

A complex balancing act with multiple levels of beams, rings, and spheres. The structure is composed of several horizontal black bars of varying lengths, supported by rings and spheres. The spheres are black and highly reflective, showing highlights and shadows. The rings are also black and have a similar reflective quality. The overall composition is symmetrical and balanced, with the title text overlaid in the center.

Balancing Fulfillment and Career

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What is your academic rank?

1. Assistant Professor

2. Associate Professor

3. Professor

What does fulfillment
mean to you?
(in 5 words or less)

A little background

- Born and raised in Washington, D.C.
- No physicians anywhere in my extended family
- Decided late to go to medical school
- MD, Residency, and Fellowship training all at Vanderbilt University
 - Trained in Pediatric Intensive Care
- Many mentors and sponsors during training
 - Developed passion for clinical ICU care
 - Recognized passion for basic research
- Even with 20/20 hindsight: 10-year training period was highly **fulfilling**
 - **NO BURNOUT**



Critical care fellowship in 1990's—120 hrs./week

Why did I feel no burnout?

I had an ongoing sense of joy and professional fulfillment

- I was surrounded by positivity and positive people
- I had plenty of support
- I was doing meaningful work

What defines professional fulfillment?

- Degree of intrinsic positive reward that we derive from work
- Includes:
 - Happiness
 - Meaningfulness
 - Contribution
 - Self-worth
 - Satisfaction
 - Sense of control over issues/problems



Audience Poll

In the last 2 weeks my work has been meaningful to me:

1. None of the time
2. Somewhat or a moderate amount of the time
3. Most or all of the time



Stanford
model of
professional
fulfillment



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Culture of wellness



Leadership support
for wellness



Resources to support
wellness



Monitoring of
wellness and
fulfillment



Fairness and
inclusivity



Alignment of values

Adapted from Stanford Medicine: WellMD & WellPhD

Efficiency of practice



Promotion of safety, quality, and effectiveness



Teamwork models



Efficient communication methods



Streamlining EMR procedures



Identification and redesign of inefficiency in work flow

Personal resilience

Individual skills and behaviors that contribute to well being

Encouragement of peer support

Coping strategies

Self care and availability of crisis intervention

Adapted from Stanford Medicine: WellMD & WellPhD

Should we
be measuring fulfillment?

Instrument to assess professional fulfillment

	Not at all true Score=0	Somewhat true Score=1	Moderately true Score=2	Very True Score=3	Completely true Score=4
a. I feel happy at work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. I feel worthwhile at work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. My work is satisfying to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. I feel in control when dealing with difficult problems at work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. My work is meaningful to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. I'm contributing professionally (e.g. patient care, teaching, research, and leadership) in the ways I value most	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- How true do you feel the following statements are about you at work during the past two weeks?
- From: [A Brief Instrument to Assess Both Burnout and Professional Fulfillment in Physicians: Reliability and Validity, Including Correlation with Self-Reported Medical Errors, in a Sample of Resident and Practicing Physicians](#), Mickey Trockel, et al. 2017, Acad Psychiatry.

Audience Poll:

Do you directly supervise/mentor others?

1. This is a major component of my current position
2. I spend some time mentoring formally and informally
3. I have teaching responsibilities, but not mentoring



Helping others find fulfillment

- Responsibility for others in academic medicine
- Trainees and junior faculty
- Our environment is strongly impacted by the fulfillment of others
- My every 6 month questions
 - What do you like most about your job?
 - What do you think you would rather not do?



Support your mentees in their quest to find fulfillment:

- Find a career that aligns with your values
- Create a list of things you enjoy
- Define a personal mission statement
- Set daily or weekly goals that are attainable
- Consider new opportunities
- **Maintain positive relationships in your network**

What other factors
impact professional
fulfillment?

Psychological Safety



**Shared belief within the team
that the team is safe**

(Edmonson, A. 1999, Adm Sci. Q.)



