Queering queer theory in management and organization studies: notes toward queering heterosexuality

Abstract

This article suggests new possibilities for queer theory in management and organization studies, hereafter MOS. MOS has tended to use queer theory as a conceptual resource for studying the workplace experience of 'minorities' such as gay men, lesbians and those identifying as bisexual or transgender, often focusing on how heteronormativity shapes the discursive constitution of sexualities and genders coded as such. This deployment is crucial and apposite but it can limit the analytical reach of queer theory, neglecting other objects of analysis like heterosexuality. Potentially, MOS queer theory scholarship could be vulnerable to criticism about overlooking queer theory as a productive site for acknowledging both heterosexuality's coercive aspects and its non-normative forms. The principal contribution of our article is therefore twofold. First, it proposes a queering of queer theory in MOS, whereby scholars are alert to and question the potential normativities that such research can produce, opening up a space for exploring how heterosexuality can be queered. Second, we show how queering heterosexuality can be another site where queer theory and politics come together in the MOS field through a shared attempt to rupture sexual and gender binaries, and challenge normative social relations. The article concludes by outlining the political implications of queering heterosexuality for generating modes of organizing in which heterosexuality can be experienced as non-normative and how this might rupture and dismantle heteronormativity.

Keywords: heteronormativity; heterosexuality and heterosexualities; management and organization studies; majority identities; minority identities; queer, queer theory and queering theory

Introduction

Since its emergence in the early 1990s, queer theory has mainly been used to examine the discursive constitution and regulation of non-normative sexualities and genders, especially those coded as 'gay', 'lesbian', 'bisexual', 'transgender' and 'queer' (Edelman, 2004; Halberstam, 1998; Sedgwick, 1990; Warner, 1993, 1999). This scholarship challenges the status of heteronormativity as 'the elemental form of human association, as the very model of inter-gender relations, as the indivisible basis of all community, and as the means of reproduction without which society wouldn't exist' (Warner, 1993, p. vii). Critiquing the normative status of heteronormativity and demonstrating the impossibility of any 'natural' sexuality, queer theory is widely regarded as a resolutely anti-normative mode of politics because it interrogates and seeks to transform social norms and relations of power (Jagose, 1996; Wiegman & Wilson, 2015).

Queer theory has also made significant inroads into MOS since its debut in Gibson-Graham's (1996, p. 544) essay, which discussed its potential to disrupt the 'normalizing effects of discourses of capitalist hegemony'. In MOS as elsewhere, queer theory has typically been mobilized to analytically subvert the heteronormative alignments between sex, gender and sexuality (e.g. Bendl, Fleischmann & Walenta, 2008; Bendl & Hofmann, 2015; Brewis, Hampton & Linstead, 1997; Bowring & Brewis, 2009; Courtney, 2014; de Souza, Brewis & Rumens, 2016; King, 2016;

McDonald, 2013, 2016a, 2016b; Muhr & Sullivan, 2013; Rumens, 2010, 2012; Steyaert, 2010). This scholarship aims to unsettle the persistent and harmful binaries (e.g. heterosexual/homosexual, male/female and masculine/feminine) that are discursively (re)produced within and through organizations and modes of organizing. In particular, MOS scholars have deployed queer theory to analyse and problematize heteronormativity, focusing on the discursive construction of 'minority'[1] subjects - again, typically those coded as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, or LGBT - within heteronormative relations of power, and fundamentally questioning this constitutive process.

A smaller number of MOS researchers have followed Gibson-Graham's (1996) lead, tapping into queer theory's anti-normative impulse to make wider methodological claims about its capacity to disrupt discursive regimes that constitute organizational phenomena such as 'management', 'leadership' and 'public administration' (e.g. Harding, Lee, Ford & Learmonth, 2011; Lee, Learmonth & Harding, 2008; Parker, 2001, 2002, 2016; Tyler & Cohen, 2008). In this less-developed strand of enquiry, attention to sexuality, gender, identity and sexual politics is uneven, with some scholars all but shearing off these attachments (e.g. Parker, 2002, 2002, 2016). Instead, they capitalize on queer theory's energy as 'whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant' (Halperin, 1995, p. 62).

Noting these contributions in MOS research, we observe some missed opportunities to extend queer theory's analytical purview to include heterosexuality as a site for enquiry. One reason for this might be that queer theory is often used to conceptualize a negative link between heteronormativity and heterosexuality (Beasley, Holmes & Brook, 2015). Of course, there is good reason why MOS scholars do this. After all, MOS research consistently shows that heteronormativity constrains how

LGBT people can live meaningful lives in and outside the workplace in constituting such minority identities as the Others to a heterosexual majority (Bowring & Brewis, 2009; Courtney, 2014; Ozturk & Rumens, 2014). As such, this type of scholarship is *crucial* and must continue responding to the calls made by researchers to address the ongoing plight of LGBT people in workplaces around the globe (Colgan & Rumens, 2014; Ng & Rumens, 2017). But, these very valuable contributions notwithstanding, we suggest our discipline has yet to engage fully with queer theory for analysing 'majority' sexual identities coded as 'heterosexual'. More precisely, the non-normative aspects of heterosexuality can be left untouched in MOS research that is concerned with how LGBT identities are marginalized, denigrated and excluded within heteronormative relations of power (e.g. Bowring & Brewis, 2009; Ozturk & Rumens, 2014). Unanswered questions remain about the provisional, contextually contingent discursive dynamics between heterosexuals, heterosexuality and heteronormativity. These missed opportunities are not only apparent within the MOS field. Sullivan (2003) and others (Beasley, 2015; Beasley, Brook & Holmes, 2012; O'Rourke, 2005) aver that queer theory research across the disciplines has often overlooked heterosexuality as an object of analysis.

Elaborating this, Beasley (2015, p. 143) submits that 'queer analyses largely ignore heterosexuality, except as the starting point against which queer theory's concern with non-normalization constitutes itself'. In this scenario, queer theorists neglect to explore how heterosexuality can be queered; to deprive heterosexuality of its status as 'normal' and examine the non-normative alignments between heterosexuality and heteronormativity. Relatedly, Beasley et al. (2015) argue that scholarly deployments of queer theory can conflate heterosexuality with heteronormativity by repeatedly demonstrating how non-normative sexualities are associated with LGBT subjects and

not heterosexuals, leaving little headroom to imagine how many heterosexuals *do not* and *cannot* stand shoulder to shoulder as the guardians of heteronormativity. In these situations, an unhelpful heterosexual/queer binary can be reproduced (Cohen, 1997), one that nullifies queer theory's anti-normative political impulse. This, in turn, works against Warner's original proposition that queer is 'itself against the normal rather than the heterosexual' (1993, p. 26). By way of contrast, queer theory *can* play an important role in queering heterosexuality (Heasley, 2005; Renold and Ringrose, 2012; Thomas, 2000, 2009). To realize its potential in this respect, we suggest queering queer theory to expose its own normative tendencies and omissions and orient it towards heterosexuality differently.

