

## REVIEW ARTICLE

# An integrative multilevel review of thriving at work: Assessing progress and promise

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## Summary

Thriving at work is a notable construct given its role in individual health and developmental outcomes. According to the Socially Embedded Model of Thriving (SEMT), *individuals* thrive at work when *embedded* in environments that support agentic behaviors and can self-sustain this state through *positive spirals* of agentic behaviors, resources, and thriving. The SEMT is inherently multilevel, yet there are two unarticulated but critical multilevel issues in existing scholarship: a paucity of research reflecting these multilevel features of the SEMT and an incipient multilevel conceptualization of thriving that has little theoretical justification. As a catalyst for progress, we present an integrative review drawing from the SEMT and other supplementary theoretical perspectives to define a multilevel conceptualization of thriving at work. Through this lens, we organize, synthesize, and evaluate the body of evidence, integrating the multilevel view of thriving within established scholarship. To substantiate our framework theoretically, we articulate how lower level processes unfold to develop higher level collective manifestations of thriving at work. We identify opportunities for theoretical and empirical advancement, coupled with specific, actionable recommendations, to deepen a multilevel conceptualization of thriving. Altogether, we advance thriving at work as a multilevel construct meaningful at three levels—individuals, dyads, and collectives.

## KEYWORDS

integrative review, multilevel, socially embedded model of thriving, thriving, thriving at work

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Thriving at work has emerged as a critical psychological driver of individual growth and development and is essential for sustainable organizational performance (Spreitzer et al., 2012; Spreitzer & Porath, 2012). Spreitzer et al. (2005) conceptualized a construct, *thriving at work*, defined as “the psychological state in which individuals experience both a sense of vitality and a sense of learning at work” (Spreitzer et al., 2005, p. 538). Central to the construct is that two key dimensions—vitality and learning—function in combination to enrich each other (Porath et al., 2012) and high levels of both are required for employees to thrive (Spreitzer et al., 2005). The construct of

thriving at work captures a sense of forward momentum, a quality lacking in other well-being constructs, such as job satisfaction, that reflect a more tempered state (Danna & Griffin, 1999) and a distinguishing characteristic that drives positive health and development outcomes in individuals (Kleine et al., 2019; Spreitzer et al., 2012).

Since the publication of the foundational article by Spreitzer et al. (2005), scholarly and practitioner interest in thriving at work has proliferated. Notably, a recent meta-analysis (Kleine et al., 2019) determined that thriving at work had predictive validity above and beyond positive affect and work engagement on task performance, job satisfaction, subjective health and burnout outcomes. With these positive outcomes in mind, organizations have been quick to

incorporate thriving into their work practices. For example, since introducing the Thrive@Hilton program in 2017, Hilton has rocketed from Number 27 to Number 1 on the Fortune 100 Best Companies to Work For (Lambrano, 2020). More broadly, government and industry practitioners have expressed immense interest in creating thriving workplaces, evidenced by reports (e.g., Mercer, 2017), events (Virgin Pulse, 2019), and engagement with research centers (e.g., The Centre for Positive Organizations at the University of Michigan).

Guided by self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2000), Spreitzer et al. (2005) developed a *Socially Embedded Model of Thriving* (SEMT) that explains how individuals thrive in environments that enable them to behave agentic at work. Two core assumptions underpin the SEMT. First, it emphasizes that most employees do not work in isolation but instead are *socially embedded* in proximal work contexts (e.g., teams and work units). Work contexts that reflect trust, respect, and decision-making discretion support self-determined and agentic individuals, thus promoting thriving. Second, the SEMT asserts that thriving becomes self-sustaining through *positive spirals* occurring within individuals. Agentic work behaviors (i.e., task focus, exploration, and heedful relating) generate resources such as knowledge, positive meaning, positive affect, and relational resources, which drive further agentic work behaviors, thus creating a recursive loop of agentic behaviors and resources. Individuals are motivated to pursue thriving-enabling conditions, and thriving aids additional agentic behaviors. All told, the SEMT proposes that thriving can be a self-sustaining mechanism that generates its own fuel when individuals are in environments that enable agentic behaviors.

The SEMT is inherently multilevel given its central propositions concerning embeddedness and spirals. Yet, these two propositions are often assumed but rarely researched nor rigorously modeled when examined empirically, hindering the advancement of a nuanced understanding of thriving at work. Overall, the thriving literature largely spotlights individual-level variations and sidelines the multilevel nuances advanced in the SEMT, though there have been some exceptions in recent years (e.g., Niessen et al., 2012; Walumbwa et al., 2018). At the same time, there is an uptick of research examining thriving at work at multiple levels of analysis through empirical means that are not necessarily guided by theory (Chen et al., 2004). For example, several studies examined the thriving of *groups* by aggregating individual ratings of thriving, assuming isomorphism (i.e., that the construct is similar functionally or structurally across levels; Bliese et al., 2007) without sufficient theoretical justification and validation of thriving as a multilevel construct. However, the SEMT is positioned at the individual level, explaining why individuals differ in their thriving, though the same explanation may not account for team-level variations. Thus, such assumptions make for potentially misplaced generalizations or a fallacy of the wrong level (Klein et al., 1994), inhibiting construct clarity and theoretical advancement of thriving at work as a multilevel construct (Chen et al., 2004; Suddaby, 2010).

While the research to date has established thriving as a legitimate topic of investigative interest, knowledge cannot advance without theoretical justification (Locke & Golden-Biddle, 1997). Thus, we begin to address these theoretical and empirical issues through an

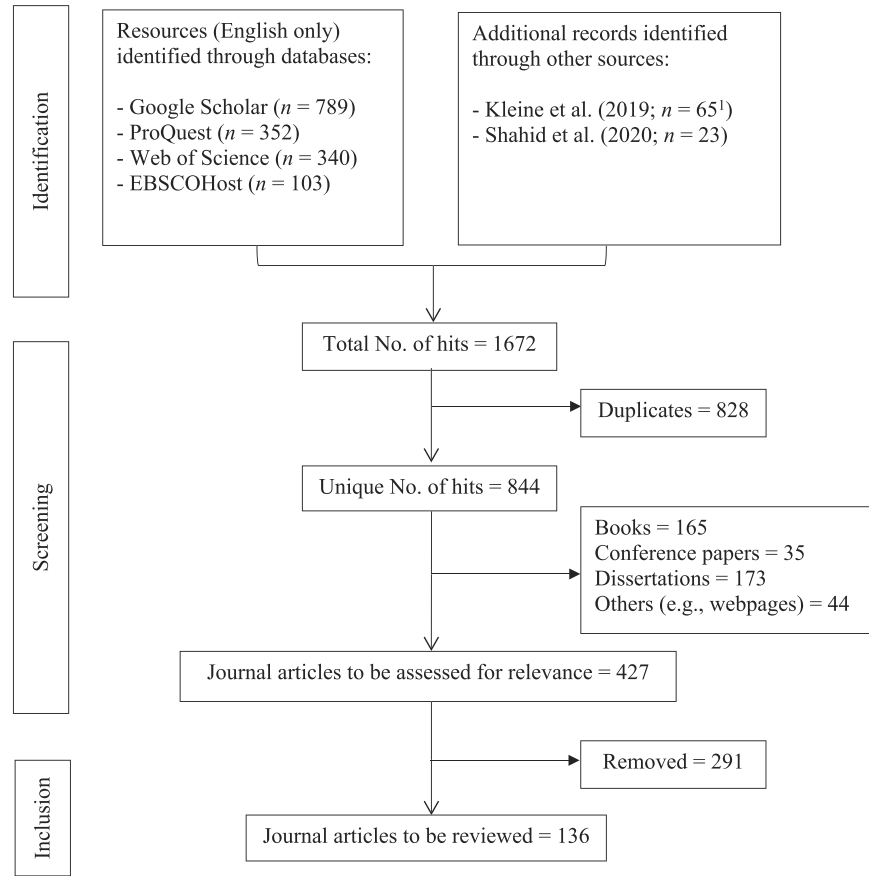
integrative multilevel review of thriving at work, in which we critique, synthesize, and advance the literature by creating new insights (Torraco, 2016). We adhere to an “exposing emerging perspectives” approach (Post et al., 2020) by identifying and contrasting the emerging multilevel conceptualization of thriving with the established SEMT. Our review of existing studies of thriving through a multilevel lens shows where the research has lost connection with its SEMT theoretical roots and might be reunited. Hence, we identify areas where alternative or additional perspectives may advance the field; where applicable, we supplement the SEMT with complementary theoretical perspectives.

