Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education
Vol. 20, no. 1, 2025, Regular Issue
https://doi.org/10.20355/jcie29690

Employable Wealth: Reframing Community Cultural Wealth as Employability for Students of Color in Higher Education

Christopher Burnett
Colorado College
cburnett2024@coloradocollege.edu

Zachary Taylor
John Burton Advocates for Youth
zt@utexas.edu

ABSTRACT

Institutions of higher education have increased their focus on their students' post-graduate outcomes, primarily these students' ability to become successfully employed after graduation. Known as *employability*, many researchers have explored how postsecondary institutions do or do not prepare students for the world of work. However, many conceptions of employability do not adequately capture the lived experiences of students of Color, many of whom have been minoritized from the higher education system, and thus, do not access gainful post-graduate employment at the same level as their White peers. For this reason, we argue that traditional models and practices related to post-graduate employability in higher education must reframe ideologies surrounding employability, namely Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model, which aligns nicely with and expands extant theoretical and conceptual frameworks. We

2025, 20(1), pp. 195-230.
http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/JCIE

Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education
Vol. 20, no. 1, 2025, Regular Issue
https://doi.org/10.20355/jcie29690

then address directions forward and implications for policy and practice to support students of Color on their path toward post-graduate employment.

Introduction

For the first time in history, the United States has seen a consistent rise in the number of underrepresented students from low socioeconomic (SES) backgrounds graduating from college (Carnevale et al., 2019; Cataldi et al., 2017). This is indeed praiseworthy, however, according to the Georgetown Center for Education and the Workforce (2019), employment opportunity and wealth creation jobs (upward mobility jobs) have been predominantly awarded to White job applicants (Carnevale et al., 2019; Puwar, 2004). This fact is troubling seeing as higher education has traditionally been a catalyst for upward mobility for students of Color and students from low SES populations (Carnevale, 2016; Chetty et al., 2017; Rivera, 2015). However, with the rise of interest in graduate employability (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; Ingram & Allen, 2019; Jackson & Wilton, 2016; Knight & Yorke, 2004), researchers are discovering the effect traditional notions of employability can have on perpetuating inequality rather than reducing it, minoritizing[1] students of Color both within higher education and during their post-graduate experiences (Hora, 2019; Ingram & Allen, 2019; Kalfa & Taksa, 2015).

[1] We use the term "minoritized" in this paper, as describing a "minoritized population" establishes a power dynamic between the oppressor and oppressed. Whereas a "minority" group may be the smallest group by count but does not suffer from an oppressive environment created by an individual or group with more power (Brocato et al. 2021).

Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education
Vol. 20, no. 1, 2025, Regular Issue
https://doi.org/10.20355/jcie29690

To date, the employability conversation has not developed a lens to allow practitioners, researchers, and policymakers to view how their practices replicate inequality, specifically as it relates to post-graduate employability for students of Color. On the employer side, a plethora of research has suggested that employers often espouse values of diversity, equity, and inclusion, but in practice, these employers do not actually recruit and hire students of Color and students from diverse ethnic backgrounds (Ingram & Allen, 2019; Puwar, 2004; Rivera, 2012, 2015). Students of Color from international backgrounds have also experienced racism and xenophobia during the post-graduate job search from prospective employers, with no intervention from their institution of higher education (Tay, 2022; Yao & Mwangi, 2017). However, employability studies have not focused on how institutions of higher education replicate inequality through the pre-graduate preparation process of students of Color when entering a patriarchal, hegemonic, capitalist labor market in the United States that prefers Whites (Jankowski, 2020; Rivera, 2015).

As a result, employability research and subsequent discussions become mechanisms to maintain systemic inequality. The reimagining of employability could begin with how much of the extant literature equates employability with human capital, when in fact it is something more (Fakunle & Higson, 2021; Hora, 2019; Ingram & Allen, 2019; Kalfa & Taksa, 2015). For industry and the economy, employability is about the training and education of the workforce, a form of development of human capital to serve a capitalist society. Yet, for students of Color and those from lower SES backgrounds, employability tends to be about developing the social capital required to access postgraduate professional employment after college (Carnevale, 2016; Chetty et al., 2017; Eagan et al., 2016; Burnett & Taylor, 2025). Therein, this argument is that students of Color may *lack* certain social capital when they enter postsecondary education, when in fact they do not *lack* social capital: They possess forms of capital unrecognized and unvalued by institutions of higher education (Yosso, 2005). Granted, a university degree is

Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education
Vol. 20, no. 1, 2025, Regular Issue
https://doi.org/10.20355/jcie29690

part of the package required for upward mobility, as education provides an indication of knowledge acquisition, but not necessarily of how to deploy that knowledge for gainful employment (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; Jackson & Wilson, 2016; Knight & Yorke, 2004).

Yet, students of Color arrive at institutions of higher education and leave with degrees and valuable forms of capital that could have great impacts on their employability if institutions of higher education and employers could recognize and value those forms of capital in the first place. Current studies have suggested that both institutions of higher education and prospective employers claim to value racial diversity, yet institutions of higher education (Hora, 2019; Tomlinson & Holmes, 2017; Yosso, 2005) and employers (Hammond et al., 2017; Ingram & Allen, 2019; Jankowski, 2020; Rivera, 2015) often act in ways that maintain hegemonic White structures, including hiring disproportionately White leaders and employees and partnering with predominantly White businesses to facilitate employment pipelines for White graduates (Burnett, 2021; Puwar, 2004). Here, both institutions of higher education and employers should reflect upon how they view *employability* and students of Color as prospective students and employees, shifting a deficit narrative toward understanding what value and capital a student of Color brings to an institution of higher education and their eventual employer.

What Is Employability?

While there is no singular definition of employability (Hillage & Pollard, 1998), the term has been adopted in the European context for the study and description of the ability to be employed. Generally, employability has been understood as, "the propensity to acquire and maintain employment" (Harvey, 2001, p. 4). Harvey's (2001) European concept of employability includes the consideration of the relationship between the individual and the labor market, as well as the individual's circumstances. This broadened understanding of employability beyond individual skills and attributes is important, as it opens the conversation to include

a more holistic understanding of employability and aids in identifying inequities in the acquisition of employment by minoritized populations. Therefore, Harvey (2001) implicitly argued that employability is systemic: human capital (students) enters a labor market, and that labor market (through individual employers) can value or devalue certain forms of capital, including humans themselves, possibly from minoritized backgrounds, a theme supported by many current studies even decades after Hillage and Pollard's (1998) and Harvey's (2001) work (Hora, 2019; Ingram & Allen, 2019; Jankowski, 2020; Tay, 2022).

With the increasing cost of postsecondary education and concern about a dynamic and unstable labor market (Carnevale, 2016; Carnevale et al., 2019), the employability of graduates has become a prevailing narrative shaping postsecondary policy and practice around the world (Hora, 2019). The literature reveals that the contemporary understanding of post-graduate employability was developed in response to the European and American economic recessions of the mid to late 2000s (Carnevale, 2016; Hillage & Pollard, 1998). Originally conceived as skills that graduates acquire, employability has evolved to incorporate nuanced application of professional skills, efficacy beliefs, metacognition (Knight & Yorke, 2004), and identity development (Jackson, 2017). Ultimately, the study of employability explains that the propensity for an individual to acquire and maintain employment over time is a process (Holmes, 2013) that is interwoven within an individuals' personal and professional development (Jackson, 2017).

