

Striving and Thriving: Occupational Identity Formation Among Black and Hispanic Youth and Youth from Households with Lower Incomes

Webinar: Insights and Implications

June 25, 2020



equitable
futures

A PROJECT OF THE
BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION

Introductions

**Please enter the following
into the chat box:**

- **Your name and title**
- **Your organization**
- **What led you to join
the webinar today?**

Today's Speakers



Nate Cadena
Denver Scholarship
Foundation



Andrea M. O'Neal
Management Leadership
for Tomorrow



Amy Simon
Goodwin Simon
Strategic Research



Michaela Leslie-Rule
Wonder: Strategies for Good



Ayele Shakur
BUILD

Nearly **4,000 young people** shared their lives, experiences, hopes, and challenges.

Advisory Team: Research

Romero Brown, Principal, Romero Brown Consulting

Nate Cadena, COO, Denver Scholarship Fund

Mary Gatta, PhD, Associate Professor of Sociology, CUNY-Stella and Charles Guttman Community College

Noel Ginsburg, Founder and CEO, CareerWise Colorado

Michael Lee, Director of Programs, Destiny Arts

Jane Margolis, EdD, Senior Researcher, UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Studies

Brandon Nicholson, PhD, Founding Executive Director, The Hidden Genius Project

Andrea O'Neal, Senior Coach, Career Prep Program, Management Leadership for Tomorrow

Roz Pierson, PhD, Partner, Luminas LLC

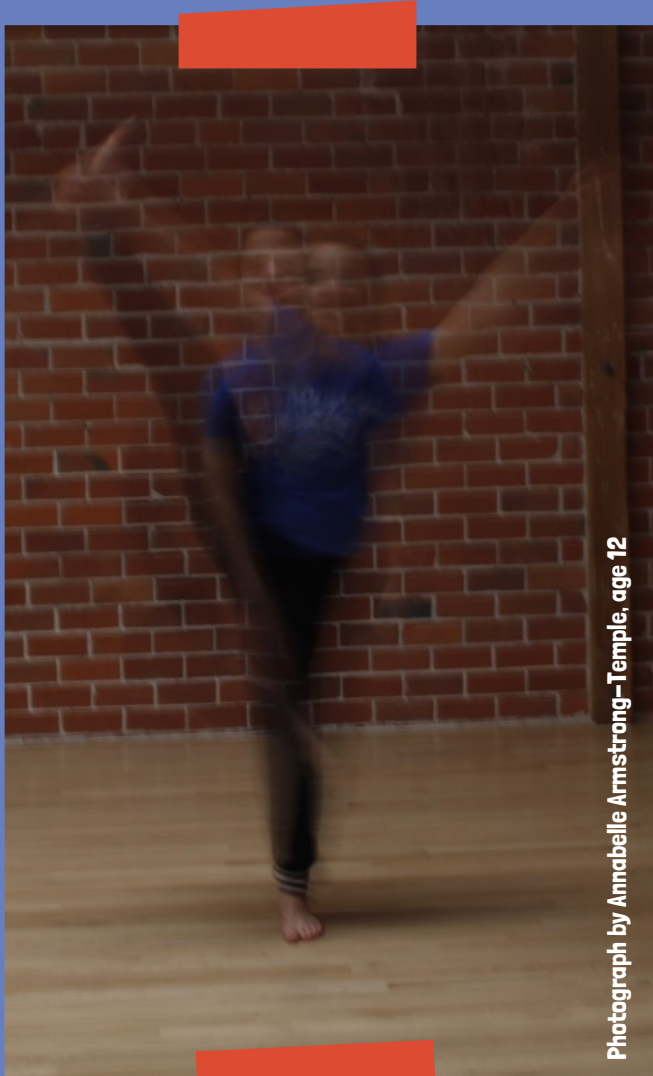
Melissa Risteff, CEO and Co-Founder, Couragion

Ayele Shakur, CEO, BUILD

Nathaniel Smith, Founder and Chief Equity Officer, Partnership for Southern Equity

Agenda

- **Part I: Research Briefing**
 - Research Overview
 - Key Insights
 - Q&A
- **Part II: Implications Discussion**
 - Implications: Advisor Panelists
 - Q&A



Photograph by Annabelle Armstrong-Temple, age 12

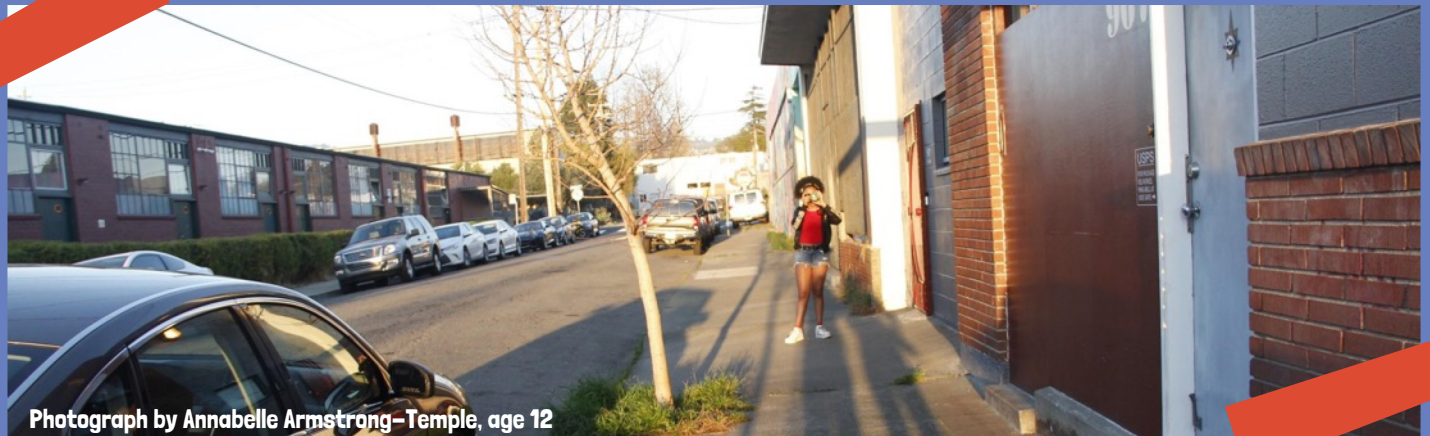
Project Origin



Photograph by Ava Victoriano, age 12

Project Goal

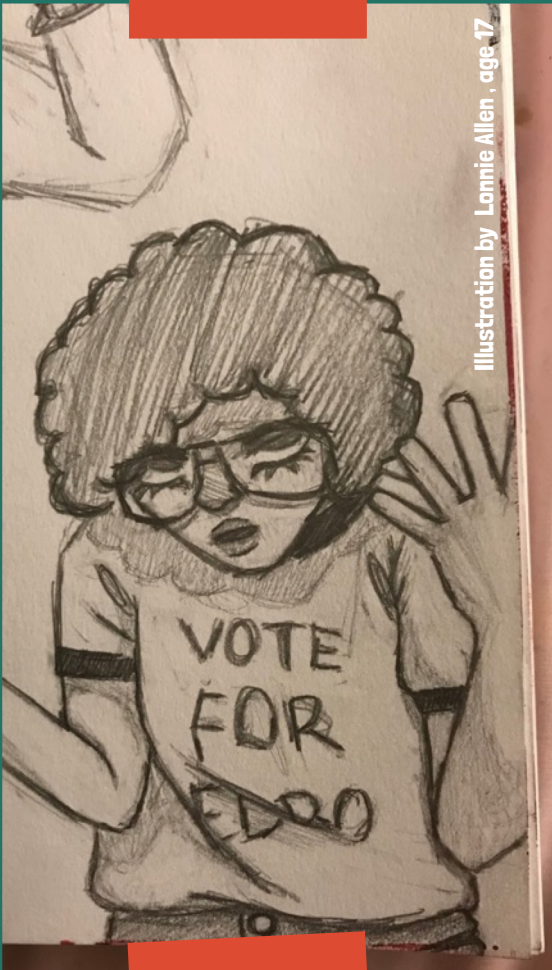
- Explore how young people's identities, values, beliefs, lived experiences, and emotions support or interfere with their educational and work goals and success—and the challenges they face in achieving those goals.
- Learn more about Black and Hispanic young people of any income, and white young people from households with lower incomes.



