

FITTING IN: EXTREME CORPORATE WELLNESS AND ORGANIZATIONAL
COMMUNICATION

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation I examine the intersection of organizational communication and what I name extreme corporate wellness. I define extreme corporate wellness as the push towards more radical fitness and workplace health promotion via the exercise program known as CrossFit. I argue that a discourse of extreme corporate wellness furthers a social-Darwinian viewpoint of “survival of the fittest” not only in the workplace, but also in an employee’s personal and home life. This study combined participant-observation with 28 semi-structured interviews in a large, corporate organization that had recently shifted to CrossFit practices. By drawing on a critical-interpretive lens I am able to not only examine an organization’s movement toward a more fitness-minded organizational culture, but to also interrogate the implications of such a move.

The findings in this dissertation contribute to three areas of organizational communication and wellness: (1) organizational culture, (2) power and resistance, and (3) corporeal ethics. First, organizational culture, including espoused values and shared levels of assumptions, took on certain changes because of an emphasis on extreme fitness. Employee participation in CrossFit led to strict notions of strength and masculinity not just in the organization’s gym, but also throughout the corporate offices and even into home life. The extreme corporate wellness discourse also contributed to employees’ understanding of not just fitness, but health, nutrition and lifestyle.

Second, I use the concept of extreme corporate wellness to further illuminate important links between organizational culture, identity and branding and how those interact in the complicated play between power and resistance. My reading of the organizational fitness artifacts (e.g. organizational posters, marketing slogans, tangible objects) brings into question not only the assumptions of a fitness culture, but also demonstrates how the CrossFit [regime/discourse] perpetuates certain moral imperatives about health and fitness. Even though the organization originally attempted to create a more ‘authentically fit’ workplace through a mandate or vertically communicated message, the CrossFit program functioned much more obtrusively by means of concertive control. This powerful fitness initiative was then resisted by certain employees, resulting in upended notions of organizational time. While there were certainly benefits to the program, my study weighs those benefits against the consequences of extreme wellness and its attendant discourse.

Finally, I theorize how the body serves as a political site between employer, government, and public in a way that forces researchers to think differently about corporeal ethics. Specifically, I demonstrate that body politics are perpetuated by an emphasis on the extreme, hegemonic, masculine world of CrossFit and that the implications of this fitness regime extend beyond the organizational walls.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

What do we call something that is hugely defining of individuals? It's the blind and relentless constant pursuit of excellence. You make people better. I'm gonna let you decide what 'better' is and you're gonna come tell me, did your exposure, did your coming here make you better? I know the answer. *Greg Glassman, CrossFit Founder and CEO*

The quote used to open this dissertation aired to a US audience during the 2013 CrossFit Games. In the 30-second advertisement, Glassman's message plays over a series of background images, including a weightlifter bleeding at the shins, blood dripping onto an Olympic weightlifting bar. CrossFit, an exercise-training program that focuses on intensity, prides itself on masochistic self-representation. Hard work, even if it results in blood, sweat and tears, is the CrossFit prescription for fitness. It is precisely this masculine mentality, this all-encompassing normalization of health and fitness on which this dissertation focuses. What happens when an organization begins to prescribe these ideals as a normative health and fitness discourse? Or, as the quote that begins this dissertation alludes to, is it really a prescription if *you decide what better is*? Is Glassman using the rhetorical strategy enthymeme (Tompkins & Cheney, 1985)? To advocate that one particular set of exercises, one particular way of life, makes someone better, is as equivalent to a social-Darwinian viewpoint as one can get. This can lead to division between those that do "CrossFit" and those that do not. Yet, the US population battles a growing obesity epidemic. While causal links between obesity and health care costs are problematic, morbidly obese individuals are more likely to have a lower life expectancy

(Fontaine, Redden, Wang, et al., 2003). Corporate wallets are hit hard with insurance premiums and employers increasingly turn to fitness centers to encourage health in the workplace. I examine CrossFit in an organization used as an extreme wellness program to encourage a more-fit workforce as part of an organizational “fitness” culture. After all, if organizational wellness is good, then the next logical extension is that extreme organizational wellness must be better. In the next section, I landscape the burgeoning topic of organizational wellness.

As the US labor market has transitioned to more white-collar business bases via deindustrialization, organizational wellness has become more popular. While it should be noted that such a clear divide between types of work is indeed problematic contingent upon categorization, the trend towards less manual labor in the US has been noted in data provided by the American Bureau of Labor Statistics (Wyatt & Hecker, 2006). In previous economic times, the labor force engaged in a great deal more body work. White-collar career opportunities are only expected to grow, and with such growth, organizations look to harness more productivity in the organization (Hopp, Iravani, & Liu, 2009). Organizational wellness then, is one particular ingredient in crafting the ideal workplace. So what do traditional workplace health programs look like? In the next section, I turn attention to trends within the workplace health and fitness movement.

As McGillivray (2005) noted, much attention in organizational wellness has come from “positivist and functional analyses” (p. 126). As such organizational wellness has been viewed largely as a variable to affect organizational bottom lines, with limited critique. After all, who can argue with lower insurance premiums and ‘better’ employee

health? Yet, a quick browse through any periodical this year, and one is destined to find ideas for encouraging better employee health. Organizational wellness is the organizational culture. Coupled with recent foci shifting to managing preventable diseases with the new US healthcare law, employers are teaming up with insurers to provide incentives for employee use (Moran, 2014). More and more companies are adopting, as part of their culture, a focus on the healthy workplace. Now more than ever a common hire in organizations is “personal trainer” to help employees with their fitness goals (Baker, 2014).

The burgeoning attention to employee health is not without merit. A team of researchers recently found that in a seven year observation period, an incentive based workplace wellness program helped drive employee participation in addition to employees demonstrating diminishing health risk factors like smoking, stress reduction, and sleep behaviors (Byrne, Goetzel, McGown, Holmes et al., 2011). Organizational wellness has traditionally included everything in the workplace health promotion discourse such as tobacco cessation efforts (Docherty, Fraser & Hardin, 1999), nutrition (Thanem, 2009), fitness (Zoller, 2003b), and safety-risk campaigns (Zoller, 2003a).

Other attention has looked at employee health and wellness checks. Some worry that employers may start using “fit for duty” rhetoric to actively discriminate. For example, airlines have been able to negotiate anti-discrimination claims by arguing that flight attendants must fall within certain sizes to ensure safety. Other organizations have taken up this line of reasoning. For example, the drugstore chain CVS recently made headlines with their plans to financially penalize workers if they do not reveal body fat

composition to their employer for health insurance purposes, raising questions about corporate democracy, privacy, and health (McConville, 2013).

More organizations are moving towards annual appraisals, or wellness checks. Paton (2014) discusses the implications of this practice in the case of midwives who were being forced to show proof of fitness in order to keep their licenses. Universities have taken up these types of wellness appraisals of employee health, often providing incentives for taking voluntary wellness exams (Texas A&M Human Resources, 2014).

Churchill, Gillespie, & Herbold (2014) found that while job type may affect participation, across the board, “financial incentives were judged to be highly motivational” (p. 56). Tannenbaum, Valasek, Knowles, and Ditto (2013) argued that the ways in which management presents its workplace health promotion campaign may “leak attitude information through their [management’s] choice of policy” (p. 1519). Thus, in organizations using a punishment method (the stick metaphor), employees reported feeling more threatened and ostensibly more judged. The authors concluded that organizations should rely solely on rewards mechanisms (the carrot metaphor) in promoting workplace health.

In fact, finding anything other than the many successes of organizational workplace health programs is difficult. Swayze and Burke (2013) noted the ways in which a pedometer (a device that measures how many steps one takes) can improve an employee’s physical activity. Other studies took a more pedestrian approach discussing the importance of encouraging more walking or bicycling (Paton, 2013). Most attempts

to promote wellness inside the organization are rather innocuous and the advice tends to encourage employers to tread carefully when it comes to promoting health.

Clearly, most of the reasons for having a fitness center in the organization can be linked to economic concerns. Insurance companies are monitoring rising obesity rates across America and looking for ways to curb the epidemic. Attention has focused on employee health as one variable that can be controlled (CDC, 2012). According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than one third of the US adult population is obese and estimates that by 2030, over one half of Americans will be obese. However, it is not just obesity concerns – workplace health promotion encourages a variety of healthy behaviors. The Centers for Disease Control recognize that workplace health promotion is growing – they even offer assistance to organizations wanting to adopt a health program. Yet, specific and tangible “recommendations” for workplace health advocacy differ greatly. The CDC notes that management must first do an assessment to determine what the organizations needs are. There is one prescription listed on the website, which aims to provide “assistance and support to be physically active, improve diet or eat healthy and stop using tobacco” (CDC, 2014). Organizations frequently offer insurance premium incentives if employees demonstrate “healthy behaviors” (McGillivray, 2005). Yet, these behaviors are often debatable, so finding what an organizations health values are proves quite difficult.

The CDC began its National Healthy Worksite Program (NHWP) in 2011. The website offers a myriad of resources about programs, partnership information, and generic benefits for employers who encourage a health workplace. The website also

notes that "case studies" will be available in the near future. Attempting to find exactly what healthy behaviors the CDC recommends is challenging, and once one finds them, they read superficially. According to the CDC (2014), to be eligible to have a sponsored NHWP in the workplace, employers must participate in:

- "making healthy foods available and accessible through vending machines or cafeterias"
- "access to onsite or nearby fitness facilities"
- "an onsite Farmer's market"
- "physical activity classes or walking groups/clubs"
- "tobacco cessation counseling through a quit line or health plan"
- "lifestyle coaching or counseling"
- "weight management programs that offer counseling or coaching"

That these “regular health prescriptions” are rather open and up to employer discretion to decide what “healthy foods” are and what “physical activity” is included. As such, this is the crux of the matter – who decides what is healthy? A few of the prescriptions seem a bit more arbitrary, like the on-site Farmer’s market, but undoubtedly this is related to cultural trend known as slow-food or finding food grown within a particular radius from one’s home (see Andrews, 2008). The marriage of organizational communication and workplace health promotion has its roots in exploring the employers reach when it comes to issues of health, identity, and fitness. Perhaps this is why then, that CrossFit in the organization is such a unique case. CrossFit, as extreme corporate wellness, envelops not just fitness, but health, lifestyle, and nutrition components as well. Additionally, it valorizes itself as a life-changing program – and indeed it has been life changing for many.

Organizational communication researchers have examined workplace health promotion campaigns, in particular Heather Zoller's (2000) dissertation research and subsequent publications (2003a; 2003b; 2004). Drawing from theories of an encroachment or colonization of the 'life-world' (Habermas, 1979; Deetz, 1992), researchers continue to look for ways that managerial discourse transcends the physical organization. Health overtures pave way for other forms of corporal control that manifest in prescriptive fitness and health organizational norms. While raising health awareness and encouraging more active lifestyles may be inspiring (and perhaps it very well is), employer health advocacy may manifest itself through unintended meanings. A discourse disguised as care for the employee may ultimately be viewed as employee coercion (Sewell & Barker, 2006). Frequently, these health advocacy programs are communicated to employees through planned organizational culture shifts, like the one that I explore in this dissertation.

Health advocacy programs represent an invaluable service to employees at work. Because Americans are at the workplace for extended periods of time, work is an ideal site to disseminate values. Because health, fitness, and nutrition are all extremely personal endeavors, the idea of handing out a one-size fits all recommendation from an employer may appear somewhat paternalistic. Also of importance, to what extent are the communicated recommendations taken home and adopted by other family members of an employee? In this sense, there are two issues of "colonization." First, a prescribed lifestyle, both at work and outside, may rely on individual agency to make the choice. Second, colonization bleeds through organizational confines and into the home as a type

of “spill-over” effect. For example, if an employer promotes a grain free diet, would the employee be more likely to make similar recommendations for his or her family? With Americans spending more and more time in the workplace (Jacobs & Gerson, 2004), the workplace becomes a central information dissemination site.

Because Americans arguably spend more time at work than other developed countries, it seems reasonable that the health and fitness recommendations they are given at work be scrutinized. After all, where is the employer getting the health information? Fraser (2001) in the book *White Collar Sweatshop* argues that the amount of time spent working in white-collar America is growing at an exceptional rate. Because so much time is spent at the workplace, a critical examination of this fitness and health discourse is crucial— scholars have noted the organizational implications behind this in terms of domination and identity.

Critical perspectives in organizational communication often refer to organizations as both a site of identity construction and domination (Mumby, 1997; Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004; Ashcraft, 2005). Analyzing the ways in which healthy behaviors are advocated in these identity-constructing sites offers a unique opportunity to extend theory on managerialism and health promotion, organizational culture, employee identity, colonization of the self, and corporeal ethics.

While critical organizational studies already address workplace health promotion to some degree, the next wave of organizational wellness is emerging. The logical extension that more workplace wellness is better may lead to more radically defined organizational wellness programs. CrossFit is being offered to employees at several

organizations in the US, in addition to the one that offers a case for this study. For example, a CrossFit promotional video shows how employees at *Vertical Turbine Specialists*, a manufacturing facility in Texas, participating in CrossFit. According to one of the company owners, doing CrossFit promotes healthy movement and reduces accidents on the job because of employees eating better and moving in more functional ways (CrossFit, 2012).

While there very well may be marked health benefits from CrossFit, critical inquiry of its implementation in the workplace is necessary. As noted in the workplace health promotion literature, organizational wellness is rarely questioned from critical perspectives (with notable exceptions as described in the next chapter). I explore the next step in a health promotion campaign currently being implemented in a large athletic apparel company, that I call FitCo, focusing on worker relationships / interpretation with the program and how those attitudes pervade from the workplace into family life. I am interested in the consequences such a program has on the workforce and the ways the planned cultural change was/is communicated across the organization. The implications from this dissertation will be helpful in understanding consequences of health promotion in the workplace. In the next section, I provide a foregrounding context to help the reader make sense of the exercise program known as CrossFit.

CrossFit as Extreme Fitness

To begin unpacking extreme organizational wellness, I first provide a basic overview of CrossFit. I start here with an overview of the purported benefits of CrossFit in the workplace, of which there are many. CrossFit proponents often boast of the program's

ability to transform bodies and increase well-being. To many FitCo employees, the opportunity to break up the monotony of the day by going to the CrossFit gym was a major perk of the job. During the first part of my interviews with employees, I would have employees tell me what they loved most about their job. One participant flat out told me, “the best part of my job is the ability to train CrossFit daily.” CrossFit was a major idolized by many. One employee spoke of a colleague who had just been laid off, but asked if before he left, if he could get in “one more CrossFit workout.” This story stuck with me, because I would have imagined most employees being laid off would want to exit the company immediately – yet, the appeal of CrossFit seemed to supersede this. Having a world-class CrossFit gym on the corporate campus was a major draw to certain employees.

In addition to the appeal of the CrossFit gym, many employees applauded the organization’s efforts to have healthier options available in the cafeteria. The health-minded push towards culture was a more recent push. Before, health was viewed more passively. Now, meetings and organizational events often include a fitness inspired event (like a mini-marathon I observed for the launch of a new running shoe). During these events, employees socialized more around a fitness event. Many employees attributed the more active attention on wellness to the opening of the organization’s CrossFit facility.

Most notably, many employees discussed marked health benefits since joining the CrossFit facility. One employee spoke of dramatic weight loss by simply going to CrossFit classes and learning to read nutrition labels and follow a prescribed diet.

Another employee attributed his entire family's newfound healthy lifestyle to his experience with the CrossFit gym at work. Other employees opened up their own CrossFit gyms throughout the Northeast. Even the public was not immune to the organization's CrossFit facility. Passersby would routinely drive into the parking lot and ask to buy product and to tour the facility. There is no doubt about it, indeed CrossFit brought with it a lot of positive attention and positively-related health behaviors.

In the next section, I turn my attention to the nuts and bolts of the CrossFit exercise program. I present the material descriptively, often borrowing from CrossFit's own definitions of fitness. I organize this section on four main areas: (1) its intensity, (2) lifestyle, including nutritional component (3) its strong, collective communities and (4) CrossFit's promotion of itself.

CrossFit as Intensity

CrossFit is a workout methodology that is defined as “constantly varied, functional movements, at a high intensity” (CrossFit, 2011). This translates to incorporating a wide variety of exercises that range from squatting, pull ups, and jumping, to flipping over large tractor tires and doing hand-stand pushups. CrossFit was introduced in 1995 by former gymnast Greg Glassman, who targeted his type of fitness towards EMS, Police, and Military personnel. CrossFit defines fitness as “the ability to do more work in a less amount of time.” According to the CrossFit.com website:

The magic is in the movements. All of CrossFit's workouts are based on functional movements. These are the core movements of life, found everywhere, and built naturally into our DNA. They move the largest loads the longest distances so they are ideal for maximizing the amount of work done in the shortest time (intensity).

In order for the “magic” to take place, however, CrossFit participants perform all exercises with high-intensity.

By employing a constantly-varied approach to training, these functional movements at maximum intensity (relative to the physical and psychological tolerances of the participant), lead to dramatic gains in fitness. Intensity is essential for results and is measurable as work/time. The more work you do in less time, the more intense the effort.

This intensity factor is one component of the diverse fitness program that often earns the praise as an “extreme” fitness program. Additionally, when combined with the focus on functional fitness, the program often draws back to a popular caveman motif that runs through CrossFit communities. Functional fitness means that these exercises were being done by early humans and are foundational human movements essential for survival. Functional fitness has been around for many years. It is in these actions that CrossFit hopes to make the human agent more efficient. CrossFit defines efficiency and functionality in as the ability to do the most amount of work in the least amount of time. In addition to intense, efficient movements, CrossFit takes on many lifestyle prescriptions as well.

CrossFit claims to specialize in not specializing, promoting a brand of fitness that privileges fitness in a variety of contexts (climbing ropes, jumping rope, Olympic weightlifting, pull-ups, rowing, among others). A typical routine in a CrossFit gym begins with stretching and rolling out on PVC pipe, a strength or skill component, and then concludes with the WOD (workout of the day). WODs rarely last longer than thirty minutes in order to keep intensity levels up.

Because of CrossFit’s focus on intensity, CrossFit is also subject to criticism for

claims of increased injury through certain popular media outlets (Curry, 2014; Smith, Sommer, Starkoff et al., 2013). Another study found that CrossFit holds similar injury rates to sports like gymnastics and weightlifting, both extremely technical sports typically performed by elite-level athletes (Hak, Hodzovic, & Hickey, 2013). While the prevalence of injury in CrossFit has not received adequate scholarly attention to come to any correlation, the program has been known to produce rhabdomyolysis or “rhabdo” for short. The National Institute of Health defines rhabdo as a breaking down of muscle tissues and fibers that then enter to the blood stream, causing kidney damage. CrossFit has recognized the potential for CrossFit induced rhabdo – often warning about it. Yet, the program also tends to pride itself on the “extreme” nature of the workout, creating a clown-like image known as “Uncle Rhabdo” who is hooked up to a dialysis machine with a prolapsed kidney on the ground. Inherently, CrossFit assumes an extreme and intense categorization. Now that I have discussed the intensity aspect of CrossFit, I turn attention to the lifestyle component.

CrossFit as a Lifestyle

While CrossFit is defined as an exercise program, it can also be understood as a set of ideologies that produce a hegemonic form of fitness (James, 2014). Some CrossFit participants tend to look down on other forms of fitness as well as lifestyles. In more narrative detail, I tell the story of Russell Greene, who walked into a restaurant after competing in an extreme CrossFit competition and thought he was on “Mars” because everyone in the restaurant appeared unfit. Perhaps some of this attitude comes from CrossFit’s interpretation of what people are “before” they join the program.

At CrossFit, when members first join, they are labeled as “sick.” Sick because they have let inactivity and certain eating habits essentially “corrupt” their body. The only way to move past the “sick” identity is to move closer to “fitness.” Nutrition is the most fundamentally important aspect of CrossFit. A body that has been feeding on gluten and sugar is a “sick” body. CrossFitters are known for a strict adherence to a nutritional doctrine. One of the most popular diets within the CrossFit community is a Paleolithic (paleo) diet. This diet privileges vegetables, meat, nuts and seeds – the focus is on eating items that they believe “ancestors” ate. Many in the CrossFit community liken the diet to a lifestyle. For example, the following text was taken from a CrossFit blog linked to another paleo diet blog, but is a pervasive sentiment in the CrossFit community:

This whole “paleo thing” is not a one size fits all program. In fact, it’s not a program. It’s life and a better life because eating paleo means eating food that makes you feel amazing instead of fat, lazy, unhealthy, and sick. If you felt okay before, eating paleo might mean maximizing your potential and realizing that just feeling ok is pretty lousy compared to feeling VITALITY! (Fragoso, 2013).

“A better way of life” is a mantra that is promoted throughout CrossFit trainings and promotional items. As evident in the quote above, viewing one’s way of life as inherently better causes one to label other lifestyles as “fat and lazy” which indeed are evaluative terms that ignore individual context.

With CrossFit, we see a material¹ outcome in the way that some people choose to live their lives, the foods they choose to eat, and even how they tend to view people that do not work out or live the way that they do. While some may argue that these are

¹ By material or materiality I refer to the physical ways in which communication manifests into a tangible reality.

indicative of a strong culture, simply resistant of outsiders, I argue that it is more than a culture, closer to an ideology. Privileging certain groups through discriminatory organizing practices, like defining groups as fit versus unfit, is ultimately problematic because it ignores the fact that a socially constructed notion of fit is simply not attainable for everyone. More, it may sensationalize dangerous or risky behavior in the gym that may lead to further injury (Lipinski, 2013).

CrossFit supports a pyramid-shaped model of their goals. To achieve results, one must advance the pyramid, going from a spectrum of sick to fit. One moves beyond the scope of “sick” when they adopt a prescribed diet (Fieldnotes). Deconstructing this term, “sick” refers to not only someone who is not eating the preferred way (grain-free diets) but someone who is also not working out in the preferred way through functional movement. According to this definition, a marathon runner would be closer to the “sick” end of the spectrum for lacking proper nutrition and for only specializing in one form of fitness. From here, the pyramid rises with cardiovascular exercise, gymnastics, weightlifting, and sport appears at the pinnacle. Each activity builds on the previous, with nutrition as the most integral step.

CrossFit as a Community

CrossFitters are known for their strong, collective communities, often earning a “cult like” reputation in the popular media (see Cooperman, 2005; Stoddard, 2011; Bellar, 2013). CrossFitters tend to consider their way of fitness as superior to other forms, earning a reputation in the fitness community as elitist – after all, their tagline is “forging elite fitness” (CrossFit, 2014). After receiving a recommendation from a friend,

I visited a local CrossFit gym (or “box” as they are known to the CrossFit community). Signing up, I found out, was more of a consultation. I felt like I was *trying out* with the coach, as she was taking notes about my flexibility. After a few months of training there, I began writing down observations – the group would have barbeques, fitness competitions, trunk shows, nutrition seminars – among other events. It was clear this was a very social activity. Nine months after beginning a CrossFit training regimen, I applied for IRB approval to interview participants, continue observation, and attend various training seminars and other CrossFit sponsored events to provide richer description of the organization behind CrossFit’s approach to fitness. This initial pilot study (James, 2014) informs this dissertation. I was most interested in the “community” aspect of CrossFit and how that community or cultural aspect would affect organizational life.

CrossFit as Defining Health and Fitness

CrossFit is a national organization that offers its training programs to CrossFit affiliates throughout the country. CrossFit gyms are called “boxes” which are routinely found with large bay doors and an industrial feel about them. In a box, one might find free weights, weightlifting platforms, a clock, a whiteboard, sledgehammers, and tractor tires. Each box pays an annual fee to the CrossFit brand for an affiliation status, which means it can use the CrossFit name in their title and description, as well as earn a much coveted link on the CrossFit.com homepage.

CrossFit has also been attempting to promote their exercise modality in the modern workplace. FitCo, an athletic apparel company, is one example of an

organization that has recently included a CrossFit gym for its employees. The FitCo brand, according to company executives (Fieldnotes) has not lived up to expectations after being acquired by the Madrigal Group in 2005. Madrigal has had success across much of Europe and the U.S., whereas FitCo has recently lost major partnerships with professional sports leagues. Hoping to reclaim its once dominant market niche, FitCo has looked to CrossFit as a potential ally for several reasons. First, CrossFit continues to open new gyms each year, growing from just over 400 gyms to now over 7000 gyms between 2007 and 2013. Another attractive reason for a relationship rests on the fact that the average membership prices for CrossFit gyms are much higher than traditional gyms, ranging between \$150-300 per month across the US. Because these gyms cater to an already affluent demographic, FitCo may be able to capitalize off of creating fitness products to a very capable and willing consumer.

Dissertation Preview

Drawing the line between the public and private discourse becomes exceedingly difficult. So much, in fact, that Zoller (2000) noted that managers often asked her why there was any problem with telling people to work out and eat healthy (p. 175). The problem, she explained, is that one person's definition of "healthy" is relative, thus encouraging an individual subscribe to management's privileged perspective on what constitutes health and healthy lifestyles. Zoller chronicled the many possible ways in which such arbitrary interpretations of healthy behavior are disseminated through a managerial discourse. Zoller concluded that managerial discourse is interpreted as an authoritative "mind" and the workers are often viewed as "merely the 'body'" (p. 176).

This dichotomy is troubling because of the power distances between supervisors and subordinates, and the extent to which workers take for granted ideological positions articulated by an employer. Additionally, as the quote used to open this dissertation indicates, CrossFit rhetoric about making people “better” is both explicit (through message) and implicit (the CrossFit body that is produced through working out).

The topic of workplace wellness ultimately brings up a question about individual freedom and autonomy. Making sense of this line is difficult, but more empirically based studies, like this dissertation, will feed the demand. In the next paragraph, I preview the dissertation format.

This dissertation is organized in a seven chapter format. Chapter two provides current conceptualizations and literature that help inform this dissertation, as well as providing key theoretical constructs that guide the study. Chapter three contains my commitments to methodological design. In this chapter, I foreground my positionality and describe the field-site in depth. The next three chapters (four-six) contain my analyses. Chapter four articulates the ways in which CrossFit materialized itself as part of FitCo’s organizational culture. I lay out an interpretive chapter that describes the organizational culture in depth. In chapter five, I present the ways in which “power” materialized at FitCo and in the CrossFit gym I call FitBox. Chapter six questions the corporeal ethics of the CrossFit program on employees lives, bringing in “the body” to the conversation. Chapter seven provides implications for theory and practice, but also distills several of the major takeaways from the study. I have also compiled a deep set of

appendices, which contain my interview protocol and code-list with representative example.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to guide the reader through relevant literature that informed this study. While researching at FitCo I was continuously asked what it was that I studied. Organizational communication scholars generally have difficulty in growing their field, or even describing what it is that they study. By discussing the research in power, culture/identity, and health promotion/advocacy, I situate my study in the larger context and show how the issues I am studying relate directly to organizational communication. I pull from three main strands of research in my literature review: (1) power and organizing (2) identity and organizational culture and (3) workplace health advocacy. In blending these three areas together, I am interested in the implications behind the fit body and organizational wellness. All three perspectives involve ways in which an organization produces and controls the body, stemming from my commitment to critical theory.

Post-modern theories, such as those derived from the work of Michel Foucault, have been the most influential in conceptualizing modern theories of power and how power plays out in the work place. I draw from Foucault's texts, *Discipline and Punish: The birth of the prison* and *The History of Sexuality Volume I*. I unpack Foucault's concept of "bio-power" and incorporate contemporary uses of bio-power in organizational studies. From here, I discuss the mythos of productive culture and examine how "identity" has been conceptualized and studied. Finally, I offer a critical assessment of health and the organization by focusing on ways organizations have

promoted health/fitness discourses over the last 30 years. Some scholars have expanded this work to examine health benefit packages, including exercise. One particular stream of research I draw from is Heather Zoller's 2000 dissertation on "working out" and managerial control. To begin, I provide an overview of power.

Organizational Control and Foucauldian Notions of Power

Power is important to unpack for this study for several key reasons. First, the critical scholar is interested in exploring the ways power affects organizational life and its inherent implications for resistance (Mumby, 1988). Theorists have morphed, evolved, and tweaked understandings of power, but Clegg, Coupesson, and Phillips (2006) understanding of power centers two main issues: (1) 'power to' and (2) 'power over' (p. 190). "Power to" derives from power's facilitative function, its capacity to accomplish good. "Power over" refers to more coercive means, or something we typically associate more with abuse (Clegg, 1989). Of course, the two are not mutually exclusive and in fact much more interconnected. One further distillation of power explores the ways in which power is exercised.

Power, according to Michel Foucault, is exercised through webs and relationships. Power is contextual and inspired by invisible symbolic forces. Giddens (1986) calls these forces the "resources are media through which power is exercised" (p. 16). In essence, power here refers to the systematic institutionalization of social relations. Deetz (1992) gives the example of how managerial relations change over time, and power is not necessarily in the position, but in the relationship the manager has with his or her subordinates in the organization over time (p. 252).

Rarely are Foucauldian notions of power and control clear, but some scholars try to explain power further. Deleuze described Foucault's conceptualization of power as "...an operation which consists of tracing 'a line of general force', linking, aligning and homogenizing particular features, placing them in series and making them converge (Deleuze, 2009, p. 75). The emphasis on these power relations implies a certain degree of influence from institutions (or "power-over"), but mainly a degree of power contingent upon "traces" of ritualized historical forces (Barker & Cheney, 1994; Clegg, Coupasson, & Phillips, 2006). Such traces are merely the historical remnants that seep through and are continually taken for granted. In practice, power can be studied by looking at enduring structures, taken for granted truths and assumptions, and deconstructing those notions.

The distinction is subtle but Foucault and Deleuze attempt to separate institutional forms of power from the affects of the organizing principles of power. The main argument behind this conceptualization of power, is that power is both object and function, with Foucault's principle concern being the functioning property of power (Deleuze, 2009). Having this understanding of power from Foucault enables one to theorize about control and resistance in the organization.

Foucault's perspective focuses on the concept of the panopticon, a symbolic metaphor for structural power relations. Jeremy Bentham created plans for a prison system which utilized a sophisticated network of surveillance to monitor and control prisoners. In his design, prison cells were positioned so that prisoners would not be able to discern if they were being monitored, but a guard positioned in a central tower could

easily observe cells/prisoners. Foucault's panopticon draws on the seemingly invisible forces that continue to regulate action. Prisoners obey because they believe they are being observed, and detection of misbehavior would be punished in some way (confinement, reduced rations, or even a beating). While that may have very well been the case at first, after such actions had been committed, simply the threat of discipline was generally enough to regulate behavior. Bentham's design was taking advantage of the "what if I am being watched" factor. In the observation deck the guard could potentially observe any number of inmates. Through surveillance, argued Bentham and ultimately Foucault, we act in accordance with societal expectations. Power then, is our capacity to negotiate these expectations. Communication, either intentional or unintentional is linked to agency and human capacity to "make a difference" (Giddens, 1986, p. 14). For this dissertation, I explore power in its panoptic (surveillance) form, through power "of the body."

Bio-Power and the Corporate Body

Foucault's theory of power is much more pervasive than the panopticon. Foucault went on to describe how in everyday interactions, everyday citizens are enmeshed in complicated webs of power. The ways in which people regulate themselves are in accordance with societal expectations. Foucault's (1990) concept of "bio-power" describes the ways in which the body is regulated because of power relations. The concept stems from sovereign power when a king could make a determination for the right to keep someone alive or death. Recognizing the limitation to this form of power, Foucault described the ways in which the power over the body was used in much more

productive ways – rather than the dead body, the king could “invest” in the enslaved body:

There is no need either to lay further stress on the proliferation of political technologies that ensued, investing the body, health, modes of subsistence and habitation, living conditions, the whole space of existence (p. 144).

The body, compared to that of a machine, shows bio-power’s emergence as a shift towards capitalist economics. That is, those that had control of a body producing products had more control over the means of production in addition to modes.

This bio-power was without question an indispensable element in the development of capitalism; the latter would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes (p. 141).

Foucault argued that the bio-politics (investing in life) became a much more popular and fruitful use of power, rather than rule over life. The body represented an assemblage of troops that could be mobilized, educated, produced. Foucault noted two primary reasons for this shift. One, the body was considered machine-like, and the other end the biopolitics (reproduction, health, sexuality) (Foucault, 1990). While the capacity to exercise “power over life” (p. 139) did indeed represent total sovereign power, the result was quick and the benefits were minimal (other than the show and exercise of power). But, in having subordinates labor and produce, “bio-power” rose and the politics of the body were exploited though the idea of *investing* in the body.

Foucault talks about the body and its production through military schools as an important transition into an increasingly industrial society. Of the body, Foucault noted:

By the late eighteenth century, the soldier has become something that can be made; out of formless clay, an inapt body, the machine required can be constructed; posture is gradually corrected; a calculated constraint runs slowly

through each part of the body, mastering it, making it pliable, ready at all times, turning silently into the automatism of habit; in short, one has ‘got rid of the peasant’ and given him ‘the air of a soldier’” (Foucault, 1995, p. 138).

That formless piece of clay or docile body is the body (or the worker) that can be sculpted into a more productive worker/soldier. Following this line of thought, scientific management emerged in organizational settings (Braverman, 1974). Scientific management, also called Taylorism, is regarded as a system of efficiencies that enables one to do tasks at an optimal rate (Miller, 2011).

Foucault’s bio-power has been applied to many contemporary contexts (e.g. weight watchers (Heyes, 2006), male body-building (Moore, 1996), fitness and consumerism (Dworkin & Wachs, 2009), and health-care (Lupton, 1995) among a myriad of others. That fact is, Foucauldian notions of power are pervasive. Post-Foucauldian conceptualization recognize the body as a main site of power relations – it is where power relations are materialized. For organizational scholars, this is of particular importance for two specific reasons. One, the body is regulated by medical discourses. Foucault argues traditional notions of medical organizing were the first attempts at controlling the body. For example, according to the *American Medical Association*, someone who has over 25% body fat is considered obese – but these “calculations” do not account for other factors like body shape. While there may be economic incentives in getting obesity defined (e.g. insurance claims), certain organizations may take these perhaps arbitrary definitions and hold them as dogmatic. Certain employers have now started charging employees who are high in body fat percentage higher insurance premiums than more “fit” employees (McConville, 2013). Second, Foucault discusses

the ways that power manifests itself over body politics by regulation. Regulation is the disciplining of bodies which ties into Foucault's concepts of surveillance and pan-opticism.

One need not look too far to see how a control of the body has found its way into contemporary organizational life (Burrell, 1988; Dale, 2005). Ben-Ari (2005) noted how the American army has used "sleep management systems" in an effort to control the body and mind of soldiers. Soldiers have been used to describe the formation of bodies at the king's whim, and where better than to exemplify Foucault's concept of the docile, malleable body. Troops form through muster, conduct military exercises, are told what to eat and sleep, and even taught proper decorum. While Ben-Ari suggested that this was not necessary military control of the body and instead part of soldier's own agency and part of the soldier's self concept (p. 166), the line between controlling systems and individual autonomy has long been blurry. Burrell (1988) argued that post-structuralists often equate the subject as being unaware of the intricate web of power that he/she in which he/she has become entangled. Labor process theorists often equate this with so-called false-consciousness.

Corporate Colonization of the Life World

Stan Deetz (1992) argued that in contemporary times, many important family decisions or "life decisions" center around an organization rather than health, education or other important factors. Instead of moving to an area for "good schools," we might be more inclined to move because we have been "transferred" or another area may have better job "opportunities." Deetz's term, the corporate colonization of the self, is an extension

of what Habermas called the “colonization of the lifeworld” (Habermas, 1979; Deetz, 1992; Ezzy, 2001). The modern corporation has become so totalizing that the line between personal and public grows smaller by the day. Deetz’s argument is that most decisions that are made in today’s society are done so out of respect to one’s career, including those involving matters of the family. The implications of this, observed Deetz, have been radically theorized, but yet only decision-making processes or “social transformations” are visible in hindsight (Deetz, 1992, p. 13). The ways we make decisions and allow organizations to be at the center, has routinized worker behavior and institutionalized the very essence of organizational life. This pattern has been reified and continues to become more invasive. Yet, many of potentially harmful effects go largely unnoticed as they are camouflaged in discourses of company care.

The most recognized case study on the “corporate colonization” is evident in studies of the corporate towns of the nineteenth century (see Green, 2010; White, 2012). The promise of utopia, a so-called paternal influence/guidance, was the answer to a fast-growing super-power. An employer would offer housing, religious services, food -- all within an arm’s reach of the laborer. The Pullman experiments created urban chaos, ultimately earning the label of an overly paternal system of control (see Schneirov, Stromquist, & Salvatore, 1999). The paternal system cares for the employee and the employee’s family and was a taken for granted component of the organization of work starting in the eighteenth century (Holliday & Thompson, 2001). The corporate towns have mostly closed down because employees began to realize these systems as controlling, dominating, and ultimately oppressive. Though now almost extinct (in

developed countries), there seems to be a slow revival of the company town model. In the 21st century, company towns still exist, but they now appear as organizational “campuses.” The end result is the same, more worker output, but yet organizational encroachment into the personal sphere becomes less obvious and more intrusive.

Mountain View, CA city council thwarted Google’s plans to construct employee housing on its grounds to compliment its notorious employee amenities, arguing that it promoted the flawed “company town” model of the past (DeBolt, 2012).

Self-Regulating Teams and Control

Barker’s (1993) study of self-regulating teams was one of the first to talk about how organizations utilizing this type of control. Barker extended Max Weber’s iron cage bureaucracy metaphor as well as Edwards’ three strategies of control (simple control characterized by direct authoritarian supervision, technological control including mechanistic models or those typically found in assembly lines, and bureaucratic which is more of the modern construct of the hierarchy). Barker explained that in various control systems, managers control workers by “shaping their knowledge about the ‘right’ way to act and interact in the organization” (p. 411). Concertive control stems from the modern organization’s push towards a flattening hierarchy and more decentralized structure. The locus of control shifts from a management centered strategy to the small work group, but Barker argued that while at first such a shift may seem more laissez-faire, it quickly becomes more controlling than traditional hierarchical control. Barker also noted how human dignity was invested into the system that evoked peer pressure and power games to control members of the group.

Ezzamel and Willmott (1998) discussed concertive control in team-work based teams discussing how team-work is not always necessarily a “win-win.” The benefits of a decentralized structure are well-documented and the “management from a distance” philosophy has been very popular. Ezzamel and Willmott named organizational identification as a key to creating more close-knit teams. In creating these teams, managers who were given the title “self-manager” were reluctant to give up their title/identity even when the program became overly obtrusive. In Ezzamel and Willmott’s study, the organizations efforts at self-managing teams ultimately failed, with organizational stakeholders citing a flawed team based bonus structure. Additionally, despite attempting to create a more lean and decentralized structure, there was already a very rigid pre-established “job” hierarchy in place. That is, many of the employees’ identities were so connected to their job type/function that removing “prestige” was too difficult as it had been so enmeshed with the employees. Ezzamel and Willmott concluded their piece with a discussion of clannism, or how too much in group bias can lead towards problem decision making processes like groupthink. Clans are powerful organizations that rely on close identification with a group, another key component to concertive control.

Pratt’s (2000) comprehensive list of reasons for identification from both the organizational and personal levels points to the desire for belonging and affiliation. In essence, group members need to overcome social isolation, so they are driven to collectives. If labor causes alienation because of division of labor, organizational identification is a way belonging, joined by collective action. While no work experience

is necessarily the same, within capitalist economics the capacity to be alienated from work is always there. Thus, the employees' experiences may be somewhat different, but the result or need for identification should remain static. Organizational leaders use identification as a means of control. Pratt described organizational identification as a naturally occurring process because of an innate human desire to "fit in" and conquer alienation from the result of a more formal division of labor. The two concepts of emulation and affinity (paths towards identification) are also important. The more committed to a job one member is, the less likely he/she is to look for alternative employment. Pratt also concluded that organizational identification is more likely to occur in unique organizations and brings in the role of emotion on identification (p. 200). This means that well known organizations that may have been sensationalized in the media may have an easier time in encouraging employee identification because, to some extent, the organization has help in generating company buzz. However, strong identification can also lead to questionable discourses of power as evident in Bangladesh with the Grameen Bank.

Papa, Auwal, and Singhal's (1995) work with the Grameen Bank, a micro-loan lending bank operating in rural Bangladesh, is the quintessential study on concertive control. In promoting the business of micro-loans, the Grameen Bank operations with a set of rules or procedures through which the line between control and emancipation becomes very fine. Managers create rules which then shape employee behavior and become 'self-regulating' (e.g. new rule created to maintain 99% loan recovery rate, putting posts behind desks to indicate where everyone stands with their recovery rate,

similar to a public surveillance system. Each organizational unit is five members (or a clique or team that basically controls itself. Both workers and members of the bank will experience the dialectic of control/emancipation (the ability to be empowered and making one's own autonomous decisions or being manipulated through peer pressure to conform to certain behaviors). Giving up individual freedoms for "greater goods" is common. The authors set out to discuss the tension between control and emancipation, showing the self-regulation "works" but the overarching question is "at what cost?" The dialectic illustrates being free from managerial or authoritative forms of control (emancipation), but how control gets tighter when participants are under group control (peer-pressure, guilt, or even more coercive forms). In the example of the Grameen Bank, workers gave up weekends to help their clients make money in order to pay back the microloan. The potential for managerial abuse of concertive control could be more powerful than other control systems, linking self-regulation with surveillance.

Sewell (1998) analyzed the methods of surveillance used to capture precisely how teams are controlled, addressing the variable of *trust* in teamwork. While empowerment / surveillance are in stark contrast with one another, Sewell noted how each are related through labor process theory. Sewell begs the question "how do you achieve control without *appearing* to control? Surveillance puts workers into categories as every detail can be "scrutinized." Often, the degree to which surveillance takes place is so ubiquitous it goes unnoticed, hence the idea of the super-panopticon (p. 403) or the ways in which it may seem inevitable to escape panoptic control. Sewell related to Foucault's concept of "bio power" and noting the way systems of knowledge come

together from which we rationalize human behavior to make us “compliant, docile, and useful” (Sewell, 1998, p. 404). Sewell also noted the role of the disciplinary chimera – mythical beast used to be a “corrective to the rhetoric of normative management discourse by conveying that emerging forms of workplace control may well be, either intentionally or unintentionally, monstrous creations (p. 414). Despite these connections to power, the extent to which the benefits of self-regulating teams and concertive control counter-set the potential negative effects remains unclear.

In self-regulating, peer pressure, concertive controlled teams, what becomes of individual identity? According the bureau of labor statistics, Americans on average spend more than 8.5 hours a day at work, more time spent than on any other task. Some research notes that Americans “work” more than any other industrialized country in the world, though quantifying such research is often difficult. During these work hours, identities are constructed either as a product or by-product of labor. At the heart of this discussion is the exercise of power in the organization, where people spend the most amount of their time. Examining the role of power on the body, corporate colonization, and even through self-regulating teams allows us to unpack the totalizing nature of power discourses. Foucault envisioned the totalizing principle of power as all-encompassing and that its discursive power is often taken for granted or normalized (Foucault, 1990; 1995).

Another element of control, albeit stemming from another vein of research, examines the effects of organizational culture. In the section that follows I provide an overview of culture.

The Mythos of Productivity Culture

During the last 30 years, organizational leaders have looked for inexpensive, quick-fix panaceas to increase worker productivity. Tom Peters receives a lot of credit/blame for advocating for prescription models of so-called “excellent cultures.” Peters pushed for a strong managerial focus and treated culture much like an independent variable in a research project (one that can be isolated and manipulated). Organizational culture has become associated with a grammar of productivity, as evidenced by endless university library stacks to even airport bookstores (Peters & Waterman, 1982; Deal & Kennedy, 1982). In more recent years, the term organizational culture is still relevant, but its meaning remains nebulous. Organizational leaders look to other forms of employee control for the promise of higher profits. Culture has faded from the organization studies forefront, and morphed into discourses of organizational identification and identity (Taylor, McDonald, & Fortney, 2011). However, cultural studies are alive and well in consulting companies and the popular press. For those actually paying attention to substantive outcomes, management guru theories have indeed been critiqued for frequently playing up myth, lacking both tangibles fixes and analysis (see for example McGover, 1997; Collins, 2012; Conrad, 2012).

How does this affect the bottom line? This mantra of the modern capitalist organization is a guiding question as organizational leaders develop “values” for employees. One possible explanation to value engineering is the encroachment of the personal “lifeworld” and tying it to the myth of productivity. Organizational cultures, starting with Deal and Kennedy (1982) have perpetuated seemingly simple fix to all

organizational ills. Organizational leaders have and continue to play around with value engineering (Ogbor, 2000; Ezzy, 2001; Kunda, 2006). Espoused values like integrity, leadership, innovation among other buzzwords are supposed to magically create more profitable environments. Peters and Waterman's work on "excellent cultures" helped propagate a culture mythos based largely on anecdotal reporting. Collins has aptly critiqued Tom Peters for perpetuating these myths and for continuing to help marginalize the role of women in the organization (Collins, 2012). From the work on culture came a new method of control, the self-regulating team and unobtrusive control systems through the use of normative control (Barker & Cheney, 1994). These systems are now widespread, utilizing peer-pressure and team based values to complete organizational tasks. In the section that follows, I describe the difference in prescriptive modes of culture and the emergent, or symbolic performances of culture. I conclude this section with directions for research in merging the two variable and symbolic approaches and focusing on embodied culture and identity.

Organizational Culture as a Variable

Organizational culture gained popularity in the late 1980s as organizational leaders attempted to utilize organizational culture as a means of boosting profits (Eisenberg & Riley, 2001). Organizational culture is rooted in the underlying assumptions behind employee action, or the symbolic ways in which organizational member make sense of their realities (Wilkins & Ouchi, 1983; Smirchich & Calás, 1987; Smith & Eisenberg, 1997). Such an approach would explain employee behaviors as motivated by organizational cultural values. Edgar Schein's (1985) work is an important

starting point for understanding culture because it provides a three stage model used to help promote a corporate culture. Schein's onion model positions patterned behavior and artifacts in the top layer or as the "skin." From here, Schein addresses how an organization's espoused values permeate in the middle-area. Ultimately, one can begin to identify an organization's assumptions that guide behavior/actions at the "heart" of the onion. Each are difficult to see and can sometimes be attributed to an organization's overall "feeling" (Schein, 1985). From a research perspective, understanding organizational culture needs to be manifested more clearly to offer a more descriptive understanding.

The role of leadership also plays a pivotal role in the development and maintenance of an organization's culture. An organizational culture may originate through founders' initial behaviors and decision premises, and slowly trickle down through small-groups interacting within the organization (Schein, 1985). One of the main tenets observed from the "culture as a variable" camp is that culture originates from leadership and is disseminated strategically. An employee can learn an organization's cultural values through a variety of top-down functions such as workforce training and meetings designed to impart cultural values. In this approach, the difference or separation between what scholars label as a corporate culture and an organizational culture becomes blurred (Eisenberg & Goodall, 1997; Linstead & Grafton-Small, 1992). That is, a corporate culture could best be represented by management views on how its culture should be. Traditionally, the primary distinction between the variable and other

approaches to culture lie within the amount of attention given to leadership's influence on cultural change as opposed to a descriptive or more shared perspective (Miller, 2011).

While Schein (1985) noted that culture is not visible, he indicated that its "manifestations are" (p. 312). Schein (1999) proposed a "change team" to effectively enter an organization, decide an appropriate idealistic "future state" and begin to implement change. The change team is not necessarily compiled of just leaders, but also "facilitators" to the change process. Manipulating the culture and using it as a variable, dismisses the much more constitutive nature of culture and further creates a distinction between a corporate culture and organizational culture (Smircich & Calás, 1987; Alvesson, 1993; Ogbor, 2000).

Organizational Culture as Symbolic

Communication scholars typically associate more of a social constructivist slant to the study of organizational culture. The basic ontological assumptions of social construction value knowledge as developed through the larger social discourse (Allen, 2005). Social construction can also be used as a lens for questioning taken for granted discursive truths (Gergen, 1999). The extremes of social construction differ widely, but an organizational reality may be so 'realist' that it would be difficult for leaders to value any other perspective. Post-modern scholars may struggle with finding an entry point to produce materially-bound evidence "relatable" to organizational leaders with such contrasting ontological assumptions. However, the symbolic connection of language to organizational culture has become another traditional alternative to the "variable" model (Eisenberg & Goodall, 1997). Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo (1983) described another "web" which not only included organizational artifacts and values, but an

individual's "own" reality that may be separate from someone else's. Therefore, there may not be a tangible "one size fits all culture," but rather, each individual has their own interpretation of an organizational culture (see Trice & Beyer, 1993),

One stream of research stems from examining the symbolic ways that culture pervades an organization. Symbolic convergence is particularly useful in organizational analysis as the theory takes into account a group's shared meaning and a first step in exploring organizational discourse (Bormann, 1996; Miller, 2011). Bormann's theory distinguishes between patterned scripts and norms to evaluate discursive fantasies and narratives which can be helpful in understanding symbolic forms of culture. Such a distinction is especially important because groups may organize their identity discursively, sometimes without even being consciously aware of the process. When comparing group perceptions of organizational culture, symbolic convergence provides a sound framework for analysis as it focuses on the ways individuals use narratives to create and maintain "fantasy themes" which help sustain group culture (Bormann, 1996). Bormann's theory of symbolic convergence identifies three main components: the patterns and arrangement of communicative events with shared attitudes, the discernible meanings of the group communication and/or motives, and why group members share examples at different times. Bormann uses the term "fantasy themes" to describe how a group relates or makes sense of certain events. It is important to note that the term "fantasy" refers "to the creative and imaginative shared interpretation of events that fulfils a group psychological or rhetorical need" (p. 130). In other words, a fantasy

theme may be an ideological interpretation of group identity which could shed light on how organizational members perceive control systems.

