

Employee Prioritization or Exploitation?

What Extravagant Perks Say About Organizational Culture in the Modern Workplace

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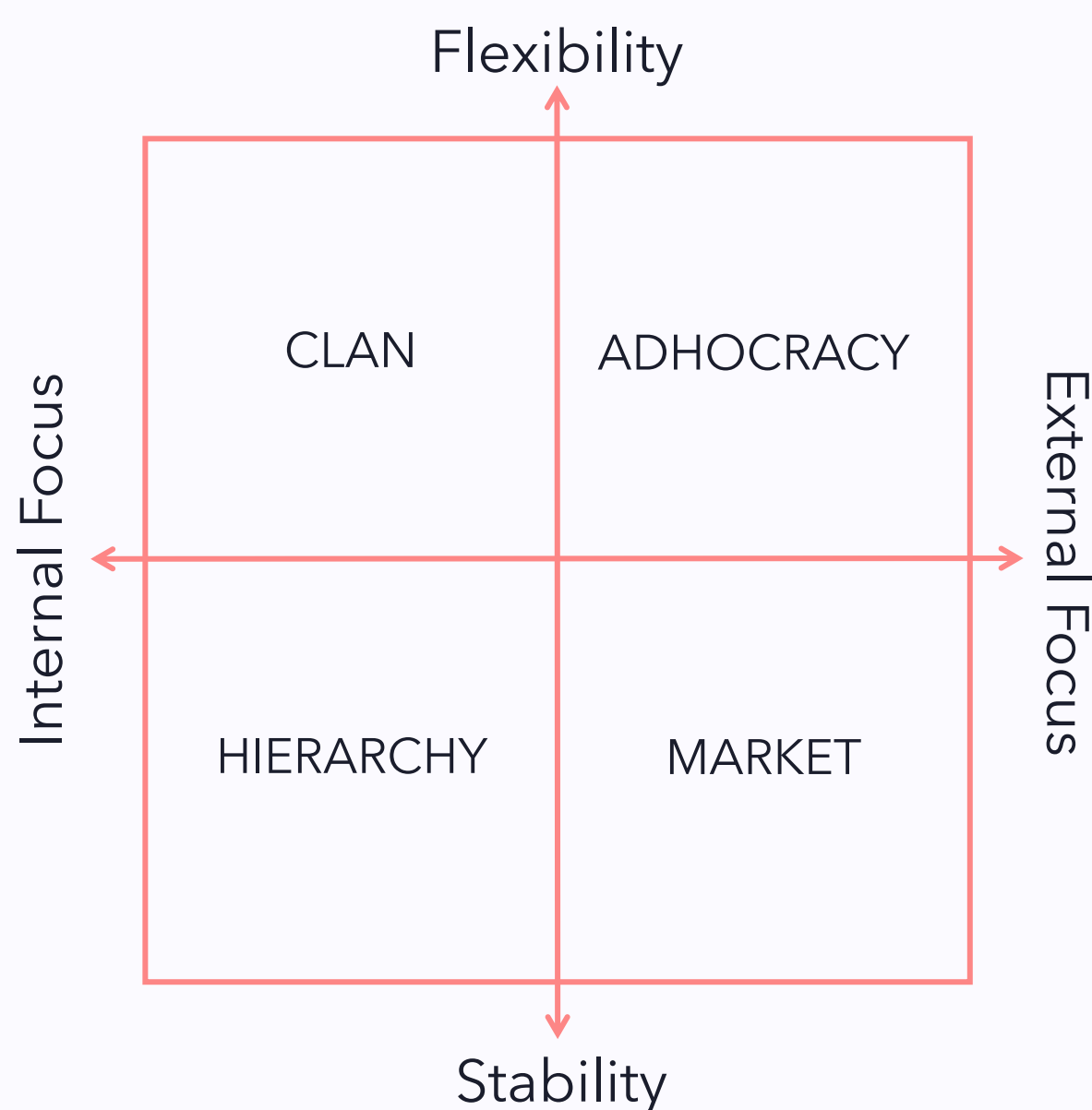
Theoretical Foundations