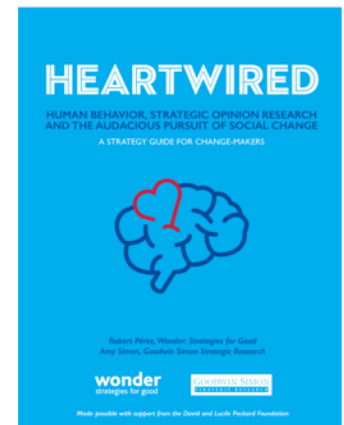
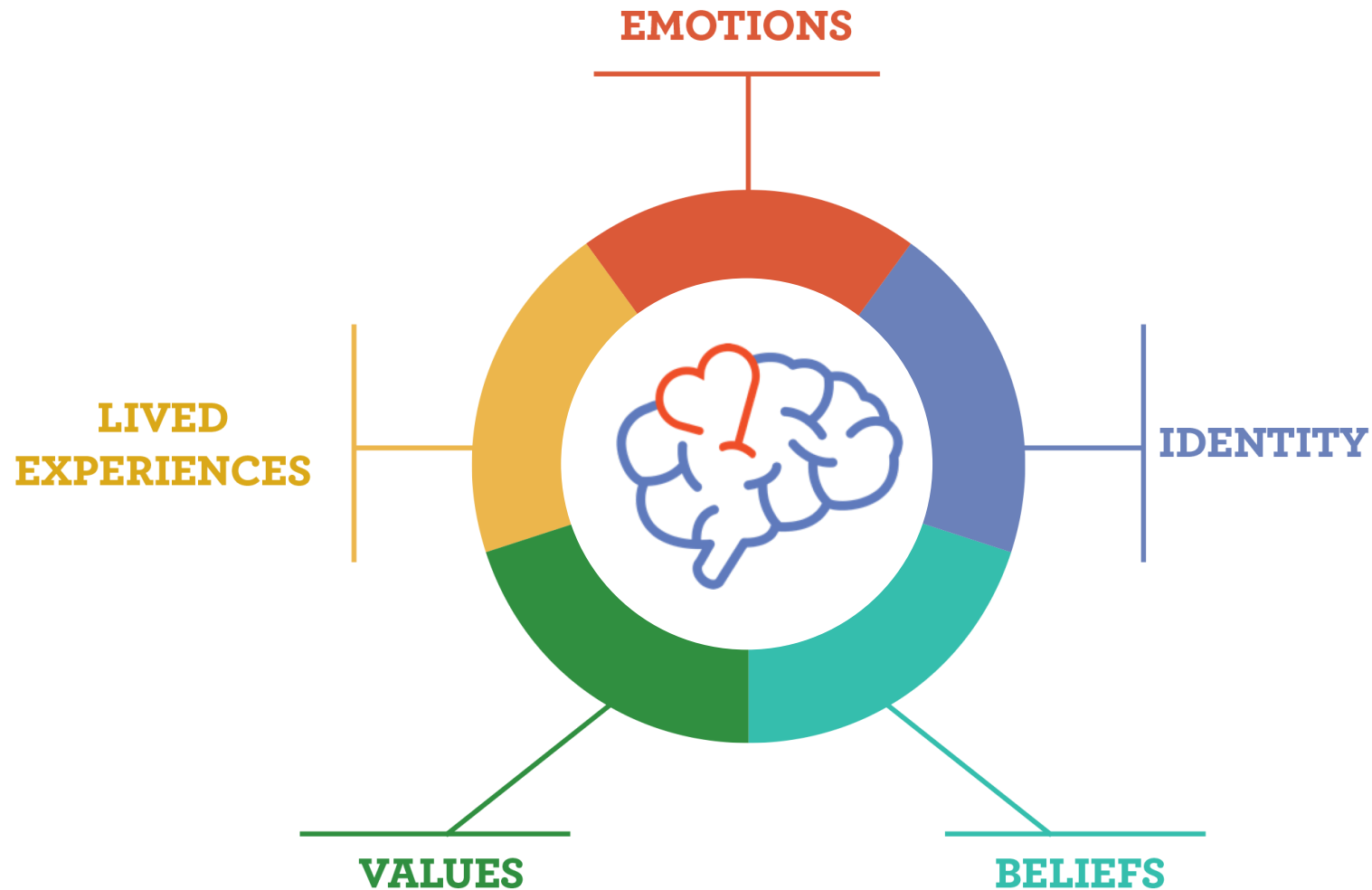
Design

The 16-month research project led by Goodwin Simon Strategic Research focused on:

- Developing an in-depth psychological and emotional understanding of young people, parents, and other adult influencers
- Conducting deep listening research on the impact of young people's own mindsets on the formation of their occupational identity, work, and life goals



