

**Management in the “Neo-paternalistic organization”:
The Case of Worksite Health Promotion at Scania¹**

Abstract

This paper proposes a qualitative study of Work Site Health Promotion (WHP) at the large Swedish producer of trucks and buses, Scania. While the concept of WHP implies that it is employees' improved health at work that is strived for, we suggest that its main area of intervention is neither the work environment, nor what employees do at work, but employees' lifestyles. To capture the potential of WHP for the management of organization, we introduce the concept of “neo-paternalistic organizational control.” By this term we want to draw attention to how WHP shares paternalistic approaches' tendency of disregarding the professional-private divide, while also drawing attention to how this extra-professional control dimension is at once less intrusive and more discriminatory than what is traditionally referred to as paternalism in the literature on managerial control.

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Management in the “Neo-paternalistic organization”:

The Case of Worksite Health Promotion at Scania

This is a study of Work Site Health Promotion (henceforth WHP) at the large Swedish international producer of trucks and buses, Scania. While the concept of WHP implies that it is employees' improved health at work that is strived for, we suggest that its main area of intervention is neither the work environment, nor what employees do at work, but employees' lifestyles. To be more precise, WHP aims to improve employees' capabilities and motivation to self-manage the way they design and style their lives, including such details as, for instance, eating, sleeping and exercising. Properly self-managed lifestyles are seen to be essential sources of health from a bio-medical point-of-view. But not only that, they are also seen to be essential sources of improved professional capabilities and greater organizational performance.

Given these characteristics, we suggest the investment in WHP made by Scania is an interesting example of an indirect form of organizational control which has become increasingly hegemonic in contemporary working life. This form of control, which downplays traditional bureaucratic regulation of employees' behaviour in favour of more subtle mechanisms of authority, essentially targets employees' subjectivities, i.e., their selves and identities (e.g. Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Casey, 1999; Courpasson, 2000; Fleming & Spicer, 2004; Fleming & Sturdy, 2009; Kunda, 1992). Studies of such “indirect forms of control” suggest that management is becoming a matter of regulating not only what employees do in a professional work-context, but also how they live, who they are and, possibly, what their lives and selves may become (Sennett, 2003). Hereby the studies of indirect control imply that the very idea of management has begun to transcend the boundaries in which

formal management procedures can legitimately intervene (see, e.g., Friedman, 2009; Zoller, 2003).

In this respect, we suggest, existing studies of indirect managerial control have a problem: While they suggest that management concerns activities and techniques that seek to regulate employees' lifestyles and selves, little interest has been devoted to studying the managerial role of other authorities than formal managers and supervisors, such as therapists, psychologists, health and lifestyle coaches, medical doctors and other medical experts. These can and indeed do take employees' selves and lifestyles as their legitimate target of intervention and could therefore be seen as a potential, - yet so far largely neglected - group of "managers" (see Korp, 2007; Holmqvist and Maravelias, 2011). Indeed, medicine has the potential to act as a critical mechanism of social control in that it can lay claim to know the truth about individuals' biological, psychological and social selves and how they ought to be changed (see, e.g., Holmqvist, 2008; Conrad, 2007; Crawford, 1980). Such a focus has, however, remained largely unexplored among students of organizations and management. With the study of WHP at Scania we attempt to compensate for this absence.

Below we briefly outline three separate approaches to indirect managerial control, which have emerged through the existing studies, normative/disciplinary control, neo-normative/post-disciplinary control and paternalistic control. We thereafter account for the study of Scania with the ambition of showing how its investments in WHP are at once closely related to these existing approaches and still uniquely different. More specifically, we suggest that WHP at Scania is an example of a neo-paternalistic control, a form of indirect managerial control, which shares paternalistic control approaches' tendency of disregarding the professional-private divide. Yet, instead of attempting to correct and change employees in relation to imposed collective norms, it shares the neo-normative/post-disciplinary control

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approaches' ambition of defining individuals existing ideosyncracies for the sake of exploiting them as organizational resources.

The Management of Self-managing Employees

While the literature on indirect managerial control is variegated, we suggest it has studied three partly separate approaches. First and predominately it has studied an approach typically referred to as "normative control" (e.g. Etzioni, 1964; Kunda, 1992; Willmott, 1993) or, if a Foucauldian frame of reference has been used, "disciplinary control" (e.g. Townley, 1994; Covaleski et al., 1998). As stated by Alvesson and Willmott (2002: 620), normative/disciplinary control is then typically seen to be accomplished "through the self-positioning of employees within managerially inspired discourses about work and organization with which they may become more or less identified and committed". Foucauldian studies of disciplinary control have illustrated well how this is accomplished in more specific terms. For instance, Townley's (1994) and Covaleski et al's (1998) studies show how HRM techniques such as attitude surveys and yearly development talks enable organizations to "objectify" and thereby indirectly control their employees by observing, categorizing and hierarchically positioning employees with regards to their behavioural characteristics, function and performance. Furthermore, and more importantly, their studies show that employees, as they begin to make use of the knowledge about themselves and their place, function and performance in the organization, they gradually become "subjectified". That is, they turn themselves into subjects of the the knowledge about themselves and become docile organizational subjects who freely act in keeping with set organizational norms.

Normative/disciplinary control has been found to be most salient when work is knowledge intensive and non-routine, is handled by teams in the form of projects and in general, where employees have considerable professional autonomy (e.g. Barker, 1993;

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Kunda, 1992; Kärreman, 2010). In such circumstances, HRM techniques and programmatic managerial descriptions of corporate culture have been found to operate as means through which employees can find implicit answers to how they should handle their autonomy and - ultimately - who they should be to be accepted and valued as ‘insiders’ (Maravelias, 2011?; Covaleski et al., 1998; Kunda, 1992; Willmott, 1993).

