

# ***Cultivating Collaborative Assessment Relationships***

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*Emilie Clucas Leaderman, Ed.D*

*Gina B. Polychronopoulos, Ph.D*

# Assessment Institute Webinar Series

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Webinar #1: *Overview and Readiness for RARE  
Model Strategies*

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#### AUTHORS

Emilie Chicas  
Leadersman, Ed.D.  
Santa Clara University

Gina B.  
Polychronopoulos, Ph.D.  
Christopher  
Newport University

## Humanizing the Assessment Process: How the RARE Model Informs Best Practices

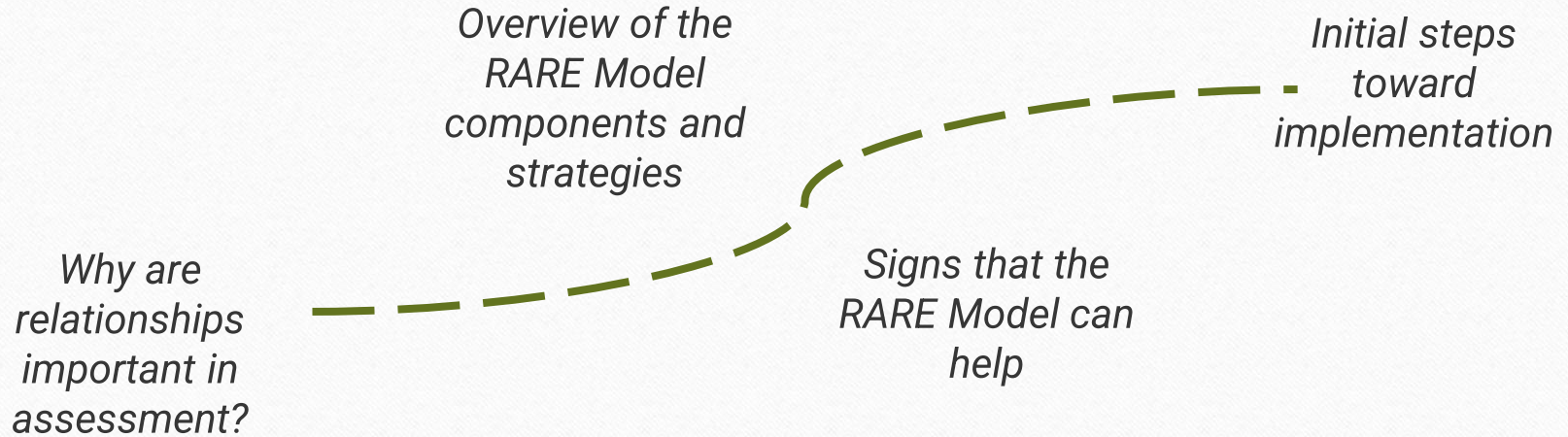
**H**igher education assessment is a complex professional identity, as some practitioners are recruited as a faculty or staff member to their role while others transition from outside of academia. Our understanding of disciplinary identity in higher education assessment is emerging, with assessment professionals entering their positions from a broad range of academic fields (Stulke, 2009). Data from Nicholas and Stotnik (2018) confirm significant disciplinary diversity, with the majority holding their highest degrees in social sciences (30%) and education (44%). Social science respondents in this survey ranged from psychology, sociology, history, and organizational leadership disciplines; while those in education included higher education, administration, leadership, educational psychology, assessment and measurement, and curriculum and design. A closer look at the years of experience among this same group of professionals reveals that 75% have moved into the profession within the last seven to 10 years (Nicholas & Stotnik, 2018), which suggests that the assessment field is evolving. While the disciplinary paths of assessment practitioners are identifiable, their industry and career experiences, as well as implications for assessment practice, remain to be seen.

To complicate identity matters, our profession has a reputation of not being well liked among its counterparts in academia. Following recent media editorials from faculty criticizing the aims of higher education assessment (Worthen, 2018) and articles calling for our community of practitioners to better define standards of practice for themselves (Eubanks, 2017), we recognize the need to articulate how we develop interpersonal relationships with faculty and staff. One recent survey points to assessment professionals' desire for learning strategies for successfully overcoming unique or common challenges at their institution (Combs & Rose, 2016), and faculty resistance has been considered one of the main barriers to successful measurement of student learning outcomes (Katz, 2010). Although collaboration and relationship-building have been identified as best practices toward meaningful engagement in the assessment process (Kinzie, Jankowski, & Provezis, 2014), it has also been suggested that inclusive practices are necessary to establish

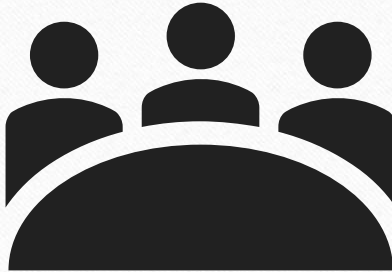
#### CORRESPONDENCE

Email  
echicasleadersman@scu.edu  
gina.polychronopoulos  
@cnu.edu

# Roadmap for today:



Poll: What is your primary job role?





