

**“Let’s do lunch!” An embodied perspective of organizational food rituals and practices.**

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## “LET’S EAT!” AN EMBODIED PERSPECTIVE OF ORGANIZATIONAL FOOD RITUALS

### ABSTRACT

*Eating and drinking are important yet overlooked components of organizational life. Practices associated with eating and drinking often become significant workplace rituals valued by employees and managers. Adopting an embodied approach based on Merleau-Ponty’s (1945) phenomenological work we explore the significance of food-based rituals within four New Zealand companies. Findings suggest that the embodied experience of eating (and drinking alcohol) at work is a powerful in-the-moment experience that strongly influences later cognitive interpretations of the experience. We conclude that embodied participation in food and drink rituals contributes to employee impressions of organizational care, feelings of inclusion, reward and fun and suggest questions and directions for further exploration of this important, everyday workplace phenomenon.*

**Keywords:** *embodiment, ritual, food, drink, organizational culture*

Everyone needs to eat and drink. At work this occurs in cafeterias, canteens, lunchrooms, at desks, in seminars, company functions, parties, celebrations, Friday evening wind-downs, and in a myriad of other places. This paper uses research into organizational culture, specifically organizational rituals to extend the emerging field of research regarding organizational practices associated with food and drink. Using the phenomenological work of Merleau-Ponty (1945, cited in Ladkin, 2010) we adopt an embodied approach to the experience of eating and drinking and our research asks ‘what is the significance of food-based rituals for organizational employees’? Based on four workplace interactions from New Zealand companies (representative of our larger data set), we suggest that the embodied experience of eating (and drinking alcohol) at work contributes to employee impressions of organizational care, feelings of inclusion, reward and fun. This is important because “good food has been associated with good business” (Pina e Cunha et al, 2008, p.943).

As food is ubiquitous in organizations a great deal of organizational life revolves around food and there are different meanings attached to food practices (Driver 2008). Food fulfills many functions, and is biologically, socially, and systematically important, yet is a neglected topic in organizational research (Pina e Cunha, Cabral-Cardoso, & Clegg, 2008). Food-related events incorporate significant rituals and ceremonies, and food may be provided by the organization which raises significant questions about types of food, reasons and motives behind its provision at work. The sharing of food is a common workplace ritual for celebrating birthdays (with cake), morning teas to celebrate new arrivals or farewell colleagues, pizza nights to socialize and reward hard work, champagne to celebrate company success, Christmas parties, seasonal celebrations and many other specific, cultural and localized activities that develop within organizations. A uniting theme to this wide range of food-based activities and practices is that of ‘ritual’ as many of these interactions are traditional and repeated multiple times and thus they become a significant part of an organization’s culture.

This paper opens with theories of organizational ritual and then specifically looks at rituals associated with food practices. Based on work by Merleau-Ponty (1945) we explore theories of embodiment related to workplace activities and food practices specifically. We proceed to outline the research design of our organizational culture study and offer four observed workplace interactions that demonstrate food (and drink) rituals. The discussion suggests that the bodily experience of shared eating (and drinking) rituals creates cognitive and reflective understandings of food practices that can stimulate bonding, harmony and positive affect in organizations. We conclude with questions for future food-related organizational research.

### **Organizational ritual**

“The offspring of culture” includes symbols, language, ideology, belief, myth and *ritual* (Pettigrew, 1976, p. 12). Rituals are a form of social enactment that portray cultural values and beliefs within events or occasions (Islam & Zyphur, 2009; Trice & Beyer, 1984), but although rituals are an observable artefact of organizational culture they are difficult to understand as they rely on shared basic assumptions that determine their significance and meaning to the group (Schein, 1985, 2004). Workplace rituals are often enacted and re-enacted repeatedly, are elaborate and planned, have an audience and can have social consequences such as enhancing professional roles and forming social identity (Morgan, Frost, & Pondy 1983). This repetition confers symbolic and shared meaning in organizational groups but individuals also interpret rituals in unique or contradictory ways (Smircich, 1983). In their review of ritual theory Islam and Zyphur (2009) highlight that the key elements of rituals are: repetition; enactment; extraordinary or special events; careful organization; presented in an attention-holding way; and aimed at collective consumption.

