ORIGINAL ARTICLE

From stress to resistance: Challenging the capitalist underpinnings of mental unhealth in work and organizations

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Abstract

The worldwide spread of work-related mental unhealth suggests that this is a major problem affecting organizations and employees on a global scale. In this paper, we therefore provide a thematic review of the literatures that address this issue in management and organization studies (MOS) and related fields. While these literatures examine how employee mental health is affected by organizational and occupational structures and managed by organizations and employees, they have paid relatively little attention to the capitalist labour relations which underpin the unhealthy conditions of contemporary working life. They have paid even less attention to how these conditions may be resisted. To help future scholarship in MOS challenge this state of affairs, we draw on some of the most basic but central notions of exploitation, alienation and resistance in classic and current critiques of capitalism, optimistic that this may help strengthen the field's capacity to confront mental unhealth in settings of work and organization.

INTRODUCTION

Even before the increase in work-related strains set off by the COVID-19 pandemic (see e.g., Ballard et al., 2020; Kniffin et al., 2021) it has been evident that mental health problems such as stress, depression and anxiety carry severe costs for employers and governments as well as for individual employees across the world. Though difficult to draw a clear boundary between mental and physical health (e.g., Ohrnberger et al., 2017; World Health Organization, 2004), it is estimated that 40% of all disabilities in work organizations worldwide involve mental health problems (Mental Health Foundation, 2019), and it has been argued that mental illness and unwellness is threatening to become a major disability affecting work organizations on a global

scale (World Health Organization, 2018). In the European Union work-related depression alone costs employers, health care systems and the economy nearly 620 billion euros per year (Matrix Insight, 2013). In Great Britain 15.8 million working days were lost due to work-related stress, depression or anxiety in 2016 (Office for National Statistics, 2017) costing employers 7.9 billion pounds (Deloitte, 2017), while in the United States the cost of presenteeism due to depression has been estimated at more than 35 billion dollars per year (Stewart et al., 2003). In Japan, 96 deaths from heart or brain failure in 2015 were ascribed to stress-related exhaustion from overwork (*karoshi*) whereas 2159 suicides were attributed to depression caused by overwork (*karojisatsu*) (Ministry on Health, Labour and Welfare, 2017). At the same time, it has been estimated that in the US

work-related stress causes as many as 120 000 deaths per year (Goh et al., 2015).

Stress, depression and anxiety is part and parcel of our daily working lives, and for many sufferers their mental health and wellbeing is negatively affected by work-related factors, including strong pressures to perform and deliver on time (Chartered Institute of Personnel Development, 2018). Even when experiencing high job satisfaction some employees experience stress, anxiety and depression to such an extent that it makes them unwell (e.g., Ganster & Rosen, 2013; Kluger et al., 2003; Michel 2011; The Health and Safety Executive, 2019; Trogólo et al., 2020).

While this may suggest that mental health is poorly managed in many work organizations (Donaldson-Feilder & Lewis, 2016; Goh et al., 2015; Nielsen et al., 2019), mental health issues are receiving significant attention from employers through stress management programmes and other workplace interventions (see e.g., Tetrick & Winslow, 2015; The Stevenson-Farmer Review, 2017). Beyond their aim of improving lives for individual employees, such initiatives often emphasise the economic benefits to employers and organizations. According to one study, the improved management of mental health in the workplace may help employers save at least 30% of the costs of sickness absenteeism, staff turnover and lost production (Milligan-Saville et al., 2017). However, it has also been pointed out that in many countries workplace intervention efforts aimed to improve mental health are poorly implemented (Biron et al., 2010) and undermined by a prevailing culture that expects employees to work excessively long hours (e.g., Financial Times 2019; Pfeffer 2018; Wada et al., 2019).

Given the widespread awareness around work-related mental unhealth it should be little surprise that this has attracted considerable attention in management and organization studies (MOS) and related fields. Firstly, there is a long history of *structuralist* research in MOS, occupational medicine, psychology and sociology investigating how employee mental health is affected by occupational, organizational and socio-economic factors such as work load, job autonomy and job insecurity (e.g., Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Karasek, 1979; Landsbergis, 1988). Secondly, there is a *functionalist* literature in MOS, psychology and medicine, which offers recommendations for managing and improving work-related mental health much based on the assumption that good employee mental health is central to organizational performance (e.g., Hart & Cooper, 2001; Hargrove et al., 2015). Thirdly, there is a *critical* literature in MOS, which primarily has examined the paradoxical ways in which stress and other work-related mental health problems are managed in relation to prevailing norms of a neoliberal discourse privileging individual responsibility, choice and self-management (e.g.,

Karjalainen et al., 2021; Newton, 1995; Pedersen, 2008; Maravelias, 2015).

Yet on the whole these literatures have shown limited interest in how our mental health is affected by the political and economic relations which shape the organizational conditions of everyday working life. The *structuralist* literature provides important knowledge about the occupational, organizational and socio-economic conditions that cause mental health problems for employees, but only rarely appreciates how this is related to the specific pressures of working life under contemporary capitalism. The *functionalist* literature devises managerial and individualistic solutions for promoting mental health and wellness at work but without recognizing how this largely addresses the symptoms of poor mental health rather than the political, economic and organizational conditions which contribute to mental unhealth in the first place. The *critical* literature has interrogated prevailing stress management approaches and other efforts to manage mental health at work, but little of it shows how such approaches are embedded within capitalist labour relations driven by profit maximization and characterised by the exploitation and alienation of employees. Thus, few of its contributions recognise how mental unhealth is related to capital's exploitation of labour in the pursuit of profit. Across the three literatures, even less interest has been shown in the possibilities of resisting capitalism's exploitative, alienating and unhealthy working conditions.

In this paper, we first conduct a thematic review of these literatures within MOS as well as in occupational medicine, psychology and sociology. Based on our review, we urge future MOS research to do more to explore how the unhealthy working conditions of contemporary capitalism may be resisted. To begin to articulate how this may be achieved, we will utilise some of the arguably most basic but central notions of exploitation, alienation and resistance in Marx, Engels and current critiques of capitalism in MOS and related fields. This makes it possible to grasp the mechanisms that enable the exploitation and alienation of employees in the first place before we discuss how capitalism's unhealthy working conditions may be resisted and replaced by healthier alternatives. While a separate review of these latter literatures is beyond the scope of this paper, we are aware that some studies on employment relations recognise that the exploitative and alienating working conditions of capitalist labour relations are associated with stress, burnout and mental unhealth (e.g., Bain & Taylor, 2000; Baldry et al., 2007; Stewart et al., 2009). Some of them have also drawn attention to employee and union resistance against such working conditions (e.g., Doellgast et al., 2020; Stewart et al., 2009; Taylor & Bain, 1999). However, we note that mental unhealth as such tends to be a tangential concern in these studies.

Rather than claiming to launch an entirely new research topic, we call for a refocusing of future MOS scholarship to more closely investigate how the mental health problems of capitalist labour relations may be resisted and contested. Doing so, students of mental unhealth within MOS may find it useful to engage with other areas of MOS, which offer key insights into the problems and possibilities of resisting capitalist labour relations. Whereas previous studies of employment relations help us understand how mental unhealth may be confronted within capitalist production regimes, research on alternative organization help us envisage healthier alternatives beyond such settings. Together, insights from these areas help us articulate a broad agenda encouraging future MOS scholarship to examine how resistance against work-related mental unhealth may be exercised in different parts of organizational life: within and beyond capitalist labour relations, across micro and macro settings, by individuals and collectives using informal tactics and formal strategies.