Our overarching objective is to establish a theoretically justified multilevel conceptualization of thriving at work, which lays the groundwork for further construct validation and operationalization (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000). To do so, we first advance construct clarity by articulating the conceptualizations of thriving at work at two levels: individuals and collectives. Using these conceptualizations, we organize, review, and assess the progress of pertinent literature. Second, we address the gap in theorizing on thriving at work as a multilevel construct by proffering bottom-up emergent processes to explicate the formation and nature of higher level thriving. From our review, we derive a future research agenda that provides actionable theoretical and methodological recommendations that expand a multilevel conceptualization of thriving at work. Altogether, we advance thriving at work as a multilevel construct meaningful at three levels—individuals, dyads, and collectives. In doing so, we set the stage for scholars to delve into relationships at each and between levels (Klein & Kozlowski, 2000).

We conducted a forward search (i.e., seeking all articles citing Spreitzer et al., 2005 in Google Scholar, Web of Science, ProQuest, and EBSCOHost) to identify articles in peer-reviewed, English-language academic journals ( $n = 1584$ ). We then included references from the recent meta-analysis and other reviews (Kleine et al., 2019; Shahid et al., 2020;  $n = 88$ ) to ensure that our approach is comprehensive and exhaustive. Out of 1672 search results, we removed duplicates ( $n = 828$ ) and non-peer-reviewed journal articles (e.g., book chapters, conference reports;  $n = 427$ ). In addition, we excluded articles that (1) did not examine thriving at work as a key construct and (2) examined only one facet of thriving. In the end, we retained 136 articles<sup>1</sup> that addressed thriving at work as a two-factor construct: 11 conceptual articles, 10 (broad, non-multilevel) reviews, and 115 empirical studies (104 quantitative, seven qualitative, four mixed methods; see Figure 1). As shown in Figure 2, there has been a sharp upturn in research since the publication of the thriving at work scale (Porath et al., 2012).

Our multilevel organizing framework outlines the conceptualizations, antecedents, and consequences of individual and collective thriving. In so doing, we advance the thriving at work literature in three important ways. First, our integrative review enables us to assess the progress in the literature and identify future research directions at each level of analysis (Post et al., 2020; Torraco, 2016). We do this by reinterpreting existing studies of thriving at work through a finer analysis of the SEMT propositions.

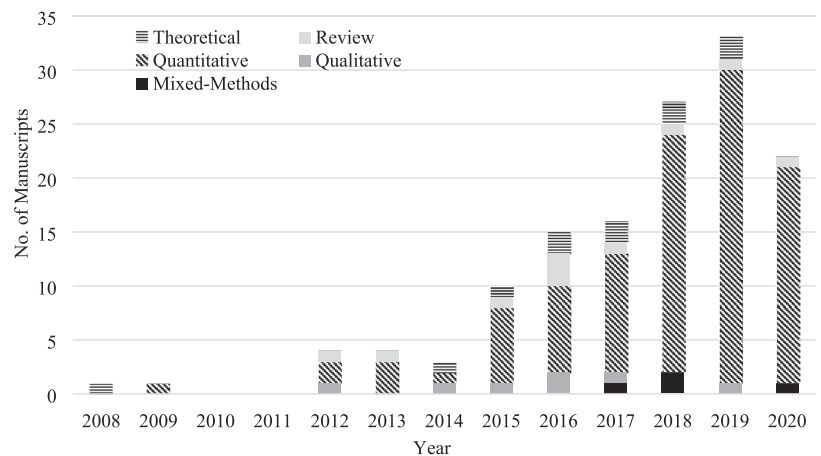
**FIGURE 1** Literature search process *Literature Search Process*



<sup>1</sup> The meta-analysis has 73 samples drawn from 65 articles, five dissertations, and three unpublished works.

**FIGURE 2** Thriving research by year and type (n = 136)

*Thriving Research by Year and Type (n = 136)*



Second, we extend previous work (i.e., Kleine et al., 2019) by exposing the multilevel perspective inherent in the SEMT and extant literature. Our framework delineates level-specific nomological networks, which can be subsequently used to establish the homology of relationships through comparisons across levels. This helps advance

theory as homologous relationships indicate theoretical parsimony; otherwise, refinement of theory and an understanding of processes that occur at each level is needed (Chen et al., 2005).

Third, we incorporate qualitative and theoretical articles that offer a richer analysis of thriving at work. These works enable construct

exploration, elaboration, and theory building and offer a counterpoint to dominant theory testing approaches, thereby expanding the potential for knowledge building. Based on our review, we then develop and advance a multilevel research agenda with specific, actionable recommendations for future investigation.

## 2 | THRIVING AT WORK: A MULTILEVEL ORGANIZING FRAMEWORK

The current body of thriving literature guided the development of our multilevel organizing framework, which synthesizes this body of evidence at two levels: *individuals* and *collectives*. At each level, we clarify how thriving is conceptualized, review the empirical body of literature, and provide an assessment of the state of knowledge. This multilevel framework provides a bird's eye view of this substantial body of research, summarizing level-specific knowledge of the antecedents and outcomes of thriving at work to guide future research. We map the current empirical landscape in Figure 3, presenting an illustrative summary of studied variables based on our organizing framework.