Rather than attempting to identify specific cultures, communication researchers emphasize the importance of studying “interpretations” of organizational culture through language. Specifically, communication scholars have examined culture as performative through metaphors (Smith & Eisenberg, 1987), narratives (Boje, 1991), and ethnographic accounts (Ronai, 1992) among other approaches to uncover organizational cultures. Taking a symbolic approach places onus on artifacts, activities, and language that shape culture (Eisenberg & Goodall, 1997). As Deetz (1992) noted, the organization as a symbolic culture framework offered a “new” insight into the inner-workings of an organization. Using the symbolic approach, researchers could uncover deep seated organizational assumptions that have continually been (re)produced structurally. Most notably, Smith and Eisenberg (1987) analyzed “root-metaphors” used by participants to describe their experience working with Disney. While the authors note the importance of individual interpretations, the root-metaphors used to describe the ‘larger’ organizational culture were useful in organizing thematic interpretations of the dominant cultures within Disney. Smith and Eisenberg discussed how different interpretations of Disney’s culture between managers and subordinates illuminated the two groups’ adversarial and contradictory positions. Schall (1983) also took an interpretive approach analyzing communication and corporate culture; his research illustrated important distinctions between a manager’s perspective and employee’s perspectives of organizational culture.

Metaphors are especially valuable for understanding perspectives of organizational culture. Because organizations are "social-historical constructions," they are sites of constant cultural negotiation (Deetz, 1985). In other words, organizations frequently construct and shift their own realities. Individuals might use metaphors as a form of resistance. For example, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) describe the pervasiveness of metaphors and almost subconscious use. They are so common that metaphors structure our perception. Within organizations, when employees describe their work environment in metaphors, it sheds light on structural or more latent issues without an employee having to be explicit.

The studies of organizational culture and Foucauldian notions of power are inherently related and exist in prescriptive and description notions of power. Foucauldian notions of power rely on the fact that power is exercised in hidden ways – like the ways that cultures perpetuate popular discourse. For example, a discourse that claims the fit body is the better body is a product of culture. However, it is also a principle of power because it pushes the *care* of the body through working out. The ways in which a collective takes for granted certain values is a component of culture. Thus, the focus on the body as both product and by-product of culture and power is critical. In the section that follows, I review literature that has begun to focus on the body as a material effect of culture and identity.

Embodiment and Culture

Attention to the working body has come into focus in recent years (Shildrick, 1997; Tretheway, 1999; Tretheway, Scott, & LeGreco, 2009). Some scholars have begun

looking at the body as a cultural artifact. Labor, or the ways in which good are produced, is arguably one of the most meaning-centric points of human life. It has been stated that losing one's job or sense of purpose is a leading cause of depression (Strully, 2009). In the post-modern era, and I define post-modern in the same light of Eisenberg, Goodall, and Tretheway (2009) that the organization is merely representative of larger cultural zeitgeists, the organization only continues to produce the body and the self. Identity concerns, like those pertaining to gender, class, and race are issues that are inherent in the organizing principles of work. Despite the body spending more and more time at work, Tretheway, Scott, and LeGreco (2006) lament that the body is lacking as focus in much of the contemporary theories. Despite relatively little research on the body at work, several key scholars have noted future directions in terms of ethics and the body.

Ashcraft (2004) called for a moratorium on the study of gender alone. Gender is so intertwined with other identity politics, like race, age, and class that distinguishing it would be impossible. It also goes without saying that much of the previous research in this literature review has addressed issues of gender and resistance, like (Smircich & Calás, 1987; Murphy, 1998; Collins, 2013). Tretheway (2001) examined the implications of the aging baby boomer generation and its potential implications for women. This vein of research moves toward an integration of gender and age, and investigating the social construction of ageism and its affects on organizations.

The discursive nature and organizing capacity of power is perhaps best exemplified in the work by Karen Ashcraft and the ways in which those in power or privileged positions attempt to stay in those positions (like the airlines resistance to

airline's attempts to take power away from pilots and distribute it throughout the hierarchy of flight operations.) The organizing principle of power and discourse is inherent to organizations, stemming from Acker (1990). Acker argued that the organization is gendered in various systematic ways. According to Acker, organizational structures are set up in such a way that they privilege the masculine. For example, she noted that a patriarchal figure looks over subordinates. She also noted the symbolic ways that power is unequally distributed, noting through proxemics how those with more power have corner offices or windows. She also noted the ways in which the abstract worker is gendered and male – typically assuming masculine characteristics.

In following Trethewey, Scott, and LeGreco (2006), the commodification of the body at work is of particular interest to this study. Rather than emphasizing how organizational members' bodies are controlled by workplace fitness centers, the very essence of the commodified workplace brings about serious questions. Mainly, is the body simply a cultural artifact inside the organization, or indicative of a much larger discourse that pertains to societal considerations? Trethewey, Scott, and LeGreco recommend:

Perhaps the best resistance to the commodification of the body is the commodification of the workplace. Such actions and the analysis of them must attend carefully to the operations of social class, because workers lacking job security and status may have less agency to make demands on their organizations. Exploring the dialogue between commodification and appropriateness presents us with a fresh perspective on the choices and resources available to workers in the construction of professional identities and bodies (p. 131).

Others point to the rise in the aesthetic laborer (Holliday & Thompson, 2001; Wolkowicz, 2006). Sinclair (2005) reflected on the nonverbal ways in which gender has been organized. Gestures, voice, and even physical stature are often ignored in leadership studies, and implied that such studies have conceived of leadership as “brains without bodies” (p. 402). But as Sinclair noted, bodies are present in all leadership performances, but perhaps the only ones we talk about are the ones that do not fall in line with expectations.

Idealized body image has been a pervasive theme in discussions of social construction and self-esteem. As the US struggles with a growing obesity epidemic, scholars are also finding a troubling new trend - “fat talk.” Arroyo and Harwood (2012) noted that engaging in individual (intrapersonal) self-fat-talk is markedly different than engaging in fat talk as an interpersonal activity. Sassatelli (1999) observed that fitness gyms offer a Goffman-esque description of body politics occurring at the gym. The gym offers a site where the fit-body is the focus, and a constant performance where “personal worth” is constantly associated with the fit body (p. 244). Yet, while all of these organizational arenas *deal* with the body, the focus on the body as the cultural artifact has been limited.

Despite copious amounts of research on organizational culture, both on prescriptive cultures and emergent cultures, questions still remain. What remains understudied are the material ways in which culture manifests itself inside the organization and beyond. The body, for example, has largely been underexplored in organizational culture studies. When an organization, for example, encourages fitness as

a cultural value, the body itself becomes an artifact of organizational culture. With this area of intrigue, the body and its fitness level raises many more questions at the intersection of culture, materiality and identity. When workplace begins to advocate for radically healthy behaviors, the implications of the body at work become illuminated.

Workplace Health Promotion as Corporate Colonization

As the line between private and public fades away, workplace health promotion programs are becoming more common and boast of its economic incentives (Farrell & Geist-Martin, 2005; Goetzell, Long, Ozminkowski et al., 2004; Keyes & Grzywacz, 2005; Stein, Shakour, & Zuidema, 2000). This trending relationship between health advocacy and the organization has strengthened in recent years (McGillivray, 2005). The growing costs of employee health care due to preventable diseases continues to grow (Goetzell, Long, Ozminkowski, et al., 2004). Among many other claims, Keyes and Gryzwacz (2005) noted that preventable diseases like hypertension and obesity are costing employers the most productivity loss and more “sick day usage.” No doubt, health advocacy in the organization has the potential to transform lives, but also the capacity for exploitation. A careful examination of the details of each program is necessary to be able to understand the fine line between health promotion and exploitation.

The subtle ways of organizing an exercise program begin to change people’s lives, but arguably towards empowerment. The US government is encouraging employers to promote healthier workplaces. The Partnership for a Healthier America held an inaugural summit in Washington with various corporate leaders to encourage

better nutritional options at work. Keynoting the conference was First Lady Michelle Obama who among spoke of the necessity of corporations beginning to change employee behavior (Aubrey, 2011). To change lifestyles, the government wants employers to start adopting “healthier” food and exercise programs to begin fighting obesity rates among other preventable health diseases. Even Michelle Obama was demonized for eating ribs on a vacation and called a hypocrite by Rush Limbaugh. Though criticism from fringe groups like Rush Limbaugh is often fallacious, fringe groups like Limbaugh are indicative of a larger discourse around the body and control.

Thanem (2009) discussed how other governments, specifically in the UK, are also focused on managing the body outside of work contexts. In looking at health campaigns centered in the UK, her findings suggest while it is inherently good for citizens to consume more fruits and vegetables as advocated through the health campaign, the effort does more to promote a latent managerial discourse:

But this health discourse is complemented by a particular governmentality discourse which frames healthy eating in neo-liberal managerialist terms. That is, the campaign mobilizes a neo-liberal managerialism to help people eat more fruit and vegetables (p. 67).

The problem with this is that such campaigns prescribe an expert-type knowledge that, in many ways, is totalizing (Foucault, 1990, 1995). With individual agency cast aside, assuming the government “knows best” is hardly a sign of empowerment. Thanem also argued that this discourse precluded individual autonomy and promoted more consumerism (e.g., one must look “good and fit” to wear certain fashions). In the US, Gold’s Gym is keyed in on the corporate wellness initiative. Through their website targeted only for corporations, Gold’s Gym lists five reasons for organizations to adopt

its corporate wellness program: to combat rising health care costs, to help with recruiting and retention, to increase productivity, lower absenteeism, and reduce worker compensation claims (Gold's Gym, 2011).

Zoller (2003b) noted scholars focusing on the symbiotic relationship between work and health. Zoller drew back to Cohen Mason (1994) pointing out that it only became a "political issue" when the chocolate-maker Hershey started "penalizing employees for excessive weight gain" (p. 172). Rarely are cases of violations of workers rights and private lives so clear. It often takes a critical framework to ask questions that go against the status quo, and find out "the other side" of what is happening to workers. Zoller observed the "disciplined body as an efficient body" through a managerial imposed discourse (p. 192). Workers were able to fully articulate what it means to be in good health and she attributed that to having been a corporate sponsored wellness series. All of the participants Zoller spoke with indicated that they "linked the need to condition the body through diet and exercise with the production of a more efficient body for work" (p. 193). The need for a more efficient body at work provided the impetus for workers to begin getting healthier. Zoller described how this was done with a hands-off type approach from management. Instead, the workers began to identify with workplace efficiency and better health, intrinsically linking the both together. Employees that did not work out or participate in the workplace program were given negative identities like "fat" or "[not] really car[ing] about themselves" (p. 195). Zoller concluded by showing how the managerial discourse was furthered (though she admits perhaps unintentionally), through "self-policing" or employee "pan-opticism" that went on

between factions that participated in the program compared to those that didn't. Each health discourse tends to have its own inventory of healthy and unhealthy behaviors. Depending on which version of health and fitness one subscribes to, these distinctions can vary widely. In certain organizational discourses, unhealthy behaviors labeled as sins, can become ideological differences among employees: Protestant, middle-class prohibitions against the “sins” of pleasure like food or alcohol, treating self-denial as a virtue.

Also nestled in this vein of research, drawing from Weber, is the growing area of organizational spiritualism and capitalism (Nadesan, 1999). Organizational leaders are promoting spirituality and entrepreneurial identities to serve organizational initiatives and extend organizational boundaries. Ultimately, what Nadesan argued, is that organizational members draw off of new subjectivities to construct their own identities in relation to corporate goals and interests. Nadesan questioned the implications behind this form of organizational control, showing how such a discourse draws off both formal and normative models of control, offering evidence for how such models privilege the young, technologically savvy employee while isolating others.

Scholars have looked at organizations and health care programs and the extent to which such programs further promote a managerial driven discourse (Holliday & Thompson, 2001; McGillivray, 2005; Tretheway, 1999; Zoller, 2004). Heyes (2006) described how the group reacted to the program's weigh-ins and point-counting. Heyes detailed how the extreme self-discipline, or askesis, was promoted through the Weight Watchers program.

The new “Flexpoints” addition to the Weight Watchers plan carries the slogan: “The real world is full of real choices. Weight loss should be too.” When Foucault comments of the ancients that “regimen should not be understood as a corpus of universal and uniform rules; it was more in the nature of a manual for reacting to situations in which one might find oneself, a treatise for adjusting one’s behavior to fit the circumstances” (1985, 106), he could be running a Weight Watchers meeting (p. 144).

Weight Watchers was both enabling and constraining with its program, just as Thanem (2009) mentioned of the UK’s health promotion campaign. The rhetoric behind dieting campaigns is ultimately exploitive of a language guised in “care of the self” (Heyes, 2006, p. 145). Such paradoxes are common as they tend to rely on cultural constructions of beauty and overemphasizing the role of individual agency – yet minimizing the role of rhetoric behind health campaigns. Health programs cultivate self-care through its discourse, but also, through Foucauldian notions of public commitment, tend to exploit a sense of community. The debate as to if individuals are acting out of their own sense of agency or being exploited by public surveillance and commitment continues. Perhaps more productive understanding of agency would look at how agency is shaped by cultural and historical relationships between communication and power.

McGillivray (2005) argued that the recent shift in organizational wellness has encroached on lifestyle choices again by carefully crafted rhetoric. Using words like “amplification” and “intensification,” McGillivray suggests that these wellness discourses are then given credence through the Foucauldian notion of legitimacy. Terminology has long been used as a means to control and empower. Conrad (2012) remarked:

Fads and fashions are characterized by high rates of failure, and implementing them often does more harm than good to the organization in which they are

adopted. They largely re-invent the wheel, but package it in new terminology; old wine in new wineskins, so to speak... They are sustained by a carefully crafted rhetoric (p. 107).

Such careful control of the message allows for rhetors to use words strategically and “reclaim” them as part of well-crafted messages (e.g. the most contemporary example being “Obama-care” used by the right, then reclaimed by the left). More traditionally, terminology was used to pathologize deviant behaviors and categorize abnormal behavior as uncivil or even perverted (Foucault, 1990). In return, the practices through which the organization uses to monitor or control its members adherence to such “choices” is routinized to such an extent that surveillance is legitimated (McGillivray, 2005). McGillivray noted that organizational gyms, characterized as “corporeal garages” offer organizational members a place to “fine tune” their bodies.

Critique of such health advocacy programs center around public and private sphere delineation (Conrad & Walsh, 1992; Deetz, 1992; Tretheway, 1999, Zoller, 2000). In each of the studies the question remains, as McGillivray asked; “is it vice or virtue?” – wanting to simply note that the possibilities co-exist. With CrossFit and the organization, evidence of an even more extreme version of private and public spheres bleed together. With such an overt attempt at control, an examination at CrossFit would further this discussion in at least two ways: (1) highlighting an extreme form of control from a “cult-like”² health advocacy program (2) answering Zoller’s (2003a) call to bring resistance efforts to the fore-front, by focusing on organizational members resisting the

² Though cult-like could seem pejorative, it is a common descriptor in popular discourse and has been legitimized/reclaimed by CrossFit (Stoddard, 2011).

FitCo CrossFit exercise program, I can provide more of an account of how the resistance takes form throughout the organization.

Zoller, citing May (1999) noted that Workplace Health Promotion ignores "ideological ramifications." Zoller cited Baun, Bernacki, and Herd (1987) that working out promotes sense of community, and through a sense of community affects employee satisfaction. Recent studies corroborate this, as well as popular press items (see, for example, MacIntosh & Walker, 2012). To what extent is this group community effort a glorified surveillance system? The critical nature of my study allows me to question this "community" aspect and explore how it is interpreted by employees, managers, and coaches. Zoller concluded that researchers situate the body within the work context, instead of changing work for the body (2003, p. 175). Of particular interest in recent literature is "fat-talk" or the ways in which body stigma is communicated Arroyo & Harwood (2012).

Anderson and Bresnahan's (2012) participants in a communicating body stigma study noted that sometimes a body that is too muscular also received negative comments (e.g. "too ripped for his own good" (p. 609). However, Anderson and Bresnahan also noted that most comparisons of male bodies were based on BMI (body mass index) and labels used to describe larger bodies included ("grotesque," "saggy," "flabby" (p. 609) among others. Most troubling about Anderson and Bresnahan's study was how others indicated that the larger body was created and thus the responsibility of the person. The authors found similar results with the stigmatization of female bodies both in labeling a larger body negatively as well as a body that was "too skinny" (p. 611). Interestingly,

Anderson and Bresnahan's study did not find a huge variance in the frequency of stigma associated with gender and the body (i.e. men that were muscular were deemed fit, just as women were, obese men were compared to pregnant women). However, gender became more important when talking about three specific body types: the very small male body, very large male, and the very muscular woman. The authors noted that more attention should be paid to body stigma and gender, specifically when other factors are included like (makeup, attire, etc.) and perhaps what ultimately counts as stigma when talking about the body.

Health and Identity

James and Hockey (2007) make the claim that the body holds in itself certain values about the self that are inherent to western conceptualizations of health and illness. Embodied health identities are material representations and affect the way that individuals are treated in the workplace in regard to issues of sickness, reproductive rights, age, and disease. Thus, there is a link between one's health and his or her own identity. For example, Hedges (2011) chronicled how Alcoholics Anonymous help alcoholics "recover" from alcoholism through the "identity *business*" (p. 3). Hedges' point is that the main purpose of AA is to recreate member identity. The extent to which members go about establishing this identity varies. For example, Hedges noted that "staying sober is considered a vital yet incomplete part of the recover process" (p. 10). The recovery process entails a changing of lifestyle from changing social circle affiliation to finding new hobbies and ways to support fellow members. Within AA, one is continually characterized as an alcoholic or recovering alcoholic.

The process of fine-tuning the body has been examined at length in studies of the female body, through recent research on the symbolic construction of masculinity suggest that the balance may be shifting (Shugart, 2008). Though standards of bodily perfection are socially constructed and seemingly arbitrary, they do continue to shape culture, and vice-versa. Shildrick (1997) discussed a pervasive framing of the “leakiness of female body” as one more attempt to control the female body through masculine dominated discourse. This paternalistic and hetero-normative discourse did more to exclude the female body than include it. As such, the female body is viewed as deviant, unequal, and ultimately normalized as little more than a birthing container (Shildrick, 1997). Now, in 2014, even with strides made closer towards gender equality, the body is normalized by the extent to which the body lives up to an archetypal stereotype. Exercise programs within the workplace can help promote health, but they also have the capacity to create more emphasis on the body. Dworkin and Wachs (2009) noted that marketing campaigns have only increased and hyperbolized unrealistic expectations of bodily appearance. Hunnicutt (2001) disagreed, as he argued only the positive benefits of such programs:

It is inherently and intuitively correct for people to try and help their staffs feel better, be in better shape and, therefore, be a healthier member of the employee team (p. 44).

Such claims seem to miss the boat, as do the variety of public health and state sponsored promotional campaigns, examining the potential negative affects these programs could have on employees and citizens. Zoller (2003a) argued that organizational health advocacy programs do more to promote a managerial and masculine laden discourse

than to foster health. Drawing on Zoller's (2003a) argument that organizations have been using health advocacy programs to align employee values, I aim to broaden the scope of health advocacy programs and the extent to which they contribute to all spheres of life. Health advocacy programs, as sites of identity production and reproduction are only one intersection where we see the body being used through "bio-power" (Foucault, 1990). Zoller discussed the implications of these sites of production within the organization by examining their economic affect on the organization. The disciplined body that they produce is able to be a better functioning, docile member of at the organization. Identity and power are two ideological constructs that frame this discussion but in a much larger organizing context. Zoller rationalized her study by asking: "What we do not know is the degree to which employees take up health promotion discourse in their judgments of self and other, and how these judgments operate in the workplace" (p 180). While Zoller addressed these concerns in her study, studying a more invasive exercise methodology will draw out other ways through which control on the body is exercised. Whereas previous attempts to study fitness at work were deemed employee perks, more attention in this study is given to the ways in which organizational members were encouraged through certain incentives and pressure to workout.

Resistance

Another paradox of organizational communication stems from organizational member attempts to resist. In our attempts to resist dominant ideology we can easily fall victim to the larger ideology at hand, through innocuous systems. Foucault called these systems normative control systems (Foucault, 1977; Kunda, 2006). Within culture, Schein

labeled these the assumptions. McCabe (2007) showed how employees were attached to their job roles that divided them from other members of the plant, even in attempts to unify. It is heartbreaking to see that they had been “gotten to” in such a way by organizational rhetoric that they were unable to situate themselves differently. This is also evident in Collinson’s (1992) case of the “shop floor workers” who bonded over their crude humor and their ragging on the management that they were essentially holding themselves down. None of the shop floor workers would even want a management position because they would not want to be the victim of the jokes.

McCabe (2007) articulated one form through which resistance can take place:

In the act and wake of successful resistance our sense of achievement can reinforce the illusion that we are free of power, even as we reproduce power relations. At the time of the walkout, employees rebelled—but then, after the walkout, power once more slipped into the background as part of that which is taken-for-granted (p. 263).

Resistance, according to McCabe (2007) might first be seen as the employees walking out of the shop floor. Indeed work stopped and the workers may have celebrated a micro-victory. However, as McCabe observed that after the walk-out, power relations returned to a sense of normalcy:

To challenge the system therefore requires that we become something other than we are. Our individualized self-consciousness and separation from others that can render us insecure, holds out the possibility of exercising power in other ways (p. 263).

Power, as it is intrinsically linked to resistance, is acting in such a way that “our sense of achievement can reinforce the illusion that we are free of power, even as we reproduce power relations” (p. 263). The most successful organization in the world is the most controlling organization in the world. However, its controlling and alienating behaviors

are framed as “normal” and “innovative” – like Enron, until, of course, the collapse and loss of all employees retirement funds (Bazerman & Watkins, 2008). McCabe (and others) have theorized that resistance is always confined to the same old way of doing things and eventually wanes. What is missing, are the productive ways in which resistance changes the ways in which power-relations are continually reproduced.

In the gym context, Zoller (2004) and McGilivrey (2005) showed how complying with “working out” furthered a managerial laden discourse. Resistance is important to study because it provides the other side of the argument, the unforeseen and often the forgotten in seemingly well-intentioned programs. All three organizational health advocacy pieces demand more studies on resistance of these programs (Zoller, 2003b; 2004; McGillivray, 2005; Thanem, 2009).

Employee resistance has come through in many different forms, often creating debates regarding what “counts” as resistance (Conrad, 2012). Burawoy (1979) observed how workers who were paid a piece-rate system often found their own ways to “make out” or to achieve the best rate of pay possible. Strategies included bonding over the oppressive nature of their work, formulating alliances against management, or even union strikes. What lacks from the seemingly pervasive popular media sources about the vast amount of professional perks available is a critical and productive description of such problematic discourses. Organizations are applauded for their “care” of employees, but yet the other side, the side that may tell a different story that is not nearly as sensationalized. What this means in terms of resistance is that wherever there are power relations, there are opportunities for resistance (Foucault, 1995).

In a study of airline flight attendants, Murphy's (1998) hidden resistance piece chronicled the unique ways employees resisted. Resistance took form by stealing aspirin, food, and liquor and through holding parties with their loot they could grab from aircraft. Other flight attendants used humor to "renegotiate the power relations" (p. 529). The airline attendants were resisting corporate control, through programs that were attempts to use space to control workers and also exert an explicit control over female appearance. For example, employees went to "Barbie bootcamp" to learn about how to dress and act "appropriately" for work. The camp varied in activities from make-up lessons to stepping on weight scales. Barbie bootcamp, promoting a stereotypical yet unattainable to most bodily ideal, provided a type of 'indoctrination' of physical ideals that each female flight attendant was ordered to adhere to. The fact that males did not attend and were given "free time" to do as they see fit and the fact that the females are required to attend the boot camp creates an unequal structure that clearly favors the males. In terms of change in the airline sector, Murphy asserted that it was critical to bring issues "hidden" to the public more public, by the illumination of what she called hidden transcripts. She noted that many airlines had relaxed some of their weight restrictions because of the ways in which resistance efforts become valorized by other public stakeholders. Identifying these structures is the first step towards emancipation. In order to lead toward the end goal of emancipation (free from gendered control or oppressive regime), one must fully uncover the intricacies within a web of ideology (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

A New Perspective on Resistance

Though the above literature points to common trends in resistance scholarship, new avenues have emerged that look at resistance as a ‘struggle’ (Fleming & Spicer, 2007; 2008). Because traditional views often depict power and resistance in direct opposition to one another, these understandings of power/resistance may be limited in showing the communicative interplay in the dialectic. Rarely is a power negotiation terminated after a power move and a response (resistance). Instead, Fleming and Spicer (2007; 2008) point to communication as the focus in imagining resistance as a struggle, drawing on work from Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers. “Power is the result of communicative struggle” (Fleming & Spicer, 2007, p. 56). In her review of power and resistance in organizational communication, Zoller (2014) noted resistance as a struggle has offered a counter-point to views of ‘domination’ in the organization. Thus, the relationship and play between power/resistance as a dialectic as well as the nuanced understanding of struggle prove useful frameworks that guide this study.

So far in this chapter I have discussed the ways in which relevant literature informed this dissertation. In the next section, I provide my guiding theoretical orientation.

Theoretical Orientation for Dissertation

I am coming from three distinct epistemological perspectives that help inform my dissertation. In what follows, I describe what tenets I hold true from each and how these all work together to inform my analysis.

Critical Theory

I take critical theory from the traditional sense of Burrell and Morgan (1979) that a critical scholar attempts to disrupt the status quo and examines how power relations inevitably oppress certain groups while privileging others. A critical scholar works for empowerment underprivileged groups and exposes inherent power imbalances in the social order (Craig, 1999). Deetz's (1996) revamping of the classic Burrell and Morgan "graph" takes it one step further by arguing the goal of the critical theorist is to work toward revolution. While I think change is an important product of critical theory, the way in which change is implemented is of most importance, working through democratic practice and open/participatory decision making (Dempsey & Barge, 2014). These structures also earn some critique in assuming an a priori position that may make certain assumptions. For example, such good intentions coming from the West may be seen as imperialism (see Ivan Illich *To Hell with Good Intentions*). Others note the "problem with speaking for others" raises difficult questions about the role of activism and scholarship (Alcoff, 1991). Alcoff posits that a much more careful effort to "analyze probable or actual effects on discourse and the material context" (p. 26) is one step in the right direction. In this regard, maybe it is impossible to be free from an "*a priori*" perspective, but at least a more careful attention to organizational discourse and "co-reflection" (Dempsey & Barge, 2014) may be productive.

The fundamental paradox in organizational studies is that of worker autonomy and management's attempts at control (Conrad & Poole, 2012). The nature of paradox and tension is that it is not necessarily meant to be solved, but rather the constant pulls

and tugs should resemble some sort of balance (Trethewey & Ashcraft, 2004). At times it is necessary for a critical scholar to question management's intentions to unpack the potential consequences of their actions on employees, but at the same time discussing the material effects or consequences of their uses of power. FitCo provides a unique case where management's intention might be *good* – but yet employees may *feel* something entirely different. The critical theorist expands on these ideas, specifically finding the ways in which the body becomes the ultimate product of organizational control (Foucault, 1990; 1995). Another element of critical theory looks at power over the body.

Critical health and organizational scholars like Zoller have questioned the organization's role in prescribing wellness to employees. Others, like Deborah Lupton (1995) discussed the role of subliminal messages in terms of health and wellness. For example, the body that is fit has many more positive connotations associated with it than the larger or obese body. Lupton draws on Foucault's concept of bio-power and how the proper, fit body is a body that is disciplined and fit; whereas the deviant body is any aberration from the ideal. Lupton asserted that the thin body is viewed as a testament to self control and "mind over matter" – anything else is delinquent.

Being fat is another identity construct through which people are oppressed (Rothblum, 2012; Wann 1998). Several authors now reclaim the word "fat" to take back its power, rather than using as a pejorative (Lupton, 2013). Yet, a fat discourse also attempts to create moral discourse. That is, the fat body is often perceived as lazy, lacking work ethic, and even challenges the social order (Lupton, 2013).

One of the most extreme examples of the regulated body was hypothesized over twenty years ago by Edgley and Brissett's (1990) article *Health Nazis and the Cult of the Perfect Body: Some Polemical Observations*. The article uses a crude, yet apt comparison of health regulators as Nazi's for their ethereal quest to create and maintain perfect bodies, and ridicule and oust anything that pails in comparison. While the ideal of the perfect body is just that, an ideal, Edgley and Brissett attempt to define it:

Neither science nor medicine has ever found the perfect body. That has not kept people from looking for it. If science has failed to locate it, current popular culture most assuredly has. It is slender, fit, and glowing. It does not smoke. If it *drinks*, it does so in moderation. It carefully regulates its diet in terms of calories, carbohydrates, fats, salt, and sugar. It exercises regularly and intensely. It showers (not bathes) frequently. It engages only in safe sex. It sleeps regular hours. It has the correct amount of body fat (women 20%; men 15%). It has flexibility (the ability to lay flat on its back and reach within 2 inches of its toes). It has proper muscle strength (as measured by the grip strength squeeze test -women 70 lbs. with the strongest hand; men 120 lbs. with the strongest hand). It has appropriate aerobic capacity (as measured by its maximum oxygen consumption-women 30 milliliters per kilogram of body weight per minute; men 40 milliliters per kilogram of body weight per minute). In short, the perfect body is one that is biochemically, physiologically and autonomically balanced. Moreover, it is one that does not allow toxic substances and activities to disturb its inner harmony. It has wrapped a protective membrane around itself. It is, in a word, "healthy" (261-262).

The overly reductive nature of prescribing bodily ideals ignores many genetic and context-specific factors. The ideal body is unattainable, yet the popular discourse communicates that we should it is something for which to strive. Simpson (1994) took this idea on in masculinity studies. He noted how the quest for the perfect body comes from Freud's concept of narcissism, or striving for what he wants to become. Having an "ideal body type" that is *just* out of reach allows for a study of the intersection of power relations and health. The most obvious of implications apply to those individuals who

may have disabilities.

Feminist Underpinnings

Taking a feminist approach to this dissertation means that I am examining the ways in which an organization is gendered. Following the work of Ackar (1990), I understand that the organization is an inherently masculine dominated space. Ackar was first to point to the ways in which the organization is contains gendered spaces as well as the organizational structure being a gendered entity. For example, power-relations are inherent to those with the best office views, most windows, or corner offices. But, and perhaps most importantly, Ackar described how gender operates at the structural level too. The entire notion of hierarchy lends itself towards the masculine frame of reference. I draw from this notion of gender and am examining the ways that gender operates within organizational culture.

The critique of CrossFit and extreme fitness in general stems from cultural perspectives of feminism. We begin to question bodily ideals and traditional connotations of beauty, health, wellness, and fitness. Tong (2009) described liberal culturalists as designating that the problem is in the low value assigned to stereotypically feminine characteristics (caring, supportive, and emotional to name a few). They also believe that the construction of femininity was created by men for patriarchal control. Women must reject this and give it entirely new meaning without reference point, or a rejection of false female self (the version given by men for patriarchal reasons) and embrace a ‘true self’ free of discursive formation. Whereas masculinity and men has been theorized as always changing and taking on any acceptable form in needs given any

context and time period (Connell, 1995). While the way of being without reference point is particularly useful in theorizing why it is we become to privilege certain bodily ideals, how we get there from the cultural perspective is through a messy deconstruction process. Another vein of research tends to embrace the ambiguity of a fragmented self.

More useful examinations of the body and fitness come from Foucauldian perspectives. Bordo (1988) extended Foucault's work to talk about how health and fitness rely on disciplinary technologies of the body. Scholars have looked at the ways in which the body has become commodified through fitness and the ways that culture has influenced the disciplining of the body (Dworkin & Wachs, 2009; Tretheway, 1997). We can often look to what is happening in the cultural zeitgeist to tell us a lot about the ways in which we are privileging the body. For example, a recent headline in *The Guardian* read: "CrossFit: the new fitness craze has a lot to tell us about late western capitalism" (Robertson, 2014). Robertson claims that the craze privileges an "atavistic" mantra that encourages office workers to get a workout without becoming "a bricklayer" (p. 1). The CrossFit discourse is heavily imbued with this masculinity component.

Ashcraft argues that it is problematic to isolate identity factors like gender apart from age, class, race among others as they are so intertwined with other issues. Separating each is impossible and to do so pushes back to a binary mode of imagining gender. I am most interested in equality, or the idea that each gendered body should be treated with respect. I am particularly interested in how over time, masculinity is privileged and maintained. I am concerned with how such a system of patriarchy continues to be hegemonic over time. These tenets might be closely rooted in cultural

feminism or “equity for difference” (Ashcraft, 2014). However, I also assume several post-structural expectations as well. For example, I advocate for women to shape/mold bodies in ways that they choose, however think that choice is often linked to structural and rhetorical limitations. However, I want to question the reasons for changes and ensure that it is not because the reference point of validation is linked to masculine ideals of strength (James, 2014.)

This dissertation looks at the ways in which masculinity affects organizational culture. Masculinity and organizational culture has been studied in depth (Collinson, 1992; Mumby, 1998; Phillipson, 1975). For example, think about working out with a boss or even CEO but because the workout is so “intense” he takes off his shirt to do the workout. Then a fellow workout partner (female) takes her shirt off to work out in a sports bra. How does the average employee feel when seeing (1) her CEO working out, or naked in the locker room (2) the other women following suit? Do people who are more embarrassed of their bodies feel in this type of environment? My participants had quite a bit to say on the matter. Taking a feminist approach brings up these issues with respect to the larger conversations going on in feminist organizational studies (Ashcraft, 2014).

Research Questions

I extend previous research in fitness and organizational communication in three key ways: (1) I focus on employee resistance strategies (2) further theorize the role of the workplace in promoting health ideologies (3) examining extreme fitness in the

workplace and its relationship to organizational wellness. My research questions are as follows:

RQ1: How is the CrossFit lifestyle discursively communicated at FitCo?

RQ2: In what ways are these lifestyle choices enacted and resisted by employees?

RQ3: What are the consequences of extreme fitness in the workplace?

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research methods are particularly useful in providing narratives and accounts that make up what Geertz described as a thick description (1973.) Qualitative research has become more broadly accepted in recent years, having academic journals devoted to furthering the method (e.g. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management*.) My decision to use interpretive methods stems from my epistemological commitments drawn from interconnectedness of organizational culture and the linguistic turn in humanities and social sciences. I combine interpretivism with a critical approach, because within the context of US based businesses, critical dimensions of inquiry are largely undervalued (Mumby & Ashcraft, 2006). I use the organization as a site from which to study and making meaning from my interpretive approach (Smircich & Calás, 1987), and look for inherent power dynamics within that context that may otherwise go unexplored (Mumby, 1988; Mumby & Ashcraft, 2006).

My epistemology, or the nature of knowing, rests on several assumptions within my approach to organizational communication. First, organizations are both sites from which we can study but also extend beyond to interconnected systems and processes (Taylor, Flanagin, Cheney, & Seibold, 2001). This nature of knowledge assumes that organizational culture is different in every context, and as such, should not be gauged against others but interpreted independently. My use of qualitative methods is not aimed at generalizability, though I do hope my contributions reflect on the current nature of the workplace health promotion literature. Rather, by using FitCo as a case, my intent is to

provide an empirical case from which to connect critical topics within the field of organizational communication and also glean a deeper understanding of localized organizational practices and interpretations.

In relating back to the role of the communication scholar and interpretive methods, using Robert Craig's work is particularly helpful. In Craig's (1999) meta-model of communication he identified seven communicative approaches. Of the seven proposed, my epistemological underpinnings are most closely aligned with socio-culturists and critical theory – the marriage of these two give way to critical-interpretive methods. According to the Craig, the socio-culturalist is under the assumption that actors are part of social orders which each have its own culture. These societies are reproduced and the result has unintended consequences on individuals (Craig, 1999). The critical tradition looks at the ways in which power and ideology affect social formations and aim to raise consciousness about hidden webs of power. The two only differ in their assumptions on where conflict arises (social order or power). The critical-interpretive scholar also acknowledges the role of axiology, or the degree to which one's own values influence his/her research (Miller, 2005). In order to maintain a degree of trustworthiness, the interpretive scholar must be transparent in his or her approach, thus the detail evident in this methods chapter (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993).

In what follows, I describe the research site, FitCo International. I then describe how I gained access to the organization and discuss the reflexive self and offer my positionality statement inherent to interpretive studies. Rather than be free from bias that certain other research paradigms might state, I embrace my bias by exposing it to the

reader. I hope that in doing so, the trustworthiness of the dissertation as a whole will be enhanced. It is my goal to be as transparent as possible with my approach and analysis. I then discuss my methods of collecting and analyzing data. I conclude with how my own experiences affected the research process and discuss ethical dilemmas that I encountered during the project.

The Research Site - FitCo International

FitCo International is a large sports apparel retail and manufacturing organization that is headquartered in the Northeastern US, near a major US city. The facility is laid out on a sprawling, well-kept corporate campus that includes a 400 meter outdoor track, two tennis courts, soccer field and softball field. The 500,000 square foot building is separated into four interconnected buildings. In addition to conference rooms, showrooms and testing labs, FitCo has an aerobic studio for fitness trends like Zumba, and Les Mills, yoga and spin classes, a basketball court, men's and women's shower and locker rooms (private shower stalls), traditional exercise equipment across three floors, a barber shop, retail store, coffee bar, and cafeteria as well as the CrossFit gym located approximately 100 yards away from the main building.

FitCo International employs over 1000 employees at the location where I observed. The organization has struggled in recent years due to declining sales and losing major contracts with professional sport leagues). The company has been plagued with an on-going series of layoffs, of which the most recent reduced the workforce by about seven percent. The company had recently been acquired by a larger organization and lost several large significant sports partnerships since the acquisition. This is an

important factor that played into the research process in multiple ways, as I discuss later in terms of brand purpose. FitCo was acquired by the larger German group I call Madrigal. As part of Madrigal, FitCo has been an underperforming asset. In the time that I began to form contacts at FitCo, the organization was entering a new marketing strategy centered on fitness. This “fitness” initiative was evident in the artifacts posted around the building, as well as how the brand was marketing itself to its consumers.

Critical scholars have often complained that the difficulty in doing case studies is the relatively limited amount of access they receive to organizations (Kunda, 2006; Zoller, 2000). After all, what organizational leader would want to open her or his doors up to possible scrutiny? However, some scholars including Kunda, noted how leaders might use organizational researchers and their reports as a strategy to enhance their organizational ethos (p. 241). One important trend in applied communication research involves taking an engaged approach.

Drawing from principles of engaged scholarship (Dempsey & Barge, 2014), I began looking at ways in which I could help FitCo (be co-creating my method with various organizational stakeholders). I had read about the success of their “Fitness Culture” in several nationally syndicated publications. My first attempts at contacting their coaching staff proved unsuccessful. While at first I received responses, when I began requesting signatures and IRB information, emails stopped being returned. After speaking with a friend about my proposed project and dissertation, serendipitously she told me she knew someone that worked for FitCo. She put me in touch and from there, I

was put in contact with a director. The director took my phone call, along with members of FitCo's Corporate Culture Task force, and listened to my proposal – I was in.

FitCo representatives listened to my proposal and asked for a timeline.

According to one employee on the other line, there was an incongruence between the “academic timeline” and the “private sector” timeline, but after describing my method in some detail, they agreed to the project. Red tape was laid across my plans when FitCo sent me a non-disclosure agreement (NDA). The agreement was straightforward, but indicated that my intellectual property would belong to them at the end of my project. I could not sign such a document that in essence gave the rights to my dissertation to FitCo. I met with a lawyer provided to me by Texas A&M (TAMU), and revised the NDA. I sent a copy to the director and did not hear anything back for several weeks. I decided that I needed to meet face to face to secure access and ensure that this project was going to get started. I planned a trip to FitCo world-headquarters to meet key stakeholders.

Our initial meeting took place in January 2013. I had flown to the East coast to find out more about the viability of my proposal. It also allowed me to make sketches and get a better understanding of the layout (Spradley, 1979). I brought TAMU T-shirts as gifts to the FitCo Corporate Culture task force. They gave me an entire workout outfit, shoes included, so that I could work out in their gym at the conclusion of our meeting. To workout at FitCo, one must be wearing officially licensed FitCo apparel. I was unaware that a major competitor made my eyeglasses and one stakeholder jokingly commented that FitCo “was going to have to work on me.” I also felt pressure from this

initial meeting not to wear any other brand of sneakers other than FitCo sneakers. While this may seem like a trivial detail, it relates back to organizational identification that I discuss later.

Later in my initial meeting I presented several documents, including the Institutional Review Board (IRB) site authorization letter. The paperwork was signed – there was no mention of any other NDA or the revised copy that I had sent over earlier. We agreed that the organization’s name would not appear in any official publications and that I would use a pseudonym. However, one member of the task force seemed disappointed that “FitCo’s” name would not appear in any reports. He said he had read many *Harvard Business Review* articles and that they always use the name of the company. Clearly, he (as were many of the fitness aficionados) was very proud of the culture that they had fostered at FitCo and wanted potential publications to reflect that. Not only did this prove noteworthy internally, but also communicated to stakeholders via the FitCo Investor relations webpage. Per my institution’s research guidelines, using the actual FitCo name was not an option. I assured several key stakeholders that I would be preparing an internal report with an overall assessment of FitCo’s fitness culture with which they could disseminate and market as they saw appropriate.

Gaining Entree to FitCo

In my proposal for this dissertation I discussed in great detail Kunda’s ethnographic experiences as he lined out in his appendix to *Engineering Culture: Control and Commitment in a High-Tech Corporation*. In my proposal, I ambitiously and confidently declared the following:

I am also aware that site observation is limited. Kunda (2006) reflected in his appendix how lonely he was sitting in the cafeteria by himself during his ethnography. I would like to have more of the backstage access that Kunda lacked. While this poses certain ethical questions, I will make concerted efforts to become part of the FitCo community. This may mean participating in off-site events and meetings, or asking to help with various projects around the facility.

Reflexive practice involves critiquing the notions of health, fitness, responsibility, empowerment self efficacy, taking control, risk, participation, and dominate discourses of health, self control and health education.

How naïve I was to think I could simply bypass the disposition of *mistrust* inherent to organizational observation. I remember reading and commenting on Kunda's accounts and critiquing his relatively limited access to back-stage areas. I devised plans to circumvent this exact situation. However, after my "contacts" had done their due diligence with me, I found myself eating lunch...alone...in the cafeteria on the fifth day of being on site. Pages of notes detailing my feelings of loneliness are abundant in my journal. Now re-reading Kunda's notes, I begin to see how the descriptive nature of ethnographically inspired observation demands an honest confessional (as Kunda puts it). The confessional, or reflexive self as others call it, situates the reader to the context of the study and that of the author. I begin by defining reflexivity and positionality.

Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009) describe reflexivity as a layered process that takes into account "the way different kinds of linguistic, social, political, and theoretical elements are woven together in the process of knowledge development, during which empirical material is constructed, interpreted and written" (p. 9). What this means is that we must question how epistemology and understand how our own experiences, beliefs,

bodies, philosophies influence an interpretive study. With that, I provide a detailed account of my experiences leading up site observation.

The reality that I choose to reconstruct is a specific reality that I observed at FitCo that was produced through my experiences. The interpretations are products of my own interconnectedness to the participants, fitness, and organizational leaders and guided by critical-feminist theory. This particular tenet means that my research is not reproducible, nor is it more *true* than if someone else were to attempt to replicate the study. The idea of having one Truth goes against a critical-interpretive approach (Miller, 2005).

Positionality

I have a postmodern skepticism of the organization, knowing that all organizational life is inherently a site of control and domination (Mumby, 1988). I also fall victim, in its purest form, to what Fleming (2009) describes as a growing trend among the millennial generation. He describes this generation of management consultants as:

...nihilistic devotees of a countercultural chic that is prominent in popular culture, ardent watchers of cult films like *Office Space*, and fans of Radiohead...[a] certain ethos of criticism – manifested as an expressive radical chic – has entered into the halls of business. Authenticity here equates being ‘cool’ thinking your job ‘sucks’... (Fleming, 2009, p. 7).

Yes, this type of critical or “cavernous skepticism” (p. 7) populates my understanding of the organization, yet as Fleming later admits, may ultimately be a nudge towards progress and democracy. It is with these axiological and epistemological underpinnings that I attempt to create meaning from my experiences at FitCo as a scholar. I also have a

contextual understanding of fitness cultures, which I describe below in my choosing of FitCo as a site.

Going into the dissertation project was a particularly exciting time for me. I wanted to choose an organizational site from which I could use my critical lens, as well as apply an engaged approach with organizational leaders. It was important to me that the research site would be willing to have a critical outsider spend time with their employees. I knew this would be a challenge, but yet I was willing to put in the effort to find both a location and a group of individuals that were interested in my contribution. My particular research interest in CrossFit comes from my own experience with the program. My critique of CrossFit can be found elsewhere (James, 2014) in much greater detail, this project focuses on questions about fitness culture in the organization and its unintended consequences. However, I know that my background with fitness was a factor in allowing access to such a site.

Before embarking on the data collection process, I had a certain position on fitness in the workplace. This is important to note, as it is, in all fairness, perhaps the reason in which I was able to gain access to FitCo. I have been involved in fitness gyms for the better part of a decade. I had also been participating in CrossFit inspired workouts for over two years. My experience with fitness was both a blessing and a curse. To some extent, organizational leaders, employees, and stakeholders viewed me as an ally and I felt an immediate rapport with employees who were also passionate about fitness. However, my study is about the resistance to extreme fitness in the workplace. Gaining entre to those particular voices took time, and came much later in my

observations and interviews until participants developed a stronger sense of trust in me, which did come later.

As part of my positionality, it is also important to note other identity issues like class and race. I am a young, white privileged male who is able to afford the expensive CrossFit membership (generally ranging from \$125-300 per month). Being able to afford a CrossFit membership is a luxury that may be reserved for only the affluent, or those that have more than a limited fixed income. While CrossFit promotes its style of fitness to all, it is clearly geared more towards the most privileged groups in society (see Demby, 2013).

Data Collection Techniques

The choice to critically engage FitCo in an interpretive, qualitative research project stems from my commitment to want to “actively creating realities and meanings” (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 213). My ethnographically inspired study creates the version of reality that I experienced.

Observations

Field observations were an important component of the data collection process. Observation, as a component of naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), involves going into the field and constructing meaning from naturally occurring activities. Organizational culture research is one of the most significant bodies of research to introduce the notion of qualitative research in organizational studies. Specifically, Pacanowsky and O’Donnell-Trujillo (1983) linked elements of interpretivism, culture and organizational life.

My interest in fieldwork, and specifically in observations, parallels Kunda's (2006) rationale. Having been reading about organizational culture and power, and also seeing strong, prescriptive cultures in my time working with America Online and eBay, I wanted to apply my knowledge and like Kunda, "see for myself" (p. 240). Because of my background in fitness and organizational culture, observing FitCo from my perspective offers a way to help situate the site and fitness in context, with respect to inherent power relations at the site. As such, observations afforded me the opportunity to use interpretive methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) with a sharp sense of critical skepticism in looking for signs of resistance. Observations, or critically inspired ethnographies aim to highlight "ought" questions (Thomas, 1993, p. 20). That is, critically inspired ethnographies let the empirical data speak for itself, but it is the goal of the researcher to "think critically through reflexivity and by rethinking our work and its implications in iterative versions of the research process" (p. 20). It is with these underpinnings that I began my research.

I arrived at FitCo on June 3, 2013 and remained on site until August 1, 2013. I spent the bulk of my time in the Northeast, but also spent a week on the West Coast at a company fitness function from where I also conducted observations of employees and interactions. I was given a "contractor badge" that allowed unrestricted access to all outside perimeter doors. I was given access to all gym areas, cafeteria, and general employee gathering locations (like the on site coffee shop, gift shop, gyms, and foyers). I was given office space inside the CrossFit gym, at the adjacent building that was set apart from the main building. This office area was not conducive to observations but did

allow me to have a “home base” throughout my two months on site. I would frequently use this office area to prepare before and after interviews, as well as to write research memos. These research notes were sent to various colleagues who had recently spent time doing ethnographic inquiry. In exchanging notes, I was reassured that my feelings were normal. One of the research memo exchanges encouraged me to think differently about where I was conducting observations: “You could expand the scope of your interviews and talk with people who were not your initial “target” if that makes sense. Could you chat with janitors for instance? They may have a very interesting perspective on how things ought to be run and also reveal “behind the scenes” information that may enrich your study.” On at least one occasion, a phone conversation with a trusted colleague allowed me to make structured alterations in my research design choices about being less timid, particularly during the last few weeks in conducting more interviews.