In working with others, what do you value most?

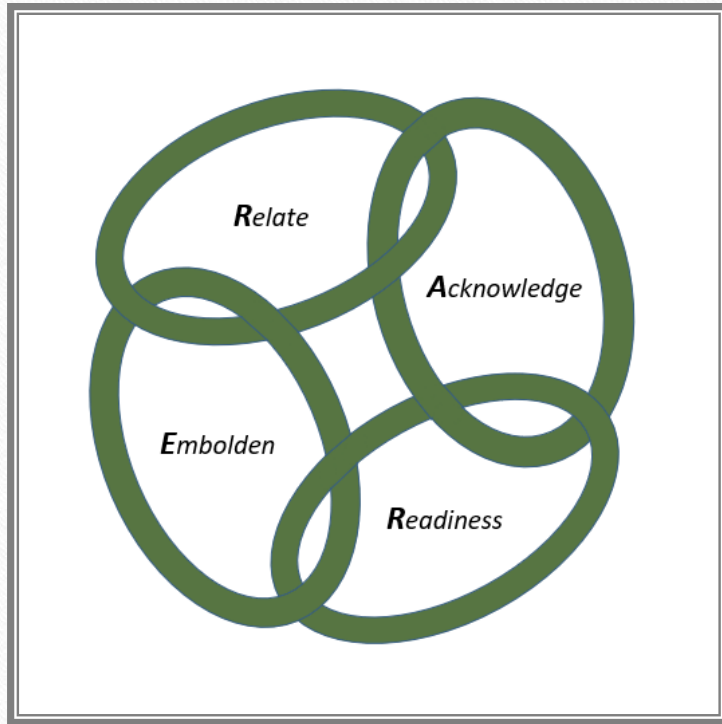


# Assessment work is largely interpersonal in nature-

## *“Assessment is about people!”*

- Collaboration and relationship-building support meaningful assessment
  - Kinzie, Jankowski, & Provezis, 2014; Rickards & Stitt-Berg, 2016; Smith, 2013
- Facilitator/Guide, Political Navigator, Narrator/translator (Jankowski & Slotnick, 2015)
- Change agent (Ariovich et al., 2018)
- Interpersonal skills are critical for success (Morrow et. al, 2022)





## *RARE Model*

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- Four components of effective assessment practice, each include set of strategies
- Informed by humanistic and postmodern counseling theories
  - Person-centered, solution-focused, motivational interviewing, positive psychology, narrative theory
- Premise: relationships are integral to nurturing positive assessment culture



**Humanistic  
theory**

**Postmodern  
theory**

***RARE Model*  
approach**



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graph TD; A[Humanistic theory] --> C((RARE Model approach)); B[Postmodern theory] --> C;
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The diagram illustrates the conceptual foundation of the RARE Model approach. It features a central green circle labeled 'RARE Model approach'. Two light green rounded rectangular boxes, labeled 'Humanistic theory' and 'Postmodern theory', are positioned above the circle. Grey arrows point from each box towards the central circle, indicating that both theories contribute to or inform the RARE Model approach. The entire diagram is set against a white background with a light brown border.

# Signs that *RELATE* is needed

Not responding to my emails/outreach

Viewing assessment as threat to academic freedom

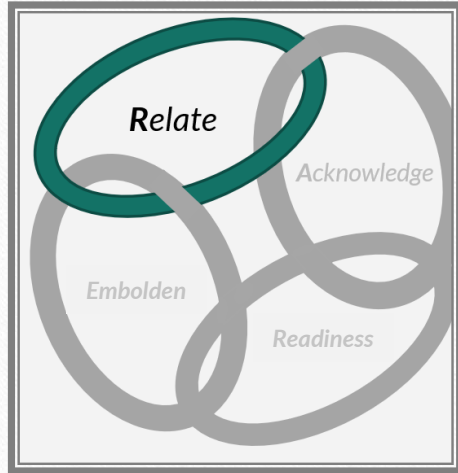
Perceiving assessment as busywork disconnected from daily operations

Focusing on compliance over meaningful improvement

Limited sharing of assessment practices due to perceived unique contexts

# R - Relate

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- Establish a trusting relationship to work effectively toward goals
- Grounded in humanistic counseling theory (Rogers, 1950)
- Person-centered, non-directive approach
- Genuineness, unconditional positive regard, and empathy
- Most essential component of the *RARE Model*



