

Analysing power and control in work organizations: Assimilating a critical socio-psychodynamic perspective

İş organizasyonlarında güç ve kontrolün analiz edilmesi: Kritik bir sosyo-psikodinamik perspektifin asimile edilmesi

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Abstract

This conceptual article draws on critical traditions from several social science disciplines, notably, social, political, and systems theory, sociology, psychology, and management studies, as it seeks to explore, assemble, and integrate some constitutive components of a socio- and psychodynamic perspective on power and control in work organizations. At its core is an archetypal taxonomy of formal (economic), real (technocratic), normative (ideological), and formative (biopolitical) modes of power and managerial control through various means and combinations of commodification (contracts, compensation, competition), coercion (commands, constraints, compliance), cooptation (culture, consent, commitment), and creation (corrosion, conception, coevolution). Other integral elements are domains or foci of inquiry, specifically, interests, ideologies, institutions, and identities. These domains are linked to meta-, macro-, meso-, and micro-levels of analysis, resembling economy, society, organization, and individual. Accordingly, behavioural control and psychological governance processes are reinforced by a pervasive economic system logic, cascading into political, social, and psychodynamic sublogics. These taxonomies are integrated with concepts from the depth and dynamic psychology and traced across economic (meta-system interests), societal (macro-political ideologies), organizational (meso-social institutions), and individual (micro-psychodynamic identities) levels revealing patterns of self-similarity. It is argued that societal subsumption and subjugation reproduce psychodynamic subjectification (submission, sublimation) at the individual level, mediated by the subordinating and socializing forces inherent in organizational control systems. Discussed are implications for the dynamics of power and control in contemporary societies, organizations, and individuals under hegemonic governance of neoliberal ideology.

Keywords: Organizational Power, Management Control Systems, System-Justifying Ideologies, Psychodynamics, Critical Management Studies, Subjectification, Governmentality, Social Character

Jel Codes: A13, B51, D91, P16, Z13

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Öz

Özellikle sosyal, politik ve sistem teorisi, sosyoloji, psikoloji ve yönetim çalışmaları gibi çeşitli sosyal bilim disiplinlerinden gelen eleştirel geleneklerden yola çıkarak, bu kavramsal makale, sosyo ve psikodinamik bir perspektifin bazı bileşen bileşenlerini keşfetmeyi, birleştirmeyi ve entegre etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. İş organizasyonlarında güç ve kontrol. Özünde resmi (ekonomik), gerçek (teknokratik), normatif (ideolojik) ve biçimlendirici (biyopolitik) güç ve yönetim kontrol biçimlerinin çeşitli metalaşma yolları ve kombinasyonları (sözleşmeler, tazminat, rekabet), baskı (komutlar, kısıtlamalar, uyumluluk), işbirliği (kültür, rıza, bağlılık) Diğer ayrılmaz unsurlar, özellikle ilgi alanları, ideolojiler, kurumlar ve kimlikler olmak üzere alan adları veya soruşturma odaklarıdır. Bu alanlar ekonomi, toplum, organizasyon ve bireye benzeyen meta, makro, mezo ve mikro analiz seviyelerine bağlıdır. Buna göre, davranışsal kontrol ve psikolojik yönetim süreçleri, politik, sosyal ve psikodinamik alt lojilere basamaklı yaygın bir ekonomik sistem mantığı ile güçlendirilir. Bu taksonomiler, derinlik ve dinamik psikolojiden kavramlarla bütünleşir ve ekonomik (meta sistem çıkarları), toplumsal (makro-politik ideolojiler), örgütsel (mezo-sosyal kurumlar) ve bireysel (mikro-psikodinamik kimlikler) düzeyleri arasında izlenir. benzerlik kalıpları. Toplumsal subsumption ve subjugasyonun, örgütsel kontrol sistemlerinin doğasında bulunan alt ve sosyalleşme güçlerinin aracılık ettiği, bireysel düzeyde psikodinamik subjektifleştirme (boyun eğdirme, süblimleştirme) ürettiği iddia edilmektedir. Neoliberal ideolojinin hegemonik yönetimi altındaki çağdaş toplumlarda, örgütlerde ve bireylerde güç ve kontrol dinamikleri için etkiler tartışılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Örgütsel Güç, Yönetim Kontrol Sistemleri, Sistemi Haklı Çıkarıcı Ideolojiler, Psikodinamik, Kritik Yönetim Çalışmaları, Subjektifleştirme, Yönetişim, Sosyal Karakter

