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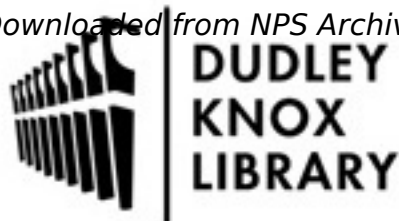
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## Exploring the generative potential between positive organizational scholarship and management, spirituality, and religion research

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Though conceptually distinct, the fields of positive organizational scholarship (POS) and management, spirituality, and religion (MSR) consider various phenomena in common. In this paper, we address a range of topics that both disciplines explore, as well as topics that are exclusive to one domain but that may inform and enrich the other. We identify shared criticisms that both domains have faced and highlight different paths each field has taken toward establishing legitimacy. Our aim is to identify mutually relevant terrain where MSR research and POS can inform and enrich each other.

**Keywords:** management; spirituality and religion; positive organizational scholarship; MSR; POS; SRW

### Introduction

Positive organizational scholarship (POS) is a domain of inquiry concerned with “questions about what processes, states, and conditions are important to human flourishing” (Dutton, OMT Interview, August, 2010). POS seeks to understand, describe, and foster the dynamics that make for optimal human and organizational functioning. Although POS and management, spirituality, and religion (MSR) research have different aims and foci, there are substantial areas of overlap, such as broad humanistic concerns for creating more positive and accepting workplaces, examining the sources of meaning at work, and fostering conditions for flourishing in life and at work. Shared interests and substantive differences between these domains can serve as a generative resource for both areas of inquiry. In the following pages, we highlight a series of topics where shared exploration may be especially fruitful.

We briefly (and, therefore, somewhat selectively) review POS and MSR as scholarly domains and then identify areas of shared interest among the two areas where one domain could inform the other in particularly useful ways.

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Though the roots of both POS and MSR have far ranging antecedents (in the case of MSR, to contemplative and theological traditions extending back for centuries, and for POS the foundations of humanistic social science), the rise of these domains within organizational studies has occurred during the same time period. Both areas of inquiry seek to bring unexamined variables into scholarly view. Just as the two domains share some overlapping interests, they have faced some mutual criticisms and may benefit from one another's approaches to establishing legitimacy. We address these issues as we inventory the backgrounds of POS and MSR.

Although cross-pollination has been limited there has, to date, been some overlap between these scholarly communities. Take, for example, the recent JMSR piece on callings at work (Word 2012), a topic that has been "of central importance" (Wrzesniewski 2012, p. 45) within POS. The recent *Oxford Handbook of Positive Organizational Scholarship* features a chapter on spirituality within POS (Sandelands 2012). Both POS and MSR research have learned from and drawn on insights from business ethics. The 2006 JMSR special issue on virtues is another reflection of a shared area of interest (Manz *et al.* 2006).

It is important to note that we are POS-identified researchers, not MSR scholars. Thus, we write from the perspective of POS looking outward at MSR scholarship. We address an MSR audience, on the pages of an MSR journal, trusting that the readers already have an understanding of MSR issues. Importantly, we further constrained our scope to solely consider matters that we, the authors, know well and where the relevance of MSR research to POS scholarship has been noted by others. Thus, we focus on virtues and virtuousness (most significantly, on compassion and forgiveness), on the meaning and meaningfulness of work, and on coping with difficulties and challenges at work (primarily on resilience and organizational healing).

These topics are by no means definitive. Because it is outside of our authorial expertise, we do not, for example, address mindful organizing (Vogus 2012) – a topic where scholars have noted differences between Western conceptions of mindfulness (Langer 1989) and Buddhist-inspired Eastern conceptions (Weick and Putnam 2006, Weick and Sutcliffe 2006). Similarly, even if we know a topic has likely "cross-over" relevance to both POS and MSR scholars, we do not address such topics unless there has been an explicit articulation by others of shared relevance or of the religious, spiritual, theological antecedents to current organization studies topics. So, for example, high-quality connections and positive relationships comprise an important element of POS inquiry (Dutton and Heaphy 2003, Stephens *et al.* 2012). Researchers of these topics note that the role of gratitude should receive further scholarly attention. Although common sense and personal experience tell us that the cultivation of gratitude is a theme within religious tradition and practice, we do not explore the topic since POS scholars have yet to make an explicit attempt to note an overlap or shared relevance.

