

Leading with Joy: Lessons from the Literature

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Abstract

This article provides an introduction for library leaders at all levels to support equitable conditions for joy in the workplace, as well as for anyone who wants to develop their personal practice of joy through lessons discovered in popular, academic, and professional writing and multimedia. Joy has a place in contemporary libraries' conversations about burnout, vocational awe, and care. The article begins with a guide to the annotated bibliography which explores five themes: defining joy, finding individual joy, work and organizational joy, empowering change with joy, and joy-adjacent emotions. The thematic guide may be read alone or used as an invitation to read specific entries within the annotated bibliography which follows. This article's elevation of joy resources and concepts will inspire group discussions, provide a foundation for future research, and offer practical advice for leaders seeking to cultivate joyful work environments.

Introduction

We came to the topic of joy from the context of the world's many challenges which, especially as they are described by the media, seem to conspire to extinguish joy. Academia is no exception; as Douglas Dowland asserts, "There is very little to feel good about in higher education today" (2022).¹ And yet, we learned through research and experience that as individuals, we can incite, feel, and interpret joy in myriad ways (Johnson 2020, 12). Joy can even become an act of resistance and a tool for social change.² More so than close cousins such as happiness or satisfaction, joy can coexist and even blend with other powerful emotions such as anger or sorrow (Gay 2022). Joy benefits the individual (Fredrickson 2001) and the

¹ Parenthetical citations are used for works appearing in the annotated bibliography, while footnotes are used for ancillary sources.

² Toi Dericotte, "Joy Is an Act of Resistance, and: Special Ears, and: Another Poem of a Small Grieving for My Fish Telly, and: On the Reasons I Loved Telly the Fish," *Prairie Schooner* 82, no. 3 (2008): 22–27, <https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/17/article/249802>.

organizations in which they work (Harter, Schmidt, and Keyes 2003; Perlo et al. 2017). Through our research, we find promise in joy to provide a foundation upon which individuals, groups, and organizations can draw strength without ignoring or glossing over injustice and challenges.

Library leaders at all levels are well-placed to create opportunities for joy in their organizations and to model how to do so with nuance and balance. Toward that end, we explored the multidisciplinary literature and compiled an annotated bibliography for leaders who wish to support joy within groups, organizational change agents who want to create equitable conditions for joy in the workplace, and readers seeking to develop their personal practice of joy. We provide a guide exploring five themes: defining joy, finding individual joy, work and organizational joy, empowering change with joy, and joy-adjacent emotions. The thematic guide may be read alone or used as an invitation to read specific entries within the annotated bibliography which follows. We provide these resources and commentary as inspiration for group discussion, a foundation for future research, and practical advice for implementation.

This article is the result of our collaborative research and discussion surrounding joy. Our explorations and selections are grounded in definitions of joy from the literature that resonated with each of us—definitions upon which we built as we experimented with inciting joy ourselves. Embracing the notion that joy is tied to values and authenticity, we went where our values and interests—as well as the literature—took us. This article, then, focuses on works that each of us found insightful, inspirational, informative, and instructive for our own lives and workplaces. We prioritized recent works of broad interest, access, and applicability. We included popular, academic, and professional works, as well as writings and multimedia, and works of various length to support a diverse range of readers and often reflecting our own diverse needs. Readers will find more about our approach and limitations, as well as positionality and context after the Thematic Guide to the Annotated Bibliography.

We began our research by looking for literature about joy in libraries, the disciplinary common ground that we share. We were exploring ways to counteract burnout, which was prevalent around us and within the literature. We saw Fobazzi Ettarh's influential concept of vocational awe³ spreading in both our professional lives and in the literature.⁴ As a profession,

³ Fobazzi Ettarh, "Vocational Awe and Librarianship: The Lies We Tell Ourselves," *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*, January 10, 2018, <https://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2018/vocational-awe/>.

⁴ Karl Stutzman, "Vocational Awe and Theological Librarianship: The Truths We Might Begin Telling Ourselves," *Theological Librarianship* 15, no. 2 (2022): 26–29, <https://doi.org/10.31046/tl.v15i2.3067>; Emily Vickers and Zoua Sylvia Yang, "Double the Vocation, Double the Awe: An Examination of Vocational Awe in Music Librarianship," *Notes*

library workers served and supported their users throughout the COVID-19 pandemic amidst large-scale protests, racial reckoning, and turbulent political events, and experienced emotional and cognitive demands similar to nurses and social workers.⁵ Simultaneously, we also saw an increased focus on care for both the users of libraries and those who work within them.⁶ While seeking something—anything!—positive, we also recognized that an insistent focus on positive attitudes while living through multiple crises would only further erode our collective mental health.⁷

In our research, we found that emotion researchers consider joy as a distinct emotion that we find has potential importance to libraries. We find that joy is associated with authenticity and supports social justice and, by extension, is likely to resonate with the inclusive and egalitarian ideals of library workers. As a positive emotion that exists alongside adversity and sorrow, joy is also a potential antidote to toxic positivity. Through our interdisciplinary selections, we propose that the inclusion of joy is a much-needed addition to today's library literature and workplace conversation.

With this contribution to the literature, we hope to spark more conversation within libraries about joy alongside the important attention paid to challenges within the profession; however, we anticipate that readers beyond libraries will also find value—dare we say joy—through the multidisciplinary selection of readings, videos, and podcasts included here.

Thematic Guide to the Annotated Bibliography

Defining Joy

As we explored the possibilities of joy in the workplace, both individually and collectively, the definition of joy and the ways of knowing and experiencing joy swiftly became relevant. How do researchers distinguish joy from other emotions? How can coworkers talk about joy together in

(*Music Library Association*) 78, no. 3 (2022): 340–52, <https://doi.org/10.1353/not.2022.0004>; Annie Bélanger, “Bias and Whiteness in Public Services,” *The International Information & Library Review* 56, no. 1 (2024): 86–92, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10572317.2024.2301867>.

⁵ Rachel Keiko Stark, Maggie Albro, and Kelli Kauffroath, “Burnt Ends: An Examination of Academic Librarian Burnout Using the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory after COVID-19,” *Journal of Library Administration* 64, no. 1 (2024): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2023.2287940>.

⁶ Melissa Beuoy, Sara Holder, and Amber Lannon, “A Case for the Empathetic Librarian,” in *Student Wellness and Academic Libraries: Case Studies and Activities for Promoting Health and Success* (ACRL, 2020), 59–73, <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0qj1k453>; Meredith Gorran Farkas, “Slow Life, Slow Librarianship | Information Wants To Be Free,” September 8, 2021, <https://meredith.wolfwater.com/wordpress/2021/09/08/slow-life-slow-librarianship/>.

⁷ Sydney Loney, “Everything Isn’t Awesome,” *Chatelaine* 94, no. 2 (March 2, 2021): 52–54.

a way that is inclusive? Matthew Kuan Johnson's foundational article (2020) frames broad perspectives on joy. He noted that joy can be viewed as an emotion, a mood, a disposition, or a spiritual fruit (Johnson 2020, 10). Johnson's definition provides a wide latitude for considering joy as a distinct and inclusive concept.

Many authors define joy as an emotion. Brené Brown, writing for a popular audience, defines joy as "an intense feeling of deep spiritual connection, pleasure, and appreciation" and elucidates related emotions so that the reader may distinguish among them (2021, 205). Patty Van Cappellen, writing for researchers, offers this definition of joy as an emotion: "Joy is elicited by the appraisals that an event aligns with who we truly are, with what we value, what we strive for, what we live for. Joy is the emotion that makes life worth living in the moment because it resonates with our core identity. It is associated with feelings of ease, appreciation, and meaning."⁸

Tracey Michae'l Lewis-Giggetts (2022) extends joy from emotion into experience, primarily through storytelling. She shows how joy can be known individually, but also collectively as a deeply embedded characteristic of culture. For Lewis-Giggetts, joy is more than just an emotion: joy is a journey, joy is a strategy, joy is a generational inheritance, joy is in cultural symbols, joy is embedded in stories and storytelling. To understand the phenomena of joy itself, she explores the purpose that joy serves.

