

Hidden Familial Control and Third-Party Contributions: A Jurisprudential Analysis of Relational Injustice

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Abstract

A contribution to one person can enter a relationship in which another actor exercises hidden control over decisions and resources. This paper examines the normative significance of that configuration in specified familial dependency relations. It distinguishes the recipient's exposure to domination from the outside contributor's uncertainty about downstream consequences. A contributor's inability to trace a gift or direct earned wages does not, by itself, establish injustice. The analysis therefore differentiates gifts, compensation, joint projects, and purpose-specific support, and identifies the additional grounds on which a third party may have a justified complaint. A jurisprudential framework separates effective control, legitimate authority, claim-rights, decision powers, and responsibilities. It also distinguishes the intermediary's causal role from voluntary representation and assesses responsibility in light of knowledge, coercion, and practical alternatives. The resulting account treats opacity as a condition that can facilitate wrongful interference while preserving the recipient's privacy and agency. A bounded comparison with colonial theory examines similarities in directed activity, extraction, and the reproduction of control, alongside the historical and institutional features that resist transfer. The paper offers criteria for normative analysis and empirical investigation, without inferring legal liability or presenting a general entitlement to govern the downstream use of another person's resources.

Keywords: familial control; third-party interests; relational autonomy; domination; jurisprudence; resource opacity; responsibility.

Discussion Paper Note

This note sets out the paper's provisional status, the limits of its normative inquiry, and the forms of scholarly response it invites.

This is a discussion paper offered for critical examination and revision. It explores how hidden familial control may affect the agency of an adult recipient and the justified interests of an outside contributor. Its distinctions organize normative questions; their adequacy remains open to argument and comparison with alternative accounts. The paper reports no empirical case and makes no jurisdiction-specific finding of liability. Its hypothetical scenarios are analytical devices whose relevance to actual circumstances would require independent examination.

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Objections, discussion, corrections, and competing interpretations are welcome, including objections to the framework's premises. Responses may challenge the grounds of a contributor's complaint, identify stronger protections for the recipient's privacy and agency, question the treatment of responsibility under constraint, or demonstrate that an existing account better explains the relevant relationship. Criticism of the colonial comparison, including its explanatory limits and historical appropriateness, is particularly welcome. The paper's conclusions remain revisable in light of such arguments.

The inquiry distinguishes justified interests from a contributor's preference to supervise another person's life. It does not presume that downstream uncertainty establishes injustice or that a familial transfer demonstrates domination. Its application must remain sensitive to legitimate care, voluntary sharing, practical alternatives, and the recipient's own reasons. The companion discussion paper models a possible resource-control feedback; that model supplies no independent proof of the normative judgments considered here.

Correspondence may be addressed to Wanhong HUANG at huangwanhong@serendip.ngo. References to the version and relevant passage will assist the evaluation of objections and corrections. A substantive challenge may require reformulating a distinction or withdrawing a claim, as well as adding qualifications or citations.

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1 Introduction

This section defines the triadic problem and states the paper’s analytical contribution. The inquiry concerns a relationship among a family actor *A*, an adult recipient *B*, and an external contributor *C*. The method combines conceptual distinctions, controlled hypothetical comparisons, and a jurisprudential account of interests and powers.

The outside contributor may believe that a transaction primarily involves the recipient’s decisions and capacities. The recipient may in fact face another actor’s control over the use of money, time, contacts, or opportunities. A contribution can then benefit the recipient, enter a family-sharing arrangement, be captured through pressure, or help maintain the instruments of control. These possibilities can remain difficult for the contributor to distinguish. They raise questions about the recipient’s agency and, in some circumstances, the contributor’s own legitimate interests.

The third-party question requires precision. Contributors often lack knowledge of downstream expenditure for entirely legitimate reasons. An unconditional gift can enlarge the recipient’s freedom to pursue ends that the giver neither anticipated nor endorses. Earned wages ordinarily become resources over which the worker’s agency should be respected. A cooperative project, by contrast, can create legitimate interests in agreed participation, confidentiality, and delivery. A theory that classifies all undisclosed downstream transfers as injustice would erase these differences and invite intrusive supervision.

The paper develops an account of *opaque downstream conversion*: a contribution enters a relational process whose material effects on benefit, control, or practical agency are insufficiently visible to an affected participant. This is a descriptive category. A finding of injustice requires an additional account of an independently justified interest and the conduct or institutional arrangement that wrongfully impairs it. The paper’s central contribution is this separation, together with a classification of the routes through which hidden control can affect a contributor.

The corresponding problem for *B* concerns the direction of their activity and future opportunities. A family actor may use support or pressure to govern the recipient’s relationships, while acquiring benefits generated by those relationships. The recipient can thereby become an intermediary through whom another person’s control reaches external interactions. The term *proxy* will designate a functional role in that transmission. It leaves consent, legal agency, and responsibility to separate analysis.

