

# The Book of Possibilities



**WOMEN  
OF COLOR  
IN THE  
ACADEMY**



“

*My identity is not my obstacle. My identity is my superpower.*

”

TED Talk  
America Ferrera,  
[youtu.be/RjquHTj4HIY?t=782](https://youtu.be/RjquHTj4HIY?t=782)

**Too often, as women of color, our unique and intersectional identities are seen as liabilities that keep us in the margins.**

In her powerful TED Talk, actress America Ferrera reminds us that, “My identity is not my obstacle. My identity is my superpower.”

The truth is that who we are at our core provides the unique fuel that powers our success. The WOCIA conference serves as a reminder of our power as individuals and as a collective.

This professional development workbook aims to provide reflection exercises that help us identify and harness our unique, identity-based power sources. We will use the resulting possibilities to fuel strategic career moves and personal growth.

“

*My hope is that the lessons I have learned . . . in academia, will bring us together in community; that they might accompany us on our path and make us feel our power.*

”

Lorgia García Peña,  
*Community as Rebellion: A Syllabus for  
Surviving Academia as a Woman of Color*

## ACTIVITY 1

# *Values Inventory*

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A large part of our personal identity is defined by our values. Values are the principles and beliefs by which we live our lives and make our decisions. Understanding our values is an iterative process that lays the foundation for the unique decisions we make in life.

**Complete the values assessment<sup>1</sup> on the next page and list your five highest scoring values in the values section on page 21. Answer the reflection questions to determine how to harness the power within your values.**

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<sup>1</sup> Brown, Duane and R. Kelly Crace, 1996. Life Values Inventory Publisher: Life Values Resources, pinnowedna@charter.net.



Circle one number below to rate how often each listed value guides your behavior. Usually your first idea is the best indicator of how you feel. There are no right or wrong answers. Your choices should describe your own values, not the values of others.

	ALMOST NEVER	1	2	3	4	5
1. Challenging myself to achieve	1	2	3	4	5	
2. Being liked by others	1	2	3	4	5	
3. Protecting the environment	1	2	3	4	5	
4. Being sensitive to others' needs	1	2	3	4	5	
5. Coming up with new ideas	1	2	3	4	5	
6. Having financial success	1	2	3	4	5	
7. Taking care of my body	1	2	3	4	5	
8. Downplaying compliments or praise	1	2	3	4	5	
9. Being independent (doing things I want to do)	1	2	3	4	5	
10. Accepting my place in my family or group	1	2	3	4	5	
11. Having time to myself	1	2	3	4	5	
12. Being reliable	1	2	3	4	5	
13. Using science for progress	1	2	3	4	5	
14. Believing in a higher power	1	2	3	4	5	
15. Improving my performance	1	2	3	4	5	
16. Being accepted by others	1	2	3	4	5	

	ALMOST NEVER	1	2	3	4	5	ALMOST ALWAYS
17. Taking care of the environment	1	2	3	4	5		
18. Helping others	1	2	3	4	5		
19. Creating new things or ideas	1	2	3	4	5		
20. Making money	1	2	3	4	5		
21. Being in good physical shape	1	2	3	4	5		
22. Being quiet about my success	1	2	3	4	5		
23. Giving my opinion	1	2	3	4	5		
24. Respecting the traditions of my family or group	1	2	3	4	5		
25. Having quiet time to think	1	2	3	4	5		
26. Being trustworthy	1	2	3	4	5		
27. Knowing things about science	1	2	3	4	5		
28. Believing that there is something greater than ourselves	1	2	3	4	5		
29. Working hard to do better	1	2	3	4	5		
30. Feeling as though I belong	1	2	3	4	5		
31. Appreciating the beauty of nature	1	2	3	4	5		
32. Being concerned about the rights of others	1	2	3	4	5		
33. Discovering new things or ideas	1	2	3	4	5		
34. Being wealthy (having lots of money, land or livestock)	1	2	3	4	5		
35. Being strong or good in a sport (being athletic)	1	2	3	4	5		
36. Avoid credit for my accomplishments	1	2	3	4	5		
37. Having control over my time	1	2	3	4	5		
38. Making decisions with my family or group in mind	1	2	3	4	5		
39. Having a private place to go	1	2	3	4	5		
40. Meeting my obligations	1	2	3	4	5		
41. Knowing about math	1	2	3	4	5		
42. Living in harmony with my spiritual beliefs	1	2	3	4	5		

## Scoring Summary

Add up the ratings for each question. Record the total scores for each letter below. This will give you your scores for the 15 major life values identified by this inventory.