Organizational Culture

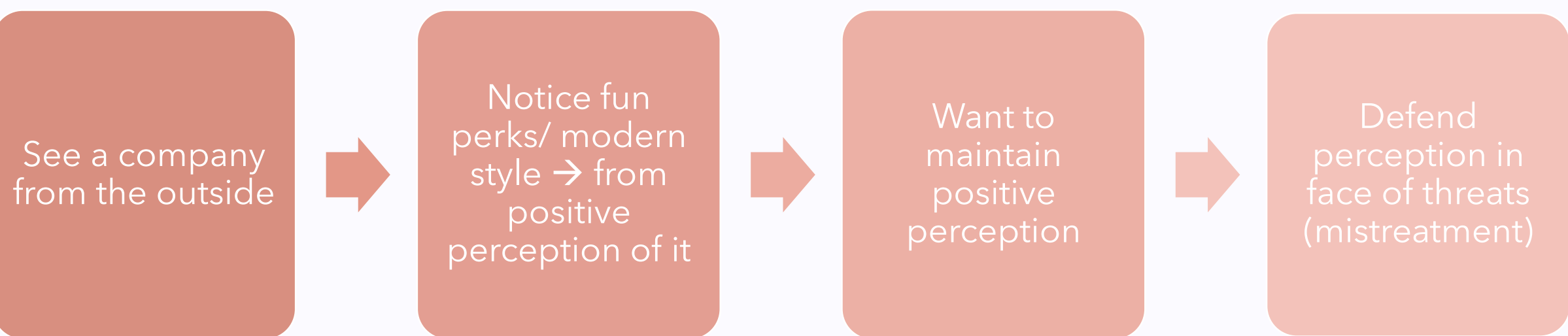
Shared beliefs, values and assumptions
Determine the norms and patterns of behaviour that develop in an organizations (Johns & Saks, 2020)

The Competing Values Framework

Diagnoses a company culture as one of four. Relevant to this study are Clan culture and Adhocracy. Modern workplaces use cool perks and offices to signal that they prioritize employee well-being, which would be indicative of a clan culture. Despite this they are often diagnosed as otherwise base on their needs.



System Justification Theory



Hypotheses

H1	Clan culture perk	↑ Justification of Exploitation
H2	Clan culture perk	↑ Justification of Mistreatment
H3	Clan culture perk	↑ Expectations of Perfectionism

Key Variable Definitions

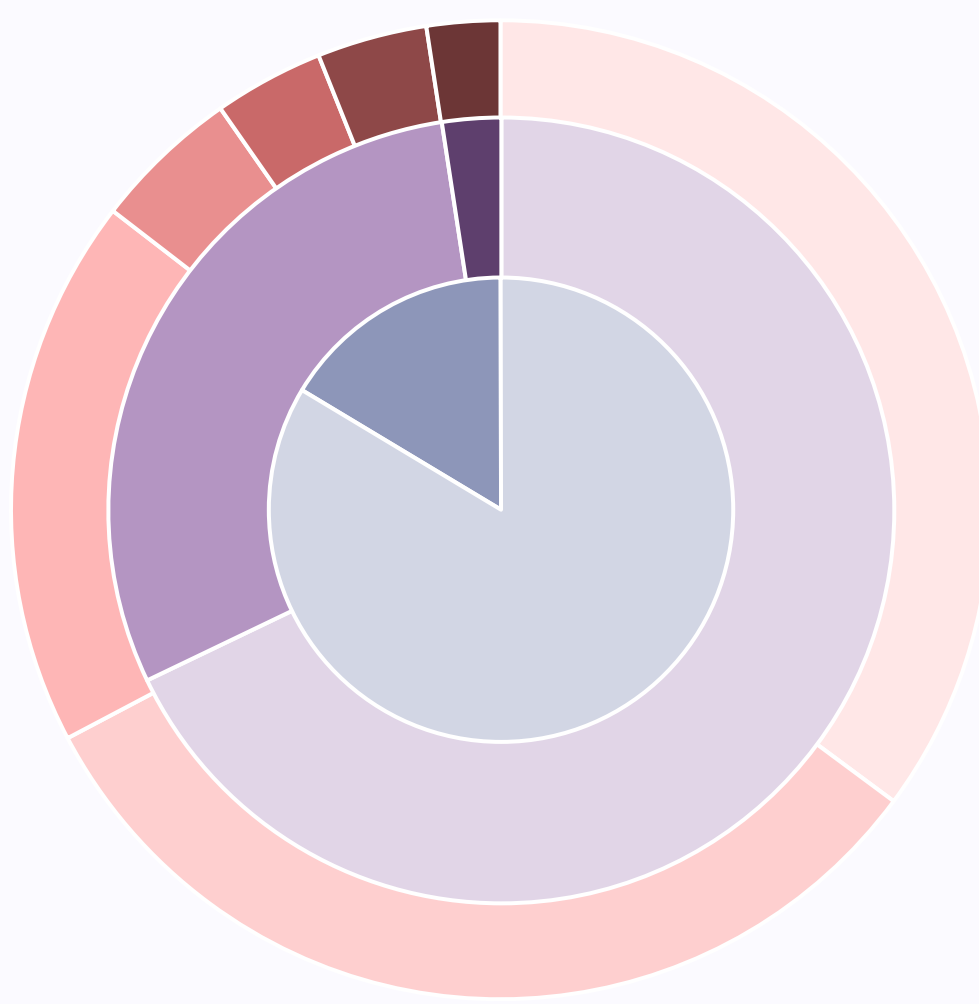
IV	Clan culture perk	A perk offered by a company that is novel and fun (e.g., staff gym)
DV	Exploitation	Unfairly compensated tasks and/or beyond job scope
	Mistreatment	Unfair or demeaning treatment from superior
	Perfectionism	Unreasonably high work standards

