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The purposes of workplace benefits: A qualitative study of workers' perceptions of work perks in tech and non-tech industries

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The purposes of workplace benefits: A qualitative study of workers' perceptions of work perks in tech and non-tech industries

by

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my friends, family, cohort, and significant other. Your combined support made this possible.

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Abstract

The purposes of workplace benefits: A qualitative study of workers' perceptions of work perks in tech and non-tech industries

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The following study examines how tech workers justify work perk implementation as a standard practice across the tech industry and how workers struggle to resist the draw of work perks that act as control mechanisms. Participants (n=19) who identified themselves as "cool" tech industry, "traditional" tech industry, and "non-tech" industry were interviewed using a semi-structured protocol concerning their work perk usage. A thematic analysis was conducted to examine an array of evidence-based patterns. Two themes emerged using an abductive approach to coding the data. The first theme examined how organizations use work perks to signal industry and occupational identification. The second theme considered how participants were willing to pay a price for seemingly free work perks. The themes contributed to academic understanding and application of organizational identification theory and unobtrusive control.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Many employers consider work-life initiatives, including benefits and amenities, to be an essential function of the contemporary workplace (Kirby & Buzzanell, 2014). Ten years ago, Pew Research pointed to a growing discontent in terms of working conditions (Taylor, Funk, & Craighill, 2006). Pew scholars suspected that America was going through a profound change as "the industrial-era model of secure jobs with good wages and benefits that predominated until roughly a generation ago gave way to a more cost-conscious and globally-competitive workplace marked by stagnant real wages, cutbacks to health benefits and retirement plans, and growing threats of having jobs outsourced abroad" (Taylor, Funk, & Craighill, 2006, p. 1). However, in more recent years, workplace conditions have improved in many industries due an emphasis on implementing extensive work-life policies in order to promote recruitment and retention (Cook, 2004).

Work perks include a variety of desirable incentives given to employees by their employers. Work perks are an umbrella term for both amenities and benefits, where workers are incentivized through real earnings like salary and monetary benefits (stock options) and nonmonetary like amenities (Rosen, 1974). Marino and Zabojnik (2008) list a variety of different incentives that fall under work perks, including personal business machines like computers, laptops, and mobile phones; workplace amenities like office space, pleasant working conditions, location, and views; and personal services like secretarial support, gyms, acupuncturists, massage therapists, and personal trainers.

Extant work perk research—as studied through amenities and benefit—focuses more on the building of employee contracts and some productivity outcomes (Marino & Zabojnik, 2008). Work perks draw people into the company and give potential workers the impression that they will like their job (Vowler, 2005, June 28). Work perks also lead to improved job attitudes, productivity and reduced turnover in the long term (Nelson & Trevino, 2004) as workers make a mental exchange of their personal commitment and effort toward organizational goals for the compensation they receive (Cyert and March, 1963). However, theoretical arguments stress that overuse of work perks can lead to issues of worker agency (Jensen & Meckling, 1976).

The popular press specifically highlights how the implementation of work perks functions as recruitment and quality of life tool for the technology industry. Pew Research found "that about 3.9 million workers—roughly 3% of the nation's payroll workforce—work in what we might think of as 'core' tech occupations—not people who simply use computing technology in their jobs, but whose jobs involve making that technology work for the rest of us" (DeSilver, 2014, n.p.). When looking at *Fortune's* "2015 Top 100 Companies" list, those companies that made the list offer their workers a range of work perks that lead to a company-centered lifestyle. Unsurprisingly, Google dominates the number one spot ("Top 100 companies", 2015) because of company morale tied to work perks. These consistent ratings create popular press hype. Publications like *Forbes* (2014) illustrate that companies such as Google and Facebook consistently make "Best Places to Work" lists across the Internet because they supply their workers with numerous high-quality work perks. The *New York Times* highlights the goal of retrofitting workspaces with work perks is to retain employees while creating a strong work culture; however, those within the tech industry say work perks do very little to enhance performance but often keep workers in the office far past their nine-to-five commitment (Tugend, 2014, Oct. 17). Although there is research on work-life initiatives and employer-provided benefits, there is a gap in the literature concerning how work perks influence work autonomy and control evident in communications surrounding work perk implementatation.

The popular press finds reasons to both applaud and occasionally reject work perks. Yet academic scholarship is largely focused on workplace leisure, namely how work-life policies—like flextime, vacation, and family-friendly policies— take hold and are rejected by workers (Kirby & Buzzanell, 2014). Work-life policies are work perks in that they incentivize workers (Rosen, 1974), but the research has largely focused on the benefits provide by flexible work-life polices instead of material amenities like the ones seen in the tech industry. The following literature review will report current understandings of workplace leisure and work-life policies and what organizational scholars stand to gain by studying work perks. Specifically, this thesis aims to understand how organizational members perceive work perks and therefore rationalize the use of work perks by individuals and organizations.

Drawing on data from 19 interviews, this thesis examines how organizational members perceived the functions of work perks in organizations as well as how the rationalize their own use and disuse of work perks. I compared and contrasted participant's responses across "tech" and "non" tech organizations as well as "tech" and "non-tech" occupations. The next section provides a literature review covering research on workplace leisure, work-life balance, and work perks before transitioning into methods and findings.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Workplace leisure and work-life policies often lead to tensions as workers attempt to navigate and interpret policies. Choices offered by work-life policies—including agency, access and opportunities—can provide organizational members with both fulfillment and dignity because the worker can dictate how he or she blends work and life (Buzzanell & Lucas, 2013). As worker enjoy the autonomy provided to them by these policies, also they must also face tensions owing to the presence of organizational control inherent in the implementation of these policies. Worker's navigation of work-life policies can lead to complex outcomes (Drago, 2007) because managers send mixed messages about how the ideal worker should utilize work-life policies (Kirby & Krone, 2002). In fact, these policies can disempower individuals by removing autonomy from work-life (Hoffman & Cowan, 2008). For example, policies that encourage camaraderie and identity through leisure often blur workers distinctions concerning work and life because workers recreation time moves to work (Sullivan & Lewis, 2001). In addition, work-life policies that encourage flexible hours and more time spent with family are often lauded as signaling unprofessionalism and stunted career growth to peers and supervisors (Crouter, Bumpus, Head, & McHale, 2001). And yet, organizations still implement these policies because they function as a tool for creating a dedicated workforce (Friedan, 1989) and drawing in the right talent (Kisselburgh, Berkelaar, &, Buzzanell, 2009).

There is a need in organizational communication to take a critical stance when examining work-life initiatives in order to better understand how power and control arise when workers try to interpret and abide by these policies (Kirby & Buzzanell, 2014). Specifically, organizational communication scholars can analyze look at how rationality and identity are shaped through the tensions developed by work-life policy implementation (Kirby, Golden, Medved, Jorgenson, &

Buzzanell, 2003). The study of work perks questions the dominant assumption provided by the popular press in media like Top 100 Lists that work perks and other related benefits are a positive addition to workers' lives. Even as the popular press also points to a more nefarious side because of underlying control messages associated with work perks (Tugend), scholars should take a critical stance to work perks and work-life policies in order to examine the tensions and complexities involved with implementation for both the organization and individual (Kirby & Buzzanell, 2014). In doing so, scholarship could lead to improvements in work-life policies as organizations lessen their control over policy and allow the worker to exert autonomy in work-life decisions.

Research shows that organizations implement work-life policies in order to establish legitimacy (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), to recruit (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978), to manage (Milliken, Martins, & Morgan, 1998), and to deal with change (Daft & Weick, 1984). Yet, scholars gain to learn more about tensions created by work-life initiatives by examining how work perks may lead to control and identity mechanism within the workplace. Although there is growing literature on benefits, there is very little research on work perks outside of their incentivizing nature (Nelson & Trevino, 2004). The study of work perks in practice may further understandings of how organizational members navigate tensions despite the seemingly desirable nature of benefits and amenities.

Workplace Leisure Studies

Leisure studies scholars have long been at the forefront of studying how workplace leisure policies affect workers. Workplace leisure policies were first implemented during the industrial era when workers suddenly had more disposable income to spend on leisure pursuits (Wheeler, 1978). *Workplace leisure policies* (sometimes referred to as work-life policies) use a variety of policy techniques ranging from flextime to company softball to "enhance organizational structural and cultural/relational support for work, family and personal life" (Kossek, Lewis, & Hammer, 2009). Employers noted that they could take advantage of worker's growing interest in leisure by promoting in-house leisure polices that garnered loyalty and in turn, control (Hendee, 1969), which relates to concepts of identification through organizational loyalty (Kaufman, 1960). Classical leisure theorists argued that work and leisure should act as opposites, but were often fused together by workers (Reisman & Bloomberg, 1957) because workers allow work practices spill over into leisure time (Wilensky, 1960). Early leisure studies scholars noted the inherent application of control when organizations invest in workplace leisure policy (Hendee, 1969). For example, since the industrial era, organizations sought to govern the body and support worker camaraderie as a function of fitness programs (Holliday & Thompson, 2001).

In recent years, researchers and government have sought to understand how the co-mingling of work and leisure affect work practices because workplace leisure policies are seen to function as a factor serving healthy work-life balance (Taylor, 2002). A UK cabinet study found a strong correlation between work and life satisfaction when workers put time aside for leisure pursuits (Donovan, Halpern, & Sargeant, 2002). However, when leisure is provided at work, employees can be blinded by the promise of leisure activities and are willing to ignore instances of exploitation within the work setting (McQuarrie, 2010). Despite government calls for organizations to implement more leisure policies such as gym reimbursement and on-site activities (Taylor, 2002; McGillivray, 2005), workers were sometimes negatively affected because they were blinded by the desirability of the policies when they were too invested in the return (Jensen & Meckling, 1976). Other researchers argue that leisure in relation to work may be a key construct in individual identity because what workers do inside and outside of work acts as declaration of self (Spracklen, 2013; Mead, 1913). Despite good intentions on the part of workers seeking leisure at work, some of these studies point to the use of leisure as a control mechanism.

Thus, workers face difficulties in determining what is work and what is leisure as more leisure policies enter the workplace, which creates tensions between how much control organizations should have in dictating work and leisure balance and how much autonomy workers can exert. Around the mid-20th century, leisure was viewed as the time not spent working (Wilensky, 1962), but as leisure-centric polices were implemented into organizations, work stood to become the new leisure (Sullivan & Lewis, 2003). Thus, the experience of work has intensified because the boundaries between work and leisure are becoming less clear due to the implementation of leisure policies (Sullivan & Lewis, 2003). Boundary blurring between work and life is intensified because society views those who do not take time off as important figures—namely, the “boss” cannot take time off (Gershuny, 2005). Workers experience difficulties differentiating between work and leisure because one person’s work is another person leisure (Haworth & Iso-Ahola, 1997) in that some people consider work to be a leisure pursuit and seeking out leisure to be too much work.