A \_\_\_\_\_  
Questions 1 + 15 + 29

H \_\_\_\_\_  
Questions 8 + 22 + 36

B \_\_\_\_\_  
Questions 2 + 16 + 30

I \_\_\_\_\_  
Questions 9 + 23 + 37

C \_\_\_\_\_  
Questions 3 + 17 + 31

J \_\_\_\_\_  
Questions 10 + 24 + 38

D \_\_\_\_\_  
Questions 4 + 18 + 32

K \_\_\_\_\_  
Questions 11 + 25 + 39

E \_\_\_\_\_  
Questions 5 + 19 + 33

L \_\_\_\_\_  
Questions 12 + 26 + 40

F \_\_\_\_\_  
Questions 6 + 20 + 34

M \_\_\_\_\_  
Questions 13 + 27 + 41

G \_\_\_\_\_  
Questions 7 + 21 + 35

N \_\_\_\_\_  
Questions 14 + 28 + 42

## Values Profile

A  **ACHIEVEMENT**  
*It is important to challenge yourself and work hard to improve.*

I  **INDEPENDENCE**  
*It is important to make your own decisions and do things your way.*

B  **BELONGING**  
*It is important to be accepted by others and to feel included.*

J  **LOYALTY TO FAMILY OR GROUP**  
*It is important to follow the traditions and expectations of your family or group.*

C  **CONCERN FOR THE ENVIRONMENT**  
*It is important to protect and preserve the environment.*

K  **PRIVACY**  
*It is important to have time alone.*

D  **CONCERN FOR OTHERS**  
*The well-being of others is important.*

L  **RESPONSIBILITY**  
*It is important to be dependable and trustworthy.*

E  **CREATIVITY**  
*It is important to have new ideas or to create new things.*

M  **SCIENTIFIC UNDERSTANDING**  
*It is important to use scientific principles to understand and solve problems.*

F  **FINANCIAL PROSPERITY**  
*It is important to be successful at making money or buying property.*

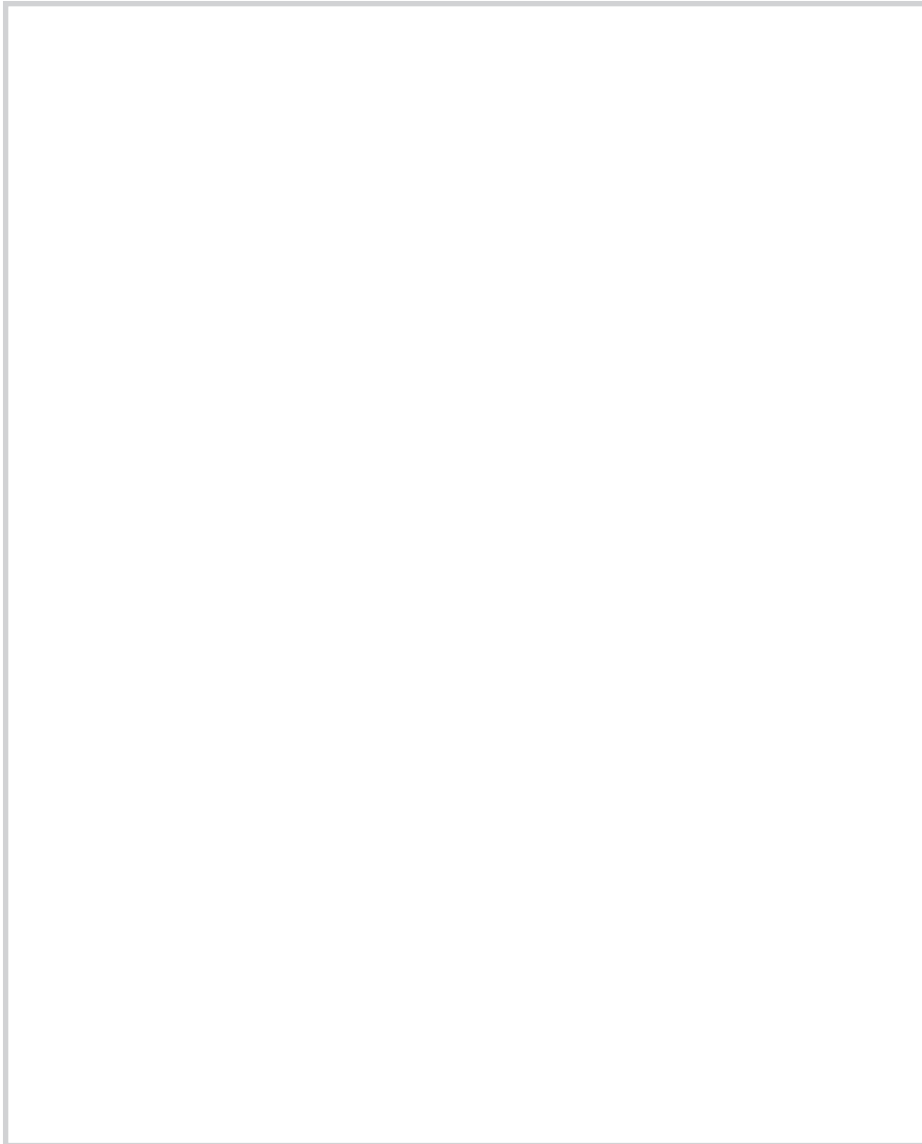
G  **HEALTH & ACTIVITY**  
*It is important to be healthy and physically active.*