Throughout this manuscript, we use the term MSR rather than “Spirituality and Religion at Work (SRW).” Although we see instrumental value in reinforcing the importance of spiritual and religious matters at work, we favor the idea that religious and spiritual insights have relevance to organizations beyond the workplace. Additionally, while we draw on an array of sources here, we extensively cite the *Oxford Handbook of Positive Organizational Scholarship* because the handbook consists entirely of review chapters of the most current (2012) and central topics in POS to date. We suggest that MSR researchers who consider connecting their agendas to POS, or making use of POS insights to enrich their work, would be well served by this text.

### Mapping the terrain

POS researchers have noted antecedents to their work throughout the twentieth century – including, for example, roots in humanistic psychology, community psychology, organizational development, and ethics – but much of this early work was neither empirical nor research-based (Cameron *et al.* 2003). Thus, a formal attempt to create a domain of scholarly inquiry began early in the twenty-first century. Whereas organization studies has traditionally focused primarily on organizational performance outcomes – such as successfully achieving profitability, productivity, or other valued goals – POS states that while “achieving goals of profitability are not excluded from consideration, POS has a bias toward life-giving, generative, and ennobling human conditions regardless of whether they are attached to traditional economic or political benefits.” (Cameron and Spreitzer 2012b). In other words, positive outcomes for individuals and groups in organizations are seen as “goods of first intent” (Aristotle, translation Crisp 2000) or positive and legitimate outcomes in and of themselves, unbound from broader considerations of organizational performance.

POS has not been unconcerned with organizational performance, however. POS scholarship has sought to understand the conditions that enable, sustain, or give rise to outlier levels of excellence or particularly extraordinary performance. POS has often framed such inquiry as an investigation of “positive deviance” (Spreitzer and Sonenshein 2003, 2004, Lavine 2012). Additionally, POS recognizes that all organizational performance is context dependent. In circumstances where tragedy is expected, lesser suffering may in fact be extraordinary. This insight is exemplified in studies of resilience, compassion, forgiveness, and courage in the presence of major challenges (Dutton *et al.* 2006, Powley 2009, Bright and Exline 2012). A POS lens has routinely been employed as a means to investigate organizational difficulties, threats, or other challenging aspects of organizational strife (e.g. Frost 2003, Cameron and Lavine 2006, Lilius *et al.* 2008, Powley 2009, Lilius *et al.* 2011, Lavine and Cameron 2012). This helps dispel the notion that a focus on “the positive” is somehow concerned only with “sweetness and light” or that it denies hardship and suffering.

POS has also investigated social change in varied contexts such as health care, corporate social responsibility, and social inequality, as it affects low-wage workers. POS has sought to legitimize the study of conditions that enable and support human well-being among those facing benevolent as well as challenging circumstances. To support this endeavor, POS research has explored a variety of concepts and variables previously outside the scope of organizational theory such as compassion, human flourishing, work orientation including a sense of calling, and high quality connections. Additionally, POS has brought attention to the ways in which organizations are sites for human organizing that can foster resourcefulness, resilience, mutual support, and other expressions of virtuousness.

Though MSR research has far-reaching precursors, the last 20 years have marked a visible rise in organizational research related to spirituality and religion. Of course, MSR topics have been explored extensively in fields outside of management or organization studies but much of the research and effort to establish MSR as a domain is fairly recent (Fornaciari and Lund Dean 2004). Initial bibliographic research about MSR has identified central themes in the most highly influential research on these topics to date. While perhaps the foremost theme has focused on developing appropriate research methods and measurements, beyond this, four prevalent themes within MSR research to date include (1) aspects of individual identity such as attitudes, beliefs, values, and behavior related to spirituality or religiosity at work, (2) HR-related considerations of integrating religious or spiritual belief systems and practices into professional life, including education and training efforts to enable enhanced diversity in the workplace, (3) organization-level considerations of workplace religion and spirituality, and (4) the interrelationships or overlap among religion, spirituality, and ethical practices and traditions (Fornaciari and Lund Dean 2009). MSR research has brought a variety of new variables into the scholarly domain such as faith, God, spirituality, and religion (Sandelands 2012).

