

Joy and Social Change - 17145 words

# **Joy and Social Change**

by

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## ABSTRACT

Joy is a phenomenon about which many disciplines have written or theorized, with different results that can cause confusion or uncertainty in defining and engaging with it. For individuals involved in change-making, engaging with the concept of joy can provide a sense of momentum, moments of respite, or motivation for imagining the future. Still, it can be difficult to access with imprecise and sometimes conflicting understandings of what joy is. Through a multidisciplinary literature review, this paper synthesizes existing work into a new framework to understand joy in the different ways it may appear. Self-reflexive journaling is also used to help the researcher track thoughts, impressions and engage with the concepts during the development of the framework. The framework presents three forms of joy: Personal Joy, as in how joy appears in an individual's life and how it impacts their approach to experiences; Applied Joy, as in ways individuals can actively cultivate and use joy in their work; and Aspirational Joy, as in ways joy can serve a goal or be a fruit of change. This framework builds on existing research on joy and furthers the study by creating new spaces for dialogue between disciplines and media on this topic. A prototype of a reflection activity is also presented to provide an example of how the framework might be engaged with, with the intent that it should be tested and refined.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As you'll read in this project, joy is intrinsically tied to other people. And I have so many people to thank for the joy they've brought to my life:

Suzanne Stein, my primary advisor: Your guidance and insights have been so valuable as I've gone through this "hippie-dippie" MRP process.

Suze Morrison, my secondary advisor, and friend: Your approach to community work is an exemplar of how to lead with compassion and love.

Mami, Papi, Delia, Jorge, and Ava: I know change is easier when done together because of all the changes we've gone through as a family.

My friends and chosen family: All the laughs, hugs, words of wisdom, and silly moments make everything worth it.

The 2019 Part-Time SFI Cohort: This is a love letter to all the work we did. Our time together has been one of the most important joys over the last three years.

Dan: I could write another 17000 words and still have infinitely more to say about how special you are.

## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*“When thinking of a word to describe the umbrella concept of joy, I think of how the word has been translated [...] into 40 languages [...] One item uses the word joy, and here is a sample of the words used: radost, 喜悦, আনন্দ, glæde, vreugde, kagalakan, joie, Freude, Χαρά, öröm, áthas, gioia, 즐거움, prieks, džiaugsmas, kegembiraan, மகிழ்ச்சி, alegria, radość, bucurie, падоцм, हर्ष, падоцм, potešenie, veselje, alegría, ความปิติ ยินดี, sevinç, паdicм, שמחה, فرح, خوشی” (Underwood 2020)*

---

I live, work, study, play, and find joy on land that has been the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat, the Haudenosaunee, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. This territory is also the subject of the Dish with One Spoon wampum - a covenant between the Anishinaabe and the Haudenosaunee.

I recognize how systems around us, and the field of design and social change, have been complicit and complacent in colonization and anti-Indigenous oppression, along with other structures of oppression such as racism, xenophobia, heterosexism, and many others, which all intersect and affect people differently based on their lived experiences and identities.

This research specifically draws upon knowledge from across cultures and belief systems and spans centuries of thought, work, and reflection, and I give my gratitude for that wisdom.

I believe everyone has a right to joy and that we must undo historical and current systems and effects of oppression and ensure the future allows for prosperous joy for all.

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## PROLOGUE

In Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Talents* (2019b:4), the second novel of the Parable series, she explores a not-so-distant future of a world ravaged by "The Pox." This "decade and a half of chaos," which lasted between 2015 and 2030, "was caused by accidentally coinciding climatic, economic, and ecological crises". It is hard not to see echoes of this novel written in the 1990s and our reality of 2022 as the world contends with the lasting effects of an ongoing global pandemic, social inequity with spotlights on race and gender, worsening impacts of climate change, crises in sectors from housing to media to healthcare, a 24/7 sensationalist news cycle and the undying grip of social media and big tech companies seemingly impacting all of our decisions. So, for the changemakers who want to face the compounding situations head-on and work towards better futures, how can they find the motivation, momentum, resilience, and endurance needed for their work? I believe one avenue is joy.



## CHAPTER 1: SEARCHING FOR JOY

*“How can you be of service to people, nature, and causes in need without losing yourself completely to a crisis mentality? How can we help the world heal and still find joy in our life?” (Dalai Lama, Tutu, and Abrams 2016:271)*

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### *Introduction: Why Joy?*

A 2022 study from Statistics Canada found that Canadians have growing despondency, apathy, and feelings of helplessness (2022). These findings are corroborated by the World Happiness Report, a series of research reports first published in 2012: “the World Happiness Reports are based on a wide variety of data, the most important source has always been the Gallup World Poll, unique in its range and comparability of global annual surveys” (Helliwell et al. 2022:3). In 2012, when the first World Happiness report was published, Canada ranked 10<sup>th</sup> when measuring the Happiness Index for the country. It held steady in the top 10 until the most recent report in 2022 saw Canada drop to 15<sup>th</sup> (Sismondo 2022). There is a gap in happiness and joy in Canadians, and with many compounding global crises, it can be assumed this is not a uniquely Canadian problem.

It can be hard to know how to navigate our world, and for those looking to create change, improve conditions, or help design new futures for us to live in, it

can be hard to figure out how to see the light at the end of the tunnel of change-making work.

For Alex Liu, the host of the podcast Joy@Work:

Life is a vector requiring both force and direction. The pursuit of happiness sets the direction, but feeling joy provides the daily confirmation that we are doing exactly what we should be doing, for the company and for the teammates who energize our efforts. (2019)

This pursuit of happiness and search for joy can be clouded and obscured by the compounding effects of multiple global events and their impact on individuals. With a growing awareness of multiple social and global issues, it can feel like things are getting worse, leading to feelings of anxiety, despair, the above-mentioned helplessness, and loneliness. This can lead to adverse health effects, as described by former US Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy when speaking about loneliness specifically:

Most people just talk about loneliness as just a bad feeling. What I came to see is that there was a growing body of research associating loneliness with a higher risk of premature death, a higher risk of heart disease, depression, anxiety, sleep disturbances, the list goes on. (2021)

In the *Journal of Positive Psychology*, Robert A. Emmons writes, "Joy has been one of the least studied human emotions despite the fact that it is on everyone's list of basic or primary emotions" (2020:1) which is corroborated in Matthew Kuan Johnson's "systematic review of the literature [on joy] and suggestions for future direction" (Emmons 2020:3) which proved to be foundational for this paper: "while joy, as a concept, has been treated at length in

fields such as literature and theology, comparatively little work in psychology has been devoted to studying it” (2020:5). A key barrier to understanding and conceptualizing joy is the imprecision or “blurriness” with which we talk about it (Amichai, 2015/2017 as cited in Johnson 2020:12). Most people have an idea of joy but probably would be hard-pressed to define it with precision. Many cultures have similar concepts of joy - this ethereal, intangible concept that is related but distinct from happiness, delight, or pleasure; might we arrive at some sort of shared definition for this concept which can feel intangible and hard to grasp?

The intangibility of joy and the murkiness in trying to define joy can feel contradictory or confusing leading to this project setting out to engage with these concepts of joy as a “‘self-corroborating truth’—when many different fields of knowledge point to the same conclusion” (Dalai Lama et al. 2016:5). This idea of looking at how different fields all look at joy is the anchor for the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Tutu’s *The Book of Joy*. For this project, the following research question provided direction and guidance in the investigation and journey: **How might joy be better understood and conceptualized clearly to allow for engagement with for social change?** And to investigate this, the following secondary questions also need to be answered:

- How has joy been theorized throughout and in differing histories, cultures, and disciplines?
- Is there a central way that the different understandings of joy can provide clarity to how joy appears in everyone’s lives?

- And then, what are some interventions to help changemakers engage with their joy?

To answer the above questions, this research project sets out to engage with various theories and concepts of joy. The paper is divided into three sections to outline the journey of the research undertaken during this project.

Chapter 1: Searching for Joy of the paper provides the context and origins of this research, discusses my positionality and social location as the researcher, and provides an overview of the literature used as the basis for the presented framework.

Chapter 2: Framing Joy goes through the Joy Triangle framework that synthesizes understandings of joy from across disciplines. The framework uses adrienne maree brown's concept of fractals to examine how joy is made up of many different elements and how one's joy is inherently interconnected to the joy of others.

Chapter 3: Reflecting On Joy provides space for reflection on the framework by making a first attempt at prototyping an exercise that allows for socialization and engagement with the concept of joy. It also establishes spaces for further inquiry and how this work can be furthered in research, design, and practice.

Throughout this paper, using the different existing bases of knowledge and wisdom about joy, I attempt to synthesize these understandings into one

framework, creating space for further discussion on the topic, hoping others will be able to contribute further with their own perspectives and other theories of joy.

*Context: Why me, why now?*

*"Things could change, Gabe," Jonas went on. "Things could be different. I don't know how, but there must be some way for things to be different." (Lowry 2006:128)*

---

I am a cisgender, queer, racialized man living in Toronto, Ontario. I was born in Guatemala and immigrated to Canada as a toddler with my family. I have been living with multiple sclerosis for ten years and identify as living with an invisible disability. I state all of this because I acknowledge how my experiences and knowledge have impacted my worldview, my day-to-interactions, and how I have had to interact with the systems around me. The privileges afforded to me as a man, an English speaker, a university graduate and student, and other identities I hold have coincided with the systems of racism, homophobia, xenophobia, ableism, and patriarchy that have impacted me throughout my life and still do on a day-to-day basis.

A throughline for my life has been the importance of community and the help that can be provided to others. From the community that supported my family as we went through the Canadian immigration process, to the friends, mentors, and teachers that helped me in my coming out process and journey

with multiple sclerosis, I have seen examples of individual, community, and systemic support that have been offered to me that have gotten me to where I am.

Because of all this, I have a deeply held belief and need to help others. I am interested in what I can do to help other changemakers and helpers tap into their joy, spark joy in their daily lives, and create visions of joyful futures. My interest in impacting individuals to impact systems is an example of how the idea of fractal change, as described in adrienne maree brown's *Emergent Strategy*, has become a core to my work as a changemaker. Simply put, fractal change is a concept that explains that "How we are at the small scale is how we are at the large scale" (brown 2017:52). As outlined in this paper, this idea of fractal change has informed many of my altruistic and changemaking sensibilities. I believe that if I can help people at an individual level, I know that that change will reverberate into systemic levels of change. This project is an attempt for me to find ways to help those that want to help others.

Part of what also inspired this research project was that I noticed an emerging pattern of the concept of joy being discussed in popular media – books, movies, television, podcasts and more. Hyperbolically, it seemed like *everyone* was talking about joy in some way, shape or form – and that got me thinking about what joy was, how we can harness it, and what it means for my emerging identity as a futurist. These pieces of media spurred my investigation of joy, serving as signposts that this question and topic are top of mind for society.

Some of the examples of media I noticed participating in this conversation include:

- the film *Everything Everywhere All At Once* (2022) in which the main character's journey sees her attempt to find, protect, hold on to, and accept her daughter, aptly named Joy;
- Gabby Rivera's podcast series *Joy Revolution*, where she interviews artists, activists, and individuals about the way that joy shows up in their life;
- And writings from various places including Jonathan Van Ness, JP Brammer, Billy Porter, and more. Many of these authors and artists were already ones I enjoyed and seeing them integrate their thoughts about joy into their work provided momentum for my interest in the topic.