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Introduction

The psychology of work cannot be adequately understood without analysing the dynamics of power. Systematically unequal distribution of power and top-down exercise of control through various instruments are at the core of hierarchical organisations' social architecture (Anderson and Brion, 2014; Clegg, 2009; Fleming and Spicer, 2014). Power and control manifest in many forms, ranging from direct coercion and domination to subtle and indirect forms of manipulation and subjectification (Fleming and Spicer, 2014). The present contribution focuses on such advanced forms of power and control from a psychological perspective on the labour process (Gandini, 2019; Thompson, 2010). For work and organizational psychology and related disciplines, a central (yet often neglected) background dynamic, which, however, is essential for adequately describing, explaining, and predicting experiences, attitudes, and behaviours of individuals and groups in work contexts, thus, is the antagonistic interplay of top-down directed power structures and control mechanisms with bottom-up processes of employee influence, self-determination, and resistance (McDonald and Bubna-Litic, 2012; Mumby, Thomas, Martí and Seidl, 2017). In addition to the omnipresence, multitude and complexity of associated psychological processes, a critical analysis of power and control is further complicated and rendered confusing by an inherent tendency of hegemonic modes of power to obfuscate and obscure their own workings. Indeed, more advanced forms of social pressure and manipulation are not readily observable, recognized, or identified as such, but surreptitiously unfold in subtle, indirect, subliminal, and subconscious ways, embedded in socially constructed and inevitably ideologically distorted versions of reality (Glynos, 2008, 2011; Hornung and Höge, 2019). Supporting the required theoretically comprehensive and in-depth analytical approach, critical socio- and psychodynamic perspectives, aimed at exposing, problematizing ("denaturalizing"), deconstructing, and counteracting these interdependent and conflictual systemic tendencies, tensions, and underlying drivers, antagonisms, and dialectics, however, are largely marginalized or ignored in mainstream academic psychology (Gabriel and Carr, 2002). The field of work and organizational psychology, in particular, tends to treat omnipresent and ubiquitous issues of power at work in a rather superficial (and ideological) way, compared to critical perspectives in sociology and management studies (Bal and Dóci, 2018; McDonald and Bubna-Litic, 2012; Mumby, 2019; Ozcan, 2012). Based on the preliminary assessment that the relevant literature is sprawling and fragmented by disciplinary fault lines, this contribution sketches out an attempt to integrate relevant theories, models, and concepts from the fields of psychology, sociology, management studies, and related social science disciplines into the foundations of a socio-psychodynamic understanding of power and control in work organizations. Adapting and extending Marxist labour process analysis, institutional control and compliance systems are analysed in terms of the specific configurations of the outer material, symbolic, as well as the psychologically internalized or embodied, disciplinary apparatus and structures for exercising executive power to resolve the "transformation problem" of human resource utilization (Gandini, 2019; Gerdin, 2020). Thus, the present contribution explicitly evokes critical social theory as it seeks to develop and present a taxonomy of four archetypical modes of power, based on historical phase models of the capitalist labour process (Thompson, 2010). Economic and technocratic modes of power, underlying formal and real control, are distinguished from advanced ideological and biopolitical normative and formative types. The former relates more directly to objective interests and institutional manifestations (societal and organizational structure); the later more strongly involve subjective mechanisms of ideological manipulation and psychological integration via processes of collective and individual identity development and mental preformation (motivational and character structure). This framework is discussed from the perspectives of organizational archetypes and social character theory, thus aiming to further integrate critical sociology with depth and dynamic psychology, drawing on the tradition of the broader project of Freudo-Marxism. Suggested are theoretical issues in need of further consideration and prospects and implications for a better understanding of power and control in organizations, based on the recommended continued integrative assimilation of interdisciplinary psycho- and socio-dynamic approaches into a more comprehensive, coherent, and critical composite framework. As a cautionary note and disclaimer, this broader undertaking constitutes (or is part of) a larger intellectual project, some basic components of which are sketched out, considered, and suggested, rather than readily presented or propagated as a conceptual endpoint here. The aim is

to reignite and reinvigorate, theoretically broaden and enrich, but also to provoke and extend the critical academic debate on power and control in work organizations – which, especially in light of contemporary developments towards the integration and totalization of technologies of societal, managerial, and self-enacted control, is found weak, waning, and wanting.

Modes and manifestations of power

Drawing on critical perspectives in organizational science, modes and mechanisms of power and control can be analysed based on the manifestations of typical configurations of the disciplinary apparatus used to resolve or regulate the “transformation problem” of human resource utilization, i.e., the conversion from employed time to good performance, respectively, from the abstract (potential) labour-power to expended and “valorised” (appropriated) labour (Fumagalli, 2015; Gandini, 2019; Westra, 2019). Power and control are interrelated. More broadly, power means the ability (of individuals and social groups) to deliberately determine, alter or influence the outcomes (resources), actions (behaviour), and consciousness (mindsets, attitudes, beliefs) of interdependent others (Anderson and Brion, 2014; Fleming and Spicer, 2014). More specifically, control refers to the ways and means through which power manifests, is exercised, realized or enforced. Thus, power is the more abstract and general concept, often associated with particular interests' dominance.

In contrast, control specifies the respective mechanisms and manifestations, typically embodied in some form of socio-technical and administrative disciplinary apparatus – power refers to the ability, control to the means. Analytic distinctions notwithstanding, power and control are inseparably linked and used more or less interchangeably. Integrating critical social theory and organizational research, formal-economic, real-technocratic, normative-ideological, and formative-biopolitical bases of power and control are distinguished. This core taxonomy is integrated with models of domains and levels of analysis and concepts from psycho- and socio-dynamic psychology, e.g., subjectification, governmentality, and social character theory. These are interpreted from archetypes' perspective as historically grounded, evolutionary and developmental, dynamically embedded patterns of organizing, behaviour, cognition, and emotion, manifesting in the collective, systemic tendencies of social character formation.

The most compelling, comprehensive, and elaborate conceptualization of power and control in societies and work organizations are still found in classic critical sociological theory, as well as its uptake and assimilation in current varieties of scientific (neo- as well as post-) Marxism (Archibald, 2009; Fluxman, 2009; Sayers, 2007; Westra 2019). Central here, Marx's concept of subsumption of labour under capital refers to the degree to which workers are integrated or assimilated into the capitalist production process, coordinated and controlled by the owners of production means, respectively their managerial representatives (or agents) to achieve the class interest of these dominating social elites to create profits or surplus value (Fumagalli, 2015; Vercellone, 2007). Based on Marx's distinction of formal and real subsumption, critical scholars have developed labour process theory to analyse dominant modes of organizing and coordinating work in consecutive phases of industrial development as progressing configurations of management control and worker subordination and submission (Vercellone, 2007; Westra 2019). Historically, formal subsumption refers to the establishment of unequal (exploitative) contractual wage-labour relationships at the beginning of the capitalist production system. Unfolding over the process of industrialization, real subsumption describes the developments through which workers have, *de facto*, lost command over the production process. Notably, this subsequent phase of increasingly intensive labour utilization was enabled by extreme division of labour and the sophisticated control apparatus of scientific management (e.g., close direct supervision; time and motion studies; performance-based pay). Elaborating the Marxian concept of “general intellect”, labour process theorists have introduced the term normative (or ideological) subsumption to describe how external control is progressively psychologically internalized or introjected, driven by the proliferation of societal ideologies and increasingly sophisticated instruments of modern human resource management, manipulating workers' minds and emotions. However, more recent arguments and observations suggest that even the concept of normative subsumption does not suffice to explain worker

domestication's new quality according to societal and organization requirements observed in post-industrial capitalism. That the current neoliberal era resembles a qualitatively distinct hegemonic period of executive power and control is a core assumption and postulate of the present contribution. Precisely what constitutes and distinguishes this new quality will be further explored in this essay.

