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Citation: Fleming, P. (2014). Review Article: When 'life itself' goes to work: Reviewing shifts in organizational life through the lens of biopower. Human Relations, 67(7), pp. 875-901. doi: 10.1177/0018726713508142

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Permanent repository link: https://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/8237/

Link to published version: https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726713508142

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Review article: When 'life itself' goes to work: Reviewing shifts in organizational life through the lens of biopower

Peter Fleming

Abstract

This review article suggests the English publication of Foucault's lectures on biopower, *The Birth of Biopolitics* (2008), might be useful for extending our understandings of how organizational power relations have changed over the last 20 years. Unlike disciplinary power, which constrains and delimits individuals, the concept of biopower emphasizes how our life abilities and extra-work qualities (*bios* or 'life itself') are now key objects of exploitation – particularly under neoliberalism. The term *biocracy* is introduced to analyze recent reports on workplace experiences symptomatic of biopower. Finally, the conceptual weaknesses of biopower for organizational theorizing are critically evaluated to help develop the idea for future scholarship.

Keywords

Biopower, control, management, neoliberalism, non-work, resistance

Introduction

Michel Foucault's *oeuvre* has been extremely influential in organization and management research, especially in relation to power, identity and control. The concept of 'disciplinary power' in particular has been utilized by scholars to demonstrate how domination can seep into the everyday practices of individuals and align them with instrumental goals through self-surveillance, normalization and subjection (e.g., Knights and Willmott, 1989; Sewell and Wilkinson, 1992; Barker, 1992; Kondo, 1990). However, by the end of his career, Foucault was concentrating on a qualitatively different kind of power pertaining to the government of populations. This he labeled *biopower* (derived from *bios* or 'life itself'). This mode of power operates differently from discipline because it does not seek to constrain, isolate or sequester subjects within fixed space/time boundaries. Instead, it indexes their everyday qualities or 'life itself' to the needs of economic regulation, governing modern Western societies from a distance and making it, ironically, all the more irresistible for doing so. In other words, it *captures* what the subject of power *already is*, rather than composing or reconstructing him or her into a desired image.

Although the notion of biopower was first introduced to English language readers in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* (1978) and embellished through the notion of 'governmentality' in Burchell et al.'s *The Foucault Effect* (1991), it was with the 2008 publication of his lectures, *The Birth of Biopolitics* (2008), that the shift in Foucault's thought becomes apparent. As Munro (2012) observes, having only recently become available to Anglophone readers, the idea of biopower has understandably received scant attention in organization studies.[1] Indeed, most of the post-disciplinary applications of Foucault have concentrated on governmentality,

which itself has only enjoyed limited adoption in management research (Munro, 2012).

For me, these studies of governmentality tended to see biopower as an extension of disciplinary containment (e.g., 'cultures of enterprise') and overlooked its distinct significance within neoliberal capitalism (also see Hatcheul, 1999). Only with the aforementioned lectures does this facet of biopower become evident, especially in relation to 'human capital' and 'human resources'. According to Foucault, there is more to control in neoliberal societies than conventional top-down hierarchies. Overt bureaucracy, state judicial repression and technological domination are still pervasive, but power also functions through infra-political means, by enrolling our wider life practices, be they private interests, independent social abilities and personal aptitudes.

This paper aims to employ the concept of biopower as a lens to analyze transformations that have occurred in the sphere of work over the last 20 years. While the very limited applications of biopower in management research have been highly illustrative (especially Dowling [2007] in relation to waitressing), I suggest that a wide range of recent empirical findings about the changing nature of work might be explained through the concept of biopower. The term 'biocracy' is introduced to frame the analysis at the organizational level, which allows us to isolate the distinct features of this mode of regulation in contrast to bureaucracy, cultural controls and disciplinary power.[2]

While it is always risky to reinterpret existing research through a new concept not predicated by those researchers themselves (see Willmott and O'Doherty, 2001), this paper is not seeking to prove, disprove or propose a superior analysis of these findings. Instead, the paper aims to add to our knowledge of contemporary

organizations by arguing that a good deal of emergent research strongly resonates with a concept only recently available to English speaking scholars. This exercise seeks not only to provide fresh tools for interpreting this research, but also develop a concept that remains somewhat fragmentary and vague in the organization studies field. Moreover, the paper points to potential weaknesses that inhere in the idea too. This will hopefully yield instructive insights for future research applying the concept of 'biocracy' as we grapple to make sense of some notable changes in work, management and organization power relations today.

The paper is organized as follows. First I outline some conspicuous changes reported in both scholarly and practitioner literature pertaining to the nature of work today. This reveals the importance of social personality, non-work and broader lifestyle elements in the production process. Secondly, the paper turns to Foucault's concept of biopower and the subsequent insights that have been developed around it in political philosophy. Thirdly, its workplace correlate - biocracy - is introduced to review recent employment research regarding changes in the way work is managed. Four dimensions are apposite: *social subjectivity*, *non-work*, *free time* and *unpaid work*. And finally, the paper evaluates potential limitations with the idea, making recommendations for future organizational scholarship.

The changing nature of work … For some

The inspiration for this article grows from the increasing number of accounts and observations about the changing nature of work, especially in Western economies and the management of organizations therein. It is important from the outset to state that while I deal in part with developments in popular management ideology, which can seldom be empirically trusted (where terms like 'Liberation Management' abound), it is suggested that concrete organizational shifts are also now afoot,

requiring updated concepts to explain how our broader lives *per se* are regulated at work. Moreover, in terms of the global division of labor, we must be cautious about deploying 'new times' rhetoric without circumspection. Arguments such as Sennett's (2006) about the 'new culture of capitalism' and Boltanski and Chiapello's (2005) about the 'new spirit of capitalism' risk missing some key continuities between present and past logics of capitalist rationality (i.e., private property, commoditization, exploitation, etc.). So what exactly has changed to inspire the introduction of a concept like biopower?

The decline of the 'organization man'?

Compared to the way in which we have typically considered work environments in organizational analysis, some substantial changes appear to be occurring. Just consider the classical descriptions of the office in Weber and the factory in Marx. According to Weber, a key defining element of ideal-bureaucratic forms were their impersonality and formality. The official position and the myriad of individual traits of the office holder were strictly demarcated. According to Weber, the disinterested and aloof requirements of the bureau meant that all of those qualities that make us human beyond the workplace had to be temporarily suspended. As he put it, "the more bureaucracy is dehumanized, the more completely it succeeds in eliminating from official business love, hatred and all purely personal, irrational and emotional elements which escape calculation. This is the specific nature of bureaucracy and it is appraised as its special virtue" (Weber, 1946: 220, also see Crozier, 1964).

A similar process of de-humanizing work can be noted in classic depictions of factory employment. Beynon (1980) found at Ford, for example, that even speaking on the line was prohibited. As the company motto reminded workers, "when we are at

work, we ought to be at work. When we are at play, we ought to be at play. There is no use trying to mix the two" (Beynon, 1980: 25). Of course, as countless studies have revealed, individuality, play and humor still persisted in such environments (for example, see Roy, 1958). But they were often confined to the informal work sphere and frequently considered a dangerous zone of autonomy by managers (see Thompson and Ackroyd, 1999). The outcome was a strict division between work and 'life' more generally, giving rise to what Whyte (1954) lamented as the 'organizational man' - uniform, bereft of any differentiating personality, deeply conservative and rather passionless (also see Alvesson, 1987).

