

Design Journeys:  
Strategies for Increasing Diversity in Design Disciplines

Thesis

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By

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## **Abstract**

Design is everywhere, but for many African American and Latino youth, the journey to a design career can be overwhelming. Limited access and too few opportunities prevent the majority of these youth from even beginning the journey. *Design Journeys: Strategies for Increasing Diversity in Design Disciplines* explores diversity in design disciplines and presents fifteen strategic ideas to expose African American and Latino youth to design-related careers. This solutions-based thesis introduces a map charting a design career from grade school to a seasoned professional. The “Design Journey Map” contains four color-coded passages that are overlapped with career competency components that simultaneously cultivate soft skills together with the hard skills youth learn along the journey to a design career. The intent of this research is to inform and empower future African American and Latino youth, their parents and other educational stakeholders, about the journey to obtain a design-related career. The objective of this study is to analyze the design journeys of current African American and Latino designers and learn what influenced their career paths. This research is important because it shows the journey to become a designer and provides principles of the solution for closing the diversity gap in the design industry.

## **Dedication**

To the Adored and Spirited One

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my thesis committee — Professor Paul Nini, Dr. Noel Mayo, Dr. Elizabeth Sanders, Dr. Sonia Mañjon — for their patience, guidance and always believing I would make it. First, I wish to extend a personal note of thanks to my advisor, Professor Paul Nini, for the time and dedication that he extended to me during this project. Second, I wish to thank Yolanda Zepeda, Assistant Provost Office of Diversity and Inclusion, for being a constant supporter and a champion of my graduate education. Last, I would also like to thank AIGA, the professional association of design, for the support it provided to help me to complete this research.

I would also like to express my gratitude to my endlessly supportive family, friends, colleagues and to all the young designers I've met in the process.

Thank you for sharing your stories.

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## **Fields of Study**

Major Field: Design

Specialization in Nonprofit Studies

## **Table of Contents**

Abstract-----	ii
Dedication -----	iii
Acknowledgements -----	iv
Vita-----	v
Table of Contents -----	vi
List of Figures -----	ix
List of Tables -----	xiii
Chapter 1: Introduction-----	1
1.0 Chapter Overview -----	1
1.1 Beginning the Journey -----	2
1.2 Statement of Problem-----	3
1.3 Researcher's Interest in The Problem -----	4
Chapter 2: The Problem Area-----	7
2.0 Chapter Overview -----	7
2.1 The Current Status of Design-----	8
2.1.1 Human Development Index -----	10
2.1.2 Opportunity Index-----	11
2.2 Factors Contributing to The Lack of Diversity in Design-----	13
2.2.1. Civil Rights Act-----	13
2.2.2. Institutionalized Racism -----	14
2.2.3. Mass Incarceration -----	16
2.2.4. Four Big Problems for Design-----	19

2.3 How the Four Big Problems Manifest Themselves in Design	- 22
2.4 Chapter Summary -----	28
Chapter 3: The Research Study-----	30
3.0 Chapter Overview -----	30
3.1 Research Question and Intent-----	30
3.2 Describing the Problem-----	31
3.3 The Research Process Overview-----	33
3.4 The Research Process Narrative -----	35
3.5 Research Survey Results -----	48
3.6 Chapter Summary -----	58
Chapter 4: The Design Journey -----	60
4.0 Chapter Overview -----	60
4.1 Developing the Map and Strategic Ideas -----	60
4.2 The Design Journey Map -----	65
4.2.1 The Passages-----	67
4.3 The Strategic Ideas -----	77
4.4 Chapter Summary -----	89
Chapter 5: Recommendations-----	90
5.0 Chapter Overview -----	90
5.1 The Design Principles -----	90
5.1.2 Notable Organizations-----	93
5.2 Recommendation for a Strategic Solution-----	98
5.3 Design Explorrr-----	100
5.4 Chapter Summary -----	102
Chapter 6: Moving Forward -----	104
6.0 Final Thoughts-----	104

References-----	109
Appendix Appendix - A: Research Instruments -----	115
Electronic Survey Participant Messages -----	116
Electronic Survey Questions-----	117
Survey Results-----	128
Survey Figures-----	140
Interview Participant Messages-----	142
Interview Script Guide-----	144
Focus Group Participant Messages -----	148
Focus Group Script and Agenda-----	149
Focus Group Images -----	152
Appendix B: Transcripts From Interview-----	157
Interview with Veronica Corzo-Duchardt -----	158
Interview with Eric Anderson -----	177
Interview with Carol Watson-----	209
Interview with Carl Settles -----	228
Interview with Jose Callaber -----	257

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Measure of America 2013-2014 Well-Being Score Card .....	11
Figure 2: Opportunity Index State Rankings .....	12
Figure 3: Prevalence of Imprisonment in the U.S. Population, Bureau of Justice Statistics .....	17
Figure 4 A. (left) B. (top right) and C. (bottom right): Examples of cultural insensitivity in advertising .....	23
Figure 5: The Multiple Problems in Design .....	31
Figure 6: The benefits of exposure for diversity .....	33
Figure 7A Brown and 7B Cyan: Examples of survey promotional cards .....	36
Figure 8: Interview participants with name and discipline .....	38
Figure 9: Design Journey Collage from Focus Group Participant One .....	44
Figure 10: Design Journey Collage from Focus Group Participant Two .....	45
Figure 11: Design Journey Collage from Focus Group Participant Three .....	45
Figure 12: Design Journey Collage from Focus Group Participant Four .....	46
Figure 13: Design Journey Collage from Focus Group Participant Five .....	46
Figure 14: The total ethnic count .....	49

Figure 15: The total gender count.....	50
Figure 16: The ages range count.....	50
Figure 17: The discipline count.....	51
Figure 18: The degree attainment count.....	57
Figure 19: The Passages count.....	19
Figure 20: The ethnicity count within each Passage.....	20
Figure 21: The gender counts within each Passage.....	54
Figure 22: Shows the respondents' age ranges by ethnicity.....	55
Figure 23: The age ranges by ethnicity within the degree.....	56
Figure 24: The Passage attained within one and two parent households by ethnicity.....	57
Figure 25: The count in each Passage by ethnicity.....	58
Figure 26: My personal learning timeline.....	61
Figure 27: The Design Journey Map in full.....	66
Figure 28: The Foundations Passage from the Design Journey Map.....	68
Figure 29: The Proficiency Passage from the Design Journey Map.....	70
Figure 30: The Workforce Passage from the Design Journey Map.....	73
Figure 31: The Influence Passage from the Design Journey Map.....	75
Figure 32: The fifteen strategic ideas color coded and stacked for their accompanying passage.....	78
Figure 33: ExpandED Schools figure showing the breakdown of the 6,000 hour learning gap based on calculations of a 6-hour school day, 180-day school year.....	81
Figure 34: Percentage of children who have computer and internet use at home, by race.....	82
Figure 35: The fifteen strategic ideas color coded	

and stacked for their accompanying passage, then separated into awareness and application strategic ideas.	
The outlined circles demonstrate the strategic ideas that would be suitable in other Passages.....	88
Figure 36: The four Design Principles for a strategic solution.....	91
Figure 37: The homepage from the Inneract Project's website.....	94
Figure 38: The homepage from E4 Youth's website.....	95
Figure 39: The homepage of The Designers of Tomorrow's website.....	95
Figure 40: The homepage of The One Club's Here Are All The Black People event website.....	96
Figure 41: The homepage of AIGA, the professional association of design, Diversity and Inclusion Initiative page website.....	97
Figure 42: The Social Entrepreneurship Framework developed by Austin, Stevenson, and Wei-Skillern as shown in Managing Nonprofit Organizations.....	102
Figure 43: The Design Journey Map shown with the Fifteen Strategic Ideas.....	106
Figure 44: The four Design Principles for a strategic solution.....	107
Figure 45: The four Design Principles for a strategic solution.....	140
Figure 46: The opening page of the electronic survey created with Typeform.com.....	140
Figure 47: Screen clippings of various social media post.....	141
Figure 48: Soliciting for survey participants at local design event .....	141
Figure 49: Developing the pieces and part to the focus group tool kit....	152
Figure 50: Toolkit cutouts and supplies for the Focus Group.....	152

Figure 51: Early example of mapping a design journey for underrepresented youth.....	153
Figure 52: Researches' collage of personal design journey.....	153
Figure 53A, B and C: Focus group participants creating a collage of their design Journey.....	154
Figure 54: Posters shown to participants of the Design Journey Map with the 15 Strategic Ideas.....	155
Figure 55: Spring semester 2016 Design Exhibition poster.....	156
Figure 56: Home page of the Design Explorr website.....	156

## **List of Tables**

Table 1: Additional problems, transitional issues and needs identified for the Foundations Passage.....	69
Table 2: Additional problems, transitional issues and needs identified for the Proficiency Passage.....	71
Table 3: Additional problems, transitional issues and needs identified for the Workforce Passage.....	74
Table 4: Additional problems, transitional issues and needs identified for the Influence Passage.....	76

# **Chapter One: Introduction**

## **1.0 Chapter Overview**

This thesis originated with my desire to expose African American and Latino (AA&L) youth to design-related careers. This chapter will explain my interest in the topic and the problems that it explores with regard to access to design careers among underrepresented youth. It will outline the shape and trajectory of the design journey as well as identify where access by AA&L youth is limited.

My interest in this problem began during my work as the graphic designer in the Cleveland Public Schools. My interest further grew as I began mentoring more young designers while working as the graphic designer for the Cleveland Division of Water. The problems that I recognized while mentoring young AA&L designers compelled me to wonder about the nature of the design journey as a collective of opportunities dependent on access, which begin during adolescence and continue throughout adulthood. The goal for this line of inquiry was to identify and address the problems that AA&L youth face when aspiring to become designers in order to devise strategic solutions that will close the diversity gap in the design industry.

## **1.1 Beginning the Journey**

The journey to a career can be met with great success or great struggle.

Travelers who are prepared to face these circumstances typically cover more distance. Easily progressing from one stage to another may represent the endurance or competency of the traveler. When a traveler is prepared for the journey, the experiences she encounters become quick stops along the way—moments of pause that, with rest and refueling, allow her to begin again.

However, for a traveler who is less prepared to face the bumps, twists and turns of the road, minor challenges become major roadblocks. Those minor challenges become permanent barricades that ultimately inhibit travel and one's likelihood to continue on the path. Early failures and disappointments become weighted baggage impeding progress. The exhaustion caused by carrying this baggage distracts the traveler from discovering opportunities and limits her ability meet goals. Without the right know-how and guidance, the traveler may become too easily wearied and opt to turn back rather than to see the journey to its rewarding conclusion.

Unfortunately, the latter path that I have described is all too common among young people of color who seek a design-related career. As my research explains, without the necessary resources, experience or knowledge of the appropriate path to success, an aspiring designer of color will rarely aspire to the goal of a professional design career. This study endeavors to provide educators, policy makers, and under-resourced communities with the agency to

close equity gaps in design and guide young people along a successful and rewarding design journey.

## **1.2 Statement of Problem**

In order to better understand the dilemma our young traveler faces, we must first address the problem of the dearth of AA&L designers in the design industry. It is a widely acknowledged fact that access to education deeply affects career opportunities and career choices, particularly among the most vulnerable populations—those who deal with various personal, social, and economic obstacles which already impact their career choices. Such issues as poor educational funding and systemic disregard for overwhelmingly AA&L school systems, impact the quality of instruction and course offerings at under-resourced institutions. This underlying inequality in educational programming across American institutions has far-reaching societal implications, which may solidify class divides along racial lines. For example, inequitable access not only affects career path outcomes, but also salary caps and career trajectories.

The process of closing the equity gap in design is especially complex due to underlying problems at both ends of the career path. Problems on one end of the career path relate to access and exposure, which impact course offerings and instruction for AA&L youth in their local community schools. The problems on the other end relate to the opportunities provided to professionals of color, which are limited due to systemic prejudices, especially among those who monitor the distribution and application of funding for education. As I shall further explain, these issues are ultimately byproducts of the history of civil

rights legislation and race relations in America. Together these factors create the current problem of ethnic and racial homogeneity in the design industry.

### **1.3 Researcher's Interest in The Problem**

My professional background is in graphic design and computer imaging. Prior to graduate school, I worked as the senior designer at the City of Cleveland's Division of Water, the largest water system in Ohio and the tenth largest water system in the United States. During my six years there, I designed corporate communication materials, managed the organization's brands, developed educational and instructional programming for staff and supervised design assistants as well as summer interns.

Although recruiting and managing the young designers at the Division of Water was hard work, it gave me the opportunity to mentor aspiring designers. Every spring, I recruited talent from among local college and university portfolio reviews and trained student design interns to assist with design and production needs. At the end of 6 years with the Division of Water, together with the previous seven years I spent with Cleveland Municipal School District, I had accrued more than 20 mentees.

My major hardship as a mentor was to discover that these young persons' stories were riddled with personal, academic and career struggles. I felt compelled to do something for them. So, I further dedicated myself to helping them with their portfolio presentations, cultivating their professional development and advising them with their career planning.

While I was mentoring these young designers, I never thought about the design industry or my legacy within it. In 2011, however, all of this changed when my niece announced that she wanted to become a designer. At that point, the status of the industry quickly became a very real issue for me. I began to wonder and fear that she would be told things like, “You speak so well for a Black girl.” or, “You’re pretty good for a Black designer.” When she went on interviews, would the receptionist whisper, “Did you know she’s Black?” “Are you on a Minority Scholarship?” Would co-workers ask her, “Did you get this job through Affirmative Action?” I asked myself whether I had done anything to make the design industry better for her. Sadly, my answer was no.

This research thesis reflects my desire to take real action on behalf of my niece, my mentees, and all young persons of color hoping to enter the design industry. In the process, I hope to positively impact the design industry both through my attention to its underlying inequities and also the practical recommendations that I provide. Throughout this thesis, I propose specific solutions to increase the exposure to design among AA&L youth. The intended outcome of this study is to realize solutions to these problems by spreading awareness of diversity issues in design and by inviting the cooperation of industry leaders and local communities.

The intent of this research is also to inform future AA&L youth, their parents and other educational stakeholders, about the journey to obtain a design-related career. To this end, I analyzed the journeys of current designers in order to discover which factors influenced their career paths, investigated strategic ideas that may be utilized to increase the number of AA&L youth progressing

along the design pipeline, and then developed a strategic solution to address the lack of diversity in design disciplines.

Once we know more about what the path to becoming a designer looks like, we may begin to have a real conversation about what it will take to improve the experiences of underrepresented youth and close the diversity gap in design disciplines. This study identifies the tools needed and the means to apply them for the benefit of underrepresented youth. This research is important because it will not only help to cultivate greater access to design-related careers, but it will also provide strategies for closing the diversity gap in the design industry.

## **Chapter Two: The Problem Area**

### **2.0 Chapter Overview**

The dilemma of researching the lack of diversity in design is twofold. First, one must analyze the current status of design in order to better understand how the industry reached its current predicament. The reports used to analyze the current status of design were the Higher Education Arts Data Summary (Higher Education Arts Data Summaries 2015-2016), the Bureau of Labor Statistics (“Employed Persons by Detailed Occupation, Sex, Race, and Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity”), the Census Bureau (Humes, Jones, and Ramirez) and the metrics of Human Development Index (Burd-Sharps, Lewis, and Martins). This analysis will trace the roots of those issues in order to assess how they affect both the design workforce and the industry as a whole. This chapter will explore inequity in design in terms of historical legislation, institutional policies and tactics to marginalize AA&L people. The following section will detail how the Civil Rights Act impacted and continues to impact design fifty years after its inception. It will describe how these covert policies contributed to institutionalized racism, which deeply affects educational systems in AA&L communities. Then, it will document the way mass incarceration has marginalized millions of AA&L people by helping to cement racial biases that preclude AA&L individuals from succeeding in the job market. The conclusion of the chapter will address the specific implications of these societal phenomena for the design industry.

## **2.1 The Current Status of Design**

In 2006, industry expert, Terry Lee Stone, acknowledged the lack of diversity in design, remarking, “We’ve got a problem and we need to talk about it. Diversity, especially race, is an issue that all designers need to be concerned with in terms of the future of our profession.” A targeted effort to diversify the design profession is long overdue and greatly lags behind the progress of other industries. Although there is a dearth of statistical data on race and ethnicity within each of the design disciplines, the data does reveal additional layers of complexity to the problem of under-diversity in design, which points to a chronic rather than an acute issue.

Data from the Census bureau report, *Projections of the Size and Composition of the U.S. Population: 2014 to 2060* indicates that the United States will become more racially and ethnically diverse in the coming years. The report further projects that by 2044, more than half of all Americans will belong to a minority group. The point at which the non-Hispanic White population will comprise less than 50 percent of the nation’s total population has been described as the point at which the United States will become a “majority-minority” nation (Colby and Ortman). According to these projections, the majority-minority crossover will occur in 2044. And youth under the age of 18 are projected to experience the crossover in 2020.

In 2010, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that 34% of the current population is minorities with 13.5% being African-American and 15.4% being Latino. In 2013, the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that 11.2%

and 15.6% of the workforce are African-American and Latino, respectively. Census Bureau trends project that by 2050, minorities will be the new majority, comprising 54% of the U.S. population. And by then, Latinos, the third fastest growing population, will represent 20% of the workforce. These statistics, however, are consonant with current data pertaining to the design profession.

Data collected from a 2015 U.S. Department of Labor report of 899,000 designers shows that the percentage of total employed African American designers is 3.5% (31,465 people), which is down from 5.4% in 2013. The data also reported that just 12.3% (110,577 people) of the total employed design workforce is Latino. The U.S. Department of Labor also reports that among 203,000 architects, 5.8% is African American and 5.7% is Latino. When one compares the current population statistics and projections for population change by racial category with the current data pertaining to AA&L populations in the design disciplines, the disproportions in representation become apparent. In fact, it becomes clear that design is a starkly non-diverse industry, wholly misaligned with the changing nature of the twenty-first century American workforce and America as a whole.

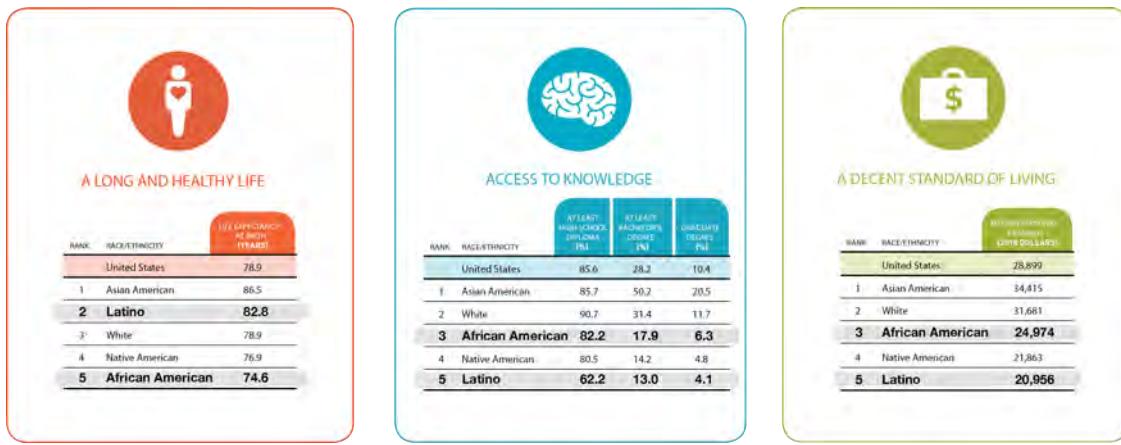
This lack of diversity extends to the American education system, which is where most design careers naturally begin. Under-enrollment in design programs is the first indicator of a problem. For instance, the 2015 data summary from the Higher Education Arts Data Service collected reports from 298 schools nationwide with art and design programs. The data summary reported that among 159,865 students from all degree levels, 4.1% (6,679 students) is African American and 10.4% (16,608 people) is Latino. And of that

159,865 students, African American males represented 3.9% (6,219 students) and African American females represented 0.2% (360 students). Latino males represented 3.9% (6,248 students) and Latino females represented 6.5% (10,360 students). Furthermore, in 2015, the National Architectural Accrediting Board reported that overall enrollment in accredited architecture programs (123 institutions total) by ethnicity was 5% among African Americans and 16% among Latinos.

This problem parallels a similar lack of diversity within the professoriate. Indeed, the 2015 data summary from the Higher Education Arts Data Service also reported that among 8,551 faculty members, 3.6% (310 people) of total art and design faculty/educators is African-American and 3.9% (330 people) is Latino. Furthermore, of these 8,551 faculty members, African-American men represented 2.2% (187 total) and African-American women represented just 1.4% (123 total) of the total faculty. Latino men represented 2.3% (196 total) of the total faculty and Latino women represented just 1.6% (134 total).

### **2.1.1 Human Development Index**

In 2010, the Measure of America, the first-ever human development report for a wealthy developed nation, introduced the American Human Development Index, which provides a single measure of wellbeing for all Americans, divided by state and congressional district, as well as by gender, race, and ethnicity. The Index rankings of the 50 states and 436 congressional districts reveal huge disparities among the health, education, and living standards of different groups. This report provides the basis for all serious discussions concerning the realization of a fair, just, and globally competitive American society.



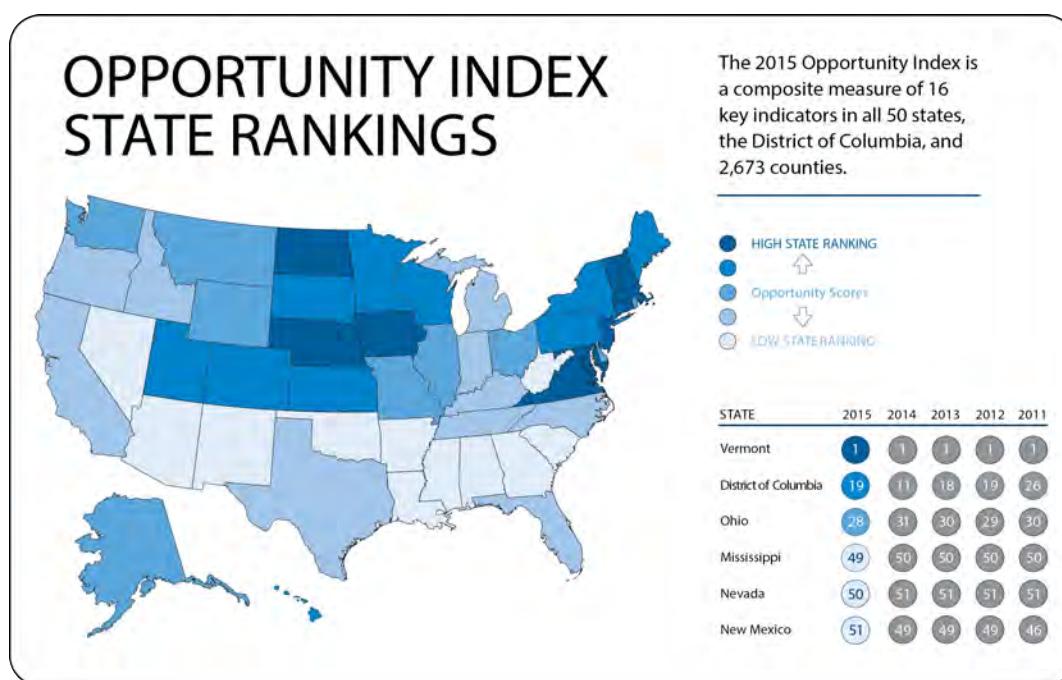
*Figure 1: Measure of America 2013-2014 Well-Being Score Card*

The American Human Development Index produces rankings on three main criteria as shown in Figure 1. The first criterion is well-being, which looks at health and life expectancy. The second is educational knowledge and attainment. The third is the median of personal earnings, or income. This ranking system uncovered that African Americans attained more education than Latinos. However, behind Asians, Latinos live eight years longer than African Americans. Latinos are also reported to have the lowest median personal earnings behind Native Americans.

### 2.1.2 Opportunity Index

The Measure of America was created in collaboration with Opportunity Nation, an organization that works to expand economic mobility and close the opportunity gap. The 2015 Opportunity Index ranks the United States using 16 different indicators of opportunity, such as economy, education and community.

The chart in Figure 2 shows the highest and lowest ranking states. Notice that in 2015, Ohio ranked 28<sup>th</sup>, which is in the bottom half of the national opportunity standard. In five years, Ohio has only progressed by two levels. The extent to which these quality of life markers correspond with racial demographics is unclear owing to the complexity of the social forces which affect quality of life. However, it is important to note that at roughly the middle of the Opportunity Index, Ohio has a population of only 13.3% African Americans and 17.6% Latinos. By contrast, Mississippi, Nevada and New Mexico, which contain predominately African American and Latino populations, rank lowest on the Opportunity Index.



*Figure 2: Opportunity Index State Rankings*

## **2.2 Factors Contributing to The Lack of Diversity in Design**

Problems pertaining to access, opportunity and quality of life are sensitive topics, not least because inequalities in these areas are tied to centuries-old racial tensions and social injustices. In fact, and most pertinent for this study, the discomfort in discussing race that many Americans feel has been a deciding factor in the struggle to increase institutional diversity, which ultimately affects the representation of AA&L professionals in the fields of design. These issues are of course deeply rooted our nation's history. Although there is not one specific historical factor which has caused this problem to magnify, three of the most salient factors are the Civil Rights Act of 1964, institutionalized racism and mass incarceration, which are all echoed in the current climate of discomfort and lack of communication pertaining to diversity in design.

### **2.2.1. Civil Rights Act**

On June 11<sup>th</sup>, 1963, following the forced desegregation of the University of Alabama, President John F. Kennedy called for nationwide participation in addressing the “moral crisis” of racialized violence and guaranteeing that America is a “land of the free” for all citizens. In this address, Kennedy called on Congress to act and “to make a commitment, it has not fully made in this century, to the proposition that race has no place in American life or law (Kennedy).”

Sadly, later that month, President Kennedy was assassinated. Immediately afterward, President Lyndon B. Johnson began pressuring Congress to release

the stalled legislation. The legislation passed the House on February 10<sup>th</sup>, 1964 by a vote of 290–130, but when the bill came before the full Senate for debate on March 30<sup>th</sup>, 1964, the “Southern Bloc” launched a 54-day filibuster to prevent its passage. On June 19<sup>th</sup>, the filibuster was broken and a version of the bill passed bill passed the Senate by a vote of 73–27 (“Five Facts about the Civil Rights Act of 1964”). After eight months and several attempts, the Civil Rights Act (CRA) was signed into legislation outlawing discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

The purpose of the CRA was to enforce the constitutional right to vote, allow Courts to enforce civil rights laws, authorize lawsuits to protect constitutional rights in public facilities and public education, prevent discrimination in federally assisted programs, extend the Commission on Civil Rights and establish a Commission on Equal Employment Opportunity. However, these objectives were widely opposed, and so the missions of the CRA were consistently undermined by individuals motivated by racism.

### **2.2.2. Institutionalized Racism**

Camara Phyllis Jones defines institutionalized racism as the structures, policies, practices, and norms resulting in differential access to the goods, services, and opportunities of society by “race.” At the University of Maryland she writes for scholars seeking to understand the impact of racism on people’s health and wellbeing. Jones suggests that there is a need for a national conversation on racism to be followed by a national campaign against racism (Jones 7-22). In order to confront institutionalized racism, Dr. Jones suggests that practitioners

must join with all citizens in naming racism, asking the question “How is racism operating here?”, and mobilizing for action (Jones 7-22).

Institutionalized racism relies on the premise that one group or culture, usually the dominant one, is better than the other subordinate group. These prejudicial beliefs have various modes of expression from the virtual apartheid of the pre-Civil Rights Era, to the subtly coded aggressions of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. In fact, governmental monitoring of overt racial discrimination following the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, opened a door for the creation of new institutional practices of racial discrimination by many established and respected forces in society. This institutionalized form of racial discrimination was described in *Black Power: Politics of Liberation 1967* by Kwame Ture (formerly Stokely Carmichael) and Charles V. Hamilton, as “less overt, far more subtle, less identifiable in terms of specific individuals committing racist acts” (Wiecek and Hamilton 1108). As Ture and Hamilton note, regardless of whether it is overt or covert, this new form of racial discrimination is still “no less destructive of human life” (Wiecek and Hamilton 1108).

Institutionalized racism is revealed by policies and practices within organizations and institutions that contribute to discrimination for a group of people (Allison and Belgrave 2009). In underrepresented schools, institutional racism takes the form of AA&L persons’ over-representation in remedial and special education programs and under-representation in gifted and advanced level courses, poor quality of school facilities, teacher shortages and under-qualified educators, and little-to-no extracurricular educational opportunities, especially in the arts.

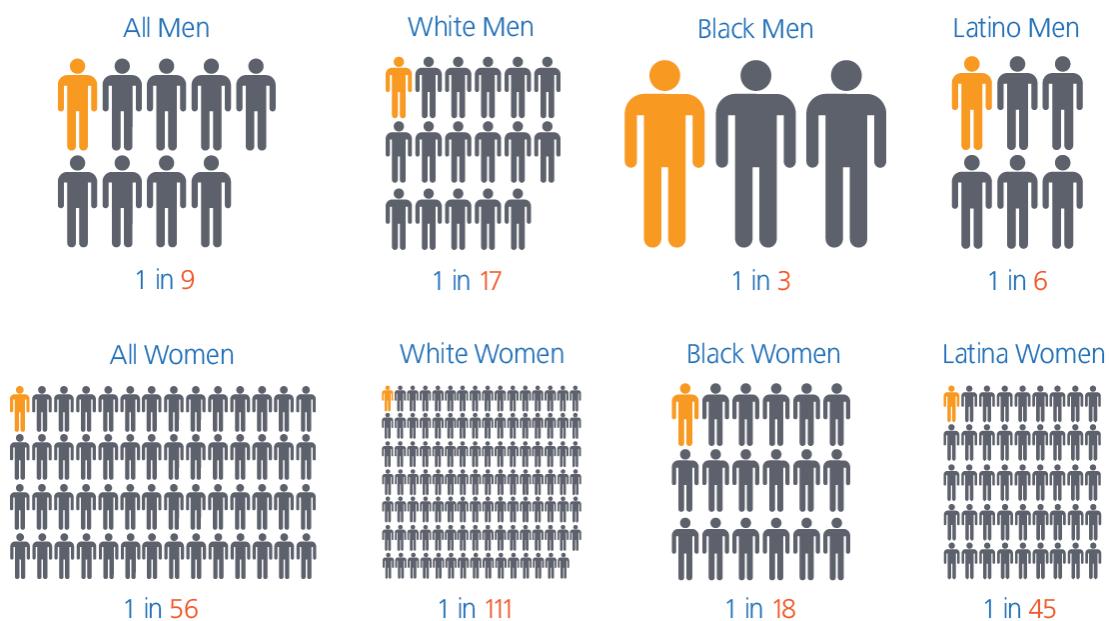
### **2.2.3. Mass Incarceration**

The measurement of institutionalized racism has two facets: documentation of differential access to the goods, services, and opportunities of society by persons of a specific “race,” and the identification of the contemporary structural factors that perpetuate these differentials. Although education is the most commonly discussed arena of institutionalized racism, another endemic problem affecting the diversity in design is the mass incarceration of people of color within the criminal justice system.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), which fights for a fairer criminal justice system, indicates that the, United States is 5% of the World population and has 25% of the world's prisoners. Furthermore, the Sentencing Project, founded in 1986, has gathered distressing information from the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics, which reports that one out of every three African American men as well as one out of every six Latino men is incarcerated (See Figure 3). This incarceration data included individuals in prison or jail, former convicts on probation or parole and juveniles in detention homes.

The Sentencing Project works to promote reforms in sentencing policy, addressing unjust racial disparities and practices, and advocating for alternatives to incarceration. This organization reports that more than 60% of the people in prison are now racial and ethnic minorities. Among Black males in their thirties, one in every ten is in prison or jail on any given day. These trends

have been intensified by the disproportionate application of the “war on drugs,” which has contributed to the phenomenon by which two-thirds of all persons in prison for drug offenses are persons of color (shown on the The Sentencing Project website).



*Figure 3: Prevalence of Imprisonment in the U.S. Population, Bureau of Justice Statistics*

The data on youth incarceration is also staggering and reflects racial disparities. Biennially since 1997, the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) has conducted a single-day count of all youth confined in facilities across the United States. In 2013, in a single day, there were 53,462 youth in confinement at private, local, state and detention facilities across the United States (Stemming 17). The relative likelihood of being placed in a local facility has increased for Black youth from 3.5 times as likely as

White youth in 1997 to 3.8 times as likely in 2013 (Stemming 6). By far, the greatest disparity gap for Latino youth occurs in placements within local facilities (Stemming 6). While there are disparate rates of commitment to other facilities, Latino youth were 3.3 times as likely as White youth to be committed to a local facility in 2013 (Stemming 6).

These incarcerated adults and youths are also labeled felons and subjected to legalized discrimination and denied the very rights supposedly won in the Civil Rights Movement (Alexander). This data forms the foundation of the work of Michelle Alexander, a civil rights litigator and legal scholar, who authored the seminal book, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. The book discusses race-related issues specific to African American males and mass incarceration in the United States, though Alexander notes that the discrimination faced by African American males is also prevalent among other minorities and socio-economically disadvantaged populations. Alexander's central premise, from which the book derives its title, is that "mass incarceration is, metaphorically, the New Jim Crow."

Consequences of the Civil Rights Act unfold as Institutionalized racism in schools in AA&L communities and the placement of staggering numbers of AA&L men and women into incarceration. The numerous facets of institutionalized racism affecting predominantly AA&L communities are likely connected to the low percentage of AA&L designers. Whereas design training and opportunities for advancement begin for most people during adolescence, as I have summarized, in many communities, AA&L adolescents are more likely to end up in prison than in an art class. Thus, the gaps continually widen.

#### **2.2.4. Four Big Problems for Design**

The four primary recurring problems in design that derive from institutionalized racism include detrimental attitudes toward AA&L education, discriminatory hiring practices, cultural insensitivity, and minimal diversity-building initiatives. Each of these four problems may be divided into additional sub-problems that result in even more significant problems for the design industry, namely pervasive cultural insensitivity and frequent stereotyping.

Disregard for the welfare of people of color in education stems much further back than the 1964 Civil Rights legislation. However, these dismissive attitudes become even more detrimental to AA&L youth when they are intermingled with the politics and policies instituted after the Civil Rights Act. Dr. Jones concludes that the onslaught of institutionalized racism resulted in differential access to goods, services, and opportunities and, in the case of this study, access to design education for AA&L youth. The aftermath of detrimental attitudes in education along with differential access to design education in many public schools resulted in hiring gaps for AA&L design educators, low AA&L enrollment in university arts programs, and nominal historical representation of AA&L individuals in design educational materials.

The detrimental attitudes in education also play a role in discriminatory hiring practices. These practices limit professional development opportunities that translate to minimal promotions and a dearth of AA&L designers in high-level creative management positions. Discriminatory hiring practices also produce few role models for AA&L youth. Limited role models means that there are fewer

AA&L designers available to mentor others throughout their design journeys. With so few AA&L designers with the power and influence to be able to address the policies that hinder diversity in design disciplines, the problem perpetuates itself from one generation to the next. Ultimately, this is a problem that affects all. Since diversity in ideas and experiences generally promotes progress, the industry itself suffers by failing to recruit new talent who could offer valuable perspectives.

In fact, the discrimination that happens during the hiring process also contributes to problems within the art of design, especially in the field of advertising. Lack of diversity in advertising has produced a lack of cultural sensitivity that often leads to stereotyping and misrepresentation. The problems of diversity in advertising have been documented for many years, but, unfortunately, representation by people of color in the profession has not increased. Rodney Ross, author of *Diversity in Graphic Design*, asks, “How can the field of graphic design tend to the needs of a country that has one of the most diverse populations of the world when the field is lacking diversity itself?” The fundamental truth is that race still matters (Murdock 88-92). As Marshall Purnell, FAIA 2009 president of the American Institute of Architects, explains, “we can put as many kids in the pipeline as we want, but unless we solve what happens at the end of the pipeline, it’s going to be a funnel.”

The last recurring problem in design is the meager number of diversity-building initiatives within institutions. Businesses and educational institutions must see diversity as a life-long commitment. Creating diversity initiatives is a crucial way that organizations may manage their diversity efforts and commit to diversity.

With so few AA&L designers in the profession, it is unsurprising that these institutions devote less attention to issues pertaining to diversity, and therefore fall short of meeting societal needs. Indeed, in *Designing for Diversity: Implications for Architectural Education in the Twenty-First Century* (2002), Kathryn H. Anthony, Distinguished Professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign calls for a more “proactive stance toward diversity.” In this publication, Anthony states that “it is imperative to go beyond satisfying the legal requirements of affirmative action” (“Implications” 260). She furthermore suggests that in order to guarantee long-lasting and continuous improvement, schools need to work strategically to address diversity-building initiatives. Developing these initiatives to improve industry experiences for novice AA&L designers will ensure that they meet greater career success. In *Beyond Race and Gender*, (1991), R. Roosevelt Thomas, Jr., further underscores the need for organizations to manage diversity. According to Thomas, managing diversity must be a long-term goal, and organizations take years to achieve it,” (Anthony, “Implications” 260)

Even though, statistically speaking, there are almost twice as many design students as educators at colleges and universities, the few AA&L educators currently employed are spread sporadically throughout the educational system and the few AA&L design students may never engage with one of these educators. This makes it even more challenging for these youth to be adequately nurtured and access these educators’ experience and knowledge. As Terry Lee Stones notes in a 2006 article entitled *White Space*, “most design programs have no budget for any sort of student recruitment, and, therefore leave it up to their admissions departments to attract a mix of students.” The

approach is not unexpected for an education system already saddled with frequent funding shortages, but has this cost-saving strategy been effective? The short answer is no. The data shows that design student enrollment demographics are still disproportionately skewed against AA&L students, which suggests that, ultimately, admissions departments are not doing their part to enhance diversity.

### **2.3 How the Four Big Problems Manifest Themselves in Design**

The ramifications of institutionalized racism may be seen throughout the design profession in the form of detrimental attitudes in education, discriminatory hiring practices, cultural insensitivity in advertising and minimal diversity-building initiatives. The detrimental attitudes in education are connected to the low number of professionals, educators and enrollees in university design programs as well as an almost non-existent presence in educational design materials. Just as there are too few students to request better representation in educational materials, there are even fewer educators to push for the development of these materials and serve as consultants to the publishing companies that produce textbooks.

Negative attitudes in education may easily develop into a negative value proposition for many AA&L parents, meaning that they do not encourage their children to pursue careers in design due to their misunderstanding of the field and its job prospects.



*Figure 4 A. (left) B. (top right) and C. (bottom right): Examples of cultural insensitivity in advertising*

### The Ramifications of Under-diversity in Design

Institutionalized racism is related to the aforementioned discriminatory hiring practices toward AA&L designers. This covert form of racism is extremely harmful because it permeates our advertising establishments, creating a lack of cultural sensitivity toward people of color as they are portrayed in the media. This lack of representation creates a monolithic culture that perpetuates stereotypes rather than challenges them. It's almost as if the misrepresentation of AA&L population justifies the underrepresentation in the industry.

For example, in 2007, Intel's advertisement campaign for the Intel Core 2 Duo processor, shown in Figure 4A (left), received backlash because of the ad's

racist undertones, which recalled the era of American slavery. The ad featured an image of a white man dressed in business attire standing tall as six muscular black runners bow down to him. The advertisement was published in Europe and was pulled shortly afterwards before running again during the 2012 Superbowl and later appearing in a catalogue for Dell Computers. Intel ultimately acknowledged its awareness of wrongdoing when Vice President, Nancy Bhagat, apologized on her blog, remarking, "Unfortunately, our execution did not deliver our intended message and in fact proved to be insensitive and insulting."

In 2006, a similar advertisement campaign was published by Sony in Holland in commemoration of the launch of the ceramic white PlayStation Portable (PSP). The billboard, shown in Figure 4B (top right), depicted a "white PSP" avatar model violently holding the mouth of a "black PSP" avatar model below the headline, "White Is Coming." In a public statement, Sony admitted that "Whilst the images used in the campaign were intended solely to highlight the contrast between the different colors available for the PSP, we recognize that the subject matter of one specific image may have caused concern in some countries not directly affected by the advertising," the company spokesman remarked. "As a result, we have now withdrawn the campaign." California assemblyman, Leland Yee, further issued a statement claiming that Sony had stooped to a "new low." Rick Callendar, president of the San Jose and Silicon Valley chapter of the NAACP, further likened the ad to a minstrel show. (Totilo) Sony has promised to think twice about selling products with the imagery of interracial fighting, remarking, "In the future, we will apply greater sensitivity in our selection of

campaign imagery and will take due account of the increasingly global reach of such local adverts and their potential impact in other countries."

The insensitivities do not solely occur in print media. In May 2012, during an airing of Saturday Night Live (SNL), Ashton Kutcher did a commercial for Popchips in which he wore skin colorants (dubbed "brownface"), a bushy mustache, and traditional Indian garb and displayed a stereotypical middle eastern Indian accent to play a character named "Raj." The commercial inspired a public outcry as a deeply insensitive depiction of Indian culture. Initially, however, a Popchips representative told ABCNews.com that, "The new popchips worldwide dating parody was created to provoke a few laughs and was never intended to stereotype or offend anyone." Later, Popchips CEO Keith Belling apologized on the company's blog, writing, "I take full responsibility and apologize to anyone we offended." The irony in this situation is that during the twenty to sixty-second portion where Kutcher played "Raj," the potato snack was never mentioned, a detail which further called into question the intention of the advertisement. Hasan Minhaj an actor and comedian correspondent with the parody news show, The Daily Show, suggested that perhaps Popchips consciously didn't want to offend minorities, but subconsciously knew it could get away with "clowning" Indians and Asians because these groups represent the new "laughable minorities" in the media.

Decades of research by organizational scientists, psychologists, sociologists, economists and demographers show that socially diverse groups (that is, those with a diversity of race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation) are more

innovative than homogeneous groups (Phillips). Scientific research has also found that a lack of diversity decreases profitability. In a study conducted in 2003, Orlando Richard, a professor of management at the University of Texas at Dallas, and his colleagues surveyed executives at 177 national banks in the U.S., then put together a database comparing financial performance, racial diversity and emphasis that each bank's president puts on innovation. For innovation-focused banks, increases in racial diversity were clearly related to enhanced financial performance (Phillips). This phenomenon is further corroborated by experiments conducted to study the effects of ethnic and racial diversity by Professors Sheen S. Levine at the Jindal School of Management at the University of Texas at Dallas and David Stark of sociology at Columbia. Levine and Stark say, "Diversity improves the way people think. By disrupting conformity, racial and ethnic diversity prompts people to scrutinize facts, think more deeply and develop their own opinions. Our findings show that such diversity actually benefits everyone, minorities and majority alike" (Levine and Stark A35). Ethnic diversity is like fresh air—it benefits everybody who experiences it (Levine and Stark A35).

The above examples illustrate the problem at the core of the lack of diversity in design. Under-diversity contributes to cultural insensitivity and ultimately harms everyone. Indeed, when people of color are not present at the decision-making table or so marginalized that they are made to feel uncomfortable with voicing their opinions, costly errors will be made, ultimately harming businesses and society as a whole. Increasing diversity in design is important because it will lead to increased productivity and innovation and help society to avoid perpetuating racial stereotypes such as those featured in the advertisements

listed above. Diversifying the design industry is a business strategy for generating more ideas and better solutions to social problems. More diversity in design can create opportunities for underrepresented populations to succeed in academics, employment and entrepreneurship and ultimately make more significant contributions to our society.

