Consumptive Work in Coworking: Using Consumption Strategically for Work

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Consumption has always been part of the workplace, yet it has traditionally been seen as nonwork—an activity that depletes rather than creates value. In the knowledge and digital economy, however, consumption and work are becoming increasingly intertwined, calling for a relational perspective on consumption's productive role. We develop this perspective through a four-year ethnography of coworking spaces across Paris and London, supplemented by post-pandemic archival data. We introduce consumptive work as the instrumentalization of consumption activities in the workplace to generate productive value. Consumptive work emerges within a postindustrial societal context where workplace culture is shaped by consumer ideology, leading to (1) customer entitlement in the workplace, (2) consumer desire toward the workplace, and (3) consumer lifestyle aspirations toward work. Consumptive work is characterized by inconspicuousness, boundarilessness, and communal and market exchange. While it can be empowering, it also fosters neo-normative alienation, particularly through performative play and leisure, and the pursuit of productive wellness. Ultimately, consumptive work reinforces evolving consumer desires and aspirations about office work and workplaces. This study advances interdisciplinary research on consumption and consumption ideology in the workplace, workplace alienation, new ways of working, and consumer research connecting work, home, and leisure.

Keywords: consumptive work, consumption ideology, coworking, work, alienation, empowerment

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> In coworking spaces, it does not look like people focus [on their work] for too long. The main workspace is noisy and often plays music. People attend various daily workshops, from professional ones, such as analytics and coding, to leisure and craft events, including pumpkin carving and beer making. These are equally consumed for their professional development or networking opportunities, building experiential CVs, or pure enjoyment. Members feel they can attend events and talk casually to the many other attendees with various backgrounds. They also partake in daily meditation and yoga, where physical training and wellness practices are systematically connected to work, such as how to improve performance and creativity. . . . If they need suppliers, coworking members can find them by scrolling on the platform provided by their coworking firm, where everyone can post an ad or an event and benefit from the communal market. As noted by Jodie, a manager, coworking companies aim to facilitate members' growth holistically, mixing work and life activities strategically. (Patchwork of field notes)

Over the last two decades, consumption has become increasingly integral to work. In coworking, access-based

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shared workspaces for independent workers (Grazian 2020), work, and professional development are carried out via participation in wellness activities, leisure, play, or communal consumption. The vignette, constructed closely from our observational notes, illustrates how coworking blurs the boundaries of work and consumption, affording an individualized and experiential work process that often does not look or feel like productive work. In effect, the same aesthetic–hedonic principles that drive consumer desire (Schmitt, Brakus, and Biraglia 2022a) are also beginning to govern the choices people make about work (Warren 2014). In response to shifting societal demands about work, coworking firms redefine work through the strategic integration of consumption, including play, fun, leisure, and wellness, which are mutually co-constituted by members (Bacevice and Spreitzer 2023; Leclercq-Vandelannoitte 2021). Examining the re-entanglement of consumption and work in coworking, we argue that consumption is strategically instrumentalized into work, producing a new form of work we call *consumptive work*. In contrast to productive consumption, which constitutes consumer work in the marketplace (Beverland, Fernandez, and Eckhardt 2024; Moisio, Arnould, and Gentry 2013), we study the productive value of consumption in the workplace where employees engage in consumption for work-related purposes.

Consumption is commonplace in the workplace; however, it has been conceptually treated as separate from work. Prior consumer research initially conceptualizes consumption in the workplace primarily as *nonwork*, separate from the productive, value-creation activities of work itself (Du Gay 1996; Paulsen 2015). Consumption and work have traditionally been assumed to belong to separate spheres of economic activity, with work being a value-producing activity and consumption being value-depleting (i.e., we consume what is produced) (Chertkovskaya and Loacker 2016; Graeber 2011; Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010). These studies are conducted in traditional office settings with clear boundaries between work, home, and leisure (Tian and Belk 2005; Weinberger 2015). Past research conceptualizes consumption in the workplace as separate from work, constituting either acts of resistance or boundary and identity-construction practice (Press and Arnould 2011; Tian and Belk 2005; Weinberger 2015).

More recently, consumer researchers have started acknowledging the broad connection between work and consumption at a societal and individual level when one fuels the other. For example, research has documented the blurring of consumer and professional lifestyles, such as in flexible consumer lifestyle (Mimoun and Bardhi 2022) or digital nomadism (Atanasova, Eckhardt, and Husemann 2024), where choice of work fits a consumer lifestyle. Similarly, research also shows that young, affluent consumers collect exploratory experiences such as extensive leisure and travel as part of their experiential résumé (Keinan and Kivetz 2011), which they can later convert into desired job placement (Weinberger, Zavisca, and Silva 2017). Extreme consumption can be a way to counter white-collar work alienation, such as through engagement in painful sports to counter the boredom and disembodiment of traditional office work (Scott, Cayla, and Cova 2017). Overall, these studies have started to stress the re-entanglement of consumption and work as well as the significant role that consumption can play. We build on their insights, which challenge the traditional assumption of consumption as separate from work, to study the strategic re-entanglement of consumption and work in the workplace.

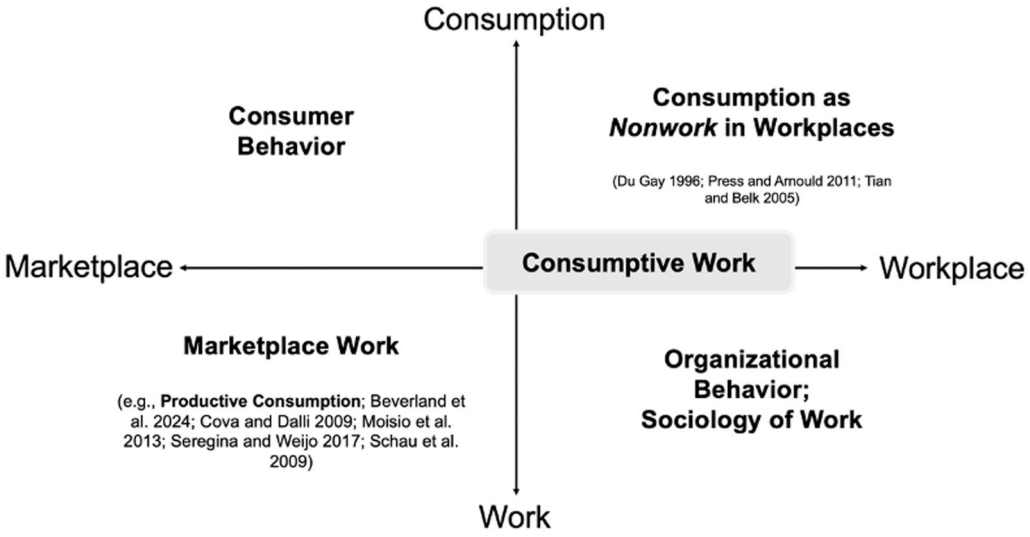
To examine the role that consumption plays in productive value creation in the workplace, we adopt a recent perspective from organizational sociology that approaches work as a site of consumption and highlights the value-creation aspects of consumption (Chertkovskaya and Loacker 2016). This perspective challenges the traditional separation of work and consumption and takes a relational approach to studying economic activity (Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010; Zelizer 2012). Work[1] is valued beyond formal paid employment, that is, activity performed in return for a wage (Ransome 2007). It examines how work is consumed for its sign value and the sense of identity, community, and purpose offered by cool brands (Besen-Cassino 2014; Chertkovskaya, Korczynski, and Taylor 2020; Farrugia 2022). This perspective highlights the need to understand the productive value of consumption in workplaces and how this has transformed work. We build an integrative theoretical framework to understand the role of consumption within work and in the workplace, relying on the disparate literature in consumer research in the workplace and that of organization studies (figure 1). In integrating these different perspectives, we aim to shift from the consensus in consumer research that sees consumption in the workplace and work as nonwork to seeing it as productive value-creation in the workplace. In this study, we ask: what is the value of consumption activities when strategically integrated in the workplace? How does consumption in workplaces transform work?

Our study is based on a four-year ethnography of five coworking spaces in Paris and London, complemented with post-pandemic archival data. Our data consist of five ethnographic sites along a continuum of workplace formality. We view coworking as an extreme context in which to investigate the role of consumption in work for two reasons. First, consumption ideologies are strategically designed in all aspects of the coworking space. Coworking spaces are branded with consumption ideologies of happiness, leisure, wellness, and community (Grazian 2020), unlike traditional rental office space (e.g., Regus). Second, members pay to access their workplace, making them clients in addition to workers, blurring the boundary between

1 See table 2 in web appendix A for definitions of key terms.

FIGURE 1

RESEARCH ON CONSUMPTION AND WORK



markets and organizations. We explore coworking, a key marketplace phenomenon, as a manifestation of changes in the practices and spaces of knowledge work. We show how consumption has become a salient practice of work, transforming the nature of work, consumption, and workplaces.

We introduce the concept of consumptive work, defined as the instrumentalization of consumption activities in the workplace to generate productive value. Consumptive work occurs in a post-industrial societal context accounting for the integration of consumption ideology in the workplace, the value of immaterial labor, and technological transformations of work, as we historize in our literature review. At the level of individuals' lived experience, we show that consumptive work is influenced by three shifts in relationships with work and the workplace: (1) customer entitlement in the workplace, (2) consumer desire toward the workplace, and (3) consumer lifestyle aspirations toward work. We further develop consumptive work by identifying its characteristics as inconspicuousness, boundarilessness, and communal and market exchange. Finally, we examine members' experience of consumptive work as underlined by a perceived sense of empowerment, especially in contrast to traditional office work, and neonormative alienation. Indeed, performative play and leisure, as well as a productive orientation toward wellness, demonstrate the darker side of consumptive work. Overall, consumptive work experiences reinforce the shifts in members' relationships with work by creating new consumer desires and aspirations about office work and the workplace. In integrating consumer and organizational research to build our framework, our study addresses the call to overcome implicit boundaries in the field of marketing (Grant and Pollock 2011; MacInnis et al. 2020) to develop relevant research on consumers amid marketplace transformations (Schmitt et al. 2022b). Next, we historicize the relationship between work and consumption.