N  **SPIRITUALITY**  
*It is important to have spiritual beliefs and to believe that you are part of something greater than yourself.*

H  **HUMILITY**  
*It is important to be humble and modest about your accomplishments.*

## REFLECTION

What are your top five values? Does your top five list surprise you? Is there a value that is missing that you would add? What are examples of when these values have led you to make career-related decisions? How can you leverage your values to make a career decision that you are currently grappling with?



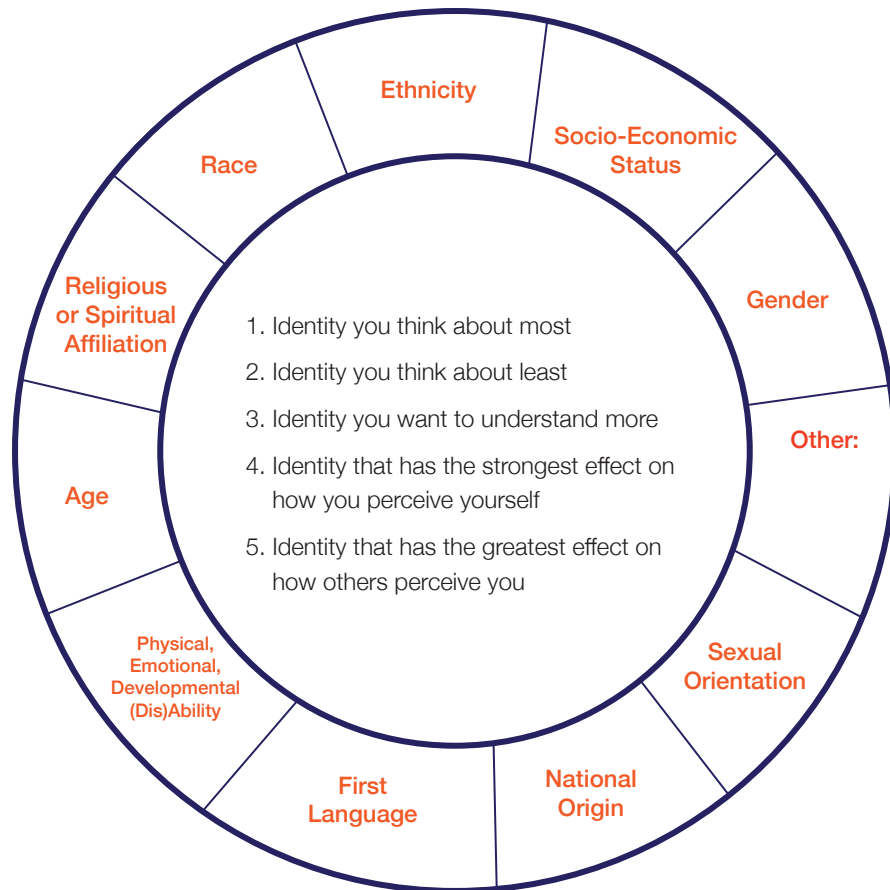
## ACTIVITY 2

# *Social Identity Wheel*

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Social identities are the parts of us that give us a sense of belonging to a group of people. Our social identities include elements like our race, social class, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, religion, disabilities, etc. Because the combination of social identities that we hold are unique to us, they provide us with a unique set of knowledge, perspectives, and strengths that we can harness to fuel our success.

Fill in your social identities in each category. Put a star next to the five identities based on the five questions in the center of the wheel. List the identities you starred in the social identity section on page 21. Feel free to list additional social identities as needed.



## REFLECTION

How has your unique set of identities, especially those with stars next to them, provided you with knowledge, perspectives, and strengths that others in a situation did not have? It may help to first reflect on your successes and then ask yourself how your social identity uniquely positioned you to make that achievement. You may gain additional insights by asking a close friend or mentor to share their thoughts on these questions.

