

The Career Myth: Why Having a Career Isn't That Important

Navigating the professional world today, I've heard the word *career* used countless times. But only after years of hearing the word used did I consider the term's actual meaning and significance. In fact, years ago, it was actually a comment on an *Intellectual Takeout* article that pointed out something that has stuck with me ever since: Most people don't have careers; they have jobs.

After reading the comment, I couldn't help but agree. Throughout history, most people worked to survive and provide for themselves and their families. In other words, they had jobs. However, today, many people work with the intent to climb the corporate ladder, and as a result, they must be willing to put in extra time and energy compared to just working a job. These individuals want to have a career, not simply have a few jobs across the course of their lives.

In principle, there's nothing wrong with having a career rather than just a job (or vice versa). Some people may be driven toward having a career, and the world needs people who are willing to go above and beyond to run companies and invent new technologies. However, should we really be pushing *everyone* to have a career?

This question is one that I've seen play out with the intense pressure [women](#) today face to have a career, often instead of undertaking the job of motherhood. This push was particularly apparent to me during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

As people returned to the workforce post-lockdowns, Joe Biden [pointed out](#) that many women hadn't returned to the labor force. He suggested that a lack of affordable childcare was what was preventing these women from returning. But he didn't

seem to have considered that many of these women may have not wanted to resume their previous careers. Is it not possible that many women [realized](#) that they derived more meaning or value from spending time with their kids and family than climbing the corporate ladder?

According to [Pew Research](#), 40 percent of Americans say that family is the “most important” source of meaning in their lives, with religion coming in second place (20 percent). Job or career came in with only 4 percent of people citing it as their most important source of meaning.

In this same study, nearly 70 percent of people said family provided a “great deal” of meaning in their lives, compared to 34 percent who said the same for their jobs or careers, putting jobs and careers in dead last.

With these statistics, it’s worth considering why society today puts so much emphasis on career. Certainly, having a job or career can be a source of fulfillment, even if it’s not the primary one, and earning money is necessary to purchase essential goods. We also need hard-working people to keep society functioning. But when the majority of people do not see their careers—or even their jobs—as the biggest source of meaning in their lives, why are we pushing people to prioritize these things?

If we go back to Joe Biden’s proclamation about women in the workforce, one explanation becomes apparent. [Gross domestic product](#) (GDP), a key measure of economic growth, only increases if money changes hands. If a mother stays home and homeschools her children, GDP doesn’t increase. But if that same mother works full time, sends her kids to school to be taught by someone else, and hires a nanny, then GDP will go up and reflect positively on the current administration.

However, there may also be a more insidious reason for this career push. As people focus on having a career, they have

less time for other aspects of their lives, including their families. In the news, we can see the family under constant attack with parents' authority over *their* children being questioned and undermined—and, in some cases, legislated away.

“There is no such thing as someone else's child. No such thing as someone else's child. Our nation's children are all our children,” said Joe Biden in a [recent speech](#) where he quoted a former teacher.

Meanwhile, in California, [proposed legislation](#) would essentially strip parents of their rights and authority over their children as soon as their kids turn 12. This bill is touted as protecting the mental health of children, particularly LGBTQ-identifying kids. As the California Family Council [explains](#): “California lawmakers [advanced](#) a radical new bill, [AB 665](#), that would allow children as young as 12-years-old to consent to being placed into state funded group homes without parental permission or knowledge. Critics are rightfully equating this to ‘state-sanctioned kidnapping.’”

Even though the push for people—especially women—to have careers isn't new, the intentions behind this push are on full display today as the family is under attack. And the only way this method of attack can succeed is if people continue to believe that having a career is of paramount importance. But if the workforce changes post-COVID are any indication, people *can* reprioritize and re-evaluate.

As for the rest of us, if family is where we find meaning, shouldn't family be our priority?

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