While expert commentators on Marxism and the capitalist labour process may object to our eclectic approach, what we are attempting here is neither a contribution to Marxist scholarship in MOS nor a fully-fledged programme for systematic theory development. Instead, we hope to offer a vantage point for further exploration and engagement which may inspire and strengthen the capacity of future MOS scholarship to confront mental unhealth in work and organization. Before we review the structuralist, functionalist and critical literatures identified above, let us discuss the methodological practices we used when searching for, selecting and reviewing significant contributions in these literatures.

METHOD

We both came to this research topic with prior knowledge of some of the relevant literatures. One of us had conducted their doctoral thesis on employee identity and mental health conditions in work and organizations. The other had done research on employer and government efforts to promote physical health and wellbeing among employees and citizens. As we suspected that much of the relevant research in this area is published in academic journals, we started by doing a comprehensive literature search using the search engine Web of Science. Recognizing that the topic of work-related mental unhealth is associated with a number of different keywords, we conducted four different searches employing the following search terms: 'mental health at work' (15 146 hits), 'employee stress' (10 066 hits), 'burnout from work' (7788 hits), and 'depression among employees' (1001 hits). In addition, we did six specific searches combining the terms employee 'absen-

teeism', 'presenteeism', 'stress', 'depression' and 'burnout' (1090 hits).

Because of the overwhelming number of hits generated by this process, we proceeded with a purposive sampling method whereby we scanned the 100 most highly cited article titles and abstracts for each search term (500 in total). Through this procedure we identified 279 unique relevant texts, which we then reviewed more closely by identifying their main findings, contributions and arguments. The other 221 hits of the 500 were dropped, either because they showed up in more than one search or because scanning their abstracts made us realise that they were not relevant for our review. We further expanded our sample by identifying more than 50 other unique texts, which were referenced and highlighted by texts within our first selection of articles (cp. Seeck et al., 2019).

However, our previous knowledge of the field made us realise that a number of significant texts failed to appear in this systematic search attempt, especially books, book chapters and articles not published or referenced in the most highly ranked journals. Using the advanced search function in Google Scholar, we therefore complemented our initial search with a more targeted but ad-hoc search for articles, books and book chapters on more specific subtopics and by specific authors we already knew or suspected said something interesting and important about mental unhealth in work and organizations. Doing so, we combined the above search terms with and without author names as well as with additional search terms such as 'overwork', 'performance', 'flexibility' and 'stress management'. Through this process we identified roughly 200 articles, books and book chapters. This time, and based on the significance, quality and originality of their contributions, we selected approximately 100 texts for closer review. We further expanded our sample by identifying more than 50 other texts which were referenced and highlighted by texts within this batch of 100 texts. Since Google Scholar has a tendency to generate results of variable quality, we did not include texts that we suspected were published in so-called predatory journals and other dubious outlets (see e.g., Stop Predatory Journals, undated).

Evaluating the significance, quality and originality of individual texts necessarily involves an element of subjective judgment, especially when concerned with thematic content rather than bibliographic impact or statistical significance. Although we did our best to privilege pioneering work which we thought said something new or different, we admit a preference for texts we thought offered distinct findings, clear concepts or models, well-crafted arguments, or lucid illustrations of what we came to view as major themes in the literature. And while our search for contributions by well-known names suggests an initial bias towards established authors, their work only ended up being

TABLE 1   Number of texts referenced per publication type

Journal articles	146
Books	22
Book chapters	11
Total	179

TABLE 2   Number of texts referenced per decade

1900–1909	1
1910–1919	0
1920–1929	0
1930–1939	2
1940–1949	0
1950–1959	2
1960–1969	2
1970–1979	8
1980–1989	9
1990–1999	19
2000–2009	57
2010–2019	56
2020–2021	23
Total	179

referenced if we found that it said something interesting, important or particularly illustrative. Conversely, we tended to deselect texts that failed to say something new or different, were poorly crafted, or did not help us meaningfully illustrate key concerns in the literature. Our literature search was not time-bound, and our earliest relevant text was published in 1908. However, we also made a separate ad-hoc search effort using Web of Science and Google Scholar to identify significant contributions from the last couple of years. Through this stage of the process we identified more than 160 relevant texts published between 2019 and 2021.

At the end of our search process, we had reviewed a total of approximately 700 texts in MOS, medicine, psychology and sociology. Although this fuzzy sample is by no means an exhaustive or perfect representation of the massive literature on work-related mental unhealth, it includes a variety of significant studies from different scholarly traditions. As indicated above, we read and reviewed these texts thematically while evaluating the quality of their main argument, the significance of their findings and the originality of their contribution. This generated a final number of 179 texts across these fields that warranted explicit referencing or discussion in the review sections of our paper (see Table 1 for an overview of texts per publication type, Table 2 for texts per decade, and Table 3 for a list of journals with most articles referenced).

On this basis we were able to identify common and contradictory themes across the literature. Despite a shared concern that mental unhealth is a major problem affecting employees and work organizations, three distinct themes emerged through our review, enabling us to classify the 179 texts we referenced according to one of the following three strands of literature: 'structuralist', 'functionalist', and 'critical'. These categories arose both from our engagement with the literature, and from our prior knowledge of scholarly paradigms within and beyond MOS (e.g., Alvesson & Willmott, 1992; Alvesson et al., 2009; Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Somewhat simplified, we ended up adopting the following broad category definitions during this process: texts tending to trace the sources of mental unhealth in working conditions were classified as 'structuralist'; texts primarily offering organizations and individuals solutions to cope with, manage and improve mental health were deemed 'functionalist'; texts seeking to challenge established discourses and practices of managing work and mental health were labelled 'critical'. In cases where a text included contributions speaking to more than one strand of literature, we classified it according to its most prevailing argument (see Table 4 for an overview of texts referenced per perspective, and Table 5 for a summary of the three perspectives as well as our suggestions for future research). From this thematic review, we were also able to identify two common shortcomings across these three strands of literature: (i) their limited attention to the capitalist underpinnings of work-related mental unhealth, and (ii) their limited efforts to explore the possibilities of resisting capitalism's exploitative, alienating and unhealthy working conditions.

Before moving on we should acknowledge that our search and review process was less linear and benefited more from external input than we have implied thus far. One reviewer helped us reduce an initial bias towards highly cited articles in top journals by encouraging us to look specifically for relevant work published during the past couple of years. Later on, another reviewer suggested new search terms that helped us identify relevant texts that were missed by our first search efforts. Although we had sought to identify blind spots in our initial problematisation of the extant literature by running additional ad-hoc searches for studies examining resistance to exploitation, alienation and mental unhealth in capitalist labour relations, this enabled us to identify interesting work in the MOS literature on employment relations. While these texts helped us elaborate our suggestions for future research, their tangential concern with mental unhealth as such meant that they did not invalidate our initial criticism of the existing literature on mental unhealth.

