

BILL&MELINDA GATES foundation

American Narratives About Occupational Identity and Future Careers



- 1. Project Focus and Approach
- 2. Narratives
- 3. Narrative Findings
- 4. Narrative Prevalence Among Focus Communities
- **5. Full Narrative Descriptions**





Back

Background

Protagonist used Narrative Analytics to reveal the stories Americans tell, and in particular Black and Latino Americans, about the **aspirations people have and pathways they perceive as available to them for future employment** by analyzing digital communications from the relevant populations.

This Narrative Analytics approach revealed seven narratives about aspirations and pathways for future employment and established a **baseline to return to and measure change** against in future analyses.

This analysis can inform:

- Program Design
- Marketing and Communication Strategy
- Policy
- Outreach



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Building a Robust Dataset

Data Set Restrictions

U.S. Only

Relevant & Narrative Rich





Content (Media)

Mainstream Media Articles and Blogs





Content (First Person)

Twitter posts from focus communities



- Scope: Data points with relevant and narrative-rich content reflecting views held by (1) the general population and (2) Black Voices and (3) Latino Voices regarding the aspirations people have and pathways they perceive as available to them for future employment
- Timeframe: January 1, 2017 March 31, 2018
- Sources: To capture the range of beliefs for all groups the dataset draws on both traditional media published within local, regional, and national media and first-person expressions from Twitter



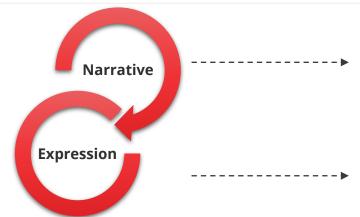
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Narratives Explained

A narrative represents the distillation of the various expressed viewpoints within the media landscape into a cohesive worldview.

- The narratives should feel familiar, since they are comprised of the points of view and arguments that you, as subject matter experts, read and hear on a daily basis.
- As a unit of measurement, narratives can be (1) quantified and (2) compared through various natural language processing techniques to reveal deeper insights on the nature of the conversation.

How Narratives Appear in the Wild



Narratives:

Issues, events, and life circumstances trigger core narrative worldviews, which are the larger constructs individuals use to understand the world around them

Narrative Expressions:

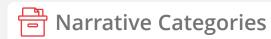
The narratives take shape in the form of a narrative expression, which captures the individual arguments made about occupational identity

By understanding what narratives are in play and how they are expressed, Protagonist can highlight differences you may not be aware of: what you think may be on someone's mind may differ from what is actually on their mind.





Seven Narratives in Landscape, Across Two Categories





Narratives that focus more on near-term obstacles to access



Narratives that focus more on **future-oriented** career success

Gaining Access and Overcoming Obstacles (Near-Term)



Financial Concern





Dream Job



Inequality



Relevant Skills



Self-Identity



Soft Skills



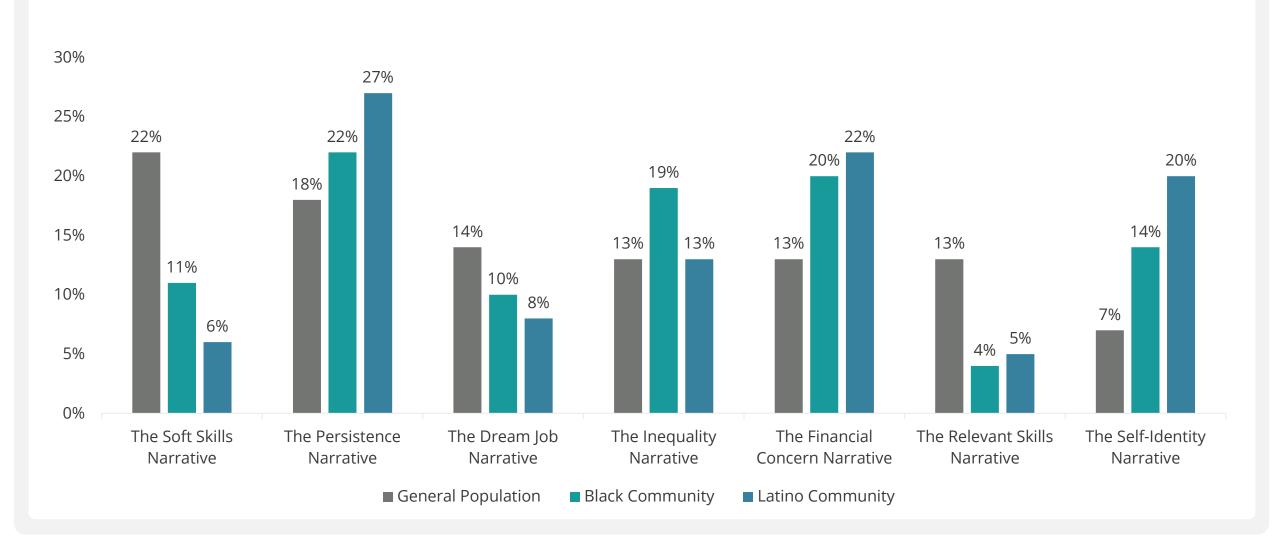
Persistence



Narrative Prevalence in First-Person Expressions

Narrative Prevalence Across All Groups – First-Person Conversation

(Percentage of Narrative Prevalence for each focus community within first-person content)







Across all communities, there was a lack of specificity when discussing future career types.

• When we do see discussion of specific career types, self-described career aspirations vary between those that are achievable and realistic versus those that seem less practical.

There is an emphasis on family across all population types.

• The role of family and parental influence emerges in discussion around pressure to choose specific educational pathways and careers within all communities.

The notion of persistence and perseverance and its tie to ultimate achievement runs across all population types.

• Across all communities maintaining a strong work ethic, recognizing the need to make sacrifices, and being persistent are personal attributes recognized for leading to success.

There is a disconnect in how the media and first-person voices portray the future of work.

• Media content highlights the need for 21st century skills in an academic tone, referencing automation, artificial intelligence, and technologies as future workforce challenges. However, first-person voices express frustration with having mismatched, outdated, or nonexistent skill sets and criticize the education system that left them ill-prepared.



Additional Findings – Careers and Pathways

When specific careers are mentioned, STEM and business careers receive the most attention

- Narrative expressions from the Latino community placed the least emphasis on STEM careers and instead emphasized education and business
- Narrative expressions from the Black community placed the most emphasis on careers in creative fields

Positive drivers of the STEM pathway included discussion about better job offers after graduation, higher salary than other career types, increased diversity efforts to get more students involved in STEM

Negative drivers of the STEM pathway discussion included discussion about perceptions that students are being influenced to pursue STEM careers, pressure from family members to choose a STEM career, feelings of inadequacy/inability to pursue STEM careers, and a lack of gender diversity in STEM careers

Discussion of four-year degrees dominated the first-person career pathways discussion (as opposed to two-year degrees and other pathways)

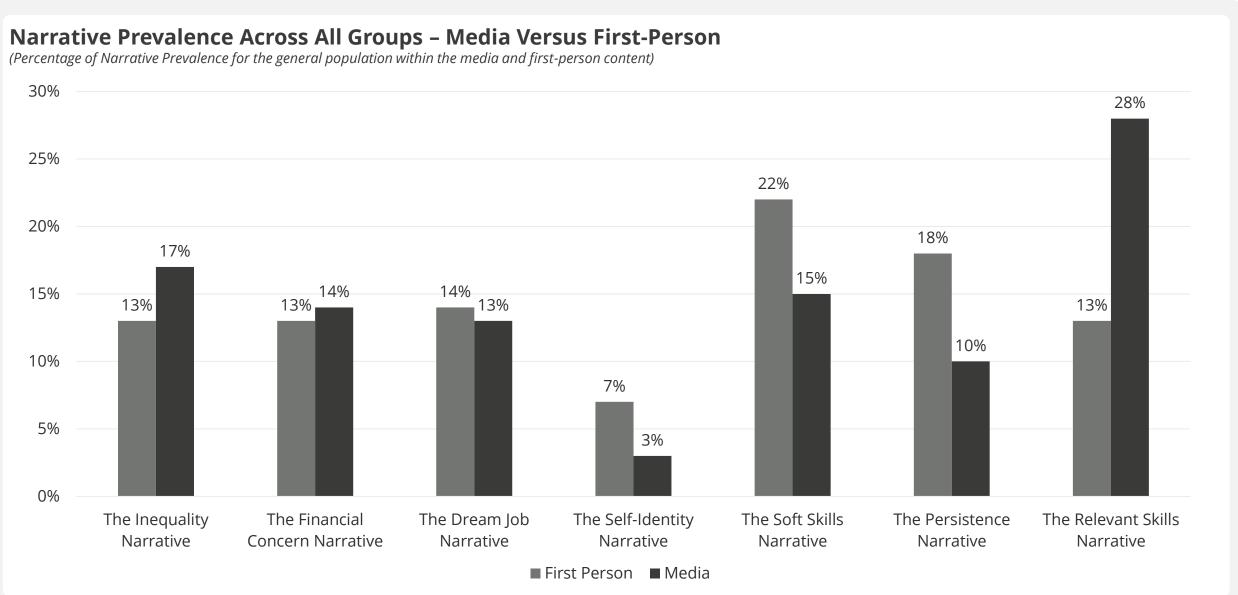
Conversation about two-year degrees was more prevalent in Black and Latino narrative expressions

When discussed, conversation about two-year degrees tended to focus on near-term advantages (e.g., lower cost, easy application process, etc.) rather than long-term career value