HISTORICIZING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK AND CONSUMPTION

Consumption and Work in Pre- and Industrial Modernity

In preindustrial times, consumption and production were entangled: they took place within the same space and were performed by the same people. The most common productive activity was agriculture or self-production, and farmers and artisan craftsmen lived and worked in the same space (Rybczynski 1986). With the advent of the Industrial Revolution, the emergence of factories and rented accommodations created a de facto physical distance between the home and the workplace (Rybczynski 1986). Work[2] was located in industrial factories, while consumption became increasingly associated with the domestic space. The home became a place for private and domestic consumption, while the workplace became a place for public, productive activities. Acts of consumption in the workplace, such as lunching during work hours, were characterized as nonwork activities (Du Gay 1996). The idea of leisure also

2 Here, the terms "work", "consumption", and "leisure" refer to their prototypical forms (table 2 in web appendix A).

emerged with industrial production and came to constitute nonwork time and activities outside the factory. Leisure is thus associated with freedom from institutional obligations and the rhythms of work (Turner 1974). The separation of leisure and domesticity from labor and work contributed to the construction of the categories of consumption and production (Ransome 2007) and a view of the economy as separated into two spheres: work, where production takes place, and consumption, where things are consumed (Graeber 2011).

The industrialization of society has been seen as depriving workers of their craft skills and agency, consigning craft to the private and consumption spheres (Morgan and Nelligan 2018). Creativity, leisure, and ludic pursuits were considered antithetical to work (Turner 1974). Industrial production reduced craftsmanship work, leading to workplace alienation and the definition of work as a way to make a living—a path and mechanism to consumption and its material aspirations (Ransome 2007). Workplace alienation, which describes situations where workers feel estranged from their work, was furthered by the implementation of the bureaucratic and scientific management system associated with Taylorism (Braverman 1974). Taylorism, which standardized and divided production and institutionalized management at the center of work (Morgan and Nelligan 2018), produced alienated activities, where workers are directed by external forces instead of being in control (Braverman 1974). What is known as the traditional office environment constitutes an industrious organization of work guided by Taylorism, with bureaucracy as its cornerstone (Barley and Kunda 2001).

Consumption and Work in Postindustrial Society

Transformations in the nature and practices of work in postindustrial modernity are a result of globalization, technological change, economic precarity, and the rise of consumer society and ideology (Aroles, Mitev, and de Vaujany 2019; Barley and Kunda 2001; Schmitt et al. 2022a). Such changes are associated with the manufacturing decline of the Global North, the emergence of the service and knowledge economies (Gill and Pratt 2008), the demise of bureaucratic organization, and the emergence of new flexible and diverse ways of working (Aroles et al. 2019). We discuss three significant transformations challenging the classical temporal and spatial division of work and consumption.

Consumption Ideology in the Workplace. Consumption ideology refers to "ideas and ideals related to consumerism, which are manifested in consumers' social representations and expressed in their communicative actions in the marketplace" (Drenten et al. 2024; Schmitt et al. 2022a, 75). Consumption ideology has entered the organizational realm, becoming an integral component of the workplace, employees' experience, and the co-production of value (Chertkovskaya and Loacker 2016). As a consequence, the processes of consumer subjectification and consumption sublimification that characterize consumption ideology (Schmitt et al. 2022a) are now relevant to understanding the evolution of lived experience in the workplace. Lived experience, encompassing sensations, thoughts, and emotions (Schmitt et al. 2022a), evolves when consumers are confronted with new practices, ideologies, or values. They are situated between consumerism and consumer desires, shaped by consumption ideology and shaping intended actions (Schmitt et al. 2022a). In the workplace, for example, a consumer orientation underlines how companies view their employees, who are now seen as consumers of the firm's brands, its benefits, human resources (HR) development opportunities, and services (Dale 2012). In this sense, consumer subjectification enters a workplace where employees also view themselves as consumers of the HR services they co-produce (Meijerink, Bondarouk, and Lepak 2016) and where organizations encourage employees to constantly develop and market themselves through branded social media work (Hesse et al. 2022). Parallel to that, organizational scholars note the sublimification that firms often operate when they adopt various consumer ideologies to appeal to and retain employees, such as wellness (Cederström and Spicer 2015) or fun (Fleming and Sturdy 2009), or when work is marketed to key audiences in the search for talent (Chertkovskaya et al. 2020). Organizational constituents may adopt different orientations toward consumption ideology in the workplace (Schmitt et al. 2022a), fostering stronger workplace identification and commitment when conforming (Press and Arnould 2011). However, critical scholars also highlight how they constitute soft forms of organizational control (Müller 2017). Thus, work and the postindustrial workplace appear as a new domain of manifestation of consumption ideology.

Value of Consumption as Immaterial Labor in Knowledge Work. Consumption can be constructed as part of knowledge work in creative capitalism (Morgan and Nelligan 2018). Creative capitalism renounces Taylorism and the idea that bureaucratic expertise is the unique engine of innovation. Instead, it aims to liberate work from repetitive tasks, meaningless jobs, and bureaucracy, allowing innovations to stem from employees' creativity and talent (Morgan and Nelligan 2018). Value creation in immaterial labor depends on "workers' mobilization of their personal subjectivities" (Van Dijk 2019, 469). Immaterial labor activities are not always seen as work and may include shaping cultural standards, "tastes, consumer norms, and more strategically, public opinion" (Lazzarato 1996, 133). Thus, work demands that people be wholly engaged, including their knowledge, emotions, consumer identity, and cultural capital. This increasingly blurs boundaries between the intimate sphere and the workplace, private and

public self, and between work and ludic play (Morgan and Nelligan 2018). For example, Endrissat, Islam, and Noppeney (2015) show that workers are often hired because of their consumer identity, which is used as a source of workplace enchantment, such as in the case of a tattooed artist hired as a salesclerk at Wholefoods. Value is produced by promoting the leisure activities and lifestyles of employees who are "putting their lives to work" (Land and Taylor 2010, 395). Consumption is a key element of value co-production in immaterial labor, in which consumers are co-producers of market value (Cova and Dalli 2009).

Technological Transformation of Work and Consumption. New spatial and temporal organizations of work emerged as a result of the technological transformations at work (Aroles et al. 2019; Endrissat and Leclercq-Vandelannoitte 2021). This led to the flexibilization and diversification of work modalities, as work may take place outside the organization's formal spatial and temporal boundaries (e.g., remote work, collaborative entrepreneurship, digital nomadism). Technology has permeated the temporal and spatial boundaries that once separated work and domestic activities (Gregg 2013). The office is no longer a taken-for-granted feature of contemporary work; a rematerialization of work in new, hybrid workplaces such as coworking has emerged (Bacevice and Spreitzer 2023). These workplaces are distinct in that technology is central to their organization and often operate using market logic or as marketplaces, such as by adopting access-based models or online platforms (Aroles et al. 2019). While these developments are often championed for their autonomy and emancipatory potential, they entail new forms of surveillance, inequalities, and anxieties (Aroles et al. 2019; Atanasova et al. 2024).

In summary, a social and spatial reorganization of work occurred in postindustrial modernity (Barley and Kunda 2001), where work and consumption are reacquiring some of their preindustrial parsing. We argue that a reentanglement of consumption and work has occurred, in which consumption is considered part of value co-creation in work. Consumption is valued for facilitating creativity, flexibility, networking, and meaningfulness in the workplace. We ask how this takes place and how contemporary office work and its experience change when consumption becomes an integral part of it. We explore these questions in our study, which regards coworking as the epitome of such a new organization of work. Next, we provide our conceptual framework.

ENTANGLEMENT OF CONSUMPTION AND WORK

Our historical review highlights the conceptual separation between the spheres of consumption and production that emerged with industrial modernity. Production occurred mainly within formal organizational boundaries, creating functional and material value, while consumption involved buying and using goods (Graeber 2011). Thus, consumption is assumed to destroy the value produced, with work emerging as a productive activity and a way to earn a living (Ransome 2007). This conceptual legacy largely continues to shape the study of consumption and work, as existing consumer research mainly treats the market and the workplace as distinct social and economic spaces (Paulsen 2015). Prior consumer research acknowledges the existence of consumption in the workplace but sees consumption primarily as *nonwork*, separate from the productive activities of work (Du Gay 1996). From this perspective, consumption in the workplace constitutes either acts of resistance or boundary and identity-construction practice (Paulsen 2015; Press and Arnould 2011; Tian and Belk 2005; Weinberger 2015).

Over the past decade and a half, other scholars have challenged this assumption and argued for a relational perspective to studying economic activity (Zelizer 2012). Specifically, they acknowledge that consumption and work are entangled in economic activity (Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010). We identify two streams of research here: (1) productive consumption and (2) consumption of work (Chertkovskaya and Loacker 2016). Productive consumption examines consumers' work as a productive activity in the sense that "some forms of consumption enlist consumer labor that creates rather than depletes value" (Moisio et al. 2013, 300). Existing research examines production and work in marketplace contexts, acknowledging productive consumer labor in the act of consumption (Beverland et al. 2024; de Certeau 1984; Moisio et al. 2013; Schau, Gilly, and Wolfinbarger 2009; Seregina and Weijo 2017). Studies highlight productive consumption's identity, transformative, and knowledge development capacity.

We introduce a second perspective to consumer research, consumption of work, arguing that consumption enters the workplace and becomes an integral part of the value-creation process (Chertkovskaya and Loacker 2016). Scholars in organization studies and the sociology of work have recently recognized consumption as an inherent aspect of production (Chertkovskaya and Loacker 2016). As the consumption and production spheres blur, value creation occurs across each (Chertkovskaya and Loacker 2016; Graeber 2011). For example, Besen-Cassino (2014) shows how American youth service work in U.S. suburbs is more about consuming the sign value of cool coffee house brands and the community benefits of these workspaces than the economic benefits of earning a living. This work recognizes that work itself, the employer, the workplace, or its employees can become objects of consumption. Studies in this emerging perspective focus on the consumption of sign value of employer brands (Lievens and Slaughter 2016) or the self-commodification and self-consumption

that emerge when consumption logics enter the workplace (Dale 2012; Endrissat et al. 2015; Land and Taylor 2010; Meijerink et al. 2016). For instance, university students consume specific sign value of knowledge work in choosing their future jobs (e.g., glamourous or trendy cosmopolitan lifestyles) and the expected perks related to leisure and self-development (Chertkovskaya et al. 2020). This is an emerging perspective with little empirical work outside the consumption of work's sign value. We adopt this perspective and extend it to study how consumption activities can co-produce value and transform work.

We propose an integrative framework of consumption and work that challenges the assumed dichotomy between work and consumption and between the marketplace and the workplace (Aroles et al. 2019; Graeber 2011). Figure 1 builds on the consumption of work perspective to conceptualize economic activity in a vertical axis as a continuum of prosumption (Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010; Zwick, Bonsu, and Darmody 2008). We indicate a continuum of spaces organizing economic activity on a horizontal axis, from the marketplace to the workplace. A relational perspective considers work and consumption as interrelated (Bandelj 2020; Zelizer 2012). Thus, spaces of economic activity will fall somewhere along a continuum consisting of a combination of each. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual continua of economic activity (production–consumption) and the space of this activity (workplace–marketplace). It identifies four conceptual research domains in work and consumption, providing a broad overview of these large fields and depicting only the essential notions of each dimension.

