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Abstract

With the rising price of college and anxiety about graduates' job prospects, the employability of graduates is a dominant narrative shaping postsecondary policy and practice around the world. Yet, completion and the acquisition of a credential alone do not guarantee employment, and research on hiring reveals its subjective aspects, particularly when cultural signals of applicants are matched to those of organizations. In this qualitative study of 42 manufacturing firms in the US state of Wisconsin, cultural capital theory is used to investigate the prevalence of hiring as "cultural matching" using thematic and social network methods to analyze interview data. Results indicate that 74% of employers hire for cultural fit, but, contrary to prior research, this matching process is not simply a matter of fitting applicant personalities to monolithic "organizational cultures" or interviewer preferences. Instead, employers match diverse applicant dispositions (e.g., personality, attitude) and competencies (e.g., cognitive, inter-personal, intra-personal) to the personalities of

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existing staff as well as to industry-specific norms that are dominant within specific departments. The paper explores implications of these findings for college students, faculty, and career advisors, especially in light of the potential for discriminatory practices during the job search and hiring process. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)