TABLE 3   The 9 most highly cited journals

Occupational and Environmental Medicine	6
Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment and Health	6
Journal of Occupational Health Psychology	5
International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health	4
International Journal of Stress Management	4
Journal of Organizational Behaviour	4
Organization	4
Stress and Health	4
Work and Stress	4
Total	41

TABLE 4   Number of texts referenced per perspective

Structuralist	87
Functionalist	74
Critical	18
Total	179

Structural sources of mental unhealth in work and organizations

As indicated above, there is a vast literature in MOS, occupational medicine, psychology and sociology dealing with the structural sources of mental unhealth in work and organizations. Research in this area is particularly concerned with how stress and other mental health problems are related to occupational, organizational and socio-economic factors, such as work load and work arrangements, performance expectations and job autonomy, organizational change, job insecurity and unemployment. Indeed, in his seminal study of Detroit auto factory

workers, Kornhauser (1965) found that their mental health was affected by a number of occupational factors, including income, pace and repetitiveness, relations with supervisors, opportunities for advancement, and the 'opportunity the work offers … to use the worker's abilities' (263).

Work-related stress is often reported as a main condition of mental unhealth and unwellness in organizational life, and a number of studies show how excessive stress has negative effects on employees' mental and physical health. Stress has been found to spur anxiety and panic attacks during work and outside working hours (e.g., de Jonge et al., 2000; Kim et al., 2020b; Murphy, 2010), it has been associated with heart disease, brain disease, insomnia, metabolic problems and muscular and skeletal pain (e.g., Chandola et al., 2006; Kanai, 2006; Kim et al., 2020b; Kivimäki et al., 2006; Rugulies et al., 2020; Schnall et al., 2000; Taouk et al., 2020; Theorell & Karasek, 1996), and it has been identified as a possible source of depression, death and suicide (e.g., Amagasa et al., 2005; Araki & Iwasaki, 2005; Goh et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2020a;

TABLE 5   Summary of perspectives and future research agenda

Perspective	Concerns	Explanations	Concepts	Findings/Aims
Structuralist	Organizational and occupational sources of mental unhealth	Environmental	Job demands, autonomy, support and rewards	Work load, performance expectations and job insecurity may cause mental unhealth
Functionalist	Improving mental health and organizational performance	Individual and organizational	Stress management, coping, eustress	Best practice tools and techniques
Critical	Interrogating the neoliberal management of mental health	Discursive	Employee subjectivity and self-management	Paradoxes and unintended consequences
Future	Challenging capitalism's unhealthy working conditions	Political and economic	Exploitation, alienation, resistance	Investigate resistance against mental unhealth within capitalist labour relations, and explore healthy alternatives beyond

Milner et al., 2018; Pfeffer 2018; Virtanen et al., 2018; Woo & Postolache, 2008; Yamauchi et al., 2017).

In one of the most significant contributions to this area, Karasek (1979) concluded that the stress experienced by employees may depend upon a combination of individual workload and job autonomy. Widely referred to as the 'Demand–Control Model' (e.g., Landsbergis, 1988; Muntaner & O'Campo, 1993), Karasek suggested that employee stress levels are affected by the demands and expectations of the job and the level of control and autonomy individuals feel they have over those demands. In fact, studies utilizing or testing the model have shown that employees with low job control or high work expectations run a higher risk of cardiovascular, gastrointestinal and musculoskeletal disorders brought on by stress (e.g., Jensen et al., 2020; Kivimäki et al., 2006; LaCroix & Haynes, 1984; Schnall et al., 2000; Theorell & Karasek, 1996). Further studies have shown that similar working conditions lead to increased risks of workaholism, depression and suicide (e.g., Amagasa et al., 2005; Madsen et al., 2017; Tsutsumi et al., 2001).

Related research in this literature has proposed alternative models for understanding the relationship between employee mental health and the work environment. According to the 'Effort-Reward Imbalance Model' (Siegrist, 1996), employees are likely to suffer from higher stress levels if their work is characterised by high work pressure but low rewards and low status controls such as job insecurity and lacking promotion prospects. Again, studies utilising or testing this model have found heightened risks of coronary heart disease and depression among employees whose work is characterised by high effort, low reward and low control (e.g., Dragano et al., 2017; Kivimäki et al., 2006; Rugulies et al., 2017).

In a similar vein, the 'Job Demands–Resources Model of Burnout' (Demerouti et al., 2001) suggests that high or unfavourable job demands are positively related to exhaustion and burnout but that job resources such as autonomy, skill variety, performance feedback and opportunities for growth are negatively related to job disengagement and burnout (see also Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Hakanen et al., 2008). At the same time, the relationship between job satisfaction and burnout remains contested. While the prevailing view is that job satisfaction and engagement are relative or absolute opposites of stress and burnout (Cooper et al., 1989; Landsbergis, 1988; Leon et al., 2015; Langseth-Eide 2019; Maslach et al., 2001), some studies have found high levels of stress and burnout among employees with high job satisfaction and engagement (Onyett et al. 1997; Kluger et al., 2003; Rothmann, 2008; see also Michel, 2011; Trogólo et al., 2020). Indeed, Freudenberger (1974), who coined the term 'burnout', hypothesised that employees with high people exposure and a strong sense of care and

commitment to their clients run a higher risk of burning out from work.

Over the years, more specific connections have been identified between stress, workload and performance norms. While the performance appraisal process as such may trigger stress (Brown & Benson, 2003), high performance expectations are a significant source of stress for employees at work and off work (e.g., Hammer et al., 2004; Jensen et al., 2013; Mazzola & Disselhorst, 2019; Noblet et al., 2006; Topcic et al., 2016; Wada et al., 2019; Yeh et al., 2009). For instance, studies of Lean Production systems, where performance standards typically are high, have found that the speed, monotony and understaffing of work in such organizations leads to increased workloads and an intensification of work which causes stress and in some cases suicides and deaths (Nishiyama & Johnson, 1997; see also Stewart et al., 2009). Moreover, as high performance expectations tend to make people work longer hours and weekends, they are likely to experience more stress when work spills into their family life and social life (Crompton & Lyonette, 2006; Gupta & Srivastava, 2020).

A similar connection has been found between stress and flexibility. While flexible work schemes are sometimes considered beneficial for organizations and for employees, they are part and parcel of many performance cultures and may disrupt work-life balance and increase stress by reinforcing the pressure on individual employees to manage their time off work as well as their work-time (Anderson-Connolly et al., 2002; Dewe & Kompier, 2010; see also Carter et al., 2011). More recently, growing expectations on employees to multitask and be available by email has been associated with increased stress levels (Barley et al., 2011; Wetherell & Carter, 2014).

The experience of insecurity associated with organizational change, restructuring and transformation is yet another significant source of stress, anxiety, depression and overall un-wellness (Bernhard-Oettel et al., 2020; Frone & Blais, 2020). For example, studies have reported that employees may be concerned about their ability to use new technology effectively, but also worry that excessive use may lead to reduced social interaction (Chapman & Webster, 2003; Golden et al., 2008). At the same time, commentators have suggested that the move away from an economy based on manufacturing to one based on service delivery and knowledge work is a source of general stress, anxiety, and burnout (Brinkley, 2007; Coyle & Quah, 2002; Dewe & Kompier, 2010).

Stress, anxiety and depression is particularly prevalent in times of economic austerity and downsizing as more people are likely to face precarious working conditions, job insecurity and unemployment (e.g., Åkerstedt et al., 2002; Stansfeld et al., 1999; Mamun et al., 2020; Peppou et al., 2020; Tsutsumi et al., 2001). Job insecurity may increase

sickness absenteeism and presenteeism related to stress (Caverly et al., 2007; Kim et al., 2020) as well as death and suicide from increased workaholism and overwork, partly because, fearing for their jobs, employees drive themselves to express excessive commitment to work in order to meet or exceed performance expectations (Kanai & Wakabayashi, 2001).