We examine the relationship between work and consumption in access-based workplaces. Consumptive work, which merges work and consumption, falls broadly on the right-hand side of the horizontal axis, leaning toward the middle as these workplaces incorporate the market. Our framework carves a research domain by examining consumption at the crossing of both axes, where boundaries blur between consumption and production, workplaces, and marketplaces.

CONTEXT OF COWORKING

Coworking spaces emerged in 2005 in San Francisco and have since become an established global phenomenon and the archetype of workplaces in the knowledge economy (Grazian 2020). They are access-based workplaces, attracting independent workers, entrepreneurs, start-ups, freelancers, and large organizations. As a relatively recent industry, coworking has undergone several macro and market changes, such as a global pandemic, the rise of new technology, remote work, and new ways of working. Coworking spaces predominantly recovered well from the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing membership numbers following the 2020 drops (Statista Research Department 2022). Despite some much-publicized failures, such as WeWork's failed IPO (Wiedeman 2020) or The Wing's accusations of discrimination, the coworking business model remains strong (Smith 2023). Worldwide, members are expected to increase from almost 2 million in 2020 to 5 million in 2024 (Statista Research Department 2022), with opportunities for growth in the Global South and suburban areas (Pilling 2022). Demand for flexible work solutions is increasing as workers adopt new ways of working (Mimoun and Gruen 2021).

Coworking spaces provide independent workers, entrepreneurs, and even traditional corporations with a unique workplace in comparison with traditional office environments in three ways. First, they are access-based workplaces offering flexible, short-term contracts (monthly or yearly) versus traditional office leases. They provide a flexible work environment, from workplace arrangements (hot desks, single offices, large offices) to 24/7 open-access buildings. Second, beyond traditional amenities (internet, printing, mail, and cleaning), coworking spaces offer professional or social events, access to wellness (e.g., yoga, Pilates, HIIT), and a network of commercial services such as banks, restaurants, or hairdressers. Third, given their communal aspect, coworking spaces aim to compensate for the solitude of independent work, the arduousness of entrepreneurship, and the precariousness of the new economy (Garrett, Spreitzer, and Bacevice 2017). Workers are attracted by opportunities to meet other people, exchange best practices, and grow their professional networks (Grazian 2020). Corporations are attracted by the all-inclusive office, which has a creative twist and opportunities to network and set up creative hubs (Grazian 2020). Researchers study coworking spaces for their capacity to bring together a diversity of actors (Vidaillet and Bousalham 2020) or as key sites to generate new knowledge about technologies (Endrissat and Leclercq-Vandelannoitte 2021) or identity work (Bacevice and Spreitzer 2023). We see coworking as a key space to study changes in the relationship between work and consumption and new ways of working.

METHOD

This study is based on an ethnography of five coworking spaces in two major European capitals, Paris and London. This research is phenomenon-based, and we undertook prolonged engagement with the phenomenon to ensure trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Ethnography allowed us to gain a deep understanding of the field, examine consumption in the workplace, and map out the activities and meanings that coworkers assign to work.

The ethnography focused primarily on two coworking spaces: Space M in Paris and Space W in London (we use pseudonyms to preserve the anonymity of participants). Space M, a small, social-business-focused coworking, represents the early-on, informal type of coworking.

Conversely, Space W, dominant in the market, provides a more catered-for, structured, and branded space. The two spaces also contrast in size, as Space M had between 70 and 90 members at the time of observation, whereas our main Space W location had around 3,000 members. Both offer basic work amenities, classes (wellness, leisure), access to food, drink, events, and networking opportunities online and in person (additional details in web appendix B). Data collection occurred over three stages (table 3, web appendix B). In the first stage, the first author conducted an ethnography of Space M between 2015 and 2017. In the second stage, we visited two additional coworking spaces in Paris and four in London to broaden the scope of the observations beyond one site. The third stage of data collection aimed at capturing more corporate-looking coworking sites, so the first author spent three months in Space W in London in the fall of 2018, with the second coauthor visiting.

We conducted ethnographic observations in Space M and Space W, starting with nonparticipant observations to familiarize ourselves with the environment, working practices, schedules, and consumption activities. Then, we shifted to participant observation, in which the first researcher worked and participated in activities as a regular member. For example, in addition to observing everyday life, she participated in brainstorming meetings, attended yoga, meditation, leisure workshops, networking events, cooked communal meals, and had regular lunches and coffees with members. We collected data in the form of field notes, pictures, videos, and interviews (table 3, web appendix B). In total, we conducted 40 interviews with members (30) and managers (10). Seventeen ethnographic interviews (Spradley 1979) were recorded with coworkers and managers in Space M, averaging 40 minutes. At Space W, we conducted 18 semistructured interviews for an average of 1 hour. Space W participants were recruited via a post on the Space W digital platform and through snowballing and incentivized with a £30 voucher. We conducted five additional interviews in other coworking spaces. The interviews focused on capturing participants' motivation for joining coworking, their work (e.g., occupation, daily tasks, business development, professional training), consumption activities (e.g., social, leisure, domesticity), and experience of coworking versus traditional office work. Our sample, described further in table 5, web appendix C, is prototypical of the global coworking demographics overall (Deskmag 2019).

In addition, both authors conducted a netnography through active engagement of several online websites and platforms connected to Space M and Space W (Kozinets and Gretzel 2024) (table 4, web appendix B). We immersed ourselves in those sites, participating in and reading publications weekly, and collected posts and comments from members and managers. We reported digital observations in the same document as on-site field notes. The netnography sheds light on the digitization of consumptive work as materialized in the digital platforms attached to each coworking site. Finally, to account for more recent changes in the world of work, and especially coworking following the COVID-19 pandemic, we collected archival data in the form of newspaper articles on new ways of working, the future of work, and coworking spaces from ProQuest ($N = 81$) in December 2023, which we coded and integrated into our analysis.

Data analysis and interpretation were iterative, occurring during and after data collection. We followed grounded theory coding of the dataset, deconstructing data into incidents that connected consumption and work (Spiggle 1994). We utilized our ethnographic data and netnography to capture the spatial and embodied aspects and relied on the interview data to unpack participants' experiences. As we coded the physical and digital materiality of coworking spaces and participants' activities and work experiences, we found consumption to be strategically embedded within them. Conversely, we found consumption to be consistently part of work within coworking (e.g., meeting new clients during a yoga class). A new form of work emerged, which we observed from three perspectives: members, coworking managers, and coworking service providers. We looked at both the positive and negative sides of consumption in the workplaces. The archival data helped us triangulate our data with examples from other coworking spaces and check the relevance of consumptive work post-pandemic. We built our model inductively. Further information on the methodology can be found in web appendix B.

FRAMEWORK FOR CONSUMPTIVE WORK

We inductively develop the notion of consumptive work as a form of work where the members, the firm, employees, and service providers strategically integrate consumption into the co-creation of productive value in the workplace. As our historical analysis of the relationship between consumption and work highlights, consumptive work occurs in a post-industrial societal context of work accounting for the integration of consumption ideology in the workplace, the value of consumption as a form of immaterial labor, and technological transformations of work. Our historical analysis shows that these macro factors have resulted in three shifts in relationships with work and the workplace: (1) customer entitlement in the workplace, (2) consumer desire toward the workplace, and (3) consumer lifestyle aspirations toward work. Consumptive work, we argue, emerges from these three shifts.

Next, we identify three characteristics of consumptive work: inconspicuousness, boundarilessness, and communal and market exchange. These features constitute separate aspects of consumptive work, yet they are interrelated and

co-shape each other. Finally, consumptive work offers a new lived experience of office work marked—often simultaneously—by a perceived sense of empowerment and neo-normative alienation. Empowerment stems from the perceived sense of control and the continued personal and professional development produced, especially from the boundarilessness and exchange nature of consumptive work. At the same time, new forms of workplace alienation emerge: performative play and leisure, and productive wellness. The perceived sense of empowerment often coexists in tension with neo-normative alienation in both work and consumption. For example, when leisure is instrumentalized at work, it stops being an enjoyable moment of consumption outside it. In return, we also observe that consumptive work experiences reinforce the shifts in individuals' relationships with work by creating new consumer desires and lifestyle aspirations about office work and the workplace. We illustrate our framework in figure 2 (additional supporting data can be found in web appendix D).

DEFINITION OF CONSUMPTIVE WORK

Consumptive work is the instrumentalization of consumption activities in the workplace to generate productive value. In consumptive work, consumption is integrated by the firm, the members, and the service providers into how work is carried out to create productive value. Coworking firms integrate consumption strategically in the design of the workplace, their customer services, programs/events, and the design of work practices. Here, members are instrumentally driven to use consumption as a way to enhance work performance and value co-creation. We illustrate consumptive work via three common examples of consumption in our data. First, wellness activities are presented and consumed as productive tools to increase members' overall performance at work. Consider, for instance, how Alicia, a yoga teacher at Space W, connects her classes with work-related value creation:

> I obviously try in my language when I teach to connect [yoga] with work, and that varies. In Space W, work is a bit of bread and butter, and we do what we can to connect that, to make yoga a tool for a better workday. [To] all of our clients, we are [saying] 'OK, what's your problem? We're offering a solution to solve that problem,' and that is always around lifting the mood, learning basic skills, breathing. . . So, the yoga in the work environment is that I see the basic skills of yoga being key to improving the day at work. (Alicia, 35, Yoga Teacher, Space W service provider)

In coworking environments, wellness practices and events have a steady schedule and are highly popular with members. In our fieldwork, we regularly practiced yoga and experienced Pilates, Shiatsu, and meditation, all seamlessly integrated during work hours between work activities. Wellness classes are marketed and taught as tools to increase concentration, productivity, creativity, and stress reduction in the workplace. This materializes in teachers' discourses, such as when, during Yoga, Alicia invited us to "focus on the tasks ahead and how yoga will help us achieve them" (field notes). Our fieldnotes describe enthusiastic members who embrace wellness in coworking to increase their productivity and creativity (e.g., "I'm going back to my desk another person!" said Ana excitedly). As a counterexample, practicing wellness for autotelic benefits without expecting any work-related outcome does not constitute consumptive work, even if practiced with colleagues or in the workplace. Instead, it falls into the more traditional conceptualization of consumption in the workplace as nonwork.