With conversations of joy seemingly all around me, the weight of personal and global issues permeating my media diet, and a natural drive towards altruism, I undertook this project to discover how joy can help changemakers continue to do their work by tapping into this concept. I wanted to find a way to make joy more accessible so it was easier to use for motivation, respite, momentum, or anything else I could find that joy could be used for.

### *Literature Review: Perspectives on Joy*

*"Because when I look at humanity, I see a history of finding joy and meaning in what we've built in and around the horns of life" (Brammer 2022).*

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One of the challenges of researching joy was the intangibility and ambiguous definition of joy often present in writings about it. Having been written about in theological, philosophical, psychological, artistic, and cultural domains across history, there are multiple definitions, theories, and approaches to understanding joy. That leads to what feels like an amorphous body of work around joy that leads to more questions than answers.

In 2016, the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu held a week-long summit to discuss joy's origin, cultivation, and importance. These conversations were captured in *The Book of Joy* and the accompanying documentary *Mission: Joy*. Their central framework centers around eight pillars of joy: Perspective, Humility, Humour, Acceptance, Forgiveness, Gratitude, Compassion, and Generosity. The former four were pillars of the mind, more attitudinal aspects of joy, with the latter four being pillars of the heart, more about the practice and cultivation of joy.



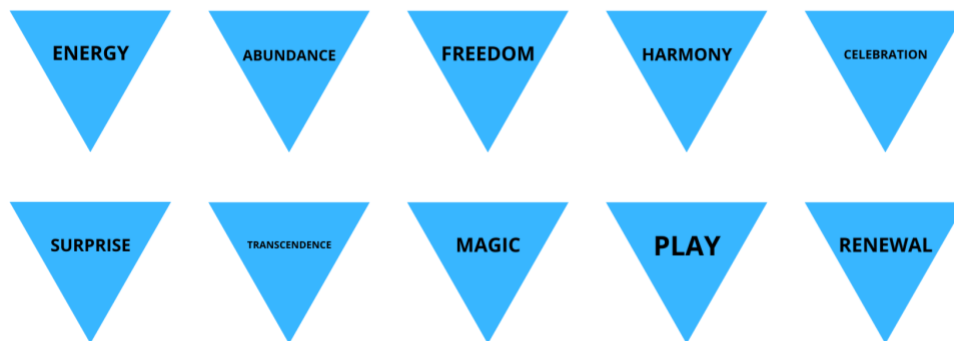
Figure 1: Author's visualization of the eight elements of joy from *The Book of Joy* (2016)



In the book, their conversations, and perspectives, while indeed rooted in the Dalai Lama's Buddhism and the Archbishop's Christianity, "the Dalai Lama was adamant about the importance of making sure that this was not a Buddhist or a Christian book, but a universal book supported not only by opinion or tradition but also by science" (Dalai Lama et al. 2016:5). They also reference other cultures' conceptions of joy and scientific explanations for the origins and effects of joy. Joy is a universal concept, and one I believe everyone has a right to pursue. By extricating their understanding of joy from specific beliefs systems or dogmas, the intention is to remove barriers and disallow any gatekeeping to joy. My research follows suit.

To contrast the Dalai Lama and Archbishop's primarily spiritual and philosophical discussions of joy, Ingrid Fettel Lee's *Joyful* was used to investigate the aesthetics of joy, bringing forth discussions of tangible and material examples of joy. Lee is a designer who, in the book and widely through her work, seeks to find the "distinct connection between the feel of joy and the tangible quality of the world around us" (2021:8). She outlines ten aesthetics of joy: Energy, Abundance, Freedom, Harmony, Play, Surprise, Transcendence, Magic,

## Celebration, and Renewal.



*Figure 2: Author's visualization of the 10 aesthetic elements of joy from Lee's book Joyful (2021)*

Through her investigations of these aesthetics, Lee references different artists, designers, and creatives and discusses their use of these aesthetics to bring about joy. She also connects these tangible aspects to internal feelings and phenomena, explaining why these design choices relate to individuals' attitudes and perspectives.

There was also an attempt to find peer-reviewed and academic literature about joy to complement the two above books. While a minimal amount of literature was available, one resource was especially edifying. In 2020, the *Journal of Positive Psychology* published a special issue focused solely on the topic of joy. In the introduction to this issue, joy is said to be “vital to well-being,” “a quality that makes life worth living” and “fundamental to human existence” (Emmons 2020:1). The goal of the issue as a whole was to “call attention to it within academic research, especially in, but not limited to, the field of positive psychology” in order to “[further] research and [promote] good practice within the

field”, which this project takes up by contributing to the conversation (Emmons 2020:2–3). Matthew Kuan Johnson’s article that opened the journal was the starting point from which the rest of the articles sprung. In this article, Johnson provides a broad literature review spanning and critiquing psychology and filling in gaps by investigating references to joy in theology, philosophy, literature, and more. Other journal articles in this issue expand on the discussion and critique the review’s findings and propose ways in which the study of joy can be furthered and codified.

Lindsay Stewart’s 2021 book *The Politics of Black Joy* examines Zora Neale Hurston’s essays alongside Beyonce’s visual album *Lemonade* and the writings of other abolitionist and anti-racism scholars to introduce a politics of joy that posits that joy in and of itself can be a reaction to oppression, contrasted with resistance. She explores the historical understandings of Black southern joy and the modern-day implications and demonstrations of joy. The connection between joy and social change is further corroborated by *The Book of Joy* as the Dalai Lama explains how he believes that individual joy can have reverberations to everyone around us that can change social conditions and negative experiences:

Still, some might wonder what our own joy has to do with countering injustice and inequality. What does our happiness have to do with addressing the suffering of the world? In short, the more we heal our own pain, the more we can turn to the pain of others [...] The more we turn towards others, the more joy we experience, and the more joy we experience, the more we can bring joy to others. The goal is not just to

create joy for ourselves, but as the Archbishop poetically phrased it, “to be a reservoir of joy, an oasis of peace, a pool of serenity that can ripple out to all those around you.” (Dalai Lama et al. 2016:63)

With the intent to develop a framework and activity that can help individuals reflect on joy in their own lives, it is important to understand existing activities and exercises for finding joy and similar concepts. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson developed climate change Venn diagrams that invite individuals to consider and reflect on three questions: “What brings you joy?”, “What are you good at?” and “What work needs doing?” (2022). This is very similar to the concept of the Purpose Venn Diagram, which is a “Westernized version” of the Japanese idea of *ikigai*, that is purported to help individuals find their purpose especially as it relates to career or job choice (Anon 2019; Winn 2014), as seen in Figure 3. These two exercises provide opportunities for reflection for individuals to consider their joy and what they want to accomplish in their life. This framework and the resulting activity have a clear lineage with these activities and help other spaces for introspection and reflection.



Figure 3: Ikigai Venn Diagram, Source: (Winn 2014)



Figure 4: Climate change Venn Diagram, Source: (Johnson <https://www.ayanaelizabeth.com/climatevenn>)

Marshall Ganz's Public Narrative tactic is a framework for social change and storytelling in political organizing that connects “the three elements of self, us, and now” (2011:274). Speaking specifically to changemakers and political actors, Ganz’s work is an example of a framework that connects individual experiences to collective concerns and future aspirations. Through his work as a political strategist, Ganz has used this framework to design campaigns, train teams, and create a method that can be replicated in different contexts.



Figure 5: Public Narrative model, source: (Ganz 2011)

The core texts listed above provide a foundation for the presented framework. There are many more areas of thought related to joy and discussions of joy in the public sphere, popular media, and academic disciplines – the framework also draws on some of these and is presented in a way that will allow for further layering on of other sources. With such a wide breadth of sources and material to draw on, a robust methodology that allowed for creative thought and reflection was developed to synthesize, organize, and bring these concepts together in dialogue.

### *Methodology: Synthesizing Understandings of Joy*

How might joy be better understood and conceptualized clearly to allow for engagement with the concept? In order to answer this central research question, I had to find a way to investigate the concept of joy, develop an understanding of how others have theorized about it, and conceptualize a method for engagement. To do this I employed the following research methods:

- A multidisciplinary literature review to take in a wide breadth of understanding of this concept of joy.
- Self-reflective journaling to chronicle the development of ideas and personal understanding of joy
- Workshop prototyping to find avenues for engagement drawing on existing methodologies and frameworks for understanding complex concepts.

For the literature review, the following texts were foundational for the

development of the framework:

- The Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu's *Book of Joy* and associated documentary film *Mission: Joy* to gain insight into spiritual and theological (specifically Christian and Buddhist perspectives).
- Ingrid Fettel Lee's book *Joyful* and her work on the aesthetics of joy;
- The Journal of Positive Psychology's issue on joy which is a collection of articles in dialogue with Matthew Kuan Johnson's literature review of joy;
- And Lindsay Stewart's *The Politics of Black* to understand the role of social change and how joy can connect to it as well.

Early in the process, I started understanding the immensely personal aspect of joy and wanted to explore that further. For context, the research also began during a time of intense change and upheaval in my personal life. I was instantly struck with the dilemma of trying to study joy while also going through personal hardships. Thus, I decided to employ reflexive journaling as a research method to document my thought processes and give me time to reflect on the topic. Reflective journaling in research can be "a written record by the researchers themselves and is written throughout the research process. [It includes] the details of what the researchers did, thought and felt while analyzing the data" (Choi 2020).

Eugen Bacon provides a framework for using three journals during research: a scholarly journal, a cathartic journal, and an insights journal (2014).

Bacon's approach to journaling is to "document something to use or reference as a creative agent, something to help decode or recode the process of learning [and] validate creative practice and praxis" (2014). She points out that her supervisor "moved to reassure [her] that [she] did not need to keep all three journals]" in a literal sense, but rather to think of different forms of thought and reflection. I liked the idea of approaching my reflections in different avenues, so I paired this idea for three separate journals with the "What? So What? Now What?" framework for critical reflection (Kenny 2014; Miro n.d.). This framework provides guidance on thinking about learning that moves from just understanding what is being learned to what implications it has for the broader research project.