Sample

165 Brock University students ($M_{age} = 19.36$, $SD_{age} = 1.99$, 82.6% Female), were recruited over SONA and compensated with class credit. The majority of this sample studied Social Science (35%) and Health Science (32%).

Control: n=82
Experimental: n=83

Social Sciences (35%)
Health Sciences (32%)
Education (18%)
Mathematics and Science (5%)
>20 years old (69%)
20-25 years old (31%)
Female (83%)
Male (17%)



Methodology

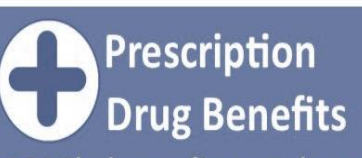
Introduce Participants to a fake tech company and employee

"John works as a software developer for a San Francisco based tech company called CCM as a software developer..."
"The following two pages briefly describe some of the perks and benefits offered to employees of CCM..."

Participants in the control condition are taught about the company's standard employee benefits (e.g., dental) while those in the experimental condition are shown that the company provides its employees with exciting perks such as an in-house pub, a games room, an on-site staff gym and an employee nap room.

Control

Additional coverage



Prescription Drug Benefits
CCM's benefits package provides coverage for both non-specialty and specialty prescription medication. You may obtain up to a 30-day supply of medications from preferred pharmacies or a 90-day supply from select pharmacy mail services.



Vision
CCM's vision plan covers annual eye exams and eyewear.



Dental
CCM's dental plan offers full coverage for preventative and diagnostic care as well as partial coverage for basic treatments such as fillings.



Mental Health Benefits
Full coverage: access to short-term counselling for a variety of life events
Partial reimbursement: a network of licensed psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and long-term counselling services.

Experimental

Perks for employees

Several free meal options
Choose from a variety of on-site cafes and restaurants serving up snacks, drinks and meals. Staff favorites include the pulled pork tacos at our in-house gastropub and the banana cheesecake made fresh at our grab-and-go cafe.



Staff games room
Whether you want to unwind alone or bond with your team members, our games room boasts a full range of arcade classics like Pac-Man and Space Invaders; the latest consoles and releases; a wall of board games; as well as several table games such as ping-pong and football.



Gym
Enjoy the convenience of a fully equipped, on-site, gym and showers to cut the commute out of your routine.



Nap Room
Sound proof nap pods are available to rest in if you need to step away from your work to recharge.

Stories involving employee mistreatment at the company are presented

"A manager at CCM is sick, and no one from management can fill in. John is asked to take over the manager's duties until they come back... without compensation"