### 2.1 | Individual thriving

The SEMT conceptualized thriving as a “temporary internal property” of an individual (Spreitzer et al., 2005, p. 538) that can vary within (i.e., fluctuations in one's thriving over time) and between (i.e., differences between people's average thriving) individuals. In line with this specification, individual-level studies thus explicate intrapersonal and interpersonal variation “in the degree to which [employees]

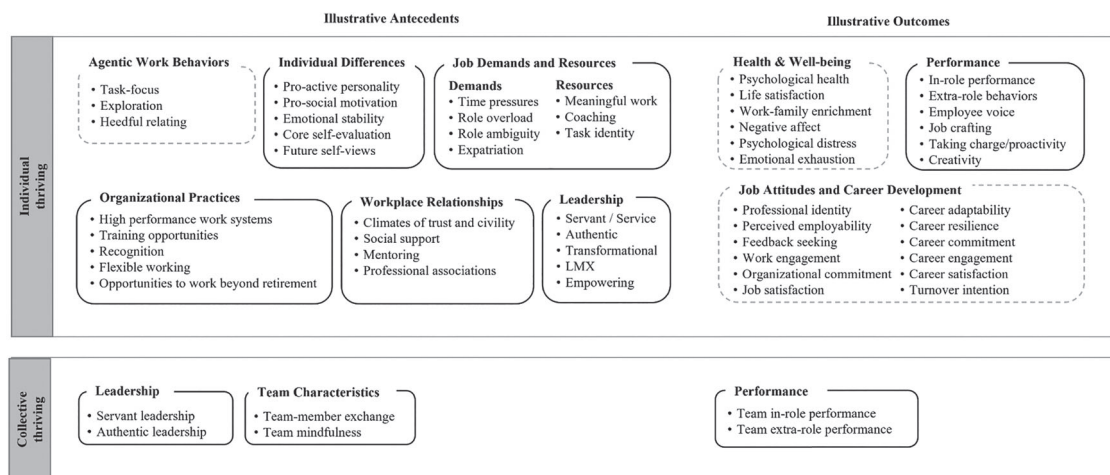
languish or thrive at work” (Spreitzer et al., 2005, p. 537). Below, we synthesize the evidence pertaining to individual thriving's nomological network,<sup>2</sup> starting with antecedents specified from the SEMT.

#### 2.1.1 | Antecedents

A small body of work supports the SEMT's proposed effects of agentic work behaviors on thriving, specifically heedful relating, task focus, and exploration (Sia & Duari, 2018). Using daily experience sampling, Niessen et al. (2012) found that task focus and exploration transmitted the indirect effects of positive meaning on thriving, providing some support for the SEMT assertion that positive spirals between resources, behaviors, and thriving inform individuals to “actively cultivate resources in the doing of work to fuel more thriving” (Spreitzer et al., 2005, p. 540). Likewise, Paterson et al. (2014) found heedful relating and task focus to mediate the effects of supervisor support and psychological capital on thriving. In caregiving occupations (e.g., nursing and childcare), relational resources such as trust and respect (Silen et al., 2019; Travis et al., 2014) promote thriving via supporting caregivers' agency in tailoring treatments to patients' specific needs (Vassbø et al., 2019). Individuals who lack personal resources that support agentic behaviors (e.g., self-efficacy; Novaes et al., 2020) may especially benefit from a supportive and thriving-enabling work environment. Collectively, these studies provide budding empirical evidence for the SEMT's assertions that thriving is an internal experience that occurs through “interactions with others in the doing of work” (Spreitzer et al., 2005, p. 539).

Beyond these central variables specified in the SEMT, our review reveals a proliferation of other thriving antecedents that we review below.

An Illustrative Summary of Antecedents and Outcomes Studied, Organized by Levels



Note. The Socially Embedded Model of Thriving components are annotated by grey dotted lines

FIGURE 3 An illustrative summary of antecedents and outcomes studied, organized by levels

### *Individual differences*

Certain traits predilect individuals toward thriving by encouraging the expression of agentic work behaviors and/or generating personal and social resources (Spreitzer et al., 2005). Speaking to the SEMT's emphasis on social interactions, those who are prosocially motivated (Nawaz et al., 2020) or emotionally stable and reliable (Hennekam, 2017) are more likely to thrive as they can more readily acquire personal and relational resources. Individuals who are high in proactivity (Jiang, 2017) and core self-evaluations (Walumbwa et al., 2018) enact change and seek out developmental challenges and learning opportunities (Walumbwa et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2019), thereby promoting thriving through resource accumulation. Attesting to the importance of unit-contextual features as asserted by the SEMT, this is particularly so under a team-level climate of involvement that affords such opportunities through decision-making participation and information sharing (Wallace et al., 2016).

### *Job demands and resources*

Thriving appears to be impeded by high job demands such as role overload (Gkorezis, 2016) and ambiguity (Jiang, Jiang, & Nielsen, 2019). Global workers experience additional demands such as extensive travel (Dimitrova, 2020) and intrapersonal identity conflict (Gibson et al., 2021) when exposed to diverse cultures and working environments. Interestingly, certain demands may foster thriving at work if perceived as opportunities for development and growth. In a daily diary study, Prem et al. (2017) demonstrated that on days where time pressures and learning demands are appraised as challenges, rather than hindrances, individuals are more likely to thrive through increased learning. In the same vein, job demands that entail significant relational responsibilities (e.g., mentoring and managing colleagues) promoted thriving as they present new challenges that stretch one's capabilities and growth (Dimitrova, 2020). Additionally, the negative effects of job demands may be buffered by possessing socioemotional resources such as greater emotional stability (Ren et al., 2015) and political astuteness (Cullen et al., 2018).

In contrast, job resources not only reduce the deleterious effects of job demands but are also instrumental to thriving. For example, an 8-week mindfulness training intervention increased thriving among physicians (Fendel et al., 2020). Greater task identity also induces more thriving (but less so among mentees in high-quality mentorships; Jiang et al., 2020). Receiving coaching can facilitate thriving via increased psychological capital (Iverson, 2016), social support, and skill development (e.g., Raza et al., 2017). These resources can be harnessed through careful job design (Kaltenbrunner et al., 2019) or technology to facilitate workplace relationships (Sun et al., 2019). Taken together, while job demands impede and job resources facilitate thriving, the relational aspect of both demands and resources must be considered as a boundary condition.

### *Workplace relationships*

Workplace relationships are key to thriving. As asserted by the SEMT, "vitality and learning are deeply rooted in *social systems* [emphasis added]" (Spreitzer et al., 2005, p. 539). Employees thrive in civil and

compassionate environments (Elahi et al., 2019), where they are validated, nurtured (Conway & Foskey, 2015), and treated fairly (Bensemmane et al., 2018) by supportive colleagues and supervisors (Wu et al., 2018; Zhai et al., 2017). Receiving interpersonal support helps individuals thrive as they feel self-assured, pride, determination, and strength (Kabat-Farr & Cortina, 2017). Giving back to others through the supervision and mentoring of colleagues (Dimitrova, 2020) and involvement in professional associations (Sim et al., 2016) also supports one's thriving. Conversely, negative interactions such as coworker incivility (Gkorezis et al., 2013) diminish thriving by undermining fulfillment of affiliation needs.