Organizational rituals become apparent in formal events (such as the weekly staff meeting), are grounded in historical occasions and activities, influence operating procedures and organizational behaviours and can exert a strong influence on the ability of an organization to deal with challenges (Morgan, 2006). Kunda (1992) found that informal rituals are also rife within organizations and include playful activities, fun, and joking. In fact “productive camaraderie” may be based on informal rituals that include humour, fun and other socially oriented workplace rituals that augment employee performance (Clouse & Spurgeon, 1995, p. 4). Although there is much literature examining organizational rituals, rites and artefacts and other symbolic processes (Alvesson, 2002; Alvesson & Berg, 1992; Dandridge, 1986; Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Gagliardi, 1990; Hofstede, 1977; Morgan, 2006; Morgan et al., 1983; Parker, 2000; Pondy et al., 1983; Smircich, 1983; Trice & Beyer, 1984), very few of these explorations have considered food practices as one of the commonly enacted workplace rituals.

### Food rituals and practices

Food rituals reinforce organizational culture, infuse meaning into business activities, and create stronger business relationships. Cabral-Cardosa and Pina e Cunha, (2003) claim that business lunches are a specific formal and ceremonial ritual that incorporate “tight etiquette”, “ethical scripts” and “special surroundings” (p. 378). In a 10 month study of food practices Rosen (1985) investigated the interrelationship of cultural and social realms during an annual company breakfast held by a Philadelphia advertising agency. Focusing on symbolic aspects, Rosen claimed that the ceremonial breakfast made visible the social and hegemonic relations which were objectified and reified by this ritualistic occasion. Similarly, Sturdy, Schwarz, and Spicer (2006) investigated business dinners of consultants and their clients and found that business dinners create liminal spaces between formal organizational practice and non-work activities. They suggest that spaces where eating occurs may be “potent spaces where work and organization occur” (p. 953) and formal organizational routines become suspended during such food rituals. In their discussion of the multiple layers of liminality Sturdy et al. suggest that the social rituals and routines around eating and drinking offer a unique space and opportunity that assists with negotiating, consulting and creating change. Researchers point to an emerging research agenda concerning food-focussed organizational practices that depict food rituals as important and symbolic events that highlight social relations, values, and processes (Cabral-Cardosa & Pina e Cunha, 2003; Rosen, 1985; Sturdy et al.2006).

Food rituals offer specific workplace advantages in combining formal and informal activities and workplace meetings are often organised around food-related events such as company barbecues, pizza nights, morning teas and lavish company meals (Pina e Cunha et al 2008; Pitsis et al 2003). In a review of current theory Pina e Cunha et al (2008) present a typology of food and organisation with two axes: 1) consuming food, 2) producing food. Within the two axes, four perspectives of food and organisation are proposed and these see food in organizations as: 1) Biological necessity-where food fulfils a physiological need; 2) Social reproduction- where food is a facilitator of interaction and an expression of status; 3) System design- where food and eating are seen as regulated patterns of activity, therefore the purpose of food is drawn from habit and rule; and 4) Systematic critique- where food is seen as a symbol and reflection of society. However researchers warn of the “artificial boundaries” (Pina e Cunha et al 2008, p.942) created by such a typology and caution that food may be classified into multiple aspects of the typology simultaneously. Pina e Cunha et al. conclude that food is a “total social phenomenon” (p. 942) that connects with all social activities and institutions and therefore food rituals offer multiple useful insights to organizational culture and climate.