Human beings are heartwired





Qualitative

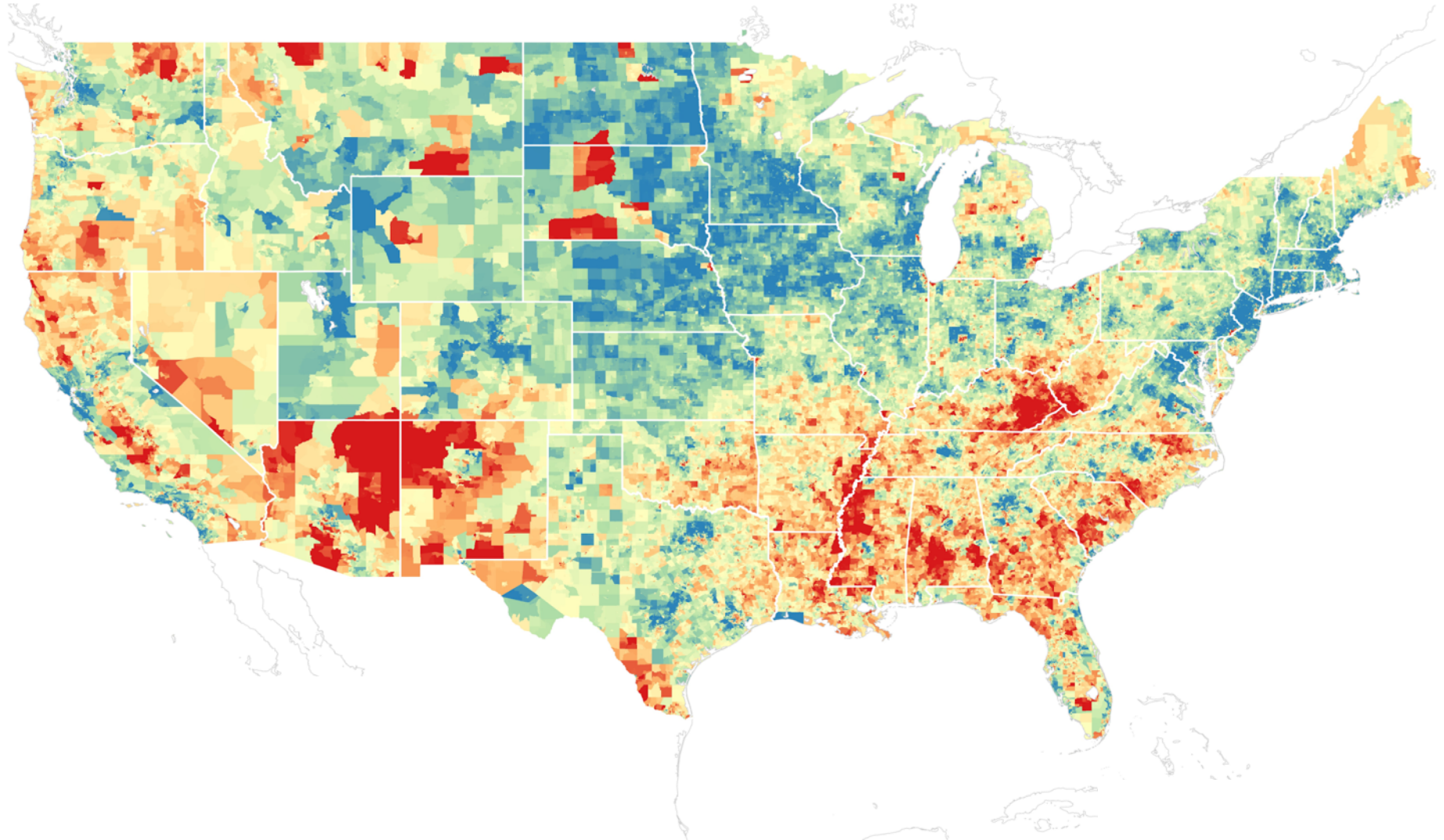
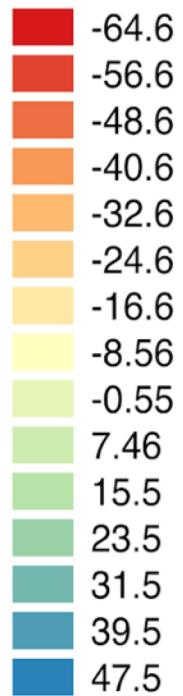
Almost 500 Black, Hispanic and white young people and adults

- 7 In-depth Interviews
- 57 In-person Focus Groups
 - Separate discussions by race and gender
 - Youth (ages 15-21)
 - Separate discussions by race and mixed gender
 - Young adults (ages 26-29), Parents/Guardians, Adult influencers
- 2 Online focus groups (multi-day)

