

# Gretchen Spreitzer

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## **Connecting to Positive Organizational Scholarship**

I have several different research clusters, briefly described below, that connect to core premises of POS. Many of the working papers are available on my [website](#).

### **1. Psychological empowerment at work**

For almost 15 years, I have been studying the psychological experience of empowerment to better understand human agency at work. I have developed and validated a measure of psychological empowerment that has been used around the world with people in all kinds of organizations and at different levels of the organizational hierarchy. Much of my work has focused on how organizations can build cultures, systems, and processes to nurture more empowerment, and on establishing the benefits of empowerment for individuals and organizations. An overview of this research is captured in a book I wrote with Robert Quinn entitled *A Company of Leaders: Five Disciplines for Unleashing the Power in Your Workforce* (Jossey-Bass, 2001). More recent work has examined empowerment amidst organizational change and for purposes of leadership development.

### **2. Enabling thriving at work**

In a research lab on thriving (Marlys Christianson, Jane Dutton, Adam Grant, Kathie Sutcliffe, Scott Sonenshein, and I), we have been studying conditions that enable thriving at work. We published a conceptual paper in *Organization Science* in October, 2005. We have two empirical projects to further understand the dynamics of thriving at work. The first, with Marlys Christianson and Kathie Sutcliffe, empirically examines our socially-embedded model of thriving at work and demonstrates how thriving contributes to positive health. The second analyzes individual narratives of thriving at work based on data we have collected in three diverse organizations. Future research is aimed at understanding unit-level thriving.

### **3. The reflected best self and the path to becoming extraordinary in organizations**

I am part of a team (Brianna Barker, Kathryn Dekas, Jane Dutton, Emily Heaphy, Laura Roberts, Brent Rosso, and Bob Quinn) working to understand how and why reflected best-self appraisals affect individuals and the relationships between individuals at work. We have developed and have been using a process whereby individuals receive feedback about how and when they have added value from people who are from different spheres of their lives—work colleagues, friends, family members. (Visit the [Center for POS website](#) to access this assessment tool, the Reflected Best Self Exercise.) The experience of getting this form of feedback is transformative. We are trying to understand the social and psychological pathways by which this practice affects people. We have a theory paper that appeared in *Academy of Management Review*, an applied paper in *Harvard Business Review*, and have completed a large-scale data collection effort with Harvard Business School MBAs. We are currently analyzing the data and designing a field study to demonstrate the power of the Reflected Best Self Exercise.

### **4. The role of organizations in sustainable peace**

This is part of a larger research effort at the Ross School on how business organizations can contribute to world peace and is led by Tim Fort and Cindy Schipani. In this research, I seek to understand how businesses can promote peace through two organizational features: participative organizational leadership and employee empowerment. These can create conditions in companies and communities that, in turn, may foster peace in civic and governmental domains. Using various data sets that include nearly 80 countries, I found less corruption and less unrest in countries where the leadership of business organizations is more participative and where employees report more freedom to make decisions. This research seeks to show one way that business organizations can create models of peaceful societies that ultimately can move societies toward more peaceful outcomes. [Click here](#) for a copy of the study.