Media Narrative Prevalence Differs From First-Person Narrative Expressions





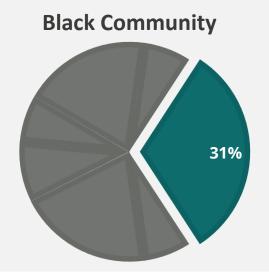
General Population Media Focused More on Relevant Skills Discussion than First Person Conversation

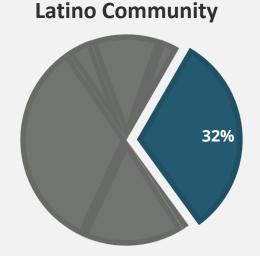




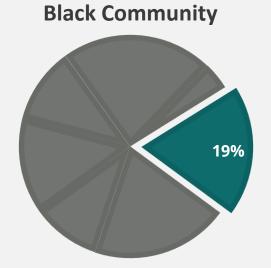
Black and Latino Media Narratives Emphasize Inequality More than First Person Narrative Expressions

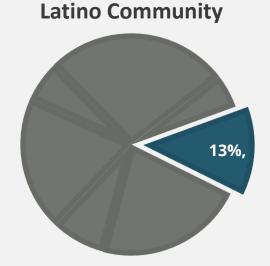






First Person Conversation









Narratives from the Black And Latino Community Focus More On Near-Term Obstacles And Less On Future-Oriented Career Success

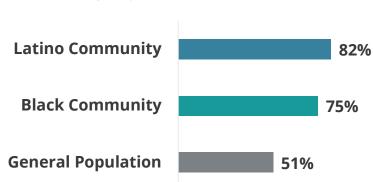
Narrative Prevalence Across All Groups – First Person

(Percentage of Narrative Prevalence for each focus community in first person content)



Narratives that focus more on **nearterm obstacles** to access

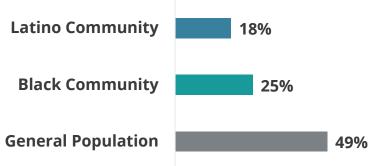
Financial Concern Inequality Self-Identity Persistence





Narratives that focus more on **future- oriented** career success

Dream Job Relevant Skills Soft Skills



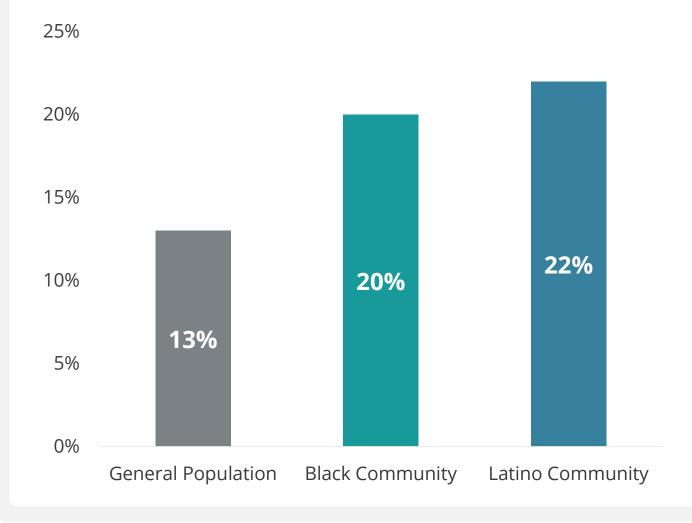
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Black and Latino First-Person Narrative Expressions Focus More on Near-Term Financial Concerns



(Percentage of Narrative Prevalence for The Financial Concern Narrative in first person content)



Topical Focus in *The Financial Concern* Narrative

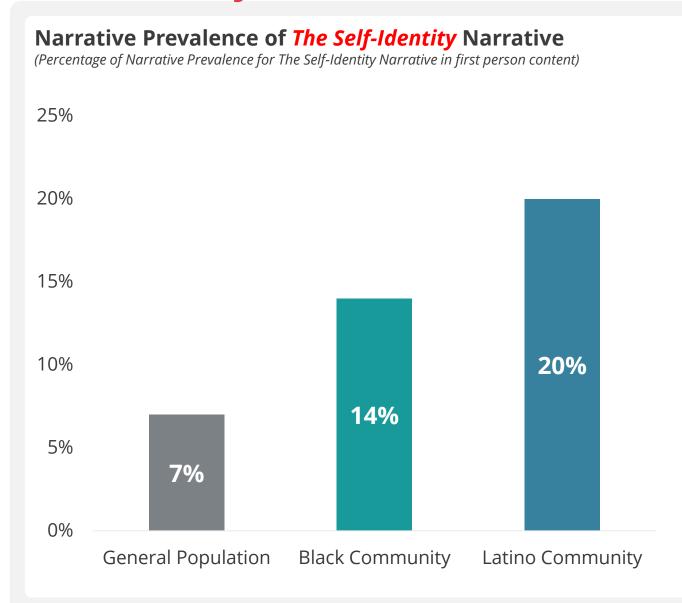
(Top Topics discussed in connection to The Financial Concern Narrative)

All Populations:

- Student loans and debt
- College affordability (four-year and two-year)
- Affording basic necessities while attending college courses
- Unpaid internship concerns
- Low-paying jobs



First-Person Latino Narrative Expressions Focus More on Self-Identity and Familial Influence



Topical Focus in *The Self-Identity* Narrative

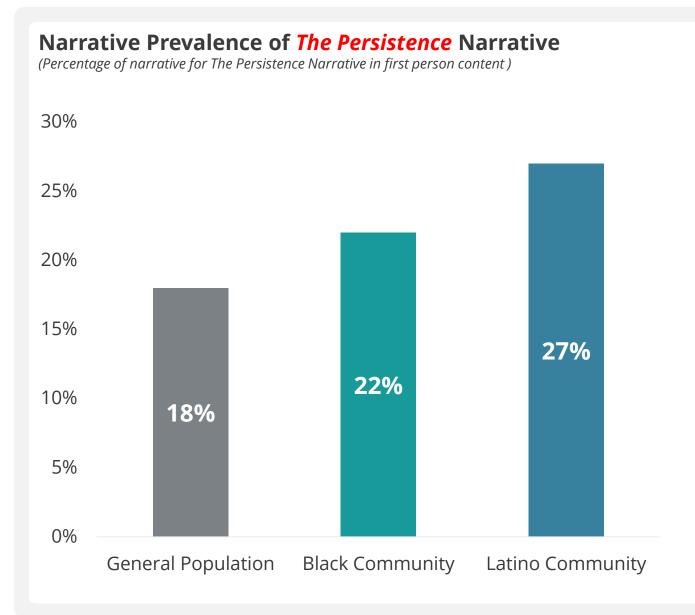
(Top Topics discussed in connection to The Self-Identity Narrative)

Latino Community:

- Importance of positive family support in overcoming near-term obstacles (hardworking role models, emphasis on learning English, general support, etc.)
- Limitations placed on career choices by culture and family



All First-Person Narrative Expressions Emphasize Importance of Perseverance and Hard Work



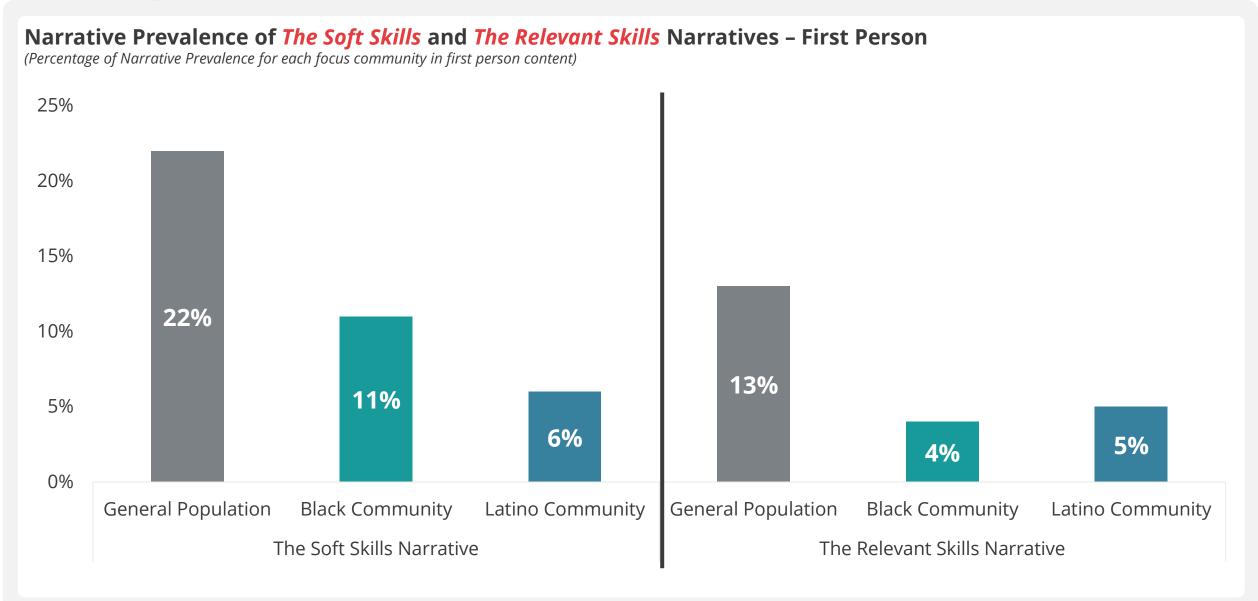
Topical Focus in *The Persistence* Narrative Expressions