What is your next big career move? How can you leverage your social identities to fuel your contribution and success in your next career endeavor?

“

*Other ways are possible and with the conviction that possibility lies precisely in community.*

”

Lorgia García Peña,  
*Community as Rebellion: A Syllabus for  
Surviving Academia as a Woman of Color*

### ACTIVITY 3

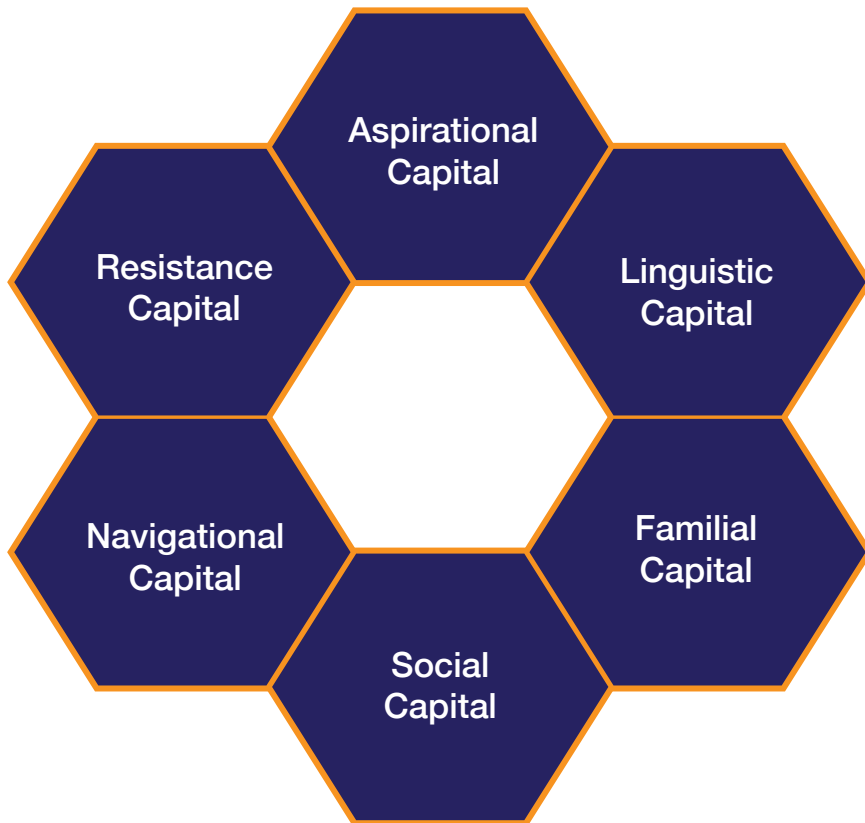
## *Community Cultural Wealth*

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Our identities are a tremendous source of strength on their own, but they can be activated within and by our communities. As women of color, we can use the community cultural wealth framework (CCW) developed by Tara J. Yosso to harness the strength that our unique identities hold. The CCW framework has six components that often manifest in an interconnected manner. The six types of cultural wealth— **aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant capital**—are connected, working together to strengthen an individual’s ability to function in multiple environments. By utilizing this capital, in the form of, talents, strengths, and experiences, as an asset, Yosso wished to “challenge the deficit-based interpretations of cultural capital in communities of color.”



For each of the six forms of CCW, answer the reflection prompts on the following pages. Use the definitions and characteristics for inspiration. List the specific sources of CCW that you identified in the CCW section on page 21.



## *Aspirational Capital*

The ability to maintain hope 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 toward pursuing your dreams and aspirations.

- What have you always dreamed to be?
- If money did not matter, where would you be?

