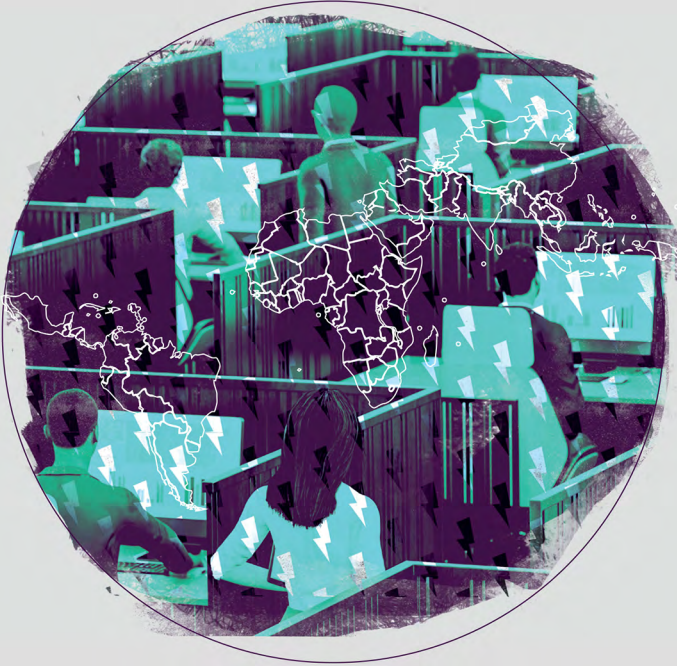


DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES ON CREATING A FAIRER SOCIETY



# NEOLIBERAL SUBJECTIVITIES AT WORK

*Conduct, Commitments,  
Contradictions and Contestations*

MUNEEB UL LATEEF BANDAY

# **Neoliberal Subjectivities at Work**

This theoretically sophisticated, empirically rich account of IT subjectivities breaks new ground in our understanding of how employers and their allies aim to discipline tech workers and how these same workers push back to assert their personhood. While the public tends to view Indian tech workers as the heroes of globalization, Banday exposes the high personal and social costs that lie just beneath the surface of these celebratory discourses. Rendering the familiar strange, Banday's work forces us to revisit our taken-for-granted understandings of Indian IT workers, the companies they work for, and the social and political conditions that perpetuate both their isolation and their success.

*Smitha Radhakrishnan, Marion Butler McLean Professor in the History of Ideas, Professor of Sociology, Wellesley College, USA*

Dr Banday has produced a highly readable book focusing on Information and Communication Technology employees working in India. Apart from this being a distinctive contribution to the dramatically expanding IT sector in this part of the world as a global phenomenon, the research also advances our understanding of subjectivity in the context of neo-liberal developments. This will be an important book for those interested in the human resource implications of technology and for students expecting a more critical analysis of contemporary working life.

*Emeritus Professor David Knights, Lancaster University, UK*

This extraordinary book charts the 'production' of new-age employees by the discursive forces of neoliberalism in an era of late capitalism. The book not only locates its empirical domain in the Indian IT sector but also provides invaluable insights that transcend spatial and temporal boundaries to make a significant theoretical contribution.

*Raza Mir, Professor, William Paterson University, USA*

This clearly written and well-informed critical poststructuralist monograph offers fascinating insight into the tensions and contradictions in the lives of Indian IT workers. A much-needed Foucauldian intersectional exploration for scholars of careers, employment relations, and anyone interested in understanding the complexities and exploitations of the contemporary neoliberal world of work.

*Alexandra Bristow, The Open University, UK*

## Diverse Perspectives on Creating a Fairer Society

A fair society is one that is just, inclusive and embracing of all without any barriers to participation based on sex, sexual orientation, religion or belief, ethnicity, age, class, ability or any other social difference. One where there is access to healthcare and education, technology, justice, strong institutions, peace and security, social protection, decent work and housing. But how can research truly contribute to creating global equity and diversity without showcasing diverse voices that are underrepresented in academia or paying specific attention to the Global South?