I spent the first week only doing observation in the CrossFit gym. The CrossFit gym offers multiple workout classes throughout the day. Each day I was on site I participated in one of the exercise classes. The first week, the coaches would introduce me as a researcher. My ability to do the workouts alongside the employees was important, and many were curious about my research. I would take business cards to the workouts and hand them out at the end, having participants contact me if they would like to speak with me more formally. After each workout I returned to my office, reflecting on the interactions. Later in my observations, I worked out with non-CrossFitters to see how their classes compared, and attempted to interview employees not comfortable with CrossFit. At times I felt like I was playing both sides of the fence. To some extent, I

played up my support of CrossFit to talk to participants who were big supporters of the program, and when attempting to talk with more reticent employees, I often revealed that I thought there might be some shortcomings to the program and wanted their input.

Other researchers had luck in interviewing employees at local bars (Zoller, 2000). In all my formal and informal interviews, I only once heard the phrase “Building Six” which referred to the closest tavern. Employees were allowed to have alcohol on site, interestingly enough, during certain social events (of which I attended and observed both) which is typically “outlawed” on CrossFit encouraged diets. During social events I observed and participated in reception activities. The first event was a barbeque on a Friday afternoon after work (in the summer month’s FitCo has an “early release” on Fridays at 2pm.) Other events centered on new product launches which had a fitness component and food/drinks. These social activities provided a good opportunity to see workers outside of the gym, but still observe how fitness was part of the organizational culture.

Meetings

In addition to observations, I had access to a variety of business and coaching meetings. My experience at FitCo came at a time when the “fitness” initiative that was being produced internally was the very message the company was attempting to communicate to consumers. As such, the organizational culture that I was studying was being marketed not only internally to FitCo employees, but also to the consumers of their products and even other organizations. FitCo had recently become associated with sponsoring certain gyms, including other corporate gyms. Thus, I observed at least one

business meeting with FitCo and another major US retail chain about the possibility of introducing a “fitness culture and gym” to their employees. Other business meetings I observed involved small team meetings between corporate employees and even a large meeting where an upper level VP presented “employee engagement” survey results to mid-level managers. I also observed small team meetings with CrossFit coaches and staff. While I was privileged to have access to a wide variety of meetings, I was also met with suspicion at various times. For example, I received an email from someone in the organization inviting me to a brand strategy meeting, only to be uninvited the night before the scheduled meeting. My contact informed me that certain details they felt comfortable only sharing with employees. I respectfully abstained from the meeting, and my contact was able to ensure that I could observe more of his smaller team meetings. These later meetings proved exceptionally rich sources of data.

In-Situ Interviews

I spoke with over a hundred employees internally. In moments of downtime during my observations (of which there was plenty), I sought out employees that might have had something to say. These types of ethnographic interviews were unstructured (Spradley, 1979) and were used to seek clarifications about organizational activities that were happening in the moment. While I must admit that it took me until week six to feel more comfortable in the environment and no longer thought I was at risk of getting “kicked out,” I made several strategic moves to gather more information about the fitness culture. I spoke to members of the custodial staff, cafeteria staff, and security guards. I made attempts to meet with the on-site nutritionist, but those attempts failed, it

was only rumored to me that the nutritionist and the nutrition doctrine of CrossFit may have been conflicting. Additionally, despite not having smoking permitted on its campus, had a small population of smokers. I noticed employees smoking outside (not in official “smoking zones”) on a routine basis. I engaged these employees and asked questions. I had many informal conversations with the CrossFit coaches and interns in the CrossFit box. Everyone with whom I spoke knew that I was a researcher and was ensured confidentiality. I frequently passed out business cards to employees and told them to be in touch should they have more to say or if they wanted to talk more formally.

I took my notepad and computer to the main building and observed in the cafeteria area so that I could be around more employees. Some days of observation were incredibly boring, others more exciting like when FitCo launched a new product line and held social events. However, my observation notes captured my interpretation of organizational routine and structure, which is an important facet that will help my reader understand the context of the study (Barley, 1983; Pettigrew, 1979; Schein, 1996).

Semi-Structured Interviews

My approach in a semi-structured interview was to create meaning together with participants, asking questions that encouraged self-reflexion (Ellis & Berger, 2003). While I did use a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix I), I used open ended questioning techniques and prompts to further explore participant responses (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As a result, the narratives, examples, explanations, and perceptions from employees are unique to this method of inquiry. My interviewing technique is

conversational, personal and respectful. In certain interviews, I asked participants what some of the reasons “might be” for other employees not working out? This question allowed insight into both the participant’s understanding of fitness in the workplace but also resistance (i.e. the ways in which employees made sense of resistant employees and ascribed labels to non-conforming employees). Each interview took a different path, but the goal of candid conversation was always the same.

In my efforts to keep participants comfortable, I looked for secluded areas of the building to conduct the interviews and offered to meet employees at a nearby coffee shop. Yet, all employees asked to meet on-site. Interviews took part in secluded areas inside FitCo’s cafeteria early in the morning or in the evenings. With participant permission, interviews were recorded and later transcribed. After reading through each transcript, I had the opportunity to reconnect with participants to ask follow-ups. I conducted 28 (n = 28) semi-structured interviews with FitCo employees which constituted 555 pages of single-spaced pages of data. During one of my interviews, the recorder failed so I later was forced to elaborate on my notes. Because I interviewed employees who were “on the clock,” the duration of each interview varied. To some extent, I felt indebted to FitCo for allowing me to “take time” away from their employee’s productivity, but made every effort to be mindful of participant time. The average interview was 39 minutes in length, but some went over an hour. In chapter five, I discuss “time” in greater depth, as it related to the research and organizational power.

Of the employees I spoke with, the average age was 38, and employees ranged from 19 to 68. I spoke with 15 men and 13 women. While I did not ask for racial

demographics, all but one participant I identified as white. My requests for racial and age demographics within the organization were not granted.

After each interview I grouped participants into groups based on their predisposition to the FitCo “fitness” culture (see Table 1). I grouped 12 participants as “advocates” for CrossFit. I grouped five as evangelicals for CrossFit. I use the word “evangelical” to describe the participants who I categorized as fanatical about their CrossFit workout and lifestyle (included but not limited to being CrossFit trainers themselves, opening their own CrossFit gym, or competing in CrossFit competitions, stressing the nutritional-lifestyle components to friends/family). The use of this word stems from the various ways in which the orchestrator of a concertive control systems has been referred to in a religious or “god-like” sense in the literature. For example, Kunda (2006) referred to the senior managers behind the normative control system at Tech as perpetrators of a moral discourse. That is, they wanted to profit but were also viewed as philosophers or religious (p. 59). Similarly, Barker (1999) noted how certain employees became “apostles” to the discourse of teamwork (p. 57). In each of these studies on concertive control, a religious/philosophical component was a key component. Thus, by identifying fitness “evangelicals” at FitCo, it offers an opportunity to contrast various interpretations of the fitness culture. Of course, not everyone I spoke with was a fitness evangelical. In the following paragraph, I describe the other predispositions I encountered.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Coded CrossFit Disposition
Barney	M	50	Advocate
Brian	M	51	Advocate
Caleena	F	25	Advocate
Heath	M	45	Advocate
Herb	M	21	Advocate
Jeb	M	45	Advocate
JMills	F	31	Advocate
Lydia	F	68	Advocate
Octaviana	F	31	Advocate
Prince	M	23	Advocate
Pun	M	32	Advocate
Sterm	M	55	Advocate
Ariel	F	29	Evangelical
BM	M	26	Evangelical
Hawke	M	45	Evangelical
Larah	F	34	Evangelical
Geoff	M	37	Evangelical
Ellena	F	37	Indifferent
Farreday	M	23	Indifferent
Peggy	F	34	Indifferent
Brohdi	F	37	Resistant
Johnson	M	32	Resistant
Krissy	F	31	Resistant
Ruth	F	44	Resistant
Meryl	F	60	Resistant
Saul	M	30	Resistant
Bess	F	45	Fragmented
Pamela	F	45	Fragmented

Six employees were openly resistant to the program for various reasons. Three employees were more indifferent. Two employees had mixed feelings about CrossFit, and although they did not participate in CrossFit, noted both its positive aspects as well

as their reluctance to join. I coded these two employee interviews as “fragmented.” I was interested in interviewing a broad spectrum of employees with diverse fitness backgrounds and perspectives, not just the gym advocates. Indeed I could have conducted many more interviews with members that participate in the CrossFit gym, but quickly realized that these members gave similar responses and began attempting to recruit other employees. Therefore, my time spent doing the exercises with employees and developing rapport in the CrossFit box was helpful, but perhaps further isolated me from the very population that may have been more resistant to CrossFit. I realized this in the last four weeks of observation and made certain changes. For example, instead of doing CrossFit workouts, I worked out in the main building wellness center – this gave me a new population with which to interview and develop rapport and diversified my population sample.

While I recruited many participants from the CrossFit gym by simply asking for a good time to speak participants in more depth after a workout, this approach was not always helpful with more resistant employees. What did prove useful was asking some key stakeholders in the company, after interviews, to distribute my business card to people who may also want to speak with me who had been resistant to the fitness culture. I realized later, to some extent, that these employees had already been stigmatized as either resistant to CrossFit or for living a more sedentary lifestyle. After interviewing two of these employees, I gave each many of my business cards and enlisted their help in recruitment via snowball sampling (Lindloff & Taylor, 2002).

Following in line with Lincoln and Guba's (1985) recommendation for member checks and enhancing trustworthiness, I gave each participant the opportunity to edit or clarify information in the typed transcript. I did not want to send each transcript to the employee's FitCo email address for fear of having confidential information accessible to others via FitCo's email server. Therefore, I sent an email to the FitCo email address blind carbon copying all participants. I instructed each participant to contact me via their personal email address and that I would send them the transcript for their review and/or clarification.

Organizational Documents

FitCo leadership encouraged me to take photographs and to collect organizational documents. I took this as a sign that they were proud of their internal marketing efforts towards fitness and wanted more exposure. I snapped pictures of the building and its contents I labeled as organizational artifacts (Schein, 1985). I made notes of large marketing presentations about branding efforts – it became clear early on that FitCo was trying to market itself as an authentically fit company to reach the authentically fit demographic. I describe what this means later – but in terms of analysis, I made notes of these marketing presentations and posters. I collected documents passed out in meetings and left in the cafeteria about “healthy eating.” I took pictures of posters that contained information about weekly meetings. I wrote down interesting posters that were on employee message boards.

Reflexive Journal

Though only two months, my time in the field was an especially draining experience for me. At the end of a day of observing and interviewing (and exercising), I frequently felt exhausted at the end of each day. I tried to make sense of my feelings with the help of a reflexive journal. A typical journal entry may have helped summarize the events of the day and questions for me to consider the following day. Another journal entry expressed questions about the data I was collecting, as I began to make sense of it and tweaked certain methodological approaches. For example, in one journal entry I expressed how lonely I was in my office area and devised a plan to spend more time in the common areas of the organization to collect data – consistent with Spradley's (1979) reasons for keeping a reflexive journal.

Research Memos

After each interview I made detailed notes. If my interview was at end of the day, I would make voice memos and reflections on my drive back to the apartment I was renting in a nearby town. One of my voice memos came after an especially emotional interview. In this particular memo, I can pinpoint the time when my research became much more personal – when I could see the pain and frustration of a woman who had over 15 years of tenure with FitCo tell me that she no longer enjoyed working for the company as a direct result of the push towards the fitness culture. I used memos even in the analysis stage to help formulate connections during the axial coding stages, as well as conceptual conversations with colleagues to flesh out ideas in the interpretation of data.

Analysis Procedures

Going into the project I had several working hypotheses that informed my understanding of CrossFit in the workplace. In sum, my position is described below:

1. CrossFit can be an effective exercise methodology, but has the potential to become dangerous. As a scholar of communication, I know how peer-pressure and support can both be empowering and constraining (Papa, Auwal, & Singhal, 1995). I also know that with this peer support comes the troubling notion of concertive control. Rather than just having direction/a management from a coach, sometimes having a group to help regulate can become problematic (see Barker, 1993; 1999). I hypothesized similar findings within the confines of FitCo.
2. CrossFit is inherently laden in masculine ideals of strength which complicate traditional notions of femininity and perpetuate hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995). I was curious how this affected things like organizational culture, but was under the impression that it would indeed be an extension of the ways in which the organization is gendered and favors the masculine (Ackar, 1990).

I used the qualitative analysis computer program AtlasTi to assist me in the coding of the data. AtlasTi allowed for me to listen to the transcript one additional time as I coded the data, as well as make any changes to the transcript file in rich text format. After the initial open coding of eight interviews that yielded 180 codes, I began my first stage of analysis to begin finding relationships and category associations, as prescribed by Glaser & Strauss' constant comparative method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). After an initial analysis, I went from 180 codes to 80 and completed coding the 18 interviews. From

here I began axial coding (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002) finding relationships between sets of codes and data. While AtlasTi kept track of the codes in the computer, I also made a printout of my codes to help recreate a “feel” to the codes. My set of codes with a representative sample quotation can be found as Appendix B.

Ethical Considerations

It became clear early on in the project how important it was for me to ensure participants confidentiality. Participants were confiding in me and in some cases, hyper-critical of their employer. I had to ensure participant confidentiality by protecting my notes, keeping computer files password protected, and also had to carefully circumvent employees’ casual attempts to find out who I was talking to. As is the nature of snowball sampling, some employees who gave me the names of other employees had a type of “insider knowledge.” One employee asked me “How did your interview go with Dan, get some good information?” I could neither say, “Yes” or “No” to this question so simply responded with a shrug and with an unintelligible “mmm” and said it went ok – I was trying to be as non-descript as possible. The employee looked puzzled and waited for more information, but I walked away, not wanting to talk about the particulars of a specific interview.

I also remember having a powerful conversation with an employee in the café area and when he looked behind him and said “This is where I have to be careful” I knew that I had to protect his responses. At times I had to reiterate my promise of confidentiality, as several employees expressed concern about the recording. This fact escaped me from to time, but I was quickly reminded when I was walking with a

participant down a public stairwell. I saw a poster in the stairwell that read “Race to the top and see if you can beat the elevator, log your time at the top” and asked the participant about his thoughts on the poster. He turned to me and sternly said, “I’m not going to answer that here.” From this I took that what seemed like a casual conversation to me was indeed a political one that could subject the employee to unwarranted attention.

At times, I also felt disingenuous to various groups of participants. I played up my role as advocate for CrossFit when attempting to recruit participants who worked out frequently. Other times, I wanted to interview employees who were more resistant to the program as played up my role as “critical observer.” In the end, I tried to be as open as possible to both groups and asked many of the same questions as per my research interview protocol. Because I spent most of my time in the presence of those that did CrossFit and because my office was located in the CrossFit facility, I may have been seen by some as an ally and perhaps segregated from certain populations from which I intended to interview. I tried to be aware of this and seemed to get more access to certain groups later in my time on site by 1:) participating in different workouts (outside of the CrossFit facility and 2:) following up with my participants and asking for names of other employees with whom they thought would want to speak with me (e.g. snowball sampling, Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

Conclusion

This methods chapter attempted to situate the reader in my methodological commitments during my engagement with FitCo. In describing my process, I showed not only rigor

and systematic method of inquiry guiding the study, but also how I felt during much of my time at FitCo. In the next three chapters, I discuss my findings. As my analysis unfolds, the interpretations should be better understood by having the researchers positionality set as a backdrop for this study.

CHAPTER IV

FITTING INTO FITCO CULTURE

Edgar Schein's onion model of organizational culture defines the most visible features of an organization's culture as organizational artifacts. Examples of artifacts include clothing, statues or plaques, banners or other signage among other material objects. Probing deeper, we can distill the organizational espoused values represented through artifacts. Using an interpretive lens to uncover these 'outer' layers of organizational culture can be useful in understanding the interpretive and performative nature of organizational culture (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983). In this chapter, I landscape the material components of FitCo culture by analyzing its artifacts. I then draw from employee responses to identify organizational values. The most difficult level of organizational culture to articulate are the taken for granted assumptions that rest in the innermost level (Schein, 1985). These assumptions may be so obvious that employees have difficulty in fluidly describing them, they are, after all, already taken for granted. I conclude by arguing that the shared cultural assumptions behind the CrossFit body may privilege the physically "fit" worker over the unfit. These assumptions may operate at Schein's "inner-most" level of organizational culture in a discourse laden with "authenticity." To begin, I start with an overview of the FitCo fitness culture.

Welcome to the Center of Fitness

Driving past the security gate at FitCo, one cannot help but notice the overt ways in which the organization markets itself towards fitness. A large "On Your Mark, Get Set,

Go!³” slogan is painted on the glass façade of the glass walled main building. A 400-meter track provides an “athletic border” circling the property. A grass pathway to the CrossFit gym (“box” as they are colloquially known) is 200 meters from the main building. Walking along this path, the grass gives way to a dusty cattle trail of sorts – it has been used. Employees walk to the box as others drag their bodies back to the main building, back to work. While fitness has been part of the FitCo culture since its inception (always having a basketball court and traditional exercise gym), the culture had changed with the onset of CrossFit. Briefly, I describe employees’ accounts of the culture *before* the conception of FitBox and CrossFit.

In years leading up to the opening of FitBox, the FitCo brand maintained a culture motivated by fitness. Group exercise classes, traditional gym equipment, pick-up soccer and basketball games were present. Yet, as employees talked about the changes, one theme kept rising to the top: choice. Before CrossFit, fitness was not necessarily a major driving force behind organizational strategy. That is, if an employee wanted to workout or go to the gym, he or she could do so without feeling much pressure from peer or management. The same exists today, but as one employee put, the fitness message is “rammed down their throats.” No doubt, part of this change can be attributed to brand direction, in that FitCo hopes to become synonymous with fitness. Whereas before it was not uncommon to see massive NFL football players like Peyton Manning

³ I fictionalized company slogans and other identifying information for confidentiality purposes. I changed them in such a way that the meaning remains the same, but the slogans cannot be attributed to the company.

strolling through the halls, today it is more common at FitCo to see chiseled CrossFit athletes meeting with sponsors.

The change in organizational culture literally occurred overnight. On one sunny afternoon, hundreds of FitCo employees went outside for a CrossFit workout. Reports vary on how “mandated” the event was, but regardless, this cultural event was the catalyst behind the change in organizational culture. A company leader spoke into a camera “I told my wife that tomorrow [today] is the day we change FitCo forever!” Some employees went out because they felt forced. Some skipped work. A great majority of employees remembered the event with fondness and may very well equate that day with the day they became committed to CrossFit. CrossFit became part of the culture – it was the new office talk. As one participant recalled, employees previously spoke of the *Super Bowl* or the *Red Sox*. Now, while some of those conversations still linger, much attention has focused on the day’s “WOD” and how well one performed.

It is with this understanding of the previous FitCo culture that the reader should contrast the culture associated with FitCo after the implementation of the CrossFit box. Because each CrossFit box is unique and typically has a strong culture (Deal & Kennedy, 1982) my first research question addressed the ways in which CrossFit lifestyle pervaded into corporate life. I was curious if elements of box culture spilled into organizational life. This analysis is viewed from Schein’s model of organizational culture, focusing on artifacts, values, and shared assumptions of organizational life. Before seeing how the CrossFit lifestyle is communicated, I begin by describing the physical FitCo CrossFit gym I call FitBox.

FitBox

Billed as one of the largest CrossFit gyms in the world, FitBox is CrossFit mecca for CrossFitters. Whereas traditional CrossFit boxes have an industrial feel, full of well used kettlebells, a few rowing machines, and a few sets of Olympic weightlifting bars – FitBox has its own mountain of kettlebells, over 40 modern-style rowing machines (each one retails for over \$1000), and enough Olympic weightlifting bars and weights to satisfy over 40 participants (the most I observed in one session was 36). Two large scale pull up and squat racks outline two entire walls in the facility. “Working here is a great honor,” a recently hired coach boasted, equating working at FitBox as one of the best CrossFit coaching gigs in the industry. It seemed that FitBox had an endless budget, the equipment and facilities were always clean and available for use.

FitBox coaches, employees, and even CrossFit enthusiasts passing by revere FitBox. On numerous occasions I observed strangers unaffiliated with FitCo wanting to explore the gym and/or buy merchandise. Employees were proud. On two occasions I observed employees bringing family members to “show off” the gym. Ariel, a FitBox coach, remarked this practice is common, but thought it interesting that it is not just those that participate in CrossFit that show off FitBox: “It’s always shocking to me when they are not members but they show it off anyway.”

When an employee arrives at the box they “sign in” via a computer that logs their attendance and workout results from that day (implications described in much more detail in Chapter five). Members can sign in from other locations to view their workout performance history as well as compare how he/she performed in relation to others for a

particular day. The results may include the amount of weight the employee used, or the time it took the employee to finish the workout. These results are displayed online via a leaderboard computer program, complete with pictures and personal bests that ranked individual workout performance. After signing in, the first 10 minutes of a session consists of a warm up (usually the coach of the session's choice). A coach will then walk the group through a technical movement that will be performed in the "workout of the day" (WOD). On my first day at the facility, the WOD consisted doing five rounds for time of the following:

Run 800 meters
70 lb kettlebell swing, 30 reps
30 Pull-ups

Employees could choose different weights for the kettlebell swing, I chose 35 pounds. After participants are comfortable with the movement, the coach will talk about the WOD and ensure everyone is ready to go. After completing the WOD, the group has the option to stay and do more technical work (e.g. 100 kettlebell swings one day, another day employees practiced "front flips" on gymnastic mats). Participants then log their results on one of the computer screens in the gym or in the front office area and retreat to the locker rooms back in the main building headquarters for showers and changing. With this understanding of FitBox, I now begin the analysis by focusing on the organizational artifacts.

FitBox Coaches

The coaches at FitBox were revered as "celebrities" when they went to the office buildings. Ariel enjoyed the celebrity aspect, but it was clear that she was also frustrated

because the office workers thought the coaches had “dream jobs” that allowed for “hanging out” at FitBox all day. In my observations, the coaches were high energy during the class sessions, but there were downtimes during the day in which the coaches would either do their own workouts, use computers, use social media, or sunbathe outside. After a full day of classes, FitBox was usually peppered with gym chalk on the soft floor mats and needed routine cleaning. Yet, none of the coaches or interns participated in deep cleaning, because a dedicated custodial staff member cleaned the gym each evening. Even though other gym responsibilities were taken up by FitBox interns who helped with marketing campaigns and various odds/ends within the gym, the coaches “performed” during class times and were highly involved in each particular class. While the coaches may have attenuated certain explicit nutritional guidance, their very presence communicated the fitness culture. Arial describes how she felt walking through the halls of FitCo:

Because they [FitCo employees] think we are superstars, which is really cool. I don't necessary agree with them but it's very cool. At part of it I think is they want our job. Everybody is living the dream over there and they come over here and they look at us hanging out as I call it and they think we're not doing anything. Unless you've coached for full time and you may not realize that sometimes very mentally intensive even though it doesn't necessarily look at it.

There are days when I wait here and I'll drive home and I'll sit in my driveway for a half an hour, just sit there because I don't feel like I'm doing anything, don't feel like talking to anybody like a timeout for myself. Yeah we go over there and everybody wants to say hi, everybody wants to tell you what they did for work out today. Everybody wants to like to just share their experiences, just share whatever it is, their life, their birthday present, give you gifts, that's amazing.

My point here is that the coaches were thought to have dream jobs where they could focus on their own workouts and nutrition. They were held in high regard throughout

FitCo. Walking with each coach throughout FitCo was a unique experience. Many employees would come up to them and chat to them. On several occasions coaches would see someone who had not been to the box recently and asked, “where have you been?” or “we miss seeing your face!” Other times, interactions seemed more playful, yet clearly a relationship of awe had been developed with the level of humor they employed.

The evangelical CrossFitters and the coaches also communicated something merely by their very presence. Even if that ideal was not attainable (i.e. employees still had to work, they could not “hang out” in the gym all day), the idealized body was the goal. The extent to which BM took his nutrition was notorious. On one day, he received a backpack from a sponsor that had compartments to house food storage containers. Companies wanted him to model the behavior, in effect, linking their products with his body. To some extent, it is product placement in attempting to associate the fit body with particular products. FitCo employees, working as a fitness company but also fully subjected to the fitness culture, were fully immersed in constant barrage of what it means to be fit, to eat healthy, and to be strong. Thus, as CrossFit coaches and athletes frequently made their rounds in the office building, a paleo diet and its benefits were indirectly communicated to employees.

Organizational Artifacts

On Your Mark, Get Set, Go!

As discussed in the opening chapter of this dissertation, CrossFit is a fitness program that prides itself on intensity, diversity of functional movements, and all

completed as quickly as possible. Elements of this exercise prescription have found its way into the main halls of FitCo Headquarters. When driving into the main corporate office, a large “*On your mark, get set, go!*” sign is painted on the glass windows. *On your mark, get set, go* is a common refrain at the CrossFit box that a coach will yell before starting the workout and turning on the clock for a timed workout. It creates that initial adrenaline fluctuation to remind CrossFitters to give it their all during the workout.

Express WODs

Taking a stroll around the main office building (apart from FitBox), are several giant support pillars. On each of these pillars are painted “Express WODs”, or quick workout ideas, so employees can take a break from their workday to do a quick workout. Inspired from CrossFit slang, these express WODs (workouts of the day) are meant to get employees active through a CrossFit inspired functional movement. Some of these movements might be jumping, air squats, jumping jacks, or even lunges in the hallway. These signs are also located next to stairwell and in other common areas of the corporate offices, in addition to outside the building. In my time at FitCo, I did not see anyone actually doing these exercises. Other signs ask employees if they are being as active as possible. One sign suggests organizing a team meeting while taking a walk. “The Challenge” – “Meet on the Move” sign offers various routes for a mobile meeting. “Challenge” signs were aplenty. One challenge sign was affixed to a large elevator door, which read in large bold lettering “ARE YOU READY FOR A CHALLENGE? SEE WHAT’S HAPPENING ON THE STAIRS.” I took this as a message aimed at keeping

employees from taking the elevators. I heeded the elevator warning and went the staircase. At the bottom of the staircase another challenge sign reads “Beat the Elevator!” and encourages employees to “Run!” up the stairs beating the elevator that takes 20 seconds to go from the first floor to the fourth. Even though many employees wore casual, workout gear to the office and potentially could have participated in these activities, I saw none participating. I also wondered about the message and its audience based on professional type. That is, were some employees exempt from these activities if their job type demanded a more formal dress style? Certain upper-class professionals seemed exempt from these types of cultural initiatives.

Therefore, the very ways in which employees present themselves professionally, or perform professionally, emits an identity from which others make judgments. So while employees were greeted at the top of the fourth floor with a white board and marker (another concept of surveillance via a whiteboard accountability measure from the CrossFit program) where employees can write their name and time it took them to traverse the stairwell. Certain employees who acted or performed differently may have been exempt from such cultural devices. In the time that I spent at FitCo, I only saw three names on the board (of the 1000 or so employees that worked there). Others routinely took the elevator despite its implications.

When asking employees about these challenges and “express WODS” plastered throughout the building, many told me that they had been up for over two years and the novelty of their message had “worn off” which corroborated my own observations of never actually seeing someone doing an “express WOD.” As an interviewing strategy, I

often had participants show me their desk and work area. As I passed through the staircase with a participant (Saul), I asked him what he thought of the particular challenge sign for “beating the elevator.” He stopped and looked back to me without expression and quipped, “I’m not going to answer that here.” Saul was critical of CrossFit and claimed to have been injured by the exercise program. When he refused to talk in a public space, I took it as a sign that there were very few back stage areas from where people could communicate freely (Tracy, 2000). Saul was also reluctant to be recorded, but ultimately agreed after a discussion of confidentiality measures. Resistance is articulated more completely in chapter five.

Other Signage

Other signage throughout the building depicted the top of the top CrossFit competition athletes and various marketing slogans. Many of the internal marketing campaigns had pictures of people enjoying the outdoors and getting dirty (one large banner depicted two athletes covered in mud tackling an obstacle course together.) Other images displayed actual FitCo employees and their personal journey to fitness. Each dossier was posted in various parts of the main office building, such as in the stairwell, on common area walls, and in the cafeteria areas and each profiled a particular employee. One plaque read, “I go to the gym to clear my mind. Afterward I feel energized, focused, and fresh.” Another read “I couldn’t imagine participating in such a program [CrossFit] at my age!” While the majority of these placards focused on CrossFit, not all did – some were merely showing how employees utilize the regular gym or running track.

Another sign informed, “Life is a team sport.” The connection to sports teams, coaching, and game plans were constant metaphors. A large sign greeted employees displaying a coach and employee. “It’s half-time. Have you had your mid-year discussion? Celebrate your achievements. Recalibrate your activities. Impact your game.” From these signs I articulated that the sports and fitness motif was a major marketing tool not just externally, but also internally.

Café

Employees remarked that the most visible change at FitCo, since the opening FitBox, were changes made in the café. A senior FitCo member, Sterm, explained that the café changes were a result of the planned cultural shift towards fitness. For context, Sterm is in a leadership position with a stake in overall employee wellness.

We got rid of the vending machines, we got rid of those. We got rid of a lot of the sweets. We used to have a lot of chocolate chip cookies and brownies. We used to be able to buy -- actually we used to have pre-made fries and onion rings, and things like that and now you have to order them [*takes longer to make, so an employee would have to wait longer*]. So there’s still some of the things... I’d like to go away like the Philly Steak Cheese or whatever it is, [laughter] cheese steak. ... And some of the caffeine drinks with the coffee, the whip creams that are high in calories. But we’re working in that direction, slowly getting to where we want to be. I mean like I said, they used to have big potato bar and now we’ve really tried to get the entrees down... And here’s the other thing getting into the mind, any addictions. When I first started here, [we] had a smoking room in the headquarters but that was in the 90’s and the distribution center and in the cafeteria [they could] smoke cigarettes. So back then when they were probably making that change or I knew they were, people were like, “You got to give people a choice.” But as you know, when people see - if they were smokers and they think about smoking and sends off pleasure signals. Well, it’s the same with food. People see pizza, so if we’re trying to create a healthy environment, we’ll get rid of the bad foods.

In this example Sterm highlights many of the changes in the cafeteria, both in terms of physical food choices but also the cognitive changes in terms of battling addictions. He

equates smoking with poor food choice and rationalized later that because employees are on the clock, their productivity is intertwined with nutrition, and thus the responsibility of the employer:

In that way we give people the opportunity to succeed. If we keep these foods here - because it's not about you and I going down, getting pretty good idea about looking at you, [you] make healthy choices. I'll talk to a few but I'll be the first to say occasionally I'll go out and I'll have the Big Mac probably once or twice a year, if that. I'll have a fried clam dinner, once a year. But it's an exception. Most of the people that eat unhealthy here are the same people that go and get pizza and fries and a coke or cheeseburger. So when people say, that's the first thing people would want to say, "You're taking away people's choices," and say, "[CrossFit evangelist] wants to go and have a burger." I guarantee that if I say to [CrossFit evangelist] we're going to create a healthier environment by getting rid of these crap, he would be the first one say, "I can do away without my burger. I'll go to, whatever, Friendly's [restaurant chain] on my home, I'm not trying to say we should check people's bag when they come to work like a cult. [laughter] Let them bring whatever they want but you can even go to Staples' website and order candy to have it in your desk. So we got to knock out that too. So if we're trying to create this -- because this is going to be the way to the future. It's going to be -- the company's going to say, "Listen. You're here, we're paying you," because it's just not impacting your health, it's impacting your productivity.

Sterm's sentiments reflect a pervasive line of thought in popular press items about managerialism and workplace health promotion. Even my presence, as a researcher, was influencing our conversation – certain evaluations were being made of me, because of the way in which I appeared “fit” to Sterm. Sterm admits that there are limitations to health promotion (not checking employees' bags), but the sentiment seems to reflect an idea that if an employee is being paid and on the “company dime” than the employer can tell them how to be healthier. The material manifestation of such sentiment is the body at work, which is the major discussion point of this chapter. The largest example of cultural artifacts was comprised of FitCo employees and their bodies.

The Body as a Cultural Artifact

It is difficult to capture the “CrossFit Body” in words. Participants described the ideal CrossFit body as lean and muscular (but not too muscular for women). As one participant noted, the CrossFit body regulates what it eats and is less “fluffy.” Throughout the FitCo halls, images of CrossFit athletes grace the walls. Most of these images were centered on employee entrances, several showed shirtless and competition-torn bodies, which seemed to serve as a reminder to all employees that hard work is rewarded. Several of the images were direct marketing slogans used to sell fitness apparel to an external audience, but were used internally as well to drive home the “authentic fitness culture” feel. A smiling group of people jogging were pictured next another caption that featured a company marketing slogan. At FitCo, these signs were everywhere. Fitness was not just a marketing strategy, it was designed to be one’s life.

Asking employees how they felt about having these pictures all around their office, few seemed to know what I was talking about. Seeing these bodies on posters and around the office became a normalized part of organizational life which suggests a routinization of the body as artifact.

As noted earlier, FitCo as a fitness-inspired brand encourages its employees to where FitCo shoes and apparel. Located inside the main office building is a fully operational retail FitCo store just for employees. Employees can buy FitCo products at a significant discount. The store was routinely busy and many employees spoke of having the perk. The apparel that FitCo marketed towards CrossFit was especially popular. Sizes of men’s medium and women’s small, the retail employees told me, sold out as

soon as they came in from manufacturing. Even in the company store, to get the best fitting clothing, one had to wait for inventory. The CrossFit body is difficult to capture, but one participant, Jenna, told me she had doubts about getting hired at FitCo because of her body. She felt like she did not have the stereotypical CrossFit body:

... when I was interviewing for this job, I was like – I said to my parents, ‘I don’t know if they’re going to hire me.’ And they’re like, ‘Why?’ ‘*Well, because I don’t look like a CrossFitter.*’ That’s really what I said even though I’ve been CrossFitting for almost two years at that point. “I don’t look like a CrossFitter.” And they’re like, “What’s a CrossFitter look like?” I’m like, “Well, if you’re CrossFitting for so long, then you shouldn’t be – you shouldn’t be looking like this. [Eric: Oh, what does it look like?]. . . It’s someone who doesn’t have a lot of body fat and someone who’s tone. That’s what people think a CrossFitter should look like. [Emphasis added]

The idealized CrossFit body is distinctive. Jenna doubted that her body fit the mold that she thought may be *required* to have in order to work at FitCo. Obviously, Jenna was hired, but she said she also falls victim to this way of assigning judgment to bodies.

I remember making the mistake one time when I first started here. I – again, this human nature, I saw this guy who is fit, who is in shape and he had a gym bag and he is coming back from his workout. And I said, “Oh, how was it?” And he was like, “You know, I had a good workout. It’s good.” I’m like, “Oh, so like, what did you think of the thrusters,” or whatever it was that day and he’s like, “I don’t CrossFit. I actually just go to the gym here and I run.” And I was like, “Oh, why don’t you CrossFit?” Like that was my first reaction. [Laughter] And he’s like, “Oh, I don’t know if it’s for me.” And then we had to part our ways but I was like, man, I should not have just assumed he came from the CrossFit gym because – you know what I mean but... [Was it his body type?] He looked like someone that...he looked like someone that he’d – he already works out. He probably would enjoy the CrossFit atmosphere. That was my assumption.

Jenna’s interaction with the other employee means that workers often assume that the people that go to CrossFit are a particular type of athlete with a particular body type.

When such bodies are easily recognizable, the tendency to evaluate seems to be easier.

For example, Caleena remembered feeling good for being recognized not only internally, but also in the community as someone who CrossFits.

Totally! It's great. Just like the other day I went into Lens Crafters to get some sunglasses and right when I walked in it goes like "You have an amazing body" [shared laughter]. It made me blush; it's great to hear those compliments.

Being recognized for one's body is a great privilege in a society in which such value is placed on physical representation. Caleena recalled several other times in which she had been "called out" for her CrossFit body:

Actually I was at the Whole Foods [market] when we had [a fitness event]. They said they saw a lot of people walking "Are you here for that CrossFit thing?" Oh yeah, like "I can tell." [*By looking at you or the food you had in your basket?*] No, by looking at me.

I interpreted Caleena's point as not pretentious or bragging in anyway, but as something she takes for granted. She later said that she "[she doesn't] even notice" her body, it is more of the way in which others recognize her. The attributions, meanings, significances, and assumptions that others prescribe to her body are communicated to others and from this, evaluation is prescribed.

The CrossFit body, as a distinctive idealized form, complicates traditional understandings of the body, especially the body at work. During my time at FitCo, designers brought in a special body-imaging machine located at the CrossFit box. This machine would take a full body scan measuring body fat, height, body mass index (BMI), and weight. CrossFit members were encouraged to get their bodies scanned to ensure that FitCo could continue properly designing apparel to fit CrossFit athletes. Men were told to come in with compression shorts and scanned without their shirts, women in sports bras and compression shorts. As all of the fit CrossFit athletes, including coaches,

went to the machine, I wondered how individuals with other body types felt at FitCo. “Othering” of different bodies was a common practice. While I was able to interview many people who had a passionate relationship with CrossFit, finding people more resistant to the program was more challenging. It seemed that the very thing that gave me rapport with CrossFit athletes (e.g. my participation and working out with the employees) might have distanced me from others who did not participate. Sensing that this was a problem, (i.e. writing about the issue in my reflexive journal, speaking to a colleague about my frustration) I spoke openly about my research questions after an interview one afternoon with a participant. The participant said she understood where I was coming from and passed my name to people she had heard may have harbored some resentment towards the program and who had felt “left out” during recent cultural shifts. This use of snowball sampling allowed me to reach more outspoken informants and helped me understand how “the other side” might feel ostracized. I also thought it noteworthy that when I started meeting potential participants to interview who may have been more resistant, the same employee names were emergent. This led me to believe that resistance and othering was in fact, public information. From this, I took that micro-resistance occurred in a public fashion – that is, it was shared resistance among people with similar mindsets about fitness and the role of the employer. Other resistance strategies are discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. The next section discusses the particular challenges that are presented with idealized body types.

The body as a cultural artifact presents some unique challenges to FitCo and to CrossFit. The aberrant body, that is, the body that is unfit and unskilled at *working out*

may have been more visible at FitCo. I make this claim because in a sea of fitness, the fit kept getting fitter. Those that refrained from fitness initiatives had little choice but to stick together, and as one participant noted, “All us fatties, feel the same way.” When judgments can be made and values prescribed, little attention is paid to the reasons underlying someone’s own journey with health, instead equating the body issue to a morality and work ethic. That is, the fat body is lazy. Whereas the lean, fit body is the disciplined and regulated body (Lupton, 2013). The disciplined and regulated body was indicative of a worker who would make sacrifices, was disciplined, and would take risks –this was the type of employee FitCo wanted. During one of my interviews, I asked Geoff why he thought some employees did not work out at FitCo. He referenced a larger woman who walked by us.

Again aspects of it are really good because people are becoming more conscious but this woman that just walked by...do you think she honestly gives a fuck about sweeteners? She probably doesn’t like to work out but there’s nothing wrong with that. She might be against working out and we don’t have any right to belittle her about that.

Geoff’s comment shows the assumptions he makes about a colleague based on her appearance; despite seemingly appreciating that certain individuals should not be belittled for their appearance. In an organization that claims to be the “Center of Fitness: Enter Confidence / Exit Doubt,” actual signage on employee entrance at FitCo, the fit body is the privileged body. Those that do not participate in fitness programs discussed feeling ostracized and some felt unwanted. Indeed, there is a confidence associated with wanting to work out and to *actively* participate in cultural rituals at FitCo, but clearly certain attributions are being made with regard to confidence and amelioration with

those employees that do not want to work out. Indeed those that are uninterested in natural sweeteners (agave nectar, for example) or working out are treated as if there is something wrong with their behavior as it goes against an organizational norm. Perhaps these labels are overt, or perhaps they are more implicit like in Geoff's comments.

Below, Ruth spoke about how the fitness initiative made her feel.

And the way that they say everything like, "Oh we're a fitness company. We want this whole world fit." The end of tone is, "And you're not so you shouldn't be here." And there have been comments like, we shouldn't have fat people working here. I'm sorry. I do my job, I do it well. Go ahead and make the try. [Laughs] It's just things like that and you're made to feel less because you don't participate in it. Because of that, I just hate it now. I'm just like, "*Ugh I hate CrossFit, I hate all of them.*" It's not right because I don't really know them. I don't know anybody over there but I hate them all because they're in that label of the CrossFit. [Emphasis Ruth's]

The majority of employees I spoke with were not as outspoken about feeling ostracized as Ruth. While Ruth was certainly not alone, many of the resistant employees were careful not to be too critical of the culture. Some refused interview requests, or failed to respond to my inquiries. However, many employees admitted that they could understand how some employees might feel unwanted because of body type or preferred fitness method. Ostensibly, the majority of the workforce at FitCo appeared athletically inclined, as was supported in the interview coding process, which revealed many employees having an athletic history (some even professionally). Most likely, this is because of the hiring process that FitCo uses. FitCo has recently made headlines for its hiring model that claims to find talent by using assessments designed to find employee *fit* with company *culture*. These variables claim to measure "behavior and cultural" variables such as "energy, ambition, and flexibility." One does not have to read too far

between the lines to know what types of employees FitCo hopes to hire: those that “fit.” Indeed, this is CrossFit’s mission too. As the quote that opened this dissertation suggested, CrossFit thinks that doing CrossFit makes someone ‘better.’ FitCo is also taking its values from the fitness phenomenon. While this is in alignment with the future vision of the company, largely spurred by increasing sales in fitness apparel lines, long tenured employees may indeed not be as comfortable. Geoff’s sentiments seem to corroborate this hiring initiative:

I’m not saying we hire people based on the way they look...but I think it’s how do they prioritize health and fitness...and they don’t prioritize or they don’t, they’re not willing to make that a priority in their life today or tomorrow, then that’s where I feel like maybe they shouldn’t work here...and see passion that the rest of us should have.

Later in my conversation with Geoff, he was even more candid. Another theme in the data was the idea that there were “no excuses” for not working out or being fit. Geoff’s comments reflect this common sentiment.

So visually, in today’s society, whether you work at FitCo or not, there’s just no excuse not taking care of yourself and be fit and prioritize yourself and making the time, and you know, that’s what it comes down to. I don’t read an awful lot because I don’t prioritize it. If I have a book I listen to it in my CD on the way into work. I don’t have the time to read it. If I don’t have it I don’t make it. You know, spending my time doing other things and I’m prioritizing fitness. This is no excuse in my mind so I do hope those folks feel uncomfortable here in a way that they do choose to leave because I think it’ll probably be better for them, for us, if, you know, whatever is causing them not to work out today...is probably not going to go away unless they do something about it, so you know, I hope they kind of choose to go somewhere else, go a place, be with someone who doesn’t have that baggage.

Geoff’s unequivocal comparison of book reading to fitness is a clear example of fallacy, but also the prevailing mindset held my many in the organization. Geoff was a CrossFit evangelist with an extensive fitness history. As described earlier, I used the code

“evangelist” to describe participants that seemed more outspoken about their preferred workout method consistent with the ways in which certain employees/agents perpetuate systems of control (Barker, 1999; Kunda, 2006). For instance, Geoff would frequently come to a CrossFit class and talk about getting a faster time [competition]. He would also take a heavy kettlebell and go with another group of CrossFit athletes to sprint up a local ski hill – all before work began, and in addition to his one-hour commute. Now that I have offered specific examples of the body as a cultural artifact, I bring in the role of the employer in crafting employee health and fitness by way of being a purpose driven company.

The Purpose Driven Company

WE ARE FITCO. OUR PURPOSE IS TO MOVE PEOPLE. TO EMPOWER AND ENERGIZE THEM. TO GIVE THEM THE CONFIDENCE AND STRENGTH TO ACCEPT THAT THEY ARE PERFECTLY HUMAN AND POWERFUL. WE DON'T SET FALSE EXPECTATIONS. WE CELEBRATE HUMANITY'S POTENTIAL TO MAKE LIFE BETTER. MORE SOCIAL. MORE UPLIFTING. MORE REWARDING. THIS IS OUR POINT OF VIEW. AND A CHALLENGE TO ALL OF US TO BE THAT CHANGE.

This banner was one of the most recognizable signs that draped across the basketball gym, visible to employees walking in the hallway stretching from the roof to the floor approximately 25 meters tall. The banner was facing me during an interview and I asked a participant, Octaviana, what it meant to her. She noted that FitCo has been pushing towards being a purpose driven company for some time now and she actually helped create this particular banner. Even the term, “purpose driven company” associates the company with an identity, rather than result-driven profit. As previously mentioned, identity and branding are intrinsically linked (Christensen & Cheney, 2000; Schultz,

Hatch, & Larsen, 2000). Yet, when I began to ask questions about the origin of the cultural shift, the responses I received indicated that it started with “Chuck Wilson.” Octaviana spoke of Chuck as a well-respected leader within the company who was inspired by a *TED Talk* video and began asking more questions about “purpose of the brand” to senior leadership. Octaviana reflected “... that’s part of the reason that why we actually came into the current structure of our purpose right now. Wherein we actually change into fulfilling the world’s potential through fitness.” The purpose that drives FitCo, according to Octaviana, is inspiring a more “fit” people. Fulfilling the world’s potential through fitness is both a marketing strategy but also an inherent part of the FitCo organizational culture that yields several implications.

Octaviana’s claim that the company wishes to “fulfill the world’s potential through fitness” is a summary of a major theme present in the interview and observational data. I called this theme “Amelioration.” In my fieldnotes I wrote at the end of week two: “A BETTER YOU” – a phrase I keep hearing. Is a fit you really better?” By this, I mean that people (defined as any organizational stakeholder whether it be a consumer or an employee) who works out, eats a more disciplined diet, and engages in more self-care practices are categorized as “better” people.

I think you see it, all the people want to get better, you see it here. So if people come back, people don’t come back to lose weight or do anything, come back to get better at pull ups, dead lifts and I think that transcends into everything else and that something I take as well. I think the qualities you learn at the CrossFit gym far exceed the walls of the CrossFit gym. In fact, the lessons learned in the CrossFit gym physically are the smallest adaptation out of the spectrum of adaptation. It’s the empowerment of what you can do.

BM's quote above reflects an ideology of a more fit body being more empowered to do other things in life. Such comments reflect a moral imperative that links both amelioration and fitness with an empowered work (and life) identity. This is a powerful message that rings true for many. Such a perspective also reflects a larger Protestant work ethic that privileges hard work above all else. Who could argue that exercise is bad? However, BM's mindset may do more to isolate those that are unfit or uncomfortable engaging in CrossFit workouts from participating or from feeling comfortable at work. After all, some people are gym averse and find fitness in other ways (e.g. playing with children, taking in nature walks, dancing). While in the interview he admitted that he hopes all employees are active, this quote clearly shows that he privileges the CrossFit workout as a gateway to doing all things "better" in life. This sentiment is corroborated with CrossFit terminology as well. By combining the traditional yet problematic notion of "functional fitness" with better fitness and thus better life, FitCo re-appropriates the CrossFit functional fitness mantra for work-life and beyond.

Being Fit for Life

The way I answer that is that we want people who are inspired. I mean you're taping me you're not videotaping me. I'm not up to be part of the Boston ballet away from Tuesday. So I think we're not looking for human perfection, we are looking for people that aspire to live a fit life or be better. I think we've all watched the *Biggest Loser* and we have people here that are bigger and perhaps in health wise would indicate they should be and all that we ask is they try and step forward. It's not a requisite... We don't hire by body type or whatever but we do definitely want people who aspire, who have the proper attitude to be a better Eric or a better Brian and that's the way I look at it. I think if you were to sit in this chair and interview people that you would be hard pressed to find anybody that you would interview that wouldn't signed up to say you know what I want to be better doctoral student or better CrossFit athlete... I want to be a

better Brian so or a healthier Brian so I can be a better husband or father, whatever the case maybe. So we won't discriminate based on body type. We certainly want encourage people that want to sign up for what we are which is an aspirational company that is in the health and wellness based, so that's my belief system.

The CrossFit model for health and fitness is limiting. For example, CrossFit defines

fitness in 100 words:

Eat meat and vegetables, nuts and seeds, some fruit, little starch and no sugar. Keep intake to levels that will support exercise but not body fat. Practice and train major lifts: Deadlift, clean, squat, presses, clean and jerk, and snatch. Similarly, master the basics of gymnastics: pull-ups, dips, rope climb, push-ups, sit-ups, presses to handstand, pirouettes, flips, splits, and holds. Bike, run, swim, row, etc., hard and fast. Five or six days per week mix these elements in as many combinations and patterns as creativity will allow. Routine is the enemy. Keep workouts short and intense. Regularly learn and play new sports. (CrossFit, 2002).

FitCo is the material reality of this formula. This entire definition is printed on a large poster at FitBox. Other posters display the ten fundamental components of fitness, as defined by CrossFit on another poster: cardiovascular endurance, stamina, strength, flexibility, power, speed, coordination, agility, balance, and accuracy. Another poster reads "Routine is the enemy!" In the coaches' office, the chalkboard warns "mediocrity is the enemy." Perhaps connecting fitness and amelioration may be physiologically correct. That is, the fittest person who can do more work in less time is more efficient than the unfit person who works slower. Such thinking harkens back to days of scientific management and Frederick Winslow Taylor. Survival of the fittest within management has also been theorized. Brown (1996) who questioned organizational leaders "altruistic" intentions speculated that such programs were more about affecting the bottom line (p.