However, factors which deviate AA&L youth from the workforce, such as the high number of AA&L individuals in incarceration, also connect to the low number of AA&L design professionals, role models and mentors. And with such a low number of AA&L designers to address policies that affect diversity in design disciplines, few diversity-building initiatives succeed in universities, businesses, organizations and workplaces. Future studies might investigate other factors contributing to the lack of AA&L designers, such as endemic problems within university design programs or pitfalls in early childhood which distance AA&L youth from the arts. The specific causes explored in this chapter, namely the motivations and examples of institutionalized racism in education and the criminal justice system, endeavor to expose how these problems affect design at the macro-level in order to invite further investigation into how they operate at the micro-level. Ultimately, therefore, this project aims to initiate a conversation about the how the lack of diversity in design inhibits our outlook for design as a craft, decreases profitability for businesses and maintains the homogeneous perceptions of society.

## **2.4 Chapter Summary**

Kathryn Anthony and others have been investigating the lack of diversity in design for many years, in particular documenting how minorities have been discriminated against by design industry schools, employers, juried portfolio reviewers and businesses. Referring to the design industry as “too male and too pale,” she explains that this occurs because the dominant culture continues to set industry-wide policies, procedures and judging criteria that tacitly exclude minorities.

Anthony’s work reflects the thoughts of many others in the design industry. In their seminal work, *Building Community* (1996), for example, the late Ernest Boyer and Lee Mitgang, relate their grave concern for “the paucity of women and minorities in both the professional and academic ranks.” In *Architectural Record*, Mitgang similarly calls for an end to “apartheid in architecture schools” and in *The Professional Status of African American Architects*, (1996), Bradford C. Grant and Dennis Alan Mann refer to the Black architect as “an endangered species.”

Ultimately, the reason why poor diversity in design still exists is because of our society’s discomfort with discussing race. Since we don’t discuss the issues, the problems continue to grow. The growing societal forces behind the lack of diversity in design result in detrimental attitudes in education, underfunded art programs, discriminatory hiring practices, an insufficient number of educators to develop educational materials, and a paucity of African American and Latino design professionals involved in policy-making decisions. Moreover, since there

are very few industry and historical role models of color, many African American and Latino communities hold onto negative value propositions for youth selecting design-related careers. These problems are all tied to a growing absence of art education in many K-12 schools, which would provide a platform for youth and their parents to be exposed to design. As the next chapter illustrates, these systemic problems pertaining to access and discrimination have not only precluded many African-Americans and Latinos from entering the design profession, but they have also affected the lived experiences of current design professionals.

## **Chapter Three: The Research Study**

### **3.0 Chapter Overview**

In the previous chapter we looked at the current status of design and identified factors which have contributed to the lack of diversity in design the design industry. This chapter describes my research approach and its results. My methodology included soliciting first-person testimonies by design professionals in the form of electronic surveys, personal interviews with eminent designers, and a focus group. The objective of this study was to analyze the design journeys of current AA&L designers and identify and understand the factors that influenced their career paths. The final sections of this chapter will recount the results of the study and their implications for the project as a whole. This information will be applied to develop strategic solutions for addressing the lack of diversity in the design disciplines.

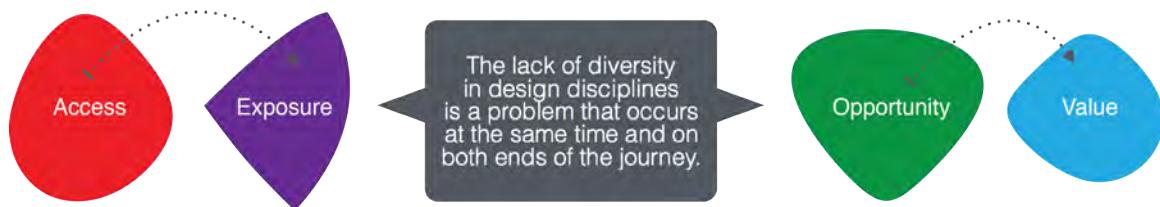
### **3.1 Research Question and Intent**

My research question investigates effective strategies for exposing AA&L youth to design-related careers. This solutions-based thesis introduces and investigates fifteen strategic ideas to expose AA&L youth to design-related careers. The intent of this research is to inform future AA&L youth, their parents and other educational stakeholders, about the journey to obtain a design-related career. The outcome will offer future AA&L youth a long-term view of the path to

becoming designers and provide fifteen strategic ideas to assist them on their design journeys.

### 3.2 Describing the Problem

The relationships among access, exposure, opportunity and value greatly impact the problem of under-diversity in the design industry. Researching these issues along with other socioeconomic and social-cultural factors (e.g., public policy, healthcare, incarceration rates) convinced me that there isn't one simple problem contributing to under-diversity in design. As Figure 4 illustrates, there are actually multiple problems on both ends of the spectrum, which have contributed to this problem.



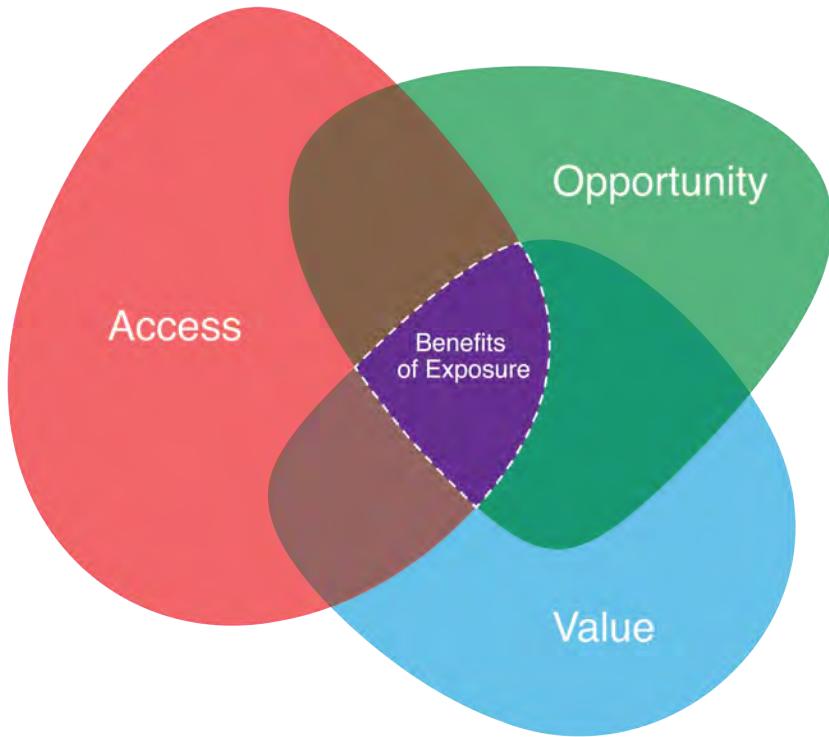
*Figure 5: The Multiple Problems in Design*

On the left side (or front end) of the spectrum, these issues stem from a lack of access to formative educational programs and opportunities for mentorship in early childhood and adolescence. Young people of color are less likely to learn about the societal impact of the design profession, its great value and disciplinary goals, and the available opportunities for mentorship and skills competency within K-12 educational environments. These and other factors lead to a lack of design exposure, which would otherwise provide AA&L youth with

the necessary strength, quality and capability to face the challenges and benefits of a design career. The lack of exposure also causes fewer young people of color to select design-related careers.

The lack of access and exposure from the left side results in fewer AA&L youth transitioning into the workforce, which is represented on the right side of the spectrum. This part of the design journey is where most opportunities lie and where value is determined. Since there are few African Americans and Latinos in this part of the spectrum, there are also fewer opportunities for employment or entrepreneurship. This scarcity of job opportunities contributes to the perception among AA&L youth, their families, and their communities, that design is an unstable career choice. The combined overlap of these issues results in a low number of AA&L people entering the design profession.

Although these problems of poor access, exposure, opportunity and value might seem too nebulous to be effectively combatted, as I show in Figure 5, when these problems are addressed simultaneously through holistic approaches to closing diversity gaps in design, progress may be achieved for the benefit of all. The elements of this multi-faceted approach will be the subject of both the remainder of this chapter and of Chapter 4.



*Figure 6: The benefits of exposure for diversity*

### 3.3 The Research Process Overview

My research compiles data from electronic surveys, comprehensive interviews and a focus group which gauged the effectiveness of proposed strategic solutions for closing diversity gaps in design. This research was conducted over the course of approximately three months. I distributed an electronic survey within several design communities and throughout my professional networks while simultaneously administering detailed interviews with six eminent designers, each of whom have over 25 years of industry experience. These interviews aimed to document the design journeys of AA&L design professionals, which would help to uncover career motivators. The electronic survey—available to any designer—began by collecting basic demographic

data on each participant, covering such areas as gender, ethnicity, age, educational attainment, family background and design discipline, as well as questions pertaining to industry experiences. Interviews were conducted either through face to face conversation or via the free video conferencing software, Skype. Initial interview questions gathered the basic facts about each participant, (which corresponded with the questions posed by electronic survey), and focused primarily on the participants' career influences and any specific strategies that they employed in order to launch their design careers. Participant data from both the surveys and interviews were mapped onto a diagram.

I also conducted a two-hour focus group with five AA&L youth participants between the ages of 14 to 21 to share the strategic ideas from the electronic surveys and interviews. I obtained participants' their feedback regarding the appeal and perceived effectiveness of these strategies. I also solicited their thoughts and ideas for further assisting them with their current design journeys. The focus group played a critical part in this study because, as the future audience of the final Initiative, the youth were invited to advocate for themselves in the form of reviewing and evaluating the proposed initiatives.

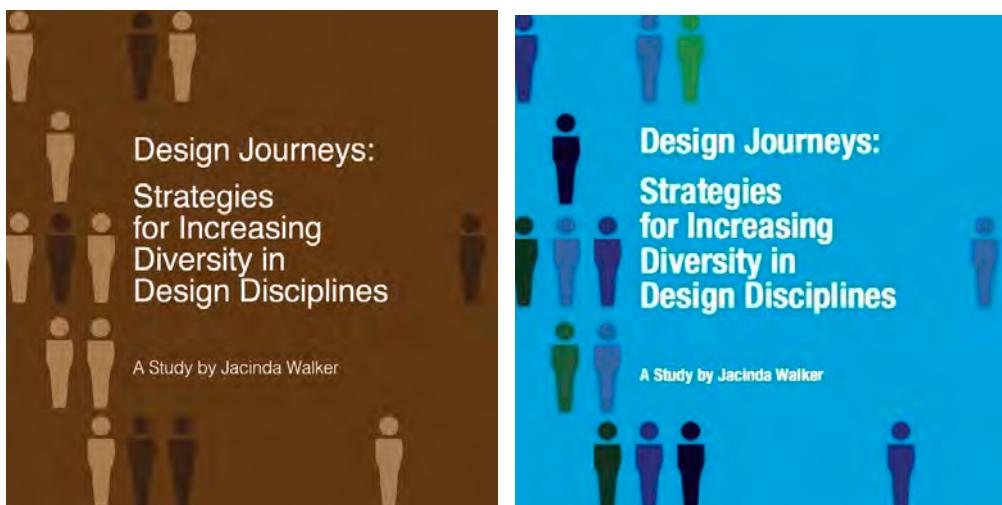
After reviewing the data from the surveys, interviews, and focus groups and after investigating the effectiveness of the proposed approaches, I developed one strategic solution with the greatest feasibility and the best potential for growth, which could form the foundation of a disciplinary approach for exposing AA&L youth to design-related careers. This solution will be the subject of Chapter 5.

### **3.4 The Research Process Narrative**

The electronic surveys began on January 25, 2016. Originally, the goal was to get 25-50 people to take the survey, but this goal was revised when I determined that a survey sample of 100 participants would provide more statistically significant data. After a several-week planning period during which I searched for pockets of diverse designers, talked about my research and advertised the upcoming survey with practically anyone who would listen, the survey yielded 70 participants within 3 days of its posting. At 70 respondents, the data report indicated that only 13 Caucasians had participated. Even with my large personal and professional network and reach, there was a lack of participation among Caucasian individuals. I immediately grew concerned. This data was non-correspondent with the population demographics derived from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The next day, concerned and disappointed, I consulted with my Caucasian design classmates in order to investigate the root cause of the low number of Caucasian respondents. One classmate who took no issue with the nature and format of the survey as such asked whether he could circulate it among his friends in the hopes of potentially boosting participation. Another classmate suggested that the label, “diversity,” which was attached to the title of the survey, had deterred Caucasian designers from responding. Finally, another classmate encouraged me to consider the design of the survey materials as elements that were affecting the response demographics. In particular, he suggested that since the color brown is coded with a range of racial associations, I might consider changing the color scheme to a neutral blue,

which I did. Unable to alter the prepared Institutional Review Board language, I quickly incorporated all their suggestions within the confines of the project as it had been originally devised and redesigned my communication materials. Within two days, the number of Caucasian participants doubled.



*Figure 7A Brown and 7B Cyan: Examples of survey promotional cards*

The changes were beginning to produce the desired effect. In order to further boost participation, I even attended a conference of a local design organization, where I solicited participation from among the 50 to 75 attendees. Everyone took a promotional card with the link printed on it, but I noticed that there were several remarks and odds looks directed toward me. One lady remarked, "Wow, it sure took a lot of courage for you to come over here and talk to us." Later, when another member was asking about the survey process, her friend condescended toward me, saying, "We know how to take a survey, Sweetie." Although this experience was particularly challenging, it further pointed toward the endemic problems of under-diversity and institutional bias that this study

addresses. Nonetheless, my experience did not suggest that designers are altogether uninterested in diversity or unaware of the need to enhance diversity matters in the profession. For example, later in the evening I was approached by a group of Caucasian male designers who were visibly pleased to participate. They requested additional promotional cards, which they promised to share with their friends. They then proceeded to engage me in a conversation about “whiteness” in the design industry and asked, “What can we do to help make it better?” Later that evening, the keynote speaker, a Caucasian female and design researcher, spoke highly of the benefits of surveys. She mentioned having encountered me earlier in the day and proceeded to encourage her listeners to participate in the survey, which she regarded as an important agent of change. After her talk, she offered me words of encouragement and promised to share the link with her friends via the social media platform, Twitter. True to her word, she tweeted the link and, sure enough, the response rates grew steadily.

On March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016, I closed the electronic survey after 8 weeks and 372 total submissions. The total ethnic count was 42% Caucasian (156 respondents), 31% African American (116 respondents), 8% biracial or multiracial (31 respondents), 7% Latino (25 respondents), 6% Asian (23 respondents), 2% Indian (9 respondents), 0% Native American, with the remaining 3% (12 respondents) identifying as Other. The findings from the survey will be discussed in the following section.

While the survey was going on, I administered in-depth interviews with 6 eminent designers, each of whom boast more than 25 years of industry

experience, in order to document their design journeys and discover their major career motivators. The six interviewees, presented below in the order in which they were interviewed, were Veronica Corzo-Duchardt, Sarah Huny Young, Eric Anderson, Carol Watson, Carl Settles and Jose Caballer.



*Figure 8: Interview participants with name and discipline*

The participants were incredibly generous with their time, but, more importantly, openly shared details about their design journeys and the factors which influenced their decision to enter the design profession. My first interview with Veronica Corzo-Duchardt took the form of a midday chat over Skype. She interviewed from her studio and I interviewed from a coffee shop in Downtown Cleveland. I was filled with anticipation to hear the story of this Cuban-American artist and designer. I was especially grateful to her because she had agreed to be involved with my research two years earlier when we met at conference in Cleveland. She shared details of her journey and its early beginnings. Corzo-Duchardt has worked in every area of art and design, but when I asked her what advice she would give to young designers, her reply was, “Show up, be hungry and do the work.” It was clear that she was a passionate educator.

Days later, I interviewed Sarah Huny Young. She was referred to me by Maurice Cherry of *Revision Path* (RP), an award-winning podcast that showcases the best Black graphic designers, web designers, and web developers from all over the world. We were put in contact because I wanted to solicit feedback from a web professional. Cherry, who knew of my research, highly recommended that I listen to Huny Young's RP podcast interview because of her great longevity in the industry as a web designer and her roots from an HBCU, or Historically Black College and University. The journey of this African American female creative turned designer exuded fearless strength, determination and a genuine love for young people. I quickly identified with her. She, too, advises young designers. Her advice to young designers was, "Take your time, so you can develop your own style." Although I lost the digital files from the interview, her podcast is available to interested listeners at [revisionpath.com](http://revisionpath.com), Episode #100.

Eric Anderson, Associate Professor in the School of Design and Associate Dean of the College of Fine Arts of Carnegie Mellon University, also came to me through a referral. Anderson was the first African American male industrial designer who agreed to be interviewed. His interview had a different tone from the first two. As he recalled his journey, Anderson spoke more concretely about the relationship between his motivations and career choices. He spoke with the wisdom of an administrator and the kindness of an educator. He shared that schools need to develop a better pitch to parents about design careers. He was the first and only interviewee that asked about my research and engaged in a critique with me about it. Although it was too late for me to fully incorporate his suggestions in the context of this study, the core of his advice will form the

foundation of the parent-pitch for my Solutions, which are geared toward enhancing diversity advocacy in design.

Whereas Anderson spoke to me with the critical perspective informed by his academic background, Jose Caballer spoke to me through the wisdom that comes from perseverance. Caballer began as a graphic designer and is now the co-founder and Chief Content Officer of the Skool, a 21<sup>st</sup>-century education platform that teaches business to creatives, focusing on topics that art schools don't typically teach. Caballer's accomplished background, revolutionary entrepreneurial work and Latino heritage greatly appealed to me for this study. As the study drew to a close, I made an impromptu call to his office in California. On the call, he generously invited me to the design thinking workshop he was instructing two hours away in Cincinnati. A multi-medium and multi-visual perspective, Caballer's approach utilizes super high energy colors that well correspond with the energy and enthusiasm that he brings to the field of design. During our interview he shared his struggles to survive art school as they intersected with various academic and personal hardships. As he reflected on his experiences, Caballer offered the parting wisdom that "Breakdowns lead to breakthroughs."

Since the surveys and interviews were going well, and since I had gathered several names along with the biographies of AA&L design interviewees, I continued to diversify my interview candidates even more by including the voices of design recruiter, Carol Watson, and social entrepreneur, Carl Settles. This decision proved fruitful because it shed light on the necessity of cultivating hard and soft skills in conjunction with one another. During her interview, Watson

explained that, having been in the communication business for a very long time and owning the cross-cultural recruiting firm Tangerine Watson, she knew that the lack of diversity in design was not really a recruiting issue. “I saw people coming in but not leaving,” she recalled. “I saw people that started as interns but were no longer in the business.”

I became interested in Watson’s insights as a recruiter after having met her at the *Here Are All the Black People* event in New York and after reading her 2011 Impact Study. The study reports address that lack of sustainability on her *Impact Studies* report. The Impact Study is the first industry-wide research snapshot of the perceptions and perspectives of multicultural advertising professionals in contrast with Caucasian advertising professionals. A total of 831 ethnically diverse respondents participated in the four-month research study. The most important finding of the Impact Study was that multicultural and Caucasian advertising professionals see and experience their industry in very different ways (Watson1). Whereas multicultural professionals are much more likely to plan on leaving their current agency within 24 months of starting work, only 26% of Latinos and 22% of African Americans plan to stay (Watson 3). At the *Here Are All the Black People* event, we watched hundreds of inspiring AA&L workforce-ready youth present their design portfolios, attend workshops, participate in job pitches and pose questions pertaining to soft skills. I heard one young man ask about interviewing, resume creation and LinkedIn profiles. Others were asking about interviewing techniques and some were inquiring about client management. Although the event was provocatively titled, *Here Are All the Black People*, it was the voice of the student asking, “Where’s the work?” that most impacted me.

Whereas Watson's responses caused me to think about learning dependency and its relationship to soft skills and hard skills, Carl Settles's responses illustrated to me how soft skills may be bridged with hard skills. Settles began his career in coding, also known as interactive development. He also has a degree in music, and played professionally for 25 years. However, like many social entrepreneurs, Settles recognized the cultural divide occurring in public schools. When he reflected on his journey and thought about the kids he was currently meeting, he realized that they weren't second-generation college students like he was. Rather, they were first-generation college students. How could these youth possibly know how to navigate the journey from pedigree to profession? He believes teachers should, "Teach students, not subjects." This outlook compelled him to develop a curriculum with soft skills exercises for youth that teachers may introduce during the school day, which will be followed after the school day ends with the program called *E4 Youth*, which teaches hard skills. Taking a collaborative approach to exposing AA&L youth to design allows Settles's *E4 Youth* program to accomplish a great deal for Austin's local communities.

Hearing about the factors and methods by which my interviewees were exposed to design, compelled me to reconsider the design journey structure in order to incorporate much-needed soft skill components. I refer to these soft skills components as "career competency." Career competency includes exposing individuals to industry information, career guidance, workforce opportunities and mentorship. Individuals need to develop and cultivate the components of career competency simultaneously with the hard skills that they develop along their

journeys. Career competency may include career day activities, field trips to local design businesses or organizations or any opportunities where students and professionals get to talk. These components could take the shape of career fairs, where students cultivate job interview skills or mentorship relationships, professional development enrichment courses, and networking opportunities. Acknowledging the relationship between soft skills and hard skills is a necessary component on the journey to a design-related career.

For the last phase of my research study, I conducted a two-hour focus group with five diverse youth from Columbus College of Art and Design (CCAD) to share their design journeys and gather their thoughts on pertinent questions from the electronic surveys and interviews. I also obtained the participants' feedback on some strategic ideas' effectiveness for youth in their age range and discussed their thoughts on effective strategies for better assisting them in their current design journeys. The focus group played a critical part in this study because all of its goals are geared for their benefit, and as such, their input is the most invaluable outlet for assessing how to best serve them.

The focus group had three sections. The first section consisted of a toolkit exercise. The second section involved presenting the Design Journey Map to the participants (to be discussed in Chapter 4) and soliciting their thoughts on the strategic ideas posed. The final stage involved presenting my idea of the proposed solution (discussed in Chapter 5) to participants with whom I then brainstormed about its feasibility along the design journey.

The five participants were all females between the ages of 18 and 31 whose ethnic backgrounds included bi-racial, Japanese, Caucasian, and African American. Although I made several attempts to engage the three male students who expressed an interest in participating, none of them showed up for the focus group.

The participants began by creating collages representing how they had arrived at their current places along the design journey. Below are the collages they created (see Figures 9-13).



*Figure 9: Design Journey Collage from Focus Group Participant One*



Figure 10: Design Journey Collage from Focus Group Participant Two



Figure 11: Design Journey Collage from Focus Group Participant Three

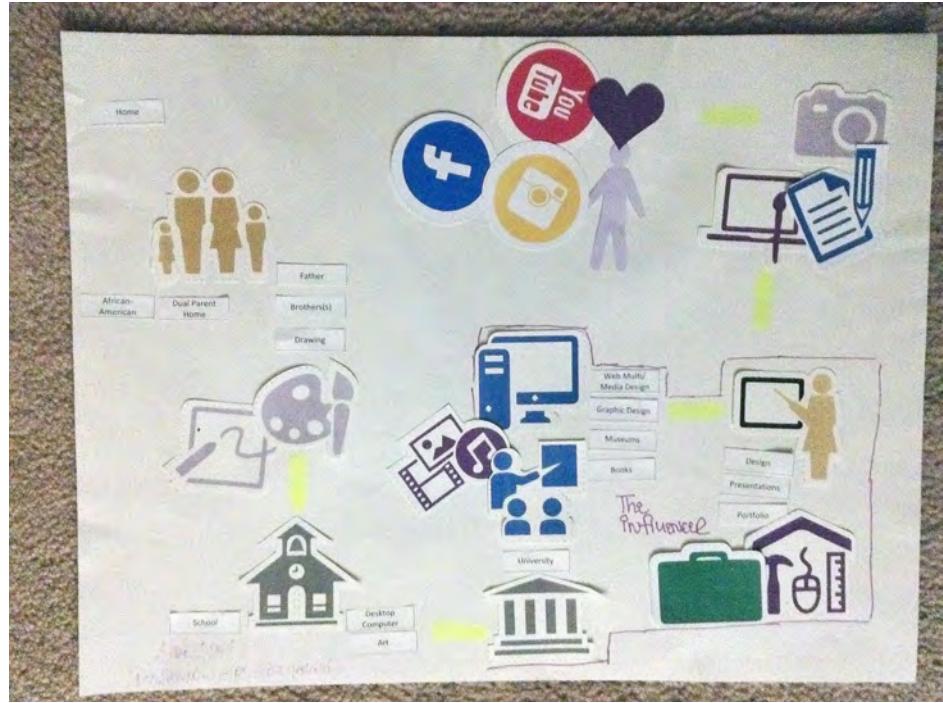


Figure 12: Design Journey Collage from Focus Group Participant Four



Figure 13: Design Journey Collage from Focus Group Participant Five

As I listened to their stories, I noticed they had already encountered problems and struggles on their journeys. They each experienced issues of access when trying to secure exposure to design. And each had encountered little guidance from their high schools. One participant related that she had almost been able to meet a graphic designer who was scheduled to come and participate in her high school's career day. However, on the day of the event, the designer didn't show up. She was crushed because she had unanswered questions pertaining to the design career and therefore greatly desired to meet an expert in the field. Unfortunately, the school never offered the career fair again and she never got to ask her questions.

Another participant shared that her high school stopped offering art class because of budget cuts, so she had to take art online in order to earn the high school art credit. Without an art teacher, she didn't have anyone to tell her about design. Another of my participants revealed that she was homeschooled. So, her mother exposed her to a lot of art and she often went to museums and other types of art activities, but it wasn't until college that she took her first design class. She also felt very unprepared for the type of work being done at the college level. Even though the participants encountered all of these challenges, they still had a thirst for knowledge about design. Despite the odds, they made a conscious effort to attend college at CCAD and make sure that they learned everything there and took advantage of all the opportunities CCAD offered. For them, CCAD represented access and opportunity.

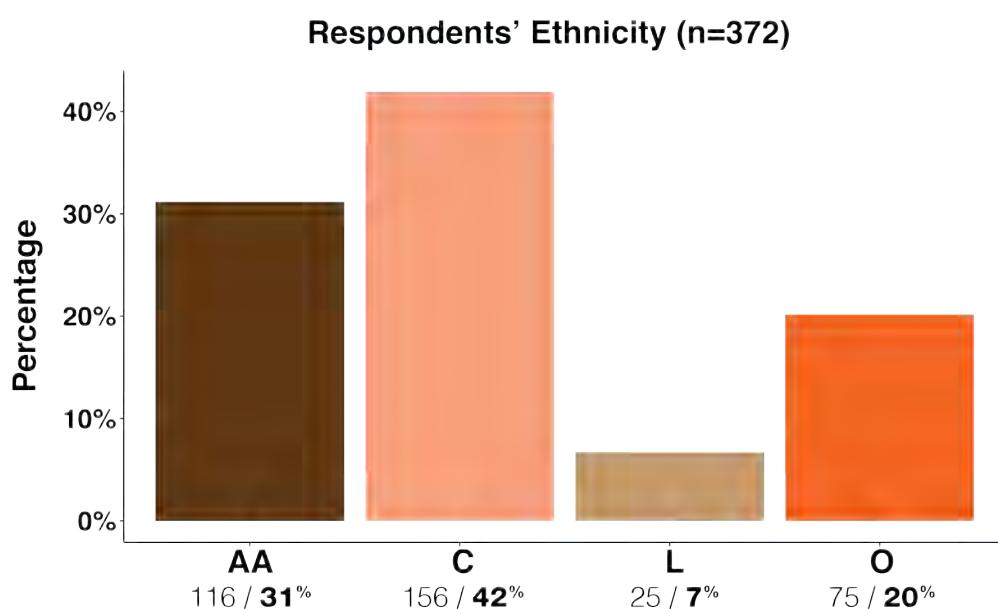
In the final unit of the session, I shared my proposed strategic solution for closing diversity gaps in design. It involved design explorations, mentorship with design professionals, activities to experiment with design and college and career readiness materials. The participants affirmed their approval of these initiatives. Their primary concern pertained to when it would be operational and whether they could be further involved, which further illustrated their interest and support. In summation, the focus group was an overwhelming success. Not only did this session provide me with the opportunity to solicit feedback from the same cohort that my research is designed to benefit, but it also provided these youth with the agency to express their needs and mobilized them to become further involved in the design journey.

### **3.5 Research Survey Results**

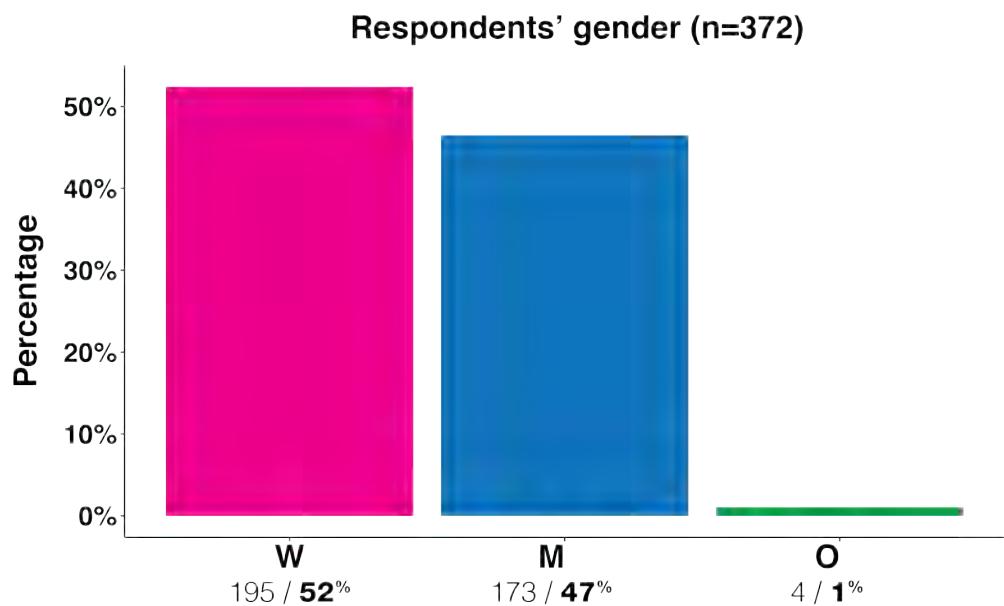
The following sections present the research survey results in chart form. The first section will share the basic demographic data collected from the respondents. The second section will share my analysis of key information provided by the respondents. The survey questions and supplemental charts will be available for viewing in the appendix.

**Basic demographic data—** There were a total of 372 survey participants. The total ethnic count was 42% Caucasian (156 participants), 31% African American (116 participants), 7% Latino (25 participants), and 20% Other (75 participants). For the purposes of this research, biracial/multi-ethnic persons (31 participants or 8%), Asian persons (23 participants or 6%), Indian persons (9 participants or 2%), Native Americans (0 participants or 0%) and all other respondents have

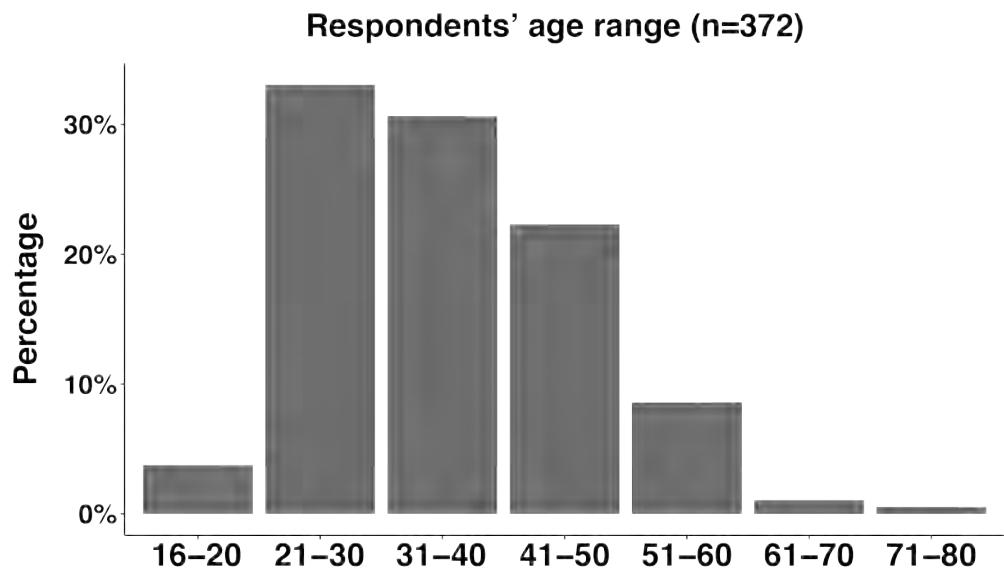
been grouped as Other. Gender was divided into 195 women (52%), 173 men (47%) and 4 Other (1%). The ages ranged from 16 to 80, with the highest percentage of respondents (123 or 33%) falling within the ages of 21 to 30. Graphic designers represented the largest proportion (132 of 372 or 55%). The majority of respondents (218) had completed a bachelor's degree as their highest degree. And 117 of the 372 respondents (52%) were in the workforce (see Passage 3).



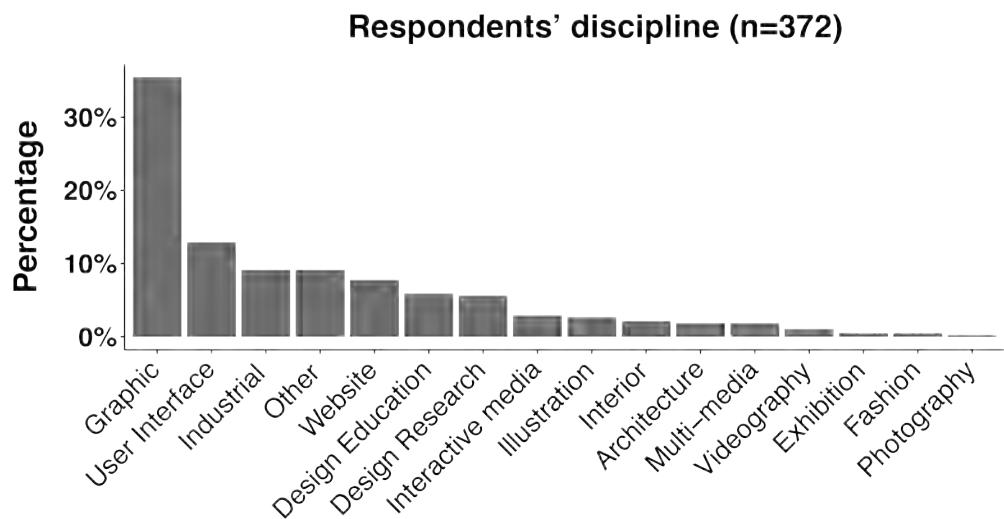
*Figure 14: The total ethnic count*



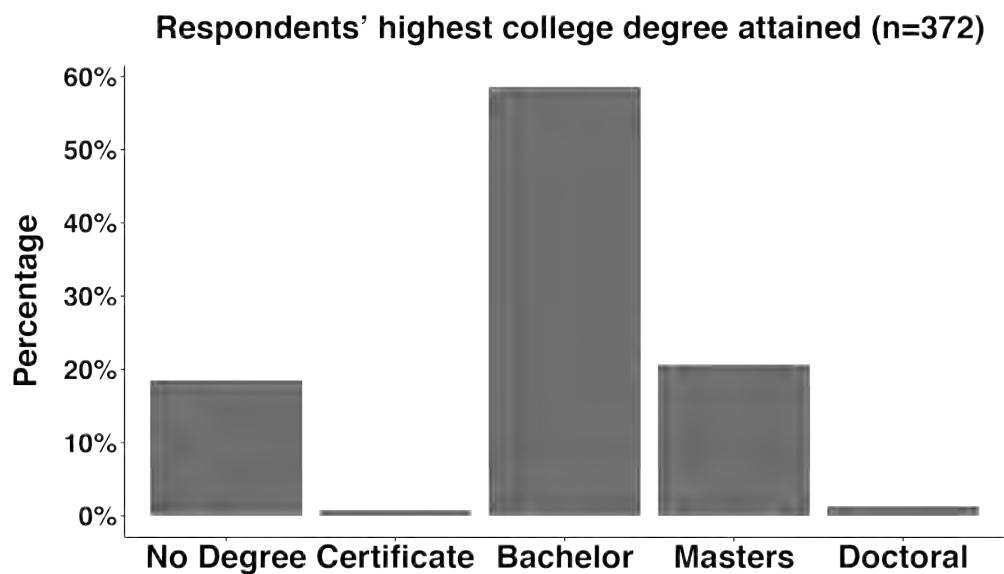
*Figure 15: The total gender count*



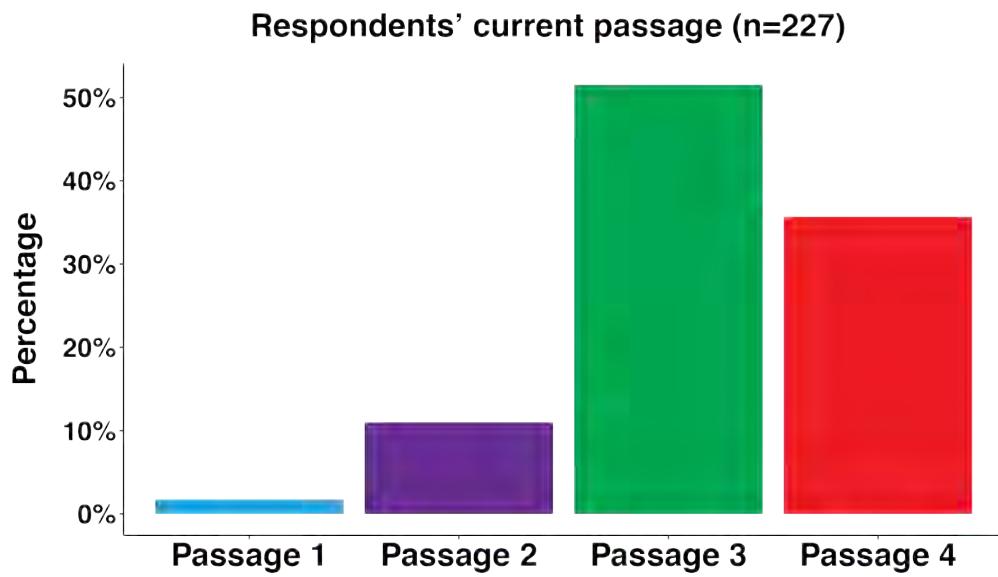
*Figure 16: The ages range count*



*Figure 17: The discipline count*



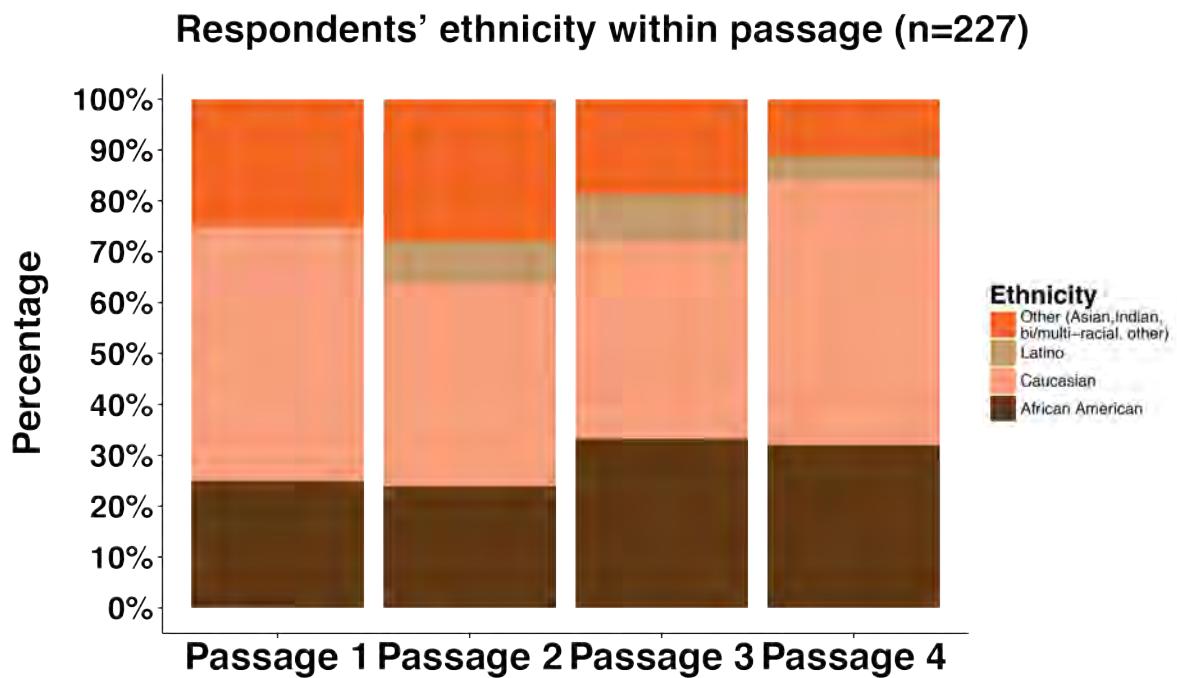
*Figure 18: The degree attainment count*



*Figure 19: The Passages count*

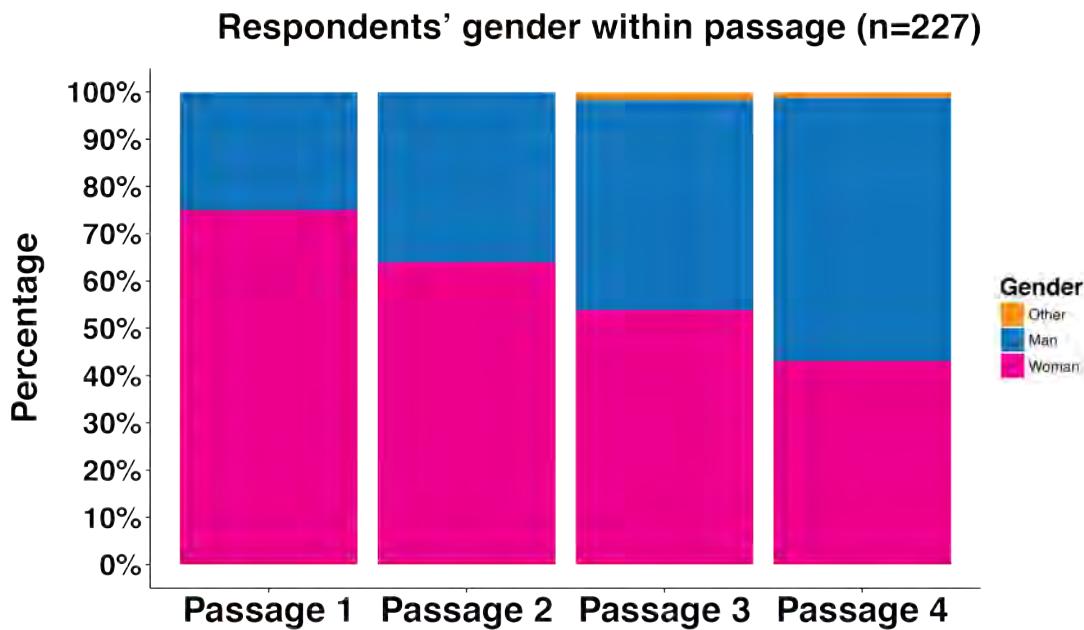
**Key information—**The following six figures show the survey results most relevant to my thesis topic. Responses to the survey questions may be viewed in the appendix.

Figure 20 looks more deeply at the ethnicity of respondents within each passage and reveals that my African American respondents are represented in all the passages and many of them (33%) are in Passage 3. The Caucasian respondents make up 50% of the Foundations Passage and 51% of the Influence Passage. Figure X7 also reveals that the most ethnically diverse passage is the Foundations Passage 2.