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# **Neoliberal Subjectivities at Work: Conduct, Commitments, Contradictions and Contestations**

BY

**MUNEEB UL LATEEF BANDAY**

*University of Bern, Switzerland*

*Goa Institute of Management, India*



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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

*This book is dedicated to all the dissenting lives who have been  
systematically forced to live on the margins.*

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# List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

CMM	Capability Maturity Models
CITU	Centre for Indian Trade Unions
FITE	Forum for Information Technology Employees
GD	Group Discussion
IT	Information Technology
ISO	International Organization for Standards
ITES	Information Technology Enabled Services
ITIR	Information Technology Investment Regions
MNC	Multinational Company
NASSCOM	National Association of Software and Service Companies
NDLF	New Democratic Labour Front
ODC	Offshore Development Center
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
SLA	Service Level Agreement
STP	Software Technology Park
UNITE	Union of IT and ITES Employees
VUCA	Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity
WEF	World Economic Forum

## About the Author

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

The good thing about working in the IT sector is that both the learning and earning curves are steep depending on how eager you are. If you have it, then you will earn good money in a very short amount of time. If it is not there, you will remain stagnant for a long time. (IT Employee GD 1; P1, 29, m)

I have gotten appendix issues as well; I was sick every other day when I went home, and there was a time imbalance. I thought, what should I do? So suddenly I put in my papers [resigned] and quit that company. (IT Employee 7, 27, f)

‘Quit by 10 am tomorrow or you’re fired’: IT employee’s recording of sacking goes viral. (Alawadhi, 2017, July 06 Money Control)

The above quotations provide a glimpse into the complex dichotomous lives of workers in the Indian Information Technology (IT) industry. The quotations provide a sense of contradictory experiences, which positions IT careers as projects of self-realization, growth, insecurity and exploitation. Such intertwining of exploitation and self-realization is representative of careers in other industries across the globe in the contemporary neoliberal capitalist workplaces (Bloom, 2013; Scharff, 2016). In the book, we explore these dynamics in detail to understand how employers, employees and unions make sense of the privileges and perils of working in the Indian IT industry. Theorizing employment relations as practices of producing and (self) governing employee subjectivities (Rose, 1999), this book explores the constitution of employee subjectivities and practices of resistance within the technological-neoliberal discourses prevalent in the Indian IT sector.

Indian IT industry has become a predominant employer in the formal sector in India over the previous three decades. The IT engineer is a popular stereotypical cultural figure in the national and transnational imagination of Indian workers (Amrute, 2016; Radhakrishnan, 2011; Subramanian, 2019). The IT sector is

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domestically positioned as the ‘ideological leader’ of the post-liberalization New India (Upadhy, 2009c), particularly due to its success in generating growth in sales, employment and exports (Athreya, 2005; Bhattacharjee & Chakrabarti, 2017) as well as the emergence of a new class of transnational capitalists and elite workforce (Pattnaik, 2013; Upadhy, 2009b). The IT leaders/entrepreneurs are iconized as the symbols of hard work and new middle-class success (Upadhy, 2009c). The IT industry is often labelled a ‘modern’, technologically driven sector with sophisticated business and human resource management practices (Athreya, 2005; Parthasarathy, 2010; Patibandhla & Petersen, 2002). The sector’s modernity claims are underlined by contrasting it with the pre-liberalization period and public-sector industries, which is labelled as the era of ‘license raj’ (license control regime) infested with bureaucratic, corrupt and government high-handedness (Upadhy, 2007, 2009c). Mobilizing the discourse of meritocracy, the industry leaders staunchly oppose reservations or affirmative action policies (Upadhy, 2007). As such, the sector has generated a substantial interest among scholars (across paradigmatic boundaries) to analyze the industry, particularly the employment relations and the work lives of IT employees.