74). Yet, despite “altruistic” claims of organizational leaders, the material reality of the fitness discourse even borders on the absurd.

Several of the FitCo coaches have started making “The FitCo Life,” a video “mockumentary” uploaded to a popular online video website. In these videos, CrossFit coaches and FitCo employees exaggerate the ways in which fitness manifests itself throughout corporate headquarters. One video shows a CrossFit athlete walking on her hands and taking the elevator in a handstand, then walking off the elevator with a colleague as if to go to her next meeting. Another shows an athlete doing kettlebell swings in the kitchen. Another video insinuates an athlete had just pushed a small car on the interstate into the main corporate headquarters. While the videos are in jest, they point to a hyperbolic infatuation with fitness and identity.

Communicating culture is important in understanding deep-seated organizational values (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2008). Regardless of the view of culture one holds, whether is the fragmented ambiguity (Martin, 2002), a strong culture (Deal & Kennedy, 1982), or anthropological (Geertz, 1973), each speaks to the idea of “espoused values” as being a central component. These values are communicated more through emergent means versus prescriptive form. For example, hearing the informal employee conversations, jokes, and other internalizations of organizational culture may reveal more information about shared values between employees. Therefore, taking Schein’s model in analyzing the artifacts as noted above, we can begin to question what those central “taken for granted” truths are at one particular level. At FitCo, the artifacts are the signs, pictures, slogans, clothing and even the bodies that populate the building. The

next level, Schein noted, are the deeper level meanings that operate on an “unconscious” level (p. 6). It is precisely this level of culture that at FitCo, the underlying assumption might be reduced to: a more fit body is a more productive body. In the next section, I talk about the implications of those surface level values. Now that I have laid out the surface level analysis, I move on to how the CrossFit discourse in the workplace may have other implications.

Brand Authenticity – Internal and External Communication

Christensen and Cheney (2000) argued that all organizations are in the “communication business.” By this, the authors mean that organizations are communicating an identity, internally “expressing themselves deliberately in their environments” (p. 246).

Increasingly, Christensen and Cheney noted, organizations are playing an “*identity game* in which their interest in their surroundings is often overshadowed by their interest in themselves” (p. 247 emphasis in original). What might at first appear to be an organizational good intention, might be a calculated move to affect the bottom line.

Sometimes veiled as corporate social responsibility (CSR), this trend has grown from the idea that large oligarchies should “give back” (after making billions). Scholarly voice on corporate social responsibility varies widely, but Fleming and Jones (2013) cynically suggest, “the soft-toned façade of social well-being observed in CSR discourse belies a more disconcerting institutional logic” (p. xii). Other scholars, like Conrad and Poole (2012) contend that corporate social responsibility stems from the stewardship principle from the likes of Carnegie & Rockefeller, but still question organizational ethics. While each set of organizational ethics vary widely, the crux of the matter lies in moving

towards more critical inquiry in regard to corporate social responsibility (Banjerlee, 2007). While the above paragraph reflected the meta-discourse in corporate social responsibility, the next section will reflect the micro and begin to address identity as it relates to organizational communication.

Some organizations use identity management strategies in times of crises to project more positive images of itself and enhance legitimacy (Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer, 2002). Publics have grown skeptical of such organizational moves as of late with headlines of corruption dominating news cycles (Enron, Goldman Sachs, ATT WorldCom to name a few). When tobacco giant Philip Morris spent millions on a public service announcement about domestic abuse, a critical public took issue with the fact that their campaign to promote their good deed equaled more than the sum of contribution. Yet, despite producing health questionable products, Philip Morris succeeded in creating more good will with women in domestic abuse awareness groups who benefited directly from large donations (McDaniel & Malone, 2009). David, Klein, and Dai (2005) noted that organizational intention may have been seen in a more positive light depending on organizational ethos (values, history, credibility), which was certainly questionable in the case of Philip Morris. Athletic companies are different because they promote sport and fitness to generally accepting consumers. Yet, athletic apparel companies are not free from criticism. As I discuss in chapter six, athletic companies do much to promote certain bodily ideals and have earned a reputation for exploiting workers in manufacturing facilities.

FitCo's internal and external communication (culture) represents a unique intersection in terms of organizational identity and branding. Yet, culture, brand/image and identity are unique concepts. To clarify the connections and distinctions among these three often times confusing subjects, Hatch and Shultz (2000) use the metaphor of the "tower of babel" in articulating important distinctions (p. 11). In the next section, I articulate the distinctions in this mode of inquiry.

Corporate Identity

The central message communicated to both external and internal stakeholders about an organization is often referred to as corporate identity (Hatch & Shultz, 2000). This concept grows in popularity, as organizations that produce products become part of the cultural zeitgeist. One may have certain assumptions about someone else based simply on the product they own or use. Most notably, this concept is made abundantly clear in the "I'm a mac/I'm a PC" commercial in which an out of touch "square" in a suit represents the PC and a quirky, casually dressed, trendy young man portrays a "mac" user. Ostensibly, organizations understand the economic incentives behind using corporate identity in crafting a "bigger share of the responsibility for sustaining margins" (Hatch & Shultz, 2000, p. 13). Thinking of corporate identity as a more explicit marketing tool may create additional opportunities to create visibility in a particular marketing niche.

Organizational Identity

Hatch & Shultz (2000) distinguish organizational identity as "how organizational members perceive and understand 'who we are' and/ or 'what we stand for' as an

organization” (p. 15). Organizational identity is not to be conflated with organizational identification, which refers more towards a perception or feeling of closeness with an organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1996). Ashforth and Mael’s (1989) distinguish social identity theory or organizational identification. Whereas social identification occurs when people gravitate towards belonging or for a “perception of oneness with or belongingness to some human aggregate” (p. 21), organizational identification may lend itself to an employee trying to get ahead in the organization, through affiliated status (Ashforth & Mael, 1988). Mael and Ashforth (1992) do indeed define organizational identification as a “perceived oneness with the organization” (p. 103). At times, the extent to which an employee identifies, or overidentifies by succumbing to unobtrusive means of exploitation may have serious consequences (Tompkins & Cheney, 1985). With identity at the forefront, the idea of branding has been an increasingly effective way to not only sell product, but keep a workforce that in is alignment with corporate values. The next section discusses branding as a tool for identification in the case of FitCo.

FitCo’s brand history and future success are interconnected to the fitness industry. Therefore, the very target demographic of their product is indeed the same demographic that they hope to employ. Some might argue that all organizations want to employ the users of its products. Indeed this may be the case, but FitCo is unique because its campaign to empower the world through fitness has a direct effect on the body. There are no spaces to hide. Whereas if one wants to find work for a technology giant like an Apple or Google, one need only to project an assimilated “technological”

interest and savvy. Indeed FitCo employees face an uphill battle when the obesity epidemic in the U.S. is expected to reach as much as 50% of the US population by 2015 (CDC, 2014). With FitCo, the physical body may tell a different story about an employee's enthusiasm towards fitness. The FitCo promotion and marketing of fitness seemed to be targeted at a public consumer, but also turned inward to its very employee base. Perhaps has marketing strategy, an authentic center of fitness seemed linked to organizational business goals. Even as a researcher, I began coding all the instances in which a reference was made to my own particular body (as being fit). What's more, there are certain cultural performances of the body that tend to project things like confidence and assertiveness. Some authors, including power/sociology professor Jeffrey Pfeffer (2010), actually give advice on how to exercise power in management.

In addition to marketing, linking identity to issues of health, fitness, nutrition under a self-care discourse, it creates a hierarchy of identity. That is, the more "fit" the body, the more the body is privileged. Troubling this issue is that "fit" is largely performative and based on aesthetic appeal. That is, CrossFit privileges the lean body (devoid of fat) but higher in muscle content. Additionally, authors have pointed how that many analyses often combine particular reasons for joining gyms, and fail to differentiate from a "moral, aesthetic, health-related and fitness related" discourses (see Crossley, 2006, p. 47).

These two issues become much more intertwined when forecasting the future success of the brand. In fact, the next generation of FitCo retail stores will resemble "CrossFit-esque" boxes, complete with tractor tire displays, pull-up rigs, mannequins

performing CrossFit foundational movements, and selling the largest profit margin brand items. So, FitCo is not necessarily stopping with their employees, but also communicating health and fitness to an external audience via targeted campaigns. In one retail concept model, FitCo offered “workouts” on small pieces of paper that shoppers could take with them after they left the store.

Scholars like Wally Olins (2000) have sketched the changing landscape with organizational branding. Whereas brands once became marketed just towards consumers, brands now provide a much more inclusive role externally and internally. Wally posits “consumer brands are no longer primarily associated with products” (p. 55). By this, Olins is referring to the ways an organization becomes so much more than the actual product they produce, they become “cult objects” and “affiliations” (p. 55). Reasons for this vary, but a major game changer has been the influx of social media. No longer is it cool to simply advertise product, but product has to be worn or used by a privileged celebrity or body-type. Perhaps FitCo is the easiest to understand in this context, and even one of their many rivals Nike. That is, these companies produce a product, but spend millions on endorsement deals linked to culturally relevant topics.

What is perhaps more interesting about the FitCo case is how the FitCo employee becomes a brand ambassador not just for clothing and apparel, but also for modes of fitness. In looking for ways in which CrossFit manifests itself throughout the corporate halls, one does not have to look much further than the clothing that FitCo produces. As discussed in the first chapter, CrossFit prides itself on intensity and getting results – often transforming lives. CrossFit is explicit in its belief that its form of fitness makes

people better, creating a moral imperative to be fit. The extent to which this sentiment trickles through the organization is of particular interest for organizational life. What are the implications of defining someone as “better” because of their preferred fitness mode? In this section, the discussion centers around this theme in greater detail, focusing on ostracizing of lesser *perceived* bodies and the othering of fitness.

Pushing for Inclusion

According to interviews with two organizational leaders, one of the intentions behind bringing CrossFit to FitCo was to foster a more inclusive environment. Certain media outlets have highlighted FitCo’s fitness culture and how CrossFit promotes more equality in the workplace⁴. As an example, I asked Geoff about the ways in which CrossFit promotes more equality as opposed to the “boys club” model for which FitCo was known. Geoff has a long history of working in the fitness industry.

When I talk about the boys club, I was always fortunate to work my way into that boys club, which I think benefitted my career advancement within other organizations, but while that was happening, I was also aware of the fact that, you know, other folks weren’t in that boys club...because they didn’t play golf or because they didn’t play squash...or they couldn’t lift weights with the guys, and what I’ve seen here at CrossFit is not – You’re rubbing elbows and you’re sweating next to guys and gals and executives and entry-level employees, younger folks, and older folks. It’s indiscriminate. It’s just it is what it is, and you can talk to anyone about the workout you did and even on a playing field because of the scalability of the programming. So I think that has given, you know, the past when where only a certain group of guys would get invited out in a foursome to go golfing or you only get on the squash court with, you know, you really have a competitive match with someone of equal ability. At CrossFit, it puts everyone on the same room, on the same even playing field, and you can relate to each other with your male or female. So I think it’s definitely given equal access, not in the locker room obviously. That’s still kind of, you know, but everything else outside of that.

⁴ These sources are not cited to protect the confidentiality of the research site.

Geoff's understanding of the history of the "boys club" culture of the past and his admitted privilege from belonging was a unique insight. Heidi also mentioned this part of the culture, and admitted that "football conversations" have waned in recent years. Now, employees are more likely to talk about how sore they are or how well they did in the day's workout. Wanting to move away from such a segregated culture is undoubtedly a good move. However, with an attempt to move away from such a model, FitCo has reproduced an even more polarizing culture. Instead of a distinct male/female division or the so-called "boys club" model, now the culture appears to be divided between fitness levels, body types and disability.

If You're Fit, You're In – BeneFITs

Wolkowitz (2006) noted women were encouraged to wear "professional" clothes at work, often taking the shape of men's style clothing (but not *too* masculine) as women attempted to even the corporate playing field during the radical feminist movement of the 1990s. Wolkowitz observed that things have changed in more recent years. That is, women's chiseled bodies, "tailored by workouts in the gym" (p. 91), must be displayed for others to see. In a way, fitness, or the value to which one ascribes to fitness, is relatively transparent based on the shape of one's body. This "fitness as a worldview" mentality was prevalent at FitCo. For example, BM, a CrossFit coach, spoke candidly:

I think you see it, all the people want to get better, you see it here. So if people come back, people don't come back to lose weight or do anything, come back to get better at pull ups, deadlifts and I think that transcends into everything else and that something I take as well. I think the qualities you learn at the CrossFit gym far exceed the walls of the CrossFit gym. In fact, the lessons learned in the CrossFit gym physically are the smallest adaptation out of the spectrum of adaptation. It's the empowerment of what you can do. I teach grown men and women, they're twice my age, how to do things they haven't done in their life

before. I challenge them, I put them back in a student role, I do things to adults that adults traditionally never be in that position again. If you're able to put yourself in that position at 50 years old, 60, 70 years old, 40, 30, whatever it may be, you're willing to get better. How many people get to a point in life and never get feedback on anything that they do? You're the boss, you're complacent whatever it is...I'm not okay with that, you need to get better. It's so powerful.

As BM noted, getting better, or fitness as a worldview, paves way for a self-empowerment. Some FitBox coaches are employed by FitCo, others are contractors, but each can speak to the culture of FitCo by their association and closeness to the site. Fitness as a worldview ignores all excuses and shows a lack of understanding as to why anyone would not want to be "fit" in that particular way. Other employees corroborated the idea of "being better" because of fitness. For example, Geoff was flummoxed that certain FitCo employees refused to CrossFit:

I was in the locker room this morning before I interview standing next to two guys that I know are active, but don't CrossFit, and I used to be active and not CrossFit. I never want to go back there again. I actually pat myself in the back for having had the discipline to go to the gym and do my gym routine, you know, most days of the week where I get outside and run on my own, but it was very solid, a solitude experience and I was committed and dedicated to achieving goals and I did it. In some way, I admire their dedication, but – And they're missing out a lot of fun, and I don't think – I just don't think they know it. I mean they don't want to know it. That's fine. They're active. They're good for them. I just – I think most humans, if not all humans, have an innate desire to want to belong and participate with other people...And CrossFit gives you that in a real not intimidating way once you get through that initial stage, so – And for the people that aren't active, I just hope they find another company to work for eventually or get active or find somewhere else to go because I just don't think that's what FitCo is all about.

This worldview that has been established through the artifacts on the walls, the slogans, the marketing campaigns, and the shared meaning – shared amongst many members of the privileged "fitness" group within FitCo. The shared sentiment seems to follow a linear form of logic: If fitness is good, and CrossFit is a better mode of fitness, why

wouldn't everybody do CrossFit as it is a better form of fitness? Ruth offered the counterpoint to Geoff. Ruth recalled a meeting in which she felt like the meeting directive was discriminatory:

They had the meeting that day and he said, 'there's going to be even more openings coming up because we're doing all this stuff. We just want to make sure as you're hiring that we stand for fitness and we want to make sure we hire people that believe in that and subscribe to everything that we believe.' I was like, 'So no fatties, I get it.' I was just like... 'Really?' Is this what we're going to tell people? That, I found so offensive. It's just that kind of attitude where we have to make sure, granted, they're qualified but we want to make sure that they believe what we believe. I thought we believed in making sure the consumers have the best experience. I think what we all bring to the table, every single one of us, different experiences, adds value... Its drink the Kool-Aid [or] be on the list.

Ruth's discussion of FitCo's hiring practice removed any doubt that the company intended to hire folks that lived the FitCo *sponsored* lifestyle. By sponsored, I mean both literally and figuratively. In the most literal sense, a meeting that talks about hiring initiatives and in the figurative sense, FitCo sells clothes for people living active lifestyles. So at first, or when Ruth began her employment, everything may have been directed at the consumer. Today, that is not enough – the organization has to place the emphasis back inward, toward the employee.

I think I'm super sensitive to those because when I work at the senior fitness program, we were all about what is the barrier? What's keeping you from doing this program? Is it embarrassment because you're already overweight and you don't want to show up, you know? Or is it sometimes it's simple – I told somebody when we first started CrossFit, I said, "I don't have clothes that fit me." I work in an apparel company but my clothes don't fit me right now. I just had a baby and I put on a lot of weight. My pants are falling when I do barbells, you know what I mean? So, it's that kind of like you guys don't get that because - you don't live in that world but there's things that people just don't even consider. There's just barriers to entry that – and as we know once people.

Loose fitting clothes might, under any other circumstances, be viewed as a trivial or

insignificant nuance. Working at FitCo and not having appropriate attire for a workout may communicate disinterest, unhealthy lifestyle, or lack of esteem regardless of the actual employee reasons. After all, the vast majority of employees bought workout attire at the company store and seemed eager to display the idealized lean and muscular bodies. If one was unwilling to do this, the presumption of locus of control fell on the internal motivation of the employee, little attention to possible external factors. Or said differently, these employees who did not *perform* fitness were lazy. The expectation is that employees are active – should employees not be active, as Geoff noted, employees should seek out other employment opportunities.

Organizational Assumptions about Authenticity

Using Schein's model of culture allowed for an examination of FitCo's artifacts and begins to address several of its values. The next step is articulating how the artifacts and values contribute to the localized, micro discourse surrounding fitness at FitCo. To do this, I delve into two main themes: (1) no hidden spaces and (2) the fit body as the preferred working body.

The discursive problem with this 'totalitarian state' of employment rests on several fundamental issues. FitCo employees have no way hide their resistance (after all, authentic employees are never resistant). By this, I mean that there are no hidden forms of resistance because the body is always exposed. The extreme corporate wellness discourse promoted a homogeneity of bodies / ideas (similar ways of thinking about fitness and values curbs diversity of thought, as well as bodies). Ultimately, this discourse ignores issues of class that may be inherent to fitness, such as nutrition and

exercise, and are discussed in chapter five. Additionally, research on body stigma shows that people assume larger bodies are the responsibility of the person (often judging someone for not ‘taking care’ of him/herself which becomes a much more salient value judgment on lifestyle (rather than technological savvy-ness, for example) – creating a moral judgment. In the next section, I unpack the significance of each of these issues.

No Hidden Spaces

Honestly I think they want to be able to bring in people and say, “Look, we live it.” I get that. I get that they want to show we live it but no matter what you live... I’m sure there are people at McDonald’s. I’m sure there are vegetarians that work there. I’m sure that every company has differences. People that are like, “Maybe we could think about this or something, too.” Not everyone in the world is perfect and not everyone is striving to be but they shouldn’t be made feel less, especially at work.

Ruth’s comparison to vegetarians and McDonalds gets to the idea that one does not necessarily have to share the same values as the organization to belong. Organizational leaders also work hard to control the message (perhaps the McDonald’s manager would be quick to make sense of vegetarian options *readily* available on any McDonald’s menu.). Cheney and Christensen (2000) describe organizational leaders’ constant pursuit of legitimacy through *identity games*. They note that few managers are ever willing to let organizational members freely communicate externally to stakeholders. Sometimes organizations use mission or goals as examples in retrospective rationalization or purpose fell “*overdetermination*” (p. 257) so that symbols are communicated “correctly.” But, at FitCo, we see a new trend in that a fitness discourse is indeed being communicated both internally and externally by everyone involved in the organization.

Preferred Working Bodies

FitCo is unique in that those that eat the preferred way, work out the CrossFit way, and wear the appropriate clothing are the idealized identity type. This is unique because one cannot feign acclimation, as the body is perceived to be the product. One must be “authentically” fit. My argument is that there is such pride in CrossFit that the relationship between employer, employee, and targeted demographic merge. We see these new types of organizations that link marketing, organizational identity and identification, and brand purpose. The movement ties back to an authenticity discourse (Fleming, 2009). Below, a coach puts this authenticity discourse in his own words:

I think it's paramount for the brand in order to be strong and stay alive and potentially thrive and corner the market, I think unequivocally that's it, that's the variable. Do it, live it, breathe it. When people come here, it blows their mind that this is going on right now. At 11 o'clock on Monday, we have 30 people in class, I just left their desk, we had 40 people in class at 6:30 to kick their week off. It's awesome, from senior management to interns. We treat them no different. That's big. We just had an intern class come in, we have an online that starts until the end of August we say hey, we have a special online class for you guys. Most people say well, they're going to leave in three months. Who cares? Well I do because they're going to go out and I want them to do CrossFit, I want them to keep going with the stuff and we had that opportunity and the kids, it cheap. They can actually get here, get some of the best coach in the world and then realize it now they actually want to pay the money that go to a gym because they want to keep it going. That's the cool stuff, that opportunity that we have and maybe we could create some more brands outside because of that too which isn't a bad thing either.

Just as BM noted, employees must “do it, live it, breathe it.” This quote exemplifies the blurring of the private and the public identities into one. The ideal employee becomes a marketing tool while working on projects inside the organization, but also a tool used outside the organization because his or body is representative of the types of values prescribed by his or her organization. Caleena, who I referenced earlier, took great pride

in being recognized in public as someone who “CrossFits.” Others, like JMills, initially thought she would not be hired because she did not look like “someone who CrossFits.”

FitCo may be unique in this regard, as opposed to other business-types, in that they produce fitness inspired products. However, important questions need to be raised about the ethics of FitCo regulating and marketing the employee body. “Doing it, living it, breathing it” is an ode to authenticity. FitCo, as evident in the picture taken from their front door, is proud to be the “center of fitness.” Authentic fitness culture, then, is a very specific way of ensuring employees follow certain health and fitness regimens. Additionally, such a discourse broaches the subject of morality, consumption, and bodily ideals.

Communicating Authenticity

Much has been written about authenticity and culture, particularly as contemporary organizations blur the boundaries between the life-world and work (Deetz, 1992). Perhaps much of the interest comes from the days of Elton Mayo and the Hawthorne experiments in which managerial gurus derived that the human element can be controlled to increase productivity just by paying attention to employees. Yet, in 2014, organizations keep looking for the elusive variable to increase profit margins. Authenticity has been growing in popularity. Fleming (2009) discusses a “just be yourself” discourse at work, and certain politics that go into crafting such a discourse:

The aura of non-work appears to be useful in the ‘just be yourself’ discourse for providing the cultural scaffolding and inspiration for authenticity, almost in an attempt to make work seem as if it is not work at all. This would make it ‘life’ instead – but it never turns out this way...this fetishization of non-work reveals an important political economy related to ‘the commons’ in which the source

material of this truncated brand of authenticity is also the site of a counter-corporate mode of life. (p. 35)

Fleming is spot on in describing the counter-intuitive model that certain organizations are following. What is being privileged is everything *extra*, not necessarily the actual “labor.” Being at FitCo means that an employee privileges fitness and eats a certain way, lives a certain active lifestyle – and continues to do his or her work. We also see similar trends in marketing relating to fitness and authenticity.

Dworkin and Wachs (2009) argued that the beautiful body is marketed as “natural” and “innate” (p. 177). The authors describe a paradox inherent to all fitness and beauty magazines that juxtapositions beauty as naturally occurring and cultural, but yet at the same time attainable for those who are not there yet but will get there with a little determination and effort (Dworkin & Wachs). Such a sentiment reigns supreme in much of the fitness world. Authenticity is often seen as the beautiful, fit, athletic, toned body. One need not look much further than the checkout line at a grocery store to see a well-chiseled body and a headline tell the consumer how to achieve similar results. FitCo is unique because it is communicating these ideals both internally and externally.

FitCo had been contracted to help bring CrossFit workouts to various corporate headquarters throughout the US. On one occasion, I had the privilege of attending one of these business meetings with a FitCo representative and a Health Care retailer employee. The FitCo representative kept telling the other employee that she just needed to “come see what we’re doing at FitCo, because words really can’t capture it.” He said that fitness became a major value for everyone in the organization and as a result they are a healthier company. The other employee looked interested and even joked, “do you have

any jobs open?” While they both laughed, I gathered that there was a bit of seriousness in her questioning. The ways in which the FitCo representative was describing FitCo’s “Authentic Fitness Culture” made it sound like a company that really takes care of its employees – and for the most part, they really do. Where else can you get a haircut, pick up your dry cleaning, have access to on-site day care, play basketball between meetings, shop at the retail store for 50% off, enjoy a Café Americano at the in-house coffee shop, or enjoy a meal of Mongolian barbeque for lunch? However, if one is not necessarily on board with the preferred fitness and health initiatives, it creates an organizational dissonance between employee and the organization that inevitably leads to a much more exclusive environment, rather than the inclusion that was intended.

The Conflation of the Corporate Brand with Organizational Culture

Olins (2003) noted that new businesses do not necessarily follow the same rules of their predecessors, especially in terms of branding. Flatter hierarchies and more self-imposed behavior regulation means that organizations look for other ways to promoting intraorganizational cohesion. Olins reflected that “branding” fits that new organizational niche:

Brands increasingly emerge as the most significant spiritual and emotional glue holding organizations together and representing their reputation to all the worlds with which they deal. Brands become the prime manifestation of the corporate purpose. That is why they are important not just for customers, but for the people who work for or deal with the organization as employees, partners, or investors (p. 115).

With FitCo, just as the intraorganizational mantra suggests, there were no “business cards in the box.” The organizational business card was replaced with the body as the fitness ambassador. Ragas and Bueno (2002) suggest that corporations can profit off

becoming a “cult brand” by creating what they call “living monuments” (p. 56). Living monuments are materializations that become representative of the brand, physical spaces that represent all the values for which that brand privileges. Ragas and Bueno provide the example that the Apple Store is one of these “living monuments.” In the case of FitCo, living monuments are bodies of the brand ambassadors. A mobilized army of fit bodies provide the ultimate tool for marketing.

The blending of marketing and organizational culture has a well-established past. Schultz and Hatch (2006) make the argument that brand marketing has moved from the actual material product and towards more attention to the branding as the organizational strategy. Thus, the organization is always in a performance, it cannot belie its marketing campaigns or ever take time off. In fact, Schultz and Hatch equate organizational culture with corporation brand. Schultz and Hatch’s three-pronged framework highlights a strategic vision, organizational culture, and stakeholder image. In terms of authenticity of performance, FitCo’s strategy to reclaim its brand ethos as the center of fitness means that it not only believes in fitness for its consumer, but that they demonstrate it as well. During FitBox sessions, photographers snap employees working out in FitCo attire, living a life of fitness – and working towards ‘empowering the world through fitness.’ These photos emerge as the rhetorical proof that indeed, this brand is authentically fit, and you [consumer] could be too.

While marketing a fitness culture inside the organization is one thing, marketing fitness and moral health superiority as a brand is something much more. Elliot and Davies (2006) contend that consumers often share “traditional markers of community

that include shared consciousness, rituals/traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility (p. 156). In short, the mere consumption of certain products can bring about certain associations amongst groups of people and ultimately, bring people together.

Understanding the power of the brand, corporations continue to unpack the possibilities of globalized economies and furthering their branding efforts to larger, diverse populations.

Elliot and Davies (2006) argue that there are different types of brand communities, including the use of sub-cultures, embodied selves and styles, and authenticity of performance. FitCo's organizational culture and marketing efforts provide a quintessential example of targeting each of these facets of brand community. In regard to sub-cultures, CrossFit's roots are closely tied to countercultural fitness movements, such as primal lifestyles and functional-outdoor fitness. This sub-set of fitness enthusiasts often bonded together over their dismay for traditional global gyms ("globo" gyms in CrossFit speak). What is fascinating about this, is that CrossFit outgrew this sub-culture, and now the marketing campaign has close ties to major corporate sponsors. FitCo is not alone in trying to market "fitness." Fitness, and its relationship to healthism and consumption, continues to be a contested area of gender relations (Dworkin & Wachs, 2009). Elliot and Davis (2006) third marketing strategy, the embodied self and style, fits within the marketing efforts of FitCo because of the ways in which the very way in which elite fitness gurus dress and command the new posture of fitness. Based on FitCo's actual body-scanning technologies to measure and

size the CrossFit body, there can be no truer example the intersection of embodiment and style.

Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the organizational fitness culture at FitCo. Specifically, I showed how the fitness culture transcended from CrossFit into organizational life. The goal of this chapter was to provide an interpretive view of the cultural elements at FitCo and preview the critical perspective. The three main findings from this chapter are as follows. The organizational fitness culture encourages a discourse of amelioration laden with ideals of authenticity. Second, there is a distinct dialectic between personal and occupational identity. That is, FitCo only wants to employ *authentically fit* employees. Third, while it is hard to argue that a company should hire people that use their products and *fit* in the company mold, FitCo's focus on fitness offers little space to resist such a totalitarian discourse that focuses so much on the visual attributes of the body and its consumption. With attempts to market this fitness as a package to consumers, workers, and even other organizations, critical examination is necessary. The next two chapters take a more critical perspective in acknowledging issues of power and ethics. Chapter five examines these issues by focusing on power in the organization. The ways in which power is exercised in the organizing of fitness and the ways in which resistance manifested as opposition to the fitness discourse is also discussed.

CHAPTER V

POWER OVERTIME EQUALS WORK DONE

Zoller (2003b) observed the relationship between workplace health promotion (WHP) and managerialism, claiming that such relationships continue to “promote hegemonic relationships” (p. 199). The problem with this, Zoller identified, is that while WHP is generally viewed in a positive light, employees have little choice but to adopt the program regardless of individual circumstance. Organizational leaders and managers are often so consumed in their rhetoric, that the power differential may go unexplored. That is, a health discourse can quickly turn into, what Zoller called, hegemonic managerialism. In this chapter, I explore the consequences of this relationship between employer/employee and discuss how extreme workplace wellness continues down the path of hegemonic managerialism, but also becomes even more dominating via a concertive (normative) system of control (Kunda, 2006).

This chapter begins with an overview of the ways in which ‘place’ may have influenced the study and introduces the way that “company time” factored into the WHP. Then, traditional corporate power relations and the mandating of fitness are discussed. An analysis of class-relations in regard to working out at FitCo and descriptions of FitCo as a site using unobtrusive means of control and surveillance are highlighted. The chapter concludes with descriptions of the ways in which resistance materialized at FitCo.

The East Coast and the Early Morning Sun

During the two months of research on the East coast, it became apparent that the day started much earlier than in other parts of the country – even the sun seemed early to rise. In the room I rented, the large windows lit up as soon as the sun began to rise around 5am. Seconds later, sanitation crews picked up recycling, the sound of glass bottles and steel cans served as a reminder to wake up. Landscapers began their daily assault, as did a street sweeper. I mention this because the days seemed longer which fed into the way in which time was understood at FitCo and in FitBox. There was a certain work ethic that was tied to the long day. In what follows, I describe how even the “times” of the day that employees chose to workout (at FitBox), seemed to connect to their commitment to fitness and to their work ethic.

FitBox hosts several different workout classes throughout the workday. Each class has its own culture and group of regulars that attend the classes. For example, the early morning class is comprised of more senior level executives. The implication is that this is the preferred class because they do not have to take time away from traditional business hours to workout, even though one of the draws of FitBox is that it claims to break up the monotony of the day. These employees get to the workout at 6:30am, some commute from neighboring states, meaning they might leave their houses at 5am or earlier. The 6:30am class is known for being the “dirty 6:30am,” as many employees joked. Other classes, like the 12:00pm class, had a group of regulars, but were routinely smaller in size. This group is not as competitive as the 6:30am, according to the workout times and from conversations with coaches. Peppered throughout the day are more

specialty classes, like a “masters” class that caters towards the older employees. While I participated in all the classes at various points during my time at FitCo, each class had its own unique *feel*. On one occasion, after a brutal workout session in the “masters” class, I collapsed on the floor and tried to catch my breath after the workout. A woman, who I later learned was 68, told me “it gets easier.” I refrained from telling her I had been participating in CrossFit for two years and begged to differ - I just smiled and asked her about her experiences and set up an interview time with her. In addition to my own observations about these classes having particular micro-cultures, employees also noted distinctions in classes and tended to prefer particular classes over others. As previously noted, the 6:30am class was infamous as being a more “hardcore” crowd that seemed off-putting to some. Bess, who enjoyed CrossFit, had this to say about the 6:30am class:

There are such little cliques within the CrossFitting grove about the 6:30 in the morning class that I’ve mentioned a few times and that still has a reputation as being the hard-core, super fit. I wouldn’t go to that 6:30 class because I would feel intimidated to go to that because I know that the people who go to that are the ones who are doing the workouts with the heavy weights and they’re doing all the as prescribed work outs and I don’t want to be and I know I hate people who are not going to that class talking to each about other how cool it was, did you puke?

Bess’ understanding of the extreme attitude in the 6:30am class was something that explicitly intimidated her. This attitude was clear even amongst the coaches, who admitted the 6:30am was the easiest class to coach because it ran itself – coaches did not have to spend much time going over “proper form” in this class. Because of its notoriety, some employees were happy to avoid it – wanting to attend less competitive classes. The cliquish nature that Bess referred to was often spoken about from other participants, who

frequently noted how CrossFitters seemed to *only* talk about CrossFit. However, the ways in which CrossFitters used *time* inside the workplace yielded insight into organizational priorities.

As an organizational stakeholder informed me, the impetus behind FitBox was to create a more “fit workforce.” Citing a recently read book, *Spark* by John Ratey, the organization was hoping to capitalize off fitness by increasing morale and productivity. When visiting the facility for the first time, stakeholders lauded FitBox as an escape from the doldrums. Instead of needing a “pick me up” at 2:30pm in the afternoon, employees could go to a CrossFit class at FitBox and come back an hour later more refreshed and more productive, as noted one male manager. However, because classes are offered both “on the clock” and “off the clock,” employees described a sort of privilege that went to employees who “*were able*” to work before the workday, at lunch, or after. Below, Barney describes what he calls, the “subtext of the 6:30am class.”

So, there are couple of subliminal or... subtext messages about going to the 6:30 [am]. One is that you *only* have time for that class. So, that you're working – that means you get your office by 7:35 and that – then you have a full day of work, right? There is the fact that other senior level people there. So, it's kind of endorsed too, that's the time that is certainly – that [is] certainly okay [to work out]. In [my division] and I don't know – I don't know how this – like I heard a few different things about [other divisions] in this perspective going on. In [my division], there is an element of people thinking that people do CrossFit means that they are slacking off, [that they] don't have enough work or [are] prioritizing themselves over the company kind of thing.

Barney conveys that the preferred employee is the one who works out on his or her own time, and is still at the office at 7:35 for a “full day of work.” The subgroup to which Barney is referring is his own workgroup, comprised of managers and other employees who treat CrossFit as an excuse to not work. While this is not an explicit rule, the

“subtext” as Barney refers to it, seems to contradict the original goal of FitBox to give employees an outlet during the day. Other employees had similar sentiments about “company time” and an apparent contradiction in wanting everyone to be fit.

My wife definitely joked, she’s like, maybe you should start going to that 6:30 class again...So, I remember people saying to me when we started even – might be on on-ramp that there is no titles or no business cards or whatever and there’s no egos. And the ego was meant to say that it’s not a problem if you can’t – like don’t be embarrass by what strength you have not business egos like it was basically saying like -- and so – and I think they generally do – I mean I know people who are very – like the 6:30 class. They have a few senior level people there like [name omitted] is in there. [CEO] goes to that very frequently [name omitted] goes to that. And then I know like [name omitted] who used – I used to go some times. He’s a junior level accountant but he loves working out with those guys. He loves it. I mean I could see it and it’s not because he thinks of getting promoted, I feel like it’s a new level of connection for him with senior level guys and they’re all there at 6:30.

I mean the 6:30 people – every class has its own personality. The 6:30 people I went there for my first class ever after an [orientation session]. And I joked because almost they’re like, “We come every day. Are you going to come every day? We’ll see you tomorrow. We’ll see you tomorrow,” because we’re five days, five days, 6:30 at one day and you know, they’re very much – they’ve gotten on a calendar and they – and when someone is out, they’re like, “Were you traveling? Where were you yesterday,” you know.

The subtext that Barney is talking about is a general prestige that is shared with employees who do not have to workout during the workday, but take care of their body, take care of their workout before the workday actually begins. Several participants shared a similar sentiment as to why they would not want to go to the 6:30 am class, because they were perceived as a more committed group.

More of the executives attended this class, and the coaches admitted the class needed less instruction because the class was full of “regulars.” It was a popular class in that it was routinely busy, but also because most of the people that came this early took

their fitness seriously. This class, as well as the 5:30pm class are the only classes that meet outside of the traditionally defined workday. There is a prestige in not having to “workout” while on the “clock.” Larah, one of the FitBox coaches, described the workout times:

Well, that one’s hard but if they’d asked then we can try to advice but everybody’s boss or manager is different and some of them are -- this is surprising to me still, some are really onboard, some of them are not. So, it depends on their work culture and their immediate work. They know that the higher ups here support it so their immediate bosses can’t really not support it but they can make it a little bit more difficult for them to come over here. There are a lot of folks that will come into the 6:30 class or 5:30 class because they really don’t have a choice or have the option to leave in a normal day. That’s a hard thing to try to talk to them about because you don’t know whose boss supports it, who doesn’t support it. Are they allowed to come at noon or one or is it a big no-no?

The ambiguity seemed to stretch across job titles and positions, but with certain employees expressing more concern over it. It appeared that managers had their own way of handling excessive FitBox usage. Pun recalled a story about a colleague who was going to leave early, so a manager encouraged her to go to the earlier class the next day:

I’ve only heard one story and that was a girl I know had to go to a 6:30 class because she was on a leave, it was a Friday and she was going to leave early and her boss was like, okay I’ll see you in 6:30 class and she was, okay and she went 6:30 and then I saw her in the cafeteria afterwards and she said yeah I had to go to the 6:30 and it sucks.

Much like the flattening of the hierarchy within organizational structures, the push towards more decentralized decision-making process; power has shifted from its more traditional forms. Weber’s ideal types have been implemented and critiqued, Fordism is dead (except in parts of the developing countries), and technology is king.

Pun talked about the hierarchy not necessarily going away, but changing:

I think that when we begin to embrace that part of our history and say this is the updated version, this is the twenty-first century version of those ideas. I think we find ways again especially with CrossFit it made people who work here walk the walk and talk the talk from the highest senior management down because you had [CEO], you had [name omitted] you have these dudes in the box. The walls of hierarchy disappeared and what one of the great things about CrossFit is they talk about checking your ego at the door which doesn't really ever happen really. [Why not?] In the sense that you get so into it and some people compete against each other, I don't. I compete against myself but I mean, last week I went totally hard on this men strain workout and then couldn't walk for three days.

Whereas before the ideal worker was prescribed a uniform, values and even a smile, the worker and particularly his or her body, is subject to a variety of control mechanisms.

(Holliday & Thompson, 2001).

While both unobtrusive and traditional control systems were present at FitCo, the push towards any control system typically starts from a managerial perspective. In the next section, the discussion centers on the initial push towards becoming the Center of Fitness. The managerial push, though ill received, played a significant role in the creation of the fitness initiatives. This push from a traditional perspective on organizational power is explored.

Corporate Power Relations

Mandating of Health and Fitness

At the onset of the planned cultural shift to include CrossFit workouts for employees, FitCo mobilized its employees with an email directive. Employees remember the exact wording of the email differently, but each recalled an email that advocated for 1000 FitCo HQ employees to participate in the introductory workout that

would take place outside. A promotional video was created about the experience, with one FitCo leader boasting that the workout was the day “they were going to change [FitCo]...forever!” FitBox invited more coaches to help with the event that took place on the campus soccer field. Employees were trained on various foundational CrossFit movements and used PVC pipes to demonstrate multiple exercises. Employees viewed CrossFit, the corporate fitness model, as the new company direction and the preferred way for employees to get fit.

For many employees, curiosity trumped fear as they made their way outdoors and participated. Others recalled the mandate as a major conflict that marked cultural change to which they resisted. For example, Ruth skipped work that day because of the mandate.

I asked Ruth how she felt about the original communiqué:

When they would have things, they would be like, “It’s mandatory.” When they had the first big CrossFit workout, it was mandatory. Then the manager was like, “Oh no, you have to go.” I took the day off. I’m like, “No, I’m not doing that.”

Eric: So to avoid, you took the day off [work]?

Yeah. I do not appreciate having things rammed down my throat.

Ruth had been with the company for over 15 years, and yet to hear her speak of skipping work to avoid a managerial mandate for fitness led me to believe that the recent FitCo cultural transition had pushed her, and others, to an unfavorable work environment. I followed up with Ruth to ask her about her current job satisfaction. She was clear that she still loves her job, but that her pride had gone down significantly. Her participation in activities had gone down significantly.

I was the mayor of FitCo for a while...I love my job. But as far as you know, I don’t know, we could be making chicken nuggets. It’s not for pride of *‘I work for*

FitCo, and it's the best company' anymore because now, I don't feel like I fit in here. [Emphasis Ruth's]

Ruth was describing how in the last few years, the emphasis on fit cultures made her less enthusiastic about the company. She had reverted to not participating in any extra activities because she now felt like she did not “fit in.” Saul described the changes in a similar tone:

A lot of people were upset that they were being force to workout. The e-mail was basically, it was basically like we got an email from the top down saying, you will come out and participate in these if you part of this branch. I mean that's essentially what it was. To be honest I think maybe 75 percent of the people that were up in arms about going out there probably have a great time, probably didn't get injured, probably had a good work out...*but I think there were a number of people that went out there against their will and probably didn't enjoy it much but we weren't given a choice.* [Emphasis added]

Even those that were more enthusiastic about CrossFit remembered the mandate and feeling a certain pressure to go, but alluded to a sentiment of feeling like it “couldn't do any harm.” One of the reasons for the first workout has to do with basic CrossFit philosophy. The mantra goes that one cannot simply discuss the benefits of the program, but people must *try* it themselves. Such a sentiment was problematic for Saul, who thought without having any pre-screening of employees, applying such a one-size fits all exercise could have led to injury. I asked one of the coaches, BM, for his perspective on the initial workout, referring to a picture on the wall of the “first workout.”

Yeah, great picture right? Yes, a few times in the beginning we had like CrossFit experiences the kind of pushing everyone through it. One time the beverage [*the beverage that BM refers to is Kool-Aid with cult connotation*] was strongly encouraged [laughter] and it didn't go over that hot but it definitely got people talking about it -Where Jerry Jones says any press is good press, right? So it definitely got people talking about it, got people out there and we got a lot of

people over here because they started diving into it. We realized that we probably brought too many people and too quick after that but that's one of those things you live and learn buy yeah it was great. We don't do too much that now, it will be CrossFit stuff but there's also the yoga, there's also the dance and all that stuff so I just try and if they ask for a CrossFit experience, we'll do a workout and people how up and show up and show up, it's fun.

The way in which BM looked at the image on the wall, of hundreds of FitCo employees going through their CrossFit exercises, PVC pipes overhead, alluded to an evangelical level of fitness promotion. He frequently referenced CrossFit founder and CEO, by only the name of "coach." "Coach's" quotes were written in marker on his dry erase board in his office. This evangelical fitness promotion, not just from the coaches, sheds light on the onset of the implementation of CrossFit in the workplace. The message also corroborates that the initial message was ill received and how the program is now being communicated differently. Whereas it at first may have been mandated, it appears that now it is communicated through what appears to be a more unobtrusive manner – that is *fun*. For many employees, indeed it is fun. Yet, to others, FitBox and FitCo were communicating something altogether differently.

On the first day of observations I was invited to have lunch with a CrossFit coach, two organizational managers, and a prospective coach who was interviewing for a position. We ate in the café area. I ordered a protein rich meal from the Mongolian BBQ line with other "paleo" eaters and went back to the table. All of us were eating something similar, a grain free meal, low in carbohydrates, full of vegetables and meat. One member of the group brought their own food in containers, holding himself to an even higher nutritional standard. When asked about why he did this, he said it was just

“easier.” It seemed to be, however, that by creating his own meals he had even more control over precisely what was going into his sculpted body.

Looking around the café area it appeared that many tables were clearly eating similar meals – yet not everyone. Many groups that participated in CrossFit together were eating together and appeared to wear similarly fashioned clothing. From the first day in the corporate campus, I wondered how the issue of job type and class played into the concept of fitness at the workplace.

Issues of Class

Biceps and a Blue Collar – Fitness for Everyone?

During observations, I was always amazed at how pleasant the maintenance and custodial staff members were in the gyms and also in the main office building. I approached one member of staff to ask him a few of his thoughts in an unrecorded *in-situ* interview. Even for FitCo standards, Bain stood out as a particularly muscular man, with piercing biceps that were always protruding from his blue company shirt. I introduced myself and as we began speaking, he looked up every few seconds to greet passersby by their name – Bain knew everyone and seemed revered by many. When asked if he had any thoughts on how things have changed since the push towards fitness, he fired back: “Very different now.” He went on to state that before, fitness more of an afterthought, something that was more passive. He said that before, they had a lot more TVs in the gym and people would spend more time resting than actually working out – now they have more “structure” and it is more “intense.” While this may seem like an insignificant point, the “intensity” associated with the workout is a salient issue. With

FitCo controlling messages about workout intensity, the extent to which employees who did not reach that level of intensity is of interest. Controlling the message about intensity was a way to privilege CrossFit over other workouts, because other fitness levels, according to Bain and others, were more passive forms of fitness. Bain did not directly participate in FitBox, but spoke of his relationship with several of the coaches.

I found it curious that of the coaches he referred to the most, he spoke with a paternal reverence, though the coach was significantly younger than him. This particular coach had given him several P-90X (a fitness regimen similar to CrossFit, though interestingly one its competitors) DVDs to take home. He had spoken with coaches about nutrition and now eats leaner meats and vegetables. As a direct result of these conversations, he boasted that he now often has tuna salad for breakfast. However, when asked if Bain could workout at FitBox (or any of the many workout facilities at FitCo), I learned it was a complicated issue. Bain looked around and spoke more quietly. He revealed to me that someone reported him for being “MIA” from his work post a few months back. He confessed that he enjoys the gym, but only works out on “his time” during breaks or before/after work. Bain seemed uncomfortable in telling me this, and spoke in a deflated, quieted tone. When asked why he thought he was “reported” Bain said he thought he knew who reported him and that he was the victim of unfair treatment. He was convinced that the person reporting him was “jealous of [his] body.” Because Bain had been with FitCo for an extended period of time, over 10 years, he said he felt comfortable going to a supervisor with his plight. He is now allowed to work out

on his breaks, but does not do CrossFit. When asked why he did not CrossFit, he replied that it takes too long to walk over to the adjacent building.

From my conversation with Bain, I gathered that perhaps a push towards fitness was not always the organization's selfless attempt at making each and every employee "better." What were the rules for contractors, maintenance and janitorial staff, or even security guards? FitCo is outfitted with several security offices, yet I never observed a security guard attend a CrossFit class. I found this ironic in the sense that CrossFit was initially created for military, police and firefighters – yet now that very demographic had either been left out or lacked interest. The security guards I observed were some of the more sedentary employees, reviewing security cameras and occupying the security gates and doors. Two security guards with whom I spoke expressed uncertainty if they were "allowed" to go to those classes, as their shifts lack the flexibility that many of the other positions at FitCo have. Some security guards (who had previously worked for the company), attended the CrossFit class at FitCo, but only on their days off of work. Thus, those employees came to work, on their days off, to participate in the CrossFit program. Zoller (2004) observed one of the many unintentional consequences of the development of the workplace gym was that the gym was perceived as more of a perk designed by management rather than a perk for subordinates. The organization she studied took little input from employees which resulted in many not feeling listened to and ended up resenting the gym. It is clear from these examples that indeed not all employees are encouraged to "be fit" in the same ways. Interns also expressed frustration, often unsure if they were allowed to workout or not. Prince describes his confusion:

So, it's confusing actually on that too. I – initially, I clocked out for it and then somebody told me you weren't supposed to and then I – so, I didn't for a week and I did for a week and then this week – this week I've started to again. I've been getting mixed signals there...well I think most of the time it's – I mean they are not used to interns. So, when like fulltime employees go out like to my understanding is they don't have to clock out because they're getting paid anyway. [So you haven't been told that you can't go?] No, I haven't. I mean I've had – my boss told me to not clock out or she told me to just clock out to lunch because it's like it's part of like the whole initiative and she said that if they want to encourage to go over there like now I feel like they're – that – that I don't know how an intern really fits in the task.

The issue of employee time was obviously a major concern, but it seems that certain types of employees were in limbo when it came to how they were *supposed* to workout. Ultimately, Prince and his supervisor seemed to improvise a solution, but it was clear that interns were not necessarily the targeted demographic of FitBox.

While the nature of work time was rarely discussed (i.e. did not hear managers tell any employee they could not work out), the idea of joking or ribbing about work ethic was a common refrain. Barney recalled a specific meeting where a manager's joke was interpreted as a dig at the work ethic of the CrossFitters:

So, one time we were on a company meeting with our president and [organizational executive] who just started CrossFit and he made some joke about it and [another individual] in the meeting in front of the whole group of people said, *'No, I'm not doing CrossFit. I still work.'*

So, now, he was joking but every joke has an aspect of truth, right? So, there is definitely an aspect to people who think that – in [different divisions with FitCo], they've had some challenges like I've seen people at – from FitCo who have seen like maybe taking a jog and then I see them show up for a class, same day. And I'm like, wow, that's a lot of time. Like I wonder if we're in a position where – so, in that sense of 6:30 class has tangible networking but also has kind of a subtext of --...I'm able to do CrossFit because I'm inventing the time by coming here at 6:30 instead of oh, yes, in the middle of the day I'm going to go at 11 when I go now especially, you know, in 11am I like go in after we're allowed whatever...