Mapping Our Communities

Developing Cumulative Measures of Education, Economy, Neighborhoods and Health

Overall Composite Score




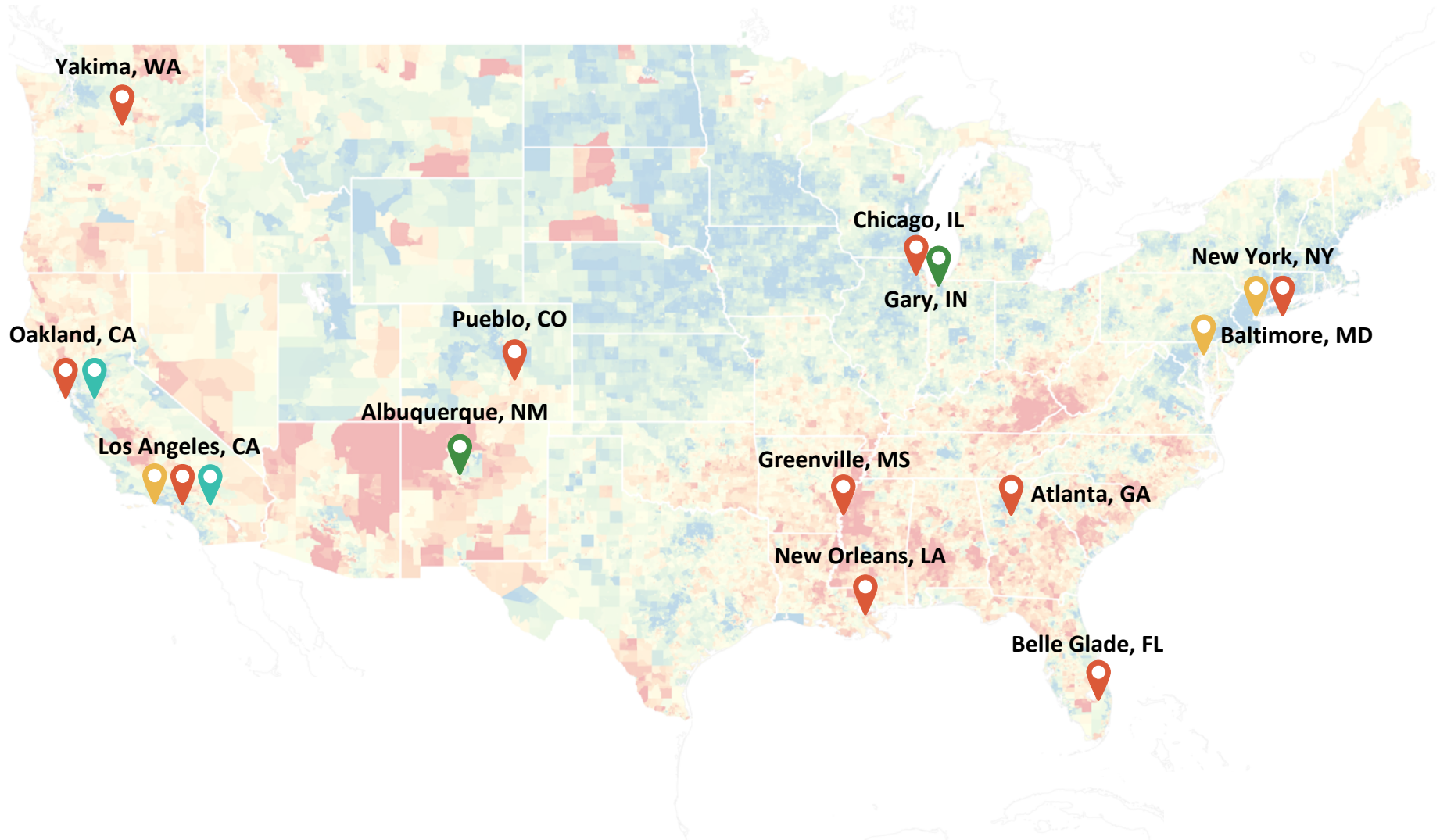
Qualitative Research Sites 2018/2019

 Winter 2018
In-Depth Interviews

 Winter 2018/2019
Focus Groups

 May 2019
Focus Groups

 June 2019
Intervention
Focus Groups

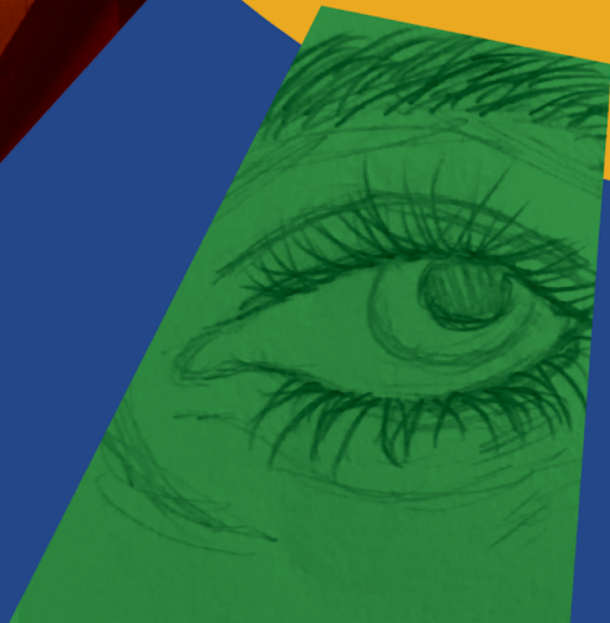


Quantitative

3,545 young people ages 15 to 21

- Online National Youth Survey, Summer 2019
 - n 495 white females and n 583 white males
 - n 486 Black females and n 451 Black males
 - n 499 Hispanic females and n 398 Hispanic males
 - n 158 Asian-Pacific Islander females and n 146 Asian-Pacific Islander males
 - n 26 Native American females and n 23 Native American males
 - n 109 females and n 46 males who identify with two or more racial or ethnic groups

Key Insights



8 Key Insights



Young people see themselves as their own best change agents



Young people aspire to live a good life



Young people try on their futures



Young people see opportunity in conversation



Young people are empowered by connections



Young people experience work as surviving, striving, and thriving

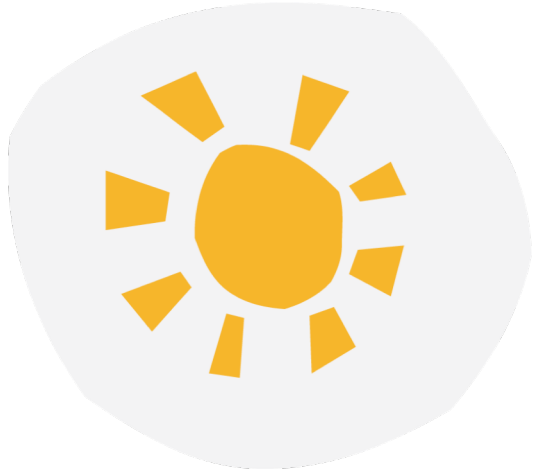


Young people envision pathways to thriving

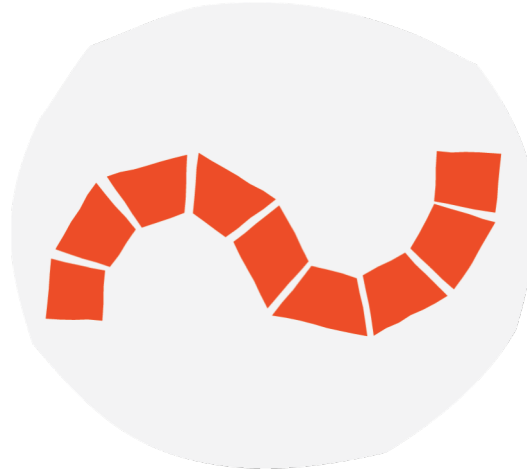


Young people experience identity as an asset

Spotlight on 3 Insights



Young people
experience work as
surviving, striving,
and thriving



Young people
envision pathways
to thriving



Young people
experience identity
as an asset

Young People Experience Work as Surviving, Striving, and Thriving

Young People Experience Work as Surviving, Striving, and Thriving



TAKEAWAY

- Understand that their journeys toward the *good life* they desire will be characterized by a mix of personal and work experiences.

Metaphor: Work is a journey

FRAMEWORK

SURVIVING



They are living paycheck to paycheck—or have no job—and they feel that they are struggling to make ends meet.

STRIVING



They feel that they have goals and are following steps that will help them advance toward *thriving*.

THRIVING



They feel that they have achieved their goals and attained their personal version of a good life.

Metaphor: Work is a journey

FRAMEWORK

SURVIVING



- No control
- Working many jobs
- Renting not owning
- Lower quality home
- Relying on food stamps

STRIVING



- Perseverance
- Struggle
- Patience
- Overcoming obstacles
- More education

THRIVING



- Control
- Ownership
- Travel
- No debt
- Giving back
- Able to retire

Bad Job | Good Job



BAD JOB | SURVIVING

- Making ends meet
- Destroy your body or make you sick
- Unsafe conditions
- Long hours
- No career growth



GOOD JOB | THRIVING

- Pays well and benefits
- Interests, strengths and passions
- Enjoyment
- Nice coworkers
- Respect
- Work and family

An abstract geometric artwork featuring a complex arrangement of overlapping shapes in various shades of teal and black. The composition is dense and layered, with some shapes appearing to be cut out or layered on top of others, creating a sense of depth and movement. The overall effect is a modern, minimalist aesthetic.

For Your Consideration

How might this striving-to-thriving framework shape your thinking about programs that aim to impact young people's career pathways?

Young People Envision Pathways to Thriving

Young People Envision Pathways to Thriving



TAKEAWAYS

- Optimistic about their futures
- They have different levels of confidence that they can set and achieve their work and life goals.
- Many young people believe the biggest barrier to their success will be themselves.

Young People Envision Pathways to Thriving



FRAMEWORK

Occupational Pathways: 5 Categories

1. Know what they want to do and know how to get there
2. Not sure what they want to do, yet have a good idea of the steps to take to explore in order to get there
3. Know what they want to do, but are unsure how to get there
4. Not sure what they want to do and unsure of what steps to take
5. Know what they want to do, think they know how to get there, but their imagined pathway is inaccurate and/or unrealistic

Note: In the focus groups, participants completed a pathway exercise in which they drew their imagined career pathways.



1. **Know** what they want to do and **know** how to get there.

“I think the only person that inspired [me] to like actually pursue what I wanted to do is like my ex-roommate because I was actually really tired of living with my parents at the age of 16. I moved out. And I started living with him. And then he pushed me to like actually get better at what I was doing — gaming. **He was like ‘Why don’t you just turn it into your career if you love it so much?’”**

