

WOMEN, MILLENNIALS, AND THE FUTURE WORKPLACE: Empowering All Employees



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Foreword

The Millennial Generation now makes up the largest generational cohort in the U.S. workforce, and women comprise nearly half of the workforce. Understanding the policies and practices that serve to best empower these groups can help businesses to cultivate the types of workplaces that many employees are seeking, ultimately enhancing their ability to recruit and retain talented employees and make them more successful companies. However, many stereotypes exist about both Millennials and women as employees. Both groups often find themselves operating within companies that do not understand nor appreciate their needs and abilities.

As these cohorts have entered the workforce at increasing rates, a number of companies have sought to create initiatives that empower Millennials, women, or both. In order for these initiatives to be effective, it is critical that businesses have access to evidence-based research on the particular challenges, needs, and preferences of these groups. This type of research can also help companies to understand the areas of overlap, providing keen insight on how to empower women and Millennials at the same time.

Over the past year, the Institute's Bank of America Fellow on Women and the Economy delved into research on this topic to uncover keys to workplace empowerment for Millennials and women. This study, made possible through the generosity of the Bank of America Charitable Foundation, found that the types of policies that serve to empower both women and Millennials have wide-reaching benefits. They create better workplace ecosystems and increase employee productivity and retention, improving the workplace for all employees. There is also evidence that these types of policies and programs have a tremendously positive impact on a company's bottom line.

The lessons learned in this study represent a unique and pioneering contribution to both theory and practice within the workplace empowerment field. Companies are seeking ways to become more competitive in a 21st Century environment. It is clear that informed and thoughtful organizational practices that take into account the needs and preferences of a diverse set of employees will play a key role in shaping the future workplace.



Ambassador Melanne Verveer
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Definitions

Autonomy: a degree or level of freedom and discretion allowed to an employee over his or her job.

C-Suite: the highest-level corporate officers and directors within a business organization.

Competence: self-efficacy specific to one's work, or a belief in one's capability to perform work activities with skill.

Environmental Variables: the formal and informal organizational, institutional, social, economic, political, and cultural forces that enhance feelings of self-efficacy among organizational members.

Flexibility: a "catch-all" term for anything ranging from setting one's own agenda, deciding where and how much to work, and when and where to travel.

Generation: a country's subculture that reflects the prevalent values of a historical period, determined by significant cultural, political, and economic developments.

Impact: the degree to which one can influence strategic, administrative, or operating outcomes at work.

Initial Public Offering (IPO): the first sale of stock by a private company to the public.

Innovation: changing or creating more effective processes, products, and ideas.

Leadership: the individuals, collectively, who head organizations.

Management: the directors and managers who have the power and responsibility to make decisions.

Meaning: a fit between the needs of one's work role and one's beliefs, values, and behaviors.

Millennials: The Millennial Generation (or Generation Y, NextGen, Millennials) includes those born between the years 1981 and 1995.

Organizational Citizenship Behavior: voluntary behavior that goes beyond the basic requirements of the job and contributes to the organization's success.



Organizational Commitment: the strength of the feeling of responsibility that an employee has towards the mission of the organization.

Respect: a feeling or understanding that someone or something is important, serious, etc., and should be treated in an appropriate way.

Role Ambiguity: the level of clarity about the behaviors expected in a specific job or position.

Seed-Funded Startups: companies in this stage are in the earliest round of financing. The amount of capital is usually small and provided by the founders, their friends, and their families.

Self-Determination: a sense of choice in initiating and regulating one's actions. It reflects a sense of autonomy or choice over the initiation and continuation of work behavior and processes (e.g., making decisions about work methods, pace, and effort).

Series-Funded Startups: companies in this stage have moved beyond seed funding and are funded by outside capital as they attempt to scale and grow.

Support: to give help or assistance to another person.

Task Performance: the effectiveness with which employees perform the tasks that are specific to their job.

Transparency: the lack of hidden agendas and conditions, accompanied by the availability of full information required for collaboration, cooperation, and collective decision-making.

Trust: the belief that someone or something is reliable, good, honest, effective, etc.

Value: to consider someone to be important or beneficial to the extent that they deserve.

Work-Life Integration: when what you do at work and what you do outside of it with family, friends, and community are driven by the same fundamental values and passions.

Workplace Empowerment: enhanced feelings of self-efficacy – one's belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish a task – among organizational members.





Executive Summary

Introduction

Women today comprise almost half of the United States labor force (46.9%)¹ and The Millennial Generation, referred to as Millennials throughout this paper, is now the largest generational cohort in the U.S. workforce.² Yet, women and Millennials often struggle to conform and thrive in traditional business structures that were not designed for their needs. Understanding the policies and practices that empower women and Millennial employees is critical for the future success of businesses. This study examines the empowerment of women generally and both male and female Millennials in the workplace, and analyzes different workplace empowerment strategies that benefit both groups. Studying the intersection of women, Millennials, and workplace empowerment can provide businesses with insight into the policies and practices that benefit the majority of their workforce.

The Research

Interviews were conducted with 60 professional employees in five cities across the United States. These in-person interviews, conducted with men, women, Millennials, and non-Millennials, provided the information used for analysis in this study.



- 1 "Facts Over Time: Women in the Labor Force – Civilian Labor Force by Sex." United States Department of Labor. Web. Accessed 1 May 2016.
- 2 Fry, Richard. "Millennials surpass Gen Xers as the largest generation in U.S. labor force." *Pew Research*. 11 May 2015. Web.



Key Findings

This study examines five key themes of employee empowerment: leadership, management, flexibility, parental leave, and work-life integration. Through this analysis, three overarching conclusions emerge:

1. Flexibility is empowering to both Millennials and women in the workplace. Flexibility is empowering because it provides employees with greater self-determination in where and how they do their work. In addition, flexibility enables and enhances other workplace policies and practices, such as parental leave.
2. Structure, in the form of clearly outlined policies and protocols for how to ask for and use flexibility, is empowering to Millennials and to women. Structure is necessary for flexibility policies to be successful. Millennials desire structure amidst increased levels of autonomy and flexibility. Women, too, benefit from structured policies that remove the ambiguity around using flexibility, parental leave, and disconnecting.
3. Recognizing the diversity and value of women's leadership and their distinctive communication styles benefits both women and Millennials. Women's leadership styles often provide greater transparency and collaboration than more traditional styles, which Millennials tend to desire from their organizations. Moreover, by taking women's communication and leadership styles more seriously, companies will increase women's confidence and encourage women to grant more autonomy to those that they manage.

By creating and implementing practices that promote flexibility, structure, and diversity, companies can empower the largest segment of their workforce, retain their talent, and grow their bottom line.

A Closer Look

Leadership: **[lead·er·ship]** the individuals,
collectively, who head organizations³

Millennials are empowered when leadership is transparent about company goals and decisions and make available the information required for collaboration, cooperation, and collective decision-making.⁴ Women are empowered when they see the natural leadership styles of women valued by the com-

3 "Leadership." Business Dictionary. Web. Accessed 17 May 2016.

4 "Transparency." Business Dictionary. Web. Accessed 17 May 2016.



pany. Women are more likely to embody styles that are “less hierarchical, more cooperative and collaborative, and more oriented to enhancing others’ self-worth.”⁵ Placing more value on transparency and openness can empower both Millennials and women in the workplace.

Companies can increase transparency and improve communication between leadership and employees by, for example, holding staff town hall meetings that provide opportunities for leadership to connect directly with their employees, implementing reverse mentoring programs where employees at all levels of an organization mentor those in leadership, and actively promoting more women by setting internal targets for the representation of women at various levels of company leadership.

Management: [~~man-age-ment~~] the directors and managers who have the power and responsibility to make decisions and oversee a company⁶

Millennials are empowered when managers grant them autonomy and support them by setting clear goals and providing feedback. Women are disempowered when businesses undervalue women’s work styles. While not all women share the same natural strengths and use the same styles of communication, as a group, women tend to use communication to connect with others and form relationships, while men tend to use communication to achieve tangible outcomes and exert dominance. When women’s styles are undervalued, women often feel the need to prove themselves and micromanage in order to be considered successful.^{7,8} By valuing women’s work styles more highly, companies can create environments in which women no longer feel the need to excessively prove themselves. Such environments will encourage female managers to provide more autonomy and better support to their employees.

Managers can ensure that Millennials are empowered through autonomy by setting SMART⁹ goals (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound), and scheduling weekly check-ins with each of their direct reports. Companies should also work to create an environment where women feel valued and confident. When companies fail to do so, however, women can

5 Eagly, Alice H.; Johannesen-Schmidt, Mary C. “The Leadership Styles of Women and Men.” *Journal of Social Issues* 57.4 (2001): 782.

6 “Management.” Business Dictionary. Web. Accessed 19 May 2016.

7 Furnham, Adrian; Chamorro-Premuzic, Tomas. “Self-assessed intelligence and confidence for the acquisition of skills.” *Journal of Personnel Psychology* 6.1 (2010): 28-36.

8 Furnham, Adrian. “Self-estimates of intelligence: culture and gender difference in self and other estimates of both general and multiple intelligences.” *Personality and Individual Differences*. 31.8 (2001): 1381-1405.

9 “SMART Objectives.” Business Dictionary. Web. Accessed 2 May 2016.



work to provide more autonomy to their employees by prioritizing their team’s tasks, determining which tasks still require approval and which tasks no longer do, and communicating these priorities to their team.

Flexibility: [**flex-i-bil-i-ty**] “catch-all” term for anything ranging from setting one’s own agenda, deciding where and how much to work, and when and where to travel¹⁰

Flexibility empowers Millennials and is especially empowering to working parents when employees know how to ask for flexibility and leverage flexibility policies. Women are more likely than men to require flexibility as parents because women continue to take on the majority of household and childcare responsibilities.¹¹ Moreover, Millennials struggle to envision a balance of work and family that satisfies their parenting and career expectations. Social expectations and workplace pressures continue to force parents to make tough decisions, which frequently result in women cutting back at work rather than men, even if women and men hold egalitarian expectations regarding their roles at work and at home.

Businesses can take steps to provide and support the use of flexibility by creating clear policies for flexibility, providing core hours and days for employees, and offering flexibility to all employees, regardless of their parental status.

Parental leave: [**par-en-tal leave**] time away from work that parents are allowed in order to look after their children¹²

Maternity leave: [**ma-ter-ni-ty leave**] leave available to mothers only¹³

Paternity leave: [**pa-ter-ni-ty leave**] leave available to fathers only¹⁴

10 “The CS Gender 3000: Women in Senior Management.” Credit Suisse Research Institute. Sept. 2014, p. 39. Web.

11 “Chore Wars: The Working Mothers Report.” Working Mother. Web. Accessed 27 Apr. 2015.

12 “Parental Leave.” *Collins Dictionary*. Web. Accessed 31 May 2016.

13 “The New Dad: Take Your Leave.” Boston College Center for Work and Family. 2014. Web. Accessed 30 May 2016.

14 *Ibid.*



Currently, women take more time off for maternity leave than men do for paternity leave.¹⁵ As a result, women are more at risk of feeling disempowered throughout their parental leave experience. In planning and preparing for maternity leave, support is critical and can be extremely empowering. Additionally, Millennial men value and use paternity leave to a greater extent than men of older generations.¹⁶ Despite Millennial men's more egalitarian views on parental and paternity leave, taking paternity leave continues to carry a stigma for the men that defy the traditional breadwinner role. Thus, offering fathers support and self-determination during their leave can empower Millennial men and encourage Millennial fathers to take paternity leave in the first place – something that also benefits women.¹⁷ Parental leave policies, when designed and implemented appropriately, are empowering to women and Millennials.

Regardless of the size or stage of the company, businesses should offer some form of paid parental leave to their employees. This signals to employees that they are valued. Cash-strapped startups should offer the amount of paid leave that they can afford, even if it is only a few weeks. As startups increase in size and revenue, they should offer increased amounts of parental leave. Because they can afford to do so, large companies should offer even greater amounts of leave to their employees. All companies should avoid “unlimited” policies¹⁸ that create ambiguity around asking for and using parental leave. Companies can also work to level the playing field for new moms and remove the social stigma for dads who take leave by offering gender-neutral parental leave.

Work-life integration: **[Work-life in-te-gra-tion]**
when what you do at work and what you do
outside of it with family, friends, and community
are driven by the same fundamental values and
passions¹⁹

Work-life integration empowers both Millennials and women. Yet, the idea of work-life integration is ambiguous and can be interpreted differently by different people. Millennials are empowered by work that fulfills their passions and aligns with their personal interests. For Millennials, this includes

15 “DOL Policy Brief: Paternity Leave.” United States Department of Labor. Web. Accessed 2 May 2016.

16 “The New Dad: Take Your Leave.” Boston College Center for Work and Family. 2014. Web. Accessed 30 May 2016.

17 Johannson, E-A. “The effect of own and spousal parental leave on earnings.” Institute of Labour Market Policy Evaluation Working Paper. 2010. Web.

18 McGregor, Jena. “An ‘unlimited’ parental leave policy sounds great, but will it work?” *Los Angeles Times*. 16 Aug. 2015. Web.

19 Wartzman, Rick. “The difference between work-life integration and workaholism.” *Fortune*. 18 Feb. 2015. Web.



work that benefits the world and their companies. Companies should provide opportunities for Millennials to achieve a sense of impact on society, within the company, or both. For women, work-life integration means finding work that accepts and values their talents, strengths, and styles. However, women's natural talents and strengths are often perceived negatively or discounted by companies. Companies should work to create environments that value women's styles and abilities in order to empower female employees.

To provide Millennials with a sense of impact, companies can shift the focus of their mission away from the company and towards broader societal impact. They can also engage employees in selecting the company's social impact initiatives. Companies can work to value women's contributions by creating an environment that fosters understanding, acceptance, and appreciation of all employees, including women. Companies can also tout the benefits of diversity, including better decisions made by teams²⁰ and increased profitability for companies.²¹

20 Snyder, Bill. "Deborah Gruenfeld: Diverse Teams Produce Better Decisions." *Stanford Business*. 1 Apr. 2004. Web.

21 Noland, Marcus; Moran, Tyler; Kotschwar, Barbara. "Is Gender Diversity Possible? Evidence from a Global Survey." Peterson Institute for International Economics Working Paper Series. Feb. 2016.



Introduction

This study identifies and discusses key concepts that empower both women and Millennials in the workplace. Additionally, this study bridges theory and practice by advancing workplace empowerment literature while providing actionable recommendations for businesses to empower women and Millennial employees. Through a study of the intersection of women, Millennials, and workplace empowerment, this report provides a deep and nuanced understanding of the complexities of business environments. It uses a series of interviews that describe the perspectives of Millennial employees, Millennial managers, non-Millennial managers, men, and women, offering a holistic and inclusive analysis. Examining the empowerment of both women and Millennial employees can allow businesses to implement practices that benefit the majority of their workforce.

This report is comprised of five chapters, each covering a key theme that empowers both Millennials and women in the workplace: leadership, management, flexibility, parental leave, and work-life integration. Each chapter discusses what empowers Millennials, empowers women, and empowers both Millennials and women within each topical area. Moreover, each chapter discusses implications for the workplace empowerment literature that point to opportunities for future research within the discipline. Lastly, each chapter provides actionable business recommendations for empowering Millennials and women within organizations. These recommendations are not meant to be exhaustive, but are intended to highlight opportunities for businesses to better integrate women and Millennials into the workplace.

Why Women?

Today, women comprise almost half of the total labor force (46.9%).²² In 1960, only 25% of households were dual-income, with men serving as the sole breadwinner in 70% of households.²³ As of 2014, these numbers have reversed. Dual-income households account for 60% of all households and only 31% have a sole male breadwinner.²⁴

Combined, the Financial Activities industry and Professional and Business Services industry constitute the largest sectors within the United States economy.²⁵ Within these sectors, professional women continue to be under-

22 “Facts Over Time: Women in the Labor Force – Civilian Labor Force by Sex.” United States Department of Labor. Web. Accessed 1 May 2016.

23 “The Rise in Dual Income Households.” *Pew Research Center*. 18 Jun. 2015. Web.

24 *Ibid.*

25 “Employment Projections: Employment by major industry sector.” Bureau of Labor Statistics. Dec 2015. Web.



represented at every level, with the largest gender gap prevalent in senior management positions.²⁶ Although the gap is closing at entry-level positions, as of 2015, only 17% of C-Suite positions in the United States were held by women.^{27, 28} Representation of women on corporate boards is equally low at 18.8%.²⁹

Companies understand that attracting and retaining female employees is critical to their success. Yet, gender bias and socially constructed gender norms, along with traditional business practices and rigid company cultures, negatively impact professional women. For instance, women who are “aggressive” are viewed negatively.³⁰ Research shows that having children can be one of the worst career moves a woman can make.³¹ And, although companies are increasingly offering flexibility programs, employees remain hesitant to use them.³² Understanding what policies and practices empower women in the workplace is imperative. When businesses recognize the unique needs of women and work to meet these needs, women thrive and, in turn, benefit the bottom line.

Why Millennials?

Today, Millennials have surpassed Baby Boomers to become the largest generational cohort in the United States.³³ The Millennial Generation (or Generation Y, NextGen, Millennials) includes those born between the years 1981 and 1995.³⁴ Millennials are the most diverse generation, with 44.2% of them belonging to a minority ethnic or racial group.³⁵ Emerging literature generally agrees that Millennials were raised, “receiving enormous care and attention from their parents, making them very self-confident, empowered, and optimistic to undertake major personal projects.”³⁶ Socially, “they were trained at school to participate in groups and teams, and for the most part grew up immersed in technology without authority figures controlling their access to information.”³⁷

26 “Women in the Workplace 2015.” LeanIn.Org; McKinsey & Company. 2015, p. 3. Web.

27 *Ibid.*, 5.

28 The C-Suite refers to the highest-level corporate officers and directors within a business organization.

29 “2020 Gender Diversity Index.” 2020 Women on Boards. Web. Accessed 2 May 2016.

30 “The CS Gender 3000: Women in Senior Management.” Credit Suisse Research Institute. Sept. 2014, p. 33. Web.

31 Cain Miller, Claire. “The Motherhood Penalty vs. the Fatherhood Bonus.” *The New York Times*. 6 Sep. 2014. Web.

32 “Women in the Workplace 2015.” LeanIn.Org; McKinsey & Company. 2015, p. 16. Web.

33 “Millennials Outnumber Baby Boomers and Are Far More Diverse, Census Bureau Reports.” United States Census Bureau. 25 Jun. 2016. Web.

34 “The Generations Defined.” *Pew Research Center*. 8 May 2015. Web.

35 *Ibid.*

36 Balda, Janis Bragan; Mora, Fernando. “Adapting Leadership Theory and Practice for the Networked Millennial Generation.” *Journal of Leadership Studies* 5.3 (2011): 14.

37 *Ibid.*



As of 2015, Millennials now comprise the largest generation in the United States workforce.³⁸ Previous research recognizes the unique characteristics of the Millennial Generation within the workplace, and the potential for conflict if these characteristics are not addressed. Myers and Kamyab (2010) assert that, “when coworkers’ work-related values and role expectations do not mesh, conflict, mistrust, and lower productivity can result.”³⁹ In fact, negative stereotypes of Millennials in the workplace have permeated popular media and the corporate world. Many non-Millennials, and even Millennials themselves, believe that Millennials lack focus, are needy, job hop, are lazy, have unrealistic career goals, are “entitled,” “don’t want to pay their dues,” “need hand-holding,” and are “high-maintenance.”⁴⁰ Yet, these stereotypes are often unfounded or based off of a small number of observations, and they can actually hurt corporate America.⁴¹ Those who buy into these stereotypes fail to recognize the many benefits that Millennials can bring to businesses.

How Millennials prefer to work and what they expect from companies is different than previous generations. Vanguard businesses such as Deloitte and PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) are at the forefront of research on Millennials, creating and implementing initiatives aimed at empowering Millennial employees. For example, research from PwC found that many “Millennials are unconvinced that excessive work demands are worth the sacrifices to their personal life – and if they come into an organization and find they’re not getting the full life they want, they will look elsewhere.”⁴² In a global survey of Millennials, Deloitte explored the issue of flexible working and discovered that while 70% of employees were able to access their email and other work applications from devices outside of the office, only 43% “were allowed to work from home or other locations where they felt the most productive.”⁴³ These companies recognize that recruiting, empowering, and retaining Millennial employees is necessary to achieving a competitive advantage and to preparing for the coming decades where Millennials will continue to comprise the largest portion of their workforce. Yet, Deloitte and PwC are the exception. The majority of companies fail to recognize the unique challenges and benefits that Millennials present to multi-generational workplaces. Understanding and addressing Millennial employees is critical for the future success of businesses.

38 Fry, Richard. “Millennials surpass Gen Xers as the largest generation in U.S. labor force.” *Pew Research*. 11 May 2015. Web.

39 Myers, Karen K.; Sadaghiani, Kamyab. “Millennials in the Workplace: A Communication Perspective on Millennials’ Organizational Relationships and Performance.” *Journal of Business Psychology* 25.2 (2010): 227.

40 Bibby, Adrienne. “Annoying Millennial Stereotypes in the Workplace.” *FlexJobs*. 12 Oct. 2015. Web.

41 Kriegel, Jessica. “Millennial Stereotyping is Hurting Corporate America.” 3 Sep. 2015. Web.

42 “Engaging and Empowering Millennials.” Pricewaterhouse Coopers. 2009, p. 2. Web.

43 “The 2016 Deloitte Millennial Survey.” Deloitte. 2016, p. 22. Web.



What is Workplace Empowerment?

Workplace empowerment refers to enhanced feelings of self-efficacy – one’s belief in one’s ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish a task – among organizational members.⁴⁴ Employee empowerment is influenced by environmental variables within organizations. The four cognitions of empowerment – 1) meaning, 2) competence, 3) self-determination, and 4) impact – together combine to form a measure of psychological empowerment.^{45, 46} Four new relational concepts of empowerment – 1) respect, 2) value, 3) support, and 4) trust – are identified in this study and are also used to gauge levels of psychological empowerment.⁴⁷ Studying women and Millennials together within the context of workplace empowerment provides a more nuanced understanding of what empowers employees in the workplace.

What are the Limitations of this Study?

While this report offers a holistic examination of different genders and generations within the professional workplace, it is important to remember that the experiences of professional employees are not indicative of every employee’s work experiences. As of 2014, 58.7% of all workers in the U.S. were paid at hourly rates, with 1.3 million workers paid the federal minimum wage and 1.7 million paid below the federal minimum wage.⁴⁸ The experiences of hourly and minimum-wage workers are likely to be different from those of professional workers and should ultimately be studied in the context of workplace empowerment. Moreover, other characteristics – including educational level, race, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and any intersections thereof – should also be considered as workplace empowerment literature progresses.

44 Conger, Jay Al; Kanungo, Rabindra N. “The Empowerment Process: Integrating Theory and Practice.” *The Academy of Management Review* 13.3 (1988): 471-482.

45 Spreitzer, Gretchen M. “An Empirical Test of a Comprehensive Model of Intrapersonal Empowerment in the Workplace.” *American Journal of Community Psychology* 23.5. (1995): 601-629.

46 See the Methodology for full definitions of the four cognitions of psychological empowerment.

47 See the Methodology for full definitions of the four new relational terms identified in this report.

48 “Characteristics of Minimum Wage Workers, 2014.” Bureau of Labor Statistics. April 2015. Web.



Background

Introduction

Over the past decade, there has been a proliferation of research and business initiatives targeted towards either women or Millennials in the workplace. Researchers are eager to understand and resolve the unmet needs of members of these groups, and businesses are eager to empower women and Millennial employees. However, the little empirical research conducted on women or Millennials in the workplace is often flawed, inconsistent, or narrowly focused.

Very little research exists at the intersection of women and Millennials, and little to no research exists at the intersection of women and Millennials within workplace empowerment literature. Researching the intersection of women, Millennials, and workplace empowerment can provide a better understanding of the complexities of business environments and better inform business practices. The following sections review the state of literature on workplace empowerment, women in the workplace, Millennials in the workplace, and existing intersections of these three lines of research.

Workplace Empowerment

Workplace empowerment produces positive outcomes for both individual employees and organizations. Over the past 50 years, literature on workplace empowerment has been discussed through two complementary perspectives: 1) social-structural and 2) psychological.

The social-structural perspective of workplace empowerment was first introduced in the 1960s and is considered an outcome of the social movements of that decade that emphasized equality within society and employee autonomy within the workplace.^{49, 50} By the 1980s, however, this perspective no longer included discussions of the experiences of different demographic groups within the workplace. Instead, the literature transitioned to focus on practices aimed at leveling the power of employees at the top and bottom of structural hierarchies. While this line of literature has proven crucial to businesses, it ignores the unique experiences and needs of diverse groups of employees within the workplace.

49 Prasad, Pushkala; Eylon, Dafina. "Narrating Past Traditions of Participation and Inclusion." *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 37.1. (2001): 6.

50 Prasad, Anshuman. "Understanding Workplace Empowerment as Inclusion: A Historical Investigation of the Discourse of Difference in the United States." *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 37.1. (2001): 53.



The psychological perspective of workplace empowerment did not arise until the late 1980s, when researchers recognized a need to study the individual in relation to environmental factors. As Thomas and Velthouse (1990) posit, “Observable external events and conditions are regarded as verifiable (i.e., as factual or objective). However, individuals’ judgments and behavior regarding tasks also are shaped by cognitions that go beyond verifiable reality.”⁵¹ Thomas and Velthouse recognize the limitations of the organizationally centric social-structural perspective of workplace empowerment. They proposed an additional psychological perspective, which considers how individuals perceive and interpret environmental variables.

Building on Thomas and Velthouse, Spreitzer (2007) refines the definition of psychological empowerment as “a set of psychological states that are necessary for individuals to feel a sense of control in relation to their work.”⁵² Spreitzer (1995) also presents a scale of psychological empowerment that can measure an individual’s level of psychological empowerment.⁵³ This scale is comprised of four cognitions, that together, can combine to form a measure of psychological empowerment: 1) meaning, 2) competence, 3) self-determination, and 4) impact (see Methodology for more information on these cognitions).⁵⁴ This study uses this scale to identify and measure psychological empowerment. Through this analysis, this study offers revisions for the scale.

Groups in Need of Understanding

Women

Despite comprising almost half of the labor force,⁵⁵ women in professional industries continue to be underrepresented at every level, with the largest gap occurring in senior positions.⁵⁶ Although the gender gap is closing at entry-level positions, as of 2015, only 17% of women in the United States held C-Suite, or executive-level, positions.⁵⁷

51 Thomas, Kenneth W.; Velthouse, Betty A. “Cognitive Elements of Empowerment: An ‘Interpretive’ Model of Intrinsic Task Motivation.” *The Academy of Management Review* 15.4. (1990): 669.

52 Spreitzer, Gretchen. “Taking Stock: A Review of More Than Twenty Years of Research on Empowerment at Work.” *Handbook of Organizational Behavior*. (2007): 7.

53 Spreitzer, Gretchen M. “An Empirical Test of a Comprehensive Model of Intrapersonal Empowerment in the Workplace.” *American Journal of Community Psychology* 23.5. (1995): 601-629.

54 *Ibid*.

55 “Facts Over Time: Women in the Labor Force – Civilian Labor Force by Sex.” United States Department of Labor. Web. Accessed 1 May 2016.

56 “Women in the Workplace 2015.” LeanIn.Org; McKinsey & Company. 2015, p. 3. Web.

57 *Ibid*, 5.



Much research on women in the workplace has been conducted in an effort to identify the causes of this representation gap. For example, studies show that competitiveness is perceived as a positive attribute for men but a negative attribute for women.⁵⁸ Moreover, researchers demonstrate that networks remain segregated by gender.⁵⁹ As men continue to hold more leadership positions than women, those with more men in their network are likely to have access to a greater number of leaders. Thus, gender-segregated networks negatively impact women. Furthermore, a study published in the *Journal of Social Issues* finds that “managers are more likely to grant male employees’ requests for flexible work schedules...Meanwhile, women in any job positions requesting flextime for either career development or family reasons were unlikely to be granted their requests.”⁶⁰

These findings evidence the different experiences and needs of women in the workplace. Yet, research on women in the workplace is often parochial, lacking a broader understanding of the interconnectedness and effects of these topics. This study examines the experiences of women within the framework of workplace empowerment in order to create a more holistic understanding of what empowers women in the workplace.