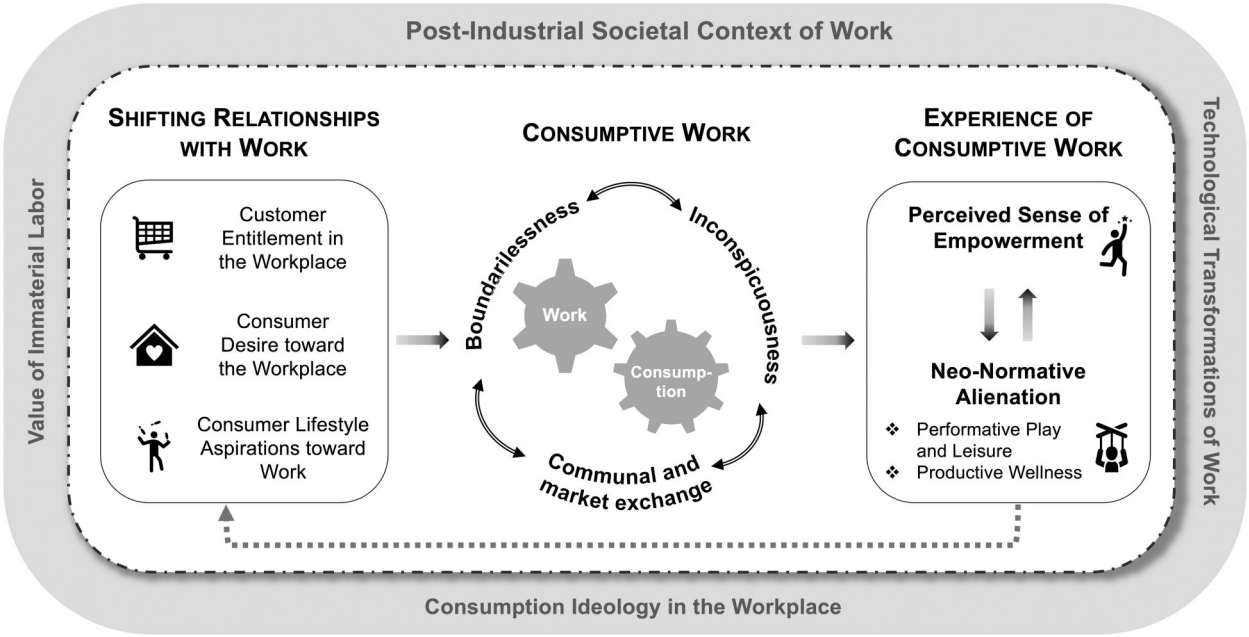
A second example relates to the strategic integration of play and leisure with productive work, common in coworking places. Our participants see work in many activities previously categorized as nonwork in the workplace (Du Gay 1996). This is, for instance, how Carlos sees fun or craft activities and events, such as a cocktail-making class:

> It could be. . .[about] the comfort zone of business development. If you go to one of these classes, yes, there's a specific activity but ultimately, you're still with a group of strangers so, yes, it could help you to develop that kind of communication skill or freedom to say, "We don't know each other, how are you? We've got this common interest today," and then kind of see where it goes. So, yeah, it's a fun activity but it can still serve the same purpose as a cold networking event. (Carlos, 36, HR Consultant, Space W)

Carlos sees consumption activities as having the same value-creating potential as traditional networking events. A self-described shy character, he strategically uses these consumption classes to engage in business development to find new clients. This shows the co-creation of consumptive work: a cocktail class does not constitute consumptive work if members only engage in it as a purely hedonic nonwork experience without instrumentalization. During our fieldwork, we noticed how members systematically expected work-related outcomes from consumption activities in the workplace. In Space M, they partake in ping-pong tournaments, movie nights, yoga, beer-making workshops, and other activities to get to know other members, admitting that "it is like that that connections are made" (field notes). Figure 3, for example, shows members of Space M engaging in various play (e.g., cosplay) activities during work to facilitate connections and spark creativity and productivity, taking a craft workshop at Space W to meet potential business partners or clients, or building experiential CV (Keinan and Kivetz 2011) (see figure 9 in web appendix D). Contrary to previous research, consumptive work does not characterize instances where work is becoming more fun (Press and Arnould 2011), playful (Du Gay 1996), or taking place in "cultures of fun" (Fleming

FIGURE 2

CONSUMPTIVE WORK



2005), but rather instances where playfulness and fun in the workplace are instrumentalized as they strategically become work.

The third example of consumptive work consists of members strategically capitalizing on communal and domestic-like consumption to extract work-related value. During a copious lunch one day in Space M (figure 3), Ben, whose entrepreneurial project is connected to food waste and food justice, explained his vision of the communal kitchen's role:

> So, to me, the kitchen is a social heaven that enables people to meet and discover each other. . .. In the beginning, everyone kept eating their pizza and their kebabs, and now, little by little. . . You see, it makes me happy because now at every lunch 15 people are eating together. It creates conviviality. It's about launching initiatives and launching propositions. (Ben, 27, Community Developer, Space M)

Space M, the most informal coworking space in our sample, provides many opportunities to engage in communal consumption: the strategically positioned common kitchen area facilitates meal making, collective dining, or simply hanging out. Domesticity enters these workplaces via homey furniture (carpets, sofas) or material (plants, books), helping participants feel at home—a sense of place often encountered in our data. For Ben, communal practices such as cooking enable members to connect, a prerequisite to working on joint initiatives. For instance, members use communal lunches to brainstorm their projects and prototypes.

In sum, consumptive work is the use of consumption activities for work. We illustrate this via the instrumentalization of three consumption activities in the workplace: wellness, leisure, and communal consumption, strategically incorporated into how work is carried out. They are fruitful in networking, business development, professional development, marketing, recruiting, enhancing productivity, and so forth. Consumption is strategic to working, and the two are enmeshed in what we call consumptive work. Further, our data indicate that consumptive work emerges as a result of three major shifts in relation to work in the post-industrial societal context.

SHIFTING RELATIONSHIPS WITH WORK

Customer Entitlement in the Workplace

Coworking spaces' access-based, contractual, and non-bureaucratic nature shifts members' positions from workers (e.g., employees, freelance) to customers, expecting experiential gains, personal perks, consumer rights, and self-fulfillment. This is consistent for self-paid members as well as employees of corporate-paid members. They expect the same treatment and benefits from their work as they do as customers in the marketplace. When asked about her

FIGURE 3

ILLUSTRATIONS OF USING PLAY AND LEISURE

NOTE.—Top left: Ben is wearing a unicorn wig to spark creativity during a brainstorm, Space M; Right: Having fun and networking during communal lunch, Space M; Bottom left: networking and fueling creativity at a Build-Your-Own Terrarium workshop, Space W. ©Author's picture.

expectations from coworking, Sophie expresses her customer entitlement this way:

> I do expect an experience and a feeling. Nothing tangible because obviously that's not really why I'm here, right, but I expect a community feeling because that's what they've promised. . . I think I just expect to come here and feel like I'm happy to be in this space and feel productive; and not like feel annoyed to be in a space with all these other people, more so that I do feel like commonality and that it's a place that I can also relax in while at work. . .. A space like this does a good job of making people feel like they really enjoy their workspace. It can accommodate a lot of different lifestyles. It offers yoga in the morning if you want to do yoga, Pilates, you can bring your dog here, so it makes it feel more like I'm not just here to work and leave and go home; it's hey, you want to live this certain type of lifestyle? Great! You can do it here and make a living while you're doing it. (Sophie, 24, Senior Account Manager, Space W)

Sophie characterizes her relationship with the workplace from a consumer position: she frames being a coworking member as a lifestyle choice. She expects to have choices and demands a consumer experience and perks rather than just a salary to make a living. A consumption ideology underlines her freedom of choice and access to commercial resources within the workplace, such as events or shopping (Schmitt et al. 2022a). She also seems to apply the same customer logic of assessing a market provider to the way she judges her workplace, showing how workers are subjectified to consumers (Schmitt et al. 2022a). The logic of consumer choice enters a workplace where members also view themselves as customers of the various events and services provided in a coworking environment (Dale 2012). Sophie practices yoga, dresses how she wants, cares for pets, takes her socks off, drinks beer, plays, naps, invites friends, cuts her hair and nails, or shops at various "pop-up" shops at Space W. She blurs boundaries and seamlessly moves between the market and the workplace, merging the two.

Consumer Desire Toward the Workplace

Our data, notably visual data, reveal that coworking places have become sublime objects of consumer desire (Schmitt et al. 2022a) via aestheticization and organizational branding. Participants talk of falling in love with coworking, like Zaina, who left her job in finance to become Space H's membership manager: "I fell in love with this space as soon as I saw it. It's hard not to." Ethnographic interviews reveal that members often chose jobs because they are located in coworking, making the workplace an object of consumer desire. Most spaces we visited use trendy designs and decorations to embed

FIGURE 4

ILLUSTRATION OF COWORKING DESIGN

NOTE.—The neon lights read: "Life is the illusion, work is the dream." Pictures were taken at Space W (various locations, top three pictures), Space S (bottom left), and Space H (bottom right). © Author's picture.

coolness and hip (figure 4 shows neon lightning in the lobby and street art in the bathrooms). Trendy music is often played in the main working areas, conveying an impression of vibrancy (field notes). In Space M, makeshift art, plants, art, and wooden materials create an overall atmosphere of being where things happen.

Coworking firms do, at times, also represent powerful brands, often internationally renowned, as in the case of Space W. Such branded spaces become vehicles for the construction of professional and personal identities (Bacevice and Spreitzer 2023), showing branding's role in workplace sublimification (Schmitt et al. 2022a). Members consume the sign value of the coworking firm brand as a marketing, recruiting, and retaining tool (Maier et al. 2022) and a status symbol. Developing trendy and powerful workplace brands elevates the value of a workplace making it stand out from the standard cubical office. For instance, Hiroe, a consumer insight analyst, enjoys the status that she gains from being a Space W member:

> I guess it's kind of like being a member of a club almost, because it has such a big brand. . . . it's this cool, hip place called Space W. . . . if you're a Space Wer, there's the status of you being kind of flexible, working for a start-up, you're doing what you like, you're enjoying life, you're kind of hip. Everything that millennials kind of point to. . . . [I]t's like, 'Oh, you work at Space W? Oh, that's cool.' (Hiroe, 26, Analyst, Space W)

Identifying as a "Space Wer" enables Hiroe to perceive herself as cool and living the flexible, start-up lifestyle, even if this is unrelated to her more traditional profession as a market researcher. In her discourse, monetary gains are less valued than the flexibilization and coolness afforded by the sign value of the Space W brand. She highlights flexibility and meaningfulness as new forms of status signals in late modernity (Eckhardt and Bardhi 2020). To her, the Space W brand embodies this culture, and working there empowers her to adopt such symbolic values. Consumer desire for self-expression and flexibility are incorporated into the most mundane elements, such as, for instance, a "*Pimp My Bottle*" event to customize reusable water bottles (field notes). Overall, consumer desires are shifting to trendy workplace brands that are aesthetically curated with consumption ideology.