As Kunda's (1992) much-cited ethnographic study of the 1980s trend of building strong cultures also observed, the ostensibly warmer and more value-based method of management resulted in very closed and claustrophobic environments. Personal identifications and emotions were strenuously molded to fit the firm, delimiting the plurality of 'life projects' that could potentially dilute these strong normative systems (also see Willmott, 1993). No wonder some researchers considered 'clan control' to be analogous to extreme cults, especially when it comes to the personal dysfunctions that arise from overwork and over-commitment (O'Reilly and Chapman, 1996). As one worker interviewed by Kunda (1992: 203) cautioned, "you keep that shit to yourself", since indicators of life beyond the firm might compromise the singular focus of the company culture (also see Casey, 1995).

The arrival of so-called Liberation Management and market rationalism seem to have partially displaced this division between work and 'life'. According to Foster and Kaplan (2001) and Kunda and Ailon-Souday (2005), for example, human resource managers quickly realized that staid conformity to a pre-fabricated culture tended to stifle worker-led innovations and initiative in industry. During the mid-

1990s, management ideology suddenly encourages the 'whole person' in the workplace, with individual difference, diversity and 'life' more generally becoming key organizational motifs. According to Peters (2003), for example, managers ought to tap the pre-existing and unique social capabilities of employees, rather than attempt to hammer them into an identikit image of the firm. What Fleming and Sturdy (2010) call the 'just be yourself' corporate philosophy in their investigation of call-centre employment recognizes the importance of wider life associatives as a motivating factor. When employees can authentically 'be themselves' they are more likely to voluntarily enact the 'buzz of life' in tasks that increasingly require interpersonal virtuosity, authenticity (especially in the service sector) and self-organized knowhow. As Delbridge's (1998) study of a 'new-age factory' in the UK also reveals, the free expression of sociality is deemed crucial to the firm, since it could no longer rely upon the mindless-subordinate model that long characterized manufacturing employment.

From work to non-work in organizations and beyond

How do organizations tap the 'whole person' at work and link it to productive activity? As numerous studies of organizational learning have demonstrated, it is difficult to induce these qualities through traditional top-down hierarchies (see Perelman, 2011; Pink, 2011). The command to 'be yourself' using basic Taylorist styles of management abnegate the very life capacities that are desired - much like 'ordering' a child to play or have fun. Contemporary management appears to have solved this problem in two ways. First, by evoking conventionally non-work themes in the workplace such as lifestyle indicators, sexual orientation, political beliefs (usually via the company Corporate Social Responsibility policy [here, see Costas and Kärreman, 2013 on how CSR is used to tap personal solutions to business problems])

and even leisure interests like ‘partying’. Secondly, by generalizing the index of work or ‘the job’ beyond the office, so that ideas, skills and potential value-adding efforts that occur in a café, at home or even on holiday might be captured by the firm. Let’s look at each dimension in turn.

One of the strangest aspects of contemporary management discourse is its conspicuous reliance on facets of life that the Fordist mentality would have previously deemed out of place in the office. Many workers are invited to express their difference and individuality by telling onsite employers ‘who they are’ outside of the workday. The management consultant Gurnek Bains (2007) casts this mainly in terms of personal authenticity. Based upon a substantial number of empirical cases, he notes the approach taken by putatively ‘enlightened’ CEOs in their attempt to increase task-engagement among the workforce:

> … a major reason why people don’t feel a sense of genuine belonging to their organizations is that they have learned to be inauthentic and so have those around them. Take the example of Simon, a senior executive in a media company. He told us: “for so long, I hadn’t been bringing myself to work. I wasn’t really prepared to let others see or know the true me … then I woke up one morning and realized, I’m living my life with these people, so what’s the point in pretending (Bains, 2007: 104).

The language is curious here in the way it frames the ‘true me’ as something inherently beyond the formal prescripts formulated in the office indicative of traditional management methods. The ‘true me’ and its attendant ‘buzz of life’ might be signified by those aspects of myself I typically concealed from the managerial gaze – informal knowhow, personality and hobbies - many of which could only be articulated outside the office. Gorz (2010) describes this change in management philosophy succinctly in his study of European employment practices. Whereas

workers in Taylorized industries "became optimal only after they had been deprived of practical knowledge, skills and habits developed by the culture of everyday life … post-Fordist workers have to come to the production process with all the cultural baggage they have acquired through games, team sports, arguments …" (Gorz, 2010: 9-10).

Gorz might be overstating this trend. But I suggest this changing emphasis in management thought is related to two additional sub-developments that have been observed in practice. First is the attempt to encourage and capture the informal organizational sphere, which in the past has been viewed with a distrustful eye by the firm. Play, misbehavior, games, humor and 'fooling about' are not only permitted by Liberation Management but also engineered through a variety of exercises and provocations (Deal and Key, 1998). One only has to think of the formidable number of studies documenting the introduction of rather puerile role-playing drills in organizations, often orchestrated by 'funsultants' who force workers to sing children's songs, wear pajamas and pull pranks on fellow employees (see Cederstrom and Fleming [2012] for a full summary).

The second sub-development is perhaps more emblematic of the Liberation Management ethos. Rather than manufacturing non-work themes in the office, the firm simply sanctions expressions of who the person already is. Kuhn (2006) calls this the lifestyle approach to labor management, in which companies hope to prompt more engaged employee performances by encouraging their everyday self on the job. This may take banal forms, like informal dress codes and tattoos openly displayed in the office (Fleming and Spicer, 2004; Fleming, 2009). But it can also be more stridently enforced, such as a call-centre employee bringing cherished personal objects to the office like surfboards, consumer items related to individual tastes and home-cooking

(Land and Taylor, 2010). According to Florida (2004: 222), for example, the aesthetic labor of the 'creative class' (which includes most modern work according to his overly-expansive definition) demands increased self-expression and the freedom to be "complete people" in organizations. As a result, companies are increasingly relaxed about the presence of 'signs of life' in the paper-littered cubicle, retail shop floor, healthcare centre and so forth.

The second broader shift in this management approach flows in the opposite direction, that of work infiltrating life beyond the formal workday. Most employees, of course, still clock-in and out as per usual. But an interesting trend also appears to be increasingly evident. In their best-selling book *Why Work Sucks and What to Do About It* (2011), Ressler and Thompson note the popularity of a 'Results Only Work Environments' (or ROWE) in US industry. Contrary to conventional management wisdom, many companies now focus mainly on out-put measures rather than inputs. As long as a project deadline is met, for example, firms do not care when, how and where the work is done – be it in your underwear in the middle of the night or in a local café on Monday morning (also see Gregg, 2011). The spread of temp-work is certainly linked to this idea (Barley and Kunda, 2004). However, we can also observe this inclination in how the management function is more generally approached. In his rather ridiculously titled book *The Seven Day Weekend* (2007), the construction industry entrepreneur, Ricardo Semler, explains the rationale:

> Imagine a company where employees set their own hours; where there are no offices, no job titles, no business plans; where employees get to endorse or veto any new venture; where kids are encouraged to run the halls; and where the CEO lets other people make nearly all the decisions… [where] you have the freedom to get your job done on your own terms and to blend your work life and personal life with enthusiasm and creative energy. Smart bosses will

> eventually realize that you might be most productive if you work on Sunday afternoon, play golf on Monday morning, go to a movie on Tuesday afternoon, and watch your child play soccer on Thursday (Semler, 2007: 13).