The IT industry is India’s largest private-sector employer, employing approximately 30–40 lakh employees directly or indirectly. The Indian IT employees occupy a unique position among the Indian workforce, simultaneously privileged and precarious (Roy, 2021, 2024). On the one hand, they form an essential part of the new middle-class ‘middle-upper’ caste India and are characterized as the symbols of modern and elite employees who get to realize their aspirations (Upadhy & Vasavi, 2012). On the other hand, they are characterized as cyber coolies (Leclerc, 2005; Pattnaik, 2013), who are relegated to the margins of the global software production networks, engaged in repetitive, redundant work and regulated according to the global client time zones (Nadeem, 2009a, 2009b; Noronha & D’Cruz, 2020; Upadhy & Vasavi, 2012). Metaphorically, they simultaneously signify the ‘self-actualizing individuals’ (Radhakrishnan, 2007) and post-Fordist ‘colonized’ employees (Upadhy, 2009a). Indian IT sector emphasizes its supposedly modern human resource management practices, which are argued to be beneficial to the employees and enhance the workforce’s diversity (Donnelly, 2015; Paul & Anantharaman, 2004). However, critical studies have demonstrated the normalization of exploitative work conditions and job insecurity (D’Cruz & Noronha, 2006; Upadhy, 2009a) with a homogenous workforce typically comprising of English-speaking, ‘middle-upper’ caste/class, urban male workers (Ilavarasan, 2007; Shanker, 2008).

The above quotations symbolize the simultaneous existence of both these narratives on Indian IT employees simultaneously. However, these contrasting narratives are not particularly specific to Indian IT employees but reflective of workers across industries in the global North and the global South within the neoliberal transnational racial capitalism (Prasad, 2023; Segato, 2022). The intertwined experiences of self-realization, excitement, enjoyment, exploitation and insecurity are imprinted in the narratives of contemporary employees, particularly enterprising employee subjects (Scharff, 2016). Therefore, it is important to analyze how employers and employees establish, accept and contest these relations in their

situated contexts. Being attentive to the situated contexts allows us to theorize the experiences of workers within neoliberal racial capitalism (Prasad, 2023) while recognizing different discourses of difference constitutive of workers' subjectivities, experiences and employment conditions (Holvino, 2010; McBride et al., 2015). Subjectivity refers to our senses of ourselves and how we understand ourselves in relation to 'others or the outside world' (Weedon, 1997). In the context of work and employment, it implies 'the ways in which individuals understand their lives, their relations and their work' (Knights & McCabe, 2003, p. 1588). It is produced in and through discourses and is in a continual process of negotiation, construction and (re)negotiation (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Tracy & Trethewey, 2005). In this book, I analyze the constitution and governance of employee subjectivities in the Indian IT sector.

## Indian IT Employees

The existing critical scholarship investigating the subjectivity of Indian IT employees is dominated by studies of call centre/BPO/KPO employees (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2006, 2011; Mirachandani, 2004, 2015; Nadeem, 2009a, 2009b; Pal & Buzzanell, 2008; Ramesh, 2004; Singh & Pandey, 2005) with only a few studies focused on software services and support employees (see D'Mello, 2006; Noronha et al., 2020; Radhakrishnan, 2007, 2009; Upadhy, 2007, 2009a, 2009b; Venkataraman & Joshi, 2020). These studies emphasize the fragmented labour process and control mechanisms (O'Doherty & Willmott, 2001; Thompson, 1990) and employees' identity work in constructing their identities (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Watson, 2008). This set of literature suggests that the IT software industry, which emerged on the basis of 'body shopping' practices (Majumdar et al., 2010; Mir et al., 2000), has developed into neo-taylorist offshoring spaces (Upadhy, 2009a). Body shopping refers to the deployment of software workers by Indian firms at the customer sites, keeping the work in their (customer's) home country (Majumdar et al., 2010). The offshoring model refers to work being done by engineers located in India made possible by the fragmentation of the software development cycle into a standardized, factory-like production process (Mir et al., 2000; Upadhy, 2009a). The parts of this development cycle are outsourced to offshore locations in India due to the presence of a highly skilled workforce as well as the cost arbitrage (Mir et al., 2000). This body shopping model is enabled by the new international division of labour (Lakha, 1994), which enables multinational companies to not only increase their profitability but also provide them access to a skilled workforce as well as incentives by the states (Mir et al., 2000). The workers are labelled as 'techno coolies' (Leclerc, 2005; Pattnaik, 2013), signifying the circulation and extraction of socio-economic value from racialized 'bodies' (Prasad, 2023) in the global software production networks. India emerged as an ideal destination in the software services sector due to the availability of a large section of educated English-speaking personnel, low labour costs, favourable government policies and infrastructural support, and the government's focus on export-oriented economy (Lakha, 1994; Sarkar, 2008). The availability of a large pool of technical workforce was also facilitated by the government's investment