The reader can also approach joy from an analytical perspective. Johnson (2020) differentiates among constructs related to joy like gladness and elation, while Xianglong Zeng and colleagues (2016) define specific types of joy for further research. Functional measurement tools like the Appreciative Joy Scale (Zeng et al. 2016), the Joy at Work Scale (Jena and Pradhan 2017), and the Institute for Healthcare Improvement framework for joy in the workplace (Perlo et al. 2017) help researchers to study and validate connections that joy has with behaviors and other emotions.

Johnson (2020) also explores how cross-cultural and language considerations contribute to both innate and learned components of joy. We similarly found that different disciplines approach joy from slightly different frameworks: library and information science (Hartel and

⁸ Patty Van Cappellen, "The Emotion of Joy: Commentary on Johnson," *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 15, no. 1 (January 2, 2020): 40–43, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2019.1685571>, 41.

Siracky 2022), psychology (Emmons 2020), healthcare (Perlo et al. 2017),⁹ religion (Casioppo 2020; Dalai Lama, Tutu, and Abrams 2016; Zeng et al. 2016), art (Lee 2021), and business (Harter, Schmidt, and Keyes 2003). By taking a multidisciplinary approach to the definition of joy, the reader can identify when a researcher or tool leaves out a major dimension of joy. For example, the NPR Joy Generator (2021) feels wide-ranging and inclusive but largely leaves out spiritual approaches.

For some people, joy is bound up in religion, spiritual ways of knowing, or in harmony with values-based approaches to life. Lewis-Giggetts (2022) describes finding joy as almost a side effect of her spiritual journey toward healing. The 14th Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu (Dalai Lama, Tutu, and Abrams 2016) present joy as a potential purpose for life built on spiritual practice and discipline. In their conversation, they imply that all people are *responsible* for developing a more joyful world and that this responsibility comes with it the need to develop a practice. Danielle Casioppo (2020) emphasizes individual values and offers several meditations to create joyful states. Sarah A. Schnitker, Juliette L. Ratchford, and Rosemond T. Lorona describe how developing our character and values can bring outcomes of joy.¹⁰

Readers may also develop a shared understanding of joy by looking at resulting behaviors and outcomes. For Gay (2022), the definition of joy relates to how it makes him behave: how joy gets humans to love, how it influences teaching, and how it helps humans to survive. Fredrickson (2001) writes about how joy broadens individual resources through creativity and play. Juan Luis Garrido (2022) explores how three forms of joy—personal, applied, and aspirational—all support engagement with social change. Matthew Hersh (2022) describes how laughing with joy leads to physical benefits. Researchers proposing measurement scales offer numerous ways to assess behaviors and outcomes in the workplace (Jena and Pradhan 2017; Perlo et al. 2017).

Our personal definitions of joy also reflect the wide range of its manifestations. Galen's personal definition of joy includes an awareness of and connection with the world, from concrete experiences like birdsong to abstract concepts like peace. Joy is a gift, a happening that can't be manufactured even as one can engage in conditions that are more or less likely to bring joy.

⁹ See also Carole Liske, Naomi Tutticci, and Michael Joseph S. Diño, "Joy at Work and Vocational Identity During COVID-19: A Structural Equation Model," *Journal of Nursing Scholarship* 55, no. 5 (2023): 1058–67, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jnu.12886>.

¹⁰ Sarah A. Schnitker, Juliette L. Ratchford, and Rosemond T. Lorona, "How Can Joy Escape Jingle-Jangle? Virtue and Telos Conceptualizations as Alternative Approaches to the Scientific Study of Joy," *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 15, no. 1 (January 2, 2020): 44–48, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2019.1685572>.

Experiences where Galen frequently finds joy, such as spending time with friends, seem to be localized instances of what might be global human experiences. Jenne defines joy as a sense that everything is right in the world, including her place in it. “I am my most authentic self. It is a personal experience, different for each person. When I see a bee harvesting pollen from a flower that I planted, I feel joy because we need bees and because the flowers bring pollen and beauty into the world. For me joy is clarity, brightness, the palpable absence of weight. Joy can be brief or sustained, and joy can be nurtured. I’ve learned that joy can be contagious, and that trusted social relationships can amplify joy. Pain and sorrow can exist alongside joy, and can usher joy in.” Jennifer understands joy as a sudden emotional and physical response to an experience. It’s a moment in time coming from a place of authenticity and integration with personal values (Johnson 2020).¹¹ As Ross Gay (2022) so eloquently explains, joy can co-exist with hardship and sorrow. And Barbara Fredrickson’s (2001) influential broaden-and-build theory tells Jennifer that joy opens a person up to play, creativity, curiosity, optimism, and possibility, building up individual resources and resilience. Finally, Jennifer has come to understand joy as an emotion that one can choose to cultivate in multiple aspects of life.

Finding Individual Joy

This work began with the intent of undertaking an academic project while simultaneously creating joyful states. What started as a quasi-ethnographic exploration led us to explore how joy can be cultivated, shared, and measured. We found that joy can be incited when absent, and it can be cultivated like a seed and bear fruit. As Ingrid Fetell Lee concludes in *Joyful*: “And though I never would have suspected it eight years ago ... it’s not far-fetched to believe that from the seeds of our own joy, a whole world can be reborn” (2021, 298).

The readings we have included offer many introspective ways to bring about states of joyfulness. In *Inciting Joy*, Gay begins by asking the reader to consider joy not as a state free from pain, but rather as its necessary companion, “fundamentally tangled up with one another” (2022, 4). His essays may incite joy by demonstrating many ways that joy and struggle are intertwined, in the classroom, in the garden, on the basketball court, and beyond. His writing focuses on how he is able to find joy and how his experiences of joy manifest themselves in his world. Physical spaces can be made more joyful through careful design. From painting spaces bright colors to seeking experiences of transcendence, Lee (2021) suggests concrete ways to bring joyfulness into physical surroundings. The Joyful Toolkit at the conclusion of Lee’s book includes worksheets with practical exercises for immediate results. Casioppo (2020) describes

¹¹ See also Van Cappellen, “The Emotion of Joy.”

three distinct approaches to increasing feelings of joyfulness in oneself: a Buddhist practice, a positive psychology approach, and a physical approach initiated by yoga. Hersh (2022) describes a yoga practice that can achieve almost immediate results in reducing stress and increasing positive emotions. The Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu (Dalai Lama, Tutu, and Abrams 2016) offer specific meditation practices for joy. The NPR Joy Generator (2021) offers prompts from nonreligious contexts designed to increase joy.

Work and Organizational Joy

While studies and opinions about job satisfaction and other positive emotions within the workplace abound, precious few specifically consider joy. We found extensive discussion of wellness at work¹² but little specific treatment of joy at work. Many organizational development and leadership authors conflate joy with engagement, satisfaction, and other positive emotions rather than considering it as its own construct. No wonder, perhaps, since, as Johnson (2020) explains at length, researchers have yet to settle on a shared definition for joy. Additional researchers (Jena and Pradhan 2017; Perlo et al. 2017) highlight the lack of a standard measure for joy. Considerable research also examines the negative effect of work, such as the exploitative framing of work as motivated by love and passion¹³ and the harmful effects of the “vocational awe” felt in service occupations such as libraries.¹⁴ Leaders and other organizational change agents will still find practical advice in the selections included in this bibliography that may help meet the broader context and its systemic challenges.

Two reports included in the bibliography are notable for their rigorous review of the literature about joy at work and for the strategies they offer. The Institute for Healthcare Improvement (Perlo et al. 2017) presents a practical four-step framework for promoting joy within the workplace that provides ample evidence and encouragement for leaders beyond healthcare. Leaders may also wish to consult the robust meta-analysis of Gallup engagement studies by James Harter, Frank Schmidt, and Corey Keyes (2003). Although Harter and others have published more recent meta-analyses, this one includes the concept of joy alongside other positive emotions and provides a strong business case for focusing on joy along with strategies which organizations might prioritize.

¹² Bobbi L. Newman, *Fostering Wellness in the Workplace: A Handbook for Libraries* (ALA Editions, 2022), <https://alastore.ala.org/wellness>.

¹³ Sarah Jaffe, *Work Won't Love You Back: How Devotion to Our Jobs Keeps Us Exploited, Exhausted, and Alone* (Bold Type Books, 2021).

¹⁴ Bélanger, “Bias and Whiteness in Public Services”; Ettarh, “Vocational Awe and Librarianship”; Stutzman, “Vocational Awe and Theological Librarianship”; Vickers and Yang, “Double the Vocation, Double the Awe.”

