

# **THE POWER OF INTELLECTUAL JOY FOR THE FUTURE OF WOMEN AT WORK**

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**2023**

## ABOUT MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY'S INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP RESEARCH PAPER SERIES

The Institute for Women's Leadership at Marquette University sponsors white papers to advance and translate academic research about gender, equity, and leadership to the wider world. IWL white paper topics range from timely to enduring issues and are designed to further discussion, transform organizations, and provoke deeper conversation about today's most important issues. This research is supported by the IWL Advisory Council.

This paper's research originated in Spring 2022, when its author was an IWL Faculty Fellow, and was completed in 2023.

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# THE POWER OF INTELLECTUAL JOY FOR THE FUTURE OF WOMEN AT WORK

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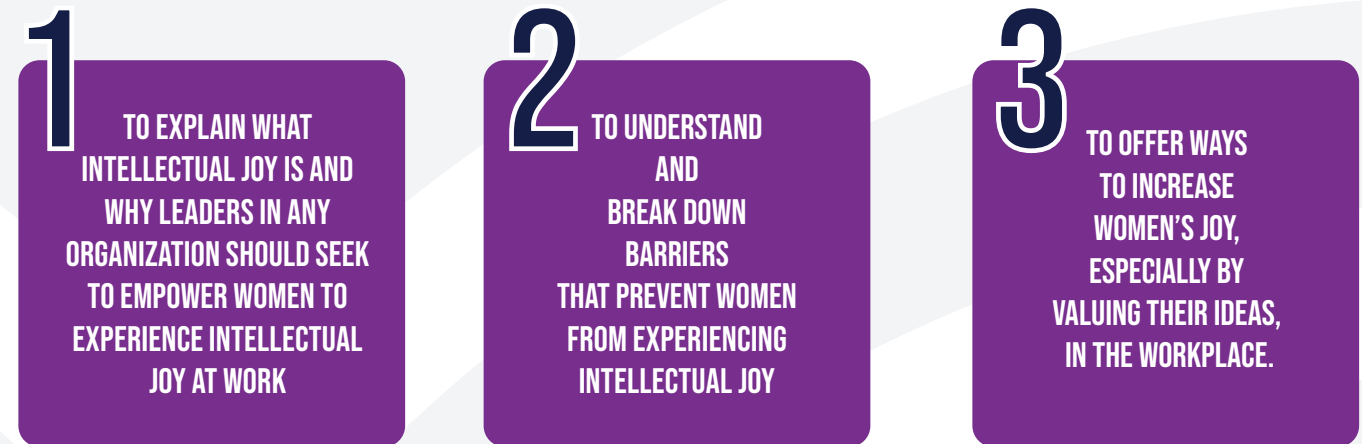
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# ABOUT THIS REPORT

The idea of advocating for joy in the workplace for all employees, but especially for women, is both a timely and enduring one. Now more than ever, corporations and other organizations seek to attract and retain superior talent, meet goals for inclusion and equity, increase profitability, and act in the best interest of their employees. Employees seek meaningful work that aligns with their ideas about value and purpose, but fewer than half of them experience the meaning that they seek at work.<sup>1</sup> How can we change this situation to meet the desires of employees and the organizations for which they work?

This report advances three goals:



By focusing on ways to increase women’s joy at work, individual leaders at all organizational levels, entire corporations, and any academic or nonprofit institution in which there are women will benefit by contributing to a more joyful future of work for women.<sup>2</sup> As this report shows, devaluing women’s ideas and precluding women from contributing in intellectually joyful ways at work and elsewhere has ripple effects not just for women but for everyone. Drawing on expertise from law, business, social sciences, philosophy, psychology, economics, and education, this report identifies high-level trends and opportunities for those seeking to make changes now for a better future for women at work in ways that benefit all.

<sup>1</sup> Bromley, *et al.* | “Making Work Meaningful from the C-Suite to the Frontline”

<sup>2</sup> Bromley, *et al.* | “Making Work Meaningful from the C-Suite to the Frontline”

## INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS INTELLECTUAL JOY?

Nearly every group of stellar women with whom I have discussed the experience of intellectual disempowerment, from groups of top expert physicians to experts in early childcare and organizational leaders in my Executive MBA classes, have expressed a deep-rooted uncertainty and frustration about how they greet the world as thinkers and knowers and how they feel devalued as knowers in various parts of their lives. These feelings of uncertainty and frustration exist despite their clear and obvious expertise in their fields. As I will explain in **Section II: Barriers to Intellectual Joy**, this experience can be and often is personally and professionally devastating because when people are thwarted as knowers, they can be shaken in their fundamental belief in themselves.

Knowing that our ideas have value and that they contribute to shaping how each of us individually understands the universe is an essential aspect of our human lives as thoughtful, creative creatures. For women, girls, and gender nonbinary or nonconforming people,<sup>3</sup> this point is essential, especially given the widespread historical and contemporary exclusion of these populations from having their ideas heard and valued. If organizations can become aware of strategic ways to break down barriers to encourage full contributions from these populations, they will likely be more successful as organizations. If people can know themselves as worthy of contributing to their own lives and the world in this way, they will likely feel more confident and capable in themselves. If all work in concert toward this common purpose, we can anticipate a more joyful experience of being human.

Intellectual joy, then, names this specific kind of joy: A satisfaction in coming to understand oneself and appreciate another person in their individual and shared capacities to know themselves and their worlds. It is not simply a passing pleasurable feeling and indeed may not even feel great all the time. This is because intellectual joy does not simply result from a person being “right” or always having their ideas confirmed; rather, intellectual joy pertains to affirming the capacity to experience a full range of ideas and to grow in one’s intellectual life.

When a person is empowered intellectually, it means that they are allowed to be wrong and are allowed to fail in their ideas. The joy that comes from intellectual empowerment, then, does not mean that a person will feel happy because their ideas are simply right by virtue of their having them, but it does mean that that person has a right to their ideas—and that their ideas may have positive value. They deserve to be tested and are worthy of consideration.

A person is empowered intellectually not just by existing in an echo chamber of own ideas, surrounded by people who say “yes” all the time and leaving the person constantly affirmed without criticism. Indeed, intellectual empowerment requires deliberation, critique, and dialogue. Intellectual empowerment validates a

**Intellectual empowerment  
validates a person as a  
knower, even if or when she  
makes mistakes.**

<sup>3</sup> The term “women” is used inclusively and broadly throughout this report, sometimes in ways that imply multiple gender identities beyond the binary of “women” and “men.” This point is especially significant when it comes to issues of privilege and power regarding intellectual joy and valuing people’s ideas.

person as a knower, even if or when they make mistakes. Indeed, we might say that it is critical to make mistakes—doing so can help a person foster a sense of confidence in their ideas even when challenged, thereby cultivating their intellectual joy. Gender schemas put enormous pressure on girls and women to be “perfect” and not make mistakes. Intellectual empowerment pushes back against those gendered expectations.

When a person experiences intellectual joy, it is not a passing feeling. Rather, that person can take heart in knowing that they can be wrong and sometimes fail without being shaken in their fundamental faith and knowledge of themselves and their worth at work and in other aspects of their life. They can trust their capacities, their workplace, and other people. They can feel intellectual joy.

When a person experiences this “knowing feeling” of intellectual joy, they are able to feel themselves more fully as they move through the world. They can expand and contract, fail and succeed, and not just act in fear of being wrong or not knowing “enough.” They can also relinquish the pressure to be invulnerable, a constant expert, or unshakable in their beliefs. They can mess up, learn, collaborate, compete, take risks, and be critical of themselves. They can value themselves and others as knowers, improving their workplace climate and their communities.<sup>4</sup> Given the ripple effects of intellectual joy, all should work to empower others and themselves in this specific way.

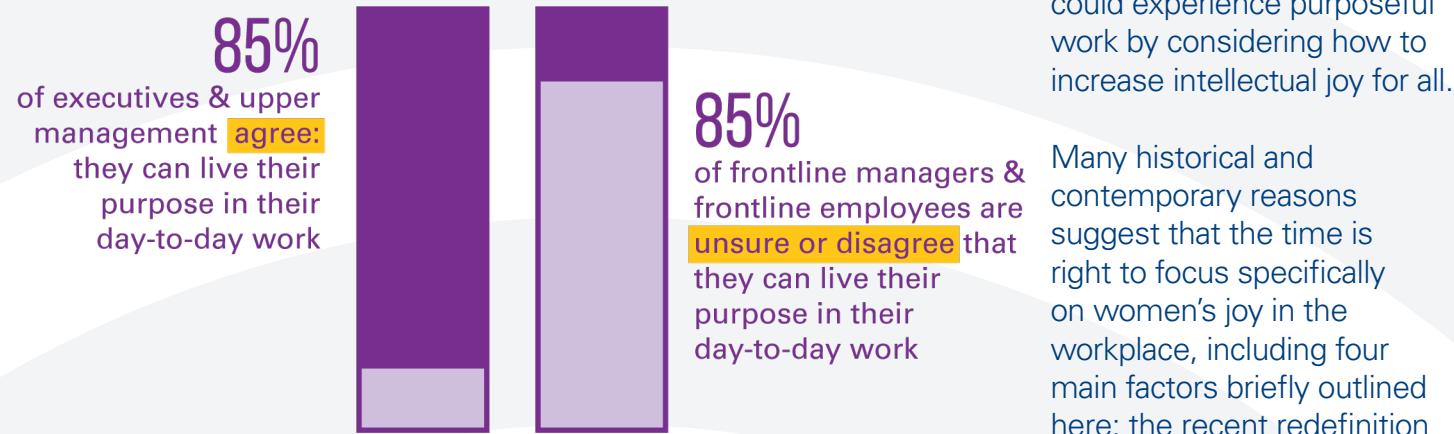
<sup>4</sup> Shew | “Women and Intellectual Empowerment”

## SECTION I: WHY JOY NOW?

“CEOs work to generate profits and return value to shareholders, but **the best-run companies do more.** They put the customer first and invest in their employees and communities. In the end, it’s the most promising way to **build long-term value.**”<sup>5</sup>

– **Tricia Griffith,**  
President and CEO of Progressive Corporation

A “purpose gap” exists between what employees say they desire in a workplace and what their reality is at work. Only 15 percent of employees surveyed say that they do find meaning in their work though nearly all of them want to find meaning in their work. In contrast, 85 percent of upper-management and executives say that they live their purpose at work.<sup>6</sup> This gap could narrow, and more employees



of the purpose of a corporation by leading CEOs, the number of educated women in the workforce, the ways that the pandemic has widened inequalities between men and women at work, and the changing desires of younger people entering the workforce.

### CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS EMPLOYEES HAS CHANGED

**The world’s leading organizations invest in their employees’ experiences, which leads to a strong return on investment.** These companies appear not only on multiple “best places to work” lists but also deliver higher profits and productivity than the others. Studies show that workplaces that excel in terms of employee experience outperform companies that fail to emphasize this dimension of their companies. Reports show, however, that only 6 percent of companies do an outstanding job of focusing on the employee experience.<sup>7</sup>

Employee experience, though, is only one piece of a corporation’s actions and responsibilities. In fact, prioritizing employee experience and well-being is a recent development. In 2019, the very purpose of a corporation was redefined by business leaders to move away from the idea that a corporation should

5 Business Roundtable | “Business Roundtable Redefines the Purpose of a Corporation to Promote ‘An Economy That Serves All Americans’”  
6 Dhingra, *et al.* | “Help Your Employees Find Purpose—or Watch Them Leave”  
7 Jacob | “Employee Experience Directly Impacts ROI”



serve only shareholders and move toward serving all stakeholders, including employees.<sup>8</sup> That year, the Business Roundtable, consisting of CEOs from almost 200 leading U.S. businesses, outlined the purpose of a corporation to be serving customers, employees, suppliers, and communities essentially on a level that is on par with meeting the obligations of shareholders. Under this new definition, which elevates a company’s obligations to employees to be “on a par”<sup>9</sup> with responsibilities to other stakeholders, companies should feel encouraged, if not emboldened, to put their force behind initiatives that prioritize the well-being of its employees.

### MORE EDUCATED WOMEN ARE IN THE WORKFORCE THAN EVER BEFORE

Nearly 60 percent of women participate in the U.S. labor force today.<sup>10</sup> Yet, women remain underpaid, underrepresented, and undervalued when compared to their male counterparts, especially in positions of leadership. Recent data shows that the numbers of women have increased in politics, business, and university leadership over the last 25 years, for instance, but those numbers are still quite low relative to the total number of women in the workforce. The number is also in relation to their male counterparts, who make up about 75 percent of leadership positions in these areas as of 2019.<sup>11</sup> Yet, 87 percent of companies in North America report gender diversity a top priority for them.<sup>12</sup> While it is encouraging to see organizations have become aware of the importance of increasing gender diversity, it is nonetheless discouraging not to see this diversity in positions of organizational leadership today.

This underrepresentation is especially troubling when considering how the number of women in the labor force holding a college degree quadrupled between 1970 and 2019, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, while the proportion of men with a college degree essentially doubled over that same amount of time. Women are much more likely to work full-time and year-round, and that the number of working women with childcare responsibilities has increased “considerably” as well.<sup>13</sup>



**Women have become more educated and qualified for a wider range of jobs as a result of their increased education, but their expertise and insights are not valued in ways we might expect.** Workplaces can be especially challenging for women when their ideas are undervalued and when they share a disproportionate amount of responsibility for caregiving both at home and in the workplace.