**Capacity to discover and treat
problems as a team**



No penalties for asking for help



**Personal concept of safety is
critical**

Basic needs are satisfied

Self compassion exists—and promotes
empathy

Positive emotional state

Wouters-Soomers, L. et al., 2022, Frontiers in
Psychology

The concept of **Belonging**

Being accepted, included, and valued by others

The feeling of being integrated into your surroundings

Clear evidence that this is a fundamental need

How do we study belonging?

- Lack of conceptual clarity among different studies
- Very hard to study quantitatively
- Not just the opposite of loneliness





A framework for studying belonging

Competencies for belonging

Opportunity to belong

Motivation to belong

Perceptions of belonging

Workplace belonging and gender

- Enhanced rates of attrition of healthcare workers post pandemic
- Recent surveys suggest 25-50% intend to leave workplace
- Useful to be able to predict likelihood of departure
- Workplace belonging most important predictor in women
 - Opportunity to thrive
 - Ability to freely share thoughts and beliefs





Promotion of belonging.

How do we promote belonging?

Especially in those who feel underrepresented

Allen, KA, et al., Aust J Sychol, 2021

Alpha Omega Alpha medical honor society

Icahn SOM at Mount Sinai—suspended student selection for AOA

Recognition that URiM students persistently underrepresented

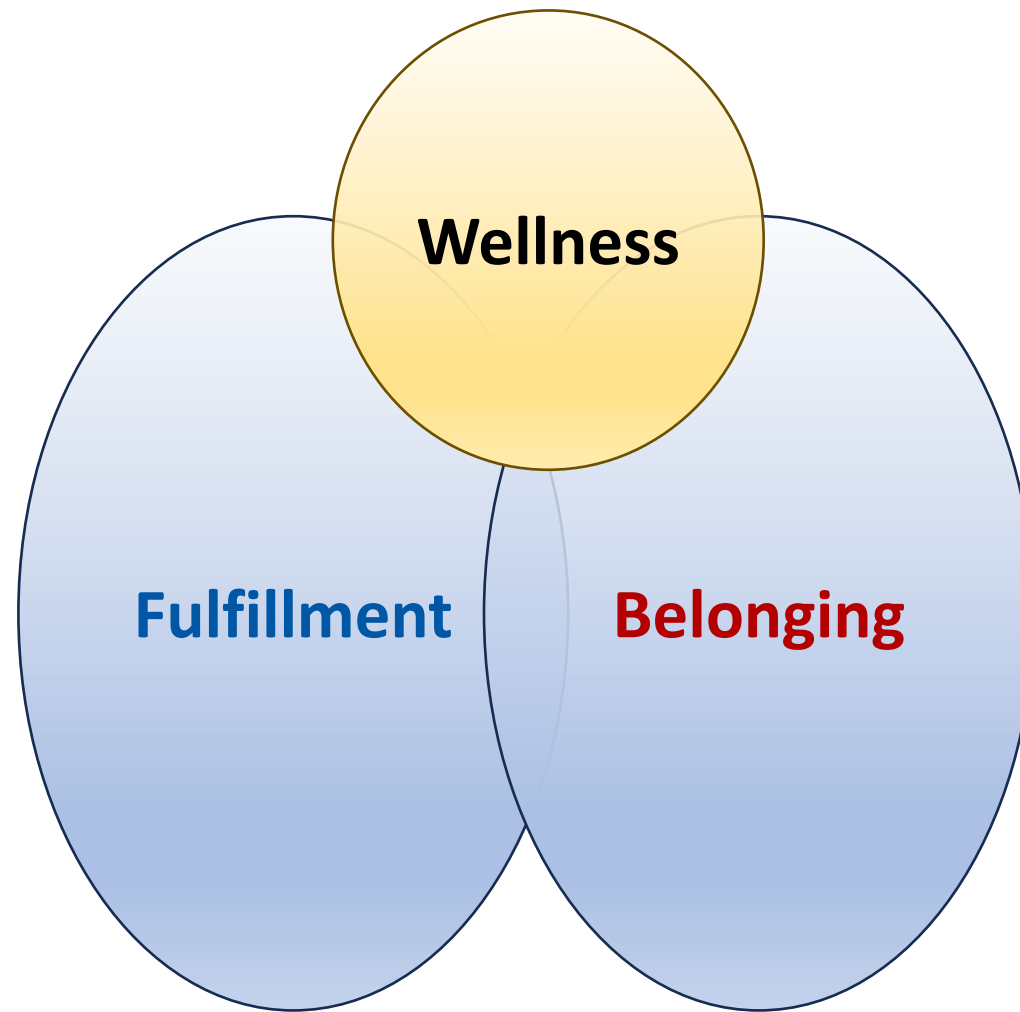
- Concerns raised by students of color in 2017