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in technical education, which included engineering, computer and other technical and professional courses (Sarma & Krishna, 2010). The government saw the IT sector as the solution for providing employment to the large pool of unemployed educated citizens (Parthasarathy, 2004).

Insofar as the employees' lived experiences are concerned the studies suggest that the employees' senses of self are produced through various discourses such as professionalism (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2006), knowledge economy (Radhakrishnan, 2007), globalization, gender and culture (D'Mello, 2005; Mir et al., 2000; Radhakrishnan, 2007), and merit and class (Upadhyaya, 2007, 2009a, 2009b) discourses. The research found that IT employees characterize themselves as performance-oriented, constantly learning individuals (Radhakrishnan, 2007) who valorize non-redundant tasks, non-hierarchical workplaces and the mobility offered by IT jobs (D'Mello, 2005; Upadhyaya, 2007). The IT jobs are articulated as producing a diffused identity, which is labelled as 'mobility-identity' capturing the shifts in identities fostered by mobility across space, social structures and networks, and career trajectories and work contexts (D'Mello, 2006; D'Mello & Sahay, 2007). It signifies negotiating the 'local' and 'global' forces in shaping the sense of self of these employees (D'Mello, 2006; D'Mello & Sahay, 2007; Radhakrishnan, 2009). These studies suggest that IT employees emphasize the ideals of merit (Upadhyaya, 2007) and the need to constantly learn and be flexible with respect to the demands of work and their self-development (D'Mello & Sahay, 2007; Radhakrishnan, 2007). While D'Mello & Sahay (2007) characterize the IT employees' investment in the projects of self as a characteristic of instabilities of capitalism, others characterize it as the product of management discourses (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2006, 2011; Noronha & D'Cruz, 2009a, 2009b; Venkataraman & Joshi, 2020) or a combination of both (Upadhyaya, 2009a).

The literature suggests the simultaneous exercise of technocratic and socio-ideological controls (Kärreman & Alvesson, 2004) by employers, which leads to a 'hybridization' of these control forms (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2006). Hybridization refers to the interplay between these control mechanisms in which one feeds on the other (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2006). These control mechanisms are reported among call centre (BPO) workers (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2006) as well as software workers (Upadhyaya, 2009a). Control over employees is exercised through the constant monitoring using sophisticated software and computer systems to track workflows, output and progress (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2006; Upadhyaya, 2009a) and discursive regulation of their identities through teamwork, customer centrality, lean management and total quality management (Upadhyaya, 2009a). In this regard, the role of HR practices is understood to be central to the production and management of 'appropriate employees' (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2011).

In terms of adverse work conditions, existing studies suggest that IT employees face job insecurity and long working hours (Roy, 2021; Venkataraman & Joshi, 2020). Upadhyaya and Vasavi (2012) argue that the acceptance of adverse work conditions among these workers emerges from their desires to sustain their class aspirations. These workers constitute the new middle class, whose senses of self are produced through their consumption practices and maintaining particular lifestyles (Fernandes, 2006). Radhakrishnan (2007), on the other hand,

argues that this emphasis on adaptability, flexibility and learning by employees as well as employers is the product of neoliberal knowledge economy discourse. These discourses lead employees to consider job insecurity as an opportunity for self-development. Employees are seen to be actively and continually negotiating the tensions between the dis-embedding effects of expert discourse of knowledge economy and the construction of a re-imagined Indianness (Radhakrishnan, 2011). Employee subjectivity is, thus, understood to be constituted and regulated through various workplace as well as broader societal discourses.