Finally, research within this literature has found connections between employee mental unhealth and the social work environment. According to some studies, poor leadership and people management may cause stress at work independently of job demands and autonomy especially if leadership is highly task-oriented or lacking (Westerlund et al., 2010; see also Nyberg et al., 2008; Walsh & Arnold, 2020). It has also been argued that team based work and production systems may increase employee stress (Braithwaite et al., 2007; Cruz & Pil, 2011; Ogbonnaya, 2019) because of peer pressure as well as increased communication levels (Kalleberg et al., 2009).

On the whole, the large-scale surveys and meta-analyses that dominate the structuralist literature have made important contributions to our understanding of the impact that occupational, organizational and socio-economic structures have on employee mental health. However, it also bears some affinities with parts of the functionalist and critical literatures which we will review next, and with our own concern with capitalism's unhealthy working conditions.

For one, Karasek highlights his findings' implications for job redesign, arguing that productivity and 'job-related mental health' (1979, p. 303) could be increased through job redesign, that is, by increasing workers' autonomy to decide what tasks to do and how to accomplish them (1979, 1989). Furthermore, his 'Demand–Control Model' has been extended into a 'Demand–Control (Support) Model', which argues that social support from colleagues may significantly help reduce stress (e.g., Dawson et al., 2016; Jalilian et al., 2019; Johnson & Hall, 1988; Karasek & Theorell, 1990; Kristensen, 1995; Luchman & Gonzales-Morales, 2013; Theorell, 2020).

At the same time, Karasek and others have pointed to some of the political implications of job redesign, recognising that stress and other mental health problems are related to capitalist forms of organization characterised by alienating working conditions. While control over the work process may have a direct impact on alienation and powerlessness (Kohn, 1976; Ross & Sastry, 1999), a key finding is that mental unhealth is a matter of class inequality (Karasek, 1989; Marmot & Theorell, 1988) as workers in low status jobs with high demands but low autonomy are 'most subject to job strain' (Karasek, 1979: 303). Hence, collective control strategies of social support and solidarity have been deemed crucial in coping with the 'stress-ful demands and pressures of modern production systems' (Johnson, 1989, p. 475) and reverting the social isolation resulting from Tayloristic and Lean efforts to decollectivise the industrial workplace through piece-rate payment systems and socially engineered teams (Nishiyama & Johnson, 1997). While these concerns strike a chord with the aims of our paper, they remain marginal in the structuralist literature, and more can be done to investigate how capitalism's unhealthy working conditions may be resisted. Let us now turn to the functionalist literature in MOS, occupational medicine and psychology.

Functionalist efforts to improve mental health and organizational performance

Although the functionalist literature acknowledges how stress and other mental health problems may have a negative impact on employee wellbeing and organizational performance (e.g., Ganster et al., 2011; Ganster & Rosen, 2013; Hart & Cooper, 2001; Milligan et al., 2017), it is mainly concerned with the management and improvement of employee mental health, not least because this is seen to have positive effects on organizational performance (e.g., Pijpker et al., 2020; Wijnen et al., 2020). Stress management is a dominant issue within this literature (see e.g., Di Fabio 2017; Grawitch et al., 2015; He et al., 2019; Quick & Henderson, 2016; Quick et al., 1992, 1997; Tetrick & Winslow, 2015; Smith et al., 2020), which includes a sustained effort to develop approaches and models supporting managers, employees and organizations in managing stress. One prominent model in this respect is Hart and Cooper's (2001) 'Organizational Health Framework', whose authors are concerned to develop structures and processes to reduce employee stress and increase job satisfaction, wellbeing and performance by managing individual and organizational characteristics, from stressors in the organizational climate to individual coping mechanisms and emotional experiences. On their view, just like 'an efficient and productive organization is of little value if this is achieved at the expense of employee well-being', 'having happy and satisfied employees is of little value to an organization unless employees are also performing efficiently and productively' (Hart & Cooper, 2001, p. 99).

As this model indicates, the functionalist literature shifts the underlying assumptions about the sources of work-related stress and how it may be managed. Stress is not just produced by factors in the work environment but an outcome of individual experiences and coping practices as well as environmental stressors. Since stress is seen to result from an imbalance between perceived demands and an individual's ability to cope (Lazarus, 1966, 1999), how people appraise and cope with stressors affects how

much stress they will experience (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Whereas some coping practices may help people reduce stress, others may reinforce stress (Cooper & Marshall, 1975; Hart & Cooper, 2001; Latack & Havlovic, 1992).

Indeed, the combination of environmental and individual factors was emphasised by 'the father of stress' Hans Selye (1956, 1974, 1976), who first used the term in 1935 to describe how the placenta of female rats are affected by starvation (Selye & McKeown, 1935) and the following year defined stress as the body's general, non-specified and adaptive response to any change (Selye, 1936). Defining stress as a combination of individual and contextual factors changes the parameters for managing stress, and later studies in this literature have suggested that individual resilience (Cooper et al., 2013; Vander Elst et al., 2019) as well as good leadership and working conditions, positive organizational culture, emotional regulation and strong relationships with co-workers may act as a buffer against stress and hence improve mental wellbeing (e.g., Donaldson-Feilder & Lewis, 2016; Extremera et al., 2020; Michie 2002).

By emphasising how certain individual experiences coincide with circumstances in the individual's environment, stress is conceived as a personal experience which may extend beyond the presence of objective stress factors (Warr, 2007) and into the individual's interpretation of the situation (Kim & Beehr, 2020; Ursin & Eriksen, 2004). This means that an individual's feelings of stress and wellbeing are affected by situational demands which exceed the 'stress threshold' experienced by the individual (Lazarus, 1966, 1999; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) such as the onset and offset of job tension, workplace engagement, work-family conflict and other stressful events (Hochwarter et al., 2007; Pieper & Brosschot, 2005). In such situations, an individual with feelings of reduced cognitive energy, exhaustion (Le Fevre et al., 2006) and insufficient resources for coping with the demands of a situation will therefore feel stressed (Akirmak & Ajla, 2021; Cooper et al., 2001; Hobfoll, 1989, 2001).

On this view, it becomes important to equip people with coping strategies to help them self-regulate, deal with and recover from stress and burnout (Halbesleben, 2006; Siegrist, 2001). For instance, it has been argued that stress can both be relieved by taking regular breaks or leave from work (Cartwright & Cooper, 1997; Hatchard, 2008; Hargreaves et al., 2020; St-Arnaud et al., 2007) and through increased physical activity (Fang et al., 2019; Rook & Zijlstra, 2006). It has also been suggested that organizational productivity, goal achievement (Hochwarter et al., 2007) and mental wellbeing can be enhanced through employee engagement (Hatchard, 2008; Tse, 2004) and through mentoring, coaching, mindfulness training and

stress management techniques (e.g., Dane, 2011; Lungu et al., 2020; Watanabe et al., 2019; Wong et al., 2017).