Different manifestations, forms or “faces” of power in organizations have been distinguished, notably episodic coercion and manipulation versus systemic processes of domination and subjectification (Fleming and Spicer, 2014). Specifically, concepts of governmentality, subjectification, and biopolitical power have been suggested to describe the flexible and “organic” assimilation of workers into symbolic and biophysical structures of the societal production process in advanced Western societies (Munro, 2012). In academic theorizing, this transformation of power and control is marked by a shift from labour process theory to the succeeding framework of critical management studies (e.g., Adler, Forbes and Willmott, 2007). The term “formative subsumption” is used in this context with the intention to stress the continuity of associated themes in describing, analysing, and evaluating current developments in advanced neoliberal capitalism. Thus, the four archetypical modes of power and control discussed here are meant to complement (rather than replace) existing approaches by providing (or extending) a taxonomy that is theoretically and practically rooted in the capitalist production system's historical phase models (periodisations). Specifically, this refers to established “long waves” of economic development and associated changes in labour processes and respective solutions to the transformation problem. Long waves of economic development are typically described in terms of a succession of the so-called first and second industrial revolutions, the post-industrial transition towards the current system of advanced neoliberal capitalism, and its present biopolitical hegemony (Westra 2019). Historical phases differ about predominant types of institutions, key industries and technologies, and management models (Barley and Kunda, 1992; Bodrožić and Adler, 2018; Clegg, 2009; Durepos, Shaffner and Taylor, 2019). Economic power and formal control (e.g., dispossession, coercive contracting) were established during the early periods of the capitalist production system, commonly referred to as the “first industrial revolution” (e.g., 1760–1840). Emerging industries were coal, iron, and textiles, processed in early factories as prototypical institutions with a critical steam engine and production machinery, and an increasingly sophisticated disciplinary system developed by rising industrial economics and administration. The so-called “second industrial revolution” (e.g., 1870–1914) marks the ascent of technocratic power and absolute control in the form of mass production (integrated company, oil and steel, electricity and cars), culminating in the “managerial revolution” of scientific management (Taylorism) and systems rationalism. Following the “golden era” of welfare capitalism, well into the post-industrial transformation (e.g., 1950–2000), is a phase of normative control and ideological power, rise and rule of transnational corporations (finance “industry”, information technologies) seeking competitive advantage through flexible “high-performance” production systems and strategic human resource management. A central thesis adopted here is that new types of biopolitical power and formative control of populations and individuals have taken hold (Munro, 2012). Life sciences, robotics, and “big data” surveillance all profit from advances in artificial intelligence and biotechnology. The organizational paradigm resembles virtualized, ad hoc configuring network services, including a new class of highly paid, internationally mobile professionals and entrepreneurs and precarious and low-wage jobs in the “gig” or platform economy (Gandini, 2019). Management models increasingly capitalize on market-mechanisms, (self-)selection, and modes of (self-)management (e.g., goal setting, alignment of interests), substituting (or, instead, complementing) the more direct forms of control characterizing earlier phases of the industrial labour process.

Table 1 gives an overview of these historical phases, including the predominant view of institutions, key industries and technologies, and management models during the respective period. Accordingly, the metamorphosis of power and control resembles a process of increasingly complete domination, domestication, and assimilation, progressing from formal and natural to normative and formative, culminating in the total biopolitical subsumption under cognitive capitalism, as an analytic vehicle and linguistic device, different ways in which power is exercised are captured (and captioned) as assorted “C’s” of control and coordination. Accordingly, economic power underlies formal control, achieved

through commodification, such as contracts, compensation, and competition among employees, whereas the absolute control of technocratic power manifests in coercion, comprising commands, constraints, and employee compliance. Ideological power and respective normative control are described in cooptation through culture, consent, and commitment. Finally, the formative control inherent in biopolitical power is associated with creation processes, including corrosion, conception, and coevolution of basic psychological and physiological human properties with system requirements. This last step reveals the complete hubris of the quasi-divine hegemonic role the economy has assumed, projecting eugenic powers and functions to markets and their institutions as omnipotent entities, ruling over life and death beyond human questioning or intervention. This “corrosive and creative” capacity for human (re-)conception and coevolution, if accepted as a distinctive phase or period in the labour process, warrants renewed and intensified analysis through psychodynamic theories of social character formation, assessing the imprint of power and control on the deep psychological structure of the respectively socialized individuals.