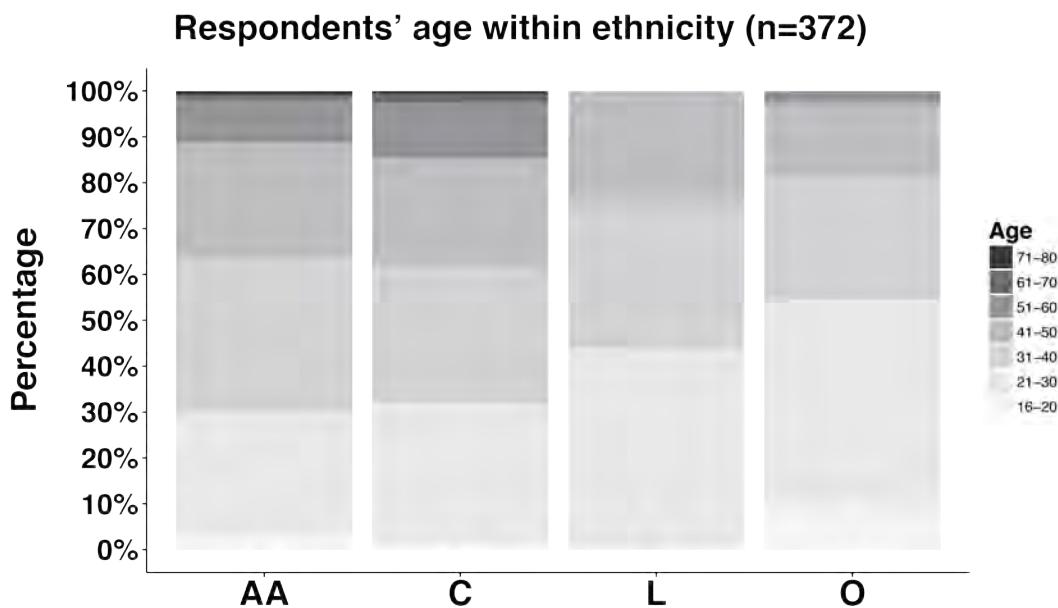
*Figure 20: The ethnicity count within each Passage*

Figure 21 shows the gender percentages within the passages and reveals that the percentage of women is high to begin with but drops off with each passage. The Influence Passage is made up of 51% men.



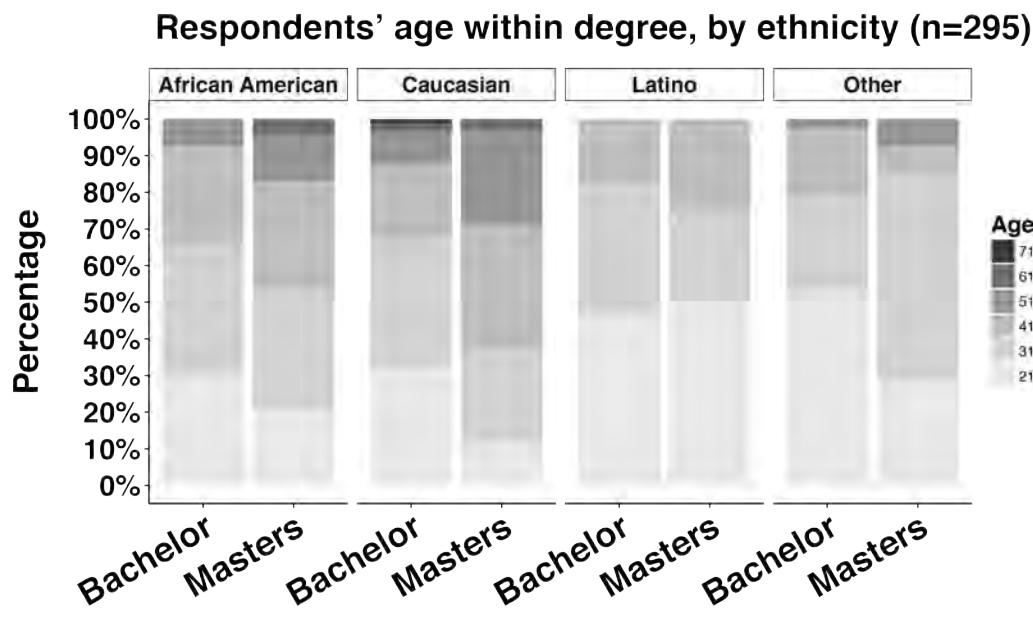
*Figure 21: The gender counts within each Passage*

Figure 22 shows the respondents' age ranges by ethnicity. There does not appear to be a big difference between the African American and the Caucasian respondents in this category. Latinos appear to compose a younger cohort, but this observation may be misleading given that the sample size of Latino respondents for this survey was very small.



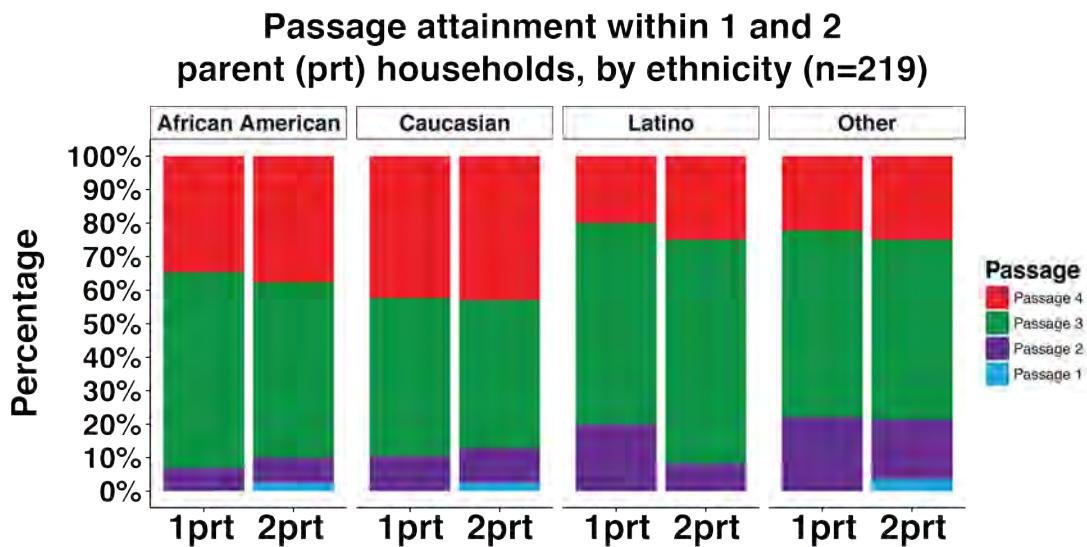
*Figure 22: Shows the respondents' age ranges by ethnicity*

Figure 23 shows the respondents' age ranges by ethnicity within the degree attained. Again, there does not appear to be a big difference between the African American and the Caucasian respondents.



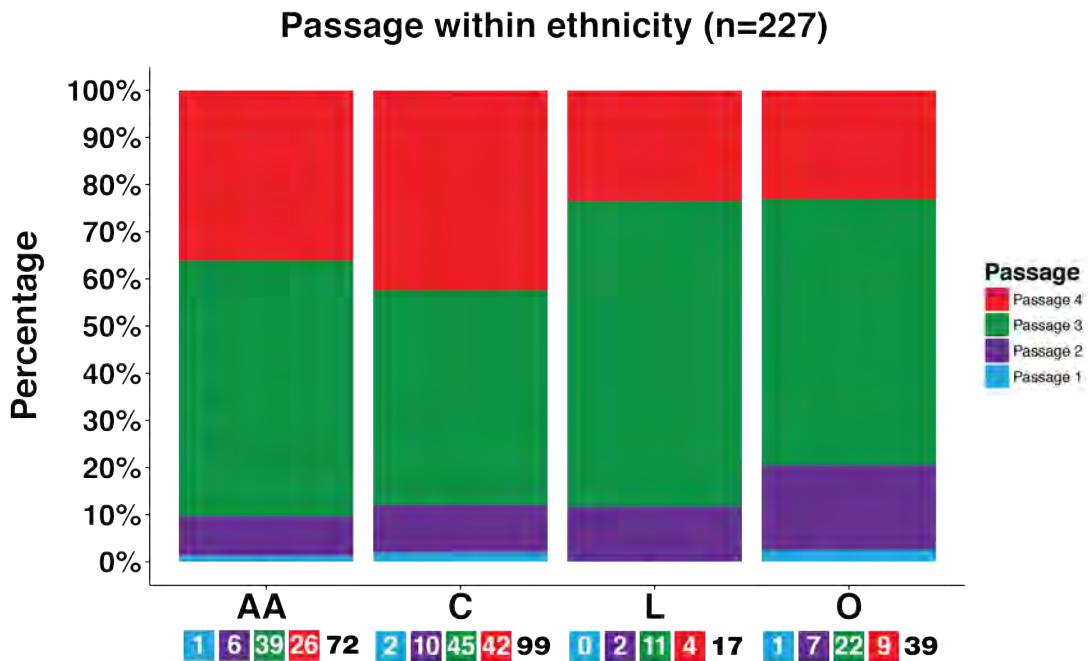
*Figure 23: The age ranges by ethnicity within the degree*

Figure 24 shows that there appears to be no major difference between one and two-parent households for the African American and Caucasian respondents with regard to passage attained. This was surprising in light of the research reported earlier and may be explained by the fact that the respondents to the survey were designers who are working in the profession today. The survey does not include those who dropped off from the design journey.



*Figure 24: The Passage attained within one and two parent households by ethnicity*

Figure 25 shows the percentage of respondents in each passage by ethnicity. The differences do not appear to be large, but there may be a slightly higher percentage of Caucasians in Passage 4. Again, it is important to keep in mind that respondents to the survey were designers who are working in the profession today versus those who dropped off the journey.



*Figure 25: The count in each Passage by ethnicity*

### 3.6 Chapter Summary

The survey data suggests that there isn't one simple problem to address in terms of the lack of diversity in design disciplines. Rather, the data indicates that the problem is multi-valent. Problems such as low enrollment in university programs are associated with a lack of access to design education occurring during adolescence or the early formation period. This phenomenon was corroborated by personal testimonies which further acknowledged the pervasive problems of access and opportunity for AA&L youth and professionals. Without businesses and organizations committed to creating more diversity-building initiatives, the industry will be ill-equipped to properly address the opportunity gaps which prevent AA&L designer from entering positions of influence. The

complex phenomena pertaining to diversity which were uncovered by the survey data compelled me to rethink the scope of my solutions-based research. As I shall further elaborate in proceeding sections, this change in approach translated into greater emphasis on early beginnings and solutions in order to ensure a more successful design journey for AA&L youth.

## **Chapter Four: The Design Journey**

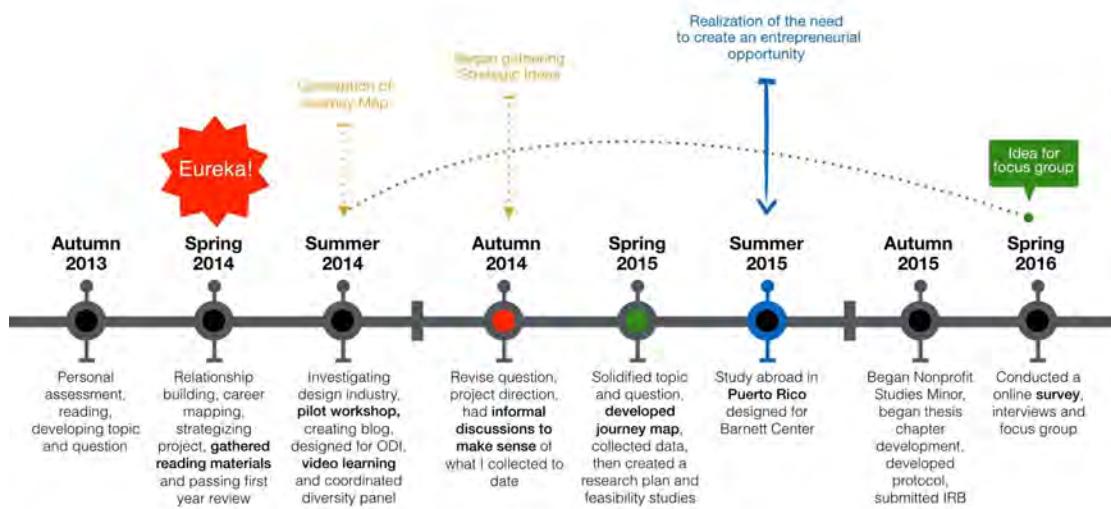
### **4.0 Chapter Overview**

Considered in light of the post-Civil Rights Era's sociological transformations, the statistical data pertaining to diversity in the design industry compels me to reflect on my own design journey and how these forces have influenced my career. I wondered whether other designers were affected by similar sociopolitical forces while they were on the journey toward their design careers. This line of inquiry led me to consider the tools that were needed to obtain a design career and what the journey to become a designer looked like. The following sections will explain the development of the Design Journey Map and introduce fifteen strategic ideas to assist travelers on their design journeys. This map has been informed by all the research data I collected for this thesis as well as my previous personal experiences.

### **4.1 Developing the Map and Strategic Ideas**

The timeline of my learning journey (Figure 26) developed during the course of producing this thesis. It first came into being during the summer of 2014 and was the result of a revelation that I had during the previous spring semester while researching the impact of online videos on the education industry. Although I had not done any feasibility testing of my concept yet, I became exceptionally confident that creating online videos about design would be one

crucial strategic solution to expose AA&L youth to design and close the diversity gap. I came to this determination while researching the way educational organizations like Kahn Academy and K-12.com were transforming the way students were learning by incorporating the online resources and other digital tools into the classroom. I was further inspired once I learned that even [Lynda.com](#) had changed its classroom learning model of teaching industry standard software, which had previously preferred Adobe Creative Suite, into an online video learning model.



*Figure 26: My personal learning timeline*

After further research, I discovered that many current K-12 teachers are actively looking for other methods for connecting and exposing their students to different educational topics via digital tools. Additionally, I discovered that the increasing rate of cell phone usage among young people and the increasing popularity of YouTube.com was also helping to fill gaps created by socio-economic

disparities among school systems. An article from the Harvard International Review entitled, “Limelight On Mobile Learning,” states that mobile learning expands student access and supports online learning. In addition, it indicates that such contemporary learning techniques as peer-to-peer instruction, multimedia classrooms, instructional videos, blended and flipped classrooms are beginning to bridge educational gaps on the shoulders of technology.

This information encouraged me to create a series of online video communication tools about design as a resource to gain information about design-related careers; although intended for benefit of all aspiring designers, these tools especially targeted underrepresented youth. Along with the learning material, I also devised a place to store them so that they would be readily accessible and thereby help to close the diversity gap in design disciplines. I began learning more about video as a medium for communicating messages and telling stories. I enrolled in video editing classes in order to learn how to produce my own videos and I began to create a curriculum of the subjects I would teach.

Also during that year, I worked at Franklinton Prep Academy on the lower west side of Columbus, where I taught a self-designed 90-minute design explorations elective course to 15 ninth and tenth graders. As an elective class which met two days a week, this course was scheduled at the end of the academic day as part of an after-school enrichment program. The experience was rewarding and eye-opening; students expressed deep interest in design. While I was teaching there, I explored various ways to expose the students to design by showing videos about various design disciplines. I spent hours online looking for

educational design learning video tools that would introduce the students to design disciplines and pique their interest in design as a career option. In my experience, showing short videos during class was by far the best way to engage students in conversations about design. One problem, however, was that the videos rarely showed designers that looked like them. They lacked what my students called a “cool-factor,” and so, these videos were somewhat limiting in terms of exposure and recruitment. Moreover, many of my students did not have the internet at home in order to be able to explore on their own. This experience helped me to recognize the need for design learning and different design education methods for teaching underrepresented youth about design in inner city schools.

By the end of the academic year, during which we shared design books and other design students’ projects, utilized open source computer software to facilitate design craft and discussed how design relates to the everyday world, I realized that this audience needed far more than just videos to prepare them for a career in design. In sum, they needed more tools than I could offer. Moreover, I ultimately acknowledged that my own digital toolkit was not developing quickly enough for me to create impactful videos about design. As a result, I began thinking, really thinking, about which additional tools might help to further expose youth to design-related careers.

After this eye-opening summer, I determined that I needed to talk with others about my experiences and gain some insight outside of academia. I piloted an informal focus group with four designers at different stages in their careers; these designers hailed from different disciplines, different ethnicities and

different genders. The attendees shared their journeys, backgrounds, education and career experiences. During this pilot, I had an epiphany that would redirect my research and allow me to develop a better solution for a truly complex problem. I realized that while videos and other tools could be effective at exposing youth early to design-related careers, their efficacy also ultimately depends on the stage of the career path at which they are introduced. If this is the case, then early introduction matters greatly; by the same token, the number of tools that could be effective could increase exponentially if introduced early and often.

As I explained in the introduction to this study, the career path to becoming a designer is a journey. I shared my epiphany with Dr. Noel Mayo, a distinguished professor, educator and fellow designer with more than 50 years of experience in the design industry. Dr. Mayo shared with me the tools that he utilized during his design journey; this conversation caused me to deeply reflect on my own path. The effective tools that one needs for successful passage are directly related to the where one begins the journey and how equipped one is at the start. Once one has embarked on the road to design, however, what should the journey look like? What are the landmarks along the way? Where is the map that will guide aspiring designers along the journey?

I found many diagrams, flow charts and step-by-step plans designed to guide students along the career path to becoming a doctor, a lawyer, an engineer or other professional, but found that no such aid exists for aspiring designers. Different schools' design programs vary greatly depending on the type of designer that they envision as part of their curriculum. None of these schools

talks about what the career path should look like after college. Thus, I took it upon myself to sketch out the design journey. In the process of mapping out the journey in various flow charts and diagrams, I realized that such materials are more than just navigational tools. Maybe these tools were the strategic ideas that could be utilized to increase diversity in design and expose AA&L youth to design-related careers. Perhaps these strategic ideas are a key to closing the diversity gap in the design industry. This development brought about the Design Journey Map and the 15 Strategic ideas Investigated throughout the remainder of this thesis.

## **4.2 The Design Journey Map**

Developing a visualization of the design journey became a critical component to exploring the strategic ideas that could be implemented in order to expose AA&L youth to design-related careers. I designed a visualization to help students, parents and educators to chart youth on a course to a design-related career from grade school to a seasoned professional. This visualization is a tool that offers a simplified, long-term view of the steps a designer travels on his or her design journey. This tool is called the Design Journey Map (DJM) and is shown in Figure 27.

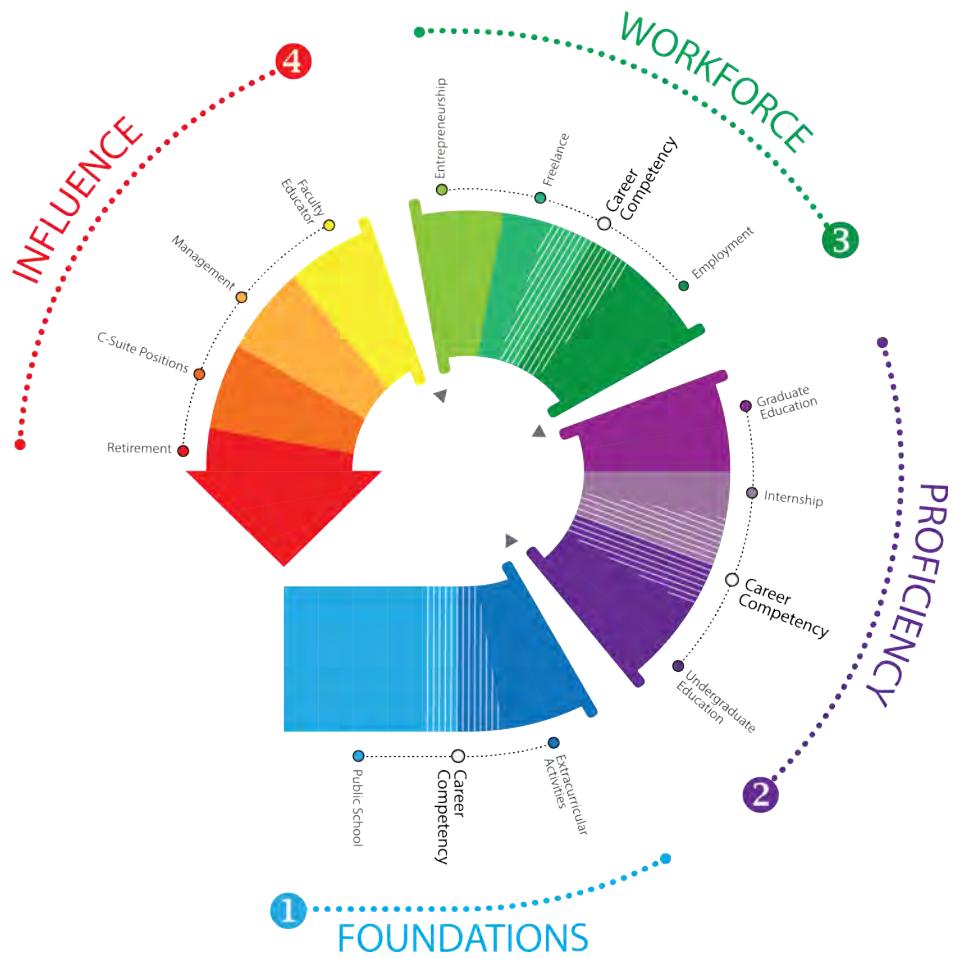


Figure 27: The Design Journey Map in full

The map is divided into four color-coded bends labeled “Passages.” Their names derive from the occurrences at that stage aligned with the progression of career development. The passages (described below) include Foundations, Proficiency, Workforce and Influence, which are overlapped with Career Competency components. Career Competency components have been added to due to the necessity for individuals to develop and cultivate soft skills simultaneously with the hard skills they learn throughout their journeys. These

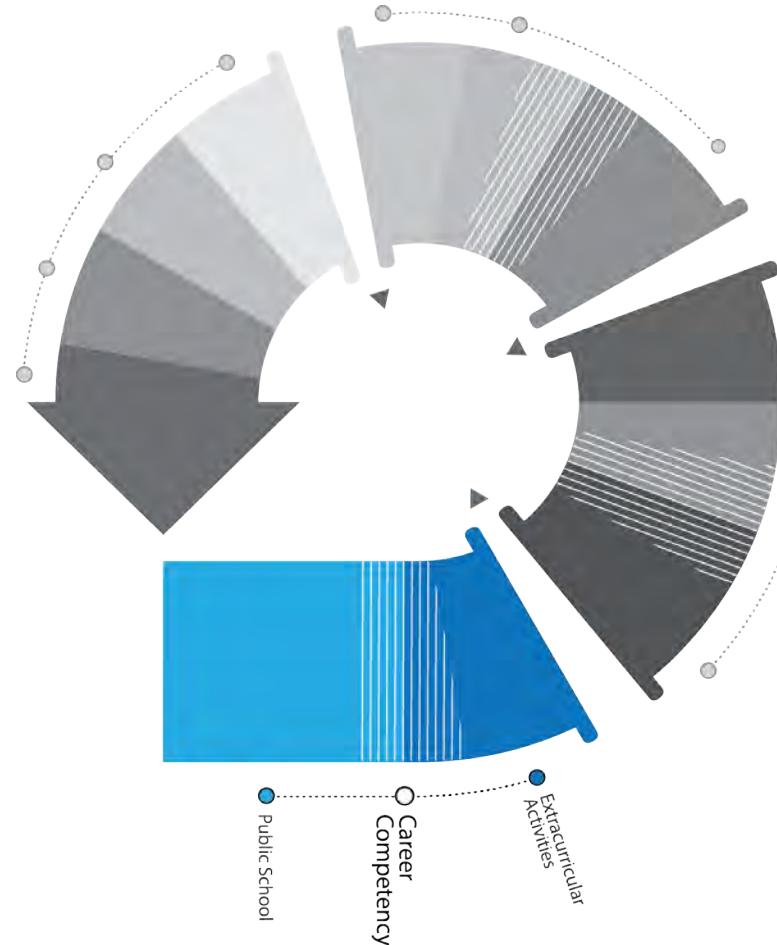
components overlap with passages one, two and three. They include providing industry information, career guidance, workforce opportunities and mentorship. Each passage identifies the recommended steps a designer should travel throughout the design journey. Although it is possible for a traveler to jump passages, this is not advised because each passage of The Design Journey Map is specifically crafted to provide unique opportunities and professional competencies. The gray triangles on the inner circle of the passages on the map illustrate the gaps where transitional leaks, or stops occur while a designer is traveling from one passage to another on their journey.

#### **4.2.1 The Passages**

The Design Journey Map passages are described below:

##### **Passage 1: Foundations:**

The Foundations Passage includes public school systems and extracurricular activities such as after school programs or community activities akin to summer camps, recreational events and museum programs. This passage is overlapped with a career competency component.



*Figure 28: The Foundations Passage from the Design Journey Map*

The primary stakeholders in the Foundations Passage include students, parents, educators, guidance counselors, administrators and educational institutions.

The primary problem in this passage is that students may not have access to design, its career possibilities and opportunities. A primary need is access to information about the nature and function of design as a discipline and to its sub-disciplines. The primary transitional issue (leak) for this passage is that students who lack this early career exposure at the Foundations stage may not

develop an interest or skillset to pursue a career in design. The chart below outlines additional problems, transitional issues and needs identified for the Foundations passage.

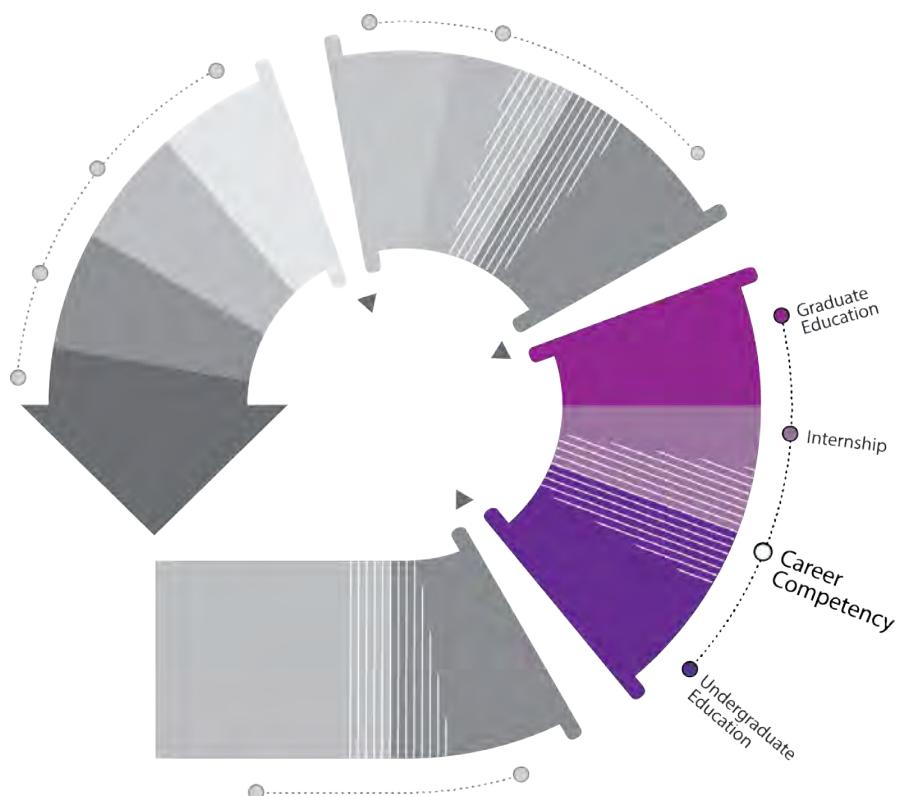
<b>Additional problems for the Foundations Passage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No access</li> <li>• Not exposed to design or the possibilities</li> <li>• Not made aware of the opportunities within design careers</li> <li>• Schools may not have art classes and limited resources for teaching design</li> <li>• The absence of design education</li> <li>• Art teachers required to teach to standard and that may not include any design</li> <li>• Limited resources for design programs</li> </ul>
<b>Transitional issues (stops and/or leaks) for the Foundations Passage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If not exposed to design in the passage here by teacher, school, parent, family member or friend, the student may not develop an interest in design</li> <li>• Student doesn't know about design opportunities to choose design</li> <li>• If the student somehow finds out about design outside of school and decides to pursue it he/she may not be academically prepared for higher education</li> <li>• Life issues and circumstances</li> </ul>
<b>Needs for the Foundations Passage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to design</li> <li>• Information in various methods about types of design and design-related careers to explore and ask professional about questions</li> <li>• Quick and easy resources for both students, parents and teachers to access</li> </ul>

*Table 1: Additional problems, transitional issues and needs identified for the Foundations Passage*

## **Passage 2: Proficiency**

The Proficiency Passage includes higher education (in a degreed vocational, college or university program), internships and graduate education. It is

encouraged that during college or university coursework aspiring designers should have internship opportunities to gain industry experience outside of the classroom. Therefore, this passage is overlapped with a career competency component.



*Figure 29: The Proficiency Passage from the Design Journey Map*

The primary stakeholders of this passage include students approximately 18 to 24 years old, parents, educators, administrators, colleges, universities, and vocational and specialty programs. The primary problem during this passage is that students may not be academically or creatively prepared for the rigorous coursework required to study design in a higher education institution, which

produces a staggering learning curve. A primary need in this passage is access to mentorship by peer tutors, professors, counselors and industry professionals, who will provide guidance and acquaint students with internship opportunities. In this highly competitive job market, networking and professionalization must begin early. Students who don't benefit from mentorship while completing their degrees miss out on valuable and often crucial opportunities for career advancement that may cause them to leave the profession altogether; thus, lack of mentorship at the college level creates a primary transitional leak for this passage.

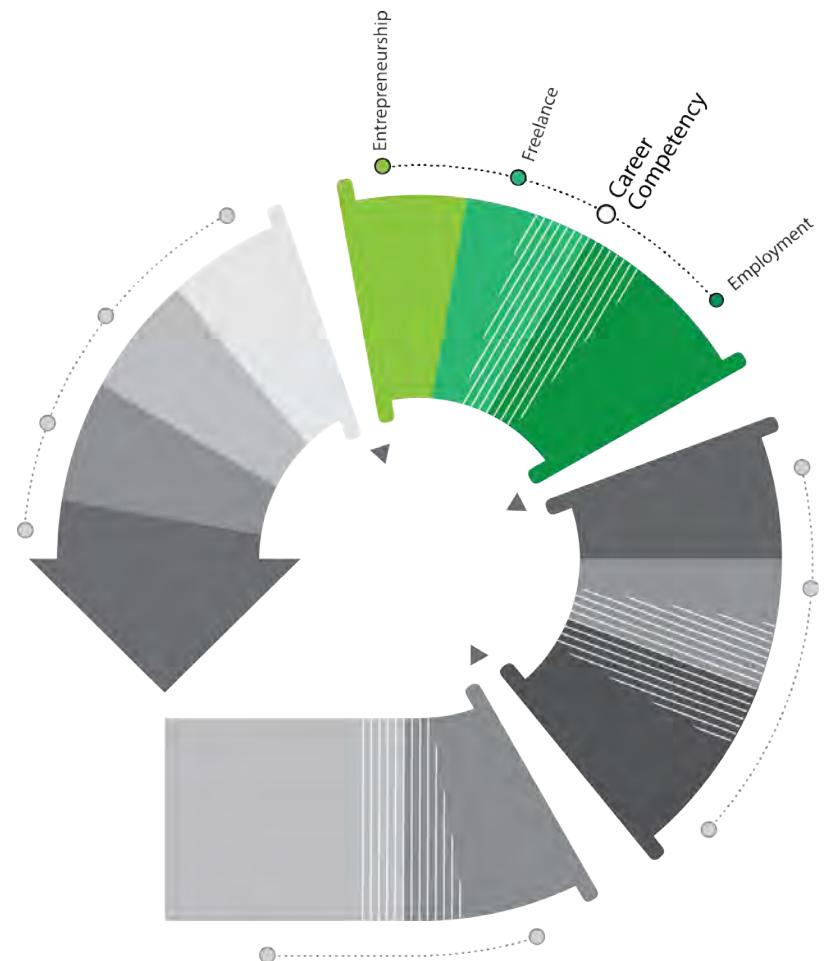
<b>Additional problems for the Proficiency Passage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design execution skills are low; Students are not used to the rigorous college/university classes and course work</li> <li>• The student may not be sufficiently aware about the design industry to relate coursework to career decisions</li> <li>• Student may have adjustment issues in the new environment</li> <li>• May not have the money to finance education, buy computer equipment or art supplies</li> </ul>
<b>Transitional issues (stops and/or leaks) for the Proficiency Passage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No support system in college</li> <li>• No mentors or relationships with other industry professionals</li> <li>• No internship opportunities</li> <li>• Difficult to fit in and cope with micro aggressions</li> <li>• Have to work to support themselves and grades may suffer</li> <li>• Weak portfolio</li> <li>• May not finish college</li> <li>• Life issues and circumstances</li> </ul>
<b>Needs for the Proficiency Passage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ability to meet professionals and mentors</li> <li>• Access to industry professionals</li> <li>• Access to industry specific organizations</li> <li>• Access to support resources, i.e. career services and academic tutoring</li> <li>• Access to Internships, employment and career information</li> </ul>

*Table 2: Additional problems, transitional issues and needs identified for the Proficiency Passage*

### **Passage 3: Workforce**

The Workforce Passage includes freelance work, institutional employment and entrepreneurship. Employment is defined as having paid full-time and or part-time design-related work experience in a for-profit or not-for-profit company or organization. Freelance or independent consulting is defined as accepting design-related projects for payment; freelance workers may also be employed by different individuals, organizations and/or companies at different times rather than being permanently employed by one company.

Entrepreneurship is thought of as an individual or individuals establishing business ventures which involve taking design-related projects for pay; entrepreneurs may also develop legal, competitive business structures for working for different individuals, organizations and/or other companies. This passage is overlapped with a career competency component.



*Figure 30: The Workforce Passage from the Design Journey Map*

The primary stakeholders for this passage include adults typically aged 24 years and older, as well as businesses and organizations. The primary problem in this passage is that designers must seek the means to financially support themselves through utilization of their creative skillsets and educational degrees. A primary disciplinary imperative in this passage is for people to open doors and professional associations to assist with relationship-building and

professional development. A primary transitional leak for this passage is a lack of knowledge on how to navigate the workforce.

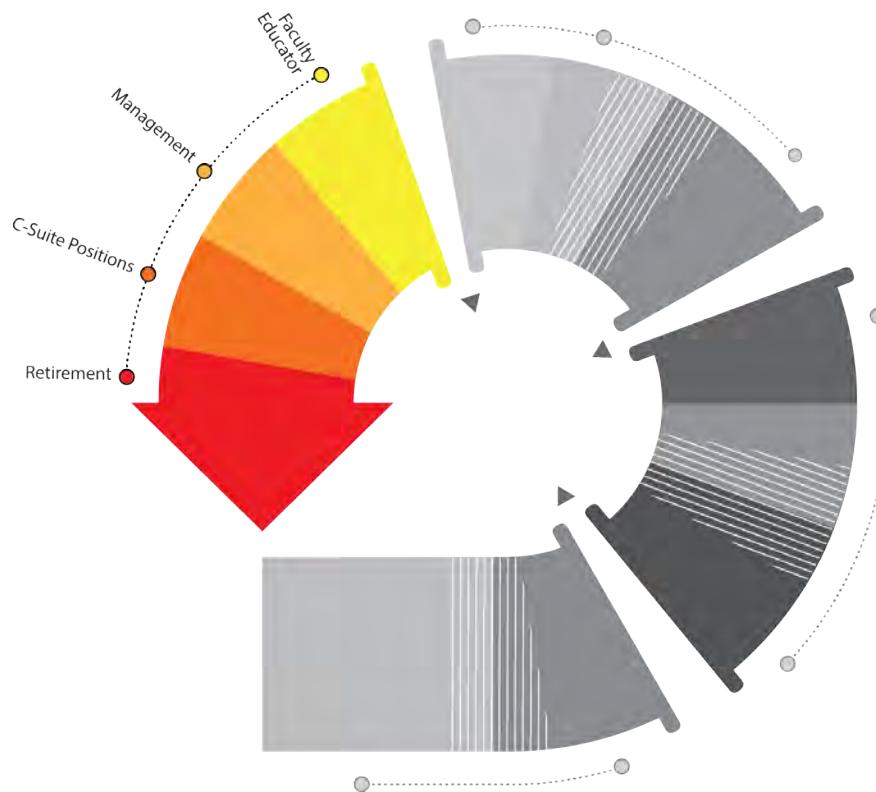
<b>Additional problems for the Workforce Passage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adjusting to the ebbs and flows of work life</li> <li>• Developing a work-life balance</li> <li>• Having to learn how to use one's design education to financially support oneself</li> <li>• Not knowing enough about the business of design</li> <li>• Need soft skills improvement for interviewing skills</li> </ul>
<b>Transitional issues (stops and/or leaks) for the Workforce Passage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of mentor</li> <li>• Lack of know-how to navigate the workforce</li> <li>• Insecurities toward relationship-building</li> <li>• Lack of business savvy</li> <li>• Life issues and circumstances</li> <li>• Difficult to adjust to new responsibilities</li> </ul>
<b>Needs for the Workforce Passage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentors</li> <li>• Professional associations</li> <li>• Networking</li> <li>• Relationship-building</li> <li>• Door-opening for people in their careers</li> <li>• Professional development</li> <li>• Additional training</li> </ul>

*Table 3: Additional problems, transitional issues and needs identified for the Workforce Passage*

#### **Passage: 4 Influence:**

The Influence Passage represents policymakers and influential individuals such as faculty educators, managers, chief creative officers and retirees. Other related parties include faculty educators teaching students in a college or

university setting as well as part-time adjunct faculty developing lessons, course work and curricula. Managers and art and creative directors who manage personnel, operational processes, creative workflows, and client affairs are also represented at this stage. C-Suite positions are typically the highest ranking executive positions within companies' creative teams; such position include the chief creative officer, chief communications officer or chief information officer, who are typically responsible for the overall look and feel of marketing, media, and branding. Retirement from administration often provides individuals with the time and opportunity to re-enter the design career pipeline with renewed spirit, experiences and knowledge to assist the others with their journeys.



*Figure 31: The Influence Passage from the Design Journey Map*

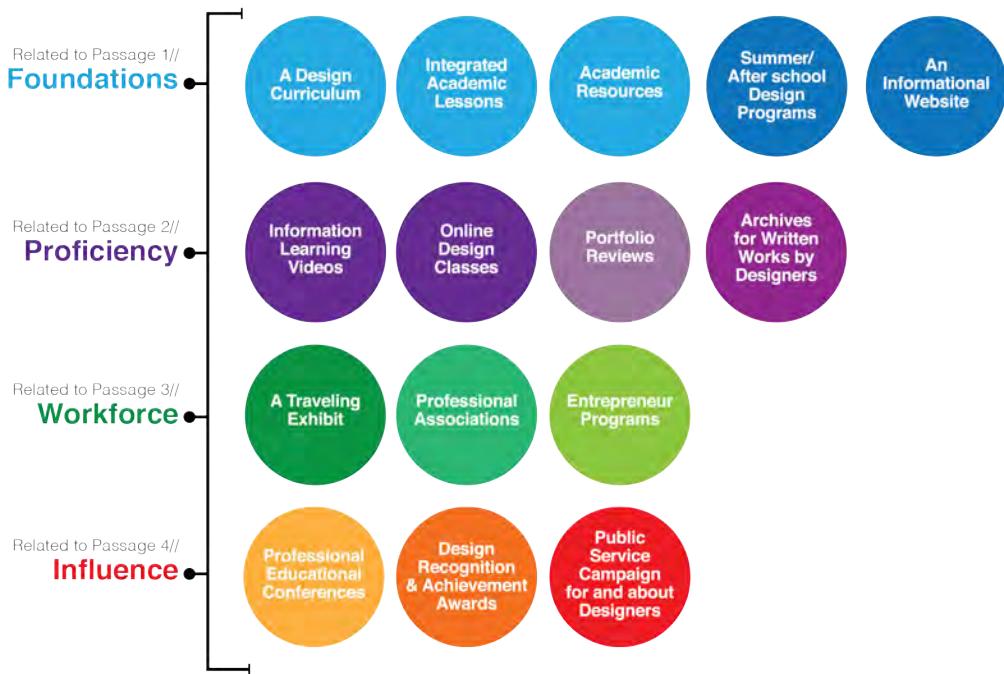
The primary stakeholders for this stage include adults approximately 40 years of age and older, educational institutions, businesses and organizations. The primary problem in this passage is reaching unofficial boundaries to advancement. Otherwise known as the glass ceiling, this disparity in attainment of upper management positions disproportionately affects women and members of minorities. A primary need in this passage is professional development along with additional training to refresh skillsets. A primary transitional leak in this passage is the difficulty to adjust to new responsibilities and lack of support systems for this level.

<b>Additional problems for the Influence Passage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fewer promotions</li> <li>• Little professional development</li> <li>• Developing and obtaining a skillset for upper management responsibilities</li> </ul>
<b>Transitional issues (stops and/or leaks) for the Influence Passage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A loss of interest</li> <li>• Difficult to adjust to new responsibilities</li> <li>• No support system for this level</li> </ul>
<b>Needs for the Influence Passage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional associations</li> <li>• Connecting with other peers</li> <li>• Additional training</li> <li>• Leadership training</li> </ul>

*Table 4: Additional problems, transitional issues and needs identified for the Influence Passage*

### **4.3 The Strategic Ideas**

As stated in section 4.1, understanding the factors that influenced the career aspirations of current AA&L designers compelled me to investigate the communication tools that they utilized during their design journeys. In creating the Design Journey Map, I was able to recognize the passages that presented the greatest challenges in terms of transitional issues that create diversity gaps in the workforce. The goal of this line of inquiry was to address these problems with impactful strategies that may be implemented for the benefit of AA&L designers and the industry as a whole. As other parties became acquainted with my research, they, too, offered suggestions regarding additional tools—called strategic ideas—that would help to expose AA&L youth to design-related careers. Figure 16 shows these 15 Strategic Ideas as they are investigated to date. In order to better understand their effectiveness, these strategies were also divided into two additional categories: awareness and application. Strategic ideas in the Awareness category endeavor to bring awareness to stakeholders along the journey. And strategic ideas in the Applications category focus on bringing applications to stakeholders in the passages along the journey. The strategic ideas are color-coded and grouped into rows to match the passages in which they would be most impactful.



*Figure 32: The fifteen strategic ideas color coded and stacked for their accompanying passage*

The strategic ideas that accompany the Foundations Passage are described below. They provide ideas for early implementation of these strategies.

- **A design curriculum:** A group of lesson plans for public school students pertaining to the subject of design, which includes projects, resources and tools for art teachers, after school programs, design camps, etc. An advantage of this strategy is that it would provide a guideline for art teachers, especially those unacquainted with design, to introduce design as a component of their art curricula. A disadvantage of this strategy is that the author of the lesson plans would need to possess superior knowledge of state-based learning standards and objectives.

- **Integrated academic lessons:** As described by Shaundra Boyd, Instructor for Educational Psychology, integrated academic lessons connect different areas of study by cutting across subject-matter lines and emphasizing unifying concepts. An example of this tactic would be using typography to help to teach poetry. An advantage of this strategic idea is that integrated lessons allow students to forge real-life connections across school subjects. This approach will benefit students by making learning objectives clearer and also allow students with active learning styles to benefit from specifically geared lesson plans. A disadvantage of this idea is that the educator must be knowledgeable about the state-based learning standards and of basic design concepts.
- **Academic resources:** Aspiring designers require scholarly resources, such as tutors in math, English and science to help creative students to succeed in academics. These resources may help creative students to identify their learning styles in order to enhance their academic success. An advantage of this strategy is that creative students are able to work with tutors early in their schooling in order to utilize concepts to improve their educational outcomes. A disadvantage of this idea is that these unique academic resources may be financially inaccessible to families and under-resourced school systems.