The framework takes familial dependency as an institutional setting in which the configuration may occur. It makes no inference about families in general and reports no empirical case. All scenarios are hypothetical. Childhood may explain a historical asymmetry, but the external contributor-recipient transactions considered here involve an adult recipient. Questions about minors, legal guardianship, and decision support require distinct legal and developmental analysis.

Section 2 identifies the relevant literatures. Section 3 defines the structure and distinguishes influence from induced proxy activity. Sections 4 and 5 examine the recipient’s and contributor’s interests. Section 6 specifies jural relations and authority; Section 7 addresses responsibility. Sections 8 and 9 evaluate the colonial comparison and evidential requirements. The discussion assesses implications without prescribing a universal remedy.

2 Literature and Normative Orientation

This section situates the framework within relational autonomy, domination, epistemic injustice, household economics, and fiduciary analysis. It distinguishes inherited concepts from the proposed application. The review is selective, with source claims limited to the material verified during preparation.

2.1 Autonomy, Dependency, and Equality

Relational accounts of autonomy examine the social conditions under which agency is formed and exercised (Mackenzie and Stoljar, 2000). This orientation permits an evaluation of how support, norms, and relationships affect a person’s decisions without requiring social isolation as the ideal. Kittay (2020)

places dependency and care within the analysis of equality and justice. Together, these approaches caution against treating an individual's continuing need for others as a sufficient sign of subordination.

The republican account developed by Pettit (1999) makes domination central to the evaluation of freedom. Its relevance here concerns exposure to another actor's discretionary interference, including situations in which overt interference is intermittent. Anderson (1999) develops a relational conception of equality that directs attention to social standing and relations among persons. The present paper draws on these orientations in asking whether a recipient can contest and revise important arrangements while retaining standing as an equal participant.

The capability approach distinguishes resources from effective opportunities (Sen, 1992). That distinction helps explain why a recipient's visible income can be an incomplete indicator of agency. The proposed focus on future trajectories is a temporal application of these established concerns. The paper does not claim that the idea of effective possibilities originates in its terminology.

2.2 Familial Control and Hidden Material Relations

Psychological-control and family-process research distinguish intrusive manipulation from legitimate guidance and close relationships (Barber, 1996; Green and Werner, 1996). Economic-abuse research examines practices involving material control (Adams et al., 2008), while coercive-control scholarship analyzes sustained entrapment within intimate relationships (Stark, 2007). These precedents support a careful analysis of patterned control. Their original populations and research purposes place limits on direct transfer to every familial setting.

Household and kinship economics provide material counterparts. Household bargaining can depend on alternatives within an ongoing relationship (Lundberg and Pollak, 1993). Pressure to share and the visibility of resources can also affect economic behavior (Baland et al., 2011; Jakiela and Ozier, 2016). Consequently, neither intrafamilial transfers nor indirect effects on outsiders are conceptually unprecedented. The present contribution concerns how these material processes intersect with the legitimate interests of a contributor whose transaction is mediated by a constrained person.

2.3 Information, Interpretation, and Authority

Information asymmetry can change the quality of economic choice, as the analysis of uncertain quality in Akerlof (1970) illustrates. The present information problem concerns effective control and resource conversion. It does not assume that the recipient intentionally withholds material facts or occupies the position of a knowledgeable seller. The recipient may have limited knowledge, face disclosure risks, or lack an obligation to disclose private matters.

Fricker (2007) addresses wrongs to people in their capacity as knowers. Sweet (2019) examines the interaction of gaslighting with social and institutional inequalities. These accounts help identify circumstances in which a recipient's credibility and interpretive access can be undermined. Ordinary disagreement about the meaning of a family contribution does not establish either process. The classification requires an account of the mechanisms affecting interpretation or credibility.

Jurisprudential distinctions clarify the relation between factual control and normative position. Hohfeld (1913) separates claims, privileges, powers, and immunities. Scott and Scott (1995) develops a fiduciary account of parental responsibility under informational asymmetry and considerable discretion. The framework below uses these resources to organize proposed normative relations. It leaves their recognition within a particular legal system open.

3 Relational Structure and Functional Proxy Activity

This section defines the triadic configuration and isolates the conditions under which the intermediary role becomes analytically significant. It separates the topology of a relationship from its normative evaluation.

The aim is to avoid treating the existence of an additional family connection as evidence of a hidden principal.

3.1 Control Domains and External Transactions

Actor A has effective control when they can materially alter the feasibility or consequences of B 's decisions in a specified domain. Examples include a practical veto over a transaction, credible penalties for refusing a transfer, or control of an indispensable channel through which a contribution is used. The relevant domain may be narrow. Control of one account would not justify describing every aspect of the person's life as governed by A .

The external relation between B and C supplies a contribution or creates a shared activity. A full description identifies what is supplied, who has a legitimate claim to it, what undertakings accompany it, and which decisions remain open to each participant. The mere existence of family influence behind the transaction adds no presumption of impropriety.

The narrower structure arises when A 's effective control shapes B 's external activity or captures benefits resulting from it. A further feedback exists when those benefits maintain the instruments of control. That feedback can matter even if A never communicates with C . It can also be absent: benefits may be consumed, used for consensual care, or shared through an arrangement that B can revise.