Table 1: Modes of Power and Control in Historical Phases of the Capitalist Production System

Historical Phases	Power and Control	Institutions (Industries)	Technologies	Management Models	Control and Coordination
First Industrial Revolution (~1760-1840)	Economic Power, Formal Control	Early Factory (Coal, Iron, Textiles)	Steam Engine, Production Machines	Industrial Economics and Administration	Commodification, Contracts, Compensation, Competition
Second Industrial Revolution (~1870-1914)	Technocratic Power, Real Control	Integrated Company (Oil, Steel, Cars)	Electricity, Mass Production	Scientific Management, Systems Rationalism	Coercion, Commands, Constraints, Compliance
Industrial Era and Post-industrial Transformation (~1950-2000)	Ideological Power, Normative Control	Transnational Corporation (Finance, Information Technology)	Computers, Flexible Production	Strategic Human Resource Management	Cooptation, Culture, Consent, Commitment
Advanced Neoliberal Capitalism (~2000-present)	Biopolitical Power, Formative Control	Virtualized Networks (Life Sciences, Big Data, Robotics)	Artificial Intelligence, Bio-technology	Assessment and Selection, Markets, Self-Management	Creation, Corrosion, Conception, Coevolution

The second assimilated taxonomy refers to the distinction of interests, institutions, ideologies, and identities, suggested as domains or foci of analysis to expose, challenge, and transform socially and ecologically divisive and destructive broader patterns and structures (Adler, Forbes and Willmott, 2007). Specifically, critical management research has been described as the questioning, negation, deconstruction, de-naturalization, and problematization of dominant, harmful, and under-challenged interests, ideologies, institutions, identities to inspire social reform benefitting the majority or those underprivileged, as well as promoting resistance to and emancipation from the resulting limiting or

deforming conditions. As an additional structural connection, these four domains of critical inquiry (interests, ideologies, institutions, identities) are linked to the economy, society, organization, and individual, reflecting meta-, macro-, meso-, and micro-levels of analysis (Wang and Polillo, 2016). Corresponding with this contribution's aims, below, the unconscious is included as an additional sublevel for analysing sublimated control mechanisms, collective fantasies, and social character formation. A central objective of the presented theoretical integration is determining some structural relationships between integrated concepts and taxonomies. For instance, economic interests shape societal ideologies and the institutions of work, which, in turn, individual influence identities and unconscious fantasies, narratives, and imageries (Bal and Dóci, 2018; Glynos, 2008, 2011). Accordingly, as outlined below, processes of behavioural control and psychological governance are rooted in a pervasive and exploitative overarching system logic (Fuchs, 2017), which can be conceptualized in terms of cascading multiple nested and reciprocal processes across levels of analysis, taking the form of political, social, and psychological, and psychodynamic sublogics of domination. Similar observations are addressed in notions of circulations, circuits or “flows” of power (Clegg, 2009; Munro, 2012), assuming that power is an omnipresent force, operating not in a unidirectional, down-down fashion, but rather tacitly pervading, distorting, and instrumentalizing all aspects of societal, organizational and psychological structures, processes, and interactions.

An attempt to specify some structural relationships between different forms of power, control processes and critical inquiry domains is presented in Table 2. Accordingly, economic power transfers into formal control via interests (commodification); technocratic power corresponds with absolute control through institutions (coercion); ideological power underlies normative control through ideologies (cooptation), and biopolitical power is exercised via formative control of identities (creation). Accordingly, the “organismic integration” of control can be analysed by drawing on psychological theory, as a progression from conflicting outside economic interests, the introjection of external control, internalized forms of identified “voluntary” compliance, culminating in the corrosion, conversion, and conception of basic intrinsic human features, through psychodynamic processes of social character formation (Deacon, 2002; Foster, 2017). Further, the four archetypal modes of power can be organized in two by two matrix, with dimensions related to the manifestations and mechanisms of employee control. In this taxonomy, economic and technocratic powers relate to objective interests and their manifestations in societal and organizational institutions, using control mechanisms of objectification.

In contrast, ideological and biopolitical powers unfold in subjective mechanisms of psychological indoctrination and identity development through internalized control processes of subjectification (Hornung and Höge, 2019; Weiskopf and Loacker, 2006). Moreover, economic and ideological powers can be viewed as manifesting initially in abstract or symbolic forms (e.g., property rights, conventional knowledge, legal code). In contrast, technocratic and biopolitical powers are structural or embodied in the material disciplinary apparatus, respectively, governing individuals' bodies and minds.

Table 2: Characteristics, Psychodynamic Processes, and Domains of Power and Control

Power and Control	Control Processes	Organismic Integration	Control via Interests	Control via Institutions	Control via Ideologies	Control via Identities
Economic Power, Formal Control	Abstract, Symbolic, Objectification	Extrinsic, Conflicting Interests	Commodification, Contracts, Compensation, Competition			
Technocratic Power, Real Control	Embodied, Structural, Objectification	External, Introjected Control	<i>(Builds on and contains the above categories)</i>	Coercion, Command, Constraints, Compliance		
Ideological Power, Normative Control	Abstract, Symbolic, Subjectification	Internalized, Identified Compliance	<i>(Builds on and contains the above categories)</i>	<i>(Builds on and contains the above categories)</i>	Cooptation, Culture, Consent, Commitment	
Biopolitical Power, Formative Control	Embodied, Structural, Subjectification	Intrinsic Features, Social Character	<i>(Builds on and contains the above categories)</i>	<i>(Builds on and contains the above categories)</i>	<i>(Builds on and contains the above categories)</i>	Creation, Corrosion, Conception, Coevolution

Levels and domains of analysis

Core concepts of a dynamic and interdependent multi-level perspective on power are presented in structured form in Table 3. In this suggested conceptualization, the common tripartite taxonomy of society, organization, and individual, as macro-, meso-, and micro-levels of analysis, is expanded by including the economy as the overarching meta-level transnational (material and informational) superstructure of the global political-economic system of neoliberal capitalism (Fuchs, 2017; Wang and Polillo, 2016). Further, additionally included at the opposite end is a sub-level of psychodynamic, or so-called, “fantasmatic” logic of unconscious control through governmentality. Psychodynamic processes on this level are interpreted as manifestations of psychological domination (subsumption), targeting and impeding critical thinking faculties about the validity of proliferated and internalized beliefs systems, norms, and normative judgements – as characterizing features of ideological indoctrination and hegemony (Glynos, 2011). This psychodynamic sub-level reflects the “deep structure” of corporate power and control in shaping the sublime fantasies and character orientations of the respectively assimilated individuals. Accordingly, processes of behavioural control and psychological governance emanate (flow) from a superimposed meta-level exploitative and dominating system logic (ideology) of advanced neoliberal capitalism, cascading into subordinated political (macro-), social (meso-), and psychological (micro-)logics. Dynamized by the inner conflicts of a crisis-prone, unsustainable, and self-destructive, interest-driven (meta-level system) logic of domination and exploitation, higher-order macro-processes of ideological subsumption subjugation at the societal level are reproduced in psychodynamic tendencies of subjectification and sublimation at the micro-level of individual