In light of the above, the main focus of this article is the examination of MOS as a theoretical field. One of our principal aims is to encourage MOS scholars to engage critically with queer theory in new ways, in addition to and beyond examining the discursive constitution of LGBT identities within the normative field of heteronormativity, toward a queering of heterosexuality and its relationship with heteronormativity. We suggest that one condition of possibility for this endeavour is a queering of queer theory scholarship in our discipline. As such, after reading this article we hope MOS scholars might mobilize queer theory differently, to expand the remit of queer scholarship in the field that nourishes further opportunities for developing queer modes of organizing politically. To advance these proposals, this article asks: why should MOS scholars consider queering queer theory?; what are the possibilities for using queer theory to queer heterosexuality and what might this involve?; and what are the implications of queering heterosexuality for engaging with queer as a mode of organizational politics?

The academic context in which these questions are posed adds further weight to their salience for MOS scholars. We agree with Pullen, Thanem, Tyler and Wallenberg (2016) that MOS is a discipline in which queer theory has not yet become exhausted and clichéd, that it still harbours potential to disrupt the normal business of producing MOS knowledge. In contrast, it appears that queer theory has become institutionalized in parts of the arts and humanities disciplines from which it originated. There, it has been chastised for becoming embedded within the academy (e.g. at academic conferences, in degree programmes and caucuses) that give the impression it has a singular and universal set of doctrines and outlook on the world (de Lauretis, 1994; Halperin, 2003). Seen in this way, de Lauretis (1994) famously questioned what was 'queer' about 'queer theory' as the relevant publications multiplied to such an extent that they soon outstripped any sense of what queer is or could do. If, as Halperin (2003) ponders, queer has become de-queered (that is, stripped of its anti-normative impulse) then queering queer theory becomes a matter of urgency. The oblique angle at which queer theory is positioned within the MOS domain provides a conducive context for us to maintain queer theory's 'capacity to startle, to surprise, to help us think what has not yet been thought' (2003, p. 343). As an instance of this, we want to (re)connect with queer theory's impulse to fundamentally subvert the 'normal' by queering heterosexuality.

The main contribution of this article is twofold. First, it adds to an emergent literature that advocates queering queer theory in MOS, whereby scholars are alert to and question the potential normativities that such research may otherwise produce. We hope this opens up a space for exploring how heterosexuality can be queered. In particular, we outline why, how and where queering heterosexuality can take place, so MOS scholars can engage with queer theory in reshaping our discipline as a theoretical

field. Second, we contribute to queer theory scholarship more generally, which has been sluggish to interrogate heterosexuality, typically using it as a reference point against which queer theory's anti-normative impulse is constituted. As such, we show how queering heterosexuality can be another site where queer theory and politics can come together in the MOS field through a shared attempt to rupture sexual and gender binaries, and challenge normative social relations. It is not our intention to re-theorize certain iterations of heterosexuality as 'minority' identities, a possible outcome if we designate some heterosexuals as 'queer'. Instead we mobilize queer as a *deconstructive practice* (i.e. *queering*) to show how heterosexuality can be queered, with the aim of dismantling heteronormativity inside as well as outside organizations.

The article is structured as follows. To begin, we highlight the variations in how the term queer has been understood before outlining its emergence as a theoretical project. Here, we provide clarity on how queer is mobilized in this article, primarily through the deconstructive practice of queering. Next we discuss how heterosexuality has typically been mobilized within MOS queer theory scholarship. Developing a particular practice of queering heterosexuality, we then explore what this might involve along three fronts: 1) revisiting the relationship between heteronormativity and heterosexuality, in particular its theoretical underpinnings; 2) queering hetero-masculinities in the workplace as an illustration of where and what queering heterosexuality can take place and involve; and 3) extending this into a methodological context by examining how we can queer heterosexuality in the research process. Finally, we discuss the implications for queer(er) political modes of organizing that could subvert heteronormativity before outlining our contributions to queer theory per se.

Queer, queer theory and queering

Queer is a polysemic term, as evident in how it has been considered and mobilized in the following ways: (i) *a noun* (e.g. to describe someone as queer, to refer to queerness); (ii) *an adjective* (e.g. describing 'politics' as queer); or (iii) *a verb* (e.g. to queer, engaging in a process of queering). In one of its earliest renditions, it was used to denote something 'odd' or 'strange', given that its Latin root is 'torquere (to twist)' (Sedgwick, 1993, p. xii). Because of these connotations of oddity and strangeness, queer developed an association with abnormality and sickness which gained currency in the late nineteenth century, culminating in its most infamous use as pejorative slang for subjects deemed to be sexual and gender deviants (Berlant and Warner, 1995; Butler, 1993a; Halperin, 2003).

However, queer was later reclaimed by political groups in the 1980s (e.g. Queer Nation, Act Up!) in an effort to cultivate a radical identity politics that could challenge the idea of a unified 'gay' identity and subject (Seidman, 1996). During this time queer was therefore also treated as an identity, advocated by some queer political groups as an inclusive term to encompass the spectrum of non-heteronormative experience (Sullivan, 2003) - although its inclusivity in that regard has been questioned by lesbian feminist scholars (e.g. Jeffreys, 2002) amongst others. Contemporary understandings of the term queer continue to demonstrate its pliability, not the least of them being how queer has been appropriated within popular culture as a signifier of gay male chic in television shows such as *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* (Clarkson, 2005).

Queer theory

Although it is generally accepted that queer theory emerged onto the academic scene via Teresa de Lauretis, in an article published in 1991 in the journal *differences* (Halperin, 2003), various commentators have cited, amongst others, Michel Foucault (e.g. Warner, 1993), Judith Butler (e.g. Halperin, 2003), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (e.g. Sullivan, 2003) and Joan Scott (e.g. Louro, 2008) as important in shaping its development. These debates about the origins of queer theory lead us to an instructive observation by Berlant and Warner (1995, p. 344), that

> 'In our view, it is not useful to consider queer theory a thing, especially one dignified by capital letters. We wonder whether queer commentary might not more accurately describe the things linked by the rubric, most of which are not theory'.

They rightly suggest that queer theory is neither 'a single discourse' nor 'a propositional program'. So, like the term queer, queer theory is not reducible to a single meaning or universal set of doctrines. As such, all of our claims about queer theory in this article should be understood as apostrophized and relativized, except where we locate them as belonging to one or the other author.

