



Promoting Diversity in Recruiting

Adapted from [Emerging Leaders'](#) Cultural Wealth handout

The Whole Person Matters: *Consider Lived Experience*

Many companies desire cultural diversity in the workplace. Certainly, recruiters and hiring managers are looking for qualified, well-rounded candidates. The University of Portland has bright and motivated students and graduates, and we want to affirm the deep cultural knowledge that has helped to define many of them. We believe that their whole story matters. This includes their *lived experiences*, in addition to whatever academic accolades, work or internship experiences, or club involvement they have. Particularly with economically and racially marginalized groups and first-generation college students, their unique perspective, cultural knowledge and diversity of thought can enhance the quality of any work environment. Students often undersell themselves as candidates even though their life experiences have equipped them with rich cultural and success skills.

Tara Yosso’s article, “Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth,” takes a strength-based approach to cultural wealth by reframing motivations, passions and skills that are often overlooked and undervalued when evaluating qualified candidates. The following is a framework that we encourage underrepresented students to consider as [they craft their career narrative](#) and application materials. The goal of this guide is to provide employers with an overview of cultural wealth so you might consider more inclusive and equitable evaluative practices of applicants’ strengths, abilities and experiences.

Definition:

Cultural wealth – *an array of knowledge, skills, strengths and experiences that are learned and shared by people of color and marginalized groups; The values and behaviors that are nurtured through culture work together to create a way of knowing and being.*¹

The six dimensions of cultural wealth—**Familial, Social, Aspirational, Navigational, Linguistic, and Resistant capital**—are interconnected, working together to strengthen an individual's ability to function in multiple environments. Below are examples of skills drawn from personal experiences.

Skills:

- Self-awareness
- Connectedness
- Value-orientation
- Creativity
- Resourcefulness
- Agility
- Dedication
- Persistence
- Problem solving
- Taking initiative
- Adaptability
- Social justice orientation

FAMILIAL CAPITAL:

Definition: Cultural knowledge obtained from family/kin.

Example: “Growing up I was a part of a youth program that taught us standards that we should live by and how we should interact with one another. These standards instilled values in me such as integrity, respect, honesty, self-care, and valuing other people’s cultures. I find myself applying these values every day in my interactions with friends, family, and in work spaces.”

—Demetrius Rhodes, Assistant Director of Scholar Empowerment at Emerging Leaders

¹ Note. Based off the article Tara J. Yosso (2005) Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth, Race Ethnicity and Education, 8:1, 69-91.

Skills:

- Deep connection to community through shared experiences
- Unique perspective
- Value orientation
- Knowledge that can be shared in multiple environments
- Broader understanding of who family is
- Use of a cultural lens

SOCIAL CAPITAL

Definition: Uses community resources and the connections that you already have and/or are building in your network to support your goals.

Example: “Growing up I had a mentor in middle school who was the best program coordinator ever. He made all the kids feel included and welcomed. He treated us like we mattered and heard our voice. He taught us so much about life and lifted us up when we were down. I always aspired to be like him when I became a young man. Now that I'm older and work with both people in the community and youth, I find myself modeling the way he interacted with us to those around me. I was able to take valuable characteristics he displayed and apply them to my life; in doing so I am able to create healthy and meaningful relationships with others.”

—Demetrius Rhodes, Assistant Director of Scholar Empowerment at Emerging Leaders

Skills:

- Relationship building
- Establishing trust
- Confidence
- Taking initiative
- Bridge building
- Maintaining healthy relationships

ASPIRATIONAL CAPITAL

Definition: Maintains hopes and dreams for the future in the face of real and perceived barriers. It is the ability to envision a future beyond your current circumstances and work towards pursuing your dreams and aspirations.

Example: “I worked side-by-side with my dad at his job in the cucumber fields when I was 14 years old. Seeing how hard ...he worked to put food on the table, to send his two daughters to college, and support his family back in Mexico, it inspired me, motivated me, ignited something within me to work hard in school, and achieve the goal my mom and dad worked so hard for, which was seeing me graduate from college. Understanding family values/ethics has helped shape the strong, driven, hard-working person with a strong work ethic that I am today.”

—Cinthia Manuel, CEO & Founder of Autentica Consulting LLC

Skills:

- Goal-orientation
- Resilience
- Motivation
- Inspired
- Go-getter
- Perseverance
- Drive
- Taking initiative
- Conviction
- High expectations
- Determination
- Utilizing social networks

LINGUISTIC CAPITAL

Definition: Intellectual and social skills attained through a collection of experiences that you bring through language; history and experiences that may not be shared elsewhere.



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Example: “The use of sayings to share/pass down wisdom from our families and communities. My family shares wisdom and teaches me lessons through ‘sayings’ or as Spanish speakers called ‘dichos’. These ‘sayings’ warn us of negative/positive outcomes, provide hope, make us think deeper, provide insights, and sometimes confirm the results of our decisions. I heard my grandparents, and parents use them. Now I find myself more often than not sharing the sayings with the younger generation.”