We only located one empirical research study focused on library employees and positive emotions (albeit not joy *per se*). In that study, Michele Villagran and Lisa Martin (2022) explore relationships between emotional intelligence and happiness with a mixed-methods study specific to libraries. Their robust literature review about negative emotional affect for library workers supports our observation of the lack of literature about positive emotions among library workers.

Finally, we've included a selection of essays about joy for those working in higher education and libraries. Reflections from Dowland (2022) and Janet Groen (2015) both encourage those working in higher education to embrace joy. Jenna Hartel and Hailey Siracky (2022), in a special issue of *Library Trends* dedicated to joy, present and provide context for essays and poetry reflecting on the joy of information including for those who make it their work.¹⁵ In combination, these pieces provide a diversity of individual perspectives on the importance and presence of joy in the academic workplace.

Empowering Change with Joy

Academics, activists, and essayists highlight a strong interconnection between joy and social justice. Or, as Alice Walker writes in her novel *Possessing the Secret of Joy*: “Resistance is the secret of joy.”¹⁶ By learning more about how joy supports social justice, library leaders may gain insights into how they can support resilient employees and cultivate an inclusive workplace.

Fredrickson (2001) proposes that positive emotions—including joy and the related activity of play—serve to build up one’s physical, intellectual, and social resources. Joy, she proposes, helps to build psychological resilience. Van Cappellen hypothesizes that joy helps individuals to understand themselves and thus “motivates us to invest energy in what truly matters for us.”¹⁷ Similarly, Garrido (2022) proposes that joy can provide momentum toward social change and Groen (2015) argues that focusing on joy can provide a foundation for social justice advocacy. Brian E. Kumm and Joseph A. Pate highlight the joyfulness of antiauthoritarian music as an important part of political resistance.¹⁸ In a special issue of *Library Trends* (Hartel and Siracky 2024), Greenshields and Polkinghorne explore the power of love (or “joy plus solidarity”) to

¹⁵ Amanda Belantara and Emily Drabinski, “Pleasure and the Practice of Classification,” *Library Trends* 70, no. 4 (2022): 562–73, <https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.2022.0018>; Mary Greenshields and Sarah Polkinghorne, “Love Is a Lens: Locating Love in Library and Information Studies,” *Library Trends* 70, no. 4 (2022): 458–71, <https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.2022.0011>.

¹⁶ Alice Walker, *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1992), 279.

¹⁷ Van Cappellen, “The Emotion of Joy.”

¹⁸ Brian E. Kumm and Joseph A. Pate, “‘This Machine Kills Fascists’: Music, Joy, Resistance,” *Leisure Studies* 43, no. 3 (2023): 395–406, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2023.2191982>.

transform power dynamics.¹⁹ The cornucopia of essays, interviews, reflections, and poems found in *Pleasure Activism* (brown 2019) manifest and celebrate sensual and erotic joys as organizing principles. Artist Amanda Phingbodhipakkiya describes the power of art throughout New York City with the I Still Believe in Our City Project to amplify joy, soothe grief, and move people to action in support of Asian Americans and Black Americans.²⁰ Kristie Soares argues that Puerto Rican and Cuban media creators use joy to “resist the dominant stories told about Latinx joy over centuries of colonialism and imperialism.”²¹

Multiple entries in this bibliography expand upon joy within the Black American community as a form of racial justice. Miracle Jones (2021), in her Ted Talk “The Radical, Revolutionary Resilience of Black Joy” explains how joy strengthens each person fighting against racism without embracing toxic positivity. In Tarana Burke and Brené Brown’s collection of essays (2021), Austin Channing Brown discusses the “foreboding joy” experienced by Black Americans living within systemic racism,²² and Tanya Denise Fields describes embracing “joy as my birthright.”²³ In *Black Joy: Stories of Resistance, Resilience, and Restoration*, Lewis-Giggetts writes that Black Joy “is a mechanism for resistance, a method of resilience, and a master plan for restoration” (2022, 8–9). Briefer considerations of similar themes can be found in powerful additional essays by Lewis-Giggetts²⁴ and Imani Perry.²⁵

In 2014, Michelle Vaughan and colleagues found a shift in the psychological research with LGBTQ+ communities away from negative experiences toward affirming, strengths-based

¹⁹ Greenshields and Polkinghorne, “Love Is a Lens,” 459.

²⁰ Amanda Phingbodhipakkiya, Joy Is a Beautiful Act of Resistance, interview by Paulette Beete, 2021, <https://www.arts.gov/stories/magazine/2021/2/showing-strength-through-creativity-equity-and-access-arts-asian-americanpacific-islander/joy-beautiful-act-resistance>.

²¹ Kristie Soares, *Playful Protest: The Political Work of Joy in Latinx Media* (University of Illinois Press, 2023), 2–3.

²² Austin Channing Brown, “This Joy I Have,” in *You Are Your Best Thing: Vulnerability, Shame Resilience, and the Black Experience*, ed. Tarana Burke and Brené Brown (Random House Publishing Group, 2021), 13–20.

²³ Tanya Denise Fields, “Dirty Business: The Messy Affair of Rejecting Shame,” in *You Are Your Best Thing: Vulnerability, Shame Resilience, and the Black Experience*, ed. Tarana Burke and Brené Brown (Random House Publishing Group, 2021), 22–32, 29.

²⁴ Tracey M. Lewis-Giggetts, “My Daughter Reminded Me That Black Joy Is a Form of Resistance,” *Washington Post*, June 19, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2020/06/19/my-daughters-dancing-rain-reminded-me-power-black-joy/>.

²⁵ Imani Perry, “Racism Is Terrible. Blackness Is Not,” *The Atlantic*, June 15, 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/06/racism-terrible-blackness-not/613039/>.

perspectives;²⁶ a related article recommended the integration of positive psychology pillars (including Fredrickson's (2001) broaden-and-build theory) into future research with LGBTQ+ people.²⁷ Queer joy has found a distinct place in the narrative of resistance as a place for celebration, critical questioning, and political action.²⁸ Recent research on queer and trans joy is explored in artmaking and archiving workshops,²⁹ diary studies,³⁰ and performative writing.³¹ As libraries are often at the nexus of politics, education, and society, library leaders of queer and non-queer identities can find illumination in how queer joy creates well-being, manifests through structural policies and inclusive programming, and increases resilience to minority stress.³²

Researchers in disability studies and those within disability communities have also embraced joy as a political act of liberation. Artist and educator Jen White-Johnson actively speaks and writes about autistic joy, and advocates for “redesigning ableist visual culture.”³³ Our annotated bibliography highlights the essay “Black Disabled Joy as an Act of Resistance” (2023) in which White-Johnson explains how mothering a child with autism while experiencing their own disability became a revolutionary act. We’ve also included Olivia Christine Patton’s *Towel Time: An Exploration of Love and Joy in Disability/Chronically Ill Communities* (2022). In this photographic series and discussion, Patton analyzes their “connection with disabled and chronically ill interdependent relationships that utilize joy and care as political acts” (2). We also located many less formal, online narratives which powerfully elaborate on disability, joy, and

²⁶ Michelle D. Vaughan et al., “A Content Analysis of LGBT-Themed Positive Psychology Articles,” *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity* 1, no. 4 (2014): 313–24, <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2014-52523-006>.

²⁷ Michelle D. Vaughan and Eric M. Rodriguez, “LGBT Strengths: Incorporating Positive Psychology into Theory, Research, Training, and Practice,” *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity* 1, no. 4 (December 2014): 325–34, <https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000053>.

²⁸ Stacey Copeland, “Sustaining Queer Joy and Potentiality: Through Independent Production with Homoground Music Podcast,” *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 35, no. 4 (December 1, 2023): 111–24, <https://doi.org/10.1525/jpms.2023.35.4.111>; Human Rights Campaign, *Time to THRIVE: Queer Joy Panel, 2022*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FXgyFLAW7UA>.

²⁹ Melissa Keehn et al., “Doing It Together, but in a Queer Way: Joyful Worldmaking with 2SLGBTQI + Folks in Atlantic Canada,” *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 2024, 1–27, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19361653.2024.2302034>.