Some divisions it seemed, were more invested in the success of the CrossFit box. Members of FitCo fitness teams, for instance, were major supporters. Other divisions within Madrigal, who may have catered to sports or even more professional attire, had competing understandings of CrossFit at work. In the above quote, Barney does a wonderful job describing the problem with that type of joking. To him, he interpreted the joke as in good fun, but also noted that with every joke there is some element of truth. To some extent, there were two groups of individuals that were being ostracized. One group consisted of the more sedentary, resistant to fitness at work employees. The other, ironically, were the employees who spent *too* much time working out. The next section goes into more detail about the local discourse that was created that promoted the fitness culture. To make sense of this discourse, an “unobtrusive control” model (Tompkins & Cheney, 1985) is utilized.

Unobtrusive Control

The Corporate Body with BeneFITs

A 1960s airline “stewardesses” job advertisement invited only single women without children, at least 5’2” and weighing no more than 130 to apply (Padavic & Reskin, 2002). Many airlines stopped explicitly listing “beauty” standards as part of the job description in the 1990s, but as Murphy (1998) observed, airlines still have informal ways of encouraging particular bodily ideals. In her study, Murphy noted what employees referred to as a “Barbie bootcamp” as a not just a place to reproduce gendered power relations, but also a site from which the body was to be constructed and disciplined (p. 516). At FitCo, they do not overtly discriminate against the unfit body,

but that does not stop certain employees from feeling ostracized. Take for instance, Geoff's comments on the subject, which are precise and raise important issues surrounding FitCo's hiring practices. I asked Geoff "you can't really, you know, only hire fit people, right?" Below is his reply:

We can't? [Laughs] Overtly, you can't, yeah...it's a whole slippery slope and a lot of people struggle to be fit and lead healthy lifestyle for various reasons...so I'm not going to try to simplify it what one person's life is like versus another. I mean I'm a huge fan of the show *Biggest Loser* because of just what those people go through and what obstacles they overcome, what hurdles they clear, and it's not even physical hurdles. That's probably the easiest part for them.

The emphasis on not having any excuse to lead a fit life and the hope that those that do not choose to "prioritize fitness" is communicated to employees who do not fit the mold of the typical FitCo Employee. Puhl, Andreyeva, and Brownell (2008) found evidence of weight and height discrimination in the US to be even more pervasive than race and gender discrimination. While Geoff noted that FitCo cannot "overtly discriminate," in actuality, the case is not quite so clear. In fact, some states do not have any laws in place to protect from discriminating against these body types, though certain states have begun to look at possible policies (Gomez, 2012).

Peer Pressure

Farreday, who had been with FitCo for the last three years, said he initially went to CrossFit classes but stopped abruptly. He said one of the coaches just "rubbed him the wrong way" and stopped going to the classes after the initial "orientation" CrossFit classes. But then, Farreday found himself going back about a year later to CrossFit

classes. When asked about his sudden change of mind, he said that he explicitly didn't feel any pressure to go, but went to classes because his team was doing CrossFit.

Farreday: It was more like, I didn't like... so I kind of didn't like that coach, that's one thing. He's for whatever it is, kind of rubbed me the wrong way. I don't know, the auditorium for classes were then, were huge. Like thirty, forty people kind of intimidating. And I was kind of like... I don't know. I feel like I can do the same thing as going to the gym. So then I didn't do it for a year and a half. And then I decided to start again like this past September, I think. So I went on ramp again. So I finished that in November. Then I went regularly since then.

Eric: How was it different now than the first time you started?

Farreday: Well, so this time around I was... I didn't... I was kind of peer pressured into it. Not really, but like, everybody on that team was doing it so I just tried. And the first time around, I was not at all. It was just like, "I'll try this, whatever." And I think, most likely, not having that pressure of like trying to fit in, which my co-workers... it probably would have been a pretty similar situation to the first time I tried it. So I say, that was the difference but...

Reading Farreday's response to why he decided to go back to CrossFit, one can hear the hesitancy in disclosing that he fell victim to peer pressure. Even after admitting he goes to CrossFit because his team did, he refused to believe that he personally was going because of peer pressure, but again alluded to it playing at least a nominal role:

Farreday: Sure, I mean, I'm sure it's not for everyone. See -- I mean, I think it looks intimidating if you haven't tried it. And I think a lot of people probably don't think it's all as cracked up to be. And I think if I didn't have that sort of internal peer pressure, it wasn't real pressure but I felt the need to get on their level, sort of. I don't think I probably would've tried it, again.

Me: Do you think that other people have felt that pressure?

Farreday: Yeah probably. I could imagine. And if sometimes it's more of leading, I know some managers would just encourage them to, "Hey, try one class."

“Trying one class” was a strategy that relied on employees getting addicted to the workout. To some, it worked – several employees insisted that they were “addicted” to CrossFit. Others felt that the pressure equated to forms of elitism and privileging CrossFit over other forms of fitness:

You’ll see that pressure. Dude, what are you doing? What are you eating? How are you eating that? It’s like come on I think that’s a bad aspect of the elitism. If you don’t do it like the guys here would joke about this class. Some of the guys will say, oh did you do Jakarta today? You do this. I’m like yeah just come I’ll show you where it’s from but it’s like that’s the thing is. That’s like if it’s not CrossFit everything else sucks.

Several responses corroborated the above employee’s perception. Yet, what was even more evident were the ways in which the fitness program used the peer pressure as fuel for intensity. Several employees remarked on the competitive nature of the program.

It is very competitive, like ‘Oh I’ll beat you.’ I heard comments about people like there was one girl that went a couple of times. One time she went and she got joined up with somebody because a lot of the things you do are as partners. The other girl was like, ‘Oh God I don’t want to work with her because she’s not fast enough, she’s not good enough.’ You don’t see that in spin class. Even in kickboxing class, ‘Oh he’s not strong enough.’ That’s ridiculous, especially we’re adults. It’s not grade school but it is. You’re afraid you’re going to be picked last for the baseball team. It’s elementary school all over again. Or you’re afraid you’re going to get hit by the dodge ball.

Here, we see the super-competitive piece about CrossFit coupled with comparisons of other body types and fitness levels. The image of dodge ball from elementary school conjures up many images of bullying from athletics in physical education classes.

In addition to seeing teammates working out and to some degree, being pressured into it, conversations often gravitate towards CrossFit. In many ways, CrossFit has become a new ice-breaker for conversations. Routinely, I heard employees asking each

other “how they did on the WOD” if they “scaled or did RX⁵.” The pervasiveness of the conversations undoubtedly lured some folks into the world of CrossFit wanting to be part of that conversation, however getting participants to admit that they fell victim to the peer pressure was another story. Like Farreday, many participants denied that peer-pressure played any role in their decision to CrossFit, but had heard murmurs of how it might have influenced other employees.

In meetings, the CrossFit lifestyle was a routine topic. In one meeting, a manager asked if he could buy all team-members a coffee (even one for me). The conversation turned to what natural sweeteners, if any, employees used in their coffee. Paleo followers would only have black coffee. The manager mentioned how he was now drinking the coffee black, as he had just given up “agave nectar.” Another teammate replied that she has been using agave nectar for a long time and loved it because it was a healthier choice than refined sugar. After the manager came back to the table and distributed the coffees, the manager said he forgot the meeting agenda on his desk. A colleague perked up and said he would retrieve it from the third floor if “someone would time him.” I took this as a joke, but he darted off (literally running) up the stairs. He came back within the minute and the group laughed. While it was clear that this group had good chemistry, it seemed backed by several CrossFit values. First, the discussion of nutrition started the meeting about coffee. When spoken privately after the meeting, each member shared that these type of conversations happen routinely; they rarely give them

⁵ Scaled refers to doing a CrossFit workout at a lower weight, whereas “RX” indicates a “prescribed weight” for the “elite athlete” (Fieldnotes).

much afterthought. Others rationalized the conversations because they offered a “healthy pressure.”

I’m kind of sensitive to those food choices anyway, so I haven’t felt that pressure but I’ve heard people feel that pressure. Yeah, definitely. And some of it’s a – some of it’s probably – I have felt like a positive change.

JMills says that people monitor their behaviors based on who is running a particular meeting:

I definitely see meetings starting that way. You’ll know people who – if you’re going to have a meeting with someone who you know CrossFits or follows a certain diet and if you know I ate paleo and you had a meeting with me, you would not bring in your chips and soda to a meeting because you know that – you know because then I’m going to be like – “What are you eating?” “What do you got there,” you know? And people don’t want to put themselves in that situation. I think most people when they start meetings here, they start – they talk about what they – what paleo meal they made last night or what their workout was like. It’s just because they know they can relate to someone else about that and they can talk to them about it --...especially someone who CrossFits and then they might go home to family who doesn’t, they don’t understand it. They don’t have anyone to talk to except for their friends who happen to be their co-workers. So, I think most meetings will start off that way.

From JMills’ quote, it is evident that meetings served another disciplinary function in the concertive control process. That is, employees who did not want to be left out may have felt more obligated to join in. Others, afraid of being left out, knew that a paleo topic or workout topic would resonate with others, and thus serve as an important meeting ice-breaker. Second, the fact that he asked the team to time him meant that his fitness was to be shared and performed. He was to be held accountable to the group who was timing him. This idea bleeds into the theme of surveillance.

Surveillance

The “Workout Results Tracker” program is the most explicit form of surveillance. The program allows all employees who go to FitBox to record their results from the workout of the day. The program allows users to create a profile picture, post their personal records to their homepage, and then ranks performance of the day against the other employees. Because employees login to the system before each CrossFit class, the program also measures attendance. Upon completion of the workout, employees line up at one of two touchscreen computers or computers at the gyms front desk and enter their results from the workout. Similarly, Barker (1993) observed the ways in which concertive control worked to increase the monitoring of other employees’ outputs, as well as increased self-monitoring (p. 434). Papa, Auwal, and Singhal (1995) noted the extreme guilt that the bank employees had if they had issues with their loan recovery rates with the Grameen Bank. In this case, the guilt was only intensified because the loan records were posted on wall for other bank employees to monitor. At FitCo, a virtual leaderboard was compiled, each for women and men, which displayed in numerical order first place all the way to last who finished the workout and when. While it is true that the CrossFit exercise program prides itself on constantly changing, routine is the enemy, functional fitness – there are some workouts that are used for what they call “benchmark” assessments (Fieldnotes). The goal with these exercises is to get faster, lift more weight – and in return, be *more* fit. Of course, not everyone has to do the same weight or even go at the same pace. But, the program took into consideration scaling options, so if an employee did not do a weight that was required, he or she provides that

information. In my time at FitCo, I also was allowed a login and able to record and evaluate my workout times with the employees, which only shows the surveillance capacity of the program.

The Personal Workout Tracker draws off a fundamental component to each CrossFit gym known as the “whiteboard.” The whiteboard is what other CrossFit boxes use as an accountability tool. Typically, a coach will write everyone’s name on the board that is attending class and then after the workout, record each person’s time. The idea behind this is that one can record his/her own results and compare to the last time the workout was completed. Each person should want to either do a heavier weight than before or finish the workout quicker (to show progression in fitness). CrossFit members then are encouraged to have a personal journal in which they record their fitness results for the day to have a personal inventory of completion times and weights.

The Personal Workout Tracker is different than the traditional whiteboard for several key reasons. While the whiteboard in most CrossFit gyms is one form of surveillance and accountability, the whiteboard did not necessarily “rank” members in order. Instead, one could compare his or her time to others, but the results are not necessarily compiled into a list ranking best-worst performances. Second, while CrossFit whiteboards could be used by coaches to capture attendance (if they re-wrote all the names at the end of the session), the tracker automatically compiles that information for coaches. However, most alarming part is that other employees, managers, executive, (and yes even this researcher) had access to such information. I could see when certain

employees worked out, historical “leaderboard” information for the last several years, as well as pictures and personal bests for each member.

The problem with the workout tracker, as a form of surveillance, is that such information about fitness may be deemed more private to some individuals. It is interesting to note here that in all of the interviews, the system was never brought up by employees. Larah, one of the CrossFit coaches mentioned the program, but seemed reluctant to talk more openly about it. I followed up with her off-site and she elaborated on the technology:

I do kind of think it [workout tracker] changed things. I know people just like the "old school" feel of the white board, I noticed that even though the technology is great and relatively fast it took a good chunk of time to get everyone signed in and also input their scores after the workout. It holds people up and at times instead of putting their scores in a place where they will remember them they stop entering them at all since they just don't have time after class. We have very large classes at FitBox so this issue could have been exaggerated a bit but I still found a lack of desire to post their scores after the workout since it became an issue ... and when you don't have the desire to post those scores... the accountability of the workout goes away. When that accountability goes away, the desire to get better goes away, then what's the point of going at all?

Larah observed employees more reluctant to share their workout times once they adopted the technology. Before, as with most CrossFit gyms, a white-board is used for all members to write down times without being ranked. In an increasingly surveilled world, the extent to which employees take for granted forms of electronic surveillance only appears to be growing. In an organization that prides itself on fitness and health, the extent to which surveillance can be used to not only to monitor, but also to regulate employee fitness habits; this is indeed troubling.

At the time of this writing, just as the time of researching at FitBox, I can log into a website and see every employee's results from the workout last week. All employees who workout at FitBox and have access to this program. CrossFit prides itself on its communal aspect, the fact that everyone pushes each other to go faster, go harder and more intense than before. Some CrossFit enthusiasts link this accountability from the community as a major contributor in their success with the CrossFit program (Cooperman, 2005). If we break this model down, we see that the driving forces behind CrossFit rests on two fundamental models of surveillance and self-regulating teams.

In addition to the performance tracker program, employees regulate each other. Cliques form, people talk about other people – all of this is traditional organizational gossip. However, what is different about this with FitCo is that surveillance is also conducted in the gym and cafeteria. The employee body has become an object through which other employees can tell if they have been eating the preferred way or working out *hard* enough. For example, during meetings when employees bring their preferred coffee drink, it communicates something else to other members of the team: either they are on board with CrossFit or not. Should an employee still decide to take one of the less popularized “unhealthy” options, they become more of the out-group and are in fact, stigmatized. So much in fact, that Ruth said she no longer goes to the cafeteria. In the excerpt below, Ruth describes the changes she witness in the cafeteria and her aversion to going there:

Ruth: It's just like the changes...I can't get white bread. There's no white bread. The pizza is always on wheat crust, things like that. Yeah, it's a taste preference. I happen not to like it, but whatever, just the foods that they offer. Every week they would have Thanksgiving Dinner with mashed potatoes, gravy the whole

night... They don't do that anymore because it's not allowed.

Eric: Is that one of the reason you don't like it here? If you bring your lunch, is it one of the reasons why you eat at your desk?

Ruth: Yeah, why come down [*to the cafeteria*]? It used to be a social thing like everybody would come down and now all you see are the CrossFit people in line for the wok thing.

Eric: It sounds like it's taken over your way of life here.

Ruth: Yeah. While you're at work, yeah. Everything is about it.

Eric: Have you had to make other sacrifices in your work life based on these new initiatives?

Ruth: I haven't. I should be losing weight to fit in, but not really doing it. There's really nothing else other than not participating in things because I just don't feel comfortable with it.

Eric: Do you see any signs of that alleviating or do you feel like it's becoming a little bit encroaching?

Ruth: I don't think they're going to make it worse, but I don't think it's going to change. They're all about fitness. Get on board or get out. That's fine, it's their choice, but it's a shame to say that no other thought process or body type can fit in.

Eric: What's really troubling is that you mentioned that it may have an impact on hiring. It sounds like managers were instructed to hire a certain...

Ruth: That's what we were told in that meeting.

Eric: So it's just not you that heard these things. Other people were there?

Ruth: No because we all left the meeting and we were like, okay so no fatties, no oldies, that's good to know, we were joking on the way back up [*to the offices*]. That's a shame.

The meeting that Ruth is referring to was discussed earlier in this chapter, where several employees felt like a new company vision that ostracized various bodies. Ruth, who identified as someone not at her ideal weight, felt uncomfortable with these company

changes. The fact that she no longer enjoyed the social aspect of lunch by sitting with peers in the cafeteria and was relegated back to the confines of her desk, implies that the surveillance system in place was making some employees feel uncomfortable. From the observations and interviews, this is a direct consequence of the cultural shift at FitCo. This created a rift between the unfit and fit. For example, when asked if as a company leader, he worries about people feeling “ostracized,” Brian responded:

You know yeah, I worry about any employee that feels ostracized or --now, there’s always a question, *is that true or is that how they feel?* And I leave that up to you... because I’m not going to ask who you’re referring to. That’s not the point [emphasis added].

Brian’s comments about it being true or how they feel sheds insight into the prescriptive nature of FitCo’s culture, which ostensibly favors a more “rational” or stereotypically “masculine” leadership style. Geoff’s comments confirm this masculine privilege:

So I would say, yeah, CrossFit is popular. It’s the popular thing to do here. Now if folks are hung up on, well I don’t want to do it. The cool kids are doing it. I’m going to do my own thing, as long as they’re doing something, great, but if they’re not, you know, eventually, they’re the ones that are going to pay the price for not living a healthy lifestyle, you know. That doesn’t need to be – That research has already been done, you know, so ultimately, those folks will just have to wake up and get with it, get over any personal emotional issues, you know, resentments they may have...

From Geoff’s comments above, I take that he feels that CrossFit is popular but is also a choice. He feels that if employees choose not to do it, in the end, they will be the ones that suffer because to him, fitness is merely a choice. Geoff and Brian’s tough love approach may be commendable to some. The logic is that there should not be emotional excuses for being unfit/unhealthy. Yet, when we begin to unpack this line of logic we

run into problematic territory. Mumby and Putnam (1992) describe the opportunity in attempting to balance the rational with the inherent emotionality of organizational life too. Failure to address the emotion along with the rational, assert Mumby and Putnam, could lead to serious ethical consequences (p. 480). Yet, as Brian's comments reflect, he favors logic over emotion, consistent with Ahl's (2004) suggestion that "feminine" entrepreneur or management styles are often viewed as "less than optimal" (p. 123). According to Brian, FitCo is trying to make employees better – and the way to do that is to curb unhealthy behaviors. However, what happens here is that the masculine is privileged and thus, the feminine (or emotional) is rejected. He goes on to clarify how FitCo intends to be an inclusive organization:

Yes of course I worry about that but I also believe that we have created an inclusive environment. You don't have to do CrossFit. I don't do CrossFit. We are encouraging people to walk, to eat better. I speak a lot on this topic quite frankly right so you always hear people oh yeah but you are fitness brand. Absolutely, but I tell them one thing; if I was going to do one thing I would encourage them to eat healthier or change their cafeteria.

That's why I was saying change the food in your cafeteria which is phase two of what we've done in which we've talked about. So these people that feel ostracized because they don't do CrossFit, it goes back to my esteem issue or whatever. I'm not saying somebody doesn't come on strong and it could be an individual that says, hey come on we want you over the box. I get that and that shouldn't occur or at least not consistently but I think that we provide ample opportunity for people to find their way another way. I'm an example of that. [Employee Name] doesn't do CrossFit and [name omitted] works out three or four times a week as well.

Many people in this department don't do CrossFit but they workout and live a fit lifestyle or at least as fit as they so desire so I am absolutely always concerned about anybody that feels isolated, targeted, ostracized, pick your word but I would also go back to this altruistic statement I think we've created a broad enough opportunity with the [dept. name] of making you fit for your life. That there's an avenue of that person to find their way and I don't think anyone gets upset that

we're down at the gym working out with [various employees' names] versus [working out at the CrossFit box.]

So if somebody perhaps is not working out or maybe isn't taking care of themselves, *might* somebody say something to them? Possibly. Does everybody you meet workout here -- not everybody, [nobody] is perfect. I'm not in perfect shape whatever but I certainly am concerned but I'm not worried about it, how's that? I think it's an aberration or a minority not a prevailing feeling and to give you facts, let's just use a thousand person location which is what this location is. Approximately three hundred and fifty, four hundred people are CrossFitting so call it 35, 40 percent of the workforce. Maybe the numbers you'll hear can be inflated a way. It's about that. So my point is 60 percent of the workforce isn't doing CrossFit.

The fact remains, as Brian notes, that their intention is altruistic in nature. Because by his estimate many, even the majority, are not participating in CrossFit, he fails to see how anyone could feel threatened. It is true that many employees choose not to participate in the CrossFit program at FitCo. However, as Foucault notes, resistance and power go hand in hand. Indeed a director may have an easier time resisting the workout than a subordinate. Is there a clear space for resistance in such a seemingly totalitarian organization for all employees? Some employees' responses corroborate Brian's sentiments, but others identify a clear struggle with the hegemonic relationship in managerial health promotion and employee agency. Must there always be a minority that is made to feel ostracized?

Agency and Resistance – The MisFits

Foucauldian notions of power reflect a dialectic relationship between power and resistance (Foucault, 1995; Mumby, 1997). Thus, resistance is a natural part of organizational life because the organization is a site of control (see Tompkins & Cheney, 1985; Barker, 1993; 1999; Kunda, 2006; Mumby, 2005). Whether it is the use of culture,

normative control, or traditional/legitimate Weberian notions of power, the organization is rife with structures of domination. Encountering resistance, however, is a particularly difficult task when employee jobs are at stake. In other empirically based studies, scholars have examined hidden resistance (Murphy, 1998), resistance as gaming the system (Roy, 1959; Burawoy, 1979), or even the ways in which what passed as humor maintained shop-floor relations (Collinson, 1992). In more contemporary studies, the idea of resistance has been closely linked to the idea of agency. For the purpose of this study, Giddens' succinct definition of agency as the capacity of doing something (p. 11, 1986) is used. Thus, resistance as part of a system or organization could be anything (micro or macro) that occurs from an individual's own accord.

Agency

I was struck by how many employees admitted that they themselves did not feel pressure to workout, or to conform to certain dietary prescriptions—but that they had heard of *others* feeling the pressure. In the following quote, Barney tells me he “agrees with me.” Yet, I did not make any type of statement, I simply asked the question if certain employees had better networking possibilities. His response indicated to me that he had rarely thought about the clear organizational advantage that some employees that worked out had over others.

Yeah, I don't know that that's true like the – they're definitely – those guys are – well, you know what? I agree with you. When I found out my – in January, my wife and I joked. She's like well maybe she said start going to the 6:30 class one, you know? And now, that I'm saying that I totally – we totally have that conversation and I kind of joked. And I've thought to myself like if I got hired by [executive name] like I -- interviewed I believe I was final for the position with him that I probably start going to that 6:30 class because for a couple of reasons – and this is what I'm saying about maybe having a different perspective.

Though Barney said that he and his wife were joking, there seems to be an ounce of truth in this line of thought. Barney believed that by association, he had a better chance of getting another position with the company by associating himself with his CrossFitting network.

Saul tied the company direction and fitness initiative with CrossFit together. Yet, he himself did not feel pressure. He said he tried the workout and injured himself, and now does his own thing. Saul was careful, after being so outspoken about the dangers of the program, he had some concerns about proceeding in the interview: “This is why I’m a little concerned about your recording me here.” After ensuring confidentiality, the interview proceeded, but it was clear that some felt “speaking out” against CrossFit was not a wise career decision. At FitCo, resistance to working out was not private, one could not escape the judgments of others.

Resistance Practices

Other employees found their own ways to engage in resistance practices. During my last two weeks on site, I became a bit more adventurous with whom I spoke with about the fitness culture at FitCo. I had wanted to engage in a conversation with the smoking population. FitCo smokers were allowed to conduct their activity at a distance. Cigarette butt receptacles were kept from the main building, located closer to the outside security gates some 60 yards away. In speaking with one smoker, I identified myself as a researcher who was studying organizational culture. I asked him if he felt any pressure at FitCo to workout or to subscribe to any of the health initiatives. He said that he was relatively new to FitCo, two months, and felt absolutely no pressure whatsoever. As we

concluded our conversation, I noticed that he was stubbing his cigarette butt out next to a pile. It occurred to me that he was not in the dedicated “smoking zone.” He joked that “his butts” were all right here, all his evidence of his bad habit. I could not help but think that this, in some small way, was a way of resisting the structure in place. He had made a pile of butts in his preferred spot, which ironically, employees going to FitBox had to jump over.

Resistance as the Othering of Fitness

Others preferred to resist CrossFit, but not necessarily fitness altogether. FitCo employees, particularly those with athletic backgrounds, were encouraged to create their own fitness classes. These classes were hosted during work hours and took place in a basketball gym and outdoors. The classes involved many similar exercises that CrossFit utilizes like kettlebell swings, pushups, and sprinting – perhaps only different in that the workouts were longer and they did not use Olympic weightlifting movements. These classes were made fun of by CrossFitters. Brohdi told me that the internal CrossFit message was clear “if you’re not doing CrossFit then you’re pussy.” I asked Brohdi about a comment I heard a manager make about his class:

Me: It’s interesting you say that because [manager name], in the meeting in the day, he’ll say Oh yeah, Brohdi does this “delicious, bootylicious fitness thing.” Does that bother you?

Brohdi: That doesn’t offend me because its [manager name] and we’re busting each other’s balls but in others within the company here there’s other people doing that and it’s like that’s fine! Whatever! Like, it’s not a problem to me. If you want to go then let go because all I want to do at the end of the day I don’t care how you get healthy. You do any of the dance classes up here or spinning or CrossFit, or you walk. If something that I can do to help you lose weight and gets

stronger if you have an injury that's all it's meant to do... I'm just trying to help them up.

Brohdi's class was quite popular and he had a diverse group of clients. While the comments do not seem to rub Brohdi the wrong way, it was clear that his mode of fitness was ostensibly viewed as "less than" to other groups. The ribbing in meetings and even from passersby in a hallway, or from other CrossFit coaches expressed a kind of contempt. When I told one CrossFit coach I went to one of Brohdi's classes, she said "what is he doing over there anyway? Makes no sense why they would go to his class and not come over here!"

Resistance as Compliance

Several employees spoke of how employees who may have only used FitBox for strategic purposes. That is, rather than having secondary benefits of using the FitBox for networking, Saul indicated that some employees saw FitBox as a tool for getting further ahead in the company by virtue of networking. Rather than going to the classes for health and fitness, several may have participated in order to increase their standing within the company via visibility at FitBox. One participant had heard these sentiments before, but was not entirely sure if they were true.

Yeah. I don't think it would put me of -- I think I've also heard people say our other employees having an unfair advantage because they're working out with the executives and obviously they're having some sort of relationship with those people because I don't do that and I don't have a relationship with them. Is there a possibility that the other person is being treated more favorably? Maybe. I don't think that's necessarily true but I've heard it said that they go to that so they can work out with the execs and I don't know.

Employees had a difficult time ascertaining truth. The very notion of dismissing certain accounts or stories, or even gossip was even more telling to me than the actual

narratives. To me, indicating that they did not believe the stories meant an adamant denial or refusal to believe in anything other than the positive aspects of extreme workplace health promotion.

Still, employees told of stories where they noted that their participation in FitBox helped them. Barney described the ways in he feels his participation at FitBox helped in networking and scheduling meetings.

Three of them are I know because of the box. Now, I think they would accept my meeting. Otherwise, I think, you know, I think they would but this is they're like, "Oh, I know you." You know, it's much faster and I feel like it's much - it established the closeness, the bond that doesn't exist - didn't exist before. So, that's been really helpful. The number of people I know I feel like has gone up, you know, like I see - you know, I see people that I've worked out with them. You know, whether you're helping them put their stuff away or they're helping you put your stuff away or they're cheering you on or you're cheering them on or whatever like that's a different level of connectivity like there's a different

FitBox clearly provides a site from which employees can use to increase their visibility within the company. Because employees were encouraged to live/work actively, eat healthy, participate in CrossFit – those that did those very activities were privileged. Saul was more explicit about this advantage.

I can tell you and this where I need to be careful here is -- I can tell you that I've had people in my office tell me, 'I'm doing CrossFit because I feel the pressure to -- if I want to move up in this company I will do CrossFit.'

I took from Saul's reticence that he viewed FitBox as a highly political topic. Yet, the underlying assumption behind his quote is that some employees may have circumvented the possible health benefits of FitBox for a more self-serving organizational aspiration (i.e. promotion). In addition to FitBox serving as a tool for compliance, the cafeteria and the entire nutrition/health discourse could be used strategically.

Health and fitness compliance reached other aspects of organizational life, like the lunch room cafeteria. Here, the site where employees have the capacity to make unhealthy choices or preferred paleo options, proved an ultimate battleground. Barney described the cafeteria as a site where he could score points with members of senior management by being healthy.

I was at the Mongolian Walk and I said to [cafeteria worker] who was behind [the counter] who I know is the chef and I was like, “Which is the -- which are the healthy sauces,” because they have the list - they have all the statistics, you know, like, “this one is high in sodium. This one is high in calories. This one is...” I was like, “Which are the healthy ones?” [laughter] [FitCo CEO] was behind me in line and he slapped me on the back and he said, ‘I love hearing you ask that.’ Yeah, you know, so and I was like, ‘I’m glad you heard me say it,’ because I will take that - I’ll take any points I can get.

It was unclear if Barney knew that the CEO was behind him and he was speaking, but the point remains; the employee who makes those decisions asked those health-conscious questions was exuding what FitCo wanted in its fitness culture. Clearly, others who did not ask those questions may not receive the same kind of attention. This created a dichotomy between the fit (and the performance of fitness) and the unfit. If one was making strides in their fitness, that employee was indeed held in high regard for their attempt at virtue. In the next section, ideas about feelings of resentment towards the company and those that were more evangelical in their FitBox participation are shared.

Resistance as Resentment

The last theme in terms of resistance was that some employees, who were more evangelical about their fitness, or at least privilege the workout above other responsibilities, might have garnered resentment from some employees. Bess explained this phenomenon:

I think there are some people who are very rigid about their workouts and they have set times when they go and they just do regardless of whatever else is going on and that of course is a level of frustration in others.

There's always the contentious issue of people making up the hours that they've worked, that they worked out or doing the people not delivering results and I don't know how many times I've heard her, yeah, *but she's got time to work out*... People complaining about high workload but then you see them at the gym and I'm not saying they shouldn't work out but sometimes I think it's difficult for people to just complain about workload and things not being delivered and yet people still find time to work out and still some acceptance to be done yet. [Emphasis added]

Thus, work ethic and workout ethic were not intrinsically linked when it came to company time. If employees developed a reputation for working out too much, other employees developed resentment. Managers were also keen on this idea, earning reputations for scheduling mandatory meetings when certain employees were known to go to FitBox. By doing this, employees were unable to workout unless they went to FitBox before or after work. Other employees seemed to be proactively managing others' impressions by taking lunch at their desks and working out before the lunch hour.

It is also important to note how other Madrigal brands (the parent company of FitCo) interpreted FitCo's culture. According to one participant, the fitness culture did not necessarily transcend to all senior executives. In one interview, a participant noted how it seemed that when Madrigal executives came to FitCo, cigarette receptacles were moved closer to the building to accommodate their smoking needs.

Resistance as Struggle

While I contend that resistance is an important theoretical construct, it was sometimes difficult to observe. What emerged from the data were the very ways in which certain

managers and coaches changed their approach to communicating about fitness based on employee feedback. Newer conceptualizations of the relationship between power and resistance tend to stress the role of ‘struggle’ in organizational contexts. Struggle is a particularly apt theoretical construct here because the concept privileges the role of communication in “creat[ing] new possibilities and potentialities” (Fleming & Spicer, 2007, p. 55). Of the types of struggles that Fleming and Spicer postulate, “struggle as resentment” (p. 69) fits many of the resistant employees’ attitudes about the cultural push.

As organizations attempt to give employees more autonomy and freedom (even souls), employees grow even more cynical about management intention (Fleming & Spicer, 2007). They conclude that cynicism can become something of an ideological force that may continue to further an oppressive force. That is, the cynicism may operate not only in an employee’s head, but in the material reality. For example, Saul, who I describe in more depth in the next chapter, was resistant to the paleo nutritional dogma. Yet, even after his critique and knowing the diet’s limitations, he laughed and said that he still eats paleo about 99% of the time. The idea of culture and resistance manifests itself through organizational disidentification – or reappropriating the inculcated organizational values as something else. Saul was eating paleo because he wanted to, not because the organization was making him. To make this point more clear, I further theorize the role of compliance.

Resistance as compliance, as was previously discussed, involved FitCo employees going through the motions, exuding pro-fitness and nutritional habits. In one

of the examples given, Barney inquisitively asked a cafeteria worker which of the sauces was the healthiest one. In Barney's version of the story, he did not know that the CEO was behind him, but the CEO's comments about how he liked hearing him ask that, made Barney feel good. Barney said he "would take all the points he can get." While I do not doubt that Barney was genuinely inquiring about healthy sauces, other employees might use the network or the fitness culture to "get ahead" in the company. I see this as a resistance practice because such actions are power moves that work to circumvent the intended purpose (in this example, job promotion over health).

Conclusion

This chapter situated the FitCo fitness culture in the context of power relations specifically that many of the corporate mandates came from a vertical power structure. Yet, in attempts to distance itself from a perceived organizational paternalism, FitBox and FitCo created complex webs of power that resembled unobtrusive control mechanisms. Critical scholars contend that such power relations may indeed be more constraining than traditional notions of power. Rather than mandating fitness, employees began to co-opt each other into working out, eating particular diets, and even critiqued work ethic. The next chapter expands the concepts of culture and power, focusing on the corporeal ethics that are associated with the regulation of health and fitness.

CHAPTER VI

CORPOREAL ETHICS

In the previous two chapters I situated the organizational “fit” culture and the power relations associated with extreme organizational wellness. Building from these two connected issues, this chapter examines the corporeal ethics of a push towards fitness at FitCo. I connect to Stanley Deetz’s (1992) notion of corporate colonization by examining the degree to which employees bring health values from work to the home. I explore the implications behind the fitness values, bringing in some recent work on the paleo diet to explore its consequences. I then explore implications behind the organization as a *functional site* using a Foucauldian analysis and foreground the study in a larger discussion in regard to body politics.

A common refrain echoed throughout FitCo, particularly among the FitBox coaches was “changing someone’s diet is like changing someone’s religion.” Yet, the more I observed the ways in which nutrition and fitness were communicated to employees, I could not help but notice the contradiction within this comparison. On one hand, religion is off-limits in the workplace; after all, there are laws that prohibit discrimination based on religious affiliation. Yet, on the other hand, organizations can and do actively discriminate based on weight/body type (among many others). Inherently, communicating ‘proper’ health, nutrition, and fitness may lead down a slippery slope of hegemonic managerialism and paternalism (Zoller, 2003b; 2004). At FitCo, nutritional guidelines are presented as a *choice* for employees, yet the material

reality⁶ of that choice warrants further discussion. FitCo leadership assumes a role in encouraging health and fitness:

... but I think yes, we definitely want to continue to broaden this to our own homes or family or friends not in a *preachy way* but in an encouraging way and I don't think we're not alone. I mean you look at what mayor Bloomberg tried to do in New York City. I think he had good intentions and I don't think it was bad even with all the backlash you, know why? Because I think he was an earlier adopter and said, you know, maybe people will push back and think I'm a bad guy but you know what? You shouldn't be pounding down extra large drinks. You want a small? Have a small but please -- so I think all of this is headed in the right direction.

The comparison to ex-mayor Bloomberg's sugary soda drink regulation in NYC assumes a moral responsibility to, in the executive's words, "encourage" proper adherence to nutrition. Obviously certain religions cannot be "encouraged" - why is food different? The "right direction" that the executive refers to seems to expand the relationship between employer/employee and even government/citizen that regulates the consumption of the body. The regulation of the body is another way in which power can be exercised over the body (Foucault, 1990; Lupton, 1995). As a field, Lupton was critical of the health promotion discourse that tended to favor particular discourses. She noted that certain types of health promotion and public health discourses "valorize some groups and individuals and marginalize others" (p. 5) through sets of subjectivities that she defined as occurring through social constructions from particular eras. At the crux of bodily regulation and consumption are the certain political and symbolic rules that are worthy of continued interrogation (Lupton). Many of these health promotion discourses

⁶ Here, materiality is referring to that which is communicated discursively via bodies, culture, and other organizational assumptions rather than the social/economic structures surrounding organizations.

that are currently operating in America are operating with the goal of curbing obesity and preventable illnesses.

Though the obesity issue is indeed a problem, many organizations and even the US Government's interference with its citizen's choices of consumption can be viewed as encroachment upon individual rights. That is, who is to tell any citizen what is a healthy choice? Individual choice and agency are two discourses that tie firmly into the American discourse. Attention has turned to the role of the organization in producing healthy bodies. Obesity remains in the spotlight, with suggestions around every corner of potential ways to curb the epidemic. Governments and organizations alike tend to use the obesity epidemic as fodder for continued health promotion. Recent studies show that obesity rates may also be showing signs of relief. One recent study noted childhood (ages three to five) obesity rates beginning to turn around, down 43% from just five years prior (Ogden, Carroll, Kit, & Flegal, 2014). Yet, the authors assert that obesity rates are elevated and that further "surveillance" is warranted (p. 813).

With continued calls by experts to monitor surveillance and to prescribe fixes, this encroachment upon the lifeworld may be impossible to escape (Deetz, 1992). However, at the heart of the matter remains the politics of the body. Ashcraft (2008) observed how the body is produced and regulated at work. With continued pressure to "fix" health problems and with Americans spending more time at work, the organization as a site of bodily regulation is essential. While scholars have begun to unpack the implications behind managers promoting health (see Brown, 1996; McGillivray, 2005; Zoller, 2000; 2003b; 2004), radicalized health behaviors at the workplace deserve further

inquiry. Kelly, Allender and Colquhoun (2007) posit that organizational wellness programs may do more to promote what the body “ought” to be able to do (p. 269) and further isolate fitter, more productive faster bodies from those that are less capable. This chapter addresses the ethical considerations behind the extreme corporate wellness initiative at FitCo. To begin this analysis, I look at the ways in which nutrition was communicated at FitCo.

The Corporate Colon:ization

The theory of corporate colonization recognizes the pervasive ways in which corporations influence life decisions. Deetz (1992) questions the “centrality” of the corporate institution and critiques the ways in which people make decisions with respect to their organization over other choices (i.e. family, education, citizenship). The colonizing capacity of organizational life, noted Deetz, is inherently problematic because of the power imbalance between employer and employee. Zoller (2003b) articulated the implications behind the construction of the healthy body and self. Her argument, that workplace health promotion discourses functions as a method of managerial hegemony, allowed for an interrogation of the very notion of what is a “healthy” behavior and whose right is it to regulate or advocate for the body. By further examining the continued hegemonic WHP discourse that centers around nutritional requisites as set forth by the organization, this chapter exposes the far-reaching ways in which that message is received.

FitCo employees are inundated with various nutritional recommendations. As noted earlier, a large component of CrossFit is nutrition via the Paleolithic diet (known

as paleo hereafter). However, FitCo's cafeteria staff is contracted out to a major national corporation, which has their own versions of "proper nutrition" for employees that may be motivated by more economic factors (e.g. the types of oils they used did not appear to be olive, which contradicted paleo diet requirements, sauces contained sugar or high fructose corn syrup and the quality of the cuts of meat they served were not discussed). Employees also spoke of ongoing debates between FitCo's in-house specialized nutritionist and paleo. While I made attempts to speak with the nutritionist, I was told she was only on site part-time and I did not come across her during my observations. Compounding the issue, personal trainers at FitCo (but not associated with FitBox or CrossFit), had more nutrition information to pass on to employees. All told, employees had four main sources of nutritional information. While there were some similarities in each of the documents, diets, and recommendations – there were also several stark contradictions. Of all the nutritional information that was disseminated, the most "discussion" in local discourse at FitBox revolved around paleo. Nutrition, as an application of a hegemonic processes, is filled with tension and contradiction, which invites/allows resistance and requires domination to be an ongoing process. First, I will examine the power relations inherent to the nutrition discourse and then identify the resistance patterns to the hegemonic managerialism.

The more I intended to investigate what the proper nutritional doctrine was at FitCo, the more confused I became (even having a basic understanding of paleo nutritional principles before this research project). The contractor in charge of the cafeteria routinely made decisions that were clearly not in alignment with FitCo goals.

Sterm, who worked with human resources, expressed frustration in trying to maintain the fit workplace culture but also competing with conflicting messages from the cafeteria:

I got something right here that's going to blow your mind [*takes out a poster for an energy drink and chips*]. This was a couple of weeks after we started the fitness culture here. This was on a crate above where you get your silverware. "So beat the afternoon blues having FanPop energy drink and a bag of Doritos!" [Laughter] *That* was in our fitness company. So I went ballistic...

There are several noteworthy points from this narrative. First, Sterm was outraged that the contractor would advertise chips and energy drinks because it contradicted the "fitness culture" FitCo tried so hard to exude. Chips were routinely frowned upon, as were beverages with excess sugar. Second, FitCo's healthy initiative was being thwarted by the food services attempts to generate more sales. I asked Sterm if he had conversations with the contractor about a more unified message, to which he noted they had. The contractor told him they have their own advertisements from *their* corporate offices and that local staff. I asked if I could observe a meeting between the contractor and human resources, but my request was denied. As I investigated this dissonance between the contractor and FitCo, it was evident that the two groups were not on the same page. Prior to my observations, one of the contractor's chefs was known for his commitment to paleo, and he was well liked within FitCo. However, he had recently quit. In JMills summation, it is unclear why the chef left, but alluded to the possibility of being frustrated:

I do know that we did have a chef here that cook paleo...The people who didn't CrossFit were like, 'I'm not eating that. You can't force that on me!' So, paleo muffins [using almond flour] became fit food muffins. I'm pretty sure there are still Paleo somewhere but they are called something differently. And those people who didn't want to eat the paleo now seem to enjoy the fit food muffins. I

don't know how much that so happens and I know that chef is gone now *because there were too many restrictions on his end and what he could make*. But I think – I go back and forth on taking away things that that people that want to eat. I do think it's kind of the same thing as we know cigarettes are bad for people. So, don't allow a certain people to buy them if they're under 18 and put a tax on. Okay, and well we know soda is looking bad. [Emphasis added]

Several employees mentioned the old chef who was paleo friendly, but it appears he was put in a difficult position between being an employee of the contractor and cooking the food for FitCo employees to their specifications. Ingredients used in most paleo meals, like olive oil, almond meal, flax seed, and other oils are often substituted for much cheaper options like vegetable oil and traditional wheat flour.

The goal in communicating nutrition, it would seem, is to have a consistent message about health and nutrition that promotes the benefits of the “authentic fitness culture” that FitCo aims to cultivate. The contractor in charge of the food in the cafeteria had several nutrition brochures that were left on a table one day. One document pictured a large slice of pizza with scattered cheese, basil and tomatoes that read:

Mindful Balance. If you think adapting a healthier way of eating involves sacrificing flavor; satisfying portions and your favorite foods, you'll be happy to know there's an easier way. The Mindful way! Simple modifications to your favorite meals, sides.

Balance in the diet is a common theme in the nutrition world. Perhaps popularized by the idea that each food falls into a perfect inter-connecting space in the USDA's food pyramid, most “popular” diets will entertain the idea of balance in some regard. Looking across more of the handouts from the contractor, I found several areas that were in direct contradiction to the paleo diet:

For smoky flavors in your sweet and savory dishes, opt for prosciutto or pancetta in lieu of bacon. You'll save on calories and fat!

Yet, bacon is supposedly a good fat to CrossFitters on the paleo diet, as long as they can eat bacon that had not been cured in sugar or contain nitrites and nitrates⁷. While there are many different flavors of paleo dieting, one of the premises behind the paleo is that fat is good and carbohydrates, especially complex ones, are bad (Hartwig & Hartwig, 2012). According to the CrossFit training manual, the CrossFit athlete works to get the body not to run on sugars, but rather healthy fats that come from things like olive oils, avocados, and certain nuts and seeds. The CrossFit nutritional mantra reads:

In plain language, base your diet on garden vegetables, especially greens, lean meats, nuts and seeds, little starch, and no sugar. That's about as simple as we can get. Many have observed that keeping your grocery cart to the perimeter of the grocery store while avoiding the aisles is a great way to protect your health. Food is perishable. The stuff with long shelf life is all suspect. If you follow these simple guidelines you will benefit from nearly all that can be achieved through nutrition (CrossFit, n.d.)

Though the quotation suggests that the proper nutritional choice is “simple,” changing the typical American diet to something along these lines is no short order. For example, finding foods with “no sugar” is exceptionally difficult. At first glance, eliminating sweets from a diet may satisfy this requisite, but sugar is also found in fruit, salad dressing, marinades, ketchup, most processed meats including bacon and turkey. The healthy looking Cliff nutrition bar packs a whopping 21 grams of sugar. Other recommendations stem from a current cultural discourse that equates grains and gluten as a contributing factor to current health problems (see *Wheat Belly* by Davis 2011).

⁷ The EPA notes that nitrites and nitrates are used in fertilizers and pesticides. They are also used as a food preservative. Exposure to high levels of this chemical is believed to increase the risk of some forms of cancer (EPA, 2014).

Gluten can be harder for the body to digest for people that have celiac disease, but this affects less than 1% of the US population (Fasano, Berti, Geraduzzi et al., 2003).

Therefore, eliminating white bread and rice from the FitCo cafeteria was next. Ruth was the most outspoken critic of these particular changes, other employees admitted feeling certain pressures at time to eat the right way. Dieting in general often has certain religious connotations of self-discipline and control. Contributing to this larger discussion on superiority and moral judgment, eating a certain way can be a way to reproduce social and class dominant discourses (Burrows, Wright, Jungerson-Smith, 2002; White, Young, Gillett, 1995). Some employees who expressed feeling singled out or judged based on their food choices may indeed be speaking truth. Some paleo or gluten free diet followers claim that the diet helps alleviate blood pressure problems, depression, type two diabetes, among others as a more natural remedy and approach to life (Hartwig & Hartwig, 2012) – yet these claims are not verified by longitudinal or scientific studies.

Evolutionary biologist and behavioral ecologist Marlene Zuk (2013) critiqued the paleo diet and the primal lifestyles in her book *Paleofantasy*. Zuk explained that paleo eaters who are attempting to eat like their ancestors have an uphill battle, considering most vegetables that come from the supermarket have been subject to “selective breeding by generations of farmers” (p. 123). Zuk also expressed disdain for the apparent arbitrariness of paleo dieters being allowed to eat an entire yam but not a potato, she also expressed concern for paleo diet followers not ingesting enough calcium (because the diet restricts dairy) and not having proper guidance to find places where

they can make up for calcium depletion. Zuk explained that the diet, in its purest form, is difficult to follow (which indeed may be its appeal to some to exert a moral superiority over other, but yet may fall short in reaching a critical mass). Citing several studies from the NHS and the *US News and World Report*, Zuk concluded that the “Paleo diet might not be a panacea for the diseases of civilization” (p. 117). Zuk suggests that contrary to popular belief, cavemen probably did not enjoy copious amounts of proteins from large game. In times of scarcity our prehistoric ancestors may have fallen back on more widely available animals including mole rats. What is more, this evidence also suggests that mole rats consumed an abundance of tubers (e.g. potatoes, cassava, other root-based plants), and in all likelihood, ancestral humans did too (Zuk, 2013).

Yet, in the midst of all the critique for a paleo diet or primal approach to life, there is also an enthusiastic following that sings of the diet’s praise. As evidenced in many of the FitCo employee responses, a paleo diet seemed to help individuals achieve a leaner body mass and as such, a more culturally aesthetic body. Below, Caleena describes what she knows about the paleo diet and emphasizes its benefits:

That [the paleo diet] came from the Paleolithic age and then you think about what they and what we have access to. Learning that dairy and wheat are inflammatories, I don’t know, like [Coach’s name] used that term. And you will notice when they start doing paleo people lose their fluff. Because like people in general just have fluff. It’s interesting because you can look at before and after pictures now all over the web of people that have done it. It’s so true...yeah, dairy and wheat are inflammatories.

The “fluff” that Caleena describes refers to body fat composition. Caleena, like many paleo followers, fall back on the underpinning assumptions of a paleo diet. Here, Caleena is only able to articulate that dairy and wheat are “inflammatories” – but unable

to articulate anything beyond that. While the paleo diet books will frequently suggest that gluten is an inflammatory, there seems to be just as many studies finding the opposite (Biesiekierski, Peters, Newnham, Rosella, Muir et al., 2013). CrossFit athletes who rigorously follow strict nutritional guidelines build bodies that are revered for their lean, yet muscular physique. Zuk also notes the strong collective of paleo eaters online. In one example, Zuk describes a comment on a blog where a paleo dieter reverts to an *ad hominem* attack on a “puffy” person (p. 115). The problem here is that a lean body is privileged in such a way that critical questioning of the diet’s merit may go unexplored. Indeed there may be potential health ramifications from this way of eating, but there are certain cultural and societal implications as well. One of the main issues with paleo is the seemingly arbitrary/hypocritical choices. While paleo enthusiasts have a myriad of rationalizations for eating the way they do, the elimination of entire groups of foods like legumes, gluten, and dairy because they are “inflammatory” may lack sufficient scientific proof. The second issue falls with the difficulty in having meaningful dialogue or critical analysis about these topics, as paleo and primal eaters are known for increasingly strong/collective communities. The *US News and World Report* rated the paleo diet as dead last in its review of overall diets in 2010, citing lack of data and that “experts took issue with the diet on every measure” (p. 1). Paleo enthusiasts flocked to defend the diet citing their own experts and studies, yet the *US News and World Report* stood by their ranking.

