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FRONTIERS OF NEOLIBERALISM: WELL-BEING AND SOCIAL MANAGEMENT IN SPACEFLIGHT

Neoliberalism is increasingly shaping social policy and social management, encapsulating human subjectivity and emotionality under the guise of social well-being and exploiting these aspects of human life for profit-making purposes. The human sciences have developed various concepts of social well-being, including theories that seem to justify the neoliberal order. This study examines the strengths and limitations of a well-being theory associated with the field of positive psychology. I use the experience of the Russian-American cooperation in outer space – the Mir-Shuttle program (1994–1997) – to establish the applicability of the selected well-being theory in the context of a demanding and dangerous environment. The study's dataset comprises three types of sources, used on the principle of availability: biographical interviews with the program participants (NASA's Shuttle-Mir Oral History Project), media interviews with Russian cosmonauts, and published autobiographies. A theory-driven thematic analysis was applied to process the data. The findings indicate that a broader contextualization is essential to explain regularities in the achieving of regimes of social coherence, integration, social realization, and contribution during long-term space missions. Cultural, political, organizational, and existential dimensions need to be considered. The ideal of collective empowerment, secured by mutual sharing, interconnection, and trust, might challenge the current imperative of disciplined self-promotion.

Keywords: communitarianism, emotional work, management of fear, individual ethics, space exploration, self-discipline

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Over the past few decades, neoliberalism has significantly influenced social policies and management practices worldwide (Schram, Silverman 2012). It has combined market-driven motives and organizational structures with paternalistic attitudes to facilitate a new wave of valorization (Rose, Miller 1992; Schram, Silverman 2012). The focus of neoliberal management has increasingly shifted toward micro-level governance. The human sciences provided a wide range of theories to justify and legitimize the established socio-political order (Rose 2007). The related theoretical elaborations identified indexes of a (self-)disciplined phenomenology of individual performance, labeled social well-being (Binkley 2011).

Social preconditions for individual well-being have been recognized by social scientists for decades (Kazemi 2011). However, contemporary organizational and workplace research has mainly focused on individual-level factors and indicators associated with cognition and emotions. In 2003, the American Psychological Association (APA) published '*Well-being in the Workplace and its Relationship to Business Outcomes: A Review of the Gallup Studies*', which presented well-being as the major concern for organizations interested in the reduction of sick leave and turnover for individual companies, as well as social problems in general. Positive emotions in employees were found to increase productivity, with the work environment being the major domain of such positivity (Harter et al. 2003). The article proposed a theoretical model of social well-being in the context of work relationships, encompassing four dimensions: coherence, contribution, integration, and social realization.

Coherence was interpreted in terms of well-defined expectations and sufficient practical conditions for work, including the availability of the necessary means, techniques and procedures to facilitate smooth production. Integration meant the informalization of workplace relationships as a prerequisite for employees' cognitive and emotional loyalty to organizational objectives. Workplace friendship, for instance, was particularly emphasized as an additional resource in crisis management, and therefore in need of pragmatic cultivation. Social realization appeared in the form of a learning attitude among employees that would allow personal growth to be combined with the pursuit of organizational goals. Last, but not least, the contribution included a vision of a general perspective, the matching of employees' skills with company goals and work situations, the individual recognition of contributions, and a regime of care and enjoyment (ibid: 211–213). Overall, workers' well-being was conceived in managerial terms to ensure business stability and profitability. Psychological positivity, sociability, and cooperation became both tools for increasing individual commitment and a form of non-monetary reward. The model was presented as almost a universal one, suitable for various organizational types.

The current research attempts to challenge the universalistic claim of positive psychology by applying the theory of social well-being presented above in a common context of extraterritorial operations. Today, an increasing

number of individuals are engaged in space flight, with a shift towards long-duration missions. This shift has led to the recognition of spacecraft as a workplace characterized by specific social relationships (Kanas, Manzey 2008). The main purpose of this study is to explore the applicability of mainstream organizational social well-being theory to the extraterrestrial context. I analyze the experience of the joint Russian-American Mir-Shuttle program, conducted in the 1990s, in order to systematize key aspects of the social well-being of individual astronauts and cosmonauts and to correlate them with the theoretical model proposed by the APA.