As well as cultural insights, food practices have highlighted perceptions of organizational care, control, inclusion, and exclusion. Driver (2008) used discourse analysis to show that food is used as

an enticement for staff to attend meetings, training and events. Organizational members associate food practices with “care, comfort and closeness to others” but also with “self-interested exchanges and perhaps manipulation” (Driver, 2008, p.928). An ethnographic study of food rituals found that food is used as a social lubricant and as a vehicle of exclusion and inclusion. Food rituals foster inter-professional collaboration and a sense of professional identity is formed during professional socialisation through the sharing of food and drink (Thomson & Hassenkamp, 2008). Although our focus to this point has been on food, we must acknowledge that alcohol may be an integral part of ritualistic food practices and for many, a facet of the embodied experience of partaking in food. Therefore when considering socialisation and food-related events researchers often find that they must also consider drink, and specifically alcoholic drink. It is entirely feasible to conduct studies that focus just on workplace drinking and indeed such studies already exist (see Ames & Rebhun, 1996; Frone, 2006; Zhu, Tews, Stafford & George, 2011). Ames and Rebhun, (1996) suggest that organizational culture may influence alcohol consumption and emphasize that some workplace rituals associated specifically with alcohol actually occur in settings outside the workplace but are still considered workplace behaviour and are part of the overall context of work. Therefore further considerations relating to organizational rituals involving alcohol consumption could include: workplace health and safety; religious and societal influences; and organisational culture and values. When studying an accountancy firm, Valentine, (2002) found that alcohol is used as a tool to relax after work, a reward for hard work, and serves to calm discrepancies between workers. Food and drink play roles in aligning workers bodies with the organisational goals by creating a sense of belonging and shared identification (Valentine, 2002). As Flores-Pereira et al. (2008) point out; drinking alcohol may add a whole new bodily dimension to the study of food as there may be specific effects caused by inebriation which have significant organizational impacts. This bodily experience of food and drink offers additional organizational insights and we turn our attention to embodied workplace experiences that may further our understandings of workplace food rituals.

Food plays a role in both the formal and informal interactions and events within organizations and forms part of people’s bodily experiences of work and its processes (Pina e Cunha et al, 2008). Although bodily aspects of work are being investigated in leadership (Ladkin, 2010), dress codes (Rafaeli et al, 1997), gender stereotypes (Schein et al 1996), and time and motion studies (Adler, 1993), inquiries into food as a bodily aspect of work are marginal in organizational research (Pina e Cunha et al, 2008). The human body is the foundation for all our experiences and these experiences precede our abstract and representative understandings (Merleau-Ponty, 1945 cited in Ladkin, 2010). “Human immanence” is the embodied, present, material, and physical aspect of our corporeal bodies whereas “transcendence” refers to the human capabilities of “imagination,

intention, rationality and consciousness” (Merleau-Ponty 1945, cited in Ladkin, 2010, p. 58). Ladkin further argues that transcendent aspects of human activities have traditionally been ‘favoured’ and the primacy of cognitive explorations is apparent in organizational research such as leadership and cultural studies, yet the “key way in which humans interrelate is through our bodily presence” (Ladkin, 2010, p. 59). Adopting a similar argument, an ethnographic inquiry into an after-work beer-drinking ritual shows how organizational culture is a “perceptual-embodied experience” (Flores-Pereira, Davel, and Cavedon, 2008, p. 1007). To be included in the ritual, organizational members have to drink, (especially beer). Therefore, rituals are the experience of culture (rather than merely representative of the culture) and ritualization is a way in which body movements become “socially instinctive automatisms” that occur *before* a person reflects upon and makes sense of ritualistic behaviour (Flores-Pereira et al., 2008, p. 1015). Happy hours and drinks after work are normal after-work rituals and drinking alcohol is a bodily behaviour that can alter an individual’s usual state through inebriation and cause non-routine behaviour (Flores-Pereira et al. 2008). Cultural studies are dominated by cognitive (representational) perspectives and new perspectives are required that adopt an embodied approach in order to extend understanding of organizational culture through “pre-reflective relation” (Flores-Pereira et al. 2008, p.1023) that occurs in the immediate perceptual experiences of organizational members.