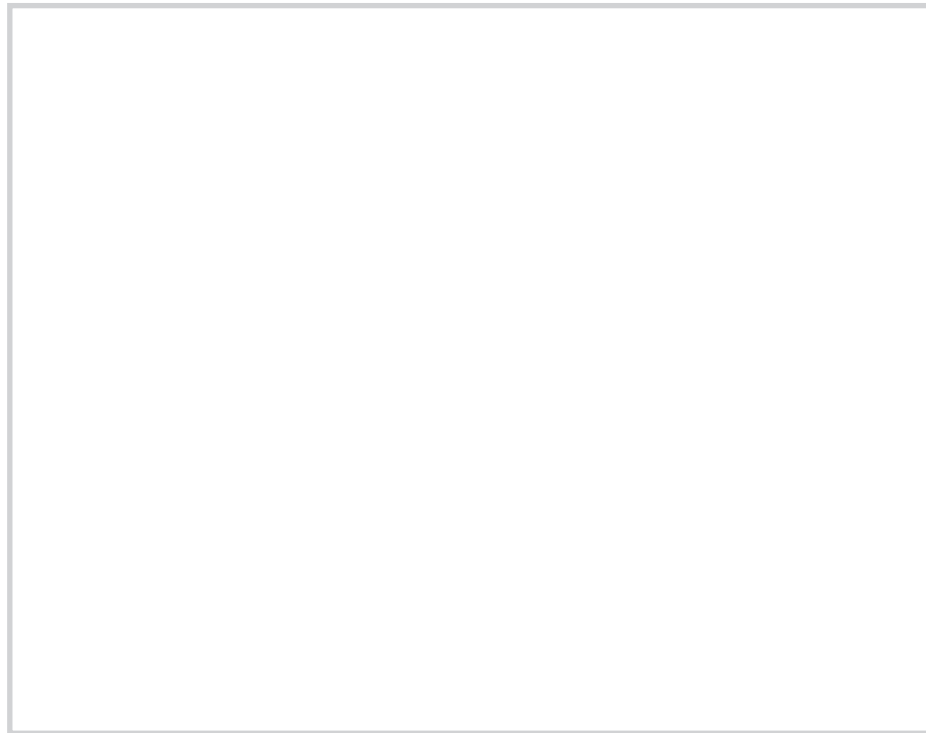
**Characteristics:** goal-orientation, resilience, motivation, inspired, go-getter, perseverance, drive, taking initiative, conviction, high expectations, determination, utilizing social networks.

## *Linguistic Capital*

The ability to develop communication skills through various experiences. For individuals who act as an interpreter for members of their family as well as the culture being based in storytelling, linguistic capital may enhance your ability for “memorization, attention to detail, dramatic pauses, comedic timing, facial affect, vocal tone, volume, rhythm and rhyme.”

- What stories do you and your family members tell and retell?
- What story would you share that is essential to understanding who you are?
- What skills do you already use to keep your audiences engaged?
- What communication skills would you like to hone? How and by when will you take these steps?

**Characteristics:** storytelling, code-switching, listening, problem-solving, perspective, multi-tasking, adaptability, decision making, comprehension, providing feedback, reflection, respect, empathy, or ability to navigate more than one language

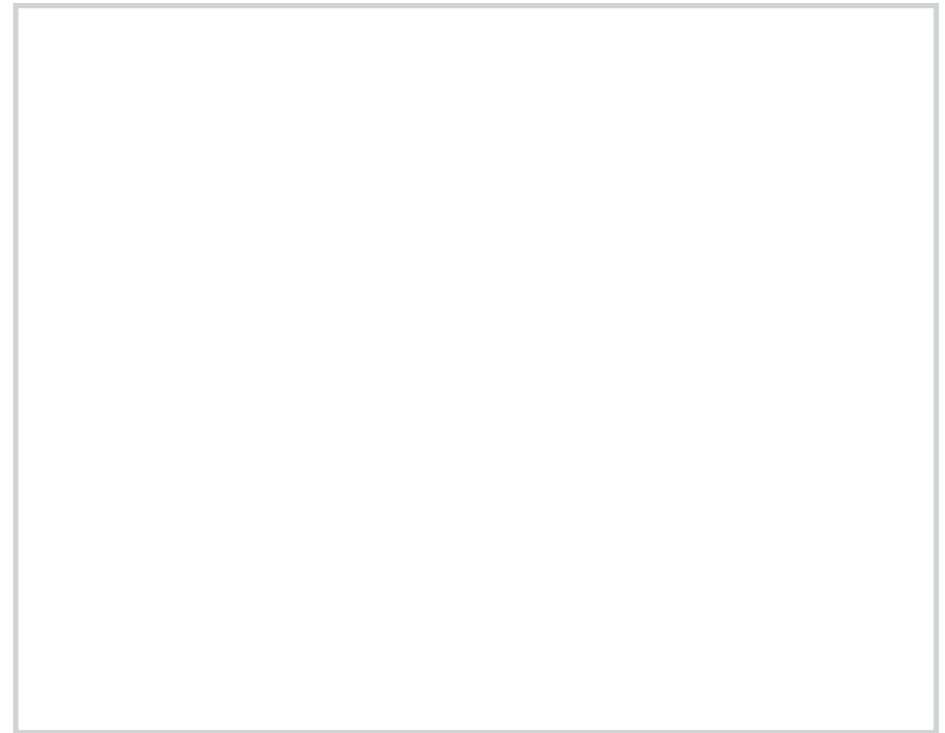


## *Familial Capital*

The ability to recognize and utilize extended family and community members to enhance social and personal human resources that will assist you as you navigate through the academy.