Core belief in a culture of Wellness and Equity

- More important for development than achievement

Will consider reinstating AoA when “equity” of experience is achieved

(Lynch, G, et al. Academic Medicine, 2020).

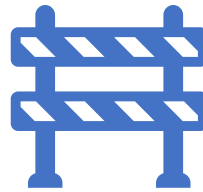


Fulfillment professionally: The pursuit of career milestones



Academic medicine pathways

How do we help residents, fellows, junior faculty to understand options



Awareness of barriers to fulfillment, career advance



Deep understanding of burnout

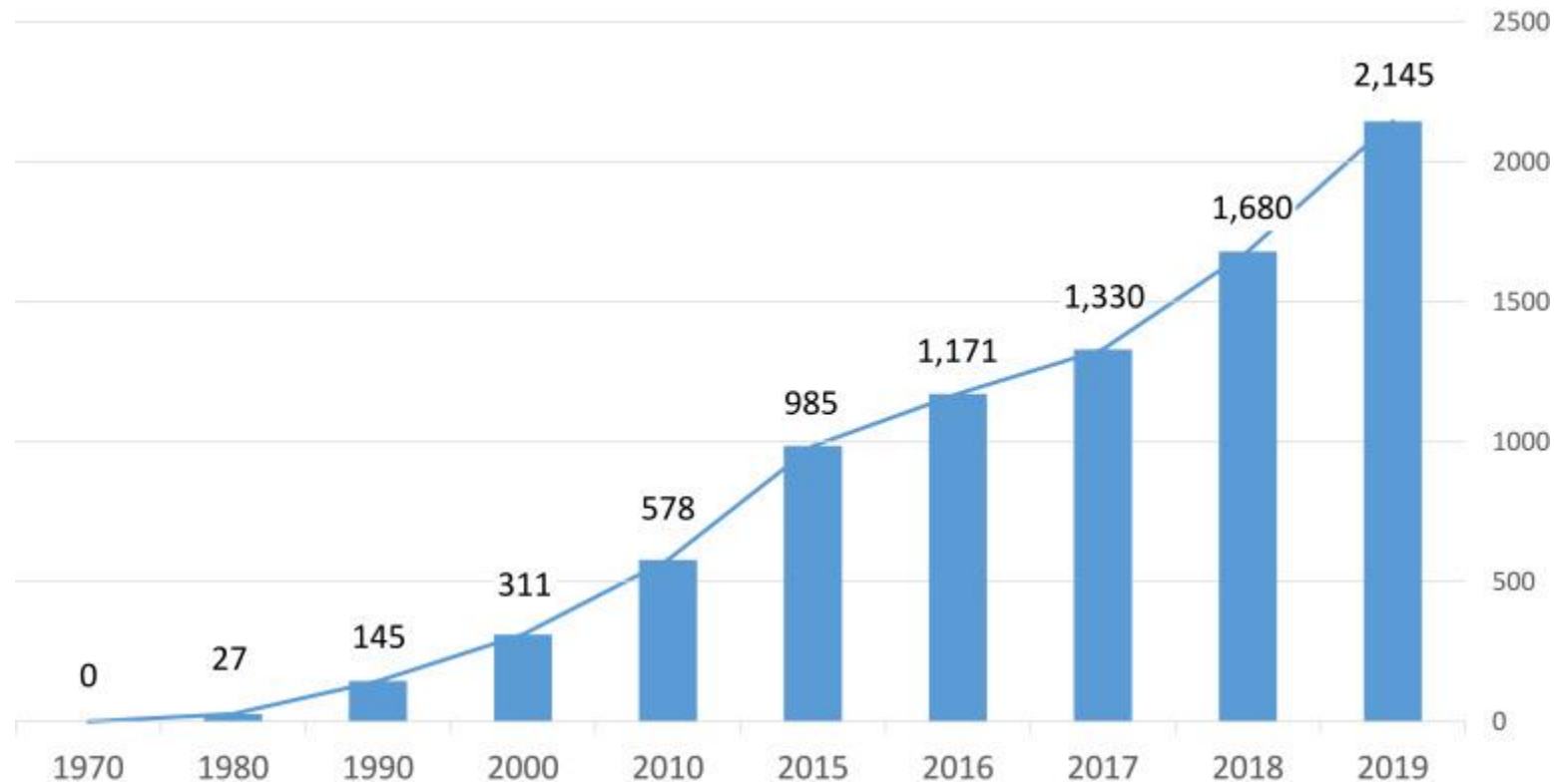
Barriers and challenges to achieving goals