Still, the amount of literature published over the last few decades provides clues about how queer theory might be characterized and has been used. Within the academy, it typically denotes a fluid and incoherent school of thought that questions prevailing, normative ways of understanding gender, sex, the body, sexuality and sexual desire (Jagose, 1996; Pino, 2007; Giffney, 2009). Importantly, Sedgwick ([1990] 2008) emphasizes that queer theory is predicated on resistance to categorizations. Consequently, she argues, its focus is not (or should not be) minority identities; women,

gay men, lesbians, those identifying as transgender and so on. Seidman (1996, p. 13) agrees, writing that queer theory is instead a study 'of those knowledges and social practices that organize "society" as a whole by sexualizing – heterosexualizing or homosexualizing bodies, desires, acts, identities, social relations, knowledges, culture, and social institutions'. Judith Butler also emphasizes this point, noting that 'queer…was never an identity…it was always a critique of identity' (2008, p. 320). As such, 'Queer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. *There is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers*' (Halperin, 1995, p. 62 – emphasis in original).

Based on this scholarship, queer theory operates as a set of intellectual claims, practices and political actions which – broadly speaking - challenge normative knowledges and identities. It problematizes the humanistic conception of the subject, especially the universalism and essentialism present in such approaches. Queer from this perspective is not an identity category, a new label for non-normative gender and sexual identities. Indeed, for Sullivan (2003), using queer theory as an umbrella term does little to 'deconstruct the humanist understanding of the subject', obscuring 'the differences between, for example, lesbianism and gayness, between women, between transsexualism and cross-dressing, and ignor[ing] differences of class, race, age and so on' (p. 49). It follows that queer theory should not be restricted to the analysis of so-called 'queer' identities.

Queering

Sullivan's (2003) caution against using queer as a label, adjective or noun alerts us to how queer is better used as a verb – to queer. Often phrased as 'queering', this term

refers to a deconstructive practice that owes an intellectual debt to Jacques Derrida, whose work on deconstruction has been an invaluable conceptual resource for queer theorists. Deconstruction can refer to a textual strategy that destabilizes hierarchical oppositions and disrupts 'foundational assumptions…for the purpose of opening up new possibilities for critical social analysis and political practice' (Seidman, 1997, p. x). In the context of queer analyses, deconstruction seeks to make the familiar strange, to question what is considered 'normal', 'common sense', 'healthy' and 'natural'. Crucially, queering seeks not to replace one set of foundational assumptions with another, but to render the normal permanently open to interrogation and contestation (Seidman, 1997).

Queering therefore represents a mode of critical resistance against conceptual closure and normativity, offering alternatives to norms, stable and universal identities, regimes of the normal and of common sense (Bryant, 2003; Halberstam, 2011; Parker, 2016). The normalization processes which queer theory unpacks occur through what Foucault calls power dispositives: 'heterogeneous group[s] that include discourse, institutions, architecture, norms, laws, rules, scientific statements, philosophical propositions, morals, philanthropies. […] The dispositif is the network that can be established among these elements' (2004, p. 244 - our translation). These apparatuses organize our lives, put us on a specific path and forge our subjectivities, regulating and producing us as socially, historically and culturally constructed identities and members of discursive categories – e.g. man, woman, transgender, transsexual, heterosexual, homosexual, mother, father and so on.

Normalization processes, then, do not simply produce Others or minorities. They also produce the normal: normality and abnormality are constructed together, existing in a mutually constitutive relationship. So queer theorizing should not simply study those

who disrupt norms, minorities or Others, nor solely the social processes which create people as deviants via labels and categories (Miskolci, 2009). What we see as important in a queer analysis is a focus on the simultaneous production of the subaltern *and the hegemonic* which, in Seidman's words, 'transform[s] homosexual theory into a general social theory or one standpoint to analyse social dynamics' (1996, p. 13). We need to use queer without congealing it as merely a category, identity or label (Halperin, 1995; Jagose, 1996). In order to sustain this approach, queer theory must likewise be queered, as we discuss in the next section.

Queering queer theory in MOS

Queer theory resides at the critical fringes of MOS. Certainly, as Parker (2016, p. 72) argues, 'the majority of business school academics are not charmed by queer…and they never have been' (also see Pullen et al., 2016; Rumens, 2016). We agree: queer theory is unlikely to be of interest to scholars focused on making organizations more efficient and productive in the context of global neoliberal capitalism. Nonetheless, queer theory has managed to establish more than a foothold within the less orthodox variants of MOS and a substantial body of work has resulted, attesting to its value in developing anti-normative critiques of heteronormativity in organizations (see also Rumens, 2017).

As suggested earlier, the relationship between queer, queer theory and queering has been approached differently by MOS scholars. One strand of research has mobilized queer as a conceptual resource for queering heteronormativity in the workplace, interrogating the normalizing effects of dominant discourses of sexuality and gender (e.g. Bendl et al., 2008; Brewis et al., 1997; Bowring & Brewis, 2009; Courtney, 2014; de Souza & Carrieri, 2015; McDonald, 2013, 2016a; Muhr & Sullivan, 2013; Rumens,

2010, 2012). Much of this important work focuses on the experiences of negotiating heteronormativity in organizations using LGBT respondents. These studies have shed important light on how LGBT employees are constituted as the Other at work, and the harmful effects on their quality of working life, career development and opportunities to develop meaningful organizational identities and subjectivities. Additionally, this scholarship has served an important role in queering heteronormativity in the workplace, where empirical examples are given of how the discourses of sexual and gender normality can be transgressed (Courtney, 2014; McDonald, 2016a; Rumens, 2012).

Other MOS scholars have approached the practice of queering differently. Gibson-Graham (1996) mobilize queer theory's capacity to chafe against what is normal and hegemonic more generally (Edelman, 2004), to articulate a practice of queering that could destabilize the hegemony of specific economic theories of capitalism. Similarly, Parker (2001, 2002, 2016) galvanizes its anti-normative impulse to develop methodological claims about queer theory's capacity for problematizing and transcending the norms that constitute harmful yet seemingly inevitable managerialist modes of organizing. In contemplating the prospects for developing such alternatives, using business and management schools as organizational examples, Parker (2002) underlines the necessity for 'queering the *idea* of the academy' (p. 162, emphasis in original). One goal of his project is to address the heteronormativity of these institutions, not least because it continues to shape the place of 'queers' within business and management schools (see also Rumens, 2016). More prominent, however, is Parker's treatment of queer as an unstable term that operates as a 'war of movement within the present' (2002, p. 159), one that paves the way for a non-foundationalist

approach to enquiry and management knowledge that is concerned with politicizing the very terms on which enquiry proceeds and knowledge is constituted.