In addition, scholars have a difficult time defining workplace leisure because combining work and leisure is a confounded process due to work and leisure being defined as polar opposites (Reisman & Bloomberg, 1957). Traditionally, work and leisure are inherently different concepts in that work interests should be separate from leisure and leisure should be separate from work (Dubin, 1956; Wilensky, 1962). From this view, leisure is the anti-thesis of work, because *leisure* is seen as non-obligated time where one is free to choose his or her activities outside of paid work (Iso-Ahola, 1997). For example, individuals may choose to go for bikes rides and spend their nights on the town because leisure acts as a form of escapism from work (Wynne, 1990), but the inclusion of work-life leisure policies in work practices blurs that definition as seen with work perks that bring escapism to the office.

As work and leisure continue to be entangled by employees and employers, scholars need to consider the effects workplace leisure has on organizational members because leisure is increasingly moving from home to work (Uhlig, 2004). Leisure is now defined through employment, self-expression, and state of mind because employers have moved leisure pursuits to work (Kleiber, 1999). Work is increasingly becoming a place of leisure as well in that organizational members find relational partners, take part in social activities, and take business trips to tourist destinations, which prior to this movement, these were activities that were dissociated from work (Uhlig, 2004). Some researchers relate leisure to non-obligated time where activities are freely chosen and are associated with enjoyment (Thompson, Grant, and Dharmalingam, 2002). In contrast, in *workplace leisure*, "leisure" may no longer be "an attitude or state of mind in which the individual subjectively believes that he or she is pursuing an activity for personal idiosyncratic reasons rather than as a result of external coercion" (Tinsley & Tinsley, 1982, p. 105). Thus, workplace leisure may not be "real" leisure because workers may feel obligated to take part in the leisure provided by the organization. This is explained through the academic understanding of social structures within organizations where in organizational members are prompted to make certain decisions based on what the organization desires (Giddens, 1984), so workplace leisure cannot be truly non-obligated if organizational members feel that they are being coerced into taking part in workplace leisure to placate the organization.

Work-Life Policies

A current understanding of workplace leisure occurs within the study of work-life leisure policies. Researchers in this area are concerned with mixed messages (Kossek, Lewis, & Hammer, 2010), resistance to policy implementation (Briscoe & Kellogg, 2011), and upsets in the work-life balance (Streib, 2015) as employers implement work-family policies, flextime, and vacation time. By understanding the struggles organizations face with implementing work-life policies, scholars might better understand how the workers and the organization rationalize desirable work perk usage.

Organizations have a difficult time implementing family-life policies without full support from managers and employees. Family-friendly policies are part of work life policy and include maternity/paternity leave, family leave and childcare assistance (Grover & Crooker, 1995) are used to recruit and retain a dedicated workforce with familial concerns (Friedan, 1989), nevertheless, success implementation requires managerial support for the policy to take hold in the organization (Lewis, 2003). Organizations need to be supportive of family-family policies in order to cut down on member resistance and build a desired “family-friendly” environment (Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999). However, family leave polices are commonly categorized by supervisors as burdens and non-routine when these policies are brought up in day-to-day conversations (Buzzanell & Liu, 2005). The difficulties organizations face in implementing family-friendly policies relates to a growing trend across work-life policies where workers feel pressure not to take advantage of the policies.

Similar difficulties can be seen in vacation policy research where workers feel "damned if you do and damned if you don't" when it comes to the controlled implementation and use of work-life policies (Putnam, Myers, & Gaillard, 2013). Despite the research showing that employees are better off when they take advantage of vacation, employees are hesitant to take time off because peer and managerial criticism (Putnam, Myers, & Gaillard, 2013). For instance, any benefit from vacation fades out as the return date approaches (Fritz & Sonnentag, 2006) and workers who take advantage of vacation time often feel more stressed when they return to the office because of increased post-vacation workloads (Strauss-Blasche, Ekmekcioglu, & Marktl, 2005). Workers are unwilling to take advantage of stress reducing policies, like vacation time, if they feel it will cause them more stress pre- and post-vacation.

Work-life policies, like flextime, often face issues in implementation because of contradictions similar to those found in vacation and family-friendly policies. *Flextime* allows for flexible starting and quitting times and allows organizational members to cope with work and family problems (Galinsky & Stein, 1990). When organizations promote flextime, they tend to see an increase in employee commitment and moral as well as a more attractive company image (Pitt-Catsouphes & Matz-Costa; 2008). Nevertheless, employees who use flextime policies are often viewed as both uncommitted and unprofessional while lacking the desire for upward mobility, and thus, career growth may be stunted (Leslie, Park, & Mehng, 2012). Inclusion of flextime cannot lead to a more flexible schedule without the presence of supportive messages from peers and supervisors (Crouter, Bumpus, Head, & McHale, 2001). There is an inherent complexity involved with taking advantage of offered workplace leisure and work-life policies because workers face dedicating too much of their leisure time to work while also feeling pressures to not take advantage of actual relaxation like vacation.

Work Perks and Tech Culture

Work-life policies like family-friendly initiatives, vacation time, and flextime all fall under the subheading of benefits and qualify as work perks because they draw people into organizations (Marino & Zabojnik, 2008). However, work perks can also be more material items called amenities, which include things like an office view and company car. Both benefits (e.g. flextime, vacation time) and amenities (e.g. cafeterias and gyms) are used to incentivize workers (Rosen, 1974) but there may be differences between long-term benefits versus short-term amenities. Thus, there is growing emphasis within the popular press about the success and failings of material work perks (amenities) within the tech industry. Companies like Google herald themselves as working to create "the happiest, most productive workplace in the world," by creating collaborative spaces and provided every basic need in-house, and Google has their own in-house research that provides evidence that their work perks and work-life investments are driving productivity and work-life satisfaction (Stewart, 2013, Mar., 15). The tech industry uses work perks like gourmet meal, on-site gyms, and nap rooms to draw in the elusive tech worker, but there is often a "more nefarious purpose of making sure employees rarely leave the office" and that the work perks provide "golden handcuffs" (Tugend, 2014, Oct., 17). Many workers in tech industry feel the pressure to choose work over family because daycares and even egg freezing are offered to them by their organizations; nevertheless, work-life policies allow workers with children to have upward career growth (Miller, 2015, Apr., 7). The popular press is in the midst of an ongoing effort to conceptualize material work perks within the tech industry, but there is no academic research on how material work perks function in a contemporary workplace setting.

This thesis seeks to answer Kunda's (1986) call to study tech cultures because they may act "a guise for a new forms of managerial control of members." Scholarship has tied tech culture to George Orwell's *1984* citizens' intense loyalty (Willmott, 1993) and research shows tech companies are capable of pulling innovation from large group of people through a common sense of purpose (Peters & Waterman, 1982). Tech companies are able to garner loyalty by colonizing the "softer sides" of the organization in order to control workers (Willmont, 1993). Arguably, within the contemporary tech workplace the softer side refers to how work perks are used to draw loyalty and increase productivity. However, scholarship also tells us that workers are able to enact resistance even when dominant structures like policy are enacting control (Foucault, 1982). In addition, workplace leisure policies have long been associated with worker resistance (Lupton, 1997) as workers are likely to contest the application of such policies (McGillvary, 2005). Common sense also points to workers not using every work perk made available to them. So the following research question asks: *How do organizational members rationalize their own use and disuse of work perks?* By asking this question, scholars may better understand how organizational members exhibit autonomy in the presence of documented control mechanisms.

Despite scholarly interest in the work cultures of tech industries, there is very little empirical research that considers how work perks, let alone work-life initiatives, function between the organization and its members in tech companies. Facebook and Google are the modern monoliths of tech culture because each provides their employees with a multitude of work perks while still bringing in substantial profit. Yet, Facebook and Google's culture are hard to directly study in part because they have their own research departments that focus on work-life initiatives (Stewart, 2013, Mar., 15). For example, Rushdi and Kamal (2014) note that Google's culture is focused on amenity distribution and values things like teamwork and commitment. In turn, Sullivan (2005) argues that Google's recruitment polices have the changed the way employees look for jobs. However, both these studies are based off of number listing websites like About.com and Fortune's Top 100 lists rather than experimental or field research.

It is not enough to say that work perks have an effect as seen through recruitment and financial figures, there needs to be more research done on how the work perks affect the worker and the organization in practice. Organizations have the opportunity to supply their workers with viable incentives when they supply work perks, and in turn, improve the quality of life for their workers. Thus, the second research question relates to the first in that it asks: *How do organizational members perceive the function of work perks?*

Workplace leisure and work-life policy leisure both point to tensions between the organization implementing policy and its intended target. Workers feel as through they cannot take full advantage of work-life policies owing to assumptions of being unprofessional and lacking commitment (Leslie, Park, & Mehng, 2012). The workers also feel that they are being punished by peers and supervisors for taking advantage of policies like vacation, but are also punished by the organization for not taking part in policies put in place to incentivize them (Putnam, Myers, & Gaillard, 2013). Thus, this thesis aims to examine how tensions between the organization and individual employees play out as "tech" workers navigate the array of work perks provided to them.

Chapter Three: Methods

This study aims to answer two interrelated research questions: 1) How do organizational members perceive the function of work perks? and 2) How do organizational members rationalize their own use and disuse of work perks? The following methods section shows how these questions were answered using a qualitative analysis of interviews with workers in technology and non-technology fields.

Participants

I purposefully recruited people who could provide insight into the ways in which work perks shaped people's experiences of work. I focused on purposefully recruiting individuals known to have access to a variety of work perks because purposeful sampling allows for seeking out participants who compliment the goals of the research question (Tracy, 2012). I solicited participants in three ways: (1) I asked people in my personal network if they knew anyone with a notable amount of work perk available to them; (2) I then recruited individuals on the street during a large multi-industry conference, and interviewed them if they fit the screening criteria of being a part of the tech industry and have some access to work perks; (3) In addition, after each interview, I asked each participant if they would refer me to other people in their network who had access to work perks. These three strategies helped me connect to people with a broad range of experiences and job titles.

I initially focused on recruiting individuals within the technology industry given the popular press' interest in work perks provided in tech industry (e.g. Carson, 2015, June 17; Vanni, 2016, March 21; Wistrom, 2016, April 2). For sampling purposes, I defined organizations in the tech industry as those who use knowledge workers and innovation specialists (Mayer, 2006) in research and development expenditure (Chakrabarti, 1991). The participants also identified themselves as being part of the tech-industry. I initially only recruited participants in tech who had "quirky" work perks like slides, bars, and video game rooms. I realized I needed to compare insights of tech workers with a high association of work perks to tech workers with more benefits and less work perks as well as non-tech worker to understand how their experiences differed because of industry, organizational culture, and the type and range of work perks. As I moved through the data analysis, the comparisons between tech and non-tech as well as high-work perk and low-work perk proved to be useful because I could compare and contrast participants' experiences and rationales with work perks. Such comparison and contrasts aimed to help scholars understand how work perks affect the modern work place.