Further, an individuals' professional development is influenced by the nature of their context before, during, and after completing a postsecondary credential (Astin, 1989; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), indicating that higher education has tremendous impacts on employability development and postgraduate promise for graduates (Carnevale, 2016; Hora, 2019). This also implies that students who are minoritized and excluded from higher education may not have access to the same professional development, indicated by decades of research proving the monetary

2025, 20(1), pp. 195-230.

Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education
Vol. 20, no. 1, 2025, Regular Issue
https://doi.org/10.20355/jcie29690

value of a college degree over a high school credential or lower form of education (Carnevale, 2016; Carnevale et al., 2019). As a result, recent years have witnessed the rise of self-employment among people of Color, an effect of persistent discrimination in the labor market, specifically the U.S. labor market post COVID-19 (Williamson, 2023). Ultimately, responding to the employability agenda has both curricular (classroom learning) and co-curricular (out-of-class learning) implications (Kuh, 2016; Woodside, 2018) and will influence the orientation and direction of the higher education student experience for the foreseeable future.

Justifying Changes to Notions of Employability

Yosso (2005) explained, "... there is a contradictory nature of education, wherein schools most often oppress and marginalize, while they maintain the potential to emancipate and empower" (p. 74). From this perspective, the concept of employability presents a similar contradiction, in that employability can be leveraged to replicate and sustain inequality while at the same time be a mechanism for the emancipation of minoritized students of Color, evidenced by current research (Burnett, 2021; Jankowski, 2020; Rivera, 2015). Because the prevailing understanding of employability and its components have been derived from prevailing, outdated, hegemonic ideals (Brown et al., 2003; Ingram & Allen, 2019; Kalfa & Taksa, 2015), employability can serve as a form of cultural gatekeeping (Hora, 2019; Ingram & Allen, 2019; Jankowski, 2020; Rivera, 2015), thus regulating who can access employment that facilitates upward social mobility. Moreover, employability is frequently explained in terms of human capital: human characteristics and traits that support one's propensity for employment, coupled with opportunities facilitated by other humans in power. Yet, many instances of systemic racism may restrict people of Color from accessing similar opportunities to develop their employability capital, even if these people of Color possess all the characteristics and traits that support one's propensity for employment. To date, no argument has been made for framing students of Color as possessing employability capital prior to entering an institution of higher education or the

2025, 20(1), pp. 195-230.
http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/JCIE

workforce, restricting how researchers and policymakers can conceptualize more nuanced forms of capital, perhaps including Black employability capital, Latinx employability capital, and additional forms of capital that students of Color possess (Fakunle & Higson, 2021).

Yosso's (2005) framing of education as both liberating and restricting has been echoed in other works related to employability (Burnett, 2021; Hammond et al., 2017; Hora, 2019). A taxonomy of employability was created by Pellegrino and Hilton (2012) who categorized employability into three domains: cognitive abilities, interpersonal skills, and intrapersonal skills. For Pellegrino and Hilton (2012), cognitive skills as thinking and reasoning abilities, intrapersonal skills as self-management and motivation, and interpersonal skills as communication and collaboration with others. These individual traits and skill competencies serve as a road map for postsecondary students to develop to enhance their postgraduate employment success. However, Brown et al. (2003) explained that existing powerful social groups effectively rig the market by monopolizing entry requirements into a profession, thus restricting access and structure the competition for employment in favor of those with the cultural capital valued by those in power. Most often, people of Color have experienced the most restricted access to the labor market, while White people have reaped the greatest benefits (Brown et al., 2003; Carnevale et al., 2019). Here, this is a form of structural racism prevalent in discussions of employability. In this sense, employability is used as a mechanism of oppression by developing and prioritizing individual employability characteristics that reflect the favor of the dominant social group, often hegemonic White society (Puwar, 2004; Rivera, 2012, 2015).

However, we argue that people from minoritized backgrounds who complete a college degree demonstrate—through their lived experience and their academic background—an ideal sense of successful refinement and deployment of employability characteristics and traits most valued by employers. Framed as

Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education
Vol. 20, no. 1, 2025, Regular Issue
https://doi.org/10.20355/jcie29690

Community Cultural Wealth, Yosso (2005), argued that empowerment exists within communities of Color and that, "...there are forms of cultural capital that marginalized groups bring to the table that traditional cultural capital theory does not recognize or value" (p. 77). Yosso (2005) explained that communities of Color offer a form of cultural wealth consisting of, "knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts... utilized to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression" (p. 77). There exists an interesting parallel between the knowledge, skills, and abilities utilized by communities of Color in navigating the postsecondary experience, and the knowledge, skills and abilities explained as indicative of employability.

Moreover, current studies have suggested students of Color often possess persistence and leadership skills that are valued by employers, and that students of Color may have possessed these skills prior to their college career and instead developed and refined these skills further as they progressed toward graduation and post-graduate employment (Hammond et al., 2017; Ingram & Allen, 2019; Rivera, 2015). Here, it is hoped that through an investigation of the parallels between Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth and employability that the emancipatory capacity of employability can be revealed, while also exposing how employability is used to reinforce systemic, racialized inequality.

Tackling Inequality through Employability

Employability has been a socially constructed phenomenon that is shaped by the nature of the changing labor market (Brown et al., 2003; Ingram & Allen, 2019; Jankowski, 2020; Rivera, 2015). Economic conditions drive labor market demands which, according to Brown et al. (2003), dictate which jobs and which skills employers need. Therefore, Brown et al. (2003) established that employability cannot be exclusively defined in terms of individual characteristics, as employability is dependent upon two dimensions: the relative and the absolute. Identified as the "duality of employability," Brown et al. (2003, p. 110) described

Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education
Vol. 20, no. 1, 2025, Regular Issue
https://doi.org/10.20355/jcie29690

employability as an interplay between individual characteristics (absolute dimension) and labor market realities (relative dimension). Here, Brown et al. (2003) explained, "Employability not only depends on fulfilling the requirements of a specific job, but also on how one stands relative to others within a hierarchy of job seekers" (p. 111). Applying positional conflict theory to the concept of employability, Brown et al. (2003) developed two elements involving how the social elite "rig" the market for credentials (p. 117). The following is a brief sketch describing how dominant groups in society manipulate the requirements for admission to the labor market and stratify the ordering of individuals attempting to access it, skewing traditional notions of employability toward powerful elites.

Rigging the System

Rigging the system or labor market for credentials, according to Brown et al. (2003), explains the way status groups monopolize entry requirements into a profession to restrict access, and the way that powerful social groups will structure the competition for employment in favor of those with the appropriate cultural capital. Similarly, Kalfa and Taksa (2015) explained that the labor market serves as a network of relationships within a specific historical and social context, described by Bourdieu (2005) as a *field*. Within the labor market, there exists many fields, or professions, where Kalfa and Taksa (2015) explained individuals subscribe themselves to the prevailing *doxa* (Bourdieu, 2000). For Bourdieu (2000), a doxa is a set of fundamental beliefs that are commonly understood as inherently true among individuals, steering the fundamental principles, beliefs, and rules of behavior of those participating in a specific field.