Millennials

Literature recognizes the unique characteristics of the Millennial Generation within the workplace, and the potential for conflict if these characteristics are not addressed.⁶¹ Anecdotal evidence from businesses reinforces this finding. Millennials are a unique cohort of employees, and businesses are curious how to adapt in order to empower and retain Millennial employees.

Much of the academic literature on Millennials uses surveys and quantitative analysis to compare preferences across generations. Often, these survey samples are extremely small and heterogeneous, resulting in inconsistent findings. For example, one study that focused on generations and leadership draws conclusions based on five survey questions answered by only four subjects.⁶² As Deal, Altman & Rogelberg (2010) wrote in their review of literature on Millennials, “the relatively sparse empirical research published on

58 “The CS Gender 3000: Women in Senior Management.” Credit Suisse Research Institute. Sept. 2014, p. 33. Web.

59 “Women in the Workplace 2015.” LeanIn.Org; McKinsey & Company. 2015, p. 18. Web.

60 Covert, Bryce. “Study: Men Are More Likely To Be Given Flexible Work Schedules.” *Think-Progress*. 22 Jul. 2013. Web.

61 Myers, Karen K.; Sadaghiani, Kamyab. “Millennials in the Workplace: A Communication Perspective on Millennials’ Organizational Relationships and Performance.” *Journal of Business Psychology* 25.2 (2010): 225-238.

62 Salahuddin, Mecca M. “Generational Differences Impact On Leadership Style And Organizational Success.” *Journal of Diversity Management* 5.2 (2010): 1-6.



Millennials is confusing at best and contradictory at worst.”⁶³ For instance, economist Alec Levenson claims, “To date there is insufficient evidence that the Millennial generation is fundamentally different than its predecessors, once predictable life cycle stages are taken into account.”⁶⁴ Yet another paper reveals differences in generational values regarding issues of email communication, social media, fun at work, and professionalism.⁶⁵

Within research conducted by businesses on Millennial employees, however, more consistent themes have appeared. For example, studies generally agree that Millennials desire greater flexibility⁶⁶ and have a greater desire for social impact at work.⁶⁷ Yet, additional academic research is necessary to verify these findings, and to better identify the sources and influence of these generational differences. This report provides an empirical analysis of the preferences and challenges that Millennial employees experience in the workplace.

Lack of Intersectionality of Women, Millennials, and Workplace Empowerment Literature

Workplace empowerment literature rarely includes the study of the unique experiences and needs of women, Millennials, and other distinct demographic groups within society. The rare instances of intersectionality of these topics are discussed below.

Gender and Workplace Empowerment

From the psychological perspective, gender has been tested to see if it alone influences levels of psychological empowerment. For example, women or men overall might have a tendency to be more agreeable in their responses, thus skewing their scores of psychological empowerment. There have been mixed conclusions as to the effect of gender on this score.^{68, 69}

In the social-structural perspective of workplace empowerment, gender has been discussed, albeit rarely and narrowly. The handful of studies that consider gender within workplace empowerment are very narrow in scope, and

63 Deal, Jennifer J.; Altman, David G.; Rogelberg, Steven G. “Millennials at Work: What We Know and What We Need to Do (If Anything).” *Journal of Business Psychology* 25.2 (2010): 191.

64 Levenson, Alec R. “Millennials and the World Work: An Economist’s Perspective.” *Journal of Business Psychology*. 25.2 (2010): 263.

65 *Ibid*, 347.

66 “PWC’s NextGen: A global generational study.” PWC. 2013. Web.

67 “The 2016 Deloitte Millennial Survey.” Deloitte. 2016, p. 8. Web.

68 Spreitzer, Gretchen. “Taking Stock: A Review of More Than Twenty Years of Research on Empowerment at Work.” Center for Effective Organizations. 2007, pp. 13-15. Web.

69 Eylon, Dafna; Bamberger, Peter; “Empowerment Cognitions and Empowerment Acts: Recognizing the Importance of Gender.” *Group & Organization Management* 25.4. (2000): 354-372.



specific to a certain group within a certain industry.^{70, 71, 72} While narrowing the scope of research can be very useful for the study of specific industries with unique circumstances and challenges, a broader evaluation of the effects of gender on workplace empowerment is needed in order to identify more generalizable findings.

Literature on female and minority group empowerment outside of the workplace is more abundant, with the majority of this literature in the field of the social sciences. Empowerment literature studies the obstacles that women and minority groups face disproportionately within society and other institutions. These obstacles exist within a variety of institutions including family,⁷³ society,⁷⁴ government, and language,⁷⁵ among others. The proliferation of female empowerment literature in the social sciences indicates that there exists a need for further research on women's empowerment in the workplace.

Generations and Workplace Empowerment

The literature on generational effects on psychological empowerment is sparse, but informative. Three key studies of generations and workplace empowerment are highlighted below.

In a study of generational differences of individual psychological traits, Twenge and Campbell (2008) discovered that Millennials demonstrate greater self-esteem, narcissism, anxiety, and depression, a lower need for social approval, and a more external locus of control than other generations.⁷⁶ Individual psychological traits like self-esteem influence employees' levels of psychological empowerment, indicating that Millennials may experience psychological empowerment differently than other generations.

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- 70 ElKhouly, Ain Shams; Sedfy, Hala El; Marwan, Rania. "Gender and Leadership Styles: The Impact on Organizational Culture and Employee Empowerment." *Competition Forum* 12.1. (2014): 141-151.
- 71 Swamy, Kalpana N. "Psychological Empowerment of Minority Women Physicians in the Workplace: A Multiple Case Study." Capella University. 2014. Web.
- 72 Lee, Yeojin. "The Effect of Empowerment on Burnout of Female Employees in Health and Human Service Organizations in the State of Texas." The University of Texas at Austin. 2007. Web.
- 73 Hancock, Peter. "Women, work and empowerment: A portrait of women workers in two of Sri Lanka's Export Processing Zones." *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift – Norwegian Journal of Geography* 60. (2006): 227-239.
- 74 Beckmann, Anderson; Wazni, Al. "Muslim Women in America and Hijab: A Study of Empowerment, Feminist Identity, and Body Image." *Social Work* 60.4. (2015): 325-333.
- 75 Shaw, Julia J. A. "Against Myths and Traditions that Emascuate Women: Language, Literature, Law and Female Empowerment." De Montfort University. 2010. Web.
- 76 Twenge, Jean M.; Campbell, Stacy M. "Generational differences in psychological traits and their impact on the workplace." *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 23.8 (2008): 862-877.



A study conducted by Edith Bell (2008) investigated the influence of generation on employee perception of environmental variables within organizations. Bell recognized that “the values, beliefs, and historical and social experiences that generation-defined employees bring to the workplace likely affect their interaction with work, thus influencing organizational and individual performance.”⁷⁷ She discovered that there were significant distinctions in how different generational cohorts perceive various elements in the workplace.

In a study of the generational effects on work attitudes, Kowske, Rasch, and Wiley (2010) discovered negligible differences amongst the attitudes of generational cohorts in three categories: satisfaction with the work itself, satisfaction with pay, and turnover intentions.⁷⁸ This study indicates that generation alone may not influence employee attitudes.

77 Bell, Edith E. “Exploring Employee Perception of the Work Environment Along Generational Lines.” *Performance Improvement* 47.9 (2008): 38.

78 Kowske, Brenda J.; Rasch, Rena; Wiley, Jack. “Millennials’ (Lack of) Attitude Problem: An Empirical Examination of Generational Effects on Work Attitudes.” *Journal of Business Psychology* 25.2 (2010): 265-279.



Methodology

Purpose

This study seeks to deepen the understanding of the organizational practices and policies that empower women and empower Millennials in the U.S. professional workforce. Moreover, this study seeks to identify any organizational practices that empower both Millennials and women in order to help businesses formulate policies that benefit the majority of their workforce.

Research Questions

1. What organizational practices and policies empower Millennials in the professional workplace?
2. What organizational practices and policies disempower Millennials in the professional workplace?
3. What organizational practices and policies empower women in the professional workplace?
4. What organizational practices and policies disempower women in the professional workplace?
5. Are there any similarities between what organizational practices and policies empower Millennials and empower women in the professional workplace? If so, what?
6. Are there any similarities between what organizational practices and policies disempower Millennials and disempower women in the professional workplace? If so, what?

Data Collection

This study employed an exploratory qualitative design in addressing the research questions and followed the grounded theory approach.⁷⁹ Semi-structured, in-person interviews were conducted with each respondent.⁸⁰ Each

79 “Grounded theory is an inductive, theory discovery methodology that allows the researcher to develop a theoretical account of the general features of a topic while simultaneously ground the account in empirical observations or data.” From: Martin, Patricia Yancey; Turner, Barry A. “Grounded Theory and Organizational Research.” *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 22.2: (1986): 141.

80 While a structured interview has a rigorous set of questions, which does not allow one to divert, a semi-structured interview is open, allowing new ideas to be brought up during the interview as a result of what the interviewee says.



interview lasted approximately 40-75 minutes, with an average time of approximately 55 minutes. Interviews were recorded using a secure recording device. Two interview guides – one for managers and one for direct reports – were used to collect data. These guides were crafted based on a comprehensive literature review of topics studied within workplace empowerment, Millennials in professional organizations, and women in professional organizations. As new and relevant themes emerged and existing themes reached a point of saturation, the interview guides were amended. This allowed for new and relevant topics to develop organically throughout the interviews (see Appendix 1 for questions included in the final interview guides).

Sample, Scope, and Limitations

The sample was narrowed to professional employees located in five cities across the United States: Washington, DC; San Francisco, CA; New York, NY; Minneapolis, MN; and New Orleans, LA. These cities were chosen so as to obtain a diverse yet comparable sample. The cities are diverse in terms of geographic location, population size, government calculated per-diem rates, and primary industries (see Appendix 2). However, the cities are also comparable in that they are large metropolitan centers that have both established businesses and startups within the industries selected for the sample.

The sample was also narrowed to four industries within the professional services sector: consulting, finance, communications, and technology. Again, the goal was to obtain a diverse yet comparable sample. Industries such as medicine, academia, law, and manufacturing have unique professional circumstances and were purposefully excluded.

Lastly, the sample was narrowed to two types of organizations: startups and large corporations. A company was considered a startup for the purpose of sampling if it was less than five years old, or if it was less than 10 years old and had fewer than 50 employees.⁸¹ A company was considered a large corporation for the purpose of sampling if it met two out of three of the following criteria: had more than 250 employees, was publicly traded, or was over 100 years old. Within each organization, the sample framework sought to target one non-Millennial manager and one Millennial direct report.⁸² The sample also sought to achieve a gender-balanced sample.

Interviewees were selected using the convenience sampling method.⁸³ Seven respondents were within one degree of connection to the primary

81 Robehmed, Natalie. "What Is A Startup?" *Forbes*. 16 Dec. 2013. Web.

82 A direct report is an employee with no employees reporting to them and who directly reports to a manager.

83 A convenience sample is made up of people who are easy to reach.



researcher, 12 respondents were within two degrees of connection to the primary researcher, 12 respondents were within three degrees of the primary researcher, and 29 respondents had no connection to the primary researcher. Email served as the method of initial contact. Pilot interviews were conducted with two non-Millennial managers and two Millennial direct reports prior to commencing the sample of interviews.

In total, 60 respondents were interviewed. They ranged in age from 24 to 63, with an average age of 33.8. 15 of the respondents were men and 45 of the respondents were women. In total, 39 respondents were Millennials and 21 respondents were non-Millennials. By gender, nine of the men interviewed were Millennials and six of the men interviewed were non-Millennials. 30 of the women interviewed were Millennials and 15 of the women interviewed were non-Millennials. Of the 60 respondents, 30 respondents were managers and 30 respondents were direct reports. Nine of the managers interviewed were Millennial managers. This often occurred at startups where few or none of the employees were non-Millennials. All of the direct reports interviewed were Millennials. Pairings of managers and direct reports were achieved in 20 organizations.

The breakdown by city was as follows: 15 of the interviewees were located in Washington, D.C.; 16 of the interviewees were located in San Francisco, CA; six of the interviewees were located in New York, NY; 15 of the interviewees were located in Minneapolis, MN; and eight of the interviewees were located in New Orleans, LA. The breakdown by industry was as follows: 36 of the interviewees were in the technology industry (26 of which worked at technology startups), 11 interviewees were in the communications industry, eight interviewees were in the consulting industry, and five interviewees were in the finance industry. The breakdown by company type was as follows: 31 interviewees worked at startups and 29 interviewees worked at large corporations.

The sample in this study was limited to professional employees in larger cities across the United States. While the sample was quite diverse in terms of region, city size, and industry, it is not representative of the United States labor force or the entire professional labor force. Of the 60 total interviewees, the sample included nine interviewees from minority groups and four immigrant interviewees. Thus, while the data incorporates some perspectives of members of minority groups, the sample is not representative of the national racial demographics of the United States. Racial and ethnic backgrounds could have important implications on workplace empowerment but these dimensions, while worth studying, are beyond the scope of this study.

Within this report, all respondent names have been changed to protect their privacy. Edited names are noted with an asterisk in the citations.



Primary Data Analysis

Each recorded interview was transcribed verbatim by either a professional transcription company or a research assistant. Interview transcripts were analyzed using ATLAS.ti, a qualitative data analysis and research software.⁸⁴ The data analysis process used an inductive, grounded theory approach. The codes were defined during the data analysis and derived from the data. The primary researcher served as the sole coder.

Relevant Definitions

Generations

The definition of generation provided by Egri and Ralston (2004) was used for the purposes of this study. They define a generation as “a country’s subculture that reflects the prevalent values of a historical period, determined by significant cultural, political, and economic developments.”⁸⁵ Members of a generational subculture share a set of “beliefs, values, attitudes, and logical processes.”⁸⁶ Those within the same generation are referred to as belonging to the same generational cohort, “a term used to make sense of groupings within society; it is used to locate individual selves within historical time.”⁸⁷ Undoubtedly, members of a generational cohort are not all exactly alike. They have, however, lived through a set of social and historic events that has shaped their “attitudes, ambitions, and worldviews.”⁸⁸

Generational Cohorts

Using the generational cohort definitions provided by Pew Research, The Baby Boom Generation (or Baby Boomers, Boomers) includes those born between 1946 and 1964, Generation X (or Gen Xers) are those born between 1965 and 1980, and The Millennial Generation (or Generation Y, NextGen, Millennials) includes those born between 1981 and 1995.⁸⁹

84 “Advantages of using qualitative data analysis software include being freed from manual and clerical tasks, saving time, being able to deal with large amounts of qualitative data, having increased flexibility, and having improved validity and auditability of qualitative research.” From: St. John, Windsome; Johnson, Patricia. “The Pros and Cons of Data Analysis Software for Qualitative Research.” *Journal of Nursing Scholarship* 34.4 (2000): 393-397.

85 Dulin, Linda. “Leadership Preferences of a Generation Y Cohort.” *Journal of Leadership Studies* 2.1 (2008): 43-59.

86 *Ibid.*

87 *Ibid.*

88 *Ibid.*, 44.

89 “The Generations Defined.” *Pew Research Center*. 8 May 2015. Web.



Empowerment

While the definition of workplace empowerment is highly debated, workplace empowerment is defined for the purposes of this study as: enhanced feelings of self-efficacy – one’s belief in one’s ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish a task – among organizational members.⁹⁰ Workplace empowerment is beneficial to employees and to companies. The model below illustrates the positive outcomes of empowerment within organizations.

The Four Cognitions of Psychological Empowerment

Psychological empowerment is measured using a “gestalt” of the four cognitions of psychological empowerment.⁹¹ These cognitions are defined below:

1. Meaning: “Meaning involves a fit between the needs of one’s work role and one’s beliefs, values, and behaviors.”⁹²
2. Competence: “Competence refers to self-efficacy specific to one’s work, or a belief in one’s capability to perform work activities with skill.”⁹³
3. Self-Determination: “Self-determination is a sense of choice in initiating and regulating one’s actions. It reflects a sense of autonomy or choice over the initiation and continuation of work behavior and processes (e.g., making decisions about work methods, pace, and effort).”⁹⁴
4. Impact: “Impact is the degree to which one can influence strategic, administrative, or operating outcomes at work.”⁹⁵

90 Conger, Jay Al; Kanungo, Rabindra N. “The Empowerment Process: Integrating Theory and Practice.” *The Academy of Management Review* 13.3 (1988): 471-482.

91 Spreitzer, Gretchen M. “An Empirical Test of a Comprehensive Model of Intrapersonal Empowerment in the Workplace.” *American Journal of Community Psychology* 23.5. (1995): 601-629.

92 Spreitzer, Gretchen. “Taking Stock: A Review of More Than Twenty Years of Research on Empowerment at Work.” *Handbook of Organizational Behavior*. (2007): 8.

93 *Ibid*, 8.

94 *Ibid*, 9.

95 *Ibid*, 9.



Relational Concepts to Be Included in a Model of Workplace Empowerment

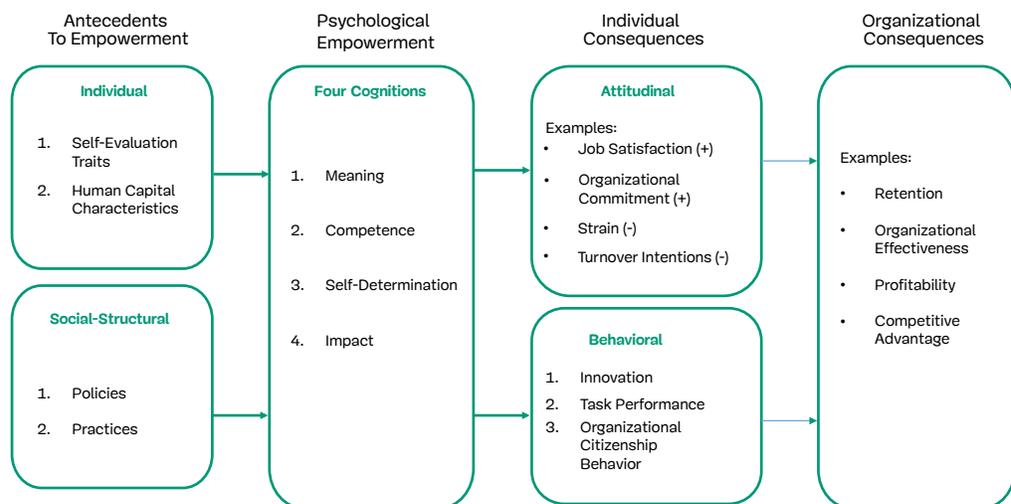
Four new relational concepts of psychological empowerment are proposed in this report. The concepts are defined below:

1. **Respect:** Respect is a feeling or understanding that someone or something is important, serious, etc., and should be treated in an appropriate way.⁹⁶
2. **Value:** To value someone is to consider someone to be important or beneficial to the extent that they deserve.
3. **Support:** To support someone is to give help or assistance to that person.
4. **Trust:** Trust is the belief that someone or something is reliable, good, honest, effective, etc.⁹⁷

A Theoretical Model of Workplace Empowerment

A comprehensive literature review was conducted to construct a theoretical model of workplace empowerment. The model is presented below for purposes of this report. At the end of each chapter, this report offers suggestions for revising this model of workplace empowerment.

Initial Theoretical Model of Empowerment in the Workplace



96 "Respect." *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. Web. Accessed 2 May 2016.

97 "Trust." *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. Web. Accessed 2 May 2016.



Both individual and social-structural antecedents lead to a sense of psychological empowerment that is measured using the four cognitions. This sense of empowerment produces both individual consequences that lead to organizational consequences. This study identifies the key antecedents for empowering women and empowering Millennials in the workplace.

Antecedents to Empowerment: Antecedents to empowerment include both 1) individual characteristics, and 2) social-structural or contextual variables that influence psychological empowerment.

Individual Antecedents to Empowerment: Individual antecedents to empowerment are specific to each person. There are two types of individual antecedents: 1) self-evaluation traits, and 2) human capital characteristics.

1. *Self-Evaluation Traits:* According to Seibert, Wang, and Courtright (2011), self-evaluation traits “represent the fundamental appraisal one makes about one’s worthiness, competence, and capabilities in relation to one’s environment.”⁹⁸ High locus of control, self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, and emotional stability have all been found to have a strong positive relationship with psychological empowerment.⁹⁹
100
2. *Human Capital Characteristics:* Human capital reflects “the level of knowledge, skill, or experience the individual brings to her work.”¹⁰¹ Human capital characteristics such as job level, tenure, and age have all been found to be positively related to psychological empowerment.¹⁰²

98 Seibert, Scott E.; Wang, Greg; Courtright, Stephen H. “Antecedents and Consequences of Psychological and Team Empowerment in Organizations: A Meta-Analytic Review.” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 96.5. (2011): 984.

99 *Ibid.*

100 Spreitzer, Gretchen M. “An Empirical Test of a Comprehensive Model of Intrapersonal Empowerment in the Workplace.” *American Journal of Community Psychology* 23.5. (1995): 601-629.

101 Seibert, Scott E.; Wang, Greg; Courtright, Stephen H. “Antecedents and Consequences of Psychological and Team Empowerment in Organizations: A Meta-Analytic Review.” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 96.5. (2011): 984.

102 *Ibid.*



Social-Structural Antecedents to Empowerment: Social-structural antecedents are contextual variables that form the environment of an organization.¹⁰³ Role ambiguity, access to information, and culture;¹⁰⁴ high-performance managerial practices, socio-political support, and leadership;¹⁰⁵ and communication with one's supervisor¹⁰⁶ have all been found to be strongly related to psychological empowerment. Each of these contextual variables can be implemented within organizations in two ways: 1) institutional policies, and 2) interpersonal practices.

1. *Policies:* Policies are the “structural” component of the “social-structural” model. They refer to the institutional policies that are officially established and recognized within work organizations.
2. *Practices:* Practices constitute the “social” aspect of the “social-structural” model. They refer to socially constructed practices and social norms.

Psychological Empowerment: Psychological empowerment is “a set of psychological states that are necessary for individuals to feel a sense of control in relation to their work.”¹⁰⁷ Psychological empowerment consists of four cognitions: 1) meaning, 2) competence, 3) self-determination, and 4) impact.¹⁰⁸ The following definitions of the cognitions were provided by Spreitzer after a thorough distillation of empowerment literature in the fields of psychology, sociology, social work, and education. Again, it is important to note that empowerment is the “gestalt” of these four dimensions.

1. *Meaning:* “Meaning involves a fit between the needs of one’s work role and one’s beliefs, values, and behaviors.”¹⁰⁹

103 Seibert, Scott E.; Wang, Greg; Courtright, Stephen H. “Antecedents and Consequences of Psychological and Team Empowerment in Organizations: A Meta-Analytic Review.” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 96.5. (2011): 984.

104 Spreitzer, Gretchen M. “An Empirical Test of a Comprehensive Model of Intrapersonal Empowerment in the Workplace.” *American Journal of Community Psychology* 23.5. (1995): 601-629.

105 Seibert, Scott E.; Wang, Greg; Courtright, Stephen H. “Antecedents and Consequences of Psychological and Team Empowerment in Organizations: A Meta-Analytic Review.” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 96.5. (2011): 981-1003.

106 Siegall, Marc; Garner, Susan; “Contextual factors of psychological empowerment.” *Personnel Review* 29.6. (2000): 703-722.

107 Spreitzer, Gretchen. “Taking Stock: A Review of More Than Twenty Years of Research on Empowerment at Work.” *Handbook of Organizational Behavior*. (2007): 7.

108 Spreitzer, Gretchen M. “An Empirical Test of a Comprehensive Model of Intrapersonal Empowerment in the Workplace.” *American Journal of Community Psychology* 23.5. (1995): 601-629.

109 Spreitzer, Gretchen. “Taking Stock: A Review of More Than Twenty Years of Research on Empowerment at Work.” *Handbook of Organizational Behavior*. (2007): 8.



2. *Competence*: “Competence refers to self-efficacy specific to one’s work, or a belief in one’s capability to perform work activities with skill.”¹¹⁰
3. *Self-Determination*: “Self-determination is a sense of choice in initiating and regulating one’s actions. It reflects a sense of autonomy or choice over the initiation and continuation of work behavior and processes (e.g., making decisions about work methods, pace, and effort).”¹¹¹
4. *Impact*: “Impact is the degree to which one can influence strategic, administrative, or operating outcomes at work.”¹¹²

Individual Consequences: Individual consequences refer to the attitudinal and behavioral outcomes of psychological empowerment on each individual within the organization.

Attitudinal Consequences: Attitudinal consequences relate to an individual’s opinions and feelings as a result of psychological empowerment. Job satisfaction and perceived work productivity or effectiveness,¹¹³ as well as organizational commitment,¹¹⁴ have been found to be positively related to psychological empowerment. Propensity to leave the organization,¹¹⁵ as well as turnover intentions and strain,¹¹⁶ have been found to be negatively related to psychological empowerment.

Behavioral Consequences: Behavioral consequences relate to an individual’s behavior as a result of psychological empowerment. There are three types of behavioral outcomes: 1) innovative behavior, 2) task performance, and 3) organizational citizenship behavior (OCB).

110 Spreitzer, Gretchen. “Taking Stock: A Review of More Than Twenty Years of Research on Empowerment at Work.” *Handbook of Organizational Behavior*. (2007): 8.

111 Spreitzer, Gretchen. “Taking Stock: A Review of More Than Twenty Years of Research on Empowerment at Work.” *Handbook of Organizational Behavior*. (2007): 9.

112 *Ibid.*

113 Koberg, Christine S.; Boss, R. Wayne; Senjem, Jason C.; Goodman, Eric A.; “Antecedents and Outcomes of Empowerment.” *Group & Organization Management* 24.1. (1999): 71-91.

114 Seibert, Scott E.; Wang, Greg; Courtright, Stephen H. “Antecedents and Consequences of Psychological and Team Empowerment in Organizations: A Meta-Analytic Review.” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 96.5. (2011): 981-1003.

115 Koberg, Christine S.; Boss, R. Wayne; Senjem, Jason C.; Goodman, Eric A.; “Antecedents and Outcomes of Empowerment.” *Group & Organization Management* 24.1. (1999): 71-91.

116 Seibert, Scott E.; Wang, Greg; Courtright, Stephen H. “Antecedents and Consequences of Psychological and Team Empowerment in Organizations: A Meta-Analytic Review.” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 96.5. (2011): 981-1003.



1. *Innovative Behavior*: Innovative behavior “reflects the creation of something new or different.”¹¹⁷ It is, by definition, change-oriented. Innovative behavior has been found to be significantly related to psychological empowerment.¹¹⁸ Examples of innovative behavior include introducing new things to the work group, making changes to improve efficiency in performing tasks, and making suggestions to improve the organization’s function.
2. *Task Performance*: Task performance is the “effectiveness with which job incumbents perform activities that contribute to the organization’s technical core.”¹¹⁹ Psychological empowerment has been found to have a positive impact on task performance.¹²⁰ One example of high task performance is perseverance in achieving the best quality of work and keeping coworkers informed of the progress of one’s work in a team project.
3. *Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)*: OCB relates to an employee’s commitment to the organization that is outside of their formal role. Psychological empowerment has been shown to be positively related to OCB.¹²¹

117 Spreitzer, Gretchen M. “An Empirical Test of a Comprehensive Model of Intrapersonal Empowerment in the Workplace.” *American Journal of Community Psychology* 23.5. (1995): 610.

118 *Ibid.*

119 Borman, Walter C.; Motowidlo, Stephan J. “Task Performance and Contextual Performance: The Meaning for Personnel Selection Research.” *Human Performance* 10.2. (1997): 99-109. Web.

