image modifications. These delimitations were important to note because other work industries and other types of body image modifications may lead to different results. For instance, the tattoo industry would be expected to be supportive of those with body image modifications and a person with health-related breast implants would not anticipate concern in finding or maintaining a job.

Participant demographics were another delimitation of this study. The Millennial generation was the only age group given attention in this study. The experiences and perceptions shared by followers was limited as other generations likely hold and develop different perceptions about leadership and body image modifications.

Choosing one age group and one job industry was important to defining the largest working population that is likely to gain the most from further understanding of a connection, or lack of, between body image modifications and the leader-follower

relationship. Millennials in the retail industry make up the second largest portion of the U.S. workforce, and Millennials fall into the highest tattooed age group; thus, they were the logical choice (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017; Shannon-Missal, 2016).

Limitations

The design of qualitative research brings limitations to the study. One was leaving personal bias out of the process, which can be a challenge. As the interviewer, I had to ask questions without leading the participant or reacting to a participant's answers. Interview transcripts must also be coded without bias. I used the Epoche process to address this challenge and my process is further outlined in Chapter 3.

This study was also limited by my ability to adequately interpret the data I obtained from participant interviews. I read and coded participant responses, but data that were important to the purpose of the study could have been overlooked or misinterpreted as unimportant. I had to read and review interview transcripts multiple times to ensure I had captured all relevant data.

Another limitation involved transferability. Seeking participants from various retail types and locations was important to the transferability of this study, but was not necessarily controllable as those who responded and met participant criteria may or may not have varied by retail type. Thus, seeking participants from a variety of retail sources was important.

Participants may have also limited the study by failing to fully answer research questions, failing to meet the participant criteria, and leaving the interview before

answering all questions. Participants were volunteering to participate in this study, had the right to share only what they were comfortable sharing, and had the right to leave at any time. They were also self-disclosing how they fit with the participant criteria for the study. Any dishonesty would create false data and leaving during an interview limits the data.

Significance of Study

With the Millennial generation holding a high percentage of current jobs and maintaining a presence in the workforce for many more years, this generation is important to extending the understanding of followers' perspectives related to leaders with body image modifications. The Millennial generation will also be establishing views for future generations. A study to help define those views as important and/or accurate is necessary for positively influencing future personal and societal perceptions.

When a relationship, or lack of, between leadership and body image modification is understood, the understanding of how followers perceive ideal leaders will also be advanced. Cultural traits, cognitive images of ideals leaders, and employee self-concepts have each been shown to play a role in how followers determine the attributes to assign to an ideal leader (Gardyn, 2001; van Quaquebeke & van Knippenberg, 2012). Followers generate an image of what their ideal leader should look like based on what they see from those they work with. On a general level, people have been found to assign different personality traits with individuals who have tattoos compared to those who do not (Wohlrab et al., 2009).

Organizations will also benefit from improved leader-follower relationships. Mayer et al. (2008) discussed how the leader-member exchange theory "is positively associated with such outcomes as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, competence perceptions, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), and task performance, and negatively associated related to deviant behavior" (p. 1). Improving leader-follower relationships will improve these organizational functions and is likely to lead to increased productivity and decreased costs for workplace disruptions.

Advancing the opportunities for individuals with body modifications could also result from this study. Individuals with body art may face less discrimination, be offered more job opportunities, and be perceived as having the same capabilities to be effective leaders. There are also additional types of body modifications that could be brought into mainstream if society becomes more accepting of body image modifications in general.

Summary

This chapter has given a broad overview of the importance of understanding a potential link between body image modifications and the leader-follower relationship. Based on Moustakas's concept of perception, how people use experience to develop perceptions and create an image of an ideal leader helps to explain how body image modifications can impact the leader-follower relationship. Body image modifications play a role through the visual aspect of perception building and ideal leader creation, becoming an element to understand in the leader-follower relationship. I further explained relevant topics and defined the research problem to ensure readers understand

the focus and purpose of the study. The use of a qualitative transcendental

phenomenological approach to the study was discussed as were assumptions and

limitations of the study.

Chapter 2 will provide a review of both the literature and conceptual framework

used in this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In this chapter, I expand upon the literature on how leaders with body image modifications are perceived. Major sections of this chapter include a review of the literature search strategy, the conceptual framework, and a review of the relevant literature. In the literature search strategy, I discuss how literature and information was obtained, including what resources and key words were used. In the conceptual framework, I explain Moustakas's concept of perceptions. A review of the relevant literature is then explored to gain an understanding of how key concepts in this study are linked from a world perspective to the leader-follower relationship.

Literature Search Strategy

To identify literature and other documents that would support the focus and need of this study, several information sources were used. Library databases made up the largest portion of sources and began with the Walden University Discovery Service called Thoreau. Thoreau allowed for searches in multiple databases, such as Academic Search Complete, EBSCO ebooks, and ProQuest, simultaneously. The Walden University and University of Phoenix online libraries were also used to access databases directly. Databases accessed from these libraries included Ebsco Host, Sage Premier, Sage Stats, Business Source Complete, Academic Source complete, Emerald Management, ProQuest Central, and Psycarticles. A variety of dissertations were also accessed through the libraries and reviewed for relevant information. In addition to

online library resources, the search engine Google Chrome was used to locate relevant material, such as websites, social media forums, and blogs.

To identify germane scholarship from the above literature sources, key search terms and combinations of search terms were used. Key search terms and combined search terms were used in each accessed source to ensure all relevant literature was obtained. This was necessary for addressing the limited literature available for this topic. The key search terms, used alone and in various combinations, are as follows: *body adornment, body art, body image, body image modification(s), body image perspective, body modification(s), body ornamentation, employee perception, employer perception, follower-centric perspective, follower perception, followers, followership, gauges, image, leader, leader follower, leadership, leadership body image, leadership body modification, leaders followers, leadership perspective, modifications, piercings, professional image, tattoos, and workplace.*

Conceptual Framework

Moustakas (1994) built the concept of perception through an individual's use of intention and intuition, both being a conscious process. Through intention, an individual sees an object for what it is, but also stores a mental meaning and image of the object. Through intuition, an individual may reflect on what he or she knows and not be swayed to think differently based on new information.

Meaning is also an element of perception. People will draw and relate meaning to what they see and experience. Moustakas (1994) noted that the connection between

consciousness and a phenomenon leads to the development of at least one level of meaning. Further meaning can be derived as an individual perceives additional information from the experience and is able to make additional judgements about the information.

For this study, the use of intention is seen as people develop their initial perceptions of things and then expand on them in a social context. Followers see leaders and build perceptions of how their ideal leader should or should not look. Intuition comes into play when followers begin to encounter leaders and discern the features of ideal leaders that they are willing to accept. If their ideal leader is not someone with body image modifications, their intuition may then lead them to deny those they encounter with body image modifications as ideal or even potential leaders. They have developed meaning in regard to leaders with body image modifications and continue to develop additional meaning as they encounter the same as well as different leaders, either with or without body image modifications.

Literature Review

In this section, I focus on understanding the key concepts of this study and explore the literature linked to the key concepts, which are body image modifications, perceptions, and the leader-follower relationship. Focus is given to how body image modifications fit into perceptions, especially regarding the leader-follower relationship.

Body Image Modifications

Carmen, Guitar, and Dillon (2012) discussed body image modifications as a variety of permanent changes a person can make to his or her physical appearance. This definition encompasses changes such as tattoos, piercings, gauges, subdermal implants, scarification, binding, and branding (Foster & Hummel, 2000). Typically done by choice, body image modifications are often directed by a purpose, such as to remember a loved one or commemorate an experience (Carman et al., 2012). Other terms may also be used when referring to body image modifications, including body art, body adornment, and body ornamentation; however, body image modification provides for a more distinct definition of making both a physical and permanent change to a person's appearance (DiPopolo, 2010; Ellis, 2014; Elzweig & Peeples, 2011).