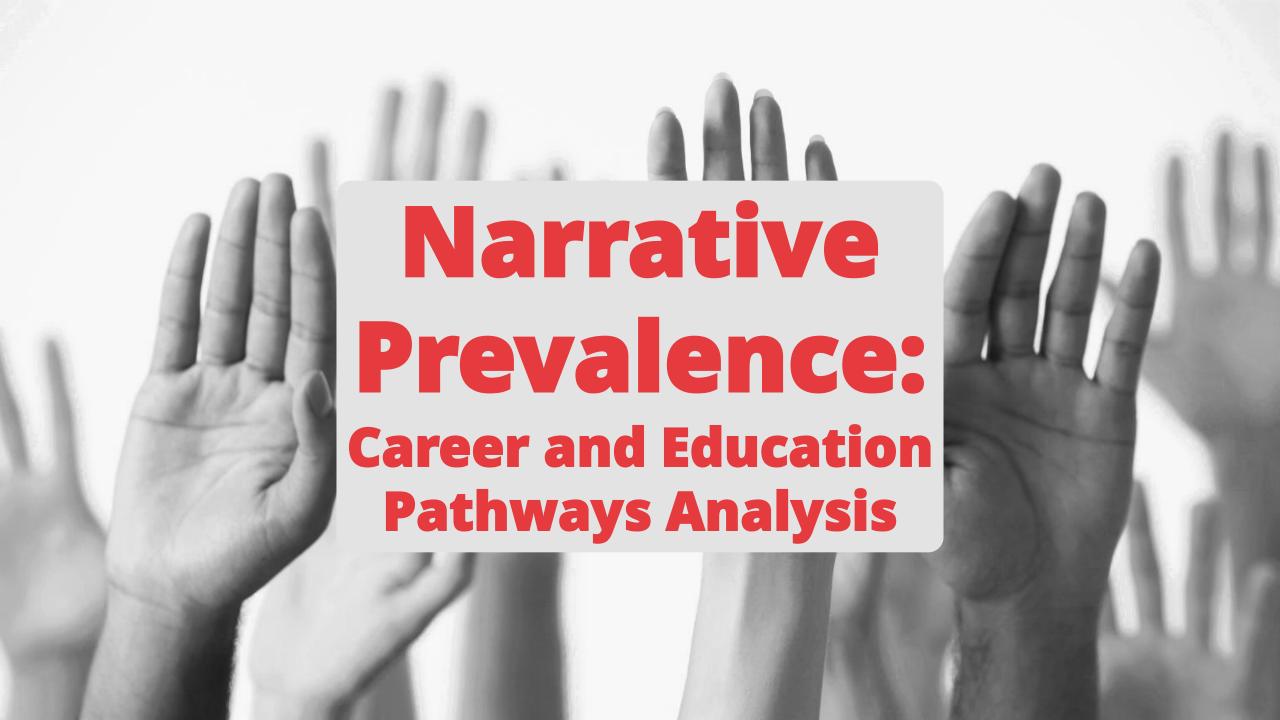
(Top Topics discussed in connection to The Persistence Narrative)

- Black community: language was more focused on perseverance related to the pursuit of projects outside other sources of employment, e.g., "entrepreneurship," "passion projects," "startups," and "side hustles"
- Latino community: language tended to emphasize perceived outcomes of hard work and related benefits for "family" members
- All groups: highlighted materialized opportunities as an outcome of hard work, the importance of sacrifice, and positive hope about the future



Skills Discussion is More Prominent in General Population Narrative Expressions



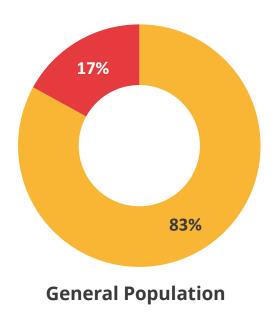


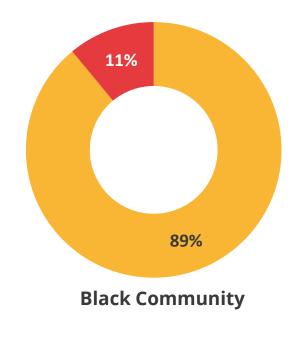


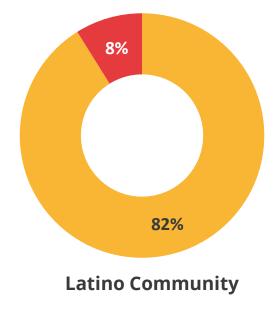
First Person Narrative Expressions Did Not Largely Focus on Specific Career Types

Career Discussion Across All Groups – First Person

(Percentage of career prevalence for each focus community in first person content)









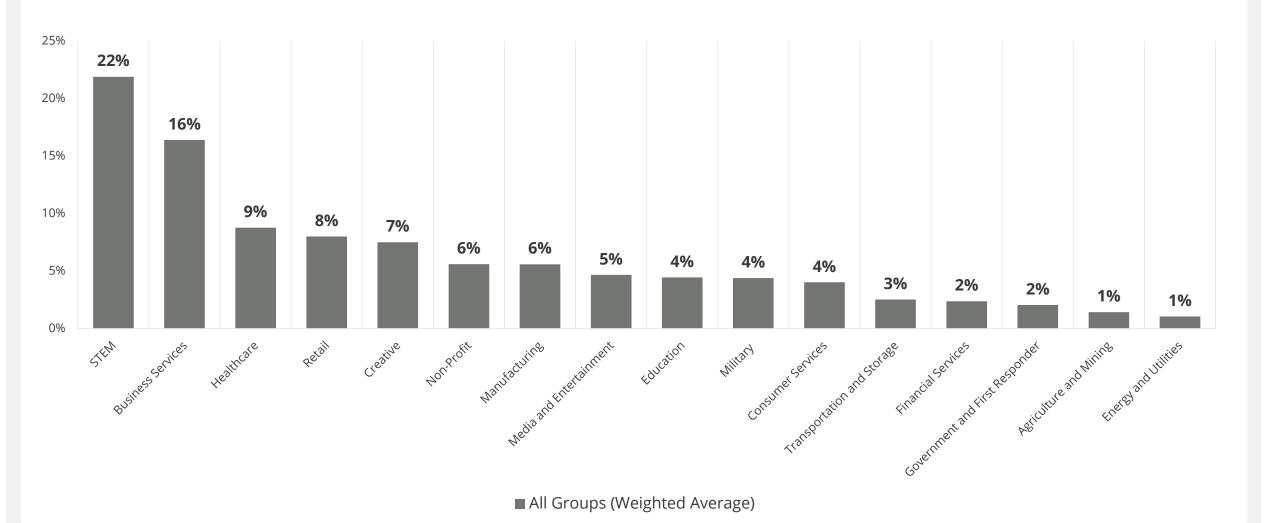




When Mentioned, STEM and Business Careers Receive the Most Attention

Career Prevalence by All Groups (Weighted Average)

(Percentage of specific career mentions within first person content focused on career discussion across all focus communities)

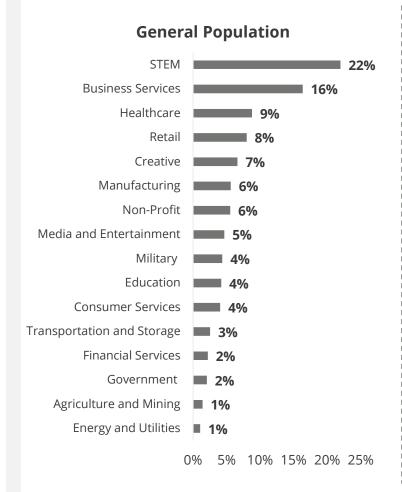


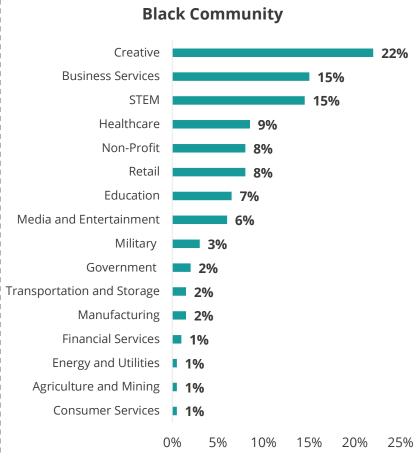


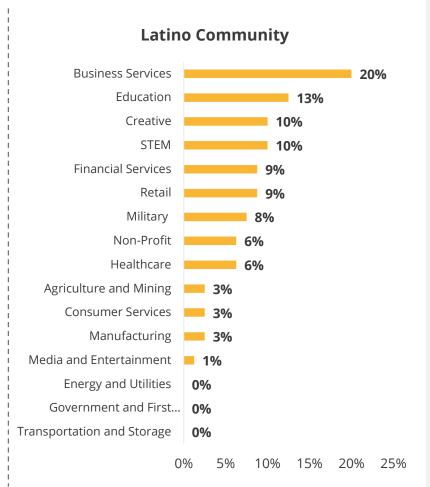
Communities Highlight Specific Careers in Different Proportions

Career Prevalence by Community Group

(Percentage of specific career mentions within first person content focused on career discussion within focus communities)