Signs that  
**ACKNOWLEDGE**  
is needed:

Having difficulty stepping into a learner role

Challenge articulating what matters in the assessment process

Obstacle preventing them from addressing discipline or department-specific concerns

Unable to see where small changes can be made in the assessment process

Not sure what the next step in their assessment process is; thinks they are finished with assessment

# A - Acknowledge

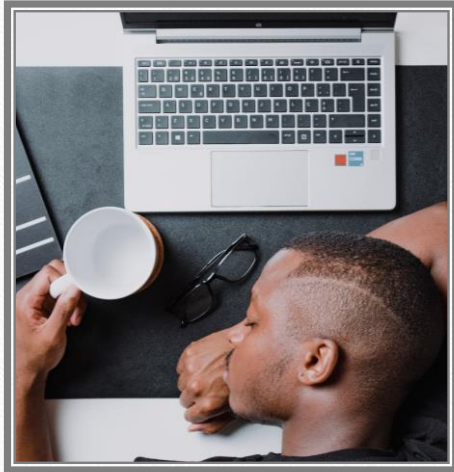
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- Recognize and highlight existing strengths and resources
- Grounded in solution-focused counseling theory (de Shazer, 1985)
  - Faculty / staff-developed goals
  - Focus on progress
- Guiding and supporting to encourage greater ownership
  - Offering alternatives or ideas to consider

# What makes collaborative assessment work *hard*?

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- Relationships take time... *we're busy!*
- Relationships take energy... *we're tired!*
- Competing priorities and initiatives can take over... *we're one person!*
- Chat: What else makes this work hard?



## Signs that READINESS is needed:

Defensive reactions when assessment data suggests needed changes

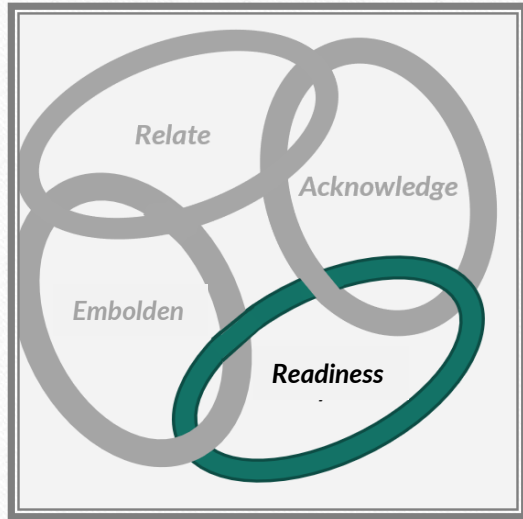
Rushed implementation of assessment without proper planning

"We've always done it this way"/ status-quo mindset

Fear of assessment data being used against programs/departments

Resistance due to past top-down assessment mandates

# R – Readiness



- Working to redefine resistance -> discord is part of the process of change
- Grounded in motivational interviewing approach (Miller & Rollnick, 2013)
- Four processes are foundational:
  - *Engaging, Focusing, Evoking, Planning*
- Dependent upon a strong and positive relationship

Signs that  
**EMBOLDEN**  
is needed:

ANALYSIS PARALYSIS WHEN LOOKING AT ASSESSMENT DATA

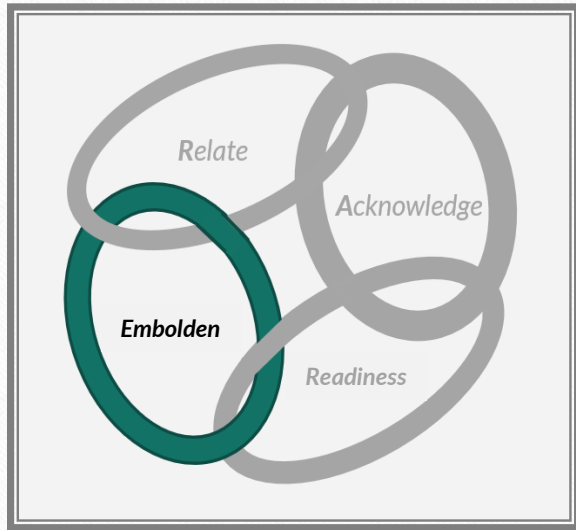
FEAR OF "DOING ASSESSMENT WRONG"/HESITATION TO SHARE "IMPERFECT" ASSESSMENT RESULTS

PERCEPTION THAT ASSESSMENT RESULTS ONLY HIGHLIGHT PROBLEMS

LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN THEIR ASSESSMENT SKILLS



# E - Embolden



- Supporting faculty and staff to feel confident and ownership in assessment practices
- Rooted in positive psychology (Seligman, 2011) and narrative theory (White & Epston, 1990)
- Multiple realities in an experience and discovering meaning through narrative
- Cultivate assessment leaders and enhance the assessment culture

POLL: Which (if any) of these signs have you seen at your institution, current or past?