Throughout the literature, researchers consistently emphasise the lack of research into food rituals and suggest a research agenda that investigates food as social interaction and as cultural institution to further understanding of organizational dynamics, processes, status and prestige (Pina e Cunha et al, 2008). The importance of food (and drink) to people at work is recognised and researchers adopt two key approaches to the study of food and related practices. Early research focuses upon food consumption and food practices as a significant organizational ritual which carries socially constructed meanings and significance within and across organizations. However, more recent studies suggest that the corporeal or bodily aspects of eating food have been neglected as part of the organizational culture studies. Our inquiry will adopt the perspective that practices regarding food are located in the immediacy and immanence of the experience forming a “pre-reflective” interpretation which occurs before the cognitive (post) reflections into the significance of food rituals (Flores- Pereira et al. 2008, p.1023). Therefore our study considers food, drink and associated practices from reflective and cognitive perspectives as well as attempting to capture the immanent ‘pre-reflective’ components that form organizational participants’ perceptions and experiences of food at work.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

This food study was part of a wider cultural study that investigated significant organizational rituals as part of an overall understanding of organizational culture. Participants were asked in interviews to describe specific organizational rituals. Enacted rituals were also observed during a month long visit to each of four New Zealand organizations. As themes began to emerge regarding organizational rituals, it became apparent that many of the social and relational practices in these organizations included food (and alcoholic drink in many cases) and these interactions were significant cultural features for organizational members. Therefore it was decided to re-examine the collected data and specifically analyse the interactions involving food (and drink) and to explore the ritualistic and embodied elements of these interactions.

The data collection comprised: observing and recording events; interviewing participants; and collecting relevant document data. In total, 59 semi-structured interviews were conducted and were audio-recorded and transcribed. As a participant observer, the researcher was seated in the open-plan office space (in each of the four companies) and moved between departments and teams. Company events were attended and even participated in whenever appropriate. Everyday interactions and special events were recorded as accurately as possible while occurring (using hand written notes). Verbal exchanges were recorded verbatim while actions, gestures and the context were described as fully as possible. In some cases in-the-moment recording was either impossible or inappropriate and in these instances events were written-up and described as soon as possible after their occurrence. The data was entered into NVIVO software to allow for coding and management of the large quantity of text-based information. Initially each company was analyzed separately to obtain an overall impression of culture, manifestations, values, assumptions and rituals. Secondly, the data for all four companies was combined and in an iterative process, was systematically coded, firstly into a variety of different categories, and latterly into a hierarchy of significant themes. At first these themes comprised typical cultural perspectives such as: manifestations (including rituals); identity (including values and assumptions, subcultures and groups); boundaries; and formality levels (including hierarchy, size, roles and structure). A later and closer reading of the data revealed a selection of reflections (from interviews) and recorded interactions (from observations) that described food, alcohol and associated practices in these four companies. It is this later reading of the data that forms the empirical material upon which this paper is based. The empirical material presented next constitutes a representative selection of activities and participant reflections from the four studied companies.

## EMPIRICAL MATERIAL

The four companies were selected from four different industries and a brief synopsis of each is included. Each company has been assigned a fictional nom-de-plume to protect their anonymity and some details have been changed to protect confidentiality.

*Kapack* is a prestigious law firm comprising 119 staff and has practiced for over 20 years. Kapack has a departmental structure and operates branches in two major cities. Although many of the company processes and rituals are highly formal, there is also a strong element of informality and autonomy among staff and the company tries to imbue its social activities with fun and humour whenever possible.

*Sigma* is a finance company and operations including organizing loans and mortgages, insurances and financial protection programmes. The company employs over 800 people and has operated successfully for 22 years. The company has a departmental structure and is formal in its processes, policies, dress code and operations with clearly defined codes of conduct for employees to follow. Sigma also has articulated four core company values and a mission statement and employees are assessed on their behavior in accordance with organizational values.