However, an additional feature of this literature is its concern with 'eustress', or good stress, yet another topic pioneered by Selye, who coined and defined the term as distinct from distress (1975a, p. 37; 1975b, p. 9). While Selye argued that 'stress is not something that necessarily should be avoided' because 'complete freedom from stress is death!' (1976, p. 137), more recent contributions tend to define eustress as the positive aspects and effects of stress which 'can leave employees invigorated, motivated and productive' (e.g., Nelson & Simmons 2003, p. 55–56) and enhance individual performance without impairing wellbeing (Nelson et al., 2008; Simmons et al., 2001; see also Arnetz, 2005; Hargrove et al., 2015; Quick et al., 1997, 2003; Quinones et al., 2017).

In contrast to the negative effects that distress has on performance (e.g., Ford et al., 201; Lazarus et al., 1952), eustress has been deemed 'essential to growth, development, and mastery as well as to achieving high levels of performance in a wide range of tasks and activities' (Quick et al., 2003, p. 53). According to one of the relatively few empirical studies in this area, nurses who found meaning and hope in their demanding jobs by actively engaging, experienced eustress as well as wellbeing at work (Simmons et al., 2001). As a result, people and organizations are not just recommended to cope with stress but encouraged to 'savor' eustress (Nelson & Simmons, 2003, 2011).

Such ideas have come to shape how this literature pursues the promotion of employee mental health, wellbeing and performance (see, e.g., Kinder et al., 2008). It is typically assumed that leaders play a key part in such efforts, not just by creating buffers against negative stressors but also by acting as role models and culture creators with a unique capacity to communicate 'that workers belong … and contribute to [the] greater good' (Quick et al., 2014, p. 15).

Some of these contributions further assume that there is a best way to design eustress initiatives and that one should do so for the 'greatest organizational benefit' (Quick et al., 2007, p. 190). One such model suggests that HR professionals should work to maximise employee eustress through a variety of interventions; by helping generate positive challenge stressors through increasing work pace, work load, job complexity and other occupational factors, and by helping select best practice wellness programmes, work arrangements and performance management practices such as coaching and flexible scheduling, performance appraisal schemes, employee compensation schemes and career management tools (Hargrove et al., 2015). Furthermore, it has been argued that leaders can create organizational cultures which 'give individuals the opportunity to experience … eustress' by generating hope

and establishing challenging goals, and that this is particularly important in 'difficult times' and 'during radical organizational change'. 'When people believe that their actions will lead to positive results,' the authors argue, 'they may be more willing to accept difficult challenges' (Nelson et al., 2008, p. 57).

In summary, there are numerous efforts in this functionalist literature to design and devise managerial practices and models for promoting good mental health at work. Although a number of these contributions claim that workplace intervention efforts not only work but yield good return on investment (e.g., Iijima et al., 2013; MacDonald et al., 2002; Quick et al., 2014), such efforts have been found to fail because of poor implementation, design flaws, partial commitment, and a low sense of ownership among stakeholders (Biron et al., 2010). But more importantly, this literature focuses on treating the symptoms of mental unhealth rather than resolving the political, economic and organizational conditions that cause them. Consequently, it ignores how mental health problems may be reinforced rather than relieved by measures that put more pressure on individuals to manage their own mental health. Indeed, the functionalist literature seems to express relentless optimism that mental health issues can be successfully managed by organizations and individuals, given the application of appropriate managerial practices and therapeutic techniques.

Critical interrogations of the management of mental health at work

While many critical MOS contributions have focused on the management of physical health and wellbeing in work organizations (e.g., Maravelias, 2015; Thanem, 2013; Zoller, 2003), we also identified a critical literature concerned with the management and discursive construction of stress and other mental health problems at work. These studies often question the concepts and assumptions that the functionalist literature rests on, and scrutinise the organizational strategies it promotes to help employees manage stress and mental unhealth.

Whereas the functionalist literature readily admits that coaching, counselling and workshops on stress management, mindfulness and work-life balance are aimed to increase employee commitment to work and maximise productivity, the critical literature interrogates how such efforts are part of a neo-liberal regime of self-management where employees are rendered individually responsible for making the right choices to manage stress (Holmqvist & Maravelias, 2010; Karjalainen et al., 2021; Maravelias, 2009; Pedersen, 2008). Since such initiatives aim to help employees take care of their own mental health and wellbeing

in such a way that they can be productive at work without burning out, stress and related mental health problems become a product as well as a component part of the production of the self-managing employee (Pedersen, 2008). In other words, this literature is more concerned with the paradoxical ways in which organizations seek to shape employee subjectivity than with the economic logic of profit maximisation and market competition which underpins them.

On this view, stress and burnout are not just medical and psychological phenomena but a 'mental occupation' with physical and social consequences (Dale & Burrell, 2013) that are culturally produced through prevailing norms, habits and language (Meyerson, 1994, 1998; Barley & Knight, 1992). In one of the first systematic attempts to engage critically with the discursive construction and management of stress, Newton (1995) suggests that stress management involves the 'formalization and … articulation of … tacit codes of environmental control' (72). As such, stress management not only expects employees to take responsibility for stress by relieving pressure rather than getting angry and frustrated but 'encourag[es] employees to own responsibility for individual and corporate performance' (60). For Newton, this means that the stressed subject is a politicised subject embedded in power relations at work and off work which increasingly require employees to manage their feelings and emotions, or, as a later commentator has suggested, feel good about work despite the stress (Pedersen, 2008).

As some of this literature points out, it should be little surprise that it has become normal to experience stress (Tomkins & Pritchard, 2019), or that stress and burnout have been deemed desirable in some care work professions, as a sign of employee engagement for suffering clients (Meyerson, 1994). This actualises a paradoxical relationship between the environmental sources of stress and the individual responsibility to manage stress. In an empirical study of a health management department operating within a large manufacturing company, Maravelias (2009) found that, in 'a calculated political manouvre' (199), the department's health professionals deliberately framed stress as an outcome of environmental factors because this, they assumed, made it more likely that ordinary employees would accept individual responsibility for tackling their own stress. Had health professionals framed stress as a purely individual factor, the reasoning goes, ordinary employees might have refused such responsibility in order to avoid guilt and blame.

Such efforts to craft a sense of individual responsibility without apparent individual blame does not mean that blame and guilt play no part in the stress management practices interrogated in this literature. While the

increasing pressure on employees to not only do their job with passion and commitment but manage job-related stress may add stress rather than relieve stress (Pedersen, 2008), a number of contributions have emphasised that the failure to manage stress then becomes an individual failure to self-manage and 'to deploy the most appropriate self-management technologies' (Pedersen, 2008, p. 173; see also Corbett, 2013; Maravelias et al., 2013; Bloomfield & Dale, 2015). However, it also becomes a failure at job performance since, 'to suffer from stress is, in effect, to admit one's inability to contribute adequately to the organization' (Hepburn & Brown, 2001, p. 694). And as this failure makes it difficult for the individual employee to turn down '"invit[ations]" to address their own shortcomings through expert counselling or personal improvement programmes' (p. 694), employees are further enveloped in organizational practices of self-management.

Something which complicates this is the workaholic sense in which people become addicted to work, and the ways in which employees, particularly if working in high pressure environments, may seem to willingly engage in overwork and in stressful, painful and unhealthy work practices because we come to enjoy them. For instance, a study of kitchen staff working in exclusive restaurants found that staff engaged in behaviours that are both stressful and enjoyable because of their passion for the work (Bicknell & Liefooghe, 2010). According to the authors, this passion may be so intense that it drives us into an impossible strive to fulfil what we lack but always will lack.