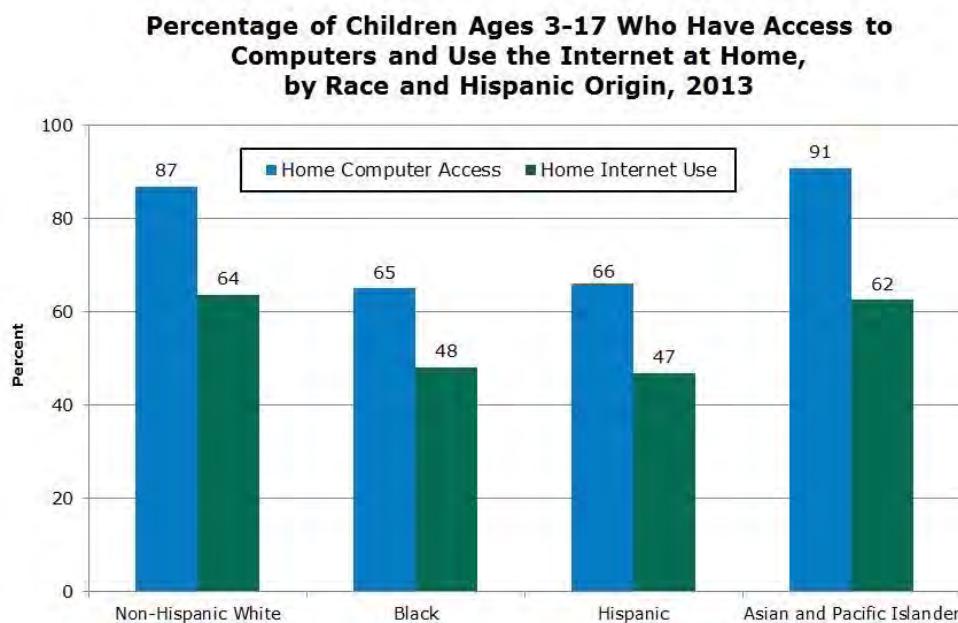
- **Summer/After school design programs:** Exposure is facilitated through specialty programs about design careers offered after school or during summer breaks. Such programs are greatly valued, for example, by New York-based nonprofit, ExpandED Schools, whose mission is to close the learning gap by increasing access to enriched educational experiences. According to research by ExpandED Schools, by the 6th grade, kids born into poverty are likely to suffer a 6,000-hour learning gap compared with their middle-class peers (“The Learning Gap”). In addition, 4,140 of these hours are coming from a lack of summer and after school learning opportunities (see Figure 33). An advantage of summer/after school programs as a diversity-boosting strategy is that these programs increase learning opportunities for youth, and may provide access to design and real-life design career opportunities. The disadvantage of this idea is that students may need transportation, and the programs may not be available locally or financially accessible to families.



*Figure 33: ExpandED Schools figure showing the breakdown of the 6,000 hour learning gap based on calculations of a 6-hour school day, 180-day school year*

- **An informational website:** In the technological age, the internet may be the most effective tool for closing educational gaps. A pivotal resource would be a website populated with information about all design disciplines, such as career and job descriptions, teacher resources, college preparation programs, summer camps, workshops etc. The advantage of this strategic idea is that information would be contained in a single place, which is easily accessible to young people, parents and other stakeholders. The disadvantage of this idea is that it could be costly

to maintain the website and develop the content. Moreover, its accessibility partly depends on at-home internet access, which is not available to many families. In fact, Child Trends reports that internet usage in AA&L homes is approximately 16% lower than in Caucasian homes (ChildTrends.org), as indicated in Figure 34.



*Figure 34: Percentage of children who have computer and internet use at home, by race*

The strategic ideas in the Proficiency Passage may be implemented as a designer moves through each passage in order to better improve his or her progress and future status in the profession:

- **Information Learning videos:** A series of videos intended to facilitate learning about the field of design and the decision-making processes

involved in becoming a designer. These videos or podcasts would include interviews with professionals who talk about their work, offer career insights and advice, and share their personal experiences of entering the job market. The advantage to this strategic idea is that it would offer students access to design professionals and allow interested parties to learn about design in their own timeframes. The disadvantage of this idea is that interested individuals would require computer and internet access.

- **Online Design Classes:** A series of videos, which will supplement or replace conventional classroom instruction, covering the different aspects of the design disciplines. These videos could be subject-based tutorials or materials intended for distance learning, blended or flipped classrooms. The advantage of this strategic idea is that the videos could be used as learning opportunities. Moreover, interested individuals may learn at their own paces and the videos may be repurposed to serve many different uses. The disadvantages of this idea are the highly technical skillset required to create the videos, the cost of purchasing the necessary equipment, the time needed to develop the content and the space needed for permanent storage of the digital files.
- **Portfolio Reviews:** The review process of completed project work from school or the workforce. Portfolio reviews encourage portfolio development. A great portfolio can open the doors to a successful career and keep a designer gainfully employed. However, a poorly developed

portfolio may adversely affect one's career path. As a strategic idea for preparing youth for the profession, portfolio reviews should model the review process of completed project work from school or the workforce. The advantage of this strategic idea is that students learn how to market themselves and receive feedback on their work from industry professionals. The disadvantage of this idea is that students must be prepared to confidently discuss completed work and accept the criticism of potentially unsympathetic reviewers. A suggested modification to this strategic idea is to offer pre-portfolio reviews that show current designers' work, thereby allowing young designers to improve their projects before engaging in a more formal evaluation.

- **Archives for written works by designers:** The goal of this strategic idea is to develop an online research database where authors of critical articles about design, design education and other important academic design topics may store their work in one place for all interested parties to read. Although libraries or bookstores may offer limited collections of materials and articles about design, this strategic idea should be thought of an access-boosting endeavor to make these materials freely available—this would be the “Google Scholar” or “Wikipedia” of the design industry. The advantage of this strategic idea is that there would be one publicly accessible place to find written works from and by designers. The disadvantage of this idea is that it would require considerable time and effort to solicit content and evaluate articles in the form of peer review.

The strategic ideas in the Workforce Passage may also be used as a designer moves through each passage in order to better improve his or her progress and position in the profession:

- **A traveling exhibit:** This strategy would develop an installation of design work that would be placed on exhibit in galleries, museums, schools or other public places where the contributions and/or the notable design work of AA&L designers may be made known. The advantage of this strategic solution is that it will bring the excellent work of the design population to the attention of people and regions that would normally not otherwise be able to access it. Moreover, the traveling exhibit could create dialogue about design and design-related careers among educators, community leaders, and industry experts. The disadvantages of this idea are the time and the cost involved in collecting the work and coordinating movement.
- **Professional Associations:** Professional associations create policies and initiatives pertaining to best practices, compensation and the fair and equal treatment of its professionals; therefore, these associations offer an invaluable service to design professionals. Regularly consisting of individuals from the same profession who meet regularly to network, share industry information, offer internships and establish industry-wide policies, professional associations could also sponsor initiatives to help minorities. For example, in 1968, Whitney M. Young Jr., Executive Director of the Urban League, addressed the American Institute of Architects (AIA) about its “thunderous silence” pertaining to the

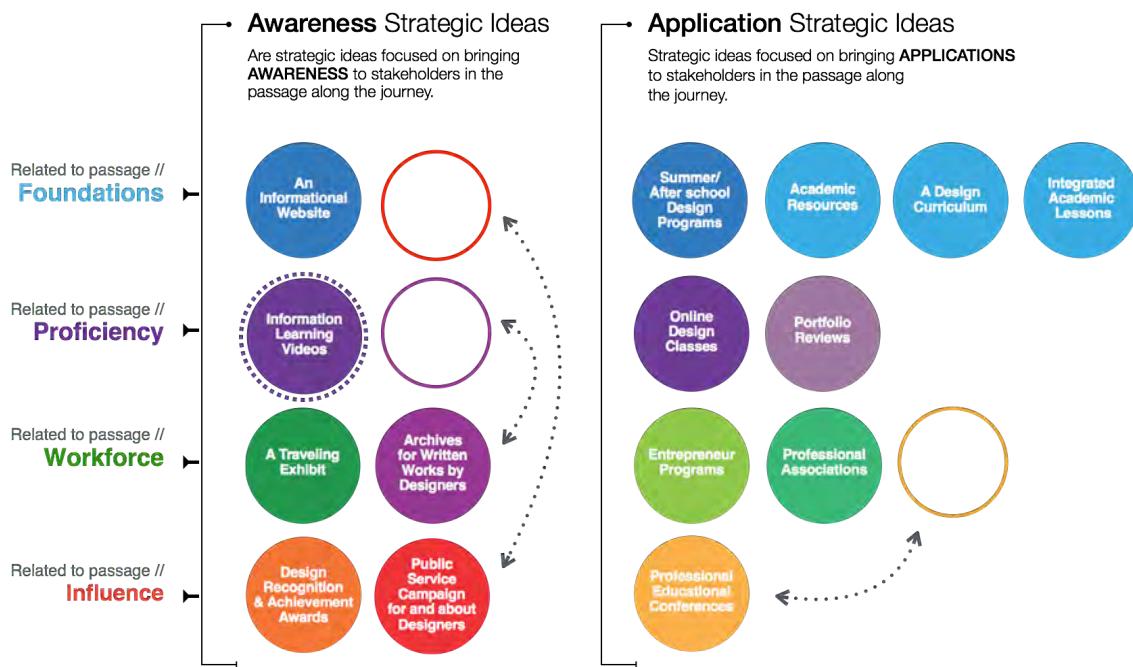
contributions of African American architects (Anthony 99). Two years later, the AIA became the first design organization to establish a diversity-building initiative by creating the Minority/Disadvantaged Scholarship Program. A similar program could be replicated by other professional design associations. Thus, the advantage of professional associations as a diversity boosting strategy is that these associations can be career catalysts and allow seasoned professionals to remain abreast of industry changes. The disadvantage of this idea is that professional associations may appear to be very elitist and exclusive to the minority population.

- **Entrepreneur Programs:** These programs endeavor to teach youth how to turn their artistic talents into economically viable business ventures. These programs empower creative youth by teaching entrepreneurial concepts such as business, marketing, finance and client management. Many universities are even building entrepreneurial concepts, which are called student-run ventures, into courses for creatives. These ventures allow creative students the opportunity to work with other professionals in order to launch their ideas and learn the facets of business operation. The advantage of this strategic idea is that creative youth will learn entrepreneurial methods for marketing their artistic talents and turning their craft into a lucrative services. The disadvantage of this idea is that in some areas, entrepreneurial programs may be less available or financially accessible for low-income families.

The strategic ideas in the Influence Passage can be used as a designer transitions from the early formation stages and workforce years to the status of a seasoned professional:

- **Professional educational conferences:** Local, state and nationwide conferences represent one benefit of joining a professional association. Conferences provide opportunities for professional development through workshops, interdisciplinary dialogue and networking. The advantage of this strategic idea is that professional association members are able to expand their networks across regions and participate in educational enhancement. The disadvantage of this idea is the high cost often associated with these conferences, which are therefore less accessible to designers early in their careers, when networking is often most needed.
- **Design recognition and achievement awards:** Industry validation through awards is a surefire way to enhance the esteem of one's portfolio. Awards from colleagues and peers give the recipients' work validation, prestige and industry recognition. The advantage of this strategic idea is that peer awards help to legitimize work and provide opportunities for recognition by industry experts. The disadvantage of this idea is that the recommendation process must be careful to avoid nepotism.
- **Public service campaign for and about designers:** The goal of this strategic solution is to develop a design campaign to raise awareness about the design industry and its service to society. The importance of this idea is that it will increase the social value attributed to design as a

service craft. The functions and benefits of design may be shown in a series of posters, web banners, PSAs and advertisements visible to students, parents, educators, administrators and business professionals. The advantage of this strategic idea is it that the message may speak to various audiences and help expose educational stakeholders to opportunities in design-related careers. The disadvantage of this idea is that such campaigns would require continued funding and a degree of industry expertise and consensus to coordinate.



*Figure 35: The fifteen strategic ideas color coded and stacked for their accompanying passage, then separated into awareness and application strategic ideas. The outlined circles demonstrate the strategic ideas that would be suitable in other Passages.*

#### **4.4 Chapter Summary**

Designers who have the right tools and resources are able to navigate their design journeys far more successfully than those who don't. The tools that underrepresented AA&L youth need for a successful journey are directly related to their points of access. For many African Americans and Latinos, their point of access is obstructed by far-reaching systemic forces within our society which negatively affect their career outlooks. The Design Journey Map and the strategic ideas here summarized have been developed in order to address this dilemma and expose underrepresented AA&L youth to design-related careers. The Design Journey Map allows industry experts, design professionals, and aspiring designers to cultivate an ongoing dialogue about diversity in the design industry. This ongoing dialogue ultimately functions as an agent of change.

## **Chapter Five: Recommendations**

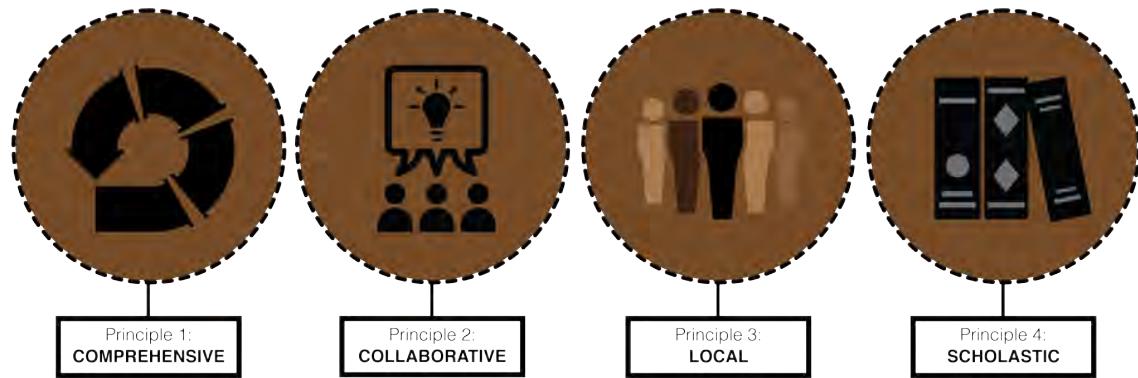
### **5.0 Chapter Overview**

The lack of diversity in design has been a recurring topic of conversation for designers, educators and organizations for more than 25 years. Many onlookers mistakenly believe that design's diversity problem is only about exposure. Nonetheless, although conversations about diversity in design are becoming more common, to date these conversations have yielded few concrete recommendations for a solution. The Design Journey Map and associated strategic ideas provided in this study represent a crucial first step toward filling the diversity gap in design. This chapter will summarize the characteristics of a strategic solution, provide examples of notable organizations spearheading the cause of diversity in design and present my recommendations for addressing the lack of diversity in design disciplines. It is my hope that these recommendations will mobilize the design disciplines to action in service of the cause of enhancing diversity in design.

### **5.1 The Design Principles**

After a comprehensive examination of the design journey and investigation of the 15 Strategic Ideas, my research has identified the Design Principles of a strategic solution for helping to close the diversity gap in the design disciplines. These Design Principles can help to ensure long-term success for programs

and initiatives whose intent is to expose AA&L youth to design-related careers. The four Principles for enhancing diversity, which should be Comprehensive, Collaborative, Local, and Scholastic, are outlined below.



*Figure 36: The four Design Principles for a strategic solution*

### **Principle 1: Comprehensive**

In order to be effective, the strategic solution must first address multiple passages along the design journey. A solution that meets multiple passages on the Design Journey Map has a far greater chance of assisting the greatest possible number of individual stakeholders, including students, parents, educators, guidance counselors, administrators and schools. Such a solution may help to address any transitional leaks relating to access, exposure, opportunity and value. Moreover, meeting multiple passages ensures greater possibilities for implementing multiple strategic ideas.

## **Principle 2: Collaborative**

As suggested by many scholars, closing the diversity gap in design disciplines is a complex problem. Complex problems are best solved through cooperation by a diverse body of individuals, stakeholders, businesses and organizations. For example, this means that such organizations as AIGA, the professional association of design, and IDSA, the Industrial Designers Society of America, should be working together to create common practices that will address diversity problems across the discipline. By the same token, professional designers will also need to work together with educators in order to work toward this common cause of promoting diversity in design. Fashion designers must work with architects; parents must work with designers; and administrators must work with businesses and/or organizations.

## **Principle 3: Local**

The strategic solution should meet students in their own communities and local schools. Although there are many opportunities for students to encounter design outside of their local communities, bringing design opportunities and experiences to students eases the burden on parents by meeting students in environments where they are already learning. Taking the solution to the students is also a great way for the design disciplines to become more engaged with and visible in local communities. Moreover, this Principle will encourage more collaboration within the group of stakeholders.

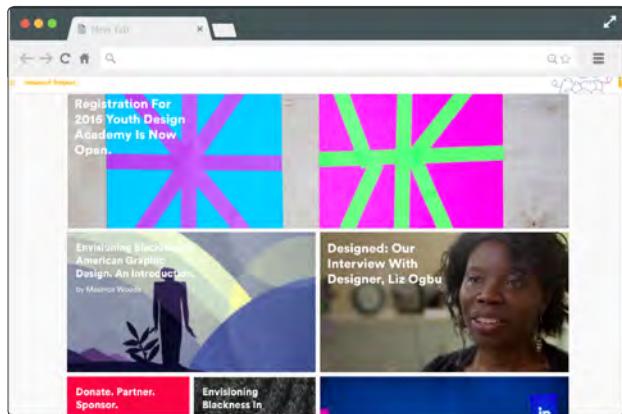
## **Principle 4: Scholastic**

Lastly, the strategic solution must have an academic and/or college and career readiness component. If design programs and initiatives committed to exposing AA&L youth to design disciplines don't include academic components, their efforts will be minimally impactful in the long-term. Indeed, long-term career success ultimately depends on educational attainment. Students who do not meet public school graduation requirements for English, geometry or foreign language competency, have a lower chance of graduating high school and attending higher education institutions where they will be able to pursue their interests in design. And when design programs and initiatives work in conjunction with academics, students are exposed to greater career opportunities.

### **5.1.2 Notable Organizations**

The five notable organizations, programs and initiatives described below provide stellar examples which embody the four Design Principles of a strategic solution identified in section 5.1 and illustrate what various solutions to increase diversity in design disciplines may look like.

- The first organization is the Inneract Project; located in San Francisco, California, this project was founded in 2004 by Maurice Woods. Woods, remarks that this project started as his passion project. Inneract Project is a professionally supported program that provides free design classes and initiatives to inner-city youth in order to introduce them to the field of design and channel their creativity into viable career paths (“About IP”).  
For more information about their work, visit [inneractproject.org](http://inneractproject.org).



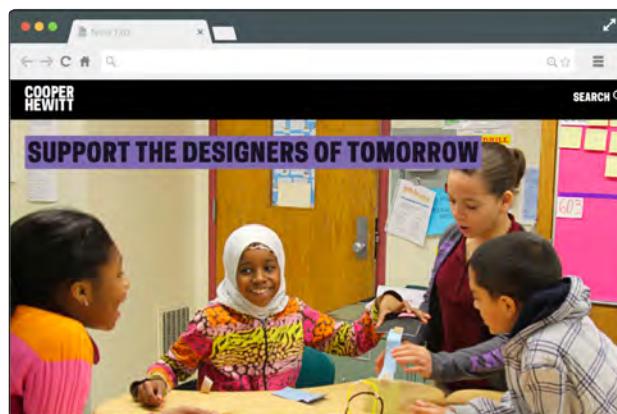
*Figure 37: The homepage from the Inneract Project's website*

- The second organization is E4 Youth, a nonprofit organization located in Austin, Texas, and founded in 2009 by Carl Settles. Through partnerships with area schools and educators, E4 Youth helps to bridge the gap between underserved youth and creative commercial arts careers. The program identifies, nurtures, and promotes talent through training, mentoring and internships. Its holistic mission is accomplished through four programs: Soft Skills Curriculum™, Professional Development, Industry Tours and Shadow the Pros ("About E4 Youth"). Further information about this organization and its invaluable work is available at [e4youth.org](http://e4youth.org).



*Figure 38: The homepage from E4 Youth's website*

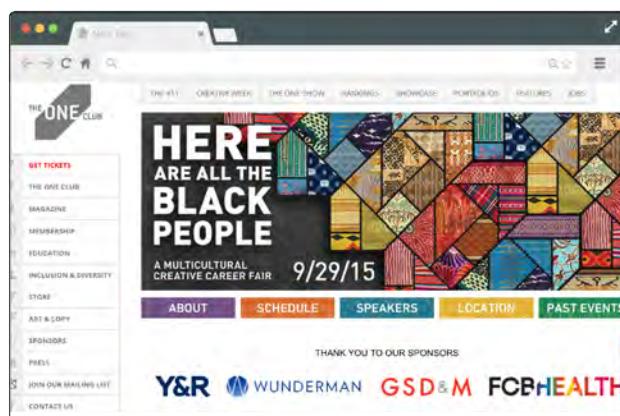
- The third organization of note is the Smithsonian's Design Museum, Cooper Hewitt's Design in the Classroom program. This program brings design directly into children's lives through the Ready, Set, Design challenge, a hands-on workshop created by Cooper Hewitt educators. The workshop teaches students in kindergarten through twelfth grade how to use the principles of design thinking in order to solve real-life challenges ("Support the Designers of Tomorrow"). Further information about this program is available at [cooperhewitt.org](http://cooperhewitt.org).



*Figure 39: The home page of The Designers of Tomorrow's website*

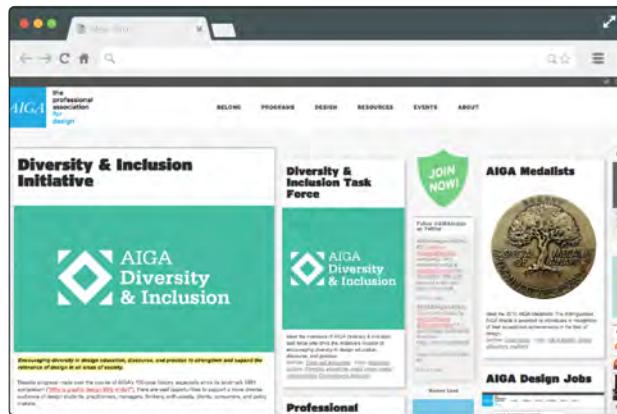
Honorable mentions have been extended to two professional design associations which have committed to increasing diversity in design by beginning diversity-building initiatives within their larger organizations.

- The One Club's Here Are All The Black People (HAATBP) is an annual one-day multicultural creative career fair that provides multicultural students, recent graduates, and creative professionals who are interested in exploring careers in advertising and design the opportunity to interview, network, learn, interact and gain invaluable knowledge from top creative industry professionals. HAATBP was created after a panel discussion between advertising greats, Jimmy Smith and Jeff Goodby, as they discussed the lack of diversity in the creative departments in advertising agencies. When Jeff asked, "Where Are All The Black People?" Jimmy, Jeff, and The One Club decided to answer the question through creation of the event, "Here Are All The Black People" (Smith). Further information about this initiative is available at [oneclub.org/haatbp](http://oneclub.org/haatbp).



*Figure 40: The homepage of The One Club's Here Are All The Black People event website*

- AIGA's, Diversity and Inclusion Task Force began in 2013 when then-founding chair, Antionette Carroll, reached out to AIGA about the lack of diversity in the design industry and asked what AIGA could do as an organization to lead a national movement to address the issue. After learning of the interest from many other chapter leaders, AIGA created the Diversity and Inclusion Task Force with Carroll serving as the founding chair. The task force currently has 22 members across the United States. Its mission is to encourage diversity in design education, discourse, and practice in order to strengthen and expand the relevance of design in all areas of society. Carroll summarizes these goals as to "celebrate, cultivate and connect." For more information about this taskforce, consult [aiga.org/diversity-and-inclusion-initiative](http://aiga.org/diversity-and-inclusion-initiative).



*Figure 41: The homepage of AIGA, the professional association of design, Diversity and Inclusion Initiative page website*

## **5.2 Recommendation for a Strategic Solution**

I propose the following recommendations for beginning to address the complex problem of the lack of diversity in design. My first recommendation is to stabilize the problems on both ends of the journey by simultaneously increasing access and opportunity with tools and resources such as the Design Journey Map and the 15 Strategic Ideas. My second recommendation is take stock of the current people power in design disciplines and to encourage businesses and organizations to create diversity-building initiatives. My last recommendation is to emphasize from the beginning of the design journey that aspiring designers should enter with the mindset that when they reach a position of influence, they should be imparting their knowledge and insight with the next generation.

The goal for this research was to develop one strategic solution which will expose AA&L youth to design-related careers and work to close the diversity gap in design. The solution would utilize my research findings as well as the statistical data and historical factors contributing to the mounting diversity problems within the design industry. Its efficacy will be measured according to its adherence to the Design Principles for a strategic solution, its feasibility for implementation and its projected impact on the design journey. This thought process led me to emphasize Passages One and Two on The Design Journey Map because they represent the first point of exposure and therefore have the most transitional issues. For both passages, the primary need pertains to access.

This study argues that combining the strategic ideas with increased access will create more effective solutions for this audience. For instance, conferences quickly and expediently grant young professionals both access and opportunity, but they are not very feasible for public school students. A traveling exhibit is a great way to expose youth to the design profession, but not something a public school could easily curate or sponsor. Summer and after school design programs are great venues for exposing youth to different types of activities, but only a select few get to participate. I asked myself what a solution would look like for Passages One and Two. This access-driven solution would need to be comprehensive, collaborative, local and scholastic. The response was a Design Day or Design Week activity, repurposed for a public school audience.

Currently, Design Week is a week-long series of activities, programs and festivities geared toward allowing established professional designers to celebrate design. However, what if the audience could be changed? What if the goals of this event could be widened to include exposing AA&L youth to design-related careers? My proposal is to effect this transformation. The idea of a Design Day/Week addresses multiple passages and transitional issues. It is a collaborative activity among interested students, design professionals, educators, parents, as well as arts and academic organizations. Design Days may expose AA&L youth to several types of design at one time. One benefit of these events is that they are highly mobile, which means that they can travel to many different audiences. These events also provide the opportunity for professionals to travel to schools to share their knowledge and provide access to underrepresented youth. These events therefore offer cost-effective activities

and workshops for AA&L youth. This study thus promotes a Design Day as a strategic solution with high feasibility and the greatest growth potential.

### **5.3 Design Explorr**

The organization currently under development to house the Design Day activities is Design Explorr (pronounced “explorer”). The mission of this design education business is to celebrate learning about design. Design Explorr has three areas of focus. First, it offers educational design programs, activities and workshops with academic components where Design Days represent the signature event. Second, Design Explorr will consult with businesses, organizations, workforce development centers and other arts organizations in order to help them to meet the needs of underrepresented youth interested in design. Finally, the organization will develop a website, which will function as a primary source of information about design and design-related careers for students, parents, educators and organizations. The overarching goal is to create opportunities that expose African-American and Latino youth to design-related careers. It is my hope that Design Explorr will sit at the intersection of design and workforce development by working to address the lack of diversity in design. The organization’s mission statement is summarized below.

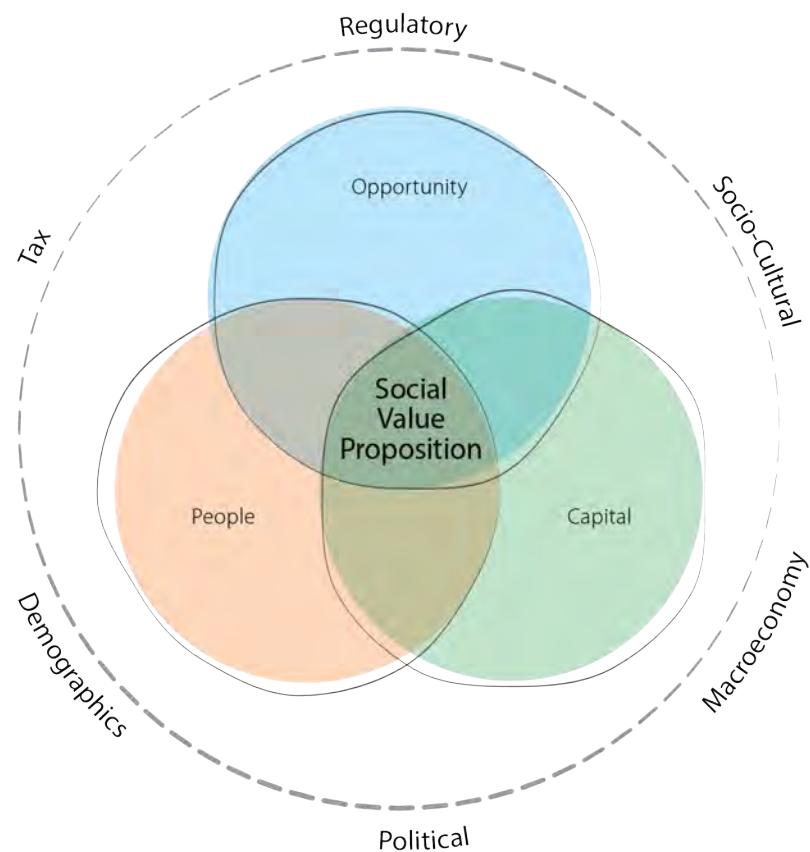
“DesignExplorr is a chance for creative youth to experience professionally directed design, to be engaged in conversations about design and to learn what it takes to begin the journey toward a career in the design industry. We want to partner with professionals, parents, and teachers who are passionate about bringing diversity to this industry in a powerful way. DesignExplor is the place

where creative kids come to equip themselves for a career that combines their love of art with real-world tools.”

Design Explorr encompasses three of the strategic ideas and delivers a social value proposition. An organization delivers a social value proposition when people, capital, and opportunity come together (Bielefeld and Tschirhart 5). This is demonstrated in the social entrepreneurship framework model developed by Austin, Stevenson, and Wei-Skillern, which elucidates the overlap of people and capital with opportunity to create a social value proposition in an environmental context of tax, regulatory, sociocultural, demographic, political, and macro economic influences (Bielefeld and Tschirhart 39). The inner circles of the Social Entrepreneurship Framework shown in Figure 42 are showing the overlap of people, opportunity and capital. The outer circle represents the environments that change agents seek to influence. This framework emphasizes the people who will participate, their involvement and economic interest in an entrepreneurial venture. This entrepreneurial effort operates as a student-run venture. Student-run ventures are innovative ways to provide students with the entrepreneurial experiences, resources and necessary support to enable them to begin their own businesses.

The individuals I selected to help me to develop Design Explorr were not only my mentees, but also individuals from within the demographic of young people who stand to benefit from the services provided by this start-up venture. To date these participants have helped me to design the brand, launch the website, create a plan for social media presence and develop three-dimensional products for educational use. This entrepreneurial effort allows my mentees to

participate in the creation and implementation of an entrepreneurial effort that also directly impacts their futures as AA&L designers.



*Figure 42: The Social Entrepreneurship Framework developed by Austin, Stevenson, and Wei-Skillern as shown in Managing Nonprofit Organizations*

#### **5.4 Chapter Summary**

Conversations about the lack of diversity in design are important, particularly because AA&L designers are still underrepresented in the industry,

underserved in universities and underemployed in the workforce. Although it is important to maintain an ongoing dialogue about diversity in design, it is equally important that these conversations begin to transition into providing recommendations for solutions. Disclosing the undergirding Principles of a strategic solution as well as notable organizations that are paving the way for future ventures like Design Explorr will help to orient the conversation about design toward providing solutions. These solutions will ultimately improve the experiences of AA&L youth interested in beginning the journey to a design-related career.

## **Chapter Six: Moving Forward**

### **6.0 Final Thoughts**

The first steps of my learning journey began with my desire to expose AA&L youth to design-related careers. This desire led me on a path of exploration in search of solutions to increase diversity in design disciplines. This search resulted in the development of the following tools: the Design Journey Map, the Fifteen Strategic ideas, the Four Design Principles and one Strategic Solution for Improving Diversity in Design. More importantly, it has helped me to understand the complexity of the problem and the commitment required to diversify design disciplines.

#### **About the commitment:**

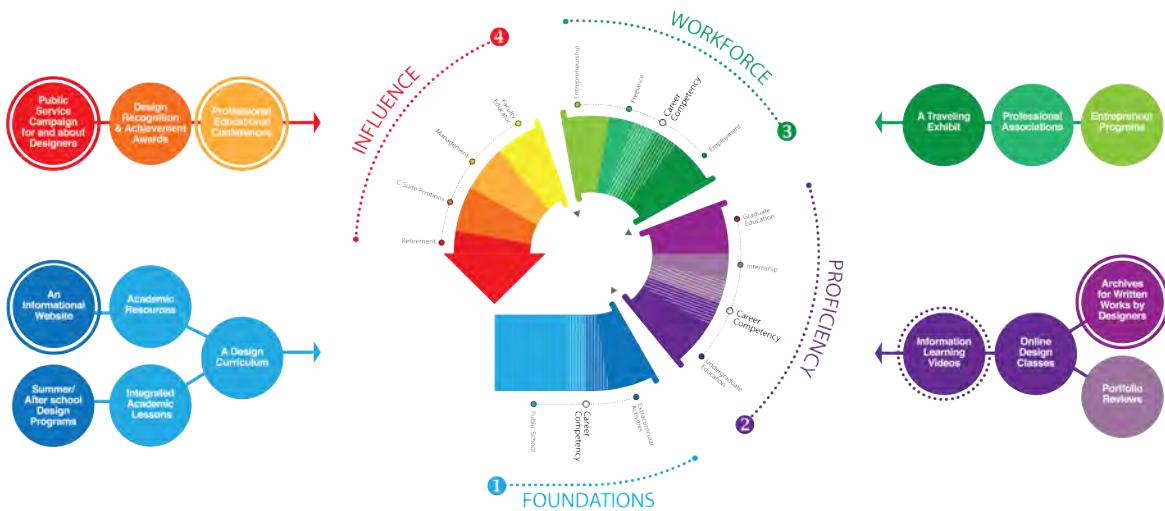
Diversity is a lifelong mission, which requires far more than mere implementation of affirmative action policies and increased hiring of women and minorities. A commitment to diversity in the design industry will require a significant change from all parties involved in order to increase the low number of AA&L designers, business owners and educators. Therefore, the design profession must undergo “a fundamental transformation” and begin to see diversifying the industry as a commitment that begins at the front end of our thinking and planning. As the importance of diversity continues to grow in all areas of society, so too, does the need for more diversity in all the areas of the design disciplines.

**About the complexity:**

Addressing the lack of diversity in design is not a simple problem. The issue is that many are trying to solve for a simple problem, when there are actually multiple problems on both ends of the journey, which are related to access, exposure, opportunity and values. These factors greatly impact the culture of design today, especially by contributing to starkly lower job opportunities and opportunities for advancement among African Americans and Latinos. Action needs to be taken in order to stabilize the problems on both ends of the journey and simultaneously create better experiences for future AA&L designers.

**About the Journey Map:**

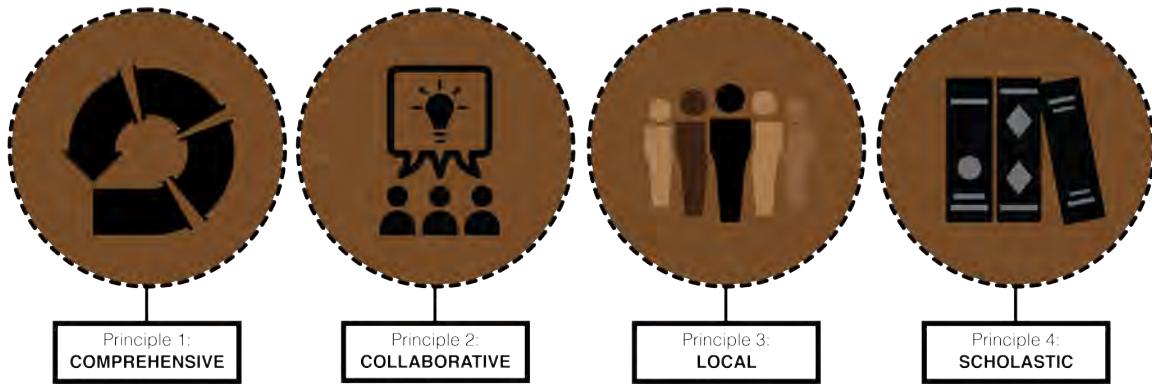
Until now, the journey to become a designer has not been visualized, especially in terms of the unique situations faced by AA&L youth. If designers, educational institutions and organizations are able to agree upon the important milestones which mark progress from one stage of the career to the next, it will be easier to communicate the objectives to students and parents. This increased transparency about the design career could illuminate paths to opportunity and better equip travelers to face challenges along the way to a design career. In this solutions-based thesis, I have created a Design Journey Map, 15 Strategic Ideas, and Design Principles for strategic solutions to closing diversity gaps in design as well as one strategic solution which illustrates how these tools should be used.



*Figure 43: The Design Journey Map shown with the Fifteen Strategic Ideas*

## About The Design Principles:

The Four Design Principles provide the foundation for a strategic solution. The Principles can also help programs and initiatives to evaluate long-term success of diversity initiatives. The first Principle dictates that the solution address multiple passages in the design journey. The second Principle dictates that the solution be collaborative. The third Principle dictates that the solution be local, providing direct access to students where the students physically are. The fourth and last Principle dictates that the solution have an academic and/or college and career readiness component. These fundamental Design Principles help programs and initiatives to ensure greater career opportunities for AA&L youth.



*Figure 44: The four Design Principles for a strategic solution*

#### **About the Strategic Solution:**

My thesis journey led me to focus on Passages One and Two because they have the most impact on AA&L youth beginning a design-related career. Both Passages' primary needs relate to exposure and they have the most transitional issues. I knew my solution had to cater toward student awareness and fit into the constraints of a public school-day. Plus, it had to deliver a great deal of access to AA&L youth. That strategic solution quickly grew into a Design Week/Day activity. Although Design Day is not a new idea, repurposing it for young audiences and adding a scholastic component utilizes all four Design Principles. For this reason the Design Day has the greatest potential for feasibility and growth. The Design Day activities will be hosted by Design Explorr, a new entrepreneurial effort that celebrates learning about design and operates as a student-run venture. The overarching goal of Design Explorr, along with Design Day, is to create opportunities that expose African-American and Latino youth to design-related careers.

These tools described above serve as my contributions to the design profession; they are geared toward beginning to tackle the complex problems relating to the lack of diversity in design. The research that produced these tools helped me to understand the complexity of the problem and provided the inspiration for other navigational tools including the Journey Map, Four Principles and Strategic Solution and Strategic Ideas. The strategic solution presented in this thesis, the Design Day, was developed with my own understanding of the situation and the resources available to me during the study. It is my hope that readers will utilize the findings of this thesis in order to develop their own strategic solutions to help to close the diversity gap in design disciplines.

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## **Appendix A: Research Instruments**

## **Electronic Survey Participant Messages**

### **Electronic Survey Participant Text Message/Social Media Post:**

**Link to electronic survey:** <https://goo.gl/vkg6XF>

**Email Subject Line:** Jacinda Walker's Design strategies survey needs your input

#### **Version 1 (Facebook, Instagram or Text Message):**

Hello! Please participate in my research study. The survey is about 10 minutes. It analyzes design journeys to develop a solution to address the lack of diversity in design disciplines. Click here to be a part of this important research. Contact me with any questions. I greatly appreciate your time.

#### **Version 2 (Facebook, Instagram or Text Message):**

Please participate in my 10min research survey. It analyzes design journeys to develop a solution to address the lack of diversity in design disciplines. Click now to be a part of this important research. Thank you.

#### **Version 3 (Twitter-160 characters):**

Participate! This 10min survey analyzes design journeys to address the lack of diversity in design. Be a part of this important research.

## **Electronic Survey Questions**

### **Electronic Survey with all questions**

#### **About the survey:**

The purpose of this study is to analyze the design journeys of current African-American and Latino designers to learn what influenced their career paths and then to develop one strategic solution to address the lack of diversity in design disciplines. Electronic surveys are questionnaires —available to any designer— that begin by collecting basic demographic data on each participant such as gender, ethnicity, age, educational attainment, family background and design discipline as well as questions pertaining to industry experiences. Survey questions will focus primarily on the career path and any specific strategies used during the design journey. Electronic surveys are anticipated to take 10-15 minutes each. A hyperlink will be distributed within several design communities and distributing it through my personal network. No special software is needed to take the survey.

**Link to electronic survey:** <https://goo.gl/vkg6XF>

#### **Long version of electronic survey questions (email consent Q#2):**

- Cover page and intro: Hello and thank you for sharing your time and information.
  - o This survey collects basic demographic data, details about your industry experiences, and then provides you an opportunity to share your

insight on the proposed strategic solution. Before you can begin you will need to provide your consent.

### **Section1==Bio and Background Information**

- a. 1. The Ohio State University Consent to Participate in Research Study Title:  
Design Journeys: Strategies for Increasing Diversity in Design Disciplines

Researcher: Jacinda Walker Sponsor: N/A [\*]<If accept, jump to Q3. If don't accept, jump to Q2.>

- b. a. **This is a consent form for research participation.** It contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate. **Your participation is voluntary.** Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and will receive a copy of the form.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to analyze the design journeys of practicing designers to learn what influenced their career paths and then to develop one strategic solution to address the lack of diversity in design disciplines.

**Procedures/Tasks:** You will take part in an electronic survey to document your design journeys and discover any influencers along the way. No special software is needed to take the survey. The electronic survey is a questionnaire —available to any designer— to gather the basic demographic facts and will then focus primarily on your career path and any specific strategies used during your design journey. Electronic surveys will be conducted via the Internet.

**Duration:** Electronic surveys are anticipated to take 10-15 minutes each.

**Risks and Benefits:** The risks to the participants in this research are minimal. Some possible risks may include bringing up past experiences during reflection that might cause them to regret past decisions since the design journeys are personal in nature. The participants will decide for themselves what they will share.

**Confidentiality:** Efforts will be made to keep your study-related information confidential. However, there may be circumstances where this information must be released. For example, personal information regarding your participation in this study may be disclosed if required by state law. Also, your records may be reviewed by the following groups (as applicable to the research):

- Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies;
- The Ohio State University Institutional Review Board or Office of Responsible Research Practices;
- The sponsor, if any, or agency supporting the study.

**Incentives:** There will be no incentives presented to research participants.

**Participant Rights:** You may refuse to participate in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you are a student or employee at Ohio State, your decision will not affect your grades or employment status. If you choose to participate in the study, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. By signing this form, you do not give up any personal legal rights you may have as a participant in this study. An Institutional Review Board responsible for human subjects research at The Ohio State University

reviewed this research project and found it to be acceptable, according to applicable state and federal regulations and University policies designed to protect the rights and welfare of participants in research.

**Contacts and Questions:** For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study, or you feel you have been harmed as a result of study participation; you may contact Jacinda Walker at [walker.1638@osu.edu](mailto:walker.1638@osu.edu). For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

**Signing the consent form:** I have read (or someone has read to me) this form and I am aware that I am being asked to participate in a research study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form.

**Please select “I accept” to give your consent and continue.**

- i. i.       I accept
- ii.ii.       I don't accept

i. 2. You cannot be part of this important research without consenting to previous stated terms. Please select “I accept” to give your consent and continue. [\*]<If accept, jump to Q3. If don't accept, jump to end of survey.>

- b. a.      I accept
- c. b.      I don't accept

- a. 3. Thank you for your consent. Let's begin. Tell me about you and your background. What gender do you identify with? [\*]
- b. a. CHOICES: Man, Woman or Other
- c. 4. What is your ethnicity? [\*]
- d. a. CHOICES: African-American, Asian, Bi-racial, Caucasian, Indian, Latino, Native American, Other
- e. 5. What is your current age range? [\*]
- f. a. CHOICES: 16-20, 21-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, 61-70, 71-80, 80+
- g. 6. What is your current design discipline? Select the one choice that best describes your primary specialty. [\*]
- h. a. CHOICES: Architecture, Design Education (Teacher etc.), Design Research, Exhibition, Fashion, Graphic, Illustration, Industrial, Interactive media, Interior, Multi-media, Photography, User Interface, Videography, Website, Other
- i. 7. How long have you worked as a designer? [\*]
- j. a. Select the one that best fits without going over. CHOICES: 1-4 years, 5-9 years, 10-15 years, 16-20 years, 21-30 years, 30+ years
- k. 8. Describe the work you do in designer.
- l. a. If applicable, please include your title also. The character count is 300 maximum.
- m. 9. Have you worked in another design disciplines? [\*]<If yes, jump to Q10.