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In close relation to the studies of normative/disciplinary control, a number of recent studies have outlined a second approach, referred to as “neo-normative control” (Fleming and Sturdy, 2009; Kunda & Ailon-Souday, 2005), or, if a Foucauldian frame of reference has been used, “post-disciplinary control” (see Maravelias, 2015; Fleming, 2014; Munro, 2012; Weischof and Munro, 2013). These studies have suggested a type of indirect managerial control where the ambition is to recruit and promote employees who manage to turn their authentic, idiosyncratic selves into a human capital for the organization. As Fleming and Sturdy (2009: 571) point out, “there is growing wave of management rhetoric and associated practices that encourage diversity, dissent, idiosyncrasy and the expression of authentic feelings in the work environment ... Neo-normative control, then, involves the selective enlistment of the private dimensions of employee selves through a process of ‘existential empowerment’”.

Hence, while normative/disciplinary control has been found to be pursued through managerial techniques (HRM, Corporate Culture rethoric, etc.), which seek to correct and transform employees so that they eventually ‘freely’ subordinate to organizational norms, neo-normative/post-disciplinary control, is typically seen to be pursued via recruitment procedures, HRM techniques and managerial rhetorics, which seek to capture and enlist the idiosyncratic aspects of employees’ selves as organizational resources. Hence, to the extent normative/disciplinary control seeks to incite employees to change and adapt their subjectivities to organizational norms, neo-normative/post-disciplinary control seeks to

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discover, include (or exclude) and exploit already existing employee subjectivities. In Foucault's (2007) own terms, post-discipline (neo-normative control) is more pronounced "centripetal" while discipline (normative control) remains primarily "centrifugal": Discipline separates a space within which it subtly keeps individuals' conduct within organizationally set normative limits. Post-discipline seeks instead to define individuals in their existing diversity for the sake of enlisting this diversity and making it useful and valuable. Hereby it emerges at once as more radically liberal and totalizing than normative/disciplinary control. Liberal, in that it promotes individuals' idiosyncracies without the normative/disciplinary ambition of changing and correcting them. Yet, totalizing, in that it seeks to make even these idiosyncracies exploitable as organizational resources.

Finally, the literature has also discussed a third approach referred to as "paternalistic control", which is primarily associated with Weber's (1947) notion of premodern, traditional authority (e.g. Ackers, 1999; Fleming, 2005; Keerfoot and Knights, 1993; Warren, 1999; Wray, 1996). While the general process of "modernization" is typically seen to have eroded the foundations of traditional paternalism (Padovic and Earnest, 1994), research on indirect managerial control has pointed towards how "some firms' HRM practice have moved in the direction of a new paternalism, and away from a strictly contractual relationship with employees" (Warren, 1999). Contemporary forms of paternalism are then seen to represent a third "sophisticated" stage in the development of paternalistic control (Wray, 1996). The first traditional paternalistic stage (Ackers, 1999, Barley and Kunda, 1992; Hooker, 1997) is associated with early small-scale industrial production where organizational procedures are still characterized by face-to-face relationships, personal obligations, indulgence and situational deference (Warde, 1989). The second stage, referred to as welfare paternalism, is developed in the early to mid 20th century as a response to the problems of maintaining face-to-face relationships when the organization increases in size. The Ford

motor company's "welfare work" project, where medical doctors were employed to make homecalls among employees to encourage them live healthier, is the paramount example (Hooker, 1997). Finally, the third "sophisticated" stage of paternalism began to develop in the 1950s and 1960s with specialized personnel departments, which institutionalized largesse through profit sharing systems, social and family benefits (laundry service, cleaning services, etc.), and so on. This was done to secure employee loyalty and commitment in large-scale and impersonal organizations where more general welfare provision had largely been taken over by the state.

In all its three stages, the term paternalism has been used to depict a particular type of hierarchical relationship between employers and employees where the former provides a 'father-like' tutelage in return for the latter's loyalty, obedience and identification with the organization. Even when it appears through corporate culture programs and HRM techniques, paternalism, as Ackers (1999) puts it, is a personalized gift-relationship, between master and servant, which is founded upon substantial inequality. By personalized we mean that the relationship between employer and employee is mutually adapted to the specific needs and characteristics of both the employee and the employer; by 'gift-oriented' we mean that both parties, employee and employer, in terms of efforts and responsibilities are expected to go beyond what is contractually required of them.

As an approach to indirect organizational control paternalism is more encompassing than normative/disciplinary and neo-normative/post-disciplinary control in the sense that it transcends the immediate labour process; its explicit and implicit forms of control involves the wider circles of community and family life in its mode of operation (Acker, 1999). Since it seeks to adapt and modify employees' professional selves to organizational norms, but, in addition to that, also seeks to adapt and modify their private selves and lifestyles (Fleming, 2005), paternalism can in particular be seen as a more encompassing

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version of normative/disciplinary control. At the same time, it differs from both the other two approaches to indirect organizational control in that it is more clearly reciprocal: It builds on a mutual adaptation, on the one hand, of organizational procedures to the employees' community and family life outside the professional sphere, and on the other hand, of employees' private lives to organizational procedures (Fleming, 2005). In this respect, it literally transcends the boundaries between work and leisure, between a professional identity and the private self (Fleming, 2005; Ackers, 1999; Padovic & Earnest, 1994; Wray, 1999).

While the three approaches are in part different, all three have been found to imply a more complete integration and appropriation of employees' selves as corporate resources. Furthermore, they imply that managerial authority, in its urge to increase its sway and scope, tends to progress beyond its traditionally legitimate field of jurisdiction. As noted above, this raises questions not only about what is meant by the term management, but also about which actors and authorities should be considered "managers" and, in that connection, which actors and authorities are entitled to "manage". In short: normative/disciplinary, neo-normative/post-disciplinary, and in particular paternalistic control which most concretely breaches the professional/private divide imply that "management" would concern aspects of employees' selves and lives, which fall outside traditional managerial jurisdictions. Hereby these approaches seem to imply a need for other sources of authority, which can legitimately affect the extra-organizational aspects of employees.

Given this, it is somewhat surprising that the majority of studies of normative, neo-normative and even paternalistic control have maintained a focus on managerial activities that directly concern work and that take place within work organizations: Relatively little attention has been paid to how discourses, activities and actors external to the structured domain of work organizations function so as to extend management as an ideological and practical force.

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In this paper we attempt to compensate for this gap by studying WHP programs as indirect forms of managerial control. More specifically, we explore the potential link between WHP and the three approaches of indirect managerial control that we have outlined above.

