The Need for Critical Consciousness in Culturally Responsive Pre-Employment Transition Services

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Capacity Building Virtual Institute
May 3, 2021

Objectives

- Why focus on transition education for students of color?
- Exploring elements of relationship building for team and student/family collaboration
- The importance and purpose of critical consciousness for culturally responsive practices
- Questions to ask or reflect on during the process of implementing Pre-ETS

“It so happens that to every understanding, sooner or later an action corresponds. Once man perceives a challenge, understands it, and recognizes the possibilities of response, he acts. The nature of that action corresponds to the nature of his understanding.”

--Freire, 1973, p.83

What is there to understand?

- Oppressive systems
- Issues of colorblindness
- Deficit-based thinking
- The importance of relationships & community support
- Inclusion means nothing without equity

Why Focus on Transition Experiences of Students of Color?

Transition Gaps

National Disability Institute:

- Clear that transition gaps persists for certain groups of people with disabilities
- Regarding employment, race and disability combined, leaves African Americans with disabilities with the lowest employment rate
  - Asians, 39%; Whites 35%; Latinos 35%; Black/AA, 25%

- More than one in five adults with disabilities have less than a high school education (21 percent) compared to 11 percent of adults with no disability.
  - Asians and Non-Hispanic Whites are more likely to have college degrees than African Americans or Latinx
  - Less than High School with disabilities (Whites, 16%, Black/AA, 25%, Hispanic/Latino, 36%, Asian, 27%;
  - Bachelors or more Black AA (9%...lowest amongst other races with disabilities)

Many studies have discussed the implications of race/culture in transition and note these findings (e.g., Banks, 2014; Trainor et al., 2020; Povenmire-Kirk et al., 2010; Rueda et al., 2005)

Why Do These Gaps Happen?

- Possible Explanations
  - **Cultural Match/Mismatch**
    - Educators competent in students' cultural backgrounds may be more likely to:
      - Hold high expectations for students
      - Interpret students and families needs more accurately
      - Incorporate culturally relevant content and methods into instruction (Brown, 2009; Mahatmya et al., 2016)
      - Incorporate culturally relevant methods and experiences in classroom and transition experiences (Scott et al., 2021)
  - Implicit Biases
    - Educators who hold **Implicit Biases** about a student's race/ethnicity
      - Provide less rigorous instruction (e.g., Jacoby-Senghor et al., 2016)
      - Write more discipline referrals (Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015)
      - Have students who make smaller achievement gains (van den Bergh et al., 2010)

Why Do These Gaps Happen?

Other Possible Explanations:

- School-to-prison pipeline
- Systemic and structural racism
- Lack of diversity in education workforce
- Limited integration of culturally responsiveness into school-university-community partnerships

Qualitative evidence indicates that these possibilities do occur (e.g., Achola, 2019; Banks, 2014; Scott et al., 2021)

Quantitative studies have not examined the extent that these concerns explain (Burke et al., 2020)

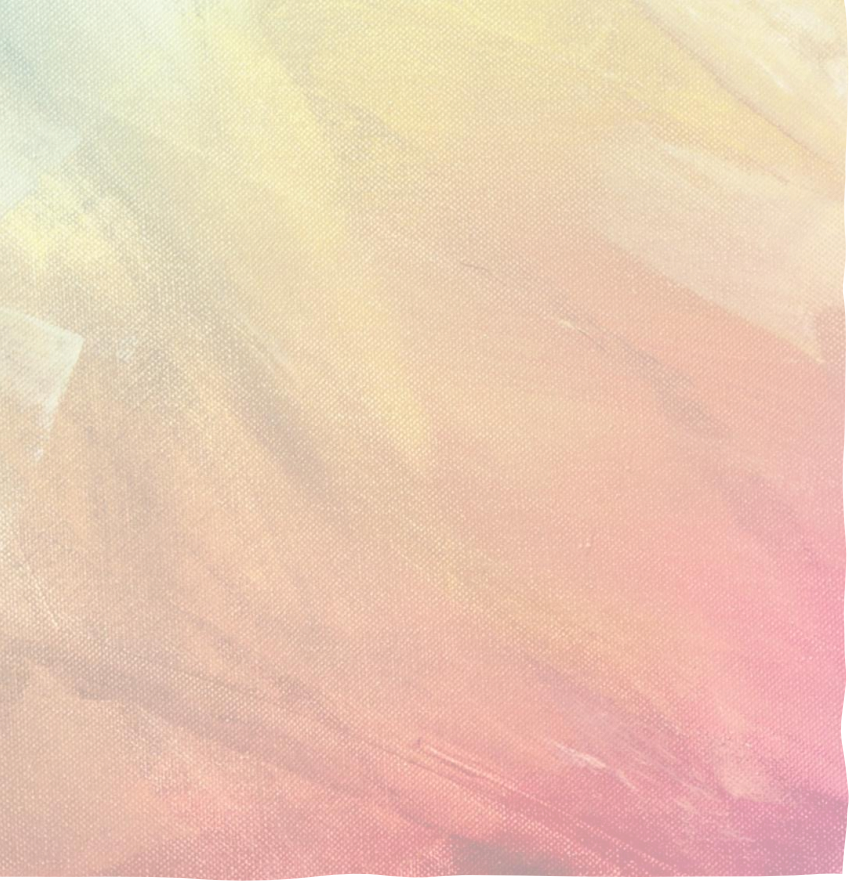
Experiences of Students of Color and Families During Transition