If no, jump to Q11>

- n. a. CHOICES: Yes or No
- o. 10. If yes, which other design discipline? Select the choice that best describes your secondary specialty.
- p. a. CHOICES: Architecture, Design Education (Teacher etc.), Design Research, Exhibition, Fashion, Graphic, Illustration, Industrial, Interactive media, Interior, Multi-media, Photography, User Interface, Videography, Website, Other

## **Section2==Value(s) of Education**

- a. 11. Continue forward thinking of your experience with education while you were growing up focusing up until the age of about 18.
- b. 12. How would you describe your family's philosophy on education?
  - c. a. CHOICES: Go to school, Just graduate high school, Learn a trade, You're going to college.
- d. 13. As a child (18 and under) were you raised in a home primarily with one parent or both parents?
  - e. a. CHOICES: One parent, Both parents, Extended family member(s), Other
- f. 14. What role did your parents play in your education?
  - g. a. CHOICES: Very Active — Saw that you went to school and received an education, also participated in school activities, Active — Saw that you went to school and received an education, but did not participate in school activities, Neutral — Didn't matter either way, Inactive — Didn't talk about education or school much
- h. 15. Is either one of your parents, a sibling or other family member, an artist, designer or creative person? [\*]
  - i. a. CHOICES: Yes or No
- j. 16. Did you have design activities at your elementary school? <**If yes, jump to Q17. If no, jump to Q18>**
- k. a. CHOICES: Yes or No
- l. 17. Did you participate in those activities? <**If yes, jump to Q18. If no, jump to Q18>**
- m. a. CHOICES: Yes or No
- n. 18. Did you have design activities in your middle and/or high school art class(es)? <**If yes, jump to Q19. If no, jump to Q22>**
- o. a. CHOICES: Yes or No

p. 19. Did you participate in those activities? <**If yes, jump to Q20. If no, jump to Q21**>

q. a. CHOICES: Yes or No

r. 20. Describe the art and/or design activities at your elementary, middle or high school.

s. a. The character count is 300 maximum.

t. 21. Did you graduate from high school? <**If yes, jump to Q25. If no, jump to Q24**>

u. a. CHOICES: Yes or No

v. 22. Did you obtain a GED? <**If yes, jump to Q25. If no, jump to Q27**>

w. a. CHOICES: Yes or No

x. 23. Did you have a portfolio when you graduated from high school?

y. a. CHOICES: Yes or No

z. 24. Do you think high school prepared you to be a designer?

aa. a. CHOICES: Yes or No

### **Section 3==Attending College**

a. 25. Did your parents push or encourage you to attend college?

b. a. CHOICES: Yes or No

c. 26. Did you attend college? <**If yes, jump to Q27. If no, jump to Q36**>

d. a. CHOICES: Yes or No

e. 27. Tell me about your college experience.

f. a. Character count is 300 maximum, approximately 25 words.

g. 28. Do you have a college degree?

h. a. CHOICES: Yes or No

i. 29. Which degree(s) do you have?

j. a. CHOICES: Certificate, Associate, Bachelor, Masters, Doctoral

k. 30. Did you switch majors in college?

- i. a. CHOICES: Yes or No
- m. 31. From what to what and when (freshman, sophomore, junior or senior year)?
  - n. a. Character count is 300 maximum, approximately 25 words.
- o. 32. What academic services/resources did you use on campus?
  - p. a. Character count is 300 maximum, approximately 25 words.
- q. 33. How did these help your performance/creativity?
  - r. a. Character count is 300 maximum, approximately 25 words.
- s. 34. Do you think college prepared you to be a designer?
  - t. a. CHOICES: Yes or No
- u. 35. Did you have a mentor, who was a designer?
  - v. a. CHOICES: Yes—while in high school, Yes—while in college, Yes—as my career began, No—not at all

#### **Section 4: About your design journey**

- a. 36. Were there any challenges and or roadblocks to your becoming a designer?
  - b. a. CHOICES: Yes or No
- c. 37. Describe some of the challenges and or roadblocks to becoming a designer.
  - d. a. Character count is 300 maximum.
- e. 38. Now that you are a practicing designer, what do you think would have improved your educational experience?
  - f. a. Character count is 300 maximum.
- g. 39. When was the first time you heard what design/designer was?
  - h. a. CHOICES: elementary school, 0 - 11 years old, middle school, 11 - 14 years old, high school, 14 - 19 years old, vocational/college/university, 18+ years old, 18+ years of age

- i. i. When did you first start thinking about becoming a designer?
- ii. 40. Where was the first time you heard what design/designer was?
- i. a. CHOICES: In a school, with a teacher; In a school, with a guidance counselor; In a school, with an administrator; In the home, with a parent; In the home, with a family member, In the home, with a family friend; With a parent; With a family member; With a family friend; At a library; In a movie; On television; On the internet; Other
- j. 41. What or who was the single most-important influencer of your becoming a designer?
- k. a. Character count is 300 maximum, approximately 25 words.
- l. 42. What industry specific design organizations are you involved in? What is your involvement? And how long have you been involved?
- m. a. Character count is 300 maximum, approximately 25 words.
- n. 43. Would you encourage young students to think about choosing a design-related career?
- o. a. CHOICES: Yes or No
- p. 44. What advice do you have for youth who are thinking about choosing a design-related career?
- q. a. Character count is 300 maximum.
- r. 45. Do you want to share your insight on the proposed strategic solution? <**If yes, jump to Q46. If no, jump to Q-END of survey>**
- CHOICES: Yes, I will answer three more questions or No, I would like to stop now

## **Section 5==Intro Design Journey**

- a. 46. Where are you in your design journey?
- b. a. CHOICES: Passage 1 // Consist of grammar school along with extracurricular activities, such as after school programs or out of school activities such as summer camps, non-profits, library, recreational events

and museum programs; Passage 2 // Enrolling and completing a degreed program of study at the college or university level to obtain a one, two or four year degree [or Graduate Level Degree]; during this coursework the student would have an internship opportunity; Passage 3 // Involves becoming a full-time or part-time employee in a design-related business or organization, obtaining independent project work for compensation or developing a legal business venture; Passage 4 // Represents the highest ranking and most influential passage in the design journey that includes decision-making positions such as managers, directors, chief creative officers, faculty members and retirees

- c. 47. Do you wish to move forward on your design journey?
  - d. a. CHOICES: Yes, I am planning to move forward; Yes, Not able to do so at this time; No, I am happy where I am now; No, I do not want to move forward
- e. 48. The following are a list of ideas strategies investigated to date. Please select which one you feel will be the most effective to expose youth to design-related careers.
  - f. a. CHOICES: A public service campaign; A informational website; Academic resources; A design curriculum; Integrated academic lessons; Informational videos; Online Design Classes; Portfolio Reviews; Archives for written works by designers; A traveling exhibit; Professional Associations; Entrepreneurship Programs; Design recognition/Achievement awards, A conference; Summer/Afterschool Design Programs
- g. 49. Would you be interested in...

Please check all that are applicable to your current situation.

  - h. a. Being a Mentor to a student
  - i. b. Reviewing Student Portfolios

- j. c. Visiting a school to talk about design
  - k. d. Providing an internship opportunity
  - l. e. Providing a job shadowing opportunity
  - m. f. Being contacted as a subject matter expert\
  - n. g. None of the above
  - o. h. Other
- p. 50. Would you like to continue to be involved in this study to participate in the final strategic solution?
- q. a. CHOICES: Yes or No
- r. 51. END-That's great to hear! Please leave your name, email and/or a telephone number to be contacted in the future.

Congratulations! You've made it to the end of this survey. Your time and thoughts are greatly appreciated. Thank you for participating.

## Survey Results

3/17/2016

General Report - Diversity in Design

### The Ohio State University Consent to Participate in Research Study

**Title:** Design Journeys: Strategies for Increasing Diversity in Design Disciplines

**Researcher:** Jacinda Walker

372 out of 372 people answered this question



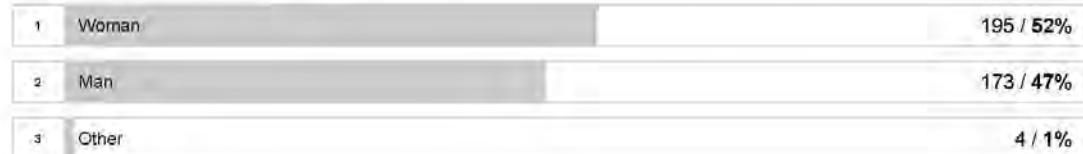
You cannot be part of this important research without consenting to previous stated terms. Please select "I accept" to give your consent and continue.

0 out of 372 people answered this question



Thank you for your consent. Let's begin. Tell me about you and your background. What gender do you identify with?

372 out of 372 people answered this question



What is your ethnicity?

372 out of 372 people answered this question



8 Native American

0 / 0%

**What is your current age range?**

372 out of 372 people answered this question

**What is your current design discipline?**

372 out of 372 people answered this question



12	Multi-media	7 / 2%
13	Videography	4 / 1%
14	Exhibition	2 / 1%
---	Other	3 / 1%

**How long have you worked in design?**

372 out of 372 people answered this question

1	1-4 years	116 / 31%
2	10-15 years	73 / 20%
3	5-9 years	72 / 19%
4	16-20 years	54 / 15%
5	21-30 years	33 / 9%
6	30+ years	24 / 6%

**Have you worked in another design discipline?**

372 out of 372 people answered this question

1	No	188 / 51%
2	Yes	184 / 49%

**If yes, which other design discipline?**

184 out of 372 people answered this question

1	Graphic	56 / 30%
2	Website	24 / 13%
3	Design Education (Teacher etc.)	15 / 8%
4	User Interface	15 / 8%
5	Photography	11 / 6%
6	Illustration	10 / 5%

7	Design Research	8 / 4%
8	Architecture	7 / 4%
9	Industrial	7 / 4%
10	Fashion	6 / 3%
11	Other	6 / 3%
12	Exhibitions	4 / 2%
13	Interactive media	4 / 2%
14	Multi-Media	4 / 2%
***	Other	7 / 4%

#### How would you describe your family's philosophy on education?

367 out of 372 people answered this question

1	You're going to college	263 / 72%
2	Go to school	45 / 12%
3	Other	26 / 7%
4	Just graduate high school	19 / 5%
5	Learn a trade	14 / 4%

#### As a child (18 and under) were you raised in a home primarily with one parent or both parents?

367 out of 372 people answered this question

1	Both parents	250 / 68%
2	One parent	93 / 25%
3	Other	16 / 4%
4	Extended family member(s)	8 / 2%

#### What role did your parents play in your education?

370 out of 372 people answered this question

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4/12

3/17/2016

General Report - Diversity in Design

1	Very Active — Saw that you went to school and received an education, also participated in school activities	179 / 48%
2	Active — Saw that you went to school and received an education, but did not participate in school activities	161 / 44%
3	Inactive — Didn't talk about education or school much	15 / 4%
4	Neutral — Didn't matter either way	15 / 4%

Is either one of your parents, a sibling or other family member, an artist, designer or creative person?

372 out of 372 people answered this question

1	No	210 / 56%
2	Yes	162 / 44%

Did you have design activities at your elementary school?

372 out of 372 people answered this question

1	No	232 / 62%
2	Yes	140 / 38%

Did you participate in those activities?

140 out of 372 people answered this question

1	Yes	136 / 97%
2	No	4 / 3%

Did you have design activities in your middle and/or high school art class(es)?

371 out of 372 people answered this question

1	Yes	237 / 64%
2	No	134 / 36%

Did you participate in those activities?

249 out of 372 people answered this question

1	Yes	226 / 91%
2	No	23 / 10%

No**Did you graduate from high school?**

371 out of 372 people answered this question

 Yes

369 / 99%

 No

2 / 1%

**Did you obtain a GED?**

2 out of 372 people answered this question

 Yes

2 / 100%

 No

0 / 0%

**Did you have a portfolio when you graduated from high school?**

370 out of 372 people answered this question

 No

241 / 65%

 Yes

129 / 35%

**Do you think high school prepared you to be a designer?**

369 out of 372 people answered this question

 No

290 / 79%

 Yes

79 / 21%

**Did your parents push or encourage you to attend college?**

370 out of 372 people answered this question

 Yes

323 / 87%

 No

47 / 13%

**Did you attend college?**

370 out of 372 people answered this question

[https://diversityindesign.typeform.com/report/EuZ3CB/NWgt?typeform\\_print=1&typeform\\_cache=0](https://diversityindesign.typeform.com/report/EuZ3CB/NWgt?typeform_print=1&typeform_cache=0)

6/12

3/17/2016

General Report - Diversity in Design



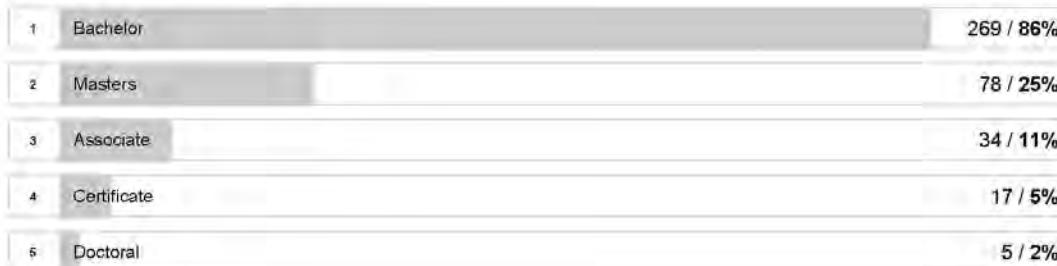
Do you have a college degree?

367 out of 372 people answered this question



Which degree(s) do you currently have?

312 out of 372 people answered this question



Did you switch majors in college?

312 out of 372 people answered this question



Which career services did you use on campus? Please check all that are applicable.

308 out of 372 people answered this question



5	No, I did not participate in any career services	83 / 27%
6	Career counseling/planning	72 / 23%
7	Interview preparation	65 / 21%
8	Other career services	29 / 9%
9	Job shadowing	15 / 5%

**Do you think college prepared you to be a designer?**

309 out of 372 people answered this question

1	Yes	196 / 63%
2	No	113 / 37%

**Did you have a mentor, who was a designer?**

364 out of 372 people answered this question

1	No—not at all	166 / 46%
2	Yes—while in college	93 / 26%
3	Yes—as my career began	85 / 23%
4	Yes—while in high school	20 / 5%

**Were there any challenges and or roadblocks to your becoming a designer?**

366 out of 372 people answered this question

1	Yes	251 / 69%
2	No	115 / 31%

**When was the first time you heard what design/designer was?**

361 out of 372 people answered this question

1	High school, 14 - 18 years old	138 / 38%
2	Vocational/college/university, 18+ years old	75 / 21%

3	Middle school, 11 - 14 years old	55 / 15%
4	18+ years of age	54 / 15%
5	Elementary school, 0 - 11 years old	39 / 11%

**Where was the first time you heard what design/designer was?**

355 out of 372 people answered this question

1	In a school, with a teacher	94 / 26%
2	Other	50 / 14%
3	On the internet	37 / 10%
4	In the home, with a parent	29 / 8%
5	With a school friend	27 / 8%
6	In the home, with a family member	20 / 6%
7	On television	18 / 5%
8	At a library	17 / 5%
9	In a school, with a guidance counselor	14 / 4%
10	In the home, with a family friend	12 / 3%
11	In a movie	9 / 3%
12	With a family friend	9 / 3%
13	With a parent	8 / 2%
14	With a family member	7 / 2%
15	In a school, with an administrator	4 / 1%

**Would you encourage young students to think about choosing a design-related career?**

363 out of 372 people answered this question

1	Yes	347 / 96%
2	No	16 / 4%

**Do you want to share your insight on the proposed strategic solution?**

353 out of 372 people answered this question

1	Yes, I will answer five more questions	252 / 69%
2	No, I would like to stop now	111 / 31%

**Where are you in your design journey?**

227 out of 372 people answered this question

1	Passage 3 // Involves becoming a full-time or part-time employee in a design-related business or organization, obtaining independent project work for compensation or developing a legal business venture	117 / 52%
2	Passage 4 // Represents the highest ranking and most influential passage in the design journey that includes decision-making positions such as managers, directors, chief creative officers, faculty members and retirees	81 / 36%
3	Passage 2 // Enrolling and completing a degree program of study at the college or university level to obtain a one, two or four year degree [or Graduate Level Degree]; during this coursework the student would have an internship opportunity.	25 / 11%
4	Passage 1 // Consist of grammar school along with extracurricular activities, such as after school programs or out of school activities such as summer camps, non-profits, library, recreational events and museum programs	4 / 2%

**Do you wish to move forward on your design journey?**

244 out of 372 people answered this question

1	Yes, I am planning to move forward	204 / 84%
2	No, I am happy where I am now	21 / 9%
3	Yes, Not able to do so at this time	15 / 6%
4	No, I do not want to move forward	4 / 2%

The following list of ideas are the strategies investigated to date. Please select the top three ideas you feel would be the most effective to expose youth to design-related careers.

252 out of 372 people answered this question

1	Summer/Afterschool Design Programs	169 / 67%
2	A design curriculum	121 / 48%
3	Integrated academic lessons	84 / 33%
4	Entrepreneurship Programs	50 / 20%

5	Academic resources	48 / 19%
6	Portfolio Reviews	44 / 17%
7	A traveling exhibit	40 / 16%
8	Online Design Classes	35 / 14%
9	A public service campaign	33 / 13%
10	An informational website	33 / 13%
11	Professional conferences	26 / 10%
12	Informational videos	23 / 9%
13	Professional Associations	21 / 8%
14	Design recognition/Achievement awards	18 / 7%
15	Archives for written works by designers	10 / 4%

Would you be interested in...

240 out of 372 people answered this question

1	Being a Mentor to a student	147 / 61%
2	Reviewing Student Portfolios	145 / 60%
3	Visiting a school to talk about design	143 / 60%
4	Being contacted as a subject matter expert	128 / 53%
5	Providing a job shadowing opportunity	57 / 24%
6	Providing an internship opportunity	43 / 18%
7	None of the above	25 / 10%
8	Other	4 / 2%

Would you like to continue to be involved in this study to participate in the final strategic solution?

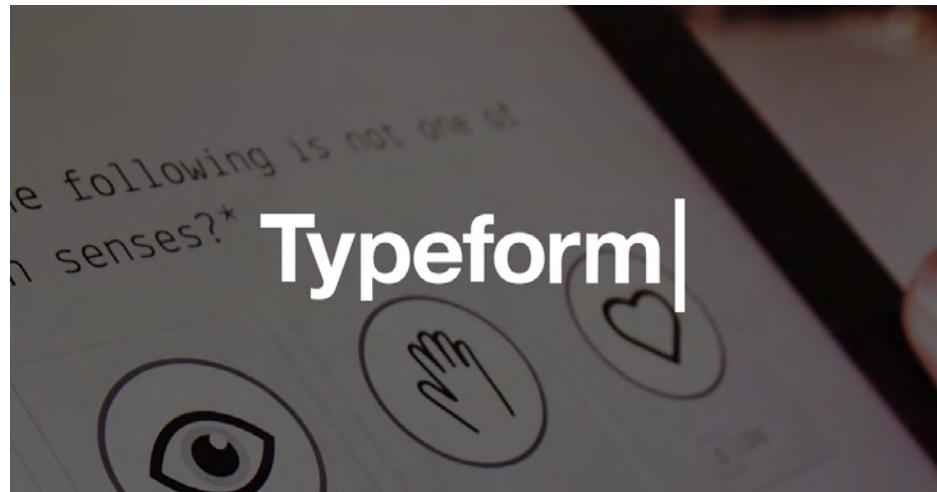
242 out of 372 people answered this question

1	Yes	183 / 76%
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[https://diversityindesign.typeform.com/report/EuZ3CB/NWgt?typeform.print=1&typeform.cache=0](https://diversityindesign.typeform.com/report/EuZ3CB/NWgt?typeform/print=1&typeform_cache=0)

12/12

## Survey Figures



*Figure 45: Homepage of Typeform.com the app used to create the electronic survey*

The opening page of an electronic survey created with Typeform.com. The background is black with a grid of small, light brown human figures. In the center, there is a white rectangular area containing text. The text reads: "Design Journeys: Strategies for Increasing Diversity in Design Disciplines". Below this, in a smaller font, is the message: "Hello and thank you for sharing your time and information." At the bottom, there is a paragraph of text: "This survey collects basic demographic data, details about your industry experiences, and then provides you an opportunity to share your insight on the proposed strategic solution. Before you can begin you will need to provide your consent." The overall design is minimalist and modern.

*Figure 46: The opening page of the electronic survey created with Typeform.com*

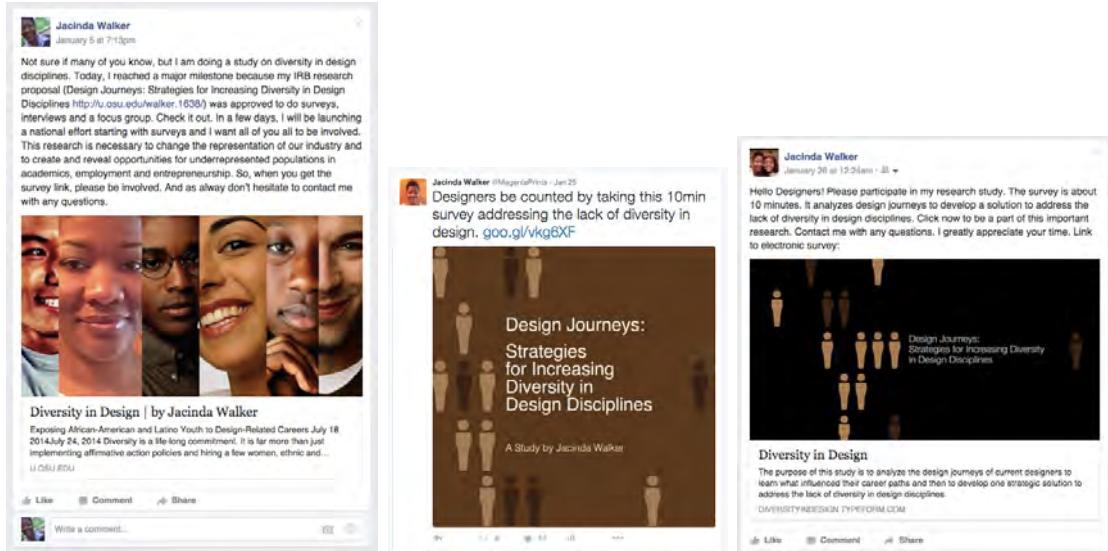


Figure 47: Screen clippings of various social media post



Figure 48: Soliciting for survey participants at local design event

## **Interview Participant Messages**

### **INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT EMAIL/LETTER and PHONE SCRIPT:**

#### **EMAIL/LETTER SCRIPT**

**Email Subject Line:** Design strategies survey about diversity in design

Hello <NAME HERE>

I hope this email reaches you in great spirits. I learned of you from < NAME OF SOCIAL MEDIA WEBSITE OR PERSONAL NETWORK>. My name is Jacinda Walker; I am a graduate student at The Ohio State University, in the Design Research and Development Program. I am conducting a study to analyze the design journeys of current African-American and Latino designers to learn what influenced their career paths and then to develop a strategic solution to address the lack of diversity in design disciplines. I am contacting you to ask if I can schedule an interview with you for my research. Interviews will be approximately 45 minutes and can take place face-to-face or via free video conferencing software.

After your review, please let me know when is a good time we can schedule your interview. I can be reached at 216-282-4632 or via email at [walker.1638@osu.edu](mailto:walker.1638@osu.edu) to schedule a good time to talk. I look forward to hearing back from you soon.

Thank you,

jw

## **PHONE SCRIPT**

**ME:** Hello < NAME OF PERSON>! This is Jacinda Walker. How are you? I hope this is a good time to reach you to talk with you about my participating in my research. {Await reply. If yes, continue. If no reschedule call and thank them for their time}

**ME:** As I mentioned, I'm a graduate student at The Ohio State University, in the Design Research and Development Program. I am conducting a study to analyze the design journeys of current African-American and Latino designers to learn what influenced their career paths and then to develop a strategic solution to address the lack of diversity in design disciplines. I am calling to ask if I can schedule an interview with you for my research? Interviews will be approximately 45 minutes and can take place face-to-face or via free video conferencing software. {Await reply. If yes, schedule interview. If no, thank them for their time and end call}

**ME:** Great! Please let me know a couple of times that are best for you. I appreciate your time and for being part of my research. Let me know of any questions. I look forward to our interview.

## **END CALL**

## **Interview Script Guide**

### **Script Guide for Interview**

#### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this study is to analyze the design journeys of current African-American and Latino designers to learn what influenced their career paths and then to develop one strategic solution to address the lack of diversity in design disciplines. Interviews will document the design journey and discover any influencers along the way. They will be conducted either face to face or via free video conferencing software. Interview questions will gather the basic demographic facts and will then focus primarily on the career path and any specific strategies used during the design journey.

#### **Steps of Interview**

- 1. 1. Gather background information in the beginning of the face-to-face or video conference meeting**
- 2. 2. Have dialogue with interviewee <sup>(45 minutes)</sup> (This activity is anticipated to take 45-60 minutes each, face to face or via free video conferencing software in a single day.)**

#### **Steps of Interview part 1: (Gather background information of interviewee)**

- 1. 1. Full name and title**
- 2. 2. Ethnicity**

- a. a. African-American, Asian, Bi-racial, Caucasian, Indian, Latino, Native American
- b. 3. Current design discipline?
- c. 4. Highest level of education received
- d. a. Certificate, Associates, Bachelors, Masters, Doctoral
- e. 5. Any online bios, age info or articles about the interviewee

**Steps of Interview #2 (Have dialogue with interviewee <sup>(45 minutes)</sup>)?**

- a. 1. Bio— (I will read a short bio I created based on the outline above.) Are the background fact I gathered accurate? Tell me more about your background.
- b. a. PROBE QUESTIONS (only ask if relevant)
  - a. 2. Can you tell me more about your formative years?
  - b. a. PROBE QUESTIONS (only ask if relevant)
    - As a child (18 and under) were you raised in a home with one parent or both parents?
    - Are either one of your parents (or a sibling) an artist/designer/creative person?
    - How would you describe your family's philosophy on education?
    - Were there art and/or design activities at your elementary or high school? Please describe.
    - Did you have design in your middle/high school art class(s)? (Vocational, cooperative education, capstone etc.)
    - Did your parents push or encourage you to attend college? -or- What role did your parents play in your education?

i. 3. Tell me more about how you learned about design. How did you making a decision to become a designer?

b. a. PROBE QUESTIONS (only ask if relevant)

- Where was the first time you heard what design/designer was?  
Was it in a school, in the home, with a family friend, by a parent?
- When did you first start thinking about majoring in your design discipline?
- What communication tools (if any) were used to assist in this decision?
- What was the single most-important influencer of you becoming a designer?

a. 4. Now lets talk about your education to become a designer.

b. a. PROBE QUESTIONS (only ask if relevant)

- Did you get a scholarship (art, design, or other) to attend college?
- a.  Did you have a portfolio upon graduating from high school?
- b.  Did you switch majors in college? If so, from what to what and when (what year (freshman, sophomore, junior or senior)?
- c.  Do you think high school and/or college prepared you to be a Designer?
- d.  Did you have a mentor/advisor?
- e.  What academic services/resources did you use on campus? How did these help your performance/creativity?
- f.  What were some of your pitfalls or roadblocks to becoming a designer?

a. 5. How could your design journey have been different (or better)?

b. a. PROBE QUESTIONS (only ask if relevant)

- a.  What and/or how could the path to becoming a designer been easier?
  - b.  What would have helped you to make the decision to choose a design-related career?
  - c.  Now that you are a practicing designer, what do you think would have improved your performance/creativity before your career?
- a. 6. Do you have any final thoughts and what would be your advice for young designers?
- b. a. PROBE QUESTIONS (only ask if relevant)
- How would you encourage young students of color to think about choosing a design-related career?
  - What advice do you have for young students of color thinking about choosing a design-related career?

## **Focus Group Participant Messages**

### **EMAIL/LETTER:**

**Email Subject Line:** Design strategies survey about diversity in design

Hello <NAME HERE>

I hope this email reaches you in great spirits. I learned of you from <NAME OF SOCIAL MEDIA WEBSITE OR PERSONAL NETWORK>. My name is Jacinda Walker; I am a graduate student at The Ohio State University, in the Design Research and Development Program. I am conducting a study to analyze the design journeys of current African-American and Latino designers to learn what influenced their career paths and then to develop a strategic solution to address the lack of diversity in design disciplines. I am contacting you to ask if you would be a participant in my focus group. The Focus group will take place on <DAY TIME AND PLACE> and take approximately 2 hours.

After your review, please let me know if you are able to participate. I can be reached at 216-282-4632 or via email at walker.1638@osu.edu to schedule a good time to talk. I look forward to hearing back from you soon.

Thank you,

jw

## **Focus Group Script and Agenda**

### **Script Guide for Focus Group**

#### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this study is to analyze the design journeys of current African-American and Latino designers to learn what influenced their career paths and then to develop one strategic solution to address the lack of diversity in design disciplines. This focus group is anticipated to take 1-2 hours in a single day with 3-7 other African-American and Latino youth between the ages of 14-21; to advise on the strategic ideas and a future solution to expose African-American and Latino youth to design-related careers.

#### **AGENDA**

- 1. 1. Say hello/welcome participants (5 minutes)**
- 2. 2. Give tool kit exercise (15 minutes)**
- 3. 3. Describe tool kit exercise and detail what was the influencer (30 minutes)**
- 4. 4. Discuss the strategic ideas and show the design journey diagram (30 minutes)**
- 5. 5. Ask the participants to brainstorm and discuss the feasibility of the proposed strategic solution (30 minutes)**
- 6. 6. Adjourn**

## **MODERATORS AGENDA**

### **1. 1) Say hello/welcome participants (5 minutes)**

- a. a) Hello Everyone
- b) I'm really glad you made it. Thank you for coming to the focus group for Design Journeys: Strategies for Increasing Diversity in Design Disciplines. I will do my best to stay within the 2-hour meeting timeframe. We will have introductions at the end of our first exercise.
- c) You have been invited because each of you expressed an interest in becoming a designer and because you represent the future of the design industry. Today, I want to hear your story and gather more insight about your design decision. This focus group is to help me determine what are the influencers to design related careers, map out your design education and career journey and to discuss the possible tools needed to help underrepresented youth make a decision to go into a design-related careers.
- d) So, we are going to jump right in and begin with your first exercise.

### **a. 2) Give tool kit exercise (15 minutes)**

- b. a) In front of you is an envelope containing materials for your first exercise. I want you to take 15 minutes to create a collage of your design journey. It should start whenever you first learned of design and can go up till about yesterday, if you like. It can talk about family, where you grew up, any impactful moments, things you used and any big education and decisions/opportunities along the way.
  - i. i) Inside you will find paper cutouts of symbols and word tags. I have poster board, glue, scissors, pens, pencils, markers, blocks and legos. When our timer goes off, we will present them and introduce your selves in the process. Please let me know if you have any questions along the way. Begin!

- i. 3) **Describe tool kit exercise and detail what was the influencer was** <sup>(30 minutes)</sup>
- b. a) Our time is up for this exercise, {Begin to tidy up area as they wrap up their map}, lets begin to present. Please take about 3-5 minutes describing your collage. Would anyone like to go first?
  - c. b) Now that each of you have created a collage of your journeys, please take just a couple of minutes to list out what could have made it easier? And what tool(s) would have been helpful to have along the journey. Next I'd like to take a moment to single out by highlighting, any commonalities.

- a. 4) **Discuss the strategic ideas and show the design journey diagram.** <sup>(30 minutes)</sup>
- b. a) Seeing all these maps and having heard all the stories, lets take the next 5-15 minutes to discuss what the “tools” would look like to help solve some of the problems/issues from number #3. And what and how does technology affect it?
  - c. b) I have already asked many adults these same questions and here is what they said you need on your design journey. Do you agree or not and why?
  - d. c) Here is my proposed strategic solution. What are your thoughts? How can I make it better?

- a. 5) **Ask the participants to brainstorm and discuss the feasibility of the proposed strategic solution.** <sup>(30 minutes)</sup>

- b. a) I think I will have them describe the tool and how it would work
- a. 6) **Adjourn**

## Focus Group Figures



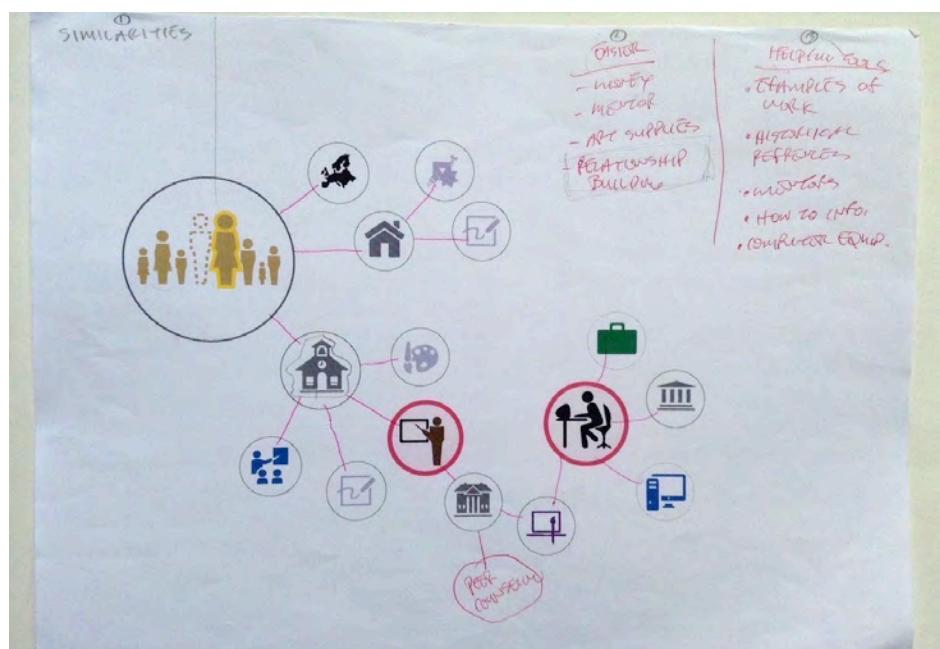
Figure 49: Developing the pieces and part to the focus group tool kit



Figure 50: Toolkit cutouts and supplies for the Focus Group



*Figure 51: Early example of mapping a design journey for underrepresented youth*



*Figure 52: Researches' collage of personal design journey*



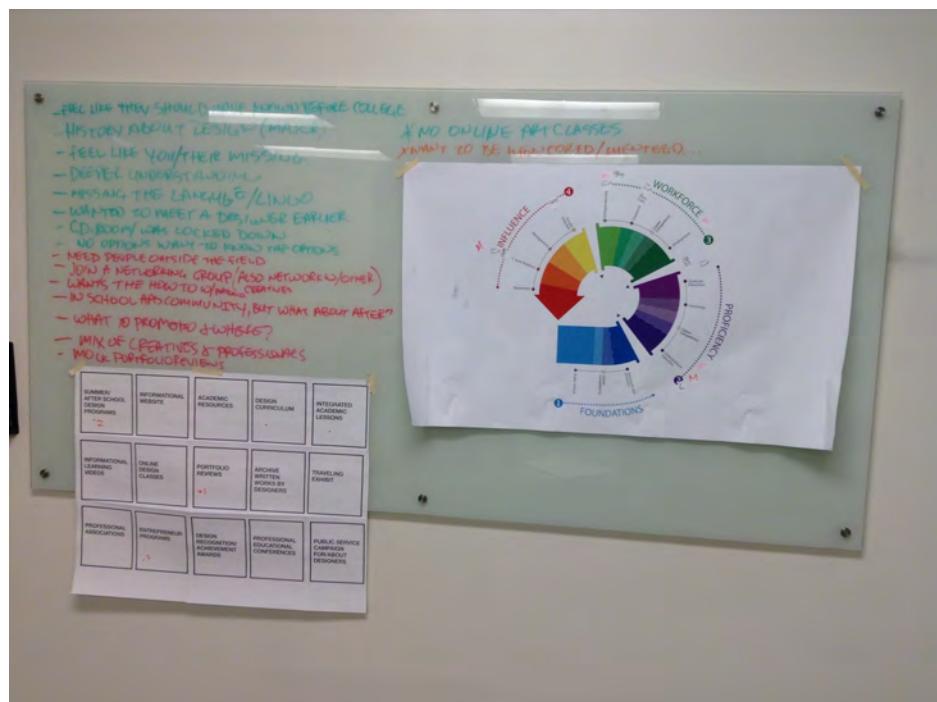
Figure 53A: Focus group participants creating a collage of their design Journey



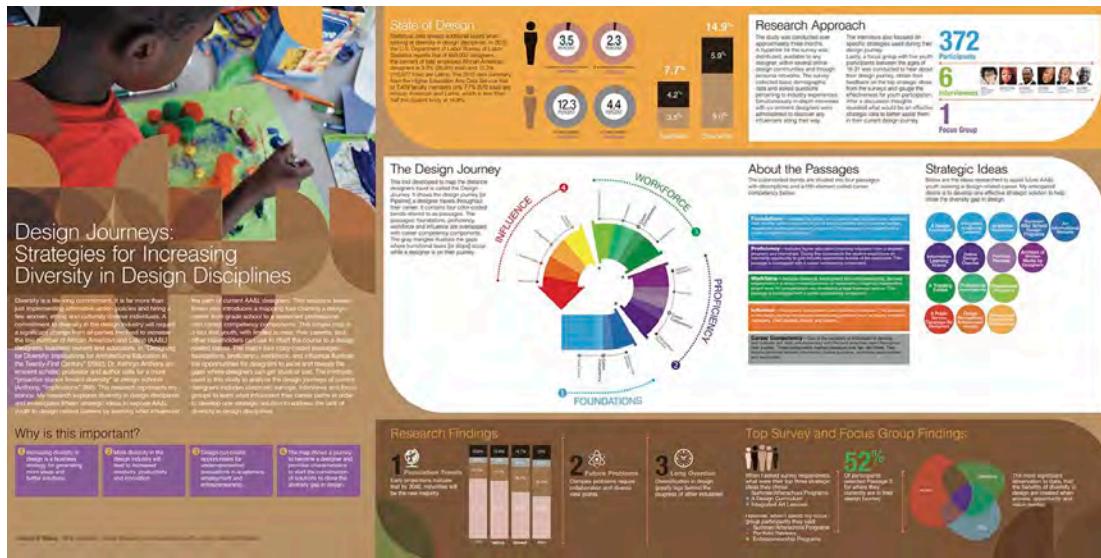
Figure 53B: Focus group participants creating a collage of their design Journey



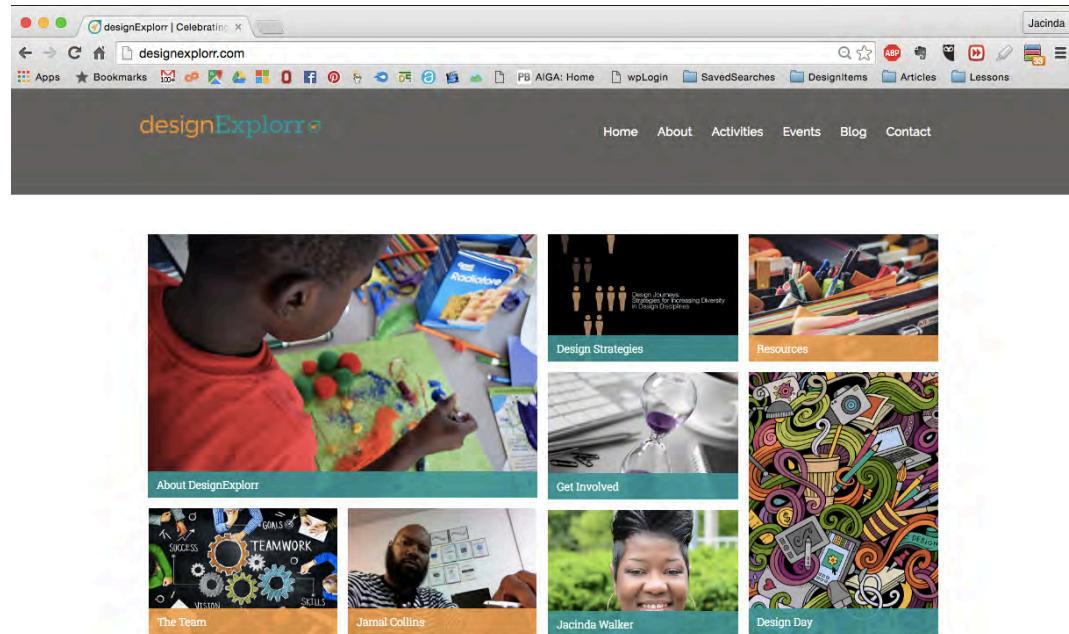
*Figure 53C: Focus group participants creating a collage of their design Journey*



*Figure 54: Posters shown to participants of the Design Journey Map with the 15 Strategic Ideas*



*Figure 55: Spring semester 2016 Design Exhibition poster*



*Figure 56: Home page of the Design Explorr website*

## **Appendix B: Transcripts From Interviews**

## **Interview with Veronica Corzo-Duchardt**

**Ms. Jacinda Walker Interviewing**  
**Ms. Veronica Corzo**

Ms. Veronica Corzo: This one was a while ago. And I really enjoyed just sort of, like, putting together all of the visual problem solving stuff and was kind of hooked from that point on. And so, my school wasn't really a great art school. So, I just took a couple of design classes on my own and ended up switching to advertising communications.

And then I just ended up taking--I took like one graphic design class and then put together a portfolio and from there went and started trying to get internships. So, a lot of my training was kind of on the job.

Ms. Jacinda Walker: Um-hmm.

VC: And then at the beginning internship since my-- going into my junior year and started working as a designer, actually my last year in college, and then from there, I moved to New York, which I grew up right outside of. So, I moved back to New York, and then I ended up getting another internship and, yeah, and then from there, I got a job in the record industry and started working from there.

JW: Do you think that--well, first of all, are either of your parents creative? How did you find out about the-- you said, "No."

VC: Uh-uh.

JW: Was it--?

VC: --Well, no. My dad's a pharmacist. My mom is just a house maker, whatever. But, yeah, I mean no, I was not encouraged to go into a creative field. I was encouraged to be creative as a child. But, both of my parents are immigrants. They both--.

JW: --Where from?

VC: Cuba. So, they're both Cuban exiles. So, I think there was--for me growing up, there was always this sense of you don't go into art unless you're the next Picasso. You need to pick something that is practical and will make you money. So, that's fine if you want to do art on the side. But, that's not a career. So, I never even thought that I could go into it until I was in college. And then I was sort of paying my way. So, I could do whatever I wanted.

So, yeah, I don't think--for me, it wasn't really encouraged as a career path. And I didn't even know what design was until I was in college. I was like what is graphic design? I have no idea.

JW: Was your family big into education?

VC: Yeah, they were big into me getting educated and making sure that I had a career and studied. So, they were always pushing me for that.

JW: But, the art thing just kind of took them by surprise a little bit?

VC: Yeah, yeah. And I don't think that they had the--I mean I didn't know what graphic design was, so they certainly didn't know. And this was--I was in high school. I graduated high school in '97. So, no, I think it was

just like they didn't even know that that was an option.  
And neither did I at the time.