Methods

We first did 23 semi-structured interviews with corporate health experts working at Scania's Health Organization (HO) unit: company doctors, nurses, ergonomists, work environment engineers, health promotion experts and behavioural specialists. We also met the manager of the HO unit and his management team that consisted of three persons, as well as administrative staff. Interviews with each individual lasted for around one hour and they were focused on discussing such concrete aspects as, what kind of health-promotion programs were offered; what were the expectations of these programs; how were activities organized; how was the HO organized and managed; and what were the goals and strategies of that unit. We recorded all data by hand and typed them into interview records. In addition to these formal interviews, we met personnel of the HO unit during a number of lunch breaks and during coffee, where we could more informally discuss issues of relevance. We also had a number of telephone and e-mail conversations with some of the health professionals, typically after we had interviewed them personally.

We participated in seven meetings held by this unit's so-called health teams. A health team consists of representatives from different "health disciplines", e.g., nurses, doctors, physiotherapists and behavioural experts. Participation in these meetings complemented the interviews by giving us the opportunity to listen to what issues were regularly attended to, what problems and challenges they experienced internally and in the external communication and collaboration with the rest of Scania; and what projects and ideas they were focused on,

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etc. In addition we **obtained** access to Scania's internal website that consisted of a host of documents related to the programmes and activities of the HO, e.g., what courses (e.g., in "healthy eating") were available, what services such as health screening were offered, and so on. We also collected a number of other documents, e.g., Scania's personnel magazine that offered stories on the activities of the HO unit, as well as brochures issued by the HO unit that described the activities of this particular unit to the rest of Scania. Overall, the study gave us a broad and basic picture of the purpose and vision of the HO unit, what activities were central, what professions were involved and their role in the larger organization of Scania.

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In order to even better understand the role of the HO unit in Scania at large, we then went on to do interviews with the following categories of people: 7 human resource management officers, i.e., people working at Scania's various human resources units that were all located at the various facilities; 18 shop floor supervisors and line managers; 31 workers; and 16 persons in various functions (such as members of Scania's so-called Scania Production System's Office, one member of the executive team, a number of people working at Scania's department for training and education, etc.). Most of the interviews lasted around one hour, with the exception of employees and supervisors and line managers that we met either on the shopfloor, or during visits to Scania's sports and recreation facility. These interviews were more informal and "conversational" in the sense that they took place when people carried out their work, or during breaks, etc.

Our ambition with this phase of the study was to get a better view of what concrete activities and practices **the HO unit was involved in; how this unit was considered among** workers; how it interacted in projects and activities with the rest of Scania; and what were the expectations **of it.** We asked, for instance, questions on how and why managers contacted the HO unit and how they thought about their daily interaction with them, and what was the relation of employees to the HO unit and how they experienced encounters with the health

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professionals. We complemented the interviews by participating in a number of activities (approx. 20 hours) as offered by the HO unit, such as Scania's Health School, courses in nutrition and physical exercise, courses in mental training and "balance in life", etc. During these sessions we got the opportunity to experience how Scania's health experts interacted with the personnel, e.g., by listening to how they presented the content of the courses, what questions were being asked by the participants, how participants experienced the courses, and how they participated in such activities.

Following Becker et al (1961: 17); Jackall (1988:16); and Jahoda et al (1971: xii-xiv), no definite research design had been worked out in advance, but many possible techniques and approaches were discovered only in the course of the investigations. To this extent our study had no formal design. That is, we had no well-worked-out set of hypotheses to be tested, no data-gathering instruments purposely designed to secure information relevant to these hypotheses, no set of analytic procedures specified in advance. Insofar as the term 'design' implies these features of elaborate prior planning, our study had none. Therefore, we cannot claim strictly scientific procedures, like random selection, in choosing the organizations that we studied and the people we met there. When it came to the collection of data, our principle was *anything goes*—that is, any way to collect data was fine as long as it resulted in providing us with the facts we needed, and of course, with due consideration taken to normal standards of research ethics. We interviewed people, studied documents, and, most importantly, listened with eyes and ears—whenever we could and wherever we were. Certainly the study was based on a number of theoretical ideas on power and management; these were, however, to be re-shaped during the course of the study; the concept of "neo-paternalistic organization" is the result of such experiences. We cannot therefore strictly categorize our study as being either "inductive", "abductive" or "deductive" (see Alvesson [and](#) Sköldbberg, 2000); but simply "ethnographic muddling through" based on a varied repertoire of methods.

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Still, a number of research questions guided our data gathering and were also important for our emerging analysis. We first of all asked ourselves how “a healthy subject” is constructed at Scania through the company’s routines, ceremonies and values related to its production system philosophy. Thus, we tried to understand what socializing mechanisms were involved and how people reacted to those, basically through adherence or resistance or a combination of both. Second, we tried to understand how the organization labelled people as healthy or unhealthy in relation to company norms and values, thus trying to capture the social-construction aspect of “being healthy.” This we regarded as an important aspect of power in general; and more specifically according to our theoretical framework. We tried to understand people’s behaviours and attitudes according to the general ideas of this approach, e.g., by analyzing how the organization made sense of people’s sleep-habits, their diet, exercise routines, and balance between work and play, paying particular attention to the role of professionals and other “health-experts”, which according to our analysis makes up a significant and central group of managers.

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Worksite Health Promotion at Scania: Outlining “The Crucial Issue”

Scania operates in some 100 countries and has around 34,000 employees. It was founded in 1891 in Sweden and has built and delivered more than 1,500,000 trucks, buses and engines ever since. Generally, Scania is described as “a very conservative company”, which has undertaken only two major transformations of its manufacturing procedures during its 130 years history. One transformation occurred in the late 1930s. Then Scania’s newly appointed top management team decided that it should transform its manufacturing procedures, which were governed by highly skilled and autonomous professional craft workers, to manufacturing procedures that were governed by Taylor’s Scientific Management principles. The other transformation occurred in the 1990s when Scania’s still “highly Tayloristic” manufacturing

was rearranged according to a formal production philosophy named Scania Production System (SPS). The SPS is basically Scania's adaptation of the production ideas more commonly known as "Lean Production" where a critical idea is "self-managing teams, where every individual takes responsibility for constantly improving the production process", as one shop floor supervisor explained. More specifically, SPS is based on each team having a reserve of 15% working time for reflective practices, which should be used to constantly raise production and productivity levels in accordance with yearly set goals.