We must, of course, give very little substantive credence to these fanciful proclamations by a multimillionaire CEO. There is now, however, some empirical data suggesting that this idea is being adopted in concrete corporate practices, in which firms realize that productive labor might just as easily take place outside of office hours as during the typical workday. As Kamp (2013) puts it, "the 'normal working day' is gradually being effaced … in reality, working hours are no longer defined by actual work time spent but by the nature of the assignment, by solution strategies, and by the level of ambition involved, as well as individual factors and preferences" (Kamp, 2013: 129).

This change in management ideology not only represents a *quantitative* change in how work is experienced, related to labor intensification or the proliferation of mobile technology. It is symptomatic of a *qualitative* shift too. Maravelias (2003) refers to this as a post-bureaucratic tendency in which the professional and non-professional become difficult to disentangle since our jobs "seek to exploit aspects of individual's 'personal' spheres, which may be valuable in work" (Maravelias, 2003: 548). In extreme cases, productive time may occur even during our most intimate moments. For example, Lucas's (2010) fascinating autobiographical account of life as a computer programmer describes how he began to solve code problems in his sleep. He termed 'sleep working' as opposed to merely dreaming *about* one's workplace, something that cannot only be explained by the promulgation of BlackBerrys or online technology.

In summary, we can note a different relationship between work and 'life' in these emergent employment trends (see Table One). As opposed to the earlier

preoccupation with suppressing or eschewing the broader non-employment and informal attributes of workers, they now appear to be central value-adding resources in organizations.

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Enter bio-power

How might the idea of biopower help us to explain these trends occurring in and around the workplace today? In particular, might the concept reveal the darker side of managerial systems that appear to grant greater 'freedom' and 'autonomy' on the job?

Foucault's turn to bios or life itself

As Munro (2012) and Hatchuel (1999) note in their excellent reviews, most adoptions of Foucault in organizational research have focused on his arguments about disciplinary power – regimes of containment and self-surveillance (e.g., see Burrell, 1988; McKinley and Starkey, 1998). The 1991 English publication of his essay 'Governmentality' partially shifted the emphasis towards Foucault's later concerns about the calculation of everyday life in modern societies, especially pertaining to enterprise cultures and 'entrepreneurial selves' (see Du Gay, 1996), but received only lukewarm interest in management studies, as Munro rightly points out.[3] With the publication of his lectures at the College de France over the last ten years – especially *The Birth of Biopolitics* (2008) – we see a more fully developed post-disciplinary agenda emerging, related to governmental management, security and biopolitical forms of domination. These ideas, I suggest, may provide insights into the changing patterns of employment surveyed above.[4]

How might *bios* or 'life itself' become enmeshed within power relations, especially when we typically think of, say, coercive workplace controls as antithetical to 'having a life'? Foucault first introduced the idea concerning the intersection between power and sexuality (Foucault, 1978). In his lectures, however, we see the concept being more systematically studied in relation to liberal forms of statecraft and especially neoliberal governmentality (Foucault, 2008). Here Foucault considers biopower distinct to the controls he had earlier termed 'discplinary'. Disciplinary power emerged from the prison and is based upon the strict and austere training of bodies within tightly regulated space/time domains. Timetables, the sequestering of individuals and internalization of the regulative gaze characteristic of prisons, he argued in *Discipline and Punish* (1977), had escaped into society to become a prominent template for workplaces, including hospitals, schools and so on.

Biopower is different and concerns not only the biological organism but also broader ways of living, social activities that tended to be considered more of a secondary reproductive resource for major institutions. This kind of regulation does not seek to contain the subject of power. Instead it aims to utilize its inherent and unlimited qualities, becoming virtual in the sense that it transcends typical disciplinary boundaries (e.g., work and non-work), enrolling pre-existing styles of conduct into governmental, economic and judicial flows of regulation. Economic security and risk are key motifs here, since the marketization of society calibrates all behavior to a cost-benefit analysis rather than pseudo-religious norms related to disciplinary confinement. This, he argued, is how populations – their hygiene, bodily functions, familial conduct and political alliances – are governed 'from afar' in late capitalist societies.

The Birth of Biopolitics lectures are astoundingly prescient in the way they concentrate on the then nascent neoliberal project as a sign of things to come. He singles out economists like Gary Becker (1976) and Robert Lucas (1972) as leading harbingers of a new type of power. Their ideas around 'human capital' in particular, he suggested, foretold the emergence of controls that index life more generally to the precepts of economic utility and governance. This entails, "generalizing the 'enterprise' from within the social body or social fabric … The individual's life itself – with his [sic] relationships to his private property, with his family, household, insurance and retirement – must make him into a sort of permanent and multiple enterprise" (Foucault, 2008: 241).

Neoliberal biopower sees economic calculability permeate into our broader life projects, making human capital no different to any other resource. Moments of living we traditionally thought to be beyond direct domination become its primary vehicle. Social aptitudes, creative capacities, libidinal desires, emotional intelligence and our very ability to engage in useful social action are enlisted in this respect. Foucault tellingly notes that the underlying fantasy of biopower is a paradoxical 'capitalism without capitalism', life *and* the preexisting structures of private property and free markets. This is why the prison metaphor and its disciplinary tropes of confinement, docile bodies and sequestered spaces are less important here. Life is accelerated and harnessed rather than coercively molded into strict conformity with impersonal timetables and rules. As Foucault (2008) further explains in relation to US neoliberalism, biopower,

> … involves extending the economic model of supply and demand and investment-cost-profit so as to make it a model of social relations and existence itself, a form of relationship of the individual to himself, time, those around him, the group and the family (Foucault, 2008: 241-243).

Biopower, capitalism and work

A serious oversight in Foucault's analysis is the limited role played by struggle and contestation in the rise neoliberal governmentality. For example, how could we explain the ascendance of Thatcherism or Reaganism without mentioning the coalminer's or air traffic controller's strikes? Also think of the material 'pain' underlying austerity policies presently promoted by contemporary neoliberal governments (see Stuckler and Basu, 2013). This dilution of the conflict behind biopower is also replicated in other related studies (e.g., Dean, 1999), including Munro's (2012) otherwise useful review, when he claims that "rather than intervene directly on the individual person, the neoliberal apparatus of control seeks to modify the 'milieu' … in which the individual makes choices" (Munro, 2012: 351). In contrast, I propose a more concrete and conflict-sensitive view of biopower, understanding it as a 'weapon' that exerts direct force on the body and social relations, but in ways that we might miss if approached simply from a disciplinary perspective.