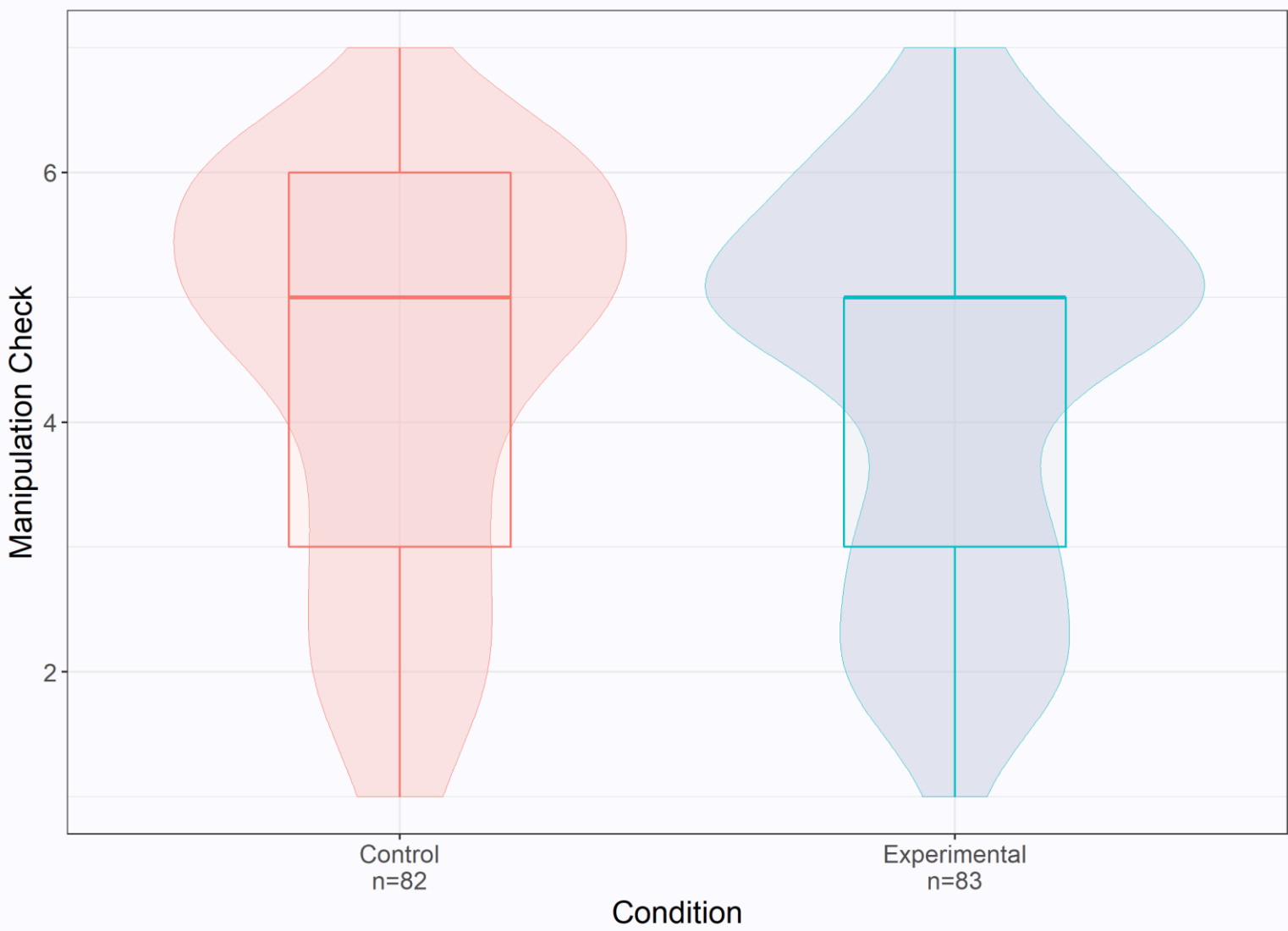
Measures are scored on 7-point Likert Scales

"CCM is behaving reasonably in asking John to take over these duties."