"The *crucial issue* in implementing the SPS system", said the global manager of Scania's production, "has not been employees' skills but their mindsets. I mean, we can recruit individuals with appropriate technical skills or, if they lack particular skills, put them in training. But to make sure that our existing employees and the new ones that we recruit have the mindset that makes them up to the challenges that come with the SPS, has proved to be a lot more difficult". Hence, the SPS requires not only appropriately trained employees, but also employees with specific personal, social, and physical characteristics. Characteristics that make them fit and able to meet the challenge of working in teams, which are responsible not only for producing specific amounts of products in accordance with quality standards, but also for improving existing product procedures so that yearly measured production levels increase. One supervisor explained: "First of all, you need to be in good shape to handle the job. It's hard work. ... But it also takes a particular person to work here, a person that is motivated to make changes and that takes pride in seeking to raise the level of production". A senior manager commented on the same issue. He said: "since we introduced the SPS we have had to learn to be more careful when we recruit new personnel. Two decades ago, you could more or less pick anyone, give him a week's training and then place him in the factory. That is no longer possible; some people are far too passive and not reflective enough to be able to work in our factories." In that connection a worker in the paint shop said that "The individual that

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is fit to work at Scania should have an active and committed personality. Even though it is not said so officially, you sort of sense that a Scania employee should live an active life also when he is not working.” As a line manager said, “people that live inactive lives tend to be less change prone. Since the SPS presupposes constant improvements it is such passive individuals that give us problems.”

The transformation of Scania is a nice illustration of what are typically seen to be a general consequence of the transformation from an “industrial” to a “knowledge-based economy”: the ideal employee is no longer the submissive “organization man” (Whyte, 1956) that responsibly executes pervasively regulated procedures, but the “flexible man” that resourcefully and enthusiastically defines her own tasks and decides how they should be executed (Cremin, 2003; Drucker, 2008). Rather than suppressing her personal characteristics and inner most desires, such self-managing employees have typically been found to “submit themselves to continuous self-scrutiny and audit in the name of accountability” (Costea et al., 2007: 253: see also Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005; Fleming & Spicer, 2004; Mirvis, 1994). Hence, the site of control is largely displaced from an external authority to the inner attributes of a self-managing subject. What becomes of management control in this new world of self- and team-managed work that Scania illustrates? As will be shown in the account of Scania’s WHP initiatives, it becomes less a matter of controlling employees directly than, on the one hand, of supporting and mentoring employees in their attempts to develop or make better use of their existing talents. Hereby, we will explore how Scania through its WHP initiatives is “managing the ‘insides’ – the hopes, fears, and aspirations – of workers, rather than their behaviour directly” (see Deetz, 1995: 87).

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The Health Organization – a Paternalistic Centre

Scania's investments in health promotion activities are described to be directly related to "the crucial issue" when implementing the SPS, namely that of making sure that the employees have "the appropriate mindset". The investments are formalized in the so called Health Organization (HO), which employs some 200 people in different professions: doctors, nurses, behavioural experts, health promotion specialists, ergonomists and physiotherapists. The HO offers a large number of WHP activities that all employees go through, for example health screening, courses in healthy eating and lifestyle change, accident prevention, etc. Other WHP activities, such as family therapy, lifestyle and career coaching, stress coping, and so on, are offered to employees on an individual basis. Many activities are short-term, others more long-term, one example being Scania's so called "Health School" that we will report on more in detail below. In all, most employees (as well as their families) have regular contact with the HO unit, irrespective of their bio-medical health status.

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What is striking about the HO, apart from the sheer magnitude of expertise, programs and facilities that it offers, is how broadly it understands and makes use of the concept of health in its operations. "Health" is seen to involve everything from certifying a risk free working environment to promoting that employees use their leisure time in ways that make them feel well. One company doctor said that "caring for and promoting our employees' health involves so much more than traditional medical services such as health tests, preventive measures against illness and injuries, and cure and rehabilitation. Those services are obviously important, but we also have to be able to influence employees' lifestyles, the way they relate to one another as colleagues, how they take and delegate responsibilities, structure their work, and so on." Hence, health is not just a medical condition, it involves the specific ways in which people live and work. Furthermore, "healthy employees" are seen to have a particular mindset; in essence, a particular active and motivated attitude. This is seen not merely to make and keep them healthy, but also something that should positively promote their performances.

“This is why”, claimed the head of the HO unit, “we should not just have the ambition of providing health care; because if we can also promote people in their efforts to feel better about themselves, to feel better physically and become more active and committed, we also nurture the strategic value of Scania’s employees.” The head of service development at the HO developed this point. He said that “we certainly try to care for our employees and their families. But caring for them is not to relieve them of their responsibility for their health. On the contrary, as I see it, it is to promote their abilities of taking that responsibility. This is also how our services relate to Scania’s performance; because Scania’s production philosophy, the SPS system, is ultimately based on individuals’ abilities of taking responsibility.”

This is then why WHP is explained to be so essential to Scania; it is seen to open possibilities of instituting paternalistic values and norms in the employees that align the principles of staying healthy and feeling well on and off work with the principles of producing trucks and buses efficiently. “Healthy employees” are thought to be active, motivated to improve and able to take charge of their lives. As such, said a HR manager, “the health work at Scania is very much a part of the ambition of ‘continuous improvements’, which underlies all of Scania’s activities.”