identities. In Marxist terms, this multi-level conceptualization provides a further differentiation and development of the distinction between economic and ideological superstructure. The former, however, assumes the role of a hegemonic meta-logic, pervading and reproducing itself within “heterarchically” nested subsystems (Eagleton, 2000). These intrusive tendencies are manifested in and mediated by organizational or management control systems as meso-level subordinating and socializing institutions for large parts of the working population. Based on systems theory, dynamic, interdependent, and nested processes thus manifest in repeating patterns of “self-similarity” or “character displacement” distributed across different levels and domains of analysis (Fuchs, 2017). As such, not just organizations but also societies and individuals and their psychological structure and social relationships are increasingly framed and re-conceived in the image of capitalist economic institutions (Pongratz and Voß, 2003). The system thus perpetuates and expands through the “autopoietic” creation of self-similar “fragments” of itself, “colonizing” previously shielded societal, social, and psychological spaces, domains, entities, and discourses, suggesting significant qualitative changes to the human psyche (LaMothe, 2016). From various critical theoretical perspectives, these developments have been insightfully analysed as a socially corrosive, corrupting, and counter-humanistic force. Specifically, this refers to pervasive economic tendencies, shaping and predisposing new social character orientations towards neoliberal ideological beliefs on individualism, competition and instrumentality (Bal and Dóci, 2018). In its totality, this process can be envisioned as the combined influence of economic, political, social, psychological and psychodynamic logics and processes, spanning multiple forms of control, domains, and levels of analysis.

Table 3: Focal Sub-Systems, Levels of Analysis, Logics, and Domains of Power and Control

Systems	Hierarchy	Logics	Domains	Processes	Control
Economy	Meta-level	System	Interests	Objectification	Commodification
Society	Macro-level	Political	Ideologies	Subsumption	Cooptation
Organization	Meso-level	Social	Institutions	Subordination	Coercion
Individual	Micro-level	Psychological	Identities	Subjectification	Creation
Unconscious	Sub-level	Psychodynamic	Fantasies (Imageries)	Sublimation	Character Formation

The meta-level of competing for economic interests and capital accumulation, and the resulting system logic of exploitative domination in advanced capitalist societies, have been analysed by generations of critics of the market system, most recently, in work on neoliberalism as a socially and psychologically corrosive force, biasing and corrupting both workplace practices and organizational research (Bal and Dóci, 2018). In the neo-Marxist (or Freudo-Marxist) framework adopted here, exploitative and dominating tendencies of capitalism are taken as ontologically given and do not require further elaboration (Archibald, 2009; Fluxman, 2009). In the following, some considerations will be outlined about the macro-level of societal ideologies and the political logic of system justification, followed by some starting points for analysing the meso-level of organizational institutions and the social logic of management control. Subsequently, the micro-level of individual identities and the psychological logic of governmentality will be discussed. Here, the boundaries are fluent regarding the additionally included sub-level of unconscious psychodynamic processes and the “fantasmatic” logic of sublime indoctrination and character formation. Control mechanisms corresponding with these levels are exemplified by processes of commodification, cooptation, coercion, creation, and character formation, representing increasingly invasive and internalized manifestations of domination and “domestication”.

Expressed as objectification processes, subsumption, subordination, subjectification, and sublimation, these tendencies reflect the progressive biopolitical takeover, assimilation, and formative “reconception” of individuals. Elsewhere, associated processes have been analysed and described as the total life subsumption under the increasingly hegemonic mental regime of advanced neoliberal capitalism (Fumagalli, 2015; Vercellone, 2007). Notably, this transformation proceeds from commodification and coercion to the cooptation, corrosion, and (re-)creation of character via the conversion of objectification and subsumption on a meta- and macro-level of subjectification as well as further through the psychodynamic sublimation of system-justifying fantasies on the individual micro- and unconscious sub-level.

On the societal level, a crucial non-coercive way through which power is exercised is ideological manipulation and indoctrination. A rich literature on the manifestations and mechanisms of ideological control in societies and organizations exists, ranging from classic to contemporary perspectives (Seeck, Sturdy, Boncori and Fougère, 2020). Notably, classic critical theory's speculative assumptions are confirmed in more recent empirical research, suggesting system-justification theory as an essential building block of theorizing power and control (Jost, Banaji and Nosek, 2004). Developed in political psychology based on extensive research, system justification theory has identified a psychological tendency to defend and positively distort society's status quo, operating among both advantaged and disadvantaged groups. Contemporary system-justifying ideologies include, for instance, fair market and shareholder value ideology, economic system justification, meritocratic beliefs, and social dominance orientation. A common denominator of these is opposition to equality. Some groups (e.g., owners and managers) are assumed to be superior to others and, therefore, the existing group-based social hierarchy would be legitimate, inevitable, and even “natural”. Further, positing that market-procedures are inherently efficient, fair, and without alternatives, economic inequalities and social stratification are counterfactually “rationalized” as justly deserved, reflecting individual efforts and contributions to society.