### *Leadership*

Given that the SEMT highlights the importance of unit-contextual features and social interactions, a significant direction in thriving research examines leadership effects on employee thriving. Both theoretical (Shahid et al., 2020) and empirical (Hildenbrand et al., 2018) accounts link transformational leadership to follower thriving, which has a downstream impact on followers' proactivity, particularly for those with low levels of emotional exhaustion (Niessen et al., 2017). Authentic leaders also nurture followers' thriving (Chang et al., 2020) via positive leader-member exchange (LMX), psychological safety climate (Xu et al., 2017), and psychological capital development (the latter only theorized; Shahid & Muchiri, 2019). Servant leaders likewise foster followers' thriving, particularly when teams are more reflexive (Wang et al., 2019) and politics-free (Xu & Wang, 2020). Empowering leaders encourage followers to exhibit decision-making autonomy (i.e., agentic work behaviors), facilitating followers' thriving, particularly when leaders themselves score high on autonomous orientation (Li et al., 2016). Inclusive leaders create psychologically safe workplaces that enable employees to take charge and initiative, particularly those high in promotion focus (Zeng et al., 2020).

When leaders convey and model grit to followers, leaders influence followers to be gritty, promoting thriving when perceived leader support is high (Rego et al., 2020). Followers also tend to thrive under paradoxical leaders, particularly when they also possess a paradoxical mindset (i.e., the ability to hold contradictory ideas simultaneously; Liu et al., 2019) or work in a psychologically safe environment (Yang et al., 2021). High-quality LMX also promotes thriving via perceived organizational support (Zhang, 2018). Collectively, this body of work indicates that leadership plays a significant role in facilitating thriving through creating a positive, safe, and encouraging environment for followers. However, Xu et al. (2019) found this effect to diminish among teams of workers who rate their work environments as crowded and restricted in space, demonstrating the complex interplay between the psychological and physical features of the work environment in creating climates.

### *Organizational practices*

Organizational practices and policies promote thriving by undergirding thriving-conducive norms and climates, reflecting the SEMT's emphasis on contextual features. For example, human resources (HR) practices such as high-performance work systems (HPWS;

e.g., extensive training and performance management; Jo et al., 2020) may be perceived as supportive of employee agency through access to opportunities, information, and power (Silen et al., 2019). In such circumstances, employees feel greater feelings of certainty (Yang et al., 2021), psychological empowerment, organization-based self-esteem (Kim & Beehr, 2020), and psychological safety (Jiang, Hu, et al., 2019) and are more motivated to undertake agentic behaviors such as extra-role behaviors (Zhang et al., 2019). Zhang et al. (2019) also found HPWS' indirect effects on performance to be stronger for employees with low levels of proactive personality, thereby corroborating our general observation that workplace environmental features manifest stronger effects on employee thriving when employees lack personal resources. Beyond HPWS, HR practices that enhance knowledge, skills, and abilities are appreciated by employees and have been found to promote thriving through times of change, such as impending retirement (Taneva & Arnold, 2018).

### 2.1.2 | Outcomes

The consequences of thriving are broadly categorized into health and well-being, job attitudes and career development, and performance.

#### *Health and well-being*

Thriving is associated with well-being indicators such as life satisfaction (Zhai et al., 2017), less negative affect (Porath et al., 2012), and emotional exhaustion (Niessen et al., 2017). In the nonwork domain, thriving individuals experience more work–family enrichment when working for a family-supportive supervisor (Russo et al., 2018). Supporting the SEMT's assertions that thriving improves health, those who thrive enjoy better psychological health with fewer psychological distress symptoms (Jo et al., 2020; Porath et al., 2012; Walumbwa et al., 2018).

#### *Job attitudes and career development*

Thriving is positively related to work engagement (Ren et al., 2015), affective organizational commitment (Walumbwa et al., 2018), and job satisfaction (Jiang et al., 2020) and negatively related to turnover intention (Chang et al., 2020). Thriving workers also tend to exhibit more career self-management, like upskilling, feedback-seeking (Paterson et al., 2014; Shan, 2016), adaptability (Jiang, 2017), culminating in enhanced career resilience (Jiang et al., 2021), commitment, engagement, and satisfaction (Jiang et al., 2020). Noticeably, thriving older workers (55 years and above) report higher levels of perceived employability (Hennekam, 2017), suggesting more positive self/career assessments.

Several studies have illustrated SEMT's assertion that individuals use their thriving as an internal barometer for self-assessment and enacting change. For example, those who thrived were more likely to gain self-efficacy (Bensemmane et al., 2018) and develop a professional identity (e.g., from apprentice to tradesperson; Conway & Foskey, 2015). When individuals are not thriving, they initiate self-adaptive processes to enact one's preferred identities (Spreitzer

et al., 2005). Kira and Balkin (2014) illustrated this self-adaptive process in a longitudinal qualitative case study on an organizational merger. Under the changing work conditions, there were individuals who did not thrive as they were unable to work authentically. However, these individuals actively engaged in job crafting or sense-making to restore positive work conditions and alignment with themselves. Taken together, those who thrive continue on their path, while those who do not may modify their behaviors and conditions to reinstate thriving.

#### *Performance*

Kleine et al.'s (2019) meta-analytic evidence corroborates thriving's theorized positive effects on a range of employee in-role and extra-role performance. In this regard, and further attesting to the SEMT assumptions, thriving often serves as a mediating mechanism linking varying traits, leadership, and organizational practices (e.g., Aryee et al., 2019; Jo et al., 2020; Paterson et al., 2014) with in-role performance. Thriving employees are also better organizational citizens, providing help to colleagues (Wu et al., 2018) and enacting promotive, change-oriented behaviors (Niessen et al., 2017) such as job crafting (Qi et al., 2019) and innovation and creativity (Wallace et al., 2016). In line with the SEMT, the expression of thriving through prosocial and proactive behaviors nevertheless is predicated on a safe, supportive social environment (Frazier & Tupper, 2018) that facilitates experimentation and exploration (Carmeli & Russo, 2016).

### 2.1.3 | Moderating effects of thriving

Thus far, the empirical scholarship on thriving has mostly emphasized the construct's nomological network of antecedents and consequences. Although thriving is not explicitly modeled as a moderator in the SEMT, several studies have demonstrated its moderating effects. Gerbasi et al. (2015) derived insights from conservation of resources theory (COR; Hobfoll, 1989) to conceptualize thriving as a “personal resource” that buffers against the deleterious effects of workplace stress on performance, presumably compensating for resource loss. Thriving also augments positive effects of leadership, for example, LMX (Qi et al., 2019) and servant leadership (Jaiswal & Dhar, 2017), on extra-role behaviors such as job crafting and innovation.

### 2.1.4 | Assessing progress

The preceding review illustrates the various ways researchers have endeavored to answer the question: “Why do people thrive differently, and does it matter?” For the most part, empirical findings uphold the SEMT propositions that favorable personal (traits), relational (leader and coworker relations), and structural (empowerment-enhancing HR practices) resources enable thriving by supporting agentic behaviors. What is more, experience sampling methods and longitudinal case studies have appropriately captured within-

individual and temporal fluctuations, thus elucidating how the process surrounding thriving unfolds over time.

Still, there is a dearth of empirical testing of “spiral processes,” thus overlooking one of the SEMT’s fundamental assertions: Agentic behaviors both *generate and are driven by* personal and social resources. Yet, spiral processes involving SEMT resources (knowledge, positive meaning, positive affect, relational resources) and behaviors (task focus, exploration, heedful relating) have not been extensively tested, nor have studies ventured into exploring other variables. A notable exception is a study by Niessen et al. (2012), who found thriving to be unrelated to agentic behaviors on subsequent days. While this may be a methodological artifact (e.g., an overnight time lag may have introduced unknown biases), one must consider the possibility that the theoretical propositions of positive spirals are unsubstantiated and that other mechanisms are at play. Thus, despite being a core proposition of the SEMT, cumulative spiral processes are not a common feature of individual-level studies.