Mir-Shuttle program

The Mir Shuttle program, which ran from 1994 to 1997, was the first large-scale Russian-American cooperation in the field of space exploration. The program involved a number of Russian cosmonauts and American astronauts, each in different roles. After a year of training in Star City (Russia), seven astronauts were hosted aboard the Russian space station Mir for up to six months (NASA 2013). The cosmonauts were familiarized with American technology and flew shuttle logistics missions to the orbital complex. Mir operated continuously for several years with regular shifts of international crews. Transport spacecraft delivered various goods and equipment to the space station, and relieved crew members. Various ground-based mission control and support services facilitated the work of the crews in orbit. The Russian space agency played a leading role in the Program, and all communications with the crews were conducted in Russian. Mir residents typically received a work schedule in advance, which included procedures for the station maintenance and improvement, scientific research, and physical exercise. Leisure time included evening hours and one day off per week. The program's management organized relatively regular contact with relatives and friends via videoconferencing and email.

Neoliberalism as a form of governance

Critical scholarship provided a theoretical assessment of neoliberal sociality. Based on insightful observations of the changing nature of capitalism in the second half of the twentieth century, they explained the role of human emotions in the contemporary mode of valorization.

Rose and Miller (1992) pointed to the increasing fragmentation and sophistication of political power in the era of neoliberalism that appropriate the traditional idea of freedom for its own ends. An image of the individual entrepreneur, driven by the desire for self- improvement and self-realization, is central to the neoliberal order. In contrast to the previous collectivist welfare model, built on the centralized calculated provision of social goods and services to responsible citizens, neoliberalism promotes the free market as the

regulator not only of economic but also of socio-political life. Neoliberal rationalities justify the individualization of risks and ensure the self-management of social actors in line with neoliberal objectives. The role of experts, including social, behavioral, and political scientists, is especially important in the production and maintenance of the neoliberal order. By generating political discourses, they 'translate' social relationships in specific terms that ensure the continued self-regulation of the population. Hochschild (2003) illustrated the workings of neoliberalism in her book *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. The study demonstrated how the new wave of privatization affected the working requirements and conditions of flight attendants. Flight attendants were encouraged to 'sell' themselves to clients by providing homely emotional comfort. All the benefits of these efforts went to the company, while the flight attendants often experienced emotional exhaustion and (self-)alienation. The scholar introduced the term 'emotional system' to explain the effects of for-profit sociality.

The transfer of expectations from the private to the public domain was demanded with the change in the mode of production towards immaterial form (Freeman 2011). As the service sector emerged as the core of the economy, knowledge and sociability became the main sources of surplus value and laborers became social workers producing an affect (Hardt, Negri 1994; Lazzarato 1996; Freeman 2011). Beyond customer interactions, the ability of workers to cooperate and sustain highly productive collective performance became particularly salient in neoliberal organizations. In this context, a marked demand for disciplined sociability, aimed at enhancing workers' self-management, was seen as securing business outcomes (Barker 1993; Ezzamel, Willmott 1998; Jacobsson, Hollertz 2021).

Study Methodology

The dataset (n=16) is composed of three types of sources, employed on the principle of availability: biographical interviews with the program participants[1]; media interviews with Russian cosmonauts, and published autobiographies. The use of biographical interviews and autobiographies offers both advantages and limitations. On the one hand, these materials enable the reconstruction of events from the participants' perspectives and access to aspects of their lives that are typically overlooked or undervalued in formal research. On the other hand, the constructed nature and communicative intent of biographical and autobiographical materials should be acknowledged, which can lead to authors' self-censorship (Power et al. 2012). This issue is particularly relevant for Oral History Project (OHP) interview materials, which are intended for public release. Despite these limitations, the current study seeks to leverage

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[1] NASA's Shuttle-Mir Oral History Project https://spaceflight.nasa.gov

the available materials to initiate a discussion on well-being in long-duration space missions. The validity of the study was enhanced by the in-depth description (Creswell 2013), cross-case analysis, and contextualization of the representations using supplementary materials.