8 Business Roundtable | “Statement on the Purpose of a Corporation”  
9 Chang | “How to Make Hard Choices”  
10 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics | “Women in the Labor Force: A Databook”  
11 Pew Research Center | “The Data on Women Leaders”  
12 Krishnan, *et al.* | “Ten Things to Know about Gender Equality”  
13 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics | “Women in the Labor Force: A Databook”

## THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS EXASPERATED

### GENDER DISPARITIES AT WORK

After more than two years of pandemic fatigue, **women continue to bear the brunt of the effects of COVID-19 in the workplace and at home.**

Women leaders have reported “downshifting” their careers at rates that outpace their male counterparts. They also report experiencing greater mental health consequences and are more burned out than men. In fact, women are even more burned out now than they were in 2020, with nearly half of working women reporting high levels of burnout.<sup>14</sup>

While more people of all genders are experiencing this burnout, the gap between women and men almost doubled between the beginning of the pandemic and a year later. This burnout is often connected with a desire either leave one’s company or leave the workplace altogether. In 2021, **one in three** women considered leaving the workforce or downshifting their careers—a significant increase from **one in four** in the first few months of the pandemic.<sup>15</sup> “Additionally, **four in ten** women have considered leaving their company or switching jobs—and high employee turnover in recent months suggests that many of them are following through.”<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, the pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on women’s unpaid labor. Before COVID-19, women spent 4.1 hours per day on unpaid work in contrast to men, who spent 1.7 hours per day on that kind of work.<sup>17</sup> That number has increased throughout the pandemic. For instance, in a 2022 study about how the pandemic has affected research productivity for women in academia, mothers had little uninterrupted work time, were three times more likely than fathers to multitask generally, and five times more likely than fathers to multitask while caring for children, reducing time otherwise spent on advancing research.<sup>18</sup> Since research produces new knowledge, the consequences for women engaged in this activity are dire, but the effects on the amount of knowledge available for everyone are also troubling. Fewer contributions of knowledge lead to less of it available in the world—for everyone.

Beyond research production, global crises like COVID-19 are also economic crises that affect women harder than men. Women already earn less overall, have fewer savings, are disproportionately represented in informal economic structures, have less access to social protections, make up a majority of single-parent households, and are more likely to drop out of the labor force due to unpaid caregiving responsibilities and domestic burdens.<sup>19</sup>



14 Marte | “Gen X Female Executives Are Leaving Their Jobs in Droves”

15 McKinsey & Company and LeanIn.Org | “Women in the Workplace 2021: The Full Report”

16 McKinsey Quarterly | “‘Great Attrition’ or ‘Great Attraction’? The Choice Is Yours”

17 UN Women | “COVID-19 and Its Economic Toll on Women: The Story behind the Numbers”

18 Pebdani, *et al.* | “Pandemic Productivity in Academia: Using Ecological Momentary Assessment to Explore the Impact of COVID-19 on Research Productivity”

19 UN Women | “COVID-19 and Its Economic Toll on Women: The Story behind the Numbers”

Moreover, a massive 2021 review of scientific mental health studies about the effects of COVID-19 on women and men reveal that COVID-19 has been misnomered “the great equalizer.” Research shows that among many factors, being younger, being a girl or woman, and/or being subjected to abuse or stigma by virtue of belonging to an ethnic minority or sexually marginalized group results in worse mental health outcomes related to the pandemic.<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, “highly educated professionals have [been] shown to struggle more with interruptions to routine activities, occupations, and work relationships.”<sup>21</sup> The phenomenon of *time confetti*<sup>22</sup> can drain a person to their core.

### **TIME CONFETTI:**

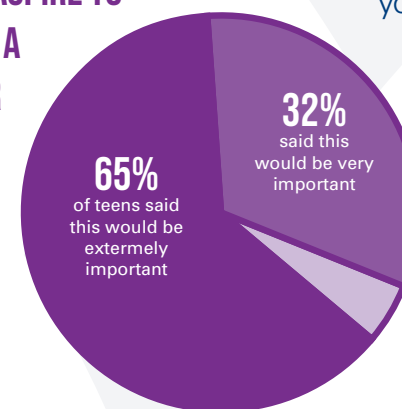
The phenomenon of “time confetti,” which happens when a person’s time is shattered into pieces and she is distracted by competing responsibilities in ways that distract her from being able to focus on a task or idea at hand, can drain a person to her core.

### WHAT YOUNGER PEOPLE WANT

More than ever, Americans are identifying meaningful work as essential in any future job. Over the last three decades, it has been ranked as the “most important aspect of a job—ahead of income, job security, and the number of hours worked.”<sup>23</sup> Employers should note that though there are arguments against the idea that meaningful work should be a goal of current or prospective employees, “younger people who will enter the workforce do indeed want that meaningful work.”<sup>24</sup> In fact, this search for meaningful work even eclipses family and kindness as the number one motivator for today’s young jobseekers.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to finding meaning in their work, young Americans are also expressing a desire to settle into a career that they enjoy. In a 2019 Pew Research report on the epidemic of youth anxiety, 95 percent of teens said, “having a job or career they enjoy” would be “extremely or very important” to them as adults (63 percent ranked it “extremely important” and 32 percent ranked it “very important”). This priority ranked higher than any other, including “helping other people who are in need” (81 percent) or getting married (47 percent).<sup>26</sup> When coupled with a firm desire to enter a diverse and inclusive workforce that actively aims to counter status quo norms of privilege and power in the U.S., young people are saying quite loudly what they want.<sup>27</sup>

### **TEENS ASPIRE TO HAVING A CAREER THEY ENJOY**



If employers want to capitalize on emerging talent, they are going to need to meet the needs and desires of their future employees in terms

20 Gibson, *et al.* | “The Impact of Inequality on Mental Health Outcomes during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Systematic Review”

21 Gibson, *et al.* | “The Impact of Inequality on Mental Health Outcomes during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Systematic Review”

22 Whillans | “Time Confetti and the Broken Promise of Leisure”

23 Bromley, *et al.* | “Making Work Meaningful from the C-Suite to the Frontline”

24 Thompson | “Workism Is Making Americans Miserable”

25 Horowitz and Graf | “Most U.S. Teens See Anxiety, Depression as Major Problems”

26 Horowitz and Graf | “Most U.S. Teens See Anxiety, Depression as Major Problems”

27 Miller | “For Younger Job Seekers, Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace Aren’t a Preference. They’re a Requirement”

of providing workplace conditions that allow for the possibility of meaningful, purposeful work that honors workers' curiosity and intellectual capabilities.

### Section I – Wrap-Up

These reasons are but a few to suggest why we should care about women's intellectual joy now. There are certainly other practical, theoretical, and existential reasons to pay attention to this specific concept—issues of workplace productivity, justice and fairness, and a deep desire to live meaningful lives among them.

The next section of this report focuses on explaining high-level trends at work—women's burnout, changing careers due to COVID-19, and ongoing issues regarding how women are squeezed out of contributing their ideas due to their increased expectation that they partake in invisible, albeit essential, labor—to see how women are harmed intellectually at work and what the consequences of this harm is for organizations and the world.

## SECTION II: BARRIERS TO INTELLECTUAL JOY

"Collectively, we are what the world actually looks like. And in order for our systems to reflect that, they don't have to create a new reality. They just have to stop resisting the one we already live in."<sup>28</sup>

– America Ferrera,  
Actress

The barriers to women experiencing intellectual joy are both expansive in scope and deeply harmful to women on professional and personal levels. The breadth and depth of this harm cuts to the core of one of the fundamental ways that we experience ourselves as humans—that is, as creatures capable of knowing our worlds and producing knowledge ourselves. When this capacity is undermined, people are kept from experiencing intellectual joy.

As this section shows, women, especially women of color, are consistently explicitly undermined at work as credible sources of knowledge. This discussion of barriers is divided into four different parts:

- 1** PART 1 EXPLAINS HOW WOMEN ARE INTELLECTUALLY DISEMPOWERED AND WHAT THIS DISEMPOWERMENT LOOKS LIKE IN THREE DOMAINS OF OUR WORLD—EDUCATION, WORK, AND ART.
- 2** PART 2 EXAMINES EMPIRICAL DATA THAT IDENTIFIES THREE "GAPS" AMONG EMPLOYEES AT WORK THAT, THIS WHITE PAPER ARGUES, THWARTS INTELLECTUAL JOY.
- 3** PART 3 FOCUSES ON HOW THE CONTEMPORARY PHENOMENA OF BURNOUT AND DOWNSHIFTING AFFECT WOMEN'S CAPACITIES FOR INTELLECTUAL JOY.
- 4** PART 4 SHINES A LIGHT ON THE WAYS THAT INVISIBLE LABOR DISPROPORTIONATELY BURDENS WOMEN, KEEPING THEM FROM INTELLECTUAL FULFILLMENT.

Understanding these barriers that women experience is essential to identifying possible practical solutions, which are highlighted in **Section III: How to Increase Intellectual Joy for Women at Work**.

### PART 1: WHAT IS INTELLECTUAL DISEMPOWERMENT AND HOW DOES IT HAPPEN?

Intellectual disempowerment is a tricky concept. Typically, when we think about ways that people are disempowered or devalued, we like to be able to point to specific people who have actively harmed them. We want to be able to assign blame, hold the person or people responsible, and eliminate the harmful actions. We may think, for example, of teachers who fail to call on specific students in class, toxic managers who undermine their employees, or abusive friends or partners who actively harm those with whom they are in relation. In those cases, we aim to target the problem person or people, assign blame, and bring the harmed person to safety. When a person is actively harmed, then, we can point to the perpetrator or culprit and often hope to hold them accountable.

Harm also happens in passive ways wherein we cannot point to a person or people causing the harm, but the result is the same: People are disempowered. This shift to the passive voice, from the active form of "X harms Y" to "Y was harmed," can be difficult to grapple with. But these kinds of structural,

<sup>28</sup> Ferrera | "My Identity Is a Superpower—Not an Obstacle"

organizational, and institutional harms are part of many people's daily lives. Since the focus of this white paper is on the ways that women in particular experience this disempowerment, we may think of examples such as the increase in downshifting that stemmed from the pandemic and consider how it may harm women in positions of leadership even if they are the ones "making the choice" to take a different, "less stressful" job.

## ACTIVE HARM:

When a person or people can be identified as causing harm, and in theory, can be held responsible for that harm.

## PASSIVE HARM:

No one person or people can be identified as causing harm, but injury still occurs. These are structural, organizational, and institutional harms where no one person or group of people can be identified and held accountable.

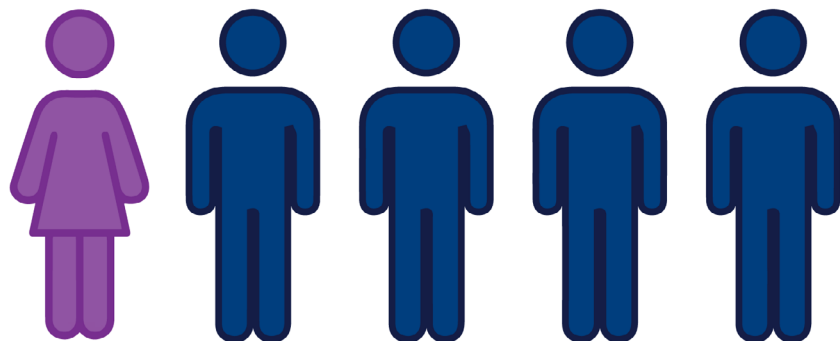
When expanding the focus beyond COVID-19's effects on the workplace and looking more broadly at women in the U.S. workplace today, we can see other examples of passive harm by way of structural and organizational inequities. For instance, recent data shows that

- Four women are promoted to manager for every five men,
- Men hold manager positions at a rate of 3:2 over women,
- Only one in five executives are women,
- One in thirty executives are women of color, and
- Women, especially senior-level women and women in technical roles, are frequently the only women in the room.<sup>29</sup>

When women are excluded from or underrepresented in those spaces where ideas are often exchanged, it causes this type of passive harm.

As these examples suggest, intellectual disempowerment—while often passive in its origins—pertains to the very specific way that people are undermined, discounted, or undervalued as knowers. People of all identity markers and backgrounds can be undermined in this dehumanizing way, of course, but intellectual disempowerment tends to affect those who have historically been excluded from intellectual realms of life. Simply put, when women and girls are excluded from intellectual aspects of themselves, whether by virtue of explicit active harm or implicit passive harm, they are intellectually disempowered—lacking the confidence in their ideas that they deserve to have by virtue of being human.

### ONLY 1 IN 5 EXECUTIVES ARE WOMEN



<sup>29</sup> Schooley | "Facing the Gender Gap in the Workplace"

All suffer as a result: The knowers themselves, the companies that could benefit from their contributions, and the general realms of research, knowledge, and innovation. When women and girls are precluded from fully appreciating their own capacities for knowledge, and when those capacities are actively or passively harmed, we are all worse off.

### THREE DOMAINS OF INTELLECTUAL HARM FOR GIRLS AND WOMEN

#### INTELLECTUALLY DISEMPOWERED IN EDUCATION, WORK, AND ART



**In Education:** Women and girls experience a "chilly climate" in relation to their male peers. Boys and men speak up three times more than their female counterparts without being called on to participate in class.<sup>30</sup> In K-12 education, girls receive more teacher comments about their personality than they do about their smarts, and they receive less attention, time, and energy from teachers overall than boys do.<sup>31</sup> Girls also receive lower-quality feedback than boys,<sup>32</sup> which can keep them from knowing their intellectual potential. These gender biases often intersect with racial biases in the classroom, with girls and women internalizing negative ideas about them as learners.<sup>33</sup>

These biases often extend into higher education as well. In college, male students consistently underestimate the GPAs of women in their classes. In general, male students participate more actively in class situations while women are less likely to volunteer their knowledge and insights in front of a whole class.<sup>34</sup> And, curricular materials at all educational levels are still designed and written mainly by men.<sup>35</sup> As a result of these pervasive issues in education, some researchers suggest conducting "gender audits" to help rebalance the scales to create learning environments that benefit all [see Appendix I].



**At Work:** While approximately half of the workforce is women, we do not see change happening in ways that value and promote women as thinkers. While we may wish to think that women's ideas are valued at work, reports on this topic are discouraging, and the appearance of progress is not itself progress. Change is not happening in ways that might be expected.