Of the 19 participants, 47% were female (n=9) and 53% were male (n=10). Although most of the participants had the ability to work from home part-time (n=15), some participants' jobs required them to be at the office (n=3) or work almost entirely from home (n=1). Most of the participants were not in leadership positions, but about a third held leadership titles including business manager, office manager, executive, director, and founder (n=5). Three participants were software engineers while two worked as IT specialists. The rest did not hold tech or leadership positions (n=10). The relationship statuses of participants were mixed: married (n=6), single (n=4), in a relationship (n=4), divorced (n=2), and widowed (n=1). The participants were located in New York, Texas, Oregon, Washington State, D.C., California, and Massachusetts because I wanted to compare differences across the country between similar organizations. I also had one American expatriate working in Japan for an American company. A more detailed description of each participant is provided in Appendix A with their state, job title, amenities/benefits, and a key takeaway for why each person provided important insight into the experiences of work perks. For example, Landon said that he would stay at the company if all the work perks went away because he liked his job, and Nick talked about how he wanted his company culture to look similar to other competitors in the area. Thus, purposeful sampling allowed me to examine how participants in tech and non-tech industries and occupations rationalized and experienced work perks.

Data Collection

I used a semi-structured interview protocol (Tracy, 2012) to understand how work perks affect peoples' experiences of work and their reported responses to work perks. Semi-structured interviews allow for in-depth conversations in order to elicit detailed insights (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The semi-structured interview also allowed me to re-order questions and changed wording to better create an adaptive and participant-centered interview. Semi-structured interviews thus allowed me to clarify and expand upon topics that participants cared about (Whiting, 2008). For example, it was common for participants to give an answer that would have been addressed later in the protocol, so I often moved questions up to create clarity and an encompassing answer.

I designed the interview protocol to gather data about organizational members' experiences of work perks. The questions elicited people's rationales for why they did or did not use work perks themselves as well as why they believed the organization implemented work perks. First, general background questions allowed me to get a sense of their day-to-day tasks, supervisor relationships, and how they used work perks. The second section focused on uncovering reasons for why participants used and did not use work perks and whether the work perks affected workplace practices. For example, "What messages does the organization send you about available amenities?" helped uncover rationales about work perk implementation. Related questions about work perk use looked at relationships, culture, and messages as related to work perks allowed participants to make connections between their use of work perks and the organization's end goals. For example, broad questions like "Describe the reasons for using workplace amenities," could be followed by prompts about organizational culture and messages if more detail was needed. Third, questions about participants' perspectives on work perks not only offered explicit insight into what participants did and did not like about work perks, these questions also provided insight into underlying rationales for why people did or did not use work perks and implicit reasons for why their organizations implemented work perks. For example, "What were your experiences with work perks?" was often followed by a discussion about likes and dislikes. Advice for management examined what work perks they would like to see added on and what work perks they would like to see changed. For example, "If you had full control over the design of workplace amenities, what would it be like?" led to interesting insights about work perks participants really valued. Such questions also allowed for participants to compare what they believed the organization should be providing and what they believed the organization was actually providing. The complete interview protocol can be view in Appendix B.

Through constant comparison and purposeful sampling (Tracy, 2012), I made adjustments to the interview protocol and wording in order to adapt the study to insights gained from earlier interviews. For one, I initially used the academic term for "leisure activities," but the term seemed too vague for the participants during the interviews. Moreover, it was common for participants even in the first interviews to included benefit policies like vacation and flextime when they listed off their available amenities because participants do not differentiate between the academic distinctions between benefits and amenities (see literature review). In my analysis, I collapsed benefits and amenities into work perks because work perks is the umbrella term that encompasses amenities and benefits (Marino & Zabojnik, 2008). I used the term amenities and not work perks through out my interviews to remain consistent and because participants responded broadly to amenities.

I used a variety of methods to collect interviews in order to make myself most accessible to participants. Interviews took place over the phone, in-person, and over video conferencing (range: 13-51 minutes; mean: 22 minutes; total: 395 minutes). Phone and videoconferences tended to be longer than most of the face-to-face interviews. Face-to-face interviews were typically shorter because they occurred at the conference under time constraints. However, the face-to-face interviews also occurred later in the study after I determined what questions were most effective as eliciting rich participant data. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim with the participants consent. The data corpus included 114 single-spaced pages of transcripts and an average of 2-pages of memos per person (total=38, single-spaced pages) after both the interview and during analytic coding.

Analysis

I used thematic analysis to interpret and categorize patterns about how organizational members reported experiencing and responding to work perks (Charmaz, 2006). Thematic analysis allowed me to encode the interviews into recognizable patterns and categories using an abductive approach as I moved back and forth between the data and the literature (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012).

During the initial coding, I examined the data line-by-line to examine *manifest* and latent meaning (Saldaña, 2015) to examine whether work perks affected peoples' experiences of work and reported behaviors in response to work perks. Manifest meaning occurs when the meaning of the data is directly observable. For example, in comparing differences in work-life balance, you can see Haley directly states how she balances her life:

> For me, I kind of just want to go home and hangout with my husband and watch TV. That's fun for me as opposed to working nights… It depends on the way you interact with other people, how old you are… I'm a linguist, and my team is very small and even though we interact with a lot people in the company, I tend to be just in my desk as opposed to having more interaction.

Haley directly states the variables that play into whether you live at work or home. In contrast, *latent meaning* is not directly observable, but rather is more implicit in the data. For example, in contrast to Haley's direct statement about work-life balance, Jamie's understanding of work-life balance is not directly stated. Jamie said, "I barely have a social life, but the people I work with are my social life. That is my family. I am extremely fulfilled in that. My workplace and my workplace family is what I need." I can interpret that she spends her time at work. In order to identify both latent and manifest meaning, I followed Charmaz's (2006) suggestion to "min[e] early data for analytical ideas to pursue further data collection and analysis" while still remaining "open to all possible theoretical directions" (p. 46). I identified initial themes based on Owen's (1984) criteria of reoccurrence, repetition, and forcefulness. During the initial coding, I used gerunds (e.g., -ing words) to connect active processes within descriptive participant insights (Saldaña, 2009). For example, when Landon said, "I feel like [the free dinner] encourages people to stay but if you don't have reason to stay and you still want it, you can take it and leave" I interpreted that as "acknowledging free choice." I also used *in vivo* coding to pull directly stated meaning from the participants own words (Saldaña, 2009). For example, when Jamie said, "You know we have our little areas we work in, but everybody goes in the break room to go get food, everybody has lunch together. It's definitely, I mean we know each other's departments, and we feel very comfortable with approaching one another with questions" The idea of "get[ting] to know each other" is very clear and the quote itself is rich.

In subsequent rounds of coding, I returned to the data to make further theoretical connections between similar initial codes (Charmaz, 2006). For example, I categorized initial codes like "hanging out," "attending group yoga" and "sharing a drink" under the second-level code of *bonding* (Taylor, 2012) because they involved social activities which participants described as bonding experiences. I also looked for contradictory data to determine what patterns would not hold (Taylor, 2012). Following this process, I dropped several initial themes (e.g. bonding, convenience, and access) because they did not have evidential support or theoretical interest.

I used axial coding to reassemble my codes (Charmaz, 2006) into hierarchical categories (Taylor, 2012) because it allowed to me visualize and connect codes through categories and led to the development of two larger themes: (1) Using work perks to signal industry and occupational identification; and (2) Willing to pay the price for seemingly free work perks. The first theme developed in response to an earlier analysis in which I developed industry categorization based on participant language resulting from constant comparison of findings. For example, the industry categorization was developed as I noted how people talked about their organizations in terms of what types of work perks it was distributing, and I labeled individual work perks as amenities and benefits. I also noted whether participants labeled their industry as "cool," "tech," "traditional," and "conservative" without interviewer prompting to later create the categories of "cool" tech, "traditional" tech, and "non-tech" industries. Several of my participants were in "non-tech" occupations, but still had access to amenities and benefits. This led to categorization of each participant's by occupation type: "tech" and "non-tech".

I followed the best practices for high-quality qualitative methods to insure the credibility of this study (Tracy, 2010; Pratt, 2009). For example, I sat down with an experienced researcher to code several interviews and see if we were coding in a similar fashion (Pratt, 2009) and to extend insight into potential emergent themes (Tracy, 2010). I discussed data and findings with two scholars experienced in qualitative research methods and organizational communication. I also searched for negative cases and disconfirming evidence to determine the rigor of the themes. In addition, the following findings provide thick description and illustrative exemplars to illustrate themes that arose from the data (Tracy, 2010).

Chapter Four: Findings

The following findings examine the two research questions in detail: How do organizational members perceive the function of work perks? How do organizational members rationalize their own use and disuse of work perks? The participant's insights as well as relevant literature led to the development two themes: (1) Using work perks to signal industry and occupational identification; and (2) Willing to pay the price for seemingly free work perks. I developed the first theme after I recognized that participants categorized themselves and/or others into three different types of industry rather than simply "tech" and "non" as was the original intention of my purposeful sample. I developed "cool" tech, "traditional" tech, and "non-tech" industries through the participant's descriptive language. The participants also categorized themselves and others into "tech" and "non-tech" occupations.

Distinguishing between "cool" tech, "traditional" tech, and "non-tech" industries.

The analysis revealed that participants' described three types of industry when talking about work perks within their (or other) industries. The majority of the participants framed themselves as part of the "cool" tech industry (n=11). For example, participants used descriptive language to signal themselves as being part of "cool tech." That is, "cool" tech participants would often frame their organization's industry as "being tech" and "being cool" to rationalize why their organizations implemented work perks. For example, Jamie a software engineer said, "I will tell you from a perspective I think that the tech industry is ahead of the curve. I really do. I think they set the standard." Another factor that seemed to distinguish the "cool" tech industry is that participants in the "cool" tech industry also mentioned the heavy influence on convenient and fun amenities compared to monetary benefits within the workplace (see introduction for summary). For example, participants who framed their organization as part of the "cool" tech industry often listed convenience-providing amenities like free cafeterias and onsite gyms in addition to fun amenities like slides, video game rooms, and bars. These “cool tech” participants typically compared themselves to organizations like Facebook and Google in terms of similar work perk implementation. Of note, I never asked questions about Google, Facebook, or key organizations. Participants repeatedly referenced Google and Facebook without prompting (as opposed to other prominent tech organizations like Apple or Microsoft).