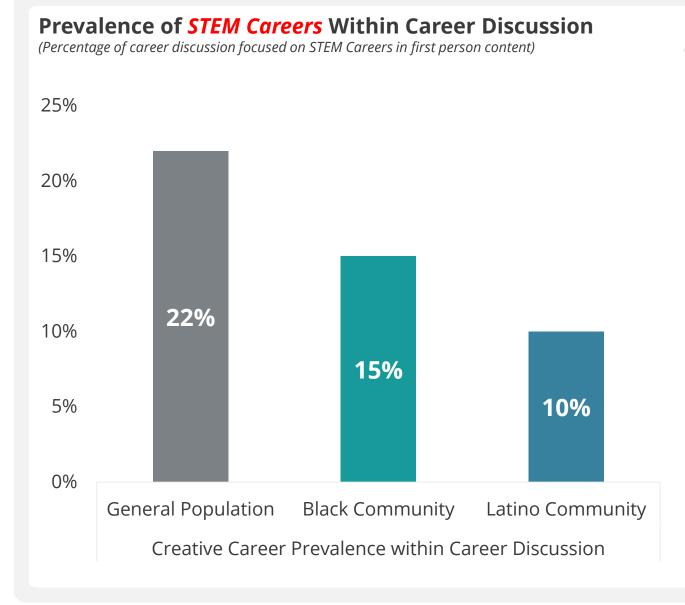








Latino Narrative Expressions Focus Less on STEM

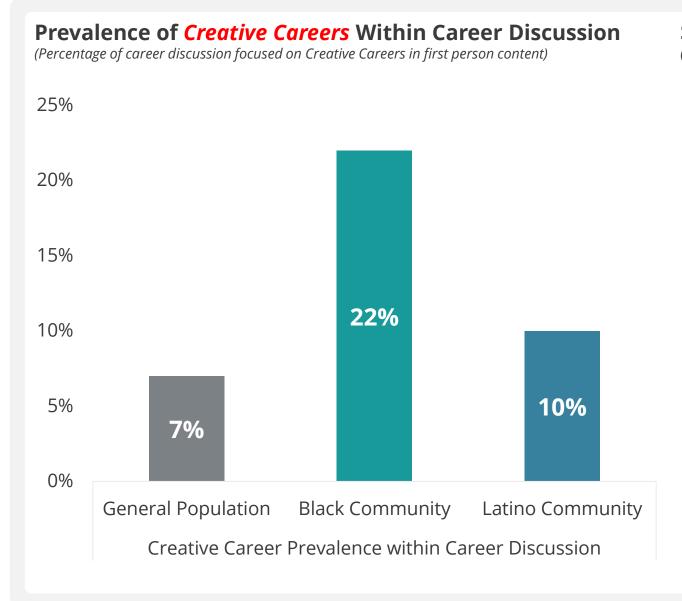


Specific Career Focus in *STEM Careers* Discussion

- Scientist
- Engineer
- Astronomer
- Statistician
- Mathematician
- Architect
- Information Technology
- Computer Scientist
- Programmer
- Software Developer
- Coder



Black Community Narrative Expressions Emphasize Creative Careers

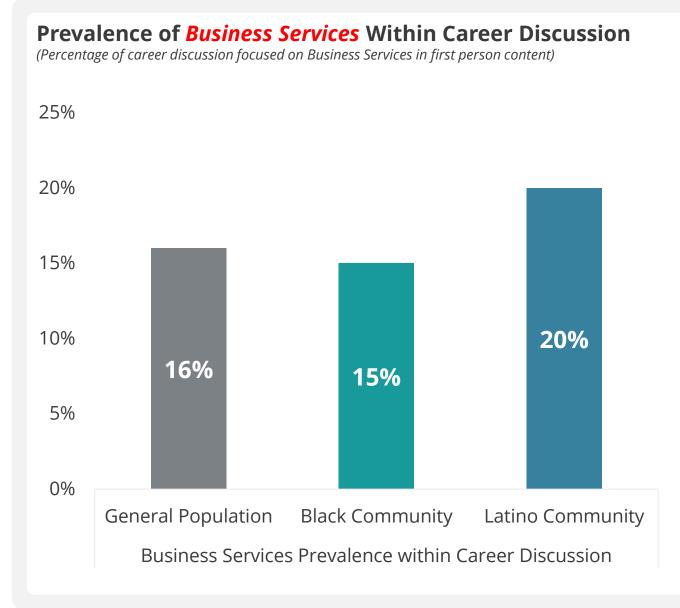


Specific Career Focus in *Creative Careers* Discussion

- Musician
- Performer
- Graphic Artist
- Comics Author
- Graphic Design
- Fashion Design
- Author
- Poet



Business Careers Emphasized by All Groups

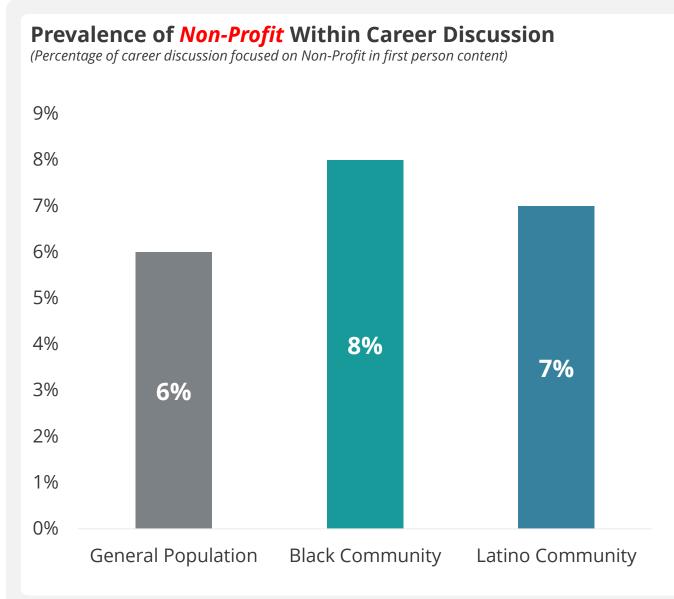


Specific Career Focus in *Business Services* Discussion

- Accountant
- Analyst
- Lawyer
- Attorney
- Assistant
- Secretary
- Marketing
- Manager
- Human Resources
- Consultant
- Administrative
- Consultant



Non-Profit Careers Within Top Eight Mentions for All Groups



Specific Career Focus in *Non-Profit* Discussion

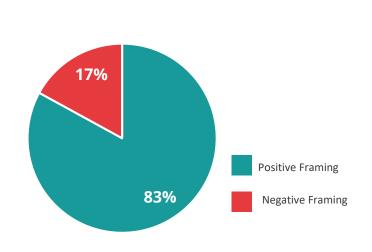
- Social Worker
- Program Officer
- Counselor
- Volunteer
- Non-Profit



STEM Careers Viewed Positively, But Sentiment May Be Changing

Sentiment Analysis of STEM Discussion within General Population, First-Person Conversation

(Percentage represents percentage of conversation where an emotive opinion is expressed)

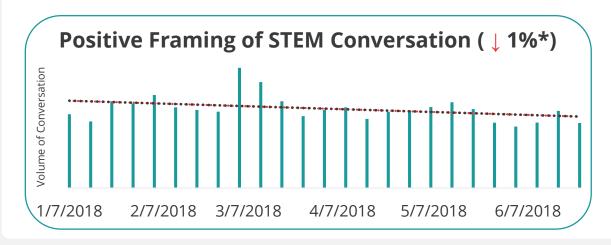


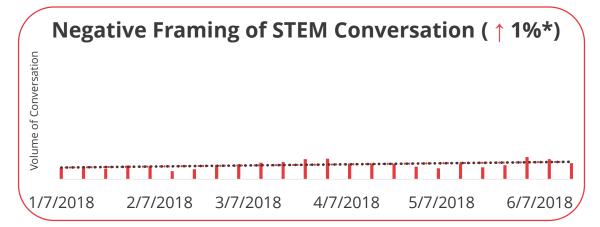
Positive Drivers:

- Better job offers after graduation
- **Higher salary** than other career types
- Increased diversity efforts to get more students involved in STEM

Negative Drivers:

- Perception that students are being influenced to pursue STEM careers over other options or individual passions
- Pressure from family members to choose a STEM career
- Feelings of inadequacy/inability to pursue STEM careers
- Lack of gender diversity in STEM careers



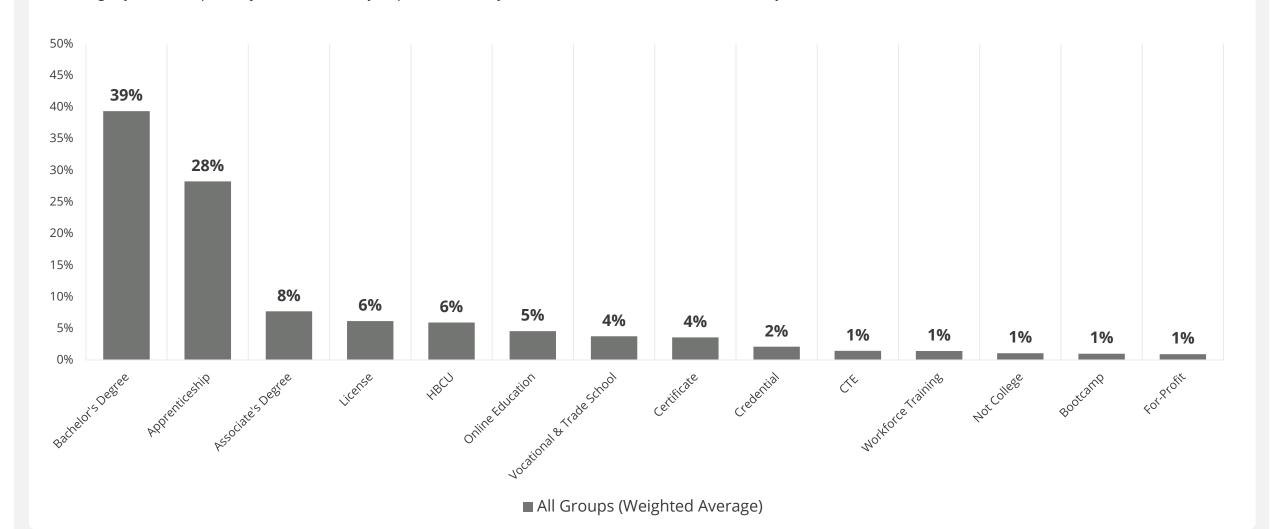




Four-Year Degrees and Apprenticeships Dominate First-Person Career Pathways Discussion