“Employee-ship” and “The 24 hour employee”: Expressing the paternalistic ambition

We found illustrative expressions for this paternalistic ambition in two sub-policies referred to as “Employee-ship” and “The 24 hour employee”. The policy of employee-ship is generally used within Scania and specifically within the HO to underline that the relationship between Scania and each individual employee should be understood, not as an exchange of services, but as a far reaching contractual agreement. On the one hand, this agreement should underline that a Scania employee is a “corporate citizen” with rights to demand that the work he or she carries out is safe and meaningfully adapted to his or her unique individual capabilities. On

the other hand, the agreement of employee-ship is also meant to underline that each employee is responsible for keeping him or herself in a workable condition. Obviously, Scania has few formal rights to interfere with what an employee does in his or her free time after or before work. Yet, as said by a line manager: "If one of my employees does not sleep enough because he plays poker all night, it is his own business as long as it does not affect his ability to work. But if it does affect his ability to work – and most likely, it will - it is not just his own business, but my business as well." In direct connection to this statement, a programmer in the IT department said that "a couple of years ago I went through a divorce. I started drinking a little bit too much and somehow my boss found out about this. At first, he did not say anything, but after some time he did and he also explained that he had spoken to a counsellor at the HO that he wanted me to contact. I did and the therapy helped, but it was somewhat creepy to experience how my family problems were turned into potential job problems." As both these quotes indicate, the policy of employee-ship implies a typical paternalistic relationship where Scania at once cares for its employees on and off work and expects that its employees make sure to live and not only work in accordance with the moral principles of Scania.

The depth and width of this paternalistic relationship is reflected in the other policy concerning "the 24 hour employee". As stated by a HR manager, the meaning of this policy is that "Scania cares for its employees 24 hours-a-day. We try to help them live healthier. Our interest and care for the employees does not end when they leave work." Yet, it also means that employees are expected to "take care" of themselves after working hours. As said by an employee in the transmission assembly department: "it is a give and take thing. I mean Scania promises us a safe work environment and resources that help us take care of ourselves on and off the job. But it also expects an awful lot from us; it expects us to do more than merely work in accordance with its standards, it literarily expects us to live in accordance with its standards." To this extent the production system SPS becomes not only a way of organizing

work; but also life. Indeed, the notion of “the 24 hour employee” indicates that that which happens during the remains of the day also requires attention, care, and management. One of the managers of the HO explained that “those two policies make it quite clear how broad and encompassing our mission actually is. They indicate that it falls within the limits of our responsibilities to do everything we can to help the employees fulfil their obligations to Scania and to help Scania fulfil its obligation to the employees. This may concern anything from making sure that the machines have no sharp edges to helping employees lose weight”.

Yet, some of the HO professionals underlined that there are delicate issues implied here. A therapist stressed that “whereas the employees have a direct right to demand that Scania sees to it that the work environment is safe, Scania cannot command their employees to eat properly, to exercise, and to educate themselves.” Likewise, a health coach said that “we can provide them with the necessary knowledge and skills and inform them about the responsibility they have in keeping themselves in shape, but we cannot demand that they actually do what we advise them and want them to do.”

Obviously there were examples of resistance to the authority of the HO’s medical personnel. For instance, during a training session on “healthy eating” for a group of 20 factory workers, most of them ignored the tutor by chatting loudly in the room, talking on their mobile phones, etc. However, one company nurse pointed out that “you employ people because they have certain competencies and abilities that are required to do a certain job. It might not be spelled out officially, but to be competent tends to imply a lot of health related things such as physical fitness, mental strength, and so on. Those are part of the resources that an employee is expected to bring to work.” In that connection, a colleague of hers underlined that many of those personal resources are developed and maintained after work in and through the life the employees lead: “if you never read anything, just sit around watching stupid things on TV, and if you only eat fast-food and never do any exercise you might end up as a rather

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unattractive and useless employee.” Hence, even though the HO has no right to command employees to live in such a way that they manage themselves to remain ‘attractive’ and ‘capable’ employees, the policies of “employee-ship” and “the 24 hour employee” are still meant as ways of pointing out that this is part of what Scania expects from its employees. To this extent it has the potential to frame both the working environment and the private environment of Scania’s employees.

However, to the extent that the two policies subordinated employees to far reaching responsibilities both concerning their work and their private lives, they were also explained to put “a straitjacket on Scania”. A supervisor in the transmission assembly department explained: “a couple of years ago we were in the process of buying machines for a new assembly line. Our bosses meant that it would help us speed up operations considerably without jeopardizing quality. Yet, from a health perspective it was found problematic because it involved some heavy lifts and was also considered to cause stress problems. So because of this they had to rethink part of that project.” In that connection a worker in one of the engine assembly teams said that “Scania has to walk its talk. I mean Scania makes such a big thing about its health ideals and it also expects so much from its employees in terms of trying to live up to them that it becomes virtually impossible for Scania to suggest anything that does not? seem to be aligned with health.”

Hence, the two paternalistic policies tie into Scania’s SPS principles by (partly) subordinating employees to far-reaching norms about how they should work, how they should live and relate to themselves in order to remain healthy and productive. Yet, the policies also subordinate Scania to an interpretation of the SPS principles that is aligned with the health ideals that the two policies rest on.

WHP at the “Health School” – neo-normative/post-disciplinary forms of regulating employees’ lifestyles

Basic principles

To illustrate, more specifically, what [Scania](#)’s WHP programs contain and what they seek to achieve we will account for the operations of the so-called “Health School” at Scania.

In general, Scania’s Health School programs are defined by their broad and forward looking interest in the health and wellbeing of employees. More specifically, they stress three features:

First, the programs analyse health holistically. As stated by the head of the Health School: “We try to investigate the whole life situation of the employee. This certainly includes work, but it also includes family relations, work conditions, fitness, eating, drinking, smoking, and sleeping habits.” Hence, neither health nor illhealth are seen to be the results of singular factors such as the work environment, they are seen to be results of the compound totality of material, social and psychological factors that surround and permeate the employee.

Second, they target employees’ lifestyles. As said by a health coach: “We target employees’ lifestyles because we know that the way they chose to live largely determines their long-term health”. Via the concept of “lifestyle” it is suggested to become possible for the Health school to maintain that health is the result of the compound totality that surrounds and permeates the individual employee while it is still very much a phenomenon that the employee can and ought to take responsibility for and control. That is, via the concept of lifestyle it becomes possible to claim that health is at once a holistic phenomena and a product of the individual employee’s choice.