JW: But, how did you find out about it? Because part of looking at the design journey is to be able to pinpoint where your first interaction with design was so that we can eventually say, "Okay, people, here's some places where people come into design. Here's some things that they do. And here's how far in their careers that they go," so that when young people come here, they can have an opportunity to know, oh, okay, I started like this. Here's where I can go. So how did you--?

VC: --Yeah.

JW: --Where were you when you first heard about?  
And, yes, talk to your--.

VC: --So, I took this desktop publishing class that was just like a communication [unintelligible] class in undergrad. And we were just doing newsletters and stuff in Quark Express. And I remember my teacher was like, oh, are you a designer? Because you look like a designer. And I was like I don't even know what that means, but thank you.

I think it was usually because I dressed in all black.  
But--.

JW: --Always the way to spot an artist. They're in black, dark--.

VC: --Yeah, yeah, yeah. Exactly. So, I was--.

JW: --Their hands messy.

VC: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So, I was like, oh, what is this? I don't really know. And I started doing just newsletter layout stuff and just kind of liked putting together images and text and sort of actually putting those

puzzle pieces together. And so, I looked into graphic design. I was like, oh, this is really cool. I was looking at the time at people doing music design, so designing things for tapes and CDs and whatever.

JW: Very popular.

VC: So, I started asking all of my friends who were musicians if I could design their tapes at the time. And so, I did little covers for them and everything. And then I took one graphic design class and put together enough of a portfolio to just sort of start on their and start just being young and somewhat arrogant and being okay, my portfolio, and I'm going to get an internship.

JW: All right. Get a job, damn it.

VC: I don't know--yeah.

JW: Okay. So, what was the moment or what did it look like when you finally said, "Hey, listen, I'm going to do this. I've got to be legit,"? What was that like for you?

VC: I think putting together my--put together a book and then going in to try to get an internship was sort of that moment that cemented it for me where I was like, okay, I'm going to just--I'm going to do this. My school didn't really have a great program, but I was like I think I have this design sensibility and can sort of speak this language.

And I sort of decided to go the advertising copywriting route just because my school was good at that. And then I was like, well, I'll take design classes elsewhere. And I think it was for me also the internship was great because I was around other designers and

realizing, oh, I can do this. This is--graphic design is a little bit of business and a little bit of art too. And I think that there was sort of this interesting mesh for me to sort of--to go into a design studio and see that in action and be like, oh, I could do this.

JW: Were they encouraging? Were they--the designers, you said that you were in a studio--.

VC: --Yeah--.

JW: --Working with others. Were they encouraging? I mean I'm thinking you're pretty young, and you're like--.

VC: --Yeah, they were. They were encouraging, and I had always interned at small studios, which I think was really helpful for me because you get to get your hands dirty in everything because when I worked at big places, everybody has their one job, and that's what they do. So, it was really good for me to work at a small agency and just to sort of see what that was like.

And I don't know. I just really liked it because it--for me, it felt like a career in art that I could have that wasn't tied to me having a brush in my hand or being some sort of amazing illustrator, which I'm not still.

JW: No? Are you serious?

VC: Yeah.

JW: You still say you're not that good of an illustrator?

VC: Yeah, yeah.

JW: Really?

VC: Yeah. I mean I'm not--most of my work is photo-based, and I illustrate to get ideas across, but I'm not an illustrator. So--.

JW: --Well, you know I'm a little nosy. I looked at all of your stuff. So--.

VC: --Oh, okay--.

JW: --I'm just shocked.

VC: Thanks.

JW: Okay. Okay. I'm digressing because I'm personally interested, but I also have to make sure I ask all the right questions.

VC: Sure, sure.

JW: Okay. So, was there a communication tool that you used? Did you--was there something that somebody gave you, or was it a tool that you used to help make the decision?

VC: To become a designer?

JW: Do you--was it a book? Was there a--?

VC: --Yeah, there was no book really. I mean I guess I'm somebody who, once I started getting interested in something, I do start reaching out and looking for all different books and sources. So, I did at the time. It was like David Carson was the hot designer. And so, I did get his book and was looking into that and just seeing, particularly with his stuff, it's so expressive artistically as opposed to this Paul Rand very design without emotion.

So, for me, I mean I sort of gravitated towards that. There was no book. I just sort of started seeking it out.

JW: So, then what was the influencer?

VC: The influence?

JW: No, no, the influencer, the thing. You talked about, hey, listen, some people indicated that I had a

design sensibility, but there were no tools to help you make this decision.

VC: Right.

JW: So, what was the influencer that said--it wasn't a tool. It wasn't a parent. You didn't have a job already. So, what was the thing that--.

VC: --Yeah, I had a friend who was a designer.

JW: Oh, okay.

VC: And I talked to them about it. And so, having somebody that I knew that was sort of in this career made it feel a little bit more accessible to me.

JW: More accessible. Okay, perfect, perfect. Can we talk a little bit more about your education? You told me that you went to school. You went to college. What is that--what's your educational degrees and that piece of it?

VC: Yeah, so, I went to William [sp] University for undergrad, and I started off in psychology. But, then I switched to communications, advertising. After that, I did my MFA at the school the Art Institute in Chicago in Visual Communication. I mean I worked for five years in between that. But, as far as my degrees are concerned, I have a MFA in Visual Communication and then a second MFA in Writing.

JW: So, I know that's a lot.

VC: So, I have a lot of student loan debt is what I'm saying.

JW: Definitely.

VC: Yeah.

JW: Well, then, okay, so, then did you have a mentor? Did you have a mentor?

VC: Into--in what sense? For working as a designer, or--?

JW: --Um-hmm. You talked about you had this friend who was a designer. Were they--would you consider them your mentor, or they were just somebody who was already in it so they could share?

VC: Yeah, they were somebody who was already in it and can share. I had some--I had a really good teacher when I was an undergrad who was very encouraging to me and sort of--and saw something in my work and really helped push. She was the one who hooked me up with one of my internships later on and was really great. And I did an independent study with her and everything.

So, that--along the way, my teachers were always very encouraging to me.

JW: That piece of it, and then what do you think were any pitfalls or problems to getting to this place?

VC: I mean I think, me, I always felt like not having a degree in design was going to hold me back. But, then I think I realized your portfolio counts for a lot, and your enthusiasm, and your ability or willingness to show up and do work is really huge. For me, I immediately tried to figure out how I can insert myself in the design world. So, I tried to go to AIGA events and look for these types of things that would be supported.

And then once I got to the point where I was working in design and went to New York, then I became more in the design scene. And that was--.

JW: --Even more credibility.

VC: Yeah. I had more credibility, and I was working with other people who were either photographers or illustrators or designers and were in the creative field. So, that was my world. But, I think that not having a design degree felt, for me--I thought I missed out in art school basically. That was kind of like, oh, no, I don't-- I didn't know how to see properly what I should be seeing.

But, I would say that and taking an internship and not getting paid. That's a big downfall. I just worked in coffee shops and things like that. Yeah.

JW: Unpaid internship, that's another big pitfall. I get that.

VC: Yeah.

JW: Do you think--hold up. Okay. So, the pitfalls were more so things that you had internalized about your abilities?

VC: Yeah.

JW: Not necessarily tangible things?

VC: Right.

JW: They were just internal things because of your background and your education. And so, it may have been a little bit of a confidence maybe kind of going on right there?

VC: Yeah.

JW: What do you think would have made your journey better or different? What do you think would have been like, yes? I mean, yes, you talk about getting this design degree. But, now that you know all these designers, maybe not?

VC: Yeah.

JW: Or what do you--?

VC: --Right. I mean I think knowing from beginning that design was an option would have been a huge thing for me because I feel like I would have gone into--going to get a design degree from the beginning. And that would have been nice to have that option and to really try out different things. So, I feel like that would have been really helpful for me, and which I think that students have a lot more now.

I feel like people talk about design in a--or maybe it's just because my world. So--.

JW: --And that's going to lead to my next question.

VC: Yeah?

JW: Now that you're way farther than many students are even as far as many professionals, you're a little bit further. What kind of tool would you have wanted? You know what I'm saying?

VC: Yes.

JW: Would you have wanted a book? Would you have wanted a brochure? Would you have wanted a dial-a-designer line? Would you--?

VC: --Yeah. I mean I think a mentorship program would have been really awesome, something where you can talk to somebody who's in the field of design because I think that one thing that was super beneficial about my internships was that you were working with other designers, and you can ask them these really weird questions of what do you do and what did you take? And what designers do you like? And all of those things where you're just like I

don't--you're search on your own, and you can get a lot of crap on the Internet and not really know.

So, I think for me a mentor, a place where I could go and hear people who were designers talking.

JW: Place?

VC: It's something that I try to do now. I go and I give talks, and I've talked in high schools and stuff, since I was somebody who really kind of paved my own path and sort of telling people, hey, this is what you're going to do. You can--.

JW: --A physical place that you could have known. Oh, that I can go learn about design, not--.

VC: Yeah. And I'll say that I had one physical tool, and this was after I graduated, and it was my first internship in New York. There's this book called Le Book. And it is a directory for fashion, and it has all of the art directors and creative houses in New York and LA and Paris.

And so, being a 22-year-old, I was like I'm going to write down the name of every single art director I want to work with, and I'm going to call them on the phone.

JW: Yeah.

VC: Yeah, and I did. I called 40-something places, record labels and [unintelligible] houses and everything. And I got one call back. And that was my first job at BG Records. So--and from there, once I got laid off from there, then I had music contacts and went to other places. So--.

JW: --So, do you--?

VC: --I was really hungry for it.

JW: Now that you are practicing, what type of tool do you--would you like to help further or to move you further in your career or further in your craft?

VC: I would again say mentorships. I think--.

JW: --You want a mentor at this stage in your career?

VC: Would I? Yeah, somebody older. I feel like some of the best--I do have a mentor who is an artist, and it's kind of invaluable to see somebody who's 20 years ahead of you and can give you a sense of the things that are important and what really matters and give you some of the ebb and flow, let you know that what you're struggling with is normal, just the reality of things. I think it's really invaluable at any age.

JW: No, that's very--I think that sometimes we think we've arrived and we don't need a mentor anymore. So, it's always really refreshing as I'm talking to more seasoned designers they want a mentor still too.

VC: Yeah, yeah.

JW: Just like a young kid, they're like I want one too.

VC: Yeah. I think we build our communities, and luckily now, yeah, I have a lot of friends who are designers. And so--but, I also have a relationship with somebody who's a lot older than me and is an artist. And it's so nice to get a sense of, oh, okay, you still struggle with this. This is how it goes, or I shouldn't worry about this kind of bullshit. That's nice.

JW: No, no, absolutely. So, then what type of tool would you recommend to be developed to help in this journey process? And just think about what your journey was, and

we talked about a mentor. But, what type of--what kind of tool would you have wanted?

VC: I mean I think a comprehensive Web site that gave me resources of books, of organizations and different areas that you can join, of design studios in your area, nonprofit organizations that can help you with career stuff in your area. And then, yeah, if there was a tool that could also hook you up with a mentor in your area, I think that that would be really cool.

JW: Like a match-making tool?

VC: Like a match-making tool for designers. Yeah, something like that, I think that would be incredibly valuable.

JW: Um-hmm. Do you--we're almost done. I've got two big ones left. Okay. So, you said you do talks for other younger designers and other artists and creatives. What do you tell them?

VC: Yep.

JW: What are some of your words? What are some of the things that you tell them?

VC: I tell them that they need to be hungry for it and put in the work, but also that they need to figure out--if they want to do something, they have to figure out how to pack together their own path. Even if the tools aren't completely available to them, to figure out how you can grab a tool from here or half a tool from there and put these together to get what you need. So, I tell them a lot to also just to show up, and if there are things in your area, to show up to them. And it'll be awkward at first, but the more you show up, the more you'll know people. And

the more you know people, the more you can get embedded into those things.

I do tell them that it's okay to work for free sometimes. If they want to break into a particular niche of design, sometimes you need to do some free work to have some portfolio stuff to show, and it pays off in the end. I mean don't be dumb about it. But--.

JW: --Yeah, don't stay there for 35 years.

VC: Yeah, exactly.

JW: But, six months of your time.

VC: So--.

JW: --Small drop in the bucket when you look at a lifetime.

VC: Exactly, yeah. And so, I do say that if there's a particular thing that you really want to work in, to go for that. I've also given the advice to work in small places because you do get a better sense of--everybody does a little bit of everything. And I think that's really useful when you're starting out to get a sense of what you want to really work on.

JW: All right. So, don't try to go get a job at IBM?

VC: Yes. Yeah, because I think at IBM, you're not going to--you can be in one department. You can do interaction design for this one particular small piece, and then you're not going to really talk to the other people because it's a huge company. But, if you're at a small firm, everybody gets their hands dirty. And it's a really great way to really figure out where you want to fit in. And then you might be like forget this. I want to go to IBM. That's fine, but it's a good way to start out.

JW: True, true, true. And then do you interact or are you able to interact with a lot of students of color because of your descent, because you are Cuban? Do a lot of them come to you?

VC: Yeah. I mean I get some more students coming to me. So, I've taught as well. And so, I--depending on where I teach, I get some more students. They come to me and talk about those things. And that's really great. Not enough, I want--I wish there was just a lot more representation of diverse students in classroom and conferences and everything.

But, I do usually get people coming up to me and talking to me about those things.

JW: Do you advise them any differently than you would students that are in your class? Because sometimes when we're talking to our class, we may say one thing. But, we're--.

VC: --Yeah.

JW: In those intimate, personal relationships that we've developed, it might be a different message.

VC: I think yeah. I think I pull the curtain back a little bit more about the how it's hard and people--a lot of people are like, oh, well, you've done so much, and you get to work with really cool clients. And you do a lot of work in cultural institutions and blah, blah, blah. And I'm like, yeah, but you know what? I don't make a lot of money. I don't. I don't. I still live paycheck to paycheck. And I'm 37 years old. And I barely have any retirement or whatever, nothing.

JW: Amen, sister.

VC: Right? And I have a huge amount of student loan debt, and I'm not complaining about that. It's just that's a choice I've made to work on the kind of things that I want to work on. And that's--I mean it's neither good nor bad. It's just the reality of what I've chosen. So, it's just like I do try to also tell students to--what people present online isn't always what is a reality anymore. And you can put up a really nice Website and act like you have everything together, and you might not know that that person has a day job.

So, just to be aware that there's also--there's a lot of privilege around, but there's also a lot of stuff behind the scenes you're not seeing.

JW: I like that, lots of privilege on the front end of design. It looks pretty.

VC: It looks pretty, yeah. But, you don't know. It's like, oh, your husband's an investment banker? That's awesome. Cool. That's how you have the money to put together that book you just launched. Awesome. Now I know.

JW: I like that a lot. I'm going to definitely use that one, lots of privilege on the front end of design.

VC: Yeah.

JW: Do you--my last series of questions are really just going to be about what--you talk about the advice that you share with your students. What type of career advice would you share? This career, it's more than just networking. So, how do you balance the life? And you said you're married.

VC: Let's see. How do I balance?

JW: Yeah, how do you--do you balance? Maybe you should start there. Do you balance?

VC: Yeah, I don't balance. No, no, I do a good job I think, as much as I want to. Both me and my wife are people who are very invested in our careers and our work. We both love our work. So, we work a lot. But, we also love our relationship. So, we try to make that [unintelligible]--.

JW: --Make that fit.

VC: Yeah. And we support each other in that. So, that's great and I think really, really important. I have a spouse who supports me even though I'm not pulling in a lot of money and vice versa and is very supportive of, yeah, I turned down that big job because that one is just going to suck your soul. You're not going to be happy. So, forget it. It's not worth it. And that's huge.

So, finding somebody that supports you in that way, but I think that some of the advice of the professional life is thinking about what you want to give up. I've chosen not to go work at a huge agency or a huge firm, even though I could. With the amount of years I've been working and my experience, I could be making a lot more money.

But, I like my life. I like my freedom. I like to be able to say, "Fuck it. I'm going to work from a coffee shop today," because that's what I need, because I need to get out of my house. And I don't need to be sitting in an office. And so, I've sort of accepted the consequences of what that is, but I don't think that I would be a happy person if I was just like just working on somebody else's stuff all the time.

JW: Other creatives have. Other creatives--.

VC: --And that's totally fine. And also, it's cool if you want to go do that for a while. And I mean I've worked in places. And I've done that for a while too. But, it's just like there are different kinds of life that you could have as a designer. There's not one way to do it.

JW: I like that. That one I really like here. Do/be a designer. I'm going to put that.

VC: Yeah.

JW: Well, those are the kind of groups of questions. I will send you the link to the electronic survey.

VC: Great.

JW: And so, you'll see a lot of these questions. And there's a portion in the survey that asks if you want to be involved in what the final solution might be.

VC: Okay. Great.

JW: So, if you want to do that, check yes, and leave me your e-mail address. And then--excuse me--I plan on writing and publishing. And so, I should be done and graduation, God willing, June or July. So, it'll be coming out then. And I'm hopeful to be able to have a Web site created so I can kind of share more of this. And so, I'll make sure that I keep you posted because I'll use a lot of that.

And since I did record our interview, I'll be able to quote you perfectly. And you'll be officially cited, so that's wonderful. Do you have anything else you might want to add or any--hey, when you're looking at a design journey, you should?

VC: Yeah. I don't know what I would say if you're looking at a design journey. I mean I would say to be flexible and to really work hard as far as putting yourself out there and doing good work and learning. Continue to learn. I feel like I've never stopped learning. I'm constantly trying to learn things. And that's part of what I think is really fun about design. We get to put our hands in a lot of different disciplines.

And so, that can be really exciting and fulfilling. But, I would say, yeah, also to be flexible because I feel like I started my career off thinking I wanted to do films and movie stuff. And I ended up going into a bunch of different realms. And so, I think enjoying yourself and not being afraid to do--to change things up and not sticking to the one plan you had.

JW: This has been wonderful. This has been wonderful, wonderful, wonderful.

VC: Great.

JW: Tons of good stuff. Well, please keep me posted. I'm going to send you the link for the survey, for the electronic survey. And you're welcome to put whatever information in it you like.

VC: Okay. Great. I'm really excited to [unintelligible].

## **Interview with Eric Anderson**

**Ms. Jacinda Walker Interviewing  
Mr. Eric Anderson**

**Ms. Jacinda Walker:** Your consent form.

**Mr. Eric Anderson:** You're pretty diligent about getting consent. Good for you.

**JW:** Well they make us. And I can't tell if it's a me thing or if they do this for everybody. So, I really want to believe that they do this for everybody.

**EA:** They're supposed to be doing it for everybody.

**JW:** Yes. So actually, I feel really, I'm really glad that you took the time to kind of chat with me. I've been reading a little bit about you--.

**EA:** --Okay--.

**JW:** And I wanted to kind of find out first of all, did you take the survey?

**EA:** I did take the survey.

**JW:** You did? How far did you go?

**EA:** I went through it.

**JW:** Did you answer the last five questions to see the design journey?

**EA:** Yes.

**JW:** Okay. All right. We're going to have a great interview.

**EA:** I didn't quite fully get it, but I did have questions.

**JW:** Excellent. Well I'll be happy to explain it to you.

**EA:** Okay.

**JW:** So, for the record, I need you to say your name and your title. And those pieces so that I can do this the official way.

**EA:** All right. Eric Anderson. Associate Professor of Design, Carnegie Mellon University.

**JW:** Excellent. Well, I think that in reading your work we have lots of common friends. So of course they all sent me looking for you. So my thesis advisor is Paul Meaney. And I'm down here with Brian Stone and Dr. Mayo. And they are like "Oh my gosh! You're looking for a black, male educator. We've got just the guy for you." He was like "He was going to take forever returning your call, but." They said "He is the one." And so.

**EA:** Don't believe the hype.

**JW:** No. No, no you have an extensive bio. It was very impressive. When I finish growing up, I hope to have something that wonderful put together. Highly impressed.

I wanted to kind of hear a little bit about how you came to design, a little bit about your formative years. And then, maybe talk with you a little bit more about your decision making process to be a designer.

**EA:** Okay. So you want from the beginning?

**JW:** You may define what the beginning is. I won't ask you to point a number to it. You may.

**EA:** Well, specifics of design. I didn't know much about, if anything about design until my senior year in high school. So, I had, I went to an art magnet high

school in Philadelphia. And so, I think I was pretty good as a artist. But it was really [inaudible] any design principles, even though we didn't call it design. It was more [unintelligible] and art. And so, I had done very well in my schooling there.

And in my senior year, when it was time to make decisions as to going to college. And I don't come from a family who have a lot of people who have attended college. There wasn't a whole lot of insight from family members. I had one uncle who was probably five or six years older than I was, and he had went to college. And he was the only one who I had known that lives that close to me. Instead of going to college, so I was aware of the college experience.

And I was also guided by my mother who was a single parent to take that next step. Although, not having been a college graduate herself, I'm not clear from what the next step from her opinion was. But it was like, "Go to school and you need to go to college."

So, the preparation for thinking about next steps was not something that I was attune to. And I had a buddy who was much more diligent, much more informed than I was who did research. And he said, "Hey I want to do industrial design." And I essentially said, "So what's that?" And he shared his research and I said, "Yeah. That sounds good too. That's what I want to do."

So, back then, when you were in an art program, often times you would come out and you would be an illustrator. And so--.

**JW:** --A fine [unintelligible]--.

**EA:** --My thinking was in illustration. And what I decided to--which college I was going to and the decision wasn't very hard because there wasn't really many financial options. So, going away wasn't an option. And I so happened to have one of the best colleges in Philadelphia that I was accepted to. And I went there.

So I had a portfolio because I came out of an art magnet program. And in the foundation year, you might be familiar with foundation years in art colleges.

**JW:** Yeah.

**EA:** Foundation year I took an elective in illustration and I took an elective in industrial design. And I did really well in both. But in illustration, I realized, just like everybody else does for the most part when they come out of high school, being very successful is that you fall into class where you're just another one who came from high school that was pretty successful. So, everybody else has the same kind of talent, if not more.

So, I looked at industrial design. Industrial design was a combination of things I really liked to do. And that was illustrating, although we call it rendering, and making. And so, looking at the competition that was in illustration, looking at the thing that I was even more, had more [unintelligible] passion about within industrial design. I selected industrial design. I studied industrial design at the Philadelphia College of Art.

**JW:** Did you like it? Were you happy?

**EA:** Well, considering I had very little to compare.

**JW:** But you said that this friend of yours helped you to do the research. And his research was good.

**EA:** Yeah. I was happy with my decision.

**JW:** Yes.

**EA:** Absolutely. I was happy with my decision. There was--even from the electives from day one just kind of conceptualizing and making. And actually getting feedback from some of the faculty who were actually teachers in the program of how strong my concepts were. I was not only satisfied with what I was learning but I seemed to be doing some things from an output side that was relevant. Or certainly aligned to what they were looking for and celebrating within the program.

**JW:** And so, this buddy of yours became your influencer.

**EA:** Yeah, but I never put it down to his big ego.

Yes.

**JW:** I won't name him in my work. I won't name him. We'll just call him an influencer. Okay?

**EA:** He was a key influence.

**JW:** He was a key influencer, and so is he still practicing today? Does he still, is he--?

**EA:** As [unintelligible] I've lost touch with him. So--.

**JW:** --Oh, okay--.

**EA:** He was, he wasn't practicing the last time I saw him. He has a degree in design.

**JW:** Oh, good.

**EA:** He has a degree in design from Chicago.

**JW:** Good.

**EA:** So, he actually had some--he had a strong undergraduate design study as well. And he was probably a

little bit more on the entrepreneurial side than I was at the time. But I think he was also more of a maker than he was an entrepreneur. So, he was coming up with ideas that were kind of clever but not really marketable. And so, I have not—I've been practicing design for 30 years now. So I've not seen him in circles even though I lost contact with him. So, my sense is that he is not designing, if anything, he is probably making [unintelligible] or something along those lines.

**JW:** Do you think that, well if he's the influencer then he would be the biggest tool that you had to help you with this decision maker—with this decision to get into design, to pursue this interest that you already had?

**EA:** Well, he was the biggest influencer as to identifying design as an option for me. He was studying design and studying in that early years within programs respectively, we kind of fed off each other.

**JW:** Good. Good good.

**EA:** So, in fact he spent a semester, we spent semesters studying together in Philadelphia because he for whatever reason he had reasons to stay close to home that year. And so, he was—that semester maybe even a year that he went back to Chicago [unintelligible] so. So he's the biggest influencer as far as putting me on a path.

**JW:** Yes. No no no. And actually yes that's the work, my work is actually looking at what that journey has been like for particular individuals and stuff. I feel remiss in asking all the education questions you sitting at a school being a professor. I feel like I probably can bypass a few of those to kind of maybe ask some of the

nittier grittier questions. What my research work looks at is diversity in design disciplines and it's asking what is an effective strategy to expose underrepresented youth, particularly African American and Latino youth to design related careers.

Thus far I've explored 15 different strategies. And your interview comes at a very timely, very timely time because I just finished doing my focus group with young people. And I only have, I've done three interviews so far. I have like two more to go behind you. But after reading about your bio, after reading your bio and hearing so many great things down here about you, I feel like I really want to ask you what you're seeing that's missing from young people. And what are some things that they should be doing? And having come through design and being a designer and now you're in this education role, what are some things you're like, "Oh, I keep seeing this missing piece" or "They're not doing blank" or "They should think of".

**EA:** Well there's two questions embedded in that question. Maybe intentionally.

And the first one deals with how do you attract young people to design. And part of the challenge is that I think it's due to the number of minority and also Black students are not far removed if at all for being first time college attendees. Meaning that they may have, they may be second generation, but my guess is that a lot of them are still, still have a fair amount of first generation college students. And with that the exposure to design central

arts and my experience is that parents when they see art and then the association with art, they don't see a career.

And so, when you are trying to pitch design as an option, particularly if it's at an art school, then parents aren't going to always want to pay for an education where they don't see an outcome. So, the hard well-established disciplines like engineering or even medicine, or things that are more well-grounded break that clear--the clear career option is something that parents understand is, is a factor how they guide and how they support students in going to higher education.

**JW:** Yep.

**EA:** So that's one. So, in a school like Carnegie Mellon, which is very expensive to [unintelligible] African American students [unintelligible]. Again, you got the cost and you also the fact that parents minds, it's still art. Now on--in recent times design is getting much more exposure. [Unintelligible] talking about a time much more definitive ways and disciplines that lead to value to industry and career options that designers have. But still it's, it's a sell. Now, go ahead.

**JW:** It seems like, do you think that schools or educators have to develop a better pitch since you call it a sell? Like if you're selling then it's a pitch. Typically, a pitch comes before the sell.

**EA:** Yeah. Yeah. We're all trying to get [unintelligible] to apply to our program. We try to get the best people to apply to our program. So if you--how you communicate the value of your program is not clear then

whoever comes to your program is probably mostly chance other than intent.

**JW:** That's a great idea. That might be your quote for the interview. Because I guess you're right depending on how you first introduce these parents who are also in this first generation cycle, which is depressing in 2016 we still have the first generation young people around. But it's true. I was a first generation, so I get that. But how you sell, how you pitch this to them for their kids is probably critical.

**EA:** And you can take it as a kind of basic communication. Most design programs, programs in general don't really do a great job in general of communicating. But some industries don't, or some practices don't need to. Not at a law firm, or [unintelligible] engineering for the most part, you have a fairly good idea of what you're doing. Now, in design, it's still very [unintelligible] for some. Ohio State having at least the areas of interior design, communication design, [unintelligible] design, people do come in and they'll usually be able to see it [unintelligible]. But that's not always true in other programs. And, particularly in our college where maybe associating with art so [unintelligible] take courses that are some form of design [unintelligible]. It's a combination of communication and as you start to get more clearly into the structure of what you want to do, it's about what is the pay at.

**JW:** Yeah. I like that idea a lot. And I will say that I have not heard that one yet. So I'm really excited. Do you think that the--one of the things I've been told in

my research so far is that I need to develop a better--a stronger not better, a stronger parent piece. And I'm kind of biased I don't have children. So, I only have my nieces and nephews to pitch these ideas to, but I come from a very creative family. And so, we never have to struggle to talk about creativity in my family.

And so I'm just hearing your comments, I'm just wondering what would that pitch look like? What do you tell a parent? What could you tell a parent so they feel comfortable to help their child make this decision? And I'm sure that must be really difficult. I'm definitely going to have to spend some time thinking about that part.

**EA:** Well, part of it is some saying that parents' ultimate goal is for their kid to have a career, or have a chance to life. And if they want to invest lots of money, particularly in today's climate, economic climate, political climate, it's unbearable to spend the money to go to college even if you have resources or you have some type of support. You're probably going to end up with some loans somewhere. And those loans add up really quickly.

And then the--I had a daughter that just graduated college a couple of years ago. And even though I have assistantship from Carnegie Mellon because of my position here. We still had to take out a fair amount of loans for her to go to college. And the interest rate of the loans is astronomical. And she has her loans, we have our loans. And so those are the kind of things to factor in to looking at investment and education. And that's the way--we still get a couple business [unintelligible].

It's an investment in your future. Investing in your future, what you need to do is understand clearly what's the value proposition. What are you getting out of this? And or as you being, what is your kid getting out of it? Because they at 18 years old won't be able to articulate what's beyond what they believe their parents have done. And so, as a parent going to invest \$80,000 of where the ticket prices are going to be for education.

You can speak clearly to me as to one, what is the sanction between why education be art and what is design. And what are career options for my son, daughter when they go to this program? What's your alumni network look like? What's the opportunities for internships? What are opportunities for them to be successful? They're probably thinking they're going right into the field that is very low or potentially [unintelligible]. It's become a much more competitive in that world now that you have Indian, Chinese, Korean, students coming in and we don't always have same types of attitudes or urgencies as it relates to our own education. So as a parent, they might go to--they might be articulate all of these concerns right away, but I think it's wrapped up [unintelligible] decisions, or even support of saying, "No you shouldn't take art. You shouldn't take design. We should tell them to pick another field that's much more sound." [Unintelligible].

**JW:** Yeah. That's deep. That's a deep one. I definitely will kind of work to figure out what that pitch, or that proposition, that value proposition might actually look like. I've read that there is a lack of value in creative fields in many minority communities. I have read

lots about that part. But what I am curious is, and I like the phrase that you used, "what does that pitch look like?" What is that, what does that conversation--you know what I'm saying? If we talk about your first generation and I'm about to spend \$80,000, what are these outcomes?

**EA:** [Unintelligible] parents [unintelligible] in front of a gallery.

**JW:** Yes. Yeah like, and how soon is this? These types of things and you're 18. You are just not even going to be able to know this. Yes.

**EA:** [Unintelligible.]

**JW:** Say that again?

**EA:** As I said, the other part of your question deals with being creative. And most of the students I see who [unintelligible] student's education. They are there because they don't come from a school that has an art program. [Unintelligible] consequence.

**JW:** Okay. So they're not coming with any pre-knowledge. They're just coming blank slates.

**EA:** They're not. They are going through at best an art program that is completely unprepared to deal with-- they haven't exposed them to current practices as far as visual thinking, making, the projects that you see tend to be very naive. This is even if they have an art program.

Now as you well know art programs have been cut all across the country. And so, the students that I see, I'm in a position where I see a lot which I understand what's going on, but it's also sad at the same time. Because I see what privilege, what privilege does for you. So there's students who, Black and White, all across the

country who aren't benefiting from any kind of training in the arts. [Unintelligible] in a real meaningful way. But those with money go on and get private tutoring. They go out, and they take Saturday classes. They do these things on a regular basis. And when we don't know, we don't know. And when we don't know, we don't do.

**JW:** We haven't made the investment. Those, they haven't made the investment on the front end, so when they get in there--.

**EA:** Well, there's two parts to it. They don't have to make the investment. So mom sees Johnny drawing little cars on a piece of paper. And he's much more talented than anybody else that she knows. And she celebrates it and is always taping up on the refrigerator. Or these topic comics and doing all these kind of things and suggests that he might have some talent. But he's not willing to educate.

**JW:** Yeah.

**EA:** So he's going up against these students that have been taking Saturday classes for three or four years and coming in. And they've been exposed to much broader ways of thinking. They've been exposed to insight around, not only the U.S. but what's happening [unintelligible] school, on the internet. They actually know to look for things. It's not that they'll always around access. They know what they're looking for. So you go to YouTube, they go look at how other parts [unintelligible].

**JW:** Yeah.

**EA:** They're studying the language websites on [unintelligible] take it back. That's the best one

[unintelligible]. Are we really understanding what the student or young kid knows, or are they just regurgitating back what they've studied about us?

Now there's a [unintelligible]. They're curious about [unintelligible] due to research. But you're also going to be making a decision [unintelligible]. We're finding that a lot of the [unintelligible] school decline. They don't know to do that. They've never known. If you don't know, you don't know. And they don't know it, what they don't know. And so they put portfolios in proudly and yet or something that's light years ahead of them.

**JW:** Yep. Yep. Yep.

**EA:** [Unintelligible.]

There are teachers that [unintelligible] art is going to reclude for all the chaos that's going on everywhere else in school. So they go to the art class to release. One of the concerns of learning has a depth of skills and thinking that they need to be in order to advance to the next level. Where do the right thing in some cases is to [unintelligible]. So it's one extreme I think that's happened.

**JW:** Do you, in your position now, can you look back at your design journey and say, "This is what I should have did to make it better" or "This is something I should have been exposed" or?

**EA:** Quickly, I would probably say no. There was a time when design was still kind of emerging. Nobody knew what it was. It was still this best kept secret. So, yeah. If my buddy had no hard work, I would have probably [unintelligible].

**JW:** This buddy. Man, I've got to get me one of these kind of friends.

**EA:** Yeah. One person's [unintelligible]. So, but I was fortunate that I was around [unintelligible] with her. From a scholar, education wise, I was excelling but from a directional standpoint I actually, it was actually looking at the next step. But outside of that, many guidance guidance counselors don't know anything. I mean, they know what they know which is the traditional way. You can go, actually go to illustration, or you--you might have people now talk about industrial design. But, mostly chance or maybe there is programs they're familiar with. They may be local, they may be other. But they might push people in those kind of directions. But, it's a social problem. It's a communications problem. It's a systems problem, a social-economic problem. It's a wicked problem.

**JW:** Very wicked. Very, very, very wicked.

**EA:** I don't have the--okay I was fortunate because I had the [unintelligible] influences. I had a, this one uncle that I had mentioned who went to college five or six years before me. He drew. He didn't go to college for art. But I was inspired to draw because I watched him draw. I watched him draw things, girls, and [unintelligible]. So, I was very inspired by seeing his work. And so that led me [unintelligible] in high school, which [unintelligible]. So I, I'm [unintelligible] fortuitous consequences [unintelligible]. At least early in my career.

**JW:** Do you think--the second part of my work and that's really what I was asking a little bit about earlier

in our conversation. Not only have I been looking at the strategies, I've developed what I call a design journey visualization. That maybe--that shows this path, perhaps, of what it could possibly look like. Because I think we don't have anything as careers, I mean as creatives.

If I wanted to be a doctor, you could whip out paperwork to show me how I become a doctor. If I say, "Show me how to be a designer," we don't have much paperwork. There's not much. It's this whole, you've got to trust the person that you ask. Or you have to trust the path that someone else put you on to get to this final destination. And so a lot of my work also explores how these strategies relate to different positions on the journey.

And so, what I've been asking all of my participants and reviewers are, if you had to pick something, what would you say--I mean you've already told me that you think that there is a value proposition and they don't know what they don't know. But, what is the thing? Is it Saturday morning classes? Is it design curriculum? Is it--what would be the thing? If you had that infinite power to kind of make it all happen, what would be that one thing you would use to expose them?

**EA:** Well, I think it's preference.

**JW:** Not even being an educator, you don't think it's one like--.

**EA:** [Unintelligible] one size fits all?

**JW:** Nope. You know I had to ask.

**EA:** [Unintelligible] responded to your survey, I think there may be three options in your survey, but you give one option now.

**JW:** Well, you know I figured you had that. You've been in this field for a million years. And you've been designing almost as long as Dr. Mayo. And that's a really, really long time. I figured you just got this.

**EA:** It's [unintelligible].

**JW:** Okay.

**EA:** And so, there are many ways of exposing. But I think if you give them opportunity to do, then you have a better chance of having them understand. I created the design camps in the community for African American boys.

**JW:** How'd they go?

**EA:** Hmm?

**JW:** How did the camps go?

**EA:** The camps went well. But, the camps--the purpose for the camps were for different reasons. The camp wasn't trying to [unintelligible] people into college. The camp was trying to look at how do you design [unintelligible] to change attitudes and behaviors toward success. And so the core of what we do is problem identification and problem solving. And recognizing that--well, having the student recognize that they are as smart as anybody else. They can be solution givers in some of the more complex problems, even in their own community. So that was the focus of design camp.

And so, but having them understand why line drawing is of value. And that it's kind of cool or interesting the way they draw little doodles in a notebook. And one, they

can make things that can actually be placed [unintelligible] score. [Unintelligible] how this visual representation can actually help them in their own classroom. Those are the kinds of things that are [unintelligible], I find to be more valuable.

Because the thing about the strategy, when I look at your strategy it seems fairly linear. And I think there is evidence of design, [unintelligible] design practices, that's not linear. You're working back and forth. You're working across disciplines. You're working in collaborative spaces, and it's a [unintelligible].

Two, leading a major Master's program, here at Carnegie Mellon, and the [unintelligible] that I co-created was a joint venture between design and [unintelligible] engineering. And the engineers and with business folks, they automatically understand that at some point and time they're going to go back to grad school. Going back to grad school was not as attitudinal, concrete decision for designers.

**JW:** Yeah.

**EA:** Designers will, and this is something that is maybe slowly transitioning. But for the most part, designers are saying "I don't need to go back to school for that. I can learn that on the job. I can learn that on my practice." So, designers for the most part are practitioners. And only more recently are they realizing that because of the complexity of problems that they were out working on because of the [unintelligible] in the products and initial design, that you have to move outside these silos.

Now the silos in some cases have real practice, where there's more conceived than it was real. You've always had to work collaboratively in order to actually get things done. The difference is is that designers are now more [unintelligible] in the conversation because people are seeing the value in how they actually structure problems and how they identify new opportunities.

But even with a [inaudible] there's still this fairly high degree of designers who don't see the value of going back to grad school. And if they go back to grad school, they're not going back to grad school for design education. They're going back to grad school for business education, or engineering education, or something else that's going to bolster the design skills and [unintelligible] of design.

So, from that standpoint, the linear strategy is not as clear to me from a design standpoint. The other thing is with [unintelligible] that students are learning nowadays, like they social--social media, but social networks to how people are sharing information online. How people are either pitching new ideas, or fitting ideas, with Kickstart or GoFundMe, or whatever the case might be. They're becoming entrepreneurs. They're doing things that I could never have thought of. This is what it takes to actually do that kind of stuff. And so, to tell them that you should stop and go back and get Master's.

**JW:** Hard sell.

**EA:** Hard sell. And even when I look at the strategy in my own career. I didn't go back and get my Master's until I had practiced a decade. So I was [unintelligible] go back and get a Master's. So I already given

[unintelligible] to why I wanted a Master's and what I wanted to do with it. So, I think you see some basic design foundation which would be the undergraduate degree. But people come out, becomes very atypical as far as a journey. I mean people are bouncing back and forth later to explore the relationship. They can work on different things. [Unintelligible] locally and across the country depending on what their experiences have been across the world.

**JW:** Yeah.

**EA:** So what that value is is going to change. And I think it is changing.

**JW:** Yeah. I can honestly share that, because I've been peaking at my survey's results occasionally. I find it, it's almost--I know that it's something that I'm going to have to dig deeper on. Because, let's just say, 200 people took my survey. Let's just as a round number, of the 200 people who took the survey, everybody had a Bachelor's degree but only I'd say 10, 15 percent of the people had a Master's degree.

**EA:** So that's a [unintelligible].

**JW:** It's a huge thing. Liz Sanders, she's also on my committee. She and I have been digging deeper into that. Is it value? Because if 200 people a Bachelor's what's the big deal about going a few more years to get this Master's thing. And we were kind of wondering or thinking maybe that is also another level of this value we look at. Do you understand? So like that's why when you said that the strategies were linear. I think to absorb them easier they have to be linear. I think that this is such a wicked

problem. If I had to present--if I had to show it, like that. I think it would have. I think it would have deterred people as opposing to trying to streamline it a little bit.

**EA:** Most people [unintelligible].

**JW:** Well and the people that I'm talking about are people who are on the beginning of the journey. But what I'm saying is, is that as I have been researching and looking at people who have taken my survey, I'm noticing there's another value proposition that happens later down the road when you start looking at graduate education. When you start looking at how far you're trying to go in your career. When you start looking at "Do I want this Chief Creative Officer position?". I feel like in my early findings, I was only looking at the value in the--the value proposition in the beginning but hearing you and also knowing what my survey results has been, I'm thinking that, I'm hearing that there's also a value proposition again that creeps up after, as you've been practicing in your field for some time.

**EA:** I think absolutely. I think there's values propositions along the journey. [Unintelligible] what kind of degree choices you make. But the way I understood your question for your research gets into how you attract people to study design.

**JW:** Correct.

**EA:** The undergraduate level. And so, the strategic [unintelligible] would be another layer that's not necessarily connected to the core research that you're trying to actually uncover. Is that fair?

**JW:** No, no. It is fair. Because I haven't kind of revealed all of that part yet. I'm supposed to be having this big debut of what it's supposed to look like. But I'll cheat and tell you.

The journey, what I've done with the journey is mapped out these passages, the four passages. And there are steps inside each passage. Ultimately what I want to be able to say is, "Hey. Here are these 15 strategies. And here's how to best use them along the path." So, summer and extracurricular activity, afterschool activities. Hey, that's great if you're in passage one. You don't have a need for a Saturday afternoon classes if you are in passage three. You don't need that. But "Hey, a design curriculum would be a great thing to have if you were in passage one and passage two. But you don't need a design curriculum if you're an influence." So what I'm looking at is, what my work is also looking at is not only what is the design journey, but what are the tools necessary to move through it. And to successfully move through it.

And so, hopefully as I begin to write and as I solidify the data and the messages that I've heard from all of you all, I'll have a more concrete example. Because it's interesting in talking to educators, there's such a different perspective than my non-educator interviews have, have offered. So, one of the things that Paul and I have been working really diligently on is to make sure as I talk about this diversity piece, that I stay diverse and not ask the same kind of people.

In the beginning I was going to ask a bunch of educators, teachers. And I started just hearing, and

reading the bios even started making me see the similarities of the backgrounds. And so this is why I targeted you so heavily because with your background and your position in education, I think that you could speak for the educators. So that I could also interview in-house designers. So that I could also interview one of the young ladies that I'm interviewing tomorrow, she was one of the first designers at Vibe Magazine.

So having these different voices to share their insight and what their influencers and what their journey has been about will help me to explain it to others. And hopefully change some of that for the next round. Hopefully some girl will come by me and want to do this or try to figure these pieces out. So, that's kind of what my research is really looking at and what I'm hoping to do on the end with it. So, eventually I want to match those strategies with positions along the journey. So, I hope that helps a little bit.

**EA:** Yeah. I think [unintelligible] too broad.

**JW:** It's big. It's really big. I do agree with that. I do agree with that.

**EA:** [Unintelligible.]

**JW:** Well, I'm very fortunate. I have a GA position with ODI. And so my, I call her my champion, my champion--

**EA:** --What's ODI?

**JW:** Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

**EA:** Okay.

**JW:** So, the reason that's important is my education doesn't come from the department of design. They are not paying my stipend. They are not my scholarship.

**EA:** Okay.

**JW:** So because of that, I've been very fortunate to look really, really broad because mine is not time-based. I don't have to--one of the things the design department is doing for many of the other students in my cohort, they're trying to herd them along. Narrow scope. Narrow scope. Narrow scope so they can graduate. Well, my bill doesn't come from them so I can kind of explore and research. And that the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, ODI I'm what they recognize as an underrepresented nontraditional student. And so, they have been very encouraging to think broader and to think about the entire of body I want to add to this topic.

