

Cultural Wealth and Your Career Narrative

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

Cultural Wealth Matters

We believe that lived experience matters, and your cultural knowledge can enhance the quality of any work environment. You bring your full and authentic self—your talents, strengths and experiences—to campus as a student, and off-campus through community engagement in a volunteer role, through experiential learning at internships, clinicals, and practicums, and through part-time and full-time jobs. Students often undersell themselves as candidates even though their life experiences have equipped them with rich cultural and success skills. This handout will help you reflect more deeply on the skills you've acquired and articulate these identified strengths and abilities. Reach out to the Career Center, a professor, mentor, family member, or friend and ask them to help you reflect on the skills you contribute to a team.

Many companies desire cultural diversity in the workplace, and we want to affirm the deep cultural knowledge that has helped to define who you are. 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 encouraging you to communicate your motivations, passions and skills that are often overlooked and undervalued when talking and writing about why you are a qualified candidate.

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.*

The six types 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 | ● Resourcefulness | ● Problem solving |
| ● Connectedness | ● Agility | ● Taking initiative |
| ● Value-orientation | ● Dedication | ● Adaptability |
| ● Creativity | ● Persistence | ● 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

Skills:

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

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Reflection questions: What are some values you grew up with? How have these shaped your career goals? Who are the people you look up to? Who do you call family and community?

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

Reflection question: Who are some of the people in your community that can speak authentically about your qualities, skills and experiences? (i.e. coaches, pastors, coworkers, mentors, etc.) Are you a member of any student organizations? Are there opportunities such as on-campus programs and events where you can meet professionals to make connections?

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

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Reflection questions: What are some of your convictions/motivations that keep you going? When you envision your life 5 years after college, what does that life look like? When you think about your future self, who do you see?

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.

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

Reflection questions: What are some sayings or pieces of wisdom that have impacted you? What are some of the different audiences you know how to speak to and connect with? How have you used your voice in the past to advocate for yourself? How can you tell your story in the future?

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

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Reflection questions: In what ways have you practiced resiliency in spaces where you felt you did not belong or were different? What are systems/communities of support that help you navigate multiple environments? Think about your path to college: how did you get here?

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

Reflection questions: How do you determine for yourself, what is worth standing up for? What are some of the ways that you have decided to define yourself or your future differently than what others may have expected of you? How do you think the challenges you faced have helped build your character?

If you have questions, please contact:

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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>

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