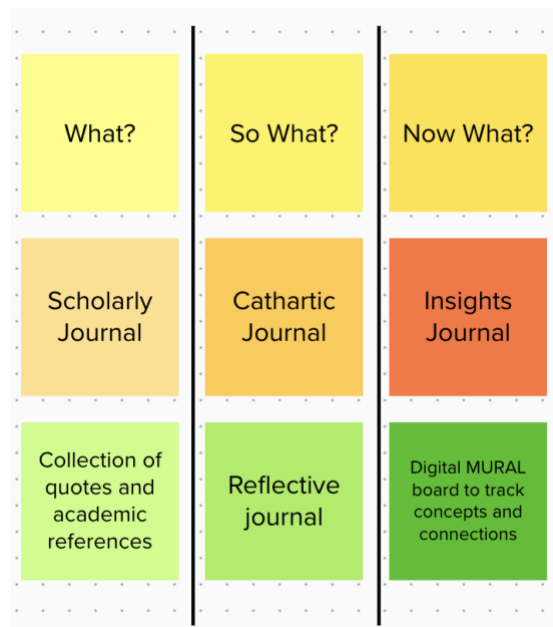


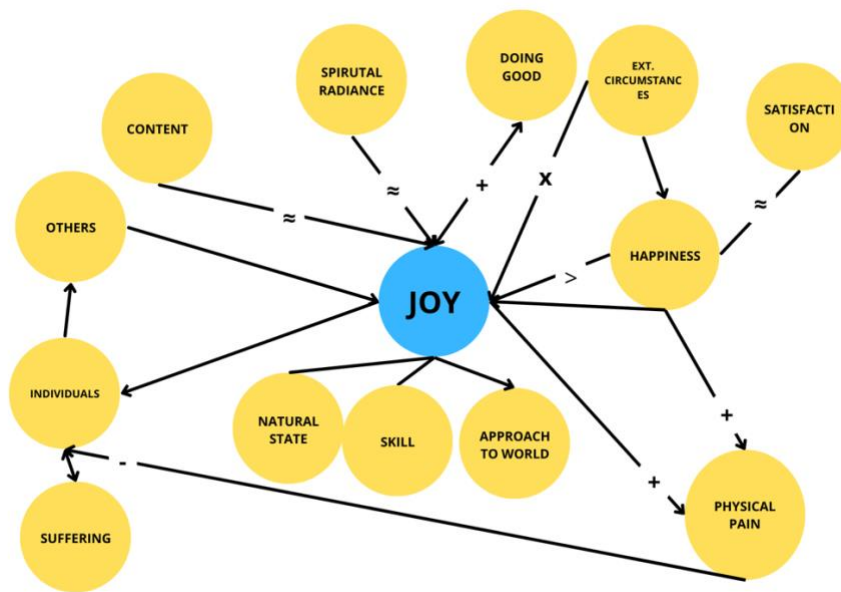
Figure 6: The journaling framework using Bacon's three journal structure and the What, So What, Now What framework

To answer the "What," I kept a scholarly journal where I documented all passages and concepts in consulted materials that I found immediately prescient



or interesting. Moving to “So What” to explore the “consequences and meaning of [my] experiences,” I kept a cathartic journal in the form of freeform writing during research to document stream-of-thought reflections and emerging insights; throughout the paper, select passages from these journal entries are included to track my thought process (Kenny 2014). Finally, for “Now What,” to engage with the concepts and my reflections, I visually mapped out the concepts with sticky notes on a whiteboard. I then transferred it to an online MURAL board as a visual and digital form of an insights journal where I could play with and engage with the insights and draw connections between them.

This allowed me to keep track of the varied and disparate concepts, while also allowing me to reflect on how I saw synthesis and connection between the concepts. This proved helpful by allowing me to add quotes from sources to a growing repository, document (and thus return) to initial impressions and connections during the development and iterations of the framework and activity and chronicle a months-long exploration of the topic. Figure 7 shows an early attempt at mapping joy, by drawing connections between the different concepts that showed up in my research. Using annotations like systems mapping methodologies, the connections were drawn to show if certain elements increased or decreased by joy (+ or -), were similar to joy ( $\approx$ ), were in opposition to the creation of joy (X) or to show relationships (>).



*Figure 7: An early attempt at mapping joy in the insights journal*

The original intent of this project was to find some central definition of joy, a way to synthesize all the different forms of joy into a singular, usable concept of joy to make it simple. However, through the mapping activities and journaling, it became clear that with joy being such a complex phenomenon, synthesizing it to one core concept would be difficult. To respond to this, the project turned to creating a framework that considers forms of understanding joy and allows them to exist side-by-side and build on each other. Further journaling and mapping activities were used to help map out and create a framework to visualize and understand how the different concepts of joy can interact with each other.

To socialize the framework, I attempted to create a reflection activity that would allow changemakers to engage with the concept of joy. Initial impressions of the framework found some similarity to Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) due to

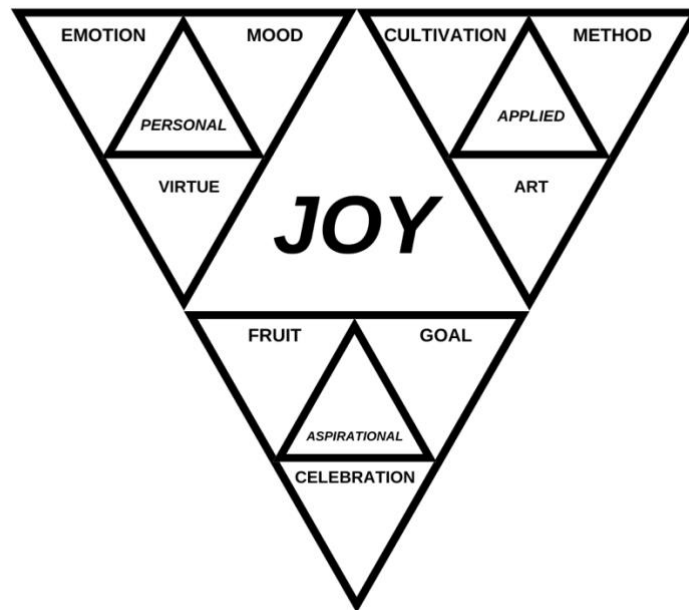
its multiple layers of joy that could be conceptualized as building off each other, but through reflection and iteration of the activity, and drawing from adrienne maree brown's writing on fractal change, a new concept for the activity was developed. This is explained in chapter 3 of the paper.

Using the literature review, self-reflective journaling, and workshop prototyping, the project was able to develop a robust framework for understanding the multiple permutations of joy and create a space of engagement and socialization with this concept.

## CHAPTER 2: FRAMING JOY

*“Joy isn’t hard to find at all. In fact, it’s all around us” (Lee 2021:5).*

---



*Figure 8: The Joy Triangles (author’s visualization)*

Understanding the different perspectives on joy, I present the Joy Triangles frame for joy. The intent is for individuals, and specifically changemakers, to understand and engage with joy. As joy is an intrinsic, personal phenomenon, I offer a varied model that allows different conceptions of joy to live alongside one another so that changemakers may understand the many ways joy can exist in their lives.

With joy being so wide-reaching, this framework does not attempt to provide one singular definition of joy; instead, it synthesizes the findings and understandings of multiple frameworks. The goal of this synthesis is to provide a clear and usable way of approaching joy that draws on knowledge across disciplines and cultures, weaving them all together into a great tapestry of joy. These overarching understandings include **Personal Joy**, **Applied Joy**, and **Aspirational Joy**. This section will investigate each of these concepts more deeply and with evidence from the cited texts, but briefly:

- **Personal Joy** is how joy manifests for individuals. This is about the aspects of life that bring them delight and have personal meaning for them. This is an intrinsic, internal, and unique joy to each person.
- **Applied Joy** is about the cultivation of joy and the use of joy as a method for change. This is about externalizing internal thoughts and feelings to bring about joy or using joy to bring about change.
- And thirdly, **Aspirational Joy** is where futures thinking starts to converge with this research. This type of joy is used to imagine different future possibilities rooted in joy. Aspirational Joy creates space to discuss teleological aspects of joy.

Building off adrienne maree brown's work on the lessons that can be gleaned from fractals in organizing and change-making, the framework in this paper presents the concept of Joy as a Sierpinski triangle. The Sierpinski Triangle is an

example of a fractal that is a self-similar pattern of equilateral triangles nested in themselves. Simply put, it is a triangle made of triangles *ad infinitum*. If joy is presented as a fractal triangle, we can imagine it comprising other self-similar triangles, here presented as the three main types of joy: Personal Joy, Applied Joy, and Aspirational Joy. Each of these types of joy is made up of different elements themselves. Going further, those elements are made up of many other triangles that could represent specific moments or instances of joy *ad infinitum*. Because fractals can scale up or down, we can also imagine another person's joy as its own triangle that can then be imagined to be part of a cluster of other triangles, creating a community of Joy Triangles. This can scale up to clusters of triangles based on communities, location, interest, and other relationships. This framework represents the interconnectedness of everyone's joy to others' joy, with each moment of joy building off and supporting the proliferation of joy everywhere and for everyone.

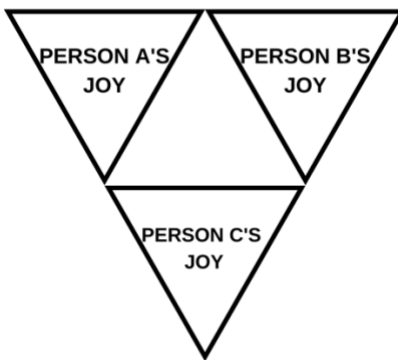
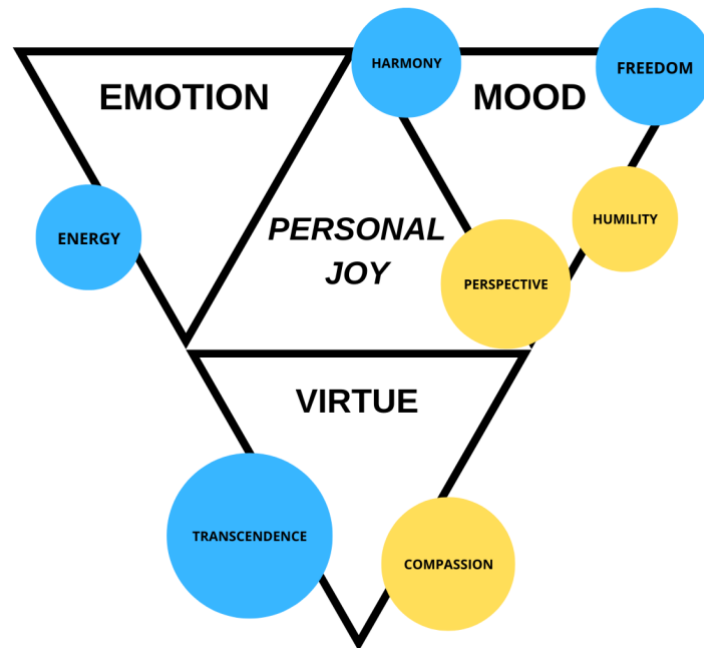


Figure 9: Example of how the Joy Triangles represent multiple people's joy

## *Personal Joy*



*Figure 10: The Personal Joy Fractal (author's own, colours match Chapter 1 models)*

Within this framework, Personal Joy is about an individual's unique sense of joy, what sparks joy in their lives, and its role in how they interact with others and the systems around them. There are three ways in which Personal Joy can show up in an individual's reflections: as an emotion, as a mood, and as a virtue. This can be seen in Figure 10, with the three elements that make up Personal Joy shown as fractal triangles – concepts from foundational theories are layered on the triangles (colours matching the author's visualizations from Chapter 1) to show the relationship to them. They are visualized as bubbles to indicate their fluid relationships.

## *Emotion*

Joy-as-emotion is a natural first type of joy to examine as it is the most evident and broadly understood. Philip C. Watkins points out in his article on how to appraise and measure joy that “To be sure, in common parlance we use the word joy uncarefully, but I maintain that there is a distinct positive emotion called joy that deserves research attention in its own right” (2020:26).

One of the earliest psychological pieces to look at joy conceptualized it as an emotion. In that work, George Dearborn’s definition of emotion is “a temporal portion of excited sentient experience wherein the subjectivity and the psychophysical attention to the object, real or ideal, are heightened with or without a tone of pleasantness or of unpleasantness, and wherein the feeling and the bodily position or movement are, or tend to be, characteristic and correlative” (1899:10). He goes on to examine each component and how it relates to joy and distinguishes it from pleasure using Sir Charles Bell’s words:

Joy is distinguishable from pleasure. It consists not so much in the sense of gratification as in the delight of the conviction that the long-expected pleasure is within our reach and the lively anticipation of the enjoyment which is now decked out in its most favorite and alluring shape. (1847 as cited in Dearborn 1899:29)

Following this early definition, further works understand joy-as-emotion as the individual’s internal response, even when it has an external reaction to it like the “telltale signs: smiling, laughing, and a feeling of wanting to jump up and down [...] it is a uniquely exuberant emotion, a high-energy form of happiness”



(Lee 2021:15). This last understanding creates the distinction that joy is a different yet related form of happiness. This exuberant feeling of happiness corresponds with Chris Meadows' concept of Excited Joy (in contrast to Serene Joy, which will be explored in joy-as-mood). Specifically, Meadows expounds on this by reviewing the presence of vitality in the experience of joy-as-emotion. This "sense of energy, potency, and aliveness" pairs with Lee's aesthetic quality of Energy (Meadows, 2017 as cited in Johnson 2020:8). Lee explains since joy is a "uniquely exuberant emotion," that vibrant colours and light can mirror the exuberance of emotion (2021:15).