Scholars who have studied body image modifications tended to focus on one or two types of modifications, specifically tattoos and piercings (Carmen et al., 2012; DiPopolo, 2010; Elzweig & Peeples, 2011; Foster & Hummel, 2000). Body image modifications are often separated into two categories: mainstream and nonmainstream. Nonmainstream body image modifications are not commonly seen and tend to be more extreme, like scarification, branding, subdermal implants, and binding (Kosut, 2006). Mainstream body image modifications, which include tattoos, piercings, and gauges, are more prevalent and are commonly seen in everyday situations (Elzweig & Peeples, 2011; Hill et al., 2016).

A number of topics related to body image modifications was focused on by researchers, including why people obtain body image modifications, the stigma related to body image modifications, and workplace reactions to body image modifications (Carmen et al., 2012; Elzweig & Peeples, 2011; Struppy et al., 1998; Swanger, 2006). The concepts of stigma and workplace reactions to body image modifications are most relevant to the purpose of this study, so they will be explored in more detail in later sections.

Societal Perceptions

Researchers have investigated a variety of different factors related to the perceptions people develop towards individuals with body image modifications. Factors that were found to affect the perception building process of the observer include age, gender, religion, stereotypes, culture, and visibility of an individual's body image modification(s) (DiPopolo, 2010; Foltz, 2014; Lim, Ting, Leo, & Jayanthy, 2013; Wohlrab et al., 2009). No one factor tends to stand out as perception building is a natural process people use to assess their environment. Almost any factor could be relevant; however, time, in a historical sense, impacts the type of perceptions people hold. For instance, researchers found that younger generations have a more accepting perception of people with body image modification, while the older generation is less accepting (DiPopolo, 2010; Resenhoeft, Villa, & Wiseman, 2008).

Stereotypes, stigmas, and discrimination. Social categorization stems from the differences people perceive in others. Alves, Koch, and Unkelbach (2016) noted that the

evaluation and differentiation process is essential to how people integrate themselves into society. Differences that are disliked result in a negative perception of others and thus the creation of stereotypes, stigmas, and discrimination.

In relation to body image modification, individuals with body image modifications have been stereotyped into groups, such as delinquents, pariahs, bikers, deviants, sailors, and criminals (DiPopolo, 2010; Elzweig & Peeples, 2011; Hill et al., 2016; Struppy et al., 1998). Stigmas related to these individuals are also regularly discussed in the literature and typically describe individuals with body image modifications as more rebellious, likely to be more deviant, thrill seekers, and more promiscuous (Elzweig & Peeples, 2011; Wohlrab et al., 2009). The Harris Polls of 2003, 2008, and 2012 showed this trend is unchanged, finding consistent views about people with tattoos being more rebellious, less intelligent, less healthy, less strong, less sexy, less spiritual, and less attractive (Braverman, 2012).

Researchers have begun to examine discrimination against those with body image modifications, comparing body image discrimination to other forms of discrimination, such as that based on gender, race, and religion. Melcon (2014) claimed that this type of discrimination is outdated because of an increase in approval towards body image modifications. However, many researchers still find a disapproval of body image modifications to be prevalent and causing a discriminatory view, especially in the workplace (Avilla, 2014; Dean, 2010; DiPopolo, 2010; Ellis, 2014; Swanger, 2006).

Ellis (2014) discussed how discrimination becomes more apparent when potential employees with body image modifications are compared to their peers with no body image modifications and are passed up for job opportunities because of the modifications. Those with body image modifications must then cover their tattoos or remove piercings/gauges to seem normal and fit in (Ellis, 2014). Hiding body image modifications may also be a requirement for accepting a job offer and maintaining a job (Elzweig & Peeples, 2011). DiPopolo (2010) discussed how hiding a stigma, like a body image modification, can decrease the discrimination a person experiences because the modification may go completely unnoticed. DiPopolo noted that the threat people assign to a stigma will affect the response people have towards the stigma. In the workplace, this could result in a negative or neutral response, depending on how a follower perceives a leader's body image modification.

Workplace Perceptions

The majority of body image modification literature is focused on workplace perceptions of how employers react to body image modifications. In this domain, employers question if body image modifications fit within the guidelines of appropriate appearance in the workplace (Acor, 2001; Behrens, 2009; Friesen, 2013; Swanger, 2006), if they will be accepted by customers (Ellis, 2014; Struppy et al., 1998), if body image modifications will be an obstacle to obtaining employment (Gardyn, 2001), and what employers think of body image modifications (Acor, 2001).

Employer perceptions. Although some employers, like, Best Buy, Barnes and Noble, Lush, Lowes, Starbucks, Whole Foods, Petco, and Petsmart, are not opposed to employing individuals with body image modifications, many employers still perceive body image modifications negatively (Allan, 2016; McGregor, 2015; Schouten, 2016). The stigmas linked to body image modifications and the desire to host a professional work environment have led to the creation of many workplace policies that do not allow for body image modifications, especially when they are visible and cannot be easily covered up (Dorwart et al., 2010; Melcon, 2014). Employers are also concerned with safety and sanitation issues related to body image modifications; employers create policies to address these issues (Swanger, 2006).

Employer perceptions extend to how employees with body image modifications may affect an organization's operations and impact customers (McKee, 2015). Ruggs (2013) noted that "an employee's physical appearance is often the first thing that customers see" and an employee with body image modifications gets noticed (p. 1). Customers stereotype an employee with body image modifications and base their perception of the organization on that employee (Ruggs, 2013). Most for-profit organizations need customers in order to thrive; any negative customer perceptions driven by an employee with body image modifications is not desired.

Hiring practices. Seventy-six percent of employees feel tattoos and piercings hurt job interview chances (Stapaw, 2016). This is only a 9% decrease from a 2007 survey by Vault.com in which 85% of individuals surveyed noted that tattoos and

piercings would affect their ability to obtain a job. Petrick (2016) interviewed a business school professor who noted they teach students to cover up and avoid body image modifications, especially during interviews as there is concern over what interviewers are paying attention to. Swanger (2006) surveyed recruiters and human resource managers in the hospitality industry and found that 86.67% of respondents saw tattoos and piercings as a negative during interviews. There is a negative perception towards body image modifications in the workplace (Bishoff, 2013; Dale et al., 2009; Petrick, 2016; Swanger, 2006). The law does not yet protect this potential form of discrimination either (Elzweig & Peeples, 2011; Swanger, 2006). Employers can address body image modifications in the way they see fit for their organizational needs, including developing policies for or against body image modifications.

Leader-Follower Relationship

Trust, follower engagement, and follower performance are commonly researched in leader and follower relationships (Breevaart, Bakekr, Demerouti, Sleebos, & Maduro, 2014; Buch, Thomspon, & Kuvass, 2016; Nienaber, Hofeditz, & Romeike, 2015; Ruiz, Ruiz, & Martinez, 2011). The aspect of strong versus week relationships also comes up in several studies (Hinojosa, Davis McCauley, Randolph-Seng, & Gardner, 2014; Steffens, Haslam, & Reicher, 2014). The traits of a strong or weak leader are focused on as well (Sosik, Chun, & Zhu, 2014). In spite of the leader-follower relationship being two-sided, Schindler (2012) and others have researched the traits of the follower (Chaleff, 2003; van Quaquebeke, van Knippenberg, & Eckloff, 2011; Wanless, 2011); however, if

the follower plays a key role in the leader-follower relationship, the follower's role must be understood.