³⁰ Sofia S. Flynn et al., “Queer and Transgender Joy: A Daily Diary Qualitative Study of Positive Identity Factors among Sexual and Gender Minority Adolescents,” *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000733>.

³¹ Michael Tristano, “Performing Queer of Color Joy Through Collective Crisis: Resistance, Social Science, and How I Learned to Dance Again,” *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies* 22, no. 3 (June 1, 2022): 276–81, <https://doi.org/10.1177/15327086221087671>.

³² Flynn et al., “Queer and Transgender Joy.”

³³ Jen White-Johnson, “Jen White-Johnson,” June 15, 2024, <https://jenwhitejohnson.com/>.

social justice. Rather than leaving out the many by highlighting just a few, we encourage the reader to search #autisticjoy, #cripjoy, and #disabilityjoy to learn more. Collectively, these works echo a shift within scholarly disability studies towards challenging assumptions that frame disability as inherently flawed³⁴ and within practitioner publications towards increased attention on positive psychology.³⁵

Black joy, queer joy, and autistic joy are only a few of the ways that marginalized groups embrace identity and joy as a means of resistance, liberation, and empowerment. Joy is a lens through which people of all identities—race, gender, ability, immigrant status, age, survivorship, and even humanness³⁶—empower themselves through their distinctive experiences of joy.

Joy-Adjacent Emotions

Some of the pieces included in the bibliography explore emotions that don't seem joyful, or even positive. Just as the reader may wish to consider conditions which incite joy, the reader might also interrogate these joy-adjacent concepts. For example, Gay writes about joy in the face of suffering in the first incitement in his book *Inciting Joy*:

What I am advocating, and adamantly so, is that rather than quarantining ourselves or running from sorrow, rather than warring with sorrow, we lay down our swords and invite sorrow in. I'm suggesting we make sorrow some tea from the lemon balm in the garden. We let sorrow wash up and take some of our clothes. We give sorrow our dad's slippers that we've hung onto for fifteen years for just this occasion. (2022, 4)

Gay goes on to describe a fantasy in which his sorrow is invited along to everything he does, and by bringing it along he is able to fully experience joy. The Dalai Lama and Bishop Desmond Tutu also explore the relationship of joy to sorrow, noting that sadness can lead directly to empathy, generosity, and compassion and recognizing the human need for connection to one another. "We try so hard to separate joy and sorrow, but the Archbishop and

³⁴ Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (Indiana University Press, 2013).

³⁵ Dana S. Dunn, "A Positive Psychology for Disability and Rehabilitation: Some Recent Advances," in *Positive Psychology: Established and Emerging Issues*, ed. Dana S. Dunn (Routledge, 2017), 236–50; Pravani Naidoo, "Potential Contributions to Disability Theorizing and Research from Positive Psychology," *Disability and Rehabilitation* 28, no. 9 (May 15, 2006): 595–602, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00222930500219027>; Michael L. Wehmeyer, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology and Disability* (Oxford University Press, 2013); Michael L. Wehmeyer, "The Future of Positive Psychology and Disability," *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (December 8, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.790506>.

³⁶ To see animals experience joy, go to a dog park. Or give a cat a feather. We might learn a lot about joy through play by watching nonhuman animals.

the Dalai Lama remind us that they are inevitably fastened together” (Dalai Lama, Tutu, and Abrams 2016, 111).

Foreboding joy is an overwhelming sense that what one is experiencing is too good to be true and that it won't last (Brown, B. 2021). Austin Channing Brown describes this phenomenon in detail in the essay “This Joy I Have,” specifically as it relates to Black women in America.³⁷ She also offers some responses and suggested strategies for mitigating the foreboding and nurturing the joy:

But our community has learned that the darkest depths of human evil cannot snuff out our experiences of joy—of laughter and love, of good food and good conversation, of family legacy and of hope for the future, of creative endeavor and the pursuit of justice. The joy of Blackness persists.³⁸

Schadenfreude is taking joy in the misfortune of others. Johnson reports that psychological researchers consider schadenfreude the result of inherent competition and is also an in-group binding emotion. That is, one experiences more joy in the misfortune of others who are rival out-group members (Johnson 2020, 18). Johnson also offers Karl Barth's term “counterfeit joy” when writing about joy at the expense of another (2020, 18).

Gluckschmerz is the experience of displeasure or anger at another's *good* fortune, akin to envy (Hoogland et al. 2015, 261). These twin emotions of schadenfreude and gluckschmerz may seem, and can be, antithetical to the experiences normally described as joyful but they do have a role to play in survival. As Charles Hoogland and colleagues (2015) describe in the experience of historian Peter Gay's years spent under Nazi rule, schadenfreude and gluckschmerz became survival strategies. Moreover, both emotions can motivate action in the face of perceived injustice. Who doesn't feel a little joy when a billionaire loses great sums of money? Or anger when some criminals get a pardon? Johnson notes that “schadenfreude is primarily driven by a desire for one's own social standing to increase” (2020, 19). This is not *prima facie* a negative, but rather a result of the human desire to survive, especially in the context of limited resources and perceived injustice.

Finally, *toxic positivity* refers to the forced maintenance of a cheerful, uncomplaining disposition as a workplace expectation. Gorin identifies this approach as aligned with a doctrine of personal responsibility and positive thinking that fails to attend to the variability in life

³⁷ Brown, A. C. “This Joy I Have.”

³⁸ Brown, A. C. “This Joy I Have,” 19.

circumstances and social identities that can affect one's flourishing.³⁹ A holistic, inclusive, non-normative, non-mandatory approach to joy, especially in the workplace, can mitigate the potential for this harmful joy-adjacent phenomenon.

Approach and Limitations

We included in this bibliography all of the research about joy within context of working within academic libraries that we could locate through searches of *Library, Information Science and Technology Abstracts*. We then broadened our search to the multidisciplinary *Academic Search Complete* to include all industries, across society, and the study of joy as an emotion. We further expanded our search to underrepresented voices with targeted searches in Google Scholar and Google. We then shared and discussed our manuscript with three colleagues who have different backgrounds and perspectives than our own. We primarily selected works which considered the specific concept of joy, distinct from other positive emotions, as described in the psychology literature.

We read only in English thus the entries are limited to that language. We acknowledge the vast and global body of older research related to joy, frequently grounded in spiritual traditions and in religious studies, as well as the significant body of research connecting physical activity and mental wellbeing. We provide selected, introductory works from these particularly rich fields of research to help direct the general reader into those more specialized bodies of work. We do not purport to provide a comprehensive coverage of joy and hope that our readers will resonate with the resources we have included to continue to explore joy where their interests take them.

Positionality and Context

This section describes our personal and professional identities. We met over nineteen years ago when we were all librarians working at a large, predominantly white, public institution in Virginia. Our collaborations with each other over the years include books, articles, and presentations. We are all white and married without dependents.

Vignettes from our personal experiences showcase how joy may manifest in the workplace differently for different individuals—even for people who may share many similar social identities and who have weathered and instigated multiple transitions in the same organization. Our experiences also illuminate how definitions of joy can be different, yet complementary. We also

³⁹ Shlomit Gorin, "The Happiness Dilemma: An Integrative Literature Review on Happiness in Positive Psychology and Psychoanalysis" (PsyD diss., The Wright Institute, 2019), 80–81, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2498601528/abstract/B5FBCB76A73B4091PQ/1>.

use this opportunity to share our positionality, which inevitably results in bias that can only be ameliorated by additional perspectives in future work and from the works we cite.

Jennifer Keach

My professional identity is both as an academic librarian and as an organizational development professional. I earned graduate degrees in both fields and have worked within that overlapping context (along with technology) for much of my professional career. As we finish this research, I am retiring from a thirty-year career in academic libraries. My personal identity includes being a first-generation university graduate, cisgender, and secular. I am currently learning how disability has become part of my identity. In my research and my practice of librarianship and my personal life, I intend to embrace an appreciative, strengths-based perspective.