120 Seibert, Scott E.; Wang, Greg; Courtright, Stephen H. “Antecedents and Consequences of Psychological and Team Empowerment in Organizations: A Meta-Analytic Review.” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 96.5. (2011): 981-1003.

121 *Ibid.*



Organizational Consequences: Organizational consequences refer to the organizational outcomes of the individual attitudinal and behavioral consequences of psychological empowerment. Examples of organizational consequences include greater: 1) retention, 2) organizational effectiveness, 3) profitability, and 4) competitive advantage. Job satisfaction¹²² and organizational commitment¹²³ have been shown to positively affect employee retention; organizational commitment¹²⁴ and OCB¹²⁵ have been shown to positively correlate to organizational effectiveness; organizational commitment,¹²⁶ innovation,¹²⁷ and task performance¹²⁸ have been found to improve or increase profitability; and innovation¹²⁹ has been shown to positively relate to competitive advantage.

122 Das, Bidisha Lahkar, and Mukulesh Baruah, M.D. "Employee Retention: A Review of Literature." *IOSR Journal of Business and Management* 14.2 (2013): 13. Web.

123 Singh, Ajay, and Bindu Gupta. "Job Involvement, Organizational Commitment, Professional Commitment, and Team Commitment: A Study of Generational Diversity." *Benchmarking: An International Journal* 22.6 (2015): 1192-211. Web.

124 *Ibid.*

125 Indradevi, R., and E. Veronica. "Key Predictors of Employee Commitment and Organizational Citizenship Behavior." *Asian Social Science* 10.13 (2014): 22-30. Web.

126 Moriarty, Jeffrey. "Compensation Ethics and Organizational Commitment." *Business Ethics Quarterly* 24.01 (2014): 31-53. Web.

127 Ho, James K. "Strategic Innovation through Business Intelligence: Linking Competitive Forces to Profitability." *International Journal of e-Education, e-Business, e-Management and e-Learning* 2.4 (2012): 280-85. Web.

128 Pugliese, Amedeo, Alessandro Minichilli, and Alessandro Zattoni. "Integrating Agency and Resource Dependency Theory: Firm Profitability, Industry Regulation, and Board Task Performance." *Journal of Business Research* 67.6 (2014): 1189-200. Web.

129 Dustin, Gentet, Mishra Bharat, and Mishra Jitendra. "Competitive Advantage and Motivating Innovation." *Advances in Management* 7.1 (2014): 1-7.





Chapter 1: Leadership

Introduction

Leadership plays a key role in empowering Millennials and women in the workplace. Leadership refers to the individuals, collectively, who head organizations.¹³⁰ Millennials are empowered, however, not by who leaders are but by what they do. Specifically, Millennials are empowered when company leaders are transparent about company goals, and make available the information required for collaboration, cooperation, and collective decision-making. When leaders are transparent, they empower Millennials by communicating that they respect and are accessible to them. Leaders promote transparency by sharing the “why” behind their strategic decisions. Managers play an integral role in fostering transparency, and are often the ones who facilitate communication between employees and leadership.

Women are empowered when they see other women in leadership. Women are also empowered when companies communicate that they value women’s leadership styles – those that are “less hierarchical, more cooperative and collaborative, and more oriented to enhancing others’ self-worth.”¹³¹ Furthermore, women are empowered by strong mentoring relationships, with many women expressing a preference for female mentors.

This chapter demonstrates that women and Millennials value transparent, collaborative, and cooperative organizations, and describes the role of leaders in producing those environments. Because organizations often undervalue more cooperative and collaborative leadership styles, this section provides recommendations for how leaders can empower both Millennials and women through the creation of more open and transparent workplaces.

Millennials

What do Millennial employees want from their leadership? Empirical research has explored this question over the last decade, and has produced some contradictory findings. Despite this theoretical diversity, a few dominant themes emerge. Balda and Mora (2011) argue that Millennials expect constant “free-flowing and bidirectional” communication with their managers and company leadership, regardless of the level of their position within the organization.¹³² Moreover, Balda and Mora propose that Millennials expect to be

130 “Leadership.” Business Dictionary. Web. Accessed 17 May 2016.

131 Eagly, Alice H.; Johannesen-Schmidt, Mary C. “The Leadership Styles of Women and Men.” *Journal of Social Issues* 57.4 (2001): 782.

132 Balda, Janis Bragan; Mora, Fernando. “Adapting Leadership Theory and Practice for the Networked Millennial Generation.” *Journal of Leadership Studies* 5.3 (2011): 15.



included in decisions within organizations. They “ignore boundaries and are unlikely to accept an organizational policy that information is communicated on a ‘need-to-know basis.’”¹³³

Similar to Balda and Mora’s findings, the interviews conducted for this study reveal that high-levels of transparency empower Millennials. Transparency refers to the lack of hidden agendas and conditions, accompanied by the availability of full information required for collaboration, cooperation, and collective decision-making.¹³⁴ 53% of Millennial direct reports interviewed discussed transparency and its positive influence on their empowerment. 26% of managers also discussed the empowering effects of transparency for Millennials.

The More You Know

Millennial employees view high-levels of transparency as critical to the quality of their work, increasing their perceived level of **competence**. For instance, Natalie, who works at a large communications company, explained that she feels the need to ask as many questions as possible because her managers withhold information that is critical to her effectiveness.¹³⁵ In contrast, Nadine, a Millennial at a multinational tech company, shared that her former boss was very open and transparent, which allowed her to produce quality work, something she finds empowering.ⁱⁱ Millennials are empowered when they are provided with ample information necessary to their work.

Anita, a Millennial manager at a startup, confirmed this idea. She explained that her employees make better decisions in their roles when leadership is transparent about their goals and properly communicate these goals to employees.ⁱⁱⁱ “In their day-to-day work, they can say, ‘I know that the CEO said this was important in our last board deck review, so I’m going to be cognizant of that.’”¹³⁶ Transparency not only empowers Millennials, but also benefits companies by aligning employees’ individual work with broader company goals.

Generation “Why”

Millennials are empowered to a greater extent when they understand the “why” behind strategic decisions. Knowing the “why” gives Millennials a picture of the broader landscape that enables them to see their **impact** within

133 Das, Bidisha Lahkar, and Mukulesh Baruah, M.D. “Employee Retention: A Review of Literature.” *IOSR Journal of Business and Management* 14.2 (2013): 13. Web.

134 “Transparency.” Business Dictionary. Web. Accessed 17 May 2016.

135 From an interview with *Natalie, a Millennial at a large communications company.

136 From an interview with *Anita, a Millennial manager at a technology startup.



organizations, and thus find more **meaning** in their roles. For example, James, a Millennial working in finance, says that knowledge of company decisions is not enough: “Some of the why behind the decisions is very much lacking.”¹³⁷ Knowing the reasoning behind strategic decisions would provide James with more meaning in his role and a greater sense of his impact on the company. When the “why” is not shared, Millennials are less likely to buy into company decisions.

Unlike many of her non-Millennial counterparts, Tess, a Millennial manager at a startup, makes it a point to provide the reasoning behind her managerial decisions to her team.^{iv} As she said, “I think we are beyond the point where people follow orders blindly. They want to understand the why, and the work will be better if they understand the why.”¹³⁸ When Millennials understand the importance of their work, they produce better work.

Fiona, a Gen X manager, views Millennials’ need to know “why” as generationally unique. When Fiona first joined her company, she did not question the rules or decisions made by management. By contrast, the entry-level Millennials that she manages today, she said, constantly question the company’s structure and protocols.^v Rather than becoming frustrated by this daily barrage of questions, Fiona sees asking “why” and challenging the status quo as beneficial to the company’s activities.^{vi} Questioning and reflecting on strategic decisions can allow companies to make their processes more effective, while simultaneously empowering their employees.

Managers Matter

Managers often serve as the gatekeepers to Millennial employees’ accessibility, or ease of contact, with leadership. They are in a strategic intermediary position where they control much of the communication flow in both directions. When managers foster relationships and recognition between a company’s leadership and their employees, it is empowering to Millennials.

Tiffany, who works at large technology company, described how her former manager enabled her to form a relationship with the Chief Communications Officer (CCO). To Tiffany, the opportunity to form a relationship with the CCO and have her work recognized by him was extremely empowering.^{vii} Direct communication with leadership allows Millennials to take ownership of their work and see their individual impact on the company.

From a manager’s perspective, Abby shared: “If somebody on my team does the crux of something, if I’m then going to talk to my boss about it, they’re

I think we are beyond the point where people follow orders blindly. They want to understand the why, and the work will be better if they understand the why.

¹³⁷ From an interview with *James, a Millennial working in finance.

¹³⁸ From an interview with *Tess, a Millennial manager at a technology startup.



coming with me. And they're getting the credit for having done it."¹³⁹ This, Abby believes, incentivizes top-notch performance.^{viii} Millennials are empowered by the opportunity to share their perspective with leadership and be recognized for their contributions.

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

Lastly, Millennials are empowered by signals of **respect** from leadership and have high expectations to be respected. Respect is defined as a feeling or understanding that someone or something is important or serious and should be treated in an appropriate way.¹⁴⁰ To respect someone is two-fold: it first requires a sense of respect for the other person, and second requires a display of this respect. Balda and Mora (2011) posit that Millennials desire their communication with their superiors to be more "open, positive, respectful, and affirming than previous generations expected."¹⁴¹ Supporting their findings, 20% of the Millennials interviewed discussed the importance of respect from leadership for their empowerment.

“What I do want is that they understand that at the end of the day, we are people. And when we walk out that door, we’re on the same level.”

James, a Millennial working in finance, described his desire for company leadership to respect him and recognize his worth.^{ix} As he explained, “What I do want is that they understand that at the end of the day, we are people. And when we walk out that door, we’re on the same level.”¹⁴² To Millennials, the titles of their superiors do not matter when it comes to their expectations for mutual respect.

Beyond a sense of respect, Samar, a Millennial who has worked at multiple startups, described experiences where company leadership did and did not display respect towards her. At her former company of 30 people, the CEO was inaccessible.^x Samar perceived the CEO as having a sense of entitlement that “came with that title without having something to show for it.”¹⁴³ Conversely, Samar has found the relationship with the CEO at her current startup to be very empowering.^{xi} Within the first month of the job, the CEO came over to her desk, sat down, and asked how she was adjusting to the new job. “I want to have a one-on-one with you,” he told her.¹⁴⁴ Given the CEO’s celebrity in the startup space, and given the size and success of the company, Samar was both pleasantly surprised and empowered by the CEO’s respectful attitude towards her. When Millennials feel respected, they are more likely to

139 From an interview with *Abby, a non-Millennial manager at a large communications company.

140 “Respect.” *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. Web. Accessed 2 May 2016.

141 Balda, Janis Bragan; Mora, Fernando. “Adapting Leadership Theory and Practice for the Networked Millennial Generation.” *Journal of Leadership Studies* 5.3 (2011): 20.

142 From an interview with *James, a Millennial at a large financial company.

143 From an interview with *Samar, a Millennial at a tech startup.

144 *Ibid*.



invest in their company. Leadership can show respect to their employees by being more accessible.

Women

Leadership plays a significant role in empowering women in the workplace. Yet, women's representation in corporate leadership is low. Women advance at much lower rates than men at each stage of the corporate pipeline. Although the percentage of women at the entry level (45%) is at near parity with that of men, as of 2015 only 27% held Vice President (VP) positions, only 23% held Senior Vice President (SVP) positions, and only 17% of women in the United States held C-Suite positions.

Despite the relatively low representation of women in leadership, research repeatedly shows that having more women in leadership is beneficial to companies. A 2016 working paper from the Peterson Institute for International Economics found that “going from having no women in corporate leadership (the CEO, the board, and other C-suite positions) to a 30% female share is associated with a one-percentage increase in net margin - which translates to a 15% increase in profitability for a typical firm.”¹⁴⁵ Simply put, more women in leadership means more money for companies. Additionally, having a higher number of female employees reflects a better understanding of consumers and the marketplace. Women make 85% of all consumer purchases in the United States and control \$20 trillion in annual consumer spending globally.¹⁴⁶ In today's competitive business landscape, retaining and promoting women offers companies a significant advantage.

Studies show that family responsibilities and motherhood are not the primary factor preventing women from entering positions of leadership in corporate America.¹⁴⁷ In fact, McKinsey & Company found that women with children are 15% “more interested in being a top executive than women without children.”¹⁴⁸ Beyond family responsibilities, researchers have found that women face unique barriers to advancement in the workplace: 43% of women believe they have fewer opportunities for advancement than men and “only 28% of senior-level women are very happy with their careers, compared with 40% of senior-level men.”¹⁴⁹ In the fight to combat women's “promotional pipeline” problem, business executives and researchers should look beyond the assumption that family responsibilities are the greatest barrier to women moving into leadership positions.

145 Noland, Marcus; Moran, Tyler; Kotschwar, Barbara. “Is Gender Diversity Possible? Evidence from a Global Survey.” Peterson Institute for International Economics Working Paper Series. Feb. 2016.

146 Barmann, Kit. “Purchasing Power of Women.” FONA International. Dec. 2014, Web.

147 “Women in the Workplace 2015.” LeanIn.Org; McKinsey & Company. 2015, p. 11. Web.

148 *Ibid*, 11.

149 “Women in the Workplace 2015.” LeanIn.Org; McKinsey & Company. 2015, p. 14. Web.



Much of the research on women in leadership is strictly quantitative – statistics pertaining to the number of women in leadership and women-to-women mentorships comprise the bulk of research in this area. In contrast, interviews conducted for this study provide a more personal and in-depth qualitative understanding of women in leadership. Conceptualizing women in leadership through authentic narratives rather than only statistics reveals nuanced information that fills gaps in the existing research.

Reflecting on Women in Leadership

Women feel empowered when they see other women in leadership positions. 58% of women interviewed discussed the importance of women in leadership for empowering women. For instance, Kim, a manager at a communications agency, expressed her disappointment in the gender makeup of the executive leadership at the company.^{xii} “We are 70% women and 30% men as an agency, yet our split in the leadership team is represented at 50:50. So that says there’s more men in powerful places here.”¹⁵⁰ She added that the company recently filled two leadership positions with men hired from the outside rather than promoting any of the extremely qualified women from within. Through this process, company leadership signaled to her that there are few, if any, opportunities for women to advance within the company and that women are not as valued as employees. Leslie, Kim’s direct report, also discussed a sense of disempowerment due to the lack of women in leadership at the company.

Conversely, Maggie, a manager at a startup, expressed a sense of empowerment due to the number of women in leadership at her company.^{xiii} “I love looking around the boardroom and seeing...our head of revenue is a woman, our general counsel is woman, my boss is a woman.”¹⁵¹ Samar, another employee at the same startup as Maggie, also described a sense of empowerment due to the number of women in leadership. Having women in leadership is empowering to women because it indicates that the company values their female employees.

150 From an interview with *Kim, a non-Millennial manager at a communications agency.

151 From an interview with *Maggie, a non-Millennial manager at a technology startup.



Taking Leadership at (Women's) Face Value

Women are also empowered when stereotypically-feminine leadership styles are **valued**¹⁵² by the company to the same extent as stereotypically-masculine styles. Stereotypically-feminine leadership styles refer to more democratic leadership, while stereotypically-masculine leadership styles refer to more autocratic leadership.¹⁵³

Researchers claim that “the leadership styles of women and men are different, mainly along the lines of women being less hierarchical, more cooperative and collaborative, and more oriented to enhancing others’ self-worth.”¹⁵⁴ Despite the fact that open and collaborative communication has many benefits, women who take time to listen to others are often viewed as having a weak leadership style, while men who make decisions unilaterally are viewed as being more competent. Because men have historically been in the workforce longer, and because men continue to hold the majority of leadership positions, these stereotypically-masculine leadership styles continue to be viewed consciously and unconsciously as superior to stereotypically-feminine styles.¹⁵⁵

Liz, the CEO of a communications startup, echoed this notion that men and women exemplify distinct qualities within the workplace.^{xiv} “I think women bring a unique way of communicating and leadership to companies and it’s different than what men do. It’s different. And I think that business hasn’t evolved to totally value that yet.”¹⁵⁶ Courtney, a young consultant also finds that business culture values men’s styles more than women’s: “We’re so used to seeing men in leadership positions that we naturally associate stereotypically-male traits with good leadership, because that’s just what we’re exposed to.”¹⁵⁷ Both Liz and Courtney were frustrated that women often have to change the way they lead in order to be successful. It is disempowering to women when their leadership styles are undervalued.

I think women bring a unique way of communicating and leadership to companies and it’s different than what men do. It’s different. And I think that business hasn’t evolved to totally value that yet.

152 To value someone is to consider someone to be important or beneficial to the extent that they deserve.

153 Eagly, Alice H.; Johannesen-Schmidt, Mary C. “The Leadership Styles of Women and Men.” *Journal of Social Issues* 57.4 (2001): 781-797.

154 Eagly, Alice H.; Johannesen-Schmidt, Mary C. “The Leadership Styles of Women and Men.” *Journal of Social Issues* 57.4 (2001): 782.

155 *Ibid*, 795.

156 From an interview with *Liz, the CEO of a communications startup.

157 From an interview with *Courtney, a Millennial at a large consulting firm.



While research shows that both men and women often discount feminine leadership styles, Eleanor, a partner at the same consulting firm, sees value in women's leadership styles. In Eleanor's experience, women are more collaborative^{xv} and more authentic communicators.^{xvi} For instance, the female CEO of her company is much better at communicating with employees compared to the other male leaders. "Her desire to connect with the people is much more genuine."¹⁵⁸ Although one of the male leaders makes an effort to communicate with the rank-and-file, "it still comes off as... 'Ok, someone told me I needed to talk to everybody.'"¹⁵⁹ Valuing women's leadership styles both empowers women and benefits companies.

Mentorships: The Woman Deficit

Mentorship proved to be an important – yet complicated – source of workplace empowerment for women. 53% of entry- and mid-level women discussed that the **support**¹⁶⁰ they receive from mentors is empowering. Mentors have the experience and the resources to guide women towards leadership positions. Many women discussed their positive relationships with male mentors. Yet, 72% of the women who discussed mentors had a preference for female mentors. These women feel that female mentors can best relate to their unique needs and experiences. Despite the beneficial relatability of women-to-women mentorships, only 33% of the women interviewed had a female mentor, and those who did not expressed frustration in their search for one.

Male Mentors

When asked about mentors, several of the women interviewed stated that they had positive relationships with male mentors. The gender makeup of their industries influences the gender of mentors – women interviewees in male-dominated industries were more likely to have a male mentor than a female mentor. Thus, it may be necessary for women to seek out male mentors when there is a low number of women in their sector.

In fact, when asked what advice she would lend a young woman in tech, Tess, a senior computer programmer and the founder of a women's tech mentoring group, said: "Don't narrow yourself to only looking for female mentors. Use everyone in your career path that you can."¹⁶¹ Tess is on to something. Existing research shows that networks play an integral role in the process of hiring

We're so used to seeing men in leadership positions that we naturally associate stereotypically-male traits with good leadership, because that's just what we're exposed to.

158 From an interview with *Eleanor, a partner at a large consulting firm.

159 *Ibid.*

160 To support someone is to give help or assistance to that person.

161 From an interview with *Tess, a Millennial manager at a technology startup.



and promoting employees into leadership.¹⁶² As men continue to hold more leadership positions than women, those with more men in their network are likely to have access to a greater number of leaders. Yet, men's networks continue to consist mainly of men, closing off women's access to those in the upper ranks of management. A McKinsey & Company study finds that "nearly two-thirds of men say that the senior leaders who have helped them advance were mostly men, compared to just over a third of women."¹⁶³

The small number of male-to-female mentorships cannot be explained simply by a lack of relatability. Rather, Kim Elsesser's theory of a "sex partition" asserts that male executives are often reluctant to mentor female employees as they are concerned that their friendliness may be misinterpreted as romantic interest or even sexual harassment.¹⁶⁴ Due to fear that basic forms of mentorship – including one-on-one meetings, drinks after work, and business trips – will be misconstrued as having sexual undertones, male executives simply decide to avoid potentially jeopardizing their reputation.¹⁶⁵

Failure to seek out male mentors prevents many women from forming connections with knowledgeable and influential people in their industry. Combined with Elsesser's "sex partition" theory, women are deprived of the support critical to a successful career.

Female Mentors

72% of women interviewed shared their desire to find a female mentor, viewing women as better able to relate to their needs and experiences. As Kim said in her interview, "When I seek out a mentor I'm looking for someone that's where I want to be. And, I know that it's more difficult as a woman. So someone that, as a woman, has been able to get to where I want to be, that's the person I want."¹⁶⁶ For women who have found female mentors, the relationships can prove even more beneficial than mentorships with men.

Don't narrow yourself to only looking for female mentors. Use everyone in your career path that you can.

162 Dawson, Julia; Kersley, Richard; Natella, Stefano. "The CS Gender 3000: Women in Senior Management." Credit Suisse. 2014.

163 "Women in the Workplace 2015." LeanIn.Org; McKinsey & Company. 2015, p. 18. Web.

164 Elsesser, Kim. *Sex and the Office: Women, Men and the Sex Partition That's Dividing the Workplace*. Taylor Trade Publishing. 2015.

165 *Ibid.*

166 From an interview with *Kim, a non-Millennial manager at a communications agency.



Tess, who previously articulated the benefits of male mentors, also spoke of the unique benefits of women-to-women mentorships. As a woman, Tess believes she can identify workplace obstacles and opportunities more specific to women.^{xvii} Tess cited a specific example where she coached a young woman during a salary negotiation by telling her that she needed to ask for more money. To Tess, her personal experiences and awareness of issues affecting women allow her to be a better mentor to young women.

Moreover, women have different expectations when it comes to female mentors. Eleanor, a partner at a consulting firm, explained that the men who reach out to her for mentorship focus on a specific challenge, while the women who reach out to her focus more on forming a relationship.^{xviii;167} Reeva, a manager at a technology startup, explained that men tend to reach out to her for professional advice, while women reach out for both professional and personal advice.^{xix;168} Women desire mentorships that provide both professional and personal guidance and allow them to form a deep relationship with their mentor.

Despite the many perceived benefits of women mentors, 66% women who discussed mentorship did not have a woman mentor and expressed their desire to find one. Moreover, five high-level women interviewed discussed the overwhelming number of young women reaching out to them for mentorship. It is clear why so many young women struggle to find female mentors and so many senior-level women are bombarded by entry- and mid-level women: there are simply more entry- and mid-level women who want mentors than there are senior-level women to mentor them. Without experienced women available to serve as mentors, many women are left without the empowering support they desire.

Implications for Workplace Empowerment Literature

Findings from the interviews provide a new concept of empowerment for Millennials that is not accounted for in the comprehensive model of psychological empowerment: Millennials are empowered through signals of **respect** from leadership. Moreover, the interviews revealed that women are empowered when companies **value** and **support** them.

Feeling **respected**, **valued**, and **supported** are all relational concepts that do not fit easily into the model of workplace empowerment. None of these concepts can be classified as social-structural antecedents to psychological empowerment because they are concepts created and built through a relationship. Respect, value, and support cannot simply be implemented as a

167 From an interview with *Kim, a non-Millennial manager at a communications agency.

168 From an interview with *Reeva, a manager at a technology startup.



workplace practice; they emerge from positive workplace interactions. These concepts also do not directly lead to an increase in any of the four cognitions included in the scale of psychological empowerment (meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact). Still, findings revealed that feeling respected, valued, and supported by leadership results in empowerment of employees, indicating that these concepts should be further studied and ultimately incorporated into a model of workplace empowerment.

Furthermore, findings indicate that Millennials' increased sense of **impact** positively influences the **meaning** they find in their roles. The cognitions of meaning and impact may not be entirely separate from one another, and one or both may influence the other. The connection between the cognitions of psychological empowerment should be reexamined within workplace empowerment literature.

Business Recommendations

Millennials and women both benefit from transparency within organizations. Companies can increase transparency and improve communication between leadership and employees through the following methods:

- **Managers Matter:** In both startups and large companies, managers play an important role in opening up communication between employees and leadership. Leadership should encourage managers to continuously seek employee suggestions and questions, and communicate these ideas and concerns to leadership on a regular basis.
- **Reverse Mentoring:** Reverse mentoring involves employees at all levels of an organization mentoring those in leadership. By engaging in these programs, companies can foster greater communication between leadership and employees, and provide leadership with perspectives from those at all levels of the company.¹⁶⁹
- **Staff Town Halls for Startups:** For startups, town halls can be frequent, simple, and short meetings that provide an opportunity for leadership to connect directly with employees. For example, at the startup Pluralsight, town halls take place once a week within a short 15 to 20 minute time window and include remarks by the executive team, brief presentations by those with important information to share, and an employee question and answer session.¹⁷⁰

169 Rodgers, James O. "How Diversity Management Fuels Procter & Gamble's Success." The Diversity Coach. Web. Accessed 23 May 2016.

170 Skonnard, Aaron. "Change Your Company's Future in Just 15 Minutes." *Fast Company*. 5 May 2015. Web.



- **Staff Town Halls for Large Companies:** For large companies, town halls should be scheduled in advance and leadership should craft and share an agenda prior to each meeting. Depending on the size of the company, meetings can be once a month, once a quarter, or once a year. Companies can engage employees by collecting employee feedback and questions prior to each town hall.¹⁷¹ Leadership should be sure to address these employee suggestions and questions in the meeting.

Increasing the number of women in leadership empowers women by signaling that they are valued by companies. Moreover, a greater number of women in leadership will likely increase the number of leaders who embody more open, collaborative, and transparent styles of leadership that empower Millennials. The following are examples of how companies can work to increase the number of women in their leadership:

- **Gender Diversity Targets:** In the absence of national policies mandating quotas for the representation of women on corporate boards,¹⁷² companies can set their own internal targets for the representation of women at various levels of leadership. Critical to their success, gender diversity initiatives should be prioritized and authentically communicated by company leadership. Moreover, companies should hold leaders accountable to their targets.
- **Look Beyond the C-Suite:** The percentage women in C-level positions is small.¹⁷³ Limiting the search for board candidates to those in the C-suite greatly limits the number of female board candidates and their potential impact.¹⁷⁴ Companies should look beyond the C-suite and to other levels of leadership and management in order to fill vacant corporate board positions. Companies can also turn to outside resources or groups that prepare women for boards.¹⁷⁵

171 Levin, Marissa. "Four Steps to Holding a Great "Town Hall" Employee Meeting." *Successful Culture*. Web. Accessed 23 May 2016.

172 Pryce, Vicky. "Why we need quotas for women on boards." *The Guardian*. 23 Nov. 2015. Web.

173 "Women in the Workplace 2015." *LeanIn.Org; McKinsey & Company*. 2015, p. 4. Web.

174 Kramer, Vicki; Konrad, Alison; Erkut, Sumru. "Critical Mass on Corporate Boards: Why Three or More Women Enhance Governance." *Wellesley Centers for Women's Publications Office*. 2006. Web.

175 "Women on Board." *Catalyst*. Web. Accessed 23 May 2016.



As more women move into positions of leadership, the number of experienced women available to serve as mentors will eventually increase. Until then, however, women continue to lack the support and mentorship they desire. To combat this issue, women can seek other forms of mentorship and support that will help them along their path to company leadership:

- **Peer-to-Peer Mentoring:** Rather than limiting their mentorship search to more experienced professionals, women can turn to their female peers for the women-to-women mentorship that they desire. Peer mentors allow colleagues to personally connect and advise one another based on similar experiences. Professionally, peer mentors from a different department, company, or industry can offer diverse and fresh perspectives and ideas.
- **Formal Sponsorship Programs:** Sponsors more directly support and advocate for an employee's career advancement than do mentors. Informal sponsorship, while based on experience and trust, relies on an individual's networks to build relationships, excluding many in the process. Formal company sponsorship programs that assign sponsors ensure that every employee has a relationship with a more experienced individual who is willing to support and advocate from them.