Roles. Researchers have begun to address the follower's viewpoint and role in the leader-follower relationship (Bearden, 2008; Schlinder, 2012). The follower's viewpoint has been shown to affect the leader directly and the leader's role, making the follower's position in the leader-follower relationship important to understand. With theory supporting how followers view their ideal leaders from a visual standpoint, there is a need to understand how body image modifications play into the visual image and impact the leadership role (Ehrhart, 2012; Farr-Wharton, Brunetto, & Shacklock, 2011; van Quaquebeke & van Knippenberg, 2012), but scholars have not yet looked as this aspect.

Perceptions. Carton and Rosette (2011) discussed the concern regarding follower perceptions and the ability for stereotyping to affect the traits followers assign to their ideal leaders. When employees feel connected to their leaders, the link is typically due to a perspective connection (Schuh, Zhang, Egold, Graf, Pandey, & van Dick, 2012). A focus on employee perceptions related to body image modification is regularly lacking in the literature, even when theory points to the importance of visual cues in the leader defining process that followers use.

<center>Summary and Conclusions</center>

The perceptions surrounding body image modifications have been explored in relation to a variety of factors; yet, the link between follower perceptions of leaders with

body image modifications is lacking regarding how the visual aspect of body image modifications plays a role in the leader prototype building process. Scholars typically focus on how leaders view employees with body image modifications, as well as how customers perceive employees with body image modification. With the leader-follower relationship being two-sided, each side should be understood in order to effectively manage the relationship. The future of leaders will also rely on how they are perceived. Understanding another variable that followers view as important to what makes an ideal leader is essential. Followers place emphasis on what an ideal leader should look like based on physical traits (Gardyn, 2001; van Quaquebeke & van Knippenberg, 2012), but the literature does not tie this back to body image modifications.

    Chapter 3 will provide a review of the methodology used in this study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

Creswell (2009) noted that qualitative research allows for the discovery of "meaning individuals and groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 4). A transcendental phenomenological lens allows the experiences and descriptions to be shared in singularity and in synthesis to define the essence of the phenomenon being studied (Moustakas, 1994). Through a qualitative, transcendental, phenomenological research design, this study can enhance understanding of the phenomenon of follower perspectives related to leaders with body image modifications. In this chapter, I will explain this research design in more detail, including the role of the researcher, participant selection logic, instrumentation, how data were analyzed, the trustworthiness of the data, and ethical procedures of the study.

Research Design and Rationale

I sought to answer the question: Within the Millennial generation, what is the retail employee experience and description of the leadership exhibited by leaders with body image modifications by tattoos, piercings, and gauges? I sought to discover more about the phenomenon of follower perspectives related to leaders with body image modifications. Understanding how followers see leaders with body image modifications will expand on what is understood about follower attributions related to leaders with body image modifications. The research approach used to gain this understanding must

give attention to the individual perceptions and personal experiences of Millennial-aged retail employees who volunteer to participate in this study.

Research Tradition

To answer the research question of this study, a qualitative, transcendental, phenomenological approach was used. Qualitative research was appropriate because of its focus on finding meaning through words versus finding meaning through numbers (Creswell, 2009). Words also allowed for the experiences and descriptions of the study participants to be shared and understood in their voice. Qualitative researchers enhance the use of words and participant voices by using open-ended research questions, so participants can share their experiences in their own words versus being directed to answer the word-defined questions found in quantitative research. This process is important to finding the meaning an individual is ascribing to his or her experience, because his or her vocabulary may differ from that used in questions.

To give structure to qualitative research, a strategy of inquiry was used. For this study, the strategy of inquiry used was transcendental phenomenology. Phenomenology scholars focus on identifying "the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by participants" (Creswell, 2009, p. 13). This aligns with the study's focus on understanding participant experiences related to the phenomenon of follower perspectives related to leaders with body image modifications. Adding the element of transcendental to phenomenology allows for the description of participant experiences without interpretation (hermeneutical phenomenology; Creswell, 2009). To understand what

participants experienced, what they lived through, and to share their experiences in their words, their voice needs to be shared as is and not interpreted by the researcher. In the process of transcendental phenomenology, scholars encourage the voice of participants by removing the voice of the researcher. The researcher sets aside his/her bias using the Epoche process, so as not to instill any of him/her-self into the experiences shared by the participants. Use of the Epoche in this study is outlined in a later section.

The transcendental phenomenology process ends with an analysis of the information obtained from participants. Analysis includes what was experienced and how it was experienced, which Moustakas (1994) called the development of textural and structural descriptions. These descriptions allow for the development of themes that describe the experience with the phenomenon. The researcher looks for similar thoughts, significant statements, and/or ideas shared by all participants.

Role of Researcher

My Role

As the researcher, I interacted with participants to conduct interviews and gather information. I was involved in their experiences in any manner. I asked participants questions and noted their answers in their words.

Relationships

I did not have any personal or professional relationships with any participants. Although participants were selected at random, if someone I knew had applied to be part of my study, I was denied their participation.

Bias Management

Transcendental phenomenological researchers gather evidence through first-person reports of lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). These experiences need to be described as they are not interpreted to mean something else by the researcher, otherwise the transcendental process is lost. As the researcher, I had to consider how my own experiences, beliefs, values, preferences, and needs might have affected my transcription of the experiences my participants share.

Epoche. To ensure I set aside any prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas I might have had towards most every topic, not just the topics of my study, I used the Epoche process of phenomenology. Husserl (as cited in Moustakas, 1994) defined Epoche as a "freedom from suppositions" (p.85). Epoche allowed me to disconnect from what I was thinking and simply listen to what others had experienced and were describing. I had to be listening to my participants as if I was hearing about the context of their experience for the first time. Any imposition of myself in the process would affect the meaning I derived from what my participants shared. I had to "allow a phenomenon or experience to be just what is and come to know it as it presents itself" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 86).

Moustakas (1994) noted that the Epoche process is not simple, especially because I, the researcher, was present during the presentation of information from my participants. I had to be open to whatever I heard or experienced through my interactions with my participants, without allowing a trace of myself to affect the interaction.

Moustakas also noted that a person may not always be aware of every prejudgment and bias he/she has. Thus, every day knowledge must be set aside and the voices, both internal and external, that direct my thoughts and actions must be silenced.

To implement the Epoche process, I made a list of my prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas about the main topics of this study before interacting with any potential study participants and again before interviewing chosen participants. I also used a researcher journal to make note of anything that might have affected my Epoche process, such as things I saw, heard, and thought when interacting with potential/chosen participants, when approaching organizations and leaders to recruit participants, when conducting interviews, and when researching and analyzing information for my study.

Methodology

The qualitative, transcendental, phenomenological research approach provides direction for how to answer a question and establishes what should be included in order to properly capture information that will efficiently answer that question. In this section, I will lay out the procedures that align with this research approach.

Participant Selection Logic

I was interested in the experiences of individuals, specifically, retail employees from the Millennial generation. This population accounts for the largest portion of the U.S. workforce and would provide the best opportunity for locating participants to interview. Finding companies that employ individuals with body image modifications would be equally important as these companies act as a resource for participant

recruitment. Creswell (2013) called this purposeful sampling and noted that it is important that "all participants have experience of the phenomenon being studied" (p. 155). Maximum variation sampling was used as well, so participants were sought using social networking posts to extend the participant search to a wider local of people. Maximum variation sampling was important for increasing the types of participants I gathered perspectives from (different types of retail, positions within retail, various ages, different genders, and so on; Creswell, 2013). This would likely increase the variety of experiences with and insights into the phenomenon.