I started researching joy by starting with curiosity about long-term retention of employees in academic libraries. As a coordinator of organizational learning and development, I wanted to know how an organization could retain employees, especially those who were later in their career. I also had a personal interest, as someone who is later in my own career and experiencing burnout, as well as eagerness for continued professional growth and new challenges. My research almost exclusively led to literature about why library employees leave, but not why they stay. I was already familiar with some of the research in these areas. Notably Ettarh's article on vocational awe⁴⁰ and Kaetrena Davis Kendrick's ongoing research about low morale experiences within libraries had provided me with frameworks to understand library workplace phenomena and trauma I had observed and experienced myself.⁴¹ What I didn't realize until I went looking for the positive was how much the library profession has focused on organizational culture deficits, largely to the exclusion of strengths.

⁴⁰ Ettarh, "Vocational Awe and Librarianship."

⁴¹ Kaetrena Davis Kendrick, "The Low Morale Experience of Academic Librarians: A Phenomenological Study," *Journal of Library Administration* 57, no. 8 (2017): 846–78, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2017.1368325>; Kaetrena Davis Kendrick, "Leaving the Low-Morale Experience: A Qualitative Study," *Alki* 37, no. 2 (2021): 9–24; Kaetrena Davis Kendrick, "The Public Librarian Low-Morale Experience: A Qualitative Study," *Partnership* 15, no. 2 (2021): 1–32, <https://doi.org/10.21083/partnership.v15i2.5932>; Kaetrena Davis Kendrick, "The Cornered Office: A Qualitative Study of Low-Morale Experiences in Formal Library Leaders," *Journal of Library Administration* 63, no. 3 (April 3, 2023): 307–38, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2023.2177924>; Kaetrena Davis Kendrick and Lone T. Damasco, "Low Morale in Ethnic and Racial Minority Academic Librarians: An Experiential Study," *Library Trends* 68, no. 2 (2019): 174–212, <https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.2019.0036>.

Jenne Klotz

In 2022, after living and working with the COVID-19 pandemic for two years, preceded by an extended period of intense organizational upheaval, I felt myself weighed down by all of the grief and heaviness in my workplace and the world. Certainly, there were good reasons to be scared, angry, frustrated, and cynical about the state of global affairs. Yet I was relatively safe. I was working from home, my caregiving responsibilities had not increased, I had what I needed to survive. I am a cisgender woman, financially stable and closer to the end of my career than the beginning. I am a tenured full professor with a consistent and stable work history in libraries and higher education. Despite the privilege I had experienced, anxiety was my constant companion. Since nearly everything felt out of my control, I began to wonder what I *could* change.

I began to think about joy in the context of transition. As a librarian, I turned to the research to help me begin to understand how I felt simultaneously so lucky to have a job and so anxious. One article in particular, “Transitioning Out of Leadership: Is There Life after Higher Administration?” described the experience of three former administrators who returned to faculty positions for a variety of personal and professional reasons.⁴² One of the authors included this experience: “Then one beautiful, late spring morning, I was out on a walk. It was 10 a.m. and I didn’t have a meeting to attend, a trip to prepare for, or a crisis to deal with. At that moment it dawned on me that I felt free and I breathed that feeling in with a huge smile on my face.” When I read this, I began to focus on relief and letting go—of hurt, worry, resentment, and stress. And I realized that there was scholarship on both the phenomena of transition and on joy. I saw a doorway to joy in my early research and decided to walk through it to see what was on the other side.

What I found when I walked through that door was a potluck dinner. There were poets, educators, religious scholars and leaders, social scientists, therapists, and artists sharing ways of bringing joy into their lives and work. They wrote about the role of joy in working toward social change (Garrido 2022) and explored the interplay of joy and sorrow (Dalai Lama, Tutu, and Abrams 2016; Gay 2022). Reading the literature allowed me to reflect on the myriad experiences of joy and begin to imagine my own future as inclusive of joy.

Galen Talis

I am a nonbinary academic librarian in the middle of my career. For me, joy has always been integrated with my underlying life philosophies and spiritualities. During my young adult years,

⁴² Christina M. Frederick, Alvin Y. Wang, and Jane S. Halonen, “Transitioning Out of Leadership: Is There Life After Higher Administration?” *The Psychologist Manager Journal* 23, no. 2 (2020): 116–33, <https://doi.org/10.1037/mgr000102>.

Christianity oriented me toward finding transcendent, emotional joy in God, Jesus, and church communities. In the workplace, shared organizational values and secular ethics have supported the joy I find in fellow human beings working together. Due to my leadership roles, I've engaged actively in studying and practicing techniques and skills to create group spaces that are supportive of connection and accomplishment, which sometimes leads to experiences of joy. My practice of Buddhism has added joy from embracing concepts like interconnectedness and impermanence. Most recently, poetry by Black authors has illuminated joy amid social injustice, expressing the inexpressible. For me, joy has often felt like it's part of my calling as a human being in both spiritual and secular ways, and my understanding of it has permeated all aspects of my life, including my career.

Doing research for this bibliography has underscored my belief that while joy may have some common expressions and characteristics, the particularities of its causes and conditions are unique to everyone. Especially in the workplace, it is critical to take an inclusive, generative approach to joy. There are many ways of knowing joy—physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual—none should be privileged over another. The vast framework of joy, along with the ability for joy to co-exist with other emotions, could provide an opportunity for workplace groups to find generative spaces while avoiding toxic positivity.

Conclusion

When we began this work, each of us were seeking specific relief—from the anxiety of the pandemic, social upheaval, and transitions on the horizon. While we feel that the entries we annotated offer something for almost everyone, we see several areas for future amplification and research. The role of joy in recovering from trauma, bullying, and complex grief could support a wide variety of situations and experiences. We encourage researchers to focus more on inciting joy in academic libraries as well as schools and children's libraries. The lack of an agreed-upon definition or measurement scale for joy limits the opportunities for researchers and organizations to study the topic systematically. Library leaders at all levels will find multiple uses for these sources and other works on joy. In working together, we found that focused attention to joy in our lives and in the resources had the effect of increasing our own joy. Anecdotally, we also observed a contagious effect of sharing joy in our lives. We suggest that readers may want to read the entries with work teams, trusted friends or colleagues and observe whether their own joy increases. Some of the works may bring joy just by reading them, and others offer small changes that can be integrated into everyday lives to increase joy. We believe that by understanding more about the circumstances that fertilize joy, it can become a lens through

which we can approach many aspects of our lives, as well as the workplace. What if we tried to make meetings a little more joyful? Can our spaces—physical and virtual—incite joy? Can we infuse joy into a syllabus or project plan? By acknowledging that conditions for joy are unevenly distributed, joy can be incited and experienced in myriad ways. We believe the resources we include open the door for anyone who wishes to amplify joy in their own life.

Want to try out some quick activities we found joyful during our work? Check out figure 1!



Figure 1: Ways to incite joy at work—in 5 minutes or less!

Annotated Bibliography

brown, adrienne maree. 2019. *Pleasure Activism*. AK Press.

This bounteous collection of essays, reflections, interviews, and poems creates more room for joy by exploring pleasures found in sex, erotica, drugs, fashion, eating, cooking, and other sensual experiences. brown and her friends and colleagues demonstrate and elucidate how pleasure can align with our values in a way to combat oppression and decolonize our bodies from the effects of profit-driven economies. Titles such as “Adornment and Burlesque,” “Ecstasy Saved My Life,” “Nipples Are Magic,” “Pleasure after Childhood Sexual Abuse,” and “Pleasure Over Sixty” only barely begin to convey the breadth and depth of this book. While the purpose and focus is on the sensory, a bevy of footnotes provide a powerful connection to scholarship and other creative works that will bring joy to those who find pleasure in critical thought.

Brown, Brené. 2021. *Atlas of the Heart: Mapping Meaningful Connection, and the Language of the Human Experience*. Random House.

Brené Brown offers a highly readable discussion of human emotion and experiences, based on extensive research. She loosely groups emotions so that the reader may consider them thematically. She groups joy and foreboding joy alongside happiness, calm, contentment, gratitude, relief, and tranquility. In defining joy, she cites Johnson's 2020 review of the literature about joy, also in this bibliography, and helps to bring the concepts alive with her own personal stories. The "Atlas Hub" offers supporting media gleaned from her 5-part television series,⁴³ also called *Atlas of the Heart*, and from her podcast, *Unlocking Us with Brené Brown*.⁴⁴

Burke, Tarana, and Brené Brown, eds. 2021. *You Are Your Best Thing: Vulnerability, Shame Resilience, and the Black Experience*. Random House.