*Uvicon* is a multi-network infrastructure company and supplies electricity, gas and telecommunications services throughout New Zealand. The company has operated for 17 years and has a large staff of 853 people. There is a hierarchical and departmental structure. Data was collected from four different departments. The company operates in a formal manner with publicized policies and codes of conduct as well as clearly defined values, vision and mission statements.

*Adare* is a small Information Technology (IT) company that specializes in network solutions and internet security for a range of corporate clients. The company comprises only 25 people in total and operates using a team structure. The company has successfully competed in the IT industry for ten years and has recently been sold to a larger organizational group. Prior to this sale Adare was run by its owner and operated with a flat hierarchy and very little formal structure. The company has no formal policies, guidelines, values, or mission statements.

### **The food/drink rituals**

Rituals in these four companies were diverse and varied from small everyday occurrences (such as a daily verbal joke by a senior partner at Kapack) to large, luxurious annual company events involving food and alcohol (such as the annual Christmas party at Uvicon). What was similar in all four



companies was that many of the rituals, included food and drink. Data included observations of many of the enacted rituals, and during interviews participants were asked to describe some of the rituals in their organizations. The most oft-cited ritual was the traditional, ceremonial ritual of celebrating birthdays. Respondents described a celebration including cake (or other food) while respondents from Adare described a birthday ritual that involved a potent form of alcohol shared with colleagues (see below). Respondents also described morning tea rituals for events such as colleagues' departures or to welcome new arrivals. Although morning tea rituals and birthday celebrations were the most common rituals, three of the four companies also organized Friday afternoon/evening drinks events where food and (alcoholic) drink was supplied by the company. Two companies enacted this ritual weekly (Adare and Sigma) while Kapack held this monthly and even highlighted the drinks ritual in their recruitment document. The following four rituals depict four observed events that involved food and /or alcoholic drink. The incidents comprise: 1) a company award ceremony (Sigma); 2) a Xmas ritual (Uvicon); 3) a weekly pizza and beer event (Kapack) and 4) an initiation drinking ritual that was also repeated on employee's birthdays (Adare).

*Ritual 1: Sigma Employee of the year*

Sigma annually awards the title of *Employee of the Year* to an outstanding employee. This is a significant event and a major achievement for the recipient who receives gifts, champagne and a travel voucher. The recipient (Brad) was invited to a (supposedly) regular group meeting along with his colleagues and subordinates. The head of department (HOD) announced that Brad (Operations Manager) was the winner of the award and described Brad's commitment to company values. At the conclusion of Brad's acceptance speech, champagne was poured for all and a luxurious celebration ensued as caterers offered plates of enticing finger-food. Photographs were taken and published in company magazines and newsletters in the following weeks.

*Ritual 2: Uvicon Secret Santa*

The research at Uvicon was during the month of December so it was possible to observe and experience company Christmas rituals and celebrations. Several work teams collaborated to organise a *Secret Santa* event in the week before Christmas. All those participating put their names in a box and everyone was given a name and bought their assigned colleague a small gift costing no more than \$10. On the designated day, an employee dressed as Santa distributed the gifts and read aloud the attached notes. The event occurred in the company cafeteria and senior managers organised a sumptuous catered morning tea for the employees. A significant feature of this Christmas ritual was the abundant food provided by the company. Selections of savoury and sweet treats were provided and this was eagerly enjoyed by the employees. There were many favourable comments about the quality and generosity of the provided food and the CEO's assistant indicated that the company

would continue to provide this type of food for similar Christmas celebrations in the future.

Photographs were taken at this event and posted onto the company intranet.