The IT workforce is claimed to represent a ‘new middle class’, which is mobile, caste and gender inclusive, and identifies with local as well as global values (D’Mello, 2006; Upadhy, 2007, 2009b). However, the IT workforce is more homogenous than portrayed in the popular imagination (Ilavarasan, 2007; Upadhy, 2007). Upadhy (2007) argues the discourse of ‘merit’ is mobilized to create an image of the IT industry’s modernity while disregarding historical and continued injustice to other ‘lower’ castes and classes in India. The ‘merit’ discourse masks the fact that the new Indian middle class, as well as the IT industry (particularly employers), are mostly composed of mainly ‘upper’ castes, who possess access to cultural, economic and social capital. As mentioned previously, a typical IT worker is a mostly urban, upper/middle caste, middle-class cis male (Ilavarasan, 2007). For female IT workers, multiple contradicting discourses lead to the construction of ‘respectable femininity’ in governing one’s work life (Radhakrishnan, 2009). The discourse of respectable femininity is built upon the modern Brahminical patriarchy (Paik, 2022), which posits that women should prioritize family over career and display modesty by disavowing promiscuity (Radhakrishnan, 2009). Thus, it is no surprise that the research shows that women face discrimination in this industry (D’Cruz & Noronha, 2011; Singh & Pandey, 2005), which reflects in the lesser representation of women in middle and upper positions (Ilavarasan, 2007; Shanker, 2008) and the existence of gender-based hostility (D’Cruz & Noronha, 2012). Despite creating broader opportunities for women, the IT sector reproduces the gender inequalities prevalent in Indian society (Arun & Arun, 2023; D’Mello, 2006).

Insofar as resistance is considered, the existing studies suggest that the resistance is limited to the practices of gaming and bypassing (D’Cruz & Noronha, 2006), subversion and manipulation (Upadhy, 2009a) or to national/cultural essentialism (D’Mello, 2006; Venkataraman & Joshi, 2020). Even though the sector has also witnessed discontinuous attempts at unionization, these resistance practices remain more prevalent than collective resistance. The IT Employers’ Association (NASSCOM) has called the idea of unions a preposterous, retrograde step and a threat to India’s advantage factor (D’Cruz & Noronha, 2006; Sarkar, 2008) while the state has engaged in mostly pro-employer position particularly post-liberalization (Noronha & D’Cruz, 2016a, Noronha, 1996). Despite the employer disapproval and the state’s neglect of IT workers’ rights, the sector has witnessed multiple unionization attempts. However, unionism has not been very effective in appealing to IT employees who perceive unionization as de-professionalization or rejection of key professional values (Noronha & D’Cruz, 2009b). Roy (2021) argues that such disidentification with unionism emerges from

the liminality of ‘precarious privilege’ experienced by these workers, making them ‘unable to articulate and protect their labour rights’ (p. 677).

The broadly negative perception of unions in this industry mirrors the overall perception of unions as the ‘old economy project’ (Sarkar, 2008); as Noronha & D’Cruz (2017) note, ‘unions suffer from a lack of credibility in the public eye. They invoke negative pictures plagued by militancy, political and social rivalries, and absence of commitment to work, irresponsible behaviour and unreasonable demands on employers’ (p. 181). The negative perception of unions and the identification of professionalism and the new-age service economy are reflected in the identities that the unionizing organization seek to reflect. The ITES BPO professionals suggested names such as All India ITES Professional Association, All India Association for BPO Professionals, Indian ITES Professional Association or the New Age Economy Professionals (Noronha & D’Cruz, 2009, p. 226). The identity of association/professional/forum is seen as reflective of the New India (or service economy) and possibly more palatable for employee acceptance. Nonetheless, despite these aversions to unionization, the sector has engaged in intermittent unionizing, which we will explore in this book.