Chapter 2: Management

Introduction

Management – the directors and managers who have the power and responsibility to make decisions¹⁷⁶ – plays a key role in empowering Millennials in the workplace. Millennials are empowered when managers grant them autonomy in their roles. Yet, Millennials are only empowered when autonomy is accompanied by other forms of management: managers must first provide clear goals and follow up with regular feedback in order for Millennials to be empowered by autonomy. Millennial employees are further empowered when managers solicit their feedback as well.

Women, more than men, feel the need to be perfect and prove themselves in the workplace.^{177, 178} As a result, interviewees perceived that female managers are more likely than male managers to micromanage. Micromanagement is the close, detailed, and often de-motivating scrutiny of employees' work on a continuing basis.¹⁷⁹

Interviewees indicated that the way many women manage is disempowering to Millennials and other women. By valuing women's work styles more highly, companies can create environments in which women no longer feel the need to excessively prove themselves. Such environments will encourage female managers to provide more autonomy to and better support their employees.

Millennials

Fifty-six percent of Millennials and 40% of managers discussed the role of autonomy in empowering Millennials. Autonomy refers to the degree or level of freedom and discretion allowed to an employee over his or her job.¹⁸⁰ 66% of Millennial employees interviewed are the direct report of a manager interviewed for this study. These pairings allow for a deeper examination of the relationship between managers and Millennial employees. Moreover, 30% of the managers interviewed are Millennials themselves. Studying Millennial managers in comparison to their non-Millennial counterparts allows for the identification of distinctions between generational cohort preferences and practices amongst managers. Because Millennial managers share similar pref-

176 "Management." Business Dictionary. Web. Accessed 19 May 2016.

177 Furnham, Adrian; Chamorro-Premuzic, Tomas. "Self-assessed intelligence and confidence for the acquisition of skills." *Journal of Personnel Psychology* 6.1 (2010): 28-36.

178 Furnham, Adrian. "Self-estimates of intelligence: culture and gender difference in self and other estimates of both general and multiple intelligences." *Personality and Individual Differences*. 31.8 (2001): 1381-1405.

179 "Micromanage." Business Dictionary. Web. Accessed 19 May 2016.

180 "Autonomy." Business Dictionary. Web. Accessed 19 May 2016.



erences with their Millennial direct reports, they often display greater awareness and use of management methods that empower Millennial employees.

Goal-Getters

Millennials are empowered by autonomy only when managers first provide them with clear goals, which increase Millennials' perceived level of **competence** in their work. When these goals are not present, Millennials feel lost and confused in their roles, rather than competent and confident.

Existing research shows that Millennials prefer centralized decision-making and clearly defined responsibilities and procedures within business organizations to a greater extent than older generations. Longitudinal data collected across over 800 students at four universities found that 60% of Millennials agreed with the statement "I trust authority figures to act in my best interest," as opposed to only 40% of Gen Xers when they were in college.¹⁸¹ Another global survey of more than 5,600 MBA students found that 72% of Millennials agree with the statement "I prefer a structured environment with clear rules," compared to only 33% of Gen Xers. Hershatter & Epstein (2010) posit that Millennials' preference for greater structure is a result of the political and social landscape in which they grew up – since they were children, government regulation has worked to ensure that products, cars, homes, and schools were made safer for them. This research argues, "Millennials have an inherent trust in organizations and a strong preference for the structures and systems that support them."¹⁸²

The interviews conducted for this study revealed similar findings. Millennials prefer autonomy within structure. Setting clear and achievable goals serves as a method for creating structure around autonomy. For example, Rachel, who works at a technology startup, lauded her manager for setting department goals that "trickle up to the corporate goals."¹⁸³ This increases her sense of competence because she knows exactly what she needs to get done.^{xx} "There's no more any question about who should be working on what, which allows for a lot of autonomy. So I never feel micromanaged by her, which is great."¹⁸⁴ Providing employees with clear objectives creates the structure required to enable greater autonomy.

181 Hershatter, Andrea; Epstein, Molly. "Millennials and the World of Work: An Organization and Management Perspective." *Journal of Business Psychology* 25.2 (2010): 211-223.

182 *Ibid*, 215.

183 From an interview with *Rachel, a Millennial who works at a technology startup.

184 *Ibid*.



Yet, goals that are too broad or vague fail to create the structure that Millennials desire. Calvin, an internal consultant, expressed frustration with the lack of specificity in the goals that his company communicates to him.^{xxi} “Our direction is to become number one by 2020 and to become a billion dollar company,” he said, “but, that’s very broad. How are you doing that?... Are you planning to do that in service? Are you planning to do it in products?”¹⁸⁵ Without specificity, goals fail to create the structure that Millennials desire. Broad company visions should be accompanied by clear and detailed instructions for how the mission can be achieved.

Autonomy

With clear goals in place, Millennial employees are empowered by high-levels of autonomy. Autonomy increases their level of perceived **self-determination** in completing their job, as well as their level of perceived **competence**. Moreover, Millennials view autonomy as a signal that they are **trusted** to do their job. For instance, Adam, a Millennial working in finance, said being given autonomy is the most empowering part of his job.^{xxii, 186} James, a Millennial who also works in finance, lamented the lack of autonomy his firm grants him.^{xxiii} Often, he feels push back from managers who want him to do things the same way they always have. “That’s when I feel powerless,” he said.¹⁸⁷ Without autonomy, Millennials are disempowered.

Courtney, a Millennial at a consulting firm, feels trusted by her managers when she is given autonomy.^{xxiv, 188} On her first consulting project, her managers were uncomfortable relinquishing control, something Courtney interpreted as a lack of trust. As a result, the managers micromanaged Courtney and her team members, requesting that the team copy the managers on every email sent. Micromanagement, the opposite of granting autonomy, signals a lack of trust to employees.

Two Millennial managers, both at technology startups, discussed how granting their teams autonomy frees their time to accomplish their own tasks. With the large amount of work that needs to be accomplished by her small team, Gabby shared that she manages her team by first setting goals, then giving them full autonomy in achieving those goals, and lastly, checking in with them every week to make sure they are meeting certain benchmarks.^{xxv} “That way I don’t have to micromanage,” she said.¹⁸⁹ Anita, a Millennial manager

185 From an interview with *Calvin, a Millennial internal consultant at a multinational company.

186 From an interview with *Adam, a Millennial working in finance.

187 From an interview with *James, a Millennial working in finance.

188 From an interview with *Courtney, a Millennial at a consulting firm.

189 From an interview with *Gabby, a Millennial manager at a technology startup.



at another technology startup, discussed a similar style of management. Granting autonomy to employees relieves managers of the time burden that micromanagement often poses.

Moreover, Alan, the Gen X CEO of a technology startup, described the impact of autonomy on creativity and innovation. As a novice entrepreneur, he initially created rigid processes intended to inform employees how to complete their tasks. However, after seeing this practice stifle the creativity, innovation, and morale of employees – most of whom are Millennials – he adopted a more open, innovative way of managing by setting objectives.^{xxvi, 190} Alan argues that individuals, not processes, make the product and business better. Autonomy not only empowers Millennial employees, but also fosters more creativity and innovation within companies.

Feedback

Lastly, after being presented with clear goals, Millennials desire feedback and **support** from their managers as they use their autonomy to complete their tasks. This feedback and advice is empowering to Millennials as it increases how **competent** they feel in their ability to do their job.

Research conducted by KPMG and Boston College discovered that Millennials perceived that positive relationships with their managers had a strong correlation with their job satisfaction. “Those who strongly agreed that their managers cared about their well-being scored 2 points higher on a 5-point job satisfaction scale than those who strongly felt that their manager did not care about their well-being.”¹⁹¹ Hershatter and Epstein (2010) discuss the potential cause of this generational preference, positing that “Millennials have been encouraged to have, and continue to maintain, similarly close relationships with parents, teachers, mentors, and advisors. As a result, they are much more likely than Gen X to want their supervisors to take an interest in them.”¹⁹² In a survey of Millennial and Gen X business students, they found that 58% of Millennial business students agreed with the statement, “When I need special treatment, I feel comfortable approaching my bosses and asking for help,” in contrast to only 31% of Gen Xers who agreed.¹⁹³

The interviews conducted for this study corroborate the importance of employee’s relationships with their managers. 80% of Millennial employees and

190 From an interview with *Alan, a non-Millennial CEO of a technology startup.

191 Harrington, Brad, et al. “How Millennials Navigate Their Careers: Young Adult Views on Work, Life, and Success.” *KPMG and Boston College Center for Work and Family*. 2015, p. 10.

192 Hershatter, Andrea; Epstein, Molly. “Millennials and the World of Work: An Organization and Management Perspective.” *Journal of Business Psychology* 25.2 (2010): 219.

193 *Ibid.*



46% of the managers interviewed discussed the importance of manager-employee feedback in empowering Millennials.

Phrasing Feedback

While 80% of Millennial interviewees indicated that they are empowered by feedback, Millennials are split regarding the type feedback they like to receive. Half of the Millennials interviewed prefer direct feedback, while the other half prefer softer feedback. For instance, James, a Millennial in finance, prefers blunt feedback that saves him from needing to have a lengthy conversation.^{xxvii, 194} Courtney, on the other hand, prefers more positively framed feedback that provides her the opportunity to have a conversation about her professional development.^{xxviii, 195} Millennials and their managers should have intentional conversations to discuss the feedback style that works best for them both.

Frequency of Feedback

Millennial employees desire frequent feedback, and are most empowered by timely, on-the-spot feedback. Several Millennials interviewed shared that they are empowered when they prompt their own on-the-spot feedback. For example, Adam, a Millennial in finance, explained that he asks his manager for feedback when he fears he is headed in the wrong direction.^{xxix, 196} For many Millennials, prompting their own feedback is empowering because it allows them to get the feedback they need at the exact moment they need it.

Yet, Tiffany, a Millennial at a large technology company, has experienced difficulty prompting her own feedback. With her former manager, she said she had to be a “ninja” or a “squeaky wheel” in order to find time for him to provide feedback.^{xxx} Tiffany fares no better with her current manager. She finds it very difficult to get in contact with her manager due to the large number of employees under her manager’s purview.¹⁹⁷ It is disempowering to Millennials when managers do not have the time or capacity to respond to the feedback needs of their employees.

To mitigate this potential issue, other Millennial employees described the effectiveness of having scheduled check-ins with their managers. Meg explained: “I think that the weekly check-ins are very helpful to me and help keep me on track. And I like constructive feedback. If [my manager] sees

194 From an interview with *James, a Millennial working in finance.

195 From an interview with *Courtney, a Millennial at a consulting firm.

196 From an interview with *Adam, a Millennial working at a large financial firm.

197 From an interview with *Tiffany, a Millennial at a large technology company.



something that's off and shares that with me, I'm very open to it."¹⁹⁸ Scheduling check-ins can serve as a proactive measure for soliciting and garnering feedback.

When relying on scheduled check-ins to provide feedback, managers should make sure to hold such check-ins regularly. Timely feedback is the most empowering feedback. For example, Rachel told of a negative experience where her manager waited to give her critical task feedback until her annual review: "If I had known that that was an issue, I would have not been doing it for six months."¹⁹⁹ Anita, a Millennial manager at a different tech startup, explained in her interview how an experience like Rachel's is exactly what she, as a manager, tries to avoid: "We don't want somebody to walk into a review and be like 'what, wait what?'"²⁰⁰ Failure by managers to provide feedback in a timely manner is disempowering to Millennials and may hurt business outcomes.

Rachel told of a negative experience where her manager waited to give her critical task feedback until her annual review: "If I had known that that was an issue, I would have not been doing it for six months."

Feedback Goes Both Ways

In addition to receiving feedback, Millennials are empowered when managers solicit their feedback. Managers make Millennials feel **valued** and increase their perceived level of **impact** on the team and within the company when they ask for Millennials' thoughts and suggestions for how to improve processes. It is important to note that Millennials are only in a position to provide feedback when they are granted autonomy in the first place. Completing their tasks how they best see fit grants Millennials unique knowledge and perspectives that can be useful for their managers, team, and company.

For instance, Meg, a Millennial at a technology startup is empowered when her manager asks for her feedback.^{xxxi} "We're looking for advice from him, but at the same time, he's really good about taking a step back and putting himself in our shoes and asking 'Why and what would you suggest instead?' 'Here's what we tried, what would be your ideas?'"²⁰¹ Beyond her direct manager, Meg's CEO also seeks feedback from lower-level employees like her. According to Meg, the CEO uses this employee feedback to make substantive changes to company strategy and the product – something she finds extremely empowering. Millennials are empowered and better able to see their direct impact within the company when managers solicit employee feedback.

This practice of using a feedback loop is not only empowering to Millennials, but also is beneficial to teams and the companies. For instance, Denise, a

198 From an interview with *Meg, a Millennial at a technology startup.

199 From an interview with *Rachel, a Millennial at a technology startup.

200 From an interview with *Anita, a Millennial manager at a technology startup.

201 From an interview with *Meg, a Millennial at a technology startup.



non-Millennial manager at a technology startup, explained that rather than telling her employees what to do, she explains the problem and asks how they would solve it. As she described, “Sometimes we will land in a direction I think. Or sometimes they’ll have an idea that will totally bust my idea out of the water, and great.”²⁰² Anita, a Millennial manager at another technology startup expressed a similar method of coaching her employees. “I try to let them be smart, creative, and come up with ideas, and voice those without thinking,” she explained, “I don’t have to be the only one with those ideas. I want everybody to share their ideas.”²⁰³ Allowing employees to contribute makes the team more efficient and effective, and empowers her Millennial employees.

It is interesting to note that all of the examples of the feedback loop occurred at smaller startups rather than larger, more established companies. It is possible that smaller, newer, companies have more opportunity or inclination to innovate.

Women

Twenty-six percent of the women interviewed shared that they feel the need to be perfect and prove their value in the workplace in order to be taken as seriously as men. The organizational environment and the extent to which businesses value women’s work styles affect how women manage. Managers have influence over the levels of psychological empowerment of Millennial employees. Thus, understanding the organizational factors that influence women’s management styles can broaden the understanding of how female managers can empower Millennial employees.

Perfectionism and Micromanagement

Many of the women interviewed expressed a preference for male managers over female managers, citing the notion that women are much more likely than men to micromanage. When businesses **undervalue** women’s leadership styles, women feel the need to micromanage, prove themselves, and be perfect in the workplace in order to be considered successful. Micromanagement lowers employees’ perceived level of **self-determination** in their job and is disempowering.

Women, especially in male-dominated industries, often feel that they need to prove their competence. Daisy, a computer programmer who works in a heavily male-dominated field, shared, “I always felt like I had to prove myself. And I feel like any time I messed up that it was twice the failure, like the

“I always felt like I had to prove myself. And I feel like any time I messed up that it was twice the failure, like the impact was twice as bad because I was a woman.”

202 From an interview with *Denise, a non-Millennial manager at a technology startup.

203 From an interview with *Anita, a Millennial manager at a technology startup.



impact was twice as bad because I was a woman.”²⁰⁴ Nadia, a fellow computer programmer and former consultant, felt the same way in her last job, where she was one of two women at an otherwise all-male company.^{xxxii} “I always feel like I have to prove that I am more and do extra work just to get the same respect level.”²⁰⁵ When asked to take on tasks outside of her formal role, Nadia explained: “I don’t want to say no because I don’t want them to think I can’t handle it.”²⁰⁶ Particularly in male-dominated industries, women feel that they must prove their competence and capabilities.

As part of proving their worth, many women frequently feel the need to be perfect in their jobs. This desire to be perfect can result in female managers micromanaging more than their male counterparts. For example, in describing the management styles of her two managers – one male and one female – Leslie explained that her female manager is “very Type A” and more of a perfectionist, while the male manager is more easy going and “optimistic.”^{xxxiii} ²⁰⁷ Denise, now a manager herself, described the management styles of her former managers – four women and four men: “Interestingly, I’ve always found that my male bosses have not been micromanagers. They’re like ‘figure it out,’ which is nice...I had more micromanagement from female bosses.”²⁰⁸ Women tend to micromanage more than their male counterparts.

Reflecting on her own management style, Denise, like the female managers she described, feels the need to micromanage: “I do feel like I have to know the details of everything, because if I’m in a meeting and I get caught not understanding something, I feel like I can’t be in that situation.”^{209, xxxiv} Denise also senses that the male managers she interacts with are not as bothered by situations where they are unaware of details. Many women micromanage and strive to be perfect in the workplace because they feel they need to constantly prove themselves in that environment.

The phenomenon of women feeling the need to be perfect in order to prove themselves could also be explained by a concept presented in the earlier leadership section of this report: women are disempowered when they feel that they and their leadership styles are not valued by organizations. By recognizing the value of women’s unique styles and qualities, companies can not only relieve the stress of many female workers who have extremely high expectations for themselves, but they may also reduce the more perfectionist

“I do feel like I have to know the details of everything, because if I’m in a meeting and I get caught not understanding something, I feel like I can’t be in that situation.”

204 From an interview with *Daisy, a Millennial computer programmer at a large technology company.

205 From an interview with *Nadia, a Millennial computer programmer at a technology startup and former consultant.

206 *Ibid.*

207 From an interview with *Leslie, a Millennial at a communications agency.

208 From an interview with *Denise, a non-Millennial manager at a technology startup.

209 *Ibid.*



tendencies common among women. As a result, companies can subdue the level of micromanagement used by managers.

Women's desire to micromanage may also stem from the finding that women, overall, have less confidence. As Katty Kay and Claire Shipman wrote in *The Confidence Code*, "Women feel confident only when they are perfect. Or practically perfect."²¹⁰ Numerous studies show that women consistently underestimate their abilities while men overestimate theirs, despite both men and women performing at the same level.^{211, 212}

Implications for Workplace Empowerment Literature

Autonomy signals to employees that they are **trusted**. The concept of **trust** has not been discussed in relation to employee empowerment. Like **respect**, **value** and **support**, **trust** is a relational concept that does not directly fit into the existing workplace empowerment framework. **Trust** should be studied along with the other relational concepts presented in this study in order ultimately incorporate such concepts into the model of psychological empowerment.

Business Recommendations

Millennials are empowered when managers set clear goals, provide them with autonomy, and follow up with frequent feedback. Companies and managers can ensure that Millennials are empowered through autonomy by:

- **Setting Goals:** Managers should set a goal for each job responsibility of every employee. These goals should be SMART²¹³ (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound), and should be created in conversation with employees. A guideline for articulating such goals is to use the template: "Do a specific action, in order to accomplish a measurable and relevant result, within a certain time frame, and make sure it is achievable."²¹⁴ SMART goals created by managers and their team can provide Millennials with the structure they need to be empowered by autonomy.

210 Kay, Katty; Shipman, Claire. *The Confidence Code: The Science and Art of Self-Assurance: What Women Should Know*. HarperBusiness, 2014. Print.

211 Furnham, Adrian; Chamorro-Premuzic, Tomas. "Self-assessed intelligence and confidence for the acquisition of skills." *Journal of Personnel Psychology* 6.1 (2010): 28-36.

212 Furnham, Adrian. "Self-estimates of intelligence: culture and gender difference in self and other estimates of both general and multiple intelligences." *Personality and Individual Differences*. 31.8 (2001): 1381-1405.

213 "SMART Objectives." Business Dictionary. Web. Accessed 2 May 2016.

214 "How to Set SMART Goals: Guide for Supervisors and Employees." County of San Mateo Human Resources Department. Web. Accessed 31 May 2016.



- **Look Beyond Annual Reviews:** Managers should schedule weekly check-ins with each of their direct reports in order to: 1) provide task feedback, 2) highlight opportunities for employee development, and 3) solicit feedback from the employee. Deloitte implemented a weekly check-in initiative in 2015 and found that “these brief conversations allow leaders to set expectations for the upcoming week, review priorities, comment on recent work, and provide course correction, coaching, or important new information.”²¹⁵ Such check-ins provide employees with timely feedback that is relevant, productive, and empowering.
- **The Sooner the Better:** Even with scheduled weekly check-ins, managers should provide on-the-spot feedback when opportunities for feedback arise. To do so, managers can use the “Start/Stop/Continue” method, which involves telling team members what they should *start* doing, what they should *stop* doing, and what they should *continue* doing in order to be successful.²¹⁶ Moreover, on-the-spot feedback should not only come from managers, but can also be provided by other team members and those on other teams with whom employees interact.²¹⁷

Women are more likely than their male counterparts to micromanage. Women’s desire to micromanage may derive from a lack of confidence and an accompanied desire to be perfect in the workplace. Yet, micromanagement is disempowering to Millennial employees. Companies should work to create an environment where women feel valued and confident. When companies fail to do so, however, there are strategies women can utilize to help build their confidence and overcome their perfectionist tendencies:

- **Fail Fast:** Women who feel the need to be perfect and prove themselves in the workplace can work to increase their confidence and overcome their desire for perfectionism by “failing fast.” Failing fast is a business strategy that involves “trying something, getting fast feedback, and then rapidly inspecting and adapting.”²¹⁸ In business, failing fast saves money by killing bad ideas before too much money is spent. For women, Katty Kay and Claire Shipman argue, failing fast is the “ideal paradigm for building female confidence...The beauty is that when you fail fast, or early, you have a lot less to lose.”²¹⁹ Women can take steps

215 Buckingham, Marcus; Goodall, Ashley. “Reinventing Performance Management.” *Harvard Business Review*. Apr. 2015 Issue. Web.

216 Swart, Gary. “The ‘On-the-Spot’ Performance Review.” *LinkedIn*. 30 Jan. 2014. Web.

217 *Ibid.*

218 “Agile Development Resources: Fail Fast.” *Innovation*. Web. Accessed 31 May 2016.

219 Kay, Katty; Shipman, Claire. *The Confidence Code: The Science and Art of Self-Assurance: What Women Should Know*. HarperBusiness, 2014, p 140. Print.



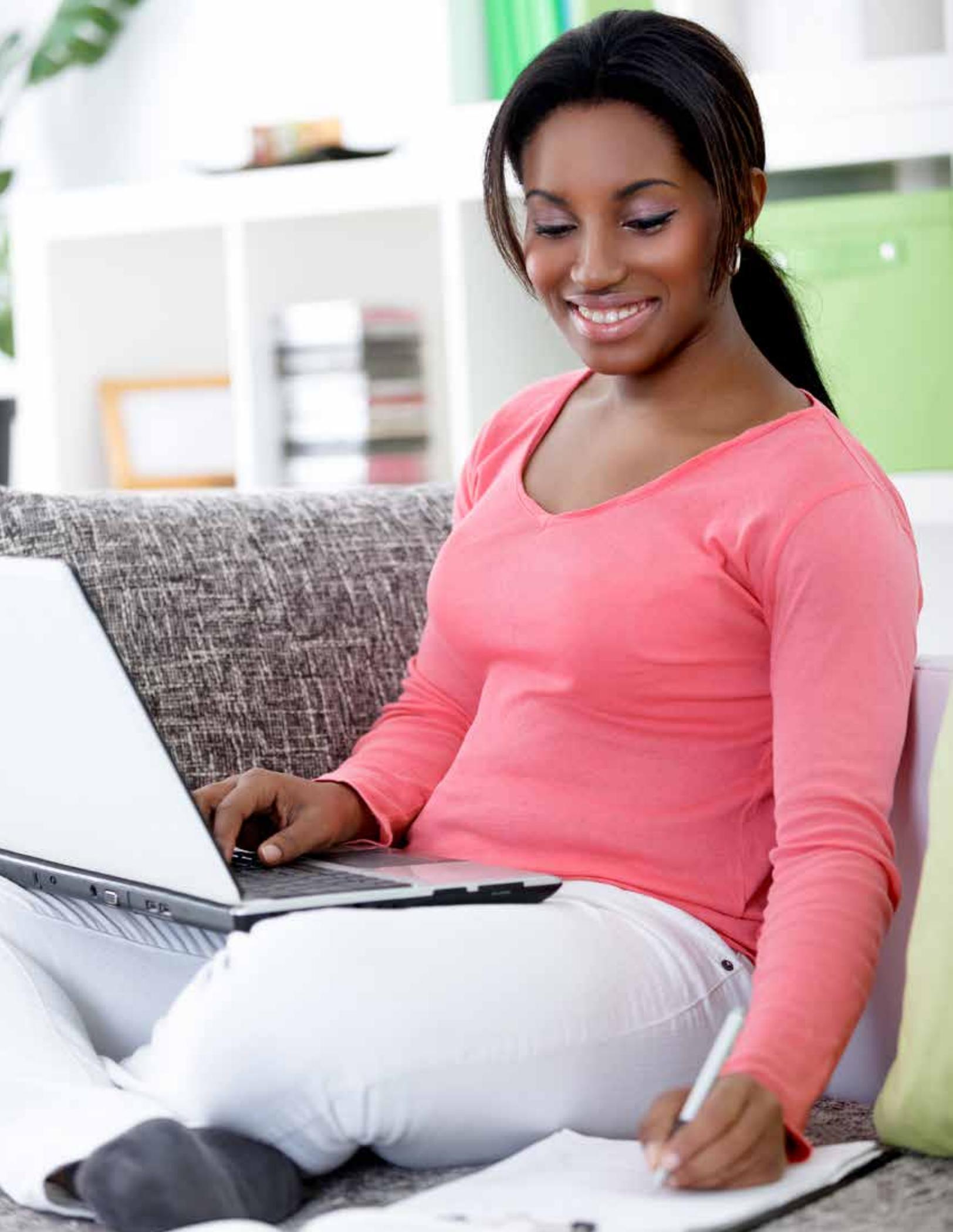
to fail fast by taking a leap outside of their their comfort zones, focus on their positive accomplishments rather than the negative ones, and make sure to repeat the process until their confidence has grown.²²⁰

- **Manage Your Micromanagement:** Women and other managers who micromanage can take measures to help themselves let go and lend their employees more autonomy.²²¹ First, managers should get confidential feedback from their team about their management habits. They can do so using an anonymous survey or a survey conducted by a third party such as the manager of another team. Second, managers should use this feedback to prioritize the team's tasks and determine which tasks still require approval and which tasks no longer do. Third, managers should communicate these priorities to their team. Lastly, managers should set clear expectations for each task and can do use using the SMART goals described above.

220 Kay, Katty; Shipman, Claire. *The Confidence Code: The Science and Art of Self-Assurance: What Women Should Know*. HarperBusiness, 2014, p 140. Print.

221 Knight, Rebeca. "How to Stop Micromanaging Your Team." *Harvard Business Review*. 21 Aug. 2015. Web.





Chapter 3: Flexibility

Introduction

Flexibility – “a catchall term for anything ranging from setting one’s own agenda, deciding where and how much to work, and when and where to travel”²²² – empowers both Millennial and women employees.

Flexibility empowers Millennials. Organizational flexibility can be mapped on a spectrum ranging from Level 1 (very little flexibility), to Level 2 (some flexibility), to Level 3 (a great amount of flexibility). There are four main factors for fostering cultures of flexibility: flexibility depends on the *team*, there is a need to *talk* about it, flexibility is better enabled by valuing *task* over *time*, and flexibility is enabled by and indicates *trust*. One potential negative outcome of creating cultures that foster greater flexibility is the increased sense that it is necessary for employees to be available 24/7, inside the office and out.

Flexibility is especially empowering to working parents. Moreover, women are more likely than men to require flexibility as parents because women continue to take on the majority of household and childcare responsibilities.²²³ Thus, providing flexibility can be disproportionately empowering for women with children.

Lastly, the interviews also revealed that there is a generational divide in household gender dynamics. Many Millennial men hope to be involved fathers, and many Millennial women wish to continue their careers after having children. Yet, both Millennial men and women struggle to envision a balance of work and family that satisfies their parenting and career expectations. Social expectations and workplace pressures continue to force parents to make tough decisions, which frequently result in women cutting back at work rather than men. Granting all employees greater flexibility may enable Millennial parents to realize a better family and work balance, and may enable working fathers to take on more responsibilities at home.