The analytical procedure was deductive-inductive. Thematic analysis was applied to the textual data. Thematic analysis is a '*method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data*' with the perspective of understanding '*various aspects of the research topic*' (Braun, Clarke 2006: 6). The dataset was coded in relation to domains of well-being (Harter et al. 2003). I moved top-down from the identification of the theoretically informed themes to subthemes and smaller units of meaning (Bernard, Ryan 2010). This was followed by within-case thematization and subsequent analysis across the entire dataset (Bischof et al. 2011). Next, the experiences of the well-being indexes were interpreted using critical theory. The deductive nature of the analytical process was dictated by the particularities of the dataset: autobiographical material as secondary data lacked the initial focus of the study phenomenon, and data characteristics varied significantly across individual cases (length and depth of the narratives). Despite these limitations, the scientific value of this exploratory project may be justified by the uniqueness of the context analyzed and the small size and limited accessibility of the study population. For these reasons, it would be important to take advantage of the existing materials. The dataset is composed of publicly available sources. However, in the research discussion that follows personal names are not displayed to satisfy ethical requirements.

Well-being in Mir-Shuttle missions: The study results and analysis

In the course of the current analysis, four themes were identified that represent different domains of well-being for the Mir Shuttle programme participants: coherence, integration, social realization, and contribution.

Coherence

A well-defined and inclusive working environment is essential to achieve coherence in spaceflight. The psychologist who supported the Mir-Shuttle crews observed that national and cultural differences could emerge as sources of divergence among program participants (Interview 13.1). For example, language barriers could hinder U.S. astronauts' interactions with other crew members and the mission control team, thus limiting the astronauts' opportunities for meaningful interpersonal relationships, information updates, and basic orientation.

Both partners in the Mir-Shuttle program made special efforts to ensure social coherence on the space station to avoid divisions and confusion. This included extensive preflight cultural and language training, as well as practical in-flight arrangements (Interview 13.1). However, there were times when these

tools proved insufficient, and space fliers found themselves creating their own methods to enhance the quality of group interactions. Some crews succeeded in developing a unique means of communication – a '*cosmic language*' – a mixture of Russian and English that facilitated everyday operations (Interview 2: 20). In this way, the spacefarers demonstrated adaptive strategies aimed at complementing the organizational arrangements made before the flight.

The primary source of fear in space missions is a lack of skills or information. Intensive training provided at the space office is therefore crucial for coping with anxiety. The Mir 24 resident agreed to engage in the mission, fully aware of the technical challenges that Mir crews had been facing for several months. He reported that he had a plan of action and was therefore confident in his ability to deal with potential difficulties (Interview 5). From the Russian perspective, however, there is always an element of unpredictability, even in well-planned and prepared situations. '*Everything will not be the same*' is the expression of a cosmonaut from the Salyut mission, which still serves as a motto for many Russian space fliers (Usachjov 2004). Mastery is essential, but one must also be morally prepared for unforeseen circumstances. In order to adapt to and manage such contingencies, Russian spaceflight culture has developed several rituals that are routinely practised before and during the launch of the Soyuz rocket. These include, for example, the crew leaving signatures on the door of their last terrestrial accommodation or watching a particular movie. Such actions are designed to ensure the safety and success of the mission.