*Ritual 3: Kapack pizza Fridays*

A monthly ritual is enacted at Kapack whereby employees gather in a large meeting room for a social event on the first Friday of every month. Pizzas are delivered and alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks along with finger-food such as nuts and potato chips are supplied at the company's expense. The observed ritual began at 5pm and finished at about 8pm (as was usual). As employees completed their work tasks they arrived at the event and joined in the chat, laughter, eating, drinking, and general camaraderie that signified the end of their working week. Senior managers claimed that this ritual rewarded their hard-working staff and offered the opportunity for light-hearted social interaction between all staff, many of whom were situated on different floors of the building. Employees stated that they enjoyed these events and were able to just drop in for a quick drink, bite and catch up before heading home.

*Ritual 4: Adare SOJU ceremony*

A new employee had started at Adare the same day that her predecessor was saying goodbye and packing his possessions. At 10 am the managing director informed staff that there was a company ritual and this was mandatory for all new employees and for those leaving the company. A table was set up in the middle of the open-plan area and all of those in the office gathered around. On the table were shot glasses full of an alcoholic drink (Japanese sake) and several (unplugged) power cables were lined up alongside the potent alcoholic drinks. The newcomer, leaver, and other staff members stood in a line and tied the power cables around their heads. In turn each person shouted 'SOJU' and drank the shot in one quick swallow amidst much cheering and laughing from those assembled. Photos were taken of each participant as they drank and were later sent to various clients and industry colleagues by email. This ritual was also re-enacted on employees' birthdays as described by this Adare participant:

*Birthday traditions are that you always bring in some alcohol and not standard stuff; quite a few people will bring in their cultural thing (for example Korean sake). The tradition is that it arrives in the morning and you have it before you start work in the day (Adare respondent).*

## DISCUSSION

The empirical data offers evidence of food practices that are ritualistic and ceremonial and these appear to build solidarity and allow interaction between those in different organizational roles (see Islam & Zyphur, 2009). The rituals also exemplify embodied experiences of eating and drinking, and include post-experience reflections that explain and reify the ritual. In each of our observed rituals,

employees and managers were observed to be eating, drinking, laughing, chatting, joking and showing outward bodily signs of enjoyment. It seems that the in-the-moment and embodied experiences of eating, drinking and laughing play a significant role in the post-experience reflections and cognitive sense-making that is latterly attributed to such events. Not one participant in any of these rituals expressed any negative sentiments or concerns about their experience, even in regard to the Adare ceremony involving potent alcohol at 10 o'clock in the morning.

The Adare event (ritual 4) has been created in this small, youthful company specifically to create a unique workplace ritual that is memorable differentiated and fun (depending on your perspective). Although the SOJU drinking ritual could be reflectively viewed (and perhaps viewed by outsiders) as coercive and even as 'hazing', the participants at Adare did not reconstruct their experience in this way. Their reflections and sensemaking used terms such as 'tradition', 'fun' 'different' 'not boring like other companies' and they insisted that this ritual made them feel 'part of the team'. For the new employee the experience was very embodied and invoked several senses as she stood in the line of employees, a cord tied around her head, giving a loud shout ("SOJU") as she and everyone else gulped down the potent alcohol. This pre-reflective stage involved laughter and immediate participation and such embodied participation provides the framework and cues for reflecting upon the experience. Everyone laughed and joked during the experience even though the strong alcohol created a 'burning' sensation that could have been experienced as unpleasant. The physical participation of colleagues in drinking, tying cords, shouting and laughing resulted in post-experience reflections from participants claiming that this was an inclusive, enjoyable, and positive ritual. The 'pre-reflective phase' where the bodily action occurs (Flores-Pereira et al. 2008) strongly influences the latter cognitive and rational reflections where participants make sense of the experience by synthesizing the feelings and impressions created during the embodied interaction. Similarly, at Uvicon, Sigma and Kapack (rituals 1, 2 & 3), the events were described as 'fun-filled' and 'enjoyable'. Employees were bodily involved in the immediate experience of eating luxurious food, drinking, laughing, gift-giving and joking during these rituals. Post-experience, employees suggested that these events created 'bonding' between colleagues and that the company management had showed 'caring' for staff by providing such fine food. As in ritual 4, the embodied actions of eating and drinking created favourable post-experience reflections. The provision of food at work may also be perceived as a reward. The luxurious food and champagne (ritual 1) rewarded the achievement of one manager and the team of people that worked with him. The hot pizza and beer physically rewarded the law firm employees each month (ritual 3) and the good quality food (ritual 2) rewarded a year of toil at Uvicon. Although notions of food (and drink) as a symbol of caring, reward and enticement have been mooted by earlier scholars, (Driver, 2008; Valentine, 2002) this appears to be