Other critiques connect links between organic/whole food choices and character. Kendall Eskine (2012) shows a link between organic, whole food consumption and

morality (moral judgment). Eskine concluded that association with the organic food movement and eating whole foods is a central contributing factor in the development of moral identity. Eskine observed that the exposure to organic foods actually harshened people's moral judgments of others and reduced the pro-social altruistic activities. While we may not yet know the specific reasons for this, Eskine hypothesized that those harvested moral superiority in their food consumption were more likely to make rationalizations about other's behaviors. Therefore, when FitCo employees note that they have not been following the diet, they may feel resented by the more evangelical followers of the diet and fitness initiatives. Some employees referred to the contradictions in the cafeteria to defend their resistance, noting that if FitCo ever took away other "bad" food items like alcohol, the company would revolt. According to participants, for certain social events, beer/wine was the drink of choice, even though it was in contradiction to certain dietary edict. In the representative quote below, Ruth seems to know what she can do to *fit in*, but her organizational discomfort overruled a sense of self-efficacy – no doubt problematized by the diet with which she had scruples. I asked her if she had adopted any of the fitness initiatives:

I haven't. I should be losing weight to fit in, but not really doing it. There's really nothing else other than not participating in things because I just don't feel comfortable with it.

Ruth feels pressure to lose weight, which may come from organizational members who equate weight loss with individual agency. As Ruth admits, there are things she could be doing to fit in, but her comfort level precludes it. When I asked employees for reasons other employees may not participate in the fitness activities, the comfort level was

significantly downplayed. Some employees had no response as to why others would not participate, others mentioned that indeed some disliked the “mandate” or being told what to do. However, one notable counter-point to Ruth’s comments can be viewed by isolating BM’s comments (a CrossFit coach) discussing why some employees do not participate and the reasons others do.

Now I think that’s overarching that people don’t want to talk about because it’s not politically correct. You’re telling me I’m not a hard worker? Well, I mean I can tell you that what most people come across the gym are successful at what they do whether they’re here or any CrossFit gym, there’s a reason why they’re coming to the gym, there’s a reason why they’re figuring out to fund that passion, that fuel. I’ve seen kids make it work that have no business paying 2-300 a month to do CrossFit across the city but they realized how important it is and they figure it out and you’ll be fine in life.

BM equates CrossFit participation to work ethic. Additionally, the rhetoric in the last sentence shows how BM feels that even if CrossFit is expensive, if people take their health seriously, they need to find a way to pay for it. Such a sentiment may ignore important class consideration and further isolate individuals who are unable afford the high cost of the fitness program. Hence, if we go back to Ruth’s comments about not being comfortable, she may be feeling like her body type is being ascribed meaning from employees with a more ideal-type body. Such a presumptuous view that weight gain is attributed to factors like laziness and food-intake, rather than contextual factors or even genetics (Lupton, 2013) is becoming more common. Moral judgments and pro-social behavior aside, if an employee feels pressure to eat a certain way, perhaps paleo or organic/wholefood subscribers could be contributing to a Ruth’s and others’ feelings of being ostracized and judged. Worse, these judgments seem to not only be rooted in the disciplining of the body, but according to BM, speak to a person’s work ethic as well.

Communicating Extreme Workplace Health Promotion

As communication scholars have noted, communicating health can be loaded with political implications (Holmer-Nadesan, 1997; Zoller, 2003b; 2004). The problem rests on a fundamental premise that one's own health (his/her consumption, lifestyle, and self-care practices) are at the whim of individual agency. Freedom to make choices rests on this fundamental assumption. Unfortunately, with a growing obesity epidemic and rising health care costs due to preventable diseases (certain forms of diabetes, types of lung cancers, and high blood pressure among others) a frequently overworked and uninformed public requires assistance in making 'proper health choices.' The difficulty in the WHP discourse is advocating for healthy choices that do not neglect an individual's specific needs and particular circumstances (i.e. genetic, cultural, socio-economic⁸). For example, as Saul pointed out, the paleo diet is communicated vertically from FitBox and leadership.

Yeah, of course it comes from the top down at FitBox. If you come from the top down over there -- one of the head trainers over there I saw or I heard in a meeting say, "if you don't believe in a Paleo diet then you are ignorant," and I think that very statement is ignorance in various forms essentially.

Regardless of the merit of the diet, prescribing such a specific strict diet for all employees could have adverse consequences. For example, what happens if one is allergic to particular foods, or cannot afford only wild game and other more expensive whole foods? Executives seem to have evolved to this understanding, admitting that they must tread lightly. In one interview, Brian who is in a leadership position within human

⁸ It is also worth noting that conservative groups that reject governmental programs tend to have few scruples with organizations doing so.

resources, was explicit that the only person at FitCo making nutritional recommendations should be the on-site licensed nutritionist.

[So how do you give the *right* diet to folks?]

I don't think we do. First off I don't think that's -- I think sometimes people maybe go a little bit beyond their capability with the exception of the true nutritionist that works here.

Regardless of who in the organization employees get their nutrition information, the practice of hegemonic control and disciplinary power still exists. After all, the nutritionist was employed by FitCo and was not there on purely altruistic motives. Yet, even though Brian recognizes that it is only the registered nutritionist who could potentially make diet choices, FitCo and FitBox advocate the paleo diet mantra. Frequently dancing on the fine line of encroachment, FitBox coaches had essentially “backed off” on talking about nutrition with its members during my observations. While they may have encouraged a paleo diet to anyone who inquired, one coach seemed to have changed his approach in getting people to change their diet. I asked BM why.

It's [nutrition] massively important but have you ever tried to change someone's religion? [Eric: No...] Why? Because of that response, right? Same thing with nutrition. It's as emotionally loaded as religion and politics if not more, in my opinion, if not more so that's why. I will give you all the information I got but I'm not going to say hey, you need to do this. You come to me and okay, this is some results that I want and I want to see them, okay. You want in? Let's do this and we'll go and if you show the commitment, you're going to follow with me, I'm not going to follow with you. You're going to follow with me, it means you want it. I'm not your baby sitter. I'm not cooking food for you, I'm not feeding it to you and you see those people that do it, their all depends on lifestyle and after a while they don't need much help.

As a coach, BM admits he has loosened up on his nutritional prescriptions, but still brings his own food each day. He does this because he eats many times a day and he said

it was “just easier” for him to make his own. Yet, just because BM does not explicitly communicate nutrition, his (and all coaches at FitBox) serve as a form of surveillance in the main office building. As discussed in chapter four, the FitBox coaches were revered almost as if they were celebrities.

The Regulated Corporate Body

The ethical question that needs consideration is, to what extent are the food choices that employees make while on the clock of importance to FitCo? Sterm theorizes that the working body is the responsibility of the employer while it is on the clock.

But once again, if we’re paying people to work here which we are, and we’re having them -- we make available these bad foods, what kind of message is that sending to them? It’s like the woman that just got 30 million dollars, or her family did because she’s deceased because the cigarette company went to the projects and said, “Hey we’re giving out free cigarettes,” and she got addicted to smoking. So how do we know years later? I know this is a far off statement but somebody that’s really overweight and has heart disease is going to say, “How come you didn’t stop giving, making available of those bad foods? Because I couldn’t stop eating them because of my addictions, because like you said it is.” It sends a lot of pleasure signals to the brain, ‘Hey, I’m going to get out and have that bag of chips.’ That’s the other thing we’ve got rid of the bag of chips, that’s probably not a good chip but we got rid of the really bad chips. Now we have the middle-of-the-road chips.

Sterm’s example seems rooted in the idea that if they do not protect their workforce by taking away the “bad food,” then they are liable in some way for their poor food choices. After all, if the employee is on the clock, shouldn’t the employer have a say encouraging the employee to eat the right food? These questions begin to beg the question, whose colon is it? Because FitCo already decides what they want in the cafeteria, choice is already somewhat limited. However, Sterm (and others), routinely said employees could

bring whatever food they wanted into the building as they did not have people checking their bags. Obviously, some within FitCo felt quite differently – feeling that the choices are “arbitrary” and the message was much less about health but more about company direction (selling fitness apparel).

Arbitrary Choices

While many employees touted the benefits of their fitness, health, and nutrition – some revealed a certain level of trepidation about “all” of the paleo nutritional claims. For example, I asked Bess if anything still made her uncomfortable about Paleo, or if the coaches’ explanations were satisfying:

No. It doesn’t satisfy me. I wanted you to tell me what I wanted to hear and I still have some doubts about some of the things, like we said some of those legumes and lentils, things like that. There’s so much information out there about how helpful they are.

Bess is talking about mixed understandings of paleo and of nutrients in general. She goes on to make a comparison, just as did Pollan (2007) in the book *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*, in wondering if gluten really is a major contributing factor to American’s obesity problem:

When you look on diets in other countries like the Mediterranean diet, it’s got a lot of oil, they eat a lot of cheese and yet they’re very, very healthy. Italians, masses and masses of pasta, often a very healthy, low cholesterol. So how does that work? Then you clearly look around, the UK, most of Europe, the US and there’s a lot of very, very unhealthy people here and in all of those places and you look at the diet there and you think well yeah then it does gel but all off it do not makes sense to me really.

The arbitrariness extended to other settings, the message was not communicated consistently. Bess here describes the frustration that she, and presumably others, feel with these decisions.

In the morning, they took most of the bagels away. I think they only have the whole meal bagel or something, but they still have white bread out for toasting. So I can have white bread but I can't have a white bagel? It just doesn't seem to make any sense. I totally get that they wanted to clean it up enough for people and [give] people a better choice but that doesn't feel that's actually worked, what happened.

Other areas of frustration mount from seeing alcohol still being served at social events.

One employee speculated that if they took "beer" away the entire company would "revolt." Yet, beer is explicitly forbidden on the paleo diet. Others commented on arbitrary food decisions in the cafeteria.

As I said, the variety is really gone. They designed a station in the cafeteria, I think they call it the Mongolian Wok. Its stir fry, it's there every single day. Have it occasionally that's fine. I don't want it every single day. I'm used to always different on that particular counter. I just feel like there isn't top choice that there around the cafeteria *ugggh* no, I don't want any of it. And the salad bar is... we always have the salad bar. It was always there but they didn't take pizza away. You can still get pizza so it seemed to be arbitrary.

The Organization as a Primary Source of Nutrition

The nutritional doctrine associated with CrossFit is widely debated. Paleo and other low carb diets, on the surface, may seem like good healthy recommendations. After all, few medical professionals would throw anyone out of the office for refusing added sugars and being encouraged to eat more vegetables. The gluten free, or "little starch" prescription begins to highlight a more volatile debate. These prescriptions, even reportedly debated from FitCo's nutritional counselor, are of major concern. Gluten-free options have popularized supermarket shelves and restaurant menus. Many FitCo employees who are strict to the diet discussed feeling more confident about their body appearance. Caleena noted that she lost all of her "fluff." Coincidentally, Steinmetz (2011) notes that less than one percent of the population suffers from celiac disease and

otherwise, gluten is harmless but routinely held responsible for “fluffiness” (p. 1) of bread. The paleo diet is perpetuating a leaner body type, and in some cases that may be okay, but the organization in perpetuating paleo eating assumes a certain responsibility, especially if it is the only place in which employees hear about what a “paleo” diet is. To illustrate this point, I want to focus on one particular interview. This story is not isolated; it could have come from a number of employees, as many had shared experiences. In the transcription segment that follows, Bess confides that prior to working at FitCo, she had never heard of a Paleo diet.

Eric: Have you heard of the paleo diet before starting CrossFit?

Bess: No.

Eric: What are your thoughts of it now?

Bess: So I’ve done it. I’ve tried it. I actually think as a lot of merit to it. I think it’s just -- the principal of it is good. I think it’s about eating food and that’s what you should do. [Laughter]

Eric: The whole foods?

Bess: Yes. So lean, protein, vegetables, fruits, nuts and seeds, not processed foods, the part where I start to come a little unstuck with it is grains, some of the vegetarian protein like beans and lentils because there’s such a lots of information that those in fact really helpful so why are they excluded? And they’re excluded because you can’t eat them in the found state you have to process them in some way you can’t pick a kidney bean and eat it. It will kill you... So cavemen won’t have eaten them or of they did eaten them, just once! [Laughter] It’s not so dairy behind it but no dairy but I tend to think things in moderation. [Laughter] I’ll say in principal I agree with it and I can see the merit in it. I think you have to also just be a little sensible about it and it’s actually a really difficult thing to do if you stick rigidly to the letter of the law on it, it’s really tough... Let’s say a great foundational principal but for it to be a reality for most people it’s not doable in its strict rigid form. So we did a nutrition challenge at FitBox last year which are two parts and it was six weeks and it was

like strict paleo and also incorporated the zone diet which accounted to the amount of food... I lost weight. I felt much better. We did benchmark workouts. In beginning of the challenge and at the end, saw a huge improvement in performance so it definitely was beneficial but there's no way I could keep it up beyond that six weeks.

Eric: Your cravings to other foods or...?

Bess: Add variety. I don't eat a lot of meat. I don't eat fish at all. So it was kind of difficult.

Eric: Difficult for you! [Laughter]

Bess: Yeah to do it and I'm actually just today, starting to do another nutrition challenge with CrossFit.

Eric: You signed up for the smaller challenge⁹?

Bess: I did. Yes, yeah. I'm hoping to get some different information out of that and find out how I can adapt it so that I can make it a longer term change and there were things that stuck from the last time so most of the grains that I don't eat pasta anymore, I hardly ever eat rice and it's just hobby. I don't even think about it. I don't miss it but I drink tea and I drink English tea with milk in it. I'm not giving that up! [Laughter] So and I don't eat a whole of dairy so I don't see the harm in the amount of dairy that I do consume so I'm hoping to try to find a way where I can kind of adapt it to be a longer term change.

Eric: Looks like fifteen people in this challenge so they're going to be giving you some very specialized help or guidance.

Bess: Yeah, hopefully. Yeah.

Eric: It sounds like you trust them quite a bit...

Bess: Yes I do. Yeah. We just had some changes in trainers over there, we just had a couple leave and some new guys start and I don't know the new folks yet and it was hard to see one of the trainers (coach's name), it was really hard to see her go. I worked with her a lot and she's really helped me personally a lot. To get

⁹ Challenges, like the one referred to here, were competitions at FitBox that encouraged strict adherence to nutrition for a set number of days.

where I am! Sometimes by shouting at me. She had a real knack for give you what you needed.

Notice how Bess admits that this nutritional advice had not come to her prior to working with FitCo. All of the Paleo recommendations came from FitCo, FitBox, and the coaches. Bess describes some uneasiness about some parts of the diet, but also admits that she has seen firsthand the results (losing weight, more strength). Bess, like many FitCo employees, are dubious about some of the dietary restrictions (namely dairy, or the gluten elimination), but of those that continue to practice the diet and workout in FitBox, seem to let the “results” help them in their convictions. Towards the end of the transcript segment Bess seems to look forward to the “help or guidance” that her coaches give her and a sense of trust that she has with the coaches. Barney’s observations were similar, he noted that it becomes easier to make nutritional choices because of the helpfulness of the cafeteria.

[Did you learn about paleo from...?] Hundred percent from over there...Never heard of it [paleo]. Never heard of it and its great because the cafeteria is so helpful in that sense like when I was really good, I was coming in here and getting egg white on with vegetables and salsa just all paleo and then at lunch I get whatever the meal was. If it was Paleo, I can always make a salad. There’s always a couple of options. And the hardest part for me with Paleo is always being at home where the kids have like cheese and so, it’s like those are good. Those are - you know, that kind of stuff.

What this leads to is a reliance on the work relationship to offer continued nutritional guidance. Most of these employees acknowledged that their first exposure to a paleo way of eating came from being at FitCo. The ethics of this relationship are worth further exploration.

Resistance, Choice, and Rationale

As discussed previously, feelings of resentment varied widely among employees. Ruth translated what she internalized as a paternalistic message:

Because I'm one of those people that if you want me to do something, tell me not to. [Laughs] Don't tell me what I have to do. That pisses me. You're not my mother. You're not my father. Don't tell me what I have to do. And just the way that it's presented and everything, it's a shame thing like, "Oh, you're not good enough."

And the way that they say everything like, "Oh we're a fitness company. We want this whole world fit." The end of tone is, "And you're not so you shouldn't be here." And there have been comments like, we shouldn't have fat people working here. I'm sorry. I do my job, I do it well. Go ahead and make the try. [Laughs] It's just things like that and you're made to feel less because you don't participate in it.

Though the nutritional choices may not be as explicit as they were at the on-set of the program, a strict nutritional doctrine in communicated in many other that serve as the starting point for this chapter. In the above section, Saul commented on how "wrong" it was to say that everyone needs to eat a paleo diet, and remained a staunch opponent of CrossFit. However, when asked of his own nutritional choices, Saul's surprising response suggests that he too may have fallen victim to the very system from which he was resistant:

I think the interesting part of this conversation maybe...is actually, I eat ninety nine percent Paleo. [Laughter] Although I don't, I think that's fair though like although I pretty much subscribe to the diet I don't I think it should be forced on people. And I think that's what separates me from a typical CrossFit mentality is. They'll tell you that it should be focused on people because they don't know better. And I just don't think that's accurate.

Saul has issue with the diet, yet still abides the dietary prescription as he feels he has made an informed decision of his own free will. While some scholars might argue that this is a prime example of hegemony (he was persuaded without even really knowing it and also offered his own rationale which enabled him to maintain face even in the presence of hegemonic domination), perhaps individuals need more of a performance of choice without fear of reprisal. The emergent values that surround him at work would make it very hard to distinguish individual agency from a hegemonic working relationship with management. Management faced some criticism in this regard for some of the Paleo changes in the cafeteria, so they found a way to prescribe the paleo diet in the cafeteria by simply calling it something else...“Fit Food.”

From my angle going one hundred percent paleo in the cafeteria would be really stupid. They do offer like Paleo Thursdays for a while and they change the name of that it's like “Fit Food Thursdays” because I think paleo then really people really wouldn't jive then like Paleo at all inside the building except for a small select few.

Because the term “paleo” was so entrenched in the CrossFit discourse, the very name “paleo” seemed to scare employees away. The CrossFit evangelicals may have enjoyed the paleo Thursdays, but because the organization had to reach all 1000 of its employees, they found changing the name to Fit Food (even though it was still essentially paleo, received less grumblings.

A CrossFit coaches explains further:

Yeah, the café has what they call a fit food. It's paleo to be honest. They don't use the word paleo. They definitely cater to not only obviously to folks who were trying to eat a little bit more in that way but they offer a lot more possibilities in that sense than they use to which is really cool. So they don't have snacks that are just like chicken and celery or chicken and carrots of that kind of thing rather

than like selling granola bars, chips or whatever so that's kind of pretty big adjustment. They sell cookies that are fit food so you know there made of almond butter and coconut flour and that kind of thing rather than white flour and sugar. That's probably one of the biggest things that they change in their menu.

Fit Food Thursdays meant that a warm "Fit Food" meal on one day was a piece of beef served with broccoli and sweet potatoes. The food was dry, but filling. Every other day, most of the CrossFitters would stand in line for the Mongolian Wok. Here, they could fill a container with meat and vegetables and choose a "light" sauce to have cooked in with the meal. This was, by far, one of the more popular choices available in the cafeteria. However, to Ruth, all the people standing in line for the Mongolian Wok represented something else:

[Is that one of the reason you don't like it here? If you bring your lunch, is it one of the reasons why you eat at your desk?]

R: Yeah, why come down [to the cafeteria]? It used to be a social thing like everybody would come down and now all you see are the CrossFit people in line for the wok thing.

[It sounds like it's taken over your way of life here.]

R: Yeah. While you're at work, yeah. Everything is about it.

While it is clear that there was a concerted, albeit fragmented, nutritional requisite at FitCo, the preferred way of eating may have been communicated much more pervasively through local organizational discourse. The choices presented in the cafeteria may have at first appeared as choices (after all you *can* get whole-wheat pizza if you are so inclined), but to employees like Ruth, if one made the *wrong* choice they were chided.

Even if employees were able to recognize that some of the food choice recommendations seemed arbitrary, or perhaps too strict, not sustainable - many still succumbed to the diet. Of course, part of this is ostensibly rooted in the unobtrusive control systems that were in place as discussed in chapter five). However, the

organizational discourse surrounding nutrition was a hard to ignore. Most notably, Saul who was an outspoken critic of the diet and CrossFit noted he ate 99% paleo. Even your humble narrator, who worked out with the employees, interviewed the most resistant employees, and agrees that paleo is an unsustainable diet, primarily eats a diet similar to it the majority of the time. The social discourse about the lean, fit, muscular body being the ideal is indeed hard for even the critic to escape. While I do not want to broach the subject of motivations, I would like to draw the organizational landscape and show the ways in which the paleo diet was popularized routinely at FitCo via a discourse that privileged the lean body that made disciplined nutritional choices.

Health and fitness suggestions are around every corner at FitCo. Even before entering the building, the new FitCo corporate logo symbolizes the company's new push towards fitness. Fitness slogans are painted on the huge glass windows, encouraging movement at every corner (literally at every corner of the building, where there is space to do an express workout of the day¹⁰). Even with the explicit culture push towards health and fitness, Octaviana described how some employees took fitness to another level entirely:

I think it was more of, just like the – when CrossFit first started, some of the people [group name omitted] implement this rule of when you are late on a meeting, you have to do burpees. But then, when you get people to come to their meetings who weren't CrossFitters and it would be very awkward. It's a very awkward thing. I think, you sort of had all people who were doing lunch once together. It was very high school-ish.

¹⁰ Express Workouts, or "Express WODS" as they were known at FitCo, were posters describing a quick workout to do at an employee's desk or in the hallway. An example of an express WOD read "20 Jumping Jacks, 20 Lunges, 4 Rounds – 3-2-1...Go!"

Making employees do burpees, an exercise movement that is similar to a push up where the chest hits the floor followed by getting up and jumping, by Octaviana's own admission "awkward." What's more, exercise movements being used as punishment might be seen as in good fun, but undoubtedly create a militarized climate in which corporeal punishment is used as a control device.

While Octaviana admitted that these practices had changed over time and to some extent loosened up since the implementation of the program three years ago, some of the effects of the elite fitness culture were still present. As discussed in chapter four, in one meeting a manager discussed a new program that would penalize workers who decided to take the elevator instead of the stairs. The intent, to get more people moving and dissuade more sedentary behaviors, becomes moot when it quickly became clear that there are often particular reasons for people to take an elevator over stairs. The manager said those caught taking the elevator would be subject to a fine, likening it to a fine one might pay in a "swear jar" should they get caught. Employees looked around the room nervously. Earlier in the meeting the manager introduced me (though got my name wrong). At the end of the meeting someone was joking with me and said, "Wow, I'm sure you have some thoughts on *this* meeting." I smiled and we went our separate ways. I had a chance to follow up with that particular employee off-site and she admitted to me the ways in which *these types* of games promote a certain boys club that not everyone can be a part of. She admitted she had just been reading Sheryl Sandberg's book *Lean In* and now when things like this come up, she thinks about it more critically. While this employee was able to articulate an encroachment (seeing an over-reach by

management), other employees that were in the room (only 10 could sit around the table) so another 10 or so including me stood around the perimeter of the room stood weary eyed and laughed nervously. My frantic note-taking seemed to offer comic relief when someone asked what I was writing, and then the manager leading the meeting smiled back nervously. It was then when he seemed to remember my name.

It is not farfetched then to see how employees might equate the extreme fitness program with paternalistic, elitist, even cult-like in its promotion of health and fitness. Brohdi noted how the extreme label was often referred to as a type of badge of honor:

That's kind of like a joke within CrossFit community and that's where guys like [name omitted], guys that are major anti-CrossFit. Like what the fuck? Like you're sitting there glorifying this and kind of joking about it when basically it kills people and you have Rhabdo the clown. The fact that if you work out you'd throw up, like, what kind of workout [uses that as] a badge of honor? I don't want to – I've never thrown up during the workout. I don't want to.

Brohdi refers to “Rhabdo the Clown” which is a cartoon character that CrossFit Inc. created to symbolize rhabdomyolysis (a condition where the kidneys fail and begin to break down muscle fibers). When people jump on to this claim, joking that the fitness is dangerous and bragging about their level of fitness, it seems likely that it may turn certain employees off to the entire program. Brohdi further equated how CrossFit's “militarized” culture transcended into corporate life:

It's kind of like -- I don't know if it makes it more extreme but they kind of go against the grain. So if you were asking me -- so CrossFit within the hierarchy of CrossFit you get a bunch of guys with the type A personalities. Most of the people within CrossFit are former military and former Special Forces, for the most part. So you get guys that are navy seals, former navy seals, army rangers, marines, they're instinctive -- instinctively their job is basically go out and destroy and kill. They're not really sitting there kind of like, “hey maybe you shouldn't do that!” or “hey, sucks!” So they kind of take that to a corporate level too that's like it's kind of the wrong tact and I think that kind of triples down to

the coaches that if anybody kind of goes against the grain or doesn't think the way we think, attack! Attack! That's true! We have that all the time here whereas we want to do a program but they're like, "no we're not going to do that. We can't do that!" And it's like, "Why? We're trying to grow the business; we're trying to grow CrossFit." If it's usually not their idea, it's not a good idea.

Another consequence here is that the diversity of ideas, so necessary to interorganizational collaboration, may be lost by a group of fitness-minded individuals.

The CrossFit evangelicals were infamous in the company. Octaviana referred to "segregation" in the building of those that do CrossFit and those that don't. Even more specifically, she referred to more division even within the CrossFit community:

[Between] people who are doing CrossFit and people who are not doing it. It was very much segregation within the building. It's interesting, too because even within the CrossFit community. People who are actually active CrossFitters, are still this different status in the box, in some shape or form. There's the... There's people who are doing competitions, and there's lots in our group, they're the competitors. And then there's everybody else. [Chuckles] It's an interesting dynamic!

But it's interesting because there's this core group... Maybe it's more of 15, I don't know. But there's this core group of people, who they will... you know they go together on a weekend and do all those stuff and so they do all those other things and it's not really as certainly a community-wide thing. Like competitions or there's definitely a group of people who all came together as a result of CrossFit. They do Ladies' Nights and things like that. It's all good, healthy stuff. But there's definitely, it's like high school! During the mean like, there are the popular CrossFit kids and there's the rest of the CrossFit kids. Then, there's the third group of -- I don't know. But like the VOC, I don't know what group it is in Texas but it's like the vocational school kids, it's like the technical school kids who are doing something different. You are not even in the other... are the other what, separate school or campus.

Octaviana's sentiments reveal the segregated nature of organizational life. She notes clear delineation between groups that do CrossFit and those that do not. However, she also speaks of a segregation even within CrossFit – equating the less fitness inclined as being like "vocational school kids." The implication is that there are superior employees,

even within CrossFit, that creates a privileged, ideal-type worker. As evidenced in observations and through other employee accounts, the CrossFit initiative (read health, fitness and nutritional choices), divided the employee population. One of the reasons this is so problematic, as opposed to other divisions in organizational life, is that the opportunity for resistance is limited because the employee body is representative of their culture. The CrossFit body becomes commodified in such a way that makes it a distinctive, recognizable, and value-laden artifact of the FitCo organizational culture.

CrossFit evangelicals, argue that such aesthetics are simply a by-product of the lifestyle. These bodies require extra fine-tuning that a mere mortal body did not. FitCo CrossFit evangelicals went to a specialized massage therapist in the FitBox for extra care once a week. CrossFit enthusiasts despise traditional corporate gyms, like *Gold's Gym* and *24 Hour Fitness*, for their representation of supposed inauthentic version of fitness. The value of the CrossFit body, proponents claim, is on functionality or the body's ability to produce, not *just* on its representation. To clarify CrossFit's position on male beauty, a monthly publication known as the *CrossFit Journal* proudly boasts the following message with a full-page high-resolution picture of the male CrossFit athletes displaying the idealized CrossFit bodies:

In CrossFit, beauty is found in function—moving large loads great distances quickly and efficiently. Without doubt, the bodies required to produce that functional movement are truly impressive machines made up of rippling muscle and taut sinew. CrossFit men are the direct descendants of hunters and warriors whose lives depended on fitness, but they are also living, breathing examples of the classical male ideal form sought after by Renaissance artists (CrossFit, 2009).

Comparing male CrossFit athletes to idealized male figures like, for example, da Vinci's Vitruvian Man is centered on a male ideal, perfection in symmetry. The focus is on an

aesthetic representation of masculinity that is representative of a strong work ethic, compared to that of “machines” that inspires the workout and creates admiration from others.

The 2009 CrossFit article begs the question, “Male beauty: is it truly defined by the puffy bodybuilder, the boyish fashion model or the surgically altered movie star?” The images display the sculpted bodies of the athletes enduring pain, grimacing due to the nature of their exercise. In one image, Jason Khalipa, the 2007 CrossFit Games winner, takes an ice bath in a horse trough. A Victor Hugo quote “people do not lack strength, they lack will” reiterates the premise that individuals outside of CrossFit lack simply the *willpower* to perform fitness. CrossFit makes no qualms about the type of body it creates. The comparison to a machine and the direct descendent of hunters and warriors plays a reoccurring role in the connection between CrossFit, functional fitness, and a paleo diet.

Because of the pervasiveness of the rhetoric for the “fit body” at FitCo, it is impossible to escape its reach. Employees, like Ruth, tried to find ways to resist by staying at their desks and limiting their social activities. Smokers, who were isolated to certain portions of the parking lot near the security gates, found ways to smoke closer to the buildings. As I walked back to the main FitBox gym one day, I passed several smokers. The well-travelled grass path beneath me was littered with cigarette butts. I wondered if this a form of resistance. When asked about it, a smoker just smiled at me and just pointed to his stack of cigarette butts as his “stash” and laughed.

The vast majority of the FitCo workplace was “fit.” Pun, who admitted that he

was a huge advocate for CrossFit, noted the following:

FitCo's an environment that -- especially in the last three or four years took a stand for its employees to be what they call "Fit for Life." That's amazing. I can -- maybe because I'm in [product] design but I can leave work for an hour and a half and go and work out and that's a rarity in corporate America.

Resistance was particularly difficult to uncover at FitCo because resisting fitness was set up as illogical. Yet, some found ways to voice concern, critique and indeed struggle.

After all, who would say that they did not want to be healthier? The very argument that FitCo set up with their "fit culture" was that you are either with "us" or against us in the fight against us. This type of false dichotomy was difficult to argue with, yet, positioned the employees who indeed may have had legitimate reasons for resisting working out, eating paleo or even doing CrossFit from those that could. While those implications may present themselves in one particular way for this study looking at FitCo, when FitCo markets that particular culture as part of a strategic marketing campaign, those implications may be much further reaching and is discussed in chapter seven.

Expert Knowledge and Communicating Health and Fitness

Foucault (1990) noted that difference (as in an aberrant body, sexuality or any type of *other* body) is cast aside for more conventional ideals. Foucault observed that power comes from the body, or by controlling its capacity to produce. Similar concerns come from Marxist thought, although the focus there is on those in power as the ones who control the modes as well as the means of production (through a variety of mechanisms of control – industry, land ownership, division of labor). Foucault described how power over the body is harnessed through multiple sites of disciplinary control. In keeping with

his line of thought, FitBox operates as a “functional site” (Foucault, 1990, p. 143) and works towards the regulation of activity through its promotion of strict nutritional doctrine.

FitCo as a Functional Site

During my time at FitCo, I could not help but feel like I was back in school. Perhaps all of organizational life is structured the same way an elementary school is to some extent, but at FitCo, the similarities are uncanny. It became clear early on that the FitCo life resembled an elementary school in the following ways: recess, assembly, pick-up sports games, cafeteria politics, and via student (employee) activities – even the cafeteria trays and silverware being returned to the dish room. In the below list, I give provide the ways in which FitCo operated as a functional site:

- 1.) While employees could work out before work or after, CrossFit and other organizational gyms and amenities served as a recess session where employees were encourage to “let off steam” or break up the day.
- 2.) Employees could attend assembly where they would hear information on health, fitness, sport and nutrition. In my observations, I attended an open talk from an outside doctor on ways to prevent injury during CrossFit workouts. The event was not heavily attended, but many of the most faithful CrossFit enthusiasts attended.
- 3.) During lunch, there was routinely a pickup basketball game. The full-court game was notoriously competitive. In the warmer months, an outdoor soccer game would also take place during the lunch hour on a full-sized field.

- 4.) The cafeteria appeared to be a contested space where teams or friends sat together. Several employees mentioned skipping lunch to work at their desk in order to avoid having to do work later (homework), and one employee mentioned not feeling comfortable in the cafeteria
- 5.) Employees were encouraged to get involved in the extracurricular activities at FitCo. Employees could rent equipment to take out and explore the nearby hills (mountain bikes). Special event days (after successful product launches) included small fitness activities like a partner/team relay race around the building.

Foucault compared schools to functional sites in their capacity to regulate activities. FitCo and FitBox act as the functional site where employees are regulated in their activities. Scholars have previously extended Foucault's concept of functional site to the extreme obstacle running craze (Lamb & Hillman, 2014). FitCo too operates as functional site in that it produces regulated activities that produce the regulated body. The implications of this, have been discussed in depth by Deborah Lupton.

Lupton (1995) observed that connection between Foucauldian notions of organized power in the body and more contemporary issues like obesity and body image. She concludes that when people do fall victim to feelings of "fatness" (p. 139) they tend to make sense of their condition by drawing on popular discourses. In this case, but certainly not limited to, FitCo created formations by which the body was an extension of work ethic. In keeping with this vein of research, Lupton argued that both external and internally, people make moral judgments about others and also themselves based on popular health promotion discourses. Thus, the way in which CrossFit (and fitness in

general) was communicated at FitCo, set the stage for feelings of inferiority or even ostracization by privileging certain forms of fitness/lifestyle over others.

This idea of the embodied health identity stems from the ways in which individuals construct narratives about their health. For example, James and Hockey (2007) described how Goffman's study of stigma relates to medical discourses. They described the stigma associated with individuals who contract HIV/AIDS and the ways in which others are unable to see such individuals as anything but their illness. Even more troubling, note James and Hockey, are the ways in which media technologies like the internet are paving way for even more stigmatized and overly medicalized discourses to prevail. Ultimately, it will become even more difficult for people to find ways to escape the embodied health identity.

One example of a new popular pseudo-medicalized discourse is found with the relationship between fitness and health. When employees are encouraged to regulate nutritional choices, are those choices necessarily the "most healthy"? Most agreed that they are because they felt better, but some questioned the long-term impact. Barney was skeptical of calcium depletion, as Zuk (2013) also critiqued, in the diet that frowns on dairy:

I do, I do. Whenever I am losing weight, I'm doing paleo and whenever I'm not, I'm not. And I'm really - so last summer I was really good and I was down to a really good weight. I felt really good about it. This year has been a little different with the layoff stuff [FitCo had a large layoff in 2012]. I definitely have not been as good about it. But I believe in it. I really do. The only thing I'm a little concern about it that it is because my wife has thought about doing it. She never has and she said that she's not sure without the dairy that like that - she wouldn't have calcium deficiencies and for women they lose bone mass. I don't know -

I'm not a doctor. I don't know very much about it but I do think of that always being like an old like, oh, when they get older they lose calcium.

Barney's concern is quite logical, indeed high protein diets also contribute to calcium depletion. Without knowledge to consume calcium rich foods like spinach, certain employees may have serious consequences of their dietary prescription. Despite Barney's concerns, he still participated in the diet and seemed to back off in his critical questions because of the immediate benefit he felt he was receiving from 1) the diet and 2) the indirect networking capabilities that CrossFit and the paleo dieting seemed to give him. Yet, he admits he is not a doctor (nor is anyone working within FitBox), but still adopted the nutritional guidelines. While these may seem like isolated cases of employees changing a few eating habits at work, the phenomenon has far-reaching potential. Take the compounding fact that employees leave work and then begin changing their own family's nutrition habits.

Spilling Out of the Container & Pouring Into Other Lives

Deetz (1992) observed that "corporations produce people, public knowledge, and effects on other social institutions (p. 63). The implications behind this regarding what becomes of "personal identity, social knowledge, structure of meaning, and the creation of corporations to other institutions in their collective production" (p. 63) are of central importance. Employees, as products, then communicate the espoused values back to their families and friends. FitCo, as an organization, has plans to encourage other fitness cultures in other organizations. The cult-like popular credo of CrossFit routinely earns praise as a fitness program that gets results. Yet, the program receives an equal amount

of comments finding its similarity to a cult problematic. The outspoken CEO of CrossFit has routinely “owned” such comparisons, noting that CrossFit gives people a sense of higher purpose. In the Bloomberg video, he concludes that “those people that find higher purpose to business than money are the ones that are making all the damn money” (Bloomberg TV, 2014). The word evangelical became a theme in the data by the pervasive ways in which some FitCo employees subscribed and promoted the CrossFit discourse. For example, values transferred from employer to employee, employee took values home, partner or spouse assumes values (the employee becomes evangelical in promoting a hegemonic fitness that assumes preferred nutrition and lifestyle choices).

My boyfriend’s never been a non-believer but... Oh wait, I take that back! When I started doing CrossFit, [laughter] he -- I think he got annoyed how much I talked about it. He’s actually living -- we’re living with his twin brother at that time too and they just come out stand me talking about it. They got so sick of it and I introduce them both to CrossFit. I got them signed up and they tried it out and his brother actually said ‘hey I’m sorry for not keeping you [laughter] for talking about it. He’s like it’s addicting.’

Caleena described her relationship with her partner. Notice her word choice, “believer” – she owns the fact that there are religious connotations to the advocacy of the program. Her constant communication about the program tends to lend itself towards evangelicalism or preaching. Hawke also admitted to his taking certain nutritional guidelines home and disseminating them to the family. I asked Hawke to what extent had he taken some of the values from CrossFit back home:

Yeah, yeah, I tried to. I tried - actually, I eat - I pretty much take that away. That’s part of my - you know, I say - a modified Paleo component. I’ve been doing it for a long time. I’ve seen interesting things and I was like changes in - try to bring it at home. You know, they’re still - you know, my -- totally young family. I have two daughters. 13 and 15. And my wife and - and they - they will - if I prep, they’ll get what I eat. They love it. And not even like it, they love it.

Yeah, it's great because, you know, it's always - to me, it's balance. I mean I always put it that way. And so, you know, so - but there are - I - you know, and it's like, well, it's like - try - it's like -- the whole thing on the white potato and the different ways and things like that. And there were times where I'm yes, I'm okay with it and I don't make a complaint about it or anything like that. But I'm like, well, let's just use sweet potato instead of a white potato, you know. And it's fine. I mean it's perfectly fine but that stuff still exists. I mean I'm not like, you know, a - such a tyrant when it comes to that but I, you know, I do observe it. Comment on it and like there are - you very rarely see the special - real special thing would be having any kind of sweet drink or soda - The regular thing in my house is water.

[Eric]Your daughters don't say, "Oh, dad. We can't just have a coke?"

No, they actually even ask for water.

The way that Hawke talks about his family *loving* the food he prepares is another way that his values of a better food, better nutritional philosophy have been internalized and communicated through the family. Do his daughters *really* love the nutritional prescriptions? Hawke seems adamant that they do. The extent to which Hawke internalized this message was obvious – he was known for his infamous faux mashed potatoes that he brought to social events at FitBox and artfully constructed the FitBox logo on top of the casserole.

Brian, the FitCo executive I spoke with, mentioned the element of choice and the role of the organization in promoting citizenship. I asked Brian about it and discussed the “organization *of* the food.”

So what we did is slowly but surely we started to change the food or *organize the food* in a way that employees are now able to make more good choices around food than bad choice. We definitely remove the French fries, it doesn't mean you can't get them but you have to ask for them so fewer people ask for them. We lessen the soda offerings and sugary drinks if you will than there used to be there. So by no means is the cafeteria perfect but it's pretty damned good and you'll not going to find a ton of bad food but you can seek it out and you can get it but more often than not you're not going to.

[Eric: I've heard a few things just rambling the halls, someone's with a coke and I'm walking with a coach and they say I got my coke here, it's my elixir and the coach said, weell...in moderation! I've heard other things like that too. I see you're drinking a chai tea, and you joked about it but is there a pressure or do people feel like they can't order French fries or why can't they order certain things on the menu?]

*I don't think it's they can't, they can. We're not just going to make that choice easy for them. You know what I mean? I think it has more to do back to that word authenticity. We're trying to be that fitness brand. You're certainly always going to have people who believe it's their birthright or their freedom. You certainly can bring whatever you want from home. You can bring in cases of coke on your head and hang them onto your chairs or whatever but I do think -- I do think that there maybe some people out there that if you're eating something they may give you their point of view, I don't think it happens 24/7 but you probably have *some pretty passionate people*. I mean I'll be honest with you and I'll give you a real live example. I mean I brought some of these insights and tidbits onto my own home. At times being told by both my wife and my children, "Dad..." ...I won't say because I'm being taped, like that, whatever. The point of the matter, I'm sure it goes on a little bit. No one wants to be preached to nor wants to be lectured to and *I'm sure a small portion of that goes on* but I think most people are trying to educate or encourage or whatever. Again, *I think there's more good intention than bad intention around that kind of feedback*.*

[It's interesting you brought the home life into it. Do you want people take that home?]

Yeah, absolutely. I think we have a lot more opportunity here to broaden this offering. Certainly we do want people to take it home because think about it from a healthcare stand point, if my children are healthier or doing better in that regard then our health care claims or cost, whatever but more importantly I think that we definitely want more *disciples* for the brand but again going back to my pointer and *I think you would agree*. There's not a lot of downside to being fitter. The fact that somebody's ten, 15 pounds overweight doesn't mean that they're not fit. I can run, I can jump on 10 pounds, 15 pounds bigger than I want to be. I don't consider myself unfit. Could I eat better? Yeah. Do I want my kids to eat better? Yeah. Do we try to be more conscious of making as I said earlier more good decisions than bad decisions? Yeah. My household is not a maniacal food household. Somebody else that you've spoken to yes, it probably is.

I just spoke on a panel, the [foundation name] is a philanthropic think tank that works with government here in the state to create legislation for health wellness,

et cetera and they had me on this corporate guy. I absolutely think that the health and wellness base is a big player right now and I don't see it going away. I mean whether it's because people aren't healthy or as healthy as it should be or because we all know exercising and eating right is good. I firmly believe that educating our children and helping with their health and wellness are like -- they're up there on a short list of things that we as citizens should be doing.

From my conversation with Brian, it was clear that he knew of a fine line of too much corporate encroachment into the private sphere. Yet, the way in which he spoke about some households promoting diets in more “maniacal fashion” or even the word choice “disciple for the brand” goes back to evangelical fitness promotion that, even if Brian does not participate in directly, still exists. I also keyed in on the ways in which my very presence in the interview elicited certain responses from Brian. He complemented my physique during the interview and made frequent references like the one in the second to last paragraph “*I think you would agree. There's not a lot of downside to being fitter.*” My very presence as someone deemed fit somehow made feel like I was in collusion with Brian about evaluating others' fitness levels. While this chapter is about organizational ethics, there certainly were questions that I further explore in chapter seven.

While Brian represented FitCo leadership, it was important to also see how subordinates decoded the fitness initiatives. Bess spoke of the nutritional changes in the cafeteria:

Yeah, so I think one notable change is the cafeteria. I'm less happy about their fitness offerings. I think they've tried to really reach this out in all aspects of the business in our daily life while we were under FitCo's roof. The cafeteria always used to offer a variety of types of food and some of it was not healthy food. It wasn't. They did French fries and they did fried chicken and those sort of things.

The rationale here is that if employees are under FitCo's roof than FitCo can control what goes into their body, given credence to some of the sentiments expressed by Sterm and Brian. Bess, who had worked for the company for over ten years, expressed frustration (as did many) over the way in the initial fitness culture message was communicated. I asked her pointedly, how do you communicate health to employees?

I don't know, really. I think it's more about feeling like you want to be part of it rather than being told you have to be a part of it. We have events every now and then but there's always some kind of workout, run, walk, something attached to it where you feel like you have to show up and do it. And another is when people here work out, they work out hard, they run, they do whatever they do but they do it away from work or they have other fitness activities that don't necessarily include the working out here. Because they want to keep them separately and they don't necessarily want to get up in the middle of the afternoon and go for a run with your colleagues necessarily.

And sometimes this brings good aspect to working out with workmates. I've met a lot of people are probably ordinarily wouldn't have worked with, but there's also, for me an element of -- I don't really want to be in a locker room with people that I've been going in the meeting with [laughter] it's a bit of an odd thing, there's just some things you don't want to see in your colleagues.

Bess indicates that there are issues that management is unaware of (or at least issues that management and leadership did not reveal in interviews with me) about participation.

The fact that, as Bess observed, some employees do not want to see their boss or another employee naked (or be seen naked) is indeed a rational explanation, yet may not be validated by management or individuals who are more confident with their bodies.

The implications of fitness at work may harken back to a social Darwinian perspective of "only the strong surviving." This is not necessarily uncommon in organizational life. Indeed most companies look for potential recruits that fit a particular cultural fit within the company. "Cultural fit" is really a nebulous phrase that means little

more than; 1) will this person fall in line 2) will this person cause trouble. Google has made headlines and even spurred a big screen picture about the process that it puts its recruits through to get the highly regarded "Googler" status (new Google employee). Technology companies and others may be able to get away with such hiring practices because, after all, much of what makes Google "Google" is its ability to enact change and adopt with a relative technological advantage. But, FitCo is different in that they are not discussing technological or intellectual prowess, but the actual "body" of the employee and what he/she puts into it and the ways in which he/she moves/exercises their body. The body, as discussed in chapter four, offers few areas for respite or resistance, as it is always under scrutiny and surveillance.

What becomes even more problematic about the extreme fitness culture at FitCo is that the model is being disseminated to other organizations. Thus, the consequences may have the capacity to affect a much larger population. Coupled with the fact that most of these norms are communicated at work and then taken home to the employee's family, shows just how exponentially conflated the message may be. Another rationale for wanting an "authentic fitness culture" was FitCo's desire to market workplace health promotion to other organizations. By serving as a prototype, FitCo hopes that other organizations will adopt similar fitness and health prescriptions in their organizations and inevitably buy their products. During my time with FitCo, I went on several business meetings with FitCo representatives to other nearby corporate headquarters. These meetings were spent talking about the initial "workout" session – or how to get employees excited about the workout. Unlike FitCo's path, FitCo representatives

encouraged other organizations to roll out the fitness initiative to a few employees at first, rather than having all participate. The message roll out strategy consisted of the following:

- Recruit a small number 15-30 “fitness” enthusiasts from said company. Ask for volunteers
- Have a CrossFit informational workout day, using body weight exercises
- Allow for time and enthusiasm to build up where fitness “champions” informally communicated workout benefits to rest of organization
- Building corporate gym offering the program “to all” inside the organization

In summary, the end goal of FitCo’s fitness culture, as surmised by Brian, was clearly articulated and altruistic. He noted the following:

What we aspire [sic] is to create a culture and an environment with those like we said at the onset that want to be fit for lives...but the environment is here for anybody fit, unfit, young, old to take that step to be better to be healthier and at a minimum Monday through Friday when they’re in the workplace we hope they eat better you know what I mean I think that is another aspect of fitness.

The intention behind the fit workplace is obviously rife with contention, but Brian is highlighting some noble issues that he, from what I can tell, genuinely cares about.

Unfortunately, the implicit ways that these messages have been communicated had led to certain consequences that may not have been anticipated. As this chapter discussed, the very notion of the role and responsibility of the employer and citizenship is in question.

FitCo operates as a functional site in perpetuating hegemonic notions of health and fitness. FitCo, much like a school, is a place where the body is to be regulated.

Organizational stakeholders are very clear on this:

My belief is that health in the workplace will become like power steering and automatic breaks in cars. It'll be a requisite within a decade. It's interesting; [organizational leader name] and I are actually presented to a group of real estate professionals. They're out there either refurbishing a building, buildings all the time. There isn't a building employment wise that's being built that a fitness center isn't part of and [name omitted] whose one of our top trainers talks about the fact that you get formal health and wellness in two parts, there's kid going to school you do Phys Ed class and what we're doing is Phys Ed for adults now. I mean that's his statement and I believe that.

One possible final outcome of FitCo's culture is to embrace the organization as an all-encompassing site. BM explains how the cafeteria has some good food options but he would like it to go a bit further, hoping that it will eventually take on a *Whole Foods* type model:

I'm still not fully satisfied with that. I want it to turn it to a whole foods model where you could go there and you can eat it but also get food later for your family and that's the end state goal.