In order to gain the most from the concept of biopower, therefore, we must position it within the context of *capitalism* proper – that is to say, class relations, exploitation and divergent political interests. Perhaps this has been done most successfully by Hardt and Negri (2000; 2009) in the political sciences. Building on Foucault's insights, they argue that the crisis of Fordism in the 1970s is crucial for understanding how biopower became a central component of the (self-) exploitation today, especially as it pertains to the affective and emotional skills of workers. Whereas life used to be considered a resource for reproducing labor outside of the point of production (as Althusserian Marxist theory revealed), these two distinct spheres are now considerably blurred. As they put it, "life is no longer produced in the

cycles of reproduction that are subordinated to the working day; on the contrary, life is what infuses and dominates all production. The excess of value is determined today in the affects, in the bodies crisscrossed with knowledge, in the intelligence of the mind, and in the sheer power to act" (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 367).

My take on this argument points to three important facets of corporate dominance that explain the rise of biopower in organizations today. First of all, the crisis of Fordism revealed that traditional models of accumulation could no longer organize themselves. The large command and control structures of the 1970s developed terminal inefficiencies, and were too remote from increasingly core value-creating activities among the workforce.

Second, a new appreciation of the working subject emerged that essentially aimed to enlist employees themselves to organize an otherwise moribund corporate infrastructure. Hence the conspicuous focus in the 1990s on self-managing teams, the self-styled learning abilities of the workforce (e.g., tacit knowledge), individual discretion and the flexible 'portfolio career' that placed many of the risks of capital investment onto workers themselves. Indeed, the problem with the neoliberal 'solution' to Fordism is that strict economic rationality required something beyond itself in order to function at all. It needed *us* to be more fully involved in everyday management matters (see Duménil and Lévy, 2011).

And third, with the de-industrialization of Western economies, many jobs come to include an immaterial or highly socialized element, partially detached from concrete tasks (e.g., screwing on a bolt). Work becomes framed in terms of 'human capital' that emphasizes life skills, communicative abilities, self-organizing capabilities and emotional intelligence. This occurs in ostensibly low-skilled jobs as much as those at the high-end of the occupational hierarchy. As Callaghan and

Thompson (2002) quote one firm in relation to menial call-centre employment, 'we hire attitude' as much as anything else.

In summary, it seems that biopower transforms work into an intangible social process no longer exclusively linked to concrete and delimited tasks indicative of Fordist employment. Having said this, it is nevertheless a highly embodied form of regulation, since our jobs are no longer defined as something we *do* among other things, but what we *are*. Hence, the logic of the factory comes to increasingly define more moments of what was once non-production. The time and space of work becomes generalized because the 'means of production' are technically *us*. Ominously, we are now permanently poised for work.

The birth of biocracy at work

Perhaps the best way to identify biopower functioning in the workplace is to contrast it with more conventional methods of management, such as Taylorism, bureaucracy and culture management. Four distinctive elements are important here.

1. *Social Subjectivity*: workers' social personality – our unique personal attributes and ability to self-organize – was often abnegated under traditional management techniques. Biopower promotes them towards capitalistic ends.

2. *Space*: Signs of non-work were usually expunged from the sphere of production. Biopower makes it a conspicuous feature in the office.

3. *Time*: Conventional regulative frameworks strictly demarcated work time and private time in order to calculate onsite productivity. Biopower blurs the boundary, since work might occur after hours, on the weekend and even in our dreams.

4: *Economic valorization*: productive labor is usually thought to reside among those formally employed by the organization. Biopower makes use of efforts and

innovations among groups and individuals beyond this remit, often entailing unpaid labor.

Thus, as distinct from bureaucracy and technocracy – both of which remain important features of organizational control – we might term the use of biopower in work settings *biocracy*. I define biocracy as the instrumentalization of life attributes that were previously considered exogenous, irrelevant or detrimental to formal organizational productivity. Biocracy is the employment-level manifestation of biopolitics in neoliberal societies. Most importantly, this term disabuses us of the idea that corporate initiatives related to Liberation Management and 'authenticity' merely entails the relaxation of power relations. The idea of biopower alerts us to the possible *extension* of organizational regulation rather than its repose. To illustrate why, I will now review a sample of emergent scholarship pertaining to organizational life (and beyond) through the lens of biocracy.

Social subjectivity put to work

Many of the classic studies of work – from Marx to Weber – complained about the dehumanizing effects of control and managerial power. The 'bureaucratic personality', for example, is uniform and dehumanized, relegating our colorful and spontaneous social attributes to the informal organizational sphere.

In contrast, biocratic forms of influence provoke and instrumentalize these aspects of the workforce, especially in relation to self-management, learning and innovation. Indeed, in his analysis of Human Resource Management (HRM), Hanlon (2007) even argues that it is now redundant, since so much of organizational productivity occurs despite (and around) the rules of top-down structures. We train ourselves, self-organize, use our cooperative discretion to get the job done, and draw upon authentic personal attributes to interface with customers, clients and superiors

(also see Hancock and Tyler, 2000). As Dowling (2007) notes in relation to waitressing, affect and spontaneous acts of cooperation (among staff and between staff and customers) remain necessarily external and autonomous to the typical labor process. Such value-adding capacities are difficult to formally prescribe through hierarchical power relations (which do not disappear), since how do you, for example, command someone to communicate their authenticity on the phone, be sociable in the office or resourceful on the job?

Biocracy partially solves this problem in two ways. First, we might note the *indirect capture* of the informal organization that was always present but previously distrusted in management practice. As the classic studies of workplace behavior including Roy (1952, 1958) and Burawoy (1979) have demonstrated, employees have always found ways to unofficially self-organize and relieve boredom despite the edicts of formal rationality (also see Juravich, 1985). But given neoliberalism's difficulty in organizing or reproducing itself on its own terms, studies are increasingly noting how this unofficial world of work has become central to the production process, especially with its rich currents of knowhow, ingenuity and plain humanity (e.g., covering for someone or fulfilling a task in the weekend as a favor to a co-worker).

On a mundane level, this might be experienced by workers as simply 'getting the job done' since so many formal management systems are ironically considered an impediment or obstruction to task accomplishment (Gordon, 1996). Qualities beyond work regimentation are important here. Orr (1996) presents a great example in his study of photocopy repair workers who drew upon a communal pool of knowhow frequently sourced after office hours to achieve their targets despite the stringent directives insisted upon by the firm. They created their own secret labor process that

was purely inter-subjective (based around narratives), enabling them to perform the job in a much more superior way compared to the formal protocols designed by upper management. This 'invisible work' (also see Fletcher, 2001) was rich in social and communicative attributes, something the firm did not acknowledge (since it contravened management) but nevertheless depended upon to maintain productivity.

A second evocation of biocracy seeks to *directly capture* these social subjective qualities of the workforce. This is somewhat different to 'responsible autonomy' (Friedman, 1977) noted in earlier studies of Fordist employment because it seeks to enclose what is already present rather than 'trust' employees to follow the rules in the supervisor's absence. This might even include harnessing activities that would have once been labeled 'shirking' within the responsible autonomy paradigm (see Ross, 2004).