### **Establishing legitimacy**

Although the POS and MSR communities have begun to achieve visibility during a similar time period, the two groups have pursued field-level legitimacy in notably distinct ways. The MSR community has sought legitimacy by creating its own specialty journal and an interest group within the Academy of Management. Several books have served as influential early works. In addition to work published in peer-reviewed management journals, fields outside of management have also helped shape the domain. In contrast, the POS community has relied on edited books, journal special issues, and the creation of an academic center to serve as an organizing point and clearinghouse. Its primary focus has been on publication in top-tier journals as well as scholarly conferences and symposia with influential and emerging scholars as key methods to establish itself as a

recognized and distinctive scholarly domain. To date, no specific journal or Academy of Management division focuses on POS:

POS and MSR have faced similar criticisms. POS has been criticized for imposing a moral agenda that critics see as narrowly proscribing what constitutes the good and the positive and for employing a positive lens that biases or limits rigorous inquiry (Fineman 2006). MSR research has been criticized for lacking theoretical or empirical rigor and for relying excessively on the first-person religious or spiritual interests of researchers (Benefiel 2003, Lund Dean *et al.* 2003). Some have noted the “considerable timidity” organizational scholars have had about exploring questions of spirituality and religion (Rosso *et al.* 2010, p. 106). Rosso and colleagues cite the lack of shared language, conceptual frameworks, and norms about separating work and religious/spiritual matters as factors which likely contribute to the tendency of organizational scholars to overlook and under-theorize matters related to spirituality and religion.

Both movements have been criticized for ignoring counter-phenomena (such as negativity or nonreligious contexts), adopting an elitist viewpoint, or lacking precise theoretical definitions (Fineman 2006, Ehrenich 2009). Although both fields have been criticized for a lack of rigor or empirical foundation, this criticism has diminished as additional work has emerged that counters such perceptions. Several prominent scholars within the POS and MSR communities have strenuously cautioned that enthusiasm for the overall concepts not outpace theory development and empirical grounding (Cameron *et al.* 2003, Lund Dean *et al.* 2003, Roberts 2006, Hackman 2009). Even though proponents of these fields have noted that variables of interest may stretch the boundaries of organizational studies, there is a need for careful development of concepts, variables, measures, and methodologies in order for these fields to mature and achieve legitimacy. In addition, both disciplines have been unapologetic about normative aims to cultivate more humane workplaces. These normative biases account for at least some of the criticism and resistance among scholars who are wedded to ideals of objectivity. On the other hand, objectivity and a normative agenda are not incompatible, and both POS and MSR are dedicated to rigorously investigating these domains.

Ample overlapping terrain representing shared interest exists between these scholarly communities. The remainder of this paper addresses a broad, and hopefully generative, swath of this territory.

### **Sources for shared contribution and generativity**

In this section, we explore three broad areas where POS scholarship has called for MSR insights or acknowledged the MSR origins of the topics in question. We first address strengths and virtues, focusing primarily on compassion and forgiveness. Then, we address the meaning of work and meaningfulness at

work. Finally, we address coping with challenges and crises, focusing primarily on resilience and healing.

### *Virtues & virtuousness*

POS concerns itself with an array of human strengths and individual and organizational virtues. Virtue fundamentally connotes a sense of living as a moral and honorable actor. To be virtuous is to cultivate such a state (MacIntyre 2007). Though specific virtues may be more or less idealized depending on certain contextual factors, the idea of virtue as an essential means for cultivating excellence and enabling human flourishing is remarkably consistent across time and cultures (Peterson and Seligman 2004). Among POS scholars, virtues such as compassion, courage, forgiveness, hope, humility, integrity, justice, prudence, temperance, and transcendence have been the object of study (e.g. Cameron and Spreitzer 2012a). Furthermore, POS scholars have examined organizational aspects of specific constellations of virtues – what is referred to as virtuousness (Cameron and Winn 2012) – as well as the organizational implications of an overall stance of positive ethics (Verbos *et al.* 2007).

Philosophers and theologians have debated virtues for centuries, seeking to describe and articulate a theory of the “good life” (MacIntyre 2007) and by extension, the “good society” (Bellah *et al.* 1984). Aristotle dedicated volumes to a discussion of these issues, including a lengthy treatise that articulated the basic elements of a virtuous character (Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* translation) as an aspiration that can create the conditions for a flourishing, meaningful life, and a highly functional society. The Greek word for excellence, *arête*, has long been considered an important prerequisite for the state of *eudaimonia*, or a condition in which human beings reach their greatest potential.