The practice of queering articulated in the article at hand operates in similar ways to the two broad approaches outlined above, in exploring how queering allows us to question what is normal but also seeking to extend the MOS queer theory scholarship that problematizes heteronormativity toward a focus on heterosexuality. For us, maintaining queer theory's capacity to rupture the normal requires at times a concern with questioning the normativities queer theory scholarship can itself produce (Bryant, 2003; Halperin, 2003). There are several reasons why this is important. One is queer theory's vulnerability to normalization. As stated in our introduction, the institutionalization of queer theory began soon after its inception, noted most vociferously by de Lauretis who denounced queer theory as a 'conceptually vacuous creature of the publishing industry' (1994, p. 297). Her remarks centred on how queer theory had become a victim of its own popularity, evidenced in how queer texts had proliferated to such an extent that it was difficult to discern what was queer about them, or indeed about queer theory itself. Halperin (2003, p. 341) also laments queer theory's rapid assimilation into 'largely heterosexual institutions of knowledge' within the academy, despite its 'anti-assimilationist posture…and its shocking embrace of the abnormal and marginal'.

In MOS, Parker (2016) is one of the few scholars who have emphasized the importance of queering queer theory, arguing that queering is a 'practice which must always refuse the common sense of the day' (p. 40). He expresses his concern that, if queering ceases, 'then thinking stops too' (p. 40). To counter this, Parker underscores the necessity to avoid the production of queer orthodoxies that threaten to calcify the academic and political forms it takes in MOS. In sync with his comments, we argue that

queering queer theory is one strategy that promises to keep queer theory from tipping into normalcy, as it aims to challenge normativities within such theory and the effects of those normative regimes that seek to fold it into the 'normal' (Halperin, 2003). This involves interrogating queer theory's shortcomings and normalizing tendencies, such as neglecting heterosexuality as a site of enquiry. Here, then, we share a wider commitment amongst MOS scholars to sustaining queer theory as a set of conceptual resources that are supple, politically charged and open-ended, allowing it to 'take on meanings that cannot now be anticipated' (Butler, 1993b, p. 228). Indeed, queering queer theory in and beyond the MOS field can be read as one (but not the only) practice that, for example, creates the conditions of possibility for queering heterosexuality.

One motive for ascribing priority to a form of queering that seeks to queer heterosexuality is the observation made by Beasley et al. (2015, p. 683) that, in feminist and queer theory research, it is nearly always cast as 'nasty, boring and normative'. Alternatively, heterosexuality can be ignored altogether. More generally, we have not been able to locate heterosexuality as a central focal point in MOS queer theory research. In regard to both casting heterosexuality as 'nasty, boring and normative' and ignoring it altogether, we cite our own research for illustrative purposes. Bowring and Brewis's (2009) research is based on data from qualitative interviews with lesbian and gay workers in apparently 'queer positive' Canada. The findings echo many previous studies, suggesting that lesbians and gay men tend to find navigating the heteronormative space of the workplace challenging. Bowring and Brewis also note that 'those lesbians and gay men who perform in ways *closest to* prevailing social expectations around sex, gender and sexuality, who rock the heteronormative boat *the least,* are also perhaps less organizationally vulnerable' (p. 373 – emphasis in original). In this argument, however, heterosexuality is linked to heteronormativity only to show

how the latter constitutes the former as ‘natural’ and ‘normal’. Elsewhere, Rumens (2011, 2017) reflects on his use of queer theory in analysing gay men’s experiences of workplace friendships with heterosexual men. He notes how the exclusion of heterosexuals as study participants can set a limit on the insights gained into how heterosexuality can misalign with the hetero-norms that shape workplace friendships.

At this juncture, let us be clear. We do not castigate such MOS scholarship for examining LGBT issues and employees only; rather, we observe that opportunities are missed for exploring how heterosexuality can be understood and experienced as non-normative within heteronormative contexts. Attending to these issues and thus adding to this literature can serve as a powerful corrective to the reading of queer theory that reduces it to a ‘theory for, about and by queers’ only, where ‘queer’ is deployed as a shorthand for LGBT people (Giffney, 2009, p. 5). Indeed, queer theorists in the humanities and across the social sciences have expressed their concern at how queer theory can be read as such (Halley & Parker, 2011). Following Butler (1993, p. 228), we reason that the queer in queer theory must never be ‘fully owned’ but always ‘queered from a prior usage and in the direction of urgent and expanding political purposes’, such as queering heterosexuality.

To recap, this article suggests that MOS scholars consider the value of queering queer theory, so they can be inspired to mobilize it differently. In this context, we use the next three sections to unpack the following question: what are the possibilities for using queer theory within MOS to queer heterosexuality and what might this involve?

Queering the heteronormativity-heterosexuality dynamic

In this section we re-conceptualize the link between heteronormativity and heterosexuality by returning to some of queer theory's original propositions. Reassessing this link is crucial because it opens doors for queering heterosexuality. Here, we envisage that one of queer theory's principal aims is to denaturalize heterosexuality, to dispossess it of its claims to be normal and, in so doing, rupture the foundations of heteronormativity that have often ascribed heterosexuality this status. While queer theory has frequently linked heterosexuality to heteronormativity (Warner, 1993, 1999), the two terms are sometimes conflated in queer analyses (Beasley, 2015; Beasley et al., 2015). At this point, it is vital to return to Warner's (1993) work on heteronormativity to remind ourselves that, while heterosexuality and heteronormativity are interconnected, they are not inextricably bonded to each other.

According to Warner, and as we have already established, heteronormativity refers to

> 'the elemental form of human association, as the very model of inter-gender relations, as the indivisible basis of all community, and as the means of reproduction without which society wouldn't exist' (1993, p. vii).

This definition provides clues about heteronormativity's roots in Adrienne Rich's (1980) notion of 'compulsory heterosexuality' and Gayle Rubin's (1984) article 'Thinking sex'. Rich (1980) identifies heterosexuality as a social institution, membership of which is compulsory for women, which challenges any view of heterosexuality as a natural inclination. Crucially, she links compulsory heterosexuality to male domination by arguing that women are coerced into heterosexuality and that the institution of compulsory heterosexuality reproduces patriarchal values and relations. In

a wider context, Rubin emphasizes what at the time was new scholarship, including the first volume of Foucault's ([1976] 1979) *History of Sexuality,* and its 'assumption that sexuality is constituted in society and history, not biologically ordained' (1984, p. 149). She goes on to identify the corollaries of biologistic assumptions about sexuality, not least of which is the argument that '[m]odern Western societies appraise sex acts according to a hierarchical system of sexual value' (p. 150).