Indeed, some business analysts now admit that it is very difficult to directly command workers to learn, be authentic on the call-centre phone or use their broader life skills to achieve certain tasks. Instead, corporations must allow employees to flourish on their own accord (even if they appear to be against the organization) and find ways of redirecting these energies back into the productive circuit of accumulation. The *Harvard Business Review*, for example, now openly celebrates all manner of techniques that harness the 'voluntary' efforts of workers that intuitively appear extraneous to the formal enterprise. An article entitled 'Harnessing Your Employees Informal Networks' (McDermott and Archibald, 2010) is telling in this regard. It is stated that a hands-off, non-interventionist approach to management is crucial for valorizing productive moments that reside within subterranean cultures of the organization (also see Clair, et al. 2005). As it pertains to tacit networks, the article argues, firms should encircle rather than manage, capture rather than formalize:

"… if your smartest employees are getting together to solve problems and develop new ideas on their own, the best thing to do is to stay out of their way …" (McDermott and Archibald, 2010).

A CEO interviewed by Pink (2011: 32) epitomizes this changing emphasis in management thought, "if you need me to motivate you, I probably don't want to hire you". In other words, and following Foucault's argument, employees are not only considered 'human capital' but also responsible for its affability, flexibility and content – since corporations cannot (or will not) take on these compositional responsibilities themselves (see Cremin, 2010). Hence the management mantra most likely to be heard in large companies today: 'be what you are!' (Sturdy, Fleming and Delbridge, 2010).

Non-work put to work

The most obvious feature of biocracy is the conspicuous appearance of non-work in the sphere of production – something encouraged in much management practice today. We might be tempted to interpret the emphasis on lifestyle, sexuality and personal attributes on the job as a relaxation of traditional workplace controls. This is how the proponents of Liberation Management and ROWE would like us to view such developments. As management guru Ricardo Semler (1993) enthusiastically proclaims, "control is now *passé*!" (xiii). However, there are two important instrumental motives underlying this trend that are symptomatic of biopower at work.

First, whereas traditional management systems considered non-work an interference to the atmosphere of productive rationality, many of today's workplaces rely upon it for innovative energy, social finesse and enthusiasm that is more indicative of one's broader lifestyle (e.g., university academics, fashion industry

employees, software engineers, etc.). As Hanlon puts it in relation to the impotency of much top-down HRM, "labor increasingly entails the input of cultural content from activities that have not been historically considered 'work' (Hanlon, 2007: 9). Gaming programmers, for example, develop a sense of cultural taste (e.g., the next big thing) away from the office, knowledge that companies nevertheless rely upon to be successful (also see Liu, 2004).

Secondly, the evocation of non-work is the most obvious way to provoke the subjective social attributes of the workforce, especially the skills we mentioned above. In Fleming and Sturdy's (2011) analysis of call-centre employment, for example, framing the office as if it was a 'late night party' did not in itself create value, but made it easier for the organization to capture aspects of inter-personality that was of economic utility (e.g., non-scripted and flexible engagement with customers, etc.). The firm even claimed that what employees did was not really 'work', since where else can you drink on the job, be sexually promiscuous and use company space to promote broader projects, such as an anti-capitalism protest? Hence also why, for instance, airline attendants are required to 'act as if the cabin is your living room' to kindle moments of emotional labor that are difficult to directly administer or prescribe (Hochschild, 1984).

A growing number of studies have demonstrated how blurring the work/non-work boundary to access 'life itself' is central to enhancing productivity. Let's review three exemplary cases. Ross's (2004) in-depth ethnographic investigation of the IT firm Razorfish is useful in this respect. The organization openly acknowledged that much of the productive work could not be differentiated from the lifestyle interests of its employees. In this sense, the highly embodied and 'immaterial' nature of the skills involved on the job meant that it made more sense for the firm to dismantle the

work/life division that previous management wisdom had considered crucial for discipline. Indeed, Ross was deeply surprised by how many non-work signifiers were observable as the organization endeavored to import "lifestyle components back into the workplace" (Ross, 2004: 139). The warehouse-like space, for example, was purposely left only partially renovated – with overhead piping and wiring exposed - to recreate a climate of artisanal amateurism many felt definitive of their work. Even the anti-corporate 'hacker ethic' was embraced by the organization, fostering a strange tension in the workplace culture, especially given that the firm was a publicly listed for-profit enterprise.

Some companies go to even greater lengths to capture life on the job. Land and Taylor's (2010) investigation of an ethical textiles manufacturer in the UK explains why. They report on how managers painstakingly replicated themes indicative of life beyond work on the company's premises. To give the job and products a veneer of bohemian chic, the firm openly promoted the leisurely pastimes of its employees, both within the organization's internal culture and external identity:

> In order to establish the authenticity of the brand, this immaterial labor of brand management drew upon the recreational activities of employees. This inscription of employees' lives into the brand created the economic value of the company's products, situating their 'lives' as a form of productive labor or 'work' (Land and Taylor, 2010: 408).

According to Land and Taylor, this systematic blurring of life and labor was much more than a marketing tool. It directly tapped into labor productivity, especially when workers began to think of their jobs as something more than just work. The study revealed that managers needed *more* from employees than anything the company could formally prescribe.

Another relevant illustration can be found in Michel's (2012) study of employees in a large US bank. Senior management did something very unusual in order to heighten effectiveness. They transformed the work setting into a home away from home, removing all cultural demarcations that might have once separated work from home, leisure and life more generally. This was presented to the workforce in the parlance of freedom and increased benefits, since employees could now access the workflow process whenever they liked, include personal events and interests in the office schedule and cultivate a workplace climate that was almost indistinguishable from living as such. Michel notes:

> … the bank erased distinctions between work and leisure by providing administrative support 24 hours a day, seven days a week, encouraging leisure at work, and providing free amenities, including childcare, valets, car service and meals (Michel, 2012: 336).

These so-called freedoms came at a cost. Michel closely documented the way in which existence in this 'lifestyle firm' was completely overtaken by work. There were no spatial or mental boundaries to separate personal concerns from those of the job, prompting one employee to sadly note, "my work is my life" (Michel, 2012: 344).

Private time put to work

Michel's study highlights a third facet of biocracy. If non-work associatives are transposed into the sphere of production, then a converse movement occurs too. Work time seeps into ever more aspects of life outside the formal job, into the private and social lives of employees more generally. This is an interesting development, since, as critical labor process theory has rightly shown us (see Thompson and Smith,

2010), most hitherto management thought focuses on the transformation of labor power at the *point of production*, often confined to tightly controlled space/time.

Biocracy runs against the grain in this respect, universalizing the pressure to work even when one has formally clocked out. Indeed, Ross's (2004) study mentioned above demonstrated how management understood that "ideas and creativity were just as likely to surface at home or in other locations, and so employees were encouraged to work elsewhere … the goal was to extract every waking moment of an employee's day" (Ross, 2004: 52, also see Harney [2007] in relation to academic work). Even the overly optimistic advocates of ROWE also admit, "it's not about giving people more time with the kids. ROWE is not about having more time off. You may not work fewer hours, you may even work more …" (Riessler and Thompson, 2011: 61). Two empirical investigations vividly illustrate this facet of biocracy at work.

