



Future of Work:

The Journal of Labor Transformation, Technology Integration, and Human Adaptation

eISSN: 3143-8148 (Online)

doi.org/10.70175/futureofworkjournal.2026

Volume 1 Issue 1 - September 2026

Using AI-Simulated Personas to Explore Motivational Interventions: A Methodological Investigation

Jonathan H. Westover, Utah Valley University, Future State University, Nexus Institute for Work & AI, Catalyst Center for Work Innovation

Received March 5, 2026

Accepted for publication July 10, 2026

Published Early Access August 3, 2026

Abstract: *Experimental research on workplace motivation faces significant practical and ethical constraints, as random assignment to interventions, manipulation of organizational contexts, and testing across diverse populations are often infeasible in field settings. This paper investigates whether AI-simulated worker personas can serve as a complementary methodological tool for early-stage exploration of motivational interventions, examining this question using beneficiary impact and job crafting interventions in a simulated fundraising context. We generated 240 diverse worker personas using three large language models (Claude, GPT-4, Llama), varying systematically in personality traits, cultural backgrounds, age, and prior experiences. Personas were randomly assigned to control training, beneficiary impact intervention, or job crafting reflection intervention conditions, with motivation, anticipated performance, and response quality measured through quantitative ratings and qualitative text analysis. Across all three LLMs, beneficiary impact and job crafting conditions showed substantially higher motivation ratings than control (Cohen's $d = 3.15$ and 3.97 respectively), with consistent patterns across model architectures and LLM choice explaining only 3-4% of variance. Individual differences moderated*

intervention effects in theoretically predictable ways, with collectivist personas and those high in agreeableness showing stronger responses, while qualitative analysis revealed distinct psychological mechanisms and generated testable hypotheses about intervention processes. AI-simulated personas show promise for rapid hypothesis generation and iterative exploration of motivational interventions, particularly for early-stage intervention design, mechanism exploration, and boundary condition testing. However, important questions remain about whether AI-generated effect sizes, moderator patterns, and psychological processes accurately reflect human responses, highlighting critical needs for human validation research.

Keywords: *motivation interventions, AI simulation, workplace behavior, beneficiary impact, job crafting, large language models, experimental methodology, personality differences, organizational psychology*

doi.org/10.70175/futureofworkjournal.2026.1.1.1

Suggested Citation:

Westover, Jonathan H. (2026). Using AI-Simulated Personas to Explore Motivational Interventions: A Methodological Investigation. *Future of Work: The Journal of Labor Transformation, Technology Integration, and Human Adaptation*, 1(1). doi.org/10.70175/futureofworkjournal.2026.1.1.1

The AI Implementation Gap in Higher Education: Navigating the Disconnect Between Technology Adoption, Policy Awareness, and Institutional Governance

Jonathan H. Westover, Utah Valley University, Future State University, Nexus Institute for Work & AI, Catalyst Center for Work Innovation

Received March 15, 2026

Accepted for publication July 17, 2026

Published Early Access August 7, 2026

Abstract: *Artificial intelligence (AI) has rapidly permeated higher education workplaces, yet a significant disconnect exists between employee adoption of AI tools and institutional policy awareness, governance structures, and strategic clarity. This study examines the emergent phenomenon of the "AI implementation gap" in higher education—the disparity between widespread AI tool usage and the institutional frameworks meant to guide such use. Drawing on recent survey data from nearly 2,000 higher education professionals and situating findings within*

broader theoretical frameworks of technology adoption, organizational change, and higher education governance, this article critically analyzes the current state of AI integration in higher education work environments. Key findings reveal that while 94% of higher education employees report using AI tools for work, only 54% are aware of relevant institutional policies, and more than half have used AI tools not sanctioned by their institutions. The analysis explores the risks, opportunities, and challenges associated with this implementation gap, including concerns about data privacy, misinformation, skill erosion, algorithmic bias, environmental impact, and the largely unmeasured return on investment of AI initiatives. The article also examines the roles of AI vendors, the ethical dimensions of AI adoption, and the implications of voluntary versus mandated technology use. The article concludes with recommendations for institutional leaders, policymakers, and researchers seeking to bridge the gap between AI adoption and governance in higher education contexts.