According to Kalfa and Taksa, (2015), a doxa internalizes and reproduces the commonly accepted principles and rules of behavior within the specific fields of the labor market. Understanding the labor market in this way recognizes that social processes dictate a field's or profession's values, and therefore, how professionals

2025, 20(1), pp. 195-230.
http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/JCIE

within that field view themselves and prospective professionals. However, there exists an underlying perception or *habitus* (Bourdieu, 2005) that maintains the systemic propensity for exclusion or admission into a field, resulting in a stratified, hierarchical profession or field, evidenced by current studies that suggest employers often profess a desire for a racially diverse workforce but do not hire diverse candidates (Hammond et al., 2017; Jankowski, 2020; Puwar, 2004; Rivera, 2015).

Over time, participants within a field become conditioned to replicating certain understandings and behaviors related to membership in that field through a subconscious process called habitus (Bourdieu, 2005). Building upon Bourdieuian ideals, Kalfa and Taksa (2015) described habitus as determining the way individuals act, think, and feel, collectively working to sustain a status quo. The impact of habitus in determining access to a field or profession is explained by Brown et al. (2003) as, "the tendency for companies to recruit workers in their own image, reproducing class, gender, and ethnic inequalities…" (p. 116). Further, Brown et al. (2003) asserted that this employment stratification places a higher premium on personal qualities and skills rather than pure academic ability, suggesting that students of Color may experience both implicit and explicit bias while on the labor market awaiting employment. This phenomenon, in essence, "rigs the system" (Brown et al., 2003, p. 117) of employment in a field to favor those who appear congruent with the habitus and doxa of the field—mainly hegemonic White society and not communities of Color (Puwar, 2004; Rivera, 2015). This suggestion is evidenced by current studies of employability that contend employers often profess a desire for a racially diverse workforce but do not hire diverse candidates and maintain hegemonic, White organizations (Hammond et al., 2017; Jankowski, 2020; Rivera, 2015).

Cultural Fit as Structural Racism

2025, 20(1), pp. 195-230.

Explained commonly as *cultural fit*, Brown et al. (2003) claimed, "the value of an individual to an employer is no longer represented by the denomination of academic currency, but the economy of experience" (p. 120). Hora (2019) supported Brown et al.'s (2003) notion, finding that 74% of employers hire for cultural fit, and that matching applicants to jobs hinges on the fit of applicant personalities with the personalities of existing departmental staff and existing dominant industry-specific norms. Brown et al. (2003) articulated this same idea, saying, "When employers reject candidates as unsuitable it could be argued that they are being rejected for lacking cultural capital" (p. 120), a nod to Yosso's (2005) model. This reality explains why people of Color, despite having the required credentials, are denied access to employment because elements of their personality or experience are determined as incongruent by the prevailing habitus within that field, often a hegemonic, White habitus, supported by a wealth of current work (Hammond et al., 2017; Hora, 2019; Jankowski, 2020; Rivera, 2012, 2015).

Cultural fit has been described by Ingram and Allen (2019) as a form of "social magic" (p. 737) whereby employers can disguise their recruitment and hiring realities behind a veil of explicit diversity and inclusion hiring initiatives. Described as, "the process of value exchange" (p. 737), Ingram and Allen (2019) explained how privilege is validated by disguising some cultural forms of capital as arbitrary and legitimizing other forms of capital through, "symbolic recognition" (p. 737). This process effectively is "rigging the market" (Brown et al., 2003, p. 117) and explains the way status groups monopolize entry requirements into professions to restrict access, and the way that powerful social groups will structure the competition for employment in favor of those with the appropriate cultural capital.

Hora (2019) offered concern for the concept of preference for hiring applicants who match the personalities and predilections of current employees (i.e., cultural fit), as this process may facilitate discrimination if incumbent employees represent a dominant group. Therefore, Hora (2019) posited that cultural fit or cultural

matching may exacerbate or embody discriminatory practices. As a result, Hora (2019) explained that further research across industries and occupational groups is needed, and that postsecondary professionals should explicitly address these issues while considering student employability and the role of networking for students of Color on the labor market. Alternatively, researchers have suggested that employers appoint diverse members to search teams or committees and focus more on how prospective employees may add to or positively change workplace culture (Tulshyan, 2022).

Higher Education as a Gatekeeper

Compounding phenomena related to rigging the system and cultural fit is the requirement of acquiring credentials for a profession through higher education. Since low-income people and people of Color have historically had less access to higher education (Ladson-Billings, 2006), these individuals have enjoyed fewer opportunities to qualify for admission to professional fields. In this sense, education credentials and subsequently employability become mechanisms that facilitate the replication of inequality. Yosso (2005) also reasoned that higher education is a great force for liberating minoritized communities and counteracting historical inequalities, yet research has also demonstrated that students of Color have been historically minoritized from higher education itself (Taylor & Cantwell, 2019; Rivera 2015; Smith et al., 2011; Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2000), especially in potentially lucrative fields of business, science, engineering, banking, law, and technology (Ingram et al., 2019; Rivera, 2012). Therefore, students of Color have not been allowed to fairly compete in the labor market because they have not been allowed fair access to higher education in the first place (Hora, 2019; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Rivera, 2012, 2015), yet these students greatly benefit from the opportunity of higher education and the ability to continue contributing to their communities of Color (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Puwar, 2004; Taylor & Cantwell, 2019).

2025, 20(1), pp. 195-230.

Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education
Vol. 20, no. 1, 2025, Regular Issue
https://doi.org/10.20355/jcie29690

Exacerbating the educational access dilemma for people from low socioeconomic and marginalized backgrounds is something Brown et al. (2003) called "reputational capital" (p. 121). Reputational capital promotes competition for quality and creates stratification of higher education institutions, academic programs, and subsequently college graduates themselves (Brown et al., 2003; Ingram & Allen, 2019). It is the pursuit for and maintenance of reputation that provokes the incorporation of meritocratic systems that organize institutions, programs and people based on their ability to maintain quality and prestige. Ultimately, a college graduate's perceived cultural fit and their access to reputational capital (Brown et al., 2003) may affect their employability, whether they are the most qualified applicant for the job or not, often negatively impacting graduates of Color. Supporting Brown et al. (2003), Burnett's (2021) recent work investigating the experiences of students of Color in the labor market found that many students of Color cited their access to higher education and student employment experiences as crucial, determining factors for their success in the labor market.

Reimagining Employability through Community Cultural Wealth

Utilizing Critical Race Theory, Yosso (2005) identified six forms of capital cultivated by communities of Color that conglomerate to form *community cultural wealth*. The six forms of capital identified are aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant capital (Yosso, 2005). These forms of capital are explained by Yosso (2005) as dynamic processes that overlap and interact with each other to develop unique forms of cultural wealth not described or valued in traditional conversations of education, learning, and employability (Brown et al., 2003; Kalfa & Taksa, 2015; Rivera, 2015). However, an investigation of the employability literature reveals that parallels exist between the characteristics of community cultural wealth and the characteristics commonly associated with employability. What follows are examples of how Yosso's (2005) model may

translate to desirable employability traits, with the caveat that future research could and should explore more connections between Yosso's (2005) notion of community cultural wealth and employability concepts.