Melisa Gregg's (2011) extensive case study of media and IT employees found them completely indexed to their jobs, to the point where one interviewee even continued to work when immobilized in a hospital's Accident & Emergency ward following a serious accident. Mobile technology certainly contributed to this hyper-work mentality. But it also stemmed from the obstructive nature of extant formal controls, whereby employees developed job-based solutions on their own time in order to successfully complete their tasks. Gregg refers to 'presence bleed' (always being mentally 'on the job') and 'function creep' (increased time being given up to organizing the labor process) as key features of this employment enviroment. She describes 'presence bleed' as a situation where:

> … firm boundaries between personal and professional identities no longer apply. Presence bleed explains the familiar experience whereby the location

> and time of work become secondary considerations faced with the "do to list" that seems forever out of control (Gregg, 2011: 2).

Here workers' broader life qualities become a vital resource for the firm, especially in relation to the sheer amount of 'poise work' conducted around the job to complete formal work-time objectives. The social organization of tasks was particularly salient for activating this overworked subjectivity. For example, the use of teams functioned to *horizontalize* power relations. Gregg notes, "the team becomes hegemonic in the office culture due to its effectiveness in erasing power hierarchies and differential entitlements that clearly remain in large organizations … [teams] have the effect of making extra work seem courteous and common sense" (Gregg, 2010: 85).

While more waking hours may be indexed to the job through biocracy, another striking study reveals that the pressure to perform might even be evidenced during our most intimate moments. In Lucas' (2010) study mentioned above, his job became so integrated into his lifestyle, hobbies and general interests that he found himself being productive even in his sleep, developing task solutions in his dreams. He observed how this made resistance very difficult, which is telling of the kind of regulation that underscores biopower. He explains with reference to some classic methods of escaping managerial control:

> … given the individually allocated and project centered character of the job, absenteeism only amounts to self-punishment, as work that is not done will have to be done later under increased stress. Given the collaborative nature of the work, heel dragging necessarily involves a sense of guilt towards other workers. On the production line, sabotage might be a rational tactic, but when your work resembles that of an artisan, sabotage would only make life harder … It is only when sickness comes and I am involuntarily incapable of work

> that I really gain extra time for myself. It is a strange thing to rejoice in the onset of a flu (Lucas, 2010: 128).

Here we see traditional modes of contestation being outflanked by a new set of control functions that have inserted themselves into everyday life. Sadly for Lucas, only illness provides any respite from the pressures of work.

Unpaid labor put to work

This extension of labor into society beyond the firm also marks another definitive corporate strategy of biopower. Even actors not formally part of the organization might be enrolled into the productive circuits of the enterprise in a number of ways. The life proclivities of consumers (e.g., co-production) and online communities (e.g., crowd sourcing) are especially salient. The massive gaming industry provides an illustrative case in point, whereby its formidable customer base is permanently poised as a key provider of product development (Arvidsson, 2006).

For example, the amateurism and artisanal cultures of online groups are increasingly used as unpaid R&D labor in many ways by these enterprises. Terranova (2000) points out that media technology has conspicuously shifted substantial innovative costs onto user-groups, with LEGO being a standout example. Kücklich (2005) ironically calls this 'play work' since it utilizes the modifications (or 'mods') of gamers outside of the traditional business-circle to generate private profits. As a result, "'mods' not only increase the shelf-life of the games industry's products, but also inject a shot of much-needed innovation into an industry seemingly unable to afford taking commercial risks" (Kücklich, 2005).

In this description, we see how the financial risks of innovation are managed by many businesses. Potential losses are seldom born by firms under this model (also see Mazzucato, 2013). Any successes and resultant profits, of course, are literally

owned by the enterprise (which Perelman [2002] labels the corporate confiscation of creativity, especially via Intellectual Property laws). Indeed, some of the most profitable business ideas have been sourced from non-capitalist activities as consumers, amateurs and enthusiasts invent solutions on their own (see also Howkins, 2007).[5] Perhaps this explains the increasing number of business analysts who suggest thinking of the private firm in terms of Wikipedia or a potentially lucrative 'creative commons' (Barnes, 2006) in which profits are derived from enclosing public inventiveness. As the authors of the best-selling *Wikinomics* claim, "by tapping open platforms you can leverage world-class infrastructures for a fraction of the cost of developing them yourself" (Tapscott and Williams, 2008: 147, also see Monbiot [2011] in relation to how academic publishers 'hyper-exploit' public university funds).

Table Two schematizes the trends identified in this review through the lens of biopower (see Table Two).

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Critical evaluation – what does the concept of biopower miss?

Reviewing these studies through the lens of biopower sheds light on some interesting changes occurring in organizational life. Most importantly, the evidence demonstrates that the language of freedom and autonomy frequently attributed to Liberation Management and other corporate systems that tolerate or promote 'life itself' on the job belies a darker, more exploitative side. There are no doubt genuine elements of employee empowerment associated with these changes in the (self) management of work. But building on the literature discussed, we are also able to

observe the concomitant intensification of regulation, which the notion of biocracy is particularly attuned to.

Here we must reiterate an important point. Foucault's lectures on biopower and the concept of biocracy developed above identify an important *qualitative* shift in power relations at work under neoliberal capitalism. Quantitative explanations regarding increased management pressure – through labor intensification and the spread of mobile technology – are no doubt important here (see Schor, 1993; Crary, 2013). But they do not capture the whole picture. For example, our 'sleep worker' Rob Lucas (2010) did not work in his dreams because of increased workloads. It was instead symptomatic of a different social relationship to his job, his fellow employees and the firm. Moreover, mobile phones and wifi certainly intensify work, as Gregg's (2011) study reveals. But it is the apparent social impossibility of *switching off the phone or laptop* that really mattered. That type of force is not inherent in the technology itself. The notion of biopower potentially reveals what else is taking place here.

A number of blind spots and/or limitations, however, are also evident when deploying the concept of biocracy. These must be considered if it is to be useful for future research.

Firstly, there is something of a 'productivist' tendency in the adaptations of biopower that risk being replicated in organizational research. This is manifest in an underlying desire to see work literally everywhere (e.g., Gregg, 2010; Lucas, 2010), even when it might not actually be present. Land and Boehm (2012), for example, even suggest checking facebook might be considered productive labor. Such observations are undoubtedly useful for highlighting the spread of work or the 'social factory' into facets where work ought not to be. But they miss the fine-grained

gradations, levels and distances within the employment sector and neoliberal society more generally.

Future research needs to acknowledge that employees *do actually have free time* and explain this in relation to how biopower functions. Indeed, the bio-politicization of work certainly appears to be ubiquitous in a quantitative sense, but theoretically cannot be since neoliberalism would stall without an exogenous space (e.g., free time, artisanal enthusiasm, 'life itself') to pick up the slack and absorb its shocks (Duménil and Lévy, 2011). I would argue that free time away from work is not really the issue. The genuine problem is that many employees are so otherwise indexed to their jobs that life away from the office becomes something vacuous, difficult to enjoy or even feared. This might account for the growing number of advice columns and forums on the difficult art of 'Learning How to Vacation' (Brady, 2012). One employee interviewed in this telling *New York Times* article confessed that after her holiday, "I hoped to return home at peace. Instead I was exhausted, defeated and irritable".[6]

This brings us to a second potential limitation with the concept of biocracy, that of worker resistance. There is a danger that the concept becomes too totalizing and thus omits conflict and opposition from the analysis. Since life itself is such an expansive notion – especially if it is now the vehicle of power - we need to develop better understandings of how workers might oppose, contest and reverse these trends. The only way Lucas (2010) could approach the topic was via illness, which is hardly optimistic. Crary (2013) argues that sleeping is the last bastion of escape from the clutches of biopower. Cederstrom and Fleming (2012) even consider suicide, which does not hold a great deal of practical or conceptual purchase, for obvious reasons.