Relatedly, Lee also posits that joyful aesthetics are often abundant, too: "When I first started hearing about the places that give people joy, I realized that many of them evoke this giddy feeling of abundance" (2021:43). The energetic aspect of joy can give way to lushness and multiplicity in the abundant element of joy. This presents an exciting area of exploration, as abundance can also be connected to overconsumption. Actor and activist Billy Porter reflects that "Joy comes from the inside. Joy just is. It's a state of simply being. Non-reliant on exterior or material things" (2021:Ch. 19). But it seems the distinction is not as clear-cut as that. Upon hearing the Dalai Lama explain that his approach to enjoying food is to think about the more profound value of food, it becomes clear to Douglas Abrams, who attended the Dalai Lama and Tutu's week of meetings, "that holiness didn't require a rejection of the simple joys of life" (Dalai Lama et al. 2016:52). This points to the importance of understanding the nuances

between joy, pleasure, and happiness, and, importantly, how societal beliefs can play a part in obscuring joy for individuals. Lee explains, "Many of us carry the baggage of this equation unconsciously fearing that our love of pattern, texture, and lushness will reveal us to be self-indulgent hedonists" (2021:71).

Aesthetically, anything tacky or gaudy can be interpreted as "abundant", and societal pressures to not be exuberant, energetic, or unrestrained lead to the ostracization of said aesthetics. The Dalai Lama seemingly agrees with this point in his professed distaste for formality: "But I think that the real answer lies in a cultural bias deep in western society that runs toward sophistication, away from joy" (2016:29). Through reflecting on this, the connection between Lee's work on abundance and the Dalai Lama's recognition of the bias towards sophistication started to underline "the constructed nature of our systems and how they're not often designed with success or prosperity in mind"<sup>1</sup>. Joy does not innately come from external objects, but the feelings that these concepts like joy or sex bring can be joyful and produce moments for joy.

Crucial to the idea of joy-as-emotion, the internal response to something external to the individual, is that joy is "a 'mixed-emotional state': it is possible to simultaneously experience joy and other emotions (such as sorrow)" (Johnson 2020:6). While happiness and sadness are often paired as antonyms, it seems to be agreed upon that joy can be part and parcel of positive and negative feelings

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<sup>1</sup> Juan Luis Garrido, Research Journal Entry, February 11, 2022

and emotions. The Dalai Lama says joy and sorrow are “inevitably fastened together,” an idea core to the conversations he had with Archbishop Tutu; during their week of talks, they both reflected on the idea of finding joy despite the two of them have faced hardships in their lives (2016:111). Part of this co-existence of joy and negative feelings like sorrow is the ability to contrast joy with something else. In the first episode of her podcast series, Gabby Rivera says, “We can’t feel joy if we’re not also giving ourselves space to grieve or feel the terror of the world field” (2020).

Joy undoubtedly shows up in our lives as emotion. It is a robust response we feel when confronted with positive phenomena or experiences. These moments of joy, for changemakers, are essential to identify, hold on to, and look for.

### *Mood*

Where joy-as-emotion is more focused on the specific responses that individuals must experience, there is also a body of work that supports the idea of what this framework calls joy-as-mood. This may also be called an approach or attitude, as it is about a personal sense of how to approach the world, others, and life. This type of joy focuses on more conscious decisions and a larger-picture perspective of one’s life. While joy-as-emotion is more about instances in which joy is felt and the reasons for that, joy-as-mood describes dispositional and attitudinal forms of joy.

Joy-as-mood is an example of serene joy, being “quieter and calmer, [and] giving feelings of harmony and unity” (Johnson 2020:7). In Meadows’ phenomenological dimensions of joy, he talks about harmony and unity specifically as “a sense of internal harmony or integration within oneself, and a sense of harmony with the ‘other’ (including friends, family, nature, etc.)”, pointing to the balance of internal feelings of joy with and connection to the outside world (2014 as cited in Johnson 2020:8). Aesthetically, Lee points out that Harmony in design in the form of neatness and symmetry “offers visible evidence that someone cares enough about a place to invest energy in it”, which offers a tangible representation of how the internal harmony and joy one feels can transmute into external actions and proliferation of joy outside of one’s self (2021:101).

Spiritually, the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Tutu speak of this connection between internal and external joy by describing the pillars of Humility and Perspective. Both pillars underline the power/importance of stepping outside of one’s joy and seeing how it connects to the outside world: “Humility is essential to any possibility of joy. When we have a wider perspective, we naturally understand our place in the great sweep of all that was, is, and will be” (Dalai Lama et al. 2016:209).

For changemakers, the question becomes how to find that balance between internal joy and the connection of joy found in other factors. The Dalai Lama and Archbishop Tutu explain that much of this work can be based on their

Perspective pillar of joy requiring a shift in perspective “from focusing on I and me and mine to we and us and ours,” an attitude and approach that probably comes naturally to changemakers (2016:199). The key is joyfully rooting that belief and concern for a collective or community. Finding that balance of one’s joy and how respect for others can also bring about joy for oneself and others is the joyful aspect of perspective shifting.

While it may seem contradictory or antithetical to the organized Harmony of joy-as-mood, one of the other critical components is what Meadows and Lee describe as Freedom. For Meadows, “joy involves the experience of physical freedom (fluid and free motor behaviors), and also freedom of thought” (2014 as cited in Johnson 2020:8) and aesthetically, Lee discusses this dichotomy that “Joy thrives on the alleviation of constraints” (2021:74). Lee points out joyful aesthetics are often related to images of wide-open spaces, pastures, and fields, illustrated by the *Most Wanted* painting project by Vitaly Komar and Alexander Melamid. In this project, a ten-country survey was conducted to determine the kind of art people enjoyed and “with few exceptions, the *Most Wanted* painting show pleasant outdoor scenes centred on grassy areas with scattered corpses of trees and plenty of blue sky,” which Lee theorizes is because “in these environments we find an ideal balance between safety and freedom” (2021:76;78). This idea of freedom has been tied to joy in many spaces. Keah Brown, who writes about her life as a queer disabled Black woman, says, “My joy is my freedom—it allows me to live my life as I see fit” (2020). Through her

internal sense of freedom, she finds joy. Through her joy, she finds freedom, especially in the face of a society that presents racism, ableism, misogyny, and homophobia as ingrained systems of oppression with which she must contend.

### *Virtue*

The idea that personal joy can be intrinsically linked to the joy of others and the proliferation of joy was explored through joy-as-mood. It explained an attitude and approach to life and interactions that center on shared joy. Philip C. Watkins says that the “‘story of joy’ is that a person construes a situation as bringing them into closer connection/union with someone or something important to them” (2020:28). This altruistic approach to relationships can be seen as a character strength, however, there are theories that conceptualize joy as a virtue (King 2020; Schnitker, Ratchford, and Lorona 2020). Pamela Ebstyne King explains that “virtues are distinguished from character strengths because virtues are prescribed meaning by an understanding of transcendence that is incorporated into one’s self-narrative” (2020:35).

Early in the research, it became clear to me that “there is so much attached to [joy] about other people and relationships”<sup>2</sup>, indicating an early understanding of the importance of Transcendence in joy. What brings virtue as one explanation of joy is the transcendence of concern, attention, and energy

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<sup>2</sup> Juan Luis Garrido, Research Journal Entry, January 23, 2022

from the individual to other people, other situations, and even things. In Jenny Odell's *How To Do Nothing*, she draws extensively on Martin Buber's I-It and I-Thou dichotomy of ways of seeing: "In I-It, the other (a thing or a person) is an 'it' that exists only as an instrument or a means to an end, something to be appropriated by the 'I'" and "in contrast to I-it, I-Thou recognizes the irreducibility and absolute equality of the other" (2019:104). This difference speaks to the nuanced difference between the concern for others present in joy-as-mood and the transcendent properties of joy-as-virtue.

Both Meadows and Lee speak about transcendence as a central tenet of joy. Meadows defines transcendence as "the content of consciousness when one senses or has the feeling that he is moving or has moved, soared, or passed beyond ordinary existence. Amid a joy experience, one may feel she has transcended bounded space and/or time, ordinary self-consciousness, the past, or usual personal ego boundaries" (2014 as cited in Johnson 2020:8).

For Lee's aesthetic approach to discussing joy, she points to objects related to elevation and lightness and examples in life – hot air balloons. As vehicles that physically lift people off the ground and just float along with the natural winds, they are a dramatization of the sense of movement that Meadows describes – partly liberating, natural, out of our control, and yet also a conscious decision to seek transcendence that can be found through a feat of design; "If we're to truly encounter anything outside of ourselves (transcending Buber's I-It relationship), we have to want it" (Odell 2019:130).

While Potkay argues that “joy – more so than any other emotion – can serve as a linchpin between emotion and ethics” (2007 as cited in Emmons 2020:2), core to joy-as-virtue is the intentional absence of specific understandings of what is good and evil; “Virtues are recognized to sustain the moral capacity to know, feel, and do good *in one’s context*” (King 2020:33, emphasis my own). Similar to how the Dalai Lama’s and Archbishop Tutu’s conversations are devoid of specific dogma or doctrine, this framework, and the idea of joy-as-virtue “is rather agnostic and does not prescribe what one should believe” as it is “informed by one’s beliefs and narrative” (King 2020:37).

Compassion, one of the pillars of joy presented by the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Tutu, is a practical, more tangible example of how joy-as-virtue can be exemplified in how individuals live and interact with each other. Jinpa, the Dalai Lama’s interpreter, defines compassion as “a sense of concern that arises when we are confronted with another’s suffering and feel motivated to see that suffering relieved” – the feeling of compassion is the transcendence of joy exemplified through feelings (Dalai Lama et al. 2016:252). This feeling, rooted in concern for others, can also serve individuals, according to the Dalai Lama: “The more time you spend thinking about yourself, the more suffering you will experience. The incredible thing is that when we think of alleviating other people’s suffering, our own suffering is reduced” (2016:254).