Aspirational Capital as Resilience

Aspirational capital, according to Yosso (2005), "refers to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers" (p. 77). Described further as resilience, aspirational capital in communities of Color is handed down from generation to generation in hopes that the younger generation can break the cycle of poverty or oppression of the older generation to enhance their academic and occupational attainment (Gándara, 1995 as cited by Yosso, 2005). Similarly, resilience is a commonly associated individual employability characteristic discussed throughout the employability literature as desired by prospective employers (Hammond et al., 2017; Hart Research Associates, 2018; Pellegrino & Hilton, 2012; THECB, 2018). According to Pellegrino and Hilton (2012), resilience or perseverance are central themes in the development of an individuals' work ethic and conscientiousness. These intrapersonal competencies, according to Pellegrino and Hilton (2012) and Hammond et al. (2017) were the most highly correlated with desirable outcomes in education and the workplace. Therefore, it is imperative for people of Color to embrace their aspirational capital as it equates to employment characteristics such as resilience, which is commonly cited as highly desirable to educators and employers, and for institutions of higher education to coach their students of Color to highlight their resilience in resumes and cover letters to better position themselves in the labor market.

Linguistic Capital as Cross-Cultural Awareness

Linguistic capital is described as the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and reflects the idea that students of Color are raised by families and support systems and attend schools

2025, 20(1), pp. 195-230.

from diverse language backgrounds (Yosso, 2005). These living and learning environments help students of Color develop critical language and communication skills that monolingual students do not possess or develop (Yosso, 2005). Moreover, youth from bilingual backgrounds, "gain multiple social tools of vocabulary, audience awareness, cross-cultural awareness, real-world literacy skills, civic responsibility and social maturity" (Orellana, 2003, as cited by Yosso, 2005, p. 79).

Echoing linguistic capital, self-awareness, cross-cultural awareness, civic responsibility, and social maturity are commonly cited employability traits desired by employers (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; NACE, 2015; Pellegrino & Hilton, 2012; Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2018). Moreover, graduates of Color whose first language is not English have remarked that their unique language background has allowed them to successfully navigate the labor market and present future employers with an excellent communication background that is valuable to many different types of employers (Burnett, 2021; Hammond et al., 2017; Rivera, 2015). However, employers have often expressed a desire to hire a linguistically diverse workforce, but many employers still prefer to hire White speakers of English (Hammond et al., 2017; Jankowski, 2020; Rivera, 2015). Again, the challenge then becomes how students of Color from English as a Second Language (ESL) backgrounds can leverage their linguistic ability to acquire desired postsecondary employment, pushing against a hegemonic, White, Anglocentric labor force that may say they value linguistic diversity but do not hire linguistically diverse people (Puwar, 2004; Rivera, 2012, 2015).

Familial Capital as Emotional Intelligence

Familial capital centers on the cultural knowledge handed down from older generations that serves to preserve community history and cultural intuition (Yosso, 2005). It is through a commitment to one's heritage that an individual

maintains connections to a community and its resources (Yosso, 2005). According to Yosso (2005), our relationships with family and community, "inform our emotional, moral, educational, and occupational consciousness" (p. 79), leading to a heightened sense of self and emotional intelligence.

The employability literature describes the importance of efficacy beliefs in establishing a propensity for employment. Familial capital serves well in establishing and nurturing the self-esteem and confidence of those individuals who do not identify with the culture in power. Through repeated social interactions among families in social community settings, individuals from marginalized backgrounds become connected with others like them and, "realize they are not alone in dealing with their problems" (Yosso, 2005, p. 79). It is through this realization and camaraderie that individuals become surer of their sense of self and, thus, more confident in who they are and who they want to become. Described as positive core self-evaluation, Pellegrino and Hilton (2012) believed this intrapersonal trait to be highly valued by employers because self-awareness and confidence are central to leadership and assertive communication.

Social Capital as Cultural Translation

Social capital refers to the networks of people and community resources one can access for, "instrumental and emotional support to navigate through society's institutions" (Yosso, 2005, p. 79). Historically, people of Color have engaged their social networks to acquire education, health care, and employment and reciprocally communities of Color serve as repositories of information and resources gained through these institutions back to their social networks (Yosso, 2005). In essence, Yosso (2005) positioned students of Color as those who can translate cultural values and ideals in ways that benefit their own communities of Color while also strategically navigating hegemonic, White societal structures. According to Mecham (2007) as cited by Jeffers et al. (2019):

Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education
Vol. 20, no. 1, 2025, Regular Issue
https://doi.org/10.20355/jcie29690

> ...informal knowledge is particularly meaningful for cultural groups such as African American individuals who have relied on the experiential and intergenerational transfer of knowledge to maintain their health and well-being due to barriers related to health care access and the receipt of inferior health care. (p. 36)

The composition of the social capital developed by people of Color differs tremendously from the social capital of the hegemonic White structure. The social capital for people of Color is derived mainly as a response to the oppressive subjugation of the White hegemony, potentially forcing people of Color to create counter-networks to translate knowledge for resisting the White hegemony. In essence, social capital for people of Color centers on how to successfully navigate, strategize, and understand the rules of the game to be successful in an oppressive, predominantly White world—this requires extensive cultural translation of how communities of Color can learn from and reject White hegemony, while translating learned information to lift their own community.

Inversely, being a member of the dominant White social class defers social capital as an unseen and often unacknowledged advantage, feeding from a large, existing network that has not historically served people of Color. Therefore, students of Color must band together, communicate, and create networks that can circumvent White hegemony to attain both individual and group goals. This sense of networking is precisely what a wealth of employability research has found to be critical for people to become connected to jobs and financial opportunities. Years ago, researchers reasoned that having a strong network and possessing the ability to effectively network is a precious skill sought by employers (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; Jackson & Wilton 2016; Logan, 2015; Tomlinson & Holmes, 2017), and recent research suggests the same, that students of Color often cite their extensive network as a reason for their successful acquisition of employment post-graduation (Burnett, 2021; Burnett & Taylor, 2020).

Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education
Vol. 20, no. 1, 2025, Regular Issue
https://doi.org/10.20355/jcie29690

Navigational Capital as Resilient, Critical Reflection

Navigational capital, according to Yosso (2005), refers to the skills required to navigate social institutions which have not been created without consideration of communities of Color. Systems like higher education, for example, feature a meritocratic structure and pedagogy that are remnants of an exclusive and oppressive White culture, a culture proven to be difficult to access and more difficult within which to thrive and experience success (Carnevale, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2006). The skills required to successfully navigate the higher education system through to graduation highlight how different the lived experience of attending college is for students of Color than White students.

Central to this concept and to the development of navigational capital is resilience, described by Stanton-Salazar and Spina (2000) as, "a set of inner resources, social competencies and cultural strategies that permit individuals to not only survive, recover, or even thrive after stressful events, but also draw from the experience to enhance subsequent functioning" (as cited by Yosso, 2005, p. 80). One's ability to remain resilient through difficult circumstances and through reflection to adjust future behavior exemplify some of the most precious and desired employability traits sought by employers. However, described as critical reflection (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007), the ability to adjust future behavior based upon a reflection and analysis of past behavior enables the individual to integrate this new information, which should lead to enhanced self-efficacy, self-confidence, and self-esteem.