Studies show that women are less likely to speak than their male counterparts, and when they do speak,

<sup>30</sup> Dartmouth College | "College Classrooms Are Still Chilly for Women, as Men Speak More, Study Finds: Gendered Participation Has a Long Way to Go to Reach Equity"

<sup>31</sup> Alber | "Gender Equity in the Classroom"

<sup>32</sup> Andrus | "Miles to Go: The Continuing Quest for Gender Equity in the Classroom"

<sup>33</sup> Andrus | "Miles to Go: The Continuing Quest for Gender Equity in the Classroom"

<sup>34</sup> Aguillon, *et al.* | "Gender Differences in Student Participation in an Active-Learning Classroom"

<sup>35</sup> Alber | "Gender Equity in the Classroom"



their ideas are less likely to be engaged. When women do contribute their ideas, they are often viewed in stereotypically gendered ways, resulting in pervasive bias at work.<sup>36</sup> Also, women who are heard are often viewed as abrasive or bossy, receiving much more negative feedback in performance reviews.<sup>37</sup>



**In Art:** An enormous 2017 study of 1.5 million pieces of art sold at auction between 1970 and 2013 reveals that art auction participants can assess the value of an anonymous work of art at a certain amount, but that when that work of art is revealed to be created by a woman, it receives an astonishing 47.6 percent “gender discount” in auction prices.<sup>38</sup> For example, a painting’s value might be assessed at \$40,000 without knowing who the artist is, but when the artist is revealed to be a woman, that “value” plummets to \$20,960 at auction. An artist may be good “for a woman” but not good “as an artist.” If she were, her art, which is an expression of ideas, would be valued in the same way that men’s art is. This situation leads researchers to conclude that “[w]omen’s art appears to sell for less because it is made by women,” not because they are any less genius than men.<sup>39</sup>

## PART 2: MINDING THE GAPS

“If women aren’t taken as seriously as men, they are going to be paid less, promoted less and held back in their careers. They are going to feel less confidence and less entitled to success.”<sup>40</sup>

– **Mary Ann Sieghart,**

*Journalist & Author, The Authority Gap: Why Women Are Still Taken Less Seriously than Men, and What We Can Do about It*

Three major gaps between women and men at work directly affect women’s ability to feel intellectual joy and be seen as credible sources of knowledge:

THE PUNISHMENT

GAP

THE EARNINGS

GAP

THE AUTHORITY

GAP

36 Heilman | “Gender Stereotypes and Workplace Bias” See also: Andie & Al, “Gender Stereotypes in the Workplace” and “A Look at Gender Stereotyping: How Women in the Workplace are Today’s Catalysts for Change”  
 37 Snyder | “The Abrasiveness Trap: High-Achieving Men and Women are Described Differently in Reviews”  
 38 Adams, *et al.* | “Is Gender in the Eye of the Beholder? Identifying Cultural Attitudes with Art Auction Prices”  
 39 Adams, *et al.* | “Is Gender in the Eye of the Beholder? Identifying Cultural Attitudes with Art Auction Prices,” 3 & 27  
 40 Sieghart | *The Authority Gap: Why Women Are Still Taken Less Seriously than Men, and What We Can Do about It*

## GAP #1: THE PUNISHMENT GAP

“Do you know how many men do things that are . . . much worse than that?”<sup>41</sup>

– **Serena Williams,**

*Elite Athlete & Entrepreneur,*

*in an on-court conference she called mid-game with U.S. Open officials so that she could defend herself further at the 2018 U.S. Open*

Studies show that women and people of color are punished more harshly for making mistakes at work than white men are, which can lead to self-doubt, an inability to trust one’s own intellectual merit, and/or difficulty in recovering from setbacks in ways that men do. That research further indicates that women employees responsible for trivial or small missteps are subject to far worse penalties than men are.<sup>42</sup>

This “punishment gap” results in some widespread and devastating consequences. For instance, according to Abhishek Parjuli’s 2019 study of “punishment gap” repercussions, women working as financial advisors are 20 percent more likely to be fired for misconduct compared to men. Women are also 30 percent less likely to find another job in the industry if fired. Similarly, future referrals decline by a third when a female surgeon loses a patient, while no decline in referrals happens if the surgeon is male.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, that study shows that ethnic minority workers are more likely to be punished than their white employee counterparts overall. Other reports show that men’s mistakes are often more easily forgotten than women’s mistakes are,<sup>44</sup> and studies have shown that Black women experience “double jeopardy” in being held disproportionately accountable for organizational failures than either men or white women.<sup>45</sup>

Future referrals decline by

1  
3

when a female surgeon loses a patient, while no decline in referrals happens if the surgeon is male.

This gender punishment gap also applies to women leaders. As CEOs, women are generally 45 percent more likely to be fired than their male counterparts. There are many phrases to describe how women leaders are punished at work, as a 2018 study describes:

- **Glass Cliff Theory** posits that women who break through the “glass ceiling” will find themselves in perilous situations as they will be promoted to higher-risk leadership positions and thus face more difficulties once they are in leadership positions, particularly in comparison to their male counterparts.
- **Token Theory** suggests that numerical minorities like women CEOs often experience greater scrutiny, visibility, attention, and monitoring.
- **Role Congruity Theory** asserts that cultural stereotypes associating leadership with masculinity can undermine evaluations of women’s competence and ability to lead.<sup>46</sup>

Studies also show that women’s misconduct at work is 20 percent less costly than men’s misconduct—

41 Beasley | “How Can We Close the Gender Punishment Gap?”  
 42 Gelfand and Choi | “The Pay Gap Is Far from the Only Discrimination Women Face”  
 43 Parajuli | “The Punishment Gap: How Workplace Mistakes Hurt Women and Minorities Most”  
 44 Dempsey | “Why Don’t Women Raise Their Hands More?”  
 45 Ashleigh and Livingston | “Failure Is Not an Option for Black Women: Effects of Organizational Performance on Leaders with Single versus Dual-Subordinate Identities”  
 46 Gupta, *et al.* | “You’re Fired! Gender Disparities in CEO Dismissal”

and, perhaps unsurprisingly, that women are less likely to repeat misconduct.<sup>47</sup> So, even though women's misconduct costs organizations less than men's misconduct at work, and even though women are less likely to make intentional or unintentional mistakes again at work, they are nonetheless punished more harshly and more often than their male counterparts.

## GAP #2: THE EARNINGS GAP

"For women who aspire to top leadership, routes exist but are full of twists and turns."<sup>48</sup>

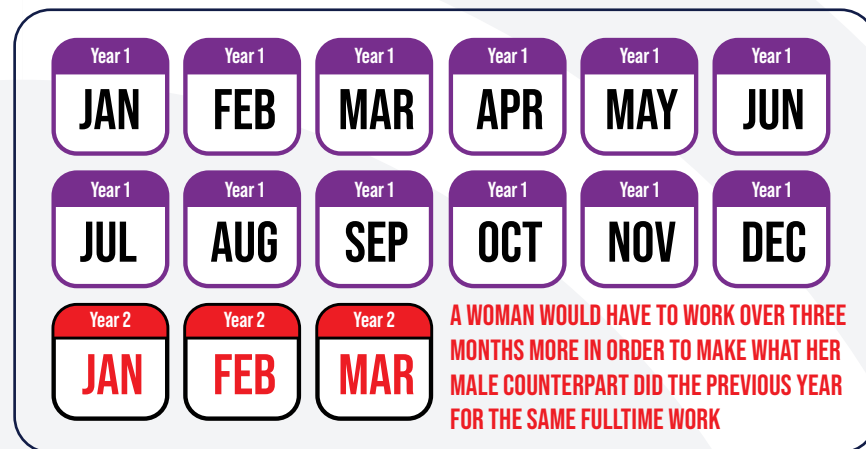
– Alice H. Eagly and Linda L. Carli,  
Psychologists, "Women and the Labyrinth of Leadership" (2018)

A 2020 report from the Brookings Institute, adapted from a 2017 speech given by Janet Yellen on gender equality in the workplace reports that,

*The gap in earnings between women and men, although smaller than it was years ago, is still significant; women continue to be underrepresented in certain industries and occupations; and too many women struggle to combine aspirations for work and family. Further advancement has been hampered by barriers to equal opportunity and workplace rules and norms that fail to support a reasonable work-life balance. If these obstacles persist, we will squander the potential of many of our citizens and incur a substantial loss to the productive capacity of our economy at a time when the aging of the population and weak productivity growth are already weighing on economic growth.*<sup>49</sup>

Additional studies show that a woman would have to work over three months more in order to make what her male counterpart did the previous year for the same full-time work. **"On average, women employed in the United States lose a combined total of nearly \$1.6 trillion every year."**<sup>50</sup> This pay disparity holds despite studies that show that women are both more productive than their male counterparts at work and are assigned more tasks than men are.<sup>51</sup> So, even though women tend to be more productive and are assigned more work than their male counterparts, collectively they earn far less than men.

This may, in part, be tied to disparities in women's representation among executive leadership. When it comes to the Earnings Gap and women in leadership, a 2018 study shows that at firms with no female representation at the executive or ownership level, women receive 32 percent lower compensation than their male counterparts. In contrast, there



47 Egan, et al. | "When Harry Fired Sally: The Double Standard in Punishing Misconduct"  
 48 Eagly and Carli | "Women and the Labyrinth of Leadership," 3  
 49 Yellen | "The History of Women's Work and Wages and How It Has Created Success for Us All"  
 50 National Partnership for Women & Families | "Fact Sheet: America's Women and the Wage Gap"  
 51 Jagannathan | "Women Might Be More Productive than Men at Work, a Study Suggests"

is no gap in firms with an equal representation of male and female executives or owners.<sup>52</sup> Clearly, increasing the number of women in boardrooms across the country would help address the issue of pay equity in a very tangible way.

COVID-19 widened the Earnings Gap as well. Consider Beth, a director of technology in the UK's healthcare sector, who took an indefinite leave from her job to care for her two children despite being at the same senior level at work as her partner: "We had to prioritise [sic] my husband's role as he . . . gets a greater salary," she said. "As a female I feel [the pandemic] has taken my ability to participate in the workplace back to the 1950s."<sup>53</sup>

Such examples were common throughout the pandemic as women across all levels of work tended to earn less than men. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), over 25 percent of women workers had part-time jobs before the pandemic, more than twice the share of men. Since the proportion of women in these low-paying jobs was so much higher, they were overrepresented in hard-hit sectors such as retail.<sup>54</sup>

## GAP #3: THE AUTHORITY GAP

"One consequence of the authority gap is that women are held to higher standards. This means that employers are often losing out on under-promoted female talent. So they, too, have a lot to gain from narrowing the gap."<sup>55</sup>

– Mary Ann Sieghart,  
Journalist & Author, *The Authority Gap: Why Women Are Still Taken Less Seriously than Men, and What We Can Do about It*

Women remain undervalued as sources of authority in relation to men, which prohibits them from feeling confident in the credibility of their ideas and keeps them from being seen as credible sources of knowledge themselves. Studies show that both women and men trust men as experts more than they trust women and that implicit bias still occurs regarding who counts as an expert or authority, no matter how much we would like to think it does not. In medical school, women have both male and female role models (47 percent male, 53 percent female), but men have almost exclusively male role models (89 percent).<sup>56</sup> Moreover, emerging artificial intelligence technologies online are providing alarm when it comes to who constitutes an expert. For instance, a search for "nurse" in one of the image-generating technologies "resulted in images that all appeared to show stethoscope-wearing females, while one for 'CEO' showed images that all appeared to be men and nearly all of them were white."<sup>57</sup> These imaging technologies draw on the huge amount images available online, so those who have historically been represented as experts or leaders are the default fodder for these technologies.

52 Egan, et al. | "When Harry Fired Sally: The Double Standard in Punishing Misconduct"  
 53 Romei | "'I Am Close to Quitting My Career': Mothers Step Back at Work to Cope with Pandemic Parenting"  
 54 Romei | "Working Mothers Bear Brunt of Pandemic Parenting: Childcare. Gender Disparity Division of Household Labour during the Crisis has Largely Fallen Back on Old Patterns"  
 55 Sieghart | *The Authority Gap: Why Women Are Still Taken Less Seriously than Men, and What We Can Do about It*  
 56 Lindberg | "Gender and Role Models in the Education of Medical Doctors: A Qualitative Exploration of Gendered Ways of Thinking"  
 57 Metz | "AI Made These Stunning Images. Here's Why Experts Are Worried"

Women, especially women of color, are habitually undermined as credible sources of knowledge. As a 2021 McKinsey report shows, only 60 percent of women and 44 percent of men “publicly acknowledge or give credit to women of color for their ideas and work.”<sup>58</sup> As preeminent journalist Mary Ann Sieghart explains in her book *The Authority Gap*, “[w]e have a tendency to underestimate women [and] if we think that they are less capable or expert than they actually are, we are going to pay less attention to what they say. Men in particular tend to discount a woman’s views much more than a man’s. [When they do this,] they manderestimate us routinely.”<sup>59</sup>

## CREDIBILITY EXCESS:

Occurs when an individual is attributed and granted authority without needing to demonstrate it, often by virtue of their identity markers, like being a white man.

## CREDIBILITY DEFICIT:

Occurs when individuals are underestimated in their authority or expertise, which is what happens often to women and people of color in male and white-dominated spaces.