Religious traditions have echoed and assimilated much of the logic found in these works to generate a theological understanding of virtue. Religious and spiritual thought has emphasized the need for the cultivation of virtuous character through the development of virtues such as faith, hope, and charity (see St. Thomas Aquinas translation Oesterle, 1984), or through virtues such as compassion, equanimity, forbearance, and forgiveness (Bible, Buddhist Sutras, Koran, Torah). As the concept of virtue has evolved, it has come to be seen as a core aspect of moral and intellectual excellence (Solomon 1992).

A virtue-based approach to ethics was venerated as the ideal mode of moral reasoning through much of history (MacIntyre 2007, McCloskey 2008). The pursuit of virtue and virtuousness was thought to promote right behavior as the challenges of life were confronted. For instance, the code of chivalry – enshrined today in military codes of conduct – emphasized the need for excellence of character among warriors, emphasizing virtues such as honor, integrity, loyalty, and courage.

“The Enlightenment marked an era when an increased focus on logic, reason, and empiricism became a preferred mode for moral decision-making (Toulmin 1992, MacIntyre 2007); so by nineteenth century, virtue and

character-focused approaches of moral reasoning were considered less ideal than more secular and scientifically guided reasoning. In Victorian England, virtue, as a term and concept, lost many of its earlier connotations (Solomon 1992), and more commonly addressed a narrow range of largely religiously influenced matters such as chastity or abstinence. In the early twentieth century, as the social sciences rose in prominence, there was an explicit effort to suppress considerations of virtue-oriented perspectives, apparently because of perceived concerns about maintaining the secular, objective values of the scientific method (Baumeister and Exline 1999, Tjeltveit 2003, Peterson and Seligman 2004).

Historical context within the POS and MSR movements is useful to understand the current emphasis in both domains to merge scientific rigor with concepts of virtue and virtuousness: Peterson and Seligman (2004) highlighted the need for evidence-based conclusions in positive psychology as an important foundation for scholarly legitimacy. The founders of POS have always emphasized that the "S" in the title denotes a focus on scholarly rigor (Cameron *et al.* 2003). MSR scholars similarly sought to highlight a scientific foundation as they created a division in the Academy of Management.

One consequence of this secular emphasis in modern social science is that the theological, religious, and organizational implications associated with virtue-oriented constructs remain underexplored. It is clear that both POS and MSR have taken up the challenge of exploring a broader range of dynamics associated with individual strengths and virtues in organizational life. This includes illustrative examples, such as compassion and forgiveness that follow.

*Compassion:* Compassion has deep roots in religious and spiritual tradition: Lilius *et al.* (2012) write (p. 274):

Christian theologian Thomas Aquinas noted the interdependence of suffering and compassion when he wrote: "No one becomes compassionate unless he suffers" (cited in Barasch 2005, p. 13). Ancient Chinese traditions acknowledge the interrelationship of suffering and human concern in the figure of Kwan Yin, often referred to as the goddess of compassion. Hindu imagery depicts compassion through a half-ape, half-human deity, Hanuman, whose chest is cleaved open to reveal his heart to others undefended. Many Buddhists take the vow of the Bodhisattva, whose life is dedicated to being present with and relieving the suffering of all beings. (Barasch 2005, Chödrön 2005)

Compassion is a virtue that has been examined by scholars in response to recognition of widespread suffering that occurs in organizational life. POS and MSR scholars studying compassion have acknowledged the religious and spiritual origins of compassion as a core concept (e.g. Dutton *et al.* 2006). A formal scholarly definition proposed by organizational scholars states, "Compassion consists of attention to, or noticing of suffering; of empathetic concern, a felt relation with the other, and action to lessen or relieve suffering" (Lilius *et al.* 2012, p. 275). Compassion has been examined as an individual capacity, an interpersonal dynamic, a group attribute, and an organizational



level-construct. While scholars have noted the importance of understanding the limitations and downsides of compassion – such as a lack of compassion when it would be expected, negative repercussions of compassion, and limitations on the institutionalization of compassion – compassion is among the more well-developed constructs in the POS literature. That is, a great deal of scholarly attention has been paid to compassion in organizations and substantial progress is being made on the meaning and consequences of compassion in organizational settings (e.g. Dutton *et al.* 2006, Lilius *et al.* 2012).