an area worthy of much more extensive research with the possibility of creating some organizational engagement and cultural advantages through food practices.

There is a shared component to each of these interactions. As the food and drink were shared in groups of colleagues, the act of sharing both food and drink brought people together and created a sense of inclusion and connection garnered from the bodily experience of imbibing or eating. Even in ritual 4 which may not have been pleasurable for many people, the sense of shared experience and group laughter from the bodily activity, created camaraderie and group bonding. Sharing food and drink even when not sumptuous and luxurious may be such a strong physical experience that even if it is mildly unpleasant may reinforce notions of inclusion and group bonding. Therefore it appears that embodied experiences regarding food and drink may be powerful and significant and the subsequent interpretation of such rituals may result in positive sensemaking by employees (Weick, 2000) which creates advantages for organizations. During three of these rituals photographs were taken and later shared and enthused over, as participants relived the interactions and displayed them to others that did not share the embodied experience. Rituals involve repetition (Morgan et al., 1983) and photographs record the event and therefore assist in future repetitions and reproductions of the ritual by reminding future organizers of the details and feelings associated with the experience. Such a visual reminder is often accompanied by a verbal (or written) reconstruction of the event and photographs may assist in transferring the immanent physical and corporeal experience (Merleau-Ponty, 1945) into the transcendence phase where rational, reflective and cognitive explanations are brought to the embodied experiences that occurred during the ritual. This post-experience sharing may further enhance the status and social integration of those involved which is a key element of organizational rituals (Trice & Beyer, 1984).

The food and drink provided during these events was luxurious, tasty and the bodily enjoyment of food and drink seemed to translate to positive feelings regarding the providers of such treats - in this case - the companies. After corporeal enjoyment perceived as a treat or reward (for hard work, achievements, or for joining or leaving as in rituals 1-4) the participants expressed positive and thankful comments towards the organization for providing the experience. This would suggest that embodied rituals such as these are significant to employees and create positive and appreciative feelings that may help employees feel valued and 'cared for'. There is likely to be a need for deeper, more specific research into such a claim and some investigation regarding what types of food and drink create such feelings. Conversely there may also be an imperative to study the opposite effect and investigate situations where the provision of food and drink creates poor impressions and negative affect for employees. It may even be of interest and note to inquire whether or not

employees feel more 'cared for' when the food is delicious, tasty and hearty or whether healthy options create stronger feelings and perceptions.

Our research inquiry into organizational experiences of food and drink answers calls for further research into embodied organizational culture experiences and further extends organizational understandings from an immediate 'pre-reflective' perspective. Although not extensive nor necessarily representative, at this stage it extends the scarce research in this area through emphasising the embodied aspects and pre-reflective (Flores-Pereira et al. 2008) components that frame and shape subsequent sense-making and rational, cognitive explanations of food-related experiences. Our food-related rituals highlight the importance of both special events and everyday occurrences of food practices. Future research should consider food practices as socially-constructed, significant, embodied workplace rituals that offer unique understandings into embodied aspects of organizational culture, group processes, organizational sensemaking, and organizational identity. Does the embodied experience of food and drink significantly influence impressions of the organization as is suggested by this early inquiry?

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