Philosopher Miranda Fricker puts it this way: When a person enjoys a *credibility excess*, that person is attributed and granted authority without needing to demonstrate it, often by virtue of their identity markers, like being a white man. They are granted authority just by walking into a room, giving a speech, or performing some other such act. They are simply believed. By contrast, when a person suffers a *credibility deficit*, they are underestimated in their authority or expertise, which is what happens often to women and people of color in male and white-dominated spaces.<sup>60</sup> They are manderestimated, needing to prove their ideas more while often feeling less confident in those ideas because of the ways they are perceived by others. Several experiments demonstrate that Black women’s contributions to conversation are less likely to be attributed to them correctly than others are, including white women.<sup>61</sup> Studies also show that women are often praised for pretending to be less successful than they are.<sup>62</sup>

Women are inclined to be less confident in their abilities while men are more likely to project confidence even when they’re uncertain. Women are also more likely to be judged on their potential versus on the achievements they have accomplished. As Yale law student Rachel Dempsey argues, all her peers (herself included) would like to aim toward productive, successful futures. She notes, however, that the “science of cognitive bias indicates that the problems we wish we’d overcome are still shaping our lives in ways that are hard to see. It’s important for us all to understand that, lest women internalize the effects of bias as personal failings or men take their confidence to be earned rather than granted.”<sup>63</sup>

58 Thomas, *et al.* | “Women in the Workplace, 2021”

59 Sieghart | *The Authority Gap: Why Women Are Still Taken Less Seriously than Men, and What We Can Do about It*

60 Fricker | *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*

61 Sieghart | *The Authority Gap: Why Women Are Still Taken Less Seriously than Men, and What We Can Do about It*

62 Eagly and Carli | “Women and the Labyrinth of Leadership”

63 Dempsey | “Why Don’t Women Raise Their Hands More?”

## WHAT CAN WE SEE IN THESE GAPS? SPOTLIGHT ON LOST INNOVATION AND PATENTS

“Right now, if more women and African-Americans were participating in the technical innovation that leads to patents . . . G.D.P. per capita could be 0.6 to 4.4 percent higher. That is, it would be between \$58,841 to \$61,064 per person compared with \$58,490 per person in 2019.”<sup>64</sup>

– Lisa Cook,  
Economist

An example of the consequences of women being intellectually disempowered comes from the domain of technological innovation specifically in relation to who is and is not granted patents. Economist Lisa Cook has performed dozens of studies that show barriers that women and people of color experience when pursuing and procuring patents. Her “entire line of research suggests that organizations—companies, laboratories, colleges and universities—are leaving colossal sums of money on the table by not maximizing talent and living standards for all Americans.”<sup>65</sup> As she explains,

*The core problem is the continued discrimination experienced by disadvantaged minorities and women at every stage of the innovation process, from childhood and youth exposure and mentoring in the STEM fields to postsecondary educational barriers to advancement, and from discriminatory denials of patent applications to the lack of opportunity to participate in the development of patentable ideas in the technology workplace. Closing this gender and racial gap in the U.S. innovation process could increase U.S. Gross Domestic Product per capita by [approximately] 2.7 percent.*<sup>66</sup>

Finally, a 2019 paper coins the term “lost Einsteins”<sup>67</sup> to name people who “do not pursue a career in innovation even though they could have had highly impactful innovations had they done so.” The study quantifies the amount of lost innovation by considering a “counterfactual [reality] under which women, minorities, and children from low-income (bottom 80 percent) families invent at the same rate as white men from high-income (top 20 percent) families. In this scenario, there would be 4.04 times as many inventors in the United States as there are today.”<sup>68</sup> A footnote from that article offers this additional commentary: “Indeed, the fact that inventors who are women, minorities, or from lower-income families are all paid less than their more advantaged counterparts despite having similar citations is consistent with on-the-job discrimination.”<sup>69</sup>

Closing this gender and racial gap in the U.S. innovation process could increase U.S. Gross Domestic Product per capita by **2.7%**

64 Cook | “Racism Impoverishes the Whole Economy”

65 Cook | “Racism Impoverishes the Whole Economy”

66 Cook and Gerson | “The Implications of U.S. Gender and Racial Disparities in Income and Wealth Inequality at Each Stage of the Innovation Process”

67 Bell, *et al.* | “Who Becomes an Inventor in America? The Importance of Exposure to Innovation”

68 Bell, *et al.* | “Who Becomes an Inventor in America? The Importance of Exposure to Innovation,” 33

69 Bell, *et al.* | “Who Becomes an Inventor in America? The Importance of Exposure to Innovation” 32

These gaps lay bare persistent inequities between women and men in ways that directly affect organizations in being able to keep worthy talent, level the playing field in terms of earnings, and respect women as authorities and experts in their fields, even resulting in the loss of patents and projected effects on GDP. Those realities do not tell the full story, though, for what else often is and can be lost is a person's own full sense of themselves in personal, intimate ways that connect their experiences to their own ability to make meaning in their world.

## LOST EINSTEINS:



People who do not pursue a career in innovation even though they could have had highly impactful innovations had they done so.

While the inequities highlighted here are specific to women's professional lives, it's not a stretch to say that the ramifications of such biases cause significant suffering beyond professional realms. As the next section shows, these inequities can lead to personal and professional burnout, unfair kinds of downshifting in women's careers, and not only an undervaluing of women's labor but of women's worth generally.

## PART 3: HOW BURNOUT AND "DOWNSHIFTING" AFFECT WOMEN'S JOY

"If you don't understand, ask questions. If you're uncomfortable about asking questions, say you are uncomfortable about asking questions and then ask anyway."<sup>70</sup>

– Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie,  
Novelist

### How BURNOUT AFFECTS WOMEN'S INTELLECTUAL JOY

Women's burnout<sup>71</sup> and increased mental health issues due to COVID-19 will have dire consequences on their ability to experience intellectual joy if left unchecked.<sup>72</sup>

According to psychologist Christina Maslach, job burnout is an "occupational phenomenon" that consists of three parts:<sup>73</sup>

**1** THE STRESS RESPONSE OF EXHAUSTION

**2** THE NEGATIVE RESPONSE TO THE JOB OF CYNICISM

**3** THE NEGATIVE RESPONSE TO SELF, OF INEFFECTICACY

This definition of burnout is not a regular or even typical feeling of being worn down or tired; rather, the three parts of job burnout correspond to ongoing and regular emotional exhaustion, cynicism through feeling depersonalized or desensitized at work, and a reduced sense of one's own effectiveness or an increased sense of one's own ineffectiveness.

In the United States, the general idea of burnout first arose in the 1970s due to massive changes in the American workforce.<sup>74</sup> In an episode of The Happiness Lab podcast, "Burnout and How to Avoid It," psychologist Jonathan Malesic explained that around 1945, productivity and wages increased in exact proportion, but by the mid-1970s, productivity continued to rise but wages stayed flat, and many companies started to abandon long-standing policies of using core employees, instead turning to what we might call a "gig economy" that relied on adjuncts and contract workers.<sup>75</sup>

In the 1960s and '70s, as noted in Section I of this white paper, a counterinfluence was also in effect. Since more people were gaining more advanced education and knowledge, ideals about what was desired in a person's work started to change. Simply put, workers started wanting their work to be more meaningful and purposeful than it historically had been. While a new emphasis on job satisfaction could lead to increased job satisfaction (albeit less commonly than one might like), it could also lead to burnout. When employees desire more from their work than drawing a paycheck due to increased education, shifts

<sup>70</sup> Adichie | *Americanah*, 406

<sup>71</sup> McKinsey & Company | "Women in the Workplace" (Abstract)

<sup>72</sup> McKinsey & Company | "The State of Burnout for Women in the Workplace"

<sup>73</sup> Maslach (interviewed by Kim Mills) | "Speaking of Psychology: Why We're Burned Out and What to Do about It, with Christina Maslach, PhD"

<sup>74</sup> Malesic (interviewed by Santos) | "Burnout and How to Avoid It"

<sup>75</sup> Malesic (interviewed by Santos) | "Burnout and How to Avoid It"

in the labor force—when they also desire to have their jobs connect in some way with who they want to be as people—then burnout is not just a matter of being tired at work but tired as a human being on a personal level.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCE:

### MASLACH BURNOUT INVENTORY & TOOLKIT

Maslach developed what is now known as the Maslach Burnout Inventory questionnaire for individuals to reflect on and assess their own feelings of burnout. She later developed an Areas of Worklife survey tool to help individuals and organizations consider issues of workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and values as they relate to a person's feelings of burnout.

Writing about burnout as “job-related emotional exhaustion,”<sup>76</sup> organizational psychologist Adam Grant noted a particular COVID-19–tinged permutation of this burnout, pinpointing the existential experience of “languishing,” which he identified as feelings of emptiness or floundering, ennui. In psychology, Grant writes, burnout is “aimlessness and joylessness.”<sup>77</sup>

When people are languishing, they don't put their knowledge into action.<sup>78</sup> As a result of COVID-19, research shows, people cut back three times in terms of productive work.<sup>79</sup> Since workers have come to seek meaningfulness and purpose at work, this languishing can have devastating consequences beyond the workplace.<sup>80</sup> A lingering and joyless emotional state has and does affect all kinds of people and is a state to which this report returns at the end to address the profound ways in which joylessness can punctuate or even impale a person's sense of self.

In addition to feeling unfulfilled in the workplace more broadly, and navigating the additional stress of COVID-19, microaggressions

further diminished many women's sense of intellectual joy. In a 2021 survey, women reported dealing with microaggressions in the workplace much more frequently than men. Thirty-four percent of women who are senior leaders and 27 percent of women who are entry-level employees said they had their judgment questioned in their area of expertise, as opposed to 22 percent of men at each level.<sup>81</sup> It is no wonder women are burned out at work even beyond increasing childcare demands since COVID-19.

## How Women Stepping Back and “Downshifting” Affects Intellectual Joy

What should we call these pandemic-induced times when it comes to describing the shifting landscape of the U.S. workforce? Is it a Great Resignation<sup>82</sup> or a Big Quit?<sup>83</sup> Should we consider the more recent suggestion of a Great Upgrade,<sup>84</sup> or try something else altogether? What about Quiet Quitting?<sup>85</sup> All of these names connote different attitudes people have toward events as they happen and as we try to make sense of seismic shifts in our world. All of them are also layered with multiple meanings, with some of them sounding more optimistic than others. This debate over nuance is also the noteworthy in the recent revival of the word “downshifting,” which is currently being used to describe the actions that many people—but especially women—are taking in response to the pandemic.

76 Grant | “Burnout Isn't Just in Employees' Head; It's in Their Circumstances”

77 Grant | “There's a Name for the Blah You're Feeling: It's Called Languishing”

78 Jennings | “Build Your Optimism to Battle Languishing”

79 Keyes | “The Mental Health Continuum: From Languishing to Flourishing in Life”

80 Romei | “Working Mothers Bear Brunt of Pandemic Parenting”

81 Dockerman | “More Women Feel Burnt Out: Women in the Workplace 2021”

82 Romans | “Analysis: Forget America's Great Resignation. It's the Great Upgrade”

83 Curtis | “Why the Big Quit Is Happening and Why Every Boss Should Embrace It”

84 Romans | “Analysis: Forget America's Great Resignation. It's the Great Upgrade”

85 Newport | “The Year in Quiet Quitting”

It matters what's in a word, and euphemisms can obscure the truth of a situation. Many of these labels have been criticized for mischaracterizing the realities of the pandemic, and we should be thoughtful about the language we use to describe shifts in the contemporary workplace. On a smaller scale, for example, “downshifting,” which has been used in many discussions of pandemic workplace changes may be an example of a euphemism that disguises the truth of a situation in a harmful way.



## EUPHEMISM:

A saying or phrase that makes something unpleasant or undesirable sound better than it is.

From the Greek prefix eu- (“well”) plus the root phēmē (“speaking”), the word indicates alternatives that have more positive connotations than what is commonly or historically used.

## WHAT IS DOWNSHIFTING?

In 1991, Amy Saltzman advanced a now-popular thesis in her book, *Downshifting: Reinventing Success on a Slower Track*, by advocating for a “less is more” approach to working, especially in reconsidering what success means beyond the workplace. At the time, downshifting offered a tempting antidote to the hyper-consumerism of the 1980s in aiming toward a “work-life balance” for professionals and simpler living in terms of lifestyle. Think minimalism and tiny houses.<sup>86</sup>



Today, this term is used especially in relation to women in high-pressure or leadership positions downshifting their careers. While Saltzman's approach in the 1990s suggested that downshifting was a voluntary choice that gave individuals more agency in the workplace, the word has taken on a different but related meaning since COVID-19. As a result of the pandemic, many women and people of color have “downshifted” their careers to accommodate changing needs for themselves and those for whom they care.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported at the end of 2021 that of the 68.9 million separations between workers and their jobs for that year, 47.4 million jobs were left “voluntarily.”<sup>87</sup> We might conclude from this data, then, that almost two-thirds of Americans [who were unemployed?] chose to change or leave their jobs of their own accord. Indeed, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics report, these “quits are generally voluntary separations initiated by the employee. Therefore, the quits rate can serve as a measure of workers' willingness or ability to leave jobs.”<sup>88</sup> For this reason, some have called what's

86 Saltzman | *Downshifting: Reinventing Success on a Slower Track*

87 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics | “Women in the Labor Force: A Databook”

88 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics | “Women in the Labor Force: A Databook”

happened (the record number of Americans quitting their jobs in 2021) the Great Upgrade.<sup>89</sup>

This terminology may, however, euphemize the situation that's really occurring. The most current data is not encouraging regarding the ability of many to voluntarily downshift their careers right now, especially when considering how the pandemic has affected women's decisions regarding their careers. Reports suggest that even outside the pandemic, "mothers working full time spend 50 percent more time each day caring for children than fathers working full-time . . . [and] COVID-19 and the uncertainty around child care and in-person instruction . . . has further increased this burden."<sup>90</sup> And early COVID-19 research projecting women's jobs as being 1.8 times more vulnerable than men's<sup>91</sup> is on track to coming true in the near future.<sup>92</sup> In September 2020, for instance, four times as many women as men dropped out of the labor force, which equals "roughly 865,000 women compared with 216,000 men."<sup>93</sup>

According to a 2021 report on "Women in the Workplace," conducted by McKinsey & Co. in partnership with Lean In, a third of women said they considered "downshifting their careers or leaving the workforce" in 2021. This marks an increase from the 25 percent who reported the same during the first few months of the pandemic. Moreover, almost half of working women reported that they might leave their company or switch jobs. One in three women between the ages of 25 and 44 who were not working cited increased childcare demands related to the pandemic as the primary reason for their departure, compared with 12 percent of men in that age group, according to census data.<sup>94</sup> Senior-level women were 1.5 times more likely than men to think about downshifting their careers or leaving the workforce because of COVID-19.<sup>95</sup> The report went on to note that "high employee turnover in recent months suggests that many of them are following through."<sup>96</sup>

## VOLUNTARY ACTIONS:

Those whereby a person makes an authentic choice with the origin of the decision being in her.

## INVOLUNTARY ACTIONS:

Those that happen to a person, where the circumstances or situation is such that the person is not positioned to make an authentic choice for herself.