Other participants framed their organization as part the “traditional” tech industry (n=4). Participants who reported working in the “traditional” tech industry used language like “traditional” “older,” and “conservative” to create a separation between their organizations and companies like Facebook and Google. For example, Hannah talked about how her “older” tech organization did not cater to Millennials. She said, “[Millenials] tend to want more meaning in their lives, more fun… We don’t have free lunch like they do at Google. There’s free food at Google. We don’t have free food. [Redacted] value[s] experienced more. There are more older people at [redacted] than there are at the younger companies.” The “traditional” tech industry participants also talked about how their organizations provided more monetary benefits as opposed to amenities to their workers. For example, the participants talked about how they were incentivized by bonuses, stock options, and even large salaries rather than fun or convenient work perks. Todd said, “I really love the fact, I hate to say, but I love the fact that they are throwing money at us all the time.” References to money were more common amongst workers in the “traditional” tech industry in contrast to “cool” tech workers who rarely mentioned any sort of benefits.

Participants who did not associate themselves with the “tech” industry, but still had access to work perks similar to those in “cool” and “traditional” tech were categorized into “non-tech" industry (n=4). I was typically informed prior to the interview what industry they were apart of (insurance, retail, and nonprofit), but the industry would often come up in conversation. For example Jane, an insurance office manager, said, "In this industry you can't ever plan on leaving with your desk clear like you accomplished everything and everyone's taken care of." It was also common for participants categorized into "non-tech" industries to talk about how their organizations provided these work perks for individual organization reasoning. For example, the "non-tech" industry participants would say that their organization "valued" them or "cared" about them. Jane who works in insurance compared work perk implementation to other offices:

> I think [amenities] positively impact you know everything that we do here… all the staff knows other agencies do not offer these types of things. You know other agencies, it's very cut throat. Make your numbers or else. You're not really valued as a person, you're just valued for what you bring to the bottom line. I think that makes our staff here really focus on customer attention and providing the best service possible because they are happy with [redacted] and myself.

Similarly, Kelly's organization was also focused on showing they valued the employee through the implementation of value-centric work perks. Kelly, a fitness retailer employee, said:

> I think that the message that they are sending by providing those amenities is that they recognize that their employees are passionate about fitness. And, that they want to provide the opportunity for people to mirror what we stand for, which is that if you have body of an athlete and by being able to have access to the fitness facilities and the healthy food choices, we're able to promote a lifestyle fitness for ourselves.

In summary, participants who worked for "non" tech organizations believed that the "non-tech" organizations' work perks were more motivated by the individual organization rather than informal industry standards.

Distinguishing between "tech" and "non-tech" occupations.

In addition to participants categorizing themselves into "cool" tech, "traditional" tech, and "non-tech" industries, the participants also distinguished themselves in terms of "tech" and "non-tech" occupations. For example, there were a few workers who labeled their occupation as software engineer which led to their categorization as "tech" occupation. There were other participants who worked in tech, but did not hold "tech" occupations (e.g. accountant, editor, and translator). The "non-tech" workers were vital for this study because they allowed me to compare and contrast how different occupations in tech perceived the functions of work perks. For example, Molly, a former employee of a news station and current editor for a website, was highly appreciative of the work perks provided to her because she was able to compare them to substandard conditions at her old job:

> But if [the work perks] went away it wouldn't really matter because I worked at a place where I literally got like nothing. It didn't even have a bathroom. It had a port-a-potty. It was awful… I got nothing for free. I worked at a news station, so like everything was like breaking… So to be somewhere where you do get all this, I'm like 'Oh this is great.' But even if it sucks, I've already like what I'm doing so much compared to what I was doing when I got nothing.

In contrast, those who had held "tech" occupations in "cool" tech industry were more likely to take the work perks for granted. Phil, an IT specialist who provided some work perks to workers, felt the software engineers often did not appreciate the time and money spent on putting the work perks into place. Although there was less evidence for the occupational motivations for work perks, there was still evidence that pointed towards organizations using work perks to signal occupation. Jim explained:

> So there's been very much this sort of engineering mentality. I mean I'm in the sales organization, but it's still very much like a software engineering. The idea is that by providing a lot of these little details, some of these creature comforts, through out the day, it kind of give employees one less thing to think about. One less thing to worry about so they can focus on the work they want to accomplish through out the day.

Thus, from participant's perspectives industry and occupational categorizations provided a way to compare and contrast how participants perceived the implementation of work perks within the organizations.

Using work perks to signal industry and occupational identification.

Building on the participant's categorizations of industry and occupation, the first theme examines how participants believed that their organizations used work perks to signal industry and occupational identification. This theme was developed answering the research question: How do organizational members perceive the function of work perks? In particular, participants who were categorized within the "cool" tech industry noted their organizations signaled identification with "cool" tech industry in particular by *mimicking work perks* used by Google and Facebook and *showing off their work perks* to outsiders. Also, work perks were used to signal occupational status through recruitment/retention efforts and optimizing talent.

Mimicking

Participants associated with the "cool" tech industry often noted that their organization mimicked the work perks found in organizations like Google and Facebook. The mimicking noted by participants is line with institutional isomorphism where constraining processes force units to look like other units in the same condition (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). This was exemplified by the “cool” tech industry participants who pointed to Facebook and Google as the leaders in “cool” tech industry, and they used Facebook and Google to explain why their organizations felt the need to implement fun work perks like slides and basketball courts. For example, Justin said, “The fun stuff is trying to keep up with Facebook. I don’t think that if Facebook were doing it we would ever think about. It’s a sort of a stereotypical tech thing to do.” Molly said that that amenities like video games room and bars led to a fun environment previously crafted by organizations like Facebook:

> They try to create just like a really fun atmosphere just for the simple fact that we are a tech company. And that’s just kind of how it rolls. That’s pretty normal and…Facebook and a couple other websites in [redacted] and stuff and they all are pretty similar in that way. We all have a bunch of really fun stuff.

Indeed, organizations often respond to uncertainty by giving into social processes like mimicking (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). In this case, the participants explain that as organizations try to identify with the “cool” tech industry, they often mimic the work perks of successful organizations like Facebook and Google.

Even so, one participant in the “cool” tech industry pondered whether his organization used any strategic rationale for supplying work perks or beyond simply meeting the “informal” “cool” tech industry standard. Landon talked about the negatives and positives involved with work perk distribution at his work, but that:

> I don’t know if they necessarily thought of those things before putting them in place or if they just said, ‘Ok, cool we’re a startup company and we need to do all the cool start up

> things that tech-exec companies like Google are doing.’ Or if they actually thought them through and thought that these would be some of the benefits they could get into companies if they could get some of these amenities out there. I think sometimes some of the mangers [are] a little near sighted.

Where some people like Molly and Justin were more certain their organizations were trying to mimic Facebook for substantive reasons, others like Landon thought mimicking was more superficial.

Consistent with to DiMaggio and Powell’s (1983) stance on organizational uncertainty, two participants perceived the insecurities organizations felt as the tried to match their work perks to industry standards. For example, Haley explained that her work was active in receiving work perk feedback from employees:

> They actually worry, they are always asking if this is a place that you recommend to someone, would you bring them to work here? I would say, ‘yes’ because it’s gives you all the tools you need to work. People are always worrying, but on top of that they add a bunch of perks that I have never seen anywhere else.

These insecurities felt by organizations about whether or not they were “being tech” was furthered when one of Nick’s investors came into the office:

> When we first started, we were like in a little office in the basement. One of our investors said, ‘Look, if you are going to business with [a “cool” tech industry leader], you need to look like you’re a big boy. Get some nice furniture, get bigger views.’ So I think when they’re bringing customers around, I think it’s to make them feel like, ‘OK this is a real business.’

The “cool” tech participant’s insight into insecurities showed the tension between implementing work perks similar to Facebook and Google and actually making others believe that the work perks signaled the organization as a part of the “cool” tech industry and being a “real business.”

In contrast, participants associated with the “traditional” tech industry noted that their organizations found little need to be like Facebook or Google because the organizations were typically already established. Hannah, who worked for a company associated with the “traditional” tech industry, explained:

> Companies value experience so at [redacted], for example, does want new blood, it does want younger people to come, but they’re not going to put up clouds lamps for their offices and things like that... There’s more stress on the ability to produce and to be adults.

Dan elaborated on the ways the “cool” industry differed from the “traditional industry in terms of work perk implementation:

> I think that you’ll see much more attention to quality of amenities. Certainly in the tech world you’ll see that. There’s a broader selection of food, generally a lot more available around the clock, sometimes it’s free to the employees. You know better selection of drinks, of coffees. Things like that I that… I think at a company like [redacted] one of the more established companies. It tends to be more conservative in terms of what’s offer.

Both Hannah and Dan felt that that the “traditional” tech industry has little reason to offer the work perks typically seen within the “cool” tech industry because their organizations were already established as desirable places to work, and as Hannah, said they do not need to cater or recruit the Millennial work force.

Showing off

According to a few participants related to the "cool" tech industry, their organizations also showed off work perks to outsiders in order to signal their status in the industry. For example, Landon said:

> We have had big product launch events where we will invite our customers in to sort of walk around our office. You know show them the new product that we're offering. Umm, at times it feels like their kind of showing off the office as well. 'Hey look at how cool we are, we have a nap room.'

Similarly, Jim's position required that he bring in sales clients to see the space:

> Yeah, we'll host little industry events here and there at the office. But I'll bring clients in, like agency partners, for lunch and meetings. And it's great because of a lot of them like to see the space. It's a kind of fun place and I think a lot of people are excited and proud to see the [redacted] facilities.

Bob also said, "There's a little bit of showing off in there. The VP of sales brings them to the CEO and they are proud of the office and the culture. Rightly so, and so they do show it off. Like here's the break room, here's some guys playing guitar." The participants perceptions of showing of work perks involve two parts: 1) The organization is signaling "cool" tech industry status through showing off the work perks and 2) The organization is garnering client support through impressing outsiders with the work perks.

In addition to showing off spaces to clients, friends and family members were sometimes welcomed into these spaces. Molly talked about how her organization was hosting an upcoming launch party for an alcohol brand and that friends and family were invited. She said, "And we're very much encouraged to invite friends and family and who ever we want to the office so that they can enjoy with us." Jim also said his organization encouraged employees to bring in friends and family to take part in work perks. He said it creates a "great environment for friends, family, and clients to sort of share that experience." Whereas for Kelly, a participant associated with the "non-tech" industry, new security measures led to friends and family being shut out from the campus. Participants within the "cool" tech industry found their organizations were able to signal industry status by allowing outsider like clients, friends, and family to share in the experience because showing off the perks allowed for greater exposure.