Criteria. Participants were required to meet the age criteria of the Millennial generation. According to Dimock (2018), the Millennial generation includes individuals born between 1981 and 1996, providing an age range of 22-years-old to 37-years-old. In addition to the age criteria, an individual who wanted to participate in the study had to be currently working in a retail environment or have worked in a retail environment within the past 6 months. The individual also had to be reporting (or have reported) during employment in retail to a leader with body images modifications, hidden or visible, comprised of tattoos, piercings, and/or gauges. These criteria were critical to the participants having an experience and perspective related to leaders with body image modifications, as well as having taken part in a leader-follower relationship. To ensure no conflict of interest with me, participants were asked if they had received support from my place of work. If they had, participants were excluded from participating in the study. Participant recruitment, included screening for these criteria, is outlined in a later section.

Sample size. Based on the saturation work of Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006), a sample size of at least six participants, with a cap at 12 participants, is recommended for phenomenological research. I sought out 15 participants who met the required participant criteria. A slightly larger sample size would leave room for natural attrition and help ensure the minimum participant size is achieved. If all 15 participants remained in the study, each would complete an interview and the data would be used for the study.

Instrumentation

In qualitative research, instrumentation may include the researcher, documentation, and audio/video files (Creswell, 2009). For this study, I was the main instrument, as I was interacting with participants as an interviewer. Before, during, and after interviews, I kept notes in a researcher journal. These notes included my thoughts, observations, Epoche-related concerns, and so on. My researcher journal is part of my study documentation.

While conducting interviews, I used an interview protocol form that I developed and have marked in Appendix A. Creswell (2009) noted that an interview protocol form should be used during qualitative interviews and should include the following:

- Heading
- Instructions for interviewer
- Main questions
- Probe questions
- Space for recording responses

- Thank you statement

The interview protocol form was the main documentation of my study. I recorded each interview as well, so I was able to review my hand-written notes and compare them against the recording. The recordings were also my audio files for this study.

Each participant was given an identification code for use in the audio file and for my use by when documenting the results of the study in case a participant comment needed to be quoted. This code was marked on the interview protocol form. An identification helps ensure participant confidentiality.

These types of instruments were appropriate for this study because I needed to capture the exact words shared by the participants. The interview protocol form allowed me to repeat an answer shared by a participant, so he/she could confirm I noted their words correctly. I also wanted to review audio files several times to ensure I had captured the exact words used by a participant. The audio files aided my review of the notes I took on the interview protocol form and provided another means of checking the information I obtained from a participant. The documentation gathered from my researcher journal helped me address Epoche concerns, which is important to ensuring the voice of the participant, and not my voice, was heard.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

To gather participants for this study, both purposeful and maximum variation sampling was used. Purposeful sampling focuses on finding individuals who have experienced the phenomenon being studied and thus help answer the research question

being asked (Creswell, 2009). Retail companies that allow employees to have tattoos, piercings, and/or gauges met the purposeful sample criteria of this study and were asked to post an invitation to participate flyer on their employee boards (see Appendix B). Businesses local to the interviewer were asked to post the flyers, as were businesses in other geographical locations. Businesses were asked to post on their websites and social media pages as well. As some organizations are highly web-based, like Amazon, additional social media options for posting the flyer were selected based on an organization's connection to the main topics of this study. Reaching a variety of business locations and types within the retail model helps meet the focus of maximum variation sampling, which seeks to include a diverse participant pool (Palinkas et al., 2015). Each business that agreed to post an invitation to participate flyer was offered a summary of my study and the results by e-mail.

The flyer stated the purpose of the study, the criteria for participation, what was expected of participants, how that confidentiality would be maintained, and ask interested participants to contact me directly. I offered my phone number and e-mail address as contact options. As potential participants contacted me, I conducted a screening interview by phone and used the Interview Prescreening Form (see Appendix C) to confirm eligibility. This form was also used to address consent competency, which helped ensure chosen participants understand the questions they were being asked and what they were consenting to do for the study. Eligible participants were scheduled for

an interview with me, either in person, by phone, or video chat. Once 15 participants were selected, the flyers (written or online) were removed.

A consent form to participate in the study was required of all participants. The consent form outlined the purpose of the study, what was expected of participants, the benefits and risks of participating in the study, and how interview data would be used. Participants were also made aware of the voluntary nature of participation and their ability to stop participating or refuse to answer any question at any time during the study. Participants I met in person were able to sign the consent form before the interview began. For interviews conducted by phone or video chat, I e-mailed the consent form in pdf format to obtain an electronic signature or mailed a hard copy of the form to the participant that he or she could mail it back. No participant was interviewed until the consent form was signed and in my file. Participants could also call or e-mail me with any questions regarding the consent form before or after signing.

Interviews were conducted by phone, video chat, or in person. I shared with each participant that I do not anticipate interviews taking longer than 1 hour. For in-person interviews, participants were asked to choose a place that was private and comfortable. For video and phone interviews, I ensured I was in a private setting and asked participants to be in a private and comfortable setting. Interviews began with a review of the informed consent form, approval to have the session audio-recorded, and a review of what to expect during the interview. I then began recording the session and asking interview questions, with probe questions used as needed. The two main interview

questions were "Describe your experience with a leader with body image modifications from tattoos, piercings, and/or gauges" and "Describe your perception of that leader's effectiveness." Probe questions included "Tell me more about that," "What was that like for you?" and "Can you give me an example?" At the end of each interview question, I confirmed my hand-written notes to ensure I had notated the information the participant shared accurately. I concluded by asking if the participant had any additional experiences to share and moved forward accordingly. Once an interview session was complete, I reviewed expectations for follow-up that I may need to do, should I have any additional questions. I also asked if the participant had any questions or concerns and addressed them appropriately. Each study participant was offered a copy of the study results summary, which were distributed by email.

Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis was based on Moustakas's (1994) modification of the Van Kaam method of analysis for phenomenological data. The following is an outline of each step that was completed for each interview:

1. I read the interview several times in its entirety, while notes were jotted down to begin identifying key words and ideas of interest, a process Moustakas (1994) referred to as horizontalization. Horizontalization requires the review of each statement a participant makes in response to a question, to discern descriptions of major experience elements of the research question. All statements must be viewed as equal to allow for the largest variety of

descriptions to be uncovered. This process produced a list of expressions relevant to the experience of interacting with a leader with body image modifications.

2. A reduction and elimination process occurred for each interview, so only those words and ideas of interest that can provide meaning to the study's purpose remained. This requires reviewing the list of expressions developed from horizontalization and eliminating words and ideas that overlap or repeat. Moustakas (1994) provided two questions to help in the reduction and elimination process. The following questions were asked about each expression:

a. Does it contain a moment of the experience that is a necessary and sufficient constituent for understanding it?

b. Is it possible to abstract and label it?

i. If yes, it is a horizon of the experience

ii. If no, it is eliminated

3. The remaining words and ideas are what Moustakas (1994) called the invariant constituents. The invariant constituents were clustered based on how they related to one another. Each cluster provides for a theme in the data and was labeled. The clusters and themes were then reviewed against the interview transcripts to confirm the clusters and themes related to the nature of

the experiences that participants shared. This was the final identification step of the analysis process.

4. To derive meaning from the themes, individual textural descriptions were created for each participant. A textural description provides a narrative explanation of a participant's experience and included examples of what was shared in the participants' exact terms (Moustakas, 1994). Textural descriptions should account for what an experience is and what may occur when the experience happens.

5. Based on the textural descriptions, structural descriptions were then created for each participant. Structural descriptions focus on how experiences occur and should include the use of imaginative variation (Moustakas, 1994). Imaginative variation involves looking at the meanings of experience from different angles and viewpoints to confirm all meanings in the data have been considered. Moustakas (1994) notes that the textural description of each participant should be "illuminated" by the structural description. The textural and structural descriptions for each participant can then be brought together to share the meanings and essences of what each participant experienced.