Racialized issues within transition

- Parents of color voice suppressed
- Student of color voice suppressed
- Culture suppressed

"The school didn't hear my concerns as a Black mother [my concerns with early transition planning]; they thought that learning was stressful for Langston. So, we didn't focus on transition until later."

Scott et al., 2021



Ladson-Billings (1995) lists three criteria for empowering students

- Academic success
- Cultural competence
- Critical consciousness to challenge social orders

What is Critical Consciousness?

Critical Action

- Behavioral component of engaging in civic/political action

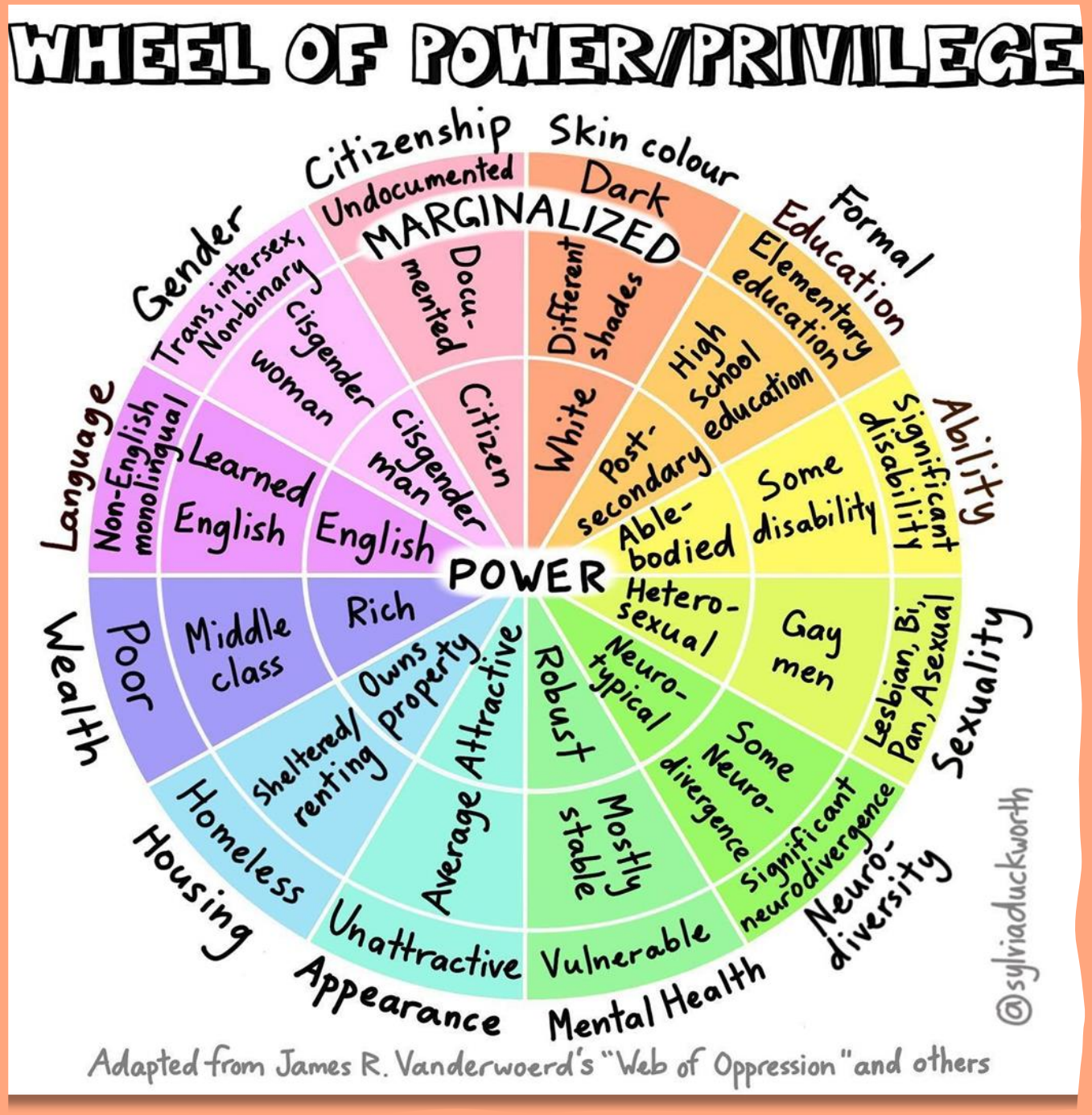
Critical Motivation

- Attitudinal component of having the self-efficacy or perceived efficacy to effect change

Critical Reflection

- Cognitive component of deeply analyzing sociopolitical issues

Jemal (2017);Watts, Diemer, & Voight (2011)