Would that be so bad? Inevitably, the answer the question rests on the type of food made available to employees and their families. Would it be paleo? Could the nutritionist become more involved? Geoff spoke fondly of the changes that the fitness culture inspired in him and can attest to the ostensible benefits that the cultural shift has created:

...compared to other health fitness options, but it's - I believe in it. So in terms of sacrifices, no. I almost look at it as the opposite. It's done me a favor. It's made it more fun and it's motivated me to train harder in different ways and expose weaknesses and it's helping me get closer to my goal of being a fitter person. It's motivated my wife to become a fitter person. I hope that someday, we'll motivate our children to become fitter kids and adults, so it's been more about a blessing than a sacrifice.

While the distinction between blessing and sacrifice is apparent, the ways in which FitCo members interpret the fitness culture varies widely. To some, the fitness culture is

a major highlight of their day. To others, it contributed to them wanting to skip work and in some cases, succeeded in doing just that. However, rather than asking the question is this good or is this bad, we must explore how can organizations communicate health and fitness in the workplace without perpetuating paternal or hegemonic managerialism? How can we continue to create more inclusive environments when Americans spend more and more time at work? FitCo is to be commended in their efforts to address these consequences. The very idea of bringing in a critical researcher to elicit some of the power-laden issues showed a genuine interest in articulating a more clear and inclusive message.

Conclusion

This chapter brought up important ethical implications behind an organizational extreme wellness program. By interrogating the ideals presented through CrossFit and also through a strict nutritional doctrine, I discussed the role of the employer as the primary source of nutrition. This responsibility brings with it several important considerations not only for the employer-employee relationship, as it connects to a larger fitness and healthism discourse. I concluded with various dialectical points of view, of those that appreciated the changes and those that felt FitCo had gone too far. In the next chapter, I present a summary of findings from the dissertation and address future directions.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Whenever I mention my dissertation topic, “extreme corporate wellness,” people say it sounds interesting, but often question how many organizations actually prescribe extreme fitness for their employees. In short, this question attempts to address the generalizability of my research. I contend that my goal is not generalizability, but indeed the trend of ‘extreme’ organizational wellness is growing. Indeed the most generalizable piece of this project may very well be the increasing control of the body. As I presented in chapter one, from the organization’s perspective, the logic is that basic organizational wellness programs are good, so extreme organizational wellness must be better. More organizations are using CrossFit and similar exercise modalities (Datalogix in Denver, CO, Vertical Turbine Specialists in Lubbock, TX are some recent adopters). More importantly, as I hope this dissertation shows, the FitCo case provides an empirical case from which we can begin to see effects of critical-interpretive theory on organizational wellness. In this final chapter, I offer a summary of my contributions. I begin with turning to the area of organizational wellness and my overarching finding.

Survival of the Fittest: Implications for Theory and Practice

With a growing number of campaigns to have organizations take better care of their employees, we will continue to see workplace health promotion grow in future years. Since Zoller’s (2000) dissertation work, many questions have arisen about the ways in which health promotion functions as *manipulation* which can do harm. Even today, there is a growing number of critical and empirically driven reviews of WHP (e.g.

McGillivray, 2005; Thanem, 2009; Zoller, 2003b) but the popular press and managerial guru literature tends to oversimplify the very complicated notion of organizational wellness while glorifying its identity. Critical scholars Dale and Burrell (2014) have tried to make sense the current status of the organizational wellness landscape. The overarching concern rests on an assumption that the organizational wellness discourse promotes certain privileged conceptualizations of health and wellness. This emphasis may blur traditional understandings of “workplace health and safety” (p. 160). The authors argue that the attention has now become “embodied.” By embodied, the authors draw from Williams and Bendelow (1998) and clarify that embodiment carries with it a more active cognitive component, what they call the “indwelling mind” (p. 160). Dale and Burrell are concerned at the tensions that are created from mind-body work. As the authors explain, sometimes employees will do things that are unhealthy at work like sitting for long hours, consume too much caffeine or even more addictive stimulants, to *do work*. These understandings pushed the authors to theorize organized embodiment – the crux of the issue is that organizational wellness “obscures its necessary ‘other’, namely *unwellness*” (p. 160). Thus, the “other” side of wellness, those that are unwell, or in this particular case, the unfit, may rarely be the focus of scholarly attention. It is precisely this sentiment that guides this research project in wanting to uncover the effects of *fitting in*, or not, to an organizational culture dedicated to extreme corporate wellness.

This research project began with my curiosity in exploring the ways in which extreme fitness affects organizational life. With more and more organizations attempting

to promote organizational cultures as perks for employees, I wanted to investigate the ways in which a fitness culture, as a perk, spilled out of the gym and into the corporate offices. I also raised important questions about the ethics of these fitness values and the judgments placed on employees perceived as unfit by those that are fit. I also explored what happens when health, nutrition, and other lifestyle prescriptions originate with the organization, are taken home, and marketed to a larger population. My fundamental questions did not seek an unequivocal, “is this good,” or “is this bad,” but rather, explored the consequences of the extreme fitness discourse in the workplace. As such, I uncovered how FitBox decreased power distance, where managers, senior level executives, and other employees could workout together and informally network. Some employees claimed that the networking capabilities, the gym provided, were second to none. Unfortunately, in FitCo’s effort to push for a more inclusive environment, the dramatic shift had led to certain consequences. Some employees felt that the organization was over-reaching, and resented a perceived paternalism and the taking away of individual freedoms. In return, several employees described feeling ostracized because they were not fit – or at least not as fit in the prescribed ways. In the next section, I provide an overview of the main takeaways from the three chapters of analysis that focused on culture, power, and the fit, regulated body.

Manufacturing Identities: Culture, Power, and the Fit Body

Burawoy (1979) spoke of organizations that manufacture “consent” through control systems, while Zoller (2000; 2004) observed a manufacturing of “health” as a managerial perk/command. With FitCo, we saw a combination of the ways in which

culture and managerialism worked to create an idealized regulated body. In understanding how FitCo became a site that *manufactures* bodily identity, I articulate how the topoi of culture, power, and identity informed the engendered organization. I show that using health and fitness as a proposed outcomes allowed for a discourse that marginalized Other bodies. By looking at the ways in which this discourse was communicated via culture, identity and bio-power, I make important contributions in each area of research. First and foremost, this study provides an empirical case from which to continue understanding the implications behind the exploding organizational wellness movement (Dale & Burrell, 2014).

Ultimately, I conclude that FitCo's organizational culture helped regulate and construct ideal body types for employees. I question these implications, as they seem to lead to a larger social-Darwinist assumption that only the fit should survive. As FitCo continues to reproduce its culture and market that culture externally, the effects may spill from FitCo corporate headquarters to the hearts of major cosmopolitan areas and beyond. Social-Darwinism at work has been discussed in the literature, from a managerial perspective for quite some time (see Brown, 1996). While this is no different than other major cultural shifts in America, FitCo and its relationship to fitness offered a unique vantage from which to examine organizational culture via communicating risk, the aesthetic laboring body, and organizational promotionalism. This section serves as a distillation of the key findings from the analysis chapters and puts each of the main contributions in conversation with relevant literature and directions for future scholarship. I begin with the conclusions from chapter four on organizational culture. In

chapter four, I used Schein's model to help articulate the organizational assumptions that were behind the many artifacts and values that materialized from the CrossFit gym and into organizational life at FitCo.

Organizational Culture

Assumptions

FitCo offers a case study that shows the gendered organizational culture that privileges masculine representations of strength in men and women. Even with its avowed goal of promoting a more inclusive environment, the ways in which fitness and health were communicated marginalized the unfit from the fit (or those that participated in fitness activities). Fitness and specifically CrossFit make grand claims to promote community and build cohesion (and in many cases, it did), it has the same potential to perpetuate hegemonic masculinity and isolate those that are fit from those that are unfit. Consequences of this culture may seem trivial to some, but may cause great distress to others. For example, a woman who had just given birth to her son was not as comfortable in her body and did not want to work out at work. Yet, some coworkers failed to understand – noting a long line of “excuses” that typically keep people from being fit/working out at work. Such a view extends masculine norms by devaluing the effect of childbirth on a woman's body. This is just one example of the ways in which masculinity maintains control of the system and furthers engendering the organization as a masculine space. With fitness cultures, masculinity tends to take such precedence that it may rarely go noticed and thus, employees may be complicit in contributing to their own oppression.

FitCo employees run the risk of developing espoused values that privilege a dominant discourse. This view neglects different bodies and perpetuates a system of domination. When this view or “culture” is manufactured and reproduced in FitCo stores and sold to the consumer – the organization plays a significant role in shaping societal norms. While this is true of many organizations, FitCo’s push for fitness has a material effect on the body which offers little chance of respite from structures of domination. After all, there are very few places to hide in a locker room – and there are only so many ways to conceal an *unfit* body. Ashcraft and Mumby (2004) observed that one of the most over-looked communicative outcomes are those that are materialized through communication. By this, they mean that communication is the process of creating meaning, values, and judgments from an already actualized reality. By using extreme fitness and wellness recommendations, FitCo produced a commodified body through a culture laden with values and judgments. Those that have the preferred fit body receive more positive attention than those that are perceived as unfit or even fat. Specifically, those that did not have the preferred body type felt ostracized. FitCo assumed the role in facilitating extreme wellness that created a communication climate that produced an assumption that the fit employee is a better employee.

Using Schein’s (1985) model as a framework, I found two main assumptions that pertained to the fitness culture and that have significant implications. As discussed in chapter four, these assumptions, “the fit employee is the better employee” and a “work ethic expressed as equivalent to workout ethic,” I argue they created a material reality

that made certain employees feel uncomfortable by the ways in which the extreme fitness discourse was communicated.

Because FitCo pushed to be the authentic “center of fitness,” having employees that enjoyed working out and wanted to push their bodies was an important cultural value. However, as several employees mentioned, the *type* of employee that enjoys working out is assumed to be an employee who is a more productive worker. As CrossFit CEO Greg Glassman noted, “CrossFit makes you better” (CrossFit, 2014). While this is a clear case of elitism, when that idea transcends to worker identity, it equates type of laborer with his or her commitment to fitness. Such a view may neglect important specifics as to why one worker cannot workout and may further produce homogeneity of not only bodies, but also ideas.

Organizational leaders wanting to really unpack the implications of their culture is one thing, but using outside expert sound bites to only help further their claims is another. Kunda (2006) noted that one of the main reasons he was allowed to study organizational culture was so that experts could use his presence as a strategy for communicating to employees that “times were changing” (p. 241) and that the organization was becoming more open. Despite repeated calls for more reflexivity and collaboration with practitioners, organizational culture tends to be regarded as a prescriptive tool that can be commodified in a variety of ways. Only looking at prescriptive views of culture neglects another level of organizational culture entirely. That is, the emergent or shared cultures offer competing narratives and show how other organizational members make sense of culture. For example, it seemed that employees

are self-identified as “fat” felt discriminated against. When asked about these employees, others tended to equate their physical condition with laziness or with excuses. Others ventured so far as to hope that those employees find employment elsewhere. It is in this light that I theorize culture as both a response to market demands and responsibility to employee wellbeing.

Culture as a Response:ability

Through my analysis, I articulated the most basic understandable truth that was communicated from the fitness culture: A better you (employee/consumer/human) is attainable through extreme fitness. Looking at the basic unit “the fit employee being a better employee” we are able to interrogate the ethics of a Social-Darwinian discourse. This discourse questions the extent to which the regulated body is being produced to labor. Within white-collar, largely categorized by “mind” work rather than that of the body, labor means looking over a computer screen.

By encouraging a judgmental discourse about the unfit body, fitness is presented as enthymeme (Cheney & Tompkins, 1985) That is, the organization presented fitness as a business strategy and moral imperative, the enthymeme being “employees have to be fit, the future of the brand depends on it.” This presents fitness as a nice byproduct of the organizational strategy, but ultimately helping the company achieve its market goals. Such control devices are particularly troubling if they are entrenched in organizational culture because they ostracize other body types who may be unable to reach “preferred” level of fitness. This moral discourse, linked to organizational culture, promotes a survival of the fittest attitude within the organization (Brown, 1996). While it appear that

these fitness standards are being communicated solely in the workplace, when organizational culture is tied to a branding initiative, an organization's culture becomes far more reaching.

Organizational culture perpetuates the old, but still popular argument of organizational culture occurring in the container. Organizational culture is not isolated to organizations or the workplace. Organizational culture is now arguably most important the product itself. It is less about the product and more about the type of person that uses the product. The ways that organizational culture is communicated towards consumers becomes a central issue. In this particular study, because organizational culture was linked to health and fitness, the corporeal ethics of such a campaign became increasingly salient (and continue to do so as the fitness campaign is listed in the company's financial report for 2013).

Cheney and Christiansen (2001) observed that organizational leaders simply cherry pick issues and public stakeholders they wish to engage and to take on, as they relate to the organization's bottom line. FitCo actively chose to promote the fitness. FitCo may have learned from its own mistake in mandating one particular type of fitness, but the effects from its initial intent are still being felt. That is, organizational leaders admitted that their initial "mandate" did not go as planned. As such, they re-tooled their approach to appear less forceful (see chapter five). Utilizing more stakeholders in health discussions would create a more dialogic process between stakeholders and possibly strengthen organizational communication. When an organizational leader responded to claims of ostracizing certain groups with "is that true

or is that just how they feel?” leadership showed little concern for an obviously marginalized group at FitCo. Mumby and Putnam (1992) deconstructed bounded rationality, suggesting that once again, a particularly privileged understanding is presented. Bounded rationality “reflect[s] a limited view of organizing, one defined by patriarchy as a dominant value system” (p. 469). Indeed FitCo leadership reflects a privileged, rational perspective placing emphasis on truth and logic over emotion or feeling. This notion supports the masculine orientation of the organization (Ackar, 1990).

Cheney and Christiansen first teased the idea of “response-*ability*” which assumed that organizational ethos may be used to move towards a profitable market area but rather limited information is presented about “how such wishes are related to the general well-being of society” (p. 261). FitCo is rather straightforward with their message “seizing your potential through fitness,” yet the perceived economic benefits of such a venture are clearly its driving force. Thus, it seems a sound rhetorical strategy is creating a fitness identity that has no bounds – after all, even the fit could be *fitter*. Further exploration of organization *disidentification* in dominating sites, particularly in the line of transparency through technology, may be a fruitful mode of research. That is, how does someone covertly and overtly resist a fitness/health initiative and still work for a company that hopes its fitness initiative spreads to the public? Making these moves may have serious consequences in the organization.

Now that I have summarized the implications behind the fitness culture, I move to unpack the connections to the organization of power.

Power

Unobtrusive Control

FitCo offered an empirical case from which to question the consequences of an unobtrusive control system in developing and changing an organizational culture. While there are examples of FitCo using a “top-down” communication mandate to change the fitness culture, those obtrusive measures were met with more overt forms of resistance. For example, employees referred to an “ask the manager” intranet message board that received many complaints (some joked that it had never seen so much attention until FitBox was built). Additionally, some employees “skipped work” during the fitness orientation session week to avoid the company wide workouts. It was not until FitCo employees saw teammates going to CrossFit and eating a paleo diet that some employees became more engaged and accepting. That is not to say resistance practices did not occur, but that resistance has become more covert. This suggests that CrossFit was more readily adopted in the organization not through organizational mandates, but rather via unobtrusive means. One employee admitted he went to CrossFit at first because he felt forced but then stopped going. Yet, he started going back again after his team encouraged him to go (though insisting that he did not feel peer-pressure). Others had to try it for themselves and indeed saw positive results – this spread in terms of fitness, nutrition and lifestyle. From this, we can apply the notion of “followership” as a contributing factor to implementing workplace wellness.

Some research goes so far as to relegate the role of the leader, and promote the role of the first few followers (Kelley, 1992). Even Saul, who was an outspoken critic of

CrossFit and paleo said he eats paleo 99% of the time. The effects of these systems of control are far-reaching and become taken for granted. Consistent with Schein (1985), these values often go unquestioned. In addition to forms of unobtrusive control, the role of technology brought up issues of employee privacy.

Technology

With more and more reliance on computer technology, the ways in which technology attempts to measure *work* is of interest. At FitCo, technology not only captures the identities of those who participate in workouts, but also employee effort during the workout (time of completion, weight used, among other variables). Known as the “Personal Workout Tracker,” each employee who participates in CrossFit workouts at FitCo can login and see a virtual leaderboard with top times for the day’s workout. Those that had “scaled” the workout (did less weight or modified the workout in some way) may have felt chided or inferior to someone who did more weight in less time (CrossFit’s definition of fitness). This was a theme in the interview data, but most that worked out at FitBox agreed that they had to quickly let their ego go.

While the leaderboard function was designed to promote competition, there are important privacy concerns which may further isolate the less fit from wanting to sign up for certain classes. This idea parallels work by Barker (1993; 1999) in which he observed teams using a public board to track circuit board completion rates. He concluded that such a board served a disciplinary function via surveillance that allowed for group members to regulate each other, often times in a more stringent and cut-throat manner than if the supervision came from a traditional control system.

Surveillance systems within concertive controlled environments take on many forms of peer surveillance. In the case of FitCo, the surveillance was much more pervasive. The “personal workout tracker” technology monitoring software was accessible both on and off site. That is, one can login from home and compare his or her workout results against other employees within FitCo. By their very definition, “unobtrusive” control systems appear innocuous. Yet, the potential for exploitation remains.

Resistance

Despite having few means to resist the authentic “center of fitness,” not all employees embraced the CrossFit lifestyle. Resistance materialized in at least one account by skipping work to avoid a “work out.” Others chose to avoid the cafeteria and eat at their desks, suggesting that while being the “center of fitness” encouraged many to come together through fitness, it also further pushed those that were more resistant from those that were enthusiastic about fitness. Yet, as this case illustrates, resistance rarely gained much attention in the organization because of such a push towards shared or what Koschman (2014) labeled, collective identity. From an organizational perspective, when asked what he thought of those that do not participate in CrossFit, BM replied:

There’s always a good amount of them, about 500 people probably. They have never set foot in the gym [FitBox] here, on campus and which is half of the community. What do I think about them? Gosh, I really don’t know if I ever think about them as individuals, as people I think everyone has their journey into the CrossFit gym.

While BM was a fitness evangelical, he had come to realize that he was not going to get every single employee to participate in CrossFit. Clearly, his focus was on the

employees that did participate in CrossFit and were more *serious* about their fitness. The employees that did participate in CrossFit were the employees that he cared about. Other employees did not receive much thought. This line of logic may have produced a dichotomy between those that did participate in CrossFit from those that did not. While many employees who did not participate in CrossFit but preferred their own form of fitness reported feeling no pressure, several did. Regardless of the actual number, my argument is that the conditions that were created through the intentional creation of a fitness culture created a tension between inclusivity and exclusivity based on body type and fitness level.

Resistant employees may also have foregrounded their interests in wanting to belong, to network, or to move up in the company. Several employees recalled instances in which they *knew* employees skeptical of the CrossFit program but still worked out, either because of intense peer pressure or for career advancement. As such, the space at FitCo provided few, if any, areas for employees to resist. One particularly useful area of resistance occurred “online.” At the onset of the CrossFit program, organizational employees expressed frustration and concern through an intranet company forum. Here, the “leadership discussion board” became a hotspot for employees to convey their lack of enthusiasm for what they felt like was a fitness and nutritional “mandate.” Resistance always seemed to find a way to peak its head, but seemed largely ignored by managers and company leaders.

Resistance was both overt and covert. Because of the (by)product of fitness is the body, resistance was a difficult path to negotiate. Choosing not to work out seemed

bizarre to some, after all FitCo was a fitness company. Even more compelling, the vast amount of exercise opportunities that were made available to employees (e.g. Basketball, Running, Traditional Gym, Yoga, and Zumba – all in addition to the CrossFit facility). To others, working out with one’s boss, changing in the dressing room, or engaging in extreme fitness at work seemed bizarre. Despite obvious conflicting opinions, there was an interplay in the ways in which resistance materialized at FitCo. It was overt in the ways that people that did not workout could

The prevailing mindset that “fitness is good, extreme wellness is better” seemed to be a prevailing logic that trumped employee feelings. Now that I have provided an overview of the resistance, I discuss the issue of bodily identity, or the ways in which body type and fitness level created identity types within FitCo.

Identity

Bodies at Work and Beyond

A CrossFit box might seem like an unlikely candidate to be juxtaposed with luxury hotels and boutique shops on one of the most expensive streets in New York City. Yet, CrossFit boxes are indeed populating all areas of the world at a rapid pace. FitCo too has opened a flagship store in New York City. Here, customers can buy fitness shorts for a mere \$175, or a pair of the latest fitness shoes for \$129. Shirts, depicting one’s favorite CrossFit slogan from the CrossFit box can be had for \$30. Slogans on shirts tend to perpetuate the extreme fitness discourse that is often associated with CrossFit. For example, one of CrossFit’s television targeted marketing campaigns included the slogan, “CrossFit, Turning Sevens into Tens” (CrossFit, 2012).

In a particularly ritzy area of Paris, near the eighth arrondissement, a FitCo store showcases its fitness attire next to a luxury handbag store. The store's interiors are complete with industrial motif—paying obvious homage to the extreme fitness discourse that not only takes form as CrossFit, but also extreme marathons and obstacle courses (see Lamb & Hillman, 2014). The motif tends to reassure the consumer that he or she earned a fit body through hard work and working out, and so the body can be draped in top of the line fitness gear. While selling fitness products is certainly not unique to FitCo, FitCo is strategically and extremely closely associating itself as its own targeted demographic. When the targeted demographic is that of a particular body type, workers and consumers may have little choice in resisting the message — after all, one can only do so much to conceal body type.

FitCo is a unique case in that organizational culture is built, prescribed, (re)produced, and packaged into a retail form. FitCo is one of the most explicit examples of an organization using organizational culture as a marketing tool, one that privileges the fit body. The implications for bodies at work and the cultural organization of bodies are explicit. Scholars have long wanted to bring the “body” back to work in order to see the visceral effects of the body (Ashcraft, Kuhn, & Cooren, 2009; Ashcraft, 2008). That is, communication scholars have largely ignored the materiality of body. While there have been repeated calls for more studies of the body at work, Wolkowitz (2006) shared how difficult that may be because “attitudes are now so deeply embedded in the wider aesthetics of consumer culture that they are taken for granted” (p. 98). Clearly, the connection to organizational culture and specifically Schein's model (1985) offers one

vantage from which to see the ways in which ideal body type is privileged in the workplace (and beyond).

Wolkowitz (2006) defined paid body work as laborers who use their bodies as “their immediate site of labor” (p. 147). FitCo trainers and coaches would obviously fit into this camp, but additionally, because of the fitness culture, most of the employees at FitCo would also be part of this group. That is, many of the workout classes are occurring while employees are on the clock – they are being paid to workout and labor in the gym. The body that has been produced and regulated at work, makes fitness products for the public, and then sells that product back via a mostly retail model. Because some employees do more body work than others (eat the preferred paleo diet, do CrossFit workouts) power relations are reproduced. The fit body that can wear more tight fitting clothes or appear more sporty by wearing less, is the preferred bodily ideal. Thus, apparel and body type might communicate a moral imperative inside the organization. This commodification of the body through fitness and sport both complicates and supplement traditional workplace ‘dress’ norms. For instance, certain executives continued to wear suits and dress shoes, but some routinely wore the company’s fitness shoe. Women wore business-professional attire (heals, skirts, blouses). Others wore workout attire. It seemed that some executive level employees who wore nicer attire associated with others in similarly dress attire. During a sales call to promote a FitCo corporate wellness program with a neighboring organization, I asked, “what should I wear?” My liaison said business casual, or “casual casual.” When we showed up to the organization we both dressed the same, jeans and tennis shoes – attire

became both an internal signifier of fitness as well as outside the organization. My liaison joked with me, tell me how they want everyone in the world to wear tennis shoes during business meetings.

When I saw executives from other Madrigal brands not working out and wearing more typical business attire, I wondered about the extent to which the gym insulated FitCo from other Madrigal owned brands. As mentioned earlier, Madrigal owns FitCo and several other smaller apparel companies. Several of these smaller companies have working offices in the FitCo building, making up a small number of employees. Brand-specific identity tensions, defined as conflicting pushes and pulls towards one particular brand identity (Pepper & Larson, 2006) emerged, but were not the focus of this particular study. I decided not to focus on those particular identification issues for this particular study because the scope of the project was already quite large. Several studies talk about the ways in which certain identities stay with organizations even post-acquisition (Pepper & Larson, 2006) which may create identity tensions between groups which may be the subject of a future case study with the data collected.

Trimming the Fat

Lupton (2013) criticized television shows like *The Biggest Loser* that tends to portray fat contestants as “objects of both pity and contempt” (p. 3). Fat activists maintain that rather than fatness being portrayed as a choice and linking to connotations of laziness, that fat has much more to do with genetic and physiological processes (Lupton, 2013). Additionally, Lupton (2013) points to recent research and activism within fat activism that positions fatness with other identity issues including gender,

race, skin color, and sexual orientation. When organizations privilege the ideal, it offers little space for the marginalized. This becomes even more problematic when the body has little choice but to be exposed. Hidden resistance at FitCo, at least in my observations and interviews, seemed either particularly well hidden or those resisted me by seeing me as more of an advocate for the fitness initiatives based on my own body-type.

I have shown through this analysis the connection between sport, fitness, health and masculinity becomes blurred in a barrage of nebulous internal/external marketing shifts. As masculinity shifts and it always becomes what it wants to become (Connell, 1995). That is, hegemonic masculinity has the privilege of being fat and white to show that one does not have to work in a largely agrarian society, or when cultures begin to feminize certain behaviors, it can morph into “Rambo” (Jeffords, 1995) or reclaim a primitive masculinity through violence (Ashcraft & Flores, 2003). With FitCo, masculinity takes shape through cultural rituals entrenched in fitness.

With FitCo, organizational life harnesses its power via culture and identity and then reproduces it back to the public via a linked network of internal/external communication (Cheney & Christensen, 2001). Workers and managers each seek something different from each other, yet find meaning when managers offer control systems that appear to meet a workers desire for belonging (Scott, Corman, & Cheney, 1998). Cheney and Christensen (2001) think that the links between internal/external communications draw back to a fundamental managerial desire for organizational control. In many contemporary organizations the ethics of this pertain to the “free

market” capital driven system. Some campaigns raise serious health implications, like the rugged and torn Marlboro man that helped construct an idealized smoker as a rustic cowboy. Communicating health identities has serious consequences that may warrant further inquiry. I discuss these implications below, as they relate to an authenticity and health centered discourse.

Marketing Authenticity and Health: A Better Employee is a Fit Employee

The organization that seizes the potential of creating unobtrusive control systems via peer pressure and technology is the ultimate site of domination. More attention must be given at looking at organizations in their entirety and such organizations must be held responsible for the choices bestowed upon certain employees, while others seem to be exempt. At FitCo, the push towards being the authentic center of fitness may have been somewhat hypocritical in that not all employees had access to the ‘extreme corporate wellness’ campaigns (as discussed in chapter five). If FitCo and its parent company Madrigal extended fitness offerings to everyone in the company, including offshore manufacturing facilities, it would appear more authentic. Yet, by refusing fitness ‘offerings’ at all sites, it begs the question about intention and authenticity. In addition to seeming hypocritical, this may have also been a case of the organization’s own class bias. That is, certain employees were exempt from working out if they were in a more privileged (upper) position.

As Ashcraft (2011) suggested, a researcher’s own class-biases often lets him or her engage certain questions that apply to certain workers. Does a FitCo employee in Honduras or Malaysia have the same “fit culture” in their manufacturing facility as

opposed to the opportunities within the corporate offices? My requests to visit international sites were denied, but I heard nothing of the types of “health promotion” that were inherent to manufacturing facilities. Though not the subject of my study, the idea of class and labor only came up once in regard to product manufacturing. A follow up study investigation emergent organizational culture across sites, not to corporate elites may shed more light on organizational ethos if emergent cultures are shared in an increasingly globalized economy. Such a discussion would also shed light on class distinctions and with FitCo, would allow for an interrogation of the company vision of “empowering the world through fitness” if indeed the manufacturing plants were serving paleo muffins in their cafeteria and enjoying “Fit Food Thursdays.” Such an “oversight” simply points to using fitness culture to *profit*.

With changing labor markets, that is, with most industrial and manufacturing jobs being sent offshore, it will be interesting to continue observing the types of moves towards organizational wellness between job types. CrossFit may provide an outlet for a white-collar worker to exert bodily energy at the end of the day. Yet, a bricklayer or other manually intensive job clearly might have second thoughts about going to a CrossFit facility at the end of the day. Even inside FitCo, blue-collar employees did not participate as actively as their white-collar counterparts. Fitness promotion, it would seem, is explicitly linked to class and professionalism.

Under the Premise of a Purpose Driven Company

While I was struck by the extent to which FitCo regarded its new direction as purposefully driven, I also was surprised at the lack of reflexivity in ensuring the same

level of fitness or mission throughout all FitCo sites. Indeed this could be simply the promotional discourse, which typically has few tangible indicators of success in corporate life. Yet, more companies have adopted “purpose driven” models (Schutz, Antorini, & Csaba, 2005). A revered leader within the company had obviously initiated a major cultural change at the corporate headquarters. Octaviana speaks of his vision with reverence. Chuck Wilson personified the fearless leader, the change agent, and altruistic hero to Octaviana. His willingness to stand up in a meeting and question the business was a major turning point in the company, according to many employees. He clearly demonstrates how effective the use of a champion or change agent can be in not only articulating a vision, but implementing a major cultural change.

...there is a huge opportunity that I've witnessed within the brand and that I see in the future for us to more clearly, impact our employees and our consumers' lives in communicating that purpose to a deeper level to them. So, right now, we communicate our purpose and that we want our employees and our consumers to be fit for life.

It is clear that these types of questions are not just existential meanderings. There is indeed a reverence and virtue associated the push towards fitness as a guiding company mission. Octaviana was clearly on board with the mission, her eyes lit up as she spoke with a fiery passion. In articulating a vision, “being fit for life” became the guiding torch for the company. Octaviana and others referred to many of the consequences of this direction but with a backdrop of many of the positive outcomes that had been presented. The assumption that “being fit for life” is a panacea to both the company and the world's ills was a seemingly noble attempt at empowerment, but also constraint in perpetuating bodily ideals and health norms. Promotionalism is no stranger to the corporate world,

which often questions the ethics of corporate intention behind various marketing campaigns. Graham Knight (2002) showed how the sports giant *Nike* became enveloped in a public relations nightmare while attempting to communicate new consumer messages while at the same time engaging in unfair and abusive labor practices. Knight concluded that organizations must attempt to promote their workers as “citizens rather than simply a market of consumers and investors” (p. 566). When these become linked (marketing and organizational identity), profit which privileges certain ways of being, serious corporal ethics questions arise as discussed in chapter six.

Ostensibly, this is difficult in industries that are promoting lifestyles and, in FitCo’s case, wanting to be “authentic.” With a changing workforce moving from away from so called blue-collar work towards more white-collar, cubicle dwelling office work, certain employees may feel emasculated by their work (Gibson & Papa, 2000; Willis, 1981). Ashcraft and Flores (2003) critiqued the ways in which a masculinity “crisis” is perpetuated, most notably in films like *Fight Club*. In *Fight Club*, Ashcraft and Flores argue that the cubicle dwelling blue collared worker must reclaim a primitive masculine self by engaging in acts of violence and taking an anti-consumerist anti-feminism stance. What one must accomplish or do is to show that he or she has earned the right to enjoy such luxuries through, in *Fight Club’s* case, acts of violence and terrorism. With FitCo, marketing strategies show that it is okay to get FitCo clothing dirty, torn or even bloody because the consumer “earned it” through their discipline in extreme fitness. Just as is the case with *Fight Club* and consumerism, FitCo also neglects certain integral pieces of

the authenticity puzzle while selectively re-appropriating its own version of being authentically fit.

The problem with authenticity is that it is a clever way to hegemonically promote whatever the preferred characteristic is at a given moment in time. Unfortunately, such philosophical questions are not always brought up in boardrooms and we must turn to the most post-modern and critical references for help. Problematizing authenticity, observed Cederstrom (2011) is its connection to fitness and health. That is, the idealized authentic body is supposed to want to be “fit.” Cederstrom took up Zizek’s work on “bio-morality” in that the regulation of the body via health and authenticity via personality. That is, certain organizations have taken on a discourse that equates just being yourself, or “becoming yourself” (p. 39) rests on a visible manifestation of the body. Thus, this outward expression of oneself is difficult to conceal and takes on both aesthetic representations, but also moral meanings. What this means is that the body can become what it wants to become, but only if it falls within certain guidelines. Scholars, suggest that this issue is nothing more than a form of managerial control (Fleming & Sturdy, 2009; Zoller, 2004).

Fleming and Sturdy (2009) calls neo-normative control a natural extension of normative control systems (see Barker, 1993; Kunda 2006). Neo-normative control, asserts Fleming and Sturdy, is not necessarily a reliance on “shared value orientation,” but rather an “exhortation to be yourself?” (p. 571). To make sense of this version of control, one need not look further from the cult classic film *Office Space* in which an over-zealous manager asks a young waitress where her “flair” is. She replies back, how

much do I need? To which the manager replies, “15 is the minimum, but look at Brian, he has 37 and a terrific smile!” The point is, the waitress should not want to have just the *bare minimum*. At FitCo, the mantra is, *why would anyone not want to be fit?* Papa, Auwal, and Singhal (1997) hinted at the same type of system that encouraged a strict control system with the Grameen bank. They noted that managers did not enforce 12-hour workdays, but bank employees created their own set of norms that included longer workdays and seven-day workweeks. When the values come from the management, it is indeed difficult to see if such behaviors are even truly “authentic.”

Communicating Health and Acceptable Risk

During my time at FitCo, I only saw one ambulance. While some might argue that only one ambulance at a corporate office employing roughly 1000 in two months is acceptable, others might disagree. On this particular occasion I had spent the morning observing meetings in the offices. Upon returning to FitBox, I saw an ambulance and a fire truck. The staff was very quiet about the particulars, but from what I gathered, or at least the narrative became, the employee had to be taken away because she was suffering from a previous illness and was already severely dehydrated. The employee was not working on in any capacity, simply listening one of the coaches discuss some of the CrossFit workouts.

CrossFit is risky. How risky, depends on who you speak with. Many in the CrossFit community equate risk with an inherent part of sport and fitness, implying that CrossFit is no more dangerous than other fitness activities. Longitudinal research on CrossFit does not yet exist, however, studies are beginning to emerge. Smith, Sommer,

Starkoff, and Devor (2013) found that while CrossFit gets results, they were concerned that 16% of their sample size did not complete follow-up post testing procedures because of overuse of muscles or injury. The authors noted that the study raised flags about the long term “risk-benefit ratio for such extreme training programs” (p. 19)¹¹. Notable CrossFit athletes deal with injury frequently, the 2012 CrossFit Games runner-up is not competing in the 2014 games because of a herniated disc and other lower back complications (CrossFit, 2014c). Even with the potential for injury in high-caliber athletes to the 70+ year olds doing Olympic weightlifting movements, the mantra seems to be that the risk is worth taking. Certain images of common CrossFit injuries may do more to function as a badge of honor, promoting an ethos that the body was earned through certain levels of masochism and strong-will.

For FitCo employees, if one accepts the risk associated with such extreme forms of fitness they may be viewed in a more favorable light. As Saul and Barney noted, participation in fitness affords the opportunity to further network and move up within the company. Some of the exercises that they conduct at FitBox could be considered hazardous even to other CrossFit boxes. One particular exercise, the rope climb, requires employees to pull themselves up a 15 foot braided rope and then back down. Without proper training and strength, it is quite easy to suffer significant “rope burn” when coming down the rope (as happened to me the first week at FitBox). Some gyms refuse to do rope climbs because it increases the risk of injury and increases insurance

¹¹ CrossFit Inc. has questioned the validity of this study, claiming that the authors falsified claims and did not have sufficient data collection techniques to know the particular reasons why 16% of the participants did not complete a post-test. As of March, 2014 – the authors of the study are being sued by the owner of the CrossFit gym, where the study was conducted. The owner claims the study was falsified and has negatively impacted his business (Kilmas, 2014).

premiums (personal communication, 2013). Ruth remembered hearing a story about the rope:

They were doing something on a rope ladder and he fell and he broke his pelvis, I think. He [also] hit his head. He was out for a while and they had just moved here.

Yet, risk is an inherent part of organizational life. Zoller (2003b) noted how discourse surrounding risk often takes shape as a disciplinary function. That is, someone who was injured may have been injured because of their *own doing*. The implications of CrossFit, as an extreme exercise program, create new norms of what is an acceptable risk. This new risk laden extreme fitness discourse tends to privilege the workout in such a way that perhaps what is best for each individual participant. When this discourse is coupled with an unobtrusive control system, the dangers are very real.

She does CrossFit. She is the poster child. She is a larger woman, but she's been hurt several times because – and this is me and her husband talking -- she doesn't feel like she can say no. Her husband worries to death about her... Yeah, because she is the foster child and she's gotten so many accolades. They brought her to [other offices] and they've done all this stuff. She's been in the paper and everything. She doesn't feel like she can stop and she doesn't feel like she can be like, "Oh I can't do that." That's wrong and that's another thing that makes me nuts. It's not okay.

The pressure that has been created by the intense push for fitness creates a forceful clasp that may make some employees uncomfortable with saying "no." As Ruth concludes, once one starts to think about the risk involved and stops going, they lose their "coolness."

Honestly I don't really deal with people who go to CrossFit anymore [Laughter]. I know a couple but a couple of people have been, 'Oh yeah, that's when I was cool, I used to go.' But people have been hurt and they haven't gone.

These sentiments highlight the controlling peer-pressure fueled discourse at FitCo. To remain in the in-group, an employee must continue to participate in the preferred workout program, despite its inherent risk.

Fixing the Body

Huzell and Larson (2012) articulated the consequences of the rising trend in hiring attractive and fit employees. The trend, argue Huzell and Larson, is growing but difficult to gain information on. After all, what employer would want to admit to *unfair* hiring practices? Yet, one of Huzell and Larson's participants was a bit more candid:

One of the employers, mainly employing low-skilled workers, put this in a fairly straightforward way: 'If you have two applicants with equal skills, then you choose the healthier looking one. There's nothing strange about that.' (p. 112).

FitCo falls in line with this trend, but has developed a more "structured" way of guaranteeing a *fit* with organizational culture as discussed in chapter four. That is, FitCo developed a set of questions to interview candidates that allowed them to make an informed decision on how the employee responded to questions about fitness. Still, the comments from Brant about hoping unfit employees work somewhere else points to a very real sense of "survival of the fittest." Though elusive, this criterion of optimization allows one form of fitness and indeed bodily type to be privileged, and indeed even labeled more "healthy" than others. What becomes much more concerning is that the message is promoted at FitCo to such an extent that it furthers cultural assumptions that unfit bodies/workers are lazy, unproductive, and fat as a choice. What's more, FitCo leadership informed me explicitly that their intent was indeed "altruistic," Brown (1996) theorized that "employers who offer health facilities don't do it out of pure altruism" (p.

1). Clearly, opinions vary.

Additionally, examining the effects of the body as a cultural artifact is a significant contribution. Because the body has little opportunity for resistance, it becomes a constantly visible cultural artifact at FitCo. With special machines being used to take intimate measurements of employees, the privileged lean body became an ideal. The CrossFit body, in all its uniqueness, also presents us several ethical concerns that relate to a discourse of hegemonic masculinity and dominant femininity. Most central to this conversation are the ways in which the strong body is privileged over weaker bodies in both men and women. While this has traditionally been a masculine ideal, women are claiming the body type too with slogans such as “strong is the new skinny” that has pervaded the blogosphere. This mantra, and presumably others, advocate for privileging the strong body in addition to a lean body. Perhaps one of underlying logics behind this saying and indeed for privileging the lean, strong body is that it appears to be more disciplined. The more disciplined body, the moral strict adherence to fitness, nutrition and health. Perhaps some, in the case of FitCo, even relate that disciplined body to potential work ethic.

The Logic of Extreme Corporate Wellness

General health promotion literature tends to focus on organizational attempts to curb employees’ preventable illnesses and problems. For example, organizations have adopted programs to curb tobacco use and obesity (Baicker, Cutler, & Song, 2010). Baicker and colleagues argue that over 60% of Americans receive their insurance from their employer. As such, attention continues to grow on how to cultivate healthism with

managerialism (Zoller, 2003b). Using a meta-analysis of 36 studies, Baicker and colleagues concluded that there is a significant cost savings not just for the employer in advocating workplace wellness, but also for employees. The average employee saved over \$358, and the average savings for the employer was \$144 per year. These results tend to strengthen the organizational wellness mantra that organizational wellness is good. After all, if it saves an organization money and speaks to health concerns, few scholars have taken up critique (with notable exceptions like McGillivray, 2005; Thanem, 2009; Zoller, 2003a, 2003b) issues. While the empirical links between wellness programs and “bottom-line” results depend on a range of factors, there is no question that managers use the presumed link as a rhetorical justification their usage.

Yet, health and fitness promotion can only push employees so far before impeding on an employee’s much coveted perception of ‘choice’ and individual freedom. While a return-on-investment number at FitCo was not made available, the prevailing logic that extreme organizational wellness had unintended consequences within the culture, centering on issues of identity and organizational culture. It is my argument that the economic incentives be weighed against the unintended consequences of extreme corporate wellness.

Implications for Organizational Communication and Wellness

Resistance as Struggle

This study also sheds light on Fleming and Spicer’s (2007; 2008) conceptual framework on resistance as “struggle.” As discussed in chapter five, using a ‘resistance as struggle’ framework looks at resistance as a constant negotiation, full of pushes and

pulls. Other studies focusing on resistance may focus on resistance as a response to a power imbalance, but not necessarily highlight the ‘shifts’ or communicative processes that are negotiated between oppressed and oppressor (Murphy, 1998; Willis, 1981). Fleming and Spicer (2007) posited that looking at resistance as struggle may hold important opportunities that “capture[s] a more nuanced and ambivalent reality” (p. 51).

While locating specific acts of resistance has practical utility, looking at the negotiation of power/resistance dialectic (Mumby, 2005) to encourage healthy behavior allows for a productive conversation both theoretically and practically. Working within a capitalist system means that an over-arching structure is ostensibly present, and it is only from within this system that important ‘resistance negotiations’ take place. Because power is always inherent in the organization and that the relationship will continue to favor the owners versus the producers, the ways in which owners/producers negotiate their relationships, identities, and responsibilities a worthwhile area of focus. Locating these communicative acts and processes shows a dialogue and sense-making process by which each group comes to understand the construction of self-identity within the organization and beyond. While identifying the acts of resistance are important, marking the negotiation range with the strategic moves from FitCo leaders, managers and coaches to the moves made by employees provides a useful framework.

Fleming and Spicer (2008) argue that academic conversations about resistance are becoming bogged down and question their usefulness. Fleming and Spicer note “Now that even “organizational farting” or “bitching” might be legitimately considered resistance, there is a risk of reducing resistance to the most banal and innocuous

everyday actions” (p. 303). If scholars continue counting *everything* as resistance, the future of resistance may ultimately be oversaturated. If acts of resistance do not lead to changes in an embedded capitalist structure, some might argue the futility of such practices. Looking at the ways power is shifted and negotiated may yield important and productive conversations. In the case of health promotion, the underlying logic is clear. Health is important to employees and managers. Managers may key in on health to affect bottom line functions (insurance premium deductions and in the case of FitCo, strategic branding initiatives). Employees want to feel that their managers care about their health and ultimately, that they can live long, productive lives. The question that remains at this intersection is – how can organizational leaders and employees work to create organizational wellness that is more inclusive for everyone?

Fleming and Spicer’s (2007; 2008) concept of resistance as resistance yields several connections to the future of studying workplace wellness. When the case involves health and fitness, where does the struggle to achieve healthier employees ultimately lead? By looking at the ways in each party made sense of an extreme organizational wellness program, scholars and practitioners can tailor workplace health promotion to be communicated more effectively.

Indeed, there is perhaps no better avenue to pursue the power/resistance dialectic than in the workplace health promotion area. Health promotion tends to take a the mantra that any type of promotion is good, often conflating state program mandated, popular media and nutrition trends and then linking those areas to managerial incentives.

Conrad (2004) reflected of the critical turn in organizational communication literature as having:

...produced a wealth of insightful analyses of the ways in which communication processes underlie managerial dominance in modern capitalist organizations and between those organization and the broader society...But there has been almost no effort to examine the communicative processes through which managers use the power of the state to further their interests or maintain their dominance (p. 331).

Conrad's quote is relevant because FitCo uses government rhetoric as well as CrossFit rhetoric to advocate for certain health and fitness norms. At FitCo, armed with former New York City Mayor Bloomberg's health rhetoric and taking advice from Michelle Obama's *Let's Move* campaign, organizational and health scholars are able to explore the communication practices that unfold as a negotiation between organizational leaders and employees. With FitCo we see a clear case as to how those communication processes began, were continually negotiated, and ultimately understood three years after the on-set of FitBox. This analysis is useful because instead of focusing on locating resistance in a web of power, it brings to light the dialogue of organizational actors to the forefront as the locus of analysis. If organizational workers want to live more healthy lives, they should have that option. Indeed, rights and freedoms should not be taken away. By looking at how organizational leaders, managers, coaches and employees made sense of the extreme corporate wellness push at FitCo and their communication processes, we can untangle the negotiation and offer insights for other organizations considering wellness programs.

Struggle for Health

In the context of this dissertation, the struggle occurred from both the organizational leaders and the employees in creating the current “state” of the extreme wellness program. Managerial attempts at creating a fitness mandate further isolated employees that were less enthusiastic about fitness and that had heard negative comments about CrossFit through various discourses (local and via media). Employees were continually negotiating the health and fitness discourse, alongside organizational leaders and their attempts at generating compliance. What I revealed through the data was that the extreme wellness discourse operated as a negotiation between certain extremes, showing the heuristic of Fleming and Spicer’s framework in the burgeoning area of organizational wellness. Because CrossFit prescribes and defines measures of health and fitness, looking at the FitCo and the ways in which health promotion unfolded are of particular interest.

FitCo provides an empirical example of the ongoing ways in which employees struggled to make sense of their own identity within the context created by CrossFit and organizational leaders’ rhetoric. On one hand, FitCo’s management wanted to get the highest possible number of employees to comply with the new system. On the other hand, doing so meant management needed to *respond* to the initial resistance strategies. While many employees wanted organizational wellness programs, some employees simply wanted to feel like they had a *choice* in participating in whatever program they wanted, rather than having it “rammed down their throats” as one participant (Ruth) explained.

In what follows, I highlight three main tensions and discuss the communication and negotiation processes evident in the *struggle*. While locating power imbalances can identify key moments of resistance, looking at struggle itself can provide a more useful understanding of the power-communication dialectic. This is particularly true in the case of workplace health promotion, in developing programs that are cast as creating health-enhancing opportunities for employees but also allow an organization to achieve outcomes that are intended by management. Questions like “is fitness bad” or “is fitness good” tend to limit the conversation, thereby suppressing employees’ voices. Without sufficient personal agency, “choosing” to comply or resist is a relatively meaningless concept, one that short-circuits the identity-control dynamic. Similarly, examining the ways in which employees and employers shifted their communication process as a response to employee concerns provides valuable insight. Importantly, employees wanted to feel that they had a choice in their fitness, so looking at the ways in which employees and managers worked together towards both of their goals helps us understand the complexity of the dialectic.

Struggle for Participation

As discussed in chapter five, narratives surrounding the onset of the CrossFit program at FitCo were pervasive. The onset was perceived as “a mandate” or “strongly encouraged.” Employees informed me that they felt like they were required to participate in the outdoor CrossFit orientation session. Managers remembered thinking that the CrossFit orientation day would be “the day [they] change FitCo forever” and others remembered the day as the day they “skipped work.” Clearly, consistent with Newton’s

Third Law, there is an equal and opposite reaction for every action. Yet, managerial attempts to get employees to comply were somewhat successful. More than half the organization participated, but employees also reported using a variety of avoidance strategies - staying home that day, going through the workout motions gingerly, or attending the workout solely in order to be seen by supervisors. In these ways they could ostensibly comply with management's initiative by showing visible support for not only FitCo's fitness culture, but also future fitness inspired branding initiatives. The company intranet received an influx of posts on the "Ask a Manager" message board regarding the perceived managerial paternalism in mandating what, to some, may have been viewed as an extreme exercise program that advocated for "elite fitness." The very idea of extreme fitness, without any other reference to CrossFit besides CrossFit's own masculine-elite rhetoric (e.g. Uncle Rhabdo and Pukie the Clown), was enough to put some employees off before even attempting the exercise program.

Eventually, organizational leaders admitted to me that their approach was ill received, and made important corrections in their next organizational messages. In observing meetings with other companies, I saw FitCo give suggestions that indicated to me, FitCo learned from the initial resistance. Instead of a company-wide mandate, FitCo suggested garnering support with volunteers, or the heavily fitness minded organizational employees. Getting organizational fitness champions on board first allowed management to accent the peer/social aspect of fitness and increase commitment through processes of concertive control. Ostensibly, it was not just FitCo organizational leaders that learned from this either. Subordinates who were initially against the program

revealed that they later went back to FitBox after they began to see their colleagues go and reported direct improvements on their health. Many employees reflected that their opinions on CrossFit had changed overtime. While at first many opinions about CrossFit paralleled the extreme discourse with the program's cult-like reputation and adornment for characters like Pukie the Clown, employees later admitted that these first impressions were not necessarily the most accurate. After seeing the program's results and the community building aspects, employees revealed a dramatic understanding of what CrossFit later represented to them. Whereas once the extreme CrossFit rhetoric was off-putting, the shared meaning between employees became more persuasive. That is, employees saw the results other employees were achieving and in some cases, admitted to wanting to be part of "team" conversations about the CrossFit workouts. I saw this connecting to issues of control and commitment in concertive control (Barker, 1999). The use of concertive control systems in increase employee participation is well documented, yet here we see the extent to which concertive control influenced health and fitness behaviors. In addition to the ways in which the social aspect of the organization helped regulate fitness participation, the cafeteria also served as a site of struggle.