Education Pathway Prevalence by All Groups (Weighted Average)

(Percentage of education pathway mentions within first person content focused on education discussion across all focus communities)

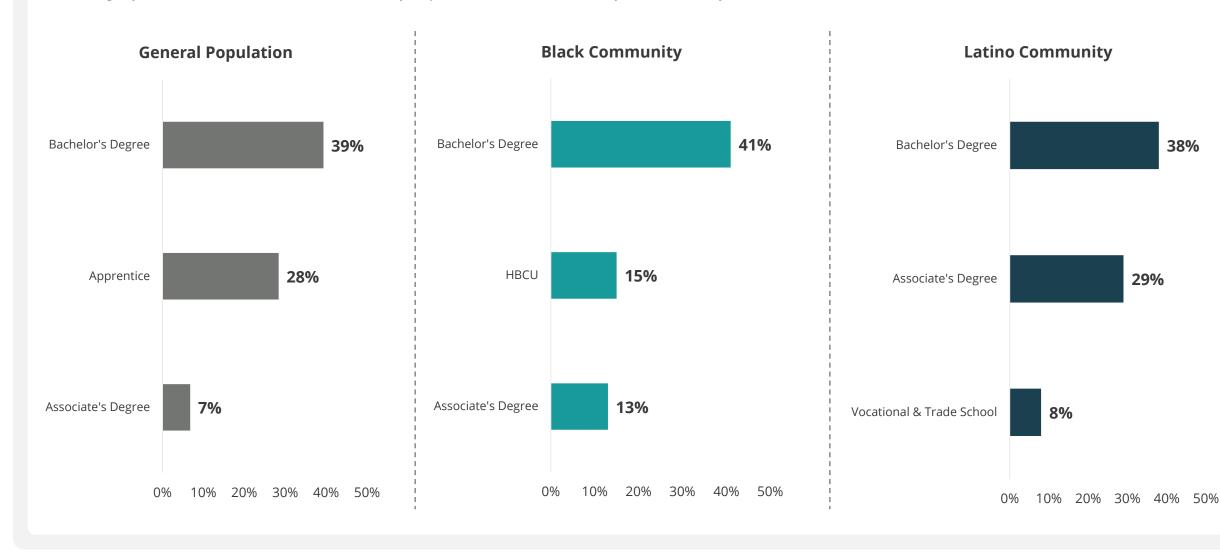




Black and Latino Narrative Expressions Focused More on Two-Year Degrees

Education Pathways Mentioned by Community Group

(Percentage of education credentials mentioned within first person conversation in each focus community)



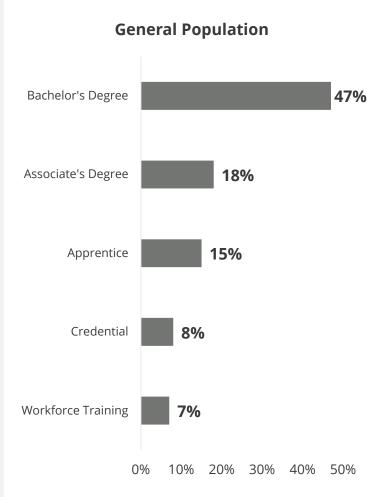
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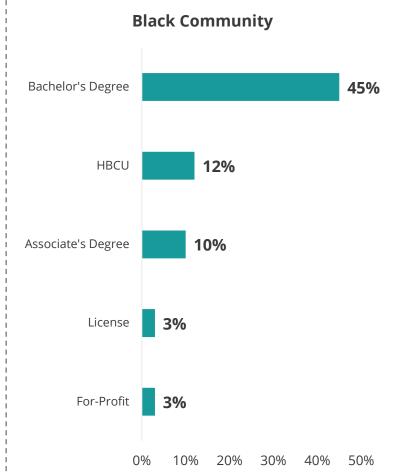


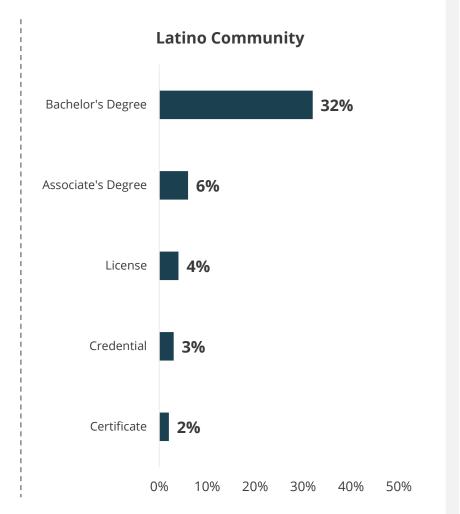
Media Does Not Yet Acknowledge the Full Potential of Other Pathways

Education Pathways Mentioned by Community Group

(Percentage of education credentials mentioned within media conversation in each focus community)







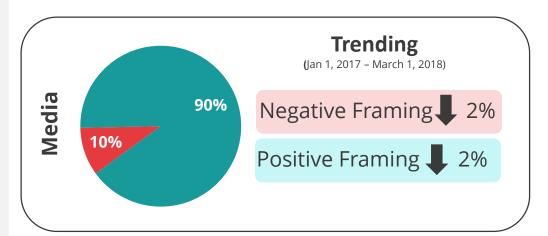


Positive Framing

Conversation About Two-Year Degrees Highlights Near-Term Advantages Rather Than Long-Term Career Value

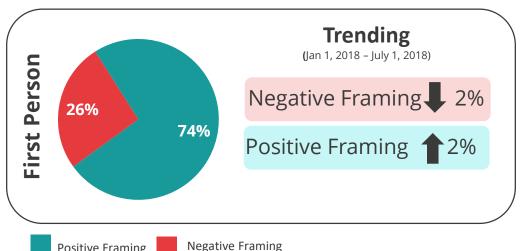
Sentiment Around Two-Year Colleges

(Percentage of traditional media and social media conversation within the general population)



Positive Drivers:

- **Cost efficiencies** over four-year programs
- Access to programs specifically designed around **skill obtainment**
- Easy application and enrollment processes compared to four-year programs
- **Higher income levels** for those who attend versus no college education
- Ability to balance family life and attend classes close to home



Negative Drivers:

- **Costs** too high for many low-income students
- High drop-out rates
- **Stigma** association with being a lesser option for those who can't get into four-year colleges
- Questions about the quality of education received and level of job preparedness obtained
- Lack of access in rural areas



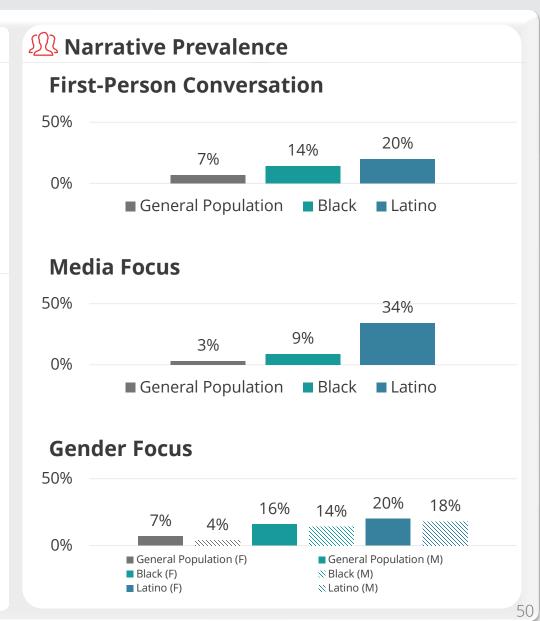


The Self-Identity Narrative

Narrative Description

There is a complex tension between others' expectations of me and the desires and expectations that I have for myself based on the communities I identify with. I battle with different ways of managing this in the opportunities I see and choices I make around career, education, and pursuing my passions.

- External factors, such as family, community, and societal expectations, shape an individual's perception of identity and, oftentimes, create internalized pressures around education and career choices
- For some individuals, the **desire to give back** to the community they identify with is a strong driver of career choice





The Self-Identity



External factors, such as family, community, and societal expectations, shape an individual's perception of identity and, oftentimes, create internalized pressures around education and career choices



"My parents didn't want me to pursue modeling nor Journalism bc they're both competitive fields and they don't have the money to support me until my career takes off. So they always pushed me to go the medical route. A safer route."