6. To gain an overall meaning of the experience, a Composite Description was developed from the Textural-Structural Descriptions of each participant. The composite description embodies the meaning the whole group of participants ascribes to the experience. This description should include both textural and

structural elements to ensure the full meaning and essence ascribed to the experience is captured.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Rudestam and Newton (2007) note that "the trustworthiness of a design becomes the standard on which it is likely to be judged" (p. 112). Since qualitative research does not employ some of the same objective procedures as quantitative research, there is a need to ensure the data obtained and the meaning discerned through this study are valid and reliable. The trustworthiness of the research design being used for this study was addressed by the evaluative criteria established by Lincoln and Guba (1985), which are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

Credibility relates to the truth of the findings and is typically established by "exploring the participant's experience in sufficient detail" (Rudestam and Newton, 2007, p.113). For this study, credibility strategies included saturation and member checks.

Saturation. Saturation is concerned with ensuring enough information was captured to develop an appropriate answer to a research question. This study based its saturation criteria on the work of Guest et al. (2006), who note that at least 6, but no more than 12 participants are needed to provide a theme(s) in the data and answer the research questions. For phenomenology, that data obtained from the 6-12 participants should provide rich and thick information that will allow for the study to be duplicated and offer no additional codes or themes (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Member Checks. Member checking is an appropriate means for validating and giving credibility to the information obtained in qualitative research as it ensures information was captured as the participant intended and in his/her own words (Creswell, 2009; Rudestam & Newton, 2007). This aligns with the focus of transcendental phenomenology in making sure the participants voice is heard. I completed member checking by meeting in person, by phone, or by video chat with participants and asking them to review a draft of my findings for accuracy as well as any information they felt was missing.

Transferability

Transferability involves showing how a study can be applied to other individuals and other settings (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Creswell (2009) notes that the rich and thick descriptions in qualitative research can provide another reader with enough information to apply the descriptions to other settings. This study sought to increase the information available for rich and thick descriptions through maximum variation sampling of participants. Variation in participant selection was addressed during participant recruitment. Finding participants from various retail locations and types – book retail versus grocery retail versus convenience retail, was one element of participant variation. Working in different retail environments and geographic locations changes a variety of factors an individual will account for in their perception of the phenomenon, such as leadership style, visual clues, emotional cues, environmental cues, and so on. Other variation elements included age and gender. Although the study focuses on Millennial

age individuals, those born closer to 1981 may have varying perspectives of the phenomenon compared to those born closer to 1996.   Men and women are also likely to have differing perspectives of the phenomenon.

Dependability

Dependability focuses on how clearly another person can repeat the study. This requires a thorough tracking of each step taken during the study to capture and analyze data. For this study, audit trails were used to address dependability. Rudestam and Newton (2007) note that audit trails provided a step-by-step process of a study, which other researchers can use to replicate the study. This was done by keeping an audit trail journal once recruitment of participants began

Confirmability

Confirmability focuses on how a study exemplifies the voice of the participants and does not include researcher bias. This is a major element of this study and was driven by the Epoche process of transcendental phenomenology, which was the main confirmability strategy for this study. Creswell (2013) notes the process of reflexivity as another strategy for confirmability and was also used in the form of the researcher journal, so any thoughts regarding the study could be noted for contemplation.

Ethical Procedures

To ensure the risk to any individual participating is minimized, if not completely removed, ethical concerns surrounding the procedures of this study had to be considered. Ethical concerns included how participants might respond during interviews, how data

was stored, how participants would be treated, and so on. This section reviews the steps I took to ensure ethical compliance was met for this study.

Participant Recruitment and Access

Participants were recruited through flyers placed in various retail locations and social media options. An agreement to post this flyer was signed by the location and myself, if I posted the flyer. Otherwise, the flyer was handed off to a representative of the organization, whose name was tracked, to be shared as appropriate. This was important to documenting that the location approved my access to its employees, understood my purpose for recruiting individuals, and confirmed employees were not required to participate. Individuals responding to the flyer thus did so out of free will and with no persuasion to participate. Participants were also asked to sign a consent form noting that they voluntarily choose to participate in the study. This recruitment process helped ensure that participants were not coerced into participating. I did not anticipate any other ethical concerns from this process.

Treatment of Participants

To ensure I understand how to properly treat and protect the participants in my study, I completed the Protecting Human Research Participants course offered by the National Institute of Health as required by the Institutional Review Board. Elements of this course were included in the consent form participants signed, so they understood my expectations for their inclusion and participation in the study.

Risk. The consent form participants signed included a section about the risks associated with being involved in the study.   For this study, psychological stress was the main risk if a participant experiences any discomfort from bringing up memories. This was addressed by ensuring participants that they have the right to stop the interview at any time for any reason. I was also set to ask a participant if he or she wished to continue the interview if he/she appeared distressed.

The disclosure of confidential or personal information was another risk. Before each interview a discussion commenced regarding the need to avoid using the leaders' names, company names, and personal information that was not relevant to the focus of the study. If this type of information was released during an interview, the information was set to be deleted from the audio recorder and the participant would be asked to restate what he or she said.

Disruption of an interview was a risk as well. Interviews conducted in-person would be held in a private setting and participants completing an interview by phone or video chat were reminded to choose a private setting. Should a disruption occur, the audio recorder was stopped until the disruption was over and the participant were asked if he or she would like to continue. The interview would either commence or be rescheduled.

Institutional Review Board

To commence with this study, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and approved my proposal. The IRB confirmed that my proposed study met the ethical

requirements of Walden University as well as U.S. federal requirements. Ensuring that the benefits of my study outweigh the risks of my study was addressed as well. To obtain approval, I submitted an application to the IRB, including a copy of my proposal and any other documents requested in the application.

Treatment and Storage of Data

Before, during, and after interviews the data collected, in both digital, audio, and written form, was protected through the use of a lockable, physical storage system as well as a password protected computer filing system. This included when the data was transferred from the interview site to the researcher's home. The management of these files was restricted to the researcher's control and a coding system was used to protect the personal information of participants. Data will be securely stored for 5 years after the completion of the study, then paper data will be shredded, audio data will be erased, and computer files will be deleted. Participants noted their understanding of how data would be used, who may access the data, and how it will be stored when they signed the consent form.

<div align="center">

Summary

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This study will use a qualitative transcendental phenomenological research approach to explore the experiences of retail employees in relation to leaders with body image modifications. An important element of this research approach is ensuring the voice of the participants are heard and that the meaning they ascribe to the phenomenon, follower perspectives related to leaders with body image modifications, is accurate. This

required that I use the Epoche process to set aside any thoughts I may have had about these topics and see participants' experiences in an un-clouded manner.

Following specific procedures to account for the trustworthiness of the data collected in this study was important as well. The way data is used and analyzed will affect the meaning ascribed to the experience focused on in this study. Moustakas (1994) modification of the Van Kaam method of analysis for phenomenological data gave this study procedural direction, while the evaluation criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability processes aided the trustworthiness of the data.

The protection of each participant in this study was of major importance. Ensuring an understanding of ethical concerns related to this study and relaying those concerns to participants was critical. Participants needed to understand their role in this study and be able to make an informed decision to participate. I as the researcher also had an obligation to support their safety and follow required ethical protocols.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences and descriptions of the leadership exhibited by leaders with body image modifications by tattoos, piercings, and gauges. Doing so allows for common themes to be developed about leaders with body image modifications from the viewpoint of followers. The research question answered was the following: Within the Millennial generation, what is the retail employee experience and description of the leadership exhibited by leaders with body image modification by tattoos, piercings, and/or gauges?

In this chapter, I will offer an answer to the research question and share the results of the study. To aid in a full understanding of the results, the chapter includes a review of the study setting, participant demographics, how data were collected and analyzed, and the trustworthiness of the data. The chapter will conclude with the results and a brief summary of the study.