— Cinthia Manuel, CEO & Founder of Autentica Consulting LLC

Skills:

- Storytelling
- Listening
- Perspective
- Adaptability
- Comprehension
- Code-switching
- Problem-solving
- Multi-tasking
- Decision making
- Providing feedback
- Reflection
- Respect
- Empathy
- Ability to navigate more than one language

NAVIGATIONAL CAPITAL

Definition: Maneuvering systems and institutions that historically were not designed to support communities of color.

Note: There are multiple avenues of support and relief that help an individual function and excel in systems that can often be isolating for folks that feel different. This type of wealth understands the value of emotional support and mentorship as well as building and maintaining social networks that support reaching one’s goal.

Example: “I was a first-generation college student, similar to many of you. And I involved myself in clubs and organizations both on campus and within the larger community, I worked part-time to help pay rent, and utilized the writing center and counseling center while still being responsible for helping to support family back home. Being able to navigate all of these different spaces of responsibilities helped me to push forward and know that I was not alone. This ability to navigate the college system and be the first in my family to graduate can be attributed to a lot of social support from my community.”

—Amani Austin, Assistant Director of Data and Curriculum at Emerging Leaders

Skills:

- Resourcefulness
- Self-awareness
- Ability to multitask and prioritize
- Adaptability
- Using social networks
- Persistence
- Determination
- Proactive
- Goal-orientation

RESISTANT CAPITAL

Definition: Highlights the skills and knowledge used to resist inequality and push forward. This gives you an opportunity to resist stereotypes that are contrary to your authentic self. This capital is best paired with Navigational & Social wealth that increase your levels of support in pushing forward and reaching your goals.

Example: “Being a woman of color entering the Tech Industry, there are two disadvantages; 1) Being a woman and, 2) Being a person of color. There are little to almost no women of color in this space. Often, these women feel that they have to prove their worth in a way that others do not. The courageous act of engaging in this space is an example of resistance against social norms.”

— Amani Austin, Assistant Director of Data and Curriculum at Emerging Leaders

Skills:

- Resilience
- Willingness to take challenges
- Ability to adapt quickly
- Being a pioneer
- Social justice orientation
- Inspiring others
- Strong core values

Moving Forward/Implementation

We encourage recruiters and hiring managers to incorporate questions into the application and interview process that create space for students and graduates to talk about the diverse experiences that have shaped and prepared them for the world of work. We expect all organizations follow legal and ethical guidelines and follow HR protocols.

Questions for consideration:

- What qualifications are truly essential for the role and which are listed out of unchecked habit?
- How can we reframe “[culture fit](#)” to “[culture contribution](#)”? What’s missing from our culture? What perspectives and experiences are lacking on the existing team, and why are they important to add? How can we find and leverage those different skillsets?
- For each role, have we assembled a diverse interviewer panel, reflective of different backgrounds and perspectives?
- What is our organizational culture, emphasis, and expectation around understanding the perspectives of colleagues from different backgrounds?
- What trainings have there been about implicit bias within our organization?
- Is there a sense of evaluating “culture fit” in the application and interview process?
- Have we standardized the interview process for every candidate? Have we created a rubric to help eliminate the [various forms of bias](#) that can take place during an interview?

Questions to ask candidates:

For any behavioral-based interview question, explicitly tell *each* candidate that they can share an example from *any* experience, whether academic, work-related, or a personal life event if it is relevant to the question.

- Look to evaluate organizational value alignment above “culture fit.” Tell every applicant what the shared values of the workplace are, define what they mean at the company, and then ask behavior-based interview questions around those values.
- What personal values are most important to you?
- What are some of your convictions/motivations that keep you going?
- What is an accomplishment that you are most proud of, and why?
- What are ways you feel included in your work community?
- Describe an example in your previous experience where you have worked with diverse populations or communities?
- Are there any experiences not mentioned on your resume that you would like to share with us? Is there anything else you’d like us to know about you as a candidate?



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Additionally, if your organization is in early stages of implementing more diversity, equity and inclusion efforts, consider the support systems that are or might not be in place for your early-career hires:

- Is there anyone else on their team who looks like them? If not, is it possible to connect them with someone from a different department who could be a mentor and support for them in their transition to and navigation of the workplace?
- How does your company training/onboarding manual address workplace discrimination and avenues for reporting concerns? How is this communicated to all new hires?

Additional Resources:

Tara J. Yosso (2005) Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth, *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8:1, 69-91: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1361332052000341006>

[12 Questions Every Manager Should Ask to Build an Inclusive Hiring Process](#), by Chris Louie

[5 Keys to Hiring the Best Candidate—Not the One Your Brain Wants to Trick You Into](#), Lily Zhang, The Muse

[Future of Work 2020: 5 Strategies to Develop & Retain Diverse Early Career Talent](#), Webinar by the National Association for Colleges and Employers

[How to define diversity, equity, and inclusion at work](#), Sarah Saska, Culture Amp Blog

[Why 'Culture Fit' Is A Failed Idea In American Hiring](#), by Monica Torres, Huffpost

[How to Remove Hiring Bias from the Recruiting Process](#), Handshake Blog

[Adam Grant: Hire for Culture Fit or Add?](#)

If you have questions, please contact:

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