Future research needs to be more attendant to the ways in which biopower is positively resisted in the workplace, since no form of power is infallible. Moreover, as I have argued above, we must place the concept of biocracy within the context of ongoing struggles and conflict that has always been indicative of capitalist economic relations. For this purpose, it might be possible to extend Hardt and Negri's (2009) societal solution to biopower into the workplace domain. They recommend the protection and self-valorization of the autonomous 'social common' which neoliberalism now heavily relies upon in a parasitical fashion. Successful resistance would see this rich and abundant living commons directed towards collective and democratic ends rather than the myopic goals of profit maximization.

How might this transpire in organizations? In his advice for contesting the neoliberalization of workplace relations, Gorz (2005) makes some useful observations in this regard. The work refusal movements emerging in Europe are particularly hopeful. As such, he foresees a new and progressive approach to employment in which "social relations, co-operative bonds and the meaning of each life will be mainly produced by activities which do not valorize capital. Working time will cease to be the dominant social time" (Gorz, 2005: 73). According to Fleming's (2013) recent analysis, this would involve a collective divestment from the principles of productivity. But given the almost complete conflation of work and 'life' that biocracy entails in Western economies, it is still unclear how this might occur in practical terms, especially in a context marked by high unemployment and job insecurity.

A third limitation pertains to occupational prevalence and distribution. Are all jobs now regulated by biocratic forms of management under neoliberalism? One of the leading problems with the concept is that it does not help us to account for its

pattern of adoption and occupational allocation across society - even sometimes assuming that *everyone* now can 'be themselves' at work and are no longer required to clock in and out of the office as per usual. Clearly an untenable proposition. It is similar to the limitations that dogged concepts like the 'knowledge economy' and post-Fordism, whereby the majority of employees discussed begin to resemble the authors making such claims: *academics*. Moreover, there is a risk of forgetting that basic forms of labor control – including bureaucracy, Taylorism and technocracy – are still leading realities of organizational life, even in the most post-modern, knowledge-based organizations. And what about the millions of workers in the Global South living on £2 a day upon whom Western economies are so reliant? Future research needs to explain how these impoverished workers fit into the narrative concerning the rise of biopower, as well as develop a more coherent map of how biocracy is distributed across occupations and within them.[7]

And fourthly, the concept of biopower is in danger of over-intellectualizing what is in actual fact the brutal byproduct of economic rationalization (e.g., zero hours contracts, internships, etc.). For example, in our discussion of Gregg's (2011) study, much of the extra-employment activity around the labor process we termed biocracy could be interpreted as an outcome of employers degrading basic conditions and benefits. Firms are simply shifting the costs of work onto the employee to increase profit margins – making the evocation of 'life itself' a material necessity for workers more than anything else. In other words, what biocracy views as the micro-management of life could be more about precarity and abandonment. For example, a well-known European budget airline recently announced that its pilots were to be rehired as self-employed contractors so that individuals would be responsible for purchasing uniforms and hotels during stopovers (*The Independent*, 2013).

Do we need a fashionable new concept like biopower to explain what might simply be a belligerent economic employment policy inherent in the logic of capitalism itself? Future research should be careful not to over-interpret such employment practices, reading into them a new modality of power that is perhaps more symptomatic of economic downsizing under the current global economic crisis.

Conclusion

Inspired by Foucault's later career concerns with biopower, this paper has sought to develop the concept of biocracy for analyzing contemporary work organizations. Drawing upon recent research concerning significant shifts in the nature of employment (for some), the concept allows us to study the corporate instrumentalization of social and non-work qualities. Based upon this review and the potential limitations of the biocracy construct identified above, a number of conclusions can be proposed for those interested in power, control and conflict in contemporary organizations.

The merging of work and 'life itself' indicative of biocracy is a historical achievement, inextricably linked to the political economy of employment in neoliberal societies. It is no accident that our wider social skills are now employed to make organizations productive. It is suggestive of key changes in how labor is regulated and exploited today, which emerged from the crisis of capitalism in the 1970s. From the 1990s onwards, labor became inordinately concerned with the challenges and anxieties of work and self-management on a daily basis. We often do not see this because 'life itself' is so ontologically close to us, entwined in our careers, life projects and existential sense of self. This is what makes biopower so effective as a form of regulation. Since how can you resist a mode of power that increasingly resembles 'living' more generally? For this reason, I suggest, in order to fully

understand biopower in organizations we must always study its presence within the socially constructed patterns of capitalist inequality, whereby the 'winners' and 'losers' are distributed in an asymmetrical manner.

The rise of biopower in organizations not only represents the strength of late capitalist power relations, but also a decisive weakness. It is increasingly apparent that formal neoliberal employment arrangements – based upon competitive individualism, predatory private property relations, precarious work, commercialization and so forth - cannot reproduce themselves on simply their own terms (also see Perelman, 2011). They increasingly require social resources that are independent and autonomous to its narrow precepts in order to function. Hence the contemporary importance of non-work, the creative commons and social attributes that were once anathema to the Fordist regime of accumulation. So much of the productive efforts employed in workplaces today are sourced beyond and despite formalized systems of economic exploitation and private property, which, to cite Hanlon (2007), are increasingly experienced as obsolete to collective effectiveness (also see Gordon, 1996). To evoke a classic Marxist nomenclature, we may even be witnessing a renewed contradiction between the forces of production (i.e., co-operative sociality, the common, life itself) and the relations of production (i.e., private property, the managerial imperative, perhaps even the necessity of work itself). Whether this will incite a fresh era of conflict over the spoils of capitalism, as suggested by some (e.g., Hardt and Negri, 2009), remains to be seen.