Further departing from critical SEMT assertions, a substantial stream of thriving research adopts a “personological” approach, emphasizing person-level attributes and individual perceptions without accounting for contextual factors such as work units and relational interactions that enable agentic behaviors. A myopic personological view of thriving that disregards this assumption may thus be problematic for both theoretical and empirical reasons. First, it omits key contextual variables specified in the SEMT theorized to influence thriving via agentic behavior. Empirically, overlooking such contextual enablers (or potential disablers) may engender unexplained variance and misguided practical interventions. Such contextual factors have not always been modeled, missing the opportunity to supplement SEMT with other theories that can expand our insights of thriving.

Looking at the breadth of antecedents and outcomes identified at the individual level, it seems evident that the SEMT does not offer a full explication of the nomological network of thriving at work; there is potential for other (supplementary or complementary) perspectives (e.g., COR theory; Gerbasi et al., 2015) to be used to advance the understanding of thriving at work. Moreover, thriving also appears to be a potential moderator of other relationships, which would be a point of departure from the SEMT perspective. Thus, we suggest our knowledge on thriving could be further enhanced by introducing thriving at work as a boundary condition in other streams of organizational research.

The existing body of thriving research also falls short of addressing the SEMT’s key promises of thriving’s health and development outcomes. Specifically, the literature does not adequately address how (or whether) thriving relates to individuals’ *physical* health, nor does it discuss *positive* health—physical or otherwise. A close examination of health measures used in extant thriving studies shows that, rather than measuring positive health, these studies capture the “lack of” negatives such as low job strain (Porath et al., 2012). Similarly, the general health questionnaire has also been used to operationalize health (Walumbwa et al., 2018), despite being a measure of mental distress and dysfunction (see Jackson, 2007). At best,

the literature equates health and well-being with the *absence* of illness and psychological distress, which contradicts long-standing views that positive health reflects the *presence* of physical, mental, and social well-being markers (Ryff, 2014).

Regarding development, the literature has thus far focused primarily on career development. However, given that thriving is a form of eudemonic well-being rooted in self-determination, it is likely that thriving drives personal and self-development toward higher levels of functioning beyond the workplace. This is alluded to in the thriving scale—specifically, the learning subscale—developed by Porath et al. (2012), which does not constrain learning exclusively to the work context. While research has demonstrated thriving’s positive relationship with desirable workplace behaviors such as proactivity, voice, and helping, it has yet to examine the underlying personal growth factors such as altruism and relationality that may motivate such behaviors. These personal growth factors transcend the workplace and encapsulate a holistic perspective of personal and professional development. As the research is meager and largely bounded to the work context, there is still much to do to fulfill thriving’s broader promise of promoting positive health and development.

## 2.2 | Collective thriving

Although the SEMT seeks to explain individual thriving, empirical scholarship has examined the construct as a collective phenomenon, that is, groups that are energized and developing. At the collective level, the referent shifts from individuals to groups, and thriving is a property of the group; the interest is in predicting mean differences between groups.

### 2.2.1 | Antecedents

We identified three empirical papers that discuss collective thriving. All three introduced leadership styles (servant and authentic) as predictors of collective thriving through varying mechanisms. Teams with servant leaders are more likely to thrive (Walumbwa et al., 2018) as such leaders encourage better quality team-member exchanges (Xu & Wang, 2020). Teams led by authentic leaders are more likely to thrive as the teams become more mindful through observing and learning their leaders, forming a shared mental model of being aware of ongoing events and balanced in their responses (Wu & Chen, 2019).

### 2.2.2 | Outcomes

Collective thriving promotes group-level in-role (Walumbwa et al., 2018) and extra-role performance such as helping (Wu & Chen, 2019). These studies provide initial evidence that collective thriving impacts group-level outcomes, suggesting potential utility for advancing thriving research.

### 2.2.3 | Assessing progress

In terms of a nomological network, the emphasis on leadership as an antecedent and performance as an outcome makes for a good start, albeit inadequate in providing insights into construct validity of collective thriving. These studies draw predominantly on social cognitive theories such as social learning (Bandura, 1986) to explain group-level effects of leadership, treating (collective) thriving as the latest in the long line of leadership/supervisor mediating variables; much is left to be done regarding collective thriving as a central construct of interest.

Aside from the immaturity of the nomological network at the collective level, we note that current literature assumed isomorphism of the SEMT (i.e., that the individual-level theorizing within the SEMT is similar at a higher level); an assumption already challenged as the “model focuses on how contexts affect individuals, not units” (Spreitzer et al., 2005, p. 546). Such an assumption results in theoretical muddiness. To illustrate, Walumbwa et al. (2018) drew on the SEMT to examine thriving at the individual and collective levels simultaneously, despite the SEMT conceptualizing thriving only at the individual level.

Unclear theorizing around collective thriving imposes empirical downstream consequences. Thus far, studies have proxied collective thriving by aggregating individual ratings either by a consensus (Walumbwa et al., 2018) or referent-shift (Wu & Chen, 2019) aggregation model, making it hard to synthesize studies on collective thriving as they have different assumptions regarding the nature of construct and data (Chen et al., 2004). The inconsistent use of aggregation methods is a consequence of lacking theoretical justification for collective thriving as a construct. Thus, to advance knowledge on thriving at work as a multilevel construct, collective thriving requires its own theorizing for greater construct clarity down the road (Locke & Golden-Biddle, 1997).

## 3 | LINKING THE LEVELS OF OUR FRAMEWORK

Our review reveals that little is known regarding the *emergence* of higher level thriving, that is, the creation of a new higher level property that cannot be reduced to its constituent elements (Lang et al., 2021). Such higher level properties are borne out of mechanisms that are fundamentally multilevel (involves more than one level of analysis), process-oriented (dynamic interactions occurring at lower levels), and temporal (requires time to unfold and manifest new properties at a higher level) (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000). Emergent processes undergird multilevel conceptualizations by providing theoretical justification for the higher level construct's existence and contributing to the construct validity of higher level measures (Kozlowski et al., 2013). With respect to thriving, we observed that collective thriving has emerged largely as an empirical byproduct of leadership research but lacks theoretical justification on how intra- and interpersonal variations in thriving (individual level) can give rise to thriving groups (collective level).

To address this gap, we supplement the SEMT with the attraction–selection–attrition (ASA) paradigm (Schneider, 1987) and social information processing (SIP) theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978) to shed light on collective thriving emergence. To begin, the SEMT stipulates that the internal experience of thriving is a self-adaptive tool used by individuals to select for and craft conditions that support their agency and development (Spreitzer et al., 2005). Therefore, those who feel that they are thriving are more likely to remain in their workplaces and maintain the behaviors and conditions conducive to thriving.