3.2 Influence, Delegation, and Induced Intermediation

Influence is pervasive in relational life. A person may consult relatives, accept obligations, or coordinate plans without becoming their representative. Voluntary delegation also differs from imposed control: a recipient can appoint another person to manage an account while preserving review, revocation, and meaningful choice. The degree and basis of these powers must be examined.

Definition 1 (Structurally induced proxy activity). *An adult recipient performs structurally induced proxy activity in a specified transaction when another actor's effective constraints materially direct the recipient's conduct or resulting benefits toward that actor's purposes, and the recipient's ability to refuse or revise that direction is substantially restricted.*

This definition concerns the transaction and the causal role of constraints. It does not classify the recipient's identity or imply wholesale loss of agency. A constrained person can maintain independent aims, resist some demands, and exercise responsibility over decisions that remain available. Nor does the definition establish agency in law, intentional deception, or a duty to reveal every source of influence.

The term requires evidence of direction and restricted revision. Familial benefit resulting incidentally from the recipient's success is insufficient. A parent can take pleasure in an adult child's achievement without directing its production or acquiring powers over the achievement. Pride, shared welfare, compensation, and coercive appropriation require separate evaluation.

3.3 Opaque Conversion and Observational Limits

Opaque conversion concerns uncertainty about what a contribution changes within the relationship. A visible expense can provide care and simultaneously free other funds for control. A visible transfer to a relative can also support a beneficial arrangement. Tracking the immediate destination therefore may leave the relevant causal effect unresolved.

For an elementary observational example, suppose C observes only that B receives 100 units and retains 70 units. One compatible situation involves an agreed household contribution of 30 units with effective freedom to revise. Another involves a compelled transfer of 30 units that finances a restriction on future activity. The observed resource account is identical; the transfer conditions and consequences differ. The example is hypothetical and supports a limited identification point.

Proposition 1 (Insufficiency of a transfer account). *If the observations available to an evaluator identify only a contribution and its immediate retained amount, and both voluntary-sharing and coercive-capture processes are compatible with those observations, no classification rule based solely on those observations can distinguish the two processes correctly in every compatible case.*

The proof follows from identical inputs: the rule must assign the same classification to both compatible cases, although their relevant relational properties differ. The result is an elementary observational-equivalence argument. It establishes the need for additional information about control, refusal, and conversion; it supplies neither a general impossibility of knowledge nor an entitlement to obtain that information through intrusive means.

4 Recipient Agency and Relational Injustice

This section examines the normative interests of the recipient before considering the outside contributor. It distinguishes ongoing support from domination, assesses appropriation of productive activity, and evaluates restrictions on future opportunities. The recipient remains a subject of justification throughout the analysis.

4.1 Care, Decision Support, and Discretionary Interference

Care can expand agency by supplying assistance, stability, knowledge, and relationships. Evaluating a particular arrangement therefore requires attention to its benefits and to the burdens borne by caregivers. A person who depends on another can still participate in decisions and retain meaningful authority over their aims. Conversely, material generosity can coexist with intrusive demands.

A relational complaint becomes stronger when control concerns central life decisions, is exercised through serious or disproportionate penalties, serves the controller's conflicting purposes, and resists effective contestation. These considerations are dimensions of judgment, rather than a diagnostic checklist. Their weight depends on the domain, available alternatives, and the reasons offered for the restriction.

The relevant standard includes accountability to the recipient's interests and choices. In a legitimate support arrangement, changes in need and preference can be considered without making basic standing conditional on obedience. An arrangement that continually makes essential support depend on serving another person's unrelated objectives creates a different justificatory burden. The existence of a material benefit does not settle that burden.

4.2 Productive Activity and Instrumental Treatment

Instrumental treatment arises when the recipient's labor, relationships, or achievements are organized primarily as inputs into another actor's purposes while the recipient's own reasons are systematically subordinated. Human relationships routinely involve mutual benefit and instrumental cooperation. The objection concerns the conditions under which the person participates and the standing accorded to their aims.

A useful hypothetical contrast involves two recipients who each contribute part of their earnings to a household. One has access to the account, negotiates the contribution, and can revise it when circumstances change. The other faces severe penalties for discussing its level and must accept externally directed work to maintain the flow. The monetary transfer may be the same. The second arrangement raises concerns about the authority governing both production and allocation.

Achievement can also produce family status without constituting an appropriable asset. A parent's public acknowledgment of a child's success differs from claiming authority to direct the child's professional relationships or misrepresenting the parent as the source of the work. The framework therefore evaluates concrete assertions of credit, decision power, and access. It avoids treating every emotional or reputational benefit to family members as extraction.

4.3 Future Opportunities and Revision of Life Plans

The temporal dimension concerns whether a person can develop alternatives and revise their commitments. A restriction on a current job may also affect mobility, future earnings, and access to independent relationships. Several individually modest restrictions can interact over time. The resulting concern is the trajectory of effective possibilities under a specified arrangement.