In contrast, social and economic equality are branded as impractical, undesirable, or even detrimental to society (e.g., impeding initiative and performance). Research has established personal (e.g., need for cognition) and situational antecedents (e.g., group pressure) of endorsing system-justifying ideologies, as well as differing consequences for advantaged and disadvantaged groups (Jost, 2019). Internalizing such ideologies generally weakens support for social change and redistribution of resources and increased positive and decreased negative affect. The first reflects indoctrinating and normalizing effects, the latter the palliative (relieving) function. However, for groups disadvantaged by the system, ideological reduction of cognitive dissonance incurs psychological costs, manifesting in lower well-being and self-esteem, less favourable views of their group, and increased idealization of privileged elites. System-justification thus effectively manipulates and dominates disadvantaged groups by imposing a “false consciousness”. Organizational applications of system-justification are promising (Proudfoot and Kay, 2014), corresponding with increasing (ongoing and renewed) interest in socio-ideological components of management control (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2004) and the pervasive roles of ideologies in work organizations more broadly (Seeck et al., 2020; Hornung, Höge and Unterrainer, 2021), as well as their subtle, tacit, subliminal, and (therefore) largely unquestioned biasing influence on topics, theories, epistemologies, and methods of applied psychology (McDonald and Bubna-Litic, 2012), organization science (Bal and Dóci, 2018), and related academic fields.

Focusing on the institutional meso-level, research on management control systems ranges from critical assessments to ethically concerning contributions oriented towards social engineering the most effective and efficient regimes of mental and behavioural governance (Gill, 2019; Strauß and Zecher, 2013). Instructive, in this context, distinctions and dynamics of technocratic and socio-ideological management control have been analysed through institutional logics of socio-technical dyads (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2004; Gerdin, 2020). Similarly, classic sociological theorizing on power and involvement in organizations (Etzioni, 1961) assumes characteristic patterns in organisations' compliance (disciplinary) structures, resembling the types of control the institution relies on, generating different forms of

attachment psychological relatedness. Commonly differentiated are three sources of organizational power and corresponding member involvement. Accordingly, remunerative power stimulates calculative involvement and compliance in response to management systems emphasizing instrumentality of behaviour for attaining material benefits or incentives (e.g., business company). Coercive power is assumed to generate “alienative” involvement (i.e., alienation from one’s role in the organization), as a negative affective form of relatedness, based on feeling forced by environmental pressures, experienced loss of control, and perceived lack of alternatives (e.g., prisons or military). In contrast, moral involvement, as a state of positive-affective attachment and internalization of (i.e., identification with and felt responsibility for) organizational goals, is associated with systems that emphasize immaterial or symbolic rewards, shared norms, purpose, meaning, and personal dedication (e.g., churches and social organizations). Research has demonstrated various combinations of calculative, alienative, moral involvement across and within the same work organizations, explained by different configurations of remunerative, coercive, normative power in the management control systems for different groups of employees (Büssing, 2002). Identified as an example for the “hidden continuity of classic themes”, the taxonomy of remunerative, coercive, and normative control corresponds with formal, objective, ideological subsumption in critical social theory (Hornung, 2010). Associated theorizing thus builds conceptual bridges between mainstream organizational literature and more critical and comprehensive perspectives. Fundamental here is the notion that the disciplinary apparatus of the work organization leaves a specific “imprint” on the psychological structure of individuals, an assumption shared by and elaborated for the societal level in psychodynamic, social character theory (Funk, 1998; Jimenez, 2019), as outlined further below.

Critically analysing the cultural logic of Western capitalism, the governmentality concept and related approaches focus on the processes through which power is exercised remotely and indirectly via modes of subjectification, such as self-management and proactive compliance (Deacon, 2002; Clegg, 2019; Rose, O'Malley and Valverde, 2006). As analysed and elaborated by Pyysiäinen, Halpin and Guilfoyle (2017), subjectification is achieved in autonomy-oriented management practices as “responsibilization” through the combined use of appeals to freedom and threats to personal control. Responsibilization means establishing a particular form of subjectivity, where individuals act as “agents” imposing the demands of those in power upon themselves – going “above and beyond” being merely obedient (i.e., fulfilling a defined function, specified role, or doing a prescribed “job”). Thus, authority and rule are exercised by individuals controlling themselves, instead of by external organizational agents (management, supervisors). The combined use of appeals of freedom, activating optimistic hopes and desires, and threats to controllability, evoking negative expectations, uncertainty, and fear of constrained autonomy, would trigger subjects to assume responsibility and engage in identifying, persistent pursuit of predetermined organizational goals to restore their sense of control (Pyysiäinen, Halpin and Guilfoyle, 2017). Diagnosing a new quality of self-control, Foucault’s conceptualizations of biopower and biopolitics elaborate on such shifts from coercive power toward self-disciplinary colonial regimes, pervading and shaping the most intimate domains of modern life by the dominating political-economic interests of the state and capital (e.g., Aslan and Özeren, 2018; Berman, 2010; Haskaj, 2018; Moisaner, Groß and Eräranta, 2018). Accordingly, biopolitics focus on vital aspects of human beings, providing intervention strategies to control groups and individuals through self-discipline regimes. Biopolitics refers to an advanced set of powerful techniques to discipline, regularize, and align populations to the needs of the modern state and “free” markets. Transcending psychological processes, biopolitics extends to issues of reproduction, illness, health and death, and physiological development and aims to utilise all aspects of human life as productive and consumptive capacities (Berman, 2010). Summarizing the literature, Munro (2012) discusses three approaches to biopolitics and neoliberal governmentality. First, research focusing on the post-Fordist mode of production analyses the rise of immaterial labour (symbolic, affective), the emphasis on networks, and the transformation of social relationships into capital forms. Second, under the label of “advanced liberal governmentality”, researchers have described the emergence of new techniques of control, such as performance management (goal setting, audits, self-organization), the privatization (organizational externalization) of risks, and the proliferation of an “enterprise culture” of employee self-reliance. Third, the most

intrusive forms of control are addressed in the literature on biocapitalist governmentality, including work on the “biosocial culture” and “biocapital”, analysing how the logic of capitalism extends into the development of basic physiological human properties pervading politics of life and social organization. All three research foci suggest essential changes to the psychological “deep structure” of work and the workings of power in organizations, requiring more automatic and insightful modes of analysis, as, for instance, offered by psychoanalytic and socio-dynamic theorizing, which will be discussed next.