- Key areas for barriers to emerge:
 - Job and career development
 - Take on admin role/leadership role—research productivity suffers
 - Lack of workplace diversity
 - Lack of interpersonal relationships and inadequate social support
 - No sense of belonging
 - Personal and family matters
- Frequency of burnout

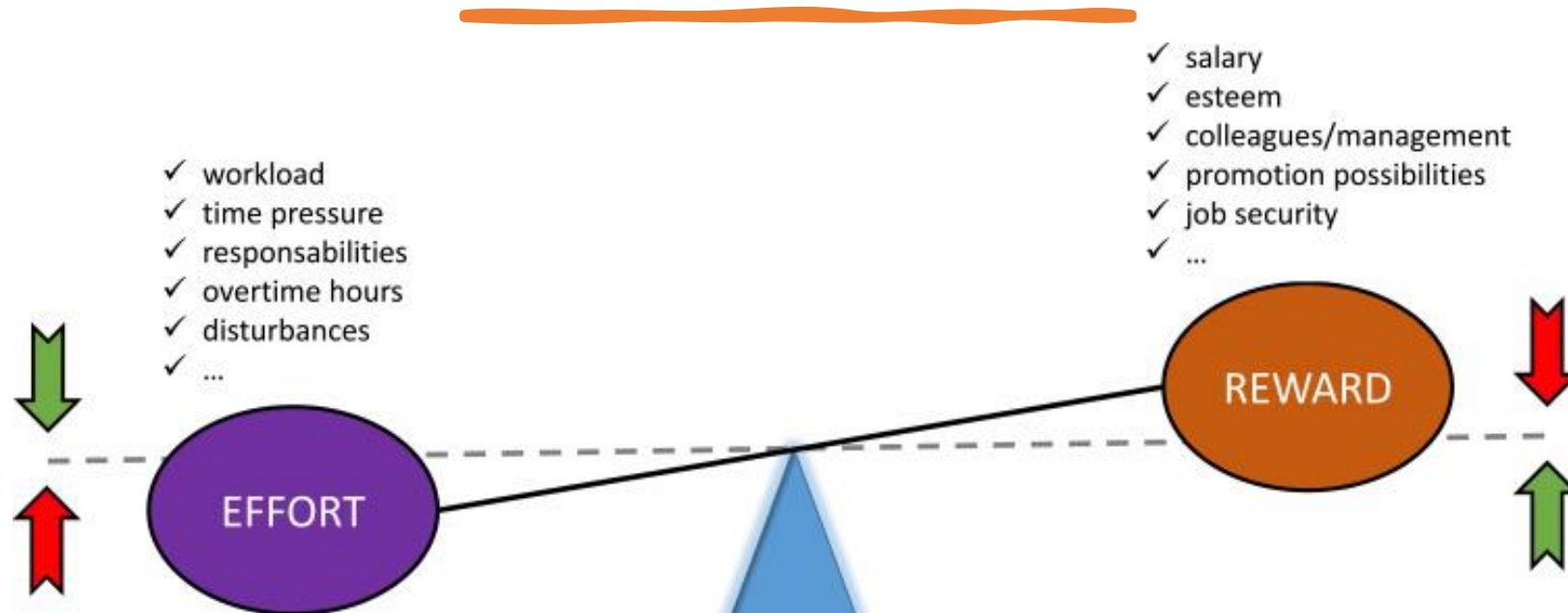
Physician “burnout”: the history

- First described 1974—Herbert Freudenberger
- “Excessive demands on energy, strength, or resources”
- Accompanied by symptoms of “malaise, fatigue, frustration, cynicism, and inefficacy”
- Development of the Maslach Burnout Inventory –Christina Maslach
 - Emotional exhaustion
 - Cynicism and depersonalization
 - Diminished sense of accomplishment and efficacy
- Growth of HMOs in mid-80’s, early 90’s diminished patient care time
- 2009 “Meaningful use” of the EHR added burden

Growing recognition of the breadth of burnout—Pub Med hits



The balance of effort vs. reward



imbalance is maintained

- if no alternative is available
- if the situation is accepted for strategic reasons
- if a specific motivational pattern is present (overcommitment)

= need for control and approval



A reframing of burnout to moral injury

- Burnout suggests the problem is with the individual
- Implies a lack of resilience
- Places responsibility on the individual to find solution
 - Retreats, yoga, meditation
- **Moral injury: the challenge of knowing the exact care your patient needs, but not being able to provide it**
 - Source of distress is a broken system
 - Alters the solution profile