89 Romans | "Analysis: Forget America's Great Resignation. It's the Great Upgrade"  
90 Bateman and Ross | "Why Has COVID-19 Been Especially Harmful for Working Women?"  
91 Madgavkar, *et al.* | "COVID-19 and Gender Equality: Countering the Regressive Effects"  
92 Barua | "Gender Equality, Dealt a Blow by COVID-19, Still Has Much Ground to Cover"  
93 Kashen, *et al.* | "How COVID-19 Sent Women's Workforce Progress Backward"  
94 Jablonksa | "Seven Charts That Show COVID-19's Impact on Women's Employment"  
95 Krivkovich, *et al.* | "Women in the Workplace 2022"  
96 McKinsey & Company and Lean In | "Women in the Workplace 2021: The Full Report"

While downshifting may be voluntary in some cases, it is likely that the pandemic has forced other women's hands. These involuntary actions are not willingly chosen and are often quite painful. Consider one working mother who lamented her options, noting: "The mom in me knows what I need to do . . . but the person in me wants to do something else."<sup>97</sup> Likewise, another mother framed it as a breaking point, saying: "I feel I am at the verge of breaking and very close to quitting my career."<sup>98</sup>

Regardless of whether the decision is voluntary or not, the loss of prime working years for parents who take a career break can have long-term consequences. A worker who earns \$50,000 a year and quits their job to raise children for two years loses an average of \$300,000 to \$400,000 in total earnings over their lifetime because of lost wages during the time off. More often than not, women are still the default stay-at-home parent. They also receive lower retirement savings and Social Security payments and tend to earn less when they return to work after an extended break, according to a 2016 report from the Center for American Progress.<sup>99</sup>

In addition to these more tangible monetary losses, what is lost—but often goes unnoticed—when women downshift their careers are their intellectual contributions to their work, their ability to apply for promotions and advancement, the benefit gained from their ideas in the workplace—and perhaps also their sense of themselves as people outside their caregiving responsibilities.

## PART 4: UNDERVALUED LABOR

Undervalued labor comes in many forms. It can pertain to the small daily tasks that are essential to operations but frequently get overlooked by supervisors, especially in terms of financial reward, or the heavy lifting of emotional support that often falls upon women in the workplace. It can also relate to the telling gender disparities in some professional fields (*e.g.*, teaching, nursing, *etc.*) where staff are often underpaid or unappreciated. This section clarifies the terminology used to describe this labor in order to identify ways that we can bring it into the light and begin to value it properly. The first part addresses

*invisible labor* and the second part *pink-collar labor*. While invisible labor is not always pink-collar labor, it is almost always the case that pink-collar labor entails much invisible labor—and all of these kinds of labor are undervalued.

## INVISIBLE LABOR:

Unpaid, underrecognized, underappreciated, and undervalued work performed either in the public or private sphere.

## PINK-COLLAR LABOR:

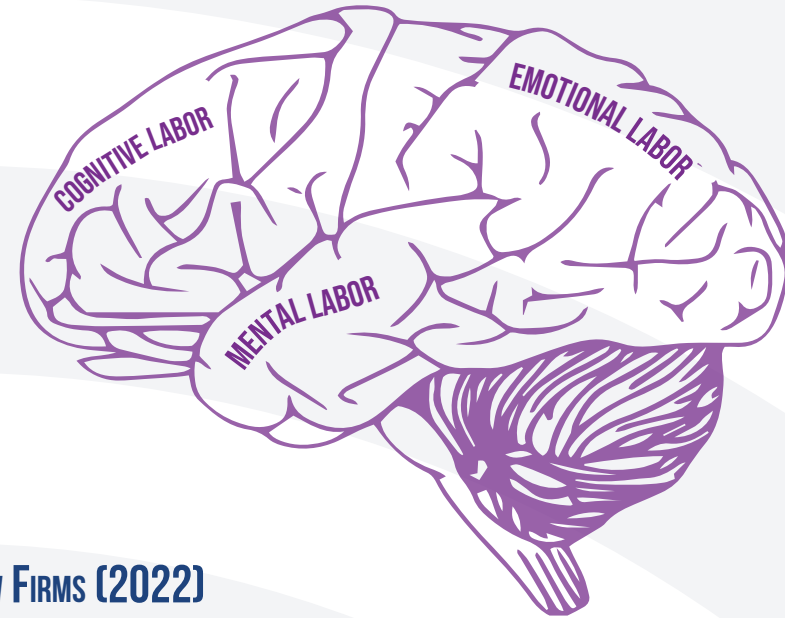
Work that is typically done by women or entire professions that have remained predominantly female.

97 Feintzeig and Weber | "Careers & Leadership: Working Mothers Derailed by COVID Face Tough Road—New Career Hurdles, New Paths Follow Struggles"  
98 Romei | "'I Am Close to Quitting My Career': Mothers Step Back at Work to Cope with Pandemic Parenting"  
99 Feintzeig and Weber | "Careers & Leadership: Working Mothers Derailed by COVID Face Tough Road—New Career Hurdles, New Paths Follow Struggles"

## INVISIBLE LABOR

The language of invisible labor has gained traction recently. Broadly speaking, invisible labor pertains to work that goes underrecognized, underappreciated, and undervalued while nonetheless providing essential functions to organizations. Women typically bear the brunt of this essential but invisible labor. This invisible labor falls into three categories:

1. **Cognitive labor:** Planning, organizing, and managing household or workplace affairs.
2. **Emotional labor:** Negotiating relationships, helping manage other people's emotions, etc.
3. **Mental labor:** Happens at the intersection of cognitive and emotional labor in anticipating all possible needs of stakeholders (coworkers, employees, family members, etc.).



### CASE STUDY #1:

#### INVISIBLE LABOR BY BLACK WOMEN IN ELITE LAW FIRMS (2022)

Studies show that Black women experience a “double burden” of race and gender discrimination in white-dominant spaces like law firms in ways that can “derail their access to recruitment, professional development, and advancement.”<sup>100</sup> In law firms, “the invisible labor clause operates as an unwritten article in the employment contract of Black women that requires them to perform added unrecognized labor to maintain their positions. Invisible labor comes in the form of navigating daily racialized and gendered aggressions specifically manifested to mitigate the negative perceptions, stereotypes, and beliefs of majority colleagues that impact the career trajectory of Black women.”<sup>101</sup> Simply put, Black women in this survey noted spending an extensive amount of time and energy worrying about how their personal appearance and performance were perceived by



their predominantly white supervisors and about whether they were invisible or hypervisible to their employers. Like their white peers they dealt with issues of self-doubt and concern over issues like developing mentor relationships, but unlike their white counterparts, their hypervigilance about how they presented in the workplace was tied to an overarching

100 Melaku | “Black Women in White Institutional Spaces: The Invisible Labor Clause and The Inclusion Tax,” 1516

101 Melaku | “Black Women in White Institutional Spaces: The Invisible Labor Clause and The Inclusion Tax,” 1516

concern about standing out not because of their skills, but for being perceived as “different” or “other.”<sup>102</sup>

Though these aggressions are not necessarily consciously held and can be examples of passive harm within an organization, it is nonetheless very much the case that Black women experience these realities in professional spaces in ways that make them perform inequitable amounts of invisible labor of all kinds. “The white racial framing of Black women as inferior within the racialized social structure . . . the systemic gendered racism rooted in white institutional spaces, and the colorblind racist ideology penetrating organizational practices, all play a role in creating added invisible labor that forces Black women to negotiate their presence in white space, while navigating white firm culture.”<sup>103</sup> On a structural level, professional organizations dominated by white employees and having a history of whiteness places a double burden on Black women, both as Black and as women, to negotiate and thrive in these spaces.

## PINK-COLLAR LABOR

Coined in 1978 by Louise Kapp Howe, the term *pink-collar* identifies work typically done by women or entire professions that have remained predominantly female. These jobs “are often low in status, pay, and opportunities for advancement and are seen as echoing domestic responsibilities,” according to the American Psychological Association.<sup>104</sup> Additionally, this work is often undervalued, both financially and professionally, in the United States. Pink-collar labor—the elements of the job that echo traditional, gendered domestic responsibilities—can exist in any occupation. For instance, women are more likely to be tasked with taking notes for meetings, organizing office social gatherings, or serving as maternal mentors for their colleagues. There have been few notable changes from 1940 to today<sup>105</sup> in terms of who works pink-collar jobs or assumes pink-collar duties, though it is notable that pink-collar workers have burned out at higher rates than workers in other sectors of the economy during COVID-19.<sup>106</sup>



### CASE STUDY #2:

#### INVISIBLE “PINK-COLLAR” LABOR BY WOMEN IN ACADEMIA (2021)

Women perform disproportionate amounts of invisible labor in academia in ways that can keep them from fulfilling their research and intellectual potential. Women academics and educators are often asked to perform more favors especially by “academically entitled” students,<sup>107</sup> accommodate students and tend to mental health issues especially after COVID,<sup>108</sup> and perform “significantly more service” internal to the workings of departments and colleges than men.<sup>109</sup>

102 Melaku | “Black Women in White Institutional Spaces: The Invisible Labor Clause and The Inclusion Tax,” 1518

103 Melaku | “Black Women in White Institutional Spaces: The Invisible Labor Clause and The Inclusion Tax,” 1516

104 American Psychological Association | “Pink-collar worker”

105 Wood | “How Pink Collar Jobs Have Changed since 1940”

106 Dockterman | “More Women Feel Burnt Out: Women in the Workplace, 2021”

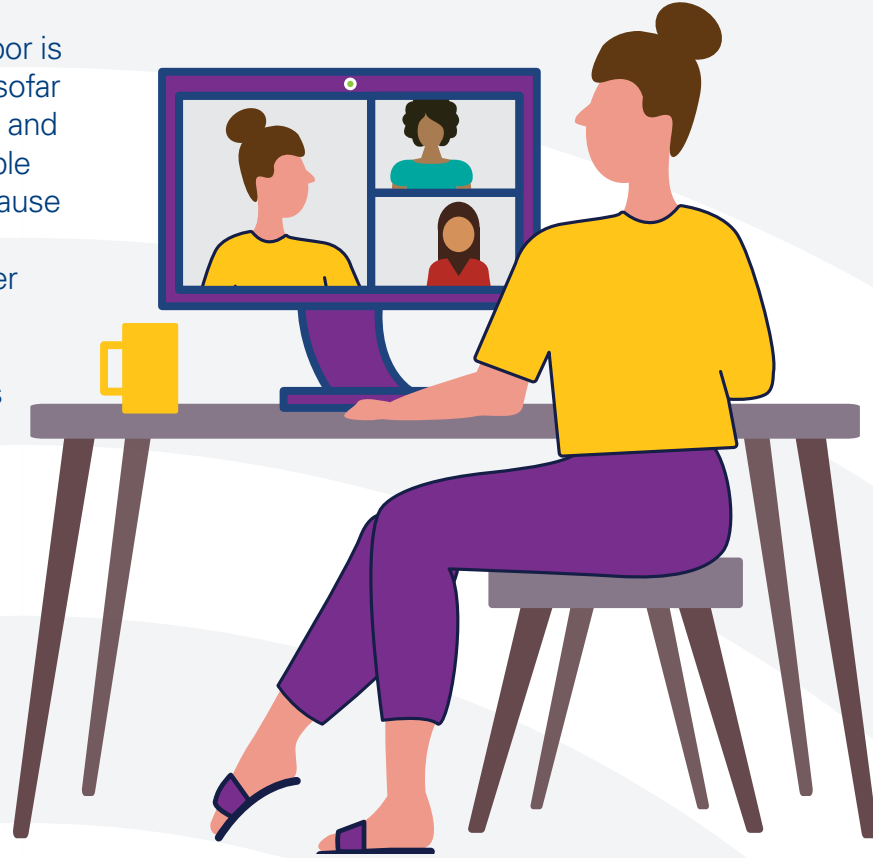
107 Flaherty | “Study Finds Female Professors Experience More Work Demands and Special Favor Requests, Particularly from Academically Entitled Students”

108 Supiano | “The Uneven Burden of Identity: Professors Are Being Asked to Accommodate Students. That’s Not the Same Ask for Everyone”

109 Guarino and Borden | “Faculty Service Loads and Gender: Are Women Taking Care of the Academic Family?”

As research shows, “this time-consuming work is often overlooked and undervalued because it is considered unnecessary and voluntary [when it comes to considerations about pay and promotion]. Combined with different standards and expectations between men and women in research and teaching, experts conclude, it is no surprise that women would consider alternative careers when overburdened with this service while remaining unacknowledged, underappreciated, and exhausted for it.”<sup>110</sup>

The catch-22, however, is that invisible labor is crucial to departments and universities insofar as this labor enhances teaching, advising, and student success. Nonetheless, this invisible labor “can be exploitative for women because they are predominantly assumed to take on caregiving roles associated with gender stereotypes and motherhood” just as women with children more often perform mental labor to “solve” work-life balances than male partners in heterosexual relationships. For working mothers, this invisible labor of caregiving in the workplace serves as a double burden. As the researchers put it: “Beyond their standard professional obligations as faculty, working mothers thus are faced with two additional ‘second shifts’ in which women are relied on for caregiving and homemaking for their family at home and for the ‘care of the academic family.’”<sup>111</sup>



To augment this point, a recent study about *stress process theory* shows how workplace burnout can and does affect women. Stress process theory “posits that unequal positions in social hierarchies (e.g., gender in academia) predict differential exposure to stressors and differential access to resources.”<sup>112</sup> That study found that women faculty at universities experience more microaggressions (e.g., being considered an educator and not a researcher, being called “sweet” instead of “smart” in student

evaluations, valuing or devaluing a person’s contributions based on hierarchical titles)<sup>113</sup> and work-life conflict and less access to support on the job in ways

### STRESS PROCESS THEORY:

Posits that unequal positions in social hierarchies (e.g. gender in academia) predict differential exposure to stressors and differential access to resources.

that indicate distress and work dissatisfaction. “When prompted to describe these experiences in their own words, faculty provide vivid and alarming examples that [ask] the question of whether women’s disproportionate share of these problems underlies gender inequalities in extrinsic rewards such as promotion and pay.”<sup>114</sup>

110 Reid | “Retaining Women Faculty: The Problem of Invisible Labor,” 504

111 Reid | “Retaining Women Faculty: The Problem of Invisible Labor,” 504

112 Elliott and Blithe | “Gender Inequality, Stress Exposure, and Well-Being among Academic Faculty,” 240

113 Young, *et al.* | “Hierarchical Microaggressive Intersectionalities: Small Stories of Women of Color in Higher Education”

114 Elliott and Blithe | “Gender Inequality, Stress Exposure, and Well-Being among Academic Faculty,” 248

Given that invisible labor is crucial to the flourishing of universities and their students, researchers note, it cannot and should not be eliminated. It should be given credit, they suggest, and could be noted in performance reviews, raises, and promotion and tenure requirements. Departments “could assign a departmental committee to create a consensual, explicit definition of invisible labor that fits the unique needs of the department, faculty, and students.”<sup>115</sup>

### Section II – Wrap-Up

McKinsey & Company’s 2021 “Women in the Workplace” report puts the current situation of undervalued labor this way: “Despite this added stress and exhaustion, women are rising to the moment as stronger leaders and taking on the extra work that comes with this: compared with men at the same level, women are doing more to support their teams and advance diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.” All women “are also more likely to be allies to women of color. Yet this critical work is going unrecognized and unrewarded by most companies, and that has concerning implications. Companies risk losing the very leaders they need right now, and it’s hard to imagine organizations navigating the pandemic and building inclusive workplaces if this work isn’t truly prioritized.”<sup>116</sup>

These added tasks for invisible labor reduce women’s space to find intellectual joy in their work because they are so busy holding it all together. Serious barriers to intellectual joy persist in ways that thwart women from achieving their professional goals. These barriers have personal consequences as well beyond the workplace, as women find themselves exhausted in the deference and expectations of others. As demonstrated in this section, though, there can be power in naming these experiences and taking time to get straight on describing accurately what these experiences are like. The language of downshifting might not appropriately capture the experience that many women find themselves in when faced with tough choices about their careers, but the language of different kinds of invisible and pink labor might more accurately get to the heart of issues pertaining to women today. Reflecting upon these recent research findings and the empirical data collected to track and measure these differences in experience can also inspire powerful change regarding them. And all these findings, discouraging though they may often be, can help empower women and all who care for them intellectually by understanding the true landscape of barriers to intellectual worth that women experience at work and in their lives.