Some of these are traditions dating back to the first spaceflight, a time of great uncertainty; others emerged after dramatic failures, such as the Soyuz 11 mission, which ended with the death of the entire crew (Roscosmos 2009). These 'protective' rituals were designed to reduce anxiety in a context where the continuity of space exploration was a political imperative. During training in Star City, prospective cosmonauts must learn a particular rationale for these rituals as they transcend formal order to account for collective commitment and individual fate. Ritual adaptation to uncertainty is quite common in dangerous professions, and levels of irrationality have been found to correlate positively with mission duration (Poggie 1980). It appears that at a certain historical juncture, the Russian space agency recognized an objective limit to its ability to ensure the welfare (and sometimes the survival) of its cosmonauts and allowed the protective rituals to be routinely performed.

To American astronauts, Russian space culture might appear as a blend of a rigid, pragmatic, hierarchical command and control regime and the normalized irrationality characteristic of spaceflight rituals (Interview 1, Mir-18 increment). This juxtaposition of 'chaos' and 'order' parallels elements of the globalized neoliberal order based on short-term objectives, flexibilization, de-regulation, and micro-management (Bone 2010: 730). However, there is an important distinction: these neoliberal features are mainly the effects of politico-economic top-down restructuring aimed at reducing marginal costs,

whereas in spaceflight rituals, they manifest themselves as bottom-up, semi-formal adjustments.

Integration

The preparation and operation of the Mir-Shuttle missions involved a wide variety of relationships, with special attention paid to interactions between crew members. The majority of those interactions were purposefully planned and monitored, but could also include spontaneous and unexpected elements. The selection of candidates for spaceflight is a complex process. According to a NASA specialist involved in the Mir-Shuttle program (Interview 13), psychological screening was mainly performed before training started. The composition of a crew for a particular flight was frequently decided by management on the basis of various factors, such as specific competencies, political preferences, the health condition of the candidates, or their suitability for certain technical requirements (Interview 13). In this way, the multi-layered and multifaceted nature of international space missions complicated efforts to ensure the initial group integration and placed additional demands on group dynamics aboard Mir.

Human relationships and social well-being on long-duration space missions were frequently considered by program participants in a wider societal context. The socio-economic transition and instability in Russia during the 1990s determined the practical possibilities for cosmonauts. Consequently, the Russian space agency adopted a cautious stance regarding the exchange of technological innovations. US astronauts were generally treated as residents and kept away from the operational system (Interview 4). Secrecy, driven by the geopolitical militarized space race, had been a feature of the Soviet/Russian space program since its inception (Gerovitch 2011). During the Mir-Shuttle cooperation, however, an imperative of economic competition and the monetarization of professional risks for cosmonauts came to the forefront (Interview 4.1). Regardless of the specific cause, the 'secondary' status of the astronauts on Mir could complicate the in-group dynamics of the crew, and undermine the individual welfare and overall group integration of the space fliers. Due to the fragmentation of the program, cosmonauts and astronauts may feel that they belong to different intuitions. As one of the astronauts commented: '*My boss is a different boss. The objectives of my program are different from their objectives, and they overlap, of course*' (Interview 4: 7).

In their childhood dreams, astronauts could hardly imagine wearing a Russian spacesuit, speaking Russian, and flying a Russian spaceship (Interview 5). Ideological motivations may have initially distanced some astronauts from Russian history, politics, culture, and lifestyle. However, the majority of the program participants seemed to be aware of the ideological issues and worked to downplay these differences. The best way to overcome alienation was to see individuals as human beings, not as derivatives of an alien socio-economic system (Interview 1, Mir-18 increment). Some astronauts developed warm friendships with

their Russian cosmonaut colleagues and in the local community in Star City. These personal bonds ensured a positive experience of the program, psychological welfare, and the overall success of their missions (Interviews 1; 2).