The topic of compassion also evokes consideration of the broader social conditions that give rise to human suffering. Social action, social change, and social justice are important matters in religious tradition and, increasingly, the POS lens is expanding to consider these issues (see Golden-Biddle and Dutton 2012). POS scholars have steadily examined issues of change agency (Branzei 2012, Sonenshein 2012), poverty, and low-wage work (Leana and Kossek 2012, Jones Christensen 2012), as well as social and environmental degradation and sustainability (Cameron and Lavine 2006, Hoffman and Haigh 2012). Inquiry on these topics is also compatible with the stated MSR goal of “doing work that furthers humanity” (Lund Dean *et al.* 2003, p. 385 citing Lips-Wiersma 2001).

*Forgiveness*: Similarly, forgiveness also has a significant history in religious and spiritual thought (Rye *et al.* 2000). However, unlike compassion, most of the social science research on forgiveness focus on a secular operationalization of forgiveness, largely eschewing its spiritual and religious undertones. As Arendt (1958) explained, forgiveness is an important idea and set of practices with significant, secular implications. An emphasis on the secular in research has tended to overshadow an emphasis on the religious and spiritual.

Still, from this secular focus, a wealth of information about forgiveness and its effects has emerged. Forgiveness, rather than a specific practice, refers to a range of practices that all have a common core: to overcome or prevent a cycle of harm and victimization that may occur (Bright and Exline 2012). The context for forgiveness can occur at nearly any level of an organization, from the person who experiences harm from another person to the collective harm that two warring groups may impose on each other. Though a full review is beyond the scope of this paper, the benefits to forgivers are now well established: forgiveness is associated with greater health, longevity, stronger relationships, and much more (Cameron and Caza 2002, Lawler *et al.* 2003, Worthington and Scherer 2004, Cameron 2006, Witvliet and McCullough 2007).

The theological underpinnings of forgiveness focus attention, not only on forgivers, but also on the effects of forgiveness on offenders. In contrast, nearly all of the social scientific literature on forgiveness focus on the actions and effects of forgiveness on the forgiver, yet relatively few studies explore how forgiveness affects offenders (Bright and Exline 2012). This is intriguing because forgiveness figures prominently in theological discussions about how to help people reform when they have engaged in harmful, offensive activities. The few studies that examine how forgiveness affects offenders are notable,

because they indicate that the effect of forgiveness, even the process of seeking forgiveness, can be dramatic (Bright *et al.* 2006, Wallace *et al.* 2008).

Another area in which forgiveness writing has acknowledged its religious and spiritual connections is in the subjective experience of being forgiven by God. Though the theological traditions may differ in how they describe this phenomenon, those who claim to experience forgiveness from the divine describe it as a transformational, life-changing experience. For example, Alcoholics Anonymous espouses the acknowledgement of one's relationship with God as a key and crucial step in recovery from addiction. The last step of the 12-step process includes the experience of "awakening," which is understood as a spiritual occurrence. Moreover, the steps leading to this final "awakening" includes a process of reaching out to those that one has harmed to make amends. These steps all refer to the process of repenting, or overcoming one's shortcomings, and seeking forgiveness from those one has offended. This leads to an interruption in the pattern of harming oneself and others. Thus, awakening has relevance to organizational scholars whether they are exploring the spiritual aspects of awakening or the dynamics of thriving, flourishing, resilience, or positive relationship as POS scholars do.

Similarly, POS scholarship makes use of the religious or spiritual notion of transcendence to examine forgiveness at work. For example, Bright *et al.* (2006) illustrated how perspectives on forgiveness reflect different mindsets toward work. The most forgiving mindset, the *transcendent* mode, appears to be associated with strong leadership and a willingness to change. In another example, forgiveness appears to be an important consideration when employees commit errors in the workplace: the way an organization responds at such moments is critical because of the many implications for outcomes. Organizational forgiveness represents the optimal balance of competing considerations – for example, the employee learns from the experience, while the organization ensures that the error is not repeated. These few examples illustrate potential overlap between POS perspectives on forgiveness and MSR perspectives.

### *Meaning, meaningfulness, and work*

Rosso *et al.* (2010) noted that questions about how people construe meaning in and of their work "have intrigued psychologists, sociologists, economists, and organizational scholars for decades and have inspired philosophers and theologians for centuries prior" (p. 91). They also noted that some organizational theorists see questions of meaning as having an inherently spiritual aspect (Vaill 1989). Others, such as Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2012), have echoed the insight that questions about the meaning and meaningfulness of work are linked to and informed by religious and spiritual thought. Work orientation and the experience of meaningful work has been a deeply explored topic within POS.