Third, they emphasize the role of motivation in constituting and maintaining health. As said by a health coach: “In the long run, you do not hold on to specific daily routines

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concerning your way of eating, exercising, and so on, unless you are motivated and want to do it.” Hence, health is seen to be the product of employees’ good choices, which together are seen to amount to good lifestyles. Yet, good choices are seen to result in good sustainable lifestyles only if these choices are based on and propelled by the individual employees’ motivation. Differently put, a good lifestyle is seen to be sustainable only if it is based on activities that the employee spontaneously likes to do. Rather than trying to assign particular diets, activities and routines to employees, the Health school’s WHP programs are therefore built around the ambition of promoting activities and routines that the employee already *does* and is found *doing*.

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Hence, generally the Health school’s WHP programs are described to concern employees’ health at work in the specific sense that they seek at once to improve it and render it productive. Yet, while it concerns employees’ health at work, it does not find its target of intervention within the sphere of work, but outside work, in the form of employees’ lifestyles. It is by choosing good lifestyles that employees become healthy and productive at work. This, however, does not mean that WHP programs seek to impose, authoritatively, pre-established diets, exercises, and so on. On the contrary, as we will see below, to secure employees’ motivation, it is claimed to promote that which is already good. It is here, it seems, in the subtle combination of *paternalistic* ambitions of productively aligning employees’ life with work with *neo-normative/post-disciplinary* ambitions of enrolling and promoting the ideosyncracies that motivates individual employees, that the essence of WHP at the Health school is brought to the fore.

Recruitment and introduction to the WHP programmes

How does the Health School and the professional at the HO know which employees they should offer the opportunity to become “students” at the Health school? The head of the

Health school explained: “It is not easy. What we try to do, however, is to make use of the health screenings that all employees at Scania should go through. The health screenings make it possible for us to see if employees’ lifestyles are sustainable or not with regards to long-term health.” Hence, the Health school seeks to contact employees who are not ill, but whose lifestyles seem to imply that their long-term health is at risk. “Ultimately”, said the head of the Health school, “we can only recommend employees to attend our WHP programs. It is up to them to chose to do so.”

While employees’ lifestyles are the main targets of the Health school’s activities, there is a more fundamental concern that first needs to be addressed, namely employees’ “self-knowledge”. A therapist working as a coach at the Health School explained: “Our students first have to learn to adopt a mindset where they reflect on what they do, how they do things and why. In particular they have to start reflecting on the choices they make on a day-to-day basis.” She continued: “our students have to accept that they are responsible for their lives and their work; that they are not victims because mostly they do have a choice.” The therapist explained how many students “initially tend to place their stress-problems outside themselves. It is their jobs that are too demanding, or their bosses that expect too much or are unable to set realistic and clear goals. We try to turn things around. We want them to see that much of the problem and the solution lie within themselves.”, thus making them aware of their personal responsibility for the health problems they experience in relation to their working environment. Another therapist explained that the focus on individual responsibility does not imply that the Health School would consider the employees’ work conditions as unproblematic with regards to stress. “Quite the contrary, we know that the SPS principles can be quite demanding. Yet it is not the Health School’s responsibility to develop Scania’s production and organization principles. We can help by temporarily restricting the responsibilities and the performance criteria of those employees that have difficulties of

coping. In the long run, however, the employees either learn to cope with their work or try to find other less demanding work.” The same therapist explained that “ultimately we do try to teach them to listen to themselves, to choose, and to accept the fact that in the final instance it is they themselves that are responsible for their health and wellbeing. If the result of the therapy at the health school is that a client decides to leave his or her work at Scania for some other career, so be it.” A former student at the Health school commented on this. He said that “Scania’s SPS principles are very demanding. Some people have difficulties in keeping up, but I cannot see how that would result in that anyone even suggested changes to the SPS principles. I mean, it is a very efficient system and everything is so systematized, down to how we handle every spike and bolt. So if employees do not cope, it is not the system that has to change, but the employees.”

In this respect, the professional environment of the clients is mainly treated as given by the Health School. The employees’ lifestyles are not treated as givens, however. As the quotes above indicate, employees’ lifestyles make up the main targets of the Health Schools’ activities. One of the therapists explained: “That our main target is employees’ lifestyles is of course closely related to our emphasis of the fact that employees’ should not see themselves as victims of circumstances beyond their control. They have chosen a particular type of life, a particular career, etc. Together, all of those choices make up their lifestyles.”

The three phases of the WHP programs

The WHP programs at the Health school consists of three basic phases. The first phase revolves around establishing a trustful climate that helps the employee accept and commit to “the fact” that he or she has potential health problems such as stress, alcohol consumption, etc. A psychologist argued that “daring to be open and honest about the fact that you do have

a problem is very important; because many health problems, not the least stress related health problems, have a lot to do with an experience of not being able to meet expectations. Declaring openly that you have a problem relieves you of some of that burden, at least momentarily, and gives you the opportunity to be honest towards yourself and to accept that you have a problem.”

A second step in the therapy revolves around mapping out the daily routines of the employee. These mapping procedures do not only concern how the employee handles work, but also the rest of the employee’s daily routines. An employee that had been at the Health school explained: “Scania takes an interest in how things are for us when we do not work. This is not merely a way of being nice and caring. Scania knows that our private lives affect how able and efficient we are at work.” The basic goal of this phase of the Health school is to develop a fairly comprehensive map of the student’s lifestyle that not only the therapists at the Health school but also, and particularly, the student accept as truthful.

The third phase of the Health school is meant to help students control and develop lifestyles, which will let them stay clear from health problems in general and stress problems in particular. The Health school’s approach during this third phase is based on two principles: First, that students should try to relate to the different parts of their lives, the private life, their work life, family life, etc., in an integrated and goal oriented way. One of the students explained: “We are taught to deal with stress, not only by being more aware and reflective about our own behaviour and attitudes, but also by starting to think in strategic terms about all areas of our lives.” Another student told us: “The Health School has made me much more structured and organized in life in general. Hereby I feel less pressure at home as well at work. Before I often thought life was chaos, with three children and all that”. More specifically, students are taught to make distinctions between work, private life and self, and to set goals in all three areas. A health coach explained: “It is a mindset that we want our

clients to adopt. They should feel that their lives are the results of their own conscious and informed choices, not of coincidences, impulses or forces they cannot control.”