Keywords: *artificial intelligence, higher education, technology adoption, institutional governance, policy awareness, workforce development, digital transformation, AI ethics*

doi.org/10.70175/futureofworkjournal.2026.1.1.2

Suggested Citation:

Westover, Jonathan H. (2026). The AI Implementation Gap in Higher Education: Navigating the Disconnect Between Technology Adoption, Policy Awareness, and Institutional Governance. *Future of Work: The Journal of Labor Transformation, Technology Integration, and Human Adaptation*, 1(1). doi.org/10.70175/futureofworkjournal.2026.1.1.2

It's Not My Responsibility: How Autonomy-Restricting Algorithms Enable Ethical Disengagement and Responsibility Displacement

Jonathan H. Westover, Utah Valley University, Future State University, Nexus Institute for Work & AI, Catalyst Center for Work Innovation

Received April 1, 2026

Accepted for publication July 10, 2026

Published Early Access August 2, 2026

Abstract: *This study investigates how algorithms that limit autonomy affect ethical behavior through responsibility displacement and moral disengagement. Using surveys (N=187), interviews*

(N=42), and experimental vignettes, the research identifies three key mechanisms: responsibility displacement, responsibility diffusion, and moral distancing. Quantitative analysis shows perceived decision-making autonomy significantly predicts moral engagement ($\beta = 0.47, p < .001$), while qualitative findings reveal how algorithmic interfaces create "ethical buffer zones." Even when humans maintain decision authority, algorithmic mediation reduces ethical accountability by 32% compared to baselines. Effective interventions include transparent algorithm design, pre-recommendation reasoning requirements, and explicit responsibility frameworks. This research validates theoretical mechanisms of responsibility displacement and offers strategies for developing "morally engaged algorithmic systems" that enhance human ethical responsibility in algorithmic environments.

Keywords: *algorithmic decision-making, moral disengagement, responsibility displacement, ethical accountability, human-algorithm interaction, moral agency, algorithmic mediation, transparency*

doi.org/10.70175/futureofworkjournal.2026.1.1.3

Suggested Citation:

Westover, Jonathan H. (2026). It's Not My Responsibility: How Autonomy-Restricting Algorithms Enable Ethical Disengagement and Responsibility Displacement. *Future of Work: The Journal of Labor Transformation, Technology Integration, and Human Adaptation*, 1(1). doi.org/10.70175/futureofworkjournal.2026.1.1.3

Generational Divides and Gender Dynamics: Decoding the Multifaceted Drivers of Employee Engagement

Jonathan H. Westover, Utah Valley University, Future State University, Nexus Institute for Work & AI, Catalyst Center for Work Innovation

Received April 15, 2026

Accepted for publication July 22, 2026

Published Early Access August 5, 2026

Abstract: *This study aims to provide a more nuanced, age- and gender-specific understanding of the key drivers of employee engagement. By analyzing survey data from over 500 U.S. employees, the research evaluates the relative influence of traditional predictors like basic needs fulfillment alongside evolving constructs like "worker activation" - discretionary commitments nurtured*

through empowering organizational cultures. The findings reveal significant generational and gender differences in employee engagement levels and the salience of various engagement determinants. Baby Boomers and men exhibit higher overall engagement as well as stronger senses of purpose, belonging, leadership efficacy, and organizational commitment compared to younger generations and women. Basic needs and teamwork factors are more influential for younger cohorts and women, while individual determinants and growth opportunities matter more for older generations and men. These insights can inform the development of tailored, workforce-responsive strategies to foster commitment, performance, and well-being across an organization's multigenerational, gender-diverse employees, as understanding the distinct engagement drivers for different generational and gender groups is critical for optimizing discretionary effort and organizational success.

Keywords: *employee engagement, generational differences, gender differences, workplace diversity, organizational commitment, worker activation, workforce management, engagement drivers*

doi.org/10.70175/futureofworkjournal.2026.1.1.4

Suggested Citation:

Westover, Jonathan H. (2026). Generational Divides and Gender Dynamics: Decoding the Multifaceted Drivers of Employee Engagement. *Future of Work: The Journal of Labor Transformation, Technology Integration, and Human Adaptation*, 1(1). doi.org/10.70175/futureofworkjournal.2026.1.1.4