Consumer Lifestyle Aspirations Toward Work

We observe a general acknowledgment across our data that expectations and meaning of office work are evolving, characterized by a disenchantment with traditional office

work, and a search for flexibility and meaningfulness in work.

First, our participants testify to an overall disenchantment with traditional office work as their main motivation for joining coworking spaces. Some even reflect on what they describe as the end of a rigid corporate work model toward a flexible work modality. These changes are related to consumer lifestyle variations, where change and transitions are part of identity transformation (Mimoun and Bardhi 2022). Our participants embrace professional precarity and pursue various jobs and positions across industries (mainly start-up jobs), with lifelong learning serving as a substitute for careers. Jacques quit his engineering career in a large corporation to follow his passion and start a business at Space M. Our data show that traditional office work failed to address his desire for flexibility: "I used to work in big companies. They're like rusty machines; everything is so slow, all the administrative machinery. It's a nightmare! It's frustrating. . .. What I wanted is to have a job a bit more flexible." Corporate work is depicted as slow, rusty, and alienating, which motivates him to quit his office job within a corporation and try coworking. These evolving aspirations are seen as part of a wider societal change, as Carlos, an HR consultant in Space W who is in his mid-thirties, indicates:

> I think what [Space W] obviously realized is that this kind of coworking space and kind of more fluid arrangement is what people want nowadays in terms of the mindset of the next generation of workers. I'm somewhere probably in the middle. I've kind of seen, in my first 10 or 15 years, a more traditional approach to working life, and now the transition to what we see around us today and then who knows what the future. . . will there even be offices in the future or will everything be on[line] and will everything be literally on our phones and actually there is no need for an office. [Coworking] is somewhere in the middle. (Carlos, 36, HR Consultant, Space W)

Carlos has observed tensions in how workplace arrangements from traditional offices respond to what he characterizes as a fluid organization of work. He notes the deterritorialization of work outside the organization's formal spatial and temporal boundaries, followed by its rematerialization in new, hybrid workplaces mediated by tech and the market.

Second, our data show that members aspire to meaningful work, that is when work is experienced as significant because it holds positive outputs of "having made sense of something" for individuals (Rosso, Dekas, and Wrzesniewski 2010, 94). In coworking, such aspirations are often framed in contrast to the perceived alienation experienced from traditional work. Esme associates meaningfulness at work with self-expression in coworking, which she contrasts with the traditional work experienced by her parents:

> Our parents worked 40 years in the same job, and they didn't mind, as long as they just got their paycheck every month so that they could leave work and have a life. Whereas [Space W] believes in merging the two, so you don't just have to get a paycheck so you can then go and live your life, but you can enjoy your life while you work. There are some people who believe that these things overlap. . . those people seek a lot of happiness at work and a lot of satisfaction at work because they believe it's one joined circle. . .. that's what [Space W]'s trying to do, make [work] a positive experience rather than the traditional experience where your boss yells at you, you stay in the same job, you're never really inspired. . .. I can't believe my dad sold air conditioning for 40 years; I don't understand that concept at all. (Esme, 26, Marketing Executive, Space W)

Coworking resolves existing tensions about traditional office work, perceived as uninspiring, alienating, and rigid. The quote highlights tensions between, on one side, an enduring career and associated security she associates with her parents' generation, and the precarity of contemporary jobs on the other side. She embraces this precarity and the flexibility of work that coworking frames as empowering and meaningful. Her discourse reflects the shift in aspirations toward work that is experiential and something to enjoy in contrast to its normative role as a duty and a way to earn a living. She values the blurring of boundaries between work and life in coworking.

Overall, aspirations toward office work are shifting toward more flexibility and meaningfulness at work, which traditional corporations are perceived as unable to offer. These tensions emerge in member's lived experience, influencing their desire to engage with a different way of working. Coworking spaces are depicted as the forerunners in this shift, notably because they integrate consumption ideology in the workplace and support their members in resolving these tensions through consumptive work. Next, we examine three characteristics of consumptive work: inconspicuousness, boundarilessness, and communal and market exchange.

CHARACTERISTICS OF CONSUMPTIVE WORK

Inconspicuousness

Consumptive work does not signal productive labor; rather, it is characterized as a hedonic experience. The practices of consumptive work are not like typical work activities and often occur in workplaces' consumption spaces (e.g., playgrounds, lounge areas, kitchens). Our participants did not highlight work activities much in their interviews, and, in our observations, prolonged work periods rarely go uninterrupted by play or community activities. Our fieldnotes reveal workers' bodies moving seamlessly without clear boundaries between work, leisure,

socializing, or shopping, unlike traditional knowledge work mostly carried out seated (Michel 2011). Here is an account of two coworkers' afternoon. Separating work and nonwork is impossible, as their movements and activities blend in coworking:

> The two women next to me are going to the Yurt, a place of rest, almost every hour for short meetings. . . . Now they are doing breathing exercises next to me. . . .They go outside and do what seems to be a ritual of burning sage and smelling and breathing the vapes. Now they come back in. They stopped to talk with the membership manager about inviting people to learn to do these sage vaping or organizing an event to do it. . .. Now they are talking to one of the Space H founders, congratulating her, and saying that they do meditations and offer to do workshops in here. . . . (Fieldnotes, Space H, 2018)

Our fieldnotes are filled with what looks like consumption: playing (e.g., ping-pong, foosball, pool), dancing, meditating, practicing Pilates or yoga, shopping, and so on in coworking. Behind these seemingly "pure" consumption activities and informal community-building practices, our interviews reveal productive practices of consumptive work. The two women in the account above boost their creativity and productivity through sage vaping, meditating, and chatting on bean bags. They engage in marketing by proposing a workshop. While we do not see them working, their activities are productive and value-creating. Sarah, a community manager in Space M, also instrumentalizes leisure and play to reframe meetings—prototypical activities of traditional work—as a communal experience to increase productivity, creativity, and networking:

> If I want you to come, I'm not going to say that it's going to give you networking connections in every direction because that will be the positive externalities. I will tell you, "Come, it's going to be cool. I guarantee you're going to have a great evening, and you're going to have a cool moment." And indeed, there will be beers, crisps, nice people and all. And there will be someone whose role is to create the conditions for you to have a cool and productive moment. People do this voluntarily; they have to have a good time. (Sarah, 26, Community Manager for Space M)

Consumptive work redefines work activities, shifting them from obligatory, purely productive tasks to potentially hedonic and community-driven experiences. Sarah knows that attracting members to work meetings may be challenging as they also see themselves as entitled customers. Thus, she markets such activities to members by appealing to their customer entitlement and consumer desires. In Sarah's example, consumptive work can result in networking, but in others, value is created by increasing creativity or productivity (e.g., drawing or mind games during meetings, as shown in figure 5). The prototypical leisure and work activities are part of the same value-creation process, such as gamification or drinking in brainstorming sessions to find new clients or investors in fun events. Consumptive work produces value by engaging members as both consumers and workers, mobilizing their personal subjectivities beyond the professional realm (Van Dijk 2019).

The inconspicuousness of consumptive work also emerges because of the hybrid aesthetics of coworking, where the market and consumption are embedded in its spatial design (e.g., playgrounds, homes, gyms, or even clubs) in addition to workplace aesthetics (Alexandersson and Kalonaityte 2018). In response to the shifting relationship to work, such a hybrid aesthetics affords communal and leisure activities for work as well as an atmosphere of informality. Coworking spaces are depicted in our interviews as "a summer camp" (Hughes, Space M), "a college dorm" (Rosie, Space W), or a "second home" (several participants). Coworking semantics portray work as fun and hide its productive aspects: "Do what you love," "Life is the illusion, work is the dream," and "Be an enthusiastic hobbyist" (figures 11, 12, and 16 in web appendix D). Field notes capture atmospheres oscillating between work, play, domesticity, and community, enabling the inconspicuous enactment of consumptive work through leisure and communal practices.

Boundarilessness

Consumptive work is characterized by blurred spatial, temporal, and activity boundaries. The experience of flexibility produced by boundarilessness emerges as motivating among our participants' accounts as noted in the shift in their aspirations toward office work. Alastair sees traditional offices as fixed and slow, making him feel dehumanized and alienated (Braverman 1974). In contrast, despite having a fixed desk within a four-person office at Space W, he admits to rarely working there all day:

> There's more flexibility here. I feel more comfortable and encouraged to use common areas and spaces to work away from my desk. In my previous company, that wasn't so easy, so yeah, it's probably improved my output, being able to work flexibly and work from wherever I was really and, the fact that it's open 24/7 basically, I've come in and worked on weekends. (Alastair, 26, Business Developer, Space W)

Alastair values productivity and his job. The flexibility in consumptive work improves his "output" in ways his previous traditional office could not. Being able to work 24/7, a policy of most coworking spaces, encourages working long nights or weekends where life and work can co-exist and integrate in the same space. Consumptive work can be carried out in different spaces, on a flexible schedule, and across different activities and roles (e.g., networking via leisure rather than formal meetings with clients).

Members must embrace deroutinization in their day-to-day work practices to enact consumptive work. Jodie, now

FIGURE 5

ILLUSTRATIONS OF MEETINGS (SPACE M)

NOTE.—Left: Drinking beer and playing with Post-it notes during ideation meeting; Right: Playing paper-scissors-rock before meeting to bring about a creative mindset. ©Author's AI-supported artwork.

general manager at Space H, recalled how in a previous finance director job on Wall Street, she worked nine-to-five in a "windowless cubicle" in a repetitive environment with "nothing ever getting done." In contrast, in coworking, where working flexibly and across activities are valued, she embraces the deroutinization of work. Below, she talks about the use of Space H's cozy corner for productivity:

> I love the lighting up here because sometimes you just need a break from the brightness. Yes, people use it for meetings. I sometimes just come and sit up here just to get a task done. If I have a specific thing I want to do, I will go to this space, or I'll go to the Auditorium and sit down until this is done, and then I'll move to another spot. I see people do that a lot, for a specific task just go and sit somewhere and then move again. Something we get a lot of feedback on is productivity. They find productivity here goes up. . . . They come to an event here and there is a hundred people that they could just go around and talk to. Our aim is to facilitate member growth and how we do that is different for each member. Is it going to meditation and yoga? Maybe. Is it being introduced to an investor? Maybe. (Jodie, General Manager of Space H)

Consumptive work is characterized by boundarilessness in that one decides where and how one works addressing the lifestyle aspirations of our informants. Seamless movement across spaces and activities within the coworking environment is encouraged. Furthermore, Jodie, in her role as coworking manager, points out that work is designed individually and can follow various paths appealing to consumer desires and customer entitlement of members. While boundarilessness can be experienced as threatening and alienating in other work contexts when work takes over life (Kuper 2023), our participants embrace it and find it motivating.