- Have you joined any professional organizations?
- Do you feel as if you have a connection with your departmental team?
- Do conversations with your co-workers go beyond job tasks?
- Did you participate in any department or college programs?
- How about grabbing a bite to eat with someone you work with to get to know them better? Remember you are not in this alone.

**Characteristics:** 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, or use of a cultural lens.

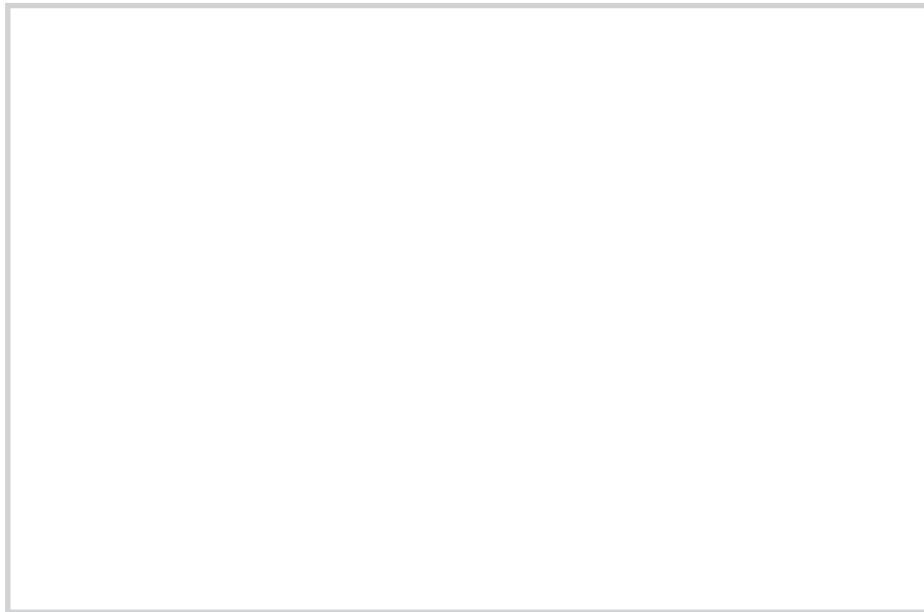


## *Social Capital*

The network of people and community resources that provide both emotional support and advice on how to navigate institutions of oppression both within higher education and in the larger society.

- List the people in your current network who serve these important roles:
  - Mentor:** Someone who sees more talent and ability within you than you see in yourself, and helps bring it out of you
  - Sponsor:** Someone who supports you through recommendation
  - Advocate:** Someone who publicly supports or recommends you, even when you're not present
  - Connector:** Someone who connects you to others within relevant networks
  - Supporter:** Someone who advocates for you and makes you feel like you belong
- Reflect on how you found these people in the past. What are steps you can take to connect with new people who will help you on your professional journey? Start with the WOCIA attendee list and Office of Faculty Development on your campus.

**Characteristics:** relationship building, taking initiative, maintaining healthy relationships, establishing trust, bridge building, or confidence.