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Views assessment as  
a threat to academic  
freedom

Unable to see where  
small changes can be  
made in the  
assessment process

"We've always done  
it this way" / status-  
quo mindset

Lack of confidence in  
their assessment  
skills

# How do we put the *RARE Model* into practice?

## Collaboration Playbook

Clucas Leaderman & Polychronopoulos, *Do you have a collaboration playbook?* The RARE Model, 1

### RARE Model Collaboration Playbook

#### Part 1: Nurturing Assessment Partnerships

<b>1. Assessment Partnership Readiness:</b> (Select one partnership or division/division/department/area to review)	<b>Your Reflections/Observations from your experience:</b>
Which assessment relationship needs your attention most right now?	
What signs of readiness (from any of the components R, A, R, or E) are you noticing?	
<b>2. Focusing on the Relational Issue:</b>	<b>Your Reflections/Observations from your experience</b>
Describe the current dynamic.	
Who are the key colleagues in this partnership?	



## How we can help in future webinar sessions:

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Address your specific needs through the collaboration playbook



Adapt the strategies to work in different contexts



Develop assessment leaders at your institution

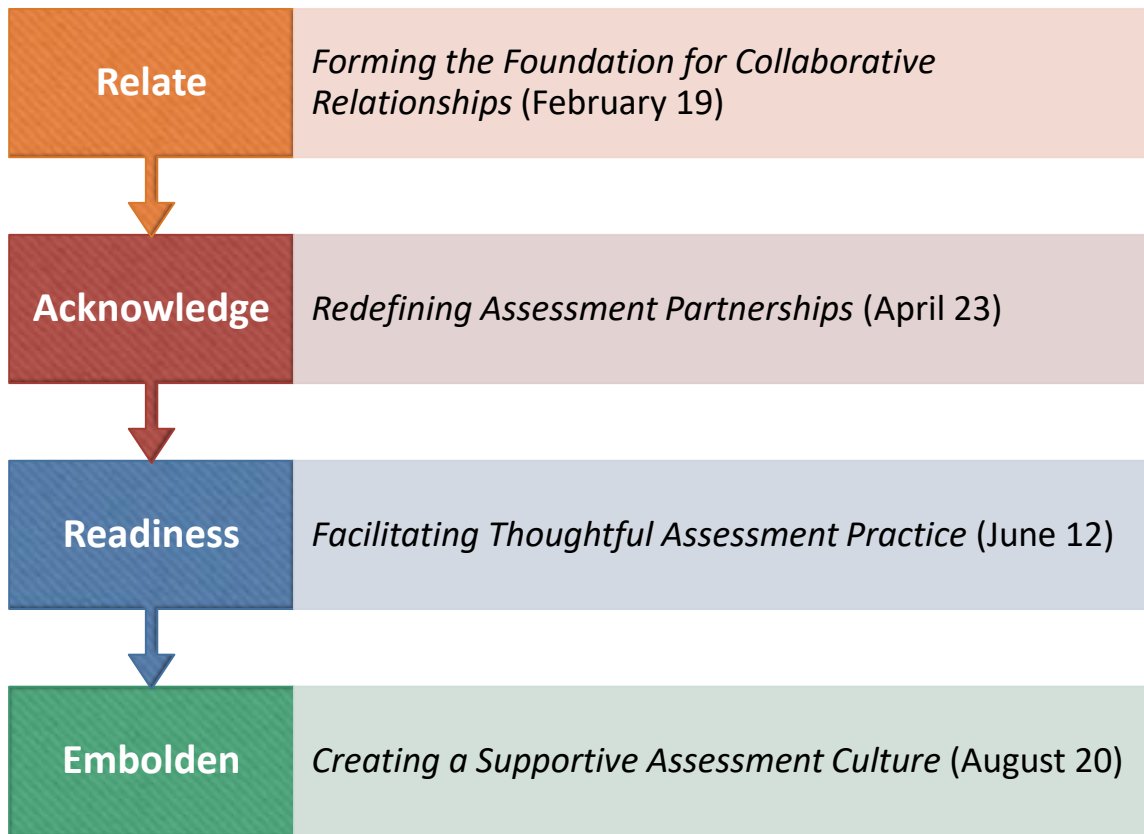


Expand your assessment partnerships

# References and Resources



Save  
the  
Dates!



# What do you value most in collaborative assessment work?

65 responses