In this collection of essays, artists, academics, and activists explore vulnerability and resilience in the Black experience. Joy appears in many of the essays, most notably in the chapter "This Joy I Have" by Austin Channing Brown.⁴⁵ In it, Brown describes *foreboding joy* (a phrase coined by Brené Brown) as it pertains to the experience of Black Americans living within racist structures. In "Dirty Business: The Messy Business of Rejecting Shame," Tanya Denise Fields embraces "Radical Black Joy as inherent as a human need...."⁴⁶ Other essays in the book explore vulnerability, healing from trauma, and the phenomena of pain.

Casioppo, Danielle. 2020. "The Cultivation of Joy: Practices from the Buddhist Tradition, Positive Psychology, and Yogic Philosophy." *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 15 (1): 67–73. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2019.1685577>.

In this article, appearing in the 2020 special issue about joy from the *Journal of Positive Psychology*, Casioppo describes three distinct approaches to creating joy at the

⁴³ Brené Brown, "Atlas Hub: Finding the Way Back to Ourselves and Each Other," 2024, <https://brenebrown.com/hubs/atlas-hub/>.

⁴⁴ Brené Brown, "Unlocking Us with Brené Brown," 2024, <https://brenebrown.com/podcast-show/unlocking-us/>.

⁴⁵ Brown, A. C., "This Joy I Have."

⁴⁶ Fields, "Dirty Business: The Messy Affair of Rejecting Shame," 29.

individual level. Focusing first on Buddhist traditions, she focuses on *mudita* (taking delight in the good fortune of others) and describes several meditations that create joyful states in the practitioners. She draws upon positive psychology to describe the use of character strengths. Key to this approach, she explains, is the concept of authenticity. Finally, Casioppo suggests yoga as a gateway to joy, describing specific breathing techniques and postures which create energized joyous feelings. Casioppo concludes that it is not only possible to create joy from within, but it is essential to our wellbeing.

Dalai Lama, Desmond Tutu, and Doug Abrams. 2016. *The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World*. Penguin Random House.

This book describes a week-long meeting between Archbishop Desmond Tutu and His Holiness the Dalai Lama in which they explore their friendship and the topic of joy. Through storytelling, teachings, and shared insights, the reader learns about how both men work to overcome hardship and prioritize joy in their own lives and the lives of their followers. They share their spiritual practices along with science that supports the positive power of joy, compassion, and generosity. A theme throughout the book is how to “transform joy from an ephemeral state into an enduring trait, from a fleeting feeling into a lasting way of being” (4). They explore eight pillars of joy: qualities of the mind (perspective, humility, humor, and acceptance) and qualities of heart (forgiveness, gratitude, compassion, and generosity). They also offer a lengthy section on joy practices, including meditations, prayers, and exercises that can be integrated into spontaneous moments and longer-term practice. Watch the film *Mission Joy*⁴⁷ for more about the meeting described in this book.

Dowland, Douglas. “No Fun for You! Academe’s Pleasure Problem.” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 17, 2022. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/no-fun-for-you>.

In this essay, Dowland (2022) proposes that “our profession has trained us to be suspicious of happiness in all forms, to scrutinize every morsel of good feeling until it is rendered mute and sterile” (para. 3). And yet, Dowland argues that academics should

⁴⁷ *Mission: Joy – Finding Happiness in Troubled Times*, directed by Louis Psihoyos and Peggy Callahn, (The Joy Film, Oceanic Preservation Society, Artemis Rising Foundation, 2022), <https://missionjoy.org/>.

instead cultivate and strengthen pleasure, to reconnect with what academics enjoy about the work and their colleagues.

Emmons, Robert A. [ed.]. 2020. "Joy and Positive Psychology." Special issue, *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 15 (1).

While we've highlighted two articles from this issue with their own entries (Casioppo 2020; Johnson 2020), the entire special issue in which they were published is notable for its extensive overview of joy from multiple perspectives. The editor strives to focus on the systematic study of joy to fill a gap in the psychology literature. His interdisciplinary approach draws from the social sciences and humanities. Contributors "reflect on what joy is, why it matters and what are its sources and consequences" (3).

Fredrickson, Barbara L. 2001. "The Role of Positive Emotions in Positive Psychology: The Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions." *American Psychologist* 56 (3): 218–26.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.56.3.218>.

Much as negative emotions elicit specific behavioral responses (such as fight or flight), Fredrickson proposes that positive emotions elicit a broader range of responses. In this way, Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory suggests that responses to positive emotions work to build up "enduring personal resources, which function as reserves to be drawn on later to manage future threats" (220). Joy, for example, "broadens by creating the urge to play, push the limits, and be creative" (220) which, in turn, builds physical resources through physical play, social bonds and attachment through social play, and intellectual resources through creativity. Furthermore, Fredrickson theorizes that positive emotions (including joy) serve as "efficient antidotes for the lingering effects of negative emotions" (221) and contribute to psychological resiliency (223).

Garrido, Juan Luis. 2022. "Joy and Social Change." Unpublished master's thesis, OCAD University.

https://openresearch.ocadu.ca/id/eprint/3929/1/Garrido_JuanLuis_2022_MDes_SFI_MRP.pdf

The central question of this master's thesis is how joy might be better understood to allow for engagement with social change. Believing that joy can provide momentum toward social change, Garrido explores three forms of joy: personal joy, applied joy, and aspirational joy. He then imagines the social change he would like to see in the world.

The narrative makes connections between other works we have included here—*The Book of Joy* (Dalai Lama, Tutu, and Abrams 2016); *Joyful* (Lee 2021); and the special issue of *The Journal of Positive Psychology* (Emmons 2020)—as well as popular works, including science fiction. The work concludes with a prototypical activity in which the author guides readers through the creation of their own joy fractal.

Gay, Ross. 2022. *Inciting Joy: Essays*. Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill.

Gay begins this book of essays by asserting that joy is not the opposite of pain and sorrow. Instead, sorrow and pain are the necessary companions to joy. In these ten essays, Gay asks not only what incites joy in himself, but what joy incites in him—as in, how it makes him behave. Through the essays Gay demonstrates how joy leads to love and is a survival skill. He does not shy away from recognizing the difficulties humans are living with—climate catastrophe, capitalism run amok, racism and sexism, and authoritarianism—but rather he addresses them head on and then writes about how he counters these forces in his life and work. The essay on school stands out as it asks educators to examine the role of competition and authority in education (which Gay otherwise sees as a source of joy) and challenges them to “trade the podium for the garden” (157). Unlike some of the other entries here, this book does not offer specific suggestions for ways to create more joy in life, but rather describes how Gay finds joy in his. By reading about his experiences, the reader sees how they might incite joy in their own life. Hear Ross Gay reading his poem, “[To the Fig Tree on 9th and Christian](#),” for an example.⁴⁸

Groen, Janet. 2015. “A Pathway to Joy in Our Work: Spirituality in the Academy.” *Journal of College and Character* 16 (2): 120–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2194587X.2015.1024797>.

In this article, Groen highlights the challenge of exhaustion cycles and proposes that “joyful work is experienced when our basic needs are taken care of and we are holistically engaged: physically, cognitively, emotionally, socially and spiritually” (120). The author describes her personal journey of a meditation practice to recommit to her “meaning and purpose as a faculty member” (122) and to move toward alignment of

⁴⁸ Ross Gay, “To the Fig Tree on 9th and Christian,” in *The Beautiful Poem That Will Bring You to Tears* | #OWNSHOW | Oprah Online, YouTube, January 22, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9aT0A28IW7E>.

outward action and internal intent. The author argues that cultivating inner wisdom and marrying it to action provides a foundation for advocacy for social justice issues in the academy.

Hartel, Jenna, and Hailey Siracky [eds.]. 2022. "Joy of Information." Special issue, *Library Trends* 70 (4). <https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.2022.0008>.