Setting

Participants were recruited while in their workplaces, but interviewed when off of work and outside of their workplace. I recommended participants complete the interview from a private and comfortable place, and noted I would do so to ensure their confidentiality. None of the participants noted any conditions that may have influenced their descriptions or experiences, nor were any conditions observed during recruitment activities. I also avoided making any opinionated statements related to leaders, followers,

body image modifications, business operations, or other related terms that may have influenced participants. This step was observed as part of my Epoche process before, during, and after both recruitment and interviews.

Demographics

Age was the only required demographic for this study, though I did observe other demographic data. Per the eligibility criteria of the study, all participants were required to be born between 1981 and 1996. Participants who completed interviews were born in 1981(2), 1989, 1990, 1992, and 1996, providing for a variety of views across the age range. Demographic data observed by me include gender, ethnicity, and geographic location. The gender of participants was even at three men and three women. Ethnicity was varied and included European American, African American, Hispanic American, and Asian American. Geographic location was less varied with one participant located in Arizona and five participants located in Virginia.

Data Collection

This study was qualitative in nature and used interviews and a researcher journal. Interviews were conducted with six individuals, and each individual was interviewed one time. Interviews were conducted by phone, and I used my interview protocol form to ensure each individual was interviewed using the same process. Participants were asked two questions, and their answers were recorded by audio file. This ensured I could review participants answers to document the exact words participants used. Interviews lasted 10 to 15 minutes.

A researcher journal was used to complete my Epoche process and ensure I avoided bias before, during, and after recruitment and interviews. I mainly noted my personal opinions, thoughts, and observations in relation to my study topics, but also used the journal to note demographic and business descriptors I observed about participants. No variations from the data collection plan outlined in Chapter 3 and no unusual circumstances were experienced while collecting data.

Data Analysis

To gather meaning from the information shared by participants, what each participant stated had to be analyzed. In Chapter 3, I outlined that data analysis plan I followed for this study. This section provides a summarization of that analysis process, along with the themes that were uncovered during analysis.

Analysis Process

Data were analyzed using Moustakas's (1994) modification of the Van Kamm method of analysis for phenomenological data. Beginning with the process Moustakas (1994) called horizontalization, each interview transcript was read at least three to five times. Each time I read an interview transcript, I would highlight key words and ideas of interest. The list of key words and ideas was then reviewed against two questions. These questions focused on understanding the moment of the experience and ability to label the experience. Any words and ideas that did not hold up to the questions as well as those that overlapped or repeated could be eliminated. This process ensured I captured information that would provide meaning to my study's purpose.

The horizontalization and elimination processes left me with what Moustakas (1994) called invariant constituents. I used the invariant constituents from each interview to develop clusters. Each cluster contained invariant constituents that related to each other and created a theme. I reviewed each theme against the interview transcripts to ensure I captured the nature of the experiences that participants shared during interviews.

The development of themes is the final identification step of Moustakas's analysis process; however, themes only identify the common topics provided by participants. To derive meaning from the themes, both textural and structural descriptions were developed for each participant. Textural descriptions involved creating a narrative explanation of participants' experience in their exact terms and in relation to the theme. Structural descriptions stemmed from the textural descriptions and focused on how participant experiences occurred. I then combined the textural and structural descriptions from each participant to develop a composite description, which embodies the meaning the whole group ascribes to the experience.

Themes

Because participants were asked two questions during their interview, I compared participants answers for each question and the words I highlighted during the horizontalization process to develop my list of the invariant constituents. The six themes that emerged and the invariant constituents (exact words and terms used by participants) that were clustered to form each theme are outlined below:

- Description of experience with leader: Good, pretty great, more casual, comfortability, difficult, never had an issue

- Conversation style with leaders: Light hearted, we joke, discuss our personal views, we bonded

- Focus on body image modifications of leaders: not something I look for, didn't notice it, doesn't matter to me, asked him about it

- Personality of leaders with body image modifications: Can be too nice and very bull headed, not personable or approachable, very social, more relaxed and more approachable, easier to work with, really cared

- General effectiveness of leaders: not most effective, effectiveness is exponential, very effective

- Relation of body image modifications to effectiveness: nothing to do with their qualifications, does not seem to get in the way, don't think it affects him, wouldn't say if affects anything, just as effective, wouldn't see them as any less effective, no concerns, perform just as well

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Ensuring this study was conducted in a manner that provides for reliable information required using criteria for trustworthiness. In this section, I review the four criteria established by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as used to complete this study. These include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

Saturation and member checking were both used to ensure the credibility of this study. Saturation criteria was based on the work of Guest et al. (2006), requiring a minimum of six, but no more than 12 interviews, be completed. Because six participants were interviewed and clear themes were noted, saturation criteria were met.

Member checking was completed by e-mailing a draft summary of the data analysis to each participant. Participants were asked to review the findings and report back any discrepancies as well as offer any additional information they felt was missing. None of the participants replied.

Transferability

To aid in the transferability of this study, maximum variation sampling was focused on during participant recruitment, especially in regard to geographic location, retail type, age, and gender. This process was successful for retail type, age, and gender, but proved difficult for geographic location. Of the six participants, three were men and three were women. Their ages spanned the range of 22-35 years old, and each was from a different type of retail (jewelry, clothing, electronics, shoes, construction material, and paper products). Geographic location only consisted of one participant in Tucson, Arizona and the other five in Fairfax, Virginia.

Dependability

Allowing another researcher to dependably repeat this study involved the use of an audit trail journal. I noted my process for each step taken to recruit participants,

interview participants, and then analyze the interview data. This ensured I was taking the same steps each time and allowed me to create a solid outline of my process. The outline developed from my audit trail journal is provided in Appendix D.

Confirmability

Ensuring the themes and reported results of this study exemplify the voice of the participants was crucial to upholding the Epoche process of transcendental phenomenology. I used a researcher journal throughout the participant recruitment and interview process to write down any thoughts I had related to my topic. This was done both before, during, and after participant recruitment and the interview process to ensure I did not incorporate any bias into my interactions with participants.

Results

The results of this study were analyzed in relation to the main research question, Within the Millennial generation, what is the retail employee experience and description of the leadership exhibited by leaders with body image modification by tattoos, piercings, and/or gauges? Considering the themes that emerged during data analysis, participants generally noted having a positive experience with their leaders with body image modifications and did not feel that body image modifications had an impact on their leaders' effectiveness. One participant noted, "My experience has been pretty great…his tattoos don't get in the way…his effectiveness is exponential." Another noted, "I have never had an issue of any managers with any kind of body image modifications and their way of performing." One participant did note having a difficult experience with her

current leader, but attributed this to personality, stating "I don't feel like her body image

modifications have anything to do with, I feel like it's more of a personal thing."

The body image modifications leaders had also did not seem to be given much

focus by participants. One participant noted, "I guess I don't notice it; it is not something

that is a subject that ever comes up." Another participant stated, "I didn't even think

about it…cause myself, I have it, the body image modifications, so it's not something I

look for in a manager." Although one participant had asked his leader about the leader's

body image modification, this was done more out of curiosity. He noted "I have asked

him about it…I don't have any, so it kinda interests me."

Composite Description

The data analysis process of developing textural and structural descriptions for

each participant allowed for a composite description to be created that also helps answer

the main research question as it provides a summarized insight from the group of

participants into what was experienced as well as why it was experienced. For this study,

the composite description was the following: *The Millennial-aged retail employees'*

experience and description of the leadership exhibited by their leaders with body image

modifications was mainly based on how their interactions with their leaders made them

feel, which ultimately depended on the personality of their leaders and was never

attributed to the body image modifications. Employees in this study developed feelings of

comfort, connection, and ease when interacting with leaders that were social, ethical,

offered a way to connect personally, and focused on doing their job. Employees with

leaders that were unfocused and did not offer a personal connection, felt a personality

clash and frustration. Body image modifications only played a role in the ability of an

employee to connect personally with his or her leader. The body image modifications did

not impact how the employees viewed the effectiveness of their leaders.