The idea of a generative landscape can organize this inquiry if it refers to identifiable feasible trajectories. Its use should remain anchored in capability and relational-autonomy analysis. There is no evident common unit for counting employment options, intimate relationships, educational pathways, and identities. A credible assessment should report dimensions separately and consider which possibilities the recipient has reason to value.

A comparison might hold needs and feasible support constant while varying whether the recipient can choose providers, maintain communication, or change an arrangement. Such comparisons are more informative than contrasting actual dependency with complete self-sufficiency. They also preserve the possibility that a caring relationship enlarges future opportunities despite continuing material dependence.

4.4 Interpretation and Contestation

Interpretive control becomes relevant when a powerful actor restricts the recipient's ability to describe, question, or obtain independent assessment of the relationship. Possible mechanisms include penalties for seeking advice, selective control of information, or systematic attacks on credibility tied to existing institutional disadvantage. Evidence of those mechanisms is necessary to connect the relationship with epistemic injustice.

Accounts of benevolence can be causally incomplete. A person may currently require assistance because earlier restrictions reduced opportunities, because an independent hardship occurred, or because several processes interacted. Establishing causal responsibility for the need requires evidence that separates these possibilities. Present dependence alone cannot establish either past interference or the moral credit due for present support.

For the recipient, a meaningful process of contestation should allow competing descriptions and revised arrangements. That criterion also applies to the investigator. Treating a recipient's continued affection or choice to remain as proof of interpretive capture would insulate the theory from criticism and reproduce an asymmetry of authority.

5 Third-Party Contributions and Grounds of Complaint

This section differentiates transaction types and specifies the additional premises required for a third-party claim of injustice. It distinguishes uncertainty, adverse effects, and wrongful interference. The analysis protects the recipient's agency while identifying circumstances in which the contributor's own interests warrant consideration.

5.1 Transaction Types and Legitimate Expectations

The nature of a contribution determines which expectations can be justified. A giver's private intention alone cannot establish an obligation for the recipient. An undertaking, a shared project, or a representation made during a transaction can create more specific normative relations. Table 1 summarizes the distinctions.

The gift case is an essential counterexample. Suppose C gives B an unrestricted amount. B freely contributes part to a relative whose choices C dislikes. The giver may regret the outcome or choose a different future contribution. Those reactions do not establish that B wronged C . A normative theory of hidden control must preserve this result.

Table 1: Transaction types and the scope of a contributor’s normative interest. The entries are analytical proposals, not statements of jurisdiction-specific law.

Transaction	Plausible contributor interest	Recipient agency and limiting condition
Unconditional gift	Freedom from material deception inducing the gift; choice concerning future contributions	Broad recipient discretion; unexpected lawful spending alone supplies no entitlement to direct it
Earned compensation	Performance of the agreed work and protection of jointly entrusted assets or information	The worker directs earned resources; family spending alone concerns the worker’s choices
Joint project	Agreed participation, confidentiality, allocation rules, and protection against hidden interference	Scrutiny is limited to material project constraints; it does not extend to general family supervision
Purpose-specific support	Good-faith performance of a voluntarily accepted, legitimate undertaking	Conditions require justification and meaningful acceptance; the contribution does not authorize control of unrelated decisions

In the compensation case, the distinction is equally important. A worker’s earnings can later be captured by a family actor, creating a serious concern for the worker. An employer’s interest in the worker’s welfare may support appropriate assistance, but it does not itself convert the employer into an authority over wages. Any claim that the employer has been wronged requires a further connection to a legitimate transactional interest.

In a joint project, effective control by an undisclosed outsider can affect the parties’ shared commitments. For example, a controller may require access to confidential information or redirect work without authorization from the participants. The contributor’s complaint then concerns the project and its accepted terms. Disclosure of every private family fact would exceed what is needed to identify that interference.

5.2 Uncertainty, Adverse Effects, and Wrongful Interference

Four evaluative categories should be kept distinct. *Disappointment* occurs when outcomes differ from a contributor’s hopes. *Epistemic disadvantage* occurs when relevant features are difficult to assess. *Adverse consequences* occur when the contribution causally produces an outcome contrary to a legitimate interest. *Injustice* requires an account of an unjustified impairment, such as deception, coercive interference, exploitation of a protected interest, or an unfair institutional process.

Opacity can facilitate a wrong without constituting one on its own. An intervention may have uncertain results because the system is complex, because the recipient is entitled to privacy, or because an actor strategically conceals material control. These explanations have different implications for responsibility and remedy. The fact that an observer lacks information does not establish that another person owes it.

The strongest transaction-specific complaint arises when a controller materially interferes with a legitimate undertaking or induces a contribution through a misleading representation about a matter on which the contributor is entitled to rely. The representation might concern who can authorize project decisions or who can access entrusted information. The relevant question is the scope of the present transaction, rather than a general right to trace all subsequent uses.