While Warner's (1993, 1999) understanding of heteronormativity is indebted to Rich, Rubin and other feminist theorists, it makes an important conceptual shift. Do Mar Castro Varela, Dhawan and Engel point out that heteronormativity turns the focus from 'repressive to productive forms of power, from coercion to complicity with normative power and to the violence of "normality"' (2011, p. 3). We can observe this in the movement away from a 'sex as dangerous' paradigm, evident in the radical feminism of Catharine MacKinnon amongst others, to a 'sex as pleasure' paradigm that queer theorists promote to celebrate sexual dissidence (Beasley, 2015). Indeed, returning to Warner's (1993) observation, Berlant and Warner (1998) emphasize again that heteronormativity and heterosexuality are analytically distinct, albeit interdependent. Berlant and Warner maintain that some forms of sex between men and women 'might not be heteronormative' (p. 565), although without providing detailed illustrations. Thus, we must draw on other scholars for illumination.

Cathy Cohen (1997) draws on queer theory and race studies to illustrate the dangers in assuming that heterosexuality has an unproblematic relationship with heteronormativity. Cohen vocalizes her disappointment in how political investments in queer and queer theory have not paid off. She cites the 'many instances' where 'instead of destabilizing the assumed categories and binaries of sexual identity, queer politics has served to reinforce simple dichotomies between heterosexual and everything

"queer"' (1997, p. 438). One effect of the bifurcation between queer and heterosexual is that queer theorists have neglected to examine fully the possibilities for privilege and marginalization as experienced by people situated on both sides of the hetero/queer divide. Added to this, Cohen is perturbed by the reliance among queer theorists on sexuality to destabilize heteronormativity. This leaves unquestioned how other differences such as race, ethnicity and class might intersect with sexuality to inhibit heterosexuals' life chances, but also provide new ways of unsettling heteronormative categories.

Focusing on race, and criticizing the racism within gay and lesbian communities, Cohen (1997) demonstrates how discourses of racialized sexuality regulate an array of differently-situated heterosexual subject positions within heteronormativity. Here, she makes trenchant criticisms of heteronormativity, exposing its origins in discourses of white supremacy. This is illustrated in how access to marriage was regulated among heterosexuals; historically a privileged institution in the US for white heterosexuals but not heterosexuals of colour who were subjugated by a system of slavery in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Legal restrictions on interracial marriages in certain periods of American history are also cited by Cohen as examples of how heteronormativity has been intersected by white supremacy, with the effect of racializing heterosexualities along diverging lines of privilege and marginalization. Similarly, Cohen examines how heterosexuals of colour are positioned within heteronormative discourses of race that evoke the figure of the 'black deviant', such as the blatant 'stigmatization and demonization of single mothers, teen mothers, and, primarily, poor women of color dependent on state assistance' (1997, p. 455).

For our purposes, Cohen's (1997) analysis is a corrective to scholarship, queer theory included, which scrutinizes heterosexuality and heteronormativity as ahistorical

entities and over-relies on sexuality without focusing on how heterosexuality and heteronormativity are implicated in reproducing other divisions and inequalities (e.g. in terms of racism, poverty and class). (Re)-scrutinizing the history of heterosexuality and heteronormativity can be an invaluable project for MOS scholars to problematize organizational discourses of heterosexuality which claim it is both natural and coherent at all times. This approach to denaturalizing both heterosexuality and heteronormativity has political import: indeed Cohen (1997) asserts that

> if we pay attention to both historical and current examples of heterosexual relationships which have been prohibited, stigmatized, and generally repressed we may begin to identify those spaces of shared or similar oppression and resistance that provide a basis for radical coalition work. (p. 453)

The type of progressive coalition building Cohen envisages could be important in the context of organizations generally and, in particular, in(re)shaping modes of organizing in the workplace, a theme we return to later in this article. Next, we pursue the idea of queering hetero-masculinities.

Queering hetero-masculinities

To recap briefly, queering heterosexuality necessitates that we revisit earlier queer theory scholarship on heteronormativity to (re)assert the importance of denaturalizing heterosexuality. This project can be undertaken by historicizing the variations in heterosexual experience. In so doing, we stand to garner insights into how heteronormativity can punitively affect some heterosexuals (Cohen, 1997), while highlighting other instances in which heterosexuality transgresses – whether consciously or not – heteronormativity. Pursuing the latter, MOS scholars could explore

how organizational femininities and masculinities might be queered by, for example, drawing on the queer concept of 'female masculinity' developed by Halberstam (1998). More developed in the MOS field, and thus a useful reference point for us to dialogue with colleagues in the discipline, is the literature on organizational masculinities. This shows signs of openness to the exploration of how organizational masculinities performed by heterosexual men and women might be queered.

For example, our article potentially connects with MOS gender scholars who seek to disrupt gender binaries by interrogating forms of gender embodiment normatively labelled as 'masculine' and feminine' (Knights, 2015; Thanem and Knights, 2012). In this literature, hetero-masculinity, in particular its association with men and men's practices, is frequently implicated in the gendering of organizations, especially in the reproduction of gender inequalities that deleteriously affect both men and women (e.g. Collinson & Hearn, 1996; Godfrey, Lilley & Brewis, 2012; Knights & Kerfoot, 1993). But, as Thanem and Knights (2012) submit, whilst the analysis of hetero-masculinity in organizations is crucially important in that regard, it can be viewed through a narrow aperture that, for example, ignores the experiences of transgender men and women.

Despite these emerging insights, feminist scholar Chris Beasley also complains that hetero-masculinity is often over-associated with the oppression of women, noting that 'the difficulty with this narrowed lens is that it largely, often entirely, obscures other perspectives and thus inadvertently advances a kind of recursive, even naturalized account of the hetero-masculine as inevitably oppressive' (2015, p. 146). For the most part, as Beasley (2015, p. 145) points out, 'such analyses frequently constitute masculinity as singular and exclusionary, as ''the norm''. Even when masculinities are referred to as multiple, as they have been for the last few decades or so in MOS and

elsewhere (e.g. Brittan, 1989; Collinson & Hearn, 1996; Knights & Kerfoot, 1993), queer theory is rarely mobilized as a resource for exploring how hetero-masculinities can disrupt heteronormativity.