In the context of geopolitical competition, astronauts sometimes felt compelled, as a matter of national pride, to invest additional effort and personal resources in mastering cultural skills before to flight. JOne of the astronauts emphasized that: '[*A*]*s an American, because of the Cold War, you felt, "Whatever I do, I don't want to make America look bad." So it sort of was a motivation to maybe study even more than you want to study, to try to not look too stupid*' (Interview 3.2:36). In the context of political division, the astronaut's mastery of the language became 'display work' (Hochschild 2003:10) aimed at maintaining positive social identity and acceptance. Similarly, Russian cosmonauts had to perform in order to ensure the integration of the crew. Cosmonauts serving on Mir-21 recalled special preparations of accommodation space for an American astronaut coming with a shuttle flight. This move was intended to demonstrate that formal cooperation agreements could be translated into a humanized exchange between representatives of different nations in outer space and in their joint productive work (Usachjov 2004).

A particular institutional discipline and professional norms also underpinned the integration process on Mir. According to testimonies, the Russian space agency typically required maintaining a conflict-free psychological climate on board. During the long-duration Salyut missions, for example, the mood of the cosmonauts was constantly monitored by Mission Control on the ground. If there were signs of distress or tension, special measures were taken. These included arranging for additional communication sessions with the cosmonauts' families, friends, and celebrities, or organizing a disciplinary meeting with the crew doctor (Lebedev 1990). Some of the established methods were also used during the Mir missions as well.

Even confinement itself might require self-conduct. A Russian cosmonaut reflected on experiences of long-duration space missions:

> Outer space taught me restraint. Just a long stay in a confined space, with a small team…teaches you to consider those who are around you. It's on the ground you can, having quarreled, slam the door and leave. But in space, there's nowhere to go – only into the abyss. Therefore, one must suppress their emotions in the interest of the common cause. (Interview 8, para 16, my translation)

Thus, emotional self-management, in conjunction with organizational control, played a critical role in ensuring group cohesion and, ultimately, sustainable long-term cohabitation. It emerged as a means of achieving the shared goal of survival and productive operation in space.

Hochschild (2003:7) advanced our understanding of emotional self-regulation by distinguishing between 'emotional work' and 'emotional labor.' The former is associated with the private, non-commercial domain of an individual's

affectivity, while the latter pertains to market-driven relationships. Patterns of private and public emotional management constitute particular emotional systems. As a central element of the service economy, emotionality has been identified as the primary contemporary domain of exploitation (see also Hardt, Negri 2000). By contrast, in space, sociality is a basic prerequisite for operation; it can hardly promise additional profit. Moreover, crew relationships are semi-public due to shared accommodation and a regime of imposed intimacy, which is rarely observed in professions outside of a mission-like format. In this context, emotional self-regulation is more akin to 'emotional work' and a 'contribution-to-the-group' (Hochschild 2003: 18). Affectivity appears as a matter of reciprocal exchange grounded in the actual moral order.

Emotional labour also has a collective outfit, as exemplified by teamwork. Hochschild (2003: 115) described how flight attendants tend to cheer each other up throughout the working day, joking a lot 'to keep the right frame of mind.' To keep the collective mood free of painful feelings, serious discussions about death, divorce, politics, and religion are usually avoided. However, team solidarity can also have an exclusionary and defensive effect when flight attendants mobilize against clients. Other studies have shown that teamwork is a tool of micromanagement, enabling self-surveillance and self-discipline of the group members (Barker 1993; Ezzamel, Willmott, 1998).

Beyond formal expectations, integration can take on a more casual character. In the Mir-Shuttle program, this informalization was evident in the specific expressive component that American astronauts noted in the Russian approach. The commander of the first Shuttle-Mir flight emphasized the importance of non-technical interactions:

> These are the kind of things that we learned from Russians, the human side of space flight, the long-duration flights we're not used to, and the human side of it, the emotional feeling side of it, they are teaching us… We use military jargon, a lingo that is very quick and tense, and use acronyms and you convey a lot of thoughts into a small sentence, and it's a lot of radio silence, and you are doing things and working… And they just talked about the weather and how things are down on the planet, and they just go on and on and on. Sure enough, we are learning those kinds of things. Humans need to talk to each other and not just be test pilots all the time (Interview 12: 10).