And so I have got a really big. And so pulling it to these two pieces has definitely been some time. I've been here now for about three years. And I've also done a lot of work with AIGA. I've also done a lot of work in my hometown. I'm from Cleveland. So I've done a lot there. And I mentor a lot of young people. A lot. Like I think right now I have 25 mentees.

**EA:** Yeah, that's a lot.

**JW:** This week alone I was fortunate. Only four of them called. I got four calls and I have two meetings. In fact, that's what I was on the phone with before you. And so I attract a lot of people with this. And I wanted to be able to offer them a different thought process to how to move through their path, their journeys to become designers. And so, I started thinking about what this tool. Is it a tool? Because at first I thought, early on in my research, I thought I was going to make videos.

Because young people they like quick information, small bits. I thought maybe I could do something like that. But, in looking at the bigger picture and understanding different systems, that's kind of when I started going really, really, really big.

**EA:** Well, I'll offer a suggestion.

**JW:** Please.

**EA:** Nothing wrong with being big, [unintelligible] time to be big. But you might take it down to different phases. [Unintelligible] in my opinion, just listening to today, you're asking kind of multi-layered complex questions. And I don't see yet where this structure has building blocks.

So if you're looking at how do you attract minorities into design. That's a rich problem step right there. Then you can look what is the next phase for once you get minorities in design. Because you probably already know this, but [unintelligible] design. Very few of them actually graduate in design. [Unintelligible] ability to practice design. So, you have a multiple case problem. Listen, you can use them as building blocks. Make sure they don't die when you're going for the pipeline. And then make sure they come out of the pipeline doing something [unintelligible] biggest plan. And that's a huge challenge.

So when you're looking at these [unintelligible] strategies, one way of thinking about it is looking at and this is where, actually, I would disagree with linear presentation of it. I think it would be better to form. [Unintelligible] understand that these really

[unintelligible] random patterns that happen. Is it that I can enter into design higher education [unintelligible] being a Master's program at any point in time. I'll go out. I'm going to work in a retail environment for three years and realize that something in that experience is going me back to grad school. As opposed to graduating from an undergraduate program, maybe working or not working for a couple years. [Unintelligible] Master's program. Or working for a couple of years and [unintelligible] and go back to school. That's a very traditional way of thinking about education.

**JW:** Multilayered.

**EA:** But education now is everywhere. Ten years ago we could [unintelligible]. Videos would have probably been more effective. Now people's saturated. Visual and media content is everywhere. And now how do you find clear information with an [unintelligible]. That's a challenge right now. [Unintelligible] is actually getting people to look at it.

**JW:** And I do agree with you that I have spent probably too much time, but quite a bit of time on looking at these layers and which one could I effectively really, really share and add value to myself. Of these different layers of these questions, which one piece is it?

And so, I chose the design journey to look at to be able to at least create something that, some sort of framework that we could even begin to talk about. And then, I really enjoyed looking at the different strategies. I think for probably a good six months, people were literally calling and emailing me like, "Hey. You should

look at this one. You should look at this one." And with each strategy, and you'll love it, because Paul has me making, we've made these expansive detailed, I call them feasibility charts, but you know, who would need it, how it would it happen, could I do it, is it something I need help with? Just these types of things.

But yeah, I do agree with you it is multilayered and I do agree with you that it's not a linear question. It's not a linear solution. I do agree with you on that respect. But um I just chose to show it in that manner because I've spent most of my research time here looking at passage one and at passage two. Those first two passages. So they're very heavily focused on education, young people, all these parts.

But what I'm finding is as I talk with more such as yourself and as I share more of this with other industry practitioners, they want to know what have I found for passage three. I even had a couple people ask me about passage four. And Paul has me writing some comments about my reaction and my position on the journey itself. Because I'm not in passage four. So, advising and talking about that one is challenging for me. So people like you who are in passage four, you can share a lot of light with me.

**EA:** That's a good answer to say that, when they start asking about passage three or passage four, that that [unintelligible] not an actual [unintelligible] research yet. I'm still focusing on resolving the outcomes of passage one and two. Or that I'm focusing on.

**JW:** Yes. Yes. For sure. For sure. For sure.

**EA:** [Unintelligible] it actually goes back to what will be the outcome of one and two?

**JW:** You want me to tell you what I found? Or—

**EA:** --[Unintelligible.] One is?

**JW:** K12.

**EA:** K12 and two is?

**JW:** Higher education. So undergraduate education, internship opportunities, and graduate education. That's proficiency where we develop this proficiency.

**EA:** [Unintelligible.] Do you take all kinds of plans and weave them into all the articles?

**JW:** No. In fact, I'm a horrible textiles person. I've tried. My mom is an amazing seamstress. She sewed for all of us. And I've tried. I tried. I got the holes in the fingers.

**EA:** I only say that because [unintelligible] put together.

**JW:** Well, because I see in my mind.

**EA:** But there's a lot in phase one. There's a lot in two and finally, I guess it depends in what you want. You can [unintelligible]. Go ahead.

**JW:** What I want to ultimately propose is what are the characteristics of the ideal solution, and I think I have gathered enough research to talk pretty confidently about what those characteristics are. I know that the characteristic to close or to begin to talk about closing this gap in design disciplines. I know it has to meet multiple passages. It can't just be for K12. And it can't just be for influence. It can't--it has to meet multiple. That's the first characteristic.

The second characteristic is that it has to be a collaborative solution. One of the things that doing the feasibility studies for the different strategies. It's easy to say one person can do something. But the problem is that as you develop it, and as it moves further and more people get engaged, you're going to need more people helping to make that happen. So if it's not a collaborative piece, there's too much of an opportunity of it falling. If only one person starts the initiative and they stop, then the initiative leaves.

The other piece that I found is that it has to address multiple stakeholders. And stakeholders are young people. Stakeholders are students. Stakeholders are educators. Stakeholders are businesses. Stakeholders are organizations.

And then lastly, it has to have an academic component. And I know I kind of feel confident that when I share that, and when I write about that in my thesis a lot of people are going to be mad. Because we, I feel like sometimes as creatives, we don't put that emphasis on math and science, English and we're just like "Be Creative." But unfortunately what I've found is that we're in an educational system that does rate everybody on these characteristics. How well you do in math, how well you do in English, how well you're doing in your science class. So even if you are ridiculously creative, and you fail Geometry, you've already changed the trajectory of your life. You can be as creative as you want to be, but if you fail Geometry, Geometry is what we call a deal breaker. You will not pass high school. You will not pass high

school if you fail a semester. If you fail two semesters of English in high school, you will not graduate. You will not graduate. So even then your path, your pipeline, the distance that you will make on the pipeline has changed. Simply because you didn't make that small little step. You missed that one little mark. It's going to change everything. And so I think that.

**EA:** I can talk for a couple more minutes. Then I've got to run.

**LW:** No problem. Thank you.

**EA:** But I do want to--I get the large [unintelligible] piece of the present.

**LW:** It's okay I'm not offended. I'm happy for the input.

**EA:** But everything you, another thing that you're saying speaks to the value and deeper focus of these particular areas. And I would just, again, suggest that maybe two things. One could be a matter of time [unintelligible]. That is what are the [unintelligible]. Is this theoretical, is it something that sits on a bookshelf or bookcase, or the quality of thousands other theses that are out there [unintelligible] work? Now hopefully [unintelligible] or is it something imaginable.

And so, when you look at these segments, taking them, looking at one. One's [unintelligible]. It's a problem of almost 50 years or more. [Unintelligible] design education in general. [Unintelligible] specifically is a challenge. How do you draw, how do you support the answers from the questionnaire? Are they supported [unintelligible] coming

out. Okay? Cracking it even [unintelligible] could be huge.

And then interesting people are going add [unintelligible] answers to your questions. But they're looking for people to feed them. They're looking for the talent. They're trying to, they recognize easily that talent has to be more diverse. They don't necessarily know how to do it. They know they need it.

So, my experience being on both sides of this, but also working in industry now is that the ones who are really attuned and really moving things forward are collaborating. A lot of the other ones are pointing fingers and saying, "This is what I need." And what they need is not necessarily what the industry [unintelligible] education needs.

**JW:** Correct. Correct.

**EA:** So. I applaud you for big thinking big and I hope, I'm sure that you will get there at some point in time before you retire. But your own journey, you might [unintelligible]. What [unintelligible] can I solidify and handle as I'm still working to that next stage?

**JW:** Correct.

**EA:** And you can always tie them all together at some point. You might even be able to get more support [unintelligible] around it as people begin to see more clearly that your outcome they find to be useful.

**JW:** Yes. For sure. For sure. For sure. If it means anything I'll keep you posted when I publish.

**EA:** Hmm?

**JW:** I said if anything, I'll keep you posted as soon I finish printing it. I'll send you a copy of it.

**EA:** But I can't [unintelligible].

**JW:** Oh you want to work with me in it? I see. You want some of this in it.

**EA:** No, no, no. You got to [unintelligible].

**JW:** You know at one point in my thesis journey I thought I was going to have like eight people on my committee. And Paul was like "Good Lord, we'll never get it done."

**EA:** Yeah.

**JW:** So, no.

**EA:** I hope this has been useful.

**JW:** Highly, highly useful and I'm going to tweet you on Twitter. And I'll kind of share one of your quotes. And if I have any additional questions I'll just email you. I understand you're busy. And so I really appreciate you taking the time to talk with me. You've definitely shared some, a unique insight with me. I'm glad that I kept contacting you.

**EA:** All right. So, it was a pleasure meeting and talking with you, and continued success along your journey.

**JW:** Thank you so much. You have a good rest of your day.

**EA:** Thank you. You, too.

**JW:** Bye-bye.

**EA:** Bye.

## **Interview with Carol Watson**

**Ms. Jacinda Walker Interviewing  
Ms. Carol Watson**

**Ms. Jacinda Walker:** I want to make sure that my audio is recording. So, I'm just going to kind of just press pause in here just to pause it and just to play it back. Once second. Hold it for one quick second.

**Ms. Carol Watson:** [Unintelligible] try and figure out the best for--I used to have like three or four of them I would experiment with when I was [unintelligible].

**JW:** Well, it's funny because as I was--because what I'm going to do--we're kind of going to start from the beginning. I'm going to ask you to say your name and what you do, so I can make sure I've got the audio with the right voice.

**CW:** No problem.

**JW:** And then, I only have about six or seven questions to ask, only because I know a little bit about your background already, so I won't bore you with those details. So, if you can just take a moment, tell me your name, what you do, and what is your involvement with young people, design, journeys, that kind of thing.

**CW:** Okay.

**JW:** Perfect.

**CW:** So, my name is Carol Watson, and I currently have two roles. One is being a Director of Global Member

Engagement for Diversity Best Practices, and my other role is the founder and CEO of Tangerine-Watson, which is a cross-cultural talent consultancy specializing in the advertising, marketing, and the media industries.

**JW:** Excellent, excellent. So, technically speaking, you are not a designer. Would you call yourself a creative, though?

**CW:** Yes. I always strive to be creative, and I believe in designing my life and designing experiences.

**JW:** Excellent.

**CW:** So, that's my perspective on it.

**JW:** So, I have to ask. Where did you go to--'cause I haven't officially found the 500-word bio for you yet.

**CW:** Oh, I'll send it to you.

**JW:** Well, only because I actually don't know where you went to school like how you kind of came into this part of it.

**CW:** Yeah.

**JW:** So, can you talk to us a little bit about how you came into this type of work?

**CW:** Sure. So, I was a marketing major, an International Marketing Communications major, at Pace University in New York. And I started in the business doing media planning at [unintelligible] worldwide at the time. It's no longer in existence. I was a media planner. And then, I had a media career in doing advertising sales and marketing in the media business at Estes Magazine [sp] then at the New York Times. I worked with them to launch a teen--and that's the young adult book--and worked with--became publisher of Vice Media [sp], the magazine, the live

award show, the events, and then launched a women's version of Vice, called Vice Dixon [sp], which was around for a little bit.

And then, the magazine business stopped being fun. And I wanted to do something different and had an opportunity of doing some consulting with digital companies and start-ups and people starting magazines--and kind of slowly got into the diversity and inclusion space on the magazine side and was asked to do some consulting work because there was not a lot of diversity in the magazine industry--and then was asked in 2006 to start an executive search firm, which was a spin-off of another firm called Tangerine, that specialized in strategy.

And in 2006, at the same time, I was asked to take over and run this spin-off that specialized in multicultural talent. The advertising industry had gotten into trouble with the Human Rights Commission because there was not a lot of [unintelligible] senior-level talent. So, I spearheaded it and really kind of was on the forefront with a number of other people in the industry that were kind of building out some solutions. Then, there was a lot of activity in the marketplace around diversity and inclusion. So, they were all from college level all the way up to senior level.

So, that's kind of what got me into the space, starting with recruiting, which--we will do some of that [unintelligible] does some of that. Tangerine-Watson still does some of that. But, I knew from being in the business for a long time that there was--it was not really a recruiting issue. So, I was on a mission to understand

what was causing the lack of sustainability 'cause I saw people coming in but not leaving. I saw people that started as interns but were no longer in the business.

**JW:** Yeah.

**CW:** So, I was on a mission to understand what that-- what was causing that and how to solve that.

**JW:** I like that--on a mission to figure out the sustainability. Carol, do you think that--as you were noticing this, that that's where this backlash was coming from in the industry? Or do you think that you--because you were in it, you saw it faster than they acknowledged it? What do you think? Who do you think came first?

**CW:** Because I was in it I saw--I would see the companies hiring. So, I was on the side of the desk where I was calling on the average [unintelligible] and marketing people, so we saw the wave of people that would come in. And then, we saw them [unintelligible]. And so, the--it was because people were seeing the demographics shift and talking about the demographic shifts in the census and because--when the census came out in 2009 and 2010, it became a more heated conversation because of how we were seeing the trends and demographics and how that was in such direct contrast to the walls of Madison Avenue for so long.

**JW:** Well, thank you for giving me a little bit more of your background. Were you in a two-parent house? How was your family dealing with you in this marketing creative space?

**CW:** I'm a first-generation U.S. born--from Jamaican parents. My mom was a teacher, and my father was a scientist. And he was a microbiologist at Johnson &

Johnson and had a really bad time as a black scientist in the '60s and '70s and became--started--switched over to insurance and real estate in the later part of his life. So, I--my parents wanted me to have a very secure job. They didn't really understand what marketing was.

**JW:** Right.

**CW:** So, I--there was nobody else that I knew that was in this space and in the industry, and in high school I didn't know what marketing was. And--but I was very fascinated by consumer behavior. So, in high school I remember, in retrospect, thinking about--being fascinated by branding and what makes one brand more popular than another and one cereal on top of the shelf versus on the bottom of the shelf. How do you pick one cereal from the other?

And I didn't really understand what that was, but I was a business--I was fascinated by business and consumer behavior. So, those were the drivers for me. And I didn't really know what that was until I was in college. And then, I went to Pace because they had a very wide variety of things you could do in marketing, so I was able to kind of experiment and explore a little bit. But, it was a bit lonely 'cause you don't really have--I didn't know about the resources and the tools. And the teachers weren't really too helpful, and the adviser counselors weren't too helpful.

**JW:** Yeah.

**CW:** So, that was way, way, way before technology and access to information that we have now.

**JW:** Carol, did you have a mentor?

**CW:** I always struggle with the word. I have people I can look back at and still have peer-to-peer mentors and people I looked up to or people that kind of tapped me on the shoulder and looked out for me--.

**JW:** --Yeah--.

**CW:** --Never a formal kind of long-term, walk me through the process, but people that made an impact on me in a variety of different ways. So, I feel like that--I met people that kind of looked out for me and definitely helped me along the journey.

**JW:** And--well, do you--what do you think, since you have had this amazing, not just corporate career, this entrepreneurial career as well? And you're still in the entrepreneurial space.

**CW:** Yeah, I haven't--I'm trying to figure out how to manage both. I have somewhat--I'm handling day-to-day operations on the entrepreneurial side, so I haven't closed the business down. But, I'm not quite sure--I'm in a bit of a transition trying to figure out how to manage--.

**JW:** --Both--.

**CW:** --Both things, quite frankly.

**JW:** Wow. I think you're handling it, personally. I had a chance to watch your Google Chats, the 20-minute lunch chats.

**CW:** Yeah.

**JW:** And the gentleman, Gavin--I was about to launch that one out on my YouTube page.

**CW:** Oh.

**JW:** He gave some--.

**CW:** --He would love to hear that.

**JW:** No, he gave some amazing ideas and many things that I already tell my mentees. And so, to hear them from another person sometimes really helps people to kind of--the message to stick. So, if you see somebody named Magenta Prince on your page, it's me.

**CW:** Oh, wonderful. Thank you.

**JW:** Do you think--having gone through these, both of these different aspects of your career, do you--what do you think would have made your journey better or different or more impactful for you?

**CW:** What would have made my journey better? And that's probably why I created the Drive Platform is to have a place to see other people that were doing interesting things and understand--be able to ask them questions or see the names and understand what their journey was and get a sense of how they got there and what their trajectory was--and get a better understanding of what companies are out there and who I should be looking at and what jobs were even a possibility.

Because there are so many--it continues to be a challenge because the growth in the industry is really coming from companies that are not household names. But, you don't even know where to turn to see what they are and to know what are they looking for, and who is there because, on the talent acquisition side, it's always going to be--no matter how much access there is, it's going to be who do and who do you have a relationship with, and what is your best social network?

So, we don't have enough--we're all--culturally, people are going to be attracted to and connected to people

that they feel like they have more in common with. So, breaking through what the tendency is is such a challenge to getting access to the opportunities. So, to be able to have events, to have places to go, to have people to get access to, would have been hugely important to sort of refine your taste buds, refine your skill set, and raise the sophistication of--.

**JW:** --Yes--.

**CW:** --What's [unintelligible] and what you can do.

**JW:** Yes. Carol, do you think that--you talked about creating your own space, and that's really what Thrive and Tangerine-Watson is. But, when you were--I just want to take you back for one second 'cause I need to try to understand what is--what was the influencer? You talked about you had this great love for consumer--for consumer strategy and the ins and outs of this marketing piece.

But, what would you call your influencer to pursue forward?

**CW:** What would I saw my influencer was? I felt like I didn't know anybody else. I felt like I was kind of a unicorn. It took a lot [unintelligible]. A lot of people that are people of color in the industry call themselves unicorns. It starts to bother me. We are really not. We kind of feel like it. So, I didn't really feel like I had other people that were into what I was into, so I kind of just searched people out. So, by the time I got to Pace there were a couple of--there was only a few of us that were interested in the advertising industry. One girl went to Brake [unintelligible] School [sp]. And so, you had to kind of find your tribe--so, just continued to--I don't know that I had one influencer--.

**CW:** --Influencer.

**JW:** But, it was this kind of back-end curiosity. But, you also had to have a patience and persistence to kind of stick with it because there would be--there will be people, especially within our culture, that if they don't get it will try and have you go down the highway versus blazing your trail on the side.

**JW:** Yeah.

**CW:** So, you had to be persistent about blazing your trail on the side instead of being pulled down the highway where everybody else is.

**JW:** Isn't that the truth?

**CW:** So, it's hard. But, you have to find your tribe in some way, whether you're talking to people, whether it's online, whether it's--I have people that reach out to me all the time [unintelligible] that are like trying to find their tribe. So, it's better now, but--because of technology and tools. But, back then I had a hard time finding people that didn't make me feel like, "What's wrong with you, and why are you so strange, and why are you interested in stuff that nobody else is interested in?"

**JW:** Interested in. Wow, wow. Well, the reason I called you back for this interview is because I know we met a few months back at the Here Are All The Black People event. And we got into this huge conversation about what is missing with the young people that you are placing and that you recognize. And I just wanted to kind of hear your thoughts on that still. Do you still agree with that statement or--?

**CW:** --Yeah, I think there are a number of things. One is that there is this expectation that someone is going to take them under their wing and take care of them. And it's not only an expectation but a request and an assumption and that--so, one of the things that I've always heard from people that are very successful is that they did the work and because someone saw how they were, they saw that they wanted--they tapped them on the shoulder and said, "I've been watching and seeing how amazing you are." And they pulled them in. And I see that all the time where I formally mentor. And I see people that are young and trying to get in the business, and they're like, "Well, I want somewhere where they're going to teach me and they're going to make--," it doesn't work that way.

**JW:** Yeah.

**CW:** People have to see that you are already hungry, that you are already doing what you need to do, that you're going above and beyond, and that you're doing your own research. And the people that I want to mentor and I want to take under my wing are people that I can see are like [unintelligible] already, that they are--not have everything but have the passion for it, have the--are doing the work, not just waiting for someone to take them along.

So, with technology there is more access, and people know that the younger generation has so much potential to make an impact. But, they need to do the work, build your portfolio, refine your tape, become students of the world, as global--and look at trends and have a point of view. So, I would love to have young people express and refine and write and find a way to express their point of view and

connect the dots, the things that they're seeing, and just build their sophistication in the space. There is so much access to information that's out there. You don't build your own passion point for it and share it. And then, people see that and see that you're doing the work. They will pull you along, and they will show you the way, but you've got to--have to meet people halfway.

**JW:** Yes--meet folks halfway. I like that. Do you-- one of the things that we also discussed--I just want to make sure I write that down--halfway. That's a great-- 'cause I'm going to tweet you and quote you on one of these wonderful quotes.

**CW:** Not a problem.

**JW:** I don't know which one. You have given me like four so far. I'm struggling here.

**CW:** I'm glad you are recording it 'cause I'm not going to remember what I said.

**JW:** I know. I am recording it. And that's why I am also taking some notes because I really liked this, "Build your own sophistication," because as a recruiter--because you know that there is this disparity out here, you can't-- and help me if I'm saying it incorrectly. But, you can't necessarily--that kid who is on the street just begging and waiting and hoping, whereas the kid who is across the street is hungry. He is pushing the cart, he is trying to figure it out. Since you already know it's a hard industry, you can't work with that kid who is not going to push and help himself.

**CW:** No, it's hard no matter what. So, it just takes too much energy. I can't push you up the hill. I can only

kind of help you navigate and give you, "Here, go here, go there. Meet this person, do that." But, I can't push you up the hill. It's designed--and people get frustrated 'cause it's so hard. But, it's by design. There is a philosophy that it's survival of the fittest. It's that, the pressure-makes-diamonds philosophy.

So, it's designed to keep people that are kind of not nearly so into it out, and it's designed to keep people that want to do the work and have a thick skin, which is really, really important. You have to have a thick skin and not be bothered and not be easily kind of taken off your game, so that the ones that are successfully kind of navigating there are--have certain of those common qualities.

**JW:** The work, when--one of the things, when we were watching the young people get their portfolio reviews, when we are at the Here Are All The Black People event--one of the things that we spoke about is, it's great that they're doing these portfolio reviews, but you had mentioned that you had hoped they were also getting this career professional development type of thing to also offset their talent.

**CW:** Yeah.

**JW:** Do you think that--have you named it something yet?

**CW:** Have I named it something yet?

**JW:** Yes, because we talked about it might be professional development, but you said it's not all professional development. You talked about it might be mentoring, but you have also explained that--.

**CW:** --Oh, no--.

**JW:** --You don't particularly like that word.

**CW:** Yeah. So, what we were talking about was the-- just subtle-ly kind of teaching about how to refine your brand, how to fine-tune your client list, who to go to, and how to kind of tell your story from a creative perspective.

**JW:** Yeah.

**CW:** So, what we were working on was the College To Career. C to C is what we were calling it. And it was a topic-by-topic series around refining the brand, building a social network that--the advanced levels of interviewing, building your relationships.

So, we--what we did was that we interviewed recent grads and people that just kind of are broken in to understand and to hear questions that they wanted to ask coaches and to kind of get that back-and-forth from people that are in the industry and how they navigate it--whether it's what-- am I getting the look right was one topic, for example, and how do you express your creativity but also kind of raise your level and know how to navigate, whether it's your hair or the makeup or just your whole look?

**JW:** Wow. Yes, for sure.

**CW:** [Unintelligible] that right.

**JW:** For sure. Carol, do you--what do you think would be--'cause I only have like two questions left for you. The first question is, what do you think that young people, other than being hungry and being passionate and being driven--but, what do you think is missing? What do you think is missing for young people looking at design-related careers?

**CW:** What do I think is missing--missing from them being able to get into a company?

**JW:** Well, get in, stay in, be long-term. When we talk about the design journey, we know that there are many, many--there are at least four passages. There is the foundations, there is proficiency, there is the work force, and then there's influence. And so, in understanding these different phases, I'm sure something is missing. And I'm just trying to ask all of my interviewees--.

**CW:** --Sure--.

**JW:** --What do you think is missing in the design journey, in this journey to be--?

**CW:** --So, there is the--I think there are two pieces, right? So, when it comes to design, to me, in terms of future and how you're moving forward and how to stand out from the crowd, it's the skill of being able to connect the dots. The beauty of diversity and innovation is having a different filter. And so, what's going--your filter and your perspective is formed by your exposure. So, what's important is to get as much exposure as possible and know how to connect the dots to create, to innovate. And so, being--getting out of whatever community or state or city or cultural circle that you're in and really kind of deepening your exposure to connect the dots influences your creativity and your solutions and your design and your sophistication.

So, that's one part that I think is missing because I still see a lot of people that are people of culture, of different ethnicities, kind of only reflecting--they only want to do Jordan, they only want to do Nike, they only

want to Gatorade, and they only want to do "urban work." And so, the people that are more sophisticated and, we'll say, in demand are ones that are--have a much broader, deeper influence from a lot of disparate things. So, the more interesting you are from that perspective, in terms of your exposure and your influence, the more desirable and in demand you are.

On the flip side of that, the other piece to that, is how do you connect? It's a very collaborative business. So, what are your--what's your emotional intelligence level? How do you inspire others, how do you collaborate, how do you get along with all different kinds of people, how do you--do people listen to your ideas, how do you communicate your thoughts? So, your written and your verbal communication skills, and your ability to connect to different types of people make you much more desirable. People want to work with people they like.

**JW:** Yeah.

**CW:** They want to work with people that are interesting. And you want to be able to communicate and get--and be able to sell your ideas and make the connections to business--beyond the art of it but to the business results of it.

**JW:** Deep, deep, deep, deep, deep. Deep, Carol, deep, Carol. Last question for you. So, what would be your advice, then, to them? If we know that they are--part of the things that are missing in their development is exposure to being able to connect the dots and understanding the importance and the significance of

collaboration, what would be your advice to them to get these things?

**CW:** It's the same advice that I give to the white guy that is trying to figure out how to diversify. Get out of your comfort zone and make yourself uncomfortable--to go to neighborhoods that you--and museums and bookstores and places that you don't see anybody that looks like you or that you feel a little bit like, "I don't know if I belong here." Go into different ethnic areas or try different places to be that you don't see anybody that looks like you, that you may feel a little uncomfortable--and practice--whether it's Toastmasters or just blogging and contributing to the blog conversations that you never would have been in.

**JW:** Yeah.

**CW:** But, kind of challenge yourselves to get out of your comfort zones in terms of building your social network, building your exposure. Go into the bookstore and go to an area that you never--don't know anything about and never knew--like is completely different from anything that you have ever experienced and just immerse yourself and just kind of wallow in it and do a deep dive and find other people that know more about that than you do and keep yourself open to learn.

**JW:** Oh, wow.

**CW:** So, the more you get out of your comfort zone and the more you get comfortable in discomfort, the more interesting you are, the more you can talk to people about things that you never knew there was a connection to. It may be a connection from yachting and sailing to hip-hop to

Indian food that like changes the world, that influences your [unintelligible], that makes you somebody that somebody wants to have an interview with--like how do you make that connection?

**JW:** Yeah, yes.

**CW:** Those are the people people want to talk to.

**JW:** Wow, wow. Well, Carol, thank you. These are the six questions. Well, I'm sure there were a little bit more than six. I enjoy speaking with you. So--but, the work that I've been doing so far has been looking at the design journey. And I have made a visualization of it. I'd love to share that.

**CW:** Hmm.

**JW:** Oh, I have. I hope you like it.

**CW:** [Unintelligible.]

**JW:** I can't wait to share it with you. I hope you really like it because when we spoke--and you always tell me these great aspects of knowledge from the recruiting piece, do you see what I'm saying? We never know what they are thinking, so to speak.

**CW:** Yeah.

**JW:** We never know what that part is. So, to have someone like you involved in this research was critical for me--hence, me hunting you down again, like when can we meet, when can we meet?

**CW:** Oh, not a problem, girl. I've been down that road.

**JW:** And I really--.

**CW:** --And I was way more [unintelligible] than you ever could even imagine, trying to get all these [unintelligible] people on the phone. It was ridiculous.

**JW:** Well, and I love the study. I have been still reading through it. And I'm actually working right now to name that thing that we talked about, like is it--it's not professional development, it's not mentoring, it's not-- it's learning about the industry, it's learning about you, it's--you know what I'm saying? So, I'm working to develop this name for it. So, as soon as I have it done I definitely would love to share it with you and to get your insights on it.

**CW:** Sure, absolutely.

**JW:** Excellent, excellent. Well, I hope you have a great Saturday planned. It's beautiful here in Ohio. So-- I don't know what the weather is like in New York.

**CW:** Yeah, I think it's nice. I'm in the middle of doing laundry. I don't know what I was thinking about trying to talk to you yesterday [unintelligible] weekend.

**JW:** No, no, and the weekends are perfect. The weekends are absolutely perfect.

**CW:** Yeah, so trying to just get myself together.

**JW:** I understand.

**CW:** I have a bunch of Stacy's friends, so hanging out with them.

**JW:** Well, I hope you--.

**CW:** [--Unintelligible] birthday season.

**JW:** Well, I hope you have a good birthday season with your people and stuff. I greatly appreciate your time. And I'm going to tweet you out--so one of these quotes. I

don't know which one I'm going to use yet. And I'll make sure that I tweet you, so that you'll know that it went down. And I'm sure tons of people will be kind of discussing it back.

**CW:** Sure, absolutely.

**JW:** Thank you.

**CW:** No problem. Tell me if you need anything.

**JW:** I definitely will, Carol. Thank you so much for your time.

**CW:** All right. Take care.

**JW:** Bye-bye.

**CW:** Bye-bye.

## **Interview with Carl Settles**

**Ms. Jacinda Walker Interviewing**

**Mr. Carl Settles**

**Ms. Jacinda Walker:** Great. We are recording. And I was going to ask you to kind of begin by telling me your name and what you do.

**Mr. Carl Settles:** My name is Carl Settles, and I founded a non-profit called E4 Youth. And I help primarily under-served youth pursue--well, first, learn about and then pursue creative careers.

**JW:** Wonderful. And what design discipline are you? Are you a designer, is probably a better question?

**CS:** Well, I made most of my living as an adult as a coder. I was an interactive developer. I used to develop Flash back when it was relevant for about 15 years. But, I actually have a music background.

**JW:** Wow.

**CS:** And I have a music degree, and played professionally for 25 years, and had a studio for a while. So, I kind of--I don't know. I think that's the design discipline. I'm proficient in visual design, but I don't consider myself a real visual designer.

**JW:** No?

**CS:** I do it out of [inaudible] else. I guess I have the T-shape skillset with the deepest in, I guess, interactive. And not that I'm the most amazing--I'm really a visionary, quite frankly. And I've found the sweet spot

between education and design thinking, and using that particularly to design curriculum.

At my [inaudible], I guess I've been able to really understand what creatives want and what they go through, what educators go through trying to work with students, and also with people on the corporate side of things, what are they trying to accomplish and what do they want? And so, I'm really able to bring those seemingly disparate parties together, if that makes any sense.

**JW:** No, no, definitely, definitely.

I was reading your bio a little bit. So, I'm glad--I appreciate you sending that over to me, so I get to skip a couple of questions.

**CS:** Sure.

**JW:** Since you describe yourself as a visionary with a background of coding, can you maybe talk with me a little bit about how you got to this E4 Youth concept, or can you maybe get me to that point?

**CS:** Sure. Well, I--as I mentioned, I have a music degree. And both my parents have--or had advance degrees. My dad had his Ph.D. in psychology from the University of Texas here in Austin. My mother had her--has her master's in [inaudible]. And so, I'm a second generation college graduate, but I didn't really know that you could make a living as a creative other than being a musician really until I got in my 30s. And my first job out of college was actually teaching reading and math in the Title I program in Killeen, Texas. And then I ended up teaching science for five years in--.

**JW:** --Wow--.

**CS:** --Another Title I program to middle-school kids in southeast Austin. And that's when I really kind of discovered technology. I started an after-school program that was technology based. We had kids coding HTML. But, I was also a creative, and I started exploring graphic design, web development. And, eventually, I ended up in the software world, particularly in educational software where I was a developer. And it was a company--they were starting an audio department.

And, me with my audio background, I became the Director of Audio. And so, at that--it was kind of my dream job at the time. It was kind of like producing Schoolhouse Rock. So, I did--I had 35 songwriters and voice-over artists that worked for me. And I was the liaison between them, the instructional designers and the technical folks. And so, that was my job until the bubble burst in 2001, and had to--got laid off, like everybody else. And then I was like, wow, I'd really love to do production. I'm good at it, and I wanted to stay in that world, and that's when I discovered advertising, was then.

At that time, it was really difficult for me to make that transition into advertising because I didn't have any relationships, I didn't have the right type of portfolio, and I really had to fight hard to get over there. And I, more or less, just hustled my way in, and I got on the board of directors for the local advertising--American Advertising Federation club here.

And, me being one of the few people of color, I started taking over diversity issues for the club. And that's where I really discovered this whole other world.

And as I went through that experience and continued to develop software projects and did some advertising stuff here and there, that's when I reflected and I thought about, well, the kids that I met, they weren't second-generation college students. They were first generation. And so, if I didn't know--.

**JW:** --They really didn't know--.

**CS:** --Then how would they know? And then if they knew, how would they actually go about pursuing a career in those fields? And so, I was working--I think one of the things that really spurred me was I had a friend I went to high school with. We both were football players. He was an all-American linebacker. I was an all-state football tackle.

And he graduated the year before I did, but he started at the time was just the Texas Diversity Council. He's been very successful. Now, it's a national organization. He has conferences all over the world.

**JW:** Wow.

**CS:** And I was--so, I got to help him out. He was doing a conference in Houston, and so I was Spike Lee's escort for the day. I went and picked him up at the airport. And here's a guy I went to high school with, and I think speaking that day was Spike Lee, Dee Dee Myers, who's the House--the Press Secretary for Clinton, Jeb Bush and heavy hitters.

**JW:** All these pivotal people.

**CS:** All these people that he was--they were speaking at my homeboy's--.

**JW:** --Conference--.

**CS:** --Conference there in Houston, and hanging out with Spike Lee. And I had a decent job, had a nice car. That's why I got to drive Spike around that day. And he was just saying how lucky he was to do what he loved for a living.

**JW:** Wow.

**CS:** And he was saying that--he's kind of talking to the audience when he was saying there's some of you here that you're doing jobs that you don't really enjoy. And I kind of felt like he was talking to me, not that I had a bad life, not that I didn't enjoy the people that I was working around. They were all good people, but I wasn't really doing something that I really cared about. A few months later, we had a company meeting. They said the company was shutting down.

**JW:** Uh-uh.

**CS:** Yeah, I went through a whole--that's a whole 'nother story with those type of episodes happening in my life, for about seven years.

**JW:** Wow.

**CS:** So, I literally stepped out of the meeting while it was still going on, and I called my friend from high school, and I said, "Man, I'm ready to do something."

And so, I drove up to Houston that weekend and started scheming about how I can do something. And, at the time, we came up with the Media Diversity Council because even the Texas Diversity Council--.

**JW:** --Do you mean the Diversity Council with the other group that you were in? I lost track. The--you said you were in an advertising group--.

**CS:** --I was in advertising that--.

**JW:** --And you were running diversity for them--.

**CS:** --The American Advertising Federation Ad Club here in Austin. I was doing diversity work for them. I got--I started an urban media symposium that they did here back--.

**JW:** --Yeah--.

**CS:** --We did here in 2007. And, you know, we had some success, but I had issues making that happen and just some push back.

So, I kind of left them alone. And then, I started working at this--I was working at this software company. They were shutting down. And, my friend, he had the Texas Diversity Council.

**JW:** That's what--yes.

**CS:** That's who I went and hooked up with.

**JW:** Okay.

**CS:** And so, he was my umbrella initially when I started the Media Diversity Council. And it was [inaudible] now. But at the time, I was not focused enough. I was trying to be everything to everybody.

I didn't--just wasn't focused enough. But, I started--I got a contract with the Housing Authority here in Austin and just kind of started taking my lumps, if you will, as an entrepreneur. But, really about four years ago, I came to a realization that all of my support and all of my relationships were within the creative community and particularly the folks over at McGarrah Jesse Advertising Agency.

They do stuff for Whataburger and Frost Bank. Brian Jessee had become a good friend of mine, and I basically reached out to him, and I said, "Hey, I'm selling my possessions to survive, and if I don't get any help, I'm going to have to stop. And frankly, there's a big difference between when I ask for money and when you ask for money, and I need your help."

And so, they helped me. It wasn't a whole bunch of financial help, especially at the time. But, it was enough to keep me going, and they provided an amazing amount of resources, financial and otherwise, since that time and really started to focus in, "Hey, we work with creative kids." Creative kids of color especially are ignored in our schools. And we need to--because everybody's throwing money at STEM.

**JW:** Yeah.

**CS:** Okay?

And I was a coder, so I see the value of that. But, the only reason I got into coding is because of creativity. And what I feel like is lost and--the people, they say STEAM. You put arts in there. You make STEM STEAM.

**JW:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**CS:** And that's cool.

But, really what they mean is STEM. They don't really care about no arts unless--so, what I--the way I look at it is that I can hit up a guy in Pakistan that will code circles around just about anybody I know. An engineer is really the 21t Century ditch digger.

You have to have somebody who has a vision for what that's going to be used for. Steve Jobs, one of the giants

of the past century, he was not a coder. He was a creative visionary. And what's happening with our kids is that, if they're not--if they don't immediately want to be coders, then they're not engaged.

The school system pushes them aside. And so, we have this whole underutilized portion of our society that's being cut out of this--being cut out of the creative class when they are the ones especially suited to lead that creative class. And so, rather than chasing the money, which is what I was doing, we put our stake in the ground and said, "Hey, we are about creative kids."

Of course, we use technology. I have a technological background. But, I can't frame it the way that they want me to frame it because, frankly, I don't think that that's really effective. And that's based on my 25 plus years in the education game and working with [inaudible] and working with students.

Now there's some kids that are all about coding and by--we take those kids, too. But, they're, by and large, extremely creative kids themselves. So, I think the key thing that I've started to focus on and what we've started to develop with this curriculum that we have is, "How do we get kids out of the consumer mindset and into the producer mindset?"

And technology, inevitably in today's world, is going to play a role in that. But, the technology is not the end all, be all. It's the ideas that the technology is a tool to help you realize, and that's where we've started to really get the most traction and make progress with the kids.

**JW:** So, being able to--so, you spent a lot of time helping children or at least believing that children should more from a consumer mindset--.

**CS:** --Right--.

**JW:** --To a producer--?

**CS:** --Yeah, producer mindset, yeah.

And that's one of the--that's part of the curriculum that we have. So, we have about 24 hours of mostly games that the kids can play. And these are high school, college age, middle school, as well.

So, eight hours of those are team building types of exercises, eight hours are critical thinking exercises, and eight hours of media literacy exercises. And their design is 20 to 30 minute activities that any teacher, no matter what they teach, can incorporate into their core lessons.

So, it could be a math teacher. We have language arts teachers that use them. I've had science teachers use them in the past. There's a big cultural divide in our classrooms in that 80 percent of our kids now are of color that are in our public classrooms.

But, 80 percent of our teachers are not. And there's a big divide there, and we have to be able to create a space within those classrooms where the kids can feel like they are engaged and are safe to be able to express themselves.

But, it also--we have to fundamentally help teachers change the way that they teach. So, the phrase that we use is, "Teach students, not subjects." And so, these exercises that we do--one teacher works with 100 to 200 kids.

**JW:** Yep.

**CS:** So, if we can change the way that that teacher teaches, then we impact the entire culture of that school.

And so, we can--and thinking of it, just with five teachers this year, we have a pool of 500 kids going through these soft skill lessons. And then we have 100 kids going to after-school enrichment led by creative mentors, college mentors, young professionals.

And so, they all work symbiotically. The students are doing these activities in class and it's--let's say you build--you make a little obstacle course, and you have somebody with a blindfold on. And you have to make that--they have to make it through that obstacle course, but the other students have to give them directions on how to make it through that obstacle course, or we're gonna build a house of cards, but only this person can talk, everybody else just has to follow instructions.

It's trying to give the kids some insights into how do they work in teams, how do they deal with stress, how do they--.

**JW:** --Who's the leader, the leader.

**CS:** Yeah, what--and then giving them some strategies for being able to deal with those things. And then, really, the fulcrum really starts to turn when we look at the media literacy part because our kids are not given the opportunity to have a voice about how they're perceived in the messages that are being put forth to them about who they are and how they think.

So, we really provide a lens for those kids to see those messages in popular culture and give them a voice to

be able to speak about those things, so how do you feel about these things. And then we say, okay, so you have something to say. Well, you have the same tools.

**JW:** Yeah, now what?

**CS:** So, you've been a consumer, right, and you say that you're not satisfied with the way that these things are being put across to you. Well, then you need to be a producer. But, your message is not gonna be effective unless you do high quality stuff, and the natural impediment to you doing that high quality content is the soft skills. I don't like working with Tammy. I need to--you don't have a plan. You haven't practiced. You--so, all of those things that the teacher--now, see, the teacher's doing the soft skills as a part of the class, and then the kid is going with a mentor after school doing the things that they're passionate about. And by doing those assignments, the kids can earn credits.

So, we just had 30 kids that attended South by Southwest with gold badges.

**JW:** Wow.

**CS:** That's 30 out of 500.

**JW:** Wow.

**CS:** Okay?

We have a relationship with Microsoft, so we're able to give away some gear. We have a summer shadowing program. I just had another gentleman donate an SLR camera and a laptop to us, so I'm gonna give that to the student that has the most outstanding piece of content about their experience with South by Southwest.

So, what we're doing is is that the kids--we let them do what they're passionate about, and then the carrot is, hey, you get to do all this cool stuff, but then they fall back on the things that they are learning in their core classes about working with each other, how do I develop a plan, how do I overcome these obstacles. And what starts to happen is that they can confidence--I don't know how familiar you are about in educational terms but Bloom's Taxonomy.

**JW:** I have heard of that.

**CS:** So, what a great content creator does is that they synthesize and they evaluate. Those are the highest levels of thinking, synthesizing and evaluating.

So, what we're really scoring them on is their ability to synthesize and evaluate. We don't tell them that. We just say, hey, that song is good. But, why is that song good? Because you've synthesized all of these different elements. Oh, you took that beat from this, I see that you took your vocal inflection from this and you put all of those things together in a seamless package. You synthesized something.

And those are the high level thinking skills that all the tests and all the things that they're supposed to be doing--.

**JW:** --Are pushing for--.

**CS:** --In class they're being measured for, those are the indicators. So, the kids gain confidence. They start to understand how they think, how do they synthesize, how do they evaluate best, and then they're able to take that process back into the classroom, and it changes that they

way that they do in their day to day work, and it just changes their attitude overall.

**JW:** Wow.

**CS:** So, what I do is really kind of subversive because--but, I don't go and try and explain that to people. I say, oh, I'm just trying to work with creative kids, and--but, once you start to put that process in place, it starts to change the culture in a school.

And the great things is that kids that make it through the program, that make it through our shadow program, they can come back [inaudible], and then they start to mentor the other kids in the program.

**JW:** It's a cycle.

**CS:** We will also start to pay them to be mentors to work with the other kids. And so, you create a culture within a neighborhood, within a school of achievement where creativity, where high achievement becomes the norm as opposed to this anomaly.