Returning to Odell’s readings of the I-It and I-Thou schema, the intentionality of seeking joy is centred in the discussion. The idea of intentionally



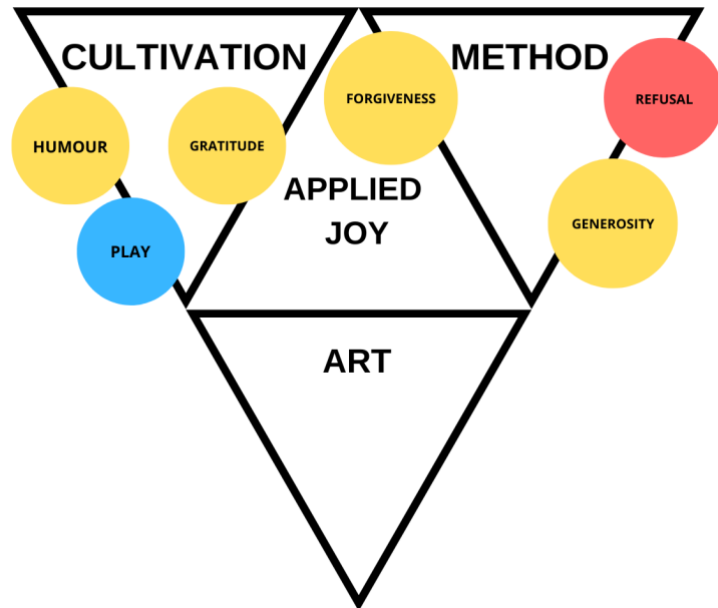
cultivating joy is intrinsically tied to transcendence, which Schnitker et al. explore in their article about conceptualizing joy as a virtue:

By this definition, people can intentionally cultivate joy by expanding the transcendent, or beyond-the-self, elements of their narrative identities while building the habits or skills that promote positive emotions (e.g., developing an optimistic attribution style, shifting goals to be prosocial, savoring positive experiences). (2020:46)

Jinpa's definition of compassion goes further by saying it is "what connects the feeling of empathy to acts of kindness, generosity, and other expressions of altruistic tendencies" (Dalai Lama et al. 2016:252). This is echoed in Ganz's Public Narrative method as he connects the story of self to the story of us and the story of now, leading to developing a central narrative for changemakers that builds off their individual experiences, collective concerns, and urgency for change. Ganz's framework focuses on personal stories, including both "stories of pain" and "stories of hope" (2011:284). Notably, Ganz's chapter about Public Narrative only mentions joy twice; neither mentions referring to it as a source for the stories or values to be used in developing this narrative. This shows a gap in this method for this paper's framework. However, it can still serve as an example and base for creating stories of joy and connecting individual, shared, and actionable joy.

With the understanding that joy can and *should* be a conscious decision to seek and cultivate it, the next section on Applied Joy will discuss how scholars, artists, and thinkers have discussed how to bring joy to life through cultivation, art, and a method for social change.

## *Applied Joy*



*Figure 11: The Applied Joy Fractal*

Applied Joy speaks specifically about how joy can be cultivated as a daily practice and how joy can be used as a tactic in social change. Whether joy is being accessed as an emotion, a mood, or a virtue, there is an element about externalizing that and the effect it has on actions individuals take:

Psychologists argue that the information provided by our emotions is partly physiological, as when our respiration changes or our body temperature alters; partly cognitive because we can describe what we feel as fear, love, desire, or joy; and partly behavioral, as when we are moved to advance or to flee, to stand up or to sit down. (Ganz 2011:275)

This framework's conception of Applied Joy builds off Buddhist ideas of cultivation of joy and mindfulness and the work of Black abolitionist thinkers, who

posit that joy can be a form of resistance, especially in systems not designed for joy. As described in the joy-as-virtue section, there are elements of joy that are natural and intrinsic to life. But there are also spaces for intentionality and choice in the discussion of joy; “Buddhists believe that joy is the natural state but that the ability to experience joy can also be cultivated as a skill” (Dalai Lama et al. 2016:48). With so many different understandings of joy, it can also seem just as “blurry” to determine how to measure and cultivate joy:

If we are right in this speculation, then the study of joy might benefit from distinguishing activities that induce joy. Can we regularly identify people high in an abiding joy? Accordingly, what is the cultural or spiritual practices that such individuals regularly engage in to transform moments of suffering into opportunities for joy? How do these activities differ from similar disciplines used to promote gratitude, savoring, or flow? (Davis, Gazaway, and McLaughlin 2020:52)

In parsing through different schools of thought, the framework presented in this paper outlines this conversation under the umbrella of Applied Joy – how do we take the internal phenomena of joy, be it as an emotion, mood, or virtue, and apply it to life, interactions, and choices. This can be done by cultivating joy and using joy as a method.

### *Cultivation*

The idea of being able to cultivate joy, to intentionally create joyful environments, and to purposely seek joy out is repeated across different disciplines. This idea is one of the central conceits of Lee’s *Joyful* and her interest in the aesthetics of joy. Part of the origins of her work was when she

noticed that “not only did people seem to find joy in the world around them, but many also put much effort into making their immediate environment more delightful” (Lee 2021:4). Intentional choices helped joy grow, reminded people of what brings them joy, and provided opportunities for joy. Even in hard times, she likens the capacity for joy to a pilot light in a stove: “it still burns within you even if you haven’t switched on the burners in a while. What you hold in your hands is the key to reigniting those joyful flames” (Lee 2021:10). Throughout the Dalai Lama’s and Archbishop Tutu’s conversations, they also spoke about the different ways that can help create more joy.

Through Gratitude, individuals can find joy by finding appreciation and contentment in their life and work. This can be part of a cycle that potentiates both joy and gratitude:

This suggests that being a more grateful person (dispositionally) may potentiate experiences of joy, and being a more joyful person (dispositionally) may potentiate experiences of gratitude, such that there may be a ‘virtuous upward spiral’ in which joy and gratitude mutually reinforce each other. (Johnson 2020:7)

Many sources compare joy to gratitude, referring to the work conducted on gratitude's importance, cultivation, and use. *The Book of Joy, Joyful*, and throughout *The Journal of Positive Psychology*'s issue on joy, especially Zeng et al.'s article about Appreciative Joy, there are references to the role that gratitude exercises, i.e. mediation, journaling, or other daily rituals, can provide opportunities that allow joy to prosper (Dalai Lama et al. 2016; Lee 2021; Zeng et al. 2020).

Two pillars from *The Book of Joy* and Lee's aesthetic pillars that have a close relationship are, respectively, Humour and Play. These characteristics of joy bring together many of the other factors discussed so far, but in a more casual, enjoyable way. For humour, the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Tutu landed on the idea that "it's about being able to laugh at yourself and being able not to take yourself so seriously. It's not about belittling humour that puts others down and yourself up. It's about bringing people onto common ground" (2016:220). The idea of being able to laugh at yourself connects to the ideas of both Acceptance and Perspective; being able to "laugh at something that could ordinarily be a source of anguish", thus providing an opportunity for levity to help deal with the anguish. The import placed on the humour of sharing, and "bringing people onto common ground" connect to the compassionate and transcendent pieces of joy, highlighting the communal experience of joy again.

For Play, Lee highlights it because "it is the only known activity humans engage in solely because it produces joy" (2021:135). Contrasting it with the pleasure and joy one can get from food or sex, she points out food and sex often still fulfill other biological needs, which forms part of the basis of the joy experienced from them; play, on the other hand, does not fulfill a biological need, even while there is research to suggest it can help with emotional and social development. The purpose of play is joy, and "the only metric of success for play is how much joy it produces" (Lee 2021:135).

Both play and humour can be potent sources of joy that are needed during

times of hardship and to help bring teams and individuals together. For those engaged in change-making, the work can be arduous at times, and using play or humour in them might provide opportunities for lightness and reprieve that helps with Perspective shifting and Transcendence of joy to others.

### *Method*

Joy-as-method describes the means through which we interact with one another and, for this paper, how we can bring about social change. It is the means to the end, while the idea of joy as an endpoint will be explored in the next section of Aspirational Joy. Taking a functionalist approach, “some psychologists suggest that joy’s adaptive function is to provide motivation to increase one’s effort if progress toward goals gets more difficult,” pointing to the use of joy as a valuable tool for social change and motivation as well (Kreiberg, 2014 as cited in Johnson 2020:7). Initially, this section was geared more towards joy as a condition for social change. However, through a deeper reading of the work and pulling from Lindsay Stewart’s book, my reflections led me to realize this work was more of an active choice rather than a passive, dependent condition – leading to the grouping of these concepts as joy-as-practice or joy-as-method because the application of joy can and should be an active choice.

In *The Book of Joy*, Forgiveness and Generosity are two pillars explored to provide examples of joy-as-method. Both are actions that focus on how an individual engages with other people. This emphasis on how we interact with

each other reinforces the beliefs expressed in the book that “We are most joyful when we focus on others, not on ourselves” (Dalai Lama et al. 2016:261)

For generosity, *The Book of Joy* draws upon Buddhist teachings:

In Buddhist teachings, there are three kinds of generosity: material giving, giving freedom from fear (which can involve protection, counseling, or solace), and spiritual giving, which can involve giving your wisdom, moral and ethical teachings, and helping people to be more self-sufficient and happier. (Dalai Lama et al. 2016:268)

One of the critical lessons of *The Book of Joy* is that joy can still be present even in times of hardship. As demonstrated through the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Tutu’s personal circumstances, they can still find joy despite having lived in exile or been part of the fight against apartheid, respectfully. Forgiveness as a pillar is one way that joy can flourish even in the face of difficulties. Using South African apartheid and Chinese-Tibetan history as examples, *The Book of Joy* views forgiveness as liberating from the past, serving as a method to deal with negative experiences, and to plot a path forward with joy. Pairing this idea of forgiveness with the tenants of fractal change, if forgiveness can be used when dealing with systemic oppression and state violence, while challenging, then this also means forgiveness can be used at individual, interpersonal, and community levels as effective means to find joy as well.

Of course, when discussing large-scale oppression and social change, there are many theories about how to approach it. Approaching it joyfully comes with a multitude of tactics as well. In contrast to the ideas of forgiveness and

acceptance (to be discussed in Joy-as-Fruit), there is also the idea that an act of refusal can bring joy. This approach is foundational to Lindsay Stewart's book *The Politics of Black Joy*, which also explores the political power of joy, and how it can be used as a tactic in the face of injustice and oppression. Stewart examines how often, and especially in recent history, resistance has been viewed as the response to oppression. She posits that joy can be a political tactic in the face of oppression. Stewart asserts that an "emphasis on Black joy was like a refusal to entertain the white gaze" (2021:9). Beginning from a place that acknowledges, in the case of Stewart's argument centred on abolition and anti-racism, that our society, with embedded and systemic racism, abounds, does not foster, or even allow for Black joy, the act of refusal means choosing joy, one can refuse the system. This refusal, and the centring of joy, is a political act in and of itself.

Similarly, Herman Melville's short story, "Bartleby, the Scrivener," tells the story of Bartleby, a clerk who refuses tasks from his employer by responding "I would prefer not to" in response to the requests. Odell interprets this as: "he not only will not do what he is asked, he answers in a way that negates the terms of the question" (2019:70–71). In the context of Odell's book *How To Do Nothing*, this refusal serves as an example of how one can refuse to play into the attention economy, "where our value is determined by our productivity, many of us find our every last minute captured, optimized or appropriated as a financial resource by the technologies we use daily" (2019:ix). Paired with Stewart's ideas of joy-as-



refusal, this reveals it as an effective and meaningful political action that centers on the individual's well-being, interests, and personhood.