Communal and Market Exchange

The third feature of consumptive work is that it involves communal or market exchange, where work is conducted through ongoing exchanges that co-create value. Coworking spaces bring together diverse companies and members and operate as (hybrid) platforms to perform daily work-related exchanges. Our participants engage in daily exchanges via the coworking ecosystem to find services, recruit, market, and carry out various tasks. Exchange enables them to benefit from the diverse ecosystem provided in a coworking space, seen as one of its core benefits. Our ethnographic sites differ in the nature of the exchanges they afford, from market exchange (Space W, Space S) to more hybrid and communal exchanges (Space M, Space H).

Within Space W, members engage in market exchange to carry out their work. Space W acts as a platform-based or in-person market for work where members become customers and clients at the same time. Many businesses survive mainly via the exchange within their own coworking. Several participants mentioned that much of their revenue

came from within their coworking space, like Marc's company (55% of business within Space W) and Berat, who admitted about Space W: "I only have one client outside of here." Harish, a marketing consultant, describes his Space W location as "a living, breathing version of LinkedIn," thereby highlighting the professionalization of the community. Members leverage Space W's digital platform (consisting of two million users at the time of the study) to buy, borrow, and barter work and services from one another (figures 14 and 15 in web appendix D):

> There's a fundamental difference between a shared office space and the modern-day coworking space in the sense that a shared, supported, facilitated office space doesn't necessarily encourage community, whereas coworking spaces do encourage community, and community enables us to sell better. That's one of the reasons why we come to a coworking space that has things which are facilitated over an app, such as the way we met, because it helps connect businesses better. . . . . [I]t's a business enablement platform as well as being a shared coworking space. (Marc, 32, Head of Sales, Space W)

Coworking spaces market themselves as community-focused, often relying on celebratory discourses (Grazian 2020). Marc sees community in a more pragmatic and instrumental way: the physical and virtual members are an audience or a client base for his business. The community simply "enables [him] to sell better." Workers reify the coworking community as a market for business-related outcomes. Market exchange and the instrumentalization of community are considered suitable components of highly individualized work.

At Space M, market exchange also happens but as a hybrid economy network, it promotes both market and communal exchange (Scaraboto 2015). Here, we observe a sense of community and stronger bonds. Reasons for this can be found in the social entrepreneurship ethos that drives Space M's founders and in the relatively small number of coworkers, allowing everyone to get to know each other better. There are also technical reasons; Space M relies on a Facebook group instead of an official platform, which implies different affordances. Members use their personal profiles to access the site, thereby blurring boundaries between private and professional selves. This is visible in communication, such as using humor to request connections or engaging in self-promotion. The informality of social exchange appears in the unofficial directive described by Sarah: "you upload more than you download." Members are expected to give to the community (time, energy, products) to be allowed to extract value from it, showing how norms here are underlined by social exchange (Scaraboto 2015) instead of only market exchange. For instance, as researchers, we used personal connections, casual discussions, and social exchanges to recruit participants, whereas, in Space W, a direct message on the platform was enough. Rather than a matchmaking platform pairing actors together, Space M acts more as a forum platform connecting actors without mediating the connections as much (Perren and Kozinets 2018). Market exchange is present and may complement the communal exchange in the value-creation process of consumptive work. Overall, workers engage in consumptive work when they use the coworking community strategically to engage in market-based exchange for work.

EXPERIENCE OF CONSUMPTIVE WORK

We now examine participants' lived experience of consumptive work. We find that consumptive work is experienced as empowering while also generating new forms of alienation. The two can coexist, at times, within the same consumptive work activity or context.

Perceived Sense of Empowerment via Consumptive Work

The overall experience of consumptive work in our data is one of empowerment. The characteristics of consumptive work produce a sense of empowerment, making work feel more meaningful and less alienating than traditional office work. The boundarilessness and the exchange features of consumptive work are experienced as providing members with a sense of control over work and how they work, which fosters a sense of workplace disalienation in our data (Kociatkiewicz, Kostera, and Parker 2021). They tell of a different approach to work where hedonic and self-oriented goals are central, where work is living, and vice versa—a motto embraced by Space W. Berat, an archetype of consumers pursuing a flexible lifestyle (Mimoun and Bardhi 2022), has no typical days and embraces boundarilessness between work and life. He works as a consultant and feels empowered by consumptive work:

> Berat: I don't have any typical days. . .. I always work. I don't have anything like '9AM.' Even my bank, they drive me crazy. They ask, 'What do you do?' I do the same thing for 24 hours. I don't see it as a job; I just do my daily. . . I read what's happening in my behavioral science. I search for new clients. I don't have this kind of 6:00PM close. So, this is like 24-hour, . . . because I don't see it as work.
>
> Researcher: Okay, so what do you perceive it as?
>
> Berat: Fun. I do what I want then someone pays me. . . .Yes, that's the thing: I do it for fun. . . I'm not doing it for paying rent. If I want[ed] to do it, I would work in Apple store. . .. and I will do that job to earn the money. I will do it 9:00PM, finish at 6:00PM, leave. I did it before, it's not a job. It's something you need to do compulsory to sustain your life. (Berat, 37, Consultant, Space W)

Berat does not follow normative notions of work as separate from personal life and leisure. He views traditional

approaches to work as a mandatory activity, something he refuses to experience. Instead, he embraces consumptive work as empowering, enabling him to do what he wants. Boundarilessness provides him the ability to work when and where he chooses; inconspicuousness enables him to work how he chooses and pursue his consumer desires of having fun; and market exchange, via the Space W platform, allows him to scroll for clients (later in the interview, he admits opening the Space W app as soon as he wakes up).

Consumptive work is not easily understood by traditional corporations, such as Berat's Bank, which operates with a traditional work mindset. Thus, coworking spaces empower workers to pursue their desired lifestyle while at work through consumptive work experience. In this way, consumptive work also transforms the meanings and perception of what work is:

> Before, I associated work with a career, working my way up. I saw my first job as an entry point to cut my teeth, to climb up. . .. I don't mean to say it's not at all the case today, but now I imagine work a lot less as a career but maybe more as competencies that you're going to acquire progressively, and that you're going to acquire in an environment that you like. It's the interaction with the persons, I think, that [is] going to make it less of a checklist. . .. It happens more softly without realizing it, through the interactions with people. . .. I'm learning to get at the roots of a bug and understand what a bug is; it forces [me] to learn how it works and how [the developers] work. I find this pretty cool. I think I won't be able to put that in my CV, like, "I know how to talk to a developer," but it's all these soft skills that you acquire. . . . [I]t has changed a lot how we perceive a job. (Sarah, 26, Community Manager, Space M)

After a series of disappointments in working for big brands, Sarah describes how consumptive work has changed her experience of office work from a necessity to get somewhere and make a living to being an enjoyable, social, and rewarding life experience. Sarah highlights how she moved away from long-term enduring professional projects like a career, instead relying on inconspicuousness to accumulate skills for her experiential CV "without realizing it." She experiences consumptive work as a life-long learning project and feels empowered to say she abandoned the social pressures and norms of traditional work and career.

Similarly, many participants discuss how they favor their personal growth and seek to achieve their full potential, showing that consumptive work is part of the ongoing process of self-development (Mimoun and Bardhi 2022) that challenges traditional career assumptions and creates new expectations about office work. Sarah and our next participant, Jack, account for a new lived experience of office work aligning with intentions to change toward a highly individualized professional path where value is created in the lack of boundaries between professional and personal identity. Jack, our youngest participant, referred to his mother's work in a bank where he interned previously as "little cubicles, computers; everyone just sitting there, never really working anywhere else." In contrast to this, he describes his experience in Space W:

> Because it's so many different companies working here, you kind of have to go and chat to people and make new friends and stuff. . . I love that there's obviously table tennis, it feels less like an office. . . I like the fact that you can kind of move in and out and it's a less traditional way of doing things. . .. So I know I can just pick my laptop off and go sit on the sofa with it, sit there for half hour, go back and just do little things like that that just make me feel more free and allow me to kind of pick the time when I work but I think that is more productive for me. . .. For me this whole thing is just a learning experience; the more people I speak to, the more confident I get. When I first joined, I didn't know how to chat to people. Now I feel like I can speak to anyone about anything, not even just my team. . . So yeah, I think personal development, so kind of just bringing myself out my shell a bit more. (Jack, 21, Intern, Space W)

Jack's experience of consumptive work is one of empowerment. Highlighting the boundarilessness of consumptive work, he expresses a feeling of control over how, when, and where he works. He notes the inconspicuousness of consumptive work as important in his personal development as he develops his self-confidence thanks to his engagement with various activities and communities. Other members provide similar observations about the coworking space's communal consumption activities (e.g., eating together), developmental workshops, and wellness activities.

Neo-Normative Alienation via Consumptive Work

Consumptive work may lead to new forms of alienation through performative play and leisure, as well as productive wellness in the workplace. Behind celebratory discourses, we uncover darker experiences that potentially lead to forms of neo-normative control (Fleming and Sturdy 2009). Contrary to traditional corporate work, which is known to alienate workers through bureaucratic control (Braverman 1974), neo-normative control exhorts employees to be themselves and have fun in the workplace, which results in leisure, wellness, and communal consumption becoming forms of soft control (Fleming and Sturdy 2009).

Performative Play and Leisure. We find that consumptive work has transformed play and leisure into a performance, leading to neo-normative alienation and exclusions. The inconspicuousness of consumptive work changes the nature of leisure and play in the workplace, as both are turned into work. Alastair describes mixed feelings about

playing, which, by becoming work, he now experiences as performative:

> I'd use it as a way of networking. Somebody will come in and start playing by themselves. It's very easy to go and say, "Would you like to play?". . . . [T]hat's kind of work for me because I'm meeting potential customers and having sales conversations. There are things that support my work that others might go to for leisure, going to events and learning more. . . . [I]t involves personal interactions and conversations and emotions, but it's work. I have to build a wall between personal conversations and work conversations because it's all an act really; it's a performance, because I'm not the same person in my private life as I am at work. I'm not that self-interested. . .. My work is very performative, and that's exhausting not being your true self all day every day. (Alastair, 26, Business Developer, Space W)

Alastair's words highlight the weight of play when experienced as work. In consumptive work, play and leisure become performances and cannot be enjoyed for autotelic benefits as they have to serve work-related purposes. Even though, as we previously saw, Alastair embraces the boundarilessness of consumptive work, he may feel pressured by his company to engage in consumptive work as a form of neo-normative control. Independent workers also experienced such pressure to engage in play and leisure. Alicia, for instance, has expressed frustrations with Space W's events that "got a bit raucous and a bit sort of like frat partyish" but feels forced to stay and engage in events for the connections, referrals, and added business the space brings to her company. This is apparent in the atmosphere of Space M's main working area at 4 pm on a Friday: "A group is laughing and drinking beers and cider in front of me. Several groups are having drinks around me; the noise level is high. . .. one guy is speaking so loud, making big, inappropriate jokes, it's annoying." (field notes, Space W, 2018). As researchers in coworking, we sometimes felt a struggle between wanting to go home after a day's work and needing to stay to make connections and write some evening fieldnotes. Several participants admitted that their business survived thanks to market exchange via the community (of clients) within their coworking space. In light of how these connections are made, it questions how empowered individuals are under consumptive work when they cannot work without engaging in it.