Summary

In this chapter, I provided a review of the results of the study, exploring the

themes that emerged during data analysis and how those themes were uncovered. This

process is important to understanding how the results answer the research question.

Finding trustworthiness in the results was also addressed through descriptions of

strategies used for credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, along

with a review of the study setting, participant demographics, data collection, and data

analysis.

With an understanding that Millennial-aged retail employees do not ascribe any

impact on leadership effectiveness to the body image modifications of their leaders, in

Chapter 5, I will extend this finding to the literature reviewed in this study and the

conceptual framework that supports this study. Chapter 5 will also include the study

limitations and how the results were affected. I will provide recommendations for further

research and describe the implications of the results.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

Body image modifications in the workplace continue to be a controversial subject, with the majority of research efforts focused on understanding the controversy from the perspective of the organization and leaders; however, a leader-follower relationship is not one sided. The perspective of the follower (the employee) is equally crucial to ensuring the leader-follower relationship is effectively maintained. Researchers further showed the importance of this relationship to an organization's success.

To gain an initial understanding of the follower viewpoint, I explored the lived experiences and descriptions of retail employees' perceptions of the leadership exhibited by leaders with body image modifications by tattoos, piercings, and gauges. The study was focused on Millennial-aged retail employees because they account for a large portion of the workforce.

I found that these followers give little to no attention to the body image modifications of their leaders and did not feel the effectiveness of their leaders is impacted by body image modifications. General experiences and feelings were positive towards leaders, though this changed if a leader's personality did not align well with the follower's personality or if the two were unable to connect in a personal way.

Interpretation of the Findings

A full understanding of the results of this study requires comparing the results to what has already been reviewed in other literature as well as discussing how the

conceptual framework is linked to the results. The literature I reviewed in Chapter 2 focused on the key concepts of body image modifications, societal perceptions, workplace perceptions, and leader-follower relationships, especially in relation to how the three topics are connected. A summary of the literature for each concept will be included.

Body Image Modifications

Body image modifications were defined by Carmen et al. (2012) as a permanent change a person makes to his or her physical appearance, with tattoos and piercings being the most noted type of body image modification in the literature (Carmen et al., 2012; DiPopolo, 2010; Elzweig & Peeples, 2011; Foster & Hummel, 2000). Tattoos and piercings, along with gauges, were also found to be more prevalent in society compared to other more intense forms of body image modifications, like scarification and implants (Elzweig & Peeples, 2011; Hill et al., 2016). This knowledge guided the body image modifications focused on in this study, and all participants noted that their leader had one or more of these body image modifications, which was part of the eligibility criteria for participation.

Societal Perceptions

Several factors were found to affect the perception building process people use, such as gender, age, and religion. Time, in a historical sense, was most relevant as individuals from different generations held different perspectives of body image modifications. Older generations were found to be less accepting of people with body

image modifications, while younger generations were more accepting (DiPopolo, 2010; Resenhoeft et al., 2008). Manuel and Sheehan (2007) also noted that Millennials, a younger generation, are more accepting of body image modifications. Participants in this study were all from the Millennial generation and noted no concerns about body image modifications. This upholds a perception of acceptance among the younger generations.

Individuals with body image modifications were connected to various stereotypes, stigmas, and discrimination. For instance, they were considered delinquents, rebellious, and more promiscuous. Discrimination against those with body image modifications was compared to other forms of discrimination, like age and gender. In the workplace, discrimination was occurring when employees were asked to cover body image modifications or were passed over for promotions (Ellis, 2014; Elzweig & Peeples, 2011); however, Melcon (2014) felt this type of discrimination is changing as people become more accepting of body image modifications. This may be true because I did not find that participants correlated body image modifications with the effectiveness of their leaders and typically had not given any thought to their leaders' body image modifications.

Workplace Perceptions

In the literature regarding workplace perceptions, the focus was mainly on how employers perceive employees with body image modifications and hiring practices. Most employers were noted as still holding negative views towards body image modifications, wanting employees to have a professional appearance (Acor, 2001; Behrens, 2009;

Friesen, 2013; Swanger, 2006). These companies also tend to create policies that require employees to cover their body image modifications (Dorwart et al., 2010; Melcon, 2014). Participants in this study were not questioned about the visibility of their leaders' body image modifications, but some visibility or discussion would have had to occur for the participants to know their leader had a tattoo, piercing, or gauge (another criterion of eligibility for participation).

For hiring practices, some employees felt body image modifications were likely to hurt their chance of obtaining a job (Petrick, 2016; Stawpaw, 2016; Swanger, 2006; Vault.com, 2007). This was further supported by scholars showing that in the interview process, body image modifications may be a distraction and should not be shown. Participants were not asked about hiring practices for the business they worked for, but a lack of focus by participants on body image modifications could indicate a more relaxed work culture around hiring practices.

Leader-Follower Relationships

Aspects of the leader-follower relationship I commonly reviewed in the literature cover the strength of the relationship, how leaders are engaging their followers, and trust between the leaders and followers (Breevaart et al., 2014; Buch et al., 2016; Hinojosa et al., 2014; Nienaber et al., 2015; Ruiz et al., 2011; Steffens et al., 2014). The role of the follower is a newer focus, with researchers looking at how a follower's viewpoint affects a leader (Bearden, 2008; Schlinder, 2012). Theory, specifically person perception and leader-member exchange, extends this by showing that followers develop their ideal

leader through visual cues and thus build their perception of those leaders (Ehrhart 2012; Farr-Wharton et al., 2011; van Quaquebeke & van Knippenberg, 2012). Perceptions tended to be positive when followers felt connected to their leaders (Schuh et al., 2012). Although participants did not note that the visual cue of body image modifications impacted their perception of their leaders, several participants did note feeling positive toward their leader when they felt connected. One participant even commented on her tattoos providing her connection to her leader.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study was founded on Moustakas's (1994) concept of perceptions. This concept emphasizes an individual's conscious use of intention and intuition. The findings of this study are in line with this concept as participants used intention to see leaders for who they are and intuition to reflect on how body image modifications do not play a role in their acceptance of those leaders.

<div align="center">

Limitations of the Study

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Several limitations were noted before participant recruitment began. These limitations included challenges that may occur while managing my bias throughout the study process, transferability of the study based on retail types and geographical location, and participant failures. My bias management process proved successful; I had no participant failures, and each participant was from a different type of retail; however, geographic location was not as varied as desired. Only one of the six participants was from a different geographic location.

Implications

The results of this study can be used to further understanding about the leader-follower relationship. In this section, I will review implications related to social change, theory, and workplace practice.

Positive Social Change

Image is a trait from both a societal perception and between leaders and followers. As this trait appears to be changing based on the findings of this study, society, organizations, and people in general may be showing an increased openness to traits that make people different, specifically body image modifications. This will be important for ensuring younger generations continue to hold an accepting perception that does not cause new challenges for the workforce.

Theory

According to the leader-member exchange theory, it is important to categorize leader traits to either enhancing or diminishing the leader-follower relationship, thus extending the importance of understanding the visual cue of body image modifications (Ehrhart, 2012; Farr-Wharton et al., 2011; Matta, Scott, Koopman, & Conlon, 2015). If the leader categorization process changes with followers' decreased focus on visual cues, leaders will need to ensure they understand the impact of the change.