An adverse-conversion concern can also arise when a contribution supports coercion against the person whom the contributor sought to assist. The contributor may have a legitimate interest in avoiding participation in that independently wrongful process. Yet that interest requires careful specification. An unintended and unforeseeable causal consequence creates a practical reason for reassessment without necessarily establishing that anyone wronged the contributor. A stronger complaint arises where another actor strategically exploits the contributor’s limited knowledge to recruit their resources into the coercive process.

This last claim is normative and contestable. Its basis is respect for a person's agency in deciding whether to contribute to an independently wrongful undertaking. It gives the contributor a reason to resist instrumental use of their participation. It does not imply ownership of the recipient's future, and it does not make every recipient responsible for preventing unwanted downstream consequences. The recipient's own coercion and privacy interests constrain what can reasonably be demanded.

5.3 A Relational Assessment of Third-Party Standing

A defensible assessment of standing requires four inquiries. First, identify a specific interest that the contributor can justify without assuming control over the recipient. Second, identify how hidden control materially affects that interest. Third, establish the conduct or institutional feature that renders the effect wrongful, rather than merely disappointing or uncertain. Fourth, evaluate the proposed response against the recipient's agency, safety, and privacy.

These inquiries distinguish the central case from ordinary fungibility. Money routinely changes hands and supports activities beyond an initial giver's knowledge. The further ground of complaint lies in interference with justified participation or an independently unjust process. A family connection is neither necessary nor sufficient for that ground.

Standing also differs from priority. A contributor with a valid complaint may still owe duties to a coerced intermediary or need to accept limits on disclosure. Conversely, concern for the recipient need not erase a collaborator's interest in confidential information or an agreed project. The task is to specify the competing claims and their relationship rather than combine them into a single measure of aggregate injustice.

5.4 Hypothetical Comparisons

The following comparisons test the distinctions while holding resource flows broadly similar. They are analytical constructions and do not report private events.

In the first comparison, a recipient voluntarily shares an unrestricted gift with a relative. The relative subsequently makes a decision the giver dislikes. The giver's frustration concerns preference divergence. The recipient has exercised the discretion conferred by the transaction.

In the second, a family actor compels the same transfer and invests it in restricting the recipient's communications. The recipient has a potential complaint of domination. The giver has reason to reconsider future assistance and may have an interest in avoiding support for coercion. A claim that the giver was independently wronged depends on additional facts concerning deception, strategic instrumental use, or a relevant obligation.

In the third, a controller directs a recipient to commit shared project resources or disclose confidential material for the controller's benefit. The collaborator's complaint concerns a joint undertaking and can exist even if the recipient's overall income rises. Responsibility for the disclosure must still account for coercion and the recipient's alternatives.

In the fourth, an outside provider offers assistance only if the recipient accepts broad surveillance and abandons relationships that the provider disapproves of. The outside actor may itself create a new form of dependency. Its declared protective purpose supplies insufficient justification for the resulting authority. The framework applies to this provider as it does to the family actor.

6 Jurisprudential Structure of Authority and Entitlement

This section uses jurisprudential distinctions to clarify the kinds of normative relations at issue. It separates descriptive control from justified authority, then examines claim-rights, decision powers, and purpose-limited discretion. The analysis proposes a structure of justification without determining current legal rights.

Table 2: Jurisprudential distinctions applied to the relational structure. The entries concern normative analysis and do not assert enforceability in a legal jurisdiction.

Jural position	Candidate application	Justification requiring assessment
Claim	<i>B</i> 's claim against coercive interference; <i>C</i> 's claim concerning an accepted project undertaking	Nature of the interference, undertaking, and corresponding duty
Liberty	<i>B</i> 's discretion over an unconditional gift or earned income	Scope of any legitimate obligations already attached to the resources
Power	<i>B</i> 's ability to authorize or revise a management arrangement	Conditions for valid authorization and practical accessibility of revision
Immunity	Protection of <i>B</i> 's normative position against unilateral expansion of another actor's authority	Grounds for limiting the actor's power and the domain of the protection

6.1 Effective Power and Legitimate Authority

Effective power concerns what an actor can bring about. Legitimate authority concerns whether others have reason to recognize that actor's direction within a specified domain. A person can have extensive factual control while possessing little justified authority over a particular adult decision. Conversely, a person entrusted with a limited administrative role can hold a legitimate decision power without possessing broad control over the beneficiary's life.

Dependency alone supplies an incomplete basis for authority. A person may need another's assistance, yet remain entitled to choose goals, challenge conditions, or seek another arrangement. An accepted role, the beneficiary's needs and interests, the purpose of delegation, and adequate accountability provide possible grounds for limited authority. The burden is to justify its scope and duration.

This distinction also prevents a misleading inference from voluntary entry. Adults may voluntarily enter an arrangement and later face conditions that make revision difficult. Historical consent matters, but its relevance depends on what was accepted, the information available, and whether later changes exceed the undertaking. In familial relations, initial membership may have been unchosen, making current authorization especially important to assess at the level of specific adult decisions.