Among the many aspects of the meaning and meaningfulness of work that have been explored by organization scholars, several scholars, principally

Wrzesniewski and colleagues (Wrzesniewski *et al.* 1997, Wrzesniewski 2012), have built on the work of Bellah *et al.* (1985) to note that some people construe their work as a "job" in which the benefits of work, and the meaning associated with it, is primarily rooted in external benefits. They seek financial remuneration or enjoyment outside the tasks in which they are engaged. Other people construe their work as a "career" in which the primary benefits of work, and the meaning associated with it, are rooted in opportunities for promotion, prestige, title, and personal growth. Still, others see their work as a "calling" in which inherent meaning, profound purpose, and personal values are inherently attached to the tasks or nature of the work being accomplished.

Scholars who have examined callings note the religious roots of the concept (Wrzesniewski 2003, Rosso *et al.* 2010, Dobrow and Tosti-Kharas 2011, Wrzesniewski, 2012). Although, historically, people described themselves as feeling called to work with inherent moral or social (and often religious) significance, scholars have subsequently noted that any work can potentially be construed as having a sacred aspect. A sense of calling can be experienced if the actor sees the work as dedicated to core values or a higher purpose. Although various secular conceptualizations of calling are now employed, they share a connection to the neoclassical Protestant reformation form of the concept by having an inherently other-oriented, pro-social aspect (Bunderson and Thompson 2009). Inquiry related to the meaning of work has been a core area of exploration within POS, but, as pointed out by Rosso *et al.* (2010, p. 106), ample terrain exists where considerations of spirituality and religiosity could inform organizational studies. They write:

Fundamental concepts in the study of the meaning of work, such as callings and vocations, have deep theological roots (Calvin 1574, Luther 1520). In addition, research has found that individuals frequently turn to spirituality or religion in their fundamental search for meaning and purpose in life (Šverko and Vizek-Vidović 1995, Lips-Wiersma 2002), and although they may be reluctant to discuss it at work, large numbers of employees across the world think of their work in spiritual terms (Davidson and Caddell 1994, Grant *et al.* 2004, Sullivan 2006) and see their religion playing an important role in how they conduct their work lives (Childs 1995). This suggests that spiritual life has an important influence on the meaning of work, yet is often overlooked in organizational scholarship (Nord *et al.* 1990). There are two areas of research on spiritual life that have particular relevance to the meaning of work: (1) spirituality writ large; and (2) sacred calling to a particular vocation.

Organization scholars have examined questions about what fosters and inhibits a sense of work meaningfulness (Rosso *et al.* 2010). This includes work motivation (Hackman and Oldham 1980, Roberson 1990, Grant 2007, Grant and Parker 2009), absenteeism (Wrzesniewski *et al.* 1997), turnover intention (Cameron *et al.* 1991, Spreitzer and Mishra 2002, Gittell *et al.* 2006), work behavior (Wrzesniewski and Dutton 2001, Bunderson and Thompson 2009, Berg *et al.* 2010), engagement (May *et al.* 2004), job satisfaction (Wrzesniewski *et al.* 1997), empowerment (Spreitzer 1996, Spreitzer 2007),

stress (Locke and Taylor 1990, Elangovan *et al.* 2010), organizational identification (Dutton *et al.* 1994, Pratt *et al.* 2006), career development (Dik and Duffy 2009, Dobrow 2012), individual performance (Hackman and Oldham 1980, Wrzesniewski 2003), and personal fulfillment (Kahn 2007). Yet, the role of religion and spirituality has largely been ignored in POS research.

Rosso *et al.* (2010, p. 107) issued a challenge to those doing MSR scholarship, to supplement the research on work meaning and meaningfulness conducted to date:

Systematic examinations of the mechanisms through which spiritual life impacts the meaning of work would be important contributions to this literature. We urge researchers to employ rigorous research methods in the study of spiritual life and meaning. Many of the studies on spiritual life that we reviewed in the meaning of work literature used particularly small or targeted samples to test their hypotheses, suffer from a lack of clear theoretical constructs and validated measures, employ cross-sectional research designs, and/or miss opportunities to better explicate the psychological processes underlying spiritual meaning-making. For these reasons, we strongly encourage scholars conducting work in this area to strengthen the methodological rigor of the work by employing longitudinal designs focused on broader samples of employees. Our hope is that this would help remove the hesitancy with which researchers have approached this domain of research, and create a strong foundation upon which future research can build.