Furthermore, parts of the critical literature on mental unhealth have interrogated the functionalist discourse on stress management and the allegedly positive aspects of stress, which are picked up by managers in organizations and used as a way to legitimate that stress levels are not minimised but kept at an 'optimal' level. According to Corbett (2013, 2015), a major problem is that empirical studies seeking to demonstrate the existence of good stress and its positive effects on performance tend to confuse terms such as stress, distress, eustress and arousal. Another problem is that some of this functionalist research continues to endorse the scientifically dubious 'Yerkes-Dodson Law' (Yerkes & Dodson, 1908). This 'law', which is based on experiments with rats, claims an inverted U-shaped relationship between stress and performance; hence, the view is that stress levels must be optimised for optimal performance because insufficient stress leads to boredom and under-performance (see, e.g., Campbell et al., 2003; Quick et al., 1997, 2008; Nelson & Simmons, 2003). While Corbett argues that widespread 'management by stress' (Parker & Slaughter, 1995) leads to victim-blaming and bullying of those unable to perform under stress, others have implied that the increasing encroachment of work on life makes life so stressful and depressing that it may provoke employees to commit suicide. One contribution to the critical literature speculates that the sources of work-related suicide can be found in the post-industrial condition, which 'shatter[s] the boundary between the professional and the personal'; as 'We have become our jobs', 'an obvious way to end the tyranny of work might be to end ourselves' (Cederström & Fleming, 2012, p. 61).

In contrast to the critical literature's primary focus on the neo-liberal discourse of individualised stress management and employee subjectivity, a few contributions suggest that stress and other mental health problems are connected to working conditions under contemporary capitalism. A study of workplace health promotion by Maravelias et al. (2013) shows how the manufacturing firm in question made individuals increasingly responsible for managing stress and wellbeing by seeking to develop health and stress management as an employee skill central to organizational performance. But this, the authors suggest, intensified work and made employees more readily exploitable as labour power since their new skills supposedly enabled the firm to extract more value from their work. More recently, in a book length critique of the corporate mindfulness fad, Purser (2019) has argued that mindfulness offers an individualised tool of stress management and coping which helps people auto-exploit ourselves for the benefits of capital by obscuring the connections between work-related mental unhealth and the exploitative, alienating and stressful working conditions characterizing contemporary capitalism. According to Purser, mindfulness is increasingly utilised as 'a technology of distraction' which shifts attention from occupational and socio-economic sources of stress and mental unhealth by encouraging users to instead focus on themselves and be in the moment without passing judgement on their surroundings.

These two contributions have also drawn attention to some of the ways in which corporate regimes of mental health and work may be resisted. According to Maravelias et al. (2013), employees may disengage from health promotion efforts to avoid that life becomes as regimented as work. And against a capitalist political economy thriving on corporatised mindfulness tools and other stress management practices, Purser (2019) suggests that more collective and radical forms of mindfulness may be crafted to help people 'dissolve attachment to self', 'calm the mind' and 'deepen our sense of connection' so as to examine the causes and conditions of social suffering and oppression, and work with others in a common struggle to overcome alienation.

On the whole, however, the critical literature has been far more concerned with interrogating the discursive construction and neo-liberal management of mental health problems at work than recognizing how the massive

spread of work-related stress, depression and mental unhealth is connected to the exploitative and alienating nature of work within capitalist labour relations or exploring how such working conditions may be resisted. Despite its otherwise critical agenda, then, it has so far made little more progress on these issues than the structuralist and functionalist literatures. It is on this basis we call for a refocusing of MOS scholarship on mental unhealth.

Interestingly, the stressful and unhealthy effects of work in capitalist production regimes have been more widely acknowledged in MOS research on employment relations, which some of its contributions have described as instrumental, exploitative and unfulfilling, as physically exhausting, mentally debasing and alienating (Baldry et al., 2007; see also, e.g., Delbridge et al., 1992; Stewart et al., 2009). Moreover, research in this area offers important insights into a variety of resistance practices exercised by individuals and collectives against work-related mental unhealth. But since this literature tends to be primarily concerned with other issues such as surveillance (Bain & Taylor, 2000; Taylor & Bain, 1999), communicative power (Doellgast et al., 2020) and the nature of work within specific production regimes (Baldry et al., 2007; Knights & McCabe, 1998; Stewart et al., 2009), we shall not deal with it further here but draw on this and other literatures when developing our suggestions for future research in the following section. As mentioned earlier, our future research agenda will be informed by key notions of exploitation, alienation and resistance in Marx and Engels as well as in MOS and related fields.

Doing so, studies on employment relations will help us articulate how mental unhealth may be confronted within capitalist labour relations and production regimes such as Lean and Just-in-Time. In contrast, recent research on alternative organization will help us envisage healthier alternatives beyond such settings. But before we begin to articulate how capitalism's unhealthy working conditions may be resisted and replaced by healthier alternatives, we need to say more about how these conditions are created in the first place.

Recognizing and resisting the capitalist underpinnings of mental unhealth in work and organizations

So, what is it about capitalism and its labour relations which creates such unhealthy working conditions? In other words, what is it that needs to be challenged and resisted? Even though many people working in the increasingly service-based and knowledge-intensive economies of contemporary capitalism may experience a complex combination of mental unhealth and wellbeing at work (see e.g.

Ganster & Rosen, 2013; Trogólo et al., 2020) rather than the blatantly depriving working conditions that Marx (1988) and Engels (1958) witnessed during the growth of industrial capitalism in the mid-19th century, capital continues to exploit labour power in the pursuit of profit. Indeed, Marx suggested that this forms the beginning of a process where our living capacity to work and labour is turned into dead labour. While labour is subjective and alive insofar as it belongs to the human labouring subject (Marx, 1988: 93; 1973: 104), under capitalism, it is objectified by capital and dies as soon as our labour power is bought as a commodity on the labour market (1973; 1976). And as capitalist firms seek to maximise profits by increasing the surplus value that can be extracted from this 'object' they have purchased, they will try to increase the productivity of labour, either by 'lengthening … the working day' or by restricting the paid labour time that workers are allowed to do the job (1976, p. 432).

While later commentators have problematised the power of capitalists to extract value from labour (e.g., Thompson, 1990), work extension and work intensification remain common features of working life under capitalism that limit how we may use our labour. This is not least evident through contributions in the structuralist literature reviewed above, which point to pervasive problems of overwork, stress and mental unhealth, both in industries characterised by intense competition between firms (see e.g. Nishiyama & Johnson, 1997; Jensen et al., 2013) but also in many parts of the public sector (e.g., Noblet et al., 2006; Wada et al., 2019; see also Chandler et al., 2002; Franco-Santos & Doherty, 2017) which find their budgets shrunk by governments privileging tax cuts and the wellbeing of capitalist firms (see e.g., Kotz, 2009; Streeck, 2014; Jessop, 2018). Across the capitalist political economy, the exploitation of labour continues through performance-related pay systems, unpaid overtime, curtailed work contracts and systematic staff shortages which subject employees to conditions where they are expected to work longer days, achieve more in the same time, or accomplish the same in less time (see, e.g., Cushen & Thompson, 2016; Findlay & Thompson, 2017; Newsome et al., 2013; Stewart et al., 2009).