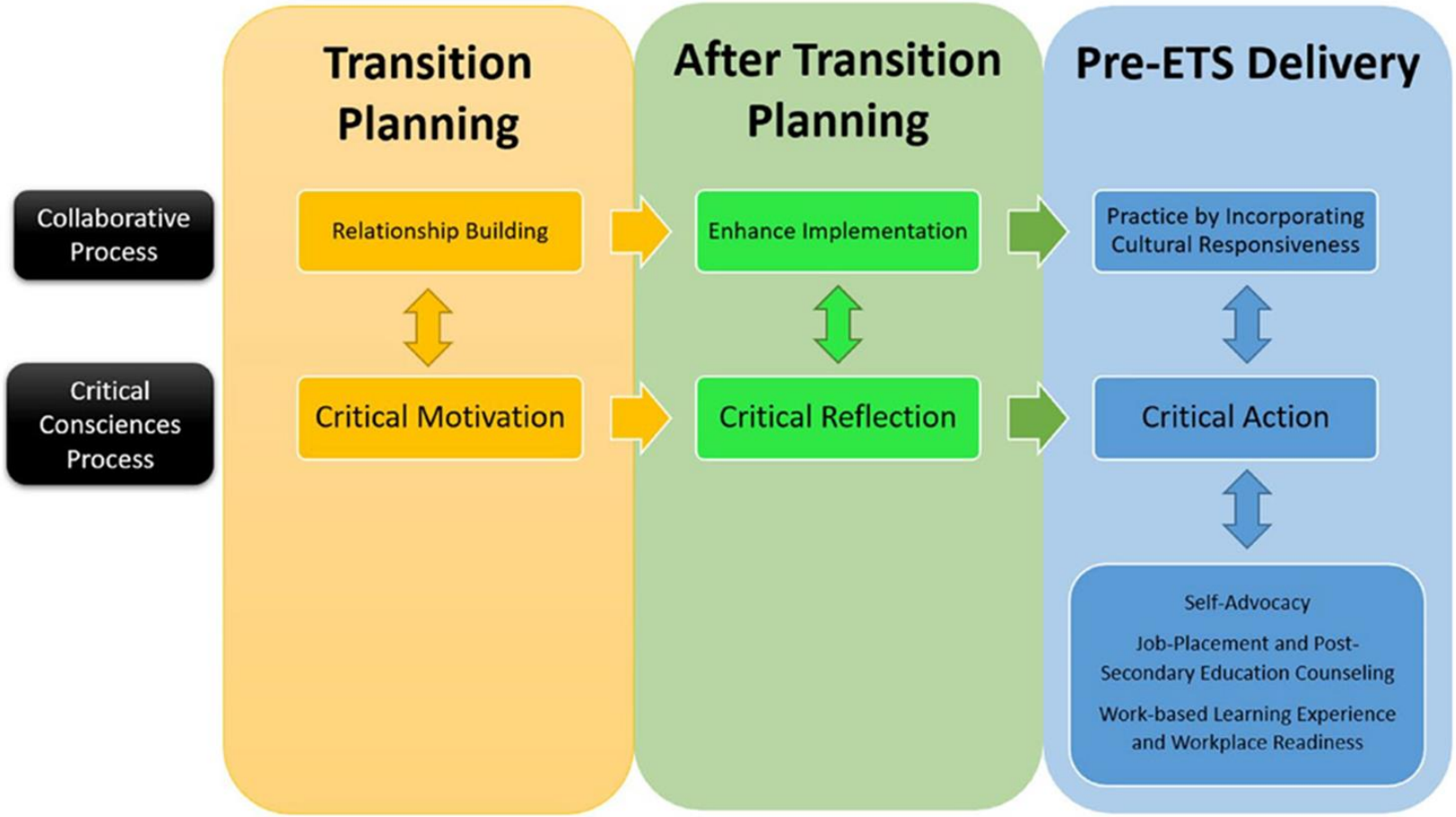
Critical Consciousness

Culturally Responsive Practices

Equity-Based Changes

Why is this important to Pre-ETS?

How could we implement critical consciousness?



Transition Planning

Team and Student/Family Collaboration

- Relationship Building
- Accountability

Critical Motivation

- Self-efficacy or perceived efficacy to effect change

Questions

Key: Group equality should be our ideal

- What are some ways we can have a better working partnership?
- What are the strengths of each of our positions?
- What are some of the weaknesses of our positions?
- What role race & gender plays in our collaborative dynamic?

After Transition Planning

Implementation enhancement

- Creating opportunities for connectiveness with community

Critical Reflection

- Areas of improvement & challenges to the school/social climate

Questions

KEY: Building capacity of community and resource understanding