Millennials

Ninety percent of Millennials and 60% of managers interviewed described flexibility as empowering to Millennial employees. A McKinsey & Company report found that most businesses in corporate America offer a variety of flexibility programs: 88% of companies offer reduced schedules, 85% part-time schedules, 82% telecommuting or working from home, and 82% leave

222 “The CS Gender 3000: Women in Senior Management.” Credit Suisse Research Institute. Sept. 2014, p. 39. Web.

223 “Chore Wars: The Working Mothers Report.” Working Mother. Web. Accessed 27 Apr. 2015.



of absence or sabbaticals.²²⁴ Yet, employee participation in these programs is extremely low. At the companies surveyed by McKinsey, only 12% of women and 11% of men use a reduced schedule, only 2% of women and 2% of men work part-time, and only 7% of women and 8% of men have taken a leave of absence or sabbatical.²²⁵ Telecommuting or working from home was the most used program with 45% of women and 38% of men participating, although the extent of usage was not measured.²²⁶ These numbers show that formal policies alone are not sufficient to create a culture of flexibility.

The interviews conducted for this study reveal the many complexities of implementing and utilizing flexibility policies. These interviews provide employee perspectives from two types of organizations that are generally viewed as being polar opposites: large corporations and startups. Further, several interviewees have experience working at both types of organizations studied, affording direct comparisons across these businesses. This dichotomous sample provides for a richer understanding of how flexibility is used and interpreted at a variety of companies.

Flexibility: You Know It When You See It

Flexibility is empowering to Millennials because it increases their perceived levels of **self-determination**. In describing the level of flexibility offered at their organizations, Millennial employees portrayed a spectrum of flexibility ranging from Level 1 – very little flexibility, to Level 2 – some flexibility, to Level 3 – a great amount of flexibility.

Level 1 organizations, those with very little flexibility for employees, are often very large businesses, many of them in the financial sector. Millennials at these organizations are disempowered by the lack of flexibility they have in their work. For example, Jeremy, a Millennial who used to work in finance, explained that the managers at his financial firm expected employees to be in the office at their desk from early in the morning until late at night, requiring 12 to 13 hour days, regardless of whether or not they had any work to do.²²⁷ He found the expectation of long-hours and lack of flexibility extremely disempowering. Cultures that value face time and do not allow for flexibility disempower Millennials.

224 “Women in the Workplace 2015.” LeanIn.Org; McKinsey & Company. 2015, p. 16. Web.

225 *Ibid*, 16.

226 “Women in the Workplace 2015.” LeanIn.Org; McKinsey & Company. 2015, p. 16. Web.

227 From an interview with *Jeremy, a Millennial who used to work in finance.



Level 2 organizations include both large companies and startups. In theory, employees at Level 2 organizations should have higher levels of self-determination; however, in practice, they are hesitant to use flexibility policies, and thus do not realize a higher level of self-determination. For example, Daisy, a Millennial at a large tech company, explained she could determine her own work schedule if she wanted to. However, she shared that the norms and protocols for utilizing her company's flexibility policy are unclear. As a result, she tends to go into the office every day from 9-5.^{xxxv} Millennials at Level 2 organizations are empowered by the flexibility that is offered to them, but are disempowered by the ambiguity surrounding the use of flexibility.

Level 3 companies are often startups or large technology companies. These companies offer their employees full flexibility and self-determination in deciding when and where work gets done. Millennials at these companies are the most empowered. For instance, when asked to describe the culture at the large technology company where she works, Nadine said the first word that comes to mind is flexible: "I've never been anywhere so flexible in terms of how you get your work done. People aren't worried about when you get your work done, it's just really about get it done."²²⁸ Millennials at Level 3 companies are empowered by the flexibility offered and a culture that supports the use of flexibility.

Interestingly, Millennial employees seek the structure of an office environment when a large amount of flexibility is offered to them. Employees at Level 3 companies shared that they often prefer to work in-office, even when it is not required of them. For example, Tess, a Millennial manager at a startup, said it is difficult to build an office culture when employees have as much flexibility as they offer. "Sometimes it's hard with people having so much freedom to be out and about."²²⁹ Anita, a Millennial manager at a startup, also discussed her desire to work in the office: "We are a very flexible company. I can work from home or remotely as needed. But, I generally like to be here just because I have a Dev Team and need to be here to support them...We have a lot of meetings so I want to be here to interact and collaborate with co-workers."²³⁰ While flexibility is empowering to Millennials, dangers of offering high levels of flexibility include difficulty in forming a cohesive company culture and less fruitful collaboration.

228 From an interview with *Nadine, a Millennial at a large technology communications company.

229 From an interview with *Tess, a Millennial manager at a startup.

230 From an interview with *Anita, a Millennial manager at a startup.



Facilitating Flexibility

Flexibility empowers Millennials by increasing their level of perceived **self-determination**. Yet, a successfully implemented culture of flexibility does not happen by accident. Companies, leaders, and managers all play a role in actively cultivating a culture of flexibility. Doing so further empowers Millennials by indicating that companies **value** Millennial preferences.

Depends on the Team

Interviews revealed that the level of flexibility within a company can vary greatly from team to team. Flexibility is not only determined by the size of a company: teams in large traditional companies can offer employees flexibility while teams in progressive startups can limit flexibility.

Courtney, a Millennial at a large consulting firm, explained that depending on where you sit within the firm, the culture can change dramatically.^{xxxvi} “We’re such a big company that, depending on where you sit, things can really change.”²³¹ In the first few months after she joined her current team, she was pleasantly surprised by the flexibility the team offered. This flexibility was encouraged and used by her managers. Her previous team, in contrast, did not allow for any flexibility, despite her desire for it. The flexibility offered and used by each team varies, and managers play a significant role in shaping the culture of flexibility.

Eleanor, Courtney’s direct manager, also spoke of the divergent team cultures at the company.^{xxxvii} Eleanor described the division where she works as the “softest” part of the firm.²³² In contrast, the other divisions are more “old school.”²³³ She explained that managers, including herself, often feel the need to match their team’s culture to the cultures of clients in order to provide the best services. For consultants, the workplace culture of the client also influences the amount of flexibility on a team.

Talk About It

Moreover, the interviews indicated that flexibility is best enabled when employees have intentional conversations with their managers. These conversations allow Millennials to actually utilize the flexibility their companies offer. Yet, employees only feel comfortable having these conversations when their managers work to promote a culture of flexibility, as described in the section above.

231 From an interview with *Courtney, a Millennial at a large consulting firm.

232 From an interview with *Eleanor, a partner at a large consulting firm and Courtney’s direct manager.

233 *Ibid.*



Nadine, who works at a company with Level 3 flexibility, explained that she is very intentional about communicating her personal commitments to her manager, and is unafraid to prioritize existing personal commitments when new work commitments arise.^{xxxviii} If someone schedules an early morning meeting during the time she typically drives her partner to work, she communicates that she can be available by phone, but will not be at her computer until she gets home. If she has a fitness class scheduled during the day, she tells her team about it so they can schedule around it.²³⁴ Employees will only receive the flexibility they desire if they feel comfortable communicating their personal commitments to their managers.

Maggie, a manager at a startup, does not feel comfortable asking her manager for more flexibility, despite the fact that the company claims to support flexibility.^{xxxix} Maggie would ideally like to leave earlier each day in order to make it home in time for dinner with her family, but is hesitant to discuss this with her manager. “Our culture, and the values...it’s hard to leave at four o’clock and feel like you’re actually pulling your weight.”²³⁵ Regardless of company policy, employees are often only comfortable asking for and using flexibility when they think that their managers will be receptive.

Task Over Time

Managers and cultures that value task over time more easily allow for flexibility. In addition to facilitating flexibility, assessing quality of work over quantity of hours at work shows Millennials that they are **valued** for their actual **impact** – what they produce rather than the time they spend at the office. In addition to enabling flexibility, Millennials prefer cultures that value quality of work over quantity of time spent in the workplace.

For example, Conrad, a Millennial who now works at a startup, was disempowered by the face-time culture at his former consulting firm.^{xl} There, employees were judged on the number of hours they sat at their desks rather than the quality of their work. This created a culture where employees felt obligated to stay in the office for long hours. “They just thought that they could get work done better, or they were doing better work if they were there and constantly plugging away.”²³⁶ Conrad prefers starting work early and leaving the office early, but the company culture did not provide the flexibility to do so. The disempowering long-hours culture at this consulting firm led Conrad to move to a startup. “You are productive when you are most productive,” he

Regardless of company policy, employees are often only comfortable asking for and using flexibility when they think that their managers will be receptive.

234 From an interview with *Nadine, a Millennial at a large technology communications company.

235 From an interview with *Maggie, a manager at a startup.

236 From an interview with *Conrad, a Millennial at a startup and former consultant.



said, and startups are generally supportive of that.²³⁷ Valuing the number of hours worked rather than employees' work products inhibits flexibility and disempowers Millennials.

Chris, a Gen X manager at a startup, emphasized the role that managers play in valuing output over hours worked.^{xli} "If you're promoting the people that everybody knows are just putting in ridiculous hours, you're setting that expectation: 'I know if I'm going to be promoted, I need to work 60 hours.'"²³⁸ Instead, Chris rewards the top performers on his team, "the people that are good at finding the quickest way to do something, the most effective way to do something."²³⁹ How managers value work determines how success is measured by each team, and influences the level of flexibility that the team affords.

It Goes Both Ways: Flexibility is Enabled by and Indicates Trust

Lastly, **trust** enables flexibility. In order for managers to feel comfortable with their employees using flexibility, they must first trust their employees. Moreover, flexibility indicates **trust**. Thus, Millennial employees are empowered not only by the flexibility granted to them, but also by this signal of trust from their managers.

For examples, Sophie, a Millennial and former consultant, desires greater flexibility, but acknowledges that she first has to prove herself as an employee. As she has only been with this new company for six months, she recognizes that she has to build trust with her manager before she can be granted the flexibility she desires.^{xlii} "Something that would be more ideal is that, once I've demonstrated that I can get my work done, it doesn't matter as much where I am."²⁴⁰ Without trust, managers are uncomfortable encouraging their employees to use flexibility.

Moreover, flexibility signals trust. Angela, a Millennial computer programmer at a large tech company, is empowered that her manager trusts her to work from home.^{xliii} She views this flexibility as a signal that her manager trusts her. "Work from home is a trust," she said, "They trust that you can finish your work on time. They don't care if you do it until 1 AM or not."²⁴¹ Managers can demonstrate that they trust employees by encouraging them to use flexibility.

237 From an interview with *Conrad, a Millennial at a startup and former consultant.

238 From an interview with *Chris, a non-Millennial manager at a startup.

239 *Ibid.*

240 From an interview with *Sophie, a Millennial at an education foundation.

241 From an interview with *Angela, a Millennial computer programmer at a large technology company.



The Communication Caveat

One caveat of providing and utilizing flexibility is an increased sense that it is necessary to be available on communication devices 24/7. When Millennials are expected to be constantly available, it lowers their perceived levels of **self-determination** and is disempowering.

For instance, Rachel, a Millennial at a startup with Level 3 flexibility, expressed her dissatisfaction with the 24-hour work culture. “Ideally, I would like people to stop e-mailing after 9 pm. Because even if they don’t expect a response until the morning,” she said, “it kind of makes you anxious knowing that there’s an unopened e-mail in your inbox.”²⁴² While Millennials are empowered by high levels of flexibility, they are disempowered by the expectation to be available 24/7.

Just as managers are in the position to create a team culture of flexibility, they can also create a culture of being “on” 24/7. When managers are constantly connected, their Millennial employees feel the need to do the same. For example, Roger, a non-Millennial manager at the same startup as Rachel, explained how he has no expectation for his or any employees to respond to emails 24/7. Yet, when describing his own work habits, he said, “Work for me is pretty much, from the time I wake up, I’m always on email or checking email...I’m addicted.”²⁴³ Regardless of Roger’s expectation of his team, his actions indicate to employees that they need to adopt a similar work schedule in order to be truly valued by the company. Managers set the tone for their team’s culture of communication.

In contrast, Gabby, a Millennial manager at a startup, does not download her work email on her phone and highly encourages her team to do the same.^{xliiv} Gabby explained that her motivation behind this is threefold. First, when Gabby first started at the company, the feeling that she always had to check her email gave her a lot of anxiety. Second, as she said, “I want [my team] to value their time away.”²⁴⁴ Third, she believes that employees will provide better responses from when they are at the office and less distracted. Millennial managers, more than non-Millennial managers, have a greater desire to disconnect themselves and see more benefits in disconnecting. Thus, they are more likely to encourage their teams to disconnect as well.

Work for me is pretty much, from the time I wake up, I’m always on email or checking email...I’m addicted.

242 From an interview with *Rachel, a Millennial at a startup.

243 From an interview with *Roger, a non-Millennial manager at a startup.

244 From an interview with *Gabby, a Millennial manager at a startup.



Women

Existing literature demonstrates that men and women have different experiences with flexibility in the workplace. While some of these differences can be attributed to men and women approaching flexibility differently, the role of parenting also plays an important role in determining how men and women ask for and use flexibility. A study published in the *Journal of Social Issues* found that “managers are more likely to grant male employees’ requests for flexible work schedules...Meanwhile, women in any job positions requesting flextime for either career development or family reasons were unlikely to be granted their requests.”²⁴⁵ Yet a study in Australia found that “women who work flexible hours are more likely to be promoted than men with similar arrangements. Men working flexible hours often feel discouraged that their career has been jeopardized.”²⁴⁶ While men are more likely to get flextime when they ask for it, women are judged less harshly for using it.

Moreover, research has found that men create flexibility in their workdays informally and unofficially, whereas women create flexibility formally and contractually.²⁴⁷ “Men are 25% more likely to take breaks during the working day for personal activities, 7% more likely to go for a walk, 5% more likely to go out to lunch, and 35% more likely to take a break to relax compared to their female colleagues.”²⁴⁸ The disadvantage of more women seeking contractual flexibility arrangements is that “organizations tend to offer this only in more support-side functions (i.e., shared services) rather than in line positions (roles that directly advance an organization in its core work and are often directly tied to profit and loss). Line roles remain the key conduit to senior and board positions, as these functions exist all the way up the organization, unlike staff and more internally focused roles.”²⁴⁹

Flexibility Works for Working Parents

Thirty percent of interviewees specifically spoke to the benefits of flexibility for parents. Flexibility increases working parents’ levels of **self-determination**, and shows parents that they are **valued** and **trusted** as employees. For instance, Meg, a Millennial at a startup, explained that her company and

245 Brescoll, Victoria; Glass, Jennifer; Sedlovskaya, Alexandra. “Ask and Ye Shall Receive? The Dynamics of Employer-Provided Flexible Work Options and the Need for Public Policy.” *Journal of Social Issues* 69.2 (2013): 367-388.

246 Sanders, Melanie; Zeng, Jennifer; Hellicar, Meredith; Fagg, Kathryn. “The Power of Flexibility: A Key Enabler to Boost Gender Parity and Employee Engagement.” Bain & Company. 2015. Web.

247 “The CS Gender 3000: Women in Senior Management.” Credit Suisse Research Institute. Sept. 2014, p. 40. Web.

248 *Ibid*, 40.

249 “The CS Gender 3000: Women in Senior Management.” Credit Suisse Research Institute. Sept. 2014, p. 40. Web.



manager place high importance on family and allow parents a great deal of flexibility, something she is excited about as she plans her future family.²⁵⁰ Flexibility empowers working parents by granting them the self-determination they need to balance work and family.

Yet, the different life circumstances of working parents can pose challenges for managers of teams that also include non-parents. For example, Reggie, a manager of a global team at a technology company and a dad, recognizes that parents live in different circumstances than employees without children.^{xlv} “They just don’t have the same cognitive bandwidth available because they’ve got three kids in the car at 5:30.”²⁵¹ If he needs something done at 5:30, he said, he knows that his employees who are parents can do it, but it will be a lot harder for them than for a young employee who does not have the same constraints. While respecting the unique life circumstances and offering flexibility to working parents is empowering, it can also lead to non-parents taking on more work.

Yet, providing parents with increased flexibility and holding parents to a different standard than non-parents can cause conflict. For example, Tina, a Millennial at a consulting firm, described the flexibility afforded to a colleague who has a young child at home. “She was working remotely and she had her baby with her which makes me think like, she clearly wasn’t working 40 hours a week...It made me upset because I work from home all the time. But of course, if you have a screaming baby, that’s going to take a lot of your time.”²⁵² While this same colleague strictly works from 9 to 5, another woman in the same department works over time to manage the team’s workload. “She is like literally working until 3 in the morning most days...I think that creates a lot of tension.”²⁵³ Holding parents to different standards and affording parents more flexibility than non-parents is often stressful and disempowering to their team.

“They just don’t have the same cognitive bandwidth available because they’ve got three kids in the car at 5:30.”

What Women Need

Despite the prevalence of working women and mothers today, cultural expectations of women as caregivers and homemakers persist. These expectations influence how others view working women, and even how working women view themselves. Recent data reveals that having children is one of the worst career moves a woman can make: “Mothers are less likely to be hired for jobs, to be perceived as competent at work, or to be paid as much as their male

250 From an interview with *Meg, a Millennial at a tech startup.

251 From an interview with *Reggie, a non-Millennial manager of a global team at a large tech company and a father.

252 From an interview with *Tina, a Millennial at a consulting firm.

253 *Ibid.*



Unless society starts making it more okay for the father to take more care of their child, it means it's never going to be possible for a mother not to choose.

colleagues with the same qualifications.”²⁵⁴ The same effect does not happen for fathers. Rather, “employers read fathers as more stable and committed to their work; they have a family to provide for, so they’re less likely to be flaky.”

²⁵⁵

Among married couples with children under 18, men are more likely than women to have a spouse who stays home: 60% of households are dual income, 31% have a father who works and a mother who stays home, and 6% have a mother who works and a father who stays home.²⁵⁶ Further, women continue to take on the majority of childcare and household responsibilities in both dual and single income households.²⁵⁷ In fact, 39% of working mothers compared to only 24% of working fathers have experienced family-related career interruptions.²⁵⁸ 51% of working mothers compared to 16% of working fathers “say being a working parent has made it harder for them to advance in their job or career.”²⁵⁹

As a result of women’s larger role in caregiving and household work, working mothers require more flexibility in their jobs as parents than men. This affects how working mothers are viewed. As Claire Cain Miller and David Streitfeld wrote, “In general, women are more likely to use [parental flexibility policies], while men either put less priority on family or make informal accommodations to work more flexible hours. A result is that women, but not men, are seen as less committed to work.”²⁶⁰

The interviews from this study revealed similar findings. Men and women discussed that women, on average, take on the majority of childcare and household responsibilities. As Diana, a computer programmer, explained: “Traditionally, women have taken the majority of the work at home. And so if you’re in a really demanding career on top of that, it’s really tough. And it becomes very stressful. Whereas men, I think, traditionally, if they are in a really demanding job, then they can do less at home.”²⁶¹ For this reason, she said, she does not want to have children. “Unless society starts making it more okay for the father to take more care of their child, it means it’s never going to be possible for a mother not to choose.”²⁶² Women are still expected to play a larger role at home than men.

254 Cain Miller, Claire. “The Motherhood Penalty vs. the Fatherhood Bonus.” *The New York Times*. 6 Sep. 2014. Web.

255 *Ibid.*

256 Parker, Kim. “5 facts about today’s fathers.” Pew Research Center. 18 Jun. 2015. Web.

257 “Chore Wars: The Working Mothers Report.” Working Mother. Web. Accessed 27 Apr. 2015.

258 “On Pay Gap, Millennial Women Near Parity – For Now.” Pew Research Center. 11 Dec. 2013. Web.

259 *Ibid.*

260 Cain Miller, Claire; Streitfeld, David. “Big Leaps for Parental Leave, if Workers Actually Take It.” *The New York Times*. 1 Sep. 2015. Web.

261 From an interview with *Diana, a Millennial computer programmer at a tech startup.

262 *Ibid.*



The disproportionate pressures working mothers versus fathers face often result in working mothers cutting back at work. Eleanor, a partner at the same consulting firm as Courtney, described the difficult decision she made after having her first child. At the time, she was in a position at the company that required her to travel regularly. Her husband was also frequently travelling for work at the time. As Eleanor explained: “We had to sit down and actually decide that his career, without saying it, because it was still too tough for me to say, ‘Your career is first.’ But his career was going to be primary and I was going to stop traveling.”²⁶³ After this discussion, Eleanor moved into another department that required less travel. Women, more often than men, make career sacrifices for their families.

Working mothers may be more willing to cut back at work because of the increased guilt they experience. As Kim, a mother of three who works at a communications agency, said, “I would love to spend more time with my kids. I feel like I am really mediocre in everything that I’m doing because I’m so busy all the time. So I feel like I’m not as good at my job as I would like to be...I wish I could be better at my job, better mom, better wife.”²⁶⁴ Even though Kim’s husband is the primary caretaker in their relationship, she still feels guilt about her family and her work life. As Courtney mentioned in her interview, “Women are battling the perception that women should be home. So I think there’s a certain level of guilt, whether it’s appropriate or not, that comes along with that.”²⁶⁵ Working mothers often feel guilt when balancing work and family.

This sense of guilt is influenced by the expectations others have for working mothers. While working mothers are judged for leaving to care for their children, working fathers are lauded. In her interview, Grace, a Millennial at a tech startup, said that the men at her company do a really good job of leaving to be home with their families. Moreover, she explained that the men at the office are admired for leaving. “We’re like, ‘Oh, you’re such a good dad.’” But, when the women at her office leave, people think “Really? You’re going out because of your kids?” As Grace put it, “Double standards all over the place.”²⁶⁶ Societal expectations continue to influence working mothers’ self-perceptions, as well as the way they are viewed by others.

Women are battling the perception that women should be home. So I think there’s a certain level of guilt, whether it’s appropriate or not, that comes along with that.

263 From an interview with *Eleanor, a non-Millennial partner at a consulting firm and a mother.

264 From an interview with *Kim, a non-Millennial mother of three who works at a communications agency.

265 From an interview with *Courtney, a Millennial at a consulting firm.

266 From an interview with *Grace, a Millennial at a tech startup.



The Generational Divide in Household Gender Dynamics

Millennial men and women often take on the parenting model of their own parents.²⁶⁷ Yet, many Millennial women who grew up with stay-at-home mothers wish to continue working after they have children. These women struggle to envision a balance of work and family that satisfies their desire to spend time with their children and progress in their careers. The many Millennial men who wish to be more involved fathers also struggle to envision this balance, as they have few role models to which they can turn.

I just can't imagine how I would raise kids not with them all the time. That being said, I love work, so I have absolutely no idea how I would do this.

Millennial men and women desire to be more gender equitable in parenting and household chores. Yet, this desire often goes unfulfilled as Millennial parents face the same pressures as parents of past generations. Social expectations combined with traditional work arrangements prevent many Millennial men from realizing their egalitarian expectations. Granting and encouraging all employees to use flexibility may help alleviate the pressure of the social expectations that inhibit Millennial men from being the fathers and husbands they desire to be.

Mother Knows Best

Research reveals that women who were raised by a working mother are more likely to have jobs themselves, and men raised by working mothers are more likely to take on household chores and care for family members.²⁶⁸ Similarly, the majority of Millennials interviewed has or expect to take on the parenting model they grew up with. For example, David, a new Millennial father who works at a tech startup, explained that his wife plans to stay home with their child. Both his and his wife's mothers were stay-at-home moms.²⁶⁹ Meg, a Millennial at a tech startup, shared that she plans to continue in her career after having children. Meg's mother worked throughout Meg's childhood.²⁷⁰ The parenting model that Millennials experienced growing up heavily influences the parenting model Millennials choose for themselves.

Yet, a number of Millennial women whose mothers stayed home desire to continue their own careers after having children. These Millennial women struggle to envision a viable parenting model that satisfies their desire to be with their children and continue their careers. As Grace, who was raised by a stay-at-home mother, shared, "I just can't imagine how I would raise kids not with them all the time. That being said, I love work, so I have absolutely no

267 Nobel, Carmen. "Kids Benefit From Having a Working Mom." *Harvard Business School*. 15 May 2015. Web.

268 Nobel, Carmen. "Kids Benefit From Having a Working Mom." *Harvard Business School*. 15 May 2015. Web.

269 From an interview with *David, a Millennial father who works at a tech startup.

270 From an interview with *Meg, a Millennial at a tech startup.



idea how I would do this.”²⁷¹ She added that there are no women at her company who have found a model that she would be happy with. Many Millennial women are unsure if they will be able to “have it all”²⁷² as working mothers.

Not simply a challenge limited to women, many Millennial men struggle to envision balancing work and family too. The Millennial men who desire to play an active role as fathers often have few role models to turn to. Mitch, a Millennial manager at a consulting firm, explained that he envisions himself being an active father and attending his children’s events during the week. Yet, he frequently travels for his work and foresees this challenging his parental plans. “To me that’s going to be a real struggle,” he said, “To figure if I can mentally pass that boundary or if that’s something that I need to change.”²⁷³ Millennial men, like many Millennial women, are also unsure if they will be able to “have it all” when it comes to work and family.

Baby Steps

A 2014 survey conducted by the Families and Work Institute found that only 35% of employed Millennial men without children thought that men should be the breadwinners and women should be the caregivers.²⁷⁴ This expectation, however, often collapses under the pressures imposed on working parents. After becoming fathers, 53% of Millennial men said it was better for mothers and fathers to take on the traditional caregiver and breadwinner roles.²⁷⁵ The absence of policies allowing for the work-life balance of men only intensifies the tendency to fall back on traditional parenting roles.

Among the highly educated, even fewer Millennial men hold ideals of gender equitable child-rearing. In a 2014 study of Harvard Business School MBA graduates, two-thirds of Millennial men (66%) expected their partners to manage the majority of childcare, compared to 78% of Gen X men and 84% of Boomer men.²⁷⁶ Social attitudes and expectations continue to shift towards more egalitarian arrangements, but workplace policies often remain rooted in the outdated ideals of the past.

The Millennial men interviewed indicated that they are willing or expect to play a large role in the lives of their children. For example, Calvin shared that he always imagined being the provider for his family because his mom was

“Social attitudes and expectations continue to shift towards more egalitarian arrangements, but workplace policies often remain rooted in the outdated ideals of the past.”

271 From an interview with *Grace, a Millennial at a tech startup.

272 Slaughter, Anne-Marie. “Why Women Still Can’t Have It All.” *The Atlantic*. Jul/Aug 2012. Web.

273 From an interview with *Mitch, a Millennial manager at a consulting firm.

274 Galinsky, Ellen, et al. “Times Are Changing: Gender and Generation at Work and at Home.” Families and Work Institute. 2011. Web.

275 *Ibid.*

276 Ely, Robin, et al. “Rethink What You ‘Know’ About High-Achieving Women.” *Harvard Business Review*. 2014. Web.



a stay-at-home mom. However, because his fiancé earns a higher salary, they have discussed the possibility of him becoming a stay-at-home dad. “I have no problem being a stay-at-home dad,” he said.”²⁷⁷ Many Millennial men are willing to take on more childcare responsibilities than the men of past generations.

Moreover, many Millennial women have high expectations for their male partners’ involvement in household chores and childcare. Courtney, a Millennial in consulting, said, “Luckily right now, I’m dating someone who is very pro-women-working as well as pro-men-being-involved-with-their-children, which I think is very important. Honestly, I don’t think I would marry someone or have kids with them if they didn’t have that attitude.”²⁷⁸ Both Millennial men and women expect fathers to take on more egalitarian roles as parents.

Despite Millennials’ desire for egalitarian parenting, social expectations continue to make it difficult for men to take on a larger role at home. For instance, Naomi, a mother of two who works at a tech company, said she feels completely comfortable leaving the office at 5:30 in order to pick up her kids. For the men in the office, however, leaving to pick up their children is not a socially acceptable reason to head out early. Social expectations continue to influence household dynamics. While these social expectations still exist, it is likely that Millennial mothers will continue to take on the majority of childcare responsibilities. Granting and encouraging all employees to use flexibility can level the playing field and may enable working fathers to take on more responsibilities at home.