Illustrating how queer theory may be drawn into the project of queering hetero-masculinity, it is also useful to flag the limitations of some approaches already taken to this end. For example, Heasley (2005) is one of the first to examine the 'queer masculinities' of straight men, arguing that 'many straight men experience and demonstrate "queer masculinity"', which he reads as 'being masculine outside hetero-normative constructions of masculinity that disrupt, or have the potential to disrupt, traditional images of the hegemonic masculine' (p. 310). Within a heteronormative grid of intelligibility (Butler, 1990), heterosexual men who exhibit queer masculinity are frequently problematized: as men who struggle with masculinity, who might be gay and who are pathologized as gender-deviant. For Heasley (2005), these heteronormative constructions of heterosexual male masculinity suggest that we have not adequately accounted for 'the ways straight men can disrupt the dominant paradigm of the straight-masculine' nor built 'a language that gives legitimacy to th[is] lived experience' (p. 311). What he proposes is a typology of 'straight-queer males', including 'straight sissy boys' who find performing hetero-masculinity difficult per se; 'elective straight-queers' who 'move into queer masculinity as a means of liberating the self from the constrictions of hetero-normative masculinity' (p. 316); and 'social-justice straight queers', who deliberately resist performing hetero-masculinity for political reasons. Heasley argues that his typology is an important contribution to queering heteronormative categories of gender and sexuality.

There is some value in indexing different types of straight-queer masculinities, but there are also drawbacks. Heasley's typology is an example of how queer theory can

be used to conceptualize multiple masculinities as a site of fixed stability. Even though he insists men may move from one category of 'queer' masculinity to the next, the categories themselves remain relatively stable. This essentializes a relationship between certain identities and specific 'queer' masculine behaviours and commitments. One corollary is that it can also stabilize the category of hetero-masculinity, as this presumes there are men who can be identified as types of 'straight queers', which runs counter to our aim of queering heterosexuality. We do not wish to discursively construct new 'minority' identity categories into which subjects coded as 'heterosexual' can be slotted. Instead, we propose that normative alignments between hetero-masculinity, men and men's practices are ruptured so we recognize the impossibility of hetero-masculinity (and heterosexuality) as a natural entity normatively aligned with men.

More in tune with our proposal is work by Renold and Ringrose (2012). They aim to problematize the facile understanding of women performing hetero-masculinity as simply aping men. Drawing on queer concepts from Butler's (1990, 2004) writing, the authors explore how 'phallic girls', those girls who join in hegemonic masculine pursuits (e.g. sexual agency, drinking, confidence, aggression and career success) perform heterosexualized masculinity in complex ways. They rebuff the argument that these girls are 'rejecting femininity for a slice of male power', or that the performance of 'female masculinity [Halberstam, 1998] serves only to reinforce the gender binary in the symbolic' (2012, p. 51). The latter accusation, of course, resonates with the difficulties often experienced by heterosexual women who perform masculinity in the workplace to 'get ahead' (e.g. Boucher 1997; Gherardi, 1995; Meehan, 1999). Yet the girls Renold and Ringrose (2012) studied demonstrate how the performance of some masculinities, such as the 'tomboy', allowed them to critique masculine surveillance of their bodies as sexualized but not by ditching femininity and girlhood altogether. They

could ‘carve out distance from heteronormative practices’ (p. 60), enabling them to develop critical insights into how hetero-masculinity and -femininity work. These insights are read by Renold and Ringrose as offering these girls alternative modes of performing gender. In other words, they are shown to manipulate and rework gender norms, thereby undermining the argument that when women perform masculinity they are only ever mimicking men. Understood as examples of queering hetero-masculinity, Renold and Ringrose outline how their female study participants engaged in re-signifying gender norms in a Butlerian sense to ‘queer and rupture’ heteronormativity (p. 60).

These illustrations shed light on some of the possibilities for where and how hetero-masculinities can be queered. For us, this raises methodological implications for MOS researchers interested in queering heterosexuality. We explore this next.

Queering heterosexuality in the research process

In thinking through the practical issues associated with the argument mounted so far, another gap in current MOS queer theory research concerns methodological questions and possibilities for queering heterosexuality in the research process. Again, it is important to be clear on what we are not doing in this section. We do not wish to get embroiled in debates about whether heterosexual scholars can or should use queer theory, as has been the case in the past (e.g. de Lauretis, 1997; Schlichter, 2004; Thomas, 2000, 2009). In these discussions, criticism levelled at heterosexual researchers who use queer theory can unwittingly essentialize queer as the proper object of those who supposedly possess superior insight into what queer is, does and who it might ‘belong’ to (e.g. de Lauretis, 1997). Such debates resonate with wider dialogues

about whether ‘minority’ subjects themselves are best suited to investigate ‘minority’ issues. We certainly do not submit that queer is, or ought to be, the proper object of some (queer) subjects and not others. Instead we wish to redirect the discussion away from these epistemological questions towards the queer deconstruction of heterosexuality in the research process.

Within the MOS field, McDonald’s (2013, 2016a) work on queer reflexivity illustrates the possibilities for doing this. McDonald revisits MOS debates on reflexivity within research, noting like many before him that one important facet of reflexive practice is considering how researchers’ identities shape the interactions with study participants and the co-construction of knowledge. In particular, sexual identity can be influential in that regard but, as McDonald opines, ‘most reflexive accounts are written as though the identities of researchers are transparent and remain stable throughout the research process’ (2016a, p. 392). The presumption of a stable ontology of identity within and through the duration of the research process is also noted by de Souza et al. (2016), who similarly mobilizes queer theory concepts from Butler’s work on performativity to foreground an anti-categorical approach to difference based on identity. McDonald (2013, 2016a) develops the concept of ‘queer reflexivity’ as a practice that encourages MOS scholars to engage ‘in reflexive accounts outside of embodied social categories such as “woman”, “man”, “gay” and “straight” because of the heterogeneous nature of these categories’ (2013, p. 132). He proposes queer reflexivity to problematize normative reflexive practices that view identity categories in the research process as bounded and unchanging.

As such, queer reflexivity heralds a departure from ‘the dominant conversation on how to reflexively engage categories of difference in research projects’ (McDonald, 2013, p. 132). One implication is that MOS researchers must scrutinize more closely

what identity categories mean, rather than assuming categories such as 'heterosexual' speak for themselves. As identity categories are enmeshed within relations of power, this also requires an interrogation of how the power dynamics in the research process are fluid and subject to (re)negotiation. Specifically, queer reflexivity urges MOS scholars to demonstrate greater sensitivity to how heterosexuality is fluid, contextually contingent and subject to change throughout the research process, rather than assuming its meaning is static and fixed.