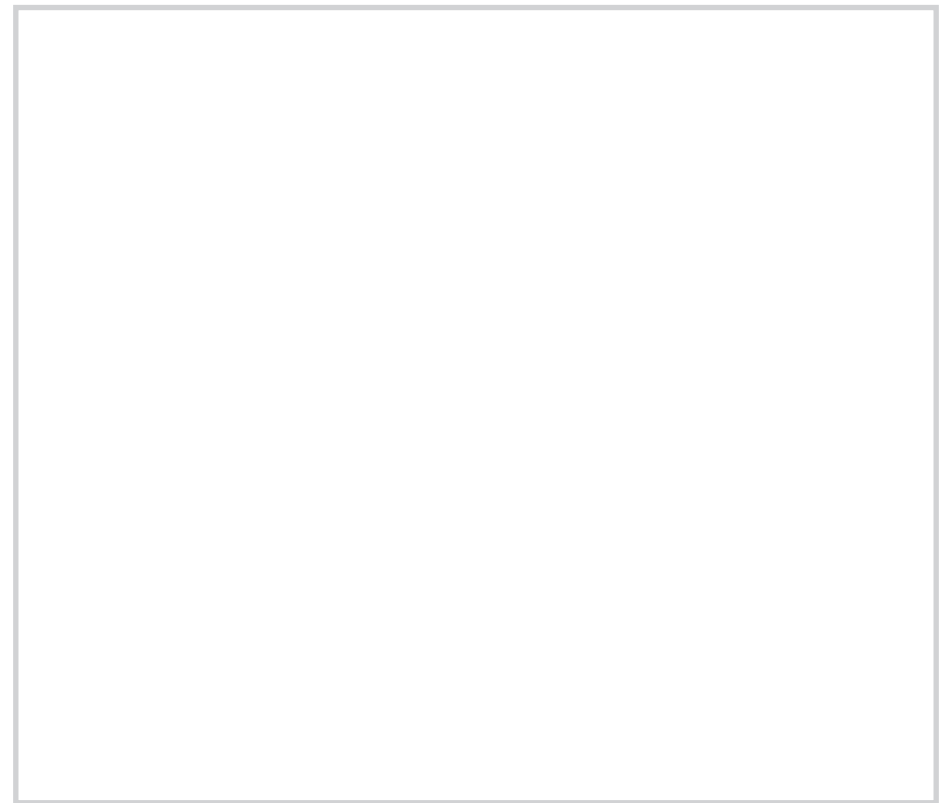


## *Navigational Capital*

How do you navigate social institutions? "Navigational capital empowers [you] to maneuver within unsupportive or hostile environments" (Yosso, 2005).

- What challenges have you faced in your career? How did you overcome these challenges?
- How might you leverage your cultural identity to advance success in your career?
- Have you observed anything about yourself that you initially perceived as a weakness but is actually an asset?

**Characteristics:** resourcefulness, self-awareness, ability to multitask and prioritize, adaptability, using social networks, persistence, determination, proactive, or goal-orientation.

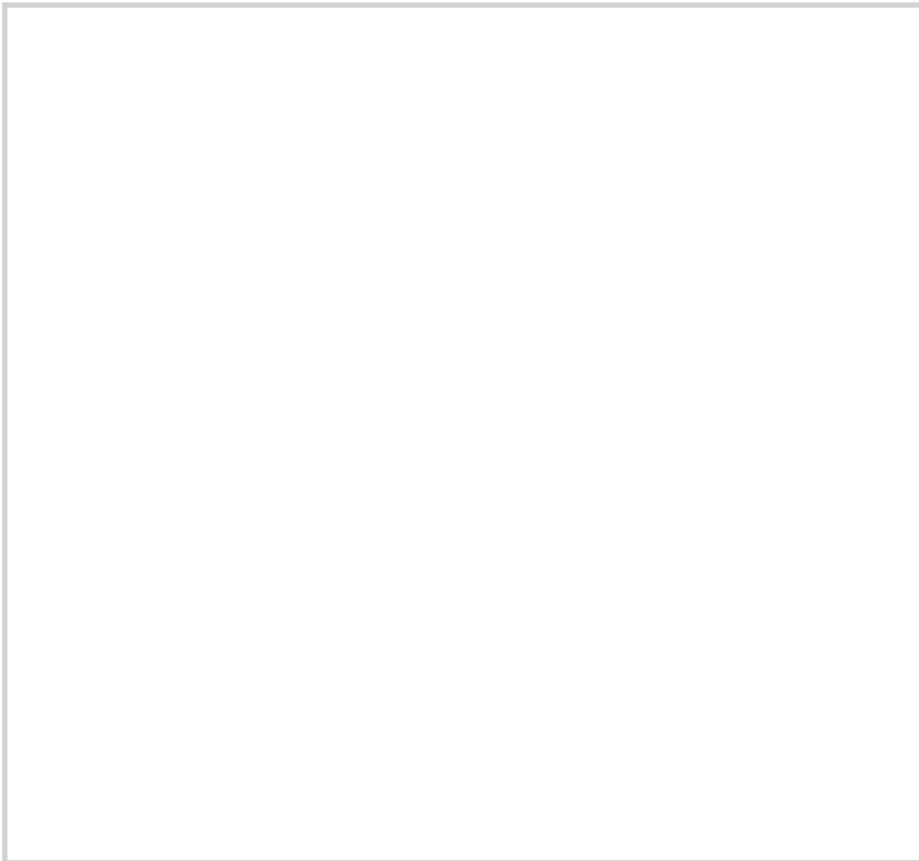


## Resistance Capital

Your resistance is passed down from generation to generation. It is the ability for marginalized populations to persist and resist in the face of oppression and opposition to become empowered. Your legacy of resistance will assist you as you navigate your institution and create change in your community and campus community.

- How will you share your knowledge with your community?
- How will you return to your community as a change agent?
- Recall the moments that got you here. How will you continue the legacy and lift as you climb?