Please rank how strongly you agree:
1= Strongly disagree – 7 = Strongly Agree

Findings

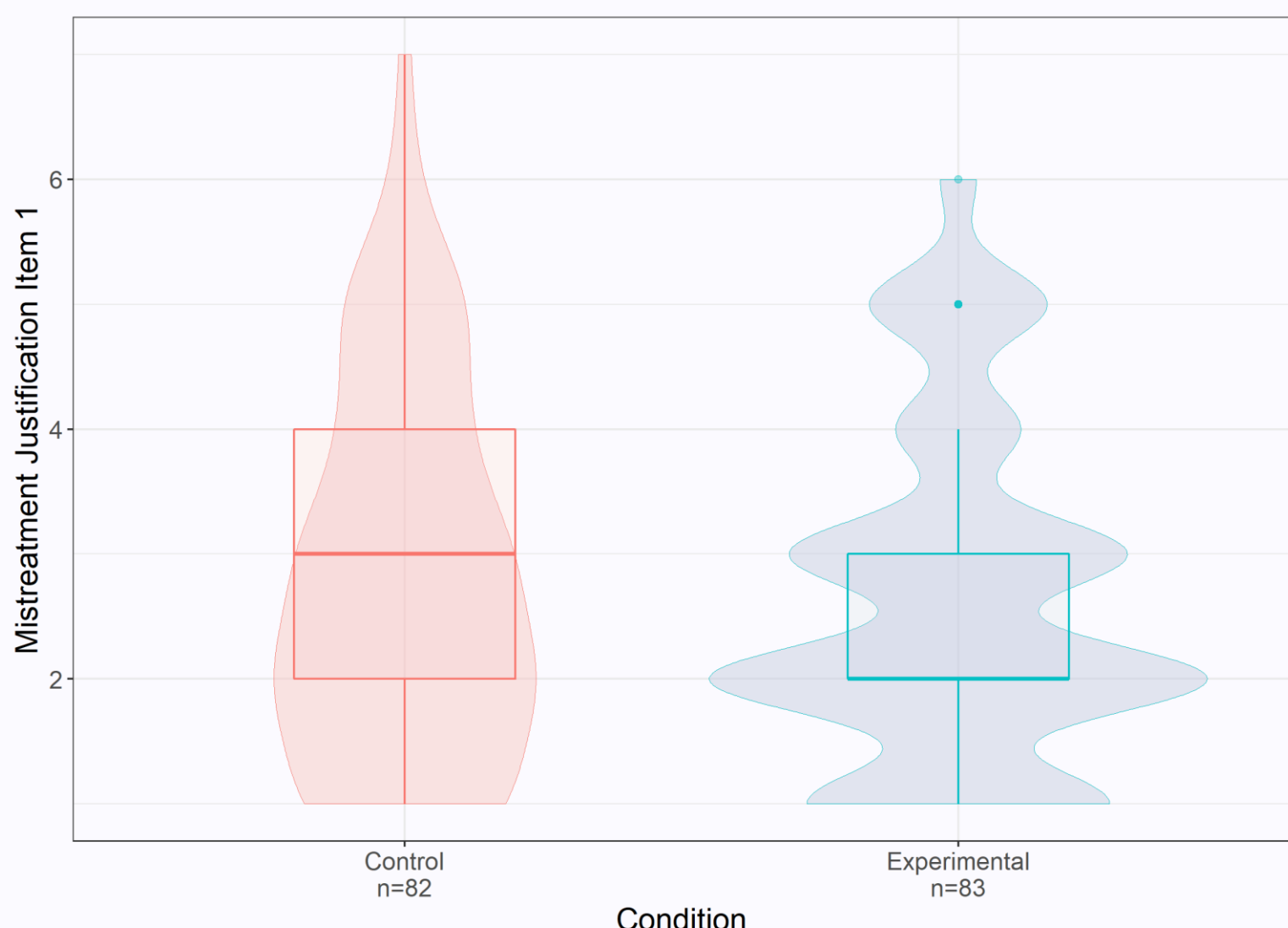
Manipulation Check



H1: Exploitation Justification



H2: Mistreatment Justification



H3: Expectations of Perfectionism



- No significant difference in perception of perks between conditions ($t(163) = 0.27$, $p = 0.79$)
- No significant difference in justification of exploitation ($t(163) = 0.93$, $p = 0.35$), justification of mistreatment ($t(163) = 0.7$, $p = 0.49$) or expectations of perfectionism ($t(163) = -0.57$, $p = 0.57$) between conditions.

Correlational analysis of all outcome variables found relationships between:

- Manipulation check and expectations of perfectionism ($r = 0.32$, $p < .01$)
- Manipulation check and expectations of gratitude ($r = 0.39$, $p < .01$)
- Perception of CCM as a fun place and:
 - Exploitation legitimization ($r = .24$, $p < .01$)
 - Mistreatment legitimization ($r = .23$, $p < .01$)
 - Expectation of perfectionism ($r = .21$, $p < .01$)
- Belief that CCM cares about its employees well being and:
 - Exploitation legitimization ($r = .35$, $p < .01$)
 - Mistreatment legitimization ($r = .35$, $p < .01$)
 - Expectation of perfectionism ($r = .21$, $p < .01$)

Conclusions and Implications

- Insignificant difference in means for the manipulation check between conditions
 - Suggests our **manipulation was ineffective**
- A **relationship does exist** between clan culture signalling and justification of unfair expectations put on employees
 - Provides explanation for justification of exploitation in tech
- Builds on Organizational Culture literature
 - Speaks to the **impact of misleading culture signaling**
- Adds to workplace perk literature
 - Bulk of perk research studies positive outcomes so this provides a **balancing perspective**
- Informs **prospective employees** seeking new employers
 - Learning to accurately identify an organizations culture

Limitations and Future Directions

- Ineffective manipulation due to subtle delivery →
 - Delivery of IV through more direct means than brochure
 - Measure of DV's through more direct means than vignettes
- Sample not reflective of individuals working in the tech sector. It was more female, younger and predominantly educated in fields other than math and computer science
 - Collect from a **more representative sample**
 - Mechanical Turk to access employed adults
 - Stack Overflow to access tech employees, ideally managers

References

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