**—NEW YORK, NY, BLACK MALE,
AGE 18–21, LOWER INCOME**



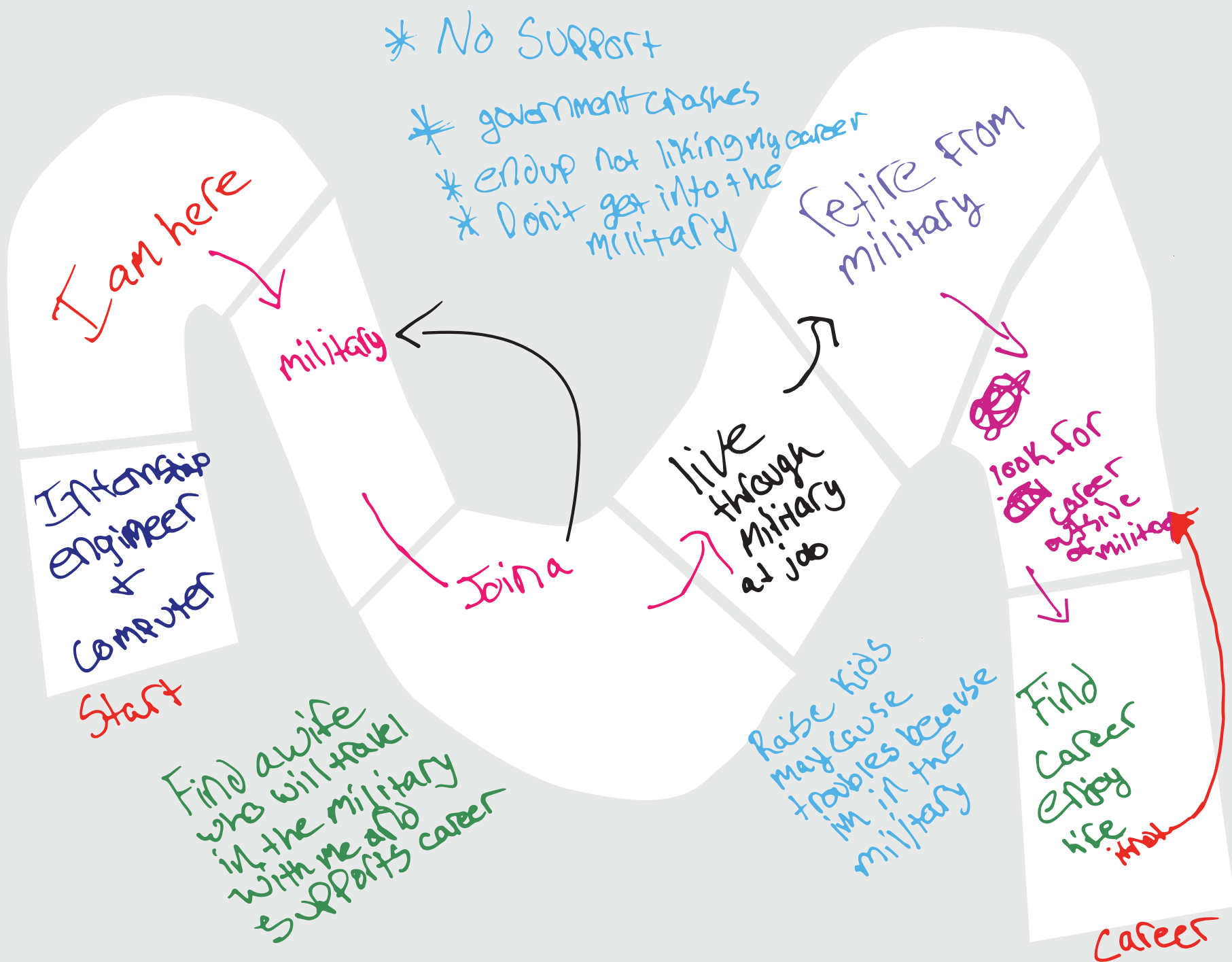


2. Not sure what they want to do, yet **have a good idea** of steps to get there.

"I'm already getting it. . . . I'm networking. I'm meeting. I'm bumping elbows with the right people. You feel me? I make great rapport with people. I think everything in life is about first impressions and being able to know how to talk to people. You know what I'm saying? . . . If you come to [people] in the right tone of voice, and you tell them what you're trying to do, you could probably end up with something [an investment of money]. **I'm just one of those people that believe, and I use my beliefs to get through life."**

**-CHICAGO, IL, BLACK FEMALE,
AGE 17-21, LOWER INCOME**



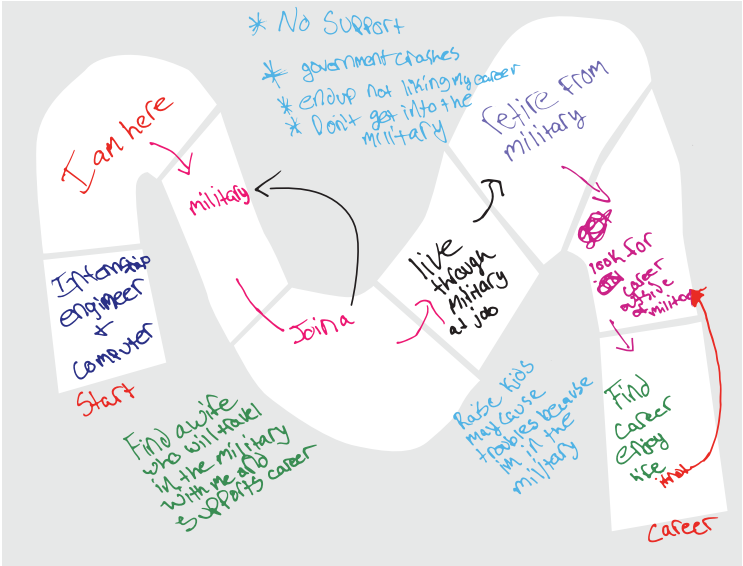


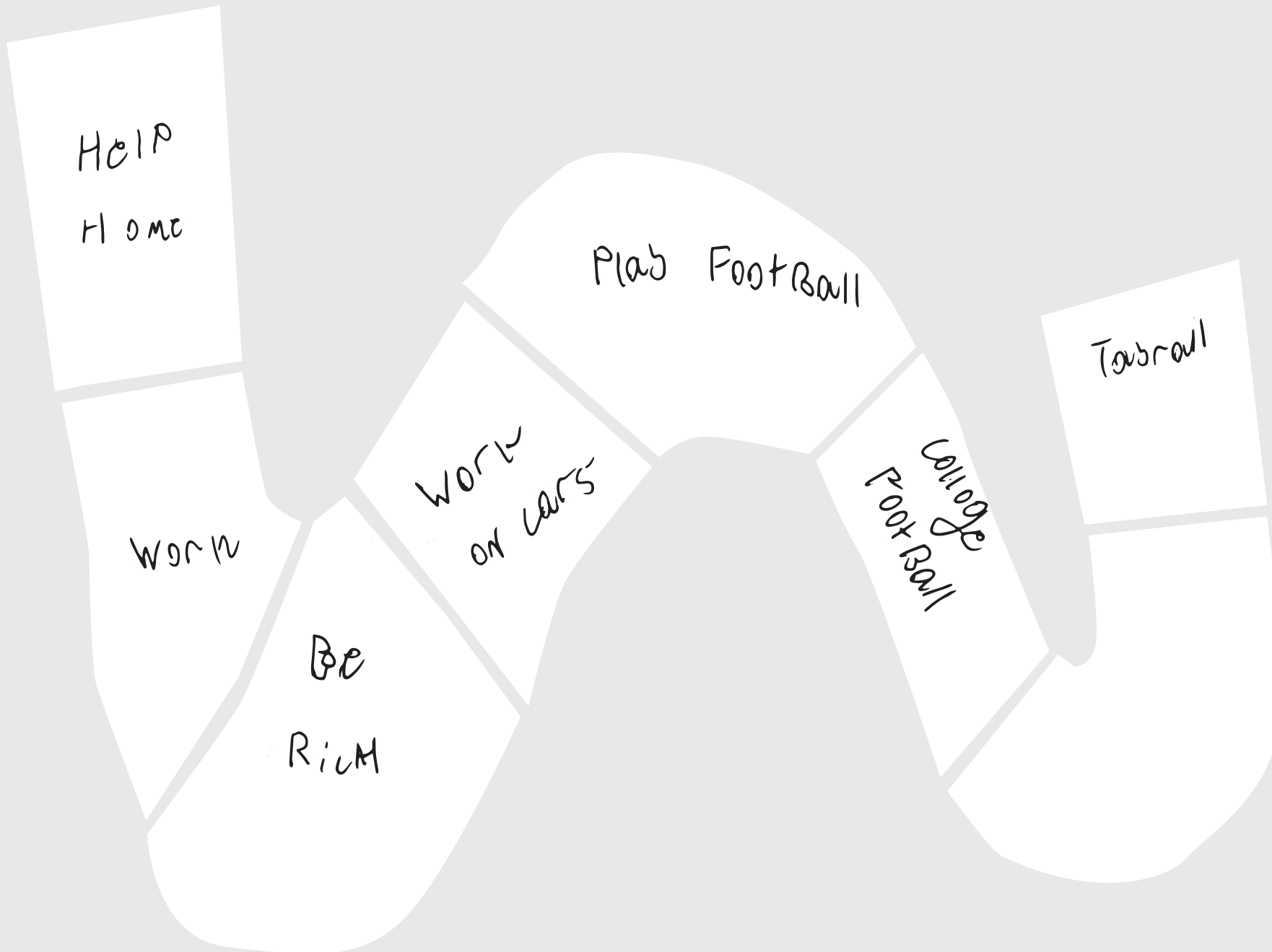
3. Know
what they
want to do,
but are
unsure
how to get
there.