In this narrative, American interactional pragmatism is contrasted with a non-technical, informal mode of communication that transcends the professional context. Using Hochschild's (2003) terminology, the individual emotional contribution emerges as a self-expression rather than as a tool of an instrumental exchange, and as a manifestation of emotional work. These casual conversations that the shuttle commander had with the Mir residents proved to be very productive. Contact with a Mir crew on a private phone helped to build trust and resolve technical issues.

A collective sense of vulnerability is a professional feature of spaceflight that can foster professional solidarity. After the shuttle's launch, a jet leak was

discovered that, in proximity to Mir, could damage the Soyuz descent vehicle's optical sensors. The shuttle crew worked diligently to minimize the leak. The shuttle commander was reluctant to initiate the maneuver, despite having official permission from both national space agencies to approach the orbital complex. He consulted with a Russian cosmonaut representing the Russian side on this mission and assured him that the rendezvous would be delayed until the leak was controlled. 'I don't want to cause any problems for the cosmonauts when they are coming back' (Interview 12: 5). The risks of space flight are high and the moral choices are difficult, therefore the affective aspects of space missions cannot be fully controlled. Despite neoliberalism's broad incorporation of human emotionality into the profit-driven race, there is hope that the productive nature of emotion and sociality can liberate itself and challenge domination. As Hardt and Negri (2000) suggested, the subsumption of embodied affectivity under the rule of global capital is never complete. Affective sociality is constantly striving to evade control and has the potential to provide a basis for emancipatory counter-mobilization.

By the time the program began, the Mir station had begun to show signs of aging, leading to frequent equipment failures, including a fire incident and serious problems with the life support system (Harland 2005). Cosmonauts and astronauts participating in the program could find themselves in the midst of technological crises and face a variety of life-threatening conditions. Space exploration has always been a risky business. As emphasized in the autobiography of a trainee in the Mir program, one in twenty people who went into space died (Sharov 2003). Interestingly, fear did not emerge as a prominent theme in the dataset analyzed. However, recognition of vulnerability and existential motives were latently present in the astronauts' narratives, often expressed through jokes and overshadowed by the image of the brave space explorer. For example, one of the astronauts would sometimes end a communication session with ground mission control giving a half-serious warning: '*Now, be careful down there. You're awfully close to the ground. You don't want to get hurt*' (Interview 12: 16; see also OHP, n.d.). This expression illustrates the enormous efforts made by the crew to maintain their professional identity shaped by specific emotional norms (Hochschild 2003).

Social realization

A wide variety of productive activities were carried out on Mir, including station operations, maintenance, upgrades, scientific experiments, spacewalks, and outreach. However, not all of them were available to the American participants. The primary focus for the astronauts was placed on scientific research, with limited involvement in the day-to-day operations of the station. The situation was sometimes exacerbated by delays in the delivery of scientific equipment. This was in stark contrast to their Russian counterparts, who were often observed working twelve-hour days (Interview 1).

The astronauts reacted differently to the inter – and intra-organizational incoherence. Some chose to disengage, viewing their experience on Mir as '*an experiment in people living in space*' (Interview 4: 6; Mir-23/24 increment). Others demonstrated a more communitarian attitude, taking on different types of practical work. As one of the astronauts explained, '*I was living on Mir just like they were, so it was important that I did my share of keeping Mir up, too*' (Interview 2: 12). According to cosmonauts, such efforts to make a meaningful contribution were highly valued and had a positive impact on group dynamics (Usachjov 2004).