6.2 Claims, Liberties, Powers, and Immunities

Hohfeld's distinctions identify different structures commonly grouped under the language of rights (Hohfeld, 1913). A claim corresponds to another person's duty; a liberty concerns the absence of a duty to refrain; a power concerns the capacity to alter normative relations; and an immunity concerns protection from another person's exercise of such a power. In this vocabulary, liability means exposure to an alteration of normative position and carries no automatic implication of wrongdoing or compensation.

Table 2 applies the distinctions as proposals for normative analysis. The taxonomy organizes questions; it does not supply the substantive justification for a particular right. Each proposed relation needs an independent account of agency, fair cooperation, accepted undertaking, or another defensible ground.

The framework makes an important distinction visible in third-party analysis. A contributor may have a claim concerning truthful project representations while lacking a power to direct the recipient's household expenditure. A recipient may have a formal power to revoke an arrangement while lacking practical means to exercise it safely. Normative position and effective capacity therefore need to be described together.

6.3 Purpose-Limited Caregiving Discretion

The fiduciary account developed by Scott and Scott (1995) treats parental discretion in relation to responsibilities toward the child, under conditions of informational asymmetry and limited monitoring. It

supplies a precedent for examining conflicts between the entrusted purpose of authority and its use for private ends. Applying that logic to adult relationships requires identifying a continuing role or undertaking; former caregiving alone cannot settle the present authority question.

A normative fiduciary analogy is strongest when one person has undertaken to manage another's resources or interests, the beneficiary is vulnerable to that discretion, and the role is justified by serving the beneficiary's purposes or protected interests. The relevant inquiry then concerns loyalty to the undertaking, appropriate care, conflicts, and accountability. These are proposed evaluative dimensions. Their use does not establish a legal fiduciary relationship in every family arrangement.

Caregiving burdens also require recognition. Providing accommodation, management, or support can create legitimate interests in fair contribution and sustainable arrangements. A purpose-limited account should permit transparent discussion of those burdens. It should also distinguish an agreed allocation of care costs from unilateral, indefinite claims over the recipient's work, relationships, and future resources.

6.4 Authorization under Dependency

Authorization requires attention to the content and circumstances of a decision. Dependence can affect the practical costs of refusal while leaving some choices voluntary. A complete account should assess information, alternatives, pressure, the significance of the decision, and the ability to revise it. Treating every dependent choice as invalid would erase agency; treating every act of compliance as valid would overlook coercion.

The scope of authorization matters in both directions. A recipient may consent to help with a budget without authorizing control over employment. A contributor may support a joint activity without acquiring powers over the recipient's private life. A controller's access to an account or practical ability to impose conditions does not itself establish that either participant has conferred the corresponding authority.

The final allocation can also exceed what any actor planned. This is why an authorization account alone is insufficient for the broader problem of opaque conversion. The analysis must include causal uncertainty, structural conditions, and responsibility for foreseeable effects while preserving the distinction between an undesired outcome and an unauthorized act.

6.5 Normative Injustice and Legal Status

A claim of injustice and a claim of illegality answer different questions. The first requires a substantive normative argument. The second requires legal sources, jurisdiction, facts, and applicable procedures. A proposed duty of justification does not establish a legal cause of action, and the absence of an identified legal prohibition does not settle the normative evaluation.

This paper does not determine whether any described hypothetical arrangement is lawful. It establishes that its evaluative criteria can be considered independently of such a determination. Actual legal analysis would require separate treatment of property, contract, capacity, confidentiality, family responsibilities, and any relevant coercion or abuse provisions. Terms such as restitution and unjust enrichment may suggest remedial questions, but their legal elements cannot be inferred from the present framework.

7 Responsibility under Indirect Control

This section distinguishes causal involvement, individual blame, institutional responsibility, and prospective obligations. It examines the controller, intermediary, and contributor separately before considering their shared environment. The purpose is to prevent a functional proxy label from determining responsibility in advance.

7.1 Controller, Intermediary, and Beneficiary Roles

The person who formally receives funds or signs an agreement may differ from the person who directs the relevant decision. The ultimate beneficiary may also differ from both. Each role is evidence relevant to a responsibility analysis, with no automatic equivalence among them. Receiving a benefit can be innocent; directing coercive interference can create responsibility even where the controller receives little material benefit.

Actor *A*'s responsibility depends on the actions undertaken, their effects, the reasons for them, and the knowledge and alternatives available. A structural account can explain how conduct becomes rewarding while leaving the actor answerable for that conduct. Conversely, an unfavorable outcome cannot establish malicious intent or a complete plan to reproduce control.

Actor *B* may be both constrained and causally involved in an external harm. The analysis should identify the choices actually available, the seriousness of threatened consequences, knowledge of the harm, and feasible opportunities to protect others. Coercion can substantially reduce responsibility. It does not imply that every decision in the person's life is externally determined. A defensible account treats responsibility as domain-specific and sensitive to circumstances.

Actor *C* may reasonably be unaware of the structure and can face real limits on what should be investigated. A collaborator should not be presumed culpable for every unknown downstream use. Responsibilities can change when credible information becomes available, especially concerning a joint project or independently wrongful interference. The reasonable response must consider likely effects on *B* and the scope of *C*'s role.