The final section of this paper proposes positive and humanizing solutions for organizations looking to help close what might be called the “intellectual joy gap” for women at work, drawing from a deep desire to break down harmful barriers and take positive steps to work toward meaningful change.

115 Reid | “Retaining Women Faculty: The Problem of Invisible Labor,” 504

116 Burns, *et al.* | “The State of Women Hangs in The Balance”



## SECTION III: HOW TO INCREASE INTELLECTUAL JOY FOR WOMEN AT WORK

“Deep within us, we all have this impulse to seek out joy in our surroundings. And we have it for a reason. Joy isn’t some superfluous extra. It’s directly connected to our fundamental instinct for survival. On the most basic level, **the drive toward joy is the drive toward life.**”<sup>117</sup>

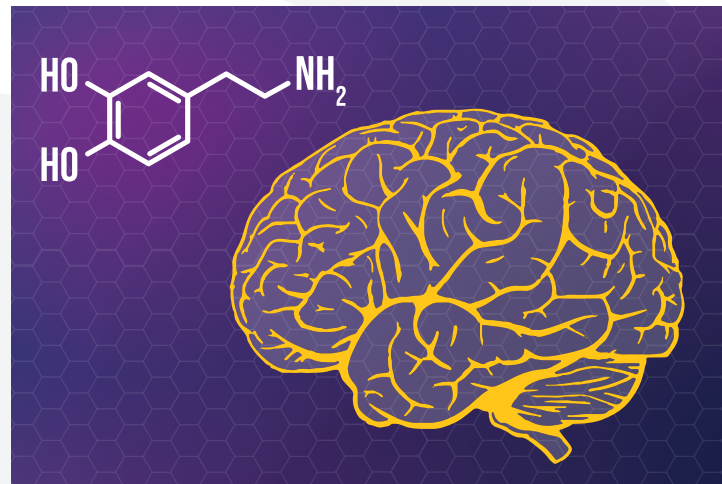
– Ingrid Fetell Lee,  
Interior Designer

The first half of this section outlines the science of joy before focusing specifically on intellectual joy and why we should value it at work by connecting it not only to workplace productivity but also to human well-being. The second half of this section offers seven discrete but overlapping concepts designed for organizational leaders and individual people to reflect on to identify strengths and future opportunities for increasing intellectual joy for women at work. A brief conclusion anticipates why people should care about intellectual joy beyond work—and what role this kind of joy can and does play in our lives as a whole.

### THE SCIENCE OF JOY

To prescribe ways to increase joy at work we must first clearly distinguish joy from other positive states and emotions, especially happiness. A substantial amount of research shows a correlation between increased happiness at work and increased productivity or success,<sup>118</sup> but the argument made here is different. The argument here is that joy ought to be cultivated by all employees but especially women insofar as joy is both intrinsically and extrinsically valuable. Joy benefits the joyful person intrinsically and it benefits the employee and the world at large through the advantages it brings to the employer who fosters the cultivation of joy by employees (extrinsic value).

Neuroscientists distinguish joy from happiness by analyzing the neurological systems triggered.<sup>119</sup> Happiness activates the sympathetic nervous system, which is most often associated with states of excitement, energy, and activity. By contrast, joy activates the parasympathetic nervous system, which is associated with feelings of peace and calm. Happiness has been found to decrease in individuals as they age from their twenties through their forties, then increase again as individuals move into their sixties,<sup>120</sup> whereas joy has been described as a “self-expanding emotion”<sup>121</sup> that can seemingly grow indefinitely. Joy powerfully



117 Lee | Joyful: The Surprising Power of Ordinary Things to Create Extraordinary Happiness, 297

118 McKee | *How to Be Happy at Work*  
Oswald, et al. | “Happiness and Productivity”

119 Alexander, et al. | “The Neuroscience of Positive Emotions and Affect: Implications for Cultivating Happiness and Wellbeing,” 220-49

120 Alexander, et al. | “The Neuroscience of Positive Emotions and Affect: Implications for Cultivating Happiness and Wellbeing,” 232

121 Johnson | “Joy: A Review of the Literature and Suggestions for Future Directions,” 18

connects us to others: “Joy is often contagious;” it “involves transference as we share and spread joy”<sup>122</sup> and is a “virtual upward spiral.”<sup>123</sup>

According to psychologists, joy is both an emotion and a disposition, which may account for the seeming contradiction between descriptions of joy as a peaceful state and claims that joy may be associated with an increase in energy as well as self-esteem and confidence.<sup>124</sup> If joy is thought of as a disposition or comportment—that is, a way in which a person exists in and presents themselves to the world—we can see why joy may bring serenity instead of energy. Alternatively, if joy is considered an emotion, joy may be seen to cause an increase in energy. This line of thinking is parallel to Ingrid Fetell Lee’s claim that joy is “a uniquely exuberant emotion, a high-energy form of happiness.”<sup>125</sup>

### FLOW:

A state that ensues when one becomes so deeply focused on a task that all else disappears—often includes experiencing a euphoric state of joy and pleasure without strain or effort.

Joy has also been described as resulting from *flow*. Flow is a state that “ensues when one becomes so deeply focused on a task that all

else disappears. The person experiences a euphoric state of joy and pleasure without strain or effort.”<sup>126</sup> Importantly, “flow [and subsequent joy] is associated with eudaimonia [human flourishing], or self-actualization of the individual.”<sup>127</sup> A person experiences this kind of joy as a result of being in the groove and can experience a fullness of themselves. Author and novelist Zadie Smith describes it this way: “the feeling—once one is ‘in’ joy—that the experiencing subject has somehow ‘entered’ the emotion, and disappeared.”<sup>128</sup>

Generally, it is difficult to experience this flow for many reasons, but it may be especially difficult for women who experience a disproportionate amount of invisible labor that interrupts a sustained amount of time to be able to get into a flow. Popping between activities on a phone and one’s work, having one’s time fractured into miniature chunks and allowing for no sustained period of time (or the phenomenon of time confetti, as described in Section II)<sup>129</sup> are all ways that flow and joy can be shattered by constant little interruptions.

### FOCUS ON: INTELLECTUAL JOY

The connection between joy and flourishing appears circular and while in many instances circularity can be intellectually problematic, it need not be so in this case. In the science detailed above, the euphoric experience of joy seems to be best understood as an emotion, whereas a

122 Johnson | “Joy: A Review of the Literature and Suggestions for Future Directions,” 20

123 Johnson | “Joy: A Review of the Literature and Suggestions for Future Directions,” 7

124 Hogan-Werner | “Where to Find Joy According to Science”

125 Lee | *Joyful: The Surprising Power of Ordinary Things to Create Extraordinary Happiness*, 15

126 Alexander, et al. | “The Neuroscience of Positive Emotions and Affect: Implications for Cultivating Happiness and Wellbeing,” 237

127 Alexander, et al. | “The Neuroscience of Positive Emotions and Affect: Implications for Cultivating Happiness and Wellbeing,” 237

128 Smith | *Feel Free: Essays*, 333

129 Whillans | “Time Confetti and the Broken Promise of Leisure”



state of actualization and flourishing makes sense as a joyful disposition. In other words, the emotion of joy and a joyful comportment are mutually reinforcing.

Importantly, research also shows that joy contains a “cognitive aspect” that distinguishes it from being pure emotion or a state of being.<sup>130</sup> Joy engages the intellect in a different way than other emotions. This explanation also helps to make sense of research showing a correlation between joy and believing one’s work is meaningful (*i.e.*, making positive social contributions and/or feeling aligned with a company’s values and vision).<sup>131</sup>

Much of the data and research on joy implies there is a connection between joy and happiness, though intellectual joy adds a special dimension in connecting to how people understand their lives as meaningful and themselves as knowers. Intellectual joy, then, clearly connects to purpose, though these connections and intersections have not yet been pursued by researchers. Such delineation requires a much deeper dive into epistemology, the philosophy of emotion, and ethics, which remains outside the scope of this white paper.

Nonetheless, this white paper reasserts that the connections exist, and that while the terms are neither equivalent nor interchangeable, they are comfortably related such that a person experiencing intellectual joy and a joyful disposition more generally will often be a person who is more likely to know the value of their ideas and be able to contribute them to causes they deem worthy. Further, it is not inappropriate to claim that joy often includes an attitude of gratefulness and correlates with increased creativity. Moreover, this joy may be shared with others and can contain communal or relational aspects. This understanding of joy outstrips the depths of happiness, despite the positive consequences (including, at the very least, dopamine production<sup>132</sup>) associated with both.



130 Johnson | “Joy: A Review of the Literature and Suggestions for Future Directions,” 8  
 131 Liu | “Making Joy a Priority at Work”  
 132 Alexander, *et al.* | “The Neuroscience of Positive Emotions and Affect: Implications for Cultivating Happiness and Wellbeing,” 224

concerns, with questions, with mistakes.”<sup>133</sup> Unsurprisingly, psychological safety is best fostered in teams grounded by positive relationships where “team members value one another’s contributions, care about one another’s well-being, and have input into how the team carries out its work.”<sup>134</sup>

It is worth noting that truly positive relationships in this sense may provide a powerful counterpoint to a culture of toxic positivity at work wherein people feel like they can only say what is deemed positive, great, or going well.<sup>135</sup> Indeed, studies show that people who allow themselves to fully process so-called negative emotions, along with the more positive ones, lead more fulfilled lives because *emodiversity*, which is the “ability to

**EMODIVERSITY:**  
 The ability to experience a diverse range of emotions in equal measure.

experience a diverse range of emotions in equal measure,” can help people uncover what truly matters to them.<sup>136</sup> We may consider, too, additional steps employers can take to include their neurodiverse employees by working to reduce stigma

**NEURODIVERSITY:**  
 Individual differences in brain functioning regarded as normal variations within the human population.

surrounding *neurodiversity*, increase clear communication, and provide reliable infrastructures that can help neurodiverse individuals navigate workplaces confidently, without added stressors related to toxic positivity.<sup>137</sup> When a person does not feel like they can trust their colleagues and workplace to respect appropriate kinds and amounts of concerns and questions, they are unlikely to feel psychologically safe in their workplace.

Additionally, psychological safety ensures that persons and employees are able to be creative and try new things, which will necessarily entail occasional mistakes. If a person is punished or humiliated for mistakes that are a result of the very innovation the employee is asked to provide, the passion to think, speak,

**INCLUSION SAFETY:**  
 The first stage of psychological safety, which satisfies the basic human need to be accepted as they are and feel like they belong—at work, school, home, or in other social settings.

and act in inventive ways will be easily crushed. The assurance that employers and colleagues will permit a person to be creative allows the employee to “bring their full selves to work.”<sup>138</sup>

**LEARNER SAFETY:**  
 The second stage of psychological safety where one feels safe to engage in all aspects of the discovery or learning process without fear of being embarrassed or marginalized.

The freedom to make mistakes is known as *learner safety* and is distinct from

the freedom to be oneself and be accepted as oneself, which has been dubbed *inclusion safety*.<sup>139</sup> If

133 Edmonson | *Building a Psychologically Safe Workplace*  
 134 McKinsey & Company | “Psychological Safety and the Critical Role of Leadership Development”  
 135 Reynolds | “Toxic Positivity”  
 136 Locaso | “What You Were Taught about ‘Happiness’ Isn’t True”  
 137 Baumer and Frueh | “What Is Neurodiversity?”  
 138 Wilkins (interviewed by Sam Mednick) | “Keys to Creating Psychological Safety with People Who Aren’t Like You”  
 139 Center for Creative Leadership | “What Is Psychological Safety at Work?”

## CONTRIBUTOR SAFETY:

The third stage of psychological safety where one feels free and able to contribute what they know to the team and apply what they have learned.

## CHALLENGER SAFETY:

The fourth stage of psychological safety where one feels free to challenge the status quo without fear of jeopardizing their personal standing or reputation.

we recall the connection of joy with meaningfulness and purpose, the concepts of *contributor safety* (freedom to make meaningful contributions) and *challenger safety*, which allows employees to work toward making things better, are not foreign.<sup>140</sup> When an employee experiences safety in this way, we can again see the benefit for the

employee themselves as well as the employer and the world at large insofar as progress occurs only when people see a lack or fault and seek to overcome or correct it.