Optimizing talent

In addition to participants believing that industry status could be signaled through work perks, they also noted that work perks could signal "tech" and "non-tech" occupational status. The participants noted that organizations used work perks to cater towards software engineers. Specifically, participants perceived that organizations used work perks to signal organizational identification with "tech" occupations in order to recruit, retain, and optimize the talents of software engineers. For example, Landon, an accountant for a tech company, recognized that his organization was not directing the work perks towards him. He explained:

> [Amenities] are really driven by the need for software engineers. Like an accounting company is not going to spend all of this money on [meal] accounts for accountants because we're just not that valuable as software engineers, and we're not as hard to find. So it's really a result of this new wave of a new skill set that has come onto the scene in the last ten, twenty, thirty years. That's super necessary for tech companies to have if they want to be competitors in the market.

Participants with "tech" occupations, like software engineers, were also aware that work perks were catered towards them. Justin, a software engineer, explained:

> There is a security company that we actually hire that apparently doesn't have access to everything... We've basically got 90% engineer and 10% support staff so a lot of our policies don't consider people who aren't engineers.

Participants perceive that the work perks used in the "cool" tech industry could signal occupational status because they are specifically geared toward "tech" occupations in order to recruit and increase productivity.

Participants note that work perks are used to specifically recruit those with "tech" occupations. The participants in this study often point to work perks that provide socialization, convenience, and collaboration as key selling points for future organizational members. Bob explained that the organization is trying to attract other software engineers like himself through work perks. He said, "To me, it seems this was done to attract the right talent. I think from my side the HR folks at my office are actively asking, 'What should we do to make people happy?'" Landon also perceived the work perks as recruiting tools for new software engineers because of the desirable outcomes. He explained:

> I think [amenities are] more of like a recruiting tool. Like maybe, 'Hey, come work for us, you'll never have to pay for lunch or dinner again'… We do bring in a lot of college students and give them tours of the office to sort of build a good relationship with the college… and we're trying to establish that we're a cool tech company to work for out of college.

Participants recognize that work perks signal the need for "tech" occupations because the work perks act as an effective lure for new recruits to sign contracts with their organizations.

Even participants associated with the "traditional" tech industry use a variety of work perks to recruit "tech" occupations. For example, Dan, who worked for a more "conservative" tech company said:

> Well they provide the ping pong and foosball table because I would say we have a pretty large, or at least recent percentage, of recent college hires in IT, so its all technology, so a lot of young technologists which is important for us to be able to recruit. It's just to create an atmosphere that's going to be conducive to a much younger employee group.

According to "traditional" tech industry participants, their organizations use similar recruiting methods as the "cool" tech industry to signal their interest and identification with "tech" occupations. "Traditional" tech also uses a variety their own benefit-centric work perks to entice workers identified with "tech" occupations. Hannah explained:

> That they want to attract people that are going to want to stay. We have other competing companies for tech brains in the area… And often, depending on the personality of our tech employees they do better in one environment over another. So [redacted] has very competitive benefits, they want to keep people that way.

Participants in both "cool" and "traditional" tech industries reported that their organizations are utilizing work perks to signal their interest in filling "tech" occupations.

In addition to recruitment, participants perceived that work perks were used to optimize the productivity of workers who held "tech" occupations. Jim explained that the work perks provided convenience to workers so that they could get more work done throughout the day:

> The idea is that by providing a lot of these little details, some of these creature comforts, through out the day, it kind of gives employees one less thing to think about. One less thing to worry about so they can focus on the work they want to accomplish through out

> the day… And really, a lot of it is about convenience. The idea being that if we make a lot of these things as convenient as possible to free people up and sort of focus on what they want to get done.

Participants like Justin, who held a “tech” occupation, explained that he was frustrated that his organization did not supply the needed conveniences, like a late night café, to allow him to do his job as a software engineer. He explained that he would like to not have to go home if he forgot a meal:

> I think I’d prefer that a lot so I could be working when I want to work. Not all the time. I want to work when I’m feeling in the mood for that. And having to do extra work in order to work is annoying. Having to get food somewhere so that I can eat in the office is frustrating, and I’d like to remove that frustration.

The participants note organizations use work perks to identify “tech” occupations because they specifically allow these workers to put in more hours to do their job correctly. Work perks that promoted recruitment, retention, and talent optimization were all factors that led to signaling “tech” occupations. Cool tech organizations invest in these work perks, but participants report beneficial outcomes in terms of interest, loyalty, and production.

Entitlement

Participant’s references to entitlement offered further evidence that work perks signaled both occupation and industry identification. In particular, participants in “tech” and “non-tech” occupations noted that work perks often led to issues of entitlement. Entitlement is not uniformly defined within academic literature but instead is operationalized depending on the setting and linguistic meaning (Asmuß & Oshima, 2012). To participants, entitlement seemed to refer to expectations of work perk implementation because of their industry and/or occupation. For example, participants pointed out that entitlement was common in everyday conversation and there were joke emails making fun of work perks like oversized monitors and massage chairs. Todd expressed his concern that entitlement was tied to the occupation when he said:

> [Work perks do] tend to foster some sort of workplace entitlement among a lot of employees. There is an attitude of, 'Oh I work for [Redacted],' there is this expectation that this should be done for me on the amenities staff sometime. Like people complain like it used to be better or something, or they didn't cut my strawberries for me. Like that kind of stuff. Where you are like, this is absolutely ridiculous, are you kidding me, it's free. So that kind of entitlement does exist in some way. It's kind of also a joke and maybe stereotyped a little bit. People will kind of put on this air of I'm so entitled because it has a seed of truth.

He goes on to say, "Another example of that, there is mailing list that has examples of this. Almost kind of tongue and cheek. 'Oh my 30-inch monitor is blocking the view of mountains at my desk.' So this giant monitor is blocking their amazing view out their window. This little bit of entitlement can get a little bit ridiculous." Molly's organization has an ongoing email thread that made fun of the $10,000 massage chair the CEO bought:

> When we got the massage chair, someone sent a gif of like somebody giving a thumbs up and just like gifs and people started a photoshopping stuff war. And then it just like snowballs… I'll check my email and I'll have like 50 emails from this one thing being like 'Oh here's a massage chair.' And then it's, like, a million gifs.

Landon, also noted, that the nap room provided by his organization was a running joke because it was not "tech enough" for the workers to actually use. The entitlement developed through organizations willingness to supply work perks in "tech" occupations create running jokes at the organization's expense.

For workers in "non-tech" occupations who provided the work perks as part of their job position for "tech" workers, the entitlement could be disheartening. Phil, who creates work perk spaces, explained that he felt under appreciated by those in "tech" occupations.

> I think a lot of people take that stuff for granted… The people I work with are basically like, we're going to provide those services for the employees and we receive a lot of complaints about all the free stuff we get. It's just kind of disheartening to hear that you're trying to make things better for people and all they do is complain about it. It's just kind of a strange situation, I guess. The free fruit and free beverage really drives people and I think people have just really taken those for granted.

He goes on to talk about how entitlement arose at the Christmas party due to those in "tech" occupations taking advantage of the party's offering:

> Like I know back at Christmas… they told the chef, 'Hey, there'll be about 300 people' so he made cookies for the event. I think he made like 600 cookies and some of the people went down there and they were just, like, stuffing their pockets with cookies. And everyone started complaining 'Oh well I didn't get a cookie? How come you guys didn't make enough cookies?' He made like 600 cookies for 300 people, and people were complaining that they didn't get down there in time to get a cookie. So that's something that we see, that you know people really feel that they are entitled to their free cookie when they have events. It's not really something that [redacted] says, 'Hey, if you come down, you are going to get a free cookie'… I think for some reason they think they are entitled to those amenities every time. If they see their buddy got free cookies then

they're upset they didn't get one cookie. It's really sort of childish. It's just something that we have to deal with on occasion.

Participants point to how workers in "tech" occupations presumably need certain work perks to do their jobs, but signaling the occupation as one that ties to certain work perks led to feelings of entitlement. Participants in both "tech" and "non-tech" occupations noted the relationship between work perks and entitlement. In sum, theme one illustrates how these participants perceive that organizations use work perks to signal both industry and occupation within the "cool" tech industry and amongst "tech" occupations.

Willing to pay the price for seemingly free work perks

The second theme illustrated participant's reports that there was often at a cost in using work perks but they were often willing to use the work perks and pay the price in part or in full. This theme arose from the research question: How do organizational members rationalize their own use and disuse of work perks? When researching how organizational members make choices, scholars often examine organizational autonomy and control (e.g. Cheney, 1983; Barker, 1993). *Organizational autonomy* is the freedom, independence, and discretion an individual has to control their own organizational life (Hackman & Oldham, 1975); whereas, *organizational control* is the way that professional socialization, cultural norms, and supervision constrain workplace behaviors (Kunda, 1992). The participants talked about how they decide which work perks they used, but often defaulted to what seemed to be in the best interest of the organization and what was convenient.

Despite the participant's apparent ability to say "yes" or "no" to work perks, the participants still made choices in terms of the organizations' best interest. For example, Molly ostensibly had the ability to use the video game room and bar whenever she wanted, but said that there were expectations to get work done first before taking breaks:

> I mean, I can say that I probably use everything but just not maybe as often as some people do… As an editor, it really is way harder for me to stop working to go do stuff that other people who are, like, junior buyers or like on our design team…Their days are like way more flexible that ours. I have certain times that I have to have stuff done. We all work on a schedule, so I have to start a post that go up during the day. So if I'm not doing those, then it seems like I can get up and go play pool for like 20 minutes. But I mean like, it's all based on like did I get something done at home that morning. So that way I can go play later.

Thus, Molly's work commitments dictated when and how often she could use the work perks. In contrast, Molly believed other people in the company had greater flexibility in using the work perks because of fewer and more flexible job responsibilities.

Perceiving a Double-Edge Sword

Two individuals explicitly referred to work perks as the *double-edged sword* in which the work perks had both a negative and a positive effect (see Rogerson-Revell, 2007). For example, Kelly, who worked in a "non-tech" industry, but had access to an array of work perks, felt that having the cafeteria onsite limited ability to separate work and non-work time.

> I think it's a double-edged sword. Because it provided incentive for you, for me, to work longer in some regards. These other work setting where those amenities aren't available, people tend to take a break from their work environment and go to get lunch or go to work out somewhere, which kind of gives your mind a mental break. The disadvantage to

> having that all here is that you are here longer, so it kind of co-mingles your work with that aspect of your life.

Similarly, Landon said work perk implementation can also lead to unexpected consequences in terms of lost time:

> Sometimes it does promote behavior that [the managers] may not be after like spending 20 minutes on [the meal account] because you can't decide what you want to eat. Like that's probably not something they would want that lowers productivity… I think it's sort of a double-edged sword. Overall, as an employee it makes me happy… but there is definitely challenges around it. But I think the challenges pale in comparison to the benefits.

Although just two participants talked explicitly about the double-edged sword, almost all participants had at least one example of a time where they felt they were putting in extra time, networking, and energy in order to make up for their work perk use.