**JW:** Do you think that--wow. Okay, okay, I'm about to go off script. I've got to stay--I have to stay on script, I have to stay on script.

**CS:** Okay.

**JW:** Okay, okay, okay. I'm gonna stay on script, but when we end the interview, I've got two questions. I wrote them down here.

**CS:** Okay, all right.

**JW:** Okay. All right.

So, my research work looks at diversity in design disciplines, and it asks a question--my--it investigates what are strategies to expose African American and Latino

youth to design related careers. And so, in hearing what you've explained about creating a culture of excellence and achievement, you are using the creativity as a tool, not necessarily as the thing like, hey, I'm a great artist, and I'm gonna be successful in your program.

That's not what you're rating me on as a student. You're rating me on, hey, I created this product, and I figured out a way to engage others, and--.

**CS:** --Yes--.

**JW:** --I've been working on my pitch to sell it, to produce it, to make it, and what do you think of it, that type of thing. So, you're more so working on these soft skills, as you described.

**CS:** Yeah. Well, so I've been able to place students at some of the best agencies here right out of high school. Talent was never the issue. They got plenty of talent.

**JW:** Plenty talent.

**CS:** Okay?

I've got a young man, he's in--the owner of the agency. It's like he's a genius. We just can't--we don't know if he's gonna show up on time. You see what I'm saying?

**JW:** Uh-huh.

**CS:** So, that's--and so, this is--after eight years of doing this, we started to see, wow, so it's--rarely is it a question of whether or not the kid has talent. It's whether or not the kid has the right types of skills that they're gonna be able to fit into the corporate mold, if you will.

**JW:** Employment, future--being a, what do they call it, a productive human being, a productive member of this society.

**CS:** Right, right.

**JW:** So--okay. So, okay, I just wrote another question down. Okay, okay.

So, in--so then, okay, this is just absolutely mind blowing because I've been reading your website and doing a lot of Googling about you, and this is not what I thought E4 Youth was. So, you have to give me a moment to regroup because it's--I love this thought that it's not about the talent, it's about the soft skills.

**CS:** And from--I'm an entrepreneur. My mind goes all over the place. I have to be focused. What I think--it's a milestone for us in that we realized--we're talking to the people at the district level here in Austin about the soft skills curriculum. That's the buzz word now, right, soft skills, soft skills.

So, what we're saying is, you know what, we can--our soft skills curriculum can work for any teacher. And that's--and the issue for us is being how do we make this pay, how do we create earned revenue. So, that's been a revelation for us over the last nine months is that realizing, oh, the real beauty of this are the soft skills, we know that there's plenty of talent, and it's wrap around because what we're saying to the teacher is, hey, you work with these creative kids, we're gonna give you access to tours, we're gonna give you access to guest speakers, you're gonna be able to get kids into our summer shadowing

program, you're gonna--if they're qualified, they can go into internships. So, it's all career based.

But, the kids--you have to--you as the teacher have to incorporate these soft skills into your classroom. That's what you need to do.

**JW:** We'll bring you the kids, and we'll keep--.

**CS:** --They already have kids.

**JW:** They have--so, the teachers have the kids. You-- how do you qualify the kids? How do you qualify the kids?

**CS:** The kids qualify themselves.

**JW:** Really?

**CS:** Yeah. So, what we say is, hey, teacher, you teach such-and-such classes, you need to teach these soft skills in your class so every kid gets these soft skills. It's subversive, okay? Every kid gets those soft skills. Then we say, okay, now you said that you wanted these types of things for your kids, so we found a mentor for you, and that mentor's gonna be your after school instructor, and that mentor is going to do activities that are gonna help these kids be passionate.

So, we may--right now, we have a pool of 500 kids going through soft skills. 100 of those kids go after school, and then they are doing creative assignments and doing these different types of creative experiences.

And so, every kid gets the soft skills. Then kids choose to opt in to the after school enrichment part, and those kids that do the best, those are the kids that get the best rewards like the badges to South by Southwest and so on and so forth.

Then all the other kids, the other 500 kids that are back in class are going, you did what? You see?

**JW:** I should have--yeah, I should have did that, or how come I didn't get picked to do that, or why did he get it over me. And then you're gonna say, hey, well, listen, he completed these benchmarks, these levels, and you didn't, or I tried, and you quit, or you didn't show up, you didn't make it through the program.

So, he tries to come back harder because he's like, are you gonna do it again so I can come back and do it because Maleek [sp] talked about how much fun he had, he showed me his pictures, and I wanted to go, too, but I didn't know, and so I'm gonna try harder next time.

**CS:** Exactly, and then you change the culture.

**JW:** Correct, yeah. So, it's more--so, you've created a soft skills curriculum to, as you say, change the culture and to be able to do that across all academic classrooms, basically.

**CS:** Yeah. And still, I don't picture it that way. What I'm saying to the school districts is, hey, your career in technology in education, teachers, we are a great fit for them because those--all of those career in technology--it's video, it's fashion, graphic design, those are all things that kind of fall within "creative careers."

So, we have to get a foothold somewhere. The one thing that I've learned is we can't be everything to everybody, but we just say, hey, do these soft skills lessons. But, what will happen is that the teachers are gonna start to see success because I started with a video teacher, and then the journalism teacher started seeing

what the video kids were doing, and she goes we want--I want a part of that.

And so, it just starts to naturally spread. But, our entry level is, hey, it's about creativity, and those are the teachers we want to support.

**JW:** And so, the kids already--by--like you said, you can't be everything to everybody, but by selecting a group of educators, you're at least able to say, hey, I'm getting kids who are more open minded. You're already--you're soliciting a type of student by selecting certain curriculum to start these soft skills programs in.

**CS:** Right, yeah. First thing I'll say to a teacher, so do you teach creative kids, because everybody's got that kid or those kids like, man, he's really talented, I just don't know what to do with him.

**JW:** To do with him.

**CS:** Right?

And you start going, oh, I do. Oh. Well--.

**JW:** --We got something for you.

**CS:** And then I got them.

**JW:** And you do this because you feel that the creative kids are really--even though they have the talent to lead this creative class that's coming, they don't have the soft skills to maintain it, they don't have the soft skills to enter it.

**CS:** Well, they don't have--they feel disenfranchised. A lot of these kids are natural leaders, but what they have to offer is undervalued in the classroom. And so, those kids are usually at risk for definitely under-achieving or just dropping out.

And so, what I'm saying is, hey, let's engage these kids, and then these kids blossom, and they become the leaders in the classes. So, Pierre Bourdieu, he was a sociologist, and he talked about cultural capital. That's what we're doing. We're investing cultural capital into these kids. We're helping them develop a network, helping them have experiences that are gonna make them more likely to be successful than they would have otherwise--.

**JW:** --I like that - we're investing cultural capital in these kids.

**CS:** Yeah.

**JW:** Do you think that--I'm sorry, I was writing that down. I might use that for your quote.

**CS:** Okay.

**JW:** And by these, you mean these disenfranchised or underrepresented.

**CS:** Yeah.

**JW:** I like that. Okay, okay, okay, okay, I think I got it now. If I miss something, do you mind if I give you a call or shoot you an email about that?

**CS:** No problem.

**JW:** Excellent because I want to keep--I want to be mindful of your time. We've only got like 10 minutes left, and I want to make sure I ask these good questions, last couple questions.

So, with my research being focused in effective strategies, one--as you were talking about soft skills, I do have a component that talks about career competency. And a lot of those things that you've described as soft skills I'm also calling career competency.

**CS:** Right.

**JW:** And so, what I want to ask you is what do you-- like how do you encourage--I mean, yes, you use the carats, but like how do you encourage them to think about choosing a design related career? Like--.

**CS:** --Well--.

**JW:** --All the kids, you're gonna be able to say, hey, we're gonna give you some tickets to South by Southwest.

**CS:** Well, they're seeing guest speakers coming to their classroom that are in creative careers, they're going on tours of places that they see creative professionals, and if they go through our summer shadowing program, they get a coach that's in the industry. Every week, they shadow somebody that's doing something similar to what they have an interest in, they're developing a resume, they're developing a portfolio, and they're working on products for real clients.

**JW:** Wow, wow.

**CS:** So, they--we let--first of all, it's Americans for the Arts 2012 Study, they were saying that most kids can't even identify an interest or a hobby. So, first of all, you've got to help them identify what they're interested in.

Then you've got to help them figure out, well, what am I good at. And then once you figure out what they're good at, okay, how do I become great at it.

So, we don't say, hey, we're trying to make you into a graphic designer. We say, hey, you're creative, what do you like. It's the Socratic method. I just keep asking questions, and then eventually, they start to come up with

the answer. I don't tell them, hey, you're this or you're that. I just keep asking questions. Oh, that was cool. So, what do you think about this? And then they start to identify--they see somebody, something sparks their interest. I guess the thing is is that I don't have the illusion that I have control over these kids. They control themselves.

And so, what--I could influence them by giving them options. We're facilitators. We want to change the role of the teacher to that of the facilitator.

So, it's opening up that teacher to all of these different types of community resources, and when they teach the student instead of the subject, they're looking at the kid and they're going, okay, well--because they see the kid every day. So, they're gonna know those kids better than we will ever know them if they open their eyes and allow themselves to really look at them in a holistic manner.

So, that's what our focus is. We've just got to keep asking the right types of questions, and the kids will come up with the answers.

And then, again, it's that natural impediment of the soft skills. I let kids fail. Wow, that sucked. Oh, well. Why did that suck?

**JW:** Like ouch, ouch, crash and burn.

**CS:** I've--the very first year I started this program, a young man that I'm still close to today, he was on probation because he wasn't going to class. He was living by himself. His parents were in another state. He was living by himself as a senior. And very talented, creative kid, and we started asking, so what are you into. I like

video games and video. Okay. So, we started going to video game companies and video companies, production.

He graduates. I coax him to get into our summer program. Fast forward four or five years later. He's working on campaigns for Whataburger and Costa Del Mar. He didn't even get a degree in college.

**JW:** Wow.

**CS:** And he's a completely different human being now. So, I've had kids that were straight up gangbangers when I met them, but it's like, oh, wow, man, you can draw. You ever thought about being a graphic designer? And suddenly, they blossom, they mature.

It's because somebody is taking a genuine interest in them. I don't look at it as--I'm not there to save anybody. They can do that themselves. I'm just there to open up some opportunities. And whenever I go to a kid, I look at it as it's an exchange, it's that they have something of value already, and I'm just helping them uncover what they have of value.

And my reward is seeing that happen, okay? I don't think of it as like, oh, I'm giving--you poor kid, let me come in there and save you.

**JW:** Talk down to them, you're not talking down to them.

**CS:** No, no.

And that same kid--the first kid, Gabriel [inaudible], I let him fail massively on some stuff. It hurt my heart, too. Man, it hurt. I gave him a project. He was supposed to be the producer, and he had all these other younger

people working for him, and he just took off literally. He left. Never finished a damn thing, man, yeah.

So, I don't do that--I don't do it to that level any more, but you have to let people feel safe enough that they can fail and know that it's not the end of the world. Lord knows I've failed enough. I've failed at what I'm doing now. I fail all the time. But, then I learn and I go, okay, I'm gonna do it this way now.

**JW:** Correct, correct.

**CS:** And that's a part of--and everybody who has some success has had plenty of failure.

**JW:** Yeah, yeah, Lord knows.

So, here's my question for you - how do you think--in reflecting on the students that you've been working with and knowing about your journey, what do you think would have made it better for you since you--you talk about you've experienced a lot. What would have made it better, easier?

**CS:** Well, I think for me--I mean, everything that I do, I think about, man, if I was a kid, what would I want. I mean, I didn't know what a copywriter was or a graphic designer or any of those things that I really kind of take for granted, or being able to attend a conference like South by Southwest and getting to know business owners, actual entrepreneurs and developing relationships with those folks. Those are all [inaudible] music legacy [inaudible] Grammy winning musicians [inaudible] hip-hop, Latin, and they're going into the studio at the beginning of April to record a record with a group of kids, and it's gonna be on fire.

They--so, these kids are actually--they're actually writing a record with these world class musicians.

**JW:** Wow.

So, are you thinking then or are you suggesting that if you had have had more exposure, your journey could have been better?

**CS:** Yeah, yeah. I mean, I'm not complaining about my journey.

**JW:** Oh, no, no, no, no.

**CS:** I think things happen for a reason. But, yeah, if I would have had more exposure--I had a great childhood. My parents were supportive, overwhelmingly supportive for the most part. My mother didn't like it that I majored in music, but we got over that.

And--but, yeah, if I would have had more exposure, if I would have know--if I would have known what I know now, then I probably would have studied advertising in college.

**JW:** Yeah. So, if you had have had more exposure to creativity, more exposure to advertising, these design related careers, these career options--.

**CS:** --Right--.

**JW:** --And I'll put creative career options--that's what you were really looking for.

**CS:** Yeah. And that's the thing now is that all these things are merging. What is--creativity, creative careers, it's really malleable. You have--we have kids now that--like another one of these young people, he's like a five option threat. He can write--.

**JW:** --Oh, yeah, I know one too like that--.

**CS:** --He can shoot, he can act his ass off, he's a deejay, and he can play, he can just pick up a musical instrument and just start playing at any moment.

**JW:** I have a lot of mentees, and I have one--I call this boy anointed. He can--he is a photographer, he can design, he's an illustrator, he can write music and he like--he wants--he's visionary, visions of possibly being a rapper one day, like--and I met--and it's kind of like--and the bad thing is we tell our young people not to be--we tell people don't be a jack of all trades, pick one. He's actually very talented--oh, and I forgot. He also does websites, okay?

**CS:** Yes, exactly.

**JW:** Yes, he also does web work, okay?

**CS:** Yeah.

**JW:** And so, I absolutely--because I have one like that. I can't even imagine what it would be like to be in a space where I had more than one young person like that.

**CS:** Well, yeah, and that's a big part of what we are doing now is we're cocooning these kids into little teams where they really start to be able--because they--we all have multiple interests, and with technology, it makes it much easier to be able to cross over into these different things. And I look at it as it's not necessarily working at an ad agency but working in the creative field as a creative entrepreneur.

And one of the things we're looking at doing, very hard at doing right now, and we're starting to get work doing that, is having these teams led by young professionals actually provide creative services for small

businesses and non-profits that wouldn't ordinarily--they can't afford to go to a GSD&M or a larger agency, but they can afford for us to be able to do work for them.

**JW:** Yeah, and then facilitate the child's learning on that as well as them getting a product at the end of this, which is a win/win for everybody.

**CS:** Absolutely, absolutely.

**JW:** Okay, last question, and I'm gonna leave you alone, then I'm gonna ask my own two personal questions. I want--so, you talked to me about what would make your journey better. We talked about your path to become this creative visionary, and what advice do you give the students? Like, you talked about that art study that you read, and you said that it talked about being able to identify what you like and then seeing it, like this--okay. So, what advice do you give them about like choosing? So, now they've seen it.

**CS:** Right. So, during the summer, our summer shadowing program, Shadow the Pros, I take the kids through a process where they do their own personal swat [sp] analysis, and what are they good at, what are they not so good at, what are their threats, what are their opportunities. And we'll look at those, and I'll question them. So, let's zero in on this. You say you're good at this. Well, what evidence do you have that shows me that you're good at this because I don't buy it, or, okay, yeah, you really are good at that, or maybe they don't think--or maybe they have some strengths that they haven't identified.

**JW:** Correct.

**CS:** I have a young lady who's really shy. She's a great writer. She's an okay musician, but she's a great writer. And I'm like, you can write, I see it, you do it easily. And what happens [unintelligible] times is kids will--because they do something easy, they discount it, and they start to focus on what they can't do.

And so, I take them--I try to take them through a process where they really have to start to examine are they really being truthful with themselves about what they're good at and what they're not and what are really opportunities for them and what are not.

One of the classics, I'll have some people like--they'll say threats, like haters.

**JW:** What is that?

**CS:** Exactly. So, identify hater for me, please, because those are just obstacles that they put up in their mind for not really dealing with things that could really help them.

So, I'm there--I guess what I say is I'm there to remove barriers and help them identify those barriers and just continue to like, oh, well, that's real, okay, we can keep that, or that's bullshit, let's take that out. So--.

**JW:** --So, you make them say my strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Then they verbalize it, and then we have a discussion based off of that where we compare, we say yes, we say nay, we say what about--we have this analyzing process that comes after the swat.

**CS:** Right, right.

**JW:** Oh, that's a--yeah, that's a good one--.

**CS:** --And so--because by the end of the summer, they need to have a resume, and this is probably their first resume, right?

**JW:** Yeah, which is the hardest one. That really is the hardest--once you get the first one down--.

**CS:** --Right.

And the thing is, so you--in their resume, you need to identify an objective. So, it's particularly a creative resume, so you don't know what you're good at, so how are you gonna get there?

So, you have to go through that process of whittling down, okay, these are things I'm good at, okay, now I'm shadowing people that are doing these things, okay, I'm doing this thing that I say that I'm good at in a group working on a project for a real client. So, by the end of that eight week period, they start to have a much, much more refined sense of what they're good at, and they've met all--they've had this distributed network of mentors, peers, near peers and professionals that start to get to know them and that can help them actually be able to pursue that.

**JW:** And it's also massaging that talent. It's massaging the talent before it become--it's--you know how like you cook something but you let it--you let bread rise before--whenever you make dough, you don't just--when you finish with it, you don't just throw it in the oven. You let it rise for a half hour. You might even--I know some people who like to let their bread rise, the dough rise on top of the stove because it's getting that--it's a heat, but it's not a cooking heat. You know what I'm saying?

**CS:** Right, the medium heat.

**JW:** Yeah, it's not--yeah, it's like a ah--that--what comes after the ah is that after stuff. But, it makes the--they say that it makes the rise a smoother rise and you get softer bread. You know what I'm saying?

**CS:** Okay.

**JW:** So, no. So, I love that.

Okay, so I think that's everything that I need on mine. I'm gonna go back through, and I might--I have your bio, so I didn't ask a lot of questions about that, but I love what you said about the design journey. The exposure piece for you would have been critical, and I really enjoyed the--I love the concept of having the advice you give to students is to do a swat analysis for themselves.

**CS:** Yeah, yeah.

**JW:** So, I'm going to ask--I'm going to close--I'm gonna officially close our interview.

## **Interview with Jose Callaber**

**Ms. Jacinda Walker Interviewing**  
**Mr. Jose Callaber**

**Ms. Jacinda Walker:** I am going to start recording now.

**Mr. Jose Callaber:** Okay.

**JW:** And you may begin.

**JC:** My name is Jose Callaber, and I am the Chief Content Officer of the school. And the school teaches creative people, designers like me, business. I'm a graphic designer. I went to Art Center College of Design. And that's it. That's my stats.

**JW:** Art Center College of Design, wow. We're probably, like, the same age.

**JC:** I'm 42.

**JW:** Excellent. And ethnicity?

**JC:** My dad is Puerto Rican. My mom is Dominican.

**JW:** Wonderful. Yesterday you mentioned that your mom, I believe you said, was--.

**JC:** --Her mom is half black and half Spanish.

**JW:** Wow, wow, wow, wow.

And so, college. What was the degree there that you attained?

**JC:** Graphic design. It's a bachelor's in graphic design and packaging with a focus on digital.

**JW:** So, with a focus on digital in the arts--?

**JC:** --It's really on packaging, but I focused on digital.

**JW:** That's what I was going to say. Was that stuff even in school when you were, like, in--?

**JC:** --Yeah. Lynda Weinman--you know Lynda.com?

**JW:** Yeah.

**JC:** She was one of my teachers. So, I took, like, aftereffects, Photoshop from her. I didn't take her HTML class, but--.

**JW:** --Wow.

**JC:** I took digital from, like, some crazy MIT people. They were great classes. I learned about narrative. I learned about nonlinear narratives. I learned about interaction in 1995 before that--.

**JW:** --Wow--.

**JC:** --Was even big.

**JW:** So, tell me a little bit more about your formative years. Like, were you--were your parents creatives?

**JC:** No. My dad was a pastor and my mom was a teacher, a biologist, and she also worked at the lab as a phlebologist.

And I grew up back and forth between Puerto Rico--the Dominican Republic, which is where I lived my first four years, then Puerto Rico, then California, then back to Puerto Rico and back to California, then back to Dominican Republic, then back to California where I stayed for the last 25 years.

**JW:** So, you've just been all over the diaspora?

**JC:** No, just back and forth. Yeah, I lived in New York for six years.

**JW:** Wow. Are you--?

**JC:** --I've surfed the diaspora.

**JW:** With your father being a pastor and your mom being an educator, what was their philosophy for you on education?

**JC:** Oh, I was supposed to be a pastor. So, they're not disappointed. I mean, I am a pastor, but not in the way--.

**JW:** --Yes, you preach the creative word.

**JC:** Hmm?

**JW:** You preach the creative word.

**JC:** Yes.

**JW:** So, how did that affect you, when they knew you were supposed to be a pastor and you decided to be a creative?

**JC:** Oh, my dad, I was--I remember very much. We lived in Highland, California and I was in high school, in the 11th grade. And I told him--hey, guys, keep the conversations a little lower so that the recording doesn't pick up all the audio. Sorry.

I told my dad that I was going to go to art school, and he's like "[spoken in Spanish]" in Venice Beach". His response was, "You're going to sell paintings in Venice Beach." That's what he thought art was--.

**JW:** --Oh, goodness--.

**JC:** --Which is fine. I mean, he said it in humor, but he didn't obviously--like, he didn't know what the impact of it was.

**JW:** Do they know what you do now?

**JC:** Kind of, because a lot of my younger relatives, my brother, my cousins, have gone into the same business.

**JW:** Wow.

**JC:** My brother's a designer. My cousin is a programmer/developer. So, they all collaborated, and they have a company that does Web stuff in Puerto Rico.

**JW:** So, did you have like--did you take the art classes and things like that that might have been--?

**JC:** --Um-hmm. In high school, I was a good D student. I was in private school all my life--.

**JW:** --Wow--.

**JC:** --Until--in Christian private school until 11th and 12th grade 'cause my dad married a woman who had kids already. So, they had too many kids in private school, so they sent me to--I call it the Mexican Brady Bunch. They sent me to public school, and that's where I found Satan as my lord and savior. Yeah, I mean, I got to take all the art classes. I didn't go to any other classes.

**JW:** In high school you just ditched--?

**JC:** --I slept through everything else and just went to art classes. It was boring. History I liked.

**JW:** I could see you liking the history classes. I could definitely see you liking that.

Did you do any vocational there? Like, I know you said you took, like, all the art classes, but--.

**JC:** --I was a teacher's assistant--.

**JW:** --Hmm, okay. All right--.

**JC:** --For the art class.

**JW:** All right.

**JC:** And I started a business spray painting, like, graffiti and, like, stuff, like drawing stuff on girls' jeans. And I sold it back to them for \$25.00, and it was easier to do it when they had it on.

**JW:** Of course. Of course.

**JC:** So, that was good money.

**JW:** What--tell me about--talk to me about the first time you told your dad you wanted to be an artist. So, when did you first hear about design?

**JC:** Oh, how did I find out and how did--oh, it's really interesting. It came about through Jesus. So, I was at church and Gary Smith [sp], who's black, just to keep it in the diaspora, who was the brother of--I think Kendra [sp] was her name, a girl in my youth group.

I was drawing a car. I liked cars. And he in, like, this--it's this big church, like one of those, like, megachurches and--out in the Inland Empire. And he saw me drawing a car and he goes, "Wow, you're really good. Let me show you something." And he gave me some tips on how to draw a car. And I'm like, "Wow, how do you know that?" And he said, "Oh, I'm a car designer."

**JW:** Wow.

**JC:** And I'm like, "Where do you go to school?" He said, "Art Center College of Design." And immediately in my mind I'm like, "I'm going there, whatever that is."

**JW:** The minute he said it and put--identified it.

**JC:** Yeah, I follow whatever I feel. So, I've--"Oh, that guy knows something. I'm going there." I had no idea what the school was, how much it cost.

**JW:** And you said he was a car designer. Would you call him your influencer to doing this?

**JC:** Yeah. Yeah, he was. He influenced--well, but then he said, "But you know what? This is product design. You get to do more things." So, he brought the next Saturday a friend, Jimmy [sp], who showed me his portfolio in product design. And I'm like, "Whoa, that's what I want to do."

And then--and he heard me. He said, "No, no, no. You know what? The money is in graphic design." And he--and I said, "Wait, what's graphic design?" And I said--and he said something like, well, you do packaging and you do, like, the labels on jeans, the hangtags on the jeans, like on Levis. And I'm like, "Oh, okay, I'll do that."

And so, it was a progression of, like, listening to what people were saying. And I'm like, "All right, I'm going to do that," what Jimmy Choo said.

**JW:** And seeing how you were kind of getting to--.

**JC:** --Yeah.

**JW:** So, in your education to become a designer, do you feel that the Art Center or even in--first of all, do you feel that high school prepared you to be a designer?

**JC:** Well, high school prepared me to understand what doing art was. Then Art Center--I moved to Pasadena. And the way I do things is I move close to them. Like, I--like, did you see how I put the cards out there?

**JW:** Um-hmm.

**JC:** I put the things in close proximity. For example, my first wife--not that I have a second one, but I

knew she was going to be in New York so I moved to New York. You get close to your target.

**JW:** Yeah.

**JC:** So, I moved to Pasadena and I went to Pasadena City College, which had a lot of preparing classes for Art Center. And the teachers were also in both schools sometimes. So, I got a real sense of what the school was like.

And in the hallways I saw poster that said minority scholarships for Art Center at night. And I'm like, "I'm a minority." It said black, Hispanic, and Native American and women. Those were the underrepresented.

**JW:** All the time.

**JC:** So, I applied and I got a scholarship for a thousand dollars--.

**JW:** --Wow--.

**JC:** --By putting my portfolio together of what I was doing at PCC. I went and met the staff that did acceptance. And I'm a charming fellow and I got to know who they were. And they were cool and there was a lot of love.

And then I took the class. It was Introduction to Graphic Design, which I finally knew what it was at that point. I'm like, "Whoa, this is graphic design." I had no idea. I just moved forward on my intuition.

Then I applied again the second--the next semester. During the day I'm taking classes at Pasadena City College. In the middle of the day I'm working making copies for some crazy Afghani guys. And then in the evenings I'm at Art Center at night once a week taking whatever class.

The second class was a little bit more advanced, and it was really cool to see and be there in the school and experience it. So, I already started making friends and creating a community inside Art Center. So, when it came time to put a portfolio together, I was ready.

**JW:** And that's going to be my next segue was--great segue. Do you remember your first portfolio review?

**JC:** Yes.

**JW:** What was that like? Was your reviewer white, and what was that--?

**JC:** --We didn't see who was reviewing it. I didn't do portfolio reviews in the sense of before I had submitted it. I just put it together based on my conversations with the admissions staff. They gave me guidance. They told me what to put in it. They looked at it before I had submitted it.

So, I took it in and--yeah, it was Sara Resson [sp]. Yeah, she's white. She's Jewish. She's super cool. I'm still friends with her.

**JW:** Wow.

**JC:** She was the Admissions Director back then.

**JW:** Did you have a mentor--?

**JC:** --Did I have a mentor? Good question--.

**JW:** --Who was a designer? Like, did you have a mentor?

**JC:** Teachers like Stan Kong [sp] at PCC who was great, but I didn't have, like, a mentor-mentor.

I did do an internship right before I got into Art Center with a surfer dude from California who was, like, a freelancer in his garage. He had a studio and I saw the

kind of work he was doing, and it was brochures for restaurants and stuff. And I was doing paste up and, like, figuring out the Mac. That was crazy.

But, it was very short. It was like a month or two in the summer, so I wouldn't consider that a mentorship.

**JW:** And you did all that in the summer? In one month in the summertime?

**JC:** Two months in the summer.

**JW:** Two months? Two months in the summertime.

**JC:** Sorry.

**JW:** When you think about high school and you think about this--what you're doing now, what pieces do you think from high school directly apply, or you can look at that like, "You know something? That's the first time that I heard that?" Like, what is that connection for--you know what I'm saying? What was--?

**JC:** --The art class had tours to Art Center. I didn't show up. I didn't go on the tour because I was working.

They talked about art school and about careers in design, but it was really at church. I took a lot of art in high school, so that was good, a lot of drawing. That influenced me.

By the way, the person who saw the potential in me--.

**JW:** --Yes.

**JC:** So, my stepmom's brother-in-law was the head of publishing for the church, the denomination they belonged to in Idaho. Well, that denomination is all over, but they have a big head thing in Idaho and their publishing is headquartered out of Idaho.

So, we went to visit them for the holidays and got to go to his job. And he's the head of publishing, so I went to see the--I saw the design department from above the floor of where the printing gets done--.

**JW:** --Oh, wow--.

**JC:** --Which is industrial scale. The walls were the size of a truck. And I'm like--my eyes were like that. And he had seen me drawing. Because you're a kid, you're like a--whatever. In 10th grade how old are you?

**JW:** Sixteen.

**JC:** We went on vacation through Mexico. They were Mexican, the family. And in a van all freaking day, what do you do? You draw and sneak in some margaritas, which is a no-no in the Seventh Day Adventist Church. But--and then you pass out and puke in the back of the van. That's a side story.

But, the--he saw me doing that and drawing. And then one day after we had visited on one of those trips, he gave me a book, The Big Book of Drawing. So, suddenly I'm, like, introduced to art--.

**JW:** --So, he gave you a book--.

**JC:** --As a practice. Then when I go to school, I see that there's art classes in this new school. So, every step in the path is taking you closer. Then I moved to Pasadena and I go to PCC and I take art classes.

So, for me, since I learn intuitively through feeling and through seeing and experiencing, it became a progression of more and more and more and more art.

**JW:** Um-hmm.

And then did you--what about your--how were your academics?

**JC:** Horrible. I didn't take my SATs. I skipped them. I didn't care. I took all the requirements to get into Art Center though--.

**JW:** --All those--?

**JC:** --Like English and stuff like that, a speech class which passed for English.

**JW:** What do you think were some of the--well, definitely the academic piece, but what do you think are some additional pitfalls to becoming a designer for you?

**JC:** Pitfalls in the process or afterwards?

**JW:** A little bit of both, yes, whichever.

**JC:** Well, there's no minorities in it, so you see very little of yourself in it. Luckily I was--I believed in Jesus. And like everybody, you accept--I didn't see color per se.

And there wasn't really any--the support structure. I was far away from my family, so financially it was extremely difficult. I was very skinny back then, which helps when you don't have good. But, that should be a diet, the artist diet.

And so, yeah, the emotional support and the network of family knowing and supporting what you're doing is hard not to have when you don't have it. But, I had an aunt who's super sweet. And she'll love me no matter what, and they supported me through the whole thing. My dad sent me a little bit of money every month, a couple hundred bucks, enough to pay some of my rent.

**JW:** Wow. Wow.

**JC:** But I worked the whole time.

**JW:** And you worked?

**JC:** Yeah. I was like that skit in In Living Color, the Jamaican family, yeah. Like, I worked in the copy place. I worked at a restaurant on weekends. I was building the plane and then I went to school.

**JW:** So, you worked and went to school with--wow.

**JC:** Until seventh grade where then I had--or seventh term in Art Center where it's the--eighth term is the hardest term, and I totally had a meltdown and, like, called my aunt crying, "I can't hack this anymore." It's like you're exhausted emotionally because you're working nonstop. But, breakdowns lead to breakthroughs. I quit my job.

**JW:** I like that, breakdowns.

**JC:** I quit my job. And then financial aid kind of kicked in and I had leftover at the--and everything, so it was easier.

**JW:** Wow, I like that, breakthroughs.

**JC:** The government--I owe the government a lot of money.

**JW:** I know. That's right.

**JC:** But I got a really good education.

**JW:** I like that a lot.

**JC:** Here's my summer of Art Center.

**JW:** Okay.

**JC:** I'm a dumbass Puerto Rican kid, which you shouldn't say to yourself in your head, but let's say I--the way I see it, who went to a really great art school coincidentally, just because that's how--where I ended up.

And every sequence in the path led to a progressively better and better station.

So, at Art Center, they would have people come interview candidates. Their pipeline of placement was really good. And I interviewed with somebody that was a New York recruiter. They called me and said, "Would you like to interview in New York?" I called my aunt, borrowed \$700, flew to New York, stayed in a flea infested motel, the Lower East Side.

I'm checking in. The guy in front of me is this fat Italian guy who is checking in with a girl that looks 14 in a fur coat and a miniskirt. I'm like, "I'm not sure what's going on at this hotel, but it ain't seemingly"--she was older. She was, like, 21. She looked 21, but she was, like, small.

And the TV had a clicker thing like that, and it was missing the knob so you had to stick your fingers in. I'm like, "This is a horrible hotel."

**JW:** Okay. So--.

**JC:** --There was a cockroach named Julio who was my freaking concierge. That's a--.

**JW:** --You said you had named one of the cockroaches--

.

**JC:** --Yep--.

**JW:** --Julio.

**JC:** Yes.

**JW:** Okay.

**JC:** He was Puerto Rican. New York City, that's [spoken in Spanish] Julio.

Okay. Keep on going.

**JW:** Okay. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

Okay, I only got two major questions left--well, three technically. Okay. So, my research work looks at the design journey. And so, what I've been trying to do interviews for and amass--we have seven minutes--and amass is what can make the journey better for young people coming through the pipeline? How--what can be better for them? And so--.

**JC:** --What conditions can we put in place?

**JW:** What conditions? What strategic ideas? What types of tools?

**JC:** Hmm, okay.

**JW:** What can--is it something I as a designer can create?

**JC:** Yes.

**JW:** And so, I figure if I ask--.

**JC:** --Totally--.

**JW:** --Enough designers of color, which has been hard, 'cause as you mentioned you're--.

**JC:** --But look at the path. Do you want me to--well, go ahead. Finish your question.

**JW:** Well, the misrepresentation is difficult, and so that's why I've been hunting designers down to--designers of color, to ask this question. What do you think would make it better? Yeah. And so, you've talked about--.

**JC:** --Let's look at the conditions--.

**JW:** --Support.

**JC:** My dad didn't care.

**JW:** So, the family support piece has got to change.

**JC:** No, no, no, no. That's good. My dad wasn't pressuring me to go get a job like him in what he did or-- he was super laissez-faire.

From 12, my mom passed away, to today--which now you have to deal with therapy because when you're abandoned it's kind of hard--but he wasn't necessarily present. He wasn't going to say no, don't do that. So, there was permission to do whatever I wanted. So, all the possibilities, whatever you want to do, do it. So, that was one.

Second, there was emotional support. I'm not--there was emotional support from the family. I have a very loving family. The church was a very great community. That's where I first discovered the possibility.

**JW:** Had a community.

**JC:** So, community. I saw people of color in it, so the person who introduced me was black and then the next person was Asian. So, look, there's people that aren't like--yeah, so there's--.

**JW:** --Sprinkled around--.

**JC:** --That. They're sprinkled around. There's not a lot, but there's some. And they gather where--you kind of stick to that. But, that church was just like that. It was very multicultural.

You had proximity to access--to the education and the programs, like minority scholarships. That was great. Art Center still has a recruiting and retention rate for minorities. They helped me. They asked me to help them many years later as an alum.

And what I found was--is that I did, and I went and inspired people speaking in schools. But, then when they joined, they couldn't--they didn't have the support infrastructure so they dropped out after a few terms. They didn't have the financial support. They didn't have the parent--the emotional support. Their peers in their community weren't doing the same things. They might have had children.

I'll give you an example. Rudy Manning [sp], friend from high school, Panamanian, same grade. The last semester at Art Center I see him in the student store. And I'm like, "Hey, what's up, Rudy? [Spoken in Spanish.] What are you doing here?" And he's like, "I'm going to Art Center. This is my first term." And I'm like, "Damn, dude. Congratulations."

Keep in mind this is four years after I had started. We're the same age. He had a baby so he had to take care of that first, and then he went to Art Center with a kid.

**JW:** Whoa.

**JC:** And he's Panamanian and black, so he's--.

**JW:** --A double intersectionality--.

**JC:** --A double, right. But, he's doing awesome now, and he has an amazing practice.

I mean, he drives an Audi 8, married a beautiful girl who's mixed who--guess what, met through the school community. She was a school member at one of my conferences, and he's a school member as a designer and as an agency. She was doing her thing, and I put a video in our newsletter that she had created under my advice to share with people what your gift is, so share your gifts.

And in the video, she said that she does filmmaking. She's a filmmaker in LA, which there's a lot of them. And Rudy called her to do an industrial film for his company for one of his clients. I don't know, SAP or someone.

So, helping each other and giving each other a research network of ideas, projects, etc., makes a huge difference. So, opportunities--you need community, access opportunities, and a roadmap, like people giving you a roadmap. So, for me, Rudy--I asked him, "Why are you here?" "Because you're here, dude." So, examples and a roadmap. The roadmap is do whatever that guy's doing because that's what's happening.

**JW:** Yeah, someone to say, hey, this is it. This is how you go there. This is how you get that far.

Okay, last big question. Well, second to last then I have one personal question. Okay, so the last big question, what are your thoughts and what kind of advice would you give to young designers now, people who are coming into the pipeline to make it to the end? Like, do you feel that you've amassed some knowledge or some secret or--?

**JC:** --I'm a Taurus. I think long, long game. I don't change my mind. I set a goal and I will not veer from it whatsoever. Things will change. The tactics will change. The philosophy and--so, religion versus tactics is my philosophy.

So, when I said I'm going to Art Center, I'm going to Art Center. Did it cost \$100,000? Yes. Was it extremely painful? Yes. It is one of the best design schools in the world? Yes.

**JW:** Yes.

**JC:** Did it create a career for me? Yes. When I became an entrepreneur, same thing. I'm going to build an agency. It took me 10 years. The first four years were learning and figuring it out and, like, struggling and struggling and struggling.

You're--as a person of color at least you know the struggle. And if you know the struggle and you have no fear through the struggle, then the only thing that can happen is that you change your mind or that you get distracted by other things, like what in church they call the world.

You have to be in the world but not of the world, meaning you detach yourself and you become who you are versus like--.

**JW:** --Allowing--.

**JC:** --Ascribing to culture. And we have very strong influences in culture in our communities, whether it be machismo within Latin culture, whether it be a lot of things that will discourage you from going to art school. You have to be a man. You can't be girly. You can't be feminine as a man, all that kind of stuff.

But, ultimately once you understand that none of that really is relevant, 'cause form is a point--there is beyond form--who you are is who you are beyond form. And if you're able to float like a butterfly, sting like a bee--.

**JW:** --Like a bee--.

**JC:** --That's what really gets you to where you need to go. It's detaching yourself from what others think and

detaching yourself from your culture. That's a hard thing to say.

**JW:** For a person of color who is all about culture.

**JC:** I'm not Puerto Rican. I'm not Jose Callaber when I go into the workplace. I come as me, as like, "Hey, what's up?" And I accept the people and they accept me.

The biggest challenge and obstacle to us being able to be broader in the workplace in design is us. It's that we simply see ourselves as black or we see ourselves as Hispanic or we see ourselves as less than or we see ourselves as whatever we were programmed to see ourselves by the system, family, school--.

**JW:** --That created that--.

**JC:** --History. Our history is what it is. And you can't separate yourself from history, but you can definitely overcome history by becoming yourself. You are not black. You are not Hispanic. You are not. You are a human being. You are one with everything.

And that in itself creates--if you see--the other day I went through this. And it was like if you want to change things around you, change your frequency first. And if you operate in your own frequency and a higher frequency, you can do anything.

But, if you operate in a lower frequency, which is what the system tries to have you be in all the time, fear, anger, resentment, you will do very little. You cannot float like a butterfly and sting like a bee in fear--.

**JW:** --With all that stuff--.

**JC:** --In resentment, in I'm black and I'm Puerto Rican and my grandmother had a dirt floor, in like I don't

belong here. You just come in and you say, "Hi, I'm Jose and I'm an obnoxious Puerto Rican guy. I'm here to facilitate your shit," and you are that because that's who you are.

And eventually in time people will rise around you who will give you who--you are a manifestation of the closest white people around you. So, who are your friends?

**JW:** And my last and final question, what tools do you recommend for people who are kind of coming into this entrepreneurial space that you're in right now? Like, I had talked with you a little bit yesterday about finding a business mentor. I've been watching some of your videos, and you and the other gentleman, Chris, I believe--.

**JC:** --Um-hmm--.

**JW:** --Kind of go a little fast sometimes. But, what are those things that we can get?

**JC:** Yeah. Right now--like, I'll speak for today's generation and for what's available. It's an unprecedented time in history where everything you need is available. Every single piece of information, every single tool, every single skill is available on YouTube.

Search for whatever you want. What's the right portfolio, how do I--how to be black and a designer, a Puerto Rican designer. Whatever you put into YouTube--.

**JW:** --No, no, not Puerto Rican designers. I looked for that one already.

**JC:** Oh, yeah, you're right. Okay, maybe that's because I should tag that in my videos.

**JW:** Well, in fact, you guys need to start the first--

.

**JC:** --The tagging--.

**JW:** --Latino design group. That's the--.

**JC:** --Nope, totally against it.

**JW:** Why? Tell me why.

**JC:** Totally against it. Nope.

**JW:** Come on. It'd be your last question. Last question, that you don't--.

**JC:** --I'm--and we can keep this conversation going afterwards--.

**JW:** --Okay--.

**JC:** --As long as it's ending now. The reason why I'm against doing, like, Black Designers United, Puerto Rican Designers United, who gives a fuck? Who gives a fuck what-it's Designers United. It's like whatever.

The minute that we put the identity in front of designer or in front of what we are and what we're being, it creates a resonance that for me doesn't make any--.

**JW:** --And it brings back that thing you talked about--.

**JC:** --This is me.

**JW:** Right.

**JC:** That's for me personally.

**JW:** How then can we find each other if we don't use those labels?

**JC:** But, I'll give you an example of what that creates. When I was at Racerfish, Jose, I'm the only one. This company is started by two crazy Jewish guys.

Everybody's white. And Jose is Puerto Rican but whatever. He floats like a bee and stings like a butterfly, literally because I was crazy. And you know who

was the most Puerto Rican and black people I saw? The UPS guy. The super. The elevator repair guy in New York City.

And I went and taught at District 21. It's a Lower East Side black and Puerto Rican--mainly Puerto Rican, and Salvadorian and Mexican started to come in. And I was teaching kid's robotics and creativity for a summer program in a nonprofit.

And there was a girl there who was Dominican or a Latina of some sort in New York. And what I said to her was this. I left her at the end of the program. Look, you're going to go after this and you are going to get tempted to just get a job and you're happy. And she lived in--I think it was Dyckman [sp], the Dominican neighborhood in New York of 125th Street.

And you're going to get a comfortable job and you're going to be in your life. And you're going to feel something calling you and you're going to feel like you compromised, like you listened to your parents, like you looked at your friends who had cars and money because they got jobs. And you're not going to do this and I know that, but remember what I'm telling you right now.

She e-mailed me seven years later and she said, "Jose, I did exactly what you said. I compromised. I didn't go to design school. I had a job as a salesperson. I was making \$60,000 a year. I was getting married. I had a ring. I was--and I was miserable. And I listened to you finally and I'm now in Atlanta College of Art and Design, at SCAD studying advertising and design, and I couldn't be happier."

**JW:** Wow.

**JC:** And now she has two kids, lives in Georgia. She's a designer for an advertising executive at some company. And she said she didn't listen.

And that's what happens to us, exactly that. Looking good in rims is far more important than, like, doing what you want to do.

**JW:** There's a value proposition.

**JC:** The value proposition, but you know what? That is our--that is just us.

**JW:** Our culture--.

**JC:** --That's our culture--.

**JW:** --That's our culture. Wow--.

**JC:** --Beyond form.

**JW:** This has been wonderful. And I will continue to quote and ask questions all day, but for the record this has been super, super great. Thank you so much for your time.