## *Art*

One space that shows up repeatedly in different discussions about both joy and social change is the relationship to art. Throughout the research for this book, art and expression were repeatedly exemplars of how to transmute feels of joy, motivation of social change, and visions for the future. Jenny Odell's investigation into reframing relationships to the attention economy reference performance artists and stories across mediums, highlighting the use of art to provide social commentary and as a form of praxis in creating change. Lois Lowry's young adult novel, *The Giver*, ends with the protagonist finding safety by hearing music for the first time. Throughout Lee's exploration of the aesthetics of joy, she references artists from across cultures, periods, art movements, and media and how their different pieces can be viewed as reflections of joy or spark joy through their choices ranging from colour, material, subject matter, or presentation. She connects music to her concepts of Celebration, Play, Surprise, and Transcendence, while many of her other concepts connect to elements of visual art. In Underwood's article about how to refine research being done on the concept of joy, she extolls the value of art in understanding joy:

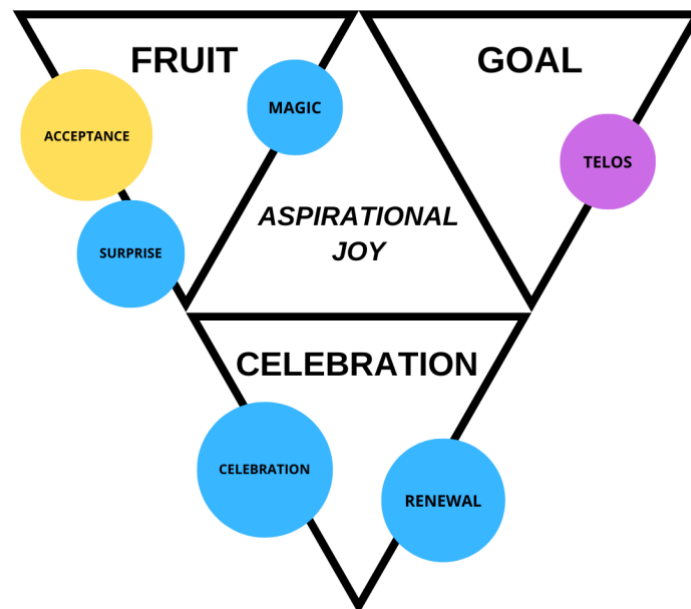
If we want to study joy in its various forms and complexity, a valuable tool as a 'prompt' for experimental and observational work is art. The arts – music, dance, film, video, and visual art – have the capacity to stir joy in us. In doing so they can help us to both define the construct more clearly

and study it better. (2020:55)

As an example of music being a conduit for messages of joy and social change, adrienne maree brown's *Emergent Strategy* ends with a suggested playlist for reading and reflecting on her work; at the top of that list is Beyoncé's 2016 album, *Lemonade*. Coincidentally, in addition to the works of Zora Neale Hurston and other abolitionist writers, Stewart also draws on Beyoncé's 2016 album to "offer an example of the inner workings of the politics of joy in popular culture" (2021:24). Interestingly, Beyoncé's 2022 album, *Renaissance*, has also been cited as an album that centers joy in its' art, as writes Britt Julious in her review of the album: "This is a record about making it *through*, a musical sojourn travelling the unparalleled legacy of Black joy, queer joy, and *Black queer joy* in music" (2022). The fact that (at least) two of Beyoncé's albums have been interpreted as being centred around joy points to how art, including music, can tell stories about joy and help foster joyful environments in powerful ways: "There is power in art, in music. And albums, as an art form, are a vessel of delivery" (Julious 2022).

Using joy as a method and practice for social change can provide motivation, center individuals in oppressive systems, and is a catalyst of art and music. Joy can also be used to imagine different futures. The following section, Aspirational Joy, will explore joy's role in future-making and its teleological function.

## *Aspirational Joy*



*Figure 12: The Aspirational Joy Fractal*

In the last version of joy in this framework, the focus is on the future and our aspirations for it. Bringing in elements of futures thinking into this discussion of joy rounds out the relevance of this framework for changemakers; the individuals who, to borrow from Stacey Abrams, are “those who worry for the future and fret about the now” (2020:230). This framework works with the assumption that, with varying degrees of intentionality, those involved with change-making are thinking about future states that they would like to see. Whether they’re working on long-term, broad, and wide-ranging systemic levels or focusing their time and energy on direct and immediate action for individuals

(or, like many changemakers, falling somewhere in the middle, dealing with both), their efforts are part of creating better futures. This creates a space to approach joy from a futures perspective, which is where the central research question for this project sprung from: How might individual joy renew a positive sense of the future and influence positive change, if at all? Aspirational Joy can take the form of unintentional proliferation of joy through joy-as-fruit, from a teleological standpoint as joy-as-goal, and joy-as-celebration.

### *Fruit*

In *The Book of Joy*, it is said that “our greatest joy is when we seek to do good for others” (Dalai Lama et al. 2016:59). This quote speaks to the transcendent and altruistic qualities of joy, but it also speaks to something core to the concept of joy – that joy does not always have to be the goal yet can still appear. It can be the indirect result of doing good for others. Throughout the research and literature on joy, across fields, the dichotomy of eudemonia and hedonia was referenced and drawn upon. From classic Greek philosophy, these two forms of happiness, and the difference between them, are the basis of many arguments and understandings of happiness and joy. Hedonic happiness is often more correlated with pleasure. In contrast, eudemonic happiness is more closely related to a life well lived or “in contemporary psychology, these aspects are usually referred to as pleasure and meaning,” respectively (Kringelbach and Berridge 2010). While hedonic happiness or pleasure can often be more related to external objects, with food and sex being the most classic examples,

“eudemonic happiness [...] is characterized by self-understanding, meaning, growth, and acceptance, including life’s inevitable suffering, sadness, and grief” (Dalai Lama et al. 2016:111). Related to the idea of Forgiveness, *The Book of Joy*’s pillar of Acceptance reflects the idea that individuals can take stock of their lives and current life circumstances and find joy within them. Now, especially when discussing social change, it can seem like this might be a form of giving up. But *The Book of Joy* is clear that “acceptance [...] is the opposite of resignation and defeat” and that it is actually through acceptance that social change can happen— “it allows us to engage with life on its own terms rather than rail against the fact that life is not as we would wish” (Dalai Lama et al. 2016:223;225). Of course, having just discussed the idea of refusal in joy-as-practice, it is essential to acknowledge that these two acts can live alongside one another; just as joy can be a complex emotional response, how they can be turned into action can also be challenging. Stewart’s idea of refusal is an active choice that requires work, attention, and energy, and parallelly “the kind of acceptance that the Dalai Lama and the Archbishop were advocating is not passive” (Dalai Lama et al. 2016:226). The act of refusal that Stewart discusses in her book, it can be argued, must come with first an act of acceptance – recognizing the current situation, accepting that it exists, and then actively choosing to reject it in favour of joy. To illustrate this, *The Book of Joy* draws upon Tutu’s experience as a leader in the fight against apartheid: “The Archbishop did not accept the inevitability of apartheid, but he did accept its reality” (Dalai Lama et al.

2016:224). The Archbishop had to accept he was living in apartheid to survive the system he lived in and start strategizing and organizing how to fight against and dismantle the same system. By accepting his circumstances, he was able to survive the day-to-day of living under oppressive circumstances, allowing him still to find opportunities for joy despite a racist regime and simultaneously dream, ideate, and work towards a future without apartheid:

We are meant to live in joy,” the Archbishop explained. “This does not mean that life will be easy or painless. It means that we can turn our faces to the wind and accept that this is the storm we must pass through. (Dalai Lama et al. 2016:224)

Through acceptance, joy can be a fruit of change-making – finding those opportunities for joy even when it can be hard to do so by accepting reality. This active, powerful act and choice can lead to joy.

Another avenue for joy can be found through Lee’s aesthetic pillars of Magic and Surprise, connecting to the human impulse to seek and accept unexpected moments of joy that expand our minds and take us out of our lived realities. When discussing aesthetic principles of contrast and illusion, the pillars of Magic and Surprise become a more precise form of how joy can appear as a fruit of different experiences. And for changemakers, they can provide bases for radical changes to understanding, often needed for significant systemic changes:

The joy we find in magic stems from a deeper impulse towards expanding the mind and improving the human condition. At the root of our love of rainbows, comets, and fireflies is a small reservoir of the belief that the world is bigger and more amazing than we ever dreamed it could be. (Lee 2021:244)

Magic often presents itself aesthetically as something unexpected and indescribable, at least at first. Comparing that to innovation and social change is not far off, as modernity can sometimes relate to historical visions of the future. When discussing magic, Lee draws on science fiction, pointing to the idea that the ideas presented in the genre often are also unexpected and indescribable: “Science fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke’s well-known third law states, ‘Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic’ (2021:236). I vividly remember my parents telling me how the video call systems they saw in *The Jetsons* growing up always seemed out-of-this-world, yet now I have weekly FaceTime calls with them. adrienne maree brown describes her activism and organizing as “science fictional behaviour”—being concerned with the ways our actions and beliefs now, today, will shape the future, tomorrow, the next generations” (2017:16). She roots much of her beliefs in the lessons she gleans from Octavia Butler’s oeuvre. This approach to affecting change, viewing it as magic or science fiction, help us joyfully create new worlds. Lee says that Magic and as well as Surprise can help bring down prescribed beliefs and stereotypes as she believes “in a state of joy, our mindset becomes more fluid and more accepting of difference” and that “joyful surprises might help disrupt harmful stereotypes, increasing the chances that we’ll see the difference as delightful rather than threatening” (2021:186). Science fictional thinking can provide opportunity for conceptualizing our goals as changemakers.

## Goal

The next version of joy this framework looks at is joy-as-goal; that joy can be the end-state for changemakers work. This idea comes intrinsically tied to the concept of joyful futures – imagining futures states where joy is a central part of the design – from the daily lived experience to a foundation value of the future, predicated on joy for all. The basis of joy-as-goal lies in teleology, “the study or science of understanding ends, purpose, or completion (King 2020:35).

The articles from King and from Schnitker et al. in *The Journal of Positive Psychology*’s issue on joy explore how joy can be conceptualized both as a virtue and from teleological perspectives. In the article from Schnitker et al., they theorize that “joy might be instead categorized as the telos (the Greek word for ‘goal’ or ‘end’) of virtue,” and specifically that eudemonia, or a life-well-lived as previously explored, may have the end goal of joy (2020:46). In this conception, which King explains as “when a person lives in accord with these three dimensions,” the virtue of joy “involves (1) the growing self, (2) mutually beneficial relationships, and (3) evolving moral guidelines that ensure the ongoing fit and flourishing of self and society” (2020:36). Waterman et al. also draw on Aristotelian philosophy in discussing the relationship between virtue and eudemonia: “Aristotle proposed the telos of virtue as eudemonia. Eudemonia is the pursuit of the good for the sake of the good, or the development of one’s best possible self” (Schnitker et al. 2020:46). Putting these ideas together leads to (quite literally) a virtuous cycle of joy and a life well-lived, or eudemonia. Suppose



we conceptualize and utilize joy as a virtue. In that case, that leads to living a life dedicated to the prosperity of goodness according to everyone – creating a life-well-lived or eudemonic happiness as the telos of joy. Then drawing on King’s work, joy is the telos of virtue – so by living a virtuous life and reaching for eudemonia, we can find joy as the goal of that work.