Expressing Concerns for Paying the Price

Participants consistently expressed concerns that work perks came at a price, which was typically their own time. Haley mentioned the work perks create an attractive workspace that allowed her to live a certain lifestyle, but that she recognized what she had to give up to enjoy the perks. She said:

> It's nice to work at an office and have all these nice perks available to you and to people that you get along with. I think that's why they do it. On the other side, I think it's also to keep you working longer.

Haley also mentioned that although the food was free, it also came with the price of coming in early to get the breakfast. She says, "You're getting free breakfasts, it's not really free. At the end of the day, they are getting you in the office at 8 o'clock and you are probably going to be more productive." Similarly, Molly's organization provides unlimited vacation, which allowed her to go anywhere at anytime, but there was an expectation to meet deadlines while away:

> I mean when I've gone kind of on vacations, and while it sucks to kind of have to work on vacations, it's nice that I can go whenever I want. We all have as much vacation as we want. We all certain have days. We don't all get two weeks. As long as you get your work done, you can do like anything. You can go wherever you want. It's pretty awesome. Nobody's paid by the hour, we're all paid salary. I mean if I was paid by the hour, I can guarantee I'd be making a lot more money. We'd all have like ridiculous overtime, I'm sure.

Bob also had unlimited vacation, but he said he needed to be on good terms with his boss to be able to utilize the work perk.

> So the vacation policy it's a new thing that's up and coming… There's no tallying or anything like that. I like that personally for me that's actually a plus… This policy allows me that if I have a good relationship with the boss and I do hard work when I'm work and if I have some time off than I feel like I have a good amount of vacation in.

Participants were grateful that their organizations provided work perks like free breakfasts and unlimited vacation, but each noted that they that had to give something back in order to fully take advantage of the work perks.

Receiving Direct and Indirect Messages about Correct Use of Work Perks

Participants reported that they received direct and indirect messages related to how they should correctly use the work perks. For example, Molly's organization supplied the workers with an open bar, but the organization was not always direct in how the bar should be used. She said that “people had been fired” for overusing the bar, but often were not warned about overdoing it until they were reprimanded. She also said that overuse in the bar had led to policy changes:

> We used to all have 24 access to the building, but people were going up there and pre-gaming before we went to [a bar] because we are also in downtown. They were drinking all the alcohol and then leaving the place an absolute mess. So now only certain people, only like managers have like access, like 24 hour access.

The indirect messages were also seen as Todd talked about how it was typical in his organization to take shorter lunch breaks because of the onsite cafeteria. It was a part of policy, but people did not take advantage of their hour-long lunch because of indirect messages sent by the organizations.

> If you are going out, you feel like you almost have to take the entire hour of your lunch because that’s what you’re afforded. Whereas, it’s way easier to go to a place and sit down eat in twenty minutes, half hour and go back to work if you’re so inclined. No one is saying, like no one’s ever standing over you saying, ‘Well you should take half an hour because it’s free or you should take the entire hour.’ But if I was in the middle of something or meetings, it’s really nice to only go fifteen, twenty minutes and go back to work.

Thus, even as participants reported receiving direct messages like “you should drink” or “you have an hour lunch,” they more often pointed to indirect and more ambiguous and contradictory messages received through the organization about using work perks.

Participants reported use and disuse of work perks is consistent with Marino and Zábojník’s (2008) argument that work perks must be complementary to the amount of time an employee is willing to spend using the perk. Namely, participants found work perks more useful if the work perks were easily accessible. For example, many of the participants did not use the on-site gyms. The gyms proved to be time wasters because the gyms were far from convenient in terms of access. For Phil, the gym meant many trips to the car in order to cart out sweaty clothes. For Todd, the gym was lacking the necessary equipment and it was more effective to go to his own gym. Dan, however, wanted a gym onsite because:

> I think it would be something I use, I think it would create a stress reliever. I think probably the first thing people sacrifice when they're under demanding work schedules is probably physical exercise. It would help to bring that back in for both the employee and the company.

Ironically, participants gave up opportunities to achieve health by not using the gym, even though exercise prove beneficial to both the employee and the organization in terms of health and productivity.

Maximizing Work Perk Benefits, yet Minimizing Individual Autonomy

Still, some participants believed that employees were less willing to reflect on their work perk usage. Participants said workers sometimes acted in a very mechanical way as they used work perks in order to maximize potential benefits. Jim said many of the workers put little thought into the work perks they use:

> There are a lot of people who think about it in a very mechanical way and they want to maximize as many benefits as possible in any given day so if [redacted]'s going to offer them free dinner then mathematically is makes no sense for them to pay for dinner elsewhere.

Referring back to how “tech” occupation’s can influence work perk use, Haley said that many of “tech” workers had never experienced anything outside of tech and took the work perks for granted:

> There’s basically people who have worked in tech companies for a long time and are used to the work amenities, so they use them like nothing, but they don’t over use them just because they’re free. Like for them it’s like a common thing and then there’s those who probably haven’t ever tried and they try to be like, ‘Oh free lunch, put a lot of food on my plate.’

There were examples of participants not recognizing what they were giving up in terms of autonomy whenever work perks were provided on site. For example, Jamie talked about how the kitchen and catered lunches provided space for worker to socialize and bond to the point that her workplace was her family. Yet, most workers were somewhat reflective in realizing that work perks often came at a price and that were willing to pay that price because of the perceived value. For example, there were those workers who decide to buy into the work perks because the organizations were willing to meet those basic needs to optimize its workforce. Jamie found that the work perks made the job worth it:

> I think that… people need coffee when they work. People need food when they work. And I mean, just by default, most of us don’t even leave the building to go to lunch. You rarely need- I mean everything is right here- unless you need to do some separate shopping or something, people don’t leave the building.

Jane also found few reasons to leave the building because everything, including a convenience store was provided to her onsite. Some participants did not view work perks as total control devices, but instead noted that work perks showed their organizations cared for them.

Despite having the ability to avoid things like the gym, participants were willing to use work perks because they provided convenience and fun. They recognized the fact that the work perks they chose to use operated as part of an exchange. They turned their lunchtime into a working period because they received free food, and they would avoid using things like video game rooms until they felt like they had put in an appropriate amount of work. Participants often did not use think about the long-term costs, because work perks were so seductive in terms of their short-term value. Molly provided an insightful metaphor for this willing tradeoff when she talked about how she would grab a plate to eat, but work through lunch with out finishing the meal:

> Getting lunch here is awesome, but… it's almost not, like, a break because I'll just get my food and then go back to my desk and work while I eat. So, sometimes its great and other times its like, 'Dude, I just want to, like, go somewhere so I can stop working and just eat,' so I can focus on eating. A lot of the times, people will come by desk and be like '[Molly] you only ate half of that.' And I'll think to myself, 'Oh, I got busy.' So, when I start working I just forget about eating.

Despite the fact that Molly took advantage of the free meals, the price was that she is not able to eat because she was working through lunch. Thus, even as the participants understood that there were tradeoffs with using work perks they were willing to pay the price because they perceived the work perks a valuable, convenient, and a standard provided by the "cool" tech industry.

Chapter Five: Discussion

The purpose of this study is to examine how organizational workers in the tech industry perceive the organizational function of work perks and how participants rationalize their own use and disuse of work perks. Prior to this study, work perks had primarily been examined by the popular press as a growing industry trend and key contributor to "Best Places to Work Lists" (e.g. DeSilver, 2014, n.p.; "Top 100 companies", 2015). This study seeks to better understand how work perks affect the organizational lives of contemporary workers particularly in the tech industry. Analysis of interviews with participants who had access to work perks revealed two key themes: First, participants reported that organizations often use work perks to signal industry and occupational identification. Second, participants are aware they are exchanging time and energy to use work perks, but were willing to pay the price for seemingly free work perks. These findings provide at least two key theoretical contributions to organization identification and research on unobtrusive control.

Theoretical Implications

First, by examining the research question—how do organizational members perceive the function of work perks—these findings expand understandings of organizational identification. *Organizational identification* is the bond formed between an individual and the organization that leads to individual conviction and a willingness to devote increased time and effort to the organization (Barnard, 1968). Whereas research on organizational identification typically focuses on how individuals identify with organizations—that is, an individual identifies with a collective—these findings suggest that organizational identification may also occur when organizations identify with industry and/or occupation—that is, a collective identifies with a collective. Similar to how individuals attempt to relate and identify with the organization the organization is also capable of evoking perceptions of oneness with or belongingness to industry and occupation. A tenant of organizational identification is that individuals signal their identification to various organizational targets through engaging in behavior that signals loyalty and similar organizational values (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008). Similarly, these participants suggested and are aware that organizations signal identification with industry and occupation through the implementation of work perks. Specifically, organizations signal identification with a specific industry or occupation by providing material work perks (e.g., bars, nap rooms, cafeterias) and by talking about how work perks allowed the organization to "be tech" and "be cool."

Thus, within the context of "cool" tech industry, organizations seem to be motivated to provide work perks because they allowed them to signal their identification with the "tech" occupation and "cool" tech industry. The organization benefits from identification by being able to mimic similar standards set by archetype companies and in turn, successfully recruit new member. Figure 1 illustrates how some organizations may identify with targeted occupations and industries. Although the findings relate to the "cool" tech industry and "tech" occupations, research could apply this model to future studies of other industries and occupations. On the left side of the figure, the participants report that organizations want to signal their identification with an occupation. The participants believe their organizations desire to signal their identification with "tech" occupations through the use of work perks in an effort to recruit, retain, and optimize the talent of the "tech" occupation archetype: the software engineer. Similarly, on the right side of the figure, the participants report organizations intend to signal its identification with an industry in order to "be tech" and "be cool" through the use of work perks. These findings show the organizations desired to signal their identification with the "cool" tech industry by mimicking the industry archetype's work perks and showing off those work perks to outsiders. The participants also report their own identification with occupation and industry in that they are in a "tech" occupation and part of the "cool" tech industry. The participants' collective identity is also tied to the occupation and industry in the same way the organization's identity is tied to the occupation and industry.