7.2 Prospective and Institutional Responsibility

Structural injustice can exceed the conduct of a single identifiable wrongdoer. Young (2006) distinguishes responsibility arising from social connection from a liability-centered model and emphasizes shared efforts to change unjust processes. This orientation helps frame responsibilities of institutions that shape access, payment, disclosure, or remedies. Applying it here requires specifying the institution's actual connection to the process and its feasible powers.

An institution can make resources formally available while leaving their practical use subject to another actor's control. It can also create intrusive reporting requirements that expose recipients to pressure or impose new dependence. These possibilities support analysis of institutional design, including whose accounts are considered credible and who can revise an arrangement. They do not justify attributing identical responsibility to all connected actors.

Prospective responsibility and retrospective blame can diverge. A contributor who acted reasonably may later be well placed to assist with a revised arrangement. A coerced intermediary may possess useful knowledge without being the appropriate person to bear the full burden of reform. Institutions with greater control over relevant procedures may have stronger responsibilities to make change feasible. The assignment of tasks should therefore consider capacity and risk alongside causal history.

8 Colonial Comparison and Conceptual Boundaries

This section assesses the colonial analogy that motivated part of the initial inquiry. It identifies the structural features that invite comparison and the historical elements that resist it. The comparison is evaluated as a limited interpretive device, rather than used to classify familial relations in advance.

8.1 Structural Correspondences

Directed productive activity, extraction, mediated access to outsiders, and the use of extracted resources to sustain control can make the proposed structure resemble some relations analyzed in colonial political economy. The analogy draws attention to who shapes production and benefits from it, and to the possibility that apparent support is integrated with a wider structure of domination.

Table 3: Scope of the colonial comparison. Structural resemblance is evaluated separately from historical classification.

Potential structural correspondence	Limit of transfer to the familial model
Direction of productive activity by a dominant actor	Interpersonal direction does not establish colonial sovereignty, territorial dispossession, or racial ordering
Extraction through a subordinated intermediary	The same pattern can occur in several noncolonial institutions and requires independent classification
Use of benefits to reproduce control	Resource-financed persistence is a general mechanism with multiple historical forms
Narratives legitimating asymmetric authority	Similar justificatory forms do not establish a shared genealogy or identical political stakes

These correspondences can help generate questions. An investigator might examine whether external activity is organized around another actor's purposes, whether the recipient's alternatives are systematically restricted, and whether extracted resources maintain those restrictions. Each question can also be asked in the vocabulary of exploitation, coercive control, or institutional dependence. The analogy must therefore demonstrate explanatory value beyond a forceful label.

8.2 Historical Specificity and Failed Correspondences

Quijano (2000) connects coloniality to racial classification and the historical organization of global capitalism. Those features cannot be reduced to interpersonal extraction. Familial hierarchy by itself establishes neither a colonial genealogy nor the relevant form of political and economic organization.

Tuck and Yang (2012) explicitly resist transforming decolonization into a metaphor for generic projects of social improvement. Their argument makes the stakes of analogical language substantive: the specificity of Indigenous land, life, and sovereignty can be displaced when terms are transferred too freely. The present paper therefore cannot describe a change in a family arrangement as decolonization on the basis of its own model.

Table 3 identifies both potential correspondences and limits. The existence of the left-hand feature provides a research prompt; it supplies insufficient grounds for importing the historical classification or the normative and political claims associated with it.

8.3 Analytical Role and Terminological Choice

The analogy has limited heuristic value for comparing processes, provided differences remain visible. It does not ground the paper's normative conclusion. The arguments concerning domination, material deception, restricted agency, and responsibility can be evaluated without adopting a colonial designation.

For this reason, the paper uses hidden familial control and induced proxy activity as descriptive terms. A future historically grounded study could investigate actual connections between colonial institutions and family arrangements. Such a study would require evidence and scholarship beyond structural resemblance. Quotation marks around colonial terminology would not substitute for that work.

9 Evidential Requirements and Research Design

This section specifies the evidence needed to apply the framework and outlines empirical designs that could challenge it. It separates factual reconstruction from normative judgment. The objective is to make the account answerable to cases that support, complicate, or undermine its distinctions.

9.1 Factual Reconstruction and Competing Accounts

An application should identify the transaction, the relevant domain of control, transfer conditions, material consequences, and the information reasonably available to each participant. Evidence may include descriptions of actual refusal, revisions to arrangements, accepted project terms, or independent records of decision authority. Formal transfers and affectionate descriptions alone provide limited access to the underlying relations.

The reconstruction should distinguish what is reported, corroborated, inferred, and disputed. A recipient's account is important evidence and should be evaluated without prejudicial assumptions about dependence. An allegation also requires appropriate evidential care when attributing specific conduct to another person. These commitments support fair inquiry rather than an automatic priority for a controller's or an outsider's interpretation.

Rival explanations include voluntary support, disagreement about fair contributions, mistaken expectations, external scarcity, a change in support needs, and interference by a nonfamilial actor. Evidence that the recipient can refuse or revise arrangements without disproportionate penalties is especially relevant to the capture classification. Evidence that a contributor assumed authority exceeding the transaction's terms is relevant to the legitimacy of the contributor's complaint.

