

Innovative research methods in management, spirituality and religion

This special issue of *Management Research Review* seeks to present innovations in research methods that will advance the study of management, spirituality and religion. Influential research asks questions that a particular audience finds important and provides answers that the audience believes arise from a reliable research design. By publishing articles that provide innovative research approaches, this special issue will help expand the audiences reached, questions asked and answers offered in the field of management, spirituality and religion (MSR).

For this issue, we welcomed submissions within and across multiple forms of methodological inquiry, including – but not limited to – qualitative analysis, statistical analysis, measurement development, experiments, action research, formal modeling and other approaches to developing and answering MSR research questions. Although research methods often emphasize analyzing data, we considered papers on other aspects of the research process, such as planning research, reviewing literature and proposing creative methods for gathering data. Of the submissions selected for publication, some present proposals for contextualizing research, analyzing data and presenting and disseminating findings in ways that make MSR research helpful to managers and employees in organizations.

The overarching goal of identifying innovative research approaches within MSR scholarship is to advance theory building and testing and to bring spiritual perspectives to management practices that improve lives, reduce conflict and promote human flourishing. As a result, we considered multiple forms of research as examples of works that advance MSR research methods along at least four dimensions of opportunity:

- (1) *Traditional and/or new questions*: We considered works that suggest approaches to answer more reliably established questions within MSR, as well as methods that open up new questions for MSR scholarship (see *Interfaith Dialogue in a Secular Field*, and *Straight from the Heart – A Clinical Group Intervention To Research Management Spirituality*).
- (2) *Within and/or across methods*: We sought work that builds upon established qualitative, quantitative and logical methodologies, and work that brings together methods (i.e. mixed methods) (see *Single Case Research Methodology: A Tool for Moral Imagination in Business Ethics*, and *Research Suggestions for Management, Spirituality, Religion*).
- (3) *Within and/or across fields*: We chose works that demonstrate how to apply methods used in other fields to MSR research, including alternatives to established methods that are well-suited to MSR phenomena and questions (see *Authenticity/تحصلا as a Criterion Variable for Islam and Roman Catholic Theology of the Workplace Analysis*, and *Research Suggestions for Management, Spirituality, Religion*).
- (4) *Theory, data and action*: We identified work that takes varied positions along the theory-data continuum, including developing theory, testing theory, improving measurement reliability and validity, examining data and describing and interpreting phenomena (see *Interfaith Dialogue in a Secular Field*, and *Applying Critical Realism in Spirituality at Work Research*).



Each article in this special issue presents various components of three major attributes:

- (1) *Question*: First, they identify a question (or category of questions) that MSR researchers have not answered adequately or cannot currently ask because they lack suitable means for deriving answers.
- (2) *Methodological innovation*: Second, they describe an innovation in research methods, whether an entirely new approach or a meaningful refinement or recombination of existing approaches that will provide answers.
- (3) *Application*: Third, they apply – or explain how to apply – the innovative method in a specific research context, demonstrating its superiority relative to existing approaches.

This special issue answers a call from the MSR community to provide opportunities and guidance to build the research contribution within MSR, to identify new people who can add to our publication base, and to continue the theoretical work of distinguished scholars such as Andre Delbecq (1936-2016). We offer this issue specifically to maintain and extend such dedication, both now and in the future.

Editorial team

The guest and co-editors for this special issue represent two important attributes that establish relevance in research. First, they represent diverse methodological expertise. Second, they share an open-minded view on research methods in management, spirituality and religion, including audiences, questions and ways of deriving valid and useful answers. Beyond seeking methods advances, this team of special issue editors have reviewed and identified papers that effectively promote the practice, publication and use of MSR research.

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