

An abstract graphic on the left side of the page. It features a stylized globe or sphere composed of thin, overlapping lines. Scattered across the globe are numerous small, colored dots in shades of red, green, cyan, and black. Some of these dots are larger and more prominent than others. The overall effect is that of a complex, interconnected network or a digital map of the world.

*THEORY TO ACTION:
CENTERING THE WELLBEING
OF BLACK YOUTH*

&

SELF-REFLECTION IN ACTION

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Historical Trauma

To properly understand historical trauma in the Black community, consider Black people's collective, historical experiences with:

- Forced migrations
- Exploitation of labour
- Constrictions on the development of personhood
- Ethnic cleansing
- Propagation of ideologies of White Supremacy that spanned 400 years

A Trauma-Informed Lens When Working With Black Young People and Their Parents/Caregivers

- 1) Recognize the harmful impact of the compounding, layering and transferring of generational trauma
- 2) Disrupt and challenge oppressive practices within Canadian institutions
- 3) Develop an understanding of particular parenting practices
- 4) Deconstruct theories about Black people's lives (behaviours, attachment, and parenting) that are deficit-based
- 5) Use holistic, inclusive and complete assessments

Practice Questions

- What are your **initial thoughts** on what you need to consider when working with Black young people and their families?
- How do you know what you know about Black young people and their families and how do you think that you can do things differently to better understand and work with them?
- What are some of the **stereotypes** that you have heard about Black parents?
- How do you plan to bring **awareness** to your unconscious biases that may influence your assessment and how you provide service?

4Es – Exploration 1/3

Important to pay attention to Black families’
Funds of Knowledge (FoK): culturally-based
practices and resources (Wolf, 1966)

FoKs can be identified through multiple
approaches, including observing or
asking about parenting practices and values

Be willing to listen and do not make assumptions
– do not diminish the activities,
skills and routines in which families engage

Consider how FoKs may shape your perception
of the child and family, as well as
how this new knowledge can be integrated into
program activities

4Es – Exploration 2/3

Acknowledge the cultural wealth of Black young people and their families? They draw upon a cultural wealth that holds great importance for supporting their children (YouthREX, 2018).

For example:

- Drawing on racial capital to navigate, manage, and resist racial marginalization and prepare their children to do the same
- Using navigational capital, the ability to maneuver through and manipulate institutions and practices that were designed to exclude Black families
- Supporting Black young people to develop racial consciousness, the ability to respond to racialized events.

4Es – Exploration 3/3

- Ask young people and their families about their experiences with racism
- Ask about parenting practices and parenting values
- Transmitted values may include education, respect and responsibility, influence of spirituality and the church, importance of the village (family members, elders, community, friends, church)
- Remember that young people and their families are experts on their lives
- Be willing to listen and do not make assumptions

• 4Es – Expectations

- Recognize barriers to engagement, e.g., time, stress, etc.

“Create a culture in which parents are expected to be *intentionally* and *proactively* engaged”
(Iruka, 2013, p. 22)

- Build on families’ FoKs and engage families in ways that are responsive to their needs

Ask for feedback to better understand their goals and preferred methods of engagement

Treat young people and their families like valued partners and contributors

• 4Es – Education

Recognize the impact of a history of disenfranchisement that has barred Black families from participating in high-quality educational systems

Educate parents on how to navigate complex institutions and systems in order to ensure that they are able to advocate for their children

Engage in partnerships with community and local agencies to share information, support advocacy, and promote access to resources and networks

Ensure that Black young people and their families are connected to services and resources, but also to each other, in order to build social capital and networks

• 4Es – Empowerment

• Empower families to be self-sufficient and equipped to deal with the challenges of parenting and life obstacles

Provide families with the **tools** to achieve their goals, rather than “doing it” for the family

Build on families’ assets and capacities

Educate families on issues around advocacy and networking

Hold high expectations about their role as parents

Critical Self-Reflection

Critical reflection involves the identification of deep-seated assumptions, but with the primary purpose of bringing about some improvements in professional practice (Fook & Askeland, 2006)

Critical reflection is making meaning from experience through a process of unearthing assumptions, particularly fundamental assumptions about power, but somehow, doing that gets us back to learning from experience (Breres, Browes & Fook, 2011 p.86)

Turning the Gaze Inwards



Self Reflection



Team Reflection



Organization
Reflection

Turning the Gaze Inwards

“Reflective practice demands that you learn from experience. It requires you to be self-critical. It expects you to analyse what you *think, feel, and do*, and then learn from the analysis” (Howe, 2009, p. 171)

It is normal and okay to have feelings of vulnerability and discomfort

Tenets of Self-Reflection

1

Critique our assumptions on which our beliefs and values are formed

2

Understand how we can use knowledge emerging out of our reflection to enhance our practice

3

Understand our experiences in the social context

4

Challenge the validity of our assumptions

5

Action focused:
never still

Checkpoint: Self-Reflection in Practice

Choose a young Black person that you work with:

- What were some of the assumptions you made about that person?
- What social and structural assumptions influenced your decision?
- What were your values, and how did they guide your work with this young person?

The process of self-reflection is not how you think you interacted with others but how you

actually interacted. It is about confronting the truth about yourself.

**CRITICAL
REFLECTION**
Not Always an
Exercise of
Comfort

Can be a very uncomfortable and fearful journey as it moves our biases from the unconscious sphere to the conscious sphere, thus forcing us to understand the truth about ourselves

Self in Action

- ❖ Self-reflection is only useful when followed by thoughtful action?
- ❖ How will you meaningfully develop an action plan that holds you accountable in every interaction with Black young people?
- ❖ How do you reimagine the way you work with Black young people and their families?

Guided Reflection #1: Deconstruction

Adapted from Jan Fook (2002) on
Social Work Critical Theory and
Practice

- What are the main themes and patterns that are emerging From your understanding of the Situation?

- Who are the people that are involved?

- Whose perspective was represented and present, and whose are missing?

- What was the interpretation/explanation of the situation, and whose were they?

Guided Reflection #2: Deconstruction

How might the situation be interpreted differently, and how might it have been interpreted by different people in the situation?

What are the knowledge and assumptions that are implied and used in your account?

How do they relate to value and belief, human behaviour; moral and ethical codes; social and political systems and change; power; gender and cultural considerations?

Where do these Assumptions originate?

What roles or positions do these assumptions support? What does everyone stand to lose from holding them, and what social and power functions do holding these assumptions perform?

What practices, systems, or structures are upheld by these assumptions.?

Guided Reflection #3: Reconstruction

Adapted from Jan Fook (2002) on
Social Work Critical Theory and
Practice

How does what happened in my incident compare with what I intended to do or what I assumed I was doing?

How does my experience in this situation compare with past or other experiences?
What are the common themes and patterns?

What aspects of this incident or situation can be applied to others of mine or my colleagues?

What needs to be changed about my assumptions, theory, actions, interpretation, and skills due to my reflections?

What strategies can I use to make these changes? How do these strategies fit with my changed theories or interpretations?

What is my reformulated theory of (or assumptions about) power which has/have resulted from my Reflection?

How can I frame my practice theory so that what I have learnt from this situation is useable in other contexts?

Self- Reflection in Action

- How are you going to build in critical reflection in your work?
- Identify a person with who you can have discussions on critical reflection. Ask that person to check in with you monthly for the next 3 months to see how you embed critical reflection in your work.
- Reflect on an interaction/incident with Black youth. Use the deconstruction and reconstruction questions to develop a practice model emerging out of this experience.