### **Worker Subjectivities: Marxian, Foucauldian and Intersectional Approaches**

Theoretically, the extant studies on the Indian IT workers represent the contentious debates on employee subjectivity (and subjectivation) in critical management studies, particularly regarding the differences in the status accorded to employee subjectivity, employers’ control over them and the possibilities of agency and resistance (McKinlay, 2010; Mumby et al., 2017; Newton, 1998; Seeck & Kantola, 2009; Skinner, 2012; Thomas & Davies, 2005a, 2005b). This contention over these issues related to subjectivity (subjectivation) in organization/employment studies depends upon the underlying theoretical orientations of these studies, viz. labour process theory, early Foucauldian discourse theory, and later Foucauldian discourse theory. While these theories have varied implications in terms of the role of power and status of the subject, the empirical studies have used concepts from across these divisions.

The labour process analysis was concerned with studying the control of managers/employers over workers in a capitalist system (Thompson, 1990). These scholars characterize managerial control over workers as emblematic of capitalistic employment relations and accordingly emphasize studying the control exercised by managers over workers. They argue that employees’ consent or participation in their dehumanization is a result of the objective control structures (fragmentation of labour process) and manipulation of their subjective work experiences (Burawoy, 1979; Thompson, 1989). The subjects are assumed to be stable, coherent and unitary, whose intrinsic yearning for freedom is manipulated or disallowed by the capitalist system through ‘extrinsic rewards’ (Burawoy, 1979). The investigation of subjectivity thus meant analyzing how employees are caught up in the production processes at the shop floor through games of ‘making out’, which enables them to gain both material rewards as well as prestige, sense of accomplishment and pride (Burawoy, 1979; Sosteric, 1996).

This form of theorization was subjected to fierce critique, particularly by post-structuralist organization scholars (Knights & Willmott, 1989; Pritchard, 1999). The critique concerns the understanding of power, subjectivity, and resistance, as well as the interrelationships among them (Henriques et al., 1984; Knights & Willmott, 1989). Firstly, the labour process scholarship is critiqued for a narrow conceptualization of power and subjectivity. It draws from an understanding of power as merely repressive and manipulative (Lukes, 2005). Instead, these scholars draw from poststructuralist ideas, particularly the Foucauldian and feminist ideas on the interrelationship of power, knowledge, and subjectivity as co-constitutive processes (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Clegg et al., 2006; Henriques et al., 1984; Knights & Willmott, 1989). Power is understood as relational, productive and dispersed (Clegg et al., 2006; Deetz & Mumby, 1990). Secondly, labour process theory invokes a humanistic understanding of a 'unitary, stable' subject whose real nature is repressed or manipulated by the capitalist system. Poststructuralist scholars understand subject (and subjectivity) as fragmented, incomplete and, therefore, always in the process of becoming (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; McKinlay, 2010; Weedon, 1997). The notion of unitary, stable and fixed subjectivity becomes analytically and politically unsustainable within this paradigm (Knights & Willmott, 1989; Pritchard, 1999). Thus, instead of the subjectivist account of an ahistorical humanist subject, these scholars argue that the co-constitution of power and subjectivity is historically and contextually specific (Knights & Willmott, 1989).

Subjectivity, understood as an effect of power-knowledge discourses (Foucault, 1982; Knights & Willmott, 1989), refers to 'the ways in which the subject experiences herself/himself in a game of truth where he/she relates to herself/himself' (Foucault, 2000a, p. 461). Scholars drawing from early Foucauldian work, particularly *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1977), argue that disciplinary power imposes normative standards for accepted behaviours against which employees are evaluated or judged (Clegg et al., 2006; Deetz, 1998). These scholars argue that various organizational practices, such as 360-degree appraisal systems (Townley, 1995), teamwork (Sewell, 1998), and total quality management (Knights & McCabe, 1999), produce panoptic effects, which subject employees to possibilities of constant surveillance (Sewell & Wilkinson, 1992). The employees internalize the gaze of surveillance and expert judgements, resulting in their self-discipline or self-subordination (Burrell, 1998; Deetz, 1998). It is through these disciplinary discourses that employees' senses of self are aligned with the organizational objectives (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002).