In other words, both POS and MSR research on meaning and meaningfulness can be enhanced and enriched by more collaboration between the two domains. MSR scholars can supplement POS research with more focus on the spiritual and religious bases of the meaning of work and work meaningfulness. POS scholars can enrich MSR research by offering additional theory, research designs, measures, and empirical bases that may foster, strengthen, or otherwise contribute to MSR research.

### *Coping with difficulties & challenges*

POS scholars have looked at positive dynamics amidst situations of trauma, suffering, and other forms of hardship. POS research related to crisis response, organizational recovery, posttraumatic growth, resilience, and healing have relevance to MSR research. When organizations face challenges and setbacks, POS scholars have focused on dynamics associated with relationships, routines, cultures, and processes by which resilience is developed and healing occurs (e.g. Powley 2012). What is less understood is the role that spirituality and religion plays in organizations and their members when such events take place.

The extent to which scholars have examined spirituality and religion in crisis remains largely a focus on generalized notions of soul and spirit (Mitroff 2005), meaning making, (Weiss *et al.* 2003), and identifying dimensions of spirituality (Tedeschi and Calhoun 1995). From a POS perspective, a recognition of suffering, setbacks, adverse challenges calls attention to actions and interventions that potentially prevent or diminish effects of crisis in the work

place. The rich array of MSR work has largely been ignored or superficially referenced in POS writing to date, but such cross-fertilization would greatly enrich our understanding of resilience and healing in organizational settings. For example:

*Resilience:* Resilience is conceptualized as positive adjustment and maintenance in the face of setbacks (Sutcliffe and Vogus 2003). It represents how individuals bounce back to a degree of normalcy after challenging circumstances. Recovering from setbacks is as likely to come from the spiritual aspects of life as from psychological or organizational strategies, practices, or routines. In times of great challenge, where psychological states are diminished, vitality may be renewed or enhanced by spiritual and religious practices such as meditation, prayer, or devotional performance, as well as by organizational practices such as team building activities, reformulating routines, and redeploying resources (e.g. Powley 2012).

Researchers studying organizational resilience note the critical importance of relationships to enable resilience (Sutcliffe and Vogus 2003, Peterson 2006, Gittell 2008, Powley 2009). High-quality human connections (Dutton and Ragins 2007) and relational coordination (Gittell 2008; 2012) are commonly identified sources of organizational resilience (Barker Caza and Milton, 2012). One form that this social support takes is the development of a sense of collective efficacy – which is defined as a “group’s shared belief in the conjoint capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to produce given levels of attainment” (Bandura 1997, p. 477). Collective efficacy fosters resilience (Goddard and Salloum 2012). In other words, collective efficacy is the developed sense within a group of capability, competence, and impending success when faced with a challenge. Not only does this enhance resiliency among organization members, but it also has been linked to improved health and educational outcomes, reduced violence, and positive group cohesion (Goddard and Salloum 2012).

In MSR research, a similar phenomenon is associated with the concepts of faith and hope. These concepts are similar in nature to collective efficacy, although little cross-referencing has occurred to date. This suggests an important area where POS and MSR researchers may be able to better inform one another’s work. While spiritual practices and communities routinely support positive adjustment to hardship, religious narratives may also enable hardiness within communities. Conversely, the mechanisms and insights of resilience may enable MSR researchers to better understand the essential dynamics of spiritual and religious practices and traditions.

Another closely related topic to resilience is posttraumatic growth. Posttraumatic growth describes the positive change and potential for transformation that can accompany, or stem from, navigating trauma-inducing circumstances. Researchers of posttraumatic growth (Maitlis 2012) note that religious tradition has long held the insight that life’s most difficult challenges can indeed contribute to positive transformation (O’Rourke *et al.* 2008). The major inventory used to measure posttraumatic growth includes “spiritual change” as one of the

five factors that define the adjustments that accompany posttraumatic growth (Tedeschi and Calhoun 1995). MSR researchers and POS researchers, currently pursuing these topics largely independently; may benefit from integrating both fields' perspectives in this research.

The construct of psychological capital also builds on and informs scholarly understanding of resilience. Psychological capital is a measurable and validated construct that shows positive organizational behaviors in use. Psychological capital is related to resilience in that the understood core variables include resilience along with efficacy, hope, and optimism. Researchers have noted that the cognitive resource of wisdom and the higher order resource of spirituality merit further consideration as possible added elements of psychological capital (Youssef and Luthans 2012). Researchers also noted that mindfulness practices such as meditation should be investigated as means to foster psychological capital (Youssef and Luthans 2012).