9.2 Comparative Designs and Normative Tests

A comparative qualitative study could examine similar resource flows under different conditions of refusal, disclosure, and control. The sampling frame should include supportive interdependence and cases in which third-party expectations themselves become intrusive. Such cases are necessary to evaluate the framework's boundaries.

Matched vignettes could hold a transfer amount constant while varying whether it is a gift, earned compensation, or a joint-project contribution. Further variations could concern coercion, knowledge, accepted undertakings, and the uses of transferred resources. Participant judgments might reveal ambiguities in the proposed distinctions. Those judgments would describe evaluative responses and would not establish the moral validity of the framework by themselves.

Longitudinal evidence would be required to evaluate the further claim that captured resources reinforce control. A study should trace changes in control instruments and usable capacity, while assessing common causes and voluntary responses. The normative argument about a project-related wrong can survive even if the dynamic feedback is absent. Keeping those questions separate reduces the temptation to select evidence for an unnecessarily comprehensive account.

9.3 Confidentiality and Interpretive Authority

Research on hidden control can create pressure for disclosure. The information needed for a justified decision should be distinguished from information that merely satisfies curiosity or suspicion. A project may need to establish who can access its confidential records without requiring a full family history. A contributor may choose a more robust transaction design without learning the intimate reasons for a recipient's preferences.

The recipient's privacy and interpretive authority remain central. Investigators should avoid identifiable composites assembled from distinctive events and should clearly distinguish constructed examples from empirical accounts. A person should be able to disagree with the researcher's characterization without that disagreement being treated as confirming control. These conditions are part of the quality of the inquiry, as well as its ethical basis.

10 Discussion and Implications

This section evaluates the framework's contributions and remaining burdens. It relates the recipient and contributor analyses, assesses the risks of overextension, and identifies limited implications for institu-

tional design. A complete program of remedies remains outside the paper's scope.

The main contribution is a set of distinctions that prevents two errors. An analysis focused only on the visible transaction can miss effective control exercised through the recipient. An analysis focused only on the hidden controller can assign the contributor authority that the transaction never justified. The framework addresses both by requiring a specific account of control and a separate justification for each asserted interest.

The recipient's and contributor's complaints can diverge. A person may face serious coercion in the use of earned income while the employer has received the agreed performance and possesses no independent claim about that spending. A collaborator may suffer wrongful project interference while the recipient receives an overall material benefit. The normative analysis should therefore preserve distinct claims and consider their interactions without treating them as interchangeable indicators.

The treatment of adverse conversion carries a remaining philosophical burden. A contributor's interest in avoiding participation in coercion is plausible, but its scope can be overstated. Causal chains are extensive, and contributors routinely accept uncertainty. The strongest cases involve strategic exploitation of participation or interference with an independently justified undertaking. More diffuse cases may support institutional reform or practical caution while leaving an individual complaint unsettled. The framework deliberately retains that indeterminacy.

An outside supporter can also become a controlling actor. Requirements that condition assistance on extensive monitoring or compliance with the supporter's preferred life plan can narrow the recipient's agency. The legitimacy of assistance should therefore be assessed using the same standards applied to family power: purpose, scope, revision, proportionality, and accountability. Good intentions do not eliminate the need for that assessment.

Institutional implications concern the conditions under which individuals can make and revise arrangements. Transaction design can sometimes clarify project-related authority, protect confidentiality, or provide channels of support that the recipient can choose and control. Information duties should be material to the transaction and proportionate to competing interests. Additional transparency can also impose costs or shift control to another actor, so disclosure cannot function as a universal remedy.

The framework supplies no general recommendation to withdraw resources. A contribution can sustain essential care and increase the recipient's opportunities even when part is captured. Whether a different arrangement would improve the situation depends on its effects, feasible alternatives, and the recipient's priorities. Normative recognition of a contributor's interest should support justified decisions about participation while preserving the recipient's standing as an equal source of reasons.

11 Conclusion

This section states the resulting account of hidden control and its limits. A contribution can enter a familial relationship in which another actor directs decisions, captures benefits, or maintains control through those benefits. The configuration creates an important problem of agency and information, but its normative significance depends on the conditions of control and the character of the transaction.

The recipient's exposure to domination must be assessed independently of the contributor's expectations. A contributor has a stronger ground of complaint where hidden control materially interferes with an agreed project, exploits justified reliance, or strategically recruits participation into an independently wrongful process. Ordinary uncertainty about an unconditional gift or the use of earned wages is insufficient. Jurisprudential distinctions clarify the relevant claims, powers, and limits, while responsibility analysis accounts for coercion and unequal opportunities to act.

The colonial comparison provides a limited set of questions and requires historical restraint. The underlying normative argument rests on agency, fair relations, and justified authority. Its empirical development should preserve competing accounts, confidentiality, and the possibility that close interdependence supports the recipient's own chosen future.

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