However, this set of scholarship faced the critique of assuming a strong deterministic effect (causality) of organizational discourses in producing employee subjectivities (Newton, 1998). More specifically, scholars argue that there is an overbearing concern with control and domination (the metaphor of panopticon) in these studies, despite the articulation of power as productive (Thomas & Davies, 2005b; Townley, 2005). It leads to the characterization of employees as passive workers (docile bodies) (Newton, 1998; Thomas & Davies, 2005b). This over-reliance on the assumed effectiveness of disciplinary technologies (panopticon) leads to the perception of employee subjectivities as thoroughly colonized by management discourses (Fournier & Grey, 1999; McKinley, 2002;

Thomas & Davies, 2005b). The metaphor of the panopticon is, thus, labelled as limited or inappropriate (if not entirely wrong) in analyzing the subjectivation of employees in and through these organizational practices (Knights, 2002; Munro, 2012).

This criticism led scholars to investigate how employees resist the organizational/managerial discourses to create ‘resistant spaces’ (Gabriel, 1999) for themselves through various micro-practices of distancing or subversion (Mumby, 2005; Mumby et al., 2017; Thomas & Davies, 2005a, 2005b). However, it has, in turn, faced criticism for romanticizing these micro-resistant practices, which do not entail any substantial change in the working lives of employee subjects (Collinson, 2005; Contu, 2008; Mumby, 2005). Relatedly, it is critiqued for emphasizing more on the instabilities of power relations while ignoring the relative stability of such relations (Newton, 1998) as well as creating a false dualism between micro and macro practices (Knights, 2016). Instead, it is argued that power and, thereby, resistance is productive; therefore, the language of control is problematic insofar as it only implies a sense of domination and subjugation (Seeck & Kantola, 2009). Furthermore, the emphasis on individual resistance practices faces critique, particularly from labour process theorists, for ignoring collective forms of resistance (Martinez-Lucio & Stewart, 1997; Mumby et al., 2017; Taylor & Bain, 1999). Finally, these studies also raise theoretical tensions vis-à-vis the nature of subjectivity, where individuals are simultaneously embodying as well as distancing from the discursive practices of subjectivation (Davies & Petersen, 2005).

This leads us to Foucauldian neoliberal governmentality scholarship, which sought to address the limitations of the disciplinary model as well as focus on populations rather than individuals (Foucault, 2007). Governmentality refers to the regulation of the conduct of the conduct of self and others (Gordon, 1991) or how peoples’ conduct can be acted upon at a distance (Bardon & Josserand, 2018; Knights & McCabe, 2003; Rose, 1989). Unlike the earlier emphasis on the production of subjectivity through domination (disciplinary power), governmentality is understood as the meeting or contact point between the technologies of self and technologies of power (Burchell, 1996; Dean, 1994). The former refers to the ways or practices through which individuals act upon themselves, i.e. their bodies, souls, thoughts and conduct (Foucault, 1993). In particular, drawing from the notion of ‘biopower and advanced liberalism’,<sup>1</sup> these scholars emphasize the

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<sup>1</sup>The concept of biopower was employed by Foucault to articulate the emergence of a new form of power in modern societies, particularly Western societies, which had a population as its target and aimed at regulating the life forces of the population (Holmer-Nadesan, 2008). While sovereign power was premised upon the state’s ‘right to kill’; biopower is premised upon positive production of life (Dean, 2010). Biopower aims to govern the population through maximization of the ‘energies and capacities of all: individuals, families, market organizations, and the state’ (Holmer-Nadesan, 2008, p. 3). It was underpinned by the assumption that the population had its own characteristics and processes which were outside the government but needed interventions (Rose et al., 2006).