Invoking Schneider's (1987) notion that “the people make the place,” thriving-facilitative work environments that endorse and support employees in exercising agency may create homogeneity by attracting and retaining the types of people who value an agentic professional self. Agentic coworkers further inspire others to be agentic and thrive by being role models and providing positive feedback and social support (Bandura, 1986). Conway and Foskey (2015) illustrated this point in their study where apprentices who trained with nurturing senior tradespersons were more likely to thrive, complete their training, self-construe as a tradesperson, and integrate into the broader professional community, testifying to how identities “are achieved in social action and unfold along trajectories of social practice” (Carlsen, 2008, p. 56). In contrast, apprentices in unsupportive environments did not thrive and dropped out of the apprenticeship or exited the trade altogether. Thus, due to the attraction–selection processes combined with the tendency for people to remain in places where they thrive, these work units may evolve over time toward social and psychological homogeneity in thriving.

When thriving individuals congregate together, they interact with and mutually influence other colleagues. Due to collective sense-making and common workgroup conditions, individuals within workgroups may form shared beliefs (e.g., agreement about what behaviors are recognized or rewarded) or norms (e.g., formed expectations that people should relate heedfully to one another) that promote similar agentic behaviors, thus giving rise to thriving at the collective level. Additionally, since “social contexts are ... anchored in the cognitions, emotions, and normative behaviors of individual employees” (Fulmer & Ostroff, 2016, p. 122), interpersonal (contagion) thriving effects may be transmitted through a multitude of factors such as emotions in teams (Barsade & Knight, 2015; Dasborough et al., 2020), ideologies (Leslie et al., 2020), and knowledge sharing (Edmondson et al., 2007).

Taken together, ASA and SIP may supplement SEMT to help formulate how thriving individuals congregate together by selecting for thriving facilitative workplaces and the “thriving contagion effects” that emerge as workgroup members interact, influence, and adapt to the behaviors of others (social cues) and contextual norms (social conformity) within their social environment. Here, creative use of methods such as modeling the dynamic interpersonal processes in teams can illustrate how such thriving contagion effects unfold in real time as team members interact with and respond to each other (e.g., Lehmann-Willenbrock et al., 2017).



## 4 | FUTURE RESEARCH AGENDA

Our review reveals fertile ground for advancing a multilevel understanding of thriving in three ways. First, we address key issues at the individual and collective levels. Second, as the understanding of thriving is evolving (Suddaby, 2010), we identify two additional levels of thriving which are yet to be explored—dyadic and organizational thriving—and discuss their theoretical cases for inclusion in future theorizing surrounding the SEMT. Third, we expand on the directions that multilevel work on thriving can take. Our suggestions are broad and not intended to create an exhaustive list of theoretical viewpoints nor detail the entire potential nomological network of thriving. Rather, we endeavor to capture what we consider fruitful and interesting directions for advancing a multilevel conceptualization of thriving. To this end, we suggest complementary theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches to yield actionable and testable future research recommendations. Our level-specific conceptualizations, theoretical explanations, and illustrative research questions are summarized in Table 1.

### 4.1 | Individual thriving

Despite a mature nomological network of thriving's antecedents and consequences, we suggest that theoretical advancement can be made with greater methodological rigor to draw more robust causal inferences, explicate processes, and reflect the SEMT underpinnings of individual thriving more closely. First of all, more research is required to substantiate the positive spirals articulated in the SEMT. Here, resource-based theories such as COR (Hobfoll, 1989) and the job demands–resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) may be useful in conceptualizing which and how resources may fluctuate in the short-term to affect within-individual thriving. To elaborate, COR suggests a resource gain spiral that may dovetail with the cyclical loop between agentic work behaviors, thriving, and resources (Hobfoll et al., 2018). From the SEMT perspective, gains and losses in cognitive, physical, or psychosocial resources (e.g., resilience, emotional regulation, and broader ethical horizons) may foster new resource spirals or trigger self-adaptive processes (Kim & Kang, 2017) that further fuel agentic work behaviors. In COR language, when individuals are endowed with resources generated through their work, they can invest resources to acquire more resources, thus producing a resource gain spiral; such short-term dynamic processes can be modeled using experience sampling methods and extended to examine cross-lagged effects.

We also suggest broadening the view, and therefore timeframes, of self-adaptation processes as triggered by thriving. Building on the importance of time in constructing within-individual thriving models, theories explicit about temporal factors suggest that we change our behavior and adapt new strategies in response to time. For example, socioemotional selectivity theory (Carstensen, 2006) posits that people limit their resources to emotionally meaningful goals and activities as one's time horizons decrease, while life span theories of control

(Heckhausen & Schulz, 1995) posit that people place less importance on exerting control over their environment as they age. This brings about questions regarding the longevity of individual thriving as a self-adaptive cue, and its answers may hinge on the timeframes considered. Thus, theoretical development of thriving at work may be advanced by a deeper understanding of the temporal characteristics and dynamics of individual thriving (George & Jones, 2000).

Beyond this, we encourage greater adoption of multilevel designs (e.g., Frazier & Tupper, 2018) to capture unique contextual effects that alter the relationships between thriving and its correlates. Modeling one's context is particularly relevant when examining the homogeneity of thriving across different populations, such that scholars could ask: “Does thriving look the same in/to everyone?” For example, Zhu et al. (2019) highlighted that for persons with disabilities, workplaces that emphasize inclusivity might be more conducive for individual thriving than workplaces that emphasize decision-making, given the social oppression and exclusion disabled persons may face. Hence, careful consideration and modeling of contextual features and resources to account for the varying needs across populations may be important in creating new theoretical insights. To this end, future research can utilize a needs–supplies fit perspective (Ehrhardt & Ragins, 2019) to investigate the idiosyncratic differences in the types and level of contextual enablers needed to facilitate thriving (Bavik et al., 2020).

Advancing another stream of research, scholars can ask: “In today's ever-evolving gig economy, where structural and contextual features are constantly changing and the work context is no longer stable, how do independent gig workers thrive?” (Ashford et al., 2018). The gig economy, characterized by job, career, and financial insecurity, work transience, physical and relational separation from coworkers and increased autonomy at the cost of a stable workgroup, reflects the notion that one is solely responsible for oneself (Fleming, 2017). In such a context of independence and isolation, the SEMT's emphasis on social contexts for thriving may not apply. Here, the multidisciplinary literature on identity offers possibilities for extending relational understandings of the thriving “self,” broaching new theoretical frontiers. In particular, the organizational identification and identity work literature (Ashforth et al., 2008; Kira & Balkin, 2014) could generate deeper explorations of the processes and actors involved in the production, expression, and regulation of self-change and identity. Methods such as latent growth modeling techniques allow us to track thriving and career trajectories over time (e.g., years) by capturing thriving's dynamic nature and its parallel to one's career development trajectory and incorporating the SEMT's assertions regarding thriving's self-adaptation functions. Qualitative techniques such as biographical methods and narrative modes of inquiry are recommended for capturing individuals' sense-making of change and constancy, including employees' interpretations of progressive self-change within multiple career settings (Sonenshein et al., 2013).