"As a female, I know how it feels to be told I don't need education, or to be called intimidating because I have an education. It's a very discouraging feeling. To be told that I am better off at home then in the work force, to be told I am better off being a mother or wife, then a doctor or engineer or teacher. Being a mother is one of the biggest blessing one can get, but it isn't for all of us. Yes society, you read that right, being a mother isn't for every female out there. So why do we only promote motherhood and not education? Because education is power, and society may not be ready for a nation with powerful females. Today, an educated female is still an anomaly, and if you are a Hispanic or African American educated female, you are an even bigger anomaly." – Female Access to Education Isn't Enough, Huffington Post

"I'd decided months before to give my website a shot and to build up my own side business by freelancing. While I felt scared because this wasn't in the plan, I also felt at peace because it felt right. My family, on the other hand, was confused. I was essentially the niña buena, and it took everyone by surprise when I decided against a traditional career path. The transition was going to be hard for them, because in my family, unconventional most times does not equal success. I'd worked so hard in college, and to some extent, by not getting a full-time, traditional job, I was signaling coming short of my potential." – I Don't Have a Full-Time Job, and My Latin Parents Judge Me For It, Popsugar

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entity



For some individuals, the desire to give back to the community they identify with is a strong driver of career choice



"I just got into Dental School. I'm going to be a Dentist. It's official. I get to have a career in the medical field where I can make people smile everyday. I get to serve others. I get to be a role model for young women interested in STEM in my community. Young BLACK women."

"The best part of my career is the connections I've made with students, families, and my community. I'm certain I'm in the right field. " { LV}

"Love it though man, that's my goal too. Not only to make money off this, but help ppl too. The community appreciates you!" $\{LV\}$

"People always question my dream of working hard to make money just to end up giving all the money back. Yes, my dream is to give back. I'll always work hard just to give back. Every single way possible. As long as I'm able to help adults/kids in need."

"I love meeting new clients that are Latino and are about empowering/giving opportunities to community. This is tangible hope in the workforce" { LV}

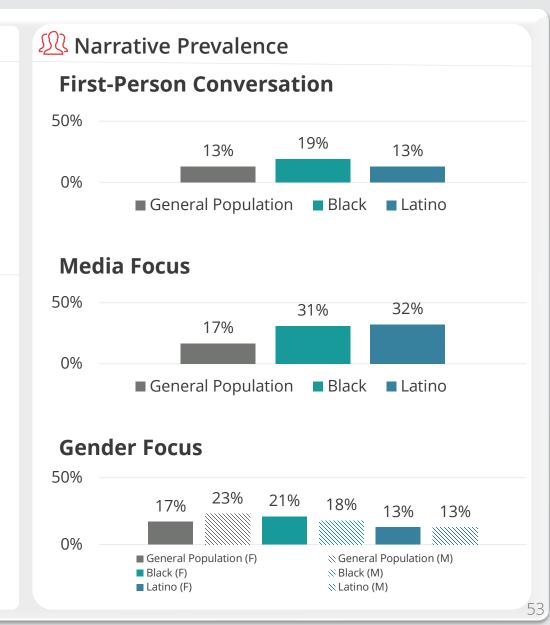


The Inequality Narrative

Narrative Description

Life is full of unequal opportunities. In so many aspects of my life I start two steps behind more privileged people. There are systemic injustices creating barriers and inhibiting my ability to access job opportunities, build meaningful career paths, and ensure work stability.

- Institutional inequities within the education system severely limit opportunities for many
- Institutional racism persists into the working world, limiting social mobility and economic and employment opportunities
- The **accumulation of life experiences of inequality** greatly inhibits the opportunity for many to experience life to its fullest potential, especially in comparison to their peers







Institutional inequities within the education system severely limit opportunities for many



"Low-income minority students don't receive the same level of education as middle-class white students. Therefore, they are at a disadvantage – free college only benefits those who are able to get into them and offers nothing to those who have been pushed through a failed system"

"We claim to believe that public education is the great equalizer, but that idea rings very hollow when we start down this line of thinking. Essentially, that would be admitting that only the kids lucky enough to have a stable, loving home life with plenty of food and resources are expected to succeed. Others might make it, but it's up to them, as kids, to overcome their own hurdles -- to overcome whatever difficulty they happened to be born into. So, if a kid doesn't arrive at school in pristine learning condition, we just throw our hands up?" – In case you missed it, I had an op-ed published in the Seattle Times, and the comments illustrate well our city's education issues, Rise Up for Students Blog

"Just got out of a meeting where I shared the following: "We work within the boundaries of a system that didn't work for any of us and are somehow perplexed that it doesn't work for our kids." This is true for schools, politics and other systems built on a foundation of oppression. Coming out of a low-income and low-access school system, my education was just as trash as the child who grew up in an affluent community. Both systems didn't prepare us to challenge the systems of a failing structure. The system my affluent peers enabled and perpetuated a life of ignorant bliss. The system I grew up in asked that I be complicit and submit to it. Both systems failed us. Now, here we are."





Institutional racism persists into the working world, limiting social mobility and employment opportunities



"The quiet racism in these office jobs is hilarious if it wasn't so sad. When I interviewed at Merrill lynch, first real job outta college, I was confused for a mover. I'm in the office, in a 3 piece suit, leather binder in hand, and Becky thought I was a mover."

"Racism is so pervasive in the US job market that even Black folks with Harvard degrees are at a disadvantage."

"I have never in my 24 years of breathing, experienced this much racism directed towards me at any job. this has caused me to lose confidence in myself & doubt my skills. my writing is suffering bc of it. I am mad at myself for being silent for so long just so I could keep a job."

"I can tell kids do you[r] work honestly, study a career you love, be humble, work hard with good intentions and if things don't work out because you are a victim of abuse & harassment find a new path to greatness. I did. But politicians sabotaged it, exploited it, abused, stole"

"I left my dream job in academia; the culture of classist white supremacy and sexism is irreparably broken."







The accumulation of life experiences of inequality greatly inhibits the opportunity for many to experience life to its fullest potential, especially in comparison to their peers



"Don't dream too big." This was a subtle and overt message sent to students of color in the America of our childhood. Decades later, has it really changed? Our shared experience as low-income students of color struggling for equality a mere 40 or 50 years ago is just as relevant today: A poor black girl raised in the Jim Crow South by a single mother who wasn't thought to have a chance; a Puerto Rican boy from a low-income Spanish-speaking household who seemed destined for vocational work with just a high school diploma." - American students need to be able to dream big, Brookings Institute

"I am just tired of playing by a different set of rules. That are constantly ever changing. Only for black People in America. Look at the data it doesn't lie. It's doesn't hedge. Income gap. Education gap. Wealth gap. Employment gap. And on and on. #TwoAmericas #Divided #racism" (BV)

"I first heard the word "undocumented" when I was 16 years old... Until that point, I had no idea I was considered an "undocumented" person in America. It crushed me to find out. For years, I was angry at my father for not coming into the country the "right way."...Once I realized what being undocumented meant for my life, things got hard. My family couldn't afford to send me to college, and since I wasn't an American citizen I couldn't qualify for college scholarships or financial aid. I was tempted to quit school, because there didn't seem like much of a point. After graduation, my classmates talked about their future, and when they asked me what my plans were I would say nothing because I was too embarrassed to tell them I was undocumented." – I Came to America When I Was 3. What Am I Supposed to Do in Mexico?, Politico Magazine



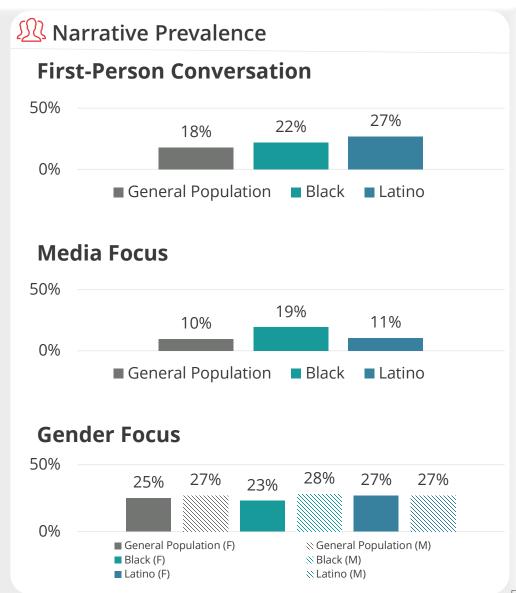


The Persistence Narrative

Narrative Description

Hard work paves a pathway for my future success. The persistence, perseverance, and sacrifices my family and I make today create opportunities for us tomorrow.

- A dedicated and unwavering work ethic is identified as a foundational factor for earning success in college and careers requiring training, nurturing, and other forms of development
- Financial and other lifestyle sacrifices are recognized as necessary to succeed, and can present significant obstacles for underprivileged groups
- Persistence and internal motivation have breaking points related to experienced rejection which lead to feelings of resignation, hopelessness, and despondency







A dedicated and unwavering work ethic is identified as a foundational factor for earning success in college and careers requiring training, nurturing, and other forms of development



"I don't care if I'm a billionaire in the future, my kids WILL have a part time job at 16 so they learn what hard work gets you"

"3 years after I graduated is when I finally landed a PART-Time job in my field. I have countless Dear John (rejection) emails or received no replies from dozens of organizations. But, prayer and persistence does pay off y'all. So, keep your head up and keep going!"

"I bought my own car at 18. Bought my own house at 23. Graduated college & started my career at 24. Damn. I have so much going on for me. I can't ever forget how much hard work I put and will continue to put in."

I have a lot of hard work ahead of me, but I'm finally back on the career path I've been working toward for years. As the odds would have it, being this persistent for so long had to work out eventually. Don't give up on getting where you want to be in life."







Financial and other lifestyle sacrifices are recognized as necessary to succeed, and can present significant obstacles for underprivileged groups



"After graduating journalism school with also a degree in psychology, I had to move to start an assignment editor job earning \$22 thousand a year to earn an opportunity to work as a part time reporter after about 3 to 4 years of hard work" $\{ \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} \}$

"Didn't have time to work on my passion project last night so brought it with me to do during lunch. The hustle is real and so is the dream."