Hence, the problem that the therapists seek to do something about, is sought and found at the individual level, not the organizational level; it is the individuals’ lack of abilities to cope with stress and to set limits and prioritize that is at the centre of the therapists’ attention. Simply put, if an employee fails to cope with the SPS system, the problem rests with his or her self-managing capabilities. “At the same time”, the head of the Health school explained: “we can focus on employees’ abilities to cope with Scania’s SPS principles rather than on changing the SPS principles because the health problems are reasonably limited. It would not be possible for Scania to claim that its SPS philosophy combines efficiency aspirations with health aspirations if let us say 30 % of the employees ended up having stress problems.”

The second principle of the Health school’s third therapy phase concerns how it seeks to help its’ students change or rearrange their lifestyles. Generally, explained a health coach, “we do not start with a ready made regime that we try to teach the employees. In fact, we generally try to avoid telling the employees how they should change their ways of life. We try to find the little things that they already do, which are good. And we try to make them do more of them and less of other things, which are not so good.” One of the students explained: “I have thought about becoming a spinning instructor, but you know, I never did anything about it.... The health coaches find out about those little dreams and they push us to do something about them. You know, by being more conscious about what we do, not trying to do a little bit of everything, but committing to something in particular, investing our efforts sensibly, setting goals, following up on those goals and so on.” Another student talked about similar issues. She said: “When I entered the program I was afraid that most of my life would be disqualified. Yet, no one has tried to change me from the ground up. It is about the little

things, e.g. the fact that I like to go mountain biking or that I happen to like eating fish. The health coaches try to make me do more of the good things I already do – and less of the bad things I do.” One of the health coaches commented on these ideas: “You go through the small things clients do every day; how they get to work, when and how they pick up the kids, and so on. As you go through these things with the client you try to find out if there are certain things that the client is really good at and likes to do. For instance, if a client likes to go for long walks you note that; because WHP is all about finding the good things clients do and trying to make them do more of them.”

Basically, the Health school’s approach during this third phase is meant to push students to adopt a strategic and goal oriented mindset to all areas of their lives. It wants them to ask questions about how their professional goals relate to the goals pertaining to their private ambitions and their families ambitions. Furthermore, it is meant to incite students not to change their lifestyles altogether, but to find the good things they already do and push them to do more of them – and thereby less of the things that do not qualify as good.

While most students seemed positive to this approach, there were also some critical voices. One former student said: “The health experts’ view of health is very closely related to things such as coping, choosing, committing, improving, etc. In a way health thereby becomes a performance next to other performances.” Another student commented more generally on how the Health school’s approach related to Scania’s ideals. He said: “On the one hand, the Health school is one expression for that you do not have to be a superman to fit in at Scania. You do not have to be anything special... Yet, one characteristic you have to have both to pass the Health school and to fit in at Scania is the motivation to improve... It seems to be the defining feature of... everything that is good in a person. So if you lack motivation, what are you then? Ill or what?”

Discussion and Conclusions

We suggest that Scania's investments in WHP is an interesting example of an indirect form of control that we refer to as *neo-paternalistic*. The term neo-paternalism is meant to capture the way in which WHP establishes a typical paternalistic "gift-relationship" between Scania and its employees, which, however, lack the typical paternalistic ambition of adapting and correcting employees to collective ideals and norms. Hereby, we argue, it departs in significant respects from the normative/disciplinary control ambitions that the literature conventionally associate with paternalism (Wray, 1996) and comes closer to the neo-normative/post-disciplinary control ambitions of exploiting employees' personal ideosyncracies. To develop this thesis we will first have to specify how, in the first place, WHP comes forth as an indirect form of managerial control of employees and not only as a pursuit of furthering employees' health.

As we have seen, the link between health and control, between health and self-managed performance, is rooted in how Scania's WHP programs influence what the respondents in our case study referred to as "the mindset of the employees". The call for employees with a particular "mindset" is then not merely a call for employees that show initiative and motivation and that take and seek responsibility; it is also and more fundamentally a call for employees that maintain particular reflective relationships with themselves. Employees that constantly alternate between, on the one hand, getting things done, showing initiative, and on the other hand, stepping aside, reflecting upon what was done, how it was done, and how it could have been done even better. The WHP programs and activities offered by Scania concern many different aspects of what is generally seen to constitute the health and wellbeing of the employees: whether or not they get enough sleep, maintain a proper diet, exercise enough, are socially and psychologically in balance, and so on. Yet, the more fundamental ambition of all of Scania's WHP programs and activities is

that of moving employees towards forming such reflective and responsible relations with themselves. Hence, according to our analysis, the instrumental link between WHP and control, between health and the organizational procedures based on employees' self-managing capabilities, is constituted via this particular "mindset"; it underlies just as much the health and wellbeing of the employees as the employees' professional abilities to match the performance criteria of the company's self-managed organizational procedures.

This is not to say, however, that WHP programs and health experts are management techniques and managers "in disguise"; that they conceal their real intentions – to control employees - behind a "health promoting mask". On the contrary, we suggest the account shows that it is precisely by genuinely promoting employees' health and wellbeing that the WHP programs come forth as management mechanisms. The crucial factor for this interpretation is the concept of health itself.

As the study suggests, Scania's WHP programs and activities are based on a notion of health that concerns a lot more than whether or not employees' pass clinical tests. To be defined as healthy, an employee also needs to have sound social relations, a balanced diet, exercise, and so on. Above all, a "healthy employee" at Scania implies an individual who chooses an active life, who is motivated "to improve", and who is disciplined and responsible enough to stay on the chosen healthy path. Hence, health is not merely a clinical issue, neither is it merely a question of how well an employee feels; it is in addition a matter of how well an employee manages his conduct at work and in life.

It is also here, in relation to this concept of health - as the self-management of one's self and lifestyle for the sake of improving one's character and behaviour - that WHP relates broadly to the notions of normative/disciplinary, paternalistic and neo-normative/post-disciplinary control that we discussed in the literature review. As recalled, these notions imply that control is accomplished when employees' subjectivities become positively aligned with

managerially endorsed discourses and organizational routines (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002).