*"Well, now it's between Army and Air Force, but I'm leaning more towards Army because Army offers promotions. **And with the Air Force...there's not really many, much promotional opportunity...**"*

Well, my family members, like I have three brothers that are in the military. They were all in different branches. . . . **My dad did, my dad was in the Army. My mom was in the Navy. My grandpa was in the Navy. It's just kind of like a family thing.** I just feel like serve a great country and enjoy doing it while doing something you love and having like a good life while doing it."

**-YAKIMA, WA, WHITE MALE,
AGE 17-21, LOWER INCOME**

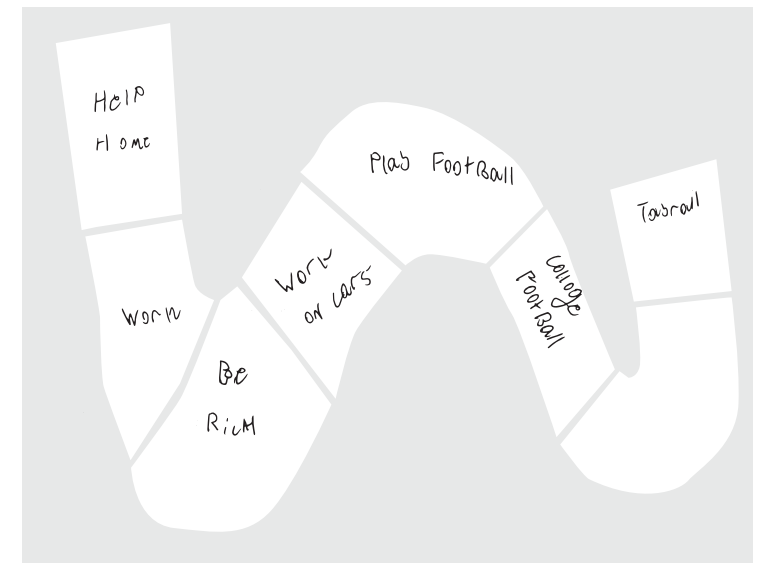




4. Not sure
what they
want to do
and **unsure**
of what
steps to
take.

"There ain't no goal at the end. . . I was thinking about working, being a doctor . . . and help people out . . . it is like there are people dying . . . and when I was a kid, I would see doctors help people come back to life."

**– OAKLAND, CA, BLACK MALE,
AGE 16–18, LOWER INCOME**

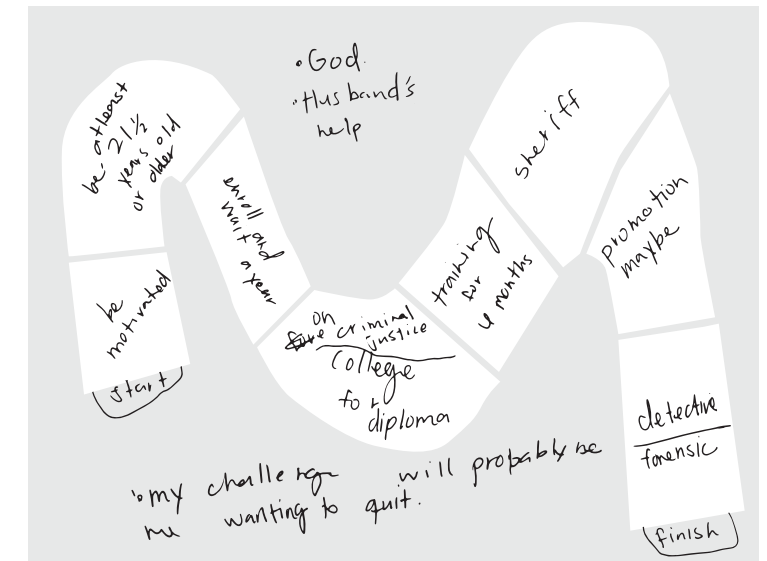




5. Know what they want to do, **think they know** how to get there, but their imagined pathway is inaccurate and/or unrealistic.

"The training is 6 months and you have to ... maybe get the promotion to be a detective because **not everyone can be a detective or forensic. It takes years sometimes being in a field just as a sheriff.**"

—LOS ANGELES, CA, HISPANIC
FEMALE, AGE 17–21, LOWER INCOME



For Your Consideration

How might the field assess and understand the diversity of young people's mindsets — and thus their needs in connection to education and work?

Young People Experience Identity as an Asset

Young People Experience Identity as an Asset



TAKEAWAYS

- Black and Hispanic young people experience their race, ethnicity and culture as asset rich.

Young People Experience Identity as an Asset

“Yes, **my gender is especially important to me** because I take a lot of time perfecting my girly look every single day. It's what drives me and gives me my confidence. Also the ability to stay strong as a woman figure today and just being happy with what I was born with. **Culture** is definitely important to me when it comes to food because that's all I mainly consume is Spanish food especially on my days off. **Religion** is important to me and I choose to believe in my own way. **Race** is important as well because that's where my ancestors are from and what **we have to remember today about our common past.**”

—ONLINE, HISPANIC FEMALE,
26–29, MIXED INCOME

“[Black people] are **the strongest folks on earth.**”

—ATLANTA, GA, BLACK MALE,
18–21, LOWER INCOME

Young People Experience Identity as an Asset

*"I'm a female; Hispanic, Cuban culture. My family, I guess they came to the United States to have a better life for their children and for themselves. My mom is not as strict—traditionally wise—but my grandma is...**[My culture is] Cuban**, I guess.*

*I was born here in the United States. **I describe myself American/Cuban, white, but I mean I don't blend in with Cubans necessarily. The majority of my friends are Mexican, so I am more them than Cuban. Cubans are...not quiet. [I identify more with Mexican culture] because I actually like their food better too.**"*

**—BELLE GLADE, FL, HISPANIC FEMALE,
17–21, LOWER INCOME**

Young People Experience Identity as an Asset



TAKEAWAYS

- Experience their identities as asset-rich.
- Young people from lower income households struggle to connect positive self descriptions to the notion of strengths.

Young People Experience Identity as an Asset

SELF DESCRIPTIONS

"I'm open-minded, nice, caring, trustworthy, loyal, funny, brave. And I can take a punch..."