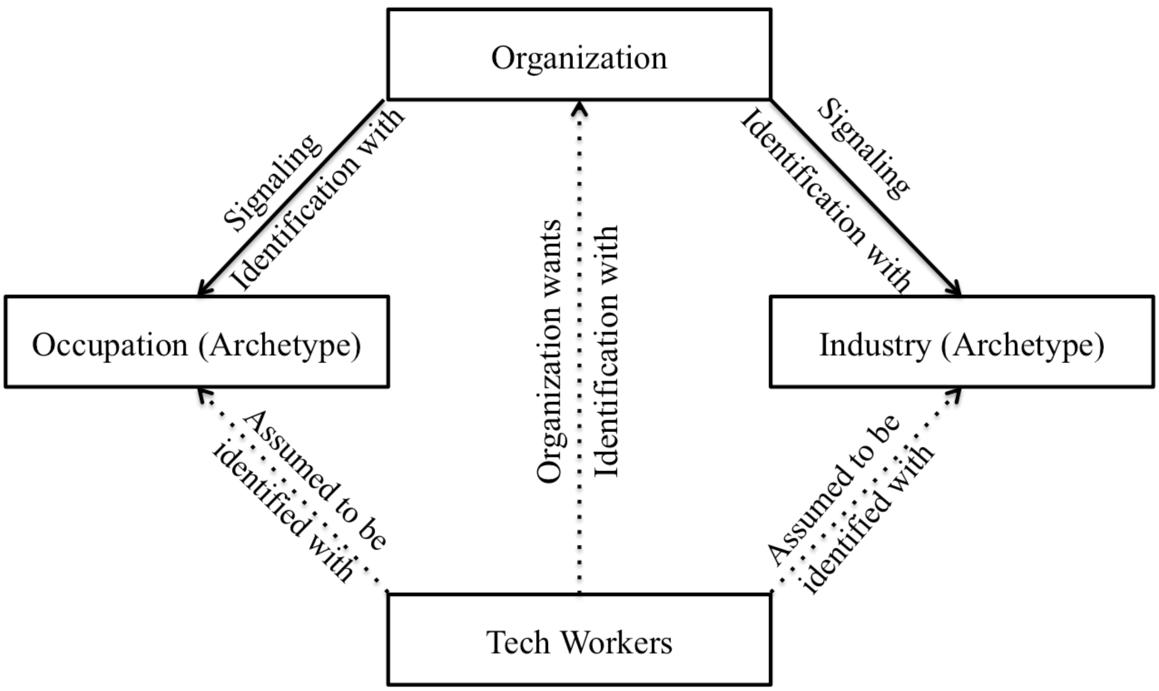

Figure 1: Occupation and Industry Identification

Specifically, participants also assume the tech workers identify with the occupation and industry through social identification. *Social identification* says that people tend to categorize themselves into different social categories like religion and organizational membership (Tajfel & Turner, 1985). Social identification is tied to organizational identification in that the membership means that people reify the characteristics common to all members and will chose acitivites attached those characteristics (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). For participants in "cool" tech industry, they felt they needed to take part in work perks, stay late, and take part in collaborative process because those actions are key to "being tech." In these data, I categorized participants into different industry and occupational categories through their own descriptive language (Turner, 1985). Many people share identities across groups (Tajel & Turner, 1985), which allowed participants in "non-tech" occupations to still identify with the "cool" tech industry because they had access to similar work perks and cultural influencers as the "tech" occupations.

In addition, social identification within the "tech" occupation could also be tied to the entitlement trend addressed by participants because it was common characteristic (Ashforth & Mael, 9185) displayed and mentioned through their insights. Although identification and internalization of values are not completely related (Hogg & Turner, 1987), it is common for people who strongly identify with a collective to share common values. It the case of participants in "tech" occupations, work perks were highly valued and expected as part of the occupation. This belief in occupational standards led to feelings of entitlement where work perks were taken for granted or made fun of for not meeting the "tech" standards.

In addition, social identification theory may also explain organizations attempts to identify with the "cool" tech industry archetype. *Archetypes* are typically thought to be "[i]ndividuals [that] influence our impression of the group to which they belong, and, conversely, what we think of the group predisposes us to a particular impression of those who form it" (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969). However, archetypes are similar to *eponyms*, which are person, places, and things for which the original is named. For example, tissues are commonly called Kleenex because Kleenex sets the industry standard. The participants explained how organizations use a set of informal standards to collectively target (Börkey & Lévêque, 2000) an identity provided by companies like Facebook and Google. Thus, Facebook and Google are the "cool" industry's eponym. Participants in the "cool" tech industry reported that their companies would often implement work perks that were similar to Facebook and Google's work perks, and that there organizations would not implement work perks if Facebook and Google had not standardized work perk-centric cultures. These archetypes' work perks likely allowed organizations to follow an informal guideline on how to attempt Google and Facebook's cultural and financial success.

Further research needs to be done to see whether these findings extend to other organization outside of "cool" tech that identifying with similar archetypal occupations and industry standards. For example, two of the four "non-tech" industry participants had work perks similar to "cool" tech industry participants. The "non-tech" participant's descriptive language of why their organizations provided work perks did not carry over into the industry or occupational sense. They seemed to tie work perk valuing to the individual and organization. A more generalizable sample is needed to further this model to industries outside of "cool" tech.

Second, by answering the research question—how do organizational members rationalize their own use and disuse of work perks—these findings add to the scholarly conversation concerning unobtrusive control. Unobtrusive control is the process by which organizational members are guided to make organizationally relevant decisions through the manager's ambiguous messaging (Tompkins & Cheney, 1985; Cheney, 1983) because they want their employees to make choices that follow the values of the organization (Tompkins & Cheney, 1985). The values determined by the organization relate back to organizational identification where the group members with strong identification will create their own social rules to dictate how themselves and others follow the organizational code of conduct (Barker, 1993). These participants are willing to let work perks dictate how they work within the organization, and they do so with a group mentality. For example, people on the same team go to lunch at the same time and arrive back before their lunch break is over. Whereas unobtrusive control typical considers the indirect and covert nature of control messages (Coller, 1996), the participants showed that they were somewhat aware of the indirect control messages associated with material items. For example, the participants recognized that their organizations were providing work perks that provided convenience, fun, and relaxation in exchange for time, energy, and productivity. The findings shows unobtrusive control is still present when workers are aware of the indirect control messaging, yet are still willing to follow the values set out by the messaging.

In fact, participants show that they are enacting (pseudo)autonomy. *(Psuedo)autonomy* suggests that participants are aware, if not briefly, of present control mechanism, and have the opportunity not to engage in those mechanisms but do so anyways. The participants are aware that they organization is indirectly trying to optimize workers productivity by providing desirable work perks, but the participants still use the work perks with little hesitation. Employees receive positive outcomes from work perks, but the findings show that work perks act as exchange mechanisms. The organization puts work perks into place in order to receive a productive outcome from its employees and acts as a guise for control (Kunda, 1986). An outcome of unobtrusive control is that workers conform to the norms and values of the organizations through the use of indirect messaging about the ideal worker (Weiland, 2010). In the case of these findings, participants used work perks in a way that signaled themselves as the ideal worker. They often took shorter lunches and extended their working hours because the organization provided them with free food. They also often created core friend group within the organization because they were provided with social spaces and alcohol. The indirect message provided by the work perks is that participants felt they needed to stay at the organization longer even if it was just for a Friday night happy hour.

The participants showed they had a difficult time navigating between control and autonomy (Evans, 1995) as they enjoyed the short-term benefits provided by the work perks. Compare this to "traditional" tech workers who were more concerned about whether their organization was providing long-term benefits like retirement plans and big salaries. Very few participants were able to resist the draw of convenient and fun work perks despite their knowledge that the work perks were sending indirect and covert control messages. The participants allowed their agency to be undermined because they put their entire identity into the organization (Rose, 1998) through agentic self-abnegation where they relinquished control (Rosso, Dekas, & Wrzesniewski, 2010) in favor of the work perks. The participants talked about how the work perks are fun, free, and social, which are all short-term effects. What the participants did not seem to think about was the long term outcome where these work perks do very little over time, but the control messages may lead to high stress and less of a work-life balance even as the organization is able to achieve optimal results through employee's identification.

Practical Implications

The two theoretical contributions to organizational identification and unobtrusive control provide a variety of organization and individual applications. There is a draw to work perks for organizations and individuals because of desirable outcomes for identity and personal gain, but the findings show that there are risks when either organizations or individuals blindly engage in work perks.

Participant reports suggest that not only are organizations able use work perks to identify with targeted occupations and industry, organizations can also use work perks to garner loyalty and productivity outcomes. Participants talked about how they enjoyed the work and the experience was also highlighted through the implementation of work perks. Nevertheless, issues can arise when organizations implemented work perks similar to Facebook and Google without considering the organization's actual needs. The findings show that some work perks were both overused (e.g. bars) and others underused (e.g. nap rooms and gyms) because the organization did not consider whether these work perks were actually a good fit for their workers. There were issues with expensive work perks being made fun of in ongoing email chains and entitlement was an emerging issue when "tech" workers came to expect high-end work perks. In addition, organizations wishing to implement work perks may face tensions as some workers— like contract, temporary and administrative— are not provided with the same work perk access as "tech" workers for both cultural and legal reasons. Organizations need to take the time to consider what work perks will function best within the culture because blindly implementing work perks does not turn an organization into Google overnight. Even so, Google's image and message may not be the right fit for every facet of the "cool" tech industry.

For the individual, work perks may provide opportunities for fun, convenience, and cost cutting. The findings show that participants were appreciative that they did not have to worry about cooking meals or spending money on yoga classes. They also found the video game rooms and bars to be fun as well as great spaces to bond with their co-workers. Nevertheless, the workplace is already a seductive environment (Sullivan & Lewis, 2001) and including desirable work perks makes it easier to spend more time at work. For example, some participants talked about how the work perks, like free dinners, cut into nightly recreation time. Even as past work-life balance literature shows that workers are able to resist the draw of work-life policies (Lupton, 1997), these findings show that workers may have a more difficult time resisting work perks that provide fun, convenience, and socialization despite spending more time in the office.

Whereas workers are able to resist work-life policies, this research show that participants had a harder resisting material work perks. The contradiction literature found in leisure studies talks about how workers feel they cannot use policies (Putnam, Myers, & Gaillard, 2013), but this research show participants often felt pressures to follow the indirect messages sent by the organizations about how they should use and not use work perks. There were examples of participants being pressured to work on vacation because the organization supplied unlimited vacation time. The inability to escape from work highlights Strauss-Blasche, Ekmekcioglu, and Marktl's (2005) findings that vacation time can cause extra stress for employees. The work-life balance was an intended consequence of many of the work perks because they allowed participants to unwind, but they end up spending extended time at work in order to take advantage of the work perks (Crouter, Bumpus, Head, & McHale, 2001). Therefore, organizations interested in implementing work perks are faced with several conundrums. The organization intends to identify with the industry and the occupation through work perks, but if done incorrectly, they face worker tension, entitlement, and work perk disuse. Individuals supplied with work perks are may find them tempting, but they need to be aware that these work perks are exchange mechanisms that require additional time and energy because of organizational values centered around the material good.

Limitations and Future Research

There are limitations involved in any research project. Even as the purposeful sample allowed me to compare and contrast individuals in and outside of the tech industry in order to understand how participants perceived organizational work perk implementation and their own use and disuse of work perks, these results should not be generalized because the sample population was highly focused on the tech industry. This study involved self-report data, and providing a future observation approach would allow for insights to be connected to actions. Future research should consider recruiting a random, representative sample to produce more generalizable results.