To illustrate, we cite McDonald's (2013) reflections on how he (re)negotiated his sexual identity during his fieldwork. Having just ended a heterosexual relationship with a woman and having no prior same-sex experiences, McDonald joined an academic institution he perceived as homonormative, in which 'organisational members were presumed to be gay-identified unless they disclosed otherwise' (2013, p. 134). This gave rise to a series of identity dilemmas; for instance, whether to disclose as 'straight' to his 'gay' research participants. On this issue, McDonald comments: 'I essentialised both myself and my research participants…by grouping all of my male participants in the category of "gay" and by placing myself in the category "straight"' (2013, p. 134). As McDonald points out, queer theory aims to destabilize such rigid categorizations, as they are seen to mask multiple points of similarity as well as difference between the categories 'gay' and 'straight'. This point is particularly poignant in his 'coming out' tale, as he recalls a life prior to his fieldwork during which he has been routinely mistaken as 'gay' and cruelly taunted for it: 'my unconscious and repeated gender enactments made me unrecognizable in the available categories of "male", "female", "straight", and "gay" that are commonly used to make sense of identity' (2013, p. 137). At the same time, McDonald recounts his same-sex desires as hitherto unrealized and explored, and a life throughout which he identified as 'straight'

given that he could not 'imagine what it may mean to not be "straight" or how life could be lived outside of the heteronormative norms into which I was born' (2013, p. 137).

As McDonald reasons, his narrative of how he has variously related to a heterosexual identity in specific contexts and moments in time problematizes the idea that researchers should communicate their social identities to study participants as soon as they enter the field. In McDonald's case, we ought not to assume, for example, that 'gay' participants would only feel comfortable with a 'gay' researcher. Additionally, we can also derive from McDonald a sense of how heterosexuality can be queered - destabilized and (re)signified - throughout the research process, how it can be constituted in ways that are at odds with heteronormative norms. On this issue, McDonald suggests: 'simply telling my participants…that I was straight would have overlooked the fact that I was *not* a typical straight researcher (whatever that may be!)' (2013, p. 138, emphasis in original). Here, his account also shows that it is not only LGBT researchers who can be closeted during the research process, illustrated in how he tried to avoid disclosing his sexual identity to his participants at times. By the end of the fieldwork process, McDonald had begun to identify as 'gay', and on this shift in identification he writes about the new ways in which he re-inhabits his body, such as creating a 'new wardrobe full of bright colours' that he dared not wear previously for fear of being constituted as such.

In summary, McDonald (2013) can be re-read as a valuable account of queering heterosexuality that avoids getting sucked into the vortex of debate, signposted above, about whether 'straights' or 'heterosexuals' have legitimate claims on queer theory. Indeed, in this section we have considered how conceptual recourses such as queer reflexivity can be drawn on in the project of queering heterosexuality in the research process, thus illustrating some of the methodological implications. Taken together, the

sections above converse with each other in ways that speak about the theoretical possibilities of queering heterosexuality, in particular where and how MOS scholars can do this. The examples we focus on are queering hetero-masculinity and queering heterosexuality in the research process. Next, we draw out the contributions and implications of our analysis for MOS scholars.

Discussion

This article has sought to persuade MOS scholars of the value of queering queer theory in our field, suggesting that it might be used to ascribe priority to an underdeveloped endeavour - queering heterosexuality. In so doing, we hope to contribute to the wider project already underway in MOS queer theory scholarship to rely on and keep alive queer theory's capacity to rupture what is normal (Harding et al., 2011; Parker, 2001, 2002, 2016), maximizing its full potential as a theory underwritten by an anti-normative impulse (Wiegman & Wilson, 2015).

In order to help MOS scholars draw from our ideas regarding queering heterosexuality specifically, we outline this article's principal contributions and political implications as follows. First, one theoretical contribution is to reassert the conceptual relationship between heteronormativity and heterosexuality as culturally contingent and historically patterned, to mitigate the risk of conflating the two terms (Beasley, 2015; O'Rourke, 2005; Sullivan, 2003). We want to emphasize the importance of a re-connection with the assertions of pioneering queer theorists for whom heterosexuality was neither monolithic nor a proxy for heteronormativity (e.g. Berlant & Warner, 1998; Warner, 1993). The work of Cohen (1997) is exemplary in this respect, demonstrating how MOS scholars can draw on issues of race to expose how heteronormativity can

punitively affect heterosexuals of colour. As such, we encourage MOS scholars to historicize the dynamic between heterosexuality and heteronormativity to unearth the various and unexpected ways they can work against each other, providing insights into the variation in heterosexual experiences and lives within organizational settings.

Second, we have sought to show where MOS researchers might put queer theory to service, using it to deconstruct hetero-masculinity, adding to a masculinities and organization literature that interrogates its relation to power, privilege and embodiment (Knights, 2015; Thanem & Knights, 2012). As such, this article may appeal to a broader cohort of MOS scholars who are interested in examining organizations and discourses of gender but who have not, as yet, considered queer theory as a conceptual resource for widening the aperture through which hetero-masculinity can be studied. Here, then, we advocate deploying queer theory not to create 'new' types of queer heterosexual identity categories, as some have (e.g. Heasley, 2005). Instead we urge its use to deconstruct hetero-masculinity so as to render it a site that is perpetually open to contestation and discursive re-signification by 'men' but also, in our case, by 'women' (Renold & Ringrose, 2012). In this way, MOS scholars can advance research on heterosexuality in organizations by problematizing hetero-masculinity's normative alignments with heteronormativity. For example, one pertinent research question is: what are the conditions of possibility within organizations for hetero-masculinity to collapse gender binaries? Another is: how might organizational subjects coded as 'male' and 'female' cite hetero-norms in ways that resignify the meaning of hetero-masculinity in non-normative ways?

Third, extending the matter of how queering heterosexuality can be done, this article articulates such a project in a methodological context. Here, McDonald's (2013, 2016a) work on queer reflexivity is a valuable conceptual resource for MOS researchers

because it shifts attention away from treating heterosexual as a fixed identity category. In that regard, we caution once more against creating 'new' identity categories such as the 'queer heterosexual MOS scholar', heeding how queer theory scholarship can reify heterosexuals as queer (Heasley, 2005) and/ or cast 'queer heterosexuality' in a negative light (de Lauretis, 1997; Schlichter, 2004). More germane to the aim of this article is how the queering of heterosexuality can direct attention to its fluidity and openness to discursive resignification throughout the research process. For MOS scholars, the queering of heterosexuality in this process represents an opportunity to approach fieldwork differently, to question the assumed stable ontology of their own identities and those of study participants throughout their empirical projects (McDonald, 2013, 2016b). Such a strategy can disrupt the hetero-norms by which study participants are hailed by researchers as 'heterosexual' (or, indeed, as 'gay', 'lesbian', and so on) as a criterion for recruitment (see also de Souza et al., 2016).