For many, being assigned to a space flight is an extraordinary opportunity for self-realization. The knowledge and skills accumulated over several years of training are naturally eager to be put into practice. The long wait for a mission assignment, coupled with the uncertainty and competition, can be extremely daunting for candidates. The motivation to go to space is sometimes so intense that one is ready to accept any, even a potentially fatal mission (Sharov 2003). At the station, however, the situation was different. Life on the station often resembled day-by-day survival, a state in which the focus on individual success was less relevant than collective co-existence. Practical activities, such as spending several hours cleaning condensate, are not tasks associated with the status of a PhD scientist, astronaut or engineer. In this sense, the situation on Mir, at least at certain times, hardly corresponded to space flyers' need for self-realization. However, within the context of dangerous long-duration space missions, especially in times of crisis, a different ethos prevailed: '*...there's no small or unimportant job on the Space Station. All of it has to get gone...*' (Interview 5: 16). The workload could be intense, with a fluid hierarchy of tasks where everyone was expected to contribute beyond the confines of their specific status or role.

Descriptions of joint efforts in sustaining daily life on the space station featured prominently in several personal testimonies. It can be argued that the sense of collectivity in outer space missions is grounded in the understanding of a shared destiny in a demanding environment. An illustrative story circulated in Star City about the experience of an early Salyut mission. During preparations for a spacewalk, the crew discovered that one of their spacesuits was damaged. The cosmonauts repaired it with the resources available and the commander, who was originally scheduled to wear a different suit, offered to wear the repaired suit himself. His crewmate's response underscored their interdependence, implying that if one of them died, the other would either face slim survival odds or live with a guilty conscience for the rest of his life (Sharov 2003). In this way, space fliers had to establish themselves not only as capable and knowledgeable individuals, but also as moral agents. In space, ethics emerges as an ethics of co-existence and care, influencing group interactions, decision-making, and actions. Individual ethics is not alien to a neoliberal order as well (Foucault 1997). In the context of a neoliberal organization, however, the depth of (self)

relationships is increasingly undermined by affirmations of competitiveness and effectiveness (Clarke 2013).

The extent to which the astronauts could adapt to the situation affected their integration into the group and, ultimately, their well-being. In this context, a communitarian approach focused on common objectives proved to be more effective than a liberal attitude centered on individual goals. The Director of NASA's Phase 1 Shuttle-Mir Program summarized these insights at the 10th Congress of the Association of Space Explorers in 1996. He suggested interpreting the Russian word 'mir' in communitarian terms, imagining it as a small community whose life is exposed to harsh environmental conditions and therefore highly integrated, based on sharing, support, and stable values. According to him, '*Maybe the station "Mir" is actually meant to connote this concept of a village or gathering of peoples and resources*' (Culbertson 1996). This model was preferred to the competitive attitude fostered by liberal society for building international cooperation on the International Space Station.

Contribution

Emotional conventions and the corresponding order of interaction are closely tied to specific governing regimes. David Wolf (Interview 5, Mir-24 increment) was initially frustrated by the lack of recognition of individual contribution in the Russian organizational culture. Only once the commander acknowledged his contribution, and at this very moment the space flier felt accepted by the team (Interview 5). Indeed, some astronauts observed an established order of subordination and control as being characteristic of the Russian space program. However, for Wolf, submission to this order also signaled acceptance to the crew: '*Had I been threatened lightly or like an American, it would have shown me that I did not succeed in becoming part of the Russian team and a cosmonaut*' (Interview 5:3). On the other hand, the astronaut's frustration could also be predetermined by socialization in the neoliberal context, where the constant boosting of individual self-esteem is crucial for survival in a highly competitive environment (Wilkinson, Pickett 2010).

Organizational care manifested itself in the Mir-Shuttle program as psychological support for the space fliers. Specialists from both the Russian and American teams organized telecommunication with family members, friends, and celebrities to support the operation of Mir crews. They carefully selected music and films to suit the tastes of the crew members and sent personal packages to the crew members with each resupply vehicle (Interview 13.1). One of the astronauts described the reception of these packages as an extraordinary event: '*Once we found out packages, it was like Christmas and your birthday all rolled together when you were five years old*' (Interview 3.1:21) This carefully planned and scientifically grounded approach to providing enjoyment functioned as a tool of governance, aimed at achieving organizational goals. The soft management of the flyers' moods was designed to prevent distress and conflict among crew members.