Psychodynamic theorizing

Psychoanalysis and psychodynamic theory are more than well-positioned to enrich organization studies in several important ways, specifically, about the complexities of the human psyche, unconscious processes and defences, and the constitution of subjectivity, all of which are core to better understanding the functions, manifestations, and dynamics of social norms and power in work contexts. As previously discussed by Fotaki, Long and Schwartz (2012), psychoanalysis, in conjunction with critical social theory, neuro-psychology, literature, environmental sciences, philosophy, and other fields, can provide more holistic analysis and interpretation of contemporary socio-political, economic, and organizational phenomena. Such an interdisciplinary science of organizational psychodynamics holds the potential of enabling management researchers to explore the deeper meaning of symbolic, affective, narrative or imaginary elements and gain a better understanding of social and psychological structures, functions, and interdependencies (Gabriel and Carr, 2002). Applications of psychoanalytic concepts of archetypes, in particular, can act as a valuable addition to research on corporate power and control. Indeed, increasing attention is currently directed at the existence, transformation, and meaning of archetypes, *gestalts*, or typical organisational research configurations. A case in point, Greenwood and Hinings (1993) argue that organizational structures and management systems are best understood by analysing overall patterns rather than more narrow sets of properties or practices. According to an archetypal approach, such patterns reflect the ideas, beliefs, and values underpin and embodied in organizational structures and systems. Archetypes have been defined as sets of structures and relationships that reflect a single interpretive scheme – based on fit among their elements – such that subcomponents integrate into an emergent coherent ensemble, i.e., a pattern that resembles organizational design (Greenwood and Hinings, 1993). Such patterns are frequently analysed or referred to as ideal-types, modes, forms, or configurations, prototypical populations, social groups or classes, but also have been described as dominant societal antagonisms, conflict of interests, dialectical tensions, paradoxes, specific psychological constellations, contradictions, and complexes (Gabriel and Carr, 2002). Organizational theorizing inevitably draws on types as basic patterns that are coherent, respectively, act synergistically to yield a systematic configuration of components and outcomes. Examples for this tendency, which, in itself is a manifestation of a meta-pattern of abstracting, differentiating, and categorizing, can be found in the literature on varieties of high-performance work practices, strategies of workforce differentiation, and segmented (stratified or differentiated) human resource management systems (Townley, 1993). Eventually, the entirety of the spectrum of human activities can be analysed and described in terms of “patterned behaviours” of scripted compliance and programmed coordination enforced through social roles and sanctions, influenced by ideologies of system justification, interacting with processes of individual identity construction, self-validation, and mechanisms of ego defence in the context of more or less developmental or detrimental, supportive or exploitative, accepting or abusive social relationships. Directing attention to these complex interdependencies and complementarities among economic, political, social, organizational, and individual levels is at the core of the socio-psychodynamic approach suggested here.

The suggested taxonomy of formal, natural, normative, and formative modes of power offers a theoretically grounded and constitutive or “foundational” conception, partly because it is based on a historical materialist “archetype approach”, which takes into consideration and reflects on shared joint configurations, models, and deep-seated experiences of work, organizations, and employment (Clegg, 2009). Going back to and coined by the founder of psychoanalytic psychology, C. G. Jung, archetypes have initially been described in somewhat mystic or obscure ways as “innate patterns of perception and

behaviour”, effectively loaded, and universally shared among all human beings, as part of the (possibly connected) psychological “deep structure” of the collective human (un-)consciousness (Roesler, 2012). Less deterministic, categorical, and “esoteric” than the initial psychoanalytic understanding, subsequent research has examined archetypes as representations of social instincts, i.e., dynamic patterns of perception, memory, and action, taking on culturally and individually varying forms. Specifically, and as an example, the approach suggested here draws on a conception of archetypes as emergent outcomes of cognitive complexity and evolved motivational systems, as elaborated by Vaughn Becker and Neuberg (2019). Accordingly, archetypes are evolutionary, developmental, and dynamically embodied. This means that, firstly, archetypal representational systems are identified as evolutionary, such that specific sets of archetypes have arisen from coevolutionary dynamics, selected to simulate and predict adaptive responses to recurrent fundamental problems of hominid sociality and survival, such as social-, relational- and self-constructions. Secondly, archetypes are seen not as universal but as developmental, i.e., as capacities, the realization of which critically depend on collective and individual experiences and developments. Thirdly, archetypal systems are described as dynamically embodied, subsymbolically grounded, distributed across multiple modes of perception and action, and adaptive to constantly changing environmental demands. In particular, in the context of and in conjunction with the current resurgence of interest in social character theory (Fromm, 2010), this psychologically sophisticated (re-)conceptualization bolsters and reinforces the usefulness of the concept of archetypes for social and organizational research and analysis, specifically, with a focus on configurations and processes of power and control in societal institutions and institutional logics of work (Glynos, 2008, 2011). Arguably, newer research on archetypes can be interpreted as converging with and supporting some more philosophical and theoretical assumptions of social character theory.