In terms of expanding the sample population, the participants all worked for U.S. companies, so a population that compares different nationalities would allow for understanding as to how work perks function across cultures. There were few gender differences noted in the findings, but gender specific questions might highlight some of the workplace leisure literature concerning work-life policy differences between men and women (e.g. Maume, 2006). Age was not taken into account for this study, but might prove useful in comparing work perk experiences between generational cohorts. Therefore I recommend, a random sample of participants be used to generate a more generalizable understanding how of people perceive the growing trends of work perks outside of the tech industry. I recommend scholars use industry reports to determine whether work perks are a worthwhile investment for organizations. By comparing interviews of participant experiences to quantitative data, organizations may be more successful in implementing work perks that lead to satisfied individuals and better financial outcomes. By studying work perks, scholars stand to understand how work perks affect quality of workers lives in and outside the “cool” tech industry. By combining both critical perspective and extensive research, both control and identify issues will be better understood as mechanism within the contemporary workplace.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study aims to understand how organizational members perceive the organizational functions of work perks as well as how organizational members rationalized their own use and disuse of work perks. Many of the work perks seen in this study seem essential to the ideal workplace environment. Work perks make the office an adult playground of slides, alcohol, nap rooms, and video games, but as the *New York Times* article illustrates and the findings show, there are more nefarious elements at play when workers are given with fun and convenience providing work perks. The findings show that organizations use work perks to signal their own identification with the industry and occupations with the intention of gaining status and finding the right talent. And yet, organizations also provide work perks to gain productivity and time from their "tech" workers at the cost of their worker's agency. There is an ongoing interplay between organizational identification and unobtrusive control in that workers who identify with the occupation and industry are willing to act in way that organizations value in exchange for work perks because it allows the workers to emulate the many facets of "tech." There are continual tensions present in workplace leisure literature as employees attempt to navigate what they want and the organization expects. This thesis adds to conversation by showing how even the most desirable incentives can lead to questions about how much control organizations have over their workforces.

Appendix A

Table 1: "Cool" Tech Industry

Name	Position	Tech Type	State	Amenities	Benefits	Key Point
Landon	Accountant	Startup	New York	Snack room, nap room, meal account	---	He enjoys his job and admits that many of the amenities his is offered would not be offered outside of the tech industry.
Molly	Copy Editor	Tech-lifestyle website	Texas	Massage chair, video game room, shuffleboard, open-bar, catered lunches	Unlimited vacation time	Previously, she worked for a news website and often compared the amenity difference between her past and current positions.
Haley	Translator	App company	California	Free breakfast, snacks, a discounted on-site coffee shop, a half-off gym reimbursement, educational course, massage, acupuncture, onsite yoga and Pilates classes	---	She limited her amenity use and tried to be aware of what amenities she used.
Jim	Sales manager	Multi-platform company	New York	Multiple free cafeterias, micro-kitchens, private spaces within the open	---	He used all of the amenities except for the gym studio. He also commented that the culture of New York leads to people wanting to workout more off campus.

				planned office, an on-site gym studio, subsidized gym memberships, limited massages, celebrity talks, technology help desks.		
Todd	IT integration	Multi-platform company	Japan	Free café, shower rooms, technology help desks, mini gym, showers, coffee bar,	Commute reimbursement	He used all of the amenities except for the gym, which did not have the equipment he needs.
Nick	Director	App company	Texas	Free drinks and beer, catered lunches once a week, on-site gym	---	He mentioned that his office tried to build up a culture to match the other tech companies in the area.
Melody	Product Manager	Online Magazine	D.C.	Common area, delivered coffee service, expensive coffee machine, private restaurant access	Unlimited vacation	There were some aspects of her job that she didn't like, but the unlimited vacation time made up for some of the smaller issues.

Jamie	Customer support	Software company	Texas	Free snacks and beverages, catered lunches, dogs are welcome	---	She mentioned that this tech company created a family atmosphere in that they are encouraged to bring in family and pets.
Tim	---	Online insurance	Texas	Cafeteria with a chain restaurant, gym, private access to walking trails, rotating food trucks	---	He commented that they were not very good at promoting things like the gym.
Bob	Technical architect	Startup	Massachusetts	Public transport reimbursement, gym reimbursement, a culture membership, guitars, ping pong table, coffee, and snacks	Unlimited vacation	He worked off location, but would like to see the culture of the office extended to other at-home workers.
Justin	Software engineer	Startup	Texas	Onsite gym, beverages, on-site café, sports courts, arcade, and ping pong	Four weeks of vacation and four weeks off for any other reason	He would work longer hours if he had access to the café at night.

Table 2: "Traditional" Tech Industry

Name	Position	Tech Type	State	Amenities	Benefits	Key Point
Phil	IT integration	Software company	Texas	Paid cafeteria with free soda dispensers and fruit bar, an on-site gym with personal trainers, an on-site nurse.	Loose three-week vacation policy with no real tracking, a one month sabbatical every four years, 401K is a five percent of their yearly salary and a percentage based bonus, they are also able to dole out money to each other based on helping each other out.	Despite having amenities, he considers the organization to be benefit centric.
Hannah	Business manager	Software company	Washington	---	Good insurance options, discounts on local	She used to work for a startup and mentioned that it is easy enough to put amenities into the office, but it is harder to provide financially for employees.

					services, pre-paid gym memberships, 401K 50% match, and stock options.	
Dan	Executive	Software for manufacture	Texas	Ping-pong and foosball table, cafeteria in a different building, chain coffee shop, and company technology like laptops and phones	Flex-time	He is offered flextime through his contract, but the nature of the work does not allow for it.
Jacob	Software engineer	Tech government contractor	Texas	Nice coffee maker	---	He argued for the positive impact of having the little things like a coffee maker

Table 3: "Non-tech" Industry

Name	**Position**	Org Type	**State**	**Amenities**	**Benefits**	**Key Point**
Rosa	Founder	Tech non-profit	Texas	Conference and music festival tickets	Medical stipend	She wished that she could provide 401Ks in order to teach her staff about saving money.

Kelly	Executive assistant	Retailer	Oregon	Paid onsite cafeteria, gym, sports trainers, company store with discounted rates.	---	She found that the cafeteria is over priced for the quality of the food. This differed greatly from the sentiment of other particpants with cafeteria access.
Jane	Office manager	Insurance	Oregon	Kitchen	3% IRA match and five weeks of vacation.	She also has more individual work perks like how she took her birthday off, her agent often bought lunch and coffee for the office, and there were little signs of appreciate like anniversary gift cards. The workers benefits grew the longer the spent with the company.
Jessica	Software engineer	Insurance company	Texas	Onsite gym, cafeteria, convenience store	---	She commented that she had little reason to leave the office during the day because of the amenities.

Appendix B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL(Semi-structured)

Project: *How people experience workplace amenities*

Demographic Data: married, be home, level of management

General Background

- Tell me a little about your role here at [name of organization]
- How would you describe a typical day for you here at [________________]
- Prompt: What is it like interactions with your peers and supervisors?
- Tell me about available workplace amenities. It could be things like…
    - *Prompt:* Describe how you use workplace amenities. (based on response to precious question)
    - *Prompt:* Describe how your co-workers/supervisors use amenity facilities…(based on response to precious question)
    - *Prompt:* Why do you think your organizations provides these?
    - *Prompt:* Do you think (ex. Provided food) is the same as (ex. Providing a game) in terms of amenity type?

Experiences With Workplace Amenities and the Organization:

- Academics call workplace amenities "leisure activities," what do you call personal enjoyment?
- Describe the reasons for using workplace amenities.
    - *Prompt:* If you don't take part in workplace amenities, why not?

- *Prompt:* What messages does the organization send you about available amenities?
- *Prompt:* What is your estimated amount of time spent using with workplace amenities?
- *Prompt:* How might you compare that to recreation time spent outside of work doing similar things?
- *Prompt:* How, if at all, do workplace amenities affect your work practices?
- *Prompt:* How, if at all, does management think workplace amenities affect your work practices?
- *Prompt:* What is an example of a recent conversation concerning workplace amenities with a co-worker? A supervisor?

Workplace Amenity Use

- Describe how you use workplace amenities in your work.
    - *Prompt:* Tell me a little about your experience with using workplace amenities
    - *Prompt:* Tell me about your experiences with a specific workplace amenity.
- Tell me a memorable story about using workplace amenity.
    - *Prompt:* Any more stories that stand out to you? One that is opposite to this one? Another one that is similar? Another one that is different?

- How have workplace amenities affected your workplace relationships?
    - *Prompt:* Can you describe some examples of this for me?
- How have workplace amenities affected your workplace practices?
    - *Prompt:* Can you describe some examples of this for me?
- How have workplace amenities affected workplace culture?
    - *Prompt:* Can you describe some examples of this for me?
- How have workplace amenities affected your employee/employer relationships?
    - *Prompt:* Can you describe some examples of this for me?
- Tell me about memorable story about something that made you---or someone you know—change how they used workplace amenities.
- Is there anything unique about how you use workplace amenities?
    - *Probe:* Have you modified the way you use workplace amenities compared to their intended use?
- Describe what ways, if any, you involve clients in your workplace amenities use.
- How do you talk about workplace leisure facilities with your supervisors?
- Tell me about your experience with workplace amenities.
    - *Probe:* How many different amenities have you used?
    - *Probe:* How many other organization affiliates have used workplace amenities?

Perspectives on workplace amenities

- What do you think about workplace amenities?

- *Prompt:* How do you see workplace amenities influencing your goals as an organizational member?
- *Prompt:* Describe what, if anything, you like about workplace amenities.
- *Prompt:* Describe, what, if anything, you don't like about workplace amenities.
- *Prompt:* Tell me about how workplace amenities impact your workload.

- Describe in what ways, if any, workplace amenities are changing the way you do your work.
- What do activities do you engage in when you are not at work?
- How have workplace amenities affected your recreational time outside of work?

Recommendations/Hypotheticals

- What advice would you give to someone new to using workplace amenities?
    - *Prompt:* Any favorite tips or tricks you could show me? Any others?
- What advice would you give to someone organizations promoting workplace leisure/recreation?
    - *Prompt:* What issues do you want them to consider?

Advice for management

- If you had full control over the design of workplace amenities, what would it be like?
    - *Prompts:* Tell me more.
    - *Prompt:* Is there anything you would include? Exclude?

- *Prompt:* How would it be promoted?
- *Prompt:* What features would it have? Who could access it?

- If you got to change anything about workplace leisure policies what would you change?

Closing Questions

- Thank you for talking with us today. Before we finish, I want to ask if there was anything that you thought I should ask that we didn't ask.
- Any questions for me?
- Do you know any other contacts would be interesting in participating in this research? Could I use your name? Could I get their contact information?

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