Struggle for Nutrition

In addition to the initial onset of CrossFit, the organizational nutritional changes were also part of the struggle. While organizational leaders maintained that if FitCo (and FitCo's recommendations were also directed at other organizations) were serious about organizational wellness, the first step involved changing the cafeteria. While the onset of

paleo items may have been met with resistance, leaders knew that they could not take away “everything” from the cafeteria. For example, employees could still purchase pizza (though they had to wait longer for it) and they could no longer have white flour crust pizza. Most of the soda machines on each floor of the building were replaced with water and Gatorade. Some employees still questioned the logic on this, thinking the choices seemed arbitrary because Gatorade still contains added sugar. These changes were initially made as symbolic shifts in promoting an authentic fitness culture. Because FitCo sponsors professional athletes who also roam the corporate halls, it was important for FitCo to, in as many ways as possible, explicitly highlight their commitment to fitness. When employees complained, management responded by reiterating to employees they could still drink their “coke,” but that they would have to bring it from home. Though the soda in the soda machines was replaced, employees could still find coke in the cafeteria during cafeteria hours. Yet, still being seen with a soda communicated an act of resistance (as evidenced in my observations) and drew attention to the “unhealthy” act.

Indeed, even CrossFit coaches, who are renowned for first attempting to change peoples’ diets, reported that they had “backed off” in this area. Realizing that changing someone’s diet was like “changing someone’s religion,” they had reduced the number of nutrition challenges, stopped the evangelical paleo rhetoric especially in the orientation to CrossFit classes, and only discussed nutrition if the employee inquired.

Employees also made important shifts. Some who were turned off at the onset of the program found themselves paying more acute attention to food labels. Some began

asking more questions about their nutrition. Others, including an executive, noted that they eat healthiest at work, but are still “dangerous on weekends.” Other employees expressed ambivalence about all of the paleo diets claims, but were able to look past certain parts of it in order to make a modified approach that would work for their lifestyles. Even if recognizing arbitrary nutritional components in the paleo diet, some employees admitted that they felt ‘healthier’ when they ate that way. Some who were resistant at first were eager to sign up for CrossFit nutritional challenges. The ways in which the more resistant employees were outspoken critics against a blanket approach to paleo was one take-away. However, upon closer examination, even though employees had their issues with the diet, some admitted to a covert compliance, even commenting to me that they felt better when they ate in a more disciplined way.

Struggle for Fitness

Because the very nature of fitness differs and because CrossFit is rather straightforward about fitness (doing the most amount of work possible in the least amount of time), a struggle unfolded in defining what counts as fitness. CrossFit rhetoric can be extreme and, at times, over the top (see Cooperman, 2005). Such rhetoric did more to distance employees rather than cultivate prestige. Rumors and narratives of employees being injured were part of the reason. By the time I had arrived at FitCo, I saw no evidence of injury, but had heard how employees made sense of previous injuries – many of those still resistant to CrossFit discussed perceiving CrossFit as injury causing. Yet, many of these employees found other ways to participate in fitness at work.

Brohdi's calisthenics class began to grow in popularity. The class, though met with some skepticism from FitBox coaches, seemed to co-exist with FitBox. In Brohdi's class, he catered to men and women who did not want to enter FitBox but still wanted to be in a structured exercise class. Brohdi's class was a shift towards organizational wellness as a response to CrossFit. This class was just one of many classes that offered throughout the typical day at FitCo.

FitBox too made important changes. For example, creating more safe spaces for older employees and particularly for employees with whom may not be the most comfortable with their body image was a priority. As a response, certain coaches who took on more empathetic tones tended to coach courses designed for older employees. These classes were created after the onset of the program as a major component to CrossFit was "community." The original thought was that it was essential for each class to be open to everyone, but with body image and athletic ability being intimidating factors, FitBox coaches relaxed this a bit and created certain "specialty" courses.

Certain employees wanted to embody a more "functional" form of fitness too. Instead of being an "elite CrossFit athlete," some employees intended to use CrossFit to perform functional movements. Whereas some of the elite CrossFitters would do many pull-ups, squat heavy weight, or do hand-stand pushups as skill movements, certain employees simply used CrossFit to become more comfortable with basic movements – some claimed this allowed them to be able to play with their kids without feeling tired too tired at the end of the day.

This case provides an empirical case from which to apply Fleming and Spicer's 'resistance as struggle' concept. As managers and employees continue looking for ways for both employee and employer goals to be met, examining the struggle that takes place is of importance. Applying the resistance as struggle concept to issues of organizational health, fitness, and nutrition, we are able to see a sophisticated system of communication processes by which fitness and health ideologies are continually renegotiated. At FitCo, each of these discourses was linked to issues of class, gender and identity – as communicated via an organizational culture and branding discourse.

Workplace wellness is a productive site from which to discuss 'struggle.' Whereas Fleming and Spicer (2007) list many "dynamics" (p. 62) including destructive, resentful, and loving struggles, this study shows how the concept of struggle can be used to trace the negotiation of the healthy workplace. In terms of health promotion, resistance against health may be viewed as counter-intuitive. Yet, when it comes to extreme corporate wellness, the campaign had its critics. By providing the interplay between management, employees, and even coaches, looking at the 'struggle' helped make sense of a much more nuanced argument dealing with employee health/fitness and individual autonomy. In what follows, I show how these implications extend beyond the organizational walls and were communicated discursively.

Gender, Class and the Inscribed Body

FitCo provides an empirical case study which we can see the conflation of organizational culture with organizational branding which had a material effect on the "body." This was not only evident in the ways through which artifacts were sold to employees, but indeed,

also sold to other organizations and consumers. The target demographic with which FitCo hoped to reach was their ideal employee. I saw this as complicating traditional understandings of organizational culture and branding because the spaces to resist this overt control of the body were limited. That is, an employee's body could not easily belie its commitment to fitness. I argued that employees may have feigned interest in healthy eating or fitness, but largely, the toned, lean and muscular body was the ideal body type of a FitCo employee. The bodies of coaches' and FitCo fitness evangelicals became marketing tools themselves.

Using the body as a marketing tool draws on an aesthetic workforce (Wolkowitz, 2006). In my analysis, I showed how the internal and external marketing attempts eventually conflate, and that the relationship between internal/external audiences changes over time. Other questions researchers may want to begin asking include: What are the effects of using the employee body as a marketing tool? Such a question points to issues of corporeal ethics (chapter six) and the extent to which the organization has control over the inscribed body.

This study demonstrated the power dynamics involved in using the body as a cultural artifact. That is, the fit, lean, toned, and muscular body conveyed with it certain privileges not necessarily afforded to other bodies. Evangelical fitness types and self-described CrossFit 'haters' were forced to interact with each other through the confines of the organization. The body was at the center of a political battle between the super-fit, the fit, and the more sedentary employees. The more lean and muscular one was, the more 'buy in' the employee seemed to communicate with his or her body. When the

body is the center of the communication, there really is not an area for respite – after all, the body is always present. Furthermore, when the body is stripped of clothing, when subordinates and managers were encouraged to use the same locker rooms and shower next to one another, an entirely new level of communication (and inevitably judgment) occurred. Even if one could feign interest in the cafeteria, one could not hide their body in the locker room. Specifically, women discussed not wanting to see their boss naked – or even other employees. Others spoke of how long it would take to “get ready” after doing CrossFit and coming back to the office. These rationales shed light on why some women were more resistant to CrossFit at FitBox. CrossFit coaches only labeled these as excuses, unable to devise another response to these claims. The takeaway from this is that the ideal body that could workout, ate a disciplined diet, and indeed display it (in the locker-room) as a privileged position within organization. Current conceptualizations of health and fitness promotion may neglect the implications behind “getting naked with your boss” or the amount of time it takes one to “get ready” after a sweaty workout. In addition to the material affect that the workout had on the body and the locker-room, the ideal body type called on certain subjectivities.

The CrossFit lifestyle calls on certain subjectivities in terms of what constitutes better health, fitness, and ultimately lifestyle. This relationship calls into question the role of the employer in promoting these entrepreneurial neo-capital identities. Nadesan (1999) argued that if one creates a new normal, whether it be corporate spiritualism” or “evangelical capitalism” (p. 4), the organization is able to create a ‘new normal’ in the workplace environment. At FitCo, the new normal is a type of self-improvement

discourse that may draw from the self-actualization and new-age discourses of Maslow and via Human Relations models (see Nadesan, 1999). Propelled by a ‘be all you can be’ logic, these types of organizational values promise organizational workers a place to be even more ‘authentic’ and promise organizational stakeholders economic reward through more productivity and creativity in the workplace. At FitCo, the authentic self is positioned as the autonomous worker who chooses to be better by participating in CrossFit and following its lifestyle prescription. As Nadesan noted, such a spiritual or “self-actualization” discourse privileged certain ideals, while subjecting issues like class, gender, and race to the background. Individual identity issues also are pushed to the background while new-age logics to what “better” is (in the CrossFit sense) takes precedence. While Nadesan noted that this was a type of “psychtopia” (p. 17), another reading could be just one more example of how the organization is ostensibly gendered and continues privileging masculine ideals (Acker, 1990).

As Nadesan (1999) reflected, it is often difficult to separate the individual from the organization that he/she represents. Further complicating this at FitCo was the way in which organizational members were branded as ‘authentically fit’ and representing a “better” lifestyle. This lifestyle was taking part in CrossFit, eating a disciplined diet, among others. At FitCo, the body became the site of the workout ethic – but indeed, clothing (produced by FitCo) also capitalized off the ‘extreme’ nature of workouts, often boasting of the *intensity* of the workout which took on a masculinized, extreme rhetorical approach.

The FitCo experience echoes Gibson and Papa's (2000) observations of how quickly certain organizational values were communicated to employees in relatively close-knit communities. For example, the far-fetched notion of "sick day" seemed to escape Gibson and Papa's participants, who believed such a luxury was not in alignment with the blue-collar work ethic. The authors argued that it was through organizational *osmosis* that organizational members adopted organizational values. While it was noted that Gibson and Papa's study focused on a tight-knit community who rallied around its blue collar factories and workers, similar findings are evident in coal mining industries (Scott, 2007). In relation to FitCo, the high degree of organizational identification through extreme corporate wellness may lead to organizational osmosis of health values to employee families.

Whereas traditional blue-collar workers were given piece rate systems to do more work in the least amount of time (see Gibson & Papa, 2000), the FitCo employee incentive was based on moral and health superiority. The privileged body was that which took shape, like it *could* lay bricks for an extended period of time, if he or she had wanted. Whereas the ideal body in blue-collar workspaces is given more money for its ability to produce, the white-collar employee at FitCo that participated in CrossFit had achieved a body that was capable of arduous physical labor, but also relegated to the cubicles for traditional white-collar work. Keeping in line with crises in masculinity (cf. Ashcraft & Flores, 2003; Robinson, 2011), the body produced through fitness is laden with judgment and work-ethic evaluations. Blood, scars, and scabs point to the potential

of the body – the potential attempts to belie white-collar identity to reclaim a sense of masculinity laden in blue-collar work ethic.

Limitations and Future Directions

As is the nature of all research, this dissertation is not free of limitations. While I contend that my positionality as someone who has participated in CrossFit, has eaten a largely paleo diet, and has been “trained” by CrossFit to potentially be a CrossFit coach earning a certificate, others might point to these facts as evidence of a particular bias. I contend that my understanding of CrossFit and ability to work out with employees, interview, and conduct observations was integral in securing access to the organization. While these issues may have hindered my ability to recruit participants who may have been more resistant to the fitness initiatives, by using rapport generating strategies and collaborative dialogue techniques (Ellis & Berger, 2003), I ultimately developed connections with a diverse sample of employees at FitCo.

Second, examining fitness for a largely white-collar workforce exposes what Ashcraft (2011) calls a class bias on the part of the researcher. While my proposal for this research wanted to use multiple site and diverse labor pools from which to examine “fit culture,” I was only granted access to one FitCo facility. While I did have the opportunity to observe various job types and the effects of fitness culture on them, having a larger sample of “blue-collar” workers would help illuminate issues of class. Other observations took place at the CrossFit Games, from which I was able to examine other marketing campaigns. As researchers, it is important to keep asking for access to multiple sites to prevent neglect of already marginalized groups. While this dissertation

focused on one particular site, a future project will compare FitCo fitness culture with an organization implementing CrossFit for its manual laborers. I will use the same interview protocol and use a similar research question, looking at the ways in which CrossFit culture transcends into a manufacturing plant as well as examining what consequences it may bring.

Concluding Remarks

As I describe the FitCo headquarters, FitBox, and all the amenities that FitCo employees have, a lot of students and colleagues tell me that they would love to work there. Indeed one fellow graduate student considered applying for a position with the company. Yoga after lunch, what is not to like about that? However, as organizations continue to offer a variety of employee amenities it becomes even more important to raise a critical eye, or at least an eye brow, to ensure that the organization is not creating more problems than it claims to be fixing. By this, I mean that organization attempts to rid itself of the “boys club” notion of exclusivity, ironically created another level of division by creating a hierarchy of fitness. Because fitness levels were fixed to body type, appearance, and preferred fitness activity, FitCo ironically created other issues of exclusivity.

Often, good intentions can be sorely overrated (Illich, 1968). Zoller (2000) had similar concluding remarks, yet over 15 years later the degree to which exercise, fitness, and health is being communicated at work only continues become more commonplace. In a culture that is fixated on body image, creating organizational cultures around the idea of fitness leads down a slippery slope.

I fear that as we begin to privilege the strong and fit body, those that cannot attain such an ideal will be further marginalized. This may lead to unfair hiring practices and other unfair choices inside the organization. Fat-talk, or the extent to which bodies are labeled as fat, seems to be a serious issue that only continues to rise (Arroyo & Harwood, 2011). More, the pervasive ways in which organizational rhetoric, guised as self-care and “empowerment through fitness” spills from inside the organization to consumer.

With FitCo, the health and fitness values were taken home. Spouses, partners and children assumed certain lifestyle choices because of a member of the household’s employment with FitCo. Some employees missed work to avoid working out. What are the implications of learning a nutritional and fitness doctrine and taking those prescriptions home to a partner or children? Many will argue nothing, and were adamant about the perceived healthy benefits to such a discourse. Yet, critical reflection is necessary when some of the information may not be coming from the most qualified sources or take into consideration the unique needs of each individual. That said, we look at ways to debunk or at least challenge expert working knowledge within the health context, and with CrossFit, we see a very straightforward approach that works for a vast majority of people that do it (myself included).

FitCo has earned criticism because of purported sexist marketing campaigns encouraging people to value working over other fidelity. In marketing campaigns, it appears that the fit consumer is the super-model, or the uber-athletic type rather than the “everyday fitness” person that the brand claims to support. While it is unfair to single

FitCo out, one way to push through the masculine, heteronormative privilege is to recognize, respect, appreciate and most importantly, accept body diversity. Dislocating connections with aesthetic body types and health might be a strong first step. Yet, the trend tends to be that organizations continue offering *fitness* perks as built into its organizational culture for employees, we need to be able to ask ourselves, ultimately, to whom do those cultures benefit?

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol for those that **do participate in CrossFit at FitCo**

1. Tell me about your job, what do you do?
2. What's the best part of your job? Most difficult?
3. Why did you choose to work for FitCo?
4. Have you ever participated in the workplace health promotion program? What do you know about the CrossFit gym on your campus?
5. In your own words, explain to me what CrossFit is:
 - a. How did you first find out about CrossFit? (If applicable)
 - b. How many times a week do you come to CrossFit?
 - c. Have you participated in other gyms? How does your program here compare to other gyms?
 - d. What do you love about CrossFit?
 - e. What is the hardest part of CrossFit?
6. What makes this specific CrossFit community (gym) unique?
 - a. Fill in the blank, "CrossFit" is like _____ ?
 - b. Is there a story that you can recall that captures CrossFit?
 - c. What do you love about working out with this group of people?
 - d. Are there things that ever make you feel uncomfortable about CrossFit?
 - e. Some people describe cross fit as "cult-like" why do you think that is, and how would you respond to that?
 - f. If you were trying to convince someone to join CrossFit rather than another gym, what would you tell them?
 - g. Why do you think some employees do not participate in CrossFit?
7. Is there a larger philosophy associated with CrossFit? If so, describe it in your own words.
 - a. How does the larger philosophy behind CrossFit over into other areas of your life? For example, are there social events or other commitments you cannot attend because it violates CrossFit principles
 - b. How has CrossFit affected your relationships with people outside of CrossFit? With people who also joined CrossFit?
 - c. When you are around something that goes against your approach to fitness, how do you respond? (If participant mentioned nutrition, probe, "how often does this happen, have you ever felt shunned from friends/family because of this?" What about at work?
 - d. For example, have you ever had a debate with a friend who is not involved in CrossFit? What did you talk about?

- e. Do gym members ever debate methodology? Can you describe a reoccurring debate?
8. How do you feel before you come to the gym? And after?
- a. How does CrossFit affect you at work? How are you encouraged to participate in workouts? Are there times when you are discouraged from participating?
 - b. Do you and your friends/family talk about CrossFit? What do you talk about?
 - c. Have you heard any outsider stereotypes of CrossFit? What have you heard? Why do you think those stereotypes exist?
 - d. Do you and your friends/family talk about CrossFit? What do they say?
 - e. Have you ever had to make sacrifices in your life (or work schedule) to make CrossFit work?
 - f. If you've ever felt limited, how cope with it at work?
9. Why do you continue to come to CrossFit?
- a. If you miss a session or do not attend as many sessions as you planned, how do you feel?
 - b. Would you continue to follow CrossFit principles if you stopped working here? Why/why not?
 - c. Physically how do you feel when you are thinking if you should you go to a class today or not?
 - d. How do you "support" your fellow CrossFit workout partners?
 - e. How do you respond to others when they have failed to follow or keep up with the workouts and rules?
 - f. What do your coaches do to encourage your participation in at the "Box?"
 - g. What types of "outside" events have you participated in with gym members or staff?
 - h. Since beginning CrossFit, describe the ways that you have changed (either physically, spiritually or other holistic manner)

That concludes the interview schedule, thank you for your time. Before we go, is there anything I didn't ask about that you would like to share with me about your experiences with CrossFit?

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol for those that do NOT Participate in CrossFit at FitCo

1. Tell me about your job, what do you do?
2. What's the best part of your job? Most difficult?
3. Why did you choose to work for FitCo?
4. Have you ever participated in the workplace health promotion program? What do you know about the CrossFit gym on your campus?
5. Have you ever participated in CrossFit? What do you know about the CrossFit gym on your campus?
6. In your own words, what is your understanding of CrossFit?
7. Have you heard of a larger philosophy associated with CrossFit? What have you heard?
8. How did you learn about CrossFit? Why do you choose not to participate in the program?
9. Do you ever feel pressure to do CrossFit classes at work?
 - a. If yes, from whom do you feel the pressure, mostly?
 - b. Do you have friends that participate in the workouts? How do they describe it to you?
 - c. Since FitCo became involved with CrossFit, have things "changed" in the office setting? a) How would you describe them before? b) And after?
10. What might be some reasons other employees do not participate in CrossFit?

That concludes the interview schedule, thank you for your time. Before we go, is there anything I didn't ask about that you would like to share with me in regard to FitCo and its relationship with CrossFit?

APPENDIX B

CODES AND REPRESENTATIVE EXAMPLES

Table 2

Summary of Codes and Representative Sample

Code	Frequency	Representative Example
Accountability	16	Yeah. It's committing to me and it's committing to somebody else. For me I struggle to commit to myself. I'm full of good intentions but [laughter] if it's just me I'll let myself off the hook but because I've signed up to this and especially this time because it's only 15 people and we were more than fifteen wanted to do it I've said I'm do it. I'll do it and knowing that there's support there, yeah and writing everything down at any time [name omitted] could have look at anger what's that [laughter] it makes me stick to it.
Age	13	I've thought about in terms of my career which is that, you know, when you said is there anything make you uncomfortable? I worry that I was too old to do CrossFit or that I wasn't in shape enough to start.
Agency	4	We were out on a first time at [event]. We're in Columbus. We were at the [class] and we went to [name omitted] and we went to dinner this beautiful steakhouse and I like bread, [name] likes bread so we got bread. And they were like you guys can't eat bread, that's ridiculous. They were like kind of like belittling us for eating bread. This was some [group name omitted] people but then some CrossFit people/athletes and whatnot, and [name omitted] like "we're not bad people!" It's like you have to call us out for eating bread. So I mean it's kind of like that...I personally didn't feel belittled but it's like I'm sure other people in that situation because I'm going to do what I want. I'm going to eat what I want and I have no problems about it but somebody else in that situation might have been thinkin' I shouldn't eat the bread because they're saying so.
Athletic Background	13	I've always been really athletic. I did track and soccer in high school. I think I still hopefully have the high school record for my high jump. Then I played, went to college and I didn't go out for any sports because I wanted to focus on school.

Authenticity	25	<p>So we started to walk the talk, model the behavior. Have people like [employee names and coaches]whomever, really lead us so that we were authentic and we were real and that you know yourself having work with those guys and gals now there's no BS. I mean they're CrossFitters they -- and we've developed FitCo One our own CrossFit box as a community.</p>
Balance	8	<p>Not necessarily, I think that...I think that's a separation of work and CrossFit like I think that like for [division of Madrigal] when you say was the hardest part like I think - but I do think there are people - I was in a meeting once so much - one of the people who I think is a really a negative influence on a corporate culture at [division same] said of a designer, "Well, maybe he should not spend so much time doing - working out and he should, you know, maybe that way he could get us better product." And I thought that was a real rip. And of course, the guy was in a room, you know.</p>
Better	26	<p>I'm not being fictitious or a wise guy when I said I haven't found the down side yet of what we're doing. So if I'm going to pay you to come to work here and you say, you know what Eric as long as you go on your meetings on time, do a good work, all that type of stuff, you can work out here. You can go run. You can prepare for marathon. So I've yet to find what's wrong with that.</p>
Bodies	42	<p>We had one guy, [name] And he's just -- two guys Europe were on the same [omitted] there and they're just -- ...gorgeous buff guys that --...you know. So, we were very nervous or intimidated but just sort of like aware that these were --</p>
Branding	29	<p>I think there's definitely a feeling that you should partake in it. And honestly, I have to say I think it's probably right. I don't have a customer facing job but if the FitCo rep came to talk to me about products and he was out of shape and you know, I'll be thinking hmmm... I don't know if I want to buy what you've got to sell because you clearly don't believe in it. So I think the sum merit in it, you can't sell it if you don't believe in it. To believe in it really, you've got to be doing it.</p>

Challenges	7	<p>So we did a nutrition challenge at the CrossFit box last year which are two parts and it was six weeks and it was like strict paleo and also incorporated its own diet which accounted to the amount of food that you ... saying just the whole foods to the all chicken and probably shouldn't though. I lost weight. I felt much better. We did much more workouts. In beginning of the challenge, saw a huge improvement in performance so it definitely was beneficial but there's no way I could keep it up beyond that six weeks.</p>
Choice	31	<p>The approach was more of hey we're doing this and this is what we're doing. It was one hundred percent on which is good. The thing kind of burnt some people sometimes because they take paleo promoted so much within CrossFit. So the cafeteria before was not an organic place. It was a special order to get something healthy whereas the unhealthy options were basically free and --out there. Yeah. So I kind of went in and just basically overhaul that completely and I kind of upset some people that are like what the fuck you know, like I want soda, I want cookies, I want this. That wasn't healthy and for most of the people were doing at probably be mostly unhealthy people within the company. Yes but it was kind of the wrong approach, the wrong tactic. Let's slowly start to implement gradually, integrate this in here. CrossFit amongst population has a very elitist mentality. Do you CrossFit? You're awesome. You don't do CrossFit any of your fitness whatever you're doing, you're stupid!</p>
Coaching	30	<p>I don't think they quite get it until they get here but we... You'll see a lot of us just kind of hanging out it looks like we're doing nothing, just hanging around sitting on the boxes or whatever. I know one of our interns earlier, "Oh, they're so relaxed" but what people don't -- I think remember is that, "if it's my job to just be there for them?" So whether that's just like saying, "Hey, how's the kids?" "How's the day?" or whether its answering questions about injury or nutrition or whatever it is, we're here available to them all the time. So that's why we sit in the front, we have these offices in the back. We don't use them because it feels like we're far away from the members.</p>

Colonization	48	<p>It's kind of like everything like if you go to a conference for whatever say you go to a community conference and at the conference it's all about communications and then outside of the conference you go to dinner and people are still talking communications. There's no like break a leg in the CrossFit world. It's like just its freaking coffee. Drink it. It's food. Just fucking eat it. I don't want to talk 24/7 about fitness. I don't want to talk -- I deleted my Facebook account the other day because it's either picture food or somebody's talking about their workout and it's just like somebody out of their soap box trying to be philosophical about something and I think it's the same thing here it's like if you go down and eat talk about the game talk about [Aaron] Hernandez or talk about what's going on with Mandela, like I don't want to talk about sweeteners or paleo well you see that a lot here.</p>
Community	46	<p>Yeah, so I knew like I was already kind of going through this experience where I was like, yeah, we're missing – you're right, we are missing the boat. Fitness isn't fun anymore. And so, when I learned about CrossFit, I was like, of course, that's why it's doing well because people miss that fun. They miss the community and you know, we don't come to those churches anymore. We don't have the, you know, this type in our local community</p>
Comparison	5	<p>I guess almost sort of comparing - the comparison of myself.....on a regular basis and there are very specific athletes... but they talk about that sort of the -- level of measure that is all based on. And granted that everything is scalable and I do that. There are times where, you know, some workouts I know I can do that as a PR [personal record] or RX [prescribed weight]. I mean I haven't done a PR but an RX program just because I know my abilities.</p>
Competition	8	<p>There were times we're in, you know, maybe - you know, I don't do that then - like I have done that at least a year but probably a year ago or if you have taken a little before then when I opened it up on my - oh, that's a great alternative for me because I don't feel like I have to compete against others, you know, as I was, you know, thinking in my mind that I was competing against even though it's all about me</p>
Concertive Control	13	<p>I personally didn't feel belittled but it's like I'm sure other people in that situation because I'm going to do what I want. I'm going to eat what I want and I have no problems about it but somebody else in that situation might have been thinkin' I shouldn't eat the bread because they're saying so.</p>
Connection	5	<p>So we needed, we need some girls. So it was [name omitted] and I right after that and for me and for [name omitted], neither one of us, I mean we are good athletes, [but] neither one of us is a CrossFit games athletes, which was a little bit easier to make a relation and connection with people.</p>

Cult	20	<p>The cult aspect of CrossFit? No I mean I don't see cult use in a negative sense when it comes to CrossFit. I mean I think it's a community it's not a cult it's a community of people. I think what's interesting about CrossFit's business model is you and I could open up a box but the success of that box is going to be directly related to our ability to effectively coach and attract a good group of people that other people want to be part of. So I'll selfishly say that we hire good people Eric, you know what I mean and I think that the extension of that is that they found a community where they go work out together and probably do things that they otherwise would not have done.</p>
Culture	43	<p>I'd say it's just the kind of openness and friendliness of everybody. Also, I feel like when CrossFit first came here, a lot of people were apprehensive about trying it and just like... I don't want to say that they resented it but, it's kind of a vibe that a lot of people... it was kind of like this new... it was kind of like the new, cool kid type thing where... I think a lot of people thought that the few that were kind of drinking the Kool-aid were really... I don't know. They don't want to be like them. And I think a lot of these people now are probably drinking that Kool-Aid.</p>
Dissent	15	<p>There's this tons resistance but I mean in terms of the cult, if you don't follow what they say, you're done.</p>
Division	13	<p>Yes. I don't think it's probably, I don't think it's affecting who sits with who at lunch, or just business, but I think there is definitely some... I think there's some type of, subconscious division. I don't know from whose side but probably a little bit from both.</p>
Elitism	7	<p>I think just communications and just that. If you're not doing CrossFit then you're a pussy.</p>
Embarrassment	6	<p>Yeah, that I'd fail that I'd be embarrassed. I think that, you know, I felt like I was overweight. I felt like I was going to, you know, kind of be the last kid in gym class who couldn't finish the push-ups or couldn't do any of those things. And you know, there was definitely a weird sense of like I don't know like now I'm thinking about it, there's a weird sense of like your youth when you were scared of something you didn't know about. You know, like first day of school but, you know, first day of football practice, first day of any of those things. You don't know what you're getting in to</p>

Emotion	5	It's a very stressful personnel stressful and figuring that out because I get emotionally invested in anyone that comes in here whether you're interviewing or you're a member and it's really hard for me because we're CrossFitters, we're not corporate suits where we all care is the bottom line, I could care less about it so that's one of the challenging pieces and how do I make sure that the members are happy and coaching status progressing and that's a good challenge, not a bad thing, it's the one that's always present.
Evangelical	13	He's so quiet and look when he sits there helping further and when he says something it's like magical. [Laughter] It's so deep and it makes so much fun when he talks. He's such a cool guy to me.
Evidence	4	I'm not saying somebody doesn't come on strong and it could be an individual that says, hey come on we want you over the box. I get that and that shouldn't occur or at least not consistently but I think that we provide ample opportunity for people to find their way another way. I'm an example of that
Excessive Working Out	2	Yup I go five days a week and sometimes not only there but sometimes I go home and work out too.
Excuses	2	...you know, she keeps having always medical issues. And you know, she'll come in for maybe twice a week for two weeks and then fall off the phase of the earth again. You know, it's something that, you know – some of the people are just to the point where they, you know, exercise is a chore for them, you know. They don't have any interest in doing it because it's more work
Extreme	35	That's kind of like a joke within CrossFit community and that's where guys like [name omitted], guys that are major anti CrossFit. Like what the fuck! Like you're sitting there glorifying this and kind of joking about it when basically it kills people and 'Rhabdo the Clown.' The fact that if you work out you'd throw up like, what kind of workout, [uses that] as a badge of honor? I don't want to -- I've never thrown up during the workout. I don't want to.

Factions	27	<p>There are such little clicks within the CrossFitting grove about the 6:30 in the morning class that I've mentioned a few times and that still has a reputation as being the hard core, super fit. I wouldn't go to that 6:30 class because I would feel intimidated to go to that because I know that the people who go to that are the ones who are doing the workouts with the heavy weights and they're doing all the as prescribed work outs and I don't want to be and I know I hate people who are not going to that class talking to each about other how cool it was, did you puke?</p>
Family	6	<p>The biggest thing is that these guys have become family to each other. Which is not common necessary in the workplace and the culture over there, everybody knows everybody which is really cool. When you go to the cafeteria everybody knows everyone. They do have really a good job of -- if you're having a meeting, you do your thing and stick to kind of stay out of the way but everybody knows everybody when you walk to the halls. There's no -- my former office experience I only knew ten people that sat around me in my cube and that really was it. Unless I had to see somebody from another building or from the same group like for the most part, I just knew the people that sat near me, had no idea what the other people did. Although they work at the same company, the same people that I passed all the way from the elevator every single day like I have no idea but these guys everybody know everybody. You'll see them -- they'll do silly things like ride their bikes in the hallways. Some, I think it helped maybe just like in the middle a little bit, hopefully. Just keep things light and interesting. [First name omitted] our CEO, he rides his bike all over inside of that building. I don't really know why, but it's funny.</p>
Fear	9	<p>It's very much they don't want to go on record. They don't - They're a little bit afraid. A friend of mine, she's point blank like I'm not freaking doing your thing. No. She's been told to just do it. She's like, "No, I'm not doing that crap. No." There's also - Yeah, it's funny. I don't want to say who they are. I don't want to get anybody in trouble [whispering].</p>
Fitness	47	<p>I would say this definitely the people in a more fitness type areas, there's definitely a higher percentage of people want to work out but I would still say if you have a fitness center and it was another company that didn't have a fitness background, you got to get way more people, like I said IT, accounts payable, the legal department. We have a great amount of people that work out in each of those areas.</p>

Gender	22	<p>Yup. When I talk about the boys club, I was always fortunate to work my way into that boys club, which I think benefitted My career advancement within other organization, but while that was happening, I was also aware of the fact that, you know, other folks weren't in that boys club.</p>
Getting Ahead	2	<p>...because they didn't play golf or because they didn't play squash.or they couldn't lift weights with the guys, and what I've seen here at CrossFit is not - You're rubbing elbows and you're sweating next to guys and gals and executives and entry-level employees, younger folks, and older folks. It's indiscriminate. It's just it is what it is, and you can talk to anyone about the workout you did and even on a playing field because of the scalability of the programming. So I think that has given, you know, the past when where only a certain group of guys would get invited out in a foursome to go golfing or you only get on the squash court with, you know, you really have a competitive match with someone of equal ability. At CrossFit, it puts everyone on the same room, on the same even playing field, and you can relate to each other with your male or female. So I think it's definitely given equal access, not in the locker room obviously. That's still kind of, you know, but everything else outside of that.</p>
Guilt	2	<p>Well, because some athletic [apparel] company, they promote that and they promote it by offering so many things to the employees. I mean it's -- you almost feel guilty if you don't take advantage of everything especially as far as health and exercise is concern.</p>
Health	18	<p>...that's just don't - they didn't go to the gym. They don't do anything else. They just - they walk. That's what they - that's their exercise. Are they getting the full benefit of what we preach and what we know or what we've learned I should say not preach but what we learned about, you know, the whole combination of consumption, food, intake what - you know, what - how do you eat properly.</p>
Humor	8	<p>So, one time we were on a company meeting with our president and [name omitted] just started CrossFit and he made some joke about it and [name omitted]in the meeting in front of the whole people said, "No, I'm not doing CrossFit. I still work."</p>

Identification	7	<p>I was really concerned about how my son, my older son was going to take the fact that I might not be working here anymore. And I didn't know how to tell him and I said to him - this is kind of a cute story and I thought he'd be upset about CrossFit. And he's a little upset about CrossFit but not really. He likes the idea of CrossFit a lot more than he likes CrossFit. He said three things. He said, "So, what about summer camps," because he comes in and we have lunch and he needs to stay at the office with me afterwards. And then he said, "Can I get Under Armour [FitCo competitor] sweatshirt?" And I was like, "Yes, you can like now you can have Under Armour sweatshirt," like he couldn't do that before. And then he said, "Okay."</p>
Industrial	3	<p>that the cost... the cost for you to get this type of - and I like to be part of it too is like when you think about the difference between training, there's a basic base, you know, base training fee for our trainers here. We have the access to the facilities of the gym, their showers and all the equipment. But when you think about CrossFit, there's not much in there as far as, you know, maintenance is. You know, you don't have TVs. You don't have the, you know, the electrical equipment, all that stuff. Some of the - you don't have the - what do you have, a roller [PVC pipe].</p>
Injury	28	<p>But there's - I think there's something to that because there's been some injuries and that's also why I don't do it is because I have my shoulder lunged up and I think - I guarantee you if I were to do it that would break something or tear something because I just - I don't know. I was raised in an old-fashioned training way of just slow and steady</p>
Intensity	8	<p>Yeah, intensity and kind of like formation and making sure you're getting lot of like variety in what you're doing.</p>
Intimidation	24	<p>I find some people come over here to just have a look, sometimes they are a little bit timid</p>

Leadership	6	<p>And when I see that kind of stuff happening, I confront it and say, "It's not a negative towards me when I'm saying we're on the same team, we might not have the same approach." Obama has this great quote about when he was junior senator and Strom Thurmond said something and he said something to a senior democrat. Obama said, "Well, Strom Thurmond, him - does not care about America and the senior senator -- that he cares about America more than you know. Never question his intent." He said, "Now, he might now agree with you, he might have a different - but his intent is for the best part of the country. Now, he might have a different strategy," and I thought that was so mature of the senator to say, "We totally disagree but man, does he love America and so do I." And like that's a little maybe grandiose in terms of loving the company but you know, we should all have the same goal doing what's right for the company not necessarily just doing right for my group or my raise.</p>
Managerialism	32	<p>Well, that one's hard but if they'd asked then we can try to advice but everybody's boss or manager is different and some of them are -- this is surprising to me still, some are really onboard, some of them are not.</p>
Mandate	21	<p>I think early on with prior to my arrival here, I've heard it was really - You know, this company was - They say this company was desperate... Well, you sure as hell make it successful so if you're here working for this company, you sure as hell better support this because at the end of it, all our livelihoods are riding on it. So get your ass over there. Do it. Do it. Do it. Why aren't you doing it yet? And I think some folks resent that the - It felt like an ultimatum. It felt like they - You know, you better CrossFit or else type of push, and you know, we back off that sense, and it's about being active and fit, but I think some people still harbor some resentment.</p>
Masculinity	9	<p>The girls would hear a lot that we look like men which I think is silly or I hear a lot of women say that they don't want to get big, they don't want to look like certain people. We have a lot of girls who -- we have couple of girls I can think of right now who are engaged and have upcoming weddings and stopped CrossFitting because they think that they're going to be too big for their wedding dresses or what have you which it's sends myself, [other coaches] right over the edge [laughter] because to me that seems like, 'okay so I want to be less fit and less healthy for a real special day of my life' as supposed to more fit and healthy [in the long run].</p>

Meeting Behaviors	2	I definitely see meetings starting that way. You'll know people who – if you're going to have a meeting with someone who you know is CrossFits or follows a certain diet and if you know I ate paleo and you had a meeting with me, you would not bring in your trips in soda to a meeting because you know that – you know because then I'm going to be like
Networking	29	I think it allows for a very common conversation across people that they may have never have interacted before.
Nutrition	82	And I was like, looking at them like, I'm the last person to be talking about like -- but yeah it was a decision that we made that if we are going to be the fitness brand, we didn't want to be totally maniacal about it. The way I explained it is this way Eric, you know [name omitted] right? [Name omitted] is all about CrossFit. He owns his own box, etc. and is into this movement in a very big way. I see myself as the every man. A guy trying to be fitter, played sports, still active but I'm not a nutritionist. So he can talk paleo, I don't quite know that. [laughter] So what we tried to do was create fair and I sometimes call it nutrition or food for dummies right? I want to be able to make more good choice than bad choices in the cafeteria. So what we did is slowly but surely we started to change the food or organize the food in a way that employees are now able to make more good choices around food than bad choice.
Obesity	4	But if you – once you get someone through the door, the right door, they'll see that it really is for anyone to do and you should – like there is that – there shouldn't be that feeling of being intimidated or failing. With that being said, I do think there's a place for certain specific classes for people who don't want to put themselves in a situation like that. So, you'd have the people who are that obese. I have a friend who owns an affiliate and – at Detroit and she has a class specifically for people that are – like she wanted to define it so that it'd be easy to explain to people but not offend anyone.

Other Fitness	48	<p>The approach was more of hey we're doing this and this is what we're doing. It was one hundred percent on which is good. The thing kind of burnt some people sometimes because they take paleo promoted so much within CrossFit. So the cafeteria before was not an organic place. It was a special order to get something healthy whereas the unhealthy options were basically free and --out there. Yeah. So I kind of went in and just basically overhaul that completely and I kind of upset some people that are like what the fuck you know, like I want soda, I want cookies, I want this. That wasn't healthy and for most of the people were doing at probably be mostly unhealthy people within the company. Yes but it was kind of the wrong approach, the wrong tactic. Let's slowly start to implement gradually, integrate this in here. CrossFit amongst population very elitist mentally. Did you CrossFit? You're awesome. You don't do CrossFit any of your fitness whatever you're doing, you're stupid!</p>
Paternalism	8	<p>At times being told by both my wife and my children, dad I won't say because I'm being taped, like that, whatever. The point of the matter, I'm sure it goes on a little bit. No one wants to be preached to nor wants to be lectured to and I'm sure a small portion of that goes on but I think most people are trying to educate or encourage or whatever. Again, I think there's more good intention than bad intention around that kind of feedback.</p>
Peer Pressure	8	<p>...more of I guess peer pressure, everyone else is kind of doing that thing.</p>
Perception	11	<p>So, one time we were on a company meeting with our president and just started CrossFit and he made some joke about it and [manager name] in the meeting in front of the whole people said, 'No, I'm not doing CrossFit. I still work.'</p>
Philosophy	5	<p>I would like to do that and get to know a little bit more about all the moves that I'm doing maybe help somebody else. Master them as well.</p>
Place	7	<p>I was really surprised when I moved here from New York because there aren't maybe I got to work a little bit later but everybody stayed at work like until 7 o'clock the earliest and it wasn't like that was working late that was like a normal time to do work. The first like week I was here I'm still in that mindset and I think I was leaving work at like 6:30 or something like that and the garage was totally empty and I was like [laughter] where am I?</p>

Politics	3	<p>The most difficult part of working here? It had to be the politics and by that - and that was really a [other Madrigal brand]-specific not FitCo-specific...I'm all for working hard. I'm not about the perception of working hard.</p>
Power Distance	16	<p>...that have definitely - and I think are going to help me both professionally and personally whether that means, you know, like I know for a fact like that I got farther on this interview path with [CEO - uses first name] because I was doing CrossFit. And he felt like you understand FitCo because you're doing CrossFit and that sense - and those are - and some of those relationships are - I met a guy for the first time, he's the head of sports marketing for FitCo. Someone suggested I meet him so I scheduled half an hour. I didn't realize he's a regular noon guy but we just past a hundred times and never said hello.</p>
Pressure	53	<p>[do you ever felt pressure to go to CrossFit?] At first there was a bit at first. It was a bit of a mandatory kind of thing like that anger's a thing. There was still some decidedly negative people about CrossFit afraid to call the cult whether they want to mean that or not. [laughter] Yeah I'll think that they really should have been quite as heavy handed at first but didn't last long it is like it doesn't persist anymore that they had to do with everyone</p>
Pride	28	<p>The biggest thing is that these guys have become family to each other. Which is not common necessary in the workplace and the culture over there, everybody knows everybody which is really cool. When you go to the cafeteria everybody knows everyone. They do have really a good job of -- if you're having a meeting, you do your thing and stick to kind of stay out of the way but everybody knows everybody when you walk to the halls. There's no -- my former office experience I only knew ten people that sat around me in my cube and that really was it. Unless I had to see somebody from another building or from the same group like for the most part, I just knew the people that sat near me, had no idea what the other people did. Although they work at the same company, the same people that I passed all the way from the elevator every single day like I have no idea but these guys everybody know everybody. You'll see them -- they'll do silly things.</p>

Purpose	5	Yeah. It's a great question, [name omitted] our chief marketing officer reference, they had a business review article a couple -- probably a year or two now which said that the company is that going to win in the future, going to be purpose driven brands that can help solve societal problems or challenges and make money at it. So we believe that there is a consumer or consumers globally out there that some of whom, yourself included are already living an active and fit lifestyle.
Rationale	20	We did it for two reasons. One was a selfish reason where is this thing called discrimination testing in 401 case where the highly compensated cannot contribute add up just proportionate level to the less highly compensated. So we were failing that discrimination test, a lot of companies do. So that was one reason but the real altruistic reason was that Americans are living longer and saving less. So we felt good about that.
Researcher Reflexivity	17	Yeah. It's a great question, [name omitted] our chief marketing officer reference, they had a business review article a couple -- probably a year or two now which said that the company is that going to win in the future, going to be purpose driven brands that can help solve societal problems or challenges and make money at it. So we believe that there is a consumer or consumers globally out there that some of whom, yourself included are already living an active and fit lifestyle.
Resistance	28	I think part of the reason is that you mentioned it before they think, you know, they feel like it's like you being told what to do and so
Results	29	I started to see more and more people and then it came to a point where I can't really complain about it and put it down if I didn't give it a try. [laughter] And there were couple of girls in my department who had signed up for the on ramp, so I signed up on ramp with them. [Laughter] [female]

Sacrifice	6	<p>I've just been more... I'm just more aware, more... I remember in auto ramp, there was a lot of nutrition lecture. I don't think I really took that to heart too much. Well actually, here is one thing that, I don't even know why I do this but, they are like, "Yay, CrossFit." Dude, you know, from the start, I drink less soda, less coffee and more water. So when I started in auto ramp, I stopped drinking coffee, and I don't... it wasn't like a conscious thought at that time, it was just, "I don't want to drink coffee now." And now, I just haven't been drinking coffee for months. I still don't have a good answer as to why it's just like, "Alright, I still don't want to drink coffee. I won't drink coffee."</p>
Scaling	10	<p>It's always hard [laughter]. I mean it depends what your goal is or what you're after. If you're after to be the best you can be and you want to look good in a bikini around the beach you're going to work hard for it. If you're going just to feel good and to say I went to the gym but you're not all about like that shortness of breath but you don't have to. I mean you scale it appropriately.</p>
Socialization	12	<p>It was a drastic difference because the other jobs not everyone was open or friendly as they were here. Here's like something totally different and I also noticed it at the CrossFit box and then I noticed it when I came back to work here to building just seeing these people I never met and their just saying hi and I have to say hi back.</p>
Sport of Fitness	7	<p>I would say that people in the fitness industry definitely have that perception but once again, if you really go in and do the work outs I pull back and say -- and once again, I mentioned at the beginning that some people can get hurt, but if you look at it as a sports instead of just fitness activity....I'm not a great athlete but...</p>
Stress	20	<p>The hardest part of my job is, you know, throwing a punch, but nothing, you know, landing basically. Nothing. Knowing, hearing what you're, you know - I think the most frustrating is - If it's a bad idea that's fine if it dies because people have legit reasons, but...</p>
Surveillance	17	<p>...the people on the outside looking at the people going saying, "You know, you leave at a quarter of...you come back at 20 past." You know, we're there for an hour and 40 minutes and that's the one thing that I think divides people - making in to that boot camps.</p>

Time	30	<p>It's true, true things. The other thing here is like they offer good class times. They've gotten better over the past year and a half when they offer classes but also if you want to go CrossFit at 11 a.m. unless you've had a down path, you need to leave your desk by probably 10:40 because you got to go change and you had to run over the gym. You do your workout. You're done by noon and come back. If you're a good person, you shower and you know, you just – I don't know what you're doing just come back smelly.</p>
Trust	6	<p>...if I start telling you what to do to some degree what you're doing and you're perceived with stuff, then that makes you maybe feel - And I'm not saying I'm in power or position of authority.</p>
Uncomfortable	5	<p>That will start making me feel like well, he doesn't trust me. On-Ramp, after 6:30 class, we did a people carry. And so, there's a 50-yard people - 50-meter people carry. And I at the time was 285 pounds and I just said I will carry people but I was like he has don't have to carry me. And the guys were like, "No, we're going to do this," because they knew it was my first day and I think about - now, I can remember the guys who carried me... I didn't know him [name omitted] really very well at all. I'll never forget them now like they were carrying my sweaty body –</p>
Uniqueness	10	<p>CrossFit is unique in that you have the constant ability to challenge yourself like a variety of different ways, whether it's adding weight, whether it's beating a time, whether you know doing something you've never done before. So where in basketball, once you get the basic skills done, you're not going to do a skill that's different than you've done before but in CrossFit maybe you're doing clubs in a band then eventually you get to doing them without the bend, maybe you get to do without the bend and have to do a butterfly pull up instead. Maybe eventually move on to muscle, so whatever, there's always new tricks if you will, to like move on to progression to challenge yourself. I think that's more realistic to real life than like a game if you will because there's always new challenges, there's always you know bumps in a road, whatever maybe.</p>

Work Ethic	22	<p>Some people our own work hard, I mean I think certainly people in the little world of health and fitness think like living in a bubble athletic, there's no pill. CrossFit works because you work hard, it's really not magic. Think about anything, if you're good at your job, you work hard. If you have a thriving family, you work hard at the family. There's a common language of work hard but people don't want them. We see them look at the world we live in. Yes, unfortunate but the truth so I think that's also the piece of people forget certainly world of -- when you're in the world, you're in, if you don't do CrossFit -- I can't do that for you, you got to come in. Now I think that's overarching that people don't want to talk about because it's not politically correct. You're telling me I'm not a hard worker? Well, I mean I can tell you that what most people come across the gym are successful at what they do whether they're here or any CrossFit gym, there's a reason why they're coming to the gym, there's a reason why they're figuring out to fund that passion, that fuel. I've seen kids make it work that have no business paying 2, \$300 a month to do CrossFit at cross city but they realized how important it is and they figure it out and you'll be fine in life</p>
Work Time	9	<p>So, it's confusing actually on that too. I – initially, I clocked out for it and then somebody told me you weren't supposed to and then I – so, I didn't for a week and I did for a week and then this week – this week I've started to again</p>
Vulnerable	2	<p>...you know, you're sweating. You're hurting. You're dying. You're doing whatever. You're high-fiving and you're dirty and you're chalky and you're - whatever, it's just different. It's just different and it's just different than walking by someone in the hallway.</p>