"Man I'm feeling so motivational this morning lol. Like the grind gotta be got this year whether it's getting a part time job to go with your full time, saving more, own businesses, SACRIFICE! I swear things will change this year and if you wasn't in my circle. Stay outside!"

"Someone had them balls to say people in the cleaning/maintenance fields CHOOSE to be there. I'm sorry, it's f**king hard to find a f**king job & I was taught to work hard no matter the job, and if I have to clean toilets to survive, so be it."





Persistence and internal motivation have breaking points related to experienced rejection which lead to feelings of resignation, hopelessness, and despondency



"I would really want another career opportunity. So, help me, Lord. My passion is starting to give up"

"I hope all of this is worth it in the end. If I'm still trying for this "imaginative career" in 8 years imma just give up." {BV}

"Kinda sucks how I've gradually had to give up on career aspirations bc theyr not realistic / im not smart enough"

"wondering when i'll stop saying i'm an "aspiring writer" & just tell it like it is: a girl who'll inevitably accept a much more insipid job where she occasionally writes & at night pages through her A+ high school and college essays, reminding her of all that wasted potential :))"

"Sure, I'll get a career that pays "good enough". Then change my mind in a couple years because it's not making me happy, I'm over worked and depressed. Oh but what choice do I have to change that? None. I'll die unhappy trying to live. Right."



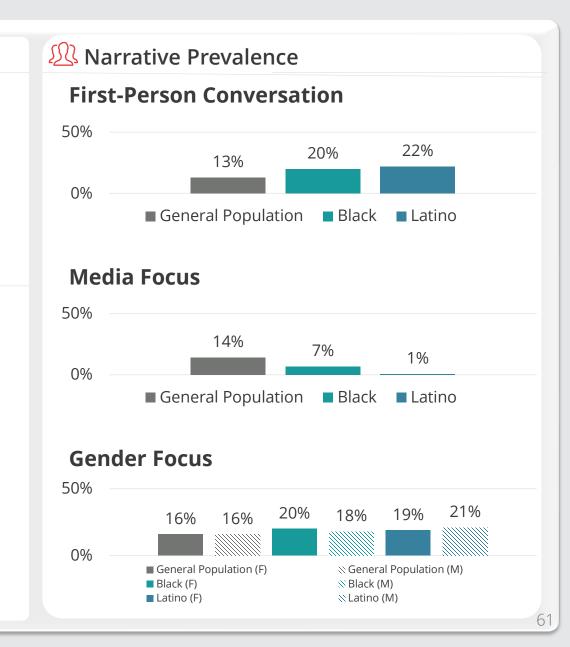


The Financial Concern Narrative

Narrative Description

The education and career choices I make today are bounded by my current financial situation. No matter what I want for the future, I need to pay attention to affordability and maintaining a sustainable income right now.

- The significant and increasing cost of postsecondary education creates a major obstacle for many students in pursuing a rewarding career
- The **need to earn money directs** many toward career choices that they wouldn't choose otherwise
- For many, especially the underprivileged, the necessity to work during college is a major challenge to college completion, and career success









The significant and increasing cost of postsecondary education creates a major obstacle for many students in pursuing a rewarding career



"They need to make schooling more affordable not raise minimum wage of a burger flipping job, ticket checking job at a theater, those jobs are not meant to be living wage jobs their for teens who want spending money but because college is so expensive people have no choice."

"I'm so close to giving up on college. This shit is too expensive to not be sure I'll have a job when I graduate. THAT'S SOME BULL SHIT" (BV)

"I'd really like to go to school instead of doing job corps. Although since I can't afford it and my Financial aid situation isn't settled yet, I'm a little SOL. I wish my parents would give me more options."

"My biggest worry about being a first-gen student is trying to figure out how I'll afford to pay my tuition and bills without the help of my parents. In fact, the reason I'm a first-gen is because no one else in my family could afford the luxury and privilege of attending college. I even had to take a gap year before attending to save money. I don't have credit for a personal loan nor the high school G.P.A. for scholarships. What do I do?" – Q&A: First-Generation Students, The New York Times

"What happens to the people who can't afford to apply for college or a job? **Do we just deny them** access based on their lack of ability to pay?"





The need to earn money directs many toward career choices that they wouldn't choose otherwise



"I'm working my ass off so my future family has the luxury of doing whatever they want rather than chasing the career that has the most money" $\{LV\}$

"I knew it was time to switch career fields when all the internships were unpaid" (B)

"I did what I had to do. It's honest work, but I will never wish this job on my worst enemy," - My Dad on working in the fields. #Salazar" { LV}

"Sometimes the hardest part of landing a summer internship is surviving the summer if that internship is unpaid. Many Latino youth don't have the luxury of pursuing an unpaid internship because we need to work. Going three months without a paycheck is simply not an option for some of us. I loved my summer internships, but I was also just barely scraping by, and sometimes it was difficult just to find bus fare just to get to my internship in the first place." – Three Young Latino Share Tips for Summer Internships, NBC News





For many, especially the underprivileged, the necessity to work during college is a major challenge to college completion, and career success



"being a college student and having a stable job that pays ok is hard because I need money but at the same time I can't work too much bc then I won't have time to make the grades I want in school"

"Today I had to withdraw from a class in order to keep my job. It has come to me trying to make money or have an education a wesome"

"I've signed up for to drive for Instacart, Uber, and Lyft on top of my campus job. I'm so glad capitalism allows me to work multiple jobs so I can barely scrape by to afford basic necessities and education. Not." { BV}

"I'm an undocumented student, with two undocumented parents and two younger siblings who are U.S. citizens...Over the past four years, I have struggled with the frustration of not knowing how to pay for each semester of my associate degree studies. I was one of the lucky ones — I found a job and put together the money I needed to get by. And now I'm studying at Hunter College for my next degree, after which I hope to become a social worker. But, as I've been studying, I've been working a 45-hour-per-week maintenance job at a homeless shelter just to be able to go to school. Sometimes the financial strain made me want to give up on school." – New York, stand up to Trump and support immigrants, Times Union

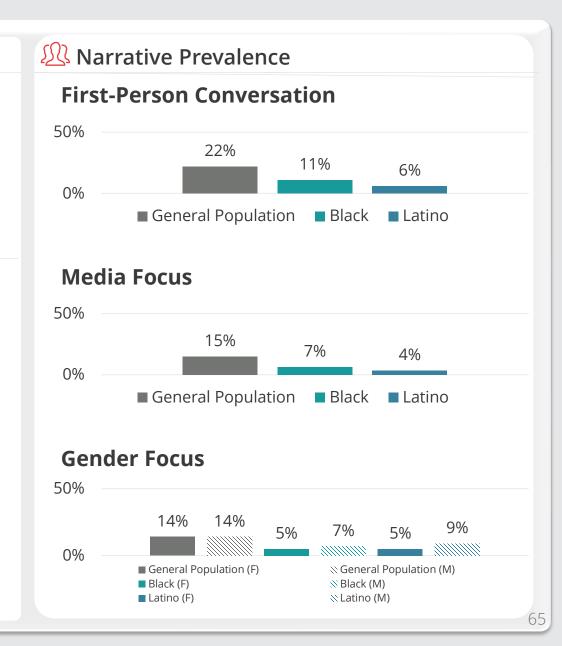


The Soft Skills Narrative

Narrative Description

In order to excel, I need to support my education and training with soft skills. Applying to schools, navigating the job search process, building professional networks, and working in a professional setting are critical skills I need to develop.

- Soft skills--interpersonal capabilities that conform to cultural norms in the working world--are both essential to success and difficult to develop
- People skills are most easily taught and nurtured through role models, mentors, coaches, and real world career experiences
- The ability to establish a strong network is essential for career development and advancement, but networks are not equally accessible to everyone







Soft skills--interpersonal capabilities that conform to cultural norms in the working world--are both essential to success and difficult to develop



"Study hard, graduate college, get a good job. Worked great for a little, until I found everything works off soft people skills that college courses taught none of. Side gatherings/tech frat might have helped on useful skills, but never called to how I interact with people."

"The United States will remain vulnerable to cyberattacks unless the nation's education system is better aligned to produce greater numbers of cybersecurity professionals, a leading industry expert testified Tuesday at a Congressional hearing... Simply put, cybersecurity professionals **are not produced by the education system** in the United States in the quantities or **the correct soft skills** that are needed," said David Jarvis, chief information officer at the IBM Institute for Business Value. "
- Colleges Urged to Ramp Up to Fill Cybersecurity Workforce Void, Diverse Education (BV)

"New intelligence needed in the workplace. How do colleges and universities build adaptability and curiosity? Why don't we see **these skills listed in learning objectives and strategic plans?**"





People skills are most easily taught and nurtured through role models, mentors, coaches, and real world career experiences



"'Agree with you 100%! The lack of soft skills will totally stall@or ruin a career. **Mentors are needed** to tell people the truth and guide them to improvements."