Here, students of Color are uniquely equipped to pair their resilience with their sense of critical reflection to understand social situations and navigate oppressive structures to succeed. Coupling resilience, a desirable trait for employers (Hart Research Associates, 2018; Pellegrino & Hilton, 2012; Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2018) with critical reflection, another desirable trait for

Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education
Vol. 20, no. 1, 2025, Regular Issue
https://doi.org/10.20355/jcie29690

employers (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; Harvey, 2001), renders students of Color extremely well prepared to enter the labor market post-graduation.

Resistance Capital as Self-Efficacy and Leadership

Resistance capital is described by Yosso (2005) as a combination of skills and understanding facilitated, "through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality" (p. 80). Stemming from the intergenerational opposition to subordination exhibited by communities of Color, resistance capital undermines the fusillade of societal messaging devaluing communities of Color (Smith et al., 2011; Yosso, 2005). The history of slavery and subsequent institutionalized racism, discrimination, and oppression in the United States have impacted the intergenerational emotional health of African Americans and have "produced a schizophrenic type of existence" (p. 1004) for the descendants of enslaved Africans (Logan, 2015). Meaning, African American citizens must act publicly in accordance with what Smith et al. (2011) described as the "White Racial Frame" (p. 64).

This "frame" is behavior exhibiting the established societal norms of the White majority, only then to return home to embody their cultural identity and embrace their cultural heritage (Smith et al., 2011). The conversations and teachings of cultural heritage by families of Color at home foster symbolic resistance to the White Racial Frame (Smith et al., 2011). Then, when this symbolic resistance is paired with "Freirean critical consciousness" (Yosso, 2005, p. 81), cultural liberation occurs. The resultant construct of the intergenerational accumulation of understanding, skills, and behaviors, according to Yosso, (2005), embodies cultural knowledge of systemic racism and motivation to transform cultural inequality. Therefore, resistance capital challenges inequality and empowers communities of Color to assert themselves toward achieving social and racial justice for themselves and others.

2025, 20(1), pp. 195-230.
http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/JCIE

Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education
Vol. 20, no. 1, 2025, Regular Issue
https://doi.org/10.20355/jcie29690

Resistance capital facilitates two immediate employability characteristics for minoritized populations. The first is positive self-efficacy beliefs and the second is leadership in advocating for marginalized identities in society. Asserting oneself toward liberation of self or of others requires self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. Likewise, according to Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007), one's efficacy beliefs are crucial to successful postgraduate employability outcomes for postsecondary students. Similarly, according to Bandura (1995), "self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to manage prospective situations. Efficacy beliefs influence how people think, feel, motivate themselves and act" (p. 2). Sources of efficacy beliefs according to Bandura (1995) believed to be relevant to employability are mastery experiences, vicarious experiences provided by social models, and social persuasion.

As discussed earlier, resistance capital is developed within communities of Color through a process of social engagement and modeling by relatives, in turn facilitating vicarious and persuasive experiences for the development of self-efficacy and confidence (Bandura, 1995). Therefore, resistance capital develops in people from minoritized populations the self-confidence and leadership to engage in the liberation of themselves and others. Further, it is this same self-confidence and leadership that prospective employers most desire in prospective employees (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; Hart Research Associates, 2018; Harvey, 2001; Pellegrino & Hilton, 2012; Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2018). The challenge then becomes how to deploy resistance capital within the labor market in such a way that facilitates employability for people of Color without using, "...conformist strategies that feed back into the system of subjugation" (Yosso, 2005, p. 81).

2025, 20(1), pp. 195-230.
http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/JCIE

Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education
Vol. 20, no. 1, 2025, Regular Issue
https://doi.org/10.20355/jcie29690

Directions Toward Community Cultural Wealth as Employability

Employability theory and models must adapt to facilitate a capacity to acknowledge instances of systemic oppression and incorporate discussions of social justice. In the United States, conversations of employability, career readiness, and the skills gap often avoids incorporating the impacts of identity—such as race, gender, age, socioeconomic status, and more—on an individual's ability to acquire employment (Hora, 2016). Presently, employability research has implicitly embraced a deficit framing of students of Color in the form of the skills gap, suggesting that students of Color lack the skills necessary to complete higher education and compete in the labor market (Brown et al., 2003; Carnevale, 2016; Carnevale et al., 2019; Kalfa & Taksa, 2015). Applying Yosso's (2005) theory breathes new life into traditional discussions of employability and suggests that the skills gap is instead a form of systemic oppression that values certain skills and capital over others, with skills and capital held by students of Color often being devalued by higher education systems and the labor market. However, Yosso (2005) also argues that students of Color hold considerable community cultural wealth in various forms of capital, and we argue that these forms of capital are valued by employers as highly desired traits of quality employees. Yet, without a reframing of employability to incorporate forms of capital held by students of Color, the higher education system and the labor market will continue to perpetuate inequities that have led to discriminatory and unfair employment practices and the racial wealth gap because of systemic racism.

According to Carnevale et al. (2019), "If nothing changes, Whites are likely to maintain or increase their advantage in good jobs over Black and Latino workers over the next several decades" (p. 2). In the U.S. context, employability is discussed and modeled utilizing a human capital perspective (Hora, 2016; Stokes, 2016) that incorporates a skills gap frame of graduates (Jackson, 2017; Tomlinson & Holmes, 2017). However, employability skills are only a part of the employability package

2025, 20(1), pp. 195-230.
http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/JCIE

and perpetuates deficit framing of college students, especially students of Color across different economies and geographies (Fakunle & Higson, 2021). Therefore, both institutions of higher education and individual employers within the labor market must acknowledge their own deficit thinking ideology, perpetuated by the notion of the skills gap.

Within concepts of employability, the skills gap narrative perpetuates deficit thinking ideology. Deficit thinking posits that students struggle academically because of their internal deficits or deficiencies, shifting the blame and responsibility for education and improvement onto the student instead of a mutual relationship between student and organization, whether that be an institution of higher education or a prospective employer (Valencia, 2010). This victim-blaming perspective fails to address the systemic inequality that perpetuates, "...an exacerbation of longstanding racial and ethnic divides in access to economic opportunity" (Carnevale et al., 2019, p. 2).

However, incorporating a frame of community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) within employability could be a leverage point for developing a strengths-based perspective of employability for historically minoritized identities. Employability has been presented as a conglomerate of attributes such as resilience, tolerance for adversity, critical thinking, and problem solving, among others. These individual characteristics appropriately describe the talents and perseverance engrained in people of Color who succeed in accessing and completing a postsecondary credential, rendering them strong candidates for post-graduate employment. Unfortunately, however, this understanding of systemic inequality hasn't translated to the U.S. labor market. According to Carnevale (2016):

> We have arrived at a point where our racial, ethnic, and class inequality is primarily driven not by the vulgar motivations of Jim Crow racism or class

Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education
Vol. 20, no. 1, 2025, Regular Issue
https://doi.org/10.20355/jcie29690

> bias, but race and class neutral economic and educational mechanisms that ultimately have the same effect as race or class animus. (p. 12)

Subsequently, according to Carnevale et al. (2019), these neutral mechanisms facilitate growing gaps in acquisition of good jobs, and subsequently higher earnings, between White graduates and their peers of Color.