This does not mean that nothing has changed since the industrial capitalism of the mid-19th century. Whereas the exploitation of labour by 19th century industrial capital was primarily pursued within factory walls, under today's capitalism increasing efforts are made to extract surplus value from labour by developing, using and exploiting a wide range of our personal traits and interests, our backgrounds, feelings and bodily appearances, off work and at work (e.g., Böhm & Land, 2012; Callaghan & Thompson, 2002; Thompson et al., 2016; Witz et al., 2003). For example, this is seen in widespread practices of emotional and aesthetic

labour in various forms of service work (e.g., Warhurst & Nickson, 2009; Thompson et al., 2016). It is also seen in the popularity of corporate cultures and leadership approaches where individual employees are encouraged and expected to generate value by setting their own goals (e.g., Maravelias, 2003), 'just being themselves' (e.g., Fleming & Sturdy, 2009) and managing their own health and well-being (e.g., Pedersen, 2008; Maravelias, 2015). When virtually all of your life is turned into a matter of work and performance to be exploited by capital, and when you are responsible not only for achieving your own performance targets but setting them, there is in principle no limit to how well you can perform, or how much you can work to improve performance, manage stress, and balance work and life. The trouble is that this tends to leave us exhausted and burned out because it creates an overwhelming sense that we can always do better, in all areas of life and work (Han, 2015).

Marx argued that the estranged and alienated labour characterizing industrial capitalism 'mortifies [the] body and ruins [the] mind' because labour then becomes a coercive and alienating activity that 'does not belong to [our] intrinsic nature' but 'belongs to another' (1988, p. 74). This, he averred, cuts us off from our essentially human capacity to engage with the world through our senses (p. 72). Thus, we do 'not feel content but unhappy' in work because '[we] feel … outside [our] work', because we do 'not develop freely [our] physical and mental energy', and because we 'deny' rather than 'affirm' ourselves through work (p. 74). Though we may be more profoundly bound up with the products we produce today than at the time of Marx (increasingly we 'are' those products like we 'are' our jobs) (e.g., Fleming, 2015), we doubt that our 'human sensuousness' and our sanity is augmented by being repeatedly expected to consider how the work we do with and on ourselves can be harnessed to make us attractive to those who might buy or simply use our labour power. Again, the prevalence of work-related stress and mental unhealth suggests that capital's expansion into evermore parts of our lives engages us in processes of hyper-exploitation rather than disalienation (Andrejevic, 2011, 2012; see also Cederström & Fleming, 2012; Beverungen et al., 2015; Thompson et al., 2016; Pitts, 2017) where we struggle to work in ways that involve 'the free play of [our] own physical and mental powers' (Marx, 1976, p. 283).

Now, if this is what we are struggling against, might we ever be able to transform our mortifying experiences into forms of resistance that may help us craft healthier ways of working and living? Engels, perhaps more clearly than Marx, offers some hope that we might. While Marx stressed that critical, revolutionary practice is itself embodied in the 'sensuous activity' that is embedded in our human nature (1970, p. 121), Engels (1958) argued that the pains

of work translate into powerful affects of solidarity, anger and revolutionary mobilisation. Though famous for his detailed observations of industrial capitalism's degrading working conditions, which he acknowledges may cause passivity among the working classes, Engels also implies that the lived experiences of the working classes may translate into powerful affects of solidarity and anger, revolutionary mobilisation and protest.

The limits and paradoxes of resistance have been widely discussed in MOS (e.g., Jermier et al., 1994; Fleming & Spicer, 2003; Contu, 2008; Alcadipani et al., 2018), and it may be difficult to envision that enough of us will transform our experiences of work-related stress, burnout and mental unhealth into effective protest and resistance which will end the mortifying working conditions of contemporary capitalism. Even if 'a majority of people [worldwide] believe capitalism in its current form is doing more harm than good' (John, 2020), it is not only people in jobs with high demands and low autonomy who are so stressed out by work that it may undermine their likelihood of being politically active (cp. Karasek, 1989; see also Trogólo et al., 2020). However, this only makes it more important to challenge the exploitative, alienating and unhealthy working conditions of contemporary capitalism, and to explore how healthier alternatives may be crafted. Like Engels, some current critics are optimistic that capitalism's mortifying working conditions harbour a potential for radical change. Not only does our living, sensuous and social human essence enable us to experience, understand and confront these conditions. Insofar as capital's expansion into our lives and subjectivities makes our work more the result of our subjective and living labour, it may become more difficult for capital and the managerial regimes of capitalist firms to objectify it (Hardt & Negri, 2000; Virno, 2004, 2007). On this view, we may find ourselves freer to resist the unhealthy working conditions of capitalist labour relations, by simply leaving them, or by engaging in civil disobedience.

While this kind of optimism and the notion of freedom that underpins it has been heavily disputed by other critics of contemporary capitalism (e.g., Thompson, 2005), the radical move from individual suffering to political struggle finds resonance in two recent critiques of the corporate and neo-liberal discourse on mental health and wellness. As mentioned above, Purser (2019) encourages us to join in a common struggle against the social injustices of capitalism by developing collective forms of mindfulness where we do not simply reflect but learn to reflect together, and act together. In a similar vein, Segal (2017) urges us to develop collective forms of joy and radical forms of happiness through spontaneous and organised action at the fringes of society by transforming personal experiences and desires into a public politics of support, solidarity

and struggle against hyper-individualism and diminished welfare.

These appeals offer interesting starting points for future MOS scholarship on mental unhealth and its resistance. But notwithstanding the power of public protest and the radical potential of reappropriating corporatised forms of self-management in a common struggle against social suffering and injustice, we believe that a broader yet more specific research agenda is needed to explore how work-related mental unhealth may be resisted within and beyond capitalist labour relations. Rather than limiting future research to issues of public protest and collective mindfulness, we would encourage future MOS scholarship to focus more closely on the possibilities of resisting the exploitative, alienating and unhealthy working conditions that many people suffer from under contemporary capitalism. This opens up at least five trajectories that may strengthen our capacity to investigate how mental unhealth may be transformed into a variety of resistance practices in different parts of organizational life: within and beyond capitalist labour relations, across micro and macro settings, by individuals and collectives using informal tactics and formal strategies.

Firstly, more research is needed to understand how unions and other collective movements challenge, resist and remove unhealthy working conditions in different occupations and industries underpinned by capitalist labour relations. Future MOS scholarship on mental unhealth may have a lot to learn from previous studies on employment relations in this respect, which offer important insights into a variety of formal strategies and informal tactics utilised by unions and worker collectives struggling to negotiate healthier conditions for employees. This may include foot-dragging, slowdowns and targeted action against authoritarian managers and supervisors (Landsbergis & Cahill, 1994), walkouts and wildcat strikes (Stewart et al., 2009) as well as legitimate strikes called during collective bargaining to refuse unhealthy production regimes. Moreover, it may include picketing, leafleting and media campaigns to generate public awareness, collaboration with research teams to build knowledge about mental unhealth at work, lobbying of politicians to create alliances for work reform, (Doellgast et al., 2020; Landsbergis & Cahill, 1994), and appeals to national health and safety regulation to further legitimate work reform (Taylor & Bain, 1999).

Secondly, more research is needed to appreciate how individual employees and groups of workers use informal tactics and formal strategies to resist and confront unhealthy working conditions. Again, previous research on employment relations may offer a helpful starting point. In particular, future MOS scholarship on mental unhealth may draw on contributions in this area to examine everyday practices of disengagement and disobedience whereby employees resist and distance themselves from stressful working conditions (Baldry et al., 2007; Knights & McCabe, 1998; Taylor & Bain, 1999). This literature may also help us examine less mundane forms of resistance, whether spectacular acts staged to highlight unhealthy working conditions, or legal action taken against employers to seek retribution and compensation from work-related stress and suffering (Doellgast et al., 2020).