Workplace Practice

Theoretical impact gives way to implications in workplace practice. If follower views of leaders are changing, given that visual cues may not be the barrier they were

previously thought to be, then organizations and leaders need to change their perceptions of followers as well. This will allow organizations and leaders to learn what is important to followers and enhance the relationships organizations and leaders have with followers. This change in perception may then change the way those with body image modifications are viewed. There may be more opportunities for obtaining positions, advancing within organizations, and being accepted as future leaders. Organizations may also have to look at changing their policies around body image modifications.

Recommendations

I found that followers do not mind a leader with body image modifications, but only from the context of leaders and followers in a retail setting. Future research could be done in other work industries to determine if the same perceptions and experiences are consistent, especially within the Millennial generation. Comparing perceptions of followers from different age groups within both the same industry and across different industries could show if societal perceptions as a whole have become similar or remain varied based on generation.

Theory should also be looked at for further research. Leader categorization theory is focused on how followers use visual cues to create images of their ideal leaders; however, I found that a prevalent visual cue, body image modifications, did not impact how followers viewed their leaders. Further research into the visual cues followers are monitoring in a leader could be important. Researchers may also want to discern if visual cues are important anymore and if so, clarify if age or any other demographic factors,

play a role. Understanding any changes to how ideal leaders are being perceived and visualized would necessitate a need to rethink theory.

Conclusion

Through a transcendental phenomenological lens, I answered the question of "Within the Millennial generation, what is the retail employee experience and description of the leadership exhibited by leaders with body image modification by tattoos, piercings, and/or gauges?", finding that Millennial aged retail employees see body image modifications, but give them no credit in the effectiveness of a leader. This challenges theory and opposes views previously assigned to perception in literature.

With the Millennial generation set to maintain a presence in the workforce for many years, understanding their perceptions is crucial to building strong leader-follower relationships that enhance the workplace. The findings of this study should be seen as a start to understanding the importance Millennial-aged followers place on leaders and the effect of that importance on both their followership ability and leadership ability. Perceptions are not likely to change quickly, so further research will be important to determining how follower perceptions are or are not continuing to change.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol Form and Interview Questions

1) Instructions for Interviewer

    a) Notate any additional bias in researcher journal before participant arrives

    b) Present consent form to participant and/or confirm completion of consent form: review purpose of the study, review participant rights, and address any participant questions and/or concerns

    c) Provide participant with a copy of the consent form in person or electronically

    d) Remind participant to avoid using leaders' names, company names, and personal information that is not relevant to the study. Note that if any of this information is shared, the audio recorder will be stopped, the information deleted, and the participant will be asked to restate what he or she said

    e) Turn on audio recording device

    f) Introduce myself and introduce the participant with coded identification

    g) Note the date and time

    h) Note the purpose of the interview

    i) Begin interview with question one and follow through to question 2, using probe questions as appropriate

    j) Turn off audio recording device

    k) Discuss member-checking with participant and confirm his/her contact information

    l) Thank the participant and reiterate my contact information

m) End interview session

2) Main Questions

    a) Describe your experience with a leader with body image modifications from tattoos, piercings, and/or gauges?

    b) Describe your perception of that leader's effectiveness?

3) Probe Questions

    a) Tell me more about that?

    b) What was that like for you?

    c) Can you give me an example?

Appendix B: Agreement to Post and Invitation to Participate Flyer

Agreement to Post

Business Name and Address

Contact Information

Dear [insert contact name],

I, Jennifer McClure, am a doctoral student at Walden University. I am conducting a study for my Walden dissertation, titled "Millennial Retail Employees Experiences and Perceptions of Leaders with Body Image Modifications."

To assist me with locating participants for this study, I am asking that you share the attached Invitation to Participate flyer with your employees. The flyer details the purpose of the study, participant eligibility criteria, participant requirements, and how participants can contact me.

I am happy to address any questions or concerns you may have and ask that confirm your willingness to assist or not assist by [signing below or responding to this email].

Thank you,

Jennifer McClure

Invitation to Participate

Seeking participants for the following study

"Millennial Retail Employees Experiences and Perceptions of Leaders with Body Image

Modifications."

This study is being conducted by Jennifer McClure. She is a doctoral student at Walden
University and is completing this study as part of her Walden dissertation.

Study Purpose: This study is being conducted to explore the lived experiences and

descriptions of retail employee's perceptions of the leadership exhibited by

leaders with body image modifications by tattoos, piercings, and gauges.

Participant Eligibility Criteria:

  i)   Must have been born between 1981 and 1996

  ii) Must be currently working in a retail environment or have worked within a

       retail environment within the past 6 months

  iii) Must report or have reported to a leader that has body image modifications

       from tattoos, piercings, and/or gauges (visible or hidden) during said retail

       employment

Participation in this study is voluntary and there is no compensation for participating.

Participants will complete an interview lasting approximately one hour in length in

person, by phone, or by video chat. All answers and personal information will be

kept confidential.

To participate in this study, please contact Jennifer McClure

Appendix C: Interview Prescreening Form

*Before completing, I will confirm the individual is calling to try and participate in the

study "Millennial Retail Employees Experiences and Perceptions of Leaders with

Body Image Modifications." and is doing so voluntarily.

Date: _____

Name:

_____

_____

Eligibility Questions and Matching Criteria

1. What year were you born?

   _____

   o Criteria: Must have been born between 1981 and 1996

2. Where have you worked in the past 0-6 months?

   _____

   o Criteria: Must be currently working in a retail environment or have

   worked within a retail environment within the past 6 months

3. Do/did you report to a leader that has body image modifications from tattoos,

   piercings, and/or gauges, either visible or hidden?

   _____

o Criteria: Must report or have reported to a leader that has body image modifications from tattoos, piercings, and/or gauges (visible or hidden) during said retail employment

4. Have you ever received support from The Arc of DC?

o Criteria: Exclusion of any persons who have been a client of my place of work.

Consent Competency

This individual responded to each question appropriately, with no apparent support from an outside source, and with little to no rewording or explanation of questions from me:

YES or NO

If Confirmed, complete the following:

- Phone Number

  _____

- Email

  _____

- Discuss completion of the consent form and note date the form was sent

  _____

- Confirm interview date and time

  _____

If Denied, note the criteria not met

_____

Appendix D: Audit Trail Journal

Participant Recruitment

1. Write thoughts, questions, and concerns in my bias journal

2. Send out Invitation to Participate flyers by email, in online posts, and in person

    a. Include Agreement to Post Flyer as appropriate

    b. In person: point out purpose of study, eligibility criteria, confidentiality, and contact information

3. After dispersing flyers by any method - write thoughts, questions, and concerns in my bias journal

Participant Screening

1. Complete Interview Prescreening form when contacted by a potential participant

2. Write thoughts, questions, and concerns in my bias journal

3. If chosen to participate, send email with Consent form and interview details

Participant Interviews

1. Utilize Interview Protocol Form

    a. Write thoughts, questions, and concerns in my bias journal

    b. Contact participant by agreed upon method

    c. Review main topics of consent form and confirm participants continued participation

    d. Review audio recording process and to avoid using names

     e. Complete interview asking questions as written on the Interview Protocol Form

2. Note any discrepancies in the process

3. Write thoughts, questions, and concerns in my bias journal

Interview Data Analysis

1. Write thoughts, questions, and concerns in my bias journal

2. Listen to audio recordings

     a. Review 3-5 times and ensure accuracy of participants words in transcription

3. Write thoughts, questions, and concerns in my bias journal

4. Complete horizontalization: highlight key terms and phrases that are relevant to interview questions and main research question

5. Develop list of Invariant Constituents: review highlighted terms and phrases against two requirements

6. Cluster invariant constituents and label themes

     a. Compare against participant answers

7. Write thoughts, questions, and concerns in my bias journal

8. Develop textural and structural descriptions for each participant

9. Develop Composite Description