Ultimately, instead of positioning students of Color as individuals who lack skills upon entering higher education—and subsequently, the workforce—institutions of higher education must view students of Color as bringing a wealth of capital to the institution and engaging these students in professional development opportunities that amplify and expand these forms of capital. Yosso (2005) stressed the importance for students of Color to maintain their community and familial connections during their postsecondary and professional career, therefore, employability theories should expand their discussion to include the role that families and communities play in the development of their college graduates. Employability theories should also engage with employers to implore whether these employers understand the various forms of community cultural wealth that Yosso (2005) articulated. It is possible that employers do not view a form of wealth such as *linguistic capital* as translating to an employability trait such as *cross-cultural awareness*, and it is also possible that institutions of higher education are not priming their graduates of Color to speak clearly and confidently about their forms of capital and how they translate to highly desired employability traits. As a result, theory must address the capital that students of Color bring to higher education, how that capital is viewed by employers, and whether theory is adequately evaluating the role that implicit bias and systemic racism plays during the hiring process and throughout the careers of professionals of Color. From here, researchers and theorists may want to work more closely with institutions of higher education and employers to better understand the student-to-employee pipeline and when, where, and why students of Color may be left behind.

Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education
Vol. 20, no. 1, 2025, Regular Issue
https://doi.org/10.20355/jcie29690

Implications for Research

As employability continues to grow in priority for institutions of higher education, Harvey (2001) suggested that assessing employment and earnings outcomes of graduates should focus on the effects pertaining to the individual rather than the institution's prestige. It is assumed that for a person of Color completing a postsecondary degree, institutions should be invested in the acquisition of employment and a subsequent career for those students of Color. As Carnevale et al. (2019) pointed out, this is not the case. In fact, despite the efforts to increase college enrollments of people of Color, the gap between White post-graduate employment and Black and Latinx post-graduate employment continues to grow at substantial rates (Carnevale et al., 2019). In short, college enrollment has not translated to post-graduate success for many students of Color, and that burden rests upon the institution and how it communicates to both their students of Color and prospective employers. Evaluation of post-graduate outcomes should focus on addressing social inequality and effects on the individual rather than be used as a metric for elevating institutional prestige (Harvey, 2001). Assessments should focus on whether completing a degree from an institution equates with the social mobility of people from lower SES backgrounds, minoritized identities, and how the institution provided experiences that facilitated individual mobility beyond graduation.

In the European context, employability is described from a broader perspective that allows for the acknowledgement of identity biases (i.e., gender, race, age, etc.) in the labor market. The USEM Account of Employability (Knight & Yorke, 2004) and the Career EDGE Model (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007) present employability as being affected by the context within which the individual is pursuing employment, including how institutions of higher education and prospective employers may apply a deficit lens to the capital that students of Color bring to educational and professional spaces. By acknowledging the impacts of race on employability, a lens—perhaps Yosso's (2005)—is added that brings clarity to the systemic

inequality affecting people of minoritized identities in acquiring gainful employment. As the concepts and models related to an individuals' capability for acquiring gainful post-graduate employment evolve, it will be important to investigate the lived experiences of all students, especially students of Color, and how their unique situations can be leveraged to achieve their employment goals. This requires research into how students of Color feel supported by their institution of higher education and how these students feel connected to the labor market by their institution.

Moreover, educational researchers should explore how socialization and on-campus work environments facilitate the development of employability capital for students (Peeters et al., 2019), especially for students from low-income and minoritized backgrounds. These investigations would provide institutions with guidance about how certain students may be socialized into certain professional fields through development of various forms of marketable skills (NACE, 2015; THECB, 2018) and capital (Brown et al., 2003; Hora, 2019), and possibly further marginalizing students with skills or capital incongruent from the White Racial Frame (Smith et al., 2011). Especially important is how institutions of higher education acknowledge and amplify the capital that students of Color already possess and whether students of Color are socialized to minimize or maximize those forms of capital, including exploring whether specific groups of students of Color are experiencing worse career outcomes and addressing those outcomes through targeted interventions. Smith et al. (2011) reasoned that employment traits are often viewed through a White Racial Frame, and researchers must explore whether institutions are imposing this frame upon students of Color and effectively stifling their community cultural wealth and perpetuating employment and wealth gaps.

Moreover, researchers should probe students' experiences as on-campus employees, investigating how students develop their pre-professional identities

Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education
Vol. 20, no. 1, 2025, Regular Issue
https://doi.org/10.20355/jcie29690

(Jackson, 2017), forms of capital (Hora, 2019; Jankowski, 2020), and skills (NACE, 2015; Pellegrino & Hilton, 2012) while still on campus. Research investigating how co-curricular rigor shapes and impacts postgraduate outcomes for underrepresented students should be important to higher education administrators and faculty in initiating new programs, services and experiences aimed at meeting underrepresented student postgraduate needs. Burnett and Taylor (2020) and Burnett (2021) have started this work, exploring the post-graduate experiences of students of Color and investigating how students of Color benefitted from on-campus employment as a mechanism to develop new skills and forms of capital while amplifying community cultural wealth.

Overall, very little work has explored how currently enrolled postsecondary students experience on-campus employment and how this employment does or does not translate to post-graduate labor market success in the form of employment, equitable salaries and benefits, and an increased standard of living. Here, future research on how postsecondary institutions facilitate pre-graduation employment opportunities should yield many important findings, many of which would directly address how minoritized students do or do not have access to various forms of capital and pre-professional identity development experiences.

Implications for Practice

Institutions of Higher Education

There needs to be a certain realism about what higher education can do to affect what has been ingrained and embodied in the years before people become undergraduates. Developing a conceptualization of employability that can effectively describe how students of Color prepare for the postgraduate labor market should center on the strengths derived from their lived experience before

attending college while incorporating engaging co-curricular experiences during college. Integrating Yosso's (2005) conceptualization of community cultural wealth with Knight and Yorke's (2004) USEM account of employability offers a potentially enlightening and informative direction. Findings from Burnett (2021) indicated that the co-curricular student affairs employment space may be more accommodating to underrepresented students than the academic curricular space. Students from marginalized backgrounds attending predominantly white institutions come to higher education with *inputs* (Astin, 1989) divergent from the *inputs* of the white majority on campus, and may perceive higher education rigor differently through what Yosso, 2005 termed, "navigational capital" (p.80) Divisions of student affairs and their commonly associated programs, services, and facilities often employ diverse professionals with postgraduate degrees at higher rates than academic units do (Athas et al., 2013; Burnside et al., 2019). Therefore, because of the access to professionals of Color, undergraduate student affairs employment (USAE) may offer a space that is better suited for underrepresented students in developing postgraduate employability than the academic curricular space.

Mentorship among students of Color and higher education professionals of Color are important relationships in enhancing the retention, persistence and graduation goals of underrepresented students and the institutions they attend (Martin & McGee, 2014; Reddick et al., 2011). Due to the higher density of professionals of Color employed within student affairs units on college campuses (Burnside et al., 2019), these spaces offer underrepresented students more access to mentorship experiences with professionals of Color than academic spaces do (Burnside et al., 2019; Martin & McGee, 2014). Therefore, future employability research should be directed at the contributions of USAE experience on postgraduate outcomes for students of Color. Research investigating how students of Color perceive the contribution of their USAE experience affecting their postgraduate outcomes would inform educators and administrators how best to curate curricular and co-

2025, 20(1), pp. 195-230.

Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education
Vol. 20, no. 1, 2025, Regular Issue
https://doi.org/10.20355/jcie29690

curricular experiences to meet individual student postgraduate employment goals. Further, the pragmatic relevance of co-curricular rigor makes it an important and effective method for developing postgraduate outcomes (Hansen & Hoag, 2018; Woodside, 2018).

Employers

Transparency in hiring and recruiting practices must be encouraged if not mandated by government entities and non-governmental watchdog groups. Governmental, private agencies, and industry need to be held accountable for their actual hiring practices despite their outward facing declaration of inclusive and diversity hiring initiatives. Requiring employers to define specifically what the agency's culture is within recruiting materials and job descriptions, and subsequently, what exactly hiring managers mean by *fit* in recruitment and hiring practice, would go a long way in opening a path for all applicants. Doing so, could reveal how *cultural fit* is used to describe the "ideal graduate employee" (Ingram & Allen, 2019, p. 738) and therefore limits access and employment for other potential candidates. Exposing and educating employers on how the idea of the ideal candidate is used to replicate inequality in the labor market could provoke structural change to recruitment and hiring processes within companies. For example, companies could intentionally recruit high-performing students from Historically Black Colleges and Universities and smaller public and private institutions which typically enroll higher percentages of students of Color than elite R1 and Ivy League Institutions. Further, decoding and demystifying cultural fit and the ideal candidate could provide a road map for graduates of Color on how to leverage their unique community cultural wealth within the hiring agency's articulation of culture and fit, facilitating their presentation as an *ideal* candidate. This may include institutions of higher education working with students of Color earlier in their educational career to better understand these students' strengths and aligning these strengths with specific industries where these students could

Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education
Vol. 20, no. 1, 2025, Regular Issue
https://doi.org/10.20355/jcie29690

add to or positively change workplace culture (Tulshyan, 2022). In addition, students of Color should be coached to speak about their strengths and experiences as they may add to or positively change workplace culture at specific organizations, providing these students with a much more focused approach to employment. Overall, this strategy presents an ideal opportunity for students of Color to investigate career services on campus and develop knowledge and understanding of how to effectively deploy their *Community Cultural Wealth* in the contemporary, predominantly white labor market.

Conclusion

The employability prerogative provides a frame which reveals how hiring practices serve as cultural gatekeeping (Brown et al., 2003; Hora, 2019) and should encompass the employment value of community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005). The value of the lived experience of communities of Color remains out of view of the White Racial Frame, and as such, the employability value (community cultural wealth) that people of Color bring to the workforce remains misunderstood and underappreciated. Understanding how people of Color can positively contribute to the labor market is potentially more important but difficult than ever, as anti-diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) legislation has been passed across the United States (Council on Social Work Education, 2025), along with a rise in institutional accountability and gainful employment standards for institutions of higher education (Office of Postsecondary Education, 2023). As a result, researchers, practitioners, and policymakers may believe that specifically focusing on students of Color and their employability violates anti-DEI measures, but that institutions are also being held more accountable for their students' labor market outcomes than ever before (Office of Postsecondary Education, 2023).

In response, Yosso's (2005) model of Community Cultural Wealth is an appropriate one to reconceptualize employability for students and communities of Color and how institutions of higher education, along with employers, can improve

postgraduate outcomes for students of Color. As connecting students to jobs continues to be a critical priority for college campuses across the United States and beyond (Carnevale, 2016; Carnevale et al., 2019), careful and intentional thought and action must be directed at acknowledging and nurturing community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) to ensure that students of Color are valued by a labor market that needs their value more than ever.

REFERENCES

Astin, A. (1989). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Personnel, 40*(5), 518–529. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1985-18630-001

Athas, C., Oaks, D. J., & Kennedy-Phillips, L. (2013). Student employee development in student affairs. *Research & Practice in Assessment*, *8*, 55–68. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1062816

Bandura, A. (1995). *Self-efficacy in changing societies*. Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (2000). *Pascalian meditations*. Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (2005). Habitus. In J. Hillier & E. Rooksby (Eds.), *Habitus: A sense of place* (pp. 43–49). Aldershot.

Brocato, N., Luebber, F., Taylor, M., Gonzalez, A., Chessman, H., & Zhao, Y. (2021). Well-being for students with minoritized identities. *American Council on Education*. https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/Well-Being-Minoritized-Identities.pdf

Brown, P., Hesketh, A., & Williams, S. (2003). Employability in a knowledge-driven economy. *Journal of Education and Work, 16*(2), 107-126. https://doi.org/10.1080/1363908032000070648

Burnett, C. A., & Taylor, Z. W. (2020). Perspiration before graduation: Pre-graduation, on-campus employment to bolster marketable skills in higher education. In S. Sharma & M. S. El Namaki (Eds.), *The economics of skills: Pathways to employability* (pp. 3-17). CSMFL Publications. https://doi.org/10.21013/978819406928701

2025, 20(1), pp. 195-230.
http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/JCIE

Burnett, C.A, & Taylor, Z.W. (2025). "Physically present, but emotionally present, too." Graduates of Color developing emotional intelligence as student employees. *Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability, 16*(1), 59–74. https://doi.org/10.21153/jtlge2025vol16no1art1892

Burnett, C. A. (2021). Learning for earning: Undergraduate student affairs employment and postgraduate employability outcomes. [Doctoral dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin]. Texas ScholarWorks. http://dx.doi.org/10.26153/tsw/31954

Burnside, O., Wesley, A., Wesaw, A., & Parnell, A. (2019). Employing student success: A comprehensive examination of on-campus student employment. *NASPA: Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education.* https://www.naspa.org/report/employing-student-success-a-comprehensive-examination-of-on-campus-student-employment

Carnevale, A. (2016, December). We need a new deal between higher education & democratic capitalism. *Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce*. https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/new-deal.pdf

Carnevale, A. P., Strohl, J., Gulish, A., Werf, M. V. D., & Campbell, K. P. (2019). The unequal race for good jobs: How Whites made outsized gains in education and good jobs compared to Blacks and Latinos. *Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce*. https://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/raceandgoodjobs/

Cataldi, E., Bennett, C., Chen, X. (2018). First-generation students, college access, persistence, and postbachelor's outcomes. *U.S. Department of Education.* https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2018/2018421.pdf

Chetty, R., Friedman, J., Saez, E., Turner, N., and Yagan, D. (2017). Mobility report cards: The role of colleges in intergenerational mobility. *National Bureau of Economic Research.* https://www.nber.org/papers/w23618

Council on Social Work Education. (2025). DEI ban & restrictions tracker. *Council on Social Work Education*. https://www.cswe.org/advocacy-policy/dei-ban-and-restrictions-tracker/

Dacre Pool, L. & Sewell, P. (2007). The key to employability: Developing a practical model of graduate employability. *Education + Training*, 49(4), 277–289. https://doi.org/10.1108/00400910710754435

Eagan, K., Stolzenberg, E. B., Ramirez, J. J., Aragon, M. C., Suchard, M., & Rios-Aguilar, C. (2016). The American freshman: Fifty-year trends, 1966–2015. *Higher Education Research Institute.* https://www.heri.ucla.edu/monographs/50YearTrendsMonograph2016.pdf

Fakunle, O., & Higson, H. (2021). Interrogating theoretical and empirical approaches to employability in different global regions. *Higher Education Quarterly, 75*(4), 525–534. https://doi.org/10.1111/hequ.12345