Together, these two lines of inquiry have potential to generate new and important knowledge about the various ways in which individual employees and small work groups, unions and other collective movements may resist mental unhealth within capitalist labour relations. But they also remind us that resistance never operates in isolation (Fleming & Spicer, 2007), and that relations between labour and capital vary across different contexts. Which brings us to our third suggestion: that more research is needed to evaluate the power and effectiveness of different forms of resistance within different settings. To do so we need detailed knowledge about the specific organizations, production regimes and labour processes wherein employees are exploited, alienated and made to suffer from mental unhealth. For instance, employees may be able to negotiate relief from stressful performance pressures in labour processes where they are able to fiddle performance figures (Knights & McCabe, 1998) or utilise gaps in employee surveillance systems (Bain & Taylor, 2000). Through unionised collectives, they might even be able to moderate straining production regimes that have not yet been fully implemented (Stewart et al., 2009). At the same time, employees who disengage and disobey yet continue to work in stressful production regimes risk reinforcing these regimes (Knights & McCabe, 1998), while unions may prove powerless to prevent jobs from being relocated to countries with lower wages (Stewart et al., 2009) and laxer health and safety regulations.

However, context is not everything, and fourthly, more research is needed to appreciate how different kinds of mental unhealth may be resisted within capitalist labour relations. Though previous research on employment relations usually does a terrific job scrutinizing the specific production regimes wherein labour is exploited for profit, mental unhealth as such tends to be treated as a tangential issue, as one of several consequences of working in the capitalist economy. And even though the suffering of mental unhealth in the workplace may provoke employees and unions to take action against it (Stewart et al., 2009), different mental health problems are suffered in different ways, which may affect our capacity to confront its causes and consequences. It is difficult to grasp these mechanisms and relationships without a focus on mental unhealth as such. For instance, stress may evolve into

burnout and serious forms of depression (e.g., Kim et al., 2020a; Virtanen et al., 2018), but these mental health conditions are not the same. Many employees who suffer from work-related stress continue to work while suffering (e.g., Caers et al., 2021; Collins et al., 2018). In contrast, people with burnout syndrome often undergo long periods of sick leave and some are never able to return to work (e.g., Ahola et al., 2009; Salvagioni et al., 2017). Although absenteeism and quitting may be seen as acts of resistance (e.g., Fleming & Spicer, 2007; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006), it may be difficult if not impossible to speak out about specific problems, stage spectacular acts of protest or participate in industrial action if you are too ill to be physically and mentally present at work.

The four trajectories outlined thus far are all concerned with the possibilities of resisting mental unhealth within capitalist labour relations, where surplus value continues to be generated through the exploitation of labour for profit. Sceptics may therefore object that the research proposals they harbour restrict future MOS scholarship to engage with forms of resistance that have only limited capacity to challenge the underlying causes of work-related mental unhealth, and that work-related mental unhealth will continue to grow unless capitalism's hegemony is brought to an end. Whether or not that is at all possible, different resistance practices do relate differently to the extremes of rejecting what is and replacing it with something else. Even sickness absenteeism and an ultimate exit from the world of paid work may involve a rejection of capitalism's mortifying working conditions. But do such individualised responses strengthen our livelihood and our capacity to freely exercise our mental and physical powers? Indeed, how might individual suffering, as Engels hinted, be transformed into collective political acts of solidarity and common interest, and harnessed through alternative forms of organization for more joyful ways of living and working?

By means of articulating our fifth and final suggestion, we are increasingly curious about the possibilities of exercising resistance through alternatives outside of capitalist labour relations, however trivial, utopian or marginal they may first seem (see e.g., Parker, 2002; Spicer et al., 2009). The growing MOS literature on alternative forms of organization is interesting in this respect (see e.g., Parker et al., 2014; Cheney & Munshi, 2017; Zanoni et al., 2017). While many studies of worker coops, voluntary organizations and community-based production forms are mindful of the paradoxes and limitations that may trouble such endeavours (e.g., Bousalham & Vidaillet, 2018; Flecha & Ngai, 2014; King & Land, 2018), recent research in this area draws our attention to forms of work that may be far less stressful and unhealthy than those possible within capitalist labour relations. Let us provide one last example, which

we believe illustrates this particularly well. In his recent study of community-supported agriculture, Watson (2020) suggests that this is a form of food production which may counter alienation among those who participate in it. Since work is geared towards generating use value rather than extracting surplus value from the labour of its participants, community-supported agriculture may involve meaningful forms of work that offer participants social support, learning opportunities, friendship and improved wellbeing as well as access to food. None of this suggests that alternative forms of work and organization are beyond critique, but it does offer some indication that people may be able to live well and do good work by using our living labour outside of the mortifying working conditions that contemporary capitalism tends to involve us in.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the review we have conducted in this paper shows that there is a massive literature on work-related mental unhealth in MOS and related fields. Most notably, there is a structuralist literature which has made important contributions to our understanding of the impact that occupational and organizational structures and conditions have on employee mental health. Secondly, there is a functionalist literature concerned with designing and devising managerial practices and models for promoting organizational performance as well as good mental health at work. Finally, there is a critical literature primarily concerned with how mental health problems are constructed and managed in relation to a neoliberal discourse of individual responsibility, choice and self-management. However, relatively few contributions across these three literatures have begun to recognise that stress, burnout and other mental health problems may be related to capitalist labour relations that prevail in the world of work, organization and production. Even less attention has been paid to the possibilities of resisting capitalism's unhealthy working conditions. If MOS is to intervene in the current crisis of work-related mental unhealth, more can therefore be done to develop our empirical and theoretical knowledge in this area.

To advance MOS scholarship on mental unhealth, we have begun to explore the possibilities of resisting the exploitative, alienating and unhealthy working conditions of contemporary capitalism. Let us summarise our suggestions in terms of the following five questions:

1. How do unions and other collective movements work to challenge, resist and reduce mental unhealth within capitalist labour relations and production regimes?

2. How do individual employees and informal groups of employees resist and confront mental unhealth within such settings?

3. How effective are different forms of resistance in confronting the causes and consequences of work-related mental unhealth?

4. In what ways are people's capacity to resist mental unhealth affected by the organizational and economic contexts wherein resistance is attempted, and by the different ways in which different mental health problems are suffered?

5. Finally, how may individuals, groups and collectives not simply resist but create healthier ways of working, living and producing beyond capitalist labour relations?

The trajectories opened up by these seemingly simple questions are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive, and future MOS scholarship may do well by attending to the variety of ways in which different forms of resistance connect, coexist and interact, with different kinds of mental unhealth, in different contexts. We are also aware that the questions themselves require further engagement. Indeed, we have posed them here, optimistic that they may inspire radical movements in thought and practice which strengthen the capacity of future MOS scholarship to confront and alleviate mental unhealth in work and organization, exactly because they require further engagement. This may spark not just a sense of antagonism but a social imagination which makes it possible to engage with 'the imperfections of lived life' (Zanoni et al., 2018, p. 584) in ways that may challenge and offer healthier alternatives to capitalist forms of work and organization.

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