Implications for Workplace Empowerment Literature

Findings from the interviews revealed that flexibility contributes to Millennial and female employees’ empowerment by increasing their perceived level of **self-determination**. Yet, the scale items within the self-determination cognition on the Scale of Psychological Empowerment fail to capture the role of flexibility in self-determination. The three scale items under self-determination read: 1) “I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job,” 2) “I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work,” and 3) “I have considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do my job.”²⁷⁹ These three scale items center around the idea of autonomy without including a measure of flexibility. Further investigation as to the role of flexibility within the self-determination cognition should be undertaken.

277 From an interview with *Calvin, a Millennial internal consultant at a multinational company.

278 From an interview with *Courtney, a Millennial at a consulting firm.

279 Spreitzer, Gretchen M. “An Empirical Test of a Comprehensive Model of Intrapersonal Empowerment in the Workplace.” *American Journal of Community Psychology* 23.5. (1995): 601-629.



Further, the interviews indicated that Millennials' perceived **impact** within their organizations depends on how their organizations measure **impact**. When organizations value time spent at the office over the quality of work produced, Millennials judge their own impact based on time spent at the office. More research should be conducted on the types of work **valued** by organizations, and the influence of that value on impact.

Lastly, a key finding about flexibility indicated that **trust** enables flexibility and that flexibility signals to employees that they are **trusted**. Trust's circular, or two-way causal relationship, with flexibility suggests that trust and the other relational concepts – respect, support, and value – may all be interconnected with the four cognitions of psychological empowerment. More research should be conducted to study these relationships.

Business Recommendations

Millennials and women are empowered by flexibility. Yet, creating a culture of flexibility is not always easy. Businesses can take steps to provide and support the use of flexibility by implementing:

- **Policies and Protocols:** Corporate policies regarding flexibility need to be clearly articulated and disseminated. In order for these policies to be successful, there needs to be buy-in from both leadership and individual managers. Additionally, companies and/or managers should create procedures for employees to notify their manager and their team when they will be out of the office and when they will be available. Such a system can align employee and manager expectations, and make employees more comfortable asking for and using flexibility.
- **Core Hours and Days:** Collaborating in-person produces more innovative solutions, while working from home allows employees to be the most productive.²⁸⁰ Companies can get the best of both worlds while maintaining a company culture by implementing core hours and core days. These core times mandate a period during which employees must be present in the office, and provide the structure necessary for flexibility to be successful. For example, many companies find success with core hours in the middle of the day, from 10am to 2pm or 11am to 3pm, which allows employees to avoid rush hour and accommodate those who are most productive in the morning and most productive in the evening.²⁸¹ Moreover, companies who implement core days have found success with two core days per week.²⁸²

280 Vanderkam, Laura. "The Scheduling Secret That Will Make Your Team More Productive." *Fast Company*. 18 Aug. 2015. Web.

281 *Ibid.*

282 *Ibid.*



- **Communication Limitation:** Having downtime increases employee productivity and creativity.²⁸³ Yet, flexibility often results in employees feeling the need to respond to communication in off-hours. To combat employees' sense that they have to be "on" 24/7, managers should create policies and set clear expectations that encourage employees to take time to check out. For instance, Vynamic, a healthcare consultancy, created a "zmail" policy that discourages email between 10pm and 7am during the week, and all day on the weekend.²⁸⁴ Yet, narrowing the window during which employees send email can reduce productivity and result in their forgetting to send important emails.²⁸⁵ To combat this, companies can use email software such as Boomerang that allows employees to schedule their emails to be sent at a later time.²⁸⁶ Setting clear expectations regarding communication and using practices that support these expectations can empower employees by ensuring that work does not interfere with their personal lives. For parents, and especially mothers, utilizing flexibility policies can cause team inequities and conflict. Companies and managers can work to prevent and mitigate these conflicts by:
- **Leveling the Playing Field:** Companies and managers should offer all employees flexibility and hold all employees to the same standards, regardless of whether or not they are parents. Doing so can prevent conflict and resentment from employees taking on a larger share of the work. Moreover, it allows parents to be viewed as equal contributors to the team and the company. Valuing all employees' personal commitments is important.

283 Coleman, Jackie; Coleman, John. "The Upside of Downtime." *Harvard Business Review*. 6 Dec. 2012. Web.

284 Thomas, Maura. "Your Late-Night Emails Are Hurting Your Team." *Harvard Business Review*. 16 Mar. 2015. Web.

285 Tousey, Scott. "Why 'Don't Send Emails At Night' Is Terrible, Outdated Advice." 10 Jul. 2015.

286 "Boomerang for Gmail." BoomerangGmail.com. Web. Accessed 1 Jun. 2016.



- **Shared Flexibility:** Holding all employees to the same standard can be difficult when tight deadlines and work emergencies arise. Teams should create shared flexibility schedules where employees are on-call on different days of the week depending on their schedule. For example, if a parent needs to pick up their kids at 3 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, other team members can be on-call on those days. Then, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, the same parent can cover for other team members. Such a system of shared flexibility should be created and discussed openly by the team. Again, this system should apply to all employees and not only parents.





Chapter 4: Parental Leave

Introduction

Parental leave policies, when designed and implemented appropriately, are empowering to women and Millennials. Parental leave refers to time away from work that parents are allowed in order to look after their children.²⁸⁷ Maternity leave refers to leave available to mothers only, and paternity leave refers to leave available to fathers only.²⁸⁸

For women, maternity leave can be a very empowering or disempowering experience. Currently, women take more time off for maternity leave than men do for paternity leave.²⁸⁹ As a result, women are more at risk of feeling disempowered throughout their parental leave experience. This experience depends on the flexibility provided at each stage of maternity leave – from planning for their leave, to disconnecting while away, to transitioning back to work. Supporting women and offering women greater self-determination in their maternity leave signals to women that they are valued as employees.

Millennial men value and use paternity leave to a greater extent than men of older generations.²⁹⁰ Despite Millennial men's more egalitarian views on parental and paternity leave, taking paternity leave continues to carry a stigma for the men that defy the traditional breadwinner role. Thus, offering fathers support and self-determination during their leave can empower Millennial men and encourage Millennial fathers to take paternity leave in the first place – something that also benefits women.²⁹¹ Both social stigma and the amount of support companies offer fathers influence men's decisions to use paternity leave. Men's experiences with leave continue to be mixed.

This chapter discusses women's experiences with maternity leave prior to Millennials' experiences with parental leave in order to provide background information on traditional maternity leave policies and experiences first.

287 "Parental Leave." *Collins Dictionary*. Web. Accessed 31 May 2016.

288 "The New Dad: Take Your Leave." Boston College Center for Work and Family. 2014. Web. Accessed 30 May 2016.

289 "DOL Policy Brief: Paternity Leave." United States Department of Labor. Web. Accessed 2 May 2016.

290 "The New Dad: Take Your Leave." Boston College Center for Work and Family. 2014. Web. Accessed 30 May 2016.

291 Johannson, E-A. "The effect of own and spousal parental leave on earnings." Institute of Labour Market Policy Evaluation Working Paper. 2010. Web.



Women

The United States is the only advanced economy in the world that does not offer paid parental leave to workers.²⁹² While the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) covers most American workers and allows “up to 12 weeks of leave per year to care for family members,” all time off is unpaid.²⁹³ Without federal action, a handful of states have adopted paid leave policies that better serve the needs of workers. For example, Rhode Island, New Jersey, and California extend paid leave for three main purposes: care for a new birth, adoption, or foster child; care for a family member with a serious health condition; and care for [an individual’s] own disability.²⁹⁴ California and New Jersey provide six weeks of paid leave for family care, while Rhode Island provides four weeks.

Although paid family leave can be offered through a company, few businesses have taken the lead on this issue. According to the Department of Labor (DOL), only 12% of private sector workers have access to paid family leave through their employer.²⁹⁵ Nearly one in four new mothers surveyed by the DOL were back at work within two weeks of giving birth.²⁹⁶

Without strong laws that dictate parental leave, it is up to companies to set their own policies, which vary widely. Within the last year, a plethora of well-known companies have introduced or dramatically expanded their family-friendly policies. In March 2015, Vodafone announced that in addition to the 16 weeks of paid maternity leave that it offers, new mothers will be able to work 30-hour weeks for full pay for the first six months after they return.²⁹⁷ In June, Goldman Sachs doubled its paid paternity leave to four weeks.²⁹⁸ In August, Accenture announced that primary caregivers would not have to travel for the first year of their children’s lives.²⁹⁹ That same month, Microsoft added eight weeks onto its paid leave, allowing 20 weeks for women who just

292 “OECD Family Database: PF2.1 Key characteristics of parental leave systems.” OECD.org. Web. Accessed 21 May 2016.

293 Kurtzleben, Danielle. “Lots Of Other Countries Mandate Paid Leave. Why Not The U.S.?” *NPR*. 15 July 2015. Web.

294 “State Paid Family Leave Insurance Laws.” National Partnership for Women & Families. Feb. 2015.

295 “DOL Factsheet: Paid Family and Medical Leave.” United States Department of Labor. Web.

296 Peck, Emily. “One-Quarter of Mothers Return To Work Less Than 2 Weeks After Giving Birth, Report Finds.” *The Huffington Post*. 18 Aug. 2015. Web.

297 McGregor, Jena. “An unusual new policy for working mothers.” *The Washington Post*. 6 Mar. 2015. Web.

298 Rooney, Ben. “Goldman Sachs doubles paternity leave to 4 weeks.” *CNN Money*. 1 Jun. 2015. Web.

299 Peck, Emily. “Accenture Just Upped The Ante on Benefits For New Moms And Dads.” *The Huffington Post*. 26 Aug. 2015. Web.



gave birth and 12 weeks for all other new parents.³⁰⁰ Netflix also announced that it was offering unlimited leave for parents within the first year after having a child.³⁰¹ In December, Facebook extended its four-month paid parental leave program to all employees worldwide.³⁰² Accenture, IBM, and Twitter are now offering to ship breast milk home for nursing mothers traveling for work.^{303, 304}

Despite the implementation of more progressive parental leave policies, “at many companies, the new benefits are at odds with a highly demanding, 24/7 workplace culture – a culture that starts from the top.”³⁰⁵ Formal policies may be clearly stated, but the norms around using these policies remain ambiguous. McKinsey & Company found that “parents of both genders are concerned about balancing work and family. However, they take very little advantage of family-friendly programs, often for fear of being penalized at work.”³⁰⁶ In fact, “more than 90% of both women and men believe taking extended family leave will hurt their position at work – and more than half believe it will hurt them a great deal.”³⁰⁷ In order to understand what constitutes the best parental leave policies, it is important to examine how employees are empowered and disempowered at each stage of leave.

Twenty-two percent of women interviewed have children, and discussed their experiences with maternity leave. The interviews revealed that employees can have very different experiences while on maternity leave. An employee’s experience with maternity leave can either secure or forfeit her loyalty to a company. Women, who often take more time off for maternity leave than men do for paternity leave,³⁰⁸ are more at risk of feeling disempowered throughout their maternity leave experience. As new mothers pass through the stages of maternity leave, their experience with maternity leave policies can be empowering in three main ways: 1) by showing new mothers that they are **supported**, 2) by increasing their perceived levels of **self-determination**, and 3) by proving to employees that they are **valued**.

300 Kelly, Heather. “Microsoft bumps up its parental leave benefits.” *CNN Money*. 6 Aug. 2015. Web.

301 Solomon, Daina Beth. “Netflix offers parents ‘unlimited’ leave.” *Los Angeles Times*. 4 Aug. 2015. Web.

302 Tepper, Taylor. “Facebook Workers Just Got a Better Parental Leave Policy. Here’s When You’ll Get Yours.” *Time Money*. 3 Dec. 2015. Web.

303 Zarya, Valentina. “Accenture is the latest employer to pay for working moms to ship their breast milk.” *Fortune*. 26 Aug. 2015. Web.

304 Wagstaff, Keith. “Twitter Offers Working Mothers Free Breast Milk Shipping.” *NBC*. 1 Sep. 2015. Web.

305 Cain Miller, Claire; Streitfeld, David. “Big Leaps for Parental Leave, if Workers Actually Take It.” *The New York Times*. 1 Sep. 2015. Web.

306 “Women in the Workplace 2015.” LeanIn.Org; McKinsey & Company. 2015, p. 25. Web.

307 *Ibid*, 25.

308 “DOL Policy Brief: Paternity Leave.” United States Department of Labor. Web. Accessed 2 May 2016.



Planning and Prepping

Helping new mothers plan and prepare for their maternity leave is empowering to women by showing new mothers that they are **supported**. It is extremely disempowering to new mothers when there is no maternity policy in place, and/or when a company does not fully support a new mother in taking maternity leave.

For example, Denise had a very disempowering experience with maternity leave when she had her second child while working at a startup.^{xlvi} As she was the first employee to have a child while working at the company, there was no maternity leave policy in place. When Denise notified the young male CEO that she was pregnant, he asked her if she needed “a couple weeks off.” As Denise said, “He didn’t at all understand the concept of what a woman actually goes through.”³⁰⁹ Without a clear policy in place prior to an employee’s need for maternity leave, companies often fail to provide women the support they need. Smaller and newer startups are less likely to offer parental leave policies than larger and more established organizations.³¹⁰

In contrast, Naomi had an empowering experience with maternity leave at a startup further in its life stage.^{xlvii} Prior to Naomi taking leave, a trailblazing woman in leadership had already had two children and helped formulate the company’s maternity and paternity leave policies. Naomi started her job at 12 weeks pregnant, and her male boss was happy to support her in planning for her leave. As she said, “life happens, and here you are investing in me for the long term.”³¹¹ Having a maternity policy in place, and having leadership that supports its use, can ensure that women have an empowering experience with maternity leave and build their loyalty to the company.

Disconnecting

When women are asked to or feel the need to stay connected while away on maternity leave, they are deprived of full **self-determination**. For example, Maggie and her manager did not discuss the expectations for communication during her leave. As a result, she said, “I basically tried to keep going throughout my maternity leave. I didn’t unplug.”³¹² Similarly, Denise felt pressured to stay connected on leave: “You don’t want to be that woman of like ‘oh, she’s just skating by.’ Not that I ever would be deemed that. But I felt that way.”³¹³ Policies and a supportive team are needed to make women feel comfortable

“When Denise notified the young male CEO that she was pregnant, he asked her if she needed ‘a couple weeks off.’ As Denise said, ‘He didn’t at all understand the concept of what a woman actually goes through.’”

309 From an interview with *Denise, a Gen X manager and a mother who works in tech.

310 Singh, Asees. “The Lost Startup Benefit: Paid Maternity Leave.” *PaperG Thunder Blog*. 1 May 2014. Web.

311 From an interview with *Naomi, a Gen X manager and a mother who works in tech.

312 From an interview with *Maggie, a Gen X manager and a mother who works in tech.

313 From an interview with *Denise, a Gen X manager and a mother who works in tech.



with disconnecting. Without an explicit policy or conversation requiring or encouraging employees to disconnect, women often feel obligated to continue working while on leave.

Phasing Back In

Returning to work after maternity leave can be extremely challenging for new mothers. The level of support that companies provide can determine the level of employee empowerment. When women receive **support** from their company during this transition, they feel **valued** as an employee and are more empowered. Transitioning back to work can be difficult with support; without it, the transition can be devastating.

Eleanor illustrated just how challenging the return to work after maternity leave can be. “There was the emotional struggle about leaving [my child] and then coming to work. And then it took me a while to get excited about work again, even though I knew I had to do stuff, I was just kind of blah about the whole thing.”³¹⁴ For Eleanor, even with proper preparation and a great experience disconnecting while out on leave, transitioning back to work was difficult. Transitioning back to work after caring for a new child is extremely complicated. Company support at this stage is critical.

Kim, a manager at a communications agency, described her disempowering experience coming back to work after maternity leave.^{xlviii} She did not receive the support she needed upon her return.^{xlix} The main issue she faced was resolving where to use her breast pump. Although she discussed this issue with the HR department before and during her leave, no solution was provided upon her return. Ultimately, Kim had to pump in her office. However, because her office has windows facing the hall, she and her friends had to cover the windows. Kim then explained that “it was the known fact when Kim’s door is closed, she’s pumping,” which made her uncomfortable.³¹⁵ This, combined with internal restructuring that had occurred while she was on leave, persuaded Kim to start looking for other employment opportunities. When companies fail to respond to employee needs and fail to support employees in their transition back to work, employees are disempowered and companies risk losing their employees.

Kim also demonstrated how easily colleagues and team members can support employees transitioning back to work. Kim, who ultimately decided to stay at the company, stepped up when her colleague Tracy came back from ma-

314 From an interview with *Eleanor, a non-Millennial partner at a consulting firm and a mother.

315 From an interview with *Kim, a Gen X manager at a communications agency and a mother.



ternity leave a few months later.¹ Kim fought with HR to provide Tracy with a refrigerator for her office to store her breast milk rather than having to store it in the kitchen. She covered Tracy's office windows, just as she had done with her own. She also greeted her with donuts, a gift card, and a card on her first day, "just to make her feel better when she came back."³¹⁶ In Kim's eyes, understanding and responding to even the most basic needs of employees can be extremely empowering to women returning from maternity leave.

Part-Time Phase In

I'm a woman working in a male-dominated work environment. I don't want people to think that I'm slacking off because I use pregnancy as an excuse.

In an attempt to support women in their return from maternity leave, many companies offer part time phase-in options. While this may initially appear to be a great option for women, every female interviewee who attempted to phase back in part-time found the experience extremely disempowering. Often, women are deprived of their self-determination and work full-time, regardless of their part-time status.

For example, Denise planned to return to work part-time after her first six weeks of leave. However, as she described, "It was basically full time. The whole part-time thing did not work."³¹⁷ Eleanor, a partner at a consulting firm, concurred: "My biggest problem was that I came back part-time, and I actually was never really part-time."³¹⁸ Because of experiences like these, Naomi, a manager at a technology company, said she advises women not to come back part-time. Part-time phase in is disempowering when company culture and manager and team expectations do not support and match the expectations of women returning from leave.

Angela, a computer programmer who was seven months pregnant at the time of her interview, explained the pressure she feels to continue working, despite discussions with her manager about reducing her workload. "I'm a woman working in a male-dominated work environment. I don't want people to think that I'm slacking off because I use pregnancy as an excuse."³¹⁹ Like Angela, many women may also put pressure on themselves, even when they have their manager or team's support to reduce their hours.

316 From an interview with *Kim, a Gen X manager at a communications agency and a mother.

317 From an interview with *Denise, a non-Millennial manager at a tech startup and a mother.

318 From an interview with *Eleanor, a non-Millennial partner at a consulting firm and a mother.

319 *Ibid.*



Millennials

Millennials value parental leave more highly, and are more likely to take parental leave when offered to them than older generations. Research conducted by EY shows that 48% of Millennial parents took parental leave, compared to 35% of Gen X and 24% of Boomer parents.³²⁰ Moreover, 38% of Millennials, compared to 28% of Gen Xers and 11% of Boomers, said they would be willing to move to a different country in order to receive better parental leave benefits.³²¹

Similarly, Millennial fathers value paternity leave more highly and are more likely to take longer paternity leave than fathers of older generations. In a survey of fathers in the United States, Boston College found that 93% of Millennial fathers said that offering paid parental or paternity leave was extremely, very, or somewhat important, compared to 88% of Gen X fathers and 77% of Boomer fathers.³²² Additionally, the research found that Boomer fathers have significantly lower expectations for the amount of time that should be offered for parental leave than Gen X and Millennial fathers.³²³

Paternity leave presents many benefits to fathers, mothers, and their children. For instance, researchers studying Sweden found that each additional month of paternity leave taken by a father was correlated with a 6.7% increase in a mother's earnings.³²⁴ Moreover, when men take longer paternity leave, they are more likely to spend a greater amount of time on household chores and childcare.³²⁵ "For example, in one study of working fathers in the U.S., those who took leaves of two weeks or more were much more likely to be actively involved in their child's care nine months after birth – including feeding, changing diapers, and getting up in the night."³²⁶

320 "Global generations: a global study on work-life challenges across generations." EY. 2015. Web. Accessed 30 May 2016.

321 *Ibid.*

322 "The New Dad: Take Your Leave." Boston College Center for Work and Family. 2014. Web. Accessed 30 May 2016.

323 *Ibid.*

324 Johannson, E-A. "The effect of own and spousal parental leave on earnings." Institute of Labour Market Policy Evaluation Working Paper. 2010. Web.

325 "DOL Labor Policy Brief: Paternity Leave: Why Parental Leave For Fathers Is So Important For Working Families." United States Department of Labor.

326 *Ibid.*



Yet, even for Millennial men, a stigma exists for fathers who take greater time away from work for children. Research from EY found that women (71%) are more likely than men (60%) to agree with the statement, “I feel empowered to take all of the parental leave available to me.”³²⁷ Another study found that taking time off for family reasons reduced men’s earnings by 15.5%, compared to only 9.8% for women.³²⁸ Researcher also found that men who took parental leave received worse job evaluations and lower hourly raises,³²⁹ and were at greater risk of being demoted or laid off.³³⁰ As with parents using flexibility policies, social expectations continue to make it difficult for men to take on a larger role at home. While companies may have formal policies regarding paternity leave, the norms for using paternity leave remain unclear, and a lack of acceptance can be detrimental to fathers who choose to take leave.

Twenty percent of the men interviewed have children and discussed their experiences with paternity leave. Like women who take maternity leave, men who take paternity leave are at risk of feeling disempowered. Because men face an additional stigma associated with taking time off of work for children, offering fathers **support** and **self-determination** for their leave is necessary to ensure that men take paternity leave, and to ensure they have an empowering experience while away and transitioning back to work. For Millennial men who value leave more highly, **support** and **self-determination** are even more important.

Paternity Leave

The lengths of paternity leave discussed in the interviews ranged from one week to three months. Consistent with existing research, younger men were more likely than older men to be offered and use, or desire to use, paternity leave. For example, Angela, a Millennial at a tech company, said that her husband, who works at the same company, plans to take two months of consecutive paternity leave after the birth of their child.³³¹ Reggie, a young Gen Xer who works at a large tech company, took three months of paid paternity leave in separate chunks over the course of a year.³³² Yet, Roger, an older Gen Xer at a tech startup, said he did not take more than a week of paternity leave after the birth of either of his children. During that week, he added, he did not

327 “Global generations: a global study on work-life challenges across generations.” EY. 2015. Web. Accessed 30 May 2016.

328 Coltraine, Scott; Miller, Elizabeth C.; DeHaan, Tracy; Stewart, Lauren. “Fathers and the Flexibility Stigma.” *Journal of Social Issues* 69.2 (2013): 279-302. Web.

329 Vandello, Joseph A.; Hettinger, Vanessa E.; Bosson, Jennifer K.; Siddiqi, Jasmine. “When Equal Isn’t Really Equal: The Masculine Dilemma of Seeking Work Flexibility.” *Journal of Social Issues* 69.2 (2013): 303-321.

330 Rudman, Laurie A; Mescher, Kris. “Penalizing Men Who Request a Family Leave: Is Flexibility Stigma a Femininity Stigma?” *Journal of Social Issues* 69.2 (2013): 322-340.

331 From an interview with *Angela, a Millennial at a large technology company.

332 From an interview with *Reggie, a Gen Xer at a large technology company.



completely check out from work.³³³ Men continue to have mixed experiences with paternity leave. Many factors, including workplace environment and social stigma, can influence a man's decision to use paternity leave.

Implications for Workplace Empowerment Literature

Findings reveal that providing **support** to employees who take parental leave signals to employees that they are **valued**. This indicates that the relational concepts – respect, value, support, and trust – may influence one another. Further research should be conducted to study the relationship between these concepts.

Business Recommendations

Women and Millennials are empowered by parental leave policies that are supported by managers and their teams. Yet, creating such policies is often complicated. Companies at different life stages are presented with different challenges and benefits with offering paid parental leave to their employees. Regardless of the size or stage of the company, businesses should offer some form of paid parental leave to their employees:

- **Parental Perks for Seed Startups:** In addition to offering perks, such as catered meals, unlimited vacation, and gym memberships,³³⁴ startups should offer paid parental leave from the start. Cash-strapped startups can offer the amount of paid leave that they can afford, even if it is only a few weeks. This signals to employees that the company values them, cares about their personal lives, and is planning to invest in them for the long term.³³⁵ Beyond paid leave, companies should have a policy in place first for employees who choose to continue taking unpaid leave in the weeks following, and second for employees who wish to continue working and will likely need greater flexibility. These policies should be applied equally to all employees in need of parental leave, and not on a case-by-case basis, so as to avoid a situation where employees may feel pressured to settle on an arrangement that does not meet their actual needs.

“Men continue to have mixed experiences with paternity leave. Many factors, including workplace environment and social stigma, can influence a man's decision to use paternity leave.”

333 From an interview with *Roger, a Gen Xer at a technology startup.

334 Drell, Lauren. “Are These the Best Startup Perks You’ve Ever Seen?” *Mashable*. 28 May 2012. Web.

335 Velasquez, Camilla. “How Startups Can Become The Unexpected Parental Leave Champs.” *Tech Crunch*. 28 Oct. 2015. Web.



- **Parental Perks for Series Startups:** As startups increase in size and revenue, they should offer greater amounts of parental leave. Doing so can improve employee retention, increase the size of the talent pool that companies tap into, and help maintain a positive workplace culture.³³⁶ A competitive amount of leave offered by startups today ranges from two to four months for maternity leave, and three to eight weeks for paternity leave.^{337, 338} Companies uncertain how to navigate their parental leave policies can turn to outside resources, such as LeaveLogic, a parental leave management software that aids employees, managers, and companies in creating a culture of and plan for parental leave.³³⁹
- **Parental Perks for Post-IPO and Large Businesses:** Large companies should offer extended paid parental leave to their employees, but should avoid “unlimited” policies³⁴⁰ that create ambiguity around asking for and using parental leave. For example, in 2015, Kickstarter changed its unlimited vacation policy to a still-generous 25 days a year of vacation. The company found that “by setting specific parameters around the number of days, there was no question about how much time was appropriate to take from work to engage in personal, creative, and family activities.” Similar to companies that have experimented with unlimited vacation policies, mandating a specific amount of parental leave encourages employees to actually take leave and to disconnect while away.

To ensure that all new parents have an empowering experience with parental leave, companies must take steps to create cultures whereby taking leave is not only acceptable, but encouraged for all employees. Organizations can do so by:

- **Going Gender-Neutral:** Companies can work to level the playing field for new moms, and remove the social stigma for dads who take leave by offering gender-neutral parental leave. For instance, Facebook³⁴¹

336 Rogers, Rikki. “Hey Startups: Why You Should Think About Your Maternity Leave Policy Now.” *The Muse*. Web. Accessed 2 Jun. 2016.

337 “8 Parental Leave Policies That Work For Startups.” *The Huffington Post*. 23 Sep. 2015. Web.

338 Singh, Asees. “The Lost Startup Benefit: Paid Maternity Leave.” *PaperG Thunder Blog*. 1 May 2014. Web.

339 Mertens, Maggie. “A New Platform Makes Parental Leave Easier On Companies, And Parents.” *Fast Company*. 19 Aug. 2015. Web.

340 McGregor, Jena. “An ‘unlimited’ parental leave policy sounds great, but will it work?” *Los Angeles Times*. 16 Aug. 2015. Web.

341 Tepper, Taylor. “Facebook Workers Just Got a Better Parental Leave Policy. Here’s When You’ll Get Yours.” *Time*. 3 Dec. 2015. Web.



offers four months and Twitter³⁴² offers 20 weeks of paid leave for all new parents by birth, adoption, or surrogacy. For women, such gender-neutral policies can narrow the gender pay gap³⁴³ and help promote more women into leadership.³⁴⁴ For men, being extended a greater and equal amount of leave can make it easier to justify taking leave to themselves, their bosses, and society. For instance, in Sweden in 1995, men were offered 30 days of use-it-or-lose-it paternity leave (now 90 days) as part of 480 days of parental leave that can be split between parents.³⁴⁵ This “daddy quota” increased the number of fathers taking leave from 44% to 77%.³⁴⁶ This model can work at the corporate level, too.