Based upon the review, I believe we must avoid viewing biocracy as a gentler and freer form of regulation that governs labor in an indirect and non-interventionist manner. Because it enlists life itself, it necessarily has a concrete element that can have deeply material consequences. This point is missed even by seasoned critics of

neoliberalism. For example, in his study of 'immaterial labor', Gorz (2010) compares biopower in the workplace to the free association of a 'jazz ensemble', which hardly captures the stress and degradation that can accompany this form of control. Indeed, Michel's (2012) study of how work/non-work boundaries were blurred in the banking sector suggested that the physical body was the first victim of this management approach, citing burnout, stress and hyper-tension as a direct corollary of how this work is organized. The widely reported death of banking intern Moritz Erhadt following three days of non-stop work is perhaps an extreme example of what biocracy can do to us (see *The Guardian*, 2013). But it is also indicative of its underlying principles. When work and life become blended to such an extent, even rest and sleep are considered a 'waste of time'.[8]

And finally, biopower ought not to be viewed as a ubiquitous form of governance. Like any other kind of control, it may be contested and opposed in many ways. While the necessity of diligent and committed work was once an almost universally accepted virtue, even amongst labor activists and critics, today's emancipatory agenda appears to be inspired by a collective and democratic withdrawal from the ritual of paid employment (e.g., see Tiqqun, 2009; Weeks, 2011; Graeber, 2013). I would suggest this is connected to the way work is ideologically posited as *the* format for life under biocracy, a universal principle with seemingly little else of value beyond it. As a result, a strident 'post-work' imaginary appears to be gathering momentum. The independent social qualities currently exploited by economic rationality are being withheld, collectively repossessed and enjoyed for their own sake. What this life beyond biocracy will look like still remains vague. But I predict that its ever-growing assertion will significantly reshape the meaning of employment, neoliberalism and biopower in the years to come.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Notes

1. The concept of biopower, however, has been widely evoked in other scholarly disciplines, including the political sciences (Hardt and Negri, 2000, 2009; Virno, 2004), philosophy (Agamben, 1998; Esposito, 2008) and the life sciences (Rabinow, 2003; Rose, 2007; Rajan, 2006).

2. To the best of my knowledge, the term 'biocracy' was first used by Lifton (1986) in his analysis of Nazi eugenics, as noted by Esposito (2008: xxv).

3. The notion of governmentality was more popular among critical accounting scholars, especially in relation to the statistical management of populations (see Miller and Rose, 1990; 2008).

4. I agree with Hatchuel (1999) that research in organization studies on the post-disciplinary concerns of Foucault – including governmentality - was limited by ignoring the interpretations of Deleuze (1991; 2006), which have been crucial for radicalizing Foucault's approach to biopower. For the sake of brevity, this paper is unable to elaborate more fully on Deleuze's contribution.

5. A large sports apparel firm encapsulates this conscious strategy of capturing public goods and trends in relation to consumer goods. Here is a telling interview excerpt (posted on YouTube as 'Lessons in Leadership') with the CEO that tells us why:

> **Interviewer**: I'm sure you are a cool guy, but some of the young people who look at you, they just probably see some guy in a suit … and think, not so cool … how do you keep parting me from my money and my kids? [general laughter]
>
> **CEO**: The main thing I do … every chance we have we keep rejuvenating our company with people who are the customer … in the areas of design, sales and marketing, they all have to be *young people* … they know the culture, they feel that it's part of their DNA, they can talk the talk and walk the walk, I'm not the guy who can do that … I make sure those people read all the relevant magazines, they travel the world, they get into the marketplace, they look at customers, they watch our competitors, they go and hangout in high schools and just observe, they go to rock concerts, they go to the mall in the weekend, all that kind of thing they have to do, to know how the market ticks … we're not that smart, to tell the truth … we sort of stumbled into it, we made shorts, we copied the guy in Australia … we kept on going.

6. This point dovetails with a related conceptual weakness. Biopower might strangely be used to buffer us from other facets of life (including our free-time) by *escaping into work*. For example, Hochschild (1997) noted that many of the employees she interviewed found sanctuary and refuge at the office, as opposed to a messy and often unpredictable personal life. I intuitively feel that biopower and the desire to escape into work are related, but how should we theorize it and with what methods?

7. Foucault does not help us much here since he expressly rejects the question of measureable distribution when it relates to the 'micro-power' networks underscoring biopower: "the analysis of micro-powers is not a question of scale, and it is not a question of sector, it is a question of point of view" (Foucault, 2008: 186). He has an important point here, which would require another paper to fully unpack.

8. Building on this observation, for those entangled in a biopower regime, it is *non-activity* that is deemed self-destructive rather than overwork, as one busy temp-employee in the law industry interviewed by Brooks (2012) stated, "there's a very self-destructive tendency to just relax, not look for that other job until you have had a couple of days to relax" (Brooks, 2012: 127-8).

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Table 1. From work to 'life' and back again: Changing trends in employee management

Dominant feature	**Taylorism/bureaucracy**	**Culture management**	**New organizational emphasis on 'life'**
Objective of management	Formalize and depersonalize work role and the employee (Taylor, 1911/67; Weber, 1946).	'Mold' or 'design' the worker to hold strong normative alliances with the firm (Kunda, 1992)	Capture pre-existing social qualities and informal knowhow of the employee (Maravelias, 2003; Gorz, 2010).
Organizational justification	Rationalization and the superiority of management science over worker knowledge (Beynon, 1980; Crozier, 1964).	Committed employees who identify with the firm and feel part of a 'family' (Deal and Key, 1998).	Liberation and freedom of self-expression and difference ('just be yourself', fun, play, etc.) (Semler, 2007).
Regulation of work/life divide	Strict demarcation between work role and the worker's personal/private and/or broader life qualities (Whyte, 1954; Alvesson, 1987).	Organization treated as a closed 'cult-like' system – fear that life might contaminate strong cultures (O'Reilly and Chapman, 1996).	Non-work associatives (lifestyle, sexuality, etc.) encouraged in organizations (Kuhn, 2006; Land and Tyler, 2010). Work occurring beyond office hours (Gregg, 2011; Lucas, 2010).
Proclaimed employee benefits	More efficient work and more pay under piece-rate system, impartially and equal treatment (Taylor, 1911/1967).	Sense of belonging at work – less alienating or anti-social enviroment (Peters and Waterman, 1982).	Authenticity and flexibility - personal idiosyncrasies, lifestyle and diversity at work (Bains, 2007; Ressler and Thompson, 2011).

Table 2. Biocracy at work

Biocratic dimension	Key aspect of 'life' put to work	Central biocractic mechanism	Desired managerial outcome
Social subjectivity	*Informal labor* that workers draw upon to 'get the job done' despite the official rules (Orr, 1996)	Indirect capture of 'invisible work' as a significant resource (Fletcher, 2001) Direct capture of employee 'ways of life' (McDermott and Archibald, 2010).	Instrumentalizing social qualities that are otherwise unmanageable towards productive ends (Dowling, 2007; Hanlon, 2007).
Space	*Non-work* skills/aptitudes and social knowhow typically enacted beyond the firm (Liu, 2004; Land and Taylor, 2010).	Blurring the work/non-work boundary – the lifestyle firm (Fleming and Spicer, 2004; Michel, 2012) Mimicking non-work activities (i.e., partying') in the office (Fleming and Sturdy, 2011)	Useful workplace qualities forged outside of the strictures of workplace controls (Ross, 2004; Gorz, 2010) More authentic emotional labor and engaged employee performances, (Hochschild, 1984).
Time	*Private time* that falls outside formally paid work hours (Riessler and Thompson, 2011).	'Presence bleed' so that work becomes a permanent concern (Gregg, 2011).	Employees continuously performing or 'poised' for work beyond remuneration or associated organizational costs (Harney, 2007; Lucas, 2010).
Economic valorization	*Unpaid labor* by non-employees enrolled into the production process (Arvidsson, 2006; Tapscott and Williams, 2008).	Capitalizing on public innovations/efforts through co-production, crowd sourcing, etc (Kücklich, 2005)	Free labor harnessed from consumers, users and general public (especially through IP law, technological platforms and commodity design) (Parelman, 2002 Tarranova, 2000).

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