Toward queer(er) modes of organizing politically

There are political implications associated with queering heterosexuality. Before saying more on this, it is important to reassert that both queer theory and queer politics are committed to rupturing sexual and gender binaries, and challenging normative social relations (Edelman, 2004; Halperin, 1995; Warner, 1993, 1999). There has been an important dialogue between queer theory and forms of queer political activism since the late 1980s (Seidman, 1996). Concerns about how queer theory can be institutionalized within the academy (de Lauretis, 1994) mean the project of keeping its anti-normative impulse beating (e.g. through queering) is vital if it is to maintain its capacity for disrupting what is normal (Halperin, 2003; Parker, 2016). We cannot take for granted

that queer theory in MOS and beyond will always be a political intervention into the normal, or assume that queer theorists and queer activists are one and the same (Browne, 2015). But, if queer theory's radical potential is to be invigorated and move forward, it is 'crucially important', as O'Rourke (2005) reasons, to develop 'queer theories which celebrate non-normative heterosexualities, the queer practices of straights, and the lives and loves of those men and women who choose to situate themselves beyond the charmed circle at the heteronormative center' (p. 112).

In this vein, one political implication of queering heterosexuality is that MOS queer theory scholarship could look very different. We can foresee a more expansive conceptualization of heterosexuality and empirical studies exploring the lived realities of heterosexual experience in organizations as more than 'nasty, normative, and boring' (Beasley et al., 2015, p. 683). For instance, we might understand heterosexuality in the workplace as pleasurable, inclusive and subversive in ways that feed into what Harding et al. (2011) label a 'queer politics of pleasure', that exposes the 'polymorphous pleasures that could be available were sexualities not rigidly controlled' (2011, p. 941). We see also MOS researchers drawing on other politically charged theories (e.g. from critical race studies, disability studies and feminism) to explore a more 'radical pluralism' where the dynamic between heterosexuality and heteronormativity is problematized. This, as we imagine it, would consist of exploring the lives of those people whose gendered and sexual subject positions are shaped by race, ethnicity, age, class and so on. Returning to Cohen, queering heterosexuality in this way might help MOS scholars identify spaces of shared or similar oppression and resistance within the academy and in organizations that 'provide a basis for radical coalition work' (1997, p. 453).

Queering heterosexuality may also inspire a queer politics of organizing that, amongst other things, seeks to disrupt the heteronormativity of organization. The salience of this assertion for MOS queer theory scholars is clearly audible in the repeated calls made by such scholars (and others in the field) to dismantle organizational heteronormativity (e.g. Bowring & Brewis, 2009; Courtney, 2014; McDonald, 2013, 2016a; Ozturk & Rumens, 2014). Yet these calls seldom mention explicitly nor explore fully how heterosexuality and heterosexuals can be sites of change toward that end. We hold that queering heteronormativity can shift the locus of challenging heteronormativity as being external to heterosexuals, which has traditionally underplayed their agency in this endeavour (Beasley et al., 2012). Crucially, it can problematize and extend current scholarship that identifies heterosexuals as the 'allies' of LGBT employees, typically within education and human development contexts (e.g. Brooks & Edwards, 2009; Lapointe, 2015).

For example, when positioned as 'allies', heterosexuals have to be called out as such, which in a similar way to Heasley's (2005) typology reifies rather than deconstructs their relationship with heterosexuality. Here, queering heterosexuality brings to the fore a tension between recognition-based politics, in which subjects make political investments in identity categories such as 'straight ally', and queer forms of politics that seek to dissolve these identity categories. Rather than see this situation as an either/or choice, queering heterosexuality could involve political activism in the workplace that deploys identity categories coded as heterosexual, but in ways that render heterosexuality permanently unclear as to what it means. In this way, heterosexuality can be a site where people experiment creatively with forms of organizing and coalition building that go beyond the limited options offered up through the 'straight ally' concept and identity category. Obviously, there is always the risk of

heterosexuality, like queer, being recuperated (back) into the normal, but even when 'queer' political experiments fail, they can yield insights into how sexuality and gender can be lived differently. Failure is, as Munoz (2009) suggests, a necessary part of the creative work of striving toward the ideality of 'queerness' - 'we are not yet queer' (p. 1), but we may aspire towards it, and in so doing expose the normative constraints that squeeze human flourishing.

Conclusion

We have argued here that queering queer theory in MOS can play an important role in retaining queer theory's capacity to disrupt what is normal. As such, this endeavour may create possibilities for queering heterosexuality and other forms of queering to emerge, as evidenced by prior incursions into queering capitalism (Gibson-Graham, 1996), success/failure (Halberstam, 2011) and race (Cohen, 1997). Challenging contemporary regimes of the normal continues to be at the heart of political activism labelled as 'queer', with some queer theorists arguing that queer politics must remain open-ended as it should/does not properly belong to any specific group (do Mar Castro et al., 2011). Following this assertion, this article contributes to queer theory scholarship more generally, (re)-emphasizing the importance of queering heterosexuality to foster new forms of coalition building and 'radical pluralism' (Cohen, 1997). Although it is the case that practices of queering tend to be confined to academic contexts, scholars of queer politics also point out that 'academic knowledge production is now privileged in driving' queer interventions in radical social movements' (Brown, 2016, p. 83). While the privileging of academic knowledge in that role is problematic, and the nature of contemporary radical street-based queer activism is sporadic (Brown, 2016), the

potential for queer theorists in MOS and elsewhere to advance queer activist praxis is noteworthy. It may be that in pursuing the project of queering heterosexuality we find new MOS scholars who are inspired to mobilize queer theory, some of whom may even take up political activism; notably, that which engages with the concerns of those people who find themselves in subject positions that are marginalized and denigrated in the ongoing reconfiguration of normative social relations.

To round off, it is fruitful to return to our starting point, to restate the value of Gibson-Graham (1996), the first explicitly queer intervention into the MOS domain. In line with Gibson-Graham, we articulate and mobilize queer as an ethical, aesthetic and political approach which profoundly questions what is considered normal in a specific place and time. Understood in this capacity, queer theory offers researchers, within MOS and beyond, a freer hand to do exactly what Parker (2016) describes as 'forcing thought' about what is normal in our everyday lives.

Endnotes

1. We do not use the terms 'minority' and 'majority' in a quantitative, numerical sense, but rather to index those who are more or less socially marginalized, subaltern groups as against those who enjoy forms of social privilege – so women as opposed to men, gay men, lesbians and bisexuals as opposed to heterosexuals, those identifying as transgender as opposed to cisgender and so on.

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