- **Leaving by Example:** By taking parental leave themselves, leadership sets the tone from the top, creating a company culture where taking parental leave is the norm for both men and women. For instance, when Mark Zuckerberg, the Millennial CEO of Facebook, took two months of paternity leave, *The Washington Post* wrote: “To have a male Fortune 500 CEO say he will take two months of paternity leave and tout its benefits for children and families is the sort of leadership by example that’s necessary, both to get more men to follow suit, and to help female executives feel they can do the same.”³⁴⁷ Seeing leaders using their own parental leave makes employees more comfortable taking advantage of these policies.³⁴⁸

342 Opray, Max. “We want to lead by example’: Twitter’s gender-neutral parental leave.” *The Guardian*. 16 Apr. 2016. Web.

343 Livingston, Gretchen. “The link between parental leave and the gender pay gap.” *Pew Research Center*. 20 Dec. 2013. Web.

344 Gallagher, Leigh. “Want to create more women leaders? Offer paternity leave.” *Fortune*. 1 Feb. 2015. Web.

345 Mohdin, Aamna. “How Sweden’s ‘daddy quota’ parental leave helps with equal parenting.” *Quartz*. 6 Jan. 2016. Web.

346 Bennhold, Katrin. “In Sweden, Men Can Have It All.” *The New York Times*. 9 Jun. 2010. Web.

347 McGregor, Jena. “Why Mark Zuckerberg taking paternity leave really matters.” *The Washington Post*. 23 Nov. 2015. Web.

348 Douglas, Dianna. “How To Get Dads To Take Parental Leave? Seeing Other Dads Doing It.” *NPR*. 8 Feb. 2016. Web.





Chapter 5: Work-Life Integration

Introduction

Work-life integration empowers both Millennials and women. Yet, the idea of work-life integration is elusive and means different things to different people. Work-life integration occurs when “what you do at work and what you do outside of it with family, friends, and community are driven by the same fundamental values and passions. Ideally, you can bring your talents and strengths and personality to both arenas, making one’s work life and home life parts of a seamless whole.”³⁴⁹ Work-life integration is different than work-life balance – “a comfortable state of equilibrium achieved between an employee’s primary priorities of their employment position and their private lifestyle” – in that it does not separate work and life.³⁵⁰ Moreover, work-life integration takes a more holistic view of the person, emphasizing a relationship between work and life where the same desires, values, talents, and personality of the person exist both at work and outside of work.

For many Millennials, work-life integration means fulfilling their passions and aligning their work with their personal interests, values, and principles, which is empowering. When this occurs, Millennials find their work more meaningful. Companies must create a sense of impact, either on the world, within the company, or both, to help empower and retain Millennial employees.

For women, work-life integration means finding work that accepts and values their natural talents, strengths, and styles. Women are empowered when they do not have to change in order to fit in at work. Women often feel need to alter how they communicate and interact in order to make contributions that are valued. Yet, women’s work styles present many benefits to companies. Companies, leaders, and managers must create environments that value women’s styles and abilities in order to empower female employees and retain a talented and diverse workforce.

Millennials

According to researchers writing for *Harvard Business Review*, “Millennials view work as a key part of life, not a separate activity that needs to be ‘balanced’ by it. For that reason, they place a strong emphasis on finding work that’s personally fulfilling.”³⁵¹ Similarly, the interviews revealed that Millennials desire work that positively impacts the world and their company. When

349 Wartzman, Rick. “The difference between work-life integration and workaholism.” *Fortune*. 18 Feb. 2015. Web.

350 “Work-Life Balance.” *Business Dictionary*. Web. Accessed 1 May 2016.

351 Meister, Jeanne C.; Willyerd, Karrie. “Mentoring Millennials.” *Harvard Business Review*. May 2010. Web.



they find this type of work, Millennials are empowered in the workplace, draw fewer boundaries, and are willing to work harder to ensure company success.

Impacting the World

Research shows that Millennials have a strong desire to serve. A 2014 study revealed that 94% of Millennials want to use their skills to benefit a cause.³⁵² A survey by KPMG and Boston College also found that two-thirds of Millennials rated “how much I am helping others” and “contribution to society” as important, very important, or extremely important.³⁵³ The interviews revealed similar findings: Millennials are empowered when they feel their work has a positive **impact** on the world. This sense of impact also provides them with a greater sense of **meaning**.

Interestingly, Millennials’ definition of what creates positive impact is broader than the traditional scope of non-profit, charitable, or socially responsible initiatives. The interviews revealed that the mission, product, or services of startups are often viewed by Millennial employees as important to the world. Large companies, however, struggle to provide this meaning in their daily operations. Thus, large companies often rely on more traditional charitable or corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives to fulfill Millennial employees’ desires to make an impact.

Startups

The work and mission of startups frequently provide Millennials with a sense of impact on the world. 44% of the Millennials interviewed who work at a startup discussed a sense of social impact they derive from the mission of their company. For example, Rachel, who works at a tech startup, believes that the work she and her colleagues do benefits more than just their customers: “Even though our industry is so random and the problem we’re solving is really bizarre and really niche, I think most people who come to work every day are really energized by the idea of solving a big problem and working at a company that is doing some good in the world.”³⁵⁴ Millennials at startups often derive a sense of impact on the world from the work and mission of their companies.

352 “The 2014 Millennial Impact Report.” Achieve. 2014. Web.

353 Harrington, Brad, et al. “How Millennials Navigate Their Careers: Young Adult Views on Work, Life, and Success.” *KPMG and Boston College Center for Work and Family*. 2015, p. 20.

354 From an interview with *Rachel, a Millennial working at a tech startup.



This impact provides Millennials with a sense of meaning and a greater sense of work-life integration. For instance, Miranda, a Millennial at a startup, explained that her personal desire for social impact is fulfilled through her job. Because she finds her work meaningful, she blurs the line between her work and personal life: “I’m kind of glad that my work may bleed into my life. Because reading the news about a particular industry might be for my own personal enlightenment, but it also applies to what [our company] is doing every day.”³⁵⁵ When Millennials’ work provides them with a sense of impact on the world, they are more likely to be empowered by work-life integration.

Corporations

Unlike the Millennials at startups, Millennials at large businesses often do not achieve a sense of impact on the world through their work. When their day-to-day work does not fulfill their desire for social impact, Millennials at large companies often become involved in charitable company initiatives outside of their formal roles. 33% of the Millennials interviewed who work at a large company discussed their participation in corporate social responsibility initiatives, as they did not feel that their formal work provided them with a sense of impact on the world.

“I’m kind of glad that my work may bleed into my life.”

For example, Natalie, a Millennial at a large communications company, discussed her participation in the company’s CSR initiatives outside of her day-to-day work. She enthusiastically described the company’s annual 48-hour pro bono marathon where non-profits submit applications to receive assistance on projects such as website redesigns, communications strategies, and advertising campaigns.³⁵⁶ Natalie was eager to talk about the lobbying strategy she wrote for an advocacy group last year. Such work, she said, empowers her by providing her with a greater sense of impact and meaning that she does not achieve in her daily work.

Tiffany, a Millennial at a multinational technology company, is also empowered by the opportunities for social impact outside of her formal role. As she explained, “I do feel the need to be involved in side projects that allow me to feel like I’m making a difference, because I don’t feel like my work currently does...I’m the type of person who needs to feel like I’m involved in something important.”³⁵⁷ Millennials desire a sense of impact on the world. When their formal role does not provide this sense of impact, they can give their work meaning by finding impactful company initiatives outside of their formal role.

355 Eagly, Alice H.; Johannesen-Schmidt, Mary C. “The Leadership Styles of Women and Men.” *Journal of Social Issues* 57.4 (2001): 795.

356 From an interview with *Natalie, a Millennial at a large communications company.

357 From an interview with *Tiffany, a Millennial at a multinational tech company.



Impacting the Company

Millennials are also empowered when they feel their work has a positive **impact** on the company. As with societal impact, internal impact provides a greater sense of **meaning**. Moreover, this impact allows Millennials to recognize their **value** to the company. Millennials who find a sense of internal impact are more willing to want to work on their own time.

For example, Jeremy, who previously worked at a financial firm, explained that his impact within the company is extremely important to him: “I want to move up, but I also care about *what* I’m doing more so than my title or what I got paid. It’s more about the results and what I’m achieving in general.”³⁵⁸ In his previous role at a financial firm, Jeremy would frequently spend days working on a slide deck or a pitch book, only to discover his section was deleted or the deck was never used.^{li} This “wasted effort,” he explained, was very disempowering as it deprived him of a sense of impact. Millennials want their work to be impactful within their companies.

In contrast, at the startup where he works now, Jeremy feels much more empowered. Because he feels a sense of impact within his company, Jeremy has a greater sense of work-life integration and is willing to blur the boundaries between his work and home life. For example, he explained that he does not mind doing work in his off hours: “I actually care. And I want to solve the problem instead of just saying ‘well, it’s not 9:00 yet, so I’m not going to look at it.’”³⁵⁹ He added that he is not expected to respond in off-hours, but want to address key problems that arise. This lack of expectation makes the work he does outside of the office feel more meaningful and less like a chore. Millennials who find a sense of internal impact are more likely to blur boundaries, but only when it is not expected of them.

Women

For women, work-life integration means being in a workplace that values women’s talents, strengths, and styles. While not all women share the same natural strengths and use the same styles of communication, as a group, women tend to use communication to connect with others and form relationships, while men use communication to achieve tangible outcomes and exert dominance.³⁶⁰ Women also tend to use more polite language than men, while men frequently interrupt women when they are speaking.³⁶¹ Moreover, women, on average, speak more tentatively, which results in women being

358 From an interview with *Jeremy, a Millennial at a startup who used to work in finance.

359 *Ibid.*

360 Wood, Julia T. *Gendered Lives: Communication, Gender, and Culture*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Pub., 1994. Print.

361 Hancock, Adrienne B.; Rubin, Benjamin, A. “Influence of Communication Partner’s Gender on Language.” *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 34.1 (2014): 46-64.



interpreted as less confident and capable.³⁶² Therefore, women's styles and talents are often discounted by businesses.

Many women feel the need to alter how they work and communicate in order to make contributions that are **valued**, despite the fact that women's natural work styles are beneficial to businesses.³⁶³ For instance, feminist linguist Robin Lakoff explains that words that professional women are told to avoid, such as "just," "so," "like," "actually," "I mean," and "sorry," are actually signs of highly evolved communication. Although interpreted as being signs of hesitance, these words allow women to better connect, communicate, and be understood.³⁶⁴

To empower women and reap the benefits of what women bring to the workplace, managers and leaders must work to build understanding, acceptance, and appreciation of how women work and communicate.

(Don't) Be Yourself

Many women feel that their natural styles of communication are not taken seriously by their colleagues. For example, Gabby, a Millennial manager at a startup, is not taken seriously because of her communication style. She believes her colleagues perceive her as lacking confidence: "I always joke about one of the male managers. It's like, we could say the exact same thing, but he says it with such confidence that the CEO will say, 'That's great!' And then I say it, and I'm sure the CEO will be like, 'Well, I want make sure that no one thinks it's a bad idea.'"³⁶⁵ Regardless of the quality of Gabby's ideas, her suggestions are taken less seriously because of how she communicates. Women are disempowered when their natural styles of communication are undervalued by organizations.

As a result, many women like feel the need to alter how they present themselves in order to be taken more seriously. When women cannot be who they are outside of work at work, it detracts from their sense of work-life integration. For instance, Courtney described the advice she was given by older women at her firm such as "speak in a lower tone of voice, sit up straight when you're sitting down in a meeting, boost your chair so you're the highest person at the table and you're just as tall as the men."^{52,366} Courtney felt frustrated and disempowered by the fact that she was told to change her approach to work in order to be valued by her colleagues.

Courtney described the advice she was given by older women at her firm such as "speak in a lower tone of voice, sit up straight when you're sitting down in a meeting, boost your chair so you're the highest person at the table and you're just as tall as the men."

362 Lakoff, Robin T. *Language and Woman's Place*. New York: Harper & Row, 1975. Print.

363 Eagly, Alice H.; Johannesen-Schmidt, Mary C. "The Leadership Styles of Women and Men." *Journal of Social Issues* 57.4 (2001): 782.

364 Lakoff, Robin T. *Language and Woman's Place*. New York: Harper & Row, 1975. Print.

365 From an interview with *Gabby, a Millennial manager at a startup.

366 From an interview with *Courtney, a Millennial at a large consulting firm.



For women, however, attempting to change how they work and communicate in the office may backfire. Studies reveal that gender bias creates double standards for women in business. For example, competitiveness is perceived as a positive attribute for men but a negative attribute for women.³⁶⁷ Ambition creates a double standard as well. According to a 2014 report, “an ambitious male is judged as wanting to succeed, driven, and as someone with leadership potential; a similarly ambitious woman can be dismissed as not a team player and someone difficult to manage.”³⁶⁸

Until companies start valuing a broader range of work and communication styles, employees who fall outside of the narrowly defined definition of what makes a “good leader” and a “good employee” will continue to be undervalued. This negatively impacts women whose styles often fall outside of this definition. Only when women are taken more seriously and valued for their contributions will they feel they can be their true selves in the office and be empowered.

Implications for Workplace Empowerment Literature

Work-life integration, an organizational practice and social-structural variable, was found to both influence and be influenced by empowerment. This finding indicates that organizational practices and other social-structural variables may have a circular or two-way causal relationship with psychological empowerment rather than a one-directional linear relationship. Further research is required to understand the relationship between high or low levels of psychological empowerment and the resulting effectiveness of empowering organizational practices.

Moreover, in the previous chapter on flexibility, it was discovered that Millennials’ level of perceived **impact** is dependent upon how the organization **values** impact. Similarly, this chapter found that women’s perceived level of **impact** is influenced by whether or not their work is **valued** by the company. This reinforces the notion that more research is needed to understand the variables that influence a sense of **impact**.

Lastly, the Scale of Psychological Empowerment fails to measure employees’ perceived impact outside of the company. The three item measures of the **impact** cognition in the scale reads: 1) “My impact on what happens in my department is large,” 2) “I have a great deal of control over what happens in my department,” and 3) “I have significant influence over what happens in

367 “The CS Gender 3000: Women in Senior Management.” Credit Suisse Research Institute. Sept. 2014, p. 33. Web.

368 *Ibid.*



my department.”³⁶⁹ All of these items attempt to measure employees’ perceived impact within the company. Yet, this study found that Millennials are also empowered by their perceived impact on the world. Thus, further study of the importance and influence of perceived impact on the world is necessary to create a deeper understanding of psychological empowerment in the workplace.

Business Recommendations

Millennials desire work that positively impacts the world and their company. Achieving this sense of impact motivates Millennials to integrate their work into their lives and empowers them. To provide Millennials with a sense of impact, companies can:

- **Makeover Their Mission:** When creating and reevaluating their mission, companies should shift the focus away from the company and towards broader societal impact. For example, the mission of the American Standard Company focuses only on the company’s success. It reads: to “Be the best in the eyes of our customers, employees, and shareholders.”³⁷⁰ In contrast, the mission statement of Becton, Dickinson, and Company focuses on the company’s broader impact. It reads: “To help all people live healthy lives.” Such a mission provides a clearer sense of the company’s impact on the world.
- **Focus On The Mission, Not The Statement:** Moreover, rather than focus their attention on crafting the perfect mission statement, companies should focus more of their efforts on instilling a sense of mission in employees. Aligning company and employee objectives with a meaningful mission can increase productivity and profit.³⁷¹
- **Engage Employees:** Large companies should engage employees in choosing the company’s social impact and charitable initiatives. This can ensure that employees will feel a strong sense of impact and be empowered by taking part in the initiatives.

369 Spreitzer, Gretchen M. “An Empirical Test of a Comprehensive Model of Intrapersonal Empowerment in the Workplace.” *American Journal of Community Psychology* 23.5. (1995): 601-629.

370 “Fortune 500 Mission Statements.” *MissionStatements.com*. Web. Accessed 2 Jun. 2016.

371 Groscurth, Chris. “Why Your Company Must Be Mission Driven.” *Gallup*. 6 Mar. 2014. Web.



- **Incorporate Impact:** Managers and leaders should highlight and discuss individual employee contributions as they relate to the company and the company's mission. In their regularly scheduled check-ins, managers can remind employees of the impact their work has within the company. In town halls, leadership can publicly highlight the impact of specific employees and teams on the company's objectives.

Women are empowered and achieve work-life integration when they feel they can be who they are outside of work at work. Companies can work to value women's contributions by:

- **Recognizing Differences:** Managers and leaders should encourage an environment that works to build understanding, acceptance, and appreciation of all employees, including women. It is difficult to shift corporate culture, but even a one-day workshop or seminar can create greater awareness and discussion of differences in work styles that allow for appreciation of styles that fall outside of the typical mold of the "ideal" employee. Traditional diversity training that discusses diversity in terms of demographic or other recognizable traits is often ineffective.³⁷² Companies should turn to other forms of training. For instance, a media company highlighted in *Harvard Business Review* found success with communication training that shifted the dynamic from training employees on how to work with categories of people to training employees on how to work with "a diverse set of individuals."³⁷³
- **Tout The Benefits Of Diversity:** Included in the one-day workshop and continuing beyond, leadership and managers should discuss the benefits of diversity. Diversity leads to better decisions by teams³⁷⁴ and increased profitability for companies.³⁷⁵ Moreover, valuing diversity of thought and an array of work styles empowers all employees.

372 Bregman, Peter. "Diversity Training Doesn't Work." *Harvard Business Review*. 12 Mar. 2012. Web.

373 *Ibid*.

374 Snyder, Bill. "Deborah Gruenfeld: Diverse Teams Produce Better Decisions." *Stanford Business*. 1 Apr. 2004. Web.

375 Noland, Marcus; Moran, Tyler; Kotschwar, Barbara. "Is Gender Diversity Possible? Evidence from a Global Survey." Peterson Institute for International Economics Working Paper Series. Feb. 2016.







Conclusion

This study deepens the understanding of the organizational practices and policies that empower Millennials and empower women in the professional workplace. Additionally, this report advances the study of demographic groups within workplace empowerment literature, and offers revisions for a theoretical model of workplace empowerment. Lastly, this study utilizes the findings to provide actionable recommendations for creating business policies and practices that benefit the majority of employees.

Through an analysis of five key themes of empowerment – leadership, management, flexibility, parental leave, and work-life balance – three overarching conclusions emerge. First, flexibility is empowering to both Millennials and women in the workplace. Flexibility also enables and enhances other workplace policies and practices, such as parental leave. The transition back to work after parental leave is a difficult process during which company support is critical. Offering support in the form of flexibility, along with clear expectations for its usage, empowers employees returning to work after taking parental leave.

Second, structure is empowering to Millennials and women. Millennials crave structure amidst increased levels of autonomy and flexibility. Alongside autonomy, managers should set clear goals and provide regular feedback to Millennials. Women, too, benefit from structured policies that remove the ambiguity around using flexibility, parental leave, and disconnecting. Rather than approaching flexibility, communication, and parental leave expectations on a case-by-case basis, companies should create clear and structured policies and encourage managers to clearly communicate their expectations to employees.

Third, recognizing the diversity and value of women's leadership and communication styles is mutually beneficial for women and Millennials. By appreciating a broader range of work styles, companies can empower women, take their contributions more seriously, and help more women move into positions of leadership. Encouraging diverse work and leadership styles empowers Millennials as well. Women's leadership styles often provide greater transparency and collaboration, which Millennials desire from their organizations. By taking women more seriously, companies will increase women's confidence, decrease their perfectionist tendencies, and encourage women to grant more autonomy to those that they manage. To empower employees, companies should work to create greater awareness and appreciation for a wider range of work styles.

While this report uncovers many novel and nuanced findings, it is important to recognize its limitations. First, much of the discussion of gender and diversity is limited to women. Further research should be conducted to better



understand men's perceptions of gender and the gendered challenges that men may face in the workplace. Additionally, this report studies only two demographic characteristics – generation and gender. Other demographic characteristics such as race, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and citizenship, along with the intersection of such characteristics, should be studied. Lastly, the sample of this report is limited to employees in four professional industries. Workplace empowerment research should continue expanding its focus to understand the challenges and perceptions faced by employees in other sectors, including hourly employment and other professional industries.



Interview Guide – Millennials

Background Questions

- Name:
- Year born:
- Industry:

- Number of direct reports:
- Ages/generations of direct reports:
- Gender split of direct reports:
- Number of people report to:
- Ages/generations of people report to:
- Gender split of people report to:

- How many years with the company:
- How many roles within company:

- What other types of companies have you worked for?
- What attracted you to your current job and/or why switch from your old job?

Time – Work Responsibilities

1. What is your official title?
2. What do you do in your job?
3. What specific deliverables are you responsible for?
4. Tell me about your work schedule.
 - a. Who decides this?
5. How often do you travel?
 - a. Who decides this?
6. What are the expectations about your availability on communication devices outside of work?
 - a. Who decides this?
7. What is your ideal schedule/work arrangement? i.e. what would you change?

Culture

1. How would you describe the culture here?
 - a. What do you like and not like?
 - i. Compare to other cultures you've experienced.
2. Thinking back to when you first started here, how did you figure out/learn about the culture and values?
 - a. Culture shock?



3. Were you ever encouraged by your manager or peers to fit into the culture or team?
 - a. What do they do?
4. Does the leadership at your company set a good example of the values/culture?
 - a. In what ways?

Mentorship

1. Do/did you have a mentor inside/outside the company?
 - a. Who? What did they do for you?
2. Gender of mentors?
 - a. Who was your mentor?
 - b. Do you specifically seek out men/women mentors or look up to women leaders? Why or why not?
3. What is the difference to you between manager and mentor? Role model? Sponsor?

Friendship

1. Do you have friends at work?
2. Do you or have you ever spent time with coworkers outside of work?
 - a. Are they male? Female? Both?
 - b. Differences?
3. What makes a work friendship?
 - a. Male? Female?

Control

1. Do you have a good relationship with your boss?
 - a. Why or why not?
2. Do you feel like you are treated fairly at work?
 - a. Why or why not?
3. Do you trust your manager?
 - a. Why or why not?
4. How are you directed in your work i.e. much autonomy/freedom do you have? Over what?
5. Do you like this? What would you change?
6. Do you receive feedback at work?
 - a. From whom?
 - b. How?
 - c. Is the feedback formal and/or informal?
 - d. What is the frequency?
 - e. What do you prefer?
7. Tell me about a time you received positive feedback and how you felt/responded.
8. Tell me about a time you received negative feedback and how you felt/responded.



9. Have you ever actively sought feedback?
 - a. Positive? Negative?
 - b. Tell me a time when this happened.

Communication

1. How do you communicate at work?
 - a. What specific channels do you use and what do you say across those different channels?
2. What about this works and what doesn't?
3. What do you see as the pros and cons of modern communication technology?
4. How transparent is information within the organization?
 - a. How is information communicated from the top down?
 - b. Would you change this at all? Why?
5. If you could do anything, how would you change the way that communication happens in your organization?

Empowerment

1. Tell me about a time you felt very empowered/excited at work.
 - a. What happened to make you feel that way? Who was involved?
2. Tell me about a time you felt very un-empowered/discouraged at work.
 - a. What happened to make you feel that way? Who was involved?
3. Do you feel valued at work? Why or why not? When?
4. Do you feel like what you do is important? Why or why not? (Think deeply about why you are generally motivated/not motivated in your job.)

Differences

1. Thinking about your team and coworkers, do you see differences in how men and women approach and complete tasks at work? Does this differ according to their age?
 - a. If so, in what ways?
2. Do you think there are differences in how people think about and conduct work as opposed to 10, 20 years ago?
 - a. In what ways?
 - b. Who is leading/causing the change?
3. Generally speaking, how do you feel about and react to change?
 - a. In the company?
 - b. Example.
 - c. How does this compare to others in the company? Those older?
 - d. Example.
4. Are there any women's groups, networks, etc. in the company? If so, what do they do?



Family, Gender, Care

1. Do you currently or hope to live with a significant other at some point in your life?
2. Do you currently or foresee having children at some point in your life?
 - a. (IF NO TO #2) What led you to that decision?
3. When you were thinking about having kids//Since you are planning on having kids// What thoughts and conversations did/do you have about splitting and balancing care and career?
4. What have you found to be//What do you see as//Obstacles to this?
5. Do you know about the maternity and paternity leave policies at your work?
 - a. Have you used it// Have you seen anyone use it?
 - b. What are your thoughts on/what do you see as challenges in:
 - i. Prepping to leave
 - ii. Disconnecting
 - iii. Coming back/ramping back on
6. Thinking to those in your office who have kids, are those with kids in your office perceived or treated differently than those who don't have kids?
 - a. Schedules?
 - b. How people view them?

Work-Life Balance

1. What does the term work-life balance mean to you?
2. How close are you to your ideal work-life balance?
 - a. What would have to change for you to reach your ideal work-life balance?
3. How many vacation days do you get a year?
 - a. Do you take them all?
 - b. Does your manager and leadership take all of theirs?
4. Across all spheres of your life – so not just at work – what are three things you wish you had more time to do?
5. Imagine that your work offered the following three benefits options. You can only choose one. Which would you choose and why?
 - b. \$10,000 cash bonus, after tax
 - b. Extra 2 weeks paid vacation a year
 - b. Work a 4-day week, making up the lost hours on other days
6. What other benefit/work arrangement policies you would like to see here?



Interview Guide – Managers

Background Questions

- Name:
- Year born:
- Industry:

- Number of direct reports:
- Ages/generations of direct reports:
- Gender split of direct reports:
- Number of people report to:
- Ages/generations of people report to:
- Gender split of people report to:

- How many years with the company:
- How many roles within company:

- What other types of companies have you worked for?
- What attracted you to your current job and/or why switch from your old job?

Time – Work Responsibilities

1. What is your official title?
2. What do you do in your job? What deliverables and tasks are you responsible for?
3. What do those that you supervise do in their job? What deliverables are those you supervise responsible for?
4. Tell me about your work schedule.
 - a. How often do you travel?
5. Tell me about the work schedule of those you supervise.
 - a. How often do they travel?
 - b. Who decides on their schedule? How is it decided?
6. What are the expectations you have for yourself and your team on being available via communications devices outside of work?
 - a. Who decides this?
 - b. How well does this work?
 - i. Would you change this at all? If so, how?
7. What do you perceive as the ideal/preferred schedule of those that you supervise?
 - a. Millennials, Gen X, Boomer?



Culture

1. How would you describe the culture here?
 - a. What do you like and not like?
 - b. Compare to other cultures you've experienced.
2. How does this culture work for those you supervise?
 - a. Do they fit in with this culture? In what ways do/don't they?
 - i. Millennials, Gen X, Boomer?
 - b. What do you think they would like changed? Why?
 - i. Millennials, Gen X, Boomer?
3. Do you actively encourage those you supervise to fit into the organization/unit/team? If so, what do you do?
 - a. Millennials, Gen X, Boomer?
4. Does the leadership at your company set a good example of these values/the culture at your work?
 - a. Why or why not?

Mentorship

1. Do/did you serve as a mentor to anyone in/outside of the company?
 - a. Who and how?
2. Gender of mentors/mentees?
 - a. Who was your mentor?
 - b. Do you specifically seek out other women to mentor? Why or why not?
3. What is the difference to you between manager and mentor? Role model? Sponsor?

Friendship

1. Do you have friends at work?
2. Do you or have you ever spent time with coworkers outside of work?
 - a. Are they male? Female? Both?
 - b. Differences?
3. What makes a work friendship?
 - a. With a male? With a female?

Control

1. Do you have a good relationship with those you supervise?
 - a. Give me an example of this.
2. How do you attempt to build positive relationships with your employees?
 - a. What do you do?
 - b. Millennials, Gen X, Boomer?
3. How much direction v. autonomy/freedom do you provide those that you supervise?
 - a. Millennials, Gen X, Boomer?