Lastly, in line with SEMT's focus on positive health, we suggest that bold and creative approaches be adopted to expand our exploration of the link between biology and the psychological state of

**TABLE 1** Summary of level-specific conceptualizations, explanations, and illustrative research questions

Level	Conceptualization	Theoretical explanation	Illustrative research questions
Individuals	Individual thriving refers to a dynamic state that exhibits variation within the same person (i.e., intraindividual variation across time) and between people (i.e., people differ in their average levels of thriving)	The SEMT's positive spirals suggest that within-individual thriving is sustained through the dynamic interplay of resources and agentic behaviors and that individuals vary in their thriving because of individual and situational differences that facilitate agentic behaviors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If and how momentary fluctuations of (which) resources affect within-individual thriving?</li> <li>• Does thriving at work offer benefits beyond the workplace (e.g., work-family enrichment)?</li> <li>• What are the temporal dynamics and timeframes involved for self-adaptation processes resulting from thriving to take hold and stabilize?</li> <li>• How do thriving individuals differ in their behavioral (e.g., exercise), psychological (e.g., reappraisals), and biological (e.g., cardiovascular) processes to achieve better health outcomes?</li> <li>• What are the boundary conditions that facilitate or impede thriving?</li> </ul>
Dyads <sup>a</sup>	Dyadic thriving refers to variations or difference in thriving levels between dyads (i.e., some dyads thrive more than other dyads)	Self-determination theory, applied as a theory of relationships, explains that dyads thrive as a result of the relationship quality and relating patterns established by individuals' motivation orientations and mutual need fulfillment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is dyadic thriving structurally and functionally equivalent to (individual) thriving at work?</li> <li>• What are the emergent processes for thriving dyads?</li> <li>• How do the relational processes (e.g., reciprocal exchanges) differ in thriving dyads compared to non-thriving dyads?</li> <li>• Do some dyads maintain or increase their thriving levels over time, while others decrease or even terminate the relationship?</li> <li>• What are the individual- and unit-level predictors/outcomes of dyadic thriving?</li> </ul>
Collectives	Collective thriving refers to variations or difference in thriving levels between collectives such as teams, groups, or departments (i.e., some collectives thrive more than others)	The attraction-selection-attrition paradigm and social information processing theory suggest that thriving individuals congregate, influence, and adapt to each other's perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors, leading to convergence and emergence of collective thriving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the emergent processes of collective thriving?</li> <li>• What are the temporal dynamics and characteristics of collective thriving (e.g., how long does it take for a collective to thrive?)</li> <li>• How does the introduction of a new member or exit of a current member affect collective thriving?</li> <li>• How does team composition facilitate collective thriving?</li> <li>• What are the individual- and unit-level predictors/outcomes of collective thriving?</li> </ul>

Abbreviation: SEMT, Socially Embedded Model of Thriving.

<sup>a</sup>Proposed new level of dyadic thriving to be examined in the multilevel conceptualization of thriving at work.

thriving. Knowing how workplace thriving relates to physical health broadens our understanding of the network of thriving consequences and may contribute to practical (workplace) interventions that engender well-being (Heaphy & Dutton, 2008). For example, medical models of health may be applied to study how individual biology (especially physiology and endocrinology) can shape employee propensities to thrive (or not; Gonzalez-Mulé & Cockburn, 2021), how thriving is experienced in the body (e.g., in accordance with individual

chronotype [sleep pattern]), and the individual medical (e.g., reduced blood pressure) and psychosomatic (e.g., enhanced perceptions of autonomy and control) benefits of employee thriving. Such factors may condition agentic work behaviors, for example, clear-headedness for task focus, which may generate personal resources, thereby strengthening the self-sustaining mechanism of thriving. Identifying thriving-related physical indicators such as lower levels of salivary cortisol and longer duration REM sleep that suggest lower stress and

better recovery processes (Ryff et al., 2004) can supplement more traditionally used socioemotional indicators such as positive self-regard, connections, and meaning (Ryff, 2014) for a more holistic look at health and well-being outcomes of thriving. Altogether, future work can examine if and how biology and psychological experiences such as thriving are linked.

## 4.2 | Collective thriving

The nomological network for collective thriving is limited, as shown in Figure 3, with variables of leadership, thriving, and performance aggregated to the group level. A clear first step is to flesh out the nomological network of the antecedents, outcomes, and boundary conditions of collective thriving. This effort may be enriched by unpacking the relational behaviors, processes, and rituals (e.g., Pouthier, 2017) that influences cooperative and cohesive team coordination needed to achieve group-level outcomes (West et al., 2009). Delving into the relational and organizing practices captures the dynamic and interdependent nature of teams that is lost when research focuses on aggregate constructs and theorizing (Humphrey & Aime, 2014).

To understand and design conditions for collective thriving, emergent processes, particularly complementary affective and behavioral processes, may be proposed and tested. As thriving is “deeply rooted in social systems” and occurs “through dynamic interaction with others” (Spreitzer et al., 2005, p. 539), it may be worthwhile to examine if and how individuals’ heedful relating and exploration can influence others’ affective and physiological energies, as well as others’ sense of learning and growth, to facilitate collective thriving. While the opportunities for collective thriving research abound, we highlight that collective thriving first needs to undergo construct validation and establish its nature, dimensionality, and emergent processes (Chen et al., 2004). Doing so forms a solid foundation for developing a unit-level nomological network that can then be used to assess the homology of relationships across levels while advancing theorizing on thriving at work.

## 4.3 | Thriving at other levels

In addition to proposing level-specific research directions, we extend the multilevel framework and discuss whether thriving at two other levels, namely, dyadic and organizational, can meaningfully contribute to our understanding of thriving and the SEMT.

### 4.3.1 | Dyadic thriving

We propose adding a level of dyads to extend our multilevel framework and the SEMT. While previous research has addressed collective thriving to examine workgroup thriving, dyads are not necessarily the same as groups (Moreland, 2010). As management research

commonly studies interpersonal, dyadic relationships such as supervisor–subordinates and coworkers, studies are increasingly using dyads as a unit of analysis (Ferris et al., 2009; Liden et al., 2016). Indeed, dyadic thriving would correspond with the SEMT’s emphasis on social interactions, especially since the dyad is “arguably the fundamental unit of interpersonal interaction and interpersonal relations” (Kenny et al., 2006, p. 1).

Here, thriving becomes the property of the dyad, not just that of the individual. Accordingly, Thompson and Ravlin (2017) conceptualized dyadic thriving as “the presence of vitality and learning at the level of the dyad, such that the *dyad* [emphasis added] ... has positive energy available (vitality) and continues to acquire knowledge, skills, and abilities (learning)” (2017, p. 155). The authors theorized that thriving dyads emerge through repeated conflict resolution, as they develop new interactional processes (e.g., repeated self-disclosures; Ragins, 2008) and features (e.g., unity, trust, and commitment; Olekalns et al., 2020) that drive an accumulation of knowledge and energy. In other words, dyads that develop adaptive relational features through successful conflict resolution are more likely to thrive.