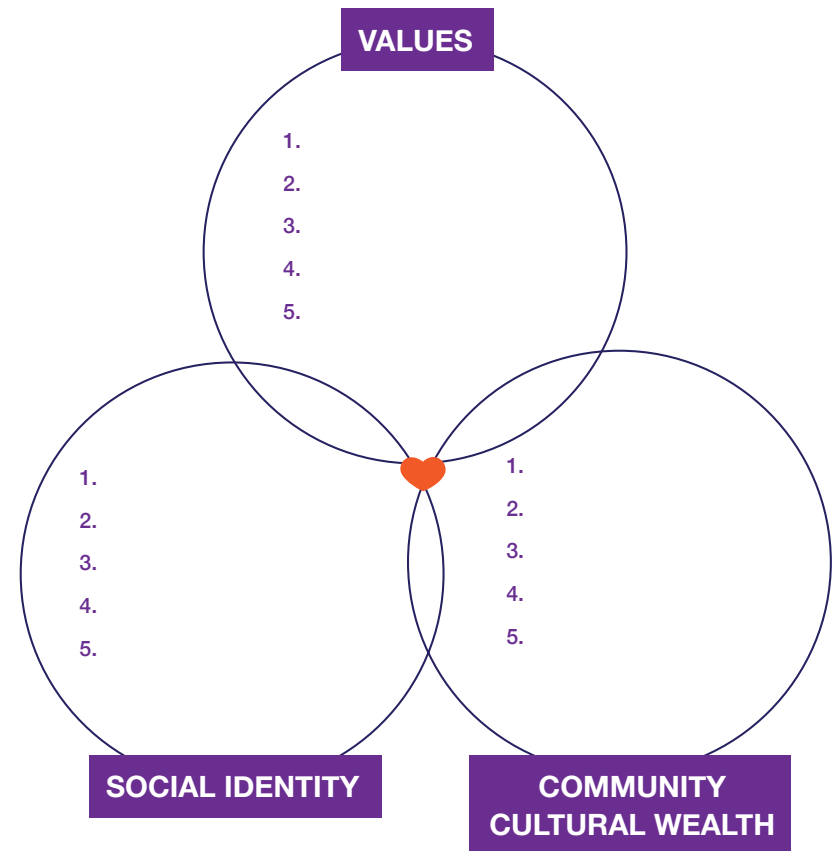
**Characteristics:** resilience, being a pioneer, inspiring others, willingness to take challenges, social justice orientation, strong core values, or ability to adapt quickly.



## ACTIVITY 4

# Unique Strengths

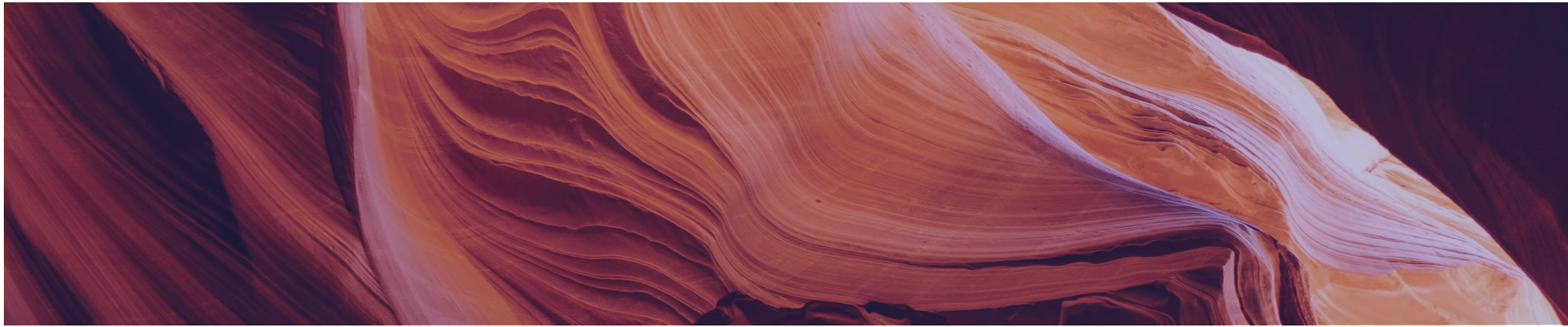
This book is designed to help you focus on three aspects of your identity—your values, social identity, and community cultural wealth—that are not often thought of as strengths, but that can be deliberately harnessed to fuel your personal and professional success. Now that you've identified your unique strengths, answer the questions on the following page to harness their power.



What are professional and personal development opportunities you can engage in to build upon your unique strengths?

What is one goal you'd like to accomplish in this upcoming academic year?  
What are three actionable steps you can take using your unique strengths to make that goal more achievable?

AND ALWAYS REMEMBER  
*Together, in community,  
we are wealthy beyond  
measure.*



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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