4. Do you feel like those you supervise need more/less direction/autonomy/freedom? Over what? Please specify.
 - a. Millennials, Gen X, Boomer?
5. Do you give feedback at work?
 - a. To whom?
 - b. How?
 - c. Is the feedback formal and/or informal?
 - d. What is the frequency?
6. Tell me about a time you gave positive feedback
7. Tell me about a time that you gave negative feedback
8. Have those that you supervise ever actively sought feedback?
 - a. Positive? Negative?
 - b. Tell me a time when this happened.

Communication

1. How do you communicate at with those you supervise at work?
 - a. What specific channels are used and what is said across these different channels?
2. What about this works and doesn't work?
 - a. For whom on your team?
3. What are the pros and cons of modern communication technology?
4. How transparent is information within the organization?
 - a. How is information communicated from the top down?
 - b. Would you change this at all? Why? In what ways?
5. If you could change anything, how would you change the way that communication happens in your organization?

Empowerment

1. Do you empower those you supervise at work? How?
 - a. Tell me about a time you empowered someone that you supervise. What did you do? How did they feel/respond?
 - b. Tell me about a time someone you supervised felt discouraged at work? What happened? Who was involved? How did you handle it?
 - i. Millennials, Gen X, Boomer?
2. Do you think those you supervise feel like what they do is important? How so?
 - a. Millennials, Gen X, Boomer?
3. Do those you supervise feel valued?
 - a. Millennials, Gen X, Boomer?



Differences

1. Thinking about Millennials, do you see differences in how men and women approach and complete tasks at work?
 - a. If so, in what ways?
2. Is this different than men and women of your age? Men and women older than you?
 - a. In what ways?
3. Do you think there are differences in how people think about and conduct work as opposed to 10, 20 years ago?
 - a. In what ways?
 - b. Who is leading/causing the change?
4. Generally speaking, how do you feel about and react to change?
 - a. In the company?
 - b. Example.
 - c. How does this compare to Millennials in the company? Those older?
 - d. Example.
5. Are there any women's groups, networks, etc. in the company? If so, what do they do?

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1. Do you currently or hope to live with a significant other at some point in your life?
2. Do you currently or foresee having children at some point in your life?
 - a. (IF NO TO #2) What led you to that decision?
3. When you were thinking about having kids//Since you are planning on having kids// What thoughts and conversations did/do you have about splitting and balancing care and career?
4. What have you found to be//What do you see as// Obstacles to this?
5. Do you know about the maternity and paternity leave policies at your work?
 - a. Have you used it// Have you seen anyone use it?
 - b. What are your thoughts on/what do you see as challenges in:
 - i. Prepping to leave
 - ii. Disconnecting
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6. Thinking to those in your office who have kids, are those with kids in your office perceived or treated differently than those who don't have kids?
 - a. Schedules?
 - b. How people view them?



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1. What does the term work-life balance mean to you?
2. How close are you to your ideal work-life balance?
 - a. What would have to change for you to reach your ideal work-life balance?
3. How many vacation days do you get a year?
 - a. Do you take them all?
 - b. Does your manager and leadership take all of theirs?
4. Across all spheres of your life – so not just at work – what are three things you wish you had more time to do?
5. Imagine that your work offered the following three benefits options to its employees. Which of these three options do you think would be viewed as most lucrative to those you supervise and why?
 - a. \$10,000 cash bonus, after tax
 - b. Extra 2 weeks paid vacation a year
 - c. Work a 4-day week, making up the lost hours on other days
6. What three benefit/work arrangement policies would you change/add to?



City Profiles

Washington, D.C.

- Metro Population: 6,032,744³⁷⁶
- City Population: 672,288³⁷⁷
- GSA Per-Diem Rate (Oct 2015 – Sept. 2016 average): \$219.83³⁷⁸
- Major Industries: Federal Government, Education, Tourism³⁷⁹

San Francisco, CA

- Metro Population: 4,594,060³⁸⁰
- City Population: 852,469³⁸¹
- GSA Per-Diem Rate (Oct 2015 – Sept. 2016 average): \$250.00³⁸²
- Major Industries: Tourism, Technology, Financial Services³⁸³

New York, NY

- Metro Population: 20,092,883³⁸⁴
- City Population: 8,491,079³⁸⁵
- GSA Per-Diem Rate (Oct 2015 – Sept. 2016 average): \$262.50³⁸⁶
- Major Industries: Financial Services, Media, Communications, Technology³⁸⁷

376 “Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV Metro Area.” Census Reporter. Web. 11 May 2016.

377 “Quick Facts: District of Columbia.” United States Census Bureau. Web. 11 May 2016.

378 “FY 2016 Per Diem Rates for District of Columbia.” The General Services Administration. Web. 11 May 2016.

379 “The Best Places For Business And Careers 2015 Ranking: Washington, DC.” *Forbes*. Web. 11 May 2016.

380 “San Francisco-Oakland-Hayward, CA Metro Area.” Census Reporter. Web. 11 May 2016.

381 “Quick Facts: San Francisco city, California.” United States Census Bureau. Web. 11 May 2016.

382 “FY 2016 Per Diem Rates for California.” The General Services Administration. Web. 11 May 2016.

383 “The Best Places For Business And Careers 2015 Ranking: San Francisco, CA.” *Forbes*. Web. 11 May 2016.

384 “New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA Metro Area.” Census Reporter. Web. 11 May 2016.

385 “Quick Facts: New York city, New York.” United States Census Bureau. Web. 11 May 2016.

386 “FY 2016 Per Diem Rates for New York.” The General Services Administration. Web. 11 May 2016.

387 “The Best Places For Business And Careers 2015 Ranking: New York, NY.” *Forbes*. Web. 11 May 2016.



Minneapolis, MN

- Metro Population: 3,495,176³⁸⁸
- City Population: 407,207³⁸⁹
- GSA Per-Diem Rate (Oct 2015 – Sept. 2016 average): \$140.00³⁹⁰
- Major Industries: Financial Services, Technology, Biomedical, Retail³⁹¹

New Orleans, LA

- Metro Population: 1,251,849³⁹²
- City Population: 384,320³⁹³
- GSA Per-Diem Rate (Oct 2015 – Sept. 2016 average): \$142.42³⁹⁴
- Major Industries: Defense & Aerospace, Energy, Tourism³⁹⁵

388 “Minneapolis-Saint Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI Metro Area.” Census Reporter. Web. 11 May 2016.

389 “Quick Facts: Minneapolis city, Minnesota.” United States Census Bureau. Web. 11 May 2016.

390 “FY 2016 Per Diem Rates for Minnesota.” The General Services Administration. Web. 11 May 2016.

391 “The Best Places For Business And Careers 2015 Ranking: Minneapolis, MN.” *Forbes*. Web. 11 May 2016.

392 “New Orleans-Metairie, LA Metro Area.” Census Reporter. Web. 11 May 2016.

393 “Quick Facts: New Orleans city, Louisiana.” United States Census Bureau. Web. 11 May 2016.

394 “FY 2016 Per Diem Rates for Louisiana.” The General Services Administration. Web. 11 May 2016.

395 “The Best Places For Business And Careers 2015 Ranking: New Orleans, LA.” *Forbes*. Web. 11 May 2016.





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End Notes

- i. “I definitely learned to ask as many questions as possible, just because in our line of work, [the VP and Senior VP] oftentimes withhold as much information as possible. They give me as much information as they think I need in order to do the task at hand, which is often not enough, or at least does not make my job as effective.”
- ii. “That’s a conversation I recently had with [my new boss] and the new director... My concern would be that there would be less transparency and I wouldn’t be engaged conversations at that level, which, for me, is problematic just from an ego standpoint, obviously, and two, from an effectiveness standpoint. So my ability to provide thoughtful analysis is based on my understanding on what you guys are meeting on and what you’re hearing. And getting that through word of mouth, then the quality of my work changes. And the quality of my work, obviously, meeting everybody’s expectations, empowers me.”
- iii. “If people know what’s going on...they can make better decisions and really know what the vision, and what our goals are, and which direction it goes. So when they’re in their day-to-day work, they can say, ‘I know that the CEO said this was important in our last board deck review, so I’m going to be cognizant of that.’”
- iv. “Having the transparency of knowing why, I think it’s really important. And I think it’s important for my staff too. Because I think we are beyond the point where people follow orders blindly. They want to understand the why and the work will be better if they understand the why...You know, like ‘hey, we need to really quickly fix this bug.’ ‘Why?’ ‘Because xyz client is really upset and can’t do blah, blah, blah, and so we need to get this fixed.’”
- v. “I didn’t question a whole lot. Now I see more people questioning, ‘Well why are you asking me to do this?’”
- vi. “I would tell [them] to keep asking ‘why?’ Because I don’t think we ask that enough. And I like that because...when I grew up and was fresh out of college, I didn’t ask that question enough. I just allowed things to happen. And I would [tell them to] continue to ask that question... Why do we need this?...Why are you doing this? What’s gonna happen? What’s the outcome? Or how can I make it better? So keep asking why... Question things in a respectful way.”
- vii. He gave everybody credit and he wanted a direct line of communication from all of us to [the CCO]. He always encouraged us to email [the CCO] directly with any program updates or anything. And that’s a very differ-



ent management style than others, because others are top-down and want all communication to their superior management to go through them. While [my manager]...almost pushed us to communicate directly with higher management, because we're the ones executing and doing the work.

- viii. “I try to make sure that they all have access to my boss, who is actually somebody who is very much of the mind that that's important. It's helpful because both of us share that vision. If somebody on my team does the crux of something, if I'm then going to talk to my boss about it, they're coming with me. And they're getting the credit for having done it, and been in it, and given the opportunity in his office or on the phone with him to offer up their perspective. And I think that that is very much valued.”
- ix. “Looking at the leadership, I don't care that that person makes more money than me. They deserve that for reasons I probably don't know. They've probably been at the company before I was born. Whatever. But what I do want is that they understand that at the end of the day, we are people, and when we walk out that door, we're on the same level. So you better talk to me like I'm at the same level.”
- x. “[W]e were only three people on the marketing team, and the company was maybe 30 people-ish. It wasn't big, but...it wasn't transparent at all. It was too much, like, top-down. The CEO was not accessible. For a company of 30 people, it was just not possible to get in touch with him. Because either he didn't think it was worthy of his time, or he would not be free...There was a sense of, I felt personally, the entitlement that came with that title without having something to show for it.”
- xi. “When I came to [this company], I was expecting that that's how it's going to be. [The CEO] is like this really, really, like well-established entrepreneur, considering that he has done so well. I think, within the first month of me joining, he came over to my desk...and he sat with me and he's like, ‘How are you liking [it here]?’ ‘I want to have a one-on-one with you.’ I literally froze when this happened. You know, somebody like him that is so busy, so accomplished, but he's so down to earth that he wanted to meet with anybody who's hired new. And he wants to see what they're doing. Are they liking the job.”
- xii. “We definitely have strong women in strong positions in the organization, as well. However – and we're, like, 70:30 women to men, but our executive leadership is all men...[Replacing] the Chief Strategy Officer was a very long search. It took like a year and a half to find him recently. And he's a guy. Maybe they could only find a person who's a man. I



don't know. Our Executive Creative Director, again, outside hire...And then our President is as a man. And in fact this office has not had a female President. So what could be done to replace that? Well, there could definitely be more development inside of the agency. But when you look around, when you're sitting in a leadership meeting and you're looking around the room, it's actually really well split. But that's also interesting if you think about the fact that we are 70% women and 30% men as an agency, yet our split in the leadership team is represented to 50:50. So that says, there's more men in powerful places here."

- xiii. "I think that's definitely a plus of our culture. And I love looking around the boardroom and seeing, like, our head of revenue is a woman, our general council is woman, my boss is a woman. It is pretty rare, and I think that definitely influences the culture."
- xiv. "I think women bring a unique way of communicating and leadership to companies, and it's different than what men do. It's different. And, so, and I think that business hasn't evolved to totally value that yet...First of all, if you go back and look at the history of women in the workforce, we haven't been in the workforce in droves for that long. So I think that there is still the element of that it is going to take time to change. At the same time, I find it, it's crazy. I opened up a *Harvard Business Review* the other day and it was all, like, the top CEO's. And I literally looked at page after page after page of white males. I am, like, 'seriously, have we not evolved at all?'"
- xv. "I find that women are a lot more collaborative overall. Like, hands down. They just get together. They hash it out. They just get stuff done. Men will kind of divide and conquer, and then sometimes they have this ego issue that, like, especially if they're all the same level, and I've watched it play out too many times, and sometimes I have to step in and I'm like, "You do this, and you do this, and you do this. I'm tired of this. Go..." But I find, if I took a broad brush, the women are much more collaborative. They will also break up the tasks and get it done a whole lot faster and earlier than if I give it to a group of men who kind of wait until the last minute and then I get it from them."
- xvi. "Our leadership, from a female perspective, is much more embracing, open-arms. The messages are softer; they're much more often. So the guy who used to run [our office] was great and such a nice guy, but even with him, I didn't hear from as much. With [the new CEO], she's doing videos all the time, sending messages. She's much more focused on making sure she's connected to the people and they know what she's thinking. You know, [the man] who runs our [financial] practice, I think, tries. But even when he tries, it still comes off as not as...It's like, 'Ok,



someone told me I needed to talk to everybody.' So while I think they're both genuine in what they're trying to do, her desire to connect with the people is much more genuine when it comes off."

- xvii. "I'd say, you know, the fact that I'm a female, I can probably recognize stuff in [young women], like you know, general female things, more so than a guy would. Because women, we often don't step up for opportunities, we often kind of shy away when someone is offering us something. And I think I would probably more easily recognize it and say, 'No, do this. This is important.' And, like, I flip between my [manager] hat and my [mentorship] hat when I'm advising them on career stuff. I'll say, 'Okay. As your boss, here's my advice. Now, as not your boss, you need to ask me for more money.'"
- xviii. "[Men's] conversations tend to be more linear about trying to get in a role...The women are more, how do I wrestle through this situation? How do I figure something out? More broad-based conversations to start a relationship."
- xix. "I think there are specific people from my previous jobs who definitely call upon me if they're trying to make a big change in their life or a professional decision, for that matter. Definitely, it does invariably end up being women... If it's men, it's more professional, whereas with women, it's mostly a combination of both professional and personal decisions. An example of that is, [Calli]...she's been really trying to figure out what's a good next step in her career, whether it's business school...or trying to grow internally within a big company...She also has a child."
- xx. "I think because my manager is so great at setting goals and they come directly from the department, and then those trickle up to the corporate goals; you know exactly what you need to get done by the end of three months...There's no more any question about who should be working on what, which allows for a lot of autonomy. So I never feel micro-managed by her, which is great."
- xxi. "I don't think that it's clearly communicated, what the direction is. I mean, our direction is to become number one by 2020 and to become a billion-dollar company, but that's very broad. How are you doing that... Are you planning to do that in service? Are you planning to do it in products?"
- xxii. "I think when I'm given the most autonomy over a project and it's something that has no real guidelines, in a way, I feel the most empowered."



- xxiii. “There are some times where I feel like you’re up against the ‘this is the way we’ve done it’ – that’s when I feel powerless and I sit there and I say ‘this is the dumbest thing I’ve ever witnessed.’”
- xxiv. “What really, for me, triggers a feeling of empowerment is someone indicating trust. So to give you the opposite perspective, on my first project, my leadership was very...they were very uncomfortable with relinquishing control...And they insisted that all of us, and not just me as the most junior team member, but people who were senior consultants, aged 29, 30, they insisted that all of us copy them on every single email we send. And first of all, that makes no sense because then they get so many emails they couldn’t possibly keep up. So they missed key communications. But for us, it was like, these are such minor communications and your need for full awareness of everything going on is disempowering.”
- xxv. “We are start-up and also very small, but we can’t control everything, and there is so much to do...So, we might, as a group, come up with goals that we have for certain projects, and then I will assign whoever is in charge of that, and then work with them on their one-on-ones to make sure, you know, week over week that they are meeting certain benchmarks in order to get the project completed...That way I don’t have to micro-manage.”
- xxvi. “And now, I’m making sure that [the goals are] clear...And, that totally changes things around, because it gives individuals an ability to kind of function and manage. Because our teams, they’re the ones talking to our customers. They’re the ones sitting and staring at the code. They’re the ones ultimately deciding what a product should look like, because they’re the ones that are making it happen. And you can try to control as hard as you want, but if you set the right objective at the right level, and you make sure that they’re clear on what those objectives are, and then give people the leeway, it totally changes the interaction.”
- xxvii. “If I mess up, I want to know now...It’s literally like, ‘Hey dude, you screwed up, don’t do it again.’ And I say ‘Cool. Thank you for this five-minute conversation that you didn’t stretch out to fifteen.’”
- xxviii. “Instead of saying, ‘You did this, and you should have done this,’ they’ll say ‘As you continue to grow professionally, focus on doing this.’ It’s very forward-looking...I think it’s better.”
- xxix. “I think that’s part of the reason why I don’t get terrible feedback often... If I’m ever thinking I’m heading in the wrong direction with a project, I’ll go to [my manager] really early on and be like, ‘What do you think about this? Am I thinking about this the right way? Is this what you were



thinking when you told me?’ And he’ll be like, ‘Yeah that’s perfect!’ or like, ‘No, I was actually thinking along these lines instead.’ So we kind of, he’s able to direct me a little bit along the way. Catch it early on.”

- xxx. “He wasn’t the easiest to get a hold of, so I learned to be a ninja and, like, basically you know, bug him – be the squeaky wheel until I got it.”
- xxxi. “[My manager] is a really good listener. He actually takes feedback – it’s a true conversation of him trying to learn from his employees, and then also trying to teach us something as well...We’re looking for advice from him, but at the same time, he’s really good about taking a step back and putting himself in our shoes and asking ‘Why and what would you suggest instead?’ ‘Here’s what we tried, what would be your ideas?’”
- xxxii. “In my last job, I was usually one or two women out of a larger group, also. It was also women in the minority. When I am in those situations, I always feel I have to prove myself more. If somebody asks me to plan a birthday party, even though it’s offensive and I want to be like, ‘Why? Because I’m a woman?’ I don’t want to say no because I don’t want them to think I can’t handle it. Because even that, I will try to kick out of the water and be like, ‘Yeah, I got it. And I can handle all my other work too.’ I always feel like I have to prove that I am more and do extra. work just to get the same respect level.”
- xxxiii. “The female is very organized, very to the point, very Type A, very ‘I’m going to do everything perfect.’...The male side is very off-the-cuff, like, ‘Oh, we can do that.’ Or very optimistic, very, ‘We can do whatever we need. Let’s make this happen.’”
- xxxiv. I fall into that too, even as somebody who doesn’t like to micromanage people...Part of me wants to [micromanage] so that I can feel like I’m doing my job, have control of the situation. I mean, that’s actually a big part of my working too much is that, I do feel like I have to know the details of everything, because if I’m in a meeting and I get caught not understanding something that is happening further down, I feel like I can’t be in that situation. While in many cases, I’ve seen men in that situation, but they’re able to somehow make it seem okay, like ‘I’m a big manager so, of course, I don’t know that small detail.’ But for me, I feel like I have to know all the details because I can’t throw that ‘big manager thing’ around.”
- xxxv. “What I really like about [my company], and talking to friends at other companies, it turns out that we have a very flexible work schedule. Like, there’s not an actual time that you have to be in. No one is saying, ‘You have to be in by 9:00.’ But based on my schedule at home and the bus schedule, I end up coming around 9:00 and leaving around 5:00, 5:30.



But no one is actually saying that you have to be in the office for that amount of time. And basically, you could even show up less, I guess, as long as you complete your work. That's the attitude that I get."

- xxxvi. "We're such a big company that depending on where you sit, things can really change...And then in this team...I knew it was going to be great. But even in the first couple months, I do remember saying to myself, 'Wow, these people really do sign off at six and go home to their families;' they actually do that."
- xxxvii. "We work in health and public service, which, at the end of the day, is the softest part of the firm...Then there are old school financial services clients and people who work over there...And I think our financial services clients are fabulous, but they, just the culture is different."
- xxxviii. "I'm also very intentional of communicating the commitments I have. So in the morning, if somebody schedules an earlier meeting than I expected, I tell them I'll be on my phone and that I'm dropping my partner off to the shuttle...Or I'll say I'm going to a gym class at 7:30 or I have to go work out. I'll be online afterwards."
- xxxix. "I would like more flexibility, I think that's...and part of it is I could do that for myself, like there's nothing stopping me from saying to my boss, 'Hey I'm going to leave at 4:00 and have dinner with my family.' I could do that if I wanted to, but I just find it really hard, really hard to do that... Our culture, and the values, and I mean it's just like, it's hard to leave at 4:00 and feel like you're actually pulling your weight."
- xi. "Yeah, I think that's the difference between this [startup] culture and the one at the [consulting firm]. Like, there's something to be said at [the consulting firm] for being there from 8:30 to 6:30, right? There's this expectation that, I think, if you are there for more hours, you are a better worker. Which isn't true...The entire team had similar project quotas, but I would get them done in a 8:00-5:00 kind of timeframe, whereas people would be there until 7:00 consistently. They would sit, and all these hours doing things, I think it was more of a mental state, right? They just thought that they could get work done better, or they were doing better work if they were there and constantly plugging away...That's kind of why I went over to [this startup], because I know that's something that the startups are very adamant about. It's like, you are productive when you're most productive."
- xii. "The way I look at it, you know, just because you're working extra hours it doesn't mean you are the most productive...It boils down to the actions that you take, right? Like if you're promoting the people that everybody knows are just putting in ridiculous hours, like you're setting



that expectation: “I know if I’m going to be promoted, I need to work 60 hours.” And I think that can cripple morale. Because to the top performers, the people that are good at finding the quickest way to do something, the most effective way to do something, they’re seen as lazy.”

- xlii. “I personally think flexibility is really important...So, you know, something that would be more ideal is that once I’ve demonstrated that I can get my work done, it doesn’t matter as much where I am. That would be my ideal. Just having more flexibility.”
- xliii. “My manager encouraged me to work from home if I needed, because, right now, I’m pregnant. He’s like, ‘If it’s too troublesome, just work from home,’ and they’re totally fine with it, and I think it’s cool. Work from home is a trust. They trust that you can finish your work on time. They don’t care if you do it until 1:00AM or not. As long as you will finish, you can complete your work, then you’re fine.”
- xliv. “I don’t try to put that pressure on my team mostly because I know that it caused me a lot of anxiety when I first started working here – that I felt the need to always be connected by e-mail, checking my e-mails throughout the day. It used to give me a lot of anxiety when I would see [a message] pop-up from my boss in the middle of the night. I felt the need, “okay I have to reply.” So, I always tell my employees, because there is a capability to download that app on your smartphone, I just tell them I don’t have any app on my smartphone. I am not putting the app on my smartphone. I know anyone who has it, they feel the need to constantly be connected...I want [my team] to value their time away. And also you don’t really get the best response anyway because someone is going to be distracted.”
- xlv. “The people who are more, kind of like me, or maybe a couple years older than me, where there’s family and there’s a lot of surrounding circumstances that these young people just don’t have. And that does change the nature of your relationship a little bit where – it’s hard to, a little bit hard for me to articulate why this is – they just don’t have, I think, the same cognitive bandwidth available because they’ve got three kids in the car, like, at 5:30, right? And, if I need something at 5:30 and, you know, they’re going to do it, but it’s going to be a lot – that conversation is going to be a harder conversation than it is going to be with somebody like this young guy who, you know, he just doesn’t have those constraints on his life.”
- xlvi. “It was just horrible. It’s like the worst. Tech is really horrible. You know, [my first maternity leave experience at the last startup] maybe was a little bit different, but [my experience with my second child] was really bad. They didn’t have a maternity policy when I was there. So I was the



first woman there who had a baby. I had to basically work with the team to figure out a plan, you know. When I told the CEO that I was pregnant, he asked if I needed like a couple weeks off. He didn't at all understand the concept of what a woman actually goes through."

xlvii. "I started 12 weeks pregnant, which I felt very awkward about...But, I didn't feel badly or nor did I apologize that. Life happens, and here you are investing in me for the long term. I had a male boss who was like, "No problem, there's no issue, that's fine"...I also went into birth in the office, which is hilarious. Yeah, my water broke in the office and that was so awkward, like, that's just one of the many awkward things that have happened to me [here]. There was a moment of sheer terror on the face of many men, even men with kids. They were like, that was odd... My second pregnancy, I was supposed to take the normal four months off, and [the company] will allow you to take up to six, but I always take four and then took time later. My older son was having some health issues, and I ended up taking nine total months off, so that we could get him into treatment and everything. And [the company] was so supportive, gave me the six months, and made sure that I was paid and I was coming back to my job."

xlviii. "So for me it was really hard this time, because I took my 12 weeks, I checked out. Then we had a person that came in and filled my seat while was out, and then, like I said, there is all of these people that left and came and so many things changed. And my client actually, so I had been fully devoted to [one client account]. And during that time that I was on maternity leave, they pulled a lot of our work and our retainer, actually. So I came back to the unknown of what my job would be...And I spent a year really figuring that out. It was hard. It was very hard. I came back to a totally different job. My direct reports started to get split between me and somebody else. I didn't know what I owned necessarily. And I had this new baby. Then there was all of these new people here. It was really hard. I mean I definitely thought about, actually, you know, started to look at different jobs and thought about the fact that maybe I shouldn't have come back after maternity leave."

xlix. "Well, for me, it was a lot of things that were outside the control of [the company], and they can't control that with the client for sure. But things like, I was really concerned about when I was going to breast pump, and I asked those questions of the HR Department. So the HR Department, once I asked specifically before I went on maternity leave, but she said I don't know [where you can pump]. It was a huge concern for me because it really is a personal thing and I don't really feel like anybody needs to know when I'm doing or what I'm doing there. And it came down to the fact that she never figured it out. And so then I was emailing her in the weeks leading up to me coming back, and she suggested



that I went to the bathroom, she suggested like the storage room. I mean, it's just all these horrible options. And I ended up pumping in my office, and we have these kind of see-through windows, so me and my friends [covered it]. But then, it was the known fact when Kim's door is closed, she's pumping. And so it was like anytime my door was closed, people knew I was pumping, which is really uncomfortable. And you can hear it. And at the time, I was in my other office and so the person sitting next to me, he could hear it. He would just put his music. So horrible experience. And I really feel like that was also in addition to all the other things that were going on that were bad for me, that were out of the control of the agency, coupled with just hormones and uncertainty. I felt like little things like that could have been done in a way to make things a lot easier."

- i. "And so when Tracy...Tracy is a copywriter and she had her baby a few months after me. When she went on maternity leave, I did everything, I fought with our HR Director to get her a refrigerator for her breast milk so she won't have to store it in the refrigerator in the kitchen. I did the thing on her window, and did all of those things. And I even got her doughnuts her first day. I gave her a gift card and a card and you know, I mean just little things that – she didn't need it, but just to make her feel better when she came back."
- ii. "So, I feel like most of my time that I spent working in finance was focused on, like, PowerPoints and random stuff that didn't actually make much of a difference, and a lot of the time was wasted effort. Like, I would spend a whole day doing something, and it would be like a pitch book where that page got deleted, or whatever. Or you know, working on a pitch book, that they never even opened, or they didn't go over that section. Whatever the case is, a lot of wasted effort."
- iii. "The advice I received were things like speak in a lower tone of voice, sit up straight when you're sitting down in a meeting, boost your chair so you're the highest person at the table and you're just as tall as the men. And I still do a lot of that stuff. And the reason I was venting about it recently is because I would like to see work environment in which women just naturally lead with whatever traits are inherent to them. My normal talking voice is probably a little higher than this right now. But this is what I've gotten used to. So I would like to see that, but I think right now, women who excel here adopt some of those stereotypically male characteristics or emulate them, because that's how they get people to a) pay attention and listen to them, and b) that's how they get what they want. For me, I'm going to keep doing a lot of those little things that are like tricks and tips, because they're working for me...I think people have different types of leadership styles, but they all, right now, are following that stereotypically male approach."





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