Consumptive work requires members to invest beyond the traditional boundaries of work, which can lead to new forms of exclusion. They are expected to spend time and effort and fully commit to work as "making a life, not a living" (netnography). However, not all members are able or willing to partake in such an encompassing commitment. Saphir, a 27-year-old Space W member, never attended a networking or leisure event. She feels left out: "They have drinks and stuff where people socialize, and I don't drink, so that's a no for me. . .. I have a baby at home, so I have to go to my baby." As a mother and someone who does not consume alcohol, Saphir feels that these events are not curated for her, contradicting the inclusive discourse of coworking. Not every parent we met felt that way, and some places, such as Space H, offer a kids' room. At Space M, Yanis regularly brought his three children in for lunch, embracing consumptive work's boundarilessness (field notes). However, this was not the case for Saphir, who likes her job but cannot engage in consumptive work. When dominant rituals within one organization involve drinking, Weinberger (2015) showed that non-celebrants find strategies to maintain their relationships with colleagues while protecting themselves. Similarly, Saphir maintains boundaries between her workplace and home, even if that comes at a cost.

In coworking, those excluded are not seen; they simply do not engage in consumptive work. Rosie, who is 42, feels "too old" for leisure classes, something Alicia hinted toward, with the added gender dynamics at play in the fraternity ethos. Carlos, a shy character of his own admission, sometimes feels "left out." Our data indicate that consumptive work creates new forms of exclusions in the workplace at the intersection of age (e.g., ageism represented in the culture of coworking places), religion and ethnicity (e.g., Muslims not being able to drink), gender (e.g., mothers with children), and class (e.g., service employees).

Productive Wellness. In consumptive work, wellness has been instrumentalized to generate productive bodies and minds. Discourses from managers and members celebrate such aspects of consumptive work as a form of self-care: we are encouraged to sleep, rest, and move our bodies. However, these are systematically connected to productivity and work. For instance, a sign on the nap room door at Space M reads: "26 minutes of nap = +54% of attention span and + 34% of performance" (figure 17 in web appendix D). In an introductory example of consumptive work, we described how Alicia, the yoga teacher, continually referred to work and productivity during yoga sessions. She encouraged us to focus on "how to make our bodies be their best" (field notes). Consumptive work promotes a radical change in the worker's body toward self-enhancement. We argue that such instrumentalization of wellness can have detrimental consequences for individuals. This could create added pressure for members and lead to mental health issues. In a discussion with Space M's manager, Eric, he acknowledged that burn-out was a worry of theirs, something they aimed to address by offering additional massages, yoga, coaching, or meditation sessions in the workplace.

The instrumentalizing of wellness and care in consumptive work has further consequences on members as this productivity orientation has come to exclude bodies deemed less able in this space. Fit and productive bodies are offered classes and courses in yoga, Pilates, nutrition, and sleep.

However, little is offered to bodies that do not fit that framework. For example, the first author was pregnant during the Space W fieldwork. The Pilates teacher felt uncomfortable and was not trained to accommodate pregnant bodies (field notes). After suffering back pains ("I went to grab a cushion as these chairs are really uncomfortable... must book an osteopath appointment."—field notes), when adjustments (such as better chairs) were requested, the managers only encouraged her to use booths normally reserved for phone calls. Her body was not adapted to the flexibility expected of consumptive work, and the spaces were not prepared for unadaptable bodies. Consumptive work requires bodies to conform to neoliberal expectations of fitness and wellness (Datta and Chakraborty 2018), thereby exerting new forms of control over workers' bodies.

DISCUSSION

Contributions to the Study of Consumption in Workplaces

We introduce consumptive work, a new notion of work that acknowledges the strategic integration and value-creating role of consumption in the workplace. Consumption has always been present in the workplace, yet conceptualized as separate from work and production and as value-depleting. Following a relational approach (Zelizer 2012) in the study of consumption and work, we challenge this and see consumption as value-creating. We define consumptive work as the instrumentalization of consumption activities in the workplace to generate productive value. Consumptive work generates business-related value, creating value beyond identity boundary work (Tian and Belk 2005), authenticity and identity/sign value (Besen-Cassino 2014; Endrissat et al. 2015), or a fun organizational culture (Fleming and Sturdy 2009). In this way, we further contribute to emerging research on consumption of work (Besen-Cassino 2014; Chertkovskaya and Loacker 2016; Chertkovskaya et al. 2020) by going beyond the social signification role of consumption in the workplace and capturing consumption as part of work and value co-creation. We emphasize that not all forms of work can embrace consumptive work. Consumptive work is especially adapted to entrepreneurial, sales, creative work, and communal work activities. This is also evidenced by the types of professionals that coworking places attract.

We show that consumption in the workplace can take two forms. First, consumption can constitute nonwork (i.e., nonwork time and activities in the workplace), operating separately from the value-creation activities of work. Here, consumption serves as an identity, boundary, or resistance mechanism in the workplace (Du Gay 1996; Paulsen 2015; Roy 1959; Tian and Belk 2005). Second, consumption in the workplace can constitute consumptive work, where consumption is instrumentalized for value co-creative work processes. Consumptive work is carried out differently than traditional office work due to its inconspicuousness, boundarilessness, and communal and market exchange features. It does not look like work because it does not signal a productive labor activity. Hedonic and developmental aspects are emphasized over productive aspects. Consumptive work is also flexible, without spatial, temporal, or activity boundaries, embracing movement and deroutinization. At the same time, exchange, either market or communal, becomes a key aspect of work for all organizational functions. Thus, consumptive work requires workplaces where the boundaries between markets and bureaucracy are blurred.

Consumptive work has emerged among major societal transformations of work in post-industrial modernity, specifically related to the adoption of consumption ideology in the workplace, the shift toward immaterial labor, and technological transformations of work. We show how this has shaped the desires and lifestyle aspirations that knowledge workers have toward their workplaces. Consumptive workers manifest a customer orientation in and of their workplaces. They expect consumer rights, hedonic experiences, and personal perks from work similar to the marketplace (Schmitt 2011). Workers are thus subjectified to consumers (Schmitt et al. 2022a), and the workplace becomes an object of consumer desire. This demonstrates how consumption ideology, which shapes consumer identities and consumption, has also restructured our relationships and desires toward work and transformed the nature of work itself. In this way, we advance the work of Schmitt et al. (2022a) by showing how consumption ideology operates outside the marketplace within organizations.

Parallel to this, we observe a change in aspirations toward work framed in opposition to traditional office work alienation. Individuals' aspirations for flexibility (Mimoun and Bardhi 2022) and meaningful work drive relationships to work and motivations for consumptive work. As a result, we show that consumptive work changes the meaning of work by devaluing its productive aspect and enhancing the consumer logic in the workplace. The traditional meanings of work as livelihood and its social role are no longer perceived as the dominant motivation for work. Instead, our participants emphasized an empowering lived experience of office work through consumptive work. Paradoxically, by turning consumption into work, consumptive work turns work into an experience: a personal and holistic journey of learning and self-transformation, fun, community, and meaningfulness (Weinberger et al. 2017). That work becomes a hedonic experience is, in a way, a contradiction to its ethos. However, this notion captures a major transformation in how individuals think about work. Table 1 highlights future research related to transformations of work and workplaces through consumptive work and in other disciplines.

TABLE 1

FUTURE RESEARCH AVENUES

Consumption in workplaces	- What are the dynamic relationships between consumption as nonwork and consumptive work in the workplace? - How does workplace aesthetization bring and reinforce a consumption logic and produce consumptive work in the workplace? - How do consumptive workers navigate within and across work and life? - How do consumer identity and marketplace skills shape consumptive work? - How do consumption ideology and consumptive work occur in traditional workplaces?
Organization studies	**Workplace alienation** - What could longitudinal research reveal about the long-term consequences of consumptive work for employees (i.e., burn-out, neo-normative alienation)? - How do dialogical dynamics of play materialize in consumptive work? - How do service agents experience consumptive work in workplaces? Under which conditions would they feel energized by client interactions? - What could an intersectional approach reveal about the new structural inequalities and exclusions produced in consumptive work? - How does consumptive work impact organizational identification and commitment? - What role do organizational branding and consumption ideology play in shaping organizational culture and commitment in access-based workplaces? - Under which conditions does a brand culture at work counter-perform and become a regime of control? - How should (critical) accounting approach consumptive work? Should consumptive work be remunerated? How? **New ways of working** - What organizational structures foster consumptive work (e.g., platforms; ecosystems)? - What types of work and professions are more suitable for consumptive work? - What relational work emerges among consumptive workers who have embraced boundarilessness? How do they navigate within and across work and life? - How do consumer identities and consumption skills operate in new ways of working and contribute to performance in the workplace?
Consumer Behavior	**Home** - What tensions and challenges emerge when domestic, home, and family issues enter the workplace, and how do consumptive workers manage them? - Under what conditions such tensions may benefit consumptive work? - How does displacement-emplacement occur when the home extends to the workplace? - What are the emotional and practical consequences of consumptive work in relation to feelings of displacement from personal home and relationships? **Leisure** - Can leisure be enjoyed for autotelic reasons outside work? - If consumption becomes work, then what value do consumptive workers see in their leisure, wellness, and collective consumption outside the workplace (e.g., identity, practices, wellbeing)? - What is the impact of workplace-based leisure on the industry overall? **Productive Consumption** - What can the connections between (productive) consumption and (consumptive) work reveal about the dynamic relationships between alienation and agency? - What role do platforms, algorithms and AI play in agency/alienation dynamics at the interplay between work and leisure? - What organizational ideologies inform productive consumption?