- How can we build a partnership with members in the community to assist in providing opportunities?
- What experiences can we provide to build on interest and understanding of those interests? Can this be policy related or community based?
- How can mentorships better support our students in addition to families to build on different interest and experiences?
- What can we do to understand more about the students and their families in terms of their community engagement?

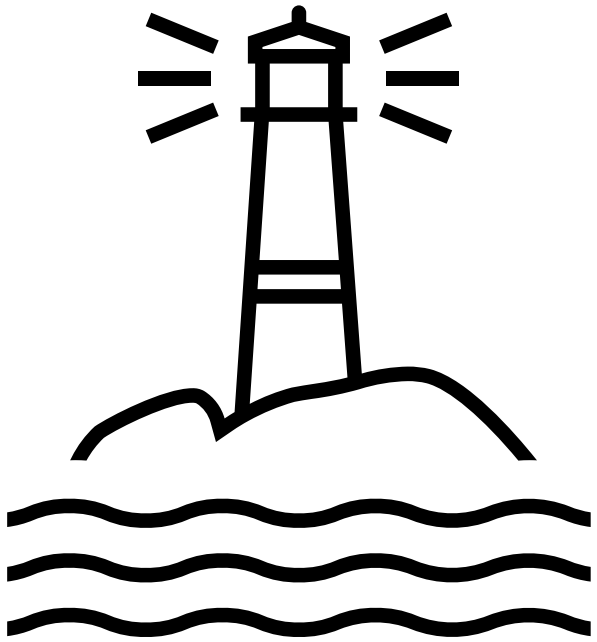
Pre-ETS Delivery

Culturally Responsive Practices

- Collaborative teaching
- Culturally competent care
- Responsive feedback
- Culturally competent universal design for transition instruction

Critical Action

- Engaging in civic/political action
- Goes beyond self-advocating in terms of disability by engaging in activities that value the intersectional identities of students