In the context of a space capsule, distant management became a typical practice, complementing traditional direct control. It was necessitated by the spatial constraints of spaceflight, which require a certain degree of reliance on the self-activation and self-regulation skills of the space fliers (Lebedev 1990). Psychologists, referred to as 'experts of subjectivity' (Rose 1996: 151), were involved in supporting the operations of the space fliers. This distant governance, however, is better explained by ideas of discipline (Foucault 1991) than by a notion of neoliberal self-entrepreneurship (Rose 1996). Overall, the emotional conventions characteristic of the Russian space agency at the time reflected the legacy of Soviet welfarism. Under welfarism, risks are seen as collective and state power assumes responsibility for risk management. Human science experts focus on promoting '*reciprocity, adjustment, mutual understanding, collective well-being and social consensus through the mechanism of supervised introspection*' (Binkley 2011: 391). In contrast, neoliberalism emphasizes '*agency, autonomy from dependency and external constraint, and the cognitive wherewithal to pursue self-interest*' (Ibid).

Under neoliberalism, social management is underpinned by the process of responsibilization, which Shamir (2008: 4) describes as a 'call for action' directed at sovereign, 'reflexive' persons who are prepared to accept the consequences of their actions. In this context, the self is perceived as a 'subjective being' driven by ideals of autonomy, individual preferences, and the pursuit of self-realization (Rose 1996: 151). In the specific environment of low-orbit missions, however, the hierarchical order of subordination, technological complexity, and high error costs objectively limit the space for individually driven innovation. Humans in space are primarily seen as components of a technological system and are expected to conform to its operational requirements (Mindell 2008).

Neoliberal well-being theory and spaceflight: discussion and conclusion

Neoliberalism defines the contemporary socio-political landscape. This study explored the applicability of the related theoretical constructs in demanding environments, specifically examining sociality as a crucial source of welfare for individuals working in long-duration space missions. It further engaged in a critical discussion on the dominant pro-profit view of human interactions. I used the testimonies of individuals involved in the collaborative project Mir-Shuttle (space flyers and ground-based specialists) to explore the relevance of a mainstream theory of well-being to the context of low orbit operations. As shown, the well-being theory considered here helps to appreciate important aspects of working life in space, namely the social embeddedness of individual actors and the social determinants of emotions and behavior. However, having been developed in the relatively stable context of a nationally-specific, market-driven economy, this approach appeared limited in addressing the non-commercial,

political, cross-cultural, cross-organizational, and existential dimensions that are central to social well-being in the Mir-Shuttle program.

The emotional system characteristic of the Mir-Shuttle program turned out to be grounded in 'emotional work,' which was crucial for collective survival. Space fliers who adopted a more communitarian view of well-being reported greater satisfaction with the Mir-Shuttle collaboration than those who adopted a self-centered, entrepreneurial attitude. For this reason, the universality of the chosen neoliberal well-being theory is questioned. Another key finding is that despite distinctly different socio-cultural regimes of the US and Russia at the time (neoliberalism vs the legacy of Soviet welfarism), the moral and emotional order in the demanding and dangerous environment transcended any specific organizational culture. The imperative of psychological survival cultivated unique values of mutual sharing, interdependency, and commitment.

Future research will need to explore and conceptualize perspectives of neoliberalism in different social domains. In the terrestrial context, demanding conditions might include natural disasters and war conflicts. Contemporary organizational studies have to find new ways of addressing such issues as organizational complexity and collective vulnerability as fundamental aspects underlying individual and group experiences. The ideal of collective empowerment should challenge the current imperative of disciplined self-promotion. It is my hope and belief that the lessons learned from the Mir-Shuttle program can help to identify and meaningfully address these prospective issues.

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