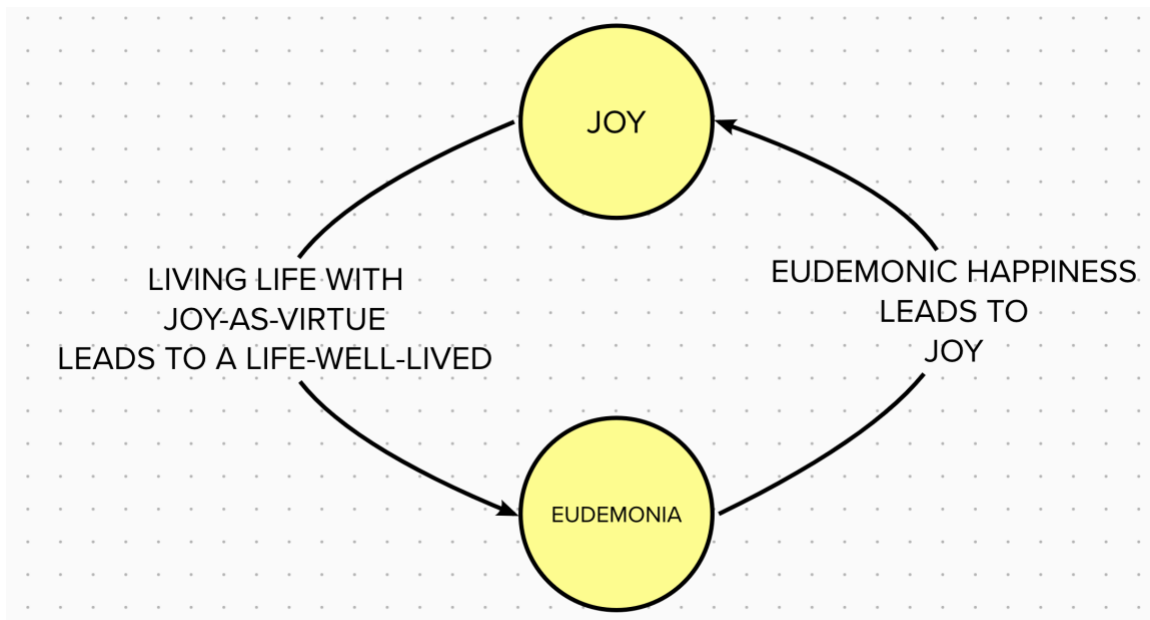


Figure 13: Mapping the teleological cycle of Joy and Eudemonia, author’s visualization

## Celebration

A helpful way to think of joy-as-goal is to think about what happens once the end goal of change-making is achieved. As we work towards joyful futures, what happens once the virtuous cycle of joy and eudemonia has helped achieve the desired change(s)? That’s where Lee’s pillars of Celebration and Renewal come into play.

*The Book of Joy* references a quote from *The Little Prince* author, Antoine

de Saint-Exupéry: “True happiness comes from the joy of deeds well done, the zest of creating things new” (Dalai Lama et al. 2016:284). This quote recognizes how it can be the completion of something good of a job well done, of creation that can provide joy and true happiness, which one can take to mean eudemonic happiness – a life-well-lived. And importantly, Lee points out that “what makes celebration unique is that it is a distinctly social form of joy” (2021:247). She references how celebrations are often group activities, or at least can be amplified when done in conjunction with others, tying to the inherent interactivity of joy and how so much of what has been explored about joy is about sharing it with other people. She explains that through communal celebration, “the result is a state of belonging and attunement, where for a few moments every individual is united in the same effervescent joy” (Lee 2021:247).

Marshall Ganz also refers to celebration as an essential part of change-making in his work on Public Narrative building: “[celebration] is a way that members of a community come together to honor who they are, what they have done, and where they are going—often symbolically” (2011:288).

Interestingly, although not listed as a pillar in their framework for joy, *The Book of Joy* follows the chapters going through each of the eight pillars with a chapter about celebration, focusing on how at the end of the week of conversations between the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Tutu, they celebrated both the meeting and the Dalai Lama’s 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. While retelling the story, the book tells an anecdote of how Tutu shared his hope that “one day you [the Dalai

Lama and the Tibetan people] will be dancing in and singing in the streets of Tibet, your home country.” In response to his sharing, the Tibetan community they were with “cheered even louder” (Dalai Lama et al. 2016:287). Just the idea of a joyful celebration, through song and dance, was enough to propagate joy at that moment. They celebrated the concept of celebration.

When it comes to social change, there is the idea of getting to a future state that is idyllic. However, the reality is that social change ebbs and flows – many different social movements have seen how that happens throughout history, especially in the last few years. And so, Lee’s pillar of Renewal becomes crucial in this exploration of joy. Celebrating and imagining future celebrations is essential, powerful, and beneficial. Still, part of Acceptance is realizing that social progress is not linear, and there will be setbacks, roadblocks, and difficulties in this work. Part of the work of finding joy in change-making is creating “a reservoir of joy, that helps us amplify the highs and buffer the lows of everyday life,” but “sometimes we have to accept that joy moves through our lives in unpredictable ways” (Lee 2021:272). Joy-as-celebration ensures you can find joy in all future states, even if it is not the desired one. This can be explained as resilience or grit, or as Lee puts it, the “ability to bounce back from the difficulty by reigniting the optimism and hope that rises within us when we believe that joy will return” (2021:275). Regarding social change, the concept of resilience can be ineffective in creating change – Julie S. Lalonde’s book, *Resilience is Futile*, “is about surviving a stalker for a decade. But it’s truly an exploration of why resilience sets

us up to fail and why we need to refocus our energy on tearing down the systems that make us have to fight so hard in the first place” (2020). For adrienne maree brown, the concept of resilience is intrinsically tied to the idea of transformative justice because she posits that through resilience we can “[transform] the conditions that make injustice possible”, indicating that resilience is not just about sitting idly dealing with injustice but finding ways to survive while changing the conditions (2017:126). This dialogue regarding the role of resilience in the face of injustice is why Lee’s choice of the word Renewal, which this framework also borrows, is so important; it is not just having grit and resilience, which can lead to roadblocks and stalling of change, to make it through hardship and setbacks, but rather it is facing these setbacks with a sense of renewal – having the wherewithal and the reservoir of joy that can be renewed to inspire further action and determination.

## CHAPTER 3: REFLECTING ON JOY

*“Accordingly, what are the cultural or spiritual practices that such individuals regularly engage in to transform moments of suffering into opportunities for joy?” (Davis et al. 2020:52).*

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While chapter 2 responds to the research questions that investigate the nature of joy, and how it has been understood differently across disciplines, this chapter will respond to the inquiry around socialization and utilization of the framework for changemakers. It also concludes with reflections on the projects as a whole and spaces for further inquiry.

### *Prototyping Joyful Reflections*

Through the framework I present in this paper for understanding joy, I have taken multiple permutations of joy and attempted to make sense of how they interplay, connect, and build on each other. An early attempt at making sense of how the different forms of joy interact with each other had them ordered in a hierarchical function. Reflections during this phase of the research process found connections to the Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) method, giving way to

using the iceberg as a metaphor for this framework of joy.

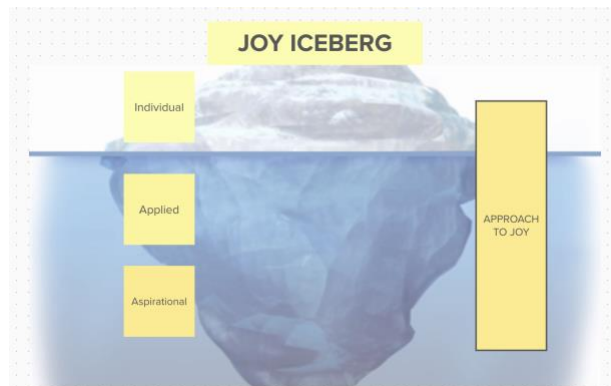


Figure 14: The second iteration of the Joy Iceberg, an early attempt at creating an engagement activity

Developed by Sohail Inayatullah, the CLA method creates “transformative spaces for the analysis and the creation of alternative futures” (2017). Through unpacking understandings of the past and present, it unearths deeply held views and unseen forces on the world and then opens space to imagine different concepts that can affect the future. Four levels are examined in the CLA method:

- Litany: “The official description of the problem.”
- Systemic causes: “Often short-term analysis, either single or multivariable.”
- Worldview: “Discerning deeper assumptions behind the problem.”
- Myth/metaphor: “Deep stories, unconscious dimensions of the problem.”

The different forms of joy were mapped to the levels used in the CLA method. However, upon further reflection, the connection between the framework for joy and the CLA activity was not an effective fit. The iceberg metaphor

indicates that there are seen and unseen elements of the subject matter in the CLA method, but in the framework of joy, there are seen and unseen elements in all forms of joy. As well, while the forms of joy are all interconnected, they are not necessarily layered onto each other as neatly as stacking them on an iceberg might suggest. My personal interest in the CLA method drove the motivation to find synergies between it and the Joy framework. After reflection, I surmised that it was more apt to find other ways of both visualizing and socializing the framework.

Ultimately, it felt apt to draw from adrienne maree brown's work and emphasis on fractals from her book, *Emergent Strategy*. Personally, this work and this concept has proven to clarify my relationship to change-making and how my actions affect those around me and wider systems. With further reading on fractals, the Sierpinski triangle presented a natural fit for conceptualizing the framework of joy and as a basis for the below activity. The idea of a fractal triangle, a triangle made up of triangles, which in turn can be made up of triangles, more adequately represented joy. There is no singular expression or experience of joy, but rather a series of interconnected experiences that support and build upon one another in multiple directions. These experiences of joy for one person can then support and interact with others' experiences of joy to create a larger triangle (or set of triangles) to represent communities of joyful experiences.

I present this activity as an early attempt to provide opportunity for

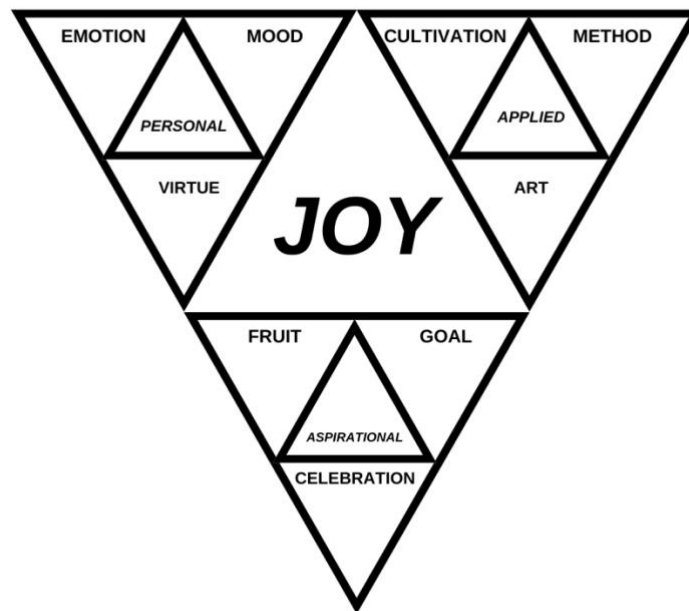
reflection on what personally brings them joy, how they currently cultivate and apply joy in their lives, and the joyful futures they aspire to. Ideally, with that understanding and further reflection activities, they can take an active role in understanding their joy and creating the change they want to see.

This is a prototype – an early version of a reflective activity that synthesizes the framework of joy into questions for reflection. The hope is that this activity could be done without having first thought read the framework or this paper. To socialize this further, it would be important for individuals and groups to participate in this activity, give feedback on the questions as they engage with them and provide insight into ways to improve the process and activity.



## *The Joy Triangles*

Joy can take many forms in our lives. As a complex phenomenon, there are multiple ways to define, identify, and use joy daily. For changemakers, joy can be a powerful concept that can provide motivation, respite, and momentum, depending on how and when you engage with it.



*Figure 15: The Joy Triangles activity layout*

Through this activity, you are invited to reflect on and interact with the different forms of joy in your life, starting with personal forms of joy, moving to ways you can actively apply joy in your life, and imagining the ways you aspire to joy.