Our account of this literature implied that these three in part separate approaches to indirect managerial control can be distinguished with regards to two general dimensions:

On the one hand, the extent to which organizational controls attempt to alter and correct employees' subjectivities in relation to organizational norms and ideals, or if they seek to exploit aspects of employees' existing subjectivities. Principally, this is how normative/disciplinary and paternalistic control are distinct from neo-normative/post-disciplinary control; whereas the two former seek to alter and correct employees' subjectivities, the latter seeks to define and exploit employees' existing ideosyncracies: on the other hand, the extent to which organizational control focus primarily on employees' professional conduct, or if they also address employees' conduct beyond the professional sphere. Whereas normative/disciplinary and neo-normative/post-disciplinary control primarily concern the professional sphere, paternalism typically addresses employees' conduct beyond the professional sphere.

We suggest the study of WHP at Scania presents an example of an indirect form of control, which stands apart from normative/disciplinary, paternalistic and neo-normative/post-disciplinary approaches in significant respects. Just like paternalistic control ambitions, it targets aspects of employees' lives, which take place outside the professional sphere. Furthermore, just like paternalistic control ambitions, WHP at Scania establishes a reciprocal "gift relationship" (Wray, 1996). "The 24 hour employee" and "employee-ship" policies and the "Health school", are all illustrative to how both Scania and its' employees are expected to give more than what its contractually required from them. Whereas the "Health school" illustrates how Scania is ready to devote considerable resources to teaching its employees how to live healthier and ultimately happier lives (even though this might mean that they eventually leave Scania for other jobs), "the 24 hour employee policy", illustrates

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how the employees accept not only to work; but in part to live their lives in accordance with Scania's performance criteria.

In some respects this is not an original observation. For instance, in the 1970s, in the car manufacturer Volvo's "Uddevalla plant" (see e.g. Sandberg, 1995), efforts were made to establish team-based manufacturing procedures, which synergetically integrated health with work-place efficiency. What separates WHP from such pursuits is the way it makes employees' lifestyles the main targets of health interventions and how it thereby manages to stretch the integration of health and efficiency concerns beyond the work-private life divide. We should also bear in mind that Ford motor company's "welfare work" project (Hooker, 1997: 47), which we mentioned in the literature review, established already in the 1920s a paternalistic form of control, which operated via (and in the name of) worker's health.

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However, these "welfare" paternalistic control ambitions, Hooker (1997) argues, were meant to subject employees to specific "home and housing conditions" which conformed to collective "American ideals". That is, Ford motor company used medical expertise to impose an idealized collective lifestyle. Wray's (1996) study of "sophisticated paternalism" shows a similar pattern. He finds that the firm "Ourfirm", a paternalistic organization by tradition, takes significant steps beyond the provision of health care services than those provided by the welfare state to secure paternalistic relations with employees. While "Ourfirm" adds initiatives such as donation campaigns and sponsorship programs, its basic ambition was still to adapt and subject employees to highly collectivistic paternalistic norms.

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Here we find the most central point in which WHP differs from conventional forms of paternalism. As our data reports, WHP's control ambitions do not aim to correct and alter employees in those regards, hence WHP does not start with a fixed normative regime that it seeks to make the employees adopt. Rather, it seeks to discover those employees that

have the potential to be active, healthy and successful. Furthermore, it tries to find those aspects of these employees' existing lifestyles and selves that can already be defined as healthy and good for the sake of furthering them so that other aspects of their lives and selves, which implicitly are deemed as "not healthy", are downplayed. What is important from the perspective of WHP ideals is not that employees live and work in one particular way or another, but that they are active and motivated to constantly perform.

Hence, while showing obvious kinship in particular with the pursuits of the Ford motor company a century ago, WHP also differs in significant respects. Rather than attempting to discipline employees to willingly subject themselves to a particular normative regime, it seeks to motivate them; to make them want to improve and take one step further in their step to lead a "more healthy life." It is in this regard that WHP shows its kinship with neo-normative/post-disciplinary forms of control: To the extent normative/disciplinary and paternalistic controls are "centripetal" in that they attempt to commit individuals to a particular normative regime which governs a particular secluded space (the factory, the school, the community, etc.), neo-normative/post-disciplinary controls like WHP are "centrifugal" (see Foucault, 2008). WHP, as we have already suggested, seeks to avoid specifying absolute standards and ideals, which restrict employees' freedom of movement and reduce their motivation; it is more interested in that employees seek to improve, than in which specific regards they actually do so. As said by one of the employees at Scania's Health school: "motivation to improve ... seems to be the defining feature ... of everything that is good in a person".

Yet, as noted in the literature review, neo-normative/post-disciplinary control risks coming forth as totalizing in its very ambition of liberalizing employees. As Fleming and Sturdy (2009: 578) have pointed out, "when the control function actually encourages workers to express these real identities, what form, if any, does resistance take? How might

one resist being oneself?” In the account for Scania, we saw how WHP programs open a space of autonomy and thereby also a possibility of also resisting the totalizing aspect of neo-normative/post-disciplinary control. The answer that WHP implies is that one may resist being oneself in the name of one’s health. WHP is dedicated to help employees fashion lifestyles and selves that heedfully integrate all domains of life, private and professional, in the name of what is “good” and “healthy” for the employee.

Here the authentic self may be one’s ally, but also one’s enemy; the authentic self may be a self that eats too much, drinks too much alcohol, a self that is not motivated and active enough, or a self that works too much and is not able to balance career ambitions against family affairs. In short, if the authentic and idiosyncratic self gives rise to ways of working and living which are not aligned with organizational notions of health and wellbeing, WHP emerges as an instrument for disqualifying aspects of this self.

Given these characteristics we conclude that WHP is best described as a *neo-paternalistic organizational control*. By the term “neo-paternalistic control” we want to draw attention to how WHP shares paternalistic approaches’ tendency of disregarding the professional-private divide while also drawing attention to how this extra-professional control dimension is at once less intrusive and more discriminatory than what is traditionally referred to as paternalism: Less intrusive because WHP does not seek to alter and correct the employee in relation to set organizational norms of proper conduct in life as well as in work, but seeks merely to discover, define, mold and augment interests and faculties that already exist; more discriminatory, however, precisely because WHP comes forth as a resource merely for those employees who are defined to “have potential”. It assesses employees’ lifestyles and selves for the sake of determining whether or not aspects of their existing lifestyles and selves are valuable as human capital.

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