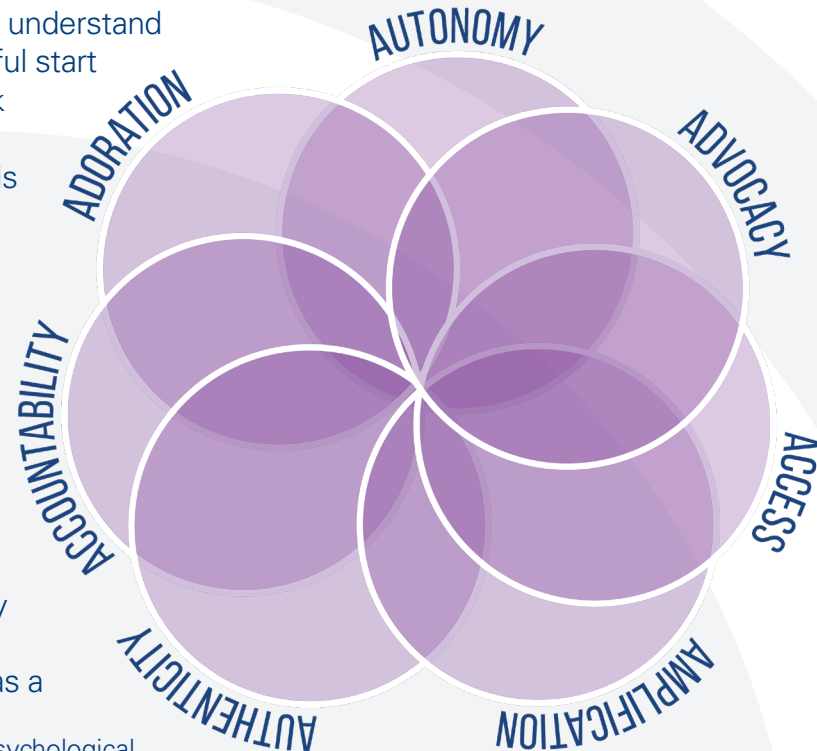
## THE SEVEN AS: HOW TO INCREASE INTELLECTUAL JOY

This section provides resources:

1. To employers and organizational leaders with practical strategies for increasing intellectual joy for women at work, and
2. To individual women in all levels of an organization to identify how these seven principles are or are not at work in their own work lives.

The Seven As are interrelated in the same way that joy is tied up with meaningfulness, flourishing, and purpose. Indeed, the following ideas, tools, and strategies may be best understood as a cluster of concepts that overlap and reinforce each other. While each concept is indeed unique (hence the individual treatment), they are entwined in inseparable ways. They bleed into each other. The entangled nature of the concepts is, in fact, evidence of the strength of the argument.

Note: These As are not exhaustive of ways to understand and increase intellectual joy but can be a fruitful start to doing so. The reflective questions for work and life in Appendix II are designed to be starting points for organizations and individuals interested in increasing intellectual joy.



## AUTONOMY

Autonomy is a concept understood as the ability for a person to be self-directing and self-determining in their life. It is the ability to decide what one values and how to act. In other words, autonomy is the ability to develop as a full and genuine person. As such, autonomy requires thinking of oneself as a

140 Center for Creative Leadership | "What Is Psychological Safety at Work?"

trustworthy and competent decision maker.<sup>141</sup>

A note about trust: Trust ought not be confused with mere reliance. Trust is necessarily a relational concept, whereas reliance can be simply transactional.<sup>142</sup> It's possible to rely on a person without trusting that person. Trust further entails care, no matter whom one is trusting. "When you merely rely on yourself, you do not work from the supposition that you will perform the action in question out of care for your own needs."<sup>143</sup> Further, trust, like joy, can be continually developed and deepened in an ongoing way. In other words, when a person is trusted, that person tends to want to meet the expectations of the person who trusts them.<sup>144</sup> The trusted person's motivation to rise to the occasion increases in an ongoing way as the trusting relationship develops. Notice how the concept of trust does not entail perfection and need not disintegrate when mistakes are made. Psychological safety, as discussed above, is required for trusting relationships to flourish, whether the relationship is with oneself or others.

Trusting oneself to think and act in appropriate and beneficial ways then results in self-respect<sup>145</sup> so that both self-trust and self-respect (or self-esteem) are fundamentally woven into to the concept of autonomy. In addition to trusting oneself, one must believe one's contributions matter. "Self-respect implies that one values oneself for those things that make one a person: one's consciousness, will, ability to choose, capacities, and abilities."<sup>146</sup> When we think about the full self that is expressed in psychologically safe environments, this self requires self-respect, otherwise the person would work to change or improve themselves.

Thus, the ability to be an autonomous person and act autonomously requires a vision of who one wants to be, the self-trust that one can indeed build and create the self that is envisioned, and respect for that fully envisioned self as it is realized.

## ADVOCACY

Advocacy should be active to increase intellectual joy for women at work. People in relative positions of power, allyship, or support can reach out to promote talent, recognize skills, suggest advancement, identify problems, and solicit feedback for solutions. Rather than simply agreeing to help someone when asked to do so, active advocates can seek out opportunities for others that align with their own autonomous interests and desires. While an organizational leader might not know what their team members might want or need, they could ask team members instead of waiting to be asked how they can help.

To advocate effectively, leaders should consider going beyond one-to-one meetings with individual employees and beyond group listening sessions. To create a culture of belonging that gives rise to active advocacy for employees, LaTonya Wilkins recommends that leaders listen to their employees not just "person-to-person," but "person-to-belonging"<sup>147</sup>—i.e., observing how their employees interact with each other to see how they belong—or don't—with their colleagues and in various organizational groups.

141 Govier | "Self-Trust, Autonomy, and Self-Esteem," 100

142 Dormandy | "Epistemic Self-Trust: It's Personal," 5

143 Dormandy | "Epistemic Self-Trust: It's Personal," 12

144 Dormandy | "Epistemic Self-Trust: It's Personal," 4-5

145 Govier | "Self-Trust, Autonomy, and Self-Esteem," 110

146 Govier | "Self-Trust, Autonomy, and Self-Esteem," 110

147 Wilkins (interviewed by Sam Mednick) | "Keys to Creating Psychological Safety with People Who Aren't Like You"

This point deserves special attention. If a person is on the outskirts at work or lacks a sense of belonging to a group, that person may be relatively invisible to others. It can be difficult for a person to self-advocate in this scenario, so leaders ought to be vigilant about who belongs and who does not in various meetings and work activities. If leaders pay attention to “person-to-belonging,” they can work toward a culture and climate that supports the dignity of all their employees and provides greater opportunities for active advocacy on their behalf.

Advocacy should not just be a solo enterprise, however. Unfortunately, most of the service work of advocacy tends to fall to women and people of color already, so another piece of this puzzle is to help create a culture of advocacy in any organization by insisting that all do their part. Furthermore, as those doing it know, advocacy work is work (recall the invisible labor research in Section II) and ought to be counted as such in employee reviews and compensation.

## ACCESS

Access to information and knowledge is crucial for intellectual joy. Philosopher Miranda Fricker notes that one of our “most basic needs is to use our reason in order to discern the everyday facts and social meanings that condition, constrain, and make sense of our shared lives.”<sup>148</sup> This need is crucial to all people and amounts to ways that we can make and benefit from “epistemic [intellectual] contributions”—the giving of informational materials (*e.g.*, evidence, critical doubt, hypothesis, *etc.*) and interpretative materials required to make sense of a shared social world. It’s essential that an individual can “contribute to the pool of shared epistemic materials—materials for knowledge, understanding, and very often for practical deliberation.”<sup>149</sup> This specific kind of intellectual contribution amounts to an ability for a person to express themselves as a knower and to share their own beliefs and interpretations.

When access to knowledge and information is kept from a person inappropriately, they are unlikely to be able to experience intellectual joy in the ways they otherwise could. Organizational leaders should routinely consider who does have access to the organization’s information and knowledge, who should have access to that information, and whose voices are absent but ought to be heard to make decisions about who is granted access to which kinds of information and knowledge. Leaders should sort out harmful kinds of gatekeeping (the desire and ability to control access to who gets information, knowledge, resources, and opportunities) from reasonably appropriate measures that should be taken to preserve the functions of the organization.

## AMPLIFICATION

Amplification is exactly as it sounds: Increasing the volume of, in this case, a voice or set of voices. Women in President Obama’s office popularized this concept,<sup>150</sup> which offers a powerful corrective to disempowerment and joylessness. Given that women’s voices are regularly dismissed or not heard at all, amplification is a conscious effort to solidify the dismissed voices.

148 Fricker | “Epistemic Contribution as a Central Human Capability,” 75

149 Fricker | “Epistemic Contribution as a Central Human Capability,” 76

150 Vazquez | “‘Amplification’: The Clever Method Women in the White House Use to Be Heard”

The actual process of amplification is intentional and simple though it is sometimes epistemically difficult to figure out who owns an idea. Recent studies show that 63 percent of employees say that not recognizing employee accomplishments prevents effective leadership in the workplace,<sup>151</sup> and as this paper has shown elsewhere, women’s ideas are routinely undervalued in education, the workplace, and the art world.

People looking to amplify women’s ideas could do this: When a woman speaks, instead of allowing her words and ideas to be smothered or become detached from the speaker to float around the room in a disembodied way, reconnect the words and ideas to the speaker by repeatedly using the speaker’s name. For example, when Maria suggests an idea, instead of removing any attribution of the idea’s origination from her, colleagues could refer to the idea as “Maria’s idea,” instead of “that idea.”

Amplification can be directed toward others, as discussed above, or toward oneself. “If you treat yourself as someone who cares about your own need for epistemic recognition, and who is competent to give it when it is due, then you will foster a corresponding self-concept and act accordingly, say by acknowledging your cognitive accomplishments to yourself and not settling for less than appropriate acknowledgment from others.”<sup>152</sup> Notice how self-amplification is tied to the self-trust and self-respect that are required for a person to be autonomous. In other words, a person can develop their self-respect by amplifying their accomplishments that they trust to be considered as legitimate contributions by their colleagues.

## AUTHENTICITY

Authenticity can be understood as a measure of integrity or being genuine. Like the other concepts here, authenticity can be applied to both employees as they become joyful and employers as they cultivate environments in which intellectual joy takes root.

Authenticity indicates an alignment between the person’s autonomously chosen values and their actions and, again, is indicative of the full self that can be expressed in psychologically safe workspaces. We can imagine that a person who acts to undermine their own freely chosen values might be labeled a hypocrite, or, considered from the point of view of the ideals themselves, possibly even a liar when their actions don’t match their self-declared ideals.

A lack of authenticity is not simply damaging to a person’s colleagues, though, as a “sustained disconnect between our inner self and the behaviors we exhibit to others can diminish our psychological well-being.”<sup>153</sup> An inauthentic person will be hard-pressed to be joyful, although they may indeed be happy in certain moments. One consequence of feeling split between how we appear to ourselves and how we appear to others is that we can be “disconnected” from “the joy we’ve naturally found in our vocations.”<sup>154</sup> Note, though, that an authentic and full self does not mean that a person has no boundaries between work and other aspects of their life. Indeed, an authentic person might realize the value of reinforcing appropriate boundaries in order to act authentically in all of them.

151 Solomon | “The Top Complaints from Employees about Their Leaders”

152 Govier | “Self-Trust, Autonomy, and Self-Esteem,” 103

153 Newton | “Rediscover Joy at Work”

154 Newton | “Rediscover Joy at Work”

The authenticity expected of employers can be clearly seen when it comes to the creation of spaces where employees feel psychologically safe and in efforts toward diversity and inclusion. Job seekers continue to increase their prioritization of diversity, and as many as one in three job seekers have stated that a lack of diversity will cause them to eliminate the opening (and potential employer) from consideration.<sup>155</sup> Potential employees “are looking for more than intent and promises [from potential employers]. They expect to see authenticity and action—proof that employers genuinely care about creating an inclusive workplace.”<sup>156</sup> Further, job seekers are turning to existing, current employees to verify whether the employer is actually—that is, authentically and genuinely—taking steps to increase diversity and cultivate safe spaces. In other words, they expect authenticity and are holding potential employers accountable for promises, policies, and practices.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

While accountability may sometimes be used in punitive ways (as in scolding or threatening), to actually hold persons and employers accountable is to respect the persons as their authentic, autonomous selves and employers as safe, trustworthy, and authentic organizations. Accountability need not be negative and could take the form of attribution—although this requires confidence that a person will not be punished or humiliated for mistakes.

When one recognizes that *autonomy* is a necessary component of any joyful life, then one must be held accountable for one’s ideas and actions. Otherwise, the autonomous aspects of thought and action are dismissed or negated.

### AUTONOMY:

Self-determination grounded in self-trust and self-respect.

Consider the previous example of amplifying Maria’s voice through the use of the attribution to affirm Maria’s idea:

- Amplification is important so that Maria is both recognized and accountable for her ideas.
  - » We can assume that Maria is acting as her authentic self, and thus her ideas will bring acclaim.
- If Maria’s ideas are not the best option presented, Maria should remain accountable for those ideas in a psychologically safe space (meaning she will not be demeaned for them). This accountability, though, should not entail undue punishment for reasonable errors or disagreements.

Regardless of the merit of one’s ideas, it is important that all team members are empowered to contribute to both the idea generation and assessment processes.

With respect to employers, consider again the increasing importance of diversity. As mentioned above, job seekers are verifying whether employer’s policies and practices match their stated values (that is, verifying that the potential employer is authentic), and eliminating them from consideration if they are not, indeed, authentic. We also see increased demands for accountability when businesses

155 Morel | “Jobseekers Are Calling All the Shots. Here’s What They Want”

156 Morel | “Jobseekers Are Calling All the Shots. Here’s What They Want”

fail to appropriately address cases of harassment or instances of workplace endangerment, or when they unfairly benefit a few shareholders at the expense of the many. On the other hand, when the organization’s values do match policies and practices, their accountability is evidenced by the organization’s ability to onboard high-quality applicants, low employee turnover rates, and increased success overall.

## ADORATION

The six preceding *As* are reduced to shallow techniques if not grounded in *adoration*. This word is not too much. We don’t usually walk around saying we adore each other, but maybe we should. From the Latinate *adorare*, meaning “to call to someone held in high esteem.” In religious contexts, it’s usually understood as worship, but here it’s understood as a human-to-human love in recognizing the ways that we call out to others, holding them in high esteem by virtue of their inherent dignity and autonomy. This high regard is not an abstract or aloof concept; however, rather, it takes practical action on a regular basis to bear it out. These regular practical actions might be called *micro-actions*—small

### ADORATION:

A feeling of great admiration and love for someone or something.

### MICRO-ACTIONS:

Small but significant signs and indicators that employees truly feel valued by their coworkers and bosses.

but significant signs and indicators that employees truly feel valued by their coworkers and bosses.

