

U. Miami Focus Groups: Connections Between Degrees and Jobs

Alexandria Morgan

In this report, we have collected quotes from our focus group transcripts which center around self-perceived stereotypes of focus group participants based on their majors. Focus Group 1 and 2 respondents comprise non-undergraduates. Focus Group 3 comprises all undergraduate participants.

Focus Group	Name	Field	Status
1	H	Marine Biology	PhD Candidate
1	E	Developmental Psychology	PhD Candidate
1	B	Meteorology	Professor
1	S	English	Lecturer
2	D	Academic Services	Associate Dean
2	A	Oceanography	PhD Student
2	G	English	PhD Candidate
2	C	Sustainable Business	MA Student
2	R	Accounting	MA Student
3	N	English	Sophomore
3	P	Political Science	Senior
3	L	Public Health	Freshman
3	U	Motion Pictures	Junior
3	T	Music Business	Freshman

Focus Group 1:

The idea that some majors are perceived as having a specific career trajectory but others are not emerged during this conversation.

H: I almost didn't get into grad school. I almost didn't get into grad school and that was with starting when I was in high school, getting really good grades in undergrad, doing well on the

GRE...you have to start earlier and earlier and earlier for them to consider you because it is getting more and more competitive and that has been my personal experience...

Like for me I would have a very hard time if I had-- I don't know the answer-- if I majored in English, I don't know what kind of job, like, I don't have an answer for that.

H: I graduated early from my undergrad and my dad said, my dad was willing to pay for another semester of college, he was like, you should get a minor in accounting just in case. You should do accounting. I was graduating, I was helping—'cause I was very lucky my parents paid for me to go to college and my dad was willing to shell out more money so I could do what accounting—getting useful—which blew my mind. I didn't do that. But that's how much he didn't understand what I do. He gets it more now but he is still I think is like, you'd make more money if you did that.

E: I do feel like a lot of my friends in college, you know, it was very much so like I want to go into finance after college I need to major in economics, I need to do business, that's what's gonna` provide me with the best skills after college and the best career opportunities

S: Well in law schools they look for philosophy majors first and foremost...it's a way of thinking and taking the question apart. So the humanities, it's not the specific majors as much as the approach.

Focus Group 3:

The following conversation occurred in responses to perceptions of the humanities.

U: I'd say, like, more open. Like your kind of jobs that are more open.

AH [proctor]: Okay, like open as in more open and inviting, kind of?

U: Meaning like, so you major in humanities, it's like, so I'm a film major, my job is like...me personally, it's harder to get one, like your industry is open, you've got to go in there and search yourself.

J: So like a less defined path. Kind of thing?

U: So it's like, broad.

AH: Okay.

J: That's cool.

This conversation centers around interdisciplinarity at UM.

L: I think at UM we're really lucky, because like our Dean of Education and senior vice provost, Dr. Green, he's the biggest champion of interdisciplinary studies. Like, I remember at orientation, he went on...he was like, be the kid who double majors in physics and classics, be the kid who takes classes just for fun, so I think we're lucky that we have someone who's the voice for our curriculum. It encourages us. Like, I feel that climate, I feel like my advisor wouldn't look at me crazy if I wanted to, you know, choose a major in something totally different. Those are the kids who are highlighted, those are the kids who are spotlighted, and people who decide to explore an interdisciplinary path are made into heroes.

P: I thought it was looked down on.

M: When I went to the 'Canes kickoff, President Frenk was talking about how a lot of students start here with one major and what they graduate is something completely different. And they really like encourage you to just go crazy, which I really like that about that here, like they encourage you, like oh you like this, let's take more classes here to see if you really like that, okay you want to do this, let's add a bit—it's like very welcoming.

L: Nobody cares at the end of the day what you major in.

L: It's funny, admissions officers drool more over those kids who come in with majors from the humanities because it's like oh you have a fresh perspective you know how to synthesize, you know how to read, you know how to communicate, so I think that's very encouraging. Like you said, you can have any major and go get your MBA so that's one thing that's been a positive, if we want to talk positively, [laughter] has been a positive change in...the types of graduate schools you can go to with a humanities major.

L: [It] just always comes back to our capitalist society, you know, you're just always trying to climb the ladder, you know the top one percent makes more than the ninety-eight percent below it, you know there's always like I'm going to beat the system, there's always that like intrinsic human thing where you think you're better than the average, or that idea that like you're like, I'll be rich one day, I'll put in the hard work, I'll be rich one day, so when it comes down to it, you have to, you know, go to your advisor and make that decision for what your major is going to be, you have that dialogue in the back of your head, and then there's the dear of it too, what am I going to do after graduation, am I going to have something stable, so, I think those two dialogues run in your head.