Hansen, S., & Hoag, B. (2018). Promoting learning, career readiness, and leadership in student employment. *New Directions for Student Leadership*, *158*, 85–99. https://doi.org/10.1002/yd.20281

Hammond, J., Marshall-Lucette, S., Davies, N., Ross, F., & Harris, R. (2017). Spotlight on equality of employment opportunities: A qualitative study of job seeking experiences of graduating nurses and physiotherapists from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 74(2017), 172–180. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2017.07.019

Hart Research Associates. (2018, July). Fulfilling the American dream: Liberal education and the future of work. *Association of American Colleges and Universities.* https://www.aacu.org/sites/default/files/files/LEAP/2018EmployerResearchReport.pdf

Harvey, L. (2001). Defining and measuring employability. *Quality in Higher Education*, 7(2), 97–109. https://doi.org/10.1080/13538320120059990

Hillage, J., & Pollard, E. (1998, November). Employability: Developing a framework for policy analysis. *Department for Education and Employment.* https://www.voced.edu.au/content/ngv%3A40352

Holmes, L. (2013). Competing perspectives on graduate employability: Possession, position or process? *Studies in Higher Education*, *38*(4), 538–554. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2011.587140

Hora, M. T. (2019). Hiring as cultural gatekeeping into occupational communities: Implications for higher education and student employability. *Higher Education*, 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-019-00411-6

Ingram, N. & Allen, K. (2019). Talent-spotting' or 'social magic'? Inequality, cultural sorting and constructions of the ideal graduate in elite professions.

The Sociological Review, 67(3) 723–740. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038026118790949

Jackson, D. (2017). Developing pre-professional identity in undergraduates through work-integrated learning. *Higher Education*, 74, 833–853. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-016-0080-2

Jackson, D., & Wilton, N. (2016). Developing career management competencies among undergraduates and the role of work-integrated learning. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *21*(3), 266–286. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2015.1136281

Jankowski, G. S. (2020). The 'Race' Awarding Gap: What can be done? *Psychology of Women Section Review, 3*(1&2), 1–20. https://eprints.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/id/eprint/6782/

Jeffers, K., Cadogan, M., Heilemann, M., Phillips, L. (2019). Assessing informal and formal diabetes knowledge in African American older adults with uncontrolled diabetes. *Journal of Gerontological Nursing. 45*(2), 35–41. https://doi.org/10.3928/00989134-20190111-06

Kalfa, S., & Taksa, L. (2015). Cultural capital in business higher education: Reconsidering the graduate attributes movement and the focus on employability. *Studies in Higher Education*, *40*(4), 580–595. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2013.842210

Knight, P., & Yorke, M. (Eds.). (2004). *Learning, curriculum and employability in higher education*. Routledge-Falmer.

Kruger, K. (2016, August 23). There exist proven approaches to non-academic student support. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. https://www.chronicle.com/blogs/letters/there-exist-proven-approaches-to-non-academic-student-support/

Kuh, G. D. (2016). Making learning meaningful: Engaging students in ways that matter to them. *New Directions for Student Leadership*, 145, 49–56. https://doi.org/10.1002/tl.20174

Labaree, D. (1997). Public goods, private goods: The American struggle over educational goals. *American Educational Research Journal, 34*(1), 39–81. https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312034001039

Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). From the achievement gap to the education debt: Understanding achievement in U.S. schools. *Educational Researcher*, *35*(7), 3–12. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3876731

Logan, M. (2015). Social work practice with African Americans. In K. Corcoran & A. Roberts (Eds.), *Social Workers' Desk Reference*. Oxford Press.

Martin, G. L., & McGee, M. (2014). The effects of student interactions with student affairs professionals on college outcomes. *New Directions for Student Services*, *147*, 49–57. https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.20100

National Association of Colleges and Employers. (2015). Career readiness defined. *National Association of Colleges and Employers.* http://www.naceweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/career-readiness-defined/

Office of Postsecondary Education, U.S. Department of Education. (2023, October 31). *Financial responsibility, administrative capability, certification procedures, ability to benefit (ATB)*. Federal Register, *88*(209), 74568–74710. https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/10/31/2023-22785/financial-responsibility-administrative-capability-certification-procedures-ability-to-benefit-atb

Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (2005). *How college affects students: A third decade of research*. Jossey-Bass.

Peeters, E., Nelissen, J., De Cuyper, N., Forrier, A., Verbruggen, M., & De Witte, H. (2019). Employability capital: A conceptual framework tested through expert analysis. *Journal of Career Development*, *46*(2), 79-93. https://doi.org/10.1177/0894845317731865

Pellegrino, J. W., & Hilton, M. L. (Eds.). (2012). Education for life and work: Developing knowledge and skills in the 21st century. National Research Council of the National Academies. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED536381

Puwar, N. (2004). *Space invaders: Race, gender and bodies out of place*. Berg.

Reddick, R.J., Griffin, K.A., & Cherwitz, R.A. (2011). Answering President Obama's call for mentoring: It's not just for mentees anymore. *Planning for Higher Education, 39*(4), 59–65. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ944324

Rivera, L. (2012). Hiring as Cultural Matching: The Case of Elite Professional Service Firms. *American Sociological Review*, 77(6), 999-1022. https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122412463213

Rivera, L. (2015). *Pedigree: How elite students get elite jobs*. Princeton University Press.

Smith, W., Man, H., & Franklin, J.D. (2011). Racial battle fatigue and the miseducation of Black men: Racial microaggressions, societal problems, and environmental stress. *The Journal of Negro Education*, *80*(1), 63–82. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/806860

Stanton-Salazar, R.D., & Spina, S.U. (2000). The network orientations of highly resilient urban minority youth: A network-analytic account of minority socialization and its educational implications. *The Urban Review*, 32, 227–261. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1005122211864

Tay, Y.X. (2022). Discrimination in the Employment Search: Narratives from International Students of Color. [Master's thesis, University of Nebraska-Lincoln]. Digital Commons @ The University of Nebraska. https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cehsedaddiss/342/

Taylor, B., & Cantwell, B. (2019). *Unequal Higher Education: Wealth, Status, and Student Opportunity.* Rutgers University Press.

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. (2018). Marketable skills goal implementation guidelines. *Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.* http://www.60x30tx.com/goals/?type=9

Tomlinson, M., & Holmes, L. (Eds.). (2017). *Graduate employability in context: Theory, research debate.* Springer.

Tulshyan, R. (2022). Don't Hire for Culture Fit. *Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)*. https://www.shrm.org/executive-network/insights/dont-hire-culture-fit

Valencia, R. (2010) *Dismantling deficit thinking: Educational thought and practice*. Routledge.

Williamson, M. (2023). Understanding the self-employed in the United States. *Center for American Progress.* https://www.americanprogress.org/article/understanding-the-self-employed-in-the-united-states/

Woodside, J. M. (2018). Real-world rigor: An integrative learning approach for industry and higher education. *Industry and Higher Education*, *32*(5), 285–289. https://doi.org/10.1177/0950422218784535

Yao, C. W., & George Mwangi, C. A. (2017). Role of student affairs in international student transition and success. *Journal of International Students*, *7*(4), I-III. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v7i4.180

Yosso, T. (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