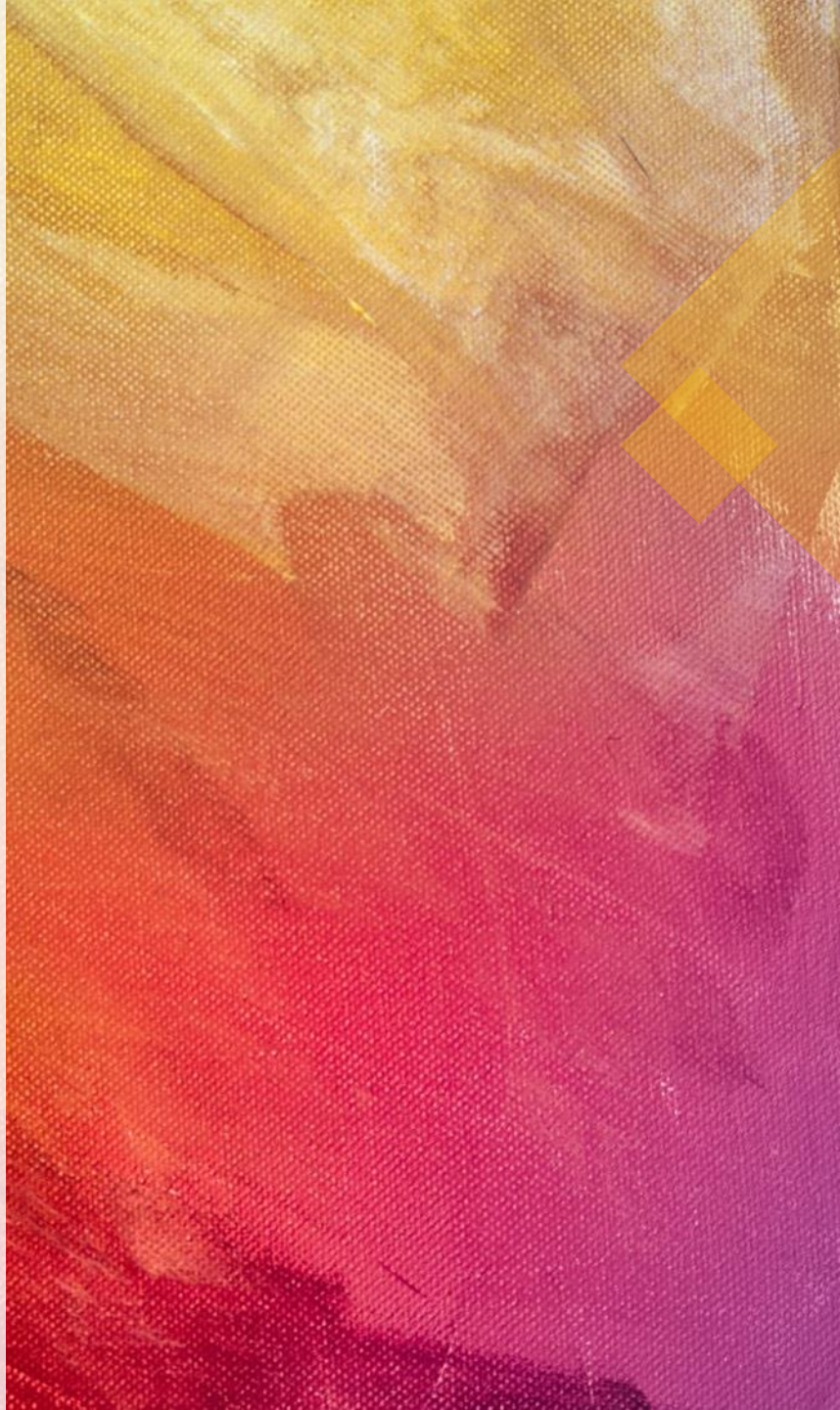
Questions

Key: Awareness of racism and ablism and supporting achievement

- How are we addressing inequality and racism through our work?
- How do we show students how to analyze inequality and racism they face?
- How do we support their advocacy in addressing different issues related to race & disability? Or other identities?
- Are our practices intentional about supporting students of color?

Conclusion

- Students of color with disabilities have disparaging transition related issues in terms of service delivery and their outcomes
- Critical consciousness is needed while implementing culturally responsive practices to identify and understand levels of injustice, oppression, and transgressions
- The use of critical consciousness can advance foundational practices for transition teams to collaborate at the professional level and the student and family level



Questions

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