While adversity may strengthen the dyad’s relational foundation, we draw from SDT as a theory of relationships (Deci & Ryan, 2014; Knee et al., 2013) and suggest agentic interpersonal interactions such as heedful relating (Spreitzer et al., 2005) are also conducive to dyadic thriving. According to SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2014; Knee et al., 2013), authentic and volitional interactions are more likely to achieve mutual need fulfillment through an exchange of resources such as support (relatedness), mutual respect (autonomy), and improved coordination and performance (competence; Gittel, 2006). Such mutual need fulfillment encourages further interactions infused with positive relational energy (Owens et al., 2016) and rich personal and professional information exchange (Elicker et al., 2006; Sias, 2005). Over time, these repeated interactions of exchanging energy and knowledge may culminate in the emergence of a thriving dyad. Given the nascency of dyadic thriving, much can be done to investigate if, how, when, and why dyads thrive and why some dyads thrive more than others.

We also call for attention to the outcomes of dyadic thriving. Thriving dyads may be more productive through increased coordination (Gittel, 2006), collaborative creativity (Weinstein et al., 2010), and relational unity (e.g., business partners; Olekalns et al., 2020). As dyadic partners are mutually interdependent, sensitive to each other’s needs and emotions, and adjust behaviors to maintain or improve the relationships (Krasikova & LeBreton, 2012), investigating the interactions and exchanges that occur may be a fruitful source of information for how these outcomes are achieved. This opens up new possibilities to examine how agentic work behaviors—especially heedful relating—are shaped by an awareness of perceived changes or displays in others’ thriving, which may vary across different dyadic structures (e.g., observational, joint activity, primary dyad), power relations, and social exchanges (Shelton, 2018).

Taken together, the field may benefit from examining how individual characteristics and interpersonal interactions (e.g., motivation orientation, heedful relating, and needs satisfaction within the dyad; Knee et al., 2013) shape optimal relationship development and

functioning (i.e., dyadic thriving). Here, the actor-partner interdependence model (Kenny & Ledermann, 2010) is particularly useful as it models both the effects of individual characteristics and relational processes on outcomes of interest (Gooty & Yammarino, 2011). Together, it captures a more thorough understanding of dyadic thriving, accounting for the unique effects of individuals and the relational effect they exert on each other (Krasikova & LeBreton, 2012).

We close this section by acknowledging that our discussion has relied on the definition provided by Thompson and Ravlin (2017), which presumes isomorphism between individual and dyadic thriving (i.e., that thriving dyads, like individuals, experience high levels of learning and vitality). Therefore, it is important for future efforts to conduct multilevel construct validation of dyadic thriving (Chen et al., 2004) to validate this assumption.

### 4.3.2 | Organizational thriving

While we support the examination of dyadic thriving, we have reservations about using the SEMT as a basis for organizational thriving. Dyadic and collective thriving may be driven by the social processes that occur between people, but an organization is much more complex than a mere collection of individuals whose interactions influence each other. A thriving organization is thus unlikely to reflect the same structure and function as individual-level thriving at work and certainly departs too far from the SEMT to draw from it. Therefore, we suggest that organizational thriving is likely to require its own unique theorizing not based on SEMT, and we exclude it from our summary in Table 1.

However, it may be of greater interest to consider a *climate of thriving*, “often considered as relatively temporary, subject to direct control, and largely limited to those aspects of the social environment that are consciously perceived by organizational members” (Denison, 1996, p. 624). Such a conceptualization captures the social aspects of the SEMT and the subjective nature of thriving, but at a level that permeates the organization. Thus, it may be more fruitful to examine if and how the social environment, and consequently a thriving climate, is shaped by institutional work such as creating specific policies and practices that draw from positive organizational scholarship principles (Nilsson, 2015, p. 373). After all, HR policies and practices are fundamental elements that can put in place structure, rituals, norms, and expectations to form a supportive, fair, and safe work environment with thoughtful job designs (Parker, 2014). Such thriving workplaces may unlock hidden resources in the system, such as creative collaborations that sustain thriving over time.

Social-ecological perspectives offer a useful starting point to understand how a thriving-promoting environment can facilitate health and development outcomes (Stokols, 1992). Such an approach emphasizes the multiple levels of influence (e.g., individual, peers, and organization) and that individual behaviors shape and are shaped by the (workplace) environment. Scholars might draw upon the “healthy leadership” literature (Rudolph et al., 2020) where studies of the role

of corporate wellness programs (Ballard, 2014), or the notion of “care in connecting” under COVID-19 (Gibson, 2020), examine how the actions of (team) leaders and peers, or organizational policies and practices, might generate or moderate states of individual thriving.

## 4.4 | Cross-level models of thriving

Alongside level-specific research efforts, scholars can investigate cross-level models of thriving to explore how variables at different levels relate to each other (see Klein & Kozlowski, 2000; Kozlowski & Klein, 2000 for detailed review); such insights are rare in the current body of work. Cross-level models are broadly categorized into two types: direct effects and interaction effects. A cross-level direct effects model examines the processes of how variables from different levels influence each other. This influence can be top down, where higher level units influence lower level phenomena. For example, a top-down cross-level model may examine how individuals' well-being is impacted when joining a thriving team. Conversely, bottom-up cross-level models examine how higher level outcomes may be affected by lower level variables. For example, why and how do certain individuals exert greater influence over collective thriving than other team members? Such questions examine the effect of individual characteristics and their constellations on higher level outcomes.

Lastly, cross-level interactions capture how the strength of the relationship between variables at one level is conditional on the effects of variables at a different (usually higher) level. Modeling these interactions may enrich understanding of contextual influences on thriving's nomological network of relationships; after all, individual employees are nested in multiple groups as well as multiple organizations. We highlight that leadership research provides an excellent avenue for elucidating such cross-level interactions since leadership style presents an aggregate-level influence that can amplify or buffer lower level dynamics. Reinforcing the SEMT's emphasis on context, leadership effectiveness on individual thriving is influenced by multiple factors within the organizational system such as HR policies and workplace culture, captured by a three-level multilevel design, that is, individuals nested in teams nested in organizations. The use of multilevel designs can appropriately capture and accurately quantify the effects of higher-level variables on the strength and direction of relationships among lower level variables.

## 5 | CONCLUSION

The considerable growth of thriving research and its resulting insights attest to the interest in and utility of thriving at work as a construct. Our review illuminates that this burgeoning research effort can benefit from a systematic approach to defining and discovering thriving at work through a multilevel lens based on the SEMT. To aid this effort, we reviewed the extant body of work at two levels (individuals and collectives) and suggested including another level of dyads. Altogether, we clarified thriving as a multilevel construct at three levels—

individuals, dyads, and collectives. From our integrative multilevel review, we identified pressing research gaps and provided specific, actionable recommendations directed toward deepening our understanding of thriving as a multilevel construct. Importantly, the theoretical promise of health and development outcomes remains unfulfilled, demanding greater clarity around what positive health and development look like and the mechanisms that link thriving with these outcomes. Coupled with our brief discussion on emergent processes, we hope our review provides a solid foundation for multilevel research on thriving at work rooted in construct clarity, theoretical precision, and methodological alignment.

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## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data sharing not applicable to this article as no datasets were generated or analysed during the current study

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> This compares to the 73 samples drawn from 65 articles, five dissertations, and three unpublished works in the meta-analysis (Kleine et al., 2019).

<sup>2</sup> We thank an anonymous reviewer for this helpful suggestion to streamline our framework.

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