**-New Orleans, LA, white male,
15-18, lower income**

STRENGTHS

Young People Experience Identity as an Asset

SELF DESCRIPTIONS

"I am anti-social with new people. I am a chunky...like big. I'm funny. I am a jokester. I [draw]; it depends on what kind of mood I am in. I like going out all the time. I have a great imagination."

**-Oakland, CA, Hispanic male,
15-18, lower income**

STRENGTHS

Young People Experience Identity as an Asset

SELF DESCRIPTIONS

STRENGTHS

“My first word was procrastinator. I procrastinate a lot, like a lot. It's really bad. But that has also made me resourceful.”

**-Baltimore, MD, Black female,
17–20, higher income**

Young People Experience Identity as an Asset



TAKEAWAYS

- Experience their identities as asset-rich
- Young people from lower income households struggle to connect positive self descriptions to the notion of strengths.
- Believe they will encounter discrimination and can overcome it by being and doing better

Young People Experience Identity as an Asset

*“Going into it you could say I think this person is going to be racist...I just feel like **it depends on your attitude too.**”*

**– Pueblo, CO, Latina female,
15–18, Lower income**

***“Being Black is already hard. To be gay on top of that is ten times harder.** I’m telling right now, they already think you’re less of a man or less of anything. And I ain’t none of those, just know that. So **you got to prove yourself ten times more** just to be noticed. **So I just try to always start everything out with a joke.**”*

**– New York, NY, Black male,
17–21, Lower income**

*“...in nursing school I’m going to come across men in the same field. **And they may feel like, well, she’s a female, so I have more power or more knowledge than her. So that just makes me feel like I got to go harder, and I got to be stronger because there are other, well, males in the program, and they already feel like they have more power than women.**”*

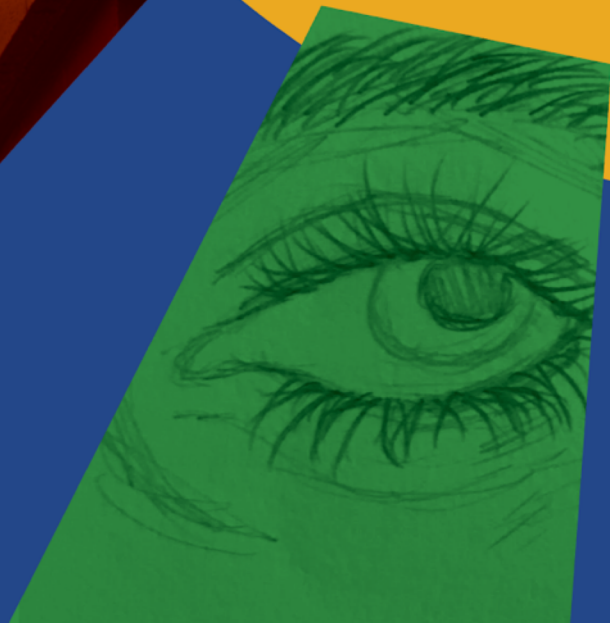
**–Greenville, MS, Black female,
15–18, Lower income**

Q&A

KEY INSIGHTS

Photograph by Annabelle Armstrong-Temple, age 12

Implications





ANDREA M. O'NEAL

**Implications & Applications for
Youth-Centered Program Delivery**

OCCUPATIONAL IDENTITY DILEMMA: 'Thriving' Young People



**NARROWLY DEFINED VIEWS
OF CAREER "SUCCESS"
+ THE "RIGHT SKILLS" /
STRIVING FOR CREDIBILITY
EXTERNAL AFFIRMATION =
SOCIAL CAPITAL**



**PRESCRIPTIVE PATHWAYS
"BOX CHECKING"
"MERITOCRACY"
UNIQUE POTENTIAL & GIFTS
LEFT UNTAPPED**



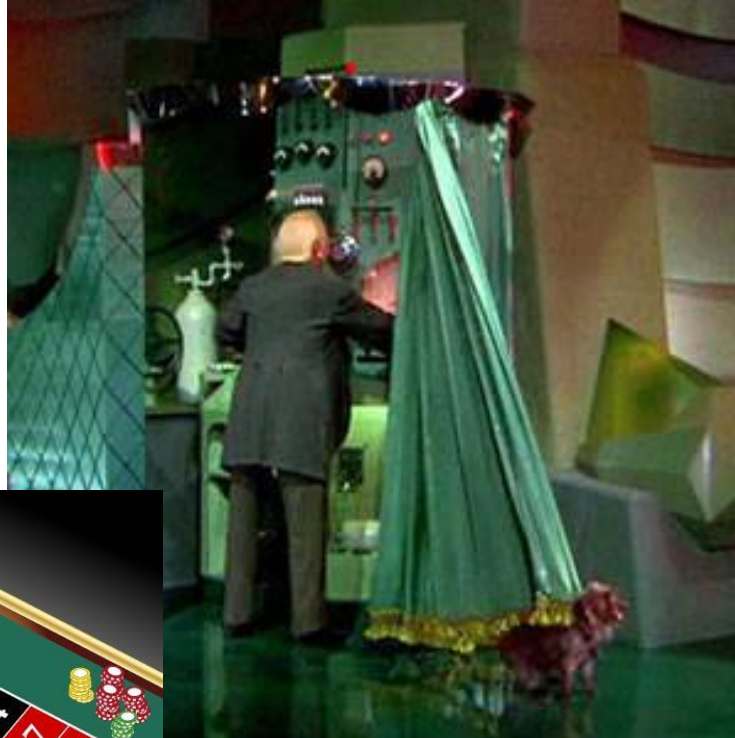
**PRESSURE OF TIME TO
"GET IT RIGHT"
ANXIETY OF CATASTROPHE IN
"WRONG CHOICES"**

#1: IDENTITY-INFORMED MENTORING



- Self-discovery + imagination + career exploration
- Origin story / “hero’s journey”
→ motivations + purpose + gifts
- Racialized / class-informed experiences & decision-making
- Martyrdom / Solitary Warrior
- Deficit vs Asset narratives
- Deconstructing power dynamics – agency, centering youth voices, needs, concerns

#2: LOW-RISK EXPLORATION + EXPERIENCES

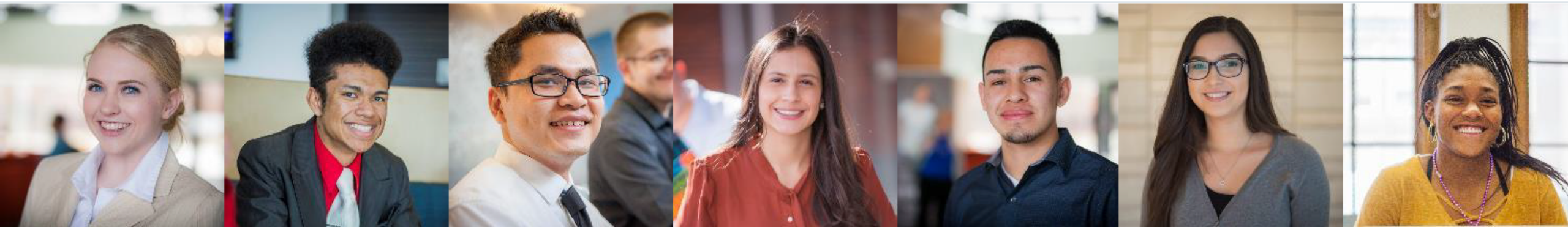


- Duty of Sponsors & Advocates as **Door Openers**
- Demystify + Clarify (*with non-judgement and without power*)
- Insulate → **Lower the stakes**
- Theory < Practice
- Iteration + Elevation = better decision making & **self-efficacy**