Hartel and Siracky present and provide context for twelve papers (with haiku interludes!) about the joy of information. This rich collection offers a multitude of perspectives including those of the scholar, the reader, the researcher and information seeker, the collector, and the library employee. Among the standouts in this collection are the concept of joy framed alongside information-seeking behavior; considerations of joy and love, social justice, and library work; and contributions surrounding the joy of information seekers and users. Essays included in this collection that deal directly with library workers include the editors' "Introduction," Mary Greenshields and Sarah Polkinghorne's "Love is a Lens: Locating Love in Library and Information Studies," and Amanda Belantara and Emily Drabinski's "Pleasure and the Practice of Classification." Readers interested in exploring even more about joy as a service, particularly within the context of public libraries, may also wish to read the 2019 book *Wholehearted Librarianship: Finding Hope, Inspiration, and Balance* by Michael Stephens.⁴⁹

Harter, James K., Frank L. Schmidt, and Corey L. M. Keyes. 2003. "Well-Being in the Workplace and Its Relationship to Business Outcomes: A Review of the Gallup Studies." In *Flourishing: Positive Psychology and the Life Well-Lived*, 205–24. American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/10594-009>.

With a long track record of surveying employees about employee engagement,⁵⁰ the consulting firm Gallup offers considerable insights into well-being at work. This 2003 review of Gallup studies offers a meta-analysis of the relationship between employee engagement and business outcomes using Gallup data from thirty-six companies across twenty-one different industries, and close to 200,000 respondents. In laying the foundation for the meta-analysis, the authors consider how well-being, defined broadly to

⁴⁹ Michael T. Stephens, *Wholehearted Librarianship: Finding Hope, Inspiration, and Balance* (ALA Editions, 2019).

⁵⁰ Gallup, "Helping People Be Heard," Gallup.com, 2024, <https://www.gallup.com/corporate/212381/who-we-are.aspx>.

include “job satisfaction, commitment, joy, fulfillment, interest, caring” (2), relates to employee engagement and benefits both communities and organizations. They refer to the seminal broaden-and-build theory of Fredrickson (2001), also in this bibliography. Providing a business case for joy, they suggest that “daily occurrences that bring about joy, interest, and love (or caring) lead to a bonding of individuals to each other, their work, and their organization” (6). The authors propose strategies that organizations can use to support positive emotions: “actions within organizations that support clear outcome expectancies, give basic material support, and encourage individual contribution and fulfillment, a sense of belonging, and a chance to progress and learn continuously” (6).

Hersh, Matthew A. 2022. “Inspiring Laughter, Humor, Joy, and Playfulness.” In *The Thriving Therapist: Sustainable Self-Care to Prevent Burnout and Enhance Well-Being*, 245–53. American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0000309-023>.

This book chapter is aimed at psychotherapists, although it offers suggestions relevant to anyone at risk for burnout or simply exploring ways of bringing more joy into their lives. Hersh specifically describes laughter yoga, a practice that encourages the physical exercise of laughter apart from humor, which is subjective. Hersh cites researchers who find that laughter, especially that which comes from yoga practice, increases positive emotions and decreases negative emotions, as well as reduces stress hormones, blood pressure, and resting heart rate. He also highlights that laughter therapy releases endorphins for pain management and increases circulation. Plus, it’s free, for the most part, and it can be learned. Watch [this five-minute instructional video](#) to try this practice.⁵¹

Homoground. “Queer Joy Podcast Series [Episodes #273, #274, #275].” 2022. Homoground (blog). October 6, 2022. <https://homoground.com/queer-joy-series/>

For this podcast series, the longstanding podcast Homoground asked queer-identified artists to share stories and songs about what queer joy means to them. Both full-length songs and excerpts are intermixed with brief anecdotes and definitions. For example, after sharing their song “To Finally See the Sun” in episode 1, at 21:09 Forest Kameran

⁵¹ Madan Kataria, *Five Minutes Instructional Laughter Yoga Video*, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wfb58mhciAE>.

describes queer joy as “making space for the possibility and potential in all things and allowing that to guide our choices rather than fear of stepping outside of the lines.” Podcast topics include finding joy in becoming comfortable with who you are, love and crushes, and queer futures. Check out the “red carnation” recipe at 7:30 in Queer Joy Part 3 for a quick thought experiment about your own future!

Hoogland, Charles E., D. Ryan Schurtz, Chelsea M. Cooper, David J. Y. Combs, Edward G. Brown, and Richard H. Smith. 2015. “The Joy of Pain and the Pain of Joy: In-Group Identification Predicts Schadenfreude and Gluckschmerz Following Rival Groups’ Fortunes.” *Motivation and Emotion* 39 (2): 260–81. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11031-014-9447-9>.

This article describes four studies in which social identity predicts schadenfreude and gluckschmerz within the context of sports spectatorship. Besides studying fandom and in-group/out-group rivalry, the authors cite research that shows fMRI scans display activation in the pleasure center of the brain at rival teams’ failures (schadenfreude) and activation in the pain center at rival teams’ success (gluckschmerz). The studies found that the stronger the in-group identification, the more likely the participant was to experience schadenfreude and gluckschmerz. Participants were also more likely to admit gluckschmerz than schadenfreude despite both being “non-normative” reactions. The authors notes that researchers have not studied gluckschmerz much. See also Johnson (2020) for discussion of schadenfreude as a form of counterfeit joy.

Jena, Lalatendu Kesari, and Sajeet Pradhan. 2017. “Joy at Work: Initial Measurement and Validation in Indian Context.” *The Psychologist-Manager Journal* 20 (2): 106–22. <https://doi.org/10.1037/mgr0000051>.

Jena and Pradhan propose a valid theoretical measure for joy at work after noting that none yet exists. Their method consisted of interviews with executives within multinational corporations, and a factor analysis to construct a Joy at Work Scale. This article is notable for distinguishing joy from other positive emotions at work and for proposing three dimensions: Meaning, Engagement, and Growth; Compassion, Sensitivity, and Respect; and Trust, Support, and Flexibility. They developed the scale specifically for

manufacturing and service executives in India and other researchers have since applied it in other contexts.⁵²

Johnson, Matthew Kuan. 2020. "Joy: A Review of the Literature and Suggestions for Future Directions." *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 15 (1): 5–24.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2019.1685581>.

This scholarly article frames joy as a topic for empirical and theoretical academic study. Sources of expertise and authority on joy include academic symposia, scholarly encyclopedias, individual scholars' publications, and philosophical and religious literature (e.g., Aristotle, Kierkegaard, Aquinas, the Bible). A major epistemological goal is to "delineate the limits around joy" (16) to produce "a greater degree of human flourishing" (21). Johnson contrasts joy with similar constructs like gladness or elation. He illuminates how joy can be conceived of as an emotion, mood, trait, or spiritual fruit, coining phrases like "dispositional joy" and "emotional joy." Johnson goes on to discuss cross-cultural and language considerations and how those contribute to both innate and learned components. He then proceeds to review methodological considerations for studying joy in psychology. While the article describes many alternative epistemological and ontological frames for joy, Johnson's own approach is academic and tending toward positivism (i.e., one can "know" joy; joy can be defined). Joy, writes the author, "may hold some of the most promise for addressing the challenges of our age" (21).

Jones, Miracle. 2021. *The Radical, Revolutionary Resilience of Black Joy*. TED Talk, TEDxCMU, 11 min., 33 sec.

https://www.ted.com/talks/miracle_jones_the_radical_revolutionary_resilience_of_black_joy.

Community organizer and activist Miracle Jones offers a personal reflection about Black joy in this 11-minute TED Talk. She presents joy as a means of fighting against racial injustice, an act of survival, and a way to foster community. Jones' stories of family adversity and political protest illustrates joy as both "a simple moment of gratitude and happiness you allow yourself to have" (00:44) and—as a Black woman living in the United States—as a radical and revolutionary act.

⁵² Roberta Perez de Souza Cruz, Maria Cristina Ferreira, and Larissa Maria David Garbado-Martins, "Evidências de Validade Para a Escala de Alegria No Trabalho (Validity Evidence for the Joy at Work Scale)," *Revista Psicologia* 20, no. 1 (March 2020): 941–46; Liske, Tutticci, and Michael Joseph S. Diño, "Joy at Work and Vocational Identity during COVID-19."

Lee, Ingrid Fetell. 2021. *Joyful: The Surprising Power of Ordinary Things to Create Extraordinary Happiness*. Little, Brown Spark.