Without this baseline of recognizing a person’s inherent dignity, actions can seem hollow and inauthentic. For example, mandated trainings can replace instead of supplement the treating of people’s concerns in real ways; employee resource groups (ERGs) and business resource groups (BRGs) can technically exist but become performative from an organizational standpoint and be stripped of the power to enact real change; an open-door policy can mean anything but that to the people on a team. People can feel discouraged, dismissed, and dejected as a result. This lack of respect and authentic engagement from bosses and coworkers can lead to employees checking out, downshifting, or leaving the workforce altogether.

Contemporary burnout and barriers discussed throughout this report may even suggest that adoration is crucial to any work done on intellectual joy in the first place. We must see that each person has dignity and then build institutions and policies that affirm that dignity by providing, for instance, fair wages, reasonable hours, predictable schedules, and work-life balance. Adoration affirms the belief in the actuality and potentiality of another, and a person or institution seeking to live out adoration will create the conditions for the possibility of making it so.

# CONCLUSION: WHY WE SHOULD CARE ABOUT INTELLECTUAL JOY BEYOND THE WORKPLACE

“Thinking is not a prerogative of the few but an ever-present faculty in everybody . . . Thinking is itself the . . . quintessence of being alive; and since life is a process[,] its quintessence can only lie in the actual thinking process and not in any solid results or specific thoughts.”<sup>156</sup>

– **Hannah Arendt,**  
*Philosopher*

One of the underlying themes of the research presented in this white paper concerns existential dimensions of human life that pertain to who we are at work but that go far beyond it. Indeed, it is with our *selves* that we enter into work. We do not, as it were, leave our selves at the workplace door, at least not completely. We bring them to work. We *are* our selves, after all. We have ideas, insights, values, and questions that we often carry into our work lives, and likewise bring our work back into our personal worlds.

We have contributions to make, problems we want to solve, and challenges we strive to overcome. Growing in our intellectual joy and working to increase that joy with and for others, as shown throughout this research, can be an integral way for us to become more wholly ourselves by activating and affirming our capacities for knowledge, wonder, and intellectual exploration in trustworthy ways that support our own growth.

The research presented here has focused mainly on ways that individual people can identify barriers to and benefit from increased access to intellectual joy, with a specific focus on advancing women due to particular barriers they have historically experienced and still face today. Certainly, though, all can and should benefit from reflecting on and trying to increase intellectual joy in their lives, so this research also anticipates some more general conclusions for future thought about intellectual joy as a concept and activity:

- Intellectual joy can have a *communal dimension*.
  - » It can lead to or provide *collective effervescence*. This phrase, coined by sociologist Émile Durkheim in 1912, connotes the power that comes from people coming together to coalesce around a shared purpose or meaning and from which a person can be individually motivated. It is an energizing and creative flow that is grounded in and through trusting oneself and others. “Not feeling the rhythm or movement of a group”<sup>158</sup> can result in feelings of loneliness, alienation, and discouragement.
  - » Seeking out this joy can help us want to listen actively to the stories and lives of others so we may learn from and appreciate them. It can also make us want to share more of our own lives and stories with others in return, cultivating empathy in the process.
- Intellectual joy appreciates our *conspicuous curiosity*.
  - » As human beings, we are born curious and over time can become less so. Intellectual joy reminds us of our fundamental capacity for wonder, the free exploration of ideas, and the

157 Arendt | *The Life of the Mind*, 191

158 Batiste (interview by Grant) | “Jon Batiste on the Art of Pushing Your Limits (Transcript)”

right that we all have to receive and generate knowledge in various aspects of our lives individually and with others.

» New scientific research shows that “while the traditional view of curiosity locates its practice in the individual act of collecting information, tracking down answers, or imagining something new, a relational and network view of curiosity would expressly embed inquisitive affects, practices, and architectures in deeply imbricated (eco)systems and (eco)cultures. Curiosity from this vantage point would be less like the eye than the light itself.”<sup>159</sup>

• Intellectual joy can be sought out and *cultivated with care* in all arenas where it makes sense to do so.

» Advocating for intellectual joy provides a strong guiding framework for why we all should be vigilant to break down harmful kinds of gatekeeping, ask questions regularly about whose voices should be heard and when, and insist on inclusion and belonging initiatives that affirm our desires to want to learn, grow, and know in organizations.

» The concept of intellectual joy can both augment and ground important changes in a variety of policies and practices, like changing education policy or informing public policy on wider scales.

• Intellectual joy can help root us in our *interior selves*.

» Since intellectual joy speaks to a capacity that can grow and does not pertain just to feeling happy when our ideas turn out to be right or valued, it can help us build resilience, be able to suffer setbacks, and give us ways to persevere through challenges.

» Intellectual joy reminds us that we are not just our latest triumph or mistake, that we have more to offer, and always more to learn.

Intellectual joy as a concept thus ultimately speaks to ways that we value our own curiosity and knowledge as well as that of others. It can both anchor and guide organizational decision-making processes to create visionary change. Intellectual joy resonates with other values that most of us care deeply about—justice, compassion, fairness, meaning, purpose, happiness—and can provide good reason for us to see how we can be empowered to seek it out for everyone, including ourselves.

159 Bassett and Zurn | *Curious Minds: The Power of Connection*, 53

## APPENDIX I: QUESTIONS TO ASK IN A GENDER AUDIT

[Adapted from Kuriloff, et al., *Teaching Girls: How Teachers and Parents Can Reach Their Brains and Hearts*]

These are a few important questions to ask when assessing school climate as it relates to gender:

- What is the ratio of male to female teachers at this school?
- What are they teaching?
- What is the gender makeup of the administration?
- What are the course-taking patterns of girls in high school compared to boys in high school?
- Are any children experiencing harassment?
  - » Do harassment rates differ by gender?
- Are girls' and boys' sports and other gender-divided activities similarly supported by the school community?
- What are the common assumptions teachers and student have about boys and girls in the school?
- Has the administration ever done a focus group with girls (or boys) to ask about their experience in the school?

## APPENDIX II: INCREASING INTELLECTUAL JOY THROUGH THE SEVEN AS: REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS FOR WORK AND LIFE

The Seven As are intended to be starting points for thinking about the power and potential to activate and deepen intellectual joy in a person's own life and workplace. They are also intended to facilitate discussion in organizations about how best to lead with an eye toward cultivating and affirming intellectual joy. The questions below are designed to start conversations about intellectual joy. Engaging with these questions would likely be most action-oriented if people can think of specific examples from their own lives, consider creating realistic and time-stamped goals to work toward increasing intellectual joy in relation to the items below, consider when each A has or hasn't been present over a certain timeframe (the last week, month, or year), and use the questions both for individual and collective reflection.

When working towards increasing joy in life through the Seven As, it is important to both:

- Reflect on when each A has or hasn't been present over a certain timeframe (the last week, month, or year); and
- Create realistic and time-stamped goals to work toward increasing intellectual joy in relation to each A.

The Seven As and the following reflections and planning tools offer a starting point for individuals, organizations, or communities to think about practical ways to increase intellectual joy. Certainly, there are many other elements to intellectual joy than presented here—and there is space at the end of this Appendix to jot notes about what those other elements might be.

### LEADING WITH INTELLECTUAL JOY

Consider the role that each A does or doesn't play in your unit, department, or organization.

- You may wish to consider the degree to which each A is or ought to be valued in your organization and consider wherein lie the strengths of your organization with respect to each A.
- You may develop a sliding scale (1-10) to ask other leaders or employees to indicate where they think the organization or team lies with regard to each topic, or you may choose to use the Seven As to identify barriers and opportunities for individual and organizational growth.
- You may also wish to reflect on where—and how—you have seen examples of each A recently in your own life or work, or if you haven't, what it has felt like or what the consequences have been when that A is missing:
- Who is harmed? Who is helped? What good might it do to focus on a specific A? How can you increase intellectual joy for yourself, colleagues, and employees?

An organizational leader might not hold a formal leadership title.

## WORKING TOWARD INTELLECTUAL JOY

Consider the role that each *A* does or doesn't play in your own work experience.

- You may wish to consider the degree to which each *A* is or ought to be valued in your work life and consider wherein lie the strength and opportunities of each *A* at work.
- You may wish to reflect on where you have experienced each *A* and where you have experienced barriers.
- You may also wish to consider where you have helped activate an *A* for yourself or others, or when you have seen others work with intellectual joy in mind to benefit you, someone else, or the organization as a whole:
  - » What has it felt like to experience these actions?
  - » What examples from your own experience are especially noteworthy?
  - » What barriers exist regarding intellectual joy in your workplace?
  - » What opportunities might exist nonetheless for you at work to contribute to increasing intellectual joy?

## LIVING WITH INTELLECTUAL JOY

Beyond work, consider how your intellectual joy is activated and increased.

- You may wish to consider how each of the *As* below applies to different aspects of your life or to your life generally beyond work.
- You may wish to reflect on where you have experienced each *A* outside of work and where you have experienced barriers.
- You may also wish to consider where you have helped others experience intellectual joy and what that has felt like, or when you have experienced it for yourself.
  - » What examples from your own experience are noteworthy?
  - » What barriers exist for you regarding intellectual joy in your life generally or non-work aspects of your life?
  - » What would it take to move yourself and others to experience more intellectual joy?

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SEVEN *As*



The ability for a person to be self-directing and self-determining to develop as a full and genuine person capable of being trusted to make competent decisions.

- How and when are your actions or those of others:
  - » Self-directed?
  - » Trusted?
  - » Trustworthy?
  - » Respected?
- What role does psychological safety play in your autonomy or that of others?
  - » How do psychologically safe spaces help trusting relationship flourish?
  - » What can you do to help increase psychological safety?
  - » What would it take for you or your workplace, or other realm of your life, to grow in this way?
- What challenges and opportunities are presented by thinking about autonomy in these ways?



The active work of reaching out to others to promote talent, recognize skills, suggest advancement, and solicit feedback to solve problems. Active advocacy can help create a culture of belonging.

- When and how have you:
  - » Advocated for another by reaching out to that person?
  - » Benefited from others actively advocating for you?
  - » Advocated for yourself—and what were the results? Why?
- How might active advocacy promote a culture of belonging?
  - » What role, if any, do person-to-person feedback sessions play?
  - » What role, if any, might “person-to-belonging” observations play to increase active advocacy?
    - Consider how people interact with each other: Who is included? Who is left out? What can you do to help?
- How is active advocacy recognized in your workplace?
  - » How is this work acknowledged and rewarded in performance reviews and raises?
  - » Who performs most of this active advocacy?





## ACCESS

Receiving access to information and being encouraged to contribute intellectually in ways that shape knowledge, understanding, and deliberation, in an organization or otherwise, is crucial for a person's and organization's intellectual joy.

- How does increasing access help a person grow in her own knowledge and express herself as a knower?
- Who is granted access to information they need to do their work well or contribute with purpose to the organization?
  - » Who monitors access to information, and how often should organizational leaders review who is granted access to which kinds of information?
  - » Whose voices are absent but ought to be heard?
- What are harmful kinds of intellectual gatekeeping that you or others experience?
  - » What does it feel like to be left out in this way?
- What can be done to increase access appropriately in your life or organization?
  - » How might doing so be helpful beyond being good for individual people in organizations, communities, regarding social issues, and so on?



## AMPLIFICATION

The activity of raising the voice of oneself or another is a conscious effort to elevate undervalued or dismissed voices to give them their appropriate regard and due.

- When have you amplified someone else's ideas or a set of concerns, and what has resulted from that effort?
- How might you or your organization seek out opportunities to amplify voices not typically heard?
- When have your ideas been amplified—in the past week, month, or year?
- How might self-amplification, especially by people who might not experience their ideas or accomplishments as routinely valued, not only be received well but encouraged?
  - » What formal policies, procedures, and practices might encourage appropriate self-amplification?



## AUTHENTICITY

Indicating an alignment between a person's autonomously chosen values and her actions, this concept is understood as a measure of integrity or being genuine. An inauthentic person will be hard-pressed to experience intellectual joy or seek to cultivate authenticity in others.

- When do you feel like your most authentic self?
- What kinds of boundaries can be helpful to ensure authenticity at work or in your life?
  - » Bringing one's "full self" to work does not mean, for instance, that there are no boundaries; indeed, boundaries between different aspects of a person's life can be essential to being authentic in life.
- What opportunities exist to encourage your own authenticity and that of others?
- How do psychologically safe spaces foster authenticity?
- How can workplaces encourage authenticity through diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging initiatives and commitments?
- What barriers exist to encouraging authenticity in your workplace?
  - » What can be done, and what can you do, if anything, to help break down those barriers?



## ACCOUNTABILITY

To hold people accountable for their actions in a positive way is to respect them as authentic, autonomous selves without them feeling inappropriately humiliated or punished. This accountability flourishes in trustworthy and authentic organizations.

- How is accountability key to autonomy?
  - » Why is it important for a person to be held accountable for her ideas?
- When does accountability seem negative or punitive in your own life or organization?
  - » What kinds of feedback practices foster trustworthiness between employees and their employers regarding accountability?
- Since being held accountable often connotes a distinctly negative idea of being strongly criticized, which is certainly sometimes appropriate and warranted but often isn't, what would it take to change this fear into something more productive?
- When you have been held accountable or have held someone else accountable when making an error, do you think that the consequences have been proportionate to the error made?
  - » Consider the research showing that women are punished far more than men for their errors.
- How can organizations best respond today to the increased desires of employees to hold themselves accountable, for better or worse, for their actions and organizational culture?



# ADORATION

The recognition of people's inherent dignity, shown and appreciated through microactions on a regular and routine basis, affirms the value of people in ways that increase individual and shared experiences of intellectual joy.

- What concrete actions do you take or might you take individually to show people that you value them on a regular basis?
- How might an organizational culture be improved by thinking about adoration?
- What does it feel like for you to be adored and valued in the ways indicated here?
- How might actively listening to people's stories and valuing the ways they narrate their experiences help affirm their inherent dignity?
- How can people know that they are being heard in actionable ways without collapsing into performative allyship or lip service on the part of those listening?
- How can organizational policies and procedures practically aim to live out adoration?
  - » Consider inclusive and flexible workplace practices that promote the six A's noted above, how to foster a sense of belonging regardless of job title or position, and/or the roles of BRGs and ERGs within an organization.

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