“And this is a woman in her 70s who wanted things done fairly quickly, and when Langston was not producing the kind of art she wanted to see produced, she could get angry. And finally at one point at around 1931 she just dropped him as a friend.” - [NPR, interpretation of Langston Hughes' Letters \(2015\)](#)



Equitable Futures: Surviving, Striving and Thriving



June 25, 2020

Program Scope

Mission: *DSF inspires and empowers Denver Public Schools (DPS) students to enroll in and graduate from postsecondary institutions of higher education, by providing the tools, knowledge, and financial resources essential for success.*

Vision: *DSF believes that every student, regardless of race, religion, gender, or socioeconomic background should have the opportunity to thrive, persist, and graduate from college.*



5,516 9th-12th Graders
1,800 College Scholars

87% PELL ELIGIBLE



91% STUDENTS OF COLOR



88% FIRST GENERATION STUDENT



Denver
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FOUNDATION

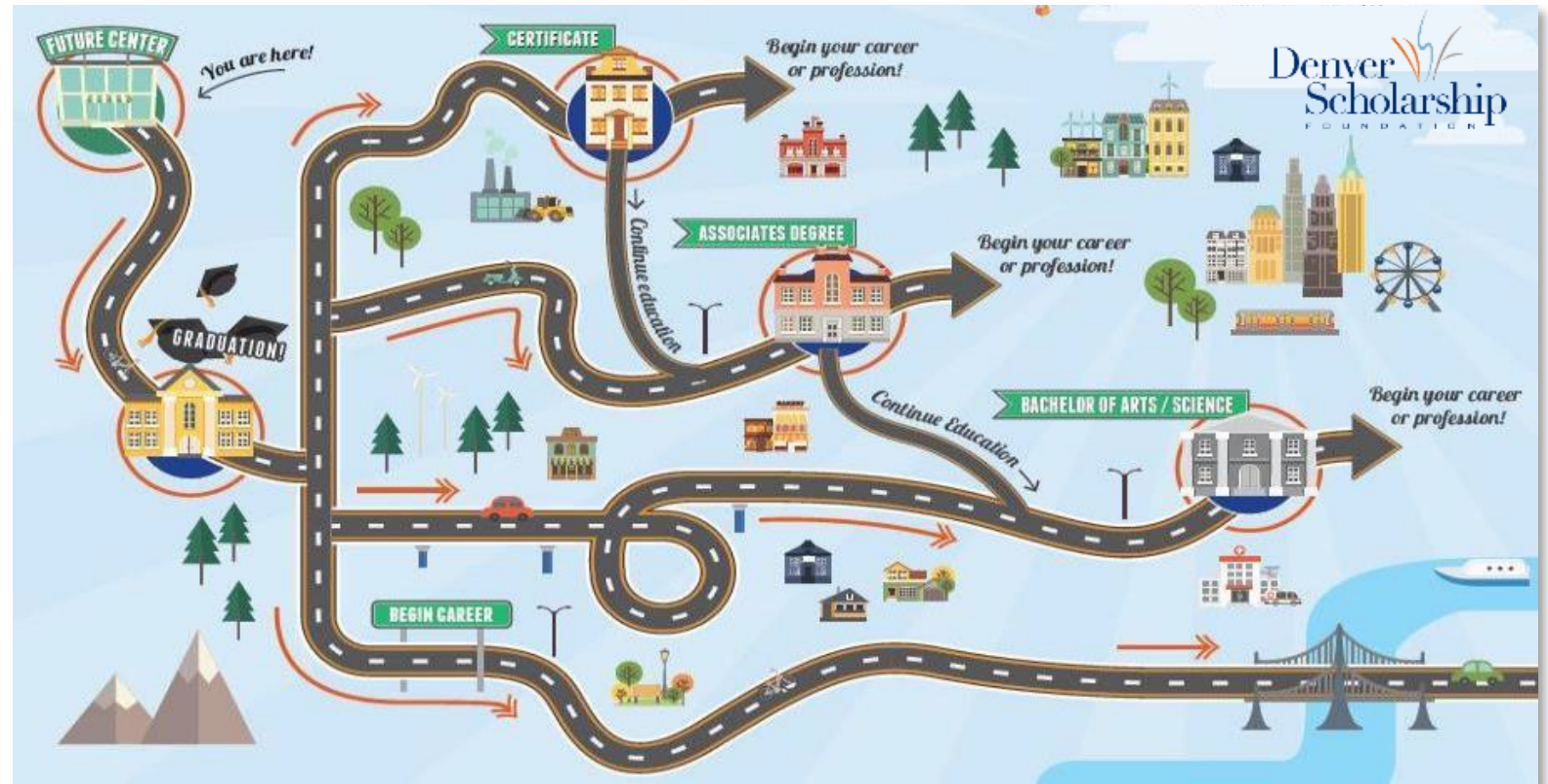


RELEVANCY OF RESEARCH and APPLICATION



- Individual Career and Academic Planning (ICAP) Curriculum and Advising
- Colorado Career Conversations
- Create multiple spaces to engage students and families

- Applied Self-Concept
- Envisioning Thriving
- Connectivity: Near Peer, Workforce
- Assess Preparedness
- Build Profile
- Navigate Pathways





RELEVANCY OF RESEARCH and OPPORTUNITIES

- Identity as an Asset
- Build Social Capital
- Negotiate Institutional Supports
- Foster Civic Engagement
- Denver Direct Pathways
- Change Makers
- Alumni Lab
- Thriving Thursday
- Alumni Advisory
- Longitudinal Evaluation





Nathan Cadena

Chief Operating Officer

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BUILD's mission is to use entrepreneurship to ignite the potential of youth in under-resourced communities and equip them for high school, college, and career success.



Founded in 1999, BUILD currently serves approximately 2,000 students annually in Oakland, East Palo Alto, Washington DC, Boston, and New York

Now more than Ever America needs Entrepreneurship Education...



SELF-AGENCY

RESILIENCE & GRIT

GROWTH MINDSET

ADAPTABILITY



SOCIAL CAPITAL & NETWORKING

TECHNOLOGY SKILLS

FINANCIAL LITERACY

21ST CENTURY SKILLS

CONNECT. ENGAGE. EMPOWER.

From **Bridging Communities** To **Building Social Capital** to Advance Racial Equity



BUILD STUDENT RELATIONSHIP WEB

EXISTING RELATIONSHIPS

PROPOSED NEW RELATIONSHIPS



TEACHERS



EMPLOYERS



PEER COACH



VENTURE ADVISOR



CAREER ADVISOR



STUDENT



BUILD STAFF



MENTORS



BOARD MEMBERS

Social Entrepreneurship & Civic Engagement

- *First Gen Design Challenge*
- *COVID-19 Design Challenge*
 - *How might we help people thrive mentally and physically in the midst of COVID-19?*
- *Up Next: Racial Equity Design Challenge*



Q&A



Illustration by Daniel Patrick, age 16



Illustration by Lonnie Allen, age 17



Illustration by Daniel Patrick, age 16

Resources

For more in-depth discussion of the research and to download the report-in-brief visit our website:

EquitableFutures.org

[Sign up for *Wayfinders*](#), our monthly email with the latest research and resources.



Credit: Jaedyn Nguyen