In this book, Lee explores joyfulness from the perspective of design. She posits that design of our physical world can incite joy. She offers ten aesthetics of joy that connect feelings of joy with our world: energy, abundance, freedom, harmony, play, surprise, transcendence, magic, celebration, and renewal. In each chapter, she describes experiences where the aesthetic elements inform design decisions. Replete with examples from the author's own life, popular culture, and scientific research, Lee shows how people naturally tend to find joy through aesthetics, and how they can increase joy in their lives by making small changes. Suggestions range from the simple (e.g., tuck bright colors into out of the way spaces to elicit surprise in your décor) to more elaborate (e.g., go paragliding or take a hot air balloon ride to experience transcendence). She offers something for anyone seeking to infuse a little more joy into their lives and spaces. The book concludes with a Joyful Toolkit that offers practical worksheets and exercises. To see Lee describing joyful design, watch her TED talk.⁵³

Lewis-Giggetts, Tracey M. 2022. *Black Joy: Stories of Resistance, Resilience, and Restoration*. First Gallery Books hardcover edition. Gallery Books.

This NAACP Image Award-winning book testifies to Black joy through lyrical essays containing stories, insights, vignettes, and vivid imagery drawn from everyday life as well as history, culture, and contemporary events. Lewis-Giggetts explains that joy can be known individually, but also collectively, as a deeply embedded characteristic of culture. Sources of authority include griots, ancestors, children, personal experience, therapists, community members, musicians, scholars, and therapists, to name a few. She explains that the ways of knowing Black joy are found on a nonbinary continuum of joy and trauma. Like Ross Gay's connection of sorrow and joy in *Inciting Joy* (2022), Lewis-Giggetts explain that the complexities of the Black experience show that "joy can live just underneath pain" (xxi). Black joy, writes Lewis-Giggetts, "is a mechanism for resistance, a method of resilience, and a master plan for restoration" (xx).

⁵³ Ingrid Fetell Lee, *Where Joy Hides and How to Find It*, TED Talk, 2018, 13 min., 29 sec., https://www.ted.com/talks/ingrid_fetell_lee_where_joy_hides_and_how_to_find_it.

National Public Radio. 2021. "NPR's Joy Generator." NPR Visuals. June 29, 2021.

<https://apps.npr.org/joy-generator/>.

This interactive web site and its whimsical design offer images, sounds, videos, and prompts to elicit joy. Users can browse through the site like an exhibit or bring up a menu of stories. The project underscores the experiential base for understanding joy even with the "credits" page where the creators share their personal joy triggers. A subtle link provides access to the cognitive and emotional science informing the content. The site offers a variety of joyful approaches—including memories, flow, sounds, poetry, and cuteness.

Patton, Olivia Christine. 2022. "Towel Time: An Exploration of Love and Joy in Disability/Chronically Ill Communities." Unpublished master's thesis, San Francisco State University. <https://scholarworks.calstate.edu/downloads/mg74qs962>.

In this master's thesis, Patton presents a photograph series and analysis about the joy of caretaking and interdependence. The author reaches a broad audience with their use of imagery, personal experiences, disability studies, and social justice. Patton's work is an approachable introduction to disability justice as well as a caring narrative about mutual aid. As Patton explains, the "concepts of time, invisibilized pain, and access intimacy intrigued me, and I wanted to express these ideas through photographs to highlight beauty and joy, in the midst of pain" (4–5). Readers interested in reading additional essays about caregiving and interdependence as a political act of resistance, may also wish to read the creative non-fiction essay "Crip Time" by Petra Koppers.⁵⁴

Perlo, Jessica, Barbara Balik, Stephen Swenson, Andrea Kabcenell, Julie Landsman, and Derek Feeley. 2017. "IHI Framework for Improving Joy in Work." IHI White Paper. Institute for Healthcare Improvement. <https://www.ihl.org/resources/white-papers/ihl-framework-improving-joy-work>.

The Institute for Healthcare Improvement created this framework for promoting joy in the healthcare workforce through a literature review, expert interviews from both within and outside of health care, site visits, and prototype programs at eleven health and health care systems. The resulting framework is a practical, four-step approach to addressing

⁵⁴ Petra Koppers, "Crip Time," *Tikkun Magazine* 29, no. 4 (Fall 2014): 29–31, <https://doi.org/10.1215/08879982-2810062>.

joy within the workplace that provides ample evidence and encouragement for leaders beyond healthcare. Of particular note is their asset-based approach (i.e., focusing on joy) rather than a deficit approach (i.e., focusing on burnout). They also emphasize systemic changes at the organizational level, informed by the individuals within the organization. The report includes a robust section on measurement of joy through proxies (such as satisfaction, engagement, employee wellbeing, burnout, turnover, retention), and provides a concise argument for improving joy at work in support of fairness and equity, as well as by making a business case. The IHI provides continued attention to promoting joy in work with programming and a resource-rich website, [Workforce Well-Being and Joy in Work](#), which includes additional white papers, case studies, videos, and articles.⁵⁵

Villagran, Michele A. L., and Lisa Martin. 2022. "Academic Librarians: Their Understanding and Use of Emotional Intelligence and Happiness." *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 48 (1): 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2021.102466>.

This mixed-methods research article seeks to explore relationships between emotional intelligence and happiness and is particularly useful for others seeking to study positive emotions within libraries as well as those seeking a robust literature review about negative emotional affect for library workers. Villagran and Martin explore the self-reported positive emotions of 169 academic librarians working mostly in the United States. The study found that respondents were within a typical range of happiness using the Satisfaction with Life Scale with a dip in satisfaction for those in the early mid-career (identified as five to nine years of experience) and later mid-career (fifteen to nineteen years of experience). Respondents frequently defined happiness in connection with "contentment, satisfaction, and meeting goals" and associated happiness with feeling valued and respected in the workplace. Although the researchers use the terms happiness, well-being, and satisfaction—and notably do not use the word joy—we include it in this bibliography as significant for original research about positive emotions among academic librarians.

⁵⁵ Institute for Healthcare Improvement, "Workforce Well-Being and Joy in Work," 2023, <https://www.ihl.org/improvement-areas/workforce-well-being-joy-in-work>.

White-Johnson, Jen. 2023. "Black Disabled Joy as an Act of Resistance." In *After Universal Design: The Disability Design Revolution*, edited by Elizabeth Guffey, 203–6. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.

In this essay, Jen White-Johnson celebrates authentic—and yet often stigmatized—expressions of autistic joy. White-Johnson provides an overview of how they came to employ design and art education in support of Black disability justice within context of parenting an autistic Black son. "I want my son's joy to be infinite, existing as its own revolution, not needing anyone's permission to show it. Ableist and racist social constructs continue to steal so much Black disabled joy, erasing our humanity and existence.... Created by the disability community, I believe that design continues to be instrumental in reigniting much needed dialogue about Black disability justice" (207). Regarding their first photo zine, *Knox Roxs*, White-Johnson noted "Autistic joy became visible.... The zine was a true expression of what love and acceptance can look like if you let it in, truly unmasked" (205). Other works described in this essay include a photo series which celebrates creative self-expression, a series of community workshops for creating zines, and the viral spread of their *Black Disabled Lives Matter* solidarity fist. Visit White-Johnson's website to view their visual design work along with archived talks and writing which advocates for inclusion in museum spaces, art education, and social movements.⁵⁶

Zeng, Xianglong, Ran Liao, Ruirui Zhang, Tian P. S. Oei, Zhihua Yao, Freedom Y. K. Leung, and Xiangping Liu. 2016. "Development of the Appreciative Joy Scale." *Mindfulness* 8 (2): 286–99. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-016-0599-4>.

Zeng et al. define a quantitatively measurable construct, "appreciative joy," based largely on Buddhist teachings. Sources of authority include Theravada Buddhist texts, Buddhist teachers, and other scholars who have developed scales to measure appreciative joy and related concepts. Similar to Johnson (2020), they take an academic perspective and base their work on the premise that researchers can define and measure joy. The Appreciative Joy Scale itself is given in the appendix and provides an example of how specific behavioral measurements can provide a concrete definition of one construct of joy. The saying "all models are wrong, but some are useful"⁵⁷ comes to mind when

⁵⁶ Jen White-Johnson, "Jen White-Johnson," June 15, 2024, <https://jenwhitejohnson.com/>.

⁵⁷ Wikipedia, "All Models Are Wrong," 2024, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All_models_are_wrong.

reading this article. A measurement scale for a particular definition of joy could help researchers find more clarity about what they do mean (or don't mean) by the term "joy."

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