"Pre-school aside, where are soft skills taught? The oversimplified answer is that they're not taught. The more complicated reality is that at the K-12 level, they're taught unevenly and indirectly. Students develop soft skills through social networks: our parents, peers, teachers, coaches, mentors, and managers. Expectations around communication, for instance, are transmitted—largely invisibly—through the people and organizations we interact with from childhood to young adulthood. So if you're not exposed to these people or networks early on, you might be at a disadvantage when it comes to getting hired as an adult." - Soft Skills Training: A Community Prototype, Medium

"Skills such as empathy, listening, receiving feedback, flexibility and being a team player hold tremendous value. However, gaps in soft skills continue to be a problem in today's work environment. Mentoring can help... In a nutshell, mentoring relationships help people improve soft skills such as listening, receiving feedback and being empathetic because they use those same skills in the relationships themselves." - Need Help Developing Soft Skills? Get a Mentor, CLOMedia.com









The ability to establish a strong network is essential for career development and advancement, but networks are not equally accessible to everyone



"Every time I apply for a job I think of the kids who skated through college because **their dad's golf** buddy's brother works at WhoYaKnow Inc."

"How do you compete with kids whose parents help them with writing essays, and whose parents' friends are lined up to provide summer jobs and after-graduation first jobs? My parents didn't finish high school, and had no clue what higher ed was about." - Q&A: First Generation Students" The New York Times

"It's especially important that we reach out to people who aren't well represented in our circles- not just for sake of diversity, but because inclusion makes our circles stronger and improves our work. When I started intentionally thinking about how to support others, at first I thought about it as service to profession and a fit for my values. But we know mentorship makes both parties better, and it's enriched my professional life to learn from emerging scholars."

"For a variety of societal reasons, I think there are far too many people of color and women who don't have anyone in their immediate circle encouraging them. I'd like to be that person to provide encouragement where I can" - Three Black Provosts Now Serving at Local Colleges, The Philadelphia Tribune



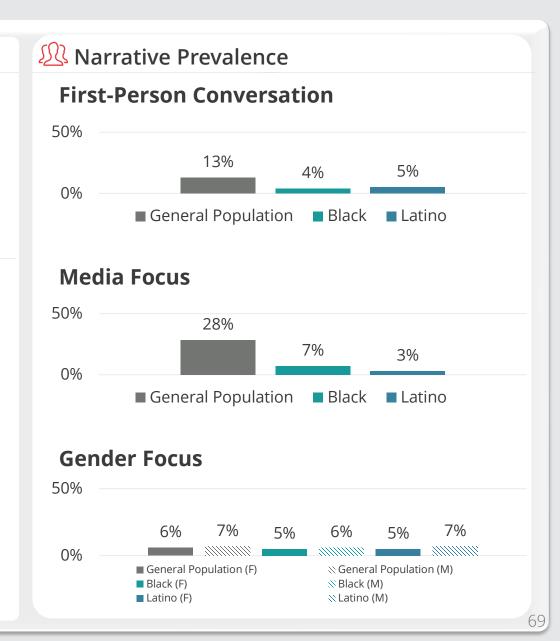


The Relevant Skills Narrative

Narrative Description

I need to develop relevant and marketable skills for the jobs of today and the future. Increasingly, jobs require new skill sets, and I need to prepare myself, but I'm finding it hard to keep up with today's demands.

- Societal changes like globalization and technology (e.g., automation of manufacturing, driverless cars, and artificial intelligence) are determining what is required for a successful career
- The education system should prepare people for the world of work in the context of globalization and technology changes, but sometimes there is a gap between what is taught and what is needed
- There are alternative ways to develop viable, meaningful skills and a traditional four-year college is not the only pathway









Societal changes like globalization and technology (e.g., automation of manufacturing, driverless cars, and artificial intelligence) are determining what is required for a successful career



"Mckinsey says #automation & #Al will displace 400m jobs & force 75m to change occupation. As my daughter makes her Uni choices, I question how prepared her generation is for tomorrow's #disrupted economy. Will her choices today still be relevant then?"

"The US workforce needs to transform their mindset for a new revolution...the technology revolution, which is making service, tech and medical field jobs the most common and most secure 1st world jobs there are. #GetEducated"

"People talk about automation taking jobs away as if we can't avoid it... Train people. Why aren't we talking about equipping people for the 4th industrial revolution so they are employable in the future that will have automated machines everywhere?" (BV)

"@realDonaldTrump Except automation is the main reason manufacturing jobs are gone. You can't make them come back. You have to promote be career paths for the present and future, not promise jobs that don't exist anymore." $\{ LV \} \}$

"We have a more educated workforce now than we've ever had in our history, and yet there are PhDs receiving SNAP, so we know that although education is important, it's simply not possible to educate our way out of the impact of automation on our economy."







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The education system should prepare people for the world of work in the context of globalization and technology changes, but sometimes there is a gap between what is taught and what is needed



"I literally only use 1 college class at my job. I paid thousands for school and only one class is relevant."

"College could be changed in my opinion. I appreciate my education and the social aspects of it but most of my skills I learned on the job" [BV]

"Thing I've hated the most since High School is we bust our ass off. Just to get a certificate/ Degree that just says you went through hell and here's a job where you won't need all the skills you learned."

"While education is important, you'll need more than your degree to succeed...[It's not] just having a degree or certification, but rather having skills that are relevant to the needs of the market"

"I would've been better off going to a tech school for a couple of years and specialized in something. But we were told our option for success was a 4 year college degree. The most expensive option. Our education system failed us. Look at the kids in debt with no job"



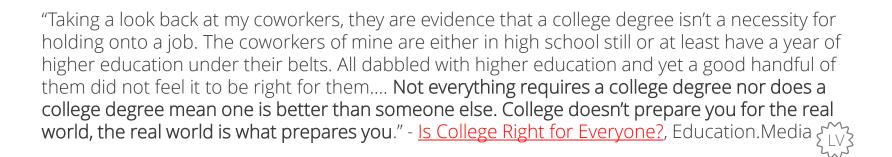


There are alternative ways to develop viable, meaningful skills and a traditional four-year college is not the only pathway



"Honestly...don't [go to college]. It's not worth it. Get mgmt experience in retail or similar, work your way up. Transferable skills. Get a support gig at a company like ddc & work up. Shit we had high school drop outs at ATT pulling 70k."

"Exactly my point! The fact that after I graduate... I now have to gain experience - while with an apprenticeship you're gaining the experience as well as the relevant skills and knowledge needed."



"SKILLS r the key. Unfortunately the message is still college is the only path 2 a successful, good paying career. As a nation, we don't value all work. Adults with degrees promote 4 yr degrees because that is all they know."

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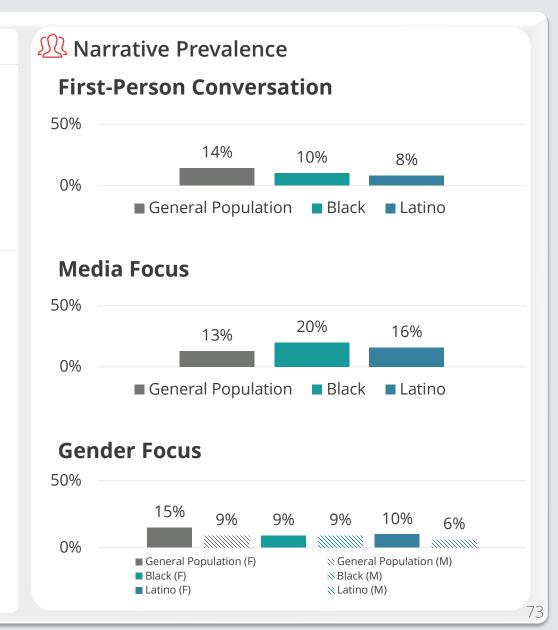


The Dream Job Narrative

Narrative Description

I can achieve my dream job. Since work is way more than what I do from 9am to 5pm on weekdays, I want to do something I enjoy and that provides rewards that are important to me.

- People identify their dream jobs based on many factors (both general and specific) including the **ability to contribute to society**, **financial reward**, **flexibility**, **lifestyle**, **and passions**
- While some career goals are clear and pragmatically planned, others are more aspirational and whimsical







People identify their dream jobs based on many factors (both general and specific) including the ability to contribute to society, financial reward, flexibility, lifestyle, and passions



"This is the kind of career I aspire to have. Something that makes me happy, that isn't a 9 to 5 desk job. Something that allows me to, not only be creative, but explore."

"People always question my dream of working hard to make money just to end up giving all the money back. Yes, my dream is to give back. I'll always work hard just to give back. Every single way possible. As long as I'm able to help adults/kids in need."

"My dream job was always to work in bookstore or library and now I've done both. My next dream job is to work in IT.

"my dream job!!!!! owning a gallery & solely making money off of showcasing new & upcoming artists as well as holding like peaceful mind body workshops bcs one of my favorite most pleasant reoccurring dreams is literally me in an amazing art gallery with so many nice people"

"Fun fact: my first dream job was to be an archaeologist because I loved dinosaurs so much. Then i wanted to be an astronaut.





While some career goals are clear and pragmatically planned, others are more aspirational and whimsical



""I'd rather be chasing a dream and a passion until I'm 30 or whatever than hop into a job at 23 that I'm going to HATE. Simple."

"My dream job would be a week divided into **two days of helping others**, diagramming, researching & explaining concepts **then two days programming from home** on an interesting project that doesn't infringe on human rights."

"I've been feeling so stuck lately in terms of what i want to do career-wise...like, i know where i want t be but not where to start. I've always been scared of just settling for anything that doesn't allow me to do something i love as a living and idk... i really want to start doing creative things that change people and the world and i want to express my point of view and make it my job'

"I have dreams of becoming a sports anchor on TV one day. I am currently in college. Do you have any advice for me as I try to obtain this dream job?

"My dream job is to obviously work in the professional sports world, but working in the rap/hip-hop industry? SUCH A CLOSE SECOND.."

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