Contributions to and Implications for Organization Studies

Workplace Alienation. Our study contributes to understanding the role of consumption in workplace alienation in several ways. On the one hand, consumptive work is experienced as countering traditional office alienation. Prior consumer research shows that knowledge workers counter traditional office alienation by engaging in fantasy, extreme, or even painful consumption outside of work (Scott et al. 2017). In contrast, our participants experienced disalienation (Kociatkiewicz et al. 2021) without leaving the office, thanks to a sense of empowerment produced by consumptive work. In this way, consumption can counter workplace alienation when part of value co-creation. On the other hand, consumptive work can be experienced as a neo-normative alienation producing exclusions along the intersection of age, gender, class, religion, and ethnicity. We identify dark aspects of consumptive work in performative leisure and play and the productive orientation in wellness. As consumption is instrumentalized as work, it is losing its autotelic or resistance role in the workplace (Paulsen 2015). Consumptive work intensifies the formation of the enterprising self (Du Gay 1996) by blurring the lines between work and life and instrumentalizing consumption for work. Consumptive work can become

homogenizing rather than liberating as work takes over consumption and life. The results can be striking, as seen in the instances of exhaustion observed in our data. Future research could explore further the tensions and alienation in consumption and everyday life that may result from consumptive work (table 1). If consumption becomes work, then what is the value these consumptive workers see in their leisure, wellness, and collective consumption outside the workplace? Furthermore, we invite longitudinal research to study whether and how consumptive work leads to employee burnout and alienation in the long run.

Additionally, we encourage future research to explore the dynamics of exclusions from consumptive work. Not everyone has access to these workplaces and forms of work designed for creative and knowledge classes (Aroles et al. 2019). For example, our analysis does not consider the experience of the service workers who support the members in coworking. Future research can build on our findings and recent research on service employees' emotions (Bhatnagar et al. 2024; Cayla and Auriacombe 2025) to focus on the experience of service agents in workplaces, understanding whether and how they experience consumptive work (table 1).

Finally, we allude to neo-normative alienation in consumptive work as coworkers feel the pressure of two forms of normative control: neo-normative and brand-centered control. First, neo-normative control, practiced through leisure and fun (Fleming and Sturdy 2009), may result in consumptive workers becoming less critical of their workspace and of consumptive work (Fleming and Spicer 2004). Actors may not acknowledge consumptive work's exclusions, bodily control, and negative performativity if their capacity for psychological distancing is reduced (Fleming and Spicer 2004). Future research can adopt this critical theoretical perspective to explore neo-normativity in consumptive work. Second, brand-centered control is another form of normative control exerted on employees via internal branding, where employees become representatives of the brand outside of work boundaries (Müller 2017). Consumptive workers may be subject to this, especially when the coworking brand is a powerful brand that carries symbolic value among some professions (Wiedeman 2020). On the one side, organizational branding is valued for identity, community value, or as a way to re-enchant rationalized service jobs (Endrissat et al. 2015) and build commitment (Maier et al. 2022). On the other, organizational branding can constitute soft managerial control, negatively impacting workers' wellbeing and ethics (Bertilsson and Rennstam 2018). Furthermore, organizational branding embedded in empowering and liberating discourses can impinge on workers' ability to resist (Mumby 2020). While studying organizational branding and its dark side is an important area of inquiry, this was not our focus. More future research in this area is needed, especially to understand how branding shapes consumptive work and the wellbeing of employees (table 1).

New Ways of Working. While consumptive work is not for everyone and has potentially been embraced by more privileged knowledge workers, it speaks to the social and spatial re-organization of work (Barley and Kunda 2001) and contributes to it in several ways. First, workplaces continue to be valued in the digital and remote work age and must provide the conditions for flexible, inconspicuous, and market-mediated work such as consumptive work. This type of work, thus, cannot occur in fully deterritorialized or liquified jobs (e.g., Atanasova et al. 2024). Coworking spaces have recently been discussed as fostering a re-materialization and re-socialization of digital work (Endrissat and Leclercq-Vandelannoitte 2021). We suggest that the hybrid design of coworking, combining aesthetics of home, play, and work, affords the re-integration of work and consumption into meaningful work experience. Consumptive work is one way through which organizations can produce meaningful work. Producing such a meaningful and empowering work experience is a core advantage of coworking spaces.

Our study suggests that employers can attract remote workers back into the office post-pandemic by creating a workplace that fosters consumptive work. Consumptive work can be found beyond coworking in workplaces where consumption is strategically integrated into work to counter alienation. Digital companies like Google and Meta exemplify such contexts, where wellness workshops, perks, and social activities are part of the job (Stewart 2013). Consumptive work can also occur outside organizational spatial boundaries, in marketplace contexts such as cafés or hotel lounges (Mimoun and Gruen 2021). These contexts provide meaning and flexibility for knowledge workers, but they also increasingly come with costs for these aspirations. Moving work outside the traditional organizational spatial boundaries can be seen as cost-cutting for firms/employers. We show how this shift gives rise to new ways of working, such as consumptive work and the development of workplaces that blend market and workplace logics. Thus, the distinct nature of consumptive work, with its inconspicuousness, boundarilessness, and exchange, brings new challenges for knowledge workers. As work practices are becoming more individualized, employees are often left to manage these new challenges on their own. For instance, relational work (Zelizer 2012) may arise from the boundarilessness of consumptive work, and we suggest future research explore this in the context of consumptive work (table 1). Additionally, research could examine how consumer identity and marketplace skills influence consumptive work, with certain consumer skills and identities potentially shaping work and the workplace (Press and Arnould 2011).

Second, our findings question the structural organization of knowledge work through bureaucracy and acknowledge alternative, market-based platforms as a potential alternative. Access-based workplaces combine market dynamics and market exchange work processes. These spaces merge physical, in-person markets with digital platforms, expanding these organizations into ecosystems. Many participants conducted business almost entirely within the ecosystem of a coworking organization. Our findings indicate a shift in the structural organization of work away from bureaucratic systems toward markets, ecosystems, and platformization (Perren and Kozinets 2018). This raises several questions about the impact and role of the market and its logics (e.g., branding) in how firms organize and operate and in how work is conducted. Future research can explore such foundational questions from an organizational perspective to identify the structures that foster consumptive work (table 1).

Finally, our research entails societal implications for the changing meaning of work. Work plays societal roles beyond the economic factor, and we show that, increasingly, people are seeking meaningful, personalized work experiences akin to those in the marketplace. In other words, the consumer society has transformed work by integrating consumption ideology into the workplace and designing work as a consumer experience. Our archival data show that the experientialization of office life with self-expression and happiness ideology is now embraced by large corporations as well as coworking spaces (Means 2023). It shows the pervasiveness of consumption as a central logic that increasingly governs our relationship with work and as a mechanism to motivate, hire, and maintain employees who behave increasingly as consumers in the workplace (Maier et al. 2022). This raises questions about organizational identification and commitment as perpetual change in jobs and careers become the norm, and people see employment as part of the collection of experiences (Keinan and Kivetz 2011).

Our findings also speak to the end of enduring identity projects such as careers (Warren 2014), replaced with ongoing personal development that incorporates professional aspects (Mimoun and Bardhi 2022). Such endeavors are individualized, precarious, and boundaryless, and include professional and consumption skills. Thus, recognizing the productive value of consumption holds societal implications. Labor movements should begin to acknowledge the added value of consumptive work for companies, prompting questions about how consumptive work should be accounted for or remunerated. These questions demand that we break down our academic disciplinary silos and engage in work where consumer behavior and branding theories inform and are explored by organizational scholars and vice versa. Our study is one such example, as the domain of consumptive work constitutes a fruitful area for cross-disciplinary research.

Implications for Consumer Behavior and Productive Consumption

Implications for Domestic and Leisure Consumption. First, consumptive work highlights the increasingly blurred boundaries between home and workplace, intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic (Croft 2020). Boundarilessness enables consumptive workers to expand the concept of home beyond a fixed location, potentially integrating it into the workspace. Practices of domesticity and care work may become spatially integrated within work practices, such as bringing pets or inviting friends to hang out at the coworking space. Coworking members cook, eat, and often watch movies together, encouraged by coworking spaces that often brand themselves as homes with slogans like: "Welcome home! Oops! We meant welcome to work!" (Space S). Despite these celebratory discourses, we simultaneously show that expanding the home into the workplace can lead to divestment toward private homes. For instance, George rents a cheaper, smaller flat in London because he spends most of his time in Space W and only goes home to sleep. Sarah admits to saving on Wi-Fi and utility bills by reducing or canceling these services at her primary home. Thus, employment decisions become consumer considerations as they affect housing situations. Spending less time at home may reduce individuals' attachment to their home and turn into a vicious circle. Indeed, the more workers invest emotionally in work relationships, the more complex their home situation becomes (due to workplace tensions), leading them to spend more time and energy at work (Gerstel and Clawson 2015). The shifting of emotions, time, and energy between home and workplace has profound consequences for people's lives, causing feelings of alienation or estrangement from home and family (Grant and Handelman 2023). We encourage future consumer research to study the dynamic tensions between domesticity and work, home, and the workplace (table 1).

Second, we raise questions about whether and how consumptive work impacts workers' engagement in leisure activities outside the workplace. Workers have always used play in traditional work autotelically for its role of fun and socialization (Tian and Belk 2005). In consumptive work, play (which constitutes only one of its manifestations) is instrumentalized to produce work-related outcomes. Both forms of play can coexist, however, only instrumental play is enlisted as consumptive work. We contribute to developing a detailed understanding of organizational play that includes both empowering elements of play that lead to engaging experiences and its darker, disillusioning sides (Butler and Spoelstra 2024). We show that this has led to alienation from leisure and play. How do workplace leisure and wellness habits influence employees' need for sports and consumption practices outside of work? This could instead push individuals to integrate even more the values and logic of work into their leisure. Finally, how is the

leisure industry affected by the presence of leisure-oriented activities in the workplace? As consumption and leisure become increasingly performative and part of work, we encourage future research to study the consequences of consumptive work on leisure activities and, at a more macro level, to understand its impact on the leisure industry overall (table 1).

Implications for Productive Consumption. Consumptive work differs from productive consumption, which involves consumer labor in consumption (Moisio et al. 2013). While consumptive work is the opposite of productive consumption, both involve a dynamic between empowerment and alienation. For instance, agency co-exists with alienation in serious leisure (Beverland et al. 2024). Similarly, we show that experiencing agency does not eliminate alienation in consumptive work. Furthermore, productive consumption, like consumptive work, is tied to organizational concepts such as performance or the enterprising self, where individuals must develop many competencies to adapt to global competition (Micali 2010). We call for future research to explore how consumption and work intersect, shedding light on alienation, performance, agency, and empowerment (table 1).

DATA COLLECTION STATEMENT

The first author conducted the in-person fieldwork (interviews and participant observations) from January 2015 to November 2018. The second author has acted as a confidante since April 2016, visiting Space W several times. As a coworking member, the first author conducted the online fieldwork for the internal networks of Space M and Space W; both authors engaged independently and equally on the remaining online fieldwork (social media and websites). Archival data were collected in December 2023 using ProQuest. Both authors discussed and analyzed data numerous times using interview transcripts, field notes, photographs, videos, online notes, and screen captures. The first author has pseudonymized all notes, images, and data. They are stored in a password-protected OneDrive folder under the management of the first author, following her IRB guidelines.

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