*Organizational healing:* Organizational healing marries resilience and posttraumatic growth. Both are vital to healing. Whereas resilience serves a maintenance function, posttraumatic growth adds a strengthening and growth dimension. Posttraumatic growth research has examined factors that promote individual and psychological well-being. Healing adds a growth dimension, but at the organizational level of analysis. In organizational healing, organizations bounce back from setbacks, but also strengthen relationships, routines, and processes in case of future threats or trauma. Furthermore, organizational healing combines insights from positive group relationships (e.g. Cameron *et al.* 2003, Dutton and Ragins 2007), work recovery (Mitchell 1996) and restoration (Fazio and Fazio 2005) to describe the work of repairing organizations and fostering the repair of vital practices, routines, and structures after significant crisis (Christianson *et al.* 2009, Powley 2012, Sonnentag *et al.* 2012).

Powley (2012) noted three conceptual pathways that support healing. Each may have relevance for MSR scholars as religious and spiritual practices are relevant to these domains. Organizational healing occurs through compassionate organizing, interpersonal connections, and the role of structuration as people in organizations create and legitimate meaning and action. Compassionate organizing (Dutton *et al.* 2006) in healing refers to the ways by which individuals respond to one another when faced with challenges. When work colleagues experience challenges, compassionate responses invoke positive emotions, which may thereby increase positive outcomes for individuals and organizations. Healing also involves restoration through interpersonal connections and positive social support. Research on communities and social groups suggest that positive relationships in communities are necessary to ensure their viability (Ayalon 1998, Fazio and Fazio 2005), and faith-based organizations may be one vehicle to achieve positive relationships (Sutton 2003, Sutton *et al.* 2006). Structuration theory (Giddens 1984) emphasizes the duality of both agency and structure where organization members and supporting responses to crisis externally reproduce social structures through their actions and interactions.

These pathways represent a promising way to study religious organizations that play important salutary functions postcrisis. For example, studying established social networks and positive relationships within a faith community might be one way to understand the effect of resilience and compassionate responses after major harm. Moreover, faith-based organizations may likely play a role in restoring order and meaning after the chaos of tragedy. In this sense, organizational healing occurs through enabling structures (Giddens 1984) such as ritual and ceremony associated with religious and spiritual practices. Rituals and ceremonies function to enable organization members to address their pain, share personal stories of the trauma, remake connections with other organization members, and begin to restore and resume the routines and practices of organizational work. Religious and spiritual practices are an important source of these social processes.

## **Conclusion**

In the preceding pages, we have explored an array of themes where the relevance to both POS and MSR scholars is established and could be further developed. A number of topics exist within POS where there is recognition that deeper insights into matters of spirituality and religion could aid understanding. We have identified issues such as virtuousness in organizations, meaning in work, and coping with traumas and difficulties where an enriched understanding of issues related to spirituality and religion would be beneficial. Although we write from a POS perspective, this is most certainly a two-way street. Beyond the learning that POS can gain from MSR researchers, we hope that the MSR community identifies questions within its domain that POS researchers may be especially suited to address.

Writing as a POS scholar, Sandelands notes that “lacking an idea of the human spirit, business science cannot account for the trust that makes business possible” (Sandelands 2012, p. 1001). He also points to the possible broad humanizing effects of making room for considerations of spirituality and religion within management:

If today’s literature on spirituality in business is united about anything, it is in the claim that there is “something more” to the human person; namely his or her human essence or spirit. Many see this claim as a brief for change – as a challenge to the values of scientific materialism and selfish individualism and as a shift “from modernity’s exaltation of reason to an appreciation of feeling, emotion and experience” and “from a dominance of masculinity and patriarchy to a celebration of femininity, in individuals and society.” Perhaps this literature evinces its subject, finding inspiration in its study of “spirit.” (p. 1002)

POS and MSR share a broad aim of humanizing organizational life. Yet, both have been criticized for their normative stance and for introducing research topics previously deemed unscientific. Thankfully, both movements recognize the need for theoretical and empirical rigor to strengthen their

respective agendas and contributions. We hope this paper encourages and emboldens scholars to explore terrain that makes use of, and adds to, insights from both of these vibrant scholarly domains.

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