Mechanisms impacting women's careers: focus on motherhood

**What is the impact of
motherhood on careers**

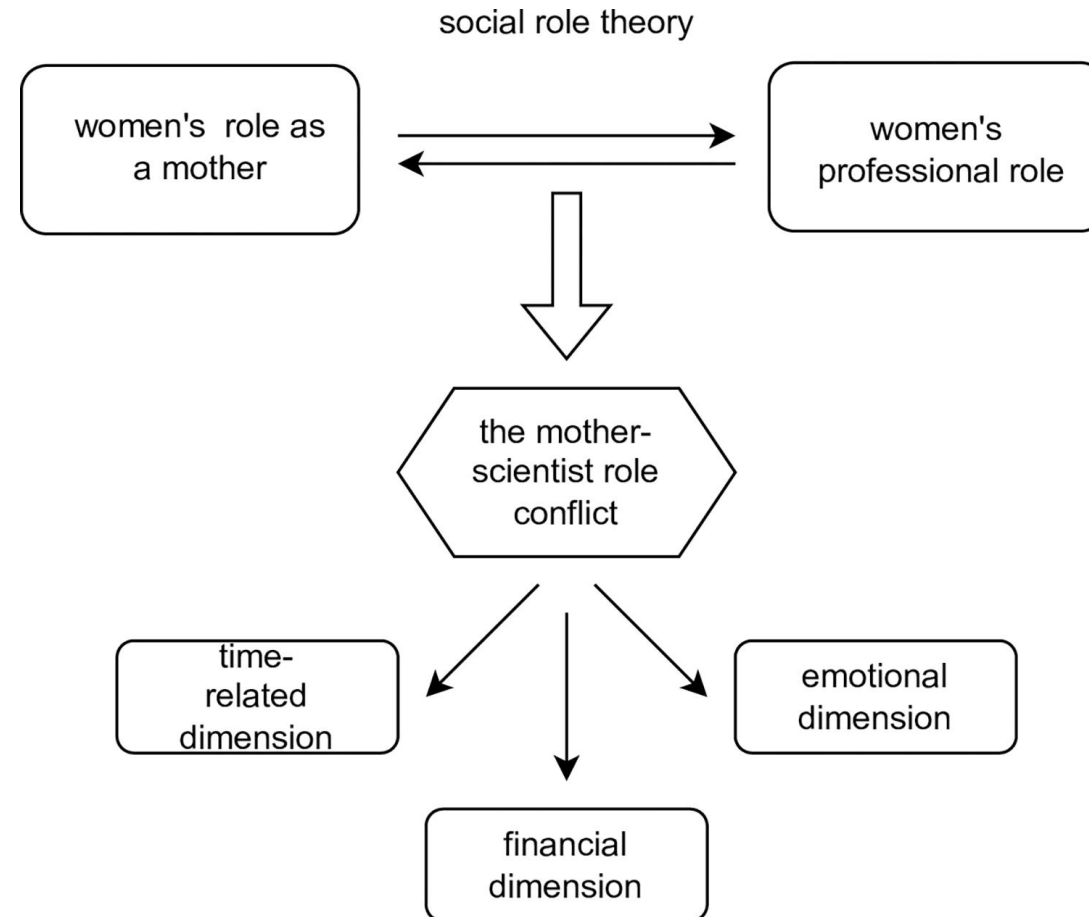
Few comprehensive studies

Social role theory:

- Performance of many roles
 - Potential for unequal performance in these roles
 - May alter relationships to minimize tension

**Delay in reaching
milestones, advancing career**

Conflicting mother-scientist roles: multi-dimensional conflict



An aerial, high-angle photograph of a large, diverse crowd of people gathered in a public square or plaza. The people are wearing various casual clothing, and the ground is paved with cobblestones. The crowd is dense and fills most of the frame, with a white text box overlaid on the left side.

Wellness gender gap in specific populations

- Cause of enhanced burnout in female general surgeons?
- Sample size of 431 general surgeons (154 female, 277 male)
- Burnout: 46% women vs. 38% men
- Profound difference in professional fulfillment: 37% vs. 56%
- Men reported significantly higher sense of control over schedule

Mete, M, et.al., Am Journal of Surgery, 2022

Work-life integration as a physician

- Boundary setting
 - Temporal
 - Physical
 - **Cognitive –can you turn off thinking about work? Be passionate about something else?**
- Establish priorities and goals: feel free to update as life changes
- Outsource the mundane
- Find the right employer (do they have supportive resources?)
- Surround yourself with positivity
- **Make sure at least 20% of work time focused on a passion work**
- Take your vacation

Personal Fulfillment

Do you plan to have children?

Do you want to travel frequently?

Do you need to stay in a certain geographic location?

What makes you happy outside of work?

Ikigai- long and happy life




- Sense of purpose in life
- Feeling of accomplishment and fulfillment
- Pursue your passions

Workplace positivity

- Optimism, caring, kindness, generosity, curiosity
- Leadership development in fostering **belonging**
- **Psychological safety** is critical





My trajectory to career advancement and continued fulfillment

- Hired as an Assistant Professor, Tenure track, focus on neutrophil biology
- Ran an NIH-funded basic science laboratory
- Took on role of fellowship program director early
 - Mistake for my laboratory
 - Great decision for first leadership role
- Became Division Chief of a small division
- Recruited to UTSW to be Division Chief of a large division
- Realized I did not want to be a Chair
 - Passion for me was faculty mentoring
- Recently became Associate Dean for Faculty Development

Thank you