Social character theory posits that the socio- and political-economic structure of societies shape personal orientations and character traits shared among the population, such that people tend to be socialized and psychologically preformed to personally “want to do” what they “ought to do”, to serve the interests of the dominating elites in power (Funk, 1998; Fromm, 2010; Foster, 2017; Jimenez, 2019). Combining the Marxian assumption that material life conditions determine human consciousness with the dynamic conception of the psyche in Freudian psychoanalytic theory, character emerges in interactions between collective social tendencies and individual psychological predispositions and socializing circumstances. Based on the dialectic method shared by historical materialism and psychodynamic theory, ideal types or archetypes of motivational structures have been identified, described, and analysed, corresponding with the historical phases of the capitalist political-economic system hoarding, receptive, authoritarian, and marketing character orientations. Against the ideals of radical humanism, societies are evaluated according to the extent that they permit and promote, respectively, impede or undermine the realization of human potentials about comprehensive well-being and health, higher levels of consciousness, self-actualization, personality development, authentic personal relationships, and psychological, moral, and spiritual growth (Fromm, 2010). Accordingly, advanced capitalist societies are diagnosed as psychologically unhealthy or “insane”, promoting destructive (e.g., egoism, greed, rivalry) and impeding “productive” personal behaviours and orientations (e.g., altruism, dedication, growth). Specifically, descriptions of the self-focused marketing character of post-industrial societies largely converge with other critical sociocultural assessments, such as the diagnosed corrosion of character in flexible capitalism (Sennett, 1998) and the “entreployee proposition”, an influential concept and neologism coined in industrial sociology (Pongratz and Voß, 2003). Specifically, the latter suggests self-commercialization, self-control, and self-rationalization as core dimensions of the normative and formative tendencies shaping the governed individuals' subjectivity and psychology, increasingly domesticated as “self-entrepreneurial” and “self-managing” forms of labour power. The prototypical persona of the “entreployee” and other conceptualizations of the “entrepreneurial self” are exemplary embodiments or ideal types of the sacrosanct and “deific” quality of the corrosive and the creative market forces conjointly working toward the total subsumption and “organic” assimilation of the “neoliberal form of life” in the era of “advanced bio-cognitive” capitalism (Fumagalli, 2015). The present analysis makes an argument for integrating extant historical, philosophical, and psychological concepts, constructs, and traditions into a more comprehensive and

coherent perspective on the development of the psychological “deep structure” of the human (species) mind, which is acknowledged at least partly as a specific manifestation of the current “collective” (un-)consciousness and hegemonic social character of an increasingly globalized political-economic world system. Identified as possible components of such conceptual and empirical integration were several academic literature bodies on archetypes, social character, and fantasmatic institutional logics. These were embedded within a framework of the complex, interdependent, and dynamic multi-level socio- and psychodynamic processes associated with the amalgamation, transformation, and continuity of manifestations, modes, and mechanisms of economic, technocratic, ideological, and biopolitical facets of power and corresponding formal, objective, normative and formative control. Disentangling these typically compounded categories offers a potent methodological device for dialectical analyses of complex systems of power. However, caution needs to be used to avoid that this taxonomical approach is not misinterpreted as an invitation to promote stereotypical thinking, deterministic rigidity, or dogma, going so far as to presuppose (onto-)logically or practically distinct, clearly separable, necessarily consecutive, or universally sequential forces, stages, (id-)entities, or (arche-)types. Instead, in reality, specific combinations and configurations of the identified prototypical modes and power and control processes are likely to interact, complement synergistically, and potentially obscure each other.

Concluding remarks

According to Deacon’s (2002) synthesis of the work of Foucault, a better understanding, of how “we”, as the human species, have become what we presently are requires not a “theory”, in the traditional sense. Rather, what would be needed instead, is “analytics” that comprehensively captures and deconstructs, how technologies of power and control have, since ancient times, become increasingly complex, interdependent, embedded, and internalized – concurrently manifestations of and, in turn, manifesting in specific historical frameworks of organizing and organizations (e.g., Clegg, 2009; Townley, 1993). Arguably, Western political rationalities have come to dominate the world through the current form of radicalized neoliberal capitalism. In this globally colonizing system, the combined use of totalization and individualization technologies positions some groups to monitor, control, contain, and discipline others, while manipulating all to discipline, distort, and domesticate themselves. Resulting from this totality are external and internal (situational and psychological) forces that compel people to behave in interest-guided ways, thus stabilizing, reinforcing, and reproducing prevailing power structures, which eventually are detrimental to the development of their own human needs and potentials (Deacon, 2002; Weiskopf and Loacker, 2006). Above, some cornerstones and components of such an envisioned “analytics of power” were discussed. This conceptual integration is a work in progress in need of further elaboration, clarification, and completion. Among others, this applies to theoretical implications and empirical applications, only foreshadowed here. Further missing is considerations of countertendencies and resistance, manifestations of “bottom-up” influence, and the role of alternative ways of organizing for emancipation, individuation, and solidarity. These issues add new and different, complex and possibly antagonistic concepts, connotations, and configurations of power and control. Admittedly, this contribution’s goals and scope are more modest, aimed at theoretically exploring and expounding venues for a more in-depth examination of the omnipresent and disfiguring shadows of power and discipline at work. Initial steps in this direction involve assimilating potential components of a widely warranted, more complex, reflexive, and holistic socio- and psychodynamic understanding of modes and mechanisms of power – and associated means and processes of control. However, the full development of such an integrated perspective is not acclaimed as an achievement here but rather an ongoing collaborative and discursive intellectual project. Compiling components of this “analytics of power” and their conceptual integration require further elaboration, addressing underdeveloped theoretical implications, empirical investigations, and practical applications. Importantly, this includes consideration of counter-directed tendencies, resistance, and revolt – as manifestations of “bottom-up” influence by individuals and groups, potentially yielding alternative ways of organizing power for the emancipatory, freedom-enhancing purposes of social critique and transformation. In this dialectic sense, a better understanding of how mankind has evolved into its present state of global crisis also implies at least a cautious hope and faint

promise, that humans are (still) able to change and could be different. An important component of such a necessary societal transformation is the intentional, coordinated, and responsible use of power, not to exploit, degrade, and destroy nature and each other, but for attaining higher levels of consciousness and moral development, acting for the common good, instead of narrow self-interest and accumulation of material wealth. Arguably, our continued survival as a species depends on this task.

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