### *Instructions for Individuals*

1. Take some time to set up a station where you can work, ensure you feel comfortable and calm, and remain relatively uninterrupted to focus on the task. This can include reflective music, beverages or snacks, and a comfortable environment.
2. Draw and cut out nine equilateral triangles (or use a digital platform like MURAL or Google Jamboard to lay out 9 triangles).
3. Label and arrange the triangles as laid out in the diagram below with the label face-up.
4. Take each triangle one by one and refer to the question sheet below for a prompt. On the back of the triangle (or in a new triangle if doing this digitally) write or draw your answer to the corresponding reflection question.
  - a. It is up to you if you want to go through each triangle sequentially (Personal, Applied, Aspirational) or move around the fractal in any other order.

### *Instructions for Facilitators to Lead Groups*

1. Ahead of time, draw and cut out the nine equilateral triangles. Based on the number of people in the group, either have multiple sets for many groups to share or one large to display and walk people through. On one

side of the triangles, have the nine elements of joy, and on the flip side, write the suggested reflection question.

2. As the facilitator, you will flip each triangle, ask the question, and prompting individuals to answer the questions for themselves. Determine how long to give per question based on how much time you have i.e., giving five minutes per question would equal 45 minutes of reflection time for all nine triangles.
3. Reflections can be done through writing, drawing, or tactically with sticky notes. Either decide on a medium for the group ahead of time or provide the options (and needed materials) to the group ahead of time.
4. If the group is comfortable and there is space to do so, organize and display all your joy triangles together to reinforce the fractal element of everyone's joy being connected to each other.

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### *Questions for Reflection*

#### **Personal Joy**

Preamble: Personal joy is about the ways in which joy shows up in everyone's life. By reflecting on, naming, and learning to recognize when and why we feel joy, we can find motivation, inspiration, and create space for proliferation of joy.

- Emotion
  - What's something that can brighten your day while working?

- Mood

- When are you at your most content in your work?

- Virtue

- What are ways that you enjoy supporting others?

## **Applied Joy**

Preamble: Applied Joy moves our individual understanding and feelings of joy to action. Through finding ways to create environments, practices, and rituals for joy in our lives, we can ensure it engrained into our work as changemakers.

- Cultivation

- What's something you are grateful for in your change work.

- Method

- Name something you refuse to interact with, knowing it doesn't allow for joy. Once written, cross a line through it!

- Art

- What are some pieces of art, media, or music that bring you joy?

## **Aspirational Joy**

Preamble: Aspirational Joy helps us imagine what joyful futures could look like.

Ranging from the future ways we will celebrate our work to idyllic changes we want to see, even if they seem impossible, knowing the joy we want to see in the

world can keep us going.

- Fruit
  - If there were no barriers, what change would you make in your work?
- Goal
  - What's the goal of your change work?
- Celebration
  - What's your favourite way to celebrate a win, no matter how big or small it is?

### *Reflections on Joy Triangles Activity*

In the development of this activity, one of the main hurdles to overcome was figuring out how to adequately take the concept of joy, and even the different elements included in the framework and find a way to invite reflection on them. As stated, the original intent of this activity was to mirror a CLA activity, as I thought it would be easier to start from an established method of engagement and reflection. With CLA being focused on futures and deconstructing meaning, it appealed to me as a starting point as the concept of joy and the deconstruction of it into Personal, Applied, and Aspirational joy had echoes of the CLA's deconstruction of topics. However, as I played with this topic and the relationship

to the CLA, it felt too forced to fit the concept of joy into the CLA' or even an iceberg metaphor. Through returning to my journals and reflections, I was able to remember the importance of fractal change and adrienne maree brown's work in my development of this research project and the relationship to social change. Thus, the fractal triangles emerged as a concept that this activity could be anchored within.

The presented activity is intended to be a prototype – an early attempt at showcasing the potential for engaging with the framework in this research project. Ideally, there will be an opportunity to test this activity, which will help also allow for conversation with the framework itself. Just as joy can appear in many forms, my vision for this activity and framework is that it could and would take many forms as well, dependent on each person, with joy being so personal, as should be the reflection and engagement with it. It is also important to note that many of the sources for this research project include activities and opportunities for engagement – namely, both *Book of Joy* and *Joyful* each have a section at the end of them that have reflection activities, meditations, and guiding questions to help readers engage with their respective frameworks. This research paper heavily draws from these texts for the basis of the framework, and their included activities for reflections have and can further so be used to build engagement activities as well.

The conceit of this project was to take the seemingly amorphous concept of joy and provide some structure and connective tissue between theories. The

Joy Triangles framework does that by coalescing many different ideas. The framework is intended to be iterated upon, as there are many more theories and writings about joy that has not been as heavily discussed in this paper. The prototype activity will hopefully provide ample starting ground to grow the engagement with the concept and framework to further the goal of making joy an accessible concept and tool for social change.

## *Conclusions: Moving Forward Joyfully*

*“Pay attention to this now, faithfully and confidently, and at the end of time you will truly see it in the fullness of joy” (Dalai Lama et al. 2016:225).*

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Joy is a concept that appears across cultures, fields of study, periods, and media. Despite this, it has been under-researched and can be hard to define. Much of what is written about joy connects to changemakers work as there are profound altruistic and community-based aspects of joy. Joy can be and is a powerful concept for changemakers. Still, with blurry definitions, it can be hard to engage with it or use it to imagine a joyful future as a means of direction-setting, sensemaking, or motivation.

The basis of this project was investigating how joy has been understood throughout and across history, culture, and fields of study. The primary research question was: **How might joy be better understood and conceptualized clearly to allow for engagement with for social change?** To provide guidance in the pursuit of answers to that question, the following questions were used:

- How has joy been theorized throughout and in differing histories, cultures, and disciplines?
- Is there a central way that the different understandings of joy can provide clarity to how joy appears in everyone’s lives?



- And then, what are some interventions to help changemakers engage with their joy?

To look at how joy has been discussed and theorized, four core texts provided the foundation for a wide breadth of understanding.

The Dalai Lama and Archbishop Tutu provide a base of philosophical understandings of joy, buoyed by their real-life experiences as spiritual leaders and changemakers. Ingrid Fettel Lee's *Joyful* examines the ways that joy appears in our physical world, and what that means for individuals, while Lindsay Stewart's *The Politics of Black Joy* connects that pursuit of joy to the politics of creating change and responding to oppression. Rounding out these texts, the *Journal of Positive Psychology*, and Johnson's comprehensive literature review, furthers the conversation about joy by interrogating and unearthing its roots, discussing ways the study, research, and design of joy can be advanced, and creating ample room for further research.

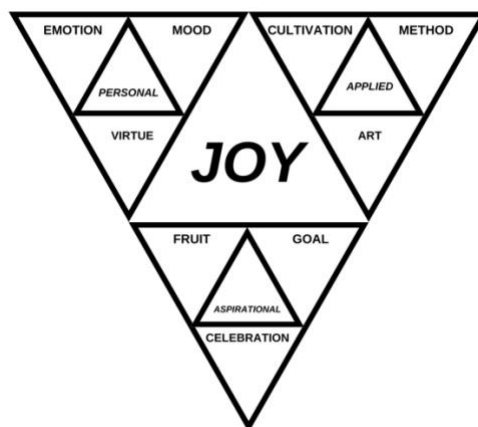


Figure 16: The Joy Triangles Framework (author's own)

Using the knowledge from these core texts and layering knowledge from other disciplines and thinkers, including the idea of fractal change, the Joy Triangles framework was developed to allow the multiple forms and understandings of joy to live alongside one another without necessarily saying which ones are right or wrong. This was conceptualized to find a central way for joy to be understood that built on existing and emerging knowledge and wisdom. This framework can scale to individual moments and how they are all part of the creation, cultivation, sensation, and experience joy. It can also scale to showcase how everyone's joy is interconnected.

With the intent of making joy more accessible a concept and provide an intervention to allow for engagement with joy, a prototype of a reflection activity was developed to help changemakers understand how their joy appears at different levels of their life and how they can engage with it.

So how can joy be made a more accessible concept? Inherently, Joy is a multi-faceted and complex. It appears in everyone's life in different forms and in different contexts. In the *Book of Joy*, the Archbishop says, "we [can] not pursue joy and happiness in their own right," which seems to mean that the pursuit and research of joy may be futile (2016:62). But after going through this project, I believe, and what this framework attempts to showcase, is that joy cannot be pursued singularly because it is not a singular concept. An individual can experience joy in many ways, and collective joy requires many different experiences of joy to come together. So instead of trying to codify a singular

definition and understanding of joy, this project organizes multiple elements together to allow for the journey of joy. It shows how joy is made up of varied experiences, concepts, and phenomena.

It is personal to each person based on how they respond to events in their life and to those around them. It can be cultivated intentionally and used as a political and social method as well as a springboard for art. And finally, joy can be central to our aspirations, hopes, and goals for the future, encouraging us to imagine joyful futures, being a fruit of the work being done, and providing opportunity for celebration.

This framework is intended to be iterated and built upon. Different people will bring their unique experiences to the framework and can and *should* layer their own understandings, other theories, and frameworks, and develop new pathways for thought. While there are four core texts about joy that provided the foundation for this paper, there are many more sources and a millennia's worth of ruminations and reflection on the concept of joy that can help bolster, problematize, and develop the framework further.

The idea of joy is deeply rooted in culture. There is space and an invitation to add cultural elements and understanding to allow for even more access. The framework of joy itself can also be expanded by exploring more the practical uses of joy and the measurement of joy. This work could draw upon the work of The World Happiness Report and several articles in *The Journal of Positive Psychology* that engaged with discussions about how to measure, codify, and

apply some academic and scientific rigour to discussions of joy.

The Joy Triangle activity needs to be socialized and refined to take this work further. It can be further honed as an individual reflection activity or presented it as a spaced-out series of activities for each corresponding level of joy. As a group activity, it can also be ideated as a collaborative activity for a team. There is also an avenue for it to be developed further as an engagement activity, not just for established groups but for public gatherings ahead, serving as a primer for participatory design initiatives such as public consultations and collaborative design activities.

I started this project because I wanted to understand what joy is, where it comes from, and how it can be used. I believe deeply in altruism and am drawn to creating positive change. Starting from the individual perspective and relating to the idea of fractal change, the intent of this project can be summarized by this quote from Lee: “From the seeds of our own joy, a whole world can be reborn” (2021:298). Joy is a powerful tool used throughout history to create respite and refuge in times of hardship, celebrate victories and social progress, and imagine different worlds, possibilities, futures, and ways of organizing society. This project hopefully will bring clarity to joy, opportunity and space for further discussion and reflection, and more tools to help everybody find their joy.

## EPILOGUE

Octavia Butler's Parable series centers around the development of Earthseed, a religion that organizes the protagonist's, Lauren Olamina's perspective on society, change, and life. The first passage in *Parable of the Sower*, and the novel's Book of the Living, reads: "All that you touch / You Change. // All that you Change / Changes you. // The only lasting truth / Is Change. // God / Is Change" (Butler 2019a:3). This passage, anchoring this series, has served as a springboard for science fiction writers and changemakers since its publication, including this very project. For those who want to *make change*, it reframes the work to say we *are change*. It is up to all of us to decide how to approach affecting change, and even when it's hard to do so, doing it with *joy* can impact not only ourselves but everyone around us – and that is what positive change is about.

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